

# The Mystery of the Silver Dagger

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## SYNOPSIS.

**CHAPTER I.**—In a New York jewelry store Philip Severn, United States consular agent, notices a small box which attracts him. He purchases it. Later he discovers in a secret compartment a writing giving a clue to a revolutionary movement in this country seeking to overthrow the Chilean government. The writing mentions a rendezvous, and Severn decides to investigate.

**CHAPTER II.**—Finding the place mentioned in the writing apparently deserted, Severn visits a saloon in the vicinity. A woman in the place is met by a man, seemingly by appointment, and Severn, his suspicions aroused, follows them. They go to the designated meeting place, an abandoned iron foundry.

**CHAPTER III.**—At the rendezvous Severn is accepted as one of the conspirators and admitted. He meets a stranger who appears to recognize him.

**CHAPTER IV.**—The stranger addresses Severn as Harry Daly. The incident plays into Severn's hands and he accepts it. His new acquaintance is a notorious thief, "Gentleman George" Harris. Concealed, Severn hears the girl he had followed address the conspirators. She urges them to hasten the work of revolution.

**CHAPTER V.**—Leaving the crowd to discuss the message she had brought, the girl discovers Severn listening. She accepts his explanation of his presence and makes an appointment to meet him next day. He tells her his name is Daly. Harris informs him of a scheme he has to secure a sum amounting to \$1,000,000, the revolutionary fund, and offers to "split" with him. Severn accepts the proposition.

**CHAPTER VI.**—Severn learns it was his new friend and a "Captain Alva" who had lost the box which started him on the trail. Harris tells him the woman is Marie Gessler. He arranges to meet Severn next day at Tom Costigan's saloon. Leaving the building, Severn notices a stalled automobile a few blocks away. Investigating, he finds the body of Captain Alva, stabbed to death with a hatpin dagger. Securing it, he remembers having seen it, or one like it, in Marie Gessler's hat.

**CHAPTER VII.**—Believing Marie left the foundry with Alva, Severn is forced to believe she is the slayer. He takes the dagger with him, leaving the body to be discovered later. At the address Marie had given him he finds she is unknown. He visits Costigan's and learns that Harris has disappeared. Costigan apparently has no doubt that Severn is really "Daly," and gives him his full confidence.

**CHAPTER VIII.**—At his hotel Severn finds a message asking him to "phone the Hotel McAlpin." He does so and is invited to call. At the McAlpin he meets Marie Gessler. She refuses fully to explain her position, and he is unable to make up his mind as to whether she is guilty or innocent of Alva's murder. The presumption, however, is all against her, and Severn, on whom she has made a deep impression, is in a quandary.

**CHAPTER IX.**—With Marie, Severn visits Peron's cafe, an underworld resort, where the girl believes they may meet Harris and a Russian Jew, Ivan Waldron, a leading spirit in the scheme of robbery. At Peron's, Harris discovers Severn, and believing the latter has obtained the money after killing Alva, attacks him. Severn fights him and Waldron off, and, with Marie, escapes. The girl refuses fully to explain her position in connection with the conspirators, insisting that Severn must give her his full confidence. With that he is forced to be content.

**CHAPTER X.**—After leaving the girl at the McAlpin, Severn finds that his room has been entered and the dagger stolen. Bewildered, he abouts comes to the conclusion that Marie has secured it as incriminating evidence. On a telephone call from Harris Severn visits Costigan's. There Harris, Costigan and Waldron confront him. They refuse to believe he has not got the money stolen from Alva, and after a fight Severn is left unconscious. "Covered the girl's identity, and that alone was inducement enough to urge me to take the risk. If he actually knew who she was, he was the kind that might become ugly, and, however much I suspected her in my own mind, I had no desire to leave her undefended at his mercy. Guilty or not guilty, my inclination was to protect her to the last. Besides I was eager to obtain the information he claimed to possess; indeed, all progress on the case was blocked until I did obtain it. As to his boast that he knew where the stolen money was concealed, I took little stock in that. Doubtless he merely threw that in for good measure. But the other looked reasonable enough; she had confessed being at Peron's before; Pierre was fully as likely to recall her to memory as he was to remember Daly, and Harris could never have made so shrewd a guess, unless he had really been told the facts. Another thing gave me courage to go to Costigan's. I was still accepted by these people as Harry Daly, crook. I would undoubtedly be so received, so treated. Under these circumstances there could be no personal danger; I held the whip-hand, the advantage—Harris was only endeavoring to see what he could get out of me; he had abandoned force to resort to diplomacy."

