Hidden Ways

By FREDERIC F. VAN DE WATER

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CHAPTER X—Continued

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"Maybe not," Cochrane answered dreamily, "but he changed his name to Ferriter, during the war."

"King George—Gawd bless 'im—changed his too," I jeered.

The innocent face before me beamed.

"He changed it to Ferriter," my caller droned. "It used to be Horstman."

I stared. Cochrane's expression was as guileless as a pan of milk.

"I give up," I said at last, "I'm not good at riddles. What's the answer?"

"I don't know," the reporter told me gently. "I hoped that, maybe, we could find one together. And now I'm all muddled up. If it's any of my business, what was your date with the pure young man?"

"Are you completely goofy?" I asked. "What man?"

"The guy with the sneeze expression and the cologne," Cochrane went on. "He said he was waiting to see you."

I looked at him hard.

"Waiting? Where?"

My astonishment seemed to comfort Cochrane. He beamed.

"In here," he said. "It must have been Everett, though I've never had a closeup of him before. He blew a minute after I came. Seemed pretty anxious to go, too."

"Who let him in?" I began and then remembered I had told Mrs. Shaw to admit any man who called. Again in my mind, the swarm of half-uttered questions stung and flew.

"Search me," Cochrane answered, "but he let himself out before I could learn who he was. You weren't expecting a call from Mr. Ferriter-Horstman?"

"I was not," I snapped and turning opened the bureau drawer. I didn't hear the question Cochrane asked. My face must have been strange for his own changed when I looked at him again.

"He came here," I said slowly, "to search this room. He's been through the bureau."

"Did he get what he was after?" Cochrane asked.

"I don't," I answered, "even know what he was looking for."

CHAPTER XI

Cochrane said gently:

"You might check if he's taken anything."

By the mess in the bureau drawer, my visitor had not been a cool and careful seeker, or perhaps the reporter had come in before he could reorder the jumble of handkerchiefs, neckties and the like.

"He's left me my razor," I told Cochrane, "and that's what I need most right now. If there's any more confusion you want to spread, you can trot along to the bathroom with me."

In his cherubic face, his eyes were bright.

"You don't let business interfere with your pleasure, laddie?"

"Not this time," I snapped, and he grinned.

"Go ahead," he waved at the door, "I'll just sit here and think."

He was staring as though the opposite wall were not there when I returned.

"Why should he want to rob you?" he asked.

"Why," I threw back at him, "should his brother want to kill me? and while I dressed, I told him of my duel with Lyon. Cochrane lit a cigarette and watched the smoke he blew. He did not speak, until I bent before the mirror to tie my tie. Then he said in mild complaint:

"I wish crime could be a little more orderly. We pick up bits here and scraps there and, put them all together, they spell nothing."

I was pulled two ways. I wanted to stay and sift the day's events with Jerry in the hope of finding coherence in their madness. I wondered, as I fidgeted and looked at my watch, if anything but the promise of this evening could possibly make me willing to leave.

"Why," Cochrane asked, narrow-eyed, "should one of the Horstman-Ferriter boys try to kill you and the other toss your room so inexpertly?"

"You tell me," I said. "I've got ten minutes more, at most."

"Then," he answered, getting up, "we better spend it elsewhere. Let's go, laddie."

"Go where?"

"We'll call on your friend Everett. Anyone in such beautiful evening clothes ought to be able to get me into the Morello. So far, the outside lobby has been my farthest north. Yoicks, my son."

"Wait a minute. We go to see Everett. I tell him I think he robbed me. He says he didn't. And that'll be that. How far does it get us?"

"Just about as far as you'd get by charging Lyon with felonious assault. But if the jittery gent is home alone and we can get to him—well, I think he'll break down. He looks like the sort that can't take it. And laddie, when I'm crowded, I can deal it."

"He had another nervous collapse or whatever, this noon," I told my companion as we pulled on our coats. "He's not built for a murderer."

"Those that aren't built for it suffer worst when they do it," Cochrane replied with an angelic smile and led the way downstairs.

We hailed a taxi and drove toward the Morello. Beside me, Cochrane smoked in silence for some minutes before he asked with the sleepy air he used when things were most important:

"I don't suppose you've had time, during your toilet, to give a thought to the fact that Everett used to be Horstman?"

"This nightmare," I told him, "moves too fast for me to think much of any one thing. What are you brooding on now?"

"Well," he said, "Horstman could be a German name, eh?"

I nodded.

