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The Blind Man's Eyes

By

WILLIAM MacHARG & EDWIN BALMER

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"I REFUSE"

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 Connerly, 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. Phillip 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 Santoiné, 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. Eaton pleads with Harriet Santoiné to withhold judgment, telling her he is in serious danger, though innocent of the crime against her father. He feels the girl believes him.

CHAPTER X—Continued.

While she spoke, the blood, rising with her embarrassment, had dyed Harriet's face; suddenly now she looked away from him and out the window.

"He would be called, I judge, a rather likable-looking man?" Santoiné said tentatively; his question plainly was only meant to lead up to something else; Santoiné had judged in that particular already.

"Mr. Eaton"—Santoiné addressed him suddenly—"I understand that you have admitted that you were at the house of Gabriel Warden the evening he was killed while in his car. Is that so?"

"Yes," said Eaton.

"You are the man, then, of whom Gabriel Warden spoke to his wife?"

"I believe so."

"You believe so?"

"I mean," Eaton explained quietly, "that I came by appointment to call on Mr. Warden that night. I believe that it must have been to me that Mr. Warden referred in the conversation with his wife which has since been quoted in the newspapers."

"Because you were in such a situation that, if Mr. Warden defended you, he would himself meet danger?"

"I did not say that," Eaton denied guardedly.

"What, then, was your position in regard to Mr. Warden?"

Eaton remained silent.

"You refuse to answer?" Santoiné inquired.

"I refuse."

"In spite of the probability that Mr. Warden met his death because of his intention to undertake something for you?"

"I have not been able to fix that as a probability."

"Mr. Eaton, have I ever injured you personally—I don't mean directly, as man to man, for I should remember that; have I ever done anything which indirectly has worked injury on you or your affairs?"

"No," Eaton answered.

"Who sent you aboard this train?"

"Sent me? No one."

"You took the train of your own will because I was taking it?"

"I have not said I took it because you were taking it."

"That seems to be proved. You can accept it from me; it has been proved. Did you take the train in order to attack me?"

"No."

"To spy upon me?"

"No."

Santoiné was silent for an instant.

"What was it you took the train to tell me?"

"I? Nothing."

"That is all, Mr. Eaton."

Eaton started back to his compartment. As he turned, Harriet Santoiné looked up at him and her eyes met; and her look confirmed to him what he had felt before—that her father, now taking control of the investigation of the attack upon himself, was not continuing it with prejudice or predisposed desire to damage Eaton, except as the evidence accused him.

And her manner now told, even more plainly than Santoiné's, that the blind man had viewed the evidence as far from conclusive against Eaton; and as Harriet showed that she was glad of that, Eaton realized how she must have taken his side against Avery in reporting to her father.

Eaton had barely finished breakfast when a bumping against the car told him that it was being coupled to a train. The new train started, and now the track followed the Mississippi river. Eaton, looking forward from his window as the train rounded curves, saw that the Santoiné car was now the last one of a train—presumably bound for Minneapolis to Chicago. At nine o'clock in the evening, some minutes after crossing the state line into Illinois, the train stopped at a station where the last car was cut off.

A motor-ambulance and other limousine motor-cars were waiting in the light from the station. Eaton, seated at the window, saw Santoiné carried out on a stretcher and put

into the ambulance. Harriet Santoiné, after giving a direction to a man who apparently was a chauffeur, got into the ambulance with her father. The surgeon and the nurses rode with them. They drove off. Avery entered another automobile, which swiftly disappeared. Conductor Connerly came for the last time to Eaton's door.

"Miss Santoiné says you're to go with the man she's left here for you."

The porter appeared with his overcoat and hat. Eaton put them on and stepped out of the car. The conductor escorted him to a limousine car. "This is the gentleman," Connerly said to the chauffeur to whom Harriet Santoiné had spoken. The man opened the door of the limousine; another man, whom Eaton had not before seen, was seated in the car; Eaton stepped in. Connerly extended his hand—"Good-by, sir."

"Good-by."