"All right," I said. "I'll run over there; if you want to play fair, I'll meet you half way."  
"Oh, I'm on the square, old man, and I've got some good dope," he insisted. "I'll blow it when you show up."  
I returned the receiver to the hook, wondering whether or not I had de-

clined rightly, yet determined to carry out the experiment. Above all else I wanted to learn who Marie Gessler was. Nothing else mattered so much, for on this discovery all else hinged. If violence, or treachery, was intended, I would be found prepared, and well able to defend myself.

The neighborhood into which I was venturing induced me to take a taxi, and, within ten minutes, I was deposited at the door of the saloon. I pressed open the swinging door, and stepped into the brilliantly lighted bar-room.

Costigan was behind the bar, but, at sight of me, rounded the end, and shook hands cordially, removing his apron, and slipping into a coat, in token that he had changed his occupation.

"Better call Charlie," he said to a man beside him, "for I'll be off for an hour or so. You came to see George?"  
"Yes; he telephoned me."  
"Said he was gone to. He's waitin' in the office there. I'll go along with you."

He pushed a passage through the crowd, his breadth of body according to the ample room in which to follow without being obstructed, and opened the closed door with a pass-key. To a wave of his big hand I passed confidently past him, and entered. The next instant he had pressed me forward, came in also, and closed the door; the sharp click of the lock sounded like the report of a pistol. One startled glance at the interior told me I was trapped, and the swift instinct of defense led me to step aside, so that I should have my back to the wall. Harris sat in the swivel chair, with feet elevated on the desk, sarcastically grinning at me over a half-chewed cigar tilted between his teeth. A white rag was bound round his head, through which a few drops

of blood had oozed, leaving a dark stain. Leaning against the wall opposite was Waldron, one eye half-closed, and his lip split, giving to his face a look of savage brutality, rendered peculiarly sinister by a grim effort to smile. Costigan remained motionless, with back against the door, as though thus barring all possibility of escape. I had walked into their trap, and the jaws had closed.

The grin on Harris' face maddened me. "Well," I said coldly, "it was a stall, was it? What is the idea?"

He laughed, without changing his attitude.  
"This happens to be our turn to play, Daly," he returned, apparently well satisfied with his smartness.  
"Then you have nothing to tell me?"  
"Oh, yes, I have; I've got a h—l of a lot to tell you. But first of all you are going to tell me a few things. Push back your right sleeve to the elbow, shirt and all."  
"What's that for?"  
"Never you mind what it's for; you do what I say, if you know what is best for yourself."

I looked at the faces of the others, but they were hard as flint. My hesitancy caused Harris to lower his feet, and sit up angrily.

"Push up that sleeve, you, or I'll have Waldron do it for you. We've got you foul, you fool!"

I stripped back my sleeve, exposing my right forearm, yet never removing my eyes from their faces. Harris and Costigan bent forward, intent on the operation, but Waldron never shifted his position. Harris slapped a hand on the desk, and gave utterance to an oath.

"By G—d, Dan, we're right. This bird's not Daly!"  
"Not in a thousand years he ain't. He's sure a dead-ringer, though."

Harris straightened up, the same hateful grin still exposing his teeth.  
"We've got your number this time, son," he announced. "Harry Daly has a tattooed anchor on his right arm. I didn't know it, but Dan did. I'll tell you what made us wise. In the shindig over at Peron's tonight, a card-case was jarred loose from your pocket. There was only one kind of card inside, and that wasn't Daly by a h—l sight. I told Dan about it, and he was for getting a squint at that right arm. Said for me to call you up at the number you gave me, believing that if I threw in 'con' enough you'd come over here. I asked for 'G 145,' the operator there named yer, and it was the same name what was on them cards. So now we know yer're a dirty liar and spy, Mister 'Philip Severn.'"

