

### It Happened Twice

BY T. C. BRIDGES

CHAPTER XXII

#### PEGGY COMPOUNDS A FELONY

Mason, who had never set eyes on Peggy and had not the faintest idea of her identity, snatched his chance, pushed her violently aside and was away down the stairs. Wearing rubber-soled shoes, he went silently as a cat.

The force of the push sent Peggy staggering. She struck the door of her own room which was ajar, it flew open and she fell. By the time she had gained her feet Mason was in the hall below. Even so she ran down the stairs in pursuit, but she was too late. Mason had already opened the front door and vanished in the fog of a November night. Peggy noticed that he had waited long enough to close the door behind him. A cool customer, this; evidently a professional.

But Peggy was not defeated. She meant to get that necklace back, and she believed she could do it. She glanced at her wristwatch. It was only half-past nine. She had at least two hours before Althea returned—probably more.

She listened a moment. No one in the house had been disturbed and all was quiet. She hurried back to her room, put on a long dark coat and a small hat, changed her shoes, picked up her bag in which was her latch key, ran down again and let herself out.

The fog was turning to rain as she walked quickly in a westerly direction, looking for a taxi. Luck was with her. She found one almost at once and told the man to drive to St. Mark's Terrace. Here Peggy stopped him, got out paid her fare and walked on to No. 73.

As she came near to the door of 73 she heard steps behind her—quick, light steps. With a great effort she refrained from looking round. A man passed her. There was no mistaking that sturdy figure and the quick stride in spite of the man's effort to lose himself in his big overcoat. Her heart leaped. This was Mason himself.

Yet Peggy let him pass. She waited until he stopped at the door of 73 and was putting his latchkey in the lock, then came quickly up.

"I want to see you, Mr. Mason," she said calmly.

The man started sharply and turned. The light of a street lamp showed his face and Peggy saw fear in his eyes. But in a flash he had pulled himself together.

"Who are you? I don't know you."

"You saw me less than a quarter of an hour ago," Peggy told him. She saw him stiffen, but he tried to bluff.

"You are mistaken. I have just come from my club." "You have just come from 117, Belgrave Square," said Peggy sharply, "where you stole jewellery from Miss Rivers' bedroom, and where you knocked me down when I caught you."

Peggy saw him glance round quickly and knew what was in his mind.

"If you bolt I go straight to the nearest policeman," she announced in a voice that, even to herself, sounded uncharacteristically calm. "There's one at the corner. I passed him." Leonard realized he was beaten.

"How do you know my name?" he asked.

"Never mind how. I've seen you before."

"Then what do you want me to do?"

"To give back what you have stolen. Do that at once and you can go." To Peggy's amazement Leonard laughed.

"Come inside and I'll give you the case." His tone changed to one of friendliness. "It's too risky out here in the street," Peggy hesitated. "It's good goods," Leonard assured her. "I won't try anything. Give you my word."

"I'll take your word," said Peggy, and he opened the door and led her into the dingy passage. There he stopped and handed her the case.

"You've spoiled the best coup I've worked for months," he said, "but you're a good plucked 'un. I hope I didn't hurt you." "You didn't hurt me," Peggy said. She paused. "Is it any use suggesting that you try some other and more lawful profession?"

"Not a bit," replied Leonard. "It's too late." He led the door open for her and she went straight out into the street.

The whole episode was so amazing, and her audacity had so stricken her nerves that she felt oddly shaken and hardly able to walk. She looked round for a taxi, but taxi drivers don't find many customers in St. Mark's Terrace, and rarely go that way.

In the end she had to walk the whole way home and, by the time she got there she was at the verge of exhaustion. She went straight to the dining-room, where the sherry decanter gleamed invitingly as she switched on the light.

She filled a glass with sherry but, before she could lift it to her lips the room began to spin round her. All went black and she tumbled flat on the floor.

When she came back to her senses Althea was on her knees beside her, dabbing her face with a handkerchief wet with Eau-de-Cologne. And Althea looked more frightened than Peggy had ever known her.

"Oh, my dear, what has happened?" Althea asked. Peggy managed a smile.

