



# The Man on the Box

By HAROLD MacGRATH  
Author of "The Grey Cloak," "The Puppet Crown."

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## CHAPTER VIII. ANOTHER SALAD IDEA.

When they found him missing, his bed untouched, his hat and coat on the rack, his inseparable walking-stick in the umbrella-stand, they were mightily worried. They questioned Jane, but she knew nothing. Jack went out to the stables; no news there. William, having driven the girls home himself, dared say nothing. Then Jack wisely telephoned for me, and I hurried over to the house.

"Maybe he hunted up some friends last night," I suggested.

"But here's his hat!" cried Nancy.

"Oh, he's all right; don't worry. I'll take a tour around the city. I'll find him. He may be at one of the clubs."

Fortunately for Mr. James Osborne I returned home first, and there found his note awaiting me. I was at the court by noon, armed with \$35 and a suit of clothes of my own. I found the clerk.

"A young man, dressed as a groom, and locked up overnight," I said cautiously. "I wish to pay his fine."

"James Osborne?"

"Yes, that's the name; James Osborne,"—reaching down into my pocket.

"Fine's just been paid. We were about to release him. Here, officer, show this gentleman to James Osborne's cell, and tell him to pack up and get out."

So his fine was paid! Found the money in his clothes, doubtless. On the way to the cells I wondered what the deuce the rascal had been doing to get locked up overnight. I was vastly angry, but at the sight of him all my anger melted into a prolonged shout of laughter.

"That's right; laugh, you old brute! I wish you had been in my boots a few hours ago. Lord!"

I laughed again.

"Have you got that \$35?" he asked.

"Why, your fine has been paid," I replied, rather surprised.

"And didn't you pay it?"

"Not I! The clerk told me that it had just been paid."

Warburton's jaw sank limply. "Just been paid?—Who the deuce could have paid it, or known?"

"First, tell me what you've been up to."

He told me snatches of the exploit as he changed his clothes, and it was a question which of us laughed the more. But he didn't say a word about the stolen kiss, for which I think none the less of him.

"Who were the women?" I asked.

He looked at me for a space, as if deciding. Finally he made a negative sign.

"Don't know who they were, eh?"—incredulously.

He shrugged, laughed, and drew on his shoes.

"I always knew that I was the jackass of the family, Chuck, but I never expected to do it so well. Let's get out of this hole. I wonder who can have paid that fine? . . . No, that would not be possible!"

"What would not be?"

"Nothing, nothing,"—laughing.

But I could see that his spirits had gone up several degrees.

"The whole thing is likely to be in the evening papers," I said.

He needed a little worrying. And I knew his horror of publicity.

"The newspapers? In the newspapers? Oh, I say, Chuck, can't you use your influence to suppress the thing? Think of the girls."

"I'll do the best I can. And there's only one thing for you to do, and that is to cut out of town till your beard has grown. It would serve you right, however, if the reporters got the true facts."

"I'm for getting out of town, Chuck; and on the next train but one."

Here our conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a policeman.

"A note for Mister Osborne,"—ironically. He tossed the letter to Warburton and withdrew.

Mister Osborne eagerly tore open an end of the envelope—a very aristocratic envelope, as I could readily discern—and extracted the letter. I closely watched his facial expressions. First, there was interest, then surprise, to be succeeded by amusement and a certain exultation. He slapped his thigh.

"By George, Chuck, I'll do it!"

"Do it? Now what?"

"Listen to this." He cleared his throat, sniffed of the faintly scented paper and cleared his throat again. He looked up at me drolly.

"Well?" said I, impatiently. I was as eager to hear it as he had been to read it. I believed that the mystery was about to be solved.

