



By DORN FORD YATES

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THE STORY

CHAPTER I.—John Spencer and his cousin, Geoffrey Bohun, are vacationing in Austria. Geoffrey is a gifted portrait painter but prefers to paint landscapes and old buildings. As the story opens, John is taking a stroll in the forest. He hears English voices, and knowing that Geoffrey is some distance away painting a vista and that his chauffeur, Barley, is with him, he plainly could not be they talking. He decides to investigate, and from safe cover finds four men burying the body of a man in green livery who, evidently, had been murdered. Pharaoh is the leader of the gang; the others are called 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 of this adventure and the latter, 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 Yorkick castle, and tells Countess Helena, mistress of the castle, what he had seen. With Geoffrey and Barley, John starts for Annabel, a nearby village. They find the inn in disorder and hear the voice of Pharaoh.

Lady Helena arose. 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. 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 damned if I'm going to be treated as though I were seven years old."

Lady Helena did not reply. I suddenly felt ashamed. Uneasily 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 at the beauty before me and cursing my un-uncle tongue, when I heard a step



My Lady Sat Down by My Side. on the pavement and before I could move my lady sat down by my side. "Where are you staying?" she said. I swallowed. "I don't quite know," I answered. "We haven't found a place yet." The girl gazed into the distance. "I hope you'll stay here." "I could hardly believe my ears. "Here? At Plumage?" I cried. "I hope so. I can answer for the man and his wife; and you'll have a privacy here that you wouldn't get at an inn."

"It's ideal," I heard myself saying. "Simply ideal. We'll be on the spot, yet in hiding. But why— I don't understand." "If you insist on fighting my battle, the least I can do is to billet you." "You're very generous," I said. Her eyes left mine—to light on the driving mirror, all splintered and starred. After a long look, they returned to me. "Was that?" she said, nodding. "A present from Annabel?" "Yes." "And you were driving?"

"I was." "Tell me exactly what happened." When I had told the story, she drew a deep breath. "If you'd knocked on that door. . . ." She shivered. "May I look at that letter of yours?" I put it into her hand. She examined the envelope carefully. Then—"Have you looked inside," she said, "since you got it back?" I raised my eyebrows. "As a matter of fact I haven't. I never gave it a thought." She pushed aside the torn edges and drew out the shoemaker's bill. The note on its back was printed and easy to read.

Dear Mr. Spencer: The gentleman in green had done something which he must have known I should not like. That is why he was being buried. Verbum sap.

We had read the words together, her face two inches from mine. Then we turned and looked at each other. But I had no thought for the note. Her hair had stung my temples, and I could only wonder whether she knew how terribly attractive she was. She sat very still for a long moment. And then she was up and was pushing her hair from her temples as though to be rid of her thoughts. "Come. Let's talk to your cousin and then we can look at your rooms." Over her shoulder she threw me a dazzling smile. "To tell you the truth, they're ready. If you insisted on staying, I hoped you'd stay here."

"We must go to bed," said my cousin. "We've had an Arabian day."

We had bathed and changed and eaten and now we were strolling on the apron under the stars. "Never fight Fate," Geoffrey said. "My one idea this morning was to get you out of the way. To say so would have been foolish, for the blood was up in your head and you wouldn't have gone. But I meant to cool you at Annabel—let you flirt with the hope of finding your men: then Barley was going to report that he'd seen Pharaoh in Salzburg; when we meet him at Villach tomorrow, you'll see it's the first thing he'll say. So we should have left for Salzburg. . . . And after a week or two there, young Florin's face would have faded and you'd have come home. Very dishonest, of course. But put yourself in my place, and you would have done the same."

"I don't think I should," I said, frowning. "Yes, you would," said Geoffrey. "I'm your keeper, you know; and when people like Pharaoh get going, ordinarily people like us must pass by on the other side. The moment Barley comes back, we've got to locate these blackguards. First come, first served, you know." He drew in his breath. "We simply must find them, John, before they find us."

With that, he insisted that we should retire for the night. Sharply at eleven next morning Lady Helena Yorick rode up to the farm. Her groom led two spare horses, for after we had consulted, Geoffrey and I were to ride to Yorkick for lunch. As I stepped to her side—"Nothing new?" says she. "Nothing," said I. "And you?" She shook her head. "Except that my brother's returning. I wish he wasn't just now, but it can't be helped. At least he's coming alone. He's very young, you know; and people spoil him, and—sometimes he makes the wrong friends. Where's Mr. Bohun?"

