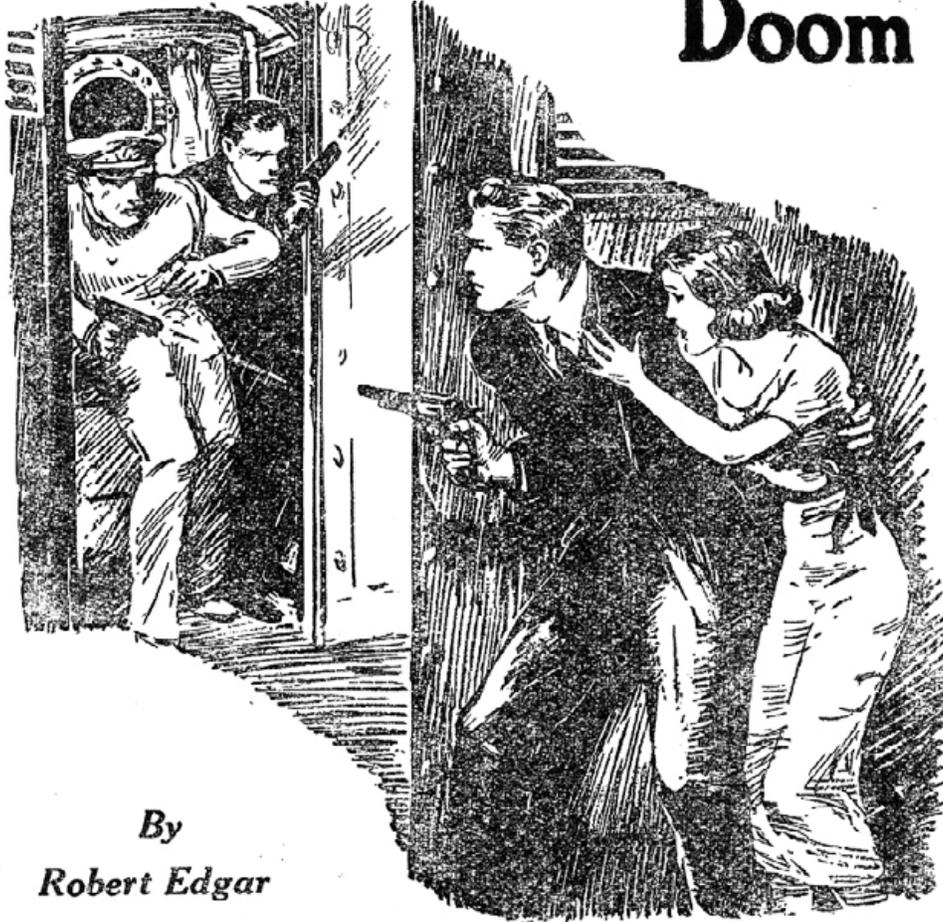


The Doctor Prescribes Doom



By
Robert Edgar

Young Doctor Meade took charge of the beautiful victim of the hit-run driver. And he found that the only cure was a quick dose of lead capsules.

THE GIRL had a bad bruise on her forehead, and a nasty cut on the left arm, below the elbow. Those were the only visible injuries.

Kneeling at her side on the floor of the little candy store, young Doc Meade thought that she was the most beautiful thing he had beheld in his life. Her dress, which was of some light, washable material, was rumpled and muddied, and her dark hair had lost any vestige of order.

But in spite of all that, her face possessed a strange, ethereal beauty which made Larry Meade feel something he had never experienced before. He suddenly felt that it was very important that this girl must live. Silently, he cursed the hit-run driver who had struck her.

The uniformed policeman on the beat was at the door, keeping the crowd out, and Joe Beloise, Larry's driver, had just come in with the stretcher. Joe took one

look at the unconscious girl's face, and whistled.

"Boy," he whispered: "She's a stunner. Is she hurt bad, Larry?"

