

# STORM MUSIC

By DORNFORD YATES

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**SYNOPSIS**

John Spencer and his cousin, Geoffrey Bohun, are vacationing in Austria. Geoffrey is a gifted portrait painter but prefers to paint landscapes. While strolling in the forest, John hears English voices, and decides to investigate. From safe cover he finds four men burying a man in green livery who, evidently, had been murdered. Pharaoh is the leader of the gang; the others are Dewdrop, Rush and Bugle. Unfortunately, John makes himself known to the assassins by dropping a letter with his name and address on it. He tells Geoffrey and his chauffeur, Barley, of his adventure, realizing that John's life is in danger, declares he must vanish. Spencer discovers that the livery of the murdered man corresponds to the livery of the servants of Yorick castle, and tells Countess Helena, mistress of the castle, what he had seen. With Geoffrey and Barley, John starts for Annabel, a nearby village.

**CHAPTER I—Continued**

"You go in," he said, "and have a look at the rooms. I imagine they're quite all right, but you never can tell." I left him filling a pipe and walked to The Reaping Hook. This was a pleasant inn, standing back from the road. As I entered the great, stone tap-room, it was clear that all was not well. It now seemed clear that some brawl or other had lately disordered the house and I began to wonder whether the host was absent because he had suffered some hurt. The poor woman's state, however, forbade my questioning her, and indeed as soon as she saw me, she threw her apron over her head and abandoned herself to her grief. I, therefore, turned to the scullion and asked him where his master might be, but the man seemed dull of compre-



Asked Him Where His Master Might Be.

hension and I had to shake him by the shoulder before at last he muttered that the host was upstairs. I made my way to the staircase which rose from the hall, and a moment later had gained a fine, broad passage which ran the length of the house. Since the stairs rose again, I was about to go higher, when the door of a room was opened, and the maid who had passed me came out, wide-eyed and breathless. "What's the matter?" I cried. "Where's your master?" She pointed to the room she had left and fled downstairs. I now began to think that the man must be dead, for he was a mild old fellow and not at all the sort that drinks himself into a fury and puts his household in fear. I walked to the door and stood listening before I knocked. For a quarter of a minute I listened, but heard no sound, and my hand was raised, ready to knock, when somebody spoke—and before he had spoken three words, I knew the answers to the riddles which I had been trying to solve. I knew why the house was disordered and why I had not been received: I knew why the maid was trembling and why the housewife was in tears; and I knew that, be they never so pleasing, the rooms at The Reaping Hook were not for Geoffrey and me . . . for the voice was the voice of Pharaoh, who was speaking pretty fair German and was recommending the landlord to do as he said.

