On the Dot

By JAMES MULLEN

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WILSON went to the window and raised the curtain. He had been up all night working. Now he heard the thunder and saw the long flashes of lightning gleaming in the skies. A storm coming, he thought, and went back to his desk.

The doorbell rang. Who could be calling at half-past three in the morning? He went to the door and opened it. A man in a raincoat stepped into the hall. He raised his hand and Wilson found himself looking into the muzzle of a gun.

"Hello, Wilson," his visitor greeted him.

"Who are you?" Wilson looked at him, puzzled, trying to recall where he had seen the man.

The stranger laughed, an unpleasant laugh. He gave an extra shove of the gun against Wilson's ribs.

"You don't remember me, do you?" he asked. "You never do remember the guys you send up."

A light broke on Wilson and, for an instant, he turned pale.

"You're Jones," he said. "The man who killed Hans Gilbert!"

His visitor nodded. "You remember now. And do you remember that I said I'd come back and get you?"

Wilson lit a cigarette.

"Well," he said. "You seem to have come. Would you mind telling me how you escaped? You were scheduled for electrocution at four this morning, if I'm not mistaken."

"At four this morning," the man returned grimly.

Wilson nodded. "Beastly hour—even for an execution."

"Cut it! The chaplain was a friend of mine. We changed places. One of the guards recognized me but I knocked him down and got away. I had a hard time getting here, but it's worth it. Wilson, I'm going to kill you!"

Wilson bowed his head. "I seem to have heard you say that before," he said.

Jones was a little puzzled by the other's nonchalance.

"You may think I'm kidding," he said. "But at four o'clock, you're going to die—not me!"

Wilson glanced at his wrist watch. Then he walked over to his desk and sat down. "Well," he said, "I've fifteen minutes yet. No—only thirteen. My watch is slow. Do you mind if I finish this letter I'm writing?"

Jones shook his head. A peal of thunder vibrated through the house. "Quite a storm," commented Wilson, amiably.

"Getting worse," was the laconic reply. "Say, Wilson," glancing at his host admiringly, "you've got guts, all right. But," with a frown, "they ain't goin' to do you no good now. I came here to kill you and I'm going to do it—on schedule."

Wilson made no reply. He went on writing. The storm outside increased in fury. Presently the letter was done. A few things on the desk were put straight. All the while the murderer of Hans Gilbert, booked for the chair at four, sat holding his gun.

"What time is it now?" asked Jones.

"I've just five minutes to four. There's a church up the street. The clock chimes the hour. You'll have no trouble knowing when it's four o'clock."

Jones got up. He was nervous—far more nervous than his intended victim. With the gun trained on Wilson, he walked to the window and threw up the shade. The flashes of lightning were blinding but he did not draw the curtain.

"Don't you feel kind of queer, Wilson?" he asked. "Like something you couldn't stop was coming after you?"

Wilson nodded.

"Well, that's the way I've felt all day." I realized that I was going to die. It isn't a nice feeling, is it?"

"Can't say that it is," replied Wilson truthfully. "It does send the shivers up and down one's back."

At that moment the chimes on the church began to peal. Jones counted them slowly, one—two—three—four. With the last stroke, he slowly lifted the gun.

"Have you anything to say, prisoner?" he asked, ironically.

Wilson shook his head. "I have nothing to say."

Jones aimed. Suddenly, there was a blinding flash. Wilson felt himself hurled to the floor. He lay there stunned for a few minutes. Then, he rose weakly. He looked around for Jones. The man lay on the floor, the gun tightly clenched in his right hand. Wilson recoiled in horror!

The telephone began to ring. Wilson picked it up.

"This is Talbot of the Morning Star," a voice said. "There's a report that Frank Jones escaped from the state prison early this morning. Do you know if it's true?"

"What do the authorities say?" asked Wilson.

"Oh, you know them," impatiently. "They refuse to make a statement. We've been trying to get in touch with them and the prison direct. Couldn't get the prison—wires all down. Struck by lightning, I understand."

Wilson hesitated. He looked at the body on the floor. Then, in a voice so low that he could scarcely recognize it as his own, he said:

"You can report to your paper, Talbot, that the execution of Frank Jones took place. He was electrocuted at four o'clock this morning."

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SASSAFRAS ITEMS

Mrs. Elizabeth Atwell and daughter, Miss Lillian Atwell spent the week end with Mr. and Mrs. Lewis I. Atwell and family.

Mr. and Mrs. George Haley, Jr., and Mr. and Mrs. Carol Everett spent the week end in Philadelphia.

Mrs. Lewis I. Atwell, Mrs. Liston Garton and Mrs. Herman Voshell spent Friday in Wilmington.

Mr. and Mrs. H. C. Taylor and son, of Elsmere, Del., spent Tuesday at the home of Mrs. Pearl Blackiston.

Mr. and Mrs. Howard Craddock and son and Mrs. Nellie Ernest, of Philadelphia, Pa., spent Sunday with Mrs. Elmer Ernest.

Miss Alma Johnston, of Delaware Hospital, Mrs. George Kennedy, of Kenedyville, and Mr. Warren Johnston, of Galena, spent Sunday with their parents.

Miss Florence Waters spent the week end in Smyrna.

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Forbes and family, of Sharon Hill, Pa., spent the week end with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Hugh N. Gibson.

Mr. and Mrs. Earle Othoson visited on Sunday, Mr. and Mrs. James Peaper, of Chesapeake City.

There will be Sunday School in the Sassafras M. P. Church 10 a. m. and services 11 a. m., Sunday morning. All are welcome.

Mr. Bile Johnson, of Wilmington, has returned to work after being sick at the home of Mrs. Pearl Blackiston.

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HOMEOPATHIC RECIPE

Diner: "What on earth is this broth made from, waiter? Surely it isn't chicken broth?"

Waiter: "Well, sir, it's chicken broth in its infancy. It's made out of the water the eggs were boiled in."

ONE THUMB EQUALS TWO LEGS

"Jones expects 100 per cent disability on his accident insurane policy. He says he is completely icapacitated by the loss of a thumb."

"What's his vocation?"

"He's a professional hitch-hiker."

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