"James Osborne, Sir. I have been thinking the matter over seriously, and have come to the conclusion that there may have been a mistake. Undoubtedly my groom was primarily to blame. I have discharged him for neglecting his post of duty. I distinctly recall the manner in which you handled the horses last night. It may be possible that they ran away with you. However that may be, I find myself in need of a groom. Your horsemanship saved

us from a serious accident. If you will promise to let whisky alone, besides bringing me a recommendation, and are without engagement, call at the enclosed address this afternoon at three o'clock. I should be willing to pay as much as \$40 a month. You would be expected to accompany me on my morning rides."

"She must have paid the fine," said I. "Well, it beats anything I ever heard of. Had you arrested, and now wants to employ you! What name did you say?" I asked carelessly.

"I didn't say any name, Chuck,"—smiling. "And I'm not going to give any, you old duffer."

"And why not?"

"For the one and simple reason that I am going to accept the position,"—with a coolness that staggered me.

"What?" I bawled.

"Sure as life, as the policeman said last night."

"You silly ass, you! Do you want to make the family a laughing-stock all over the town?" I was really angry.

"Neither the family nor the town will know anything about it,"—imperturbably.

"But you will be recognized!" I remonstrated. "It's a clear case of insanity, after what has just happened to you."

"I promise not to drink any whisky," soberly.

"Bob, you are fooling me."

"Not the littlest bit, Chuck. I've worn a beard for two years. No one would recognize me. Besides, being a groom, no one would pay any particular attention to me. Get the point?"

"But what under the sun is your object?" I demanded. "There's something back of all this. It's not a simple lark like last night's."

"Perspicacious man!"—raillingly.

"Possibly you may be right, Chuck, you know that I've just got to be doing something. I've been inactive too long. I am ashamed to say that I should tire of the house in a week or less. Change, change, of air, of place, of occupation; change—I must have it. It's food and drink."

"You've met this woman before, somewhere."

"I neither acknowledge or deny. It will be very novel. I shall be busy from morning till night. Think of the fun of meeting persons whom you know, but who do not know you. I wouldn't give up this chance for any amount of money."

"Forty dollars a month," said I wrathfully.

"Cigar money,"—tranquilly.

"Look here, Bob; be reasonable. You can't go about as a groom in Washington. If the newspapers ever get hold of it, you would be disgraced. They wouldn't take you as a clerk in a third-rate consulate. Supposing you should run into Jack or his wife or Nancy; do you think they wouldn't know you at once?"

"I'll take the risk. I'd deny that I knew them; they'd tumble and leave me alone. Chuck, I've got to do this. Some day you'll understand."

"But the woman's name, Bob; only her name."

"Oh, yes! And have you slide around and show me up within 24 hours. No, I thank you. I am determined on this. You ought to know me by this time. I never back down; it isn't in the blood. And when it is said, where's the harm in this escapade? I can see none. It may not last the day through."

"I trust not,"—savagely.

"I am determined upon answering this letter in person and finding out, if possible, what induced her to pay my fine. Jaskass or not, I'm going to see the thing through." Then he stretched an appealing hand out toward me, and said wheedlingly: "Chuck, give me your word to keep perfectly quiet. I'll drop you a line once in a while, just to let you know how I stand. I shall be at the house to-night. I'll find an excuse. I'm to go up north on a hunting expedition; a hurry call. Do you catch on?"

"I shall never be able to look Nancy in the face," I declared. "Come, Bob, forget it. It sounds merry enough, but my word for it, you'll regret it inside of 24 hours. You are a graduate of the proudest military school in the world, and you are going to make a groom of yourself!"

"I've already done that and been locked up overnight. You are wasting your breath, Chuck."

"Well, hang you for a jackass, sure enough! I promise; but if you get into any such scrape as this, you needn't send for me. I refuse to help you again."

"I can't exactly see that you did. Let's get out. Got a cigar in your pocket? I am positively dying for a smoke."

Suddenly a brilliant idea came to me. "Did you know that Miss Annesley the girl you saw on shipboard, is in Washington and was at the embassy last night?"

"No! You don't say!" He was too clever for me. "When I get through with this exploit, Nancy'll have to introduce me. Did you see her?"