He went on, softly:

"And it was a German voice you heard, over the phone, just before Blackbeard was killed?"

He saw that he had pricked me and beamed.

"You don't think," I asked angrily, "that I don't know Everett's

"You aren't just a spectator."

voice? You really can't think that he has the guts to—"

"If you knew," Cochrane broke in, "the number and variety of the things I can think, you'd be dismayed and grieved. Anyway, you might chew on that a little, during your wooing of the lovely heiress."

"Listen," I began and glared at him.

He smiled sweetly.

"I don't want to hear a word," he answered. "Here we are at the scene of the crime."

Walters, the night doorman, was in attendance on a shiny town car when our cab drew up at the Morello and Cochrane followed me into the foyer, unchallenged. Fineman was on the switchboard. He seemed too dazzled at sight of me in formal clothes to notice the reporter and, at my request, telephoned the Ferriter apartment.

"Nobody home," he said, flicking down the switch. "The old boy, him that was pinched after the killing, went out twenty minutes ago."

"I wanted to see his brother."

Everett's absence cheered me. Apparently, the furies had found another job and my way upstairs to the Paget apartment was clear, at last.

"Him?" asked Fineman. "He hasn't shown since I came on. I'll tell him, if he comes."

"Do that," I answered and turned back to Cochrane.

He grinned at my news.

"Well," he said, "we tried anyway. Good night to you, Prince Charming. Have a nice opera. I think I'll nose around a bit. Not in here, where I pollute the patrician atmosphere and run a chance of getting heaved out on my neck, but outside. I'll be seeing you, laddie."

"I feel like a pup, walking out on you now," I said.

"I certainly hope you do," Cochrane answered cheerfully.

Miss Agatha and Allegra were in the living room. There was coffee on the table beside them and its fragrance for an instant made me aware that I had missed another meal. Then Allegra smiled and I forgot prosaic food. She was very fair in her black evening dress with the frosty coronet in her hair; so lovely of body and face, that I looked quickly away and endured the old lady's humorous glare.

"David," Miss Agatha asked, "do you always appear everywhere exactly on time with the look of one who has run the last hundred yards?"

"I always run at least the last hundred when I'm going to see you," I told her.

Allegra giggled. Miss Agatha retorted:

"My dear boy, I've been a whetstone on which many men have sharpened their gallantry for use on others. You don't impress me. Go on to your opera. It's Wagner and it serves you both right."

I held the glittering, fur-collared coat in which Allegra wrapped herself. The fragrance of her hair made me slightly dizzy. She went to her aunt and, bending, kissed her. I saw the old hands catch one of hers and hold it tightly, passionately, for an instant. There was pathos in that. There was none in Miss Agatha's brisk voice.

"Allegra, will you remember that David Mallory starts his work again in just thirteen hours? What havoc you make of other men's nights is between you and your God. David is my employee. He's got to do a second chapter tomorrow as good as the first. Don't keep him out till dawn."

The girl laughed.

"Agatha," she promised, "you'll be surprised."

"I've lived with you young hellions too long for that," said the old lady. The tenderness in her eyes did not reach her voice until we turned to leave the room.

"Take good care of her, David," she called after us.

CHAPTER XII

Most of the first act of "Die Walkuere" went over my head, which, perhaps, left me even with most of the audience. I was stirred more by the girl beside me than by the fat persons on the stage. She watched their posturings and, whenever I dared, I watched her.

"Didn't it get you at all?"

She was flushed and her eyes were bright. I rose to let our seat neighbors pass into the aisle.

"It got too much of me," I told her. "Shall we get out?"

"If you had an opera hat," she said, "I'd know you were itching to wear it in the lobby with the rest of the show-offs. Me, I'd rather sit still. It takes time for me to get my breath after Ring music. Let's just talk."

I said: "I'd rather, too. Will you pick up where we were interrupted? Why hasn't Everett an alibi?"

"Aren't you," she asked, "the most persistent person?" Her smile faded and her face grew troubled. She frowned and picked her words:

"Measured by time, he hasn't. If you can stretch your imagination to believe him a murderer, he might have done it."

"Then why—" I began, but she took away my question.

"Why did I clear him? Because it was idiotic to dream—it's still crazy to think—that Everett was the killer. When Captain Shannon began checking up, Agatha said I had been with Everett and I let it go at that. I had been, too, but only for less than five minutes before you came in. How long he had been in our apartment before that, I don't know. He usually spends most of the afternoon in the workroom. He has a latchkey."

