

The Tommies Sit Tight at Cologne

Sketches by Captain Bryan de Grineau Among the British Forces of Occupation





*"He didn't have
nothing to
say, and he ain't
afraid of
trouble — now.
He's croaked"*

Synopsis:

Rodney Manship, lawyer, is summoned to the antique shop of Aniello and Liborio Barocco, who have adopted the name of Baroque, meaning "bizarre." The lawyer assists Aniello in making his will. Aniello and Liborio are twins and believe in the superstition that those born in the same hour must die in the same hour. Aniello has twin children. Francesca is beautiful and good. Her twin brother, Angelo, is evil, and has taken up with bad associates. In his will, which is signed and put in Manship's possession, Aniello leaves all his property to Francesca, disinheriting Angelo. The police raid the antique shop while Manship is present. Liborio attempts to escape and is shot dead. The shock kills his twin brother, Aniello. Detectives find many thousands of dollars' worth of narcotics in the shop. Angelo denies knowledge of the narcotics. While he is brazening it out before the detectives and Manship, Francesca faces him, and Angelo cries: "Why do you look at me like that?"

CHAPTER VII

THE girl moved one pace toward him, and he started back in something nearly resembling panic.

"Angelo!" she said, pausing—her voice was the very voice of woe—"what have you done?"

"What do you mean, what have I done? I haven't done anything; I've just come home from a party, I"—

"I was waiting for you," Francesca gently explained. "When I heard voices here I thought it must be you, and I came down to find out. But it was that man, that detective, talking to Mr. Manship; and—well—I heard him say this terrible calamity to-night could never have happened without treachery. Angelo! somebody betrayed Uncle Liborio to the police. Do you know who?"

"No, of course not! How should I know?"

"You know everybody who could have done it. . . . And, Angelo, you know your own heart."

Either the boy was deliberately working himself into a rage, or else he was going out of his mind with fear—cowering away from Francesca, refusing to meet her regard, fairly gibbering denials.

"What's my heart got to do with it?" He ripped out a string of black Italian

BAROQUE

BY LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

ILLUSTRATED BY DOUGLAS RYAN

oaths, but his voice was shaky. "Are you accusing me?"

"I say you know or can find out who did say you must find out, and will—that you won't rest till you do—if you are your father's son!"

"It's a lie! I don't know, and I don't know how to find out. You're crazy—out of your head! How!"

"Angelo!" Advancing as he retreated, the girl had him with his back to the desk; and as he was on the point of darting aside she put a detaining hand to his wrist. "Angelo! are you my brother?"

"Let go of me!" The boy shook her off. "Stop staring at me like that! I won't stand your accusing me!"

"I don't accuse—I ask."

"You let me alone, keep away!" She had caught his arm again and was holding on despite his resistance.

"Let go of me or!"— Of a sudden his rage seemed to pass into sheer madness; he faced her raving. "Damn you! keep off or I'll murder you!"

"I'm not afraid, Angelo. You value your own life too highly."

"Well! then—by God! I'll scar you for life."

With a deftness approaching legerdemain his hand slipped into and out of a pocket. Above his head steel shimmered, menacing the face of his sister. Instantly Rodney grasped his shoulders and dragged him screaming, kicking and cursing, back across the desk. Inkstands and fittings flew, the lamp crashed to the floor, darkness fell, relieved by the dim light from the hallway. But Rodney had the knife.

"Angelo," she pleaded—"forgive me if I've hurt you—forget, please, if I have said anything unkind or unjust. Remember, I am half distracted with

He contrived to drop it into his coat pocket without losing the mastery, then for a moment held Angelo helpless with pinioned arms.

"You rat!" he cried, and shook his victim as if he were in fact a rat. "If ever again you lift a hand to your sister, I'll break every bone in your body!"

He flung the boy away and, in the sudden illumination that followed when Francesca at the wall switched on the chandelier, saw Angelo land on his back with a thump that wrung from him a cry of pain.

Quivering like a whipped animal, he rested briefly—eyes half shut, lips compressed to an ugly line, fists clenched, all betraying a desperate struggle to assert self-control. Then the fit passed and, relaxing, he picked himself up; but when he stood erect, with steady hands readjusting collar and necktie, Rodney perceived in the steadfast regard of eyes like black diamonds set in a countenance whose pallor fairly blazed, that he had succeeded only in transmuting insensate anger into mortal hatred.

Francesca moved between them, offering a hand of pardon and appeal. But her brother would not see it; and though he no longer hesitated to confront her, but gave her back look for look, there was in his expression if anything even a deeper rancor than he had for Rodney.

"Angelo," she pleaded—"forgive me if I've hurt you—forget, please, if I have said anything unkind or unjust. Remember, I am half distracted with

grief. You know how dear he was to me, what nobility of heart and soul has been taken from us to-night. Surely my sorrow is yours!"

She checked on a sob. Angelo stood watching her like a frozen shape of malevolence.

With a struggle she continued:

"Angelo, alone with his poor body, an hour ago, with my hand on his dear dead bosom, I swore an oath to find and expose the traitor who had brought him to his death. It is a sacred duty we owe to his memory, you and I."

Indignation quickened out of the incredulity with which Francesca read her brother's response in his silence. Slowly her body stiffened, her shoulders straightened, her head lifted, till she was actually looking down at him, lifted above his stature by her scorn.

"Then know this: with or without your help, against your opposition if it comes to that, though it take my lifetime, though it cost me my life, I shall keep my vow. And when I have found the man, whoever he may be, I shall denounce him—you know to whom. You know, too, the penalty of—with barely perceptible hesitation she finished in Italian—"nfamata!"

Whatever the ulterior significance of that word, whatever meaning attached to it in their common understanding beyond that which was intelligible enough to Rodney in the mere sound of it, that it had found the chink in Angelo's armour was apparent in his flinching eyes, in his sharp gesture of expostulation and affright. But instantly he caught himself and recovered, presenting again to Francesca a stony mask of despite.

"Thank Heaven that's settled!" he sneered, and wheeling strode from the room.

CHAPTER VIII

EVER since the death of his father had left him alone in the world, Rodney Manship had made his home in rooms near by his clubs, in the lower Fifties near Fifth Avenue. Here, on the second night fol-