



From the front of her dress she slipped a steel-cutting saw up the prisoner's sleeve.

The Shadow of the Ghost

As told to P. L. TRUSSELL

Author of "The Bobbed-Hair Terror"

A TRUE GUN MOLL STORY

The only man who ever escaped from solitary confinement in Auburn! The ghost! The same man who escaped from the "Tombs" in New York City—and all with the help of a faithful moll who stuck to her man. Here is a true story that, although the records prove it, is still almost too thrilling to believe.

MANY eyes followed the girl as she ascended the steps leading to the entrance of the "Tombs," that forbidding prison

on Lafayette Street in New York City. They were admiring eyes, for the girl moved with a graceful liteness as she tripped up the steps which usu-

ally were trod by reluctant feet. She was of medium height and beautifully rounded figure. Her most beautiful features were her flashing dark-brown, almost black eyes, and her heavy, glossy black hair.

Resolutely, she entered the prison door. There was nothing apologetic about her manner. She spoke decisively to the Assistant Warden who asked her business.

"I would like to see Reynolds Forsbrey," she said. "It's permissible, isn't it?"

"Who are you, and why do you want to see HIM?"

"I am Margaret Ryan," the girl responded, and, then, a bit sadly, "I am Reynolds Forsbrey's sweetheart—we were to have been married. I want to comfort him, if I can."

The warden looked the girl over curiously. This well-dressed, beautiful girl, who spoke with a voice of refinement, did not fit into the picture he would have drawn of the moll of Reynolds Forsbrey, for Forsbrey, only a few days before—on July 29, 1912—had been remanded to the "Tombs" for trial after shooting down two men ruthlessly, one of them fatally. This girl did not fit into his picture of Forsbrey's life at all.

All New York was talking of the brutal shootings. Forsbrey had walked into a little watchmaker's store on Delancey Street, near the Bowery, and for no reason, apparently, had fatally shot Morris Schwartzkopf, the proprietor. Then, as the police of the East Side were hunting the assailant, Forsbrey, not more than an hour later, entered a United Cigar Stores' establishment at No. 35 Cooper Square and asked the clerk, Maxwell Kats, to look up a telephone number for him. As the clerk looked into the telephone book obligingly, Forsbrey had drawn his gat and fired three hot slugs into the

clerk's body. Two policemen had seen Forsbrey run from the cigar store and had captured him in a basement on Seventh Avenue.

And as the prisoner was being booked in the Fifth Street Station House after his capture, Deputy Police Commissioner George S. Dougherty had arrived and identified Forsbrey, who already was suspected of having participated in the murder of John Whitford, an old man in Brooklyn, and also in the slaying of Walter Messeritz, who died of gun shots in a hold-up of his men's furnishing store in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn the previous March.

THAT was why the deputy warden eyed Margaret Ryan so curiously, when she declared herself the sweetheart of Reynolds Forsbrey. Her appearance and demeanor didn't fit into the Reynolds Forsbrey picture. She didn't look the part of the moll of such a renowned character as the "Tombs" prize prisoner at that time.

And the deputy warden hesitated for another reason before he allowed the girl any freedom in the prison. Forsbrey had been "baiting" his jailors. Pushed into his cell in the "Tombs," Forsbrey, a good-looking chap whose only disfigurement was a deep scar on his chin, had laughed disdainfully at them.

"You can't keep me in here," he said confidently. "I'll be leaving here soon—just give me a bit of time!"

So, Forsbrey was under a heavy guard—and the "Tombs" officials did not intend to give him an opportunity to make good his boast.

Margaret Ryan looked fearlessly into the eyes of the doubting deputy warden as he pondered.

"Reynolds faces an ordeal," she said calmly, "and I just want to cheer him up. Only a minute, please, that's all I ask."

The deputy warden relented. Sure-

ly, it would do no harm to let this refined girl talk with the prisoner, desperate as he was, for a few minutes. He called a jailor and gave the necessary instructions—and Margaret Ryan, the beautiful brunette, accompanied by the jailor, was ushered into a room, and the defiant Reynolds Forsbrey was led from his cell for the meeting.

As footsteps approached down the corridor, the girl's body tensed. She stood, awaiting the appearance of the slayer whom she loved. The door opened, and Forsbrey, handcuffed by one wrist to a guard, stood before her.

