# From Now On

By FRANK L. PACKARD

(AUTHOR OF "THE MIRACLE MAN")

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THIS BEGINS THE STORY

Dave Henderson, as Bookie Skarvan's confidential man, is sent to Martin Tydeman to get $100,000 to recoup racing losses. He sees a chance to obtain a fortune and leave the distasteful world of crooks, so he steals and hides the money. Skarvan also plans to double-cross his silent partner in racing ventures, but the thugs he hires for the job discover that Henderson has forestalled them. Captured by the police, he is sentenced to the penitentiary for five years, and just before his time is up, Detective Barjan tries to learn where the money is hidden and fails. Skarvan also visits him with the same object, and when Henderson remains silent he is threatened with the powers of the "underworld." He realizes with despair that he will leave the penitentiary a marked man with no opportunity for visiting the spot where he has hidden the money and he confides in Millman, a prison mate, who promises to get the loot from the old pigeon cote, where it is hidden, and meet Henderson at the St. Lucien Hotel in New York at 8 o'clock in the evening of June 24. No sooner has he disclosed his secret than Henderson repents, certain that Millman has been lying in wait for just this information, and since he leaves prison before Henderson will have time to make his getaway. Dying in his cell, one Tony Lomazzi calls for Henderson and snaps out the name of his friend, "Nicolo Capriano, Frisco," who, he says, will pay to Dave the old debt he owes Tony.

AND HERE IT CONTINUES

## CHAPTER VIII

### The Door on the Lane

WAS that a shadow cast by the projection of the door porch out there across the street, or was it more than a shadow? It was true that, to a remarkable degree, one's eyes became accustomed to the murk, almost akin to blackness, of the ill-lighted street; but the mind did not accommodate itself so readily—a long and sustained vigil, the brain spurred into abnormal activity and under tense strain, produced a mental quality of vision that detracted from, rather than augmented, the dependence to be placed upon the physical organs of sight. It peopled space with its own imaginations; it created, rather than descried. Dave Henderson shook his head in grim uncertainty. He could not be sure what it was out there. With the black background of the unlighted room behind him he could not be seen at the window by any one on the street, which was two stories below, and he had been watching here since it had grown dark. In that time he had seen a dozen shadows that he could have sworn were not shadows—and yet they were no more than that after all. He was only sure of one thing—that out there somewhere, perhaps nowhere within eye range of his window, perhaps even half a block away, but somewhere, some one was watching. He had been sure of that during every hour of his newfound freedom, since he had reached Frisco that noon. He had been sure of it intuitively; but he had failed signally to identify any one specifically as having dogged or followed him.

Freedom! He laughed a little harshly. There weren't any stone walls any more; this window in front of him wasn't grated, nor the door of the room steel-barred, nor out there in the corridor was there any uniformed guard—and so it was freedom.

The short, harsh laugh was on his lips again. Freedom! It was a curious freedom, then! He could walk at will out there in the streets—within limits. But he did not dare go yet to that shed where Mrs. Tooler's old pigeon-cote was. The money probably wasn't there anyhow—Millman almost certainly had won the first trick and had got away with it; but it was absolutely necessary that he should be sure.

He had freedom; but he had dared go nowhere to procure a steel jimmy, for instance, or a substitute for a steel jimmy, with which to force that shed door; nor had he dared to go anywhere and buy a revolver with which to arm himself, and of which he stood desperately in need. He had only a few dollars, but he knew where, under ordinary circumstances, he could obtain those things without any immediate outlay of money—only it was a moral certainty that every move he made was watched. If he procured, say, a chisel; if he procured, say, a revolver, he was not fool enough to imagine such facts would be hidden long from those who watched. They would be suspicious facts. It was his play now to create no suspicion. He could make no move until he had definitely and conclusively identified and placed those who were watching him; and then, with that point settled, it should not be very hard to throw the watchers off the track long enough to enable him to visit Mrs. Tooler's pigeon-cote, and, far more important, his one vital objective now, old Tony Lomazzi's friend—Capriano.

