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THE LION'S MOUSE

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The Lion's Mouse

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THE LION

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Roger Sands had steel-gray eyes, a straight black line of brows drawn low and nearly meeting above them, thick black hair lightly powdered with silver at the temples, and a clean-shaven, aggressive chin. He had the air of being hard as nails. Most people, including women, thought him hard as nails. He thought it of himself, and gloried in his armour, never more than on a certain September day, when resting in the Santa Fé Limited, tearing back to New York after a giant's tussle in California. But—it was hot weather, and he had left the stateroom door open. Everything that followed came—from this.

Suddenly he became conscious of a perfume, and saw a woman hovering, rather than standing, at the door. At his look she started away, then stopped.

"Oh, do help me!" she said.

She was young and very beautiful. He couldn't stare quite as coldly as he ought.

"What can I do for you?" was the question he asked.

He had hardly opened his mouth before she flashed into the stateroom and shut the door.

"There's a man.... I'm afraid!"

Though she was young and girlish, and spoke impulsively, there was something oddly regal about her. Princesses and girl-queens ought to be of her type; tall and

very slim, with gracious, sloping shoulders and a long throat, the chin slightly lifted: pale, with great appealing violet eyes under haughty brows, and quantities of yellow-brown hair dressed in some sort of Madonna style.

"You needn't be afraid," he said. "Men aren't allowed to insult ladies in trains."

"This man hasn't insulted me in an ordinary way. But I'm in dreadful danger. American men are good to women, even strangers. You can save my life, if you will—or more than my life. But there's only one way." Her words came fast, on panting breaths, as though she had been running. The girl had stood at first, her hand on the door-knob, but losing her balance with a jerk of the train, she let herself fall into the seat. There she sat with her head thrown wearily back, her eyes appealing to the eyes that looked down at her.

A queer fancy ran through the man's brain. He imagined that a woman being tried for her life might look at the judge with just that expression. "What do you mean?" asked Sands.

He had resisted the jerk of the train, and was still on his feet. Instead of answering his question, the girl begged him to sit down.

"I can't think properly while it seems as if you were waiting to turn me out," she said.

Sands sat down.

"I hardly know how to tell you what I mean. I hardly dare," the voice went on, while he wondered. "It's a tremendous thing to ask. I can't explain ... and if I hesitate it will be too late. I don't know your name, or your character, except what I judge from your face. The way to save me is

to keep me in this stateroom with the door shut, as far as Chicago."

"Good heavens! That's...." Sands was going to end his sentence with "absolutely impossible!" But he stopped in the midst. Her eyes made him stop. It was as if he were pronouncing a death sentence. He was silent for a few seconds.

"I'd have to say ... no, I could not say you were my wife, because everyone knows I've not got a wife. I'll say you are my cousin: say you've come late. I want you to have this stateroom, and I'll take another ... or a section. I—I could do that."

"Will you?" she breathed.

"Yes. I will."

He said this almost sullenly. He was thinking: "Pretty smart new dodge! Neat way to get a stateroom all the way from Albuquerque to Chicago."

"I'll go out now and fix things up with the conductor," he promised. "We must settle on a story. You came on board at Albuquerque just now?"

"Yes. The last minute before the train started. I have a berth in this car. I thought I was safe, that everything was right for me. Then I saw the man ... not the one I expected; worse. He wasn't in this car, but the next. I saw him standing there. He was looking at some ladies passing through. One had on deep mourning, and a crepe veil. Perhaps he believed it was I. I turned and rushed this way. Your door was open, and you ... you looked like a real man. That's all."

"What about your baggage?"

"I have nothing. I ... was in a hurry."

"In what name did you make your reservation?"

"Miss Beverley White. White isn't my real name: Beverley is ... one of my names. I can't tell you more."

"All right. The porter will get some toilet things for my cousin whom I'm to chaperon from Albuquerque to Chicago, and who nearly missed the train owing to illness. He'll bring your meals in, as you're not able to leave your stateroom."

