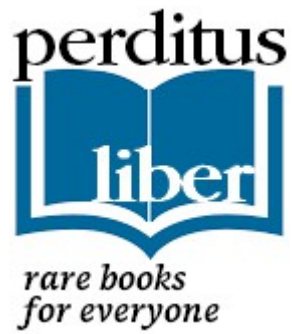


THE WALLS ARE HIGH

AND SHE IS VERY FAR



by **JOSEPH VAN RAALTE**
Author of "THE VICE SQUAD"



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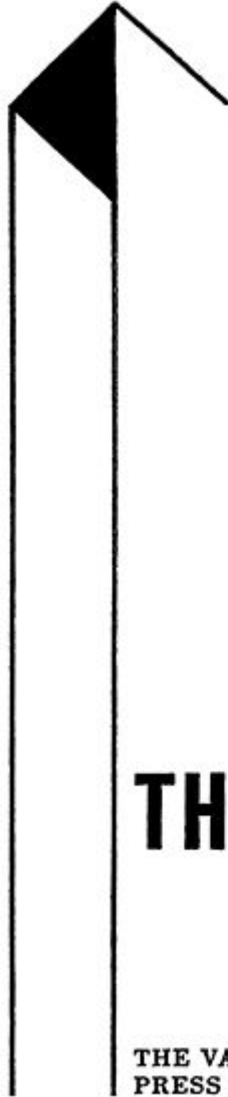
The Walls Are High

by

Joseph Van Raalte

Published 1931

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THE WALLS ARE HIGH

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**A NOVEL BY
JOSEPH VAN RAALTE
AUTHOR OF "THE VICE SQUAD"**

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To

J. H.

With Admiration and Respect

“The walls are high and she is very far”

KIPLING

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THE WALLS ARE HIGH

CHAPTER I

LOUNGING over his coffee and cigarette at a window table in Kringle's bakery and lunchroom on Delancey Street, Arnold Chadwick gazed beyond the sidewalk's fierce human current—indifferent and hurried.

April morning, blue and gold.

Magnetic to the sweet influence of the season, the lounge by the window in Kringle's coffee-room was dimly conscious of melody, distant, faint, yet well-defined, penetrating the bizarre roar of the crowded street.

A vagrant breeze, tossing meagre tendrils in the iron-railed parkway, sighed a symphony of love and youth to the bright, warm world and the opening year.

Arnold Chadwick had caught the harmony.

It was his wedding day and he was "coked to the gills."

Kind-eyed little Margaret Lyons had said she

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loved him Glory be to God, what a girl!

His heart beat high as he stepped from the coffee-house into the sparkling sunlight and surveyed the street scene—the old, familiar scene.

Flexing the muscles of his arms and shoulders the realization came upon him of how God must feel. An over-powering sense of omnipotence suffused him.

Westward along Delancey Street he directed his course, bestowing casual survey on narrow, mean thoroughfares—sordid jumbles of push-carts, fire escapes freighted with sagging clothes-lines, gutters choked with litter, festering amid the yeasty, human turmoil; a seething, jostling sweating mass, feverishly striving for foothold in the thing called Life. Yet how differently it loomed this particular morning, under the breezy blue sky. No longer reeking with a filth of human contact, beyond redemption; but fantastic, picturesque, and, as a habitation of clustered men and women should be, overlaid with the smell of endeavor.

Four blocks west of Kringle's coffee-house he sauntered into Abraham Lesser's tarnished little jewelry store.

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Old Lesser, eager-eyed, unctious, waved his clerk aside. Personally he would minister to the desires of the day's first customer.

Indicating in the show case a tray of wedding rings, Arnold Chadwick said:

"I want one of those."

Margaret Lyons was humming gayly as she packed her suitcase.

Carefully she folded the little plaid skirt. The jaunty, blue jacket and the saucy tam o' shanter next were tucked away. The freshly ruffled blouse was placed on top of the pile, the suitcase closed, the straps buckled.

Arnold would be there any minute.

She crossed to the dressing table for an along-toward-the-last-look in the mirror. She was a very pretty girl, Margaret Lyons—frank, clean, sweet—everything a girl should be.

Arnold Chadwick was a lucky man.

The canary in a cage by the window burst into melody. Smilingly the girl addressed the little fellow:

"Is that intended as my wedding march, or are

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you trying to make me believe you don't care because I'm going away on my honeymoon?"

She crossed to the cage and at her approach the bird ceased its song, fluttering toward her, close to the bars.

"Two whole weeks I'll be gone; and then, when I come back, we're going to have a pretty little cottage of our own with hollyhocks and morning glories blooming by the door. How do you like that, Mr. Dickie Bird? We're going to have a—"

A knock at the door.

"Come in," said Margaret Lyons.

The knock was repeated.

She crossed the room and flung open the door to confront a tall, well-dressed man with very broad shoulders and iron-gray hair. Behind him, in the gloom of the hallway, hovered Mrs. Thomas, mistress of the rooming house, nervously wiping her hands on her apron.

"Miss Lyons," she quavered, "this gentleman—"

The man raised a huge hand.

“If you don’t mind, Mrs. Thomas,” he said with elaborate politeness, “I’ll do th’ talkin’.”

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He strode in, bestowing upon the rooming housekeeper a gesture of dismissal.

Margaret Lyons interposed.

“Just a moment, Mrs. Thomas.” Then to the visitor, “What is it you want?”

The man, appraising the neat room and its dainty occupant in a sweeping glance, ignored the query and indicated the strapped suitcase on the bed.

“All packed up to go ’way, I see. Waitin’ for Mr. Chadwick?”

“Are you a friend of Mr. Chadwick?”

“No, I’m not a friend of Mr. Chadwick.”

“Just who are you?”

“Why, eh—I jus’ come over to—”

Something in his tone and manner foreshadowed evil.

“Is anything wrong?”

The faltering voice she barely recognized as her own.

“I’m afraid so.”

“Has he been hurt?”

And when he made no response:

“Tell me—what is it?”

“Why—it’s, eh—sort o’ serious.”

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“Something’s happened to him. What is it? Where is he—in the hospital? Oh, please take me to him.”

The man stared at her reflectively for a brief instant. He seemed to be debating something.

“All right,” he said finally, “come on, we’ll go—an’ if you don’t mind, suppose we take this suitcase o’ yours with us. You never can tell. They may be somethin’ in here that might prove t’ be useful.”

The interminable taxi ride from the rooming house was a horror augmented a thousandfold by the taciturnity of her companion, who brooded moodily over his cigar in a corner of the vehicle. He uttered not a single word during the entire journey and the girl found it impossible to muster courage sufficient to pursue further interrogation.

They stopped at a white stone building occupying an entire block on Center Street. Margaret found herself being hustled up the steps and along a wide corridor, then through a narrower passage where she was halted at a huge, oak door. “Come in,” was the growled response to her companion’s imperative knock. In answer

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to the summons he flung the door open, fairly shoving Margaret across the threshold, crowding in behind, with her suitcase. Then the door closed with the metallic snap of a rat trap.

At a large, glass-topped desk, between two windows, sat a grizzled man with a closely cropped mustache and shaggy brows that shaded gray-green eyes, bright as screw points. He sat with his back to the wall so that anyone facing him bore the full glare from the two wide windows.

This man, whom the girl’s escort addressed as “Inspector,” surveyed Margaret Lyons from head to heel in a single, sweeping glance. From the instant she had set foot in this building, a sickening dread had possessed her, in no way mitigated by her companion’s bearing, and now this other man’s demeanor. His manner, while not actually offensive, conveyed an uneasy impression of menace.

“So,” he said in a slurring drawl, “this is th’ girl, eh?”

He indicated an armchair that faced the window at the right end of his desk.

“Sit down. You’re Margaret Lyons?”

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“Yes, sir. And now, where is Mr. Chadwick? Please take me to him.”

Instead of replying the inspector turned to her escort.

“Find anything, Cullen?”

“Just got there in time.” He indicated the suitcase. “All ready to blow. Everything packed. Will I open it up?”

The inspector nodded.

Cullen unstrapped the suitcase and delved. The ruffled blouse, tarn o’ shanter, blue jacket, little plaid skirt—shoes, stockings and the score of things a girl might carry in a suitcase on her wedding trip.

“Humph!” grunted the inspector. Opening a drawer of his desk he drew forth a humidor, carefully selected a fat, black cigar, lighted it, surveyed the

glowing tip with grave deliberation and, after three or four tremendous puffs, addressed Margaret Lyons through the smoke wreaths.

“How long you been livin’ over t’ Miss Thomas’s?”

“Five years.”

“Parents alive?”

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“No, sir, my aunt brought me up.”

“Go to school here?”

“I was in my second year in Teachers’ College when my aunt died. Then I decided on a business course.”

“I see. An’ where you workin’ now?”

“I was secretary to Mr. Charles Young, of Young and Leblock. They’re coffee merchants.”

“How long you been workin’ for them?”

“About three years. I left Saturday.”

“Oh, you left Sat’dy, eh? Huh huh. And, eh —where was you headed for this mornin’, with this suitcase, here?”

“You mean where was I going? To Niagara Falls on our honeymoon. Mr. Chadwick and I are to be married to-day—that is, if—has something happened to him? Is he here?” “Now just a minute. How long you known this Chadwick?”

Her smoldering resentment at the insistent impertinence of her interrogator found words.

“Why are you questioning me in this way? I have asked you to take me to Mr. Chadwick.”

She made as if to rise. With a limp forefinger the inspector motioned her back to her place.

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“You ain’t got nothin’ t’ be worried about, young woman, if you tell me th’ truth—an’ answer one or two more questions I’m goin’t’ put to you.”

There was a frigid finality in the inspector’s drawl that warned the girl against further protest.

“I ast you how long you’d known this fellow Chadwick?”

“It’ll be a year this summer.”

“Met him where?”

“I was introduced to him at Seagate.”

“Who interdooced you?”

“We had an outing down there one afternoon from the office. A friend of one of the boys—I can’t remember now just who it was—introduced us.”

“Know what Chadwick does for a livin’?”

“Yes. He has a plumbing business.”

“In business for himself, eh?”

And freighted to capacity with withering sarcasm was the inspector’s next query—a single word—“Where?”

“Well, eh—that is—he hasn’t an office or a store. He just goes around and gets contracts.”

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“Oh. He gets con-tracts. Ever see any of ’em in writin’?”

“No, sir. I never pried—”

“You never pried into his business an’ yet you quit a three year job t’ marry a guy you’ve only known for one year—an’ you say he gets contracts.”

He turned to the detective, his lips sagging in a sneer.

“Did you get that, Cullen? Con-tracts!”

The sheer absurdity of the thing left Cullen speechless. Slowly he wagged his head in mingled mirth and pity.

“Tell me some more about this Chadwick,” said the inspector. “Did he ever give you any money, jewelry, or anything like that?”

“He never gave me money, certainly not. When we became engaged he gave me this ring.”

“Let’s have a look at it.”

She slipped the modest diamond from her finger and reached for it when the inspector had concluded a critical examination.

He tossed it to the desk. “Suppose we leave it here a while. Now tell me —”

He was interrupted by the entry of a paunchy,

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round-shouldered man with spectacles, who sidled to the desk where he placed a file of papers and some photographs.

“Yeah,” said the inspector thumbing the sheets, “this is what I want.” He read aloud: “Forgery—petty larceny—burglary—burglary.”

He tossed the papers over to Margaret Lyons.

"I don't suppose," he said, "Chadwick told you nothin' about *them* contracts?"

She took the file glancing at it with unseeing eyes and laid it aside.

"Rec'nize that?"

She accepted a card—Arnold Chadwick's picture—two pictures, side by side—one full face, the other profile—a set of numbers on each. The girl had seen similar photographs tacked to the bulletin board in the post office—pictures of men wanted by the authorities for felonies.

"That's him all right, ain't it?"

Her face had blanched. She was striving to keep back the tears. Gently she placed the pictures face down on the pile of papers. From then on her lips were sealed.

The 'phone rang. While Cullen talked, the

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inspector sat eyeing the girl from beneath half-closed lids. Cullen hung up.

"Bradley's just been to Young and Leblock's an' th' roomin' house. Both o' them say she's jake. Bradley's goin't' check up on th' aunt an' then he's comin' on in."

"Yeah," said the inspector in weary rumination, "I guess he kidded her to a fare-y'-well." He addressed Margaret Lyons. "I'm goin't' tell you somethin', miss. I pride m'self on bein' a fair judge o' human nature. My opinion is you're a good girl—a sort of a dumbbell, you might say, that's had a *mighty narrow escape*."

He paused to rekindle the cold end of his cigar.

"It may surprise you to know that this fellow you was all packed up t' marry an' go gallavantin't' Niagara Falls with, is a jailbird an' a cokie. You know what a cokie is? A drug addict—sniffs cocaine.

"He steps into a jewelry store on Delancey Street this mornin' an asts t' see some weddin' rings. He was goin't' pay with a Colt .38. Th' proprietor happened to be one o' them ol' fashioned guys that a weddin' ring means somethin'

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to—you know, sort o' sentimental like. Am I right, Cullen?"

"Absolutely, Inspector."

"Well, that's about all they is to it. Th' man don't get his hands up quick enough an' Chadwick lets him have a bullet—socko!—straight through th'

heart. Then he beats it. Don't even stop t' grab a weddin' ring—*your* weddin' ring, I suppose."

The girl winced.

"Two hours later," continued the inspector, "this same plumbin' contractor o' yours, Mr. Chadwick, steps into a cigar store on Cooper Square, out with his automatic an' tells th' clerk t' unbutton th' safe. Th' clerk ducks towards a side door an' th' plumbin' con-tractor lets him have it in both legs. An' bein' coked, I suppose, beats it again without grabbin' a jit. They chase him an' get 'im in a cellar. The dope's wearin' off—an' he gives up without a struggle. Just a rat—no guts. We got 'im here in Po-lice Headquarters, booked for murder and felonious assault. An' believe me, it's an open an' shut case."

Wide-eyed and silent, little Margaret Lyons sat, her romance tumbling about her ears. Silent

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—but with pink fists clenched till the knuckles showed white.

The inspector turned to Cullen.

"Tell 'em to bring Chadwick in here."

With each heartbeat banging against her eardrums, she waited. Only half a minute; but it seemed an eternity. Then they brought him in.

Margaret arose and walked across the room to him.

"They just told me you killed a man this morning," she said. "Is that true?"

He was a pitiable spectacle. Eyes glazed. Trembling. Lines the girl never before had observed seamed a face drawn and ghastly. The sweat stood in beads on his forehead.

"Listen, honey. Honest—I was coked—I—"

Patting his hand reassuringly, Margaret Lyons turned, facing the inspector. Cullen had taken his place beside Chadwick. Her glance was leveled as she confronted the two men and her tone when she spoke was low and earnest.

"It doesn't make any difference," she said. "Whatever he is—whatever he has done, or will do—he was kind to me, and I love him."

And Chadwick, whose head had been bent,

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lifted his quivering chin and squared his shoulders.

“All right, Margaret,” he said. “Then I’ll be back to you.”

CHAPTER II

JERRY MCKELVIE occupied a dusty law office in the vicinity of the Tombs. He was a picturesque character—a small man with a round, red face, gray hair, a mellifluous voice and a smile that seemed permanently wrought. Among the denizens of the criminal courts, he had the reputation of “knowing everything”—law, history, philosophy, human nature. A man of innumerable resources and expedients, he usually found a “way out” for his clients. This was largely because Mr. McKelvie never entered upon a case as advocate unless, after analysis and a careful balancing of dominant factors, he discerned some likelihood of victory.

Despite the manifold exactions of his profession, the little lawyer found time for numerous incursions into the political and the business worlds. Keen, well-balanced, suave, deliberate, Mr. McKelvie, from the point of vantage of his

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desk chair, puffed at his inevitable black cigar and, with a grasp on the practical and positive side of things, watched the world as it wagged.

Late in the afternoon, the day following Chadwick’s arrest, Margaret telephoned Mr. McKelvie. Would he be available for consultation in the morning? No, he expected to be “tied up” till late in the day. Just what was it she wanted to see him about? She was desirous of retaining him as counsel for Arnold Chadwick.

“You mean the Delancey Street murderer? Not a chance. If the newspaper account I read was in any way accurate, Chadwick don’t need a lawyer. What he needs is a priest and an undertaker.”

“I think you’ll look at it differently when I’ve had a talk with you, Mr. McKelvie. If I get down to your office about four o’clock tomorrow afternoon, do you think you can see me?”

“And to whom am I talking?”

“This is Miss Lyons—Margaret Lyons.”

“Oh, I see. All right, Miss Lyons, if you think it’s going to make you any happier talking to me about it, come along by all means; but I can tell you beforehand, it’s a waste of time.”

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Mr. McKelvie had defended Chadwick in his last “jam”. The real culprit in that case was Mike Deyer, brother of “Red” Deyer, strong-arm potentate of the district. Red had “suggested” that Chadwick “take the rap” and Chadwick had agreed. Red was possessed of unique talent in prompting compliance in matters of that sort. True, he had guaranteed Mr. McKelvie’s fee as Chadwick’s lawyer; but a cog had slipped somewhere and a hard-boiled jury had returned a verdict of “Guilty.”

“Too bad,” had been Red Deyer’s comment.

“If I could have handled the case without the jury getting a look at Chadwick,” said McKelvie, “he might have had a chance. But I suppose,” he added with a philosophic smile, “it’s all for the best.”

“Ain’t dat de trut’,” said Red.

Mr. McKelvie was acquainted with the many shadowy windings of Chadwick’s career and in its tragic denouement discerned nothing illogical.

Spawn of the tenements—a kid not wanted— neglected, growing up hard and dirty as the sidewalks on which he played. Apprenticed to a plumber. Unfit for the plumbing trade, as for

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every other trade. Hands futile and limp. Fingers predestined to stumble, when bent in any orderly, legitimate process.

Mr. McKelvie had known men quiet, colorless, who somehow gave hint that under pressure they might develop power of high voltage—but not Chadwick.

Numerous terms in prison; and during the third, encountering “Dutch” Henderson, university graduate, a yegg with literary leanings. Because of his knowledge of books, Henderson had been made prison librarian. In the classic shade of the bookshelves, he and Chadwick exchanged their first greeting. Dutch Henderson, looking past the gangster’s limp hands and air of frustration, had read promise in the level, blue-gray eyes. A man who all his life, without being conscious of it, had been questing kindness and had never found it. A man in whom tremendous loyalty and devotion might be cultivated with intelligent tending.

Forthwith Dutch Henderson had set upon the task of improving Chadwick’s mind. Three years of careful and painstaking labor on the part of both master and disciple bore fruit. At the end

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of his term Chadwick, who had entered prison swaggeringly proud of the designation “rough-neck,” emerged with more than a rudimentary knowledge of books; and if not a complete mastery of felicitous speech, at least a desire for betterment in that direction.

Henderson’s tutelage had embraced a wide area. The amenities had not been overlooked. Until that time Chadwick had viewed life as a bitter economic scramble, sordid and insistent, wherein grasping landlords, dunning tradesmen, short rations, uncomfortable living quarters, excessive heat and bitter cold were twined and twisted in a hopeless welter.

It was from books Dutch Henderson had placed in his hands that he first learned the value of dressing well. Apparel had a function other than to hide a man’s nakedness. Clothes could embellish; and it really was a fact that people “dressed for dinner” and that a bath, a shave, immaculate underthings under a well-pressed suit had the power to reinforce a man’s morale.

Think of it! And up to that time a silk hat had been nought but a grotesque manifestation of

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aldermanic vanity—legitimate target for a snowball or a lump of coal.

Cheap detective stories that had been his sole literary fare stressed the fact that the police in their endless war on evil-doers inevitably prevailed. He had known by experience the fallibility of this principle. For the first time in his life he now knew why.

Part of Dutch Henderson’s training had been an attempt to infuse Chadwick with at least a hint of the smiling impudence that had made Dutch a “big shot” in the criminal world. From Henderson’s lips the colorless gangster had absorbed a smattering of Freudian psychology.

“You’re cursed with what’s known as an ‘inferiority complex’,” said Henderson. “That’s caused by—” And he told him the cause. “The way to correct it—” And he enunciated the process of rectification.

“If you think big,” said Henderson, “you’ll be big. If you think small, you’ll be petty larceny all your life. An’ it’s never too late to begin. The piker of today is the plunger of tomorrow.”

With the prison behind him and back again in his old haunts, Chadwick’s former companions

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had been first shocked, then resentful of the transformation wrought in him. Who was this soft-spoken jailbird, careful of his diction, fastidious, who, if he was possessed of only a dime, squandered it at the corner bootblack stand?

In the man that was Chadwick, ambition was to be discerned—vanity. Menace resided there. That was an assault upon the gang's protective coloring. They pulled away from him. They did not understand and, not understanding, they feared.

Dutch Henderson's training, applied under forced draft, had made but superficial impress. Memory, rather than intellect, had been cultivated. Deserted by his companions, the young gangster, having learned to shrug, made no attempt to recapture his lost status, parading elaborate nonchalance to cover his inability to fathom the gang's defection.

Later Dutch Henderson had joined him in the busy haunts of men and thereafter Chadwick had applied his limp, white fingers to devices more subtle than the lead pipe and the jimmy.

Then the girl had come along.

"That's a mistake," Henderson had told him.

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"You can't hook up with a skirt in this game."

"She's on the up and up," said Chadwick.

"That makes it all the worse," said Henderson. "You know the old line—'a good woman raises hell with only one man'—and she'll do it, son, as sure as you're standing there."

But Chadwick was obdurate; and as the old gang, discerning in him a menace, had drawn away, so Dutch Henderson, after carefully weighing pros and cons, struck out to play a lone hand.

"A reasonable probability," he had said, "is the only certainty; and the reasonable probability in this case is that the young man sooner or later will be badly jammed."

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CHAPTER III

“SO,” said Mr. McKelvie, “Chadwick sent you to me, eh? I wonder what his idea was? What can I possibly do for him? The court will furnish counsel. Has he any money?”

“No,” said Margaret, “but I have.”

“Take my advice and hang on to it.”

“But we want the best legal talent we can get.”

“My dear girl, all the legal talent on earth won’t save that man. His only chance is so remote as to be negligible. What I mean is, he might get a disagreement. You never know what a damn fool jury is going to do. But I’d stake my professional reputation that he draws a death sentence.”

“Oh, but they couldn’t. They don’t understand. You wouldn’t let them do that, would you?”

Mr. McKelvie smiled.

“I have nothing to do with it. And to be

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perfectly candid with you, I don’t want anything to do with it. I always insist on a toe-hold, at least. Here we have a cold-blooded murder perpetrated in the course of a holdup—”

“I know that’s the way it looks on the surface; but if you understood, as I do, you would realize he isn’t really a murderer at heart. He had taken some cocaine—he told me all about it. It was the first time he had used a drug. He was trying to key himself up. He wanted to get some money and a wedding ring for me. He wouldn’t take my money; but I’d have turned it over to him gladly. What difference would it have made? What I have is his. He knew that.”

“It’s none of my business, of course, and I hope you won’t mind what I’m going to say to you; but a girl of your evident education and refinement shouldn’t be hooked up with a boy like Chadwick. Don’t you see what he is—a gangster at heart—a third-rate thief with a little superficial polish? Talks better, dresses better than the average breed, but—don’t you see what I mean?”

“Why are you so prejudiced against him?”

“It means nothing to me, my dear girl, one

way or the other. I was merely thinking of you. After all, it's your life. You're free, white and twenty-one, and if you have no conscientious objection to descending from the sheltered and sunlit levels of respectability into the twilight zone of the plug-ugly and the thief—" He paused and shrugged. "As I say, it's your life."

"And you won't take the case?"

"For heaven's sake, Miss Lyons, why force me into this position? I don't want to take your money."

"I know; but if I told you it would make me more comfortable to have you as his lawyer— wouldn't that make a difference? Let's agree that you probably can't do anything for him. That would overcome your objection, wouldn't it?"

Tossing away his half-consumed cigar and kindling a fresh one—an unfailing sign that after active cerebration he had reached a definite conclusion—he swung around in his desk chair with a gesture of impatience.

"By Gad," he said, "you're bound and determined, aren't you, that I've got to shoot mackerel in a barrel? All right, young woman, you win,"

he added, with a shrug and a resumption of affability. "I'll take a five-hundred-dollar retainer from you and run over and see Chadwick some time tomorrow. In the meantime, you know what I'd do if I were you? I'd step over and have a little heart-to-heart talk with Father Mulcahy. The Padre used to be prison chaplain once. He's acquainted with your friend—met him up the River. Pretty level-headed customer, Mulcahy."

