

The BOGIE of FEAR by Arthur Somers Roche

THE STORY.

ALLAYNE GUERNSEY has inherited the Guernsey millions and an inborn dread of a scandal. Her bustling fear of being talked about has led her, at 24, to a marriage with a man of her own kind. Her husband, BENNETT HALSEY, a smooth crook, who is at the end of his resources and needs Allayne's money. At the start of their honeymoon Allayne learns of the existence of a woman known as ROSA HALSEY, whom the crook discarded to make his marriage possible, and she promptly tells Halsey she is through with him. The train on which they are passengers is wrecked and Halsey, seeing his scheme a failure and fearing the police, who are always on his trail, conceives the idea of "playing dead" by exchanging papers with one of the wreck victims. Allayne's former romance is renewed and, supposing Halsey to be dead, she and Bourke are married and find themselves supremely happy. Then Halsey, who has been traveling about again with Rosa, reappears in the rôle of black-mailer. Allayne has put all her wealth into Bourke's business and is at his side when the crook asks for money. Therefore she complies without question when he demands that she meet him at a roadhouse. Meanwhile Halsey has had a heart attack, knows himself to be at the point of death, and has turned his thoughts from greed to revenge. He proposes, he tells Allayne, to kill himself and let her be found in the locked room at the roadhouse with his body. As he is about to carry out this threat, Rosa, who has provided herself with a revolver, enters the room through a window and kills him. Allayne, terror-stricken at the thought of further scandal, makes her escape from the roadhouse with Rosa, hoping that Halsey's death will be thought a case of suicide. But she does not reckon on the resourcefulness of RANDOLPH JENKINS, the town's chief of police, who finds two weapons in the roadhouse room and no bullet entered—conclusive evidence, Jenkins decides, of murder. Nor does Allayne know that Halsey, as a part of his scheme of revenge, wrote a letter to this same chief of police, summoning him to the inn.

SIXTH INSTALLMENT.
Rosa Pays the Piper.

THE Chief turned to the door and beckoned the trembling clerk to enter. The man did so.

"Who had this room? I mean, did he give any name?" asked Jenkins.

"He telephoned—gave the name of Carver," replied the clerk.

"What time did he phone?"

"Between twelve and one," was the answer. "Said that he wanted a private dining room. He got here a little before one, ordered luncheon for two, and said that a lady would arrive shortly and to send her up here. When she came she went right upstairs, after asking me where Mr. Carver's room was."

"Ever see her before?" asked Jenkins.

The clerk shook his head.

"How was she dressed?"

"I didn't really notice, sir," said the man, "except that her clothes were dark and that she wore a heavy veil."

"Couldn't identify her then?" asked Jenkins.

The clerk shook his head again. Jenkins looked beyond him to where, in the doorway, stood the sergeant and his followers, plainly piqued that their Chief had beaten them to the scene.

Jenkins beckoned to the doctor. The surgeon entered and bent over the dead man. His examination was cursory, perfunctory.

"Death instantaneous," he announced, rising from his knees.

"All right," said Jenkins. He bent over and picked up from the floor the automatic pistol lying by Halsey.

"One shell fired," he announced. He walked to the table and picked up Halsey's revolver. He "broke" it and found that none of the cartridges had been exploded.

He waved a hand to the sergeant and the plain clothes men entered. "Take charge, sergeant," he ordered. He turned to the clerk. "I'll talk to you later. Where's the waiter who served them?"

The man came quickly forward. "We'll talk outside," said Jenkins. He left to the sergeant the detail work of examination.

Downstairs, in the private office of the manager, he questioned the man.

"Never saw the dead man before?"

"Never, sir," replied the waiter, nervously.

"Tell me what happened—from the moment of his arrival," ordered the Chief.

The waiter's forehead wrinkled. He was not a bright mentally, but mentality is not required of waiters. But he was honest and very anxious not to omit anything.

"Well, sir, the man—Mr. Carver—had ordered luncheon for one o'clock."

"From you—or from the clerk?"

"From me, sir. As soon as he'd come I went to the dining room upstairs, sir. He ordered the regular table d'hôte meal, sir. Then he asked me for pen and ink and stationery. I brought them to him, sir. A few minutes later he rang for me, and when I got to the room he gave me a letter and told me to mail it. He gave me a dollar tip, sir, and said to mail it right away. And so I walked right down to the letter box and dropped it in."

He paused, as though for dramatic effect. He had got over his first nervousness. Doubtless he visualized himself as the center of an admiring circle of friends tonight, thrilling them with the tale of the drama in which he played a leading part.

