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The BLIND MAN'S EYES

BY WILLIAM MACHARG & EDWIN BALMER.

Illustrations by R.H. Livingstone

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"DESCRIBE HIM"

Gabriel Warden, Seattle capitalist, tells his butler he is expecting a caller, to be admitted without question. He informs his wife of danger that threatens him if he pursues a course he considers the only honorable one. Warden leaves the house in his car and meets a man whom he takes into the machine. When the car returns home, Warden is found dead, murdered, and alone. The caller, a young man, has been at Warden's house, but leaves unobserved. Bob Connelly, conductor, receives orders to hold train for a party. Five men and a girl board the train, the eastern express. The father of the girl, Mr. Dorne, is the person for whom the train was held. Philip D. Eaton, a young man, also boarded the train. Dorne tells his daughter and his secretary, Don Avery, to find out what they can concerning him. The two make Eaton's acquaintance. Dorne is found nearly dead from a murderous assault. A surgeon operates. Dorne is revealed as Basil Santoline, blind, and a power in the financial world as the adviser of "big interests." Eaton is suspected and questioned. He refuses information about himself and admits he was the caller at Warden's house.

CHAPTER VIII—Continued.

Eaton had sensed already what the nature of the message must be, though as the conductor held it out to him he could read only his name at the top of the sheet and did not know yet what the actual wording was below. Acceptance of it must mean arrest, indictment for the crime against Basil Santoline; and that, whether or not he later was acquitted, must destroy him; but denial of the message now would be hopeless.

"It is yours, isn't it?" Connelly urged.

"Yes; it's mine," Eaton admitted; and to make his acceptance definite, he took the paper from Connelly. As he looked dully down at it, he read: "He is on your train under the name of Dorne."

The message was not signed. Connelly touched him on the shoulder. "Come with me, Mr. Eaton." Eaton got up slowly and mechanically and followed the conductor. At the door he halted and looked back; Harriet Santoline was not looking; her face was covered with her hands; Eaton hesitated; then he went on. Connelly threw open the door of the compartment next to the washroom and corresponding to the drawing room at the other end of the car, but smaller.

"You'll do well enough in here." He closed the door upon Eaton and locked it. As Eaton stood staring at the floor, he could hear through the metal partition of the washroom the nervous, almost hysterical weeping of an overstrained girl. The thing was done; in so far as the authorities on the train were concerned, it was known that he was the man who had had the appointment with Gabriel Warden and had disappeared; and in so far as the train officials could act, he was accused and confined for the attack upon Basil Santoline. But besides being overwhelmed with the horror of this position, the manner in which he had been accused had roused him to helpless anger, to rage at his accusers which still increased as he heard the sounds on the other side of the partition, where Avery was now trying to silence Harriet Santoline and lead her away.

CHAPTER IX

The Blind Man's Eyes.

At noon Connelly came to his door, and behind Connelly saw Harriet Santoline and Avery. Eaton jumped up, and as he saw the girl's pale face, the color left his own.

"Miss Santoline has asked to speak to you," Connelly announced; and he admitted Harriet Santoline and Avery, and himself remaining outside in the aisle, closed the door upon them.

"How is your father?" Eaton asked the girl.

"He seems just the same; at least, I can't see any change, Mr. Eaton."

"Can Doctor Sinclair see any difference?" Eaton asked.

"Doctor Sinclair will not commit himself except to say that so far as he can tell, the indications are favorable. He seems to think—" The girl choked; but when she went on, her blue eyes were very bright and her lips did not tremble. "Doctor Sinclair seems to think, Mr. Eaton, that Father was found just in time, and that whatever chance he has for recovery came from you. Sometimes Father had insomnia and wouldn't get to sleep till late in the morning; so I—and Mr. Avery too—would have left him undisturbed until noon. Doctor Sinclair says that if he had been left as long as that, he would have had no chance at all for life."

"He has a chance, then, now?"

"Yes; but we don't know how much. I—I wanted you to know, Mr. Eaton, that I recognize—that the chance Father may have come through you, and that I am trying to think of you as the one who gave him the chance."

The warm blood flooded Eaton's face, and he bowed his head. She, then, was not wholly hostile to him; she had not been completely convinced by Avery.

Her eyes rested upon Eaton steadily; and while he had been appealing to her, a flush had come to her cheeks and faded away and come again and again with her impulses as he spoke.

"If you didn't do it, why don't you help us?" she cried.

"Help you?"

"Yes; tell us who you are and what you are doing? Why did you take the train because Father was on it, if you didn't mean any harm to him? Why don't you tell us where you are going or where you have been or what you have been doing? Why can't you give the name of anybody you know or tell us of anyone who knows about you?"

