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W. W. Scott — Editor

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YOUR DAUGHTER WAS ATTACKED

by CARROLL MAYERS

The law was a lot too slow
for the father's vengeance

WHEN Walter Lyson reached home shortly before six-thirty that night, his wife poked her head around the kitchen door. "I was beginning to think you'd missed the bus," she smiled. Then she bit her lip, glimpsing the bulging briefcase Lyson was depositing on the hall table. "More work tonight?"

Lyson was a lean, balding man in his late forties; his sensitive features resolved into a rueful grin as he began washing his hands at the kitchen sink. "Afraid so," he said. "You know how those reports pile up at the end of the month."

Martha Lyson shook her



head soberly. "I know how hard you work," she told him, bringing her smile back. She pulled out Lyson's chair, turned to the stove. "I've kept everything hot."

He sat down, glancing at a third chair. "Linda upstairs?"

"She phoned after school, said she and another girl are staying overnight with one of their friends. Something about starting a camera club."

Lyson chuckled. "Last month it was a record club." He picked up his fork.

They had hardly begun the meal when the doorbell rang. Lyson frowned at the kitchen clock, muttered, "Why does anyone call at mealtime...?"

Martha Lyson started to rise. "Finish your dinner."

He pushed back his plate. "I'll go," he said, turning into the hall. "Probably only somebody wanting directions."

Two men stood on the small porch. As Lyson opened the door, one of them bent forward inquiringly. "Walter Lyson?"

He nodded. "That's right."

The man flashed a badge. "Police, Mr. Lyson. We'd like to talk to you."

Lyson's pale blue eyes flickered uncertainly; he blocked the doorway. "Police? I don't understand...?"

"I'm Sergeant Sloan. My partner's Sergeant Vitella. May we come in, sir?"

The officer's query was polite, yet firm. Lyson flushed, abruptly fell back. "Of course. I'm sorry—"

AS the two sergeants stepped into the hall, Sloan withdrew a notebook, flipped the pages. He was a tall man, well-built, with a ruddy face. His associate was stocky, dark-featured.

Finding the page he wanted, Sloan asked, "You have a daughter, Mr. Lyson? Linda Lyson?"

Lyson stared at the sergeant. "Why, yes." Then he added quickly: "Is... anything wrong?"

"About seventeen. Blonde. Hazel eyes." Sloan was reading his notes. "Birth mark on her right shoulder."

The sombre tone of the officer's words brought sudden apprehension to Lyson's gaze. He said: "What is it?"

Sloan snapped shut the notebook. His mouth was grim but he kept his voice low, even. "I'm afraid your daughter's been hurt, sir. She's—"

The sergeant broke off as Martha Lyson came into the hall. She looked at her husband, her eyes instantly wide with intuitive fear at his expression. She said, "What's the matter, Walter?"

Lyson went to her. "I... don't know." He took his wife's hands. "These men are the police," he said. "They say Linda's been hurt—"

"Oh, no!" Martha Lyson whispered.

Sloan said, "She'll be all right, ma'am. She had a bad time, but she'll be all right."

Lyson supported his wife, repeated Sloan's words. "What do you mean, she had a bad time?"

The sergeant avoided Lyson's gaze, glanced at his associate. It was Vitella who finally said quietly: "Your daughter was attacked in Clinton Park, sir. Her screams frightened the fellow off, but before he fled he beat her pretty badly. She—"

"It can't be Linda!" Martha Lyson pleaded. "She wouldn't've been in Clinton Park. She and another girl are staying with a school friend..."

Sloan said, "I'm afraid it was Linda, Mrs. Lyson. Her two friends were with her; they'd decided to visit another girl, were cutting through the park. They panicked when the fellow jumped Linda, ran off. Afterward, they identified her." He stopped, added simply: "Please believe us; she's going to be all right. She's at Mercy Hospital now."

A nerve was throbbing in Lyson's cheek. "This... fellow," he said, his pale eyes cold. "You know who he was?"

Sloan pocketed his notebook. "No. We picked up a suspect in a bar across from the park shortly after Linda was found. A young punk who's been in trouble before on the same complaint. But we couldn't tie him in."

The chill in Lyson's gaze grew bleaker; he gripped Sloan's arm. "You... released him?"

The sergeant's nod was sober. Martha Lyson shook her

husband fiercely. "I want to see Linda, Walter! I want to go to her now."

Lyson took a deep breath. "Of course, dear," he said. He looked at Sloan. "You said Mercy Hospital?"

Sloan said, "We'll drive you there."

AT the hospital, a young intern approached as the two sergeants escorted Lyson and his wife down a corridor. Vitella said, "Here are Mr. and Mrs. Lyson, the girl's parents."

