

NOT IN THE  
SCENARIO

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# Not in the Scenario

*By Kathrene and Robert Pinkerton*

*Illustrated by R. Van Buren*

*Here is a thrilling mystery story of the adventures that befell a company of motion picture players while on location in the big woods of the great Northwest. Full of interest and suspense.*

## CHAPTER I

IT was fortunate for Dave Mann and the Nonpareil Film Corporation that he was the only person in the company who possessed a temperament. Otherwise the combination of mosquitoes, swampy portages, black flies and smoky campfires would have wrecked Dave's expedition in search of realism the second day out.

As it was, things were going much as they did on any location. Peggy Dare and Fay Brainerd sat side by side in the middle of a big freight canoe, veiled and gloved and high-booted, Peggy growling and snapping and Fay laughing because she knew that Peggy's temper, unlike her beauty, was only skin deep and more often than not a mere vehicle for witticisms.

"The next time Dave goes after realism I hope he wants it in a Ritz setting," Peggy said. "He could have borrowed a moose from the Bronx Zoo and shot this stuff in New Jersey."

"But Dave gets inspiration when he sees the real thing," Fay protested with mock seriousness. "He rewrote half the scenario last night after talking with one of the guides. Says he has the real Canadian flavor now."

"Yes, and he'll rewrite it twice more before we're through, retake everything a dozen times and keep us here a month. By that time it will be winter and he'll get a new idea—all snow stuff."

"Ugh!" Fay shivered, and then she laughed. "But anyway, one of us is enjoying himself."

Peggy glanced across to the bow of another canoe in which knelt Larry Moncrieff. He was swinging a paddle with amazing skill when it was considered that he had never seen one until three days before.

"Yes, look at the million dollar beauty!" she exclaimed. "You'd think the shore was lined with flappers."

"Peg! I never heard anyone accuse Larry of playing to the flapper gallery."

"That *was* rough. A black fly had just started a tunnel through my neck. But why does he work like that?"

"He has to do some paddling in this picture."

“You don’t say! If he only sits in a canoe half the women in the country would believe it ought to move for that reason alone. It’s a wonder Dave lets him do it. He might get a blister.”

“As a matter of fact he has several,” Fay answered. “And, stranger still, he’s proud of them, or proud of the way he got them. He’s a funny one.”

“Funny’s the word. I can never get quite used to him. When Dave first picked him up I thought he had nothing but a face. Even now you wonder if that isn’t all except when Dave yells ‘shoot!’ ”

“Yes, Dave is the only one who can wake him up. I suppose that’s what’s saved him from the flappers, and all the rest. Any other man would have been ruined by their adoration.”

Peggy Dare’s high-salaried eyes grew serious.

“I don’t get him,” she said. “For a long time I thought he was the usual doll and passed him up. Even now I can’t quite see a man who lets someone double for him when he does anything so dangerous as lighting a gas jet.”

“But why blame Larry?” Fay objected. “That’s Dave’s idea. He won’t let him risk a finger in a stunt.”

“Yes, but you’ve never heard Larry fighting for the chance. I don’t suppose I would either if my name could fill the theater like his does. Still, I’d like to be sure he’s a regular he-man.”

“Give him time. He may surprise you.”

“He certainly would. I suppose I’m the only female in the world who hasn’t fallen for him. But I hate to see those shoulders wasted in Dave’s nursery. Right now he’s doing the hardest work I’ve ever seen him do. Look at him.”

Larry Moncrieff was paddling as steadily and as energetically as any of the canoemen. The two girls watched him as he snapped the blade forward and drew it back with quick, strong strokes. They could see that he was enjoying himself thoroughly but neither guessed that he reveled in the soft light of suddenly awakened imagination, that in his own mind he had ceased to be Larry Moncrieff, movie idol, and had become a colorful *voyageur* of old, fighting his way through an uncharted wilderness to the land of fur and adventure.

Even when the canoe turned shoreward he remained in the land of his dreams. The portage they were about to make was only another fascinating

bit of the uncharted wild and, for Larry, all such trails possessed an unflinching charm.

“How far?” he asked the man behind him.

“It ain’t how far, but how high,” the canoeman answered grimly. “A half mile but straight up over that hill.”

They landed, and when the next canoe touched the shore Larry helped the two girls.

“You poor boy!” Peggy Dare exclaimed. “Look at those blisters, Fay.”

Larry sometimes thought he detected a keen edge of sarcasm in Peggy’s dulcet voice. He grinned sheepishly.

“I’m having a good time anyhow,” he said. “And I’m going to help pack across this portage.”

But before he had lifted his load he was stopped by a hail from the lake.

“Dave’s afraid he’ll strain himself,” Peggy whispered. “I’m surprised he doesn’t have the men carry Larry across.”

But Dave Mann was not concerned with Larry Moncrieff’s safety just then. His canoe, the fourth, had lagged far behind and as it drew nearer the director stood up and waved excitedly to those on shore.

“Wait!” he called. “Don’t carry that stuff across. Put it down. Don’t touch it. I’ve got a new idea.”

Some of the canoemen had already started, and not until they had returned with their burdens did Dave cease issuing his fervid commands. The moment his canoe grounded he leaped ashore.

“Come here, Bill,” he called to the man in the stern. “Larry, I want you to hear this. I’ve got a wonderful new idea. A palace! Think of it! In this wilderness. Wonderful set. And it’ll fit right into the story, with a few changes, of course. I’ll fix those up tonight.”

Larry joined him, as did Peggy and Fay, Phil Sherwood, the assistant director, and Roy Quigley, the camera man. No one ever knew what was going to happen when Dave got an idea.

“Now, Bill,” Dave began. “Tell them about this place.”

“I don’t know much except what I’ve heard and what I’ve told you,” the canoeman said, obviously unconcerned.

“It’s a regular palace, built of logs, of course,” Dave explained. “Some queer old gink lives there alone.”

“He’s not alone,” Taylor interrupted. “There’s someone around to do the work and——”

“Think of that!” Dave cried. “No one knows about them. Mystery! Romance! An exile in the wilderness! There’s a picture in that. We can introduce a girl and——”

“There is a girl there, too,” the canoeman said.

“A girl! Wonderful! Why didn’t you tell me?”

“I tried to and you got so excited I didn’t have a chance. I never seen her but——”

“Where is this place?”

“It’s on the next lake, about five miles from where we’re going to.”

“Know anything about the owner?”

“No one does, far as I can tell. He must ‘a’ come in from the other railroad to the north. Been there some years now but he’s just as much a stranger as ever.”

“And it’s a big place, stunning set and all that?”

“I ain’t never been close to it, just paddled by once. It’s a mighty pretty place, half way up a hill with some big Norways around it, but they don’t allow visitors. Partner of mine stopped there one day but they told him flat they didn’t want him.”

“Oh, we’ll take care of that part of it,” Dave said confidently. “Gad! Think of it! A girl living there! Prisoner, I’ll bet. Idea for a corking picture. And a set like that ready-made. Come on, you fellows. Start lunch. We’ll eat here, get across this portage and see the place before supper time.”

Late in the afternoon four large freight canoes and a smaller one approached the north end of White Otter Lake. As they neared a point Bill Taylor turned and spoke to Dave Mann.

“It’s right around here,” he said, “down near the head of this bay.”

“Fine!” Dave cried excitedly.

“But I want to warn you he never lets anybody land. Queer old devil.”

“That’s for me to worry about,” Dave answered. “You lead the way. Run the canoes right up onto the shore and we’ll get out before he can stop us. After that—well, I’ll talk to him. What’s his name?”

“I never could say it. Heard it only once. French or Italian or something.”

“Wop, eh?” He turned and surveyed the other canoes.

“Any of you talk dago?” he shouted.

No one answered.

“Oh, well,” Dave muttered, “a few bills with the right numbers on ’em talk any language. Hurry it up there, you fellows.”

The canoes rounded a point but no sign of a house was to be seen.

“It’s at the head of a little cove near the end of the bay,” Bill Taylor explained. “You’ll see it in a minute.”

The canoes slid on, turned another point, and then even the paddlers ceased work to stare in amazement.

Set on a broad ledge thirty feet above the water stood a long, low building of logs. A broad veranda extended across the entire front and wide windows looked out across a beautiful bay. The underbrush and saplings had been cleared away but a score of tall Norway pines towered above the cabin like a squad of sentinels.

“Wonderful!” Dave Mann cried after he had gazed at it a minute. “Marvelous! Think of a place like that up here in such a wilderness! Why, we must be fifty miles or more from the nearest railroad.”

He turned to Peggy Dare, whose canoe had drifted alongside.

“There’s romance for you!” he exclaimed. “Palace in the wilderness. No one ever permitted to visit it. Beautiful girl kept prisoner by aged Italian exile. Just the part for you, Peg. And Larry as the rescuing hero! Wow! With just a few changes it will fit right into the story we’ve——”

“Better keep quiet,” Bill Taylor whispered. “If he hears us he’ll most likely come down and order us off before we get a chance to talk to him.”

Dave motioned to the other canoes to hurry forward and in another moment all five had tied up at a log dock. There had been no sign of anyone on the shore as they slipped across the cove and even after they had landed no one was seen.

"I'll go up alone," Dave said as he started along a trail. "Rest of you stay here."

"If ever a man acted as if he had nothing but bats flying around the bells it's Dave," Peggy Dare said. "Here we're off again on a second picture. It'll be a month before we're out of this mosquito hole."

"Yeh, and we'll have some picture when we do leave," Roy Quigley answered. "Dave acts nutty but his old bean's working overtime all the time. Four knockouts in the last year and no flivvers. Huh! I guess that's being nutty."

"Lord, Quig, let me get some joy out of this!" Peggy snapped. "I know as well as anyone the sort of pictures he makes. I've been in them. But—"

She was interrupted by a hail from the ledge above them.

"Come up and see this, you folks!" Dave Mann shouted. "It's wonderful. Wonderful! And not a soul around. Bring a camera, Quig, and flashes. I want some interior stills right away while I can get 'em."

He turned and disappeared and the whole company hurried to the trail that led upward. Behind them, more cautiously and more slowly and yet fully as eager to inspect this strange place, came the dozen canoemen and helpers.

When they reached the top of the ledge Dave stood at the veranda entrance holding the screen door open.

"Shut it!" Peggy cried. "If there's a place up here without mosquitoes don't invite them in."

"Wonderful! Wonderful!" Dave cried, wholly unconscious of her protest. "The interior's wonderful. Never dreamed of one like it. We'll take some stills and reproduce it on the lot when we get back. And the outside! Look at it. Those big logs and the way they're fitted together."

"Isn't there anyone around?" Larry asked.

"Can't find a soul. Went out back and called. Get busy inside, Quig. We want to reproduce that living room. If we had the lights here we'd use it. And say, Peggy! There's a grand piano in there."

The entire group followed Dave inside.

"What an adorable place!" Fay Brainerd exclaimed.

“Yes, just look at it!” Dave added. “That fireplace! And those rafters. Nothing like you’d think a wilderness home would be and yet it has the wilderness touch. Unmistakably. And then add the mystery and the romance, the exotic nature of such a situation—”

“Clear out, all of you!” Roy Quigley ordered. “I’m going to take the stills.”

The men left through a rear door but Peggy and Fay turned unerringly to a hall that led to several bedrooms and as unerringly, to one unmistakably a woman’s. They entered, curiosity overcoming all sense of respect for another’s privacy.

“Poor thing!” Peggy exclaimed after a brief survey. “Isn’t it plain?”

“And yet it’s nice,” Fay answered. “She has everything she needs. Wonder why she’s kept here.”

“Wouldn’t it be deadly? Think of it! Never seeing anyone, never—”

She had walked across to a table and was turning over several books.

“And look at what she has to read! What sort of clothes has she?”

Peggy opened the closet door but before she could look inside they heard Dave Mann calling.

“Probably ready to shoot right now,” Fay said as she led the way out.

The men were gathered in the living room again, appearing dimly through the clouds of smoke from the flash lights.

“We’re going to camp right across the bay.” Dave said. “I want you all to go over there now and when the old wop gets back I’ll talk to him. I’m going to make some changes in the scenario tonight and in the morning we’ll start shooting. Come on, now. Hurry up. I don’t want him to find us all here. Might make him huffy.”

After supper, Dave, Larry and two of the canoemen returned to the cabin on the hill. A careful watch had been kept but no sign of the owner’s return had been seen.

“He’s sure to get here before dark,” Dave said as they landed. “If we’re here when he comes he can’t throw us off until we talk to him. Besides, I want to get the outside of the house and the interior well fixed in my mind before I work over the story. Gad, this is luck! It’s going to fit right in, with only a few changes.”

“What if he won’t let you use the place?” Larry asked. “He might be so crabby he’d drive us off with a gun.”

“Oh, we’ll get him some way. You fellows keep a watch outside and let us know if anyone comes,” he told the canoemen. “We’ll be in the living room.”

Once inside Larry Moncrieff went to the piano, opened it and began to play softly while Dave paced up and down the room. “What’s that stuff?” he demanded suddenly.

“Grieg.”

“Huh! I don’t see how you get the jazz into your work like you do. You never show it any other time.”

Larry kept on playing without an answer and Dave turned again to a survey of the room. But almost immediately Bill Taylor burst in.

“Say!” he cried excitedly. “Come on out back! Quick!”

“What’s happened?” Dave demanded as Larry whirled around from the piano.

“A man! We saw him lying in a dark corner of a shed. I think he’s dead.”

Dave and Larry, following at the heels of the canoeman, ran outside. Jack Gibson, the other woodsman who had accompanied them, stood near the open door of a small outbuilding.

“He’s alive,” Jack said as they approached. “I just heard him moving.”

“Better be careful,” Bill warned. “You never know what’s going to happen in a place like this.”

But Dave brushed past him and knelt in the dark corner beside the body of a man. He made a brief examination and then called to the others.

“Carry him outside,” he commanded. “He’s all tied up. Get a knife and cut those ropes.”

Larry helped the two canoemen carry the man. He had been bound by an expert. His legs were lashed together, his hands tied behind his back and a big handkerchief held a gag in his mouth.

But even as they began to slash the ropes they saw that he was very much alive. His eyes, black and large, burned with a fierceness that caused Bill Taylor to draw back in alarm.

“What’s happened here?” Dave demanded. “Where are the rest of the people, the old fellow and the girl?”

The man’s legs and arms had been freed. Though his face was twisted by pain, his eyes stared fiercely up at Dave.

“Come! Can’t you talk? We’re friendly. What’s happened?”

Still there was no answer. The man rolled over, stretched his cramped arms and legs and finally sat up.

“Gad, what a type!” Dave whispered. “Real brigand.”

The man looked it. Very dark, with long black hair, fierce mustache, coal black eyes, gleaming white teeth and a face lined by passion and savage lust, he would have fitted well into any tale of southern Europe.

Even his clothes filled out the picture—the open blue shirt, the scarlet handkerchief about his neck, the corduroy trousers and the black slouch hat which had been lying just inside the door.

“Come, can’t you talk?” Dave repeated irritably.

The man stared at him in a peculiar manner.

“Spika de Eye-tally-one?” Dave ventured.

Suddenly the fellow’s face was contorted in a strange manner and he began to wave his arms about and make queer signs with his fingers.

“A deaf-mute!” Larry exclaimed. “Don’t you see? He’s trying to talk to us.”

“Gad, what a situation!” Dave cried. “A crime has been committed and not one of us can tell what he’s trying to say. But wait!”

He took out paper and pencil, wrote “What has happened?” and passed it to the man.

