Hidden Ways

By FREDERIC F. VAN DE WATER

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CHAPTER XIX—Continued.

—20—

When Al had left for his post, the Captain ceased to fight us and took charge. Once in, he was game. He spent the next fifteen minutes setting the stage, mentally and physically, for Lyon's entrance. The doorbell's shrill cut him off midway in his final instructions.

We heard Annie come down the hall. Shannon sat behind the desk. Allegra looked out at the sunlight that crept up the area's wall and locked her hands tight in her lap to check their trembling. Cochrane stared at nothing with a half smile and lighted a cigarette.

"Please," said Miss Agatha and he started and offered her one. She lighted it steadily as Lyon Ferriter entered.

He checked himself just over the threshold as though our plan were an invisible wall and I felt that his lank body grew tense. In the wintry light, his face looked paler and thinner but it was as controlled as his voice.

"I'm sorry to break in on a—conference, but the hallman said you wished to see me, Miss Paget."

His eyes questioned each of us. He must have read danger in our silence for he looked at me last and longest.

Miss Agatha said, quite tranquilly:

"Two calls in a day may be an imposition, Mr. Ferriter, but when I heard you were here, I thought it best that you come in."

"A pleasure," he said, with a little bow, but now he watched Shannon. "I was just getting some things my sister needs."

The silence stretched each second. Shannon asked:

"And your sister, Mr. Ferriter. How is she?"

"Ill," Lyon replied. "Quite ill."

Again, the pause was hard to bear. Shannon cleared his throat.

"Mr. Ferriter, I've found out who killed your visitor."

Lyon might have been bronze. At last, he said:

"In the first place I'm not aware that he was my visitor. In the second place, if this is to be a police questioning, I must ask permission to call my lawyer."

"Sure," Shannon said and shoved the desk phone toward him. "Tell him to meet us at the Babylon and that I'm on my way up to arrest Ione Ferriter."

That name caught Lyon half-way across the floor and stopped him. He stared at Shannon, glanced at me and then smiled.

"Ione?" he asked lightly. "Arrest her?"

"Arrest her," Shannon repeated. "For murder. I'm sorry to break it to you so sharply, Mr. Ferriter—"

He made no further movement toward the telephone, but stood, looking hard at the policeman.

"What rot!"

The Captain pushed back his chair.

"No," he said. "Shall we go on up?"

"Surely," Lyon began and then his bluff broke. "You mustn't. She's ill, I tell you. You can't possibly think she had anything—"

The pain in his voice rang true. Shannon cut him off.

"I better give you the usual warning about whatever you say being used against you. I'm not sure whether you're accessory or not."

He paused. I was watching Lyon's hands. They hung at his sides, rigidly still. Shannon went on and I admired the confidence in his voice.

"She knifed this guy—for reasons of her own. Then she came out into the hall yonder and hollered."

"I see," said Lyon. "And swallowed the knife."

"Listen," Shannon answered, "if I wasn't so certain I'd not be telling you. The next night after the murder, this Mallory here bumped into her in the basement hallway. In the dark."

Lyon's eyes touched mine for a split second. Then they returned to Shannon. I saw his hands clench and instantly hang lax again. His voice was amused.

"I see. He recognized her in the dark."

Shannon shook his head, immune to irony.

"No. He knew it was a woman, that's all. But a taxi driver saw her come out of the basement. She got into his cab. Here's his affidavit. Care to read it?"

He offered the paper Cochrane had set down at his dictation. Lyon half reached for it, drew back and shook his head.

"I'm not interested," he said carefully. "It's a mistake. My sister was at the Babylon all that evening."

"I don't know now," Shannon went on, with narrowed eyes, "whether you really think so or not. Ferriter, she wasn't. She called at Mr. Mallory's boarding house. Mrs. Shaw, the landlady, identifies her, too. Right after that struggle in the basement, she went to see him."

"All of which," Lyon began and coughed. I jerked. For an instant, I thought I heard in his voice a trace of that foreign speech that had come to me twice before. It was not there when he resumed.

"You overlook the fact that my sister has been cleared. One of the hallboys saw her come in just before—"

"He's downstairs now," Shannon said, "and he's confessed. He never saw her at all. He said he did it because he didn't want to get a lady into trouble. Your sister, Ione, killed that man, whether it's news to you or not. She then dropped the knife down the elevator shaft and screamed. Shall we get on uptown?"

This time he rose, but Lyon did not stir, and I saw the gloss of sweat on his leathery face.

"I see," he said with an ugly laugh. "A sort of social third degree, eh? By all means, Captain. Let's go uptown. I'd like to hear you tell that story in court."

Shannon's voice was more silky than I had thought it could be.

