



HULBERT FOOTNER

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Title: Queen of Clubs

Date of first publication: 1928

Author: Hulbert Footner (1879-1944)

Date first posted: Apr. 17, 2022

Date last updated: Apr. 17, 2022

Faded Page eBook #20220442

This eBook was produced by: Al Haines, Cindy Beyer & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <https://www.pgdpCanada.net>

QUEEN of CLUBS

By HULBERT FOOTNER

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The Huntress," "Officer," "Ramshackle House," "The Shanty Sled," "The Substitute Millionaire," "Thieves' Wit," "The Under Dogs," "The Wild Bird," "The Woman from Outside," "A Backwoods Princess," etc.



A. L. BURT COMPANY
Publishers New York

Published by arrangement with Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc.

Printed in U. S. A.

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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i

CAROLA GOADBY awoke with a vague feeling of discontent. Am I ill? she asked herself. No! I slept like a baby, and I have a good appetite for my breakfast. As a matter of fact I'm too healthy; I don't get exercise enough; there's something in me that needs to be worked off. As soon as she began thinking about it, she realized that she had had this feeling of dissatisfaction for a long time—for that matter had she not always had it? only of late it had been making itself actively felt, like a lump somewhere inside her that interfered with her free motions.

What could it be? She was Carola Goadby, a being set apart from the common lot of mankind. This fact she had accepted since babyhood. She had everything that heart could desire, and everybody was perfectly lovely to her. Everybody bore themselves towards her tenderly and solicitously as towards something rare and precious that must be handled with care. They envied her. Generally it was pleasant to be envied; it made you feel secure. And yet . . . and yet . . . ! Somehow it all seemed a little unreal. Ha! *that* was it! She was like an actress in an elegant comedy; but whereas other actresses went home after the show and had their suppers, her play went on for ever and ever. Brh! she made haste to press the bell that hung over the head of her bed.

Her own maid Sophie entered the room with her charming smile and cheerful greeting. She pulled the curtain cords and the room became flooded with sunlight. The big bay in Carola's bedroom looked out on a side street in the Fifties. Her house while still magnificent, was somewhat old-fashioned nowadays, and the shops had sprung up thickly all around it. However, Mr. Minturn her trustee had not cared to take the responsibility of building a new house for her further uptown. Let her come of age first, he said, and choose her own location. Instead, he had bought the opposite corner on the side street, and had erected a low building upon it, that the precious sunlight might be assured in her bedroom window. The rents from the low building, he explained, would not pay a very good rate of interest, but she had so much money the rate scarcely mattered, so the principal was secure. His difficulty he said, was to invest the surplus income, it accumulated so fast.

Carola looked at Sophie speculatively. The maid was as fresh and pretty as a shepherdess in a painting by Fragonard. Yet there was something unreal about her too. She always did exactly the right thing at exactly the right moment like the ladies' maid in a well rehearsed play. Carola had no idea what went on behind the scenes with Sophie—or with anybody else for that matter, because she, Carola was always on the stage. There was something irritating about Sophie's charming smile this morning. Carola had the impulse to speak rudely to her, even to strike her, just to see what would happen. Tears would be real anyhow. But of course she resisted it. Behind Sophie's official smile, miles away from Carola, there was a demure glint that was real, and that brought a little pain to Carola's breast. Sophie has a secret, she thought, a happy secret; and my life is as public as a railway station.

"Will you have your bath or your breakfast first?" asked Sophie.

Carola considered this important question. "My breakfast," she said at last. "A bath makes me too hungry. I shall not bathe until it is time to dress for lunch."

"Shall I give you your breakfast in bed?"

"No," said Carola, "it is nicer to sit in a chair and look out of the window . . . I want toasted muffins. Two whole ones sent up one at a time, and *very hot*."

She hoped there were no muffins. That would give her a real grievance. Then they would all make a fuss over her, and perhaps she'd feel better. But she was disappointed.

"Cook has them," said Sophie brightly. "I asked particularly."

Sophie went out into the hall, and gave a low-voiced order over the house telephone. When she returned she said:

"When you've eaten your breakfast there's a young person from Mandel's with your dress for the St. Nicholas dance to-night."

Carola experienced only a faint interest. She had so many new dresses. "Bother!" she said, "then I'll have to put some clothes on in order to try it on."

"Oh no," said Sophie, "they have sent the mannequin whose measurements are the same as yours. She will put it on and save you the trouble."

Carola felt more interested. She remembered the mannequin.

"In that case," she said, "let her come right up. I can be eating at the same time."

"Very well," said Sophie. "I will call Mrs. Van Arsdale."

"No!" said Carola so sharply, that the maid looked at her in astonishment. "Oh, let her sleep," said Carola. "We were up until two this morning."

Sophie hesitated. "But Mrs. Van Arsdale will be so interested in the dress," she said.

A hot little flame of anger shot up inside Carola. "You heard what I said!" she said sharply. It astonished herself.

With a startled glance, Sophie nodded her head, and disappeared.

Carola was so pleased with the effect of her tiny outburst that her anger immediately evaporated. I am too docile, she thought; I ought to make myself felt more. After all this is my house.

She looked forward with a little thrill to the coming interview. To talk to the girl from Mandel's without her chaperon being present would be quite an adventure. In the shop of the fashionable coutourier she and the mannequin had glanced at each other with the shy curiosity of youth, but had never spoken. Carola resolved to try to get the girl to talk about herself; to talk about real things—that is, if Sophie did not betray her and arouse Mrs. Van Arsdale after all. Carola had had irritating experience of the fact that the servants looked towards Mrs. Van Arsdale for their orders, instead of to herself.

And behind Mrs. Van Arsdale there always loomed the fatherly figure of Mr. Minturn, Carola's trustee. Mr. Minturn's influence made itself felt in the remotest parts of the household. He hired Mrs. Van Arsdale, who hired the housekeeper, who hired the servants; and they all worked together in a close corporation that frequently made Carola feel like a stranger in her own grand house. If they had oppressed her in any way she would have fought back; but they were too wise for that. With petting, cajolery and affectionate indulgences they concealed the rules that circumscribed her life like a cage. Carola was almost suffocated with kindness. How can you fight against that sort of thing? Every now and then she got up some small rebellion, and was always defeated—with smiles.

Carola was sitting beside one of the Avenue windows of her boudoir sipping chocolate and munching buttered muffin when the mannequin was brought in. Just as smart in appearance as any of my friends, thought Carola—or almost. Of course the dress box gives her away, poor thing. The two girls exchanged greetings. The mannequin's voice gave her away worse than the box she was carrying. She cannot have been to a good school, thought Carola sadly. However there was much about her to like; her modest manner; her steady, reticent glance. Moreover she was quite as pretty as Carola herself, but in a different style.

Sophie hung about with an anticipatory air, waiting to see the dress. "That will be all, thank you, Sophie," said Carola sweetly; and the maid went out with just the suspicion of a flirt to her black dress.

Carola and the other girl felt a little shy with each other. "I'm sure the dress is all right," said Carola with a laugh; "or Mandel wouldn't have sent it home. However I suppose you must try it on. Go into my dressing room and change."

While she was out of the room, Carola debated how best to open a real conversation with her. She did so want to learn how people lived! She couldn't decide on a beginning. The girl presently returned looking like an angel in pale blue embroidered in threads of silver. Carola scarcely gave a glance at the dress.

"It's all right," she said.

The mannequin was greatly concerned. "Oh, don't you like it?" she asked with a falling face.

"Do you?" asked Carola with a sudden smile.

In her enthusiasm the girl forgot the well-trained reticence of the mannequin. "I think it's a dream!" she cried, clasping her hands, and gazing at herself in a long mirror. "So delicate and refined! So much better style than the showy dresses we have to make for most people. I think it's the prettiest dress we have ever made!"

"Then you take it," said Carola, yielding to a sudden impulse.

"I?" said the girl, opening her eyes as wide as saucers. "Oh, then you don't like it," she said sadly.

"But I do," said Carola; "that's why I want to give it to you. I have stacks of other dresses. I can wear one of them to-night just as well."

"Oh, thank you for your kindness," said the girl in great confusion. "But I couldn't take it. What would they say at the shop?"

"What have they got to do with it?" said Carola. "I take the dress. I give it to you. I will send some one with it to your house."

"Oh, thank you, thank you," said the girl hanging her head, "but I couldn't. It wouldn't do at all!"

"Oh," said Carola, disappointed. "Don't you ever go to dances?"

The girl raised her head, and a shy smile appeared. "Oh yes," she said, "in fact I'm going to a dance to-night, too."

"Then you must take the dress!" said Carola. "Where is your dance going to be?"

"It's given by the Yorkville Social Club at Webster's Hall."

"I expect you'll have a better time than I shall," said Carola. "Do you have chaperons?"

The girl laughed outright, and forgot her shyness. "Oh no," she said; "we don't run to such class as that!"

“Then who takes you?” asked Carola.

“My boy friend.”

The little phrase melted Carola’s heart. “Oh, how nice,” she murmured. “And does he bring you home again?”

“Of course.”

“Alone?”

“Surely!”

“How sweet to have a boy friend!” murmured Carola.

“But . . . haven’t you?” asked the girl.

Carola shook her head. “I meet plenty of men,” she said; “dozens; hundreds. All carefully selected, you understand. They seem pretty wishy-washy to me. In their evening clothes with their hair slicked down they’re as much alike as a row of tame blackbirds. We never seem to get anywhere. They’re too much in awe of me—or of my money. They won’t let me be human.”

“I can understand that,” said the girl.

“Tell me about your boy friend,” said Carola cajolingly. “What does he look like?”

“I have a picture of him,” said the girl shyly, “if you’d like to . . .”

“Oh, do show it to me!”

The picture was produced out of the mannequin’s little handbag. Carola beheld a stalwart young man with mirthful eyes, and the corners of his mouth provokingly turned up.

“Oh, he looks nice!” she said. “He looks a little wild.”

“Oh yes,” said the other girl, with a fond, proprietary air, “if I didn’t manage him.”

“I like them that way,” murmured Carola, studying the picture; “I am so tired of tame men!”

“Sure. Only you mustn’t let on.”

Carola giggled delightedly, and gave the other girl’s hand an impulsive squeeze. They felt like sisters. “Is he allowed to come to see you?” she asked.

“We go out together,” said the other; “to the dancing palaces and to the movies . . . It’s dark,” she added demurely.

“Just the two of you! Oh, how nice!” murmured Carola.

“But summer is the best. We go to the parks and beaches then.”

“I envy you!” sighed Carola.

“How strange!” murmured the other girl. “That you should envy me!”

There was a brisk rat-tat on the door, and without waiting for any summons, it was opened and Mrs. Van Arsdale swept in, wearing a fleecy, fluffy negligee, and with every hair of her elaborate coiffure in place.

Oh damn! said Carola to herself. Notwithstanding her careful bringing up, she had learned to swear to herself, and it afforded her a good deal of private relief.

“Good morning, darling!” cried Mrs. Van Arsdale. “I hurried as fast as I could.” She gave the mannequin a hard look. “Oh, it’s Miss Julia,” she said in a sweet and patronizing voice.

So she knew her name. Mrs. Van Arsdale always remembered such things. She was a terribly efficient woman. Now she’ll speak to Mandel, thought Carola bitterly; and the girl will never be allowed to come near me again.

“Let me see. Let me see. Let me see,” Mrs. Van Arsdale burred brightly. “Walk across the room, please, Miss Julia . . . Now turn and face the windows. Stand for a moment.” Mrs. Van Arsdale walked all around the mannequin, putting her head on one side, and screwing up her eyes. “Not bad. Not bad. You will be a success in this dress, Carola . . . But I told Mandel to lower the panel on the left side another inch. Of course one does want to have the line exactly level, but the discrepancy is too great. Looks a little freakish.” There was more discussion of the finer points of dress design which may be omitted.

Now I must fight, thought Carola. Aloud she said: “It really doesn’t matter, because I have given the dress to Miss Julia.”

For once in her life Mrs. Van Arsdale was completely taken aback. “Hey?” she said blinking rapidly at Carola. Then she recovered herself with a little scream of fond laughter. “Oh, my darling child, what a quaint and dear idea! Carola, you are perfectly adorable! But it wouldn’t do at all, would it, Miss Julia?” (Miss Julia made no answer.) “That dress was ordered for you to wear to the St. Nicholas dance to-night. It’s too late to get another.”

“I will wear one of my other dresses,” said Carola.

“They’ve all been noticed and commented on. You have a reputation to keep up, my dear.” Mrs. Van Arsdale resumed her examination of the blue dress as if the matter had been completely disposed of. “Miss Julia,” she said, “ask Mr. Mandel to make up a second girdle in that cielo messaline that he showed me yesterday. We will try the effect of it under artificial light.”

“Yes, Madam,” said the mannequin with her usual impersonal manner.

Mrs. Van Arsdale appeared to be struck by a sudden happy thought. “I tell you what, Carola. Give Miss Julia the pink net over silver cloth. It is not becoming to you, and it will be just the thing for her.”

“I don’t like that dress,” said Carola stubbornly. “I don’t want to give her a dress that I don’t like.”

Mrs. Van Arsdale was not listening. She scampered into the next room, and returned with the pink confection over her arm. "It has never been worn," she said.

Carola stiffened. Her generous impulse had already been cheapened and spoiled, but she was determined to fight for her own way. "I want her to have the blue one," she said stubbornly.

But Julia approached her, and said in a low voice beseechingly: "No, please, Miss Goadby. I appreciate it, but it would not do, really."

Carola, realizing how painful this scene must be for the girl, suddenly gave in with a shrug. After all one could not fight one's household battles before a stranger. She and Mrs. Van Arsdale would have it out later.

"I will have it put in a box for you," said Mrs. Van Arsdale, sweet as peaches, now that she was getting her own way.

"It must be sent to Miss Julia's home," said Carola. "It would only make talk at Mandel's."

"Of course!" cried Mrs. Van Arsdale. "You think of everything, dear!"

"And put in silver slippers, stockings and a fan," said Carola. "And an evening cloak," she added, determined to do the thing in style.

"Not a cloak, please, Miss Goadby," said Julia nervously. "I couldn't wear it, walking through the streets."

"Well, never mind the cloak," said Carola.

There came a moment later when Mrs. Van Arsdale turned her back to give orders to Sophie concerning the pink dress. Julia approached Carola. She dropped the impersonal air of the mannequin.

"Thank you, thank you so much," she whispered wistfully.

Carola took her hand. "I shall see you again," she said meaningly.

When the girl had gone, Mrs. Van Arsdale said brightly: "Well, darling, will you ride this morning, or will you just lie about and rest?"

"I don't care to ride," said Carola.

"Mrs. Frelinghuysen and her son are lunching with us, you remember," Mrs. Van Arsdale prattled on. "Such a delightful young fellow!"

"Does he always go about with his mother?" asked Carola.

"Oh my dear," said Mrs. Van Arsdale, slightly shocked, "she was a Hamilton!"

What's that got to do with it? thought Carola. She did not say it aloud; no use wasting one's strength on trifles.

"Mr. Minturn is also lunching," Mrs. Van Arsdale went on, "and he will no doubt want a little talk with you afterwards. At three thirty Madame Lucia is

coming with hats. At four you will have to dress for Mrs. St. Evremond's tea. That will be a delightful affair. Just the girls of your set. We are dining with the Simeon Barclay's and will go on to the dance with them."

This is unbearable! thought Carola. I will not stand it another minute. "Mrs. Van Arsdale," she began.

"Why this sudden formality?" asked Mrs. Van Arsdale with her bright smile.

"Well, Emma, then . . ."

"Yes, darling?"

Suddenly Carola thought: This is not the proper moment for a stand up fight. In three weeks I shall come of age. When that day arrives I swear I'll smash out of these walls of glass no matter how I cut myself!

"Yes, darling?" repeated Mrs. Van Arsdale.

"Oh, nothing," said Carola indifferently. "I've changed my mind about riding. You may order the horses."

"Splendid! It will give you such a pretty color for lunch!"

ii

LEN FARLEY was loafing down Fifth Avenue with his coat collar turned up and his hands thrust in his pockets. He was completely out of luck yet his heart was light. When you come down to rock bottom at least you have nothing worse to fear. He felt cheerful and he looked cheerful; he was amused by the contrast between his shabby self sans shirt or overcoat, and the elegantly habited young gentlemen hurrying to keep luncheon engagements. For all of their spats and sticks and fancy mufflers Len thought, I am a better man than any of them.

It was the elegant ladies who bolstered up Len's self-esteem. No matter how haughty and indifferent their manner might be, he was apt to catch them glancing at him out of the corners of their eyes. Len was only human; and perfectly well aware of his desirability in the eyes of the opposite sex. Had he needed any reassurance as to his good looks, the first plate glass shop window would have reflected it. He had a chest and shoulders on him like Vulcan the smith, but unlike Vulcan he had two strong and shapely legs to boot. His face was that of a good-humored buccaneer. Though he had not eaten any too grandly of late, the red was strong in his cheeks. It was not that delicate flush

which comes and goes; the ruddy tint was burned in for keeps. I may not own an overcoat, he said to himself; but I am made like a man!

Len had quit worrying. That was another reason for his cheerfulness. He had had eight jobs since he came down from Sing Sing six weeks ago, and there was no damn use looking for another. He would only get all riled up for nothing. When you had no references all you could get was a job as day laborer; and when you were working at day labor you had a hard-boiled boss over you. It was always the same story. He fell foul of the boss; he knocked him down; he got the air. Gosh! he felt better right away now he'd decided not to look for another job.

So it was back to the old game then. Well, why not? He didn't take any stock in the moral stuff they handed out to you. A man ought to have the backbone to stand by his own acts, and not lay back on religion. When he thought of respectable men and the stuff they pulled, he preferred crooks. At least a crook took his life in his hands when he went out to work at his trade. He had only wanted to go straight because he couldn't stand another sojourn up river. But if they wouldn't let him go straight so much the worse. He just wouldn't get caught; that's all. He had a good set of wits. He'd put 'em to work . . . The recollection of his last term would keep him from getting careless. And if they *should* get him in spite of all, well, he'd be prepared. With the first money he got, he'd buy a gun. If they cornered him, good night! Nobody would ever hear a whimper out of him.

Since he didn't have a gun, his first job would have to be a burglary. He thought he'd stick to that anyhow. He didn't much like the stick-up stuff. Made him sick to see a poor fish wilt down and lose all his manhood when you pulled a gun on him. It was overdone anyhow. Burglary required more skill and patience, and the reward was greater. You could take time to plan everything out nice, and make sure of your getaway. Of course you'd ought to have a partner to stand lookout, but he'd make out without it. He liked best to work alone.

Burglary was going out of fashion because everybody was moving into apartment houses. Nothing doing with an apartment house. He would stick to private houses. Plenty of 'em left. Not the grandest places up and down the Avenue, because they always have watchmen, but the middle-size houses and kind of old-fashioned ones. Old-fashioned folks never hired an inside watchman. They may have burglar alarms of course, but they leave the bedroom windows open for air. He could climb all the same as a cat. He'd be a cat burglar, and win himself a big reputation.

Len came to a corner, and paused to let a taxi turn into the side street. Facing him across the way was a fine house built in the elaborate gothic style fashionable twenty-five years ago. It had a narrow frontage on the Avenue and

long rows of windows on the side street with the sun in them. Now that house would be a cinch to enter, thought Len; it's got so god darn much architecture. A fellow could go up over those bumps around the windows as quick as winking. That's the proper way to build a house. These new ones are so smooth they wouldn't give foothold to a squirrel.

He walked a little way down the side street and back, studying the house. He could make the second story windows in ten seconds from the street, he thought. All he'd have to do would be to make sure there was nobody in sight at the time. The risk would be getting out again. He'd have to chance it. If he had decent clothes he could let himself right out of the front door. He decided to look into this matter. Must take the time to do it right. That bay window would be the principal bedroom. The master and the mistress slept there, and that's where the jewels would be. If he hung around during the next day or so, maybe he could pick up one of the maids when she took an afternoon off. Then he'd get the whole household dead to rights.

A white clad street cleaner was pushing his broom along the gutter. He paused to rub his hands together, and Len took advantage of his moment of relaxation to remark:

"Say, fellow, that's a fine house across the street. Who lives there?"

"Carola Goadby," answered White Wings with an air of great familiarity.

"No!" said Len. "Who'n hell is she?"

"Say, I guess you don't read the papiss, fella," answered the other with scorn. "She's the twenty million dollar baby."

"On the level, a baby?" said Len.

"Oh well, she's growed up now," answered the street cleaner, "but that's what they called her in the papiss for years back, along of her fat'er and mot'er dyin' and leavin' her all of t'at. She's got a million dollars a year, fella, and she lives t'ere all alone."

"All alone!"

"Well I mean she ain't got no folks, like. She's got plenty to look after her of course; servants and detectives and lawyers and nurses, and God knows what all. Nice people, they are. I gits coffee in the kitchen."

"Did you ever speak to the twenty million dollar baby?"

"Well, I ain't 'xactly spoke to her, but I see her ev'y day when she goes out. She looked at me once."

"Well, that's something," said Len.

Walking on, he turned up the Avenue again. A superb limousine was waiting in front of the corner house. One had to look twice to appreciate the quality of that car. It was painted a dull black, and the cushions were dun

colored. The chauffeur wore a sober colored uniform. There were a hundred showier looking outfits trundling up and down the Avenue. It's just as I thought; said Len to himself; the *real* muckamucks don't throw the dog.

While Len was sauntering by, the door of the house opened, and a young girl in riding costume, breeches and boots, came running down the steps. She was followed by an older woman similarly attired, but with a very different effect! The second one's face was plum-colored from the effort of getting into her habit. A middle-aged man very neatly dressed, and with a noticeably cagey eye brought up the rear. Detective, thought Len. The two ladies entered the car, and the man took the seat beside the chauffeur. They drove away.

It was all over in a second or two, but the incident made an indelible impression on Len's mind. The exquisite grace and delicacy of that girlish face and figure was like nothing he had ever seen. Not that she looked unhealthy; on the contrary she was the picture of rosy vigor; the delicate air was due to the fact that she had been protected from every rude breath of life since babyhood. As Len expressed it to himself in his own language:

Oh baby! Oh twenty million dollar baby! You are the sweetest thing in New York. I'll remember you when life seems all to the bad. I couldn't rob your house, sweetheart; I'd feel like too much of a skunk if you woke up in your pretty bed and saw me. On to another!

iii

ON the morning of her birthday Carola breakfasted in her boudoir. The room was filled with flowers and costly gifts of all sorts, and more were constantly arriving. Of candy alone there was enough to feed an orphan asylum. Everybody she had ever heard of seemed to have remembered her birthday, and many more whose names were unknown to her. Mrs. Van Arsdale, wild with excitement, was popping around like a pea on a hot shovel, but Carola herself was unnaturally calm. Mrs. Van Arsdale was distressed by it. A dozen times she asked:

"What's the matter, darling? Don't you like it? Doesn't it drive you crazy?"

All Carola would answer was: "It is too much; too much!"

In reality she was saving herself for the greater excitement that lay before her. What was a roomful of schoolgirl gifts beside that! Mr. Minturn her trustee was coming at eleven for the little ceremony of her coming of age. No

one else was to be present. Various elderly cousins had been suggested (Carola had no near relatives) but she had vetoed them. She put no faith in cousins. No one was to be present but Mr. Minturn and the household.

Every time she thought of it, Carola's heart went down into her quilted pink mules. How would she ever be able to go through with it! One lone girl against that crowd. Mr. Minturn all by himself was a terrible person to face; as hard and cold as ice behind all his fond and fatherly ways. And so old and experienced; he could talk in circles around her. Had she not better wait until she could find a friend to stand by her? But where would she find a friend? They kept the right sort of people away from her. No! that was the counsel of cowardice; if she did not assert herself to-day, she would never be able to do so. The thing must be gone through with somehow.

In casting desperately around in her mind for somebody that she could depend on, Carola's thoughts lingered on Mr. McQuissick, the private detective who acted as her bodyguard whenever she went out. Something differentiated him from all the others who waited upon her. What was it? A sort of affectionate and quizzical look hidden deep in his experienced eye. He liked her; there was no doubt about that, she had a thousand unobtrusive proofs of it; but he was not in awe of her, nor did he pretend to be. Always quiet and respectful, he nevertheless acted towards her like one human being to another. This reassured something away down inside Carola. McQuissick was a man. He wasn't afraid of anybody. Her thoughts kept coming back to him. He had sent her a tiny bunch of sweet peas which she kept close beside her. She said to Mrs. Van Arsdale:

"Did you see these, Emma? Mr. McQuissick sent them. Wasn't it sweet of him?"

"Oh, you darling child!" cried Mrs. Van Arsdale embracing her (for perhaps the fortieth time that morning), "how dear and characteristic of you to make the most of the least of your gifts! As I have always said, you have a heart of gold!"

Um! thought Carola; I wonder if you'll be saying that two hours from now. Aloud she said: "Is he in the house?"

"I suppose so."

"I'd like to have him come up so I can thank him."

Mrs. Van Arsdale looked humorously shocked. She registered like a movie actress in a close-up. "A man in your boudoir! Oh, my dear! Wait until you are dressed."

"But Manley comes up here, and Briggs."

"McQuissick is not exactly a servant, darling."

Patience! whispered Carola to herself; I mustn't start a row over this. Instead, she set herself to cajole Mrs. Van Arsdale, and that lady presently yielded gracefully.

"I can refuse you nothing to-day."

So Mr. McQuissick was summoned. He was a middle-aged, middle-sized man without any distinguishing features, to begin with; and he had carefully cultivated the appearance of ordinariness which was valuable in his business. Carola was comforted by the sight of him, he looked so solid and dependable. Moreover, under his wise air there was a glint of fun. At the present moment he was somewhat fussed by this summons to the boudoir, a place where he had never been. The lovely room with its banks of flowers, and his exquisite young mistress enveloped in a pink cloud of something or other still further disconcerted him. However he was ready to laugh at his own embarrassment.

"Don't look so frightened," said Carola, "it's only me."

"Well now, I'm relieved to hear your voice," he said. "I thought I had strayed into fairyland, like."

They laughed, and felt like friends. In the background Mrs. Van Arsdale looked pained.

"I wanted to thank you for these flowers," said Carola; "you see I am wearing them."

McQuissick's experienced eye perceived that this was not why he had been sent for. Carola looked distraught. However when she had thanked him, and he had made a suitable reply, there seemed to be nothing else to say. He was preparing to bow himself out, when she stopped him with a swift and appealing touch on his arm.

She said: "Have you any children, Mr. McQuissick?"

"Three, Miss," he answered. "My oldest is a girl about your age."

"How nice," said Carola. "Will you bring her to see me?"

"Sure!" he said, "if you would want it. She'd be tickled pink!"

Carola spun the talk along until she saw her opportunity. Mrs. Van Arsdale went to the door to receive some more presents. "Mr. McQuissick," Carola whispered swiftly, "if I needed a friend would you stand by me?"

The astute detective was almost bowled over. The imploring blue eyes affected him almost as to deprive him of the power of speech. "Would I? Would I?" he stammered hoarsely. "Just try me, that's all! What is it?"

"Haven't time to explain now," said Carola; "but you will see for yourself later. I shall rely on you."

Mrs. Van Arsdale came back squealing: "Oh, Carola, look at this! Open it! I am dying with curiosity!"

McQuissick made his way out of the room, in a slight daze of wonderment.

At eleven o'clock Mr. Mitchell Minturn took up his position in the bay of the blue drawing-room. A fattish man, smooth shaven with curly gray hair surrounding a bald spot like a monk's tonsure, he had an imposing air of success and assurance. Wherever he might go he would be recognized as a Somebody. He had edged his waistcoat with white piqué and stuck a red carnation in his buttonhole in honor of the festive occasion. They had placed a little table for his papers.

All the members of the household filed in through the lower door of the room, according to their rank; Mrs. Brattle the housekeeper, who regarded herself almost as a member of the family; McQuissick, whose position among the servants was somewhat anomalous; Manley the butler who had a grand conceit of his own dignity; Briggs, the second man who kept discreetly in the rear of Manley. After these followed Redding the first chauffeur, and Doane the second, who wore the customary chauffeur's masks upon their comely faces; Mrs. Harper the cook, and half a dozen assorted maids. They all stood about at some distance from Mr. Minturn not quite certain how to act. Mr. Minturn acknowledged the greeting of Mrs. Brattle, and ignored the rest. He blew upon his glasses and polished them. All the servants watched him uneasily. He was the source of power in that house.

There was a sound of voices on the stairs, and Carola entered followed by Mrs. Van Arsdale. All the servants smiled obsequiously. Carola as slender as a lily in a brown silk dress with a pleated skirt and a little jacket, looked pale, and her smile was mechanical. Mrs. Van Arsdale in a purple confection, somewhat breathless with exertion, was talking for both. She would ask Carola questions, and answer them herself. The lofty room was hung and draped in blue brocade, and the big gilded chairs upholstered likewise.

Mr. Minturn hastened forward with outstretched arms. His sack coat was cut short like a young man's and he was very spry in his movements. "My dear child," he said, "allow me to congratulate you on your birthday!" He kissed Carola first on one cheek then the other.

Carola submitted. She was feeling rather disgusted with herself. At this moment when all her faculties ought to have been keyed up to their highest, all she could think of was, how like a pouter pigeon Mr. Minturn looked. How on earth does he fasten his tummy up where his chest ought to be? she asked herself.

"Sit down! Sit down!" said Mr. Minturn, waving them towards a small blue and gilt sofa which he had himself placed in proper relation to the table.

They obeyed, and Mrs. Van Arsdale caressed Carola's hand. Carola wished she wouldn't. It appeared that the ceremony was to consist of a speech from Mr. Minturn.

"My dear Carola," he began with suitable gravity, "to-day you become your own mistress, and mistress of all your great possessions. It becomes my pleasant duty to hand everything over to you, and to render an account of my stewardship."

Carola idly wondered where all her possessions were. There was nothing visible but a half sheet of note paper lying on the table.

"People envy the rich," Mr. Minturn went on. "Alas! they have no conception of the onerous responsibilities that attend upon great wealth. Uneasy lies the head that wears a diadem. Hereafter there will be many a knotty problem to trouble your pretty head, my dear. You and I must share the work. Mine may be the privilege of advising you, but with you rests the responsibility of deciding. . . . That is, provided you do not wish to engage another attorney." This he asked as in the nature of an afterthought, with a roguish smile.

"Oh no," said Carola, without smiling.

Mr. Minturn who had never anticipated such a possibility, went on serenely: "Little by little I will instruct you in all the details of management. My aim must ever be to bring you to the point where you will be able to dispense with an attorney, and decide everything upon your own initiative. I will not always be at your right hand, my dear." Here he paused for a little snuffle and blink; very pathetic.

There was more of it which need not be set down. It all sounded beautifully, but conveyed no real information to the hungry ears of Carola. The important part came at the end, when Mr. Minturn uncovered a fountain pen, and said carelessly:

"Sign this paper, my dear."

Carola read it first. She had made up her mind to do that in every case hereafter. But all she got was a jumble of legal phrases of which she could understand scarcely a word. It dizzied her.

"What does this paper mean?" she asked.

"Bravo!" cried Mr. Minturn. "You are already taking interest, I see." He exchanged a congratulatory smile with Mrs. Van Arsdale. "By signing that paper you appoint me as your attorney," he went on kindly. "In the first place the court appointed me, but now that you are of age you must appoint me yourself if you wish me to serve."

"I see," said Carola. She hesitated with the pen in her hand. His explanation sounded all right; and yet . . . ! Oh, why not sign it and be done

with all this worry. Everybody said Mr. Minturn was a good business man, and as for herself she was perfectly unable to cope with this world of figures and legal phrases. Sign! Sign! one half of her urged; but the other half stood firm; no! I said I would no longer be a doll in the hands of these people, and I mean it! She tried again.

“In putting my name to this paper should I be signing away any of my rights?”

“Oh, my dear child, what a question!” said Mr. Minturn fondly. “I shall consult you about the smallest matters; and the more you are able to take on yourself the better I shall be pleased.”

Carola was ignorant, but not stupid. He is hedging, she said to herself; and her hand drew back from the paper. She suddenly turned around. “Mr. McQuissick,” she said, “do you know the meaning of this paper?”

“Sure, Miss, since you ask me,” came the prompt reply. “It’s called a power of attorney. Everybody knows what that is. It gives Mr. Minturn the right to act for you in all matters just as if your property was his.”

A general gasp went up at the boldness of this reply. “That is what I suspected,” said Carola quietly. She tore the paper across slowly; put the pieces together and tore them again and again.

A breathless silence filled the room. Mrs. Van Arsdale was sitting bolt upright on the blue sofa with her mouth hanging open in the most ridiculous manner. Mr. Minturn looked like a man who had suffered a slight stroke; his face had become livid and flabby; his eyes were devoid of all sense. Then color flamed back; his body straightened, and the storm broke.

“Silence!” roared Mr. Minturn. “You insolent upstart! How dare you try to worm yourself between me and my charge! Leave the house!”

McQuissick received this salvo with a quizzical grin. He cocked an eye in Carola’s direction. Her lips silently formed the word: “Stay!” whereupon McQuissick folded his arms, and planted himself firmly on the rug.

Mr. Minturn waved his arms in front of his head. His gray curls stiffened with rage. “Get out!” he cried. “Or you’ll be put out! Manley! Briggs! Redding! Doane! You know your duty! Assist this man out!”

The servants, impressed by the splendor of Mr. Minturn’s rage, instinctively sided with him. The women all cried “Oh!” and turned scandalized faces towards McQuissick; the four men moved towards him threateningly. Carola slipped swiftly to the detective’s side, and laid a hand on his arm. Her face was very pale; for this was a startling initiation for the sheltered child of fortune; but she kept her head high.

“If Mr. McQuissick goes I go too,” she said.

“Stand aside, child!” cried Mr. Minturn. “You don’t know what you’re doing! This man is a base upstart who seeks to reap some advantage for himself by thrusting himself between you and your true friends! You will find plenty of such, now that you have come into your money!”

Mrs. Van Arsdale added a shrill voice to the uproar. “Carola! Carola! think of what you are doing! Oh, my darling child, think twice before you go against the one who has been a second father to you!”

The unseemly racket disgusted Carola; before the servants too; her own anger began to rise. “What’s all the noise about?” she asked with a proud air. “I asked him a plain question to which he gave me a plain answer.”

The noise went on, and it is doubtful if anybody heard her. A red spot appeared in either of the girl’s cheeks; she suddenly stamped her foot, and her voice rose high and clear. “Am I the mistress here or am I not? Be silent, all of you!”

A most impressive silence fell. Mr. Minturn gaped at her clownishly. In the look of consternation on every face, Carola suddenly realized her own power, and the knowledge was sweet to her. Away with all childish timidities. She had only to raise her voice once, and all the walls fell down of themselves. Her first care was to get the servants out of the room.

“You needn’t wait,” she said to them. “You are all discharged. You will leave the house at once. You are good enough servants some of you, but we need to make an entirely fresh start in this house. You will all be paid two months wages and furnished with characters. Mr. McQuissick will see to that for me.”

The servants filed out with scared and chagrined faces. They had backed the wrong horse. McQuissick wondered where the money was coming from to pay them, but did not raise the question then for fear of adding to the confusion. Mrs. Brattle the housekeeper sought to dissociate herself from the servants by sidling over towards Mrs. Van Arsdale, but Carola caught the move out of the tail of her eye.

“That applies to you also, Mrs. Brattle,” she said coldly.

The housekeeper hurried out of the room with her handkerchief to her eyes.

Mrs. Van Arsdale, scared but resolute, passed an arm about Carola’s waist. “Come, darling,” she said in her most melodious accents; “let you and I go upstairs and talk this matter over quietly. You are just a little hysterical, my sweetest.”

Carola firmly unwound the arm. “You still do not understand what has happened,” she said coldly. “All this talk about my being mistress is something more than talk to me. Hereafter I *mean* to be my own mistress. I do

not require a chaperon any longer. Please do not force me to be still more explicit.”

Mrs. Van Arsdale dropped on the blue sofa, and wept unrestrainedly. “This is my reward!” she cried tragically. “This is my reward! Turned into the street!”

“Oh, for God’s sake!” murmured McQuissick in the background. “Be yourself, lady.”

Carola looked at him. “Thanks,” she said; “that’s what I wanted to say. She is to be paid her salary of course, until she finds another situation.”

Now Mr. Minturn within the last moment or two had been doing some rapid thinking. The handling of twenty million dollars is not to be given up without a struggle. And a really clever man knows how to make a stepping-stone of an apparent misfortune. When Carola turned towards him he was wearing the old fond and indulgent smile—a little strained to be sure, still it was there.

“My dear child!” he said, “I congratulate you! I really didn’t think you had it in you. There is nothing like making a clean sweep at such a time. You have done exactly right.”

Carola ignored the outstretched hand. “Exactly,” she said meaningly, “a *clean sweep*.”

Then, from pure excitement, she felt the tears beginning to rise. What a lamentable anti-climax that would have been. She suddenly turned and ran from the room; flew upstairs to her room. She dashed water in her face, averting the tears; threw on hat and coat, and ran down again. They were waiting for her at the foot of the stairs.

“Where are you going?” gasped Mrs. Van Arsdale.

“Out,” said Carola.

“But you can’t go alone!”

“Who is going to stop me?”

“I’ll go with you,” said McQuissick soothingly.

Carola whirled around, as angry with him now, as she had been with the others a few moments since. “Stay where you are!” she said. “I won’t have a bodyguard! Nobody else has one. Stay here and see that my orders are carried out!”

Bang! went the front door. Ed McQuissick scratched his head. Technically he had come out on top in this affair, but he saw a plenty of trouble ahead.

AMONG the handsome cars bowling up and down the Avenue on a certain fine Autumn morning was to be seen a landaulet of a rakish foreign model with the top let down. In a corner of the back seat lolled a fat man smoking a long cigar with half closed eyes of enjoyment. Fat he was, but handsome in his way; his face in repose bore a look of insolent power. He stood out from amongst the crowd. He and his don't-give-a-damn air suited the sleek and ultra-expensive car.

He seemed to be pretty well known. Men riding in other fine cars nodded to him as he passed. People on the sidewalks nudged each other, and called attention to him. But well known to a certain point only. A stranger would ask: "Who's that?" and the New Yorker's reply would be: "Marcus Breedon." . . . "Who's he?" . . . "Oh, he's a sport and a man about town. King of Broadway some call him. Everybody in the know has got to know him. Rich as Croesus." . . . "Where'd he get it?" . . . "You can search me." . . . "Is he in business?" . . . "Nah! Just a sport."

Like all such men Breedon was seldom to be seen without his hangers-on, and he had one with him now, a little toy-terrier sort of man, proud to be seen riding alongside the big fellow, and scared of him too. The whole story was to be read in his anxious, propitiatory glances and smiles in Breedon's face.

Breedon appeared to be perfectly indifferent to the passing scene; but it was not so; for when, at a moment while the car was stopped in the traffic, Len Farley came slouching by on the pavement, he sat up suddenly.

"By Gad! there's a handsome young fellow!" he said. "That's what I need in my business. With his figure and face and that scornful look of his the women would fall for him like flies for molasses!"

"Where? Where?" asked the little man.

Breedon pointed him out.

"What, that bum?"

"Oh, my God, Mack, but you're a fool!" said the big man coolly. "You can't see nothing but clothes. Hop out and trail that fellow. He is down on his luck. Sound him out, and if he wants a little easy money bring him to me."

Mack Brindle made his way to the sidewalk, and the traffic moved on. There was no difficulty in finding Len whose progress was nothing if not leisurely. From behind, Mack surveyed him up and down. By Gad! built like a statue, thought the puny man, and hated Len from that moment. He overtook him, and stopped alongside a store window to let Len pass him again, looking at him sideways. Mack did not greatly relish his present job. There was a hard

look in the young fellow's eye. Suppose, when he spoke to him, the young fellow pasted him one. Why, with the power in that stalwart young frame he would be knocked clean into the gutter. Can't brace him here, he decided; wait until he settles down somewhere.

Just about this time Len was beginning to feel leg weary. A fellow can't walk all the time. He remembered a speak-easy around the corner from Third Avenue where they sold near-beer over the bar, and "block-fall" in the back room. This potent liquor was supposed to lay you out cold within a block of the drinking place. Len didn't want the liquor, but he had a nodding acquaintance with the bartender, which he thought might be good for a hand-out. In any case they'd let you sleep for a while in the warmth; they weren't mean.

He struck over towards the East side with Mack following at a discreet distance. When Len disappeared within the grubby little saloon, Mack hung about outside in a torment of indecision. He was too well dressed to enter such a place; it would be as good as asking to be blackjacked and rolled. On the other hand the big fellow's orders had to be carried out. Mack finally took his courage in his hands, and pushed open the door. He made out to have a bit of an edge on, in order to account for his entering such a place. He was a good actor.

To his relief it was almost empty. His flesh crawled at the smell, the dirt on the floor, the gloom, the general suggestion of furtiveness. No place for a gen'leman, he thought. He found Len in the back room sitting sideways in a chair, with his head propped in the corner, preparing to sleep. Little Mack lurched into the chair opposite him.

"Say, fella, have one with me," he said thickly. "I do' want to drink alone."

Len came to life. "If it's all the same to you I'll take a sandwich," he said. "I ain't eaten to-day, and they say this stuff ac's like nitroglycerin on an empty stomach."

"Anything you like, fella; anythin' you like!" said Mack with a wave of the hand.

He's not any more drunk than I am, thought Len, watching him through his lashes. Wants somepin out of me. All right; I ain't kickin'.

A generous slab of meat and bread was put on the table; and two glasses of an innocent colorless liquor. Mack sniffed at his gingerly and put it down again. Len's teeth attacked the sandwich in businesslike fashion. With so much willingness to oblige on both sides there was no need to be shy with each other. They made rapid progress.

"You're a good fella," said Mack.

"Same to you," said Len.

By degrees Mack ventured to drop the pretense of drunkenness. “What do you do when you’re workin’?” he asked.

“Well, my favorite job is emptying a plate,” said Len grinning.

Mack laughed heartily. “You look like a good hard guy,” he remarked.

“Hard!” said Len; “when you hit me with a flint it strikes a spark!”

“On the level,” said Mack, “what’s your line?”

It tickled Len to see how the little fellow swelled up and talked big as man to man, and all the time he was as nervous as a cat. Len couldn’t resist the temptation to play with him a little. “Stick-up work,” he said carelessly. “Got a job for me?”

“Oh, God, no!” said Mack quickly.

“I’m so big and strong,” said Len, “that most men curl right up if I on’y look at them ugly. It’s child’s play for me to make ’em give up. I don’t need no gun. When I get a man alone I on’y got to put my hand lovin’ly round his neck like, and press him back against a wall, and he near busts his gee string shellin’ out all he has!” He illustrated with his hand an inch or two from Mack’s throat.

All the color left the little man’s face. He glanced over his shoulder towards the outer room. A fat lot of help he could expect from the gang out there! Why had he ever ventured into such a den? Breedon be damned! A man on’y had one life to lose! . . . He was relieved by a guffaw of laughter from Len. The young man reached over and hit him a clap on the shoulder that almost telescoped his ribs down that side.

“Hell, fella!” he cried. “You and me are friends, ain’t we? I wouldn’t touch a fella that just bought me a meal!”

“Sure, we’re friends!” said Mack laughing. “I just thought I heard a noise outside.” After that he hated Len worse.

“As to what my line is,” said Len, “it’s anything that pays good, and no questions asked.”

“You’re a good-lookin’ guy,” said Mack slyly.

“Sure!” said Len grinning. “It’s my curse.”

“I know a fella maybe might give you a job.”

“Well, he’s welcome,” said Len, “so he don’t expect me to work too hard at it.”

Mack pounded the table at this witticism. “No, there’s no work about it,” he said. “My friend’s a smart guy. On’y the boobs has to work.”

“My idea exactly,” said Len. “What does he want then, a trapeze performer?”

“Well, I do’ want to raise your hopes too high at that,” said Mack. “Let’s go along and see my friend. If he likes the cut of your jib he’ll tell you hisself.”

“Lead on, Macduff,” cried Len with a sweeping gesture; “and blest be he that got’s the stuff!”

“Where’d you git that tag?” asked Mack. “Sounds familiar, like.”

“That’s out of Shakespeare,” said Len.

“The hell you say!”

Nobody knew anything about Marcus Breedon’s private life—if he had any, or where he lived. His hangout was in the lobby of the Mackinac Hotel, a flashy joint in the neighborhood of Times Square. Some said he owned the joint. Whether or not that was true he certainly had the staff well trained. Here off and on during the day and night he was to be found in the lobby surrounded by a group of his henchmen and admirers, and always smoking the long black cigars. It was said that they cost him a dollar a piece. He carried smaller ones to hand out. Not that he was mean; but his own cigars would put weaker men under the table. Breedon appeared to live in a blaze of publicity, but if one observed more closely, it would have been seen that there were many private conferences held in an adjacent room.

Marcus Breedon’s position in the great world of New York was a peculiar one. He seemed to enjoy almost unlimited power, but no man could have exactly described the sources of it. Men in certain lines such as the theatrical business, the hotel and restaurant business, all forms of professional sport and the practice of criminal law could not get far without crossing Breedon’s trail. They would come to a certain point and find that Marcus Breedon would have to be “seen” before they could go further. He would be seen, and if agreeable, the way would be most miraculously smoothed. A man never paid Breedon in money for this exercise of his power, but thereafter he was supposed to be Breedon’s “friend” and to be ready at any time to return the favor. Thus the big fellow’s power grew and grew and no man could measure its limits. Even the biggest men such as district attorneys, bank presidents and the like were respectful to Breedon. They knew no more about him than anybody else, but an instinct told them that he was one to be dealt with cannily.

