

## CHAPTER XII

### FOGERTY

At the Waldorf Arthur's own limousine was standing by the curb. The street was nearly deserted. The last of the Kermess people had gone home.

Weldon ran to his chauffeur.

"Did you take Miss Merrick home?" he eagerly enquired.

"Miss Merrick? Why, I haven't seen her, sir, I thought you'd all forgotten me."

The young man's heart sank. Despair seized him. The detective was carefully examining the car.

"They're pretty nearly mates, Mr. Weldon. as far as the brown color and general appearances go," he said. "But I'm almost positive the car that carried the young lady away was of another make."

"What make was it?"

The man shook his head.

"Can't say, sir. I was mighty stupid, and that's a fact. But my mind was so full of that assault and battery case, and the trickery of that fellow Mershone, that I wasn't looking for anything else."

"Can you get away?" asked Arthur. "Can you help me on this case?"

"No, sir; I must remain on duty at the hotel. But perhaps the young lady is now safe at home, and we've been borrowing trouble. In case she's been stolen, however, you'd better see Fogerty."

"Who's Fogerty?"

"Here's his card, sir. He's a private detective, and may be busy just now, for all I know. But if you can get Fogerty you've got the best man in all New York."

Arthur sprang into the seat beside his driver and hurried post-haste to the Merrick residence. In a few minutes Mrs. Merrick was in violent hysterics at the disappearance of her daughter. Arthur stopped long enough to telephone for a doctor and then drove to the Doyles. He routed up Uncle John and the Major, who appeared in pajamas and bath-robos, and told them the startling news.

A council of war was straightway held. Uncle John trembled with

nervousness; Arthur was mentally stupefied; the Major alone was calm.

"In the first place," said he, "what object could the man have in carrying off Louise?" Arthur hesitated.

"To prevent our marriage, I suppose," he answered. "Mershone has an idea he loves Louise. He made wild love to her until she cut his acquaintance."

"But it won't help him any to separate her from her friends, or her promised husband," declared the Major. "Don't worry. We're sure to find her, sooner or later."

"How? How shall we find her?" cried Uncle John. "Will he murder her, or what?"

"Why, as for that, John, he's safe locked up in jail for the present, and unable to murder anyone," retorted the Major. "It's probable he meant to follow Louise, and induce her by fair means or foul to marry him. But he's harmless enough for the time being."

"It's not for long, though," said Arthur, fearfully. "They're liable to let him out in the morning, for he has powerful friends, scoundrel though he is. And when he is free--"

"Then he must be shadowed, of course," returned the Major, nodding

wisely. "If it's true the fellow loves Louise, then he's no intention of hurting her. So make your minds easy. Wherever the poor lass has been taken to, she's probably safe enough."

"But think of her terror--her suffering!" cried Uncle John, wringing his chubby hands. "Poor child! It may be his idea to compromise her, and break her heart!"

"We'll stop all that, John, never fear," promised the Major. "The first thing to do is to find a good detective."

"Fogerty!" exclaimed Arthur, searching for the card.

"Who's Fogerty?"

"I don't know."

"Get the best man possible!" commanded Mr. Merrick. "Spare no expense; hire a regiment of detectives, if necessary; I'll--"

"Of course you will," interrupted the Major, smiling. "But we won't need a regiment. I'm pretty sure the game is in our hands, from the very start."

"Fogerty is highly recommended," explained Arthur, and related what the house detective of the Waldorf had said.

"Better go at once and hunt him up," suggested Uncle John. "What time is it?"

"After two o'clock. But I'll go at once." "Do; and let us hear from you whenever you've anything to tell us," said the Major.

"Where's Patsy?" asked Arthur.

"Sound asleep. Mind ye, not a word of this to Patsy till she has to be told. Remember that, John."

"Well, I'll go," said the young man, and hurried away.

Q. Fogerty lived on Eleventh street, according to his card. Arthur drove down town, making good time. The chauffeur asked surlily if this was to be "an all-night job," and Arthur savagely replied that it might take a week. "Can't you see, Jones, that I'm in great trouble?" he added. "But you shall be well paid for your extra time."

"All right, sir. That's no more than just," said the man. "It's none of my affair, you know, if a young lady gets stolen."

Arthur was wise enough to restrain his temper and the temptation to kick Jones out of the limousine. Five minutes later they paused before a block of ancient brick dwellings and found Fogerty's number. A card over

the bell bore his name, and Arthur lit a match and read it. Then he rang impatiently.

Only silence.

Arthur rang a second time; waited, and rang again. A panic of fear took possession of him. At this hour of night it would be well-nigh impossible to hunt up another detective if Fogerty failed him. He determined to persist as long as there was hope. Again he rang.

