

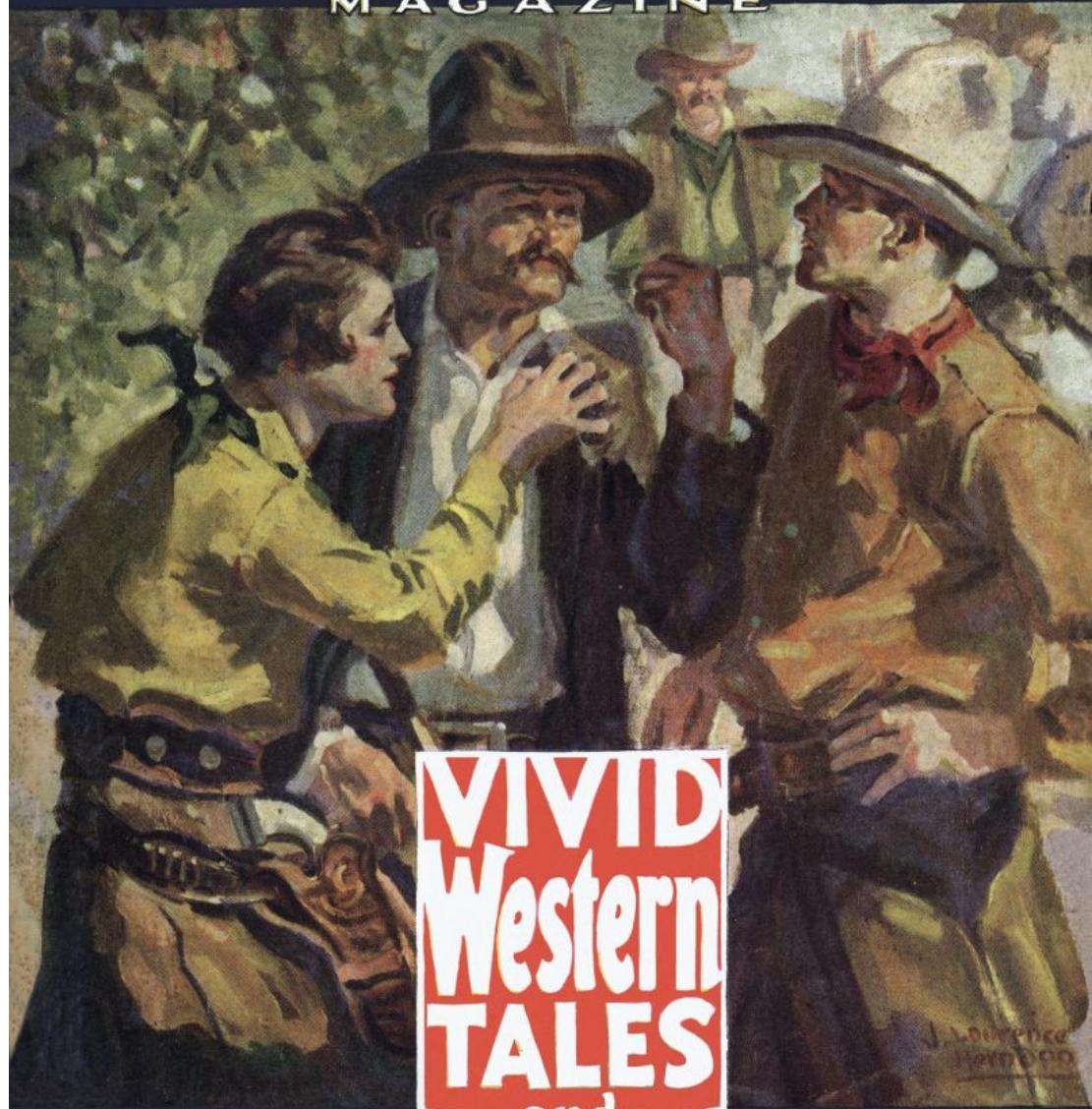
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"So you have come to arrest me?" asked Durant.

The Trail of Death

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

Illustrated by L. R. Gustavson

"North of Trouville" offers you one of the most keenly dramatic of all these absorbing stories by the gifted author of "Geyser Reef," "Madagascar Gold" and many other well-remembered tales.

When the telephone in Durant's room tinkled, he knew instinctively it was fate calling.

He had finished breakfast, had just closed his bags; in another five minutes he would have been paying his bill and leaving the little hostelry in the Rue Vignon. And then the sharp, insistent summons! Even as he reached for the instrument, his eyes flitted out to the old narrow Paris street below—no, escape was hopeless.

"M. Durant?" It was the voice of the hotel proprietor. "There are some gentlemen here asking for you."

The peculiar intonation made Durant divine the truth.

"Of the police?" he inquired.

"Yes, m'sieur."

"Ask them to come up to my room, if you please."

Durant laid the instrument on its rack. Caught, then! Not quick enough in getting away. He should have gone at once to Makoff's house the previous night, as soon as he learned its address. He had seen by the morning papers that Woroff the dancer, chief assistant to Boris

Makoff, master of crime, had been killed the previous afternoon; his slayers were arrested, caught red-handed. The papers did not say it was thanks to Durant that they were caught—only the subprefect of police knew it. And now he had run down Durant!

“Enter!” called Durant, to the sharp rap at the door.

To his surprise, he saw it was the subprefect, but alone. M. Ducasse entered, with a bow, and stood for a moment regarding his prey. He was a handsome man—thinly bearded, his face proud, aquiline, powerful, his eyes cruelly cold; in his expression was something sardonic, as though he found the world humorous and bitter.

This man battled against all the underworld of Paris, and made a fair job of it.

“Good morning, M. Durant,” he said. White teeth showed through his beard as he smiled. “You see, I have discovered your name, have found you! You did me a good turn yesterday, for which I owe you thanks, but I could not have so intelligent and able a man loose in Paris without knowing more about him.”

“So you have come to arrest me?” asked Durant. The other gestured.

“I have come to barter freedom—for information.”

Meeting those piercing, indomitable eyes, Durant made his decision swiftly. He was now dealing with a Frenchman, to whom the personal appeal meant everything. Defiance would only bring down violence.

“Be seated, M. Ducasse,” he said, and fumbled for pipe and tobacco. The subprefect took a chair, adjusted the flower in his buttonhole, and smiled.

“You aroused my curiosity yesterday, m’sieur,” he said. “An American, allied with thugs! An honest man mixed up with thieves! You even mentioned a gang of which I had never heard—an incredible thing, I assure you!”

Durant nodded, and smiled cynically.

“You want to know more about me?”

“I already know something. Since the war you have been employed in a bank here. Sometime ago you were called to America by the death of a relative; you are now wealthy. Eh?”

“Correct enough.” Durant sat on the table, puffed at his pipe, swung a leg carelessly. “Coming over on the boat, I met a lady. I had often seen her, here in Paris; now I met her. By sheer accident, I learned that she was in the grip of a blackmailer, a criminal organizer, a man who plans and carries out large and small things. I undertook to free her from his grip. As a preliminary step, I got into his good graces, joined his gang. The lady in question is Baronne Glincka, widow of a Russian—an American girl whose marriage was unlucky. The man is her former husband’s relative, one Boris Makoff.”

