

The SHIELD of SILENCE

By Edwin Balmer and Philip Wylie

Double Tragedy Lightens the Strain in the Myrand Case

THE STORY TO DATE

Lucian Myrand is serving a life sentence for the murder of Serge Ralten, who was supposedly his friend. At the trial Myrand pleaded guilty, but gave no reason for committing the crime. Nor would he explain his mysterious disappearance for ten months after escaping from a German prison camp during the war. Myrand's wife, Ursula, and his daughter, Alice, live on the family estate near Chicago. On the sixth anniversary of the murder Alice and Ethan West, a young lawyer friend, visit the town house where the murder occurred and find a man murdered and sprawled on the floor where Ralten had lain. The slain man cannot be identified. They call him "Otto." Daniel Fallone, professional reformer, offers his aid to Peter Corondelet, with whose office Ethan is connected. Ethan learns where "Otto" lodged and in the man's room finds Sunday papers from which two pictures have been clipped. One is nineteen-year-old Johanna Strang, a Bohemian dancer, who is appearing in Chicago. The other is of Alice Myrand. Ethan interviews Johanna Strang, who was born at the end of the year of Lucian's disappearance during the war. She admits she came to Chicago to seek her real parents. Ethan is convinced she is Lucian's daughter. In Myrand's library Ethan and Alice find hidden in a book a picture of a woman who must have been Johanna's mother. Ethan pays a surprise visit to the reformer's office. Fallone seems to be in terror of his life. Alice and Johanna meet. Johanna sends a message to her father over the radio. Lucian is planning an escape. Ethan suspects there is a connection between Fallone's office and a disreputable adjoining building.

INSTALLMENT XIII.

Alice's phone call awakened Ethan. He heard the bell and a moment later Sanders, Peter Corondelet's man, tapped on the door. "Miss Myrand telephoning, sir. She says it is very important. You can take the telephone in Mr. Corondelet's dressing room, sir." "Mr. Corondelet's not here?" "No, sir; he left for the office an hour ago."

Ethan jumped up and saw by the sun that it was late in the morning, which meant that Peter must have given orders he was not to be disturbed. He saw on the stand beside the bed a folded paper addressed to him in Peter's hand. He opened it and read:

10:30 a. m.

Have just learned that F. has not appeared at a meeting of a committee which he never misses. Also he is not to be located either at his office or his home. Other developments. Better phone me. P. C.

Ethan went in pajamas to the phone.

"Ethan?"

"O, Alice! How are you?"

"Can you possibly come here right away?"

"What's happened?" Ethan asked, his heart hurrying with his longing to be beside her when she needed him so. The carefully preserved secrets of the Myrands were now dammed back by a barrier thin indeed, and had it at last altogether broken?

"Nothing more has happened, Ethan," Alice said. "Nothing—outside us. I mean nothing more has been done."

"Your mother, you mean," Ethan said, thinking how terrible must be the happenings within her if she knew all the truth.

"Yes. . . . When can you get here, Ethan?"

He had carried in his hand Peter Corondelet's note, but momentarily had forgotten it.

"I'll—call you back, Alice!" he said.

"You mean you aren't coming?"

"I want to—O, you must know that—but things are breaking here, Alice! About your father—the murder—the whole affair."

"That's just it, Ethan—don't you see? They're breaking—breaking mother, too!" Alice burst out crying; she could not help it.

Ethan heard her. "I'll come as quickly as I can—if it's the best

thing to do," he qualified his quick promise. "I've first got to call Mr. Corondelet, then I'll call you back." And they both had to be satisfied with that.

A moment after she hung up, Ethan had Peter on the wire.

"Hello," said Peter, calmly in comparison with the call just completed. "You woke up? Well, I was going to give you about ten more minutes. I need you this afternoon, Ethan."

"Mr. Corondelet," said Ethan, "Alice just called. She's disturbed about her mother. She asked me to come up there."

"I've talked with Mrs. Myrand this morning," Peter replied. "I'll see to the situation there. I want you to go to Riverplain. . . . The gentleman we talked about last night has disappeared. Something very unusual. . . . He had important appointments this morning, and especially a committee meeting which was going to give him a place in the spotlight which he loves. Nobody can locate him, and a lot of people have tried. But it is understood he's going to keep his appointment to speak at Riverplain. He phoned the president of the Riverplain Women's club, from some place in Chicago, about some small matter of arrangements, and he said he would see her at two o'clock. His address, by the way, is to be broadcast."

"When did he call her?" Ethan asked.

"About eleven o'clock."

"He phoned himself?" Ethan inquired, thinking of the flight in the car in the night and of the car that followed Fallone's.

"Yes. Mrs. Greeley—that's the club president—knows him, and she had a little talk with him, as usual, over the phone. She had no idea that anything might be wrong with him until other people phoned her to find if she had heard from Fallone. . . . I want you to go to Riverplain and be at that meeting."

"That's an order, sir?"

