



***HORATIO JR.
ALGER***

***ADRIFT
IN NEW YORK:
TOM AND
FLORENCE
BRAVING
THE WORLD***



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Horatio Jr. Alger

Adrift in New York: Tom and Florence Braving the World

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CHAPTER I.

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The Missing Heir.

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“Uncle, you are not looking well to-night.”

“I’m not well, Florence. I sometimes doubt if I shall ever be any better.”

“Surely, uncle, you cannot mean——”

“Yes, my child, I have reason to believe that I am nearing the end.”

“I cannot bear to hear you speak so, uncle,” said Florence Linden, in irrepressible agitation. “You are not an old man. You are but fifty-four.”

“True, Florence, but it is not years only that make a man old. Two great sorrows have embittered my life. First, the death of my dearly beloved wife, and next, the loss of my boy, Harvey.”

“It is long since I have heard you refer to my cousin’s loss. I thought you had become reconciled—no, I do not mean that,—I thought your regret might be less poignant.”

“I have not permitted myself to speak of it, but I have never ceased to think of it day and night.”

John Linden paused sadly, then resumed:

“If he had died, I might, as you say, have become reconciled; but he was abducted at the age of four by a revengeful servant whom I had discharged from my employment. Heaven knows whether he is living or dead,

but it is impressed upon my mind that he still lives, it may be in misery, it may be as a criminal, while I, his unhappy father, live on in luxury which I cannot enjoy, with no one to care for me——”

Florence Linden sank impulsively on her knees beside her uncle's chair.

“Don't say that, uncle,” she pleaded. “You know that I love you, Uncle John.”

“And I, too, uncle.”

There was a shade of jealousy in the voice of Curtis Waring as he entered the library through the open door, and approaching his uncle, pressed his hand.

He was a tall, dark-complexioned man, of perhaps thirty-five, with shifty, black eyes and thin lips, shaded by a dark mustache. It was not a face to trust.

Even when he smiled the expression of his face did not soften. Yet he could moderate his voice so as to express tenderness and sympathy.

He was the son of an elder sister of Mr. Linden, while Florence was the daughter of a younger brother.

Both were orphans, and both formed a part of Mr. Linden's household, and owed everything to his bounty.

Curtis was supposed to be in some business downtown; but he received a liberal allowance from his uncle, and often drew upon him for outside assistance.

As he stood with his uncle's hand in his, he was necessarily brought near Florence, who instinctively drew a little away, with a slight shudder indicating repugnance.

Slight as it was, Curtis detected it, and his face darkened.

John Linden looked from one to the other. "Yes," he said, "I must not forget that I have a nephew and a niece. You are both dear to me, but no one can take the place of the boy I have lost."

"But it is so long ago, uncle," said Curtis. "It must be fourteen years."

"It is fourteen years."

"And the boy is long since dead!"

"No, no!" said John Linden, vehemently. "I do not, I will not, believe it. He still lives, and I live only in the hope of one day clasping him in my arms."

"That is very improbable, uncle," said Curtis, in a tone of annoyance. "There isn't one chance in a hundred that my cousin still lives. The grave has closed over him long since. The sooner you make up your mind to accept the inevitable the better."

The drawn features of the old man showed that the words had a depressing effect upon his mind, but Florence interrupted her cousin with an indignant protest.

"How can you speak so, Curtis?" she exclaimed. "Leave Uncle John the hope that he has so long cherished. I have a presentiment that Harvey still lives."

John Linden's face brightened up

"You, too, believe it possible, Florence?" he said, eagerly.

"Yes, uncle. I not only believe it possible, but probable. How old would Harvey be if he still lived?"

"Eighteen—nearly a year older than yourself."

"How strange! I always think of him as a little boy."

"And I, too, Florence. He rises before me in his little velvet suit, as he was when I last saw him, with his sweet,

boyish face, in which his mother's looks were reflected."