“The Baronne Glincka!” murmured M. Ducasse, lifting his brows.

“Who is forced to assist Boris at his work, forced to pay heavily, forced to lend her position and talent to further his schemes.”

“I know her, though I would never have dreamed this,” said the other. “But I do not know Boris Makoff, or anyone of that name.”

“He calls himself Baron Glincka—”

“Ah! That man!” The eyes of Ducasse flamed suddenly. “You mean it? Why, it seems impossible, fantastic! He is well known—wealthy, a Russian noble—”

“A criminal,” said Durant. “There is my story, m’sieur, in brief.”

Ducasse, inspecting him with frank curiosity, shook his head slowly.

"You have taken on an impossible achievement, m'sieur."

Durant laughed at him. "So? But he does not suspect me. I have discovered where he lives. I am going to him. Yesterday three of his best men were removed. When I have stripped away his defenses, I shall secure the documents which give him his hold on the Baronne, and my work is done."

"An impossibility." And now Ducasse spoke gravely. "But you speak of stripping! That is a harsh word, m'sieur, as you use it. It means killing."

"Exactly," said Durant, and his eyes were cold. "These men are like wild beasts, to be treated as such."

"I am interested in bringing them to justice," said the other softly.

"I am not," said Durant. "I am interested only in playing my own game—and winning. I can do it only in my own way. But you don't know everything! I've won over to my side the dope ring here in Paris, through an American agent of theirs whom I aided. They will give me every assistance against Boris Makoff."

Ducasse grinned at this. "The dope ring! I congratulate you on your friends, m'sieur. You fight fire with fire, eh?"

"With anything, to win!" exclaimed Durant vibrantly. He came suddenly to his feet. "I play this game, m'sieur, for the sake of a woman. What are you going to do about it? Interfere, and it's war between us. Hands off, and you'll be the gainer in the end. What do you choose?"

Ducasse fairly gasped, then leaned back and surveyed Durant with a flicker of admiration in his sardonic eyes.

"War! You dare threaten me—Paris—all France?"

"I dare anything," said Durant, giving him look for look.

"You, a lone American? Why, it is laughable!"

"Then arrest me," said Durant calmly, "and declare war—if you dare."

Their eyes met and held.

"Sacred name of a dog!" ejaculated M. Ducasse, and came to his feet. "You mean it! Well, my friend, I think you are a madman. And I never interfere with madmen if I can help it."

"You mean—"

M. Ducasse bowed, half-mockingly. "That you are free to pursue your own road, m'sieur, with my blessing! After all, you did me a service yesterday. Next time—we shall see."

And the subprefect of police departed.

Once alone, Durant called Boris Makoff on the telephone.

"Boris? Durant speaking," he said in English, which the other spoke fluently. "Thought I'd hear from you last night. According to the papers—"

"So you're still at that hotel?" said the Russian. "Don't be a fool. Cover up."

"I intend to." Durant laughed softly. "I'll be right along to your Avenue Mozart place."

Makoff swore. "Confound you! You know about it?"

"From Woroff."

"Huh! Wait a minute, now—don't come here. I'm up against it. Everything's cracked up for the moment." The Russian's voice was crisp, businesslike, alert. "I had to send the Baronne to Trouville this morning. Can you join her and take charge of a deal there? This cursed run of luck must stop, or I'll begin to think something's wrong."

Durant, startled as he was by this news that Helen Glincka was gone to Trouville, chuckled to himself. Boris Makoff might well curse—certainly his organization was badly

smashed, a number of his cleverest men lost, his schemes knocked awry!

“Yes,” said Durant. “But what’s in it? I’m beginning to think that I won’t get much by working for you, Boris.”

An inarticulate snarl brought a grin to his lips. Others, probably, were saying the same thing.

“Meet me at the Gare St. Lazare in thirty minutes,” returned Makoff. “You can get the Trouville express. I’ll show you what’s in it.”

“Done,” said Durant, and rang off.

He did not want to leave Paris. He did not at all want to visit the twin resort towns of Trouville-Deauville on the Normandy coast. He wanted to come to grips with Boris Makoff as quickly as possible. But Helen Glincka had gone—that changed everything. He could be with her, could no doubt get further information from her about Makoff’s place in the Avenue Mozart, headquarters of the wily Russian; he might even manage a blow at Makoff or the latter’s men.

“The rascal must be short-handed if he’d send us on such an errand,” thought Durant. “He probably meant Woroff to go—well, we’ll see! Now for Lewis.”

He called up the American dope-smuggler whom he knew, and on whose influence he might rely for help.

“I’m off for Trouville on the morning express, Lewis,” he said. “Something’s up, there—I don’t know what. Have your friends any agent in that vicinity?”

“They sure have,” Lewis laughed over the wire. “If it wasn’t for Deauville in summer, where would all the money come from? Tell me where to reach you, and I’ll have a wire waiting with his name. Meantime, I’ll have them wire him full instructions to help *you*.”

“Good man. I don’t know where I’ll be, but wire me in care of the Trouville branch of the Crédit Lyonnais, and I’ll call for it in the morning.”

“Right. Good luck to you!”

Leaving one of his bags here, Durant took the other and set out afoot for the Gare St. Lazare, only a few blocks distant. He delayed *en route* to buy a few toilet articles, so that when he entered the big gray station it was close to ten o’clock. As he mounted to the train level, he came upon Makoff, at the head of the stairs.

There was nothing small about the Russian, mentally or physically. He was a burly, powerful figure, impeccably clad in morning attire from hat to spats; his dark, dangerously eager eyes fastened upon Durant, he came to the latter’s side.

“Late! You’ve ten minutes to make the train. Here’s a ticket and first-class reservation for you. Come along—talk on the platform.”

Durant nodded, took the tickets held out, accompanied Makoff through the gates, across the waiting-space beyond, and so to the train-gates. Once on the platform beside the train, the Russian took his arm and broke into soft speech.

“For the moment, my friend, things are badly disorganized here—a series of disasters, you comprehend? Well, fate evens up. Here’s your car. I’ve put a package in your seat; take care of it. You’ve heard of Kaparien?”

Durant shook his head.

“One of the Greek syndicate that controls the gambling at Deauville. He’s half Greek, half Armenian, very wealthy, and a scoundrel,” said Boris Makoff. “His yacht is at Trouville now, and he’s going north to Etretat and Ostend in a day or two. If you never heard of him, I suppose you’ve heard of Count Corvos, the Austrian?”

“Naturally,” said Durant. “He’s said to have the finest collection of uncut stones in existence.”

Makoff chuckled. “Not any more—Kaparien has it. The Austrian plunged at the Deauville tables, and the syndicate took over his little collection. It happened last week. Kaparien is taking the stones with him—he’s going to meet a certain actress at Ostend, and open a campaign against her virtuous scruples. No very hard matter, I imagine. My Deauville man only learned of all this at the last moment. I got Héléne off this morning, and will wire her; she’ll meet you. Trust her! Things will be arranged—”

The train began to move, without warning, in the almost insensible glide of French trains at starting. Durant swung to the steps.