The brigand looked at it, shook his head and then reached for the pencil. Painfully and slowly, for his hands were swollen and cramped, he wrote a few words.

“Pure wop,” Dave said when he had glanced at it. “And none of us knows a word of that.”

He shook his head and handed the paper back. The man seemed to understand and instantly a look of fear came to his savage eyes. He glanced toward the house and then arose and hobbled away.

The others followed. Once inside the deaf-mute searched quickly through the place. At last, when satisfied that the cabin was empty, he went into a room off the kitchen and returned with a rifle.

The four men surrounded him as he hobbled through the living room. Dave Mann tried futilely by signs to learn his purpose but he thrust them aside, walked through the front door and down to the shore. There he drew a small canoe from the brush, set it in the water and paddled away toward the open lake.

## CHAPTER II

WHEN DAVE, LARRY and the canoemen returned to camp with their story of the bound deaf-mute there were as many explanations, and reactions, as there were people.

Dave alone seemed to look at it impersonally. His excitement was greater than that of anyone else but his interest was not in the mystery so far as it concerned the unknown owner of the palatial cabin and the girl. He did not even stop to think of what might have happened to them. Details would hamper his imagination.

“Come here, Phil,” he called to his assistant as soon as he landed. “I’ve got the whole thing worked out. We want to get it all down tonight.”

He led the way to his tent and before Larry had told half the story to the others the “tap, tap, tap” of Phil’s portable typewriter was heard.

“But Larry!” Peggy Dare exclaimed. “What has happened to the girl?”

“I don’t know that anything has. I didn’t see a sign of her anywhere.”

“I did,” Fay Brainerd said. “This afternoon when we were in her room. And she had been there just a little while before.”

“Been there!” several exclaimed. “How do you know that?”

“She was there after lunch,” Fay declared. “And I can tell you something more. She’s a blond with long, very long, reddish gold hair.”

“Haw! Haw!” Roy Quigley burst out scornfully. “Where’d you get that Hawkshaw stuff?”

“Shut up!” commanded Truman Harlow, the heavy. “Fay’s right. They were there after lunch, or someone was.”

“Trust Tru to find that out,” Peggy laughed. “He made straight for the kitchen when we went into the house. What did they have to eat?”

“I don’t know,” Truman snapped, “but one of the canoemen told me there were some coals in the kitchen stove and that the dishes hadn’t been washed and that they hadn’t been standing there long. But what about the hair, Fay?”

“That was easy,” she answered. “There was a cake of tar soap on the wash stand that hadn’t dried. On a chair was a bath towel she had wound her hair in to dry. The towel was still wet and there were two long, reddish gold hairs in it.”

“Not so loud,” Peggy implored. “If Dave Mann hears us he’ll start all over again and make a mystery story of it. We’ll never get out of here.”

“I don’t think there’s anything funny about this,” Larry declared soberly. “This girl, whoever she is, was there for lunch. No one knows anything about her. I was asking Bill Taylor and he says that he learned of her presence from Indians, that white people have never seen her.”

“And now we add a brigand bound and gagged,” Peggy said. “The answer to that is going to keep Dave up half the night.”

“The answer’s easy,” Roy Quigley interrupted. “The brigand is an Italian. So is the old man who owns the place. The brigand came to capture the girl, or may be rescue her, and the fellow who works for the old man got the best of him and then they all took a canoe and beat it. I bet they never come back.”

“But I’m sure the deaf-mute is the one who works for the old man,” Larry objected. “When he went to the house he looked all through it and then went to a room off the kitchen and got a rifle. He acted as if he were at home.”

“Of course,” Fay added, “and what happened is this. Someone came, bound the deaf-mute, captured the girl and perhaps killed the old man and then carried her off. The deaf-mute is trying to find her.”

“Don’t one of you breathe a word of this to Dave,” Peggy implored them. “It would give him ten new ideas and he’d have to try them all out.”

“I don’t see where you find anything funny in this,” Larry said. “We’re the only white people in the country and I think it’s up to us to do something.”

Silence greeted this remark, a silence that became increasingly significant as it continued. Larry caught it at once and a flush crept up from beneath the collar of his woolen shirt.

He believed he knew what they were thinking, that since Dave Mann had lifted him from a clerkship in the office of a big lumber company to almost unprecedented stardom in the movies he had never been permitted to do anything that entailed the least danger. It was even rumored that Dave

carried a large policy with Lloyd's and around the lot Larry was invariably referred to as "the million dollar beauty."

Only the fact that Larry was no different than on the day he had first appeared at the Nonpareil studio had saved him from the slightly veiled thrusts of his co-workers. Nothing seemed to have turned his head—success, the adoration of a million women or a fabulous salary.

"I know what's caught him," Peggy Dare drawled. "It's the long hair."

LARRY glanced at her uncomfortably because he did not understand and because he never knew what Peggy might say.

"I imagine it would be a relief to have something besides a shock-headed flapper groveling at one's feet," she continued when she caught his wondering expression. "By all means go over and rescue her, Larry. But you'll have to hurry. It's getting dark."

He flushed again, but only Fay caught the angry glint in his eyes as he arose and started toward the tent door.

"It just happens that I am going over there," he said. "I don't know what's happened but I'll find out if they need help."

"Wait and I'll go with you," Quigley announced.

But they did not leave camp that night. Everyone had been so absorbed in a discussion of the mystery that none had noticed signs of a storm that broke with a blinding flash and a concussion from which the very earth seemed to rock. Peggy screamed and even the men were awed.

Another flash followed and another roar and then the wind and the rain came in a crashing attack. For a few minutes conversation was out of the question. The tent was alternately dark and brilliantly lighted and each moment the wind threatened to blow the flimsy shelter away.

Peggy and Fay cowered down together, thoroughly frightened. Then during a lull the sound of a typewriter came to them. "Dave doesn't even know it's raining," Roy Quigley said.

Everyone laughed and from the relief of laughing seemed to gain their self-control.

The lull was only momentary. It was as if the storm had paused to catch its breath. The thunder and the lightning ceased and the ferocity of the wind abated yet the rain drove down incessantly and with a vicious note that

foretold hours of deluge. At last the men ran through the downpour to their tents and the girls were left alone.

“Poor Larry,” Peggy laughed. “Even the weather won’t let him be a hero.”

**B**UT when the movie people were aroused by the cook’s call for breakfast in the morning it was such a day as would gladden the heart of any director or camera man. Dave, though he had slept only three hours, was up with the cook. Phil Sherwood alone showed the effects of a long night on the new scenario.

“No gadding over coffee!” Dave cried when breakfast was nearly over. “I want to shoot that whole thing over there today. The folks haven’t come back and maybe we can finish before they do.”

He walked down to the canoes and Larry arose quickly and followed.

“Don’t you think we ought to do something about those people,” he began hesitantly. “That fellow being bound and gagged and the others not \_\_\_”

“Larry, I’ve got the best part you ever had!” Dave exclaimed as he struck the actor on the shoulder. “And with that setting and all—”

Larry turned impatiently.

“Yes, and while you’re talking about that picture those people may have been murdered,” he protested.

“And if we didn’t work on the picture what could we be doing?” Dave demanded. “A lot of help we’d be, paddling around these lakes. Besides, things like that don’t happen. What we want to do now is to get that stuff before the old fellow comes back.”

He turned to call to Peggy and Fay.

“Hurry up, all of you. Same costumes and make-up, everybody. Quig and I will go over now and get ready. The rest of you pile into another canoe.”

Whatever delay Dave Mann may have caused by changing the scenario, inserting new ideas in an already tight story and apparently losing all sense of costs, time and proportion, he more than made up for it by the speed with which he conducted the actual work of filming.

He knew exactly what he wanted, he had assembled a capable company, he had a personality that drained his people of the last ounce of ability and then imparted a large part of his own, and he made pictures that filled the theaters.

And the strange part of it was that, despite his apparently reckless methods and temperamental flights, astonishingly few re-takes were necessary and the cutting room on the Nonpareil lot was known as a loafing place.

When the big freight canoe landed the principals, their make-up more grotesque than ever in such surroundings, Dave was ready. He drove them to their places, gave a few brief instructions, ran them through a quick rehearsal and then yelled:

“Ready! Get set! Go!”

There were many people who said that Dave’s scorn of the universally accepted terms of the studio was part of an iconoclastic pose. “Go,” “twist her,” or “slam into it,” were synonyms, but it is doubtful if Dave knew that every other director in the world yells “shoot!” when he wants the camera man to turn the crank. A real creative genius is too busy to pose and Dave Mann was never idle.

It was the first actual work that had been done since the party had left the New Jersey studio and Dave rushed things through with astonishing speed. He was like an orchestra leader of the eccentric type. Dancing behind the camera, he enacted the role and, monkey on a string though he appeared to be, he managed in some way to bring out hidden qualities in his people and to convert what appeared to be a burlesque into a finished piece of work.

Half the forenoon wore away and Dave continued to drive without cessation. The canoemen and camp helpers, none of whom had ever seen a picture in the making, stood in a spellbound group at a little distance. The people in the picture were as absorbed as Dave himself, for constant attention was required if they were to keep pace with his dynamic spirit.

“Now comes the big scene!” he cried at last. “Larry and Fay alone. Peggy! You and Harlow can go inside and take a rest. Stand up there on the steps, Fay. Your brother hasn’t returned. You fear he would go through the Wolf-jaw rapids in his eagerness to get back quickly. You have always dreaded them. You picture what must have happened. You think he’s dead. At last you wilt down there on the steps, confident the rapids got him.

“And then, Larry, you come in and find her. You arouse her and she’s so glad to see you alive she forgets all about the bad news she has for you. Understand? All ready now. There! Twist her, Quig.”

Fay Brainerd was an actress. Though they had just heard the story, though they knew what it all meant, though Dave Mann danced and swayed beside the camera, though Fay did not speak a word, the woodsmen were spellbound. They stood gawking at the girl, fascinated by her pantomime, unconscious of their surroundings.

And through them, blustering, shaking his long white hair in his fury, burst a little old man. He rushed forward to Dave Mann, grasped his shoulder and whirled him around.

“Stop it!” he cried in a high, shrill voice. “How dare you? Do you know, sir, that this is my home?”

Dave took one glance at the interloper, shook off his hand and turned back.

“Great, Fay! Keep going, Quig! Ready, Larry! Oh, stop it! Stop it! Don’t you see you are ruining this picture? Twist her, Quig. Now, Larry! Into it!”

But Larry did not move. He was staring past Dave and the stranger.

“Get away from my place!” the old man cried, and his fury was so great it seemed that he would attack the director.

“Just a minute!” Dave begged without turning around. “Larry! Into it! What’s the matter, man?”

Larry was continuing to stare and remain wholly unmindful of his director’s commands.

“Get off my place!” the old man shouted. “Are you barbarians that you think you can do this to me? Get off, I tell you, or I’ll drive you off.”

Larry’s action had brought Dave out of his absorption and for the first time he realized who the white-haired old man was. He turned to confront him, but instantly he, too, was held by the vision that had distracted Larry.

**A**ND vision it was. The girl stood back of the old man, watching the tableau with an amused expression and just a suggestion of wonder in her great, hazel eyes.

She was tall and slender, but round and with an amazingly deep chest, facts which permitted her to wear a light flannel shirt and a plain khaki skirt

without anyone being conscious of her clothing.

So glorious a creature was she her hair, marvelous in itself, failed to be anything more than a detail in the picture. Fay Brainerd had said it was long, but she had not guessed that it fell to her knees, and she had said it was reddish gold without suggesting the elusive glints in it.

“Good God!” Dave Mann whispered reverently. “And buried in this hole! Girl, what are you doing here? Why aren’t you in pictures? You’re robbing the public. You’re robbing yourself. Quig! But I don’t need any tests. I know ’em when I see ’em. She’s perfect.”

He had stepped to one side to get a profile, but as he finished speaking the old man dashed forward, shaking both fists.

“Such insolence! Such—such—Get out of this before I strike you. Get out, I tell you, before I—”

He stopped and whirled toward the house. Slashing, crashing, there came from the open windows the sound of a sudden, syncopated, jazz-fiend attack on the grand piano in the living room. Peggy Dare was resting.

The old man became apoplectic. He clapped both hands to his ears and shrieked. His face was so red it seemed purple beneath the long, white hair.

“Stop it! Stop it!” he cried. “It’s sacrilege! Sacrilege! Have you people no respect for anything? Marguerite! Close your ears! Don’t listen. After all these years that I should have to—”

He stopped as if overcome and then suddenly he dashed up the steps, across the veranda and into the living room where the unconscious Peggy, swaying on the bench to the rhythm of Tin Pan Alley’s latest, was pounding out the barbarous and yet lilting and sensuous refrain.

“Stop it!” the old man shrieked. “My God! On my piano! You have defiled it.”

**H**E ran forward and, grasping Peggy by the shoulders, dragged her away and slammed down the lid.

“Such insolence! Such audacity! I never believed it possible. Get out of my house with your barbarian ways and the barbarian thing you think is music.”

Peggy Dare’s face and name were known to practically every man, woman and child in the United States and never, not even at the hands of a

bull dog director, had she received such treatment.

“Barbarian!” she cried. “Insolence! Audacity! Well, of all the—”

She stopped, speechless because of her rage, but in a moment she found her tongue and began. It was scorching, so scorching the old man drew back in astonishment. His face became as white as his hair while she lashed him, but before he could break forth in protest Dave and the other members of the company entered the room.

“Lay off that, Peg,” he commanded harshly. “Do you want to spoil everything for us?”

He thrust her to one side and confronted the old man.

“My name is Mann, David Mann of the Nonpareil Film Corporation,” he began deferentially but with a note of certainty that the two names would bring instant and equal deference. “I am very sorry to have upset you so, but I was quite carried away by this wonderful home of yours. I have never seen anything like it and I simply had to have it in a picture.”

“A picture!” the old man exclaimed. “I wouldn’t care if you took a picture of the place. But all that foolishness out in front, that dancing around, that painted girl on the steps, and this—this painted—this painted woman here defiling my piano with such depraved sounds—Out! Out! All of you! Off my place before I throw you off.”

He seemed to have lost control of himself and dashed back and forth, flinging his long white locks about his head and shaking his clenched fists.

“Painted woman, eh?” Peggy hissed as she started forward.

“Stop that!” Dave commanded sternly. “Keep away. I’ll handle him. We’ve got to go on with this stuff. Take her out, one of you fellows.”

“Now, sir,” and he turned back to the owner of the house, “if you will permit me to explain—”

“Explain! Explain such insolence! I don’t want to hear you. Out you go! You have forfeited all right. You can explain nothing.”

He abandoned himself to his fury again, expressing it with quivering arms and tossing head as he stormed up and down the room.

“And Angelo!” he cried at last. “Where is he? What have you done to him? Why did he let you do this?”

“Let me explain,” Dave pleaded.

“No! No! Nothing! Only leave!”

The girl who had accompanied him slipped through the crowd to his side.

“*Maestro*,” she said in a low voice, “there is no need to distress yourself so. The man wants to tell you something and perhaps it would be well to listen.”

“But *cara mia*! See what they have done. In my house! And on my piano!”

“But perhaps Angelo misunderstood and let them come. You know he cannot hear or read English.”

“Angelo would never let them enter unless he were dead.”

“I beg your pardon,” Dave said, addressing the girl, “but is he referring to the chap who looks like a brigand, a deaf and dumb man?”

“Yes, he is an old retainer of the maestro’s.”