Mack did not make the mistake of leading the shabby Len into the hotel lobby. That would have been a bad break. Instead they entered by the service entrance, and made their way by back corridors to a bedroom on the second floor. Here Len was left to cool his heels while Mack went to report to his boss.

This smells of mystery, said Len to himself. Well, I should worry! Mystery fetches a good price.

By and by the big fellow came strolling into the room, turning his cigar over and over between his thick lips. Mack was at his heels, peeping around him, first one side then the other, exactly like a little dog. Breedon grunted at the sight of the young fellow, and coolly looked him up and down, taking his time about it, exactly as if Len had been a prize animal at a fair that he was thinking of buying. It did not feaze Len at all. He waited grinning, for the verdict.

“Huh!” said Breedon at last; “quite a likely feller, ain’t yeh?”

Len went on grinning. This was evidently a man to be propitiated, therefore he held back the impudent retort that sprang to his lips.

“Can you dance?” asked Breedon.

At the unexpected question Len could not help laughing outright. “What for or with?” he asked.

“With ladies,” said Breedon with a cold stare. “What did you think?”

“I didn’t know,” said Len. “I was just asking . . . I can dance for my own satisfaction, but I never won no silver cups for it.”

“You could be taught,” said Breedon.

“What’s the big idea?” asked Len.

“Friend of mine’s got an interest in a dance club on Forty-ninth Street,” said Breedon. “It’s called Elysia. Swellest place in town. He’s looking for a young fellow to help entertain the lady guests.”

“Oh, a lounge lizard,” said Len.

“Well, are you too good for it?”

“Do I look it?” asked Len with a wide grin. “My only doubt is if I could get away with it.”

Little Mack was scandalized by Len’s free and easy air towards the great man. He expected to see him summarily dismissed. But it happened that it was what the shrewd Breedon was looking for. By this time he had finished sizing Len up, and he was satisfied with the result. He began to unbend. He offered Len a cigar—not one of the big ones.

“Well, my friend is looking for a new type,” he said. “He can get plenty of lizards with their tucked pantaloons and their slave bracelets and all, and now he wants a novelty, being as he’s got to keep in the forefront. He wants a manly lookin’ young fellow.”

“What is there in it for me?” asked Len.

“Well, you’ll get the wages of any good actor. Say a hundred a week to start, and a hundred and fifty when you can dance good. You can sign checks

for food and drinks too—in moderation.”

“Sounds good to me,” said Len. “But give me the inside dope. Nobody ever hung any medals on me for honesty. I just want to know what’s expected of me.”

“I’m givin’ it to you,” said Breedon blandly. “There ain’t nothin’ in this but what appears on the surface. My God! this Elysia’s the swellest place in town. The best people patronize it. You couldn’t have nothin’ queer about that sort of a place.”

That may be, thought Len to himself, but it smells queer to me.

“Formerly,” Breedon went on, “when a fellow ran a night club all he had to do was to provide some attractive girls, but times have changed. The rich ladies come nowadays and they have to be amused too.”

“I get you,” said Len, “but it’s only fair to tell you that I couldn’t crook my back and butter my tongue to those dames. I just ain’t got the knack of it.”

“ ’Tain’t necessary,” said Breedon still more blandly. “They want to see life, see? They want to experience new sensations. If you get the reputation of being a bit of a roughneck and a bad actor it won’t do you no harm with them. Even if it should get around that you have done time up river it won’t hurt.”

“And can I speak up to them just as I would to you?”

“They would think it was grand,” said Breedon with a curious smile.

“All right,” said Len. “I’m on.”

“Mack will take you up to see my friend,” said Breedon. “Of course it all depends on what he thinks of you.” (Len guessed though, that the matter was already settled) “You’d better buy some new clothes on the way up. Get the best ready-made suit you can buy, and order one made. Mack will steer you. Here’s some pocket money for you.” Producing a great roll of bills from his pocket, he counted off five yellow backs.

“Good God!” said Len. “I certainly am obliged to you. Suppose I skipped out with the clothes and the money?”

“Aah! we’re puttin’ you in the way of makin’ your fortune, son,” said Breedon with a cynical smile. “I guess you’ll stick to us.”

As they all left the hotel room, Mack drew Breedon back a little way. “Boss,” he whispered, “I ain’t got no call to interfere in your business, but I can’t help sayin’ I think you’re makin’ a mistake in this young feller. I been watchin’ him. He’s got a nasty look in his eye. Independent. He ain’t got the proper respect for a man like you. Boss, you’ll never be able to bend this young feller to your will.”

Breedon looked at the little man with a face of grim humor. “Watch me!” he said.

IT was the first time in her life that Carola had been on the street alone. A delicious excitement filled her. No further danger of tears. Free! Free! Free! What a wonderful feeling. No mentor at her side to suggest this and to advise against that. She could go any place that her fancy suggested, and stay out as long as she liked. How marvelous the sunshine, the blue sky and the thronging panorama of the Avenue!

However she had not gone a block before she began to meet acquaintances who glanced at her in surprise, seeing her alone. That dashed her sense of freedom, and at the next corner she turned into a side street. By and by she came to an humbler avenue with the elevated railway running overhead, and she followed that. She was like a traveler just landed in a foreign land. Everything was strange and new. People not going anywhere in particular, but lounging in doorways, and standing on the corners. Women leaning their elbows comfortably on window sills in the sunshine. These people had a look of lazy content on their faces that charmed Carola. We're all just people together, she thought.

She marveled at the children playing unattended on the sidewalk. They had a cocky air such as the children of the rich never show. The darlings! thought Carola, they are free! The store windows fascinated her; quaint little stores such as she had never seen; one with rolls of wall paper hanging down; a hardware shop with all sorts of ingenious things the uses of which she could not divine; paint shops; laundries; a cobbler stitching shoes; barber shops with men leaning back having their faces lathered and scraped all in full view of the street. Other features were not quite so agreeable; cheap lunch rooms where the food looked horribly indigestible, and garbage cans lined up in rows along the curb.

One thing which surprised and charmed Carola was that nobody stared at her over here. She had been told that poor people always stared rudely, but it was not so. They were willing to be and let be. There was no interference with her freedom. Freedom was in the very air in these streets. Their manners are really better than those of the so-called nice people, Carola said to herself.

At first in the joy of making new discoveries, Carola put aside all thought of the situation she had left behind her, and must face when she went home. After awhile when the novelty had partly worn off, it began to trouble her. I must decide what I am going to do, she said to herself. The trouble was she didn't know where to begin.

After she had walked for a long time she came to a group of buildings that she decided must be a courthouse and prison. Behind the principal building

there was a high wall, and within the wall rose a smaller building with heavily barred windows. While Carola was looking at it, a prison van drove up to the rear door, and several dejected looking men were shepherded across the sidewalk by stern looking blue-coats. Ah! *they* are not free, thought Carola with sharp compassion.

Across the road from the courthouse was a row of little shops which had been turned into offices. The former show windows now bore such signs as this: A. Zuckert, Attorney-at-Law; Birnbaum and Levy, Attorneys, and so on.

Attorney, thought Carola reading the signs, that's what I need. I'll go in and inquire.

She opened the nearest door which happened to be that of Mr. A. Zuckert, and went in. The office was empty except for a bony little man wearing glasses and a great deal of hair on his head, writing at a flat-topped desk. He had an air of being extremely busy, yet he looked up with great eagerness when Carola opened the door.

"How do you do," she said, "are you the lawyer?"

"I am," said Mr. Zuckert with dignity. "What is the trouble?"

"Oh, there's no trouble," said Carola with a laugh. "That is, I hope the trouble is all over. I just want a little advice."

"Well that is what I am here for," said Mr. Zuckert. "Please to sit down." He was sizing her up narrowly. He could not make her out. He had had young girls for clients before this, sometimes they were surprisingly fresh and charming. But Carola brought something into his office that had never been there before.

What a comical little manikin! thought Carola, as she seated herself. But maybe he's all brains. Aloud she said calmly: "I am Carola Goadby."

The little lawyer's mouth dropped open, and he blinked rapidly behind his thick glasses. All the newspapers that morning had run a story on the front page about the twenty million dollar baby's coming of age, and he was familiar with it of course. And now to have her drop into his office like a thunderbolt from the blue! *Twenty million dollars!* Was it any wonder that his stomach caved in and he began to shake a little? Only his native scepticism kept him from swooning away. Of course there was some trick about it.

How queer he looks! thought Carola. "Maybe you've never heard of me," she said. "I have a whole lot of money. Just how much I don't know."

"Yes, I've heard of you," said Mr. Zuckert huskily.

"Mr. Mitchell Minturn has been looking after everything for me," Carola went on, "but I . . . we . . . well, I don't want him any more. In fact we've

quarreled. I saw ‘attorney’ on your window so I just thought I’d come in and ask your advice.”

The girl’s candor was so transparent it was impossible to believe that this could be a hoax of any kind. Twenty million dollars! Twenty million dollars walking into his office and asking to be taken care of! The little lawyer was dizzied by the possibilities that opened up. Then it occurred to him that she might be mad. He put a few questions to her. Her answers convinced him that she was in the full possession of her senses, but unbelievably innocent. Oh boy, what a chance! It was real! It was true! It was no pipe dream! He had a twenty million dollar client!

Carola was saying: “I want to know what to do?”

“Well the first thing,” said Mr. Zuckert in a throaty legal voice, “is to obtain a full accounting of your property from Mr. Minturn.”

“Suppose he won’t give it to me,” said Carola in a small voice.

“He will have to!”

Though he’s little, this man has courage, thought Carola.

“But wait!” said Mr. Zuckert, “you won’t have to go to him for it. When you came of age he would have to give an accounting to the court which appointed him as your trustee. You can get it from the court, and make Minturn account for every item on the schedule.”

This sounded very legal and convincing, and Carola was satisfied that she had made no mistake in consulting Mr. Zuckert.

But alas! for the lawyer, he no sooner realized what a glorious opportunity had come to him, than he saw that he was not big enough to swing it unaided. I’ll have to have backing in this matter, he thought, if I appeared in court for Carola Goadby the whole newspaper press would get after me like a pack of hounds; call me a shyster and so on. She’d soon be taken away from me. I’ve got to have backing. Fortunately he knew where to look for it.

“I tell you what, Miss Goadby,” he said. (How he loved to roll her name over his tongue!) “You got to have the best advice in these matters. I’m a lawyer myself, and so I ain’t a disinterested party, see? Now I got a client who’s a rich man, Miss Goadby, a capitalist; he’s as rich as you are, so he wouldn’t have any object in advising you wrong. I’ll get in touch with him right away. I can give you all the legal advice you want, but he’s the one to advise you about finance and investments and all that.”

What an honest man! thought Carola. She said: “Shall I come back again then, after you have had a chance to see your friend?”

Mustn’t let anybody else get hold of her! thought Zuckert. He consulted his watch. “Oh, that won’t be necessary,” he said. “It’s just about lunchtime. I

know where to lay my hands on him.”

“In that case,” said Carola, “bring him to my house for lunch. . . . Oh, I forgot! I discharged all the servants this morning. I don’t suppose there will be any lunch!”

“Then you must lunch with my friend and me,” said Mr. Zuckert gallantly.

He locked up his office, and hailed a taxicab. Handing Carola in, he ordered the chauffeur to drive to the Mackinac Hotel. How strange to be riding in a taxicab alone with a man! thought Carola; but he isn’t like a man; he’s only a lawyer. And Mr. Zuckert was thinking: Imagine me riding in a taxi with Carola Goadby! I can’t believe yet that I’m not dreaming!

At the hotel Mr. Zuckert asked Carola to wait in the cab while he fetched his rich friend. In the lobby he was just in time. Mr. Marcus Breedon and his friends were about to adjourn to the restaurant for lunch. Zuckert was walking on air and his eyes fairly glittered behind the thick glasses. He experienced a curious shortness of breath. Getting the great man’s ear he whispered:

“Mr. Breedon, could I speak to you a moment in private? It’s important.”

In the convenient bedroom he told his story breathlessly. Breedon listened, rolling the cigar in his mouth over and over. When Zuckert had finished, he drawled:

“Zuckert, I think somebody is puttin’ one over on you.”

“No sir! No sir!” cried the little man excitedly. “I got the girl right outside in a taxi.”

“Well, I’ll look her over,” said Breedon. “I guess it worth a lunch.” He clapped the lawyer on the shoulder with unusual geniality. “Zuckert, you did right to come to me. If there proves to be anything in this I sha’n’t forget you. Now I don’t want to hurt your feelings, old man, but you must know that you ain’t got the front to appear as attorney for Carola Goadby.”

This only confirmed the little man’s fears. “Maybe not,” he said sadly.

“You leave this entire affair to me,” said Breedon cordially, “and I’ll see that you’re taken care of.”

“Just as you say, Mr. Breedon,” said Zuckert submissively.

TOWARDS four o’clock Carola was making her way home in a taxicab, a little tired from the manifold excitements of the day, but with a happy half

smile wreathed about her lips. Luncheon with Mr. Breedon and Mr. Zuckert had been such fun. That is to say the fun had really started after Mr. Zuckert had left. He was such a grotesque little manikin that Carola had felt a little uncomfortable in appearing with him in a fashionable restaurant. He both looked and felt out of place there. But when the meal was half over Mr. Breedon had said something about Zuckert's having an important appointment, and the little man had bade her an absurd and sentimental farewell.

With Mr. Breedon she had been perfectly at ease. In fact she thought he was one of the finest men she had ever met; so wise and humorous and plain-spoken about everything. To be sure his speech was rather rough; but she liked that. It showed that he was not just one of these men who had inherited money, and then did nothing for the rest of his life. He had worked his way up, right from the bottom; he told her so; he had a vast experience of life. The fact that he had rather a wicked and terrible look pleased her, too. It was all part of life. She was like a person starving for life. And he was so kind and gentle with her; he let her see that she had made a conquest of him; it was like having a lion for a pet. He was the first old person she had met who treated her as if she was grown up and had a mind of her own. Anybody could see what a prominent man he was; the most important looking people in the restaurant spoke to him with respect.

He had given her a world of good advice. "You don't need no lawyer, Carola," he said. He had started calling her Carola from the beginning; it made them feel like old friends. "Of course you'll have to have one at the start to receive your securities from Minturn, that old stuffed shirt! and to check them up. I'll supply you with one of my young men for that. But afterwards, no! What do you want a lawyer around for to nag at you? All they do is to create business for themselves and graft on you in a perfectly legal way."

"That's just the way I feel about it," said Carola. "But how will I look after my investments?"

"They don't need lookin' after. That's just the talk they hand out to make it seem like they was earnin' their fees. You'd think it was a hell of a hard job to be rich. Nothing in it, my dear. What's the use of money but to give you a good time. Now Minturn has got all your money laid away in absolutely gilt-edge securities; the court wouldn't let him buy no others for an orphan. All you got to do is to put your securities in a safe deposit vault and spend the income. You don't need no lawyer for that."

"You make everything seem so simple," said Carola.

"That's because I'm not a lawyer," said Breedon chuckling. "You'll be all right if you just bear one thing in mind. Don't sign no papers. Don't sign no papers of any kind for nobody, without you let me read them first."

“I certainly won’t!” said Carola.

“Of course you’ll be a famous woman,” Breedon went on; “in fact you’re famous already.” (How Carola had thrilled at this.) “And all the dead beats in town will be campin’ on your trail. You’ll have to cultivate the habit of bein’ nice to everybody and turnin’ everybody down. You’ve gotta turn ’em down on principle, see? and not go worryin’ about whether the hard luck stories is genuine. If you once let ’em get inside your guard you’re done for! Have a good time, and keep yourself to yourself, see?”

“Take the newspaper reporters, they’ll be after you now like unleashed hounds. Nice fellers, too, but awful persistent. I believe in newspaper publicity myself. It’s a grand thing if you run it, and don’t let it run you. Here’s the way to handle the reporters, Carola. Make personal friends of them, jolly ’em along, and never tell them a damn thing about yourself. Once they succeed in digging you out, you’re finished for copy, see? But as long as you keep your own secret they got to go on guessing forever. If you and me handles this situation right, the newspapers will make you the queen of New York!”

“Oh!” breathed Carola with starry eyes.

Only in one respect did she refuse his advice. “You really ought to have somebody to live with you,” he had said, “just to help you to keep off the spongers and the grafters. Now I got a friend, Mrs. Moberly, a lady of the very highest class . . .”

“No!” said Carola, “I’ve had enough of that sort of thing.”

“You wouldn’t have any trouble with Mrs. Moberly,” said Breedon, “she’s tactful, she is; she’s liberal minded; she’s human . . .”

“No! No! No!” said Carola, “I won’t have a chaperon of any sort. I’m going to live as I please.”

Breedon did not press the point. He was not so anxious to place a creature of his own next to Carola as he was to make sure that nobody else’s creature was placed there. There seemed to be not much danger that this would happen. “Well, I think you’re right, myself,” he said with an encouraging grin. “You want to have a good time. And why shouldn’t you? Why, with your class, your looks, your money, little old New York lies at your feet, Carola. All you got to do is kick it!”

Without appearing to mean anything by it, Breedon continually put this heady wine to the girl’s lips; to be talked about; to become famous; Queen of New York, and so on. It was more intoxicating than the juice of the grape. And now she was driving home with his words tingling in her ears, and a half smile on her lips. What fun to be somebody! She pictured herself telling Mr. McQuissick all about her afternoon; and immediately afterwards she decided she would not tell him. He was old; he would be cautious and prudent like all

other old people; he would be sure to throw cold water on these lovely plans. No! she would begin to follow Mr. Breedon's advice right away, and keep her affairs to herself.

When the cab stopped in front of her house, everything looked the same as usual; but the moment that Carola opened the door and put foot to the pavement, men seemed to rush at her from every direction as if they meant to attack her. She was frightened half out of her wits. A dozen men armed with clumsy looking boxes and long tripods that they managed with extraordinary dexterity. They planted their tripods and pointed their boxes at her. Some ran up the steps of the house; some even dived between the legs of the others to get a point of vantage. They were as quick as insects. With a terrified glance around her, Carola ran up the steps and beat on the door with her fists. She had no latch key. Fortunately McQuissick must have been waiting on the other side of it. She ran in gasping.

"Oh, what are they Mr. McQuissick?"

"Newspaper photographers, Miss. They've been hanging about the house all afternoon."

Carola dropped on a hall chair, and laughed weakly at her own fears. Such was the beginning of her fame.

Almost immediately the doorbell rang again. "This will be the reporters," said McQuissick grimly. "They're waiting too."

A fresh panic seized on Carola. "I sha'n't see them," she said quickly. Then she remembered Breedon's advice. "Yes I will see them. . . . Oh, Mr. McQuissick, what should I do?"

McQuissick scratched his head. "Darned if I know," he said helplessly, "I'm not the one to advise a young girl. You ought to have a . . ."

Carola jumped and stamped her foot. "Don't you say chaperon, or you and I will no longer be friends!"

McQuissick grinned. "Well, I'll see the newspaper men for you," he said. "This story has got to be contradicted." He pulled a newspaper from his pocket. It was one of the small newspapers full of photographs, that Carola had seen on the news stands, but which had never come to the house. She had been led to understand that they were not nice newspapers, but they looked exciting.

"What is that?" she said, taking the paper.

"Go into the drawing-room and read it," said McQuissick. "I'll see these guys in the library."

When Carola unfolded the sheet she was astonished to find a large photograph of herself on the front page. Where could they have got it? Over

the photograph in staring black letters was the caption:

TWENTY MILLION DOLLAR HEIRESS
SHOWS HER SPUNK

Then in letters just a little smaller

CAROLA GOADBY MAKES THE FUR FLY

How unspeakably vulgar! What followed was a garbled and sensational account of the scene in her house that morning. As she read on a red spot appeared in either cheek, and her eyes glittered. She was represented as a perfect little termagant. Infamous! How on earth had the story got in the newspaper? Then a phrase gave her the clue. It had evidently been carried to the newspaper office by one of the discharged servants, who had no doubt been paid a good price for it. Oh, infamous!

Carola was so angry, that she opened the door and marched into the library with the paper in her hand. McQuissick was in the act of explaining to the assembled reporters that Miss Goadby couldn't be seen, when she appeared. He threw up his hands, and the reporters laughed. There were about a dozen men of assorted ages and conditions, and a sprinkling of women. They immediately began to bombard Carola with questions. It was utterly confusing. She looked at McQuissick for help.

"Hey, cut it out!" he cried, waving his hands. "One at a time! One at a time!"

The reporters consulted amongst themselves, but appeared to be unable to come to an agreement. Finally the oldest man appealed to Carola. "You choose one of us to interview you, Miss Goadby."

Carola looked them over; the women she did not care for; they looked too sure of themselves. Of the men her attention was attracted by a good-looking young fellow not so many years older than herself, who was frankly posing to catch her eye. He had an engaging grin.

"You may question me," said Carola.

He flashed a triumphant look at his confreres. "I see that you have read the story about yourself in the——," he began briskly. "Is it true?"

By this time Carola had got her head again. "Do I look like that kind of person?" she asked.

There was a general laugh, and the whispering of pencils. "Didn't you fire your servants?" asked the young man.

"I did," said Carola. "Evidently this newspaper buys its news from discharged servants."

“Easy! Easy!” whispered McQuissick behind her. “That’s libelous.”

“That’s all right, Mr. McQuissick,” sang the young man. “We won’t let her down.” To Carola he said: “Didn’t you give Mitchell Minturn the air?”

“I don’t understand you,” said Carola.

The young man illustrated with a gesture. “Didn’t you fire him?”

I mustn’t injure Mr. Minturn in the newspapers, thought Carola. “Certainly not,” she said coolly; “Mr. Minturn took care of my property all these years at a sacrifice to himself. Now that I have come of age he has his other business to attend to.”

The young man gave her a quick smile as from one good sport to another. “Good stuff,” he said, and scribbled rapidly on his pad.

“Is it nice to come into your own money?” he next asked.

“That’s a silly question,” said Carola. “Of course it is.”

“How much have you got?”

“I don’t know. And I wouldn’t tell you if I did. I won’t answer that kind of question.”

He was perfectly unabashed by her rebuke. “What are you going to do with it?” he asked.

Oh, if he thinks he’s so smart, I can be smart too, thought Carola. “What would you suggest?” she drawled.

He laughed delightedly. “Fine stuff! We’ll ask our readers for suggestions.”

“Oh Lord,” groaned McQuissick behind Carola, “we’ll have to hire a hall to handle our mail in.”

“Well, invite your readers to send their suggestions to the paper, and not to me,” said Carola.

Many questions of a personal nature followed that Carola steadily refused to answer. Finally she said:

“Here I am. You must make up your minds about me according to your own observations. I’m not going to give myself away.”

There was more laughter, and a voice from amidst the group said: “You’re all right, Carola!”

Finally the young man put his pad in his pocket, and said: “That closes the joint interview. Now I want to make a personal request. Will you grant me a special interview to myself for a full page story in our Sunday edition?”

Carola liked his boldness, but had no intention of giving into it. “Certainly not,” she said. “No special interviews to anybody. I would hate to see myself spread all over a whole page.”

There was a general laugh at the young man's expense, but perfectly good-natured. I like this crowd, thought Carola, they can give and take. The young man laughed as loud as any.

"Well can we come to see you again in a body?" he asked. "Something tells me you will be making news."

"Certainly," said Carola, "delighted to see you at any time."

McQuissick feeling that this was a good exit line for her, opened the door and she slipped out into the hall.

"You did fine?" he whispered to her as she passed him. "After this you'll have these birds eatin' out of your hand!"

Carola ran upstairs.

vii

LEN FARLEY found his new life comfortable but dull. The manager of Elysia, Monsieur Paul Chablon engaged him at a glance. Len's instinct told him that this polished and experienced restaurateur was only a figurehead at Elysia; Marcus Breedon was the real boss there. It was something everybody knew, and nobody mentioned. M. Chablon told Len that he would not be expected to start work until he became proficient in dancing. It was arranged that he was to take a lesson from Miss Adelaide Sanders every afternoon on the dance floor at Elysia before the place opened for business. Len might have got some fun out of these lessons; but unfortunately Miss Sanders proved to be a woman of forty, thin and embittered. She could dance like a dream, but she had lost her looks. Her cynicism was proof against all Len's jollying. She was sore on men. He soon gave her up.

Aside from his daily lesson, his time was his own. He was provided with a room and meals at the Mackinac Hotel, but no money. The fifty dollars that Breedon gave him the first day melted away like ice in the sun. Well, he had to buy himself a tortoise shell cigarette case, a lighter, an ivory-headed stick and other things that went with his new character. For a few days it was grand to fluff about in good clothes with nothing to worry about, and then it began to pall on him.

Len had considerable steam to let off, and day by day the pressure rose. He began to lay on weight, a thing he hated in himself. My figure is my fortune, he said grimly to himself as he looked in the glass. Moreover, it was galling to

a young man of spirit never to be able to buy. Might as well be somebody's tame sheep! he grumbled.

He made the mistake of speaking to Marcus Breedon about it. "Say, boss, I'm flat broke. If you could only let me have the money it costs to keep me in this joint, I could live cheaper outside, and have a little coin to spend."

"What have I got to do with it?" asked Breedon with a hard look. "You're workin' for Chablon."

M. Chablon when appealed to, spread out his hands and shrugged expressively. "When you start work, your pay starts," he said. "What's the matter with you? Miss Sanders says you will make a good dancer soon."

"All right if I don't go nutty first," muttered Len.

He was now recognized as a member of Breedon's crowd, and as such had plenty of company around the hotel. Queer fish! Queer fish! I thought I knew life, Len said to himself, but I'm only a beginner! Men of all ages and every complexion, nearly every nationality in Europe was represented amongst them. They were alike in one thing only, and that was the superior quality of the smoothness they exhibited. They had a certain common meeting ground of talk in which they exercised themselves fluently, beyond that, mum! Queer half hints would be dropped; but no man ever asked another a question. All private communications were saved for the old man's ear. These men turned up at the hotel in endless succession, hung about for a day or two, and dropped out of sight as mysteriously as they had appeared. Others were regular habitués of the lobby. Good God! what a team Breedon drives, thought Len; is there no end to it?

By degrees he became pals with a little fellow named Charley Marden, who like himself, lived in the hotel. They were the same age. Charley was a slick, thin little fellow, who could pass for a high school kid when necessary. It was very useful to him. Now Breedon was generally away from the hotel at night, and the place was dead. Neither Charley nor Len had any money to spend and they got into the way of passing the time at night by smoking and chinning in each other's rooms. Very cagey with each other at first, they gradually became confidential. It turned out that Charley had turned a couple of tricks in his time, just the same as Len. Finally one night with justifiable pride, Charley described how he had robbed a bank in Chillicothe, O., single-handed. It was the biggest stunt of his career.

"God!" said Len, "I wish I had something on right now. I'm dying of dry rot, kid."

"The old man'll take care of you," said Charley soothingly.

"That's all right," said Len, "if I don't go bugs first. I can't stand this life. I got to have action."

“That’s funny, now,” said Charley thoughtfully. “It just happens now, that I got an elegant tip a couple of days ago. I can’t use it myself. It seems a kind of a shame it should go to waste.”

“What is it?” asked Len eagerly.

“Say, if you’re workin’ for the old man, you want to keep off it too, fella.”

“Aah! I ain’t workin’ for Breedon,” said Len. “Anyhow he says I ain’t.”

“Well, it’s like this,” said Charley, “fella I know, a good friend of mine, made a bunch of money last week out of a shipment of hooch, and he put a part of it into a pair of elegant diamond earrings for the wife. Regular searchlights, they are; set him back a cool three thousand bones. Well, the old woman won’t wear them out of the house at night, cause she’s scared somebody might tear them out of her ears, see? And next Saturday night they asked me to go out to dinner with them, and take in a show. They don’t keep no servant, and all the time we’re out, those shining babies will be lying in the little inside drawer of the desk in their parlor. It’s a walk-up apartment; no bell boys or nothin’ to interfere with you. What’s more, they keep a spare latch key hangin’ behind the door. I’m in and out of their flat all the time. I could take an impression of the key, and have one made for you before Saturday.”

“My God! what a cinch!” said Len with a brightening eye. Then his face darkened. “But gee! what a rotten deal for you to hand your friend! Ain’t you got no conscience.”

“What do you think I am!” said Charley with seeming indignation. “The diamonds are insured. The insurance company will have to put up for them. That’s what an insurance company’s for. It’s nobody’s loss and our gain. We’ll split fifty-fifty on it.”

“All right, I’m on,” said Len. “Will you get rid of the stuff? I ain’t had no experience with diamonds.”

“You take ’em direct to Mother Mitcheson,” said Charley. “I’ll give you her address. If we wait till morning the alarm will be out for them. She’ll give you a thousand for them.”

“Is that all?” said Len, “and they’re worth three?”

“What do you expect?” said Charley. “Nobody would do more.”

They went on discussing the affair in all its details.

Saturday night came, and the affair was carried through as planned, without a hitch. This is sure a cinch if there ever was one, Len said to himself. He sold the diamonds to Mother Mitcheson that same night, and when he got back to the hotel, he handed Charley his share of the proceeds. They had a little quiet celebration before they sought their respective beds.

Early Sunday morning before Charley was out of bed, the big fellow himself visited him in his room. "Well?" he asked curtly.

"O. K. boss," said Charley. "Our young friend walked right into it."

"You had your witness placed all right?"

"Surest thing you know. I got an affidavit from him in case of accidents. Couldn't get a notary at that time of night, but you can easy fix that up."

Breedon took the paper that Charley handed him and read:

"M—— being sworn, deposes and says: My name is M——. I live at —— West ——th Street. On the night of October 21st, as I was coming home at 10:30 P.M. I saw a young fellow loafing in the apartment house where I live, and I didn't like his looks. After I got into my apartment, hearing a suspicious noise in the hall, I opened my door a crack and looked out and I saw this same young fellow letting himself into the apartment opposite to mine with a key. I am acquainted with Mr. and Mrs. Witmer who occupy that apartment, and as I had never seen him with them, I suspected that he was up to no good. So I went through my parlor, and got out on the fire-escape that runs between my parlor window and the Witmer's. I looked through the Witmer's window, and I saw the young fellow go to the desk in there, and take Mrs. Witmer's diamond earrings. I saw the diamonds sparkle when he opened them up. As soon as I saw what he was up to, I went back through my flat, and downstairs to call a policeman, but the thief was too quick for me. He got out of the house before I did, and I couldn't find him. But I could identify him anywhere. Young fellow about twenty-five years old; height about five foot ten; weight about 180. Black hair, black eyes, bold face; very well dressed.

(Signed) M——.

"Hm! Not so bad!" said Breedon, with a grim smile. "The alarm will be given to-day, and the insurance company will be hot on the trail of the thief. If anybody should steer this witness up against Len at any time . . ." He paused grinning.

Charley was not grinning. "Sure," he said sullenly. "Boss," he went on, "Len sure is a square head, and clever as hell. I'd hate to see any harm come to him through this."

"Why so would I, Charley; so would I," said Breedon with an appearance of great heartiness. "I look on Len as one of the brightest young fellers I've got. I expect great things of him." He shook the folded paper. "This is just a precautionary measure, see? As long as Len is a good boy and does what he's told, it will just gather dust in my safe. I ain't goin' to spoil the usefulness of a

good man. But if he should get ugly, see? and try to gum the works, well, that's what this is for."

Charley nodded, not entirely reassured.

"Now, you can make out you've been sent away on orders, see?" Breendon went on. "Get up and get out of here, and wait for further instructions in the place you know of. You can leave a note for your friend if you want."

Len never saw Charley again.

viii

IT appeared that Mr. McQuissick had managed very well, considering his lack of experience in household matters. When Carola got home she found a complete set of new servants installed and functioning smoothly. They were under the direction of a depressed looking housekeeper called Mrs. Tylee. Though not exactly prepossessing, she was undoubtedly efficient. She received Carola's orders with downcast eyes, and carried them out without comment. Upstairs Carola found her new maid in attendance, by name Ella. She did not care much for her looks; too pale and mousey-looking. I'll get something livelier later, thought Carola.

Ella was waiting around for orders, and a curious blankness descended on Carola. All her life long, every waking hour had been filled for her by others, and now that she was her own mistress she didn't know how to act for herself. What would she do until dinner time? She tried to remember some of the things she had promised herself she would do when she became free. All she could think of was smoking a cigarette. Why hadn't she bought any when she was out.

"I wish I had a cigarette," she said.

"I might be able to get some in the house," said Ella demurely.

Carola looked at her with a fresh interest. Maybe she was human after all. Her pale face betrayed no expression. "Well, see if you can," said Carola.

Ella, as demure and noncommittal as ever, presently returned with a packet of cigarettes. "They're only cheap ones," she said deprecatingly.

"Doesn't matter," said Carola. "Where did you get them?"

"From the second man," said Ella, with just the suspicion of a dimple in her pale cheek.

I bet they have fun amongst themselves; thought Carola with a little sigh; they are not hampered by conventions. She broke the packet, and abstracted a cigarette. Ella she noticed was looking around for something. "What is it?" Carola asked.

"The lighter."

"I haven't any."

Ella lit a match, and held it to the cigarette. Carola endeavored to take her first puffs like an old hand, but the maid saw through her. "Don't inhale at first, Miss," she said.

"What do you mean by inhale?"

"Draw the smoke into your lungs and blow it out through your nostrils."

"Mercy! I'll be glad enough if I can blow it out of my mouth without choking," said Carola . . . "Draw the chaise longue in front of the cheval glass so I can practice how to do it properly," she added.

Watching herself in the mirror, she strove to do it as nonchalantly as the women who had surrounded her in the fashionable restaurant. How lightly they had held the little cube between first and second fingers; flicking the ash off with the third. And what a graceful aid the gesticulating cigarette provided to conversation. It will take a lot of practice! thought Carola with a sigh.

In the middle of this she heard McQuissick asking for her at the door. Her impulse was to hide the cigarette, but she resisted it. He might as well know soon as late, she said to herself, I'm not going to let Mr. McQuissick or anybody else run me. "Come in!" she sang out.

McQuissick looked at the cigarette without batting an eye. "Have one?" said Carola carelessly.

"No thanks," said he, "I just wanted to tell you that Mr. Minturn called up three times when you were out. He asked me to call him as soon as you got back."

"Oh, bother!" said Carola, "I thought I was through with him."

McQuissick said nothing.

Much against her will, Carola was forced to ask for advice. "What must I do about Mr. Minturn?"

"Well, Miss, since you ask me," said McQuissick cautiously, "I should say keep him by you. He's had a jolt, Mitchell Minturn has; he's feeling real humble minded now. If you can keep him in his place, he'd be a valuable man to have around you."

I must not do anything without consulting Mr. Breedon, thought Carola. "Well, tell him I'm too tired to talk business to-night, but I'll see him in the morning," said Carola.

McQuissick nodded. "Here's a list of your social engagements that Mrs. Van Arsdale left for you," he said, and went away to telephone.

Carola studied the list with strong distaste. Dinner at General Rampayne's; dance of the Knickerbocker Association at the Madagascar; Mr. Percival Papp's musical morning; lunch at Mrs. Frelinghuysen's; tea at Mrs. Bramsby Lincoln's, etc., etc. How well Carola knew the round. As soon as you completed it you started over. She tossed the list on a table.

McQuissick returned to say that Mr. Minturn would call upon her at eleven next day. "He wanted to come at nine," said the detective with a twinkle; "but I took the liberty of putting him off."

"Quite right," said Carola. "You're such a help to me, Mr. McQuissick." She picked up the list. "Now I wish you'd telephone to all these people and tell them I can't come to their stupid parties."

"But what'll I say?" objected McQuissick a little aghast.

"Say anything you like. What is it they always say? Say I'm indisposed. That's perfectly true. I'm indisposed to go to their parties."

"But how would they know who I was?"

"Write to them then," said Carola impatiently. "Write a note to each one and I'll sign it."

McQuissick ran a hand through his hair. "I can't!" he said helplessly.

"You can't write!"

"Sure I can write, but I don't know how to put it to fashionable folks."

Bother the man! thought Carola. How different he was from Mr. Breedon who made everything so easy for her. "Put it any way you like," she said, "as long as you made it clear that I'm not coming."

McQuissick went out with a hand in his hair.

Presently the new butler came to the door of Carola's boudoir. She never did learn this man's name; he only stayed one day. He had come to announce that Mrs. Frelinghuysen was calling. Carola's heart sunk.

"What did you tell her?" she asked sharply.

"Said I'd see if you was in, Miss."

"Then she'll know I'm in."

"Sorry, Miss, but I had no orders."

"Tell her I'm sick, and beg to be excused."

"Yes, Miss." He went away.

In three minutes he came padding softly along the corridor again. "She says she'll come right up, Miss, if she may."

Carola jumped up. “Damn the woman!” she said. It was the first time she had ever sworn out loud. The sound of it gave her courage. “I’ll go down to her,” she said with the light of battle in her eyes.

Carola put her cigarette away. On second thought she lighted a fresh one, and went downstairs puffing. Mrs. Frelinghuysen, withered and elegant, was sitting in the blue drawing-room with a consciously sweet expression. Her face changed in the most comical manner when she saw the cigarette. She swallowed hard, but said nothing about it.

“My dear, when I read that terrible story in the newspaper I came to you at once!”

“Oh, do you read that paper?” asked Carola sweetly.

“Not as a rule,” said Mrs. Frelinghuysen. “One of the maids brought it to me. Now darling, Ronald and I want you to come to us, until you get your house in running order again. We will not take no for an answer.”

“Thank you,” said Carola, “but my house is running all right as far as I can see. I appear to have the usual number of servants.”

“And a chaperon?” asked Mrs. Frelinghuysen.

“No chaperon,” said Carola blandly.

“Well dear, there’s my cousin Maria Kip. One of the Hamilton Kips, you know. Maria I know, would drop everything and come to you at whatever sacrifice to herself.”

“I’m sure she would,” said Carola.

“Shall I wire to her, dear?”

“No, thank you. I’m not going to have a chaperon.”

“But my dear!” gasped Mrs. Frelinghuysen, running up the aristocratic eyebrows into two little gothic arches.

“Well?” said Carola calmly.

Mrs. Frelinghuysen thought of the twenty million dollars, and her eyebrows climbed down again. “Perhaps you are right,” she said, “I was only thinking of all the talk it would make. I expect there will be reams more about you in the papers to-morrow.”

“Oh yes,” said Carola, “I have just interviewed all the reporters in a body. Such amusing fellows.”

Mrs. Frelinghuysen stared, and the eyebrows undulated like little black waves. But she drew a long breath for patience, and went on with determined sweetness—she prided herself on being a woman of resource: “I tell you what, Carola, let you and I and Ronnie take a little trip until this blows over. The *Octavius* is sailing on Saturday. Taormina, my dear, or Amalfi or Sorrento.

Rome later. Your trustees would never allow you to be taken abroad; the responsibility was too great. Now you are free to taste those delights.”

“You are awfully kind,” said Carola, “but I have other plans.”

“What plans?” asked Mrs. Frelinghuysen sharply.

“To amuse myself right here in little old New York.”

Now a conversation of this sort could have but one outcome; in about five minutes the aristocratic little lady was stiff with rage.

“This is outrageous!” she cried. “You can’t go on in this manner!”

“Why can’t I?” said Carola.

“Your name will become a byword!”

“I don’t know what a byword is.”

“No decent man would marry you!”

“I’m not thinking of marrying,” said Carola, “when I do . . .”

“You’ll fall a victim to a fortune hunter!”

“Why not?” said Carola with a provoking smile. “If he’d never had any money, what fun to fill his pockets!”

“Oh! Oh!” said Mrs. Frelinghuysen, making for the door with the smart bow on her hat fairly quivering.

Carola had one more shot in her locker. “What I was about to say when you interrupted me,” she drawled, “was, that when I do marry, it shall be to an orphan.”

“I shall never darken these doors again!” cried Mrs. Frelinghuysen in the good old-fashioned way.

So much the better! thought Carola; but she did not say it. After all she had the advantage of the withered little lady; about thirty years advantage in fact. Her feeling of triumph faded as soon as the door closed. She was naturally a peaceable soul. Oh dear! she said to herself as she climbed the stairs; do I have to be fighting with somebody the whole time? I’ve a good mind to give away every damn cent and go work for my living like Miss Julia at Mandel’s! However, Carola did not really mean this.

Happening to stray to one of the front windows of her boudoir, Carola’s curiosity was excited by the peculiar actions of the people out in front. The sidewalk was thronged. They could not stop and stare at the house; the police would not have allowed it; so they walked slowly up and down staring at the windows, ten paces, then back again. Carola was immediately discovered; she hastily stepped out of sight. She called her maid.

“Good Heavens! Ella, what is the matter with these people?”

Ella was delighted with the sight. "Curiosity seekers, Miss," she said in an awe-struck tone; "they read all about you in the papers, and they come to see the house."

"So this is fame!" said Carola.

It was now time to dress for dinner. Carola and Ella consulted about this matter. But Carola got no pleasure out of the dainty gowns that Ella spread before her, one after another. "Too missish," she said, wrinkling up her nose. "I'm a woman now; I want to register. To-morrow I'll go to Mandel's and order a fresh lot, according to my own taste."

"Which will you wear to-night?" asked Ella.

"It doesn't matter. Give me the pale green with the beads. Hunt about and see if you can't find a big velvet rose or something to pin on the shoulder."

Carola was appalled by the prospect of the long dinner in solitude. Upon going downstairs she found McQuissick in the lower hall with his hat and overcoat on. "Stay and eat with me," she pleaded like a little girl.

McQuissick reddened with gratification, but stood firm. "Sorry, Miss," he said, "but I got to go home. If I don't show myself at home once a day my old lady, she'll divorce me."

So Carola had to proceed to the dining room alone. The new staff anxious to show their quality, had lighted up the room as if for a banquet; the big table was lovely under a bank of pink roses with forget-me-nots and maidenhair. But the single place that was laid looked piteously lonesome, and Carola felt about two feet high under that lofty ceiling. The elaborate ceremony dragged out its invariable course; *hors d'oeuvres*; soup; fish, etc.

Having nothing else to occupy her mind, Carola studied her servants. The nameless butler was a fresh importation; he was said to have come direct to her from the Duke of Portland. He looked it. His face was wrinkled up as if his sense of responsibility was strangling him. He stood at the sideboard waving his hands over the dishes like a priest at the altar. The second man on the other hand looked like a purely American product, a tall stalwart youth with beautiful blonde hair. He acted as an intermediary between Carola and his mightiness the butler; changing the plates and fetching the food from the sideboard. Outwardly the correct and deferential servant, he had a look in his eye that suggested he knew himself to be a man as well as a servant. Ella's friend, said Carola to herself, from whom she got the cigarettes. Well, he's better looking than any of the young men I know. While Carola ate he stood behind her chair. She was accustomed to it.

The second man was cool, the butler nervous. In passing between pantry and sideboard, the latter slipped on a rug, and recovered himself with difficulty. In connection with his awful dignity it was too ridiculous. Carola

caught the eye of the handsome young second man, and both were shaken with silent inward laughter. Laughter is a dangerous leveller. They felt like friends immediately. Well, why shouldn't I make friends with him, said Carola to herself; I said I was going to break all their silly old rules and regulations.

"What is your name?" she asked the second man.

"Stratton, Miss."

"You are American, aren't you?"

"Yes, Miss."

It was an unfortunate question. American suggested English, and English suggested the overpowering butler. The laughter which was still churning inside them suddenly broke all bounds. Carola and her servant laughed out loud together. The butler turned with a look of frozen horror, and of course that only made it worse.

When the second man went to the sideboard, the butler whispered to him, and the young man left the room not to return. Thereafter the butler served Carola with his own august hands. After awhile she said:

"Where is Stratton?"

"I was forced to ask him to retire, Miss," said the butler.

"But it was my fault that he laughed."

"A good servant must know his place under all conditions, Miss."

"But I can't have him punished for what was my fault."

The butler put down the dish he was carrying. He fairly trembled with rage or grief, or some emotion that was mysterious to Carola. "Man and boy for thirty years I have served in the best houses," he began. "I hope I know what is due to my masters and mistresses. No complaint has ever been made against me on that score . . ."

To be lectured by her own servant! This was intolerable! Carola jumped up and flung down her napkin. "Please spare me your orations," she said. "I have finished my dinner."

She went upstairs feeling very angry and dissatisfied with herself. It seemed as if everything she did was wrong. In a few minutes Mrs. Tylee the depressed looking housekeeper came to her boudoir.

"I am sorry there was trouble at the table," she said.

"It was nothing," said Carola; "it was entirely my fault. I outraged the butler's sense of propriety. But surely I can do what I please in my own house!"

"Naturally," said Mrs. Tylee. "I will replace the man to-morrow."

“Give him a month’s wages to heal his injured feelings . . . And try to get a more human one,” added Carola. “Never mind if he hasn’t worked for a duke.”

“I’m afraid I must let the other man go too,” said Mrs. Tylee deprecatingly.

“But why? He hasn’t done anything.”

“I know. But after such an incident if I kept him on, the new butler would never be able to control him. Servants are only human.”

“Very well, if you must.”

Mrs. Tylee went away. By this time Carola was utterly depressed. The prospect of spending a long evening alone was intolerable. She rang for Ella. Ella wasn’t much, but she was better than nothing. Ella appeared red eyed and sniffing. Evidently there had been a grand row below stairs. Carola sent her away again. It seemed to her as if there was a curse upon her house.

Suddenly her eye fell upon the telephone, and she thought of that nice, kind, wise, old Mr. Breedon who made everything so easy and comfortable for her. “Call me up at the Mackinac Hotel at any time,” he had said. Taking down the receiver, she gave the number.

She was presently informed that Mr. Breedon was not in the hotel at the moment, but if she would give her name, he might perhaps be found.

Five minutes later she heard the rich, soothing voice over the wire: “Hello, Carrie, what’s the good word?”

