

# The STOLEN SINGER

by MARTNA BELLINGER

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## SYNOPSIS.

Agatha Redmond, opera singer, starting for an auto drive in New York, finds a stranger seated on her chauffeur. She is annoyed, but he remains. Leaving the car, she goes into the park to read the will of an old friend of her mother, who has left her property. There she is accosted by a stranger, who follows her to the auto, climbs in and chloroforms her. James Hambleton of Lynn, Mass., member of an old New England family, decides he needs a holiday. He goes to New York and there witnesses the abduction of Agatha Redmond. Hambleton sees Agatha forcibly taken aboard a yacht.

## CHAPTER III.—Continued.

On the instant his brain became active again. It did not take long, as a matter of fact, to find the car; though when he stumbled on it, turned about and neatly stowed away close beside the partitioning wall, he gave a start. It was such a tangible evidence of what had threatened to grow vague and unreal on his hands. He squeezed himself into the narrow space between it and the wall, finally thrusting his head under the curtains of the tonneau.

It was high and dry, empty as last year's cockleshell. Not a sign of life, not a loose object of any kind except a filmy thing which Hambleton found himself observing thoughtfully. At last he picked it up—a long, mist-like veil. He spread it out, held it gingerly between a thumb and finger of each hand, and continued to look at it abstractedly. Part of it was clean and whole, dainty as only a bit of woman's finery can be; but one end of it was torn and twisted and stretched out of all semblance to itself. Moreover, it was dirty, as if it had been ground under a muddy heel. It was, in its way, a shrieking evidence of violence, of unrighteous struggle. Hambleton folded the scarf carefully, with its edges together, and put it in his pocket.

Jimmy's actions from this time on had an incentive and a spirit that had before been lacking. He noted again the number of the car, and returned to the edge of the dock to observe the yacht. She had steamed up river a little way for some reason known only to herself, and was now turning very slowly. She was but faintly lighted and would pass for some pleasure craft just coming home. But Jim knew better. He could, at last, put two and two together. He would follow the Face—indeed, he could not help following it. In him had begun that divine experience of youth—of youth essentially, whether it come in early years or late—of being carried off his feet by a spirit not himself. He ran like a young athlete down the dock to the nearest workman, evolving schemes as he went.

The dock-hand apathetically trundled a small keg from one pile of freight to another, wiped his hands on his trousers, took a dry pipe out of his pocket, and looked vacantly up the river before he replied to Hambleton's question.

"Queer name—Jene Dark they call her."

It was like pulling teeth to get information out of him, but Jim applied the forceps.

The yacht had been lying out in the river for two weeks or more, possibly less; belonged to foreign parts; no one thereabouts knew who its owner was; nor its captain; nor its purpose in the harbor of New York. At last, quite gratuitously, the man volunteered a personal opinion. "Slippery boat in a gale—wouldn't trust her."

Hambleton walked smartly back, taking a look both at the yacht and the motor-car as he went. The yacht's nose pointed toward the Jersey shore; the car was creeping out of the dock. As he overtook the machine, he saw that it was in the hands of a mechanic in overalls and jumper. In answer to Hambleton's question as to the owner of the car, the mechanic told him pleasantly to go to the devil, and for once the sight of a coin failed to produce any perceptible effect. But the major-general, waiting half a block away, was still in the humor of giving fatherly advice. He welcomed Jim heartily.

"That's a hole I ain't got no use for. 'Owd'd you make out?"

"Well enough, for all present purposes. Can you undertake to do a job for me?"

"If it ain't nothing I'd have to arrest you for, I might consider it," he chuckled.

"I want you to go to the Laramie Club and tell Aleck Van Camp—got the name?—that Hambleton has gone off on the Jeanne D'Arc and may not be back for some time; and he is to look after the Sea Gull."

"Hold on, young man; you're not going to do anything out of reason, as one might say?"

"Oh, no, not at all; most reasonable

thing in the world. You take this money and go to get the message to Mr. Van Camp, will you? All right. Now tell me where I can find a tug-boat or a steam launch, quick."

"O'Leary, down at pier X—2—0 has launches and everything else. All right, my son, Aleck Van Camp, at the Laramie. But you be good and don't drop yourself."

This last injunction, word for word in the manner of the pert Edith, touched Jimmy's humor. He laughed ringingly. His spirit was like a chime of bells on a week-day.

