

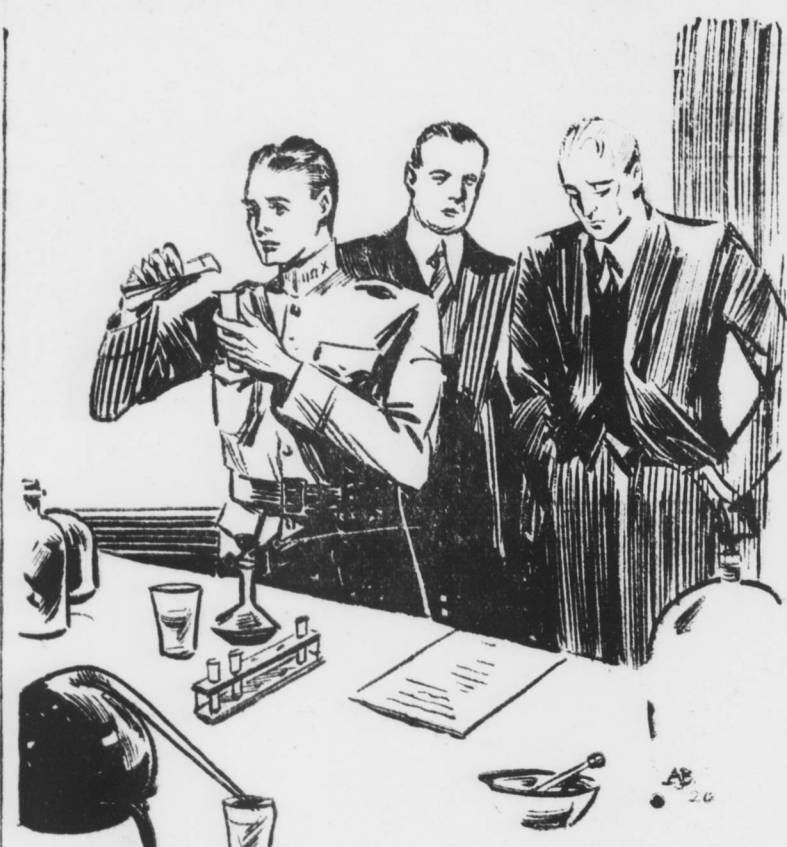
The Blonde Countess

by Herbert O. Yardley



READ THIS FIRST.

Pretty JOEL CARTER is secretary to NATHANIEL GREENLEAF, head of the U. S. "Black Chamber"...



"We've committed burglary before now."

CHAPTER 20

THEY WENT into Jake's room locking the door behind them. Jake had prepared his chemicals and made the test which Martin had de-

scribed. Eagerly they bent over the paper which had been held in the paper. There was nothing to see. It was stained a uniform brown.

He elation was suddenly dashed at the sight of Jake's expression. "Then," said Jake, "the iodine test won't work for when all the paper is dampened, all the fibers are dis-

arranged and the vapor will not settle into the crevices of the writing." "It's a fact," said Greenleaf slowly.

"Of course!" said Greenleaf, who understood little of these matters, followed the scientist with a light air and said nothing.

He looked to Jake as the authority in such things rather than Greenleaf, Jake said, thoughtfully, "The iodine test must show one thing though—"

"And that?" Greenleaf demanded eagerly. "Whether the paper has been dampened."

"I can't see," said Greenleaf. Jake rapidly seized two pieces of paper. "I'll show you," he said.

One piece he dampened and then cried by pressing it between blotting paper with a warm iron. Then he stroked the paper with an iodine swab and laid it aside while he stroked the second undampened paper in the same manner.

He held the two up under the light. The dampened paper was perceptibly lighter than the undampened. Quickly he stroked the letter with the iodine swab. It dried to the same light tint as the dampened paper.

"The letter was dampened after the message was written," Jake explained. Blane, even followed this demonstration.

"You're right," he said, looking at Jake with a curious new respect. This was a bit of detective work to him.

"And now," said Jake, "all we've got to do is read the letter, yes?" "You mean you've got to find the one particular reagent for some one particular chemical?"

"That," said Jake, drily, "is my little job. And if this paper holds together after a thousand experiments or so maybe I'll find it. And again maybe I won't."

Greenleaf regarded him glumly. "Meanwhile where are we?" he asked. "Well, there are other ways. Come along Blane, we'll let Jake go

to it while you and I hatch something."

Blane from the other side of Greenleaf's desk read in his chief's face the inception of an idea. "Spill it," he remarked laconically.

