

# When Morpheus Called

by Lee  
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“HERCULES” HARLEY reached out an eager hand for the morning paper which some early patron had left on the beer-slopped table. With even more eagerness he scanned the front-page head-lines, and his face became a battle-ground of conflicting emotions as he finally came to the news item he sought.

Harley’s countenance was by no means as classic as his nickname. Indeed, his red hair, cropped short, his wicked green eyes, his two days’ growth of stubby beard, and the absence of three of his front teeth, combined to give him a most villainous appearance. His coat was short of sleeve and barely reached to his hips, and his bulging back muscles stretched it tight across his shoulders.

So formidable and forbidding was his aspect that at first the dapper young man who sat alone at the next table in the back room of Regan’s saloon hesitated to address him. Presently, however, the latter summoned up his courage and, rising,

stepped up behind the brawny ruffian’s chair.

“I see you’re interested in the Professor Kemble hold-up case,” the young man began casually.

“What’s that to yuh?” Hercules snarled, turning his head so as to face the speaker. “What in hell do you care what I’m interested in!”

The other smiled affably.

“No offense meant, old man. You see, I happen to be interested in the case myself. In fact, I wrote that story. So I—”

“You wrote the story?” Harley cut in, with a frown of perplexity. “Oh, I see! You’re a newspaper reporter?”

The dapper young man nodded.

“My name is Grayson. I cover police headquarters,” he announced. “Yes, I covered that hold-up assignment, and—well, seeing you reading about the case suggested to me that possibly you might be able to help me.”

Hercules looked at him suspiciously.

“How in blares can I help yuh?” he growled. “I don’t know anything about that hold-up. Not a thing. And I ain’t even interested in the case. For the love uv Mike, can’t a feller read a newspaper without bein’ suspected—”

“I’m not suspectin’ you, of course,” Grayson cut in hastily. “Why should I do that? When I spoke of your helping me I had in mind that possibly by—er—through some of your acquaintances in the underworld you might be able to get me the information I am seeking.”

Harley scowled.

“You want to use me as a stool-pigeon, huh?”

“Well, we needn’t call it that. But if you could manage to get a line on the man or men who held up the professor I—the paper—would make it well worth your while. All you’ve got to do to make an easy fifty dollars is to keep your ears and eyes open and tip me off as soon as you learn anything that looks promising.”

Hercules toyed with his beer-glass for a while in meditative silence.

“Bein’ that you’re a newspaper reporter, I reckon you’re pretty thick with all the bulls at headquarters, eh, young feller?” he remarked suddenly.

“I am acquainted with a good many members of the force. As for being thick with them, however—well; frankly, just at present I am rather *persona non grata* at Center Street.”

The other regarded him blankly.

“You’ll have to come again, mister. I don’t understand Eyetalian.”

“I mean that I’m in bad with the police. The *Blade* has been roasting the department since last election, so naturally its representative at police headquarters isn’t very popular with the force.”

An expansive grin spread across

Harley’s countenance.

“I ain’t exactly fond of the cops myself,” he confided. “I’m beginning to warm up to yuh, young feller. In fact, yuh make such a hit with me that I’ve a half a mind to let you set ’em up.”

“It will be a privilege,” said Grayson appreciatively, pressing the button on the wall. “I hope you will give me your help in this hold-up case. I presume you live in this neighborhood, and your acquaintance with some of its characters ought to be useful to me.”

“If, as you say, you have a grudge against the police it ought to be an additional inducement to you to help me put one over on the central office. Just think how it would make those sleuths at headquarters writhe and gnash their teeth if the *Blade* was to capture Professor Kemble’s assailant while they were still watching the hospitals and dispensaries.”

Hercules looked at his companion sharply.

“What—why should they watch the hospitals and dispensaries?” he asked wonderingly. “What do yuh mean by that?”

“Well, it seems to be the only likely clue they have. That broken test tube, you know. If the hold-up man really was inoculated, as the police suspect, there’s a good chance of his applying for treatment at one of the public institutions. Of course, though, it’s even more likely that he’ll be too cagey to risk—”

“Hold on!” Harley interrupted the speaker. “Keep your mouth closed a moment, mister, while I finish readin’ this newspaper article. I didn’t see nothin’ about no broken test-tube, as far as I got.”

He turned his attention to the paper again. The news item in which he and his companion were interested ran as follows:

PROFESSOR KEMBLE WAYLAID BY THUGS.

