

# THE DOUBLE DEALER

By VARICK VANARDY.  
Author of "Missing—\$81,500."  
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The elder man was silent for a moment; then, with evident hesitation, he said:

"I spoke to you about the cameo last night. You mentioned it a moment ago. I think I ought to tell you that I received a telegram from Lorna this morning. They must have stopped the train purposely to send it. Here it is. Read it for yourself."

The telegram read:

Forgot cameo brooch. In drawer of built cabinet in my bedroom. Take care of it. Jerry and I are very happy. We both send oceans and seas of love. Lorna.

Moreaux returned the message without comment, but Mr. Delorme said quietly:

"The cameo has disappeared, also, Birge. It was not in the cabinet, and it is of far greater value than all the other things put together, no matter how absurd that statement may sound to you."

Moreaux lighted a cigar and pushed his chair away from the table.

"I think it will be recovered," he said.

They left the club together and stood for a moment at the curb, where Mr. Delorme's car was waiting to take him down-town, the artist having declined an invitation to ride with him.

But when the man of many millions was inside the car and prepared to start Moreaux bent forward and asked, as if the question had just occurred to him:

"Can you suggest anybody among your acquaintances who might be a jewel worshiper?"

Mr. Delorme shook his head negatively. "No, no," he replied, "I can not. I never heard the expression before."

The artist returned to the club and sought a telephone-booth, where he had himself connected with police headquarters, and then with the detective bureau, whereupon he announced:

"Will you inform Lieutenant Muchmore and Mr. Bunting that Mr. Moreaux regrets very much indeed that it will be impossible for him to keep the engagement made with them for twelve o'clock today. Thank you. And say also, please, that Mr. Moreaux will try to find one or both of them later in the day."

Contrary to all precedent, Crewe appeared at his place of business shortly after noon that day, and the few who were scattered about among the tables looked up in surprise, and then cast a furtive but significant glance at one another.

He entered the saloon through that small back room. He was in his shirt-sleeves, as he nearly always was, although Christy was ever emaculate in a bartender's white coat.

"Hello, boss!" greeted Christy, who, although he had not expected his employer's coming, was quick to "catch on." He knew by experience that he would now be sent out on some errand. "I didn't know but you'd plumb forgot that you'd promised me this afternoon off."

"I'll let you go presently," Crewe replied, and walked behind the bar to the upper end of it, near the window, where Christy was standing.

"When did you see Bobcat Rickett the last time?" was the first question that Crewe asked.

"He was here three nights ago—the night you were out in Jersey," Christy replied. "I haven't seen him since then."

"Do you know where he lives, or can you find him and get him here to see me by or before midnight?"

"Sure," Christy replied, with confidence.

"I want him—at least, I think I want him. He is about the best of the bunch in his line, isn't he?"

"That's the reputation he's got; but he has got another one, too, that isn't quite as acceptable to his friends."

"What is that?"

"Most of the yeggs that blow in here think he's a stool, and won't work with him."

"Oh, well, if he is, it won't matter very much in connection with what I want him to do. He is a clever crack man; he has got good tools, and he knows how to use them—and those are the three requirements that I am seeking just now."

"Anything else, boss?"

"Yes. Find Sindhur, if you can, and send him to me at once. Also, here are impressions of three Yale keys. Have them made while you are out and bring them to me when you return. Have any headquarters men been in today?"

"Baxter and Marline were in last night, and went out again. Marline was put back on the job only yesterday. He walked along the tables and stared at those who were here."

"I guess he just wanted to let them know that he was back on the job. Baxter asked for you and wanted to know when you would be in. I told him that you were the only man in

the burg that could answer that question. I shouldn't be surprised if they saw you when you did come and—here they are again, right now!"

"All right, Christy. Tell Bobcat that I want him to bring his best and smallest tools. There won't be any heavy work in what I want him to do."

"Is it for tonight?"

"If he should ask you that question, Christy, tell him to ask me when he gets here."

"How are you, Crewe?" Detective Marline broke in, thrusting his hand across the bar. "I am back on the job again, as you can see. Baxter 'n' me are working together, too. And say, I'm blowed if I don't wish that Hol-derness was back, too."

"No doubt," said Crewe as he nodded a greeting toward Baxter.

"We wanted a private word with you, Crewe," Baxter announced. "I see that Christy is going out. Can't you hold him a few minutes and take us into the back room?"

"This is about as private as any spot in the place, Baxter. There isn't a guy within thirty or forty feet of you. What's the subject of it?"

"I just got it from the skipper on the D. Q. mind you, that a honey-bunch of shiners was lifted from the Delorme house at a weddin' last night," Baxter replied in a low tone, leaning half across the bar.

"Likewise, it's whispered—I don't know why—that at least one, and probably two, of your acquaintances were there. You can guess the rest, can't you?"

"I'm a poor guesser, Baxter."

"Well, I'll tell you the rest, Crewe, Marline interrupted. "We gotta bunch that YOU know where them shiners are right now, an' Baxter 'n' me wanta be in on the deal; see? It ain't no use for you to go flimflamin' around with guys like Muchmore 'n' Bunting. They are on the level, and if they get you they'll get you good an' hard; see?"

