THE BEAUTIFUL DERELICT

CAROLYN WELLS

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THE BEAUTIFUL DERELICT

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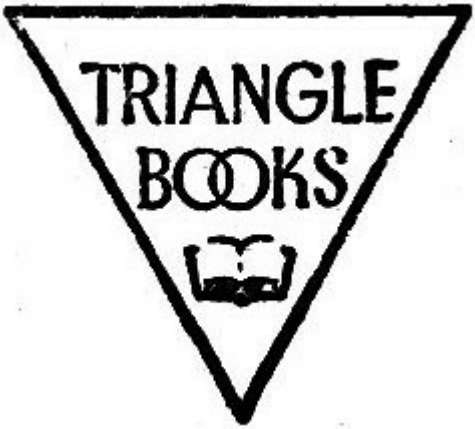
THE BEAUTIFUL DERELICT

By Carolyn Wells

Author of
THE VISITING VILLAIN
THE CLUE OF THE EYELASH
THE SKELETON AT THE FEAST
and others



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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO

BRIDGET MARY O'CONNELL

AS A TOKEN OF FRIENDSHIP
AND GRATEFUL APPRECIATION
OF HER UNFAILING
KINDNESS TO ME

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THE
BEAUTIFUL DERELICT

11

CHAPTER I
Derelict on the High Seas

On the great steamship, plying between New York City and Nova Scotia, Fleming Stone came out of his stateroom and went down the brass-bound staircase.

He paid scant attention to the shifting fog outside; his mind was intent on his Journey's End and he wanted to reach the metropolis as soon as possible.

But just at present he wanted his breakfast and, reaching the dining-room, drifted into his seat at the Captain's table.

Captain Gregg welcomed him with a smile, a reception not unusual to Fleming Stone who made many friends because he couldn't help it.

They discussed the International Yacht Races, then just beginning, and, as the talk drifted to other things, the Captain gave an anxious glance through a porthole and hoped he would not be late in arriving.

"But," he said, "it's a fog that is going to lift, I'm sure of that."

“Let’s hope so,” Stone said; “I want to get home.”

“Got a case on?”

“No, but I fancy I shall find one awaiting me there.”

A steward came to their table. He brought a message from the First Officer, who was on the bridge, requesting the Captain’s presence.

Captain Gregg responded at once, and Stone followed him, with a natural curiosity.

Owing to the fog there were two lookouts, and the one in the Crow’s Nest had telephoned the bridge of a strange and apparently helpless craft nearby.

It was a mystifying scene. The Captain and Fleming Stone, each with a strong glass, studied it. They saw a yacht perhaps forty feet long, or so; sloop-rigged, of beautiful lines, drifting helplessly. The sail was flapping and, perhaps because of the fog, they could see no one on board.

“Have to see about it,” said Captain Gregg laconically, but with a sigh for the consequent delay.

But though they whistled and megaphoned with all the force at their command, there was no response from the pitching boat.

They were out on the high seas, perhaps midway between Nantucket and Montauk Point. Leaving Yarmouth the day

before, Stone had hoped to make New York that afternoon and he didn’t at all like this promise of delay.

But the Captain knew his duty, and he ordered the engines stopped and a boat lowered with the necessary crew. The third mate was in command, and Stone asked to be allowed to go too.

“Do,” said Gregg, “and pick up any information you can.”

As the lifeboat rode the choppy waves the fog lifted a little, and there was clearly seen a really magnificent yacht, which Stone declared at once to be a sloop with an auxiliary motor. But she was not moving by sail or motor power, she was aimlessly, helplessly drifting at the mercy of the wind.

With a real thrill Stone looked forward to the explanation of this mysterious condition and stared through a powerful glass as he dimly discerned the figure of a man huddled on the deck. No other human being was visible on board and the detective scented dire disaster.

As the men rowed the lifeboat nearer to the yacht, they shouted through the megaphone but received no response.

As soon as he could do so, Jamison, the third mate, boarded the beautiful vessel and Stone followed at his heels.

On the deck lay a man who, quite evidently, had fallen in some sort of convulsion or had suffered a stroke.

Stone stared at him, noted the contorted position, and noted,

too, that he was quite dead. Jamison lifted the stiffened arm and feeling for the man's heart, found it had ceased to beat.

"Know him?" he said, looking up at Stone.

"No; never saw him before. Do you know the yacht?"

"No; but we can doubtless find her papers."

"And another man. This chap wasn't sailing the boat."

"How do you know?"

"He isn't togged for it. He's a visitor. But where's his host?"

"Here he is," said the boatswain, who had brought them over. "He's dead, too."

"My God!" cried Jamison, "what have we struck, here? A charnel house?"

"Don't touch him," Stone said to the sailor, "let me see him. Come over here, Jamison."

The other dead man was down in the hold.

It was apparent that he was there to start the motor.

"That's the owner of the boat," Stone surmised. "But what happened to him?"

The man, a young fellow, was lying before the engine. His head had been hit by some terrible blow and, though his face

was but slightly marred, the back of his head showed an enormous swelling.

Jamison looked at his companion.

“Any theories, Mr Stone?”

“No, nor any occasion for them. This is a case for the police.”

“Well, and aren’t you the police?”

“Not exactly. You must make sure there is no other human being on board, dead or alive, and then report to your Captain.”

No other person was found, and Stone took command.

“I am connected with the police, more or less,” he said; “and I advise you, Jamison, to go right back with the Bo’sun to the *Nokomis*. Make your report to Captain Gregg and tell him I am staying here with one of the crew that brought us over, and if he will send orders, I will do whatever he advises.”

Jamison and the man went off and Fleming Stone found himself alone on the yacht, save for one sailor and two dead men.

They were out on the high seas, with no land in sight.

“Could land be seen if there were less fog?” Stone asked of his only living companion.

“Might make out Martha’s Vineyard, er maybe Nantucket. I don’t rightly know jest whur we air.”

He relapsed into taciturnity and sat staring out to sea, as motionless as the two lifeless passengers.

With his usual efficiency, Stone began taking notice and making notes of conditions.

He paid little attention to the yacht itself, though he fully appreciated its great beauty and value. But that would be taken care of. He wanted to learn all he could of the events that had taken place and discover some explanation of the tragedy.

He examined first the body of the man down in the hold. A young chap, perhaps twenty-six, or so, in his shirt-sleeves and wearing no hat.

He must have been sailing the boat, for the sail, though flapping, was still unfurled, and the engine not yet turned on. He lay on the floor, obviously having dropped where he stood. Felled by a blow? Surely; what else? Hit on the back of the head? Of course—the fine young face showed only minor bruises. He was, then, facing the engine, struck from behind and killed by the ferocious blow.

A handsome young fellow, dark hair and eyes, and a face roughened and tanned by a summer spent on his yacht. Somehow Stone felt sure it was his yacht, and he went up the steps to the deck and into the roomy cabin, to hunt for the papers. There was a small safe, but it was locked; so, beyond the fact that the name of the yacht was the *Hotspur*, little

knowledge could be gained.

The *Hotspur*, as a name for a spanking yacht, seemed quite appropriate to the young man who lay dead in its hold. The boyish face looked as if given to smiling, and Stone even imagined it told of a daredevil nature.

But he knew better than to read temperament from a dead face, a source too likely to give erroneous information.

He went back on deck to look at the other victim to tragedy of some sort. This man was older than the one in the hold and, it would seem, had died from some internal disorder. It appeared to Stone that he must have fallen from his deck chair, in a spasm of agony. If he had been seized with a sudden severe cramp, his contorted body might have fallen like that.

And yet, quite possibly, the man might have been dead in his chair and thrown off it forcibly, by reason of the yacht tossing at the mercy of wind and wave.

Stone looked at his hands. Well-kept, white hands, not at all like the hands of a sailor or yachtsman. A man, apparently nearing forty, with a face suggestive of a wise, cynical nature. Medium height, slender, well-groomed and garbed in the most modern and well-made clothing.

Calmly and with deft handling Stone felt in the man’s pockets and brought out a wallet, which soon gave up the information that it belonged to one Elkins Van Zandt of New York City.

He did not open the letters it contained, feeling that he was

not yet definitely certain there had been any crime committed, or that he was justified in close investigation.

He sat down on the deck chair that the man, he felt almost sure, had fallen from, and looked around the yacht. Every fitting, every appointment, was of the finest and in the best of taste.

What did it mean, these two dead men on this beautiful boat, these two inexplicable deaths out here on the high seas?

Through his mind passed a hazy memory of the *Marie Celeste*. But that ill-fated craft was found uninhabited and unmanned.

No, the conditions were not much alike. There, the departure of all humanity from the vessel seemed to imply willingness to go, or else coercion. Here, the perpetrators of the crime, if crime there was, had disappeared, leaving their victims behind.

But were they victims? Had there been crime? A seemingly unanswerable question, thus far, and therefore a problem after Fleming Stone's own heart.

Ratiocination was called for.

First, could the idea of a third party be eliminated? Could these two men alone be responsible for this state of things?

Could one of them have killed the other and then himself committed suicide? Too easy! Of course he could.

The man on the deck could have gone down into the hold, could have seen the other there, starting the motor, could have hit him with a heavy weapon and killed him. Could then have gone back up to the deck and have taken poison to put himself out of the way.

Complicated? Not specially so; no more than the procedure of many murders.

Also, the killer need not have killed himself, but died of some illness or accident.

One of Fleming Stone's special detestations was theorizing without sufficient data. He, therefore, at this point told himself that he was not theorizing at all, merely trying to reconstruct the affair.

But the task of reconstruction was exceedingly difficult.

The older man was not only slender and of light weight, but had no strength of muscle observable and his small-featured, unaggressive face showed no pugnacious tendencies.

Stone felt he could not see this man brutally murdering his companion and then killing himself.

But, he further ruminated with a sigh, strange and inexplicable actions take place in connection with a murder.

And beside, who was there to say there had been any murder?

Accident, as a solution, seemed equally without definite

evidence. Had the young man been killed by some heavy weight falling on his head, where was the weight? If the elder man had been thrown from his chair by a heavy sea, why the twisted, spasmodic position and clenched hands?

In both cases rigor mortis was present, and Stone gave over the medical investigation to look for something more subtly indicative.

The man in the hold had fallen on his side, almost at full length, and from the uppermost trouser pocket Stone drew forth a cigarette case. It was a swagger one, of black onyx and bearing a monogram in tiny diamonds. The letters were W. B. or B. W. A handkerchief, in the same pocket, showed the same two letters.

Stone did not turn the body over, but went up the hatchway and to the cabin. Fairly good-sized, and done up in simple good taste, Stone found in it some suggestive hints. On a table was a photograph of a lovely girl, and the plain silver frame bore the initials, B. W. Across the corner of the picture, in a dashing handwriting, was the legend, “Barry from Jane.”

So now, Stone thought, contentedly, he had the names of those so far involved, except the surname of the unfortunate young man in the hold. Doggedly, he clung to his belief that he was the owner of the yacht, and the Barry of the silver photograph frame. And his last name began with W. These details, however, were unimportant, as they would all be learned when the safe was opened. What Stone was trying for was some possible explanation for the whole strangely staged affair.

He felt no hesitation as to looking in cupboards and drawers in quest of clues. A detective of the old school, he was yet fully abreast of and sometimes ahead of what are known as modern methods; but he never scorned a real clue, or one that seemed such to him.

Yet he opened no letters or what looked to be private papers. Time enough for that when it had been discovered that there was a crime problem to be solved.

Yet his long experience in detective work made him feel sure that there had been foul play, and that no arguments for accident would hold water.

The obvious solution would be the presence of a third party who had killed one or both of these men. And for traces of this hypothetical murderer Stone hunted eagerly.

And found nothing.

Sherlock Holmes once said that no human being could enter a room and go out of it again without leaving some trace of his presence.

This, Stone had disproved time and again, as any logical reasoner will readily believe.

Yet though a room might be entered and left without evidence, it would be a pretty hard matter to board a yacht, murder two able-bodied men and put off again without leaving any trace or hint of an intruder’s presence.

But none could he find. No footprints on the deck seemed to

mean anything. No cigarette stubs or spilled tobacco gave hint of an assassin.

Barry had been smoking a cigarette, of the same kind the case in his pocket held. It lay on the floor beside his dead body.

Mr Van Zandt had been smoking a pipe, an ordinary briar, which now lay on the deck beside him. There was no spilled tobacco; if there had been, the winds had swept the deck clean of it.

Stone’s thoughts turned to the time element.

The first of the International Yacht Races had taken place the day before, and a logical assumption was that these two men had been out to see it. Somebody, Stone assumed, had come aboard and killed both. Perhaps two or three men came. For it seemed quite sure there had been no struggle. The rug, a soft fine plaidie that hung over the back of the deck chair, was still smoothly folded and undisturbed. A newspaper lay on the deck beside the chair, neatly folded at the second page.

There was no real reason to deduce murder here. If Mr Van Zandt had fallen from his chair in a convulsion, it could as well have been caused by a stroke or other illness as by foul play.

Stone’s thoughts pursued no sequence. He looked everywhere, saw everything, yet noticed no two facts that seemed to have any connection with one another or with the tragedy.

In the cabin were two clocks. One had stopped, but the other

was still going and showed the time to be nine-thirty, which was just about right, by the detective's impeccable timepiece.

When had these men started out, and from where? Quite evidently they were not on a cruise, for no signs of food were seen. Some tinned meats and biscuits were in a small cupboard, and a similar cupboard held a choice lot of things to drink. But no corkscrew, no used glasses were visible, and if they had eaten or drunk all had been cleaned up thoroughly.

Stone, noting the freshness of their shirts and collars, their smoothly brushed hair and their closely shaven faces, admitted to himself that death must have come to them very soon after they started. But it would mean a daybreak start that would give time for them to be murdered and reach their present stage of rigor mortis by nine-thirty! They had not been on the yacht all night, that was certain; for if that were so, they must have had some sort of breakfast, and there was no sign of coffee or bacon. Nor yet any set table or used dishes. In fact, this marvellously designed and perfectly built yacht was not living up to its own possibilities. Were there no stewards or waiters? No crew or sailor? Or, were these conditions part of the mystery?

Had the underlings killed their masters, and then fled with some especially valuable loot? For it was not a clean-up robbery. Small appointments and trinkets of value were in the cabin. A silver box on the table contained small bills and loose silver coin, doubtless convenient change for occasional shopping.

All of which was futile musing.

Stone still tried reconstruction. But it was all so contradictory.

If the two men had boarded the yacht that morning—oh, how stupid! Fleming Stone, shamefacedly to himself, went back to the deck and picked up the newspaper there. It bore yesterday's date and it was a Newport paper.

Now, then, had they brought along that paper this morning because they started too early for the daily paper to reach them, or because there was some program or data about the races that they wanted; or had they, after all, been on the boat all night?

No, for aside from their very recent shaves the little bathroom on the boat was in the most tidy order. Nobody had used that lavatory that morning, it showed a cleaning up done by skilled fingers, not the hasty slicking over that a well-meaning guest might give.

Nor had the beds been used. Two tiny staterooms and some comfortable-looking berths were of immaculate whiteness and in perfect order.

No, the men couldn't have been on board over night . . . unless, again came thought of the mythical steward who callously murdered two men, put the yacht in apple-pie order and went his way. Perhaps he was not alone. A seaman of sorts and a small boat might be missing from the yacht, for all Fleming Stone knew.

It was too vague. No self-respecting detective would be silly enough to build up a house founded on such very shifting sand.

What relation did the two dead men bear to one another?

He had sorted them as the owner of the yacht and his guest. And it seemed plausible, for Barry, the rich young chap who sported a jeweled cigarette case, was far more likely to own this boat than the older and apparently less wealthy man who sat on the deck.

And it was Barry who went down to start the motor because the fog and the lack of wind did not make for pleasant sailing.

And the girl's picture on the table in the cabin was inscribed to Barry, not to Elkins Van Zandt.

All right then, Barry Somebody owned the boat. He had started out that morning, taking with him as guest Mr Elkins Van Zandt . . . and—the rest is silence, Stone told himself, ruefully.

A longish shelf of books ran along one wall of the cabin.

Stone approached it without any great hopes, for though it is a favorite theory among detectives that, shown his books, you can deduce a man's character, it is often a hazy and sometimes a false deduction.

And a man with a pleasure yacht frequently selects his very small library with an eye single to the guests he expects to entertain.

The books on the *Hotspur* were clearly chosen purely for entertainment. The newest romances were there; also some best sellers of the season before. There were the newest

detective stories and a few older and better ones; a fair showing of recent light verse and some older and realer poetry. A sprinkling of books about other lands and a dash of psychology.

Altogether a lot that Stone approved of. There was, too, a row of historic and romantic cruises, a subject which interests adventurous spirits, and among these the detective was surprised to see “The Cruise of the Marchesa,” an old and out of print volume, really hard to come by.

He took it down from its shelf and riffled the leaves, noting the attractive pictures and maps.

The sailor who was with him, and who was restlessly moving about, caught sight of a page and seemed to recognize the picture.

“I bin there,” he volunteered, placing a big, stubby forefinger on a map of the Malay Archipelago.

“Stay long?” asked Stone, laconically, not at all anxious to hear the reply.

“A while. There were Americans there, too.”

“Living there?”

“No, tourists, more like. But a private crowd, a big one.”

Stone said no more, but looked over the book a few moments, and then returned it to its place.

“You a detective?” asked the man, whose name, Stone found out by inquiry, was Zeb.

“Zebulon or Zebedee?” asked Stone.

“Dunno; jest Zeb. You a detective?”

“Yes, are you?”

“Not a reg’lar. But sometimes I see things.”

“See them now, then.” Stone was standing with his back to the large center table on which was the portrait of “Jane,” and a number of other things.

“Shut your eyes,” Stone said, “and tell me everything that is on this table behind me.”

Zeb began bravely, but after he had mentioned the silver-framed picture and perhaps half a dozen more things, he gave out entirely.

“I guess that’s all, sir,” he said.

“You do? Now you look at them, and I’ll list them.”

Stone moved away from the table, leaving it in full view of Zeb, but entirely out of his own vision.

Without a pause, he mentioned every object on the table, listing them almost precisely in the order they lay.

Then he turned, to see Zeb staring with amazement.

“The first thing to learn, Zeb, if you really have an interest in detective work. Why did you remember the lady’s picture? Because it is the biggest thing on the table?”

“No, sir—not exactly. More because she’s the Captain’s sweetheart.”

“Guessing, Zeb, guessing; that won’t do. Just because it’s the only picture of a lady in evidence, you mustn’t jump to a conclusion.”

“’Tain’t guessing, sir. The proof is right there ’fore our eyes. Look at it!” 27

Stone gave the man a comical glance and said, “You’re right, Zeb, it’s there.”

“You see it, sir?” cried the man eagerly.

“Yes, of course. There are the large finger prints of a man on the silver frame. While everything else is spick and span clean. Our young captain wouldn’t pick up the picture of any one but his sweetheart, to look at closely. Not his sister or cousin.”

“That’s what I meant, sir. And if you look close on the glass you can see where he kissed it.”

“Zeb, you’re an able seaman, but I vow you’d make an abler detective!”

CHAPTER II
The Wayne Brothers

Back came the lifeboat from the *Nokomis*, bringing the Assistant Purser, Flint, and a prominent medical man who was one of the passengers.

Jamison, too; and he reported that Captain Gregg had thought over and decided upon his own procedure.

“Discovered anything?” he said to Stone, and his snappish tone disclosed his resentment of this unwelcome intrusion which was so upsetting to his own plans.

“Nothing very definite or important,” Stone said, and Doctor Harmer, who had come to assist, at once went to the huddled figure on the deck and began to examine it. He soon came to a conclusion, which he announced.

“There is no visible wound on this man,” he said, positively. “I see no reason to suggest murder. An autopsy must be made if we want to learn why he died, but except for poison, no means of death are, as yet, indicated.”

“Do you see any indication of poison?” Fleming Stone

asked.

“Not precisely. Symptoms often disappear after death. A slight occlusion of the glottis is indicated, but until a post-mortem can be held I prefer to make no statement. Where is the other dead man?”

Doctor Harmer went down the hatchway, followed by Flint. The horrified exclamation of the latter proved that his peaceful job as Purser of a steamer had not inured him to the sights he was seeing now.

When they returned, the Doctor reported that the young man had obviously been felled by a terrific blow on the back of his head. He had fallen forward, not, however, scarring his face badly, and it was the Doctor’s opinion that death had ensued instantly.

“Why is there no blood or cut evident?” asked Jamison.

“The blow,” explained the Doctor, “was swift and strong. The skull was instantly fractured. In two places. You know a blow on the occiput, that is, on the back of the head, may fracture the frontal bone. In this case it fractured both, and there was internal hemorrhage, but none outside. This, of course, will be disclosed at the autopsy, and it explains all conditions.”

“Then I think,” Flint declared, “we’d better go back to the Captain at once and tell him what we have learned.”

Leaving Jamison on the yacht, Stone accompanied the Purser and the Doctor back to the *Nokomis*.

Captain Gregg listened to their story, attentively, and asked few but pointed questions, to which he demanded exact answers.

“I am confronted,” he said, at last, “by a grave situation. A condition of things, a shocking and terrible emergency, of a sort with which I am entirely unfamiliar, but which I must meet with my best available efforts. I deeply regret the inconvenience to which I shall have to put my passengers, but my duty is clear. Having found this yacht, derelict, on the high seas, I am obliged to report to the Federal authorities as soon as may be. I must also report to the Line and the Owners of the *Nokomis*, and ask their orders for my personal procedure. The first step is to communicate with the nearest Coast Guard Station, which is New London.” And then, more brightly;

“If the Coast Guard take over entirely, I can go on my way and reach New York not so very much behind time. I wish we hadn’t sighted the thing. We saved no lives, the yacht will get back to her owner anyway, or to his estate.”

“Well, of course—” Jamison began.

“Yes, I know what you mean,” the Captain grinned, “salvage. And a swanky little piece of property like that would divvy up some coin. Not like the days of old, when a salvor would receive half value of a craft he towed in. But a purse, all the same. That, my Owners may insist upon. But I’d rather make port on time than . . .”

“Now, now,” said Stone, quizzically, “are we to believe that?”

“Yes,” Gregg asserted, gravely, “personally, it’s true. But the Yarmouth line, a corporation and therefore considered soulless, might feel differently about it. The salvage award would be a goodly sum.”

“And you’d get a goodly slice of it,” observed Jamison.

“Most likely,” agreed the Captain. “But action other than this I propose might involve hostile public criticism. Than which there is no more fearful wildfowl.”

“Right you are,” declared Jamison; “go to it.”

Captain Gregg sighed as he went away to telephone.

“Salvage varies, I suppose,” Stone said, “with the value of the saved craft.”

“More than that,” Flint told him; “all the circumstances must be considered. Hazard, time involved, effort expended, value of equipment used, and in this case the possibility of a Federal crime having been committed. But Captain Gregg’s the man to do it all up proper. He’s quick-witted and intelligent, more’n most, and he’ll follow the rules.”

“All interesting to me,” Stone said; “I’ve never had just this experience before, and I’d like to take up the case, though no one knows as yet whose case it is.”

Captain Gregg at once got in touch with the Coast Guard base at New London, that being the nearest. He was advised to proceed to that port, taking in the yacht, and keeping the vessel, her equipment, fitting and the bodies, as nearly as

possible in the condition found. He was informed that the Department of Justice representative would be notified and would take action.

The U. S. Attorney would coöperate with the Coast Guard, and would have investigators board the yacht, perhaps before it reached the port of delivery, via a Coast Guard craft. This, in order to get all the evidence available as soon as possible.

Obeying these unwelcome but imperative orders, the *Nokomis* towed the *Hotspur* to the port designated and gave the yacht over to the Federal authorities.

Meantime Fleming Stone made arrangements to leave the steamer, and stay by the mysterious craft which so absorbed his attention.

He had never before been brought into contact with the Coast Guard in action, and he was deeply interested in the proceedings. Efficiency and quick action seemed second nature to this Department, and its excellent communication system advised the proper authorities, and soon discovered the ownership and status of the derelict.

It was a private yacht, of great value, belonging to Barry Wayne, of the Nantucket Yacht Club.

Barry Wayne, thought Fleming Stone when he heard this. B. W. of course. Wonder who the other man is, Mr Elkins Van Zandt.

That was not so easily discovered, though his personality

would doubtless soon become known. Probably a guest of the owner.

The final result was that the United States Attorney's office communicated with the residence of Barry Wayne, at Nantucket, and talked with Mr Daniel Webster Wayne, father of the young man whose body was found in the hold of his yacht.

Mr Wayne, Senior, agreed to go to the Coast Guard Station at New London immediately, taking the most expeditious way possible.

He flew over and later joined the group who were still uncertain whether or not murder had been done.

Captain Gregg, after a conference, was allowed to take his ship on to New York. U. S. Attorney Demarest and Fleming Stone, with the Coast Guard authorities, were discussing the situation cautiously, for an entirely parallel case was not known to them.

Who could say whether these two men had been killed, if they were killed, outside the three-mile limit or not? True the yacht was found on the high seas, but the deaths may have occurred within the jurisdiction of a particular state.

"Could they have been killed elsewhere and carried to the yacht?" asked Demarest, who looked on Stone as a past grand master in a matter of this sort, he himself having had little experience with mysterious cases.

"Not likely," Stone told him. "At least, not Mr Wayne. He

was positively at work on the engine, and struck down by some terrific blow. As to the other man, I think it could be possible that he was brought there dead, but we have no definite evidence.”

“Perhaps Wayne brought the dead man there, or, perhaps he was only ill, and then perhaps Wayne went down to see about the motor, and . . . some one else came on board . . .”

“You’re getting in deep water, Mr Demarest. There is not a scrap of evidence of a third man on board.”

“Must there be—always?”

“I think so. Where was the yacht when the third man got on board?”

“Oh, he went on with the other two. At the Yacht Club, I’d say.”

“And then they started?”

Demarest looked up quickly, fearing a trap.

“Yes, started to sail.”

“And the wind gave out?”

“Yes, so Wayne concluded to start the motor.”

“And went down to do so.”

“And went down to do so. You see, Mr Stone, he was leaning

over—”

“And your third man came down and whacked him over the head with some blunt instrument?”

“Looks like it.”

“Why didn’t he put up a fight? Why didn’t he see or hear him?”

“That’s what I can’t understand.”

“I can’t understand any of it. That’s why I want to take over the case. Do you think it could be managed? There’d be no charge.”

“It’s up to me, and I’ll say right now I’d be glad to have you help us. Are you at leisure?”

“I can make myself so. I want to work with you and with the police. It’s the strangeness of the affair that intrigues me. I don’t understand it, I can’t see how its conditions are possible. Yet they are right there.”

“Perhaps the father of the unfortunate young man can throw some light on conditions.”

“Let us hope so. Those two deaths seem to contradict each other. I can’t reconstruct the crime.”

“Always remembering that there may have been no crime.”

“That condition would be harder still to reconstruct. Young

Wayne couldn’t have dealt himself that fatal blow.”

“He could have fallen, accidentally.”

“But he didn’t. He was attacked, and with force. His position shows that.”

“Then there must have been a third man. That lightweight Mr Van Zandt couldn’t have walked down the steps and smashed Wayne, and then calmly walked up again.”

“When do you think the thing happened?”

“This morning, didn’t it?”

“Not in my opinion. I think the murders, if they are murders, took place about twenty hours or so before the bodies were discovered.”

“Is that so! Why do you think that?”

“Principally because Mr Van Zandt had been reading yesterday’s paper; and there was no paper around of to-day’s date.”

“Well, we’ll know a lot more now, for here come the men from Nantucket.”

“Shall we go down?”

“No; let them come here. I like to talk behind closed doors.”

In a few moments more, Fleming Stone was looking at

two men whose faces were drawn by distress and grief.

“I am Daniel Wayne,” said one, “and this is my brother, Patrick Wayne. Young Barry Wayne is—was my son. The yacht, *Hotspur*, was his property and what this dreadful news means I don’t know. Can you enlighten me?”

“Let me talk, Dan,” said his brother, with a kindly note in his voice. “We live over at Sand Hill, Nantucket Island on a rather large estate. My brother and his son Barry and myself comprise the family. We frequently have house guests; just now several people are with us for the Races. Yesterday morning we planned to go over to Newport to lunch with some friends. Some of us went on a friend’s yacht, some in a motor launch, and Barry proposed to go in his yacht, *Hotspur*, taking with him his fiancée, Miss Holt.

“But at the last minute, Miss Holt’s father refused to let his daughter go with Barry alone, and decreed that she should go with him, and meet Barry at the Newport party. Both the young people were terribly put out, but Mr Holt was inexorable, and they had to submit. With an idea of throwing himself into the breach, Mr Van Zandt, another guest, said he would go with Barry. The boy, angered at the situation, said he didn’t care who went with him, and he and Mr Van Zandt started off for the Club, where the yacht is kept. From that point we know absolutely nothing of the two men, or of the yacht. They didn’t show up at the Newport house for luncheon, and there was no word from them through the day or night. There’s a wireless set on board, and we couldn’t understand why Barry didn’t call for assistance, if needed.”

“What did you finally assume had happened?” Demarest asked, gently. 37

“We had various theories. My brother and I rather inclined to the idea of kidnapping, by a bold and ruthless gang, who would demand ransom. Or who, perhaps, were merely bent on stealing the yacht and stranding the two men somewhere.”

“There were no hard feelings between Mr Barry Wayne and his father?”

“Oh, Lord, no! We three led a most harmonious life. Business men during the winter, and long summer vacations in our Nantucket home.”

“You endorse all your brother has said, Mr Wayne?” and Demarest turned to Barry’s father.

“Yes, indeed. He was as fond of the lad as I, myself. Barry’s mother died when he was a child, and we have brought him up as nearly as possible as she would have done. Please tell me what happened? I know only that he is dead.”

Demarest told him the facts as known, and, suppressing his emotion, he said, calmly, “And now what must happen next?”

“You or your brother must identify the bodies,” 38
Demarest told him, “and an autopsy must be made. As you must recognize, it is an unusual case, and I trust you will not resent the fact that I must pursue my duty.”

“We want that, Mr Demarest,” said Pat Wayne; “all we ask is the administration of justice. Do I understand Mr Stone is

investigating the affair?”

“Yes,” Stone answered. “I expressed a desire to do so, and I am to be allowed. With, of course, your sanction and approval. I shall ask no fee.”

“We most certainly give our approval,” Daniel Wayne said, “the fees will be discussed at some other time. Now, may I see my boy? I am holding myself together for these preliminaries, but my heart is breaking, and, so far as possible, I shall shift any routine work to the shoulders of my brother—who will stand by me.”

No word was necessary from Pat, who in a brief glance promised all the assistance and devotion of which he was capable.

Friends of these brothers often declared they could not say which was the finer man. A patriotic mother had named them Daniel Webster and Patrick Henry, and except for a sense of humor, which Pat possessed in abundance and Dan had but scant store of, they showed similar traits and tastes.

Dan was five years the older, and though Barry loved his father better, he was deeply devoted to his Uncle Pat.

And now, Barry, who was always foremost in the thought of the two brothers, was no more, and they saw ahead the great emptiness that life without the boy would mean.

But neither evinced this feeling of bereavement in the presence of these strange men.

Ahead of them lay the routine of investigation, and they met this condition bravely as they did any emergency that came to them.

Hoping to spare his brother at least one pang of grief, Pat went to the morgue to identify the two bodies.

Knowing them at once for Barry Wayne and Elkins Van Zandt, he further explained that the latter was a guest at the Wayne home, and that his wife was still there awaiting news of her husband.

“A terrible matter, all round,” Pat said to Fleming Stone; “Mr Van Zandt was a frail man, physically, but he was a big gun in his profession. A New York lawyer, of the highest reputation. His wife is a fine and spirited woman. She will take this bravely, but I shouldn’t want to be the one to tell her.”

“Hysterical?” asked Stone.

“No; say rather, dramatic. She’ll rave around like a madwoman. Sincere enough, you understand, but expressed blatantly. Then there’s Jane Holt, my nephew’s fiancée. And her father. I’m not shirking, but perhaps you or Demarest could tell some of them.”

“Or your brother.”

“No, I’ll do it before I’ll foist it on poor Dan. After the excitement is over and things are settled down, that chap will collapse. I know him, and he’s as brave as they come, but he won’t realize how his life is broken up until his duties are

done and he has time to think.”

“Will he be very keen to discover the killer?” Stone asked.

“Yes, but he’ll have to be prodded a little. I’m sure he’ll just settle down to his sorrow and loss, unless he is urged to be active in the investigation. After all, is there much he can do?”

“That remains to be seen. Let us go back now. That Demarest is a capable chap. He says there’ll be an inquest.”

“Held by whom?”

“The county coroner. You see, the yacht was delivered here, and it would be simply a routine duty for him to hold an inquest, because two dead bodies are now within his bailiwick. His action, of course, would not be binding on the Federal Authorities, but the coroner will doubtless do his duty. And it may help matters along.”

“And in the meantime, the bodies—”

“Must be left in the morgue. The yacht, with all its equipments and fittings, is in the custody of the Coast Guard until its final disposition. It will be returned eventually to Barry Wayne’s estate, but there will be delay.”

“And when will the bodies be given over to us?”

“After the inquest. Then the real investigation will begin. I shall be on the case, but it will be in the hands of the Department of Justice. I trust I may be of help, for while the

Coast Guard enforces more laws on the water now than formerly, it does not maintain any highly organized criminal investigative agency. It is more like a patrol element on the water for the enforcement of Federal laws. So my long experience in detective work may be of use. And, too, now that we learn the home port of the yacht is Nantucket, that may mean changes in procedure."

The two men went back to the office of the United States Attorney, to find the inquest was just being opened.

The coroner was a brisk, busy little man, who seemed to think this case unimportant and of little interest. How mistaken his opinion was, became, later, a source of deep regret to him.

He first questioned Flint, who gave a succinct account of his seeing the derelict, investigating it, and notifying the Captain.

Fleming Stone was called next, as one of the first at the scene of the tragedy.

Stone told all the facts he knew, expressing no opinions though urged to do so. Instead, he inquired what the reports from the autopsy had been?

Doctor Blaine, who had conducted the post-mortem, replied to this.

"Regarding the death of Mr Wayne," he began, "there is no doubt that he was hit a fatal blow by some one desiring his death. There is no effect of an accident and he could not possibly have struck the blow himself. A heavy instrument was used, which, I understand, has not been found.

“As to the other dead man, Mr Van Zandt, I found no indication of anything but a natural death. The man had a bad case of ulcers of the stomach, a dread disease. It had reached a stage where death must ensue soon, and he could not have lived another twenty-four hours.” 42

“And there was no sign of poisoning?” the coroner inquired.

“None other than the poison of the disease itself. It is a terrible malady.”

“How long had these men been dead?”

“That question is always difficult to answer, and especially so in this case, as the bodies had been exposed to the weather for many hours. If obliged to express an opinion, I should say anywhere from fifteen to twenty hours. But this is mere surmise. I do not state it as a fact, even approximately. Mr Wayne tells us they left the Nantucket Yacht Club sometime after nine o’clock, yesterday morning. I should say their deaths occurred pretty soon after starting; but I cannot be positive. Also, I have no reason to think that they died at the same time, nor yet no reason to think otherwise. The unprecedented character of the situation when they were found is not to be judged as a more usual case might be. Now, I have told you all I can. As to the presence of a third person on the yacht, I am not qualified to say. But, so far as I can see, Mr Wayne was most surely killed, and Mr Van Zandt as surely died of the disease known as ulcers of the stomach.”

“Now, Mr Stone,” said the coroner, urgently, “having heard the autopsy report, will you state your opinion as 43

to the possibilities of the case?”

“In view of the report we have just heard there seems to be but a small range of possibilities. We must take the Doctor’s findings as truth, and that leaves us with pretty fair proof that Mr Wayne was murdered and Mr Van Zandt died what is called a natural death, that is, death from a recognized disease. Granting this, we are faced with the problem of who committed the murder. This, doubtless, will necessitate strict and technical investigation. As I am employed on the case, I shall of course use all my energies to solve the problem, but at the present speaking I have no idea as to who is the criminal, nor can I have until I am more conversant with the evidence. There is much to be learned, and until I have found out some of it, I can give no opinion whatever.”

Daniel Wayne was called and, though he preserved his poise, he looked badly shaken and talked with difficulty. He said nothing evidential, nor did his brother.

Despairing of any further real information, the coroner gave the case over to his small but intelligent jury, who promptly returned the verdict that in their opinion Barry Wayne was murdered by a person or persons unknown, and Elkins Van Zandt died of a severe attack of stomach ulcers.

The coroner gathered up his papers, and with a few conventional words of leave-taking, hurried away.

“It is understood,” Demarest said, “that this inquest was purely routine, but is useful as a record. And now shall we all go over to Nantucket? I don’t want to be intrusive, but

the work must go on, and I trust it can do so, unimpeded.”

“Yes,” declared Dan Wayne, “we will all go. My brother and I will undertake to tell the guests who are there, and I hope they need not be troubled with harrowing questions to-day, at least.”

Demarest promised him that should not happen if he could help it.

CHAPTER III
The Stag At Bay

After a swift trip in a Coast Guard motor-boat, they reached the Nantucket Yacht Club, and took a motor over to the village of Sand Hill, where the Waynes lived.

“That’s the house,” said Dan, looking toward a long, low structure just coming into view.

It was outside the hamlet, and fronted the sea. A house remindful of an old English Inn, half-timbered on its original façade, but not on the many additions which had been made to it. A Sun Room at one end and a Flower Terrace at the other seemed anomalous but not inharmonious.

A verandah ran the full length of the front, and an old signboard on rusty hinges swung from a tall pole. A painting on it, after Landseer’s picture, justified the name of the tavern, “The Stag At Bay.”

For a tavern it was, or had been, and long ago; for many years the Waynes had spent their summers there. Then Mrs Wayne died, and after a few years more the landlord

became old and ill, and decided to sell the place.

Whereupon the Wayne brothers considered the matter and concluded to buy it, and live in it summers. Barry approved the plan, having many lifelong friends on the Island, and when his father and uncle gave him their joint present of the splendid yacht he was more than willing to live in the old house.

Indeed, all three felt more at home there than in their fine apartment in New York City.

Barry was twenty-five, a Yale man, and a big, buoyant-hearted, even boisterous chap who made friends with everybody because they made friends with him.

He sailed on cruises far and wide, always, however, glad to get back to The Stag At Bay.

Fleming Stone liked the place at once; Demarest, more conservative, reserved judgment till he should see the inside of the house.

But if the outside had left him uncertain, the interior did more so. Few changes had been made, except such as would result in larger rooms. In several instances two or even three rooms had been thrown into one, for the Inn rooms were small. Low-ceilinged, too, and this had here and there been improved upon by raising a ceiling, and disregarding the useless portion left of the upper room. Elaborate plumbing replaced the old styles, and electricity was put in, though at Barry’s request the old chandeliers of bronze or crystal were left in a few rooms.

Straight through the house, from front to back, ran a wide hall, now called the Common Room, and used at any time by everybody.

Here, Vera Van Zandt, wife of the dead man found on the yacht's deck, also Stephen Holt and his daughter Jane awaited them.

As the four men entered, Jane rose and flew to Daniel Wayne, crying out piteously, "It isn't true, is it? Oh, tell me it isn't!"

Wayne put an arm round her, and led her to a seat, while he said, in a low tone, "Yes, it is, dear. Be a brave girl, you know how we all love you and sympathize. We, too, loved Barry."

"Yes, I know. Oh, I am selfish. Your grief, of course, is as deep as mine. Forgive me, we will try to comfort one another."

She turned to her father, who drew her down beside him as he sat on a davenport.

But Pat Wayne was not to perform his errand so easily.

He took the hand of Van Zandt's wife, and began to commiserate her on her grief.

"Don't talk like that!" she cried, stamping her foot on the rug. "Don't tell me you're sorry for me! What do I care whether you're sorry or not? Tell me of Elkins. Tell me how he died—why he died—who killed him? What with? Tell me everything! You know all about it, and I know nothing, *nothing*!" The last word died away in a long, low wail. She

stalked across the floor and back, making despairing gestures with her hands, which would have seemed theatrical had they been less sincere. She shed no tears, but the tawny gleam in her amber eyes showed the intensity of her emotion.

The strangers saw only a woman racked with grief, for which she strove to find a physical outlet.

She paused before the older brother.

“Dan,” and her voice fell to a gentler tone, “tell me about him! Tell me who killed Elk. I must know—I must! I *must*!” Again she gave a wild shriek.

“Hush, Vera,” said Dan, “be more quiet. Van was not killed. He died of a stomach trouble.”

“You lie!” she screamed, and as Dan looked across at his brother Pat nodded, and Dan pushed an electric button on the wall near his chair.

In a moment appeared a matronly looking woman, with a capable, kindly air.

“This is Mrs Mingle,” Dan said, “our most efficient and highly cherished housekeeper.”

Demarest and Stone acknowledged the introduction, and then Vera screamed again.

“Don’t you try to take me away, Ming! I won’t go! You let me be!”

“Just for a few moments, Mrs Van. Come along, now. I’ve something to tell you.”

A pair of blue eyes looked straight into Vera’s, and her amber ones lost their glitter, as she quietly let Mrs Mingle lead her away.