"You called me Daly yourself, Harris," I said quietly, realizing the game was up, but not yet sure of their intentions. "I merely let it go."  
"Sure; but what was the game? You ain't no fly-cop?"  
"Nothing of the kind."  
"Then you was after the dough. That's what I thought; you and the girl are in cahoots. Well, what did you do with it?"

I shook my head, but this only angered Costigan.

"Ah, stow that," he broke in roughly. "We know you never got it, but she did. There ain't no other way it could have been done. The dame left with Alva. George here saw her go out with him. Then the next morning the guy was found dead, his pockets rifled, and the bag of cash gone. How was he croaked—do you know? Punctured from behind with some sorter sharp instrument, no bigger than a hat-pin. It looked like a woman's job, but she got away clean. And what then? The next night she turns up with you over at Peron's blowing in the coin, and the two of yer havin' a h—l of a time. That proves yer were together, don't it?"

"We're not going to blow this to the police," broke in Harris, as Dan paused for breath. "That ain't the idea at all. But we want a share of that dough. You come across, and

there wouldn't be no more trouble."  
"But suppose I don't? Suppose I tell you I haven't the slightest idea where that money is, or who got it? What then?"

Harris' grin was more malicious and hateful than ever, but he waited and deliberately lit his stump of a cigar.  
"What then?" he echoed finally.  
"Well, in the first place, we've got you, haven't we? I'll squeal, believe me, before you ever get out of our hands. See here, Severn, I ain't got any direct proof that'll put you in the chair at Sing-Sing; that's true enough, but, unless the two of you cough up liberal, I'll turn something over to the police of this town what will give you a term in the jug, as accessory, and, fix that fly dame of yours for all time."

"You are bluffing; you have no such proof."  
"Oh, haven't I? Look here, you fool; do you know where I got that?"  
He whipped something from out the concealment of an inner coat pocket, and flung it fully revealed onto the desk—an ornamental dagger, glittering in the light, which I as instantly recognized.

"Ever see that baby weapon before?"  
"Yes," and I felt a sudden relief at the discovery. "You slashed open my valve, and found it."

"Exactly; that's what I did," evidently proud of himself. "It was an easy enough trick. Just as soon as I got eyes on this pretty plaything I knew I'd got the sticker that put Alva out of business—an' I knew where it come from."

"Where?"  
"Oh, h—l do you think I ain't got any eyes? That skirt wore it in her hat when she and Alva went out together."

"Oh, did she? This same pin, was it? Say, Harris, I wish I could be as bright as you think you are. And did you happen to observe also that the lady's hat was held in place by exactly the same pin tonight when she was in Peron's? Well, it was; now how could it be in your pocket and in her hat at the same time?"

He stared at me, his mouth wide open, and I was equally amused at the expression upon the faces of the other two. I realized fully the peril I was in, and that these men would hesitate at nothing to obtain their end. Yet, in spite of all this, I was inexpressibly happy. I spiked their big gun with a single blow; moreover, I had learned the truth about her, and my faith in her innocence came back in a flood. Harris had done too much boasting; he had ruined his own case. He had placed the very weapon in my grasp which I most desired to have—absolute assurance that the girl herself was innocent. The fellow felt, and realized, the change.

"That's easy," he sneered. "She bought herself another. That proves nothing, except that she is smart enough to play safe. Neither one of you can get away on that sort of dope."  
"Perhaps not; but it clears her of the murder charge."  
"Oh, does it? That remains to be seen. We know who she is, and that is more than you do. Oh, h—l, I got out to that over the wire; the only thing that interested you into coming here was to learn who the dame really was. That's part of her play, as I figure it, Severn. She won't give herself away, but is just using you. When she's good and ready she means to fade, an' she'll take the dough along with her. You will have sold out for a few cheap kisses, an' that's all." He laughed coarsely. "She is stringing you for a fool. Come now, wake up, before it is too late, an' let's all get a hand in the pot; what'd yer say?"

"You still think I am that kind? One of your class?" I questioned, thoroughly angered by his sneering speech.  
"One of my class? I should say not; you are the rawest kind of a mutt, but so far you've been in luck—that's all. Now your luck has changed, and yer up against it."  
"What do you want me to do?"  
"Blow her; tell us all you know. We'll play the game for you, and divide square."

