

RUNAWAY JUNE

By George Randolph Chester and Lillian Chester

NINTH EPISODE

Kidnaped

CHAPTER I.

FROM his concealment amid the shrubbery Ned Warner rose to rush forward as the brilliantly lighted limousine, with its gay party of five, swept down the drive of the Villard home. His eyes were burning, he was breathing heavily, and his fingers were curved like claws, for in a moment more he intended to grapple by the throat the black Vandyked face bent smilingly over Ned's lovely runaway bride.

At that instant three shadowy figures sprang also from amid the shrubbery, two men and a woman. There was no outcry and scarcely any struggle. Ned Warner found himself suddenly seized from behind, a rough sleeve across his mouth, his arms pinioned.

He was lifted bodily and thrown as Gilbert Blye, with the grace and gallantry only possible to a polished man of the world, assisted the radiant June Warner from his luxurious limousine.

The deserted groom, his head still held in a viselike grip and his mouth stopped, saw his bride enter the house, surrounded by the gay group, the darkly handsome Blye on one side and the white mustached Orin Cunningham on the other.

It was Marie who made the gag to slip in Ned's mouth. Then Marie slipped back of the house.

The two men, one apparently a chauffeur, referred to as Henri, and the other a gardener, picked Ned up and followed her. As they passed the brightly lighted library Ned saw June's collie greet her with the height of canine joy, saw Cunningham and Blye making friends with the dog, then saw the twinkling eyed Cunningham sit in a cozy corner with June and begin an animated tete-a-tete.

The chauffeur and the gardener shrank back in among the bushes with their helpless burden.

There came a high powered racer whizzing down the drive. The man let himself in with a latchkey and, with his hands in his pockets, strolled nonchalantly into the parlor.

Mrs. Villard, talking with Gilbert Blye and Tommy Thomas, turned, and as she saw the newcomer her eyes widened imperceptibly, and a look of concern flashed down across her gentle countenance.

"Well, Bert, you're a surprise," she said.

"That's my best trick," he drawled, kissing Mrs. Villard perfunctorily. "Hello, Tommy! Howdy do, Blye?"

Villard was impressed as his eyes fell upon the fresh beauty of June.

"Mr. Villard, Mrs. Warner." The introduction was very cold, and again Mrs. Villard's face as she saw her husband's eager interest. "My companion," she added, and Cunningham and Tommy Thomas, glancing at each other, smiled.

With a careless nod to Cunningham, Villard walked over to June and, taking her hand, held it while he smiled down at her with such obvious admiration that the helpless bound and gagged man beyond the library window lurched free from his captors and tugged at his bonds until they almost cut into his wrists.

Marie came back from the corner and motioned. The chauffeur and the gardener followed with the husband of the beautiful young girl, who was then smiling her courteous responses to the dissolute Bert Villard.

Marie sped quickly across the shadowy back lawn to the garage and opened the door.

"He's not to talk, and he's not to come near the house," she whispered

started back, and she started forward, and she turned around in a half circle. She was well nigh distracted with the weight of her great secret, was Marie.

If she told Miss June that Mr. Ned was in the garage there'd be an end of everything, and maybe it would be all for the best, or Miss June might run away again from such comfortable surroundings, and it would be all for the worse. Marie sat down and pulled her thumb; then she jumped up and pulled the other thumb. The piano began a succession of silvery notes. June, and over her bent the inordinately tall Villard.

"Well!" said the gardener in the dimness of the garage, and he brushed his arms. It was all the rest they needed. He turned ponderously toward their captive, whom they had deposited in a corner on a bench.

The gardener's one word was a question, an exclamation of relief and an expression of complete and thorough bewilderment. He was a broad Swede, and his arms hung crooked with muscles.

"I know nothing," laughed the wiry little chauffeur. He was a Frenchman with an infinitesimal mustache and a quick eye and a childlike joy in everything. "The maid of the charming mademoiselle telephones from the pantry to the garage that there is a man near the hedge, who must not come near mademoiselle, who must not speak, to whom nothing must be said, and all must be prompt! Voilà! I am Henri, and all of action. I call my friend Jens."

And he tapped the huge Swede approvingly on the chest. "I bring my friend Jens swiftly by the mere force of my enthusiasm. We glide through the bushes so, like a snake. No!" He

as Mrs. Villard's companion it was her duty to go on this trip.

"Shall we take Bouncer?" suggested the pleasantly modulated voice of Blye. "Of course Bouncer shall go!" June declared, and this time the handsome collie, on his feet in an instant, wagged his tail so vigorously that his hind feet slid.

