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*Harriet looked toward the window. Marguerite seemed to be there . . . holding her head*

By  
W. HAROLD  
WILSON

## Clue of the Blue Bead

**T**HE two were seated in a stuffy private office at police headquarters. Harriet Oden repeatedly wiped the tears that insisted upon clouding her soft brown eyes while occasional shudders passed over her slender body. Her fair complexion seemed pallid in contrast with her curly black hair and dark brows and lashes.

Neither had spoken for several minutes. Detective Michael Kelly, a middle-aged man of medium height and stocky build, was tapping on the desk with a pencil. His gray head drooped forward, his heavy brows knitted in a frown of deep concern.

"Now, let's see, Miss," he began to review the facts. "We ain't got much here to work on. Your sister was found dead this morning in bed, by her husband. The doctor says that death was from natural causes."

"But that is impossible. She was not ill," Harriet insisted. "Why, last evening she was in the best of spirits and feeling fine."

"That may be, Miss, but there ain't a mark on the body," the detective drawled. And after a brief pause: "Of course, circumstances point to him and his secretary pretty strong. Did your sister

*Unconsciously Harriet called out to her, "Marguerite! What's the matter? What is wrong?"*



*Everybody was baffled by the death of young Marguerite until this tiny ball rolled on the floor—*

know what relations there was between them?"

"No," she answered. "I didn't know myself until a short time ago and I learned it then by accident. I happened to return to the house one afternoon, after Marguerite and I had started for a bridge party, and I overheard Floyd and Marie quarreling. She was insisting that he leave with her."

"You didn't tell your sister about that?" the detective queried.

"No—I couldn't."

"Have you notified your people?" he then asked.

"I—you see—Marguerite was the only one of my family left—she was like a mother to me," Harriet sobbed.

THE detective sat for several minutes, apparently turning things over in his mind, then proceeded in a slow drawing voice that was tempered with sympathy and yet distinctly apprehensive: "Of course, she might have been poisoned or something like that; and I've ordered that an autopsy be performed, but it couldn't be done to-day because Mr. Langdon's been hanging too close around and we don't want him to know just yet, that he's

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**Slowly she opened her eyes and in the darkness saw the faint figure of a man. He was standing at the head of her bed. . . .**

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under suspicion. They'll get to that to-night. You come in to-morrow and in the meantime I'll keep him shadowed."

"All right, but I shall never rest until I am sure that my sister was not murdered by Floyd Langdon." Her voice emphasized an unmistakable tone of determination.

Kelly frowned. "Better be careful, Miss," he warned. "If he's guilty and gets suspicious of you—there's no telling what harm he might do you."

**A**S she stepped into her bright colored roadster and headed toward the beach road, she thought of that happy home back in Virginia that would be no more. Having lived with her sister and brother-in-law since her mother's death several years before, she was naturally included when the Langdons decided to come to Miami Beach for a vacation. She couldn't understand then why it was that Floyd had insisted upon bringing Marie Chadwick, his private secretary, along. He wasn't engaged in any definite business. He was one of those extremely fortunate young men who had inherited a comfortable income, and who held an honorary office in one, or possibly two, corporations in which he owned stock. But he needed a private secretary to handle his personal mail and to look after the details incident to his holdings, he would explain—and, of course, Marguerite believed him. But now Harriet understood . . . it was all clear to her.

Presently, from far down the highway, the dreary house appeared—dreary to her. They had taken it on their arrival a month ago. It stood alone, well back from the road, and overlooked the mighty Atlantic.

Walking slowly to the front of the house, she listened closely for some sound from within, but all was silent, though Floyd's car was in the garage. She stepped up to the veranda and was about to enter when she caught sight of Floyd standing about midway of the hall, in the doorway leading to the living room.

Floyd Langdon was of medium height,

slender of body, and wore his thin dark hair combed straight back with a slight break in the center. His sharp features were accentuated by narrow piercing eyes. As usual, he was faultlessly attired, presenting a sleek, well-groomed appearance.

She watched him for a moment. He was examining something that he held in his hand, in which he seemed deeply interested; so much so that he did not notice her. Harriet could not see what it was that so engrossed his attention. She moved toward him, but as she did so he looked up—startled, and quickly thrust his hand into his pocket. She saw a small object drop to the rug. She thought he showed signs of extreme nervousness—apprehension even.

