

Unconfessed



CHAPTER XIV—Continued

Mitchell struck him in the face.

He leaped at him like a bull terrier at a mastiff. The blow caught Harriden unprepared, and he reeled, a hand at his chin, then, with a choking sound he lunged at his assailant.

With official agility Donahey's big body intervened; Keller and young Watkins sprang to hold Dan. "Not here, Dan, not here—" Keller's reminder had its weight. Harriden gave a queer look toward the bed, to that still, sheeted figure of his wife, and his arms fell. He drew a deep, convulsive breath.

He addressed Donahey. "Whoever this girl is, she took those papers. She is a thief and a black-mailer. If they aren't on her she has destroyed them. They were here when I left this room."

Involuntarily our heads turned to that fireplace but no flames danced there. The sight of the andirons exploded something in my brain. It was as though some flash of lightning, the flash I had been waiting for, subconsciously, flung into indelible brilliance the way before by straining vision. I spoke out, throwing all caution to the winds.

"You'll find blood on one of those andirons, Mr. Inspector. On the left hand one. It is Mrs. Harriden's blood . . . It has been washed away, but it is still in the deep places . . . She was killed by falling on it, by being thrown back upon it."

In the stillness that descended on the room there was literally no sound. Then a voice came, Harriden's voice, hoarse, hardly distinguishable. "If you know—that you did it—you—"

"No, you," I said. "When you struck at her the second time. When you followed her away from the window. It was you who struck at her at the window." I went on.

"You had come up early, though you denied this. Nobody remembered clearly enough to contradict you. You came to her room, you quarreled and then struck out at her. She fled backwards and you struck at her again. Perhaps you struck her down, perhaps she fell trying to escape you, but she fell across the screen, knocking it over, and her head crashed on that andiron."

I wasn't looking at him. I was looking at that sharp-pointed andiron, watching what I saw there. "She came down with all her weight. You rushed to draw the curtains. You lifted her up, carried her into the closet. Perhaps you thought she was already dead. She died very soon, her blood on that closet door . . . You wiped off the andiron with your handkerchief, you wet the handkerchief and washed over the andiron but more blood than you knew had run into the deep grooves of its decorations. Then you washed the handkerchief and left it drying on the radiator."

I spoke as if I were seeing it. I was seeing it; everything that had been confused and strange was suddenly crystallized and sure.

"You were aghast, but you concentrated on your danger," I said. You locked the closet and went in your room and dressed for dinner. Then you came back and rang for the maid. You stood at the door watching for her; you had darkened the room behind you. You told her not to disturb Mrs. Harriden."

"But she saw my wife on the bed. You've got her testimony to that!" Harriden's voice had loudness; belligerence rang out of it.

"People see what they expect to see," I said. "The room was darkened; you let her have a glance through the open door, then you closed it and went down to dinner. No one spoke then. No one moved."

"But you kept worrying about that body in the closet. Perhaps you hadn't taken the diamonds then—perhaps you had, but you realized you hadn't made it look enough like a robbery, like an assault from outside. You began seeing the situation. You thought of opening the window. So you went upstairs, halfway through dinner, and when you were opening the window, you realized you could make it look like suicide. So you took your wife out of the closet and thrust her out, down into the shrubbery. Perhaps you had seen the blood on the floor—"

I stopped. I had a queer feeling that I was wrong. I said, "I think you hadn't seen it—but you thought it wise to lock that closet till you could look it over, later. You locked it and came down again to dinner."

"You were thinking you could make it seem either accident or suicide and after dinner you asked the princess to go up—you talked of a row between you, of her overwrought state of mind, of her hysterical threats. You created the impression of a neurotic, irresponsible woman, ready for any rashness . . . You didn't want that closet opened. When Mrs. Keller had the housekeeper unlock it, you were quick to enter. You said there was nothing there. Then they found the blood. You realized you had to make it look like robbery."

My voice grew slower, raggeder. "I don't know when you picked up the diamonds—perhaps at the beginning when you meant to make it seem the work of an outside thief. After you decided upon suicide you didn't speak of their disappearance. But when you saw it had to seem robbery, then you thought of them again."

It seemed to me that I had been talking forever in that world of shadows. Not a word now out of Harriden. Not a sign from him except that immobile attention.

I murmured, "I thought—that if Anson had been killed there, at that time, then the pink towels would still be there. But they were not, and the maid who had taken over the room, on Anson's disappearance, said she had found none. So I knew that Anson had taken her towels and gone." I raised my eyes again to Harriden. "I knew the pink towels were for these rooms. So I asked the maid to look in here—you were downstairs then—and she did. She said the fresh towels were distributed in both bathrooms but that Anson hadn't taken away the soiled ones. I thought that Anson might have been so nervous in these rooms that she had hurried away forgetfully, and gone, for some reason, again into the prince's room, where she met her death . . . But that wasn't so.