The intern nodded. "Your daughter's in no real danger," he said kindly. "We've given her a sedative."

Martha Lyson was hardly listening. "Where is Linda? I want to see her."

Lyson's arm went about his wife. "Martha—"

She caught at the intern's sleeve. The young man's gaze flicked from the sergeants to Lyson, back to Lyson's wife. "The sedation will be effective for several hours, Mrs. Lyson. This way, please."

Lyson steadied his wife, guided her into the room across the corridor. At first glimpse

of his daughter, lying drugged, her head bandaged, her soft eyes and lips puffed and bruised, Lyson's fists balled. As his wife sobbed softly, he gently eased her onto a chair beside the bed. Then he turned, the nerve in his cheek twitching. The two officers and the intern stood just inside the door; Lyson shouldered past them. "I want that punk's name," he told Sloan.

The sergeants followed Lyson into the hall. Sloan said, "We couldn't hold him, sir. I mentioned that."

"I want his name!"

Sloan frowned. "His name's Leo Karsh. A wise hood with a bad record. Suspicion of pushing narcotics. Molesting girls. Violence with rival gangs. But he swore he was clean to-night and we couldn't prove otherwise. Your daughter was hysterical with shock, her friends too terrified to remember details, make a positive identification. And Karsh wouldn't break."

Lyson said hotly: "So you let him go!"

Vitella exchanged a glance with Sloan, said mildly: "We

know how you feel, Mr. Lyson. But we had no choice."

For a long moment Lyson's only motion was his trembling fists. Abruptly, his shoulders slumped. He said stiffly: "I . . . appreciate your bringing us here." Then he turned, re-entered the room.

Martha Lyson still huddled beside the bed while the intern checked Linda's pulse. Lyson drew the young man aside. "You're certain she's going to be all right?"

"There's nothing to worry about, Mr. Lyson."

"Thank God," Lyson muttered fervently. He caught the intern's arm, added: "Please keep checking my wife, too." Then he crossed, silently squeezed Martha Lyson's shoulder. Her agonized gaze did not lift from Linda's bruised face. Lyson took a deep breath, slipped out of the room.

Sloan and Vitella had departed. Lyson's jaw bunched; the hunched tensity of his shoulders suggested a previous slump had been feigned. He left the hospital quickly, flagged down a cab. "Clinton Park," he directed.

THE tavern was drab and dingy, jammed with a noisy crowd babbling above the blare of a juke box. Lyson stood at one end of the bar, squinting against the smoky haze, finished a beer. He had already visited two similar places; this was the only remaining dive opposite the park.

Noting Lyson's empty glass, the barkeep moved down. Lyson nodded; when his glass was filled he asked casually: "Karsh been around?"

The barkeep's fat features were stolid. "Who?"

"Karsh," Lyson said. He had paid for the first beer with change; now a five dollar bill was in his fingers. "Leo Karsh."

A speculative glint flickered in the man's eyes. "Oh . . . Leo." He swabbed the mahogany with a dirty rag. "Yeah, he was in earlier."

The bill rested on the bar. "Know where I can find him?"

The barkeep eyed Lyson sharply. "Who's looking for him?"

Lyson said, "Friend of mine." He lowered his voice. "He needs a fix."

The man scowled. "What the hell's that supposed to mean?"

Another five joined the first. Lyson said, "My friend needs that fix bad."

Down the bar, a busty blonde giggled, pounded her glass. "Nother one, Charlie."

The barkeep kept watching Lyson shrewdly, then turned, took care of the blonde. Lyson's fingers still toyed with the two fives when Charlie swung back. Abruptly, a sweep of the bar rag encompassed the money. "I don't know nothing about a fix, Mac," Charlie muttered, "but I hear Karsh's got a pad over on Ferry."

Lyson pushed back his glass. "That's a long street."

"Twenty-two," the barkeep said. "Fourth floor, rear." He shoved the bills into his pocket as Lyson left the bar.

Ferry street was across town, near the river; Lyson paid off his cab two blocks short, walked. Locating number twenty-two, a crumbling brownstone, he climbed quickly to the fourth floor, his nostrils twitching at the rancid odors of filth and cooking.

Before the scarred door of the rear apartment, Lyson set himself, knocked shortly. Nobody answered. Lyson frowned, rapped again, rattled the knob. His mouth etched thin as the sagging panel shook in its frame.

Lyson glanced at his watch. Nine thirty-five. He peered down the shadowy hall, decision mounting in his bleak eyes. Then he hunched his shoulder, thrust hard against the door. The lock held the first two assaults; at Lyson's third lunge, the bolt sprang. He burst inside.

