Hidden Ways

By FREDERIC F. VAN DE WATER

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CHAPTER XIII—Continued
—14—

Allegra's silence bothered me. Her profile was clear and sharp as the head on a coin in the uneven pulsing of lights beyond the taxi window.

She said, looking straight ahead:

"I lied to Agatha today. I don't usually do that. I told her, when Grove dropped out, that I couldn't get anyone to take me to the opera tonight. I never tried. I only said that I was disappointed and she did what I hoped she'd do."

Once or twice in a lifetime, fortune offers you the thing you want most and, remembering the way she has treated you, you don't believe it. I did not now. I thought I was reading wild meaning into her words. She turned toward me with an odd little smile and hurried on:

"I've been lonely and frightened and I—needed you, I guess. I needed to be alone with you and Tell All. I thought we could be—friends. And instead, you behave as though you were—well, a millionaire that a low-down gal was trying to compromise."

"If I have," I told her, "I beg your pardon, my dear. I think, though, that you've got the parts mixed up. You're the millionaire. Wait a minute—" I saw she was trying to break in and I hurried on:

"It galls you to have—misled your aunt. All right. What about me? She's lifted me out of a hallman's uniform; she's given me a job and her confidence. I have little integrity, maybe, but I'm not a complete so-and-so. It mightn't do you a bit of harm to consider the problems of someone else now and then."

The girl did not answer. She had turned her head and was looking out of the window. I did not wonder that so few persons in this world were ever nobly renunciatory. There was no pleasure in it. I said:

"And now that that is all cleared up to our mutual dissatisfaction, how about changing the subject?"

"It's not necessary," she answered and turning as though she had decided something, looked squarely at me. "We're almost home."

"And maybe that's just as well, too," I answered. "Thank you, Miss Paget—for a great many things."

Her laugh was like a breaking stick. Then she caught hold of herself.

"If you don't stop patting me on the head," she warned, "I'll take a poke at you. Will you answer one question for me—honestly? Just one?"

I could see the marquee of the Morello, just ahead, and a group of men who lingered on the curb beneath the street light.

"Will you?" Allegra asked again, and I wondered why her voice was so tense.

"I promise," I told her and belatedly wondered if I were pledging myself to disloyalty to Cochrane. "Unless," I added, "it concerns someone else." For a few minutes I had forgotten the murder and Lyon's almost certain part in it. It came back to me now and made me a little sick. The cab slowed down. Allegra asked in a low, clear voice:

"You're in love with me, aren't you?"

The taxi had stopped and Walters was opening the door. I might have kept silent, but her hand clung to mine as I helped her out. I heard myself say:

"You'll never know how much."

She hurried on into the foyer while I paid the fare. As I turned to follow, someone said:

"The society bellhop, himself."

Larry Duke was of the group that gathered around me. I knew the faces of others and the malease within me quickened into nausea. Why were reporters hanging, like vultures, about the Morello again?

"Any statement," Duke asked nastily, "on the most recent—unpleasantness, Count?"

The foretaste of disaster was bitter in my mouth. Its savor made it easier to hold my temper.

"I'll leave the issue," I told Duke, "to the good sense of the American people."

I started away but someone else caught me by the sleeve.

"Listen, fella," he begged. "They've just found this Everett Ferriter's body at the bottom of the area. What's it all about?"

When I could speak, I said as steadily as I might:

"You tell me. Suicide?"

"Suicide, hell," Duke said with relish. "They caught your girl friend's brother in the Ferriter flat, right after Everett went out the window. And they're dusting off the hot seat for him, right now."

CHAPTER XIV

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A reporter asked another question. The words made no sense. As I broke away, I stepped on someone's foot and he swore. I ran into the foyer.

It was not flight. Duke's tidings had rubbed out thought of self. My purpose was to reach Allegra as quickly as I might. I must get between her and the blow's full force.

There was a cop in the Morello's hall once more. I wondered if Allegra had read the portent of his presence. He scowled at me and said something I did not catch. My evening clothes must have daunted him, for he backed up and let me pass. Then I saw her at the end of the gloomily ornate foyer.

She waited beside the elevator shaft but the car was upstairs. Wherefore, I was thankful and, at the same time, wretched. I must tell her what had happened, here and now.

She looked so small, in her brocaded evening wrap—slender as a flame and unconscious that the wind of fresh tragedy rose to blow her about. She heard me coming and turned.

