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THE MYSTERY

By STEWART EDWARD WHITE
and SAMUEL HOPKINS ADAMS
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CHAPTER XXXI—(Continued.)

"Sorry not to have met you at the door," he said, courteously. "It was you that knocked, was it not? Yes? It roused me from my sleep."

"They started at him in silence. He blinked in the light, with unaccountable eyes."

"You will pardon me for not asking you at once. Past circumstances have rendered me well—perhaps suspicious is not too strong a word."

"They noticed that he held a revolver in his hand."

"Captain Parkinson came forward a step. The host half raised his weapon. Then he dropped it abruptly."

"Navy men!" he said, in an altered voice. "I beg your pardon. I could not see at first. My name is Percy Darrow."

"I am Captain Parkinson of the United States cruiser Wolverine," said the commander. "This is Mr. Barnett, Mr. Darrow. Dr. Tremdon, Mr. Darrow."

"They shook hands all around."

"Like some damned silly afternoon tea," Tremdon said later, retelling it to the men. A pause followed.

"Won't you step in, gentlemen?" said Darrow. "May I offer you the makings of a cigarette?"

"Wouldn't you be robbing yourself?" inquired the captain, with a twinkle.

"Oh, you found the diary, then?" said Darrow easily. "Rather dull of me to complain so. But really, in conditions like these, tobacco becomes a serious problem."

"So one might imagine," said Tremdon dryly. He looked down at Darrow. The man's eyes were light and dancing. From the nostrils two liquid lines ran diagonally. Such lines one might make with a hard blue pencil pressed strongly into the flesh. The surgeon moved a little nearer.

"Can you give me any news of my friend Thraxclaw?" asked Darrow lightly. "Or the esteemed Puls? Or the scholarly and urbane Robinson of Ethiopian extraction?"

"Dead," said the captain. "Ah, a pity," said the other. He put his hand to his forehead. "I had thought it probable. His face twitched. 'Dead? Very good. In fact—really—amazing.' He began to laugh, quite to himself. It was not a pleasant laugh to hear. Tremdon caught and shook him by the shoulder.

"Drop it," he said. "Darrow seemed not to hear him. 'Dead, all dead!' he repeated. 'And I've outlasted 'em!' And his mirth broke forth in a strangely shocking gasp."

Tremdon lifted a hand and struck him so powerfully between the shoulder blades that he all but plunged forward on his face.

"Quit it!" he ordered again. "Get hold of yourself!"

Darrow turned and gripped him. The surgeon winced with the pain of his grasp. "I can't," gasped the maroon, between paroxysms. "I've been living in hell. A black, shivering hell, for God knows how long. . . . What do you know? Have you ever been buried alive? And again the agony of laughter shook him."

"This, then," muttered the doctor, and the hypodermic needles shot home.

During the return Darrow lay like a log in the bottom of the gig. The opiate and done its work. Consciousness was mercifully dead within him.

CHAPTER XXXII.

The Survivors.

Rest and good food quickly brought Percy Darrow back to his normal poise. One inspection satisfied Dr. Tremdon that all was well with him. He asked to see the captain, and that gentleman came to Ives's room, which had been assigned to the rescued man.

"I hope you've been able to make yourself comfortable," said the commander, courteously.

"It would be strange indeed if I could not," returned Darrow, smiling. "You forget that you have sent a savage down in the midst of luxury."

"Make yourself free of Ives's things," invited Captain Parkinson, "or follow; he will not use them again, I fear."

"One of your men lost?" asked Darrow. "Ah, the young officer whose body I found on the beach, perhaps?"

"No; but we have to thank you for that burial," said the captain.

Darrow made a swift gesture. "Oh, if thanks are going," he cried, and passed in hopelessness of expression.

"This has been a bitter cruise for us," continued the captain. He sighed and was silent for a moment. "There is much to tell and to be told. There is much to be told."

"Much," agreed the other, gravely.