“Mrs Van Zandt is very emotional,” Pat said, with an air of apology. “I think we may forget that little scene. Mrs Mingle has a wonderful influence over her.”

“Mrs Mingle seems to be rather a wonderful person herself,” Fleming Stone observed.

“She is,” Pat Wayne told him. “She’s the daughter of Florence Nightingale and Machiavelli. Kind as they make ’em, and clever as the devil.”

“She’s lovely,” Jane Holt said, “and how she did love Barry.”

“She was a second mother to him,” Dan said, with a tremor in his voice. “We couldn’t get along without Ming. I call her that, because she’s as valuable as a rare bit of Ming pottery.”

“She looks the part you give her,” Stone declared. Then, turning to Jane, he said: “We promised, Miss Holt, that we would ask of you ladies no troublous questions to-day, though we may have to, later. Would you prefer that Mr Demarest and I should talk with you as to the tragedy now, or wait until to-morrow? I need not remind you that promptness is one of the most important points in detective work, and I am assuming you want to have the man who brought about Barry Wayne’s death discovered and punished.”

Jane Holt was a spirited young thing. Of medium height, exceedingly slender, with short brown curly hair and great gray eyes, fringed with the blackest, longest lashes, she rose at once to the occasion.

“Mr Stone,” she said, “I am broken-hearted at this awful thing. I loved Barry Wayne with my whole soul. We were to have been married next month. I have no wish to spend time in grieving that might be used in tracking down his murderer. Of course I want to learn who killed him, and why. And I want to know that he suffers full penalty for his villainy. I shall have long, weary hours to indulge in sorrowful thoughts and dear memories. So, at any time, ask me anything you wish, and I will tell you, if I can.”

“I assume that includes me also,” said Demarest, “and may I begin now?”

“Certainly,” returned the girl, though her lip trembled slightly at thought of the ordeal.

“Then first, Miss Holt, did you feel deeply disappointed at not being allowed to go on young Mr Wayne’s yacht yesterday?”

“I was very deeply disappointed,” and Jane cast an indignant frown at her father. “Had I gone, all this might not have happened.”

“You have no reason to say that,” her father broke in; “you know nothing to indicate that, and you have no idea who attacked Barry.”

“Why did you object to your daughter’s going, Mr Holt?”

This from Stone.

“Because it was a threatening day,” Holt responded in an ungracious tone. “Barry is—was, a young dare-devil, and after the race began he was quite capable of following a yacht out into the far seas. I am too fond of my girl to subject her to what seemed to me very real danger.”

“Yet you were willing to let her marry him.”

“That’s another matter. Once she was his wife I should have no further control of her actions. That is as it should be. But while under my protection I felt I must care for her.”

“With whom did you go, Miss Holt?” asked Demarest.

“In a large motor-boat, belonging to Mr Campion, a neighbor. He invited some of us to go with him, having room for three. So I went, and Mrs Van Zandt and Uncle Pat.”

“Yes,” said Pat Wayne, “and I nearly threw my host overboard! He knows as much about motor-craft as—as Noah! The only thing Rod Campion ought to navigate is an ark!”

“But he got you there?”

“Yes, after a fashion. I wouldn’t go out in a sailboat with him.”

“You’re quite evidently a sailor yourself?”

“More or less, in my youth. But Barry was the adventurous one of our family just now. He feared nothing, dared anything and was everlastingly getting into some sort of trouble.”

“Is there, then, a possibility that he could have incurred the ill will of some revengeful enemy, and it resulted in his death?”

“It seems to me that could be possible; not all Barry’s quarrels were of a trifling sort, though he was too good-natured to have a real enemy.”

“I wouldn’t say that, Pat,” objected his brother; “Barry was quick-tempered, but he never held malice. It was all over quickly.”

“Maybe, Dan. But we don’t know all of Barry’s affairs. While frank and willing to answer questions, he was not impulsively communicative about his own doings.”

“Then, Miss Holt,” Demarest returned to his witness, “you were not with your father on the trip over to Newport?”

“No; father went in a small sailboat with Mr Dan Wayne.”

“And you all met at the luncheon party at Newport?”

“Yes; all but Barry and Mr Van Zandt. I was alarmed from the very first, for Barry, though he was very angry because I could not go with him, said he would meet me at the Mannings’ as soon as possible. Indeed, I thought he would be there when I arrived. But the others kept saying he would turn up soon, and for me not to worry. They said such a splendid yachtsman as Barry couldn’t have gone wrong in any way,

and if the yacht were disabled or anything he had a wireless, and, too, there were scores of boats all around, and he would be looked after. How do you suppose they got him?”

“Who got him?”

“Why, the people who killed him.”

“You think, then, some enemy came in a boat and killed him premeditatedly?”

“What else is there to think?”

“It is difficult to reconstruct the scene you suggest. But there was another man on board.”

“You are not accusing Mr Van Zandt!” cried Dan Wayne, in horror.

“Mr Demarest is not accusing anybody,” Stone said, a little sternly. “He is asking necessary questions, and there are a great many to be asked. Now that Mrs Van Zandt is not present, will you tell me more about her? Were she and her husband a devoted couple?”

“By fits and starts,” said Pat, as no one else vouchsafed an answer. “I mean, sometimes they were all affection and devotion, and again, they disagreed to the point of quarreling. That right, Dan?”

“Yes; but I think they meant the affection, and the quarreling was an outburst of Vera’s quick temper and Elk’s slow, even sluggish intellect. For he had intellect, of a high class, but he

was slow-witted; and that irritated Vera, always. Now, I can't see a little man like Elk attacking a big, burly chap like Barry, and getting away with it. But if he did do such a thing, the reason can be guessed at. Van Zandt had a strong streak of jealousy, and of late, Vera has been making up to Barry. I think she did it mostly to tease Jane—"

"Yes, she did!" broke in the girl; "Barry and I both saw it, and we were amused by it, that's all. It didn't really tease us, but it did tease Mr Van Zandt. He is a funny little chap, and he thinks every man who sees Vera falls in love with her. Some of them do. But, my good Lord, he wouldn't kill Barry for that, and he couldn't have done so! To think of Elky Van whacking Barry hard enough to kill him is too ridiculous!"

"Mrs Van Zandt might feel glad to be rid of her husband?" Demarest asked, candidly.

"Not she!" returned Dan Wayne. "Vera knows too well which side her bread is buttered. She has lots of admirers, but few of them will seek to marry her. She's a cute little devil, but just about as extravagant as they come."

"Was her late husband a rich man?"

"He was before he married her," said Pat, dryly. "Not so much so since."

"How does his death affect her financially?"

"You mean insurance?" Pat continued to give out information; "well, he held large policies, but I rather think he had borrowed somewhat on them, and their value is a little

shrunken.”

“Tell me this,” Stone asked; “did you know that Mr Van Zandt had this serious stomach trouble?”

“He complained a good deal of indigestion,” Dan said, “and occasionally had a slight attack of acute indigestion; but we had no reason to think he had what might prove a fatal malady. That is, I hadn’t. His wife may have known.”

“Stomach ulceration is a very painful disease,” Stone said, slowly; “if Mr Van Zandt had had successive attacks of that, you must all have known of it. You could scarcely have mistaken them for acute indigestion. At least, a doctor could not have done so. Was a doctor summoned on these occasions?”

“No,” Dan said, “I think not. Mrs Mingle would take care of him with ordinary household remedies and always brought him round.”

“Have the Van Zandts been here long?”

“On this visit? About a month. They came the middle of August.”

“They’re your long time friends?”

“Well, yes; we’ve known them about four or five years, eh, Pat? They turn up here once or twice every summer, without waiting for an invitation. Lots of our friends do that.”

“Your son liked Van Zandt?”

“Well, no! he didn’t. Barry was annoyed when Jane wasn’t allowed to go with him in the *Hotspur*, and he was annoyed again when Van invited himself to go instead.”

“The two men were at odds?”

“Oh, no; Barry was too good a host to show his displeasure at Van’s company. They started off chummily enough.”

“About what time?”

“I don’t know. Right after breakfast. About nine or ten, I suppose.”

“Let me answer for a while,” said Pat, noticing his brother’s sad weariness. “Yes, Barry and Van started off about nine-thirty, saying they would go straight to Newport, leave the yacht at the Club and be at the Mannings’, where we were to gather, before we were. The plan was for a large party of us to go out in the Mannings’ big yacht, or in our own boats, take care of the races and be back for luncheon at two. Of course, if any one didn’t want to come back so early that was all right, and when our men didn’t show up, they all thought the *Hotspur* had followed the yachts, ’way out, and lost her way in the fog. But I didn’t think that, because while Barry was daring enough for any escapade, he wanted to get back to where Jane was.”

“Yes,” Jane agreed, “he told me he’d go straight to the Mannings’ and then he would try to sneak me away in his boat.”

“He did, did he?” exclaimed Holt, but a warning glance from

Pat made him stay the speech that would have pained Barry's father.

Fleming Stone looked round the group.

"We are at one," he said, "in our desire to solve the mystery of these two deaths, and while I have hope and belief that we shall do so, yet I am willing to state that I have never been faced by a more seemingly unsolvable problem. It is absurd to suspect either of the two men on the yacht of being the murderer. If Barry had killed Van Zandt, and then went down to start the engine, who killed Barry? And if, on the other hand, Van Zandt killed Barry, how could he expect to reach land himself? He could not sail a boat, I am told; he would then be at the mercy of storm or shipwreck, drifting out to sea and to certain death. If he killed himself by some poison not discovered at the autopsy, why choose that peculiar setting in which to stage his taking-off? And if he killed Barry, down in the hold, where did he leave his weapon? Whatever it was, it was large and very heavy. Can you imagine that small, timid man lugging a great weight down the stairs, throwing it at his victim, who apparently put up no fight, killing him, and, picking up his unwieldy weapon, going up the stairs again, and sitting down in a chair to bring about his own death?"

"He could not have done it," Dan declared. "You didn't know Van Zandt alive, Mr Stone, but he was incapable of the deeds you describe. In a word, we sometimes called him Caspar Milquetoast, because he looked and acted like that familiar cartoon. But he had not the stamina, moral, mental or physical, to put over such a deed. You all agree?"

He looked round the group and his brother and the two Holts nodded their heads.

“Perfectly true,” declared Steve Holt. “I never cared much for Van, though he was an accommodating sort; I often marvelled at his timidity, and his disinclination for any exertion. Nor do I believe he would kill himself or any one else. He was a most unnecessary man, in every way. I don’t know what Vera ever saw in him.”

“His money,” said Pat, laconically. “He lost a lot, but he had a lot left. No, Elky would never have killed himself.”

“It seems to me quite clear,” Stone went on, “that neither of those men could have been the murderer. To my mind, they had neither weapon nor opportunity; and so far as I know, no sufficient motive. We have no hint of any third man who may have come to the yacht, committed the crimes and gone away again, leaving no trace. I assume you know of no such person, who desired the life of either?”

Stone looked at Dan, but Jane spoke up in reply.

“Nobody could have wanted to kill Barry!” she exclaimed, her cheeks red with indignation at the idea. “I know everything about his affairs, he always told me everything. Don’t dream for a moment he was the principal target. Somebody wanted to kill Van, and did, and Barry, hearing Van call out, ran up the steps and was bashed on the head by the murderer and fell back down the hatchway.”

“Good reconstruction, Miss Holt,” and Stone looked at her with a little smile. “Now, if we can prove it. And have you

any idea who this enemy of Mr Van Zandt could be?”

“No, I haven’t. Ask Vera, she ought to know.”

“She has many admirers among the men?”

“Slathers of ’em. Poor Van had to accept the situation, and like it. But he wouldn’t kill any of ’em; he wasn’t the killing sort.”

“We don’t admit a killing sort,” Demarest said, looking at Jane’s pert, pretty little face.

“Why not?” and the big gray eyes looked at him earnestly.

“We think any one *can* be a murderer, whatever sort of man he may be otherwise.”

“What amazes me,” Stone said, musingly, “is the absence of any weapon. There is nothing down in the hatch against which Barry might have hit his head, accidentally. There is nothing that could have dropped down on his head from the ceiling, nor is there height enough for such a drop to be fatal. Beside, he was killed instantly, and the projectile, whatever it was, must have been removed by some one. I can’t get away from a third man.”

At that moment Vera returned. Mrs Mingle came with her to the door, and then left her, as she entered the room by herself.

“I am quite calm again, now,” she said, in a gentle voice. “I will not lose my hold on myself any more. Are you going to find out who killed my husband, Mr Stone?”

“Working with Mr Demarest, I hope to do so,” Stone said, without definite interest. He did not like this siren-like beauty. Ladies with glittering topaz eyes always repelled him. Yet he must accept her as she was, must even cultivate her, for it already seemed to him she stood for a lot in this strange Wayne case.

“You have no further information for us?” he went on, and to his surprise, she answered:

“Ah, but I have,” and she gave him a sorrowful smile; “I have what you call a—a clue—isn’t that it? Or do you say evidence?”

“It doesn’t matter, Mrs Van Zandt,” Stone was getting annoyed at her, “tell me what you have discovered.”

“A letter! A terrible letter, that will lead you straight to the murderer.”

“Very well,” Stone said, showing but slight interest. “Give it to Mr Demarest.”

“I thought you had the case,” she pouted a little, but handed the letter over to the Attorney, as bidden.

Unfolding the sheet, Demarest read it aloud.

> “Great Cæsar, man! Don’t think I’m intrigued by your wife! Though she is a lovely woman. If I seemed to flirt with her last evening, it was just to rouse a spark of jealousy in the heart of the girl I am trying to win. Don’t

be silly, forget it. B.”

“Do you know the writer of this?” Demarest asked her.

“No. It might have been one of several men. But I thought you detectives could find out from typing as well as handwriting who wrote a note.”

Demarest had handed the document to Stone, who put it in his pocket, saying:

“Thank you very much, Mrs Van Zandt. It may prove a valuable clue. Let us hope so.”

A messenger from the Coast Guard Station appeared then, with an important letter for Attorney Demarest.

After reading the document in silence, Demarest said, “I have here important information. I do not propose to read this message aloud, just now, but I will tell you its intent. Mr Van Zandt did not die from stomach ulcers, he was murdered.”

CHAPTER IV
A Complicated Case

As was to be expected, the news Demarest announced after reading the letter that came to him sent Vera Van Zandt into fresh hysterics.

As she began to rant, Demarest rose, and beckoning Stone to follow him, left the room.

A houseman appeared, and ushered them to a small reception-room.

“Can I give you anything?” he asked.

“Only some information,” Stone returned, smiling a little. “Is Mrs Van Zandt always so emotional?”

“Not always, sir, but always when under sudden stress of trouble or excitement. She is a tempestuous lady—”

“She is, indeed,” Demarest said. “Now, I want you to leave Mr Stone and myself in here, uninterrupted, for a time. If either Mr Wayne wants to see us, we will go to him, but nobody else must intrude.”

“Yes, sir,” and the man departed, closing the door after him.

“Complicated case, eh?” Demarest said, with a puzzled frown. “Ought to be one after your own heart.”

“Looks like it,” and Stone frowned too. “Nothing much to take hold of yet, though. Now, Mr Demarest, you desired my services, if I remember rightly, and the Wayne brothers, jointly and severally, have asked me to stay here and take charge of the matter. I mean stay in Sand Hill. I shall go to a hotel, though I’d rather stay in this house.”

“Haven’t they asked you to do that?”

“Yes, but perfunctorily. And the Hotel might be a better plan. Or, I might go there and, if they want me here, I could come later. It seems to me a complicated, and uncertain matter. I feel that it will not be solved easily or quickly. You, of course, cannot remain here to work on it?”

“No; my work is too varied and widespread to stay here on this case. That’s why I have asked you to do it. But I want to be kept informed of progress or of difficulties in which I can be of assistance. Use your own judgment as to staying at a hotel in Sand Hill, or staying here. Count on me for anything you want in my department, or for any aid I can give. Now, shall I tell you about the death of Van Zandt?”

“Yes, do.”

“This letter is from the laboratory where the organs of the dead man were sent for further examination. Mr Stone, I can’t help feeling that it was at your request that was done.”

“Yes, it was. I saw that the stomach of Mr Van Zandt showed an escharotic condition, which did not denote stomach ulcers but something much more significant. It showed a caustic substance, which I took to be metallic sodium. I spoke of this to the doctor who conducted the autopsy, and suggested that he look further than he had so far done. He said he had been hurried, which was doubtless true, but that there might be some foreign matter there. As his letter says, there was, and it was metallic sodium. The result of this, taken into the stomach, is an almost immediate collapse, and an ensuing death in a few hours. The appearance of the tortured stomach is so like that resulting from real ulcers that a most careful doctor can scarcely suspect poison, unless definitely looking for it.”

“And so, the two men were murdered?” Demarest’s shock was unfeigned.

“Yes, as I see it. In that case, which was murdered first?”

“After about twenty-four hours, I fear that can never be answered.”

“But we must endeavor to do so.”

“Of course; and that’s why I want you to carry on. It will mean time, hard work, research, and all the other helps you have to put on the job.”

“That I guarantee. Have you a suspicion of anybody, Mr Demarest?”

“No, I can’t say that I have. In fact, I can’t seem to see any

motive.”

“Nor can I. But just because the whole affair is so very much mixed up, I have a feeling that something will break loose and show us in what direction to look.”

“Let us hope so. Now, suppose we talk things over with our host, or with his brother.”

Stone pushed a bell button and there appeared the man who had brought them to the room.

A long, lank, lean New Englander, who said his name was Hezekiah, and added that Mr Dan and Mr Pat would like to see them, when their conference was over.

“We’re ready now,” Demarest told him. “Shall we go with you?”

“No, sir, the gentlemen will come to you here.”

He went away, and in a moment the brothers Wayne came in, closed the door and sat down.

“Now, may we know about Mr Van Zandt’s murder?” It was Dan who spoke, in a somewhat querulous voice, as if annoyed.

But Stone thought it was only an unconscious result of the nerve-racking incidents that followed one another so swiftly.

“We can’t help being curious,” Pat said, as if in apology; “but naturally we want to know about our guest as well as our boy.

If they were both murdered, do we conclude the crimes were committed by the same person?”

“That’s yet to be seen,” Demarest told him; and Stone added:

“If by the same criminal, Mr Wayne, can you form any opinion as to who he might be?”

“No; and to my mind it makes the mystery all the deeper. For, so far as I know, Barry and Van had few friends in common and no enemies.”

“A murderer does not have to be an enemy,” Dan Wayne said, with a somber face.

“That’s cryptic, Dan,” his brother told him; “what does it mean?”

“I have my own theory of the scene,” Dan said; “suppose a criminal was on board the yacht, and was there to kill Van Zandt. Suppose he did kill him, Mr Demarest says he was killed, and suppose Barry saw the crime so that the murderer had to kill Barry to be sure of his own safety. He was not necessarily Barry’s enemy, but he killed him, you see.”

“Imagination, Dan,” said Pat, looking kindly at his brother, “pure imagination.”

“Aren’t all reconstructions that?” Dan asked.

“Yes, but they have a little more truth to be based upon. Am I right, Mr Stone?”

“In general, oh, yes. But you’ve no idea how many bits of evidence depend on distorted facts or mistaken reports.”

“Just how shall you begin to verify or sort out your facts and evidence, Mr Stone?” Dan inquired, with deep interest.

“There are so few facts and so little evidence as yet, that it is difficult to decide what to do. But my usual course is to collect and tabulate all available facts; then to get together all the evidence and collate and connote that, and hope that some light will shine through the chaos.”

“We should be glad if you two would make your home with us, while you are working on the case,” Dan said, cordially.

“It will not be possible for me to remain here at all,” Demarest assured him. “I must go back to my post this evening; Mr Stone, of course, can speak for himself. But first of all we must turn the case over to the local police of Nantucket. We are not sure the crime was committed in this county, yet we do not know to the contrary, and we do know this was the home of the yacht’s owner and the visiting place of his guest. Once in the hands of the local police, this point may be made clear. Mr Stone, being a free lance, can make what arrangements he likes. I should be glad to remain with the case, but my orders are clear on the point and cannot be disregarded.”

“There has been, then, no inquest on the body of Mr Van Zandt?” Dan asked.

“No,” Demarest told him; “that will be at the discretion of the local force.”

“It is really an unprecedented case,” observed Stone. “Perhaps unparalleled.”

“It is certainly unique in my experience,” Demarest agreed. “Procedure would be clear if we knew where the crimes were committed. If on the high seas my department would, of course, retain control to the end. If within the waters of any state that state’s Prosecuting Attorney must take up the matter. As we have, so far, no knowledge of the exact locality of the yacht at the time of the two deaths, we must make the most rigorous investigation to learn all we can about it. It remains to be seen, if it can be seen, whether the case belongs to the local police or the Federal authorities, and neither can evade the responsibility of the search for the truth. Either force, too, would, I am sure, welcome the assistance and advice of Mr Fleming Stone, an investigator of nation-wide reputation. I think I may say that he will be an impartial worker, and any facts he may learn will be announced to us all.”

“I agree generally, with all Mr Demarest has said,” Stone told them. “The very fact that the case is so peculiar and unusual makes us resort to unusual methods. We have no known criminal nor any logical suspect. We know almost nothing of the time, place or circumstances of the double crime. We know of no motive, we have seen no weapons. Until we can learn the answers to these questions, we cannot decide whose case it is. It is my opinion, therefore, that we continue the work of investigation, by all who may possibly be in a position of responsibility, and hope by coöperation, if in amity, to arrive at the truth.”

“That sounds like good logic, Mr Stone,” said Pat Wayne, nodding his head in agreement. “And if it suits your convenience, I hope you will decide to stay here at Lang Syne with us. Barry’s mother never liked the old Inn name, and christened the place Auld Lang Syne, because she had many happy memories of it in earlier days. There are any number of rooms, from which you may select as many as you wish.”

“Yes, Mr Stone,” Dan said, cordially, “we’ll be glad to have you here, and I’m sure we can make you comfortable. We can transport you any place you’ll want to go; we have many varieties of boats, motors, airplanes and a sidebar buggy.”

“I shall be very glad to accept your hospitality, for a time at least, until I begin to see through the darkness of this opening scene. I’m sure I can conduct my investigation better from here than from the hotels in town. And I hope and trust I can solve the mysteries that have so suddenly come into your life. I’m sure you will be glad to welcome Mr Demarest, whenever he wants to come here for conference.”

“We shall always welcome Mr Demarest, whatever his reason for coming,” Pat said, cordially; “and will the Nantucket police be traipsing in and out, too?”

“I daresay they will, Mr Wayne,” and Demarest looked sympathetic. “But nothing is too bothersome if we achieve our end, and find the villain who killed your nephew.”

“That’s right!” and Pat looked belligerent. “Call on me, Mr Stone, for any least thing I can do to help.”

The men from the Nantucket police, who had been telephoned for, came then.

Demarest looked with interest at the tall and bulky Inspector Cox and the dapper Sergeant Bascom.

“You’ll be having a hard nut to crack, Inspector,” Demarest said.

“I’m thinkin’ so,” and the shock of gray hair that crowned Cox’s head seemed to stand on end in his excitement. “But to catch any vilyun that done for our Barry Wayne . . . well, he won’t get away from me, if I have half a chance.”

“That’s good talk. And our husky young Sergeant here will be right at your left wing, I take it. Go to it, Inspector. Find out where the *Hotspur* was when some one boarded her with malice aforethought and carried out that malice to the limit.”

Inspector Cox sighed deeply.

“Easy to say, sir, but not so easy to do, when a feller has no ‘Information’ to call, so to speak. I’ve often thought that people, on the telephone, you know, don’t make use of Information as often as they might. She knows a heap, that girl does, yet lots of people never think of calling her up. Well, in this case, not having any Information to call, what can I do? Just depend on intuition, I guess. I got plenty of that, anyhow.”

“Is it always right?” asked Demarest, smiling.

“Most gen’ally,” returned Cox, placidly. “Whuffore, I propose to begin at the beginning, and trace the track of that yacht, mile by mile, until I know her route to the dot.”

“A good plan,” said Stone, heartily. “I think we shall get along together, Cox. Don’t let your intuitions run away with you, that’s all.”

“No; my Sergeant here is a check on me. Many a time he says, ‘Don’t foller your intuitions too far.’ And sometimes he checks me off just in time.”

“We’re coming in,” said a determined voice, as the door opened, and Vera Van Zandt and Jane Holt appeared. It was Vera who spoke, and she went right on. “I can’t see any reason why we’re barred from all the talk about this affair when Jane and I are the principal sufferers.”

“That’s just the reason, Vera,” said Pat, kindly; “we want to spare you both all the harrowing details possible.”

“Dad went over to the Club,” Jane said, as she crossed the room and sat beside Dan, whom she had long looked on as a second father. “Vera and I felt lonely, so we came along here.”

“I was fed up with Mrs Mingle’s condolences,” Vera stated, “she nearly drove me mad with her conventional sympathy.”

“I thought Ming was very nice,” Jane said, with a sad little smile. “She loved Barry so, and I liked to hear her tell about him as a boy.”

“You would be apt to know, Miss Holt,” Stone said. “Did young Wayne expect to go anywhere before he went to Newport?”

“No, Mr Stone, I’m sure he didn’t. He wanted to get to the Mannings’ as soon as possible. We wondered which of us would get there first.”

“He was sailing over?”

“He said he would sail at first, but if the wind veered, or failed, he’d turn on the motor.”

“Which he evidently did.”

“Yes, the wind slackened about ten minutes after they left the Clubhouse. We found that out, while we were at the Mannings’, wondering where they were.”

“Oh, we telephoned everybody,” exclaimed Vera, “I was crazy with fear that something had happened to Elkins, and I called up several of his friends.”

“And no one knew anything about him?”

“Oh, yes; Johnny May saw the *Hotspur* about ten o’clock, scudding south.”

“Why would they go south?”

“Ah, Mr Stone, that’s just what I asked myself. Why, *why* would Barry go south, when he was crazy to get to Newport?”

“Where was the yacht then?”

“I’m not perfectly sure, but I think they were off Martha’s Vineyard.”

“Well, there’s a starter for you, Inspector,” Stone said, looking at Cox and his Sergeant.

“And we’ll follow it up,” said the Inspector as he rose to go. “I’ll come back here, Mr Wayne, this evening, or to-morrow morning, jest as you say.”

He looked at Dan, but as he said nothing, Pat answered:

“My brother is wearied and heartbroken, Mr Cox. Let me answer to-night, and to-morrow morning he’ll be better able to take hold. If you prefer to come back here to-night, by all means do so; but if you don’t mind, we’d rather it would be to-morrow.”

“Oh, that’s all right, Mr Pat. I’ve enough to do this evening getting into harness.”

“Harness?”

“Well, I just mean, to look up some statistics and such; to quiz a few chaps round the docks; to look into Mr Barry’s movements of late—oh, there’s lots of preliminary scouting to do.”

“Very well,” Pat said, “go ahead and do it.”

With a preoccupied air the Inspector nodded a general gesture

of farewell and, with his colleague, went away.

“Good man,” said Demarest, with an appreciative smile. “Now, I’ll be getting along. Can you send me over to New London, Mr Wayne?”

“Any way you want to go,” Pat said; “Plane, sail or motor.”

“Motor, then, please. My time is of account. I’ll keep in touch with you, Stone, and Cox will report to me, also.”

Pat Wayne went away with the U. S. Attorney, telling him as they went to the boathouse that he was sorry to have him leave.

“I’m not entirely out of it,” Demarest said; “You may see me pop back at any time, if occasion calls for it.”

“So much the better;” Pat said. “I fear, Mr Demarest, this matter will not be quickly cleared up.”

“I think that, too; but you’ve got a big man in Fleming Stone, and if anybody can succeed he can.”

“Yes, I feel that. But there’s so little to work on.”

“I have good men, who will also be looking into it. I shall have to keep the yacht for a time, but rest assured you will get it as soon as possible. These things take time, you know.”

“Oh, we’re in no hurry to have the yacht back. I doubt if any of our guests would want to sail on it. Of course, we want it

when the time comes for us to have it.”

“It will be returned to the estate, after it ceases to belong in our custody.”

“That’s all right. Now, you want to go over to New London in a motor-launch. Here you are. Little *Bambino* will take you over. A baby craft but a goer. Avast there, Fred!”

“Aye, aye, sir!”

“This is our boatyard man, Fred. He’ll take good care of you. Put Mr Demarest in snug harbor, Fred, at New London.”

Fred, a big, brawny, good-natured chap, saluted, and soon the U. S. Attorney was off in a shuffle of spray.

Pat went slowly back to the house and met Steve Holt just returning from the Club.

“Too bad, Holt,” Pat said, “that you and Jane should be here in these troublous times. Do you feel like staying on, or would you rather be out of it?”

“Rather be out of it, much! But it can’t be did. They told me at the Club I’ll have to stay. The police will insist on my company and Jane’s too, for a time or so.”

“Oh, Lord, I suppose so. I expect that’s the routine. Then, Vera will have to stay, too.”

“Yes, she and her hysterics. I suppose she thinks they are captivating. They get on Jane’s nerves. I wish I could

take Jane away. It’s no atmosphere for a young girl.”

“It won’t hurt Jane. She’s the sensible sort.”

“It isn’t particularly pleasant to be mixed up with murders and police and detectives.”

“No, it isn’t. But it can’t be helped, Steve, so stand up to it.”

“Is that Stone golliwog staying in the house?”

“Yes, he is,” and Pat laughed in spite of his annoyance.

“Well, of course I want to find the man who killed Barry and Elkins, but why does the detecatif need the help of all us laymen?”

“Give it up. Maybe he likes to see you around. Maybe he’ll be smart enough to get you off and have you sent home, if you ask him prettily. But, I say, Steve, aren’t you rather pretty awful to act like this? Give a thought to poor old Dan. Remember how he idolized that boy. Suppose your Jane was murdered in cold blood—women have been murdered—would you like to have your friends grousing about the necessity for detectives in the house?”

“Oh, of course it’s necessary and all that, but as I didn’t have anything to do with the crime I think I ought to be allowed to leave.”

“Convince the police that you didn’t, and probably they’ll be glad to get rid of you.”

“What do you mean, ‘convince the police’?”

“I don’t mean anything. Forget it. Come on into the house.”

As they went in, Holt tried to slip through the hall and go to his own rooms. But Dan called to him.

“Come in, a minute, Steve. We want you.”

“Who wants me?” and reluctantly Holt drew nearer the group.

“I do, for a moment,” said Stone. “Just a question or two. When did you see Barry Wayne last?”

“Why should I be asked that? What does it matter? I didn’t kill the lad. Why should I? He and my girl were betrothed; would I kill the man she loved?”

“Go on, Mr Holt,” Stone looked at him without admiration. “Ask any more of those questions you wish. They are rhetorical, I take it. And when you have finished with them, please answer my question.”

“What’s your question? I didn’t hear any question!”

“Except your own, I suppose. I asked you when you saw Barry Wayne alive last.”

“Why, at breakfast, yesterday morning, just as all the rest did. What about it? Are you holding an inquest?”

“No, just asking a civil question, to which I’d like a civil reply.”

“You won’t get it from me, then; I had no hand in his murder, so I have no reason to be quizzed concerning it.”

“Very well, you shan’t be. I thought you might have some theory or opinion, you seem like a man who would. No matter, I’ll not trouble you further. I think we won’t take up the subject just now, though I must talk to you all, later on.”

“I hope you will, Mr Stone,” Dan said. “While it is agony to think what must have happened to Barry, yet I want to get at the truth as soon as we can. And, too, there’s Van Zandt’s murder to be looked into. Will you tell me, now that Vera is not here, what, exactly, caused his death?”

“It is a simple, though not well-known principle. Metallic Sodium. Unless he took it of his own accord, Mr Van Zandt was given a dose of that mineral and died from its effects.”

“What are its effects?”

“I hate to tell you, Mr Wayne, but as the ladies are not here I will say that it is one of the most fiendish deaths that can be brought about by a diabolical intent. The after symptoms, exposed by an autopsy, greatly resemble those left by stomach ulcers and are naturally ascribed to that disease. But the action of this poison and the death of the victim are so terrible in their agony that it is indescribable. The effect of the sodium is like an absolute explosion and collapse is almost immediate, though death may not follow for some hours. In Mr Van Zandt’s case, we cannot tell these times exactly, but there is no doubt that was the agency that brought about his death. As to Barry,” he looked sorrowfully at Dan, but felt it was better

to speak of the boy then, “he was hit or he fell, we do not yet know which, and the severity of the blow caused his immediate death. It is my hope and my belief that we can discover the perpetrator of these terrible deeds, but so far I see no real clue.”

“I’m sure you’ll find one,” said Pat. “Barry was my boy as well as his dad’s, and the least we can do is to use every effort to bring punishment to his murderer.” 77

“Yes,” Dan agreed, “stop at nothing, spare no pains or expense, but track down that fiend who took my boy from me.”

CHAPTER V
Night Thoughts

That night, Fleming Stone lay awake for hours, trying to see some ray of light on this darkest of all problems he had ever encountered.

The evening had brought no help of any sort. The dinner, irreproachable in food and service, was eaten almost in silence, and it seemed to Stone that the family had only just begun to realize the tragedy.

All had retired to their rooms early, and Stone in the pleasant suite he had chosen tried to sleep, but found he could not do so.

Pulling on a small night light, he looked about him.

He had three rooms, all facing the sea. The middle one was the bedroom where he lay in an old-fashioned four-poster of applewood. Not tall posts, but low ones, with balls a-top.

The room was not furnished like the decorator's idea of "Early American" but showed a chest-on-chest of cherry, and tables and chairs of other fruit-woods. Rag carpet

was on the floor, and fresh, ruffled dotted-swiss curtains at the windows. The wall-paper was sprigged pink roses on a green trellis, and the high and beautiful mantelpiece was painted white and bore proudly two hurricane lamps and a Staffordshire dog.

On one side of this room was a large dressing-room, with complete, even luxurious, bath.

On the other side, a study or lounging-room.

The old Governor Winthrop desk was well furnished with stationery; the plump old sofa and wing chairs were covered with fresh, gay chintz, and on the floor was a carpet of “Body Brussels.”

Each room had a door opening on a long verandah which ran across the second story of the Inn, and just outside the windows hung the swaying sign “The Stag at Bay.”

Hearing it, Fleming Stone decided that if ever there was a stag at bay in that vicinity, there was one there now, and he was it.

He realized exactly, he told himself, just what stags at bay feel. They daren’t go forward, lest they step into hidden dangers; they daren’t step back, lest the enemy attack from behind; and they daren’t stand still, for the work must be accomplished.

He rolled out of bed, put on a Mandarin coat over his pajamas, and going into the next room sat down by the open window.

It was characteristic of him that he laid aside all thoughts of his problem while he decided what to call that room. He detested the word Den, he disliked Study, and it was neither large enough nor of the right type to call a Lounge. But one more glance at the marble-topped center table, where on a shaded green moss mat lay a large Bible, and he knew at once the room's name was parlor. It could be nothing else.

He opened the door to the balcony and stepped out.

There were many chairs, and he dropped down in a Boston rocker with a feeling that he was in a theater box, waiting for the curtain to rise on some tragic drama.

Nor was he wrong; that very thing was to happen, and he was to bring it about.

He forced his mind to go slowly over the events of the day. In his far from placid life he could remember no day so full of successive excitements. And he felt a strange urge to set them all down in orderly manner, lest he forget them.

But more, his thoughts came rushing about the people in the house, about their relations to one another, and about what had happened before he had come into their lives.

Had Vera and her husband been as deeply in love as she made it appear? Had Barry cared for Jane as desperately as she now intimated? Why, he asked himself, why did he have so strong an impression that it was a *crime passionnel*?

He knew these people scarcely at all, yet he was already imputing to them motives and characteristics that he knew not

if they possessed.

Why should he doubt the affection of the married pair or the love of the betrothed couple?

Why? There must be some reason; something said or done or hinted, that told his subconscious mind of a state of things not ordinarily evident.

To reconstruct; but he had tried so many times to reconstruct, and could find nothing to work on.

All he knew was that Barry and Van Zandt had gone out in the *Hotspur* about nine-thirty, and had soon after met with violent deaths. A nice pile of lumber to reconstruct from!

More? Well, yes, he knew that Barry had been bashed on the head with that absent heavy, blunt implement, and Van had been given poison in some guise.

And wasn't that enough? What more could the super-detective Stone ask?

Must he have a cigarette butt, a cuff-link and a few shreds of heavy, twilled cloth?

Stone attacked what to him was the beginning.

The two went on board at the Yacht Club. Not long after, they met their death. This was proved, the doctors told him, by the condition of the food in their stomachs. So, Stone told himself, either one or two of those men committed one or two of those murders.

Which man was more likely to be a murderer? Why, Barry, of course. Van Zandt would scarcely go on his friend's yacht with the purpose of killing him! Also, Van Zandt could neither sail a boat nor swim! In fine plight he would be, afloat on the ocean in a yacht, with a dead body for company. Nor could the slight-bodied Van so attack the big, heavy-built Barry as to kill him at one blow.

No, if there was murdering done on the *Hotspur*, it was not Elkins Van Zandt who did it.

So much for logical reconstruction!

Because, of course, it was not Barry. A young man, of wealth, brains and good looks, just engaged to a lovely girl, is not going to kill a guest at his home for no imaginable reason whatever.

But somebody killed Van Zandt. Supposing it was somebody other than the two men known to be on board, then he must have come on the yacht, after she left the Club. (He must see the Club people about that.) Then, did one man kill both victims? Somehow, it didn't seem so. And, even yet, there was no real reconstruction accomplished. Who could say that a criminal boarded the boat, gave Van Zandt a poisonous dose which the victim took willingly, went down the hatch and killed Barry with a biff from some heavy club, and then departed from the *Hotspur*, leaving no incriminating trace behind.

Impossible!

But what was possible? What could be imagined, fancied or

dreamed of that would fill the obvious requirements?

Stone frowned. A big case like this, with all sorts of tentacles reaching out in many directions, must give one something to bite on.

And it would—sooner or later.

Stone laughed at himself for being up to his own *bête noire*, deducing without data. Why, he hadn't even searched the rooms yet.

Far down at the end of the long verandah, a figure came into view, from around the corner.

A tall, graceful figure, with long, clinging draperies, so dark that they faded into the night, leaving, it would seem, only a white face peering ahead, as the form came nearer.

"Vera the vamp," Stone thought to himself, and then, as she paused beside his chair and said, "Mr Stone" in a low voice, he rose, and said,

"Yes, Mrs Van Zandt, you wish to speak with me?"

"I do, very much."

"Sit here, won't you?" and Stone drew a chair near his own.

She sat down, showing no trace of excitement. She drew about her the oddly made cape she wore—odd, but very beautiful. It consisted of superimposed capes of successive shades of misty gray chiffon. The lightest one, the outside

one, was like a silvery fog, and it fluttered from her white arm and fell over the side of her chair.

Stone looked for melodramatics, but she spoke calmly and without tension.

“You are going to find the murderer of my husband?” she asked in what sounded like a casual way.

“I trust so. You want him found?”

“Would it matter to you if I didn’t?”

She looked up at him quickly, and he was startled to find how lovely she was, when not temperamental or in a temper.

“It would not matter in my search, and I think you mean that. If you tell me you don’t want him found, I shall go ahead with my quest just the same, having the added incentive of curiosity.”

“Curiosity?”

“Yes; I should be curious concerning your apathy in the matter.”

“And you call yourself a detective! The reason for that ought to be clear to you at once.”

“Meaning that you didn’t love your husband?”

“Meaning that, and more!”

“Ah, that you love some one else?”

“You can see things, can’t you?”

This was accompanied by a gentle little smile, the sort of smile which did not belong to the amber eyes and their dark, sweeping lashes. But Stone had yet to learn of other smiles that did belong there and which went to make up a confusion of smiles that was very bewildering.

“Am I then to gather,” he went on, “that you have no regret for your husband’s death? You are glad he is dead?”

She winced. “Don’t put it so crudely,” she said. “I am glad to be relieved of his presence, but I could wish it had been brought about in a less blood-curdling way. If he had run away with another woman, or had died of the ‘Flu,’ or some civilized disease, it would have been far more easy to bear.”

“You’ll miss him, of course,” and Stone looked at her curiously.

“Oh, yes, he was a good sort. But who could care for a shrimp like Elk?”

“He was looked up to by his men friends, I hear.”

“In a business way, yes. But socially, everybody thought him a pusillanimous sort. He thought himself so. He had a very severe inferiority complex.”

“Which you helped along all you could.”

“Do you mean anything by that, Mr Stone?”

“Only what the words say; they are good English.”

“Good English may say many things—”

“We are talking drivel. I take it, then, that I may expect no help from you in my quest for the murderer?”

“Oh, that does not follow!” Again that warm little smile. “Yes, let me help you; and it will make our way clearer, now you know how I feel about my late husband.”

“All this is leading up to the fact that you have something to tell me, is it not? Something that I ought to know and don’t; something you can tell me and no one else can?”

“No, not that, but I want to give you a warning.”

“Think twice. There is much harm done by an untimely warning.”

“This isn’t untimely; it is what you need know, right now. Don’t look at me as if you think I’m crazy! I know what you’re thinking, you’re wondering if I am the same woman you saw in hysterics a few hours ago. Well, I am the same person, but in a different mood. I have many moods.”

“Most women have, Mrs Van Zandt. Don’t think yours a unique case. Now if you feel you must give me that warning, go ahead and do it. And then I think it would be wise for you to go back to bed, it is chilly out here.”

