

"HEART-WARMING AND  
HILARIOUS" — A. F. STEADMAN

author of *Skandar*

# CLEM FATALE HAS BEEN *Betrayed*



EVE WERSOCKI-MORRIS ILLUSTRATED BY HONIE BEAM

# CHAPTER ONE

## *The Youngest Gangster in the City*

*London, Spring 1951*

**B**eneath the pearly lights of the big city, in the alleyways and alcoves painted black with smog, you can bet that there will be crooks and criminals, gangsters and no-good 'uns making mischief in the midnight hours. They stick to the shadows. Moonlight can send those thieves scuttling back to their dens. No law dodger has the guts to pull a heist when a full moon is grinning in the night sky, brighter than a bobby's torch. No one, that is, except Clem Fatale and the Spider Gang.

And tonight the moon was on their side.

Clem Fatale crept up the grand staircase of the house chosen for that night's robbery. She tiptoed between

strips of moonlight falling from the high windows. At the top of the stairs she paused, her heart beating fast. The silent house loomed around her. Ahead, a corridor yawned away into the darkness, its walls glittering with silver plaques and mounted pistols.

“Lord Weatherdale really knows how to make the place look homely,” muttered Clem, eyeing a pair of decorative antlers with distaste.

“He’s got riches here worth more than a princess’s piggy bank.” Clem’s dad’s voice stole out of the darkness beside her.

Clem grinned, feeling bolder. Breaking into a filthy-rich mansion might not be every twelve-year-old girl’s ideal Wednesday night, but not every twelve-year-old had Jimmy Fatale – notorious jewel thief and boss of the Spider Gang – for a dad. Clem had been pulling jobs with the Spiders ever since her eleventh birthday. She was the gang’s secret weapon. She might be small and skinny but she could unpick any lock and fit through tight holes other gangsters could never even dream of tackling.

“We’re gonna show old Weatherdale a thing or two tonight, ain’t we?” muttered Clem.

“I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again,” said Jimmy Fatale. “When your name’s in the Green Book, your

treasures are as good as nicked.”

The Green Book was the envy of every gangster in the game. It was a notebook, handwritten by Jimmy Fatale, detailing the location of every hidden gem, every extravagant necklace, every jewel-studded moustache comb hoarded by the upper crust of London society – and how to steal them.

That night the Spiders were after the Fool’s Canary, a rare yellow diamond cut into the shape of a bird. It was the most valuable prize they had ever attempted to pinch.

Jimmy Fatale patted his coat pocket where he always kept the Green Book and gave Clem a reassuring wink. “You know the score, kid,” he said. “Wait for my signal. You bring the bag, we tuck up the Fool’s Canary—”

“And then we slink out of here like moonshine,” Clem whispered back.

He chuckled. “That’s my girl.”

Clem felt her dad’s warm hand on her shoulder and then he was gone – down the corridor, gliding in and out of shadows, until all Clem could see was his silhouette. He paused outside a door and Clem heard the soft flick of his penknife, and the squeak of a lock, before he disappeared inside.



After months of plotting and planning, the Spiders' heist was finally in motion and so far it had run like clockwork. Lord Weatherdale's mansion was a towering monstrosity in North London, guarded by high walls and peculiarly shaped shrubbery. There was a passage, mostly popular with foxes, which ran behind the garden wall, and this had been the Spiders' way in.

Ropes in hand, Clem and the gang had scaled up and over the wall and streaked across the lawn to the house. Then came Clem's moment: shimmying up the waterpipe, unscrewing the air vent and then, with barely a wriggle and a squeeze, she had somersaulted into the kitchen, snatched up the keys and opened the back door.

If their calculations were correct, Lord Weatherdale was at that very moment snoozing in his country pile several hundred miles from London – but there was always the chance he'd left some servants behind.

In the dark corridor, Clem tensed herself, the getaway bag held close to her chest. Any second now she would hear the signal and run to join her dad in Lord Weatherdale's study.

*Any second now...*

A flicker of movement caught Clem's eye. Opposite

the door to the study hung a tapestry and the tasselled end was fluttering. There must be a draught seeping out from underneath the door. Clem frowned. All the windows inside the study should have been locked and bolted – she'd seen the blueprints herself.

Something felt wrong. The hairs on Clem's arms began to tingle. She should have heard the signal by now.

