

SERIAL STORY

ELUSIVE ISABEL

By JACQUES FUTRELE

Illustrations by M. KETNER

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SYNOPSIS.

Count di Rosini, the Italian ambassador, is at dinner with diplomats when a messenger summons him to the embassy, where a beautiful young woman asks for a ticket to the embassy ball. The ticket is made out in the name of Miss Isabel Thorne, chief Campbell of the secret service, and Mr. Grimm, his head detective, are warned that a plot is brewing in Washington, and Grimm goes to the state ball for information. His attention is called to Miss Isabel Thorne, who with her companion, disappears. A shot is heard and Senator Alvarez of the Mexican legation, is found wounded. Grimm is assured Miss Thorne did it; he visits her, demanding knowledge of the affair, and arrests Pietro Petrozinni, Miss Thorne's friend, while she escapes. Fifty thousand dollars is stolen from the office of Senator Alvarez, the minister from Venezuela, and while detectives are investigating the robbery Miss Thorne appears as a guest of the legation. Grimm accuses her of the theft; the money is restored, but a new mystery occurs in the disappearance of Monsieur Boissac, the French ambassador. Elusive Miss Thorne reappears, bearing a letter which states that the ambassador has been kidnapped and demanding ransom. The ambassador returns and again strangely disappears. Later he is rescued from an old house in the suburbs. It is discovered that Pietro Petrozinni shot Senator Alvarez and that he is Prince d'Abuzzi. Grimm figures in a mysterious jail delivery. He orders both Miss Thorne and d'Abuzzi to leave the country; they are conveyed to New York and placed on a steamer, but return. Grimm's coffee is drugged and upon regaining consciousness he finds a sympathetic note from Isabel Thorne. The conspirators against the government are located and their scheming is overheard. Grimm orders d'Abuzzi to destroy the unsigned compact.

CHAPTER XXIII—(Continued.)

"Miss Thorne has stated the matter fairly, I believe, your Highness," and Mr. Grimm permitted his eyes to linger a moment on the flushed face of this woman who, in a way, was defending him. "But there is only one thing to do, Miss Thorne." He was talking to her now. "There is no middle course. It is a problem that has only one possible answer—the destruction of that document, and the departure of you, and you, your Highness, for Italy under my personal care all the way. I imagined this matter had ended that day on the steamer; it will end here, now, tonight."

The prince glanced again at his watch, then thoughtfully weighed the percussion cap in his hand, after which, with a curious laugh, he walked over to the squat iron globe in an opposite corner of the room. He bent over it half a minute, then straightened up.

"That cap, Mr. Grimm, has one disadvantage," he remarked casually. "When it is attached to a mine or



"Your Silence Would Be Worth—Just How Much?"

torpedo it can not be disconnected without firing it. It is attached." He turned to the others. "It is needless to discuss the matter further just now. If you will follow me? We will leave Mr. Grimm here."

With a strange little cry, neither anger nor anguish, yet oddly partaking of the quality of each, Isabel went quickly to the prince.

"How dare you do such a thing?" she demanded fiercely. "It is murder."

"This is not a time, Miss Thorne, for your interference," replied the prince coldly. "It has all passed beyond the point where the feelings of any one person, even the feelings of the woman who has engineered the compact, can be considered. A single life can not be permitted to stand in the way of the consummation of this world project. Mr. Grimm alive means the compact would be useless, if not impossible; Mr. Grimm dead means the fruition of all our plans and hopes. You have done your duty and you have done it well; but now your authority ends, and I, the special envoy of—"

"Just a moment, please," Mr. Grimm interrupted courteously. "As I understand it, your Highness, the mine there in the corner is charged?"

"Yes. It just happened to be here for purposes of experiment."
"The cap is attached?"
"Quite right." The prince laughed. "And at three o'clock, by your watch, the mine will be fired by a wireless operator fifteen miles from here."

