

The Million Dollar Mystery

By HAROLD MAC GRATH

Illustrated from Scenes in the Photo Drama of the Same Name by the Thanhouser Film Company

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CHAPTER XX.

Braine Tries Another Weapon.
"What I want now," said Braine, as he paced the living room of the apartment of the countess, "is revenge. I've been checkmated enough, Olga; they're playing with us."

"That is nothing new," she replied, shrugging. "At the beginning I warned you. I never liked this affair after the first two or three falls." But you would have your way. You wanted revenge at that early date; but I cannot see that you've gone forward. Has it ever occurred to you that the organization may be getting tired, too? They depend solely upon your invention, and each time your invention has resulted in touching nothing but zero."

"Thanks!"
"O, I'm not chiding you. I've failed, too."

"Are you turning against me?" he demanded bitterly.

"Do my actions point that way?" she countered. "No. But the more I view what has passed, the more disheartened I grow. It has been a series of blind alleys, and all we have succeeded in doing is knocking our heads. I can see now that all our failures are due to one mistake."

"And what the devil is that?" he asked, irritably.

"We were in too much of a hurry at the beginning. Hargreave prepared himself for quick action on your part."

"And if I had not acted quickly he would have started successfully on one of his world tours again, and that would have been the last of him, and we should never have learned of the girl's existence. So there's your argument."

"Perhaps you are right. But for all that we have not played the game with any degree of finesse."

"Bah!" Braine lit a cigarette and smoked nervously. "I can't even get rid of that meddling reporter. He has been as much to blame for our failures as either Jones or Hargreave. I admit that in his case I judged hastily. I believed him to be just an ordinary newspaper man, and he was clever enough to lull my suspicions."

"You want her . . . dead?" whispered Olga, paling.
"Exactly. I want her dead. And so if all my efforts here come to nothing, so shall Hargreave's. His millions will become waste paper to him. That's revenge. The Persian peach method."

"Poison? You shall not! You shall not kill her!" vehemently.

"Tender hearted?"

"No. If I must in the end go to prison, so be it; but I refuse to die in the chair."

"Very well, then. We shan't kill her, but we'll make her wish she was dead. I was only trying to see how far you would go. The basket of peaches is in the hallway. Every peach is poisoned. No man in the

"Letter" What letter?"

She sprang from her chair. "Do you mean to say that they have not told you about that?" Olga became greatly excited.

"Explain," he said.

"Why, I was at the garden day before yesterday, and a man approached

and asked if I was Miss Hargreave. Becoming at once suspicious that something very important was about to happen, I signified that I was Miss Hargreave. The man slipped a paper into my hand and hurried off. I took a quick glance at it and was dumbfounded to find it utterly blank of writing. At first I thought some joke had been played on me, then I chanced to remember the invisible ink letters you always wrote me. Understanding that you were to visit the cave in the morning, I had one man at the garden take the note. And you never got it!"

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3:48 P. M.—Train 63—For Norwood, Ansonville, Wadesboro, N. C., Cheatham, Hartsville, Darlington, and Florence, S. C., connecting at Florence with A. C. L. trains, for Charleston, Columbia, S. C., Savannah, Ga., Jacksonville, Fla., Wilmington, N. C., etc. Through train to Florida.

7:30 P. M.—Train 59—Local Passenger train from Winston-Salem for Wadesboro and intermediate points.

2:30 A. M.—Train 58—Local Passenger train from Wadesboro for Whitney, Southmont, Lexington, Winston-Salem and all intermediate points.

1:48 P. M.—Train 62—For Winston-Salem, Whitney, Lexington, etc. Trains 62 and 63 are through trains between Florence, S. C., and Roanoke, Virginia.

Full information as to rates, schedules, etc., furnished on application.

H. L. Joyce, Agt., Albemarle.
E. P. Collier, Jr., G. P. A., Winston-

lesness. I'll call up Vroon and Jackson at once. Wait just a moment."

He went to the telephone. A low muttering conversation took place. Olga could hear little or none of it. When Braine put the receiver back on the hook his face was not pleasant to see.

"That girl!"

"What now?"

"It seems she had been out horseback riding that morning. She had seen one of the boys cross the field and suddenly disappear; and she was curious to learn what had become of him. With her usual luck she stumbled on the method of opening the door of the cave and went in. She must have been nosing about. She didn't have much time, though, as the boys came up to await me. Evidently she crawled into that old chest and in some inexplicable manner purloined the letter from Jackson's pocket. They left to reconnoiter; and it was then that Jackson discovered his loss. When Florence heard them returning she jumped into the well. And lived through that tunnel! The devil is in it!"

"Or out of it, since we consider him our friend."

"And I had her in my hands, note and all!"

"But with all that water there will not be any writing left on the letter."

"Invisible ink is generally indelible and impervious to the action of water; at least the kind I use is. I'd give a thousand for a sight of that letter."

"And it might be worth a million," Olga suggested.

"Not the least doubt of it in my mind. Olga, old girl, it does look as if my star was growing dim. We'll never get our hands on that million. I feel it in my bones. So let's settle down to a campaign of revenge, without any furbelow. I want to twist Hargreave's heart before the game winds up."

"You wish really to injure her?"

"I do not wish to injure her. Far from it," he replied, smiling evilly.

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