She looked at him in an impartial way, and said:

“That is a stunning Mandarin coat you have on; you look like —like—”

“Like a Mandarin? And you look stunning, too. But I’m not here for an exchange of compliments. Run along, now; I want to think.”

“And you haven’t heard my warning!”

“Hurry it up, then. What is it?”

“Since you take it so casually, I think I won’t tell you.”

“Very well; I haven’t asked you to. Good night.”

Stone had risen, and he spoke with an air of finality, which few could have failed to obey.

But Vera caught at the wide sleeve of his robe, and drew him down to his chair again.

“Listen,” she said, softly; “are you not a fool to disregard a little light from me on this dark matter? You know nothing of the inmates of this house—I can tell you much. You can question them, to be sure, but how much better to listen to a few hints from one who knows them well.”

“That might appeal to some, Mrs Van Zandt, but, for myself, I prefer to learn my characters as they present themselves to me. However, you have presented yourself, and if you care to tell me anything concerning yourself, and also

bearing on this tragedy, I shall be very glad to hear it. Am I right in assuming you do not propose to tell others what you have told me regarding your feelings toward your husband?”

“I think it wiser not to do so. They wouldn’t understand, as you do.”

“But I haven’t said I understand.”

“You don’t have to say it, I can read you like a book.”

“Very well, let me read you like a book. You are here to try to find out whom I suspect of being implicated in the murder of your husband. You want, then, to give me a hint—a warning, as you say—that will set me on another track.”

“How clever of you! You haven’t hit it just right, but you are warm.”

“Don’t you think we are unwise in continuing this conversation out here? May we not be overheard? Whose rooms are along here?”

“Let me see; there are your own, those three. To the extreme right is Barry’s suite, a magnificent apartment. The other way, you will find Dan’s rooms. The between ones are vacant. You know this was an old Inn, and the rooms are of various sizes and shapes. Pat Wayne’s rooms are directly over Barry’s and the Holts’ apartments at the other end of the third floor hall.”

“And up above all these?”

“There is an enormous ballroom. Also Mrs Mingle’s rooms,

and some of the servants'."

"Have you ever heard of Jonathan Edwards?"

"I don't think so; who is he?"

"He's exceedingly defunct. But when on this planet, he wrote a famous book on the Affections. I wish, since you refuse to leave me, you'd give me an idea of the affections existing between members of this household. Whom do you love, here?"

"What an odd question! Well, of course I love the two Waynes to distraction."

"The brothers?"

"Yes. I don't know which I prefer, they're both so dear."

"Would you marry one of them?"

"Like a shot! Either, or both—successively."

"And they're devoted to one another?"

"Com—pletely. Damon and Pythias, David and Jonathan, Castor and Pollux, you can't beat Dan and Pat for brotherly devotion. They're splendid men. They brought Barry up by hand, and made a man of him. Barry would have been his father all over again, had he lived. And his Uncle Pat, too. The boy had the best traits of both."

"On, on; tell me a word about the others. The Holts, now."

“Oh, Steve Holt is a multum in parvo. He can be a bland philanthropist or a sneak thief. A polished gentleman or a cutthroat.”

“I wish you’d talk sense. I don’t know any of these people. Why not help me a bit by telling me what you know of them?”

“And isn’t that just what I’m doing? I’ve no reason to blacken or whiten them. Steve Holt is the kaleidoscope type, changes with every occasion. And Jane is a chip of the old block. She’s sly, that’s what Jane is, sly. Beware of her.”

“Is that the warning you had in mind for me?”

“Maybe and maybe not. I think you can manage Jane; she is tricky, but amenable to kindness.”

“And the redoubtable Mrs Mingle. Is she as formidable as she seems?”

“More so, far more so. Don’t try to get ahead of Ming! Win her liking, flatter her, praise her, get her on your side, but don’t attempt to fight her!”

“Why should I?”

“Oh, she’s irritating and sometimes really annoying. She has a good heart for those she loves, but it stops right there.”

“There are other servants, of course?”

“Heaps of ’em. But Ming isn’t a servant, she really isn’t. She

knows all the affairs of Dan and Pat—and all Barry's secrets he confided to her. She's a wonder. You'd better make up to her."

"What makes you think I expect to make up to anybody?"

"Why wouldn't you? This isn't a case where you can look through the dead man's rooms and find all sorts of clues. By the way, shall you search the rooms of Barry and my husband?"

"Yes, I daresay. In company with the local police."

"Do you learn much that way?"

"More or less; you see, inanimate things are not so secretive as human beings."

"No; I could tell you more about Elkins in a minute than you could learn from searching all his chests and cupboards."

"Why don't you, then?"

"Why should I? You're here for that very purpose yourself. It would be foolish for me to try to help you and then fall into all sorts of errors."

"Have you any idea who would have a motive for killing your husband?"

Vera sat quite still and looked at him. The moon was in and out of the drifting clouds, and shone now and then on her exquisite face and her white arms that restlessly moved

among the serrated chiffons.

Then she said, in soft, gentle tones, as if apologizing for her lack of assistance, “If I have, Mr Stone, it is someone you have never heard of. Somebody miles away from here; somebody I scarcely know myself, and who could have no reason whatever to kill Elkins, but who may have done so.”

Stone pretended to stifle a yawn.

“Your words sound cryptic, Mrs Van Zandt,” he said, with a slightly amused smile. “And to be frank, not of very much importance.”

“Then here’s where I leave you,” she retorted, rising with a swirl of gray chiffon, that caught the moonlight in its soft ripples like silver rain. “A detective who can’t see importance when it stares him in the face is not worth telling it to.”

“No?”

“No! I have given you a hint—a clue, and you, not understanding, toss it aside as worthless! I dare not speak more plainly, these old walls carry echoes around their corners, and we may be overheard by some one more comprehending than yourself.”

“There isn’t anybody,” said Stone, calmly, and Vera stared at him.

“Cut along now,” he went on, smiling at her. “Always to-morrow is another day.”

Almost she seemed to float, as her capes made billows in the light breeze, and Stone stood looking after her and shaking his head.

“A trifle mistaken,” he said to himself, “when she said I didn’t understand and I tossed her hint aside as worthless. It is a great find!”

While Vera was still with him, Stone had heard a footstep far along the verandah, and he now waited for it to sound again.

It did, and in another moment, Steve Holt came jauntily along.

“Yes, I’m holding audience,” Stone said to him; “yes, I expected you. Yes, certainly you may sit there.”

He indicated a nearby chair, and resumed the one he had been occupying. “You want to talk or listen?” he went on.

“Talk, please,” said Steve Holt, and sat down in the wicker porch chair. “Don’t be alarmed, I am keeping you but a few moments.”

“Why should a longer stay alarm me?” Stone sounded quizzical.

“Well, if you are mortal man, and I assume you are, you have had a long and well-filled day. And if you want to get off by yourself to rest or to wrestle with the problems of said day, I’m sure the prospect of a long and boresome talk would alarm you.”

“But I never allow myself to be submitted to a long and boresome talk. Do you propose such a thing?”

“You know I don’t. I told you that in my first sentence just now.”

“So you did. Talk away then.”

“Do you mind telling me just how you are going about the solving of this murder mystery?”

“Very much. Beside, you said you wanted to talk, not listen.”

“Oh, very well. But just tell me this. Shall you start in with the idea that the murders were committed by some one now in this house, or by some one from outside, whom we may not even know or know of?”

“Yes, just that. I shall start in with the idea that the murders were committed by some one now in this house, or by some one from outside, whom we may not even know or know of.”

“You’re not at your best when you try to be funny,” Holt said, with a sneer.

“Nor are you,” Stone returned. “Now, Mr Holt, we may as well be friendly. I am not given to asking any one to help me in my work—the real creative work, which belongs to me alone. But I must ask those who know, for certain data, for dates of occurrences, for questions of relationship and for accounts of actions known only to certain ones. Without these facts, I should be somewhat in the position of the Jumblies, who went to sea in a sieve. You said you wanted to talk; what

have you to say?”

“I want to say this; that I do not think Barry and Elkins were killed by the same person.”

“You have a reason for this belief of yours? Is your reason subjective or objective?”

Holt suddenly looked sheepish.

Stone stared at him, for it seemed like the embarrassment of a schoolboy delinquent in his lesson.

And that’s just what it was.

“Mr Stone,” Holt fairly blurted out, “all my life I have been bothered by those two words. I don’t know exactly what they mean, or, if I have a glimmering, I don’t know which is which.”

Stone burst into laughter.

“Forgive me,” he said, suppressing his mirth, “but it is so funny. I looked on you as the most erudite chap here, and now you balk at a simple and often-used expression. But it’s easy to explain. Subjective means referring to or concerning yourself. Objective has to do with some one or some thing outside yourself. Do you want to know my opinion as to a single murderer or two of them because of some deep interest of your own, or some concern for another?”

“Why, both, I suppose. I want to know, for my own satisfaction, and I want to know because it will affect

others very deeply.”

“And since you have decided the matter in your own mind, why do you think there were two murderers?”

“I don’t. I think the doctors are wrong, and Van died a natural death.”

CHAPTER VI
Investigations Begin

Next morning brought one of those shining Autumn days when the air seems to crackle with sunshine.

Stone stepped out of his room to the balcony, and watched the surf frothily tumbling in and rolling out again.

Dan Wayne joined him and said, almost abruptly:

“Good morning, Mr Stone—have a good rest? Can you sleep with the sea pounding? I say, breakfast’s ready, but stop a minute. Are you going to search the house to-day? Is that part of your routine?”

Apparently he desired no replies to his first questions; so Stone took up the last.

“Not mine,” he said, “but I daresay the police will expect to do something of the sort. Better not make objections. They won’t really disturb things and they are suspicious of people who show unwillingness.”

“I’m not at all unwilling for myself or my family; but I hate to

have them intrude on my guests.”

“Mr Van Zandt was, of course, your guest, and as you know, his room must be gone over. Your son, too—you’re willing to have his rooms searched?”

“Oh, yes,” and Dan sighed. “I want anything and everything done that will help matters along. But I hate to have the Holts bothered, or Mrs Van Zandt.”

“Don’t worry, Mr Wayne; I’ll see to it that there is as little intrusion as possible. It’s not as if the crime took place here. Personally, I think it more important to search the yacht.”

“Shall we ever have that back, Mr Stone?”

“Certainly. As soon as some legalities are arranged.”

“Oh, there’s no hurry about it. I never shall go in it again, anyway. Pat may, he’s fond of yachting. But more likely he’ll feel as I do about it.”

“Your son left a will?”

“Oh, no. We never have given him a lot of money. He had an allowance, and more at any time he asked for it. Pat and I often talked about settling a round sum on him, and we planned to fix it up this winter when we go back to the city. You see, we found it hard to realize that he was a grown man, we still thought of him as a boy, and gave him money as he needed it.”

“You and your brother shared equally in your father’s great

fortune?”

“Not exactly that. In his younger days Pat was a gadabout, and traveled to the four corners of the earth. When my father made his last will Pat was off in the Malay Archipelago. Father fixed things so Pat would get a regular allowance, and more, if he needed it. Then, knowing his days were numbered, he left the bulk of his money to me, knowing I’d look out for Pat. But we never had any definite settlement, and we both draw money from the main fund as we want it. Not very business-like, I suppose, but I’m not an extravagant sort, and Pat’s wants are simple. I’ve not encouraged the idea of dividing the fortune with him, for he’s careless, even ignorant of the management of a fortune, and we’ve drifted along. We have a most competent man of business who looks after investments and income taxes and such things. He was my father’s confidential secretary and now he’s mine. And Pat’s, if he wants one. I suppose that all seems foolish and rather shiftless to you, Mr Stone?”

“I quite understand. And, since you have such a trustworthy man of affairs, why handle matters that don’t interest you?”

“I’m still at the head of the business, of course. Western timberlands. But there are managers and overseers for every department. Their final reports, however, all come to me for approval, and I can assure you I am not an idle man. Pat, now, he doesn’t bother with business at all, but he looks after the place here and also our home in New York. He’s clever that way, and he now and then buys or sells a bit of Real Estate to good advantage. But these matters will wait, and Mandy’s waffles wont. Come along, Mr Stone, to breakfast.”

Before breakfast was over the police came, and it was plain to be seen Inspector Cox was on the warpath.

He strode into the breakfast-room, and informed those who were there that he proposed to interview them all, and separately.

“Who was the last to see Mr Barry Wayne and Mr Van Zandt, as they left the house?”

“I was,” said Jane. “I was mad because Dad wouldn’t let me go with Barry and I went out the door with him. He went over to the Yacht Club in a motor-car. Leonard was driving. Mr Van Zandt was already in the car when I came out the front door with Barry. He said he’d . . .”

“Wait, Miss Holt,” Cox said, “wait till I begin to question you. Will you come into another room? Mr Stone, are you coming with us?”

“Yes,” and Stone rose from the table, disregarding the hot waffles that were successively appearing.

Cox led the way to a room that had been prepared for him. The old Inn had so many rooms one could easily be found for any purpose.

A desk was in readiness, also a round table, at which the three took their places.

“Now, Miss Holt,” and the Inspector spoke somewhat brusquely, “just tell all there is to tell, in a few words, about your going to the races in some other boat than that of your

fiancé.”

“There’s little to tell about that,” Jane returned, a little shortly. “Since I couldn’t go with Barry, I had to go in the Campion boat. Rod Campion is a neighbor, and his yacht is a large one. We all went over to Newport to lunch with the Mannings but when Barry and Van didn’t show up we didn’t know what to do.”

“You waited for them?”

“We waited, off and on, all day. The party went out in different boats, you know; there were lots of boats, and then they’d go back to see if the *Hotspur* had appeared yet.”

“Who went with you in the Campion yacht, Miss Holt?” Stone asked.

“Uncle Pat and Vera—that’s all from here. There were several other people, guests of the Campions.”

“And then you all went on to Newport?”

“Yes, and then most of them went right off to see the race, but I didn’t go.”

“You stayed at the Manning home?”

“Yes. I had promised to meet Mr Barry Wayne there; so I stayed, hoping he would come.”

“I see. You were there alone?”

“Oh, no. There were others coming and going. A buffet luncheon was on, and the guests would rush in and eat something and rush out again.”

“But you just waited. You didn’t go out at all?”

“Not till late afternoon. The interest in the race was over, but I wanted to find Barry.”

“In what way did you try, Miss Holt?” Stone asked her.

“Mr Campion was still there, and I asked him to take me round.”

“He had kept his big yacht?”

“Oh, no; somebody else took that home, and took his other guests. He got a swift little motor launch from somewhere and we went to two or three Yacht Clubs and one or two hotels where we knew people to see if we could hear anything of Barry, but we didn’t.”

“And then what did you do?” Cox asked.

“Who? Rodney Campion and I?”

“Yes, Miss Holt.”

“Oh, we went over to a dance at the Waylands’. I expected to go there with Barry, and as he wasn’t around, I went with Rod. I left word here with Mrs Mingle to tell Barry to come along when he got home; of course I had no idea what had happened.”

“No, of course not. Now, Miss Holt, just in your own mind, how do you think young Mr Wayne came by his death?”

“Why, Mr Cox, I haven’t the slightest idea! How could I have? He was a magnificent sailor, any one will tell you that. He was anxious to get over to Newport just as soon as possible, so we could be together again. We know somebody killed him, but who or why is a mystery.”

“You don’t think then, Miss Holt,” Stone said, “that it could have been the deed of Van Zandt? Now, don’t say Mr Van Zandt was a slight, small man—I don’t mean that way; but had he been quite capable of the deed physically, had he any motive?”

Jane Holt looked serious. “To my mind, Mr Stone, it would take a pretty strong motive to make a man commit murder, but I do know that Mr Van Zandt was angry because Barry had flirted a little with Vera, Mr Van Zandt’s wife.”

“And why would Barry do that?” Stone looked incredulous.

“Because he wanted to stir up my jealousy. This sounds absurd, but it is true. Barry was a splendid big thing, but he had a foolish notion that I didn’t love him as much as he loved me. I did, you know; but, in my turn, I used to tease him, pretending I didn’t. Whereupon, he would make love to Vera and she would be delighted; that would make Van mad and he would go for Barry, but I only laughed at the whole affair, so Barry didn’t get any kick out of it all.”

“You say you took it lightly,” Stone went on; “can it be that

Barry took it more seriously than you knew and when he found himself alone with Van Zandt on the yacht, he took that occasion to pick a quarrel with him and in a spasm of anger gave him a poisoned drink that brought about his death?”

Jane Holt thought in silence for a moment.

“It doesn’t make sense, Mr Stone,” she said; “the little cupboard where Barry kept his drinks was not unlocked when the yacht was found. There was no bottle nor glass to be seen. And then, who killed Barry, and why?”

“I think we will excuse you now, Miss Holt,” Stone told her. “If you please, will you ask Mrs Van Zandt to come in here?”

“Also Sergeant Bascom,” the Inspector added.

“That explains the note Mrs Van Zandt gave us yesterday,” said Cox.

“Does it?” asked Stone, inattentively.

“Why, yes; don’t you know, it was signed B? Of course it was from Barry to Van Zandt, explaining why he had flirted with his wife.”

“Let us get her version of it,” Stone suggested, and then Vera entered.

She was dressed all in white, a soft, crêpy material that hung in long graceful folds.

“Are you going to question me?” she asked, with a little

shudder. “I am so frightened! You’ll take care of me, Mr Stone, won’t you?”

“If you need it,” Stone said, coolly, and thinking this was a different mood from that of the night before.

“I’m not an ogre, Mrs Van Zandt,” and Cox smiled in what he hoped was an ingratiating manner.

“We’re not going to question you about sad details,” Stone told her; “we want you to tell us about that letter you brought to Mr Demarest when he was here yesterday.”

“Oh, that letter. Well, what about it? That was a letter from Barry Wayne to Elkins. I know nothing more about it than its text.”

“And you think Barry wrote it?”

“Of course. Barry sometimes makes up to me, to make Jane feel jealous.”

“And does it accomplish its purpose?”

“Well, hardly—you see both Jane and I see through it all.”

“And what do you see?” Stone spoke coldly.

“Only that Barry is—was, not quite sure he had won Jane’s heart entirely.”

“And had he?”

“Yes, indeed! She worshipped the ground he walked on.”

“It seems odd for Barry to write that letter to Mr Van Zandt when they were in the same house and he could have spoken to him,” Stone observed.

“No,” Vera returned, “it wasn’t odd for Barry. He was everlastingly leaving notes around for everybody. A memorandum for Ming, or a message for his father—they cropped up everywhere.”

“Have you any?”

“No, Mr Stone; I have had them, but I never kept any. There must be some about, somewhere, though.”

“We’ll find them later,” the Inspector broke in. “You went over to Newport, Mrs Van Zandt, in the Campion yacht, I understand.”

“Yes, and when I found my husband wasn’t there, I went off in a launch with some other friends. And that’s all I knew about it, until we had word from the people about the disaster.”

“Never mind the details of that, now. Can you throw any light on the mystery itself? Had your husband any enemy, that you know of, who would desire his death?”

“Lots of them,” Vera said, calmly; “but I don’t know of any one who hated him enough to kill him.”

“His death must have been premeditated, for somebody gave

him the sodium purposely. Was he in the habit of taking medicine?”

“He—he always carried sodamints with him, as he was liable to indigestion.”

“Were they in a bottle?” Stone inquired.

“No; Elkins was a fastidious sort. He carried them in a little silver box. Just ordinary sodamints, you know.”

“We found that box on him,” said Cox, “that is, the Coast Guard people did, but it was empty.”

“That’s odd,” Vera said, “for I saw him fill it that morning, just before he started off with Barry.”

“Where was he when he filled it?” asked Stone, but Vera didn’t answer him. Instead, she turned to the Inspector, and said:

“Are you going to search my husband’s room? And mine? We have a suite on the third floor—”

“We shall have to do that, Mrs Van Zandt,” Cox told her, and Stone repeated his question, with a note of severity in his tone.

“I asked you, Mrs Van Zandt, where your husband was, when he filled his silver pocket-box with sodamints from the original container.”

“Where was he? Why, I don’t know—or, yes, I remember, we

were in the Common Room—that's what they call it, silly name! He keeps a bottle of them in a cabinet there. There's aspirin there, and aromatic ammonia—"

"A medicine chest?"

"No, just a few little odds and ends. Pat was with him, holding the big bottle while Elkins filled his silver box. He'll tell you what I say is true."

"We're not doubting your word, Mrs Van Zandt," Stone assured her, "but it is important that we know these things we ask."

"You think that Mr Van Zandt took the sodium in tablet form, then?" the Inspector asked of Stone.

"I don't know that he did, but I'm trying to find out. We have very little to work on, Inspector."

"Very little indeed, but I don't see where the sodamints will help us."

"Maybe not, but we must try everything. Mrs Van Zandt, suppose we give your rooms a look-over right now? You can go with us, and I assure you it will not be much of an ordeal."

"Yes, do," and Vera seemed pleased at the idea. They went up to the third floor, and into the Van Zandt suite. It was much like Stone's own place, with two bedrooms and a small boudoir, all facing the sea.

"Now go to work," Vera said, laughing like a child at a show,

“it’s so exciting!”

She settled herself cozily in an easy chair, and watched the men at work. They went over Van Zandt’s room first, and the Inspector deftly opened cupboard doors, searched the contents and closed them again. He pulled out dresser drawers, took in their effects and pushed them back. A small desk caught his attention, and he went through the few letters and papers it contained, with close scrutiny, but found nothing of interest. Except one paper, which he handed to Stone, saying, “Looks like one of those notes Barry leaves around.”

It was a typed message, signed B, and it ran:

“Fishing to-morrow morning early. Be down by six.”

Stone glanced at it and put it in his pocket without a word.

“My Heavens!” said Vera, “what do you want of that?”

“Might come in useful,” Stone said, carelessly. “Now, Mrs Van Zandt, if you’ll take us into your own room—”

“Certainly; come right along. I’ve no hidden treasures. Here we are! Now, do be careful of my laces and ribbons.”

Stolidly, Inspector Cox made a survey of her belongings. His practised hand slid among delicate garments and fragile trinkets, leaving no trace of its search.

Indeed, the Inspector had no idea what he was looking for, but this search was a necessary part of his program and could not be omitted.

He looked round the boudoir. Little to see here. Except for a few books and magazines, it seemed to have only the furnishings it had contained when Vera arrived.

The Inspector opened doors and drawers, investigated a small Chinese cabinet and some lacquered boxes. Stone did his part by looking on. He watched Vera's eyes as they followed Cox's progress, and when the Inspector lifted a heavy silver box from a small table, Stone saw a distinct look of fear in her eyes and her face paled under its light touch of rouge.

"That's only our bridge game, Inspector," Vera said, smilingly, "nothing suspicious about that."

But Stone saw her fingers twisting and twining, and he gave a nod to Cox that meant, "Look into it well."

The Inspector did so, but after taking out two packs of cards, a score-pad and some pencils, saw nothing more.

Stone reached out his hand for the box, and Cox handed it over.

Vera gave him an imploring look, but he went on inexorably, and at last touched a hidden spring that disclosed a false bottom in the box. This, lifted, showed two items of interest, one a tiny slip of paper, the other a one thousand dollar bill.

The paper bore only an address, Mrs Maria Main, and a number on East Forty-sixth Street, New York City.

There was nothing else in the box.

“You care to explain this, Mrs Van Zandt?” the Inspector asked in a tone of accusation.

Vera looked at him disdainfully.

“I don’t know why you assume it needs explanation. The money was a gift to me last Christmas, from a relative of mine. An old aunt, who gives me the same every Christmas. I save it along until I see something special I want to buy with it.”

“And why do you keep it so carefully hidden?”

Vera gave a sad little smile.

“There is no reason now,” she said; “I’ve kept it in that secret box so my husband wouldn’t—er—borrow it.”

“Your husband was a wealthy man, why should he borrow of you?”

“No, Inspector, Elkins was not a wealthy man. He lost much of his wealth quite recently, and he would borrow any ready money I chanced to have by me.”

“Did he know you had this?”

“He did not! Or I shouldn’t have it now.”

“And this address?”

“I forget; what is it? Let me see it.”

Stone showed it to her, and then putting it in the box, gave it back to the Inspector.

“It’s a hat shop,” Vera said, carelessly, so carelessly that Stone repeated the number to himself to be sure he remembered it. “A new shop, and a friend gave me the address. I love hat-shops.”

Her beautiful eyes turned to the Inspector for sympathy.

“Doesn’t your wife love hat-shops?”

“Not the kind you patronize. You’ll spend that whole gift of money on hats, I daresay?”

“Most of it,” and Vera tossed her head. “Is this search helping you much, Inspector?”

“No,” he said, a little wearily. “But it’s only routine work, you know. We have to do it. We’re through here, I should say. How about Mrs Mingle next, Stone? I want to know that woman better.”

“I think the two men ought to come first; the Wayne brothers, I mean.”

“Very well. We’ll let Mrs Mingle wait, then. Good morning, Mrs Van Zandt, sorry we had to bother you.”

But her smile of dismissal lacked the warmth of that with which she had greeted them, and Stone felt even more certain that she was far from frank of nature.

They went down stairs and found that Dan had gone to town, but Pat was at leisure.

“We’ll have a little talk with you, then,” the Inspector told him, “and question your brother when he returns. May we not go to your own room?”

“I’ve lots of rooms,” Pat said, pleasantly; “you see, when any one wants a room here, he just takes it. There are plenty to spare. But my reception-room for my friends is in my suite on the third floor. Shall we go there?”

They went there, and found a most attractive place. An enormous room—three small ones had been thrown together to make it—was filled with curios and odd pieces of furniture and ornaments, quite evidently brought from foreign climes.

Though simple of manner, Pat couldn’t resist a slight effect of pride in his acquisitions as he ushered in his guests.

For guests they were, even if they were also police bent on solving a murder mystery.

Inspector Cox remembered this, and said, as they sat down for conference, “We are here, Mr Wayne, for serious talk; otherwise, I would only too gladly admire and compliment this fine museum. But Mr Stone and I realize the great and serious difficulties that confront us, and we must not lose a minute. First, have you anything to tell us, that would help us in our work? Any piece of information that we do not possess? Any clue, any bit of evidence unknown to us? If so, I beg of you to tell us at once. Speaking for myself, I am entirely at a loss to know which way to turn.”

“And you, Mr Stone, speaking for yourself, do you echo the Inspector’s words?”

Pat Wayne spoke seriously, and gave Stone an earnest glance.

“In general,” Stone returned, “yes. But the main question that I want you to answer, and as soon as possible, is whether you think, with or without definite reason, that the two men on the yacht were killed by some one of this household, inmate, guest or servant, or whether you suspect the deed was that of an outsider; neighbor, townsman or marauder.”

It was a few moments before Pat replied.

Then he said, “I am not willing to mention a name, but since you ask me so directly, I will say that I think Barry’s death lies at the door of one who slept in this house the night before the boy was killed. I have no proof, I have no evidence—that is why I mention no name. But if you find any proof against any one, let me know, and I will tell you if it is the same.”

CHAPTER VII
Rooms and Rooms

“Very well, Mr Wayne,” Stone said, “I’d rather you wouldn’t mention your suspect’s name. Tell me something of your servants. That man, Hezekiah, now, is he trustworthy?”

“Oh, Lord, yes; he’s a native around here, and he is devoted to Dan and myself, and he was a perfect slave to Barry. ’Kiah came to us when Barry was a little chap, and has been his major-domo ever since. When you question Hezekiah you may depend on truthful answers.”

“And Mrs Mingle?”

“Likewise. Though you must remember that Ming is daffy about ‘her men’ as she calls us three Waynes. You won’t get anything out of her in our disfavor.”

“Never mind the servants now,” the Inspector broke in. “I want to get at the murderer. I think you must tell us, Mr Wayne, who it is that you have in mind as a suspect.”

“Hardly worth while, Cox,” Fleming Stone said; “I think we can name him at a first guess.”

Pat Wayne stared at the speaker.

“Try it,” he said, looking incredulous.

“Too easy,” said Stone, smiling a little. “You have in mind Mr Holt, because he is the only one who slept in this house the night before the tragedy who could be suspected. Unless you mean Van Zandt killed Barry, and I don’t think he did. And I’m sure you don’t mean Barry killed Van Zandt.”

“No, I think you are justified in eliminating the boy. And I’d be quite ready to suspect Van Zandt if I could see how he brought it about. But, as you guessed, Holt is the one I had in mind. I think, for some reason he hated Barry, and didn’t want Jane to marry him. Now, how it would be possible for Holt to bring about such a complicated and deeply-plotted double murder is beyond my comprehension. But somebody did do it —somebody bashed in the boy’s head, and also administered sodium to Van, either in a drink or in some food. If you look into this with your skilled and experienced judgment and declare Steve Holt innocent, nobody will be more pleased than I.”

“You helped Van Zandt to fill his pocket box of sodamints that morning, I believe.”

“Yes, Mr Stone. I held the big bottle while he took what he needed. I shook some out in his palm and he took part of them and put the rest back in the bottle, which I replaced on its shelf. But I assure you I put in his box no sodium or whatever you call it, nor any poisonous drug. I was not a great admirer of Van Zandt, but I had no earthly reason

to desire his death.”

“Did Mr Holt have?”

“Not to my knowledge. But it’s hard to tell about people. Mrs Van Zandt is a charming woman; more, she is a fascinating woman, a siren. Steve Holt admires her greatly. She flirted with him as she does with every man she meets and Van resented it. Yet, I can’t see Holt really killing Van in the hope of marrying his widow.”

“Can you see Mr Holt wanting to kill Barry, because he didn’t want him to marry Jane?”

“When you put it as bluntly as that, I must say no. But many crimes are committed because of a love or passion that we never suspected was so powerful.”

“You seem to have escaped the siren powers of Mrs Van Zandt.”

Pat shrugged his shoulders.

“I’ve known her so long,” he said, “I’m fed up with her blandishments. But if I could see any way she might have accomplished these crimes, I could find it in my heart to suspect her.”

“A Borgia?”

“Hardly that; but a woman who would stop at nothing to gain her ends.”

“Her ends in this case, being?”

“Freedom from a husband she had long since ceased to love; wealth, which would come to her from his insurance—he hadn’t much otherwise—and a possibility of trying some other matrimonial fetters.”

“Not good enough,” said Inspector Cox. “How could a woman go aboard the yacht, after the two men were on it, administer poison to her husband and then hit Barry over the head with a heavy club, or something, and make a getaway?”

“She might manage the husband part,” said Stone, “but not the other. Unless Barry stood with his back to her, and she crept down the stairs softly.”

“It’s a problem, seems to me,” said Pat, “that we can’t solve by argument or discussion. We need some solid, definite facts to put us on the right track. Suppose we assume that the two men started from the Clubhouse docks, as we know they did. Then, being bound for Newport, they made generally west, or northwest. Nobody went on board with them, for I asked the dock people, and therefore we must conclude that some craft overhauled them later on, that some one from it boarded the *Hotspur*, and that then the crimes occurred.”

“All right, so far, Mr Wayne,” Cox said, “but unless we know who the visitor to the yacht was, we don’t seem to be any forrader.”

“But you agree that is the way it must have happened?” Pat insisted.

Cox nodded his head to this, but Fleming Stone said, “I don’t agree to that, no. Why couldn’t there have been a man on the yacht before the two went aboard, hidden, of course, who appeared after they had started?”

“And then committed his crimes, fixed up the place, and stepped off the deck?” Pat smiled at him.

“I didn’t overlook that point,” Stone told him, “and its weakness is, that it implies a confederate. A man in a boat must have come for him and taken him away. Now, murderers seldom have accomplices, but they do sometimes, and if the accomplice is enough afraid of his master, it may work. Another possibility is that our murderer might have done his work, set the engine going himself, sailed to some lonely strip of beach, and then turned off the engine a few feet from land, jumped overboard and swam ashore.”

“How account for himself, dressed, drenched and cast away?”

“I’m not explaining, Mr Wayne, I’m only suggesting possibilities even if improbabilities.”

“Your suggestions are weird,” the Inspector said; but Stone replied, “It’s a weird case, Cox. I defy any one to give a clear, lucid explanation of what took place, or to make a logical reconstruction, with the facts and details we now know. We must learn more. We are not to blame for not having done so yet, for but little time has passed, and we have had to look into the very preliminaries. I think I can say I never knew of a case with less to start on. We have the fact of two men dead on a private yacht. Nothing more. We must get more. If not

material evidence, then suggestions from the character or action of those concerned.”

“Who is concerned?” Pat asked.

“Every one who knew Barry Wayne or Elkins Van Zandt. And possibly some who did not know him. There’s a chance of the crimes having been done by a professional ‘killer.’ Suppose some clever brain planned them and then hired murderers to do the work. Though I admit the nature of the crimes is against that theory.”

“What about alibis?” asked Pat. “Take the crowd in this house. We can all speak for one another. We were here at breakfast, Barry and Van with us; then they went their way, leaving all the rest of us here in the house. I think no one of us left the dining-room before full time for the yacht to get away. Leonard, the chauffeur, was back from the Club before I left the breakfast table, and most of the others were with me. Anyway, you can check up on it, and see what they say.”

“The murders may have occurred later in the day,” said the Inspector. “We have no real reason to assume any given time. After being dead twenty-four hours or more, the doctors couldn’t say positively when they died.”

“But we have some evidence,” Stone demurred; “I hold the deeds were done not long after starting, because the morning paper was still folded with the first page outside. If Van Zandt had been on board long, he would have gone on to another page.”

“Slim,” said Cox.

“I agree,” Stone went on, “but here’s another straw to show which way the wind blows. Barry had smoked only one cigarette, so far as we could see. True, he might have thrown some stubs overboard, or he might not. And Van Zandt’s pipe was very recently lighted. Again, there was practically no breeze at all when they started out. He had tried to sail, but had given it up and was starting his engine. It would not have taken him very long to learn he had no sailing breeze.”

“Very good, Mr Stone,” said Cox; “very good, indeed. Close reasoning, keen observation and all that. But where does it get us? Only to the conclusion that the men were attacked soon after they started.”

“A small point,” agreed Stone. “But to an inquirer with no points at all, it seems something to start from. Not much scope for deduction, but it proves that for nearly twenty-four hours the *Hotspur* drifted aimlessly, inside the three-mile limit. Outside, it would have been picked up by the Coast Guard much sooner.”

“You don’t think then,” asked Pat, “that somebody attacked the victims later in the day—say ’long about noon . . .”

“How could that be? If they started early, where were they between starting time and the advent of the enemy? The yacht’s engine was in perfect order, the captain was in fine condition, he was anxious to cross over to Newport quickly, what could have delayed them except the arrival of the messenger of death?”

“Nothing,” said Pat. “You’ve scored a point there. Hello, here’s Dan. Come along in, boy.”

Daniel Webster Wayne came into the room slowly. The man had visibly aged in the past two days and the spring had gone from his footstep and the brightness from his eyes.

“Learn anything down in the village?” his brother asked him.

“No; I spent most of the time at the Mortuary Parlors. Vera wants to have a double funeral up here, and take Van Zandt’s body down to New York later on.”

“Well, I’ve no objections, have you?” Pat returned.

“No; I suppose not. It jars on me, though. Oh, well, never mind it now. What are you all talking about?”

“About the possibilities,” Stone told him. “I suppose you have the same confidence in the servants that your brother shows.”

“Most of them, yes. Ming and ’Kiah above all suspicion. Fred, the boatyard man, all right, so far as I know. And the others—but, Mr Stone, I can’t suspect the servants in a case like this! I don’t mean to laud the staff, though they’re a good lot, but I mean a great crime, and a skillful crime such as has come to us, can’t be judged by petty standards, and to me it is out of the question to connect the awful affair with hirelings. They wouldn’t dare—and yet, it’s hard to say what any one would dare, Mr Stone, and too, a hireling might be a tool employed by a master criminal.”

“True enough; but still, the murders on the yacht seem to me

to have been carried out by the master brain that conceived them.”

“You think the murderer intended to kill both men?”

“I think it unlikely. To me it seems more probable that one murder necessitated the other.”

“Yes, I fear that. You’re searching the rooms, I take it?”

“Yes, Mr Dan, and I’d like to run through yours next. After that, your son’s. I assure you we will make very little disturbance.”

“Do what you wish, Mr Stone. The matter is entirely in your hands, conduct it as you will. Keep me advised of important findings, but don’t trouble me with unnecessary or unimportant details.”

Dan led the way to his own rooms and Stone followed, without waiting for the Inspector, who was talking with Pat.

“You’re not getting anywhere, Mr Stone,” Dan said, more sympathetically than as if criticizing.

“Getting my bearings,” Stone returned. “I have to make the acquaintance of Barry’s relatives and friends, before I can go very far. And every one I meet gives me a new hint or a new way to look for the truth we are searching for. After I have talked to a few more of your household, I shall be ready to put my observations to use.”

“You’ve discovered something?”

“Nothing definite, no. But you must remember not much time has passed. Only about forty-eight hours or so since those two men left this house; and only a little more than twenty-four hours that I have been on the job. There has been no wasted time, I assure you.”

“Oh, no, I didn’t mean that. I know you are faced with a most mysterious case . . .”

“It is a great blank, Mr Wayne, a vista like a prairie, with no trees to look behind. Yet something may break—must break—pretty soon. We must find something.”

“You have learned nothing that you are withholding?”

“Not a thing. I consider anything I may find of importance a matter to be told you at once. No, I have no real reason to suspect any one I have met, so far. This room is fine. Very different from your brother’s, yet equally interesting. I gather your brother has travelled a great deal, and you have been more of a stay-at-home.”

“We took a long trip together many years ago. A cruise it was, through the Malay Archipelago. Most interesting, but I think Pat enjoyed it more than I did. I disliked the heat of the tropics and the primitive ways of living and all that, but Pat just revelled in the new scenes, the odd customs of the natives and all that sort of thing. Then soon after we came home I married and that put an end to our travelling together. Pat went off alone once or twice, but he said it was no fun without me. Pat is a born sailor and loves a cruise of any sort, short or long. I wish Pat would find some sea-loving chum and go off

with him. I'd rather stay at home. Now, Mr Stone do your searching. I'll leave you here alone if you like. This is my sitting-room. I don't call it study or library, for I am not a student. The rest of the adjoining rooms are mine, bedroom, bathroom and workroom."

"What kind of work?"

"Oh, I'm a sort of handy man about the house. I mend broken furniture, or broken pottery, I rebind books and I tinker about at any odd job. I have a leaning toward machinery and I dabble with electric appliances."

"You do, indeed," and Stone looked round the big room, which showed up a small carpentry shop, a little bindery and an electric section which was fenced off from the other departments.

"I like carpentering, myself," he said, "and this complete lot of sharp, shining tools has a charm for me. Do you make things?"

"No—I only—that is, I just fiddle with things. Try to improve on some patented contraption—they're mostly so inadequate. And I mend things for Ming; the maids are always breaking something."

"Yes, I see. Now, Mr Dan, your son's rooms are at the other end of the house?"

"Yes; shall we go there now?"

"I think so; unless it is too painful a duty for you?"

“No, I like to be where my boy has been, where he slept and worked and loved. He was a devoted lover, Mr Stone.”

“I’m sure he was. I wonder if Miss Holt was the right girl for him.”

“No, she was not. They were in love, but it was a silly, modern sort of romance, all guying and chaffing. You know what I mean.”

“Of course I do. But don’t let yourself get dated, as the youngsters call it. Barry was—how old was he?”

“Twenty-five.”

“And to-day, young people of twenty-five are widely experienced and they know what they want. The affair of your son and Miss Holt was doubtless perfect as they saw it.”

“Yes, that’s what Barry always told me, that I must try to see with his eyes.”

They had walked the full length of the front upper verandah, passed Stone’s rooms and several others, and came to Barry’s rooms, which were just below those of his Uncle Patrick.

Interesting rooms they were. Not filled with College pennants and pictures, not devoted to the paraphernalia of any fad or pursuit, but big, airy, wholesome rooms, showing fine taste in furnishings and appointments and a love of beauty that caused all to be harmonious and pleasing.

The room that best expressed Barry was his library. The boy had been a book lover, and his shelves were filled with worthwhile literature. Not rare books, though he had a number of first editions, but a sound reading library, a goodly lot of *belles lettres* and many books of travel and adventure.

“Splendid selection,” said Stone, taking them in at a glance. “His own?”

“Yes, for the most part. Pat and I helped him at first but he soon learned to choose. We’re a bookish family. I suppose you resent the chandelier?”

“Resent is too strong a word. But why?”

“Only Barry’s whim. He insisted he had furnished the room right up to it.”

“So he did,” and Stone glanced about approvingly.

They were speaking of an old-fashioned crystal chandelier, whose sparkling pendent prisms tinkled against one another in the sea breeze that came in at the windows.

It was a massive specimen of that old-time ornamentation, and festoons of faceted glass depended from the corona-like structure.

“It has been readjusted,” and Stone looked at the ornate medallion centerpiece of plaster above it.

“Yes; it was taken from the Inn ballroom and as it was so

large, we raised the ceiling of this room to get proper height for it. We did that in several instances. It leaves a sort of half room or loft above, but we've twice as many rooms as we can use, even with guests. There's lots of waste space in the house."

"Shall you stay here now?"

"I—think so. We're not quite sure . . . Pat and I have talked it over, but I think we'll continue to come here summers."