"You will let me out of here?"  
"Sure, once you give us the right steer."  
"And if I refuse?"  
He laughed contemptuously.  
"You're not going to; you've got too d—n much sense. But just to satisfy

your curiosity I'll tell you. We've got

the girl spotted; we can lay our hands on her in an hour; and, believe me, we've got the goods on the young lady. Here's the sticker that did the business, and I found it right where you had hidden it away. I can find three men—they are keeping out of sight, but I can stir them up—who'll swear that she went away alone with Alva from that factory over there; that he had the bag with him, and that the two got into the auto together. That makes one h—l of a straight case, don't it?"

"The way you put it—yes. But what good will it do you fellows to have her pinched? Where do you gain anything?"

"Time; it blocks the get-away with the swag. That's all we want. See here, Severn, we know where the stuff is planted; at least we've got an idea, but we've got to work slow and cautious in order to lift it. If it wasn't for that we wouldn't care if she skipped. If you'll help us to get quick action, we'll let the girl go, and give you a share. Take my word for it, that's a d—n sight more than you'll ever get by staying with her."

"But if she finds out that I have turned her down?"  
"She won't never find it out; we'll keep mum. Besides, you're doin' her a good turn, keepin' her out of the electric chair. Well, there's the proposition—you can leave it, or take it."

Serious as the situation was, I could not fail to see its absurdity. This was no threat to frighten me; the fellows meant what they said, although I doubted if they really possessed the knowledge claimed so glibly. But they evidently meant to go on; they were not bluffing, for they really had an ugly case, and could undoubtedly make trouble. The evidence against the girl was strong, almost convincing; it even

shook my own confidence in her innocence. The absurdity of the situation lay in my absolute ignorance. I knew even less than they pretended to know. What should I do? Pretend, manufacture some story? I had no faith it would work. These fellows were criminals, suspicious and unscrupulous; they would only believe what I could prove. If they caught me in a deliberate lie, as they probably would, that would instantly end everything. I might, then, just as well fight it out with them now as later. I set my teeth, ready for what I felt sure was coming.

"You fellows have sized me up wrong," I said quietly, but firmly. "I am not the kind to squeal because of a threat. You'll find I'll protect the lady, but I'll do it in my own way—not yours. The honest truth is, I haven't anything to tell. You won't believe that, but it is so. I know less than you claim to know. I have no knowledge of where the money is, or who got it. I do not know who killed Alva; even now I haven't any suspicions worth mentioning. But I will say this plainly—I do not believe this girl did it, or that she had any hand in the robbery. I am going to stay with her till h—l freezes over, if that is what you want to know. That's my answer, Harris, and it is all I've got to give you."

"You d—d cur! we'll show you something!"

"Perhaps you will; you are three to one, and on your own dung-hill. But the man who touches me is going to get hurt; I'll promise you that. No, you don't, Costigan; that trick won't work!"

I tried to keep my eyes on the three of them, but his movement caused me to step back closer against the wall. I feared the Jew least; he had neither spoken nor moved since our entrance, and I felt he had no stomach for any farther fighting. Yet I judged wrong. With one quick dash forward he gripped my wrist as I reached back for a revolver, and flung his burly frame against me with such force as to have thrown me headlong but for the support of the wall. Before I could wrench myself free, the others closed in desperately, content to use their hands, unwilling, perhaps, to create any alarm with fire-arms. I was a better fighting man than any one of the three, but combined they had the advantage. I wrenched free from the Russian, and thus got one hand in action, yet that was all. I knew I planted one jolting blow straight against Costigan's round face which made him wince, and got a foot fair into Harris' stomach, sending him reeling backward. Indeed I staggered the two of them, twisting out of the grip of those iron fingers, and smashing a step forward in spite of every effort. I was maddened, frenzied, reckless of all injury, eager only to injure those devils in any conceivable way; hate seemed to endow me with supernatural strength, and a desire to kill swept me with passion. All before me was blood-red, amid which swam their faces, and I went straight for them like a wild beast. Then, suddenly, from behind, a blow descended on my head, crushing me to the floor. I went stumbling down as though struck with a pole-ax, and lay motionless. For the instant I must have retained a measure of consciousness. I knew where I was; I even attempted vainly to regain use of my limbs, and I heard Harris swear in disgust.