There was instant gratification in the faces surrounding June.

Far away in the night Henri was speeding northward. Every now and then he turned to look back and laugh, where Jens Janssen sat stolidly puffing his pipe, one immense hand constantly on the arm or the knee of Ned Warner.

"Volla!" cried Henri in high glee as the sharp night wind cut past his face.

"Well," grunted Jens in huge content. June put herself into the hands of the agitated Marie very thoughtfully after the visitors had gone.

"What is the matter, Marie?" June's tone was quite solicitous. She became suddenly aware that Marie had been in such a state of nervous excitement as she had never exhibited before.

"Nothing, Miss June; nothing at all! I'm afraid of burglars!"

"Why, Marie, come here!" Marie came slowly over, nervously kneading some knotted pink thing in her hands. "Your eyes are feverish. You must go to bed, Marie. Wait. Bring me my medicine case and a glass of water."

Meekly Marie took what June gave her, but later she dashed down the stairs and streaked across to the garage. Empty!

At that moment Ned Warner, his hands and feet still bound and his mouth still gagged, was being gleefully deposited in a deserted woodcutter's shed in the middle of a vast, bleak grove. Through the trees the moon-

light glinted on distant water, and the shadows of the trees lay in fantastic, twisted patterns on the hillside.

Dawn. The red glow of the sunrise, filtering through the mist of the morning, stole in at the open door of the Villard garage and found Marie, with her fists folded under her arms and the tip of her frosty nose in her elbow, loudly snoring.

She limped over to the house, plodded up to her room, dressed herself with numb fingers and after half an hour of dull eyed thought scrawled this note, which she laid on June's bed:

Dear Miss June—I am feeling better, thank you. I hope you will excuse me if I take a few hours off. I will be back for lunch. Hoping you are the same, I remain, yours affectionately, MARIE.

She tiptoed out and hurried down the hill to the station, where she caught the first commuters' train. Arriving at the city, she sought Officer Dowd and prevailed on him to phone Ned's friends and June's parents that Ned had been kidnaped.

June in a pretty little morning robe was busy among the flowers in Mrs. Villard's boudoir window conservatory and singing softly when she heard a footstep behind her. Turning, she saw Villard towering above her, his hands

lowering his voice the slightest particle as if the remark were addressed in confidence to her, though the others were crowded eagerly round.

There was an instant of hesitation. "Then aboard the yacht!" exclaimed Tommy Thomas. She was looking at June, her deep red lips parting in a smile. June's cheeks paled. After all,

in the pockets of his lounging robe, and he was grinning.

"Oh!" exclaimed June, started. "Good morning."

"So this is friend wife's pretty new companion," observed Villard. "Well, friend wife has excellent taste."

June moved away.

"Don't be in a hurry," he chuckled. "We must get acquainted," and, suddenly reaching forward, he put his hand under her chin and turned up her face.

She jerked away, but he closed the door toward which she darted and, gathering her in his long arms, crushed her to him. June's struggles were futile and her shrieks muffled, but one pair of ears heard. There was a crash of glass, the flash of a long, lithe, white and brown body through the room, and then Villard released his hold. Bouncer! He had sunk his teeth into Villard's arms, and now he was a whirlwind of canine fury.

The man turned pale with fear, kicking and striking at the enraged animal.

"Bouncer!"

That cry from June saved Villard's life, for the dog, with a yelp of joy, was springing for his throat as he fell. The man lay back. The dog stood still, motionless. The man's hand moved nervously. The collie moved precisely that same amount. Villard did not twitch a muscle from that time on, except to speak.

"Call off the dog!" he ordered.

"Watch him, Bouncer," said June quietly.

June rose from the chair into which she had hlimply sunk, but a cold anger had come to replace her weakness. She

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AMERICA MAY DEMAND RECALL OF OBNOXIOUS VON BERNSTORFF

NEW YORK, April 16.—A Washington despatch to The Herald says: "The activities of the German Embassy have become the absorbing topic of thought with officials here, engaging the attention of the Departments of State, Treasury and Justice."

While the action to be taken by the United States with regard to the memorandum of the German Ambassador, Count Von Bernstorff, charging the United States Government with an unneutral attitude in the European conflict, has not been determined, there is every indication that the attention now being given to the general activities of the German Embassy will uncover facts which either will enable the United States to demand the recall of the Ambassador or to stop the campaign which he is waging to influence political thought in this country.