



The Crime Cat

By Leslie McFarlane

"THE CRIME CAT" appears in these columns by special permission of the editor of the All-Star Detective Stories, in which magazine the story originally appeared. Leslie McFarlane's mystery tales appear regularly in All-Star Detective Stories.

Chapter II The Cigarette-Case

Death was the only outcome of that dizzy plunge from the sixth storey to the concrete of the court below.

Kelvey, awed and shaken by the swift fate that had overtaken the fugitive, gazed down into the tiny yard at the base of the steep walls. In the radiance of a light at the entrance of the court he saw a sprawling, crumpled shape.

He stepped back onto the landing and hung himself across the window-sill. Roberts, ashen-faced, gulped:

"He—he fell?"

"Slipped as he left the next landing," said Kelvey, grimly. He gestured toward the wall telephone. "You had better telephone to the police."

The manager was moving slowly toward the telephone, like a man in a daze, as Kelvey hurried out of the apartment and made his way toward the elevator. Fortunately, the cage was just descending from the upper floors so he was not kept waiting, and within two minutes he had reached the courtyard.

The clatter on the fire escape, and the terrified scream of the doomed man had aroused many of the tenants. Windows were being raised, excited inquiries were being hurled back and forth from the upper stories and two men had already reached the object on the concrete.

Nothing could be done. The man had been killed instantly, after one swift glance Kelvey would have turned away, as the two other men had done, but his eye caught the glint of light on an object near the base of the wall. He went over and picked it up.

The object was a thin gold cigarette case. It had fallen open and cigarettes were spilled about on the pavement. On the cover of the case he saw a monogram, "AV", neatly engraved.

"I heard him yell," one of the men was saying, excitedly. "I heard him yell, just as I was coming out the door, and I saw him drop. I SAW him. I'll never forget it....."

Others were hastening into the court. A gabbling crowd collected. Kelvey slipped the cigarette case into his pocket. He saw a policeman pushing his way forward among the people.

Kelvey went back into the building, reaching the lobby just as an automobile drew up at the door and disgorged a squad of headquarters men. Roberts, the manager, looking gray and ill, emerged from the elevator.

Inspector Malloy, of the detective bureau, spied Kelvey. The two were not on friendly terms. The memory of a number of cases which Kelvey's independent investigations had solved after Malloy had admitted failure, still rankled, and the inspector had gone out of his way to dub Kelvey a busybody and a theorist.

"Roberts tells me you've been in on this," snapped Malloy. "Not intentionally, inspector," smiled Kelvey, agreeably. "It's your case. I advised Roberts to call you up."

"It'd serve you right if we let you handle it by yourself, all the way. Stick around. I'll want to talk to you."

"At your service," Kelvey answered, cheerfully. "Always glad to help you if I can."

With this parting shot he sauntered over to the switchboard, while Malloy and his men crowded into the elevator with the luckless Roberts.

For the next fifteen minutes the lobby throbbed with activity. Police guarded the building. An immense crowd had gathered outside. Reporters fought for admittance. Out in the courtyard now cleared of outsiders, flashlights flared as headquarters of-

ficials photographed the body of the man who had fallen from the fire escape, and after all formalities had been complied with the crushed form was whisked away to the morgue.

The switchboard operator was driven to desperation by calls from tenants seeking information until a curt order from Malloy, calling from Heath's apartment, bade her respond to none save incoming calls until he gave the word. Grateful for this respite, she leaned back with a sigh while the lights on the board twinkled madly.

"Isn't it terrible?" she said, shakily, as Kelvey leaned across the desk.

"A bad business," he admitted. "I just can't believe Mr. Heath is dead. He was always so nice. So jolly, and good-looking."

"When did you last see him?"

"Just last night. He was going out to a party. He stopped to talk to me for a minute, as he always did. And to think he's dead now!" The little operator dabbed at her eyes with a handkerchief.

"You didn't know he was going away?"

"Why, no! He never even mentioned it, and I'm sure he would have said something about it. I'm only on duty at night, and if he had intended to go away this afternoon he would have said good-bye to me, at least."

