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TOD CLAYMORE *and the*

MYSTERY AT THE
MARDI-GRAS



FROM THE STORY "APPOINTMENT IN NEW ORLEANS," BY TOD CLAYMORE

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TOD CLAYMORE *and the*

MYSTERY AT THE MARDI-GRAS

FROM THE STORY
**"APPOINTMENT
IN NEW ORLEANS"**

MY NAME IS TOD CLAYMORE. THIS IS AN ADVENTURE
THAT HAPPENED TO ME WHEN I WENT TO NEW ORLEANS
TO VISIT A VERY RICH FRIEND NAMED LOUIS CUREL.

LOUIS WAS A VERY RICH MAN INDEED,
AS A MATTER OF FACT HE OWNED THE BOAT THAT
I WAS TRAVELLING IN.

ALSO ABOARD WAS POPPY LALEHAM, SHE, ALSO,
WAS GOING TO STAY WITH THE CURELS, WHOM SHE
HAD KNOWN FOR ABOUT THIRTY YEARS.

POPPY AND I WERE DISCUSSING FELLOW PASSENGERS...



THEN THERE'S
THAT LAWYER FELLOW,
SWENSON. ALWAYS
HANGING AROUND THAT
FINNISH GIRL.
TEMMY WHATS—
HER NAME...

TAIMI LANNER,
SHE'S RATHER,
NICE....

BUT I DIDN'T GET ANY FURTHER, FOR AT THAT MOMENT
THE CABIN DOOR CRASHED OPEN AND SWENSON STAGGERED IN.



CL-CLAYMORE!
I MUS'-MUS' SPEAK-
CLAYMORE--!

TOD! IT'S
SWENSON!
HE'S DRUNK--

THE NEXT SECOND SWENSON THUDDED DOWN,
CRACKING HIS HEAD ON THE CUPBOARD AS
HE FELL...

WHAT'S HE
SAYING, TOD?

QUIET, POPPY,
QUIET!



CLAYMORE--
I--YOU MUST--
L-LOOK AFTER
TAIMI! SH-SHE'LL
NEED YOUR HELP--

SWENSON SAID NO MORE. HE WAS DEAD.

WHAT DID HE MEAN
'LOOK AFTER TAIMI'?

I DON'T
KNOW, BUT
I DON'T LIKE
IT. POPPY.





GAINS WAS A NASTY PIECE OF WORK. I HAD HEARD THAT HE WAS A BIG SHOT GAMBLER IN NEW ORLEANS, AND THAT HE HAD WAYS OF GETTING RID OF PEOPLE HE DIDN'T LIKE. I WHISPERED THIS TO TAIMI.



TAIMI LOOKED AT ME. I SAW HER CLEAR BLUE EYES VEIL THEMSELVES AS IF SHE WERE CUTTING HERSELF OFF FROM ME AND EVERYONE ELSE.



DURING THAT DAY I GRADUALLY DISCOVERED WHY TAIMI WAS SO RESERVED. AS A MEMBER OF THE FINNISH UNDERGROUND DURING THE WAR SHE HAD BEEN CAPTURED AND BRUTALLY INTERROGATED BY THE GESTAPO.

SHE'D NEVER FORGOTTEN IT. NOW SHE WAS GOING TO NEW ORLEANS TO SEE FOR THE FIRST TIME FOR TEN YEARS A YOUNG AMERICAN SHE HAD MARRIED SHORTLY AFTER THE LIBERATION.



AND WHO IS YOUR HUSBAND?

HIS NAME'S CUREL, PAUL CUREL!



ABOUT TEN MONTHS AGO PAUL HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN A PLANE ACCIDENT. ALL THIS TIME HE'D CLUNG TO LIFE, BUT HE WASN'T EXPECTED TO LIVE LONG NOW. OBVIOUSLY TAIMI KNEW NOTHING OF THIS.

SO YOU KNOW THE CURELS THEN?

YES. BUT I'D NOT REALISED PAUL WAS MARRIED. BUT WHY HAVEN'T YOU SEEN HIM FOR ALL THIS TIME?

BECAUSE MRS. CUREL - PAUL'S MOTHER - IS TRYING TO KEEP US APART. SHE SAYS I NEVER MARRIED HIM. BUT I HAVE PROOF - LETTERS AND MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE. SHE CAN'T KEEP ME FROM HIM. I LOVE HIM!

I BEGAN TO FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE. AFTER ALL, THE CURELS WERE MY FRIENDS. JUST THEN LEE JOHNSTON, THE SHIP'S THIRD OFFICER INTERRUPTED. I'D NOTICED HE RATHER LIKED TAIMI.

THAT'S ENOUGH OF THAT, LIMEY. YOU'VE GOT NO CALL ASKING THIS GAL ALL THESE QUESTIONS. LEAVE HER ALONE - GET ME?

WELL? IT'S SIR. GALAHAD TO THE RESCUE!

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF OUR ARGUMENT, TAIMI SLIPPED OFF...

LIKE I SAID, LIMEY. LEAVE HER ALONE AND I'LL LEAVE YOU ALONE!

WELL, YOU'VE CERTAINLY SCARED HER OFF WITH YOUR RESCUE ACT. SATISFIED?

LATER I WAS
THINKING OVER
THE STRANGE EVENTS
OF THE DAY.....

I'VE GOT
AN UNCANNY
FEELING THIS
BUSINESS OF TAJMI
LANNER IS ONLY
JUST STARTING.
THOUGH WHERE
I COME IN I CAN'T
SEE--

I SOON FOUND OUT! A MOMENT LATER
I SUDDENLY FELT MY LEGS BEING GRIPPED,
LIFTED AND

HE-LP!

I HIT THE WATER WITH A JAR. I SURFACED
SPUTTERING--TO REALISE WITH HORROR THAT
SOMEONE HAD TRIED TO MURDER ME!

**MAN OVERBOARD!
AWAY LIFEBOAT!**

**HE-LP!
HE-LP!**

SOMEONE ON WATCH HAD OBVIOUSLY BEEN KEEPING A GOOD LOOKOUT. IF THEY HADN'T I WOULD SURELY HAVE DROWNED.



O.K., PAL.
WE'VE GOT
YOU!

AM I GLAD
TO SEE YOU
FELLOWS! PHEW!

A FEW MINUTES LATER I WAS SEATED IN THE CAPTAIN'S CABIN SIPPING A TOT OF RUM.

YOU TINK US SAILDRS GOT NUTTIN' ELSE
TO DO BUT PICK UP PASSENGERS WHO
AIN'T GOT DE SENSE NOT TO FALL
OVERBOARD?



WHO SAID
I FELL
OVERBOARD?

YOU MEAN YOU
WAS PUSHED?

OF COURSE! AND IF I CAN
FIND OUT WHO — BUT WHO
GAVE THE ALARM?

MISDER JOHNSTON,
THE T'IRD
MATE.





PRETENDING TO BE ASLEEP, I WATCHED
TAIMI...

SHE'S SEARCHING
MY LUGGAGE. WHAT
ON EARTH IS ALL
THIS ?



TAIMI EXAMINED SOME ENVELOPES BUT
REPLACED THEM. OBVIOUSLY SHE HADN'T
FOUND WHAT SHE WAS LOOKING FOR.
SHE CLOSED THE CASE AND WENT OUT.

WELL, I'LL BE -- ? SHE OBVIOUSLY
THOUGHT I HAD SOMETHING SHE
WANTED. BUT WHAT WAS IT ?



TAIMI SEEMED TO AVOID ME
FOR THE NEXT FEW DAYS, SO
I DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE TO
TALK TO HER BEFORE WE
DOCKED IN NEW ORLEANS.

SO THIS IS
NEW ORLEANS, EH ?
AND, WOW ! ISN'T IT
HOT, POPPY !

HMM ! I COULD
DO WITH A COOL
DRINK, TOO !





WE WALKED QUICKLY TO THE CUSTOMS BENCH TO FIND LOUIS CUREL STANDING GUARD OVER MY HEAVIER LUGGAGE. HE SHOOK HANDS WITH US AND THEN TURNED TO A CUSTOMS OFFICIAL.

OH, JACKSON. MR. CLAYMORE AND MISS LALEHAM ARE MY GUESTS. I'LL VOUCH FOR THEM.

VERY WELL, MR. CUREL. THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME.



THERE IN A SMALL WAY I HAD MY FIRST TASTE OF THE CUREL FAMILY'S POWER. AS WE TURNED TO LEAVE I NOTICED TAIMI HAD ALSO BEEN MET.



