A Grease Paint Strategem

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

BY THEODORE SHELDON

uptown upon which he had set his to the table at which the gray-haired earlier than usual that evening and heart, and it so prospered that he was man sat the latter rose and spoke a hurried to his lodgings. From the rejustified in relinquishing his job with few words to him, inclining his head cess of a venerable trunk he dug up the news company, in order that he in Finneran's direction as he talked. a black tin box which contained might bestow upon his new venture The proprietor shrugged his shoulders, grease-paints and powders such as are his full and individual attention.

worked for ten years handled all the "best sellers"—and others—and Finneran timidly. through this source Finneran had augmented the erudition gained in an Eastside public school and to his they appeared to him from the top floor of a downtown tenement.

Finneran was frugal and shrewd, but like met of us, he had his weakness-a lust for adventure. Finneran was an adventurer pure and simple. Aport from the "best sellers"-and others-he had read of the sprightly ramble of one Haroun-al-Rischid, and, being blessed with a fecund imagination, he delighted to regard himself

as a sort of modern Bagdad caliph. When this fanciful mood came upon him he would roam the city's length: and breadth hopeful that some strange happenings would befall him.

Business done for the day, Finneran would carefully close up his stand and draw from his pocket a teetotum. This was a home-made contrivance fashioned from a small square block of wood pierced with a short wire nail; and the point of which acted as a peg on which the little cube might spin when the upper part of the nail was given a sharp twist between the thumb and middle finger.

The four outward sides of the block bore respectively the letters E, W, N and S. With great solemnity Finneran would stand under the glare of the electric light which flickered high above him and spin this top on one of the projecting shelves of his booth. If it fell with W uppermost westward he would go in quest of adventure until, if he found none, he would spin

again for another direction. On a certain evening he closed his stand later than usual, intending to wend his way homeward, when the spirit of the venturesome caliph entered his being and half guiltily he yielded to its persuading power. The teetotum directed a southerly course, and after a block or two on foot the heat of the evening caused him to board a car.

Southward he rode almost to the roint where the car's seat-backs were turned over for the return journey, stayed until a broad, East Side avenue attracted him and he dropped off, turning his steps southward, still obedient to the guidance of the tee-

The buildings on this wide thoroughfare sit far back from the street which abound and flourish, avail them. the additional space thus afforded and array their tables and chairs under the awnings of vinecovered trellises, the gaze of passersby being partially screened by small trees and shrubs set in green boxes along the front and sides.

Into one of these places Finneran wandered and took a seat at a small, round, iron-based table near the side entrance which gave upon the street Owing to the hour there were but few patrons and an obsequious waiter lost

"Iced coffee and cakes," he ordered, "and bring me a paper." The waiter bowed and hurried to

side table whereon lay many foreign news journals and illustrated periodicals, some of them held in wooden binding, with handles attached.

Now it happened that the clientele of this particular ratort, small though it was, was made up of men from many lands, which accounted for the cosmopolitan array of public prints; but never before had the waiter en countered such a poyglot person. He brought the paper Finneran requested. and then retired to a far corner, where he gazed in admiration at the youngster who read in all languages.

Quietly alive to the interest he had awakened, Finneran, with the utmost gravity, persued his whim and scanned the pages of the foreign papers with deepening absorption, stealing now and again a glance at the wondering waiter. When, finally he ordered more iced coffee and cakes, and carelessly asked if there was a chinese paper in the place, the waiter's negative died he was keenly alert to the fact that in his throat, and he could only shake an actual tragedy was impending, and his head.

On his way to the kitchen, however, on meeting the proprietor, his power of speech returned, and that dignitary was informed of the presence of the linguistic marvel, and Finneran's last request made known. The proprietor went behind his desk and rumin triumph to Finneran's table.

"Thank's very much," said Finneran, taking the paper then, as he height, and broad in proportion, Finglanced at it he added, "Oh, but this is an old one-I've seen it."

The proprietor gulped. "I'll finish Il Progresso, I guess" a swarthy gray-haired man who sat There would be so much more to it! far off at one end of the room shift

the news-stand been roaming about the place, came before him. He closed his stand made a gesture with his hands and used by the theatrical profession. He The company for which he had continued on his way into the kitchen, unearthed also a trick dagger, the

spik Italian?"

