

# The Unlatched Door

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Inspector Kenway went slowly back to his chair and sat for some time, drumming on the table with his fingers, while he went over in his mind what Barbara had told him. Her account of Borden's death tallied closely with his own notions of what had happened. It seemed to cover the whole ground of the event itself; there was only one point where he thought Barbara had been wrong and that was not owing to deliberate intention, but to ignorance of what was she had seen occurring.

She had spoken of pushing Borden from her so that he fell against the table and of his immediate recovery and return to the attack on her with his revolver in his hand. That did not strike Kenway as a convincing, or even possible, explanation of his resort to the weapon.

Borden was a burly, muscular man. He would be quite capable of dealing with a wisp of a girl like Barbara without the help of firearms. It was more likely that he had seen an enemy at the door of the room and snatched the revolver up and raised it to fire in self defence. He would be aiming past, or over, Barbara's head, and it was quite natural that she, ignorant of the presence of a third person, should jump to the conclusion that he was threatening her. The shots must have been practically simultaneous. It would be an instance of irony of fate if Barbara's action in throwing up Borden's hand had saved the life of the murderer!

But who was the murderer? Was he any nearer to a solution of that problem? Avice Carlake had been in her flat immediately after the shots were fired. Kenway had no difficulty in deciding that Barbara was telling the truth with regard to the conversation she heard taking place on the landing. There was no mistaking the identity of the speakers: They were Avice and Anthony Revelstone. Barbara could not have invented that meeting. There had been nothing published about the case which could suggest to her that the time of their arrival at Darnley Mansions had importance. She had described the actual facts.

Then, was either of them the murderer? What about Revelstone? Barbara had heard footsteps on the landing before he rang for Avice. Whence had he come? From her account she must have been at the front door within a very few seconds of the time of the shots. Whoever killed Borden could not have got more than a few yards away; it might have been Revelstone. Say he had started down the stairs, heard some movement below and turned back. He would naturally want to provide a reason other than the real one for his presence, and a call on Avice would supply it. A decided possibility!

He took up the smaller bullet and looked at it absently. What an insignificant little object to have done so much harm! The pistol from which it was fired must have been correspondingly tiny.

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He remembered noticing Revelstone's hands, huge, coarse hands, they were, like legs of mutton. The weapon he was picturing would be lost in them. He doubted if one of those great, spatulated fingers could have been disposed to pull the trigger. But a woman's hand? Such a weapon, little more than a toy in appearance, would be exactly the thing to appeal to a woman who wished to arm herself. Decidedly he must learn a great deal more about Avice Carlake!

He put the two bullets back in the table drawer and took out the folder in which were the papers connected with the case. Something might be there which he had overlooked. He began to turn the papers over. Here was the case with the statements referring to Borden's banking account. He had forgotten Rathbone and his promise to get from the bank manager the name of the person in whose favour that order had been made. He looked at his watch. Half past 11. Rathbone should be reporting very soon now.

He turned some more papers and suddenly snatched one up and stared at a signature on it. Then he took from his pocket the note with the heading of the Merwin Hotel which had been given to him that morning by the estate agent. Laying the two papers side by side on the table, he compared the writing at the foot of each.

To be continued

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