"I'll talk to anybody on earth you think will be able to help Arnold."

"That's fine," said McKelvie, consulting his watch. "If there's nothing else on your mind—"

"There's just one thing. Maybe you can tell me. Have there been many escapes from the Tombs?"

"Escapes? From the Tombs?" repeated McKelvie, in his affable tone, without a hint of the shock provoked by the naive query.

"There have been a few, I believe. I couldn't say offhand just how many; but I do know they don't escape often enough to call it a habit. You've

visited our friend there. You know what the place is. Several hundred men, some of

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them pretty badly cornered—several hundred brains imprisoned in masonry and steel—many keen brains, perverted but tricky; and most of them trying to figure a way out past five or six locked doors of steel bars, each bar half an inch thick. A sixth door of oak and a granite wall four feet thick and eighteen feet high.” He paused and inquired suddenly, “What put the idea of escaping from the Tombs into your head?”

Margaret Lyons regarded him with unblinking eyes.

“I’ll tell you exactly what put that idea into my head, since you ask me. If it’s true, as you say, that Arnold hasn’t a chance in the world of escaping the death penalty, I’m going to see if there isn’t another way out.”

McKelvie, with his head on the side, was regarding her with a quizzical smile.

“You think that’s absurd, I suppose?” she said defiantly.

“Years ago, when I was a very much younger man, in many ways I might have regarded it as a bit—well, let us say, ridiculous. One of the kindest things the years taught me, Miss Lyons, is the futility of a sneer. No, there’s nothing in

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the least absurd in your planning another way out for our friend. ‘Chicago’ May did it. The French Government banished her sweetheart, Eddie Guerin, to Devil’s Island, and she smuggled him out. Devil’s Island—the Tombs—I should say the odds were in your favor.”

“Oh, I suppose the whole thing’s stupid—”

“The only stupid thing about it, Miss Lyons, is your telling me. There’s an old saying that stresses the wisdom of confiding the entire truth to your lawyer and your doctor. I can’t speak for the medical men; but so far as the legal profession is concerned, remember this: Never tell your lawyer any more than you have to—and, I might add, don’t even tell that much. ‘A secret that is known to one, a secret known to God alone. A secret that is known to two, a secret known to God knows who.’ ”

“Oh, but you wouldn’t mention it to anybody, would you? I thought a lawyer’s office was like a confessional.”

“Well, Miss Lyons,” said McKelvie slowly, “suppose you do this. You and I will keep that plan of yours to ourselves. We won’t even let Him in on it. And let’s see how things work out.”

CHAPTER IV

A MONTH passed. A month of misery, longing, dread and uncertainty. For Margaret Lyons, hidden away in a darksome and diminutive three-room flat in the Bronx, it was a period of readjustment. The publicity attending the murder had lapsed, and the world of men and women was busy with its own and with newer affairs. In her seclusion, the girl experienced a sense of having been stranded, high on some lone, sandy waste of existence, the tide long since receded.

Summer coming on apace. Heat and noise and dirt—squalling children and raucous slatterns. The million and one pulsations of a tenement street choked with human atoms, inarticulate, resenting ever having been spewed into existence. Practicing virtues without possessing them. Routine begetting monotony that crushed out of life its spontaneity and relish. The incubus

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of toil, as nothing to the incubus of passions which writhed and kicked and screamed under the imposition of restraint. Groaning under the weight of life and at last dying as the only means of throwing it off.

Thanks to the solicitude of Mr. McKelvie, exceptional latitude was accorded the girl in the matter of visiting Arnold Chadwick. She had fallen into the way of cheating the lagging hours by anticipating these visits to the Tombs. Then came the day when that modicum of comfort was withdrawn.

One night she read, in screaming headlines, that the alertness of a prison guard had prevented a possible jail-break by Arnold Chadwick. A search of his cell had disclosed several thin steel saws and a bottle of hydrochloric acid.

The story of his misdeeds was again rehearsed with abundant emphasis on the girl's tragic love story.

Said one news account:

When, in response to Margaret Lyons' declaration that "Whatever he is—whatever he's done, or will do—I love him," Chadwick replied: "All right, Margaret, then I'll be back to you,"

no one took his words seriously — except his sweetheart. Authorities discussing today Chadwick's frustrated jail break agreed that more than lovers' speeches must have passed between Chadwick and Margaret on her visits to him.

Next morning on the telephone, Mr. McKelvie was curt and far from pleasant.

"Take a taxicab down to my office," he said. "I'll wait for you."

Arriving at the office, she was ushered immediately into McKelvie's sanctum, where the lawyer turned on her, bereft of his usual smile.

"You see," he said, "what happens when you dabble in things you know nothing about? You see the position you've placed me in—to say nothing of yourself."

"Don't worry about me, Mr. McKelvie. Naturally, if I've done anything to hurt you, I'm sorry."

"Done anything to hurt me! Do you think I want to be known as counsel for a man who pulls a damn fool stunt like that? It makes me look like an ass. Who engineered this thing?"

"I did."

"You! You and who else?"

Margaret was silent.

"Come now. I can find out, you know. It may take a little time and trouble, but I can get the whole story, and if you don't care to tell me, I'll get it elsewhere."

"A man by the name of Mike Deyer helped me.

"Mike Deyer! Chadwick sent you to him?"

"Yes. Told me he'd done Mr. Deyer a favor one time and that if I'd go to him, tell him who I was and what I wanted, that Mr. Deyer would do the rest."

"I see. Probably passed the stuff to one of those 'coke' runners and paid well for it. Chadwick was turned in, of course, you know that?"

"Turned in?"

"Sure. Somebody squealed. Probably the guy that slipped him the stuff, trying to kiss his way into the Warden's good graces. Well, that's that. And now, what? You understand, Miss Lyons, you won't be able to visit the

prison any more. From now on, you're like a city on a hill. You're marked. They'll pick you up on suspicion the first chance they get."

"Suspicion? What for?"

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"Certainly—suspicion of having abetted your sweetheart in an attempted jail-break."

"They couldn't prove anything. You don't think Arnold would tell them? And all I'd have to do would be to deny it."

"I know all that; but take my advice and keep under cover. If it's necessary for you to get in touch with me after this, telephone my office here. If I'm not in, don't leave your name. If I am in, tell the operator the Bronx is calling. Get into the habit of using drug store pay-stations and never use the same one twice. Don't talk to strangers. And when you're talking to anyone, try to keep your tongue glued to the roof of your mouth. And you might leave me your address."

"Will Arnold understand why I stopped visiting him?"

"Understand? Why, my dear girl, if you were to show up at the prison after this, Chadwick would probably drop dead of heart failure."

"How about writing to him?"

Mr. McKelvie shook his head and sighed.

"You know, Miss Lyons, for an intelligent girl you sometimes—well, never mind. No, you mustn't write. Talleyrand said it: 'Fools and

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women write letters.' Never, never, never write a letter."

"What a life!" sighed the girl.

"There's nothing particularly sweet-scented about it, especially when you get off on the wrong foot. I'll have to say good-by to you now—"

Mr. McKelvie held out his hand:

"Go and sin no more."

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CHAPTER V

ON the morning of the second day of June, five weeks after the murder of the Delancey Street jeweler, the city was electrified by the story of a daring jail-break!

Arnold Chadwick, making good his promise, had broken bonds and been swallowed up in the maelstrom of the metropolis.

When the acid and the saws had been found in his cell, he had been grilled by prison authorities who have their own effective methods of awakening loquacity in a taciturn law breaker. The man with the restless gray eyes, straight mouth and squarish jaw, who, in the work-a-day world had proved unfit to grapple with himself single-handed, elected not to talk; and, mute as a fox among mangling hounds, tightened his lips and shook his head. His tormentors tired. He showed no sign of wavering.

“Chadwick,” said the warden, reverting to the

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subject later in the day, “I want you to trust me. I promise you I won’t take any action. It’s just to satisfy my own curiosity. Who slipped you the outfit?”

Sullen silence.

“Why don’t you come clean? We know. It’s the girl.”

The accumulated scorn and bitterness of many years overlaid the tone of Chadwick’s response.

It was not the first time in the warden’s career that the imputation of canine maternity had been hurled at him.

Thus, when Chadwick conferred the bar sinister, he replied:

“I have documentary proof to the contrary.”

The warden was ignorant of the fact that a really great man, finding himself in a position of absolute power, abuses it only on the side of mercy. So, that afternoon, Arnold Chadwick was consigned to one of the isolation cells known as the “cooler,” where nothing intervenes between a man and his naked soul.

In the ceiling of Chadwick’s cage was a steel grating that opened into a ventilating shaft. Standing tiptoe on his cot this grill was within

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reach. The clothes he was allowed to wear as a prisoner included a belt, with the usual metal buckle. Using this as a screw driver he loosened the fastenings that held the grill in place, then writhed through the opening into the air-shaft.

Where that shaft ended was conjecture— whether the sharp bends in its labyrinth admitted progress was problematical. The course was blacker than the heart of darkness. Inch by inch he wriggled—scarcely room for the play of his body. Sweating, stifling panic gripped his joints. The pit of his stomach grew icy. His breath came in gasps. If he made the distance, he knew where Margaret Lyons was waiting....

The vent swerved sharply and became a chute, down which he plunged headlong into the carpenter shop, a two-story drop, where he lay stunned physically but with brain alert.

The guard on duty in the carpenter shop was asleep. In the entire course of his service there, nothing untoward had ever happened. Why should anything happen this particular night? The evening prior he was off duty and had not rested well that day. When the prisoner from the isolation cells tumbled from the ventilator, the

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guard in the darkened shop groaned uneasily and slumbered on.

Chadwick gained the prison yard. There, an eighteen-foot wall confronted him. With the smell of the city assailing his nostrils, what was an eighteen-foot wall? On the far side of the yard lay a plank. This he placed against the granite barrier, ran back a distance, then, cat-like, made the length of the plank, reached the top of the wall, dropped down on the other side and slipped away toward the Bronx through the sheltering night.

2

The days that Arnold Chadwick and Margaret Lyons spent in the little hideaway in the Bronx were the happiest either of them had ever known.

God be thanked, chants the poet, the meanest of His creatures boasts two sides, one to face the world with, one to show a woman when he loves her.

“I know now I was all wrong. I shouldn’t have lied to you. It would have been better for both of us if I’d told you I wasn’t working. I was in

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the habit of lying, I suppose. I can see where I made my mistake.”

.... her head upon his shoulder and his cheek against her cheek

“The whole thing was wrong, Sonny. It wasn’t your fault, really. You’d been lonesome for so long—swallowed up by the indifference of the world—drifting from day to day with no one to care what happened to you. And then I came along. I suppose it was too much to expect that in the time we knew each other you could alter the stride you’d grown accustomed to through the years.”

“That’s your kind way of puttin’ it, Margaret.”

“There’s no other way of putting it. Poor, foolish boy, on what was to have been your wedding day, out looking for a stake, lacking the courage and doping yourself to make the grade. And all for me—for me, who’d have given my right arm, my life itself, to save you from any such thing.”

“Margaret, believe me, will you, when I tell you that sometimes, just like somebody’s socked me, it comes over me what I’m in the can for— what I’m facing. And you know, as I told you

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a dozen times, I didn’t set out on any such errand. I wouldn’t of killed th’ old man if I’d known what I was doin’.”

“Yes, I know, but who’s going to believe that?”

“Now listen, kid. It’s all right. Don’t worry.”

“They mustn’t find us.”

“They will if the papers keep on the way they’re goin’—”

He arose, crossed the kitchen where they were sitting and stood at the table. An evening paper lay spread, ebon headlines bearing on the manhunt. Chadwick hammered the newspaper with his clenched fist.

“I’d like to have the man that wrote this article swap places with me for just about one week and see how he’d act. Listen to this:

You could not psychoanalyze Chadwick with an X-ray and Yerkes telescope. He wears a case-hardened mask. It would take a crowbar and pickaxe to get through these defenses. There is no telling what he thinks about away back behind those frigid eyes that blink drearily at times. He is like an eagle, parading in lamb’s skin.... If faces tell anything, this man’s face proclaims

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absence of feeling. He is free of emotions. Cruelty would not hurt him any more than kindness would please him. One thing he hates—the handcuffs—

“Don’t read any more,” pleaded the girl, going over and placing her arm about his shoulders.

“I know, Margaret; but that isn’t fair. A little, ready-made suit model, sitting in a newspaper office, trying to chalk up a reputation for smart writing at the expense of a man who can’t hit back. That’s like kicking a cripple. Further along here, in the same article, they have me killing a State trooper in Pennsylvania and I’m identified from a gallery picture by the cashier of a bank that’s been robbed.”

“Don’t talk that way, Arnold, please. Let’s try to accept life as we find it—let’s try to adjust ourselves to things as they are. Why attach importance to a lot of mournful little people, oppressed by their own good intentions? It’s you and I, sweetheart, against the world. I don’t want anything or anybody but you; and I’m praying that we get away safely out of all this. We’ll go far off, get a new start—make amends for past mistakes. In the meantime, we won’t be bitter, will we?”

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Chadwick’s laugh was hard, mirthless.

“Suppose I have broken the law?” he said. “Where is the percentage in these birds”—he slapped the open paper with the back of his hand —“trying to headline me into the chair?”

With a laugh, bright as she could muster, the girl swept the newspaper aside disdainfully.

“Let’s forget all that nonsense and plan what we’re going to do when we get away.”

“You know what I’m going to do if I get a chance this time?”

“Be a good boy and make me happy.”

“Yeah, that and something else. I’m going to do what I can to help kids. No kid ought to be in an institution.”

So they talked and planned through the long days of concealment.

Margaret’s late-at-night excursions to a delicatessen shop around tire corner from the flat were adventures that sent her scurrying back to the little haven below the chimney pots, her heart beating with an apprehension that she concealed with difficulty from the eager eyes of her lover.

Twenty thousand officers of the law were

searching every nook and cranny of the city for the fugitive.

“Get the girl!” was the order. “Wherever she is, you will find him.”

One week slipped by uneventfully. A second week. Summer was crowding fast upon the city and the stuffy flat became stifling. In the small hours preceding dawn, the only period of the day’s round when quiet brooded over the teeming district, Chadwick and the girl would creep up to the roof, sitting silently hand in hand, under the stars, contemplating the sleeping town—in every darkened corner of which brooded menace.

Their plan was to wait another two weeks and then Margaret would try to establish contact with Mr. McKelvie. The exchequer was undergoing a severe strain; but they had apportioned a sum sufficient to take them across the Canadian border. There must be some way of circumventing the barriers of the law. Surely Mr. McKelvie could negotiate that. He had promised to befriend them. He liked Margaret; and when he learned what they had planned—when he understood that they were going to start life afresh—

make amends—he would help. Of course he would.

A third week dragged its weary length. Then, late on the second night of the fourth week there came a banging at the door of the little flat. A shoulder against the panel. The flimsy lock gave way and in tumbled half a dozen detectives.

“Pipe the whiskers, will you!” shouted one of the detectives. “Chadwick, y’ look like a religious pitcher!”

The fugitive shrugged and extended his left wrist for the handcuff.

“So long, Margaret,” he said.

“Not good-by yet a while, big boy,” said one of the detectives. “She’s comin’ downtown with you this time.”

CHAPTER VI

“**Y**OU know,” said Jerry McKelvie, speaking from the dizzy pinnacle of a quarter of a century at the bar, “I’m getting ’round to the point where I believe in the existence of a deity whose function it is to look after drunks, blind men and plain, ordinary, North American damn fools. Here you are, Chadwick, lashed to the mast, not one chance in a million of dodging the chair and you deliberately step out and invest yourself with a nuisance value of such proportions that the authorities don’t think they’ve got enough locks and bars to hold you while the trial is being held. The District Attorney suggests a homicide plea. What is it, Chadwick, dumb luck or good psychology?”

The prisoner shrugged and sat staring moodily at the stone floor. At the end of a course of conduct that sound sense must pronounce absurd,

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how could he explain it so that this practical man would understand? Why try?

“Well,” continued McKelvie, “that’s the way the case stands now. I am withdrawing as your counsel—asking the court to be relieved. You’ll go up in a day or so to take the plea and be sentenced. There are two counts, you know, homicide and felonious assault, which means you’ll probably draw thirty years.”

“Thirty years! I’m twenty-seven now. Why, in thirty years I’ll be—”

“No gratitude in your heart, is there?” said the lawyer, palpably disgusted. “You fellows are all alike. Here you are, by all the rules of the game headed for the chair. You get a break at the last minute, and all you do is sit there and whine.”

“I suppose you’d get sore, counselor, if I told you there are things in life they can’t teach in a law school? Get me right. I’m not thinking so much about myself. I don’t want Margaret to be kidded. I don’t want her to think that she and I are not going to see each other until thirty years are over, because that’s a pipe dream. It isn’t

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going to happen. I’m not going to serve thirty years.”

“Chadwick,” said the lawyer, “honestly, yon almost make me feel sorry for you. Your whole life seems one absurd moral disaster after another; and from the look of things, you’re going to keep right on. I know what you mean when you say you’re not going to serve your sentence; but you’re wrong. You will serve it; and if you try to break jail again—”

“Who said anything about breaking jail?”

“What did you mean, if not that, when you told me just now you weren’t going through?”

“I might have meant lots o’ things.”

“Don’t kid me, big boy, unless you’re lookin’ for more exercise than satisfaction. The trouble with you is, your head is no resting place for brains. You tried to get away twice out o’ here. The first time you flivvered. The second time you made it, sure enough; and what did it get you? Here you are, back again, with a long line o’ years ahead, and a reputation as a tough hombre. That’s no way to turn a long line of years into easy travel.”

Chadwick yawned.

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“Is that all, counselor?”

“No, I’ve another matter to take up with you. In discussing your case, the district attorney inclined to the belief that your future welfare—to say nothing of the philosophic calm of your custodians—will be best conserved by an immediate severance of all -written and personal communication with the girl you mentioned a moment ago. Not that you deserve it, and you’ll probably abuse my confidence, but I’m tipping you off. You and Margaret Lyons are all through. They’re not going to let her visit you. They’re not going to let her write to you, nor you to her. The belief prevails that she’s been an evil influence and—”

“The hell you say. I suppose when they were knee deep in this talk fest, you put in your two cents’ worth in favor of reforming Arnold Chadwick by taking away from him the one thing in his life that counts for a good—”

“There you go again.”

“Oh, forget it, counselor,” said the prisoner wearily. “It’s O. K. with me. I’m not blaming you—I’m not blaming anybody but myself. I’ve dug my way in and dragged her after me. Now

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I suppose it's up to me to dig us both out. But that's my affair. You don't have to lose any sleep about it. The D. A. doesn't—none of them. I appreciate what you've done—”

“If you really want to show gratitude to your friends—including Margaret—the best way would be to take your medicine like a man—behave yourself. After all—”

Chadwick leaned forward, placing his white, futile hand on the lawyer's knee. There was a strange huskiness in his voice.

“Do me a favor, will you? Don't take sides. Maybe, who knows? Some time you may be in trouble. You may want someone to do something for you and they'll do it, just as you're doing this for me. I want you to get word to Margaret.”

“What do you want me to tell her?”

Chadwick studied the lawyer's face a long time before he answered. McKelvie found the steady glance difficult to bear.

“You wouldn't kid me, would you? The reason I say that is this. A lock-up is no novelty to me. You know that. What you don't know is that there are times when you can't sleep and you get remembering things. I'm telling you I'll

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keep thinking from one 'stitch' to another that perhaps you kidded me and didn't do what I asked you.”

“But you haven't asked me. What is it you want?”

“Tell Margaret Lyons to wait for me. Tell her I'm coming back, as I said I would. Tell her to get in touch with Father Mulcahy and leave her address. No use in mixing you up in it any more, counselor. They'll try to break her heart on my account. You know that, and I know it. She doesn't know anything about it; but it won't take her long before she's wised up. You tell her what I said.”

The lawyer shook his head, pityingly.

“Fair enough, Chadwick, but—”

“Got the message right?”

The lawyer repeated it, and Chadwick extended his hand.

“Good-by, counselor. Good-by and good luck.”

Two days later he was sentenced. Twenty years to life for the killing of old Lesser, and nine years for shooting at, and wounding, the cigar clerk.

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Next morning he was removed to the Big House up the River where he was held several days and then transferred to a similar institution in the northern part of the State—a bleak, forbidding pile of stone in the heart of dense and dismal forests.

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Had Margaret Lyons' experience with American courtroom justice been far-flung, she might have entertained grave apprehension at the unconcern manifested in her case. All officialdom connected therewith had decided, apparently, to adopt a shrugging attitude. There was really nothing tangible, they agreed, on which to base a prosecution for connivance at jail-breaking. True, she had harbored an escaped malefactor with a discouragingly lengthy record—a man who in the course of two holdups had murdered one victim and attempted to slay another. Society might have its score to settle with this culprit; but the girl loved him, as some woman always loves such a creature. Why should justice

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intervene to penalize a woman for indulging an inexplicable aberration?

In this manner, justice ostensibly summarized the situation; and all unsuspecting, Margaret Lyons fared forth into the crowded, dusty streets of the city, reeking under the blazing sunlight of a stifling June morning, "tailed" by Mike Olsen and "Shorty" McCullough of Inspector O'Haran's staff.

In transmitting Chadwick's message, McKelvie had improved the occasion by delivering a homily wherein was stressed the fact that there are battles with fate that can never be won—that man breaks not the metal when God casts the die; and this being the case, it behooves sensible humans, having discerned the inevitable, to bow gracefully thereto, smothering their chagrin.

"Life, Miss Lyons," murmured Mr. McKelvie earnestly, "is full of uppercuts and grief."

More sonorously descanted good Father Mulcahy as he sat opposite the girl in the stuffy little parlor of the downtown rectory, mopping his brow and trying to be at once kind and sensible.

"I understand, my dear child," he said, "that

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you love this poor fellow. There's nothing I can say at this moment—there's nothing anyone can say to you that will lift the weight crowding down upon your heart. You have given rein to a very unfortunate affection. And this is the unhappy result. Suffering is always our portion when we set ourselves in opposition to the Divine Will. Our attitude towards sin must be such that we are willing to run no risk. Our only course is the safe course—prudently estimated.”

“But, Father, I despise what you call ‘the safe course’. The world is crowded with people who may be respected because they take the ‘safe course’ and who haven’t as much decency and real honor as this man just sentenced to prison for thirty years—the man neither you nor anybody else can see any good in, simply because he had a rotten break in life.”

“Margaret,” said the priest with a sigh, “many times in the course of my priesthood I have felt as I do this afternoon, talking here with you—my heart and my head don’t seem to belong to the same man. You come to me with a scrambled human problem that I could very easily unscramble by means of an obvious outline

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of moral doctrine. That is the only way in God’s world it can be unscrambled; and it’s the one solution you will not attune your mind to. What can I say or do to help a girl who won’t be helped?”

“That’s the trouble with the Church, Father. We come in deep distress looking for some tangible assistance, and all we get is—what shall I call it?—moral web-spinning. You talk about God—God—God. What’s God got to do with it? You don’t suppose, do you, He’s worrying about me? If He’s all you say He is—if the love I have for Arnold Chadwick is a reflection of God’s love for me, something fine and beautiful—why should He permit all this to happen? Why should He endow me with the power to love and then turn that love into an instrument of torture?”

“Margaret, my poor, misguided child, I’m afraid you have been reading a lot of silly books when you should have been studying your catechism.”

“My catechism is given over to suffering and I don’t want to suffer. I want to be happy.”

“This life, my dear child, is a probation. The whole object of Divine Providence is probation.

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Every acceptance of the test here, in this world, means the working out of a Higher Destiny—”

“You talk about ‘Divine Providence’. Tell me, why should I—why should that man up there in prison—think twice of ‘Divine Providence’? Where was Divine Providence when Arnold Chadwick was being conceived and born and bred in hell—when society was producing another ‘rogue’, as he is called—”

“Of whom,” interrupted the priest, “there would be more, were it not for the fact that few of us have vitality sufficient to make our instincts imperious.”

“Oh, you agree with me, then?”

