



The MAY DAY MYSTERY

By Octavus Roy Cohen

CHAPTER XI—Continued

Reagan nodded. "Where does?" "Blank box, I'll bet," observed Hanvey, as though talking to himself. "Uh-huh, new bank box key. Vernon's next train for Steel City?" Reagan consulted his watch. "Midnight." "If you'd run up there tomorrow alone?" "Sure I will. I can be back tomorrow evening. What's the big idea?" Jim detached the key from the ring. "Take this with you, John. I've got a hunch that Max Vernon related a box at some big Steel City bank. Take some samples of his handwriting with you, because he'd use an assumed name, of course. You can check up on the traces of it in the last couple of days—then compare the handwriting." "And if I find the box shall I look it up?" "No. We'll just take it for granted that if he rented a box there the Maryland bank money is in it, or, anyway, Vernon's share. What say?" Reagan rose. "I'm on my way. Chief. At the door he turned. "And I'll look it up." "No, no, no," said Jim. "It turns out to be Vernon who had it—will you admit then that I was right?" Jim smiled broadly. "Maybe," he said. "I'll sure think you were pretty near right, anyway."

CHAPTER XII

WARM brilliant sunshine bathed the courtyard when Tony Peyton and Larry Welch walked out on foot to temporary freedom. Tony was particularly happy. "They wouldn't have let you off if they thought you were guilty, would they, Larry?" He shook his head. "I don't believe so, Sis." "Good," she clasped her hands. "All the time you were there, Bud, I couldn't think of anything except—except—" He squeezed her hand. "Don't you worry, kid, I don't have anything to do with it." Later in the day Larry and Tony met by old Main and walked toward the top. "A kid which rode above the streetcar and down from which one could look down into the Maryland campus, and they still farther to the spruce of the town of Maryland. Half the actual body saw them together and every young man and woman made a dash for the telephone booth. No one joined them. The students were more, than a little embarrassed. They wanted the pair to know that there was every belief in their innocence, every sympathy, every willingness to do whatever was necessary by way of help. . . . But they were not to be so easily intruded on their privacy. The tragedy had cast a sort of gloomy mantle about them. They squeezed their top and stood regarding each other; the tall and blond and very boyish-looking despite the tiny lines of worry about his eyes; the girl vividly beautiful. Their hands were clasped and they drank deep of the wine of freedom and of their joy at being with each other again. It was Tony who spoke. "You know how I feel, Larry, about what you did." "He frowned. "What did I do?" "Thinking about detective that Pat was alive when you left his room. Of course I know he wasn't." "Larry's cheeks blushed. "How do you know?" "I know now, Larry. That's all I wanted. To trick an admission from you. It was fine of you, dear. But you just go to Mr. Hanvey and tell him the truth. That Pat was already dead when you reached his room. But I didn't say."

trilled gayly; the pine trees swayed softly in the warm breeze which swept in from the countryside. The air was fragrant with the fragrance of flowers and on Pine top there was no suggestion of anything but ineffable peace and happiness. It was an odd way from the solitary confinement at the Maryland jail; so glorious a relief from the staring at four black walls and a tiny square of barred window. They were very young and very much in love with each other, and Larry moved so close to her that their bodies touched. "When all this is over, Tony, you will marry me?" She looked straight into his eyes. "Yes, Larry." "I'd like to put into words . . . to be able to tell you how much I love you . . ." "You don't need to. I understand." His arms closed about her and he held her close, staring hungrily into her eyes. Then, suddenly, he buried his face in her hair and so they stood for an age of time. "The afternoon dragged away. Larry worked over his class books, trying to rid himself of the effects of the experience and wondering what the future had in store for Tony, for himself, and for Max Vernon. And in his room at the hotel Jim Hanvey sprawled on the bed and devoured a detective story. It was there that John Reagan found him. Jim put the book aside reluctantly. "Gosh," he commented, "it's great that story. Just as soon as I get interested in something like this you have to come butting in. What is it?" Reagan spoke crisply. "On the morning of May second a man answering Max Vernon's description—and there ain't any doubt, Jim, that it was Vernon—entered the American National bank of Steel City and rented a box. He gave the name of William T. Aragon. He took the box with him into a little booth. Then he left the bank. The box is number two thirty-five, and unless I'm all wrong you'll find a lot of Brother Pike's lost money right there." The telephone buzzed, and Hanvey answered. "This is the warden of the jail," announced the voice at the other end. "Miss Peyton and Mr. Welch are down here. They want to see you as soon as possible." "Send 'em over to the hotel," will you?" Then he turned away from the telephone and grinned broadly at his friend. "Welch and Miss Peyton are on their way over, John. Stick around if you want. I have a hunch we're going to hear some interesting dope." . . . Tony Peyton acted as spokesman. "Larry and I have been talking pretty seriously, Mr. Hanvey. We've got that you're playing square and are entitled to have the whole truth—so far as we know it." Jim's big face beamed. "That's fine, Mr. Peyton. But I want to ask one thing before we start: Am I going to get the whole truth or only part of it?" "The whole truth," said Tony. "Great! Suppose you begin." She shook her head. "I haven't a thing to add to what I told you at the jail. That was the plain, unvarnished truth. I think you know the truth by instinct. That's why I told you to go in the first place." "It's a pity your boy friend didn't get the same hunch. We'd maybe have let him out earlier." "I was a fool, I suppose," broke in Larry. "But I knew I was innocent. I thought you'd never be able to convict me. So I wasn't very much of a hero, after all. And I was a little frightened." "By what?" "By the thing you've known all the time: that Pat Thayer was dead when I went to his room. Knowing that you had believed me, and seeing Thayer dead—I had every reason to be afraid. Suppose I had said Thayer was dead when I went there and suppose it turned out that Vernon had never visited the room? Can't you see that it would have been a lie? I know Miss Peyton believed any argument?" "Yeah, . . . That's right, sure enough. I'm mighty much obliged. So, for obvious reasons, your danger, in my mind. And now suppose you tell me about that visit?" "What did you have in mind when you went to Thayer's room?" "The young man hesitated. "I'm trying to be honest, Mr. Hanvey, and the fairest way to answer that question is to say I don't know. But it's only honest to say that I