"All these foreign trophies are fine. And a lot of them are from the Malay Archipelago, I see."

"Where are you?" came a querulous voice, and Inspector Cox came into the room. "Oh, here you are. What are you looking at? My Heavens! what is that?"

Pat, who followed the Inspector, laughed at the horror on the man's face.

It was caused by the hideous thing Stone was examining.

A carved wooden image, not much more than a foot in height, but of an ugliness beyond description. The head, huge out of all proportion to the dwarfed body, showed a ferocious frown and a menacing grin of bared teeth. One long, skinny arm was raised in a threatening gesture and the other rested on a beautifully carved shield. The whole was on a pedestal, but the fine carving and superb modelling could not fill the eye to the exclusion of the terror that lurked in the heathenish thing.

“Know what it is, Mr Stone?” asked Pat.

“Yes, I do. I’ve not travelled overmuch, but I have been to Malay lands. And Papua was a favorite hunting ground for me. This is a Papuan Korowaar.”

“A what?” Cox goggled his eyes.

“That’s right,” Pat declared; “a Korowaar, which is an earthly habitation for the spirit of a dead man. It is also a means of communication between the dead man and his living friends.”

“And not seldom makes trouble for those same friends later on,” Stone added.

“You’ll note more Malay junk about, then,” Pat went on. “You liked the country?”

“I was there only a short time,” Stone told him. “Had hardly time to like or dislike it. But on the whole I’m not fond of the tropics. I think they should be given over to jungle life and insect activities.”

Dan laughed at this. “Their insects are sure enough active,” he admitted. “But these amulets are more engrossing, to my mind, than the miserable Korowaars. Look at these.”

He drew their attention to some small sticks, perhaps six inches in length, each carven in a general representation of a human figure. At least there was a head at the top, and then the lines slithered off into almost anything. But they were of great value to the people for whom they were made. For they were guards of health and safety on long

and dangerous voyages; they were preventives of illness; they were security against the evil designs of Manuen, the malicious spirit; indeed, there was one for every disaster that could come to mortal man.

Pat took up the tale, and gave a little more information about the Papuans, to which Cox listened avidly and Stone nodded his affirmation.

“A wonderful collection,” Stone said, at last; “no dead wood in it, no common, worthless junk; just specimens of the best and rarest curios of the place. Fine lot.”

“Did Barry collect these?” asked Cox, impressed with the prowess of the young man. “Was he ever in Papua?”

“No;” said Barry’s father, “Pat and I collected these things. From time to time we gave Barry whatever ones he asked for. Until, finally, we concluded to put all our best bits in here together, and call it a collection. But of them all I think Barry loved best this bird,” and he designated a beautiful Golden Oriole, that had been stuffed by a master hand and looked for all the world like a live bird.

“A glorious bird,” Stone said; “I prefer them to Birds of Paradise.”

Inspector Cox, who knew little geography and less history, asked timidly if he might see a Malay Kris. He had read of such things.

Pat opened one drawer after another of a tall cabinet and showed him all manner of weapons, from dull, deadly looking

spears and horrible, murderous parangs, to krises, decorated with intricate designs of gold and silver and ivory, until their sinister suggestion was lost in their rare beauty.

Stone took in all these things swiftly, and then walked off by himself into Barry’s other rooms.

They seemed only the living rooms of a modern young man, orderly of habit and of correct tastes.

A small smoking-room, evidently much used by Barry and his chums, interested the Investigator.

It seemed to him that whatever was to be found, if anything, was to be found here.

He was looking for nothing definite, he had no hunch, but somehow the very intimacy of the little room indicated a secret.

Yet he found nothing.

He didn’t open cupboards or drawers, he felt sure letters or papers would be in the other room where the desk was.

But as he looked about, he saw one smallish picture that hung on the wall, that didn’t hang straight. It was his habit to straighten any picture that needed it and as he did so, a tiny package dropped from behind the picture. He picked it up and put it in his pocket.

CHAPTER VIII
Mrs Mingle

Fleming Stone, without much hope of finding anything of importance, opened the little packet.

It contained four or five tiny capsules, with no label or marking to tell of their contents. He put the parcel in his pocket just as some one came into the room, and he looked up to see Mrs Mingle facing him, with no sign of approbation on her hard, strong face.

She was of the George Eliot type, tall, gaunt, bony, and quite evidently as Puritan as Plymouth Rock itself.

Efficiency was stamped on her countenance and capability showed in her every action. No waste motion for her, but economy of attention to every duty or interest in her life.

“I’d prefer you not to touch Mr Barry’s things,” she said, resentment sounding in the words she spoke.

“Sorry, Mrs Mingle,” Stone told her, with a sympathetic smile. “I know just how you feel, but perhaps you don’t fully realize that I am only doing my duty. You want us to

find the criminal who brought about this awful tragedy, don't you?"

"Yes, I do; but it isn't necessary for you to go pokin' and pryin' about among his things."

"Yes, that's the routine we have to follow. And your own common sense must tell you that we mean no harm and do no harm to Barry's belongings."

"I s'pose that's true," and the woman seemed somewhat mollified. She smoothed down the folds of her black silk gown, and said, in a more friendly tone, "Can I help you any way?"

"Why, yes; I'd like you to tell me some things about Barry. He was your boy, I understand."

"Then you understand right; he was my boy. From the day his mother died until day before yesterday when he left this house he was in my charge. And I was faithful to my trust as far as I could be. As his mother lay dying, she said to me, 'Ming, look after my boy.' And I did, and a good boy he grew up to be."

"Even disposition? Good-natured? Happy?"

"Happy he was, and all those things you say. But happiest when he was in a boat. I used to be well scared about him as a lad, he was that daring and careless-like on the water. But his father told me not to worry, for Barry was a born sailor and would never come to grief for lack of skill or judgment."

"His father is a born sailor, too?"

“Yes, but not so much as Mr Pat. He could sail a boat blindfold and with his hands tied behind him. He and Barry were planning a racketing off somewhere, and Mr Dan hadn’t decided whether he’d go with them or not. I guess he would, though, like as not.”

“Would Barry have left Miss Holt behind, or would she go, too?”

“I prefer not to talk about Miss Holt, if you please. She is here, you can ask her direct.”

“Yes, that is true. Now, Mrs Mingle, how about Barry’s friends—or enemies? Not being at all acquainted with the young man is a handicap.”

“Yes, sir; it may well be. But, of course, I can’t pick out any one of his acquaintances who would want to kill him. Especially to bash his head. That’s like the work of a Thugger, or whatever they call ’em. Barry had no acquaintances like that. Mr Campion, now—he’s the only one I know who really gets a mad on. Barry sometimes, but he wouldn’t do a thing like that! He might shoot or stab or even poison somebody, but batter them with a sledgehammer, no!”

“Why did Mr Campion quarrel with Barry?”

“About a girl. Always about a girl, this one or that one. Just now, it was Miss Jane. Rod Campion, he likes her well, and that made Barry furiously jealous. For, you see, Miss Jane, she’d favor Rod just to tease Barry, but Barry wouldn’t see it like that and he’d think she was throwing him over for Rod. So he and Jane would have spats and the boy would go

around looking like a weeping willow for days.”

“But you wouldn’t think that would incite Campion to murder!”

“I would not, sir. And that’s why I say I prefer not to talk about the . . . the death. When I think of that blessed boy foully hit with a crowbar or whatever the villain man used, I just go all to pieces. I prefer not to go all to pieces.”

“Then you can’t tell me of any episode or of the ill-feeling of any one that might have resulted in a murderous attack?”

“No, sir, I can’t. But I can tell you this. You won’t discover the mystery in a moment. There’s queer doin’s, or more like, queer feelin’s, among the people in this house. Nothin’ you can put your finger on, but hints of evil somehow . . . just a suggestion of somethin’ wrong.”

“Among the people of the house?”

“Among the people in the house,” she corrected him.

“You know, Mrs Mingle, when you say as much as that you must say more, or you’ll be suspected of holding back information.”

“I’ve nothing to say, but if you’re any sort of detective you must see it for yourself.”

“Do you think the brothers, Mr Dan and Mr Pat, sense this evil you speak of?”

“I can’t say as to that, but something is troubling them. Was, I mean, before the boy died.”

“Nothing about him? About Barry?”

“It may have been. There was some strange man in the village, and people said ill things of him. Seems Barry’d been seen with him, once or twice.”

“All that can be checked up, you know. Tell me more definitely of the man.”

“I prefer not to. You can ask Mr Wayne about that.”

“Either of them?”

“Yes, sir. Among the staff, Mr Wayne means Mr Dan—he’s the oldest and Mr Pat has his own name.”

“You have a large staff to look after, I daresay.”

“Yes, large. All told, I’ve twenty servants to mind.”

“Any troublesome ones?”

“No trouble to me. From the butler himself, Mr Bangs, down to the youngest scullery maid, they are respectful and obedient. Not that I dictate to Mr Bangs—indeed, he often asks my advice.”

“No one of the twenty, I suppose, could for a minute be suspected of having a hand in the murders?”

“Not one, Mr Stone,” and Ming shook her high-held head vigorously.

“How can you be so sure?”

“Because I know them. You can’t live with a staff of capable servants without knowing their ways and their temperaments.”

Mrs Mingle looked as wise as a seer or an oracle, and Stone quite believed she knew what she was talking about.

“Could you with a lot of incapable ones?”

“Oh, yes; a shiftless, inexperienced bunch might well mislead you with their ignorant blunders.”

“Bangs I suppose is entirely in harmony with your methods and ideas?”

“Oh, yes; you see, I made Bangs. He came here without the slightest training, and had no knowledge of proper serving. I taught him and, as he was very quick to learn, he did me proud.”

“They are all loyal and true to the Wayne family?”

“Every one, sir. Of course, some of the under ones never see the family or guests, but a general spirit of law and order is always present. Don’t ever get a notion that a servant in this house is mixed up in the tragedy on the yacht!”

“Who took care of these rooms of Barry’s?” Stone looked

from the little smoking-room where they still were, out into the library where the great crystal chandelier again caught his attention.

“I, myself, sir,” and Ming fairly quivered with pride. “The cleaning men do their work under my personal supervision, and all the furnishings and the curios I look after myself. And they are always clean, I assure you of that.”

“I haven’t the least doubt of it. But you can’t clean that big and very fragile chandelier?”

“I direct it. The cleaning is done by some sort of compressed air performance. But it lasts a long time, the cleaning does, and as there’s no dust here the sea helps keep it clean.”

“Yes, of course; it’s a magnificent bit of antique. And I see the Korowaar is gone; who took that away?”

“I did,” and Ming spoke in a lower tone. “I asked Mr Dan if I might, and he said it was Mr Pat’s and I must ask him. So I did and Mr Pat said, ‘Take it by all means, Ming. Here, I’ll give you some cassowary feathers for it.’ So I took it to my own room—”

“Why the cassowary feathers?”

“To put on the head of the Korowaar. You know he will speak some time, and he will tell us who killed Barry.”

“You believe in those terrible superstitions, Ming?”

“I believe in that one. And it will not be long. The Korowaar

has lived so long in Barry's companionship, is so at one with him, that he will speak soon. And if I have him in my room, I shall be able to hear him and learn the truth."

"You amaze me," said Stone, truthfully. "I suppose Mr Pat taught you all this heathen lore."

"Yes, and Mr Dan and Barry, too. They didn't really believe it, they joked about it, but I am *en rapport*, and I get the wisdom of the Korowaar."

"Let us go to your room and see this god," Stone suggested. "I'd like to see Koro in feathers. He must look like an Indian Chief!"

But he didn't. They went up to Ming's sitting-room, on the fourth floor, and entered the cozy, homey place.

The furnishings were conglomerate. A mid-Victorian upholstered rocker stood near a Colonial highboy. An early New England cradle stood next the fearsome atrocity called a Korowaar.

The cassowary feathers were small bunches or tufts, not at all like the eagle feathers of an Indian. Short and straight and blunt of end, they stood out from the great head, making it look like an enormous feather duster.

"And this, you hold, is the habitation of Barry's departed spirit," Stone said, very gently, for he respected Ming's ignorant faith, and had no wish to offend her.

"I am not an entire convert, Mr Stone," she returned, slowly,

“but if it should be true, I want to know it. If my boy’s spirit is wandering the earth with no habitation, I want to provide one. The heathen people of the East Indies believe this, why should not they be right as well as we Christians in this respect?”

“You don’t worship heathen gods?”

“Land o’ goodness! No! This belief in Korowaar has nothing to do with religion, it’s a belief about the dead. Korowaar isn’t a god! He’s a kindly being who provides a home for the wandering spirit, homeless and helpless. And he acts as a means of communication between the dead and their friends. I hope to hear him speak.”

“Let me know if you do,” Stone asked her and she agreed.

He looked round the anomalous old room, noting things that had quite evidently been there when the house was an Inn, as well as the most modern accessories and ornaments.

“I’m not going to search your rooms, Ming,” he said; “I feel sure that if you had anything you didn’t want me to see, you would already have concealed it.”

“You may be sure of that, Mr Stone,” and Ming permitted herself a grim smile. “But let me tell you, I would hide or secrete nothing that could help you in your search for the truth. I’m looking for the truth myself, and when I start on a thing I’m like a puppy at a root, I worry it to a finish. But, I’m so afraid you or the police will hit on the wrong man, and will rustle him through and convict him before he has a chance to say Boo. That’s why I don’t join in

with you heart and soul, just because I do not think you're headed in the right direction."

"And do you know the right direction? And do you know the direction in which I am headed?"

"Well, no, sir, I don't *know* either of those things. But I think you're on the trail of Mr Holt and I think the right trail leads to somebody else."

"Very well, Mrs Mingle. Now, why not say the name you have in mind and so avoid a lot of questioning on my part and a lot of beating about the bush by yourself?"

"All right, sir. Then I think the real criminal is Mrs Van Zandt."

"Indeed? And how do you think she managed the affair?"

Ming looked very much in earnest as she scanned Stone's face. She did not seem altogether pleased with what she saw there, but she went on steadily:

"I think she wanted her husband put out of the way, and she engaged a Bad Man to kill him, on the yacht. Then, Barry happened to see what was going on, and he had to be killed too, lest he tell the tale. The way I say it, it doesn't sound so good, but you know about such things, Mr Stone, and you can put it in the right way."

"Why did Mrs Van Zandt want to be rid of her husband?" Stone asked, gravely.

“Because she was in love with another man. You must have seen that in the short time you have been here.”

“I suppose you mean Mr Holt,” and Stone frowned at her. “But let that matter rest for the moment, and tell me this. What is it, Ming, you are holding in your hand? It’s a tiny scrap of old paper, but what is it?”

With an air of surprise, Ming looked down at the scrap of paper she was holding.

“Oh,” she said, smiling at him, “it’s a stamp—a foreign stamp. See.”

She smoothed out the crumpled bit, and handed it to him.

It was a corner torn from an envelope and bearing a stamp from some foreign place quite unfamiliar to the detective.

He looked at it closely, but could not make out the locality, because of the heavy postmark.

“You picked this out of Mr Pat’s waste-basket,” he said to Ming.

“Yes, I did; but how do you know that?”

“I saw it in his waste-basket when I was in his room. Why did you want it?”

“I prefer not to tell you that,” and the positive shake of the woman’s head seemed decisive.

“Oh, fiddlesticks, don’t be silly. Are you collecting stamps?”

“Now how’d you guess that?” and Ming looked incredulous. “Most people don’t collect stamps from scrap-heaps. But I don’t get many. It’s like looking for a needle in a haystack, they’re awful few and far between. No, I don’t collect ’em, but what I pick up now and then I give to my little nephew—he’s crazy about ’em.”

“And how do they come to be in Mr Pat’s scrap-basket?”

“I suppose they come on his letters, sir.”

“Yes, I suppose they do. Does he have much foreign mail?”

“I don’t know, I never see the mail; Bangs looks after that. But I know Mr Pat writes to faraway lands just to get the queer stamps back.”

“He’s a collector, then?”

“I suppose so.”

“I wish you’d let me take that stamp, Ming. I’ll give it back to you for your nephew, in a few days. May I keep it that long?”

“Oh, yes, Mr Stone.” Ming sighed. “I never showed one of those stamps to anybody but what they took it and kept it. But you can have it.”

“You’ve had this pattern of stamp before, then?”

“Yes, a few times. I don’t believe Mr Pat cares much for it. It

isn’t very pretty, anyway.”

Stone put it away in his notebook.

“Now, Ming,” he said, “just one more thing and I’ll let you go. Have you any of those notes Barry often left around for people in the house? Typewritten and signed B. You must have some.”

“I prefer not to give them to you, if I have.”

“But you will give them to me. So get them out, please. I don’t care what they are about, as long as Barry wrote them. They may help us a lot.”

“Will they really help? Will you give them back to me? Will one or two be enough?”

“Ming, you are a teaser. Let me see them and I’ll answer your string of questions.”

Still reluctantly, Ming went to a large chest of drawers and pulled out a great bundle of papers, which were all typed notes of the sort Stone was asking for.

“Make your own selection,” she said, suddenly generous, and drawing up a little table, she spread the papers before him.

Stone glanced them over quickly, and concluded the messages they bore were of no importance, so he selected half a dozen at random and told Ming she could put the others away again.

“Now, Ming,” he said, looking at her with a slight air of

disappointment, “you’ve been fairly good help, but not all I expected. Show me some more things you have of Barry’s. Not letters, but some mementoes of him; I know you have lots.”

“Oh, I have—I have all sorts of things that were his.” She turned to a tall cabinet with a glass door lined with a shirred silk curtain.

Opening this, she took out first a little blue kid shoe.

“Barry’s first shoes,” she said, proudly; “he threw the other one at the puppy, who tore it to pieces. So I kept this one for a memento, like you read about in the poems.”

“Yes, yes, very nice. What mementoes have you of Barry’s later days, this last year, say?”

“Not much. Oh, here’s a tie Miss Jane gave him.” She held out a dark magenta affair of nondescript pattern. “He brought it in here to me, and he said, ‘Ming, here’s a tie Miss Holt just gave me. But it’s a bit too old for a lad of my tender years. You keep it for me till I’m about seventy and then give it back.’ He joked like that, Mr Barry did, and too, sir, you can see yourself it’s a tie for an old gentleman. But I saved it.”

“He didn’t approve of Miss Holt’s taste then?”

“As you see. Now, these old things Mr Dan and Mr Pat brought from the Heathen places. The best and most valuable ones they kept in Barry’s Museum, as they called it. These are the offscourings, like the scraps of fat in a butcher shop.”

“I see. Let me look at that gold and silver piece, will you?”

Ming took the thing from its shelf and handed it to him. It was an ornament of some sort, and was shaped a little like a spoon with a long handle. The bowl of the spoon, set on like a ladle, was about the size of a saltspoon. The handle was hexagonal and formed of alternating sections of gold and silver.

“I don’t know what that is,” Ming said, “nobody ever told me.”

“It is a hairpin,” Stone explained; “it is of a sort worn by natives of the Liu-kiu Islands, a small archipelago, near Formosa. Who gave you this?”

“No one in particular. It was in the lot that they all said didn’t belong in the museum, and I could have them.”

“Aren’t they a nuisance?”

“Oh, dear, no! I love every one of them. And you say this is a hairpin? It doesn’t look like one.”

Dan chanced to come by at that moment, and seeing the two discussing the curios, came in.

“Just how is this thing used, Mr Wayne?” Stone asked him,

“I’m not sure, I never paid much attention to the furrin gadgets. Pat will know. He’s in his room, let’s ask him.”

Taking the trinket, Dan led the way along the corridor to Pat’s

rooms in the opposite corner of the house.

They found him sitting by a window, a newspaper on the floor beside him and a look of utter sadness on his face as he looked up to greet them.

“Oh, come in,” he said, cordially, as he rose. “Can I do anything for you, Mr Stone?”

“We both want to know,” his brother said, “how these hairpins work. This is a hairpin, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” Pat said, but he looked a little uncertain. This puzzled Stone, for surely Pat’s knowledge of these things was complete. “Yes, it is a hairpin, from the Liu-kiu Islands.”

“That’s what Mr Stone said,” and Dan nodded. “But how are they used?”

“They do look awkward, don’t they?” Pat smiled. “And I don’t believe I know just how they are used. This is a man’s hairpin, not a woman’s. The men do up their hair in a peculiar way, needing a hairpin to hold it. The lower classes have them of brass or pewter, and the richer ones use gold or silver. This is a good one; where did you get it?”

“From Ming,” Dan told him. “She had it in her collection. How did we happen to give it to her?”

“Probably Barry gave it to her,” and Pat dropped the subject. “I’m mightily put out,” he said; “I’ve been telephoning the Coast Guard people at New London to learn when we may hope to have the *Hotspur* restored to us. And they won’t say,

definitely. I don't see why it can't just as well be over here as there. No harm could come to it, kept at the Yacht Club, and they could see it whenever they wished."

"Why do you want it over here, Pat?" his brother asked.

"Oh, just on general principles. I think it ought to be in our possession. I'd like to look it over, and I'd like to have Mr Stone look it over again. Don't you want to, Mr Stone?"

"If it were here, I'd go over it, of course. But I made a very thorough search when I had the chance. I found no signs of anything helpful to our work, nor anything that could be called a clue. Another hunt might prove more profitable, but I doubt it."

"Are you getting on, to your own satisfaction, Mr Stone?" Dan asked.

"Generally speaking, yes. I tell you frankly I have nothing to report as yet, but I have piled up many hints and clues and possibilities that I hope will soon show us which way to look for the murderer. It is, beyond all doubt, the strangest case I have ever known. And it implies a careful, deep-laid and very curious plot, planned out with the shrewdest intelligence I have ever seen at work."

"That one conclusion ought to lead you to the criminal," Pat said; "we haven't many around here answering to that description."

"But he mayn't be around here," and Stone looked very

serious; “that’s the strange part of this affair. The murderer may be some one from a distance who came here, killed the two men—I can’t believe there were two killers—and went away again and never returned. But that would seem to implicate some one known to you two. Or, again, some one whose main desire was to kill Mr Van Zandt and Barry was an unexpected victim. There are so many ways to look at it that I can’t settle to real work until I find out certain facts. But I am making progress and I can assure you that I shall succeed in my enterprise, though for a few days longer the progress may be slow.”

CHAPTER IX
Hezekiah

It was the afternoon of the double funeral.

The services were held at the Mortuary Chapel in Sand Hill, and many friends of the Wayne family and of the Van Zandts had come to Lang Syne, knowing the spaciousness of the house and the hospitality of the owners.

But the family and their guests had gone and, save for some of the under servants, Fleming Stone was alone in the old Inn.

The butler and housekeeper had, of course, gone to pay their last respects to the young master they had loved so well, and of the house servants only Hezekiah, a houseman, was left to look after things.

This gave Stone his chance to have a talk with this sagacious old-timer without being overheard.

After some search, he found his man on a small back porch so overhung with creepers that Hezekiah himself could scarce be seen.

Casually, Stone paused at the porch and, lifting a few trailers, stepped inside and sat down opposite the other.

“Sad day for you, ’Kiah,” he said, and the real note of sympathy in his voice made up for the terse speech.

“Yep; and sadder days ter come.”

“Why do you gloom out here? Why don’t you sit where you can see the sea?”

“I’ve seen the sea.”

“Well, then, the flowers.”

“I say, Mr Stone, who kilt our boy? Who did?”

“I’m not yet quite decided in my own mind, ’Kiah. But I shall find out, and soon, I hope. You must remember we detectives are not magicians, as some people seem to think us. I have to learn all the facts I can, and then piece them together and consider the pattern they make. Now in this case the facts are exceeding few, and they are not indicative. For instance, I learned this morning that a man was on board the *Hotspur*, before Barry and Mr Van Zandt got there. Whether he had left the yacht or was still on it when they started, I do not know. Now, that might seem to be indicative, but of what use is it, unless I know who that man was.”

“Didjer find out?”

“Yes; and that was not indicative, either. It was Mr Rodney Campion.”

“Well, he never killed Mr Van Zandt, whatever he might have did to Barry.”

“He was fond of Van Zandt, then?”

“No, not special. But he was hopin’ to get a job outen him. They was haf a chance fer him. So he wouldn’t kill him. As to Barry, now—”

“Well, as to Barry?”

“I can’t think of Rod killin’ Barry, though he mighta done anythin’ just short of killin’. But girls was their bone o’ contention. Whenever one got a girl the other wanted her. Not that he loved her—all that thar dratted love business is plumb foolishness. But they each thought it was smart to cabbage a girl’s affections away from the other one. But killin’ now, I can’t think it of Mr Rod.”

“Is he, Mr Campion, a handy man about the house? Fixing things that are broken and the like of that?”

“Well, you just ask Mr Pat that!” Hezekiah chuckled. “You see, Mr Pat has jest about the finest tool-chest that was ever assembled on this mortial spear. Well, that ornery Rod, he comes over here, day in and day out, and borrows Mr Pat’s tools, and takes ’em home, and fergits to bring ’em back and Mr Pat’s nigh about druv crazy.”

“Why does Mr Pat lend his fine tools to the young nuisance?”

“Well, you see, that Rod, he ain’t so dumb, he borrows ’em when Mr Pat ain’t home.”

“Clever of him. But surely Pat Wayne could put a stop to that sort of thing.”

“Well, you see, Mr Pat’s too easy-going. Too much so fer his own good. Ever’body imposes on him, so they do. But, you don’t mean to tell me, sir, that young Campion took some tool of Mr Pat’s and killed Barry with it?”

“Heavens, no! How you do jump at conclusions! I only want to know if Campion is clever at tinkering about in a carpentering way.”

“Yes, he is. Why, he fixed this very chair I’m settin’ on. It was guv up fer good, but I kinder liked it, and I hinted as much to him, and he got busy right away.”

“If Mr Dan is such a carpenter, why didn’t he fix it?”

“Said he would a dozen times, and never got at it. Bangs woulda had it in the scrapheap if Mr Rod hadn’t jest happened along.”

“He seems too good-natured a chap to do anything criminal.”

“You can’t tell by that.” Hezekiah looked at Stone with the air of a Gamaliel teaching the man at his feet. “And I own I’d be mighty su’prised to find Rod Campion did that hideous thing. But he’s got an awful temper.”

“How’d he get his opportunity?”

“Well, you say he went over to the yacht before Barry got there. Wanted to see him, we’ll say. Well, then he coulda

come agin later on, but before they sailed, and had it out with Barry. Took a bludgeon sort of weapon along, in case of need. Then, most likely, Mr Van Zandt caught on, and had to be quietened. Now, own up, Mr Stone, isn't that the way you figger it out?"

"Not just exactly. But it's very seldom that two detectives size up a case the same. They almost always take different views of it."

"Yes, I dessay that's so," and Hezekiah's pride remained unhurt.

"The girl, in this case, being Miss Holt?"

"Yes, sir; and that's a queer thing, too. Barry's been more'n haf way engaged to Miss Jane fer a coupla years. Yet Rod Campion never got a mad on before!"

"Well, 'Kiah, remember we have no proof that Mr Campion went on board the yacht a second time, and he couldn't have killed Barry the first time, because Barry wasn't there."

"Yessir, and here comes the Inspector gentleman. I'll have to boost him in."

The police car that brought Cox over was to await his return, and he hurried Stone to an immediate conference, which they held in Barry's library.

"We've pretty much come to the conclusion," the Inspector began, "that Mrs Van Zandt knows more about the murders than she has told. We think she meant no harm to Barry, but

was anxious to be rid of her husband.”

“Why?”

“Oh, for the usual reasons. She was tired of him and felt that if she was free she would be a rich woman in her own right and could, if she chose, marry a younger man.”

“You’ve proof of this?”

“Not yet, but we’re hoping to get it. Have you learned anything new?”

“This.” Stone took from his pocket the small packet he had found behind the picture in Barry’s smoking-room, and passed it over to his colleague.

“What is it?” Cox asked.

“That’s what I want to know. I found it behind a picture on the wall of Barry’s small room, next this.”

“This bundle, just as it is?”

“Yes; what do you think about it?”

“Can’t say, till I have the stuff analyzed. Of course, it might be metallic sodium, and then again, it might not. Shall I take the lot, and have an analysis made at once?”

“I wish you would. I must tell you that I kept out one of the capsules, and a tiny piece of the wrapping paper.”

“That’s all right. What is this paper? Do you spot it?”

“Yes, I think so. It’s a piece of the New York Times.”

“Do the Waynes take that paper?”

“Yes; and everybody in the house may read it, or use it as this has been used.”

“Then you deduce some one in this house is the murderer?”

“Oh, my dear Inspector, don’t go off half-cocked!”

“Well, you found these things in Barry’s room, and hidden, at that; doesn’t that prove Barry had them, with the intent to kill somebody? And who would the boy want to kill? Only some one who was trying to get his girl away from him.”

“You don’t mean he suspected Elkins Van Zandt of being in love with his Jane!”

“We don’t know. Who can tell who is in love with which, these days?”

“But Van Zandt, of all men! Probably Miss Jane has lots of suitors, why pick on him? Because he was there on the yacht, I suppose you’ll say. Well that’s the last reason to suspect him. Let me tell you that when you discover the murderer of Barry Wayne it will be somebody who was *not* on the yacht at the time those two men met their death.”

“Queer talk, Mr Stone. What they call cryptic, I guess. But I trust you’ll remember you promised to tell me whatever you

discovered bearing on the crime.”

“I certainly remember that, Inspector, and I hope to make good my promise very soon. I have not discovered a single fact that I have not told you. I am only trying to dig up something that I can, even by stretching a point, call a fact. As soon as I do, you shall know it.”

“All right. And do you keep your eye on the delectable Vera. She’s a cute one, and will bear watching. Now, let me see the picture in the room where you found the little parcel.”

They walked the length of Barry’s library, about thirty feet, and entered the room he called his smoke-room.

Now, Mr Fleming Stone was not even as likely as a weasel to be caught asleep, and he had already, himself taken copies of the finger prints he had found on the glass and the frame of the small picture in question.

He was not, however, an expert, and though he was careful enough, his prints were far from clear and definite. In fact, they were so very amateurish that Stone felt no reason to show them to Cox, especially as that worthy had declared his intention of securing the prints himself, and his experts would, of course, take proper ones.

“What’s become of that horrible image?” Cox asked.

“They gave it to Mrs Mingle,” Stone told him. “You know it’s a superstitious fetish, or something, and the housekeeper half believes in it. Anyway, the brothers gave it to her, and she has it set up in her place, and is waiting for it to speak to her.”

“Are you a ventriloquist?” Cox’s eyes sparkled. “You could pretend it was talking, and talk yourself, you know.”

“No, I’m not,” Stone returned. “You can hire one, you know.”

“It wouldn’t be the same. You’re right here on the spot.”

“Well, I haven’t the art. Here is the picture that the parcel was behind.”

Stone paused in front of the picture, and suddenly he gave an exclamation of disappointment.

“Merciful Heavens!” he cried; “where are they? Who did it?”

“Who did what?” Cox asked.

“Wiped away all the prints! See, there isn’t a sign of them on the glass or on the frame!”

“Are you sure they were there?” asked Cox, dryly.

“You know I must be, since I told you about them as a fact.”

“Then whoever left them must have come here, later, and wiped them away.”

“Not necessarily. They may have been wiped away by a cleaning maid or a houseman.”

“Yes, they might. It’s a pity they’re gone, they would have been a good clue.”

“A very good one. As it stands, we only know that some one took hold of the picture, put the packet behind it, and left it hanging a trifle crooked. What does that suggest to you, Inspector?”

“Only that the murderer of Van Zandt put them there, after he had used one for his dreadful purpose. And, consequently, that the finding of them here in Barry’s room shows that Barry did kill Van Zandt, after all. I picked up from some of the servants that Barry was sweet on that Siren woman, Vera, they call her.”

“And when he found he had to take Van Zandt in his yacht, he thought it a good opportunity to kill him so he could marry his widow? And what was to happen to Jane Holt?”

“When a young man kills another man because he wants to marry his widow, he doesn’t stop to think what happens to his current sweetheart. Young men are like that now. Barry was tired of Jane, and was keen for the lovely charmer, with the long, glittering eyes. So, he set to work to get her, and found it no very difficult matter.”

“Well, Inspector, you amaze me. Now, it seems to me a totally different story. Barry was a smart lad, from all I’ve heard; I mean an intellectual chap, with a clever and ingenious brain. He could have concocted this diabolical scheme, but he didn’t.”

“Then why did he hide a bunch of killer tablets behind a picture in his own room?”

“He didn’t. The murderer put those where I found them. He

planted them on Barry, so he would be suspected of the crime.”

Cox sniffed at this, but Stone went on. “Barry was too smart, too far-sighted to let himself in as a suspect—if he did do the deed. He was far too clever to leave a picture hanging crookedly, because of a great bulge behind it, in his own room—if he did do the deed. But a criminal, planting those things in that place, to make trouble for Barry, would, of course, leave the picture out of plumb to attract attention, and leave the parcel of poison there, where it would surely be found.”

“You think this? Then it’s probably true,” Cox said, always ready to subscribe to Stone’s opinions.

“I do. But we must remember that the criminal, whoever he is, is extraordinarily clever, and can bamboozle us into thinking black is white.”

“Well, you must admit, now, that the criminal is some one in the house. How else could he go about unnoticed?”

“Some one’s coming,” Stone said, suddenly, and looked up to see Rod Campion in the doorway.

“Am I intruding?” a pleasant voice asked, and Cox introduced the two men. Stone had never met Campion before, and there was admiration in the glance he cast at the blond giant. A Viking type; Rod’s big blue eyes and bronzed gold hair, combined with a most engaging smile, commanded immediate interest.

“Are you a carpenter?” Stone asked, noting a fine saw and a

T-square under his arm.

“I would be, if Uncle Pat would let me,” and Campion scowled. “But every time I use his tools he says I spoil their edges, or bend or break them when, of course, really I do nothing of the sort!”

“Look here,” said Stone, “I’m getting mixed up. First, they told me that Mr Dan was the wonderful handy-man, with a fully fitted carpenter shop and all. He told me himself he mended things all over the house, for Ming or anybody. Now, you’re all acclaiming Mr Pat, though he has only a chest of tools.”

“But such a chest!” Rod exclaimed. “Such tools! If I didn’t spoil them they’d be the finest set in the country, I do believe!”

“Why do you spoil them?” Stone inquired; “for Hezekiah told me you are a fine handy-man with mending tools. He was sitting in a chair you had retrieved and mended.”

“That’s just it!” and Rod smiled his captivating grin. “Uncle Dan and I are handy men about the house— that’s just what we are, but Uncle Pat is not only a carpenter but a magician. The gadgets he can turn out! The beautiful cabinet-work he can do! The gimcracks he can make! He can take a Chinese pagoda and copy it so you can’t tell ’em apart. He’s an artist, that’s what he is.”

“Are you related to him?” Stone asked, interestedly.

“No, not at all. But I’m with him a lot and he lets me call him

that.”

“You and Barry been friends a long time?”

“Yes, Mr Stone, and we were friends, too. Don’t you believe these things they are saying about me and Barry being at odds.”

“But you sometimes had—er—spats?”

“Who told you that, Mr Stone?”

“I see no reason I shouldn’t tell you that. Mrs Mingle did.”

“Oh, that’s all right, then. But don’t listen to it from any one else. Old Ming’s mind is back in the past, and she remembers our childish quarrels. They were short but very fierce, and sometimes Ming had to patch us up a bit. But we put aside childish things some years ago. Of late, we’ve had no bickering, no disagreements.”

“Not about the girls?”

“Ah, Ming put you up to that! Well, now and then, we each want the same girl, but we always fix it up amicably. My God, I keep forgetting he’s dead! I simply can’t realize it. Well, I came over here to see if I could stick around and make the place less dreary for them to come home to. Don’t you know how lonely and bleak a house seems after returning from a funeral? I figured if we had a roaring fire on the hearth in the Common Room, and smoking things around, and maybe a spot of tea or something hot, it would be cheery. It isn’t so awful cold, but a fire is comforting like. I’ll go

down and fix it up with the few henchmen that are down there. Most of them went to the services.”

“Didn’t you?” Cox asked.

“Yes, sir, but I slipped out ahead of the crowd.”

“Wait a minute, Rod,” Cox detained him. “Were you on the *Hotspur* that morning she sailed?”

“I didn’t go out with them from here, sir.”

“I know you didn’t,” and Cox glared at him. The Inspector’s ways were far different from Stone’s. “But were you on the boat before she started, before Barry and Van went aboard?”

“Why, no,” and Rod looked puzzled.

“Think again, boy,” Cox said, not unkindly.

“Oh, you mean when Barry wasn’t there! Hadn’t come down yet. Yes, I was at the Yacht Club, and I sauntered down to the yard to see the Club boats. The *Hotspur* was there and, golly, she looked splendid! Have they got her back yet?”

“No,” the Inspector said, sternly. “But never mind that now. Did you go on board?”

“What if I did?” and Rod’s lower lip quivered, a sure sign of worry with him.

“Nothing much,” Stone intervened. “We’re just collecting data, and you can fill in a little.”

“I don’t know anything to fill in with.”

“Why did you go on board?” Stone urged him forward.

“I went to see if Jane Holt was there.”

“Didn’t you know the men weren’t on board?”

“I wasn’t sure.” Rodney was regaining his swagger air. “And I didn’t care whether they were or not, if Jane was there.”

“And no one was on the yacht?”

“Nobody at all.”

“What did you do?”

“I poked about a bit, admiring the fittings of the craft, and especially my own bits of handicraft.”

“What were they?” Stone inquired.

“Just some little tricks like a way to open the refrigerator with your foot, and a shute sort of thing that propelled waste stuff down and out to the sea. It’s my hobby to make such things as that.”

“A mighty convenient hobby,” Stone said. “And here are the cars coming in. Let’s go down to greet the crowd.”

Rodney was as good as his word. He chatted cosily with Jane and Vera, he talked with respect and sympathy to the Wayne brothers, he was cordial to Steve Holt and friendly with Ming.

At last, without seeming to do so, Stone managed to get Pat Wayne alone in his laboratory.

The two men sat in silence for a moment, and then Stone said, “Young Campion is a well set-up lad. I took quite a fancy to him.”

“Yes, a good boy. He was a chum of Barry’s.”

“Was he, that is, a sort of—sort of handy man about the house?”

“Oh, yes, though I taught him about all he ever knew. But he had a knack at making little things that would really go. I like that sort of thing too, and we worked together more or less. But he has a besetting sin of carelessness that drives me wild. I can’t abide to see fine tools spoiled by misuse.”

“Nor I. It is a real pity, and so unnecessary.” Pat nodded his assent.

“I see you have a fine camera,” Stone went on with his observations. “Is that one more of the worlds you’ve conquered?”

“Not entirely,” and Pat laughed. “It came near conquering me. Somehow, I’m not nimble enough to do fine work on it.”

“Did you ever take pictures of the yacht?”

“Yes, but not many nor good ones. Hold this door until I can get this cabinet drawer open. There are some pictures for you. Those are all photographs of the *Hotspur* taken by an expert

photographer. Like ’em?”

“Indeed, yes; they are magnificent!”

And they were. The yacht on the high seas, in a calm, even in a storm (with trick work) and off the beach of Nantucket.

“Any interiors?”

“Yes, but these are mostly the plans of the designer, a great naval architect, who planned the boat.”

They showed lots of cubby-holes and even a view down in the hatch, where Barry received his death blow.

Stone was about to pass this over, but Pat said, “No, let me look at it.”

Stone looked at it, too, and said, slowly, “Is there any of Campion’s work in view?”

Pat riffled over the pictures and selected two or three which showed a few simple bits of Campion’s ingenuity, and one rather complicated rack for bottles that looked like a milkman’s basket, but was more ornate.

“I say!” and Stone’s face lighted up with the gleam of success. “I believe we have it! Have you been over to the yacht yet?”

“No, not to go on board. But they won’t let us go on board for a time, not until the yacht is restored to us.”

“They’ll let me go,” Stone said confidently; “and I’ll bet you they’ll let me take you along with me. And I think I know the Killer?”

“By heck, you do! Tell me, quick!”

“What would you say to Rodney Campion?”

CHAPTER X
Clues Are Out of Date

Owing to Stone's amicable relations with U. S. Attorney Demarest he had no difficulty in obtaining permission to visit and explore the *Hotspur*, taking with him Inspector Cox and one of the Wayne brothers. It was Pat who went, for all interested felt that the visit to the yacht would be too much for Barry's father.

As they tore through the water in a swift police motor boat, the dancing spray and the sunlit waves seemed all out of harmony with the errand on which they were bound.

Stone's face showed a brooding expression, and though it gave no hint of his thoughts it veiled a determination to learn something from conditions on the yacht, if that were humanly possible.

Cox looked stolid and was, quite evidently, hopeful of something turning up, though he had no definite idea what. He had a notion that he could see through a ladder with a hole in it, but not always was there much to see through the hole.

Pat Wayne looked expectant. He had a real respect for his own powers of observation, but he knew he could never force this opinion on others, unless he gave them some worthwhile example of his prowess. And to be pitted against the astute detective and the clear-eyed Inspector was not a position that could be called a sinecure. But he hoped to spy out something on the beautiful boat that would appeal to the deductive talent of Fleming Stone.

Demarest met his three visitors with cordial greetings.