“No, merely anticipating you,” smiled the priest. “I’m acquainted with that particular line of argument. I’ve heard it so often before: ‘Where was God while this boy was running wild on the streets as a youngster; fighting his way through gray days in institutions and prisons; growing to manhood in an environment that a sturdy weed could not have flourished in; neglected by heaven and earth until the crack of his automatic startled us out of our lethargy and we turned, hands lifted in horror that one so young

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should be so far from Heaven?’ I’ve heard it many, many times; and listening to it again from you doesn’t make it any less stupid.”

“If it’s such an old story,” said the girl, rising to go, “don’t you think it’s time you did something about it? But there,” she added, with a smile, “I’m not going to quarrel with you.”

“Don’t quarrel with me, Margaret. Don’t quarrel with the Church. You were brought up a Catholic. You understand. Mother Church takes us all as we are, tells us what we must be and shows us how to be it. Your conscience is troubling you because you are indulging an inordinate affection. Your attitude of indifference has lured you into deliberate mortal sin in act.

“You know the old example of the marksman? The marksman is supposed to aim at the bull’s eye. The only perfect shot is the one that hits it. If he tries his best and misses it, that’s an imperfection. If he misses it through not trying his best, that’s a fault. But, if he doesn’t care a damn about the whole business of shooting and does it only because it’s ordered, and fires at random, not caring if he misses the target, that is a mortal sin as regards attitude of mind. And

if he deliberately aims outside the target, out of sheer malice or protest against orders—as you are doing here—that’s a deliberate mortal sin in act.”

“I couldn’t hope to win an argument against you, Father, with your trained mind, your vocabulary, your thousand tricks of logic—”

“There’s no sophistry here, Margaret. Your attachment for this man is too intense, too tenacious, unrestrained. My advice to you, my dear girl, is to marry some sensible man and have a couple of children to occupy your mind. Love is an excellent thing in itself. It becomes detrimental only when it lures the soul to adopt means for its realization which involve the sacrifice of God to a creature—”

“There you go dragging God in again.”

“Poor God,” said the priest sadly.

“No, not poor God. Poor you, poor me, living in a hell that grew out of a misunderstanding of that little word—‘God’. Good-by, Father. Thanks for trying to help. And forgive me, won’t you, for a bad quarter of an hour?”

“I wish you would let me help,” said Father Mulcahy.

“Maybe you can,” she smiled. “I shall forward my address to you from time to time; and if there should come a query, you might say where I can be found.”

The priest stood on the steps of the rectory, looking after her.

“I wonder,” he said to himself, “what some of us are going to write into our accounts concerning her—and him”

CHAPTER VII

HEADQUARTERS detail being a labor of love to Messrs. Olsen and McCullough, they were eminently successful. Much of their power resided in the complete optimism with which they regarded the path they had traced for themselves in life. In their hearts they took cognizance of no road more lofty than that which they negotiated so adroitly.

For twenty-seven days one or the other of the two detectives, in the parlance of their profession, referring to Margaret, “put her to bed at night” and “picked her up in the mornin’.”

It was McCullough who disclosed her identity to the keeper of the little west side rooming-house. Forthwith Margaret was requested to leave. It was Olsen who suggested to Miss Carter on Morningside Heights that it might be just as well not to rent to the girl the front room of her apartment, advertised in the morning paper.

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“She looks innocent enough,” protested Miss Carter in bewilderment.

“You don’t want th’ po-lice comin’ here, do you?”

Miss Carter certainly did not. Like the average law-abiding American citizen, Miss Carter entertained a respect amounting almost to dread for anyone connected in any way with the law. The mere suggestion of a police station or a courtroom made Miss Carter’s scalp crawl. And in recounting the “narrow escape” she had had—the chief topic of Miss Carter’s conversation for the ensuing year—she rehearsed, pridefully, boastfully, volubly, the adamant stand she had assumed “until the officers had submitted cogent and irrefragable proof.”

For, as Miss Carter was wont to add with lofty determination, “We Americans have, I trust, one or two rights remaining under our Constitution.”

It was that same sort of “noble defense” that poor Margaret Lyons encountered from the day the two detectives undertook their assignment. Following numerous rebuffs, she secured a position as typist with a manufacturing concern. Returning

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from luncheon the first day, she was given half a week's salary and told her services were not wanted.

When this had happened the third time, she appealed to the man who had hired her.

"Just what is it?" she asked. "Isn't my work satisfactory?"

"You know better than I can tell you what the trouble is."

"But I don't. I'm honestly inquiring."

"Ask the two police detectives who were in here today. They'll tell you."

So that was it! That was their method of driving home the truth of the lesson Father Mulcahy had spoken. Society had formulated elaborate rules for its own welfare. Attempt to run counter to this codified procedure, and at once, and in a thousand nameless ways, you were beyond the pale.

How long ago was it that she had packed her bag at Mrs. Thomas's in preparation for her wedding journey? Less than three months; and look at the road she had traveled in that brief duration. It seemed like yesterday that she had resigned her position at Young and Leblock's.

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At that time who could have foreseen that within a few months the man she loved would be shut away in prison for thirty years; that she, herself, would have known what it meant to be arraigned in court, locked up in a cell; and would be roaming the city, as she was today, an object of police surveillance and mistrust?

And now, what?

Fate, in the form of Detective Olsen, answered the question.

Mr. Olsen, in a well-pressed brown suit, blue tie and highly polished tan boots, edged alongside Margaret on the street one afternoon, lifted his gray, soft hat, smiled, and wondered if she could direct him to the Grand Central Station.

"Walk two blocks ahead, then turn to your right, and down three."

They had reached the corner.

"You don't seem to be in any great hurry," said the detective. "I have an hour or so to kill. What do you say to a little—"

"Thank you," smiled the girl. "I'm afraid our ways part here. Your road leads south and I'm heading north."

"That's the truest word you ever spoke in

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your life, Margaret Lyons,” replied Olsen moving closer, grabbing her by the arm and flashing his shield.

“But why? What is it? What have I done?”

The detective hailed a taxicab and he and his prisoner entered.

“What have I done?” she insisted. “Has it anything to do with Arnold Chadwick?”

Olsen leaned forward and closed the window at the chauffeur’s back.

“That’s better,” he grunted.

Lighting a cigar he sprawled in his corner of the cab, surveying the girl with impudent appraisal.

“Just a dumb-bell,” he soliloquized, “just a sap; but it’s the saps that cause all the trouble in the world. It’s the saps that makes it hard for us fellers.” Then, addressing Margaret: “Listen, what do you want bangin’ out with a rat like this Chadwick guy for?”

Silence.

“Just a dirty, yaller, coke-sniffin’ rat,” continued Olsen, enunciating each word with calm deliberation, as he carefully studied the point of ash on his cigar.

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“And here you are, hustlin’ on th’ streets to get money for a louse like him—that was makin’ a laughin’ stock out o’ you when we had ’im locked up in the Tombs—tellin’ us all about how he was puttin’ it over on you—and what a dumbbell you was.”

The girl dried her eyes.

“What are you arresting me for?”

“For solicitin’ me on the street. Arnold Chadwick’s sweetie driven to prostitution.”

“You’re doing this, I suppose, so that he’ll hear of it up there in prison. You can’t do any more to him physically, so you’re attacking him mentally. You hope to drive him crazy

“Who, him?”

Mr. Olsen reached over and patted her knee paternally.

“That bird was loco, sister, nine months before he was born and he ain’t improved none since.”

“If he’s mentally ill, why isn’t he in an institution under physicians’ care?”

“Nah, you don’t get me. When I say he’s goofy, I mean crazy, like a fox.”

“Have you no conscience?” asked the girl.

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“You know I didn’t solicit you. You came up to me and asked the way to the Grand Central. I suppose,” she added hopelessly, “it would have been all the same if I had brushed by without answering. You look like a decent man. You don’t look like the sort of person who’d be guilty of an outrage such as this. Haven’t you any womenfolk of your own? Suppose you weren’t a policeman and somebody treated your mother or sister or your wife as you are treating me?”

The detective elevated a red, moist, earnest paw and smiled derisively. “I never see one of you women yet that when they get in trouble they don’t pull the old hooey about the cop’s mother or wife or sister. Lemme tell y’ somethin’. Us coppers is out to make it unhealthy for lawbreakers—”

“What are you doing now, upholding the law or breaking it? You know I’m innocent, and yet you’re going to get up in court and swear—”

“That’s just your hard luck,” replied the cop. “You serve notice on the po-lice that you’re Chadwick’s sweetie. Fair enough. Nobody tied a rope around you and dragged you into this game. You drew up a chair and invited yourself

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in. It’s our game. We set th’ limit an’ make th’ rules—an’ them’s the rules you got t’ play. If everybody made their own rules—” He shrugged, peered out the window and added, “That would make it a hell of a game, wouldn’t it?”

They traveled a block in silence. Margaret was crying again. Olsen shifted uneasily.

“If you an’ me looked at life the same way, that would be tough on what th’ Frawgs call ‘Joy Dee Veer’.”

She turned on him in a fury.

“If you and I looked at life the same way— and that way was your way —”

The cab was coming to a halt.

“All right, sister,” interrupted the detective, “finish the wisecrack some other time. Here’s where we get out, you an’ me.”

And so it happened that Margaret Lyons, having been adjudged guilty of prostitution, was committed for an indefinite term in the reformatory.

Her first glimpse of the place was reassuring. There were pretty little cottages, trees, flowers, well-kept lawns. But once inside, booked and fitted out in the blue-and-white checked gingham

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uniform, heavy white stockings, black oxfords, a black belt, and consigned to a small room in the hospital, all illusion of peace and kindness faded.

The first two weeks she spent in quarantine with frequent physical examinations by the staff of physicians. The diet of potatoes and greasy soup nauseated her; nor were digestive tremors allayed by the nature of the tasks to which she was assigned.

One of these consisted in feeding other inmates who, for infractions of the rules, some minor, some grave, were undergoing a torture known as “the sheets.”

These were of heavy canvas. The culprit placed between two of them, as in an envelope, the canvas covering her entire body, was clamped down by heavy leather straps in such manner as to hinder all movement. Once a day Margaret carried to these victims bread and tea, under a strict injunction of silence.

They screamed and cried, refusing to eat, and Margaret, her heart torn by the spectacle of this stupid brutality, drew down upon her own head the penalty of violating the injunction of silence.

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“Please don’t cry like that,” she said to one of the hysterical girls. “If you’ll try to be quiet, it will be so much better for you.”

A harsh, rasping voice intervened.

“I thought you was told not to talk?”

The food was snatched from Margaret’s hand and forcibly administered to the girl between the sheets. Margaret was led to her cell—they called it a “room”—and told that she had earned a week’s solitary confinement.

She must neither read nor sew. The windows were too high to afford a glimpse of the country. She must not lie on her cot—merely sit upright on a hard little chair all day, her hands folded in her lap.

The first day of this discipline she spoke to the girl who brought food to her. For this infraction, she was told, her time would be lengthened.

“We’ll break your spirit, girl,” they said, “we’ll break your heart. We’ll make it easier for people to live in the world with you when you get out of here.”

One of her companions smuggled a book into Margaret’s cell. Inexperienced, she accepted and sought to hide it. It was discovered. She was

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taken to the superintendent’s office, and for half an hour thereafter, grilled. Who had given her the book? She wouldn’t tell. They mentioned the “cooler”—a damp, dark, basement cell with a mattress on the floor where not a soul is seen nor a sound heard except once a day, when food is pushed in through a little hole at the bottom of the iron door. It is cold there. Dark.

Margaret understood the threat of the cooler. Only too well she scaled their reference to the sheets.

“Why,” she inquired, “should I tell? The girl who slipped me that book was sorry for me, and trying to be kind. She knew I had done nothing to merit solitary confinement. It was a sense of outraged justice that prompted her to do what she did. And you want me to turn informer so that you can penalize her for the heinous crime of entertaining and expressing sympathy?, I’ll never tell you who she was—”

The superintendent shrugged.

“You’ll take another week of solitary,” he said, “and we’ll add thirty days more to your time.”

Saturdays and Sundays the girls were locked

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all day in their cells, leaving them only for meals. On Sundays attendance was compulsory at religious services where they sat sullenly and listened to an adenoidal rehearsal of the breadth and length and height and depth of the goodness and kindness and mercy of the Creator—to Him be glory unto all generations, world without end. Amen.

Margaret had been assigned to work in the kitchen. A girl alongside her spent most of the time crying. Her eyes were always red and swollen. Perseveringly, in stolen snatches of converse, Margaret learned that the girl had a lover who had promised to “wait till she came out.” The girl had been “framed,” she said, because they did not like her boy friend; but honest, Moe was a good kid.

“You do think he’ll wait, don’t you?” said the girl. “He promised he would.”

“I’m sure of it.”

“You’re sure of it?”

Margaret Lyons smiled kindly.

“People on the outside always wait,” she said.

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2

At the end of a year and two months Margaret was paroled, and because she had been initiated in the intricacies of kitchen work, a “nice place” was obtained for her as a domestic, with an “exemplary family.”

Weekly she appeared at the probation office to be subjected to the bilious benevolence—the scientific pity—which distinguishes “organized welfare” work. Within these precincts self-respect vanished. Each invasion of her privacy, in the form of stupid interrogation, prompted a persuasion of inferiority—an assumption of having been created of lesser clay.

“You are sure you are making no attempt to establish communication with that convict, Chadwick?”

And, before she could respond:

“Because if you are, you are breaking your parole. If we find it out, back to the Reformatory you go.”

“I see.”

Lacking temerity to ask permission to depart,

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she would stand there in idle subjugation until caprice dictated her dismissal.

“Remember, be here next week. If you’re not—”

And she would take her leave, conscious of officialdom’s fishy eye centered in glazed dubiety on her retreating form.

At the end of four weeks, Margaret mustered sufficient courage to protest.

“I am a stenographer,” she said. “At the Reformatory I was assigned to kitchen work. That’s probably why you insist now upon my being a domestic. I am terribly unhappy where I am. Surely it’s possible to get me a position in an office where I can do the work I was trained for.”

The cold gray eye of the dowager to whom she spoke brightened strangely.

“We have been expecting just such an outburst as this—”

“It’s not an outburst. I’m only asking if you can’t make my life a little easier. I’m not vicious. I’m not depraved. You ought to be able to tell that by looking at me, by talking to me.

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God knows I’ve been through enough in the last year and a half to have made me—”

“We’ll dispense with any more talk like that, if you please. This case has been given a great deal of earnest consideration. Our observation confirms the belief that you are a young woman entirely devoid of self-respect. It’s probably not your fault. Had your mother and father lived and had you benefited by moral home surroundings you might not be here today. But here you most certainly are—and a problem it is very difficult to see a solution to.”

Margaret sighed.

“I wouldn’t have believed it possible,” she said to herself, “for a woman to be so unutterably stupid—”

“And so,” continued the probation officer sweetly—(her husband was a wealthy utilities man, she was prominent socially and dabbled in “uplift” work because she felt that women like herself, of means, intelligence and understanding should, even at personal sacrifice, help roll the world a little nearer heaven)—“and so, Margaret, we have decided that the kindest thing we can do in your case is to return you to the Reformatory

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for an additional two years. At the end of that time, with your sense of responsibility quickened, we’ll tackle the problem afresh. Don’t weep, I know it seems hard and probably unjust to you, but”

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CHAPTER VIII

TOMMY HOY, a week out of Dannemora, having readjusted his values to the life “outside,” where the lure of events and not mere lapse of time engages the mind, was roaming the city in an endeavor to pick up the trail of Margaret Lyons.

The fact that it had not been his good fortune ever to have laid eyes on the young woman, and that he had not the first faint notion where she might be located, accelerated rather than tempered the intensity of his quest. For three days and nights, assiduously, he sustained his self-appointed task and on the fourth morning—a cold, cheerless December forenoon—picked up the trail, coming to a halt midtown beyond the entrance of a diminutive eating house. A swinging sign, creaking crazily in the wind, proclaimed that beyond the steam-blurred glass-plated portals lay his journey’s end.

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Tommy Hoy stood for a brief instant contemplating the sign—“Buddy’s Bear Cat Bar—Ladies Invited.”

“I guess this is the nosebag I’m lookin’ for,” he said; and entering, habit strong upon him, seated himself at a table in as close proximity as possible to the door. Before engaging in any endeavor, Tommy first insured what he termed a “quick out.”

It was ten o’clock in the morning, and trade at that hour was not brisk. Mr. Hoy, being at the moment the sole patron, found himself, greatly to his satisfaction, the recipient of the fair waitress’s undivided attention.

“Gimme a cup o’ coffee. Yeah, that’s all I want. An’ a pack o’ cigarettes.”

He sat studying the waitress as she busied herself about the place. Lithe, graceful, with a fascinating fashion of moving her shoulders as she walked. But it was her eyes that held him. The eyes of a woman who had suffered much, who had been abused and misused and who had fought through, into the clear, alone and without a whimper. Kind eyes, full of understanding

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and sympathy; yet, in their depths a glint as from the facet of a blue-white diamond.

“Winner back of a gun,” was Tommy Hoy’s estimate. And with a nod of satisfaction, “That’s her all right. I’d know ’er in a million.”

He hailed the waitress.

“What do I owe you—Miss Lyons?” he said.

She started at the sound of her name and fixed the man with a look of distrust; but before she could speak, he continued:

“I got a message for you from a party up State. Just got back from there myself the other day. Been lookin’ for you ever since. On the right lay, ain’t I?”

She made no move—uttered not a syllable.

“First name’s Arnold. Right? An’ th’ rest of it’s—what?”

“Chadwick,” replied the girl.

Tommy Hoy nodded in extreme self-satisfaction.

“Can’t fool Tommy,” he grinned.

She was still staring at him too stunned for articulation.

“What time you through here?”

She was off duty at four o’clock.

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“That’s great. Now I tell you what you do. Down on Houston Street—” he named the location “—there’s a place called Katz’s. It’s a nose-hag like this, only different. I’ll be waiting there for you by the entrance at half-past four. Don’t forget to show. It’s important.”

The clientele at Katz’s was as bizarre as the place itself. It was always crowded without appearing to be. The chairs were ample and invited dalliance; the tables, large and arranged far apart. A man could sit all afternoon brooding over a glass of beer or a cup of coffee and a cigar with none to manifest the least interest in his presence. Conversation rarely soared above a low, indistinguishable hum. Between the proprietor and his patrons existed a tacit agreement which insured perfect and harmonious isolation. One was in the throng, but not of it, entering and departing unnoticed. It was not what you spent there that counted with Katz so much as the comfort and satisfaction your visit entailed.

At an adjoining table might be seated an old “peter man”—the woman with him a well-known “booster.” Dips, touts, gifters of various sorts

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and conditions lounged at ease as in a neutral zone, talking of life and love and hope unspoiled.

Margaret Lyons, entering Katz's that afternoon with Tommy Hoy, was conducted to a table in one of the far corners. No need for a "quick out" at Katz's. At the table was seated a small woman, blue-eyed, pretty, discriminately apparelled. She was presented by Margaret's escort as "my wife—Mrs. Tommy Hoy. The greatest woman that ever lived."

"I suppose you're more or less mystified by all this," said Mrs. Tommy Hoy with a smile, fascinating as her drawl. "Knowing Tommy as I do, it's a marvel to me you had the courage to put in an appearance at all—Tommy's so bloomin' mysterious."

Margaret turned to him.

"You said something this morning about—"

"The party up State," interrupted Tommy, nodding profoundly. "I just come down from there, like I told you. Got a message for you from him. He's all set to—"

The place might be Katz's and safe as a sepulchre, nevertheless Tommy bent closer toward the

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center of the group, lowering his voice to the gruffest of whispers.

"He's all set to take it on the lam—"

"You understand?" queried Mrs. Tommy Hoy.

"Oh, hut he mustn't!"

Margaret spread her hands in appeal to her companions.

"There must be some way of getting that idea out of his mind. It's insanity to try it You know that," she ended, addressing the ex-convict.

The sun starved face of Tommy Hoy went seamed and serious.

"That's a tough place up there—"

Mrs. Tommy Hoy reached over and patted his mottled paw.

"But the place ain't any tougher than he is, an' I know 'em all."

"Does he know about me?"

"I'll tell you how much he knows. If he ever gets his mitts on the copper that framed you on the Reformatory bit—"

"How did he find out?"

Here Mrs. Tommy Hoy undertook an explanation of the elaborate and highly efficient system

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of prison communication known as the “underground.” Writhing under what he considered inadequate elucidation, Tommy finally interrupted.

“You remember,” he said, “that feller Regan they brought down from Sing Sing to testify that he killed the old boardinghouse keeper in Chelsea Village? They had a young girl on trial for that killing. The Judge, first off, gets a letter from a ‘con’ up in Dannemora. The letter says that a guy named Regan, doin’ a bit in Sing Sing for highway robbery, is goin’ t’ write t* the Judge clearin’ up th’ murder. Sure enough in a few days, along comes a letter from Regan. They bring Regan down an’ he admits the murder, knockin’ the D. A.’s case for a row of ’phone booths. The girl’s acquitted. The D. A. says he don’t believe Regan. Regan is tried for perjury an’ gets seven stitches added to the fifteen he’s doin’. That’s the underground. You always know what’s goin’ on up there in th’ can. An’ when Chadwick heard o’ th’ deal you was gettin’— take it from me, he wasn’t good company.”

“You see,” said Mrs. Tommy Hoy to Margaret, “nothing you’ve undergone happened by chance. It was all carefully planned in advance.

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Their idea, all along, has been to slap Chadwick in the face, with the hand of the woman he loves—to make him think that once they had him safely locked up, you had become discouraged and taken the easiest way. That’s their method of fighting—these ladies and gentlemen. They resort to measures and methods the average crook would scorn.” She paused, turning to her husband, “Tell Margaret the message you have for her.”

“The message is: He’s all set to go three days after Christmas. That’s a week from now. You’re to be up in Plattsburg on the afternoon of December 28 with a horse an’ buggy. You can hire th’ rig up there. You’re to bring a rod with you—you know, a gun—and some food and to wait for him on the road with the horse an’ buggy one mile south of the prison. He’ll join you there about two in the afternoon. If he ain’t there, by six, you’re t’ come back t’ New York.”

The blood surged to the girl’s face and was pounding against her temples. For three years, bravely, she had striven to keep alive the flickering flame of hope. In her heart, all along, she had struggled against the conviction that the

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battle was in vain; and now, here sat a man, a man who had been living for years side by side with Chadwick and who was telling her in matter-of-fact fashion that she and her lover were to be united again; that Chadwick, because of his love for her—because of the realization that she still loved him—would make a plaything of every lock and bar between them. What a lover!

“Don’t you think he’s wonderful?”

Tommy Hoy, to whom Margaret addressed the question, may have been a crook; nevertheless, he prided himself on being an honest man—that is, a man to whom “tact” and “diplomacy” were mere verbal expedients devised by untruthful men and women who discerned something unpleasant in the word “liar.”

Thief? Yes. Liar? No. Tommy’s differentiation on this score was meticulous. Wherefore, when asked by Margaret if he did not think Arnold Chadwick was “wonderful,” Tommy elevated his brows, tilted his head, fingered his coffee cup, negotiated three smoke rings and spoke as follows:

“I’ll tell you what I think, Margaret. I think that with you standin’ beside ’im—or without

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you and just the thought of you in the back of his head—he can tip the world over. I don’t know what his lay is about crackin’ th’ can. He didn’t tell me; but I’ll stake the bankroll I’m hoping t’ have a few weeks from now, that he makes it.”

Margaret Lyons was doing her best to capture and retain the infection of Tommy Hoy’s certitude; but try as she would, she could not retain the faintest sense of elation. Her initial reaction on hearing that Chadwick was about to attempt another jail-break was one of apprehension. Immediately this gave way to a sense of gladness which sprang from the realization that he *knew* she was waiting, as she had promised; but joy, momentarily triumphant, was crushed by an undercurrent of dire foreboding.

As if intuitively scaling her state of mind, Mrs. Tommy Hoy said:

“If anything should happen and he’s not on hand next Thursday at the time appointed, I want you to promise me that you will come directly from the prison to our house. We live over on Eighth Street. You’d better take the address. Don’t write it down. Never write addresses or ’phone numbers. Commit them to

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memory. And I have your promise that you'll come to us—if—"

"Yes," said Margaret huskily, "I promise."

2

The blank walls of the prison lay far in the distance. The countryside was deep in snow. The cold was intense. Hour after hour the girl in the buggy waited. The afternoon shadows lengthened. The wind moaned through the sentinel trees. Twilight crept over the lifeless landscape.

Night. Silence. The stars.