“Oh, Mr. Breedon, I’m bored to tears,” she said. “Could you come around and see me. I want to consult you about something.”

“Sure!” he said instantly, “how about me and you takin’ in a show together, Carrie?”

Her heart leaped. “Oh, can we?” she cried.

“Why not? What would you like to see?”

“Could we go to a revue? They would never take me to a revue. How about the Escapades of 1927?”

“Surest thing you know, Carrie. I’ll get a box. I’ll call around for you in twenty minutes. . . . I won’t come in,” he added cannily. “When you see my car stop, come out.”

“There’s a crowd out in front,” said Carola.

“Well, I’ll send my chauffeur up the steps to fetch you down.”

Carola, all smiles and anticipation now, put out the lights in her boudoir so she could not be seen, and sat down at one of the front windows to watch the crowd, and wait for Mr. Breedon. Presently she saw McQuissick return, and an uncomfortable doubt attacked her. What would he say to her going out? Of course it was none of his business, but he might say something anyway. Oh

bother! Everybody seemed to feel that they had to manage her. Could she get him out of the way somehow? No, such a trick would be beneath her. He had to learn sooner or later that she was her own mistress.

Carola had evening cloak, gloves and bag handy to her hand, and as soon as the rakish landaulet drew into the curb, she scampered down the stairs. Alas! McQuissick was mounting guard in the front hall, seated on a chair, reading a newspaper.

“Going out?” he asked in surprise.

“Yes,” said Carola with her sweetest smile.

“Shall I come?”

“No thank you.”

McQuissick scratched his head. However much trouble it might make, his sense of duty forced him to ask the question: “Where you going?”

Carola’s dander rose, but she controlled it yet. “To the theater with a friend,” she answered sweetly.

“Hm!” said McQuissick somewhat grimly. He was a father. “Who is it?” he asked.

Then the storm broke. Carola stamped her foot, and proclaimed her independence anew. She refused to answer.

“Well, somebody’s got to look after you,” said McQuissick with a worried look, “and there don’t seem to be anybody on the job but me. Every crook and confidence man in town has got his eye peeled for you after reading them stories in the newspapers. God knows I don’t relish the job.”

“Then give it up!” cried Carola. “Understand, I will not be looked after! You will have to leave me. You have made it impossible for me to have you here!”

“All right! All right!” said McQuissick sadly. “It was bound to come to this. I’m sorry. Just the age of my girl, too. But I guess it was impossible!”

Carola waited for no more. She ran down the front steps with the tears springing to her eyes. An inner voice whispered to her that she had thrust away her best friend, but she would not listen to it. She flung herself into Mr. Breedon’s car, still seething with indignation. A fatherly patting of the big man’s hand soothed her. Here at last was a nice person who understood her, and did not force her to quarrel with him.

On his way to fetch Carola, Marcus Breedon stopped at Elysia in Forty-Ninth Street. This resort, the smartest in New York, did not advertise itself to the world by a sign over the door. The modest exterior in no way suggested the luxury within. Three plain, old-fashioned brownstone dwellings had been thrown together. They had been completely rebuilt inside, but the prim façades

had been preserved unaltered, except that the entrance was now at the level of the former basements. The entrance floor was devoted to dressing rooms in front, kitchen and service rooms behind, while the main restaurant was on the first floor with a gallery surrounding it. On the third floor there were charming rooms devoted to roulette, baccarat, and simple Canfield; but one had to be an initiate before gaining admittance there.

Breedon proceeded to the manager's little office on the entrance floor, and messengers were sent scurrying about the building for the men he desired to speak to. Elysia enjoyed a good patronage for dinner, and there was dancing throughout the evening; but of course the big show did not begin until after the theater. One by one the men sent for hastened to Breedon, not without a certain anxiety; Paul Chablon the ostensible proprietor of the place, and four slim and good-looking young men, most beautifully finished.

Breedon took care to close the door before he started speaking. "Boys," he said, rolling the long cigar, "I'm bringing Carola Goadby here to-night, and I want you all to help me show her a good time. She's a personal friend of mine. Nice girl. I presume you read about her in the papers?"

They nodded, anxiously studying the fat, masklike old face. When Breedon's words dripped butter and honey he was most dangerous. He never came out with anything crude and raw. You had to listen to his words, and then make up your mind what lay behind them. And God help you if you got his meaning wrong.

One by one Breedon fixed the young men with his hard eye. "I want you to show her a good time," he repeated; "flatter her; make her feel good; but *don't try to push yourselves forward personally*. You are her dancing partners, nothing more. If she smiles at you kindly, don't be misled by it. We got to take care of this little lady. Take your cue from me. I shall treat her like a father. You're all equal in this; if any one of you tries to make time on the others it's out for him." He illustrated with an energetic gesture.

This was explicit enough. They nodded again.

"Are we supposed to know who she is?" asked Chablon.

"Sure!" said Breedon. "There's no secrecy about it."

"Her coming here will make talk."

"What of it? The more talk, the better for business."

Having dropped his hint, Breedon proceeded up town to get Carola. In his car, he listened sympathetically to the recital of her troubles, and patted her hand. She quickly felt better.

"You said you wanted to consult me," he reminded her.

“Yes,” said Carola. “It’s about Mr. Minturn. He’s been calling me up all day. I suppose he wants to go on being my lawyer. I said I would see him tomorrow morning. What ought I say to him?”

“Hm!” said Breedon thoughtfully. “It wouldn’t be such a bad idea, Carrie. If we treated him rough, he might make a scandal.”

“A scandal?”

“I mean get us the wrong kind of publicity,” he explained dryly. “You get your property firmly in your own hands Carrie, and let the old boy go on playin’ round.”

“How shall I do that?”

“Put it in a safety deposit vault, and you take the key—the only key.”

“All right,” said Carola.

“And by the way, don’t mention my name to Mitchell Minturn,” added Breedon carelessly. “Me and him had a little trouble once. He don’t like me.”

In the theater Carola was enchanted. It had the allure of something which had been forbidden. To tell the truth there were some things about the show she did not like and other things, at which the audience laughed noisily, that she did not understand. But she mustn’t be prudish, she told herself; it was all life; that was what she had asked for, and she could never never get enough of it. Breedon, who had seen the show a number of times, did not bother to look at the stage, but sat, half concealed by the curtains of the box, studying Carola with a fond and fatherly expression.

The odd thing was, that he really felt like that. Like other men Breedon was a curious mixture. He was thinking; Dear li’l thing, I will protect her from the wolves of New York! and at the same time the thought of her money was always present in his mind like the heat of a pleasant fire. He would never have admitted to himself that he was planning to get her money, but all his acts were directed to that end. If things went well, her fortune, or a good part of it would just naturally flow into his hands, and he would go on feeling fatherly and protective to the end.

When the final curtain fell Carola sighed like a child. “Oh, I’m so sorry it’s over!”

“Well, it’s over here,” said Breedon, “but the night is young. What say if we go have a bite to eat somewhere, and see another show?”

“A night club!” said Carola, “I would love that better than anything!”

“Ever hear of Elysia?” asked Breedon.

She shook her head. “I never could get anybody to tell me about those places.”

“We’ll go there. It belongs to a friend of mine, and for to-night it shall be yours!”

Carola was rather disappointed by the outside of Elysia, it was so plain. Just an old-fashioned brownstone house without any lights in the windows; not even an electric sign. To be sure one car after another was discharging its freight of well dressed passengers at the door; but they went in very quietly. Carola had imagined something more bacchanalian than this. Inside the door it was just like the reception hall of one of the best houses; ivory painted woodwork, red carpets, attentive and smiling servants. Carola found herself in a charmingly furnished dressing room with a maid taking off her wrap.

But the guests were not just like the guests in the houses that Carola had visited. At the little dressing table next to hers sat a girl who took Carola’s breath away; a slender thing of flame and rainbows. Not a day older than I am, thought Carola, but she looks as if she knew everything. She was wearing a dress of some shimmering material that changed color with every movement; her short, curly hair showed the lights of burnished copper. The pupils of her eyes were curiously distended making the whole iris look black and mysterious; her cheeks and lips were scarlet—paint of course, but how brilliant and effective! The brilliant color robbed her face of humanity; she did not look like a common human girl, but like some mad young priestess of pleasure. She struck powerfully on Carola’s imagination. It was neither approval nor disapproval, but Carola felt herself drawn to her like the needle to the magnet.

The red haired girl was talking in a high, clear voice to the girl on the other side of her—or to anybody who might hear: “We got fed up with New York, and went down to New Orleans to spend the winter. We didn’t have a cent beyond our fare, but we took a chance. Why should the men have all the fun of going on the bum. Two girls can always make out together. I got a job in a department store demonstrating foot-ease, and my friend peddled margarine from door to door. Then we got acquainted with some nice men who gave us jobs in banks. We took a flat in the Pontalva Buildings and furnished it on nothing at all. All the most fascinating bums in the country drop anchor in that little park in the winter. The garrets of the quarter were full of them. I mean the wild young fellows, the rebels, the ones with too much oxygen in their composition who break away from home. They’re the nicest, and they never have a cent, worse luck. They paint, and write bad poetry and make music and do nothing at all. We laughed all the time, and lived on red beans and rice . . .”

Carola scarcely got the full sense of her rapid words; it was like a lurid glimpse into the unknown. The rapid rush of her speech was as intoxicating as her appearance.

Carola glanced with dissatisfaction at herself. Though her cheeks were delicately warmed with excitement, it seemed to her that she looked wishy-washy alongside the brilliant creature in the adjoining mirror. I ought to have put on some rouge before coming to such a place, she thought; then she perceived that there was rouge in little pots on the dressing table before her. She applied a little to her cheeks, but not with unqualified success; it would not spread properly.

Finally the girl next to her perceived what she was doing. "Oh, my dear, that's not the way!" she cried. "You must lay a foundation first. Let me show you."

Carola gratefully turned sideways in her chair, and the girl set to work with deft and knowing fingers. "Ah, your skin is like lily petals!" she said. "It's plain to be seen you're a newcomer here. Who are you?"

Carola understood by intuition that one must not give oneself away in such a place. "Oh, I'm Titania," she said smiling.

"You look it," said the girl. Her wild, strange laughing eyes were only a few inches from Carola's face as she worked. "I'm Cassandra; she was cuckoo, you know. Crazy Cassandra, that's me!" And her poignant laugh rang out.

"Don't put too much on to start with," said Carola.

"Don't worry, duckling," said Cassandra. "When I'm through with you your boy friend will want to eat you!"

Her boy friend! How that phrase softened Carola's heart. Would she find him in Elysia? "Oh, that doesn't matter," she said blushing under the rouge. "I came with an old gentleman."

Cassandra laughed loud and long. "We all do, duckling. They have the price."

"Are there no young men here?" asked Carola with a falling face.

"Oh yes, they keep a few tame ones for you to play around with; but you have to be very prudent, duckling, or the payers will get sore."

Well, thank goodness, thought Carola, I can pay for myself.

When Carola mounted to the main floor with Breedon at her side, her longing for light and color and gayety was satisfied. Behind the prim fronts of the old houses a beautiful hall had been built which filled the entire plot of ground. It was surrounded on three sides by a narrow double gallery. On the galleries, and under the lower one the tables were placed, leaving all the center of the floor clear for dancing. "Only place in New York where you've got room enough to dance," remarked Breedon; "costs money at the present valuation of real estate." The place was decorated in a very modern fashion

which combined severity of line with the utmost vividness of color. Ceiling, walls and balcony parapets were painted in lozenges of glowing color like a harlequin suit. The effect was indescribably gay and young. For the convenience of the dancers many little stairways came down from the galleries; but the tables were all served through openings in the wall behind; and the waiters were never in evidence on the floor. The orchestra was playing an intoxicating air, and a gay hum of talk and laughter filled the air.

At the top of the stairway they were received by the proprietor a gentleman of the most perfect finish, his major-domo scarcely less imposing, and two lesser functionaries. Bowing low, these gentlemen murmured a welcome in such dulcet tones as to make Carola feel like royalty. Then all four, led them proudly across the floor to a reserved table in the middle of the right hand side—the best place in the room as Carola could see. At this spectacular entrance all conversation ceased, and Carola was sensible that every eye in the room was upon her. It took her breath away rather; but how thrilling to be treated like a queen!

They were seated with genuflections. Carola's sparkling eyes took in the gay scene. There was a something about it—she could hardly put it into words, a sort of release, a letting-go, such as she had never experienced. Ah! this was life! She protested that she couldn't eat; nevertheless, various dainty morsels made their appearance, and she found them good; caviare on tiny squares of toast; lobster a la Newburgh in a ramequin; and an ice that was like nectar and ambrosia. A cork popped discreetly in the neighborhood, and pale golden bubbles strained upward in Carola's glass. As she sipped, they began to course through her veins. She saw everything through a golden haze. Ah! this was Elysium indeed!

Meanwhile speculation was rife at the other tables. Marcus Breedon was known to most of the people present. "Who's the girl with him?" they asked each other. "Some class, eh? Looks like a top-notch. Not much more than a child. A new type for old Mark." By and by the answer began to fly about from table to table. "It's Carola Goadby. *Carola Goadby!* The twenty million dollar baby! No! I have it straight. Carola Goadby!" And some who knew Breedon too well, shook their heads and murmured: "What a pity! What a pity!"

But Carola was happily unconscious of all this. While they ate there was a performance on the stage. It was all new to her and she took it at face value. Old rounders in the vicinity who wondered wearily what they had come to the place for, observed her fresh and delighted gaze with envious hearts. Later the orchestra mounted to the stage, leaving the floor clear for dancing. It was a little company of artists under the leadership of one who was a master. Carola had never heard such jazz. Her toe began to tap on the floor.

“Like to dance?” suggested Breedon. “I haven’t the figger for it myself, but I see plenty young fellows here who are crazy to be introduced.”

“All right,” said Carola.

She did not see Breedon make any signal. By magic as it seemed, an elegant young gentleman appeared before them, and was introduced as Sandro Belisario. When Carola extended her hand he kissed it with perfect grace and assurance. She was deeply thrilled. He was a romantic looking young man with languorous black eyes like a movie star, and two fetching little love locks that crept down his cheeks and ended in a point. Carola thought him slightly ridiculous but very fascinating. They started to dance. The young man was lost in a dreamy daze from which he issued very infrequently to speak. Speech however was scarcely necessary, for he danced like an angel. Through the shoulder upon which her fingers lightly rested, and through the hand which grasped hers, Carola could feel how his whole body yielded to the music. It was dangerously intoxicating. In order to keep her feet she felt obliged to say something.

“How beautifully you dance, Mr. Belisario.”

“That is because I am dancing with you,” his silky voice whispered in her ear.

Oh dear, thought Carola, American boys will never learn to make such pretty speeches.

On the wrist which was extended, she caught the glint of a heavy circlet of gold. He saw her looking at it. “A gift from a friend,” he murmured. “It is welded on my arm. I swore to wear it until I die.”

Carola felt as if she were living in a novel.

When the dance drew to a close he began to quote poetry in her ear:

“Utter no softly whispered vow
There is no need
For any now.
Dance silently warm hand in hand
With beating hearts
That understand.”

That was all. No explanation. How pregnant with warm and mysterious meaning. Carola was thrilled afresh.

“Well, how did you like the wop?” asked Breedon when she returned to the table.

“He’s too good-looking to be left around loose,” said Carola.

“His father is a laborer,” said Breedon carelessly. “Paul picked him up shining shoes in City Hall Park.”

“So much the more credit to him then,” said Carola. “His manners are beautiful.”

“Hm!” said Breedon.

When the music started again, Mr. Belisario hastened back to ask for another dance. At the same time arrived a blonde young man who was introduced as Jack Winters. He had light brown hair that looked as if it had been marcelled. Carola not wishing to favor Mr. Belisario too signally, accepted the blonde. He too, danced beautifully. Unlike the other he talked all the time; it was a gay rattle signifying little. He represented himself as being perfectly worthless, and appeared to expect to be liked for it. Carola did like him, but he was unable to efface the impression that the romantic Mr. Belisario had made.

Her next partner was Claude Tanner a young man with slightly protuberant brown eyes which somebody must have told him were “compelling.” He bored her through and through with them. He asked Carola if she didn’t think he looked like Mussolini. She didn’t. To her his eyes had no more expression than a pair of gumdrops, but she kept that to herself. He impressed upon her that he had been to Harvard, and was acquainted with all the prominent men in his class. This one bored Carola.

He was succeeded by a dainty little fellow called Freddy Earl who had a soft, reedy voice and a killing manner. He immediately took Carola into his confidence in a certain way that was new to her, whispering innocent little morsels of scandal concerning the people in the place, just like one girl to another. A new type to Carola.

But all four were desirable partners, and undoubtedly the best dancers in the room. It was highly agreeable to Carola’s vanity to have them hasten to the table, and contend half seriously for the honor of dancing with her. Other women who had nobody to dance with but their stupid looking escorts glanced at her with spiteful envy.

As the evening wore on the fun became ever faster and more furious. Hundreds of brilliantly colored child’s balloons were released, and were batted around the room in an impromptu game amidst shouts of laughter when they burst. Watchman’s rattles and other instruments of torture were distributed in great profusion, and the racket was deafening. Carola, the child who had been suppressed all her life, enjoyed it without stint. It was perfect—well, almost perfect; her young men were too lukewarm; under the eye of Breedon they dared not let themselves go completely, therefore Carola could not quite let herself go either. She had not yet found the boy friend. She envied the girl who called herself Cassandra, who was the bright particular star of the maddest party in the room. She finally mounted on the table, and sang to the accompaniment of the orchestra, while her friends joined hands and danced

around her. An elderly gentleman adorned with a fool's cap executed a *pas seul* with a portentous air of gravity in the middle of the floor.

Carola learned fast. She was dancing with Jack—it was already Jack and Carola, for such seemed to be the custom, when she saw the romantic Sandro guiding a majestic dowager who danced with determination though her eyes were agonized and her face purple with her exertions. Poor fellow! thought Carola; I suppose that's how he earns his dinner. She passed so close that she brushed against Sandro, and she distinctly heard him murmur in the dowager's ear:

“Dance silently warm hand in hand
With beating hearts . . .”

At first she was angry; then she laughed at herself. How simple of me to be taken in so easily! she said to herself. The next time Sandro came to claim a dance of her, her smile upon him was dry.

Bredon took her away before the party got too much frazzled. Everybody in the room shouted good-by to her as she crossed the floor. How friendly! About ten gentlemen ridiculously decorated with favors struggled to kiss her hand in imitation of Sandro, but none could do it like he. Carola tore herself away laughing. Her four swains accompanied her down to the door, each striving to recommend himself to her according to his own style.

“Have a good time, Carrie?” asked Bredon patting her hand in the car.

“Glorious!” sang Carola. “I've never had such a good time!”

“Good work! What you think of the boys?”

“I liked them, but there's something a little unreal about them, isn't there?”

“Exactly!” said Bredon approvingly. “Wise little head! That's the way to take life. Enjoy everybody's act, but never be taken in by it!”

Carola was proud of his approval.

“Let's go again to-morrow night,” said Bredon, “and every night until you tire of it.”

“I'll never tire of it!” cried Carola. “I've got a whole lifetime of dullness to make up for!”

CAROLA was never lonely again. Friends seemed to spring up everywhere she turned. Such nice people, so anxious to humor her in

every way and make things pleasant. She forgot what it was to be crossed; the whole world was full of smiles. Sometimes just for fun, she would be deliberately wilful to try them out. It made no difference; they never ceased their efforts to please, to accommodate themselves to her. I suppose this is very bad for me, Carola would say to herself; but she had no desire to change it. Her house seemed to be full of people all the time. In fact she sometimes forgot who they were or how they had come there; but they were all charming to her. Merry parties succeeded each other all day long, and half the night. Life was a continuous rush from one pleasure to another.

In her first interview with Mr. Mitchell Minturn Carola learned that she had \$140,000 in the bank. All she had to do was to sign two little cards to be sent down to the bank, and thereafter she was free to sign checks for whatever sums she chose. What fun it was! She had never handled any money in her life before. Mr. Minturn recommended that part of the money be invested, since on December first there would be as much or more coming in from interest and dividends, but Carola had a different idea. "It is everybody's duty to spend their income," she said; "It keeps the money in circulation and helps make good times." She had picked this up from Mr. Breedon.

"You can't spend your whole income!" said Mr. Minturn aghast. "It is more than a million a year!"

"I can but try," said Carola.

And in fact she scattered checks like falling petals in an orchard. That very same morning she sallied forth to buy an automobile that she could drive herself. She bought a huge Brewster green roadster that made her look like a pygmy at the wheel, and later she saw one of a different make in Copenhagen blue that she thought suited her coloring better, so she bought that also. The young salesmen were perfectly lovely to her. She gathered a whole bunch of them together and took them to lunch at the Madagascar. What fun they had!

In the afternoon she went to Mandel's to order evening dresses that would be suitable to appear in at Elysia; she rioted amongst splendid effects and showy colors; a gown of gold cloth and turquoise velvet; another of silver cloth misted with black net like the night sky; a scarlet dress such as she had longed for all her life. This was to be made perfectly plain, to hang from her shoulders by two points. There was also a dress in paddy green; a sheath gown made of some weird iridescent Oriental stuff; and a taffeta dress with bouffant skirt in the brightest shade of blue. This was Carola's favorite color.

By this time she was tired of choosing. "I'll order some more next week," she said, and carried Miss Julia the mannequin off to have tea with her. Free at last of supervision and chaperonage the two girls had a lovely time together talking about young men. Carola learned something from Julia. In a burst of

impulsiveness she invited Julia to come live with her so they could always be together; but the offer was declined. Julia was wistful but firm.

“My boy friend wouldn’t like it,” she said.

“But he can come to see you whenever he wants,” said Carola.

“He wouldn’t come. He’d just get sore. . . . No,” added the wise young head, “I had best stick to my job. It will give me a big pull at Mandel’s when they see that you are my friend. And it will be just lovely if we can be together sometimes.”

Carola privately resolved to send Julia all her girly-girly dresses that she was sick of, but which Julia seemed to like.

After tea she went to Mount’s and ordered a diamond crescent that she intended to wear in her hair when she put on the black and silver dress. This made a really noticeable hole in her bank balance. I’ll be able to spend it all before the first of December, she thought with satisfaction.

During those first days Carola had several interviews with Mr. Minturn. He had rather a deflated aspect when he came into her presence now. The gray curls hung limply down around the bald spot. He gave Carola to understand that his legal business had suffered irreparable damage owing to the announcement in the press that he was no longer her attorney; so Carola caused another notice to be put in the papers stating that Mr. Mitchell Minturn was still attorney and advisor to the Goadby estate.

So much for the public, but the erstwhile trustee soon found that his job was a sinecure now. Carola went on paying him a handsome stipend, but he had nothing to do except to offer advice, which, it is to be feared was generally not taken. Carola with all the attention, encouragement and adulation that was lavished upon her, matured almost over night. The brilliant assured young creature who ran her own show had little left in common with the subdued child of yesterday, product of a long line of nurses, governesses and chaperons. Mr. Minturn was forced to transfer all her securities to a safety deposit vault to which she had sole access.

“But in order to safeguard your interests securities frequently have to be sold, and the proceeds reinvested,” he objected.

“That’s all right,” said Carola airily; “whenever you want anything let me know and I’ll get it out for you.”

“And coupons have to be cut at regular intervals.”

“Fine! We’ll have a coupon cutting party. I’ll take the gang down. It will be something new.”

“But why must you take all this on yourself?” he asked with some bitterness. “Surely I could be trusted to look after it, and render an account.”

“Sure,” said Carola. “It’s not that. But some time or other I might want a whole lot of money. Well, I want to be able to get it without having to ask for anybody’s say-so.”

“You wouldn’t touch your capital!” he said aghast.

“Why not?” asked Carola.

“But . . . but that great fortune which you have inherited from your parents is a sacred trust that . . . that you ought to hand on intact . . .”

“To whom?”

“Well I suppose you will have children some day.”

“If I do I’ll save them a nest egg . . . It’s a bad thing for children to inherit too much,” she added with a twinkle in her eye; “look what it’s doing to me!”

Mr. Minturn left her with sundry sad shakes of the head. “Ducks and drakes!” he muttered to himself; “ducks and drakes!”

Carola went to Elysia every night, and soon learned her way about the place. Her silky young attendants there, Messrs. Sandro, Jack, Claude and Freddy accommodated themselves to her humor. Perceiving that Carola wanted everybody to let themselves go, they let themselves go—or appeared to do so. Carola had much more fun than upon her first visit. However, she did not confine herself to these four. She brought her other friends with her; those strangely assorted friends that she picked up everywhere. My gang, she termed them. They might include anybody from bookkeepers to bookmakers.

Marcus Breedon did not attempt to put any strings on her. He was quite content to be left out of her parties. In fact he declined to make one of a party; he was no hand in a crowd he said; he would rather wait until Carrie could spare him an hour or a half hour to himself. And Breedon remained her best friend—her only intimate friend; it was to him that she went for counsel. His store of humorous and worldly wisdom appeared to her to be inexhaustible.

A particular table was saved for Carola every night. Sometimes she would turn up after the theater with as many as a dozen people. Other tables would be hastily shoved up, and the fun would commence. The corks popped (notwithstanding the Volstead law) and the most delicious and expensive delicacies appeared in relays from the kitchen. Carola had quickly established an *entente cordiale* with the leader of the orchestra, and that great man now took his orders from her. It would go on for hours and nobody was ever asked to pay for anything; no bill was presented to put a damper on the merriment. Of course Carola knew that a thumping big bill must be rolling up against her but: I should worry! she said to herself; with two hundred thousand coming in next month! What she liked best was to include a little salesgirl in her party who had never been further than Coney Island, or a good-looking lad who had never had twenty dollars to blow in his life, and watch their eyes.

Breedon would sit alone at his table, and take in all the fun with his fond and fatherly smile. Fond and fatherly! Of course the way you regarded that smile depended on how you felt towards Breedon. There was a tall, distinguished looking woman who had clearly been a beauty in her day, but whose haggard, burnt-out face was tragic now. She was heard to say to her partner as she danced by:

“See Breedon sitting there, grinning. Doesn’t he look exactly like a bloated spider in the corner of his web watching the struggles of us poor flies!” This was the famous Mrs. Piers Moberly.

The reporters came to see Carola every afternoon; that had become a regular part of her day. The twenty million dollar heiress and the snow storm of checks she was scattering about her, made first-rate copy; they never failed to get a story out of it. Carola never told them anything, but let them make it up. Sometimes she had the likeliest among them to dinner and to Elysia later in the evening. That made grand publicity both for Carola and the night club. Business increased to such an extent that M. Chablon doubled the cover charge with the aim of keeping out all but the heaviest spenders. It scarcely seemed to make any difference in the crowd.

Columns upon columns were written about Carola, all couched in the warm and adulatory phrases that, without her knowing it, had become the very breath of her nostrils. She bathed in admiration; it covered her like a warm blanket. Sometimes she would dream at night that it had suddenly been taken from her, and wake up shivering. Everybody told her she was the best known woman in New York. As one slangy writer in the press put it: “All the previous spenders who ever hit this burg were pikers alongside of Carola Goadby.” Carola loved that phrase. The sweetest moment of her day was when she sat up in bed in the morning, sipping chocolate, and reading the stories about herself in the papers.

And then one morning there was no story. Carola sent out for different papers, but it was the same with each. A particularly brutal murder had broken the day before, and in addition there had been a big holdup; Carola Goadby had been crowded out of the news. She affected to laugh at the circumstance; to make cynical little jokes about it; but it rankled; it rankled all day. She felt a kind of disgrace like a deposed monarch, and would not take a party to Elysia that night. Instead she telephoned to Marcus Breedon to ask him to meet her there.

As soon as she joined him he saw that something was up, but he forbore to question her. It will come out, he said to himself in his wise way; and it did. It came tumbling out pell mell as soon as he said.

“Well, hello Carrie! This is great. I never get a word with you no more since you got to be so famous.”

“Famous!” cried Carola. “There’s nothing in that stuff!” (She was rapidly acquiring the racy speech of Breedon and the Elysians generally.) “These people set you up only for the sake of letting you down after. They play you off for the amusement of the boobs who read their sheets, and when they’re through with you they throw you aside like a rag baby. Don’t speak to me of being famous. I’m done with it. I’ve a good mind to go into a nunnery if I knew where one was.”

Breedon smiled. It may be said that he smiled two smiles; an inner smile of satisfaction, and an outer smile of sympathy. “A nunnery, now,” he said, “that would be a change after this, eh? That would land you on the front page again. You’ve got the right instinct for publicity, Carrie. But it would be a kind of farewell appearance, wouldn’t it? Finito!”

“I never want to see a front page again!”

“It’s the penalty of greatness, my dear. In order to keep in the forefront you always got to have a new stunt up your sleeve. It’s up to you to pull something new, Carrie.”

“What do you recommend?” she asked bitterly, “a murder or a holdup?”

“Well neither would be exactly in your line,” he said with a chuckle. “The public resents it when their favorites try to change their roles.”

“What could I do then?”

“Well, you like this place, don’t you? You got your publicity here. Your name is associated with it. Why don’t you buy the joint outright, Carrie, and be the hostess here. That would make a story I guess.”

Carola’s eyes widened as the dazzling possibilities of this idea took hold of her. “But . . . but,” she stammered; “how could I run the place; buy the food and hire the waiters and all that?”

“Oh, you’d hire a manager for that. I’ll undertake to find you a manager.”

“Do you think M. Chablon would consider selling it?” she asked breathlessly.

“Well, he’s always talkin’ about goin’ back to La Belle France,” said Breedon.

“Call him over! Call him over!”

“Now wait a minute, Carrie,” said Breedon in his most fatherly tone. “I was only funning sort of, when I made that suggestion. Can you afford it?”

This only increased Carola’s eagerness. “Afford it!” she cried. “Why I can’t even spend my income! Call him over!”

“Well, if you must,” said Breedon with a shrug.

M. Chablon was summoned to their table.

“Paul,” said Breedon, “I’ve heard you say you would sell this place if you got an offer. What would you take for it as it stands?”

“Well,” said M. Chablon, “considering the lease, the good will, and the money I put into it, seven hundred and fifty thousand would be a fair price.”

“Come off, come off,” said Breedon with an appearance of scorn. “Get down to realities!” (This scene had been carefully rehearsed.)

“It’s making over a hundred thousand a year clear,” said Chablon passionately, “that’s fifteen per cent. on the investment.”

“You’re figuring on your present takings,” said Breedon, “Miss Goadby brought that business to you, and she can take it away again. You can’t figure on that as an asset. Come now, how much did you clear last year?”

“Sixty thousand,” said Chablon sullenly.

“Then five hundred thousand would be a good price. This ain’t like an ordinary business. You’re on the top of the wave of popular favor just now, but it might roll back and leave you stranded.”

How wise Breedon was, thought Carola; how well he managed for her.

“I won’t take it,” said Chablon.

However, the discussion did not end here, and after a while Chablon reluctantly agreed to accept five hundred thousand cash.

“Very well then, I buy it,” said Carola.

“Oh, is it you, Miss Goadby,” said Chablon with a surprised look. “Well, I congratulate you. I confess I hate to let it go. When would you like to take possession?”

“To-morrow night,” said Carola promptly.

Chablon looked dubious.

“Of course it can be done,” said Breedon. “Fix it up with your lawyers to-morrow morning, and the money shall be placed in your hands in the afternoon.”

Carola gave him a grateful smile.

Chablon presently left them.

“How can I get all that money so quickly?” Carola asked anxiously.

“Give him securities,” said Breedon carelessly. “That’ll do just as well. You can get ’em out of your vault in the afternoon.”

“There’s an awful mess of stuff there,” said Carola frowning, “and I don’t know what’s what though it’s all been explained to me.”

“Do you know what bonds are?” asked Breedon. “Those are the engraved certificates with coupons attached.”

“Oh yes,” said Carola, “the little pictures that you cut off and send to the bank. I remember a big pile of those all of the same kind. They are marked Utah Pacific Railway, and each one has a cunning picture of an old-fashioned locomotive at the top.”

“Utah Pacific,” said Breedon, “let me see?” He consulted a little notebook. “Yes, they sell above par. Five hundred of those will do. Take a suit case with you to the bank. I’ll go with you for safety’s sake, and wait in the car outside.”

And so it was done. From the bank they drove directly to Elysia (“To get the stuff off our hands” said Breedon) where Breedon carried them in to Chablon, returning presently with a receipt, and a sheaf of legal papers which, he said, constituted Carola the sole proprietor of the night club. They were all Greek to her. She thrust them negligently into her hand bag.

It is hardly necessary to state that Chablon never saw the locomotive on the Utah Pacific bonds. Instead, Breedon peddled them out in small lots through a score of brokers, and reinvested the proceeds in other securities. All Breedon’s acts were carried out with the view of making a possible “investigation” as difficult as possible.

At midnight that night Carola and M. Chablon mounted the stage at Elysia together, and the latter in a neat little speech announced the change in ownership. The crowd cheered Carola to the echo. She likewise made a speech the gist of which was, that in order to signalize the event all refreshments would be on the house for that night. At that the crowd went simply wild.

Naturally Carola reappeared on the front page with a bang next morning. Most of the papers ran the story with a two column head or more, and the murderer was nowhere. Carola’s whole career up to the moment was recapitulated. Scores of anecdotes real and fictitious were related to illustrate the character they were building up for her. It was on this morning that some bright paragrapher first applied the epithet that they all took up later: Queen of Clubs! How happy she was!

Before she was out of bed, Breedon called up, and with a chuckle in his voice, said that he had taken the liberty to call up Police Headquarters on her behalf and ask for police protection for Elysia that night, in view of the mob that was to be expected. He recommended that only regular customers of the house be allowed in. Carola agreed.

Other people read the story with other feelings. There was Mr. Mitchell Minturn who sadly shook his head a great many times, and murmured to himself as one who sees a gloomy prophecy fulfilled: Ducks and drakes! Ducks and drakes! Visiting Carola later, he did his best to learn if she had really bought the place, how much she had paid for it, and if she had alienated any of her sacred capital. But Carola blandly evaded his questions.

There were Miss Margaret Grasette and Miss Kate Grasette, cousins of Carola, who held up their delicate withered hands when they read the story. "Sister," said Miss Margaret to Miss Kate in horror, "this unhappy child is going down where the way is steepest. It is incumbent upon us to do something to save her. We are her nearest of kin."

Down in Washington there was Senator Frank Peverley the famous boy senator from New York state (though at that, the gray was beginning to appear in his hair) who was also a cousin of Carola's and who had a design of marrying her and her twenty millions when he got around to it. In fact that was the reason he had never married anybody else. He scowled when he read the newspaper story, and said to himself: This is too much! I shall have to run up to New York and see about it. Confound it! and I have the sole responsibility of the Peverley-Sugden bill on my shoulders!

Finally there was young Len Farley. He grinned in his cynical and good-humored fashion when he read the story. Hm! he thought, that's the little angel I saw coming out of her house on Fifth Avenue that day. She must be anything but the lamb I took her for. That's one on me all right. So she's the new boss at Elysia. I suppose that will let me out.

When he had an opportunity he asked Breedon about it. "Say, boss, this change up at Elysia; does that let me out?"

Breedon looked him up and down before replying. There was a great change for the better in Len's appearance since the day when Mack had picked him up in the East Side dive. To be sure he had put on weight, but only enough to smooth out the gaunt hollows in his face. His well tailored clothes set off his superb figure to perfection; his sparkling eyes and the high dark color in his cheeks revealed him to be in the pink of condition. By Gad! thought Breedon; damned if I don't think he's the handsomest young blackguard in all New York. Aloud he said carelessly:

"First chance I get I'll take you up and let her give you the once over. If she likes your looks maybe she'll keep you on."

"Thanks boss," said Len.

AT ELYSIA things went on very much the same as before only more so. The peculiarity about a life of excitement and publicity is that you have continually to whoop it up a little bit more or it will go flat on you. The

principal change was that M. Paul Chablon disappeared from the scene. He was said to have returned to France, but nobody knew for sure. Breedon no doubt had work for him elsewhere. His place was taken by Mr. Sam Frawley, a good American product with a wide experience of Broadway and its people. He had a large, slow, indulgent way with him that speedily endeared him to the patrons of Elysia. Carola was delighted with her “manager.”

Carola of course, was much more in evidence than formerly. The feeling of proprietorship afforded her inexhaustible satisfaction. As the recognized owner of Elysia she was treated with the greatest deference by the guests. We manage that sort of thing somewhat differently from the way they do in Europe. In America the patrons of a fashionable restaurant cringe to the proprietor, instead of the other way round. With the servants it was otherwise. Though Carola had paid for the place cash down, Breedon’s influence over the staff was undiminished. It was to him that the servants looked with fear and awe in their eyes. Carola scarcely perceived it.

It soon transpired that M. Chablon had grossly exaggerated the profits of the place. In fact profits could hardly be said to exist. Mr. Frawley was awfully good about explaining the figures to Carola; he made everything quite clear. It was agreed between him and Carola that, in order to keep everything straight, it would be better for her to pay for whatever she ordered like anybody else. It would be all the same to her in the end of course. The weekly bills were terrific, but Carola paid them with a shrug. It was so easy to sign a check and forget about it. And anyhow she was spending her money in her own shop. Breedon was very indignant when he learned about the shortage of profits. However it appeared that M. Chablon had left the jurisdiction of the court, and there was nothing that could be done about it.

“You remember I told you you was rushin’ into this too quick, Carrie,” he said.

“You did,” she admitted.

Sam Frawley was a considerably older man than M. Chablon, and he and Breedon were long time cronies. In fact it was a saying around the lobby of the Mackinac that “Sam Frawley was closer to Marcus Breedon than any man living.” Which after all, wasn’t saying much. However the two old fellows were frequently to be seen together at a table in Elysia, surveying the scene indulgently. Their conversation was perfectly decorous. In fact they were never candid with each other, though they understood each other very well. A sort of running translation is necessary to enable the outsider to comprehend the inwardness of their talk.

“She’s a sweet thing,” said Sam one night, as he watched Carola flying about; “you sure are lucky, Mark, to have an interest like that in your life.”

(What he really meant was: How did you get your hooks into that at your age?)

Breedon answered: “You’re right, Sam. She’s a fine girl, and I’m lucky. But there’s a big anxiety connected with it too. I ain’t got any real influence over her like I’d have if I was twenty years younger.”

There was a genuine look of frustration in his eyes as he spoke. Translated, this speech meant: “She’s naturally too straight and too fearless for me to get any real hold on her. That’s what worries me. How you goin’ to get a real hold over a fearless person?”

“Yes, it’s a heavy responsibility,” said Sam solemnly, “I can see that, Mark.”

“Sure,” said Breedon, “lookit the way they’re all after her. Every unattached man that comes here is nursin’ the hope that he may be the one to cop Carola Goadby in the end. Well, I’ve wised her to them, and she’s got good sense anyhow, but she’s only a human woman, and she’s bound to fall for some man in the end. He’ll marry her and take her away, and I won’t be able to look after her no more.”

This speech was fairly straight, and requires no elucidation.

“Sure, sure,” said Sam. “What you ought to do is to find her a husband of your own choosin’. A fellow you could depend on personally.”

“I have it in mind,” said Breedon, “but it’s a ticklish business.”

“Some poor young fellow,” suggested Sam. “She’s got enough for two. And a poor fellow ought to be grateful to you for helpin’ him to it.”

“I don’t bank much on gratitude,” said Breedon dryly. “A poor fellow would be like to get his head turned by such a sudden rise. But at that I got a lad in mind.”

“Who is it?” asked Sam, “if it’s not a secret.”

“Oh, I got to tell you,” said Breedon, “cause I need your help in this. Let it be a secret between you and me. It’s Len Farley. You’ve seen him down at the hotel.”

Sam whistled between his teeth. “Whew! That lad certainly has the looks to take any girl’s fancy. But . . .”

“But what?”

“I should think you’d be takin’ a big risk in handin’ the girl over to him. He’s quiet enough around the hotel, but he’s got a dangerous look in his eye. You never could control him. Nobody could control him once he got the bit between his teeth. He reminds me of rogue horses I’ve seen in the West that would kill themselves before they’d let a man ride them.”

“Sure,” said Breedon, “he’s like that, but what you gonna do? No tame man would ever fetch her. Look at the crowd here, she’s safe from them because they let her tread on them. She enjoys treadin’ on ’em too, but she’s never gonna fall for a man that asks her to walk over him. No, that little girl’s got a proud high spirit, and as I look at it she will never mate with any but another of the same. Now Len Farley wouldn’t let the Queen of England put it over him. If I’ve got any knowledge of female psychology, she’ll fall for Len, and fall for him hard.”

“Sure,” said Sam, “but afterwards?”

“Well, nachelly I ain’t failed to take that into account,” said Breedon dryly. “If it don’t turn out to suit me I’ll know what to do.”

“Divorce?” said Sam. “But then you’d be just where you was in the beginning. And maybe she wouldn’t let him go nohow.”

“I wasn’t thinkin’ about a divorce,” said Breedon. “Nor of consulting her about the matter neither. There’s other ways of gettin’ rid of an inconvenient husband. Of course he don’t cut no ice with me; I ain’t got to consider *his* feelings. I picked him out of the gutter, and to the gutter he can return. All I want is to be able to take care of that li’l girl, and to go on takin’ care of her. Now, if she was married, yet not married, see? she’d be safe from the matrimonial designs of other men and obliged to rely on me.”

In this subtle speech the whole of Breedon’s subtle plan was revealed. Carola and Len were to be allowed to fall in love with each other and to marry—then Len was to be railroaded to Sing Sing.

“I get you,” said Sam admiringly, “have you brought them together yet?”

“No,” said Breedon, “I’m waitin’ for the psychological moment. That’s very important.”

Breedon’s “psychological moment” arrived in his estimation the next time that Carola got a fit of the blues. One who leads a life of reckless pleasure must be on guard every moment against a reaction. Once the blue devils gain entrance they work havoc. The higher the flights into the realms of bliss, the greater the fall into despair. One morning for no reason at all, or perhaps because insufficient sleep had lowered her vitality, Carola awoke feeling as if she had swallowed ground glass, and naturally everything went wrong.

Her maid was clumsy, her breakfast cold, there was a spiteful item in the newspaper, and when she drove to Mandel’s, she found that he had ruined one of her most carefully thought out designs. Julia burst into tears and left the room when Carola lost her temper. Driving away from the place in a fury, (she drove herself about town now) she collided with another car, and there was a hideous scene on the Avenue. Nobody seemed to appreciate the fact that she

was Carola Goadby. They dared to say that the accident was her fault, and the bystanders smiled at her in the unkindest manner.

So it went all day. After dinner Carola gathered a crowd around her and went to Elysia in a last effort to stave off despair. But the place had no thrill for her to-night; the decorations looked tawdry; the food had no savor, and her companions got on her nerves. In the middle of the evening she suddenly sent them away, and came drifting over to the table where Breedon and Sam Frawley sat, for consolation. After a little friendly conversation, Sam faded.

“Oh, Uncle Mark I feel rotten!” said Carola.

“Let’s have a bottle,” said Breedon.

“Don’t speak to me of champagne,” said Carola with a gesture of disgust. “It’s gone back on me—like everything else.”

“Well, well, what’s the trouble, Carrie?”

“Oh, all kinds of little things have crossed me,” said Carola, “but I’ve got sense enough to see that that isn’t it really. I woke up wrong, and I’ve been in wrong all day. The trouble is in myself. That’s what discourages me so. Life has suddenly lost all its kick for me. There’s nothing you can do about that.”

“Oh, we all have them times,” said Breedon soothingly. “Tell me, what *seems* to be the trouble.”

“The trouble is people,” said Carola disgustedly. “This gang I carry around with me wherever I go. My ‘friends’ I call them. Lord! a fat lot they care about me. They only flatter me for what there is in it!”

“Now, Carrie,” said Breedon, “you’ve only got the blues. You can’t see nothin’ straight when you got the blues.”

“I wonder!” she said, gloomily resting her chin on her palm. “I wonder if maybe I’m not seeing the truth for the first.”

“Nonsense! Nonsense!” said Breedon. “If you ask me, that’s a pretty good gang you got around you. Nice refined people.”

“I don’t mind the women so much,” Carola went on. “They play the game openly. And most of them are plucky and good-tempered about it. But the men! Ugh! They make me sick!”

“What’s the matter with them?”

“They all make love to me.”

“Well, that’s not unnatural.”

“I don’t mind their making love to me, but only the way they do it. They make love in an underground fashion like worms. Why can’t they come up in the sunlight and give it to me straight. They’re worms! There isn’t one amongst them who can look me in the eye!”

Breedon chuckled fatly. "Now, Carrie! Now, Carrie! 'Tain't as bad as all that! I can't talk to you, or you'll be quarrellin' with me next. Lookahere, Carrie, you go home and get a nice novel, and read yourself to sleep, see? And to-morrow you'll feel fine!"

"All right," said Carola with unusual docility; "there's nothing else to do."

Breedon escorted her down to the door. On the stairs he said in his most casual manner: "By the way, Carrie, there's a young fellow you ought to see. Paul Chablon picked him up sometime ago with the idea of breakin' him in to dance here. Adelaide Sanders has been givin' him lessons. She says he's pretty good."

"Another dancing man," said Carola wearily.

"Well, I understand this one's a little different style from the others," said Breedon dryly. "A bit of a roughneck, Paul said; thought he'd be a kind of a novelty."

"Let Mr. Frawley see him," said Carola. "If he's satisfied, I am."

"Now lookahere, Carrie," said Breedon, "that ain't no way to run a place. You gotta take a personal interest or it'll go to pot. Sam's a real good fellow, but if you never do nothin' yourself, he'll get to take too much on himself. It's on'y natural."

"Oh, all right," said Carola, "I'll see your roughneck."