Crewe bent forward across the bar until his bleached face was quite close to Marline's.

"Marline," he said slowly, "I don't know how you got your old job again, but I suppose it was politics. Whatever it was, it was a mistake, and you won't last long. I don't like you or your company, and I want you to keep out of my place unless you come here in your official capacity. And you get out of it now or I'll give you a free bath."

And Crewe picked up a siphon of seltzer and aimed it at Marline. Then, as both men backed away from the bar, he added:

"Neither of you can have another drink over my bar, ever. Those guns along the wall over there are honorable gentlemen compared to you two bulls."

Crewe put down the siphon and turned his back upon them.

CHAPTER VIII.  
Some of Crewe's Strange Methods.

Fifteen minutes after the two officers had gone out of Crewe's, after swearing bitter vengeance upon him, a small man of compact build and rather flashily dressed entered the barroom.

He came in with that sort of air which says, louder than words could express it: "Well, here I am. Take a look at me. I'm IT."

He swaggered across the room to the bar and announced:

"Lo, Crewe. Here I am. What's doin'?"

"There won't be anything doing, Bobcat, if you keep that voice of yours as loud as your clothes. You'd better beat it out of here if you're going to play any of your fool manners on me."

"Say, lowering his tone until it was a mere murmur and could not be overheard ten feet away, "I have been overheard ten feet away, I just butted into Christy, crossin' the square, an' he said you wanted to see me important. Was that on the level as was he stringin' me?"

"I WAS on the level when I sent him out to find you, Bobcat, but after looking you over and getting onto that style of yours, I don't think you will pass."

"Aw, say, Crewe, I just got these new blankets from the tailor's, an' the shoes an' spats an' hat and the hula layout, and I guess I was feelin' a little bit chesty. I'll be good. Tell me what's doin', won't you?"

"Go home and take off those clothes and put on something respectable, and then come back here. Maybe, if you walk into the place like a human being, I'll talk to you."

"Say, Crewe, on the level, I'm sorry. I'll go an' take 'em off the minute you've spoke your little piece. Honest."

He stepped upon the footstool to make it possible to bend nearer to Crewe, and in a tone that was barely audible added: "Christy said that you wanted me an' my best an' lightest kit. How about it?"

"That's what I told Christy to tell you, Rickett. But I ain't not looking for a Ravenshaw nor a Casigliastro."

"I don't know either of 'em, so help me, only I'd doper it out that the last guy you named is a lingo, all right."

"Where are you living, Bobcat?" Crewe asked.

"Oh, I've got a nest around here in Fourth Street, second floor, back; right-hand door," and he gave the number.

Crewe pretended to consider deeply. Then he said:

"Go to your room and stay there. Don't go out, again, only to get your dinner, and get back after you have had it as soon as you can. If I decide to null off what I wish you to do. I

will be there after you at one o'clock tonight or about that time. If I don't show up tonight I will probably do so tomorrow night; and if not then, the night following. Got that?"

"Say, is this a continuous performance, with me playin' the part of writer?"

"That is about the size of it, Rickett. It's yours for sleepy hollow until I get there—if you want the job. If you don't, there are plenty of others."

"Of course I want the job, an' there ain't any others—not like me. An' besides, I ain't never done any jobs with you, Crewe, an' I'm achin' for a chance. Do you mean that I ain't to poke my mug outa doors till you git there, not even if it takes a week?"

"Only for eats, and they must be sudden and quick, and if I hear of your talking to a person in the street, man or cop, it's off."

"Say, Crewe, can't you give me a line on what it is?"

"I'll give you nothing whatever as long as you wear those clothes; so duck. And, Bobcat, if I hear that you have stopped in at a booze-can or stopped to talk with anybody on your way to your nest—well, keep out of here afterward; that's all. Beat it, now."

"Well, wouldn't that give you the hives?" the Bobcat muttered as he turned away, and Crewe looked after him, smiling oddly.

But as soon as Rickett had closed the door behind him, Crewe caught the eye of one of the ferret-eyed beings at the opposite side of the room and crossed the middle finger of his left hand over the first finger.

The man thus signaled to rose lazily from his chair, stretched himself, and slouched out of the room on the trail of Bobcat.

"Come here, Pincher," Crewe called presently. Then: "Tell the boys along the wall that I'm going to blow and ask them what they will have. You can do the serving. Then come and take yours over the bar. I want to talk to you. Now," he went on when that had been done, "you are almost a stranger in this burg, aren't you?"

"Surest thing you know, Crewe." I never was here in my life till I brought that letter to you last week. I've always lived in Chi, just as Jimmy said in the letter. It was him that got me to thinking that I would rather live straight and be on the level than to stay crooked all my life."

"I've never been 'mused,' so I guess maybe there's a chance for me. And Jimmy said you'd boost and help. If you thought I meant it. That's why I came to New York, and to you. Because Jimmy sent me."

"The recommendation of Jimmy the Dip goes with me, Pincher. He left here some time ago and promised to live on the level, and he has kept his word. Anyhow, I'm going to give you a tryout. If you make good and don't fall by the wayside, I'll find you a good and decent job afterward."