“Propotkin—my man at Deauville—fully trusted—all details—luck to you!” came in snatches from the Russian, and then no more.

Durant passed along the car until he found his own compartment—a first-class smoker in which were ensconced two American tourists. His own seat was marked by a small, rather heavy package wrapped in brown paper. He put it in the rack with his grip, not opening it, and settled down to the four-hour trip.

Nothing could so clearly denote the fix in which Boris Makoff found himself as this emergency call upon Durant and Helen Glincka. The Russian was convinced he could trust them both—holding the woman in pawn through fear, the man through grudging respect. Durant knew that his part must be to fetch the loot safely back to Makoff, and for once he found himself quite willing to play the Russian’s criminal game.

In his years of struggle, Ralph Durant had acquired a point of view which, to most men, would have been extremely perilous. For the law he cared nothing. He had seen so much of the world’s injustice and misery, so much of the men who battered upon other folk, the easy schemers who evaded the law and preyed upon less clever men, that it had imbued him with a cynical disregard for the justice of men. In the present instance, he was entirely willing to see Kaparien robbed, and to have Makoff profit at the man’s expense—even to share in the work. It would be robbing the vulture to pay the buzzard. Kaparien, one of the crew who sat back and profited by the gambling instinct of others, deserved no sympathy. He had taken over the gem-collection of Count Corvos direct from the gaming tables, and Durant had no hesitation in lifting his loot.

Besides, by doing so, he would win through to his objective. As he had told Ducasse that morning, the one great objective before him was to free Helen, Baroness Glincka, from the strangle-grip of Makoff. To this end he must bide his time, temporize until the chance came, risk no failure. To this end he must bend everything that turned up, with a ruthless disregard of ethics or anything else, even the lives of men. Already the trail behind him had been starred by the dead.

“We’ll put it through,” he resolved grimly. “We’ll put it through at all costs—and come back to Paris with the end in sight! At all costs.”

In this mood, avoiding his fellow-travelers, he reached Trouville early in the afternoon, and did not find Helen Glincka at the station to meet him.

He passed from the platform on through the station, and out to the front. There he set down his bag and gazed around. It was a brilliant scene that greeted him, in the hot summer sunlight.

The wide space before the station was crowded with vehicles—automobiles, huge busses, taxicabs, victorias, dogcarts. Opposite, the sidewalk cafés were crowded, and the gay sweaters and blazers of tourists were everywhere. To the right, against the green hills, spread out ancient Trouville, with the gray houses back from the esplanade and quay where the fishing craft swung in the deep and narrow port, and the casino out at the sea-end.

To the left was Deauville, garish, modern, aswing with life and action. Opposite the station, beyond the grimy coaling port, lay the yacht basin, where a dozen splendid money-wasters were moored against the quays.

Abruptly, Durant found a man at his elbow, heard his name.

“Pardon—this is M. Durant, perhaps?”



Fougères snatched the bottle. “M’sieur, you are generous—” “No,” said Durant, “I am giving orders.”

Turning, Durant beheld a queer figure—a short, extremely wide-shouldered man with luxuriant curled whiskers and high-boned face, and very long arms; in short, a man who only needed a beard-clipping to pose as a gorilla in clothes. He was soberly dressed in black, and might have been a shopkeeper.

“I am M. Durant,” said the American. “You are Propotkin?”

The other bowed slightly. “I have a shop in Deauville, m’sieur—jewelry and curious things. May I take you there for a chat?”

“No one else will meet me?”

Propotkin smiled. “Unfortunately no, m’sieur. Madame is engaged.”

“All right. But I have to get to the Crédit Lyonnais in Trouville at once—I’m expecting a telegram there, and the bank will be shut before long.”

“Nothing simpler, m’sieur. Here is a taxi now—”

A taxicab came up, and they entered. Propotkin gave the address, then made a sign of caution to Durant, who nodded.

They rolled across the narrow bridge and turned out along the wide Trouville esplanade, on to the seaward face of the town. There, before the square fronting the casino, the taxi halted. Durant went into the bank and inquired for a telegram sent him here. One was found and delivered to him.

In the doorway, he tore open the sealed blue paper, curious to see who the agent of the dope ring here might prove to be. He read:

Our man is Propotkin, jeweler, Deauville. Good luck.

LEWIS.

Durant burst into laughter as he shredded the telegram and cast it away. Propotkin! Agent both for Boris Makoff and for the Paris dope ring!

As the taxi returned to Deauville, the jeweler spoke quietly:

“M. Durant has many friends in Paris, it appears!”

Durant nodded, reading danger in the situation, but meeting it halfway with his usual calm assurance. Propotkin had received a wire from Boris Makoff—and had received another from the dope ring. What had this other said?

“What did they wire you about me?” he asked, turning and looking into the man’s alert dark eyes. “Not Boris—the others.”

Propotkin grinned. “Only that you were to be trusted and obeyed.”

“And what would Boris say,” demanded Durant slowly, “if he knew you were working for others—eh?”

The shot told. Propotkin darted him a sharp, alarmed glance, then laughed and relaxed.

“What about yourself, my friend?”

Durant only smiled. He was quite certain of his ground now, and in his smile was a queer conviction as he gazed at Propotkin—a realization. This man, this human gorilla, was agent for the dope ring in Deauville, a retailer of drugs, another bird of prey who got his claws into the victims of the baccarat tables. Durant felt that he would kill this Propotkin with great pleasure. He would be doing the world a distinct service.

In Deauville now—past the public square, on toward the casino where the “fast” set of Paris, the demi-monde of France, the gullible tourists, gathered to be plucked. Before reaching the garish building, the taxi turned off a side-street, and halted before a small shop whose window was filled with cheap jewelry and tourist curios. Propotkin alighted and paid the driver, then led the way into the shop, after unlocking it. He had no assistant, then!

Durant followed him into a back room of good size, furnished as a living-room—the man’s apartment obviously opened off the shop.

“You have lunched?” asked the Russian. “Good—then let us be comfortable. Here are cigarettes. We have an hour before Madame la Baronne calls for you! I suppose you know the game?”

“The general scheme, but no details.”

“I have arranged all details,” said Propotkin complacently, fingering his luxurious whiskers. “Kaparien, like most of his class, is eager for social distinction. Mme. la Baronne is now a guest aboard his yacht, and you are to join her there—the two of you only, to Ostend. You are an American millionaire, a friend of Baroness Glincka. She is to call for you here in an hour. So far, understood?”

Durant nodded, and lighted a cigarette. The other went on, much pleased with himself, looking more than ever like a simian as he sprawled in his chair.

“It is really quite simple—almost too simple. Two men of the crew are my men; the yacht has been lying here a fortnight, you see. There are three officers, including Kaparien himself, and four in the crew. That makes three of you against four. Two others will be aboard to act at the right moment. That makes five against four.”