"Anson never left the room alive. She began to talk to you about something she had to tell at the inquest. There was something on her mind, a handkerchief she had seen drying on a radiator. The corner was not torn off—you didn't tear that off till you came to pin the diamonds in it. She didn't want to. She told me that any one might have washed out a handkerchief. She tried to explain it to you."

Harriden's dark eyes were blazing like sheet lightning upon me. "She told you about it. She may have said, too, that she couldn't swear that Mrs. Harriden was on her bed when she had looked in at eight. She was a very simple-minded girl, anxious to be truthful. You lost your head—you may have tried to bribe her as you did me upstairs—you gave your alarm away. And then you jumped for her. You choked the life out of her. You looked up and down the hall. It was empty. You had only a step or two to take to Rancini's door. You saw his room was empty. It was a desperate chance but you had to take it. You got her in the room, you thrust her in the closet. You wiped your prints off the door. You went back to your room, and no one saw you coming out, that—you—knew—"

My voice trailed out the words automatically. It was the look in Keller's eyes that prompted that, that uneasy, worrying, disquietude. Tom Keller knew something. Perhaps he had seen Harriden leaving the room. Perhaps he had seen him in the hall.

I knew it with the strange wrought-up divination that possessed me; I knew it so surely that I would have cried it aloud but Mitchell intervened.

"You remembered to wipe the door knob, Dan, but you forgot Deck's taste in cigarettes. Luckies. When you found his case there weren't but two cigarettes in it, not enough to hold a stone in place, so you crammed it full of your own, making sure to keep the diamond at the bottom. That's where you slipped—nobody here smokes Macedonias but you. The case was full of Macedonias."

"And you call that evidence?" Harriden sneered. The man was gathering his power again, full of defiant challenge. "You've turned against your friends, have you, for the sake of—"

"For the sake of a girl you tried to blacken and a man you tried to hang your own gullet on," Mitchell flashed back, his eyes as full of war as Harriden's.

"Evidence—you bet I'll make it stick as evidence. You waited till they were all around Deck, you prompted Letty to ask Clancy for his case, and Deck handed it over. Do you think a jury will believe a man would do that if he had a diamond hidden in it—a stone that would cost his neck . . . He'd have taken out some cigarettes and passed them back. But Deck just handed it over. Just like that. And Clancy gave it to Letty, and you whispered her to feel it, to tell Clancy to feel it."

He swung away from Harriden. He spoke sharply to a white face. "Why didn't you ask Dan for a smoke? You like his brand—you were smoking them tonight. You'll have to testify he prompted you."

"Oh, Dan, Dan, it isn't so!" Letty Van Alstyne's voice, overwrought, breaking with hysterical strain, sobbed out at him. "You didn't ask me to say anything."

"You shut up!" said Harriden harshly. "Shut up and keep shut up, d'you hear? Let them talk their heads off. That's all there is to it—talk."

"No one will believe it, Dan," she cried half crying. "No one will blame you for anything. We'll all forget it—you'll forget it. Nora wasn't worth it."

"Wasn't worth it?" He gave a dreadful glare at her, then strode to the bed and with a single gesture he tore the sheet away. Nora Harriden's still face lay before us. We saw the loveliness of her profile, like chiseled marble, the rigid, tinted lips, the long, dark lashes, motionless on her cold cheeks.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Frontiers Always Shifting There is hardly a country in South America that knows its own frontiers, says Answers Magazine. In Asia matters are not much better, for the frontier of China and Russia are always shifting, while between India and Afghanistan there is a wide stretch of No Man's Land. The only continents where frontiers are definitely marked are Europe and North America.

For Style-Conscious Little Girls

By CHERIE NICHOLAS



IT IS with ever increasing enthusiasm that designers are yielding to the urge of catering to the needs and fancies of style-conscious little girls.

The story of the modern child's wardrobe resolves itself into many chapters dealing with all phases of fashion. Beginning with simple, novel and amusing beach, swim and playtime togs and cunning sun suits, the plot carries on through thrilling adventures in the realm of smart school and dressy daytime clothes reaching a grand and glorious climax in a way of entrancing pretty party frocks that make every little girl look like a fairy princess of story book lore.