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Sandbagged and Robbed on Way Home from Hospital. Aged Specialist May Succumb to Injuries.

Late last night, while on his way home from the Municipal Hospital for Contagious Diseases, where he is chief bacteriologist, Dr. John K. Kemble, formerly professor at Yardsley college, was held up by thugs and brutally beaten.

He was found by patrolman James McKnight, of the eighteenth precinct, lying unconscious a stone's throw from the door of his home on Fifth Avenue, and was removed immediately to the Emergency Hospital, where it was said that he was suffering from a fractured skull and was in a very precarious condition.

That robbery was the motive of the assault was indicated by the fact that the victim's pockets were all turned inside out and their contents removed.

The police look for an early capture of the renowned physician's assailant or assailants as the result of an unusual circumstance in the case. In one of the doctor's pockets were found the fragments of a test-tube which had contained millions of *trypanosome gambiense*—the germs of the dreaded sleeping sickness.

From blood stains found on the broken glass and on the cotton wool which had served as a cork, it appeared that the thug, in going through the victim's pockets, must have run foul of the sharp glass and severely cut his hand, in which event he could hardly have escaped infection from the millions of germs released when

the tube was broken.

At the Hospital for Contagious Diseases it was said that prompt medical treatment alone can save the life of a person suffering from the sleeping sickness, the first and principal symptom of which is an excessive drowsiness.

Needless to say, the individual responsible for the hold-up will receive a hearty welcome at any hospital at which he may apply for treatment. The police have sent out an alarm broadcast for a man suffering from the unusual malady.

Hercules gulped several times as he lifted his eyes from the newspaper and turned to the man beside him.

"Can—is it a fake?" he asked thickly. "You say you wrote this yourself. Where did you get your information?"

"The police gave it out," Grayson informed him. "I corroborated it, too, at the Municipal Hospital. There's no doubt about its being a fact that he was held up, about its being a fact that the doctor was carrying the test-tube of germs at the time he was held up. As for the hold-up man being inoculated, however—well, that, to my mind, is open to question. The police seem to take it for granted that he was cut by the glass. If such was the case it would, of course, be certain to settle the unfortunate fellow's hash. But I am inclined to think that the blood found on the glass fragments and the cotton wool may have come from the professor's own wounds. In that event their hopes of a speedy capture aren't likely to be realized."

Harley was silent for a while. He described liquid circles on the table with the base of his beer-glass, and while thus engaged his face twitched spasmodically.

“Does it always croak yuh-this here sleeping sickness?” he asked suddenly. “Couldn’t-doesn’t a guy ever have a chance of beatin’ it?”

“I understand that there is a cure for it. If the case is taken in time,” Grayson replied carelessly. “But delay is fatal. Once the patient succumbs to the stupor it is too late to save him.” He looked at his watch. “Well, I guess I’ll have to be getting along. Glad to have met you, old man. Don’t forget to keep your eyes open.”

“What do yuh mean keep—your eyes open!” the other snarled. “Why—what’s going to close ’em? Are you insinuat’—”

“Merely a figure of speech,” Grayson reassured him. “What I meant was that I hope you’ll be very much on the alert in case you happen to ran across anything that will help clean up this hold-up mystery. All you’ve got to do, you know, to earn that fifty dollars is to send us the tip.”

He went out to the street, and for some minutes after his departure Hercules sat staring moodily at the empty glass.

Suddenly the latter, with a deprecatory shake of his head, unwound a dirty handkerchief which was wrapped around his left hand—he had kept that hand under the table while talking with Grayson—and anxiously examined a jagged wound in the ball of his thumb.

“You can’t see ’em, but you sure can feel ’em,” he muttered morosely.

He got up and, walking over to a washbasin in an adjoining room allowed the water to run over his gashed hand.

The water was very cold and made the wound smart.

“If this don’t drown ’em it may freeze ’em.” he growled.

The wound washed out, he

replaced the handkerchief and returned to his seat.

“Another beer, Mike,” he called to the man at the bar. “No. you’d better make it straight whisky. They use whisky to cure snake bites, don’t they, Mike?”

“What’s the matter—have you got a snake bite?” the bartender asked, grinning, as he came with the bottle and glass. “Hully mackerel! It ain’t the first time that snakes have been seen here, but I’ve never heard of anybody bein’ bitten by one before.”

The other scowled.