Her eyes were dark with worry. I said, trying for lightness:

"There are too many latchkeys."

I knew from the way she caught her breath that the jest had hurt. She sat for a moment, pleating her program with nervous fingers and I felt she was trying to control her voice. It was quiet when she said at last:

"Grove is with Ione tonight."

I could find no answer for a moment. She went on, as though she were afraid of silence:

"They probably are out together right now. They always are, when he has one of these 'business engagements' that keeps him from coming home."

She turned and faced me, like a child who is sorry for a fault.

"Maybe that's not fair. Maybe she loves him. It's just that—well, I'm jealous, I suppose. Grove and I have been very close since we were little children and now—we're not. That's not all. This murder seems to have turned everyone's world—but Agatha's—upside down. I'm frightened for Grove. He's walking deep into something. And I'm—afraid."

"Sure," I said, "I know how you feel."

The thick voice I had heard over the telephone; the still unexplained disappearance of the murderer; Grove turning on the light in the Ferriter apartment; my struggle in the dark basement hallway; Everett's furtive raid on my room; my duel with his brother—these were blown about by the strong wind of music. Siegmund and his rival were fighting with swords on the stage. When the clumsy contest ended I found my palms clammy and my breath scant. I might at this moment be lying like the slain Hunding. I looked at Allegra. She had made life important. I was sweating as the curtain fell.

Allegra, too, had felt the music's spell. She watched me mop my face and, I think, read there something more than the effect of an operatic tragedy. When our neighbors had gone again into the lobby, she asked:

"Just what is your—your interest in this mess?"

I could tell from her eyes and the sound of her words that she had kept that question a long while. I tried to gain time.

"I don't quite know what you mean."

She brushed that away with a quick movement of her hands.

"Mister," she said with hollow gaiety, "you wouldn't trifle with a poor girl, would you? You aren't just a spectator. You're in this up to your neck. I can feel it. Why?"

I said slowly:

"That's a hard one. Because if I told you the truth; if I said that my interest in a murderer and a murder was chiefly—almost entirely—the hope that I might help you, you wouldn't believe me."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Household News By Eleanor Howe

IT COMES UPON THE MIDNIGHT CLEAR . . . MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A CUP OF CHEER!
(See Recipes Below)

'Tis the night before Christmas and all through the house everybody's stirring except the wee people who are wandering in dreamland with Santa Claus. The little stockings have been filled to bursting, the last package has been tied up in tissue and ribbon, the Christmas angel has taken the tree under the shadow of its wings . . . and everybody's hungry!

So . . . when it comes upon the midnight clear—that glorious song of old — the family wish each other Merry Christmas and gather round the buffet table for a snack and a cup of cheer.

The bill of fare, on such an occasion, is as simple as the way it's served; a platter of cold meats, served with hot chili sauce; soft rolls or French bread or perhaps melba toast; and cookies for the sweet tooth are the perfect accompaniment to hot tea which quickens the Christmas spirit.

Or perhaps you'd like to serve bowls of creamy, old-fashioned oyster stew, with toasted hard rolls, a green salad if you like, and for dessert doughnuts with hot, spicy apple sauce.

Oyster Stew
(Serves 6 to 8)

1 quart oysters
½ cup butter
2 quarts rich milk
Salt and pepper to taste

Place oysters, strained oyster liquor, and butter in a saucepan and cook gently until edges of oysters begin to curl. Heat milk in a separate saucepan at the same time. (Caution: Milk should be thoroughly heated, but should not boil.) Add oysters to milk and season to taste. Serve immediately.

Stir-up Chocolate Cake.
(Makes 1 8-inch square cake)

1 egg (unbeaten)
⅓ cup cocoa
½ cup shortening
1½ cups flour
½ cup sour milk
1 teaspoon soda
1 teaspoon vanilla
½ cup hot water
1 cup sugar
½ teaspoon salt

Put ingredients in mixing bowl in order given. Stir or beat until the batter is smooth. Pour into greased cake pan 8 by 8 by 2 inches square. Bake in a moderately slow oven (325 degrees) for about 50 minutes.

Boiled Icing.

2½ cups sugar
½ cup light corn syrup
¼ teaspoon salt
½ cup water
2 egg whites (well beaten)
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Place sugar, corn syrup, salt and water together in a saucepan and cook to the firm ball stage (250 degrees). Pour the hot syrup slowly into the well-beaten egg whites, beating constantly. Add vanilla extract and continue beating until the frosting will hold its shape when tossed over the back of a spoon. Should the icing become too stiff to manipulate easily, a very small amount of hot water may be added, or the icing may be remelted in the top of a double boiler. Spread on cake in swirls.

