BANNER SERIAL FICTION

She Painted Her Face

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

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CHAPTER XI

—22—

I had told Winter to call me at nine o'clock; but, tired as I was, I awoke at a quarter to eight, and after trying in vain to go back to sleep, I presently threw in my hand and began to get up.

My state of mind was uneasy.

I could not reach my lady, because I had given her back the key of her suite. Yet, since I had her chemise, my shirt must be in her bedroom. If she found it, well and good. But if some servant found it . . .

In fact I need not have worried, for about ten minutes to nine a manservant came to my room, bearing a note and a parcel addressed to me.

"From his lordship, sir," he said, and bowed himself out.

With starting eyes, I read the following words:

Mr. Exon,
I have the honor to return you the shirt which you dropped this morning on leaving my daughter's suite.
Perhaps you will make it convenient to leave the Castle at once.
Brief.

I remember that I stared at the paper as though it belonged to some dream. Then I sat down and put my head in my hands. And then I stood up again, because something had to be done.

As I made for the door, this was opened and Winter came into the room.

"Find Mr. Parish," I said: "and ask him to come here at once."

As it was, I was more than half dressed, and as I got into my jacket, the Englishman entered the room.

"Parish," I said, "how soon can I see her Grace?"

"Perhaps at ten, sir: but certainly not before that."

I glanced at my watch. The time was five minutes past nine.

"Very well, I must see the Count. I don't think he'll want to receive me, but if you can get hold of Bertram, perhaps you can bring it off."

"I'll manage it, sir," said Parish. "Do you wish to see him at once?"

"Immediately."

"Then come with me, sir," said Parish. "I think I know where he is."

I thrust the note into my pocket and left the room.

The respect with which Parish was treated by the servants of Brief was very nearly as deep as that they were pleased to accord to the Duchess herself, and before two minutes had passed I was ushered unannounced into an elegant library.

As the door closed behind me—

"What does this mean?" said the Count, getting up to his feet.

I answered him slowly enough.

"It means," I said, "that we are to clear the air."

"I'll see about that," said the man, and made straight for the bell.

"I strongly advise you," I said, "not to try to have me removed. If you do, you will force my hand: and so, Lord Ferdinand Virgil, cut your throat."

I saw the shaft go home. My use of his proper title hit him beneath the heart. If more revelations were coming, better that they should come whilst we were alone. For all that, his eyes were burning . . . I was Richard Exon, and not the Duchess of Whelp.

As a servant answered his summons, he turned on his heel . . .

I watched him curiously.

There was a moment's silence.

Then—

"Your lordship rang?" said the servant.

The other spoke over his shoulder.

"Yes," he said thickly. "Has—has Mr. Percy returned?"

"Not yet, my lord."

"Desire him to come here the moment he enters the house."

"Very good, my lord," said the man, and made himself scarce.

As the door closed behind him—

"I do not think," I said, "that your son is going to come back."

Lord Ferdinand started about.

"My son? Is this blackmail?"

"It's not even bluff," said I, "but listen to me. I say I have reason to think that your son is not coming back. In view of what I told him last night, I think he will find it convenient to disappear."

The man was staring as though I were not of his world.

"Of what you told him? Who are you?"

The question flamed.

"I'm a plain-clothes man," said I, "and I'm working for Scotland Yard."

I watched the blood flow out of the fellow's face . . .

At length he moistened his lips.

"Does the Duchess know this?" he said.

"No," said I. "Nobody knows—except the Austrian police."

I saw his mouth twitch at the word.

"Why—why the Austrian police?"

"Because I could not arrest you, without their leave. It's a question of extradition. You broke your bail in England twenty-two years ago."

"So you say. But—"

"You arranged your flight with your brother. He booked your passage for you and went alone to the station, taking your tickets and money, to see you off. And, when he was gone, you went—to Paris, instead. And the police mistook him for you . . . and sent him down. That's twenty-two years ago, and he's done his time: but the charge against you remains, Lord Ferdinand Virgil, and I have been sent from England to . . . clear things up."