"Look above, sir," called Jones from his station in the car.

Arthur stepped back on the stone landing and looked up. A round spark, as from a cigarette, was visible at the open window. While he gazed the spark glowered brighter and illumined a pale, haggard boy's face, surmounted by tousled locks of brick colored hair.

"Hi, there!" said Arthur. "Does Mr. Fogerty live here?"

"He pays the rent," answered a boyish voice, with a tinge of irony.

"What's wanted?" "Mr. Fogerty is wanted. Is he at home?"

"He is," responded the boy.

"I must see him at once--on important business. Wake him up, my lad; will you?"

"Wait a minute," said the youth, and left the window. Presently he opened the front door, slipped gently out and closed the door behind him.

"Let's sit in your car," he said, in soft, quiet tones. "We can talk more freely there."

"But I must see Fogerty at once!" protested Arthur.

"I'm Fogerty."

"Q. Fogerty?"

"Quintus Fogerty--the first and last and only individual of that name."

Arthur hesitated; he was terribly disappointed.

"Are you a detective?" he enquired.

"By profession."

"But you can't be very old."

The boy laughed.

"I'm no antiquity, sir," said he, "but I've shed the knickerbockers long ago. Who sent you to me?"

"Why do you ask?"

"I'm tired. I've been busy twenty-three weeks. Just finished my case yesterday and need a rest--a good long rest. But if you want a man I'll refer you to a friend."

"Gorman, of the Waldorf, sent me to you--and said you'd help me."

"Oh; that's different. Case urgent, sir?"

"Very. The young lady I'm engaged to marry was abducted less than three hours ago."

Fogerty lighted another cigarette and the match showed Arthur that the young face was deeply lined, while two cold gray eyes stared blankly into his own.

"Let's sit in your limousine, sir," he repeated.

When they had taken their places behind the closed doors the boy asked Arthur to tell him "all about it, and don't forget any details, please."

So Weldon hastily told the events of the evening and gave a history of Mershone and his relations with Miss Merrick. The story was not half



told when Fogerty said:

"Tell your man to drive to the police station."

On the way Arthur resumed his rapid recital and strove to post the young detective as well as he was able. Fogerty made no remarks, nor did he ask a single question until Weldon had told him everything he could think of. Then he made a few pointed enquiries and presently they had arrived at the station.

The desk sergeant bowed with great respect to the youthful detective. By the dim light Arthur was now able to examine Fogerty for the first time.

He was small, slim and lean. His face attested to but eighteen or nineteen years, in spite of its deep lines and serious expression. Although his hair was tangled and unkempt Fogerty's clothing and linen were neat and of good quality. He wore a Scotch cap and a horseshoe pin in his cravat.

One might have imagined him to be an errand boy, a clerk, a chauffeur, a salesman or a house man. You might have placed him in almost any middle-class walk in life. Perhaps, thought Arthur, he might even be a good detective! yet his personality scarcely indicated it.

"Mershone in, Billy?" the detective asked the desk sergeant.

"Room 24. Want him?"

"Not now. When is he likely to go?"

"When Parker relieves me. There's been a reg'lar mob here to get Mershone off. I couldn't prevent his using the telephone; but I'm a stubborn duck; eh, Quintus? And now the gentleman has gone to bed, vowing vengeance."

"You're all right, Billy. We both know Mershone. Gentleman scoundrel."

"Exactly. Swell society blackleg."

"What name's he docked under?"

"Smith."

"Will Parker let him off with a fine?"

"Yes, or without it. Parker comes on at six."

"Good. I'll take a nap on that bench. Got to keep the fellow in sight, Billy."

"Go into my room. There's a cot there."

"Thanks, old man; I will. I'm dead tired."

Then Fogerty took Arthur aside. "Go home and try to sleep," he advised. "Don't worry. The young lady's safe enough till Mershone goes to her hiding place. When he does, I'll be there, too, and I'll try to have you with me."

"Do you think you can arrange it alone, Mr. Fogerty?" asked Arthur, doubtfully. The boy seemed so very young.

"Better than if I had a hundred to assist me. Why, this is an easy job, Mr. Weldon. It 'll give me a fine chance to rest up."

"And you won't lose Mershone?"

"Never. He's mine."

"This is very important to me, sir," continued Arthur, nervously.

"Yes; and to others. Most of all it's important to Fogerty. Don't worry, sir."

The young man was forced to go away with this assurance. He returned home, but not to sleep. He wondered vaguely if he had been wise to lean upon so frail a reed as Fogerty seemed to be; and above all he wondered where poor Louise was, and if terror and alarm were breaking her heart.