THAT WAS THE
LAST I WAS TO SEE
OF TAMI FOR A
WHILE. AND NOT
MANY MINUTES
LATER WE HAD
ARRIVED AT THE
PALATIAL CUREL
HOME . . .

WHAT A
WONDERFUL
HOUSE, LOUIS.

GLAD YOU LIKE IT,
TOD, MY SISTER-IN-LAW,
GRACE CUREL IS ALWAYS
TRYING TO GET ME TO
SELL IT. BUT I DON'T
THINK I EVER SHALL.

THE BUTLER SHOWED ME TO MY ROOM.

AFTER A SHOWER AND A CHANGE,
I WANDERED AROUND THE HOUSE,
AS LOUIS HAD GONE TO LOOK INTO
THE SWENSON AFFAIR.

OH! I'M
SORRY--

YOU'RE
TOD-- COME
RIGHT IN!

I HAD OFTEN HEARD ABOUT FRANCINE DE
SARAM, LOUIS' NIECE.

I'M NOT
GOING TO
BITE YOU.
COME HERE
AND HAVE
SOME COFFEE.

I-ER-OH-
ER- YES,
COFFEE!

SHE LAUGHED AT MY SPEECHLESSNESS. IT WAS A TINKLING LAUGH. THEN SHE BEGAN TO TALK ABOUT TAIMI.

TOD, YOU MUST HAVE MET THAT - THAT ADVENTRESS ON THE BOAT. TELL ME ABOUT HER, WILL YOU?

YOU MEAN TAIMI LANNER? BUT WHY CALL HER AN ADVENTRESS. ALL SHE WANTS IS TO BE WITH HER HUSBAND.



PAUL WOULD NEVER HAVE MARRIED WITHOUT TELLING HIS MOTHER, MY AUNT GRACE. WHY DID SHE HAVE TO WAIT TEN MONTHS AFTER HIS ACCIDENT, TO MAKE HER CLAIM - AND THROUGH A NIGHT SPOT ENTERTAINER AND A CROOK LAWYER. SHE'S JUST AFTER PAUL'S MONEY, THAT'S WHY!



WHO'S THE NIGHT SPOT ENTERTAINER?

RONNIE MARVIN FROM THE SEVEN DWARFS CLUB. ED FETTINGER'S THE LAWYER AND THEY'RE BOTH TIED UP WITH A CROOK CALLED ELMER GAINS.

YOU KNOW PAUL'S GOING TO DIE, TOD, DON'T YOU? IT'S HORRIBLE. MARVIN CALLED TO SEE AUNT GRACE RECENTLY TO TELL HER ABOUT THIS LANNER GIRL. MARVIN KNEW PAUL DURING THE WAR IN EUROPE.

BUT UNTIL HE CAME TO SEE AUNT GRACE WE'D NEVER HEARD OF HIM OR TAIMI LANNER.



IT WAS OBVIOUS FRANCINE HATED TAMI WITHOUT EVER HAVING MET HER. I SOON HAD ANOTHER VISITOR... THE BUTLER ANNOUNCED MRS. GRACE CUREL...

AH, MR. CLAYMORE. I'M SO GLAD TO MEET YOU AT LAST.



SOMEHOW I TOOK AN IMMEDIATE DISLIKE TO MRS. CUREL. HOW DIFFERENT FRANCINE WAS TO HER. IT SEEMED ODD THEY WERE RELATED.

YOU KNOW, I FEEL RATHER SORRY FOR THAT GIRL TAMI LANNER. BUT SHE CAN'T BE PAUL'S WIFE. SHE'S JUST HATCHED THIS PLOT TO GET HIS MONEY.



I HAD HEARD THAT SAME PHRASE ONLY A FEW MINUTES BEFORE - FROM FRANCINE. I COULD SEE ALREADY WHAT GREAT POWER GRACE CUREL WIELDED OVER THE CUREL FAMILY...



OF COURSE I SHALL HAVE A TALK WITH HER AND I'M SURE SHE'LL GIVE UP THE WHOLE IDEA. BUT, IF SHE DOESN'T, SHE WILL HAVE TO BE DEALT WITH DRASTICALLY. I'D LIKE TO BE REASONABLE THOUGH--

SHE WENT ON FOR SOME TIME.
BUT AT LAST SHE LEFT, SAYING
SHE HAD TO SEE ABOUT THE
ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE FANCY
DRESS BALL NEXT DAY.
I SAT WITH POPPY WAITING
FOR LOUIS TO COME BACK...

YOU KNOW, TOD, YOU'RE GOING
TO HAVE TO TELL THE POLICE
ABOUT SWENSON'S
MURDER. HAVE YOU
THOUGHT WHAT
YOU'RE GOING
TO SAY?

WHAT CAN I SAY
EXCEPT WHAT I SAW.
IT'S ONLY A GUESS
HE WAS MURDERED
ANYWAY.

BEFORE WE COULD GO ON, LOUIS RETURNED.
ONE GLANCE WAS ENOUGH TO TELL ME THE
WORST I HAD GUESSED WAS TRUE.

WELL,
LOUIS?

THIS BUSINESS
HAS TAKEN A NASTY
TURN. SWENSON WAS
MURDERED - POISONED
WITH OPIUM.

SO THEY HADN'T BURIED SWENSON AT SEA
AFTER ALL / CAPTAIN LUNDSTROM MUST
HAVE HAD SECOND THOUGHTS. . . .

LT. MICHAEL FLYNN OF
THE HOMICIDE WOULD LIKE
TO SPEAK TO YOU, TOD.
I SUGGESTED HE COME
ROUND IN THE MORNING.

RIGHT, I'LL BE READY.
MEANTIME I THINK I'LL TAKE
A DRIVE ROUND THE TOWN,
IF YOU DON'T MIND.



MY THOUGHTS WERE WHIRLING MADLY AS I DROVE OUT IN THE CAR LOUIS HAD LOANED ME. MY MIND WAS FULL OF THE MYSTERY I HAD BECOME INVOLVED IN.

SUDDENLY A FLASHING NEON SIGN CAUGHT MY EYE. IT READ SEVEN DWARFS CLUB, THAT RANG A BELL. FRANCINE DE SARAH HAD MENTIONED A NIGHT SPOT ENTERTAINER, NAMED RONNIE MARVIN — AND THAT WAS WHERE MARVIN WORKED.

I PARKED THE CAR AND WALKED BACK TO THE PLACE.

THAT MUST BE
RONNIE MARVIN SINGING
NOW. HE'S PROBABLY BROUGHT
TAMI HERE TO HIDE UP FOR
A WHILE.



THERE WAS CERTAINLY NOTHING TO COMMEND THE PLACE TO ME. BUT HAVING SEEN IT, I PREPARED TO GO. BUT MARVIN SPOTTED ME AND CAME TO THE EDGE OF THE STAGE.

DON'T GO RIGHT IN
THE MIDDLE OF MY ACT,
SIR. WE NEED YOUR
MONEY. SIT DOWN AGAIN
AND HAVE A DRINK ON
THE HOUSE.



I LIKED THE WAY HE BROUGHT THAT OFF THE CUFF. SO I STAYED. BUT IMMEDIATELY HIS ACT WAS OVER, I MOVED OUT . . .



MY FIRST WARNING OF DANGER WAS A MENACING VOICE BEHIND ME . . .



WHAT COULD I DO ?
I LET THEM GUIDE
ME TO THE REAR
OF THE CLUB . . .



THEY LED ME INTO WHAT APPEARED TO BE
RONNIE MARVIN'S DRESSING ROOM.
THE TALLER OF THE TWO WENT OUT OF THE
ROOM LEAVING THE OTHER ON GUARD.

SIT DOWN
AND DON'T
YAP!

WHO D'YOU THINK
YOU'RE BOSSING AROUND?



SHORTY THRUST HIS FACE TO WITHIN
AN INCH OF MINE . . .

ONE MORE
SQUAWK OUTA
YOU --



THIS WAS MY
CHANCE AND
I TOOK IT!

UUUGH!

TAKE THAT,
OLD SON!



THE MAN CRASHED TO THE FLOOR, OUT FOR THE COUNT. I QUICKLY RETRIEVED HIS GUN FROM WHERE IT HAD FALLEN...

I THINK I CAN USE THIS PIECE OF ARTILLERY. IT MIGHT COME IN HANDY.