After general praise of the yacht, Inspector Cox and the U. S. Attorney fell into conversation, and Pat Wayne led Stone through some of the less conspicuous nooks and crannies, each of which had its own definite use.

“Perfect building,” Stone said, admiringly: “and this yacht is yours, now, Mr Pat.”

“Yes;” and Pat sighed. “But it was always communal property. Dan and I gave it to Barry, but we all used it at will. Dan doesn’t care quite so much for sailing, but Barry and I were devoted to it. Now, it belongs to us, but I doubt if I shall use it much, and Dan probably not at all. We loved that boy, and this boat is full of memories.”

They neared the hatchway and Stone hesitated about going down, though he greatly wanted to do so. But he feared it would rouse Pat’s emotion.

Wayne saw this, and started down the steps himself.

“Come along,” he said; “real grief is not affected by

inanimate objects.” He scrutinized the engine, and fingered a few of the mechanical parts in a workmanlike way.

“Marvellous gear,” he said; “every known new bit of invention, and more, too.”

He pulled out a sort of bar, attached at one end, and let it go back.

Stone looked at the bar with interest.

He had what is called a photographic memory, to such a degree that he was sure this rod or bar was not on the photographs he had seen, picturing the hatch.

“What is it?” he asked.

“The beginning of a bit of invention Barry recently started. It’s a sort of self-starter for the motor, and when complete can be used from the deck above. The boy planned it entirely, and his work on it was delayed by some supplies that didn’t arrive on time. Then he became interested in something else and half forgot about it. I think I’ll try to finish it. It’s a clever dodge.”

They went on looking over the various details of the engine, built by the most famous experts, and Stone expressed surprise that Barry would tamper with the delicate machinery.

“He was a delicate machinist himself,” Pat said, simply. “He could have made a fortune from his inventions had he chosen to apply himself.”

They went on, and in the cabin Stone saw again the

framed photograph, with its inscription “Barry from Jane.”

He well remembered when he first saw it; then the names meant nothing to him; now, he knew Jane, and almost better still, he felt, he knew Barry.

“You like Miss Holt?” Pat asked, casually.

Stone, with an equal nonchalance returned;

“In some ways very much, in others, not at all.”

“In what ways not at all?” and Pat looked amazed.

“I’m afraid our conversation is more personal than it ought to be, but I’m willing to reply. When she is her own sweet, natural self, I like her exceedingly; but when she apes the ways and manners of others, she is, to me, not so attractive.”

“Meaning, when she tries to act like the more sophisticated Vera?”

“Yes; or like any one whom she admires or envies. Why does she stay here? Her fiancé is dead, her father is not a general favorite, she is not really friendly with Mrs Van Zandt. She must have hosts of friends who would be glad to have her visit them, yet here she stays with a houseful of people all her senior.”

“There’s Rodney Campion; have you forgotten him?”

“Yes, I know he admires her. But is his regard returned?”

“It’s hard telling these days. Who can read the hearts of the present generation of young people? Or older people either, for that matter. I think Jane is in love with the whole Wayne family—”

“Including yourself?”

“I meant rather the Wayne family, as a whole. The people, the place, the house, the whole establishment. Jane is fond of the water, she cares little for gay society, and she has always loved Lang Syne.”

“And, too, just now, she is full of memories of Barry, and really feels like shunning social gayeties.”

“Yes;” Pat smiled a little. “But I still feel if Rod Campion were to go away, there would be small attraction here for Jane Holt.”

Inspector Cox and the Attorney came along just then, and joined the pair in the cabin.

“Found anything?” asked Cox, with interest.

“Not a thing,” Wayne told him. “I don’t see how you investigators know which way to turn next.”

“Sometimes we don’t,” admitted Demarest. “I’ve been in places where it seemed I’d reached the very end of all probable or possible solutions.”

“And yet you won out?” Stone said, smiling.

“In those desperate cases, usually, yes. Of course, it’s a case of the brightness that follows the darkness that occurs just before dawn. I’m not mixing my metaphors, am I?”

“No, indeed; your metaphors are unstrained,” and Stone grinned at the absurdity of his own speech.

“I think,” said Cox, in his matter-of-fact way, “that I have learned all I can from this yacht. I don’t say there isn’t more to be learned, but if so, it’ll have to be shown me. It’s my habit to go over a thing thoroughly, and then consider it finished. No matter how long you keep on, you can’t draw blood from a turnip. I’m through with my search here, and I’m ready to go. How about the rest of you?”

“I’m ready, but for one thing,” Stone declared; “I’d like, Mr Wayne, to take a book from the shelf, if I may. It’s that old Marchesa book, the big blue one. I read it many years ago, and I’d like to run it through again. May I?”

“Most assuredly, Mr Stone. It’s Dan’s book, and he’ll be glad to talk with you about it. Barry was fond of it, too. All right, then; shall we all go, now? Perhaps Mr Demarest will let us come over here again some day; not Inspector Cox, but the rest of us?”

“At any time,” returned the U. S. Attorney. “And if there is any way whatever in which I can be of use to you, just tell me frankly, and depend upon my aid.”

The quick run home was not so beautiful an experience as the trip over, for the sun was low and the blue and gold water turned to a gray black.

A strong breeze was blowing, and as Stone shifted the large book he was carrying, a tiny scrap of paper blew out from it and flew wildly into the white-caps.

“Valuable?” asked Stone, with a glance of apology at Pat.

Wayne laughed, and said, “No, indeed, I think it was a postage stamp, probably put in to hold a place.”

“You collect?” Stone asked.

“No,” returned Pat. “We used to, all of us, but when Barry grew up he tired of it, and as a real hobby, it doesn’t appeal to Dan and me. But you’ll find old stamps here and there all over the house. Dan and I have travelled a lot, and the Tourist Agencies tried to adopt us, and are constantly sending us circulars and booklets. Fond of travel, Mr Stone?”

“In my own way. As a young man I made all my duty trips; now, I just go where the fancy takes me, here and there, now and then, hither and yon.”

“We must talk over our trips some day. You know the Orient?”

“In spots. But my travels have been mainly on land. Yours, doubtless, have been cruises.”

“Both. But cruises please me best. Barry was like me—more so than like his father, in that respect. Perhaps, Mr Stone . . . well we’ll talk over possibilities some other time.”

“Aren’t the stamps that come to you on your pamphlets and

circulars somewhat valuable?” asked the Inspector, more interested in price than beauty.

“Some are; but not many. We have a lot of old ones that have a goodly value; but as they gain in price every year why dispose of them now?” A sudden quiver came into Pat’s voice, but he went on. “We had planned, of course, to keep them for Barry; as, being specimens of the years before his birth, they are often really rare ones. But now—now all is changed.”

He concluded in a low voice, and Stone tactfully addressed a casual remark to the Inspector, regarding certain issues of recent American stamps.

It was dark when they reached Sand Hill, and after landing Stone and Pat Wayne, the Inspector was carried off in his official motor-launch.

Entering the Common Room, Stone laid the book he had brought home on a table within sight of Dan Wayne, who gave a sudden start when he saw it.

“Where’d this come from?” he asked, not knowing Stone had brought it in.

“I brought it, from the yacht,” the detective answered; “Mr Pat lent it to me.”

“Oh, all right, all right—I beg your pardon for seeming surprised. But it’s an old book that I haven’t seen for a long time. Where was it?”

“On a library shelf in the cabin of the yacht. I read it years ago, and I thought I’d like to look it over again.”

“Of course, Stone, of course. Look it over, it’s well worth your while. We’ll have a chat over its Oriental charms some day.”

Dan’s odd manner passed entirely, and he sat, fingering the pages, while he talked of other things.

“Find any clues on the yacht?” he asked, calmly.

“No,” Pat said; “I believe clues are out of date. So few show up nowadays. Think so, Mr Stone?”

“I was never much of a one for clues, except real, good clues. Then they’re worth while.”

“But rare.”

“Rare as good blue moons or first-class hens’ teeth.”

And the necessity for hens’ dentistry or the appearances of lunar bodies tinted ultramarine or cerulean seemed to crop up less often than Fleming Stone had ever observed them to do in his previous cases.

Yet, that very night, as he sat on his own verandah, hoping between sea and sky to hear a whisper of a hint of a good clue, he heard one—nay, he heard two.

Uncertain at first whether they were good ones or not, he hastened to try them out.

He had already listed and classified and tabulated the possibilities, probabilities and likelihoods of his potential criminals.

Unlike most detectives, he did not set down the most outstanding villain first, he listed the other way. At the top of the column was the one he deemed least capable of the murder of Barry Wayne. This was Dan Wayne, and was followed by Pat Wayne. Had it been feasible, Stone would have put these two men side by side. Though one was father and one uncle of the boy, yet the detective frequently thought he discerned a little deeper affection, a little greater pride, in Pat's heart than in Dan's. This, he was willing to admit, might have been because Pat's more ebullient nature caused him more spoken grief, more expressed sorrow than that of his quieter brother.

Placing the two brothers together, then, as free from all suspicion, he cast around for his next most negligible name.

He gave this matter deep thought, and finally returned to the one he had chosen first, that of Mrs Mingle.

He had watched Ming closely ever since his arrival at Lang Syne, and had found no flaw in her devotion to Barry, a deep, maternal love, founded on an undying respect and admiration. She showed no presumption, no forwardness, but she remembered that she had brought up the child from babyhood to manhood, and was thereby entitled to a certain dignified proprietorship in the memories of his life.

Mrs Mingle, then, he classed as third, directly after the Wayne

brothers.

Jane Holt, of necessity, came next. She could never be suspected of murder, of course, but an investigator must inquire into all side issues and pay minute attention to vague indications as well as blatant facts.

Then, Stone supposed, Vera. It seemed as if she might have been higher on the list, yet surely she was a more likely suspect than Jane, each of them having a motive.

He put down these feminine names quite placidly. His long experience had made him realize that women do commit murders, though not the majority of them. Also, inquiries and suggestions put to women not seldom brought out unexpected hints or facts of decidedly great value.

Indeed, he already had more women than men on his list.

But he had not yet come to his really likely guesses.

Steve Holt followed Vera. Stone was getting near the end of his rope, and he knew he considered Holt among the latest and likeliest.

He wound up with Rodney Campion.

This does not mean he felt most sure of Rod, but that he found the most telling hints, the most indicative suggestions, the most leading pointers of them all, in his talks with Campion.

On a separate list, he noted the large staff of workers on the

Wayne estate; the Club servants and Boatyard men of the Yacht Club; the many unknown enemies Barry may have had, and the jealous rivals he may have made in his not infrequent love affairs.

But of all the lists and sub-lists, Stone paid little attention to underlings, or slight acquaintances. The deep tragedy of the double murder, the preconceived and horrible methods, the inexplicable details of the case, all pointed to a master-mind, to a diabolical enmity and a devilish ingenuity in satisfying it.

This murder was never plotted or planned by any half-way genius or partially educated mind.

Moreover, it was always Stone's belief that a crime of clever conception and ingenious device would show in some way a hint of its creator. The brain that planned the killing of young Wayne and Van Zandt could never rest like a sloth in idle content.

The list the detective had made was not in existence. Having carefully made it and committed it to memory, he had destroyed it, well knowing it would lurk safely in the recesses of his brain.

And so, sitting on the verandah, listening to the swaying of the old Inn sign, he needed no reminder of the names of those who might have killed the young yachtsman and his guest, nor in what rotation of probability he had begun to suspect them.

And it was there, a plaid about him, the autumn stars shining indifferently down, that he pondered on postage

stamps.

He was not a true philatelist, but, like all other mental interests or diversions, the study appealed to him, and he knew more or less about it.

His mind gave him a picture of the stamp he had found in the book about Formosa. A fairly familiar location to him, he resolved to take up the matter with Dan Wayne. He wished he had brought the book upstairs, but didn’t care enough about it to go down for it.

An odd stamp, but all those tropical or Oriental stamps were odd. He remembered it was clean and fairly undefaced. Old, of course, it had lain in the book for years.

He remembered the stamp Ming was carrying about, and which she said she collected from the waste-basket for her young relative, but had given to Stone.

That stamp, he recalled, was worn and soiled, but it had been in the scrap-basket. Yet, it was likely, a new stamp, if discarded in the present day scraps.

And why not? The Waynes were constant recipients of circulars and pamphlets of foreign cruises and de luxe Tours. The stamps of small if any value were added to the collection of Ming’s nephew, by permission of her masters.

Yet stamps, *per se*, for some reason, pestered Stone’s brain, and he decided that morning should see them swept out like cobwebs.

The other little matter that seemed a salient point in the day's work was the contraption Barry had been building as an attachment to his engine on the yacht.

The young man was a delicate mechanician and there was no reason he should not add a self-starter to his motor engine, but that was no absolutely new invention. Had he been asked, he would have assumed the yacht had a self-starter of its own, in fine condition.

But, doubtless, Barry had invented a new model, a great improvement on any known one, and, as he had had delays with it, he had put off finishing the work, and now his uncle would take it up.

Stone had seen Barry's clever and beautiful work, and was quite ready to believe in the new invention, but he felt it ought to be a more important device than a self-starter.

He rose from his comfortable deck chair, and went into his own suite of rooms.

His sitting-room, which because of its quaint furnishings he still called his parlor, had become a favorite working-place of his.

The family and household never interrupted him at his work, and, though passers-by on his verandah were sometimes called in, they never intruded otherwise.

Stone sought out the stamp that Ming had given him. It was still attached to the bit of paper that formed the corner of an envelope.

The paper was tough, thick and decidedly foreign in texture.

His piece was perhaps about a third of the whole surface of the envelope, and was of a grayish tan color. There was a faint, subtle odor to it, not at all unpleasant, but decidedly permeating.

Only the final letters of the address could be seen, and these seemed to be *me*.

Stone did not look upon the writing as a puzzle, but assumed it was really the last marks of Wayne. Who else but the two brothers received mail from the Tropics? And this postmark, Stone was almost ready to wager, was Formosa or something very like it.

He laid it away until morning, feeling sure the Waynes would tell him at once.

But after all, the letter could have no sinister meaning. He knew the men frequently received mail matter from the East Indies, and often wrote there for something they wanted.

He frowned at himself for becoming interested in stamps and postmarks, when he had other and more complicated matters to look into.

He glanced down his mental list, and paused at the names of Jane and Vera.

How did they chance to stand next one another?

Mere coincidence, he decided, and then wondered why he had

put Jane first. Was she really less likely to be a murderess or implicated in a murder than Vera?

Nonsense! neither of them could kill anybody, though any woman could possibly be dragged into a matter of crime.

But of the two?

Well, he had designated Vera as more possible.

That was nothing, he must get at their mental powers.

At first they seemed opposite. Vera was brave, Jane was timid. Was she, though? Jane Holt timid? Never, in this world! Bah, how did he know? He knew her but superficially. Well, she seemed timid. What of that? He had seen Vera Van Zandt look as timid as a baby lamb, when he knew at the time she was brazening out a lie she had told.

Some one crossed the light of his room window.

It was Vera, and she paused in his doorway, looking at him wistfully.

“May I come in?” she said; “I know it’s late—but . . .”

“Yes, you may come in for a few minutes, if you’ll answer a question truthfully.”

She stepped on the threshold.

“I never have done that, as I remember, but—I’ll try. Ask it.”

“All right. In your estimation or belief, can a woman commit a murder?”

Her low laugh sounded.

“How absurd!” she said. “Haven’t they always done it? In Bible times, Judith, Herodias . . . all and sundry! Later on, Lucrezia, Messalina . . . oh, history is full of examples.”

“Could you?”

“How do I know? I don’t believe any woman knows what she can or can’t do until she is tempted.”

“Never mind yourself, then; do you know any woman you think could kill?”

“Meaning Jane Holt?”

“Yes, meaning Jane Holt.”

“No, she couldn’t; she’s too vain.”

“Aren’t you too vain?”

“I’m not vain enough.”

“Are you talking drivel?”

“Not at all. I mean all this. To do a brave deed like murder requires vanity of a rare sort. I don’t possess it—I wish I did.”

“I believe I begin to think you are talking sense after all. Run

away now; we will finish this discussion some other time.”

CHAPTER XI
Ming Prefers Not To

The next morning Fleming Stone sought Ming in her apartment and found her in her cozy sitting-room.

She rose quickly, but Stone bade her be seated again, and talk to him.

“About what?” she asked; “you come in here like a thousand of brick and bid me talk. ‘Talk,’ says you, when I prefer not to.”

“Why do you use that phrase so much? Why say ‘I prefer not to,’ instead of ‘I don’t want to’?”

A vague, tender smile came over the woman’s face.

“I used to teach Barry,” she said, “to say I prefer not to, instead of I won’t or I sha’n’t. It sounded so much less rude and bad-tempered. At last he learned it so thoroughly that he invariably said it, even to his little playmates. One day, I heard loud screams from the playground, and I went out there to find my boy and a little neighbor pommelling each other like two little demons. Barry had a new ball, and the

other lad wanted it. He kept screeching like a house afire, ‘Gimme that ball!’ ‘Gimme that ball!’ and Barry, like a little Lord Fountroyal, kept screaming, ‘I prefer not to!’ ‘I prefer not to!’ I couldn’t help laughing at this polite tussle, and I grabbed Barry up and ran into the house with him, and fed him pie.”

“It is a more courteous phrase than ‘I won’t,’ and I like to hear you speak it. Now, Ming, I wish you’d show me some of those foreign stamps the Wayne brothers received. You’ve collected a lot I think. Mr Dan is going to tell me about some of his, and I don’t want to be utterly ignorant, to start with.”

“Yes, sir; I’ll do that gladly. I’ve none here; would you care to walk over to my brother’s house to look at them, or shall I bring nephew Peter’s lot over here?”

“Oh, let’s go over there. It’s a grand morning to step out.”

Go they did, and Stone soon found himself in the presence of Ming’s nephew, who showed off, with justifiable pride, his small but really worthwhile collection.

Young Peter, who knew about his stamps through the kindness of the Wayne family, had them neatly classified and arranged.

“My best ones are from the Orient,” he informed Stone. “Do you like the Orient, sir?”

“Yes, Peter, but not as well as some other localities.”

“I used to think the Orient was only China and Japan,” the

boy went on. “But the Islands, I think, are more interesting than the countries.”

“Have you stamps of Formosa and Kamtchatka? And of New Guinea?”

“Yes, all those. And of the Liu-kiu Islands—they are very rare. But of course my collection is far from complete. I’ve a lot of stamps from the Malay Archipelago, and none at all from European countries. I mean scarce or important ones.”

“But you’ll improve your collection all the time. And when you’re a man, you’ll probably find these Malay stamps are more valuable than any European ones. Do you like the game? Do you enjoy the stamps themselves?”

“Oh, yes, sir. It’s great to think you can’t get a certain stamp, and then get it! Of course, the Wayne gentlemen are most kind to me, and give me lots.”

“I’ll send you some, Peter; not lots, and not immensely valuable ones, but worthwhile specimens.”

“Oh, thank you, sir! Did you hear that, Aunt Ming?”

“Yes, dear; the gentleman is very good to you.”

“Show me some of your Malay stamps,” Stone asked of his young friend.

Willingly Peter drew out a well-filled album of stamps from the East Indies.

Stone remembered that the Wayne brothers had visited those regions shortly before Dan's marriage and the following birth of Barry. He saw that the stamps were of an issue of about that time, and concluded the brothers had brought them home as gifts for friends, or additions to their own collections.

He quickly scanned the stamps and asking Peter's permission, made a partial list of designs and localities.

"I say, Mr Stone," cried Peter, eagerly, "I've got lots of lists of my stamps. I've a friend who can typewrite and he lists 'em for me. Would you like a list?"

"I should, very much, my boy. Just lend it to me, I'll return it."

"No, I'll give it to you; I want to. I have several."

"All right, Peter boy, I'll take it, then, with pleasure. And, I say, keep it under your hat, will you? It's not exactly a secret, but you know we investigating fellows have to be careful what we tell, sometimes. So, you and I will not tell all we know—for a few days, anyhow."

Peter was joyously flattered at this confidence placed in him by the great man and willingly made the promise required.

As Stone walked back home with Mrs Mingle, he complimented her on her bright and attractive young relative.

"Yes," she said, "he's a good boy, as good as they come. I'm not sure he'll keep your secret, though, Mr Stone. He means all right, but you know how youngsters like to brag about any

attention from important gentlemen like yourself. Shall I warn him against tattling?”

“I doubt it will be necessary. Why not appeal to his gratitude, or mine? Tell him I’m so thankful to get his list and that I’m pretty sure he won’t talk about it to the other boys until I tell him he may. Wouldn’t that be better?”

“I think it would, sir. And do you want me to keep it dark? If Mr Dan should ask me, now.”

“I leave that to you, Ming. I don’t ask you to tell a lie, but maybe a diplomatic change of subject—eh?”

“Yes, that would do no harm, Mr Stone.”

They reached by this time the porch of the old Inn, and Stone looked up at the sign swinging in front of the house.

“The Stag At Bay,” he repeated, well knowing what would be Ming’s comment.

“We don’t like it called that,” she said; “we prefer not to.”

“You like Lang Syne better?”

“Much better. Mrs Wayne named it that, and we all prefer it.”

“What was the lady like? I’ve never seen her portrait.”

“Oh, she was beautiful. Soft, silky brown hair, and a tiny dimple in either cheek. A lovely lady was Mrs Wayne.”

“Did Barry look like her?”

“No, not at all. Barry was the image of his father. Poor Barry. Mr Stone, are you going to track down the brute who killed him?”

“I sincerely hope so, Mrs Mingle. And I don’t mind telling you I think it will be soon. You see, we have also to work on the case of Mr Van Zandt’s death and the two are interwoven.”

Mrs Mingle went her ways, and Stone went into the Common Room, where he found several of their party studying maps and photographs of various parts of the Malay Archipelago.

“How did you happen to choose the East Indies for your Happy Hunting Ground?” Vera asked of Dan, next whom she was sitting.

“Because we admired the place;” Pat told her. “From one end to the other, the Island of Formosa is a joy to all the senses. It is a Japanese possession, since 1895, and lies between Hong Kong and Shanghai.”

“But it is quite off the beaten track,” said Dan, “and to my mind, is a veritable little Paradise of tropical fruits, as well as tea and tobacco.”

“Are there pirates?” asked Jane; “I’ve heard so.”

“Don’t be silly,” her father reproved her.

“But there were pirates there once,” said Dan. “Great, big, awful pirates, each with a cutlass in his mouth, or a kris.”

Vera gave a frightened little scream, but Jane said, calmly:

“Why carry them in their mouths?”

“Habit,” Pat advised her. “And then they were handy to get at.”

“And they’re not there now? The pirates, I mean.” Jane looked disappointed.

“No, my child,” Pat smiled at her; “Formosa is now a prosperous and well-cultivated land, producing lavish and valuable crops.”

“What is the seaport?” Holt inquired.

“Keelung. And the capital is Taihoku, only a few miles distant. These towns have certain fascinations of their own, and you’d love them, Jane.”

“She wouldn’t, but I would,” Vera declared.

“You both would,” Dan insisted. “The old picturesqueness of long ago is still there.”

“Not any for me,” announced Steve Holt. “To me the Orient connotes dirt.”

“Oh, no!” and Dan shook his head. “The streets are full of curious little shops and ancient shrines and temples of odd

beauty. There are winding narrow lanes with images in them. And to me the greatest charm of Formosa is its equal effect of Chinese and Japanese.”

“And the climate,” added Pat. “That is ideal; a glow of liquid sunshine.”

“Come on,” said Jane; “I’ll buy it. Who’ll go to Formosa with me?”

“Let’s all go,” Pat suggested, “Here, I’ll trace out our trip now!”

“Not too fast!” cried Fleming Stone; “I’d go in a minute, were it possible, but I haven’t the leisure for it now.”

“Nor I,” said Holt. “I have to look after my girl, and I’d never take her to Oriental parts. She wouldn’t like it.”

“Oh, I would, Dad!” and Jane pouted. “I’d just love it. Barry told me a lot about it, and it’s heavenly.”

“Heavenly is the wrong word to use, my daughter.”

“Barry said it was.”

“I know, dear; but Barry had never been there, and to a betrothed pair, any place seems heavenly where they may be alone together.”

“You’re right, Dad; I do miss him. We were going on lots of trips. We had wonderful plans.”

Stone reverted to the stamps of Oriental countries, which had, the night before, aroused the subject.

“Are the stamps now,” he asked, “the same designs as when you were over there twenty-five years ago?”

“More or less,” said Pat. “Of course, many of the old ones are growing more and more valuable.”

“Yes,” Stone observed; “Ming took me over to see her nephew this morning, and the lad has a pretty fair lot of specimens from the East Indies.”

“He has! Where did he get them?” Pat asked, seeming surprised.

“Mrs Mingle picked them out of various waste-baskets, I believe.”

“Curious; but if they were found in trash-baskets, they cannot be of any value.”

“Probably not,” Stone agreed. “But the boy enjoys them, as a plaything. The subject doesn’t appeal to me, as the real ones are so hard to come by and also so expensive.”

“Are they modern or old ones?” Pat continued.

“I’m ashamed to say I don’t know,” Stone confessed. “I’m not at all a connoisseur.”

“Let me see some and I’ll tell you.”

With an odd glance, Stone said, quietly, “Young Peter didn’t give me any.”

“I’m going to collect stamps,” said Jane, suddenly. “Will you give me a few to start with, Uncle Pat?”

“As I get them, yes. But I haven’t had many of late years, and current ones don’t amount to much anyway. Better collect our own National Parks stamps.”

“What’s the most beautiful thing in your Formosa?” asked Vera.

“It isn’t entirely my Formosa,” Pat returned, “but I’d say the women; eh, Dan?”

“The women and the Golden Orioles. I don’t know which I admire more,” and Dan seemed to fall into a day-dream.

“Wake up, old chap,” cried his brother; “I didn’t know you cared for the bird so much. You may have mine.”

“I accept it, but leave it where it is now. That’s a perfect place for it. But I suppose you people mean scenery. It is mildly picturesque. There are waterfalls, of course, the high hills provide those. There are marvellous sunsets, and I don’t know, but I daresay, equally beautiful sunrises.”

“And there are the fearful Head Hunters,” supplemented Pat. “They are said to be worse than the Dyaks; do you care for details of their work?”

“We do not,” declared Dan; “let me tell you of the curious

things. There are little altars, where they burn scraps of all paper that is written upon.”

“What a discreet place,” commented Stone. “And are these somewhat contradictory people musical at all?”

“Yes, as they consider music. They play on an instrument with three strings, something like the Japanese samisen. Always you find the Japanese and Chinese traits and customs intermingled.”

“Temperament?” asked Vera.

“None, to speak of. Placidity and good-humor make their ways ways of pleasantness, and their paths seem peaceful enough.”

“Too tame for me,” declared Vera. “I don’t want to go to the Malay Archipelago! Leave me out.”

“But you love sailing trips. You’ve often said you wanted to go on a real cruise.”

“Yes, to some exciting place. Here comes Rod Campion. Rod, do you want to go to Formosa and points East?”

“Not I. I’m not much on cruises. I like short trips better. Jane, do you want to go for a little sail? The wind is perfect just now.” Then, looking round, he added, “I’m not asking any one else.”

They laughed, and the crowd broke up, as Jane ran to get her things.

Campion waited, and talked a bit with Stone.

“Getting on, sir?” he said, with an air of mild respect.

“Very well, indeed;” and Stone’s manner bespoke a pride of success. “I say, Campion, you know all about the engine of the *Hotspur*, don’t you?”

“Pretty much, I guess. I didn’t build it.”

“Were you building the self-starter, or helping Barry to build or attach it?”

“Didn’t know a self-starter was in process of construction.”

“Well, maybe there isn’t. But some sort of gadget is being added to the motor engine, something that’s merely begun, and it isn’t clear to me just what it is.”

“What’s it like?”

“Like a self-starter, and that’s what Mr Pat Wayne says it is. I thought you’d know about it.”

“Nope; never saw or heard of it. Here’s Mr Pat, I’ll ask him.”

“I’m sure it’s a starter of some kind,” Pat replied to Rod’s query. “And as it puzzled me, too, I looked about in Barry’s desk and found some preliminary plans for the thing. Don’t let us keep you, Rod,—here’s Jane now. Want to see the drawings, Mr Stone?”

“No hurry about it. Or, have you them with you?”

“I have some small ones. There are others, too large to pocket.”

Pat produced some papers, which were crude but definite drawings of what was undoubtedly a starter for an electric motor.

He asked Stone if he cared to have them, and the detective took them, rather absent-mindedly, and laid them on a table beside him.

Pat went off then, and Stone repossessed himself of the drawings, and went up to his rooms and put them safely away.

Then he went and sat in Barry’s library, the place he liked best to think over his problems.

And at this moment, he decided that his greatest problem for the time being, was Vera Van Zandt.

Had she cared for her husband?

Had she hated her husband?

Did she kill her husband?

The last two questions could be answered affirmatively, if he understood aright some things she said and did.

But she was an uncertain proposition, at best, and Fleming Stone was by no means sure that he did understand her contradictory nature.

He admired Vera. Her great and fascinating beauty would demand admiration from any man. He liked her. Her quick-witted brain and intellectual mind commanded his appreciation.

And yet, to a certain degree he suspected her. Was she not herself capable of being any of those women she had mentioned? A Lucrezia Borgia? A Messalina?

Could he not imagine her tiring of her uninteresting spouse to such an extent as to murder the man who bored her?

Well, no; he couldn't. She may have been a murderess, for all he knew, but he couldn't see it that way. True, he had never known Van Zandt, but he knew Vera, and he believed her capable of intense hatred, of desperate enmity, of scorn and loathing, but not—no, *not* of murder. It didn't suit her, didn't coincide with her suddenness of temper, her quick loves and hates, that were here to-day and gone to-morrow.

Then he realized that Van Zandt's murder was not quick or sudden. It might have been an impulsive decision, but the administration of that dose of metallic sodium was premeditated and planned in advance.

There was always the possibility that Vera had taken out the sodamints from his pocket-box, and put instead, therein, a single poisonous tablet that he might have taken thoughtlessly, disregarding the absence of any others. Van was absent-minded at times, and could easily have forgotten that his box was filled just before his starting off with Barry.

Of course, that would make Van Zandt's death the work of an

absent murderer. But so was Barry's. No, not necessarily Barry's. The criminal might have given the tablet in the way Stone had just reconstructed the deed. And, then, afterward, he or another might have killed Barry as he stood starting his engine, or, perhaps more likely, stood or bent down to work on his new attachment.

Could this murderer have been Van Zandt, himself?

That would necessitate reversing the order of action.

Say, Van went down in the hatch to find Barry there, leaning over his machine. Suppose opportunity brought irresistible temptation, and an instrument of some sort lay ready. Mightn't he have struck the blow and gone back up on deck to think things over?

Mightn't he have taken a tablet without knowing he did so, and then died very soon afterward?

Motive? Jealousy of his wife, of course. Stone had heard, many times since his arrival, of Van Zandt's insane jealousy of Vera, and knew, too, that it was directed to one or another of the three Waynes.

This jealousy had been fostered by the lady herself, who used it as an instrument of persuasion for many things she wanted.

Yet there were other jealousies not so far away that might well enter the field as a motive.

There was Rodney's jealousy, or, rather envy of Barry's

engagement to Jane. Perhaps it was true, as Ming said, if one of those boys wanted a girl, the other wanted her, too.

Rodney Campion, though of calm demeanor, had a quick temper and a habit of sudden exhibitions of it.

He was the last on Stone's list, and though the detective had not yet accused him, that position indicated that he was the chief suspect.

There were absurdities that accompanied such a suspicion. Campion was a popular young man, a good fellow, with many friends and no known enemies.

A lifelong chum of Barry Wayne, a favorite with both Barry's uncles, and with Ming, the old nurse.

A man of similar tastes and pursuits to those of the Waynes, Rodney's energies found sympathy and good-natured rivalry, in their love of all water sports as well as their interest in mechanical and other ingenious inventions.

Why should a man like this, a well-bred, highly educated, friendly sort of chap, plan to murder his best friend, and then, presumably, kill another who had overseen the deed?

It was especially absurd on that day, for the fact of Jane's not going in the *Hotspur* left her free to go with him. Perhaps this very fact had brought about words between Rod and Barry, and so the crime had come about. There must have been plenty of time, for Barry sailed an hour before Rod's motor-boat started.

The latter could have gone over to the *Hotspur*, executed his plan, including the unexpected killing of Van Zandt, and been back home before time to start with his guests.

The motive, though not entirely clear, was doubtless connected with a quarrel about Jane or about the diversions of the day.

And it was Fleming Stone's way to get his hypothetical continuity planned out before considering the motive, unless the motive had been the starting point.

He had jotted notes as he thought, and now, looking back over them, his deductions seemed a trifle weak. No, not weak, they were sound and dependable. But . . .

Well, at last, being a very honest debater with himself, he confessed to his inner consciousness that his death scene was not theatrical enough.

This statement is not so absurd as it may sound. Fleming Stone had gone through many cases; some he plodded through, some he leaped or skipped across. But, invariably, a deep and carefully worked out case had, in his experience, ended in a stunning if not spectacular dénouement.

And this final picture had, without exception, been vouchsafed to him by reason of his own skilled work and triumphant reasoning powers.

And now, he must admit, his reasoned decision, his final belief, his discovered solution, found in the person of Rodney Campion, did not satisfy him.

Why? he wondered. Why not? he pondered.

The answer came to him like a flash. Because Campion couldn’t pull it off!

CHAPTER XII
The Old Typewriter

Stone's thoughts wandered a little, as he sat gazing round Barry's room. The big library he was in showed many books, and one section was entirely devoted to a small collection of books on cruises. Perhaps to read up on the cruise Barry had in contemplation, perhaps just because of his love for sailing. However, Stone thought, a perusal of those books promised little light on his present darkness.

He looked, as he often did, at the great crystal chandelier. Aside from its beauty it had a fascination for him, and he watched with delight the slow gentle swaying of its gleaming prisms. A strong wind might easily break off a lot of them, but he knew that Ming's care over her boy's possessions would never let that occur.

Noticing the careful work which had made possible the raising of the ceiling with no apparent discrepancy of proportions, he wondered who did it.

He went in search of Hezekiah and asked him. But the man knew nothing of the matter and seemed to know

nothing of carpentry. He referred Stone to the Wayne brothers who could tell him all about it.

Whereupon, Stone found his way up to the false floor by himself.

It was entirely simple. The flooring of a room above Barry's library had been lifted halfway up its own walls, making Barry's library about twenty feet high, and leaving a ten-foot loft above it.

There was no secret passage, no mysterious entrance. A tiny staircase opened into the hall at its top, and the lowest step of the stairs was in the dark and nearly empty loft. Stone's pocket flash revealed no point of interest, no curious contrivance of any sort.

There was nothing in the room but three or four pieces of old lumber, a much worn tapestry chair, a broken statue, an iron dog and a tricycle.

Stone scrutinized every article, looking especially at the tricycle, which he finally judged to have been Barry's, although it was of a style in vogue about fifteen years previous. This would make it Barry's toy when he was about ten years old, pretty well along for the use of a tricycle.

"Hello, Mr Stone," said a voice, and Stone looked up to see Pat Wayne's head appearing above the little stairwell.

"Hello, Mr Pat; this tricycle belonged to Barry, I suppose."

"Yes, Ming wouldn't allow her charge to use a bicycle

until he was nearly grown up. She was a splendid nurse, but rather on the over-cautious side.”

“I daresay. The reconstruction of the room below this is interesting. How much better proportioned it is with its higher ceiling. The chandelier is too massive to be hung too low.”

“Yes, that’s what we all thought. A few years ago Dan and I were away somewhere and Barry had it done to surprise us on our homecoming.”

“He was a ‘handy man’ too, then?”

“No, not that; but he put the job in the hands of a first-class carpenter, who did it fairly well. Not as Dan or I would have had it done, but good work in a plain carpentered way. There was nothing really difficult about it. But Barry engineered it, and we wouldn’t change a stick or a stone in it.”

“I see; you prefer it with its flaws to some modern improvement that could be made.”

“Oh, yes. Neither my brother nor myself would let it be touched now.”

“Of course not. Shall you remain in this house through the winter, or do you go to the city?”

“That we haven’t decided. I want to take Dan to some place that would really divert his mind and interest him. How are you getting along with your work here?”

A little quiver in Pat’s speech robbed the words of their

seeming carelessness, and Stone replied, gently:

“As well as I can hope. Not only the double murder, but other complications make it a curious and difficult case. I am pretty sure, though, that soon I can make a definite report.”

“I don’t want to hasten your work, Mr Stone, nor does Dan. But it is hard to feel that one may be harboring a murderer under one’s roof. If I could be convinced that no one now staying at Lang Syne . . .”

“You suspect some one, then. That is natural; it would be strange if you did not.”

“I do and I don’t. At times I hate myself for imagining the one I do imagine might have been the cause of Barry’s death.”

“Suppose you forget it. I mean, forget for a time that you are wondering. Leave it to me for a while, feeling that I can at least do as much in the matter as you can. This is not boasting, it is only that my long experience must count in my favor. If you know or learn anything important, tell me, that is only fair to my efforts. Now, Mr Pat, I want to see Barry’s typewriter. I looked in his library, but it is not there. I drifted up here thinking it a lumber loft, and it does seem to be one. Don’t bother, yourself, but let ’Kiah bring it to my room. Can I have it pretty soon?”

“Yes, I think so. I’ve no idea where it is, but Ming will know. You shall have it shortly. Going down now?”

“Yes; by the way, that’s an odd notion your tropical friends

have, of shrines where they burn written paper. Why do they?”

“It’s part of their superstition. They fear one of their god’s names might be written on the paper, and he might be displeased.”

The two men had to go up to get down. They went up the little stair and found themselves in the third floor hall.

Pat’s suite of rooms was on this floor, and he turned into it, saying he would send the typewriter to Stone at once.

And ’Kiah brought it immediately.

Stone himself didn’t know just what he expected to learn from it, but his thorough habits demanded that he look it over.

It was an old one, out of repair and sadly in need of a cleaning, but Fleming Stone handled it as carefully as if it had been a valuable old clock.

He had amassed some dozen or more notes or short messages written by Barry, not one of any moment, but all mere trifles of dates of engagements, or instructions to Ming or ’Kiah or memoranda to aid his own memory.

One in particular arrested Stone’s attention.

It ran: “Dear Uncle Pat do let me have a thousand dollars to-morrow. Dad is on his ear about that Turner girl and won’t give it to me. Be a good sport now do B”

All of Barry’s notes were lacking in punctuation. He seemed to scorn periods and commas.

Stone examined the machine and found the punctuation keys were all right, so concluded it was a notion of time-saving with the young man.

Another was to Jane.

“Sorry have to break engagement for to-morrow Jane dear You wont mind too much will you I’ll make it up to you you know B”

These two interested Stone most. He carefully examined the typewriter keys and discovered that beyond all doubt the notes were written on that keyboard.

But as he pored over the papers, as he scanned closely the lettering, a sudden light came into his eyes.

Then he turned the notes over and looked at their backs.

Yes, he was right! These two notes were not written by the hands that had typed the others! For these two showed no even quality of pressure that betokens an experienced typist or a slow, careful one.

There was no such writer in the house and Stone’s thoughts flew again to Rodney Campion.

But why should Campion write these notes to Barry’s uncle and to his fiancée?

It couldn’t be possible that Rod was trying to get a thousand dollars under false pretences! And why should Campion write the note to Jane? Perhaps Barry had a sore finger at the time and asked Rod to do it. Or perhaps Barry was just lazy and asked Rod to take his dictation.

But none of these guesses seemed right. One thing, however, was certain, the two odd notes were written by some one other than Barry Wayne.

On the other notes, that Barry had assuredly written, the capitals were not very heavy.

Laying them face down and running his finger-tips over them, Stone could not feel every one, plainly, like Braille type. But in the two notes some o’s and c’s were banged so hard they cut little circles out of the page.

Surely this was the work of other finger-tips than those which wrote the smooth, even lines of the other notes.

Here was something to ponder over. Locking the typewriter and all his papers in a small cupboard, Stone went down stairs and found Dan Wayne sitting on the front verandah, poring over the Marchesa book.

“What’s the charm of that book?” the detective asked; “you all seem to delight in it. Is it amusing?”

“Oh, no. It’s a well-written account of the Malay Archipelago. You know, Mr Stone, you will never find Barry’s murderer.”

“Perhaps not; but I am by no means sure you are right as to

that.”

“Take your time about it, sir. Leave no clue unexplained. Stick to it until you succeed or give up. But make all the haste compatible with good work.”

Stone saw fit to change the subject.

“If you go to the East Indies, shall you stay long or merely cruise?”

“That will be largely as Pat says. I want to go to a few places, and for the rest, I don’t care much what we do. It will be a painful trip, because we intended going with Barry. But Pat and I both want to go, and I think we shall. I want to see the Liu-kiu Islands again, they are so beautiful. Soft, warm tropical nights, a sighing breeze wafting in from the hills, a moon, such as never was on sea or land, delicious scents of spicy vegetation and—” he paused.

“And a slender, tender, little wisp of brown-skinned, doe-eyed humanity,” Stone supplemented, with a smile.

“Yes,” Dan said, frankly, “the Liu-kiuan girls are very lovely; not human, you know, just visions, wraiths of beauty and gentleness.”