"I might ask you in return," Eaton said, "why you thought it worth while, Miss Santoline, to ask so much about myself when you first met me and before any of this had happened? Why were you curious about me?"

"My father asked me to find out about you."

"Why?"

Harriet had reddened under Eaton's gaze. "You understand, Mr. Eaton, it was—was entirely impersonal with me. My father, being blind, is obliged to use the eyes of others—mine, for one; and he has Mr. Avery. He calls us his eyes, sometimes; and it was only—only because I had been commissioned to find out about you that I was obliged to show so much curiosity."

Harriet arose, and Eaton got up as she did and stood as she went toward the door.

Avery had reached the door, holding it open for her to go out. Suddenly Eaton tore the handle from Avery's grasp, slammed the door shut upon him and braced his foot against it.

"Miss Santoline," he pleaded, his voice hoarse with his emotion, "for God's sake, make them think what they are doing before they make a public accusation against me—before they charge me with this to others not on this train! It will not be merely accusation they make against me—it will be my sentence! I shall be sentenced before I am tried—condemned without a chance to defend myself! That is the reason I could not come forward after the murder of Mr. Warden. I could not have helped him—or aided in the pursuit of his enemies—if I had appeared; I merely would have been destroyed myself! The only thing I could hope to accomplish has been in following my present course—which, I swear to you, has no connection with the attack upon your father. What Mr. Avery and Connelly are planning to do to me, they cannot undo. They will merely complete the outrage and injustice already done me—which Mr. Warden spoke to his wife—and they will not help your father. For God's sake, keep them from going further!"

Her color deepened, and for an instant, he thought he saw full belief in him growing in her eyes; but if she



They Dashed the Door Open, Then—

could not accept the charge against him, neither could she consciously deny it, and the hands she had been pressing together suddenly dropped.

"I—I'm afraid nothing I could say would have much effect on them, knowing as little about—about you as I do!"

They dashed the door open then—silenced and overwhelmed him; and

they took her from the room and left him alone again. But there was something left with him which they could not take away; for in the moment he had stood alone with her and passionately pleading, something had passed between them—he could give no name to it, but he knew that Harriet Santoline never could think of him again without a stirring of her pulses which drew her toward him.

The following morning, the relieving snowplows arrived from the East, and Eaton felt it was the beginning of the end for him. He watched from his window men struggling in the snow about the forward end of the train; then the train moved forward past the shoveled and trampled snow where rock and pieces of the snowplow were piled beside the track—stopped, waited; finally it went on again and began to take up its steady progress.

The attack upon Santoline having taken place in Montana, Eaton thought that he would be turned over to the police somewhere within that state, and he expected it would be done at the first stop; but when the train slowed at Simons, he saw the town was nothing more than a little hamlet, beside a side-track. They surely could not deliver him to the village authorities here.

It made no material difference to him, Eaton realized, whether the police took him in Montana or Chicago, since in either case recognition of him would be certain in the end; but in Chicago this recognition must be immediate, complete, and utterly convincing.

The train was traveling steadily and faster than its regular schedule; it evidently was running as a special, some other train taking the ordinary traffic; it halted now only at the largest cities. In the morning it crossed into Minnesota; and in the late afternoon, slowing, it rolled into some large city which Eaton knew must be Minneapolis or St. Paul. The car here was uncoupled from the train and picked up by a switch engine; as dusk fell, Eaton, peering out of his window, could see that they had been left lying in the railroad yards; and about midnight, awakening in his berth, he realized that the car was still motionless. He could account for this stoppage in their progress only by some change in the condition of Santoline. Was Santoline sinking, so that he no longer dared to travel? Was he, perhaps—dead?

No sounds came to him from the car to confirm Eaton in any conclusion; there was nothing to be learned from anyone outside the car. Eaton lay for a long time, listening for other sounds and wondering what was occurring—or had occurred—at the other end of his car. Toward morning he fell asleep.

CHAPTER X

Publicity Not Wanted.

"Basil Santoline dying! Blind millionaire taken ill on train!"

The alarm of the cry came to answer Eaton's question early the next morning. He threw up the curtain and saw a vagrant newsboy, evidently passing through the railroad yards to sell to the trainmen, Eaton, hailing the boy put out his hand for a paper. He spread the news-sheet before him and read that Santoline's condition was very low and becoming rapidly worse. But below, under a Montana date-line, Eaton saw it proclaimed that the blind millionaire was merely sick; there was no suggestion anywhere of an attack. The paper stated only that Basil Santoline, returning from Seattle with his daughter and his secretary, Donald Avery, had been taken seriously ill upon a train which had been stalled for two days in the snow in Montana. The column ended with the statement that Mr. Santoline had passed through Minneapolis and gone on to Chicago under care of Dr. Douglas Sinclair.