His fingers were plucking at his trousers, as those of a dying man will pluck at his sheets.

"What d'you mean—clear things up?"

"I'll tell you plainly," said I. "Because of the mistake that was made, another warrant must issue—as a matter of form. Before that warrant can issue, a further information has to be sworn. I am here to complete that information . . .

"It Means," I Said, "That We Are to Clear the Air."

Thanks to what happened last night, it is very nearly complete."

"And then?"

"Then I shall return to London. And when the warrant is issued, I—shall—come—back."

There was a deathly silence.

Then the fellow turned round and made his way to a chair. I saw that he went heavily, as a man that is tired.

After a little he spoke.

"Why do you tell me these things?"

I took out the note he had written and held it up.

"Because of this letter. It seems that one of your people saw me leaving the Lady Elizabeth's suite. I had to convince you, therefore, that I was there on duty—and nothing else."

He let out a laugh at that, and the blood came into my face.

"If you doubt me," I said, "I can prove it. I'd a man outside her door the whole of the time."

"A man?" he cried, starting up.

"A man," said I. "Don't think I'm working alone. The man in question is playing the part of my servant: he's really a sergeant out of the C. I. D."

He quailed to the words, as a beast will quail to the whip. And then, as a beast will turn, he was showing fight.

"So you say," he snarled. "So you say. You prate of warrants and duty and — where's your badge?" His voice rose into a scream. "Show me your badge, you—"

"It's in my dispatch-case," I said "—with other things. Would you like to know the duty which took me into her suite?"

"What then?"

I raised my eyebrows.

"I wanted a word with her maid—a girl of the name of Elsa . . . She's wanted for forgery in Bristol. Perhaps you didn't know that."

And there, when I stood to lose it, I won my game—with a shaft that Percy Virgil had set in my hand: for I saw in his father's eyes that he knew the truth about Elsa . . . and how could I have known it, unless I belonged to the police? "The evil that men do lives after them." The son had delivered the father into my hand.

Lord Ferdinand's head was shaking.

As he felt for his chair—

"I swear that I didn't. I swear—"

"You needn't worry. You won't be accused of that. But that isn't nearly all. I didn't go just to see Elsa: I wanted to see your niece. For one thing, I wanted to speak of her mother's jewels."

The fellow's head stopped shaking, and a hand went up to his mouth.

"What — of — her — mother's — jewels?"

"This," said I. "Your son, Percy Virgil, stole them six weeks ago."

The fellow sat back in his chair, with a hand to his throat.

"You say that he's gone," he said.

"Both he and Elsa have gone. You see, I had instructions to give them their choice. That is sometimes done—if the injured party consents. It—it tends to avoid a scandal . . . I gave them both until dawn to be clear of Brief. And both have availed themselves of the chance which they had. Personally, I think they were wise: and I must confess that Elsa got back on me, for she packed a suitcase whilst I was engaged with your niece, and, when she went, it went with her . . . But that's by the way. In fact, this is all by the way, for I have so far said nothing of the most significant duty I did last night. I proved your brother's statement that he is the Count of Brief."

My words brought him up to his feet.

"I defy you," he mouthed. "It's a lie." He clawed at the air. "There is no proof. Because some old doddering servant imagines vain things—"

"I am not a doddering servant and I have no memories. Yet I can prove the statement your brother makes. I was sent to see if I could prove it—I told you just now. I was sent to complete the information . . . upon which the warrant will issue, the day after I get back."

"Then prove it—prove it to me."

"With pleasure," said I. "The Lady Elizabeth Virgil is twenty-four. She is also the next in line. If you are the Count indeed, why have you never shown her the secret of Brief?"

Beside this, my other blows were so many flicks on the face. Before my eyes, Lord Ferdinand seemed to shrink; and he took a step back and then sideways, and put out a hand to find something on which he could lean.