intended to make it mighty clear to Thayer that he'd better keep away from my life." "I see . . . And when you got there?" "He was dead. I got rather sick, just looking at him." "Did you touch him?" "Good G—d! No!" "Why didn't you report finding the body?" "Because I thought of Miss Peyton." Hanvey nodded approval. "Pretty straight story, Welch. There are just one or two more questions. First of all, did you touch the knife?" Larry's face expressed surprise. "What knife?" "The knife Thayer had been killed with." "I didn't see any knife." "I did see it," Jim extracted a black cigar from his vest pocket, snapped the end from it and lighted the thing with a brief nod of apology to Tony. "You took that diamond ring off Thayer's finger, didn't you?" Again that startled light flashed in Larry's blue eyes. "I told you I didn't touch the body at all." "Aw, come now, Son. You promised to tell me the whole truth, and it didn't hardly seem like you're doing it. You find the body of the man your sister is crazy about. He's dead, and on his finger is a diamond ring that can be traced back to your sister easy. It means mixing her up in a pretty nasty affair. So you take the ring off Thayer's finger and keep quiet about it. Ain't that the way it was?" "No," said Larry firmly. "I never noticed Thayer's fingers at all. I can't say what would have done if I'd seen the ring. But I didn't see it and that's the truth." "Well—Hanvey heaved a vast sigh. "Somebody did—because it's gone." "I didn't touch it," repeated Larry. "I hope you believe me." "I reckon I do. And I'm much obliged for coming here. Though I can't say it has cleared things up a whole lot." They chatted for a few minutes longer and Larry and the girl left Reagan closed the door behind them and faced his ponderous companion. "You believe Thayer was dead when Welch got to the room, Hanvey?" "Looks pretty straight to me." "You told me, Miss Peyton killed him, didn't you?" "See! I'd sure hate to think anything like that about such a young kid as he is." "The first thing I can't straighten out in my mind, John, is the knife that we found in Vernon's room; the one that we sure Thayer was stabbed with." "Any man can unless something is overlooked that knife, that's all. And knowing it was his, and finding it in his closet, is enough to convict him." "No," argued Hanvey gently. "It's enough to acquit him, John." "That's the—" "Well, listen, Brother, and don't get all hot up. According to your own pet theory, Max Vernon carried that knife into Thayer's room and stabbed him during a room. Then he carried it back to his room and had sense enough to polish the fingerprints off the handle—because, remember, there wasn't a print on it. He then changed his blood-stained clothes. And then, by golly, you ask me to believe that a boy who's so careful as all that went into and forgot the knife! Holy an' ferin' mackerel! John—that ain't reasonable. It don't click with the knife that worries me, and I would wonder how his blood got off that one-track railroad you're riding. The knife is Max Vernon's only chance. If it wasn't for that, I'd bet he killed Thayer." "Then—then you think that knife was planted in Max Vernon's room?" Jim regarded the end of his cigar speculatively. "I sort of have a hunch that way, John. Think it over. He bodied himself from his chair and waddled to the door. Let's ride over to the college, if you don't mind. I want to see a lot of folks." "Who?" "Well, I ain't talked with those two kids who saw sneaking from the porch—Farum and Gleason, ain't they? And I'd like to talk with the dean again, and maybe the president of that fraternity." (TO BE CONTINUED)