"I read it better than I speak it," the body.

himself at Finneran's table. "You no Italian," he began with conred hair and azure eyes.

"No, I'm a blond Esquimaux," said Finneran solemnly.

The gray-haired man glanced furcirew from his pocket a much-soiled envelope which, after further furtive glances, he pushed across the table Then looking eagerly at Finneran, he whispered. "Tell me what he says!"

Finneran glanced at the address which he recognized as that of a better class tenement in the Italian quarter, then drew the letter from the envelope. It was in Italian and executed in red ink. In one corner was crudely sketched hand done in black. "Why do you ask me to read this, Cantarelli?" he demanded, shooting a stern and quizzical glance at his companion.

"I can no read or write," said the gray-haired man, leaning across the able and gazing squarely into his

"But some Italian friend-"

"Ah, I no trust-I scared! Not for ne-myself. No! It matter not. But my daughter! My beautiful Giulietta h, signor, she is so beautiful! Like

he blessed Madonna! And so good. Finneran bent over the letter and s he did so he heard a quick intaking f breath, a muttered imprecation, and he gray-haired man sprang from the able and vanished through the side loor, looking over his shoulder toward the main entrance as he fled. Finneran followed the direction of his glance and caught sight of a darkskinned, evil face peering in at the door. It vanised almost instantly. and there before him on the table lay the lurid letter, with its signature of "Il Mano Nera"—the Black Hand!

When Professor Altomare stopped and once again he consulted an east- for his papers at Finneran's news erly direction, and accordingly he got stand next morning, and was moving on a cross-town car upon which he off toward the subway entrance, he was halted by the newsdealer's cheery

> "Excuse me, professor, just a mo rent-have you got time to translate short letter for me?"

"Certainly, my friend," answered the ittle Italian teacher, and Finneran and the restaurants, large and small, handed him the sinister-looking letter. As he hastily read it over to himself the professor elevated his eyebrows, and when he had finished emitted prolonged whistle.

"Well?" said Finneran. "Did someone send this to you,

"No, but I would like to know what t says.'

The professor readjusted his spec tacles and said, "I will read it for you. Then he cleared his throat and read:

"You can delay no longer. Thric nc time in ministering to Finneran's you have failed. Tomorrow night I will call at your house as the clock strikes nine my knock shall sound on your door. Leave the money with Giulietta. If I find her empty-handed she will die on the spot, and you soon after You are too wise to attempt any trick. If I am captured you will be dead within an hour. Be guided by me and all will be well. Fail me and you know what will happen!"

> "No signature but a black hand chuckled the professor as he returne the letter to Finneran and walke away, waving his arms.

> Finneran's first impulse, his mor ensible one, was to lay the matter before the police captain of the pre cinct in which Giulietta and her father lived; but the thrall of adventure seeking held him back-here wa beauty (at least according to he father), soon to be in distress, and he

-Finneran-could succor her-could thwart and punish the miscreant who his matter to me and do just as I no monkey business about it, either! Now Finneran was far from quixotic

in the purest sense of the term; bu that he himself could and would avert it single-handed.

At last he faced a "regular adver-

A plan of action must be immediately devised. That the writer of the threatening letter meant what he said there was no doubt-how to cope with maged a moment, at last drawing forth and capture him was the question. a crumpled newspaper which he bore That bodily hurt might come to him self never entered the mind of Finneran. Lacking an inch of six feet in neran had a heart that was as stout as his sinews. The thought of lying in wait for the Black Hander and overcoming him by mere strength had no continued Finneran, picking up the appeal-he must outwith the fellow by Italian paper. As he said this he saw strategy, cunning and skill combined.

Thus did Finneran reason, and in his seat, at the same time regarding finally set himself to thinking how he should accomplish, in the most grati-

who had fying manner possible, that which lay

The gray-hairen man approached blade of which telescoped when a "Excuse me, signor," he said, "you fastening itself to the clothing, looking as though the knife had entered

knowledge of the world and things as replied Finneran, with truth and ami- Of these things Finneran had be ability. Here possbly, was adventure. come possessed in his his more youth-The gray-haired man glanced furi- ful days when vaudeville had held out tively about him, and then seated to him its lure, but until tonight he had neither seen or thought of them for years. Now the very definite manviction, smiling at the other's brick- ner in which he resurrected them and packed them together in a parcel showed that they were to play a part in the night's work which very evidently he had mapped out.