His jaws locked. He meant to force that issue tonight, even if he could not discriminate between shadows and realities out there through the window! He had a definite plan worked out in his mind—including a visit to Square John Kelly's. He hadn't been to Square John's yet. To have gone there immediately on reaching San Francisco would have been a fool play. It would have been not only risky for himself, but risky for Square John; and he had to protect Square John from the searching and pertinent questions that would then have certainly ensued. He was going there tonight, casually, as simply to one of many similar places—that was part of his plan!

And now he smiled in mingled bitterness and menace. The underworld had complimented him once on being the possessor of potentialities that could make of him the slickest crook in the United States. He had not forgotten that. The underworld, or at least a section of it in the persons of Baldy Vickers and his gang, was leagued against him now, as well as the police. He would strive to merit the underworld's encomium!

He turned suddenly away from the window, walked in the darkness to the table in the center of the room, and, groping for his hat, made his way to the door. He had not expected much from this vigil at the window, but there had always been the possibility that it would be productive, and the earlier hours of the evening could have been employed in no better way. It was dark enough now to begin his

He was only sure of one thing—that out there, somewhere, some one was watching

night's work in earnest. It must be between half-past 9 and 10 o'clock.

There was a dim light in the corridor, but, dim though it was, it did not hide the ragged, threadbare state of the carpet on the hallway and stairs, nor the lack of paint, or even of soap and water on doors and woodwork. Pelatt's Hotel made no pretentious claims. It was as shabby as the shabby quarter in which it was located, and as shabby as the shabby patrons to whom it catered. But there were not many places where a man with close-cropped hair and wearing black clothes of blatant prison cut could go, and he had known Pelatt in the old days, and Pelatt, in lieu of baggage, hadn't demanded any cash in advance—he had even advanced Dave Henderson a little cash himself.

Dave Henderson reached the ground floor, and gained the street through a small, dingy office that was for the moment deserted. He paused here for an instant, the temptation strong upon him to cross the street and plunge into those shadows at the side of that porch just opposite to him. His lips grew tight. The temptation was strong, almost overpoweringly strong. He would much rather fight that way!

And then he shrugged his shoulders and started along the street. Since he had left the penitentiary, he had not given the slightest sign that he had even a suspicion he was being watched; and, more than ever, he could not afford to do so now. There were two who could play at the game of laying traps! And, besides, the chances were a thousand to one that there were nothing but shadows over there; and there were the same odds that some one who was not a shadow would see him make the telltale investigation. He could not afford to take a chance.

He could not afford to fail now. He had to identify beyond question of doubt the man, or men, who were on his trail, if there were any; or, with equal certainty, establish it as a fact that he was letting what he called his intuition run away with him.

There came a grim smile to his lips as he went along. Intuition wasn't all he had to guide him, was it? Barjan had not minced words in making it clear that he would be watched; and Bookie Skarvan had made an even more ominous threat! Who was it tonight, then—the police, or the underworld, or both?

He had given no sign that he had any suspicions. He had gone to Pelatt's openly; after that, in an apparently aimless way, as a man almost childishly interested in the most trivial things after five years of imprisonment, he had roamed about the streets that afternoon.

But his wanderings had not been entirely aimless! He had located Nicolo Capriano's house — and, strangely enough, his wanderings had quite inadvertently taken him past that house several times! It was in a shabby quarter of the city, too. Also, it was a curious sort of house; that is, it was a curious sort of house when compared with its neighbors. It was one of a row of frame houses in none too good repair, and it was the second house from the corner—the directory had supplied him with the street and number. The front of the house differed in no respect from those on each side of it; it was the rear that had particularly excited his attention. He had not been able to investigate it closely, of course, but it bordered on a lane, and by walking down the cross street one could see it. It had an extension built on that reached almost to the high fence at the edge of the lane, and the extension, weather-beaten in appearance, looked to be almost as old as the house itself. Not so very curious, after all, except that no other house had that extension—and except that, in view of the fact that one Nicolo Capriano lived there, it was at least suggestive. Its back entrance was extremely easy of access!