"Reynolds," she cried—and before the guard could restrain her, she threw herself into the prisoner's arms, weeping bitterly, her head on his shoulder. She clung to him, sobbing for a minute before the guards separated them. Then she grew calmer.

The conversation of the girl and Forsbrey was nothing out of the ordinary. Margaret assured Forsbrey of her love.

"They won't convict you, boy," she said, "and when you get out of here, I'll be waiting for you!"

SHE kissed him again as the guards told her that they must return their prisoner to his cell. Then she dried her eyes and went back to the prison office, thanking the deputy warden for his kindness.

Margaret Ryan walked from the "Tombs" and returned to the room she occupied in Brooklyn. In the minds of the deputy warden and Forsbrey's guards, the meeting of the slayer and his moll had been just another one of those things which come when a crook is in trouble.

They did not realize, even dream, that the cultured girl who had thrown herself into the arms of the manacled murderer—in that brief moment of

contact with him—had slipped into his possession the things which Forsbrey needed to accomplish what was deemed impossible—escape from the formidable "Tombs."

Margaret Ryan, in that brief embrace, had slipped a small phial of muriatic acid from its hiding place in her heavy hair down the neck of Forsbrey's shirt, and from the front of her dress had slipped four small steel-cutting saws up the prisoner's sleeve!

Reynolds Forsbrey had these implements in his cell—and Margaret Ryan, working as a stenographer in a New York office by day, sat in her Brooklyn room by night, awaiting the coming of her sweetheart over the grim wall of the "Tombs!"

And, as Margaret Ryan awaited his coming, Reynolds Forsbrey taunted his guards.

"Coppers," he gibed, "you can't keep me in here. I'm going away from here—and it won't be long."

The guards' eyes always were on him, except in the small hours of the morning, when it was thought Forsbrey was asleep. But, for a few minutes each night, when vigilance was relaxed, Forsbrey was working with the saws and acid which Margaret Ryan had smuggled in to him. Night by night, the saws bit a little more deeply into the bars of his cell on the second tier. With any kind of a break, he decided, his dash for freedom soon would come.

On the night of August 25, however, a guard on the second tier fancied he heard a sound particularly out-of-place in a prison which should be quiet at that hour. He crept along the tier until he stood close to the cell occupied by "Killer" Forsbrey. He heard the sound distinctly now. It was the "rasp-rasp" of steel against steel.

The guard hurried to the first floor of the prison and whispered his

suspicious to the night warden. A group of guards quietly made their way to the second tier. There was no sound now. Reynolds Forsbrey, stretched flat on his prison cot, apparently was sound asleep in his cell. The guards unlocked the door and entered the cell and Forsbrey sprang to his feet.

The night warden, while guards held Forsbrey, examined the bars of the slayer's cell.

Three bars had been sawed nearly through—weakening them so that a strong wrench would part them. And as the sneering Forsbrey watched, the guards searched his cot. Hidden in the padding was the bottle of acid and the four saws which Forsbrey's moll had smuggled to him!

Margaret Ryan's invasion of the "Tombs" to aid the escape of her lover was in vain—and a few hours later she was arrested in her Brooklyn room, with no other explanation than, "You're wanted at Headquarters!"

Taken by automobile to Police Headquarters on Centre Street, in Manhattan, Margaret faced a battery of dicks.

With emotion she admitted her part in the plot.

"Yes," she said, "I took the acid and saws to him. It was easy. The acid was hidden in my hair and the saws in a corset stay when I entered the "Tombs."

The escape plot had been frustrated and Margaret Ryan regained her freedom. Forsbrey, indicted in the Messeritz slaying now, was moved into an "isolation cell" on the Lafayette Street side of the "Tombs," still taunting his guards and promising them that he "soon would be freed." A double guard was stationed just outside the isolation cell, in constant sight of the gibing Forsbrey.

MMARGARET RYAN, undismayed by the failure of her attempt to free her lover, went back to her work by day and her Brooklyn room by night. She had not lost confidence. She felt certain that Forsbrey either would escape from his double-guarded cell or would "beat the rap" when he stood trial. The girl simply would not believe that her sweetheart would fail to rejoin her.