"Yet, if still living," interrupted Curtis, harshly, "he is a rough street boy, perchance serving his time at Blackwell's Island, and, a hardened young ruffian, whom it would be bitter mortification to recognize as your son."

"That's the sorrowful part of it," said his uncle, in a voice of anguish. "That is what I most dread."

"Then, since even if he were living you would not care to recognize him, why not cease to think of him, or else regard him as dead?"

"Curtis Waring, have you no heart?" demanded Florence, indignantly.

"Indeed, Florence, you ought to know," said Curtis, sinking his voice into softly modulated accents.

"I know nothing of it," said Florence, coldly, rising from her recumbent position, and drawing aloof from Curtis.

"You know that the dearest wish of my heart is to find favor in your eyes. Uncle, you know my wish, and approve of it, do you not?"

"Yes, Curtis; you and Florence are equally dear to me, and it is my hope that you may be united. In that case, there will be no division of my fortune. It will be left to you jointly."

"Believe me, sir," said Curtis, with faltering voice, feigning an emotion which he did not feel, "believe me, that I fully appreciate your goodness. I am sure Florence joins with me——"

"Florence can speak for herself," said his cousin, coldly. "My uncle needs no assurance from me. He is always kind, and I am always grateful."

John Linden seemed absorbed in thought.

"I do not doubt your affection," he said; "and I have shown it by making you my joint heirs in the event of your marriage; but it is only fair to say that my property goes to my boy, if he still lives."

"But, sir," protested Curtis, "is not that likely to create unnecessary trouble? It can never be known, and meanwhile ——"

"You and Florence will hold the property in trust."

"Have you so specified in your will?" asked Curtis.

"I have made two wills. Both are in yonder secretary. By the first the property is bequeathed to you and Florence. By the second and later, it goes to my lost boy in the event of his recovery. Of course, you and Florence are not forgotten, but the bulk of the property goes to Harvey."

"I sincerely wish the boy might be restored to you," said Curtis; but his tone belied his words. "Believe me, the loss of the property would affect me little, if you could be made happy by realizing your warmest desire; but, uncle, I think it only the part of a friend to point out to you, as I have already done, the baselessness of any such expectation."

"It may be as you say, Curtis," said his uncle, with a sigh. "If I were thoroughly convinced of it, I would destroy the later will, and leave my property absolutely to you and Florence."

"No, uncle," said Florence, impulsively, "make no change; let the will stand."

Curtis, screened from his uncle's view, darted a glance of bitter indignation at Florence.

"Is the girl mad?" he muttered to himself. "Must she forever balk me?"

"Let it be so for the present, then," said Mr. Linden, wearily. "Curtis, will you ring the bell? I am tired, and shall retire to my couch early."

"Let me help you, Uncle John," said Florence, eagerly.

"It is too much for your strength, my child. I am growing more and more helpless."

"I, too, can help," said Curtis.

John Linden, supported on either side by his nephew and niece, left the room, and was assisted to his chamber.

Curtis and Florence returned to the library.

"Florence," said her cousin, "my uncle's intentions, as expressed to-night, make it desirable that there should be an understanding between us. Take a seat beside me"—leading her to a sofa—"and let us talk this matter over."

With a gesture of repulsion Florence declined the proffered seat, and remained standing.

"As you please," she answered, coldly.

"Will you be seated?"

"No; our interview will be brief."

"Then I will come to the point. Uncle John wishes to see us united."

"It can never be!" said Florence, decidedly.

Curtis bit his lip in mortification, for her tone was cold and scornful.

Mingled with this mortification was genuine regret, for, so far as he was capable of loving any one, he loved his fair young cousin.

"You profess to love Uncle John, and yet you would disappoint his cherished hope!" he returned.

"Is it his cherished hope?"

"There is no doubt about it. He has spoken to me more than once on the subject. Feeling that his end is near, he wishes to leave you in charge of a protector."

"I can protect myself," said Florence, proudly.