“I don’t intend to appear in it,” said Durant calmly. The other grinned.

“I don’t intend you shall! Twenty minutes after you leave Trouville, Kaparien will be killed, my four men in command of the yacht, you and the Baronne presumably prisoners. You will, however, be at work. It’s your job to learn where the stones are kept and to blow the safe if you can’t get into it. Then pass the stones to one of our men. I’ll be alongside with a fast motor-boat, and all get away, to land up the river at Villerville and scatter, unless we go on to Rouen. The yacht will go on to Le Havre or back to Trouville; you and the Baronne will be promptly set free, though you’ll have to act as witnesses, and that’s all.”

“Hm! Very simple,” said Durant dryly. “Two objections, my friend. To insure your getaway, you must pull off the affair at night; you can’t do it as soon as the yacht has left port!”

Propotkin chuckled delightedly at this.

“Oh, can’t I? But the yacht is in Trouville harbor and must leave at high tide, since at low tide the place is a mud-flat. In fact, she’s been having some scraping done, to save drydock expense! Further, Kaparien always leaves harbor at night, in order to be at sea by dawn. He’ll get away around two o’clock, if he goes tomorrow night.”

Durant nodded reflectively. This hairy rascal seemed to have everything mapped out.

“The second objection is more important,” he said. “I was sent to get the stones and bring them back to Paris—not help you get them.”

Propotkin lost his grin. Seeing a quiet, steady purpose in Durant’s gaze, he sat up, gasped out protests—worked himself up to explosive pitch. Durant only shook his head in silence, and waited. The Russian cursed, threatened, pleaded, but all to no purpose.

“You’re wasting time,” said Durant at length, calmly inflexible before all the gesticulating and torrents of words. “I’m taking orders from Boris Makoff, not from you. I’m beginning to think that you want to clean out those gems for yourself and get away with them.”

“It is not so!” exclaimed Propotkin vehemently. “And you must do as I say—”

“Yes?” Durant smiled at him. “Perhaps you forget the other telegram which reached you from Paris today? I think it said you were to obey me?”

The Russian flung up his hands and collapsed like a punctured balloon.

“What do you want?” he demanded sullenly, staring at Durant.

“I’ll tell you that when the time comes.” Durant’s eye fell upon the package left in his care by Boris Makoff, and he was suddenly reticent. He reached out for the package and tore it open. Two smaller packages fell into his lap.

He opened the first, while Propotkin watched in wondering surmise. From it he took a pistol, fully loaded, and an extra clip of cartridges. This he pocketed. The second package was extremely heavy, tied with thick cord. Propotkin produced a knife and Durant cut the cord. This package, opened, again produced two packages.

One of these contained some dozens of bank-notes, new, fresh, crisp thousand-franc notes. Propotkin uttered a low gasp at sight of them, and reached forward, his eyes avid. Durant let

him take them, and opened the second and heavier packet. This, wrapped in oiled silk, contained a steel die.

Durant sat motionless, giving no sign of the amazement gripping him, while his brain groped with the problem—and reached the solution. Why had Boris Makoff given no reason for intrusting him with this burden, which meant hard labor for life if it got into the wrong hands? The Russian had been afraid to speak of it at the station, obviously; had confidently left it to Durant, or perhaps had sent some message through Helen.

“So you didn’t expect this, eh?” asked Durant.

Propotkin gasped again. “Forged!” he exclaimed, dropping the sheaf of notes in his lap and staring at the die. “And that is what did it—”

“Exactly.” Durant wrapped up bank-notes and die once more, then regarded the man with calm assurance. “So you see, your little scheme did not go far enough! Now you shall take your instructions from me. Agreed?”

“But yes, m’sieur,” muttered the other.

“And you will not fail to do as I say?”

“Oh, *si, si!*”

Durant lit a fresh cigarette. “Bring these aboard the yacht yourself. Let us assume there is a safe in the cabin—eh?”

“There is one,” said the other. “I have everything ready for you—to blow it.”

Durant nodded. “You’ll come down to the cabin where it is. I’ll attend to the safe, to save you time in escaping. The stones I’ll keep myself—it won’t be dangerous. You’ll take everything else out of the safe, and keep it for your trouble; Kaparien will be certain to have a large sum aboard. Put this die and these forged notes in the safe, and go. You’ll be supposed to have taken the stones, and no attention will be paid me. It will be thought Kaparien was a note-forged. Since the Hungarian forgeries, the public is wild about such things; the murder and robbery will be quickly forgotten. It will be thought that the Greek syndicate here was behind the forgeries, using the notes at the baccarat tables; the newspapers will play it up, everything else will drop to second place—”

Propotkin leaped to his feet. “Admirable!” he exclaimed. “Here is true genius—it is magnificent! M’sieur, I bow humbly to such a brain!”

“Thank you,” said Durant modestly. He had, he believed, correctly fathomed the intent of Boris Makoff—indeed, the course was obvious enough. “Then take charge of these things, and don’t fail to bring them.”

Propotkin nodded. He rose, took the wrapped-up die and forged notes, and disappeared with them into another room. Durant sat in growing exultation, as the thing gradually opened out before him—the whole thing, cut and dried, as though on a screen! When the Russian returned, Durant spoke:

“Who’s in charge of things aboard the yacht? I’d better be in touch with him, in case anything goes wrong.”

The other laughed heartily. “Who? The steward, one Jean Fougères—a Frenchman. And how did I reach him? Because he needs the little white powder, you comprehend? It is not a bad thing to have two irons in the fire, eh? It is Jean who will attend to Kaparien.”

Durant nodded carelessly. “Right. I’ll get in touch with him. When does all this come off—tomorrow night, you say?”

“We’ll know definitely when Mme. la Baronne comes. She should be here any moment.”

“By the way,” said Durant, “I wish you’d give me a small bottle of the stuff, Propotkin. I don’t use it myself, but I may have need of it. A few ounces.”

“Eh?” The other stared. “A few ounces? Do you know what it is worth?”

Durant shrugged. “No, nor care. Charge it to me in your account with the syndicate.”

“Very well, m’sieur.”

The Russian disappeared again. When he returned, he was holding a small bottle, unlabeled, filled with a white powder. He extended it to Durant.

“Here you are—unadulterated, too. Is that enough? It should supply any ordinary addict for a month or two.”

“Plenty, thanks.” Durant took the vial and pocketed it carefully. Here was forged another link in the chain—that chain of trickery and intrigue which had flashed across his alert brain. He would fight fire with fire in this matter, and with fire redoubled! Playing a lone hand, with swift and certain death as the penalty for errors or squeamishness, he was efficient and merciless as rock.

“What about blowing that safe?” he asked.

“Wait until the Baronne comes,” said Propotkin, fingering his curled whiskers. “She’ll bring word from Jean—he thought he might learn the combination, which would make the work needless. If he fails, I’ll send aboard a package tomorrow, containing everything from drills to nitroglycerin. You can manage it?”

“At a pinch.”

