BANNER SERIAL FICTION

She Painted Her Face

A story of love and intrigue . . . by **DORNFORD YATES**

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CHAPTER VIII—Continued

—17—

"Who was George Eliot?" asked the duchess.

"His lordship's pet spaniel, your Grace," replied Bertram.

"So he was," mouthed the Count. "To think I'd forgotten—"

"So what was?" said the Duchess.

Her victim clawed at the cloth.

"The dog, madam. The—"

"George Eliot was a female," said the Duchess. And then, "What became of her . . . Brief? What became of Rudolf's pet spaniel . . . that never would let her master out of her sight?"

I shall always remember that moment that held so much and shall always see the three faces of those concerned. Old Harry's, keen and relentless, seemed cut out of painted stone: the Count's was a mask of wet gray, with lines that gave the impression of having been drawn with blue chalk: and Bertram's was tense and bloodless—the face of a man who is waiting to hear some monstrous suspicion smothered at birth.

Twice the Count tried to answer, and twice he failed.

At the third attempt—

"Madam," he croaked, "I have told you that my memory—"

"What became of George Eliot, steward?"

"His lordship shot her, your Grace, because she was going blind."

"Himself? His favorite dog?"

"He would let no one else do it, your Grace. And no one, except his lordship, knows where she lies."

The Duchess returned to the Count.

"D'you remember it now?"

Somehow the man made answer.

"I remember . . . that I shot her . . . myself."

Old Harry lunged.

"In that case, you can tell me her color."

The silence which succeeded this challenge dragged at the nerves, and I was really quite thankful when Virgil, in desperation, put in his oar.

"Madam, you are dealing with matters which my uncle has fought to forget."

Old Harry raised her eyebrows.

"That explanation is one which I am not prepared to accept. I'll tell you why. It's too easy. There's something very wrong here—and I'm very glad that I came." She turned to survey the oarsman. "Why are you here?"

"Madam," said Virgil, "this was my father's home."

"I know that better than you. I ask you why you were here."

"I have no other home, madam."

"Indeed," said Old Harry. "Where is your father now?"

"My father," said Virgil, "is dead."

"When did he die?"

"At least ten years ago, madam."

"In that case he's been resurrected before this time. I must get into touch with him. I know he was living in London a year ago."

The Count of Brief leaned forward.

"Madam," he gasped, "this is very painful to me."

"Then it shouldn't be," said Old Harry. "Mistakes have been made before now, and I'm not at all certain your brother wasn't an innocent man."

Virgil whipped into the breach, before the Count could reply.

"In that case, madam, there's only one thing to be done. May I have my father's address?"

"I'm afraid," said Old Harry, "your filial affection must wait. I'll deal with this matter myself. And when I have talked with your father, I'll let you know. I expect he, too, has fought to forget the past. But he may have been—less successful . . . However, we'll very soon know. I'll write to my agent tonight." She returned to the Count, whose head was shaking a little, as that of a very old man. "He will ask your brother two questions, and send his answers to me. The first will be this—What was George Eliot's color?"

The Count half-rose from his chair.

"Madam, I protest."

"Protest all you like," said Old Harry. "Whelp is not Whelp for nothing, and I was a friend of your father's before you were born."

"But what can that prove?" cried the Count. "If he tells you George Eliot's color, what can that prove?" His voice rose into a scream, and he smacked the cloth. "That can prove nothing, madam . . . nothing at all—except that he can remember what I have contrived to forget," and with that, he sank back, breathing hard, with the air of a man who knows he has made a mistake and yet must needs go on, because he cannot retire.

"Quite so," said the Duchess, "quite so. But the second question will be much harder than that. Where is George Eliot buried?" She set her arm on the table and dropped her chin to her palm. "If he answers that, I think that that will prove something . . . and prove it up to the hilt."

I glanced at the Count.

The man was sitting up straight and was staring directly before him, but not at me. It was plain that his eyes saw nothing that eyes can see, that Apprehension possessed him, body and soul. And this, I think, was natural, for the Duchess had hit very hard. She had publicly forced the cupboard in which his skeleton stood and had hung the sword of vengeance over his head. And this, after 22 years . . .

