

The Million Dollar Mystery

By HAROLD MAC GRATH

Illustrated from Scenes in the Photo Drama of the Same Name by the Thanhouser Film Company

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CHAPTER X.

The Past a Blank.

It was perfectly true that Florence had cast herself into the sea. It had not been an act of despair, however. On the contrary, hope and courage had prompted her to leap. The night was clear, with only a moderate sea running. At the time the great ship was passing the banks, and almost within hail she saw a fishing schooner riding gracefully at anchor. She quite readily believed that if she remained on board the George Washington she was lost. She naturally forgot the marvel of wireless telegraphy. No longer may a man hide at sea.

So, with that quick thought which was a part of her inheritance, she seized the life buoy, climbed the rail and leaped far out. As the great, dark, tossing sea enveloped up to meet her she noted a block of wood bobbing up and down. She tried to avoid it, but could not, and struck it head on. Despite the blow and the shock of the chill water she instinctively clung to the buoy. The wash from the mighty propellers tossed her about, bit her and you, from one swirl to another, like a chip of wood. Then everything grew blank.

Fortunately for her the master of the fishing schooner was at the time standing on his quarterdeck by the wheel, squinting through his glass at the liner and envying the ease and comfort of those on board her. The mate, sitting on the steps and smoking his pipe, saw the man for the moment lean forward suddenly, lower the glass, then raise it again.

"Lord a mighty!"

"What's the matter, cap'n?"

"Take in God's name, come 'ere an' take a peek through this glass. I'm dreamin'!"

The mate jumped and took the glass. "Where away, sir?"

"A pint off th' starboard bow. See somethin' white bobbin' up?"

"Yesir! Looks like some one dropped a bolster 'r a pillow overboard. . . . Cod's whiskers!" he broke off.

"Then I ain't really seen' things," cried the master. "Hi, y' lubbers!" he yelled to the crew. "Lower th' dory. There's a woman in th' water out there. I s'pect her head 'r tail. Look alive! Sharp's th' word! State, you go long."

The crew dropped their tasks and sprang for the davits, and the starboard dory was lowered in shipshape style.

D takes a good bit of seamanship to haul a body out of the sea, into a dancin' bobtald dory, and on one moment it is climbing frantically heavenward and the next heading for the bottomless pit. They were very tender with her. They laid her out in the bottom of the boat, with the life buoy as a pillow, and pulled energetically for the schooner. She was alive, because she breathed, but she did not stir so much as an eyelid. It was a stiff bit of work, too, to haul her aboard without adding to her injuries. The master ordered the men to put her in his own bunk, where he nearly strangled her by forcing raw brandy down her throat.

"Well, she's alive, anyhow."

When Florence finally opened her eyes the gray of dawn lay on the sea, dotted here and there by the schooners of the fleet, which seemed to be hanging in midair, as at the moment there was visible to the eye no horizon.

"Don't seem t' recognize nothin'."

"Mebbe she's got a fever," suggested the mate, rubbing his bony chin.

"Fever nothin'! Not after bein' in th' water half an hour, Mebbe she hit one o' them wooden floats we left. Them dinged fingers keep on crowdin' th' grand old barnes, with a fisherman's hat for the floating hotel. 'Want by without a foot. See 'er, jes' like th' banger's wife goin' t' church on Sunday? A mile a minute; for, or no fog, it's all the same t' them. They ran us down an' never stop. What th' tarantula we goin' to do? She'll haff t' stay aboard till th' run is over. I can't afford t' yank up my mudhook this time o' day."

"Guess she can stand three 'r four days in our company, smellin' oil-clothes, fish, ketchup, an' punk 'blaccs."

"If y' don't life th' kind o' t'bacco I buy my own. I ain't objectin' none."

The mate stepped over to the bunk and gingerly ran his hand over the girl's head. "Cod's whiskers, cap'n, there's a bump as big as a cork on th' back o' her head! She's struck one o' them floatin' rail. Where's th' armic?"

Barnes turned to his locker and rummaged about, finally producing an ancient bottle and some passably clean cloth used frequently for bandages. Sometimes a man grows careless with his knife or got in the way of a pulley block. With blundering kindness the two men boned up the girl's head, and then went about their duties.