But Greenleaf seemed loath to begin. "You see," he began at last, "this is a shot in the dark. Also it involves committing a crime—burglary to be exact."

"We've committed burglary before now," Blane observed cheerfully. "Why the sudden growth of conscience?"

"I know, I know," Greenleaf said embarrassed. "Don't misunderstand me. The crime is justified if we get the goods, but I very much doubt if the goods are there. A fruitless crime—my conscience disapproves of that."

"Perhaps," ventured Blane, taking a cigar without invitation from Greenleaf's desk. "If you'd tell the circumstances I'd know whether it's worth committing."

Greenleaf looked perplexedly at his accomplice. "I can't—or won't—do that. I'll tell you this. It has occurred to me that the chemical we're after may be in the possession of a certain person. It's a hundred to one chance that it isn't. I don't really think it is. Yet—"

Blane nodded comprehendingly. "I know. If you don't do it, it will be on your mind. The answer is, do it. Prove yourself right."

Greenleaf frowned. "That's all very well, but if your man should be caught there'd be hell to pay. He might have to stand trial, be convicted and go to prison before the government could do anything."

"Oh, I'll do it myself," Blane offered brightly. "It's not a thing I'd ask my men to do."

Greenleaf looked even more depressed. "I was afraid you'd say that."

"Come," said Blane, "cut out the apologies and tell me where to go and what to get."

Greenleaf drew a plan on a piece of paper. "This tree stands near the window, probably about the third window from the front on the second floor on the west side. There's a tough vine which can, I think, be easily climbed. The window was unlocked and slightly raised at five o'clock this afternoon. It opens into a small reception room, off which is a dress-

ing room, and beyond it, I suppose, a bedroom. On the dressing table, and probably in the bedroom, there are all manner of bottles, jars, boxes, and tubes containing lotions, tooth paste, facial cream, toilet water and all the rest of it. What I want is a small sample of each. I want to be sure they're no more than they present."

Blane looked with disapproval at the clear which he had taken. "And this house, this mysterious house, is the Scandinavian embassy, and the lady whose dressing room you've been in is the Countess herself. Am I right?"

"I've not been in her dressing room. I got a glimpse of it through the doorway."

"Tell that to the marines," said Blane coarsely. "I've suspected that dame ever since you pinched Duval in the embassy."

Greenleaf shook his head. "I no longer suspect her—never mind why—but I'm not taking any chances I can avoid. And also, the stuff we're looking for might be there and she not know it."

Blane regarded him with raised eyebrows. "Doesn't sound reasonable to me," he observed. "No?—never mind. Just an idea of mine. Let it go. This is the situation. The Countess will be at the reception and dance in the Mexican embassy tonight. Between 11 and 12 the place should be clear but for servants. If your man makes a visit and samples everything and gets away without leaving any traces it would, maybe, be a useful job."

"I told you," said Blane, "that I'd do it myself. I've not pulled off a good burglary in some time. I like the idea."

"You always were a damn fool," said Greenleaf thoughtfully. "I suppose that's why I count on you."

Blane looked at his watch and rose. "I need about two dozen little bottles or containers of some kind. How many of those samples do you think there'll be?"

Greenleaf frowned. "A lot," he said. "Some of them you can pass over probably. Take a sniff or a taste and make sure they're what they pretend to be. It will probably be some clear white liquid—possibly a white powder. Those are the likeliest things to look for. Ask Jake to fit you out."

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SATURDAY GRID SCHEDULE

Table listing football games and scores for Saturday, November 10, 1934. Sections include EAST, INTERSECTIONAL, MID-WEST, SOUTH, PACIFIC COAST, MOUNTAIN, and SOUTHWEST.

NONSENSE advertisement with a cartoon showing a man looking at a sign that says 'DENTIST' and another sign that says 'TEETH PULLED WHILE YOU WAIT'.

STEVENSON THEATRE advertisement for 'WAKE UP AND DREAM' and 'George O'Brien'.

MOTOR TRANSPORT EMPLOYS 20 PCT. One Out of Every Five Workers in State Dependent on Industry.

wholesale, retail and service business in the State amounted to \$802,254,000 of which \$138,082,000 represented purchases by motor vehicle owners of all classes.

Page-Hocutt Drug Co. Special 1-Day Sale! Saturday Only. Madagascar Rings 49¢.

WATCH AND WAIT FOR OPENING EFIRD'S NEW STORE In New O'Neil Building HENDERSON, N. C. A New Store, With New Goods, At New Low Prices...

Coal and Wood City FUEL CO. Ransom Duke, Prop. Phone 180.