THE GRAY MASK 11-THE ELMFORD MURDER By Wadsworth Camp

On the afternoon before the Elm- She yielded and sat down, but now ford murder Garth, leaving headquar- she bent forward, her hands clasped at I ters, made an unaccustomed purchase. her knees to prevent their trembling. Not long ago such affectation would have appealed to his sturdy, straight field and Ross. I went to Ross. I felt forward mind of a detective as trivial, I knew him well enough. My dear! possibly unmasculine. He reddened as It's common scandal-much worse, I'll the handed his ten cents to the shape do you the credit of saying, then the deft. He had no illusions as to the here on Long Island, at some of these source of this foppish prompting. The unspeakable road housesinspector had called him in and told him that Nora would welcome him at the flat for dinner that evening. The event appeared a milestone on the amorous path he sought to explore hand in hand with the girl. He realized his desired destination was not yet in view, but such progress required a deviation from the familiar -some peculiar concession to its signifi So he turned away from the cheap sidewalk stand, wearing, for the first time in his life, a flower in his button-hole-a rose of doubtful future and unaristocratic lineage.

That night on the edge of winter it was thoroughly dark when Dr. John Randall left New York for his Long Island home Treving had unexpected ly detained him at the club. The interview had evidently projected more than the unforeseen, for Randall's habitual calm was suddenly destroyed by the color and the lines of a passionate indecision. He crossed the Queensborough bridge and threaded the Long Island city streets with a reckless dis regard of traffic which probably went undisciplined only because of the green cross on the radiator of his automo-

His house, although just within the city limits, had an air, particularly under this wan starlight, remote and depressing. Heavy trees, which clustered near, appeared to shroud it.

The doctor, scarcely slackening speed, swung up the drive. At the turn the house rose before him, square, frowning, black. It was only after a moment that a nebulous radiance from a curtained window upstairs defined it-

Randall sprang out, and nearly running, stumbling a little, climbed the steps, crossed the veranda, and pushed the electric button. No sound of hurry ing feet followed it. Randall, after waiting for a moment, took out his latchkey and entered. 'Bella!" he called.

Immediately the relieving answer "Here-in my dressing-room, John

Why are you so late?" He leaned weakly against the wall.

"I was detained." 'You've forgotten," she answered "We talked it over a week or so ago. and I thought you had agreed. Ellen's but at the sound of her husband's re- His bound limbs relaxed. wedding. Naturally they all wanted to turning footsteps it resumed a semigo. I had an early dinner and packed blance of control. No tears fell. But I counted on you. was growing afraid, all alone in the house. What kept you?" "Old Mrs. Hanson-at first. She's

very ill. I should really have stayed the night. I went to the club for a "At the club-I knew I must come

home tonight. I-I sent your cousin, Tom Redding, to Mrs. Hanson." She shivered for a moment uncon

"Bella," he said, "I've not been altogether blind about you and Treving." shiver was repeated, and the uncar-

tainty of her voice lingered. "But Treving's seemed a decent enough sort in spite of the way he trusted you unquestioningly."

"And now? Tell me what you're you?" driving at, John. I won't put up-" "Don't work yourself up, Bella. You know, I've told you. It's bad for you." "What do you expect, when you in

"It's just this: we must talk it out gone-what it portends, so that I can

"I overheard," she said. "It was Delaless Italian woman whose fingers facts. You've been seen with Treving about his coat lapel were confusingly in cafes of doubtful reputation, and out

> The lines about his mouth tightened "Treving," he said with an affectation of simplicity, "came into the club while I was talking with Ross. He had been drinking-a great deal. I didn't realize it at first-it's quite necessary you should hear this -so I took him reasonably. I told him it must stopany friendship between him and you As I told you, he had been drinking, but that didn't explain his astounding assurance. I don't want to do you an injustice but I couldn't help fearing his confidence was basel on an understanding with you. I told him, if I heard of his coming near you again or communicating with you in any way, I would thrash him within as inch of his

> Bella, he laughed at me His eyes left hers. A look of utter discouragement entered them. spoke slowly, with unnatural distinct-

"Treving offered to lay me any stakes he'd spend this evening with you." His eyes remained averted. Perhaps he didn't dare risk the vital testimory hers might have yielded.

"But I don't think ha'll succeed. And warned him as he deserved. You may as well make up your mind, Bella that that incident is finished. Unless, Bella- that's why, when I saw the house dark, I was afraid you'd gone. Did you and he know about old Mrs. Hanson? Have you any arrangement with him for tonight" She pressed her lips together.

congested her cheeks. Somewhere in the house a bell commenced to jangle, and continued, irritatingly, insistently.

"Why, isn't it answered? Oh, yes. You might have kept Thompson at Let it ring. I shan't go down. "A doctor!" she said scornfully. She arose with an effort. The lace ated the difficulty of her breathing. His

glance, which took all this in, was not "Answer it," she said. "I shan't fly while you are in the library."