Margaret was not a girl who ran with a mob. Reynolds Forsbrey alone had attraction for her, and that attraction was so strong that she made it her business to associate with those who had connections with that mysterious "underground grapevine telegraph" system by means of which even isolated prisoners in the closest-guarded dungeons communicate with their numerous friends "outside"—the prison.

So, Margaret learned what she could of what was going on inside the "Tombs" and waited—waited for Labor Day, September 2, 1912. That date meant much to the sweetheart of Forsbrey the killer. She knew that it was the date Reynolds Forsbrey had set for his second attempt to flee the "Tombs."

Labor Day came, with a blustering rain and wind which howled through the prison yard. At three o'clock in the morning Night Warden Nicholas Jones, sensing trouble, walked through the rain-swept yard. Against the high wall, where the "Tombs" rounds off close to Centre Street to face the Criminal Courts Building, he saw a nail-studded plank, leaning against the prison wall—from the *inside!*

Hurrying inside the prison, the night warden found, asleep in a chair, the night keeper who had failed to punch his time clock a few minutes before. The night keeper could not explain the nail-studded

plank. He did not know how it got there.

The night warden, in a flash, recalled the boasts of Forsbrey. He rushed to the "isolation cell" where the dangerous prisoner should be asleep. He looked inside. A trusty assigned to watch outside the cell was asleep—and Reynolds Forsbrey was gone! Quickly, the night warden realized what had happened. In Forsbrey's cell was a ventilator, covered by a heavy wire screen. Forsbrey has pried loose the screen and using his bed for a ladder, had crawled to the ventilator shaft and slid to the cellar of the "Tombs." The nail-studded plank had been used as a ladder to mount the high wall and the fugitive had dropped from the wall to Lafayette Street and freedom under cover of the rainstorm!

Forsbrey, who had been branded by Deputy Commissioner Dougherty as one of the most dangerous criminals in the country, was at liberty—and hardly had the search for him become organized when Brooklyn police reported to the "Tombs" officials that Margaret Ryan, the black-haired sweetheart of the killer, had vanished from her home at just about the time when her man was slipping away from the side of the "Tombs" wall!

Margaret Ryan never told, nor did Forsbrey, how they met, but it was at some point in Forsbrey's odd getaway. They did not meet immediately, for after escaping in the darkness Forsbrey, in some manner secured a hat so he would not attract attention. While the police were scouring the city for him, he went to Bronx Park on the subway and by the time he left the train there the weather had moderated. He joined a group of bench-sitters and chatted with them until late in the day. He slept on a park bench that night.

The next day he went to Jersey City on a Hudson & Manhattan tube train, smiling to himself as persons beside him read scare-head stories in their newspapers, telling of his escape! His photograph stared at him from the newspapers, but none of his fellow-riders recognized him. He stayed in Jersey City two days and then returned to New York, going into hiding until a mustache and beard grew.

It was during this time that Margaret Ryan reached his side. And on September 13, eleven days after his escape, a young couple went into the Bronx to rent a home. Reynolds Forsbrey, the escaped killer was a blond youth, with bright yellow hair, and Margaret Ryan, his sweetheart, was a girl with black tresses.

BUT this young house-hunting couple which strolled arm-in-arm through Bronx apartments selecting a place to live, attracted no suspicion by their appearance, for the husband, who gave his name as "Mr. Davis," had *black hair*, and a *black mustache and black beard*. The young wife, unlike the Margaret Ryan sought by the police, was a decided blonde, with heavy yellow curls! Nevertheless the couple were Reynolds Forsbrey and Margaret Ryan. They had dyed and bleached their hair so neither would fit the police descriptions which had been broadcast!

The affectionate young couple finally found an apartment which suited them. The agent was Meyer Brown and the apartment stood at No. 1176 Fox Street. Brown was delighted to rent the fifth floor apartment to the charming, cultured couple. They moved in, and the name, "Edward Davis" was placed on a card over the doorbell for the apartment. A month's rent was paid in advance, and "Mr. Davis," who

seemed to have plenty of money, apparently had no occupation, for he and his bride spent much time at home, rarely going out in daylight.

Margaret Ryan was happy. She did not regret changing her hair from its brilliant black to a bleached yellow. She was with her man—and she felt his appearance, from a blonde with smooth face, to a black-haired, bearded man, would avert his recapture. She did not realize it, but a figure was lurking in the neighborhood, trying to fathom the mystery of "Mr. and Mrs. Davis" and to send Reynolds Forsbrey back to his cell.