Looking once more at the scrawled same and address on the envelope which contained the red-ink Black-Hand letter, he tucked his package ender his arm and sallied forth.

Finneran mounted boldly the five lights of the dismal tenement desigpated by the address on the envelope and knocked boldly on the door which elow stairs, he had learned was the entrance to the abode of the people he cught—the Cantarellis.

His knock was at first unanswered out hearing sounds of whispering within he rapped again. This time a oft, feminine voice replied in Italan, nd although he did not understand what was said he announced with all he assurance of having uttered an open sesame," "It's Finneran."

Then from the other side of the door ime in English, "Are you a police-

"Oh, no, better than that-I'm a ewspaper man!"

Again there was a whispered conersation, and the door was opened. n the dim light of a solitary oil lamp Finneran beheld a strikingly pretty young woman. Her glossy, black hair, tastefully arranged, crowned an oval, ntelligent face which, with her wellfitting simple black dress and white collar, seemed strangely out of keeping with the surroundings.

A look, half inquiring, half fearful, was in her dark, wide-set eyes as she invited Finneran to enter. As he did se and the door closed behind him the gray haired man of the avenue cafe, sprang from the shadow and eagerly greeted him.

"Ah, signor, what did he say?" "He said, Mr. Cantarelli, that you re a boob not to have handed his etters to the police in the first place; hat he knew he 'had you right,' and that he is coming here tonight to colect a little piece of change from you, not to mention other things which don't make no never-mind. Do you get me, amiko myo?" (The two last words are spelled as Finneran spoke

The Italian nodded.

"Oh, please tell me what it is all cating move in Finneran's direction. suppose it's some more of those niserable letters, but, of course, I do

"It's a good thing that neither of you know what's in this letter," thought Finneran, at the same time marveling say tenderly, "Giulietta!" at the girl's correct speech and lack of accent. Then he said aloud, "Pardon me a second—Mr, Cantarelli, I have lish, "See what I've done!" ome here to meet this man, you leave t all to me?"

The old Italian did not seem to grasp what had been said to him, and the he turned to the girl and once again daughter quickly translated to him. his words flowed in an impassioner brought forth a hopeless shrugging flood. of shoulders and a mumbled, "All right -but it is no good!"

Finneran grinned encouragingly, Miss Cantarelli he explained briefly to what was transpiring. As he did so the letter, but telling no more of its truded the awkward butt of a huge ontents than he had already told.

During the recital Cantarelli walked ip and down the room, the clenching and unclenching of his hairy, gnarled ists being punctuated with fervently with a stiff arm and an acusing finger muttered prayers.

would offer her harm! And there was say," concluded Finneran cheerful, "I tionless, then relaxed, and Guilietta think we can fix it all up as easy as "You are very kind, indeed, Mr.

we to do?" Finneran consulted his

"It is now 8.25," he said, "and our caller will be here at 9.00. Now, I want your father to go out and get away from the neighborhood-he can their cozy apartment. As they linreturn at 9.30."

peated this in Italian, ard when she ink Black Hand letter, and what came had finished he tremblirgly took up of it. Guilietta left the table and in his hat and with a sorrovful "Addio." a moment returned with the trick dagclumped down the steep stairs. Miss ger which she laughingly exhibited to Cantarelli sat expectantly, her hands the professor. clasped in her lap. The fear had left her eyes, and she viewed Finneran's bearing with undisguised relief

aged to say, "We've got to do a little theatrical stunt tonight Miss Cantarelli

-jever do any amateur shows?"

where I teach, but I have no talent. "Never mind, you'll get away with t," Finneran rattled on. We haven't good deal of time for rehearsal, but here's the plot-tonight I am going to

The girl stared at Finneran for a pace and then drew back; but the resupper is still waiting." urrence of the reassuring look on his

"I don't quite understand," said she Finneran said nothing, but producing his bundle he unwrapped the make-up box and asked for a candle. This given him and lighted he seated himself in front of a small stand back blow was struck with it, the hilt of which hung a narrow, dingy mirror. With great deftness of fingers he manipulated the sticks of grease-paint, first heating them in the flame of the

candle, then applying them to his face. When he had used the powder puff s a finishing touch and turned toward the girl a little cry escaped her. His countenance appeared drawn as if in glassy, while his whole face and neck were ashen gray and waxen.

