

Old Sleuth

A Successful Shadow: or, A Detective's Successful Quest



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Detective's Successful Quest**

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PROLOGUE

Those of our readers who read our narrative "Two Wonderful Detectives," will more especially enjoy the further adventures of Jack Alvarez. To those who did not read that narrative we will state that this remarkable detective had just solved a great mystery – one of the most remarkable detective feats ever accomplished. He had found that there had been a true heir to a great fortune which had been deposited in a most mysterious manner with a banker, but, alas! when his "shadow" appeared successful in one direction, he encountered a little tombstone in an out-of-the-way graveyard, which appeared to settle beyond all dispute that the heiress had died when a child, and the great fortune which she would have inherited was diverted in another direction. Indeed through a singular combination of circumstances, the detective himself became heir to a portion of the great estate. He did not feel disposed, however, to accept the benefice, and made up his mind that there were actual heirs living who were through kinship entitled to the fortune. He had started out on a former "shadow" without a clue, and in his resolve to find the collateral heirs he also started out minus a single clue, but he was a man, as our readers know, to discover clues, and in a most remarkable manner he succeeded through a series of thrilling adventures in finding a legitimate heir to an immense estate.

CHAPTER I

THE SAME OLD INCIDENT OF A MISSING BEAUTY – A WIDOW'S NARRATIVE – AN AROUSED INTEREST – THE POSSIBILITIES IN A NAME – STARTLING SUGGESTIONS – WAS IT A CLUE

"Mr. Alvarez, I am very poor; I cannot offer you a large reward, but I have saved a few hundred dollars, and those I will give you if you are successful in finding my lost child."

Jack Alvarez, the detective, was seated in his office when a veiled woman entered and addressed him in the language with which we open our narrative.

The detective was a kind-hearted man, well-to-do financially, and as it occurred not immediately engaged on any special job. He looked the visitor over a moment and then said:

"Madam, before I can entertain your proposition at all, I must see your face."

"Is that necessary, sir?"

"It is."

"I am sorry."

"Why?"

"Simply because I fear that you will be so shocked you will not aid me."

"Why will I be shocked, madam? Are you a criminal?"

"I am an honest woman, sir, but oh, how bitter has been my life – yes, sir, it has been one of humiliation and suffering, and now there has come to me this terrible sorrow. It may prove even a greater sorrow than I at present dare anticipate, but I trust not."

"You need not fear to show me your face."

"May I first tell you my story, sir?"

"Yes."

"I was left an orphan at a very early age. I was reared in an institution until I was able to go out to work. I never knew my parents, I never knew my real name. I was deserted in my infancy and I grew up to be quite a fair-looking girl. I can say this now, sir, without any feeling of exultation, for what beauty I may once have possessed vanished in one night, and I am now hideous to look at. When I left the asylum in which I had been placed I went to live with a very kind family, and at the age of twenty I married a poor but very worthy man. My little daughter was five years old when one night our little family was aroused by the barking of our dog. We lived up in the country in New York State. My husband was an invalid and slept in a room adjoining the one I occupied with my child. As I told you, I was aroused by the barking of our dog; I knew it meant danger, and I leaped from my bed and instantly discovered that our little home was on fire. I rushed down the one flight of stairs with my child in my arms, and then returned to aid my husband to escape, but, alas! I was overcome by smoke and flame and fell unconscious, and would have been consumed had not a neighbor rushed in and dragged me forth. I was saved, but when the fire was subdued and they entered the room of my husband, they found him dead. He had been suffocated, and I, alas! was horribly disfigured for life, being terribly burned in the face. This, sir, is a part of my story. I am terribly scarred and, now if you still desire to see my face I will remove my veil before continuing my story."

"Madam, you need not be ashamed to remove your veil. Your scars were honorably won; you should be proud – yes, I will look upon your face."

The woman removed her veil, and indeed she did have two ghastly looking scars, but she had exaggerated her disfigurement, for despite the scars hers was not an uncomely face to look upon. Her eyes were beautiful, and the detective was led to say with chivalrous truth and gallantry:

"Madam, you may once have been so beautiful, over-sensitiveness causes you to exaggerate your misfortune, but enough, tell me your story. Tell me about the loss of your child."

The woman's voice was very musical; she spoke in low tones and her pronunciation and general demeanor betrayed the fact that gentle blood ran in her veins.