That person was Lieutenant John Lake, assigned to Harbor B Precinct at 125th Street. Lieutenant Lake, on the day following the advent of "Mr. and Mrs. Davis" into the Bronx apartment, overheard a conversation in a saloon. Someone in a furtive group in the corner of the room mentioned the name "Forsbrey" and also said "Fox Street." Lake asked Deputy Commissioner Dougherty to give him time to work on his tip and Lake was relieved of his station house duties, taking up the job of combing Fox Street for the fugitive Forsbrey.

LAKE was looking for the black-haired Margaret Ryan and the blonde Forsbrey, and gradually he worked his way down the long stretch of Fox Street. On his tenth day on Fox Street, Lake passed a fine-looking young blonde woman on the street. He made inquiries about her and learned that she was "Mrs. Davis" and he followed her to her home, the Fox Street apartment. Then he waited outside for the appearance of "Mr. Davis."

And while the police officer was waiting for a sight of him, "Mr. Davis" made a real mistake. The small beard he wore irked him.

"I'm going to shave this beard," he told Margaret. "I'll let the moustache stay, and keep it and my hair dyed black, but this beard's going to come off."

"But the scar on your chin?" Margaret protested.

"I don't care. Off comes the beard."

So, Reynolds Forsbrey shaved off the beard which hid the tell-tale scar for which every copper in New York was looking. And it was not many hours later when Forsbrey strolled from the apartment and the watching Lake got a good look at him. That was enough. The scar told the story, and Lake hustled to a telephone and called Deputy Dougherty.

Dougherty and two detective lieutenants from Headquarters dashed to the Bronx and met the watching Lake. By this time Margaret and Forsbrey had eaten their dinner and were chatting in the living-room of their refuge, up there on the fifth floor of the apartment. They did not know it, but the building was surrounded by a horde of policemen.

There was a ring of the doorbell—not the bell on the street floor, but the bell at the apartment entrance. Like a flash, Forsbrey hurried into the darkened bedroom and slid under the bed. Margaret, her heart beating rapidly, went to the door and steeled herself for the ordeal. She opened the door slowly, to face Deputy Dougherty and three detectives and Lake. Service revolvers were held poised by everyone.

"We want Davis!" Dougherty said to the girl.

"I'm sorry," she replied evenly, "but he's not in. He has gone out for the evening."

The detectives brushed the moll aside. Bright lights were burning in the living-room and kitchen, but the bedroom was dark, so the dicks

approached that room cautiously. They charged the room silently in the darkness, feeling with left hands and holding ready revolvers in their right hands. A searching hand felt Forsbrey and all weapons were turned on that spot.

"Out of there, or we'll shoot," demanded Dougherty, and Forsbrey, after his weeks of liberty, again was headed for a cell.

Margaret Ryan, her plans for happiness upset, cried bitterly as she and her lover, together with the detectives, entered Deputy Dougherty's automobile for the ride to Headquarters. By ten o'clock that night, Forsbrey was back in his cell in the "Tombs," and Margaret Ryan was held in the women's section of the prison.

MMARGARET went to the House of Detention, held under \$1,500 bail as a material witness against her sweetheart—but her love for Forsbrey, whom the coppers now called the "Ghost," was as strong as ever.

"I would marry him as he sits in the electric chair at Sing Sing," she said, tearfully, "if it ever comes to that!"

And at that time it looked as though the Death House would be Forsbrey's fate. But, he got a break. The State's case against him was none too strong, and the District Attorney's office agreed to accept a plea of guilty of murder in the second degree and first degree assault. This was done with the consent of the court. Forsbrey, heard himself sentenced to a thirty-years' stretch, and Margaret Ryan was ordered released by Judge Mulqueen.

Thirty years! What a blow it was to the moll. She knew that Forsbrey was in Sing Sing. Then she learned that he had been transferred

to Clinton Prison, at Dannemora, where the most dangerous criminals were confined. Prisoners just did not escape from Dannemora. Margaret knew that, yet she still had supreme confidence in Forsbrey. She still wanted her man and she disappeared from her home and haunts. She was making her connections with those mysterious persons through whom she could communicate with Reynolds Forsbrey through the "underground telegraph!"

