

## A Detective's Experience

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### *A Midnight Adventure*

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"I will tell you nothing, sir!"

"But you must!"

"I will not!"

The young head was flung back with an imperious gesture, while the fierce blue eyes met mine, said Mr. F., full of scorn.

It was a strange case. It baffled us. Both Mr. I. and myself had wasted weeks upon it. We were no nearer the solution now than when we began.—The boy was obdurate. He would tell us nothing, yet we were sure this was the abode of the criminal. Time and again had we traced him to this old, rickety house, built near a century ago, and romantic with many a tale of the olden time. The moonbeams played upon its dome like fire, and the trees in the avenue and lawn caught a silver sheen from the weird beams that strayed in among their foliage. The dark shadows seemed instinct with life, as the waving leaves fashioned them in curious form on the dark grass.

Underneath these trees Mr. I. and myself had waited for hours that night. It was known that Charley Wynne was in the city; a policeman had seen him enter here. But we had searched the house from bottom to roof, and only this boy was seen—a child almost with sunny hair and face like a girl's. There was a witching grace in the lithe, slender limbs, and the willowy frame, grace in every motion, courage in the fierce blue eye; and as we searched the house, the boy followed our movements, a smile of scorn upon his lips, but a look of anxiety in his eyes.

At last I had asked him if he knew the murderer of Mr. Hill, one Charley Wynne. He flushed redly as the question was repeated, and his lips trembled with emotion.

"Do you know him?" I repeated.

"I will not tell you, sir!"

"But you must!"

"I will not!"

"Very well then you are my prisoner. I shall have to arrest you for harboring a fugitive," I replied. Still I had no intention of doing so. I only meant to play upon his fears, in the hope that it would elicit some information.

But the boy thought me in earnest...A frightened look swept over his face, and he trembled like

an aspen. I noticed, too, a restless, uneasy glance out of his eyes that we sometimes see in one who dreads the effect of spoken words upon one he fears may hear them.

That look assured me that my prisoner was near at hand!

I went on to tell him that if he refused me the information I sought, that, much as I disliked to, I should have to lock him up among common criminals, in a police cell.

Where was the boy's courage now? His knees trembled—his face was livid with fear, and, sinking into his chair, he cried out amid sobs and tears:

“Oh! Charley, Charley, save me!”

The words had barely left his lips, when a concealed door in the old partition wall opened, and Charley [Wynne] stepped into the room.

“I surrender!” he said; “let the boy alone!”

The next moment the boy sprang to his feet, gave one passionate glance at Charley, full of sorrow and regret, and then murmuring—

“What have I done; what have I done,” sunk fainting to the floor.

“Why, this young man,” said Mr. I., regarding him rather contemptuously, “[seems] inclined to make a scene.”

“Yes; it appears so,” I replied, but feeling all the time a strange fear working at my heart. As hastily as I could I applied remedies to revive the fainting boy. Soon his eyes opened, and, resting on our prisoner, he cried out:

“Oh, Charley! Charley! is it I who betrayed you?”

“Your fears have.”

“Then I'll die with you. I too,” he said, turning to me, “am equally guilty. I planned the deed; I helped to execute it; I will not be separated from him.”

“This is strange devotion in a boy.”

“Boy no longer; I am this man's wife,” and shaking loose her bright yellow golden curls disclosed the features of one of the most noted, as well as beautiful, decoys in the city—an outlaw's daughter and a murderer's wife.

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