"What the h—l did you hit him like that for, you idiot?" he yelled. "We don't want to kill the guy; he's worth more to us alive. Here, you, Waldron, lift up his head!"

Then all knowledge left me, and I went out into the dark.

**CHAPTER XI**  
A Venture of Peril.  
I must have remained unconscious for an hour or more. I never really knew how long, for my watch disap-

peared, yet it was still night when I again painfully opened my eyes and endeavored to perceive my surroundings. Memory of the blow which ended the struggle caused me to lift a hand to my head; the scalp was bruised and broken, the hair matted with clotted blood, yet I could not believe the injury was a serious one. I could use my limbs. Satisfied on this point, and assured that I was alone, I braced myself on one arm, and, in a sitting posture, endeavored to survey my surroundings.

I was resting on the floor of a bare room of ordinary size, containing no vestige of furniture. The place was cold, with that indescribable chill peculiar to unused apartments, and through the one window, which was unshaded by a curtain, poured the direct light of an almost full moon. In this silvery light every bit of that interior stood revealed in its hideous bareness, the roughly finished walls, the patches of plaster scaled off, the dirty floor, the single door and window, the rags amid which I rested. It was a hopeless scene.

I staggered to my feet reeling a moment like a drunken man, and then finally found my way along the side wall to the window. My strength increased as I advanced, and courage was born with it—I was not dead; I might baffle those villains yet. They must have felt that I was safe enough in this place; that, even if I regained consciousness, no escape was possible, for they had left no guard. A glance without revealed the reason for such confidence. I was four stories up, a sheer brick wall below, and, at the bottom, a concrete walk. There was nothing there to cling to unless it might be the narrow coping of stone just beneath the window sill. I stared at this, almost hopefully, for an instant; then turned my eyes away with a shudder; it was scarcely as broad as the sole of my shoe and to think of creeping along there was merely the dream of a madman. The bright moonlight flooded everything about, yet I saw nothing familiar; I was evidently at the back end of a house, with others closely set on either side, and an alley beyond a small, enclosed

yard. This latter was littered with dead weeds and rubbish of every description, and a small shed of some kind extended across the rear. Three stories below, but to the right, a narrow porch protected the back door. There was no movement visible anywhere, no gleam of light from the windows below me. I listened in vain for any sound; the night was as still as death, not even the echo of a distant street-car reaching my ear. I was somewhere within the limits of the city; of that I felt assured, but beyond this could I determine nothing.

I stole as silently as possible across to the door. It was securely locked, of course, and could be forced open, if at all, only by creating considerable alarm. I stood, staring helplessly about, feeling the impossibility of escape. I could only wait for my jailers to appear, impotent to aid myself in any way—or her. After all, that last thought was the most impelling. That they suspected Marie Gessler of being implicated in both murder and robbery was clearly evident; indeed, they not only suspected, but were convinced that she had done the deed. I was secretly obliged to admit that they had some reason to so believe; that they even possessed proof which would probably convict her in court of the crime. This gave them a terrible advantage over the girl, once they had her bodily in their possession. Guilty or not guilty, she could not establish her innocence; under torture and threat, such as they would doubtless use in their money lust, there was no knowing what might happen. Alone, helpless in the grasp of these unscrupulous crooks, her fate might be death, disgrace. Certainly it would be foul insult, and, if she failed to yield, the desire for revenge might even drive those cowards to a secret denunciation of her to the police. This, however, would be their last resort; they would exhaust all other efforts first. And no one else knew of her danger; no one else was in position to aid her; she must face this gang absolutely alone unless I could effect an escape. It was not merely my own life at stake; hers was also in the balance.

And the time in which to act was short. If I escaped at all, it must be accomplished before my jailers returned, before they dreamed that I had aroused from unconsciousness, or

had strength enough to make the attempt. Yet what possible way suggested itself? I felt in my pockets; they were utterly empty, except for a single overlooked bill. There was no means of egress other than the window and that seemed hopeless. Yet in desperation I crossed over once more, and again looked out. Could I—dare I—attempt to cling to that slight ledge in my stocking feet, even for the one or two steps necessary to reach the next window? The very conception of such a feat made my head reel giddily and my stomach rise in protest. Besides, even if I made it by some miracle, what if that other window should be closed and locked? How could I ever move backward to regain safety?