“Well, well, to think our Dan was a poet all this time and nobody knew it!” Steve Holt came along, laughing. “Oh, it’s all right, Dan, I wish I had your flow of langwitch when interested in a subject. I believe I’ll go on your cruise, after all; and get a glimpse of these Liu-kiuan belles.”

“You’re invited, Steve, if, when and as it comes off. What about Jane?”

“Have to think her over. No hurry, I suppose.”

“No; we’re doing no planning yet.”

Dan rose and walked away from the group and Stone went to his rooms and sought out the list young Peter had given him.

A list of the places from which somebody in the old Stag At Bay Inn had received letters.

Yes, it was there! Liu-kiu. A blind alley, perhaps, but Stone knew he must go up it.

He started at once for the home of Ming’s nephew.

Young Peter welcomed him gladly and willingly brought out his file of stamps that included those of the Liu-kiu Islands. Those that he had were of a design used about fifteen years ago; Stone had looked up the matter of East Indian stamps.

They gave him little information except that some one in the house was probably receiving letters from Liu-kiu at that time or later.

But he asked to borrow them from the boy, saying he would return them soon and unharmed.

Fleming Stone had been at Lang Syne nearly a fortnight and so far he felt he had made little progress.

Never had a case seemed so baffling, so devoid of definite clues or so lacking in indicative details.

Now he had proofs that letters came to some member of the Wayne family ten or fifteen years ago. Yet how could it be otherwise? The brothers had sailed on their cruise in the Malay Islands some twenty-five or more years ago. Doubtless they made many friends, who wrote to them afterward. And too, then as now, they wrote for and received the curios and dealers' catalogues.

Still, he felt certain that in those communications, somehow, some way, lay the link he was seeking.

He had heard vague rumors of a man seen now and then about the town, especially among the foreign element.

'Kiah reported on him once, saying he was a Lascar.

"What is a Lascar?" Stone asked him.

But 'Kiah declared he had no idea, only somebody told him the stranger was a Lascar.

Nothing more was heard of the man, until, the day after Barry's death, he was said to have been seen.

But all efforts to verify this statement were futile, and the Lascar was forgotten.

Looking backward over the chain of events from the day he first stepped into this case, Stone remembered the sailor who had stayed with him on Barry's yacht, when the mate went

back to the Sound steamer to make his report.

In a flash, he knew why this ignorant tar had been recalled to his memory. At the time, Stone had been looking over the Marchesa book, that he had recently brought from the yacht, and the family had all become interested in it.

When he was carelessly looking over it on the yacht, the sailor, whose name he had learned was Zeb, had glanced over his shoulder, and had remarked, pointing to one of the maps, “I’ve been there.”

Stone had paid no attention to the statement, nor did he think now it could mean much, but he was not going to let any opportunity slip.

He went down to the village post-office, and there, in a closed booth, called up the Steamship Line on which he was travelling when he learned of the fate of Barry Wayne.

The line was closed down for the winter now, but one of the men in the office agreed to listen to his wants.

Stone reminded him of the morning on which their steamer *Nokomis* had to stop in her course, because of the discovery of a derelict yacht.

The man recalled the incident, of course, but said he knew nothing more about it than he had read in the papers.

Stone told him politely that that was not what his inquiry was about. He merely wanted to know the name and address of one of the crew, who was called Zeb, and who doubtless was

conspicuous because of his being left on the yacht alone with Fleming Stone.

This brought a ready response, although the man's address was usually temporary. At present it was in a Sailors' Home, and if not there now, they could give word of him.

After much patience and many inexplicable delays, Stone finally succeeded in hearing the voice of the uncultured Zeb, on the telephone.

"Hello, are you the one that was on that yacht with me, a playin' detective games about wot was on the table?"

"The same," Stone told him. "Are you at leisure?"

"Where's that? I'm at a sailors' stoppin' place in N'York."

"Well, can you take a run up to Nantucket?"

"To see you, sir?"

"Yes."

"Betcher life. When do you want I should arrive?"

"As soon as possible."

"Termorrer mornin' then?"

"Yes; that will be fine. But, I say, Zeb, don't come to Nantucket, either. Meet me at New London. At the Coast Guard Station. Tell them you're there to meet me."

“Aye, aye, sir. Anythin’ more?”

“Not now. Good by.”

“Goo’ by, sir.”

A wild goose chase, Stone told himself it was. What could that old sailor know about it? Was it supposable that the Waynes’ cruise was the only one that ever went to Formosa? Then he remembered that Zeb was a detective, or thought he was, and Stone was glad he had sent for him. Not to be of help in detective work, but on the chance that if he had known the Waynes in the Orient he had taken notice of their ways and doings in general.

At any rate, he was in for it now, and he was glad he was.

Mr Demarest would welcome him, and would let him have a room to himself in which to receive his guest.

And it all turned out as Stone had hoped. Next morning he had a conference with the sailor.

The U. S. Attorney wasn’t there, but he had left full directions for Stone’s reception.

Stone closed and locked the door, and then turned to Zeb.

He had already learned that the man’s name was Turner, but he continued to use the familiar Zeb.

“Still doing detective work?” Stone asked, smiling.

“Yes, sir; are you?”

There was no hint of familiarity in the tone, and Stone merely nodded his head.

“Now, look here, Zeb,” he began, “I want to go fast. So just answer questions, please.”

The roughened old face beamed assent, and Stone went on.

“Here are some maps of the East. You told me you had been there. Show me just where.”

Zeb’s big forefinger indicated Formosa, Kamtchatka, New Guinea and Borneo, then with a comprehensive sweep of his hand he said:

“I bin all over ’em. I visited some, lived quite a spell in some, but most all these heathen, outlandish places I’ve been through, anyway.”

“And you told me when we talked together last that you knew some American tourists there. Just where were they, when you knew them?”

“I didn’t to say know ’em, I just heard about ’em and saw ’em now and then.”

“What was the name?”

“Blamed if I can ’member. Wynne, mebbe.”

“Or Wayne?”

“That’s right, Wayne. Two brothers, they was, Dan and Pat.”

“Haven’t you read about them in the papers, lately?”

“Naw, I don’t read papers. But it all comes back to me, now. Dan, he stayed at Liu-kiu while Pat went cruisin’ about.”

“What were you doing down there?”

“Me? Oh, I jest got a chance to go on a fruit boat, and I went.”

“And you knew these Wayne brothers?”

“Not to know ’em, you onderstand, but I knew who they was and what they was doin’.”

“What were they doing?”

Zeb grinned broadly.

“You really want to know, sir? Well, they was mostly a makin’ love to the chocolate ladies. That’s what they called the gay girls down there.”

“They explored, and climbed the mountains, and took snapshots and all that, I suppose?”

“Oh, yes, but they spent a lot of time a lallygaggin’. Say, off on a blue lagoon or little silver stream, floatin’ along under the trees on the bank, or dawdlin’ among the water-lilies. They jest let the happy days be theirs.”

“I see. Now, Zeb, all that was a long time ago.”

“Say like about twenty-five years.”

“Would you know either of those men to-day?”

“Spect not, sir. They musta changed a heap.”

“Well take a look at these photographs.”

He handed over half a dozen pictures, and Zeb said at once:

“O’course these is them. That’s Mr Dan, about ten years ago, and that’s him a bit later. Mr Pat’s is like him, too. Oh, yes, I recognize them all right.”

“After all these years!”

“Their real features don’t change much; jest their expression grows up.”

“You’ve hit it, their expression grows up. Now, Zeb, can’t you content yourself round Nantucket for a bit? Don’t you want to find some old cronies over there and live there for a week or two? I’ll pay your board.”

“Yes, Mr Stone, sir, I’d like it right down well. Shall I get myself over and get settled like and then find you?”

“All right, except that I’ll find you. Can you write?”

“Sorta. None too good. But you can make out my meanin’.”

“That’s enough. When you’re all fixed, write your address and seal it up. Then just address it Mr Stone and don’t mail it, give it to the postmaster at Sand Hill. He’ll do the rest. Make it snappy. Good day, Zeb.”

“Aye, aye, sir; snappy it is.”

The man departed and Stone, after a few words with the officers about, went back to Lang Syne.

He joined the party in the Common Room, just as tea was brought in. He was about to recount some of his experiences of the day, when ’Kiah came in with a strange expression half wonder, half fear.

“A queer man, Mr Wayne,” he said, addressing Dan. “Wants to see you.”

“What’s his name?”

“I can’t quite make it out, sir; sounds like Sam Wing.”

“Sounds like a Chinese laundryman, then,” said Steve Holt. “Have him in, Dan; just for fun.”

Dan nodded assent and bade ’Kiah show Mr Sam Wing in.

But the man hesitated. “You won’t like him, sir,” he said, half pleadingly. “Let me send him on his way.”

“Show him in,” said Dan, and Stone thought he saw a strange look come over his face.

So ’Kiah brought the young man, who was well-dressed, well-mannered, and, they all noticed with a gasp, who looked like Barry!

“Who are you?” said Dan, in a tense whisper, and the young man replied, “I am your son.”

CHAPTER XIII
Samfari

Having glanced once at the visitor, Fleming Stone looked quickly about to learn how the others were taking it.

Dan Wayne was staring at the young man who had made such a strange announcement. But he was looking at him with interest, with curiosity—even, it seemed to Stone, with eager expectancy. Could it be Dan knew something about this matter?

Pat Wayne's face showed sheer amazement, as did Vera's and those of the Holts.

But Dan Wayne handled the situation competently.

The young man who was making such an amazing claim was about Barry's height, also something of Barry's general build.

In spite of clear-cut features, his dark complexion gave him a foreign look, and a very slight tilt to his fine eyebrows had the effect of an Oriental. Yet, withal, there was an unmistakable resemblance to Barry Wayne, and Dan stared as if hypnotized at this mysterious stranger.

“Be seated,” he said, at last; “I shall, of course, need something beyond your unsupported word for your claim. Will you tell me further of the circumstances?”

“Before all these people?” and the young man sat down, carelessly, his query seeming rather a desire for information than a comment on the incident.

“Yes, I know of no reason for making a secret of your errand here. Go on with your explanation.”

“You spent a summer in the Malay Archipelago, many years ago. You remember?”

“Of course. I was there on a cruise. We visited many of the islands.”

“How long ago was this, Mr Wayne?”

“How long, Pat?” Dan turned to his brother.

“Nearly thirty years ago. About twenty-eight years.”

“That’s right,” said the young man. “And you, sir,” his eyes fastening themselves on Dan, “you fancied the Liu-kiu Islands, and stayed there a long while because of the charms of Avatcha, one of the beautiful native girls.”

Dan Wayne had forgotten the others present, he had eyes and ears only for that lad, that strange, yet familiar being, who looked at him with Barry’s eyes.

“Go on,” he said in a whisper. “Go on.”

But if Dan Wayne was enthralled at what he was hearing, Pat was even more so. He watched the man who looked like Barry, he glanced back and forth from his face to that of his brother. It was as if he was hearing a strange story that he could not believe.

Vera, who sat beside Pat, listened avidly. She couldn’t quite grasp the meaning of it all, but she sensed a great excitement and wondered what was going to happen.

Steve Holt showed no deep interest, but listened with a sort of forced politeness. As a matter of fact, he was very much interested, but he wished Jane were not in the room.

Jane herself was idly thinking of the possibilities of a flirtation with this romantic foreigner.

He was tall and lithe, graceful in all his movements, and with no sign of embarrassment or self-consciousness.

He was speaking again. “Yes,” he said, to Dan, “Avatcha charmed you as only a maid of the tropics can delight you cold, white people. But Avatcha was a good girl. You she loved, but would have none of you, unless you two were married. So, Mr Wayne, you two *were* married by a travelling missionary, and lived together much of the summer as man and wife. Of your union, I am the visible result. I am your son, born in lawful wedlock, and I am here to claim recognition and acknowledgment.”

“Tell me of yourself,” said Dan; “you have education,

manners—”

“Yes, my mother brought me up with carefulness. I have had schooling. I speak the English—you see.”

“I do see. Why are you named Sam?”

“My name is not Sam, as you know Sam. My mother named me Samfari, which is, in our language, The Morning Star. That was her fancy.”

“And Wing?”

Samfari looked troubled.

“That is a mistake,” he said; “I came here to look for you. But my mother gave me no written name. She said, just before she died, ‘Give Samfari over to Mr Wing.’ She meant Wayne, you see, but no one knew. I came here to seek for you and I have found you, my father. Is it not so?”

“I cannot say, lad. Your story may be true, partly true, or not true at all. But this I will do; I invite you to spend the night here, and the morning will bring counsel. Go now, you will be attended.”

Dan touched a button, and ’Kiah appeared, with admirable promptness.

“This is Mr Wing, ’Kiah,” Dan said, “he is my guest for a time. Put him in Mr Barry’s rooms, and see to it that he is provided with everything he may need.”

“Good night, sir,” said Samfari, “good night, all.” And bowing with his inimitable grace, he left the room.

Then, rising, Dan said:

“I am not ready to discuss this matter with you all. I will ask Pat and Mr Stone to come with me and we will say good night to you ladies, and to you, Steve.”

“Oh, let me string along with you,” and Holt looked disappointed. “I’m crazy to know more about it, and besides you know, Dan, I often give you good advice, though I admit you seldom take it.”

“You’ll know all there is to know, to-morrow, old man. It’s not a secret at all, but I am not yet ready to make my decision. Come along, Mr Stone.”

Pat followed them both, though wistfully looking back at Vera as if wanting her with him.

Dan took them to his sitting-room, and began at once. He was fairly quivering with excitement and his eyes shone as he offered Stone a seat and took one himself.

Pat sat down, too, and he said the first word:

“Dan, is all this a true bill?”

“You ought to know, Pat, you were there with me.”

“But I wasn’t with you all the time, Dan. In the summer, you know, it was so warm you settled down at that beautiful little

place in the inner harbor of Napha-kiang, and I went back and forth cruising when and where my fancy led me. It was an ideal country, Mr Stone.”

“Oh, it was,” and Dan’s enthusiasm broke loose. “The water there is very shallow, and we could drift lazily over the clear, still surface and see below us the beauties of coral land, colored, soft-toned coral, that is seen only in the tropics. Then all suddenly, you leave the water for a large, thickly wooded island, its foliage as luxuriant as can be imagined.

“Then you are in an Eden, a real Paradise, truly Japanese, but with its grotesqueness toned down, because of being six degrees of latitude farther south.”

“You are thinking of the night of the sunset dance,” said Pat, now turning reminiscent himself. “That is a sort of festal religious ceremonial, performed when the sun drops below the horizon. Standing on the highest summit facing the west, the figures are seen in a golden framed silhouette, waving their arms and dancing an adieu to the day.

“Musicians play on their weird, snakeskin guitars, and singers chant the strange but not unpleasing discords of Liu-kiuan songs.”

“Eerie,” said Dan; “we float along, half unconscious under the spell of the strange music. Of all the scenes of happiness vividly impressed on my memory, I can recall none more magically beautiful than the Liu-kiuan Sunset Dance in the Napha-kiang harbor.”

“I’m with you,” said Pat, and for a moment the brothers

forgot all else in their memories of the Orient.

“And now,” Pat began, but in a tone of personal interest rather than critical comment, “who or why or which or what is our young adventurer, Samfari?”

“I am under the impression,” and now Dan spoke a bit diffidently, “that he may be my son, as he says. But not born in holy wedlock, and not as he says, a son of Avatcha. She was a beautiful girl, but I only saw her a few times. You knew her, Pat?”

“Slightly, about as you did. We may as well confess, Mr Stone, that life in the Liu-kiuan Islands is by no means a formal affair. It’s more a case of ‘a little sigh, a little quiver, and fly not yet upon the river.’ I haven’t quoted that quite right, but those upon the river were quite likely to ‘fly not yet.’”

Stone smiled; “I suppose any river would do as well,” he said.

“No, not as well, but well enough.” Dan gave himself a shake like a big dog settling down, and said to the detective:

“Here’s where you come in, Mr Stone. Can’t you find out for me whether this young man is really my son, and if not, whether he is of good antecedents? For, in that case I have a notion to adopt him.”

“What?” cried a very amazed Pat, and Fleming Stone looked an equal surprise. “Adopt him?” Pat went on. “Dan, are you crazy? What do you mean?”

“I’m not crazy at all, and I mean just this. Neither of you men know how hard I am taking Barry’s death. Even if Mr Stone concludes his quest and finds out the truth about the murder, that won’t give my boy back to me. Barry was my all in all. I loved him beyond words, and now, each day becomes harder to bear because of his absence. If therefore this is my son—illegitimate, I confess, for I never went through any silly ceremony before a faked parson—I want to adopt him, and give him the life Barry would have led. I want to adopt him, legally and absolutely, so that in the eyes of the law he will be my actual son. If he is really that, so much the better. But what I do not want is to stir up a lot of women down there in the tropics, who will each claim to be his mother. I know the greed and rapacity of those women, and whoever his mother was she must now be an old harridan. They age very young in those countries, and I do not want the erstwhile lovely creature that was my son’s mother around me now, in her present condition and appearance. They are an ignorant, stupid lot, and are better let alone. Isn’t that right, Pat?”

“Yes, Dan, it sure is. Just wait a bit till I get over my going queer in this way, and I’ll get my wits together.”

“Hush your nonsense! I’ll bet no man ever went to Liu-kiu without falling down before those ravishing, dusky women, those soft, smiling love-girls. But, here’s the point, Mr Stone. If adopting this chap, and mind you, I don’t propose to do it without giving him a lengthy trial, means one or a dozen Liu-kiuan females rushing up here and claiming Samfari’s maternity, the deal is off. One claimant for the position of mother, and away with Sam Wing!”

“He said his mother was dead,” reminded Stone.

“That’s nothing. She may be round the corner of the house now, listening to us.”

“You’re asking me, I gather, Mr Dan, to trace the antecedents of this Wing chap for you. Hasn’t it struck you that I’m already on a job for you? I can’t do the murder investigation and the quest of antecedents at one and the same time. Which will you have first?”

“The finding of the murderer,” said Dan, quickly. “That must be done to avenge my boy, my real son, Barry. Then if I take over Samfari, as I am more and more inclined to do, that will be a separate and quite different affair. But the murder quest first—oh, yes, by all means, the murder quest first.”

“Very well,” said Stone; “and what about your young guest, in the meantime?”

“I shall keep him here on approval,” said Dan, very seriously. “Perhaps he will not want to be adopted—”

“You go slow on that adoption business,” said Pat, looking anxious. “This isn’t like you, Dan, to fly off the handle . . .”

“Oh, I haven’t flown off the handle. To tell the truth, Pat, I thought you’d fall in with my plan. We both loved Barry, and here is a second Barry, ready made for us. However, I shall consider well before making any decision. You can’t doubt the chap is my son; he looks so like Barry, and save for that Oriental touch about his eyes and brow, and his dark skin, he does not look like a foreigner. But he must wait—wait for Mr

Stone's further disclosures and wait until I give him a fair trial in my home."

"I think, you're planning right, Dan," his brother said; "I only want to warn you against undue haste, which I have never seen you show before. But if you wait a time before deciding, you will make no mistake, of that I am sure. And if you adopt the lad, I shall know that you feel he is your own, and I shall certainly raise no objection. He can never take Barry's place in my heart, nor in yours, either—I know that. But he can be a substitute, and we may learn to love him."

"Has it occurred to either of you," Stone asked, "that there may be some connection between your son's death and Mr Wing's presence here? You know he was here before Barry died, and I have heard more or less mention of a foreigner who asked questions about the Waynes."

"Yes, I thought about that," Pat said; "but Samfari doesn't seem to me to be a wrong-doer. I admit I am judging him on very short acquaintance. Why did you put him in Barry's rooms, Dan?"

"To get his reactions. Unless he has enough innate gentility to live up to our standards, I'm not sure I want him around. I shall, of course, provide for him, but I need not have him here unless I choose."

"That's right," and Pat nodded at his brother. "Make up your mind carefully, and don't rush matters. I'll stand by any decision you may make, but think over it well first."

"I certainly shall, old boy," and Dan gave him an affectionate

smile. “We’ve never had a serious disagreement yet, and I don’t believe we ever will.”

“Then, I think there’s little room for further discussion to-night,” Stone said; “and, do you two mind if I talk to young Wing alone? Would you rather I shouldn’t?”

“Oh, certainly, do,” said Dan; “I want you to find out all you can about the boy. He seems to me sincere, but I’d be glad of a sound outside opinion. Do whatever you like, Mr Stone, in the matter of investigation.”

They separated then, and if the brothers talked far into the night, it is quite likely that Fleming Stone sat up later still, musing over his problems.

Next morning brought him the expected letter from Zeb.

This somewhat odd friend of his announced that he had found a rooftree at Sand Hill, not far from the Wayne place, but on another road. Stone could come to see him if he chose, or Zeb would keep any appointment.

Stone read this letter at the breakfast table, being the first one to sit there.

In a moment, young Wing came in.

“Don’t let me interrupt you, sir,” he said, as Stone laid his mail aside.

“My letters will keep. I’d like a chat with you, Mr Wing, at your convenience; later in the day, perhaps?”

“Yes, indeed. I want to talk with you. You are a detective?”

“Yes; in charge of the yacht murder case. You know of it?”

“Only what I’ve read in the papers or heard in the village.”

Just then Vera came into the room. It was her habit to breakfast in her own rooms, but curiosity impelled her downstairs this morning.

She nodded to Stone, then turning to the other, she gave him one of her best smiles, and said, “Tell me what I am to call you, then I can give you a morning greeting.”

“Let me be Samfari to the household,” was the reply; “I fear I do not yet know my right name.”

The Wayne brothers appeared then, and with a word of excuse, Stone left the table and went out of the room.

He stood a few moments, gazing out on the blue water.

To him came Ming.

“Oh, Mr Stone,” she said, in a terrified voice, “what am I to do? They’ve put the Lascar in Barry’s rooms! Bangs says they’re going to keep him here, but I don’t believe that. Do you think Mr Dan is all right? I mean, he hasn’t lost his mind or anything? I saw him a moment just now, and he was looking like he was plumb daft, and yet he had a happy little smile at the corners of his mouth—a queer little smile that I’d prefer not to see there. What am I to do, Mr Stone? Tell me.”

“I’m not sure, Mrs Mingle, that there is anything special for you to do. If there is, surely Mr Wayne will tell you.”

She turned reproachful eyes on Stone, in which tears gathered, spilled over and ran down her cheeks.

“Oh, Mr Stone, oh, don’t you go back on me! Oh, sir, don’t!”

“I go back on you! Why, what do you mean?”

“Why, just now you called me Mrs Mingle, like I was a strange and unpleasant person you’d never seen before and hoped ne’er to see again.”

“What are you talking about? Oh, you mean I should have called you Ming! That it?”

“Yes, sir, that’s it. All my folks do, and you say it so nice, like. I’d prefer not to have you call me Mrs Mingle, sir.”

“All right, Ming. Just as you say. Now, don’t bother about the new young man. You’ll soon come to like him, I shouldn’t wonder.”

“But—I don’t know . . . I don’t know anything!”

“Perhaps you’re lucky at that. Well, don’t act until you do know something. That will be soon enough. I’m going out for a while, Ming, if anybody asks you; if not, don’t volunteer the information.”

“No, sir; yes, sir. Very good, sir.”

Stone laughed at her bewilderment and went his way.

His way took him, after a time, to an old, but rather picturesque farmhouse.

It was nothing to rave over from an antique point of view, it was not even of a New England type, but somehow it was attractive. Perhaps because of a clambering rosebush that straggled up its old weather-beaten sides, and to which Zeb gave a caressing pat as he came out of the door.

“G’mornin’, Mr Stone,” he said, cordially, “let’s take a step along,” and he guided his caller down a side path.

“Good morning, Zeb, and I wish you’d tell me your full name. I’m a lot bothered of late by people with lacking cognomens.”

“Meanin’ the Lascar, I take it.”

“I’d forgotten your mind-reading powers, old chap, but you’re right. However, tell me your own name first—all of it.”

“Can’t do it, Mr Stone. I’m free to confess I don’t know it.”

“That is a confession. Well, how much of it do you know?”

“Zeb, that’s all. You see, I was what they call a waif an’ a stray. Picked up somewhur, and stuffed into an asylum. But never mind about me, what about the young heathen?”

“What do you know, yourself?”

“Less’n you do, I reckon. You’ve seen him?”

“Yes.”

“Does he look like Barry Wayne?”

“Well, Zeb, as you know, you and I saw Barry Wayne only after he was dead and had been dead some time.”

“Yes, sir, I know all that, but does this new feller look like him?”

“I think I shall have to say he does.”

“Thought so. Then we can take it, I’ll say, that he is a Wayne. How does he seem?”

“Seem?”

“Yes, seem. Like a gentleman, a good man or a savage?”

“He has gentlemanly manners, very much so, but not overdone. He has *savoir faire*, that is, he isn’t easily got, you understand that better?”

“Much better. Stuck on himself?”

“Not at all. Yet not unduly modest.”

“You’re makin’ him out quite a feller.”

They had strolled across the bit of lawn, and had entered a small piece of woods. Zeb had motioned to a

fallen tree trunk, and there they sat, both thinking deeply of Samfari Wing.

“I think, Zeb, he is quite a feller, but I don’t know. I can find out more about him, as he is to stay at the house for a time . . .”

“Hey, what’s that? Goin’ to stay at Lang Syne, as they call it?”

“Yes, for a while . . .”

“Then he’ll stay for all. I know that Wayne chap, not awful well, but some well. And if he starts a thing he’ll carry it through, in face of fire and water and the Day o’ Judgment.”

“How do you come to know him so well?”

“Don’t know him at all. But you sez find out, and I’m a-findin’.”

“Good for you. So Mr Dan Wayne is a determined sort, is he?”

“Who said anythin’ about Dan Wayne? I’m referrin’ to Pat.”

“What has Pat to do with the Conquering Hero who has just walked in?”

“Now let’s get this straight. I heard last night that a what-do-you-call it?—claimant?—has arrived who says Pat Wayne is his illegitimate father.”

“Well, whoever told you that, told you all wrong. I was there, in person, and the Malayan visitor announced that he was the son of Dan Wayne, and born in holy wedlock, saying his mother was the beautiful and far-famed Avatcha.”

Zeb stared.

“Holy smoke!” he observed. “Avatcha? I knew her right well. She never took up holy wedlock with anybody. Mark that, Mr Stone. Don’t forget, I was down there in them regions at the very times you’re a speakin’ of. I was.”

“Then you must tell me all about it. Do you mean that the boy that looks like Barry Wayne is the son of Patrick Wayne?”

“Oh, I don’t rightly mean that. Leastways, I don’t know that. But you leave that lay for the time bein’. I’ll advise you as to that later. You tell me more about them two brothers. Do they look alike?”

“No, not very much. What you might call a family resemblance. The young man, who claims Dan Wayne as his father, looks much like Barry, and a little like Dan. But not at all like Pat.”

“He’s educated?”

“Well. Speaks remarkably good English. Has easy but correct manners. You can’t help liking him—but there is something . . .”

“The Eurasian in him. Well, I guess I’ll have to see him. How shall we bring that about?”

“I’ll bring him over here, if that suits you. Do you think you’ve ever seen him?”

“Dunno. Er, yes, I think so, but I’m not sure. If it’s the guy I think it is, I know him.”

“When were you last in the East Indies?”

“Seven years back. But that won’t matter, I can tell him.”

CHAPTER XIV
Zeb to the Fore

Fleming Stone went slowly back to Lang Syne. He had learned a lot from Zeb, but not the principal things he wanted to know. He began to think that Dan Wayne's living son might prove a greater problem than his dead son.

However, Dan had told him to go ahead with his investigation of the murder case, before taking up the adoption matter.

Stone was surprised at the sudden and definite stand Dan had made regarding the stranger. To be sure the resemblance of Samfari to Dan was striking as was also the resemblance of the Oriental to Barry, as Stone could see from Barry's photographs. Yet Barry was dead, and, before his father had discovered and convicted his murderer, he was planning to adopt a new son. Still, Stone knew that this was not in any way forgetfulness of Barry, but acknowledgment of Samfari's relationship and recognition of his rights.

There was a queer streak in this Wayne family, Stone concluded; and then, in all fairness, he admitted that Dan was merely carrying out his own code of moral

obligation, and giving a birthright to his own offspring.

Well, his business at present was to learn who was responsible for the two deaths on the yacht, and he wondered if this new interest would prove a help or a hindrance.

Reaching the old Inn, Stone found Samfari on the broad front verandah entertaining Vera and the two Holts. The Wayne brothers were not present, but the young man seemed perfectly at home in his new environment. He was garbed in white flannels, which had been a part of Barry's wardrobe, but which fitted Samfari decently enough.

He was telling Vera and Jane of some of his college escapades, and kept them laughing, but Steve Holt looked on with disapproval.

He wanted to take his daughter away from this house, away from the atmosphere of mystery and crime that pervaded it, and which was now amplified by the appearance and acceptance of this stranger.

Stone wondered a little, and not for the first time, whether Samfari was in reality the simple, guileless youth he seemed.

But as he joined the group, and the young man greeted him in his pleasant, cordial manner, the detective couldn't help feeling that this nature was sincere, and perhaps Dan Wayne was right in taking his son to himself.

"Samfari," Stone said, and his manner of speaking the word had a tang of the Malaysian dialect not at all unpleasing, "you promised me an hour of your company this

morning. Shall we go for a small walk or would you prefer indoors?”

“Oh, let’s walk,” and Samfari rose, and with courteous speech excused himself from the group on the porch.

Hatless and smiling, he joined Stone and they went off together.

They walked a few moments in silence, and then the younger man said, in a matter-of-fact way: “What is it you want to ask me?”

“The main issues of your appearance here,” Stone said, calmly. “I hope you will be frank and truthful in what you tell me, and if I ask anything you don’t want to tell me, just say so.”

“Very well, sir, I agree to all that. Carry on.”

“When did you first arrive on Nantucket Island?”

“About a month ago.”

“What did you come here for?”

“To seek out my father, and learn if he was willing to acknowledge me.”

“Why, then, did you not address Mr Wayne sooner?”

“Because,” Samfari looked very serious, “I found he had a well-beloved son, to whom he was a most devoted father, and

I hesitated to interfere.”

“Is that the strict truth?”

“Yes, Mr Stone, it is. Unknown to the Waynes, I watched them, I saw their home and family life, I saw how the two brothers loved young Barry, and I felt that I should not get a welcome from Mr Dan Wayne, although I am his son.”

“And you found it easier to make this approach after young Barry was dead?”

“Of course; can you not see that for yourself?”

“Yes. Strange, was it not, that Barry should be removed so opportunely?”

“Already, in your heart, you are suspecting that I killed him. I did not, Mr Stone. I felt no temptation to do such a thing. Had it not been for Barry, had I found my father childless and lonely, I would have gone to him with my story. But with a splendid son in his home, he did not need me and probably would not want me.”

“I take it, Samfari, you were acting entirely by yourself, not advised by any one?”

“You are right, Mr Stone, I acted alone.”

“You came here from Formosa?”

“Oh, no. I have not been to Formosa in seven years. I have

been in Tokio at the University. You know, our government grants scholarships to such as earn them. I worked hard and won a scholarship, then I went to college. I have an education, such as I desired.”

“And where did you get the money to pay for all this? Even though you were given a scholarship, there are many consequent expenses.”

“Indeed there are, Mr Stone, as no one knows better than I. But I have never wanted for money—”

“No? How is that?”

“Always it was given to me, in plenty, by the Treasure Man in Formosa. It is done that way.”

“I don’t understand. Who is the Treasure Man, and why did he give you money?”

“I think I mean Treasury Man. But at the Bank, in Taihoku, I get all the money I ask for, whenever I will. This money is placed there from time to time by my father, for my upbringing. Do you now understand?”

“Not altogether, no. You mean, Mr Wayne sent money regularly to his Formosan bankers, for your support?”

“I suppose so. I do not know entirely, myself. But this I am sure of: Mr Wayne is my father, one would know that to look at us. No?”

“Assuredly, yes. You are very like him. I mean Mr Dan.”

“But it was Mr Pat Wayne who always sent the money.”

“Are you sure of that?”

“Mr Stone, I am sure of nothing. But I know that the year after I was born, Mr Dan Wayne married, here in his home place, and another year, and he fathered a son, the Barry of whom we know. I was eight years old when my mother died, but she told me to remember always that my father was named Dan not Pat.”

“Was your mother the beautiful Avatcha?”

“My mother’s name was Avatcha. But she was not the famous beauty of that name. There are many women named Avatcha in the Formosan country.”

“All this you are telling me, Samfari, is, then, hearsay, since you have grown up? You remember nothing of importance at eight years of age.”

“True, sir. That is why, when I did begin to brood over these things, I knew not whether my father was one or the other of the Wayne brothers. For I could not be sure if my mother had said to me, ‘Dan, not Pat,’—or, ‘Pat, not Dan.’”

“It meant little to you at the time of her death, I suppose. And who cared for you, then?”

“Many relatives. I was foisted from one aunt or uncle to another. Because I could draw money from the Banking House, I was sought after. I grew up with a great desire for knowledge and education, and as soon as I could, I began to

work for the scholarship, and I achieved it.”

“Why work for it? Why not draw money from your Bank for your college career?”

“But so much more the honor to win it. And, too, I knew not when, perchance, the Bank money might cease to come. I read much of American matters, and I feared for my sustenance. Yet I came through all right. The main trouble was, nobody knew anything—nobody could tell me anything. The Banking Man said the money came from my father, but he would tell me nothing more. I thought I heard him say Wing, as my father’s name, but I see now he must have said Wayne. It is all very mysterious. Now, Mr Stone, won’t you advise me what to do?”

“You surely need advice. But not a layman’s. What you want is a first-class lawyer, and yet, if Dan Wayne is your father, and is also adopting you, legally, what do you want of any other information?”

“Then you think I need do nothing?”

“I don’t see what you can do. It’s all up to Daniel Wayne. Now, Samfari, I want you to walk a little farther. Are you willing to talk to a common seaman, who may know more about your people than you know yourself?”

“I am willing to talk to any one you wish me to. I have every confidence in you, Mr Stone, and I don’t know why you are so kindly disposed toward me.”

“I am in your father’s employ, just now, and it is my duty to

attend to any matter that affects him. Beside, I have taken a liking to you, and I am interested in your welfare. I'm wondering if I can trust you. You are pretty clever and keen-witted."

"It would be of small use to insist on my trustworthiness, sir. Should I do that, you would be justified in thinking me a fraud. I think you must judge for yourself."

"Well answered. Now, here we are at Zeb's place. I have been here before, to-day. Take no initiative. Let him do the talking."

Zeb appeared, and instead of inviting them in, he led the way again to the little wooded ground where he had talked with Stone an hour or so before.

The three sat on the fallen logs and Zeb gave Samfari a long look.

"Dan Wayne to the life," he said. "More of Pat's disposition, I expect, but Dan's features, and Barry's, too."

Skilfully, then, Zeb drew from him much the same story he had just told to Stone.

"I was there," Zeb said; "I was there the summer the Waynes were there. I remember the two brothers, wild young fellows they were. Not wild, maybe, so much as adventurous. Eager to see everything, to do everything. And swift with the girls. Pat more than Dan thataway, but in the tropics much was forgiven that would be berated in the North. And you've been here about Nantucket for a few weeks or so, incog., as they

say?”

“Yes, Zeb,” said Samfari, using the name as Stone had told him to, “I saw my half-brother several times. I was on his yacht the morning of the day he died.”

“What for?” asked Stone, quietly.

“I was going to make myself known to him. But he wasn’t there, so I came away without seeing him.”

“Why didn’t you wait, with such an important mission?”

“Because I found out it was a holiday, and I knew Barry wouldn’t want to be bothered with my errand when he was on a pleasure trip.”

“You fancied he was going to resent your existence, perhaps,” suggested Stone.

“Not only that, but it was not the right moment. I wish I had stayed, I might have helped him fight off his assailant.”

“You assume, then, that there was an assailant?” This from Zeb, whose small, pale blue eyes peered into Samfari’s face.

“How else could Barry get that great smash to his head?” and Samfari’s face showed simple wonder.

“Can you think of no other way it might have occurred?” Stone inquired, looking at him steadily, but the Formosan shook his head.

“Can you, Mr Stone?” Zeb asked, with a sudden jerk toward the detective.

“Why, yes; but thinking of things is of small use unless we can prove them. I daresay, Samfari, you heard more or less gossip in the town. Did you hear suspicions cast here and there?”

“No, except now and then an opinion that there had been a marauder, an evil-minded scoundrel, who came to the yacht, and smashed Barry. Then, having been seen by the other man, he killed him for his own safety. But, if the gentleman died from poison, I scarcely see how it could have been arranged.”

“Yes, Samfari,” Stone said, “it could have been arranged, and was arranged. The question is who did the arranging?”

“Mr Stone,” Zeb said, his sailor-blue eyes fixed upon the detective’s face, “you know that self-starter thing young Wayne was building onto his motor-engine, and it stuck out, like a stick?”

“A sort of starting mechanism, yes, Zeb. It is a new invention, different from any ever seen before. I believe Mr Campion is going to carry on with it.”

“Mebbe he’s at it now, then; for that there stick is gone.”

“Gone from the apparatus entirely? Are you sure, Zeb?”

“Yessir, I’m sure. I was over there yesterday, and I saw . . .”

“Did they let you go on the yacht?”

“Oh, yes, sir; I can worm my way into anything that rides the water. I’m a gallant tar, you know.”

“I know you are, and you’ve saved me a trip over there by telling me that gadget isn’t there any more. Shall we assume the murderer took it away?”

“I wouldn’t be too sure as to that, sir. Why not mebbe the experts a-lookin’ over the boat decided them gadgets didn’t look good, so unfinished and all?”

“That might be. Anyway, you say they’re gone. Leave any marks?”

“Not a trace, sir.”

“All right, Zeb. I’m taking your word for this, a thing I’d do with mighty few people. I usually have to see things for myself.”

“Yes, sir. And another thing, Mr Stone, it was that young Campion chap who took the stuff away.”

“The unfinished starting invention?”

“Yes, one of the sailor fellers told me. There was another gentleman with him, but Mr Campion unfastened the affair and took it home.”

“Zeb, you’re a prize! And who was the gentleman with Mr Campion?”

“I don’t know, Mr Stone. Should I’ve-a asked?”

“You should’ve indeed. So find out, Zeb. Not in a loud voice, but in a mere whisper, learn the name of Mr Campion’s companion on the yacht, and let me know as soon as convenient. Can you get on it again, and no questions asked?”

“Oh, yes, I’ll manage it. And what are you doing now, Mr Samfari?”

“Waiting. If Mr Dan decides to adopt me legally, I shall live with him, of course. If not, I’ve no idea what will happen to me.”

“He’ll look out for you,” Stone said; “don’t worry till you have to. Zeb, you know what a Korowaar is?”

“I do indeed, sir. And hateful looking old images they be. Why?”

“Do you, Samfari?”

“Of course, sir. I come from their country. But I cannot say I believe in them, Mr Stone. Do you?”

“No, I’ve no leanings toward the occult. But Ming does. I think she fully expects that one she has to tell her who killed Barry and Mr Van Zandt. She says he will talk, or he will tell her in a dream. I don’t take much stock in dreams, but if the bug-a-boo speaks, I’d like to hear him.”

“They seldom speak, Mr Stone,” Samfari informed, “but often messages are sent by them.”

“From whom or from where?”

“I suppose from the regions the soul inhabits after death. You know the Korowaar is merely an earthly resting-place for the spirit of a dead man. I assume Ming considers the one she has the earthly temple of Barry Wayne.”

“Yes,” said Stone, “that is her belief. The Wayne men gave her the image, and she accepted it, legend and all.”

“It is not to be scorned,” Samfari said; “the legend is a true one. I have often known it to be proved.”

“You must tell us about it, sometime,” Stone said; “both Zeb and I would like to hear it. But now, we must be going back; I only borrowed this youth for an hour. They all like him at the house, and I feel sure his future is assured.”

“Probably,” assented Zeb. “But there’s a snag yet; I’m told that the astute and keen-sighted Inspector, here-abouts, has come to a part-way conclusion that Mr Samfari Wing is the suspect for him.”

“Cox!” exclaimed Fleming Stone, “why, he never said a word to me about it.”

“He will, though. He’s jest a waitin’ to be a bit surer. Folks hafto be pretty much certain afore they tell things to Mr Fleming Stone.”

“Yes, it’s wiser so,” Stone agreed, calmly.

And then Samfari said, with a hesitant manner, “If I were a little more certain, I could tell Mr Stone something. But I’d better wait.”

“No,” said Stone, “don’t wait. In your case it is far better to tell me at once, for you haven’t enough knowledge of the details of the murders to judge for yourself. Take my advice, Sam, and tell what you know.”

“That’s the trouble, Mr Stone, I don’t really know anything. But last night, or, rather, early this morning, I heard, or thought I heard, the faintest whisper that sort of wafted through the room. Not at all like a human voice, but like a . . .”

“Radio,” put in Zeb, practically.

“No,” and Samfari looked worried and anxious, “not like that either. More like a voice from the dead.”

“That’s your imagination, Samfari,” and Stone spoke briskly and with decision. “Don’t give way to it. It will make trouble for you, if you do. Forget dead people, forget the crimes on the yacht, and only try to act and behave as your father, Dan Wayne, would wish you to. You have in your power to make him love you, respect you, and take you for his own son. Don’t trifle with this good fortune that has come to you. Perhaps you are his own son, perhaps not. But in either case, you will have that relation legally, and you must not jeopardize your chances.”

