

Freddie gasped. The burglar on the fire-escape was a girl!



The Fall of Frisco Freddie

by

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Freddie the blackmailer captures a girl burglar; the girl returns the compliment. But you'll never guess what the police caught when they reached the spot!

ON THE DIRECTORY of the swanky Chatham Arms Apartments he was known as Frederic Graham, Esq. But to his intimates he was Frisco Freddie, one of the slickest blackmailers in the extortion business.

Just at present, Frisco Freddie lolled back in a comfortable, leather-upholstered easy-chair in the living-room of his bachelor flat. He was sipping an after-dinner high-ball and listening to police calls on the radio. Also, he was fondly examining a particularly brilliant five-carat diamond which he had purchased just that same afternoon.

The diamond, Freddie admitted frankly to himself, was a luxury he really couldn't afford. It had cost him every cent he had accumulated in six solid months of blackmailing activities. Now that he had bought the stone, he was absolutely broke. He'd have to nose around for a new victim from whom he might extort a few hundred dollars for running expenses. But Frisco Freddie wasn't worried. New York was full of suckers.

Idly he arose and tenderly placed the five-carat diamond back in the wall-safe where he kept his valuables. He closed and locked the safe. And then, abruptly, he tensed.

From the loud-speaker of his radio blared an

official, commanding voice from police headquarters: "Calling Car Seven-Eight-One! Car Seven-Eight One! Proceed immediately to the Chatham Arms Apartments! A prowler has been seen leaving the window of an apartment on the top floor. The burglar is descending by the fire-escape. Hurry, Car Seven-Eight-One! You may get there in time to catch him before he reaches the ground!"

Frisco Freddie's eyes narrowed. A burglar—right here in his own apartment-house! Suddenly an idea came to him—an idea whose irony brought an abrupt grin to Freddie's rat-like features. Wouldn't it be funny if he, Frisco Freddie, notorious lawbreaker, could capture the burglar and turn him over to the cops!

STILL chuckling, Freddie leaped for his desk and extracted a flat automatic. Then he dashed for his window, which opened out upon the fire-escape, down which the housebreaker was supposed to be descending. He peered out.

The night was solidly dark; but Freddie saw a deeper blob of shadow just above him on the iron-grilled fire-escape. The shadow was moving, slowly and silently. It was coming down.

Freddie waited just the proper length of time.

Then, when the moving shadow had almost reached his landing he thrust out his automatic and said, "All right, Mr. Burglar, I've got you covered!"

The shadow stiffened and emitted a sharp feminine squeal of dismay. It turned its white face toward Frisco Freddie.

Freddie gasped.

The burglar was a girl!

In the dim light that seeped from his open window he could see her face—a piquant, terror-stricken face marked by deep blue eyes and trembling, kiss-inviting red lips. The rest of her was concealed beneath an engulfing black topcoat five sizes too big for her.

Almost instantly, Freddie recovered his poise. Again he pointed his automatic. "Come on down!" he commanded. "And no tricks, remember!"

Haltingly, the girl descended the remaining few steps. Freddie reached out, grabbed her, and yanked her into his living-room. Then he whipped down the shade and whirled on his captive.

She shrank away from him, wide-eyed.

Freddie grinned. "You're the prettiest burglar I ever ran across!" he told her. "The cops are going to be quite surprised when they see what I've captured."

The girl's features turned even more pale than they had been before. "Th-the c-cops!" she quavered.

"Sure. They're on their way here now. Somebody saw you leaving that apartment upstairs; saw you and phoned headquarters. I just heard the radio call dispatching a patrol-cruiser over here."

The girl shook visibly. "But—but, I'm no b-burglar!" she wailed frantically.

Frisco Freddie grinned amiably. "Of course not You're one of the chambermaids of the apartment house. You were dusting off the fire-escape, weren't you?"

The girl shivered within the folds of her dark topcoat. "You—you wouldn't understand!" she whimpered dolefully. "I c-couldn't expect you to!"

"I couldn't understand what?" Freddie asked.

"H-how I happened to b-be on the f-fire-escape."

FRISCO FREDDIE studied her. Despite her obvious fright, she was pertly pretty. Also, she was young; and from beneath her pulled-down cap he could see stray strands of bobbed red hair protruding. Freddie liked red-haired girls who were

young and pretty. He said, "Maybe I wouldn't understand. But I'm perfectly willing to listen. Take off your coat and cap. Sit down."

She paled again. "Oh—I—c-can't t-take off my coat!"

"Why not?"