It had been such a brave day. It was such a big, beautiful world. A world where anything could happen. Where nothing had happened.

Arnold Chadwick, gambling again with Fate, had lost. The toll of years—four years of study, planning and plotting—staked on a single futile throw.

He worked in the machine shop. There, patiently, perseveringly, furtively, he had constructed a box of sheet iron. He contrived, little by little, to acquire enough gasoline to fill this

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receptacle. His idea was to place this box against the wall of the cell house and touch a match to it. If the plan succeeded, a hole would be blown through the wall and, in the succeeding turmoil, he would break for the outside wall.

Everything was in readiness. Margaret Lyons, he knew, was on hand a mile away, properly equipped. He would wait until an hour after the mid-day meal and then—

* * * * *

One of the guards in the machine shop stumbled over the box of gasoline.

* * * * *

"So, Chadwick, up to your old tricks, eh?." said the warden.

The words were ominous and incredible. It was all to have ended so differently.

"You don't blame me, do you?"

“Certainly I blame you.”

“Why? For refusing to lie here an’ let life forget me? I got a reason for wantin’ t’ get out.”

“I know your reason. If it had meant a damn to you, you wouldn’t have abused liberty when you had it.”

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“I took a chance, Warden.”

“You couldn’t afford to. You weren’t the only one concerned. The trouble with all you fellows is, you gamble with other people’s happiness and then expect the rest of the world to sympathize with your suffering.”

“You don’t know what it means to take a chance, do you?”

“Chadwick,” said the warden, “all my life I’ve held to the possible. You haven’t. That’s why I’m sitting here today, and why you’re standing there.”

And it may be that with the idea of shattering his propensity to “take chances” Chadwick was transferred further down the State to Auburn prison, where he arrived a marked man. In his case, day and night, the vigilance of keepers never relaxed. Every move he made was effected under the strictest surveillance.

Prison breaker, was he? Well, let him get away under these new conditions!

The one thing they could not do was rid his imagination of the girl he loved; and with her as his incentive, he set himself anew to find a way back.

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CHAPTER IX

MARGARET LYONS had passed the stage of sheer resentment at the fact of her own existence and imperceptibly was adopting a philosophy wherein mere living becomes the sole law of life.

Mrs. Tommy Hoy had contributed much to this.

“Why,” queried that estimable lady, “hang on to a childish sense of morality so long as those around you seem to have made up their minds not to permit you to be childishly moral? After all, what is morality among men and women in the work-a-day world but the art of driving the best possible bargain with environment? Flowers for the ladies, bon-bons for the babies. You pays your money, you takes your choice.”

“That’s a nice, easy way,” said Margaret, “of kicking conscience into the discard and placing a premium on lawlessness.”

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“Just what do you mean by ‘lawlessness’?”

“I mean just that.”

“With one half the world trying to keep the eyes of the other half trained on heaven so that it will be easier to pick their pockets, an interpretation of the word ‘lawlessness’ is necessary,” said Mrs. Tommy Hoy. “A burglar and a bishop would never agree on that score. And Wall Street’s interpretation would be as different from that of Hell’s Kitchen as—well, as yours, let’s say, is from mine.

“To me, lawlessness, in a majority of cases, is merely an individual attempt on the part of men and women, socially sick, to level inequalities. My own case is typical. I didn’t start out in life to become a Chooser; but it didn’t take me long to learn that ‘a map of the world that doesn’t include Utopia, isn’t worth looking at’. So, I included Utopia in my topographical scheme of things—and behold!”

With a wave of her hand, she included the exquisitely furnished Eighth Street apartment.

“Where do all these lovely and stupid things come from?” she continued; and then, answering

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her own question, "From here, there and everywhere—"

"You mean it's all stolen stuff?"

"Every bit of it, my dear. Stolen from those who'd steal from me if they got the chance."

"You don't think much of your fellowman," said Margaret.

"What was it Mark Twain called them? 'This mangy human race'. I share that conception. For twenty years my course has carried me over the world, under the world and into the company of all kinds of men and women. I can look back over that road and in all sincerity say that in dealing with my fellowman I have encountered perhaps a dozen persons whom I should characterize as strictly honest—and of this number only four were women—"

"What do you suppose Cardinal This, Bishop That and the Right Reverend Fiddle, D.D., would say if they heard you talking that way?"

"They would not agree, certainly. Perhaps they'd be right. It may be that the world is crowded with forthright folk I've missed; but so far as my experience goes, the original figures will have to stand—and the territory covers

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every so-called civilized country of the globe, including—you guessed it—Scandinavia."

"Perhaps," laughed the erstwhile waitress at Buddy's Bear Cat Bar, "your standard is too exacting."

Mrs. Tommy Hoy shrugged.

"It isn't that," she said. "I don't kid myself the way most people do. When I want to get a good long look at Mrs. Tommy Hoy, I take a washcloth and rub off the mascara and the rouge. What is there unreasonable in asking others to follow the same procedure? Most people make a naive pretense of life. I crowd past nonessentials and insist on fact. To me, thievin's thievin', whether it's indulged in by the pink-and-plus-foured gentleman fresh from some phony stock deal, posing on the veranda of his Westchester country club; or by one of the 'You-Can't-Win' boys in a greasy gray cap, lurking in the shadows of a speakeasy on the edge of Broadway. Cheatin's cheatin', whether it hides away in a duplex apartment on Park Avenue or flaunts itself in a Tenth Avenue railroad flat without benefit of plumbing."

"I remember reading somewhere," said Margaret,

soberly, “that when you cannot find truth in the bottom of a well you might look for it in the heart of a thief. There’s a lot in that, I guess.”

“I’ll say this much for myself,” replied Mrs. Tommy Hoy, “that no honest man or woman—no man or woman of clean heart—ever got other than a square deal from me. My prey has always been the licentious well-to-do; and I’ve met those people in a twilight zone of their own choosing. My levies have never been exorbitant. In each instance I’ve staked twenty years of liberty against the cash they could well afford. And with my background of experience matched against their evil, I think their lessons in applied psychology are obtained at a ridiculously low fee.”

“And just what is your particular specialty?” inquired Margaret.

Mrs. Tommy Hoy laughed.

“My rôle is that of Becky Sharpshooter, modern equivalent of Thackeray’s interesting little friend, whose philosophy was summed up in the wistful belief that she might have been what the world calls a good woman if she’d been

possessed of five thousand a year. Remember? And her wise old chronicler adds: ‘Who knows but Rebecca was right in her speculations and that it was only a question of money and fortune that made the difference between her and an honest woman? If you take temptation into account, who is to say he is better than his neighbor?’ ”

“You haven’t told me yet,” said Margaret, “what form of villainy you practice.”

“I am a successful thief—a Chooser. I look around, choose what I want and take it. Big business and politics reduced to the lowest common denominator. I say I’m successful. On the other hand, Tommy, my husband, is not. As you know, he has just completed a bit in Dannemora. That fact makes him—what shall I say—a dub? To be a successful crook you mustn’t get caught. Tommy has served two terms. He might have been jammed once on a fluke; but when he served this last bit he forfeited all right to any claim to distinction. It’s with thieves as it is with others in this lopsided world. Seventy-five per cent are neither successful nor unsuccessful. The rest are

pretty evenly divided on both sides of The Great Fence of Mediocrity—”

“That’s a novel division,” said Margaret.

“Novel, because so few discern the obvious. The intelligent crook is intelligent by virtue of the fact that he never sees the inside of a prison except, perhaps, when he visits it as a member of a delegation of ‘prominent citizens’. The intelligent crook may stand high—usually does—in the social, business, political, ecclesiastical world. His role is that of an honored and useful member of society. Look for him everywhere, anywhere, except the one place he belongs—in the can.”

“You’d have found me there,” said Margaret, “if you had looked in the last three years. So far as the world goes, I am a convicted prostitute; and I give you my word of honor that Arnold Chadwick is the only man I’ve ever known. I am not married to him. I was going to be when this trouble came about. But what difference does it make? Could I love him any more than I do—could he love me any more than he does if some clergyman or justice of the peace had stood up and mumbled a lot of balderdash in our faces?

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Would that have made our love any more sacred? Just because he was foolish and weak—as you put it, unsuccessful—they won’t look on our love as something beautiful. All they’ve done is try to kill and crush it.”

“Don’t you see why, Margaret? Could you or I or Tommy or Arnold Chadwick or any man or woman in prison today be guilty of as heartless a crime as organized society has perpetrated against you? The fact that it hasn’t made you bitter—that even now you are reluctantly adopting the viewpoint of the Choosers, speaks volumes for your tolerance. Tolerance, even of ‘virtue’, is what I call a real thing. They’ve made it difficult for you to revolt now. At your least deviation from their stupid code, they will wave your ‘record’ and cry for your imprisonment. Don’t you see what a rotten show it is?”

“It’s a rotten show for some of us.”

“The remedy is in your hands. Stop being a fool. Step out and give them a taste of their own methods. They dragged you into the gutter, kicked you, spat upon you. Because you had the courage to turn and face them with the declaration that you loved an outcast. All right. Now

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you show them what happens when they do that to a girl of intelligence. Declare war on them. Hit their pocketbooks—their treasure chests—that’s where their hearts lie. Mix your larceny with brains. I’ll show you how it’s done.”

Margaret sat silent with bowed head. Mrs. Tommy Hoy looked at her narrowly.

“And, Margaret, my dear,” she said, in a level tone, “you’re sure you’ll always stick to Chadwick? That you’ll always go on—waiting for him?”

There was a note of anxious hope in the query.

“Always and ever,” replied the girl.

“Of course,” said Mrs. Tommy Hoy, lighting a cigarette, and thoughtfully extinguishing the match with a slow-blown column of smoke. “Probably,” she continued, “that’s the thing to do. In the meantime,” she continued, in a crisper tone, and smiling brightly at the girl, “we’ll cash in on our good looks, our education, our magnetism. We won’t fool around with waitress jobs and things of that soil. I’m going to show you how to make money, little girl. And once you have money, you will be astonished at the number of things it will save you from.”

CHAPTER X

BACK in her home town in Iowa, Frances La Pine had been dubbed “Fussy” and, as such, was known along every weary mile of the long trail that winds from the Tanks into Gotham. Somewhere between the Harlem River and Forty-Second Street and Broadway, the moniker became obliterated. To the burlesque wheel, she was known as “Petite” La Pine; and when, having amassed a very small heap of “strange achieved gold,” and after many years of intermittent massage, it dawned upon the lady that it was the will of heaven she should be fat, she bowed to what-cannot-be-helped. Thereafter, she look to marcelling her silken locks into a frivolous pyramid of spun-henna and around the corner from New York’s Rue de la Paix, presided over the destinies of a specialty shop under the name of Madame Francine.

From matins to the vesper hour—and sometimes

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well into the night—eyelashes dripping mascara, fingernails resplendent with the rosiest of nail polish, Madame Francine might be found on duty holding place as center of a strange coterie, with the easy nonchalance of a woman who, so often having come to grips with Circumstance, could not easily be dislodged from accustomed savoir faire.

Sophistication earmarked the avid-eyed, well-groomed men—the avaricious, husky, elaborately frocked women—who foregathered at Madame Francine’s.

Larry Jacobs, the lawyer; Dave Tennyson, Ken Andrews, “Donkey” Hicks, “Doc” Pollard —grifters all; and Polly, Daisy, Violet, May and Rosalie—Out-of-Town-Girls-About-Town— a motley crew united in compact confraternity by the common belief that the chief end of man is to be solvent.

Over this aggregation, holding it in place, dominating its activities, lending to it character and force, reigned the sweet-visaged little lady with the fascinating drawl—Mrs. Tommy Hoy.

The specialty shop with Madame Francine as its visible head “was Mrs. Tommy Hoy’s idea.

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Every unlovely machination hatched there, all devious procedure outlined there depended for its achievement upon Mrs. Hoy's subtle cerebration. Daily she received details of pending "leads" from the carmine lips of Madame Francine. It was in the course of one of these visits that Madame Francine made the acquaintance of Margaret Lyons.

"This is the 'enfant' I was telling you about," said Mrs. Tommy Hoy.

Madame Francine's smile had all the dazzle and warmth of a ray of left-over January sunshine.

"My dear," she said, pecking at Margaret's cheek, "it's providential that you should have met Mrs. Tommy Hoy—positively providential."

"For a woman," said Mrs. Hoy, "whose disbelief in God dates from the time she got her first good look at her father, 'providential' is good."

"She knows what I mean, don't you, dear?"

Again, Madame Francine turned upon Margaret the sunlight of her smile.

"She'll report at the shop tomorrow afternoon,

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somewhere around the cocktail hour," said Mrs. Tommy Hoy. "Be sure to have everyone on hand. She is one of us from now on. I want her carefully trained. Margaret has a good head despite the fact that she let her heart run away with her too early in life. That's all right, too. It means she won't lose it again when she steps out on the Trail."

When Madame Francine had departed, Mrs. Tommy Hoy said to Margaret:

"It may be I won't see you more than once a week in the next month. Remember, your mission henceforth is to cash in on the excesses of wealthy fools. In time you will come to have a hearty contempt for these people. Never show it. When you're tempted to flash disdain, remember that if it were not for fools in this world, you and I and the rest of us wouldn't find life as easy as we do.

"Never be too eager to get your hands on money—that is, don't make your eagerness apparent. Sit back and let the money come to you. Remember, money doesn't interest you. Foster that idea in the mind of the person you're dealing

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with. Keep that faraway, dreamy look in your eyes—"

“I’m afraid, as I told you, the trouble’s going to be that when it comes to a show-down with some man, I’ll have to renege. The one thing I simply won’t do is give myself up—”

“Don’t be a fool, Margaret. Nobody expects you to ‘give yourself up’ as you call it. Isn’t that what I’ve been trying to make clear to you? Our method is to get without giving. Naturally, there will be times when you will have to lead your men along—but only to a certain point.

“Most of the men you’ll come into contact with will be married. Men looking for what they call ‘diversion.’ There’ll be occasions when you’ll have to throw away the notes and play by ear; but that won’t happen in the beginning. Your job, when you deal with a man like that, will be to make yourself so interesting he won’t have time to think that possibly he may be compromising himself. Whenever possible, get his name on the bottom of a letter. A married man’s autograph on a nice, warm, cozy little note is just as good as his name on a check. It’s better, because a check is limited; and with a tricky lawyer

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behind you, such as our friend, Larry Jacobs— well, my dear—

“And the most important thing of all. Forget all the rest of it, if you want to, but remember this: Give your ears a thousand labors where your tongue has one. When you are not talking, you are not telling on yourself and usually are listening to the other person who is. You know what makes the tired business man tired? Talking about himself. Very well. When he gets tired, that’s when you collect.”

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After a month of enthusiastic absorption at Madame Francine’s, Margaret was deemed qualified to try her wings. Her wardrobe had been gloriously replenished and she had been accorded sole occupancy of a sunny little studio apartment in an exclusive section of town. Mrs. Tommy Hoy attended to these details.

“There’s nothing to thank me for,” she had said, when the girl sought to voice her appreciation. “It’s all part of your equipment. One good

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‘clip’ will cover these little outlays a hundred-fold.”

Her “trial heat,” as the Mob called it, was run with Ernest Wilgus, a chubby little Wall Street man in a gray sack suit and a polka dot necktie. After fifteen years of frightened continence, he had decided to step out and “take the temperature of adventure with a cautious finger.” Doc Pollard, posing as a fellow broker, had effected the meeting.

Ernie Wilgus was obsessed with the idea that he had a pleasing personality—a delusion based on something his mother had once said to him as a child.

He took Margaret to dinner several times, introducing her to a number of his friends with an urbanity quite in contrast to the diffident and apologetic manner in which, when occasion demanded, he presented his dowdy wife.

One evening he ’phoned to his wife from Margaret’s apartment, suggesting that she eat dinner without him.

“Henry sent a wire from ’Frisco asking me to see a Chinaman over at th’ Penn, on a matter of

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business. I won’t be late—and winking at Margaret, “I’ll cut it short as I can.”

After which he ’phoned to an agency, paying fifteen dollars for a pair of seats for a show he heard was a “humdinger.”

After the theatre, they stopped for a salad at an exclusive hostelry where it cost the broker a five-dollar tip to have the head waiter spoil the French dressing.

Sitting stiffly back in his chair, surveying his smartly gowned companion with a pathetic simulation of camaraderie, he felt that, beyond peradventure, he had established his status as a gay dog. It might have perturbed him to know that all he had succeeded in establishing was an intangible bond between his companion and the head waiter whose disdain for each other was mitigated, to a degree, by the realization that Fate had thrown the same bankroll between them.

Later in the evening, under the hazy glory of some bad liquor, Wilgus recounted the details of a pending stock deal from the proceeds of which Margaret was to have five thousand dollars.

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The potency of this golden futurity, however, proved inadequate and he was dismissed and sent home to his wife, unsatisfied and miserable.

The following day, when he failed to communicate, Margaret penned a brief note in which money was casually mentioned in connection with the fact that Wednesday was the first of the month—and rent day.

Wilgus 'phoned, made a dinner date for Wednesday, and later dispatched a note canceling the appointment. He was leaving town that night, but with Margaret in mind, had given instructions for the sale of some stock.

Not hearing from him for a week thereafter and ascertaining that he had not been out of town, Margaret wrote, demanding the money. He ignored the communication, at which juncture Margaret appeared at Madame Francine's late one afternoon, where she held lengthy converse with the adroit Larry Jacobs.

"The trouble is," said Margaret, "I have no legal claim."

"If your claim were legal," said Jacobs, "we'd probably never collect. The easiest dough to collect is dough you're not legally entitled to."

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That's merely transposing the dictum of a certain brilliant ex-convict who said that society does not prohibit theft but merely regulates it. You advanced Mr. Wilgus five thousand dollars in cash one afternoon on his promise to return it the same evening. You didn't have the money and Madame Francine, who always carries large amounts of cash on hand, advanced it. You explained to her fully why you wanted the money. Wilgus admits the obligation, in his note. He said the debt would be discharged. You have written and 'phoned him in vain. Obviously, he is trying to 'welch.' That's your story. It's old, but it's good. We'll collect without any trouble, especially when I read him that letter over the 'phone and ask him how he'd like to her it in court."

Larry Jacobs was eminently correct. Mr. Wilgus settled in full.

"Not much, Margaret," Madame Francine remarked, "but enough to convince you that sucker-dough never gives out. The late lamented Phineas T. Barnum knew that. When he died back in 1891, he left a little over one million, three hundred thousand dollars—a lot of money, even in these days."

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CHAPTER XI

DOC” POLLARD felt it incumbent upon him to institute a personal investigation to test the validity of the story that had gained circulation concerning Margaret’s inviolability.

Pollard exerted a mastery over women—most women—that cannot be acquired but must be conferred at birth by the Sun Goddess on the bridge of heaven. To disturb emotionally and while disturbing, soothe, is not within the trajectory of every man’s powers.

He had dined at Margaret’s apartment. Outside a storm was raging. The rain pelted viciously against the curtained windows and the wind made mournful music—just the sort of night to sit by the fireplace with the after dinner coffee and smoke and talk.

Doc Pollard had been outlining to the girl the details of a projected “clip” involving old David Kempter, millionaire silk man, whose

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daughter, Mildred, an only child, was engaged to marry Duke Hall.

Duke being a harebrained lad with wild and weird sex leanings, it had occurred to the agile-minded Mrs. Tommy Hoy that, in exchange for ocular demonstration of certain strange proclivities on the part of his son-in-law elect, old Kempter might donate ample sheaves of high powered legal tender.

It was Margaret’s first important “clip,” and Pollard, selected to evolve ways and means, was improving the occasion by inaugurating a temperamental closeup of his hostess. He had certain doubts to resolve.

“Sort of rotten thing to do, don’t you think,” said Margaret, “breaking up a girl’s happiness like that?”

“How long do you suppose her happiness would endure if she were married to Duke, with that perverted mind of his?”

“Who knows, she might go on loving him— it’s been done.”

“So they tell me,” said Pollard sententiously.

“You don’t believe it?”

“I could understand it in a woman—well, a

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woman like Madame Francine, for example. If she were capable of loving a man sufficiently, I imagine, with her knowledge of life she might, by some twist of the feminine brain overlook perversion in her husband. But not your baby-lamb like old Kempter's daughter. However, your talking about this being a 'rotten thing to do to the kid'—"

Pollard paused as if in doubt how to proceed.

"Tell me," he said finally, "if it's clearly enough defined in your own mind, just what place you give conscience in our scheme of things—yours and mine and the rest of the crowd?"

"Don't you ever feel sorry for some of the people you 'clip'? I never felt more sorry in my life for anyone than I do for that fool Wilgus. When I think over my part in that little affair—"

"Can't sleep o' nights?"

"It isn't as bad as that. It's—oh, I don't know—like stealing money from a blind beggar."

"That's nothing to feel gloomy about. Adopt the Wall Street slant. Steal money from a blind

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beggar and make a virtue of the fact that you didn't steal his tin cup along with the money."

Margaret made no answer. Pollard, too, fell silent, staring into the fire.

"I entertain doubts," he said finally, speaking very slowly, and in a dispirited tone, "very, very grave doubts as to your fitness for this game. You may make a success of it, after a fashion; but you lack—what shall I call it—the temperament that must be part of the equipment of every successful Chooser."

"Definitely, what is it I lack? Maybe I can set about supplying the deficiency?"

"With just as much chance as 'battering down the Rocky Mountains with a rabbit's heart beat'. I can tell you offhand two qualities you lack—resentment and viciousness. Mrs. Tommy Hoy, the Madame, my old side-kick, Ken Andrews, Larry Jacobs,—yes. But you"—he shook his head—"you have as much license riding herd with this outfit as I'd have heading a college of cardinals."

"You're wrong, Doc."

"Not unless human nature has changed overnight But I'm not running the show, Margaret;

so we'll proceed with plans for ribbing up old man Kempter.

"We'll use this apartment and May Worthing. She has past acquaintance with Duke Hall's peculiarities, so that end of it's all right. You won't mind giving up your apartment for one afternoon? I'll pose as Clyde MacDonald, lawyer about town, get in touch with Kempter, and if he proves recalcitrant, I'll see his wife. I don't think I'll have any difficulty with him. It's his daughter's future happiness that's at stake. My one doubt, as far as he's concerned—this is my story to him—is whether I can persuade you to doublecross a lucrative 'client' like young Duke Hall.

"After a fictitious talk with you, I'll go back to the old man and report failure. Tell him you're mercenary and obdurate—like the banker with the glass eye. Naturally, that'll get him all excited. What's he to do? I shrug. Something must be done, he urges. After all, I say, that's up to him. My duty was accomplished when I warned him. By that time, he's frantic. 'Mr. MacDonald,' he pleads, his eyes brimming, his lower lip quivering, 'she's my little girl—an only

child. She and her mother are all I have to live for.' "

He paused.

"Go ahead," said Margaret Lyons in a level tone.

"Well, I insist that I can't do anything with you. I suggest that he try. I coach him in his approach, arrange a luncheon date, introduce you, and having set the stage, make my exit. From there on the play is yours. Let him do the talking. He will. Naturally, you'll refuse to doublecross young Duke Hall. You tell him Duke's been very nice to you and any number of his friends are 'clients' of yours. Explain that if the fact became known that you'd given Duke the run-around, you'd lose a good deal of business.

"He'll say to you: 'You're not going to let my daughter's happiness go on the rocks?' And to yourself you say, 'Not a chance in the world, sweetie, if you come across with the bankroll.' Let him bring up the question of money. He'll tell you that money means nothing to him—that he'd spend his entire fortune to safeguard his little girl's happiness. He'll lean across the

table—I know the old buzzard—take your hand and tell you how noble it is of you to do what you’re going to do, that is, take him and his lawyer to your apartment and give him ocular proof of Duke Hall’s depravity.

“He realizes, he’ll tell you, that you’re doing it to save his baby. That she never goes to bed at night without saying her prayers. Never goes out without her mother. Just an innocent, unsophisticated, sweet kid. But, Margaret—” and Doc Pollard waved an admonitory forefinger, “remember this—”

The telephone bell startled them. Margaret crossed the room and picked up the receiver. Mrs. Tommy Hoy was on the other end of the wire. Was Margaret alone? No. Doc Pollard was with her. Mrs. Tommy Hoy said good, she was glad of that.

“Tell him to wait till I get there,” she continued, “and on no account, Margaret, are you to leave the house. I’ll be over just as quickly as a taxi will make it—ten or fifteen minutes.”