“Cut the comedy. You’re as funny as a funeral.” He paused, and a shudder shook his burly frame. “Say, Mike, what did you put in that last beer? I’m feelin’ kind of queer. Never felt so dopey in my life.”

“Nothing wrong with the beer, Hercules. Maybe you’ve had too many. I don’t want to hurt the boss’s business, but—”

“No; that isn’t the answer,” Harley cut in. “I’ve only had three, and you know my capacity. It must be—er—something else that gives me this here woozy feelin’. I’m fallin’ asleep all over—from my head to my feet. This is fierce!”

He groaned, and his burly frame lurched forward so that his chin rested on his chest. His eyes closed for a moment, but he roused himself with an effort.

“Don’t let me go to sleep, Mike,” he entreated, a note of terror in his tone. “Keep me awake—even if you have to keep kickin’ me in the shins.” His face suddenly lighted up as a thought thrust itself into his hazy mind.

“Seen Doc Smithers lately,” he asked the bartender eagerly.

Smithers was the one physician the underworld could trust. He could always be relied on to furnish treatment without

asking embarrassing questions.

If a bullet was to be removed, Doc Smithers would remove it irrespective of how it was received. If chloral, commonly known as knock-out drops, were required, Doc Smithers would furnish it without displaying any inquisitiveness as to how it was to be used. In short, the doc was the underworld's all-around handy man. If sometimes he did his patients little good, at least he never went out of his way to do them harm. With his class of patients this, of course, was an important consideration. And for these reasons it had occurred to Hercules Harley that Doc Smithers was just the practitioner to consult regarding the peculiar spell of drowsiness that was assailing him.

"No, I haven't seen him lately," the bartender replied. "He don't get around here much no more since he moved across the bridge."

"Where does he hang out now, Mike? A pal of mine could use him," said Harley thickly.

"I don't know. Hold on, though; he wrote it down for me. Maybe I've got it."

Mike stepped into the barroom, rummaged among a varied assortment of bills, receipts and miscellaneous fly-specked papers behind the cash-register, and presently returned to his unhappy customer with a slip of paper in his hand.

"Here it is, Hercules. I remember now—he wrote it himself: 29 Downing Street, Brooklyn."

"Gimme the paper." Harley requested. "I'm feelin' so dopey that I'm afraid I won't remember the address—for the pal of mine who can use the doc." He rose unsteadily to his feet. "Guess I'll go out, Mike. The air may do me good,"

As he staggered from the room the bartender looked after him wonderingly.

"Only three beers and a whisky!"

the latter muttered. "And I've known him to take a dozen of each without battin' an eyelid. Maybe he had a good edge on, though, before he came in here. That must be the answer, of course."

That was not the answer, however. Hercules Harley had been perfectly sober when he entered the saloon. He was tolerably sober now despite the strange feeling of drowsiness which had taken possession of him and which he was making a valiant effort to combat.

There was no doubt in his mind as to the cause of his condition. He shuddered as he contemplated his predicament.

"The sleepin' sickness!" he mused, "Ugh, can you beat that! And its goin' to croak me if I don't see a saw-bones in a hurry. I'm goin' to sleep myself to death. What a mean trick to play on a guy. Carried a million germs in his pocket, did he! A fine, saw-bones he must be to be spreadin' disease around instead of curin' it. There ought to be a law ag'in them fellers. Ah! this air feels good. If only I can get to Doc Smithers before I go dead to the world! The doc will fix me up all right—if I can get to Brooklyn."

His eyes dosed even as he mused, but his leaden feet struck an uneven area in the ill-laid sidewalk and the jolt had the benevolent effect of rousing him from his lethargy.

As he staggered toward the nearest subway kiosk he lurched against a dapper young man who was coming from the opposite direction, and the collision was so violent that the latter was thrown to the sidewalk.

As his victim regained his feet Harley had a hazy impression that he had met him somewhere before. However, before he had a chance to pursue that line of thought the other turned on him

fiercely.

“You clumsy dog!” he cried. “Why don’t you look where you’re going? Are you asleep?”

“Asleep your grandmother.” growled Hercules, mindful, despite his languor, of the danger of allowing such an impression to prevail. “Never felt more wide-awake in my life. And who are yuh callin’ a dog, huh? Why, if I wasn’t in such a hurry to keep an important date, you pie-faced mutt, I’d break you in two for that.”