"As I told you, sir, my husband was suffocated, and I was left a widow with one little child, a daughter. I will not dwell upon my sorrow, but kindly permit me to say that the horror of that catastrophe has never passed from my mind, and I have been a sad woman; and now, alas! it appears as though a greater sorrow were about to overwhelm me."

"Not if I can aid you, madam."

"It is refreshing and gladdening to hear you say so. I had been told that you were a wonderful and very kind man, and a hero whom any one could trust. I need the services of a brave, discerning man."

"And if I can serve you, madam, I will; continue your narrative."

"After the death of my husband I removed with my infant daughter to New York City, as it was necessary that I should earn a living for my child. I was ambitious to give my daughter a good education – yes, give her opportunities that were never vouchsafed her mother. I was a very skillful needlewoman, and taking cheap apartments I applied for work at some of the large stores, and my skill soon secured me employment and I continued to live economically in order to save money to educate my child; and, sir, I succeeded. I worked steadily and was always successful in securing work, for as I have said, I was a very expert needlewoman, and so the years sped by until my child became sixteen, and, sir, I can say that she was indeed splendidly equipped as far as education is concerned. I intended that she should become a governess and thus be surrounded by environments in line with her education and refined tastes. She was always a dutiful and loving daughter, cheerful where I was sad; hopeful where I was despondent. One year ago my daughter became appointed as governess in a well-known family and they treated her in the kindest manner, and became very much attached to her – indeed they treated her more as an equal than as an employee. As I have said, my daughter is not only very beautiful, but splendidly educated, and during her residence with the family I have named she met among their guests a young German, who claims to be a baron. This young baron fell in love with her, and from what information I can obtain his love, or pretended love, was not reciprocated by my child; and now comes the mystery. One day my daughter went out to do a little shopping; she has not been seen by any of her friends since, and I am almost distracted with apprehension. She is very beautiful, as I've said, and I felt that she was perfectly safe while living with the family where she was employed. I was told by a person with whom I am acquainted that I should put the affair in the hands of a detective at once, and I was referred to you."

"And who referred you to me, madam?"

The visitor mentioned the name of a person whom our hero knew well, and after a moment's meditation the detective demanded:

"How long has your daughter been missing?"

"It's now nearly a week since she went forth and failed to return."

"And what is the name of this baron?"

"He is known as August Wagner. He claims that is but an assumed name, and that he is really a baron and heir to great estates in Germany."

"Did your daughter ever speak to you about this young man?"

"Yes."

"And did she show any indication to look favorably upon his professions of attachment?"

"On the contrary, she showed the utmost aversion to him, and it is possible that because of her aversion she has run away and hidden herself so as to escape his attentions, or it is possible he has persuaded her to elope with him. Her friends favor the latter idea."

"By her friends you mean the family with whom she resided?"

"Yes."

"They are favorable to the baron?"

"They appear to be, and strangely, since my daughter's disappearance they have turned against her."

"Against your daughter?"

"Yes."

"Where is the baron?"

"He is still a visitor at the Richards' home."

"Richards is the name of the family with whom you resided?"

"Yes."

"And they still entertain the baron?"

"Yes."

"Have you seen the baron?"

"I have."

"And what does he say?"

"He says he knows nothing about my daughter."

"And he claimed to have loved her?"

"Yes."

"Does he exhibit any sorrow or anxiety?"

"He does not, and this to me appears very significant."

The detective was thoughtful. He recognized that indeed the baron's sudden indifference was significant.

"He has not offered to aid you in finding her?"

"He has not."

"And the Richards family, do they exhibit any anxiety?"

"They do not."

"This baron is their intimate friend?"

"He appears to be."

"And they suggest that he knows where she is?"

"Not exactly; they merely declare that my daughter was not abducted, that wherever she is her absence is voluntary."

"And the Richards family appear to have turned against your daughter?"

"Yes."

"And previously they were very fond of her?"

"Yes, apparently."

"The apparent change has come since her disappearance?"

"Yes."

"Madam, I will undertake this case. What is your daughter's name?"

"Amalie Speir."

The detective gave a start, and we will here explain the cause. Amalie was the name of the heiress to the fortune which he at that moment held in trust. Ordinarily there would not be much significance in two persons having the same given name, but our hero was a man subject to wonderful discernments – a man who builded on the slightest incident – and from that instant he had more than an ordinary interest in the missing Amalie Speir, and that interest within a few hours was to grow into a thrilling intensity under later very singular coincident discoveries.