CHAPTER XIII

THE following morning Hanvey was dressed when Reagan arrived, and at his suggestion they went to the jail and were admitted to Max Vernon's cell. Hanvey addressed him in a voice more stern than Reagan had yet heard. "I'm talking straight from the shoulder, Vernon," said Jim firmly, "though not unkindly. "You're in the hottest kind of hot water. It'd be so easy to convict you of Pat Thayer's murder that a kid could do it. I'm going to get some definite action today. Heap quick, see? I'm giving you this last chance. Tell the whole truth from beginning to end—nothing held back. If you don't do that we'll put you over the jumps for the murder of Pat Thayer. Think it over, kid, and tell me how it looks." "I didn't kill Thayer." "No? Well, maybe not. But you were mixed up in the robbery of the Maryland National bank." The boy's face flushed and out of the silence came Jim's voice again—infinitely gentle. "Robbery ain't half as rotten a charge as murder, Max." Vernon stopped his pacing and turned back to Hanvey. "You win," he said dully. "You tell the truth? All of it? Every bit?" "Yes." "All right, Son. Shoot." "I'll try to make it brief, Mr. Hanvey. I've been a d—d fool—but not a murderer." "Pat Thayer and I have been friends since he first came to Maryland as a junior last year. I didn't suspect that his interest was not in me, but in money." "Over a period of almost two school years he has been trimming me. This year, it happened that I went crazy about a girl. It doesn't matter what her name is—" "You mean Ivy Welch?" "Yes, Ivy. I'm awful fond of her. And this spring Thayer took me for my last cent. I had lost about forty thousand dollars in two years to him. He had my note for five thousand dollars. I didn't have a dime to pay him, and I couldn't borrow. Then, when Thayer knew I was stripped, he did everything in the world to show that he had contempt for me." "On May first I had a date with Ivy. She stood me up. I wasn't happy any more, and that made me feel worse. Then when I saw her coming to the hall with Pat Thayer, I sort of went crazy. We had a quarrel—Thayer and I. When I left him I was in a cold sweat. If you don't to know just how rotten I feel, I guess I was mad enough to kill him. Maybe I'd have done it if I'd thought about it—but I didn't. I'm telling you all the truth. Every bit of it, Mr. Hanvey." "Go ahead, Son. You're doing swell." "I got to the fraternity house and went straight up to my room. I changed my clothes and I shaved. Then I decided to take a suit I had had on to the tailor. I didn't leave my room until I walked downstairs. I had the suit rolled up in a bundle and had it under my arm. Then I was going down Archer street to Oak, where the tailor is. I got to the corner about half-past two o'clock. "There is a traffic light on the corner, Mr. Hanvey, and it flashed red just as I got there. I stopped for it, and it seemed almost as soon as I stopped that shooting started inside the bank. I was scared to death. Then all of a sudden the door opened and a little man ran out. He was carrying a satchel. "This man—he was the robber—jumped in the back of my car and hid on the floor. I was pretty near paralyzed. I was so scared." "Yes? What happened, Max?" "That feller in the back of my car stuck a revolver right against my neck. 'I've just robbed that bank,' he said, 'and I'm d—n desperate. Now drive—and drive fast.' And I drove fast." "I guess it seems funny," commented the young man, "that I'd help a robber escape, but I could feel that gun stuck against the back of my neck. . . . He told me to drive around the city and stop at a place by the Little Indian river. It's about twenty minutes' drive beyond the city limits. I got out into the open country again and speeded up, and not another word from the back of the car. When I got to the turn-off place by the Little Indian, I saw the car and sped off the motor. 'Is this the place you wanted?' I asked. He didn't answer, and I spoke to him again. And he didn't answer this time, either." "I didn't know what to make of it, and I was scared to turn around for fear he'd shoot me. After a while, when he still didn't speak, I looked around." Vernon was talking swiftly and his face was twitching with excitement. "He was lying all huddled up in the bottom of the car and the first thing I saw was a lot of blood. I knew he was unconscious and that I was safe. I was so scared that I suppose I acted more bravely than I would have done otherwise. I went to the back of the car and took his gun, which was lying on the floor of the car, and I saw that he was dead."

SPECIALS

Thursday
Friday
Saturday

Strictly Fresh Dressed Young Hen
Michigan

TURKEYS
lb. **35c**

Fresh Dressed Michigan

Broilers lb. **29c**

Fresh Dressed Michigan

Young Hens lb. **32c**
For Stewing

Fresh

Calves Liver
and
Sweetbreads

lb. **39c**

Swift's Circle-S
**SMOKED
PICNIC
HAMS**

lb. **25c**

Imported—French

Roquefort Cheese
Style

lb. **49c**

Medium
Cheddar Cheese

lb. **29c**

GENUINE 1935 SPRING

LAMB SALE!

**Leg
Roast**

lb. **28c**

**Rib
Chops**
For Broiling

lb. **34c**

**Rolled
Roast**

lb. **27c**

**Shoulder
Roast**

21c

Rinso large package **2 39c**

FELS NAPTHA 10
SOAP 43c

Ohio Solid Pack

TOMATOES 3 No. 2 cans **25c**

Large, Juicy
FLORIDA ORANGES 3 doz. **89c**

Muselman's

APPLE SAUCE 3 cans **27c**

Prince Finest
TUNA FISH 2 size cans **35c**

Thin

PRETZEL STICKS Lb. **19c**

Meiers—Concord
GRAPE JUICE Pl. Bot. **17c**

Maxwell House Coffee 29c

Libby's Sweet

Pickles Qt. Jar **25c**

Edgemont

Smacks 2 pkgs **35c**
The real butter wafer

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Dozen Cans 95c



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