For three days Florence evinced not the slightest inclination to leave the bunk. She lay on her back either asleep or with her eyes staring at the beams above her head. She ate just enough to keep her alive; and the



"The Poor Young Thing," murmured Mrs. Barnes.

strong black coffee did nothing more than to make her waken. No one knew what the matter was. There was the bump, now diminished; but that it should leave her in this comatose state vastly puzzled the men. The truth is she had suffered a slight concussion of the brain, and this, stop of all the worry she had had for the last few weeks, was sufficient to cause this blankness of the mind.

The final end was cleaned and packed away in salt, the mudhook raised, and the schooner Betty set her sails for the southwest. Barnes realized that to save the girl she must have a doctor who knew his business. Mrs. Barnes would know how to care for the girl, once she knew what the trouble was. There would be some news in the papers. A young and beautiful woman did not jump from a big Atlantic liner without the newspapers getting hold of the facts.

A fair wind carried the Betty into her harbor, and shortly after Florence was sleeping peacefully in a feather bed, content, it is true, but none the less soft and inviting. In all this time she had not spoken a single word.

"The poor young thing!" murmured the motherly Mrs. Barnes. "What beautiful hair! O, John, I wish you would give up the sea. I hate it. It is terrible. I am always watching you in my mind's eye, in calm weather, in storms. Pieces of wrecks come ashore, and I always wonder over the death and terror look of them."

"Don't y' worry none about me Betty. I never take no chances. Now I'm goin' t' th' village an' bring back th' sawbones. He'll tell us what t' do."

The village doctor shook his grizzled head gravely.

"She's been hurt and shocked at the same time. It will be many days before she comes round to herself. Just let her do as she pleases. Only keep an eye on her so that she doesn't wander off and get lost. I'll watch the newspapers and if I come across anything which bears upon the case I'll notify you."

But he searched the newspapers in vain, for the simple fact that he did not think to glance over the old ones. The village took a good deal of interest in the affair. They gossiped about it and straggled out to the Barnes' cottage to satisfy their curiosity. One thing was certain to their simple minds: some day Barnes would get a great sum of money for his kindness. They had read about such things in the family story paper. She was a rich man's daughter; the ring on the unknown's finger would have fitted out a fleet.

Florence was soon able to walk about. Ordinary conversation she seemed to understand; but whenever the past was broached she would shake her head with frowning eyes. Her main diversion consisted of sitting on the sand dunes and gazing out at sea.

One day a stranger came to town. He said he represented a life insurance company and was up here from Boston to take a little vacation. He sat on the hotel porch that evening, surrounded by an admiring audience. The stranger had been all over the world, so it seemed. He spoke familiarly of St. Petersburg, Vladivostok, Shanghai, as the villagers—some of them—might have spoken of Boston. There were one or two old timers among the audience. They had been to all those parts. The stranger knew what he was talking about. After telling of his many voyages he asked if there was a good bathing beach nearby. He was told that he would find the most suitable spot near Captain Barnes' cottage just outside the village.

"An' say, Mister, soon anythin' in th' papers about a missin' young woman?" asked some one.

"Missin' young woman? What's that?"

The man told the story of Florence's leap into the sea and her subsequent arrival at the cape.

"That's funny," said the stranger,

"I don't recollect readin' about any young woman being lost at sea. But those big liners are always keeping such things under cover. Hoods on the ship, they say, and turns prospective passengers to other lines. It hurts business. What's the young girl look like?"

Florence was described minutely. The stranger peered in his chair and smoked. Finally he spoke.

"She probably was insane. That's the way generally with insane people. They can't see water or look off a tall building without wanting to jump. My business is insurance, and we've got the thing figured pretty close to the ground. They used to get the best of us on the suicide game. A man would take out a large policy today and tomorrow he'd blow his head off, and we'd have to pay his wife. That nowadays a policy is not worth the paper it's written on if a man commits suicide under two years."

"You ain't tryin' to insure anybody in town, are you?"

"Oh, no. No work for me when I'm on my vacation. Well, I'm going to bed, and tomorrow morning I'll go out to Captain Barnes' beach and have a good swim. I'm no sailor, but I like water."