Eaton stared at the newspaper without reading, after he saw that. He had not realized, until now that he was told that Harriet Santoline had gone—for if her father had gone on, of course she was with him—the extent to which he had felt her fairness, almost her friendship to him. At least, he knew now that, since she had spoken to him after he was first accused of the attack on her father, he had not felt entirely deserted or friendless till now.

But why, if Santoline had been taken away, or was dead or dying, had they left Eaton all night in the car in the yards? Since Santoline was dying, would there be any longer an object in concealing the fact that he had been murdered?

He dressed and then paced back and forth the two or three steps his compartment allowed him. He stopped now and then to listen; from outside came the noises of the yard; but he made out no sound within the car. If it had been occupied as on the days previous, he must have heard some one coming to the washroom at his end. Was he alone in the car now, or had the customary moving about taken place before he awoke?

Finally, to free himself from his nervous listening for sounds which never came, he picked up the paper again. He read:

"The news of Mr. Santoline's visit of a week on the Coast, if not known already in great financial circles, is likely to prove interesting there. For years he has been the chief agent in keeping peace among some of the great conflicting interests, and more than once he has advised the declaring of financial war when war seemed to him the correct solution. Thus, five years ago, when the violent death of Matthew Latron threatened to precipitate trouble among western capitalists, Santoline kept order in what might very well become

financial chaos. If his recent visit to the Pacific coast was not purely for personal reasons but was also to adjust antagonisms such as charged by Gabriel Warden before his death, the loss of Santoline at this time may precipitate troubles which, living, his advice and information might have been able to prevent."

Having read and reread this long paragraph, Eaton thrust the sheet out the window. As he sat thinking, with lips tight closed, he heard for the first time that morning footsteps at his end of the car. The door of his compartment was unlocked and opened, and he saw Doctor Sinclair.

"Mr. Santoline wants to speak to you," the surgeon announced quietly. This startling negation of all he imagined, unnerved Eaton. He started up, then sank back for better composure.

"Mr. Santoline is here, then?"

"Here? Of course he's here?"

"And he's conscious?"

"He has been conscious for the better part of two days. Didn't they tell you?"

Eaton looked toward the window, breathing hard. "I heard the newsboys—"

Sinclair shrugged. "The papers print what they can get and in the way which seems most effective to them," was his only comment.

The surgeon led Eaton to the door of the drawing room, showed him in and left him.

Harriet Santoline was sitting on the little lounge opposite the berth where



Harriet Santoline Was Sitting on the Little Lounge Opposite the Berth Where Her Father Lay.

her father lay. She was watching the face of her father, and as Eaton stood in the door, he saw her lean forward and gently touch her father's hand; then she turned and saw Eaton.

"Here is Mr. Eaton, Father," she said.

"Sit down," Santoline directed. The blind man was very weak and must stay quite still; and he recognized it; but he knew too that his strength was more than equal to the task of recovery, and he showed that he knew it. His mind and will were, obviously, at their full activity, and he had fully his sense of hearing.

Harriet's lips trembled as she turned to Eaton; but she did not speak directly to him yet; it was Basil Santoline who suddenly inquired: "What is it they call you?"

"My name is Philip D. Eaton," Eaton realized as soon as he had spoken that both question and answer had been unnecessary, and Santoline had asked only to hear Eaton's voice.

The blind man was silent for a moment, as he seemed to consider the voice and try again vainly to place it in his memories. Then he spoke to his daughter.

"Describe him, Harriet."

Harriet paled and flushed. "About thirty," she said, "—under rather than over that. Six feet or a little more in height. Slender, but muscular and athletic. Skin and eyes clear and with a look of health. Complexion naturally rather fair, but darkened by being outdoors a good deal. Hair dark brown, straight and parted at the side. Smooth shaven. Eyes blue-gray, with straight lashes. Eyebrows straight and dark. Forehead smooth, broad and intelligent. Nose straight and neither short nor long; nostrils delicate. Mouth straight, with lips neither thin nor full. Chin neither square nor pointed, and without a cleft. Face and head, in general, of oval Anglo-American type."

"Go on," said Santoline.

"Harriet was breathing quickly. "Hands well shaped, strong but without sign of manual labor; nails cared for but not polished. Gray business suit, new. Soft-bosomed shirt of plain design with soft cuffs. Medium-height turn-down white linen collar. Four-in-hand tie, tied by himself. Black shoes. No jewelry except watch-chain."

"In general?" Santoline suggested.

"In general, apparently well-educated, well-bred, intelligent young American. Expression frank. Manner self-controlled and reserved. Seems sometimes younger than he must be, sometimes older. Something has happened at some time which has had a great effect and can't be forgotten."

"I understand; of course Hugh! But you—you're here! In his house!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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