QUICKLY I SLIPPED OUT OF THE ROOM AND DOWN SOME STAIRS. AT THE BOTTOM WHO SHOULD I RUN INTO BUT TAIMI LANNER.

YOU! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?



VISITING. SHALL WE GO INTO THAT ROOM. I WANT A WORD WITH YOU, YOUNG LADY!

TAIMI LOOKED AT ME DOUBTFULLY, THEN WITH BARELY ANOTHER GLANCE TURNED, AND WENT BACK INTO THE OFFICE. I FOLLOWED.

THIS IS THE FIRST CHANCE I'VE HAD OF ASKING YOU SOMETHING.

WHAT IS IT?





MARVIN EXPLAINED THAT HE HAD THOUGHT I WAS A SPY HIRED BY THE CURELS.

YOU KNEW PAUL CUREL IN EUROPE DIDN'T YOU ?

I WITNESSED HIM AND TAIMI GETTING MARRIED. WHEN PAUL CAME BACK HERE, MRS. CUREL STOPPED ALL TAIMI'S LETTERS REACHING HIM. THEN TAIMI WROTE ME, SO I WENT ALONG AND SAW MRS. CUREL, BUT SHE SHOWED ME THE DOOR. I GOT MAD AND SENT TAIMI THE FARE TO COME TO NEW ORLEANS.

ALL VERY INTERESTING, BUT I STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT TAIMI WAS AFTER WHEN SHE SEARCHED MY CABIN...

A LETTER PAUL WROTE ME BEFORE HIS ACCIDENT, AND A CERTIFICATE OF OUR MARRIAGE. THEY WERE STOLEN FROM ME AFTER MR. SWENSON DIED.

SUDDENLY SOMETHING CLICKED. WHOEVER KILLED SWENSON KNEW HE'D GONE TO EUROPE TO INVESTIGATE TAIMI'S CLAIM TO PAUL. THINKING SWENSON HAD THOSE IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS OF TAIMI'S, HE KILLED THE LAWYER TO GET THEM. THAT MUST BE IT!

HMM? THE MAN WHO KILLED SWENSON FOR THOSE PAPERS ALSO PUSHED ME OVERBOARD THINKING I KNEW TOO MUCH. NOW WHO ON BOARD—WAIT A MINUTE! ANYONE KNOW A GUY CALLED ELMER GAINS?

ELMER GAINS WAS ON THE BOAT? HE'S A DANGEROUS GUY. WHAT'S HE GOT TO DO WITH ALL THIS?

MARVIN PUT IT
IN A NUTSHELL..
WHAT HAD
ELMER GAINS
GOT TO DO
WITH IT?

NEXT MORNING
I DISCUSSED
DEVELOPMENTS
WITH POPPY.

YOU KNOW,
TOD, YOU'RE GOING
TO BE UNPOPULAR
IN THIS ROUSE
SHORTLY. YOU'RE
ON TAIMI'S SIDE,
AREN'T YOU?

YES,
AND IT'S LANDED
ME IN THE MIDDLE
OF A FIRST-CLASS
MYSTERY.

THEN POPPY TOLD ME THAT LEE JOHNSTON
HAD 'PHONED. HE WANTED ME TO MEET HIM
AT 12-15 AT A BAR CALLED "LA LOUSANNE."

JUST THEN, THE BUTLER BROUGHT ME A
MESSAGE . . .

THERE'S A
MISS BROWN WISHING
TO SPEAK TO YOU ON
THE 'PHONE, SIR.

BROWN?
I DON'T KNOW
ANY MISS BROWN--

HUH!

WITH A GLARE AT POPPY I WENT OUT TO THE
'PHONE IN THE HALL. WHEN I ANSWERED
THE 'PHONE I RECOGNIZED TAIMI'S VOICE
AT ONCE . . .

OH, IT'S YOU!
— I WONDERED WHO
ON EARTH IT WAS.

TOD — PLEASE
MEET ME SOMEWHERE
ABOUT 12. I MUST
SPEAK TO YOU.

I COULD COMBINE MEETING
TAIMI AND MEETING LEE AT
THE LA LOUSANNE SO I
ARRANGED IT THAT WAY.
I WAS THERE PUNCTUALLY
AT TWELVE AND TAIMI SOON
ARRIVED.

WELL,
TAIMI,
WHAT IS IT?

I WANT TO SEE PAUL-- I'M
NOT WORRIED ABOUT THE
MONEY. WILL YOU-- AS A
FRIEND OF THE CURELS SAY
THAT IF I CAN SEE PAUL,
THEY CAN KEEP ALL THEIR
MONEY? PLEASE,
TOD!

I CAN'T SAY I LIKED THE IDEA OF TELLING
LOUIS WHAT TAIMI THOUGHT HE COULD DO
WITH HIS MONEY. BUT JUST AT THAT
MOMENT LEE CAME IN.

HI, TOD. WELL,
TAIMI, THIS IS A
PLEASURE. DIDN'T
EXPECT TO SEE
YOU AGAIN.

H-HALLO, LEE
IT IS NICE TO
SEE YOU.

TAIMI-- LEE'S
ON OUR SIDE. TELL
HIM THE WHOLE
STORY, TOD, EH?

TAIMI HESITATED THEN AGREED. SHE TOLD
HOW SHE HAD MET PAUL IN GERMANY
WHERE SHE WAS A NURSE, AND HOW SHE
HAD MARRIED HIM SECRETLY.
SHE TOLD HIM HOW MRS. CUREL HAD
STOPPED HER LETTERS TO PAUL.

I'VE ONLY JUST HEARD
ABOUT PAUL'S ACCIDENT,
THOUGH. IF THAT HADN'T
HAPPENED, HIS MOTHER
COULD NEVER HAVE
KEPT US APART.



HMM. IT'S A
ROTTEN BUSINESS.
BUT THAT DRAGON,
MRS. CUREL IS A
MIGHTY POWERFUL
WOMAN AROUND
HERE.

I KNOW.
BUT NOW I MUST
GO. TOD, PLEASE
REMEMBER WHAT
I ASKED.



THEN TAIMI LEFT.

TELL ME
WHAT YOU KNOW
OF THE CURELS,
LEE.

LOUIS IS ALL
RIGHT. BUT THE
REST - THEY'RE JUST
CURELS. PLENTY OF
MONEY. WHEN OLD JOHN
DIED LAST YEAR HE LEFT
SOME MILLIONS. PAUL'S HIS
SON, SO HE INHERITS.
IF PAUL DIES, AND TAIMI'S
HIS WIFE, SHE GETS A QUARTER
- THAT'S THE LAW IN THIS STATE.
IF SHE IS NOT - MRS. GRACE
CUREL GETS THE LOT!



SO GRACE CUREL GETS
THE LOT. THAT'S INTERESTING.
BUT ELMER GAINS FIGURES
IN IT SOMEWHERE, LEE.

GAINS IS A
BIG TIME GAMBLER
AND RACKETEER.
HE'S GOT PLENTY OF
MONEY, AND HE'D LIKE TO BE
IN THE SMART SET - BUT HE'S
THE WRONG TYPE OF GUY.



HE'S GOT SOCIAL AMBITIONS LIKE MRS. CUREL HAS HE ? I WONDER IF HE KNOWS HER . THERE MIGHT BE A CONNECTION !

I LEFT LEE THINKING THAT ONE OUT , TO PREPARE FOR THE KREWE BALL , A BIG SOCIAL EVENT , ONE OF MANY LEADING UP TO THE GREAT MARDI GRAS CELEBRATIONS . FRANCINE WAS AT THE BALL , LOOKING LOVELIER THAN EVER , BUT DECIDEDLY FRIGID TOWARDS ME .



I TRUST YOU ENJOYED YOUR LUNCHTIME TETE A TETE - WITH THAT WOMAN ?

SO THAT'S IT ! HER NAME'S TAIMI LANNER BY THE WAY . STOP CALLING HER 'THAT WOMAN' . HOW DID YOU KNOW - AUNT GRACE TELL YOU ?



FRANCINE STARED AT ME AND THEN SNAPPED THAT SHE WAS. WE WENT IN HER CAR TO THE SEVEN DWARFS.

TAIMI JOINED US AT OUR TABLE.



AT ONCE I COULD SEE MY IDEA OF CONVERTING FRANCINE TO OUR SIDE BY INTRODUCING HER TO TAIMI WAS A FLOP.



