

Storm Music



By **Dorndorf Yates**

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SYNOPSIS

John Spencer and his cousin, Geoffrey Bohun, are vacationing in Austria. Geoffrey is a gifted portrait painter but prefers to paint landscapes. While strolling in the forest, John hears English voices, and decides to investigate. From cover he finds four men burying a man in green livery who, evidently, had been murdered. Pharaoh is the leader of the gang; the others are Dewdrop, Rush and Bugle. Unfortunately, John makes himself known to the assassins by dropping a letter with his name and address. He tells Geoffrey and his chauffeur, Barley, of his adventure. Geoffrey, realizing that John's life is in danger, declares he must vanish. Spencer discovers that the livery of the murdered man corresponds to the livery of the servants of Yorkick castle, and tells Countess Helena, mistress of the castle, what he had seen. With Geoffrey and Barley, John starts for Annabel, a nearby village. They encounter Pharaoh. In making their getaway they exchange shots with the gang, without serious result. They arrive at Plumage farm, on the Yorkick estate, where Lady Helena had requested John and his cousin to meet her. She reveals to them that her father had converted his immense fortune into gold and hidden it away in a secret vault in the castle. Knowing that his son, Valentine, Helena's brother, was incapable of controlling the fortune, he had revealed it to Helena alone just before his death. In some manner the news leaked out, and Pharaoh is after the treasure. They planned that Geoffrey and Barley would go to Salzburg to watch for Pharaoh, while John was to remain at Plumage, patrolling the roads about Yorkick from dusk to dawn. Several nights go by without important incident. John visits Yorkick castle and finds that Helena's brother, Count Valentine, is there and with him, on most friendly terms, is Pharaoh, as Captain Panning. Hearing that John is stopping at Plumage, Pharaoh speaks to Dewdrop. John suspects a plot. As dinner is announced, Helena and John make their escape, pursued by Pharaoh's men, encountering many difficulties during the night. They run out of gas.

CHAPTER IV—Continued

If we were now in no peril, our case was sorry enough. Stay with the Rolls we dared not, for the chance that some friend would come by before some enemy seemed to us very slight. Helena's brilliant plan was back in the melting-pot. For her nurse would have kept her counsel, but we could not now summon Geoffrey and we were sure of our host. And the Rolls had to be recovered before we could move. . . . Over all, the knowledge that, until I was healed, I was not only out of action, but could not lift a finger if danger arose, hung like a thunder-cloud. . . . "Are you sure you can walk?" said Helena. . . . "Comfortably," said I. "And if I saw Pharaoh coming, I quite expect I could run. The burning question is where to look for a lodging that's not by the side of this road." . . . Together, by the light of the torch, we studied the map. Upon this there was shown a farm, called Holy Tree. So far as we could make out, it stood some seven miles off. . . . Though I was tired and in pain, I shall always remember with pleasure our progress that summer night. . . . We had walked for an hour and a half before the track we were using came to an end. The going was rough and, because I was weary I stumbled, and every time I did so the muscle which I had injured protested with all its might. . . . "It is useless," said I, halting. "We must wait till the dawn comes in." I stepped to a mighty beech and flung the clothes I was wearing down at its foot. "You must lie here, my lady, and take some rest. And Sabre and I will watch." . . . "I see," said Helena, slowly. Then she put up her hands and slid my coat from my shoulders and drew it clear of my arms. "You've got to change," she said, and, despite my protests, insisted on helping me into dry clothing. "Now you lie still," said Helena, lighting my torch. "I'm going to get some leaves." . . . Three times she went and came with her coat full of dry leaves. These she poured into a hollow by the side of the beech. I found there an ease of body which I had not expected that night. And she sat down behind me, with her back to the trunk. . . . "When we get to Holy Tree, I'm going to borrow some lotion and rub your back. I shall tell them we're brother and sister, so remember to treat me rough. It's really important, John, if you value my name. If you're polite, they'll know that you aren't my brother and then my reputation will cease to exist."