"That's what I'd have asked," she said. "I may trust the porter?"

"The porter knows me. Your idea is," he went on, his hand on the door, "that the man you don't want to see will try pretty hard to see you?"

"Yes. When he searches the train and can't find me (I'm sure he's begun the search already) he can't be certain I'm on board, but he won't give up easily. If the deepest gratitude——"

"I don't need consolation. Any other instructions to give before I leave you?"

"No. Yes ... there's one thing. Will you take charge of a very small parcel? I daren't keep it myself, in case anything unexpected should happen.

"It is inside my dress," the girl explained. For an instant she turned her back, then, rebuttoning her blouse with one hand, held out to him in the other a long, thick envelope, unaddressed, and sealed with three gold-coloured seals. Roger took the parcel.

"You see how I trust you," she said. "This packet is the most valuable thing I have in the world, yet I feel it is safe."

"You told me you didn't know my name. But if I'm your cousin you'd better know it. I'm Roger Sands——"

"Roger Sands, the great—what is the word?—corporation lawyer? The man who saved the California Oil Trust king?" She looked surprised, almost frightened.

"It isn't a 'Trust,' or I couldn't have saved him. That was just the point."

"How lucky I am to have such a man stand by me! For you will?"

He slipped the long envelope into an inside breast pocket of his gray tweed coat. "It's as safe there as in a bank," he assured her. "Now I'll go and make everything straight. If you want me, you've only to ring for the porter and send me word. I won't come till you do send."

Whether or no her terror was justified, Roger resolved to give it the benefit of the doubt. Instead of trying to secure another stateroom, he would try to get a section close to Stateroom A, in order to play watch-dog.

It wasn't difficult to do. The section he wanted was engaged from the next stopping place, but an exchange could be made. The Pullman car conductor took it upon himself to attend to that. Sands' suitcase, coat, and magazines were arranged on both seats, and he sat down to keep guard. The porter had been told that Miss White wasn't to be disturbed unless she rang, except at meal times, when he—Sands—would choose dishes from the menu and send a waiter from the dining-car.

A few toilet things were somehow procured by the negro, and handed into Stateroom A, with a contribution of novels,

magazines, and a box of chocolates, from Miss White's cousin.

Night, Roger realized, would be the dangerous time, if danger there was, and he decided not to sleep. Lying awake wasn't, after all, very difficult, for the portrait of the girl was painted on Roger's mind. He saw things in that portrait he'd seen but subconsciously in the original. He thought that her beauty was of the type which would shine like the moon, set off with wonderful clothes and jewels. And from that thought it was only a step to picture the joy of giving such clothes and jewels. The man was surprised and ashamed to find himself thrilling like a boy.

Daylight released him from duty. He dressed, and had his section made up. Though all peril—if any—had vanished with the night, Roger couldn't bring himself to leave his post for breakfast until he saw the porter tap at the door of Stateroom A in answer to a ring.

"I hope Miss White's feeling better," he said to the negro, when the door shut once more.

"Yes, sah, she wants her room fixed up. Ah'm gwan do it raight now, but Ah'm bound to give yuh the lady's message fust. She thought you'd like to heah she's mighty well, considerin'. An' she'll thank yuh, suh, to order her some coffee an' toast."

Roger added cantaloupe to the order, and a cereal with cream. The mysterious girl hidden in his stateroom was no longer an adventuress, sponging on his idiotic generosity: she was an exquisite, almost a sacred, charge. As he ate his breakfast in the dining-car he saw a man he knew sitting directly opposite him at the next table. Their eyes

encountered. Roger felt that the other had been staring at him and hadn't had time to look away. He bowed, and paused at the table which he was obliged to pass on his way out.