“Listen, sir,” Dave said sternly to the old man. “We arrived here late yesterday afternoon. The place was deserted. We searched and could not find anyone. Last night we camped across the bay. After supper two of the canoemen came over with me and they found a man bound and gagged in an outbuilding. We released him, but he could neither speak nor write English and as soon as he could stand he went into the house, took a rifle and paddled away down the lake.”

“Bound and gagged!” the old man repeated. “What nonsense is this?”

Before Dave could reply there was a commotion at the door and the deaf-mute burst through the group. He ran forward and went down on his knees before the old man and the girl. There were tears in his eyes and his attitude was not unlike a fawning dog’s.

The old man’s fingers seemed fairly to twinkle as he held up his right hand and instantly the deaf-mute leaped to his feet. While he communicated his thoughts with one hand he used his other arm, his whole body, his head and his mobile features as emphasis.

**B**OTH the girl and the old man watched him intently, the girl’s eyes widening with horror while her companion’s face became set and cold. The pantomime continued for a moment and then the owner of house turned

to Dave. "Now," he began slowly and calmly, "I will ask you to take your people and leave my home."

He was no longer excited and there was a dignity and firmness in his manner which had been lacking before and therefore became doubly impressive.

"But my dear sir, you are in danger here," Dave protested. "Someone has attacked your place and bound your servant. If there is anything we can do \_\_\_"

"There is nothing, and there is no danger. Some petty thieves have come. I do not fear them, now that we are on our guard, and I doubt if they return."

"But if you will permit us to remain," Dave pleaded. "We will do no damage. Another hour will finish our work. I assure you that it is highly important that we—"

"No! You came unbidden. You did what you had no right to do. You have desecrated my home. You have committed an unpardonable sin. Leave at once."

He stood there with his head thrown back and in his voice was an unmistakable note of authority. One arm was thrust out toward the door. Dave Mann looked at him for an instant as he stood there beside the girl and then to the surprise of every member of his company he bowed slightly and turned away.

"Back to camp, all of you," he commanded, and followed them out through the door.

## CHAPTER III

THERE was no mistaking the fact that Dave Mann was in a bad humor as the canoes crossed the bay to the camp. Peggy Dare alone risked speech. She was still sputtering because of what the old man had said to her.

“Oh, shut up!” Dave snapped at last. “Nothing happened to you and look what’s happened to me. The best picture I ever did and stopped right in the middle of it.”

When they landed he went at once to his tent, but a few minutes later he sent for Larry Moncrieff.

“Now,” he began at once, “we’ve got to finish that stuff over there. Understand? Got to. I know now what this picture’s going to be and that house has got to be in it.”

“When the old fellow calms down he’ll probably let you,” Larry suggested.

“Calms down! He has. And when he did he set hard. I know his sort. Something queer about him in the first place or he wouldn’t be living there. We’ve got no chance with him.”

“Then how are we going to do it?”

“*We’re not. You are.*”

“Me! How can—”

“Through the girl, of course. Didn’t you see the way he quieted down when she spoke to him? She can twist him around her little finger, and you can twist her.”

“Me! Why—why—”

Larry stammered, partly from confusion, partly from anger.

“Yes, you!” Dave exclaimed harshly. “You’ve kept clear of all this mash and flapper stuff ever since you came onto the lot. Don’t I know it? Haven’t we passed up all sorts of chances for publicity because you’d never stick your head out of your house after dark unless there was one of those symphony concerts on?”

“And look here, Larry.” He put a hand on the actor’s shoulder with sudden affection. “I understand. I know you don’t care for that sort of thing and I respect you for it. I’ve gone to the mat for you more than once when the publicity man had won over the big boss. They were going to drag you out whether or no. But I stopped it. I knew how you felt. I stopped them.”

“But Dave!” Larry protested helplessly.

“Now, listen, son. I’m going to put this on the grounds of a personal favor. I’ve never asked anything of you. I picked you out of an office at twenty-five a week and now you’re getting more money than you thought there was in the world. I don’t say you’re not worth it, mind you. You are. You earn every cent of it.”

“But Dave!”

“Listen to me. I’m asking you to do this as a personal favor to me. That girl can win the old man over. A girl with her looks can get anything. And you can win her over. Just whisper your name and—Why, there’s nothing to it. There isn’t a woman under forty-five on the whole continent who doesn’t know all about you. And just because this is the first time you’ve fallen it’ll be all the stronger.”

“But Dave! Listen!”

“Will you do this for me?”

“It isn’t that. Of course I would. But I can’t—can’t—”

“Can’t what?”

“I can’t put it over. The honest truth is, Dave, I’m scared to death of women. I can’t talk to ’em. They make me sick, chasing men they’ve seen in pictures. And I’m a fish when I’m not working. You know that. When I see myself on the screen I can’t believe it’s me.”

Dave stared at him for a moment without speaking. He knew what Larry meant. It had puzzled him before and it had been the cause of endless discussions among people who worked for the Nonpareil Film Corporation.

There was something weird about it. On the screen Larry Moncrieff possessed more magnetism than any man is entitled to. The adoration of several million women attested to his ability to enact romantic and sentimental roles. Cynical critics confessed that his work was excellent. Some even went so far as to say he was one of the few people in the films who possessed real histrionic ability.

Yet always, whenever the camera man ceased grinding, Larry relapsed into a rather stolid, decidedly diffident and easily embarrassed young man. His sudden rise to fame and his enormous popularity did not seem to have touched him in any way. He never hung around the studio, rarely associated with movie people. Many a woman, attracted by his salary, had tossed a Parisian creation into the ring without his ever having seen it.

The mystery of Larry's case was heightened by the fact that he always had a double for difficult roles. The general opinion in filmland was that he lacked nerve for hazardous stunts. Even those who worked with him never were certain this was not true. They knew Dave Mann always provided for the double and was zealously vigilant of his star's welfare. Only Fay Brainerd sensed that it was a matter to which Larry had given little heed either way, and yet Fay, who probably understood him better than anyone else, had never reached a definite conclusion.

All these things flashed through Dave Mann's mind as he looked at the young actor. There were no secrets hidden from him in the Nonpareil studio and yet he suddenly realized that here was something that was a little beyond him.

"I tell you, Dave!" Larry burst forth. "I'd do anything for you. You know that. But I'm afraid I—"

"All right," Dave interrupted. "Then all I'll ask you to do is to make the try. See her. Talk to her. Ask her to use her influence to get the old man to let us finish that stuff."

Larry turned toward the door. He looked exactly as might a man who was starting for the electric chair.

"All right," he said. "After lunch. I'll go over and do the best I can."

"Fine! I knew you would."

True to his word, Larry started an hour later, going alone in the small canoe. He said nothing, but he had not reached the center of the bay before his destination aroused the curiosity of everyone in the company.

"So that's it!" Peggy Dare exclaimed as she turned to Dave Mann. "Working your resistless male vamp off the lot at last, are you?"

"Keep quiet, Peg!" Dave snapped irritably. "I've got to finish that stuff and Larry's got the name and the face to win out if anyone has."

"Name and face, yes. But he won't know what to say when he gets there. He'll be too fussed to speak."

“You didn’t help any this morning when you lit into the old man the way you did.”

“Well, if you think, Dave, that I was going to stand for what he called me without—but I’ll tell you what I’ll do. I’ll bet—well, anything you say up to a week’s salary, that ‘Handsome Larry’ is back here in half an hour.”

Dave glanced at her and she caught the fear in his eyes. He turned away with a grunt and Peggy smiled as she walked to the tent she shared with Fay.

But Larry did not return. Dave watched impatiently. Peggy watched. An hour went by and his canoe was still tied up at the dock across the bay.

“Huh!” Dave chuckled as he walked past his leading woman. “Who’s the wise one now?”

“He hasn’t brought home the bacon yet,” Peggy retorted.

Meanwhile a somewhat terrified and completely embarrassed young man had paddled a canoe across a half mile of water to the most difficult task of his life. The girl he was going to see had jerked him out of the picture that morning in an astounding manner. The combined attractions of all the stars of filmdom could not have had so strong an effect upon him. Never before had he experienced such emotions.

Yet it was not of these things that he thought. He was conscious only that in a few minutes he would be face to face with her, that he must speak, that somehow he must enlist her aid for his friend.

Larry watched the big, sprawling cabin closely as he paddled. For a time he could not see anyone and then to his delight the old man and the deaf-mute crossed the clearing at the rear. When they disappeared in the forest he went on a little faster.

Just as he was about to land, the girl herself came out from behind the brush along the water’s edge and stepped onto the dock. She stopped, startled, when she saw him. Larry jerked off his hat.

“How do you do,” he said.

She smiled and walked out onto the dock as he drew alongside.

“You are very brave to come so soon after what the *maestro* said this morning,” she laughed.

“It wasn’t exactly—well, bravery,” he stammered. “You see—I’m Larry Moncrieff and I wonder if I could talk to you a few minutes.”

“Certainly you may, Mr. —— I didn’t quite catch the name.”

“Larry Moncrieff, of Nonpareil Pictures.”

There was no change whatever in her expression and Larry stared at her in astonishment. The name that would have thrilled any woman in the country had meant nothing to her.

“Pardon my asking it,” he burst forth, “but—but—you never heard of me, did you?”

“Should I?” and there was a twinkle in her eyes.

Then she added quickly,

“But I’m glad to know you just the same, Mr. Mon—Moncrieff. My name is Marguerite Temple.”

Larry leaped out of the canoe and stood before her. His face was beaming, his embarrassment was gone.

“Good Lord!” he cried exultantly.

The girl stared at him in such astonishment he got control of himself.

“I’m awfully glad to meet you, Miss Temple,” he said impulsively. “I didn’t think—I didn’t know that—have you lived here long?”

“Eight years.”

“But you have been away, out to a city?”

“No, not since I came.”

“And you never go to picture shows or see the fan magazines?”

She shook her head in bewilderment.

Larry threw back his head, straightened his shoulders and stared up at the hillside. “Gee, this is a wonderful place to live!” he cried. “I never knew there was such a country. I—I’ve thought about the woods ever since I was a boy and I’ve always wanted to see them. But the nearest I ever came to it was clerking for a big lumber company. It was in the city office and I never even saw a board, let alone a pine tree.”

There was a longing in his words and manner that touched the girl.

“I know,” she said. “It is terrible to be shut up in a city. I was once.”

“You!”

“Yes, before the *maestro* brought me here.”

“The *maestro*?”

“Yes, Signor Ettore Zappettini. You saw him this morning.”

“Zappettini,” he repeated slowly.

He stared past her, his brow wrinkled in an effort to remember, and then suddenly his lips puckered and he began to whistle softly.

“You know that, his first *capriccio*!” she cried.

“Know it! And his one symphony, especially the third movement. I have searched and searched for more and wondered why I could find nothing.”

“You will,” she said, and her voice thrilled in a manner that was not only significant but started Larry’s heart to beating as if he had been running. “And oh, it is wonderful!”

She stopped speaking and glanced quickly around. Her face was flushed and her eyes were bright with excitement. Larry wondered if it were possible for any woman to be more beautiful than she was at that moment.

“Come!” she exclaimed suddenly. “You shall hear some of it.”

She leaped off the dock and led the way up the twisting trail to the cabin. She ran so lightly and so swiftly Larry had difficulty in following her to the great living room.

But without pausing the girl went to the piano, sat down and began to play. For a moment Larry stood there and then unconsciously he dropped into a big arm chair.

For half an hour the girl played. She rarely finished anything. It was a succession of stray movements, of fleeting bits of many things, and yet so well ordered was her selection, so easily did she drift from one to another, not once was Larry aroused from his ecstasy.

When at last she turned to look at him he seemed to be still in a daze and did not speak.

“What do you think of my *maestro* now?” she asked.

“I—I can’t tell you,” he faltered. “Why, I haven’t even breathed since you began. And that is all his?”

“All. Done right here in this room.”

“But surely—” he began in quick protest.

“Some day, when he is ready, and satisfied. But listen. Most of that is finished. He is working on an opera now, the big thing in his life.”

She turned and began to sketch certain parts of it, and as Larry listened he became conscious of only two things, of the enravishing quality of the music and of billowy clouds of reddish gold hair that tumbled to the floor behind the bench.

He had no thought but that he and this girl were alone in a world of their own. The wilderness, the movies, the mystery of her presence there, everything faded. For a full minute he was not even conscious that the soft, entrancing aura that had pervaded the room had dissolved, and then suddenly his eyes were jerked to one side and he saw Signor Zappettini standing in the door.

Without thought, Larry leaped to his feet and bowed in a manner that was nothing less than reverent. At the sound of his boots on the floor Marguerite turned.

“Oh, *maestro!*” she exclaimed in confusion. “You are not angry? But he knew of you. He was whistling that first *capriccio* when I saw him at the dock.”

“Hush, child,” the old man said gently as he came forward. “You have disobeyed, but I forgive because I saw his face as you played. He loves what is our life and that is enough.”

He turned and extended his hand to Larry.

“My name is Moncrieff, Larry Moncrieff,” the young man said.

“A name means nothing, sir. I saw your face as she played, and that is enough. Are you, too, an artist?”

“I’d give anything if I were. I can only listen.”

“A gift in itself, and you excel in it. But will you do me a favor, sir?”

“Anything!” Larry exclaimed eagerly.

“Then please do not, when you go to the world outside, mention having seen me. For eight years I have been hidden, not because I had to but because I wished to. And I am not ready—yet.”

“I understand,” Larry said. “But it will not be long, *maestro?*”

He spoke the word haltingly. It was the first time he had ever used it, or had met a great musician.

“Perhaps not long,” Zappettini answered slowly. “There are several things, and I am not satisfied yet.”

Marguerite had risen from the piano and crossed the room to the two men.

“You are very good, *maestro*, not to scold me,” she said softly as she slipped an arm through his and squeezed it affectionately.

“If you had not the spirit to break a command I could not love you, little one,” he answered. “But listen,” and he strode forward to the piano.

“The thing that bothered me. Remember, *cara mia*? I got it this afternoon. It is like this.”

HE played a few bars and then turned, radiant and exultant, to the girl. She applauded joyously and in a moment they were deep in a discussion, often too technical for Larry to glimpse their meaning, but one which held him nevertheless.

And for a long time he listened as both the girl and Zappettini played and talked. Sometimes he was drawn into the discussion but usually to his discomfort. He was content to sit and listen, and to marvel, until a slanting sunbeam touched his face. He looked at his watch and jumped to his feet.

“It has been very wonderful of you to be so good to me,” he said awkwardly. “I have never enjoyed an afternoon so in my life.”

“Be silent, sir,” the *maestro* said gently. “In eight years there has been no one to listen. An artist without an audience, well—” and he shrugged his shoulders significantly.

“And may I come again?” Larry ventured timidly.

Instantly Zappettini’s manner changed.

“Once more,” he said somewhat sharply, and he bowed slightly in dismissal.

Fifteen minutes later Larry grounded his canoe on the little beach before the camp. Dave Mann was waiting impatiently, and confidently. Behind him were the members of the company.

“Well?” the director demanded. “How about it? Did you fix it up for us?”

Larry, still under the spell of his three hours across the bay, stared at him blankly.

“Old fellow give in?” Dave asked eagerly. “Ought to. You must have made some sort of a hit to stay there so long. Can we shoot the rest of it tomorrow?”

“Why—why,” Larry stammered in embarrassment, “I didn’t ask him.”

“Didn’t ask him!” and Dave grew apoplectic. “Why in the name of hell didn’t you?”

“I forgot all about it. I—I—”

Larry stopped, suddenly aware of what he had done and of the spectacle he was making of himself. Peggy Dare tittered.