IT WAS JUST THEN
THAT A LARGE, ONLY
MAN APPROACHED.
AS SHE SPOTTED HIM,
FRANCINE STOOD UP
AND LEFT HURRIEDLY!

I'M GOING,
TOD. YOU STAY
HERE WITH YOUR
FRIENDS.



BEFORE I COULD STOP HER SHE WAS GONE.

WHO ARE YOU?
WHAT DO YOU WANT?

NAME'S FETTINGER,
TAIMI'S LAWYER.
MR. CLAYMORE LOOKS
LIKE MISS DE SARAH DIDN'T
WANT TO MEET ME,
HUH?



I'VE SUGGESTED TAIMI
WRITES A LETTER OFFERING
TO GIVE UP HER CLAIM TO
PAUL CUREL AND LEAVE THE
COUNTRY IN EXCHANGE FOR
\$ 200,000.

BUT THAT LETTER
WOULD AMOUNT TO
BLACKMAIL.



FETTINGER WENT ON TO SAY
THAT IF TAIMI DIDN'T DO THIS,
SHE'D PROBABLY BE CHARGED
WITH SWENSON'S MURDER.

WHOEVER WAS BEHIND ALL
THIS WOULD STOP AT NOTHING
TO GET TAIMI'S MONEY.

SUDDENLY RONNIE MARVIN PUT IN AN APPEARANCE . . .

I HEARD YOU'VE BEEN TALKING TO ELMER GAINS, FETTINGER!

I CAN'T AFFORD TO CROSS ELMER GAINS, PAL. I WANT TO STAY IN BUSINESS.

SO FETTINGER WAS MIXED UP WITH GAINS, TOO.

IT WAS CLEAR THEN THAT GAINS WOULD SOON KNOW ABOUT FRANCINE'S VISIT TO TAIMI. I WONDERED JUST WHAT HE'D DO ABOUT IT.

I WOULDN'T HAVE BROUGHT MISS DE SARAM IF I THOUGHT GAINS WAS GOING TO COME INTO IT!

THEN I LEFT . . .



WHAT CAME NEXT HAPPENED VERY SWIFTLY. THE TAXI HAD JUST DRAWN UP AT THE KERB WHEN . . .

WHAT THE --
-- UUGH!



IT FELT AS THOUGH I HAD WALKED INTO A BUS AS I STAGGERED BACK FROM THE TAXI . . .



THE BEATING-UP WENT ON MERCILESSLY. I WAS POWERLESS AGAINST ALL THESE THUGS . . .



AS I CRUMPLED BACK INTO THE TAXI, I SUDDENLY BECAME AWARE OF SOMEONE STANDING CLOSE TO ME - BUT NOT HITTING ME. IT WAS RONNIE MARVIN...

STAY WHERE YOU ARE, CLAYMORE AND YOU'LL BE O.K.

AAGH!



NEXT THING I KNEW, MARVIN WAS BUNDLING ME INTO THE CAB. THEN WE DROVE OFF - FAST.

THAT WAS A HINT, CLAYMORE. ELMER GAINS MUST BE PRETTY SCARED OF YOU TO PAY YOU THIS AMOUNT OF ATTENTION!



RONNIE MARVIN TOOK ME HOME. IN MY ROOM I EXAMINED THE SHINER I'D COLLECTED.



I'M GOING TO HAVE A LOT OF EXPLAINING TO DO TO LOUIS TOMORROW - WHAT WITH THIS BLACK EYE AND SIDING WITH TAIMI. OH, HECK! WHY DOES EVERYTHING HAPPEN TO ME?



I WAS RIGHT. EVEN AS I SAT DOWN TO BREAKFAST NEXT MORNING THE BUTLER TOLD ME LOUIS WOULD LIKE TO SEE ME.

I WANT TO TALK TO YOU, CLAYMORE, TO BEGIN WITH, WHY DID YOU TAKE MY NIECE FRANCINE TO THE 'SEVEN DWARFS' LAST NIGHT?

I WANTED HER TO MEET TAIMI LANNER, TO TRY TO CONVINCE SOMEONE IN YOUR FAMILY THAT TAIMI'S NOT JUST AN ADVENTRESS.



SHE'S MADE THIS CLAIM TO HAVE MARRIED PAUL, BUT GRACE TELLS ME SHE HAS POOR SWENSON'S ASSURANCE THERE'S NO TRUTH IN IT.

ALL SHE WANTS IS PAUL. AND NOW SHE LOOKS LIKE BEING PEGGED FOR SWENSON'S MURDER BY A BUNCH OF CHEAP RACKETEERS.



WHO DO YOU THINK KILLED SWENSON?
WHO THREW ME OVERBOARD FROM THE SHIP?
WHO BEAT ME UP LAST NIGHT?

YOUR SISTER-IN-LAW'S PLAYMATE,
ELMER GAINS, OF COURSE.

FETTINGER'S IN WITH GAINS, AND
FETTINGER WARNED ME TO CHANGE SIDES
OR ELSE. AND I WAS BEATEN UP,
AND WHO TOLD YOU I'D BEEN TO THE
SEVEN DWARFS WITH FRANCINE? NOT
FRANCINE. AND IF IT WAS GRACE CUREL—
I'LL BET FETTINGER OR GAINS TOLD HER.



I KNEW I'D SHOT MY BOLT NOW. LOUIS WAS
FURIOUS.

YOU AND MISS
LANNER WILL NEED A
GOOD LAWYER. THIS NOTE
IS TO MR. FOSDYKE A VERY
REPUTABLE LAWYER IN
THIS CITY.

WHY, TH-THANKS,
LOUIS. LOOK HERE,
I HATE ALL THIS.
I COULDN'T BE
SORRIER. BUT
WHAT CAN I DO?



LOUIS SOFTENED A LITTLE
AT THAT. BUT HE WAS STILL
ANGRY. I HAD TO LEAVE.
I TRIED FOR ACCOMMODATION
BUT THE HOTELS WERE FULL
OF MARDI GRAS VISITORS
SO I DECIDED TO SEE
FOSDYKE BEFORE I CONTINUED
MY SEARCH FOR AN HOTEL ...



RIGHT. TELL ME
THE STORY FROM THE
BEGINNING ...

O.K., HERE
IT IS - WITH NOTHING
LEFT OUT.



WHEN I'D TOLD HIM THE WHOLE STORY, HE LEANED BACK IN HIS CHAIR STARING AT ME INCREDULOUSLY . . .

THE CURELS - OF ALL PEOPLE - AND ELMER GAINS AND THIS FINNISH GIRL. WHAT A SET-UP! IT'LL EXPLODE LIKE A POWDER MAGAZINE ON NEW ORLEANS.



SOON AFTER THAT I LEFT...

I MADE FOR "LA LOUSANNE" TO MEET LEE JOHNSTON AGAIN. THERE I FOUND HIM WITH HIS PAL, BOB SMALLS, AND I BROUGHT THEM BOTH UP TO DATE ON THE WHOLE BUSINESS.

YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LET GAINS AND COMPANY GET AWAY WITH PITCHING YOU OVERBOARD AND BEATING YOU UP, ARE YOU?



BUT BEFORE BOB SMALLS COULD GO ON,
WHO SHOULD ARRIVE BUT FRANCINE DE SARAM!

FRANCINE!
WHAT ARE YOU
DOING HERE?

TOD, AUNT GRACE HAS
GONE OUT AND WON'T BE
BACK UNTIL THREE. GET TAIMI
TO COME AND SEE PAUL WHILE
SHE'S GOT THE CHANCE. HURRY.
IF SHE REALLY IS PAUL'S WIFE -
I'D NEVER FORGIVE MYSELF.
PAUL MAY DIE ANY DAY NOW!

I WAS AT A LOSS TO UNDERSTAND FRANCINE'S SUDDEN
CHANGE OF MIND — BUT I TOOK HER AT HER WORD.

LEAVING BOB AND LEE I RUSHED AROUND TO THE SEVEN DWARFS.
I FOUND TAIMI WITH RONNIE MARVIN, TOLD THEM WHAT WAS UP AND RUSHED
HER INTO A CAB . . .

I'M SURE
IT'S ON THE LEVEL,
TAIMI.....

IT'S JUST THE
THOUGHT OF SEEING
PAUL AGAIN....



HOW LONG I WAITED I DON'T KNOW, BUT AFTER A TIME, THE DOOR OPENED AND TAIMI AND FRANCINE CAME OUT TOGETHER. TAIMI LOOKED LIKE A SLEEPWALKER.