"How do you do, O'Reilly?" he said, with a slight stiffness. He would have preferred to walk past with no more than the nod, but in that case the man would believe his late absent-mindedness had been deliberate. Roger didn't wish to leave this impression. Justin O'Reilly was nearly ten years younger than he, but had got the better of him once, and not long ago. Sands was too proud to let it seem as if the memory rankled.

O'Reilly rose and shook the offered hand. He was tall and lean, and brown-faced as a soldier back from the war. He had a boyish air, younger than his thirty-one or thirty-two years: but under that look was the same sort of hardness and keenness which was the first thing a stranger noticed about Sands.

"I'd no idea you were out west."

"It's been a flying trip," O'Reilly answered.

"Queer I missed seeing you before. Suppose you've been on board since Los Angeles?"

"I caught sight of you last night for the first time," said the other. "I'm not in your car, and I've been resting up. I came on board tired. One usually does come on board tired!"

"Yes," said Roger. "Well, we shall knock up against each other now and then, here in the diner."

"Sure to. I shall be spending a few days in New York before Washington," O'Reilly volunteered.

"Right! But don't let your coffee get cold for me." Roger passed on.

If his thoughts had not been focussed on the occupant of Stateroom A he would have wondered a good deal as to what had taken Justin O'Reilly on a "flying trip" west. This was O'Reilly's first year in Congress, and he'd man[oe]uvred to make himself a conspicuous figure in Washington one way or other. His own present interests could not, Roger thought, be interfered with by Justin O'Reilly. The man was a Democrat, and opposed on principle to the cause of John Heron, whom Miss White had called the "California Oil Trust King": but personally the two were friends, even distantly related, and O'Reilly would wish to do Heron no secret injury.

When he got back to his own car Sands found the porter waiting.

"Lady's through breakfus, suh, and would like to see yuh w'en convenient," was the message: and two seconds later Stateroom A's rightful owner was humbly knocking at the door.

The girl's beauty struck the man anew as she smiled him a welcome. She was as well groomed as if she had had a lady's maid.

"Has anything happened? Have you had any trouble on my account?" she inquired.

When Roger said no, nothing had happened, she drew a breath of relief.

"No one in any way noticeable has tried to get acquainted with you?"

"The conductor and porter and a waiter or two are the only persons I've exchanged a word with—except a fellow I

know slightly, named O'Reilly, a Congressman from California. I suppose he doesn't interest you?"

"No man interests me ... unless the one who is saving my life," the girl answered surprisingly. As she spoke, a wave of rose-colour poured over her face, and she turned quickly away in confusion. Roger felt that she had blurted it out, scarcely knowing what she said until too late. Instead of liking her less, he liked her better. He brought forth the envelope to show. It had been under his pillow all night, he told her.

"I don't know what I should have done without you!" she said, with a gratitude that was almost humble. There'd be a certain blankness, Roger couldn't help seeing, when the time came to do without *her*!

"When we get to Chicago," he asked, "how can I help you there?"

"Oh, I expect to be met by a friend. I suppose I shan't see you again: but I shall never forget."

Roger Sands felt a horrid twinge of some unpleasant emotion. He loathed the "friend" who would take the girl away from him.

"But Chicago's a long way off," she said when he did not speak. "It must seem a wild story to you, but the danger I'm in ... the danger that this envelope is in ... won't be over for one minute till you've put me into my friend's hands. You will do that, won't you? You'll see me through till the last?"

"I will," said Roger.

"And meanwhile you'll come and call on me in the stateroom sometimes if you don't mind?"

Roger smiled. A silver lining began to glimmer through the cloud.

By good luck he knew no one on board save O'Reilly, who fortunately was in another car, and he hoped that few people knew him. He could not resist her invitation. He began by deciding to spend a half hour with his "invalid cousin" now and again. As through the veil of beauty he caught glimpses of something like character within, Roger felt that the mystery thickened.