Less than a minute later, came the tinkle of a bell—some one had come into the outer shop. Propotkin slipped out, and in the exchange of voices following, Durant heard the clear even tones of Helen Glincka. A thrill ran over him, and he came to his feet. The curtain across the door was pushed away, and she came toward him, hand extended. Wordless, he bowed over it in French fashion, then straightened up and looked into her eyes. She was murmuring some conventional greeting, but it was the eyes of her that spoke loudest to him, the sky-blue eyes full of questioning, mute alarm, entreaty!

“It’s all right, Helen,” he said quietly in English, giving her hand a quick pressure. Then, as Propotkin followed her into the room: “You have a message for us from Jean? From the steward?”

She nodded, took the chair Propotkin set out for her.

“He got the combination of the safe this morning,” she returned. “Why would it not be possible to do the work without harming Kaparien? Tonight, say, when we’re all at the casino?”

“No,” said Durant promptly. “I’ve no sympathy for such a man—let him pay! Besides, we cannot change the plan; Boris has mapped it out admirably. Eh, Propotkin?”

“Oh, a magnificent plan!” exclaimed the Russian with enthusiasm. As he looked at the man, Durant smiled; and watching his cold eyes in that smile, the baroness shivered.

“I’ve come for you,” she said simply. “The car outside will take your bag or bags to the yacht. We’ll go over to the Potinière together—the café opposite the casino, you know—and Kaparien will meet us there a bit later. I’ve been shopping. Are you ready?”

Durant nodded. “Ready,” he said, and looked at Propotkin. “Don’t forget that package, when you come aboard! Then we sail tomorrow night, Helen?”

“Yes,” she said. “A little after midnight.”

Propotkin grinned.

Helen Glincka was very beautiful—not in the fashion of the painted professional beauties to whom Deauville is used, nor that of the pink-cheeked, free-striding American girls to whom it is also used, but in a delicate fashion all her own.

A day had passed since Durant's arrival in Trouville. He had met Kaparien, had gone aboard the yacht, had settled into the swing of the business; now once again he sat under the wide shade-trees of the Potinière, with Helen Glincka across the table and an hour of privacy ahead. They were in the back corner by the cake-shop, and could talk freely.

Here, as everywhere, women looked long at Helen Glincka, men looked on and again; her very passing created a little ripple of eager interest. To Durant, her delicate features beneath their crown of pale golden hair looked strained and anxious; strongly carved as they were, they seemed a half-broken mask.

"Boris is a remarkable man," he observed, "to bend such a woman to his purpose!"

Her blue eyes rested upon him calmly, yet underneath the calm was desperation.

"Once he learns you're trying to help me—you know what will happen."



As Kaparien whirled about, Durant's fist struck him solidly.

"He'll expose you? He'll tell the world that your husband tricked you, had been secretly married to an opera singer before he married you?"

She gestured impatiently. "I'm talking about you, not about myself."

"I'm talking about you." Durant smiled, and under his poised assurance her eyes lost the strained, tense expression, a little tinge of color crept into her cheeks. "I want to know where Boris keeps the proof of that first marriage."

She shrugged. "How should I know? I see little of him, hear from him only when he needs money or assistance."

"He calls himself Baron Glincka and lives in the Avenue Mozart. He is well known by that name."

Her eyes widened. "You mean it? It is his family name, but he is not a baron—"

"No matter. You haven't been inside his house?"

"No. And the other woman is to be in Paris this week—my money and influence have gone to bring her. She is to sing at the Opéra Comique."

Durant nodded, stung by the bitterness of her voice. He could realize what humiliation this woman was suffering.

“Elsa Muscova, eh?”

“Her real name is Elsa Swinger.”

“I know. Well, we’ll attend to her in short order, Helen. Boris must be short-handed to make such use of us.”

“He is, dreadfully. He thinks he can depend on you—he imagines that you’re infatuated with me—”

Durant looked at her steadily. “It’s the truth. I’ve always loved you, since those days when you would come into the bank three times a week, and I’d look up and see you—”

She flushed, her eyes tender now.

“Folly! But, my friend, delicious folly—I never thought there was such a man in the world. There’s frankness for frankness. I didn’t suppose—”

“Poor kid! You’ve run up against the wrong kind, like most of ’em over here, and you went on the rocks. Well, I’m going to pull you off,” said Durant. “Then we’ll go to Mentone or Juan les Pins or Pau together and forget there ever was a world. And I’m going to pull you off the rocks quickly, too—there’s no time to waste! Look here, now—is Kaparien a particular friend of yours?”

“That man? A friend?” She made a distasteful motion. “How could you think so?”

Durant chuckled. “Just wanted to make sure. You buck up, now, and face what happens tonight—plenty will happen, or I miss my guess! Then we’ll go back to Paris with the stones, and open up the main attack. First I’ll deal with this Elsa Muscova, and through her with Boris.”

“But what will you do—what can you do?”

“Fight.” Durant’s gray eyes were cold and hard as stone. “Just now I’m passive, twisting things to suit my purpose, waiting. Once I hit Paris, I start in to fight, with any weapons—creating weapons if I haven’t any. Helen, this is an absolutely ruthless, pitiless game; to pull you off the rocks, I’m going to wreck anything in sight! And you’re coming off.”

“Oh!” Her eyes shone, and for an instant her breath came fast. “To be free—but no, you can’t manage it. Nobody could. You’ll only involve yourself, my friend—”

Durant laughed. “We’ll see about that! To business, now. What’s the program for today?”

“Kaparien will be here any minute—the casino’s open already. There’s a try-out this afternoon of that acrobatic dancing act from Stockholm, and I admit I’m interested. Then back to the yacht for dinner. One of Kaparien’s partners will be with us, and an English baronet and his wife—one of the impecunious-traveling kind who stay out of England. It’s a shabby business all around. Then here for the evening; they’re giving Tosca tonight. An hour at the tables afterward, I suppose, and then back to the yacht. Kaparien wants to leave port around one o’clock, with the tide.”

Durant nodded. “Good. And here’s our friend now.”

Kaparien came toward them, bowing and smiling here and there as he threaded his way among the tables. He was clad all in white from hat to shoes, with a glitter of diamonds; few men can wear white with any luck, and Kaparien was not one of the few. His swarthy, vulpine face, his powerful figure, his heavy-lidded geniality, were not pleasant to Durant, who found something reptilian in the man.

None the less, as it was his business to do, Durant made himself highly agreeable.

The tea-hour finished—more English and Americans were here than French—they passed across to the casino and up the stairs into the great hall. Here, about the *boule* or two-per-cent

roulette tables in the rear was a small crowd of pikers; the main interest was centered in the stage. Kaparien, given much deference by the waiters, had a table reserved.

To Durant it was all rather a bore, but he was amused by the attitude of Kaparien, who tried to show himself a polished man of the world. To pierce this mask of culture was easy; beneath it, Durant found a typical hybrid Greek, sensuous, regarding the world as his prey, wolfish. A man who could be merciless as stone, devoid of any sympathy or regard for those in his power. At the present moment, Kaparien was doing his best to make use of the social touch given him by Baroness Glincka—he little dreamed that both the baroness and the supposed American millionaire knew all about the lady he was hoping to meet at Ostend.

