

way of making the acquaintance of his future father-in-law-by-adoption. It seemed that he'd a big house in Oxfordshire that Queen Elizabeth had slept in half-a-dozen times, but that he liked work, and—well, well—I'd nothin' particular to grumble at.

"So that's the reason of the lanterns, and so on. I'm expectin' 'em back from the honeymoon every minute, and—"

A servant came to the door.

"Mr. Latimer has asked me to inform you that your car is now in going order, sir."

I departed, leaving my host in the hall to inspect, for the twentieth time, his scheme of decorations. At the gate I came upon two people alighting from the station fly, so utterly engrossed in each other's society that I doubt if they even saw me. But I heard a clear girl's voice say:

"Hurry up, Arthur dear, or daddy'll have to adopt another partner for Bongoline!"

And I beheld a sudden vision of Mr. Bosking, his face wreathed in smiles, running frantically down the drive to meet them.

He pushed open the door and entered a large bare room, which was filled with a blue haze of tobacco smoke. Opposite the door through which he entered was a wide bed, and stretched upon it in all the luxury of shirt sleeves, collarless neck, and shoeless feet, was a big freckled faced young man, with a mop of fiery red hair above his watery blue eyes. Beside him was a pile of newspapers and between his lips a cigarette sent out its clouds of smoke.

The man on the bed made no motion to rise. He surveyed his visitor with a cold and none too cordial scrutiny.

"This is Mr. Shannon, I take it," said the newcomer.

"That's wot," the other replied tersely. "Ryan sent me—Dan Ryan, you know."

"Uh-huh!"

"I have need of a man in your profession," said the visitor, with a slow smile, "and Ryan suggested you. Now then, how are you fixed for time? Anything particular on for to-night?"

Mr. Shannon grunted and shook his head.

"Then perhaps you can find time to do a little job for me," the other suggested. "Maybe," said Shannon cautiously. "Wot is there in it?"

"I'll tell you what I want you to do and let you set your price," was the answer. "I shall want you to go with me this evening to a certain house out on Claverly Road, and get for me a little tin box—just an ordinary strong-box, black japanned tin, handle on top and two yellow stripes running around the lid. You know the kind; you couldn't possibly mistake it."

Mr. Shannon nodded.

"I'm not positively certain as to just where it is," his informer went on, "but I can make a mighty good guess at the place. In all probability you'll find it in a little old fashioned safe set under the shelves in a china-closet, just at the left of the side-board in the dining-room."

It is a woefully old fashioned safe," he added. "I'm quite sure it will give you no trouble at all. Now then, what will it be worth to you to get that tin box for me?"

Mr. Shannon meditated for a moment. He took a fresh cigarette from the box beside him and lighted it from the glowing one he had just finished.

"A hundred plunks," he decided at last. "Fifty now, the other fifty when I turn over the box to you. And if it aint where you say, or there's any trouble—a holler from the folks in the house or anything of that kind—the fifty already paid is mine just the same."

"That's all right," the broadshouldered man agreed.

He drew a roll of bills from his pocket and stripped off several of them.

"Here's the first fifty. We better go out there about eleven. I'll meet you in a motor in front of the Day Building in Jefferson Square. That all right? Good! Don't fail me, will you?"

"I'll be there at eleven," said Shannon. "So long!"

He picked up one of the papers, and arranging the pillows more comfortably under his head, resumed his reading.

At five minutes of eleven that evening, he stood on the curb before the Day Building, his hands in his pockets and a cap pulled low over his eyes, watching the stream of traffic on the glistening pavements. A drizzling rain was falling, and the biting wind which whistled sharply about the neighboring corner, made him turn up his overcoat collar and tap his feet on the curbing for warmth.

Presently, from the long line of passing vehicles, two lights swung in his direction. A low, rakish road car shot up to the curb and the man at the steering-wheel craned forward to peer into Shannon's face.

"On time, I see," said the familiar voice of his caller of the afternoon.

The Tin Box.

By John Barton Oxford.

THE rocking hansom swung the corner from the avenue, rolled along a shabby little cross street and turned finally into one of the narrow, crooked thoroughfares close to the waterfront. It pulled up at length before a decidedly unattractive house, and the man who sat grimly on the cushions pushed open the apron and alighted.

"I'll be down in a few minutes," he called to the cabby, as he mounted the steps and gave the bell a vigorous tug.

The door was opened by a frowsy woman, who surveyed the man on the stoop with more or less suspicion. He was a tall, well-built man, broad shouldered, clean shaven, and apparently in the early thirties. His clothes were faultless in cut and texture. His gray eyes were clear and steady. Decidedly he was not the sort of man who generally rang the bell of this particular house.

"Well?" said the frowsy woman, the suspicion in her own shifty eyes growing momentarily more pronounced.

"I'm looking for a party named—er—"

The man on the step drew a bit of paper from his pocket and glanced at the scribbled lines upon it.

"A party named Shannon," he finished. "I'll find him here, won't I?"

"No," said the woman shortly. "He's moved."

The other elevated his eyebrows.

"Aren't you mistaken?" he asked politely. "You see, Dan Ryan sent me."

Immediately the woman's expression changed. She grinned, nodded her head, and opened the door wide.

"Three flights back," she instructed, and forthwith shuffled away down the gloomy hall.

The man mounted the three flights of creaking stairs, paused before the door of the back room, and tapped smartly upon it.

"Come in!" a gruff voice on the other side commanded.

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