

OVERNIGHT GUEST

By BEN AMES WILLIAMS (WNU FEATURES)

THE STORY THUS FAR: Adam Bruce, FBI operator, while on a visit to his old home, ran into his previous boss, Inspector Tope, and Mrs. Tope. He sent them out to the Dewala's Mill auto camp, operated by Ben Dewala. Later that night Tope phoned Bruce and had him come out with Ned Quill, a state trooper. Tope had been shown to a cottage called Faraway, but seeing that something was wrong, he had a transfer made to another cottage. Tope had been told that no one had occupied the Faraway cottage, yet he had seen signs that led him to believe something was wrong. He sent his wife out while he began a search of the cottage to locate the mystery.

CHAPTER III

"But if a man is doing something in the dark by the light of a match, he will hold it till it burns his fingers. This match would have burned a man's fingers."

And he said: "I looked in the finding and the paper and behind the logs till I found eleven matches, all burned down about the same way. I lit a match and timed it. Handled carefully, it burned over half a minute. So eleven matches would give some light in this cabin, for about six minutes. A lot can be done in six minutes."

Mrs. Tope suggested: "You can't do much with one hand if you're holding a match in the other!"

Tope nodded in quick pride. "That's right, ma'am! Adam, this wife of mine is keen. So whatever was done here, there were two people. One of them did it, and the other held the matches, made a light."

Bruce said: "I can see that. Go on."

And Tope explained, apologetically: "So it seemed to me sure that some one had done something here. Either they came to get something, or to hide something. I thought they might have hid something; and I wanted to search the place, see what I could find."

He looked at Mrs. Tope. "But—I didn't want to bother you, or worry you," he said to her; and then to Adam. "So I let her go outside. Then I started to look under the beds. That was the only place where much of anything could be hidden. You see how they're made."

Adam felt his pulses pounding heavily. "I found something under the bed," Tope explained. The young man tried to speak, to ask a question; but his voice died in a husky whisper. Tope said gravely: "It's still there. It's a dead man. I'll show you!"

But as he was about to draw the coverlet away, some one knocked, in a soft, furtive fashion, on the door. That quiet knock was terrifying! These three whirled as one; and then a knock sounded again, and Bruce opened the door. Then he said in a vast relief:

"Oh, hullo, Ned! Come in." He drew the other man into the room. "This is Ned Quill, Inspector," he said. "You wanted him, and I told him to meet us here."

Tope extended his hand. "I've seen enough of Mr. Quill to know he doesn't like violins!"

Quill grinned, and took off his cap, and shook hands with Tope and with Mrs. Tope. "That fiddler makes me fidget!" he agreed. He stood looking at them, waiting. "Well?" he challenged. "What's the matter? What's all the shooting for?"

Tope, after a moment and without a word, turned again toward the bed. They came silently behind him.

"There's a dead man under here," said Tope. He removed the blankets and the sheets, and he took hold of the mattress at one end, looked at Bruce. "You take the other end," he directed.

They lifted the mattress, laid it on the floor. There was left on the bed a spring, made of a square pattern of heavy wire. The electric light, a shaded bulb, hung almost directly overhead; and its rays shone down unhindered, so that the wire squares threw a network of shadow on that which lay in the box-like space below.

This was, as Tope said, the body of a man. He lay a little on one side; yet not as though his body had been arranged in this position, but in a twisted fashion vaguely disturbing, suggestive of some spasmodic effort or movement in the moment of his death. He was an old man, his age manifest in thin gray hair, scantily seen under a ragged cap pulled down to his ears. There was a prickling of gray beard on his chin and the upper part of his cheek.

But except for brow and cheek and chin, his countenance was concealed by two strips of black adhesive tape bound tight over his mouth and over his eyes. Each band was carried clear around his head, double and triple for full security. Also, his hands were bound behind him, with lengths of insulated wire twisted around the wrists; and these wires held in place around his hands a thick fold of blanket. His feet in the same way had first been wrapped in a blanket and then bound with wires; his swaddled hands were secured to a rope that circled his body like a belt.