For practical daytime and playtime frocks the call is outstanding for cotton reps, gabardines, chambrays, crinkled seersuckers (no ironing required in their big appeal), gingham, novelty cottons soft and spongy, piques and most important, new lines both plain and printed. Now that a sturdy non-crush type of linen is obtainable mothers are jubilant, for in it they have discovered the fabric ideal to withstand the vigorous test of the wear and tear of the thousand and one antics which little folks enjoy in a day's sport.

Perhaps the most exciting news is gay printed linens in bold patterns and colorings. Peasant designs in a blaze of daring colors abound and these rustic prints are especially good-looking when made up into separate little coats with hats to match. Florals in effective spacing, cunning animal, vegetable and fruit

motifs on the new printed linens are a special lure to children. Then there are the exquisitely sheer printed handkerchief linens and the fine dimities which are adorable for dress-up wear.

Lace-trimmed organdie ororgette is a favorite theme this season with the designers of little-girl party dresses.orgette made over taffeta is shown quite a little. A significant trend is the use of pastel colors which seem to have almost gained precedence over all white.

In the matter of styling, the princess silhouette is a great favorite while most sleeves are just short puffs. Note the dress worn by the little girl with the gorgeous doll in the picture. Her smart school and playtime dress is of firm linen cut on the new princess lines. Gay striped printed linen is used as a bordering. The style distinction of this charming dress will make instant appeal to both mother and little daughter.

The other two children are looking their prettiest in dainty party frocks or perhaps they took part in "last day of school" exercises. At any rate their little pleated sheer frocks are lovely and will be a joy the whole summer through. The wee maiden to the left is wearing an accordion pleated voile as charming in pastel colors as it is in white. A wide sash about her waists ties at the back in a huge butterfly bow.

Tiers of narrow pleatings animate the frock centered in the group. The vogue for pleating is as pronounced in children's fashions as in grown-up styles. The pleatings about the neckline extend over the short puff sleeves so as to achieve the new-vogue wide shoulder line.

IT'S EMBROIDERED

By CHERIE NICHOLAS



The latest call of the mode is for frocks of monotone silk crepe with complementary jackets made of the identical silk crepe of the dress, the same handsomely allover embroidered in bright contrasting colors. In the instance of the model pictured the sport dress is of pink silk crepe with a short-sleeved box jacket of the same crepe embroidered with green and blue wool. Blue buttons are on the dress.

Short-Term Wigs
Wigs are proving popular among fashionable women in London, who use them to cover hair while it is regaining its natural color after a "blond" period.

Black Is Smart
Much black is shown for summer wear with tailored white jackets and white accessories.

DESIGNERS PRESENT SKIRT INNOVATIONS

Unusual color combinations and a strong Oriental influence characterize the new Alix collection. Some skirts are so full and flaring that they resemble parachutes or lamp shades, while others, are caught under at the hem like Turkish trousers.

Glamorous Apparel Wins Approval of Parisiennes

For the polo matches, the races and late afternoon occasions of summer in Paris, it is now the smartest fashion to wear frocks and hats of the glamorous variety. Sheer fabrics like organdie are altogether enchanting and feminine for frocks with wide and sweeping skirts and hats with wide and flattering brims.

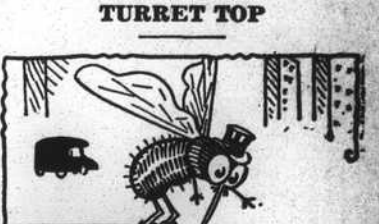
These decorative full-skirted frocks, with little capes or puffed sleeves, have not by any means replaced the tailored evening costume with a jacket, an important fashion for parties from five o'clock on. Daylight dining will enhance this tailored idea.

Calottes More Popular
The fashion for calottes (divided skirts) is no longer confined to the active sports field, say stylists. They will be seen everywhere for all daytime occasions this summer. Last season saw them first spring into popularity for sailing, bicycling and beach wear.



Cause Enough
Neighbor—I wonder why your new baby brother cries so much. Bobby—Oh, I guess you'd cry too if all your teeth were out and your hair all off and your legs so weak you couldn't stand on them.

Self-Protection
"You mean to say Crimson Gulch has an anti-gambling law?"
"Yes," replied Three-Finger Sam. "We had to have some way of breaking up the game when a tenderfoot comes along and gets to winning all the money."



Horse Fly (on top of auto):
"Gee whiz, this is the toughest equine I ever tackled."

The Last Word
Mother and father were having a few words when father said: "I don't believe in parading my virtues."
"No?" answered mother. "I don't think you could, dear. It takes a number, you know, to make a parade."

Answered at Last
"How far is up?"
"As far as down is from the middle."

Bounded Out
Teacher—What are the bounds of Australia?
Mary—The kangaroo!

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