I saw in her smile a trace of the last words I had blurted. She thought I was a lover, returning to complete a pledge half-spoken. That made it harder. The world had changed since I had helped her from the cab.

The elevator might appear; someone else might intervene, at any second. There was no time for tact. A dirty job was best done quickly. I let her have it all in one breath.

"You'll have to take it, my dear. Everett Ferriter is dead and they think your brother had something to do with it."

Vaguely, all that evening, I had wondered how much of her high color was make-up. I knew now. Her face grew white. Her lips were gray, but they did not tremble. She took it standing and never wavered. Her eyes hurt me. She asked, "What happened?" in a level voice, and I told her what Duke and the others had told me. She said, "He didn't do it."

I said, as cheerfully as I could:

"Reporters think in headlines. It's probably much less serious than they say. I only wanted to tell you before you walked into it."

"Where is he?" Her eyes held mine as though that impersonal contact kept her up.

I said, "Upstairs," and rang again for the elevator. After the far shrill of the bell, I heard the old machinery groan.

I stumbled over many things I wished to say—yet might not, and at last managed:

"I've hurt you but it seemed the only way. I'll leave you here, but I'll wait. If you, or your aunt, want me, you can telephone the foyer."

"Please," she whispered as the shaft door slid open, "please come up with me."

She stood, stiff and silent, on that journey upward. Toward its end, she turned as though her neck were stiff and asked:

"A cigarette?"

I lighted it for her and we stepped from the car. The door clanged behind us. She fumbled in her bag for her key. The first shock of the blow was wearing off. Her mouth worked and her fingers blundered. In front of the Ferriter flat, a plain-clothes man watched us. He chewed gum and his derby rocked with each movement of his jaws. Allegra said at last:

"Please ring the bell. I don't think," she added with a twisted smile, "we're likely to get anyone out of bed."

Annie, in a rumpled wrapper, opened the door. Her eyes were red and her breath came in small explosions.

"Where is Miss Paget?" Allegra asked crisply.

"In the livin' room," the woman faltered and closed the door behind us.

"And Mr. Paget?" the girl went on.

Annie wept. "Yonder," she wailed. "Them cops—" She jerked her head toward the Ferriter apartment and could say no more. I followed Allegra down the hall.

Miss Agatha Paget, her body folded precisely in a black silk dressing gown, sat in her wheel chair and smoked. The lids of her keen eyes were unreddened by tears. Her hair was drawn back by a thin braid from the face that had the bold calm of the hawk.

For an instant, as her niece ran to her and the old woman looked up for her kiss, I saw the hard features soften. The girl bent over her a long instant and then, with one hand locked in her aunt's, turned to me.

"He didn't want to come up," she defended. "I made him. Agatha, what is it? What's really happened?"

Miss Agatha drew on her cigarette and blew smoke through her beaked nose. I thought, as she looked at me, of the figurehead of a ship, worn and immune to storm. She asked dryly:

"Material for another chapter in the book, David?"

"No," I said. "I had no business barging in. Only if there is anything I can do—"

"Name something," she broke in.

I stammered:

"Have you thought of a lawyer? I mean—"

"Long ago," she told me. "I think I got Tertius Groesbeck out of bed. If he doesn't take too long dressing, he should be here before Shannon finishes with Grove, across the hall."

She had lighted another cigarette while she spoke. I saw her hand twitch as she uttered her nephew's name. Allegra asked:

"Agatha, what happened? Everett is dead and—"

The old head jerked agreement. The old voice said without a falter:

"Very dead. In the area, with a broken neck, I believe."

"But why—" the girl cried, and her aunt answered the anguish in her voice without waiting for more words.

"My dear, there was a struggle of some sort before he—fell. I heard it. So did everyone else whose windows open on the area—bumping and voices and then a yell and a fall."

Her thin shoulders drew together in the least possible shudder.

"Grove," said Miss Agatha, quite calmly, "was in the Ferriter apartment. They caught him coming out. You know he had a latchkey?"

She looked up sharply at her niece.

"Yes," the girl admitted.

Miss Agatha patted Allegra's hand.

"I wonder," she mused aloud, "if there aren't limits beyond which loyalty is no virtue. We both knew and yet—"

The bell rang and we heard Annie shuffle to the door.

"Because," the girl began, but her aunt took the thought away from her.

"Because Grove is such a stubborn young devil that we were afraid if we protested it would only drive him further. We were wrong, my dear. Marriage with Ione is better than the murder of her brother."

