

FROM NOW ON

By FRANK L. PACKARD
(AUTHOR OF "THE MIRACLE MAN")
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THIS BEGINS THE STORY

Dave Henderson, an ex-convict, is sent to Martin Tysan to get \$100,000 to ransom a woman. He sees a chance to obtain the money by the theft of a diamond ring. He steals and hides the ring. Skarvan also plans to double-cross the thief. Henderson has foreseen this. Captured by the police, he is sent to the prison. He has two years, and just before his time he escapes. He goes to the city where the money is hidden and finds the money and the woman. Henderson also visits him with the money. He is threatened with the money. He realizes that he will lose the money if he visits the spot where he has hidden the money. He goes to the spot and finds the money and the woman. Henderson also visits him with the money. He is threatened with the money. He realizes that he will lose the money if he visits the spot where he has hidden the money. He goes to the spot and finds the money and the woman.

of the ruin of his life, not much for the risk! Not much—only to make one last fight, to make as many of these men pay as clearly as he could. Fight! Yes, he would fight. He had never hedged. He would never hedge. They had him with his back to the wall. He knew that. There wasn't much chance now; there wasn't any. If he looked the situation squarely in the face, he stood alone, absolutely alone; there was nowhere to turn, no single soul to turn to. His hand was against every other man's. But he was not beaten. They would never beat him. A knife thrust or a blackjack from Bookie Skarvan's slinking pack, though it might end his life, would not beat him; a further term here behind these walls, though it might wither up the soul of him, would not beat him!



Dave Henderson bent his head to catch the words.

ALL THE passion of the man was on the surface now. Lean and gaunt, his body seemed to crouch forward as though to spring; his hands, with fingers crooked like claws reaching for their prey, were outstretched before him. Sixty-one days' start Millman had. But Millman would need more than that! The only man in the world whom he had ever trusted, and who had then betrayed him, would need more than sixty-one days to escape the reckoning that was to come. Millman might live, Millman might live for years in a quiet ease on that money, and in the end there might be none of that money left, but sooner or later Millman would pay a bigger price than a thousand dollars. The world wasn't big enough for the two of them. And when that day came—

His muscles relaxed. The paroxysm of fury left him, and suddenly he moaned a little as though in bitter hurt. There was another side to it. He could not help thinking of that side. He had had two years' start, and he had had two years' start of what he thought was friendship, and the friendship had been hypocritical. It was hard to believe. Perhaps Millman meant to play square after all, perhaps Millman would keep that ransom money in New York on June twenty-fourth at eight o'clock in the evening at the St. Lucian Hotel. Perhaps Millman would. It wasn't only on account of the money that he hoped Millman would help him. He would get Millman. The world wasn't big enough for the two of them. And when that day came—

He leaned suddenly against the wall of the cell, and his hands pressed against it, his face crushed in his knuckles. No! What was the use of that? Why try to delude himself again? Why try to make himself believe what he wanted to believe? He could reason now coolly and logically enough. If Millman was honest he would not do what he had offered to do; and being, therefore, dishonest, his apparent honesty had been only for his gain, and the mask had been only for his gain. Henderson's, benefit, and that, logically, could evidence but one thing—that Millman had deliberately set himself to win the confidence that would win for Millman the stake of one hundred thousand dollars. There was no other conclusion, was there?

His head came up from his hands, and he stood rigid, tense. Wait! Wait a minute, until his brain cleared. There was another possibility. He had not thought of it before. It confused and staggered him now. Suppose that Millman stood in with the police? Suppose that the police had used Millman for just the purpose that Millman had accomplished? Or—why not?—suppose that Millman was even one of the police himself? It was not so tenable a theory as it was to assume that Millman had acted as a stool-pigeon; but it was, even at that well within the realm of possibility. A man would not count two years' ill spent on a case that involved the recovery of a hundred thousand dollars—nor hesitate to play a convict's part, either, if necessary. It had been done before.

Until Barjan had come last night, the police had made no sign for years—unless Millman were indeed one of them, and, believing at the last that he was facing failure, had called in Barjan. Millman hadn't had a hard time of it in the penitentiary. His education had been the excuse for it. He was an expert, for all the soft clerical jobs. Who was to know if Millman ever spent the nights in his cell?

Dave Henderson crushed his fists against his temples. What did it matter? In the long run, what did it matter? Cook, or informant, or an officer, Millman had wrecked him, and he would pay his debt to Millman. He laughed low again, while his teeth gnawed at his lips. There were Barjan and Bookie Skarvan and now Millman! And Baldy Vickers and the underworld! There wasn't much chance, was there? Not much to expect now in return for the eternities in which he had worn these prison stripes, not much out

thing wrong with the old bomb-thrower. Yes, he remembered—old Tony's strange appearance that afternoon. He rattled again and again on the bars. Old Tony was moaning now.

Footsteps on the run sounded along the iron gallery. A guard passed by; another paused at the door. "Get back out of there!" growled the guard. "Beat it! Get back to your cell!"

Dave Henderson retreated to the center of the cell. He heard old Tony's door opened. Then muffled voices. And then a voice that was quite audible—one of the guard's: "I guess he's snuffed out. Get the doc—and, yes, tell the warden, if he hasn't gone to bed yet."