**CHAPTER II**

**Plumage.** As I stole away from that door, I know that my knees were loose. So often as I remember that my hand was raised, ready to knock, the sweat will start upon my forehead. I passed down the passage a-tiptoe, as well I might, wondering if ever before two men had been at such pains to avoid the foe, only to choose for their harbor the enemy's camp, for that, of course, was the use to which he was putting the inn. I was halfway down the stairs, which rose in two flights, and the doorway of the inn was before me, when there came to my ears the slam of the door of a car. I believe that I stopped instinctively, but almost before I could think, a figure was in the doorway—a little wiry figure—and was heading straight for the stairs. It was my old friend, Dewdrop. Now I saw in a flash that unless of the four it was he that had been lying in wait to identify me at Lass, I stood a very fair chance of being no more than suspected as I went by. I, therefore, held on my way, and since he was looking down, Dewdrop did not perceive me until he was three steps off. And then our eyes met—for an instant. His surprise was his undoing. As plain as though he had said so, I knew that he knew who I was and the second he spent in staring served my turn. As his fingers flew to his mouth, I hit him under the jaw and leaped for the door. Now all would have been very well if I had not made one mistake. I had had the advantage of Dewdrop, for he had been standing below me and I was the heavier man. But the hall below us was flagged and I was afraid to hit hard lest he should topple backwards and split his skull on the stone. And so, though the blow was heavy, it was not heavy enough. Lay hold of me he could not, for his balance was gone, but as I gained the forecourt his piercing whistle rang out. My cousin heard it—I saw him. He had his back to the inn, and the bonnet of the Rolls was open and he was making some adjustment, spanner in hand. For an instant he stared. And then the bonnet was shut, and the spanner was in his pocket and a pistol was in his hand. Before I could speak— "Take the wheel," said Geoffrey, "and back her the way we came. There's a corner a hundred yards back. Turn her around there and wait. Is that her car?" "Yes, but—" "Quick," cried my cousin, and started to stroll to the inn. As I flung myself into the Rolls, I saw Dewdrop, running towards us, stop in his tracks. As Geoffrey fired, the fellow turned and doubled, dodging from side to side; to my amazement my cousin began to give chase. The engine of the Rolls was running and I let in the clutch. Then I lifted the car towards Geoffrey across the road. A closed car was standing in the forecourt beside the door of the inn. As Dewdrop whipped behind it, my cousin fired again. Then he turned to see me waiting six paces away. . . . Pharaoh was standing in the doorway, with a hand to his hip; as he drew arms, Rush thrust out from behind him and sent him against the jamb. I shall always believe that this blunder saved Geoffrey's life. I had never stopped the Rolls and as Geoffrey leaped for the step I let her go. In that instant two shots were fired, and a bullet went by my face to splinter the driving mirror. And then we were flashing through the village. Geoffrey was speaking. "I'm much obliged, my son. But another time you simply must do as I say. It's you they're after, not me. And now please put her along. I've holed their petrol-tank, so I hardly think they'll start: all the same I believe in distance." Twenty minutes later we glided out of a by-road on to a grass-grown track: where this curled into a thicker, I threw out the clutch. "My God," said Geoffrey, and wiped the sweat from his face. "And after all that trouble to cover our tracks. Fate beats the band sometimes. And now tell me exactly what happened." I told him the truth. "Colossal," says he. "Colossal. There's no other word. However, there's no harm done." He pulled out a map. "And now let's see where we are.

We ran through a village called Wagen some four miles back." We were twenty-two miles from Plumage, and the hour was just one o'clock. "Tea with the goddess," he said, "at five o'clock. What could be better? But I don't want to wait till then. Besides, we must find a lodging." Plumage lay more than two miles from the high road. The farm was set on the floor of a fair-sized valley that ran due west. The dwelling itself was handsome, white and gray and low, with shutters of olive green. "I must try and paint that," said Geoffrey. "The world will say it's unnatural, but never mind." We stole down the lane in silence and as I brought the car to rest, Lady Helena Yorick came out of the house, and, behind her, a great Alsatian, a very beautiful hound. Here for the first time I saw how truly lovely she was. I introduced my cousin and the lady gave him her hand. "I know your work," she said. "You painted my mother's brother six years ago." "In Philadelphia," Geoffrey said. "He carried his head as you do and he had the same blue-black hair." For a moment they spoke of her mother's American home. "Plumage," said Geoffrey, "deserves its beautiful name. Will you let me paint it one day, when the battle is done?" Lady Helena laughed. "I see," she said, "that you have been reading the map." For a moment I stared. Then— "This isn't Yorick?" I cried. "No," said Geoffrey. "But it's on the Yorick estate. Yorick itself is three miles beyond these woods." "And six miles from Annabel," said Lady Helena. "Remembering that Mr. Bohun, do you still propose to stay there?" "No," said Geoffrey, "we don't. We've—er—changed our minds." "I'm glad to hear it," said the girl. "Mr. Spencer is rather headstrong, and he doesn't seem to consider that he's rather too young to die." Lady Helena then turned to the bench on the left of the door. "Let's thrash this out," she said. She took her seat in the middle and we sat one on each side. "You may take it from me," she said, "that this is no ordinary case. I know what these men are out for, and they're not going to stand any rot. If it was my jewels, they could have them—young Florin was above rubies. "But they are not after my jewels; they're after something which isn't mine to give them and which they will never get. "Now, how d'you think they feel about Mr. Spencer? They know that he has the power not only to ruin their game but to send them to prison and death. Of course I can't answer for them, but if I were in their position, I'll tell you how I should feel. I should not rest until Mr. Spencer was dead." "I'm inclined to agree," said Geoffrey. "If you'd said as much this morning, I should have said you were wrong, for I think the return of his letter was an order to him to clear out. But now the case is altered. Through no fault of his own he's given them reason to think that he means to treat this order with all the contempt it deserves. Now, mark you, it wasn't his fault. We bumped into them at Annabel. They'd made the inn their headquarters, and John walked into their arms." "My God," said the girl. "But, as you see," said Geoffrey, "he also walked out. To tell you the truth, we had the best of the brush. But, speaking perfectly frankly, I fear that the damage is done. They believe that he's out to get them, and if he leaves the country I give you my word I think they'll follow him out." "You say," Lady Helena said, "that you had the best of the brush." "We put their car out of action. They won't be able to move for twenty-four hours." "That's a start worth having. He could be in London tomorrow if you left Salzburg tonight." My cousin sighed. "My lady," he said, "for one thing, he wouldn't go; and, for another, it wouldn't be any use. Their finding that letter was deadly: it bore his London address." "Then what's to be done?" "He must have his wish," said Geoffrey. "Fate has played into his hands,