"Map-reading," said I. "His map, with our big luggage, will get to Villach tonight. He's got to be met, of course. What Geoffrey is trying to do is to work out how we can fetch him without fetching Pharaoh, too. That show at Annabel's eaten into his brain." "I wish it would eat into yours." Here Geoffrey walked out of the house and gave her good day. "And now tell me this," said he. "Had young Florin keys upon him?" "No," said the girl. "While he's within the castle, the night-watchman carries keys; but before he goes out, he leaves his keys with his mate." "Well, you beat them there," said Geoffrey. "Young Florin was killed for the keys which he hadn't got." "I think you're wrong," said the

girl. "To enter Yorkick won't help them. I'm the person that matters. They've got to bring me to my knees." Geoffrey looked at her very hard. Then—"Lady Helena versus Pharaoh and others. You know I can't help feeling that you ought to go to the police."

My lady pulled off her gloves. "Let's walk in the meadows," she said, "and I'll tell you one of two facts."

In silence, we left the apron and took to the fields. . . . "My father," she said, "had vision. He knew the great war was coming and he saw that after the war the world itself would fall upon evil times. Mother had a very great fortune, and father was rich, and his one idea was to invest this money that, while the lean years were passing, it would be perfectly safe. I think he really wanted it for Yorkick. Our motto is: All things pass, but Yorkick endures. And he wanted to insure that Yorkick would always be maintained as it has been maintained for about five hundred years. Well, this idea obsessed him, and I think that my mother's death affected his brain. He threw back to his ancestors, and he put his whole fortune in gold. Golden sovereigns, mostly." She put her hands to her eyes. "I tell you it's the curse of my life."

"You don't mean—" began my cousin. "Yes, I do," said the girl. "Lying in the cellars at Yorkick is the best part of two million pounds. It's going, of course. We live upon capital. But even so, it'll last for a hundred and fifty years. And long before that, of course, the idea was to change it back."

"Good God," said Geoffrey. And then, "But what astonishing foresight your father had."

"He was wise—in theory. But how would you like to have charge of two million pounds in gold? The only people who know are old Florin and I. I said it was in the cellars, but it is not as easy as that. It's in a private cellar. The way to which nobody knows."

"But of course it was bound to come out. I've done my very best, but there's been a leakage somewhere, and Pharaoh knows."

"Well, there you are. He obviously can't get away with a million pounds. He could never transport it, for one thing. Very well, what's his object? I imagine to levy blackmail. Of course I shan't submit, but I can't afford to let the position be known. That's why I can't go to the police. I'd be an outlaw tomorrow if people knew. Everyone's hand would be against me and half the thieves in Europe would be camping outside my gates."

"The remedy's too obvious," said Geoffrey. "Why don't you get rid of the stuff?"

"Because I have passed my word. My father made me swear that until the world was settled I'd keep our fortune in gold."

"Well, now you know why Pharaoh the Great is here. He may prove hard to deal with, but I'm in no personal danger—I think that's clear."

"This was too much. "Clear!" I cried. "I don't think it's clear at all. I think you're in very great danger, by day and night. The man is ruthless—you know it."

"I entirely agree," said Geoffrey. "And I'll tell you another thing. In view of what you've told us

this morning, I think it was no mere chance that sent John down to that dell."

Yorkick was like no castle that I have seen, for though it was moated, the moat was not under its walls, and the pile seemed to rise from an island which Nature had brought from a distance and set in a fold of the hills.

We crossed the moat by a draw-bridge that could no longer be moved, and a gravel road brought us up to the castle gateway, which must have been twenty feet high. This was now shut by vast curtains of silver-gray, and to my surprise, my lady rode straight between them, her horse's head and shoulders parting them as she went.

In the hall my lady left us, to go and change, and, when we had washed our hands, a servant led us to the terrace where a table was laid.

The view from here was astounding, for we looked clean over the forest, which seemed to spread out like a fan, on the foothills and mountains which stood in their ancient order, the nearest some seven miles off.

An Austrian lady joined us, a Madame Olava, who plainly lived at the castle, for Lady Helena's sake. But though in this way convention was doubtless observed, as I have shown, my lady went unattended whenever she chose.