The motor-car drove down a wide, winding road with tall, spreading trees on both sides. The man in the car with Eaton, whose duty plainly was only that of a guard, did not speak to Eaton nor Eaton to him. The motor passed other limousines occasionally; then, though the road was still wide and smooth and still bounded by great trees, it was lonelier; no houses appeared for half a mile; then lights glowed directly ahead; the car ran under the porte-cochère of a great stone country mansion; a servant sprang to the door of the limousine and opened it; another man seized Eaton's hand-baggage from beside the chauffeur. Eaton entered a large, beamed and paneled hallway with an immense fireplace with logs burning in it; there was a wide stairway which the servant, who had appointed himself Eaton's guide, ascended. Eaton followed him and found another great hall upstairs. The servant led him to one of the doors opening off this and into a large room, fitted for a man's occupancy, with dark furniture, cases containing books on hunting, sports and adventure, and smoking things; off this was a dressing room with the bath next; beyond was a bedroom.

"These are to be your rooms, sir," the servant said. A valet appeared and unpacked Eaton's traveling bag.

Eaton went to bed, but amazement would not let him sleep.

He was in Santoiné's house; he knew it could be no other than Santoiné's house. It was to get into Santoiné's house that he had come from Asia; he had thought and planned and schemed all through the long voyage on the steamer how it was to be done. He would have been willing to cross the continent on foot to accomplish it; no labor that he could imagine would have seemed too great to him if this had been his end; and here it had been done without effort on his part, naturally, inevitably! Chance and circumstance had done it! And as he realized this, his mind was full of what he had to do in Santoiné's house. For many days he had not thought about that; it had seemed impossible that he could have any opportunity to act for himself. And the return to his thoughts of his friends—those friends who through his exile, had been faithful to him but whose identity or existence he had been obliged to deny, when questioned, to protect them as well as himself.

As he lay on his bed in the dark, he stared upward to the ceiling, wide awake, thinking of those friends whose devotion to him might be justified at

CHAPTER XI

The Ally in the House.

The first gray of dawn roused Eaton, and drawing on trousers and coat over his pajamas, he seated himself by the open window to see the house by daylight. As it grew lighter, he could see it was an immense structure of smooth gray stone. Eaton was in its central part, his windows looking to the south. As he watched, one of the two nurses who had been on the train came to a window of the farthest room on the second floor of the south wing and stood looking out; that, then, must be Santoiné's room; and Eaton drew back from his window as he noted this.

The sun had risen, and its beams, reflected up from the lake, danced on his ceiling. Eaton, chilled by the sharp air off the water—and knowing now the locality where he must be—pulled off his coat and trousers and jumped back into bed. He realized that circumstances had given him time for anything he might wish to do; for the night's stop at Minneapolis and Santoiné's unexpected taking him into his own charge must have made Eaton's disappearance complete; for the present he was lost to "them" who had been "following" him, and to his friends alike. His task, then, was to let his friends know where he was without letting "them" learn it; and thinking of how this was to be done, he fell asleep again.

At nine he awoke with a start; then, recollecting everything, he jumped up and shut his windows. There was a respectful, apologetic knock at the door; evidently a servant had been waiting in the hall for some sound within the room.

"May I come in, sir?"

"Come in."

The man who had attended him the evening before entered.

"Your bath, sir; hot or cold in the morning, sir?"

"Hot," Eaton answered.

"Of course, sir; I'd forgotten you'd just come from the Orient, sir. I shall tell them to bring breakfast up, sir; or will you go down?" the man asked.

Eaton considered. The manners of servants are modeled on the feelings of their masters, and the man's deference told plainly that, although Eaton might be a prisoner, he was not to be treated openly as such.

"I think I can go down," Eaton replied. He found the hall and the rooms below bright and open but unoccupied; a servant showed him to a blue Delft breakfast room to the east. He had half finished his bacon and greens before anyone else appeared.

This was a tall, carefully dressed man of more than fifty, with handsome, well-bred features—plainly a man of position and wealth but without experience in affairs, and without power. He was dark haired and wore a mustache which, like his hair, was beginning to gray. As he appeared in the hall without hat or overcoat, Eaton understood that he lived in the house; he came directly into the breakfast room and evidently had not breakfasted.

"I am Wallace Blatchford," the stranger volunteered as Eaton looked up. He gave the name in a manner which seemed to assume that he now must be recalled; Eaton therefore feigned recognition as he gave him his name in return.

"Basil Santoiné is better this morning," Blatchford announced.