“Well, I’ll be—” Dave began, and then he turned and strode away to his tent.

## CHAPTER IV

AFTER supper that night Dave calmed down enough to trust himself to talk to Larry.

“Didn’t you know that I sent you over there for that alone?” he demanded.

“I know, Dave,” Larry pleaded, “but he wasn’t there until later. And when he came he talked music all the time and I didn’t get a chance.”

“But the girl? Won’t she put in a word for us? How did she act?”

“She was very friendly, and I think she would.”

“Of course. I knew your name and your face would turn the trick.”

“But she had never heard of me. My name didn’t mean anything to her.”

Dave stared at the actor in amazement.

“Never heard of you!” he cried. “Well, they are dead ones. I think I had better go over there myself.”

Larry remembered the gentle, gracious *maestro* as he had first seen him that morning and he felt certain of what would happen if Dave intruded again. Moreover, he had sensed added mystery that afternoon. The fact that these two had shut themselves off for eight years was in itself significant and there was that final concession by Zappettini when he had said, “Once more.”

“You’d better leave this to me,” Larry urged. “You got him all stirred up this morning, remember.”

“Yes, and the girl got you so fussed up this afternoon that you forgot what you went for. I can’t waste any more time here. Hey, one of you fellows! Paddle me across to that house.”

One of the canoemen came forward, and, in spite of Larry’s whispered pleading, Dave departed.

But the director never reached the cabin on the hillside. Signor Zappettini evidently had seen him coming, for he met him at the dock.

“I want to apologize,” Dave began at once, “for the manner in which we took possession of your house this morning. But I assure you we believed the place was deserted and perhaps, as a fellow artist, you can understand how I was carried away by the beauty of your home.”

Zappettini raised a hand.

“Just a moment. Did you say ‘fellow artist’?”

“Of course. I saw all that music and the piano and the blank pages you’d been writing on. And I thought you’d understand. I know my art is newer, an infant compared to yours, but no art has grown and expanded, has assumed such far-reaching proportions, as that of the moving picture. Nothing has—”

Again Zappettini raised a hand.

“Just a moment. What art is this?”

“The motion pictures, the cinema, the movies.”

“And this morning when I found you here you were making motion pictures? You call that monkey-shining art? You claim to be an artist because of those queer capers and unintelligible shouts? Bah!”

“I’ve seen orchestra conductors act far worse and to no purpose,” Dave retorted angrily.

“Because you are not an artist and do not understand the artistic soul. And those women painted so foolishly, and one of them desecrating my piano with such sounds! Bah! There is no art in you.”

“But listen,” Dave pleaded. “We have gone to great expense to make this picture. An hour is all I want. It means thousands and thousands of dollars to my people. Let me use your veranda for only an hour more and I’ll not bother you again.”

“Thousands of dollars, eh? I thought so. That is the art in the motion pictures. I have always suspected it. I saw one twelve years ago.”

“I’ll pay well for the use of your place. I’ll guarantee you against all possible damage, I’ll not take more than an hour. I won’t disturb you further.”

**D**AVE had sensed violent opposition and he was ready to debase himself to gain his end.

“No,” Signor Zappettini answered emphatically. “You came without permission. You took what you had no right to take. The consequences are on your head.”

“But the house was deserted. There was no one around, no one to ask.”

“We were detained by a storm or we would have been back last night. No! Your request has become an impertinence.”

“By gad!” Dave exclaimed. “You can’t come that on me. You’re in none too good a position yourself, living up here alone with a pretty girl like this. I knew there was something funny about it. And when I get out I’ll—”

Zappettini charged down the dock toward the canoe.

“Get out!” he cried so furiously the canoeman shoved away. “Don’t ever dare come near this place again.”

He waved a stout cane above his head, his face became red with fury, he forgot the perfect English he always used, perfect except for a slight accent, and resorted to his more fluent Italian that he might express himself fully.

And he made Dave Mann understand.

“Go on back,” Dave muttered to the canoeman in the midst of the tirade. “Nuts. Pure nuts. Might as well argue with a rattlesnake.”

Dave himself was black with rage when he returned to camp. He stormed past the assembled members of his company to his tent and they did not see him again that night.

The next morning he aroused them with orders to pack up immediately, and after breakfast the flotilla of huge freight canoes streamed down the shore of the bay to the open lake. An hour and a half later they arrived at the gorge of the White Otter River, the spot which had drawn them all the way from New Jersey to make a picture, and found a camping place on the lake shore near the mouth of the stream.

Once Dave Mann had inspected the site for the big scenes in his picture, the Wolf-jaw rapids, the falls, the narrow, dangerous portage trail upon which the battle was to be fought, all backed by the rugged, savage beauty of the Canadian wilderness, he seemed to forget completely the fact that he had failed at Signor Zappettini’s cabin.

He became wildly enthusiastic and with Phil Sherwood, Roy Quigley, Bill Taylor, the head canoeman, and Nat Haskell, Larry’s double, he began at once to scramble over the rocks and down the cliffs to determine the

advantageous spots for the camera and for the principal bits of action in the story.

“Wonderful! wonderful!” he repeated. “The stills didn’t do this justice. Gad! The scene fits into the very spirit of the picture, savage yet beautiful, primitive, forbidding, ruthless, and yet always with the peace of the Canadian forest in the background.”

He raved with increasing enthusiasm as they went from one spot to another until a stranger would have believed that Dave had lost his head completely. But Sherwood and Quigley knew his mind was functioning rapidly and surely despite the outward evidences of excitement. His questions gave them an indication of his thoughts and when at last they returned to camp and the luncheon that was waiting for them they knew the main details of the picture had been decided.

“All preliminary work this afternoon,” he announced when the meal was finished. “Peg, you and Fay and Larry and Truman can give the mosquitoes a treat. Nat, I’ll want you again to decide on those stunts. Bill, bring a couple of your good men along, and we’ll need one of the big canoes at the foot of the rapids.”

As was often the case, Larry was soon left to himself. Truman Harlow promptly went to sleep and Peggy and Fay retired to their tent to escape the insects. Larry climbed to the rim of the gorge and walked along it, watching the boiling, rushing water beneath. He came out at last at the lower end and walked along the lake shore to the camp.

The small canoe lay on the beach and he set it in the water and paddled out into the lake.

It is doubtful if Larry’s plan had yet been formed. To him the canoe had become a symbol of the entrancing wilderness which he had just entered for the first time. He had taken naturally to the paddle, had delighted even in the weariness of a long day’s journey, and now, with an empty afternoon before him, he turned to the water as eagerly as a boy.

But once he had started, creeping slowly along the shore, reveling in the wild beauty, grasping delightedly at the suggestive symbols of this land of fur and romance, other thoughts came to disturb him.

First, and he believed it the chief, was the fact that he had failed Dave Mann. He knew the moment had been auspicious when Signor Zappettini had become so gracious the previous afternoon and that he, enthralled, had failed to take advantage of it.

**B**UT while he conscientiously went over these facts his thoughts kept reverting to Marguerite Temple. He still thrilled to that delicious moment when he discovered that she had never heard of him, that here was a woman he could meet without thought of the two hundred mash notes that arrived each day, one to whom he could be a plain, ordinary man in a wool shirt.

He thrilled also to the thought of her beauty, her naturalness and her love of music. The mere absence of rouge was a matter of exquisite delight. Somehow, he felt, this girl seemed to fit so perfectly into her surroundings, seemed so much a part of this entrancing land of which he had dreamed since boyhood and which in the reality had exceeded his dreams.

A half-mile slipped by, and a mile, and at last he turned a point to find himself facing an open stretch of water they had crossed that morning. Beyond that, he thought, through a narrow opening and across another open place, was the mouth of the bay on which stood Marguerite's home. He glanced at his watch, hesitated a moment, and then began to paddle vigorously.

"I owe it to Dave," he muttered. "I'll square it with him."

The open stretches and the narrow passages were far longer than he had supposed and it was an hour before he turned into the now familiar bay. At last the cabin appeared through the Norways, but as he approached the dock he suddenly ceased paddling.

A sound, so high, so clear, so enravishing it held him spellbound, had flashed across the water like a shaft of silvery moonlight through a dark forest. For a moment he did not understand and then, when it came again, more softly and yet with such amazing force and volume, he knew he was listening to a woman singing and that the woman was Marguerite Temple.

He recognized the song at once. It was from the opera she had sketched for him the day before, but this was of little significance, entrancing as the music was. The thing that impressed him most was the fact that he was hearing a voice that would have caused a furore even in Paris or Milan.

Each winter in New York, even before he had entered the movies, Larry had rarely missed hearing grand opera. He was familiar with the voices of all the prima donnas, could have named each in the dark, and now, he knew, he was listening to one more wonderful than he had ever heard before.

FOR ten minutes he sat there in the canoe without moving. At last the girl ceased singing and, still in a daze, he paddled quickly to the dock, tied his canoe and ran up the trail toward the cabin. Half way there he heard her begin again and he went slowly, walking softly that he might not miss a note of it. He made his way cautiously to an open window of the living room on the side hill and stood there, waiting until she had finished.

Closer now, with the song pouring from the window like a flood of brilliant moonlight, he knew that distance had not lent enchantment, that the first surprise had not led him to over-estimation. He began to sense something of what Zappettini had meant when he had said that he was not quite ready to take his music to the world. It was not of his own work he had been thinking, but of this girl's voice.

Before Larry had time to carry this thought further Marguerite broke off in the middle of a high note. In the silence that followed Larry believed he heard a little gasp of fear, but before he could move she spoke.

“Who are you?”

It was barely more than a whisper and again Larry caught the note of terror. He started quickly toward the door, but at the first step a man's voice halted him and he heard:

“Don't you know your own father?”

It was almost a whine, and in the silence that followed Larry stood motionless beneath the window.

“How did you find me here?” Marguerite asked at last.

“Find you! I've done nothing for eight years but look for you. Did you think I was going to let a man steal my own daughter and make no effort to get her back, the little girl I loved and was all I had in the world?”

Larry recovered enough to realize that he was eavesdropping, but as he started to steal away her voice arrested him.

“It has done you no good. I am not going back. I've always been glad I was stolen from you.”

“Rather stay with a murderer than go with your own kin, would you?” the man snarled. “What's he done to you that you act like this?”

“Murderer!” Marguerite gasped. “What do you mean? The *maestro* never—you don't know what you are saying. He couldn't! He's too kind, too good.”

“*Maestro*, eh? So you call that wop piano player that? And you think him kind and good, eh? But he could fool you like he fooled the rest. He’s a keen one. He gave the slip to the best detectives in the country even if it was three years before they stopped looking for him and there was a big reward out. Kind and good, eh? And he stuck a knife between a man’s ribs.”

Larry no longer thought of eavesdropping. Horror held him to the spot, horror and fear, for he had detected a note in the man’s voice that he did not like, a hidden threat, and he felt that Marguerite was in danger.

“You lie!” the girl cried furiously. “The *maestro* could not do such a thing. Go away from here! You can’t say such things to me. Go away!”

“Tut, tut, little one. You must not talk that way to your father. And when I go, remember that you are going with me. I haven’t hunted these eight years for nothing.”

“I’ll not! I’ll not leave the *maestro*.”

There was a silence, and Larry’s muscles tensed as he believed he heard footsteps, soft and stealthy, on the floor of the living room. And then again came the man’s voice.

“You’ll not go with me?” and there was a note of cruelty as well as a threat in his tone. “Do you think I’m a fool? Do you think I spent all this time hunting for you on the chance you’d turn me down?”

“I don’t care what you did,” Marguerite interrupted. “I will not leave the *maestro*. He is the only person in the world who has been kind and good to me. I love him. I’d die if I had to leave him. And as for what you say of him, it’s a lie. He never did such a thing. He never did!”

Larry heard a low chuckle, and then the man spoke.

“Listen, girl, and stop that silly talk. Tomorrow morning at six o’clock I’ll be waiting for you on the point down the lake, the one on this side of the bay, just at the mouth, where there’s a short stretch of sand beach.”

“I won’t come, I tell you!” Marguerite cried.

“Wait a moment. You’ll be there. I’ve seen to that. You’ll be there or the bulls will come in and get your *maestro* and take him away to the electric chair.”

Larry heard a gasp of horror and then the girl burst forth furiously.

“It’s a lie! All a lie! He never did such a thing. You can’t scare me with a story like that.”

“Lie, eh? You’re lying. You weren’t so young that night that you didn’t know what was going on. I saw you myself, coming out of your room. And there in the hall, lying right across your door! What was it? You know.”

He stopped speaking to laugh.

“A body, wasn’t it? A dead man. A man who had been alive only a few minutes before. And there was a knife on the floor, wasn’t there? A thin-bladed one, the sort wops use.

“You saw the body there, all right. You had to step over it to get out. But let me tell you something you didn’t see, something I saw from a door down the hall, something nobody but me knows. I saw your wop friend standing over that man with the wop knife in his hand and I saw him take things from that man’s pocket. Letters, they were, letters written by a woman.”

“You lie!” Marguerite cried.

“Lie, eh? Listen. The police have that dagger yet, and they have the fingerprints on the bloody handle of it. And there’s still that reward. The dead man was a lawyer, a big one. He had a lot of friends.

“And those letters that were in his pocket. Do you know where they are now? They’re in the wop’s trunk, in his room there, that old leather one. Go see for yourself. Go to the bottom of it, down past all those papers and things. You’ll see them, five of them, in blue envelopes.”

“Do you think I am a fool?” Marguerite cried contemptuously. “How do you know what is in that trunk?”

“I didn’t know until two days ago.”

LARRY’S own mind leaped back to his first visit to the cabin and the bound and gagged deaf-mute in an outbuilding. That the same thought had come to the girl he felt sure, for she remained silent.

“The wop and what he did to the lawyer don’t matter to me,” the father continued. “But he stole my little girl, all I have in the world, and I want her back. I’ve spent eight years looking for you. If you think as much of him as you say you’ll be down the shore at six o’clock in the morning.”

“I won’t! I won’t!” Marguerite cried. “I won’t leave him like that!”

“I’m not worryin’ but what you will. I’ve got to go now. Risky staying here so long. But look in the trunk when I’m gone. See if you find what I

said. And then be there tomorrow morning at six o'clock. If you ain't there I won't wait. I'll go right on out and tell the police."

Marguerite did not speak and Larry heard the man walk across the room to the rear door.

"Better leave the wop a note saying you've discovered all, or you're tired of it here, something like that," he advised. "If he follows us I'll turn him over sure."

## CHAPTER V

THE LARRY MONCRIEFF of the screen would rush in at that moment, give the terrified girl a reassuring embrace and then dash on in a thrilling pursuit of the villain. The young man under the window did not move.

More than that, he didn't know what he should do. His desire was to go to Marguerite at once, but common sense told him that no matter how much his sympathies had been aroused he was to her nothing more than a stranger. An inherent diffidence accentuated by the fact that he had been eavesdropping added to his confusion.

And as he stood there while emotions, impulses and repressions warred, he was startled by an exclamation above his head. He looked up to see Marguerite in the window.

"You—you—did you hear?" she whispered.

Larry nodded and then he burst forth.

"I didn't mean to! I was listening to you sing. I think I was in some sort of spell. And then when he came in and said he was your father I started to leave. But you seemed afraid and—"

"It doesn't matter," she said dully. "Only you must not tell the *maestro*."

"But look here," Larry protested. "You can't handle a thing like this by yourself."

"I'll have to. Don't you see? It's got to be the *maestro* or myself and I can't let the *maestro* sacrifice anything more for me."

Larry stared at her.