"Were there any calls to his apartment tonight? That is, before Mr. Roberts found him?"

"There was a call for him at about half-past six. From a girl. I didn't know then that Mr. Heath had given up his apartment, so I rang him but there was no answer."

"Did you recognize her voice? I mean, had she ever called him before?"

"Not that I remember. Of course, lots of girls used to call him up, so I can't be sure."

"A girl went up to his apartment tonight?"

"Yes, I saw her going into the elevator. She was a little bit of a thing. Cheaply dressed."

"Pretty?"

"Oh, yes—if you like that type! said the operator, patting her blonde hair. "Thin, and hungry-looking, but pretty, in a way."

Kelvey suppressed a smile at this faint praise that damned.

"You didn't know where she was going?"

"No, the elevator boy told me she went into Mr. Heath's apartment."

"What time was that?"

"About eight o'clock."

"Did she stay long?"

"Only a few minutes. When she came down she fairly ran across the lobby."

"Did anyone else go up to the apartment?"

"Wait till I finish telling you about the girl. Right after she had gone up, I was busy with a call, but out of the corner of my eye I saw someone cross the lobby. I hadn't heard anyone come in, and it gave me a bit of a scare when I just barely caught sight of someone disappearing up the stairs."

"A man?"

"Yes, I had only the faintest glimpse of him. From here, you see, the stairs are almost hidden. He was just as silent as a cat, the way he got across the lobby."

"You couldn't describe him?"

The girl shook her head. "I couldn't tell you much about him except that I think he wore a cap, and was rather short."

"Didn't you see him go out again?"

"No. He didn't come down in the elevator and I didn't see anyone come down the stairs. Of course, he may have gone down through one of the other wings."

"Did anyone else go up to Heath's apartment during the evening, that you know of?"

"A young man went up at about nine o'clock. He was in evening dress. He was only upstairs for about five minutes, then he came down again and went out. The boy told me that when he went up in the elevator he got out at the seventh floor and went down the corridor and knocked at Mr. Heath's door."

"What did this chap look like?"

"Oh, he was a swell-looking fellow. Not as handsome as Mr. Keith, but he was tall and fair, and awfully well dressed."

There had been considerable confusion in the lobby while Kelvey talked to the switchboard operator. Detectives and uniformed men were going in and out of the building continuously, tenants desiring to leave were obliged to give their credentials to the officers at the door, the elevator clashed and hummed incessantly. The girl, obedient to instructions, ignored the twinkling little lights on the board, but suddenly one imperative flash aroused her to action.

She answered the call, listened intently for a moment, then looked up at Kelvey.

"They want you upstairs."

"Thank you, miss."

Back in Heath's apartment, Kelvey sauntered in to face a group of detectives who eyed him with a certain amount of hostility, not unmixed with triumph. The body on the sofa was hidden from view beneath a sheet. Roberts, the manager, was huddled in a chair, now utterly unnerved. Inspector Malloy, thumbs in his vest, leaned against the mantel.

"Well, Mr. Kelvey," said Malloy, heavily, "I suppose you'll be able to tell us all about it. Seeing as you were on the ground first and had the jump on all the rest of us, I guess you'll be able to show us up again, eh?"

"No, I'm afraid I can't help you a bit, inspector," returned Kelvey, cheerfully.

"I'm not askin' for help. I just want to know how far you have doped this business out, with all the start you've had on the rest of us."

"I haven't doped it out at all. As a matter of fact, I think it is a very complicated case."

Malloy laughed joviously. "Well, that just shows how much you know about it. This is one case that the police get credit for solving in double-quick time, Mr. Kelvey. Do you know who that guy was that you pushed off the fire escape?"

Kelvey's lips tightened. "I didn't push him off the fire-escape. He was fifteen feet away from me. He slipped on the wet steel."

"Yeah? Well, any statement I give the papers is goin' to have it that you and this guy were out on the fire-escape, and he fell six or seven stories into the courtyard, and the public can draw their own conclusions. Not that it matters very much, only maybe some people will say you should have arrested him and let him have a fair trial. He got what was comin' to him."