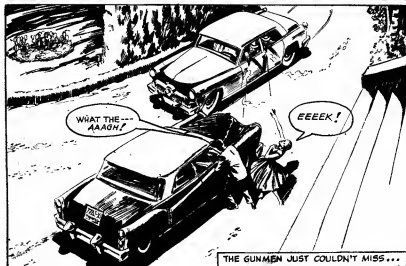


I TOLD THE CABBY TO DRIVE AROUND FOR A WHILE. TAIMI SAT MOTIONLESS WITHOUT SPEAKING. I'VE NEVER SEEN SUCH HORROR AND SHOCK ON A GIRL'S FACE BEFORE. THEN...



I TOOK HER BACK TO THE SEVEN DWARFS WHERE LEE WAS WAITING. HE HEARD WHAT HAD HAPPENED AND TOOK TAIMI TO HIS MOTHER'S PLACE TO GET SOME REST.

MEANWHILE, AS I LEARNED AFTERWARDS, A CAR WAS DRAWING UP OUTSIDE PAUL'S HOME. LOUIS AND GRACE CUREL WERE PREPARING TO GO DOWNTOWN.....



I KNEW NOTHING OF THIS UNTIL I RETURNED TO PACK MY THINGS TO LEAVE LOUIS' HOUSE. I WAS MET BY TWO TOUGH LOOKING CHARACTERS WHO LOOKED SUSPICIOUSLY LIKE DETECTIVES.

THEY WERE !

YOU
TOD CLAYMORE ?
LIEUTENANT FLYNN
OF THE POLICE
DEPARTMENT
WANTS TO SEE YOU
— FAST ! WE GOT
A CAR OUTSIDE.

ALL RIGHT !
I'LL COME WITH
YOU.

THE DETECTIVES TOOK ME BACK TO PAUL CUREL'S HOME. THERE WAS A BIG CROWD IN THE DRAWING ROOM. I KNEW THEM ALL, SAVE HENRY LUCAS. THE MAN I'D BEEN TOLD MRS. CUREL WANTED FRANCINE TO MARRY...

WHAT'S THIS —
A FAMILY REUNION
OR SOMETHING ?

I WANT A DETAILED
ACCOUNT OF YOUR MOVEMENTS TODAY,
CLAYMORE. DON'T ACT INNOCENT — YOU
KNOW AS WELL AS I DO. THAT SHORTLY AFTER
THREE TODAY A GANG OF HOODLUMS SHOT AT
MRS. CUREL AS SHE RETURNED HOME —
AND KILLED LOUIS CUREL.

I FELT AS IF SOMEONE HAD HIT ME WITH A SLEDGEHAMMER. LOUIS - DEAD? MURDERED? BUT WORSE WAS TO FOLLOW...

MRS. CUREL TOLD ONLY HER NIECE SHE'D BE BACK AT THREE. MISS DE SARAM TOLD ONLY YOU - AND THEN THIS CAR, WITH THE KILLERS IN WAS WAITING!

BUT YOU DON'T THINK I KILLED LOUIS DO YOU?



DEFENCE FOR ME CAME FROM A VERY UNEXPECTED QUARTER - MRS. CUREL!

I DON'T BELIEVE HE DID, LIEUTENANT. HE MUST HAVE TOLD THAT GIRL TAMI LANNER, WHEN SHE CAME HERE. IT COULD HAVE BEEN HER...

SO YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT TOO?



WE KNOW A LOT ABOUT YOU, CLAYMORE AND WE DON'T LIKE IT. WHO DID YOU TELL ABOUT YOUR VISIT HERE?

I SUDDENLY REALISED THAT THE ONLY OTHER PERSON WHO WOULD HAVE KNOWN - WAS RONNIE MARVIN. HE'D BEEN WITH TAMI WHEN I'D FETCHED HER... I TOLD FLYNN... HE 'PHONED POLICE HEADQUARTERS.

MARVIN'S SURE TO HAVE AN ALIBI. - OH, THAT YOU, LENAHAN? PUT OUT A GENERAL CALL TO PICK UP TAMI LANNER AND RONNIE MARVIN, WANTED IN CONNECTION WITH THE MURDER OF LOUIS CUREL!



I COULD SEE NOW WHY MRS. CUREL TRIED TO SHIELD ME — SHE WANTED THE BOOK THROWN AT TAMI. WHAT A VIPER THAT WOMAN CUREL REALLY WAS. THEN I TOLD FLYNN THAT IF HE WANTED TO ASK ME ANYTHING FURTHER, I WANTED MY LAWYER ALONG ...

MY LAWYER HAPPENS TO BE FOSDYKE. LOUIS SENT ME TO HIM THIS MORNING.

IF FETTINGER'S YOUR LAWYER, YOU'RE OUT OF LUCK. HE'S THROWN THE CASE UP. SAYS IT LOOKS FISHY TO HIM.

I DON'T BELIEVE IT!

FLYNN STARED FROM ME TO MRS. CUREL AND BACK AGAIN. THEN HE ROSE, ENDING THE INTERVIEW AND TOOK HIS MEN WITH HIM. FRANCINE WAS DISTRAUGHT.

TOD — YOU CAUSED THIS. YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE TOLD THOSE PEOPLE!

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE SAYING, FRANCINE.

ALL I WANTED WAS TO GET OUT OF IT ALL. I WENT BACK TO LOUIS' NOW OWNERLESS HOUSE AND CALLED FOSDYKE. HE WAS A LONG TIME COMING AND I WAITED IMPATIENTLY.

YOU'VE SURE GOT YOURSELF A MESS NOW. THIS CASE IS GOING TO MAKE LEGAL HISTORY IN NEW ORLEANS. PROBABLY COST YOU ALL YOU GOT!

THAT ANNOYED ME . BUT
I TOLD THE CRAFTY OLD FOX
THE WHOLE STORY . WHEN I'D
FINISHED , HE LOOKED AT ME
GRIMLY . . .

YOU'VE GOT TO GET FRANCINE
DE SARAM TO TESTIFY FOR YOU .
LOUIS' NIECE , THE PRETTIEST GAL
IN TOWN - IT'D SMASH THE POLICE
CASE . MIGHT EVEN STOP 'EM
ARRESTING TAMI .

MISS DE SARAM
IS NOT COMING INTO
THIS BUSINESS .
THAT'S FINAL .

AND THAT ANNOYED FOSDYKE .
BUT I WAS ADAMANT . EVENTUALLY
HE LEFT ME WITH THE WARNING
NOT TO BE TOO CLEVER WITH FLYNN .

WHACKED OUT , I WENT TO BED . . .

BY HEAVEN ,
I'M GLAD TO GET TO BED
AT LAST . LORD KNOWS
WHAT TIME I'LL WAKE
UP TOMORROW !

IN FACT IT WASN'T VERY MUCH LATER. I WOKE WITH A START WITH A STRANGE FEELING SOMEONE WAS IN MY ROOM.

I WAS RIGHT — AND IT WAS NONE OTHER THAN ELMER GAINS.

GAINS, HOW DID YOU GET HERE?

I GOT HERE, BUT IF ANYBODY ASKS WHERE I SPENT THE EVENING IT WAS OVER IN JEFFERSON COUNTY PLAYING POKER!

WHY HE'D COME I DIDN'T KNOW. BUT I TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY OF CLEARING UP A FEW THINGS...

CORRECT ME IF I'M WRONG, GAINS, BUT YOU HATE THE CURELS, DON'T YOU? BUT YOU'RE USING MRS. CUREL TO GET YOU INTO HIGH SOCIETY, RIGHT? INCIDENTALLY AM I ALSO RIGHT IN THINKING MRS. CUREL GETS SOME MONEY WHEN PAUL DIES?

RIGHT EACH TIME. PAUL AND FRANCINE ARE LOUIS' HEIRS. BUT WHEN PAUL DIES TAIMI AS HIS WIFE WILL BE ENTITLED TO A QUARTER OF THE ESTATE. BUT SHE CAN'T PROVE SHE'S HIS WIFE, GET ME?

THEN I KNEW, GAINS HAD STOLEN TAIMI'S PAPERS ON THE SHIP, AFTER MURDERING SWENSON, TO GET THEM THINKING THE OLD LAWYER HAD THEM.

AND WHY DID YOU COME HERE?