"Now for the dirty work!" said Finneran in mock dramatic tones. He hereupon melted carmine cosmetic in a little pan, and with this daubed his birt front in a spot under which he figured his heart should be: then he held up the trick dagger and explained ts mechanism.

Now he made as if to plunge the blade into his breast over the crimson tains, and as the hilt attached itself to the soft shirt he wore and remained fixed Miss Cantarelli gave another little cry and turned away her

"We must hurry," said Finneran. 'Tousel up your hair and take off your collar." When she had done this bid ling he powdered her face until the healthy glow of her olive skin gave way to a deathly paleness.

"Now unlock the door, and if any ene comes and attempts to enter,' he continued, "try to prevent him by pushing against it. Then let him come in and run over to this corner and stay here-scared stiff, understand? Don't get really scared at anything that happens, but remember thisyou've killed me! Everything will be all right."

He stretched himself on the floor one arm flung out, and his left knee

Then a stair creaked and a soft read sounded along the hall, followed by three smart taps on the door.

With an exclamation, Miss Canta relli bounded across the room and the long night." nurled herself against the portal, but is it slowly pushed inward a tall. nuscular man stepped into the room. inneran caught a glimpse of his glad that it was the mother's tears vicked face, and at once recognized t as the same that had leered at him brough the avenue cafe the evening

The girl stood defiantly in front of he man in the doorway, and stayed his entrance for a brief moment, dur ng which the two gazed at one ar other in amazement—the man at th dishelved condition of the girl, and sh at recognizing the intruder, for she

gasped, "Pasquale!" "Si," said he, as he pushed further to the room and launched into a ent of Italian which, in substance wa translated for Finneran's benefit by about," pleaded the girl, with a suppli- Miss Cantarelli, exclaiming, "No, my

father left no money with me for you or for anyone else! Get out of here! It was then that Pasquale changed not know, as my father no longer con- his manner and in place of the harsh threatening tones he had first used, his voice became gentle and softly pleading-several times Finneran heard him

There was a pause, and then the girl exclaimed dramatically in Eng

The man crossed the room to where Finneran lay. "Santa Maria!" he whispered. Then

"No. no!" cried Giulietta.

Finneran ventured to incline hi nd taking the chair offered him by head a little so that he might see er why he was there, relating his he saw Pasquale seize Giulietta with xperience of the night before, and his left arm and with his right reach sow he came to have in his possession for his hip pocket from which proautomatic pistol.

There was but a second in which to

Finneran rose to a sitting posture cointed at Pasquale's back. Then he "If you and your father will leave let out a horrid, blood-curdling scream. For an instant Pasquale stood mo slipped limply to the floor. The Italian turned and beheld the ghastly visage of Finneran, the hilt buried dagger Finneran," said the girl "but what are in the crimson stain and the stark pointing finger.

"Madre di Dio!" he shrieked, and fled from the room

Professor Altomare was the first guest the Finneran's entertained in gered over the meal Finneran repeated To her father the yourg woman red for the fifth time the story of the red-

"I prize that among my most cherished possessions," said she, for not reassuring expression and confident only did it save my life, but it brought me a jewel of a husband-here's to He looked at her wth growing vd. him!" And Mrs. Finneran and Promiration, and there was something of fessor Altomare clinked their glasses an awkward pause before he man- of chianti while Finneran looked on and smiled sheepishly.

Once upon a time the gallant used "Yes," she said, with a smile, "I've to kiss his lady's hand. The modern taken parts now and then at the school girl will tell you it's entirely out of

Princess Willful (Continued from page 2)

play your lover, and you are going to their two visitors, especially the mon-

"Come," said the good woman, "your

hand on one curley head, and the monkey knowingly went ahead, so that the three children eagerly followed nim into the house.