The Count seemed to take hold of himself: a shiver ran through his limbs, and a hand went out to his wine: and then he was glancing about him, as though to take up his place. But the look on his face was haunted, and he might have been 20 years older than when he sat down.

In a silence which nobody cared to break, some dessert was served.

"What Was George Eliot's Color?"

Then Old Harry spoke in German.

"John Herrick, relieve the tension. You know how to tell a good tale."

"Madam," said Herrick, "command me." He put a hand to his head. "A few minutes ago the conversation turned upon remembrance—a precious faculty. By that my story shall hang . . ."

(Here I should say that Herrick's story was heard by every soul in that room, for the Duchess had taken her spoon, yet did not begin to eat; and while we, at table, sat waiting for her to begin, the servants had nothing to do, because the course had been served.)

"There was once an English vicar, a very forgetful man. Now all of us sometimes forget. I forgot my pistol on Friday afternoon. But he was much worse than that. He would set forth to keep an engagement and, while he was on his way, forget why he had gone out. He would frequently enter a shop and, ere he was served, forget what he came in to buy. And sometimes in winter, when the heaven was dark and he was rising early, as parsons do, he forgot he was getting up, but supposed he was going to bed, took off the clothes which he had that moment put on and then retired, as though it were night and not day. But, with it all, he was so gentle and charming and had a nature so sweet that his flock forgave his failing with ready hearts, smiled at his errors and said it was 'Parson's way.'

"Well, one beautiful summer morning, he could not resist the call of the countryside, and, after his early breakfast, he set out afoot to prove the lively beauty he loved so well and draw from it a sermon such as no books could give. For the following day was Sunday . . . As though upon air, he roamed for mile upon mile. Of course he forgot all else: and of such was his communion that he forgot all time. In fact, it was past two o'clock, and he had covered the best part of 15 miles, when he climbed a stile in a hedgerow, to find a man in the road, with a watch in his hand. And the man was watching a chauffeur changing a tire—or, rather, trying to change it, for the car had detachable rims, and, because of the heat of the day, the metal had expanded and the rim had seized on to the wheel.

"At once the Vicar perceived the state of the case. The man, who was wearing full dress, was clearly due at some function, for which he feared to be late: the chauffeur was needing assistance to pull off the rim: but the other dared not give it, because of his clothes.

"Without so much as a word, the Vicar went down on his knees in the dusty road—not to pray, but to add his strength to that of a fellow man. And after a moment or two, before their united endeavors, the rim gave way . . . The rest, of course, was easy, but the Vicar continued to help till the work was done. Then at last he straightened his back, to find the other beside him, silk hat in hand.

" 'Sir,' said the man, 'I never can thank you enough. And since you have done me a service which I can never repay, I beg you will do me the honor to be my guest. I am to be married this day at half-past two, and I should not now be happy if you were not there.'

" 'My very good friend,' said the Vicar, inspecting his state, 'you know very well that I am not fit to appear.'

"That was true: he was not even wearing clerical dress.

" 'Whose fault is that?' said the other, and ushered him into his car . . .

"Now, though, for the moment, he did not know where he was, so soon as they moved, the Vicar got his bearings, only to find that they were approaching the village of which he was priest. At the sight of the distant spire, his memory suddenly stirred.

" 'Dear, dear,' he cried. 'I'd forgotten. I shan't be able to come. You must set me down at that village. I've got a wedding myself.'

" 'At that village?' cried the other. 'But that is where I'm to be married—in ten minutes' time.'

"The Vicar smiled his rare smile.

" 'Make it twenty, my friend,' he said gently. 'You must give me time to change.'

"So they brought one another to church—the priest and the groom, for, had they not met as they did, neither the one nor the other could have arrived."

There was a moment's silence.

Then the Duchess of Whelp shook her head.

"Too good to be true," she said, "as I'll lay the Count will agree."

"Madam," said the Count, "I am with you. And who ever heard of a—"

"God in heaven!" cried Herrick, and started up to his feet. His eyes were upon the Count, and the Count was staring back, with the eyes of a beast at bay.

So for a long moment . . .

"What then?" said Old Harry, sharply.

Herrick put a hand to his head.

"But he's denied it," he cried, and looked dazedly round. "And I was there—at the wedding. I saw them arrive."

"What of that?" said the Duchess. "He wasn't."

