

MYSTERY LEAGUE



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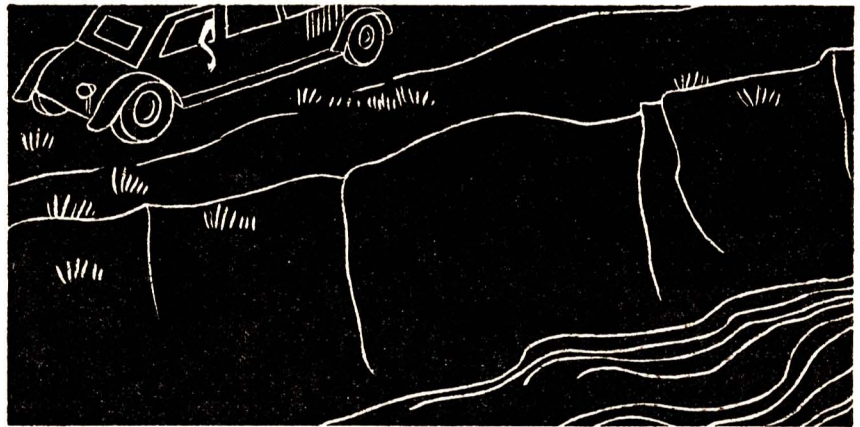
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ELLERY QUEEN

EDITOR

NIGHT

Occasionally we shall print non-mysteries by mystery authors



DASHIELL



A SEDAN with no lights burning was standing beside the road just above Piney Falls bridge and as I drove past it a girl put her head out and said, "Please." Her voice was urgent but there was not enough excitement in it to make it either harsh

or shrill.

I put on my brakes, then backed up. By that time a man had got out of the sedan. There was enough light to let me see he was young and fairly big. He moved a hand in the direction I had been going and said, "On your way, buddy."

The girl said again, "Will you drive me into town, please?" She seemed to be trying to open the sedan door. Her hat had been pushed forward over one eye. I said, "Sure."

The man in the road took a step toward me, moved

his hand as before, and growled, "Scram, you."

I got out of my car. The man in the road had started toward me when another man's voice came from the sedan, a harsh warning voice. "Go easy, Tony. It's Jack Bye." The sedan door swung open and the girl jumped out.

Tony said, "Oh!" and his feet shuffled uncertainly on the road; but when he saw the girl making for my car he cried indignantly at her, "Listen, you can't ride to town with—"

She was in my roadster by then. "Good night," she said.

He faced me, shook his head stubbornly, began, "I'll be damned if I'll let—"

I hit him. The knockdown was fair enough, because I hit him hard, but I think he could have got up again if he had wanted to. I gave him a little time, then

SHADE

This is one of the most startling stories you have ever read



HAMMETT

asked the fellow in the sedan, "All right with you?" I still could not see him.

"He'll be all right," he replied quickly. "I'll take care of him all right."

"Thanks." I climbed into my car beside the girl. The rain I had been trying to get to town ahead of was beginning to fall. A coupé with a man and a woman in it passed us going toward town. We followed the coupé across the bridge.

The girl said, "This is awfully kind of you. I wasn't in any danger back there, but it was—nasty."

"They wouldn't be dangerous," I said, "but they would be—nasty."

"You know them?"

"No."

"But they knew you. Tony Forrest and Fred Barnes." When I did not say anything, she added,

"They were afraid of you."

"I'm a desperate character."

She laughed. "And pretty nice of you, too, tonight. I wouldn't've gone with either of them alone, but I thought with two of them . . ." She turned up the collar of her coat. "It's raining in on me."

I stopped the roadster again and hunted for the curtain that belonged on her side of the car. "So your name's Jack Bye," she said while I was snapping it on.

"And yours is Helen Warner."

"How'd you know?" She had straightened her hat.

"I've seen you around." I finished attaching the curtain and got back in.

"Did you know who I was when I called to you?" she asked when we were moving again.

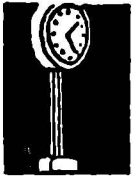
"Yes."

"It was silly of me to go out with them like that."

"You're shivering."

"It's chilly."

I said I was sorry my flask was empty.