His face was haggard, confessing Elmford. greater suspense than before. "The Hanson's butler," he said. I'm afraid the old lady's off this fine. Dedding had told him to get me. They

a fast car. Man said he ought to be He paused, searching her face in an

agony of indecision. 'Bella," he went on. woman-for years she's depended on his hand in Randall's pocket. She exclaimed impatiently, but as me. I could do more for her than Redding; I might help her-a little--' She shrugged her shoulders.

"Go to your work, I've no arrange-ment with Freddy. I don't expect him spends his money and his Broadway here. If he comes I shouldn't let him record, and you see, Bella, I've always in. Your honor is safe enough in my hands for tonight. Does that satisfy

"I trust you, Bella. I'm sorry." His eyes begged, but she offered nothing more. So he went out, closing the door softly behind him.

Almost immediately he ward the fluid down his throat. sound of a motor. He couldn't find his I've a right to know how far this folly's hat. The front door bell rang, and, the rope, and the bottle, the man left take measures of defence for myself table, he opened the door No one satisfaction that was not wholly vicious.



An indistinct voice came back affirm-Randall caught the word house. Therefore he ran down the steps and, his eyes still blinded by the

and settled himself by the driver. They swung away at a breakneck speed which before iong swept Ran- was very careful to see that the door dall's cap from his head and forced him did not latch behind him. He placed to cling with both hands to the side the key on the hall table. He folded "Man!" he shouted. "This is danger-

ous. There's no point in such haste.' The car swerved. Its speed was all way. of the mauve dressing-gown exagger- at once reduced. With a disconcerting jerk it came to a standstill. As Randall, trying to recover his balance, started ot speak angrily, something soft and blinding struck his face and enfrom the house to any man's arms veloped his head. His hands raised throat. purposelessly, were caught and pinion-She stood for a time by the door, ed. The cloth suddenly became moist listening. Once or twice she placed her and a familiar odor arose. The other hand above he heart. Her face set in laughed as he fastened a cord about the cruel distortion that prece es tears, the arms and body. Randall gasped.

> The driver turned the car, and, with one arm around the senseless doctor. drove in leisurely fashion back toward impelled by a perfectly controlled im-

some distance from the house stood a held her. small, partly ruined stone building, used once, form the water flowing sent the chauffeur some time ago with nearby, as a spring house. The driver carried Randall to the interior of this building and placed him on the floor. Lighting a match, he glanced around. He swayed a trifle, steadied himself with an effort, then, as the glow of me? Won't you promise? That old the match expired, bent over and thrust

He drew out a key ring. He struck another match and ran quickly over the ring until he had found the key he desired. This he slipped from the ring into his own pocket and returned the rest to Randall's coat.

On the point of leaving, he hesitated, and with a resolute air stooped and removed the cloth from Randall's head and the cord from the body. After wards he took a small bottle from his pocket, forced the unconscious man's ips open and poured a quantity of the When he had gathered up the cloth

snatching an ancient cap from the the stone building, laughing with a Freddy. Perhaps later things will be stood in the veran a, but the glare of He secreted the compromising bundle

Treving-there in the next room." powerful automobile headlights blinded beneath a large stone in the bed of

He alighted, climbed the steps, and crossed the veranda. He felt in his glare, stepped into a large runabout pocket for the latchkey he had taken Treving lost his head and offered to bet from Randall, inserted it in the lock, and noiselessly opened the door. He his coat and laid it with his cap on a chair. Stealthily he advanced along the dark and silent hall to the stair-

> At the sound of his automobile Bella had half arisen. A board creaked in the corridor outside her door.

> Complete silence followed. Unless something out of all reckoning had occurred, her husband could not be None of the servants would

have used an automobile. The knob moved. Inch by inch the door opened, and inch by inch, as if pulse from the door widening on the Hidden among the undergrowth at intruder, she retreated until the wall

> "Freddy!" she gasped. "What are you doing here? How fid you get in? Go, before-. This is out of the question. "It's all right, Bella. Needn't afraid. Randall's out of the way. He

won't bother us tonight.' "Then you know about Mrs. Hanson?" she asked.

He nodded sagely

"I know a lot. "You can't stay here," she said. "Go." "Then you shall come with me. That's the scheme Been in the back of my head all along. We'll show a clean pair of heels. Time something definite happened. Bella!-you knowhow I love you."