His eyes again fast on the Count—

"By heaven," said Herrick, "I don't believe that he was. And yet the bridegroom's name was Rudolf of Brief."

Two hours had gone by, and Winter was telling his tale. This in Herrick's room, the middle room of the tower. (This had not been a bedroom the week before: but now it was changed.)

"The first thing I knew, sir, a servant came running in, to say his lordship had fainted and his valet was wanted at once. Well, that told me you were off, and very soon after, Bertram the Steward comes in, as white as a sheet. He asks the older servants to come to his room, an' when he was gone, a footman begins to talk. I couldn't get all he said, but I made out her Grace an' Mr. Herrick 'ad put it across the Count. There's a chauffeur there speaks some English, and so I got on to him. 'What's the trouble?' I says. 'What's anyone done?' An' then he starts off . . .

"They've got this much clear, sir—that there was another brother an' he was a twin: that 'er Grace and Mr. Herrick keeps on referring to him: that his lordship keeps getting caught out, because he don't seem to see that they're mixing him up with his brother in all they say. But they can't understand why his lordship is so much upset. 'Why can't he see?' they keep asking. 'Why don't he tell them they're mixin' him up with his twin?' Of course, the Steward's got it—you ought to have seen his face. An' Mr. Parish has rammed a point or two home. But they all know there's something wrong, an' they all think her Grace has come here to put it right. It seems she said something like that. And they've got Mr. Herrick's story about the forgetful priest: but they think that when he said 'Rudolf,' he must have meant 'Ferdinand.' "

"Oh, give me strength," said Herrick, and threw up his hands.

"If I may say so, sir, you 'aven't no call to complain. They've got the truth in their hands, but, except for the Steward, they're holding it upside down."

"And what will happen," said Herrick, "if ever they turn it round?"

"Shocked to death, sir," said Winter, "if you ask me. I think they'll walk out on him, sir, from bottom to top. They're a very 'ouse-proud lot. An' another thing—in their eyes her Grace can't do no wrong."

There was a little silence.

It was clear that we had won the first round, and won it well. It was also clear that Old Harry was going for a knockout, because the pace she had set could not possibly last—for one thing only, her threat to produce poor Gering was one which she could not fulfill. And again it was clear that Old Harry's judgment was good, because a win on points would be useless to us. The Count of Brief had to be floored—or be made to throw in the towel.

If he contrived to stand up for the first few rounds, the man was safe. I could not lose sight of one thing. And that was that he had a second who knew no law.

Indeed, this was how I saw it—that the Duchess of Whelp was fighting the Count of Brief, because the fall of the Count would set Elizabeth up: but Virgil was fighting his cousin, because, if he brought her down, the fall of the Count would not matter, because he — Percy Virgil—would then be bound to succeed.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Strange Things Happen to Vessels at Sea During Storms and in Accidents

During a hurricane in the Caribbean, in 1906, a British tramp steamer, the Dorisbrook, was caught by what her crew described as a tidal wave. They said it must have been nearly 100 feet high, and that the big steamer was carried on its summit like a chip in a mill race. At last she stopped with a bump, and when daylight came she was in a pine forest more than 200 yards from the beach, reports a writer in London Answers Magazine.

A dock was dug around her and a canal to the sea. She was refloated and went under her own steam to Galveston, where she was repaired. In the following February she delivered her cargo safely in London.

Extraordinary things happen at sea, but perhaps nothing harder to believe than the fate of the large wooden schooner, Fred B. Taylor, She was run down by a steamer in the Atlantic and cut in two. Her crew was saved. The bow half drifted to Delaware bay, on the American coast; the stern came ashore on Ascension island, 4,500 miles away.

One more story almost equally strange. The British steamship Mercedes, laden with iron ore, was off Newfoundland, when caught in a severe electric storm. The whole ocean was like an endless stretch of prairie fires and balls of electric fire hissed and exploded in all directions among the vessel's masts and rigging. A heavy gale sprang up, and the heavily laden ship was badly damaged.

As the gale died out the fireballs appeared again, great "composants" which hung in big globes from the masts and stays and turned night into day. By their light repairs were effected which enabled the vessel to reach port.