As the supper neared its end the good woman looked up suddenly and asked, "But how did it come to pass ou were changed into roses?" for in the excitement and joy at recovering er children, she had forgotten the trange circumstances. "'Twas a little old woman who made

us into roses," cried the littlest boy, "and I said I didn't want to be good and that I would rather like to stay when you return not this evening." "And then we began to cry," said

elder child, "but before we could run away we found ourselves roses grow ing in our own garden." "It must have been the little old vomen we saw," said the princess

urning to her pet monkey. "Did she have a very crooked nose? sked the littlest boy.

"And did her chin turn up till it almost touched it?" asked the next "And was her hair in a long white

braid?" asked the eldest, "and were her eyes black as coals and bright as won't be any old farm left, and the iamonds?" "Yes," answered the princess with

laugh, turning to each child in anwer to his question.

"And she hobbled along on rutch," added the monkey. "Yes," cried the three children at

nce, "she did!" At that moment the little old woman nerself appeared. The children clung in terror to their mother's skirt, while the little princess caught hold of the monkey for protection.

"Fear not," said the little old woman, n a kindly voice. "All's well that nds well. I returned to find out whether the three roses were to sleep in the garden or in their feather beds." At this the children grew bolder and lost much of their fear. And the little princess turned to the little old woman and said, "I am sure you would not have let them remain roses all through

"Bless you no," replied the little old woman, with a twinkle in her black eyes, "bless you, no. But I an and kiss of forgiveness that made them good little children again."



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"So am I," replied the little princess in a whisper, "it makes me remember how often my dear mother kissed me in loving forgiveness." And here the

"We will come, too, if we may," the little princess into your house and children, for she is far from her own home and lonely."

"That I will gladly do," answered the good woman, and placing her arm kindly about the little princess she led her into the humble cottage for the

Highly Humorous

"Don't tell me a woman ain't got n sense of yumer!" said Constable Sam T. Slackputter, of Petunia. "I know a dad-blamed sight better! Every away; so she said, 'I will change you once in a while when I crank a lady's agony, his eyes sunken, staring and into roses so that you may see how flivver for her she starts the car becorrowful your poor mother will be fore I can get out of the way, and runs over me; everybody but me has hearty laugh."-The Press

An Ominous Outlook

ting through college, coming back to the old farm when he completes his

education?" "I'm afraid not," answered honest Farmer Bentover. "His education is costing me so much that prob'ly by the time he gets all he can hold of it there only inducement for him to come back will be to see the place where the old farm used to be."-Time and Tide.

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An Exploded Pun

"Aw, yes!" grumbled the postmaster little princess actually began to cry. at Forked Stick, Arkansas, "I've "I feel quite homesick!" she sobbed. heered all I want to hear of them old "There, there," said the little old jokes about postmasters reading the woman, "don't cry," and turning to postal cards. Lemme tell you, there wards the good woman, she said, "take ain't nuth'n to it, as fur as I'm conface and the azure twinkle in his azure said the little princess, laying her put her to bed with your own dear about one in fifty of them durn postal cards is worth reading anyhow."-Successful Farming.

Missed Both Ways

"So that magazine editor sent your lory back to you?" said Brown.

"Yes," replied Smith. "What did he say?" asked Brown. "He said that the story was both ood and original."

"Then why didn't he accept it?" "Oh," explained Smith, "he said that what was good wasn't original, and what was original wasn't good."

Silicus-"Ah, who can define love?" Cynicus—"I can. It's what people write novels and plays about."

The teachers say they want more pay, And 'tis their aim to boot, To hit the dollar mark, or they

Won't show the young idea the way They are supposed to shoot.

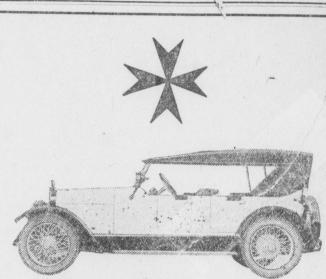
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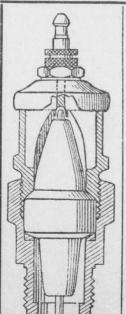
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