Larry Meade ran his long, sensitive fingers around the girl's skull, feeling for a possible fracture. He almost breathed a sigh of relief as he looked up and said to Beloise: "I don't think it's a fracture, Joe. But it's a concussion. Here, let's get her on the stretcher and in the bus. I'll treat her on the way in. Easy there!"

As they lifted her on to the canvas, she opened her eyes.

Larry was right above her, and he saw the sudden swift terror in those dark eyes of hers, the sudden spasm which shook her slender body underneath the thin dress.

He smiled down at her. "Take it easy, Miss," he said. "You'll be all right. We'll take good care of you."

For a moment, she seemed unable to comprehend what was going on. Then, memory flooded back.

"Oh!" Her voice was low, smooth. "I—I was hit by that car—"

"Don't talk now, Miss," Larry ordered, as he and Joe carried the stretcher out through the crowd, with the policeman clearing a path for them.

They got her into the ambulance, and the cop climbed in and asked her name and address, jotting the information down in his book.

"Kate O'Day," she told the officer. "Rountree Hotel."

"Occupation?"

"Secretary. I—I work for Mr. Raymond Cobbler."

The cop let out a low whistle. "Say, I knew you were high class, the minute I seen you lying there in the street. Raymond Cobbler, eh? The President of the Cobbler Armament Corporation!"

The girl nodded weakly, while Larry Meade worked over her injured forehead

and arm, disinfecting the cuts and applying fresh, clean bandage. Almost resentfully, he realized that this girl, who worked for a millionaire armament manufacturer—and who must, therefore, make as much in a week as he made in three months—was the woman he wanted, the woman he must have for the rest of his life. Like most young internes, he had cultivated a certain shell of hardness, of ultra-sophistication. For he and his fellow internes believed that they had seen everything there was to be seen, and learned everything there was to be learned about women. They didn't think they could ever fall unselfishly and devotedly in love.

But now, Doctor Larry Meade understood that he had been all wrong.

The cop was kneeling in the ambulance alongside him, asking the girl more questions. "How come you were out walking at two o'clock in the morning—near the waterfront?" he demanded.

KATE O'DAY smiled weakly. "My employer, Mr. Cobbler, phoned me to come over to his yacht. It's anchored in the river. He wanted to discuss an important matter that's coming up tomorrow. He sent his car and chauffeur for me, and we got almost as far as here, when we had a slight collision with another car. I was anxious to get to the yacht, so I left the chauffeur to exchange license numbers with the other driver, and I started to walk. When I got to this corner, a car came swooping down at me, and—" a shudder wracked her slender body—"and I was hit. That's all—I know."

"I'll say it came swooping down on you!" the cop grunted. "It was hell bent for leather. Looked to me as if it was deliberately trying to get you. Lucky for you I was coming around the corner at the minute. I yelled at the top of my lungs, and it made you jump. Hadn't it been for that,

you'd of been hit square and hard. As it was, you jumped far enough so that the car only grazed you!"

Larry Meade looked up at the cop. "Where is the car?"

The policeman's face darkened. "It disappeared down the street like a bat out of hell! It had no lights, and I couldn't even see a license plate. I fired one shot after it, and then it was gone!"

"Hmm," said Larry, looking down at Kate O'Day, and remembering the look of terror that had been in her eyes when she had recovered consciousness. "It seems as if some one was trying to finish you off. You got any enemies?"

Kate was pale. Her lips were firm. She closed her eyes, and did not answer.

Larry frowned. "We better get her into a bed," he said. He glanced up at Joe Beloise, who was at the wheel, peering in through the sliding panel, which was open.

"Better get going, Joe. I'll treat her as we ride." He turned to the cop. "Are you riding with us to the hospital?"

"Sure," said the cop. "Regulations. Let's get started. That crowd out there won't break up till we leave. It's a wonder, he grumbled, "where a crowd comes from, at this unholy hour! Just give 'em an accident, and you get a crowd out of nowhere—"

He stopped short, as a quick series of staccato revolver shots sounded from somewhere around the corner. There were five blasting shots in quick succession, then a single shot. And then silence.