"Something like that; yes, very much like that," assented the prince. "Thank you. I merely wanted to understand it." Mr. Grimm pulled a chair up against the door and sat down, crossing his legs. On his knees rested the barrel of a revolver, glittering, fascinating, in the semi-darkness. "Now, gentlemen," and he glanced at his watch, "it's twenty-one minutes of three o'clock. At three that mine will explode. We will all be in the room when it happens, unless his Highness sees fit to destroy the compact."

Eyes sought eyes, and the prince removed his mask with a sudden gesture. His face was bloodless.

"If any man," and Mr. Grimm gave Miss Thorne a quick glance, "I should say, any person, attempts to leave this room I know he will die; and there's a bare chance that the percussion cap will fall to work. I can account for six of you, if there is a rush."

"But, man, if that mine explodes we shall all be killed—blown to pieces!" burst from one of the cowed figures.

"If the percussion cap works," supplemented Mr. Grimm.

Mingled emotion struggled in the flushed face of Isabel as she studied Mr. Grimm's impassive countenance. "I have never disappointed you yet, Miss Thorne," he remarked as if it were an explanation. "I shall not now."

She turned to the prince. "Your Highness, I think it needless to argue further," she said. "We have no choice in the matter; there is only one course—destroy the compact."

"No!" was the curt answer.

"I believe I know Mr. Grimm better than you do," she argued. "You think he will weaken; I know he will not. I am not arguing for him, nor for myself; I am arguing against the frightful loss that will come here in this room if the compact is not destroyed."

"It's absurd to let one man stand in the way," declared the prince angrily. "It might not be an impertinent question, your Highness," commented Mr. Grimm, "for me to ask how you are going to prevent one man standing in the way?"

A quick change came over Miss Thorne's face. The eyes hardened, the lips were set, and lines Mr. Grimm had never seen appeared about the mouth. Here, in a flash, the cloak of dissimulation was cast aside, and the woman stood forth, this keen, brilliant, determined woman who did things.

"The compact will be destroyed," she said.

"No," declared the prince.

"It must be destroyed."

"Must? Must? Do you say must to me?"

"Yes, must," she repeated steadily.

"And by what authority, please, do—"

"By that authority!" She drew a tiny, filigreed gold box from her bosom and cast it upon the table; the prince stared at it. "In the name of your sovereign—must!" she said again.

The prince turned away and began pacing back and forth across the room with the parchment crumpled in his hand. For a minute or more Isabel stood watching him.

"Thirteen minutes!" Mr. Grimm announced coldly.

And now broke out an excited chatter, a babel of French, English, Italian, Spanish; those masked and cowed ones who had held silence for so long all began talking at once. One of them snatched at the crumpled compact in the prince's hand, while all crowded around him arguing. Mr. Grimm sat perfectly still with the revolver barrel resting on his knees.

"Eleven minutes!" he announced again.

Suddenly the prince turned violently on Miss Thorne with rage-distorted face.

"Do you know what it means to you if I do as you say?" he demanded savagely. "It means you will be branded as traitor, that your name, your property—"

"If you will pardon me, your Highness," she interrupted, "the power that I have used was given to me to use; I have used it. It is a matter to be settled between me and my government, and as far as it affects my person is of no consequence now. You will destroy the compact."

"Nine minutes!" said Mr. Grimm monotonously.

Again the babel broke out.

"Do we understand that you want to see the compact?" one of the cowed men asked suddenly of Mr. Grimm as he turned.

"No, I don't want to see it. I'd prefer not to see it."

With hatred blazing in his eyes the prince made his way toward the lamp, holding a parchment toward the blaze.

"There's nothing else to be done," he exclaimed savagely.

"Just a moment, please," Mr. Grimm interposed quickly. "Miss Thorne, is that the compact?"

She glanced at it, nodded her head, and then the flame caught the fringed edge of paper. It crackled, flashed, flamed, and at last, a thing of ash, was scattered on the floor. Mr. Grimm rose.

"That is all, gentlemen," he announced courteously. "You are free to go. You, your Highness, and Miss Thorne, will accompany me."

He held open the door and there was almost a scramble to get out. The prince and Miss Thorne waited until the last.

"And, Miss Thorne, if you will give us a lift in your car?" Mr. Grimm

suggested. "It is now four minutes of three."