and the only thing he can do is to stand and fight." Lady Helena rose. As Geoffrey and I stood up— "I'm sorry," she said coldly. "From what Mr. Spencer told me, I fully believed I could count upon your support. He's very young and downright, and he can see nothing but red. But I fully believed you would see that my consent must be given before you took on these men. The man who is dead was my servant, and the men are after my goods. If you stand and fight you will therefore be fighting my battle, and that gives me the clear right to decline your help. And I do decline it, Mr. Bohun. You cannot enter this quarrel without helping me; and I do not desire your assistance. If London's not safe, then leave for Paris tonight." "I'm damned if I'm going," said I. Lady Helena turned upon me with blazing eyes. "I beg your pardon." My blood was up and I gave her back look for look. "I said 'I'm damned if I'm going.' And I'll tell you another thing. I'm



My Lady Sat Down by My Side.

damned if I'm going to be treated as though I were seven years old." Lady Helena did not reply. I suddenly felt ashamed. Unpleasantly I turned to my cousin, but he had strolled down the apron and was regarding his barn. For a moment I hesitated. Then I made my way to the farther side of the Rolls. . . . And there I was sitting, on the running-board, staring on the beauty before me and cursing my unruly tongue, when I heard a step on the pavement and before I could move my lady sat down by my side. (TO BE CONTINUED)

**Problems in Subtraction Always Puzzle the Birds** Many birds possess a number sense—which should not be confused with counting—declares Dr. Tobias Dantzig in "Number: The Language of Science." For instance, if a nest contains four eggs one can safely be taken, but when two are removed the bird generally deserts. In some unaccountable way the bird can distinguish two from three. A squirrel was determined to shoot a crow which made its nest in the watch tower of his estate. Repeatedly he had tried to surprise the bird, but in vain. At the approach of man the crow would leave its nest. From a distant tree it would watchfully wait until the man had left the tower and then return to its nest. One day, the squirrel hit upon a ruse. Two men entered the tower. One remained within, the other came out and went on. But the bird was not deceived. It kept away until the man within came out. The experiment was repeated on the succeeding days with two, three, and then four men, yet without success. Finally, five men were sent. As before, all entered the tower, and one remained while the other four came out and went away. Unable to distinguish between four and five, the crow promptly returned to its nest. By the way, has it occurred to you that there is no last number? The process of counting cannot conceivably be terminated, Doctor Dantzig points out. Every number has a successor. There is an infinity of numbers.

**Goal Is Dependent Upon Style of Our Faculties** All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen. Whatever it be which the great Providence prepares for us, it must be something large and generous; and in the great style of his works. The future must be up to the style of our faculties, of memory, of hope, of imagination, of reason.

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