"And the letter was addressed to you, sir?" he cried.

Jenkins stared at him. "To me?"

"Yes, sir. He made out it was so important that I took a look at the address. And it was addressed to the Chief of Police of Hilltown, sir."

Jenkins had had, in the few brief months that he had been at the head of the Hilltown police force, many exciting experiences. But this was the most exciting of all. The dead man upstairs had written to him shortly before his death. Why? The answer came immediately to his mind: because he feared death, knew that some one intended him injury, and wished the forces of the law put immediately upon the trail of the slayer. Unquestionably, even the name of the slayer would be contained in the letter.

The reasoning must be sound. Why else should the dead man have written to Hilltown's Chief of Police?

He reached for the telephone upon the manager's desk. He was connected with the Hilltown postmaster.

"This is Dan Jenkins speaking."

"Listen," said the postmaster. "I don't belong to your party. If you have any complaint to make, please address it through the proper channels. Or is it a dinner invitation, Rannie, old top?"

"Neither," said Jenkins, "a favor."

"The bank account is yours," said the postmaster, chuckling.

"Not even that," laughed the Chief.

"There's been a murder at Hillcrest. I've just learned that the murdered man wrote a letter to me before he was killed. How recently has mail been collected from the box near the Inn?"

"The postmaster whistled his amazement. Then, 'Just a minute till I find out.'"

Jenkins heard him speak to a clerk. In a moment he said, "The last collection was at eleven this morning. The next is at seven tonight. What time was the letter mailed?"

"About one," said Jenkins.

"It's in that case it's still in the box. I'll send an inspector out at once to open it. I'll have him give you the letter. Where will you be?"

"Well, if he comes right away I'll be waiting at the Inn," replied Jenkins.

"All right. Anything else I can do?"

"Not a thing, old man, except," he added, "not to mention this letter."

"Silence is our middle name down here," said the postmaster.

Jenkins hung up the telephone and turned again to the waiter.

"Well, what happened after that?"

"Luncheon had been ordered for one o'clock, sir, and I brought it up in a heater, just as a lady came up the stairs to the door. I opened it for her and let her in. Then I went in, too, and began serving the meal. Then I left them. About an hour later, sir—maybe less—I went up and knocked. I heard the lady ask what I wanted. I told her that I'd come for the dishes. She called through the door that they'd ring when they wanted me. So I went downstairs. I usually go off duty at half-past two or three, sir, until the night trade begins. But I couldn't leave until I'd brought the dishes downstairs and been paid the check."

"So, by and by I went back and knocked. This time no one answered. I tried the knob and found the door locked. So I went to the top of the stairs, thinking it was pretty funny, and called to Mr. Kenny. He came upstairs and we knocked and called. Then, getting scared, we broke open the door. Mr. Kenny ran right downstairs and saw the woman driving off in her car. Then he telephoned—and that's all, sir."

"And very well told," Jenkins complimented the man. He sent for Kenny, the clerk.

"Did you see the woman leave?" he asked.

"Well, sir, I didn't exactly see her," said Kenny. "I was going over some accounts and I sort of felt that some one was passing, but I didn't look up. But the waiter called a minute later, so I guess she must have gone by just before he called."

"And when you discovered the body?" prompted Jenkins.

"Then I ran downstairs and looked out the door in time to see the woman going down the driveway in a car. I hollered to her, but she didn't stop. Then I telephoned the police."

"Didn't notice the number of the machine?"