Through the rents in them no hint of underclothing was visible. This was the whole picture. They looked, and Mrs. Tope closed her eyes and clung to her husband's arm, and Tope covered her hand with his. Adam Bruce was pale and shaken, his face a drawn mask. Save for the cheerful murmur of the brook outside, the night was completely still.

Tope said gravely: "When I saw the tape, Adam, I thought of you. The gags and the blindfold looked like kidnaping. This may be in your line."

Bruce nodded. "Who is it?" he muttered.

Tope shook his head. "I don't know. I haven't touched him, except to make sure he was dead."

"There's been no kidnaping reported," Bruce reflected. "Or we'd have known. The Chief knew where I was." And he exclaimed incredulously: "I was here last night, Tope! Do you suppose he was here then?"

"Yes."

But Tope spoke, in a tone of finality. "Well, there it is," he said. "Quill, this is up to you and Adam."

Bruce objected: "I've no standing unless this chap was carried across a state line." And he urged: "Be-



This was, as Tope said, a body of a man.

sides, Inspector, you're not going to walk out on us! Mat Cumberland will keep you on the job if he has to handcuff you."

"Cumberland?" Tope echoed. "Is he still the D.A. up here? I worked on the Hichens case for him."

Quill suggested: "But Joe Dane does all the work in the office. He'll be back here, later, when he brings Bee home."

Adam urged: "It's not up to us to call Joe, Ned. We'll get Mat. If he wants to turn it over to Joe, that's up to him."

"You ought to get the medical examiner too," Tope suggested. "But—I've a notion it might be a good idea to keep this quiet, just at first. Don't use the telephone. It's a party line."

"I left my bike up at Amasa's," Ned Quill explained. "I can ride to town and get Cumberland."

Tope, when the trooper had gone, laid a sheet over the naked springs of the bed, and he and Adam and Mrs. Tope drew near the fire. Adam stood leaning against the mantel; Tope filled his pipe and lighted it; and Adam said:

"Looks like a tough one, Tope."

"Well, it may get easier as we go along," he puffed contentedly. "After I found this man, I did a lot of listening. Your friend Miss Dewala, she talks without much prodding; and there's a woman, a Mrs. Murrell, that likes to ask questions. Maybe you know her?"

"Sure," Adam agreed. "I listened to some of her questions," Tope explained. "And asked some of my own. They tell me eight cottages were full Saturday night. I figure that was the night he was put here." He asked: "Adam, how many people were here last night? What time did you get here? You weren't here Saturday night, were you?"

"Some one here wasn't harmless," Tope suggested. "How about this man with the violin! Know anything about him?"

Bruce hesitated. "Why, his particular hobby is rivers, and waterfalls. He's the secretary of an association for the protection of our streams. I don't know whether there is any such association, but he's the secretary of it, anyway!"

Tope looked at the young man thoughtfully. "Your—vacation up here have anything to do with him, Adam? I gathered he didn't like you."

Bruce chuckled. "You're cute as a weasel, Tope, for smelling out a trail, but you can cross Vade off."

The older man did not press the point. "All right," he said. "We'll cross Vade off. But two men came in tonight after we got here. One of them—called himself Whitlock—was talking to Priddy after supper. I think they're after something; but—they weren't here Saturday night!"

"No," Adam agreed. "Nobody here by those names!"

"How about the Murrells?" Adam chuckled. "Out," he said positively.

"And Miss Dewala? She doesn't seem as stubborn and cantankerous as you said she was. What about her?"

"Why, I met her two or three years ago," Adam explained. "While I was working in the bank commissioner's office. I came up here to look over the local bank, and she was secretary to the president. A man named Eberly." He spoke ruefully. "I liked her, and she liked me, but the bank was in bad shape. After I made my report, the commissioner closed it, and she was held against me ever since. Or at least she pretends to. She was devoted to Mr. Eberly. . . . But Tope, this doesn't get us anywhere. Not on this business. I don't see that we've got any place to start, on this."