TO PERSUADE YOU TO GET TAIMI TO LEAVE TOWN. I WANT HER OUT, BUT GOOD. I WANT THIS WHOLE CASE TO FIZZLE OUT. BECAUSE IF TAIMI'S ARRESTED YOU'LL TALK ABOUT MRS. CUREL AND ME. DO AS I SAY AND IT'LL SAVE ME THE TROUBLE OF KILLING YOU!

AND YOU'LL KEEP YOUR TRAP SHUT.
WITH TAIMI GONE YOU'LL HAVE NOTHING
TO TALK ABOUT. THE CASE'LL DIE.
MRS. CUREL WILL TAKE OVER THE CUREL
INTERESTS. AND I TAKE OVER MRS. CUREL.
BINGO! DOES TAIMI LEAVE - WE CAN
SEE HER NOW IF YOU LIKE -- ?



GAINS MEANT TO KILL ME ANYWAY. IF I LED
HIM TO TAIMI, HE'D KILL HER TOO.
HE WAS SHREWD ENOUGH TO REALISE AT
ONCE WHAT MY ANSWER WAS . . .

O.K., YOU ASKED
FOR IT, CLAYMORE --



BUT HE NEVER FIRED. FOR IN THAT SPLIT
SECOND, A SHOE HURTLIED THROUGH THE
OPEN DOORS AND CRASHED INTO THE
BEDSIDE LAMP . . .

I SAW MY CHANCE AND TOOK IT....

WHAT --
AAAGH!





THEN GAINS CAUGHT ME IN THE STOMACH WITH HIS KNEE, AND AS I DOUBLED UP, HE RUSHED TO THE WINDOW AND VAULTED THE BALCONY.



I HELPED POPPY TO
HER FEET...



IS THAT HOW I'M THANKED
FOR SAVING YOUR LIFE, YOU
WRETCH? PAN! I COULDN'T
SLEEP AND HEARD YOU TWO
ARGUING SO I PEEPED IN -
AND PITCHED MY SHOE
AT THE LAMP ---

YOU DID WHAT?
YOU WERE EAVESDROPPING AS
USUAL, POPPY. BUT THANKS
ANYWAY!

NEXT MORNING, FLYNN ARRIVED...

I SAW FOSDYKE THIS MORNING - AND
TAMMI LANNER. WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME
WHERE SHE WAS? LISTEN, PAL,
STOP HOLDING OUT ON ME. IT'S NOT WISE
GET ME?



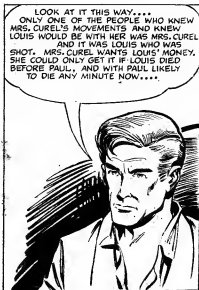
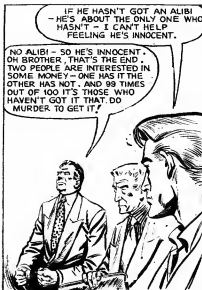
I GET YOU.
BUT WAIT UNTIL
MY LAWYER ARRIVES.

FORSYKE ARRIVED RIGHT ON CUE.

TALKING OF INFORMATION, LIEUTENANT,
YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED TO KNOW GANN
CAME HERE LAST NIGHT TO SHOOT ME. YOU
WON'T PROVE IT -- HIS ALIBI IS THAT HE WAS
IN JEFFERSON COUNTY PLAYING POKER.
I EXPECT MARVIN HAS AN ALIBI FOR
LOUIS' MURDER, TOO!

MARVIN'S STORY WAS
THAT HE WAS AT A MOVIE.
BUT LIKE YOU HE CAN'T
PROVE HIS STORY!





AND THAT SEEMED TO BE THAT! WEARILY FLYNN GOT UP TO GO . . .



DON'T THINK I'M LETTING THINGS SLIDE, CLAYMORE. BECAUSE I'VE NOT ARRESTED TAIMI LANNER YET, IT DOESN'T MEAN THAT I CAN'T.



WHEN FLYNN HAD GONE I TURNED ANGRILY ON FOSDYKE . . .

WHAT DID HE MEAN? DOES HE KNOW WHERE TAIMI IS?

YES, I'VE GIVEN HIM A PROMISE TO PRODUCE YOU AND TAIMI AT ANY TIME HE WANTS. I'VE ADVISED TAIMI TO GO TO MISS DE SARAM'S COUNTRY SHACK. I SAW HER ALSO THIS MORNING AND SHE MADE THE OFFER. SHE'S TAKING TAIMI DOWN THIS MORNING. I TOLD FLYNN ALL ABOUT IT.



YOU SEEMED TO HAVE BEEN DEVILISH BUSY THIS MORNING!

I HAVE. BUT DON'T KID YOURSELF THIS BUSINESS IS A PARLOUR GAME. WE'RE UP AGAINST TWO VERY POWERFUL AND UNSCRUPULOUS PEOPLE WHO'LL STOP AT NOTHING.



I'VE MADE MORE ENQUIRIES TOO. WE CAN'T PROVE TAIMI AND PAUL WERE MARRIED BY REFERRING TO THE CHURCH REGISTER. IT'S NOW ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE IRON CURTAIN. THAT'S WHY MRS. CUREL'S SO CONFIDENT.

I WONDER IF I COULD GET THOSE PAPERS GAINS STOLE FROM TAIMI?

IF YOU WANT TO STAY ALIVE FORGET YOU EVER THOUGHT OF THAT.

AFTER FOSDYKE HAD LEFT I DRESSED AND THEN HEADED FOR FRANCINE'S COUNTRY SHACK TO SEE TAIMI AGAIN...

FRANCINE HAD ARRANGED FOR LEE JOHNSTON'S MOTHER TO COME WITH TAIMI TO LOOK AFTER HER — IT WAS MRS. JOHNSTON WHO MET ME ON THE VERANDAH.

MRS. JOHNSTON I LIKED IMMEDIATELY.
SHE TOOK ME INSIDE . . .

I'VE HEARD SO
MUCH ABOUT YOU FROM
LEE. COME ON IN.
TAIMI'LL BE IN SOON.
SHE'S HAVING A
BATH.

DOES SHE
KNOW ABOUT
PAUL YET ?

MRS. JOHNSTON'S EYES CLOUDED FOR A
MOMENT, THEN SHE SMILED SLOWLY . . .

YES, SHE KNOWS.
HENRY LUCAS TOLD HER
THIS MORNING. I THINK IT
DID HER GOOD. SHE'S BEEN
PINING AWAY FOR PAUL --
NOW, WELL, SHE CAN START
LIVING AGAIN.

AT THAT MOMENT TAIMI CAME IN. AT ONCE
I NOTICED THE DIFFERENCE IN HER.

HALLO,
TAIMI.

HALLO, TOD. YOU'RE
IN TROUBLE BECAUSE YOU
TRIED TO HELP ME -- I'M
SORRY. BUT I SEEM TO BE
EITHER A MILLIONAIRE OR A
MURDERESS.

IN A NUTSHELL THAT WAS IT. MURDERESS OR MILLIONAIRE. WHAT A SITUATION. AFTER WE HAD SOME COFFEE, LEE ARRIVED.

I WONDER WHAT BOB SMALLS AND YOU WILL DO ON TUESDAY?

WATCH THE MARDI GRAS PROCESSION I EXPECT. NEW ORLEANS LETS ITS HAIR DOWN THEN. STREET'S FULL OF PEOPLE. THE WHOLE TOWN GOES HAYWIRE. WHY?

A WILD IDEA HAD COME TO ME.... BUT AFTER I'D TALKED ALL ROUND IT WITH LEE, IT DIDN'T SEEM SO WILD.... JUST THE SAME, THERE WAS NOTHING WE COULD DO TILL TUESDAY— MARDI GRAS DAY — MARDI GRAS DAY WAS THE KEY TO MY WHOLE SCHEME.

NEXT MORNING FRANCINE CALLED ME FROM TOWN...

MISS LALEHAM HAS LEFT, AFTER A ROW WITH AUNT GRACE. TOD, -AUNT GRACE FRIGHTENS ME. SHE SAID SOMETHING ABOUT SHE'D GET WITNESSES TO SHOW TAIMI TRIED TO BLACKMAIL HER AND THAT SHE KILLED SWENSON.

WHAT SORT OF EVIDENCE?

I FELT A COLD HAND AT MY HEART. I REMEMBERED FOSDYKE'S WORDS "THEY'LL STICK AT NOTHING"....