WE HAD turned into the western end of Hellman avenue. It was four minutes past ten by the clock in front of the jewelry store on the corner of Laurel Street. A policeman in a black rubber coat was leaning against the clock. I did not know enough about perfumes to know the name of hers.

She said, "I'm chilly. Can't we stop somewhere and get a drink?"

"Do you really want to?" My voice must have puzzled her: she turned her head quickly to peer at me in the dim light.

"I'd like to," she said, "unless you're in a hurry."

"No. We could go to Mack's. It's only three or four blocks from here, but—it's a nigger joint."

She laughed. "All I ask is that I don't get poisoned."

"You won't, but you're sure you want to go?"

"Certainly." She exaggerated her shivering. "I'm cold. It's early."

Toots Mack opened his door for us. I could tell by the politeness with which he bowed his round bald black head and said, "Good evening, sir; good evening, madam," that he wished we had gone some place else, but I was not especially interested in how he felt about it. I said, "Hello, Toots; how are you this evening?" too cheerfully.

There were only a few customers in the place. We went to the table in the corner farthest from the piano. Suddenly she was staring at me, her eyes, already very blue, becoming very round.

"I thought you could see in the car," I began.

"How'd you get that scar?" she asked, interrupting me. She sat down.

"That." I put a hand to my cheek. "Fight—couple of years ago. You ought to see the one on my chest."

"We'll have to go swimming some time," she said gayly. "Please sit down and don't keep me waiting

for my drink."

"Are you sure you—"

She began to chant, keeping time with her fingers on the table, "I want a drink, I want a drink, I want a drink." Her mouth was small with full lips and it curved up without growing wider when she smiled.

We ordered drinks. We talked too fast. We made jokes and laughed too readily at them. We asked questions—about the name of the perfume she used was one—and paid too much or no attention to the answers. And Toots looked glumly at us from behind the bar when he thought we were not looking at him. It was all pretty bad.

We had another drink and I said, "Well, let's slide along."

She was nice about seeming neither too anxious to go nor to stay. The ends of her pale blond hair curled up over the edge of her hat in back.

At the door I said, "Listen, there's a taxi-stand around the corner. You won't mind if I don't take you home?"

She put a hand on my arm. "I do mind. Please—" The street was badly lighted. Her face was like a child's. She took her hand off my arm. "But if you'd rather . . ."

"I think I'd rather."

She said slowly, "I like you, Jack Bye, and I'm awfully grateful for—"

I said, "Aw, that's all right," and we shook hands and I went back into the speakeasy.

Toots was still behind the bar. He came up to where I stood. "You oughtn't to do that to me," he said, shaking his head mournfully.

"I know. I'm sorry."

"You oughtn't to do it to yourself," he went on just as sadly. "This ain't Harlem, boy, and if old Judge Warner finds out his daughter's running round with you and coming in here he can make it plenty tough for both of us. I like you, boy, but you got to remember it don't make no difference how light your skin is or how many colleges you went to, you're still nigger."

I said, "Well, what do you suppose I want to be? A Chinaman?"

Dashiell Hammett, like Ernest Hemingway, has blazed a bold trail in fiction. He has developed a brutal, debunked, staccato, strong-arm storytelling style which has left an indelible mark on mystery fiction. The *Maltese Falcon*, *The Glass Key* and others from his pen are published by Alfred A. Knopf.

AUTHOR!

■ DASHIELL HAMMETT

The story of Dashiell Hammett is the story of a hard struggle against great odds. Mr. Hammett, introducing a style of fiction of unusual character, was forced to battle his way from the pages of minor publications, contesting every inch of the way, until he finally achieved the recognition he deserved. To-day he is acclaimed by intelligentsia and the general populace alike, a tribute to his talent and the vision of his publishers, Alfred A. Knopf. . . . His graphic, vivid grasp of action and dialogue has stood him in good stead in Hollywood—one of the few writers lured to cinemaland who made good. . . . His earlier works, *The Dain Curse* and *Red Harvest*, brought instant critical interest; but they were formative, and it was not until the publication of *The Maltese Falcon* that he came into his own with the book-buying public. Then followed *The Glass Key*, and Hollywood. His realistic style is undoubtedly an outgrowth of his experience as a private detective.