She tiptoed down the corridor, throat dry, until she was right outside the study door. If something was amiss, her dad might need help. Clem paused for a fraction of a second, took a deep breath and opened the door.

It was even darker inside, and cold. The moonlight fell on a claw-footed desk covered with framed photographs of a snooty family all wearing the same grumpy expressions. The window beyond was open. She could hear it squeaking on its hinges, letting in the cool night air. There was no sign of Jimmy Fatale.

*“Dad?”*

Then Clem saw the safe, pushing out into the centre of the room, its door wide open. It was empty.

Without warning, a hand plunged out of the darkness and seized Clem's arm – before she could scream, another hand was clapped over her nose

and mouth. She struggled and kicked, fear welling up inside her. She bit down hard on the hand and it released her.

She tore from her attacker, banged out of the door and raced for the stairs. She flew down the staircase and swung on the final banister, landing like a cat in the entrance hall, before zigzagging back through the dining room to the kitchen. Suddenly a figure emerged out of the darkness ahead of her and Clem ran straight into them. The force of her run knocked the person off balance and the two came crashing to the floor.

“Good grub! Don’t hurt me!” squealed her would-be attacker.

“Don’t move or I’ll whack you so hard you’ll be seeing stars till Christmas!” growled Clem. Bluffing had got her out of many sticky situations before and it was needed now (especially since the deadliest thing she had in her pocket was a stick of toffee).

Her attacker whimpered.

Clem scrambled to her feet and it was only then that she heard the sirens. The police! She twisted round and saw two more people pounding towards her, the beam of a torch spinning across the walls.

“Clem! That you?”



“Monty! Twizzler!” Clem sighed with relief.

Her Spider comrades skidded to a halt: Monty – shaggy and bulky like a ginger bear; and Twizzler – twitchy and pipe-thin.

“Have you seen Dad?” demanded Clem.

“He’s not with you?” said Monty, his soft eyes creased.

“No—”

“You’ve lost the boss? You useless kid!” snarled Twizzler as she bristled with fury. “And I bet you set off the alarm, didn’t you?”

“No!” Clem protested. “I didn’t do anything. Dad went into the study but then he vanished and the Fool’s Canary – it’s gone!”

The sirens were coming closer and Clem, Monty and Twizzler ducked as headlamps roved over the windows. Car doors slammed.

“The police are here,” Monty gasped. “Screw’s got the car ready to scarper – let’s get out of here!”

“What about him?” hissed Twizzler and the three of them turned to look at the person on the floor.

Monty raised his torch and Clem saw that her attacker was a young boy with a milky complexion and dark hair slicked to his head like paint. He looked strangely familiar.

Twizzler dragged the unfortunate boy to his feet and shook him. "TALK!"

"I – I say – how do you do? I was just – um..." the boy gabbled.

There was a loud bang and shouts from the hallway.

"They're inside! We need to scram," ordered Monty. "Leave the boy!"

"You gonna leave a yapping witness like this?" demanded Twizzler.

Before the boy could utter another "I say!", Monty had thrown him over his shoulder and was hustling the others through the kitchen.

"We need to go back for Dad!" Clem fought against Monty's grip as he dragged her out the back door.

"Are you cracked?" screamed Twizzler. "You'll be marching into the arms of the fuzz!"

They hurtled across the lawn, the police torches raking through the house behind them. They reached the wall, where their ropes were still dangling, and Clem pulled herself up. Monty and Twizzler swarmed up beside her, the pale boy dangling under Monty's arm like a bag of groceries. Clem hit the ground on the other side and saw the car, jittering with expectation, in the passageway. Screw, hunched in the driver's seat, swore furiously as the four of them piled in.

“Who’s the spare part?” he asked.

“Some unlucky butler’s boy!” spat Twizzler.  
“We ain’t leaving no witnesses!”

They were all thrown backwards as the car surged out on to the open road. Clem was in the front seat beside Screw; the wind was rustling her hair and her blood was pumping hard.

Clem watched the boy in the rear-view mirror – the kid was whiter than a bleached bed sheet – and in a flash she knew where she’d seen his face. The photos in Lord Weatherdale’s study!

This was no servant boy. Unless she was very much mistaken, the Spiders had not only fudged the Fool’s Canary robbery and lost their gang leader, but they had also accidentally kidnapped the son of Lord Weatherdale.