Buttermilk Rolls.
(Makes 3 dozen)

1 cake yeast
2 cups buttermilk (scalded and cooled)
2 tablespoons sugar
2 teaspoons salt
¼ teaspoon soda
4 cups flour
2 tablespoons shortening (melted)

Soften yeast in buttermilk which has been scalded and cooled to lukewarm. Add sugar, salt, and soda to the rest of the buttermilk. Add softened yeast and half of the flour. Beat until the batter is smooth and full of bubbles. Beat in fat and remaining flour, mixing until dough forms a ball. Turn onto a well-floured board (using ½ cup flour) and knead until the dough is smooth and elastic. Roll out to ½-inch thickness. Cut into rounds and place ½-inch apart on greased baking sheet. Brush with melted butter, and let rise in a warm place until double in bulk (about 1 hour). Bake in a hot oven (425 degrees) for 15 to 20 minutes.

Feeding Father.

For the married folk you like to remember with an inexpensive Christmas gift, or for clever party favors, how about a copy of Eleanor Howe's cookbook "Feeding Father"? You'll find in it the recipes for the foods that men like best, tested recipes, too, for foods like Old Fashioned Navy Bean Soup, Baked Onions, Stuffed Pork Chops and Chocolate Cream Pie!

To get your copy of this clever book, send 10 cents in coin to "Feeding Father," care of Eleanor Howe, 919 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Deviled Eggs.

6 hard cooked eggs
5 tablespoons mayonnaise-type salad dressing
2 teaspoons onion (minced)
¼ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon prepared mustard
Tabasco sauce
1 tablespoon pickle (minced)

Cut hard cooked eggs in half lengthwise. Remove yolks and force through sieve. Add remaining ingredients and mix well, using additional salad dressing if desired. Refill whites with yolk mixture. Chill. Sprinkle with paprika or minced chives.

Spicy Apple Sauce.
(Serves 6)

8 medium-sized tart apples
Water
1 cup sugar
¼ teaspoon cinnamon
¼ teaspoon nutmeg

Wash, quarter, and core apples. Place in saucepan with just enough water to cover. Add sugar and spices, cover, and cook over low heat for about 10 minutes. Rub through coarse strainer. Serve hot.

Sour Cream Doughnuts.
(Makes 3 dozen)

2 eggs
½ cup sugar
1 cup thick sour cream
3 cups flour
1 teaspoon nutmeg
⅓ teaspoon soda
1½ teaspoons baking powder
½ teaspoon salt

Beat eggs until thick and light; add sugar and sour cream. Beat well. Sift remaining 5 dry ingredients together. Add to first mixture to make a soft dough. More flour may be needed if dough is very sticky and is to be rolled and cut immediately. If not used at once, chill overnight or several hours. Roll out dough, small portions at a time, ¼ inch thick, using as little flour on board as possible. Cut with floured cutter.

Preheat enough frying fat to 375 degrees Fahrenheit. Fry a few doughnuts at a time, turning them only once. When browned on both sides, remove from fat and drain on soft, absorbent paper. When cold, sprinkle with powdered sugar, if desired.

(Released by Western Newspaper Union.)

HOUSEHOLD HINTS

If your kitchen storage space is limited, make filelike shelves in a lower cupboard and use them for storing lids, pie and cake pans and other flat utensils. This will be a time saver.

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Hard-cooked eggs will peel easily if, as soon as they are cooked, their shells are cracked slightly and the eggs are dropped into cold water for five minutes. The eggs may then be chilled and used.

Ask Me Another
A General Quiz

The Questions

1. Who delivered the famous Cooper Union address?
2. What great river has its flow controlled by the Assum dam?
3. In what year did Hitler become dictator of Germany?
4. What is the official language of Liberia?
5. An anodyne is a medicine that does what?
6. What person in fiction had the "Old Man of the Sea" clinging to his shoulders?
7. How far do the Appalachian mountains extend?
8. What is a yashmak?
9. How many South American countries have no seacoast?

The Answers

1. Abe Lincoln.
2. Nile river.
3. In March, 1933, when the reichstag passed an act giving him absolute power.
4. English.
5. Relieves pain.
6. Sinbad.
7. From Quebec province to Alabama.
8. A double veil worn by Mohammedan women.
9. Two, Bolivia and Paraguay.

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