"Do I need to make it an order?"

"I was thinking about Alice," Ethan explained.

"Then go to Riverplain thinking about Alice. And by the way, take the train, and keep among people. Do you hear?"

"Yes, sir."

"Sanders will give you breakfast. Then get started."

It was past noon when he left the apartment and nearly two when the train delivered him at the little city, half town and half suburb of Chi-



"I defy both personal dangers and misunderstandings."

As Above, So Below

Look for your birthday or the group in which it appears throughout the following notes—it may be mentioned more than once. Mark it with a pencil wherever you see it, and then heed the counsel given.

By WYNN

This Week's Opportunities for All of Us

For BUYING: Today, Tuesday forenoon, and Saturday.

For SELLING: Monday, Tuesday, and Friday.

For ROMANCE: Today, Wednesday afternoon, and Friday.

For FINANCE: Wednesday forenoon.

For TRAVEL: Monday afternoon, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.

For OCCUPATION: Today and Friday forenoon.

For LEGAL MATTERS: Monday afternoon, Friday, and Saturday.

For HEALTH: Thursday and Friday forenoon.

DAY BY DAY

TOMORROW and TUESDAY: Get your thinking apparatus going; develop plans that will enable you to advance your interests, especially those centering around your community.

MONDAY, DEC. 30: Down the familiar groove; nail down the emotional safety valve. Best for those born Feb. 24-March 10, June 26-July 11, and Oct. 29-Nov. 12.

TUESDAY, DEC. 31: Better early than too late; watch relations with superiors—be tactful. Best for those born March 10-24, July 11-26, and Nov. 12-26.

WEDNESDAY and THURSDAY: Your accumulations (property, savings, real estate, etc.) should receive a good deal of your attention; aim to put them in order.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 1: Financially good; better in forenoon. Double test important decisions. Best for those born March 24-April 8, July 26-Aug. 11, and Nov. 26-Dec. 11.

THURSDAY, JAN. 2: Forenoon doubtful as to money schemes; noon hour favors wise changes. Best for those born April 8-22, Aug. 11-25, and Dec. 11-24.

FRIDAY, SATURDAY, and SUNDAY: Relax a bit from your usual grind and welcome opportunities that offer recreation and diversion. Develop artistic and dramatic talents.

FRIDAY, JAN. 3: Generally favorable except in late afternoon; avoid risks. Best for those born April 23-May 7, Aug. 25-Sept. 9, and Dec. 24-Jan. 6.

SATURDAY, JAN. 4: Urges to do and say unwise things; hold them around noon and sunset. Best for those born May 7-21, Sept. 9-23, and Jan. 6-20.

SUNDAY, JAN. 5: Best to analyze your local and long-distance emotions; in the rut. Best for those born May 21-June 4, Sept. 23-Oct. 7, and Jan. 20-Feb. 2.

FAVORED GROUPS

This week's vibrations favor expansion, creative effort, and the consideration of new plans by those born on and between these dates:

JANUARY 7-27, FEBRUARY 6-20, MARCH 14-29, APRIL 1-18, MAY 8-25, JUNE 8-19, JULY 16-31, AUGUST 1 and 4-11, SEPTEMBER 10-27, OCTOBER 11-21, NOVEMBER 16-30, DECEMBER 1-14.

Notable persons born in the foregoing periods are Carl Laemmle, Bebe Daniels, Mischa Elman, Jerome Kern, Heather Angel, Alice Roosevelt Longworth, and John Barrymore.

penitentiary saw the mist approaching. The convicts behind the walls could not see it, but they could feel its fog, clammy breeze.

"My fog is coming," Lucian Myrand whispered to himself. "My fog . . . my chance . . . my chance."

In the great auditorium of the woman's club at Riverplain silence ensued for an instant as the speaker groped for his glass of water. His fingers found it and he gulped the water down. The club president herself instantly refilled the glass from the pitcher. Fallone already had resumed his oration and resumed, through his voice, his complete possession of everyone's emotions.

Everyone's?

Ethan at least preserved himself, and now he looked back over the rows behind him, encountering here and there a countenance self-contained. A man's face had become conspicuous for its coldness. It was on the right toward the rear.

Ethan recognized him. The fellow was one of the two who had stepped out of the lighted office last night after Riola had tapped twice on the door and had carried out with complete efficiency Riola's order to give Ethan "the street."

There were two other men, seated separately, also singularly uncombed by the speech, which was coming at last to its climax.

Fallone's fingers caught momentarily in his waistcoat pocket. Standing so, he spoke for a few minutes; then, as if it required a struggle, his hand went to the glass again and came down on top of it.

He picked it up, still speaking, holding it with his big hand about it. Twice, while the excitement of his speaking increased, he lifted it toward his lips, but lowered it again.

At last he drank, gulping the water down as before, and replaced the glass on the table. He returned to the microphone, shouting into it with redoubled earnestness, extending his hands to the people before him.