He honestly enjoyed swimming. Early the next morning he was in the water, frolicking about as playfully as a boy. He had all the time in the world. Over his shoulder he saw two women wandering down toward the beach. Deeper he went, farther out. He was a bold swimmer, but that did not prevent a sudden and violent attack of cramps. And it was a rare piece of irony that the poor girl should save the life of that eccentric who, was without pity or mercy. As she saw his face a startled frown marred her brow. But she could not figure out the puzzle. Had she ever seen the man before? She did not know, she could not tell. Why could not she remember? Why must her poor head ache so when she tried to pierce the veil of darkness which surrounded her mentally?

The man thanked her feebly, but not in his heart. When he had sufficiently recovered he returned to the village and sought the railway station, where the Western Union had its office.

"I want to send a code message to my firm. Do you think you can follow it?"

"I can try," said the operator.

The code was really slow; and when the long message was signed it was signed by the name Vron.

The day after the news came that Florence had jumped overboard off the banks, Vron with a dozen other men had started out to comb all the fishing villages along the New England coast. Somewhere along the way he felt confident that he would learn whether the girl was dead or alive. If she was dead then the game was a draw; but if she was alive there was still a fighting chance for the Black Hundred. He had had some idea of remaining in the village and accomplishing the work himself, but after deliberation he concluded that it was important enough for Braine himself to

"Shanghaied!" the reporter murmured. He sat up and ran through his pockets. Not a sou, mark, nor a match coin; and a second glance told him that the clothes he wore were not his own. "They've landed me this time, Shanghaied! What the devil am I doing to do?"

"Eyes hear me!" bawled the attendant voice again.

Norton looked desperately for some weapon of defense. He saw an engineer's spanner on the floor by the bunk across the way, and with an almost physical effort he succeeded in obtaining it. He stood up, his hand behind his back.

"All right me bucks! I'll come down an' get ye!"

A pair of enormous boots began to appear down the companionway, and there gradually rose up from them a man as wide as a church door and as deep as a well.

"Wait a moment," said Norton, griping the spanner. "Let us have a perfect understanding right off the bat."

"We're goin' t' have it, matey. Don't be worry none."

Norton raised the spanner, and dived as he was, faced this scuffing Hercules courageously.

"I've been shanghaied, and you know it. Where are we bound?"

"Copenhagen."

"Well, for a month or more you'll beat us up whenever the opportunity offers. But I merely wish to warn you that if you do you'll find a heap of trouble waiting for you the next time you drop your mudhook in North America."

"Is that so?" said the giant, cying the spanner and the shaking hand that held it aloft.

"It is. I'll take your orders and do the best I can, because you've got the upper hand. But, God is witness, you'll pay for every needless blow you strike. Now what do you want me to do?"

"Lay down that spanner an' come on deck. I'll tell ye what t' do. I was goin' t' shafe th' daylight out o' ye. I t' ye somethin' as a man. Drop the spanner now."

Norton hesitated. As like as a tiger the ball of a man sprang at him and crushed him to the floor, wrenching away the spanner. Then the giant took Norton by the scruff of his neck and banged him up the steps to the deck.

"I ain't goin' t' hurt ye. I had t' show ye that no spanner ever bodied Mike Hanneck. Now, d' know what a cook's galley is?"

"I do," said Norton, breathing hard.

"Well, like there an' start in with peelin' spuds, an' don't waste 'em neither. That'll be all for th' present. Ye were due for a wallop, but I kinda like yer spunk."

So Jim stumbled down to the cook's galley and grimly set to work at the potatoes. It might have been far worse. But here he was, likely to be on the high seas for months, and no way of notifying Jones what had happened. The outlook was anything but cheerful. But a vague hope awoke in his heart. If they were still after him might it not signify that Florence lived?

Meantime Braine had not been idle. According to Vron the girl's memory was in bad shape, so he had not the least doubt of bringing her back to New York without mishap. Once he had her there the game would begin in earnest. He played his cards exceedingly well. Steaming up the little fishing harbor with a handsome

Florence had either been going to or coming from the apartment. And that memorable day of the abduction the princess had been in the dry goods snop.