"Listen to me," said I. He lifted his head. "Following your brother's directions, I found the way to the chamber eight hours ago. I took his daughter with me: and now she knows for herself the secret of Brief. Both of us, therefore, can swear that we have seen with our eyes what your brother said we should see . . . which means that, as I warned you, the information is very nearly complete."

Though I heard no sound, I saw his lips frame the words.

"Very nearly."

"Very nearly, my lord. I have proved all your brother said, except one thing. He declared that if I were to ask you to tell me the secret of Brief, I should ask you in vain. And so . . . I ask you . . . to give me one single detail . . . of what your father revealed to his first-born son."

The man was trembling, and the sweat was out on his face.

"My b-brother," he quavered. "I think, if I could see him . . . I mean, without his statment the—the warrant could not issue . . . and could not be—"

"He has made his statement," I said. "I have a copy upstairs."

"But my son is free. Statements were made in his case, but he has gone free. You said that you had instructions—"

"If the injured party consents."

"That's what I say," cried the man. "My brother would never subscribe to my — to proceedings against his father's son. I—I know he wouldn't, Exon. He wouldn't bear malice like that. And then the scandal . . . You said yourself that, rather than have a scandal—"

"Your son has gone," said I. "There can be no scandal there. Percy Elbert Virgil has disappeared."

"I—can—disappear."

He was panting now, and his eyes were half out of his head; yet he did what he could to wreathe his face into a smile, as though to do me pleasure and make me his friend.

"I can make no promise," I said, "until I have reported to those who sent me here. The case is too grave. But I'll tell you what I will do. If you will indorse the statement your brother has made, I'll take it to London tonight and recommend my people to let you go. To be honest, I don't think they'll do it, but—"

"How soon will you know?"

"On Friday. And on Sunday I shall be back—with or without the warrant for your arrest. This is upon condition that you indorse the statement to which I refer. Otherwise . . ."

"Yes?"

"In view of what you have admitted, I shall lay an information at Gabble without delay. That will insure your detention until the demand for your extradition is made."

"But if I sign . . ."

"I can make no promise," I said. "I'll take the statement to London, and do what I can. You can take it or leave it, my lord. Sign, and I leave for London. Don't sign, and I leave for Gabble—within the hour."

The fellow was biting his fingers, with his eyes on my face. The signing stuck in his gullet, as well it might. And then he threw in his hand . . .

"All right," he said. "Give me the statement . . . And you'll do your best for me, Exon. I'm—I'm not as young as I was."

I stepped to the bell and rang it.

"I want my . . . servant," I said . . .

With a shaking hand, Lord Ferdinand wiped his face: and then, still holding the table, he made his way round the oak and took his seat in a chair. When my summons was answered, one hand was shading his eyes and the other was toying with a paper that lay on a blotting-pad.

"I want my dispatch-case, Winter."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Smithsonian Aid Uncovers Traces of An Ancient Race of Indian Brewers

A prehistoric race of Indians who were the longest-headed people ever known on earth may also have been among the heaviest drinkers, according to discoveries in the Big Bend country of west Texas announced by the Smithsonian institution.

A tremendous cave hewed out of a limestone cliff and apparently used as a ceremonial brewery was excavated near Dryden, Texas, by Frank M. Setzler, head curator of the institution's department of anthropology.

While searching for dwelling sites of this mysterious people whose existence he discovered only seven years ago, Setzler located a cave, 60 feet wide by 40 feet deep, that gave evidence of extensive cooking operations.

Setzler and his assistants dug through nine feet of debris, uncovering arrowheads, scrapers, drills and stone knives, but a relative scarcity of the usual cooked animal bones and human skeletons. (The caves ordinarily were both dwelling and burial places.)

In front of the cave was an abnormally large accumulation of cooking stones. Furthermore, there were great deposits of ashes of sotol, the lily from which a highly potent alcoholic beverage was brewed.

In addition to the lack of animal bones and human skeletons—indicating that the cave was not used to house a family group—and the abundance of cooking stones and sotol ashes, evidence that the cave was a brewery came from a boulder with a hole drilled in it. The boulder may have been used as a brewing kettle.