"You think so. You do not consider the hapless lot of a penniless girl in a cold and selfish world."

"Penniless?" repeated Florence, in an accent of surprise.

"Yes, penniless. Our uncle's bequest to you is conditional upon your acceptance of my hand."

"Has he said this?" asked Florence, sinking into an armchair, with a helpless look.

"He has told me so more than once," returned Curtis, smoothly. "You don't know how near to his heart this marriage is. I know what you would say: If the property comes to me I could come to your assistance, but I am expressly prohibited from doing so. I have pleaded with my uncle in your behalf, but in vain."

Florence was too clear-sighted not to penetrate his falsehood.

"If my uncle's heart is hardened against me," she said, "I shall be too wise to turn to you. I am to understand, then, that my choice lies between poverty and a union with you?"

"You have stated it correctly, Florence."

"Then," said Florence, arising, "I will not hesitate. I shrink from poverty, for I have been reared in luxury, but I will sooner live in a hovel—"

"Or a tenement house," interjected Curtis, with a sneer.

“Yes, or a tenement house, than become the wife of one I loathe.”

“Girl, you shall bitterly repent that word!” said Curtis, stung to fury.

She did not reply, but, pale and sorrowful, glided from the room to weep bitter tears in the seclusion of her chamber.

CHAPTER II.

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A Stranger Visitor.

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Curtis Waring followed the retreating form of his cousin with a sardonic smile.

“She is in the toils! She cannot escape me!” he muttered. “But”—and here his brow darkened—“it vexes me to see how she repels my advances, as if I were some loathsome thing! If only she would return my love—for I do love her, cold as she is—I should be happy. Can there be a rival? But no! we live so quietly that she has met no one who could win her affection. Why can she not turn to me? Surely, I am not so ill-favored, and though twice her age, I am still a young man. Nay, it is only a young girl’s caprice. She shall yet come to my arms, a willing captive.”

His thoughts took a turn, as he arose from his seat, and walked over to the secretary.

“So it is here that the two wills are deposited!” he said to himself; “one making me a rich man, the other a beggar! While the last is in existence I am not safe. The boy may be alive, and liable to turn up at any moment. If only he were dead—or the will destroyed——” Here he made a suggestive pause.

He took a bunch of keys from his pocket, and tried one after another, but without success. He was so absorbed in his work that he did not notice the entrance of a dark-

browed, broad-shouldered man, dressed in a shabby corduroy suit, till the intruder indulged in a short cough, intended to draw attention.

Starting with guilty consciousness, Curtis turned sharply around, and his glance fell on the intruder.

"Who are you?" he demanded, angrily. "And how dare you enter a gentleman's house unbidden?"

"Are you the gentleman?" asked the intruder, with intentional insolence.

"Yes."

"You own this house?"

"Not at present. It is my uncle's."

"And that secretary—pardon my curiosity—is his?"

"Yes; but what business is it of yours?"

"Not much. Only it makes me laugh to see a gentleman picking a lock. You should leave such business to men like me!"

"You are an insolent fellow!" said Curtis, more embarrassed than he liked to confess, for this rough-looking man had become possessed of a dangerous secret. "I am my uncle's confidential agent, and it was on business of his that I wished to open the desk."

"Why not go to him for the key?"

"Because he is sick. But, pshaw! why should I apologize or give any explanation to you? What can you know of him or me?"

"More, perhaps, than you suspect," said the intruder, quietly.

"Then, you know, perhaps, that I am my uncle's heir?"

"Don't be too sure of that."

“Look here, fellow,” said Curtis, thoroughly provoked, “I don’t know who you are nor what you mean, but let me inform you that your presence here is an intrusion, and the sooner you leave the house the better!”

“I will leave it when I get ready.”

Curtis started to his feet, and advanced to his visitor with an air of menace.

“Go at once,” he exclaimed, angrily, “or I will kick you out of the door!”

“What’s the matter with the window?” returned the stranger, with an insolent leer.