The fluttering of a bird woke me, and a glance at the leaves above me showed that the dawn was up. . . . At once I rolled on to my side, but Helena's lodgment was empty and she and Sabre were gone. Since I was very foul, I determined to find some water before she returned. . . . My back was stiff, as was natural, but to my relief I found I could walk

with ease, so I set off towards the clearing, for there, the night before, I had heard the song of a rill. . . . When I had found this, I bathed my head and my hands, but before I had finished this very simple toilet, Sabre gave tongue beside me and then stood moving his tail and looking the way I had come. . . . A moment later my lady stepped out of the woods. . . . "How's his back?" said Helena, taking her seat on a tree-stump. . . . "Stiff," said I, "but better." . . . "Rest is the medicine," says she. "We simply must find a farm. Besides, I want my breakfast." . . . "God send it you quick," said I. "We must go on walking east; but if after half an hour we don't strike a path or something—"

"I've struck one," says she. "I don't know where it leads to, but I think we might try and find out."

Nearly an hour had gone by when we saw before us no farm, but a little, time-honored cottage, standing in a glade of the forest, with a garden of flowers about it. . . . "Bread and milk," said Helena, turning a glowing face. "And honey, perhaps—there's a beehive."

We were 40 paces away, when a young woman entered the doorway and stood looking into the garden alight with the sparkling flowers. For a moment she stared upon them. Then she leaned against the jamb, put her arm up to her eyes and began to weep. Helena and I stopped dead. . . . "You stay here," she said quietly, "and I'll go on and see what the trouble is. Perhaps you can straighten it out in return for a meal."

Twenty minutes went by before I saw her again, and then she came out of the garden with the lass that had stood at the door. The latter was smiling now. . . . For a moment the two stood speaking. . . . Then the woman dropped a curtsy and started across the forest in evident haste. . . . Helena beckoned to me, and I got to my feet. . . . As I came towards her—

"The trick," she said, "has been done. Our hostess has gone for two hours, and when she comes back in pet, she's going away for good—for three days, at least, to Salzburg. Our host, however, will remain; he's inside now, in the very best of humors and finding our use of his cottage an excellent joke."

I followed her into the cleanest of tiny kitchens, all bright with old wood and copper and smelling of sweet wood-smoke. Beneath the open window a table was laid with our breakfast. . . . Sabre was lying on the flags in front of the hearth, and a pretty, fair-haired baby that might have been two years old was seated beside the Alsatian. . . . Helena sat down by the infant and drew him on to her lap. . . . "Max," she said, "this is my brother. He's rather nice."

"And our host?" said I. . . . Helena looked up, laughing. . . . "This is our host," she said. "If you had any manners, you'd come and give him a kiss."

CHAPTER V

The Forester's Cottage. . . . "Convention be darned," said Helena. "All right," I said. "I can't help it. Do what you like. If the Countess Helena of Yorkick is determined to dwell in a solitary, two-roomed cottage with an imitation brother, an infant-in-arms and a dog—"

"Till your cousin arrives, she is. And now listen to me. Freda's man is in Salzburg; he's lying in hospital there and gradually getting better of a fever which nearly carried him off. Yesterday she got a letter, saying that now she might visit him, but that on no account must she bring with her the child. I imagine there's a risk of infection. That provision there is, for she's no one to take the child. And that is why she was weeping. . . . "I offered to care for the baby and to give her a present as well, if my 'brother' and I might stay here until her return. She simply jumped at the bargain—she's gone for petrol and when she leaves for Salzburg she'll take a letter to your cousin. I need hardly say she's promised to hold her tongue. . . . "Now if, to serve convention, you'd have thrown such a chance away, we'd better say good-by here and now. You're jealous of my honor. Well and good. If you weren't, we shouldn't be here. It is because you respect me, because you're so very anxious that I shouldn't put a foot wrong, that I like you and trust you."

"All right," I said slowly, and hardly knew my own voice. "I'll play the pretty game."