"Yes, and talked to her. You see what you missed by not going last night."

"Yes, I missed a good night's rest and a cold bath in the morning."

"Where shall I say you were last night?" I asked presently.

Mister James struck his chin disconcertedly. "I hadn't thought of that. Say that I met some of the boys and got mixed up in a little game of poker."

"You left your hat on the rack and your cane in the stand. You are supposed to have left the house without any hat."

"Hat!" He jumped up from the cot on which he had been sitting and picked up the groom's tile. "Didn't you bring me a hat?"—dismissed.

"You said nothing about it,"—and I roared with laughter.

"How shall I get out of here? I can't wear this thing through the streets."

"I've a mind to make you wear it. And, by Jove, you shall! You'll wear it to the hatter's or stay here. That's final. I never back down, either."

"I'll wear it; only mark me, I'll get even with you. I always did."

"I am not a boy any longer,"—with an inflection on the personal pronoun. "Well, to continue about that excuse. You left the house without a hat, and you met the boys and played poker all night. That hitches wonderfully. You didn't feel well enough to go to the embassy, but you could go and play poker. That sounds as if you cared a lot for your sister. And you wanted to stay at home the first night, because you had almost forgotten how the inside of a private dwelling looked. Very good; very coherent."

"Cut it, Chuck. What the deuce excuse can I give?"—worryedly lighting the cigar I had given him.

"My boy, I'm not making up your excuses; you'll have to invent those. I'll be silent, but I refuse to lie to Nancy on your account. Poker is the only excuse that would carry any weight with it. You will have to let them believe you're a heartless wretch; which you are, if you persist in this idiotic exploit."

"You don't understand, Chuck. I wish I could tell you; honestly, I do. The girls will have to think mean things of me till the farce is over. I couldn't escape if I wanted to."

"Is it Miss Annesley, Bob? Was it she whom you ran away with? Come, make a clean breast of it. If it's she why, that altogether alters the face of things."

He walked the length of the cell and returned. "I give up. You've hit it. You understand now. I simply can't back away; I couldn't if I tried."

"Are you in love with the girl?"

"That's just what I want to find out, Chuck. I'm not sure. I've been thinking of her night and day. I never had any affair; I don't know what love is. But if it's a shaking in your boots at the sound of her name, if it's getting red in the face when you only just think of her, if it's having a wild desire to pick her up and run away with her when you see her, then I've got it. When she stepped out of that confounded carriage last night, you could have knocked me over with a paper-wad. Come, let's go out. Hang the hat! Let them laugh if they will. It's only a couple of blocks to the hatter's."

He bravely put the white hat on his head, and together we marched out of the police-office into the street. We entered the nearest hatter's together. He took what they call a drop-kick out of the hat, sending it far to the rear of the establishment. I purchased a suitable derby for him, gave him ten dollars for emergencies, and we parted.

He proceeded to a telegraph office and sent a dispatch to a friend up north, asking him to telegraph him to come at once, taking his chances of getting a reply. After this he boarded a north-going-car, and was rolled out to Chevy Chase. He had no difficulty in finding the house of which he was in search. It was a fine example of colonial architecture, well back from the road, and fields beyond it. It was of red brick and white stone, with a wide veranda supported by great white pillars. There was a modern portico on one side. A fine lawn surrounded the whole and white-pebble walks wound in and out. All around were thickly wooded hills, gashed here and there by the familiar yet peculiar red clay of the country. Warburton walked up the driveway and knocked deliberately at the servants' door, which was presently opened. (I learned all these things afterward, which accounts for my accurate knowledge of events.)

"Please inform Miss Annesley that Mr. Osborne has come in reply to her letter," he said to the little black-eyed French maid.

"Ees Meestaire Osborrne zee new groom?"

"Yes."

"I go thees minute!" Hein! what a fine-looking young man to make eyes at on cold nights in the kitchen!