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Kidneys are Unhealthy
Constant Headaches

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"After one dose of Dr. Hamilton's Pills, there was a sudden change. I felt better, my appetite increased, and that constipation depression entirely left me. Life seemed bright and new. After I used Dr. Hamilton's Pills, I am strongly recommending such good medicine."

No Appetite—Bad Color—General Debility

"I was run down," writes Mrs. Albert E. Dixon, of Fairhaven, P. O.: "My color was all right, but my appetite was poor, and I suffered from constipation."

"I found it hard to get up in the morning. I was very nervous, and I suffered from constipation. After I used Dr. Hamilton's Pills, I am strongly recommending such good medicine."

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Take Dr. Hamilton's Pills when you're well, when you're sick, whenever you think a purifying tonic will do you good. Sold everywhere in yellow boxes, 25c each, or five for \$1.00. Insist on having only Dr. Hamilton's Pills of Maudslayi and Butternut.

"You will want to see Slade first, I presume," said the captain.

"One of your officers whom I have not yet had the pleasure of meeting?" The captain stared. "Slade," he said. "Ralph Slade."

"Apparently there's a missing link. Or I fear I was not wholly myself yesterday for a time. Possibly something occurred that I did not quite take in."

"Perhaps we'd better wait," said Captain Parkinson, with obvious misgiving. "You're not quite rested. You will feel more like."

"If you don't mind," said Darrow, "I'll go with you."

"Very well. I am speaking of the man who acted as mate of the Laughing Lass. The journalist who—good heavens! What a name! I have to beg your pardon, Mr. Darrow. It has just occurred to me. He called himself Eagen with you."

"Eagen! What is this? Is Eagen alive?" "On this ship. We picked him up in an open boat."

"And you say he calls himself Slade?" "He is Ralph Slade, adventurer and journalist. Mr. Barnett knows him and vouches for him."

"And he was on our island under an assumed name," said Darrow in tones that had the smoothness and the rasp of silk. "Rather annoying. Not good form, quite, even for a pirate."

"Yet, I believe he saved your life," suggested the captain.

"He admitted. 'Why, yes,' he said. 'So he did. I had hoped that all of my crew were of the same way. You didn't find any of the others.'"

Darrow got to his feet. "I think I'd like to see Eagen—Slade—whatever he calls himself."

"I don't know," began the captain. "It might not be—"

Darrow drew back a little, misinterpreted the other's attitude. "Do I understand that I am under restraint?" he asked stiffly.

"Certainly not. Why should you be?" "Well," returned the other contemplatively, "it really might be regarded as a subject for investigation. Of course I know only a small part of it. But there have certainly been suspicious circumstances. Piracy there has been; no doubt of that. Murder, too, if my intuitions are not at fault. Or at least, a disappearance to be accounted for. Robbery can't be denied. And there's a dead body or two to be properly accounted for."

"You'll find my story highly unsatisfactory in detail, I fancy. I merely want to know whether I'm to present it as a defence, or only an explanation."

"We shall be glad to hear your story when you are ready to tell it—after you have seen Mr. Slade."

"Thank you," said Darrow simply. "You have heard his?"

"Yes. It needs filling in."

"That's for Dr. Tremdon to say. He came to us almost dead. I'll find out."

"Hate to put the strain on him," said he. "But he'll be in a fever till he gets this thing off his mind. Send Mr. Darrow to him."

After a moment's consideration Darrow said: "I should like to have you and Dr. Tremdon present, Captain Parkinson, while I ask Eagen one or two questions."

"Understand one thing, Mr. Darrow," said Tremdon briefly. This is not to be an inquisition."

"Ah, said Darrow, unmoved. "I'm to be another defendant pro se."

"You are to respect the conditions of Dr. Tremdon's patient, sir," said Captain Parkinson, with emphasis. "Outside of that, your attitude toward a man who has twice thought of your life before his own is for you to determine."

No little cynicism lurked in Darrow's tones as he said:

"You have confidence in Mr. Slade, alias Eagen?"

"Yes," replied Captain Parkinson, in a tone that closed that topic.