"Be-because—I—"



Freddie approached her. With an unexpected motion, he grabbed at the shoulders of her dark topcoat and yanked. The girl gasped and shrank away from him—and the coat slipped from her quivering body.

Frisco Freddie's eyes bulged. The girl was almost nude!

Miserably she tried to cover her sketchily brassiered breasts with her forearms. Her only other garment consisted of a sheer mesh step-in which clung to her hips with shy intimacy. Her body was a series of lilting feminine curves and creamy contours—curves and contours which set Frisco Freddie's blood leaping up toward the boiling-point in his hammering veins. "Well, I'll be—!" he gasped.

His captive curled up abjectly on a divan and tried to cover her generous exposures with a very small cushion. "P-please give me back my coat!" she wailed.

"I should say not!" Freddie retorted. "I like you

much better the way you are!” He reached forth and snatched the cap from her mussed auburn curls. “You’re an absolute knock-out, you know!”

“B-but I—I might catch cold!”

Freddie grinned. “We’ll have a little drink. That’ll keep you warm.” He poured out two slugs of Scotch, downed one himself, and handed the other to the red-haired girl. She drank it with a tiny grimace of distaste.

Freddie sat down beside her on the divan. Firmly he took away the silken cushion with which she had tried ineffectually to conceal her seductive young body. His eyes boldly swept over her; drank in the clean curves of her bare thighs, the flat plateau of her stomach, the glorious half-globes of her firm breasts. Then his hands went forth to wander over the same route his eyes had taken . . .

The girl pushed him away with a tiny cry of dismay. “You—you mustn’t!”

Freddie frowned. “Maybe you’d rather have me turn you over to the cops when they arrive?” he suggested coldly.

She shivered. “Oh—please—no!” she whimpered, and snuggled herself against him as though unconsciously seeking his masculine protection. “I—you mustn’t let the police get me! I’d be ruined!”

Frisco Freddie felt a tingling thrill race through his arteries at the intimate contact with her. “Then you’d better be nice to me!” he warned. Again his fingertips traced patterns on her undraped body. His palm wandered, came to rest on the throbbing firmness of her breasts . . .

THIS time she didn’t try to struggle free from him. A mounting flush came to her cheeks, as though the slug of Scotch was beginning to warm her blood. She merely looked into his eyes and said, “But—this is—naughty!”

“Naughty and nice!” Freddie grinned, and proceeded farther in caressing her unadorned femininity . . .

The skill of his experienced fingers must have done something to the girl’s self-control; for suddenly she relaxed in his arms and drew a deep, panting breath . . .

Freddie’s hot palms pressed against those quivering, inviting mounds. “I’m going to kiss you!” he told her.

“N-no—!” Her protest died under the impact of his questing lips against her open mouth. For a long

moment their lips clung together in moist hot ardor. Then Freddie transferred his kisses to her shoulders, her throat . . .

With a tiny sob of surrender, she clapped his head against her; almost smothered him . . .

AFTER a while, Freddie poured two more drinks. “Now maybe you’ll tell me what you were doing out on the fire-escape,” he suggested.

“If—if I tell you, you won’t—give me up to the police?”

“After what’s just happened, I wouldn’t give you up to the Prince of Wales!” Freddie smiled dreamily. “I’m going to keep you here from now on. Consider yourself a prisoner of love!”

“Oh—but—I’ve got to go! I’ve got to be at work in the morning—I must!”

“Work!” Frisco Freddie repeated. “I thought burglars worked only at night—even pretty burglars like you!”

“But I’m not a burglar! I’m a—a stenographer!” the girl said.

“A stenographer?”

The girl blushed as she nodded. “I—I work for Julius King, the big food importer. He lives in an apartment upstairs in this building. I—I came here tonight because he wanted me to take some dictation.”

Freddie grinned sardonically at her. “Do you always take dictation in your undies?”

She lowered her eyes. “I—he—Mr. King and I got—sidetracked!” she admitted ruefully. “And then his wife suddenly came home. I—I had to get out by the fire-escape. I didn’t have time to get my dress back on.”

“I see!” Frisco Freddie whispered softly. And then an idea struck him. It was a brilliant idea. It had to do with Freddie’s profession—blackmailing!

He smiled inwardly to himself as the full details of the plan leaped into his brain. He would go upstairs to the apartment of Julius King, call the man out into the corridor. And then he would demand hush-money, on pain of exposing King’s *liaison* with his red-haired stenographer—spilling the beans to King’s wife!