"I'll be damned!" shouted the cop. He dropped his notebook, yanked out his police positive, and jumped out of the ambulance. The crowd scattered before him, and he raced away around the corner toward the shooting. The crowd wavered; then, almost like a mass of cattle, started after the policeman. The attraction around the corner was far greater than this. In a

moment, the street around the ambulance was deserted, while the echo of those six revolver shots rolled around in the still night air.

Joe Beloise, looking in from the driver's seat, grinned. "Never a dull moment! And to think we get paid for this—" Joe's voice suddenly choked, his eyes popped, and then he emitted a single strangled word: "*Hey!*" He was staring toward the open door at the rear of the ambulance.

LARRY swung his head to follow Joe's startled gaze. He saw a man at the ambulance door, hat-brim drawn low over his face, and a gun in his hand. The gun was pointed at Kate O'Day.

Something between blind panic and murderous rage swept Larry Meade into instinctive action. He was hunkered on his knees beside Kate. Almost without thinking, his legs straightened like pistons, and he catapulted himself directly at that man with the gun.

The fellow's face was expressionless, absolutely without emotion. That part of his features visible beneath the peak of the cap were wooden, like those of a fellow who is doing a piece of work and is bored with it, and anxious to get it done and over with.

But as he saw Larry Meade's long body catapulting at him, a spasm of annoyance jerked at his features, and he swiveled the gun to take care of Larry first.

The man was just one-fiftieth of a second too late. Larry's two outstretched hands slammed against his face, and Larry's left elbow struck the fellow's gun hand off at a tangent. The gun exploded deafeningly into the wall of the ambulance, and then Larry's hurtling body carried the gunman backward.

They fell in a tangled mass in the

street, and the fellow's gun slid out of his grip. It went bouncing under the ambulance.

Larry struck at the killer with smashing lefts and rights as they lay on the ground, sending the punishing blows straight into the other's wooden face. Blood spurted from the man's cut lips and broken nose. Larry took deep satisfaction from the feel of his knuckles against bone and cartilage. He kept on pounding and smashing.

The killer's face was no longer wooden and expressionless. Without a gun in his hand, he was no great shakes. He uttered a squeal of pain, and scrambled to his feet and lunged away down the block, running for all he was worth.

Larry started to follow him, but he heard the voice of Kate O'Day, calling from the ambulance.

"Come back—please!"

He stopped short, and turned back.

Joe Beloise had sprung down from the driver's seat, and was just coming around to the rear, with a heavy monkey wrench in his hand. So swift and vicious had been Larry's fight, that it was all over in the few seconds it had taken Joe Beloise to get around from the front.

Joe stared down the street, where the fleeing gunman had disappeared into a dark doorway. "Boy," he said to Larry, "I sure thought you were through that time—diving right into the guy's gun! What'd you want to do a crazy thing like that for?"

Larry automatically tried to brush some of the mud off his spattered white uniform. "I don't like to have my patients bopped off." He turned and climbed back into the ambulance.

Kate O'Day was trying to sit up.

"Better lie down," he told her. "You're still suffering from shock and concussion. And I don't want anything to go wrong with you."

Very gently he forced her head down on the pillow again. "I'm going to take you in to the hospital right away—without waiting for that cop to come back." He raised his head to Beloise, who had recovered the gunman's weapon from under the ambulance, and had now climbed back in the driver's seat.

"Shove off, Joe!"

THE ambulance started. As it rolled away, Kate O'Day's wide, dark eyes fastened upon Larry. "Please don't take me to the hospital. I won't be safe there. They're determined that I shall not live until morning. Don't you see? That accident was no accident at all. The hit-run-car tried to kill me. And then, when they failed, they sent that gunman. If it hadn't been for you—"

"But why should anyone want to kill you, Kate?" Larry demanded.

"It—it's because of something that I know. Something connected with the armament business, I think. That's what I was going to discuss with Mr. Cobbler tonight. You see, tomorrow morning, I have an appointment to go to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and look at certain photographs. The federal agents are searching for a certain spy here in this country, and they think I may recognize his picture."