Vron took a downtown surface car, and Norton took the same. He sat huddled in a corner, never suspecting that Vron was watching him from a corner of his eye. Norton was not keen today. The thought of Florence kept running through his head.

The car stopped and Vron got off. He led Norton a winding course which at length ended at the door of a tenement building. Vron entered. Norton paused, wondering what next to do, now that his man had reached his destination. Well, since he had followed him all this distance he must make an effort to find out who he was and what he was going to do. Cautiously he entered the hallway. As he was about to lay his hand on the newel post of the dilapidated stairs the floor dropped from under his feet and he was precipitated into the cellar.

This tenement belonged to the Black Hundred; it concealed a thousand doors and a hundred traps. Its history was as dark as its hallways.

When Vron and his companion, who had been waiting for him, descended into the cellar they found the reporter insensible. They bound, blindfolded, and gagged him quickly.

"Sanders," said Vron, "you tell Corrigan that I've a sailor for him to catch, and that I want this sailor booked for some-where south of the equator. Tell him to say to the master that this fellow is ugly and disobedient. A tramp freighter, whose captain is a bully. Do you understand me?"

"I got you. But there's no need to go to Corrigan this trip. Hanneck is in port and sails tonight for Norway. That's far enough."

"Hanneck? The very man. Well, Mr. Norton, reporter and amateur detective, I guess we've got you fast enough this time. You may or may not come back alive. Go and bring around a taxi, some one you can trust. I'll dispose the reporter while you're gone."

Long hours afterward Norton opened his aching eyes. He could hardly move, and his head itched awfully. What had happened? What was the meaning of this slow rise and fall of his head? "Shanghaied!"

"Come out o' that now, ye skulkin' rat!" snarled a voice down the companionway.

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yacht in itself would allay any distrust. And he wore a capital disguise, too. Everything went well till he laid his hand on Florence's shoulder. She gave a startled cry and ran over to Barnes, clinging to him wildly.

"No, no!" she cried.

"Now what, my child?" asked the sailor.

She shook her head. Her aversion was inexplicable.

"Come, my dear; can't you see that it is your father?" Braine turned to the captain. "She has been like this for a year. Heaven knows if she'll ever be in her right mind again," sadly. "I was giving her an ocean voyage, with the kindest nurses possible, and yet she jumped overboard. Come, Florence."

The girl wrapped her arms all the tighter around Barnes' neck.

An idea came into the old sailor's head. "Of course, sir, y've got proof that she's your daughter!"

"Proof?" Braine was taken aback.

"Yes, somethin' t' prove that you're her father. I got skinned out of a sleep once because I took a man's word at its face value. Black an' white, an' on paper, save I, hereafter."

"But I never thought of such a thing," protested Braine, beginning to lose his patience. "I can't risk sending to New York for documents. She is my daughter, and you will find it will not pay to take this peculiar stand."

"In black an' white, 'r y' can't have her."

Braine thereupon rushed forward to seize Florence. Barnes swung Florence behind him.

"I guess she'll stay here a leetle longer, sir."

Time was vital, and this obstinacy made Braine furious. He reared again for Florence.

"Clear out o' here, 'r show your authority," growled Barnes.

"She goes with me, or you'll regret it."

All right. But I guess th' law won't be no use. I'm in my rights. There's the door, mister."

"I refuse to go without her!"

Barnes sighed. He was on land a man of peace, but there was a limit to his patience. He seized Braine by the shoulders and hustled him out of the house.

"Bring your proofs, mister, an' nothin' more'll be said, but till y' bring 'em keep away from this cottage."

And, simple-minded sailor that he was, he thought this settled the matter.

That night he kept his ears open for unusual sounds, but he merely wasted his night's rest. Quite naturally, he reckoned that the stranger would make his attempt at night. Indeed, he made it in broad daylight, with Barnes not a hundred yards away, calling a dory whose oars he had sprung aloft. Braine had Florence upon the chartered yacht before the old man realized what had happened. He never saw Florence again, but one day, months later, he read all about her in a newspaper.

Fluently tonight, but she was weak, and so the conquest was easy. Braine was kind enough, now that he had her safe. He talked to her, but she merely stared at the receding coast.