And those messages got through the thick walls of Dannemora prison! Time and again Margaret and Reynolds exchanged words through the mysterious channel, and early in April, 1913, Margaret made a strange journey. She gave up city living to retire to the country, and strange to say, she chose as her abode an obscure cabin, hidden away in the woods, only six miles from the gray walls of Dannemora prison!

The cabin, by the way, was only sixteen miles from the Canadian border!

Margaret was accompanied to her new home by strange bundles. They were not filled with women's finery. They were men's clothes—clothes which would slip over prison stripes and hide them from public gaze. And the girl took up horseback riding. Two fleet horses were stabled in the little barn adjoining the crude cabin in the woods.

Margaret Ryan was ready to rejoin the "Ghost" and flee with him to the safety of the international boundary just as soon as he could solve the hitherto unsolved puzzle of escaping from Dannemora.

There, on April 11, 1913, Margaret Ryan, the moll who was so loyal to her boy friend, "Killer" Forsbrey, waited his coming. She was waiting there when Warden

Harry Kaiser became suspicious of Forsbrey's jaunty manner and started an inquiry. Kaiser rifled Forsbrey's cell and found the secret of the prisoner's elation. Hidden in the bed was an ingenious gasoline bomb which Forsbrey, working in the prison shop, had fashioned out of two tin-cups! And in the prison shop basement he found two scaling ladders which Forsbrey had made.

Forsbrey's plan had been to blow up the prison shop with his bomb, escape to the basement in the confusion and to scale the walls with his ladders! Then Forsbrey was to meet the waiting Margaret Ryan and escape with her!

MMARGARET RYAN waited tearfully and in vain that day. And then she got the word that the plot had failed. This girl shadow of the Ghost faded from the neighborhood of the cabin and the riding horses disappeared.

But, Margaret did not despair. Forsbrey now was under heaviest guard. His only exercise now was behind bars, in a cell built adjoining the main prison wall. It was like an animal cage, yet Forsbrey continued to scoff at his jailors.

"I'll be leaving here before long, coppers," he would tell them with a laugh. "You can't keep me in here!"

Even under the strict surveillance, Forsbrey was sending messages to and receiving others from Margaret Ryan. Day after day the girl labored to perfect plans for her lover's escape and flight. Their communication continued through the "underground," but unluckily for them, that channel sprung a leak.

Late in November, a letter which Forsbrey wrote to Margaret was read by the prison authorities, and then allowed to go on its way. Margaret, of course, did not know the word she awaited had been under

the keepers' eyes and she followed its instructions. Quickly she moved to follow the instructions in the letter, which told her to wait for Ghost Forsbrey at a roadhouse about six miles from Plattsburg, New York, and be ready to help him steal horses from a farmer's stable there.

"On the first cloudy day," the Ghost wrote, "be ready to join me. Everything is ready for me to escape from my outside cell. With springs taken from my bed I'll be able to scale the wall."

The cloudy day came and Margaret waited at the trysting-place. But she waited in vain, her eyes futilely straining for the running figure of her man. As the cloudy day came, the prison officials went into Forsbrey's outside cell and searched it thoroughly. They found that the Ghost had used the leg of his bed for a lever with which to pry loose two bars in the top of the cell. Forsbrey was taken from that cell, put in another stronger one and his guard was doubled.

IT BECAME a matter of pride now for the prison keepers to keep Forsbrey with them and to prevent his communication with the moll who would not despair. For more than a year, virtually no word passed between them, and the strain told on the moll whose only interest in life was in the Ghost, who still boasted that he would "walk away from Dannemora."

Margaret had to work for her living. All her money had been spent in her futile efforts to liberate the Ghost. She had been his very shadow for years, but the failure of their efforts to effect a reunion slowly broke her morale. The moll who was ready to "marry Forsbrey, as he sat in the electric chair at Sing Sing, if it came to that," was

living under an assumed name in a rooming house in Brooklyn, at No. 385 Dean Street.