"Still, I should be glad to have you gentlemen present, if only for a moment," insisted Darrow, presently.

"Perhaps it would be as well—on account of the patient," said the surgeon significantly.

"Very well," assented the captain. The three went to Slade's cabin. He was lying propped up in his bunk. Then he entered first, followed by the captain, then Darrow.

"Here's your prize, Slade," said the surgeon.

Darrow halted, just inside the door. With an eager light in his face Slade leaned forward and stretched out his hand. "I couldn't believe it until I saw you, old man," he cried.

Darrow's eyebrows went up. Before Slade had time to note that there was no response to his outstretched hand, the surgeon had jumped in and pushed him roughly back upon his pillow.

"What did you promise?" he growled. "You were to lie still, weren't you? And you'll do it, or out we go."

"How are you, Eagen?" drawled Darrow. "Not Eagen. I'm done with that. They've told you, haven't they?"

Darrow nodded. "Are you the only survivor?" he inquired.

"Except yourself."

"The Nigger? Puls? Thraxclaw? The captain? All drowned?"

"Hardy Solomon," replied Slade with a shrug. "They murdered him."

"Ah," said Darrow softly. "And you beg your pardon—your—er—friends—disposed of the doctor in the same way?"

"Shaking him," Slade got that fixed, if there's a hell for human fiends. They threw the doctor's body in the surf."

"You didn't notice whether there were any papers?"

"If there were they must have been destroyed with the body when the lava poured down the valley into the sea."

"The lava," of course, assented Darrow with elaborate nonchalance. "Well, he was a kind old boy. A cheerful, simple, wise old chap."

"I would have given my right hand to save him," cried Slade. "It was so sudden—so damnable—"

"Better to have saved him than me," said Darrow. He spoke with the first touch of feeling that he exhibited. "I have to thank you for my life, Eagen—I beg your pardon: Slade. It's hard to remember."

Dr. Tremdon arose, and Captain Parkinson with him.

"Give you two hours, Mr. Darrow," said the surgeon. "No more. If he seems exhausted, give him one of these powders. I'll look in on an hour."

At the end of an hour he returned. Slade was lying back on his pillow. Darrow was talking, eagerly, confidentially. In an another hour he came out.

"The whole thing is clear," he said to report to them. "I am ready to report to you."

"This evening," said the captain. "You've had Slade's story. I'll take it up just a moment."

His cigarette glowed fiercely in the dimness before he took up his tale again.

"You all know who Dr. Schermerhorn was. None of you know—I don't know myself, though I've been his factotum for ten years—along how many varied lines of activity that mind played. One of them was the secret of energy; concentrated, resistless energy. Man's contrivances were too puny for him. The most powerful engines he regarded as toys. For a time high explosives claimed his attention. He wanted to harness them. Once he got to the point of practical experiment. You can see the ruins yet; a hole in a southern New Jersey cliff, where he had been working. He never understood how he escaped. But there he was on his feet across a ten-foot fence in a ploughed field—yes, he flew the fence—and running furiously in the opposite direction, when the dust cleared away. Someone stopped him finally. Told him the danger was over. 'Yet, I will not return,' he said firmly. He was faintly aware. That disgusted him with high explosives. What secrets he discovered he gave to the government. They were not, indeed," corroborated Barnett.

"Next his interest turned to the natural phenomena of high energy. He studied lightning in an open steel network laboratory, with few results save a succession of rheumatic attacks, and an improved electric interrupter, since adopted by one of the great telegraph companies. The former obliged him to stop these experiments, and the invention he considered trivial. Probably the great problem of getting at the secret of energy led him into his attempts to study the mysterious electrical waves radiated by lightning flashes; at any rate he was soon as deep into the subject of electrical science as his countryman, Hertz, had ever been. He used to tell me that he often wondered why he hadn't taken up this line before. He was not, indeed, a very practical man. He was a theorist, and he loved to explore, waves in that tremendous range between those we hear and those we see. It was natural that he should then come to the most important of all elements, uranium, thorium, and radium. 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