"Don't be frightened. It's nothing. Let me get into a chair and I'll tell you."

"But I must send for the doctor."

"Don't dream of it," Peggy said. "I mean it, Althea. I give you my word I'm not ill. I was a little overcome and fainted." She sat up and, with Althea's help, got into a chair. "Now if you'll give me that glass of sherry I'll tell you just what happened."

She sat silent for a few minutes, sipping the wine, and soon felt a little better. She pointed to the jewel case which Althea had picked up and put on the table.

"I heard a noise upstairs," she said, "and went up to see. Your door was locked up to see. Your key was sure it was a burglar and that he must have climbed in over the balcony. I thought of the telephone, but felt that the police

wouldn't get here in time, so I decided to go out on to the balcony by the window of the other front room and catch him before he could get away."

"But it was an awful risk!" put in Althea, wide-eyed. Peggy smiled.

"I was too anxious about your necklace to think of that. I went into my room to get a torch and just then the man unlocked your door and came out that way. I ran after him and caught him outside. I gave him his choice to give up the necklace and go free, or I'd call the police. You see, if he once got away, I thought very likely the police would never catch him, or at any rate wouldn't get back your emeralds."

"He caved in. He handed over the necklace and went off. Then I came back. But I suppose I got a bit excited and, like a fool, I fainted. I hope you don't mind about my letting him go."

"Please don't. A night's sleep will put me all right."

"Then I'll help you to bed, Ruth."

(To be Continued)

#### COAT TO SUIT YOUR TYPE

Fashion designers, it seems, have really discovered a woman's type and size are important in her coat selections. That a woman who either cannot carry much fur, or can't afford the becoming style with the fur that's right with her hair and eyes can do without it to advantage.

These new coats, looking very important, and with their own measure of drama, are cut and draped to sculptural advantage. They may depend on silhouette interest—such as capelets (single or tiered), or belted tunics or peplums. Skirts may bell a little, have front fullness or be very trim. Velvet trims, frogs, petit point or other embroidery or braid may add their important look.

Newest of all are the coats which depend entirely upon fold of their own beautiful fabric, and fine detail, for individuality. Petite women will love them. So will larger women who have tired of living up to lavishness. These dressmaker models which have tried so long to

edge from the custom tailored to the ready-made department seem to be here at last. A cowl drape to a neckline, an intricately cut yoke which ends in a scarf—and, coming up—a side closing. These, along with the dropped shoulderline, and nice little seams which do things for the figure but are not too apparent.

are features to watch in the better coat. Intended to be worn as is, they may carry your fur scarf, stole or tipper.

If an airplane is travelling 250 m.p.h. at a height of 20,000 feet, it must release its bomb when it is still 2-2 miles from the target figure but are not too apparent.

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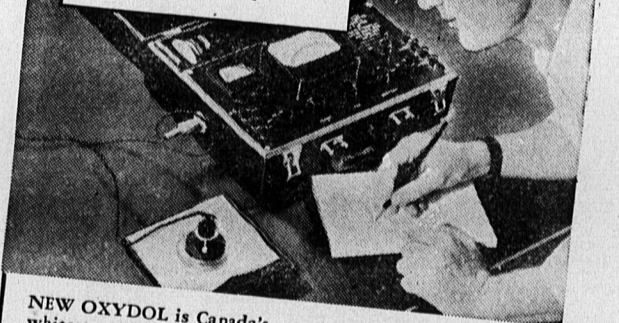
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A unified command in the Far East for the Allied powers was announced from Washington. General Sir Archibald Wavell of Britain has been named to the supreme command. Under him will be Major-General H. Brett, chief of the air corps of the U.S. army, as deputy supreme commander, RIGHT, who is now in the Far East; Admiral Thomas Hart, U.S. navy, LEFT, who will assume command of all naval forces in the area; and General Sir Henry Pownall, CENTRE, who will be chief of staff to General Wavell. Wavell will have under his command all the sea land and air force in the southwest Pacific area. The announcement is subject to agreement by the Netherlands and Dominion governments concerned.