“Is there anything wrong?”

“Do what I tell you,” said Mrs. Tommy Hoy, and rang off.

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Doc Pollard listened quietly to Margaret’s rehearsal of the phone talk. He lighted a cigarette and paced thoughtfully about the room.

“What’s happened, do you suppose?” said Margaret. “I can’t tell you why, to save my life; but I’ve got the queerest, most apprehensive feeling here—”

“That’s your solar plexus,” grinned Doc, “another bit of excess baggage you’ll have to jettison. It’s a damned nuisance. If you don’t want to go to the trouble of getting rid of it entirely, you might install a switch, on the direct wire that runs from the imagination direct to the solar plexus, so that little, unexpected turns in life won’t give you stomach ache. Mighty interrupting, a stomach ache, sometimes.”

But Margaret was in no mood to banter.

“I do wish she hadn’t been so mysterious.”

“She’ll be here any minute now,” said Pollard, “and when she arrives you’ll find you got all fussed up for nothing.”

“But why did she tell me not to step out of the house?”

“You’ll find that Mrs. Tommy Hoy had a good reason.”

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“You’re not much of a comfort.”

“I’m not trying to be. Who was it said: ‘I’m an old man. I’ve known many troubles; and most of them never happened.’ ”

“First time I ever heard it.”

“And the other one: ‘How much trouble the evils that never happened, have caused us.’ ”

“What time is it?”

“Twelve-thirty.”

“You wait here,” she said. “I’m going to the kitchen and make some coffee.”

Ten minutes later Margaret rushed from the kitchen at the sound of a bell. Mrs. Tommy Hoy carefully closed the door, and taking Margaret by the hand, led her into the living room. Addressing Pollard, she said:

“Go down to the house. I told the taxi man to wait. You’ll find Tommy there. He’s expecting you. You’ll know what to do after you’ve talked with him.” Then, turning to Margaret: “Chadwick’s broken Auburn—”

Margaret’s face went ashen.

“You mean, he broke out of prison—that he got away?”

“I’m afraid so, my dear.”

CHAPTER XII

ARNOLD CHADWICK, fragment of human driftwood in the slimy backwash dashed against the blank walls of prison, nursed a grievance to which no one would lend ear. Strange that a resentment so vital lacked all power of arresting attention.

Looking back, he wondered why the judge who, fifteen years prior, had started him on his career with a commitment in the House of Refuge, had not seen what the trouble was. The judge didn't know. He didn't care. Why was he on the bench, then? Blundering in the case of a lad whose entire future hung in the balance of the scales of justice.

Chadwick had traveled a hard road, those fifteen years; and here he stood with nearly twice that distance to go—twenty-five more years in which the indifference of mankind would

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match the indifference of the stone walls that encased him.

Why wasn't there someone to whom he could explain, that love, coming into his life, had proved a greater deterrent than fear?

No one harkened. No one cared. The first flush of rehabilitation faded almost as it appeared. The victim of monotony, confined in unhealthful surroundings, without the alleviation of amusement or recreation, became morbid and unbalanced—a sullen, vengeful being, writhing in the suffocation of a single idea.

He knew that winter passing, spring would ensue. Then summer. And winter again meant another “stitch” completed. After that, four more seasons—then another four. Year following year in dreary persistence—thirteen, fourteen, fifteen gone. And fourteen more to go. Up at the same hour every morning. Along the same corridors. Down to the same meals. Out to the same workshop. The same companions. The same “screws,” the same stones and walls and bars.

And the bars smelled.

With all his prison experience, funny he never knew till this last “stitch” that prison bars have

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a smell as repulsive as that of the grave. And everywhere he turned there were barred windows, and beyond them, low, ugly prison buildings; and beyond them, the high walls and watch turrets Sixteen, seventeen, eighteen and eleven more to go.

.... Toiling across the years, leaving no footprints

There was an interesting yard in which the prisoners exercised. The fence that enclosed it had four huge gates. And the gates were of chilled steel bars. Beyond the fence, a street's width, lay an enclosure, on the far side of which loomed the prison wall proper.

No gate in the inner wall ever swung open, unless the gate in the outer wall were locked. And before the outer gate ponderously and reluctantly gave way, every inner gate first must be locked.

Chadwick's whole existence became centered on those ponderous gates—an idea had taken shape.

One afternoon, four months after his entry into Auburn, he left his bench in the workshop, a hammer secreted in the sleeve of his prison

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uniform. The underground had been working. Through friends of Tommy Hoy, he had got word concerning Margaret.

All that remained was to negotiate those two sets of gates.

Signalling the armed guard beyond the inner wall, he held aloft a bundle of grease-stained workshop clothes for the laundry. As the guard opened the gate to receive the bundle, Chadwick fumbled it and dropped it to the ground. As the guard stooped to retrieve it, Chadwick felled him with a blow of the hammer, snatched his keys, and raced for the gate in the outer wall. There, fortune favored his random choice of a key. The tumblers responded. The gate came open. By the time several guards had reached the outer gate Chadwick was nowhere in sight.

Hours later, when darkness descended, the hunted man took refuge in a hay bam several miles from the prison. It was a cold night, windy and threatening. He lay huddled in a comer, every sense and instinct alert. No use planning. They hadn't hit his trail as yet. They might not search, until too late, in the direction he had

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taken. And if they didn't—no plans yet a while. Lay low till daylight and then—

What was that? The wind? It sounded like the haying of bloodhounds. It must have been the wind. No, there it was again—nearer, this time, and coming closer still.....

When the hunters crashed the barn, ten minutes later, Chadwick met them with the same docile smile and limp attitude of frustration at which the detectives had marveled when they came upon him and Margaret Lyons in the little flat in the Bronx, four years before.

A man with one talent that required a barrier of steel and stone to call into play.

“What’s the big idea, Chadwick?” asked the warden.

Would he try to tell him the “big idea”? Would this man listen? Would he understand? After a long look into the prison official’s eyes, Chadwick decided against a presentation of his case. All he said was:

“I wouldn’t keep takin’ it on the lam if you’d let her visit me—let her write to me—let me write to her.”

“You’ll stay here ‘if I do so and so’—you’ll

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make an infernal nuisance of yourself ‘unless I do something else’. Now get this straight, Chadwick. I’m boss in this place and you’re not going to make a sap out o’ me. I’m going to hold you here if it’s the last thing I do. You figure a way out o’ here after tonight and you’ll have Houdini’s laurels lookin’ like a hunch of wilted wayside violets. I’m goin’ to have you up on trial for assaulting poor old Murphy, the guard. And with a few more years added to your stretch we’ll stick you in one of the cells in the old death house. The first man to get out o’ there hasn’t been born yet.”

A man in prison can have a very bad time of it, if he so elects. And Chadwick had so elected.

He was tried for assault on the keeper. Found guilty. An additional nine years added to his sentence.

“ two, three, four—an’ thirty-four t’ go ”

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CHAPTER XIII

THE day following the Kempter “clip,” Doc Pollard and Mrs. Tommy Hoy were lunching at the Eighth Street Studio.

“Ten thousand dollars less than we should have in the treasury—”

“That’s what happens when Mrs. Tommy Hoy goes out of her way to be kind to somebody— forgetting that she’s not the only one in the Mob.”

“I wonder if I really have made a mistake,” murmured the lady meditatively. “She has imagination, intelligence—”

“And knows as much about human nature as I do about the hieroglyphics on a Babylonian brick.”

“In this game, a very negative failing in a very positive place.”

“If she couldn’t swing a little thing like the Kempter ‘clip,’ what good is she to us? I blueprinted it for her. The old man and his lawyer

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went up to the flat, got a bird’s-eye view of Duke and May Worthing and, next day as you know, the engagement was broken. Kempter took Margaret to lunch and handed her five hundred dollars. Said he knew it wasn’t much of a material return for what she’d done; but his money was pretty well tied up in the market and, after all, it was like finding the dough. Duke would never know what had happened or that she had anything to do with the matter.”

“To which Margaret replied?”

“Just what you’d have expected her to say: ‘You told me you’d sacrifice your entire fortune to safeguard your daughter’s happiness. The flowers alone, at her wedding, would have cost you five thousand dollars—and that amount to me, at this moment, would be a great deal of money.’ And as an after thought, she added: ‘Duke Hall would have paid me twice that amount not to have tipped you off.’ Kempter told her, all things considered, he thought five hundred dollars was a fair figure, whereupon Miss Margaret up an’ said that if he was as hard pressed as all that, perhaps he’d better keep the

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five hundred—that she’d only squander it on a headache.

"I got in touch with Larry Jacobs next day and had him start suit against the old man for twenty-five thousand dollars, for services rendered, but," added Doc Pollard disconsolately, "I understand Kempter has some sort of drag in the District Attorney's office, which means that the suit will be discontinued."

"Well," said Mrs. Tommy Hoy, beating a light tattoo on the edge of the table in nervous annoyance, "I suppose that's that. What do you suggest?"

"The only thing I can see to do, Mrs. Tommy, is to advise Pollyanna to choose the nearest exit and run, not walk."

"I'm sorry. I had hoped she'd fit in. If we let her out now, what do you suppose she'll do?"

Pollard shrugged.

"In this world of nit-wits, lice and fly cops, your guess is as good as mine. What happened once can happen again."

"No," said Mrs. Tommy Hoy decisively, "it mustn't happen again. If there were only some

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way that we could get her mind off that damn fool up there—"

"He's probably done the trick himself. With that last nine-year bit added to the twenty-nine he was serving and not much chance of commutation, with that record of his, Margaret'll be nearly sixty years old when he comes out. Of course, he'll never live to serve it. You watch what I tell you. They'll shoot it out with that baby, up there, one of these days. I know the type—you know it—he's a second 'Whitey' Quinn—all of Jesse James's guts tacked on to the mental equipment of Simple Simon. What are you goin't' do with a bird like that? You'd think he'd take a header over the rail of the top tier up there, wouldn't you? It's a good forty-foot drop with a concrete floor. That's what I'd do in his shoes. That would be giving the girl a chance."

"The trouble with her, as I see it, Doc, is, she hasn't enough resentment in her cosmos. She has too much balance to make a successful crook."

"Yeah," said Pollard, nodding judiciously.

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"You've gotta have something wrong with the old think tank."

"Not the slightest doubt in the world about it, Doc. You have to be just crazy enough to realize it—which, I suppose, is the nearest approach to

sanity anyone ever attains.”

“Well, what’s the verdict? Does Miss Margaret get the air?”

“What chance is there of Chadwick making another break?”

“Not one in a million. They’ve put him in one of those cells in what used to be the death house in Auburn. So many holes cut into solid rock. Each of them has two steel-barred doors, front and back. One that you enter and leave by and the other leading into a six-by-nine yard, surrounded on all sides by high stone walls. Nine feet overhead in each of these little yards there’s a steel grilled roof, bars an inch thick. A United States Treasury vault is a pasteboard box compared to that layout.”

“Sounds good to me,” mused Mrs. Tommy Hoy. “Go on, tell me more. Tell me lots more. Make it as complicated as you can.”

“There isn’t so much more to tell. Twenty-four

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cells, back to back, set in the middle of a rectangle of solid masonry. Guards patrol the aisles night and day. And in order to avoid unpleasant contingencies the occupants of the cell block change cells once a week. The man in cell number three is moved, at the end of seven days, into number five, then into number seven, and so on, till he’s spent a week in each of the other twenty-three cells—nearly six months before he gets back again to number three where he started.”

Pollard lighted a cigarette, crossed the room, and stood staring moodily into the street.

“Is that all?” queried Mrs. Tommy Hoy.

“Isn’t that enough?”

“Quite enough, Doc. Thank you so much. I’ll give you a ring later this evening.”

On his way towards the door she halted him. He turned without retracing his steps.

“I was wondering—” She paused and added, “Were you ever in love, Doc?”

“I’ve often wondered about that myself,” he replied easily. “Why?”

But she made no answer.

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CHAPTER XIV

SILENCE.

Steel bars. A blank wall.

The blue-clad figure of a guard slipping past the cell door.

Silence.

Morning burning into mid-day. Afternoon fading into twilight.

Night.

Today as was yesterday. Tomorrow as was today. Life bereft of all action, all urge. Seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years. Sunup, sundown. Spring, summer, fall, winter. And twice four are eight; and three times four are twelve; and four times four are sixteen. ...Who are you? You're me Five times four are twenty

The blue-clad figure of a guard slipping past the cell door.

Silence.

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What was that noise? Sounded like a faint tapping. He wasn't beginning to "hear things," was he?

.... Five times four are twenty; and six times four are twenty-four

There was that noise again!

He started to his feet. It might be the man in the next cell—Number Eight. Chadwick listened.

That's what it was. The ancient "wall tapping" code that every old-timer knows.

The man in number eight was to be transferred to Dannemora, so the faint staccato ran. When Chadwick, by the process of rotation, reached number eight, he was to pry loose the sash frame of the cell window near the ceiling of the yard wall, there to find the blade of a small saw.

Four days elapsed before the man was transferred; and nearly two months dragged by before Chadwick heard the steel-barred door of cell number eight clang behind him.

His heart was pounding painfully. He slumped on the edge of his cot. A guard came by and after a perfunctory glance into the cell, passed on. An instant later Chadwick had leaped

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to the cot and was feverishly fumbling with the sash frame of the cell window. Working the narrow wooden slat loose, he cautiously felt along the stone ledge until his fingers encountered a narrow, detached strip of serrated steel.

He had barely time to replace the blade and readjust the sash frame before the guard returned. For some reason he had retraced his steps and stood peering into Chadwick's cell. What he observed was a man sitting on the edge of his cot, head in his hands, shoulders drooping. Sick with despair.

Chadwick waited many hours. It would not do to commence work immediately. A man in a new cell earned a temporary measure of increased vigilance on the part of the "screws." It was not till late that afternoon that the tiny saw was retrieved and operations begun.

Standing on the cot, he thrust his right arm through the bars of the cell window and reaching out as far as he could, laid the teeth of the saw against one of the steel bars of the grilled roof of the yard.

With a quickening of his heart, he caught the

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faint rasping melody of metal biting into metal. Hardly an incision—merely a scratch.

His arm was stretched to the straining point and his hold on the saw cramped and precarious.

The blade was so hopelessly narrow!

Once the saw came down across the steel bar, attention must be focused upon the delicate job of sending the blade back upward in the identical hair line channel. Energy must be conserved. No margin there for waste motion. Work of that kind calls for concentration, but attention must be exquisitely apportioned between the barred grill of the yard roof and the corridor beyond the cell—for, along that corridor, at intervals, without cessation, passed the screw.

His long prison experience had invested him with quickness of mental readjustment. In an astonishingly brief span, he had correlated his activities to a program of complete effectiveness.

The screw pausing at the cell door, would study the outline of the inert man, lying face down on the cot, and then pass on. As he passed, velvet-footed, lithe as a panther, Chadwick would spring to his task.

Silence

The scratch of the saw, faint as the gnawing of a mouse in the wainscoting.

Silence

Crumbling the barriers between him and freedom—a few, almost imperceptible, flakes of steel at a time. Every thrust of the saw, a further disintegration of the sector of steel bar. Every tiny, glistening grain of steel dust just that much lessened distance between himself and the girl who told him she would wait.

.... whatever he is—whatever he has done— I love him. . . .

The week ended.

Strange how fleet were those few days—what a narrow margin between sunup and dusk.

Back into its sheath in the window frame went the saw and Chadwick to a distant cell in the block.

Consumed with impatience to return to cell number eight, he accepted the long interval with the philosophy of his kind. What were a few weeks' interruption to a man facing practically a lifetime in prison?

Hour after hour in enforced inactivity, he lay on his cot timing the appearance of the

screws, learning to attune his ears to their distant approach, calculating, with an imaginary saw blade, the maximum number of strokes he could crowd into each interval between the guard's appearance.

When at last the monotonous rotation carried him again to his center of operation, he resumed the self-appointed task with an insistence merciless as flood tide.

Convinced that the particular steel bar on which he had been working was sawed nearly through at one end, he started labor afresh on that same bar, fourteen inches nearer his cell window.

By the time both ends of two bars in the roof grill had been all but cleft, and it was time to start on the two end bars in his cell window, impatience gripped his soul. Not the routine and maddening interruption. That he accepted with strange placidity. What obsessed him was a dread that the life of the saw might not match in duration his certainty of purpose.

The grinning divinities in a man's godhouse were cruel jesters. They prompted desire and then, with blighting suddenness, fulfillment an

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arm's length away, withdrew the lure an inch beyond ultimate reach.

He stopped once to stare wistfully at the tiny blade.

.... God! If the guy that made that saw had only known! . . .

By overtaxing the implement he might have avoided squandering weary weeks of waiting in the process of rotation before making the big break. Some years ago he would have elected precipitation. He had learned a semblance of prudence. Obedient to procedure, he made the round of the other cells, got back to number eight and two nights later, the instant the guard had passed by the cell door, Chadwick leaped to his cot and was twisting at the end bar in the window. Severed top and bottom, held in place by the tiniest of steel strands, it came away in his hand. After that, it was a matter of instants to wrench the second bar out. Every second counted now.

Stretching a long arm through the gaping cell window, he snapped the bars he had loosened in the yard grill and with the agility of a contortionist,

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wiggled from his cell through both apertures.

Scuttling across the roof of the death house, he made for a brick wall at the far end, ascended a drain pipe, reached the top of the wall and jumped, landing in a heap in the soft mud in the lumberyard.

As he thudded to earth, he could hear, back in the cell-house, the shouts of the guards. His escape had been discovered.

Experience, years prior in the yard of the Tombs at night, stood him in good stead. Planks of all description lay in profusion about him. Grabbing the first he stumbled across in the darkness. He staggered with it towards the outer wall of the prison, set the plank in place, and in a flash had mounted the wall, dropped to the roadway, struggled to his feet—was off blindly and at top speed.

The wail of the prison siren arousing the countryside. Unmindful of his prison garb, of the fact that he had no money, no food, was unacquainted with the terrain, he clung to a single idea. He must keep going as fast as he could.

They got him the following day.

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Stealing from a box car in which he had taken refuge, he started in quest of something to eat. One of the guards spied him. As under similar bygone circumstances, he shrugged, smiled and surrendered without a struggle.

He was borne down, gyved, and ignominiously carted back.

The big gates in the prison wall opened and slammed shut again.

Several days later they returned him to Dannemora.

CHAPTER XV

DESPITE Margaret's apparent ineptitude as a Chooser, Mrs. Tommy Hoy refused to become discouraged. Hope, she said, must not be expected to bloom in the soil of certainty. Following her fiasco in the Kemp ter "clip," Margaret had been relieved of all active participation in the execution of numerous machinations hatched in the sheltering shade of Madame Francine's.

It was deemed best to permit her to play around on the fringe of things. Practical appreciation of the spirit of the Game might become hers by absorption.

She had harkened to every meticulously outlined detail of the great Hemway "clip" effected by the united efforts of May Worthing, Doc Pollard and Larry Jacobs. The gross return on that foray had amounted to a hundred thousand dollars.

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"But what I don't understand," said Margaret, "is why a woman like Mrs. Hemway does not fight."

Mrs. Tommy Hoy undertook the task of elucidation. Judicially she spoke.

"What is it they say—not enough guts to stand the gaff? Guilty conscience. Faulty early training. Defective heredity and an environment that vitiates initiative—you see, my dear girl, it's a combination of causes. All these very rich people are alike. When you stop to think of how important public opinion is in their lives, you'd imagine that in their occasional lapses they would exercise a little care. But they don't. Thus you an' I and other choice spirits are enabled to give free rein to an inherited love of judicious inactivity."

"Judicious inactivity," however, was really a verbal extravagance on Mrs. Tommy Hoy's part. Probably no congeries of persons in town, bracketed by identity of personal interest, labored more assiduously than that particular crew of freebooters.

It is true, the periods of rest were numerous between forays; but these invariably were of

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short duration. When no major operation was under advisement, the crew could usually be found nonchalantly skirting the sidelines of life, making sporadic and spiderlike incursions here and there, emerging with fragmentary booty which intrinsically justified the energy attending its acquisition.

Margaret observed all these manifestations with frank wonder. What prompted these people, she asked herself, to squander all that mental and nervous energy in labor of that nature, incurring the risk the outlaw invites? Any of them from Mrs. Tommy Hoy, down to the best dressed little “extra,” by applying natural talents in legitimate channels, might reap an equally satisfactory harvest with none of the detriments of chance they now faced?

It dawned upon the girl that probably as impelling a force as any in these people’s scheme of things was an inherent contempt of society’s hypocrisy for the one-day-a-week prune-selling Christian who, whether behind the counter of a little grocery store or in the ornate setting of a corporation president’s office, “weighs his

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thumb,” along with the prunes or the sugar or the stocks and bonds.

“Proposition the average ‘honest’ business man,” Doc Pollard had once remarked, “and there flashes into his eyes, unknown to him, a telltale glint of greed informing you at once that you can ‘do business’ with him.”

It was probably a sense of resentment against the venality of these people, at which the spirit of men and women like Doc Pollard and Mrs. Tommy Hoy rebelled. In them, strange as it seemed to Margaret, she had come to discern a certain rigidity of spirit that scorned to operate, as a majority of the world operates, according to the tenets of legalized theft.

The one-day-a-week prune-selling Christian refrained from cheating at cards in his club—yet in his business, marked cards were all he ever used. The ethics of the spider’s parlor.

What was that expression Mr. McKelvie had once used? “Shooting mackerel in a barrel.” That was it. The antithesis of good sportsmanship.

But though in these philosophic Teachings she apportioned the greater glory to the Choosers,

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Margaret found herself unable wholeheartedly to make use of her sophistry in translating the potential into the actual.

Why?

And there, her power of analysis failed.

She was possessed of one glorious, outstanding talent. It was discovered quite accidentally by Mrs. Tommy Hoy.

“Where in the world did you ever get that exquisite jacket?” she inquired. “Turn around, let me look at it.”

And then, after a distant inspection, embracing effect, and a close-up, covering method, “I never—why, Margaret, it’s superb!”

“I made it.”

“You made that?”

“Not only made it, but designed it.”

“Will you design me one? I mean, of course, on those general lines. That jacket was never made for anyone on this earth—could never be worn by anyone but Margaret Lyons. There’s a simplicity about that piece of work that I’m not going to hesitate to call genius.”

Thereafter, from time to time, certain alluring vestments of daintiness and charm appeared in

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the show windows of Madame Francine’s. The glad tidings spread through certain exclusive portions of town, and to Madame Francine’s trooped dowagers, sub-debs and a scattering of the ragtag and bobtail of moneydom.

Among the new clientele, attracted by Margaret’s handiwork, was little Miss Constance Marille, who arrived under escort of Colonel Fosdick Brackler. On their second visit to the shop, Doc Pollard chanced by with May Worthing, who, ostensibly seeking an ensemble, “ritzed” Madame Francine and Margaret shamefully. Pollard, taking his place on the sidelines with Colonel Brackler, fell into easy conversation with the banker.

Doc Pollard was six feet tall, a broad-shouldered, genial athlete. He knew men. He knew books. Best of all, he knew Doc Pollard.

He interested Colonel Brackler. A week following their initial meeting they lunched together. Pollard’s role was that of retired chemist with a craving to “shoot a little more golf, play a few more games of bridge and enjoy a sunset or two before cashing in.”

“A sane, healthy and forthright viewpoint,”

agreed the Colonel. "A year or two from now, I am looking forward to adopting just such a program."

"Why a year or two? How many noble plans have been shattered by waiting too long?"

"The wherewithal, my boy," laughed the Colonel. "You have no one to think of but yourself. I have a large and expensive family. When mother and the girls are bitten by the society bug, it keeps a man hustling."

Mother and the girls, thought Pollard, must have expensive predilections if the Colonel's six million dollars in liquid assets were inadequate. For Pollard had instituted a meticulous investigation of Colonel Brackler's tangible assets, and, at investigation of that character, Pollard was particularly effective.

A week later he reported to Mrs. Tommy Hoy that "the time had come."

"If nothing miscarries," said the lady, "we should drag down—"

"Half a million, at least," said Pollard. "Why not make a final big showing and quit? Frankly, I'm weary—"

"Getting old, Doc?"

"If age means waning enthusiasm, the answer is yes."

Mrs. Tommy Hoy sat looking at him narrowly before she resumed, and when she did, her tone implied that she had reached a conclusion after difficult analysis.

"I think we'd better use Margaret in this case," she said.