"A spy?" Larry asked blankly.

Kate nodded. "A man named Nixville. The federal agents think he has worked his way into our organization, disguised, and under another name. They think if they show me the various pictures they have of him, with different disguises painted on them, I may recognize one of them. That was why I was going to see Mr. Cobbler tonight. We were worried, lest that spy, Nixville, might really turn out to be some one in a key position."

"Well, he must be!" Larry said grimly.

“Otherwise, they wouldn’t go to such trouble to eliminate you.”

Kate’s eyes were wide, but unafraid. “That’s why I don’t want to go to the hospital. I’d never be safe. They’d get to me somehow.”

“How about going to the F. B. I.?”

“Please take me out to Mr. Cobbler’s yacht, Larry. I know I’ll be safe there. And I must talk with him tonight. The yacht is anchored in the East river—just a few blocks from here. Tell your driver—before he turns off for the hospital.”

Larry’s eyes met hers. He was silent for a moment. Then he said “Anything you ask, Kate. Just remember that you can always count on me.”

“I think I—understand,” she said:

Larry stuck his head out front and spoke to Joe, telling him swiftly what he had learned from Kate.

Joe Beloise grinned. “Anything for a thrill, Larry. Let’s go.”

He swung east at the next corner, and headed for the river.

Kate whispered directions to Larry, who relayed them to Joe, and in a few minutes the ambulance rolled up to a private dock, where a small launch was tied up. Out in the river, several hundred yards away, they could see the lights of a long, gray private yacht, swaying gently in the swell of the river.

Joe Beloise clucked with admiration. “Is that your boss’s dory?” he asked.

Kate, sitting up with the help of Larry’s arm across her shoulders, nodded. “It’s Mr. Cobbler’s boat, *The Headwind*. It cost almost a quarter of a million. He only has a skeleton crew aboard now, but I know I’ll be safe there. Mr. Cobbler has armed guards.”

SHE pointed to three men who were hurrying over to the ambulance from the dock, “Here comes Mr. Cobbler

himself. He told me he’d meet me at the dock. And that’s Langley, his bodyguard, and Captain Fisher of the yacht.”

The three men reached the ambulance, and Raymond Cobbler brushed swiftly past Larry, and climbed inside beside Kate. He was a man of about fifty, with a powerful, leonine head, and piercing eyes. He seized her hand.

“Miss O’Day! I’ve been terribly worried about you. Jarvis, the chauffeur, didn’t show up with you or the car, and I was sure something had happened. Tell me, are you all right?”

“Yes, Mr. Cobbler. I was lucky. They made two tries at me. But Larry—Doctor Meade—saved me the second time. He’s been very nice.”

Mr. Cobbler pressed her hand, and turned to Larry. “I appreciate this immensely, doctor. You don’t know what danger Miss O’Day is really in. Suppose we all go aboard the yacht. I want to express my thanks fittingly to you and your driver.”

“Well,” said Larry, “we should be getting back to the hospital.”

“I won’t hear of it!” Mr. Cobbler raised a hand. “You won’t be long. I want to give you both a drink, and then you can come back in the launch.” Without waiting for Larry to decline again, he swung to Kate. “Do you feel strong enough, Miss O’Day?”

She smiled. “I’m all right. I guess I was more bruised than anything else.”

“You want to be careful,” Larry broke in. “You may be in worse condition than you think. I’ve seen cases—”

But Cobbler was already helping her out. “You can finish treating her aboard the yacht, doctor. And I’ll want you to come back tomorrow and see her again. I think it’s only right that you should continue with your patient.”

Larry shrugged, and took her other

arm, and helped her down.

Joe Beloise came around to the rear and said doubtfully, "What about the ambulance? I don't like to leave it."

"You needn't worry about that," Cobbler interrupted. "I'll have Langley, here, remain to watch it."

Cobbler had taken such complete command of the situation, that there was nothing else to do but string along. Larry reflected that the long habit of command and swift decisions had given him an air of authority which carried all before it. So this was what it was like to be a millionaire industrialist.

