

A Detective's Story

BY BILL SQUIBB

THE following adventure was narrated to me by an old friend of mine, who had at one time been a detective.

It ran thus:

“I had been nearly three years on the force,” he commenced, “and during that time, I passed through some trying scenes, and on several occasions came near losing my life.

“But the one I am about to relate is the most startling of all.

“It occurred in this manner:

“A band of counterfeiters were flooding the country with counterfeit bills of large denomination, on different banks; and so well were they executed that none but the most competent judges could detect them.

“So the case was given to me and Jack Findall—another detective—to work up, and if possible discover their rendezvous.

“We had put into practice every stratagem and artifice known to the profession. We were out late and early, at one time prowling at the dead hour of midnight, in places where a man's life could be sold for a drink; at another, strolling through fashionable art galleries, and loitering along fashionable promenades, watching, listening for the slightest gesture or word which might lead to a clue—but without success; and still the counterfeits were thrown out upon the public.

“Matters went on in this manner for nearly a month; and one morning, after being up all night, Jack and I separated for our respective homes to recruit for another night's work in a different direction; for he thought that he had the thread in his grasp, which would eventually lead to their discovery.

“Well, at the appointed time, I was at the place of meeting, but Jack was absent. I waited a half-hour, but no Jack. I repaired to the station-house—he had not been there; I hurried to where he boarded—I received the same answer.

“What could it mean? Had anything happened to him? These were questions I mentally asked myself, while standing on a corner considering what I had best do.

“I knew that he would not go off voluntarily without me, I said to myself, ‘Well, then, where is he?’ I fiercely ejaculated aloud.

“‘If you will submit to my terms, I will take you to him,’ answered a deep bass voice behind me.

“I turned quickly round, and there stood a man enveloped in a loose coat.

“A broad-brimmed hat was slouched over his eyes, completely hiding the upper part of his face, while a growth of bushy black whiskers concealed the lower part.

“All this I saw at a glance.

“‘If you know where he is I shall arrest you, for I believe he has been foully dealt with,’ I said, placing my hand on his shoulder.

“‘Not so fast, not so fast, my young friend,’ he returned, taking a step backward, and at the same time throwing open his coat with one arm and disclosing to view his other, pistol in hand aimed point blank at me.

“I was completely dumbfounded at this new maneuver, and he seeing my confusion, gave a low laugh, and said:

“‘If you will submit to having your eyes bandaged and placed in a carriage, I will take you to him, if not I will bid you good-night and be off,’ and he turned to walk away.

“‘Stop.’ I called out, recovering myself. ‘I accept your conditions; but remember, if anything happens to me I have wealthy, influential friends who will do me justice.’

“‘I give you my word of honor that no harm shall befall you,’ he said, and drawing a handkerchief from his pocket he placed it over my eyes, and then giving a shrill whistle, a carriage drove up to the curb and I was assisted in, and we started.

“By this time it had grown dark, and was raining heavily.

“We rode on in silence for some time, when the carriage suddenly stopped.

“My guide jumped out, and assisting me to alight, he then led me up a long flight of steps, through a narrow hallway and at length reached a door, where he gave a peculiar knock and we were admitted into what seemed to be a large room.

“I was then led some distance and finally conducted up a short flight of steps and seated in a chair, when the bandage was suddenly removed, followed by a burst of light which nearly blinded me, but after a short time my eyes became accustomed to the bright light and I looked around me.

“I was seated at one end of a large room on a small raised platform. In front of me, and extending to the other end of the room, were benches filled with men all wearing masks.

“At this juncture my guide, who had been standing at my side, said to me:

“‘Look!’

“Turning my head I saw two men enter through a small door, bearing Jack Findall, bound and gagged, between them, and carrying them up the room, they threw him on the floor in front of me.

“‘This man,’ continued my guide, pointing at Jack, ‘has occasioned us a great deal of trouble, and has been the means of bringing more men to justice than any other man on the force, so we are going to cut short his career.’

“‘And,’ he continued, ‘these men seated before you are the ones who have succeeded so successfully in the counterfeiting business; they have made it their study for years, and have now reduced it down to a science, but your friend here had found out our mode of operations, and had he had his freedom a day longer, he would have captured the whole gang, but,’ he added fiercely, ‘he will never see the light of day again.’

“At this instant a trap door opened in the floor and a curious-looking machine slowly ascended.

“It was made of two heavy stone rollers which could be raised or lowered one over the other and both worked with cranks at the side.

“Jack was lifted and lashed on a board with his arms extended in front of him and then plank and all was lifted and placed with his feet towards the rollers.

“I saw it in instant. They were going to crush him between the rollers.

“‘Inhuman fiends, would you brutally murder a fellow being in this manner, and in cold blood,’ I shouted, jumping up and rushing forward to release Jack; but a dozen men sprang up and forced me back in the chair, and as many caught hold of the cranks and commenced turning, while one regulated the height of the rollers.

“Jack was deathly pale, and his features were as rigid as marble. Poor fellow, he had fainted, but when his feet came between the rollers the excruciating pain soon brought him back to the realization of his terrible position.

“The rollers moved slowly round, and crash, crash went the bones of his feet and legs; his face was distorted with the agony he endured.

“I raved, swore, and fought like a madman to free myself and go to his assistance, but all my struggles were useless, and still the infernal machine turned on, mashing his bones to powder, while the blood ran off the table to the floor in small rivulets.

“And I can imagine to this day that I hear the crunch, crunch as his body passed between the rollers. O God, what a horrible sight.

“Well, at last this terrible work was over, and what remained of poor Jack came out a bloody, shapeless mass.

“I was then compelled to place my hands on it, and solemnly swear, that I would never reveal what had occurred and also resign my position as detective.

“I was then bandaged, placed in a carriage and left at the same street from which I had started three hours before.

“This took place years and years ago, so I think there can be no harm in telling it as I suppose most of the actors in that frightful scene are long since dead.”

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