The inevitable moment came. The porter was brushing men's hats and coats. Suitcases were being fastened up. The Limited was slowing down in the big station. Then, and not till then, did Miss White show herself at the door of Stateroom A. Sands, who had knocked to tell her that she had better come out, was waiting to guard her for the last time. Neither had much to say. The hope of haven had not raised the girl's spirits. As Sands gave her a hand, stepping on to the platform, he saw Justin O'Reilly, already out of the train and looking about with the air of expecting someone. O'Reilly took off his hat, with an unnecessarily cordial smile for Sands. At heart they were enemies. Roger took the smile to mean amusement at sight of his companion. He felt annoyed. Miss White was looking straight ahead, a brilliant colour staining the cheeks usually pale.

The rendezvous, she had explained to him, was at a news stand. "There!" she said, "that is where he will be. There's such a crowd, I can't see him yet."

They neared the news stand, and as "Miss White" was a tall girl whose head could be seen above the hats of average women, he expected a man to start eagerly

forward. But no man separated himself from the crowd. She was beginning to look anxious: there was no flush on her cheeks now.

"Where can he be?" she said. "Something must have happened."

"Taxi broken down, perhaps," Roger tried consolation.

"Oh, if only it's nothing worse! I must just wait. But you, Mr. Sands, I oughtn't to ask...."

"You needn't," Roger cut her short. "I'm not going to desert you."

"I might have known you wouldn't. He can't be long!"

"What about the envelope? Will you have it now?" Roger asked. She had begged him to keep it until they were out of the train.

"Not yet. I daren't. You're sure it hasn't been stolen from you? Do please make certain!"

He put his hand inside his coat, and felt the envelope, which was safe, of course. "It's there, as large as life."

"Thank heaven!" she breathed.

Minutes passed: fifteen minutes; twenty; thirty. The girl was white as ashes, and dark shadows lay under her eyes. "All hope is over!" she said, as Sands glanced at his watch, when they had stood for three-quarters of an hour. "Some terrible thing has prevented him from meeting me. I don't know what's going to become of me now!"

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THE NET

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"You made no plan what to do if your friend didn't turn up?" Roger enquired. "Have you any other friends in Chicago?"

"Not one."

"Have you ever lived here, or stayed here?"

"No."

If he had now been capable of suspecting her, all his first suspicions of Miss Beverley White would have marshalled themselves in his brain. Nothing had happened during the whole journey to justify her fantastic story of mysterious danger. As for the wonderful envelope, who could tell that it didn't contain blank paper? But Sands had got beyond this stage. If he were a fool, he asked to be nothing better.

"Is that friend you talk of more than a friend?"

"No, only a person I trusted for reasons I can't tell you."

"I see. And you don't know what will become of you since he's failed you, and you're turned adrift in a strange town?"

"I don't know at all. I feel stunned—as if it didn't matter."

"It does matter to a girl like you, left alone without friends in a big city where you're a stranger. Have you money?"

"I had enough and more than enough for my journey here, enough to pay you back for all you've done. I expected to get more money, and to be looked after in Chicago. Perhaps I can find work."

"Do you think after all that's passed I can go coolly on my way leaving you alone in Chicago? I may be a fool, but I have another proposal to make." He paused.

She looked up as if startled.

"What do you say to marrying me and going on to New York as my wife?"

For a minute he thought she was going to faint. She seemed suddenly to become limp. She swayed a little on her feet, and he caught her arm.

"You're tired out, standing so long," he exclaimed.

"No, it's not that. Forgive me. It was almost too much, finding out the height of your goodness. Yet, 'height' is the word!"

"You'll marry me, then!" he cried.

"No," the girl answered, "I thank you with my whole heart, but I can't."

"Why ... why?" he stammered. "Unless you're married already."

"I'm not married. No man has ever been anything to me. I swear that to you! But I can't tell you any more about myself."

Roger did not speak for a minute. At last he said:

"See here, you and I have got to talk. We can't do that where we are, with people jostling us this way and that. There's one thing certain. However this ends, I'm not going to leave you alone in Chicago. We've got plenty of time. Will you let me take you to a quiet restaurant? We can thrash matters out across the table."