"Now, Mr. Ferriter," it purred, "I haven't been asking you. I've been telling you."

Miss Agatha spoke, so quietly that I wondered whether Lyon felt the edge of her words.

"I asked Captain Shannon to tell you what he knows, Mr. Ferriter. You were so considerate this morning that I believed you would rather be prepared, before—the arrest."

"There will be," he replied with an ugly defiance, "no arrest. No

"No. He knew it was a woman, that's all."

doubt Ione, if it were she, could explain her presence in the basement."

"She won't need to," Shannon said quietly, "because it has been proved. She went down there to get the knife that killed your visitor."

"Whose name," Cochrane said dreamily, "was — just possibly — Horstman, eh?"

Lyon could control his spare exterior. He could not manage his heart. Color came into his face.

"You see," Shannon pressed on. "Ione Ferriter dropped something in the basement that night."

He lifted the handkerchief from the knife upon the desk. The distant sound of traffic came into the still room. Lyon did not move, but ebbing color left his face a greenish gray.

Shannon said: "Her fingerprints are on the handle. There's blood on the blade," and after another long moment in which Lyon never stirred, added:

"We've got her, Ferriter. She killed him. As for her alibi—"

He picked up the telephone and said: "Hoyt? Come up here."

Down in the Morello, I heard the shaft door clang. The moan of the elevator blew through the room like rising wind.

Lyon said thickly:

"Ione had nothing to do with it." He paused and then added:

"I killed him."

The thrill it should have brought was oddly missing. I looked at Lyon with vague disappointment. It should have been more dramatic than that. Miss Agatha said:

"This is, of course, a rather belated but chivalrous attempt to save your sister . . ."

The doorbell rang. Shannon called to Annie: "Tell him to wait."

Lyon said to the old lady as though there had been no interruption:

"She is not my sister. She is my daughter."

"I've wondered," said Miss Agatha at last, breaking the silence.

The man went on and as emotion relaxed his pose, the guttural tone I had heard first over the telephone grew beneath his accustomed speech and at last dominated it.

"This is my confession. You can write it down, Captain. The man that I killed had done my daughter much wrong. I thought him dead."

He paused.

Cochrane asked:

"In a blizzard, in Alaska?"

That blind shot got Lyon, knocking his reserve away, breaking, for an instant, his self-control. He gaped at his mild questioner and struggled for speech. Jerry drove his attack home, still gently:

"With a bullet through his chest?"

"Are you the devil?" Lyon blurted and the thick sound of his tortured voice seemed to shock him. He caught hold of himself, turned from Cochrane and said to Shannon, in his old easy manner:

"Do you mind very much if we don't go into that? I'd like to keep my daughter out of trouble. That is the purpose of my confession. She married my cousin, and hers, Lyon Ferriter, and went to Alaska."

"Lyon—" Shannon repeated, and gaped. The lean man frowned.

"If you please," he objected and went on. "She married Lyon Ferriter. He had been my partner in vaudeville. We are Bohemians by birth. I thought she would be happy. She was not. Ferriter abused her. I followed them to Alaska. All that she had written me was true and more. He was making her pose as his sister, with all that implied. Ferriter had got hold of the story of a lost gold strike, farther in. He and she and I went prospecting for it. We found it—and lost Ferriter."

I thought of the bullet scars on the dead man and held my peace. The slayer of Lyon Ferriter went on:

"I had gone there to take his wife, my daughter, away. He wore a beard and I grew one, that winter, after his death. We looked alike clean-shaven, and more so, bearded. We came back to the states—Lyon Ferriter and sister.

"My brother, a student but a weakling, had changed his name during the war. He was no longer Emil Horstman, but Everett Ferriter. Now, I was no longer Andreas Horstman but Lyon. I had enough for comfort. We were happy. I believed my daughter would make a good marriage when your nephew came of age."

He bowed precisely toward Miss Agatha as though he had complimented her, and pursued:

"Last Monday, my cousin, whom I thought dead, hailed me on the street. He had my arm before I saw him. There was nothing else to do. I brought him to my flat. There was no one in the hall and we walked upstairs. We talked a long while."

He paused and seemed to look back with critical eyes upon that interview. Shannon bent over his writing. I saw the quick rise and fall of Allegra's breath and the hawk look on her aunt's face.

"Lyon was greedy," Andreas Horstman said at last. "I offered him all the money. He wanted it—and Ione. She was still his wife. I ordered him out at last. He refused to go. Then I lost my temper. I called the police and he drew his knife and again I killed him. This time, permanently I think."