“And I will do so, you think, sir, if I give way to my belief that the whisper I heard was a supernatural voice?”

“I do think so, at least to a degree. But what did this voice say, when it whispered?”

“Only one word—Korowaar . . . and again, Korowaar . . . that’s all.”

“And enough,” said Zeb. “I don’t like this, Mr Stone. Most superstitions of various religions or beliefs are only rubbish. But the Malayan Korowaar is a serious matter and not to be taken lightly.”

Samfari gave Zeb a frightened look.

“I don’t want you to think me a coward, Mr Stone,” Samfari said, hesitantly, “but to live in a heathen country, where belief in this superstition is universal, and never have any personal experience with it, and then, to come up here to a Christian country, a land of practical hard-sensed inhabitants, and have a word from the spirit the first night I spend under my father’s roof . . . it is not explainable.”

“No, Sam, it isn’t,” and Stone looked at him kindly; “but can you not agree with me, for this first time, anyway, and admit it was imagination? You may have dreamed hearing the voice; it may have been a sound of the sea, which sometimes makes strange sounds; it may have been your overworked nerves causing imaginary voices; in any case, you cannot, you must not believe it was the voice of an idol of a heathen race! With your civilized education, your cultivated mind, you cannot, you dare not revert to savage beliefs.”

“No, I suppose not,” and Samfari looked vaguely uncertain about the subject.

“I say,” Zeb said, tensely, “you foller Mr Stone’s advice this time anyhow. You forgit it this once and if it happens again,

we’ll reopen the topic. You sleep with your doors open?”

“Oh, no!” and Samfari looked amazed. “Never. I’ve slept in too many strange places to do that.”

“But Lang Syne is a home,” said Stone; “a civilized, hospitable home.”

“I know that, sir, but I have always locked my doors and windows, and always shall.”

“Then the room you slept in was securely fastened last night?”

“Yes, Mr Stone. I always carry with me small contrivances that lock the windows, if necessary. But in my room at Lang Syne there are adjustable appliances on the windows that made the use of mine unnecessary.”

“Nor will they ever be necessary there,” Stone said, smiling at the thought of his own suite, which he never locked.

Leaving Zeb, the two strolled back to Lang Syne, and found the porch deserted, so they went each to his own apartment.

Stone entered his parlor, and was glad to sit down quietly and finish the reading of his mail.

He had it nearly all docketed and filed, when Samfari came along the verandah and paused at Stone’s door.

“May I come in?” he said, so gravely that Stone answered yes, though he had intended to say no.

“You have some news?” the detective said, noting the excitement shown by his caller.

“Yes, sir. When I reached my rooms, I went in at the small foyer, which opens with a Yale key, and so is always locked from the outside. I went to my bureau—dresser, you call it?—and there, under an ash-tray, I found a note. Here it is.”

He sat down, after handing Stone a paper.

Samfari was quivering with very evident fear, but he was trying hard to overcome it, and succeeding fairly well.

The note, on a strange, foreign-looking paper, was short, and it had the appearance of having been typed on Barry’s old typewriter.

It read; “Leave, young man, now. You are not Barry and cannot hope to take his place. This is a warning. Be wise and go quickly and never return.”

And without further word, it was signed “Korowaar.”

Stone was at first inclined to laugh, but a glance at Samfari’s face quashed any such idea.

“Where was it?” the detective asked, though he had heard.

“Under a large brass ash-tray. I scarcely saw it at first. It is from Korowaar, Mr Stone; no human being could get into my room. All doors and windows were and are strongly fastened. Just as when I left them. May I not sleep somewhere else to-night?”

“Of course. You were put there in Barry’s suite as a compliment. But you shall be moved.”

“Thank you, sir; doubtless I appear to you a white-livered craven. But, remember, I believe in Korowaar.”

CHAPTER XV
The Sumbawan Kris

After Samfari had left him, Stone glanced at the time and found he had still an hour before the luncheon gong would sound at two o’clock.

He sat a moment, staring at the note Samfari had left with him.

This, surely, must be a clue. Whoever was putting over the Korowaar fakery must be somebody in the house. His thoughts flew to the servants, there were so many of them, and they had not been thoroughly canvassed.

But none of them, except perhaps Ming and ’Kiah, had brains enough to have anything to do with this ever more mysterious tragedy. And those two had no opportunity and no motive to want any harm to come to the house of Wayne.

Stone himself was still keeping an open mind, for, though he had several possible suspects, he was waiting for some overt act that should direct his attention more definitely to one individual. Or two, for Fleming Stone was

beginning to think that the criminal had a partner, though perhaps a silent one. At any rate, he welcomed this new note, for it must mean something.

And he would find out what. Any one pitting himself against Fleming Stone had his work cut out for him.

Or her.

Inspector Cox was so convinced that Vera was an accomplice in the crime, that he was for arresting her, and dragging from her the name of her principal.

And, too, Stone had half a notion that Vera was the writer of those notes signed B that were typed with a slight difference from the others.

He scanned the Korowaar note closely.

As he had felt sure, it was, beyond all doubt, typed by the same hands that had done those others. The touch was harder than Barry's light tap, and as a consequence the capital letters and some of the small ones cut through the paper, making a roughness on the back that was distinctly noticeable if one felt it carefully.

It was not likely that this was Vera's work. Her every gesture, every mannerism was of a gentle, graceful nature, and she could not be imagined banging on a typewriter.

No, a man's work, Stone felt sure.

Suddenly, by some strange revulsion of feeling, he

suspected Samfari. He had said the note had been placed in his room, in spite of locked doors and windows. He had no one to corroborate his story of the voice in the night. Was there any? True, these other two notes, written with a vigorous touch, were written before Samfari came to the house. But if the young Oriental was a real criminal, he would, Stone felt sure, be a careful and a clever one.

The paper used in this Korowaar note was not much thicker than ordinary paper, but it was of very different texture and color. This, of itself, was no proof, but must be remembered. All the notes signed B were written on a leaf torn from an ordinary pad, which always lay on the machine itself. In this instance, then, the writer had taken his own paper with him to write on.

Yet this was scarcely compatible with the idea of Samfari's work, for that astute young man would not have been guilty of leaving such an obvious clue behind him. And in the Wayne house a bit of foreign paper could easily be found. Stone determined to find out exactly where that paper came from. But he thought, too, that if it should prove to be a piece of writing-paper from Samfari's store, that would be no real proof that Samfari wrote the words on it. Anyway, they were certainly pounded out by the writer of the note in which Barry asked Pat to let him have a thousand dollars. Could some forger have acquired money from Pat by such means?

He was puzzling over these things when Inspector Cox was announced.

"Come in," said Stone, cordially; "sometimes I sigh for

clues, for palpable, material clues, of the good old-fashioned sort. Yet now, I have a dozen of them here before my eyes, and they only make me more and more bewildered.”

“Letters?” and Cox glanced at the sheets spread out on the table.

“Notes,” Stone amended; “all sent in the house, from one to another, and all written on the same old, rickety typewriter.”

“What’s so puzzling about them, then?”

“The writers.”

“Any of ’em from a woman?”

“How can I tell that? Typing has its points as handwriting does, but they’re not the same points.”

“You ought to know a woman’s typing. They bang the type right through the paper—”

“Do men never do that?”

“Yes, beginners, or people who almost never use the machine.”

“And in case of a woman the same assumptions apply. A woman typist does none of that banging. So your deduction is *nil*.”

“Well, never mind typing just now. I’ve come to arrest Vera Van Zandt.”

“On what evidence? Because she’s a beautiful woman, and more or less of a vamp?”

“No, sir. Because she is responsible for the death of her husband, and Barry’s death seems to be the secondary murder. I mean Van Zandt was the principal victim.”

“Oh; somebody went to the yacht to murder Van Zandt, not thinking Barry would be there!”

“Not thinking Barry would be around. Thought he would be looking after his motor, as he was. But he discovered what was going on, and poking his head up through the hatchway, received that awful blow that killed him.”

“And you’re telling me Vera Van Zandt struck that blow?”

“Not personally, but by an accomplice, a hireling.”

“I see. And what was her hireling’s name and address? Was he willing to commit two cold-blooded murders at her request? How did he get away?”

“Don’t be silly! You may be mighty glad to learn the answers to your thoughtless questions.”

“Now, now, Cox, not thoughtless. Flippant, maybe; unanswerable, probably; but not thoughtless. Why, I’ve just been thinking deeply about the mysterious Vera. And I’d be mighty glad to have answers to them.”

“And how about the mysterious Samfari?”

“Unfortunate, rather than mysterious. That young man is in real danger. Do you think Vera or her doughty accomplice could do him in?”

“I think her accomplice could—yes.”

“Anybody could do anybody in, but in this house they’d be pretty sure of being discovered. No place in it seems to be empty. You think you’re entirely alone, and look up to see a lackey of some sort hovering about. On his legitimate business, of course, his routine work, but startling sometimes. I wish you’d tell me who is this accomplice. We agreed, you know . . .”

“Yes, I know we agreed, but you must admit you’ve not told me much.”

“I’ve told you all I’ve learned, Inspector.” Stone spoke seriously. “I’m hoping to unearth something big, very soon, but it hasn’t come to the surface yet. I know this sounds like the usual promissory talk of a detective, but I think you’ll soon find me making good my promises. There’s the gong; if you care to stay to luncheon, I’ll invite you.”

“No, I’ve had my lunch. But I’ll hang round and do a little clearing up while they’re all in the dining-room.”

“As you like it. Use this room as you wish. I’ll go along, then.”

Stone left the Inspector in the parlor, which was by now transformed into an office, and went down the broad stairway to the dining-room.

He found Vera already at the table, and beside her sat Rod Campion. Stone had a quick thought of Campion as Vera's accomplice, but it seemed unlikely.

However, he decided to ask him about the bit of mechanism.

"So you're bringing home the *Hotspur* piece-meal, Campion, are you?"

"Well, I've brought over one piece of it."

"What for?"

"Mr Pat and I are going to find out what sort of invention Barry had up his sleeve. So far, it's not at all clear."

"Where's Samfari?" asked Dan Wayne, suddenly. "He must have heard the bell. Go and find him, 'Kiah. The lad is depressed, I think. I wonder, after all, if he will be happy here."

"Oh, how can he help it?" cried Vera, with an engaging look at Pat. "I think it would be happiness enough to live here, whatever troubles one might have." She sighed, and looked down at her black gown with eyes full of sorrow. "I must be going on, the end of the week, Dan. I've stayed much longer than I meant to do."

She looked at him, fully expecting a renewed invitation.

But Dan gave her a quick nod, and said, somewhat perfunctorily, "Oh, stay as long as you like, Vera," then turned his whole attention to the returning 'Kiah.

“Didn’t you find him?” he asked impatiently; “he must be in the house. Have you no report?”

“No, sir,” ’Kiah returned. “Mr Samfari is not in his rooms at all. Well, you see, sir, he went out, and Mrs Ming thinks he may be out still.”

“He isn’t,” Stone declared; “because he went out with me, and came back with me. Of course, he may have gone out again.”

“No, he didn’t go out again,” Dan said, positively, “I should have seen him. I was on the porch waiting for him to come down to luncheon. He didn’t come.”

“I think the matter should be investigated, Mr Wayne,” Stone said, “I think we cannot be too watchful of Samfari’s doings just now. Excuse me, please, I will look for him.”

Stone left the room, and ’Kiah gave his master another bit of information.

“Inspector Cox is upstairs,” he said; “he is searching the rooms again.”

“Oh, my heavens!” Vera gave a little shriek; “he has no right to do that!”

“Come back, Vera,” Pat called after her, as she flew from the room.

She heard him, but paid no heed and ran on. But she returned as quickly as she had left them, and reappeared, her eyes staring and her fingers twisting nervously.

“Oh,” she cried out, as she sank into a chair, “Samfari’s gone! That thing took him!”

“Hush, Vera,” and Pat went to her, “what do you mean? Don’t talk at random.”

“No,” and Vera smiled at him; “but they can’t find Sam, and Ming says the Korowaar has got him, and will never bring him back.”

“Hush that nonsense, Vera,” and Dan Wayne spoke to her as to an erring child. “Where is Samfari?”

“Hush, yourself, Dan,” his brother said, “why ask the poor girl that when she has said she doesn’t know. I will stay with her—be quiet, Vera dear—and you or somebody go and see about Sam.”

Dan went away, and Steve Holt started to follow him, then said:

“I can be of no help; I shall stay here and look after Jane. Campion, why don’t you go?”

“I hoped you would let me look after Jane, sir. All right, I’ll go, but I think they’ve already enough searchers.”

“Dear me,” said Holt, as Rod disappeared, “what a house! I shall take steps of some sort that will allow me to leave it. I have nothing to do with these terrible goings on, yet I must be kept here . . .”

“It is too bad, Steve,” Pat told him; “as Inspector Cox is in the

house now, perhaps we can have a word with him, you and I, that will persuade him to let you and Jane go home. I think he can be made to agree.”

Then they heard Campion coming slowly down the stairs, and he appeared at the door of the dining-room.

“You’ve finished your luncheon, haven’t you?” he asked. “Come out here, then; let’s go in the Common Room.”

His tone, more than his words, impressed them, and the Holts, Vera and Pat followed him to the great hall.

“You see,” Rod said, “Samfari is really missing. That is, he can’t be found.”

Pat stared at him.

“Why should he be found?” he asked. “I mean if he has gone out to lunch or gone to town on some errand, he doesn’t have to announce it to us. We’re trying to make the lad feel at home, but he won’t if we hector him for every move he makes. Why this alarm at his momentary absence?”

“It’s Mrs Mingle’s doing,” Rod declared. “She vows the Korowaar has carried him off.”

“I never knew Ming to act as foolish as that,” Pat said. “Have you looked all over? You know there are a lot of rooms in this house.”

“Your brother and Ming ought to find him, then. They must know all the rooms. You mean Sam was wandering about and

got lost?”

“That might be,” said Jane, looking anxious. “Is there any cupboard or wardrobe that shuts with a spring door?”

“No;” Pat said. “But if Samfari were caught in a mistletoe chest, or an old dark cubby-hole, he could yell, if he couldn’t get out by himself. And there are plenty of such places in the attics on the higher floors.”

“Then they ought to be searched!” cried Jane, and she ran up the stairs before her father could stop her.

“Jane!” he called, “come back here!” but Jane had already joined the group in Barry’s suite, now given over to Samfari —the absent Samfari.

Surely, things were going queer.

Steve Holt ran up the stairs after his daughter, and Vera and Pat followed, but Rod Campion went home.

The searchers were grouped in the library of Barry’s suite.

Inspector Cox was looking pretty well disgusted with the whole affair. He didn’t like these cases that dragged in heathen gods and Mongolian people, or whatever that Samphire youth was. He didn’t like dusky beauties and illegitimate children and marriages by missionaries. Nor did he like this new mystery coming along upon the heels of the other and greater one yet unsolved.

Had he known the words, he would have quoted

Shakespeare's lines:

> "One woe doth tread upon another's heel,
> So fast they follow."

But Inspector Cox knew little Shakespeare and less Pope, so he never quoted from John Bartlett, His Book.

From the library, one could see through the bedroom to the well furnished dressing-room, and Cox had already assured himself these rooms were empty of humanity. Yet already their character, their atmosphere had changed, in some subtle way. There was a breath of Oriental fragrance here and there, noticeable as one passed an open vial or flask on a table or a partly filled pot-pourri jar of rare old lacquer, holding dried and aromatic leaves.

One or two Mandarin robes and heavily embroidered slippers betokened a hoped-for leisure, and only Samfari himself was needed as evidence that the library had gone Oriental.

"I have decided to adopt him," Dan said, in his slow, positive fashion. "I shall perhaps be criticized, but criticism, even disapproval, seldom stands in my way. I shall adopt Samfari, making him my son and heir. I have no belief in heathen myths or superstitions, and I think he has gone on some suddenly remembered errand, and will soon return. I shall wait with patience for a time, then if further effort must be made, it shall be done."

"Oh, my boy—my boy!" wailed Ming, who was looking utterly hopeless and disconsolate. "To find him only to lose him . . ." she buried her face in her hands.

“Has he taken Barry’s place with you, Ming?”

It was Pat who asked, and with no trace of censure, but simply a kindly interest.

“Not likely, Mr Pat,” and Ming raised her sad eyes for a moment. “But Samfari will be Mr Dan’s son, same’s Barry was, and I have room in my heart for the memory of Barry and the love of Sam.”

“What did you propose to call him, Mr Wayne?” and Cox looked his sympathy. It was uncalled-for, however, for Dan sat up and said, firmly:

“I did propose—and I do propose to call him Samfari Wayne. He will doubtless be called Sam by his chums, but to me Samfari is a beautiful name and I shall use it, if no one else does.”

Cox wanted to say, “First catch your hare,” but he feared it was not quite the thing to do.

Fleming Stone had said very little, almost nothing, during the whole discussion, and when, at last, Pat said, “What is your opinion, Mr Stone? Where do you think our Samfari is?” the detective answered:

“I can’t tell you that, offhand; but we can find out at once. Ming, where have you hidden Samfari?”

“I?—me, sir? . . . what do you mean, picking me out like a kingfisher swooping down on his prey?”

“Cut the fine talk, Ming,” and Pat stared at her. “Have you any knowledge of where Samfari is, at present?”

“Me? How could I have, Mr Pat?”

“You talk to her, Dan,” his brother said; “she always makes me laugh. Ming, if you’ve been up to tricks, you’ll get just punishment, mind that, now!”

Dan spoke more sternly.

“I can’t think, Ming, that you have hidden my boy from me! Have you?”

“Not from you, Mr Dan, but from the Korowaar. I prefer you not to interfere. I will be responsible for Samfari’s safety.”

Dan rose and stood before her.

“Sarah Mingle,” he said, in strong accents, “where is Samfari?”

“In the Nursery, Mr Dan,” and Ming couldn’t entirely repress a smile, though she looked penitent also.

“The Nursery! What a perfect place! How did you think of that? Now, down to the Common Room, all of you. I will go and find him and bring my son to you. Come, Ming.”

The two went away, and Pat began to shepherd the others downstairs.

Fleming Stone, however, followed Dan, as he went swiftly

along some rear corridors, and Inspector Cox was close on Stone’s footsteps.

Ming led the way, and her cheery voice rang out as they neared the Nursery door.

“We’re coming, Samfari! Are you there?”

They were off in an ell, attached to the South wing of the old Inn, and they found Samfari there waiting.

The Nursery was a large suite of rooms, fitted up with all necessary and convenient appliances for the welfare and happiness of infants whose parents spent their summers at The Stag At Bay. Barry had lived there many of his childhood seasons, what time Ming was his efficient and devoted nurse.

The windows were barred, lest heedless toddlers lean out too far, and now, with plenty of grown-up furniture about, the Nursery was a delightful place for any one looking for quiet and solitude.

Samfari, himself, threw open the door to his visitors.

Dan stepped at once to his side, and putting his arm round the young man’s shoulders, made a short speech.

“Before these witnesses,” he said, looking round at the interested group, “before Inspector Cox and Detective Stone and Nurse Mingle, I declare here and now, that this is my son, Samfari Wayne, and is to be accepted as such by all and sundry, so long as he shall live.”

“I accept Samfari Wayne as your son and as my cherished friend,” and Inspector Cox held out his hand to Samfari, who accepted it gravely.

The gesture was repeated heartily by Stone, and with a deferential timidity, by Ming.

“He is my boy, as Barry was my boy,” she said, almost reverently, and drawing down his tall head she kissed him on the brow.

“Of course,” Dan went on, “this will be ratified and legally declared in the courts. This is merely my informal announcement to you, my friends who are by me now. All details will be properly cared for, as soon as may be. The furtherance of the matter on which Mr Stone is working will proceed with all possible speed, but to-day, to-night, I have set apart for the introduction of my son to my friends. Shall we join them now?”

The three men went downstairs, and in the Common Room, Dan again made practically the same announcement he had made upstairs.

The Holts, and Vera, as well as Pat Wayne himself, and Rod Campion who had drifted back, voiced a chorus of welcome and congratulations, and Samfari, quite at his ease and looking very handsome, smiled his thanks and joy at the occasion.

Ming, in the servants’ sitting-room, was telling the tale, and immediately after, conferring with Bangs and ’Kiah regarding a feast that would be spread later for a few of the best and

dearest friends of the Waynes.

Jane Holt was perhaps the most excited one of the party. She seemed, like Dan and Ming, ready to accept the new son as a complete substitute for Barry, in every respect. Almost she embarrassed Samfari by the expressions of regard and the assumptions of proprietorship with which she showered him.

Steve Holt, too, appeared to have overcome his uncertainty as to Samfari's worth and value, and made very friendly with him.

Vera was in her kindest, gentlest mood. She welcomed Sam to the family circle, declaring she belonged to it herself.

In a word, everybody was glad and happy, yet not forgetting that Lang Syne was a house of mourning and a dark cloud overhung its people.

When at last the evening was done, and they separated with friendly good nights, Dan asked Samfari if he wished to change his rooms then, or wait another day.

"I shall not change," Sam replied; "I have no fear now of the Korowaar, I dwell under the roof of my father. Nothing will harm me. Barry's places are now my places. Yet—I lock my doors."

He smiled a little when he said a final good night and backed into his small foyer, and at once they heard the door click, as its Yale lock fastened itself.

* * * * * * * *

The many clocks in the old Inn went round and round, yet at nine next morning, no sound had been heard from Samfari.

’Kiah and Ming consulted, and then carried their dilemma to Fleming Stone, rather than the Waynes.

With them, Stone went to the door that Samfari had clicked shut the night before. It was still shut and locked, and there was no other entrance to the suite. Save, of course, the windows. These, all fastened firmly in place, gave admission to ventilating air, but left no opening large enough for one to get in or out.

“Go and get Mr Pat Wayne,” Stone said to ’Kiah. “Don’t tell Mr Dan yet.”

And then, with Pat’s permission, Stone ordered a pane cut from one of the bedroom windows. ’Kiah managed this deftly, and Stone stepped first through the opening. He turned back quickly and opening the French window, he beckoned to Pat.

Pat came in from the verandah, and the two men stood gazing down at Samfari Wayne, as he lay in his bed.

And he lay there, dead, with a cruel-looking Sumbawan kris sticking out from his heart.

CHAPTER XVI
Surmises

Pat Wayne nodded to the man on the verandah.

“Come inside, ’Kiah,” he said, and as he was obeyed, he dropped the heavy curtain again over the French window.

“We must see what to do,” he said, and his voice shook a little. “I’m bewildered, Stone; why are all these terrors happening here? And while I feel it keenly enough, think of Dan! How can I face him with news of this new tragedy? Poor Dan; he is suffering far more than you know. I am familiar with his ways, and I know that while he greatly likes—liked Samfari, it was a bitter pill to see him in Barry’s place in every way. Yet, it was better far for Dan’s peace of mind that Sam came along, just as he did. Sometimes I think it saved Dan’s reason. It diverted his mind as nothing else could possibly do. We brothers don’t advertise it, but our affection is very true and deep. I’d willingly die for Dan, if it could do him any good. And he would for me. Now, don’t think I’m forgetting the work of the immediate moment. What do you advise? Shall ’Kiah go and fetch Dan up here, or shall we go downstairs and tell him?”

Stone noted that Pat's thoughts were all for his brother; he had, as yet, not recognized other aspects of the case.

So he said, gently, "Suppose we get Dan up here, and let him advise. Breaking the news to him, hard as it will be, is only the beginning of what we are up against. You know, of course, we must notify Cox at once, and the police routine must start afresh. Let me look round here just a moment, before we make any move."

Pat nodded silently, and turned again to the still figure on the bed.

Stone, who knew the room well, wanted to make himself sure as to the means of entrance. The door into the hall was the only ingress to the suite as a whole. The bedroom, where they were, had a door into the dressing-room, and another into Barry's library.

These were not locked or bolted.

Stone remembered Samfari's remark that he would remain in Barry's rooms, but he would lock his doors.

He had not done so, except the main outer door.

Two French windows opened on the verandah. One of these had given entrance to the men now inside, the other was firmly fastened, with its ventilator duly adjusted for air.

Carefully, Stone noted the locks and bolts, even making a few hurried notes, and then said:

“How did Samfari’s murderer get into this room?”

But Pat’s response to this, was simply: “And out again? I’ve often said, Mr Stone, that I didn’t believe in the fiction plots that hinge on what they call ‘a hermetically sealed room,’ but I must admit this looks like it. I must admit, too, that I would like to leave those matters until we have told Dan about this. He may go out somewhere, and it is his right to know of it as soon as we do.”

“True, Mr Pat. Are you willing to have your brother up here, telling no one else, until afterward, what has happened?”

“Yes, of course; shall ’Kiah go for him?”

“Yes. Tell no one else, ’Kiah, but bring Mr Dan here at once.”

The man started, and then paused:

“You know, Mr Stone, Ming and me kep’ watch outside, all night.”

“Watch outside? What do you mean?” Pat asked, curiously.

“Why, Mr Dan, he arranged that Ming and me should spell each other a-watchin’ that nobody got into Mr Samfari’s room. And nobody did. I took two hours and then Ming, she took two hours, the whole endurin’ night. And nobody —*nobody*, Mr Stone, coulda got in these here rooms. ’Course, they coulda broke in a winder, like we did jest now, but likewise, you can see that wasn’t done.”

“Then, how did the murderer get in, ’Kiah?”

“Why, he couldn’t get in, Mr Stone; and he didn’t get in. Which brings us back to . . .”

“Don’t be silly, ’Kiah!” Pat exclaimed. “You were going to say Korowaar, which is absurd. If you have gone Oriental, talk with Ming about it, but not to us.”

“Yes, Mr Pat. And shall I go now for Mr Dan?”

“Yes,” Pat said, “go on. Don’t speak a word to any one else, not even Ming.”

“Go out through that window,” Stone said, “and come back the same way. Bring Mr Dan, and make no fuss about it.”

“Think of those two keeping watch all night,” Pat mused. “Dan is certainly fearful of some one or something that he thinks threatens Sam.”

“He will tell us,” Stone said. “I think, Mr Pat, that when you talk with your brother, I will call up Cox, for we will be censured if we delay too long.”

Pat nodded assent, and then ’Kiah returned with Dan.

The man nearly collapsed under this new blow.

“What does it mean?” he groaned; “my God, what does it mean? Are we all doomed to violent death? Who will be the next?”

Stone looked at Dan Wayne with infinite sorrow and then slipped away to telephone Cox.

He told him as little as possible, only saying that a fresh tragedy had occurred, and for the Inspector to come at once, bringing his routine workers with him.

He went slowly back to the room where Samfari Wayne lay dead, where Daniel Wayne was fighting against a nervous collapse, and where Patrick Wayne was doing all he could to calm and comfort his stricken brother.

“I must ask you to go to some other room,” Stone said, “for it is my duty to turn this suite over to the police, as nearly as possible as we found it. ’Kiah, you may tell Ming and Bangs of this, but in strict secrecy. If any one else asks you about it, refer them to me. After the police are in charge, take your orders from them. If the guests of the house ask you questions, tell them I shall be downstairs very shortly, and will explain to them the situation.”

’Kiah went away, with bowed head, and finding Ming, took her to a small empty office, and told her the news.

She listened in silence, and then said, slowly, “Now, perhaps you will believe in Korowaar’s powers. You know, you and I watched the night through; you know, no human being entered or could enter those rooms; then, what explanation but the secret power of that devil of all evil? A dagger in his heart you say? What dagger? Where from?”

“It’s a heathenish looking thing. One of those, I’ll swear, that form a trophy on the wall of the library.”

“Which one? No, don’t tell me, I’ll tell you. It is the Sumbawan kris. Is it not with a long hilt that is of worked

gold, and that goes on down the blade for several inches from where it is joined? Is there not an ornament on top, of gold and ivory, something the shape of a little ship?”

“Yes, yes, you have described it exactly! How did you know?”

“I guessed. It is the choice of the Korowaar.”

“Oh, shut up on the Korowaar! I’d think you’d be ashamed, a sensible woman as you are, to harp on that nonsense!”

“I’d prefer not to have you call it nonsense. And if you discard the Evil Spirit, who shall you blame for this murder?”

“It’s the work of an Evil Spirit, all right, but said spirit is in the heart of a human being, not a wooden image!”

’Kiah went off, leaving Ming in a state of bewildered grief. She had given her affection and allegiance to Samfari, partly because of his resemblance to Barry, and partly because of her sense of duty to Dan Wayne.

Now, she firmly believed, the Evil Spirit had removed Barry, and again, had removed Samfari. Who would be next? She saw the Evil Spirit removing Dan Wayne himself, because of his sin. To Ming’s one-track mind an illegitimate child connoted an unforgivable sin, and though she had been assured that Mr Dan had been married to Samfari’s mother she had her secret doubts on the subject.

And then she received a summons to go to Mr Stone in Samfari’s apartment.

With a wildly beating heart she took her way there.

She found only Inspector Cox and Fleming Stone in the library, awaiting her.

“Just a few words now, Ming,” said Stone with a kindly look; “just tell the Inspector of your keeping watch last night.”

“Yes, sir. It was this way. ’Kiah and I took two hours each, in turn. I was always ready for my watch. I came to relieve him, every time, right on the minute.”

“Good;” said Cox. “And was he as prompt?”

“Oh, yes, sir; ’Kiah’s a fine man. Well, sir, we watched, just as Mr Dan bade us, and we can both swear nobody went in or came out of Mr Samfari’s rooms all night.”

“And you heard no noise inside?”

“None; it was as quiet as death, which it had to be, I’m sure.”

“You didn’t fall asleep, now? Did you?”

“I’d prefer not to have you ask imperent questions, sir. I think you know I wouldn’t do that.”

“Forgive me, Mrs Mingle. Yes, I do know it. What time did you cease your watch?”

“At six o’clock, as Mr Dan had required. I was on duty when ’Kiah came and told me to leave off the watching.”

“Thank you, Mrs Mingle; that will be all for just now. Any questions, Mr Stone?”

“One only. Tell me, Ming, do you ascribe this death of Samfari to your Korowaar?”

“Who else?” and Ming looked at him, her eyes filled with tears. “Who else could get in through locked doors, could go through that door into this room, could take that gold-hilted dagger—kris, I mean—and use it on Samfari, and then go out again, leaving everything else untouched? Go out again, past me or past ’Kiah, who sat waiting for a glance at any marauder! Think *you*, Mr Cox, that would be possible?”

“More possible, ma’am, than the same acts committed by a block of wood . . .”

“That’s where you err, Inspector,” Ming said, calmly; “the deeds were done by that image, which you call a block of wood, but which, by a miracle, is enabled at times to do the will of its evil master, the Devil.”

“That will do for now, Ming,” Stone said; “we will talk with you again about this. You may go.”

“Yes, sir,” and with her usual dignity the housekeeper went away.

“Now, Mr Stone,” Cox said, “I propose to search these rooms at once. I make no doubt you could do it better; indeed, you probably know all I can find out; but a search is my routine duty, and must not be omitted. First, however, will you tell

me if you are as puzzled as I am about this locked room business? Do you know how the murderer got in? If so, I think you ought to tell me.”

“I think so too, Inspector, but I have no more to guide me than you have yourself. Shall we search together, or would you like to be left alone?”

“It doesn’t matter, so long as you agree to share with me your findings.”

“I promise that, but I think we must not start on it now. The Medical Examiner’s Deputy will be here any minute, and we would only be interrupted.”

Cox agreed to this, perforce, but he was secretly longing to get at the investigation of the mysterious doings of the murderer, when at his work.

The Medical Examiner, by name Doctor Barrows, arrived. He was a tall, gaunt man, with a preoccupied air, which did not lessen as he looked at the still figure of Samfari, and noted the death-dealing kris.

Beyond the briefest of greetings, he said no word, but set about his investigation with a puzzled look on his face.

Samfari lay on his back, in the middle of the bed, and the hilt of the weapon protruded from the region of his heart. It was, as Ming had surmised, a very elaborate kris, and the handle, of finely worked gold, was of such intricate and indented pattern that there was small chance, if any, of securing an impression of a finger print.

And beside, Fleming Stone felt pretty certain that if this death was by the same agency as the two on the yacht, the criminal was quite astute enough to wear a glove, or wrap a handkerchief round the kris handle.

“The bedclothing is turned down, you see,” said Barrows, finding his voice, “proving that the murderer attacked his victim while he was asleep.”

“Drugged, probably,” Stone said; “to pull the sheet down so far would waken him else.”

“Yes, that is what I was about to say. An autopsy will settle that question. Who discovered the body?”

“I did,” replied Stone; “no sound had been heard from the young man and one of the house servants called my attention to it, shortly after nine o’clock this morning. In company with Mr Patrick Wayne, and ’Kiah, the houseman, I entered through that broken window you see there. I thought it wiser than breaking in the heavy door.”

“And you found everything just as it is?”

“Precisely. Nothing has been touched.”

“Then young Mr Wayne was certainly drugged or in a very deep sleep. If awake, he would not lie there and receive a fatal stab from one of his own native weapons.”

“Probably not.”

“Do you recognize the weapon?”

Though the question was addressed to Stone, Cox answered.

“Oh, yes; it is one from a . . . a bunch on the wall . . .”

“A panoply,” Stone assisted him; “you know, small weapons arranged in a semicircle. There is such a group on the wall of Barry’s library, the next room to this.”

“Is one missing?”

“I don’t know,” Cox returned, but Stone said:

“Yes; one is missing, and as I recollect it, this looks like the one. But any member of the household can tell you that.”

“Could it have been a suicide?” Cox wanted to know.

“No;” Barrows informed him. “It was wilful and deliberate murder. The weapon is sharp and powerful, and was sunk in the victim’s breast by a strong arm and a knowledge of the use of such a weapon.”

“You don’t mean a technical knowledge, do you?” Stone asked him. “Can’t any muscular arm drive a dirk into a man?”

“Oh, yes, but a skilled blow leaves the blade firmly imbedded and the handle at right angles to the body. You can see that is a well-aimed thrust.”

“I do see it,” said Stone; “and it achieved its purpose. Now, Doctor, I am sure you are waiting for the inevitable question __”

Barrows smiled, and answered it before it was asked.

“Often it is not easy to tell how long a man has been dead, but in this case I think I can say about seven hours. Samfari was probably stabbed at somewhere near three o’clock this morning.”

“And death was immediate?”

“Instantaneous, probably. Now, that is all I can tell you, without an autopsy. So far as you know who was the last person to see him alive?”

“The two Wayne brothers, I think,” Stone said. “There was a party here last night, in honor of Mr Dan Wayne adopting Samfari as his legal son and heir. Quite a lot of us came upstairs together, and then we said good night and drifted off to our rooms. When I left Samfari, there was no one with him except Dan and Pat Wayne. That’s all I know of the matter.”

“Your rooms are on this floor?”

“Yes; next this apartment there are two or three single rooms, then my suite, then some more rooms, and then, at the South end of the house, Dan Wayne’s rooms. Such a great barn of a place, every one has as many rooms as he likes.”

“I see. Now, gentlemen, I have told you all I can as to this shocking affair; all, that is, until I can have an autopsy performed. I shall not remove the kris until I have taken the body away. When do you want that done? Wouldn’t you better consult the Wayne brothers?”

“Yes;” Stone agreed. “But I think, since you are leaving the dagger in the wound, it would be better not to have the guests or the servants see it. They are an emotional lot, and doubtless have never seen such a sight. But it is better to ask the Waynes, one or both of them.”

Stone opened the door between the bedroom and the library and found the brothers waiting.

They were both very quiet, and would express no wish or opinion as to further details of procedure.

“Do whatever you think wisest and best, Mr Stone,” Dan said, a weary note in his voice. “I rely on your judgment, and I know you will have our interests at heart, in every way.”

“I say the same,” Pat declared, “but don’t let Vera and Jane see poor Samfari with that awful kris in his heart. Nor Steve Holt and young Campion. Why harrow the nerves of those younger people by unnecessary horrors. Can we not send the remains of the poor chap right off to the mortuary, now?”

Inspector Cox put these matters in the hands of some members of his own staff, also bade his photographers, finger-print men and others do their parts, and he, himself, looking determined but deeply perplexed, asked Fleming Stone and Doctor Barrows to confer with him.

“Come to my place,” Stone said, and led them to his “parlor.”

They sat round the table, and Cox said, complainingly, “I think it’s too bad that I should have these complicated cases

all the time. I don't know how to deal with them. The Yacht case was bad enough, but this of Samfari is worse. I've had experience with murders, but not with people who get in and out of locked rooms and kill people with krisses. If you know, Mr Stone, won't you tell me how that stunt *could* be done, whether it *was* done that way or not?"

Stone looked grave.

"Inspector," he said, "to get in and out of an apparently unenterable room is a problem that confronts every detective now and then. Sometimes it is easily solved, sometimes it seems impossible of solution. We are not sure, as yet, that we are up against that problem, but if so, I fear it will be a hard nut to crack in this instance."

"Why do you say we are not confronted by that question?" Barrows asked. "Surely the young man was killed and to get into the room you had to break in."

"We did break in," Stone said, "but it may be we didn't have to."

"You mean there is a secret entrance, and it was known to the murderer?"

"Yes; or the murderer could have been hidden in the suite, and could have come out of hiding when he chose, killed Samfari, and then could have left by the front door."

"But one of the servants was on watch all night," Cox reminded them. "Both Mrs Mingle and Hezekiah are

trustworthy and reliable. Unless they went to sleep, and they vow they didn't, one of them must have seen a man emerging from the foyer."

"I do not believe for a minute," Stone said, "that either of those two watchers went to sleep while on duty, but it must be remembered that they could do so and not know it."

"Or be ashamed to admit it," suggested Doctor Barrows. "Now I must go along, about my duties. This closed room is a fascinating subject, but it is your department, Cox, not mine. I will see you, again soon, Mr Stone."

The doctor bustled away, and for a moment Stone and the Inspector sat and stared at each other.

"I'm almost inclined," Cox said, at last, "to go over to the heathen side, and believe that that scarecrow of a wooden image did the thing."

"How did he get in?" Stone asked, uninterestedly, for he was wasting no time or thought on Korowaar. He had now a definite problem to wrestle with. Who killed Samfari, and how did he get in the room where Samfari lay asleep?

"If he's as evil and as powerful as Mrs Mingle makes out, he didn't need any regular way to get in. He went through the walls, I suppose."

"Now, Inspector, I planned to work with you, but I can't do it if you're going to talk like that. If you're jesting, it's a wicked waste of time, and if you really believe in supernatural powers, then here's where I get off."

“Oh, no, I’m not foolish enough to believe in that Raw-head-and-bloody-bones bug-a-boo. But if I ignore him, I’ve no one but you to look to for assistance and I hope you won’t fail me.”

“Do you always depend on assistance?” Stone’s voice was not unkind, but Cox reddened.

“I don’t, Mr Stone. But this is a peculiar case—you must admit that. Leaving for a minute how it was done, have you any idea who did it?”

“No, Inspector, that’s just what I haven’t. We’ll have to dismiss Rod Campion from our list of suspects, I’m thinking.”

“Yes, and the ladies.”

“The ladies! Good gracious, you didn’t suspect Mrs Van Zandt or Miss Holt!”

“No, I was thinking of Mrs Mingle. You can’t always tell about those ladified servants.”

“But Ming is like one of the family. Nobody could suspect Ming. She is devotion itself to every one of the Waynes. And she accepted Samfari in Barry’s place, just as Dan Wayne did.”

“Well, anyway, it’s too soon to come to any definite or important decisions. I haven’t questioned the people yet. Suspicion may point in a very different direction from what we think.”

“Yes, Inspector, that’s true. And then, there’s motive. Who in the world would wish harm to Samfari? As fine a young man as I’ve met anywhere of late. He is certainly Dan Wayne’s son, he showed more and more of his father’s traits all the time.”

“Like his Uncle Pat, too.”

“That’s natural, of course. Now, Inspector, let us both go to our posts, and to our duty. You’ll be rounding up the witnesses and questioning them, and I’ll look about for a secret entrance to the room.”

“If there’s a secret entrance the Waynes must know of it.”

“Perhaps not. It might have been in the old Inn, and maybe bricked up and only lately opened again.”

“Go to it, Mr Stone, and luck go with you.”

“Thank you. I’ll tell you this much, Cox. If you go in Barry’s library, and just sit there and look around, you can’t help seeing something, that if not a clue to the secret entrance, at least starts you on a way to look.”

“And what are you going to do now?”

“I’m going that way.”

CHAPTER XVII
Another Note

The routine work of the police was going on.

The finger-print men were taking impressions wherever they could find any, but had, so far, found none save those of the people in the house.

As had been anticipated, no definite print could be obtained from the handle of the dagger. It was too deeply indented with its ornate pattern to make a surface fit to hold an impression.

And all round the bed of the victim no prints were found save his own, and here and there one that was identified as that of a servant.

Photography resulted in nothing of interest. Pictures were made of the rooms in Barry's suite, but they gave no information or suggestion that could be of use.

The County Coroner arrived.

A smallish man, Mr Munson, and an inefficient looking chap. But his looks belied him, for he fairly sprang to

his job, and before he had been in the house ten minutes, he had organized his plan of inquiry and set to work.