The dapper young man struck out blindly and his clenched hand came in contact with his burly antagonist’s jaw. The blow seemed to sweep the cobwebs from the latter’s brain. With a bellow of rage he raised a ponderous fist, but before it found its mark intervention came in the form of two uniformed policemen.

“Here!” one of the patrolmen exclaimed, grabbing Harley’s upraised arm. “None of that. You can’t fight here. Oh, it’s you, Hercules, is it? Is that the best you can do—pickin’ on a feller that’s only half your size.”

“I wasn’t pickin’ on him,” the big fellow protested. “Honest, Clancy, he struck me first. And for nothin’ at all.”

“Nothing at all, eh!” his opponent exclaimed, with an ironical laugh. “That’s pretty good. Why, he knocked me down and called me a pie-faced mutt in the bargain. I make a charge of assault against him, officer, and I insist on your locking him up. You know me, of course? I’m Grayson of the New York *Blade*.”

“Yes. I know you, Mr. Grayson,” Patrolman Clancy sneered. “You’re the reporter that’s always roastin’ us cops in your rag of a paper.” He turned to his comrade with a triumphant grin. “I guess we’ll take them both in. They’re both guilty of disorderly conduct and fightin’

on the street, and I reckon the lieutenant won’t be exactly sorry to have a chance to settle old scores by bookin’ Mr. Grayson.”

Grayson took the situation calmly, but his fellow prisoner became almost frenzied in his despair.

“Let me go,” the latter snarled, struggling with his captors. “Darn you, you don’t know what you’re doin’. I’ve got an important date which can’t be broken. I—”

“You’re got a head that’s goin’ to be broken if you don’t behave!” growled Patrolman Clancy, twisting his prisoner’s arm behind him. “We’ll give you a taste of the locust, Harley, if you don’t keep still. Guess you’d better ring for the wagon, Tom; we’ll never get this pair to the house on foot.”

During the ride to the station-house in the patrol-wagon Hercules’s conduct gave no cause for complaint. This was due largely to the fact that the languor, which the recent excitement had momentarily dispelled, was again stealing over him. The motion of the vehicle added to his difficulty in keeping awake.

Before the lieutenant’s desk at the station-house he made one more desperate attempt to shake off his lethargy and to save himself from his impending doom.

“On the level, lieut,” he began, after the pedigrees of the two prisoners had been taken, “they’ve got me wrong. If—”

“Take him back and lock him up,” the official behind the desk cut him short mercilessly. “Take this muck-rakin’ reporter back, too.” The lieutenant chuckled. “Lock ’em both in the same cell. If they want to fight we’ll give them all the chance they want.”

The two cell-mates did not come to blows, however. As soon as the turnkey slammed the door of their cell Harley

turned conciliatingly to his companion.

“I’ve got nothin’ against you, cul,” he said. “It was all a misunderstandin’. Let’s be friends.”

Grayson signified his willingness to bury the hatchet.

“I’ve a favor to ask of-you, cul,” the big fellow continued. “If you should catch me noddin’—sort of goin’ to sleep like—just pinch me or give me a kick in the shins, will yuh?”

“Certainly,” his companion assented. “I’ll be glad to oblige you. But why shouldn’t you go to sleep if you feel like it? There’s no law against it. And there’s nothing else to do here until court time.”

“No, no.” Hercules protested frantically. “If I—er—I don’t want to go to sleep. I—the doctor says too much sleep ain’t good for me noives. Keep me awake even if you have ter stick a pin into me. Yuh get me, young feller”

“I’ll do the best I can,” he promised. “By the way, what’s the matter with your hand? You seem to have had an accident.”

Harley scowled.

“A dog bit it,” he explained sullenly.

“A dog! Not a mad dog, I hope. If so, there’s danger of hydrophobia.”

“No; the dog wasn’t mad,” said Hercules. “It ain’t hydrophobia that I got. I—he—”

His voice trailed off into a murmur, his eyes closed, and his head dropped on his chest. Grayson nipped him in the fleshy part of the leg, and he came to with a savage growl.

“What do yuh mean?” he began violently, and then his manner changed, “Much obliged, cul,” he said meekly. “That’s right. Keep me awake, no matter how hard yuh got to work to do it. I—I

don’t know what makes me feel so dopey. Must be the bad air, I guess. What was we talkin’ about when I dozed off?”

“You were just going to tell me how you cut your thumb.”

“I didn’t cut it,” Harley denied sharply, “I got it jammed in a door.”

“Too bad. Does it hurt much?”