Warburton sat down and twirled his hat. Several times he repressed the desire to laugh. He gazed curiously about him. From where he sat he could see into the kitchen. The French chef was hanging up his polished pans in a glistening row back of the range, and he was humming a little chason which Warburton had often heard in the restaurants of the provincial cities of France. He even found himself catching up the refrain where the chef left off. Presently he heard footsteps sounding on the hardwood floor, which announced that the maid was returning with her mistress.

He stood up, rested first on one foot, then on the other, and awkwardly shifted his new hat from one hand to the other, then suddenly put the hat under his arm, recollecting that the label was not such as servants wore inside their hats.

There was something disquieting in those magnetic sapphire eyes looking so serenely into his.

## CHAPTER IX. THE HEROINE HIRES A GROOM.

Remarkable as it may read, his first impression was of her gown—a gown such as women wear on those afternoons, when they are free of social obligations, a gown to walk in or to lounge in. The skirt, which barely reached to the top of her low shoes, was of some blue stuff (stuff, because to a man's mind the word covers feminine dress-goods in general, liberally, and handily.) overshot with gray. Above this she had put on a white golfing-sweater,

a garment which at that time was just beginning to find vogue among women who loved the fields and the road. Only men who own to stylish sisters appreciate these things, and Warburton possessed rather observant eyes. She held a bunch of fresh-plucked poppies in her hand. It was the second time that their glances had met and held. In the previous episode (on the day she had leaned out of the cab) hers had been the first to fall. Now it was his turn. He studied the tips of his shoes. There were three causes why he lowered his eyes; first, she was mistress here and he was an applicant for employment; second, he loved her; third, he was committing the first bold dishonesty in his life. Once, it was on the very tip of his tongue to confess everything, apologize, and take himself off. But his curiosity was of greater weight than his desire. He remained silent and waited for her to speak.

"Celeste, you may leave us," said Miss Annesley.

Celeste courted, shot a killing glance at the tentative groom, and departed the scene.

"You have driven horses for some length of time?" the girl began.

If he might only look as calmly and fearlessly at her! What a voice, now that he heard it in its normal tone!

"Yes, Madam; I have ridden and driven something like ten years."

"Where?"

"In the west, mostly."

"You are English?"

"No; Madam." He wondered how much she had heard at the police-court that morning. "I am American born."

"Are you addicted to the use of intoxicants?"—mentally noting the clearness of the whites of his eyes.

The barest flicker of a smile stirred his lips.

"No, Madam. I had not been drinking last night—that is, not in the sense the officers declared I had. It is true that I take a drink once in a while, when I have been riding or driving all day, or when I am cold. I have absolutely no appetite."

[To Be Continued.]

## Precocious Young Missourian.

The judge of one of the Missouri county courts went to his home the other afternoon, and, becoming acquainted with some flagrant act of his seven-year-old-son, summoned the lad before him. "Now, sir, lay off your coat," he said sternly. "I am going to give you a whipping that you will remember as long as you live. "If it please your honor," said the boy, "we desire to ask a stay of proceedings in this case until we can prepare and file a change of venue to mother's court. Our application will be based on the belief that this court has formed an opinion regarding the guilt of the defendant, which cannot be shaken by evidence, and is therefore not competent to try the case." Stay was granted, and the boy allowed 25 cents attorney fee.—Kansas City Journal.

## Parson and Curate.

A well-known Pennsylvania clergyman recently received an invitation to officiate at the Sunday services of a church in a neighboring town, and entrusted his new curate with the performance of his own duties. When he returned home that night he anxiously asked his good wife what she thought of the curate's sermon.

"It was positively the worst I ever heard," replied the ministerial helpmeet. "There was absolutely nothing in it."

A little disappointed the clergyman sought the new curate and asked him how he had made out during the day.

"Oh, very well," was the rather startling reply. "I didn't have time to prepare anything myself, so I preached one of your old sermons."—Philadelphia Telegraph.