He finished. He was "off the air." Throughout the auditorium men and women rose to their feet, clapping and cheering.

"Bravo! Fine! Great! Fallone! Fallone!"

Before their eyes Fallone collapsed and fell to the floor.

"Doctor! Doctor Bemis!" the club president was screaming. She kept her head fairly well. She remembered that Dr. Bemis was in the audience, and she had a way cleared for him. But all that the doctor could do when he reached the form on the floor was to pronounce Daniel Fallone dead.

Ethan returned to Chicago shortly after six o'clock, and he went directly to Peter Corondelet's apartment. He was well aware that both radio news flashes and the first newspaper account of Fallone's "tragic" and dramatic end had preceded him.

Peter was awaiting him, having canceled all engagements for the evening. Peter was excited, and as soon as he saw Ethan he realized that Ethan had not come merely to repeat the news that everyone now had heard.

Peter took Ethan into his study and shut the door.

"Exactly where were you and what did you see?" Peter inquired.

"I was perhaps twenty-five feet away from him during his speech. When he fell I jumped up on the stage. Of course, there was tremendous confusion, sir."

"Naturally."

"I have with me the remains of the liquid contents of the last glass of water which he drank."

Ethan took from his pocket and exhibited a small phial, carefully corked and half filled with clear fluid.

"It seemed to me worth while to cover the chance that there might have been something in this water." And he described in detail how he had seen Fallone's fingers catch in his waistcoat pocket and how his hand covered the glass and then held it before he drank for the last time.

"Tell me how you got hold of it."

"I jumped on the stage, I said, but I was not the first. Several people were bending over Fallone. All the attention was that way. I put in my pocket the glass Fallone had

used and was careful not to spill the little fluid remaining at the bottom. I bottled it later."

Peter now possessed himself of the phial. "I'll have it checked on before midnight, Ethan," he said. "And now I've something quite as sensational to tell you; and this also is confidential for a time. Lucian Myrand is missing!"

"The family has not been informed, and there is nothing official about my information. I simply heard from someone who knows of my interest in the penitentiary that this evening one convict is not accounted for. My further information is that the man is Myrand. This may not be accurate, but I believe it is."

"Probably Lucian is lying in a hole he has hollowed somewhere under one of the shop floors or under a pile of material or some such place, where he hopes to stay concealed until he finds a chance for a final break. . . . The odds are tremendously against him."

"I see, sir. I'm sorry."

"It's raining harder, Ethan. A rotten rain; and cold, now."

them, slender and cold, but quick to return his clap, and they warmed within his own.

"I just got back to town," he said, "except I had to go first to Mr. Corondelet."

"Yes; you were in Riverplain?"

"Yes."

"Mr. Fallone died there?"

"Yes. I was with him. I saw it." She stared at him. "Ethan, what was he to father—or father to him?"

"We don't know yet."

"But something?"

"Yes," said Ethan honestly. "That is, we think so."

"Ethan, you have news for me. I can feel it! You have news for me, haven't you?"

"Your father's not accounted for at the penitentiary tonight."

"Ethan!"

"They think he's hidden himself somewhere inside, trying to escape."

"This night!" she cried. "This awful, awful night! Ethan, I'm going! If you love me, if you care for me at all, the least little bit, don't try to stop me. Tell them you've come for me to take me out. I've my car, and I'll get a coat. . . . Ethan, do just that this once for me!"

The Joliet road for the most part is wide and straight and level, so sometimes as he drove Ethan turned and looked at the girl beside him as the lights of passing cars shone in. Strange how those garish glimpses remained in his mind and etched themselves on his soul. He was hers, hers, utterly, forever.

They went to the walls of the prison, and the walls yet were manned. It proclaimed that the convict who was missing had not been found. They drove away and at random turned and steered into a side road that mostly was mire. They left the car and on foot splashed in the mud and pools of planted fields.

"Father!" Alice called to the black, blinding wind and rain.

"Father, it's Alice. Alice, your daughter! I'm here!"

Too long, as Ethan well knew, he allowed that; but at last he made her obey him. He took her into a town and to a house where the

certain that again he was ratted and recognized her he repeated French the same words, "Look ninety-three." He said nothing of that had any coherence.

Alice carried within herself belief that she knew what he meant but she did not even try to test until after the funeral. For the first time she returned to the town house and to the room in which he had shot Ralten and in which someone else had shot someone else six years later.

She told Ethan, and they chose to be alone again in the house, haunted now as it had not been before.

So once more in silence the pushed open the library door and entered the room together.

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[To be continued.]

An Open Letter to Jean Hersholt

Dear Jean: You are so good that most folks who see you on the screen think you are somebody they never saw before, even though they have been entertained by you constantly since the old silent movie "Greed" and before. But what I want to mention here is that you have at least three and a half good years ahead of you, with opportunity for added laurels, and in the added departments of writing and directing. Keep your eye open for opportunities. With best wishes,

WYNN.



JEAN HERSHOLT

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