The automobile came in answer to a signal, and the three in silence entered it. The car trembled and has just begun to move when Grimm remembered something, and leaped out.

"Wait for me!" he called. "There's a man locked in the coal-bin!"

He disappeared into the house, and Miss Thorne, with a gasp of horror sank back in her seat with face like chalk. The prince glanced uneasily at his watch, then spoke curtly to the chauffeur.

"Run the car up out of danger; there'll be an explosion there in a moment."

They had gone perhaps a hundred feet when the building they had just left seemed to be lifted bodily from the ground by a great spurt of flame which tore through its center, then collapsed like a thing of cards. The prince, unmoved, glanced around at Miss Thorne; she lay in a dead faint beside him.

"Go ahead," he commanded. "Baltimore."

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Personal Equation.

Mr. Campbell ceased talking and the deep earnestness that had settled on his face passed, leaving instead the blank, inscrutable mask of benevolence behind which his clock-like genius was habitually hidden. The choleric blue eyes of the president of the United States shifted inquiringly to the thoughtful countenance of the secretary of state at his right, thence along the table around which the official family was gathered. It was a special meeting of the cabinet called at the suggestion of Chief Campbell, and for more than an hour he had done the talking. There had been no interruption.

"So much!" he concluded, at last. "If there is any point I have not made clear Mr. Grimm is here to explain it in person."

Mr. Grimm rose at the mention of his name and stood with his hands clasped behind his back. His eyes met those of the chief executive listlessly.

"We understand, Mr. Grimm," the president began, and he paused for an instant to regard the tall, clean-cut young man with a certain admiration, "we understand that there does not actually exist such a thing as a Latin compact against the English-speaking peoples?"

"On paper, no," was the reply.

"You personally prevented the signing of the compact?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



"You, Your Highness, and Miss Thorne, Will Accompany Me."

WHERE IS CIRCUIT RIDER?

Old-Fashioned Itinerant Preacher Seems to Have Vanished From Present-Day World.

What has become of the old circuit rider? He seems to have gone, to have vanished entirely from the present-day world, although to the older generations he figured in the lives of the people to whom he ministered.

In their day the circuit riders knew little of home or rest, for each had from seven to fifteen parishes, miles apart from each other. When night overtook the circuit rider and his horse—this was the minister's usual mode of travel—he stopped with some member of one of his parishes. And he it said it was great honor, indeed, to have the great fortune to entertain the minister at a meal or over night.

Probably the much overworked man would get to spend one night in a week at home, perhaps not that. His life was uncertain and wandering, but his faith was that which "passeth understanding." But his days were numbered and are gone, probably never to be revived. He was a figure, however, that is typical of the pioneers of America—he knew his duty and was faithful in the performance of it.

They Are Tinkering With Pisa.

According to the findings of a royal commission appointed to investigate the present condition of the Leaning Tower of Pisa, it appears that, instead of being supported on a massive foundation, the tower rests on a ring-shaped masonry base, with an inner diameter of 24 feet 3 1/2 inches, exactly the same as the inner diameter of the tower. The tower is about 177 feet high, and in 1825 it is said to have been 14 feet 5 inches out of plumb; since that time its inclination has been increased by an additional 0.0055 foot per foot of its height. In 1834 an earthquake caused a deflection of about five inches.

On Bargain Day.

Gentlemen—Er—where can I find the silk counter? Floorwalker—Third battle to the right.—Judge.

THE NEWS OF PENNSYLVANIA

Freeland.—Steve Harlack was killed by a fall of coal and Michael Welchko, his laborer, was fatally injured in the Jeddo mines of G. E. Markle & Co., in Jeddo.

Norristown.—Elva Tarbutton, of Penn street, Camden, died at the home of her grandmother, Mrs. A. R. Tarbutton, from tetanus, caused by dirt getting into a vaccination wound.

Reading.—The torch was applied to the stack of the Empire Iron & Steel Company, at Topton, Thursday. There are now three furnaces in blast in that vicinity, with the prospects of another going in some time this fall.