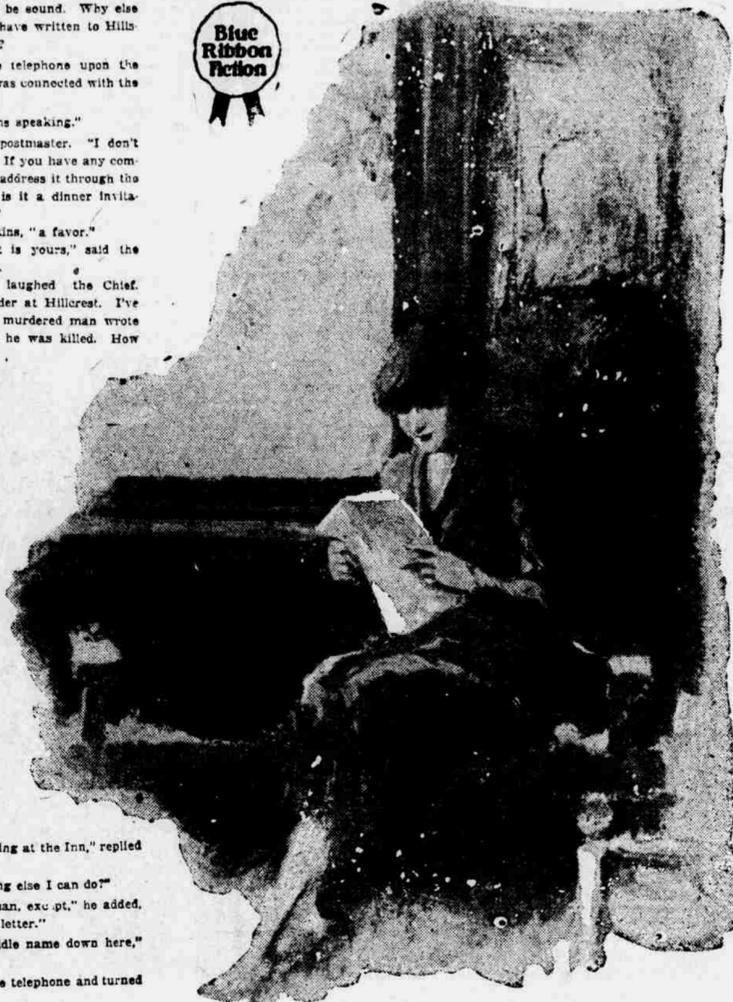
The clerk shook his head.

"Send in the rest of the employés," ordered Jenkins.

Half an hour later, when he had questioned all of the servants, Jenkins gave up the idea of discovering the number of the machine. He went upstairs and talked with the sergeant.

Halsey, in his way, had been something of an actor. It was necessary that he should be, inasmuch as he played so many parts. And when he was posing as an Englishman he carried no papers that, falling from a pocket, might have unmasked him. At the time of his death he had been posing as William Carver. To have carried any papers identifying him as Bennett Halsey, or as anyone else, would have been reckless. So, upon his body had not been found a single document that would indicate that he was anyone other than Mr. Carver."

As a matter of fact, beyond a few engraved cards, bearing that name, there were no papers whatsoever upon him. Save for the letter that had been mailed to him, Jenkins could see no clue to the possible identity of the slayer. Of course, there might be finger prints upon the handles of the weapons, and these were carefully shielded. Also, the sergeant and his men would later examine the man's clothing.



Rosa obtained a time table, chose a secluded corner of the waiting room, and sat down to study it.

looking for laundry or other marks that would serve to place him. But just now there was nothing to do save wait for the arrival of the postal inspector.

He did not keep the chief waiting long. But when he arrived carrying in his hand a bundle of soiled, muddled envelopes, his face wore a puzzled expression.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, chief," he said. "But—somebody skidded into the letter box at the foot of the drive. Knocked it over and busted the mail box. I found these letters in the road, but—that's all."

He handed them to Jenkins. There was no letter addressed to him.

"Did you get them all?" he asked.

The inspector shook his head. "I picked up one of these in the trees across the road. There must have been a high wind blowing—no, I don't suppose I got half of them. And it's so dark now that it isn't much use looking."

But Jenkins disagreed with him. Once more he picked up the telephone and issued orders that half a dozen men, equipped with flashlights, should be sent out at once. At

dead man might be void of clues. It might be the letter of a crank. It might contain—anything. If, in the meantime, he could learn something about the man, without depending on the discovery of the missing letter.

At ten o'clock that night Sergeant Blaney reported to him that a man named Carver, and his wife, had been registered at the Longridge Hotel, a questionable hostelry in the cheaper section of Hilltown. The man had been heard giving a taximan the address, "Hillcrest Inn," about noon today. Later his wife had made inquiries about him, and had walked, apparently much disturbed, away from the place. She had not returned. It had also been learned that the man Carver had been seriously ill the day before and had had two doctors called to him. These doctors had been interviewed, but knew nothing of the man, save that they had attended him and that he had been dangerously ill, at the point of death, in fact. Servants had heard the woman called, by her husband, by the name of "Rosa." She had not returned to the hotel since she left it, shortly after noon. The sergeant had a description of her.

"Send that description out," said Jenkins. "Have her arrested on sight. Anything in the rooms that would tend to tell who they were—anything about them?"

The sergeant shook his head. "Not a thing, Chief."

Jenkins nodded. Shortly, there being nothing else to do, he went home.

Criminals of the confidence game type can have no homes. The burglar, plying his trade by night, his identity masked, may find it possible to maintain a residence. There is no reason why, by day, the burglar should not be a respectable-seeming business or professional man. Doubtless many of them are. For, unless he has bungled his work, he need not fear recognition.