"Why?" asked Kelvey, dangerously quiet.

"Because he was a murderer. He killed Heath."

"You think so?"

"Don't you?"

"No."

Malloy chuckled. "I'll tell the reporters that, too. Well, for your own information and so your conscience won't bother you for sendin' him to his death, I'll tell you all about him. His name was Sam Bodansky. He was a crook and he served two terms up the river for robbery with violence. Heath caught him robbing the apartment. They had a fight, and Bodansky shot Heath. He got out the window when Roberts came into the apartment, but he couldn't get to the ground because the fire-escape passes an open window two storeys down, and he would have been seen. He was hidin' there on the fire-escape all the time you and Roberts were in the apartment."

"Very feasible," said Kelvey. "How do you know Bodansky and Heath had a fight?"

"Because the knuckles of Heath's right fist are skinned, and there's a fresh bruise on Bodansky's jaw."

"How do you know Bodansky robbed Heath?"

"Because we found a roll of bills in Bodansky's pocket, and Roberts identifies one of 'em as a bill he had given Heath when he

cashied a cheque for him yesterday. It had a blue pencil mark across it."

"And how do you know Bodansky shot Heath?"

"Because," declared Malloy, triumphantly, "we found the rod in Bodansky's pocket! We found the gun, with one empty shell, and the bullet in Heath's head was fired from it."

(To be continued)

Here and There

(691)

More than two million fingerling salmon and 40,000 trout yearlings were placed in Nova Scotia lakes and streams during 1930 from the fish hatchery at Lake George.

About \$80,000,000 was spent in Canada in 1930 on hydro-electric power development and installations, and it is expected that fully \$300,000,000 will be spent for a similar purpose during the next three years.

Consumption of natural gas in Canada during 1929 for domestic purposes was calculated to be sufficient to displace 640,000 tons of coal. Natural gas is found in abundance in Alberta and some parts of Western Ontario, and the Maritime Provinces.

Province of New Brunswick's representation at Sportsmen's Shows in the United States this year will be larger than ever and new territory will be invaded. Its first exhibit will be at the New England Sportsmen's Show at Boston, February 7-14, and also at the Philadelphia Sportsmen's and Motor Boat Show, February 21-28.

Six thousand pounds of unfrozen white fish from Northern Saskatchewan recently went by Canadian Pacific from Prince Albert to Winnipeg and points beyond. It was carried 150 miles to Prince Albert by aeroplane in one hour and a quarter, a trip that would by ordinary means have taken from eight to eleven days.

When a 22-year-old woman recently fell from the wharf at Pier D, Vancouver, into the dangerous rip tide of Burrard Inlet, William Hillon, assistant chief clerk of the British Columbia Coast Steamships of the Canadian Pacific Railway, without hesitation dived in and after a 20-minute battle in the chill waters succeeded in getting her ashore. The woman will recover.

All Canada from hors d'oeuvres to dessert was represented at the first dinner served to the former Governor-General of Canada, Viscount Willingdon, on Canadian Pacific liner Montclare, which sailed for England recently. Starting with Saint John oysters, it included supreme of Nova Scotia sole, saddle of western lamb, roast Ontario chicken, and bomb maple leaf as a sweet.

Work has started on the building of the British Columbia link of the Trans-Canada Telephone Line. A direct system through the Crow's Nest Pass to Alberta will be provided to replace the present system of routing telephone calls to and from British Columbia across the United States via Seattle. The proposed system will cost \$1,250,000 and will involve some 655 miles of telephone lines, 125 miles of which have already been built.

Marriage at sea has happened before and will likely happen again, but the distinction of being baptized at sea is claimed to be unique and this occurred when two infant children were baptized in mid-Atlantic by Dr. Oliver C. Rankin, Scottish minister aboard Canadian Pacific liner Minnedosa, recently. The mothers and children were coming out to Canada from Great Britain and the minister is giving a course of lectures at McGill University.



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