“That’s as you prefer, but if you don’t leave at once I will eject you.”

By way of reply, the rough visitor coolly seated himself in a luxurious easy-chair, and, looking up into the angry face of Waring, said:

“Oh, no, you won’t.”

“And why not, may I ask?” said Curtis, with a feeling of uneasiness for which he could not account.

“Why not? Because, in that case, I should seek an interview with your uncle, and tell him——”

“What?”

“That his son still lives; and that I can restore him to his ——”

The face of Curtis Waring blanched; he staggered as if he had been struck; and he cried out, hoarsely:

“It is a lie!”

“It is the truth, begging your pardon. Do you mind my smoking?” and he coolly produced a common clay pipe, filled and lighted it.

"Who are you?" asked Curtis, scanning the man's features with painful anxiety.

"Have you forgotten Tim Bolton?"

"Are you Tim Bolton?" faltered Curtis.

"Yes; but you don't seem glad to see me?"

"I thought you were——"

"In Australia. So I was three years since. Then I got homesick, and came back to New York."

"You have been here three years?"

"Yes," chuckled Bolton. "You didn't suspect it, did you?"

"Where?" asked Curtis, in a hollow voice.

"I keep a saloon on the Bowery. There's my card. Call around when convenient."

Curtis was about to throw the card into the grate, but on second thought dropped it into his pocket.

"And the boy?" he asked, slowly.

"Is alive and well. He hasn't been starved. Though I dare say you wouldn't have grieved if he had."

"And he is actually in this city?"

"Just so."

"Does he know anything of—you know what I mean."

"He doesn't know that he is the son of a rich man, and heir to the property which you look upon as yours. That's what you mean, isn't it?"

"Yes. What is he doing? Is he at work?"

"He helps me some in the saloon, sells papers in the evenings, and makes himself generally useful."

"Has he any education?"

"Well, I haven't sent him to boarding school or college," answered Tim. "He don't know no Greek, or Latin, or

mathematics—phew, that’s a hard word. You didn’t tell me you wanted him made a scholar of.”

“I didn’t. I wanted never to see or hear from him again. What made you bring him back to New York?”

“Couldn’t keep away, governor. I got homesick, I did. There ain’t but one Bowery in the world, and I hankered after that——”

“Didn’t I pay you money to keep away, Tim Bolton?”

“I don’t deny it; but what’s three thousand dollars? Why, the kid’s cost me more than that. I’ve had the care of him for fourteen years, and it’s only about two hundred a year.”

“You have broken your promise to me!” said Curtis, sternly.

“There’s worse things than breaking your promise,” retorted Bolton.

Scarcely had he spoken than a change came over his face, and he stared open-mouthed behind him and beyond Curtis.

Startled himself, Curtis turned, and saw, with a feeling akin to dismay, the tall figure of his uncle standing on the threshold of the left portal, clad in a morning gown, with his eyes fixed inquiringly upon Bolton and himself.

CHAPTER III.

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An Unholy Compact.

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“Who is that man, Curtis?” asked John Linden, pointing his thin finger at Tim Bolton, who looked strangely out of place, as, with clay pipe, he sat in the luxurious library on a sumptuous chair.

“That man?” stammered Curtis, quite at a loss what to say.

“Yes.”

“He is a poor man out of luck, who has applied to me for assistance,” answered Curtis, recovering his wits.

“That’s it, governor,” said Bolton, thinking it necessary to confirm the statement. “I’ve got five small children at home almost starvin’, your honor.”

“That is sad. What is your business, my man?”

It was Bolton’s turn to be embarrassed.

“My business?” he repeated.

“That is what I said.”

“I’m a blacksmith, but I’m willing to do any honest work.”

“That is commendable; but don’t you know that it is very ill-bred to smoke a pipe in a gentleman’s house?”

“Excuse me, governor!”

And Bolton extinguished his pipe, and put it away in a pocket of his corduroy coat.