The hour which followed was one that James Hambleton found it difficult to recall afterward, with any degree of coherence; but at the time his movements were mathematically accurate, swift, effective. He got aboard a little steam tug and followed the yacht down the river and into the harbor. As she stood out into the roads and began to increase her speed, he directed the captain of the tug to steam forward and make as if to cross her bows. This would make the pilot of the yacht angry, but he would be forced to slow down a trifle. Jim watched long enough to see the success of his maneuver, then went down into the cuddy which served as a cabin, took off his clothes, and looked to the fastenings of his money belt. Then he watched his chance, and when the tug was pretty nearly in the path of the yacht, he crept to the stern and dropped overboard.

## CHAPTER IV.

Mr. Van Camp Makes a Call.

Aleck Van Camp turned from the clerk's desk, rather relieved to find that Hambleton had not yet made his appearance. Aleck had an errand on his mind, and he reflected that Jim was apt to be impetuous and reluctant to await another man's convenience; at least, Jim wouldn't perceive that another man's convenience needed to be waited for; and Aleck had no mind to announce this errand from the housetops. It was not a business that pertained, directly, either to the Sea Gull or to the coming cruise.

He made an uncommonly careful toilet, discarding two neckties before the operation was finished. When all was done the cravat presented a stuffed and warped appearance which was not at all satisfying, even to Aleck's uncritical eye; but the tie was the last of his supply and was, perhaps, slightly better than none at all.

Dinner at the club was usually a dull affair, and to Mr. Van Camp, on this Monday night, it seemed more stupid than ever. The club had been organized in the spirit of the English clubs, with the unwritten by-law of absolute and inviolable privacy for the individual. No wild or woolly manners ever entered those decorous precincts. No slapping on the shoulder, no half-fellow greetings, no chance dinner companionship ever dispelled the awful penumbra of privacy that surrounded even the humblest member. A man's eating and drinking, his coming or going, his living or dying, were matters only for club statistics, not for personal inquiry or notice.

The result of this habitual attitude on the part of the members of the club and its servants was an atmosphere in which a catalytic fit would scarcely warrant unofficial interference; much less would merely mawkish or absent-minded behavior attract attention. That was the function of the club—to provide sanctuary for personal whims and idiosyncrasies; of course, always within the boundaries of the code.

On the evening in question Mr. Van Camp did not actually become silly, but his manner lacked the poise and seriousness which sophisticated men are wont to bring to the important event of the day. He was as near being nervous as a Scotch-American Van Camp could be; and at the same time an unwonted flow of life and warmth in his cool veins. He went so far as to make a remark to the waiter which he meant for an affable joke, and then wanted to kick the fellow for taking it so solemnly.

"You mind yourself, George, or they'll make you about of this monastery yet!" said Aleck, as George helped him on with his evening coat.

"Yes, sir, thank you, sir," said George.

He left word at the office that in case any one called he was to be informed that Mr. Van Camp would return to the club for the night; then, in his silk hat and generally shining togs, he set forth to make a call. He was no stranger to New York, and usually he took his cities as they came, with a matter-of-fact nonchalance. He would be as much at home

on his second day in London as he had ever been in Lynn, or he would go from a friend's week-end house-party, where the habits of a Sybarite were forced on him, to a camp in the woods and plot-blood fare, with an equal smoothness of temper and enjoyment. Since luxury made no impression on him, and hardship never blunted his own ideals of politeness or pleasure, no one ever knew which life he preferred.

Choosing to walk fifteen or twenty squares to the Archangel apartment house, his destination, Van Camp looked about him, on this night of his arrival, with slightly quickened perceptions. He cast a mildly appreciative eye toward the picture disclosed here and there by the glancing lights, the chiaroscuro of the intersecting streets, the constantly changing vistas. For an unimpressionable man, he was rather wrought upon. Nevertheless, he entered the charming apartment whither he was bound with the detached and composed manner which society regards as becoming. A maid with a foreign accent greeted him at home; Mr. Van Camp would find her in the drawing-room.

The stiff and unrelaxed manner with which Mr. Van Camp bowed to Miss Reynier a moment later was not at all indicative of the fairly respectable fever within his Scotch breast. Miss Reynier herself was pretty enough to cause quickened pulses. She was of noble height, evidently a woman of the world. She gave Mr. Van Camp her hand in a greeting mingled of European daintiness and American frankness. Her vitality and abounding interest in life were manifest.

Ah, but you are very late. This is how you become smart all at once in your New York atmosphere! But pray be seated; and here are cigarettes, if you will. Not? Very well; but tell me; has that amorphous jelly-silt—or, no, the branchial lamella—has it behaved itself and proved to be the avenue which shall lead you to fame?"