"I'll call for you at four to-morrow afternoon," said Breedon, "and bring you down here."

In the lobby of the Mackinac next morning, Breedon said offhand to Len: "Oh, by the way, Len, drop around at Elysia at quarter past four this afternoon, and meet Miss Goadby."

"Right, boss," said Len, no less offhand. But the unforgettable picture of the blonde girl in riding costume leaped up before his eyes, and his heart beat faster. He grinned at himself. You fool! he thought; what is she to you, or you to her? You'll be lucky if you get a hundred a week out of it. Yet he could not help but dream of that fair hair as beautiful in the sight of his dark eyes as sunlight; of those eyes bluer than the skies; of the exquisite highborn grace that enveloped her like a garment. He spent hours bathing, shaving, and arraying himself, grinning derisively all the while at his reflection in the mirror. You fool! You fool!

During the afternoon Elysia was entirely deserted except for Pat McPeake the watchman. The cleaners finished their job in the morning, and the cooks did not come on duty until five thirty, an hour before the place opened for business. During this time the great restaurant was a dim, quiet place. The only windows were in the front of the building, and here, at a little table looking

into Forty-Ninth Street, Carola and Breedon sat down to tea. A cook had been ordered on duty especially to prepare it for them.

Carola was in much livelier spirits this afternoon. She was wearing one of the little silken suits that became her slender form so well, dark red to-day, with extremely short skirt and boyish jacket. A priceless silver fox pelt hung negligently from her shoulders, and on her head she wore a jaunty red hat cocked so far over one eye, she had to turn her head sideways in order to look out at you from under it. Conscious of looking her best she chattered away about anything or nothing. She displayed a frank curiosity concerning the new man, asking a dozen questions which Breedon affected not to be able to answer.

"I scarcely noticed him. Wait until he comes, and you can see for yourself."

And then he came. He marched across the floor with his head up and his back stiffened. He who scarcely knew the meaning of fear, was thoroughly frightened now. Carola, with that curious art of which women are mistress, never appeared to look at him as he approached; yet she must have taken him all in. A lightning change took place in her manner; the thoughtless girl became a woman of the world. When he came to a stop beside the table, she gave him a cool glance that was all but insulting. It was an instinctive measure of self protection. There was a kind of storm raging inside her. This is a man! This is what I longed to meet; a real man!

Breedon knew women—partly, and inwardly exulted. She is touched already! I made no mistake. He blandly introduced Len. "Mr. Farley . . . Miss Goadby."

Carola offered Len her finger tips, which he barely touched. "How do you do," she said, with half her attention, and turned to Breedon to finish what she had been saying when Len came up. Len remained standing, feeling rather like a fool.

Breedon said: "Farley was engaged by Paul Chablon to work here as soon as he could dance well enough. Well, Miss Sanders says he's pretty good now, and he wants to know if you care to go on with it."

Carola addressed Breedon, not Len. "Certainly," she said coolly, "if that was the arrangement. Let him come to-night. Mr. Frawley will give him the necessary instructions . . . Oh, sit down, won't you," she added to Len as with an afterthought.

But Len had his instincts of self protection too. No woman living might toss him a bone in that fashion, and get away with it. "No thanks," he said politely. "If you'll excuse me, I have an engagement now. I'll be here to-night."

Breedon turned to him, angered by his effrontery—then lowered his lashes, and rubbed his lip to hide a smile. By Gad! the lad knows his game better than I can teach him! he thought.

“Oh, certainly,” said Carola indifferently.

Len bowed not ungracefully, and marched out as stiffly as he had come. He was angry and sore—chiefly with himself. You fool! Oh, what a fool a man is to let himself dream about a woman! She gets under his skin before he knows it. This girl is anything but the friendly kid I thought her. She’s up to all their tricks. Oh God! she’s beautiful. This is going to be hell for me . . . Oh well, if I don’t like it the world is wide, and there are no strings on me.

As for Carola, she could play a part as long as he was present, but it was hard to keep it up after he had left. She bit her lip to conceal its tendency to tremble; she felt an ominous prickling around her eyelids. Fortunately the brim of her hat concealed her eyes from Breedon. She crumbled a bit of toast into small bits. There was a good deal of the child left in her, and she did not at all relish being paid back in her own coin. No man had ever treated her like that, and the fact that it was the first man she had herself been attracted to, made it all the bitterer. He scorned me, she thought; he went out of his way to show that he thought me just light and silly. Well, maybe I am. Only fools fall in love with me; a real man despises me.

“Well, what do you think of him?” asked Breedon heartily.

“Oh, he’ll do,” said Carola indifferently.

Breedon was too wise to attempt to draw her further.

Carola, pleading another engagement, soon left him. Breedon walked back to the Mackinac, nodding right and left to his many acquaintances on Broadway, and feeling thoroughly well pleased with himself and the world. Everything was going fine.

AT the same hour that evening Len was dressing in his little room at the Mackinac, and Carola was dressing all over her suite on Fifth Avenue; boudoir, dressing room and bedroom. Len had no anxiety about his clothes, for the mirror told him that he looked better in his dinner jacket than in anything. It had been made by one of the best tailors in New York. The expanse of white shirt front had the effect of broadening his broad shoulders and deepening his chest. He took his own good looks for granted. He was vain without being

egotistic. At the present moment his good looks reassured him not at all. What good all that, when he had set his heart on the moon?

Carola, on the other hand was giving her maid Ella a very bad quarter of an hour. With so much to choose from she found it impossible to settle on a choice. Dress after dress was brought out and rejected; she felt she couldn't wear one that had been worn because it had been worn, and one that had not been worn she was afraid to wear because it had not been worn, and she could not therefore be certain of the effect it would create. In the midst of the confusion a dress arrived from Mandel's. A whole squad of girls had been sewing on it all afternoon. Ella's involuntary exclamation of pleasure as she lifted it out of the box, decided Carola; that dress she would wear.

At first glance it was all black—black was very becoming to the blonde Carola; the bodice was severely plain, the outstanding skirt of cobwebby black net showed a hint of color beneath like the first gleam of dawn in the night sky. The net hung in many panels which shifted and parted when Carola walked or danced revealing flashes of strange, piercing blues and greens like northern lights.

Carola was filled with an odd, dry kind of excitement. She looked forward to her next meeting with the scornful young man with delight and with dread in equal degrees. What is the matter with me? she asked herself continually; that I should get so wrought up about a man I never saw before, and know nothing about. He can't be much if he has to dance at Elysia for his living. At this, the other half of her reminded her of all the rich and well-born young men she had met. What about them? After all, she told herself, with a sigh nothing counts alongside of manliness.

Carola had asked some people to dinner at her house, and was to take them afterwards to the first night of a revue. A dozen times she had been on the point of calling it off, and slipping down to Elysia for dinner. But I can't give myself away like that, she thought. Everybody watches everything I do. And above all, she thought, with a deep blush, the man himself must never be allowed to suspect that I . . . that I . . . She didn't finish this thought even to herself. There was nothing to do but resign herself to a dreary evening. The worst of a first night was, the performance dragged on forever; she was sure it would be past midnight before they got to Elysia.

The longest evening wears to an end, and Carola found herself entering the restaurant at last. She kept her eyes down, but was well aware of what was going on around her. Len was sitting at a table on the main floor with a party of four, and there was no doubt but that he had made good with them. There was a scornful good-humored smile on his handsome face, and he was talking and gesticulating with animation, evidently telling a story. All four of his hearers were hanging on his words and Carola could see that the two women

in particular, were infatuated with his good looks. A hot little flame of anger spurting up in her breast. What horrid women to be sitting there admiring and flattering him with their eyes in the very presence of their husbands. Now they'll try to hang on to him all evening, she thought bitterly. I suppose they think he's thrown in with the food and the drinks.

The following hour did not go well with Carola. When the dancing started she supposed that he would come and ask her to dance if merely out of propriety. But he did not come. Dance after dance passed. She declined to dance with the men of her own party for fear she might miss him, and she was miserably conscious that she was only making herself disagreeable and conspicuous. Len without doubt had made an instant hit at Elysia, and it was not long before the girls of Carola's party spotted him.

"Oh, my dear, who is that handsome man? Who is he? Who is he? Carola, who is that man?"

"A new dancing partner that I engaged this afternoon," said Carola indifferently.

"Who is he? Where did you get him? I didn't know that you kept anything like that on the premises."

"Mercy! I don't know anything about him," said Carola crossly. "Some one brought him up to me, and I said he could come here and dance if he wanted to."

"Oh, the handsome roughneck! Doesn't he look dangerous? Why don't you introduce him to us?"

Carola made believe not to hear.

Later, one of the girls returning to the table after a dance, cried out: "Oh, my dear, I've been talking to Dora Fearon who's been dancing with the new man. She says he's a perfect love. Besides shooting a man down in New Orleans over a crap game, he's served a couple of terms in Sing Sing for burglary. Isn't that perfectly thrilling! I tried to get Dora to get a dance with him, but she says he's already booked solid for a week ahead!"

Carola's thoughts were black. What disgusting fools these women were! She seemed to turn ugly inside. Well, if they were going to fight over him, she'd fight too. After all she was the mistress there, she'd make her power felt.

She sent a little private sign across the floor to Marcus Breedon, and he arose and came to her. "Uncle Mark," she whispered to him, "let somebody tell the new man that he's got to dance with me. He is not to know that it comes from me, though. I want to try him out."

Breedon nodded sagely, inwardly chuckling. Returning to his table he whispered in Sam Frawley's ear. Sam got up, made a circuit of the room,

greeting his friends, and by degrees worked back to the table where Len was sitting. He spoke in Len's ear, and Len nodded.

Now, thought Carola, when he comes over here, I must be easy and friendly with him; not so ridiculously stiff as I was this afternoon.

But alas! the moment that the music started and Len arose, she felt herself stiffening. He walked across the floor with that suggestion of a mocking smile on his face, the eyes of half the women in the place following him. It's not fair! thought Carola; he's *too* good-looking, too sure of himself; he makes me feel like a schoolgirl! By the time he reached her table she was like a block of wood.

He bowed with a good grace—some men have natural good manners, and some cannot be taught; saying: “Will you dance?”

Carola arose without speaking. From behind her that fool of a woman squalled: “Oh, Carola, do introduce us, darling!”

Carola performed that act with the best grace she could muster.

The woman said with a killing air: “You know, Mr. Farley, we all think you're a perfect duck!”

Carola turned her head to hide her blush. What would he think of her, consorting with such a priceless fool!

“Thanks,” drawled Len in reply, “I'll try to live up to that.”

They started to dance. It was not a success. That was hardly Len's fault for, while not an adept like Sandro *et al*, he was good enough; there was rhythm in his strong frame. But Carola with too much emotion felt helpless and logey, like a sack in his arms. She could not speak, and he made no effort to do so except once. They had collided with another couple, and Len said, smiling:

“Generally I'm a better driver. But I'm so keen on making good with you, I'm nervous.”

“You're all right,” said Carola stiffly. “I can see that you're going to be a success here.” How like a prune I sound! she thought despairingly.

They were both relieved when the music stopped. Len turned to accompany her back to her table, but she slipped her hand through his arm. “Oh, not right away,” she said involuntarily. “I'm so fed up with those people!”

“Sure, I get you,” he said quickly and warmly. He pressed her hand under his arm. “Where can we go?”

“Downstairs into the office,” whispered Carola. At his quick and friendly response a great load seemed to be lifted from her.

They went soberly downstairs, still not speaking. Carola was ridiculously happy now. Len's strong dark face was softened and quiet. Carola glancing at

it out of the corners of her eyes, was sweetly reassured. He's a dear! she thought; I don't care what he is or what he's been, he's a dear! She felt as if she were treading on air. Oh dear, oh dear, she thought; I have lost hold of things entirely; I feel like a butterfly in a gale. But she did not greatly care.

They passed into Sam Frawley's office at the back of the entrance hall. Len hesitated whether or not to close the door.

"Close it," said Carola, "I'm tired of being stared at. Press the button for a waiter. I'd like a seltzer lemonade."

Alas! the moment the door was closed her happiness evaporated again. Alone together in the little room, a horrible feeling of constraint fell upon them; Carola became rigid with self-consciousness. What is the matter with me? she asked herself helplessly. I act like a stupid common child. She made a desperate effort to talk.

"Do you like it here?" she asked with stiff lips.

Len shrugged, smiling. "Oh, it's an honest way to earn your keep," he said, "that is fairly honest."

"What do you mean?"

"If I told these birds what I really thought of them, I wouldn't last long."

"The women are such fools!" murmured Carola.

"I've got a good thick skin," he said laughing, "they can't get under it."

Then the talk petered out, and silence descended on them like a pall. The waiter came, received his order, and departed. Carola was sitting in Sam Frawley's swivel chair with her back to the desk, and Len was sitting at one side of the desk. They could not look at each other; both were suffering a curious kind of torment that was new to them. A panic seized on Carola. Yet she could not very well jump up and run out, because she had ordered the drinks to be brought there. Oh, why doesn't he say something? she thought. If he does not speak, I shall burst out crying. Here was a nice state for the Queen of Clubs to be reduced to!

Stealing a look at her, Len perceived from the pathetic down drawn lines of her face that she was still very much the child he had at first imagined her to be; and that the woman of the world air which had put him off that afternoon, was nothing but an assumption. He was tremendously relieved by this discovery. After all his secret dream had not played him false. His protective sense was aroused. She must be helped out.

"What's the matter?" he asked simply.

Carola looked at him. The derisive expression had completely disappeared; his eyes were friendly and full of laughter. To see a hard, masculine face softened like that is irresistible to a woman. Carola was immediately

comforted, and something seemed to leap out of her to him. “That’s just what I was asking myself,” she answered, smiling back.

They burst out laughing together, and instantly the little room was full of cosiness again. It was as if somebody had lighted a fire. All at once it seemed to them as if they would never be able to catch up with all they had to say to each other.

“I’ll tell you what was the matter,” said Len. “I was scared stiff of you!”

Carola did not confess that she had been afraid of him too; it would have been too dangerous an admission. “Afraid of me! How silly!”

“Well,” he said, “you’re the big boss here, you know, and you’ve been played up in the newspapers so much, a fellow gets to think of you as something way up in the air. Not like a regular girl.”

“But I am,” she said wistfully.

“Sure, I can see that now. But you can’t deny you high hatted me something fierce this afternoon.”

“I didn’t mean to,” said Carola humbly. “You were pretty lordly with me yourself, though you *were* applying for a job!”

“You began it,” said Len.

They laughed again. The waiter entered, and putting the lemonades on the flap of the desk between them, departed again.

“I will not be that way with you any more,” Carola promised. “It is not my line, anyway.”

“I know it isn’t,” said Len. “That’s what had me guessing what you had against me?”

Carola’s answer was not entirely candid. “Nothing,” she said. “I was just expecting another dancing man.”

“I get you,” said Len. “It’s a pretty low kind of a job, isn’t it?”

Carola experienced a sudden fear that Elysia would not be able to keep him. “The job is all right,” she said quickly. “It’s the men who are tiresome.”

They leaned toward each other over the flap of the desk, talking in low tones as if the subject matter was vastly important, whereas it was as trivial as it always is. The dark eyes were fastened on the blue, and the blue ones on the dark. Each pair of eyes was giving away more than the owner realized. An outsider seeing them, would have perceived that they were falling deeply and helplessly in love, but they didn’t know it yet. The sensation was as new to the man who had hardened himself to meet life, as it was to the girl who had been protected from all knowledge of life.

After awhile Len said: “I saw you once before to-day.”

“When was that?” asked Carola.

“A couple of months ago. I was walking up Fifth Avenue, and a fellow told me that the house on the corner of ——th Street was your house. Just as I was passing, you came down the steps dressed to ride horseback.”

“I didn’t see you.”

“Oh, you wouldn’t have noticed me. I was a bum.”

A pain struck through Carola. He had had a hard time! She did not like to question him.

“How did you come to buy this joint?” Len asked.

“I can scarcely tell you now,” said Carola. “You see, ever since I was a baby, I have been surrounded by such a mob of people telling me what to do; nurses, governesses, tutors, chaperons, trustees; that I got a sort of madness for freedom; and the very day I came of age, I blew up. I only had one idea, and that was to have a good time, and please myself. I won’t deny that I’ve had fun, but the last few days I’ve been asking myself what there was in it after all.”

“I know,” said Len, “as soon as you make a business of having fun, it’s no more fun!”

“How true that is!” murmured Carola.

“You’ve got to catch fun on the fly,” he went on. “The best times always come to you when you’re not lookin’ for them . . . like this,” he added low.

“Yes,” murmured Carola. “Like this.” She was afraid to say more.

But night clubs were once more delightful places to Carola, and with adorable inconsistency she chattered on: “Anyhow, here I am in it up to my neck, and even if I could get out of it, I wouldn’t want to, really.”

“Up to your neck?” said Len.

“Yes, it’s a secret yet, but I’m planning to build a much bigger and finer place up off Fifty-Third Street.”

“Was this Breedon’s idea?” asked Len.

“I don’t remember whether he or I thought of it first,” said Carola unsuspectingly; “but he’s helping me with it, of course. You see the New York public is fickle. They never stick to a place very long. So I want to have a surprise to spring on them when they begin to tire of Elysia. I have bought a plot of ground, and have engaged architects and decorators to draw plans.”

They are bleeding her! thought Len. He kept silent as to his suspicions. Their friendship was as yet too tender a plant to risk.

Carola chattered happily on. In Len’s warm and open glance she experienced a quality of sympathy that she had never before known. One could say anything to such a friend without fear. Len, like a schoolboy, was a little ashamed of the unwonted softness that filled his breast; he was glad that

the door was closed; but what a luxury it was to yield to it after having hardened himself for so long! When Carola showed him the little girl side of her like that, he was filled with a fierce desire to protect her.

Finally Carola remembered the passage of time. "Good Heavens!" she cried laughing; "two dances must have passed; perhaps three! They will be sending out a search party for me!"

They rose. In the moment of rising, Carola's eyes lifted to Len's in quite unconscious surrender. Her face had an unearthly beauty then. Len saw that she was ready to love him, and a fearful joy coursed through his veins. The queen had chosen him! But even as he perceived it, he found that his arms were clamped to his sides. This was different. She had to be taken care of!

Carola hung for a moment with that wistful half smile on her lips. She was entirely at the mercy of her feelings; consciously she did not realize what was happening; but her heart was chilled because he did not take her in his arms. She sought to throw it off with a laugh, and made for the door.

"Wait for a moment or two before you follow me," she said; and disappeared.

Len dropped back into the chair, brooding on the miracle which had happened. The superficial Len was full of exultation; the greatest prize in the world had fallen into his hands! he was a made man! he had been snatched up amongst the great of the earth. But a new and deeper Len, of which up to that moment he had scarcely suspected the existence, struggled up into the light. He was confused and overwhelmed by the new feelings which filled him. His happiness was as much like misery as happiness. All the proud conceit and vanity of youth ran away from him. There alone in the little room with no one to see him, he lowered his head. An inner voice seemed to whisper to him: "You're not fit!"

ONE morning Senator Peverley dropped into Mr. Mitchell Minturn's office without any previous notification of his coming. The lawyer was a good deal flustered by this evidence of the great man's condescension. Peverley, the junior senator from New York, was not only the youngest member of the august upper chamber, but was rated as one of the most brilliant. It was freely predicted that some day the greatest prize of all would be within his grasp. Mr.

Minturn did not have to be told that this was going to be an unpleasant interview for him.

Peeverley, a handsome, young-looking man in the forties, with a powerful eye, lost no time in getting down to the business in hand. "Mitchell, what is this stuff I read about Carola in the papers?"

Mr. Minturn spread out his hands unhappily.

"Is it true, man?"

"Yes, it's true—allowing for the customary amount of newspaper exaggeration."

"But, good God, why didn't you warn me of what was happening?"

"I had no warning myself until it happened, and then—well you could read the papers."

"But tell me in a word what happened."

"The day she came of age, Carola showed me the door; that's what happened."

"But the papers still speak of you as her lawyer."

"Oh, she took me back in a day or two after a fashion. She pays me a retaining fee, but I am not consulted about anything. She runs her own affairs."

"That raw girl!"

"You will find her surprisingly matured."

"Well, Mitchell," said Senator Peeverley with brutal frankness. "I can only say that you asked for it. For the last ten years I have been telling you that you were driving the mettlesome filly on too short a rein. She was bound to turn out either a complete idiot or a high flyer."

"I did the best I could for her," said Mr. Minturn sullenly. "A crown princess could not have been more carefully reared."

"Sure," said Peeverley dryly, "only this happens to be America. You wouldn't take advice, and now see where you are. Anyhow I'm glad she isn't an idiot. Is it true that she has bought this night club?"

"I suppose so. I know no more than I read."

"Didn't the money pass through your hands?"

"No. I told you that nothing passes through my hands now. Carola has only to go to her safety deposit vault and withdraw what securities she has a mind to."

"Damnation!" cried Peeverley, "they may get it all from her! Who put her up to it?"

“I don’t know,” said Mr. Minturn growing more and more sullen. “The former proprietor was a man called Paul Chablon. I presume he got the money.”

“Presume! Presume!” cried Peverley impatiently. “Is that where you stop? This Chablon is probably a figurehead. It isn’t reasonable to suppose that a girl fresh out of leading strings could strike out on her own without somebody to prompt her. Who is putting her up to it? Who are her friends? Who is she going around with?”

“I don’t know.”

“Good God!” cried Peverley jumping up, “you’re a greater fool than I took you for, Mitchell. You’re aging, man. For the last twenty years you have done nothing but sit back on your haunches, and let the Goadby money flow through your hands, until you’ve lost the capacity for action. You don’t know! Well, for God’s sake why don’t you find out? What are detectives for?”

“I have never used them,” said Mr. Minturn stiffly.

“Well I have!” cried Peverley, “and I can use them again!” He jammed his hat on his head, and ran out.

Ten minutes later he was closeted with his friend James Rohrty, head of the nationally known detective agency of that name; and within half an hour four of Mr. Rohrty’s most discreet and astute operatives had received their instructions to observe and report on the activities of Miss Carola Goadby and her associates.

From Rohrty’s office Senator Peverley drove to Carola’s house. It was then close on noon, but Carola, having remained at Elysia until four that morning was still in bed. However the Senator was asked to come up to her bedroom. This was surprise number one for him. To be sure he was her cousin, but such a request would never have been made by the timid little girl he had known.

He found Carola propped up in bed wearing a delicious negligee and cap. Though she had been up all night, she had had a good sleep since, her color was fresh and her eyes sparkling. She had no reason to fear the flood of morning sunshine that filled the room, and she knew it. The secret consciousness of being loved (or of having found a real friend as Carola put it to herself) had given her young face the lovely light that only illumines a woman’s face once in her life. Peverley was pretty well hardened as regards the charms of women, but his breath was taken away by the sight of her. Between her as he had last seen her and as she was now was all the difference between a bud and an open blossom.

“Good God, Carola, how beautiful you have become!” he cried.

“Thanks, cousin,” she said, dimpling delightfully. “I must apologize for receiving you in bed, but I know what a busy man you are, and I dared not ask

you to wait until I could dress.” (In reality Carola had calculated that by receiving Peverley in her bedroom she could have her maid passing in and out of the room, and might thereby avert the scolding she expected from her relative.)

“I am honored,” said Peverley. “Among your pillows you look like an angel in the clouds.”

Carola laughed lightly. She was thinking: If he really thinks I am so pretty, I needn’t be so much afraid of him. He can be managed like other men. “Sit down,” she said, indicating a chair beside the bed. She put down her coffee cup and picked up a cigarette; surprise number two for the Senator. “I suppose it’s no use asking you to have a cup of chocolate.”

“No,” he said, “but I’ll smoke, since it seems to be the thing here.”

They laughed together. No further reference was made to the cigarette.

“Why do you never write to me, Carola?” complained Peverley. “You used to.”

“Mercy!” said Carola, blowing smoke. “Nobody gets time to write letters nowadays. I am driven to death—doing nothing.”

“Of course I am not entirely ignorant of your movements,” he said dryly, “since I read the newspapers.”

“Isn’t it dreadful the way they pick on me,” said Carola, affecting a pretty boredom.

“Dreadful!”

They laughed together. He’s nice, thought Carola; he sees through me, yet he doesn’t try to act superior.

“I see you’ve become the proprietor of the smartest night club in town,” he remarked mildly.

“Yes,” said Carola, “will you come around to-night?”

“Sorry, I have to rush back to Washington this afternoon. How did you get into that line of business?”

“Oh, I was tired of all the things I was permitted to do before I came of age. As soon as I was free I went to Elysia every night, and I had such a good time there, I wanted the place to play with for my own.”

“Who took you there the first time?”

Carola affected to consider with an innocent air. “I can’t remember,” she said. “I’ve been there so many times and with so many people.”

“Um!” said Peverley. He was engaged in a kind of struggle with himself. Not a word of censure, of reproof, of reproach, he was adjuring himself; she is primed to reject it. Such was the prompting of better sense; but it was hard, it was hard to refrain.

Carola vaguely aware of what was passing through his mind, demurely smoked her cigarette, and held her tongue.

Peverley finally jumped up, and took an energetic turn back and forth. "Carola," he burst out, "I'm not going to say any of the usual things. I expect you've heard them all."

"Thanks," said Carola.

"I've got something else to say to you. I've rushed up here at God knows what cost, especially to say it . . ."

"To say what?" put in Carola beginning to be alarmed by his vehemence.

"This is my answer to all the things that people are saying about you, our lot I mean; I want you to marry me, Carola."

"Oh," said Carola, very much as if she had had the wind knocked out of her. Her mouth dropped open, and her hands dropped weakly on the bed. The cigarette began to burn the costly lace spread without her noticing it.

"Look out!" he said sharply. "You're burning your bed up."

"Oh!" said Carola with a jump, and tossed the cigarette in the ash tray.

There was a silence.

"Well?" he asked sharply.

"This is so sudden," said Carola; then she began to laugh weakly, her own words sounded so silly.

Peverley was not laughing. "Sudden to you," he said, "but I have been thinking about it for years. I fell in love with you as a little girl. While you were under age I would not speak of it, nor let my intention appear to anybody because it would have been such a desirable thing for you (and for me too, of course) that everybody, cousins, trustees, chaperons and all the people who surrounded you would have combined to urge you into it. You might very well have taken me just to escape them, and I didn't want you that way. So I waited until you were your own mistress."

"But, Cousin Frank, you're not in love with me," said Carola helplessly.

"Yes, I am," he said, with a queer, sidelong scowl at her, like a schoolboy.

"You don't look as if you were."

"Men show it in different ways."

Oh dear! thought Carola, this is not a bit romantic. I am acting like a little girl!

"Now look here," Peverley went on in that terrible matter-of-fact way, as if he were haranguing a committee; "I don't expect you to commit yourself to anything now! I simply want to put the proposal before you. I've been rushed

into it by the evil-minded things that people are saying about you. Naturally that hurts me like the devil.”

“Evil-minded!” exclaimed Carola, opening her eyes.

“My dear girl, did you think you could run a night club without having all the old tabbies in town spitting at you?”

“Oh,” said Carola. “Well, as a matter of fact I never considered them. Heaven knows I was sick of *their* parties.”

“Exactly,” said Peverley. “I sympathize with you entirely. I say, have all the fun you can. You’re entitled to it after the horrible childhood they inflicted on you. I propose that you marry me and have your fun. I’ll give you all the rope you want. As Mrs. Frank Peverley you could do whatever you damned please, and nobody would dare to say a word. Whereas as a single girl you are queering yourself.”

Carola began to resent being talked to like a committee. “You are saying the same things to me as everybody else,” she retorted, “though you pretend not to be. Ever since I was a little girl they have been telling me that I would queer myself if I did this, that or the other thing. I don’t see it. If I was obliged to marry, of course I’d have to follow all the rules of the silly old game. But thank God! I can support my own self in the style to which I have been accustomed. I’m not beholden for anything to the tabbies. If I marry I shall pick out a poor man who will be darn thankful to get me. A poor man is just as much of a man. More so, from my experience.”

“Have you already picked him out?” asked Peverley turning pale.

“No.”

“Ah, my dear, you’re just the wife I have dreamed of!” said Peverley in a more human fashion. “I already loved you when you were a little girl, but I did not foresee that you would flower so brilliantly.”

“No, you’re wrong,” said Carola. “I would never do in Washington. The mere thought of official society makes me curl up. That would be worse than Knickerbocker society.”

“But why be as they are?” asked Peverley. “Bring a little pep and bounce into official society; it would do them all good. Look at me. You don’t catch me subscribing to the ridiculous inflated notions of senatorial dignity. Only the stuffed shirts are dignified. I’m human and I register. Have the courage to be yourself, and people will call you great.”

He came to the bed, and catching up one of Carola’s hands, pressed it roughly to his lips. “Oh, you delicious thing!” he murmured, “you’re entitled to be courted, and that’s the rub. How in the devil am I going to find the time to court you?”

Carola smiled at his mixture of hard practical sense and emotion.

“Come down to Washington for a visit,” he pleaded, “and give me a chance. You shall have a suite at the Plymouth, and be as free as air. I and a few other live ones will show you a time that will make you forget New York.”

At his words the figure of Len arose before Carola’s mind’s eye. Not for worlds would she have left New York just then. “I’m sorry,” she said, “I can’t go now. I have made so many engagements. Besides, I have my business to look after.”

“Engagements with whom?” he asked sharply.

“Oh, all sorts of people,” said Carola vaguely.

“Who are your friends?” he demanded.

Carola was not so much in awe of him now. “When you question me like that you undo everything you have said,” she pointed out.

He hastily climbed down. “You’re right! You’re right! Your friends are your own affair.”

Carola, feeling her own power, was not indisposed to exercise it a bit. “A little bird tells me,” she said cruelly, “that all your fair promises about giving me my own way are just ‘springs to catch woodcock’ as Shakespeare says. When your eye flashes at me I see that you mean to have your own way. You are not Senator Peverley for nothing.”

“No! No!” he protested, “I swear . . .”

“Don’t swear,” she said, “or e’er you be forsworn! Mercy! how literary I’m getting. But that doesn’t sound quite right.”

“Carola,” he pleaded humbly, “I suppose you don’t love me.”

“Not that way.”

“But you don’t dislike me, dear.”

“Oh, no!” she said warmly, “you’re the only relation I’ve got that’s human.”

“Good! Then . . . only one more question, dear? Is there anybody ahead of me?”

Carola turned her lovely blue eyes upon him as candid and open as a child’s. “Oh no, Frank,” she said. There is not a woman alive who does not feel justified in telling this lie.

CAROLA was dissatisfied. Several nights had passed since Len Farley came to Elysia, and their friendship seemed to make no progress. She was aware that Len watched her throughout the evening without appearing to; and whenever he could, he asked her to dance. That was not often, since Carola was besieged for her favors, and she could not hold off while waiting for Len. Apparently he was not experienced enough to realize that he must engage his dances the moment she appeared. When they did dance together it was not much good; one cannot have any real talk while dancing, and they were further hampered by the hundreds of eyes which followed them around the floor.

Carola considered various little plots for seeing Len by himself. Should she ask him to her house? she was free to do as she pleased—well not quite free, for the reporters were always camping on her trail. Generally speaking, Carola loved the publicity they gave her, but she had the strongest disinclination to seeing anything in the papers about her friendship with Len. That was something real and fine; and publicity would ruin it. She did not see how she could ask him to the house without starting everybody talking about it. Her friends were continually asking her to lunch with them, and she could easily have got Len included in one of these parties, but the same reasons applied here. They ate in expensive restaurants, and people were continually watching and taking notes. Besides the newspapers, she had to consider the several weeklies who filled their columns with chit chat about people in the know. Carola Goadby was a gold mine to these sheets.

Then she happened to remember Mrs. Wilmer Gantt. Mrs. Gantt was a pretty little woman without a grain of sense, who had come out of the West with a huge fortune and a complaisant husband, and had taken a palace on upper Fifth Avenue. She with the meek husband were nightly attendants at Elysia, where the pushing little lady had secured an introduction to Carola, and besieged her with her attentions. Hitherto Carola had side-stepped her invitations. Now it occurred to her that Mrs. Gantt gave her parties in her own house. There was a chance of course of finding a reporter there too, but Carola decided to risk it. Why shouldn't she use Mrs. Gantt? she asked herself. Everybody used everybody else in this mad world which surrounded her. Mrs. Gantt herself was trying to use her as a means of advancing herself in the ranks of the conspicuous.

Therefore, the next time that the gushing little lady rushed up to her, Carola was more receptive than heretofore. After a rapid fire exchange of civilities, Carola said:

“By the way, you made me promise to let you know the first day I had free for lunch. A friend has just let me down, so I have to-morrow free, if it's not

too short notice.”

“Oh, my darling, how adorable of you!” screamed Mrs. Gantt. “I have a date for to-morrow of course, but I’ll cut it. I’d cut the Prince of Wales in order to entertain *you* at my house. Whom shall I have to meet you?”

Various persons were discussed and decided upon. “We must have another man,” said Mrs. Gantt.

“One of the men here is amusing and agreeable. I suppose that’s all that’s necessary,” said Carola casually. “I mean Mr. Farley.”

“Oh, my dear, he would be perfectly wonderful! If he’d only come. Do you think he’d come?”

“Why, of course, if you asked him.”

As she left Mrs. Gantt she added carelessly: “By the way, don’t put him next to me at the table. People talk so!”

“You can rely on my discretion, darling.”

Later Mrs. Gantt sent the meek husband to fetch Len to her table. “Oh, Mr. Farley, are you free for lunch to-morrow?”

Len, outwardly smiling and courteous, surveyed the lady coolly. Not good enough! he thought; I have enough of her sort every night. “Sorry,” he said, “I’m booked up for to-morrow.”

“Oh, I’m broken hearted!” she cried. “I’m having Carola Goadby to my house to lunch and I wanted . . .”

Len was ready to kick himself then. Why couldn’t the foolish woman have said so in the beginning. “Well, I’ll try to get out of it,” he said. “Keep it open for me a little while, and I’ll let you know.”

Needless to state, he found it possible to get out of his other date.

At one o’clock next day, Len was walking up Fifth Avenue, pleasantly conscious that he looked as well as any man on the street. Glancing at his reflection in a plate glass window as he passed by, he thought: Nobody would know from my outside but that I had a million dollars in the bank. But Gosh! what a snap it must be to be born good looking *and* rich! . . . Luck’s a funny thing, he pondered. It blows you up, and it lets you flat again. ’Tain’t so long ago I was traveling this very street on the rims, and now I got a new set of balloon cords under me. What would the gang on the rock pile say if they could see me now!

When he turned in under the porte-cochère of the Gantt palace, a momentary disquietude attacked him. I wonder how a fellow’s supposed to act in a joint like this? I suppose I’ll pull many a bonehead play before I get out . . . Oh hell, be yourself, Len! She knew you were a roughneck when she asked you. She can’t blame you if your etiquette is sketchy.

He found it easier than he expected. He was the least self-conscious of men, and he forgot all about etiquette. A magnificent factotum opened the door to him; a lesser one relieved him of hat, coat, stick, and gloves, and a third saying: "This way, sir," started to lead the way up the stairs. Three able-bodied men just to let you in! thought Len. Home was never like this! . . . Four months ago the meanest keeper in the prison was free to bawl me out, and now this elegant guy crooks his neck to me, and gives me a sir every time he opens his mouth. Well, they say variety is the spice of life!

At the door of the drawing-room the footman halted, and bawled his name: "Mr. Farley!" Len, having made the mistake of coming at the time he was asked, found himself the first arrival. However Mrs. Gantt was not at all displeased at the opportunity of having an innocent philander with the star man from Elysia. Cocktails were served to assist it. Len took one to steady his nerve, but resolved to go slow. He was in a strange world where it behooved him to keep all his wits about him.

Soon the other guests began to arrive, and the cocktails came around in breathless succession. There was a continual crooking of elbows. These guys are just out of bed, thought Len, and already they're tanking up. Gosh what a life!

Carola was the last to come. As she swam into the room full of insincere excuses, Len thought: The kid knows how to time her entrance all right. Her greeting to Len was cool, but he was not dismayed. His intuition told him this was for the benefit of the crowd, and that he was not out of favor.

The company adjourned to the dining room on the floor below. Len was disappointed to find himself placed across the table from Carola. Still, he could look at her. She was wearing a cunning little suit which consisted of a gold jacket and a brown skirt. Apparently she never looked at him. Of the meal which followed it is unnecessary to say anything. The cocktail mixers were still circulating, and there was much loud talk, and no conversation. Presumably the food was all right, but the lunchers never noticed it. Len was glad to see that Carola did not drink. She allowed her glass to be filled, but merely touched her lips to it. She had a healthy young creature's instinctive repugnance to stimulants in the morning.

As time went on the lunchers became more and more unraveled. Finally they began to drift away from the table. Len wondered if he were going to have any speech with Carola this day. He felt that he could hardly make a move. It was up to her to give a sign if she wished it. He watched her out of the corners of his eyes. A mere flicker of an eyelash from Carola in his direction, and he was at her side, determined to stay there until the Heavens fell.

Everybody was standing now. Several more or less bibulous gentlemen were talking to Carola, evidently under the impression that they were sad dogs. They still held their cocktail glasses in their hands, and the soft-footed waiters circulated in and around filling them. Cocktails it seemed were the alpha and omega of a meal in this house. Out of the corner of her mouth Carola whispered to Len:

“Let’s find a quiet place.”

The party was continually milling around, and Len maneuvered Carola out into the hall. Once clear they ran for the stairs. In the drawing-room overhead there was already a whispering couple, and another in the library at the rear.

“Another flight,” said Carola smiling, “Mrs. Gantt said the family sitting room was upstairs.”

They found above, a long low room looking out on the avenue, paneled in smoke blackened oak like an English inn. In a deep recess at one end there was a cheerful fire burning. At the side of it stood a high-backed settle, and when they turned this around in front of the fire and sat in it, they were completely hidden from the view of anybody who might look in the door.

“How cozy!” said Carola. “Give me a cigarette.”

They lighted up, happy to be silent with each other for the moment. Downstairs they could hear voices calling: “Carola! Carola!” but after awhile they fell silent.

“What a mess!” said Carola, referring to the scene downstairs.

“You said it,” answered Len.

As on the former occasion when they were alone together, the parts that they played nightly at Elysia seemed to fall away from them, and they saw each other as they really were. Carola became the little girl again, and Len her big brother, grinning at her in a friendly and protective fashion. It was a blessed relief to feel that they could be themselves. In particular it affected Len strangely, for he had worn his protective armor since he had learned to walk. In all his life nobody had ever seen him drop it completely except Carola. He felt rather shaky and exposed without it, but he liked the feeling, because he was assured that he was safe with her.

It was strange, too, that though Carola was the loveliest girl he had ever talked to, and she made it clear too that she liked him, he had no impulse to make love to her—yet. Somehow she was too lovely to touch. All he wanted was to expand for awhile in this luxurious sense of being himself, of making friends with another human being. It was like coming out into warm sunshine after winter. All this was expressed in the big brother’s happy grin.

For awhile they talked about trivial things, though all that was unspoken loomed big in Carola’s candid eyes. Finally it came out:

“I suppose you know that all kinds of stories about you are going around at Elysia. I don’t believe them, but I made up my mind I would ask you if they were true.”

Len’s heart sunk. “What do they say?” he asked, grinning still.

“They say that you shot a man down in New Orleans.”

Len laughed in pure relief. “Nothing in it!” he said. “I never shot a man anywhere; and I’ve never been in New Orleans. Somehow, they always seem to lay the scene of a shooting at New Orleans.”

Carola looked relieved, too. “They say you’ve been in prison,” she went on.

Len raised his arms and let them fall again in an odd gesture of helplessness. It was impossible for him to lie to her when she looked at him like that and spoke so quietly. “It’s true,” he said.

“Ohh!” breathed Carola.

Len could not mistake the feeling behind that exclamation; there was no blame in it, but only compassion for what he had suffered. He felt like hell, yet somehow his confession did not destroy the feeling of open friendliness between them. He looked at her in surprise. She could take even that without turning from him! He was glad he had not tried to lie to her.

“Tell me about it,” murmured Carola.

“I don’t like to talk about it,” he said uncomfortably. “I don’t want to seem to whine. I broke the law and I went to jail for it. Nobody was to blame but me. I got a perfectly square deal.”

“What did you do?”

“I held up a couple of guys and robbed them.”

Another sound of distress escaped from Carola. She veiled her eyes.

“I know that seems like a terrible thing to a person who’s always had everything they needed; but when you have nothing, and you see everybody around you with more than they want, it looks different. Especially when you’re as big as me, and men are afraid of you. It’s always a temptation.”

“I wasn’t blaming you,” said Carola quickly. “It makes me ashamed because I have always had too much.”

“Well, that isn’t your fault,” said Len with a laugh.

“Please tell me all about it,” she murmured, “I’m sure there must be some explanation.”

“I won’t make any excuses,” he said stubbornly. “I knew what I was doing. . . . It would take my whole life to explain it—or the way the world is run, if you like. I don’t seem to fit in anywhere.”

“Your people?” she asked.

“Never had any.”

“Just like me!” she murmured.

“Yes, just like you,” he said with his brotherly grin, “only different. . . . I was a foundling,” he went on. “The first place I knew was the orphan asylum. Well, I’m not going to hand you the usual sob about orphanages. It was run all right; we were well fed and clothed warm, and taught right. But somehow an orphanage don’t seem to work out. The kids go to the bad pretty regularly. Maybe it’s because they see other kids having parents and homes, and they get to think they’re a damaged lot and it don’t matter to anybody what they do.

“The kids begin to steal from each other in the orphanage just for practice. Seems to come natural to them. I didn’t steal in the orphanage, I took what I wanted. I was the strongest kid anywhere near my size. It was a hard life and it made me hard. Yet I had gentle thoughts and feelings inside me just like any kid in a nice home, but nobody ever suspected it because I was such a hard hitter. I never told anybody about this before.

“I was a great reader when I got bigger. In this way I learned to talk better than the other kids when I wanted to, but of course when you were with roughnecks you talked rough just so as not to call attention to yourself. I was a simple kid really, because I believed the dope the books handed you, that the way to get on was by being game, honest and industrious. I thought the world was a kind of paradise outside the orphanage. I was a good bit surprised when I got out there.

“I went to work with the determination of making good. But things never seemed to prosper with me. Always got in wrong. The trouble with me was, I couldn’t stand being bossed. The books said that a lad ought to be brave and independent and ready to fight for the right, and it was just those very things that queered me. So I got to feeling a sense of injustice, and that’s damn bad for a kid. I soon learned that my strength was no good to anybody but a day laborer. Well, I had a good head on me, but that didn’t do me any good either. Fellows were continually lying their way ahead of me, and all I could do was smash them and get fired. These pasty-faced, bottle-shouldered stool-warmers always hate me like poison even though I never bat an eye at them.”

“I can understand that,” murmured Carola, glancing at him through her lashes.

“Well,” Len went on, “I was no good in an office—couldn’t seem to get air enough, and when I worked as laborer I always had some hard-boiled foreman over me that soon got my goat. So I turned crook. And right away I found that my wits and my strength were some good to me in that line. I made good. Not that it was a perfect life. I can’t honestly say that I feel any remorse for what I

did, but I despised the fellows I was thrown with. A rotten lot, mostly. Of course I could always mix with any kind of crowd I happened to be in, but I trained alone.

“That’s about all. They got me in the end, and I served my bit. That was a black time for me. Don’t want to talk about it much. Up there you see, the lowest scum among the keepers was free to put it all over you. There were certain ones that picked on me just because they saw I had an independent spirit. It’s a wonder I didn’t commit murder. If I ever went back there I know I would.

“I got out at last, and I meant to go straight. Not for any moral reasons; I can’t pretend to have them; but just because I knew I couldn’t stand another trick up river. However it was the same old story; fired out of eight jobs in six weeks. Funny thing, I had just made up my mind to go back to my old trade when I saw you that morning. In fact I was looking at your house and saying to myself it would be a cinch to rob it, when you came out of the door. When I saw you I changed my mind. You were too nice to rob, so I went on to find another.”

“And did you find another?”

“No. Soon after that a fellow picked me up and asked me if I didn’t want to be a dancer in a night club.”

“And you haven’t since?”

“Yes, once,” said Len honestly; “but that was only an insurance company. It isn’t very bad to rob an insurance company. Nobody suffers by it.”

“It isn’t the harm you do to others, but the harm you do to yourself,” said Carola earnestly.

“I never thought of it in that light.”

“You’ll never do it again!”

Len’s face hardened. “I can’t promise that,” he said obstinately. “If I made you a promise I’d have to keep it, and I’m not sure that I could keep that one. Just now I happen to be sitting on the top of the world, but there’s no security in it. Who can tell what may be in store for a man like me? . . . If I do,” he went on with a somber gaze, “it will be with my eyes wide open. And if they take me I’ll pay my shot without flinching. They’ll never put me behind the bars again. The moment that they get me in a corner, I fluff out, see? ring down; dismiss the house!” He touched his hip pocket significantly.

The color faded out of Carola’s face as she listened, but she kept her eyes fixed on his. “That would be the best,” she said quietly.

Len’s eyes flashed on her. Ah! what a woman to share a man’s life! that look said.

Carola turned away her head, and a deep blush spread over her cheeks. "Look here," she said, "we are friends, aren't we?"

"Sure, we're friends!" said Len quickly and warmly. "You're pretty near the first real friend I ever had."

"Look how rich I am," stuttered Carola in her confusion. "It's immoral to be so rich. I could make you independent for life, and never feel the loss of it. Won't you let me . . ."

"Oh, I couldn't! I couldn't!" he said, turning away, no less confused than she was.

"You're not angry with me?" she said imploringly.

He whirled around. "Angry! With you! Oh, you're a dandy! I might have known you would want to do something like that. But don't you see, I couldn't. My independence is all that makes a man of me. It's that which has got me into trouble all my life, but it's that too, which makes you like me. If I took money from you you would despise me."