"Hello, Harriet. I didn't hear you come in," he mumbled as he turned toward her and started as if to leave the house. He did not seem to be in a very conversational mood.

Appearing not to have noticed his actions, she quickly asked, "When are they going to bring the body home?"

This seemed to irritate him. "I don't know. I've been to the funeral parlors at least half a dozen times to-day, trying to hurry them up, but I don't get much satisfaction out of them. All they say is that they'll bring her out as soon as they can. I don't understand such business," he nervously answered.

"Possibly they do not know that we are taking the body back to Virginia," she ventured.

**Y**ES they do. I told them. I'm going down there after dinner this evening and find out what's wrong," he snapped.

Kelly's plans for the autopsy immediately came to her mind, but to disagree with Floyd would be unwise; so she made no answer, though her eyes followed him as he strode abruptly from the house, crossed the road and disappeared beyond the slope to the hard surface at the water's edge. Then she turned to where he had stood when she first came in.

She intended searching for the object

he had dropped, in which he had shown such keen interest. "Possibly Marie is around somewhere and will see me," she thought, and decided to make sure. She must hurry, however, or Floyd might return. Maybe Marie was up-stairs in her room. She would see.

Marie's room was at the head of the stairs. Harriet occupied the room down the short hall and on the same side of the house as Marie's. In fact, the two rooms were joined by a connecting bath. Across the hall was one large room which had been Floyd's and Marguerite's. The door was directly opposite from Harriet's.

As she reached the top of the stairs, Marie called to her. "Oh, Harriet, is that you?" she whined in her fine shrill voice. "Yes," Harriet answered, glancing through the open doorway as she turned into the hall. She despised the sight of Marie, who was one of those plump little blondes, with bewitching blue eyes and frivolous red lips.

"Oh, Harriet, isn't this simply terrible?" she sputtered. And in the next breath rattled on: "Why, where have you been all day, Harriet? I haven't seen you since all the excitement this morning. Just think of Mr. Langdon waking up and finding Marguerite beside him—dead! Oh, horrors—and the undertakers carrying her away in that long narrow basket. Poor Mr. Langdon. I feel so sorry for him, don't you? He has been so upset all day. I am really worried about him."

Harriet mumbled some answer to her as she went to her room. She really didn't know herself what she said, but called out as she started back down the stairs, "I'm going down to the casino to get some aspirin. I've a terrific headache."

**A**T the foot of the stairs she looked about her. Floyd had not yet returned, so she stepped quickly and quietly to the rug. Leaning over, she searched the entire surface around the living-room doorway. All she could find was what seemed to be a small blue bead, no larger than the end of her forefinger. She could see nothing to that—possibly she was mistaken; possibly it was all her imagination, she thought. But Floyd had been so keenly interested . . . she dropped the bead in

her purse and hurriedly left the house. For a moment she thought she saw her dead sister standing on the stairs, her hands holding her head.

She sped up the highway to warn Kelly of Floyd's intended visit to the morgue, and to return before he should, if possible. She knew only too well that the detective was right. It would never do for Floyd to become suspicious of her.

**I**N the telephone booth at the casino, she called headquarters. Kelly was not there but they gave her a telephone number by which she could reach him, possibly his home. She called and Kelly himself answered the 'phone.

"Mr. Kelly, this is Miss Oden speaking. I've called to tell you that Mr. Langdon intends to go to the mortician's again to-night. I thought you would want to know," she informed him.

"Glad you called, Miss. Thanks. I'll be looking out for him. You're being careful for yourself, aren't you? Remember what I told you," the detective's voice came over the 'phone. He seemed a bit apprehensive.

"Yes," she answered.

When she again arrived at the house, darkness had fallen. She found that Floyd had already returned. He seemed to be searching the hallway floor, particularly around the living-room door.

"Lost something, Floyd?" she asked.

"No," he dryly answered, as he cast a sharp cutting glance in her direction.