Historical Inconsistency

History is anything but logical or consistent. The Pilgrim fathers, for instance, originally sailed for the Hudson and found themselves at the end of their voyage on the Massachusetts coast. Their destination was the Hudson, then Dutch, because they had come from Holland, whence they had sailed from England seeking religious freedom. But in Holland, life was so good that the little band of Pilgrims, seeing absorption imminent with so many intermarrying with the Dutch, determined to keep themselves separate by journeying to the New World.

TAKING NO CHANCES

The thrifty Scot was on the train from Edinburgh to London. At each station he hurriedly left his compartment, rushed to the ticket office and rushed back to the train again. After this had been repeated a number of times, a fellow passenger asked the reason.

"It's because of my heart," the Scotsman explained. "The doctor says I may drop off at any time and I'm buying my ticket from station to station."

Such Injustice

"Have you any references?" inquired the lady of the house.

"Yes, mum, lots of 'm," answered the prospective maid.

"Then why did you not bring them with you?"

"Well, mum, to tell the truth, they're just like my photographs. None of them don't do me justice."

Hedging

The soldier was explaining the theory of shooting to his sweetheart.

Soldier—You see, we have to calculate the distance of the object we want to hit, and then allow for the power of attraction of the earth.

Sweetheart—But suppose you are shooting over water?

Soldier—Oh, that is more than you would understand—besides, I am not in the navy.

Preparation

A college student had failed to pass a very important examination and wishing to break the news gently to his parents he sent this telegram to his elder brother:

"Have failed to pass exam. Prepare father."

The brother replied:

"Father prepared. Prepare yourself."

THE LAST LAUGH

"Ho! Ho! Bill, jes think of them poor boobs what's jes had vacation at sea shores and such places."

"Where does the laugh come in?"

"Well now, they gotta go back to work."

No Hypocrite

A revival service was being held and one of the partners in a coal concern had joined the church. He tried to get his partner to do likewise.

"I can't do it, John," replied the partner, when his insistence became irksome. "Who'll do the weighin' if I join?"

Proposal?

"Ma, do you think Pa is goin' to let that little shrimp of a Sidney Brown marry Sis?"

"Why, I don't know, son. What makes you think he might?"

"Well, Dad is playing cards in the front room with 'em and I just heard him say, 'I'll raise you, Sid.' "

No Recommendations

"Could you let me have—er—a banker's reference, sir?" said the house agent, negotiating a sale. "Just a formality, you know."

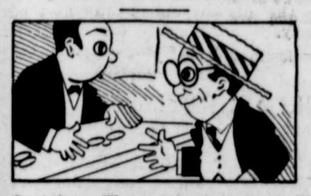
"I could," replied the client, "but it would only distress you."

Shrieking Tax

Victim—Fifteen dollars? You usually charge me $3.

Dentist—Yes, but you shrieked so loud that you frightened three patients away.

IMPROVED VISION



Optician—These glasses are only $10. Let me put them on. Do they improve your vision?

Customer—Wonderfully; I can see plainly the price is altogether too large.

Fine Distinction

The judge was reproving a colored man for deserting his wife. "Wife desertion is something we must deal with severely," the court admonished.

"But judge," protested the black man, "youall don't know dat woman. I isn't a deserter, I'se a refugee."

Her Gentle Answer

"Can you make a cake like mother used to make?

"Yes, darling, if you don't mind the indigestion father used to have."

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QUICK QUOTES

Sentinel Features

BACK TO WORK

"THE most important job for congress today is what it has been for the last six years—to put America back to work. This must be the watchword. Back to work for the unemployed. Back to work for idle capital and empty factories. Back to work for all to the task of creating a better world. Only under an administration dedicated to such a program can America once more move forward."—*U. S. Representative J. William Ditter.*

Narrow Souled

It is with narrow-souled people as with narrow-necked bottles—the less they have in them the more noise they make in pouring it out.—Pope.

THE TRUTH SIMPLY TOLD

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