But the confidence man, the swindler, works in the open. He presents his forged note of introduction, insinuates himself into his victim's good graces, perpetrates his chicanery, and—must needs fly to fields afar. He cannot meet his victim next day at the club. For his identity is known. He must depart with all the celerity that he can muster.

Rosa, wife of a confidence man, had never known home life since the ill-fated day when, a cashier in a little southwestern restaurant, she had made the acquaintance of Benny Halsey, who was at that moment engaged in laying the foundation for an oil swindle of some magnitude.

Since the City, shortly after their meeting, when she had married him, she had always "traveled light." For it was essential to their liberty that they be able to step aboard a train or boat at a moment's notice. It was cheaper, Halsey used to say, to buy new things than to wait for the laundry—and a policeman.

So that there was nothing of hardship, nothing unusual, in the fact that Rosa found it necessary to leave Hilltown without any

of the effects that she had brought there. She had slightly over fifteen hundred dollars, enough to keep her going for some time. After that—O, she could take care of herself.

Just how she would take care of herself was not important at the moment. She had been honest until she met Halsey. Whether or not she would have remained honest had she never met Halsey is doubtful. She was of the sort that takes what it considers the easiest, most comfortable course. If circumstances arranged themselves so that honesty would be easy, Rosa would be honest. But with her future she was not at all concerned. Only the immediate present interested her.

She had progressed through many moods since the killing of Halsey. On the moment of regaining consciousness that ever-present fear of the police had ruled her. But only momentarily. She had become indifferent to the consequences. Then, a little later, she had been anxious to end everything, either by jail or death. A little after that she had decided to begin life all over again, and escape was the thought that ruled her. It still ruled.

She did not make the mistake of engaging a taxicab when Allayne set her down from the roadster. It was a stormy day. A taximan, reading the account of the killing at Hillcrest Inn, might remember having conveyed a wet and bedraggled woman to this or that place. No, she would walk to the railroad station. Ticket agents in so bustling a place as Hilltown would hardly remember every prospective passenger.

But, unfortunately, there would not be a train for New York until late afternoon. Rosa, in the waiting room, studied the situation thoughtfully. In an hour or so—perhaps less—the railroad stations would be watched. Unfortunately, a description of Allayne—if one were obtainable—would loosely fit herself, Rosa. They both had worn dark clothing, were veiled, and their general complexions were the same. Rosa was tempted to remove the veil, but decided not to. Some employé of the Longridge Hotel might be in the station, attending to tickets or baggage for a guest of the place. Curiosity might be aroused at sight of her.

From the information window she obtained a timetable. She chose a secluded corner of the waiting room and sat down to study it. A train for Chicago left in two hours. And, of course, local trains left for various points at frequent intervals.

Chicago and New York, however, were the only places where Rosa felt that she might hide in security. And she didn't know Chicago at all. It suddenly occurred to her that there were other roads besides this one which passed through Hilltown. She asked for a timetable of another road. Studying this, she found that a train for New York left Stasburg in two hours. According to the map it was only a dozen miles or so from Hilltown.

She left the station and approached a taximan. She knew that it made her conspicuous, that the man would remember her, but it was extremely doubtful that the Hilltown evening paper of today would contain any account of the killing of Halsey. Her brief residence in the town had taught her that the evening paper came out at one o'clock and that it published only one edition. She doubted that it would be enterprising enough to publish an extra. Therefore, the taximan wouldn't connect her with the killing—supposing that he did—until tomorrow morning's paper had been published, at the earliest. And by that time she'd be in New York.

"Can you drive me to Stasburg?" she asked.

The man eyed her appraisingly. With her hat and suit wrinkled by the rain, she did not look like the sort of person who could pay fifteen dollars for a taxi ride.

"It's nearly thirty miles," he said. "Cost you fifteen dollars."

"That's all right," she told him. "How long will it take?"

The taximan glanced at the slippery street. "Pretty muddy over the hills," he said. "Ought to do it in an hour and a half, though."

Rosa opened the rear door of the machine. "All right; take me there," she ordered.

The man hesitated, and she guessed the cause. She opened her purse and extracted fifteen dollars. She gave it to him. "And there'll be five more when we get there," she told him.

The man's surly face lighted up. "Hop in, lady," he invited. A moment later they were turning away from the station.

Emotion is exhausting. There were no pangs of remorse to keep Rosa awake, and she had no fears of capture. Wherefore she sank into a placid slumber. She never awoke from it in this world.