Durant was glad when they adjourned to the yacht toward six o'clock. The *Elektra* lay in the yacht basin between the twin towns, moored against the quay. She was a luxurious craft of good size, fitted rather for coasting from port to port in leisurely enjoyment of life than for any real sea-work, and Kaparien had obviously lavished money on her.

Durant had a small cabin to himself. The three separated at once to dress for dinner, as the other guests would arrive by seven. Once in his own cabin, Durant rang for the steward; the moment for action had arrived. A moment later Jean Fougères presented himself; he was a thin, pallid little Frenchman, with enormous black mustaches.

"Come in and shut the door," said Durant. "Can you give me five minutes?"

"Certainly, m'sieur." Fougères entered, closed the door, waited. Durant looked at him.

"Do you know that I am in charge of the job tonight?"

"Yes, m'sieur. M. Propotkin so informed me today."

"Oh! Did he inform you, by any chance, that he has double-crossed all of us and intends to skip, leaving us to face the music?"

The pallid face of Fougères became ashen as death, and his eyes burned.

"M'sieur!" he exclaimed. "It—it is impossible!"

"On the contrary," said Durant coldly. He produced the vial Propotkin had given him and handed it to the steward. "There is a present for you. When that runs out, come to me in Paris and you shall have more. Is it understood?"

Fougères snatched the little bottle and examined it, caught his breath.

"M'sieur! You are generous—"

"No, I am giving orders. Do you intend to obey them?"

"With all my heart. If this is true about M. Propotkin—what shall we do?"

"Carry through all the plans as arranged. Where is the safe? I have seen none."

"Behind the painting of Venus in the smoking salon. Lift down the picture."

"The combination?"

"Is here, m'sieur." Fougères passed over a folded slip of paper.

"Good. You have arranged as to signals and so forth with Propotkin, no doubt. The men below?"

"She burns oil, m'sieur. Only three men there, one of them ours. All is arranged."

"Then carry out the plan. Give me five minutes' notice, and I'll open up the safe. When Propotkin comes aboard, shoot him and leave him. Come down, rifle what's in the safe, get away in the launch. Do you know how these gems are kept? In boxes?"

"In four morocco boxes, m'sieur."

"Very well. Make sure of Propotkin. That's all."

"Good luck, m'sieur!"

The steward withdrew, and the door closed. Durant smiled grimly to himself.

The dinner was informal and greedy, with the oily, bejeweled partner of Kaparien very much in evidence. Durant was relieved when they adjourned to the smoking salon and ordered a taxicab.

“Drop me at the Bureau des Postes,” he said, as they filed over the gangway to the wharf. “I have a few letters to mail—I’ll walk on to the casino and join you.”

So, ten minutes later, he dropped from the taxicab, which continued its way. Instead of seeking the post office, however, Durant crossed over to the prefecture of police, entered the brick building, and from a lounging gendarme inquired the whereabouts of the prefect. By sheer luck, that gentleman was now in his office, despite the hour—Deauville does not begin the day until darkness falls. Durant was ushered in, and gave his name to the fussily important prefect.

“I have a verbal message for you, M. le Prefect,” he said, “from the subprefect of Paris, M. Ducasse.”

“Ah! I know M. Ducasse very well,” was the response. “A very good man indeed—what a pity that politics appoint the prefect of Paris! Otherwise, M. Ducasse should have had the position long since. A message to me, you say? Verbal?”

Durant shrugged. “A matter of suspicion only, to be confided to your delicacy and tact, m’sieur. As M. Ducasse observed to me, there were few other men in France upon whom he could depend, in a matter so important, requiring such precision of management.”

The pleased prefect fingered his whiskers and beamed.

“Most kind, most kind of the great M. Ducasse!” he said. “A compliment from him—ah!”

“Perhaps you are aware,” said Durant, “that a certain shopkeeper here in Deauville acts as a distributor of drugs—chiefly cocaine?”

The prefect started slightly, but he was a good actor.

“We have had our eye on one or two men for some time,” he said wisely if vaguely. “Yes indeed, while we awaited positive evidence. The man in question?”

“One Propotkin, who has a small shop.”

The prefect could not conceal his astonishment here. “What? You are sure? Why, I myself play chess twice a week with M. Propotkin—”

“Permit me to remind you that this is merely a message,” said Durant. “It is established that Propotkin retails drugs. What is far more important, however, is the suspicion that he is connected with an enterprise much more dangerous—the forgery of bank-notes.”

The prefect flung out his hands. “Ah, these Russians!” he exclaimed tragically.

“Exactly,” said Durant. “M. Ducasse requests that you will, during the coming week, have this man watched—very cautiously. He must not be alarmed or given any cause of suspicion. Perhaps M. Ducasse will come here in person to give you such information and assistance as is in his power. That is all, m’sieur, and I thank you.”

“But you, m’sieur?” questioned the prefect, now profoundly alarmed and disturbed. “You are not a Frenchman—an Englishman, perhaps?”

“Heaven forbid!” said Durant, and laughed. “I am an American, at present the guest of M. Kaparien aboard his yacht, leaving tonight. If you will wire M. Ducasse, I think he will tell you that I am well known to him and trustworthy.”

“Oh, no, no, not necessary at all,” and the prefect waved his hands. “You will not sit down and have a cigar? No? It is most kind of you, m’sieur—”

Durant was bowed out, even escorted to the front gate, and twice shook hands before he could get rid of the excited and eager prefect. Then, chuckling to himself, he headed for the casino, only a short distance away.

The evening passed rapidly, furiously; Kaparien was kept busy pointing out famous actresses, courtesans, plungers, millionaires, titled folk, even a lone king more noted for his dissipation than his regal qualities. Only once came a break in the routine, before the last act of the opera being given on the wide, shallow stage before them. For the moment, Durant and Helen Glincka found themselves alone at the table. She leaned forward, her face suddenly tragic.

"Can't you stop it?" she said under her breath, imploringly. "It's terrible to think that this man who is entertaining us is to be killed before morning—that one word from either of us would stop it!"

Durant regarded her steadily. "He is a wolf, not a man," he responded, his gray eyes like ice. "His fate matters nothing to me; yours is everything. Would you prefer to let him live, then, and go on indefinitely in your slavery to Boris Makoff?"

She shivered a little—whether from the words, or from the bitter chill of his gaze, were hard to say.

"No," she said. "No. And yet—it seems—"

"It is none of your doing," said Durant inflexibly. "Instead of feeling pity for him, think of the hundreds who have been ruined at these baccarat tables in the rear rooms—to buy his yacht! Think of the women and children who have gone down into poverty—to set those diamonds on his hand! Think of the crime, the punishment that falls hardest on the innocent families of men, indirectly due to the place in which we sit—which puts the clothes on this man's back! Let him suffer. The more the better! The world's full of his kind. Killing him won't stop it, of course—but let him serve our turn, your turn! If he can serve you by dying, I'm more than satisfied."