"I understood he was very comfortable last evening," Eaton said. "I have not seen either Miss Santoiné or Mr. Avery, this morning."

"I saw Basil Santoiné the last thing last night," the other boasted. "He was very tired; but when he was home, of course he wished me to be beside him for a time."

"Of course," Eaton replied, as the other halted. There was a humility in the boast of this man's friendship for Santoiné which stirred sympathy, almost pity.

Eaton finished his breakfast but remained at the table while Blatchford, who scarcely touched his food, continued to boast, in his queer humility, of the blind man and of the blind man's friendship for him. He checked himself only when Harriet Santoiné appeared in the doorway. He and Eaton at once were on their feet.

"My dear! He wants to see me now?" the tall man almost pleaded. "He wants me to be with him this morning?"

"Of course, Cousin Wallace," the girl said gently, almost with compassion.

"You will excuse me then, sir," Blatchford said hastily to Eaton and hurried off. The girl gazed after him, and when she turned the next instant to Eaton her eyes were wet.

"Good morning, Miss Santoiné. You are coming to breakfast?"

"Oh, no; I've had my breakfast; I was going out to see that things outside the house have been going on well since we have been away."

"May I go with you while you do that?" Eaton tried to ask casually. Important to him as was the plan of the house, it was scarcely less essential for him to know the grounds.

She hesitated.

"I understand it's my duty at present to stay wherever I may be; but

but I'll hardly run away from you while inside your own grounds."

This did not seem to be the question troubling her. "Very well," she said at last. She was abstracted as they passed through the hall and a man brought Eaton's overcoat and hat and a maid her coat. Harriet led the way out to the terrace. The day was crisp, but the breeze had lost the chill it had had earlier in the morning; the lake was free from ice; only along the little projecting breakwaters which guarded the bluff against the washing of the waves, some ice still clung, and this was rapidly melting. A gravelled path led them around the south end of the house.

Eaton saw at a little distance a powerful, strapping man, half-concealed—though he did not seem to be hiding—behind some bushes. The man might have passed for an undergardener; but he was not working; and once before during their walk Eaton had seen another man, powerfully built as this one, who had looked keenly at him and then away quickly. Harriet flushed slightly as she saw that Eaton observed the man; Eaton understood then that the man was a guard, one of several, probably, who had been put about the house to keep watch of him.

Had Harriet Santoiné understood his interest in the grounds as preparatory to a plan to escape, and had she therefore taken him out to show him the guards who would prevent him? He did not speak of the men, and neither did she; with her, he went on, silently, to the gardeners' cottages, where she gave directions concerning the spring work being done on the grounds. Then they went back to the house, exchanging—for the first time between them—ordinary inanities.

She left him in the hall, saying she was going to visit her father.

As Eaton stood, undecided where to go, a young woman crossed the main part of the hall, coming evidently from outside the house—she had on hat and jacket and was gloved; she was approaching the doors of the room he just had left, and so must pass him. He stared at sight of her and choked; then he controlled him-



She halted suddenly as she saw him, and Grew Very Pale.

self rigidly, waiting until she should see him.

She halted suddenly as she saw him and grew very pale, and her gloved hands went swiftly to her breast and pressed against it; she caught herself together and looked swiftly and fearfully about her and out into the hall. Seeing no one but herself, she came a step nearer.

"Hugh!" she breathed. Her surprise was plainly greater than his own had been at sight of her; but she checked herself again quickly and looked warningly back at the hall; then she fixed on him her blue eyes—which were very like Eaton's, though she did not resemble him closely in any other particular—as though waiting his instructions.

"Stay where you are, Edith," he whispered. "If we hear anyone coming, we are just passing each other in the hall."

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

"Even lower, Edith; remember I'm Eaton—Phillip Eaton."

"Of course; I know; and I'm Miss Davis here—Mildred Davis."

"They let you come in and out like this—as you want, with no one watching you?"

"No, no; I do stenography for Mr. Avery sometimes, as I wrote you. That is all. When he works here, I do his typing; and some even for Mr. Santoiné himself. But I am not confidential yet; they send for me when they want me."

"Then they sent for you today?"

"No; but they have just got back, and I thought I would come to see if anything was wanted. But never mind about me; you—how did you get here? What are you doing here?"

"Yes; it was an attack. The man in the car meant to run Mr. Eaton down."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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