When luncheon was done, my cousin went off with Madame Olava to see the gallery of pictures, but Lady Helena walked with me round the ramparts, showing me certain landmarks and telling me the lie of the land.

After a little—"Was that gray all right this morning?" "Yes," said I. "He gave me a lovely ride." "I thought he would. You shall

have him to take you back. I shall keep three horses at Plumage as long as you're there. With a groom, of course. You may have news any moment which I should hear."

"I shall ride to Yorkick," said I, "to see how you are."

"But not too early," says she. "Yorkick wakes up at six, but its eyes aren't properly open till eight o'clock. So don't ride before then, if you please, either in this direction or anywhere else."

"I'm going to ask you to do a difficult thing. It concerns old Florin. You see, it's so awful on him. He knows I can take no action. And what can he do? He's got to sit down helpless under this shattering blow, while the men that dealt it go free. And so I want you to see him and tell him what you told me—that you are out to get them and to see that justice is done."

"With all my heart," said I. "Let me see him at once."

Without a word she led me across the terrace and into a library. Then she summoned a servant and bade him ask the warden to come to her there.

Two minutes later a man of some sixty summers was ushered into the room.

Helena spoke in German. "John, this is my warden, Florin. This is the gentleman of whom I spoke."

The warden bowed to me, and I went forward directly and took his hand.

"I can't bring back your son, Florin, but one day I'll show you his grave. It's a pretty place, far better than any churchyard, fit for



"This is the Gentleman of Whom I Spoke."

a king. But before I take you there, I've some work to do. I'm going to find the fellows that took his life. And they're going to pay for it, Florin. I'll never rest till they're taken, alive or dead."

The warden lifted his head and looked me full in the eyes. Then he turned his head to his mistress and looked at her. Though he never spoke, he seemed to ask her some question, for after a moment she nodded and looked away.

With his hand still in mine, the warden went down on one knee. "Your servant, sir," he said quietly. And then, "I am very grateful, sir. I cannot say more. My son will not rest in his grave if you come to hurt."

Then he rose and turned to his mistress, and when she had smiled and nodded, he bowed to her and to me and left the room.

As the door closed behind him—"He shouldn't have knelt," said I. Helena shrugged her shoulders. "That's his affair. But please tell no one he did so. You and he and I know, and that's enough."

Upon a sudden impulse, I put out my hand for hers. She gave it to me gravely enough. Then I went down on one knee and put the cool, slight fingers up to my lips. As she caught her breath—"Your servant," I said quietly, "and you may tell whom you please."

Eight hours had gone by, and I was sitting at Villach, in the driver's seat of the Rolls. My cousin was on the platform.

The train from Salzburg steamed out. Without a word being spoken our baggage was lifted aboard, and as Barley climbed in among it, my cousin sat down by my side.

"Let her go, John."

Ten miles on we pulled up by the side of the road. I felt my cousin nudge me. Then he lifted his voice.

"Anything to report, Barley?" The answer came pat. "No, sir. Nothing at all."

My cousin sat very still. Then he slewed himself around in his seat.

"That's strange," he said. "I'd half an idea that you might perhaps have seen someone—someone you thought you knew."

"No, sir," said Barley, firmly. "No one at all."

"Look here," said Geoffrey, "before you left—" A desperate voice cut him short. "Could I see you alone, sir, a moment?" "You can speak the truth here and now, Mr. Spencer isn't going

We're all three going to stay." "Very good, sir. Then I see Pharaoh. And Dewdrop beside. I'll swear it was them. In Salzburg: this afternoon. Come out of the station, they did, as I walked in."

CHAPTER III

On Patrol.

IF BARLEY'S news had given us something to go on, it pointed the wisdom of acting without delay. This for two very good reasons. In the first place, Salzburg for Pharaoh was dangerous ground, for anyone moving in Salzburg must plainly be under the hand of the Salzburg police: if, therefore, we could find him and then arouse suspicion sufficient to have him detained, although he might put up a fight, his race was as good as run. Secondly, it seemed pretty certain that Pharaoh had split his force and that Rush and the fourth of the rogues were yet in the countryside: and that meant that if we could find them, we should only have two men to deal with, and those very ordinary thieves. (And here I will say that I afterwards learned that the fourth rogue was known as Bugle.)

