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The Third Warning A Mystery Love Story

By Augustus Muir

A VILLAGE "Three hearty huzzas," said George: "I see a village." And a few minutes later we had swung into the twilight of a street, with houses on either side. And an array of windows spouting yellow lamplight. "This looks like an inn," mumbled George. "Can you read the sign? Brackenbridge Arms. Romny, old son we have arrived."

A stout and cheerful dame met us in the little cramped hall with its hanging lamp. To our query whether she could put us up for the night, she smiled, nodded and replied: "Aye Manage fine." Her husband carted our baggage upstairs; and twenty minutes later we sat down in the coffee room to a simple but voluminous supper.

"They do you well," chuckled George as he tackled a regular hayrick of cold beef. "Better tell 'em you're the new laird and they might throw in champagne if they've heard of the stuff."

"I somehow feel it's bad form," I said "coming here before going on to see Mr. Blair in Edinburgh. But I'm dying to have a look at the outside

of the hall before it gets too dark. So hurry up with that pound or so of roast beef you're gormandizing."

Before setting out, we sampled the local whisky in the bar below; and I asked a stout fellow with corduroys in which direction Brackenbridge Hall lay. As I said the words, there was a clap of silence in the bar. Men took quick glances at us over their shoulders. The yokel looked at us queerly and jerked his head eastward.

"We're unpopular all of a sudden," whispered George. "D'you spot it?" I was conscious of sundry pairs of eyes following us as we went out.

"It's only natural," I commented. "Old man Drysdale died just last week, and they probably think we're going to lease the place."

George nodded as we passed down the street in the dusk. "Might be a lot of obvious reasons," he agreed. "It struck me as rummy at the moment. These rustic didn't gape at us blatantly—they sort of squinted round corners."

We had left the village behind. "I say," said George, "how far are we supposed to go to get a squint at this family seat of yours?"

"We haven't passed lodge gates or anything," I meditated.

George snorted. "Lodge gates; don't be such a snob. Perhaps your ancestors just shinned over the wall. What's that row going on?"

"Sounds like a lawn mower," I said. "Over that hedge. Somebody seems busy. Let's ask where the place is."

A few yards ahead was a little white gate, and up a long garden lay an old square house embowered in trees. I called out to the unseen mower of grass. The machine stooped. "Hello, hello!" a voice hailed us.

"Golly, it's a girl!" whispered George.

And she was an amazingly attractive girl to boot, tall, slender, with reddish hair and white teeth and a frank jolly smile.

"I thought you weren't village people when I heard you call," she said, opening the gate. "In a little place like this one gets to know everybody so well."

"Yes, we just arrived this evening," I replied. "I wonder if you could direct us to Brackenbridge Hall."

In the twilight I could see the smile going slowly from her face. "The Hall?" she repeated in a slightly restrained voice. There was a moment's pause. She looked at George, then back at me. Again I had the queer feeling I had at the inn with the rustic.

"It's all locked up, you know," she added. "Oh no matter. We'll just stroll along and back again. Good night."

The mower whirred again as we proceeded. "Your rascally forebears plumped for a spot where they grow pretty girls," remarked George. "Quite a rustic beauty."

"Not so rustic either," I said. "Did you spot, by the way, how she caught her breath when we asked for the Hall? And she spoke of her house as 'the Manse.' She must be the daughter, or something, of the man to whom old Drysdale left the whole outfit in his will."

"I don't wonder she looked as if she wanted to run you under the mower blades," George murmured.

"She didn't, you chump. She doesn't know who I am from Adam. How could she? She was a bit startled, that's all. Hello, that looks like the place."

"Sun's down," said George shortly. "Might be cleaners busy. But it's a queer time for cleaners to be messing about."

"I say, George, I'm going over this wall to have a look." I burst out impulsively. "After all, the place is mine."

"Good wheeze," nodded George, to whom the unusual was meat and drink.

"I'd have put the lights down to some old housekeeper body," I continued, "but that girl said plainly the place is locked up. Living next door she ought to know."

"We'll have a squint and see," said George with a chuckle. "Wouldn't do, when you take possession, to find some pushful lad has abstracted all your furniture and disposed of it to the local pop shop."

I moved across the lawn to the doorway. "Hold a second," said George. "I vote we scout round the place first and see if there's any sign of life." No pair of housebrakers ever circumnavigated a house with greater stealth; but we found nothing save silence and desolation. The windows were all shut and fastened; the back door, when we tried it, was locked; nor was there a tint of a fire in any room.

"Rummy," agreed George when I spoke my mind.

"Look here," I said, deliberately. "I'm not going to knock. I'm going to get a window open somehow and jolly well stroll in. If the place is supposed to be locked up, it seems to me somebody is in there who's got no right to be. The place is mine, so I can be clinked for busting into my own property to find out."

"I'm with you!" George chuckled. "Why didn't you tell me there was going to be a bit of fun like this, you

SMILES

GABBY GERTIE



"Practice makes perfect—savages out of people if it's saxophone practice."

A CONTINGENCY "The early bird will get the worm." Of that there is no question. But if that worm should chance to turn He'd get the indigestion.



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Olepp: Is your baby fond of you? Newpop: Fond of me! Why he just sleeps all day so that he can stay up all night to enjoy my entertaining society.

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PRESBYTERIANS IN EAST INCREASE

TORONTO, March 22—In the Synod of Montreal and Ottawa, 39 new churches have been erected at a cost of \$1,365,000 since 1925 when Church Union was consummated, the general board of missions of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, in annual session here, was informed today. Rev. F. C. MacKintosh reported for the Maritimes, presenting figures showing in 1925 there were 118 churches compared with 130 today. In 1925 the membership of the Presbyterian Church in the Maritimes was 16,602 with 10,539 families, compared with a present membership of 17,800, including 11,100 families. The present budget of the churches in the Maritime Provinces totals \$40,000 compared with \$23,000 in 1925. Considering the financial situation of the present year, the board decided to take steps to raise, as soon as possible the sum of \$350,000.

ceded George. "Drink it all in Ronny. Ye home of ye de-Drysdales. I say, look old thing! I thought that girl said it was locked up."

"She did. By jove, that was a light, wasn't it? It's gone out now."

"There it is again!" cried George, gripping my arm. "Seems like somebody closing the curtains."

The place was black and dead once more. Looking at it, I could scarcely believe that my eyes had seen a shimmer of light in an upper window.

"Can't have been a light, George. Couldn't it have caught a bit of sunset or something?"

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(To be Continued)

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Inspection Monday between 3 and 5 p. m.

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