"He didn't!" Allegra exclaimed.

Miss Agatha nodded and bit through an invisible thread.

"You know it," she answered. "I know it. I don't think Captain Shannon who has kept Grove"—she glanced at the clock on the mantel—"for almost an hour now, is so certain. There is that struggle, which everyone heard, which turns a suicide theory rather sour."

The calm in which they endured their wretchedness was too much for me. I said:

"One might fight to prevent a suicide, as well as to commit a murder."

Miss Agatha looked at me hard.

"Every now and then, David," she told me, "I admire your mind. It is so much like mine. Obviously, that's what happened. I doubt whether the police will accept our explanation."

Captain Shannon entered. At once, Miss Agatha and her niece drew down, over their emotion, the opaque shades of utter calm. Shannon ducked his head toward them and looked hard at me. Inwardly, he fumed. Anger or bewilderment had reddened his face and blurred its freckles. Outwardly he was calm and his voice was regretful.

"Miss Paget," said he, "I'm sorry, but we'll have to take him in."

I heard Allegra catch her breath. Miss Agatha's face did not stir. She asked:

"Then he, my nephew, has implicated himself?"

Shannon's exasperation got away from him. He rumpled his reddish-gray hair.

"We'll have to take him in," he repeated, "for obstructing justice, if nothing else. Implicated himself! The facts implicate him, Miss Paget. We can get nothing out of him. He'll not say a word, beyond that he tried to stop this Ferriter from jumping."

Tiny lines about Miss Agatha's eyes deepened with satisfaction.

"My own explanation," she said.

Shannon shook his head like a worrying terrier.

"Unfortunately," he told her, "that's not all of it. Why was he in that flat? He won't say. How came he to have a latchkey? He won't say. Why, having one, didn't he admit it when the first murder was committed? Same answer. Where was he the afternoon this Blackbeard was stabbed? He was walking uptown."

His grunt was thick with disgust. I stuck my oar in.

"Mr. Paget came in a full hour after that killing. I saw him."

They all looked at me. There was no friendliness in Shannon's regard.

"Sure," he snorted. "Didn't everybody? Nobody could have killed Blackbeard, but his corpse is still in the morgue, isn't it? I'm thinking this second murder—or whatever—is going to solve the first."

Anger pushed him beyond discretion. He fished in his pocket and drew forth a folded sheet of typewriter paper.

"Among the things that your nephew won't tell," he said to Miss Agatha, "is why he wrote this note we found in his pocket."

I could have choked him for the pleased voice in which he read aloud:

" 'My dear: I have failed as usual and can stand no more. When another death may settle everything, I do not hesitate.' "

He seemed disappointed at the woman's lack of expression and thrust the paper back into his pocket, muttering. I had peered over his shoulder as he read and now I said to Miss Agatha:

"Typewritten and unsigned. It proves nothing."

Shannon wheeled and glared. Knowledge of his own incaution made him still angrier.

"Written," he said and thrust out his heavy lower jaw, "on the typewriter in the front room yonder, as I've just proved, my lad."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Chic Silhouette Figure Depends On Proper Foundation Garment

By CHERIE NICHOLAS

YOUR costume may be the very pink of perfection, your accessories nothing less than glamorous, but no matter how smartly appareled, unless you are correctly corseted in the proper foundation garment to make your figure conform, so far as is possible, to the slim svelte lines that current fashion demands, you will fail to qualify "up to the mark" in general appearance.

Ladies, look to your corsetry! Soon it will be time to take up the matter of new clothes for spring. Start the program right with a carefully selected foundation garment wardrobe and see what a difference it makes when you come to be fitted in the new frocks and suits.

The long-stemmed American beauty glorified by United States designers in their first season of independence from Paris influence calls for intelligent corseting to underline the new styles with high, well-contoured bustline, straighter and slightly longer waistline and sleek hip and thighs, American corsetry has made amazing progress in achieving control without sacrificing comfort in the foundation garment.

What special type of foundation you should wear depends upon your individual needs. Study your figure in a mirror to get a clear picture of faults to be corrected. Then go "in conference" with your favorite corsetiere. In analyzing your figure defects and virtues, remember that the side and back views are even more important than the front, because they show your posture and distribution of weight.