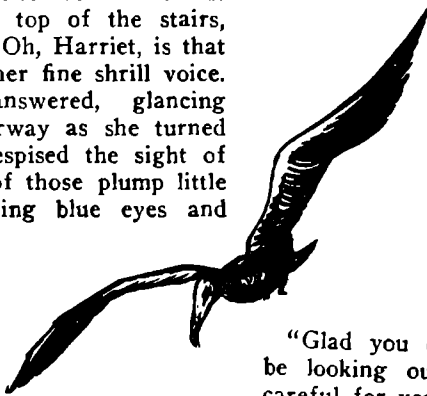
She noticed that glance, and remembering the bead in her purse, asked no further questions, but immediately passed on into the kitchen where Agnes, a fat Bahamian Negress, was preparing the evening meal.

"Lawd, honey, but yo' looks so pale and tired," Agnes said, as Harriet entered.

"I am tired, Agnes. Have you some hot coffee?"

"Yes'um. Yo' jes sit right down dere and ole Agnes give yo' a hot cup of coffee and some vittles. Poor li'l chile! Ah knows jes how yo' feels."

She wasn't hungry, however. Floyd and Marie both called her to dinner later but she declined, saying that she felt ill.



Harriet had tried for hours to sleep. Floyd had come in quite late, pushing his door to in a rather irritated manner. Finally, leaving her bed, she sat by the open window. From her room she had a clear view of the vast Atlantic, and a round full moon cut a golden path over the top of the waters. It was as quiet as the tombs, save for the slight rustling of the palms and the distant lapping of a peaceful sea.

**P**RESENTLY she experienced a strange feeling. She could not account for it, but it seemed as though it were a premonition that something was about to happen. She was not afraid. On the contrary, she was anxious—eager to know what it was. She waited, but the night wore on. Finally she returned to her bed; still she was restless. She felt a burning desire to again look from the window. As she started to get up, she gasped. There, sitting in the same chair that she had left a few minutes before, she saw her sister, Marguerite!

Harriet almost called out to her. She seemed as if in the flesh. Her head was clasped in her hands and she was swaying to and fro as if suffering with a severe headache. Now she was rubbing her head—stroking her hair; now holding her head and swaying again. Harriet wanted to fold her in her arms, to fondle and caress her. She felt that she must go to her. As she moved—it disappeared—it was gone!

"What can this mean?" she thought.

Then suddenly, three piercing screams—screams of horror, broke the hush of the night. She leaped to the floor, and from the adjoining room, Marie yelled: "Floyd! Floyd!"

"Marie! What's the matter?" Floyd called as he jerked open his door.

"Those screams. They seem to have come from the room where Agnes sleeps beside the garage," Marie clamored.

Then Harriet heard Floyd tramping down the stairs and through the hall. Later, there was loud knocking at the front door, and in a moment she heard him talking to some one. After a time, he returned and she heard him tell Marie: "Agnes must have been dreaming. She said some one was around her room. It must have been some animal. I didn't see anything." Then he called, "Harriet, did you hear

all the commotion just a few moments ago?"

"Yes, I did," she answered. "Who was at the door?"

"Some man—said he was a plain-clothes man; that he was passing along the road and heard some one scream. He wanted to know what the trouble was," he replied as he re-entered his room and closed the door.

The next morning old Agnes came up to her room.

"Missie Harriet, is yo' seed anything las' night?" she asked.

"Why—did you?" Harriet interposed.

"Yes'um. Ah seed Missie Marguerite. She was a-walkin' aroun' and a-holdin' her head. It mos' scaid me to death when Ah fust woke up."

"Did you tell Mr. Langdon about it when he went down there?" Harriet asked.

"No'm, cause Ah's more scaid of dat man den Ah am of de ghoses—mos'."

Harriet did not tell her that she, herself, had seen a vision of Marguerite.

It was afternoon before she went to see Kelly. She was anxious to learn what the autopsy had revealed. And yet she had a feeling of dread. She found the detective again at his desk.

"Come in, Miss. Sit down," he greeted her.

Taking a chair close to the desk, she immediately inquired about the autopsy.

"We made the autopsy but found nothing, Miss," he began to explain. "No poison or no gas."

This was an unexpected surprise to Harriet, and she sat as if stupefied for several minutes before commenting. Then, as if grasping at a last straw: "But—what a—could he have strangled her—or maybe suffocated her?"

**T**HE detective shook his head thoughtfully. "Nope, either would have left signs, Miss." Then presently he asked, "What have you found out—anything?"

