

JACK O'JUDGMENT

By Edgar Wallace

An Unusual Story of a Blackmailing Gang and a Mysterious Avenger, by the Author of "Green Rust," "The Daffodil Murder," "Clue of the Twisted Candle"



THE STORY SO FAR

COLONEL DAN BOUNDARY, a fat, coarse-grained but unaccountably clever leader of a gang of crooks, has become alarmed at reports of heavy clubs, signed "Jack o' Judgment," after several of his gang members, all of whom are subtly destined to catch him without risking the law's penalties. He tries to disarm suspiciously gathering around him by commissioning to

STAFFORD KING, of the London Criminal Intelligence Force.

PINTO SILVA, a sleek man about town, forces his attentions on an actress, who rebuffs him. She is

MAISIE WHITE, daughter of Sally White, one of the gang who wishes to retire. She is interested in Stafford.

LOLIE MARSH, a doll-faced but clever girl, who acts as "vamp" of the blackmailing gang.

CROOK CREWE, once a gentleman, now a thief.

CHAPTER VI
Stafford King Resigns

A WEEK later Stafford King came to the office of the first commissioner of the criminal intelligence department, and Sir Stanley looked up with a kindly but pitying look in his eye.

"Well, Stafford," he said gently, "sit down, won't you? What has happened?"

Stafford King shrugged his shoulders. "Boundary is discharged," he said shortly.

Sir Stanley nodded.

"It was inevitable," he said. "I suppose there's no hope of connecting him and his gang with the death of Hanson?"

"Not a ghost of a hope, I am afraid," said Stafford, shaking his head. "Hanson was undoubtedly murdered, and the poison which killed him was in the glass of water which the usher brought. I've been examining the usher again today, and all he can remember is that he saw somebody pushing through the crowd at the back of the court, who handed the glass over to the head of the people. Nobody seems to have seen the man who passed it. That was the method by which the gang got rid of their traitor."

"Clever," said Sir Stanley, putting his finger tips together. "They knew just the condition of mind in which Hanson would be when he came into court. They had the dope ready, and they knew that the detectives would allow the usher to bring the man water, when they would not allow anybody else to approach him. This is a pretty bad business, Stafford."

"I realize that," said the young chief. "Of course I shall resign. There is nothing else to do. I thought we had him this time, especially with the evidence we had in relation to the Spillsbury case."

"You mean the letter which Spillsbury wrote to the woman Marsh? How did that come by the way?"

"It reached Scotland Yard by post."

"Do you know who sent it?"

"There was no covering note at all," replied Stafford. "It was in a plain envelope with a typewritten address, and was sent to me personally. The letter, of course, was valueless by itself."

"Have you made any search to discover the documents which Hanson spoke about?"

"We have searched everywhere," said the other a little wearily, "but it is a pretty hopeless business looking through London for a handful of documents. Anyway, Boundary is free."

The other was watching him closely.

"It is a bitter disappointment to you, my young friend," he said; "you've been working on the case for years. I fear you'll never have another chance of putting Boundary in the dock. He's got a lot of public sympathy, too. Your thorough rascal who manages to escape from the hands of the police has always a large following among the public, and I doubt whether the home secretary will sanction any further proceedings unless we have the most convincing proof. What's this?"

Stafford had laid a letter on the table.

"My resignation," said that young man grimly.

The first commissioner took up the envelope and tore it in four pieces.

"It is not accepted," he said cheerfully. "You did your best, and you're no more responsible than I am. If you resign I ought to resign, and so ought every officer who has been on this game. A few years ago I took exactly the same step—offered my resignation over a purely private and personal matter, and it was not accepted. I have been glad since, and so will you be. Go on with your work and give Boundary a rest for a while."

Stafford was looking down at him abstractedly.

"Do you think that we shall ever catch that fellow, sir?"

Sir Stanley smiled. "I don't," he admitted. "As I said before, the only danger I see to Boundary is this mysterious individual who apparently crops up now and again in his daily life, and who, I suspect, was the person who sent you the Spillsbury letter—Jack o' Judgment, doesn't he call himself? Do you know what I think?" he asked quietly. "I think that if you found the Jack, if you ran him to earth, stripped him of his mystic guise you would discover somebody who has a greater grudge against Boundary than the police."

Stafford smiled. "We can't run about after phantoms, sir," he said, with a touch of asperity in his voice.

The chief looked at him curiously. "I hear you do quite a lot of running about," he said carelessly as he

client to fill a little flat which I have taken in Bloomsbury."

"But what are you going to do?" he asked curiously.

She shook her head.

"Oh, there are lots of things that a girl can do," she said vaguely, "besides going on the stage."

"But isn't it a sacrifice? Didn't you love your work?"