"Well, son, we know some things," Tope reminded him: "We know there were two people in it, because one of them struck matches to make a light, while the other did the job. And by the way the bed was made, I wouldn't be surprised if one of them was a woman. Not many men can make a bed right. Then there's another thing: That electrician's tape around this man's mouth and eyes; and the wires he's tied up with are old ignition wires off a car; and the clothes on him are greasy. Maybe whoever tied him up was a mechanic, a chauffeur."

"That's just guessing."

"Well, I believe in guessing," Tope insisted. "Then those pieces of blanket wrapped around his hands and feet and head—a dog had slept on that blanket. A police dog, I think. You can see the hairs."

"Plenty of police dogs around!" Tope considered; and then he asked, in the tone of one who has made a discovery: "Adam, why were his feet and his hands and his head wrapped up in pieces of blanket? Why were his hands tied to his body behind?"

Bruce shook his head. "I don't know!"

Tope said positively: "Why, to keep him from making a noise, by kicking, or butting with his head, or beating with his hands. A noise that some one might hear."

Bruce stared at him. "You mean he wasn't dead when they put him here?"

"Well, it's sure he wasn't dead when they tied him up, anyway."

Mrs. Tope spoke swiftly. "Inspector!" They looked at her. "Inspector, no one would kidnap a poor man! This man has on old, shabby clothes."

Tope watched her. "Oh, they changed his clothes."

"Why?" she challenged, as though she knew the answer. "So he couldn't be identified by what he had on."

"You mean they changed his clothes after they killed him?"

IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

By HAROLD L. LUNDQUIST, D. D. Of The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago. Released by Western Newspaper Union.

Lesson for December 16

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EXALTING CHRIST IN THE LIFE OF THE NATION

LESSON TEXT: Isaiah 9:1, 2, 6, 7; Luke 1:26-35

GOLDEN TEXT: For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.—Isaiah 9:6, 7.

Christmas is coming! It should be a blessed and delightful time this year. But do not fail to ask yourself, What is its true meaning? Why did Christ come? So that we could feast and celebrate? Surely not. He came first of all to be a Saviour; but do not forget that the Saviour is also the King of kings.

When Jesus came, His people Israel were practically without a government. They were a subject people under the rule of Rome. Their national life was in ruins; darkness had settled over their land, and there was both national and spiritual darkness. Christ came as their King, as well as the Light of the world. True, they rejected Him, and His kingdom is now in abeyance until He comes again to reign. One of these days He will come!

I. Darkness—but the Light is Coming! (Isa. 9:2, 3).

When Jesus came there was deep darkness in Israel; there was no king. National honor and glory were at low ebb. Religious leaders had lost their spiritual vision and zeal. They were going through the form of godliness but denying its power. Read the book of Malachi for a picture of their desolation.

Then Jesus came, and the greatest Light of all time shone forth in the darkness. He was and is "the light of the world" (John 8:12). They that followed Him did not stumble in darkness (John 9:5; 11:9). How sad that they received Him not (John 1:11)! The reason? They loved darkness rather than light (John 3:17-21).

There is much darkness in our world today. We need the light of Jesus in national life, as well as in individual life. When will the nations of the earth recognize Him as the only One who can truly lead them through the darkness?

Military leaders, educators, and scientists are saying in our day that there must be a spiritual rebirth of the peoples of the earth if we are not to have another war which will destroy everything. No mere revival of "religion" will do it. We must have Jesus, the Saviour and the Light!

II. Chaos—but a King is Coming! (Isa. 9:6, 7).

We have already suggested that Isaiah's prophecy came at a time of chaos in the affairs of the nation. Would they ever have the order and dignity of a nation again? Who was to be their king? What kind of leader would He be? Our verses give the answer.

Seven hundred years before Christ came, the prophet presented a glorious, detailed picture of the coming One. He was to be born as a Babe—a Son—but the "government shall be upon his shoulder."

What kind of King is He? His names reveal Him.

"Wonderful"—that word has been so misused that it means comparatively little to us. It really fulfills its true meaning in Christ. He is unique, remarkable, yes, truly wonderful.

