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THE YELLOW STUB

GREAT NEW MYSTERY SERIAL By Ernest Lynn

Henry Rand, 55, a business man, is found murdered in a cheap hotel in Grafton. Police find a woman's handkerchief and the stub of a yellow theatre ticket.

Janet Rand, his daughter, breaks her engagement with Harry Colvin, because of the "disgrace." Jimmy Rand, his son, goes to Chicago, where the theatre is.

Jimmy meets and falls in love with Mary Lowell. Later he encounters Olga. She faints at hearing police want her for murder.

Olga tells police the stub might have come into possession of a man who "picked her up" two nights before the murder.

That evening Jimmy and Olga see, in an auto, a man they both recognize—she as the man who got the stub, he as one of his attackers.

Chapter XXXIII. "Yes," repeated O'Day, "there was hell to pay when Harry and Marie came back."

"The whole town was up in the air," resumed O'Day. "I can still see them now, the way everybody buzzed about the affair and hung around to see what had happened."

"They held the kids for a while at the town lockup, waitin' for their parents to come after them. When Thaddeus Rand and old Angelo Real got there, Angelo listens for a minute to their story an' then he turns to Thaddeus and demands that Harry marry Marie."

"My girl will have a bad name, he says. 'There's nothin' else to do. 'Thaddeus Rand doesn't say a word. He just looks at Angelo, his face white as a sheet."

"Neither of 'em—Thaddeus or Angelo—understood. The kids hadn't done anything wrong. They were just nuts about each other, so they made up their minds to defy their parents an' get married. They couldn't, an' that's all there was to it."

"But all Angelo could think of was that his daughter had run away with this boy an' they'd been gone for a day an' a half. So in his ignorant way he thought the only way to save his daughter from bein' the laughin' stock of the town was for her to marry Harry Rand."

"An' Thaddeus—he thought it was just a scheme of old Angelo's to marry into the Rand family. 'That was proud old Thaddeus all over. 'He marches Harry home to the drug store, still silent an' white-faced. When he gets him there he goes over an' picks up a shiny stick—he used to sell 'em—an' he says to Harry, 'I told you not to have anything more to do with this girl.'"

"Harry doesn't say a word. He just stands there. Then Thaddeus says, 'What happened. 'Nothin', says Harry. 'You're lyin', says Thaddeus. 'What happened?'"

"Nothin', says Harry, an' my brother, who saw it all from a corner of the drug store where he was hidin', says he looked the old man right in the eye. Real proud, you understand."

"Well, Thaddeus stood there for a while, firin' questions at your father, an' then he accused him of bein' a disgrace to the name of Rand. He went crazy mad, because Harry wouldn't say he was sorry or anything, an' he swung that shiny stick he was holdin' an' gave Harry the most unmerciful beatin' a boy ever had."

"Harry just stood there lookin' at him. He didn't say a word, an' he didn't try to get out of the way. He just stood there an' took it. 'God!' Jimmy breathed. 'It was terrible, Rand. Finally Harry just fell to the floor, an' my brother, sick at the stomach at the awful sight, ran out an' grabbed the stick out of Thaddeus Rand's hand."

"Thaddeus takes a look at your father lyin' there on the floor an' he says to him, 'Get out of my house an' don't come back.' Then he walked out of the back of the store."

"My brother had to pick Harry up. He had fainted. An' for several days after that he couldn't walk. The blow that had knocked him to the floor was a crack on the knee that was terrible. It was enough to cripple him for life."

"I know," said Jimmy. "My father's left leg was stiff. He limped when he walked. But he never did tell us how he got it. 'Well, it must have been that awful beatin'. My brother took him home to our house, where we had the doctor for him. He was with us for four days, with never a word from his father. Then he left town, after thankin' my mother, an' not a one of us ever saw him again."

O'Day sighed heavily. "It was a rotten shame," he growled. "But nobody could blame Harry. The lad had spirit. He couldn't go back after what Thaddeus had said. The old man simply didn't understand him."