Remembering the little blue bead, she reached in her purse and handed it to him, explaining how she found it and how Floyd had acted. Kelly examined it at great length, his heavy brows arched, then knitted in a thoughtful frown. "Can't see anything to this right now, Miss, but leave it with me for the time being." He carefully placed it in the drawer of his desk.

"Floyd has seemed quite upset because they are holding the body so long," she told him.

"Yeah? Well, he'll have to get upset some more because the body won't hardly be ready before to-morrow morning. He delayed us last night and I want to look it over again to-day. I'm not satisfied yet—sometimes clues show up later," he mused.

AS she was about to leave, Harriet turned to Kelly and asked: "Do you believe in premonitions or a vision from the Beyond?"

"Yes, Miss, I do," he meditatively replied, eyeing her gravely.

"So do I . . . and I still believe that my sister was murdered."

At the front entrance she caught sight of Floyd standing on the corner, and darted quickly back to avoid him. All the way home she wondered if he had seen her. Surely he must have seen her car parked in front.

That night, shortly after retiring, she again felt that strange, uncanny feeling

out like that. I hope no one heard me. But what can all this mean? I don't understand it. She must want to tell me something. What can it be?" she thought.

How long she had slept she did not know. But suddenly she awakened—startled. She was conscious of some one's presence in her room—near her. Slowly she opened her eyes, and in the darkness saw the faint figure of a man. He was standing at the head of her bed. Harriet watched him, fearful that he might hear the thumping of her heart within her breast. Presently, he lifted his hand above her head—it seemed as if he were about to grip her mouth and face. She gave a terrified scream! He darted back and through the bathroom door. In a moment a light shone from Marie's room.

"Harriet! What's the trouble—dreaming?"

"No. There was some one in my room," she excitedly exclaimed, sliding out of bed and turning on her own light.

"Some one in your room?" she whined.

"Yes, he ran through the bathroom. Did you see him?" she asked as Marie came

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**Harriet turned ghastly white, then fainted. Even the seasoned detective shuddered as the doctor exclaimed: "This is the most dastardly crime I have ever known of!"**

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creep over her that she had experienced the night before. It grew stronger and she became extremely restless; so pushing the light covering aside, she sat on the edge of the bed, clad in her thin silk gown. Then looked toward the window—a shudder passed over her. Marguerite seemed to be there again. As before, she was holding her head. It was plainer this time. Harriet could see her face clearly; it seemed streaked as if with blood. Unconsciously she called out to her, "Marguerite! What's the matter? What is wrong?" And as if in answer, the hand moved—it moved to the head. Harriet leaned forward, breathless. It stroked the hair—then extended toward her as if beckoning her to come. Then back to the head and stroked the hair again and again; finally resting on top of the head, seeming to press as if to alleviate pain. Harriet started toward the window—the vision disappeared.

"How foolish, how silly of me to call

in. The blonde secretary was trembling.

"No, I didn't see anyone, Harriet," was the reply.

Then Floyd called from across the hall, "What's all the noise? What's ailing you, anyway, Harriet?"

"THERE was some one in my room, I tell you," she insisted as she slipped on her negligée and opened her door to let him in.

"Oh, you were just dreaming—go on back to bed," he snapped.

Soon the house was quiet again. But Harriet did not close her eyes until dawn brought its all-pervading sense of protection and security.

The sun was well up before she arose; looking at her watch, it was a quarter to ten o'clock.

While she was dressing, cold shivers ran up and down her spine as she reflected on the night that had just passed. She was glad that she would soon be

leaving this house; though it would be in her memory—always, with its sorrow and its horrors. Just then she heard a car come to a stop, and looking from the window, she saw the hearse. Floyd drove up behind it. She stepped back from the window . . . she could not bear to watch them bring the casket in.

**E**NTERING the hall, she found Floyd's door open. She had not been in that room since the morning of Marguerite's death. Now, she tiptoed in as if she might awaken someone who was but asleep. Marguerite's trinkets and toilet articles were still on her dressing table, just as she had left them. They did not seem to have been disturbed. Harriet touched them tenderly and fondled them all.

"I hadn't noticed that Marguerite's brush was so scarred. I wonder how she did that," she thought as she took the hair brush in her hand.

Then she heard light walking down-

stairs; the soft rolling of wheels on the rugs—they were bringing the casket in. She rushed back into her room and closed the door so that she could not hear.