I will not set out our discussion of these very obvious points, for fully three hours had gone by before with many misgivings our plans were laid.

Early the following morning, Geoffrey and Barley and I were to visit The Reaping Hook: that Bugle and Rush would be gone, we had no doubt, but we had some hope of tracing the damaged car. If this should lead us up to the men we sought, we should at once give battle and do our best to lay the two by the heels: but unless by midday we had picked up some definite clue, then Geoffrey and Barley would leave for Salzburg by train, whilst I remained at Plumage, lying low during the daytime and patrolling the roads about Yorkick from dusk to dawn. "And I give you my word," said Geoffrey, "if only you'll mind your step, I think you're more likely to get there than Barley and I. We've got to search a city, and we don't know where to begin. But your field is much more narrow. In the first place, Yorkick is a loadstone, and Bugle and Rush will naturally turn that way. . . . But you simply must watch your step. You're out to get information, not to attack. If you find them, you must not strike: lie down and see them home, and then drive all out for Salzburg and Barley and me. Will you give me your word to do that? And always to be back at Plumage before it's light?"

I gave him my solemn word, but I knew in my heart that he would never have left me if he had thought it likely that I should find Bugle and Rush, and that, though he disliked the idea of my working alone, he was doing his best to choose the lesser evil and to keep me away from Pharaoh at any price.

Thanks to my lady's foresight, we could now send word to Yorkick without any waste of time, and before we left the next morning our groom was on his way to the castle, bearing a note from my cousin in which he had set out our plan.

It was barely eight o'clock when we ran into Annabel.

By Geoffrey's direction I stopped the car at cross roads out of sight of The Reaping Hook: then he and Barley descended and walked as far as the forge which was walling one side of the forecourt that graced the inn; and there Geoffrey

stood by the corner while Barley walked up to the house. As luck would have it, a servant was washing the steps, and a word from Barley brought him to Geoffrey's side.

Then my cousin turned and waved, and I brought up the Rolls, for, as we had fully expected, the birds were flown. One minute later we were speaking to the host and his wife. . . .

Now we had had no doubt that the moment we questioned their late undesirable guests, the two would be only too ready to talk themselves hoarse: but we were not prepared for the spate of incoherence which our casual inquiry unleashed. The two were simply bursting to vent such a volume of grievance as I can only compare to the burden of Christian's sins. When we had heard them in silence for what seemed a quarter of an hour and had inspected the spots at which violence had been committed or damage done, we ventured to put the questions which we had come to ask.

The strangers were gone. What was the order of their going and what had become of their car? Our words might have been a spell.

I have never seen human beings so suddenly change their tune. As though we had turned some tap, the fountain of talk stopped dead: all their excitement died an immediate death, and the two became as crafty and sullen as though we had come to trap them and to do them some evil turn.

They had seen nothing at all. One minute the strangers were there, and the next they were gone. They had not seen them go: they knew nothing of any car; when we spoke of its being dashed

they glanced at one another and shook their heads. "Scared stiff," said Geoffrey shortly.

In silence we returned to the Rolls. "And now for Plumage and Villach. At least, this means we can catch an earlier train."

Four hours later I bade my cousin farewell. . . .

Helena glanced at her wrist and folded the map. We were sitting by the water at Plumage, and had been for half an hour, for when I got back from Villach, a note from my lady was waiting to say that I might expect her at five o'clock.

"Do you think you can find your way?" "I think so," said I. "By night, without lights, upon roads that you've never seen?" I swallowed.

"I propose to watch certain points—the turning to Laas, for instance, and the copple that you call Starlight: that's where the road turns closest to Yorkick itself."

"And the car?" "I'll find some track or other and park her there."

Helena drew in her breath. "And supposing they're there before you and watch you arrive. . . . They'll let you park the car and steal back to the road. They'll let you pick your position and settle down. . . . And tomorrow at dawn they'll be digging another grave."

"Be honest," said I, laughing. "Why on earth should Rush and his fellow be watching these roads?" "I don't care," said Helena swiftly. "It isn't a one-man job. Mr. Bohun must be out of his mind. Will you take Sabre with you? At least, he'll give you warning if anyone else is at hand."

"I will, indeed," said I. "What time are you leaving here?" "About ten o'clock," said I. "Sabre shall be there tonight at a quarter past ten."