The apartment was a single room and bath, both littered, unkempt. Lyson closed the door, switched on the light long enough to orient himself, take in the unmade bed against the far wall, the battered table and straight-backed chair. His lips curled in distaste as he noted the garish pin-up pictures over the bed. Then he turned off the light, sat down on the chair. An hour passed. And another...

THE scuff of footfalls brought Lyson to his feet. Silently, he pushed the chair

aside, fists clenching. A key rasped in the lock, followed by a short oath as the door sagged inward. The light blazed.

"What the—" The youth entering the room had hard black eyes, dark oily hair and a bad case of acne. He scowled at Lyson. "Who the hell're you?"

Lyson squinted against the glare of light, stepped to block the door. He said tightly: "You're Leo Karsh?"

The youth's scowl darkened. "That's right. Look, man, what goes—?"

Lyson's voice was cold. "I'm the father of the girl you attacked tonight, Karsh."

Surprise glinted in Karsh's eyes; then his slack lips split in a sneer. "You're bugs, pappy."

Lyson's hot gaze never left the youth's face. "You didn't confess to the police, did you, Karsh?" he said softly, moving forward.

Karsh's sneer faded slightly; he took a step back. "So the fuzzies pulled me in," he said quickly. "They couldn't prove nothing."

The corners of Lyson's

mouth were white. He brought up his balled fists, whispered, "You'll confess to me."

Retreating, Karsh abruptly checked himself, cocked his own fists. "Relax, pappy," he rapped. "I'm telling you like I told the fuzzies: if your chick was jumped, it wasn't by me. You say it was, you gotta prove it." His sneer flashed back.

Lyson shook his head, suddenly lunged, grabbed the youth. "You filthy scum!"

Karsh was no weakling. He fought Lyson viciously, kneeling his groin, finally broke free. He swung hard at Lyson's chin, missed, fell onto the bed. Lyson leaped on the youth, thudding blows into his body. Karsh kicked wildly, but Lyson was relentless. He yanked Karsh from the bed, slammed him against the wall, then beat him to the floor. On his knees, sobbing curses, the youth tried to squirm loose, almost succeeded. But Lyson caught his ankle, swarmed over him.

"Confess!" Lyson panted. "Confess!" He began pounding Karsh's head.

IT was past midnight when Lyson returned to the hospital. His sensitive face was rigid with intensity as he strode down the corridor, but when he entered his daughter's room the stark light in Lyson's eyes instantly faded. Linda was conscious.

"You're all right, honey?" Lyson's voice broke as he drew a chair beside his wife, caught Linda's hands. "You're really all right?"

Linda managed a weak smile. Martha Lyson said tensely: "She'll be fine, Walter." She looked searchingly at her husband." The doctor said you'd stepped out, but you were gone so long..."

Lyson said simply: "I went home. There was nothing I could do here, and I had all that work..." He met his wife's gaze, smiled. "I checked with the doctor first, made certain both of you would be all right—"

He broke off as the door opened and Sloan and Vitella came into the room. Both sergeants were sober; their features relaxed only slightly as they saw Linda was conscious.

Sloan said, "They told us at the desk your daughter'd come around fine, Mr. Lyson."

Lyson smoothed Linda's forehead, nodded without speaking. Watching him, the sergeant added: "They also mentioned you left here for three hours."

"That's correct. I've just told my wife the same thing." Lyson's voice was steady. "It seemed likely to be several hours here, just waiting, and I had some urgent office reports. I went home, finished up the work, came back."

Vitella said, "You can prove that, sir?"

Lyson looked puzzled. "Why, no...not definitely. I was alone." He met Vitella's stare. "Why?"

Sloan cut in. "Because from blood on a shirt found in his closet matching Linda's, we now know Leo Karsh did attack your daughter," he said. "And because that shirt was discovered after one of Karsh's associates stopped by his room an hour ago, found him beaten to death."

Martha Lyson's intake of breath was audible; she put

trembling fingers on her husband's arm. Again her gaze was searching, with an added hint of dread.

At the word 'attack', Linda began to cry softly. She clutched Lyson's hands, lips quivering. "Oh, Daddy, I'll never forget it—"

He stroked her hair. "Yes, you will, honey," he murmured. "It was just a bad dream, that's all. Just a bad dream for us all."

Lyson kissed his daughter,

then turned to the two policemen. "You mentioned Karsh had been involved in violence with rival gangs before."

Sloan nodded gravely. "We'd still like a statement about your working home alone, Mr. Lyson."

"Of course." Lyson's gaze was direct. Momentarily, he looked at his wife, strong reassurance in his quiet smile. "Anything, sergeant," he said.

THE END