"And Angelo Real? What did he do?" "Oh, Angelo was all right. He had one of these hot tempers that flared up quick an' died down just as sudden. He forgave Marie right away. He even went around to tell Thaddeus that he didn't mean what he had said about the kids marryin'. Thaddeus didn't speak to him."

"Well, now comes the strange part of the story. I think at last he came to realize what he had done an' he was sorry for it, although he'd never admit it to a soul. 'The whole town turned against him. You see everybody was in sympathy with the son. He hung around his store, pale an' silent. Everybody knew he was waitin' for Harry to come back, or maybe for a letter from him. But none ever came to the postoffice. The postmaster had his eyes open—you can be sure of that."

"Thaddeus must have remained in Durbin for another six months. Finally it got too much for him. He could feel the town's hostility on every side of him. People refused to come to his store. They wouldn't speak to him when they saw him on the street. If you've ever lived in a small town, Rand you'll know what a terrible thing it is to be boycotted like that."

"Finally he found a man who was willin' to buy his drug store. He opened up a little to him an' told him what a fool he had been—that he had learned a great lesson. He said he was convinced that his unreasonable anger had lost his son to him forever. 'Everybody's against me,' he says, 'an' I don't blame them, I'm goin' away where nobody knows me. I'm not fit to bear the name of Rand any more.'"

"You see, remorse finally got him. As soon as he had sold his business he left town. But first he went around to call on old Angelo Real. 'I'm sorry,' he says to Angelo, 'for what I said to you. I hope you'll forgive me.'"

"So Angelo shook hands with him. Thaddeus Rand left town that night an', just like your father, he dropped completely out of sight, as far as the folks in Durbin were concerned."

"And that's all?" Jimmy's face was still very white. "That's all, lad. Nobody ever heard a word from either one of them. Your father was proud, too."

"Yes, he was. 'Poor dad.' Jimmy stood up. "And Marie—Real? What became of her?" "Oh, Marie. You see, old Angelo had ambitions for her to become an opera singer. He spent money on her voice, an' she did have a pretty good one. She graduated from high school an' then she went away to take vocal lessons somewhere. I think she did go on the stage, or become a concert singer or something. Nobody got to know very much about it, because Angelo moved away shortly after she graduated from high school."

Jimmy glanced at his watch. "Good Lord, I didn't know it was so late. It's after eleven. We've been talking here for three hours."

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I'm sorry, keeping you like this. "Why? You know I'm a night owl anyway." "Well, thank you. You've told me more about my father than I knew myself. I think I can understand why he was always silent about his boyhood days. . . . The recollection of them must have been bitter."

Jimmy stuck out his hand. "Good night, lieutenant. You've been very kind."

"Good night, lad." Jimmy stepped out of O'Day's house and into a cold, wind-driven rain. He had only a short time to wait for a street car, which carried him to a stop just two blocks from his rooming house.

Twice on the walk home from the car he stopped nervously and looked back. He could have sworn that

he had heard someone following him. He had the same sensation of being watched that he had experienced the night he was attacked on the very corner he was now passing.

He listened, but all he heard was the howling of the wind. The thought of the anonymous warnings he had received again flashed through his mind. There was the last one, especially, that had threatened his life unless he left town within three days.

But as he mounted the steps of the porch he put it all down to his imagination. He went up the stairs to his room. A light was burning; he could see it shining from the crack under the door, and he thought it strange.

He opened the door. There, sitting very comfortably in the easiest chair, his legs draped over the arm, was Barry Colvin.

Barry laughed. "Your nerves are getting bad, Jim. I've been here all evening. Had a heck of a time persuading your landlady to let me in. Finally had to show her one of your letters. She seemed pretty suspicious."

"What's on your mind, Barry? Why did you come? Anything wrong at home?" "News from the front, Jim." Then, his tone getting more serious, "here's something that's just come to light. It belonged to your father."

He fumbled in his pocket. "Have you ever seen it before, Jim?" In his outstretched hand Barry Colvin held a ring. (To Be Continued).

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