"I wouldn't!" said Carola indignantly.

"Yes, you would," he said firmly. "You wouldn't know you did, but it would gradually come around that way. And if I settled down to live off your money, I would despise myself."

"But think of me," said Carola. "I hate to be rich when my friend is poor. How would I feel, having so much more than I need, if you were forced through want to . . . to . . ."

"Well, I'll try to find some other way out," said Len.

"You speak of the future as being so uncertain," said Carola, "you're not thinking of leaving Elysia, are you?"

"Not as long as you want me to stay. But of course Elysia is only a fad for you. You're half sick of it already."

Never while you are there! thought Carola; but she said demurely: "You are mistaken. I am not thinking of selling out."

The cries of "Carola! Carola!" which had sounded at intervals, now began to draw near, and presently little Mrs. Gantt ran into the room, clinging to the arm of a gentleman on either side. Other guests followed her, and instantly it seemed, the quiet room took on the dishevelled aspect of the dining room below. The noise was deafening.

"Darling!" screamed Mrs. Gantt. "Don't you know you are the whole excuse for my party! When you hide yourself we are all in gloom. We waited and waited for you, and now all the little molehills have come to the mountain. But that doesn't sound quite right, does it? Will somebody please press that button by the fireplace . . ."

The reaction from friendliness and tranquillity was too sudden for Carola. She sat looking into the fireplace like a disgusted little girl. Len saw that it was up to him to create a diversion in order to give her time to recover herself. Springing up, he faced the others with the old derisive smile that was so devastating among the ladies. He cried:

“You never saw me make a monkey of myself, did you? I’m a baboon in the zoo.” He squatted down on his heels and jumped up and down making droll faces. “I’m asking for peanuts, see? Don’t give any to the other fellows.”

They did not perceive the irony in his grin. They fell back in the sofas and chairs helpless with laughter.

“Stop! Oh, stop!” gasped Mrs. Gantt. “You’re killing me, you dreadful man!”

xiv

RETURNING home for tea on the second day following her interview with Senator Peverley, Carola was greatly astonished—and not a little gratified, to find the great man striding up and down her blue drawing-room in a fine fume at being kept waiting. It was something for a girl to be able to make a Senator hop back and forth between Washington and New York in this fashion. Carola was very human.

“You and I have got to have a serious talk,” he said instantly, “and I hope to God we can get through with it without a quarrel. It appears that nobody can say a word to you nowadays without a flare up.”

“Oh, I don’t know,” said Carola with a provoking smile. “How about yourself? I am in a perfectly good humor, but you are obviously spoiling for a quarrel.”

“Well, I’ve got to do my duty,” he said doggedly.

“I have noticed that a person always says that when he is going to be disagreeable,” said Carola. “Don’t begin until I can have tea in. That will help us to bear with each other.”

Peverley smiled in spite of his ill temper. “You’re a witch!” he said. He strode towards Carola, who stiffened, expecting that he was going to try to kiss her, but he only caught her chin between thumb and finger and tipped her face up in a sort of rude caress. “A witch! A witch!” he repeated.

Carola breathed a little sigh of relief when he let her go. She turned aside to toss her hat on a sofa. "I've got a cook," she said, "who can make dropped scones that are warranted to tame the most savage man in captivity." She chattered on in the effort to delay the evil moment as long as possible.

Peverley visibly chafed under it, and at last he broke out: "Look here, Carola . . ." But at that moment a servant entered with the tea things. Peverley turned his back and walked away into the bay, where he stood scowling into the street.

The moment the man was out of the room, he whirled around. "Carola . . . !"

"Oh, swallow a cup of tea first," she said, "it will mellow you."

He laughed shortly, and sat down like a shorn Samson. His somber eyes brooded upon the girl. She was pleased and fluttered as any girl would be. Say what you like, Cousin Frank was a man, too. But not for me! she said to herself firmly. As his wife I would stand about as much chance as a mouse with a cat. Liberty is sweet!

Peverley finally put down his cup and said more mildly: "Carola, my dear, I am very much concerned about you. It is a matter of common gossip that you are friends with a man called Marcus Breedon." (He did not feel it necessary to state that this gossip had been reported to him through the medium of a private detective.)

Carola lighted a cigarette. "Yes," she said coolly, "Mr. Breedon is a friend of mine."

"Your most particular friend?" asked Peverley leaning towards her, and boring through her with his eyes.

"Yes, my most particular friend," said Carola defiantly.

Peverley groaned.

"What's the matter?" asked Carola sharply. "Mr. Breedon is quite an old man. The relation between us is like that of father and daughter. He is most kind and helpful. Gives me quantities of good advice."

"Of course he would," said Peverley bitterly.

"What are you insinuating?" demanded Carola with her chin up.

"It is a matter of common report," said Peverley, "that this Breedon is an infamous scoundrel; in short a blackmailer."

Carola laughed in pure irritation. "Oh, my dear cousin how ridiculous you are! Common report!"

"It's more than common report," said Peverley. "I've been submerged in Washington for the past ten years, and I no longer know the ins and outs here

in New York; but my informant knows. He tells me Breedon has made a great fortune out of blackmail.”

“Is there any proof of this?” demanded Carola.

“Of course there isn’t any proof. He’s far too clever to show his hand. And the mouths of his victims are sealed by terror.”

Carola laughed again. “Bless me!” she said, “what a tale to scare infants! I don’t believe a word of it!”

“I know it’s true!”

“And I know it’s not true! I know Mr. Breedon. I see him every night. And you have only common report to go on.”

“Where there is smoke there is fire,” said Peverley.

“Nothing of the sort!” retorted Carola. “Even I have learned better than that. Human beings are fairly well behaved on the whole, but there’s one vice that they all share—or nearly all. They love to believe the worst about each other, and to pass it along. I have noticed how when a person becomes prominent in any way the most terrible stories are set in circulation about them. I don’t know who starts them, but I do know that they are made out of whole cloth. Why every now and then somebody who wishes to curry favor with me, will repeat to me one of the stories that are passed around about me. They are preposterous. You don’t want to believe the half of what you hear cousin, nor the hundredth part of it!”

“We mustn’t quarrel!” said Peverley. “Let us talk it over quietly.”

Carola smiled in the manner of one whose patience is tried by a child.

“This Breedon is admittedly a rich man,” said Peverley. “Well, where did he get it?”

“I’m sure I don’t know.”

“Neither does anybody else. In the case of other rich men, their history is known, and the source of their riches. Breedon is a sphinx!”

“That doesn’t prove anything.”

“Well, it’s what we call strong presumptive evidence, my dear. I am told that Breedon was the real proprietor of Elysia, and the man Chablon merely one of his creatures.”

“That is certainly a lie,” said Carola. “Mr. Breedon saved me thousands of dollars in that transaction.”

“How?”

“He wouldn’t let me pay the first price that was asked.”

“How do you know that the two men weren’t in cahoots?”

“I know it from the way they talked to each other.”

Peverley flung up his hands in a silent gesture of helplessness. He took a fresh cigarette, struggling to control his temper. Finally he returned to the charge in a quieter voice. "Here's another thing; I am told that Breedon has persuaded you to build a new palace of pleasure that is to outdo everything of the sort ever known."

Carola flushed a rosy red with anger. "How did that get out?" she demanded.

"You see," said Peverley, "the man who told me these things was pretty well informed."

"Cousin," said Carola, "you have been spying into my affairs."

"Nothing of the sort," blustered Peverley, "it is a matter of common gossip."

"That is not so," said Carola; "that last fact could only have been ferretted out."

"But you admit it's a fact?"

"Not quite. The idea was my own, not Mr. Breedon's."

"You have already put great sums into it."

"I have bought a piece of land."

"Now Carola," said Peverley, making another attempt to be calm and reasonable, "here's a chance for you to prove whether there is anything in what I say. Just tell me where your land is and what you paid for it, and I will tell you at once if you were swindled."

But by this time Carola was far too angry to listen to reason. "I shall do nothing of the kind!" she said. "Nor will I allow you to speak in such a manner of my friends. What's all the excitement about anyhow? My money is my own to spend as I please."

"Sure! Sure!" cried Peverley, "but you can't blame me for getting excited when I see you in the power of a blackleg!"

Carola jumped up with flaming cheeks. "I told you I would not listen to such talk!" she cried, and ran from the room.

"Carola, come back here!" he cried in the voice of a man who is accustomed to be obeyed.

But there was no pause in the flying feet on the stairs. He heard a door slam overhead. There he was left flat in the drawing-room. A nice position for a Senator. He strode up and down the room running his hands through his hair, and cursing furiously. His feelings were sadly mixed, for he was most aware of her beauty and desirability at the moment when she infuriated him. He was of two minds whether to run up stairs and search for her through the rooms.

But after all she was the mistress there. Struggling into his coat, and jamming his hat down on his head, he ran out of the house banging the door behind him.

He hailed a taxi and had himself carried to his club. Now Peverley was a man of great experience, who owed his success largely to his skill in conducting negotiations and in making deals, in short, to getting the better of other men. That was because when he had anything important on hand he kept cool, and let the other party lose his temper. At this moment, he made a serious tactical error. Failing to consider that his furious anger rendered him unfit to conduct negotiations, he rushed into a telephone booth at the club, and called up Marcus Breedon at the Mackinac.

“This is Frank Peverley,” he said when he got his man on the wire. “Senator Peverley.”

Breedon was full of wonder. He did not know of the connection between Peverley and Carola. What did the junior Senator from New York state want with him? His voice sounded heated, too. However, a Senator had no particular terrors for Breedon. He was used to them.

“Yes, Senator, what can I do for you?” he answered blandly.

“I would like to have a little talk with you.”

“Always at your service, Senator.”

“Unfortunately we cannot be seen together or it will start gossip,” said Peverley. “So I cannot come to you.”

“Where are you?” asked Breedon.

“At my club, the New Amsterdam.”

“I suppose you don’t want me to come there and ask for you. That would certainly start the ball rolling.”

“Quite so. Can you suggest anything.”

“My car is outside,” said Breedon. “I’ll drive up and stop at the door of the New Amsterdam without getting out. When you see the car, come out and get in. It’s a landaulet and nobody can see inside from the street. We can talk in the car.”

“Very good,” said Peverley, “I’ll be looking out for you.”

Driving uptown, Breedon rolled his cigar between his lips, and calmly speculated on what lay before him. Peverley was a very powerful man, an antagonist to be treated with respect, but Breedon did not find himself greatly anxious about the outcome. In a glance he surveyed the whole field of his operations; all tight and secure; armed at every point. He continually went over it in his mind. He prided himself on being ready at any moment for an investigation or a fight. Oh, I suppose I’ve got some friend of his in a tight place, he said to himself, and he thinks all he’s got to do is to wag the

Senatorial forefinger at me, and I'll lay off. Well, he's got another guess. Even a Senator ain't big enough to make me take water.

When Peverley got into the landaulet the two powerful men sized each other up warily. It was the first time they had met. So this is what you're like! each said to himself. The Senator betrayed various signs of mental disturbance, and Breedon added to himself: He's excited. That's money in my purse.

"Will it take long, Senator?" he asked courteously.

"I don't know," said Peverley, "that depends on you."

"Anything I can do is granted in advance," said Breedon. "I am one of your staunchest supporters, Senator."

"Drive into the Park, Joe," said Breedon to his chauffeur, "and keep on driving slowly round till I tell you to come out again."

"Humph!" said Peverley.

"Breedon, I am not a man to waste words," said Peverley at once, "I want to talk to you about my cousin, Miss Goadby."

"So," said Breedon. This was a surprise to him, and rather a shrewd thrust, but his blandness was equal to it. Carola was the one weak point in his defenses, for he had not yet secured a permanent hold over her. If he had known that she possessed so powerful a friend as Senator Peverley he might have proceeded differently. A shrewd thrust, but it only made him more wary and keen.

"I am told," Peverley went on, "that with your help my cousin is preparing to spend a vast sum in building a new night club."

"Well, how did that get out?" said Breedon. "I understood she wanted it kept a secret. I never told nobody."

"Never mind how it got out. I know it's a fact, and naturally as her nearest male relative I'm concerned to see that her interests are safeguarded as far as possible."

"Sure, sure," said Breedon smoothly. "I'm real glad you spoke to me about it, Senator. I'd be glad to shift the responsibility to one of her relatives. That young lady, God bless her! what a fine girl she is! has gone crazy to spend money. All I can do is to apply the brakes here and there, and to make sure as far as I can, that she isn't swindled. To come out flat and oppose her wishes, only makes her worse—as you have found out yourself," he added shrewdly.

"Umph!" said Peverley, with an expression as if he had swallowed something bitter.

Touched him there! thought Breedon. "Of course it's nothin' to me what she does with her money," he said carelessly, "but nachelly a man don't like to

see a young girl rooked.”

“How much is this place going to cost her?” demanded Peverley.

“God knows!” said Breedon cheerfully, “whatever she has a mind to spend on it, I reckon.”

“Who has she engaged for an architect?”

“Senator, you got me at a disadvantage,” said Breedon with a deprecating air, “you see I gave my promise I wouldn’t say nothin’ about it. Why don’t you ast her?”

“I’m asking you,” said Peverley shortly.

He’s been to her! thought Breedon. “Well, I can’t tell you,” he said with an appearance of great regret. “But I tell you what let’s do; let’s go get Carrie and talk it over, the three of us.”

“No, I don’t care to do that,” said Peverley.

“Well, I’m sorry for that,” said Breedon, “because Carrie would tell you that I always done all a man could do—all you could do yourself, Senator, to keep her from slingin’ her money around.”

It was at this point that Peverley perceived he had made a tactical error in going to Breedon. His own position was weak, and Breedon with an unerring instinct had nosed out the weakness. Breedon had now maneuvered him into a false position. No ordinary scoundrel this. When Peverley considered the man’s villainy and hypocrisy, he found it very difficult to control his temper. Nevertheless it was calmly enough that he said:

“Mr. Breedon, you are not dealing with a young girl now. Your comedy is wasted. I have been in politics for twenty years and in that time I have met so many scoundrels I have learned to recognize all the different varieties.”

“Meaning me?” said Breedon equably.

“Just as you please.”

“Well, you can’t make me mad,” said Breedon. “I been called so many hard names in my time—just as you have, Senator, that I’m hardened to it I guess. I go on my way just the same. You and me is both too old hands to waste each other’s time calling names.”

“Right!” said Peverley.

“Then name your wants of me, Senator, and I’ll meet them as far as I can.”

“Information about you has been placed in my hands,” said Peverley, “which proves that you are not a fit person to associate with my cousin—I’m not going to discuss this with you . . .”

“You’re not going to get the chance,” put in Breedon coolly. “I never discuss the stories that are told about me.”

“You do well not to,” said Peverley dryly. “I know how you make your money, Breedon. I’m no reformer, and I’m not anxious to interfere in your affairs, provided you leave my cousin alone. If you don’t, I’ll smash you. That is my ultimatum. If you do not break off all relations with Miss Goadby, and stay away from her, I’ll expose you.”

Breedon considered a moment, twisting the cigar around and around, before he answered. A momentary fear attacked him—how much did the fellow know? but he quickly dismissed it. If he had any real evidence he’d show it. He only knew what everybody knew, and they couldn’t take that into court. “Well, that’s plain talk, Senator,” he said smoothly, “I always appreciate plain talk from a man. I’ll give you the same. What you may have heard about me ain’t got nothin’ to do with it. Life’s too short for me to bother with such stuff. My conscience is clear and my mind’s easy. I won’t deny to you that the society of this young lady is very agreeable to me, but it ain’t worth riskin’ the ill will of a man like you. I’m a peaceable man. Moreover, the responsibility of tryin’ to look after her is a heavy one, and I’ll be glad to get rid of that. So I’ll go to her to-night, and I’ll say: ‘Carrie, my dear, your cousin the Senator says I’m not a fit associate for you, and he’s right too, for which of us that has lived a man’s life is fit to associate with you. So good-by, my dear, and God bless you!’ Will that satisfy you, Senator?”

Peverley smiled disagreeably. “Do you think that I am deceived by this sort of talk, Breedon? Go ahead and make all the trouble you can between me and my cousin, if such is your desire. She will soon be able to judge between us. It is nothing to me whether you go to her, or do not go to her, or what you say to her. I am only concerned with the result. If all relations are not completely broken off between you and Miss Goadby, I shall act. I give you a week.”

Breedon shrugged elaborately, and spread out his big hands. “I’ll do my best, Senator.”

“All right, we’ll see,” said Peverley dryly. “Now, you’d better let me out.”

Breedon turned to him with a face of the greatest concern. “No, no, Senator, I can’t let you do that! Now you *will* make me mad if you do an unfriendly thing like that. I will take you back to your club of course. What the hell, Senator! I guess two men can have a difference of opinion without bein’ unfriendly like. It happens every day with me.”

Peverley submitted with a shrug.

Breedon slid back the front window and spoke to his chauffeur. “Back to the New Amsterdam Club, Joe, pronto!”

All the way back he insisted on making friendly conversation. “What’s your opinion of the chances of the party in 1928, Senator? Up here of course,

we're optimistic and we got our candidate groomed and on his toes. But of course there's other sections of the country, there's other sections. We can't put our man in the White House by ourselves. Now you're right in the center of things Senator, you can feel all the currents. On the level, what are the chances of the old party in 1928?"

"Good," said Peverley.

"Say, it does my heart good to hear you say it. Now when 1932 comes around, or say, 1936, for you'll still be a young man in 1936, and Al is entitled to his two terms, we'll have another candidate for 'em, eh? You betcher life we will. We'll knock 'em for a row of goose eggs!" And so on. And so on.

Peverley smiled grimly as he listened, and his self-love which had received grievous wounds during this interview, was partly soothed. This soft talk proves that the man is a blackguard, he said to himself; if he was honest he'd throw me out of his car!

At the club door Breedon was most effusive in his farewells. "Good-by, Senator, good-by. Cert'n'y was kind of you to look me up."

Peverley looked him square in the eye, but it never feazed Breedon. The fat face was wreathed in smiles, the eye as cool and steady as Peverley's own. "Call me up next time you're in town," he called with perfect effrontery, as the Senator ran up the club steps.

When the car started to move again, the smile quickly ironed itself out, and Breedon's face became set and hard. He tossed his frazzled cigar out of the window, and taking a fresh one, stuck it in his mouth, and turned it slowly round and round. His gaze was turned inward. He had one of the biggest decisions of his life to make. Dared he risk a fight with a man as powerful as Peverley? Once more in his mind's eye he surveyed his defenses. His field of operations was on a great scale nowadays, and of course there must be vulnerable points. But Breedon trusted no man completely, and therefore no man was in a position to completely betray him. Peverley would have to buy up a dozen of his men to get anything complete on him, and Breedon knew that his men were pretty solid. They were bound to him by the strongest tie of all—self-interest. They were all doing well out of their jobs.

At this point Breedon began to smile grimly. Haven't had a real fight on my hands for a long time back, he thought. Maybe I need it to freshen me up. Kinda tempts me, like. This young feller is smart, but mebbe I'm a little bit smarter. He finally clapped a hand on his thigh and spoke aloud: "Yes, by God! I'll give him a fight. Let him do his damnedest!"

WHEN CAROLA ran upstairs to her boudoir leaving Peverley in the drawing-room, she had a good cry. The tears relieved her feelings, but did not assuage her anger. When she had dried her eyes and bathed them, she was if possible, angrier than ever. If she had been cool it must have occurred to her that there was at least something in Peverley's charges, and it might have started her thinking. But she was far too angry to think. She rejected Peverley's charges in toto. Breedon seemed to her the most maligned man on earth. She was in a mood to go to him and put her whole fortune in his hands.

When she went to Elysia that night she was still in a dangerous emotional state. In fact she had cancelled a party she had on hand in order to devote herself to Breedon. She intended to sit with him at his table and show all the world that he was her best friend. If her unspeakable cousin Peverley was still having her watched and followed by detectives, so much the better; let them report to their master what they had seen.

However her intention was partly defeated. They were waiting for her at the top of the stairs at Elysia, and she was engulfed in a maelstrom of laughing excitement. This man she had promised to dance with; another she had promised that she would come and meet his friends; this man, a great picture magnate had brought a party of friends all the way from the Coast to meet her.

Carola was now at the summit of her fame. Such is the power of publicity that in a few short weeks she had become a sort of uncrowned queen of the town—just as Breedon had prophesied. Millionaire baby, richest girl in New York, prodigal daughter, Queen of Clubs, people came from all over the country and paid the scandalous prices that were charged at Elysia without a murmur, just to have a look at her. Few were those who could aspire to the privilege of actually meeting her, and fewer still the young men who could hope to boast that they had danced with Carola Goadby. She was Elysia's sole excuse for being; when she did not appear, things fell flat; the patrons of the place scowled and openly showed that they felt they had been done out of their money. However, she was not often absent. She might have her moments of disillusionment and boredom, but all this adulation was very sweet to her. Night after night to feel that she was the center of attraction for all that throng of eyes; to move, surrounded by her admirers six deep, all contending for her favors; to be supported by their laughter when she laughed, and their sympathy when she complained; Ah! that was living!

Sam Frawley of course, lost no opportunity of cashing in on the business that Carola's popularity brought to Elysia. The restaurant would only hold so many, and as the demand for tables increased so the prices were jacked up.

Carola never looked at a menu of course, and nobody would mention such a vulgar detail to her. Soon Sam adopted the continental custom of leaving the prices off the menu altogether.

In order to obviate the danger of any crowding and confusion, a careful censorship was exercised at the door. Tables were reserved many days in advance. As soon as Sam learned that speculators were making a big thing out of this, he refused to reserve tables except for known customers of the house. Newcomers had to be introduced. By exercising a judicious selection, Sam was able to show the very cream of New York life in his restaurant—not fashionable people solely, but all those “in the know.” With a sprinkling of people from out of town to supply an admiring chorus, of course.

Carola had a good deal of trouble in finding opportunities to dance with Len. Finally she allotted him the same two dances every night, and the Mayor of New York himself could not take one of them. This fact was soon remarked amongst the frequenters of Elysia, and Len was counted a lucky dog. Extravagant sums were offered him for his dances, all of which he refused with a grin. Not but what he would have been glad of the money; a young man never has enough money, but he knew that Carola would never stand for such a deal. Carola’s staggering publicity bothered Len very little. Len, who was a realist through and through, perceived that it was no more than the meringue on the top of life. He had something for Carola that she never got elsewhere, something real.

On this particular night, Carola was not able to get a word alone with Breedon until she shut herself up in the private office downstairs, and sent word to him to join her there.

“I had a scene with my cousin, Senator Peverley this afternoon,” she said.

“So did I,” said Breedon with a broad grin.

“Oh, Uncle Mark, I’m so sorry that you should have been subjected to his insults!” she exclaimed.

“Bless you my dear, it didn’t hurt me none.”

“I think he must be out of his mind!”

“He’s set his heart on marrying you.”

“Why how did you know that?” said Carola staring. “You’re a terrible person, Uncle Mark. You know everything without being told.”

Breedon smiled comfortably. “Well, it didn’t take much perspicacity to see *that*, Carrie. It explains everything, don’t it?”

“But even so,” said Carola, “why should he make such an awful fuss about my building a new clubhouse if I want to?”

Breedon pulled deeply at his cigar, and blew the smoke upward. "He don't like to see the money pass out of the family," he said dryly.

"Ohh!" breathed Carola indignantly. "So that's it! I see it all now!"

"Now mind," said Breedon, "I don't mean to insinuate that Senator Peverley is just after your coin. He's pretty well fixed himself I guess, though of course a politician with his ambition couldn't scarcely have too much. No, he's in love with you too, Carrie. No man could help fallin' in love with you, my dear. It's when love and calculation get all mixed up in a man's mind that he acts so crazy."

"How wise you are!" said Carola . . . "What did he say to you?" she asked eagerly.

"Well, he was pretty tolerable abusive," said Breedon grinning. "I ain't agoin' to sully your pretty ears by repeatin' it all. The gist of it was this: that I wasn't a fit person to associate with the likes of you, and in that he was quite right of course, and if I didn't break off all relations with you, he'd ruin me."

"Ohh!" said Carola, "I wonder you didn't knock him down!"

"It was hard not to do it," said Breedon virtuously, "but then I thinks what a nasty stink it would make in the papers, and Carrie has got too much publicity already, I thinks."

"Always thinking of me!" said Carola, touched. "And are you going to give me up?" she added with a dewy glance through her lashes.

"Not so's you could notice it, my dear. That is, not as long as you want me."

"Well, I do want you," she said, touching his hand swiftly. "You're the best and the kindest friend I have."

"Then we'll see it through together," said Breedon.

"I see what I've got to do now," said Carola briskly.

"What is that?" he asked, not without anxiety. "You shouldn't make any moves without consultin' me, Carrie. We got to act together."

"Certainly," said Carola. "This is what I'm going to do. When he asked me to marry him the other day, I didn't give him a definite answer. He didn't seem to expect it."

"Sure," said Breedon, "he's the kind of man who counts on wearin' a woman down."

"Ohh!" breathed Carola with fresh indignation. "Well, I'll answer him now in such a way that he can't possibly mistake my meaning. I'll write to him before I sleep to-night . . ."

"Wait! Wait!" interrupted Breedon.

“Oh, you needn’t be afraid,” she said with flashing eyes, “I sha’n’t lose my temper or anything. I shall tell him the simple cold truth, and that is that he has too tyrannical a temper ever to be my husband. And that I wouldn’t marry him if he was the last man on earth!”

“Now Carrie, now Carrie,” said Breedon, stroking her hand, “be advised by me, my girl. That would only make matters worse.”

“Why would it?”

“Because he would believe that I dictated that letter over your shoulder. He don’t believe that you’ve got any mind of your own.”

“That’s what makes me so furious!” said Carola.

“It would only make him more set on getting you, and on smashing me. A man like that can’t take no for an answer.”

“Well, I won’t write it then, if you say not to,” she said reluctantly.

“No, Carrie, the thing for you to do is not notice him at all. Our consciences are easy. We got nothing to fear. Just sit tight you and me, and let him rage. Of course he never will give up the hope of getting you until you marry somebody else.”

“Well, I wouldn’t marry just to get rid of him!”

“Sure! Sure!” he said soothingly. “There’s only one thing I might suggest,” he added with a thoughtful air.

“What is that?”

“This young fella, Len Farley . . . a nice lad! a nice lad . . . !”

Carola quickly turned her head. “Yes, he’s a dear,” she said.

Breedon with satisfaction marked the deepening color of her averted cheek. “I notice you give him a couple of dances every night,” he went on, “no matter who asks you. It’s made a bit of talk around the place, and no harm, no harm. But after this, I think I’d go a bit slow with him, Carrie.”

“I’m not going to . . .” she began indignantly.

“Wait a minute,” he said, “Peverley will have his detectives in the club. They’re prob’ly here to-night. Such a gang comes here, don’t see how we can keep ’em out. And if you show any favor to that young fella . . .”

“I’m not going to throw Len over to please my cousin!” cried Carola with tears of anger in her eyes. “If I thought he was watching me, I’d dance every dance with Len!”

“I’m not suggestin’ that you throw Len over,” said Breedon. “But listen, Carrie; Peverley can’t get me, and he can’t get you, but maybe he could get Len. I don’t know anything about his past, though I hear stories. But if it’s vulnerable, Peverley would certainly try to strike at you through him.”

“Oh Heavens!” gasped Carola, paling. “What shall I do, then?”

“See Len in private,” said Breedon.

“But how? where? If Peverley has me watched here, he has me watched everywhere. How do I know but what he’s got a spy right in my own house?”

“Nothing more likely,” said Breedon.

“Then where could I see Len?”

“Why not here at Elysia in the afternoons? Between two thirty and five thirty there is not a soul in the building except Pat McPeake the watchman. Now I know McPeake, I got him the job here, and I can bank on him to the death. You would be followed to the door of course, but nothing would seem more likely than you might come to go over your accounts and tend to your business here. You could have Sam Frawley meet you here to lend color to the scheme. As for Len, let him live in the house. There are a couple of spare rooms up on the top floor.”

Carola’s color came back, and her smile. But even to “Uncle Mark” she would not reveal her thoughts. “Well, I’ll think about it,” she said carelessly.

Presently Len came to claim her. Conscious that everybody in the neighborhood was watching her, Carola placed her hand on his shoulder and danced away with a perfectly expressionless face. Len’s face bore its usual tolerant half smile—which concealed everything. These were Carola’s golden moments. She could scarcely have explained it in words, but to her Len was like a breath of cool fresh air that penetrated the superheated atmosphere surrounding her. He was so real, so solid, so salty! He was always himself. When she spoke to him she got a genuine reaction, and not a sickly echo of herself. His rough slangy speech and his smile which was both scornful and tender were like good food and drink. But all this she had to conceal on the dance floor. Carola looked most like the haughty princess when she danced with Len.

“I am so tired of being watched,” she whispered to him. “It’s like having iron bands around one. We never have a chance to let ourselves go with each other.”

Len’s arm tightened around her. “Sure!” he whispered. “I am always thinking that too.”

“I wish we could be alone together sometimes.”

“That’s up to you,” he whispered. “God knows I wish it!”

“Why is it up to me?” she complained. “You are the man.”

“But you are the boss,” he answered smiling.

“Not to you,” she whispered.

She felt him draw a deep breath to steady himself. He pressed her close to him without speaking.

“Not so close!” she whispered in a kind of panic, “or I can’t keep up pretenses.”

He released her.

“If we are to be real friends we must be equals,” she whispered.

“So we are, really,” he answered, “but there’s all this flummery that surrounds us. You are the queen here. I have to keep that in mind. If I could only get you away from it all! But how can I? You’re so well-known. Everybody sees your picture in the papers. Where could we go where you wouldn’t be recognized?”

“Meet me here at three to-morrow afternoon,” whispered Carola. “There is nobody here then.”

A flame shot up in his eyes. “Oh, Carola!” he breathed, and crushed her to him again.

Carola felt as if all the strength were deliciously leaving her limbs. “Oh, Len, don’t,” she whispered faintly. “I can’t bear it!”

Nothing more needed to be said. They danced on in a happy dream—with perfectly expressionless faces.

When the music stopped Len whispered: “Until to-morrow.”

“Until to-morrow!” she whispered.

“I am the happiest man living!”

Later, when the crowd was beginning to thin out—Carola had already gone, Breedon beckoned Len over to the table where he was sitting alone. “Sit down Len,” he said with great affability, “and have a touch with me before I go.”

Len with that good-humored grin of his which took everything as it came, and gave nothing away, obeyed. Breedon had always treated him pretty well, but his intuition had warned him of a hidden animosity. One can hardly be mistaken about such a thing. This sudden increase of affability made him wary.

“You made good here all right, Len,” said Breedon.

“Well, I do my damndest,” said Len. “It’s a new kind of life to me.”

“Yes, and you got a good hard head as I can see. You take all this for what it’s worth and no more.”

Breedon continued to make conversation in this flattering tone, and Len wondered what it was leading up to. They had a drink of velvety Scotch from

the old man's private flask. Finally Breedon rose to go. Len walked with him to the entrance.

"By the way, Len," he said as with an afterthought, "I was talkin' with Sam Frawley about you awhile ago. Sam says he don't see why he should go on payin' your bill down at the Mackinac when's he's got a perfectly good suite of rooms here in the building that ain't bein' used. It's parlor, bedroom and bath up on the top floor. Fitted up in elegant style he says. Paul Chablon used to live there, but it ain't no good to Sam cause he's got a family."

"Well, that's fine!" said Len. His natural gratification was modified by doubts as to what lay behind this. He wondered, sharp with suspicion, if it had anything to do with Carola.

"Well, before you go home, speak to Sam about movin' in," said Breedon.

Every player however skilful, occasionally makes a false move, and Breedon made his now. A pretty good reader of psychology up to a certain point, he had never really understood the fiery independence which underlay Len's tolerant air. Considering the enormous distance in station which separated Carola and Len, Breedon felt that the young lover might need a word of encouragement to spur him on. So he whispered with his most fatherly air as he left Len:

"You're in luck, my boy! I can see what I see. The greatest prize of all is hanging over your head. All you got to do is reach for it."

"Thanks, thanks, Mr. Breedon," stammered Len.

Breedon thought his air of confusion natural enough, and departed well pleased with himself.

Len was left standing in the lobby looking as if he had seen a ghost. That air of complete nonchalance which it seemed as if nothing could shake, was gone now. Becoming aware that people were looking at him curiously, he made haste to hide his blank face in one of the coat rooms. His head was in a whirl.

Breedon is on to Carola and me! He's telling me to go in and win. What does that mean? Maybe he picked me out of the gutter and fitted me out and brought me here just for that purpose. Maybe. Maybe. We're all just like chess men on a board that he moves around . . . But he's no fool. He must see that I'm not a tame cat. He must see that I wouldn't stand for any crooked work with Carola if I married her. Just the same he wants me to marry her. What for? What for? God! I'm all in a fog. But he wants me to marry her. It must be part of some blackguardly scheme to ruin her . . . Sure, it would ruin her. Who am I? A thief and an ex-convict! It would all come out if I married her. I would just drag her down to the gutter! Oh God! I can't face it!

Len buried his head amongst the hanging coats, and ground his teeth in his agony. "Oh God! just when I was so happy, too! She loves me! It's like a miracle! How can I give her up! . . . By God! I won't give her up. I'll marry her in spite of the blackguard. I'll marry her, and save her from his schemes, and he can go plumb to hell! . . . I *can't* marry her! *I can't marry her.* I've just been living in a fool's paradise to-night. Breedon or no Breedon I can't marry her. It would be just dragging her down to my level. My hands are not clean. I can't touch her without soiling her. Oh God! what am I going to do!"

xvi

CAROLA'S days were as crowded as those of royalty. Struggle against it as she would, she found herself committed to all sorts of things she didn't want to do, and it began to appear that she had only exchanged one form of slavery for another. Publicity laid its chains upon one too. To help her cope with the pressure of her affairs, she had first engaged a secretary, then in rapid succession two stenographers and finally a super secretary, a sort of social liaison officer to direct the whole staff. All these ladies were kept as busy as nailers. Carola's house was not nearly large enough for her present state, but she felt she ought not to start building another until she got the new night club off her hands. Meanwhile Breedon was kindly looking about to see if he could find a suitable house ready built.

First there was the mail in the morning. Carola now enjoyed the privilege of a special carrier to deliver her letters. Long before she was out of bed the young ladies fell upon it. It was principally begging letters; letters begging for Carola's time or her money for every conceivable purpose. The obvious fakes went straight into the waste basket. Another young lady was engaged to investigate the hard luck stories that touched Carola's heart. The report was generally adverse, and she was much saddened. It seemed as if the really deserving cases never wrote. How was one to find them?

But it was the people who considered that they had a claim on her time who were the greatest bother. These countless "friends" that she picked up everywhere, and dropped as fast as she picked them up were very apt to act as if they owned her, and to cling like limpets when Carola wished to forget them. They wrote, telephoned, and called at the house endlessly; then they got their feelings hurt. It was really very difficult to be so famous.

The telephone rang all day long, and it soon became necessary to engage another young lady to take the calls. The doorbell rang almost continuously, and a third man servant was engaged whose sole duty it was to answer it. The efficient housekeeper picked out a husky specimen, properly qualified to deal with the cranks who applied. Carola's servants enjoyed the excitement that filled the house from morning until night. One and all they adored their lovely young mistress who moved in such a strange bright upper world.

Carola's house was an old-fashioned one with a high front stoop. This rendered her very conspicuous when she left the house, and going out became rather an ordeal, even with a stout footman at her elbow. But the house had a little back yard in the old style, and they cut a double gate in the fence, so that the automobile could wait inside. Thenceforward Carola popped out of the back door directly into the car, and avoided the loiterers who always seemed to be in front.

Every photographer in town was continually imploring Carola to allow him to take her picture; every publisher begged her to read his latest novel and say what she thought of it; every chorus girl out of a job implored to be taken on at Elysia. Endless were the tricks and wiles resorted to by ingenious advertisers in order to procure Carola's testimonial for this, that or the other. Wagon loads of "presents" arrived at the house every day.

All this was in addition to Carola's legitimate activities such as shopping. It was wonderful what a lot of money you could spend when you put your mind to it. There was one kind of purchase alone that was warranted to consume the greatest income in the world; i.e. jewels. Carola could not resist them. Her taste in jewelry was simple and chaste, but such things of course are the most expensive; a necklet of square cut emeralds; a short string of matched pink pearls, etc. Most of the objects that Carola bought were brought to the house for her inspection; but there was one thing she still had to go out for, the daily seances at her dressmaker's. She no longer dealt exclusively at Mandel's. Miss Julia had set up her own shop, and with the cachet of Carola's patronage, was flourishing like the green bay tree. She and the boy friend were preparing to get married.

Then there was lunch. Carola had dozens of invitations to lunch to choose from every day, likewise to tea and to dinner. These were livelier affairs than those to which Mrs. Van Arsdale had formerly carried her—still they were much of a muchness. Food was food and table talk was table talk. The convention was different, but they were no less conventional, and Carola began to weary of them. She got out of most of the invitations to dinner by giving dinners at home. It was much less fatiguing to dine at home. One could at least have what one liked to eat. Carola had a male cook now, a Frenchman with the most polished manners. Under the terms of his contract he was

permitted to enter and leave the house by the front door. He wore a red carnation in his buttonhole.

At noon of the day following Carola's tempestuous interview with Senator Peverley, two little ladies as alike as two peas got out of a tall old-fashioned motor car at Carola's door; unmistakably high bred little ladies with the air of belonging to another day, but very trim and elegant in general effect. A servant strange to them opened to the door—it was always a strange servant nowadays; they asked to see Miss Goadby and gave their names as Miss Grasette, and Miss Kate Grasette.

“Have you an appointment?” asked the man servant.

The sisters looked at each other. “Why no,” said Miss Grasette, delicately affronted, “we are Miss Goadby's cousins.”

“Please to step in,” said the servant.

They were ushered into the red library, a room immediately to the left of the entrance door, which Carola had never had any use for before, and which had now been turned into a sort of general reception room for the mob. In this room the Misses Grasette found already waiting; a photographer and his assistant with all their paraphernalia grouped about them on the floor; two newspaper reporters; an architect's young man with a great portfolio of drawings; and three highly ornamental ladies of affiliations unknown. The Misses Grasette sat down on the edge of two chairs, and glanced at each other in fresh dismay. Like a professional person's reception room! their shocked eyes said.

To them presently, came the super social secretary, a tremendously efficient person, of whom the Misses Grasette were secretly in terror though they doubted if she was *quite* a lady, my dear. The secretary greeted them with her professional smile, which she clicked on and off like electric light; and said: “So sorry, but Miss Goadby is in the hands of the hair dresser at this minute. However, I'll trot right up and tell her you're here.”

“Thank you,” said Miss Grasette; and “Thank you,” echoed Miss Kate. They looked unhappily at each other.

They were presently bidden to step up to Miss Goadby's dressing room if they would be so good, and the other waiting women looked at them spitefully. This room was the second in Carola's long suite on the South side of the house. Carola had cleared out all the fal-lals, wishing to make it look like a laboratory or operating room. The Misses Grasette found their cousin reclining in a sort of mechanical chair that the operator could tip forward or back, with various genii of the toilet grouped or revolving about her. There was a maid seated on a stool, polishing her finger nails; there was a hair dresser doing mysterious things to her blonde tresses. (A man, my dear! Miss

Grasette's shocked eyes conveyed to Miss Kate) while in front of her there was an important looking lady in a white overall operating on her face. When they looked around the chair the Misses Grasette gasped in horror, for Carola's eyes were closed, and her face was a livid blue color. She looked like the victim of some awful pestilence.

Carola heard them enter. "Good morning darlings!" she sang out. "I can't look at you just now. Sit down won't you, or go into the boudoir if you'd rather."

"Carola, what is the matter?" gasped Miss Grasette. (Oh, what is the matter? whispered Miss Kate.)

"Matter?" said Carola blankly. Then she understood, and laughed outright. (Tsch! Tsch! Tsch! said the lady in the white overall, for the mud on her face cracked prematurely) "You darlings!" cried Carola. "This is only a facial treatment. I shall emerge from it directly like Venus born anew!"

"We'll wait in the next room," said Miss Grasette hastily. She and her sister retreated into the boudoir.

"Oh sister!" said little Miss Kate.

"Oh sister!" echoed her elder.

"How will you ever open the subject amidst all this confusion?"

"I can but do my best, sister."

By and by they were summoned back into the dressing room. The hair dresser and the person in the white overall were gone. Carola enveloped in a cloud of white swansdown was seated at her dressing table with various other acolytes serving her.

"Sit down darlings," she said, "I asked you to come back in here so as not to waste any time. I have to go out almost immediately."

"If we could have just a few minutes with you alone," said Miss Grasette.

(This was just what Carola wished to avoid.) "I don't see how I can manage it this morning," she said, looking at them with a deprecating face from the mirror. "There's a photographer waiting downstairs, and a man from my architect's, and some papers from the bank that have to be signed, and goodness knows what else."

"We could wait," said Miss Grasette with gentle firmness.

"But I'm lunching at the Ritz directly, and I have an important engagement after that." (How Carola's heart lifted when she thought of *that* engagement!)

"Then we'd better come another time," said Miss Grasette preparing to rise.

"Oh stay until I have to go downstairs," said Carola. "I never see you nowadays."

“We have called three times in the afternoon,” said Miss Grasette dryly, “but you were always out. So this time we tried the morning.”

“You should call up and get an appointment from my secretary. She keeps everything straight for me. I never know what I have to do.”

“It had not occurred to us that that would be necessary in the family,” said Miss Grasette, with dignity.

“But what can I do, Cousin Margaret? I am simply besieged in my own house. Honestly, I have to sneak out of the back door in order to escape people.”

The sisters looked at each other and shook their heads.

“But never mind that now,” said Carola. “Tell me all about everybody. How is Cousin Daniel; and Great-Aunt Ann?”

These family particulars and many others were duly related.

“Cousin Frank Peverley came to see me yesterday,” said Carola.

The sisters exchanged another glance, this time of pleasure and congratulation. Carola perceived it in the mirror, and smiled dryly to herself. They think he’s the one to tame me, she thought.

“How nice!” said Miss Margaret. “Dear Cousin Frank is such a splendid man! So successful. They say that there is no height to which he may not aspire now. It is our dearest wish to see him happily married to the right girl!” The words “right girl” were oh, so delicately underscored.

“Mine too!” said Carola heartily.

During this, she was going through the process of getting herself dressed. She finally emerged complete, facing her cousins, a delicate boyish figure in Lincoln green with her fair curls clustering around her face. She still looked half the child, and the implied contrast between her exquisite naivetè, and all the evidences of ultra sophistication which surrounded her, almost brought tears to the eyes of her excellent little cousins. The three ladies passed into the boudoir, and Carola picked up a cigarette.

“Oh Carola, must you?” said Miss Margaret plaintively.

“Why no,” said Carola dropping it, “not if you dislike it. It’s just a bad habit one gets into.”

There were no servants in the room at the moment, and Miss Margaret took her courage in her hands. “Carola, my dear,” she said, “we feel it our duty as your nearest relatives to remonstrate. . . .”

Oh Lord! thought Carola; here it comes! “Excuse me just a moment, Cousin,” she said brightly. She went to the door of the dressing room. “Ella, it looks cold out of doors. I will wear my sable coat. Bring me the sand colored

toque with the tri-color cockade. I'll carry the green needle point hand bag that came from Rome." She came back. "Yes, cousins?" she said sweetly.

". . . Our duty to remonstrate with you upon . . ." Miss Margaret began again.

"Oh excuse me darling," said Carola. She flew back to the dressing room door. "Ella, I forgot; the sand colored toque is too big. It wobbles when I turn my head quickly. Bring the other one of the same color; the one from Maison Clarisse." She came back. "So sorry, Cousin!"

Miss Margaret began for the third time. "Carola . . ."

There was a discreet tap on the door. It was the smiling super secretary. "So sorry!" she said, "but the photographer is almost in tears. It appears that he has an appointment with Mrs. Schuyler Van Benthuysen at one. And the bank has telephoned to ask what has become of their messenger."

Saved! thought Carola. "Oh dear! Oh dear!" she cried, flying about; "Ella, quick! my things." She struggled into the sable coat. "I must put on my things before I go downstairs or it is impossible to get rid of those people," she explained to her cousins. She kissed each one. "So nice to have seen you, darlings. Do forgive me for rushing away. You must come to lunch some day."

The whole party started to move down the broad stairs. At the bottom there was renewed confusion. The waiting ladies rushed out of the library and started to gush over Carola; the photographer made his plaintive voice heard. Somehow, they could scarcely had said how, the little Misses Grasette found themselves out on the stoop. They went down the steps with many shakes of the head, and got into the tall motor car.

"What can one do, sister?" said Miss Margaret to Miss Kate.

xvii

DURING the next few days Senator Frank Peverley spent a good deal of time in New York while the newspapers were chronicling his activities in Washington. With the aid of his secretaries, he transacted what business he could on the train passing to and fro, and he always managed to turn up in Washington just in time for his advertised appearances. More than once he was obliged to sleep on the train, a sad compromise with Senatorial dignity. He showed the double strain of his private and public affairs in an increased irritability of temper.

The reports furnished him by his detectives had amongst other matter, listed the prominent persons who were said by common report to have been blackmailed by Marcus Breedon. No proof of this was adduced. Among these names were those of three persons whom Peverley knew pretty well, and he determined to see them. He had no great hopes of gaining his objective by such a frontal attack, but on the other hand he did not see how he could lose anything, and in the meantime he had other lines out.