"That's a man's viewpoint," she said. "Yet a word to him—"

Durant leaned over the table. "If you utter that word," he said quietly, "it means that you put me into prison—or else that you put a bullet into me, as surely as though you pressed the trigger. You don't know all that's coming off this night, my dear. Now warn him if you like?"

Her face paled as she met his gaze, comprehended his words, realized all they portended.

"I sha'n't warn him," she said quietly. "Would I do such a thing, when you're doing all this for me? Yet I'm sorry."

Durant shrugged. A moment later Kaparien rejoined them, and the final act of Tosca was on.

Luck was with Durant that night. Then and later, in an unobtrusive manner, he exerted himself to strip the place of its artificial glitter and show it, to the eyes of Helen Glincka, sordid and naked; and chance sent a newspaper man from Paris, whom he knew slightly, to point out men and things with cynic notes. Here was a man whose brother, ruined at these very tables, had shot himself on the seaward terrace; here was an actress wearing the jewels for which a statesman had bartered honor and life; and so it went. A little later he met her sea-blue eyes for an instant, and read in them a message which drew a smile to his lips.

At one o'clock, with the night getting into full swing, they departed. Kaparien had drunk nothing, though he had gambled and won heavily; he seemed bored by the noise and

confusion of the place, and on the way to the quay spoke of being at sea and the beauty of it. Durant almost liked him—for a moment. Then they were out and getting aboard the yacht, whose crew was standing by, ready. No tug was needed in this little harbor.

The Baronne bade them good night, and retired. Durant did likewise. Kaparien departed to change his clothes, and told his skipper to pull out at once; he himself would take the bridge when they were outside the jetty. So the three separated. Durant went down to his own cabin, pocketed his pistol, and waited by the open port.

Voices of men, rattle of winches, slow turnings of the engines; presently the *Elektra* was gently sliding out, until the houses and quay were gone as by magic. For a little the broad white beach glittered in the moonlight, then it too vanished, and as Durant's cabin was to port, the land vanished as the yacht headed out to the northward, across the broad estuary of the Seine. Behind lay Trouville, ahead and to the right was Havre with its high headland, and to the left was the Atlantic and the Channel. They were off.



“What’s all this?” snapped the Russian. Durant knew there was but one way out. He fired point-blank.

The night was clear and still, with little of the usual sea running. As he stared out at the glinting water, Durant suddenly realized his own inward tumult, and anger swept him—yet there it was. He rather considered himself hard-boiled, cynical, careless of others; in reality, he could not repress his actual self, could not always fight down the rush of gentler feelings that upsurged in him. And now, all in an instant, he abruptly flung overboard all his schemes and strode out of his cabin and down the passage. He knocked at the door of Helen Glincka's room.

“Yes?” came her voice.

“Dressed? Then be ready—I’ll bring a chap down here in a few minutes,” he told her. “Leave your door open, key on the outside. I’ll lock you in. No time to talk.”

He departed hurriedly, cursing himself for a fool, and yet curiously glad of what he was about. Here, merely for a woman's whim, merely for a few words from Helen's lips, he was risking life and liberty needlessly, staking everything recklessly on a desperate gamble! Here in these moonlit waters, with the green Norman hills blended into the sky behind and the lights of Trouville dim stars along the coast—he was making a fool of himself! And yet the mere resolve to do it had lifted a half-sensed burden from his heart.

He came back to his own cabin, and as he opened the door, Jean Fougères came hurriedly along the passage.

"M'sieur! M'sieur!" The steward spoke softly, swiftly. "It is time. In five minutes I take his coffee up to him—he drinks it, dies quickly. Be ready!"

The man glided away, leaving Durant stupefied. Poison! He had not suspected such a thing. The damnable cowardice of it appalled him. This was Propotkin's work, beyond doubt.

"Thank heaven I made my decision!" thought Durant.

He turned, darted up the ladder with furious anger spurring him. To think he had been so close to condoning this work, taking a hand in it! A man's killing, in a man's way, was one thing, but this was quite another thing—it angered him, sickened him, goaded him on his swiftly chosen course.

Gaining the deck, he ran forward, heading for the wheel-house and tiny chart-room, then espied the figure of Kaparien standing at the rail, examining something ahead through night-glasses.

"That you, Durant?" said the Greek. "Looks like a boat adrift—"

Durant caught his arm.

"Here! Come below with me instantly," he exclaimed, keeping his voice down. At the urgency of his tone, an exclamation broke from the other. "Can't tell you here—quick. Your life's in danger, man—they're all in it! Thank the Baronne, not me—she discovered it—come along, now—"

Urging the other man along, he half dragged him toward the after companion. Kaparien poured out questions, then acquiesced, evidently realizing something desperate was up. A moment later they were on the ladder. At the foot of it, Kaparien turned.

"What is it, Durant?" he demanded excitedly. "You can't mean—"

"Look out—behind you!" cried Durant.

As Kaparien whirled about, Durant's fist struck him solidly, terrifically, behind the angle of the jaw. The blow had weight. Kaparien flung out his arms and pitched headlong down the corridor.

Durant dragged his senseless victim to Helen Glincka's cabin, flung open the door, and lifting Kaparien, laid him on the bunk. He straightened up and looked at the wide-eyed girl.

"Not dead but knocked out. Don't wake him up. Tell him I brought him here when he does wake up."

With this he was out again, locked the door, pocketed the key, and made hastily for the deck. Five minutes had not passed since his word with the steward, but he knew Fougères would be unable to wait out the time. And he was right. As he gained the deck, he almost collided with the steward, who bore a tray.

"No need of that now!" exclaimed Durant. "Go ahead—I've attended to Kaparien. Pass the word and strike! I'll be in the cabin. And look here! Don't be too open about shooting down Propotkin. Do it quietly, you understand?"

“Right, m’sieur!” Fougères promptly tossed his tray overboard. “Go, then!”

Durant made for the smoking-salon.

As he entered the tiny, luxurious, richly appointed little cabin and switched on the lights, a pistol-shot rang out up above. At the same instant, the throbbing turn of the engines ceased abruptly. There were no further shots. He could detect no outcry, no confusion, only dead silence. Beyond a doubt, everything had gone off like clockwork, the faithful men of the crew were taken by surprise, the yacht was captured.

Durant thought of Propotkin coming aboard from that drifting boat Kaparien had sighted, and grinned to himself. He did not intend to stave off the dope-handler’s destiny.

No time to waste, now! He darted to the wall, jerked away the large painting of Venus, and laid it aside. There was revealed a large safe-knob, the safe itself being concealed by the wall-paneling. A single knob, no more—Kaparien evidently trusted greatly.

In his hand the folded paper given him by the steward, Durant worked at the knob. The combination, like the safe itself, was simple enough. In two minutes he pulled at the knob, and as the safe opened, a section of paneling opened with it. Before him was another steel door, which opened to his touch, and displayed an array of compartments and small drawers. In one compartment stood four red morocco boxes.