Rounding a curve on a steep hill, the taximan came face to face with a descending car. To save an infinitesimal fraction of time, the taximan was bugging the wrong side of the road. The other was a heavy touring car and its brakes could not stop it; barely checked it. The taximan whirled his wheel over. He saved his own life. But the big car tore into the rear of the taxi and crushed it.

Hours later the taximan awoke in a Hilltown hospital. Beyond a bad shaking he was well enough. And in the morning he was able to talk with a detective of police, and give information concerning the acci-

dent. Frankly he conceded that it was due to his own carelessness.

"How's the lady?" he asked remorsefully. The detective told him. The taximan groaned in horror.

"Who was she?" demanded the detective. The taximan shook his head. "Never saw her in my life before," he stated. He narrated the circumstances of his engagement by Rosa.

The detective was quick-witted. He saw a connection between the victim of the accident and the woman wanted for the Hillcrest killing. So, in the morning, employé of the Longridge Hotel definitely identified the body of Rosa as the missing "Mrs. Carver."

Jenkins, arriving at his office at nine, was greeted by the detective. He listened attentively to the man's story. He nodded approvingly.

"Good work, Wilson," he said.

A reporter from the afternoon paper was waiting to see him. He ordered that the man be admitted.

The morning paper, pro-administration, had contained a long account of the mysterious killing, and had wound up with the statement that the police were showing remarkable efficiency.

Jenkins smiled as he read this. There had been neither efficiency nor inefficiency shown as yet. But now this information brought by Wilson clarified the case. There remained to be found the letter that had been written to him by the dead man, but that would merely explain, probably, the motive for the crime. And that was not nearly so important as the identity of the slayer.

And that identity, Jenkins believed, had been discovered. The woman was fleeing Hilltown when she had been killed. It was known that she had been excited at learning that her husband had left the hotel. Of course, there was something puzzling in the fact that "Carver" had made, apparently, an engagement to meet a woman at Hillcrest, and that his wife, who patently had been there and killed him, should have been excited at his departure from the hotel.

Still, Jenkins reasoned, they had intended to go together, but for some cause the man had decided to go by himself, leaving the woman to follow later. The letter written by the dead man might clear up this gap in his reasoning.

And that letter would soon be found. Half a do a men had been searching for it since dawn. They were, according to a report upon his desk, climbing trees, looking in the branches. . . . They'd find it. And, because a crowd of amateur searchers would hinder the police if the existence of the letter were made known, nothing had been given to the newspaper men's about it. The waiter had been instructed to keep silent, and Jenkins was quite sure that he would obey.

So, feeling that with the identification of Rosa the department had a good night's record, he smiled upon the representative of the evening paper. Personally, they were friendly, although politically opposed.

"Anything new on the Hillcrest murder, chief?" asked the reporter.

"You can't bawl us out this afternoon, Kennedy," said Jenkins. "Anything new? Well, something. We've found the woman who killed 'Carver.'"

The reporter was a sportsman; he could appreciate the dexterity of a foeman.

"Nice work," he commented. "How'd you do it?"

Jenkins told him. The reporter nodded. "Anything on the motive?" he asked.

"Not yet," Jenkins admitted. "But we hope to learn something."

The reporter nodded again. "But you can't prove that this woman killed the man," he objected.

"It's circumstantial; I'll concede that," said Jenkins. "But pretty good at that."

"I'll say it is," the reporter congratulated him. "Much obliged, Chief."

Jenkins grinned. "Don't mention it, Kennedy."

"All right, I won't," smiled the newspaper man.

There was something mocking in his smile, something that made Jenkins vaguely uneasy. Did the man know anything that was not known to the police? Mentally he began reviewing the case as it had progressed thus far.

He had an excellent brain. And he had not been thinking five minutes before he began to see, not the one flaw in his reasoning—the strangeness of the fact that, if "Carver" were planning to have luncheon with his wife, he had not driven to the Inn with her—but several others. For opposition sharpened his wits.

The case, with the identification of the body of "Mrs. Carver," had seemed so simple that he had been content with what had been done. But the mocking smile of Kennedy made his brain, lulled into contentment, awaken.

"Mrs. Carver" had been killed in an accident to her taxi. But she had ridden away from the hotel in a car which she had driven herself. What had become of that car? It couldn't have been a taxi, or there would have been a chauffeur. Why had a woman who apparently owned her own car, later used a taxicab?

(Continued Next Sunday)
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"There's been a murder at Hillcrest."