He chose Flora Duane first because she was a good-natured old thing in spite of her defects of character. She was a woman of great wealth married to a man somewhat younger than herself who bore a fine old New York name. A former beauty, the escapades of Flora's middle life were notorious, and her husband was obliged to condone them, because of the difficulty a man has in obtaining alimony in the courts. He lived in the family mansion, while Flora drifted around from one expensive hotel to another with her maids and her Pekinese spaniels. Peverley went to the hotel that she was at present honoring with her patronage, and sent up his name.

Mrs. Duane was very much astonished to receive it. Frank Peverley! such a handsome man, and still young; the greatest catch of them all! What on earth did he want, dropping on her from the blue like this? She smirked at her reflection in the mirror. After all, I have not lost my allure, she thought. She dared not keep him waiting until she dressed. Instead she wrapped herself in a marvelous negligee, and reclined on a *chaise longue*. Though it was broad day, the curtains were drawn and amber colored lights turned on. As a last preparation a little *Lys Noir* was sprayed about the room.

Peverley made a face when he smelled it, and the first involuntary glance that he bent on the lady was not flattering. The Senator was much more successful in dealing with men than with women. His directness amounted to positive brutality.

"Ah, Frank," said Mrs. Duane melodiously, "what a pleasure! I thought you were in Washington. The newspapers . . ."

Peverley wagged his hand as much as to say: Please cut out the preliminaries. "Flo," he said, "I've come to see you on a matter of the greatest importance to me. I hope you may be inclined to help me out. You were always a good-natured soul."

"Good-natured" was unfortunate. Mrs. Duane didn't want to be considered good-natured, but fascinating. Rather chilled, but smiling still, she murmured: "Anything, Frank, anything!"

"I have been informed that a man called Marcus Breedon, a notorious character about town, has been blackmailing you."

Mrs. Duane sat up so suddenly that her wig shifted slightly. She surreptitiously straightened it. "Blackmail!" she cried in a strident voice that betrayed her age. "What a word to use. Blackmailed me for what?"

"That I don't know," said Peverley.

"Who told you this?" she demanded.

Peverley had come to obtain information, not to give it. "What does that matter?" he said a little impatiently. "As a matter of fact it was a private detective that I engaged to investigate Breedon's activities. Who told him that you were one of the victims I don't know. He said it was a matter of common report."

"Oh! Oh!" cried Mrs. Duane tragically, "Do you meant to tell me that people are saying that I . . . that I . . ."

"Oh Flo," he said impatiently, "what does it matter to people like you and I what the mob says about us, as long as there is no proof?"

"What have you got against Breedon?" she demanded. "Has he been blackmailing you?"

"No. But he is getting a friend of mine into his toils, and I have sworn to smash the blackguard!"

"Oh, now I see," she said, rather acidly. "It is Carola Goadby. She and Breedon are as thick as thieves." Naturally Mrs. Duane was not pleased to discover that it was not her charms which had fetched Peverley to see her, but the charms of a younger woman. Mrs. Duane had once dreamed of playing the rôle of Queen of New York, but had never made it.

"Well, will you help me out, Flo?" asked Peverley.

"Help you out!" she said sharply. "How can I help you? I never heard of this Breedon—well, of course I've heard of him, but I never spoke to the man in my life. And as to the idea of his blackmailing me, it is perfectly postposterous. Thank God! nobody has got anything on me!"

Peverley rubbed his lip. He perceived that she was lying, but could not very well tax her with it. "The man must have hundreds of victims," he went on persuasively. "He's like a festering sore in the community. What a splendid work it would be to destroy him! And you are just the one who could do it, Flo. A woman of your age, wealth and position has nothing to fear from a cur like Breedon." (Age was an unfortunate word to have used, he realized as soon as it was out of his mouth.) "Instead of hurting you in the eyes of the public, you would become a popular heroine if you came out against this scoundrel." (And anyhow you haven't got a rag of reputation left, he thought; but did not say it.) "Breedon could not publish his charges against you except in some disreputable sheet where they would fall of their own weight. . . ."

She interrupted him coldly. "You are speaking as if you did not believe me when I say that I never had any dealings with Breedon in my life."

Figuratively speaking, Peverley threw up his hands. He saw that instead of gaining a friend, he had made an enemy. "No, no," he said lamely, "I was just wishing that it was possible for you to help me."

"I would be the first, the very first to defy this man if he ever tried to threaten me!" Mrs. Duane virtuously announced.

After a little desultory talk, Peverley went away, leaving the lady a prey to a very pretty anxiety. She wondered how much he had kept back. Indeed, before the week was out, she hastily packed up and went to Europe to escape the storm that she expected to break around her head.

Peverley next went to see a man whose wealth had caused his name to become a household word in America. He was one of the Senator's chief political backers, and a man with a wide popular reputation for his liberal and humane views. But Peverley saw the reverse of the picture now. There is no need to detail the interview since it was no more successful than the first. White faced and stuttering with panic, the great man denied all knowledge of Breedon and his works. He could see that Peverley could see he was lying, but he stuck to it. Good God! what rottenness some of these fine façades conceal! thought Peverley as he left the millionaire's palace.

His last resort was to one of the leading judges in the criminal courts. This man had enjoyed wide publicity on account of his handling of a certain celebrated case, and he was regarded in the public mind as a stanch upholder of the right. He was freely mentioned as a suitable candidate for a higher office. He and Peverley were intimate friends, and the Senator had been very much astonished to find his name on the detective's list.

Arriving from Washington on the Congressional Limited in the middle of the evening, Peverley went to his friend's apartment by appointment, and the two were soon closeted in the Judge's library. Though no older than Peverley (the two had been college mates) Judge —— was already famous for the thatch of snowy hair which surrounded his head like a halo. With his pink skin and finely-chiseled features it gave him a most distinguished and reverend appearance on the bench.

"Richard," said Peverley, "there is a man in this town who richly deserves to be hung. His name is Marcus Breedon."

"I agree," said the other with curt emphasis.

“Well, I’m out after him,” said Peverley. “I’m afraid I can’t hang him, but with a little luck I can put him behind the bars.”

“I hope you may succeed.”

“I have detectives on his trail. They have furnished me with any amount of information but little evidence. Among other things it has been reported to me that Breedon has been blackmailing you.”

“Hm!” said the Judge gravely. “Have they offered anything to support this?”

“No. So I come to you.”

“May I speak in confidence?” asked the Judge.

“Surely!”

“Will you give me your word not to use what I am about to tell you in any way whatsoever without my permission?”

“There’s my hand on it, Richard.”

“Very well. It is true then, that Breedon has been blackmailing me.”

“Well, thank God!” cried Peverley.

The Judge looked at him queerly.

“No, no, don’t misunderstand me,” said Peverley. “I am thanking God for an honest man. You renew my faith in humanity, Richard!”

“It’s not a serious thing that Breedon has against me,” said Judge — bitterly. “A mere piece of folly, that any other man might commit and think nothing of. If I was anything else but a judge, I would soon tell Breedon to go to the devil. But no breath of scandal may blow upon the bench; there’s where he has me.”

“But you and I together could easily smash this blackguard,” said Peverley eagerly.

“I don’t doubt it, but I would go down with him too, Frank. I have enemies as you know. There are certain interests who consider my views too radical. I would be forced to resign, and there is no other career open to me as far as I can see.”

“Richard,” cried Peverley, “you are the very man to champion the cause of decent folk against this wretch!”

The Judge still shook his head. “It is useless to try to persuade me. I thrashed this matter out with myself long ago.”

Peverley was keenly disappointed. “Well, maybe you and I can do something without letting your name appear,” he said gloomily.

“Anything in my power, Frank.”

For two hours thereafter they discussed the matter. The further they examined it, the more astute did Breedon's conduct appear. He seemed to have safeguarded himself at every point. For instance, he had never approached his victim directly. In fact Judge —— had never laid eyes on Breedon. It was only by certain imponderable things—things you could not take into court, that he knew who was his real enemy. Several go-betweens had been employed.

"You see, Frank," he said, "even if I was willing to come out with the whole story and take my chances, it is not at all certain that we could convict Breedon with it. There would still be important links in the chain missing."

It was not until the name of Mack Brindle was brought up that they began to see light. "This Brindle," said Judge ——, "a slick, sneaking little rat of a man used to come to me to collect the money. He claimed to be a lawyer; if he ever was, he was disbarred long ago. A few weeks ago he gave place to another collector, and I imagine Brindle may be at outs with Breedon."

"Ha!" cried Peverley, "that's something! Can you tell me where Brindle is to be found?"

Judge —— shook his head.

"What!" cried Peverley, "you had a lead like this in your hand, and you never attempted to follow it up!"

"But I told you I had decided long ago that I could not afford to fight Breedon."

"But with a weapon like that you could have conducted a counter offensive, and brought him to terms without any publicity at all."

"I am not a man of action like you, Frank."

"Well, I'll see if I can find him."

Peverley wrote a note to James Rohrty, the head of the detective agency, and leaving it with his friend to be delivered in the morning, hastened down to the Terminal to catch the sleeper back to Washington.

Mack Brindle was found living in a second-rate hotel in complete idleness, and thoroughly disgruntled. He was spirited down to Washington in a car for an interview with Senator Peverley. Peverley's eyes glistened when they fell upon him. If ever any man looked the part of a blackmailer's go-between it was this skinny little manikin, with his dress of careful elegance, his false eyes, and his mean, cringing manner. Remembering the comparison that Judge —— had made, Peverley thought; the rat is a bold and self-respecting beast alongside him; he's more like a . . . but there's no animal low enough to be compared to him.

At first the little man was recalcitrant. Apparently he considered that he had been badly used by Breedon, but his awe and terror of the big man persisted, and he refused to talk. As a matter of fact, he was still in Breedon's pay. Peverley was rarely at a loss how to deal with men. He did not attempt to use intimidation, but kept Brindle by him for a whole day, treating him with the greatest consideration. Brindle was allowed to see that Peverley was a more powerful man even than Breedon. The natural result followed. Brindle decided that the picking's from Peverley's board would be fully equal to Breedon's, and it would have the advantage of being safer. He decided to change his master. His obsequious little soul had to prostrate itself before somebody.

Towards evening he announced his readiness to talk. But he would not allow it to be taken down, fearing that Peverley would throw him aside, once he got a signed statement out of him. He talked for half the night while the Senator listened, pulling his fingers in his satisfaction until the knuckles cracked. Brindle detailed the whole of his activities on Breedon's behalf, describing how he had visited such and such persons, had collected sums of money from them, and had subsequently handed it to Breedon. Some great names were mentioned.

It was a tremendous step forward, but still not enough in itself to convict Breedon; for Brindle had no first-hand knowledge of what the money had been paid for; nor any evidence that threats or coercion had been used. Additional evidence was required. By the time Brindle had finished talking, the night train for New York had departed, and Senator Peverley ordered up a special, that he might be on hand early in the morning to see some of the persons named by the go-between. Brindle meanwhile was carried back to New York in the same closed car that had brought him. He was ordered to go on living at his hotel, so that no suspicion might be aroused by his disappearance from the scene. He received a handsome honorarium from the Senator, with a promise of more to come.

WHEN CAROLA and Len met in the lobby at Elysia in the afternoon, Sam Frawley and Pat McPeake the doorkeeper were standing by, and the greetings of the young people to each other were constrained. Both Sam and Pat were full of sympathy and encouragement, but being men of coarse natures there was unfortunately the suggestion of a leer in their smiles, and

Carola resented it. She thought: How dare they let me see that they know I have come here just to see Len! She hastened upstairs followed by the young man.

“There is a cook here to make your tea,” Sam called after her. “Just ring when you want it.”

“Oh, we don’t want any tea; we’ve just had lunch!”

They sat down facing each other at one of the little tables by the front windows. . . . The big restaurant was as empty and silent as a church on a weekday. Carola was confused and could not bear to look at Len, but Len’s gaze at her was direct and somber.

She could see him, though she did not look at him. “What’s the matter, Len?” she asked softly.

His heart was lifted up with delight and pain at the sound of his name on her lips. “I haven’t slept,” he said.

“But why?” she asked, looking at him with her blue eyes full of solicitude. “Thinking?”

He nodded.

“What about, Len? Us?”

Again he nodded.

“Why does it make you unhappy?” she asked with a childlike droop of unhappiness in her own face.

“Oh God, you’re so sweet it drives me mad,” he blurted out. “I’m near out of my mind trying to remember what I have to do.”

She was not greatly alarmed, because it was evident from the emotion in his voice that he loved her, and that was what she was longing to hear. “Why be mad?” she whispered.

Their hands crept across the table and clasped.

His dark face became rapt and self-forgetful. “I love you! I love you! I love you!” he whispered. “I cannot keep it in!”

“And I love you!” she murmured.

Leaning across the table their lips met in an endless kiss.

Len jerked back with a groan. “I ought not to have done that,” he murmured. “I swore to myself I wouldn’t. I have no strength of will at all.” He still clung to her hands.

Carola didn’t want him to have any strength of will in that respect. “Why shouldn’t you kiss me if I want you to?” she whispered, smiling. “Kiss me again.”

And of course he did. "I have had a hard life," he murmured; "and I was hard. But now I am soft. Seems like when I love I've got to go all out. I'm helpless."

"Be soft only with me," she whispered.

"How can I give you up?" he groaned. "To me you are like something that never happened before in this world. You have made a new world for me. You are not just a woman, you are my dream. All the dreams of a boy come real in you. It's too much; it's too much to ask!"

"Why should you give me up?" she said, still smiling; nothing seemed important if he loved her. "Haven't I got something to say about that?"

"Listen, you beauty," he said, pressing her hands between his: "Your hair is like sunlight sparkling on the water; when you look at me like that I am like a man who has eaten a happy drug. I love you! But I've got to give you up. Even though you want me to take you I cannot take you. Was ever a man in such a box before? I am like a hungry kid outside a bakery window, I can only look and look and go on my way empty! Listen to me, and don't ask me to kiss you again, or I shall go all to pieces . . ."

"Kiss me, Len!"

He kissed her.

"I've got to talk to you. I ought to have done my talking before I kissed you. It's harder now. I ought never to have kissed you. But I love you so! Now that the string of my tongue has been cut seems like I can't stop telling it to you."

"Oh, don't stop telling me," she whispered, "never stop!"

"You're like a dear little girl who has never known anything mean or bad. Your eyes have that look. You are like the fairy in a Christmas play. That was what got me, that look, the first day I saw you. I carried it away under my torn coat. I didn't own a shirt that day. I had my coat collar pinned shut to hide the lack of it. Quite like a Sunday school story, isn't it, the thief halted in mid-career by a vision of the angel child? Oh, you sweet!"

He dropped his face on her hands. Under the rush of his words that he tried to make sound humorous, Carola apprehended the pain that was tearing his heart, and began to take alarm. "Len, what is it?" she faltered.

He raised his face, that hard, masculine face which had become so dear to her. It was soft enough now—yet not so soft either, for it still wore its derisive smile. "I'll try to tell you straight," he said, "though it's a job explaining wickedness to you. Why you come here every night, you're supposed to own the place and that's the richest joke of all, yet it has never touched you!"

"What's the matter with this place?" she asked sharply.

“If the truth were known it’s the rottenest dive in New York.”

“Len!”

“You and I have tumbled into a trap, baby.”

“A trap!”

“There was a plot to bring us together, and let us fall in love with each other, and look how we have done that very thing!”

“Whose plot?”

“Breedon’s.”

Carola could only stare at him in hopeless perplexity.

“Has it never occurred to you that Breedon was a scoundrel?” he asked.

She shook her head. “He seemed to be everything that was kind.”

“Well, it’s something that everybody else knows,” he said. “Everybody knows that he only runs this place to promote his rotten business.”

“But this is my place!”

“Think!” said Len, “I know you paid for it, but do you run it?”

Carola lowered her head. “No. He does,” she whispered. Len was not Frank Peverley. She could not disbelieve her lover. She presently planted her elbows on the table, and buried her face in her hands. “Oh, this is horrible!” she said. “I thought he was my friend. It makes all life seem such a mess!”

Len flung an arm around her shoulders and drew her towards him until his cheek pressed against her hands. “I know something of what you feel,” he murmured. “Once when I was a lad I had a friend, and I caught him stealing from me. I would have given him everything I had.”

Carola caught his face between her hands. “But I have you,” she said imploringly. “You are true!”

“You’ll see,” he said deeply.

They kissed again.

“Oh, this will never do!” said Len, half laughing, and kissing her again. “We haven’t started to talk things over.”

“My head is whirling,” said Carola. “How on earth will I get out of this beastly mess? Think of the newspaper publicity! Think of . . . Oh, Len, it’s worse than you think. What a fool I’ve been. A friend of mine tried to warn me of Breedon, and I quarreled with him and insulted him. How will I ever face him again?”

“Who was that?” demanded Len jealously.

“My cousin, Senator Peverley . . . It’s too much for me,” she went on, “I can’t see any way out. It’s so much easier just to love you, and not think! . . . Oh, I longed so to know somebody like you, Len. Somebody manly and rough

and open in character. I have been surrounded by such silken creatures; half men!”

Their elbows were planted on the table, their faces a few inches apart. They gave themselves freely to each other in their eyes. “Gosh!” said Len, “it’s quaint to think of anybody admiring *my* character, and especially you, you blue-eyed angel!” They moved their heads forward until their lips touched. “Oh, this isn’t talking things over!” he groaned.

“What sort of plot do you mean?” asked Carola.

“I don’t know, completely. I first got on to it last night after you’d gone home, when Breedon called me over and told me to go in and win. Meaning you, you understand. Told me I could count on his support. That’s what kept me awake all night.”

“Maybe he meant it in kindness,” faltered Carola.

“There is no kindness in Breedon,” said Len curtly. “He hates me. That’s what I can’t get. Why, if he hates me, he should want to help me to you. There is some devilish business going on that I can’t see through. But one thing is plain enough. Our marriage is part of a plot to ruin you.”

“Why should it ruin me?”

“That’s easy,” said Len with a bitter laugh. He turned away his head unable to bear her look just then. “I have been a thief, Carola. I have served a term in prison.”

Carola was silent. “Oh God! I wish I could wipe it out!” he cried. “But there’s no use! What’s done is done!”

“Is that all?” she asked.

He jerked his head around in astonishment. “All!”

Carola was drawing a design on the tablecloth with her forefinger, and studying it attentively. “You told me that before,” she said. “Why couldn’t we run away from it all?”

“Where could we run to? There is not a village in this whole country where the people have not read the stories about you in the newspapers and pinned up your photographs. Think of the sensation that would be caused if Carola Goadby ended by running away with an ex-convict. Suppose we went abroad; the news would be cabled over before our ship was out of sight of land, and we’d find mobs waiting in England or France or wherever we landed to have a look at us. There is no place to run to.”

“Then let’s stay here,” said Carola proudly, “and marry and face it out. I can face it.”

Len took her hands between his again. “I knew you would say that,” he said. “You love me and you are crazy to give up everything for me, just as I

would be in your place. But you're the one that's got everything to lose, and so I must be the one to hold back." His voice faltered. "But I'm not made of iron. I can't carry through this thing alone. You've got to help me."

"I can't promise that," she said sullenly.

"Listen," he said earnestly, "we mustn't wreck each other because we are in love with each other. We mustn't let ourselves come to the point some day of cursing the day we met. We must keep it clean! I couldn't have anything else for you. God knows, I never imagined to hear myself talking like this. You have put it into me. You have given me a religion. Look, wouldn't it be better to part, and each lead our own lives, and keep this thing clean! You know it would, and I know it would, and we must help each other to carry it through."

She did not answer.

"You must think of me, Carola," he said cunningly, "if I married you now, it would certainly wreck me."

"Wreck you?" she said astonished.

"Everything that is decent in me knows that I've got to leave you alone," he said. "All last night I was fighting it. I wasn't trying to make myself do the right thing, for I always knew what that was. I was trying to find some excuse to take you anyhow. It's no go. If I married you now, I would feel like a cur every time I looked at you. This good feeling," he struck his breast with his clenched hand, "the first good feeling I ever had, would turn bad! . . . When a man knows in his soul what he ought to do, and does the other thing, he's done for. He never can respect himself after that. He goes down fast. Generally takes to booze. Good God! how could I face the fact that I had spoiled the woman I loved! And you? And you? I'm no better than any other. How would you like to see me turn into just another one of these fat, lazy, booze-fighting husbands of rich women?"

His last phrase struck her harder than all that had gone before. "Oh, not that! not that!" she gasped, and covered her face with her hands.

There was a silence. When she took her hands down, her face was pale and resolute. "You are right," she said, "we can't marry . . . We just haven't any luck. There is something wild and free in your nature, and that is what I love. And my damned money would kill it . . . I know. . . ."

"Well, that's that," said Len in a voice that he tried to make cheerful; but it had a flat ring. He lowered his eyes to hide the pain in them. He had won, and life was like dust and ashes in his mouth.

Carola quietly pushed her chair back, and standing up, looked out of the window without seeing anything. She did not wish Len to see the tears that

were rolling down her cheeks. That would make it too hard for him. They came faster and faster; she breathed very carefully in order to betray no sob.

Some sixth sense informed Len of those tears. He looked up sharply, then rose, and passing around the table, took her by the shoulders and turned her around. When he saw her wet cheeks he went to pieces. This was something he had not bargained for.

“Oh, don’t! don’t!” he groaned taking her roughly in his arms. “I can’t stand it! I will not give you up!”

“Hush,” she whispered. “What do a few tears matter? Women cry very easily. You mustn’t let a few tears weaken your will. I can’t help the tears from falling, but I can be strong just the same . . . Kiss me for the last time . . . !”

They dropped wearily back in their chairs. “We must plan what we’re going to do,” said Carola passing a hand over her white face. “For the immediate future I mean. I don’t seem to be able to think. I must break with Breedon. How shall I do it?”

“I would like to find out what is behind all this,” said Len. “Could you come here for a couple of nights as if nothing had happened?”

“If you will be here, I could play a part.”

“Sure, I’ll be here.”

“And can we dance together, often, I mean? What difference will it make if it’s the end? Breedon would be pleased.”

Len’s eyes brooded over her. “Yes, let’s dance,” he said . . . “It can only be for a night or two. We couldn’t keep this up, if we were seeing each other all the time. Nobody is as strong as that. I will go away.”

Carola caught her breath, but answered firmly: “Yes, that will be best.” She had a silent struggle with herself; this time she downed the tears. “Where will you go?” she asked quietly. “You have no money. Will you let me give you some money?”

Len’s dark face was illumined by a smile. “No,” he said. “It’s best not. But I like you to offer it. . . . I shall be all right. Some rich sports who come here—I mean Walter Falconer and his friends, are backing an expedition to explore the interior of New Guinea. Starts in a month or so. They’re looking for an able man or two to join up. I think they’d take me.”

“Just the thing for you,” said Carola. “Ohh!” she breathed, “I wish I were a man.”

Various sounds about the building warned them that Elysia was getting ready to open for business. Len put his hands over and took Carola’s.

“Carola,” he said, “whatever may happen to us, to me, to you, I shall love you till I die!”

“And I you, Len!”

xix

SURROUNDED by his henchmen, Marcus Breedon was sitting in the lobby of the Mackinac Hotel, rolling a long cigar from side to side of his mouth and discussing politics and the news of Broadway. But “discussing” is scarcely the word, for the great man rarely spoke. He allowed the others to tell him, and generally reserved his opinion. When he did speak, a hush fell on the group; he was the oracle.

Like other public characters, Breedon had cultivated the faculty of pursuing his own thoughts in the midst of a crowd. At the moment while he sat there as calm and impassive as a great image of Buddha among his devotees, he was secretly anxious. Some days had passed since his fateful interview with Senator Peverley, and as yet no open move had been made, in the promised battle. Breedon was having Peverley watched, of course, and had learned how busy he was rushing back and forth between Washington and New York nearly every day. One night Peverley had even hired a special to bring him to New York. But Peverley knew he was being watched, and so adroit was he, that he nearly always succeeded in shaking his trailers as soon as he left the train. Breedon had no precise knowledge of what he was doing. It was a bit wearing even on the stoutest nerves. He perceived that in warfare it is a heap more fun to take the offensive.

All he could do was to go around and around his defenses in his mind’s eye, while he waited for the attack. He had had friendly talks with this man and that, perhaps putting a bit of money in their way, if flattery were not sufficient. Such of his victims who appeared as if they might have been pushed too hard, were privately notified that a remission of tribute was to be expected. Breedon, however, had rarely made the mistake of exacting too much. He believed in moderate payments and many of them.

Suddenly while he sat there, the name of Mack Brindle came into his mind, and he frowned slightly. I should have seen him before, he thought. He may be sore. There ain’t no reason why he should be sore, for he’s getting his pay regular, but you never can tell. These little cusses have a grand idea of

what is due to their dignity. And anyhow it's dangerous to let him lie around in idleness.

"Pete," he said to one of his friends, "call up the Bella Vista Hotel, and get Mack Brindle on the wire. Tell him to come down here and see me."

His messenger darted away.

When little Mack got this message over the wire he grinned in mixed delight and terror. It was sweet to his vanity to have the great man coming after him like this after he, Mack, had dished him. Mack had no intention of obeying the summons; that would be too much like putting his head in the lion's mouth; but he lacked the courage to refuse even over the telephone. In a voice of fawning eagerness he said he'd be right down, and hung up, meaning to change his hotel quietly, and lie low until he received further instructions from his new master.

Breedon had not quarreled with Mack. It was simply that two or three little incidents had shown him that Mack was not a suitable instrument to be used in the collection of tribute. Mack looked the part too well. However barbered, manicured and dressed up he might be, he still looked like such a mean little rat that it was compromising to a person of any position even to have him call at the house. So Breedon had replaced him with another man, no whit better, but one who did not reveal his character so clearly in his face. Mack had been told to wait until some other employment turned up. Breedon had not troubled himself to be very tactful, and the incident rankled in the little man's soul.

On second thoughts it occurred to Mack that he had better notify his new master of what had happened. He had been instructed not to try to communicate directly with Senator Peverley, so he went to James Rohrty the head of the agency who was directing the Senator's operatives. When the little man told his story with his mean grin of self-satisfaction, Rohrty cried:

"Hey, you've got to hop a taxi and go down to the Mackinac, pronto!"

Mack cringed and shrunk like a whipped cur. "I won't!" he cried. "I won't go near him."

"You got to go!" cried the other. "If you don't go Breedon will know that you've gone over to the Senator. The Senator is not ready to strike yet, and if this gets out it would be a fatal blow to his plans. This is a fight to the death, man, and you're the key to the whole position. Suppose Breedon came out on top where would you be now?"

Mack could not resist the will of the stronger man. Willy-nilly he had to get in a taxi and ride down to the Mackinac. When he got there sheer terror enabled him to show his usual obsequious grin to his former master. Breedon appeared to see no change in him. Giving him a careless hand, the great man said:

“Hello, Mack. I’m just goin’ in to eat. Come and have a bite with me.”

This greeting, casual though it was, was a signal mark of favor from Breedon, and all the other men crowded around to shake Mack’s hand with eager friendliness, not unmixed with envy. Mack grinned and cringed to all. The little fellow’s breast puffed up with satisfaction. Never before had he attained such a position of honor in the gang. Huh! he thought, I got both the big fellows eatin’ out o’ my hand now. No flies on me, I guess.

When they sat down at the table in the restaurant, Breedon tried him out with a few careless seeming questions.

“Well, Mack, how goes it?”

“Oh, so-so, Mr. Breedon. I can’t complain.”

“What you been doin’ with yourself, lately?”

“Nothin’ a tall, Mr. Breedon; nothin’ a tall. Just been hanging round the hotel waitin’ for orders. Been kinda dull.”

“Well, I didn’t forget you, Mack. I was just waitin’ until the right thing turned up for you; something suitable for your particular talents.”

The big man gave the little man a look of contemptuous jocularly, and Mack laughed heartily, while inwardly he writhed. Damn him! he thought, he’s givin’ me the laugh now; but just wait! It’ll be my turn before long.

Breedon went on: “I got a little job for you now, Mack. Just temporary till somethin’ better turns up.”

“What’s that, Mr. Breedon?”

“Know anything about Senator Frank Peverley?”

Breedon’s eyes bored through Mack like gimlets, but terror gave the little man the strength to meet his glance without quailing. “I on’y know what everybody knows,” he answered. “What you read in the papers.”

Apparently Breedon was satisfied. “Well, Peverley and me is at outs,” he continued. “In fact Peverley says he’s gonna smash me, though how he’s gonna do it ain’t been specified.”

Mack laughed uproariously. “Smash you!” he repeated. “That’s a rich one, that is! The idea of anybody smashin’ you!” Inwardly he was saying to Breedon: That’s all right, you big puddin’! I’m the one that’s gonna smash you! Yeah, me, little as I am!

“Well, I ain’t scared to death over it,” said Breedon carelessly, “but of course I’m takin’ my precautions here and there. I’m keepin’ an eye on Peverley, and that’s where you can help me.”

“Any way I can help out, Mr. Breedon.”

“Peverley certainly has his spotters in Elysia, and I want you to spot his spotters, see? Get yourself a good-looking girl, and come to Elysia to-night as

a guest. You can sign checks for anythin' you want."

"Sign checks at Elysia!" said Mack rapturously.

"Sure! Anythin' you wanta order up is on the house. Come ev'y night for awhile, and find out for me who is watching me and Miss Goadby. Here, you'll want a bit of money, too, to blow your gal to the theater and so on." The famous roll of bills appeared—it was said to be the largest carried in New York, and Breedon peeled off ten yellow backs, and passed them over.

This is *good!* thought Mack, taking them.

The rest of the conversation was along the same lines. When they had eaten, and Mack was leaving, Breedon said affably: "Drop in before lunch tomorrow, Mack, and we'll have another talk. Drop in often."

Mack ought to have known that when the big fellow laid himself out in this fashion he was most dangerous; but, as is always the case, the little man was so carried away by the fuss that had been made over him, he didn't stop to think. This good-by was said in the lobby of the Mackinac. Two of Breedon's "friends," Pete Kallen and Tony Tarquin, young men with a reputation for stopping at nothing, slipped out unobtrusively just ahead of Mack. They had received their instructions. They mixed in the crowds on Broadway, and when Mack came out one picked him up on one side of the street, while the other followed at a little distance on the opposite side.

Mack, having a suspicion that he might be trailed, cast many a fearful look over his shoulder; but Pete and Tony were old hands at that game. He did not discover them. By degrees he became reassured. However he did not care to go direct to Rohrty's office. Instead, he returned to the Bella Vista, and called Rohrty on the telephone from his own room. They made appointment to meet in a room of another hotel further uptown, and Mack proceeded there in a taxicab.

When he told his story the famous detective clapped him on the shoulder. "Great stuff, Mack! Your fortune is made, my boy!"

Mack swelled up all over again. He certainly was getting it handed him, he thought.

"Now, I'll tell you what we'll do," Rohrty went on, "I'll give you the description of the two operatives that we plant in Elysia every night. One is known as Colonel Summerville. Looks like a retired British army officer; red face, big white mustache, white hair, wears a monocle. The other is Diana Listen, a beautiful blonde. She goes there with different men. Later I'll phone you and tell you what she's going to wear, so you can identify her. You report these two to Breedon as Peverley's sleuths, and they'll be given the air, see? That will make you solid with the old man. Then you can go on and do their work. You can do it twice as well because you are on the inside with Breedon.

Their job was to watch Breedon, also Carola Goadby, and report their movements every night. Also to make friends with the waiters, and report the general gossip of the place concerning these two. It's a cinch, Mack."

"It's a cinch!" echoed Mack, puffing out his little chest.

They took care to leave their meeting place separately. Mack went first. He passed out through the lobby of the hotel walking on air. So much hot air had been fed him that he had almost as much difficulty keeping the ground as a gas balloon. As a matter of habit he gave a sharp glance around the well-filled lobby, but saw nothing to alarm him. Pete Kallen was hidden by a pillar and Tony Tarquin was sunk in a big arm chair with a newspaper held up in front of him. As soon as Mack passed out through the revolving doors, the two young men exchanged a significant glance. It was not necessary for them to say anything. Pete followed Mack out of the hotel, and Tony raised the newspaper again. He had the tail of his eye on the elevator doors.

Mack walked back to the Bella Vista with Pete a discreet distance in the rear. When Pete saw his man safe at home, he went into a cigar store and telephoned to the Mackinac for a car. As he issued out of the cigar store, Tony Tarquin came strolling along. These two having been side kicks for a long time past, understood each other very well. Their speech was laconic.

"Thought I'd find you here," said Tony.

"Who was it?" asked Pete.

"Jim Rohrty, Peverley's man."

"Thought so. I telephoned for a car. They'll be expecting us at the back door."

"I get you."

That was all. No comment on the situation. They leaned carelessly against the wall, waiting for the car. The two young faces were as if carved out of stone. Only the glittering eyes moved.

Presently the car rolled up. It was Breedon's own rakish landaulet. The body being lighted by a window in the door only, the back seat was always in obscurity; which made the vehicle useful for a variety of purposes. The chauffeur was another stony-faced young man of the same ilk. They all understood each other with half a glance. Pete and Tony got in. The Bella Vista lay just beyond the place where they had been waiting.

"Stop at the door of the hotel and wait there," said Pete.

When the car stopped again, Pete said to Tony: "You stop here and I'll fetch him out."

Mack Brindle still lingered in the lobby, talking to some of his hotel acquaintances with a self-important air. The little man squared his shoulders

and puffed at a cigar; when Pete came in he was in the act of saying: "Yes, as Marcus Breedon said to me at lunch to-day . . ."

Pete Kallon's brow was now as open as the summer sky, his smile all friendliness. "Hello, Mack," he said. "I come after you. The old man wants you again. You cert'nly are in demand."

This summons exactly fitted in with Mack's mood, and no thought of danger occurred to him. He was delighted to be sent for within the hearing of his acquaintances. "I'll come right down," he said importantly. "Well, so long, gentlemen; see you later."

As they crossed the lobby he asked with a patronizing air: "What is it this time, Pete?"

Pete's face was bland. "You can search me," he said. "Somepin about the arrangements for to-night, I t'ink."

"Oh, sure," said Mack, nodding his head sagely.

He was charmed to find Marcus Breedon's own car waiting for him, and hoped that they were watching from inside the hotel. But when he opened the door, and ducked his head in, he saw the other figure sitting motionless in the corner, and took sudden fright. He started to draw back saying: "I won't go!" Pete with a lightning glance around, made sure that no one was looking. With a sudden boost he sent Mack sprawling inside, and climbed after. As Mack fell in, Tony flung up his hand with lightning swiftness and brought it down on the little man's head. There was a dull crack, and Mack went limp without a sound.

Pete climbing over his body, pulled the door shut after him, and the car moved away.

The two young men took it quite as a matter of course. They spoke but once. Tony said:

"He may come back before we get there."

Pete answered: "Gag him and roll him in the lap robe."

It was done.

Behind the Mackinac Hotel there was an alley that was used for the delivery of goods. The rakish black landaulet nosed in and out of it a dozen times a day, and was a familiar sight in the neighborhood. Often it was parked in there for hours at a time. On this occasion the chauffeur brought it to a stop with the running board scraping the frame of the service doorway. The car door when opened, swung inside the larger doorway, and the chauffeur stood at the other side, blocking any possible view that way. In a twinkling the muffled body was passed through the door and into the service elevator which was beside it. On the top floor of the hotel it was whisked into a room opposite

the elevator, and casually dropped on the floor. A grunt escaped through the wrappings.

The two men who had assisted Pete and Tony vanished. Pete freed Mack of the lap robe by the simple expedient of giving one end of it a jerk that caused the captive to roll out of it. Mack had regained consciousness, and his eyes mad with terror, rolled piteously from one of his captors to the other. He whimpered under his gag. Pete and Tony looked down at him dispassionately. Tony lit a cigarette, and Pete went to the telephone and took down the receiver.

xx

WHEN MACK BRINDLE left the Mackinac Hotel after having lunched with Marcus Breedon, Len Farley was arriving. The big fellow had summoned him down for a "little talk." Breedon took Len up to a room on the second floor that was reserved for his use during the day. It was furnished in the smartest hotel style of perhaps ten years ago, which was already beginning to look out of date, but Breedon cared nothing for style. Below the windows the kaleidoscopic human show of Times Square rumbled all day and flashed at night.

Breedon was still affable; offered Len a cigar, and pressed him to take a comfortable chair. Len, more perspicacious than Mack, was wary of him.

"Well, lad, what's the good word? You're lookin' pretty peart."

"Oh, I can't complain," said Len with the good-humored grin that made such an admirable cover for his real feelings. However, notwithstanding his nonchalance, a change had come over his grin. Strong feeling is bound to leave its marks. During the last few days his face had become older and quieter. Breedon marked the change, but did not comprehend the reason for it. According to his notions, Len should have been beaming with happiness and self-satisfaction. He apprehended that something was working against him here.

"Got any news for me?" Breedon asked with a significant grin.

"Nothing special," said Len.

"Hm! You know the old saying about striking while the iron is hot."

"Sure do, boss."

"My God! Len, you got a chance such as don't come to one young fellow in a million. It's like winning a kingdom. You don't want to trifle with it."

"I'm doin' my darndest, boss."

"You been havin' a nice teet-a-teet up at Elysia every afternoon, ain't yeh?"

It went sorely against the grain with Len to discuss this with Breedon, but he knew that if he refused to do so, it would immediately bring about a showdown, and he was not ready for that yet. So he grinned still, and answered in the affirmative.

"Then why don't you cinch it?" demanded Breedon.

"I don't get you, boss."

"Why don't you marry the girl?"

"'Tain't my fault," said Len with a laugh. "I ask her every day, but she's still stallin'."

"Stall, nothin'!" said Breedon. "What you want to let her stall for? She's crazy about you, ain't she?"

"Gosh! I don't know," said Len.

"Well, I know. I can see it. Of course it's natural for her to hang off some on account of the publicity and all. What you got to do is sweep her off her feet . . . I don't have to tell you how to do that, do I?" he added with his significant grin.

"No," said Len.

"Now look here, Len," Breedon went on with his most fatherly manner, "I got your interests at heart, lad, and I called you down to drop a word of warning in your ear. If you don't cinch this matter within the next day or so, you're likely to be dished, my boy."

"How?" asked Len.

"Ever heard of Senator Frank Peverley?"

Len nodded.

"He has sworn to get your girl," Breedon went on. "A determined man and a powerful one. He's already suspicious about what's goin' on at Elysia, and I don't doubt but what he's got his spies watching us. Once he gets on to you, your goose will be cooked."

"Why?" asked Len.

"Why?" repeated Breedon with a hard stare. "He'll tell Carola about your prison record, won't he?"

"That won't hurt," said Len. "I already told her myself."

Breedon was considerably taken aback. He rubbed his upper lip to conceal that fact. "Well, maybe you done right, maybe you done right," he said at last. "How'd she take it?"

“It didn’t make any difference to her.”

“Fine!” said Breedon. “But look, even though Peverley couldn’t queer you with Carola direct, he could raise an awful nasty stink. It’s one thing to have a story whispered around, and another to have it come out in cold print. Carola *couldn’t* marry you after the newspapers had said you were an ex-convict. Why, much as I like you, Len, I’d have to advise her to give you the air, just on account of the harm it would do to Elysia. . . . Are you gonna see her up there this afternoon?”

Len nodded.

“Then you want to fix it up this very afternoon,” said Breedon. “We’re just teeterin’ on the edge of a nasty scandal, and to-morrow it may be too late. Give her the grand rush. There ain’t a woman can resist it. Whirl her into the next state, either Connecticut or Jersey, and bring her back married. Then you can tell the Senator to go plumb to hell. I’ll lend you my car. What do you say?”

Len was in a very difficult position. “I’ll think it over,” he said, grinning.

Breedon’s face suddenly turned dark, and he struck the table. “Think nothing!” he cried. “I’m telling you!” The pretense of friendliness had disappeared. The man’s cruel and implacable nature was revealed in his cold gray eyes. Terrible eyes; their command had rarely been resisted; but it was resisted now. Len said nothing. He thought: Oh well, a show-down was bound to come. I did all I could.

“Do you hear me!” said Breedon. “I’m telling you what to do!”

“I hear you.”

“Are you going to do it?”

“No!”

Instantly Breedon resumed the mask of friendliness. He laughed carelessly. “Well, we won’t scrap about it. You must excuse me if I seemed to get a little hot. I’m an older man than you and accustomed to having my advice taken. But of course it’s your affair, and you must pull it off in your own way. I ain’t got no interest in it but what is yours.”

Len was not deceived by these honeyed words. He knew that henceforward Breedon would have it in for him; but he did not see how the big man could injure him, powerful as he was, as long as Carola stood by him. They parted in apparent amity, and Len hustled back to Elysia to keep his date with Carola.

When he was left alone, Breedon paced up and down the room with his heavy, soft tread, head lowered, hands clasped behind his back. There was power in the big figure; he might have been the Secretary of State deliberating

upon the policy of the nation instead of only the prince of blackmailers. He was unable to puzzle out the relations that existed between Len and Carola; the situation was outside his experience. He was anxious; but not unduly so; what one does not comprehend is always a source of anxiety; but it never occurred to him that the penniless young man might be honest and disinterested with a girl as rich as Carola.

One thing was clear to Breedon. Len would never serve his purpose now. He went over in his mind the names of several ambitious young lawyers whom he could call on to do a little piece of dirty work. . . . There was Abel Zuckert—but he had been too closely connected with the affair of Carola Goadby in the beginning; there was Harry Capper, he would do. Breedon sat down at the telephone and called him up.

Ten minutes later Capper was in the room; a white faced young man with hard, bright eyes; one who was determined to get on in the world by hook or by crook. He was almost breathlessly eager in his desire to be of service to the great man.

“H’are yeh, Harry,” said Breedon affably; “sit down. Have a cigar.” Breedon himself dropped in one of the easy chairs, and letting his head fall back, blew smoke reflectively towards the ceiling. “I asked you to come up,” he went on, “because I thought I seen a chance to put a bit of money your way, Harry.”

“Cert’n’y was kind of you to think of me, Mr. Breedon.”

“Some weeks ago,” Breedon continued, “there was a robbery pulled off in a flat on the upper West side. I forget the names of the parties, but I got a memo of it in my safe. A pair of diamond earrings was taken worth between three and four thousand dollars. They was fully insured, so the Britannia Insurance Co. was the only losers. They been lookin’ for the thief ever since. They got an eye witness to the affair who can identify the thief if he is landed. They have offered five hundred dollars reward, and that’s the piece of coin I thought you might as well cop off, Harry.”

“Yes, Mr. Breedon,” said the lawyer, moistening his lips.

“I got an idea that the thief is one of the young fellers who are hired to dance with the lady patrons of Elysia,” said Breedon, “and I suggest that you take a detective representing the insurance company along with the eye witness up there to-night, and see if you can pick him out. If you find your man, arrest him on the spot, though of course you don’t want to make any scene about it.”

“You can depend on me for that, Mr. Breedon.”

“Well, there’s your tip. Go to it.”

“But they say Elysia’s so crowded you have to reserve a table weeks ahead,” said the lawyer anxiously. “How can we be sure of getting in?”

“I’ll fix that. You ask for the manager Mr. Frawley when you go in. He’ll have a table for you.”

“All right, sir, and thanks to you. If you’ll just give me the names of the people that was robbed, and the identifying witness . . .”

“Sure, I got an affidavit from him in my safe.”

As Breedon went down on one knee to work the combination, he remarked casually: “Of course my name is not to be mentioned in any way.”

“I quite understand that, sir,” said the lawyer fervently.

“I hope to have better things to put your way from time to time,” said Breedon affably.

“Cert’n’y is kind of you, sir.”

When Breedon came back to the telephone with the affidavit in his hand, the telephone bell rang. Breedon, clenching the paper in his hand, took down the receiver. The voice of Pete Kallen came to his ears.

“That you, boss?”

“Yes.”

“We got our friend up here in room 1515.”

“Has he got his samples on him?” asked Breedon.

Translated, this meant: Did you catch him with the goods? i.e. in the act of betraying us; and Pete answered dryly: “Sure, a complete line, boss.”

“All right,” said Breedon, “I’ll come up to look them over.”

Breedon, hanging up the receiver, seemed to go into a study, still clenching the paper in one hand. His face was like a mask of clay. He appeared to have entirely forgotten the presence of the lawyer. The latter waited politely for awhile, then began to fidget. Finally he cleared his throat apologetically.

“You was goin’ to give the names of the parties, Mr. Breedon . . .”

Breedon roused himself. “Excuse me, Harry,” he said affably. “An important piece of business just come in.”

“Don’t mention it, Mr. Breedon. The names . . . ?”

Breedon, still wearing an air of abstraction, got up, and returning to the safe, put the paper back where he had got it, and closing the door, gave the combination a twirl. The lawyer’s face fell. Coming back to the table, Breedon said coolly: “I’ve changed my mind. Sorry, you had your trip for nothin’, Harry. But of course I’ll pay you your fee for consultation.” The great roll appeared from his pocket. He peeled off five bills.

The lawyer politely protested against taking the money, but took it nevertheless. He still looked crestfallen for fifty dollars was not five hundred; however one could not afford to criticize so powerful a client.

When he had gone, Breedon, sunk in thought, proceeded along the hotel corridor with his heavy, soft tread. He had the fat man's gait, the knees giving a little under the weight of his body, but there was strength there and a coarse distinction. No longer having any need of being on his guard, his face was dark and lowering. He had forgotten the cigar, but his thick lips were still pursing themselves up and twisting as if they held it. The first gun in the campaign had been fired. There was no doubt now, but that he had the fight of his life on his hands. He was meditating a brilliant stroke that would not only crush his enemies, but increase the terror of his own name fourfold. It could never be brought home to him, but everybody would know; everybody would know! He summoned an elevator, and had himself carried up to the top floor.

xxi

NUMBER 1515 was one of the smaller and meaner rooms of the Mackinac Hotel, furnished with cast offs from the rooms below. It provided a fit setting for the sordid scene which was concluding there. Mack Brindle was writhing at Breedon's feet, weeping, beating his head on the floor, frantically protesting his innocence of any treachery. All in whispers, for Pete Kallen stood by ready to kick him if he raised his voice. The faces of both Breedon and Kallen were perfectly impassive; neither disgust nor anger showed there. Tony Tarquin leaned against the wall trimming his nails.