Mr. Van Camp stood silent through this flippant badinage, and calmly waited until Miss Reynier had settled herself. Then he thoughtfully turned the chair offered him so as to command a slightly better view of the corner where she sat, leaning against the old-rose cushions. Finally, taking his own time, he touched off her greeting with his precise drawl.

"I'm not smart, as you call it, even in New York, though I try to be." His eyes twinkled and his teeth gleamed in his wide smile. "If I were smart, I'd pass by your error in scientific nomenclature, but really I ought not to do it. If one can't be exact—"

"That's just what I say. If one can't be exact, why talk at all?" Miss Reynier caught it up with glee. She had a foreign accent, and an occasional twist of words which proved her to be neither American nor Englishwoman. "That's my principle," she insisted. "Leave other people in undisturbed possession of their hobbies, especially in conversation, and don't say anything if you can't say what you mean. But then, you won't talk about your hobby; and if I have no one to inform me, how can I be exact? But I'm the meekest person alive; I'm so ready to learn."

Mr. Van Camp surveyed first the bantering, alluring eyes, then turned his gaze upon the sofa luxuries about them.

"Are you ready to turn this bljuou dream into a laboratory smelting of alcohol and fire? Are you willing to spend hours wading in mudbanks after specimens, or scratching in the sand under the broiling sun? Science does not consult comfort."

Miss Reynier's expression of quizzical teasing changed to one of rather thoughtful inquiry, as if she were estimating the man behind the scientist. Van Camp was one of the lean, angular type, like Jim Hambleton. He was also very manly and wholesome, but even in his conventional evening clothes there was something about him that was unconventional—a protesting, untamed element of character that resisted all rules except those prescribed by itself. He puzzled her now, as he had often puzzled her before; but if he made fun of his hobbies, she had no mind to make fun of the man himself. A cheerful, intelligent smile finally ended her contemplating moment.

"Oh, no; no digging in the sand for me. I'll take what science I get in another way—put up in predigested packages or bottled—any way but the fishy way. But please don't give me up. You shed a good deal of light on my mental darkness last winter in Egypt, and maybe I can improve still more." She suddenly turned with friendly, confidential manner toward

Aleck, not waiting for replies to her remarks. "It's good to see you again! And I like it here better than in Egypt, don't you? Don't you think this apartment jolly?"

The shaded lamps made a pretty light over Miss Reynier's cream-colored silk flounces, over the delicate lace on her waist, over her glossy dark hair and spirited face. As Aleck contemplated that face, with its eager yet modest and womanly gaze, and the noble outline of her figure, he thought, with an unwonted flowering of imagination, that she was not unlike the Diana of classic days. "A domestic Diana," he added in his mind. "She may love the woods and freedom, but she will always return to the hearth."

Aloud he said: "If you will permit me, Miss Reynier, I would like to inform you at once of the immediate object of my visit here. You must be well aware—" At this point Mr. Van Camp, who, true to his nature, was looking squarely in the face of his companion, of necessity allowed himself to be interrupted by Miss Reynier's lifted hand. She was looking beyond her visitor through the drawing-room door.

"Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Lloyd-Jones," announced the servant.

As Miss Reynier swept forward with outstretched hand to greet the newcomers, Van Camp fixed his eyes on his hostess with a mingled expression of masculine rage and submission. Whether he thought her too cordial toward the other men or too cool toward himself, was not apparent. Presently he, too, was shaking hands with the visitors, who were evidently old friends of the house. Madame Reynier, the aunt of mademoiselle, was summoned, and Van Camp was introduced to a sofa with Lloyd-Jones, who was just in from the West. Aleck found himself listening to an interminable talk about copper veins and silver veins, a new kind of assaying instrument, and the good luck attendant upon the opening of Lloyd-Jones' new mine, the Liza Lu.

Aleck was the essence of courtesy to everything except sham, and was able to indicate a mild interest in Mr. Lloyd-Jones' mining affairs. It was sufficient. Lloyd-Jones turned aside on his end of the soft, spread out plump, gesticulating hands, and poured upon him an eloquent torrent of fact, speculation and high-spirited enthusiasm concerning Idaho in general and the future of the Liza Lu in particular. More than that, by and by his cheerful, half-impudent manner threatened to turn poetic.

"It's great, living in the open out here," he went on, by this time including the whole company in his exordium. "You ride or tramp, or dig rock all day; and at night you lie down under the clear stars, thankful for your blanket and your rock-bed and your camp-fire; and more than thankful if there's a bit of running water near by. It's a great life!"