"Counsellor"—in every detail of life, great or small, an infallible Guide. "Mighty God"—not just like God, or representing God; Christ is God. "Everlasting Father"—the tender and loving, unchanging One to whom time brings no change, for He is the "Father of eternity." "Prince of Peace"—He is not yet the Ruler of the nations of the world, hence we hear not only of wars but of rumors of wars. Mark it well that there will be no enduring peace until He comes to reign whose right it is to reign, the divine Prince of Peace.

III. Jesus Christ—the Light and the King (Luke 1:26-33).

If Christ is to be honored in the life of any nation, yes, of our nation, He must first be recognized as the Son of God, the Lord of glory, the everlasting King of kings.

The Home Town Reporter in WASHINGTON

By Walter Shead WNU Correspondent

WNU Washington Bureau, 1616 Eye St., N. W.

FHA Ready to Help Farm Home Builders

THE Federal Housing administration has just announced that it now has a hundred-million dollar bank balance. In addition, for the past five years, this agency of government has been paying operating costs out of its own income. It has mortgage insurance of \$6,700,000,000 on its books plus about \$2,000,000,000 of insured loans on repairs and modernizing programs on existing homes.

Your Home Town Reporter can remember back 11 years ago when the FHA entered the field of home financing. It was attacked by most of the men in private home financing as a "ridiculous and hairbrained proposal of long haired theorists," and "was doomed to utter failure."

Its activities, however, are now accepted by lending institutions everywhere. Banks and other lenders are now making home financing loans, some of them on more generous terms than even the FHA will make.

Eleven years ago it was impossible, or at least very difficult, for a man of moderate means to own his own home. He had to save up enough for at least 50 per cent of its value and had to go on mortgaging and remortgaging for three-year periods, at high interest rates. In some instances he paid as high as 8 per cent.

FHA said to prospective home owners and to private lending institutions alike, "You folks can own your own homes by paying only 10 per cent down on new homes costing less than \$6,000, and Uncle Sam will guarantee the bank against loss. You can make your payments in equal monthly installments for a period up to 25 years at interest of not more than 4 1/2 per cent."

Loans for Farm Homes

After financing many thousands of home purchases, Raymond Foley, FHA director, says, "Because of the sound financial principles underlying the FHA program, its far-reaching benefits are proceeding without cost to the government."

Of great importance to rural residents and those living in rural communities, the FHA has just recently announced that it is extending its guaranteed loan provisions to the construction of country homes and also the provisions of its Title I for the repair and modernization of existing homes and farm buildings.

It seems to your reporter that in the face of the acute housing shortage, the tendency to throw away government restraints, the rapidly increasing prices on speculative housing and other factors, that the safest procedure a prospective home owner could take would be to go to his bank or building and loan association and say he wanted to buy that home on an FHA insured mortgage.

He would be protected (1) against any inflated appraisal of the property; (2) against any shoddy construction; (3) against costly second and third mortgages; (4) against costly mortgage renewals; (5) against lapsing of taxes and insurance.

And his monthly payments would be in reasonable proportion to his regular income, obviating insofar as possible, the chance of default in payments and consequent foreclosures resulting from over-borrowing. Veterans not only have the advantage of this FHA loan, they also can borrow up to \$2,000 under the G.I. bill for new home purchase, which is also guaranteed by the government through the Veterans' administration.

For the first time since the war, FHA applications for guaranteed home loans are now running at the rate of approximately 1,000 per week. The trend in new house construction is to get out of the cities and into the country, and this present housing emergency finds more than a million and a half families living doubled up, according to the National Housing agency.

'Back to Land' Movement

Those who are watching the acute housing shortage see a definite "back to the land" movement which will mean the construction of thousands of new small homes in rural areas and in the smaller towns of the nation. One-acre and half-acre plots are the dream of thousands in the massed population centers in the cities.

Estimates of housing shortages reach the 12,000,000 mark and of this number approximately five million are in the small towns and rural areas throughout the nation. The war brought about mass migration of workers from the South and East into the West and Midwest and these next several peacetime years will see another mass migration of workers from the slum and crowded sections of our great cities into the breathing space of the rural sections. So pressure of these events to come will make housing one of the critical issues in the future.

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By Ruth Wyeth Spears



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