It was March 30, 1916, more than a year after Forsbrey's last frustrated jail break. The girl had retired to her room to brood, as she did nightly now. The picture of the Ghost was before her, the smiling Reynolds she had known before that day of the double-shooting which first put him in the "Tombs." The recollection was too much for her overwrought nerves. She rose from her chair and ran to the bathroom. On the shelf of a medicine cabinet were two kinds of poison. Seizing the bottles, the girl drank a draught from one bottle and then from the other. Before the poison worked enough to stop her activities, she wrote this note and pinned it to the mantel in her room:

"I am Margaret Ryan, sweetheart of Reynolds Forsbrey. Let me say 'The wages of sin is Death.' Notify Reynolds Forsbrey, No. Eleven Van Camper Street, Dannsville, N. Y."

"No. Eleven Van Camper Street, Dannsville, New York," was the address of Dannemora prison!

But the Margaret Ryan, who had been so faithful to Reynolds Forsbrey, did not die from the poison. Her cries attracted the attention of the proprietor of the house and she was rushed to a Brooklyn hospital, where physicians saved her life. Once out of the hospital the girl disappeared from Brooklyn, just about the time that Forsbrey was moved from "Murderers' Row" in Dannemora to a similar unit of Auburn Prison.

In Auburn Prison Forsbrey was given a "task" in the cabinet shop. The prison officials never could learn whether Margaret Ryan continued

her communication with the Ghost after his transfer, but they believe she did, for Forsbrey seemed possessed with the idea of escape. Something was driving him to desperate chances, and on the afternoon of April 16, 1917, he slipped from his workbench in the prison shop and walked to the guard at the door. He had a bundle in his hands.

"I'm the runner," he said to the guard. "Package here for Captain Betts." Captain John Betts was on guard at the entrance which separated the men's prison from the women's prison. The guard let the supposed "runner" pass.

Forsbrey reached the gate and offered the bundle to Betts, who was an aged man. As Betts reached for the package, Forsbrey, summoning all his strength, struck Betts between the eyes, knocked him down, and in the shelter of the big gate, beat him into unconsciousness. He donned Betts' cap, took his keys and let himself into the yard of the women's prison. Then he locked the gate behind him and walked through the yard of the women's prison.

Nearing the wall, he broke into a run and leaped up, catching his fingers on the top of the wall. As women prisoners screamed, he pulled himself to the top, swung over the wall and dropped to the street outside.

THE Ghost again was at large—and the first thing the pursuers conjured in their minds was a reunion of Forsbrey and Margaret Ryan, his faithful moll. The pursuit was hot, and if Margaret was waiting for her man it was a futile wait, for that same night a posse recaptured the Ghost Forsbrey, hiding in a hay-mow on the property of George Wildner, near Auburn.

The Ghost had made good his word to escape again, but he had

failed to meet the moll the guards believed was waiting for him somewhere.

The Ghost went back into solitary—and no word was heard of Margaret Ryan.

Again, on the night of March 8, 1918, the Ghost lived up to his name. He did what no other man had done—he escaped from a solitary confinement cell in Auburn Prison by sawing the bars with a saw which came from "outside." And the saws were exactly the same as those which Margaret Ryan, years before, had slipped into Forsbrey's sleeve in an embrace in the "Tombs" in New York City. The prison officials never learned where that saw came from—but the underworld smiled knowingly, even if no one had seen Margaret Ryan for a year.

Forsbrey was recaptured the following day—hiding in a freight car in the Lehigh Valley Railroad yards at Locke, N. Y.

When he surrendered to the posse which found him his bravado was gone. He was questioned about the saw which came to him so mysteri-

ously—but he told nothing and he refused to answer any questions in which the name "Margaret Ryan" was used.

From that time until the present no one connected with the police or prison systems knows what has become of Margaret Ryan. Reynolds Forsbrey was in Clinton prison for six years and then was sent back to Sing Sing. He still has five years in stir before him, and Warden Lawes of Sing Sing reports him a model prisoner, reliable and dependable.

Five years—1936. It then will be 24 years since Margaret Ryan slipped the acid and saws to the Tombs prisoner, the same prisoner whom she was willing to "marry as he sat in the electric chair, if it comes to that."

The riddle of Margaret Ryan of these recent years is her secret alone—and, perhaps, Reynolds Forsbrey's. Only Margaret Ryan, the shadow of the Ghost, and the Ghost himself, maybe, knows whether she will be waiting for him when he steps from Sing Sing in 1936. And neither the moll nor the Ghost will tell.