"And I'm not to thank you," I said. "I stay at your house. I ride your horses: and now I'm to have your dog. As partnerships go, it seems to be rather one-sided."

"That," said my lady, "is foolish. What am I doing that, if you were placed as I am, you wouldn't be glad to do?" "That ought to be the answer," said I.

She was sitting sideways, propping herself on an arm; and either because of her pose or because her hair, which was tumbled, she seemed no more the fine lady, but only a beautiful child.

Suddenly I knew that I was in love. . . .

That night was very dark, and I would have given a lot to have seen but once by daylight the roads that I was to patrol: quite apart from picking my way, I could see no track or turning until I was actually there.

It follows that after ten minutes the only idea I had left was to get to where Sabre was waiting at the mouth of the castle drive; and this, after great tribulation, I found about half-past ten. I overran it, of course. However, I knew I was right, so I stopped the engine and listened and then stepped into the road.

I was hastening back in the shadows when I suddenly found that something was moving beside me, and then, before I could think, the Alsatian was licking my hand.

At once I turned, to make my way back to the car, but the dog did not turn with me and when I put my hand on his collar, he would not move.

I had not begun my patrol: the Rolls was out in the open; and Sabre refused to move. If he would not come. . . .

I perceived that the first thing to do was to get the Rolls off the road. If Rush and Bugle were out—

Far in the distance I heard the drone of a car.

For an instant I stood spell-bound. Then I was out in the road and was whipping back to the Rolls. . . .

Before I started the engine, I listened again, to hear on the road



The Drone of the Car Was Louder behind me footfalls of some

body running, but I didn't know who it was. Then—"In you go, Sabre," said I, opening a door. As the dog leaped in, I sat at my side. "A hundred yards out," said I. "As quick as you can get a track on the right side of the road." The drone of the car was louder behind me footfalls of some er—some car on the road. "Now," said Helena. As I left the road for the drone of the car, I turned into a snarl. I stopped the engine and myself out of the Rolls. "Stay here," I cried, back to the bushes that lined the side of the road. The car was close now; headlights were on; and I passed me, her driver's lights and slackened. I started to run down the road with Sabre loping down. The car had stopped close to the entrance. Cautiously I made my way. I was almost abreast of light when Bugle spoke. "Two hundred yards," said he. "He's seen your speedometer reading went." "I would," said Bugle. "Cause he ain't no fore." "Now look here, Bugle. I'm doin' good. He's goin' to find little Annabel these roads." "Who's rakin' roads?" Pharaoh says "Watch that Annabel's right. The lady, he'll find her dog. The case is, says Pharaoh, that he, he laughed faintly. "Gimme the pumps," said Bugle. "He's got to take 'em, 'ow many Rolls d'ye want?" "An' when Bugle's we've got him, what do we do?" "Well, we ain't exactly got 'ere's a list of the pumps used." He let out a peep. "E's a nasty mind." "That's Gawd's truth, an' it's. Look at that: that's Sabre first-class, but he must let up. 'E's in some now—you can lay to that." "Ow far 'ave we got Bugle. After an audible snarl the tale the speedometer "Ninety-four," said Bugle. "Gawd 'elp," said Barley. "Well, we can't do it." "If 'e said to be castle—" "Figures is proof," said "Anyways, young Arthur and, with that, he let it I ran for the Rolls. man and, panting, looked Helena, started the car backed the car onto the stant later we were in suit of Bugle and Rush. frantic ten minutes I quarry was lost. "John, if they come row, I bet we follow them." "We?" said I. "You're ing out again." "I certainly am," said "For one thing, I shan't and you're not going to this that you can do it. To my horrid disappoin kept a fruitless vigil the nights. So two days and two by, and I had no new and, to judge from the sent, he had none for. Our third patrol was my lady and I were from Plumage as the peering over the eastern Helena turned to me. "Will you come and evening? I'm not going." "I'd love to, Helena." "Then you ride up to at a quarter to eight, and to bring up the room and edge of the forest—" I hesitated. "I wish," I said, "you miss tonight." "It isn't every day that of people like Pharaoh roah's crowd. The joint, my dear John, help reduce it. I've got of my beat. And here you look. I'm going to get the maddest impulse to self off my horse and take my arms. As I pulled myself "You're trembling, John." "No," said I. "I'm know how dogs shake when they're dreaming of a serious dream." "What are you dreaming Helena. (Continued Next)