Later, slowly descending the stairs, she found that the hearse had gone. All was quiet. It had taken her quite some time to muster sufficient courage and control to come down. Hesitatingly, she stepped to the living-room door and looked within. The soft gray casket rested at the front end of the room near the double windows; the easel was banked with flowers. It was all that she could do to walk the short distance . . . and as she looked down, she burst into tears and frantically sobbed.

The small body, so lately full of life and health, was turned slightly on its side and nestled among pillows and folds of shell-pink satin and tulle, which blended softly with the luxuriant hair curling about the temples. The cheeks were faintly rouged and the lips slightly colored. She seemed as if but asleep—then, as if she were ready to speak—as if she were trying to speak. Harriet found herself again thinking of the vision, and what it could mean.

"Could it have been a message? It must mean something. I wonder . . ." she pondered.

She looked long at the head, then suddenly decided . . . glancing around the room—she was alone. Leaning over, her hand extended and touched the hair. She stroked it softly. Then, as the vision—she pressed the top of the head. Abruptly she jerked her hand away and stepped quickly back from the casket . . . What was it that had pricked her hand? She looked down. There was a spot of blood on her finger—she brushed it off—it came back. It was her own blood. She whirled around. Panic seized her and she screamed—terrified screams of horror. Then all went black before her.

When she regained consciousness, she heard Floyd saying, with a soft affected tenderness, "Poor little girl. She is overcome with grief; that is all that's wrong with her."

She was lying on the settee. Leaning over her and holding her wrist, was an elderly man. Beside him stood Michael Kelly,



*Startled, Floyd quickly thrust his hand in his pocket. Harriet saw a small object drop to the rug*



"This is Dr. Bradley, Miss. I heard you scream and rushed in. You had fainted, so we summoned the doctor," he told her.

"Just lie quiet, young lady," the doctor counselled as she tried to rise.

"Please . . . some water," she sobbed.

"Bring her a glass of cold water," the doctor instructed, turning to Floyd.

As Floyd reluctantly left the room, she shot quick glances around—Marie was standing in the doorway. Harriet motioned to Kelly and he leaned close to her.

"Examine the head . . ." she gasped, pointing to the casket.

The detective's expression did not alter. The two men exchanged whispered words, but neither moved. She held up her hand—both looked at the spot of blood on the finger.

**T**HEY quickly stepped to the casket.

The doctor was examining the head. He stroked the hair. Then sharply withdrew his hand. Harriet watched them as they exchanged puzzled glances. He now parted the hair and appeared to be inspecting the scalp. Suddenly he reached for his case and secured rubber gloves and forceps. . . .

Harriet turned ghastly white, then fainted. Even the seasoned detective shuddered, as the doctor exclaimed: "This is the most dastardly crime I have ever known of!"

Kelly wheeled around and dashed from the room. The doctor devoted himself to restoring Harriet. Soon, the detective returned with a satisfied expression on his face.

"We got them, both of them," he said.

"My men had the house surrounded. I took this off of Langdon. I guess it was meant for you last night, Miss Harriet." At this he drew forth a long sharp instrument resembling a hatpin, only much stronger and apparently made of highly tempered steel. It had a round blue head.

"This is a duplicate of the one used on your sister. See," the detective said, raising his arm and gripping the pin-shaped instrument in demonstration. "With a forceful blow he drove this into the skull, then cutting the head of it off, he left only the end protruding."

"Oh, that brush on Marguerite's dressing table," Harriet said quickly to Kelly who soon reappeared with the hair-brush.

"This is what he tapped it in with," he said.

"Oh, did she suffer much?" Harriet moaned. "She was killed instantly, wasn't she, Doctor?"

"No, not necessarily," he answered. "She may have been alive several hours, but I doubt if she suffered or even tried to make an outcry. The shock of the blow must have stunned her; then the piercing of the vital centers of the brain would cause temporary paralysis. However, the puncturing and laceration of the brain tissues caused a profuse flow of blood within the head—hemorrhage of the brain. The pressure of this hemorrhage is what really caused death.

"How did you find out?" Kelly asked her.

"She told me," Harriet sobbed.

The detective and the doctor exchanged mystified glances, but Harriet knew her sister had returned through the portals of death to reveal the awful crime committed against her.