“Not much. But the germs—”

“The germs!” Grayson interrupted him excitedly. “What germs?”

Hercules glared at him balefully.

“Who said anything about germs?” he growled. “I said Germans. I was talkin’ about the war.”

Again his eyes closed and his head fell forward. But he roused himself this time without any assistance from his companion.

“It’s no use,” he groaned. “I’ve got to give up. I got to get a saw-bones before it’s too late. I can fight anything on two legs, but I can’t fight them germs. I can’t—”

He stopped short and began to rattle the bars of his cell. The angry turnkey came running down the corridor.

“What do you think you’re doing, you souse.” that official snarled. “If-you don’t stop that racket I’ll hand you something that’ll put you to sleep for keeps.”

“I ain’t soused, boss,” the unfortunate prisoner whined. “I want a doctor in a hurry, I got the—the sleepin’ sickness.”

“The Sleeping sickness!” cried the turn-key and Grayson in one breath.

“Yes; it ain’t no use my tryin’ to flag it any more,” Harley groaned. “I give up. I’m comin’ across. It was me that done up the professor. Get a saw-bones before I croak and I’ll—I’ll sign a confession.”

“Congratulations, lieutenant,” the latter said to Grayson, in an undertone. He

grinned broadly. "That little third degree stunt of yours certainly turned the trick. It's the slickest thing I've seen or heard of in all the many years I've been in the department."

"Hush!" Grayson cautioned him sharply. "He may hear you, and we'd better get a confession from him in black and white before he gets wise."

He stepped over to his drowsy cell-mate and shook him roughly. They got Harley to his feet and marched him to the front room. There, in the presence of several witnesses, the unhappy prisoner sleepily dictated a full confession to the desk lieutenant, and with a trembling hand put his signature to the document.

"And now do I get a doctor?" he asked querulously. "Or are youse cops goin' to let a guy sleep himself to death?"

"We'll get a doctor for you, all right, Hercules." the desk lieutenant reassured him, winking at Grayson. "And in the mean time, while he's on his way, let me read you something. It may help you to keep awake."

He picked up the first edition of an evening newspaper from the desk and with a chuckle read aloud the following item:

#### NO CLUE TO PROFESSOR'S ASSAILANT

Dr. John F. Kemble, the aged bacteriologist of the Municipal Hospital for Contagious Diseases, who was brutally attacked and robbed by a highwayman last night, recovered consciousness early this morning, but could give no description of his assailant. He said he was struck from behind and never knew what hit him. The police had hoped to locate the thug because of the fact that a test-tube believed to have contained the germs of the

sleeping sickness was broken in the scuffle. Professor Kemble knocked that interesting theory on the head, however, by declaring this morning that the tube he carried was an empty one, which had never been used for the purpose for which it was intended.

Nevertheless, Lieutenant Philip Grayson, of the Central Office, who has charge of the investigation, says he hopes to clear up the mystery and make an arrest within a few—

The desk lieutenant suddenly stopped reading.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed, with some chagrin, as he glanced at the prisoner. "Can you beat that, fellows? He's fallen fast asleep on his feet. I don't believe he heard a word of what I said. Take him back, Anthony, and let him have his sleep out. He's earned it."

Later that day Lieutenant Philip Grayson of the Central Office gave out an interview to the reporters at police headquarters.

"I knew when I gave out the story to you boys last night that the tube was empty," he confessed with a grin. "I'm afraid I've been guilty of deceiving the press, but I hope you won't hold it against me; It was in a good cause. I wanted to throw a scare into the highwayman and—well, I think you'll agree that the end has justified the means."

"It was a good story, anyway, lieutenant," said one of the newspapermen laughingly. "And the account of the ingenious ruse you employed to get the goods on Hercules Harley will make even a better yarn." He paused.

"But there's one thing we don't quite understand. You have told us how you posed as a reporter so as to have a

chance to strike up an acquaintance with him and talk to him about those germs, and how you got into a street fight with him later so as to have him arrested and prevent him from getting medical treatment for his supposed malady. But what made the fellow feel so sleepy? That's what we'd like to know. Was it merely a case of auto-suggestion?"

The dapper little detective smiled.

"Auto-suggestion may have had a lot to do with it," he replied dryly. "But I don't mind admitting that as I stood behind his chair while he was reading the newspaper in the back room of the saloon, I took the precaution of dropping a sleeping powder in his beer—and I reckon that may have helped some."