Miss Reynier listened to him with eyes that were alternately puzzled and appreciative. It was a discourse that would have seemed to her much more natural coming from Aleck Van Camp; but then, Mr. Van Camp really did the thing—that sort of thing—and he rarely talked about it. It had probably been Mr. Lloyd-Jones' first essay in the world out of reach of his valet and a club cocktail; and he was consequently impressed with his achievement. It was evident that Miss Reynier and the amateur miner were on friendly terms, though Aleck had not seen or heard of him before. He had hobnobbed with Mr. Chamberlain in London and on more than one scientific jaunt. The slightest flicker of jealous resentment gleamed in Aleck's eyes, but his speech was as slow and precise as ever.

"I was just trying to convince Miss Reynier that outdoor life has its peculiar joys," he said. "I was even now suggesting that she should dig, though not for silver. Does Mr. Lloyd-Jones' little seem more alluring than my little wriggly beasts, Miss Reynier?"

If Aleck meant this speech for a trap to force the young woman to indicate a preference, the trick failed, as it deserved to fail.

"I couldn't endure either your mines or your mudpuddles. You are both absurd, and I don't understand how you ever get recruits for your hobbies. But come over and see this new engraving, Mr. Jones; it's an old-fashioned picture of your beloved Rhine."

Aleck, thus liberated from Mr. Lloyd-Jones and his mines, made his way across the room to Madame Reynier. The cunning of old Adam was in his eye, but otherwise he was the picture of deferential innocence.

Madame Reynier loved Aleck, with his inoffensive Americanisms and unfeeling kindness; and with her friends she was frankness itself. Two men in Miss Reynier's hands for entertainment, it seemed to Aleck unlikely that either one could make any alarming progress. Besides, he was glad of a tete-a-tete with the chap-erone.

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Madame Reynier was a tall, straight woman, elderly, dressed entirely in black, with gaunt, aristocratic features and great directness of speech. She had the fine kind of hauteur which forbids persons of this type ever to speak of money, of disease, of scandal, or of too intimate personalities; in Madame Reynier's case it also restrained her from every sort of exaggerated speech. She spoke English with some difficulty and preferred French.

Van Camp seated himself on a spindle-legged gilt chair by Madame Reynier's side, and begged to know how they were enduring the New York climate, which had formerly proved intolerable to Madame Reynier. As he seated himself she stretched out saving hands.

"I can endure the climate, thank you; but I can't endure to see your life endangered on that silly chair, my dear Mr. Van Camp. There—thank you." And when he was seated in a solid mahogany, he was rewarded with Madame Reynier's confidential chat. They had returned to their New York apartment in the midst of the summer season, she said, "for professional advice." She and her niece liked the city and never minded the heat. Melanle, her aunt explained, had been enabled to see several old friends, and for her own part, she liked home at any time of the year better than the most comfortable of hotels.

"This is quite like home," she added, "even though we are really exiles." Aleck ventured to hope that the "professional advice" had not meant serious trouble of any sort.

"A slight indisposition only."

"And are you much better now?" Aleck inquired solicitously.

"Oh, it wasn't I; it was Melanle," Madame smiled. "I became my own physician many years ago, and now I never see a doctor except when we ask one to dine. But youth has no such advantage." Madame fairly beamed with benevolence while explaining one of her pet idiosyncrasies. Before Aleck could make any headway in gleaning information concerning her own and Melanle's movements, as he was shamefully trying to do, Lloyd-Jones had persuaded Miss Reynier to sing.

"Some of those quaint old things, please," he was saying; and Aleck wondered if he never would hang himself with his own rope. But Lloyd-Jones' cheerful voice went on:

"Some of those Hungarian things are jolly and funny, even though you can't understand the words. Makes you want to dance or sing yourself." Aleck groaned, but Melanle began to sing, with Jones hovering around the piano. By the time Melanle had sung everybody's favorites, excluding Aleck's, Mr. Chamberlain rose to depart. He was an Englishman, a serious, heavy gentleman, very loyal to old friends and very slow in making new ones. He made an engagement to dine with Aleck on the following evening, and, as he went out, threw back to the remaining gentlemen an offer of seats in his machine.

"I ought to go," said Jones; "but if Van Camp will stay, I will. That is," he added with belated punctiliousness, "if the ladies will permit!"

"Thank you, Chamberlain, I'm walking," drawled Aleck; then turning to the company with his cheerful grin he stated quite impersonally: "I was thinking of staying long enough to put one question—er, a matter of some little importance—to Miss Reynier. When she gives me the desired information, I shall go."