CHAPTER II

A MOST SINGULAR AND WONDERFUL COINCIDENCE – THE DETECTIVE STRIKES A NEW TRAIL – A DENOUEMENT MOST WONDERFUL – POSSIBILITIES AND PROBABILITIES BEYOND PERADVENTURE

"And your name?" asked the detective, in an apparently indifferent tone.

"My name is Amalie Speir."

The detective repeated:

"Your name is Amalie?"

"Yes."

"Then your daughter is named after you?"

"Yes."

The detective tried to appear indifferent as he asked:

"What was your name, madam, before your marriage to Mr. Speir?"

"I do not know."

"You do not know?" repeated our hero.

"No; I was called Amalie, that is all I can remember. You see, sir, I most always have lived with strangers, and if my last name was ever mentioned in my hearing it was done so rarely that I never remembered it."

"Have you ever sought to find out what your name was previous to your marriage?"

"I have, but I have failed."

There was intense eagerness in the tones of our hero's voice despite his effort to conceal his interest when he asked:

"Madam, do you know your age?"

"Yes, to a day."

"How old are you?"

"I am forty-six sir, a little past."

"Do you know the date of your birth?"

"Yes, sir, I was born July 20, 18 – ."

The detective figured in his mind, and there came a strange gleam in his eyes as he said:

"Madam, you can count upon my services."

"May I ask, sir, why you are so interested in my age and my maiden name?"

"You may ask certainly, but I shall not answer your question at present. I may to-night; tell me where you reside and this evening I may call upon you and I may have some news of your daughter."

The woman gave her address and went away, and the moment the detective was alone he leaped up, and pacing rapidly to and fro across the room, muttered:

"Great Jerusalem! of all the strange, weird and remarkable incidents, this beats them all in its fateful significance. There is the little grave marked Amalie Canfield, died aged four years. Great ginger! here is a nameless Amalie who may have been older than the child Amalie Canfield."

We will here state to those of our readers who have not read Jack's former adventures as related in "Two Wonderful Detectives," that they will understand the detective's excitement as they proceed with the narrative.

Jack did not waste much time in words. He left his rooms, also a note for his brother, his partner as a detective, and started for New Jersey. Fortunately, he caught a train, and an hour later alighted at a station, and rapidly he walked along the road for a couple of miles, when he arrived at a little

graveyard. He entered the cemetery and almost ran to a little grave, and dropping down he fixed his eyes on the tombstone, and there he read:

"Amalie Canfield

"Born, – . Died,

December – , 18 – ."

The detective rose to his feet, his handsome face all aglow, and he again muttered:

"Here is a mystery – a little mystery – but it can be explained. One or the other Amalie died. It's my opinion Amalie Stevens lives, and after all I have at last found the heir to a million. I lose the fortune, but the true heiress will get it. Yes, I'll swear I am on to the final solution, the most successful shadow I shall ever make. It is the greatest catch of my life – yes, although I lose half a million, and I'd rather lose a million than to learn that I have been misled. I must go slow – yes, very slow – but as it stands I believe I've struck it at last."

The detective returned to New York, where he arrived early in the afternoon. He had a close friend, a very wealthy banker, for whom he had done a great service. He proceeded direct to the home of the banker, an old gentleman, but a man of great vigor considering his age, both mentally and physically.

"Hello, Mr. Wonderful," was the banker's salutation as our hero entered his presence. "Where did you come from? I have not seen you for several months."

"No, but I am here now."

"And your presence means that you have made another of your wonderful discoveries."

"I think I have."

"What is it."

"I believe I have found an heir to the Stevens' fortune."

"I thought you would some day, if there was a surviving heir."

"I believe there is, and I can put my hand on her at any moment."

"Who is the party?"

"Amalie Stevens."

The banker started, and exclaimed:

"I thought you had positive evidence of the child's death?"

"I thought I did, but, alas! it appears now that I was mistaken. I cannot tell yet, but I will know to-night, I will as sure as my name is Jack Alvarez."

Again we say to our readers the significance of the above conversation will be duly explained as our narrative proceeds.

Our hero returned to his lodgings. He had gained very important facts and he intended to justify them, and early in the evening he proceeded to a plain little house where the lady, Mrs. Amalie Speir, resided. He found Mrs. Speir awaiting his presence. He was led into a neatly furnished room, and taking a seat spoke about some everyday matter, but his keen, restless eyes were wandering about that room. He was a man of marvelous quick perceptions, and he discerned that no matter what had been the early surroundings of the woman who lived in those rooms, her natural tastes were those of a lady.