Snuffed out! There was a queer, choking sensation in Dave Henderson's throat. A guard ran along the gallery. Dave Henderson edged silently close up to the door of his cell again. He couldn't see very much—only a gleam of light from Lomazzi's cell that fell on the iron plates of the gallery. There was no sound from within the other cell now.

The murmur of voices came from the other cell. Time passed. He clung there to the bars. Alone—without help! The presence of death seemed to have infused itself into and to have become synonymous with that thought. It seemed insidiously to eat into his soul and being, to make his mind sick and weary, whispering to him to capitulate because he was alone, ringed about with forces that would inevitably overwhelm his puny single-handed defiance—because he was alone—and it would be hopeless to go further alone—without help.

He drew back suddenly from the door, conscious for the first time that he must have been clutching and straining at the bars with all his strength. His fingers, relaxed now, were stiff, and the circulation seemed to have left them. A guard was opening the door. Behind the guard, that white-haired man was the warden. He had always liked the warden. The man was stern, but he

was always just. He did not understand why the warden had come to his cell.

It was the warden who spoke: "Lomazzi is dying. He has begged to be allowed to say good-by to you. I can see no objection. You may come."

Dave Henderson moistened his lips with the tip of his tongue. "I—I thought I heard them say he was dead," he mumbled.

"He was unconscious," answered the warden briefly. "A heart attack. Step quickly; he has not many minutes."

Dave Henderson stepped out on the iron gallery and paused an instant before the door of the adjoining cell. A form lay on the cot, a form with a

past-colored face, a form whose eyes were closed. The prison doctor, a hygienic syringe still in his hand, stood a little to one side. Dave Henderson swept his hand across his eyes—there was a sudden mist there that blurred the scene—and, moving forward, dropped down on his knees beside the cot.

A hand reached out and grasped his feebly; the dark eyes opened and fixed on him with a flicker of the old fire in their depths; and the lips quivered in a smile.

Old Tony was whispering—old Tony always talked and whispered to himself here in his cell every night—but old Tony never disturbed anybody—it was hard to hear old Tony even when one listened attentively. Dave Henderson brushed his hand across his eyes again, and bent his head to the other's lips to catch the words.

"You make-a da fool play when you come in here, Dave—for me. But I never, never forget. Old Tony no-for-

get. You no make-a da fool play when you go out. Old Tony knows. You need-a da help. Listen—Nicolo Carrino—Frisco. You understand? Tony Lomazzi send-a you. Tony Lomazzi take-a da life prison for Nicolo. Nicolo will pay back to Tony's friend. You did not think that"—the voice was growing feebler, harder to understand, and it was fluttering now—"that old Tony call-a you da fool, he did—did not—remember—and—and—"

Some one disengaged Dave Henderson's hand from the hand that was clasped around it, and that had suddenly switched and, with a spasmodic clutch, had seemed as though striving to maintain its hold.

The prison doctor's voice sounded muffled in the cell: "He is dead."

Dave Henderson looked up at the



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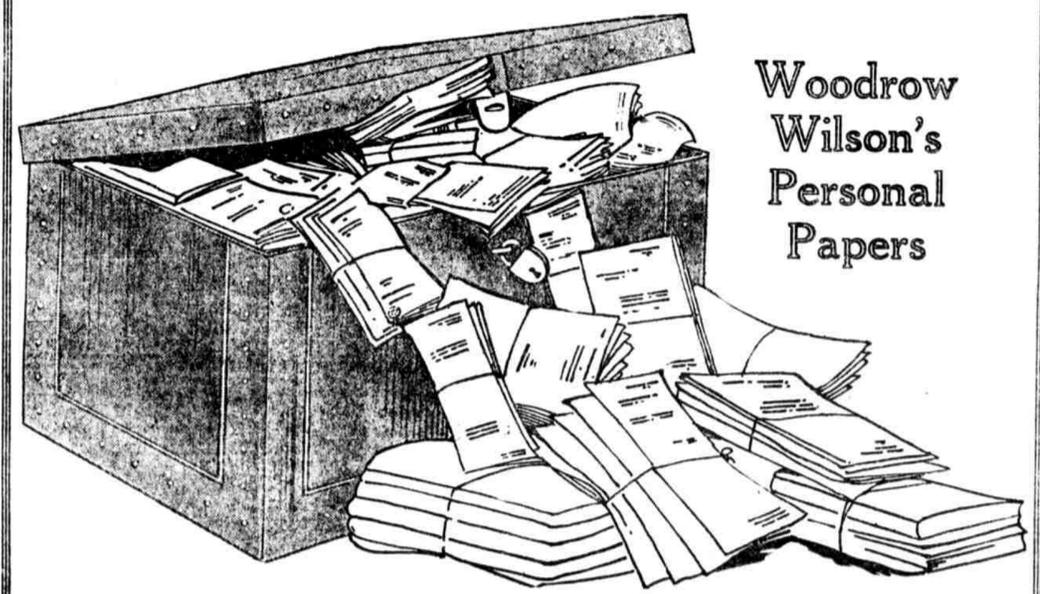
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