"Nothing doing," snapped Pollard, a note of finality in his voice. "Bring her in on this and declare me out."

She looked across at him and smiled. He refused to share the mood.

"I've a hunch against it. Every time I've played my hunch, I've come out with flying colors. My failures may be summed up by the number of times I've gone contrary to that sixth sense. Remember, Mrs. Tommy, I'm admitting you're good—an' I don't want you to think I'm impugning your judgment. I'm not basing my objection on reason. I'm talking hunches."

Mrs. Tommy Hoy thoughtfully tamped her cigarette.

"Yes," she said, "I suppose you're right. If

that's the way you're going to act, we'd probably better make a final thing of it and blow—"

"I don't know what's the matter," said Pollard disconsolately.

"Would you be very much perturbed if I told you that you were in love?"

"Or something I mistake for love?" He shrugged. "It's happened so often before there's no kick left in it. You'll say, perhaps, that my mentioning Margaret's name in this connection is tantamount to taking a plea. But that's very obvious sort of reasoning, Mrs. Tommy. If it were true and I wished to conceal the fact, Margaret is the last name I'd mention. What I'm doing is simply anticipating you."

"A very patent case, Doc. After all, why shouldn't you fall for her?"

"I'll tell you why not. In the first place, I couldn't love anyone, old or young, who is not sufficiently alive to resent, in dynamic and telling fashion, the sort of treatment Margaret's had. The mere fact that she takes it on the chin the way she does galls me beyond belief."

"Any more cogent reasons, Doc?"

"None, except that she's in love with that fool

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up State. You know—listen, Mrs. Tommy. Nature didn't crowd into my being the sort of stuff that saints are made of. I'm of the earth, earthy. There may be one commandment I haven't broken—I don't think there is; but I'm giving myself leeway. There aren't many things on earth I have reverence for; but I recognize decency and loyalty when I meet up with them—and that girl's love for that poor nit-wit—"

"He's been sent back to Dannemora, I understand?"

"Yep. Doing two years in 'solitary'."

"Oh!"

"I told Margaret that and—"

"Yes, I know. And she stopped her dress designing. You shouldn't have said anything about it to her."

"I was only trying to make her see that she was wrecking her own life —"

Mrs. Tommy Hoy sighed, shook her head, arose, and handed Pollard his gloves, hat and stick. "Be over here tomorrow at the house, about noon, and we'll discuss the Colonel."

She paused and patted his shoulder kindly.

"Poor old Doc," she said.

CHAPTER XVI

CONSTANCE MARILLE, confidential secretary to Colonel Fosdick Brackler, gravitated to the ample, sachet-scented bosom of Madame Francine as beach sand is drawn to the receding wave.

“What a fortunate thing for a man of Colonel Brackler’s wealth and position to have run across a little lady of your appearance and understanding,” gurgled the mistress of the specialty shop. “The average girl nowadays is too superficial —committed so inextricably to the shadow of things, neglecting altogether the substance—”

“Well,” purred little Constance Marille, with a self-conscious sigh of resignation, “I’ve done my best. You know, as I look at it, a man like Colonel Brackler must get some relaxation of the spirit. He is so tightly wedged into the banking and business world, he’s simply got to have an outlet for his emotions. In his home he gets none of that. There’s no understanding. The place

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that should be a clearing house of the spirit is—”

Madame Francine nodded in sage understanding. She was debating how best to broach the subject of the Colonel’s taking over the particular little love nest uptown that Mrs. Tommy and Doc Pollard had agreed upon as the scene of the Colonel’s “education.”

And with astonishing ease, the way had presented itself. It was Constance Marille who had broached the subject. Madame Francine knew of a “divine little place—a place just made to order for you.” There were only four apartments in the house. No elevator. You had to walk up. One of those converted, beautiful, spacious, old private houses.

“I was trying to think of the woman’s name who occupies it,” mused Madame Francine, knitting her brows in simulated perplexity. “She dropped in here—let me see—it can’t have been more than ten days ago. Wanted to know if I knew of anyone who was looking for an apartment for three or four months. Let—me—see— Oh, well,” she concluded, “I’ll think of her name in the course of the day and give you a

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ring. My only hope is that she hasn't rented it. It's beautifully fitted up, I understand...

And thus Colonel Brackler and Constance Marille went to housekeeping in East Sixty-fifth Street. The apartment was on the second floor. It was quiet and secluded—one of a number of such places in town where a man and a woman may hide away with the minimum chance of ultimate discovery.

Miss Marille, who conducted all preliminary arrangements for the subletting of the rooms from "Mrs. Ray Denton," made not the least objection when "Mrs. Denton" asked permission to store some personal effects in the large hall closet, directly outside and abutting the apartment. The closet was locked and the new tenants did not bestow another thought upon it.

This closet was contiguous to the bedroom, and into the dividing wall, a small aperture had been cunningly devised. This aperture was concealed by a tapestry on the bedroom wall, the tapestry itself cannily cut to admit the insertion of a high-powered French lens movie camera, painstakingly adjusted in the closet.

The bed, a ponderous affair in design and

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ornamentation—Mrs Denton had assured Miss Marille it was a replica of the favorite bed of Marie Antoinette—had been placed in camera focus. It was far from an ideal layout because Miss Constance Marille might take it into her head to rearrange the setting of the bedroom.

"But we'll chance it," Mrs. Tommy Hoy had said, "and if necessary, later, we'll reset our field equipment to fit circumstances."

Fortune favored the venture. Within a week, Doc Pollard had in his possession several reprints made from what he called an "intriguing strip of film."

Several days later he journeyed to Colonel Brackler's office where, ensconced in a huge leather chair, the door of the sanctum closed, he sought to interest his host in "art." Pollard had some pictures that possibly the Colonel might invest in with great value.

"Value," said Pollard, "is what a thing is worth to you. Suppose you look at these—"

He withdrew from his breast pocket a long white envelope, tossed it to the desk, arose, crossed the room, and with hands buried deep in his

pockets, became interested in the street scene.

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But not for long. He turned suddenly and strode across the office, taking his place behind Colonel Brackler's desk chair.

Pollard made it an invariable rule to remain on his feet when negotiations of the sort in hand had progressed to a point where his companion began to "breathe hard."

"You can't sit down," Pollard maintained, "once your victim realizes he's being clipped. If you do, he immediately takes advantage and tries to get confidential and bargain."

Deliberately, and without the least visible tremor, Colonel Brackler studied each of the twenty-four diminutive "intriguing" photoprints in the envelope. They depicted him and Miss Constance Marille in highly compromising attitudes. In certain quarters, several of the pictures, most certainly would have been termed "disgusting."

"I see," said Colonel Brackler slowly, thoughtfully. "So this is your profession. And pray, what value could you possibly have imagined I would place on these things?"

He indicated the group of photographs with a disdainful sweep of his hand.

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"Their nuisance value is enormous, Colonel."

"Nonsense. They couldn't be printed. Suppose I were to telephone for the police—to summon help—have you detained here by force until the detectives arrived? These pictures might gain circulation in the District Attorney's office—among a few lawyers—among members of a jury perhaps—and by that very circulation you'd go to jail."

"Colonel, you almost make me regret that I have to take you into camp—a man with your nerve. If you had as much sense as you have nerve I wouldn't be here. But," continued Pollard, with a shrug and a short, mirthless laugh, "there's no way out."

"Suppose, as you say, you summoned the police and turned these pictures over to them? I'd deny ever having seen them until I stepped into this office a little while ago; and you'd have precipitated an exposé for nothing. Say you did have me arrested and the pictures eventually were destroyed—look, let me show you—"

Pollard reached over, stacked the photographs into a neat little heap, tore them into small pieces, deposited the fragments in a large ashtray

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and set fire to them. Delving a second time into his breast pocket, he placed a duplicate set before his host.

“There,” said Pollard, “are the only other copies I have with me. The films—the originals—are in a safe deposit vault in a Mid-west city and the groundwork is so arranged that if I encounter trouble here from you, copies of these pictures will be released at once, simultaneously. Within a few days the country literally will be flooded with them. The film will be shown in Havana and at stages in numerous cities throughout the United States where you sell stock. The home folks will feel pleased and gratified to realize that they have invested their hard-earned savings with such a—”

“I suppose so,” said Colonel Brackler, abandoning his attitude of indifference and suddenly slumping into his desk chair. “What’s your price, Pollard?”

“There are nine copies of these pictures in existence, not counting the set you have there on your desk. I’m going to make you a present of those. Take them with my compliments. I want fifty thousand dollars apiece for the nine

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sets and an extra fifty thousand for the film itself.”

“Are you crazy, man?” shouted Colonel Brackler, leaping to his feet. “That’s half a million dollars!”

“No crazier than any crook, Colonel. We’re all a little off center. That’s why we take the chances we do. It’s only men of your calibre who are wholly sane—balanced at every intersection—”

“Half a million dollars!” murmured the dazed victim. “Why, that’s preposterous!”

“Remember my telling you one time that I was going to shoot a little more golf, play a few more games of bridge, and enjoy a sunset or two before I cashed in? Sunsets come high, Colonel—especially since men like you insist upon building skyscrapers—‘to shiver the sky and wrench the stars apart.’ Skyscrapers shut out sunsets, so that we have to travel far to catch up with one or two. No, under the circumstances, I don’t think five hundred thousand dollars for these ‘works of art’ is too much.”

“I’ll have to consult my attorney before entering into negotiations for any such amount; and

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I can assure you the sum agreed upon will be nothing like that figure.”

“Why is it, Colonel—it’s a thing that has often puzzled me—why is it that men like you give lawyers such a strangle hold? Here you are, dealing with me, a perfectly honest thief, who’ll give you a square deal so long as you don’t try to doublecross—and you deliberately turn around and take a lawyer into your confidence. Of all people in the world, a lawyer! Colonel, the more I think it over, the more convinced I am that old Dean Swift knew what he was talking about when he advised those who wonder how God values money, to look at some of the people He lets have it.”

Colonel Brackler arose with a frigid assumption of dignity.

“ ’Phone me tomorrow, in the forenoon.”

“I’ll ’phone you tonight, Colonel, at the Sixty-fifth Street dovecote, some time between ten o’clock and midnight. And when I ’phone you will be there. I will use a pay station in Connecticut or New Jersey—maybe in Pennsylvania—and I will not hold the wire, nor will the conversation run over half a minute. You will be able to say

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all I want to hear in that space of time. If you don’t hear from me, by midnight, expect a call same time, same place tomorrow.”

Colonel Brackler started for the door with the apparent intention of speeding the parting visitor, changed his mind and stopped irresolutely in the middle of the office.

Pollard paused at the threshold, turned, and elevated his right hand in a gesture of benediction.

“*Pax vobiscum*, Colonel,” he said.

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CHAPTER XVII

MRS. TOMMY HOY and Margaret were lunching for the last time in the Eighth Street studio. They were “all washed up,” as Mrs. Tommy Hoy expressed it. Madame Francine’s shop had been disposed of, but the name was still blazoned on the ornate sign board that swung in the autumn breeze. A “Madame Elinore” had purchased the establishment, stock, fixtures and title, indulging the hope that under the name of Madame Francine, fair winds might send her into channels more auspicious than those she had encountered as Madame Elinore.

“We are scattering to the four winds, Margaret,” said Mrs. Tommy Hoy. “Madame Francine is invading the South American continent. They haven’t enough trouble down there. Doc is going to hang out here in New York a little while, and then plans a trip around the world. He says he wants to pursue his studies in human

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nature. Your interpretation of that is as good as mine—”

The bell rang at that juncture, and shortly thereafter Pollard himself entered.

“Of course,” said Mrs. Tommy Hoy, “you’d have to time your entrance in exact conjunction with your place in our conversation. I was just telling Margaret here your plans.”

“Oh, forget about me,” said Pollard. And turning to Margaret:

“Picture little Mrs. Tommy Hoy and her husband, Mr. Tommy Hoy, mooching around the Riviera—toddling along the Bois de Boulogne —lounging Unter den Linden—skidding along Rotten Row—shooting grouse in Scotland—I believe that is what they shoot in Scotland, isn’t it?”

“Nothing of the kind, Margaret. Tommy and I are going to take a flat in London; and when we get tired of London, we’re going over to Paris and so along and around wherever the spirit moves us.”

“We’re going to miss you, Mrs. Tommy,” said Pollard, with one of his sudden lapses into the serious.

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“What about me?” said Margaret. “Missing you, Mrs. Tommy, is going to be a perpetual ache.”

“You already have one such ache, little lady. Don’t take on any more. You mustn’t let life do that to you. It isn’t worth it. You don’t get enough out of it.”

“Oh, I don’t know,” said Doc Pollard. “I think -we’ve done pretty well. By the way, I got the last instalment from the Colonel this morning. Half a million dollars, all told.”

“Paid up like a little man, eh?” said Mrs. Tommy Hoy. “Well, Doc, let me pour you a cup of tea, and we’ll pledge the dear Colonel’s health in a Haviland cup of Orange Pekoe.”

“Why squander tea and a toast on the Colonel? I’d rather lift my cup to you, Mrs. Tommy Hoy, and express the hope that your life may be a perpetual springtime—springtime, the time of the Sap.”

“No, Doc,” said the lady, “I’m through. Out of it for keeps—*per omnia saecula saeculorum*, as Father Dineen used to say. You’ll look out for Margaret as long as you’re around, won’t you?”

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She turned to the girl, who was almost in tears.

“I’m leaving you ten thousand dollars, Margaret. Put it in the hank; and when any of the little tramps—you know, May Worthing and that crew—come to you with hard luck stories, looking for fifty or a hundred, turn them down cold. Look out for girls like that. They’re no good and they’ll get you into fresh trouble.”

“I thought you trusted May Worthing,” said Margaret. “You know, somehow or other I’ve always liked her—felt sorry for her—I don’t know why.”

Mrs. Tommy Hoy turned to Pollard.

“Do you think,” she said, “it’s wise to leave this kid here without a governess?”

“Oh, I’ll be circulating ’round. I’ll more or less keep an eye on her.” He shook his finger at the girl. “But you’ll have to promise to do what papa tells you.”

Mrs. Hoy reached across and placed her hand on Margaret’s.

“I want to explain to you,” she said, “about May Worthing and her type. You ought to know. You must have come across them up at the Reformatory. The ‘Sawbuck Sadies’ we call

them. May Worthing is a perfect example of the breed.

"I remember distinctly the first time I met May. She was such a lovely creature with her mahogany red hair and Smyrna raisin eyes, innocent as a baby. Svelte. And so gloriously alive. Just the makeup to attract college boys and over-ripe bankers.

"My chauffeur brought her home. He had found her, he explained, sitting tearfully outside the park wall at Sixty-third Street. She had been locked out of her hotel and was wan and hungry.

"She hailed from a small up State college town—the college having done its worst for her in the matter of morals and disease—and had come to New York to work in the movies. Alas!

"I provided food and clothes, her cheap steamer trunk yielding only a few rags, hardly worth what I advanced for its release from the hotel storeroom. I saw that she received proper medical attention, discovered that she was a dipsomaniac and admonished her to stay sober.

"After a while, she was introduced to Floyd— so named, I believe, for one of his ancestors

who had signed the Declaration of Independence.

"Floyd was tall, slim and well-mannered— not precisely good-looking, but with one of those likeable faces which develop marvelous strength later in life. He was young and impressionable. The environment of his home, a charming mother and a sister, had bred in him a wondrous respect for women. Interested in himself—but in a way that made you respect his opinions and enjoy listening to his plans for the future.

"It was his first love affair, and quite too bad the girl could not have been a better sport. He asked my consent to marry her. Imagine!

" 'You're so fond of my little girl,' he told me, 'and she looks to you for guidance in all things.'

"With Floyd wanting to marry her, there was a problem. I felt some duty to the boy at the moment.

" 'You know,' I ventured, 'May is, eh—er— well, rather a—'

"I put a dubious accent on the 'rather'.

" 'Oh, yes, I know,' he interrupted, 'I know all about it. She has told me, and I'm going to forget those indiscretions. She is so young—'

“ ‘And so pretty,’ I added.

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“ ‘We are going to be married today.’

“ ‘Why so soon?’ I was shocked.

“ ‘I am due home at midnight,’ he explained. His father held a high position in Washington and the family’s social prestige was impeccable.

“ ‘So be it.’

“We discussed the marriage, the red-headed little devil and I, from a purely business angle. Would his father be willing to pay heavily for an annulment? How long would she be ‘inconvenienced’?

“Floyd came back from a shopping tour with the ring. A lovely gold band, engraved with her name. I don’t know what he paid for the rush job on the engraving. May sharply protested. She wanted a diamond-crusted platinum band.

“ ‘But dearest, this is just like the one Dad gave my Mother.’

“My warning glance forestalled further objection from her.

“A witness? Who to get that could be trusted and was eminently respectable? Finally I found the right man and they went down to get the license. We met at the Little Church Around the Comer at seven o’clock that evening.

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“I had never seen a wedding ceremony performed in church. My own lovely little romance came to bloom under the tender auspices of a tobacco-chewing justice of the peace.

“It was such a pretty ceremony—at least until May giggled at Floyd’s clumsiness at slipping on the ring. I felt a tinge of conscience as I watched him. He stood so straight and tall, and for all his boyishness, radiated such manly protection. His tone was so sturdy and sincere as he promised to love and cherish her, always and ever.

“It was over and we had a quiet little supper before Floyd caught his train.

“The wedding was going to be kept secret for a year; but the afternoon papers of the following day carried the story, as we had planned they should, and we sat back waiting to hear from Dad.

“His lawyer ’phoned. I refused him any information. He was a prominent and blustering lawyer, not used to being denied information; but

long before I had learned the art of handling lawyers—blustering and prominent or smooth-spoken and shyster.

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“The boy’s father called up long distance. Was the girl staying with me? Yes. Would I see him? Assuredly.

“Next day I had luncheon with him at the Vanderbilt. And what a fine old gentleman he was, to be sure. He sketched Floyd’s whole life for me, describing Sister and Mother; and of course, Mother was ‘terribly upset’. The boy was so young.

“ ‘Yes, that’s quite true; but so is Floyd’s wife young, and altogether lovely,’ I countered.

“It had been such a shock to them. Tactfully, he wondered if it ‘couldn’t be fixed up in some way?’

“ ‘Why don’t you see your son’s wife and at least have a talk with her before you discuss plans for wrecking their lives?’ was my advice.

“He was persuaded.

“ ‘May has gone for a ride now. Come up at four and have tea with us,’ I suggested.

“He consented.

“And home I hastened in time to wash the rouge from May’s lips and cheeks. She used to have such exquisite skin. We selected a plain little blue serge frock from her now quite adequate

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wardrobe. Hastily I sewed on the ever effective white linen collar and cuffs.

“ ‘And above all,’ I admonished, ‘keep your trap shut!’

“Dad came, saw and we conquered.

“ ‘I sincerely apologize to you,’ he said gallantly. ‘I had some hazy notion in my mind of a flaunting chorus girl. I’m sure I can’t blame Floyd.’

“ ‘No,’ I interposed sweetly, ‘you couldn’t. Perhaps they were a trifle hasty; but one cannot stay the impetuosity of youth.’

“Mother, we all agreed, was bound to be difficult. She set great store by the illustrious name. Plans were formulated that week to place May in a private school in Washington for the little finishing touches required to fit her for the high social position she was to occupy.

“Will you believe me when I tell you that I talked long and hard to May about her future?

“We had not expected the situation to develop in that fashion. My selling talk had been just a little too good.

“Carefully I packed my little silver fitted handbag for May. What discriminating attention

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I bestowed on the choice of frocks that went into her trunk. What a lecture I read that young woman on her morals. And how I pleaded with her not to abuse the lavish bestowals of whatever funny little god it is that turns gray days into gold.

“Twenty thousand dollars I sent a-swingin’ out the door as they bade me good-by, those three—Dad with an arm around each of his children, taking them home to Mother, for her blessing.

“It was less than a twelve-month later that May breezed in, dropped her handbag to the floor and gave me a husky hug.

“ ‘Hell’s bells,’ was her greeting. ‘Society gives me a pain in the panties!’

“And to the maid: ‘Hey, Nannie, bring us in a real live sap and quart o’ gin!’

“And that, my dear Margaret,” concluded Mrs. Tommy Hoy, “is what I mean when I say that May Worthing has the soul of a ‘Sawbuck Sadie.’ ”

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CHAPTER XVIII

SUMMER came and the city was dusty and deserted. Doc Pollard, leasing a suite in an upper Broadway hostelry, arranged his household goods and then hied him for a month, with an angling outfit, to leafy banks of lakes where black bass may be battled with.

He returned to town by way of Chicago, stopping a day or two to refurbish, along the Lower Levels, certain contacts tarnished by time. Resuming his homeward journey, his baggage was augmented by the addition of a large trunk, the property of one "Slim" Nelson, serving a three-year sentence for an imprudent essay into the realms of unlawful larceny.

Mr. Nelson's trunk, overlooked by the police at the time of his arrest, contained the variegated equipment of the grifter and "con" man. Pollard would place it in storage, and when Slim

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again found himself in the outside world, to put into practice the several "deals" he had been planning in prison, his equipment would be ready for him.

Doc Pollard always had quarreled with the Shakespearean edict that it is not in our stars but in ourselves that we are underlings. A man's stars, Pollard maintained, had everything to do with it. A man possessed of sufficient energy, intelligently directed, must yet have what is known as "luck" to save him from ill-paid returns in fame and fortune.

Events were to prove to Pollard the validity of his philosophy. Misfortune, that so often had stepped out of his path to allow him to crash past, turned highwayman and without warning, shot out of the shadows and bade Pollard stop and deliver.

"Chubby" Guilfoyle, grifter, tired after a busy season on the West Coast, and on his way to Europe, decided to stay over a week or so in New York. Fate was "framing" Guilfoyle. A frameup consists in removing all warning signs of danger. Chubby, blissfully ignorant of the fact that he was only a single jump ahead of the

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Government agents, tarried among the Fifth Avenue shops “and,” as Doc Pollard later remarked, with a rueful shake of his head, “of all hotels in New York, he had to pick out the particular caravansary in which I had a suite on the third floor.”

Guilfoyle had been assigned quarters on the fourth floor. Two days after his arrival, the Government agents made their appearance, and Fate, having proceeded thus far in her operations, decided to swerve from Guilfoyle’s trail to that of Pollard.

The Government operatives, mistaking his quarters on the third floor for Guilfoyle’s, directly overhead, entered, rifled Pollard’s effects and found nothing to warrant their intrusion until they tackled the big trunk he had obligingly brought from Chicago to safeguard Slim Nelson. In the trunk they came across an assortment of fire-arms, old “decks” of cocaine, marked cards, and a number of fraudulent United States Government badges and warrants.

And Doc Pollard, returning to his rooms about the dusk hour to dress for the evening, opened the door of his suite, entered, flashed on the

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lights, and stood staring at the gray and blue snub-nose of an automatic, leveled by a Federal agent. And next morning his name was in the newspapers.

Margaret, who had lapsed into the bad habit of neglecting to scan the daily prints, knew nothing of Pollard’s predicament. It was May Worthing who apprised her. As the astute Mrs. Tommy Hoy had predicted, sedulously, but without crowding, May Worthing cultivated contact with Margaret who, giving the matter little thought, arrived at the conclusion that no harm resided in the attractive little red-head with the husky voice, on whose general loveliness sustained night-life had made obvious inroads.

May ’phoned the news concerning Pollard. Margaret immediately got into communication with Larry Jacobs and wanted to know how serious the difficulty was and what he thought could be done. Jacobs was noncommittal. Anyway, what business was it of Margaret’s? Doc could be trusted to take care of himself.

“I know that,” said Margaret. “What I want to find out is, have they got him right or—”

“What do I know about it, my dear girl?”

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“Aren’t you his lawyer?”

“I certainly am not. In the first place, he didn’t ask me to represent him, and you ought to know by this time that I never go into court. My cases are all settled on the outside. I’m the greatest little arbitrator on earth. They’re going to hand me the Nobel Peace Prize some day— when they get around to it.”

Having learned from Jacobs the name of Pollard’s legal representative, she hastily scribbled a note to Doc, addressed it, sealed the envelope, placed it in her bag and taxied downtown to the gentleman’s office.

His name was Ramley—a very dignified limb of the law who sat back, the tips of the outstretched fingers of both hands contiguous, endeavoring ponderously to impress all beholders with the length, breadth and depth of his mastery of the law and all things germane.