"You were to bring me news of my daughter."

"News for your daughter," corrected our hero, and after a moment he added: "Madam, it is possible I have a very remarkable revelation to make to you; it is possible that a strange fate brought us together."

"I care only for my daughter, sir. If you have anything to communicate that concerns my daughter proceed, otherwise I am too distracted to discuss any other matter."

"I desire to ask you a number of questions concerning yourself, and it is possible that these questions may concern your daughter more intimately than you suspect. I ask you to listen to me patiently, and answer my questions calmly and truthfully as far as your memory will permit."

"Let me ask, have you made any discoveries concerning my daughter?"

"As yet, no, but I propose to begin my quest to solve the mystery of her disappearance this very night. I will tell you frankly, I do not believe you have anything terrible to dread as concerns your child."

"On what do you found your belief?"

"On the facts that you have revealed to me. Of course I cannot say anything positive at present; by to-morrow I may give you a more decided opinion, but I desire now to talk about a matter which under any circumstances is very important – yes, important to you and to your daughter also – if no real disaster has overtaken her. I believe and trust she is alive and well. I found my belief on evidences that I cannot make plain to you; and now answer me. Madam, is there no name that is familiar to you, no name that awakens memories when you hear it?"

"I cannot recall that there is."

"Have you any suspicion why you were named Amalie?"

The woman did not make an immediate reply.

Jack saw that he was making headway, and said:

"Did you ever hear the name Canfield?"

"I cannot recall that I ever did."

"Let me see, did you ever hear the name Amalie Stevens?"

The woman turned deathly pale, and after a moment in a trembling tone asked:

"Why do you mention that name?"

"Never mind, answer me."

"Yes, I know something about the name Amalie Stevens."

"What do you know?"

"Answer me first: Have you any reason to believe that you know anything about a person named Amalie Stevens?"

"I may."

The woman meditated a long time and said:

"Wait a moment; I have perfect confidence in you; I will show you something."

Mrs. Speir left the room, but in a few minutes returned, bringing with her a little garment, age stained, but otherwise perfect. She held the garment up to the light and pointed to a letter mark. The marks were fine – very fine – but the detective had his glass with him. He subjected the letters to inspection and plainly made out the two letters A. S., and there shot a thrill through his frame, while the woman watched him with eager eyes, and she said:

"I never heard the name Stevens, but when you mentioned the combination Amalie Stevens, I remembered the letters on this little garment. I have often studied over them; for, sir, since matters have gone so far, I will say that I have always felt that there was a mystery in my life which would never be cleared up."

"Who wore this garment?" asked Jack.

"I did."

It was the detective's turn to become thoughtful. He had made a most extraordinary discovery – indeed, in his own mind he had found an heir to millions in this modest and hitherto unfortunate woman. Jack meditated for a long time, and Mrs. Speir at length asked:

"Will you tell me, sir, what this all means? I know you are not wasting time. You know or suspect something. Is it possible that after all these years I am to learn who my parents were?"

The woman spoke in the plural, and the detective, desiring to be evasive, could safely say:

"I fear, madam, that is a mystery that can never be wholly solved, but I have something to show you."

The detective always carried the photograph with him, and our readers will understand later the story of the photograph. He showed the picture to the woman, and she almost fainted, so intense was her agitation. Jack observed her agitation, and there came a look of triumph in his face. He could discern, as he believed, that after all he had made a successful "shadow."

"Where did you get this picture?" demanded the woman, in an agitated tone.

"You recognize it?"

"I do."

"You knew the original?"

"I did."

"She still lives?"

"She does."

"Where?"

"Here."

"What do you mean, madam?"

"I have the mate to that picture, as I live."

"You have the mate to the picture?"

"I have."

"Where?"

"Here."

The woman drew a locket from her bosom and handed it to our hero, who at a glance recognized that the locket portrait and the daguerotype were pictures of the same child.

"You say you know the original of these two portraits?"

"I do. Oh, strange, strange, I never noticed it so strikingly before, but either picture might be taken as a portrait of my dear child at the same age. How wonderful the resemblance! and here I am a scarred-face woman, hideous to gaze upon – so hideous I always go veiled. It's wonderful, it's wonderful."

The detective saw that the woman was really talking to and communing with herself, but after a moment he asked:

"Madam, was that picture taken for you when you were a child?"