"Say, Crewe, if you only knew how much I appreciate—"

"Never mind that, my boy. You are only a boy yet. How old are you?"

"Twenty-three."

"You are broke, aren't you?" Crewe asked.

"I've got a little over four dollars left."

"Well, I'm going to stake you to fifty. Shut up your trap, now. You must work for it."

"I'll do anything—anything, Crewe, except—"

"Well, except what?"

"Except steal. I'm damned if I'll ever do that again."

"Good! I like the sound of that, Pincher. What changed you?"

"My mother changed me. She sent for me. I went to see her, an'—well, I got there only just in time; and I—I promised her. Say, Crewe, what is it that you want me to do to earn that fifty?"

"Shake hands, Pincher, and then I'll tell you. I think that we are going to be very good friends."

"Thank you, Crewe. You know how to put heart into a man, all right. I had begun to think you were a little slow about coming to the front, but I guess you were only missing me up."

"Correct," Pincher. "I was trying you out, and a chap that can stand what you have been up against for a week is all right. Now, to business."

"Yes," was the eager reply.

"You sized up those two bulls that were in here a while ago, didn't you?"

"I sure did, Crewe."

"One is Lieutenant Baxter; the other—the thick-set one with the red hair—is Marline. I am going to put you on their trail, and from what Jimmy says about you, you can pull it off. I want you to take the fifty and buy yourself a new outfit from the skin out. Hat, shoes, and everything."

"I've got your mustache and that week's growth of whiskers and get your haircut. Then get on the trail of those two cops, and hold it till you are called off. Here is the telephone number. Report in every chance you get; but don't come here yourself. Is that plain?"

"I understand, thoroughly, Crewe. Either Christy or I will be here and nobody else ever uses the private telephone. You can talk with Christy as frankly as with me."

"I'm on, Crewe."

Pincher nodded understandingly.

"They will be somewhere in this neighborhood by seven o'clock tonight, or about that time, and you ought to be fixed up by then—don't you think so?"

"Remember, report in here by telephone every chance you get, even if you have nothing to report more than the locality you happen to be in. There are telephones everywhere."

"I'm on, Crewe. I'll do the job, even better than you think. I can do that sort of work to the queen's taste."

Crewe produced a substantial "roll" from one of his pockets and peeled several yellow-backs from it. These he gave into the hand of Pincher.

"Fifty of that is yours, for the services you will render; for your clothes and for any other purpose you care to put it to. The other fifty is mine which I hand to you for expenses. Don't spare expense in the job you're on, but I shall expect you to account for it just the same. Now, beat it. Here comes a man I want to talk to."

It was Sindhur who approached the bar as Pincher went out.

There was craftiness, subtleness, even menace in the very air of the man; they seemed essential parts of him.

"You sent for me, Crewe?" he inquired in his soft, deep voice.

"Yes, Crewe replied shortly; and my first inclination was to send a pair of plain-clothes men after you and have you taken to headquarters."

"Why! What do you mean? I do not understand."

"Sindhur, you can't put it over on me, and the sooner you find that out the better it will be for you. That cameo brooch was in the built cabinet in the bride's dressing room when you found it. There were other things in that room and in other rooms of the upper floors of that house, which you also brought away with you."

"I have a list of them—and I have got your number, too. I will give you until twelve o'clock tonight to bring every one of them here to—"

"If you fail, I'll have you behind the bars before tomorrow morning."

"Just a few stickpins and—"

"Never mind. You bring them all to me. You disobeyed my orders. Men who know me never try that on more than once."

"Crewe"—Sindhur's teeth gleamed as he spoke—"some day I shall kill you!"

"I don't think you will, Sindhur; but some day, more than likely, I shall see you killed—in the chair at Sing Sing," and Crewe stared until the black eyes of the Oriental until the man was compelled to lower them.

"That will do for the present, Count Suciini," Crewe said ironically. "I want you to return here before twelve o'clock tonight with those things; and I want you to come here every night between eleven and twelve until further orders."

"Tonight or tomorrow night or some night before long I will have work for you to do—with me. If you find that you can keep faith with me, just once, it will be much better for you."

"Work? What kind of work, Crewe?"

"I will tell you when the time comes. Beat it out of here, now, and don't forget."

The front door opened again as Sindhur turned away, and Lieutenant Muchmore, closely followed by Bunting, entered the room. They came straight forward toward the bar where Crewe was standing behind it, and Muchmore, with a half smile on his strong, good face, said:

"Crewe, I have come to make that apology that you demanded and which you had a right to demand. Does that go?"

"Of course it goes, Lieutenant. It never happened at all," was Crewe's instant and hearty response.

(To be Continued.)

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It is not known how the fire originated. Mr. Cassise places his loss at \$3000. He carried \$500 insurance on the stock and \$300 on his household goods. As soon as he can have the insurance adjusted Mr. Cassise will assume business.

The State Grange will hold its annual meeting at State College this week and the annual Farmers' Week will be observed at that place December 27th to January 1st. For these meetings tickets at the rate of two cents per mile will be sold by railroads in Pennsylvania.

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