When Freda returned she was heavy laden, for she bore two gallons of petrol which she had begged of the farmer that sold her milk; and as well she brought two chickens and a basket of new-laid eggs. What tale she had told I know not, but I think that it served her turn, for we were not once molested by curious eyes. She had little time to spare, if she was to catch the train which would bring her to Salzburg that night. . . . I took my ease for the most of that day, but while I am sure the repose did much for my back, it was Helena's use of the lotion that actually healed the strain. . . . "Tonight," I said. "I am going to get the Rolls. I'll fill her up at some pump and then find some place near Witchcraft and park her there. Her value apart, we simply must have that

car. Without her we're tied by the leg." "I shall come, too," said Helena. "Sabre can mind the baby and keep the house."

"I think," said I, "that you've done enough today. You've fetched and carried and nursed me and played with Max."

"Oh, John, why wasn't I born to a life like this? The life I lead is a duty—and that's the truth."

"We're not born to idylls," said I. "We've no such luck."

Helena crossed her ankles and laced her delicate fingers behind her head. "Do you find it idyllic, too?" "I tried to say so this morning," Helena knitted her brows. . . . "Then you said it very badly," she said. "I thought you were jibbing at being here alone with me."

"For me, that's the idyll," said I. Helena turned her head and gave me a dazzling smile. . . . It was when we had eaten our supper and the infant was fast asleep that Sabre was given his orders and we set out with the petrol to seek the Rolls. The dusk would come in, I judged, by the time we had crossed the clearing and gained the track, and that was just what we wanted, for so we could use the daylight, yet be wrapped in the cloak of darkness by the time we came to the road. For all that, I was none too easy, for if, by some evil chance, friend Pharaoh had found the Rolls, his instinct might well have suggested that we should return at nightfall to try to recover the car. And if he was lying there, waiting . . . The nearer we drew to the road, the more I wished for Sabre, for he at least would have saved us from walking into a trap. . . . Five minutes later, perhaps, the darkness ahead was lightened, and I knew we were approaching the road. . . . With my right hand upon my pistol, I moved like any shadow along the side of the track. . . . Arrived at its mouth, I waited, straining my ears. So perhaps for three minutes. Then I stole round the corner and on to the edge of the road. . . . The Rolls was gone. . . . I was up betimes the next morning and had shaved and bathed and dressed before Helena called to me to know if I was awake. . . . First came the caring for Max and the preparation of our breakfast, which occupied our time for about two hours. . . . In my note I had asked my cousin to bring some food, but in case he brought with him no bread, Helena decided to make some—a labor which kept us busy till nearly noon. I judged that my cousin would reach us by five o'clock. And that would be the end of my idyll; with his and Barley's coming, my present estate, my kingdom, must be resigned, my lovely world would be over, and never so long as I lived should I ever be given another that smelled so sweet. . . . From a covert which we selected we could see the way to Witchcraft, yet

reached the heights of unselfishness by becoming so elated over another's good fortune. Unfortunately, and I must admit that I have had no more of a glimpse of the contract than have my very knowing betters, I am overcome with very serious doubts as to its truth. . . . In mentioning this—and I do have some very definite information concerning the top salaries paid to outstanding pitchers in both major leagues during the last five years—I am not attempting to quibble over a mere \$3,000 paid by somebody else to somebody else. Instead I am wondering whether these sports page delusions of grandeur do not quite often have a decidedly adverse effect upon the scenes which they are imagined to enhance.