Though they had wrung a hundred damaging admissions from him, Mack like an imbecile, continued to protest his innocence. "I never told them a thing! I never told them a thing!" he whined. "May God strike me down dead if I would lie to you, Mr. Breedon! All night long they kept at me and kept at me, and I never let out a thing. I was carried down to Washington in a car by force. It was Judge —— told the Senator about you, not me. I never let out a thing! They wanted me to sign a paper, but I wouldn't sign it, and I didn't sign it! Not though they put a gun to my head! I am true to you, Mr. Breedon. Always I was true to you. Only give me another chance to prove it!"

Coolly kicking Mack out of the way, Breedon made for the door of the room. "We've got all there is to get out of this little skunk," he said. "Put the gag on him again."

Mack went scrabbling after him on hands and knees, and clung round Breedon's legs. "Oh, God! Mr. Breedon, what are you gonna do to me!" he moaned, mad with terror. "Spare me! Oh, spare me! I swear I never told."

Pete adroitly threw the gag over his head from behind, and drew it tight. Mack's voice was stifled to a piteous whining. Pete flung him on the floor. He writhed there, his distended, fear-crazed eyes rolling from face to face. Breedon, looking down at him, bared his big yellow teeth in an ugly smile.

"Why, I wouldn't hurt a poor little shrimp like you," he drawled. "You'll have to go down to the house at Bay Ridge, and stay there until this blows over. After that I don't care what you do."

The gagged man's eyes desperately searched his face to read what might be the truth of his meaning.

Pete followed Breedon outside the door of the room. "We're to take him down to Bay Ridge?" he asked.

"Sure."

"How long we got to keep him there?"

Breedon and his man exchanged a look full of meaning. "Damned awkward," said Breedon, "I got other work for you and Tony to-morrow. I can't spare you for jailers."

"We'll be back," said Pete briefly.

Breedon never gave Mack another thought.

Back in his own room on the second floor, he applied himself to the telephone again. He put in a call for a man he had working for him in Washington. While he waited for that to come through, he called up Mrs. Piers Moberly. She was not at home. He finally ran her down at the house of a friend.

"Marcus Breedon speaking," he said. "Can you come down to the Mackinac and see me?"

"What about?" she asked sharply.

"My dear lady," said Breedon, "if it was something I could tell you over the phone, I wouldn't put you to the trouble of coming down."

Silence on the part of Mrs. Moberly. "Do I have to come?" she asked at last in a low strained voice.

"That's for you to decide," said Breedon.

"Very well, I'll come," she said with exceeding bitterness.

"Fine!" said Breedon. "You needn't ask for me at the desk. Come right up to room 206 and walk in."

While he was waiting for her, he got his Washington man on the wire. Their talk was brief. Breedon, asking for information about the movements of Senator Peverley, was informed that the Senator had been in his office all day, but had booked a drawing-room for New York on the midnight sleeper, and a drawing-room to return on the Congressional at five the following afternoon. He was advertised to speak at the banquet of the Pan-American congress the same night. Breedon, hanging up the receiver, rubbed his hands in satisfaction.

Mrs. Piers Moberly entered the room with a polite mask upon her handsome, haggard face. She was still a superb woman, tall, slender and most beautifully dressed; and with an expression of insolent assurance that marked her out as one of the eminent of the earth. When she saw that Breedon was alone in the room, she dropped her mask. Her lip curled bitterly. "Well, here I am," she said.

Breedon hoisted himself out of his chair. "Sit down; sit down," he said affably.

"Thanks, I prefer to stand," she answered shortly.

"Have a cigarette," said Breedon, offering her the box. "I don't use 'em myself, but I always keep 'em for my friends."

"No, thank you," she said. "What do you want of me?"

"How can I talk to you comfortably when you take that tone?" said Breedon, with a humorous, deprecating air. "Relax! Relax! I am your friend."

She laughed harshly. "I have to come here when you send for me," she said; "I have to pay you what demand of me. But I don't have to be agreeable to you when we are alone together. I don't have to conceal the fact that I think you are the greatest scoundrel in New York!"

Breedon spread out his hands with the air of one who was resigned to being misunderstood. "There you go!" he said smiling. "For years you have had that idea in your head. It's a kind of mania with you. I never took a cent off you in my life!"

"Tell that to the Marines!" said Mrs. Moberly. "If I am not in your power, how did you come to summon me so impudently?"

"To do you a favor," said Breedon blandly. "This is the only place where I could talk to you without publicity."

Her laugh of bitter amusement sounded again. However, she condescended to sit, and to light one of her own cigarettes. "This is good!" she said. "Proceed!"

Breedon turned his chair around, and sat down, watching her steadily. While his voice dropped sweetness, his eyes were as hard as gray agate. The honeyed words were all a part of the game; he did not expect her to be swayed

by them, but by the cold threat that his eyes conveyed. "I have lately found out who it is that has been blackmailing you," he said.

"Well, here's a piece of news!" said Mrs. Moberly, laughing.

"And I think I see my way to put a crimp in his game."

She looked at him with a sudden wild eagerness. "You mean . . . you mean . . . ?" she began breathlessly—then she laughed cynically. "Oh, I see! What have I got to do?"

"Well, it may be that you can do me a little favor in return," said Breedon. "I thought you wouldn't mind . . . You're an old friend of Frank Peverley's, ain't you?"

"Yes," she said, "known him since childhood . . . I wouldn't betray Frank in any way," she added quickly.

Breedon spread out his hands. "My dear lady! Give me a chance to tell you what it is!"

"Well, I'm listening."

"I seen you up at Elysia a couple of times," Breedon began, "so I'm supposin' that you're on to the situation there. Of course you won't believe anythin' good about me, but the fact is I'm crazy about that li'l girl, Carola Goadby. I feel towards her just like a father. She's the best influence that ever come into my life!"

Breedon with his curious capacity for self-deception, believed this while he was saying it. Mrs. Moberly sneered.

"Now the situation is gettin' out of my control," Breedon went on. "Did you happen to notice a young feller up there called Len Farley?"

Mrs. Moberly nodded.

"Carola is gettin' stuck on Len," said Breedon, "and I'm afraid she's gonna do something rash. Maybe you've heard the gossip about him? Well, it's true. He has served time at Sing Sing. My God! if he and Carola was to get married think of the scandal!"

Mrs. Moberly having made a pretty complete mess of her own life could not be expected to betray much concern over the threatened downfall of another woman. "What can I do to stop it?" she asked coldly.

"Give Peverley a hint of what is going on. He's the girl's only male relative as I understand it. Let him do something to save her."

"Why don't you tell him yourself?"

Breedon was prepared for this question. "Now, I ask you," he said raising his shoulders. "If I told Peverley, and he busted up the affair, the li'l girl would turn on me. Well, I'm only human. Now she's nothin' to you, nor you to her; you could tell him all right."

Mrs. Moberly considered the proposal, studying the burning end of her cigarette. Her intuition told her that Breedon was playing some deep game, but for the life of her she could not fathom it. It looked all right on the surface. And of course there was a chance that he might be telling the truth. "And for doing this I am to be relieved of paying any further tribute?" she asked cautiously.

"I think I am safe in promising that," said Breedon.

"Do I get my letters back?"

"Oh, I couldn't answer as to that."

She laughed. "That means I must still dance whenever you pull the strings!"

"Now, Mrs. Moberly!" said Breedon reproachfully. "Ain't I convinced you yet that I'm dealing with you on the square?"

"No," she said bluntly.

"Well, if I live long enough I hope I may. . . . What do you say?"

"How would you know whether I had carried out my orders?" she asked.

"By the results," he said dryly.

"What is it exactly that you want me to do?"

"I am informed that the Senator is comin' over from Washington to-night on the sleeper," said Breedon. "When he spends the day in town he goes to the New Amsterdam Club. He will have his breakfast there. You must call him up real early, because once he gets out, there's no telling where you can find him, and . . ." (He paused to make a rapid mental calculation) "as I understand it he's going back to Washington early. Make an appointment to see him right after breakfast, and tell him just what I told you."

"Well, I'll do it," said Mrs. Moberly. "In fact, I have no choice."

"Make it strong, because the situation is urgent," Breedon went on. "Tell him that this Len Farley is an ex-convict and a blackleg, and that he has cast a spell over Carola. You have seen the fellow; describe to the Senator what a damnable handsome guy he is, and how he mows down the women like so much grass. And lastly, here's the thing that worries me; I just got on to it. At night they act careful enough with each other, but every afternoon between three and five they meet at Elysia when there's nobody there."

"God forgive you if you are lying to me!" said Mrs. Moberly, searching his face.

Breedon made his face as bland as a baby's. "You'll see! You'll see," he said soothingly.

Breedon's next visitor was Sam Frawley who came in a little after five. Breedon didn't waste much comedy on Sam. "Have they been together all afternoon?" he rasped.

"Did they leave the place together?"

"No. I took Carola home in my car. Len, he stayed at Elysia."

"Did you find out if they were going to meet there to-morrow afternoon?"

"Yes. They are. Carola asked me to be there as usual at three."

"Well, don't go," said Breedon shortly.

"Hey?" said Sam, astonished. "Why not?"

"Damn it!" said Breedon hitting the desk. "Do I have to explain my reasons to everybody?"

"No, no, Mark, sure you don't," said Sam soothingly. "You know your business best."

"Stay away from Elysia to-morrow afternoon," Breedon repeated meaningly, "and if you're wise you'll have a good alibi prepared when she asks you why you didn't come. I tell you this as a friend."

"Sure, sure, Mark. I'll see to it."

"Now, here's another thing," said Breedon, "is there anybody in particular up at the club that Len pals with?"

"Well, there's Jack Winters," said Sam. "Len has him up to his room sometimes. Len ain't got no use for the other sheiks up there."

"Can you get hold of Jack before the show to-night?"

"Sure. I know where he eats."

"Is Jack safe?"

"Cheese! yes. Jack 'ud jump through hoops and walk on his hands to keep his job there."

"Good! then here's a delicate little piece of business for you to handle, and for God's sake don't bungle it."

"Shoot, Mark."

"See Jack Winters, and get him to approach Len some time to-night, and warn him as a friend, that Senator Frank Peverley is on to him and Carola. Wait, now. Jack must have some explanation ready as to how he heard this. Well, one of Peverley's spies is the girl Diana Liston who comes to Elysia every night. Let Jack tell Len that he overheard this girl say to her partner that the Senator was layin' for the jailbird, and had threatened to shoot him on sight."

"I get yeh," said Sam.

“Most of these sheiks totes a gun just for the look of it,” Breedon went on, “but anyhow I want to make sure that Len has protection. I think a heap of Len. If he has no gun Jack Winters must be prepared to lend him one. If Jack has a gun to give him, so much the better. If he hasn’t, I’ll give you one to pass along.” From a drawer of the table he took a small automatic of blued steel, and handed it over.

“Could this be traced?” asked Sam anxiously.

Breedon gave him a pitying look as much as to say: What do you think I am? “This is Jack’s gun, see?” he said. “He’s been carryin’ it for five years, and he bought it from a man called Stanowitz in the Bowery who’s now gone out of business.”

Sam chuckled silently, in appreciation of the big fellow’s wit.

“Well, that’s about all,” said Breedon. “When Len and Carola come to Elysia in the afternoons do you have a cook and waiter on duty?”

“Not any more,” said Sam. “She don’t want it.”

“Good,” said Breedon. “I won’t be round to-night. Call me up and let me know how things go.”

Breedon slept with the telephone on a stand beside his bed. Towards morning he was awakened by the sound of the bell. “Hello, Mark,” said Sam Frawley’s voice, “just wanted to report that the word was passed along just like you wanted. Len, he said, when Jack told him: ‘Well, if anybody pulls anything, I ain’t so slow myself.’ I didn’t need what you give me, because Len has one of his own.”

“All right; I hope the lad keeps out of trouble,” said Breedon piously.

xxii

CAROLA and Len were seated at the little table by the window looking at each other. These afternoon hours were desperately precious to them because both knew that they were numbered. Their parting, which they had themselves willed, was like an advancing doom that might not be averted. Both knew by instinct that these hours constituted the top of their lives, and that hereafter they must be content with existence upon a commoner level, regretfully looking back. Therefore, every minute, every second was charged with importance. It seemed to them that they could never get said all that had to be said. Yet so fearful was each of making the parting harder for the other,

that they could permit themselves no displays of emotion. Their voices were quiet and steady.

“I feel as if we were sitting on a powder magazine,” said Carola.

“Same here,” said Len grimly. He had more knowledge of the explosives than she had.

“Then we must act for ourselves before we are blown up.”

“Right!”

“It’s got to come!” said Carola. “So let us . . .” But her voice faltered. She could not finish.

“Let us call this the last time,” said Len with a wooden face.

Carola nodded. “But what will you do?” she asked, looking at him piteously. “You won’t let me . . .”

“Oh, I’ll be all right,” said Len with a painful grin. “Seems I have acquired a sort of fame here. I have been to the proprietor of the Forty-Four Club. He will take me on to-morrow.”

“You couldn’t stand that,” said Carola anxiously.

“Not for long, maybe,” said Len grinning. “But later there is the chance of the expedition to New Guinea. . . . What will you do, Carola?”

“I shall sail for France on Saturday.”

“Alone?” he asked startled.

“No. I’ll go with a girl I know. A splendid girl. At first she was just a mannequin at Mandel’s, but I helped her to start her own shop. She is going to Paris to get into touch with the houses there.”

“Oh, Julia,” said Len. “You told me about her. That will be fine.”

There was a silence.

“But this place is on my conscience,” said Carola. “How can I let it continue, now that I know the sort of thing that goes on here?”

“Oh, that reminds me,” said Len putting his hand in his pocket; “here is the paper you asked me to read over for you. I’m no lawyer, but as far as I can make out it’s a perfectly regular agreement of sale between you and Paul Chablon, who has now departed for parts unknown. They say he was not the owner of this place, and in that case of course the paper is worthless, and your half million is gone to the bow wows.”

“Never mind that,” said Carola with a painful gesture, “all I want to do is to stop it.”

“I think you could do that easy enough,” said Len.

“How?”

“Well, publicity will cut both ways. It’s been stated in the papers over and over that you were the proprietor of this place. Why, on the first night it was publicly announced from the stage, in Breedon’s presence. The night before you sail you write to Sam Frawley instructing him to close the place, and at the same time write to the papers stating that you are not satisfied with the way Elysia has been conducted, and that you have therefore ordered it closed.”

“What would happen?” asked Carola, opening her eyes.

“It would have to close. Breedon couldn’t very well claim then that you had no right to close it. And even if he did find some trick to keep it going, the people wouldn’t come here any more. The wrong kind of publicity is fatal to these places. No, he’d close up, and sell the lease for what it would bring.”

“And open somewhere else,” said Carola bitterly.

“Sure,” said Len. “But you mustn’t worry your head about that. You’re not responsible for Breedon. Nor for all the poor fools that fall into his net. Neither you nor me is strong enough to break Breedon. For me it’s enough that you win away from him clean and clear. Thank God! he’s got nothing on you!”

“Thanks to you,” murmured Carola.

“Thanks to yourself,” retorted Len. “Even Breedon couldn’t smirch you.”

“I owe everything to you,” she insisted.

“Well, look at what you’ve done for me,” said Len. “You’ve made a man of me!”

“You were a man before I knew you,” said Carola, with a soft smile.

“Oh, physically, maybe. But that cuts darn little ice.” He unconsciously clenched his fist for emphasis. “A man isn’t really a man until he is forced to face things clear through!”

“Then you’ve made a woman of me,” said Carola, “for that’s what you forced me to do, face things.”

“Well, we won’t scrap about it,” said Len grinning. The grin faded. “It’ll be grand if we can always tell ourselves that we did good to each other!”

Carola nodded, and looked quickly out of the window. There was a silence.

Len drew a design on the tablecloth with his forefinger. “Look,” he said, “when you go away, can we write?”

“Oh, yes!” cried Carola in alarm. “Why shouldn’t we? They can be such letters that anybody might see. You and I don’t need to make vows to each other. Just friendliness. I need that.”

“You will always have it,” said Len quietly.

Their hands crept across the table and clasped. They lost themselves in each other’s eyes.

“We mustn’t do this,” whispered Len. “It’s fatal.”

“It’s the last time,” whispered Carola.

They heard a sound on the stairs, and drew away from each other.

The stairs rose directly into the restaurant. A handsome man of authoritative carriage mounted into view, followed by one who looked like an attendant. Len, who was facing the stairs, saw him first. An instinct warned him that it was Senator Peverley, and he involuntarily sprang to his feet. Carola looked sharply over her shoulder. Len’s eyes fastened themselves on the man’s hands. If they had made a move towards his pocket . . . !

But he came forward with outstretched hands; his face while lividly pale, was bland and smiling. “Here you are!” he said to Carola. That was the politician of twenty campaigns. In spite of his superb self-command, his hand gave a little shake, that Len marked. Somehow it was more suggestive of his rage, than if he had come foaming to the table. Len knew his enemy.

Carola had had no experience of the passions of men, and her first feeling was one of mere displeasure. Her greeting to Peverley was cool.

Peverley gave Len an inquiring and contemptuous glance that was intended to flatten him out, but it passed without effect on the wary Len. Carola introduced them:

“Mr. Farley . . . Senator Peverley.”

Peverley gave Len a nod sideways, and bent over Carola. “So sorry to have disturbed you,” he said, “but I had a little matter of business to talk over with you, and I’m obliged to return to Washington on an early train.”

“How did you learn that I was here?” asked Carola.

Peverley laughed lightly—he could not quite keep the acid bitterness out of the sound: “They told me at your house that you came down here every afternoon to do your accounts.”

Carola knew this was a lie, but pretended to accept it. As soon as Peverley came close to her her instincts took alarm from the deathly pallor of his face and the strained tones in his voice. She had her courage, too. “Pull up a chair, and sit down,” she said coolly.

“Carola, give me five minutes of your time,” said Peverley lowering his voice.

Aware now that the man was half beside himself with rage, Carola had no intention of depriving herself of the protection of Len. “If it’s business, you can speak before Mr. Farley,” she said. “He has my confidence.”

This was a nasty blow for Peverley. He stood in silence by the table with a hideous smile etched on his face, until he was able to recover from it. “We are

friends, are we not?" he went on, still pointedly addressing Carola. "Have I not the right to ask that much?"

Carola would not yield. "The last time we talked together privately," she reminded him, "it didn't do anybody any good."

He humbled himself yet again, with a laugh that betrayed the fearful strain he had put upon his arrogant nature. "When I said it was a matter of business, I was not exactly speaking by the book. It is really a highly personal matter."

"Then speak out," said Carola. "Mr. Farley is my friend."

This was too much for Peverley. "All right! All right!" he said in a low voice shaking with rage. "I will speak out. This gentleman who possesses your confidence, this friend of yours, is in fact an ex-convict."

"I know it," said Carola.

Peverley was horribly taken aback. "You know it!"

"He told me himself."

"Oh," sneered Peverley, "with the extenuating circumstances I suppose."

"If there were any extenuating circumstances he didn't mention them."

"I . . . I cannot understand you," said Peverley helplessly. He walked away a step or two to recover himself.

Carola understood by this time that his anger threatened not herself, but Len. She had no fears of Len being able to defend himself against Peverley, but the second man terrified her. He had remained standing at the head of the stairs watching them, but out of earshot, since all had kept their voices low. In a moment Peverley turned around with a perfectly composed face. So much self-command in a man of such a passionate nature seemed marvelous.

"Who is that man, Frank?" asked Carola with an affronted air.

"Oh, that's my bodyguard," said Peverley with a laugh. "I've been warned that my life was in danger, so I carry him around with me."

"Your life is not in danger here," she said. "Send him downstairs to wait."

Walking over to the man, Peverley spoke to him in an undertone, and he went downstairs. Carola breathed more freely. Returning to the table, Peverley drew up a third chair, and sat himself down.

"Well, since we must, let us talk this matter over together," he said with an appearance of frankness that was part of the art of the orator.

Carola was deceived, but Len was not. His finger was still nervous for the trigger.

"I concede," Peverley went on, "that Farley has strong personal recommendations"—his nostrils were very bitter as he said this, "and I am willing to concede furthermore that he may have been entirely blameless in

going to prison. Just the same, what you are going to do spells certain ruin. This enormous structure of publicity that has been built up around you, will fall and crush you. There is nothing that the public loves better than to tear down one of their own idols and stamp on it . . .”

“But excuse me, Senator,” put in Len with his good-humored grin. “It appears to me you’re barking up the wrong tree. We are not aiming to get married.”

Peeverley of course thought this was merely a lie to put him off. “Oh,” he said, thoughtfully pulling his nose, while he debated how to entrap them into an admission. Turning to Carola he said: “You realize then that it would be fatal to marry him.”

“I don’t care to discuss the matter,” said Carola. “We are not going to marry. That is enough.”

“Well, that’s a load off my mind,” said Peeverley with a seemingly open face. “It’s the only thing to do. I’m not saying that society is just in these matters; just or unjust you can’t change it. A man can live down any crime, but the prison taint, never! It’s like a deformity.”

Peeverley said this with a serious, reasonable air, stroking his face. Len marked the slightly trembling hand, and smiled, Carola was infuriated by that single ugly word.

“Taint!” she cried. “That’s ridiculous. There is no taint on him. Look at him! If that was all, I’d marry him to-morrow.”

The disclosure that Peeverley had provoked, was too much of his self-control when it came. He sprang up knocking his chair over backwards, his face working like a madman’s. “You scoundrel, you have bewitched her!” he cried, and his hand went to his hip pocket.

Len was prepared for something like this. He drew his gun at the same moment. Carola was electrified. Springing up, she half flung herself across the table, and seized the wrist of either man.

“Drop them! Drop them!” she cried with blazing eyes.

With sheepish expressions they opened their hands, and the guns clattered on the table. Carola snatched them up, and whipping a napkin around them, clutched them to her breast. A reaction set in. She turned sick with terror of the tragedy she had so nearly provoked. True to her womanhood, she sought refuge in anger. She cunningly affected to be equally angry with both men.

“You fools!” she cried. “What are you trying to do? Make me the heroine of a newspaper tragedy?” She dropped into her seat, shaking like a leaf.

The men likewise sat down, scowling sullenly, and watching each other out of the corners of their eyes. Their blood was up, Len’s now no less than

Peverley's, and they resented her interference. Both wished her away from there, so that they could settle the issue.

"Carola, please leave us," said Len. "I've got to teach this man a lesson. You've got the guns. There won't be any serious damage."

Peverley laughed harshly. "You've got a lesson to learn, my man," he retorted.

"I shan't go!" cried Carola, her voice scaling up hysterically. "You are mad, both of you!" She was forced to pause until she could control her shaking voice. "Frank," she resumed, "you said you wanted to talk to me. Well come away from here, and you can talk to me all you like."

"It's too late," he said sullenly, "he's the one I want to talk to now."

"Len," she said imploringly, "come away with me, and leave him here."

Len stubbornly shook his head. "You ask too much of me," he said, "I can't sneak out of here under cover of your skirts!"

"Oh, what is one to do with such a pair of madmen!" cried Carola despairingly. Then she stiffened. "All right," she said, "then we'll all stay here together."

And stay they did, the three of them at the little table almost touching each other; Carola clutching the guns to her breast and the men eyeing each other. It was one of the preposterous situations that the passions of men bring about; it had its elements of childishness as well as of danger. The great restaurant was perfectly still; it was already beginning to grow dark out of doors, and the back of the long room was wrapped in obscurity. The sounds of the street reached them, a little muffled by the closed windows; the banging of motor trucks, the honking of taxis, and even the whisper of shuffling feet on the pavements.

Len never ceasing to watch the other man, tipped his chair back, and taking a cigarette from his case, tapped it deliberately on the table and lighted it from a pocket lighter. Peverley, not to be outdone, likewise produced a cigarette, and signaled that he wished a light. He wished to provoke an attack from Len. But Len merely grinned, and gave him the light. Carola watched them fascinated like a bird.

In the end Len softened with pity for her. The brave eyes, the white cheeks, the soft lips pressed tightly together to conceal their trembling, reminded him too strongly of the dear little girl. It was a shame to subject her to such an ugly and terrifying scene. He threw away the cigarette. "Carola, I'm sorry," he said. "I'll go . . . alone."

Peverley sneered, but Len never looked at him.

A heavenly smile irradiated Carola's strained face; the tears she had been fighting back, sprang to her eyes. "Oh, thanks, Len," she breathed.

The feeling that escaped in that little phrase; love and trust and understanding, drove Peverley completely mad. He sprang up with an oath. Seizing the back of his chair, and swinging it around his head, he tried to brain Len with it. Len easily slipped out of the way. Seizing the chair, he wrenched it from Peverley's grasp, and set it spinning down the room. Peverley rushed at him. Len gave ground, and hauled off his right fist. There was the crack of bone on bone, and Peverley dropped to the floor. He was not injured. He scrambled out of the way on all fours, and getting to his feet, crouched, watching Len, and searching sideways for a weapon. There was blood running down his chin. Carola looked on frozen in horror.

"Fetch help," said Len curtly. "I don't want to kill the man."

His words galvanized her into motion. She ran for the stairs calling: "McPeake! McPeake!"

There was no answer.

She ran on down the stairs calling louder: "McPeake! McPeake!"

The entrance hall was completely deserted. Carola could not understand it. Half frantic, she opened the doors of the different dressing rooms, and of Frawley's office, calling for the doorkeeper. From overhead she could hear faintly, the sounds of a furious struggle. Finally there was the dull sound of a fall—and silence.

A moment later Len appeared on the stairs wiping his hands on his handkerchief. "It's all over," he said with a cheerful grin.

Carola collapsed, half fainting, on the bottom step. Len sprang to her aid. Picking her up, he carried her to one of the settees in the lobby. She did not altogether lose consciousness, but clung to him, shaking.

"There! There!" crooned Len, "It's all right, baby. There is no harm done. Everything's as right as rain!"

"What happened?" she gasped.

"I put the hot-headed Senator to sleep with a sock on the jaw," he said grinning. "He'll be himself when he comes to."

"You are sure he is not injured."

"Not a bit in the world beyond a cut lip and a bit of a shaking. He's a game coon, I'll say."

Carola clung to him, letting her nerves quiet down. After a moment Len said: "Come on, baby, let's get out of this. The Senator's strong-arm man," he looked around him, "wherever he is, can bring him to. He won't want to see us when he wakes up."

“Yes! Yes!” said Carola; “let’s get out of this place. I will never enter it again.”

Carola’s fur coat, Len’s coat and hat were in the cloak rooms. Getting them, they made for the door. But in the act of opening it, Carola hung back.

“No,” she said, “we shouldn’t leave him like this. It would make a horrible scandal if he were found lying there. It would ruin him. He’s not a bad fellow, Len. It is only that . . .”

“Sure, I understand how he felt,” said Len. “I got no hard feelings now.”

“Then let’s go back and help him. Let’s see if we can’t hush the thing up.”

Len hesitated. “You go home,” he said. “I’ll take care of him.”

“No,” she said, “I must help smooth things over. It would be too bad if his whole career was ruined for a thing like this!”

They turned back. “What shall I do with these things?” said Carola indicating the revolvers.

“Give ’em to me,” said Len, “if you’re not afraid to.”

“I am not afraid of you now.”

Len dropped the pistols in his overcoat pocket, and tossed the napkin in a corner. They went up the stairs hand in hand like a pair of children. Len gave Carola’s hand a reassuring squeeze as he dropped it.

Senator Peverley was lying on his back at the edge of the dancing floor, some thirty feet from the head of the stairs, and perhaps half that distance from the table where they had all been sitting. His head was close to the base of one of the pillars that supported the balcony. The moment that Len caught sight of him he said sharply:

“He’s changed his position! . . . He looks funny!” and started to run towards the prostrate figure.

Carola’s legs failed her. With a horrible premonition of disaster, she leaned against the pillar at the head of the stairs, pressing her clenched hands to her breast. In the gathering darkness she apprehended the dark stain that was spreading under Peverley’s head. Len stopped short beside the body, and clapped his hands to his head; a silent and unspeakably tragic gesture. Then he dropped like a stone to his knees, and lifted Peverley up. Dark drops fell from the man’s head to the floor. Len let him fall back.

“Oh God! he’s dead! . . . he’s dead!” he said hoarsely. Bowing his body forward, he pressed his head between his arms.

FOR a long time as it seemed to Carola there was no movement in the darkening restaurant. Len continued to kneel beside the dead body bowed forward with his arms wrapped around his head. She supported herself against the pillar a little way off so benumbed with horror as scarcely to be conscious of feeling anything. The noises of the street seemed to rise louder; the shuffle of feet on the pavements increased as the workers began to hurry home; thousands of people hurrying to their quiet homes without a care on their minds; life going on regardless of disaster.

Then Carola perceived that the spreading pool of blood under Senator Peverley's head was creeping towards Len's knees. She screamed faintly. "Len, get up! Get up!"

He got slowly to his feet, and stood back, still gazing stupidly at what lay on the floor. Finally he looked at Carola, no less dazed than she. "Carola," he said hoarsely, "I didn't do it."

"I believe . . . I believe . . ." she stammered. Her tongue refused its office.

Resolution returned to Len. His back straightened. He looked at Carola strangely. "I love you," he said. "This is the best way." He thrust his hand in his pocket.

That brought Carola to life. With a cry, she ran and flung her arms about his arms. "No! No! Len, not that!"

"It is the best way!" he repeated.

"You didn't do it!"

"Yes, but he's a Senator and I'm an ex-con.," he said with a half smile. "How much of a show would I stand?"

"He attacked you first," said Carola, "I can swear to that!"

"Oh, they couldn't send me to the chair," he said, smiling still; "give me fifteen years maybe. That's enough. I have sworn that they shouldn't put me behind the bars again. Let me alone. I am the boss of my own life."

He roughly freed himself from her encircling arms, and took the pistol from his pocket. Carola became suddenly quiet. "All right," she said with steady eyes and trembling lips. "Maybe it is the best way. I will follow you. There will be plenty of bullets left. Let's make a complete job of it."

A spasm passed across Len's face, and his pistol arm dropped at his side. "No!" he said hoarsely, looking at her as a man looks at an unearthly vision. "Not a pistol bullet . . . You are too beautiful!"

"I will do it, if you do," she said, "and you know I will."

“God help me, what else can I do?” cried Len in sharp despair.

She took hold of both his arms. “Fight!” she said. “We have plenty of money. Much can be done with money. If everything fails, if they put you behind the bars in spite of all, I will provide you with the means to . . . to do what you wish.”

“You mean that?” he said searching her with his burning eyes.

“I swear it,” she said simply.

“All right,” said Len curtly. He dropped the pistol back in his pocket.

Immediately afterwards it seemed, the place became filled with howling confusion. Pat McPeake the doorkeeper, and the man who had served as Peverley’s bodyguard came running up stairs. Lights were switched on revealing the scene in all its ghastliness. At the same time several waiters, just come on duty, ran in through the serving doors around the sides of the room. They filled the restaurant with their senseless cries. The detective was for running to call the police; McPeake, a big man, restrained him by main strength, having some imbecile notion apparently, of doing away with the body and concealing the crime. Meanwhile the waiters were imploring Len and Carola to tell them what had happened. Carola was incapable of doing so, and Len would not.

“Bring in the police,” he kept saying. “I’ll tell them.”

In the middle of this there was a ring at the street door, which at this hour was locked of course. McPeake ran downstairs, and admitted Marcus Breedon, who had just alighted from a taxicab at the door. He asked for Sam Frawley. When McPeake stuttered out what had happened up above, Breedon came running up the stairs with astonishing celerity considering his weight and age.

His heavy face offered a study in horror when he took in the scene. “My God! My God! this is terrible!” he muttered. He looked around. “Carola, you here! Oh, this is terrible!” He wiped his bald forehead with an immense linen handkerchief.

Several voices simultaneously attempted to explain what had happened. Breedon waved his hands before him. “Silence, all of you!” he cried. “Let Len tell me!”

Len with a hard face told his story in curt, bitter sentences.

Breedon punctuated it with sympathetic nods. “Sure! Sure! You couldn’t have acted any different. Nobody could blame you, Len. He must have struck his head against the pillar when he fell.”

“He didn’t strike the pillar,” said Len. “I was looking at him when he fell.”

“Oh, you were too excited to notice,” said Breedon. “He must have hit his head on the pillar. He couldn’t have got that wound from the flat floor.”

“Well, have it your own way,” said Len indifferently.

“Where were you when this happened?” Breedon demanded of McPeake.

“Downstairs,” said the doorkeeper stolidly.

“He wasn’t there,” said Carola. “I ran to get him as soon as they began to fight.”

“Well, boss,” said McPeake sheepishly, “the fact is me and this fella got to talkin’ and I ast him back to the pantry to have a smile with me. I keeps a bottle back there.”

“I never thought of any harm comin’ to the Senator with Miss Goadby here and all,” added the detective.

“Hm!” said Breedon, studying.

“Who’ll go for the police?” asked the detective.

“Sure!” said Breedon. “But wait a minute! . . . Men,” he went on, addressing them with a friendly and persuasive air, “I’m studyin’ to see if I can’t keep Miss Goadby’s name out of this terrible affair. My God! we don’t want to see that young girl mixed up in it, do we? There are seven of us here. Before we get the police in, can’t we agree amongst ourselves to keep her out of it?”

A chorus of affirmatives answered him. A gleam of eagerness showed in Len’s somber eyes. Even Peverley’s detective moved by the sight of Carola’s helplessness, and appalled by the possibilities of scandal that were involved, agreed with the others. Anyhow Peverley was dead, and he was out of a job. A prudent man must consider that.

“But I have something to say about this,” said Carola sharply.

“Now Carrie; now Carrie,” said Breedon soothingly; “let me take care of you in this. Nobody need ever know that you were present. We can easy fix up an alibi. You go upstairs and wait in Len’s rooms until we get the police out; then I’ll slip you home.”

“I will not go,” said Carola, “my testimony is needed. There is nobody but me to swear that Len acted in self-defense.”

“Sure there is,” said Breedon. “We can find plenty of witnesses to testify that Peverley was going around town looking for Len.”

“Just the same, I will testify too,” said Carola.

“Let me speak to her,” said Len. He drew her away towards the back of the room. “Please, *please* do what he wants,” he begged. “This is maybe the last thing I shall ever ask you.”

“But Breedon is a scoundrel,” said Carola. “This is some fresh scheme of his to entrap us.”

“I don’t care,” said Len recklessly. “It’s what I want. I’ve got enough to go through with, I just can’t stand the thought of dragging you down with me. That’s the one thing that I can’t bear.”

“You make it very hard for me,” said Carola with tears standing in her eyes. “How can I keep silent?”

“You couldn’t do me any good,” said Len grimly. “I’m done for, and we might as well face it. Suppose you got me off with a sentence of five years, what of it? I wouldn’t serve one. I want to leave you behind me unsullied and unharmed. Oh, let me have that much!”

“But think of me a little,” protested Carola with the tears falling fast, “how can I appear to abandon you?”

“You won’t be abandoning me. You can hire lawyers and detectives to work for me. I make no objection to taking the money from you for that. You can work for me to better advantage by keeping under cover.”

This consideration influenced Carola. She hesitated in an agony of indecision.

Breedon spoke: “You’ll have to look sharp, Carola. The rest of the staff will be coming. We can’t answer for all of them.”

“Very well,” said Carola. “I will try to keep out of it now. But I won’t promise as to the future. It will depend on what happens.”

She was rewarded by the look of relief that spread over Len’s face. He pressed her hand.

“I will not hide in the building,” said Carola. “Let me leave at once.”

“That will be all right,” said Breedon. “It’s dark outside. You won’t be recognized. Come on.”

Carola went down the stairs with a piteous backward look at Len.

Breedon let her go alone. He sent Peverley’s detective downstairs to telephone to Police Headquarters. When he was out of sight, Breedon dropped on his knees beside the body of Peverley, and went through his pockets. To the watching men he said carelessly:

“I got to make sure he isn’t carrying anything that would bring the girl into it.”

Apparently Senator Peverley did not carry important papers on his person. Breedon found nothing that interested him.

A few minutes later Inspector McNamara, chief of the bureau of detectives arrived with several of his men. The reporters who had got the news at Headquarters, followed. The Inspector forced them to remain downstairs while he conducted his first examination. A wiry, fine drawn little man, he betrayed nothing in his composed face; his crisp, impersonal manner would have been

the same had the victim been a stevedore instead of a Senator; but his assistants, men of lesser caliber, suggested in their awe-struck faces what a stupendous sensation they had on their hands. An electrical tension filled the place. Breedon had the subdued air of a man crushed with horror, but he had his wits very much about him. His eye was everywhere. It was he who brought the Inspector upstairs.

To the Inspector Len told his story all over again. This time he suppressed all mention of Carola's having been present. He represented that Peverley had called at Elysia looking for him. His air of hard self-possession was perfect.

"We sat down at a table yonder by the window," said Len, "and we talked."

"What about?" asked the Inspector.

"That I won't say without the advice of counsel."

"Go on."

"The Senator lost his temper, and jumped up and pulled a gun on me. I disarmed him. A moment later he picked up his chair and aimed a blow at my head, but I took it from him, and slung it across the floor. There it lies now. Then he came at me with his bare hands, and I knocked him down. He had no show against me with his fists, but he was crazy. He kept coming back. I knocked him down a couple more times. And the last time he didn't get up again. I just thought he was knocked out.

"I left him lying there, and went downstairs to get my hat and coat. I thought the man he had brought with him would bring him to, and I wanted to get out. But at the door I thought I better try to bring him to myself, and hush the thing up, it would make such a scandal for a public man like him. So I came back upstairs, and I found him dead. That's all."

"You said you disarmed him," asked the Inspector; "what did you do with his gun?"

"I have it in my pocket."

"Hand it over."

Len produced both pistols. "This is mine," he said; "so this must be his."

"So you had one, too," said the Inspector. "Have you a permit to carry it?"

"No," said Len; "but last night I got a tip that he was looking for me with a gun."

"Who told you this?"

"Jack Winters, a fellow who works here."

"Where did he hear it?"

"He told me he picked it up at one of the tables."

“Had the Senator any reason to be looking for you as you say?”

“He thought he had a good reason.”

“What was it?”

“That I refuse to answer just now.”

“That is your right,” said the Inspector coolly. “Search him,” he said to one of his men.

Len submitted to the search as a matter of course. Nothing was found on him but what a young man might be supposed to carry: cigarette case, lighter, watch, penknife and wallet with a moderate amount of money. He was then sent downstairs under guard. So far the Inspector appeared to be satisfied with his story. Everybody was sent downstairs while the Inspector and his principal assistant conducted their examination of the body.

When Breedon got down to the ground floor he found that Sam Frawley had arrived, preparatory to opening the place for the evening. Refusing to answer all questions, Breedon took Sam into the private office and shut the door. In the briefest possible manner he told Sam the public version of what had occurred. Sam dropped into his chair half stupefied. Breedon strode up and down the little room with his hands behind him, looking straight ahead with eyes that saw nothing of what was before them. To an ordinary observer it might have seemed merely the agitation natural to the circumstances; but Sam Frawley knew him pretty well, and Sam saw that the big fellow was filled with a dark exultation that he had difficulty in concealing. That was why he had shut himself up in the little room. Now Sam himself was no sensitive plant, but he was filled with a kind of terror of Breedon. Good God! what a man! what a man! he was thinking.

Meanwhile, upstairs, the Inspector and his assistant had turned the body over on its face. A single glance at the back of his head was sufficient. It had been crushed in with a blow from some blunt instrument. It was impossible that such a wound could have been received in a fall. The two men exchanged a significant look and rose. The Inspector glanced around the restaurant and instantly observed that every table bore a brass match stand with an ash receiver in its base. The metal base was filled with plaster of paris to make it heavy, and with the match receptacle for a handle, the whole made an effective weapon. Every table bore one *except* the table beside which the dead man lay.

“Let us see if we can find that one,” said the Inspector dryly.

A rapid and silent search revealed the missing match stand under a table in the farthest corner. It was broken in two, and the matches were scattered about. The Inspector carried it carefully out under the light, and took out a pocket microscope to examine it.

“Got an envelope?” he asked.

An envelope was produced, and the Inspector carefully placed in it two hairs that he found clinging to the base of the stand. He then placed the edge of the base in the ugly depression in the back of the dead man's head. It fitted. He said:

“In the back of his head, you observe. Either he was running away when he received that blow, or else he was already lying face down on the floor. It pretty well explodes the theory of self-defense.”

xxiv

CAROLA fled home like a wounded creature, dazed with pain. Her fine house offered her but a sorry refuge then; it contained no creature to whom she might open her heart; but she had no other place to go. She was even denied the ease of showing that she was in pain. In order to keep up the fiction that she had not been present at the affair, it was necessary for her to enter her house with a clear brow as if she had not heard the news. She did the best she could. Whether or not she succeeded in deceiving the servants, she could not be sure. She told her maid she would rest for an hour before dressing for dinner, and flung herself on her bed, a prey to despair.

At first she was filled with utter confusion; then little by little her thoughts began to crystallize. She perceived that what had happened could not have been due merely to accident. Somebody had sent Frank Peverley to Elysia that afternoon, knowing that he would find Carola and Len together, and that a quarrel would certainly be provoked. Well, Len had told her what had taken place between himself and Breedon the day before, and she felt that she had no further to look. *Breedon!* It all fitted together! Carola's nature knew no half measures. The fat man loomed before her mind's eye as an inhuman monster.

At this point her maid entered, apologizing for disturbing her by saying that Mr. Breedon was downstairs, and had sent word that he must speak to her on a matter of the greatest importance. It sprang to Carola's lips to say that she would not see him, that she would never see him again, but she checked herself. She began to see that she had a more difficult part to play. Len had said that he and she were not strong enough to fight Breedon. His words seemed prophetic now. He was surely right as far as direct methods were concerned. If she attempted to fight Breedon in the open, she would fail and Len would suffer by it. But a woman had other ways of fighting a man; indirect ways. If she allowed Breedon to suppose that he was still deceiving

her, might she not surprise the truth out of him? An appallingly difficult part to play: but she had read of women who had done as much for the men they loved.

She said to her maid: "Send down word that Mr. Breedon is to be shown up to the boudoir, and come back and put something on me."

Breedon was waiting for her with a heavy and lugubrious air. "My poor girl! My poor girl!" he said wagging his head.

Carola was half fainting with repulsion. She made a vague gesture to signify that the situation was beyond mending with words of sympathy.

"Are we safe from bein' overheard?" Breedon asked, looking around.

"Quite safe," said Carola.

"Well, I come because somebody had to seem to tell you the news, see? Now, you don't want to go and worry yourself all night, Carrie. Everything will be done that can be done. It's a clear case of self-defense of course. I will take the full charge of engaging lawyers for Len and so on."

Carola bit her lip. Here, already, was an agonizing decision that had to be made. It seemed as if it would be a fatal thing to entrust the defense of Len to Breedon; but on the other hand she could not oppose it without coming to a break with the man. If she allowed the least suspicion of Breedon to show, it would ruin the plan she had formed. Her head spun around. Fortunately her agitation seemed natural enough under the circumstances.

"Len himself is the one to decide everything," she said faintly. "No step must be taken without consulting him."

"Sure, sure," said Breedon.

"I will supply whatever money is needed."

Breedon held up his hand. "No, Carrie! I take that upon myself. I feel strongly about this matter, specially because Len and me had a bit of a tiff yesterday. . . . Did he tell you about it?" he asked with a cunning gleam in his eye.

Carola told herself that her line henceforward must be to learn all and tell nothing. "Why no," she said, looking at him full. "What was that?"

"Well, never mind that now," said Breedon. "But if he had on'y taken my advice!" He finished with a shake of the head. ". . . There's somepin else I gotta ask you, Carrie. What you goin' to do about Elysia to-night?"

"Close it," said Carola quickly.

"That's nacheral; that's nacheral," said Breedon soothingly; "but listen, Carrie, I got to tell you what I think or I wouldn't be a true friend. A house of entertainment has got a duty to the public that has got to be observed. Every table in the place has been reserved for a long time in advance. Some will

cancel of course when the news gets about, but not many. If you was to close to-night it would be a blow to the prestige of the house, from which it would never recover. It ain't done, Carrie. All show people know that. That's why an actress goes right on with her part, though her mother is lyin' dead in the little parlor at home."

What a disgusting hypocrite! thought Carola. How could I ever have been deceived. . . . But what does it matter whether Elysia opens or closes when I have so many more important things on my mind? "Do whatever you think best," she said aloud.

"That's the girl!" said Breedon heartily. He gave her a sharp, calculating look. "I suppose I couldn't persuade you to show yourself there for a little while," he ventured.

"Oh, no!" said Carola with a gesture of repulsion she could not repress.

"It's very important to get the newspapers to take the right view of this affair," Breedon went on smoothly. There was a curious combination of cajolery and threat in his tone. "There's nothin' the public appreciates so much as gameness. If you was to show yourself there to-night as usual with your head up, by Gad! they'd treat you like the Queen of New York, and no mistake. Nobody would dare to make any insinuations. But of course if you hide yourself, like, there's no knowing what they may say."

"I will not go!" said Carola.

Breedon saw that it was useless to try to persuade her. "All right, all right," he said. "After a day or two you can come back with a knockout."