"Me, too," chirped Mr. Lloyd-Jones. "I came expressly to talk over that plan of building up friendly adjoining estates out in Idaho; sort of private shooting and hunting park, you know. And I haven't had a minute to say a word." Jones suddenly began to feel himself aggrieved. As the door closed after Chamberlain, Melanle motioned them back to their seats.

"It's not so very late," she said easily. "Come back and make yourselves comfortable, and I'll listen to both of you," she said with a demure little devil in her eye. "I haven't seen you for ages, and I don't know when the good moment will come again." She included the two men in a friendly smile, waved a hand toward the waiting chairs, and adjusted a light shawl over the shoulders of Madame Reynier.

But Aleck by this time had the bit in his teeth and would not be coaxed. His ordinarily cool eye rested wrathfully on the broad shoulders of Mr. Lloyd-Jones, who was lighting a cigarette, and he turned abruptly to Miss Reynier. His voice was as serious as if parliament, at least, had been hanging on his words.

"May I call tomorrow, Miss Reynier, at about twelve?"

"Oh, I say," put in Jones, "all of you come to luncheon with me at the Little Gray Fox—will you? Capital place and all sorts of nice people. Do come. About one."

Van Camp could have slain him (TO BE CONTINUED.)

## OLD FOE RECALLS GUNMEN OF WEST

Says Some Outlaws Left Particular Marks on Victims.

## TALKS OF BERT CASEY

Former U. S. Attorney for Oklahoma Tells How Marshal Fossett Inspired Three Desperados, His Prisoners, With Respect by Rare Rifle Shot.

Guthrie, Okla.—"It has been the case frequently that it was possible to identify the slayer in outlaw days in Oklahoma and other sections of the southwest either by marks on the body of the slain person or the position in which the dead body was found," says Judge Horace Speed of Guthrie, who was United States attorney for Oklahoma for sixteen years and prosecuted many outlaws and gunmen.

Speed was first appointed when Oklahoma was opened to settlement, in 1889, by President Harrison, and later served under several other administrations. During his days as chief prosecutor here for the government he was active against members of the Dalton, Doolin and other outlaw gangs, and studied their ways and methods as a means of helping himself in prosecutions of criminals.

"Nearly every outlaw who was a killer had a different method of treating the bodies of his victims," says Judge Speed.

"As a rule, the outlaw was very superstitious, and it was for this reason mainly that he would show the greatest respect for a victim's body, in many instances performing the last rites in a truly ministerial manner. Other outlaws, and these were always of the most wicked brand, would maltreat and disfigure the bodies of their victims, and it was easy for an officer who understood these things to tell at a glance who the killer had been.

"The most bloodthirsty man that ever came under my observation was Bert Casey, one of the last outlaw leaders in the southwest. He was always 'with his boots on,' always ready to kill, and invariably he marked the victims' bodies in a manner that never failed to reveal that Casey was the killer.

"Casey's mark was a kick in his victim's face. He would turn a dead body over after having killed in order to kick the face, leaving a heel imprint on his victim. This, in my opinion, was because Casey was so thoroughly wicked.

"His victims, too, were many, and the list included not only some of the bravest officers in the country, but also members of his own band, for Casey was also treacherous. If it happened that he did not like some mem-



Many a Poor Fellow Died Because of the Bandit's Bad Temper.

ber of his gang he would kill the fellow simply because he loved to kill. Many a poor fellow died because of the bandit leader's bad temper.

"Casey would shoot, and kill, too. In the same manner that many men hunt and kill wild animals. For instance, on one occasion Casey shot a distance of 400 yards and killed an old farmer just to see if a new Winchester rifle would carry that distance and kill. The old man was plowing in a field, unconscious of approaching danger and unaware of the nearness of the outlaw. Casey called the attention of a companion and then fired at the farmer. Casey laughed and remarked that the gun seemed to be a dandy.

"Other outlaws showed the greatest respect and reverence toward the dead bodies of their victims. I knew of one prominent gunman, in particular, who afterward became a good citizen, who always laid out the bodies of the men he killed, performing the last rites in a religious manner. He would close the eyes, place the hands by the body's side or fold them across the bosom, and remove the boots. This man was one of the best shots the west ever knew. I do not know that he ever killed unless it was deemed necessary by him, for he was unusually kind hearted."

## Classification.

"When you come to slimmer then down," maintained the flimsy boarder, "there are only two classes of people—those who call it 'hummock' and those who call it 'taccumode'."