"You don't mean—?" he gasped.

"I must do it. It's the only way. You don't understand. You don't know my father."

"I know enough to understand he's a crook. You can't put yourself in the power of such a man."

"Life did that, and even when I thought I'd gotten away from him I carried the fear that some day he would come back."

Larry hesitated. He was sickened by the thought of Marguerite, the girl of the glorious voice, of the wonderful hair, the girl who could go on to such triumphs and such a marvelous life, being the victim of this man.

“Wait a minute,” he said. “I’m going to talk to you.”

He ran around the corner of the house, through the front door and into the room.

“You can’t do this!” he cried as he approached her. “It’s—why, it’s not to be thought of for a moment. You don’t even know the *maestro* needs your protection. Ask him first.”

“And have him give himself up for me? He would do just that. You don’t know him.”

“I know he’s not a murderer. It’s impossible.”

The girl looked away.

“What do you know?” Larry demanded. “Why are you so sure?”

“I shouldn’t tell you. It seems a piece of treachery even now. And I was only a little girl the night it happened—the night he took me away with him.

“I was living with my father. I know he must have been a criminal, and out in the hall I heard voices and quarreling and then everything was quiet. I was frightened, but soon the *maestro* came in. When we went out together a man was lying there on the floor. He was dead.

“Since then I’ve known nothing but love and peace, and now I’m going to pay him in the only way I can.”

“By making him unhappy? By spoiling the work of years?”

“But he need not know it. He could think I was unworthy.”

It was an orgy of self-sacrifice and Larry was helpless in argument. He turned to a show of force.

“I’m not going to let you do it!” he cried as he approached her. “I won’t let this thing happen.”

He spoke with such determination, Marguerite looked at him in amazement.

“I’ll be there at six o’clock to meet him,” Larry rushed on. “I’ll settle this matter for you.”

“But you could do nothing.”

“I can keep you from going with him.”

“And make the *maestro* the victim of his revenge?”

“That’s a matter the *maestro* and I will settle.”

He was too intent to see the quick look of fear which crossed the girl’s face or note the sudden change which came to her.

“No! No! Promise you will not meet him.”

“Will you promise that you won’t?” he countered.

“But he’ll call in the police.”

“He’d be the first criminal who did. Of course, he won’t. He doesn’t want to do it any more than you want to have him. He was just trying to frighten you and you almost let him do it.”

“You saved me from it,” and Marguerite looked up at him with a quick smile. “I am so glad you came and heard.”

“And you won’t see him in the morning?”

“No. But you won’t tell the *maestro*? Promise that you will never tell anyone what you heard today.”

“Of course not,” Larry replied. “You can trust me, can’t you?”

“Yes, I can trust you,” and she held out her hand.

Larry took it, and he held it longer than was necessary and without being conscious that he had done so. Nor did she draw it away until both heard a step on the veranda. They turned as Signor Zappettini entered.

**H**E bowed to Larry without speaking but his eyes did not leave Marguerite’s face and there was a question, almost an accusation in them.

“Oh, *maestro*!” the girl cried. “I am so glad you came. Mr. Moncrieff just arrived to say goodbye and he has only a few minutes. The party he is with is going on and he was so afraid he would miss you. He was wondering if he could wait.”

“I am glad I came, sir,” Zappettini said as he stepped forward to shake hands with Larry. “It has been a pleasure to know and to have you here. In eight years there has been no one who could give the appreciation you have.”

Larry did not reply. He had been startled by Marguerite's statement, the unmistakable hint that he must go at once and must not return. He glanced quickly at her, but she was smiling as if nothing of any consequence had happened.

"I am only sorry that Mr. Moncrieff could not have remained longer," she said, covering his awkward silence.

"If I come next summer I hope I may see you again," he ventured, looking at her as he spoke.

"We would be glad to see you," the *maestro* said. "Only I doubt if we are here. By then, I think, our silence will have ended."

In the *maestro*, too, Larry sensed something baffling as well as a desire that he be gone. He didn't understand. He felt that he shouldn't leave without making an offer of assistance. And then as he hesitated he caught a reassuring glance from Marguerite.

"But perhaps we will be here," she said, "and if we are we will be so glad to see you. Won't we, *maestro*?"

"Yes, yes," the musician replied somewhat absently.

Larry saw that he could gain nothing by remaining. Reluctantly he bade them goodbye and went down the trail to the lake. As he paddled away he glanced back several times, but he saw nothing of the man or the girl.

He reached the camp near the river just before supper. No one seemed to have noticed his absence and he sat down with the others and listened to the chatter of the day's happenings.

"Everything's in shape," Dave Mann said. "We've worked out each scene, all the stunts, everything. And it's going to be some picture. Wonderful! I'm going over it all again after supper. Better come along, Larry, to see what you must do."

He led the members of the company to the rim of the gorge at a bend from which a view up and down stream could be had. Beneath them the river dashed and roared among the rocks.

"Here's the way it works," Dave began. "These are the Wolf-jaw rapids. Well named, aren't they? See that place near the top? See those sharp, jagged rocks sticking out and the foam all around them? Just like the jaw of a wolf, isn't it? There's a ledge down below where we can get a slant at them that makes them look like Niagara Falls. We'll get that over in a title,

the insatiable maw of the Wolf-jaw rapids which has devoured the lives of men.

“And on the other side of the river! See where the portage trail dips down from the top of the gorge? In one place, right over the big eddy above the falls, it’s only a narrow ledge.”

“Now, here’s what happens. The hero’s in a hurry. Time means everything to him. He paddles down the river, intending to portage, and then he thinks how long it would take him and of a sudden he decides to run the rapids as far as the falls, lift his canoe around those rocks and go on.

“Nat will do that, or part of it, down at the falls, but maybe Bill Taylor will have to take the canoe through. Sure you can do it, Bill?”

“I’d have done it today if the boys had gotten back from the Indian camp with that birchbark sooner,” the woodsman answered.

“Can Nat do it?”

“I could tell him how. The rest is up to him. Rips ain’t never as bad as they look. They’re like barkin’ dogs. I’ve run these a dozen times and there’s only one ticklish place. The Wolf-jaw itself isn’t bad. The current takes a canoe right around the first rocks if you let it go. But when you get right here and it looks smooth, that’s where it’s bad. You’ve got to shoot over to the left and let that big wave lift you over the ledge.”

“But what are you going to do when you get down to the falls?” Nat Haskell demanded. “You can’t go over them.”

“Not and tell about it afterward,” Taylor drawled. “You just catch the eddy right, on that side, and it takes you into the pocket. You step out onto that flat boulder, lift the canoe down into that backwater behind that long point of rocks and go on your way.”

“Huh!” Roy Quigley snorted. “‘On your way!’ Bill was born with paddle blisters on his hands. ‘The Wolf-jaw ain’t bad.’ That’s what a puncher told me at Cheyenne after he’d ridden Steamboat. Said the old horse was losing his pep and I’ll swear that fellow’s liver had three knots tied in it before he got out of the saddle. This fellow Einstein is as clear as a third grade reader compared to Bill telling how he can slip through that mass of forty-mile water.”

“Shut up!” Dave snapped irritably. “Nat says he’s not afraid of it.”

The double grinned in embarrassment and turned away, but no one noticed him. Long ago the company had become accustomed to his complete lack of nerves and had ceased to sympathize with him because he took all the risks and Larry Moncrieff reaped all the glory in the pictures.

“Anyhow,” Dave continued, “the hero goes through to save time, to get the girl, but the villain, never dreaming anyone would try it, is waiting for him on the narrow ledge up above. He never thinks to look down in the rapids and never knows what’s happened.

“And all the time he’s got the girl hidden up there. After a while the hero comes back looking for her and he meets the villain laying for him on that ledge. They fight, the girl gets loose and comes down to help him and she gets knocked off into the eddy above the falls. The hero throws the man over onto the rocks and jumps after the girl, catching her just before she goes over the falls and pulling her out.”

Dave led them on upstream, outlining his story and becoming more and more enthusiastic as it progressed. He had devised many thrilling scenes and daredevil stunts.

“And always,” he proclaimed, “we will have this wonderful background, a wild, rugged, ruthless setting for a story of wild, rough, ruthless people, and yet with the beauty of the Canadian wilderness, a beauty so like that of the girl herself, gentle and yet savage, primitive and yet lovable. Huh! And yet they say there is no art in the movies. Some people make me tired.”

Only the mosquitoes ended his discourse. The nightly swarms came in with twilight and drove everyone back to the shelter of the tents.

Yet Larry did not sleep. Ever since he had left Signor Zappettini’s home he had thought of little else than the tragic story he had unearthed. He tried to tell himself it was none of his affair, that he had been dismissed by both Marguerite and the *maestro*, and yet he could not drive out the thought that he should do something—that his help was needed.

At last he drifted off to sleep, but at dawn he wakened. He found his mind startlingly clear and that he was able to recall every detail of that story he had heard through the open window and of his conversation with Marguerite afterward. And out of all those statements, glances and fleeting expressions there came to him the conviction that he had been duped, that the girl had sought only to get him to leave, had promised she would not meet her father at six o’clock with the sole intention of allaying his fears and keeping him away.

In an effort to disprove what he feared was true he went over the conversation word by word, only to reach the opposite conclusion. He was certain that Marguerite had striven to get a clear field that she might sacrifice herself for the *maestro*.

Larry looked at his watch and found that it was half past four. He arose quietly, dressed and slipped out of the tent. No one was awake and he walked down the trail to the lake, set the little canoe in the water and paddled away.

HE did not have any definite plan, he only knew that he must reach the point where the father had said he would be waiting in time to prevent Marguerite going away with him. How he would prevent it he did not know. His mind was occupied with the more important question of traversing five miles in a little more than an hour.

But he had no sooner left the place where the White Otter River flowed into the lake at the gorge than he found the open stretch hidden by a morning mist. He could not see the opposite shore but he did catch a glimpse of trees on a high hill above the narrows and paddled toward them.

After a while they disappeared and he was surrounded completely by the fog. It was something he had not counted on and he paddled desperately, knowing that he could only trust to luck to strike the narrows.

At last a shore appeared but it was unfamiliar. He paddled along its twisting contour until he found a spot he remembered, realized that he had seen it only a few minutes before, that he had paddled completely around an island.

He was without sense of direction, had no idea which way he should turn. The mist was thinning but not enough to disclose anything familiar. He was helpless, held inactive while the minutes whirled away.

At last he saw a burned pine stub some distance ahead. He knew it was on the right side of the narrows and turned in that direction. But when he emerged on the next open stretch he found it still enshrouded by fog. He could only take his bearings as best he could and drive across, but as he started his wrist watch told him it was six o'clock.

A slight breeze came up and helped Larry to keep his course but that soon failed and he paused, helpless. As he sat there, paddle trailing, a sound came to him. It was only a slight click, as of one piece of wood striking

another, and that was all, but it seemed louder because it was the first break in the stillness.

When it was not repeated he went on, paddling slowly. At last a shore appeared to the right and he went toward it, determined to wait until the mist was gone. He knew he was too late, that there was nothing he could do now. Either Marguerite had kept her appointment and was gone or she was safe at the cabin.

At half-past six the sun dissolved the mist as if by magic and to his surprise Larry found himself within a hundred yards of the rendezvous point. It was empty and he paddled toward it. There was no canoe in sight but as he grounded on the beach he saw, sharply cut in the sand, the mark where one had been pulled part way out of the water. Beside it were the footprints of men and among them the small, clear impressions of a woman's boots.

Larry sprang out and followed the tracks back to the woods from which Marguerite had emerged. They pointed only toward the water and he knew without further evidence that she had done what she intended to do from the first, that she had gone with her father, whom she feared and hated, rather than bring disgrace to the man who had befriended her.

## CHAPTER VI

WHEN he realized what had happened Larry did not hesitate. He shoved his canoe away from the beach and turned it into the bay upon which Signor Zappettini lived. Ten minutes later he landed beside the dock at the cabin.

There was no smoke rising from the kitchen chimney nor was anyone in sight and he ran up the trail and onto the veranda. Through a window he saw the *maestro* coming from his bedroom and without knocking he burst in at the front door.

“Has she gone?” he cried excitedly. “Did she do it?”

Zappettini looked at him in astonishment.

“Look!” Larry continued. “Look in her room. Is she there?”

“I don’t understand you. What is the reason for this intrusion?”

“Please!” Larry begged, and his agitation was so great and so sincere it impressed Zappettini with a sense of the importance of his question. “Go to her room and see if she is there.”

The *maestro* turned at once and went down the hall. In a moment he was back.

“What has happened?” he demanded. “How did you know Marguerite was not there?”

Haltingly at first, for he found himself suddenly embarrassed in a recital of affairs which really concerned him so little and his hearer so deeply, Larry told how he had come to the cabin the previous afternoon and of the conversation he had overheard through the window.

As Zappettini caught the import of what was coming he staggered back against the table and his face became deathly white. But he did not interrupt until Larry had told all he knew, nor even then did he abandon himself to the excessive rage or grief the young man had expected.

“Wait,” he said quietly at the end. “She must have left some word.”

He returned to Marguerite’s room but he had hardly gone when Larry called to him.

“Here is what you are looking for,” he said, and he extended an envelope he had seen lying on the table.

It was addressed simply, “*Maestro.*”

Zappettini tore it open and as he read the tears started in his eyes.

“Sir,” he said brokenly as he laid the missive down, “there never was such a girl as Marguerite. She is all that is brave, all that is good. See what she has done. She has told me nothing of what you have. She has not even hinted at it. She has merely said that she is tired of it here, that she wishes to go out and see the world from which she has been held for so long. She even tells me that she does not care for me or my music, that it is driving her mad, that she can stand it no longer.”

“But she doesn’t mean it!” Larry cried.

“Mean it! Don’t you see? She has made this sacrifice for me. She has sacrificed herself, ruined her career, her life, to save me. She has told me this so that I won’t follow her, won’t make an attempt to get her back. Oh, *cara mia!* Why didn’t you come to me?”

For the first time Zappettini broke down and the sight of the old man struggling against his grief held Larry silent for a moment. Then anxiety forced the question:

“But you are not going to let her do this, let her go with him?”

The *maestro* straightened.

“No,” he declared. “It must not happen. That man is a criminal, the leader of a notorious gang. I had thought he was in prison. He must have escaped.”

“Then it will be easy,” Larry answered. “The law is on your side. He is a fugitive and there is no reason—”

He stopped, suddenly aware that there was a reason. Zappettini studied him closely for a moment.

“Young man,” he said at last, “you are a stranger and this affair concerns me alone. Circumstances have brought you into the situation and now I ask only that you regard it as a confidence. For the rest, Angelo and I must attend to it.”

“You mean that you do not trust me?” Larry asked.

“No, I would trust you, for I watched you as you listened to the music that first day. But the thing that must be done is something into which I have no right to drag you.”

“But I wish to help. You don’t understand. It is unthinkable that a girl like Marguerite should be in the power of such a man. Come! We can catch them before they get to the railroad.”

“Yes,” Zappettini answered, “it must be before—or not at all.”

He had spoken the words quietly but something in his tone carried the impression of a deadly purpose.

For a moment Larry studied him. He had thought of Zappettini as a visionary artist, engrossed in music, childlike in his rages and yet as harmless as his moods were violent. Now he found himself gazing into eyes which burned with hatred and which held no mercy.

“Then let me join you?” Larry pleaded. “You need me. I don’t ask to hear your story. I want to help.”

Zappettini thrust out his hand.