Dave Henderson turned abruptly in through the door of a saloon, and, leaning against the bar—well down at the far end where he could both see and be seen every time the door was opened—ordered a drink.

He had thought a good deal about Nicolo Capriano in the two months since old Tony Lomazzi had ended his life sentence. He hadn't "got" it all at the moment when the old bomb-thrower had died. It had been mostly old Tony himself who was in his thoughts then, and the reference to Capriano had seemed no more than just a kindly thought on old Tony's part for a friend who had no other friend on earth. But afterward, and not many hours afterward, it had all taken on a vastly different perspective. The full significance of Tony's words had come to him, and this in turn had stirred his memories of earlier days in San Francisco; and he remembered Nicolo Capriano.

The barkeeper slid a bottle and whisky glass toward him. Dave Henderson half turned his back to the street door, resting his elbow negligently on the bar. He waited for a moment until the barkeeper's attention was somewhat diverted, then his fingers cupped around the small glass, completely hiding it; and the bottle, as he raised it in the other hand, was hidden from the door by the broad of his back. He poured out a few drops—sufficient to rob the glass of its cleanness. The barkeeper looked around. Dave Henderson hastily set the bottle down, like a child caught in a misdemeanor, hastily raised the glass to his lips, threw back his head and gulped. The barkeeper scowled.

It was the trick of the saloon vulture—not only a full glass, but a little over for good measure, when, through practice, the forefinger and thumb became a sort of annex to the rim. Dave Henderson stared back in sullen defiance, set the glass down on the bar, drew the back of his hand across his lips—and went out.

He hesitated a moment outside the saloon, as though undecided which way to go next, while his eyes, under the brim of his slouch hat, which was pulled forward almost to the bridge of his nose, scanned both sides of the street and in both directions. He moved on again along the block.

Yes, he remembered Nicolo Capriano. Capriano must be a pretty old man now—as old as Tony Lomazzi. There had been a great deal of talk about a gang of Italian black-handers in those days, when he, Dave Henderson, was a boy, and Capriano had been a sort of hero-bandit, he remembered; and there had been a mysterious society, and bomb-throwing, and a reign of terror carried on that had paralyzed the police. They had never been able to convict Nicolo Capriano, though it was common knowledge that the police believed him to be the brains and front of the organization. Always something, or some one, had stood between Capriano and prison bars—like Tony Lomazzi, for instance!

He did not remember Lomazzi's trial, nor the details of the particular crime for which Lomazzi was convicted; but that, perhaps, had put an end to the gang's work. Certainly, Capriano's activities were a thing of the past; it was all a matter of years ago. Capriano was never heard of now; but even if the man, through force of circumstances, was obliged to live a retired existence, that in no way robbed him of his cleverness, nor made him less valuable as a prospective ally.

Capriano was the one man who could help him. Capriano must still possess underground channels that would be of incalculable value in aiding him to track Millman down.

His fists, hidden in the side pockets of his coat, clenched fiercely. That was it—Millman! There wasn't a chance but that Millman had taken the money from the pigeon-cote. He would see, of course, before many more hours; but there wasn't a chance. It was Millman he wanted now. The possibility that had occurred to him in prison of Millman being a stool-pigeon, or even one of the police, no longer held water, for if the money had been recovered it would be publicly known. It hadn't been recovered. Therefore, it was Millman he must find, and it was Nicolo Capriano's help he wanted. But he must protect Capriano. He would owe Capriano that—that it should not be known there was anything between Nicolo Capriano and Dave Henderson. Well, he was doing that now, wasn't he? Neither Square John Kelly nor Nicolo Capriano would in any way be placed under suspicion through his visits to them tonight!

The saloons appeared to be Dave Henderson's sole attraction in life now. He went from one to another, and he passed none by, and he went nowhere else—and he left a trail of barkeepers' scowls behind him. One drink in each place, with five fingers curled around the glass, hiding the few drops the glass actually contained, while it proclaimed to the barkeeper the gluttonous and greedy imposition of the professional bum, wore out his welcome as a customer; and if the resultant scowl from behind the bar was not suggestive enough, it was augmented by an uncompromising request to "beat it!"