A slight impediment, unfamiliar to the startled woman, made itself noticeable in his voice. His control was limited. Already his true condition disclosed itself. Fear, as powerful as that which had greeted his stealthy approach returned to her eyes.

arranged. John and I had a talk to-He advanced. She stepped behind the table. He tapped the side pocket

of his coat. "By gad! I'd have killed him tonight to get to you if it had been necessary. That's what you've done to me, Bella. He reached across and grasped her arm. He held her tight while he glided around the table. A book fell to the floor, and another. 'A vase of roses toppled over and shattered musically. He got his arm around her. "You've got to let me keep my pron

Still laughing, he drew her closer. His flaming eyes were near. His breath was revolting on her cheeks.

She struggled, gasping for words. "Let me go. You've been drinking. As he flung her back against the table the side pocket of his unbuttoned

coat flapped against her hand. "I'm not going to let you slip now, "Freddy! You're killing me!" She put her hand in his pocket and

snatched out an unpolished, stubby, evil cylinder with a square grip which perfectly fitted her hand. "Look out, Freddy! You hurt!" He laughed again. His lips, repul-

sive and cruel, crushed hers. Her smothered crying was bitter. An explosion, slightly muffled, crowded the room with sound. Another fol-His lips, a moment ago masterful with unreasoning vitality, no longer

"Freddy!" she sobbed "I'm surry-" He crumpled at her feet. Near the water, spilled from the vase of roses, a darker stain spread. She stumbled o her knees by the dead man. Her desourte cries fled ceaselessly through the open window.

Garth the next day read the brief and scarcely illuminating account of the Elmford mucder in the morning papers. Irritation at his own assignment—an 'unimportant case uptowi:-let it slip through his mind without arousing any exceptional interest.

When he returned to the central office in the afternoon the doorman beckoned to him. "Inspector's been asking after you." Garth went to his room and paused, ill-at-ease, just within the doorway. The huge man lolled in his chair. lis quiet eves fixed Carth

desk paraphernalia. voice was abnormally mild. "Boys tell me you're a little sore on the jobs you've had since you sneed Slim and George and their favorites."

For once he failed to fidget with his

Garth grew red. "Were you thinking of paying your party call tonight? Because I've got to disappoint you. I can't see any thing particularly dangerous about this job, but I'd like you to look it over this afternoon. It's the Elmford murder. Suppose you've read about it. "There doesn't seem much to clear up except Dr. Randall's whereabouts. The men I sent out this morning haven't got a trace. Nothing's been heard from the ferries or the stations or out of town. Seems there ought to be some indication at the house for a

sharp pair of eyes."
"There's no doubt then," Garth asked, "that he killed Treving?" The inspector ran his hand through

"Ask me if Cain killed Abel," he answered. "Treving's goings-on with Randall's wife have been common gossip. The boys blushed about it in the clubs uptown. Listen, Garth. I'va

want you for the murder of Frederick found out things you won't get from any papers. Randall and Treving met at their club last night. Seems Rar-His lurch was more pronounced as he walked to the car, and his manner dall had overheard some of this conversation. I've had a few of the highless confident as he drove on to the hat crowd down here today, and one of the hall boys who heard what went on between Randall and Treving. Ran-

> Randall." "Good Lord!" Garth exclaimed. "Was he drunk?"

"Can't tell," the inspector said. "Anyway, Randall came back with his own the lady's dressing-room." "Pretty bad," Garth agreed, "and I

suppose she refuses to open her

The inspector's small eyes narrow-"Wish I knew if she's acting. She's been practically off her head ever since that motor cop found her kneel-

something about the heart. Her cousin, another doctor, is with her." Garth moved towards the door. "I know you'll bring Randall in," the

inspector called. he reached the station near Elmford. He inquired the way from the agent

and set off along a road bordered by unlovely suburban dwellings. These soon gave way to fields and hedges which in turn straggled into a miniature forest. Just beyond that the in a bad way. Do you suppose I'd gateway opened to the left. Garth waste my time here otherwise? I tell walked through and up to the secluded you quiet is essential." house. He glanced at the two automobiles, near each other in the drive. Mrs. Randall's cousin, you must have scious of something missing. When he A tired-looking man in plain clothes known the doctor pretty well." lounged in the veranda. Another with a languid air paced up and down at

While he was talking to them Garth first became aware of a mournful un- a very masculine type-no affects dertone, sometimes punctuated by a tions. shrill, despairing note, now smothered in a heavy silence. see. Mrs. Randall," Garth said. "I'd Hoped she'd be able to stand a

little talk by this time." One of the detectives handed him

"Room's locked. This lets in from more noise here tonight. I'm sorry "Room's locked. This less in door's about the chaid. I'd rather you didn't

Garth entered the hall. Randall's hat lay as the inspector had described in the hall long enough to take the that lay as the inspector had at Garth latchkey from the table and slip it in with an odd air of appeal. He saw his pocket. Then he walked to the Treving's coat and hat—another trag- back of the house where the servants ic excitation for the doctor if he had were collected in an uneasy group, chanced to notice them—on a chair by There was a chauffeur, he found, a but the table. A key, which Garth found ler, a cook, and a maid. Another maid fitted the front door, lay at the table's they told him, was with Mrs. Rendall, edge. Garth replaced it there and con-