"I was just telling him the same thing," said Curtis. "Don't trouble yourself any further, uncle. I will inquire into the man's circumstances, and help him if I can."

"Very well, Curtis. I came down because I thought I heard voices."

John Linden slowly returned to his chamber, and left the two alone.

"The governor's getting old," said Bolton. "When I was butler here, fifteen years ago, he looked like a young man. He didn't suspect that he had ever seen me before."

"Nor that you had carried away his son, Bolton."

"Who hired me to do it? Who put me up to the job, as far as that goes?"

"Hush! Walls have ears. Let us return to business."

"That suits me."

"Look here, Tim Bolton," said Curtis, drawing up a chair, and lowering his voice to a confidential pitch, "you say you want money?"

"Of course I do."

"Well, I don't give money for nothing."

"I know that. What's wanted now?"

"You say the boy is alive?"

"He's very much alive."

"Is there any necessity for his living?" asked Curtis, in a sharp, hissing tone, fixing his eyes searchingly on Bolton, to see how his hint would be taken.

"You mean that you want me to murder him?" said Bolton, quickly.

"Why not? You don't look over scrupulous."

"I am a bad man, I admit it," said Bolton, with a gesture of repugnance, "a thief, a low blackguard, perhaps, but, thank Heaven! I am no murderer! And if I was, I wouldn't spill a drop of that boy's blood for the fortune that is his by right."

"I didn't give you credit for so much sentiment, Bolton," said Curtis, with a sneer. "You don't look like it, but appearances are deceitful. We'll drop the subject. You can serve me in another way. Can you open this secretary?"

"Yes; that's in my line."

"There is a paper in it that I want. It is my uncle's will. I have a curiosity to read it."

"I understand. Well, I'm agreeable."

"If you find any money or valuables, you are welcome to them. I only want the paper. When will you make the attempt?"

"To-morrow night. When will it be safe?"

"At eleven o'clock. We all retire early in this house. Can you force an entrance?"

"Yes; but it will be better for you to leave the outer door unlocked."

"I have a better plan. Here is my latchkey."

"Good! I may not do the job myself, but I will see that it is done. How shall I know the will?"

"It is in a big envelope, tied with a narrow tape. Probably it is inscribed: 'My will.' "

"Suppose I succeed, when shall I see you?"

"I will come around to your place on the Bowery. Good-night!"

Curtis Waring saw Bolton to the door, and let him out. Returning, he flung himself on a sofa.

“I can make that man useful!” he reflected. “There is an element of danger in the boy’s presence in New York; but it will go hard if I can’t get rid of him! Tim Bolton is unexpectedly squeamish, but there are others to whom I can apply. With gold everything is possible. It’s time matters came to a finish. My uncle’s health is rapidly failing—the doctor hints that he has heart disease—and the fortune for which I have been waiting so long will soon be mine, if I work my cards right. I can’t afford to make any mistakes now.”

CHAPTER IV.

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Florence.

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Florence Linden sat in the library the following evening in an attitude of depression. Her eyelids were swollen, and it was evident she had been weeping. During the day she had had an interview with her uncle, in which he harshly insisted upon her yielding to his wishes, and marrying her cousin, Curtis.

“But, uncle,” she objected, “I do not love him.”

“Marry him, and love will come.”

“Never!” she said, vehemently.

“You speak confidently, miss,” said Mr. Linden, with irritation.

“Listen, Uncle John. It is not alone that I do not love him. I dislike him—I loathe—him.”

“Nonsense! that is a young girl’s extravagant nonsense.”

“No, uncle.”

“There can be no reason for such a foolish dislike. What can you have against him?”

“It is impressed upon me, uncle, that Curtis is a bad man. There is something false—treacherous—about him.”

“Pooh! child! you are more foolish than I thought. I don’t say Curtis is an angel. No man is; at least, I never met any such. But he is no worse than the generality of men. In marrying him you will carry out my cherished wish.