"Very well," she agreed.

Roger knew Chicago. When he had arranged to have his luggage put in safe keeping, he got a taxi and took the girl to a dull but good place, sure to be practically empty at that

hour. They sat down at a table in a corner, and Sands ordered an oyster stew.

"Do you dislike me?" he began his catechism. "Could you like me enough to think of me as a husband, if we'd met in a conventional, society sort of way?"

"Yes, I could. I do want you to know that. You've been so splendid to me."

"So far so good, but I haven't been splendid. I've fallen in love with you. I haven't been in love before ... that is, not since I was twenty. I've never had time...."

"You haven't taken much time in doing it now!" She gave a queer little laugh with a sob in it.

"I've learned the lesson that time isn't the thing needed. I want you more than I ever wanted anything in my life, and I'll take you ... as you stand."

"You haven't stopped to think ... to count the cost," she said. "Imagine what it would be for a man like you to have a wife he knew nothing about, just a single figure cut off its background, in a picture he'd never seen. People would ask: 'Who was she?' and there'd be no answer."

"They'd not ask me that," said Roger obstinately. "And I wouldn't care what they asked each other. I'm not a society man, though I might enjoy putting my wife on the top floor. And I can do that with you if I choose! You say I'm a man of importance. I'm important enough anyhow to take the wife I want, and to put her where I want her to be."

"Yes, perhaps. But it wouldn't be only for a little while that I'd not be allowed to tell you about myself. It would be for always. You couldn't love me enough to be happy in spite of that."

"I could be happy," Roger insisted, "if you'd love me."

"I'd adore you! But...."

"Then there isn't any 'but'. I don't say I shouldn't like to know all about my wife and her people and her past. Still, I'd rather have you with a future and no past than any other woman with both. I can't do without you, and I'm going to have you ... now, to-day, as soon as I can buy a license and get a parson to make us man and wife."

"But if you should regret it?"

"I never will be sorry, if you'll do what you just said, adore me ... half as much as I'll adore you."

Her eyes gave him a beautiful answer. Roger Sands felt that nothing could make him regret the coming of such a romance into his hustling life.

This, then, was the story behind the sensation when Roger Sands came back from a short trip to California bringing a wife, a girl who had been a Miss Beverley White, a girl nobody had ever seen or heard of before.

III

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THE MOUSE

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On the same September day, in Moreton and Payntor's department store in New York, might have been seen a wisp of a girl "cheeking" a manager into giving her a situation on the strength of her being Irish.

By chance, the side door of the big Sixth Avenue shop opened for Clo Riley (her true, Irish, baptismal name was Clodagh, but she didn't think that would "go" in New York), on the day when Roger Sands' stateroom door, on the Santa Fé Limited, opened for a very different girl and for Romance. No one would have thought that they could be in the same story—the mysterious Vision and the little, sharp-faced thing from County Cork. Yet without Clo Riley it would have been another story altogether, even though, for more than six months, she and Mr. and Mrs. Roger Sands never heard each other's names, nor saw each other's faces.

It was in the April after her marriage that Mrs. Sands came upon an advertisement in a newspaper. Moreton and Payntor were making a splash about their lately started department for antique furniture. They had obtained "eight magnificent, unique pieces of satinwood furniture painted by Angelica Kaufmann, bought by a representative of Moreton and Payntor, from a titled family in England."

Beverley Sands (her husband called her "Bev") loved painted satinwood, when it was good. How she knew that things were good or bad, Roger sometimes wondered: but she did know. Roger had taken a house at Newport which had come into the market, and Beverley was picking up "beautiful pieces" with which to furnish it. The house would, they hoped, be ready to move into by June.