Yet wait; there was a way, dangerous enough to be sure, yet possible if I possessed the necessary nerve. There were opened blinds at each window; they would hold some as grasping spots for the hands. The one within reach appeared solid enough, firmly anchored to the casement, and secured to the brick wall by means of an iron hook. Between the two the space to be traversed was not wide; a single stride on the ground beneath would bridge the distance. If I had something to cling to above—anything that would keep me upright—I might hold my footing on the narrow stone and make the passage slowly. It was a daring, deadly venture, but possible.

But what could I hope to utilize as a support? The bare room offered but a single suggestion—the dirty coverlet which had been thrown over me. Torn apart from corner to corner, and twisted into the form of a rope, it ought to safely sustain my entire weight in case a foot slipped. I started to tear with my teeth, and thus succeeded in ripping the thing from

end to end. It was scarcely long enough for the purpose, which compelled me to make the noose correspondingly small. However, with this improvised lasso gripped in my right hand, I took position astride the sill of the window, in an endeavor to project the loosened end over some protuberance of the blind beyond. By holding tight to the frame with my left hand, the right was left free, and I was enabled to lean out far enough to obtain a clear toss. There was little the noose could catch on, and continued failure left me listless and discouraged. I lost hope, yet kept at it, and finally, to my surprise, the ring of the cloth settled over an iron projection of the hinge, and clung there, extending straight across from window to window. I hardly dared breathe as I drew the thing taut and tested the firmness with which it was held at the other end. The noose closed down tightly about the iron staple, and resisted every effort at release. To all seeming it was as safely anchored as though I had placed it there by hand. Somehow the very knowledge that this had been accomplished, that the way was open, brought with it a renewal of the feeling of horror with which I had first contemplated the possibility of such an accomplishment. Would I ever dare the attempt? My head swam as I gazed downward, and then across, and I shrank back absolutely terrified at the very thought.

Yet my nerve returned, and I found myself cool and determined. It was no pleasant job, to be sure, and I was compelled to steel myself to the attempt, yet I no longer held back paralyzed by fear. I easily found a secure fastening for the strip of bed-spread at my own window, and then, satisfied that it was taut and securely held at both ends, lowered my body cautiously over the sill, until my stocking feet nervously gripped the narrow stone or permit my mind to dwell for an instant on what was below. Slowly I straightened up, until my entire weight was upheld by this precarious foot-hold. To advance step by step was impossible; all I could hope to accomplish in locomotion was to stealthily advance one foot a few inches, sliding it along the stone, ever retaining contact, and then, as carefully drawing the other after until they met, toe and heel. It was the slow progress of a snail, yet the slightest effort at hurrying would mean a certain fall.

This was not unduly perilous, however, so long as I retained firm hold on the sill, or even could grip my fingers over the lower frame of the open blind, as I was enabled thus to partially sustain my weight, and, even if a foot slipped, the feel of the solid wood yielded confidence. But finally my hand reached out and grasped only the cloth cord, twisted into some semblance of a rope, and, as it gave sickeningly to the pressure, the old fear swept over me in a torrent of agony. I could never rankle it—never! I would go swirling, crashing down to that death below. It was but a step, to be sure; a step and I could reach the firmness of the other blind; but, oh, the step—the speechless horror of it! Yet there was no going backward; I tried this, only to realize at once its impossibility, and the perspiration burst out from every pore, as the full horror of my situation suddenly flashed over me. I must go on, trusting to that thin, unstable cord, balancing myself above the gulf. There was no other way, no retreat, no means of escape. I do not know now how the act was accomplished; it is hardly a memory, except as some wild delirium of sleep haunts one when they awake. Inch by inch I crept, hand encroaching on hand, foot pressing against foot, every slightest movement an inexpressible agony—then I gripped the support of wood once more, and clung to it as with the grasp of death.

I clung there until my mind came

Continued next week.



"And if I Refuse?"  
your curiosity I'll tell you. We've got