Only Three Big League Pitchers Topped \$15,000 . . . Without going into a historic incident when an American league pitcher (not with the Yankees) took such estimates of salaries as correct, called his business manager a liar and then was forcefully persuaded to apologize, there is competent authority for the statement that only three big-time hurlers ever have been paid more than \$15,000 a season. . . . That I have it upon the same competent authority that one of the hurlers—and it is not Hubbell—is not a matter of particular importance. Yet, taken along with the swollen incomes supposed to be earned by prize fighters who, on the average, are lucky when they can make \$3,000 a year, it does provide some cause for thought. . . . Naturally this thought will be lost upon the professional sports people as well as upon the promoters of football universities who habitually overestimate the size of their crowds by 10,000 or so, and yet I have a suspicion that this continued speaking in boxcar figures is an important indication of one of the very great ills now besetting such enterprises. . . . So far as the performers are concerned, they grow so accustomed to reading about such gorgeous purses that they must become discouraged when they discover that really they are going to be paid only such a sane sum as the traffic will bear. It is a point, if you will consider the amounts that would have to be taken in at the gate if such magnificent salaries were really to be paid, that does not need any considerable elucidation. . . . Still, admitting that the main fault perhaps lies with the newspapers, I am wondering whether the performers and promoters who so ardently support such ballyhoo have ever considered the effect upon the ultimate consumer. . . . Possibly just to prove that "them as has gits," Harry F. Sinclair won more than \$1,200,000 in purses during his four years of improving the breed with his Ranococas stable.

could not be seen, for the ground rose up a little, to make a knoll, yet the bracken made us a breastwork through which we could see when we pleased, which no eye looking up from the path could ever have pierced. . . . As I turned to peer through the fronds—

"You are very impatient," said Helena. . . . "That's the wrong word," said I. "I can't tell you what's the right one, but it's rather like standing on a platform, seeing somebody off by train."

Helena knitted her brows. . . . "I know the feeling," she said, "but I don't see how it applies."

"You wouldn't," said I. "Never mind. The train will leave when Geoffrey and Barley arrive."

Again I turned to glance at the shadowy way down which they must come. "I like Mr. Bohun," said Helena. . . . "He's the best in the world," I cried. . . . "Well, he'll be here soon—if you don't keep on watching that path. Watched pots never boil, you know."

"You don't understand," I said, and lay back on the turf. "I don't want Geoffrey at all. I'll be glad to see him, of course. But if he was delayed or something, I—I shouldn't mind."

Some time later Helena suddenly peered through the fronds. "At last," she said. "Enter Mr. Bohun and Barley—with a suitcase in every hand. What do they think this is? The Majestic hotel?"

(TO BE CONTINUED)



Balloon Diamond Salary Figures Might Annoy Fans

ALTHOUGH money occasionally is listed as a most sordid topic it undoubtedly takes high rank among those very interesting things about which people insist upon talking. Whether it is discussed as much in sports as in Wall street and other realms of big business is, of course, a question that is open to some argument. Yet, with the season for the signing of baseball contracts now under way, it again becomes evident that the methods of the athletic gossipers are vastly different from those of ordinary mortals. . . . Most people—even though there remain a few who dwell sorrowfully upon the fact that they can scratch up only a million dollars or so of pin money—dote upon speaking in the highest terms concerning their own incomes and honorariums. It is a very human trait and I have no desire to join the coyly philosophical space fillers while commenting upon it. . . . Instead—as could have been said a hundred words ago—I am interested in the great joy various sports persons seem to obtain from somebody else's golden rewards. . . . There is, for instance, the matter of Carl Hubbell's newly autographed contract. Most of the comments concerning this signing bubble over with the news that the pitcher will receive \$18,500 per year. This is interesting news. If true, it would not only indicate that the Giants are becoming more careless than usual with their money, but also that the commentators have reached the heights of unselfishness by becoming so elated over another's good fortune. Unfortunately, and I must admit that I have had no more of a glimpse of the contract than have my very knowing betters, I am overcome with very serious doubts as to its truth. . . . In mentioning this—and I do have some very definite information concerning the top salaries paid to outstanding pitchers in both major leagues during the last five years—I am not attempting to quibble over a mere \$3,000 paid by somebody else to somebody else. Instead I am wondering whether these sports page delusions of grandeur do not quite often have a decidedly adverse effect upon the scenes which they are imagined to enhance.

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