On these Durant seized. Spreading his handkerchief on the table, he emptied each box into it, throwing the boxes on the floor. The glittering, shimmering pile of pebbles was not large; he knotted the four corners of the handkerchief, then swiftly left the room and ran aft. He gained his own cabin, opened his bag, dropped the loot into it, then headed back for the smoking-salon. So far, so good—not a hitch anywhere. The *Elektra* was quietly drifting.

Back to the smoking-salon now—two men had just entered before him. They flung Durant a nod, obviously recognizing him, and plunged at the open safe.

“Where’s Fougères?” asked Durant, lighting a cigarette at the table.

“Waiting above,” replied one of them, stuffing bank-notes into his pockets. “That cursed Propotkin is just coming aboard. Lucky thing you warned us.”

Fougères had spread the word, then!

Durant smiled and watched the two men at their work. Propotkin would be dropped, would be found later with the forged notes and die in his pockets—for he would need both hands to reach the deck of the yacht—and all would be lovely, so far as the police were concerned.

With vicious abruptness, everything changed in an instant.

Through the quiet ship tore a scream—a woman’s shrill cry. Durant whirled about, jerking out his pistol—Helen’s voice? A smashing, banging crash from somewhere aft; then a sudden wild outbreak of sound came from the deck—a shot, another, a man’s yell cut off midway by a bullet, shouts.

“Something wrong,” exclaimed Durant, to the suddenly alert men. “Get up above—”

“So this is it, eh?”

The voice of Kaparien from the doorway—he had smashed his way out of the locked cabin. He stood there, pistol covering the three men, an ugly smile on his lips. “Hands up, all three of you! Quick, Durant—up!”

Durant obeyed, pointing his pistol up at the ceiling, and the other two men followed suit. Too late, Durant saw his mistake. There was iron in this Greek, and he had not counted on it sufficiently.

“Clever American, eh?” Kaparien’s narrowed, dangerous gaze struck at Durant. “I suppose she’s in on it too, since you’re a friend of hers. Well—”

Behind Kaparien showed a darting shape—a low, gorilla-like figure. The crash of a shot rang out. Kaparien staggered, whirled around, and jerked sideways, half his head blown away. In his place showed the figure of Propotkin, glaring into the room, pistol in hand.

“What’s all this, eh?” snapped the Russian. “That damned Fougères tried to round on me—the rest of you in it or not? Speak up, you American pig—”

Durant, his arms half lowered, knew there was but one way out now.

He fired point-blank, fired a second time, the deafening reports ringing in the little cabin with stunning force. What happened next was difficult to say. Both the other men flung themselves forward at Propotkin as the latter staggered back. Then, unexpectedly, the Russian’s pistol vomited flame; he recovered, uttered a roar of brute ferocity, shot repeatedly.

It was all swift—swift! Durant fired a third time. Propotkin flung out his arms, whirled about, went down across the body of Kaparien. One of the other men was down, coughing out his life. The second was gone with a leap for the deck.

Realizing himself unhurt, Durant halted only to look at Propotkin and make sure the man was dead, then he, too, started for the deck. As he came up the companionway, a medley of shouts and orders broke out forward. Durant tossed his pistol over the rail, took two steps, came upon the body of the steward. Jean Fougères lay, pistol in hand, shot through the head, beyond all further need of dope.

The quick explosions of a motor broke out upon the moonlit night, and from the side of the *Elektra* shot a small craft, heading away from her at high speed. Those who remained of the gang were off and away in Propotkin’s craft.

Somewhere aboard must be two officers and two faithful men. Durant moved forward, and came upon them all in the bow, lashed side by side to the rail. They greeted him with a burst of shouts, and he worked at their lashings—not too rapidly. He did not want that small boat overhauled.

“Locked in a cabin—broke out,” he exclaimed. “There was shooting below—what’s it all about, captain? Where’s M. Kaparien?”

“Murder, piracy, robbery!” said the skipper, rubbing his wrists. “And they’re off—here, come below, m’sieur! We must see where M. Kaparien is—and the lady—”

They hastened below, and in the passage encountered Helen Glincka. A cry of relief broke from her at sight of Durant, and she swayed. Durant caught her, murmured a low word in her ear, and with a nod she went to her cabin. Durant followed the captain, the other three men at his heels, to the smoking-salon.

All four of them stood surveying the red scene before them, and the captain crossed himself as he stared. He turned to Durant. “You see, M. Durant? This hairy stranger came aboard in his boat; a gang was at work and had us trussed up. M. Kaparien came upon them as they rifled the safe, and opened fire. He killed two of the rascals—another shot him from behind. Ah! A brave man, this poor m’sieur! And now—what?”

“Back to Trouville at once,” said Durant. “This is a matter for the police.”

In five minutes the *Elektra* was heading south again to Trouville.

In the cold light of dawn, the prefect of police at Trouville stood in the smoking-salon of the *Elektra*. Two of his men were busy writing; on the table were ranged loot taken from the

dead thief, with the die and the packet of forged notes that had been found in Propotkin's coat pockets. Durant motioned toward Helen Glincka, who stood by the door.

"Mme. la Baronne, I presume, may retire?" he asked. "Since she was locked in her cabin and knew nothing, she might better be left out of the proceedings, m'sieur. It would be a graceful act of courtesy, such as has made the name of Frenchmen renowned."

This is a touch which not even a police official can resist. The prefect turned to Helen with a bow.

"By all means. We have Madame's story, we have her Paris address in case of need—that is all. Madame, if I can be of any assistance in this regretful crisis—"

"I'll accompany her to Paris by the morning train," said Durant. "That is, unless you have need of me—"

The Baroness departed. The prefect fingered his voluminous beard a moment, then shook his head.

"I think not—you did not break out of your cabin and release the prisoners until after it was all over. What need of evidence? The thing speaks for itself. This poor M. Kaparien was brave, but foolish. He should not have attacked these others. See! He put two bullets into Propotkin, killed another man with his third. What valor! If, M. Durant, you will take a message to Paris for me, there is no need of detaining you except to get your statement."

"Gladly," said Durant. "The message?"

"Tell M. Ducasse what has happened here. If he wishes to put his men to work on these forged notes, if he wants to get in others of the gang, well and good; I shall keep this phase of the matter from the newspapers until tomorrow, by which time I shall hear from him. Eh?"

"Excellent, m'sieur. Then, with your permission, I'll pack."

Durant went to his own cabin. He pulled out his bag, looked into it, saw the lumpy bundle of his handkerchief at the bottom. He quietly drew other things over it, then straightened up. A smile touched his lips.

"So all's clear, here are the stones for Boris—to buy my way into his den!—and by this afternoon I'll be on the inside of things. But I wonder—I wonder what M. Ducasse will say when I telephone this message to him!"

His smile became a grin.

"Beside Henri IV," the next story in this scintillating series, introduces Henry of Navarre and the beautiful Viennese opera singer, with a breath-taking climax. In the next issue.

[The end of *The Trail of Death* by Henry Bedford-Jones]