He appeared to be possessed of an earnest determination to make a night of it—and also of an equally earnest determination to get as much liquor for as little money as possible. And the record he left behind him bore unimpeachable testimony to that purpose!

He appeared to grow a little unsteady on his feet; he was even lurching quite noticeably when, an hour later, the lighted windows of Square John Kelly's Pacific Coral Saloon, his first real objective, flung an inviting ray across his path. He stood still here full in the light, both of the window and a street lamp, and shook his head in well-simulated grave and dubious inebriety. He began to fumble in his pockets. He fished out a dime from one, and a nickel from another—a further and still more industrious search apparently proved abortive. For a long time he appeared to be absorbed in a lugubrious contemplation of the two coins that lay in the palm of his hand—but under his hat brim his eyes marked a man in a brown peaked cap who was approaching the door of the saloon. This was the second time in the course of the last half hour—since he had begun to show signs that the whisky was getting the better of him—that he had seen the man in the brown peaked cap!

There were swinging wicker doors to the saloon, and the man pushed these open and went in—but he did not go far. Dave Henderson's lips thinned grimly. The bottom of the swinging doors was a good foot and a half above the level of the sidewalk—but, being so far gone in liquor, he would hardly be expected to notice the fact that the man's boots remained visible, and that the man was standing there motionless!

Dave Henderson took the street lamp into his confidence.

"Ol' Kelly," said Dave Henderson thickly. "Uster know Kelly—Square John. Gotta have money. Whatsh matter with touchieg Kelly? Eh—whatsh matter with that?"

He lurched toward the swinging doors. The boots retreated suddenly. He pushed his way through, and stood surveying the old-time familiar surroundings owlishly. The man with the brown cap was leaning against the bar close to the door; a half dozen others were ranged farther down along its length; and at its lower end, lounging against the wall of the little private office, was a squat, paunchy man with a bald head, and florid face, and keen gray eyes under enormously bushy gray eyebrows. It was Kelly, just as Kelly used to be—even to the massive gold watch chain stretched across the vest, with the massive gold fraternity emblem dangling down from the center.

"'Ello, Kelly!" Dave Henderson called out effusively, and made rapid, though somewhat erratic progress across the room to Kelly's side. "Glad t'see you, ol' boy!" He gave Kelly no chance to say anything. He caught Kelly's hand, and pumped it up and down. "Sure, you know me! Dave Henderson—ol' days at the track, eh! Been away on a vacation. Come back—broke." His voice took on a drunkenly confidential tone—that could be heard everywhere in the saloon. "Shay, could I see you a minute in private?"

A man at the bar laughed. Dave Henderson wheeled belligerently. Kelly intervened.

Perplexity, mingling with surprise and disapproval, stamped Kelly's florid face.

"Yes, I know you well enough; but I didn't expect to see you like this, Dave!" he said shortly. He jerked his hand toward the door of the private office. "I'll talk to you in there."

Dave Henderson entered the office. Kelly shut the door behind them.

To be continued tomorrow


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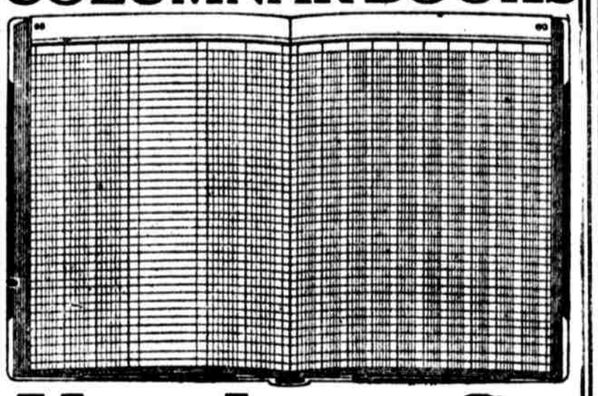

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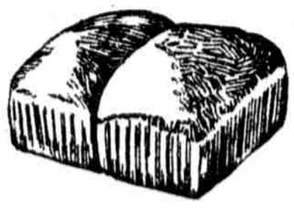

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