SOMETHING ABOUT OPIUM PILLS FOUND IN TAIMI'S ROOM AT THE SEVEN DWARFS!

SWENSON HAD BEEN POISONED WITH OPIUM.

MRS. CUREL AND GAINS WERE REALLY OUT TO GET TAMI!
NOW, SUDDENLY—AND I MEAN SUDDENLY—POPPY
ARRIVED LIKE A BOMBSHELL. SHE WAS ANGRY.

HULLO, POPPY, I
HEAR YOU HAD WORDS
WITH MRS. CUREL.

A FEW. SHE HAD
THE NERVE TO DEMAND—
DEMAND MARK YOU—
TO KNOW WHERE YOU
WERE. INSTEAD I TOLD
HER A FEW HOME
TRUTHS!

SO POPPY WAS TO STAY WITH US IN THE
SHACK. IT WAS GETTING QUITE CROWDED.
NEXT DAY WAS MARDI GRAS AND
I HEADED INTO TOWN TO LEE'S HOUSE.

YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO?
RIGHT, YOU SAID FETTINGER
WAS SURE TO BE IN HIS
OFFICE DESPITE MARDI
GRAS, LEE?

THE PARADE PASSES
RIGHT UNDER HIS WINDOW.
HE'LL HAVE A COUPLE OF
BUDDIES IN FOR LUNCH
AND DRINKS.

WE'LL SEE
TO THE
BUDDIES!

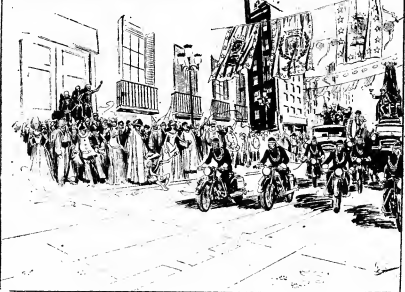
LEE HAD BROUGHT THREE COSTUMES FOR
THE MARDI GRAS... TIGHT FITTING SUITS
WITH SKELETONS PAINTED ON THEM ...

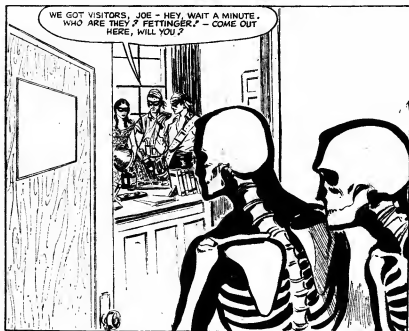
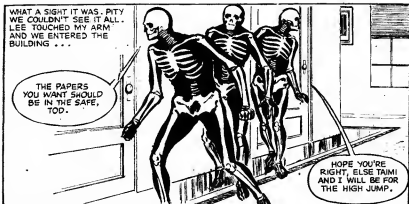
WE'LL FRIGHTEN 'EM
TO DEATH IF NOTHING
ELSE IN THESE
THINGS!

WE HEADED FOR FETTINGER'S OFFICE THROUGH STREETS FILLED
WITH INDESCRIBABLE COLOUR OF THE FESTIVAL OF MARDI GRAS .
THE TOWN HAD INDEED GONE HAYWIRE .



WE REACHED THE BUILDING AND DECIDED TO
WAIT UNTIL THE PARADE WAS PASSING . . .





FETTINGER CAME OUT FROM AN INNER OFFICE. HIS JAW DROPPED WHEN HE SAW US. HE SEEMED TO SENSE SOMETHING WAS WRONG. . .



WHAT'S ALL
THIS? WHO
ARE YOU?

IT HAD BEEN AGREED I SAY NOTHING
LEST MY ACCENT GAVE ME AWAY.
SILENTLY I GRABBED FETTINGER, AND
FROGMARCHED HIM INTO HIS OFFICE —

BE WITH YOU
IN A SHAKE, PAL. SOON
AS WE DEAL WITH
THESE PUNKS!



THE TRIO OUTSIDE WERE SOON BOUND AND
GAGGED AND SITTING IN CHAIRS IN THE
INNER OFFICE . . .

OPEN THAT SAFE,
BUSTER AND
SMART ABOUT IT!

WHAT —
WHAT —?

YOU HEARD
WHAT THE MAN
SAID!



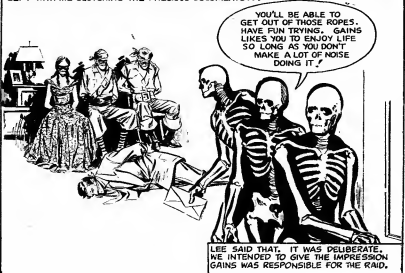
I SUPPOSE OUR WEIRD DRESS DIDN'T HELP FETTINGER OVERCOME HIS FEAR. ANYWAY HE FUMBLER FOR THE KEYS AND THE SAFE WAS OPENED.



IN MY EXCITEMENT I'D SPOKEN. BUT IT DIDN'T MATTER. I RIPPED OPEN THE ENVELOPE AND FOUND TAIMI'S MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE A LETTER FROM PAUL TO TAIMI AND ANOTHER LETTER - FROM SWENSON TO MRS. CUREL. IT PROVED WHAT I'D SUSPECTED, MRS. CUREL KNEW TAIMI'S CLAIM WAS GENUINE!



WE BOUND AND GAGGED FETTINGER AND THEN LEFT WITH ME CLUTCHING THE PRECIOUS DOCUMENTS...



WE WENT TO A NEARBY BAR TO CELEBRATE
OUR SUCCESS....

GET WHAT
YOU WANTED,
TOD ?

THIS'LL SINK
MRS. CUREL WITHOUT
TRACE . GAINS PROBABLY
STOLE ONE DOCUMENT,
A LETTER FROM SWENSON
TO MRS. CUREL , BEFORE
HE WENT TO EUROPE .
HE PROBABLY INTENDED
TO USE IT TO BLACKMAIL
MRS. CUREL .

I LEFT THEM THEN AND DROPPED A NOTE
TELLING FOSDYKE WHAT HAD HAPPENED .
THEN I RETURNED TO THE SHACK .
MRS. CUREL WAS THERE .

I DEMAND AN
EXPLANATION OF YOUR
PRESENCE HERE ?

I'VE ALREADY
TOLD YOU I LENT
HIM THE PLACE,
AUNT GRACE.

YOU'RE A PLAUSIBLE ROGUE,
MR. CLAYMORE BUT YOU'VE
OVERREACHED YOURSELF THIS TIME .
I'LL RING THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY AND
TELL HIM YOU'RE HERE . I HAPPEN
TO KNOW HE HAS CONCLUSIVE
EVIDENCE THIS TAINI LANNER
IS A MURDERESS !



COME TO THAT, I'VE GOT EVIDENCE TOO, A LETTER FROM PAUL TO TAIMI, A MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE AND A LETTER SWENSON WROTE TO YOU FROM HELSINKI PROVING TAIMI WAS GENUINE.

YOU HAVE MY PAPERS ?

I DON'T BELIEVE IT !

GRACE CUREL WAS BADLY SHAKEN. IT WAS THE FINAL BLOW OF THE BATTLE, FOR SHE JUST ABOUT COLLAPSED, ALL THE FIGHT KNOCKED OUT OF HER.

I'VE BEEN A FOOLISH WOMAN, A WICKED WOMAN. I SUPPOSE I SHOULD NEVER HAVE GOT TIED UP WITH CROOK LAWYERS AND RACKETEERS, BUT I ONLY DID IT FOR PAUL'S SAKE.



EVERYONE DISLIKED ME, EVEN MY HUSBAND. I HAD ALL THEY LACKED - DRIVE ! I COULD HAVE MADE THEM THE MOST POWERFUL FAMILY IN THE SOUTH BUT THEY WOULDN'T LISTEN. BUT THEY COULDN'T TAKE MY SON PAUL FROM ME. PAUL ALWAYS TOOK MY ADVICE NOT THEIRS. OH IF ONLY HE HADN'T HAD THAT ACCIDENT !

IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT GRACE CUREL WAS PRETTY NEARLY MAD.

IT WAS ALL OUT NOW, THE FRUSTRATION, THE DISAPPOINTMENT OF YEARS. SHE HAD AN ENORMOUS LUST FOR POWER AND AN OVERWHELMING URGE TO RUN THINGS AND PEOPLE. FOR THIRTY YEARS THE CURELS HAD POLITELY SAT ON HER. I DISLIKED THE WOMAN, YET I FELT SORRY FOR HER . . .