Origin of Whist

The origin of whist, like many card games, is obscure, but under the name of "triumph" it had become so well known that when Bishop Latimer preached the Christmas sermon at Cambridge in 1529 he had no doubt that his hearers could follow his allegories based upon it. Its first serious study and the formation of set rules regarding play resulted from frequent meetings of a party of whist players at the Crown Coffee house in Bedford Row, London, of whom Edmond Hoyle was one.

YUM! YUM!

Fulton Oursler passes along the tale of a tough customer who stormed into a barroom, ordered a Manhattan cocktail, tossed it off and chewed up the glass. He ordered three more cocktails, downed them in turn and chewed up each glass. Then he wheeled on a meek citizen standing beside him peacefully sipping a glass of beer:

"What are you looking at! What's it to you?"

"Nothing," the humble citizen replied, "I just wondered why you leave the stems. That's the best part."

Reckless Spending

A husband and wife were having a bitter discussion about who was the more extravagant.

"You accuse me of reckless extravagance," said he scornfully. "When did I ever make a useless purchase?"

"Well," said she, "there's the fire extinguisher you bought last year. We never used it once, not once."

SUBSTITUTE

"Did you get an imported hat this year?"

"No, I only got a foreign label for the lining."

At the Sales Conference

Sales Manager—Now, gentlemen, in closing, let me repeat the words of Webster.

Salesman—Come on, fellows, let's go. He's starting in on the dictionary.

Water Sprite

Girl—You can swim, can't you?

Smart Boy—Only at times.

Girl—What times?

Smart Boy—When I'm in the water.

Flavoring

"Sugar?"

"No, thank you."

"Then what do you like with your tea?"

"Gossip."

If You Want to Know

Mr. White—When I was your age, I thought nothing of chopping wood all day.

Oliver—I don't think so much of the idea myself.

Considerate

Student—I don't think I deserve a zero.

Professor—Neither do I, but it's the lowest mark I'm allowed to give. —Hartford Courant.

Skip It!

"Quick, Ruggles, bring me some brandy, her ladyship's fainted."

"Yes, your lordship, but what shall I bring her ladyship?"—Tit-Bits magazine.

Thoughtful Betty

Teacher—Betty, spell bird cage.

Betty—B-I-R-D hyphen C-A-G-E.

Teacher—Why the hyphen?

Betty—For the bird to sit on.

Very Neat

Customer—I thought I saw some soup on the bill of fare.

Waiter—There was some, but I wiped it off.

ANIMATED GHOSTS

"Smith has moved away from that house he was living in. He says it was haunted."

"And so it was. His creditors were hanging around there day and night."

It Comes With Time

Elderly Sister—So Mr. Goldkatch said I had teeth like pearls? And what did you say?

Young Brother—O nothing; except that you were gradually getting used to them.

All in a Nutshell

"Do you understand this building-loan scheme?"

"Sure! They build you a house and you pay so much a month. By the time you are thoroughly dissatisfied with the place, it's yours."

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Ask Me Another

A General Quiz

The Questions

1. What is a party of lions called?
2. What is the difference between a typhoon and a tycoon?
3. Does nicotine stain the fingers yellow?
4. What animal skeleton is kept in the bathroom?
5. Who was the author of the phrase "entangling alliances"?
6. Which is correct, "Drive slow" or "Drive slowly"?
7. Which is the darkest hour at night?

The Answers

1. A pride.
2. The first is a type of cyclone. A tycoon is an important person in business.
3. No. Nicotine is colorless; the yellow is tobacco tar.
4. Most people keep a sponge in the bathroom, which really is the skeleton of a very energetic animal, usually found by divers in the sea.
5. Thomas Jefferson.
6. "Drive slowly" is better English, although "Drive slow" is generally accepted as correct.
7. The Naval observatory says that no light is received from the sun when it is 18 degrees or more below the horizon, and during those hours there is no hour that is regularly the darkest.

SAFETY TALKS

Driving Too Fast

OF THE 28 states which published fatal traffic accident summaries for the year, 21 classified more drivers as "exceeding the speed limit" or "driving too fast for conditions" than were charged with any other kind of improper driving.

All 28 states combined, says the National Safety council, in its 1938 edition of "Accident Facts," reported about 18 per cent of the drivers in fatal accidents and about 9 per cent of the drivers in non-fatal accidents were in this category.

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