“Thank you,” he said. “I accept in the spirit in which you offer and because I need you. And while I cannot tell all, I must tell enough to put myself in your power if I am to show you the need of what I must do.”

“**I** DID steal Marguerite. I had heard her sing and I knew the glorious life she might have. But my taking her, saving her from a life in which she would have been trained for crime, was accidental, an afterthought. The real story concerns another.

“The reputation, the future of a woman was in danger. She had become the unwitting victim of a gang of blackmailers and she sought me in her trouble because—because she was the only woman I ever loved.

“Angelo, my deaf-mute servant, knew her and loved her. Only to know her was to love her. It was when on an errand in her behalf that I first saw Marguerite, heard her sing. She lived in the house of her father, the leader of the gang.

“But the man I went to see was not the leader. He was a lawyer, respected. No one knew his connection with the gang. If he had demanded money I would have given it gladly. But he was playing for something else.

“We went to see him several times, Angelo and I. One night I determined to kill him. It was the only way and I would have done it. I meant to, but Angelo was quicker. His knife reached him first.

“The moment it was done I knew we must hide. The law in its clumsy efforts to attain justice would have ruined the life of the woman we sought to protect. It was then, just as I was going, that I saw my opportunity to take the child, to snatch her from a sordid life and save for the world the great gift she has.

“We were never followed. The gang had fled. Some were captured but nothing was proved against them. There was only the stiletto with the fingerprints on the handle, mine, for I had jerked the blade from the body, and the father, he alone, had seen me.

“Later I heard he had been sent to prison for another crime and I felt safe. We were never connected with the crime but now he has escaped and sees his opportunity.”

“Opportunity for what?” Larry demanded.

“For a fortune, the fortune she can make for him. He has not only a beautiful woman but a divine voice as well. She need sing only a note in Paris or Milan and he can write his own figures in the contract.

“No wonder he has let me train her. Now, so long as I live, he has a club to hold over her head. He can make a slave of her, rob her of the glorious life to which she is entitled.”

“And you?”

Larry could not repress the question.

“I would gladly die for Marguerite,” Zappettini answered, “but it does not rest with me. The story must never be told. There is the other woman. Thus, you see,” and he paused significantly, “the matter must be settled here, quietly, for all time. That man must never reach the railroad.”

“All right,” Larry agreed impetuously. “He won’t.”

“Wait. I must tell Angelo. I had worried, since that day he was bound and gagged. I feared this, but believed it was only the work of common thieves. We were molested once before.

“But he has been working on the matter. He has searched the forest around us. Last night he was gone. Perhaps now he can tell us something.”

Zappettini went to the room off the kitchen and returned at once with the deaf-mute. With the manual alphabet the *maestro* spelled out a brief account of Marguerite's disappearance and as his hands moved and waved convulsively Angelo became more and more excited. At last he, too, began to spell out words.

"He says he found a camp of men, two, on a hidden bay a mile to the east of us." Zappettini interpreted for Larry. "They have been there some days, have walked through the forest to this place. He could not see them in the dark, did not learn who they are."

"They are the ones who bound him," Larry said. "Our coming that first day spoiled whatever plans they had then. They waited until we left."

"And I thought you and your friends were impertinent interlopers!"

But Angelo was again busy with his fingers.

"He says he did not see the men who bound him," Zappettini explained. "They attacked him from behind."

"That's all beside the question," Larry interrupted. "We've got to save Marguerite and they have an hour's start."

"You are right, my friend," and Zappettini spoke to Angelo.

The deaf-mute ran to the kitchen and came back with his rifle.

"It is the only weapon we have," the *maestro* explained as he started toward the door.

AT the dock Angelo dragged a canoe to the water with one hand while he talked with the other.

"He thinks we should divide forces," the *maestro* said. "There are two railroads, one fifty miles north, the other as far to the south. These people may go either way."

"But their camp in the next bay!" Larry interrupted. "They may have gone there before starting, to pick up their outfit."

Zappettini and Angelo immediately began a silent but nevertheless hysterical discussion. Their fingers fairly twinkled, their arms waved violently and their faces were twisted by convulsive efforts to communicate their thoughts.

"What's he talking about?" Larry demanded impatiently.

Zappettini babbled something in Italian without turning his head and his fingers flew the faster. Larry watched him in bewilderment for a moment and then realized that the *maestro* had lost his self-control, that the unwonted calmness with which he had discussed Marguerite's disappearance when they were in the cabin was gone.

"I don't know what to do!" he cried suddenly as he turned to Larry. "The wilderness is so great, so empty, so trackless. There are so many waterways, so many places where they might reach the railroad. If we take one it is a mere chance."

"What does Angelo say?" Larry interrupted.

"He feels sure they will go to the south. He insists that we go that way. But I don't know. If we were wrong, if we didn't find her—"

Angelo was in his canoe and beckoning impatiently. Larry, knowing that time was precious, anxious to begin the pursuit, suddenly saw that he must remain calm and reach a decision.

"Go with Angelo," he said quickly. "Take the southern route. You can tell at the first portage whether they have passed. I'll take the other up the White Otter River. If they went that way I'll know and keep after them."

He forced acceptance of his plan by jumping into his own canoe and paddling away. A moment later the other craft started and it soon passed him. Angelo was strong and a skilled canoeman and the *maestro* added his feeble efforts at the bow.

They kept on down the shore toward the mouth of the bay and the open lake to the south while Larry slanted across to the other side of the entrance and turned to the left.

When he started it was his intention to go straight to the gorge in the White Otter River and learn if Marguerite and her father had passed that way but as he settled to his work and the other canoe disappeared on the far side of an island, leaving him alone, he began to comprehend just the sort of an enterprise upon which he had embarked.

Yet Larry gave heed only to the immediate facts in the case, to the chances of success, to the course he would adopt if he did overtake Marguerite. He never stopped to marvel that he, a comparative stranger, had thrown himself so passionately into her defense.

HE only knew this girl whom he had never seen until three days before, the girl who had never heard his name and had given him the exquisite thrill of treating him as a wholly normal person, was in danger of ruining her life, of sacrificing a glorious future.

And it was not the marvelous voice or her beauty that had attracted him. He was not even affected by the future which undoubtedly was hers. He had sensed in their first meeting that here was a sincerity and a wholesomeness that meant more to him than beauty—he had seen too many film stars—and her abandonment of everything to save the *maestro* was all that was needed to convince him of a purity and beauty of character such as he had only dreamed of.

Nothing, he knew, could be more criminal than her sacrifice and upon him rested largely the action necessary to prevent it. His determination centered upon that thought but always he fumbled with the question, “How?”

In his eagerness for speed his left hand slipped on the head of the paddle shaft and the blade struck the edge of the gunwale with a peculiar click. He stopped short, held by a sudden recollection. He had heard that sound before and then he remembered that it was the one that had come to him in the fog an hour before and almost at the same place.

Larry looked back to the point which Marguerite’s father had chosen as a meeting spot. His own course when he had groped through the fog had been farther out in the lake. The sound had come from his right, probably from near where he now was. And that click, he felt certain, had been made against the canoe which was bearing Marguerite away.

He looked ahead and saw a narrow opening to the left. It led, he believed, to the bay upon which Angelo had found the camp of the strangers and, risking the chance that Marguerite had been taken there, he turned his canoe into the passage and shoved it swiftly forward.

After a quarter of a mile Larry came out on a wide part of the lake he had never seen before. A chain of islands cut it off from the open stretch to the south that he had traversed. He stopped paddling to survey it, for somewhere on the northern shore, he felt certain, was the camp he sought.

But before he had begun to look for tell-tale smoke or a spot of white his eyes caught a movement against an island straight ahead and he saw a canoe with three people in it disappearing toward the open lake. There was no doubt in his mind as to who it was and he began the pursuit at once.

By following the chain of islands he could keep out of sight and in ten minutes he reached the place where he had seen the canoe. Moving cautiously through a channel between two islands, he saw it a mile ahead, just turning a point.

Larry estimated that he was three miles from the river where the portage around the rapids would be necessary and he knew that in those three miles he must make up the distance between them.

For it was there at the portage, he knew, he must overtake Marguerite and rescue her, at the portage where the movie company was encamped and any number of men could come to his assistance.

He settled grimly to his task and though his shoulders ached and his hands were blistered, he shot the canoe swiftly forward. Marguerite's fate, he believed, rested on his arriving in time.

## CHAPTER VII

WHILE LARRY MONCRIEFF had never been a hero except on the screen, and even there his most daring exploits were achieved by a double, he was in no sense a physical weakling. Yet no one ever knew what his attitude toward the use of a double might be and as a matter of fact he had none.

From the time Dave Mann had jerked him out of the big lumber company's office Larry had simply obeyed orders. He had looked upon Dave as a benefactor and as a mentor and he had always complied without question.

Dave himself had often been puzzled by Larry. He had come to respect his desire for seclusion, or, rather, to heed it. He knew the young man was "nuts over music," that he was, to use movieland's own term, a "clean liver," that he had managed to keep the face and form of an Adonis without the disintegrating effects usually accompanying sudden stardom, and that he was a capable and easily handled actor.

Dave did not know that Larry had once been the best wrestler in a small athletic club, that he had given up boxing only because it endangered the arrangement of his "million dollar map," and that in high school he had won through to a couple of state championships in track athletics. Nor did he know that Larry always kept in perfect physical condition.

But the actor had been as reticent about these things as he was about his movie prestige. He would not have hesitated to tell Dave of them if Dave had asked, but Dave never had.

One result of this clean living and constant training had been an unflinching flow of snap and vitality in the trying and exhaustive work before the camera and a preservation of the famous face and figure. But Dave had merely accepted these as part of the marvelous qualifications of his protege.

Yet Larry's living habits were to produce another result. Though he was new to a paddle and lacked the skill that can come only through long practice, he did have the strength, the endurance and the dogged determination necessary in a stern chase.

And he soon found that he was gaining. When he reached the point around which the other canoe had disappeared he saw it down the shore

ahead of him, and much nearer. But he had to wait until it turned the next point for he did not dare show himself in pursuit so soon.

After reaching the second point he found that a string of islands along the shore gave him shelter and he crept up faster still. When he came out at the mouth of the bay into which the river entered he was only a quarter of a mile behind and he could plainly see Marguerite and the two men disembarking at the beginning of the portage.

Almost immediately the men lifted the canoe to their shoulders and, with Marguerite ahead of them, started across.

Larry paddled now as he never had before. He fairly lifted the little craft from the water. He knew that he must reach the shore and run across the portage in time to catch them before they went on up the river.

Just exactly what he would do when he overtook them he had not considered. He knew that nearly twenty movie people and canoemen were there, though across the river from the portage, and that somehow he must accomplish his purpose.

When he reached the shore he let the canoe strike without diminishing speed and converted the lurch with which he was thrown forward into a running start up the steep trail, never seeing two heavy packs beside it.

The path twisted and turned among huge boulders and balsam thickets before it emerged at the top of the gorge. From this open space Larry saw Fay and Peggy across the river, climbing from the camping place on the lake. Ahead of them several canoemen were busy cutting spruce-poles.

But he gave no heed to them. The trail dipped down into the gorge, running along a narrow ledge, and as he turned a bend he could see the top of the rapids. The canoe had been set down partly in the water and Marguerite stood beside it. He felt certain that she saw him.

A swerve in the trail hid her and Larry ran the faster. He was approaching the spot directly over the big eddy above the falls. The ledge was narrow here but straight until it turned abruptly around a high point of rock and he increased his speed.

When he dipped down into the gorge Larry had caught a glimpse of Dave Mann and Roy Quigley working with a camera on a little platform that had been built out over the water. They were directly opposite him now, no more than seventy-five feet away, but in that moment, with the roaring river between them, they might as well have been on another planet for all the assistance they could be.

AND then as Larry slackened his pace at the sudden bend in the trail he came face to face with two men. One was about fifty, rather small and with a mean, cunning countenance and quick, rat-like eyes that associated themselves at once with the thin, whining, threatening voice he had heard the previous afternoon through the open window of the Zappettini cabin.

The other was young, about Larry's own age, and slightly heavier.

Larry's eyes widened in exultation when he saw them and they held, too, an expression of ferocity. Until that moment he had not known how he hated these two who were planning to ruin Marguerite's life. And that exultation and that ferocity combined to force an unconscious exclamation from his lips.

"I caught you!" he panted.

Already the two had guessed his object and the glances of each had shifted to the movie men across the river, both still absorbed in their task. Then with a movement quick as light the smaller jerked an automatic pistol from a pocket.

At the flash of his hand Larry had ducked instinctively and his fingers touched a jagged boulder on the crumbling, sloping wall of the cliff beside him. With a movement that at once threw his own body to one side and hurled the rock, he knocked the pistol from the man's hand just as it was fired.

At the same instant the younger man leaped forward to catch Larry off his balance. But the actor had already gathered his feet beneath him and met the onslaught with a lunging tackle that threw his assailant heavily near the edge of the trail.

Larry was now between the two men but before the younger could get to his feet he sprang past him and whirled to confront them both. And, rather than wait for them to coordinate their forces, he leaped to the attack.

There began as desperate and thrilling a battle as the screen has ever shown. A hundred feet above the writhing eddy in the river just before it plunged over the falls, with a cliff rising sheer above them, on a shelf not more than five feet wide, with the thundering roar of the cataract and the snarling rush of the rapids furnishing a savage orchestral accompaniment, Larry Moncrieff, "million dollar beauty," whom Dave Mann had protected from all danger, was engaged in a life and death struggle with two escaped

convicts, men whose training and instincts forbade all consideration of fairness or the value of a human life.

Across the gorge, held spellbound by the sight, were Fay Brainerd and Peggy Dare, Dave and Roy and a half dozen of the canoemen. Had he not been so occupied Larry would have seen Dave turn excitedly to Roy, and had it not been for the noise of the water he would have heard the familiar, "Twist her, Quig!" The camera man, as imperturbable as ever, began grinding away with his little lever.

Had he looked Larry also would have seen Dave rush madly up the side of the gorge, dash toward the staring woodsmen and send them running toward the camp and a canoe with which to cross below the falls and go to the rescue, as if there were a possibility that they could get there before he was thrown over the cliff.

But Larry Moncrieff had no intention of being thrown over the cliff. Ebullient ferocity had driven him to the attack and a sudden intense and inexplicable hatred kept him at it, but he was cool now, once the possibilities of the encounter became apparent.

And a cool mind was opposed to him. The big man rushed again and again, striking and attempting to gain a hold on the actor's body. He charged like a demon, his lips writhing with a bestial snarl, but all the time, darting back and forth, careful to keep away from the edge but watching for an opportunity, the little man, an open knife in his hand, was seeking an opportunity for a quick thrust.

**H**E moved rapidly but unhurriedly. His black, baleful eyes were steady and calculating and sometimes, as was intended, they drew Larry's from his more aggressive antagonist.

But Larry astounded even the imperturbable Roy Quigley and sometimes caused a variation in the automatic motion of the hand on the little crank. He was in and out like a flash, risking a step toward the perilous edge for an effective blow, stooping to pick up a rock and hurl it at the little man when he crept too close.

He himself was not escaping punishment while he inflicted it. Blood streamed from his nose, there was a gash across one cheek and three of the teeth which figured in the priceless smile that had won flappers by the thousand were loosened.

At last a well-aimed rock struck the little man a glancing blow on the head and drove him back. Larry sparred for a moment, took a spent body blow and then staggered back as if in distress.

Instantly the younger man leaped in, his eyes alight with triumph, only to be met, not by a boxer but by a wrestler. He found himself caught in a hold from which he could not wrench free and he felt himself being borne slowly but surely back toward the brink of the precipice.