He chose Barry's library for his headquarters, and asked for a bridge table, which he placed in front of a large easy chair, and then called his witnesses.

Inspector Cox and Fleming Stone were allowed to remain in the room with him and the others were called singly.

Daniel Wayne was the first, and though in a nervous, worried state, he stood the ordeal well.

"You have, then, had two sons murdered within a month?" Munson said, brutally, after a few preliminary questions.

Dan Wayne gave him a startled look, and then drew himself together, sat up very straight, and replied:

"Yes, Mr Coroner. I look to you to help us discover the murderer and learn his methods and motives."

"You assume, then, that there is but one murderer concerned with both cases?"

"I am not aware that we are now considering any case other than the murder, last night, of my son, Samfari."

"Ah, the yacht murders, then, are in the competent hands of Mr Fleming Stone?"

"They are. Can I tell you anything bearing on this new tragedy?"

Mr Munson began to fidget a little. He was not accustomed to receive such a slight showing of deference and respect, and he resented it.

“I will ask the questions myself, Mr Wayne. You need not make suggestions.”

At that, Dan showed such anticipatory interest that the Coroner fidgeted a little more.

Fleming Stone, too, ready to play up, pocketed his pencil and pad, on which he had been scribbling, and paid keen attention.

“Have you, Mr Wayne, a suspicion of any one who might have had a feeling of enmity toward this newly-found son of yours?”

“Oh, no; I have no suspicions. That’s what I want to learn from you.”

“Was the dead man your son?”

“To the best of my knowledge and belief, yes.”

“You had adopted him?”

“I was about to do so, legally. I had written my lawyer to come here for a few days, and look into the matter.”

“And you were about to make him your heir?”

“I expected to do so, yes.”

“Would that impair or interfere with the prospects of any other possible inheritor of your wealth?”

Dan stared at him.

“Of course not. I have no other presumptive heir, unless you mean my brother, who is by no means forgotten in my will.”

“I see. Now, Mr Wayne, I understand you were the last person to see Mr Samfari Wayne last evening.”

“Why, yes; except for the one who killed him, I suppose I was. My brother and I remained with him a few moments after the others left us, and Pat said good night and went off a bit before I did. We had a few affectionate words such as any father and son might on a similar occasion. I begged him not to fasten his outer door, but he wouldn’t promise, and after I stood outside it, I distinctly heard him click the latch, which fastens it on the inside, and I also heard the bolt shot home.”

“Why did you object to this procedure?”

“Because Samfari had received a threatening note, and I feared some injury might come to him, so I wanted his door left unlocked.”

“May I see this threatening note you speak of?”

“It is in my possession,” interposed Fleming Stone; “now, if you choose, or later. It bears a warning that he must not stay here in Barry Wayne’s place.”

“As you say, we may leave the examination of the document till later. May I ask, Mr Wayne, why you stationed the two watchers outside a door through which they couldn’t possibly gain entrance in case of an alarm?”

“I could think of no other plan,” Dan said, wearily. “And I hoped, if need arose, Samfari could get to the door and unlock it, finding help at hand. I didn’t think of murder at all, but of a possible joke to scare him with a heathen image, which is around the house somewhere.”

“And now, you don’t think the frightful idol was used?”

“It isn’t an idol . . .”

“Never mind that part, Mr Wayne. I’ve seen the Korowaro, or whatever it’s called, and I have no interest in it.”

“Then why discuss it?”

Munson gave him a withering glance, which failed to wither Dan Wayne, but greatly amused Fleming Stone.

“One more question, if you please,” and Munson assumed a more suave manner; “Have you thought that a woman might have committed this crime as well as a man?”

“I’ve thought little about the criminal,” Dan said, slowly, “I’ve been wondering what possible motive could be back of the crimes. They seem utterly inexplicable to me—as if the work of a madman.”

“Or a mad woman. You may go, Mr Wayne, and please send your brother to me, and on his return send the housekeeper—Mrs Mingle, is it?”

“Very well. But, though Mrs Mingle has some peculiarities, don’t imagine her mind is affected in any way.”

“Let me be the judge of that, if you please.”

Dan Wayne stalked out, full of resentment at the inimical attitude of the Coroner.

Finding Pat, he told him to go to the witness box, and nodded, “For heaven’s sake don’t let that chap have it in for Ming. She’d talk back and there’d be the devil to pay.”

Pat nodded his understanding, and went to meet the inquisitor.

He smiled at Munson, dropped into an easy chair and asked permission to light a cigarette.

“Of course, sir,” the coroner agreed, “good for your nerves. Your brother is in a pathetic state. So worried.”

“Who wouldn’t be?” and Pat flared up. “Any other man who had gone through what my brother has gone through would be in the hands of a nerve specialist! I am almost as bad. Have a heart, man. Think of three murders in your home inside of a fortnight . . . one inquest after another . . . show me the man who could go through such ordeals and keep a calm placidity!”

“Oh, I didn’t mean that . . .”

“Didn’t mean what?”

“Why, that . . . that . . .”

“Never mind what you meant, get along with your questions, will you?”

Munson groaned inwardly. This man was more exasperating than his brother. Well, he’d have to show him.

“Tell me all you know about the last moments of Samfari Wayne,” Munson said.

“Now, Mr Coroner,” and Pat stared at him, “you certainly know that I was not with him in his last moments!”

“And you certainly know that I mean the last moments you spent with him.”

“Oh, I see. I thought Dan told you that. Well, there were people here last night, not a party, of course, but a few neighbors and friends who had heard of our adopting Samfari and came in to congratulate him.”

“Was Mr Rodney Campion among the guests?”

“He was.”

“Why do you say *we* adopted the young man? Had you any part in it?”

“Oh, not legally, of course. But Dan and I always do everything together, and we talked the matter over a good

deal before we decided. Sometimes Barry used to say that he had two fathers, rather than a father and an uncle. I daresay young Samfari would have felt the same way about that, had he lived longer, poor chap.”

“I have an odd idea, Mr Wayne, that the tragic death of last night was the work of a woman, rather than that of a man.”

There was a silent pause, and then Munson said, sharply,

“Did you hear me, Mr Wayne?”

“Certainly,” Pat replied, “I am not at all deaf.”

“Then why did you not answer?”

“You didn’t ask me any question,” and Pat looked at him in mild surprise.

“I made an observation.”

“Am I supposed to comment on all your observations? Very well, then, I do not agree with you. I think Samfari was stabbed to death by a man.”

“And how did your hypothetical man enter those locked rooms?”

“The same way your hypothetical woman got in. Come now, Mr Coroner, why wonder who did it, until you discover how it could have been done?”

“Mr Stone says there are several ways that an entry may have

been made.”

“Well, he knows. Another theory is that the murderer was concealed in the suite somewhere, perhaps in a wardrobe or closet, and that he came out of hiding and killed his victim and then went back again to his place of concealment.”

“Then how did he get out of the suite?”

“Well, that theory implies his making a getaway when the police break in and others follow and there is such crowding and confusion that the murderer may make his escape; or join the crowd, as if with them all the time.”

“And you think this could have happened to the murderer of Samfari Wayne?”

“I know it could not.”

“How do you know that?”

“Because I was there this morning when the window was opened. I followed Mr Stone into the room, and I know there was no one else there then.”

“Might have been—hiding.”

“Well, I suppose so. Yes, there might have been. I hadn’t thought of that. But I’m sure there was no woman there, except Ming.”

“Ah, the ever useful Ming. Will you go now, Mr Wayne, and

send the housekeeper to me?”

“Yes, Mr Munson. Shall you want me again?”

“I cannot say. If I do, I trust you will be within call.”

“I will. Look for me in my own rooms.”

Pat left them and the Coroner remarked:

“Both the Wayne brothers seem nervously upset.”

“Well, as Pat Wayne said, who wouldn’t be, in the circumstances?” the Inspector returned. “I’ve never heard of such a complicated case before. Have you, Mr Stone?”

“Never of one with so many killings in such a short time. And here is Mrs Mingle. Come in, Ming.”

Stone drew a chair for her, and introduced the Coroner.

Ming sat down, with an air of utter indifference as to what might be required of her.

“You were the nurse of Barry Wayne when he was a child, I understand?” Munson began.

“You understand correctly,” Ming informed him, with no change in her blank expression or rigid attitude.

“And you didn’t know, at that time, that Mr Wayne had another son?”

“No, sir.”

“Can you give us any information or any suggestion as to why Samfari Wayne was killed last night? We are not considering the case of Mr Barry Wayne now.”

“I know of no reason, Mr Munson, why Samfari was killed at all. Nor was there any reason for Barry’s death.”

“You were on watch outside the rooms, last night?”

“I was. Mr Wayne asked me the favor, and though I would have preferred not to do the watching, of course I would not refuse him.”

“No, you couldn’t do that. And you heard no sound from the young man, all night long?”

“No sound whatever, sir. It was as silent as a peak in Darien.”

“Were you sleepy when on watch? Perhaps toward the early morning?”

“I don’t deny that I felt drowsy, sir, but not a wink of sleep did I take. I prefer not to be unfaithful to a sacred trust.”

“That is right. Now, Mrs Mingle, do you know of any secret passage to this suite of rooms? This one, that was occupied by the two young men, in succession?”

“Of course not, sir. If there is such a thing we should all know it. Many’s the time such a passage has been hunted for but

never has such a thing been found. This is a queer old house, and it has many closed up rooms and dark little cubby-holes, but they are not secret or concealed, except by ordinary doors.”

“Then if one is outside in the hall, he cannot get into this room we are in now, except by the regular entrance door?”

“Or by cutting a pane from the window, which is what Mr Stone did. And much wiser, too, than to bust down a door, as they always do in the detective stories. Break down great strong oaken doors, with heavy bolts and locks. Instead of having wit enough to smash a pane of glass, or cut it out neatly as it was done in this case. But somebody did murder Samfari, and as it could not have been a human bein’ it must have been a piece of magic. You know, yourself, sir, Samfari couldn’t have stuck that knife in himself—no more could any one else get in to do it. Wherefore, we must conclude that death was brought about by supernatural agency. You know about the Korowaar, I presume?”

“All I want to know. We will not discuss that thing now.”

“But it is the only possible solution to the problem of Samfari’s death.”

“It is no solution at all. Wooden images do not enter locked rooms and kill, and then go out again.”

“They have been known to do so. Then you do not believe in anything you have never seen before?”

“Let me ask the questions, Mrs Mingle. Have you ever heard this image speak?”

“No, but he sent a message to Samfari, advising him to get out.”

“How was this message sent?”

“By letter.”

“In the mail?”

“No, it was left on a table in his bedroom—or on the dresser, perhaps. It was from the Korowaar, of course. It was a warning.”

“You needn’t tell about it, we are not interested. Then, on watch last night, you heard nothing and also saw nothing? No shadow, gliding through the halls, or appearing suddenly from a dark corner?”

“No, sir; it was not a game of spooks.”

Munson looked at her and frowned.

“We are not taking this matter as a game,” he said. “Now, Mrs Mingle, answer this question carefully. Do you know of any one in this house, any one, family, guest or servant, who felt a real enmity toward Samfari? Enough hard feeling to want him put out of the way?”

“Mr Munson, I think the enmity you speak of is felt by every one in this house, with the exception of the two Wayne

brothers, Mr Dan and Mr Pat. They loved the lad, Samfari, almost as they loved Barry. I did too, and Hezekiah did. You must not consider the servants. No one of them is a killer. But you must consider visitors, guests or neighbors.”

“Neighbors? Are you harking back to Mr Campion?”

“If any shoe fits anybody, put it on him,” said Ming, oracularly.

“And what would be the motive of Rodney Campion?”

“Jealousy,” said Ming, serenely. “He was jealous of Barry, because of Jane. Later, he grew jealous of Mr Dan, because he thought, Rodney did, that Dan favored Jane himself.”

“Now, hold on there, Ming!” Fleming Stone expostulated; “you’re making that up. Dan Wayne has no romantic affection for Miss Holt. He looks on her as one who should have been his daughter—that is, daughter-in-law—had things gone smoothly.”

“I’m sorry, Mr Stone, but you don’t know all about these matters. I am right here all the time, and I can assure you that Mr Dan has only a fatherly feeling toward that girl. His eyes turn to another face—I prefer not to say whose.”

“Then why are you mixing Jane Holt in with this?”

“I’m not,” said Ming, patiently. “It’s young Campion who’s doing that. He pours out attentions and flatteries on that girl, and somehow he has an impression that she is leaning toward Mr Dan. If she is, it’s just for his money, of course.”

“And who is it that Dan Wayne admires?” Munson asked, bluntly.

“Mrs Van Zandt, of course,” and Ming looked wise. “To be sure, that beautiful goddess is in love with Pat, and has been for years, but she can have two strings to her bow. Aren’t you going to question her, Mr Coroner?”

“Yes, yes, of course. I shall have the inquest to-morrow, and probably the funeral will take place the next day. Now, see here, Mrs Mingle, when you say Mrs Van Zandt is in love with Pat Wayne, does that mean that he is in love with her?”

“It certainly means that, sir. Those two have been beaus for a long time, and now that her husband is removed, I make me no doubt she will marry Mr Pat, after the worry and excitement are all over.”

“But Mr Pat may change his mind, now that his brother is so saddened and alone.”

“Perhaps;” and Ming nodded agreement. “And Mrs Vera may change her mind, and go over to the elder brother’s side.”

“That is not unlikely,” observed Inspector Cox; “I am not entirely unobservant myself, and often do I see the lady in question walking far up the sands with Dan Wayne. Though quite often, also, with Pat Wayne, and in either case I note signs of affection, and sometimes definite expressions thereof.”

Remembering his promise to give Munson the note to Samfari, that warned against the longer stay of the young

man, Stone left the library and went to his own quarters.

The notes were all in a box, packeted and labeled. He looked them over once more. Noted the ones that were typed by that strong hand that drove the letters through the paper, and realized afresh that the latest note, the one on Japanese paper, was in that same forceful print.

He wondered if Vera could have done these missives. Or Jane. It was seemingly impossible to get either of the women to touch the typewriter. But he would manage that yet.

With his box of typed notes, Stone went back to Barry's library, where he had left the others. There was no one there at all, and he gathered that the coroner had been summoned to Vera's own rooms.

Rather glad of this, he sat down for a moment to look about him.

The room was so large and so full of furniture and decorative objects, no routine searching could be done in a hurry. Stone leaned back in an easy chair and looked about him. Just such a library as he would have liked for himself. Not the books—of those he would make his own selection; but some of the relics and curios of the Malay Islands were tempting, and he thought the brothers might be willing to let him buy some of them.

His gaze went upward to the high ceiling. How high it was. Stone remembered it had been raised to make sufficient space for the great crystal chandelier. A beautiful thing that was, but inappropriate to the room he was planning

for himself.

Curious, too, why people ever wanted such a heavy lighting arrangement; and then he noted for the first time that the ornament had not been fitted with electricity, as had most of the rooms of the old Inn.

Did they never light it, then?

Oh, yes, it was quickly evident that the thing was really a candelabrum and not a gas fixture. Its light, if used, would have to be dozens, perhaps hundreds of candles.

He was seized with a desire to see it lighted and hoped it could be managed before he left the place for good.

As he took a last lingering look at it, before going back to Munson, he noticed there was a crystal prism missing.

Half a prism, rather; for from one branch of the massed glass pendants he saw the upper half of a prism that should have been whole.

Clearly, the prism had by some accident broken in two, and the lower half must have fallen to the floor.

He looked around with care, but saw no sign of glass. Of course, it might have happened days, or even weeks ago, but Ming was not likely to leave any such thing unattended to. Especially in Barry’s rooms.

He got up and searched more carefully under the chairs, couches and large, soft hassocks.

About to give it up, he found the missing piece of glass under the edge of a rug.

He picked it up, and held it high toward the bit that still hung from the chandelier. It was not necessary to get a stepladder and go up there. It was plain to see that the piece in his hand would fit perfectly to the broken prism above.

Exactly what it meant he wasn't sure, but he had a glimmering of an idea that promised to be interesting.

Finding a bit of tissue paper in his emergency pocket, he wrapped the fragment of glass carefully, and took it to his own room where he put it away in safety.

It was his first real find, and he accepted it as a beneficent gift of Fate.

Slowly, he went down the long staircase, and found Munson talking, in the Common Room.

"I have learned much here to-day," the coroner was saying; "and I hope to learn more to-morrow afternoon, when I shall hold the inquest. Please, all of you, be in your places in this room at quarter before two."

He bowed himself out, taking, with a silent nod, the bundle of letters Fleming Stone offered him, and leaving a somewhat bewildered group behind him.

CHAPTER XVIII
The Confession

During the afternoon Pat sought out the detective, and asked for a word with him.

“Of course,” said Stone, and the two went to Pat’s quarters.

“I assume, Mr Stone,” Pat began at once, “that I have a right to ask how you are getting along with your work, and just where you stand at present.”

“Of course you have, Mr Pat. What can I tell you about, specially?”

“About Mrs Van Zandt. If you have any idea that she is mixed up in these crimes, you’re on the wrong tack. I know her, you see, and she is as fine and true a woman as ever lived. After these troubles are over, I hope to win her for my own.”

“If your brother doesn’t win her away from you,” and Stone smiled.

“Oh, Dan. Now, you must know, sir, that if my brother wants to marry Vera, I should certainly step aside. I

would do anything for Dan, or give up anything to him, but I don't think he looks on Mrs Van Zandt in that way. However, that is not the point I am making just now. I want you to tell me if you have the slightest thought of suspicion against Vera, regarding these tragedies that have fallen upon our family. Do you feel, can you feel, that she had or has any knowledge or belief concerning the three deaths that we look upon as mysterious?"

"Speaking simply and truthfully, Mr Pat, I may say that I have no least suspicion that Mrs Van Zandt is in any way personally connected with the circumstances of these murders, but I should not be surprised to discover that she knows more about them than she has allowed us to believe."

"Then you are wrong on that count, too. I know the lady very well, and I can swear to you that she has no least word of what can be termed guilty knowledge of the crimes. She is as stunned and bewildered as the rest of us. I want to tell you these things, because I have better means of knowing than you have; also, I have more consideration for the lady. May I say, Mr Stone, that I think you are a trifle prejudiced in her disfavor."

"You may, but I am sorry to hear it. One of my most earnest efforts is always to keep my mind free of any prejudices, for or against."

"And you usually do, I gladly subscribe to that. But in all fairness I think I may ask for your promise that you will consider Vera with an unbiased mind, and not prejudge her too harshly."

“Of course I will promise that, and I assure you I’m glad you asked it.”

“And I want you to deal gently with Dan. Poor chap, he’s just holding himself together. He’s on the verge of a nervous breakdown. After the inquest to-morrow, and after the funeral, I want to take him away. Abroad, if he will go. I think a liner would be better atmosphere for him than a yacht, just now.”

“You think the inquest will bring no further revelations?”

“I don’t see how it can. There are no new witnesses that I know of. I look for an open verdict and a shelving of the whole matter. Understand, Mr Stone, I don’t blame you in the least, that you haven’t been more successful. We shall never know the truth as to what happened on the yacht, and as to Samfari, it might well have been suicide. Those Orientals are queer chaps, and it’s utterly impossible to judge what they will do next. There’s the first dinner gong. See you later.”

Dinner was far from being a social or even a kindly occasion.

Each one at the table seemed to be glum or self-absorbed. Campion was there, as he was most nights, being now openly attentive to Jane Holt.

Steve Holt seemed to have relaxed his watchful concern for his daughter, and sat, for the most part, silent, with gloomy face and downcast eyes.

The two Waynes were very quiet, though now and then trying to start an argumentative conversation on some subject of

impersonal interest.

Vera alone was at her best.

Beautiful she looked, in black chiffon, perfectly draped, which gave a streamline effect to her long, lithe figure, and which emphasized the whiteness of her arms and back.

“I wish they wouldn’t have that horrid inquest to-morrow,” she said, not pettishly, but with a wistful curve of her scarlet lips.

“I wish so, too,” Pat echoed.

“The inquest need not be held,” Fleming Stone observed calmly; “it is entirely unnecessary.”

“Why?” demanded Dan, looking up quickly.

“You engaged me, Mr Wayne, to learn, if I could, who is responsible for the three murders, and why and how they were committed.”

“Yes, Mr Stone, I did.”

“I have completed the task you set me, I can tell you the answers to those questions. And I think the information I can give you will preclude all necessity for the inquest appointed for to-morrow.”

“You know the person or persons who killed my two sons and my guest, Mr Van Zandt?”

“I do.”

“Are you ready to tell me?”

“I am ready, but I refrained from raising the subject at the dinner table.”

“Then shall we go into conference?” Dan had risen and, apparently oblivious of the rest of those present, stepped eagerly toward Stone.

“My report, sir, will be more of the nature of a narrative than a conference. Shall we adjourn to the Common Room or, better, up to Barry’s suite, where Samfari met his death?”

“Yes,” Dan assented, and straightening up like a soldier, he marched from the room, assuming the rest would follow him.

They did, and soon all were gathered in Barry’s big library.

Stone waited until all were seated, and then, without further preliminary, he began.

“Having been professionally engaged by Mr Daniel Wayne, to learn, if possible, who was responsible for the two murders on the *Hotspur*, and later who is responsible for the killing of Samfari last night, I announce that I have learned these things and I am now ready to tell them. If I can prove to you the truth of my statements, there will assuredly be no reason for holding an inquest on last night’s crime.”

“You are sure of your facts, Mr Stone?” asked Pat, as he gave

a furtive glance at Vera, who sat beside him on a tapestried love-seat.

“I think so. I propose to tell my story without, at first, divulging the criminal’s name. Should I be in error he will have an opportunity to exonerate himself. I have now informed you that the murderer is a man. I will further say that he worked alone and is solely responsible for the three murders that have occurred here of late. A plot of more diabolical cleverness has never come under my notice. A simple plot to start with, but one that became complicated by reason of unforeseen circumstances. The motives include envy, greed and illicit love. The weapons were a mechanical device, assumed to be a new sort of starting gear, but really a death-dealing instrument. A dose of metallic sodium, of fatal effect after a season of intense agony. And, last night, a deadly stab from a dagger known as the Sumbawan kris. I further state that the user of these methods, the killer of these men, who is in this room at present, will be given opportunity to confess now, if he chooses to do so.”

Stone waited, but no response came to his suggestion.

He sighed. “It would be better,” he said, slowly, “to have a confession than an accusation. I could wish the murderer felt the truth of this and would come forward with his statement.”

“No one seems to be suffering from pangs of conscience,” Pat Wayne said, after another pause. “Suppose you tell all, Mr Stone. Give your criminal a local habitation and a name.”

“No,” Fleming Stone refused. “I have a story to tell and

I propose to tell it as I choose, not as I am directed. I shall go ahead in my own way, making the tale as brief as possible. As you know, I first saw the dead bodies of Mr Barry Wayne and Mr Van Zandt before I knew who they were. This point was soon cleared up, but I was put to it to learn or even to guess the methods of their taking off. Indeed, it was only yesterday that I found out that the stick or bar that we took to be the first move toward a new invention, a new and revolutionary idea of a self-starting mechanism, was nothing of the sort. It was a gadget that meant certain death to the victim selected for its use. On his yacht, that morning, Barry Wayne went down in the hatch to start his auxiliary motor, and received his death blow from the already sprung device connected with the motor. The heavy bar, suddenly released, flew round and hit him in the head, and flew back again, as planned, and the unfortunate man never knew when or why he fell. Before learning all this, we were able to deduce the method of Mr Van Zandt's death. This was due to his swallowing a capsule or a tablet, containing metallic sodium, an element capable of exploding in the gastric region and causing intense agony and ensuing death. These two deaths were cleverly managed by the criminal and, though not evident to an investigator at first sight, were definitely and positively proved later."

"Do you connect the murders on the yacht, that you have just described, Mr Stone, with the murder of Samfari?" Pat Wayne asked this question with a look of blank wonderment.

"I certainly do, Mr Pat," Stone replied.

"Then surely you will agree that we must look toward the foreign, the Oriental, element for our information."

“I said,” Stone returned, with careful enunciation, “that the murderer is now in this room. I fail to see any one here of Oriental extraction. At the same time, I repeat my statement; the triple murderer is in this room now. Mr Wayne, shall I tell his name?”

Stone turned toward Dan, with a look of inquiry, but Wayne shook his head.

“Give him another chance,” he said. “It may not be the one I think. You must realize my position,” he said, looking round the room; “I do not know the criminal, but Mr Stone does. I dread to have him say the name, which may be that of one near and dear to me, or may be a more casual acquaintance. But unless the criminal sees fit to confess, here and now, I authorize Mr Stone, my chosen agent, to state the murderer’s name.”

“Don’t do that!” rang out a clear voice from the back part of the room.

It was the voice of Ming, who had come in unnoticed, and spoke now for the first time. “Mr Stone would state the name wrong—because he doesn’t know. The criminal you want is Mrs Van Zandt. She it is who did away with these men, for her own purposes.”

“Ming!” cried both Wayne brothers at once.

“That’s true!” she went on, hysterically. “She wants . . .”

Vera herself interrupted.

“All right, Ming,” she said, placatingly, “let’s talk it over by and by. We mustn’t disturb the conference.”

“That’s her tryin’ to get out of it,” Ming exclaimed. “Oh, she’s the cute devil!”

Fleming Stone gave a nod to Hezekiah, who stepped forward, and with a whispered word, persuaded Ming to go quietly away with him.

“You bid me name the murderer, Mr Wayne?” and Stone gave Dan a sorrowful and sympathetic look.

“Yes, Mr Stone.”

“Then I name Patrick Henry Wayne.”

A slight hubbub ensued, but Pat Wayne smiled at Stone, as he said, casually, “I thought you’d say that.”

“You see,” he went on, turning to the others, “I found that Mr Stone was fastening his suspicions on some one I care for very much, and who is absolutely innocent of even an impulse toward crime. So I flung out a few hints and put around a few clues that directed our canny detective’s attention toward myself. My little ruse worked and, though innocent, I have made Mr Stone feel sure I am the criminal—so sure, that he now announces my name as the perpetrator of these three crimes.

“But I can disprove his statement in three seconds.” Pat looked at Stone with a glance that held no malice, and Stone returned a not unkindly smile.

“You see,” Pat went on, “I am not an inventor, not even a mechanic, and I could not dream of an attachment to an engine that would deal a fatal blow. Nor am I a chemist. I have no knowledge of the ingredients that make up these violent poisons, nor would I know where to procure such. And, I most assuredly could not get in Samfari’s room last night to stab him to death, with Ming and ’Kiah watching outside, and with the suite locked at every possible entrance.”

“How many possible entrances are there?” Stone inquired, showing interest.

“Only the one main front door into the foyer,” Pat replied. “But I should say the windows are available. A pane of glass could be neatly cut out, and replaced after the deed had been accomplished. But such procedure could scarcely be managed while the place was so well watched and guarded.”

“Yet the man was stabbed to death.”

“He certainly was, Mr Stone,” and Pat looked at him a little reproachfully, “and I had hoped—and still hope—that you can discover the ways and means.”

“Set your mind at rest as to that,” and this time Stone permitted himself a sad little smile, “the ways and means are an open book to me.”

“I, for one, am not willing to accept your statement, Mr Stone,” and Dan Wayne spoke in a hard, even menacing tone. “I do not believe for one moment that my brother is in any way responsible for these murders, or that he has any guilty knowledge of them. Unless you have positive, undeniable

proof that you can produce now and here, I must ask you to retract your words.”

“Of course, I have proof, Mr Wayne, and I am quite ready to give it to you. Shall we go back, first, to the murders on the yacht? Very well. Since you do not like to hear your brother’s name in connection with these crimes, let us consider a hypothetical murderer, whom I shall call Mr Cain. This man went down to the beach to bathe early that morning. It was the day of the first International Yacht Race. While he was on the beach, after his bath, he went over to the yacht in question, the *Hotspur*, went on board for a few minutes, then came off and returned to the bathing beach, and from there to his home. I may as well tell you, now, that he was seen to do this by a neighbor who chanced to be watching. And I state, also, that when Mr Cain went on the yacht, he went for the sole purpose of setting the mechanical device which resulted in the killing of Barry Wayne. Now, he had before this, assisted Mr Van Zandt to fill a pocket box with sodamints. Instead of which, he put in none of those, but instead, a capsule of Metallic Sodium. This, as you all know now, is a fatal dose, and it was taken by Mr Van Zandt, perhaps through ignorance or absent-mindedness. However, we know that he died from its effects, and we know that it was given to him by Mr Cain.” 299

“How do you know that?”

“From conversations I have had with various witnesses. Mrs Van Zandt described to me the incident of Mr Cain helping Mr Van Zandt to sodamints, which were kept in a cupboard in the Common Room, proving he was the only 300

person who had opportunity of providing this poison. I have been on this job a few weeks, Mr Wayne, and I assure you I have been very busy and deeply interested. Much had to be learned from the people in the house, and much more from outsiders. Chance and coincidence helped me at times, but most of my work has been done by inquiry. I have met with no discourtesy or unkindness, and, aside from the fact that I was here on a grim errand, I found many opportunities of entertainment and interest. But I was engaged, in a strictly business sense, to discover the criminal who had been at work, and to that I devoted my energies. The first clue that pointed in the right direction was the discovery of those informal notes, written by Barry, oftenest to people in the house. A few were written by other people, pretending to be Barry's work. These were so easily discernible, that they announced themselves as forgeries."

"Forgeries?" asked Pat Wayne. "What do you mean? Forgeries by whom?"

"Forgeries of Barry's style of notes. And they would have proved deceptive, but for the fact that their writer failed to take into consideration the different amount of force used by different people. Barry Wayne gave the machine a light tap, while the forger fairly banged out the letters, often piercing the paper by his strong touch. I found no difficulty in ascertaining which of these notes were written by Mr Cain. He even continued writing them after Barry's death. The note to Samfari pretending to come from Korowaar is his work, and others, quite enlightening to a persistent investigator.

"Then apparent implications of Mrs Van Zandt's

interest in Mr Cain's procedures naturally led my thoughts toward her. An address found among her belongings, and which she said was the number of a new hat shop, was indicative also. It proved to be a hat-shop, but a private post-office as well, and I soon learned that Mrs Van Zandt and Mr Cain communicated through that convenient agency. Much more I learned from some stamps and postmarks that I found of value. These directed my search to tropical regions, to be exact the Malay Archipelago, to which and from which country correspondence was carried on by Mr Cain and his bankers in Formosa. This was in relation to the young man Samfari, and cannot be taken up just now."

"You are prepared to tell us, Mr Stone," Dan Wayne's voice had lost its rancor, and he spoke almost pleadingly, "how the death of Samfari was possible in the conditions obtaining last night?"

"Certainly, Mr Wayne. But I can go no further without insisting that we use real names and discard all camouflage. Unless the murderer will confess to his crimes, we must get some further witnesses to testify in a few matters. Mrs Van Zandt, will you answer a few questions?"

"No, she will not," and Pat Wayne almost shouted the words. "Her testimony need not be called for. I confess—I am the criminal. But I refuse to say another word, unless you assure me that Vera shall not be questioned."

"I assure you of that, Mr Pat," Stone said; "it will not be necessary, if you are willing to answer the questions yourself."

He glanced at Dan Wayne, uncertain how he would take this confession of his brother's. But instead of the collapse that Stone feared, Wayne was sitting up very straight, and looking at Pat with a stern, cold glare.

It was plain to be seen that at last Dan Wayne had realized, had been forced to believe in his brother's crimes.

"Pat, is it true?" he said, in a mere whisper, as if hoping against hope.

"Well, yes, old boy," and for some reason, Pat Wayne returned to his usual debonair manner. "I never would have given in, but for that man's lugging in Vera! I'll tell the whole story—give me half a chance."

"Just tell us what we don't already know," said Stone, "and perhaps that will not make too long a recital."

"Oh, no, it won't," and Pat settled himself back in his easy chair, lighted a fresh cigarette, mixed for himself a stiff highball and began:

"Imprimis, I am bad—bad all through," and he looked round as if for a friendly denial, but received none.

"Not so much actively bad, as passively all wrong. I am amoral rather than unmoral, and immoral not at all. So, from boyhood, I have resented that Dan was the good boy, and I the Terror. Yet I adored my brother, I do still. But when our father left his property and his fortune the way he did, I resented it, and it soured my whole life. Not with regard to Dan; I knew it was not his fault, and I felt rage and rancor

only against my father. But he died before I could ask him to change the conditions, and all my life I have had to be content with the amount of money my brother saw fit to give me. Even this in no way lessened my affection for Dan, but I began to puzzle out what I could do about it.

“The problem was an easy one. Between me and the large sum of money left by my father stood only Dan and Barry. Dan, bless him, I knew must die soon—he has a fatal disease, rapidly developing. Barry, I concluded to sacrifice. I was tired of this dull uneventful life I was living, and I wanted a large fortune, a big cruising yacht and . . . and Vera. I set to work to get these, and was just about to succeed, when Mr Stone steps in and worries me.”

“I haven’t begun the real worrying yet,” Stone said, ominously.

“No, I suppose not.” Pat sighed, and went on.

“Well, I did make the contraption that hit Barry. It was clever, if I do say it myself. You see, the heavy bar, arranged to hit him on the head as he started his engine, was so planned that its action could be turned on or shut off. And this adjustment was worked by the same means that started or stopped the engine. Thus, the switch that Barry turned, thinking it would start his engine, had been set to start the spring that released the bar, and did so. The bar hit him and killed him, and obeying the spring’s mechanism, flew back to its place among other strips of wood, supposedly for the newly invented ‘starter.’ The device acted only once; to be used again, the spring must be set again. So that as soon as the fatal blow had

been struck and the bar had flown back to its place, the real starter was automatically in working order. I went over to the yacht early that morning and set the thing. I knew exactly where Barry would stand to start his motor, and the bar was aimed at the place his head would be. It worked perfectly; I was amazed myself when I found how perfectly it had worked. The next thing was to get it away. Campion and I did that; not, however, without being caught by our detective wizard here. Elkins' little quietus did its part, and everything was all to the good until Samfari turned up."

"The lad you had sent money to for years, thinking he was your own son?"

"Yes, how did you know that?"

"I know everything. And when you learned he was Dan's son, you decided to send him after the others."

"Just so." Pat's complacency was boundless. "And I defy you to tell me how I managed an entrance into this suite."

Pat's eyes were staring, blazing. He had the expression of a maniac, but Stone was sure he was sane.

"Of course I know how you effected your entrance into Samfari's locked suite, but why kill him? There is surely money enough in the Wayne estate for all of you."

"Yes, I suppose so," and Pat sighed. "But I'm tired of being on Dan's bounty, and when Samfari came into the game, I knew Dan would make him his heir and cut me out. Beside, I wanted a lot of money to . . . to buy Vera."

“And you, a murderer, planned to marry a lovely lady . . .”

“We will leave her out of the question, if you please. I am making this confession to prove to you that Mrs Van Zandt had no knowledge of her husband’s killer, and never would have had, except for our super-clever detective. I am sorry, now, that I planned and carried out the whole affair. I didn’t think it was going to become so complicated, but one thing necessitated another until I was in too deep to get out.”

“And you meant at the end, to kill your brother, and so get all the money for yourself?”

“No!” and Pat’s voice rang out. “No, I never could have killed Dan. He meant too much to me. I adore my brother and always have. But I had little affection for any one else—except—the woman I love.”

He glanced at Vera, but she refused to look at him, and he went on.

“I didn’t mean to do for Elkins that day, but when the plans were changed and he went in the yacht with Barry, instead of Jane, it was too good a chance to miss. I had the sodium ready long before. I meant to put it in among his sodamints, but had to arrange it differently. I told him it was an antidote for seasickness. I can’t help feeling that I laid my plans cleverly and carried them out successfully, until Mr Stone came butting in and put the whole plan askew.”

“It is my invariable experience,” Stone said, “that a murderer is always a very vain person. He is more

proud of his achievements than many a man is of worthier practices. Then you had planned to include Mr Van Zandt in your massacre?”

“No, not that. I had hoped I could persuade Vera to get a divorce, but, as I told you, I want to leave the lady out of this discussion.”

“This is not a discussion,” Stone said, sternly, “it is a confession, and a very painful one. I think we will soon bring it to a close.”

“Meaning you are going to arrest me? But you forget, you haven’t proved that I did for Samfari.”

“I can easily do that,” and Fleming Stone looked regretful. “You left too many clues, Mr Pat. Your entrance to this suite last night is easily traced. In fact, all your course has been traceable by clues. Those notes you wrote to incriminate Barry and others, even that last one signed Korowaar, were easily discerned because of your forceful typing. Your fixing of the death-dealing bar on the motor engine, and your insistence that it was a sort of starting mechanism, led to suspicion and verification of your interest in it. You made that infernal piece of work, you knew just where Barry would stand to start the motor, you knew that his first move would release that bar that would hit his head, and cause his death. Even the faked plans you made to fool me, spoke against you. You knew that the metallic sodium would probably not be suspected, and you took long chances, most of which you have lost.

“Now, regarding your entrance last night, will you explain it, and show us how it was done, or . . . do you want me to do that?”

“Ha, ha, you think that’s a way out, do you? Well, sir, if you are really smart enough to have discovered my clever trick, go ahead and show off. I don’t for a minute believe you know anything about it. And you’re trying to bluff us into thinking you do. Proceed, Mr Wizard, leave the room, let us lock the door, and then get yourself in here again.”

“Very well,” said Stone, rising, going through the foyer and out into the hall.

Pat Wayne locked the door after him, and returned to his seat, showing for the first time a slight air of concern.

A short pause ensued, during which no one spoke, and Pat Wayne seemed every moment to look more at ease.

Then, there was an odd sound, that made every one look up at the ceiling. The great crystal chandelier was swaying the merest trifle, and its prisms tinkled softly.

Then the large plaster medallion, from which the chandelier depended, seemed to loosen itself from the ceiling and move downward. Slowly it came, crystals, medallion and all, and on the medallion could be seen a pair of shoes, then a pair of trouser legs, and then the whole man, Fleming Stone, standing on the medallion, which, apparently of plaster, was really of steel.

A strong rope supported the whole affair, which worked precisely like a dumb-waiter, the balancing weight concealed in the wall, and a perfectly working mechanical contrivance enabling Stone to regulate the rapidity of its descent and stop it at will. This mechanism was concealed in the loft above by a false floor which covered it.

He did stop it at perhaps a foot above the large center table, on to which he stepped and then sprang to the floor.

His weight removed, slowly the chandelier began to ascend to its original position, and as they all watched, with fascinated gaze, a muffled click told of its readjustment to its usual place.

Pat Wayne turned an ironical stare at Stone, and said, “You are indeed a master in your profession. How did you guess?”

“I didn’t guess,” was the reply, “you left a clue, as you do so often. Here it is,” and he handed over to Pat the broken piece of a prism he had found on the floor. “You doubtless broke that bit of glass as you came down last night, and didn’t know it.”

“I certainly didn’t. Where was this piece?”

“Right under the chandelier; see, it is the lower half of that one on the second festoon.”

“Just my luck!” said Pat, pettishly; “everything all right up to the last minute, and then . . . bilked by a bit of broken glass!”

“Oh, there were lots more marks against you than that,”

Stone told him. “Too bad to hurt your vanity, but you left traces everywhere. When you put that sodium behind the picture, knowing it would be found, you went afterward and wiped away your own finger marks. But I had already secured them, so I knew you were afraid. A man afraid is often a guilty man. You knew if you left that picture crooked, I would straighten it. So you put the sodium there to incriminate Barry, but it didn’t work. You thought Samfari was your son, and I daresay even your crimes would not include *that* murder, but when you learned his father was Dan, you were all for it. It was your whisper through the window ventilator that he thought was Korowaar’s.

“It was a great help to you that nearly all the men about were handy men. Yourself, Dan, Barry, Campion—all these could have rigged up that thing on the yacht; but you did it, pretending it was a new starting gear. You even made some fake drawings to prove it, but they only proved the fraud. Oh, you are clever, Mr Pat, but too careless of other people’s cleverness. A crime committed is almost always a crime that can be discovered, but you forgot that. When did you rig up the very efficacious mechanism that controls the chandelier?”

“One summer, when they all went off on a trip and I didn’t go. I only fixed it up to have fun with it. Mystify them, you know.”

“It mystified me, for a time, but I think I should have discovered it even without the broken prism.”

Dan Wayne rose and left the room. He walked uncertainly, like an old man, saying no word to anybody.

“I’m going home,” Steve Holt announced. “There is no cause for me to stay longer, and I want to get Jane away from this atmosphere. Mr Stone, will you tell Dan, when it is convenient? We shall leave early in the morning. Come, Jane.”

“I’ll see you as soon as I can make it,” Campion whispered as he bade Jane good-by.

“If they can go, I can,” said Vera. “Shall I, Pat?”

“Do you want to?”

“Not while you’re here—”

“I won’t be here long. I suppose I shall be dealt with as my friends doubtless all think I deserve.”

“And as you think you deserve?” said Fleming Stone, gravely.

“Yes,” said Patrick Henry Wayne.

THE END

Transcriber’s Notes

- Copyright notice provided as in the original—this e-text is public domain in the country of publication.
- In the text versions, delimited italics text in _underscores_ (the HTML version reproduces the font form of the printed book.)
- Silently corrected palpable typos; left non-standard spellings and dialect unchanged.

[The end of *The Beautiful Derelict* by Carolyn Wells]