She hesitated.

"I thought I did at first," she said. "You see, I was always a very good mimic. When I was only a little girl I could imitate the colonel. Listen!"

Suddenly to his amazement he heard the drawing-room of Dan Boundary. She laughed with glee at his amazement, but the smile vanished and she sighed.

"I want you to tell me one thing, Mr. King."

"Stafford—you promised me," he began.

She reddened.

"I hardly like calling you your Christian name, but it sounds so like a surname that perhaps it won't be so bad."

"What do you want to ask?" he demanded.

She was silent for a moment, then she said:

"How far was my father implicated in this terrible business?"

"In the gang?"

She nodded.

He was in a dilemma. Solomon White was implicated as deeply as any save the colonel. In his younger days he had been the genius who was responsible for the organization, and had been for years the colonel's right-hand man until the more subtle villainy of Pinto Silva, that Portuguese adventurer, had ousted him, and, if the truth be told, until the sight of his girl growing to womanhood had brought qualms to the heart of this man, who, whatever were his faults, loved the girl dearly.

"You don't answer me," she said, "but I think I am answered by your silence. Was my father—a bad man?"

"I would not judge your father," he said. "I can tell you this, that for the past few years he has played a very small part in the affairs of the gang. But what are you going to do?"

"How persistent you are!" She laughed. "Why, there are so many things I am going to do that I haven't time to tell you. For one thing, I am going to work to undo some of the mischief which the gang has wrought. I am going to make such reparation, as she said, her lips trembling. "For the evil deeds which I fear my father has committed."

"You have a mission, eh?" he said with a little smile.

"Don't laugh at me," she pleaded. "I feel it here." She put her hand on her heart. "There's something which tells me that, even if my father built up this gang, as you told me once he did—ah—you had forgotten that."

Stafford King had, indeed, forgotten the statement.

"Yes," he said. "You intend to pull it down?"

She nodded.

"I feel, too, that I am at bay. I am the daughter of Solomon White, and Solomon White is regarded by the colonel as a traitor. Do you think they will let me alone? Don't you think they are going to watch me day and night,

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begin to arrange the papers on his table. "By the way, how is Miss White?"

Stafford flushed.

"She was very well when I saw her last night," he said stiffly. "She is leaving the gang, and is responsible for the organization, and had been for years the colonel's right-hand man until the more subtle villainy of Pinto Silva, that Portuguese adventurer, had ousted him, and, if the truth be told, until the sight of his girl growing to womanhood had brought qualms to the heart of this man, who, whatever were his faults, loved the girl dearly."

"I'm just making a suggestion," said the other; "think it over."

Stafford thought it over on his way to meet the girl, who was waiting for him on the sunny seat in Temple Gardens, for the day was fine and even warm, and two hours before luncheon, the place was comparatively empty of people. She saw the trouble in his face and rose to meet him, and for a moment forgot her own distress of mind, her doubts and fears. Evidently she knew the reason for his attendance at Scotland Yard, and something of the interview which he had had.

"I offered my resignation," he replied in answer to her unspoken question, "and Sir Stanley refused it."

"I think he was just," she said. "Why, it would be simply monstrous if your career were spoiled through no fault of your own."

He laughed.

"Don't let us talk about me," he said. "What have you done?"

"I've canceled all my contracts; I have other work to do."

"How are you?" He hesitated, but she knew just what he meant, and patted his arm gratefully.

"Thank you; I have all the money I want," she said; "father left me quite a respectable balance. I am closing the house at Hertsdown and storing the furniture, and shall keep just suffi-

cient to fill a little flat which I have taken in Bloomsbury."

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and get me in their power just as soon as they can? Think of the lever that would be, the lever to force my father back to them."

"Who is she?" asked the girl curiously.

"A young person called Lolie Marsh," Stafford laughed. "At present she has a mission, too, which is to entangle me into a compromising situation."

The girl looked toward the spy with a new interest and a new resentment.

dozen yards away and whose face was carefully shaded by a parasol.

"Who is she?" asked the girl curiously.

"A young person called Lolie Marsh," Stafford laughed. "At present she has a mission, too, which is to entangle me into a compromising situation."

The girl looked toward the spy with a new interest and a new resentment.

"She has been trailing me for weeks," he went on, "and it would be embarrassing to tell you the number of times we have been literally thrown into one another's arms. Poor girl," he said with mock concern, "she must be bored with sitting there so long! Let us take a stroll."

If he expected Lolie to follow, he was to be disappointed. She stayed on, watching the disappearing figures.

without attempting to rise. Waiting until they were out of sight she walked out onto the embankment and hailed a passing taxi. She seemed quite untroubled in her mind that the plan she had evolved for the trapping of Stafford King could not fail to succeed.

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