At the close of a fifteen minute interview, Margaret left the office in entire ignorance of the status of Pollard’s case but oppressed by a vague apprehension that all was not well.

To Ramley, she had explained her status as an old and trusted friend of Pollard. And would

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he please deliver the letter with which she was entrusting him?

“I will be down tomorrow afternoon,” she said, “to consult further with you.”

But the following afternoon, as she waited in the reception room of the ornate offices, Ramley came out. He wore his hat and carried a briefcase.

“Where is Miss—” he began, looking around, and then sighting Margaret—“oh, yes,” he continued, crossing to where she sat, and handing her back the note she had written Pollard. “My client informs me he hasn’t the faintest notion who you are, what you are, or what your idea may have been in writing to him.”

“But Mr. Ramley, he and I are old friends. Did you give him the note yourself?”

Instead of answering her at once, the lawyer said to the operator at the telephone switchboard:

“Call up the Bradhurst people and tell ’em I’m on my way over—”

Turning back to Margaret with a detached air and a slight show of annoyance:

“Just what was that?”

“Did you give him the note yourself?”

“My good woman, the man says he never heard of you. And now if you’ll pardon me—”

Then came the day not long afterward when the newspapers carried a brief paragraph to the effect that Pollard, having been sentenced to the Federal Prison in Atlanta, would be transported there at the termination of a three-day stay.

Again Margaret turned to Larry Jacobs. What did he think was the matter with Pollard? What could she have done to make him annoyed at her?

“You haven’t done anything, kid,” Jacobs explained wearily. “That’s just Doc’s way of being a gentleman—letting you know that your cue is to lay off.”

“What a little fool I am,” cried Margaret, conscience-stricken, and at once penitent, “to have misjudged poor old Doc—”

“I wouldn’t worry about that if I were you, Margie,” said Jacobs. “It isn’t the first time in his life Pollard’s been misjudged—and probably it won’t be the last time. The point is this, kid, as far as I’ve been able to learn, all the

trouble you’ve encountered seems to have come from butting in when other people got jammed. You know what I mean. Now that’s bad business. You’ll get yourself, and those connected with you, in a lot of trouble by indulging that little habit. Savvy?”

“Yes,” said Margaret, “I know what you mean. You’re right, I suppose.”

“Certainly I’m right. That’s the best advice in the world. I ought to bill you for that.”

“Listen, Larry, you can do a little job for me, if you will. You must know some way of finding out about—you know—up the State?”

“What about it? He’s still up there.”

“I heard the other day in a roundabout way— I don’t know what truth there is in it, that they were going to—that he was—well, some talk of moving him a little nearer.”

“I’ll find out for you. And in the meantime mind your own business—and look out for the Fool Killer.”

CHAPTER XIX

MARGARET found herself on an isolated peak. She had never known what a lonesome place a big city can be. She had no friends, no interest to engage her attention. Hard as she tried, it seemed impossible for her to keep her footsteps from turning and lagging back over the Road to Yesterday. Once she walked past Mrs. Tommy Hoy's Eighth Street studio. From across the way, she glanced up at the windows. The tenant who had succeeded Mrs. Tommy Hoy had moved. The place was empty, the windows storm stained.

Continuing the sentimental journey she traveled uptown and entered Madame Francine's. Inquiring the price of a frock on display, she hurried back into the street, regretting the impulse that had prompted the visit. Poor Madame Elinore was not making a go of it. The

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shop was deserted. Failure and frustration brooded over the place.

Another time she journeyed downtown to Delancey Street, following the horrible trail poor Arnold Chadwick had trod that April morning— a thousand years ago. It must be a thousand years. It couldn't be only six. How could so much misery be crowded into a brief six years?

Arnold—poor, poor boy! Did he know? He *must* know she was thinking of him. Look. She'd sit down and bury her head in her hands—concentrate. She wouldn't allow anything in the world to come between her thought and him.

.... Arnold, my poor, dear boy, I do love you know that, won't you keep thinking of it.... I am waiting for you I'll always wait....

And twilight found her curled in the chair by the window, tired out with sobbing. Asleep.

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May Worthing's advent at this time was regarded by Margaret as propitious. May had come to her, ill. Margaret, nearly frantic with

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loneliness, insisted that the girl make her home there for a week or two. Until she had recovered.

Margaret summoned a physician. The girl had been viciously maltreated. Blood poison was indicated. The doctor was curious to know how the injuries had been sustained. May spoke frankly, but withheld the name of the man—a wealthy manufacturer, married and possessed of a family.

“He should certainly be made to foot the bill for your treatment,” said the physician. “In the entire course of my professional career over a period of twenty-five years I have never seen any more flagrantly wanton and brutal infliction. The man must be mentally sick.”

Convalescing under Margaret’s gentle ministrations, May Worthing recalled the medical man’s words and one day from the studio telephoned the cause of her illness. She used his private ’phone number, telling the secretary that “M” was calling. The secretary regretted that Mr. Sheesley was not available.

A second time she telephoned. And a third time. Receiving the same reply, May gave the secretary the number of Margaret’s telephone,

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suggesting that Mr. Sheesley get in touch with her there. Unless he wanted her to call him at his home.

Ten minutes later he was on the wire.

“Did you tell my secretary if I didn’t call you that you’d call my home?”

“Why certainly not, Gene. I asked her distinctly, if she thought you would object if I did call your home.”

“Well, what is it you want?”

She told him what she wanted. She rehearsed the physician’s words. She didn’t have a cent. She was living temporarily with Margaret. Margaret would have to be reimbursed. The doctor’s bill would have to be met. She needed cash with which to go away and recuperate.

The following day Sheesley sent her twenty-five dollars. She ’phoned him. He was out. She left her number again. When he called, she was sleeping and Margaret answered.

“Who are you?”

Margaret told him.

“Is that girl sick, or is she shamming?”

“Why don’t you get your own physician to consult with mine? He’ll tell you. The girl means

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nothing to me, Mr. Sheesley. I simply feel sorry for her.”

“Well, I’ll tell you what you do. Make me out an itemized bill for whatever expense you were put to in caring for her—along with the doctor’s bill—and I’ll send you a check for the full amount.”

The bill was sent, but no check was received. At the end of the month, May Worthing, with twenty-five dollars she had borrowed from Margaret, left to visit friends in New Jersey.

Three weeks later, returning home about dusk, Margaret encountered May Worthing sitting on the front steps of the house.

“There’s a position as night cashier down at a place at Atlantic City,” said May. “I’m sure I could get the job if I had the fare down there—and a couple o’ little summer dresses.”

“Oh, I guess that can be arranged,” said Margaret. “When do you have to be at Atlantic City?”

“I should be there tomorrow night at the latest.”

“By the way, have you heard from your friend Sheesley?”

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“No. But he’s heard from me. I telephoned his wife this afternoon. I have an appointment with her at three o’clock tomorrow at the Cedar Terrace.”

“You shouldn’t have done that, May. Why drag that poor woman into it? It’s not her fault. There she is, married to a rotter like that, with a couple of children who bear his name—why involve her?”

And after further parley, it was agreed that May should telephone him at his home.

The conversation was acrimonious. May refrained from any mention of Sheesley’s wife.

“You not only owe me something,” said May, “but you owe my friend three hundred and sixty dollars—or some amount like that. She sent you the bill and you welched on it.”

“Well, don’t let’s quarrel any more. You meet me tomorrow morning in the lobby of—” he named a well-known midtown hotel. “I’ll be there with

the cash. Make it ten o'clock sharp, and try not to be late. There is a little lounge there, at the extreme left and rear of the lobby. I'll be waiting."

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"Well," said May, banging down the receiver, "that looks as if he meant business."

"And now, if you'll take my advice," counseled Margaret, "you'll stay here with me tonight. Get a good rest. I'll advance the money for the few little things you need and your railroad fare. You hop down to Atlantic City the first thing tomorrow and get that job. There's no use in your wasting valuable time keeping your appointment with Sheesley. Give me a note to him. That will be all the introduction I need. I talked to him once on the 'phone, you remember."

They left the house together, early the following day. May, to shop and make the best time she could to the shore. Margaret, to meet Gene Sheesley.

He was waiting, and when Margaret had presented May's note he was most courteous. He was sorry she had been inconvenienced, but—and here he handed her a roll of bills—if she'd count that, she'd see he was trying to make some material restitution for any difficulty he had prompted.

"Would you like a receipt?"

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"Oh, dear, no," smiled Gene Sheesley. Nevertheless, he accepted a receipt when Margaret insisted and resumed his hat to terminate the meeting.

"Which direction are you going? My car is outside. May I drive you part way, at least?"

"No, thank you," said Margaret.

They bowed and parted.

Margaret signaled the starter for a taxicab. She stepped in, and as she did so, two men crowded in after her. One of them grabbed her handbag containing the money. The other flashed his shield.

She was under arrest, they told her, on a charge of attempted extortion.

"And here's the evidence," said Detective Sullivan, "in marked bills."

An afternoon in early fall.
The State was summing up.
For one hour the Prosecutor had pranced up and down before the jury box. Mopping his

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brow. Tugging at his wilted collar. Thumping the table. Bellowing invectives.

Finally he paused, strode over to where Margaret sat beside her attorney. Waggled a pudgy forefinger in her face.

His voice sank to a whisper as he uttered a last plea for her conviction.

“Gentlemen of the jury, this woman is a human vulture. Preying on society. If you turn her loose, no man’s home will be safe. It is your solemn duty to bring in a verdict of guilty, that she may be restrained from plying her nefarious trade for twenty years—the extreme penalty for the crime with which she is here charged.”

The District Attorney was a little, plump, pink-faced, owlish man, with rimless spectacles, thin, dank hair and bulgy blue eyes—a pillar of the church—much of whose vindictiveness as prosecutor might have been traced to an inactive liver.

Margaret eyed him dispassionately, recalling the political chicanery to which he owed his position.

She looked toward the bench at the Judge.

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His robes were stained with the filth of many a political crossing.

She glanced about her at the evil, self-satisfied faces of prominent legal lights who had invaded the crowded session—hoping to learn new tricks from her attorney, one of the best criminal lawyers in the country.

He was a youthful looking man, who, while eminently versed in the intricacies of his profession, was no less adept at the general art of interpreting “human nature as she is spoke.”

He never took a chance.

“You may have a copper-riveted case,” he told Margaret, “but you’re always safer when you’ve got at least one man on the jury. What you spend at the trial, you save in an appeal.”

So, the day before, Margaret had pawned her last bit of jewelry, a diamond bracelet, and turned the money over to be distributed.

“Justice” is *such* an expensive luxury.

Calmly she surveyed the rat-eyed, aduncous-beaked merchant responsible for her arrest. Beside him sat his wife, a stout woman, negatively pretty, whose trust he had ruthlessly violated. Aware of his perfidy, she had mounted the witness

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stand, there throatily to perjure herself in his behalf.

The District Attorney’s office had pointed out to her that their case was weak. Margaret’s acquittal would involve a heavy suit for damages. Self-respect had been pitted against the family bank account. The bank account won.

In her position, some women might have balked at mentioning the names of her children for the benefit of a crowd of morbid spectators. Such a recital entails an indelible smear—but not to this woman.

She rehearsed in a tremolo her three little girls’ names and ages, spoke of her husband’s love—with tears in her eyes—and required meager prompting to paint a verbal picture of domestic felicity, compared with which a cat and nine kittens before an open fireplace would have taken on the appearance of a bacchanalian orgy.

Later, when the District Attorney had lauded her to the jury, as “this noble little woman who has stood so bravely back of her husband in the protection of their home,” she sat back flushed with conscious rectitude.

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Margaret appraised the “twelve good men and true” as they listened, open-mouthed to the judge’s mellifluous charge. They were weak. Vain. Intolerant. Stupid. There were only three of them in whom Margaret would have reposed the slightest trust.

The judge droned on. Margaret tried to visualize the army of inefficient law breakers, lacking money or sufficient influence to set up the customary barriers of evasion and delay, who had been herded from that very court room into worlds where they became transformed into dead men—playing at life.

She fell to wondering why criminologists never pursued their endeavors among politicians, who dominate the courts.

A philosopher, she recalled, likening politicians to prostitutes, was condemned in hell for trying to damage, by comparison, the oldest of

professions.

Her wandering thoughts were arrested by a cessation of droning from the bench. The judge had concluded his charge. The arbiters of her fate clumsily arose. Shuffled towards the jury room. They wrangled until long past midnight.

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They broke even, the little District Attorney and Margaret. The twelve men stood six to six.

It would have been an acquittal instead of a disagreement had May Worthing returned from Atlantic City to testify in Margaret's behalf.

What was it Mrs. Tommy Hoy had said of her—the soul of a “Sawbuck Sadie”?

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CHAPTER XX

AT the close of the trial, Margaret was bankrupt. Her ready cash amounted to a trifle over a hundred dollars. She was worn out mentally and physically.

She had no friends. The few acquaintances she boasted had hastily taken themselves off at the first hint of trouble. It was out of the question to think of going on as she had been. Thoroughly discredited, marked in the public mind by scores of newspaper photographs, most avenues of employment congenial to her were denied. No one, rated respectable, wanted a “notorious woman” in his employ. And, just or unjust, merited or otherwise, that’s what she was. What was it the District Attorney had called her? “A human vulture—preying on society.”

What would Mrs. Tommy Hoy have advised, were she there to counsel? What would poor old Doc Pollard have advised? What a good scout

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he was. Taking a “rap” that wasn’t coming to him and warning her of the danger of association by disclaiming acquaintance.

May Worthing had disappeared. The earth might have opened and swallowed her. Just as well. It would have been just as well had they never met—but was it altogether May’s fault? Can the hell-diver see mud with the same eyes as the bird of paradise?

May was merely running true to form. Mrs. Tommy Hoy knew. Larry Jacobs knew. It *must* have been May Worthing he had in mind when, in that indirect fashion of his, he had warned her against butting in. Out of sheer desperation in her loneliness she might have telephoned Larry Jacobs, had it not been that she shrank from incurring further slights. Margaret could readily imagine the contemptuous blatancies.

Her experience in Madame Francine’s shop emboldened her to seek a position back of a counter in a department store. She had not anticipated any difficulty in securing such a berth. What had given her pause when the thought first presented itself was the contingency of physical strain involved. She was horribly tired. Frazzled..

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Jumpy. It required stamina, good health, and a certain tranquillity of mind to be able to stand in a crowded shop back of a counter—hour after hour, day after day, with nothing much to look forward to but a few dollars at the end of the week. Barely sufficient to defray the expense of eating and lodging.

Failing in half a dozen attempts to effect a connection elsewhere, she finally turned her lagging footsteps to the employees' entrance of a large mercantile shop. The woman who talked to her was one of those capable females—capable to the exclusion of the least spark of kindness, sympathy, and understanding. Margaret turned wearily away. At another shop they were not taking on employees at that time. The personnel manager at a third establishment might have found a place for her had she been a college graduate.

"You see," she said, "we are making every effort to elevate the standard of—"

"I understand," replied Margaret with care-worn calmness.

Her last few dollars were slipping away. She

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would have to make a connection somewhere soon or—

The immense and brutal indifference of the world was shattering her morale. For the first time in her life she was afraid. It was an intangible dread of something—just what, she was not aware. It crept upon her, manifesting itself in a dread of walking abroad. Of placing too great a distance between herself and the miserable lodginghouse room she called "home."

This fear became stronger day by day. Dressing in the morning, she would find herself oppressed by a nameless foreboding, revealed by analysis to consist in the subconscious realization that a few minutes thereafter she would be an integral part of the street jostle. Nothing much happened on such occasions until she actually found herself on the sidewalk, where panic would seize her. The width of even those narrow neighborhood pavements set her heart palpitating, turned her brain to ice, her feet and hands to lead. Weakness suffused her. Many times, fearing to proceed, she turned back, climbed tire stairs, entered the dark, disordered

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room and throwing herself on the bed wept hysterically.

These attacks increased in frequency. The time came when it was all she could do to drag herself twice a day from her room to the little combination bakeshop and restaurant around the corner where she took uninviting sustenance.

Her fear became intensified, embracing a dread of being by herself. Once, in the middle of the night, she summoned the lodginghouse keeper, simulating sudden ailment. Margaret hated herself for succumbing thus to her weakness; but, try as she would, she found her will inadequate.

Then the thought: Why endure it longer? She had followed her light and where had it led her? To what good? Too bad there wasn't a God. How could there be? A God as inadequate as all that?

What a sorry lie.... And she had believed it once.... But, oh, why couldn't it have been true!

It was late afternoon, the last Sunday in October.

She hurried round the corner to the drug store and returned with a bottle of veronal. She had

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been using the drug for a week past in an effort to cheat the particular fiend that nightly haunted her pillow.

Painstakingly she stuffed all the cracks in the rickety window that looked out on the brick wall of the house next door. Across a scrap of paper she scribbled:

"I am Margaret Lyons—Arnold Chadwick's sweetheart. Tell him."

She stared at the scrawl.

That was the best way the only way They would keep him caged for long years to come—but at least he would draw comfort from the realization that she was beyond the power of the world....

She had loved. That was the heinous offense for which she had been indicted and damned by a world, smug and respectable, reeking with incontinence and broken vows.

"I am Margaret Lyons—Arnold Chadwick's sweetheart...."

That was her answer to the world.

She swallowed an extra dose of veronal. Turned on the gas. Stumbled across the darkened room to the bed.

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CHAPTER XXI

MARGARET'S note was read to Chadwick in the warden's office. They might have added that her attempt to shirk the lesson of life had been as abortive as his last attempt to reclaim freedom. Maybe they did not know that after hovering for hours between life and death she had been resuscitated and was recuperating in the prison ward of a hospital.

Chadwick was silent. By not the slightest movement of muscle did he betray the anguish that tore his heart-strings.

Two years of solitary confinement in a stone cage with a steel door, robbed of sunlight and real air, had turned the man into a stoic. His white face had become set as a marble mask. The blue-gray eyes proclaimed the presence of life. He was alive, that was all.

"We are transferring you further down the State, Chadwick," said the warden.

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Not a move. Not a word.

"That's all, Chadwick. You can go."

In his cell that night he lay thinking. The weird and horrible sounds that drift through the corridors of a prison at night make no impress on those calloused by years. Chadwick might have been the sole occupant of a desert island, so detached was he, spiritually, from the externals of his existence.

Dannemora, Auburn, Sing Sing,—here, there, anywhere—what difference now—with Margaret gone.

Ten years ago he had seen her for the last time. Those three weeks in the little Bronx flat. Sitting out on the roof, hand in hand under the stars, with the city asleep. Sometimes his arm about her shoulder. Ten years. Twenty-eight more to go. What of it? Suppose it was thirty-eight? Forty-eight? From now on, the road led only to one place. Beyond that? Was there anything beyond that? What were they doing, bullin' you, about some place where some day you'd meet up with people you'd missed by takin' the wrong road?

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.... Yeah, probably a lot o' bull; but God! Suppose it wasn't?....

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Chadwick had reached a critical juncture in his existence. Ungifted, a failure at his calling, second-rate thief, victim of frustration, he had, under the impetus of a girl's love, developed a talent that had electrified the world. The walls were high, and so long as he knew that out there, beyond them, Margaret Lyons was struggling for a precarious existence, heroically facing an unheroic fate, barriers of steel and stone were so much paper.

Then they told him she was dead. A suicide. Showed him the note she had left, and on top of that came his transfer further down the State to an institution where he came face to face with one of the most intelligently sympathetic penologists in the world.

Here was a man whose rational and carefully planned rehabilitation work among "his boys," as he called the prisoners, was regarded by many well-meaning, but misinformed, individuals

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as a system built on sentiment. The warden subscribed to the belief that men caged like wild beasts year after year become sullen machines, and that a game of baseball now and then in the prisonyard, and an occasional moving picture show in the mess-hall, were good for the souls of those paying with their liberty for their own mistakes—and the shortcomings of the social order.

Crime, according to the warden, was for the most part the result of social and economic conditions with roots far deeper than mere penalties could hope to affect. The best administered prison would not reform all. The worst administered would reform some. The great trouble was that for all possible causes of crime there were only two remedies—fine or imprisonment. The ills of the flesh were many. What would be the estimate of a physician giving only quinine or calomel, nothing else? Yet, judges gave only fine or imprisonment for ills of the mind or spirit far exceeding in number and complexity those of the body. Not only that. In the majority of cases they were given without diagnosis, prescription, treatment or even investigation.

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“And,” said the warden, “the penalty is so unimportant if the law breaker finds he can ‘get away with it’. Whether or not he can get away with it is the only deterrent which enters his mind previous to the commission of a crime. It is not the *nature* of the penalty which deters, but the *certainty* that a penalty of some sort will be applied. Certainty and not severity is the most desirable element in any form of merited punishment.”

When a newcomer’s name was entered on the prison roster, the warden always found time to summon the man to his office for a “heart-to-heart talk.” Prisons must deal with the failures of school, home and church. Prison receives the human wrecks cast aside by all other agencies engaged in educational and philanthropic work. The last resort of the social misfit, prison must be regarded not as a place of vengeance. The new man, novice or hardened old offender, must be made to understand, if possible, that in theory he is being segregated as a protective measure, until such time as, re-created in spirit, he may safely take his place again in the open world.

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“Every man has his breaking point,” the warden explained to newcomers, “but no man is born to crime. There is no mysterious method—although many persons still believe there is— by which habits firmly intrenched by years can be immediately corrected. If you haven’t learned the principles of obedience in general, or the notion of duty or respect for authority and law, the prison gates close on you the same sort of man you were on the outside. You can’t change over night. I understand that. I want to treat you as a human being should be treated. I want to treat you fairly, and to make your life here as bearable as possible under the circumstances. In turn, I’m going to look for a square deal from you. Be on the level with me and you’ll not regret it.”

Chadwick’s eyes met those of the warden— and held.

“You come here,” said the warden, “with the reputation as the greatest prison breaker in America. I know your story from start to finish. What I want to find out from you, at the start, is whether or not you’re going to try to take it on the lam. If that’s your plan you’ll probably

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succeed. I don’t think I can hold you if you’ve made up your mind to break. I’m acknowledging your genius. What I can do, however, is make it

difficult for you to break. Now, come clean. Are you with me or against me?"

Chadwick shook his head.

"No," he replied listlessly, "I'm through."

"Do you mean that?"

The warden arose and extended his hand.

"A gentleman's agreement?"

The man from Dannemora looked long and earnestly into the other's eyes. His attitude was one of calm deliberation as with a wistful smile he clasped the extended hand—the first human and humane gesture he had ever encountered within a prison gate.

And shortly thereafter, Arnold Chadwick was listed as "trusty," jealous of the honor and proud of his word.

CHAPTER XXII

ON the fringe of the North River, midtown, sprawls an unlovely section. The streets, flushed daily, still are strewn and soiled. Tenements stretch row upon row in stratified ugliness, their hard-bitten, chipped and dust-stained facades presenting a hopeless picture of the struggle of mere brick and stone against the merciless daily impact of human beings making a last stand against extermination.

The faces of the denizens are masked in habitual apprehension. A smile is something to be feared.

In the half light of early morning, men stumble from gloomy hallways out to the garbage-littered sidewalks, the goad of the time-clock lengthening their stride. Back again at nightfall to overburdened and nagging women-folk and squalling youngsters, to overcrowded

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rooms. Fagged. Sullen. Sodden with unremunerative and hopeless toil.

The very cats and dogs that dart in furtive rendezvous from one to another reeking covert are underfed and miserable.

Precincts inured to the lockstep of poverty— a place happiness has overlooked, or, once knowing, long since has forgotten.

In the heart of this district, on the ground floor of a tenement more squalid than the rest, lived a woman, alone, who eked out an unenviable existence.

She was a seamstress, famed far and wide in even that unexacting neighborhood for the loveliness of the wedding gowns she designed and constructed. Nothing about the woman's appearance or that of her disordered living quarters furnished the least clue to the worth of her handiwork. A slattern, whose unkempt hair was becoming faintly streaked with gray, she had taken on the frowzy, straggling look of the individual who discerns in existence no longer an incentive worth the effort that a maintenance of self-respect involves. The whiskey flask had become the woman's chief solace. Long and persistent

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resort to this nepenthe had imparted a watery film to her once lovely eyes and an unhealthy ruddiness to her once charming complexion.

Margaret Lyons, having tried and failed, was ending her days in the gloom of defeat.