"It was."

"You are certain?"

"When you see my daughter you will have proof – sufficient proof. Tell me, sir, what does it all mean – where did you get that picture?"

"Shall I tell you the history of that picture?"

"If you please."

"Madam, I will, and you must prepare to listen to a very remarkable story. A little more than forty years ago a gentleman in New York received a visitor. The gentleman was a young banker; his visitor deposited with him a large sum of money, placing the money in trust. The banker was to hold the money for twenty years and then open a letter that was given to him. The banker invested the money but lost the letter, and at the expiration of twenty years found himself the custodian of a large fortune without any knowledge as to its owner. It was at this time that he called in detectives, but they

failed in solving the mystery, and twenty years elapsed, when the case was given to me. The banker furnished me no clue, and I started out to solve the mystery by methods not necessary to explain. I learned that the man who deposited the fortune was named Jake Canfield, and was killed the very day he left the money with the banker. Further discoveries led up to the fact that the man Jake Canfield left a supposed granddaughter, and just as I discovered these facts the letter was found, and it was further learned from the letter that the supposed granddaughter was really the child of a man whose life Jake Canfield had saved. This latter gentleman was named Harold Stevens, and he had a child, and in view of his own approaching death he confided his child to the care of Jacob Canfield, and – "

At this moment the woman, Mrs. Speir, uttered a cry, and would have fallen had not the detective held and assisted her to a chair. She revived after a little and the detective resumed his strange narrative.

CHAPTER III

ONE MYSTERY SOLVED – A SUCCESSFUL "SHADOW" INDEED – ON A NEW "LAY" – IN A GAMBLING ROOM – A NEW ACQUAINTANCE – THE DETECTIVE PERPLEXED – FALSE OR TRUE? – A RIDDLE TO BE SOLVED

It was evident that Mrs. Speir, who was bright and quick of perception, had discerned partially what the ultimate conclusion of the narrative would be, and it was her excess of emotion that affected her, but as stated she speedily recovered and the detective immediately continued his story:

"As I said," resumed Jack, "the gentleman, Harold Stevens, confided his child to old Mr. Canfield because he had reason to know that Jacob Canfield was an honorable man, and he also confided to this old fisherman a large fortune in trust, but for reasons that will never be known he made the singular conditions that his child Amalie should be kept in ignorance of the fortune until she was twenty-five. The old man, fearing to keep the money, transferred the trust to the banker, a Mr. Townsend, and left the letter of instructions, which was not found until after forty years; and now, madam, I come into the romance. Once more I started out to find this heir; I learned that Jacob Canfield had placed his ward in charge of friends to care for, but we could not discover who these friends were, and I was compelled to go it blind. I had found the picture which I showed you and learned a name. I spent weeks in prosecuting my search, and at length found a little grave in an out-of-the-way cemetery, and on the tombstone was engraved: 'Amalie Canfield, died December 20, 18 – , aged four years.' This age about accorded with the age of Amalie Stevens, and we were forced to conclude that Amalie Stevens was known as Amalie Canfield. I gave up the search, concluding that there was no heir unless Harold Stevens had left other heirs than his own child. I have been looking for those heirs, and had about given up all hope of ever finding them when you came to me."

There followed a moment's silence and then the woman asked:

"What do you conclude now?"

"I will tell you; I believe that Jacob Canfield did have a granddaughter, and that this granddaughter was but a little younger than his ward. I believe he placed his granddaughter in the care of certain people, and that this child died, while the real heiress, Amalie Stevens, survived."

"You believe now that Amalie Stevens survived?"

"I do."

"And why have you told me this strange, weird narrative?"

"Madam, do you not guess?"

The woman did not answer, and the detective again produced his daguerotype, and pointed to the name Amalie Stevens.

"What does this suggest, sir?"

"That is a portrait of Amalie Stevens, and Amalie Stevens is the heiress of Harold Stevens, and you claim to be the original of that portrait. Madam, if this can all be substantiated you are a very wealthy woman. I will tell you candidly, I believe you are the heiress; I believe your claim can be established. Remember, your baby clothing was marked A. S. We need but one more proof."

"And what is that?"

"You say your girlhood lineaments are preserved in your daughter?"

"Yes, in a most remarkable manner."

"Then all we have to do is to find your daughter, confirm your claim, and all the evidence under present conditions is gained, and you shall be recognized as the heiress, and the fortune will be surrendered to you."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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