It is especially important this season that your bustline be properly contoured. The tendency in current costume design is to accent top interest in moulded and draped and swathed treatments. The new classic daytime wools with their suave simply tailored blouse tops make expert corsetry imperative. This is especially true of brassieres which must be meticulously selected. Remember that unless you wear some type of pantie girdle and brassiere under your slack suits, swimsuits, tennis, golf or riding clothes, your figure cannot look attractive.

It is also important that you have two identical foundations for everyday wear to keep your figure moulded properly and comfortably. Two foundations worn alternately and kept fresh and in good repair may be expected to hold their original lines and do their job of figure control appreciably longer than two purchased successively.

One foundation for formal wear is a wardrobe necessity because the figure needs extra help to look its best under formal gowns, which are more fitted in line than daytime styles.

New foundations for evening offer several outstanding features. Brassieres are cut to give more accent to the bustline than for daylight hours, and have many clever tricks to suit the straps to the various decollete lines. Corsets and all-in-ones are cut longer in the skirt to prevent thigh bulge and afford a suave, gently curving line from waist to knees without any hint of stiffness in effect.

Shown in the illustration are two examples of the sleekly moulded evening silhouettes favored this season. Note the dress to the left with perky wee bows tying in a one-side fastening. It requires perfected corsetry to achieve the youthful fashion-right lines here delineated. Jacket costumes as centered in the group are outstanding in the evening mode and exact expert foundation garment fitting. A goodlooking daytime black wool dress with which to wear a single costume jewelry piece (in this instance a stunning bowknot pin at the waistline) has become a staple in every wardrobe. Shown here to the right is an over-the-bust draped effect which requires very special corsetry because of its top interest.

(Released by Western Newspaper Union.)

Loop Felt

Fetching little hats made of bright loop felt are effective with tweed or dark fur coats. Some of these jaunty sprightly headpieces are so fashioned they look like a single large flower caught firmly to a fitted cap made of ribbon velvet. They are tied at the back in a big bow, the flowerlike cluster of felt loops poses piquantly over the forehead. The hat of felt loops pictured is a pillbox type in moss green with beige. The long-sleeve muff is in green velvet with a ruche bordering at each end made of felt loops matching the hat.

New Trim for Shoes

Even your shoes have a dressed-up air this season, with trimmings of fur bows and beading. Tailored bows are used to trim pumps made of crocodile, and frilled bows and beading add a smart look to suede shoes for afternoon.

'Twin Hats' Copy Headgear of Men

Probably the most important style item this winter is the companionate hat, known also as "he and she," "Mr. and Mrs.," and "twin" hats. These hats are merely hats that look alike—one for men, one for women.

Actually the twin hats are a blessing, both to men who have put up with some pretty wacky looking women's hats in the past, and to the ladies who are always looking for something new. The distaff twin hat is, of course, out and out larceny. It is styled to duplicate the sportier men's styles. Manhattan has seen them in telescopes or pork-pies, derbies, felt caps and in the so-called double brim safari felts. As a style item they are excellent.

American designers of women's hats have a knack for feminizing these twin adaptations to the point where they are, if anything, more feminine than distinctly feminine hats.

Red, White, Blue Featured in South

Women vacationers spending their winter in the southlands are wearing dresses patriotically featuring red, white and blue.

For daytime wear two or all three of the brilliantly contrasting colors are combined, and are often further trimmed with gold braid insignia or belt buckles that are red, white and blue shields.

Evening clothes, whether dinner dresses or formal gowns, nearly all have full skirts. They are made of sharkskin, crepe, organdy, lace, taffeta, and net, with black, white and blue the reigning colors.

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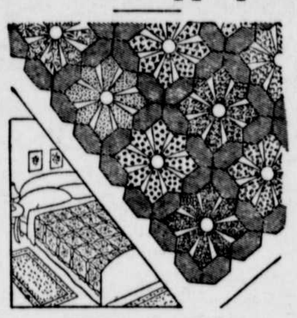

Pattern No. Z9051

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Made Rather Bad Guess In Dark of the Night

Podkins had been walking about all day looking for lodgings. When darkness came he was still searching. At last he noticed a card in a window.

"Good evening," he said to the woman who appeared at the door in answer to his knock. "I'm here in reference to the card in your window."

"Oh, yes! How many might you want, sir?"

"Only one. You see, I've had a row with my landlady—"

"But you're not going to pelt her with it, are you, sir?"

"Pelt her with a room?"

"Room? I've got no rooms. That card reads 'New-Laid Eggs.' "

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