I WOULD NEVER HAVE BELIEVED IT OF HER.



AT THAT MOMENT I HEARD THE SCRAPE OF CAR TYRES OUTSIDE. I THOUGHT IT WAS FOSDYKE AND I WENT TO THE DOOR TO MEET HIM . . .

BUT IT WASN'T FOSDYKE—IT WAS ELMER GAINS.

WHAT THE DEVIL-- GAINS?



YEA, MISTER, ME / AND WHAT THE HELL ARE ALL YOU PEOPLE DOING HERE ?

HE'D OBVIOUSLY COME EXPECTING TO FIND ONLY TAMI AND ME — AND TO GET RID OF US.

YOU'RE TOO LATE, GAINS. I'VE HANDED THE PAPERS OVER TO FOSDYKE. LAST I SAW OF HIM HE WAS ON THE WAY TO THE D.A.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT - WHAT PAPERS ?



IT WAS MY TURN TO BE SURPRISED. . .
OBSOLETELY HE KNEW NOTHING OF MY RAID
ON FETTINGER'S OFFICE. BUT HE SOON
CAUGHT ON . . .

SO THAT'S
WHY FETTINGER DIDN'T
RING. WHAT HAPPENED
TO HIM ?

I SUPPOSE HE'S
IN JAIL BY NOW--



THEN FRANCINE MOVED FORWARD . . .

YOU'VE
GOT NO RIGHT
TO HOLD US UP.

STAY WHERE
YOU ARE
LADY.



GAINS, THUG THAT HE WAS, ROUGHLY PUSHED FRANCINE TO
ONE SIDE. HENRY MOVED BEFORE I COULD --

YOU LOUSY THUG!
DON'T LAY A
FINGER ON HER--

OOOOH !

DON'T YOU
TRY ANYTHING,
MISTER--



BUT AS HENRY HIT GAINS, ANOTHER OF THE GANGSTERS RAISED HIS GUN LIKE A CLUB.

UUGH?



GOOD WORK, LEW. I'LL SETTLE HIM NOW!



HENRY!

GAINS RAISED HIS GUN TO POINT IT AT HENRY. EVEN AS FRANCINE THREW HERSELF ACROSS HENRY'S LIMP BODY, I KNOCKED THE GUN UP.

CUT THAT OUT, YOU LOUSY KILLER!

WHY YOU--?



BUT I HAD OVERLOOKED THE GUY WITH THE GUN.

I JOINED THE GROUP ON THE FLOOR.



THE NEXT I KNEW TAIMI WAS CRADLING ME IN HER ARMS DABBING THE BLOOD AWAY FROM MY FOREHEAD...

TIE 'EM UP.
WE'LL TAKE 'EM DOWN
TO THE SWAMP WHERE
NOBODY'LL FIND 'EM.

YOU CAN'T DO
THIS TO ME—
I FORBID IT.



YOU FORBID IT?
HAW, THAT'S GOOD. LISTEN,
LADY. YOU WERE USEFUL TO
ME FOR A WHILE. NOT NO
MORE. YOU GO WITH
THE REST.



THE THUGS TOOK US
OUTSIDE AND BUNDLED
US INTO THE WAGON.

WHERE'S THE
IGNITION KEY,
ELMER. I LEFT
IT HERE?



GETTING OUT OF THE CAR THE THUGS
SEARCHED THEIR POCKETS . . .

YOU MUST HAVE
THE DURNED THING.
LOOK FOR IT!

THAT'S WHAT
I'M DOIN' ELMER.
I AIN'T GOT IT,
I TELL YOU!



THESE GUYS HAVE
GOT CARS ROUND THE BACK.
I'LL GET THE KEYS FROM
THEM. MAYBE ONE'LL FIT.

THERE WAS ONLY ONE GUARD WITH US IN THE
BACK. GAINS HADN'T TIED THE GIRLS UP, SO
I WHISPERED TO TAIMI TO TAKE A KNIFE
FROM MY POCKET. SHE FOUND IT, AND
BEGAN TO CUT THROUGH MY BONDS. THEN
ELMER GAINS BEGAN TO GET IMPATIENT...



WHERE'S THAT GUY
GOT TO? HE SHOULD BE
HERE BY NOW!

CURSING, GAINS HEADED FOR THE HOUSE. THIS WAS MY CHANCE. TAJMI SLICED THROUGH MY BONDS, AND I RABBIT PUNCHED THE GUNMAN IN FRONT OF ME AND GRABBED HIS GUN. GAINS HEARD THE MAN'S STIFLED YELL, AND SWUNG ROUND, GRABBING FOR HIS GUN.

UUGH!

WHAT THE-?

NEXT SECOND A BLAST OF FIRE BELCHED FROM THE HOUSE - AND GAINS COLLAPSED INTO THE DUST . . .

WITH WHAT SEEMED A FINAL EFFORT GAINS RAISED HIS GUN AND FIRED WILDLY INTO THE CAR . . .

DUCK!
QUICK!

POPPY LALEHAM HAD APPEARED
LIKE MAGIC IN THE DOORWAY.

THEN GAINS WENT LIMP. HE WAS DEAD. I LEAPT FROM THE CAR AND RAN ACROSS TO POPPY.

POPPY—YOU AGAIN,
YOU SAVED OUR LIVES.
TAKE IT EASY WHILE I SEE TO
THE OTHER CROOK—HE'S ROUND
THE BACK WITH THE CARS.

DON'T WORRY
ABOUT HIM, TOD—
I KNOCKED HIM OUT.
BUT FOR GOODNESS SAKE
GET ME A DRINK.



BUT BEFORE I COULD DO ANYTHING, THERE WERE MORE ARRIVALS. THE POLICE TOOK OVER. FLYNN FOUND THAT BY POETIC JUSTICE, GAINS LAST SHOTS HAD KILLED MRS. CUREL. SHE HADN'T DUCKED. WHILE A POLICE DOCTOR STITCHED UP MY HEAD, FLYNN ASKED POPPY ABOUT HER PART IN THE AFFAIR.



I WENT FISHING
AND GOT LOST. WHEN I GOT BACK
HERE, I SAW WHAT WAS GOING ON
THROUGH A WINDOW, SO I THOUGHT
IT WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA TO
LIFT ALL THE IGNITION KEYS.

...WHEN THE HOUSE WAS EMPTY I NIPPED IN, GOT THE SHOTGUN AND PHONED THE POLICE. THEN WHEN THAT FELLOW WENT TO LOOK FOR THE KEYS IN THE OTHER CARS, I TAPPED HIM OVER THE HEAD.

YOU FRACTURED HIS SKULL, MA'AM.



I TAKE IT YOU'RE SATISFIED, NOW, ABOUT TAIMI, LIEUTENANT?



I ALWAYS HAD MY DOUBTS ABOUT WHETHER SHE KILLED SWENSON, ANYWAY. I WAS PRETTY SURE WHEN I FOUND THAT BOTTLE OF OPIUM IN HER ROOM...

THIS I DIDN'T FOLLOW. BUT FLYNN WENT ON...

...THERE WERE NO FINGERPRINTS ON THE BOTTLE. SHE WOULDN'T HAVE TAKEN OFF THE PRINTS AND LEFT THE BOTTLE. THEN THERE WAS GAIN'S ALIBI FOR THE NIGHT HE VISITED YOU. I CHECKED AND HE TOLD US ABOUT THE POKER GAME. YOU WOULDN'T HAVE KNOWN THAT UNLESS HE'D TOLD YOU. OTHER THINGS TOO, BUT THEY ALL ADDED UP.



AND WHAT ABOUT RONNIE MARVIN, MR. FLYNN?

HE'S O.K. TOO. ONE OF OUR MEN HAPPENED TO BE SITTING BEHIND HIM IN A MOVIE WHEN LOUIS CUREL WAS SHOT, SO RONNIE COULDN'T HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE. WE'VE QUITE APPRECIATED YOUR HELP MR. CLAYMORE --



BUT YOU COULD HAVE DONE
BETTER WITHOUT ME. AND WHAT
DO I GET — A BLACK EYE AND
A SPLIT HEAD.

ARE YOU WORRIED?
YOU'VE GOT A WEDDING TO ATTEND —
MISS DE SARUM AND MR. LUCAS.
AND YOU'VE GOT MATERIAL FOR A NEW
BOOK. DON'T GO TELLING ANY MORE
LIES THAN YOU HAVE TO.



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