Larry stopped only to take his medical bag from inside the ambulance, and then they helped Kate to the foot of the dock. Larry gave his bag to Joe to hold, and picked her up in his arms as if she weighed nothing at all. The touch of her thrilled him, and his eyes met hers. Their faces were close, and they smiled at each other.

Langley, the bodyguard, remained with the ambulance. Captain Fisher, a tall, taciturn man, took the wheel, and in a moment they were skimming across the water to the yacht.

The companion ladder was down, and once more Larry had the task of carrying Kate. He set her down gently on the deck. Joe followed him, and then came Mr. Cobbler and Captain Fisher. Two seamen on the deck watched apathetically, until Fisher snapped an order at them, and they moved up closer.

Larry happened to glance over the rail, back toward shore, and he suddenly uttered an exclamation. "The ambulance! It's moving away!"

SURE enough, the white outline of the ambulance could be distinguished, rolling away from the dock.

"Hey!" shouted Joe Beloise. "Where's that guy Langley taking it?"

A low chuckle sounded behind them.

Larry whirled. All the muscles of his body suddenly became tight and hard.

The two seamen who had moved up closer had produced automatic pistols. Captain Fisher and Mr. Cobbler also had weapons in their hands, which seemed to have appeared there magically.

It was Mr. Cobbler who had chuckled. He paid no attention to Larry or Joe, but spoke to Kate.

"You came to the right place, Miss O'Day, when you came here seeking protection—that is, the right place *for me!*"

Kate was trembling, leaning against Larry. "What—what—what do you mean, Mr. Cobbler?"

He chuckled again. "I only mean that it is I who have been trying to kill you all evening. Unfortunately, this meddling interne and his driver intervened. This time, however, there shall be no failure. I am sorry—but all three of you must die."

A subtle change had come over Mr. Cobbler's face as he spoke. The lines of dignity had fallen away, leaving a merciless expression. No longer was he the sedate industrialist, but a ruthless wolf. It was as if a disguise, long worn, had suddenly been discarded.

"I get it!" Larry exclaimed. "You are Nixville!"

"No, no!" Kate gasped.

Mr. Cobbler inclined his head, his eyes gleaming. "Indeed, yes. I am Nixville. When Mr. Cobbler returned to America a year ago, from a long stay in the Orient, people were easy to fool, for they hadn't seen him for years. They didn't realize that the real Cobbler was dead—and that I had assumed the role. But unfortunately, Miss O'Day, the federal agents obtained some pictures of me, taken years ago. The pictures didn't bother me. But the federal agents also have a description of me,

which includes a three-cornered scar on my left forearm. You, Miss O'Day, once saw that scar, when you came into the office unexpectedly while I was washing."

"And you're afraid," Larry interrupted, "that she'll tell the G-Men about the scar tomorrow."

"Exactly. You see, it is supremely important that I be allowed to run the Cobbler Armament plant for another two weeks. By that time, I shall have succeeded in my plans to disrupt your country's entire defense production. And you can readily understand that three lives matter nothing at all in a game with such tremendous stakes."

Cobbler—*alias* Nixville—stepped back, smiling crookedly. He motioned to Fisher and the two seamen. "Take them below—quietly, if possible. If they resist, kill them now!"

LARRY stiffened. This was it. Suddenly, unexpectedly, without warning, he and Joe and Kate had walked into the looming shadow of death. Through no fault of their own, they must all three finish their lives right here on this deck.

Ironically, he still clung to his black medical bag, the badge of his healing profession. It was in his left hand, while his right was around Kate O'Day's slender waist. He was a healer of men, and these were killers of men. They would kill not only here upon this deck, but their plans embraced the killing of countless thousands of workmen in defense plants throughout the country.

Fisher and the two seamen were closing in on them steadily, as if they had all the time in the world at their command. No one could interrupt them here, in the middle of the river, at their murderous work.

Joe Beloise said tightly: "They really

mean it. It ain't a dream. They're going to kill us!"