Larry believed the time had come. He had had just the hold he wished. The little man was coming back, his knife ready. A twist, a wrench, a thrust, and the big man would totter over the edge.

But as Larry put his plan into execution one foot slipped on some loose gravel and he found both himself and his opponent swaying at the very brink. Then a piece of rock gave way and they both dropped.

Instinctively each man loosened his grip and flung out his arms. The crook's scraped the edge and he dropped out of sight. Larry's eager fingers found a crevice and he hung on.

His first glance was at the older man but he had already turned and was hurrying back along the trail. Evidently he had believed both men were doomed.

Only the skill acquired through long hours on the horizontal bars and on the headless steed of the gymnasium enabled Larry to lift himself from his perilous position. He did it, carefully but quickly, and once on his feet he glanced upstream. Marguerite still stood beside the canoe and she was staring up at him.

But even as Larry looked he saw her glance away and draw back toward the river as if in sudden fear.

And Marguerite was afraid. Running toward her, his face contorted by passion, was her father.

"You damned snake!" he cried furiously. "You fixed it, eh? Fixed it so we wouldn't be followed. Gave the wop a phony story, did you? Didn't *want* to be followed. Well, you've queered my game. Thank God you're no daughter of mine. I'd hate to be the father of a stool pigeon."

"Not your daughter!" Marguerite cried.

"No, not mine, and you'll not be anyone's in a minute," he snarled. "I'll fix you! You'll never play a trick like that again."

He lunged forward, his face a horrible symbolization of his murderous passion, and, grasping her by the shoulders, thrust her back. Her knees touched the gunwale and she was forced down into the canoe, her head striking a thwart with a crash.

THE girl was dazed by the blow and before she could raise herself the man lifted the bow and shoved the craft far out into the stream. The greedy current caught it and whirled it into the rapids.

Larry had not waited for this to happen. When he saw the man advance threateningly toward Marguerite he started to run. But he was still fifty yards away when he saw the canoe sent out into the stream, carrying the girl straight toward the Wolf-jaw.

For a moment he stood there, stunned by the horror of it. He could not force himself to follow the dancing, tossing, rushing course of the little craft and its helpless burden. He had already given them up as lost. He knew that no canoe, unguided, could pass through the rapids or escape the falls.

And Larry knew that meant the end of Marguerite, the end of the glorious voice, of the girl he had found in the wilderness and who had so suddenly and so strangely taken hold of his heart.

In that instant he realized what she meant to him, what had prompted his interference in an affair that clearly did not concern him, what had driven him to the pursuit and the battle on the ledge. In the very moment when she was being whirled to her death he knew for the first time what love was.

Sickened, beaten, he shut his eyes and turned away. All the strength went out of him and he swayed there on the steep trail.

And then suddenly his eyes snapped open. He had heard the scrape of a boot on a rock and saw Marguerite's murderer coming toward him.

The man's passion was gone. He was again the cold, calculating criminal, more cold and more calculating now because he was bent on escape from his latest crime. Behind him was the river, before him the steep cliff. The only way out lay along the path on which Larry was standing.

But Larry did not wait for him to come. His strength returned in a flood. Hate and fury engulfed him and with a hoarse, animal-like cry he sprang down the trail.

The man waited, his knife ready, but Larry sent it spinning with a blow, grasped the fellow about the waist and rushed him on down to the water's

edge.

The crook fought desperately but without avail. Larry forced him out onto a huge, flat rock that thrust far out into the current and narrowed the stream in the first turbulent stretch of the Wolf-jaw.

And there in a last burst of maniacal fury he hurled the man down, grasped him by his clothes, lifted him above his head and hurled him out into the snarling, crashing, boulder-cluttered river.

His victim's back struck a great, jagged piece of granite and he hung there for a moment, his face white with agony. Then the hungry fingers of the rapids plucked him off and carried him from sight.

## CONCLUSION: CHAPTER VIII

WHEN the face of the crook disappeared in the angry waters of the Wolf-jaw, Larry stood watching the spot, fascinated. Yet he was not thinking of the fact that in the last sixty seconds he had killed two men, had exceeded in life anything Dave Mann had ever planned for his double on the screen. He was conscious only of a great emptiness, of futility, of the fact that Marguerite was gone, that he had been unable to save her.

In that moment of enervation the spell of the rapids, and of what had happened there, gained mastery. His glance was drawn downstream irresistibly and then out of the corner of one eye he caught a glimpse of Dave Mann and Roy Quigley still standing on the little platform above the falls.

Both were greatly agitated. Roy was still turning his crank with one hand, but with the other he was pointing at the big eddy. Both of Dave's arms were waving frantically. Suddenly he turned and scrambled up the side of the gorge.

At that moment Roy saw Larry watching him. He abandoned his camera and began to beckon and to point with great, exaggerated sweeps of his arms and suddenly Larry understood what all this meant. He turned and ran back up the trail.

Halfway to the place where he had fought his battle on the ledge he could look downstream as far as the falls. In the eddy, the powerful waters tugging at her body, her head and shoulder and one arm only out of the water, was Marguerite.

She was alive. He saw her arm move slowly as if she were endeavoring to get a firmer hold on the wet rock. But she was dazed, the swift current was tearing at her body and clothing. At any moment it might wrench her loose and hurl her over the falls.

At the foot of the rapids, out in the lake beyond the swirling current, Larry caught a glimpse of a big freight canoe propelled by half a dozen men. So rapidly had events transpired they were only halfway on the errand of rescue to which Dave Mann had dispatched them.

But what impressed Larry most as he looked downstream was the impossibility of rescue even when the woodsmen did arrive. The gorge was straight walled on that side and the snarling water filled it from bank to bank. Marguerite was caught on a tongue of rocks that ran out from the left side and afforded the sole means of lifting a canoe to the backwater beneath the falls.

A man could be lowered by a rope, if there were one long enough, and strong enough, in the camp. But before they could return for it the girl would have been swept away. She hung there, in sight of all, so near and yet so inaccessible. Her feeble efforts to cling to the slippery rock were plainly seen, and they might fail at any moment.

As Larry watched her, sick with horror, afraid to turn away and yet dreading to continue watching, he saw Bill Taylor join Fay and Peggy at the rim of the gorge above Roy Quigley. The mere presence of the woodsman gave Larry an idea, pointed out the only way possible to reach Marguerite in time. The next instant he was running back down the trail to the head of the rapids.

He remembered having seen a birchbark canoe there beside the one in which Marguerite had been sent into the stream and surmised that it was the Indian craft Bill Taylor had obtained to be used in the picture, the only type of canoe in which he would shoot the Wolf-jaw.

And as Larry ran he endeavored to recall in detail the method of accomplishing the feat which the woodsman had outlined.

“The current takes a canoe right around the first rocks if you let it go . . . Only one ticklish place . . . When it looks smooth, that’s where it’s bad . . . Let that big wave lift you over the ledge.”

Larry did not stop to weigh the chances of his success. He only knew that it was the one way of reaching Marguerite in time, that Bill Taylor, who could do it, was across the river, that time was precious.

And he knew, too, that he must not fail, that somehow he, a tenderfoot, a stranger to white water, his hands yet sore from his first paddle blisters, must accomplish this hazardous task.

Thus it was not with a prayer but with a fierce resolve that brought coolness and concentration on one thing that he slid the birchbark into the water above the rapids, knelt in the center and paddled out to midstream.

The current, smooth and silent and yet irresistible, gripped the canoe and whirled it down toward the boiling, hungry smother. In the middle of the

river he turned the bow straight down and the next instant fell the cold dash of spray in his face and the frail craft plunging and lifting beneath him.

Directly in front the savage, jagged row of rocks which gave the Wolf-jaw its name rose above the current, standing there immobile and awesome, rending the powerful current to bits and scattering it in every direction.

The canoe rushed on until Larry believed Bill Taylor had lied, that nothing could save him from those huge black teeth. But the thought had no more than flashed through his mind than he saw the rocks streaming past on his right. The next instant they were gone.

Now he entered a stretch of water in which great waves lifted him like a feather, in which eddies jerked the bow this way and that, in which the backlash rose up from nowhere to smite him on one side and then the other.

The turmoil, the motion, the hungry waves reaching high above the gunwale, all were terrifying. Larry did not believe for a moment he could survive. He did not see how it was possible, but he remembered Bill Taylor's words: "Only one ticklish spot . . . When it looks smooth, that's where it's bad."

Larry wondered how anything could be worse than the place through which he was now passing and then it suddenly occurred to him that he was still afloat, that the bottom of the canoe was scarcely dampened, that he was being borne swiftly but still alive, although he had not lifted a finger to help himself.

Suddenly, directly in front, he saw the smooth place of which Bill had spoken. In startling quiet and agreeable tranquillity the canoe swept forward. Directly in front was the ledge, which could be crossed only with the aid of the great wave on the left side.

"Let that big wave lift you over," Bill had said.

Larry saw it, frightfully menacing compared to the oily flow to the right, and then he realized that it was here Marguerite must have been wrecked, that it was here he must make the effort to save her.

With desperate strokes he reached far out over the side and tried to turn the canoe. At first he felt that he was not making an impression and then, as if suddenly possessed of a grim determination to shatter itself, the craft darted straight toward the lifting, engulfing wave.

THE bow rose high in the air, poised a moment and then jerked down. The stern sprang up. For a moment the canoe was entirely clear of the water. Then it leaped forward and down as Larry clung desperately to the gunwales. Before he realized that he was still upright he was darting straight toward the brink of the falls.

Again he paddled frantically. The bow barely crossed the V of foam where the current split and eddied violently inshore above the tongue of rocks, and the next instant it wedged between two boulders. Larry leaped out, scrambled a few yards over the wet, slippery granite and grasped Marguerite by one hand just as it had released its hold.

With difficulty he pulled her out and half carried, half dragged, her back to a higher, drier spot and laid her down.

“Marguerite,” he whispered as he knelt beside her.

The girl’s eyes were open and she smiled faintly.

“You’re safe now,” he assured her. “And it’s all over. They’re both dead. They’ll never bother you again.”

She shuddered, but she continued to smile, and then she began to tremble.

“I’m so cold,” she whispered. “And my head. It aches terribly.”

The roar of the falls drowned most of her words, but he comprehended that she must be gotten to a dry, warm place as quickly as possible, and he sprang to his feet.

He remembered that Bill Taylor had explained how the falls were to be circumvented, once the rapids had been passed. Climbing to the top of the point of rocks, he saw the quiet backwater shut off from the cataract by a high, natural wall of granite. Beyond, though the current was swift, there was an easy passage to the open lake.

Larry scrambled back to his canoe, dragged it out of the water and carried it across. Then he returned, picked Marguerite up in his arms and made his way carefully down beside it. Two minutes later he was being swept out into the lake and was paddling across to the camp of the movie people.

Dave Mann, Fay and Peggy and the others were there when he landed, and the two women immediately took charge of Marguerite. Larry helped carry her to their tent and then returned to the shore. Dave studied him closely.

“Well, you fish!” he suddenly burst forth. “You certainly went and messed up everything. Look at your face! Now there’s the devil to pay. No telling how many thousand dollars it’s going to cost us to wait around here until it heals enough for you to work again.”

It was the first time Larry knew he had been cut and he felt of his bloody visage in amazement.

“And look at the chances you took!” Dave continued. “Fighting up there on that ledge! Why you didn’t go over I don’t know. And then running those rapids! You, a greenhorn! Fool’s luck is all that saved you. But look at you. Million dollar map! Ruined! And all—”

“Who’s that coming?” some one behind Dave demanded excitedly.

A canoe, propelled by strong, swift strokes, was approaching from the open lake. No one had seen it until it was close upon them.

“The wop and the deaf-mute!” Dave exclaimed. “Too bad they couldn’t have been here sooner to ’tend to their own affairs. Nice mess that fellow’s gotten us into. Won’t let us finish the work at his place and then gets my leading man all messed up.”

“Look here, Dave!” Larry cried. “There are other things in this world besides your damned movies.”

“Don’t I know it?” replied the director angrily. “Haven’t I been trying not to show it? Do you suppose I thought I was watching a show when you were doing all those stunts across the river and me not able to lift a hand to help you?”

Suddenly his voice broke, and he threw his arms around Larry’s shoulders.

“Damn it all, boy!” he half sobbed. “I—I—but you’re back, all right. You’re back and—”

Signor Zappettini had landed and both he and Angelo catapulted from the canoe to Larry’s side.

“Marguerite!” the *maestro* wailed. “What happened? Where is she? Did you catch them? We saw their canoe coming this way.”

“She’s all right,” Larry assured him. “She’s in a tent getting dried out. You can see her in a moment.”

Angelo thrust himself between them and, with his quick fingers, demanded an explanation. Zappettini told him with a few convulsive

movements.

“But you, my boy!” he cried. “Your face! And those two! Where are they?”

“They’re fish bait now,” Dave told him jubilantly. “Talk about fights! You ought to ’a’ seen that one. On a ledge, right above the falls! And Larry here alone against the two of them. And then—”

THE *maestro* did not wait to hear more. He had seen a tent flap thrown back and Marguerite emerge with Fay and Peggy on either side.

“*Cara mia!*” he cried, and both he and Angelo rushed forward.

He took the girl in his arms, kissed her repeatedly and then held her away from him as he stared at her, speechless but with a radiant face.

At her feet knelt Angelo. His fierce brigand’s face was contorted grotesquely, and he was fumbling with the hem of Marguerite’s skirt and pressing it to his lips.

“Here!” Peggy cried. “That’s my dress you’re slobbering over. Look at that, Dave! First time it ever happened, and the skirt wasn’t on me when it did.”

Her remark relieved the tenseness of the situation. Several laughed. Everyone talked. Six people suddenly and simultaneously felt inspired to tell the story of what had happened.

Marguerite, pale but smiling, glanced shyly at Larry, who tried to withdraw to the rear of the group.

At last each narrator seemed to have exhausted himself or to have realized the futility of going on. In the sudden quiet Dave Mann surveyed the principals in the affair and then burst forth with a question.

“Say!” he exclaimed. “What in Sam Hill was this all about anyhow? Who were those two guys and what were they running off with the girl for?”

Marguerite became even paler as she looked quickly at Signor Zappettini. The musician, still greatly excited, was aghast. His mouth opened, then shut, and he glanced wildly about him. His eyes finally met Marguerite’s, and Larry, grasping the entire significance of the situation, felt suddenly sickened.

After all, he saw, the blackmailers might be dead but the impetus of their scheme was still carrying both Marguerite and the *maestro* on to disaster.

Even two criminals, he knew, could not be killed in the presence of twenty people without that fact coming to the notice of the law.

And the law would not stop there. It would want to know what was back of it all. It would demand imperiously, as Dave Mann had asked curiously, why there should have been that struggle on the ledge.

And such a demand could not fail to bring out the very thing the *maestro* would die to keep hidden and it would drag into the mire of a sordid affair the pale girl now looking so fearfully at Zappettini.

“What was it anyhow?” Dave repeated.

Larry took a quick step forward and stood in front of Zappettini.

“I can tell, now that it’s all over,” he said. “Those two had been after me for a year. They tried to frame me in New York and they almost did. But I fooled them. They threatened to get me and, of course, it was easy for them to find out we were coming up here.”

Dave had been staring at him in amazement.

“Frame you!” he cried. “Fat chance any one would have hanging anything on you.”