The tiny, dark flat comprised four rooms. Her meals were prepared and eaten in the kitchen. The diningroom she utilized as a workshop. The door was always locked. The other rooms were a welter of dirt and disorder.

Margaret had first made a wedding dress for a girl who lived on the floor above her. Although poverty claimed the neighborhood as its own, the residents there, as in similar environs the world over, intuitively clung to the elaborate rituals with which the ages have invested the ceremonials attending birth, death and marriage.

A wedding, especially, was an event on which latent imaginative human yearnings were permitted to struggle, unhampered, to the fore, to be manifested without inviting ridicule from one's friends or retributive penalties on the part of stem and jealous gods.

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The little girl on the floor above was very much in love with the man of her choice—a broad-shouldered, blue-eyed, curly-haired, young deity, who answered to the name of Terence O'Brien, and who was spending a temporary holiday from Olympus, as a truck driver.

It must be true, that when Love speaks, the voice of all the gods make heaven drowsy with the harmony. In the case of Della Roberts and Terence O'Brien, Love spoke, and the harmony drifting past the portals of the ground floor tenement home of Margaret Lyons, awakened a memory that sent her reeling out on the doorstep in the darkness of a stifling summer night to proffer, with alcoholic profusion, her services, gratis, as designer of the wedding dress of Miss Della Roberts.

"Sure," said Terence good-naturedly, hugging Della a little closer to him, "that'll be all right, Miss Lyons. Della will talk to you in the morning about it."

If they thought the unkempt woman on the first floor would forget when the fumes of alcohol had left her brain, they were in error. Early next day, Margaret presented herself at the door

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of the Roberts' flat overhead and, entering, talked wedding gowns. Even they whose perception at best was never more than half kindled, had the instinctive knowledge that they were in the presence of a woman really great in the art she professed.

That wedding dress of Della Roberts made history among the tenements. The indelible mark of genius lay in every line and fold—peeped forth from the last contour.

And while Della in her wedding gown stood at the altar registering her vow, poor Margaret Lyons, in her bedroom in the west side tenement, lay sprawled across the bed in a drunken stupor.

Numerous, thereafter, were neighborhood demands for wedding gowns; and the woman with the magic shears labored early and late, as time went on finding it less essential to resort to treacherous solace.

Some few of her patrons found cause for complaint, not in Margaret's handiwork but in the sneering, leering manner that at times characterized her converse.

Dropping in to talk over details of a gown in progress, the seamstress, likely as not—one

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never knew—would suddenly suspend work, leave her chair and walking across the room, take her visitor's chin in a rough grasp and after a brief and searching scrutiny, would relinquish her hold, venting her feelings in a short, bitter laugh, indicative of deep-rooted scorn.

"All this fuss and pother," she would say, indicating the half-finished gown, "for what? You don't love the man you're marrying. All you're trying to do is dodge the kitchen sink over home, or the job in the factory. Love! God, what a travesty!"

And the girl would depart, conscience-stricken and afraid, to circulate among the neighborhood word that "Miss Lyons was drinkin' somethin' awful. And ain't it a shame, with her talent!"

"Will you make me a gown, like you made Della Roberts?" asked little Mollie O'Keefe. To whom Margaret Lyons made answer:

"And how can I do that? There can't be two wedding gowns alike in this world—any more than there can be two sunsets alike, or two girls alike, or two men alike? And you do love him, don't you?"

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“Love him, Miss Lyons? Aw, I wish I could make you understand just how much I do love him. You don’t know.”

“You’re that sure, are you?”

“Oh, yes, Miss Lyons. Positive. If anything happened to him, or if he lost his job or something like that—I wouldn’t care—”

“Yes, I know. You’d wait, wouldn’t you? You’d wait—and ruin your life—come to hate yourself—to curse God and the world.... I’ll wait. Love’s eternal lie.”

And such a marvelous gown emanated from the locked diningroom of Margaret Lyons’ flat that the neighborhood buzzed for weeks thereafter. The fame of it spread among the girls in the shop where Mollie had labored before her marriage. And from the shop shortly thereafter, a female scout known as Macklin, in quest of rarities in lovely apparel, took her courage in both hands, invaded the foetid precincts from which the gown had come and in an instant discerned that she was standing in the presence of supreme talent.

Negotiations with Margaret Lyons were most difficult.

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“Why should I?”

That was the tenor of her objection, impervious to voluble, closely-knit response.

Macklin’s idea was that Margaret should foreswear her morbid surroundings, undergo medical care, recuperate for a time somewhere amid green fields and running brooks, then return and in clean, pretty, attractive, sunlit, air-swept quarters, devote her entire time and attention to the great task of designing gowns.

“God in His infinite wisdom had some reason for crowding such a gift into that brain and those fingers of yours,” said Macklin, who was a practical pious woman to whom the principle of “good measure pressed down and overflowing,” bore no relation to five hundred per cent profit on the sale of a gown. But why confuse the demands of heaven with those of this world, when both can be recognized so gloriously by keeping them rigidly apart?

She was a clever woman, Macklin. A persistent woman. A woman who, once having convinced her reason of the validity of an objective, and thereon having set her mind and heart, permitted no exigency to obtrude.

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By unrelenting pressure Margaret Lyons was won over to the plan. Carefully she was to be coaxed back to health; and after a sea voyage was to engage in business in a gown shop financed by Macklin. Margaret would supervise the designing. Macklin would do the rest.

“You lead in prayer,” said Macklin, “and leave the collection to me.”

She had prevailed in all respects save one. Margaret absolutely refused to sign a business agreement until she had seen the results of her attempt to revitalize her shattered morale.

“I might not make it.”

“Nonsense,” replied Macklin, “there is no ‘might’ or ‘might not’ about it. You’ve got to.

The unfeigned tribulation in the neighborhood when the day arrived for Margaret Lyons to wave farewell was pitiable.

“And I was counting on you making my wedding dress,” sobbed poor Katie Connors.

“I’ll let you know, after a while, where I’m located,” said Margaret, “and wherever it is, I’ll do the dress for you. I hope it’ll bring you luck, Katie—lots o’ luck—and that you and the man you think you love will be happy.”

CHAPTER XXIII

CLYDE KELLEY entered the newspaper profession in the days before the business office invaded the editorial sanctum, sending *Adventure* hurtling through the -window back of the city editor's desk, to be dashed to death on the sidewalk of Park Row.

He should have quit when the wise ones did, and become a public relations counsel.

Like most good newspapermen, Kelley was always teetering on the edge of personal accomplishment. Some day he was going to do a great play. Some day, a great book. One afternoon he spent two hours explaining to the man on the sober side of the bar in the Knickerbocker what a great idea he had just evolved for a stage production.

"That'll be wonderful, Mr. Kelley," said the bartender. "I'll get a night off when the play's produced, an' be there with the Missus."

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"We'll all be there," chorused the gang.

It was late afternoon. George Cohan, having finished the second act of a comedy, stepped into the cafe to light a cigar before tackling the third act which was to be completed before nightfall.

"George," said Kelley, "you're just the man I want to see. Listen to this idea for a play."

"A great play, Kelley, m'lad, a great play," was the verdict of the old master. On his way out he paused at the threshold, turned, surveyed the gilded quarters—"and a great place to write it," he added.

A good newspaperman, Kelley. Sympathetic. Discerning. Tactful. Energetic. He would stick with "the story," lead the trail where it may. Kelley did what most artists in his craft do. He neglected his own interests for those of his paper, not realizing, perhaps not caring, that his boss—not the managing editor, nor the city editor, but his real boss, the business manager—entertained no conscientious scruples about cashing in on a reporter's loyalty.

A short-weight, prune-selling Christian purchased the newspaper on which Clyde Kelley labored and in the ensuing turmoil he found

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himself shifted to the Sunday Department, his job there being to dangle rancid scraps of journalistic bacon under the noses of the paper's Sunday readers—"Special Stories" smothered under a fictional seasoning plenteous enough to hide the odor of decay. The old expedient of substituting one smell for another.

Pawing through old files of the newspaper one afternoon, Clyde Kelley encountered the forgotten story of Arnold Chadwick, mediocre thief, prison breaker extraordinary, great lover. The story, so far as he could trace it in the newspaper file, ended with Margaret Lyons' abortive attempt at suicide. The landlady of the wretched rooming house, sickened by the odor of escaping gas, traced it to the girl's room. The door was battered in. Later at the hospital she was revived.

"That's a hell of a way to leave a story," muttered Kelley, every reportorial instinct bristling with resentment. "I wonder what happened to him—and to her."

"Good idea, Kelley," said the boss. "Suppose you get after it."

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Up the River he journeyed to see his old friend the warden.

Chadwick was a trusty—wonderful fellow—great man to keep his word—like a Chinaman in that respect.

"Can I talk to him?"

The warden hesitated. There had to be good reason before he'd put any of "his boys" on exhibition.

Of course, Kelley knew, once having voiced the request, it would be granted.

Chadwick had grown into a stocky man of middle age, hair beginning to thin on top, skin clear, his eyes....

"Notice those eyes of his?" asked the warden later.

"You bet I did," said Kelley. "I'd hate to have them boring me back of the nose of an automatic."

"In here too long," said the warden. "Nineteen years now. I'm tryin' to get him out. If he stepped out today he'd be the safest man in the world—he'd slip into some quiet niche and you'd never hear of him again. Keep him locked up here another two years, and he'll—"

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"Yeah?"

The warden shrugged. "We'll probably have to shoot it out with him. I've been in this work a long time. I've come to know what that look in a man's eyes means."

"Thanks, Warden," said the newspaperman. "Will I see you down at the fights Tuesday? Oh, well, don't work so hard. Look at me...."

Then, on the trail of Margaret Lyons. That wasn't so easy. Two days and a dead end. A fresh start. A week. Another cul-de-sac. Finally, he hit the trail. Another week's work and he encountered Macklin, Margaret's business partner elect.

"What do you want to know for?"

"An old friend o' my sister's," grinned the scribe. "We lost track of her. Didn't know what had happened to her. Thought she was dead. I ran into news of her the other day, followed it up, and here I am."

His smile was disarming.

"She'll be back in another two weeks. Been to Europe for a little rest."

"An' I can get her here, any day, when she gets back?"

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"You're sure she's an old friend of your sister's? You know, young man, I think you're lying to me."

"You know," said Clyde Kelley, "I shouldn't be the least surprised if you were right. I'll be back, anyway, in two weeks."

Then, up again to the Big House.

"Got news for you, Warden."

The warden liked newspapermen. This regard endured despite one or two rank violations of trust that certain unworthy brethren had perpetrated. The warden was a broad gauged man of sound sympathies and estimates.

"What are you going to tell me now?" he asked Kelley. "You know, sometimes I'm just a little bit afraid of you fellows—afraid of your insight into things."

"This fellow Chadwick—any objection to me doing what I can to get the Governor to intervene?"

"There's a move already under way in that direction. It has, as I told you, my hearty support. What was this news you said you had for me?"

"That girl o' his—"

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"Margaret Lyons?"

The newspaperman nodded.

“She’s alive—did you know that?”

“You must be mistaken. She died several years ago.”

“I’ve been wrong so often in my life, Warden, I don’t get the same kick out of it I used to; but I’m not wrong this time.”

The papers in Chadwick’s case were sent for and scrutinized.

“According to this, she’s dead.”

The warden indicated the file.

“And according to this,” replied Kelley, tapping his forehead, “she’s alive. Good story, eh, Warden? Draggin’ on seven years, thinkin’ she’s gone—”

The warden smiled wryly.

“That’s a good one on me,” he said. “Here I’ve been thinkin’ all along that I cured him. What really put a quietus on his prison breaking was—” He paused. “Yes,” he said slowly, nodding his head, “I suppose if he knew today that that girl was on earth there’d be no holding him. I’d like to get a look at her.”

“Oh, that can be fixed easy enough,” said

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Kelley, “leave it to me. Kid Cupid’s got nothing on Kid Kelley, with the exception of a certain sartorial freedom—eh, Warden? Can you picture me runnin’ around naked? So long! See you in Bradstreet!”

2

Somebody had started the story that His Excellency was “presidential timber.” And His Excellency, hearing the story, believed it. Whereupon, overnight, he lapsed from an affable nonentity into a Sacred Cow.

Sacred Cows are notoriously difficult of approach. That fragment of zoological knowledge was nothing new to Clyde Kelley. Early in his newspaper career he learned that the bigger the public man, intrinsically, the easier it is to establish contact.

His Excellency, having ascertained through his well-oiled publicity department that Clyde Kelley was only a scribbler for the magazine section of the Sunday newspaper, realized at once that any good he might expect from that quarter would be negligible, while consideration

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of harm was out of the question. His Excellency numbered among his “dearest friends” Mr. Kelley’s boss.

Kelley wired His Excellency for a telephone appointment. By return wire the great man regretted that he would find it impossible to establish telephonic communication with Clyde Kelley that evening as requested, but Mr. Kelley might ’phone the great man’s secretary who would be in New York the following day.

“Huh,” said Kelley, upon a second perusal of the wire. “He probably thought I wanted to make a touch.”

His Excellency’s secretary, the following morning, was not at all enthusiastic. His Excellency was very busy.

“He’ll be in town tomorrow, but the entire day will be taken up with conferences. He leaves after dinner, for a brief vacation in France. I don’t see a chance of your getting to him. Why don’t you write him a letter?”

“Cheerio,” said Kelley. “Sorry to have bothered you.”

Members of the Better Element in His Excellency’s State who were intrigued by his judicious

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use of the broad “A” and his lofty appearance of intrenched wisdom, frequently were saddened by sporadic indications of a tendency on His Excellency’s part to dicker with the Powers of Political Unrighteousness who, despite their unsavory reputations and numerous high-handed misfeasances, nevertheless wielded a tremendous veto power in a National Convention.

His Excellency probably never had heard that “a habitation giddy and unsure hath he that buildeth on the vulgar heart”; and his weakness in taking counsel of his ambition, and making unto himself friends of the children of Mammon, provided Clyde Kelley with the wedge he needed.

To Mike Mulvahill, dominant factor in the counsels of The Unrighteous, repaired the newspaperman.

“Kelley, what can I do for you?”

“What makes you think I want you to do anything for me?”

“Experience. When were you in here to see me last? Two years ago. All of that. Now, up you pop, without warning, an’ out of a clear

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sky, you might say, like the devil. Out with it. What’s it you want?”

Kelley told him. Whereupon the Dominant Factor sat long in thought.

“The Governor,” he said, “is going to exercise executive clemency in six cases in three prisons in the State within a week. There’s two of ’em already picked from the joint where your friend is locked up. I’m sorry.”

“Can’t one of ’em be switched? Can’t an extra name be added to the list?”

“Certain considerations, m’ boy—and you know it better than I can tell you—enter into these things at times.”

Kelley threw down his hat, dragged out a cigar, bit off the end, drew up his chair and sitting on the edge, began to talk.

“Suppose you hear the story....”

And he told it, as a trained newspaper reporter would “tell it to the city editor”—only, in this instance, because the Dominant Factor happened to be an Irishman, who, for all his chicanery, had a heart as big as all outdoors, Kelley pressed heavily on the emotional pedal.

“.... you see what I mean?” he ended. “You

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understand now, why that man’s got t’ come out? I’ve been tryin’ to get in touch with the Stuffed Shirt in th’ hope he’d do somethin’; but he’s too busy layin’ on his elbow, hittin’ th’ political pipe. Baby, wait till that Statesman snaps out of his hop-head dream—glory be!”

“Kelley, I’ll see what I can do for your friend. What did you say his name was—Chadwick? When was he sent up?—Oh, never mind. I’ll get all that. Give me a ring in a couple of days—”

And then to the boy who answered the desk pushbutton:

“Mr. McKelvie is waitin’ outside, isn’t he? Send him in.”

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CHAPTER XXIV

JUST to vary the monotony of life, young fellow, me lad,” said the warden, “I’m going to tell you something. Do you know there’s more than a likelihood that Chadwick is going to receive executive clemency?”

“Warden,” cried Kelley, in well-feigned astonishment, “I don’t believe it.”

“There’s nothing definite, of course—and I don’t want you to breathe a word of it; but there isn’t much doubt it’ll go through.”

“How did you ever do it?”

The warden elevated his hand in a gesture that bade his visitor not to pry too deeply into esoteric matters.

“There’s always a way—”

“Major, you’re a wonder. Tell me. You were going to send for Margaret Lyons the other day. Did you do it? I told her you would.”

“I most certainly did and found out all I

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wanted to know. That’s a wonderful woman, Kelley.”

“What did Chadwick say when you told him?”

The warden lighted a cigar and took two or three deep inhalations of smoke before replying.

“I never undertook a more pleasant or a more difficult job. I thought he was going to kick over at first. He sat there staring at me—you know those eyes of his. Then he tried to speak, and couldn’t. Finally, he got up and came over here to my desk. ‘You say she’s alive? She’s not dead?’ I didn’t recognize his voice. He needed a shot of brandy. I told him the whole story — gave you the credit for it—”

“Aw, lay off, Warden.”

“I did. It was comin’ to you. Told me afterwards he wants to see you again—to apologize for all the rotten things he’s ever said about newspapermen. He was unfortunate, it seems, in running into the wrong kind.”

“Yeah, I know. Have you told him about the commutation?”

“Say, listen, you don’t think, do you, I’d let that bird know Margaret Lyons was out there in

the world if there wasn't a chance of his getting a commutation?"

The warden glanced at his watch.

"Now you clear out. She's coming up this afternoon. Ought to get here inside of half an hour. They're going to meet, in this office, alone—"

"My God!"

"Yes, they're goin' to clasp hands here, the first time in nineteen years."

"Boy!" murmured Clyde Kelley, picking up his hat and wandering out, his imagination swamped by the dramatic possibilities of the reunion.

The warden sat alone finishing his cigar when the newspaperman had gone. It was well on into the afternoon when his secretary entered.

"Margaret Lyons is here."

"Oh," said the warden, rising, "send her in."

She paused at the threshold, smiling. No longer young. Her beauty sadly marred by the detriments of fate, but certainly still lovely. There was a look about her—a hint of her old self—that the suffering and neglect of years had been unable to obliterate.

"Come in," said the warden. "Here, sit down. You look fine. That's a pretty dress you're wearing. I never notice clothes, myself, much— but that sort of struck my eye."

"Just a little homemade frock."

"That's fine. And now, if you'll make yourself comfortable—here, sit in my chair—I'll send him in. The door you entered by will be guarded by my secretary with instructions that no one is to open it until you step out. This other door over there is locked from the inside. I won't see you when you leave, so I'll say 'Goodby', now."

She took his hand, tears of gratitude brimming her eyes, but spoke no word. Then she heard the door shut. Her heart started to race. She felt that it might choke her. She sank into the warden's chair. Stared out the window. Beyond the steel bars lay a wide stretch of sunny hillside strewn with weeds and rocks. Beyond that, long, low, ugly prison buildings, seared by narrow windows, barred; and beyond them, high, white walls manned by guards whose vigilance never for an instant relaxed. Margaret was about to

turn away when the door of the office opened and softly closed.

She started to her feet. Turned. Their eyes met.

“Hello, Margaret,” he said huskily. He smiled as he spoke, so that in his face she would not read wonder at the change in her.

She opened her arms as a mother might; and thus they stood, his head upon her shoulder, as he had pillowed it there, years before. Comfort and infinite rest lay in her touch.

Long they remained, side by side. Daylight faded from the sky and darkness crept over the big room and across the countryside. Hand in hand they journeyed back over the shadowy miles. Tired children who had strayed far.

When the parting came, she turned at the threshold to where he was standing in the middle of the room.

“It’s all true, Sonny,” she said.

He held her hand in both of his.

“I’m glad you came back to tell me that. You *are* Margaret, aren’t you? I *know* you are—”

He freed his hands. Pressed them against his eyes.

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.... *Nineteen years, two months and six days....*

“I know, Sonny; but it’s all right now. Really it is.”

“Sure,” he said shakily, summoning every ounce of grit to be able to hold up till she had gone. “Sure, Margaret.”

2

There was a painful scene when Macklin learned that Margaret’s genius, on which she had been depending for success in the projected dress shop on the Upper Levels, could not be translated into cash dividends.

“But I have already invested in you. I laid out good money, I squandered valuable time. This is the thanks I get for it.”

“It isn’t that. I’m grateful for what you’ve done. I haven’t the money now to repay you, but I’ll save and return it—”

“Oh, the devil take the money. It isn’t that paltry amount I’m thinking of. It’s the crime—the sin of permitting those gifted hands of yours—that gifted brain—to amount to nothing. Why,

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my dear girl, with your talent it wouldn't be any time before you'd be acknowledged the world's foremost designer. You simply mustn't. I'm not going to stand here idly and see you toss this opportunity away. There's no bar to your getting married. How many married women are there who have their own business, their own activities in life, separate and apart from their interest in their homes? Thousands of them—"

"It wouldn't be fair for me to make all that money. The man I'm going to marry wouldn't use it. He's peculiar that way. Once, a long time ago, rather than come to me for financial assistance—No, really, it can't be done."

"That's final?"

"Absolute in its finality. I'm making one more wedding dress—and that's going to be the last."

"Your own?"

"My own."

CHAPTER XXV

“I DIDN’T see you at the fights Tuesday night,” said the warden.

Clyde Kelley shook his head.

“No,” he replied, “I was too busy getting the newlyweds off. Couple o’ babes in the wood. I had to sit down and write it out for them— where to get the train from Niagara Falls for Indiana—”

“You should have told them people don’t go to Niagara Falls on a wedding trip any more. That went out of date when they quit buying statues of the Flatiron Building.”

“I tried to tell ’em, but they insisted—both of ’em.”

“Well,” said the warden with a sigh, “that’s the close of that chapter. Too bad they don’t all end like that. You know, there’s a lot to be said for happy endings in novels and plays and movies. I suppose it’s low-brow—Laura Jean

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Libby and all that sort of stuff; but there’s so darn much trouble and tragedy, so many tears and disappointments and busted dreams in real life that it’s sort of natural to snoop around looking for sunlight, shimmering on the bridal veil in the last chapter.”

“What’s that job he’s got out there—some factory or something?”

“Friend of mine. Manufactures cutlery. Wonderful business and a great guy running it. He’s taking Chadwick in and will shove him along. He’s darn clever with those mitts of his.”

“Yeah,” grunted Kelley, “I’ll say he is.”

“The job sort of appealed to him right from the start. He wanted to know what they made out there. I told him—knives and scissors and saws —‘Saws?’ he asked. I nodded. ‘You know, I think I’d like to make saws. Good saws—saws that’ll meet *any* strain you might lay on ’em.’ And so,” concluded the warden, “Mr. Chadwick from now on is a saw maker. Wonderful, isn’t it?”

“Great thing to find work you’re happy in,” said Kelley.

“You ought to know, son.”

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“What do you mean? You know I quit the newspaper business—”

“What?”

“Yeah. Been in it too long. Losing my values. The game has changed, anyway, in the last few years. It’s left a lot of old fogies like me behind it. There’s a new set of standards that we don’t quite get—”

“That’s too bad, Kelley. I’m sorry.”

“Oh, it’s O. K. with me. I’m goin’ over to Ireland, knock around there for a year in a certain forgotten corner I know, where life still runs along like a song. I’m going to write a novel.”

“I’ll bet it’ll be a good one. But, by the way, why didn’t anything appear in the papers about this Chadwick thing?”

“Do you want to know why, Warden? Well, I get ’em off on the train with a bridal bouquet, magazines and chocolate and come out of the station feelin’ pretty low. I have a couple o’ drinks over in the speakeasy, and get thinkin’ things out. What in hell was it all about? That’s where I got the idea about Ireland—”

“Just the place such a dream would hatch.”

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“Well, anyway, I breezed over to the office— told th’ boss I had the complete story of Arnold Chadwick and Margaret Lyons, but I wasn’t going t’ write it. He wanted to know why, an’ I told him the yarn—the way you an’ I know it.

“ ‘You won’t write a story like that?’ he said.

“I told him no, an’ I told him why.

“ ‘How long you been in the newspaper business?’ he asked me.

“I said something like twenty years. ‘An’ you haven’t got over that sort o’ thing yet?’ I told him no, I hadn’t.

“He was sitting there, with a newspaper in his hand, looking at me over the top of those Oxford glasses he wears. When I told him I hadn’t got over that sort of thing yet, he put down the paper, took off his glasses and stuck out his mitt.

“ ‘I hope you never do get over it,’ he said.

“But speaking of stories, Warden, I remember one time....”

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