When he had left her, Carola walked the floor of her boudoir, struggling to bring some order out of the confusion of her mind. There was no longer any need to conceal her agitation. She perceived by the changed expressions of her servants that the news was generally known throughout the house. Their faces expressed more curiosity than sympathy, and Carola felt terribly alone. I shall go mad if I cannot find a friend, she thought. But where was she to look for aid? All she could think of was Len sitting in a cell with his head wrapped in his arms and Frank Peverley lying in an undertaking establishment with his weeping relatives around him.

By and by she heard the newsboys crying extras in the street, and shivered afresh. How quickly such things became public property! Before she had so much as started a plan to meet the situation, everybody knew! Naked and friendless in the pitiless glare of publicity, what good was all her money to her? Where could she turn? How live through the long night with her torturing thoughts?

And then like a ray of light through the murk, the thought of Ed McQuissick came to her. As his plain ordinary, friendly face rose before her

she could have groaned with relief. There was a true man, steady as a rock; a detective, too, well experienced in such matters; the very man! She ran to the telephone, quivering with apprehension. She had treated him badly. Would he have the generosity to forgive her?

By good fortune she found him sitting down to his supper at home. His response to her question was, hearty and instantaneous. "Sure, I'll come to see you, Miss Goadby."

"Oh, thank you," faltered Carola, partly breaking down. "I don't deserve it."

"I'm real glad you called me up," said McQuissick simply. Evidently he had read the extra. "Just as soon as I swallow my supper . . ."

"But wait," said Carola, pulling herself together; "I think we ought to keep our meeting a secret, at least until we have decided what is best to be done. I am surrounded by watchers and spies."

"Then if you came to my place you'd be followed."

"I would, most certainly. Listen; I have a friend that I sometimes go to see. It is Miss Julia Winterring the dressmaker. She lives in the Alvord apartments. The Alvord has an entrance on Amsterdam avenue and another on Broadway. I enter from Amsterdam avenue. If you went in by the Broadway door and crossed the court, we could meet in my friend's apartment without anybody knowing of it."

"Good!" said McQuissick; "I'll be there in half an hour."

On her way uptown Carola bought one of the extras. The headlines in letters three inches high ran clear across the front page. The story that followed sickened her. While it stuck pretty closely to the facts and preserved at least the forms of impartiality, nevertheless the impression was clearly conveyed that there was no doubt of Len Farley having killed Senator Peverley. The two men had met in the deserted restaurant, and after a quarrel which was admitted by the accused, Peverley had been found dead, his head crushed by a blow from a heavy brass match safe. This last fact was new to Carola. It was like piling fresh horror on the already staggering load.

She found McQuissick quite unchanged; neat, matter-of-fact and ordinary looking. The invariable quizzical smile did not hide his honest warmth of heart. His kindness unnerved Carola, and she told her story with the tears streaming down her cheeks. Nevertheless, she told it clearly. His face darkened as he listened—not with any doubt as to the rightness of their side, but with anxiety at the difficulties that faced them.

"We have the devil himself against us!" he muttered.

He asked a few significant questions. Had Sam Frawley the manager been in the place when the thing happened? No. Had he not always been there on

previous afternoons? Yes. Had he not told Carola that he would be there. Yes. “Hm!” said McQuissick when he heard these answers.

He strode up and down the room, scowling and pursing up his lips, thinking hard. Carola with clasped hands hung upon his next words like a prisoner awaiting the verdict of his jury. Finally he stopped, facing her.

“Ain’t you got anybody better qualified than me to advise you?” he asked. “Any relative?”

“If you fail me I have nobody,” said Carola faintly.

“I ain’t goin’ to fail you,” he said harshly. “I just wanted to make sure that I was the best one for you.”

“You are the only one.”

“All right,” he said firmly. “I’ll do the best I can for you. And may God guide me right! . . . First-off, I think you did right in givin’ Breedon as much rope as he wanted. We’ll stick to that line. Let him think he’s running the show.”

“But he won’t really work to get Len off.”

“Of course he won’t. But it takes time to arraign a man for trial. Meanwhile I’ll be workin’ underground. . . . It’s goin’ to be a hard job on you, but I’m countin’ on you to pull it off. There mustn’t be any half measures about it. You must make Breedon believe that you think he’s the finest man on earth, and that you are doin’ everything he advises. If I was you I’d show myself at Elysia to-morrow night.”

“I’ll go there to-night if you think best,” said Carola desperately.

“No, that might start him wondering what had made you change your mind. To-morrow night will be better. And you should let him see that now Len is down and out, you are cooling towards him a bit, and that whoever goes under you intend to stay on top.”

“But if I seemed to change like that, Breedon would certainly suspect something,” objected Carola.

McQuissick shook his head. “No! Breedon expects everybody to be crooked at heart. It would seem quite natural to him.”

“How shall I set to work to get the truth out of him?” she asked.

McQuissick raised a quick hand in admonition. “You mustn’t try anything like that,” he said, “or Breedon will certainly smell a rat. Your job is just to lull his suspicions; to make him think that everything is all right, while I do the ferreting.”

“Have you got a plan?” she asked anxiously.

“Yes, I got a plan,” he cautiously answered, “but I ain’t sure yet if I can work it. And anyhow it will be easier for you to do your part, if you don’t

know just what I'm doin'. I'll keep you advised. It may be that I'll be in a position the next day or so where I can't let you hear from me. If you don't hear, you'll know that everything is goin' O.K."

"Tell me plainly," said Carola imploring; "what chance have we got of saving Len?"

"Sure, I'll tell you on the level. I wouldn't lie to you. You've got too much sense. I should say the chances were fifty-fifty. Len is innocent. That ain't everything, like the storybooks try to make out, because this is a wicked city and many a good man gets done in. But it's something. On the other hand we're up against the cleverest and most powerful crook in New York. He thinks he's got an absolutely watertight organization. Well, it's up to me to find out if there's a hole in it anywheres. About fifty-fifty I should say."

xxv

THE newspaper next day nearly broke Carola's heart, but she could not leave them alone for fear of missing something that was important for her to know. They were laid before her edition after edition as they appeared. It was the greatest sensation in years, and everything else had to give place to it. It was her first experience of the hunting pack giving tongue, a terrifying discovery to her generous heart. The newspapers themselves were not to blame; they were merely reflecting the feeling of the great mob, their master. Len Farley had been shown to them as their victim, and they were after him in full cry. With popular opinion at such heat, it would have been positively dangerous for anybody to suggest publicly that Len might not be guilty. Only a hero would have ventured it, and no hero appeared.

Columns upon columns were devoted to recounting the public services of Senator Peverley, all of which added fuel to the flames. In order to allay the public wrath, the district attorney announced that the accused would be brought to trial with record-breaking swiftness. It is true, one of the most expensive and conspicuous criminal lawyers was engaged to defend Len, but he appeared to Carola to be chiefly seeking his own aggrandizement in print. It enraged her to perceive that while ostensibly defending his client, he was secretly truckling to the mob spirit. It was a foregone conclusion that Len would be convicted. Carola felt as if an iron machine were slowly closing around her and her lover.

From the earliest hour she found herself besieged in her own house. Two additional strong-arm men were engaged to stand outside the front door to accost all who tried to ring the bell. Carola denied herself to all. In the oft-repeated story of the crime there was no mention of her name; but the implication was writ large over all that there was a woman at the bottom of it; and she had no difficulty in guessing that her name was being freely circulated from mouth to mouth. Breedon telephoned advising her to allow herself to be interviewed, but she had simply not the strength to face this ordeal on the first day. However she prepared a statement to give out, which, in the manner of such statements, ran to some length without committing her to anything. When it came time for her to go out, her car had literally to force its way through the crowd besieging the back gates, and swarming into the yard. Photographers were knocked down, and their instruments smashed.

At the entrance to the City Prison another battalion of photographers was lined up. Carola ran the gauntlet with her head up. Marcus Breedon and Fowler Downes the lawyer, were both with Len, and Carola had no speech with him alone. Len had a grim and bitter air, and a close-shut mouth. It was clear that he had prepared himself for the worst. He pressed Carola's hand, and whispered a plea to her not to come again on account of the newspaper notoriety, but she would not consent to that. The coldness that was forced upon them by the presence of others cut her to the heart. Ah! if only she could have been behind the bars too, facing the cruel outcry hand in hand with her lover, how much easier it would have been to bear!

She returned home and shut herself up again. The inaction was the hardest thing of all. All day no word came to her from McQuissick. The disreputable sheets printed alleged interviews with her which she did not take the trouble to deny. Nothing was said openly against Carola but a slime of insinuation covered all. The switchboard operator was discovered to be sending out bulletins to the press, and was summarily dismissed from the house. This day Senator Peverley's body was privately conducted to a receiving vault to await a time when his funeral could be held without danger of popular demonstrations.

Towards dinner time Breedon came to see Carola ostensibly to report progress, but in reality to endeavor to persuade her to appear at Elysia that night. Carola demurred at first, but gradually allowed herself to be won over.

Breedon said: "All your friends will stand by you. They was askin' for you last night. There was a bigger crowd than ever."

"Stand by me!" said Carola, raising her eyebrows. "Why should I need to be stood by? I haven't done anything."

“Sure, you haven’t!” cried Breedon, delighted by this evidence of returning spirit. “But there’s bound to be a certain dirty slop over from this case that will fall on you.”

“Very well, I’ll come to-night,” said Carola. “I’ll show them!”

Breedon sprang up. “Now that’s my girl!” he cried exultantly. He felt as if the last difficult corner had been passed. All was clear going now. He had her! “I knew you’d come through game!” he cried. “Blood will tell!”

Carola prepared for her ordeal with a sinking heart. Fortunately make-up and a drop of belladonna effectively concealed the ravages of grief and anxiety. She had never looked more brilliant. An instinct bade her eschew her more gorgeous dresses to-night. Instead she put on a simple robe of a priceless old lace, worn over a pink slip and girdled with a broad purple sash. Most men would have perceived only a lovely girlish effect, but any woman would have given her little finger for the lace.

There was a small-sized crowd gathered outside the doors of Elysia. A long-drawn Ahh! greeted Carola as she stepped from her car. She thought she detected an undercurrent of derision in it. Well, I wouldn’t blame them if they hooted at me; she thought. Inside the place was humming with animation. An extra row of tables had been placed around the dancing floor. Superficially it was like any other big night (A gala to celebrate poor Frank’s death! thought Carola bitterly) nevertheless a subtle change had taken place. The tone was somehow lowered. In spite of what Breedon had told her, she missed the faces of the regular frequenters around the walls. Their places had been taken by a commoner element. Occasionally she caught sight of a new face that shocked her. It looked like the face of something that had crawled out of its hole into the light for the first time. Such faces gloated over her with a horrible, naked curiosity. Retiring to the dressing room she put more belladonna into her eyes. This somewhat dimmed her sight and saved her from the pain at least of having to see such faces.

Returning to Breedon, she clung to his arm. “I shall not dance to-night,” she whispered. “Let me sit and talk with you.”

“Well, that suits me all right,” he answered, grinning and patting her hand.

As the evening progressed a rowdy spirit began to show itself amongst the tables. Not that the better class people had formerly been especially decorous in their behavior after midnight; but at least they had done their merrymaking in good taste. The newcomers on the other hand had loud, common voices; they banged their glasses on the table and sometimes smashed them. They abused the waiters and made love to their ladies in an unpalatable fashion. Twice a fight started; something that had been unheard of at Elysia heretofore.

Even what little she could see caused Carola's heart to sink into her gilded slippers. Have I come down to this! she thought.

"Who are these dreadful people?" she whispered to Breedon.

He was never at a loss for an answer. "Well, to tell you the truth, Carrie, Sam was obliged to let down the bars some, to-night. Of course if any vacant tables were to be seen it would end our vogue for good and all. The right people came last night, and when they saw you didn't come, they stayed away to-night. But they'll come back again to-morrow night when they read in the papers that you are on the job again."

Carola suspected that he was lying, but said nothing.

"Of course," Breedon went on, "the place is bound to suffer some on Len's account. The whole country is down on Len now, and you and me and all who are known to be his friends must share in it."

He said this in a sort of experimental way, obviously feeling Carola out. She asked quickly: "Do you think that Len did it?"

Breedon raised his shoulders and spread out his hands expressively. "How do I know?"

A hot little flame of anger sprang up in Carola, and for the moment she forgot the part she had to play. "He couldn't have done it!" she said.

"I don't know," said Breedon. "Maybe he had strong provocation."

"He had the provocation. I heard that."

"Well then," said Breedon, "I would never be the one to blame a hot-blooded young man for downing the man who insulted him."

"Neither would I," said Carola. "There are worse crimes. But he didn't do it. He couldn't have lied about it afterwards."

"Now be reasonable, Carrie," said Breedon. "Would you expect a young fellow full of health and vigor with his whole life before him, to out and say: 'Yes, I killed Senator Peverley!' and go to the chair for it? It ain't natural."

Carola remembered her part. She lowered her eyes to keep Breedon from reading too much there. He *is* the devil! she thought; able to put a fair appearance on everything that is base and dishonorable. "Well, perhaps not," she murmured.

"What I say is," Breedon went on argumentatively, "if Len didn't do it, who did? If anybody could show me anybody who could have done it, I'd give Len the benefit of the doubt."

Carola could only shake her head.

"We gotta face things," he said.

Carola perceived the answer that he was angling for, and gave it to him, while her heart smote her for disloyalty. "Well, maybe he did do it."

“That’s better,” said Breedon approvingly. “There’s no use in deceiving ourselves. Of course as friends of Len, it’s nothing to us whether he did it or not. We’ll work tooth and nail to get him off just the same.”

Carola felt slightly nauseated. What kind of a world was it where such a man was permitted to wax fat and rich? Who would want to go on living in such a world?

“My idea is,” Breedon continued, “that we can work for Len to better advantage if we don’t let on that we are his friends.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, if you read the papers to-morrow morning you’ll see. I don’t know why the newspaper boys come to me, but they do. And I just said: ‘Well, if Len Farley did this thing he ought to be punished.’ That satisfied them, see? They want everybody to say that Len is guilty. And I was thinkin’ if you would come out with something of the same sort, it would free your hands like, to work for Len. For then the public wouldn’t be suspicious of you.”

Carola thought: If I expect to fool this man, I must make a thorough job of it. “I never thought of that,” she said, looking at him full. “You’re right, of course.”

“You and me’ll work for Len until Hell freezes over,” Breedon went on enthusiastically. “We’ll spend money like water. Most anything can be done with money. But of course they may get him in spite of us—we gotta keep that in mind, Carrie, and if they do, we got our own lives to live.”

“Surely,” said Carola, with her eyes fixed on his. (He can’t read my thoughts; she told herself.) “We’ve got our own lives to live!”

Breedon radiated satisfaction. She’ll give me no trouble; he thought.

A deep depression seized on Carola, almost paralyzing her will. Of what use was it to go on fighting in a world where such wrong prevailed? Would it not be better for her and Len to leave it together? Perhaps there was a happier world to come. At the same time she was aware of the danger of such thoughts. I must fight for Len, for Len, she kept telling herself. But her spirits sunk ever lower. A hint of suspicion appeared in Breedon’s eyes.

“Buck up, Carrie,” he said a little harshly, “it would queer the whole works if the notion was to get about that you was grievin’ for Len.”

Carola smiled, and toasted him with her glass. God knows what an effort it caused her. Her heart was like a leaden ball in her breast.

And then, leaning over a table on the other side of the dancing floor she saw Ed McQuissick! *Ed McQuissick!* He wore no disguise save the waiter’s conventional black suit, and the napkin over his arm; but he seemed to have changed his very skin. He was the well-trained deferential waiter to the life.

Carola laughed inwardly at the deft gesture with which he picked up a morsel of fish between fork and spoon, and transferred it to the diner's plate. What a marvelous man! How on earth had he got himself a job in Elysia?

A great gush of gratitude and fresh courage filled Carola's breast. Ed was working for her! There was still decency and good faith and loyalty in the world, and it was well worth fighting for!

Raising her eyes to Breedon's, she said with a careless laugh: "It wasn't of Len I was thinking, but of the general messiness of the whole business. However, I don't mean to let it get under my skin. After all, it's not our funeral. We've got our own lives to live!"

Breedon beamed, completely reassured. "That's the talk!" he cried, clinking his glass against Carola's.

xxvi

JULIA WINTERRING postponed her sailing for France in order to provide what comfort and assistance she could to her friend. It was arranged that Julia should act as intermediary for the messages passing between Carola and McQuissick. Every day after the first day McQuissick sent word that things were going as well as could be expected, but he had nothing important to pass along. On the fifth day, Julia casually suggested over the phone that Carola come up to her place. Carola, hastening to obey, found Ed waiting for her there. The sight of his homely face was as good as a cordial to her. Julia gave them her little breakfast nook for their conference.

"I ain't made such an awful lot of progress," Ed said deprecatingly, "but at that I got a sort of case laid out."

"Yes," said Carola breathlessly; "go on!"

"What we're up against good and plenty," said Ed, "is the popular feeling against Len. I mean there are several men around town who know that there was bad blood between Breedon and the Senator, and that the Senator was trying to get Breedon. James Rohrty the head of the detective agency is on, and Judge — of General Sessions is another. Rohrty told me that Peverley had got hold of a go-between of Breedon's called Mack Brindle, and had extracted a confession from him. I've been doing my darndest to find this Brindle, but he has clean disappeared, and there was no written confession. Rohrty says he can't testify to the verbal confession having been made, because it would only be hearsay. The real fact of the matter is that these

fellows are satisfied like everybody else that Len did the trick—possibly at Breedon’s instigation. There is no chance of getting them to testify unless we can show that somebody else could have done it. Well, that brings me to Elysia . . .”

“How did you get in there?” asked Carola.

“It wasn’t hard. The best people in town have dropped the place like a hot potato, and Breedon and Frawley have made up their minds to cash in as much as they can on the notoriety of the place before they have to close altogether. So they put in a lot more tables, and had to take on more waiters. Now I know a fellow who used to be a pal of Sam Frawley’s, but is sore at him now. You can do a lot sometimes by keepin’ these feuds in mind. So I got this fellow to pass me along to another fellow who is in with Frawley at present, and Sam give me the job. I had grand references, you understand.” Ed winked expressively.

“Go on,” said Carola.

“Right away my case began to shape itself. I have established the fact that somebody else *could* have killed Frank Peverley, though as yet I have no direct evidence to prove who it was.”

“What have you found out?”

“There is a secret exit from Elysia. It passes through the building which adjoins it at the back, and comes out on Forty-Eighth Street. I don’t know if Breedon or the man before him had it made, but it was evidently for the purpose of making a getaway if the place should be raided by the police. The passage is kept locked to prevent the cooks and waiters from running stuff out through the rear, and Sam Frawley is supposed to have the only key. I think we may safely assume that Breedon has a key too. Well, a man *could* have beaten in Peverley’s skull while Len went downstairs to look for you, and made his way out through the service passage and the rear exit before you came up again.”

“Yes! Yes!” said Carola breathlessly.

“There’s a long distance to go, though, between making your theory and proving it. And popular opinion is runnin’ so high against Len that it’s got to be proved up to the hilt, or the case will fail. Now there wasn’t any need for Len to kill Peverley, since he was able to knock him down as often as he pleased, and furthermore if Len had killed him, he wouldn’t have taken you back upstairs when all he had to do was to walk out of the door to make his getaway. But that ain’t enough. We got to have logical evidence to convince the dumb-bells on the jury.

“Well, all I can do is to collect it straw by straw. Here’s one thing. There were no fingerprints on the match safe, proving that the murderer wore gloves.

Yet we know Len wasn't wearing gloves. If I can bring together enough facts of that sort, they'll have to let Len off, though every man in New York wants to see him sent to the chair.

"At first I thought my line lay through Sam Frawley, but after studyin' him the last few days, I changed my mind. Breedon don't take Sam completely into his confidence. Sam is too clever. It would be dangerous. The way I figure it out, Sam got a tip that it would be healthier for him to stay away from Elysia that afternoon, and he just stayed. I don't believe he knows anything more about it. But the case is different with Pat McPeake the doorkeeper. He was in the building throughout. He must know the truth about what happened.

"You may remember that Vallance, the private detective who went to Elysia with Senator Peverley, told the police that while he was talking to McPeake, the buzzer on the telephone switchboard sounded, and McPeake went in back to answer it. When he came back he told Vallance that somebody had called up to reserve a table. Shortly after that he took Vallance into a little pantry at the back of the house to give him a drink. When the police asked McPeake who it was that had called up to reserve a table, McPeake made believe that he couldn't remember. Said that the tragedy had driven it clean out of his head. That sounds pretty fishy. The police, satisfied that they had the right man anyway, carried the matter no further, but I did. Through a friend in the telephone company I had the calls checked up, and I found that nobody called Elysia at that hour. If there was a call, it was a house call. So you see the thing is narrowing down.

"McPeake is my man. I'm concentrating on him. We're as thick as thieves already. But I'll say he's a tough nut to crack. You have seen the fellow; an ignorant, thick-skulled, superstitious Irishman, blaspheming one minute, and crossing himself the next. He's just the man that Breedon would trust. He's too thickheaded to make trouble; yet he's got a streak of cunning in him that always warns him how to serve himself—and his master. I've learned that Breedon once saved him from a jail sentence; since then he's been the big fellow's dog.

"His weakness is Irish whisky. Good Irish is pretty hard to come by in New York nowadays, but I've got me a stock of it, and I feed him that. I don't like it myself, but I have to make out I do. I let on to him that I've got a brother, steward on a transatlantic liner that calls at Queenstown, and he brings it to me. I'm on visiting terms with McPeake now. Once already I got him as drunk as a fool, but I didn't get anything out of him. He guards that secret like his life. And of course I got to be darn careful. If he ever suspected what I was after—good night!"

Several more days passed without any change in the situation. The popular outcry against Len became more and more violent. It sickened Carola to see how everything seemed to turn to Breedon's advantage. He didn't have to exert himself; he sat tight, and the newspapers worked for him. By degrees she learned that it was generally believed around town that Breedon had egged on Len to kill Peverley. Yet there was no outcry against Breedon. His power seemed to intimidate the crowd. It was Carola's first lesson in the inconsequentiality of mob passion, and a bitter lesson. She had learned to watch Breedon now, and she perceived with growing horror that he actually relished the reputation he was acquiring. So long as they could not bring evidence into court, he wished people to believe that he was responsible for the death of Peverley; it increased the terror of his name. Carola played her part well, and he had no further uneasiness about her. As he became more sure of her, he took less trouble to hide his real nature from her.

She went to see Len once more, and then ceased to visit the prison. These constrained interviews under the eyes of others were too painful. Moreover it was out of character with the part she was playing. She showed herself at Elysia every night. That place of entertainment ran downhill very fast, but it was still coining money. Meanwhile she and Breedon were going ahead with their plans for the gorgeous new palace of pleasure which was to open some time in the future when "all this trouble had blown over," as Breedon put it. The newspapers still printed many fulsome paragraphs concerning Carola, but now she could detect a sneering undertone. She saw that she had cheapened herself in the popular view, but she cared little about that, so she was able to save Len.

Ed McQuissick reported to her every day through Julia. They did not have another meeting since nothing new had developed. Ed, still working as a waiter in Elysia was, in his off hours, laying a patient siege to McPeake without any visible hope of success.

Notwithstanding the pain it caused her, Carola continued to read the newspapers assiduously for fear of missing something. Two weeks after the tragedy she came upon an announcement that drove all the blood from her heart.

"District Attorney Leggatt announced this morning that he was ready to proceed with the trial of Len Farley. Out of consideration for the defense one more week has been granted them for preparation. The case is set down for one week from to-day. A special panel is being drawn. Mr. Leggatt said: 'Our sister state of New Jersey has long enjoyed a certain preëminence for the swiftness of her administration of justice. Jersey Justice is famous. But she will have to look to her laurels now. Three weeks after the commission of this crime which has shocked the whole country, the accused will be brought to

trial. I think that constitutes a record in a capital case that they will have some trouble in beating.’ ”

Carola buried her face in her pillow. Justice! What a hideous mockery! The cruelty and unfairness of it rendered her helpless. What could one do in the face of this yelling pack at Len’s heels? There was no reasonableness anywhere.

Later Julia called up suggesting a visit to her flat. Carola found McQuissick walking up and down, chewing a cigar. He looked badly worried.

“This is unheard of!” he cried, referring to the district attorney’s announcement. “It’s rank! Len stands as much chance of a fair trial as I have of the presidency. But what can you do against popular opinion?”

“Then you haven’t got anything out of McPeake?” asked Carola.

He shook his head gloomily. “No. There’s no use kidding ourselves. They’ve got us on the run. It’s up to us to act quickly.”

“What do you propose?” she asked from between pale lips.

McQuissick gave her a queer, half apologetic look. “I want to engage Mort Slidell to act for us,” he said.

“Mort Slidell?” said Carola. “I seem to have heard the name, but I don’t know who he is.”

“You wouldn’t,” said McQuissick dryly. “Yet he’s one of the most notorious men in town. Almost as powerful as Breedon in his way. A criminal lawyer who never appears in court, but always gets his man off.”

“What would Fowler Downes say if we brought another lawyer into the case now?”

“Oh, let that old stuffed shirt strut his stuff,” said McQuissick impatiently. “Slidell won’t appear for us openly. He’s not looking for publicity. Downes won’t know anything about it.”

“Why do you want Slidell?”

“Because he knows Breedon inside and out. They have pulled off many a crooked deal together. But they have quarreled lately, and Slidell would be glad to get back at Breedon. That’s what put me on to him.”

“Mightn’t such a man do us more harm than good?”

“Get me right,” said McQuissick, “I’m not hiring him to manufacture evidence, but to bring out the truth by fair means or foul. We’ve got to fight fire with fire. There’s no other way.”

“Could you trust him?”

“No,” said McQuissick frankly. “He might double cross us. But it’s a chance worth taking.”

“What’s he going to do?”

McQuissick looked a little sheepish again. “I don’t exactly know myself,” he said. “I spoke to him, and he’s got some kind of a plan. He said we better not ask what it was until he delivered the goods. He said all I had to do was to get McPeake to take a drink with me, and I said I could always do that.”

“Well, let us take the chance,” said Carola.

“It’ll come high,” said McQuissick.

“Oh, never mind that. How much?”

“Fifty thousand. Half in advance; the other half if Len is acquitted.”

“It’s not bribery?” said Carola anxiously.

McQuissick grinned sheepishly. “No,” he said.

“Very well, I’ll go to the safe deposit vault and get the securities. Wait here for me.”

xxvii

UNPRECEDENTED scenes of disorder marked the opening of the Farley trial in the Criminal Courts Building. People had brought camp stools the evening before, and had sat throughout the night at the doors. These patient ones however, were swept out of their places of vantage by the crowds who gathered in the morning. An immense throng filled the surrounding streets, and fought viciously to get in. Many were crushed and trampled. The court room would only hold a handful of spectators. The overflow jammed the great central court of the building, and the surrounding galleries, impeding the business of the other courts. Those who could not get in at all, had to content themselves with a glimpse of the famous prisoner as he passed over the Bridge of Sighs between the prison and the courthouse.

During the subsequent days order was gradually brought out of the confusion. Now no one was allowed inside the building unless provided with a pass. Every important newspaper in the country had sent a special writer to cover the case, while the metropolitan dailies reviewed it through the eyes of the entire staff from office boy up. Various more or less distinguished persons managed to get into the limelight upon one pretext or another. For a time a celebrated novelist shared the bench with the presiding judge.

Once the tedious business of choosing a jury was concluded, the trial moved with an unwonted celerity for so celebrated a case. This was chiefly

due to the amenability of Mr. Foster Downes, chief counsel for the defense, who displayed no inclination to hold matters up. It was a foregone conclusion that his case was lost, and everybody (or almost everybody) considered that he played a difficult part very gracefully. The most he could hope for was to save his client from the electric chair. At the last moment a young lawyer named Irons had been brought in as junior counsel; at the insistence of the accused man it was said. Mr. Irons conducted the cross-examinations; while Mr. Downes benevolently advised, and saved himself up for the final plea to the jury.

On the eve of the trial there had been a sharp discussion between Carola and her advisers as to her attending the sessions. Carola had been deaf to all the excellent reasons they advanced for her staying away. "I can't help it!" she said. "You ask too much of me. I've got to be there." And so every day the presence of the richest girl in New York had given the affair an added éclat. She shared stellar honors with the handsome young prisoner. Marcus Breedon another famous character was generally at her side. The prisoner sat in front of her at the counsel table with his back turned, and so far as anybody could see they never exchanged a glance. However this did not prevent many romantic stories from being circulated respecting the infatuation of the rich girl for the ex-convict, etc., etc.

It was now the fourth day of the taking of testimony. The State had finished presenting its case, and the defense was expected to conclude on this day. Len Farley who was the principal witness on his own behalf had just stepped down from the stand, and Carola suddenly became conscious of a crushing weariness after the long strain. Yet she could not relax for a moment. The slightest details of court procedure were charged with a terrible significance for her. The people around her, seeing her cold white face whispered to each other: "She has no feeling." Sometimes Carola heard them and smiled painfully. If they had known!

During the examination and the cross-examination of Len she had scarcely looked at him—she knew all his answers by heart; but with a painful intensity she had studied the faces of judge, of jury, of spectators trying to measure the effect of Len's words upon them. What she read in the faces was not hopeful. When Len had first turned around and taken his seat on the stand, an audible breath of admiration had escaped from the women spectators; he was so much handsomer than his pictures! They hung upon every word of his testimony with parted lips and rapt eyes that caused a little sneer to appear in Carola's face. She was not deceived. Had the women been on the jury Len would have fared no better. They wished to believe him guilty. It was his supposed guilt that made him such a romantic figure in their eyes.

As to the jury, that was Carola's daily study. She was familiar with every line of the twelve commonplace faces; she dreamed of them nights. Twelve good men and true no doubt, but also stupid and prejudiced according to the average; she groaned inwardly for their wrongheadedness. Among them was a beefy, red-faced man by occupation a butcher and he was the worst. Of an unbelievable stupidity (so it seemed to Carola) he nevertheless had a grand conceit of his own smartness, and asked frequent questions to show it off. What could you do with such a one? Next to him sat a heavy-featured, sullen man who breathed noisily with his mouth open. He was a storekeeper. There were also merchants, bookkeepers, clerks, a clothing manufacturer; prudent, closed, chilled faces, all. At the end of the first row there was a gentle little man of whom at first Carola had hopes. He was a photographer by trade. He looked at Len with compassion. To be sure he was only one, but he might cause the jury to disagree. But as the days passed a vicious look appeared in the little man's eyes. They've been badgering him during the recesses, Carola thought, he hasn't got the strength to stand up for his own ideas. She gave him up too.

On the stand Len told his story exactly as he had told it to the police on the night of the tragedy; and seven hours of cross-examination had failed to shake him in any important particular. Nevertheless he had not made a good impression. His slowness in answering, the care with which he weighed every word, conveyed the impression that he was keeping something back, which of course he was. He was keeping back the highly important fact that Carola had been present. Carola could have wrung her hands. The whole thing had been mismanaged from the start. This air of caution was not natural to Len, and everybody sensed it. He should have been telling the whole truth freely and openly, thought Carola, and I should have followed him on the stand to back it up!

During Len's long ordeal on the stand, extending over two days, his eyes never met Carola's. A curious kind of wall separated them. It could not have been any different. When their eyes did meet by accident, they skated away again without a sign of recognition. Carola might cry for half the night because she was divided from Len; and Len might sit for hours in his cell with his arms wrapped around his head thinking of Carola, but when they came face to face in the court room they were as if dead to each other.

When Len stepped down, Carola's eyes partly shielded by her lashes, searched from face to face in the jury box. All the faces wore discreet looks of impartiality of course, but a certain something in the sidelong, detached looks they gave the accused, told her their thoughts. Len's fate was decided. God help us both! Carola groaned inwardly.

She was very near to the end of her endurance. Sometimes for a second or two the whole scene before her eyes seemed to slip and waver. A climax had been reached two days before when Pat McPeake had been called to the stand by the prosecution. He had testified in a painstaking and matter-of-fact manner which carried conviction with the jury. He was able when he chose, to adopt a sort of half-witted look which they put down to honest innocence. He had told the story so many times by now that it was probably more true to him than the truth. Yet Carola knew he was lying. A searching cross-examination failed to shake him. He was as phlegmatic as an old dog. Many of Mr. Irons' questions were not allowed by the court.

That night Carola had been ready to despair. They had failed with McPeake; what other chance had they? No word had been received from Mort Slidell; and nobody knew what he was doing, if he was doing anything. Carola was determined to testify on Len's behalf. Her friends assured her that it would do more harm than good now. With the greatest difficulty she was persuaded to wait until the last moment before Mr. Downes rested his case.

After Len left the stand the defense sprung a mild surprise by calling Pat McPeake to testify for their side. The district attorney was immediately on his feet with an objection. Mr. Irons explained that he wished to question McPeake about certain matters which had not been touched on by the State, and which he had therefor been forbidden to refer to in cross-examination. The Judge allowed that it was perfectly regular. However, McPeake did not answer to his name. He was not in court.

"Has he been served with a subpoena?" asked the Court.

"Yes, your honor. He was served as he left the stand two days ago."

Sam Frawley arose in the body of the court room. He said: "If it please your honor, I am the employer of this man McPeake. Yesterday afternoon after he had reported for work upon the adjournment of court, he was taken violently sick. A waiter in my place who was a friend of his, took him to the private hospital of Dr. Corcoran on West End Avenue where he is now."

"What's the matter with him?" asked the Court.

"They said it was ptomaine poisoning."

"Have you heard from him to-day?"

"Yes, sir. They said at the hospital that he was a very sick man."

"Hm!" said his honor. He turned to junior counsel for the defense. "Mr Irons, have you other witnesses here that you can call?"

"If it please your honor," answered Mr. Irons, "in order to present a consecutive story to the jury it is desirable that I should have this man's testimony at this juncture. It is nearly time for the noon recess anyway, and if your honor will adjourn now, I promise to be ready to go on after lunch."

“But if the man is very sick, you won’t be able to produce him after lunch.”

“In that case I will put another witness on the stand.”

At first Carola perceived no more in this incident than appeared on the surface. She thought: if McPeake dies then we never will get the truth. Then she perceived a certain complacency about the mouth of young Mr. Irons which gave her pause. She stole a glance through her lashes at Marcus Breedon who was beside her. A subtle change had taken place in his face also. The expression of good-humored contempt was the same, but a curious grayness had crept under his skin. Lowering her eyes, she observed that the knuckles of the hand that grasped his stick were white. The man was obviously laboring under a sudden strain. Well, anything that disconcerted Breedon was good news for her side. A wild hope filled Carola.

Court adjourned.

After lunch Mr. Irons kept the court waiting fifteen minutes, and his honor’s black gown switched with annoyance when he took his seat on the bench.

“Have you got your man?” he asked sharply.

Mr. Irons was still panting as a result of his sprint to reach the court room, but there was a light of triumph in his eye. Carola felt sick with suspense. “No, your honor,” said the lawyer, “he was too sick to be moved. But I took a deposition at his bedside. As there was some doubt about the man’s recovery, I thought it safer to take it at once. If it is your honor’s wish, I will read it to the jury.”

The district attorney was on his feet. “I object!” he said heatedly. “A deposition . . . read to the jury! This is most irregular! I ought to have an opportunity to see it first.”

“But if I had the man himself here on the stand you wouldn’t know what he was going to say until after he had said it,” suggested Mr. Irons mildly.

“That is not the same thing at all! If the man himself was here I could cross-examine him.”

“It wouldn’t be necessary,” said Mr. Irons sweetly.

“I object to counsel making such remarks in the hearing of the jury!” shouted the district attorney.

His honor poured oil on the troubled waters by inviting the opposing counsel up to the bench to read the document with him before it was placed before the jury. Mr. Foster Downes who like everybody else, was all at sea regarding its contents, went too. The four men read it with their heads together

over the judge's desk. That it was evidence of the greatest importance could be seen by the startled way in which they looked at each other. The district attorney was seen to be expostulating earnestly, but his honor overruled him with a gesture. His honor was overheard to say:

“After all, gentlemen, we are all here for the same purpose. The ends of justice will be served by reading this deposition to the jury.”

This little scene produced a feeling of electrical tension throughout the court room. A breathless silence prevailed. The accused was the most unconcerned person present.

Mr. Foster Downes as senior counsel for Farley, took the deposition and read it to the jury in the resonant voice for which he was famous. One might have thought from his manner that he had been solely instrumental in obtaining it. Young Mr. Irons sat down with a demure smile, well content to let the other have the spotlight. Irons knew that he would get the credit from those who counted.

Mr. Downes read slowly: “I, Patrick McPeake, being very sick and in fear of death, do wish to square myself with God Almighty by telling all I know concerning the killing of Senator Frank Peverley. I gave false testimony on the witness stand, and it lies heavy on my conscience. I cannot rest easy until I have told the truth. I lied when I said there was nobody in the building that afternoon except the persons named during the trial. Miss Carola Goadby was there too as all the others know. We fixed it up amongst us men to keep her name out of the case. Marcus Breedon was in the building also, but nobody knows that except me. I was talking to him before the others come. He let himself in through the back entrance on Forty-Eighth Street to which he had the key. And afterwards he went out that way, and took a taxi and drove around to the front.

“During the whole time that Len Farley and Miss Goadby were talking together in the restaurant, and afterwards when Senator Peverley come with the detective Vallance, Mr. Breedon was hidden in the service passage alongside them listening. Mr. Breedon had it in for both Farley and Peverley and was trying to set them against each other. When Vallance come downstairs after and was talking to me Mr. Breedon called me up on a house phone from the third floor. He was sore because Miss Goadby had got the guns away from Farley and Peverley and he had to try something else. He told me to take Vallance into the storekeeper's pantry at the back and give him a couple of drinks and keep him in talk. When I heard the door of the rear passage close I would know that he, Breedon, was out of the house, and then I could come back.

“So I done just what Mr. Breedon told me. Vallance and I had a couple of drinks in the storekeeper's pantry, and after awhile I hear the door of the back

passage close. I waited a couple of minutes more, then Vallance and me come back to the front of the building. Senator Peverley was dead then. Farley and Miss Goadby were looking at the body dazed like.

“Marcus Breedon has always been a good friend to me and it goes hard to inform against him, but I cannot die with a sworn lie on my soul. This is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God! Amen! (Signed) Patrick McPeake.”

An oath taken in the presence of a notary followed.

When Mr. Downes finished reading, absolute silence filled the court room. It took a few seconds for the significance of what had been read, to reach the understanding of the general hearer. It was broken by the voice of the judge asking in his quiet, precise accents:

“Mr. Irons, who was present in the room when this deposition was taken?”

“Dr. Corcoran, the proprietor of the hospital; two nurses; the notary who took it down, and myself, your honor. All are prepared to testify.”

The strain snapped, and disorder broke out in the court room. An hysterical woman cried out; her neighbors tried to quiet her. At the back of the room they began to clap, and the court attendants in seeking to still the noise, only added to it. The judge pounded in vain with his gavel. Sensation followed upon sensation. It was suddenly perceived that Miss Goadby had fallen over on the bench sideways in a dead faint. Several voices cried for water. A moment later everybody seemed to realize simultaneously that Marcus Breedon who had been sitting beside her, was no longer in the room.

A small uproar broke out. His honor, after despatching two policemen to search the building for Breedon, and sending an attendant to telephone police headquarters, adjourned court. The remaining attendants commenced to clear the room. The newspaper men had already dashed away to their offices with the biggest story that had broken in years.

As the prisoner was being led from the court room, Carola returned to her senses. Their eyes met and clung in a long look. Somehow the wall between them had collapsed; they came to life for each other again. There was a blessed peace in their breasts.

IN court on the following day, the District Attorney handsomely conceded the authenticity of the McPeake deposition, and the trial came to an abrupt

end without any speeches. The judge instructed the jury to bring in a verdict of acquittal. An extraordinary revulsion of popular opinion had taken place over night, and Len Farley was hailed with storms of cheers upon leaving the City Prison. He fled from the demonstration.

On the same day Marcus Breedon was taken in Philadelphia. While being brought back to New York he eluded the vigilance of his guards while the train was traveling at a high rate of speed, and clambering over the gate which closed the rear vestibule, he was instantly killed. Many a head in New York rested lighter on its pillow when the news of his death became known. The elaborate organization that he had built up dissolved as if it had never been.

It is scarcely necessary to state that Pat McPeake quickly recovered from his seemingly mortal illness. He was discharged from Corcoran's Hospital a sheepish but wiser man. It is doubtful if he thoroughly understood the nature of the trick that had been played on him. In any case he took good care never to speak of it. Everybody connected with that affair kept a close mouth, and the full details never became known. The district attorney laid evidence of McPeake's perjury before the Grand Jury, but no indictment was returned, since he had recanted of his own free will. It was held perhaps that no public end was to be served by reviving this noisome case.

Carola handed McQuissick the balance of the money for Mort Slidell with a thankful heart. Ed remarked with his quizzical grin: "He's a crook all right, but for once he operated on the side of the angels."

For thirty hours after his release Len Farley disappeared from the sight of man. Carola's friends, Ed McQuissick, Julia Winterring, Ralph Irons were full of speculations about his whereabouts, not unmingled with anxiety. Carola herself was undisturbed.

"It is perfectly natural for him to want to get by himself for awhile," she said. "He'll come back when he has got his balance."

After dark on the following day Len with his coat collar turned up and his hat pulled low over his eyes, ran the gauntlet of the loiterers who still hung about the Goadby house, and rang the bell. The faintest vibration of a voice in the hall told Carola who it was and brought her flying down. Their eyes beamed and glowed upon each other, but they did not so much as touch hands. For a moment or two they did not speak. It scarcely seemed necessary.

It was the first time Len had been in Carola's great house. He looked around him with a smile, half derisive, half wistful. "So this is what it's like!" he said in his deep and softened voice.

That smile said: It would never do for a wild bird like me! Carola understood and was not offended. These two had reached through pain, a completeness of understanding such as is vouchsafed to few men and women.

“Come up to my own room,” she said.

She led the way to the charming sitting room in the front of the building. Flowers filled it as usual, and there was a leaping fire of cannel coal in the grate.

“I thought you would come to-night,” said Carola simply. “So I sent them all away.”

Len conveyed by a nod that he comprehended her motives. They understood each other, still it would have been difficult to have had others present at their meeting. “I mustn’t stay,” he murmured.

“I know,” she said.

They dropped down on a deep Chesterfield before the fire. Carola’s eyes feasted happily on Len, and his eyes on Carola, but they did not draw close to each other. Each was well aware that a physical contact would destroy the fine thing they had with such pain built up together, and each was resolved to spare the other.

“It’s so good to see you!” murmured Len, deeply.

“Well, then you must know how happy it makes me to see you,” said Carola; “your own man again! What are you going to do?”

“I can’t stand this town,” said Len with a gesture. “Having the mob running after me with cheers, when they wanted to lynch me a couple of days ago—the same me! it’s given me a disgust of people. It makes me want to fight.”

“I understand,” said Carola.

“I’ve seen Walter Falconer,” Len went on, “and he has advanced me some money. I’m taking the first ship for Italy to wait for the rest of the crowd there—second class under an assumed name. In three weeks the Falconer expedition sails from a port called Brindisi for the East Indies. We’ll be gone for a year—longer if the work pans out well. The work’ll suit me first-rate.”

Carola sighed. “It’s good to be a man,” she said.

“You’ll be sailing for France with Julia I suppose,” said Len.

She shook her head. “No, I’ve changed my mind about that. That would be like running away. I’ve decided to stick it out. Ed McQuissick and I have been talking politics. It seems that things are very bad in the district where he lives and he and some other men have formed a Citizens’ Committee, and are putting up a young man to run for the legislature at the next election. Of course he won’t have any show against the machine, but it’s a beginning. I’ve

promised to help them with money, and with what influence I have. I shall sit on the platform at their meetings, and perhaps then I can overcome my stage fright. At any rate I can go around and talk to the women voters. We're going to try to get the other districts to form similar committees. Later, if anybody should want me, for a candidate, I'll run for the legislature myself. They call me the best known women in New York. I'm going to see if I can't turn my publicity to account in cleaning up local politics. My heart is set on that. It's corrupt politics that produces creatures like Breedon and Mort Slidell."

"Good work," said Len. "Better than running a night club, I'll say."

"Oh, don't remind me of that!" she said.

"I was a bigger fool than you," said Len.

"Well, we've cured each other of our foolishnesses," said Carola.

"Yes," said Len, "we've done good to each other. That's what I hold to!"

"We've done good to each other!" echoed Carola.

They repeated this statement energetically, but somehow just then it did not afford their hungry hearts much satisfaction. A silence followed.

"So this is good-by," murmured Carola.

A spasm of pain passed over Len's face. "Well, don't let's make a regular business of it," he said harshly.

She understood. Her eyes brooded upon his averted head feeling his pain rather than her own. "Of course we won't," she said quickly. "We understand each other so well, it's not necessary to say anything, really."

"My tongue is tied," he muttered jerkily, "but there's one thing . . . nothing sentimental . . . What I shall always be remembering is your squareness. Before I met you I didn't think a woman could be absolutely on the level with a man. A man is so damned grateful for it! . . . In giving you up I am losing my pal as well as my girl. I guess it doesn't often happen."

"Knowing you has opened the whole of life to me," murmured Carola. "I understand other men and women now. Before, I was an ignorant child."

Len stood up suddenly. "What must be must be," he said in a strained voice. "Let's cut it off short and clean. Good-by, Carola."

She turned her back on him. "Good-by, Len," she said, concealing her clenched hands in her skirt.

At the door he faltered and looked back with longing in his eyes. Carola heard him stop, but kept her back turned, and made no sign. He ran on down the stairs. When the front door slammed, Carola dropped to her knees in front of the Chesterfield, and hid her face in its cushions. The one who stays at home has the harder part to bear.

THE END

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Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

[The end of *Queen of Clubs* by Hulbert Footner]