"*If they can!*" Larry shouted grimly. With a single motion, he thrust Kate behind him, and at the same time swung upward with his black medical bag. The edge of the bag caught the gun hand of the nearest seaman, sent the weapon spinning out of his grasp.

Captain Fisher shouted something in a foreign tongue, and swung his automatic to cover Larry, but Larry had already flung himself into a diving tackle at the disarmed seaman's legs.

They tangled on the deck, and Larry, with all the coldly furious rage welling up within him, remembered that he was a doctor, and that he knew things about the human anatomy which the ordinary layman was entirely unaware of. He must finish this seaman quickly, for Fisher and the other seaman, and Nixville himself were hurrying in for the kill, momentarily forgetting Joe Beloise and Kate.

The things which Larry Meade knew about the human body had been learned for the purpose of healing. But—at a time like this, they could be used also for destruction.

The seaman was smashing blows at his face, which Larry did not even bother to ward off. Instead, he slipped his thumb and forefinger under the inside of the man's leg, behind the knee. He found the two tendons there which he sought, and dug his thumb and forefinger into them, squeezing so hard that he almost brought the tips of the two fingers together behind the tendons.

That terrific pressure was enough. The pain of that sudden tension upon the tendons is excruciating, utterly unbearable when applied relentlessly. Larry knew that, and he knew very well what would happen. It did.

The seaman uttered a weird, agony-

wracked yell, his body stiffened as if in convulsive effort. Then Larry let him have a sizzling right to the jaw. The seaman sagged limply to the deck.

Larry threw a swift glance upward, and saw that Nixville, Fisher and the other seaman were closing in, with guns swinging down upon him.

Fleeting, he wondered where Kate and Joe were, whether they were safe, whether they had taken advantage of the opportunity to jump over the side and swim for shore. But it was only a fleeting thought. He was acting, even as that swift thought sped through his brain. He rolled over, away from the three advancing men, and snatched at the automatic which the disarmed seaman had dropped. He got his fingers around the butt, and rolled over once more, face up. The killers' guns were bearing down upon him.

He didn't care. He would take as many of them with him as he could. He would die here, but at least he would give Kate a chance to get away. He had fired pistols many times before, on the target range of the National Guard Armory. He knew how to handle one. The automatic catch was already off, and he pulled the trigger three times.

Before his eyes, he saw the face of the second seaman disintegrate, saw the body of Captain Fisher smashed back by the driving force of the slugs in his chest. He swung the gun toward Nixville, wondering dully why the spy hadn't fired long before.

And suddenly, he knew why. Another gun was barking, behind the spy. It must have been barking before, while he himself was shooting, but his own shots had drowned out those others in his ears.

He saw Nixville stiffen, a look of great fear and pain spread across his

countenance, and then the spy dropped his gun without firing it, and collapsed.

Behind him, Joe Beloise stood with the smoking gun in his hand which he had picked up from beneath the ambulance.

Joe grinned. "I just remembered I had a gun, too! Boy, did we wow 'em!"

Larry sprang to his feet, and clapped the ambulance driver on the back. "That was beautiful work, Joe."

"Teamwork is what I calls it!" Beloise said.

Larry didn't answer him. He had swung around, and he had taken Kate O'Day in his arms.

"Kate," he said, "it looks like you have no more job. And I'm called to the colors, as of next week. I'm getting a lieutenant's commission in the Medical Corps. Do you think you'd like army life?"

"I'd love it!" she said.

A motley crew of men was streaming up from the engine room, all with arms in their hands. But Joe Beloise said calmly: "Don't worry, Larry. It's in the bag. Here come the Marines."

A police launch, attracted by the shots, had chugged alongside the yacht, and bluecoated men swarmed on deck with automatic machine guns. The crew surrendered.

Larry Meade, M.D., was not interested, however, in the proceedings. He was standing with his back to the deck, leaning over the rail, an arm around Kate O'Day, and the two of them were looking over toward the shore and speaking in whispers.

Joe Beloise spat disgustedly. "Nuts!" he said to the sergeant of police. "I thought HE was immune!"