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Grey Roses

By PETER BENEDICT

TRAGEDY IN THE ROSE GARDEN

He let her go. She turned away from him and walked rather wearily across to a chair beside the fireplace, and sat down. The fitful gusts of wind brought in almost imperceptible exchanges in voices which meant nothing to the most sensitive ear. All the doors between were open, but the hearing while they kept their distance was too great for clear tempers. However, after ten seconds of this quiet he was aware that they were both listening with stretched nerves, catching at every hint of sound; and that the voices were rising.

Snatches of words came in upon the rose-laden air. "—you, you to come here and teach me my duty—" Fury there of a half-hysterical kind, and over-riding it the strong wild anger of Charles: "You need to be taught—allow me to ruin in her life and not put a hand in—worth ten of a man like you!" Thea started up again with a little gesture of despair which she saw. "They're both so stupid! Oh, why did Charles have to come here at all? It's so like him—and so unkind."

She tucked her hand into his arm, and they went through the dim, breeze-ruffled hall, and out into the garden. There were no longer any voices. In the doorway they paused. It was so quiet, and as they looked at companion with hurried, uneasy, sidelong glances, the scream came, sudden and wild and frightening—a long cry which tapered away slowly into the silence. Thea gave a cry which echoed the death of it, and began to breathe short and hard, with a rattle in her throat.

Jim turned and took her by the arms. "Go back into the house, and sit down, and wait for me. Please do as I say. I'll come back to you in a few minutes. But don't come any further with me."

She only shook her head, and went past him with a face white as milk, and ran between the beds of roses radiant in the sun in the direction from which the cry had come, and from which it did not come now. A bleached hedge and a line of little trees intervened, and they could see nothing. But as she rounded the hedge, Thea stopped and felt aside with a groping hand for her back, and there it was. "It was down there, wasn't it?—in the sunken garden. But he isn't there. You see there's no one there."

The cloudy lavender grey of the roses covered the stony oval from sight, even the paved paths were lost under the glow from this viewpoint. But Jim passed her and ran down the steps, and plunged down into the centre with a cry which had a face grimly anxious. He was by no means sure that Austin Hart was not there.

Thea was at his shoulder when he found him. There was a horrid moment when the certainty of something wrong forced itself upon his mind with the force of a hammer, and from which it did not come now. A bleached hedge and a line of little trees intervened, and they could see nothing. But as she rounded the hedge, Thea stopped and felt aside with a groping hand for her back, and there it was. "It was down there, wasn't it?—in the sunken garden. But he isn't there. You see there's no one there."

When Jim took the body by the shoulder and carefully turned it over, when the clenched hand withdrew itself unwillingly from the soil, making five or six rows in the brown earth, she shivered but did not utter a sound. His face was convulsed, marked here and there with bruises and his chin in a dark red smear. He was breathing, but so feebly that it seemed the effort could not last long. Yet at least it was possible to assure his wife that for the moment he was alive.

"It's not dead," said Jim abruptly. "Go back and ring up Doctor Wayland. Tell him to hurry. Say there's been an accident."

Home Conditions Said Cause of Crime

TORONTO, Aug. 28 — "The worst criminals in Canada today are between the ages of 16 and 19," according to Lt. Col. Wallace Bunton, head of The Salvation Army Prison and Police Court Services Department. "The next worst age groups are from 18 to 25."

"Veterans of service with the armed forces have not been responsible for even the share of crime that could be attributed to them on a percentage of population basis," he said. It is possible to trace back to the home 90 per cent of the major crime in Canada, Col. Bunton declared. This does not always mean a poor home because some criminals come from prosperous homes. Too much severity by parents in some cases, not enough in others, deception of children by parents, the bad example of low-principled parents and broken homes are the background factors that develop young criminals, according to Col. Bunton.

The home is first, the school second and the church third in the proper upbringing of the young, said Col. Bunton. "Home conditions are reflected in school conduct and where school conduct is bad there should be investigation of home conditions. Then, too, the church work among young children. The Salvation Army prison department has 92 officers across Canada engaged in full or part-time reclamation work among prisoners. Last year personal work was done with 29,787 of them and more than 2,000 individuals were handed over to The Salvation Army by courts and prison officials." According to Col. Bunton, 87 per cent of these are now going straight and efforts continue to reclaim the others.

He turned on his heel without a word, and ran as if her feet were wings. Jim stood up and looked round the sunny corner of the garden, but no Charles was there; and even when he went down to the gate which gave upon the meadows, and opened it and passed through, he could see no sign of the man who had certainly been there only a few minutes before. Charles had beaten a very hasty retreat.

Why? Because he had uttered Austin Hart to death and had sufficient sense left to get away from the scene of the struggle with all speed? Jim could think of nothing. Something had been said about Thea, and Charles had certainly threatened to bludge her and perhaps if the offence had been repeated—which was rather more than likely—his temper had snapped, and he had hit out. But to continue the assault to this point—No, if Charles in a blind rage had done that, he would have been here now, standing over the body far too arrogantly sure of his immunity to run away from what he had done. Much more probable that Charles had run like a hare from the probability of murdering Hart if he stayed. But in that case who had murdered him? There was no innocent case of a fatal fall upon the stones. The rosebeds were threshed to pieces in the struggle, and the ground spattered with blood.

BACK TO THE BODY

He went back to the body. It was little more than a body, the head and concave blood clot on one side, and several ribs to the best of his judgment, broken and piercing the right lung. Jim did not know again. The police would want to see how he died; for dead he was even while he breathed; to imagine the miracle was the merest folly. His head was smashed. Already Jim had raised his head and shoulders from the ground, and the sun's face had paled a little towards its normal colour. There was no more to be done, and even so much effort was wasted. Imperceptibly the shallow, hard breathing had slowed and stopped.

Slowly Jim withdrew himself from the sunken garden, and went up towards the house. Dr. Wayland, if Thea had managed to call him, at home, would not have far to come, and accordingly might be here any moment. Jim turned the corner of the clipped hedge and stopped short in mid-stride. The gardener, Woodford, with leisurely deliberate movements, was setting up at the far end of a short step-ladder, and mounting it, shears in hand. His face was contentedly blank, as if that cares lay heavy on his mind while the smooth sun caressed his flowers so kindly.

Jim approached him deliberately and was met with a pleased smile. Certainly Woodford was in a good mood to-day. "Why, Mr. Tatum, who'd have thought of seeing you here. I never expected as you meant to pay your compliments in person, so to speak."

"Have you been here long?" asked Jim abruptly. "On this hedge, you mean, sir? Why, no. I've just this minute come round from the far side of the house. Why would you be asking?" "You didn't hear anything—or see anyone in the garden?" "Why no, sir—not a sound. It would have been a middling big sound to carry to me there on account of the bulk of the house in between. Why, sir—what's happened?" "Mr. Hart has been killed," said Jim. "In the rose garden." (To be continued.)

New Era Of Co-operation Proposed

(By Harold W. Ward) — (AP) — WASHINGTON, Sept. 2 — (AP) — The American Federation of Labor offered today to a "speed production, avoid strikes and negotiate wage increases within price ceilings" but asked for an occasional, confidential look at employers' books. This policy of co-operation can succeed, the A. F. L. said, "only if employers are ready to meet us half way." "We have offered to co-operate with you as partners in improving production. Show us the facts so we can know the results of our

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OUT OUR WAY

By J. R. WILLIAMS



WHY MOTHERS GET GRAY

OUR BOARDING HOUSE

With Major Hoopie



LET'S PLUG HIM AND SEE IF HE'S RIPE!