"All right, don't talk if you don't want to. Here," to one of the men, "take her to the cabin and keep her there. She don't you touch her. I'll break you if you do. Put her in the cabin and guard the door at least keep an eye on it. She may try t' get into her head to jump overboard."

Even the temporarily demented are not without a species of cunning. Florence had never seen Braine till he appeared at the harbor cottage. Yet she recalled at the touch of his hand. On the second day out toward New York she found a lot of matches and blithely set fire to her cabin, walked out into the courtyard and thence to the dock. When the fire was discovered it had gained the main roadway to be stopped. The yacht was doomed. They got off in the boats and for half a day drifted helplessly.

Pat's has everything mapped out like a game of chess. You move a pawn, and back goes your bishop, or your knight, or your king; or she lets you almost win a game, and then check-mates you. But there is one thing to be said in her favor—she is not a woman who will sell. It is always giving odds to the innocent.

Mike Hanneck was in the pithouse, looking over his charts, when the look-out in the crow's nest sang out: "Two boats sight off the port bow, sir!" And Hanneck, who was a first-class sailor, although a rough one, shouted down the tube to the engine room. The freighter came to a halt in about ten minutes. The castaways saw that they had been noted, and pulled gallantly at the oars.



"Girl, I Love You Better Than Life," a trick of that Perloff woman, and it succeeded. Girl, girl, I love you better than life!"

"I know it now," she said, and she kissed him. "Has my father appeared yet?"

"No."

"Do you know anything at all about him?"

"No."

"I thought I did. It's all a jumble to me. But beware of the man who brought you here. He is the head of all our troubles; and if he knew I was on board he'd kill me out of hand. I'd have to go."

Braine offered Hanneck \$1,000 to turn back as far as Boston; and he Hanneck had all the time in the world, carrying no perishable goods, he consented. But he never could quite understand what followed. He had put Florence and Braine in the boat and landed them; but when he went down to see if Braine had left anything behind, he found that individual bound and gagged in his bunk.

(Continued Next Saturday.)

The Churches

German Evangelical Lutheran Church.
 Corner of Fifth Street and Central Avenue, in the lower building. Next Sunday service—a service of devotion and prayer will be held Sunday at 10:30—11:30.

First Methodist Episcopal Church.
 Corner Second Street and South Third Street. Service at 10:30. Sunday School at 10:00. Prayer Meeting at 7:30.

St. John's Church.
 Corner of Fifth Street and Central Avenue. Service at 10:30. Sunday School at 10:00. Prayer Meeting at 7:30.

First Congregational Church.
 Corner of Fifth Street and Central Avenue. Service at 10:30. Sunday School at 10:00. Prayer Meeting at 7:30.

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church.
 Corner of Fifth Street and Central Avenue. Service at 10:30. Sunday School at 10:00. Prayer Meeting at 7:30.

Christian Science Society.
 Christian Science service will be held in the Woman's club building at the corner of Seventh Street and Gold Avenue, every Sunday morning at 11 o'clock.

Worshiping service will be at 10:30.
 The public is cordially invited to attend these services.

Immense Convocation Church.
 Sunday School at 10:00. Service at 10:30. Prayer Meeting at 7:30.

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WOMAN IN BAD CONDITION

Restored To Health by Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

Montpelier, Vt.—"We have great faith in your medicine. I was very irregular and was tired and sleepless all the time, would have cold chills, and my hands and feet would frost. My stomach bothered me. I had pain in my side and a bad headache most of the time. Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound has done me lots of good and I now feel fine. I am regular, my stomach is better and my pains have all left me. You can use my name if you like. I am proud of what your medicine has done for me."—Mrs. MARY GANTNER, 21 Ridge St., Montpelier, Vt.



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An Honest Dependable Medicine.
 It must be admitted by every fair-minded, intelligent person, that a medicine could not live and grow in popularity for nearly forty years, and to-day hold a record for thousands upon thousands of actual cures, as has Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, without possessing great virtue and actual worth. Such medicines must be looked upon and termed both standard and dependable by every thinking person.

If you have the slightest doubt that Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound will help you, write to Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Co. (confidential), Lynn, Mass., for advice. Your letter will be opened, read and answered by a woman, and held in strict confidence.

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