The table cover was awry. One or return, but they were an incoherent two books lay on the floor beneath. lot, all talking at once, and saying Half a dozen long-stemmed roses, faded nothing useful. Therefore he returned as they were, still splashed color across to the veranda where he stood, trying the carpet of a neutral tint. As his to put himself in Randall's place, cast eyes took them in Garth smiled, sharne ing about for his likely course when facedly reminiscent. He started. The formless, agonized automobile.

cry of a woman arose and seemed to The sun had set. The dusk had a set in violent motion the atmosphere ready rendered objects at a distance in of this tragic chamber. The cry was repeated. Garth shivered. He had a quick uncomfortable the right. Certainly something had

horrid and superhuman efforts to overcome some obstacles to expression. He returned to his scrutiny of the in htis light invisible. room. Its disordered condition suggested a struggle before Randall had fired the shots and dropped the revolver

there at the end of the table. A circle of no great radius would have enclosed the scattered and faded roses. No-not all. One bud lay farthdall warned Treving away with threats. er off, nearer the bedroom door. Garth tiptoed to it, stooped, picked it up, examining it curiously

he'd spent last evening with Mrs. while he tried to reconstruct from it an er. The description fitted, but that active picture of the tragedy. The stem had been broken away, indicating since Treving or Randall had probably worn it, the close and desperate nature conviction. Swore he'd shoot Treving of their struggle. For it was not like if such a thing came off. Well! Ran- the roses from the vase. They were of dall found Treving, late last night in a larger variety and wider open, and this lay, he estimated, near the spot where Treving, conquered and killed, had fallen. As he stooped there, reflecting, con-

stantly troubled by the impotent sounds from the next room, a ray of late sunopen window, and gleamed upon a silvery thread apparently in the carpet. ing over the body, screaming fit to- In his haste to reach this thread Garth Where's my wife? What about my to wake the dead. Nothing but hys. stumbled noisily against a chair, and, terics all night and day. Jones reports as if in response, while he detached the thread from the carpet, ing reached him from the bedroom door. cally out of her head." A little ashamed of his racket, he thrust the thread in his pocket, arose, and opened the door. A tall man with wards the house. iron-gray hair entered, closing the door "I'll do my best," Garth answered. gently behind him. His tone was re-It was late in the afternoon when pressed, but Garth did not miss its an-the only human witness of the crime

noyance.

"Do you want to kill that woman?"

"I see. The chair," Garth said.
"When do you think we'll be able to her." question her?" "God knows! If this keeps up. She's

"By the way, dector, since you're "Yes, yes, very well."
"Did you ever notice—was he in the

the side. They became animated and habit of wearning a flower in his butconverged on Garth, anxious to know if ton-hole?"

"I never saw him with one. He was Garth flushed.

"And Mr. Treving?" he asked. "Did

"What? Wear a flower? I'm sure I don't know. Never noticed, But I think it likely enough." "Thank you, doctor. There'll be no

say anything about those questions." Garth went downstairs. He paused

Garth questioned them about last night's wedding and the hour of their he had sensibly decided not to use his

distinct. Garth started. He stared at a patch of shrubbery on the hillside to fancy that the woman was making moved there. It occurred to him that to a man in the shrubbery the three forms under the veranda roof would be Without speaking to the others he

walked to the end of the veranda and dropped over the rail. Aiding the friendly dusk by keeping behind trees and bushes as far as possible, he approached the patch of shrubbery. After a moment there was no question. The foliage did not wholly secret the figure of a man. The man appeared to listen Garth's hand tightened on his revolv. was scarcely necessary, for on this cold evening the man was hatless. Garth sprang up and, his revolved ready, faced the man.
"Dr. Randall! I've plenty of help

near. Randall stepped back. "And what about Treving?" he askel in a husky voice. Garth watched him warily,

"I'm sorry," he answered, "but I've got to take you for his murder." "I'm wanted for Treving's murder" "You'll come quietly?" "Yes. What's that noise? I thought I heard some one scream, a-a woman wife?"

Garth cleared his throat. "She's been hysteric Garth could not fathom Randall's ax pression as he walked at his side to-"Of course," he said, "she'll be call

The doctor smiled contentedly.

"Yes," he said, "I should like to s

"Dr. Redding's with her," Garth ex plained, "but if it's in my presence I've no objection if he hasn't. Garth waved the two excited detectives away. As he led Randall across

the veranda he was provokingly conhad opened the door and taken his captive into the hall, he realized all at once what it was. Mrs. Randall's pitlful and chaotic crying no longer dis turbed the quiet house. He noticed



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