## Fritz Wanted to Know.

Fritz was the meekest looking office boy that ever put glue on a book-keeper's stool. He worked for a lawyer, and one day the lawyer had a woman client, whose brute of a husband had beaten her and for whom he filed suit for divorce. A week later the husband, six feet tall and broad in proportion, came into the office drunk, announcing his intention of whipping every one there. Every one was too busy to see him and he was left to Fritz. Fritz held conversation with the man and listened to his troubles. Finally the man declared loudly: "I've buried three wives, two of them in this county." "What county buried the other one?" inquired Fritz.

## Not Timothy.

Frequently in the south one finds among the negroes as remarkable Christian names as those bestowed upon their offspring by the Puritan fathers. A gentleman of Virginia tells of a negro living near Richmond who for years had been familiarly known to him as Tim. It became necessary at one time in a law suit to know the full name of the dandy. The not unnatural supposition that Tim stood for Timothy met with a flat denial. "No, sah!" exclaimed the negro, "mah name ain't Timothy. It's 'What-timorous-souls-we-poor-mortals-be Jackson.' Dey jest calls me Tim f' sho't."—Success Magazine.

## Somewhat Different.

The scanty-haired bachelor at the pedal extremity of the mahogany was sawing away at his steak.

"You remind me of a picture I once saw," remarked the ribbon-counter clerk. "It was entitled 'An Imitation of a Man at Work.'"

"You've turned to the wrong page in the art catalogue, young man," growled the old bachelor. "The picture I represent is a war chromo entitled 'The Battle of Bull Run.'"—Chicago News.

## RULES AND ETIQUETTE OF GOLF



"A ball lying in the fork of a tree must be played or the player shall lose a stroke."

## A Lucky Cast.

She was a freckled country maid. She did her mother's duty. A city fellow married her. To get a speckled beauty. —N. Y. Sun.

## In Memory of the Departed.

"What a beautiful locket you have I presume you have a memento of some sort in it?"

"Oh, yes; a lock of my husband's hair."

"But your husband isn't dead, is he?"

"No. But his hair is all gone."—Milwaukee Sentinel.

## Different View Points.

"The anxious lover imagines that when the marriage ceremony takes place all his troubles will be over with."

"Well?"

"Well, when he is married a while he realizes that that is just when life's troubles commence."—Houston Post.

## A Business Man's Opinion.

"Think of the men of genius who lacked the necessities of life!" exclaimed the studious young woman.

"Yes," answered Mr. Cumrox, "and in nearly every case it was because they didn't know how to advertise."—Washington Star.

## Reason for It.

"Why, Mr. Knox," said the landlady to the new boarder, "you have let a piece of butter fall in your coffee."

"I did it on purpose, Mrs. Hasher, replied the n. b. "I believe in compelling the strong to assist the weak."—Chicago Daily News.

## Getting Information.

Mr. Goodthing—How does your sister like the engagement ring I gave her, Bobby?

Her Young Brother—Well, it's a little too small; she has an awful hard time getting it off when the other fellows call.—Tit-Bits.

## It Would Never Do.

"Let's go round and call on Mrs. Gossip."

"Not for the world."

"Why, have you quarreled with her?"

"No; but I happen to know that she is at home."—Houston Post.

## Hard to Bear.

\* Lady Visitor—Oh, Mr. Smear, these ostriches are simply superb. You should never paint anything else but birds.

Artist (sadly)—Those are not ostriches, madam. They are angels.—Cassell's Journal.

## Comparing Notes.

"I tell you, it's a serious thing to be the father of 11 daughters."

"I can understand that, old fellow. It keeps me busy clearing away the cold wads of chewing gum for six."—Chicago Tribune.

## Took First Prize.

"My dog took first prize at a cat-show."

"How was that?"

"He took the cat."—Judge.

## Getting Even.

"What makes you think the market went wrong to-day?"

"Because my husband came home and spanked Johnny."—Houston Post.

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