With Freddie, to think was to act. “Listen,” he said to the auburn-haired girl on the divan. “You wait here for me. I’ll go up and try to get your dress from this Julius King. And to make sure you don’t run out on me,” Freddie added, “I’ll just take this topcoat along with me.” He slipped into the dark

overcoat which the red-haired girl had worn on her trip down the fire-escape. "I suppose this coat belongs to King?"

"Y-yes. I grabbed it as I went out the window."

"I'll give it back to him in exchange for your dress." Freddie blew her an airy kiss and went out of his apartment, locking the door behind him.

HE didn't bother to wait for the automatic elevator. Instead, he pelted up the four flights of stairs that led to the top floor. He knew just exactly what apartment to look for; it had to be the one directly over his own, because the fire-escape ran past it. He gained the corridor of the top floor, raced down its dim length. He came to the door he sought.

It was partially open. Frisco Freddie stopped dead in his tracks as he heard voices floating out from inside the apartment—!

"I came home unexpectedly and snapped on the lights," a man's excited tones rumbled. "I was just in time to see this burglar going out my window. He seemed to be wearing a dark overcoat and a cap, but I could see a flash of red hair under the cap itself. The coat seemed too large for him."

A heavy, official voice asked, "Did the burglar get anything of value, Mr. Jones!"

"Yes. He got away with a diamond stickpin and a watch—"

But Frisco Freddie hadn't waited to hear any more. His features suddenly grey, he turned and raced for the staircase. "Good God!" he mumbled to himself, frantically. "That red-headed dame lied to me! The occupant of that apartment isn't Julius King! His name is Jones! And the red-haired dame isn't his stenographer! *She's a real burglar!*"

Freddie's heart hammered within his heaving chest as he launched himself down the stairs. Bitterly he cursed himself for seven kinds of a damned fool! He had actually left the red-haired girl burglar in his own apartment . . . and suddenly he remembered that five-carat diamond in his wall-safe . . .!

He reached his own floor, flung himself along the hallway to the door of his flat. With trembling fingers he unlocked the door and smashed it open. He stared.

Frisco Freddie groaned and almost collapsed.

The round door of his wall-safe gaped open. He stared into the looted aperture. His diamond was gone—and so was the red-haired girl!

He looked around him, dazed. His closet was open. His own topcoat was missing! The window-shade was up and the window itself was open. The girl had evidently made her escape down the fire-escape . . .

Freddie's rat-like face whitened as he realized the full truth. The girl was a professional housebreaker. She did her jobs clad only in step-ins and a topcoat, so that if she happened to be caught, she would have an alibi all framed—a story similar to the one she had told Frisco Freddie! "And I swallowed her yarn—hook, line and sinker!" Freddie cried. Abruptly he whirled on his heels. "By God, she won't get away with this!" he gritted desperately. "I'll go up and tell the cops about her—send them after her! She can't be very far away! They'll catch her—"

HE dashed out into the corridor and raced up the staircase to the top floor. Down the long hallway he ran, blindly, excitedly. And at that very moment a door punched open. It was the door leading into the apartment which the red-haired girl had burglarized before she got into Freddie's flat.

The door opened, and two detectives emerged. With them was a tall, angry-looking man. The angry-looking man stared at Frisco Freddie racing towards him: and suddenly his eyes narrowed. "*There's the burglar now!*" he roared. He pointed a long accusing finger at Freddie. "I'd recognize that topcoat anywhere!"

Freddie turned, started to run.

The two detectives leaped at him, caught him, pinioned him. Freddie struggled uselessly. One of the detectives twisted Freddie's arm. "Well, well, well!" the headquarters man grinned. "Frisco Freddie—with a police record as long as your arm!"

Freddie tried to jerk loose. "You're all wet!" he snarled desperately. "I'm no burglar! In fact, my own apartment has been robbed—"

The tall, thin, angry-looking man snorted as he came up. "That's the burglar!" he shouted. "I tell you I recognize that topcoat he's wearing! Why don't you search him—see if he's still got my stickpin and watch?"

"Good idea, Mr. Jones!" one of the detectives grunted. His hand plunged into the pockets of the dark topcoat—

Freddie groaned wildly. The detective's hand emerged from the coat-pocket—emerged bearing a

glittering diamond pin and a gold watch! “Are these yours, Mr. Jones?” the detective grinned.

Frisco Freddie was trapped, and he knew it. It would take a darned good lawyer to get him out of this jam—

And then he groaned again in sudden agony. He hadn’t any money to hire a lawyer. He’d spent his last dime for that five-carat diamond—and the red-haired girl had stolen the stone from his safe!

So they took Frisco Freddie off to jail.