His face moved with a ghost of his whimsical smile. He shrugged and said:

"The rest you have found out—how I hid the knife in the basement and how Ione found her husband; how she went back to the cellar, to save her father—and got the knife only to drop it when Mr. Mallory came upon her; how she lost her head and went to his room; how Everett and I both bungled our last effort to find it and Everett killed himself because he feared death too much to live longer. Outside of trying to help the father she loves, my daughter had nothing to do with this—I tell you, not a thing."

Shannon started to speak but Cochrane's query forestalled him. "All right," he crooned, "you killed him. How did you get out afterward?"

For an instant, Lyon did not seem to understand. Then an odd expression crossed his face.

"Oh ho," he exclaimed softly. "Something is still a mystery, eh? You know so much, I thought you had read it all. It was simple. Let me show you."

He took a step backward and glanced about the room.

"Suppose the divan behind which Lyon's body lay was there."

Our eyes followed the pointing finger.

"The door," said Horstman, turning toward it with a smile, "would then be here."

He leaped. It slammed behind him. Like its echo, we heard the front door close.

I was quick but Shannon was quicker. He was at my elbow as I pulled the workroom portal open. He was past me and through the hall door before I reached it.

"Where?" he was barking at Hoyt, who stood in the open doorway of the waiting car. Eddie gabbled.

"Downstairs. On foot. He fell, I think. Shook the hull elevator. He—"

"Al!" Shannon roared down the shaft.

"Here," his aid replied from below.

"Stop him," shouted the Captain and plunged down the stairs. I jumped for the car.

"Basement," I muttered to Eddie, who jerked his lever. I was thinking too hard to hear his questions. The knife had been hidden in the basement. Somehow, the murderer had left it there, unperceived, before. He might be taking that mysterious route thither again.

Shannon beat us to the foyer. As we slid past its closed door, I could hear him yapping like a thwarted terrier.

"He came down. And I followed him. If you've let him get by, I'll—"

I heard, once again, the voice—the real voice—of him we had known as Lyon Ferriter. It filled the shaft with a fearful sound, suddenly ended. The car lurched.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Rent Land Under Water? It's Quite the Thing Here!

Water, water, all around! Here's lesson No. 1 on how to "get away from it all!" Visitors are renting ground under water at $1 per acre in Miami's Biscayne bay, 11 miles off shore, and building "tumbledown" shacks with all the comforts of home except a telephone. These pictures show some of those with a Robinson Crusoe complex who can reach their "summer homes" only via boat.

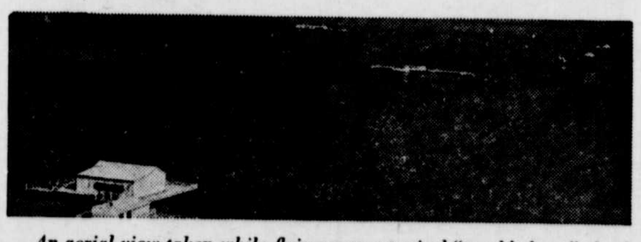
The picture above shows Miss Barbara Wells calmly pulling in a fish through her bedroom window, caught while she was napping in the afternoon at one of Miami's "tumbledowns." If this isn't the last word in piscatorial comfort then we're missing our guess by a mile.

Left: All water is either carried to the houses via boat or caught off the roof tops. Here Miss Ruth Fay collects some fresh rainwater for the household.

Above: Host Leo Edwards, prominent Miami auto dealer, right, gives a fish fry for his friends.

A room in one of the luxurious houseboats near the swanky, $250,000 Quarterdeck club which has just been opened in the area, featuring the last word in life aboard ship. This room, which has been redecorated, is tastefully designed and furnished.

View from the deck of the new Quarterdeck club during a "Miami Flyer" boat race. When the owners want a change in marine tempo they whizz over to the club in their speedboats.



An aerial view taken while flying over a typical "tumbledown" shack in the Quarterdeck club area of Biscayne bay.

HOUSEHOLD QUESTIONS

A little vinegar put into soapy water when washing aluminum ware helps to keep it bright.

• • •

You will find that fresh bread will cut easier if you heat the knife.

• • •

Before hanging clothes on the line in freezing weather, put pins on the clothes in the house, then snap on line with double clothes pins.

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To keep muslin curtains even when laundering, put two curtains together and iron as one curtain.

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To prevent the odor of cooking cabbage, broccoli or onions from permeating the house, cook these vegetables uncovered with two pieces of bread on the cooking water.

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For washing windows—an old auto windshield wiper blade makes a good utensil to wipe water from house windows after they have been washed.

• • •

Iron scorches on white cotton, silk or linen materials may be removed by dampening a cloth with peroxide of hydrogen, laying it over the scorch, then putting a dry cloth over the damp one and pressing with a warm iron.

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