

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, fat, coarse-featured, but unaccountably clever...



CHAPTER IX The Colonel Employs a Detective THEIR prisoner was a stranger. He was a lean, furtive-looking man of thirty-five, below middle height...

"What have you got to say before I send for the police?" asked the colonel virtuously. "What have you got to say for yourself?"

"What were you doing, listening at my door?" asked the colonel. "That was his game, Mr. Silva?"

"What were you doing?" asked the colonel. "Find out," said the man sharply. "The colonel stroked his long mustache, and his manner underwent a change."

"Now look here, old man," he said almost jovially. "We're all friends here, and we don't want any trouble. I dare say you've made a mistake, and my friend has made a mistake. Have a whisky and soda."

"Not me, thank you," he said emphatically. "If I remember rightly, there was a young gentleman who took a glass of water in North Lambeth Park on the 12th of August, and he was the colonel's eyes narrowed."

"Well, sit down and be sociable. If you're suggesting that I'm going to poison you, you're also suggesting that you know something which I don't want you to tell, or that you have discovered one of those terrible secrets that the newspapers are all writing about. Now be a sensible man; have a drink."

"You have a drink of whisky out of the same bottle, and I'll join you," said the colonel. "Help yourself," said the colonel good-naturedly. "Give me any glass you like."

"Oh, there isn't, isn't there?" said the colonel in his blindest tone. Then suddenly he leaned forward across the table, and his face was the face of a devil.

"There's only one Boundary gang, Pinto, and this is it," he said between his clenched white teeth; "and there's only one Dan Boundary, and that's me! Do you get me, Pinto?"

"You're not going to stand for Phillopolis," said the other, with tensa face. "I'll tell you I like the girl. There's going to be none of that smuggling—"

"You're quite right there," said the man—and he spoke with the earnestness of the ill-used wage earner. "It is a dog's life; out in all kinds of weather, all hours of the day and night, and never so much as 'thank you' for any work you do. Why, we get no credit at all, sir. If we go into the witness box the lawyers treat us like dirt."

"I absolutely agree with you," said the colonel in shaking his head. "The private detective business in this country isn't appreciated as it ought to be. And it is very curious we should have a man like you, who is evidently, only this evening I was saying to my friends here that we ought to get a good man to look after our interests. You've heard about me, I'm sure, Mr. Silva. 'Snakit,' said the other. 'Here's my card.'"

"He produced a card from his waistcoat pocket, and the colonel read it. 'Mr. Horace Snakit,' he said, 'Dooby and Snomes.' Now what do you say to coming into our service?'"

"Well, the man hesitated. 'I don't know whether it isn't betraying the confidence of a client.' He waited for some encouragement to pursue the path of rectitude and honor, but received none. 'Snakit' told me that either you were engaged in watching me, or 'I'll admit that, sir,' said the man readily. 'I had a job to watch you and to discover if you knew the whereabouts of a certain person.'"

"What were your general instructions?" asked the colonel. "Just to watch you, sir, and if I had an opportunity, when you were out, to look in and look around. 'I see,' said the colonel. 'Crews, just take Mr. Snakit downstairs and tell him where to report. Fix up his bag—you know. He gave a significant jerk of his head, and Crews escorted the gratified little detective from the apartment."

"When the door had closed the colonel turned on Silva. "Finto," he said—and there was a rumble in his voice which betrayed his anger—"that girl is dangerous. She may or may not know where her father is; this detective business may be a blind. Probably Snakit was sent here to know that she would be captured and would talk."

"That struck me, too," said Pinto. "She's dangerous," repeated the colonel. He resumed his promenade up and down the room. "She's an active worker, and she's working against us. Now I'm going to settle with Miss White," he said gratingly. "I'm going to settle with her for good and all. I don't care what she knows, but she probably knows too much. She's hand in glove with the police and maybe she's working with her father. You'll get Phillopolis here tomorrow in the morning."

"The other's eyes opened. 'Phillopolis?' He almost gasped. 'You're not going to—' 'You're not going to—' 'You've had your chance with the girl and you've missed it,' he said. 'You've tried your fancy method of courting and you've fallen down.' 'But I'm not going to stand for Phillopolis,' said the other, with tensa face. 'I'll tell you I like the girl. There's going to be none of that smuggling—'

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