Easton.—The jury impanelled by Coroner Fetherolf to inquire into the death of Miss Catherine Warner, of this city, who was killed last week in an auto accident, found a verdict that it was due to excessive speed and reckless driving. Parents of the dead girl have entered suit against Dehl for \$5,000 damages, and District Attorney McKeon is looking into the case with a view of proceeding against Dehl for reckless running.

Hollidaysburg.—Duncansville was the scene of a destructive fire, and for a time the entire eastern portion of that town was threatened. A warehouse and stable, owned by Norman Wilt, and dwellings owned by Oliver Stultz, William Gamble and L. D. Stiffer were destroyed.

South Bethlehem.—Monroe B. Barwick, a former local Justice of the Peace and one time member of the State Legislature, while suffering from an attack of melancholia, killed himself with a bullet that sped from a revolver into his jaw and took an upward course.

South Bethlehem.—Because the officials of the Gabriel Hosely Mills, at Coopersburg, refused to listen to the petition of its employees that they be not compelled to pay for damaged socks and broken needles, 190 girls went on a strike. Miss Edna Hunsberger, who represented the strikers, was discharged.

Corry.—Isaac H. Button, of Jamestown, was instantly killed and Charles Blanchard was fatally injured at Panama. The men were standing on a scaffold making repairs to a dam over broken Straw creek. The scaffold broke and the men fell to the creek bottom. Button fell on Blanchard. A huge rock on the scaffold fell and struck the struggling man.

Pottsville.—Geo. Opie filed charges that the new county insane asylum building at Schuylkill Haven is being slighted. Opie, who has previously made serious charges concerning this building, which will cost \$500,000 before it is completed, now declares that the steel work is being bolted instead of riveted as specifically required by the contract. Opie says this involves a saving of \$900 for the contractor.

York.—While his employer was attending a funeral James Leonard, a young Baltimorean, drove off with the \$250 horse and buggy of Henry Kurtz, a farmer of Hopewell Township, with whom he had been employed. Leonard took the team during the early part of September. Detective White traced him back to his home and arrested him. Leonard confessed the crime.

Mahanoy City.—After being entombed in a gangway at Tunnel Ridge colliery for ten hours, John Melusky, Adam Anthony and Robert Dennis were rescued none the worse for their experience. The three men were caught last night behind a rush in the gangway. Their absence was discovered and a rescuing force organized, which never faltered in the face of grave perils, until the three men were reached and released.

Pottsville.—Pardoned by the Governor, George Haines, who was serving a long sentence in the Schuylkill county prison for horse stealing, walked out of the jail doors here Thursday a free man. Since his imprisonment he invented a life-saver, which is destined to be used as one of the safety devices on liners and every sort of maritime craft, and he was granted a patent upon it while he was in prison by the United States Patent Office. He has also invented a life-saving device or preserver for aviators, and declares that as soon as he can manufacture his model, a patent upon this will also be granted him, and there will be no more deaths of aviators. Though penniless, he has refused \$50,000 for his life-saving inventions, and will hold out for double that sum.

Pittsburgh.—Vaccinated twenty-one days ago upon entering school, Albert G. Glass, aged six, died at his home in New Brighton, from lockjaw. The vaccination, it is said, became infected a few days ago and tetanus developed.

Bethlehem.—Five robbers waylaid James Beller, of East Macungie, while on his way home from Emaus and, becoming enraged at not finding any money on his person, beat him terribly and threw him down an embankment, where he was later found in an unconscious condition.

TERMS.—The terms of subscription to the Reporter are one dollar per year in advance.

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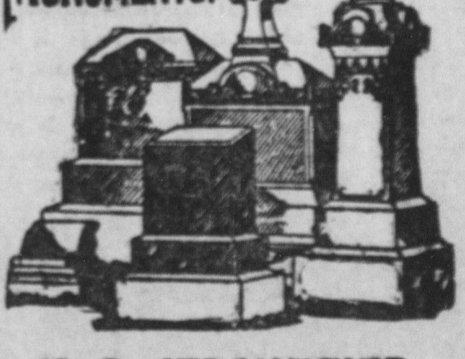
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