“But they belong to one of the biggest gangs in the country,” Larry protested. “Clever as sin. They almost had me. And yesterday afternoon I went over to call on Miss Temple. They followed me. Must have heard us talking. Anyhow, they thought they saw a chance to make me whack up. They kidnapped her last night and then came and told me I’d never see her again unless I paid what they asked.”

“How could they see you?” Dave demanded. “I didn’t hear of anyone hanging around here.”

“I couldn’t sleep, worrying about them,” Larry answered, “and I went for a little paddle along the shore. That’s when I saw them.”

“But why the fight?”

“I was to meet them up the lake, but I must have missed them. Then I saw their canoe at the mouth of the river and I hurried over. I was running across the portage to catch them when I met them on the ledge.

“I began to see red then, I guess. We were alone and Mar—Miss Temple could get away. I didn’t think she was in any more danger and I just lit into them.”

“I’ll say you did!” Dave exclaimed. “Gad, what a fight that was! But I guess you needn’t worry now, boy. You’ve got enough witnesses. We’ll all say they jumped you. There’s no need to worry about the police.”

Larry was conscious that both Marguerite and Signor Zappettini were watching him. He felt embarrassed, decidedly uncomfortable, suddenly desirous of being alone.

“Guess I’ll go and get cleaned up,” he said as he felt of his face. “I don’t think that scratch will show much, Dave. It’ll be all right in a day or two.”

He turned and hurried away to his tent.

## CHAPTER IX

AS PEGGY DARE was the first to predict, and as everyone expected, the happenings crowded into five minutes that morning gave Dave Mann several new ideas which had to be worked into the story. Larry had barely finished telling what happened before his active mind was at work.

But Dave also saw another possibility. When the excitement had died sufficiently for saner conversation he turned suddenly upon Signor Zappettini.

“Look here,” he began brusquely. “You’d better change your mind about my using your house a little more. It means a lot to me, money and time and everything else.”

The *maestro* held up his hands in protest.

“Sir,” he said, “I am sorry you have asked that question. I am very sorry. I wish you had not.”

“Good Lord!” Dave exclaimed. “You don’t mean that after all—”

“I said I am sorry you asked it,” Zappettini interrupted quickly. “It had been my hope, sir, that I could offer it to you, my house, myself, everything I have, to do with as you wish. I will never be happy unless you make a million pictures there.”

Dave stared at him a moment and then thrust out his hand.

“I thought you were the right sort. And say! I want you to watch us work. I’ll show you there is art in moving pictures.”

“I am sure there is,” Zappettini replied. “And I will be glad to watch you. But this Mr. Moncrieff, he is one of your actors?”

Dave gasped and then recovered enough to say,

“Yes, one of them.”

“I hope he has a future,” the musician continued, “but I imagine he is destined for smaller roles. He is so modest, so unassuming, has so little of the ego necessary to an artist, I cannot foresee a great success. He is too much a regular—what do they call it?—a regular he-man, too self-

sacrificing, too eager to slip out of the limelight. Even now when I wish to thank him I cannot find him.”

“I don’t know,” Dave said slowly and without any thought of sarcasm. “They don’t come any finer than Larry. But I don’t make him out at all. He certainly hasn’t any of the earmarks of the usual actor. But he’s down there in that tent if you want to see him.”

His mind had already turned to the new features he wanted to work into the story, and he hurried away to find Phil Sherwood and his typewriter. Zappettini went to Larry’s tent.

THE *maestro* had regained control of himself, and he made his words of thanks as simple, short and sincere as he could. His Latin soul revolted at so mild an expression of a great emotion, but he had seen enough of Larry to know what he would prefer. Larry sensed the delicate consideration, but as soon as he could he asked,

“And you will take Miss Temple out, now that the only one who knows is dead?”

“I would have done so anyhow. I believed this man was in prison for a long time. And the other. You say he was young? He could not have been of the same gang. A new recruit, perhaps.”

“And Miss Temple—she will sing in opera?” Larry interrupted.

Zappettini became at once the enthusiastic *maestro*.

“Such a triumph as she will have!” he cried. “France! Italy! New York! She will be acclaimed everywhere.”

Larry excused himself and returned to his tent.

The next day Dave Mann began shooting at the rapids. There was never any question as to who would perform the hazardous stunts. Nat Haskell had received several sly digs about being out of a job, but Dave put him through all the dangerous work and kept Larry safe on the rim of the gorge.

“I’m not going to risk his neck in any of that stuff,” the director growled to Roy Quigley. “He’s worth a million, that boy is. I don’t want him taking chances.”

But Dave had not given all his attention to the picture. He dispatched two men on a mysterious errand, and he sent two others upstream to engage a band of Indians to hunt for the bodies of the blackmailers. The Indians

refused to come. They had known men to drown there before, they said, and once a body was swept out into the cold, deep lake it had never come up.

Four days later the work at the gorge was completed and the entire party moved back to their camping place across from the Zappettini cabin. Larry's face had healed so that, with thick make-up, the cut on one cheek was not noticeable.

They arrived late one night and the next morning Dave rushed into the work. He and his cast had hardly arrived at the cabin before he was busy picking up the threads where they had been broken by the *maestro's* fiery entrance.

Zappettini and Marguerite were warm in their welcome, and when the work of filming began they were as interested spectators as ever sat behind a camera man.

The scene between Larry and Fay, which had been interrupted, was quickly completed and then Dave jumped to the climax and the meeting between the lovers, Peggy and Larry.

When it was finished at last to Dave's satisfaction even the *maestro* was loud in his praise. For to the musician's amazement he discovered that Larry was an actor.

To that love scene he brought something other than the usual smirking and greatly exaggerated sentimentality. There was an ease and a sincerity, a repressed passion and a smoothness, that dumfounded Zappettini, and yet which had already won the hearts of several million women.

"Marvelous!" he cried when it was finished. "A wonderful piece of work, Sir," and he turned and bowed to Dave, "I apologize again and again. The other day I thought it was silly mimicry. Today I know it is art."

"You bet it's art," the director beamed. "And it's art that pays, too. Wait until this picture is released. It'll be a hold-over in every house."

Later there were several small cuts to be cleared away, none of which required Larry's presence, and as the work went on he found himself beside Marguerite. He had seen her at the movie camp, had talked to her a few minutes the day of the battle, but only when many others were present. Since his return to the cabin he had avoided being with her alone. A strange embarrassment possessed him and he found it difficult to carry on a conversation. "You have never seen my dogs, have you?" the girl whispered. "Would you like to?"

“Dogs!” he exclaimed. “I always did like them. Are they huskies?”

She led him around the house and to the rear of the clearing. At last they came to an opening in the thick brush and Marguerite halted.

“There are no dogs,” she said with an anxious glance at his face. “But I had to see you alone for a moment. There have always been others and I could not tell you what I think of the things you have done for the *maestro* and me.”

Larry looked about uncomfortably.

“Please don’t try to,” he said. “I—I enjoyed it. That is, some of it. I—I—when you went down those rapids, of course—”

“It was wonderful, all you did there!” she rushed on when he halted in confusion. “But not nearly so wonderful as what you did afterwards, there at the camp. I never heard of so noble an act, your taking all that dreadful story upon yourself. It was—”

She faltered and tears came to her eyes.

“PLEASE don’t,” Larry begged. “And I’ve wanted to tell you—to explain about your father and—and what I did to him. I’m sorry. I can’t tell you how sorry, and I know you’ll never forget that I killed him. But I thought he had killed you and—”

“Don’t,” she said. “You mustn’t feel that way. He wasn’t my father. He told me that last minute. But even if he had been it wouldn’t have made any difference. I never thought of him as a father. I couldn’t.”

Larry looked at her, his face beaming in relief.

“And now you are going out?” he asked. “To France, and Italy?”

“Later in the summer, the *maestro* says.”

There was no exhilaration, no anticipation, and she looked back across the clearing to the cabin. Larry watched her a moment. His heart was thumping, and there was a strange feeling in his throat.

“Marguerite,” he began, and his voice had a peculiar squeak in it, “I want to see you again. You know, I—maybe this will be the last chance I get. I know I shouldn’t say anything now, but—”

He broke off in confusion, utterly unable to go on. But he risked a glance at her face and found it very close. Her eyes held his. His heart thumped

more violently than ever. He felt that he would suffocate. Something was the matter with his throat.

Then the next thing he knew his arms were around her. He was mumbling deliriously into her hair. He made an awkward attempt to kiss her and failed.

A half hour later they had talked over a thousand things and had said some thing a thousand times. Then they heard Dave calling Larry and started back to the cabin.

“Why is it, Larry?” Marguerite began with a mischievous glance at him.

“My name’s not Larry,” he interrupted. “I forgot to tell you. That’s the name Dave dug up for me when he got me into the movies. My real name is Jones, Cliff Jones. I—I never liked Larry.”

“But Cliff,” she persisted, “why is it that on the verandah with Miss Dare you made love so wonderfully? It was the sort of thing I’d always dreamed of, that every girl must dream of, and yet back there a little while ago—why, you didn’t even know how to kiss me. You got your mouth full of my hair and—”

“Huh!” Larry snorted. “That business with Peggy—that didn’t mean anything. That was—it was just plain movie stuff.”

And then he wondered why her hand slipped into his for a quick squeeze and her glance was more adorable than ever.

**D**AVE MANN rushed his work through to completion in the afternoon and announced that they would start back to the railroad in the morning.

“We’ll finish the rest on the lot,” he said. “We’re going to make a time record on this picture.”

Before supper that night Larry called Dave to one side.

“See here,” he began. “I caught a glimpse of Quig turning the crank on me that day at the falls and I’ve been asking about it. I understand you told him to shoot the whole thing and that he did.”

“He did!” Dave cried. “Every bit of it. Some of it’s pretty far off, but it’s corking stuff.”

“Where’s that film?” Larry demanded sternly.

“Where is it! What do you mean?”

“You’re going to burn that film, Dave,” Larry said so sharply Dave looked at him in amazement. “That was—well, it wasn’t the thing to do, Dave.”

“Not the thing to do! Are you crazy? Burn it! Well, I guess not!”

“But I mean that. Some things can be carried too far and that is one that shouldn’t have started. I’ll tell you now, Dave, confidentially—I don’t want it to get out yet—but Marguerite and I are going to be married and that film—well, it’s personal stuff. Understand? It concerns just us, and I want it burned. I mean it.”

Dave stared at his leading man with complete lack of comprehension, but that didn’t mean anything to Larry, he knew only too well the rapidity with which that mind worked behind the mask of apparently numbing emotions.

Then the director made the characteristic grimace which indicated that, having met a new problem, he had solved it.

“Personal stuff, eh?” he exclaimed. “Where do you get that? Nothing’s personal or private with a movie actor. You’ve dodged it this far, but you can’t any more. And do you think I’m a fool? Think I want to let these Canuck police tie you up for a long trial when I’ve got the proof right there in that film? Show it to a jury and they’d cheer you out of the court room. Personal stuff!”

He snorted and started away and then wheeled back with outstretched hand.

“Congratulations, old boy,” he said heartily. “She’s a wonder, a marvel, but she’s met her match.”

Just before supper two men arrived in a canoe. For an hour they talked with Dave Mann in his tent.

After supper Larry slipped away and paddled across the bay. For a while he listened to Marguerite and Zappettini, and then he said,

“I think those two men who came today are detectives. I ought to have the name of that man, the one who said he was Marguerite’s father, to make my story stick.”

Zappettini told him, and for the first time he protested against Larry shouldering his own story.

“Nonsense!” the young man exclaimed. “You two understand and that’s all I care about. It probably will never come out anyhow. And there’s another thing. I forgot it that day at the falls and no one thought to ask me about it. Why would Angelo be bound and gagged if these men were after me?”

Marguerite and Zappettini were dismayed by this phase of the matter.

“The police will be sure to find out about that and ask questions,” the girl said.

“Listen here,” Larry interrupted. “I have it. They were after me, but they found you two folks here and saw a chance for another crime. They suspected that there was something funny in your living here alone.

“They watched the place and when you went away that day they came over, bound Angelo and searched the house. You can say that a trunk was broken into and your private papers thrown about the room.”

He paused a moment and then said diffidently,

“And those letters, those five blue envelopes the man said were in your trunk. You should destroy them.”

“Destroy them!” Zappettini exclaimed. “I destroyed them that night, years ago, within an hour.”

“But—” Larry began.

“He was only guessing!” Marguerite cried. “He had broken into the trunk but he hadn’t seen them. He believed that what he said was convincing enough to impress me or that the *maestro* would get back before I could look.”

“They did search that day,” Zappettini explained. “But I do not think that is why they bound Angelo. I believe they intended to use force to get Marguerite when we returned. Only you—”

It had become dark while they talked and the *maestro* was interrupted by steps on the verandah. He went to the door to find Dave, Roy Quigley and the two strangers.

“These gentlemen are from the Ontario Provincial Police,” Dave began at once. “I sent for them that first day. It’s always best to have everything clear and above board.

“They want to ask a few questions of Larry and you two, but before they do there is something I’d like to show all of you. Get that stuff, Quig.”

THE camera man went outside, and Angelo, at the *maestro's* order, brought a lighted lamp from the kitchen. Quigley entered with a projecting machine, a roll of film, a specially constructed battery and a bundle of white cloth.

“I understand that Signor Zappettini has seen only one motion picture, and that twelve years ago,” Dave said as he helped Quigley stretch the cloth across one end of the room. “I want to show him one now. I’m going to prove to him that there is art in the movies.”

He bustled about, directing the arrangement of chairs and the setting up of the instrument. Larry tried to draw him to one side but in vain. At last the lamp was turned down and Dave’s private show began.

Probably no shorter, and no more dramatic or thrilling, picture was ever thrown upon a screen. No one in the little audience seemed to breathe. A suppressed cry broke from Zappettini’s throat when he saw the crook hurl Marguerite into the canoe and shove it out into the rapids, and Angelo, denied any other form of expression, started to his feet and sprang forward before he realised what he was doing.

At the end Dave turned up the lamp and faced the two policemen.

“Well, gentlemen?” he demanded.

There was an awkward silence, and then one of the men cleared his throat and glanced at the other.

“You said you’d bring him if we want him,” he said with a nod toward Larry. “You can go with that promise. But I don’t think you’ll ever hear from this. We’ll make a full report and I guess that’ll end it. They were only two crooks anyhow, from the States. Ontario’s not much interested in them, now that they’re dead.”

Quigley stepped forward and handed a bundle to Dave.

“Miss Temple,” the director began, “Larry’s told me about you two. Larry’s a fine boy, none finer, and I’m mighty glad to know that when at last he did fall he fell where he did.

“I’m a busy man. I have a lot of things on my mind and I forget easy. So I like to do things in advance and I’m going to give you a wedding present now. No telling what I’ll be doing when you’re married, or where I’ll be.

“I don’t intend to make any predictions. I think you’re going to get along fine and dandy together, not more’n one quarrel in six months, say. But

marriage is a funny thing. It's been tried a million times and no one's got it doped out right yet.

“But here's something that's going to help a lot, though I hope you never need it. I want you two to take it and keep it. No copy's been made of it. It's the only one in existence. It's that film we just showed you and whenever either one of you thinks things ain't running right, just get out your little machine and throw this picture on the screen.”

He handed the film to Marguerite and then turned to Zappettini.

“How about it now?” he demanded. “Any art in the movies?”

“Sir,” the old man answered with a smile, “who can say just what art is? Perhaps some day you will make me happy by asking me to write the music for one of your pictures.”

THE END

## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Illustrations have not be included in this ebook due to copyright considerations.

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 *Not in the Scenario* by Kathrene Pinkerton and Robert Pinkerton]