When she read Moreton and Payntor's advertisement, Beverley decided to see the satinwood suite and buy it if genuine. Her present wealth emphasized her astonishing, incredible happiness. "He gives me everything I want, he trusts me to do everything I like," she thought. Life was

wonderful. Slowly she was coming out from under the cloud of fear, and had ceased to be afraid of Something terrible that might happen.

Roger went every morning to the offices of the firm which had his name at its head. She had breakfasted with him in a kind of super-dressing gown which Roger said was like an opal seen through a sunrise mist. As her maid hooked up her frock she sang for happiness. She wished she could earn it by making someone else happy. Roger didn't count in that way. The credit would be to do things for a person you didn't love.

"To the first creature I meet to-day, who needs help, I'll give it," she said to herself. "I'll do something big ... like sacrificing on an altar."

She went out in Roger's latest present, a limousine car, so silent and so swift that it travelled like a cloud-shadow. Outside the car was dark blue; inside, the pale azure of a robin's egg. Beverley told the chauffeur to drive to Moreton and Payntor's, avoiding traffic because she was in a hurry. To do this, he approached the shop by passing through a side street in which was the entrance for employees, as well as that leading to minor departments, and so connecting with the main shop. It was comparatively a quiet street, but to-day there was a crowd. Something had happened, and only a moment ago, for a policeman was just coming up. The chauffeur would have hurried by to spare Mrs. Sands what might be an unpleasant sight, but on one of her impulses she stopped him. The car windows were open. Beverley heard the words "Poor child" and "Ambulance." She opened the door and jumped out. Because she was beautiful and

beautifully dressed, and had a fine car, people made way for her.

On the pavement a girl was lying. There was some blood, and that would have made Beverley sick, if the face streaked red hadn't struck her as the most tragic, the most pathetic face she had ever seen. It was so ghastly white, so thin, and yet so young!

"What is it? What's happened?" she inquired of the innermost group.

"Chucked herself out of a fourth story window," a fat woman answered. "Somebody was beastly to her, I guess."

"Is she dead?" Beverley asked.

"Not yet ... though she must be a bag o' broken bones. She'll die on the way to hospital, likely, in the ambulance, with nobody to care."

At that instant, as if she heard the terrible words, the girl's eyes opened. It seemed to Beverley that they looked straight at her.

Suddenly she remembered her own resolve. It had been almost a vow: "To the first creature I meet to-day who needs help I'll give it."

Here was the creature. If ever there were an appeal in human eyes, it was in these. Perhaps it was an unconscious appeal. Perhaps the brain had been stunned asleep, but the deep-down soul was awake. It was calling to Beverley's soul, and the call had to be answered, or the vow would be broken. Roger Sands' wife dared not break such a vow lest she should be punished and lose her magical happiness.

She hated the sight of blood. She wanted to think that, if the girl were dying, she could do no good. Yet, while reason

argued, instinct had already decided that this was the claimant of the vow. Beverley knelt down beside the curiously flat-looking body which lay on the pavement. Her dress dipped into a widening pool of blood, but she did not sicken as she had thought she would. And to her own surprise she found her hand stroking back a lock of dark red hair from the upturned face. Poor, thin, child's face!

"Don't be afraid, you're going to be loved and cared for," she promised.

By this time a doctor had arrived. He, too, knelt by the sufferer. He spoke to Beverley, thinking she had some acquaintance with the injured girl. The police had cleared away the sensation seekers, but the lovely lady of the blue automobile was left in peace. She seemed to be helping the doctor.

"Keep off, please, keep off," the policemen repeated. "The ambulance'll be round any instant."

But the ambulance did not take its cue. This was strange, for the service was splendidly prompt. A man ran up bringing news that there'd been a collision with a trolley. No one was hurt, but it meant a delay before another ambulance could be called and respond.

"Can't we take her away in my car?" asked Beverley. "Oh, why shouldn't I have her at my house? She's only a child, so thin and frail! Loving care might save her. I'd have a trained nurse in. I'm Mrs. Roger Sands. You may know my husband's name."

The name of Roger Sands was impressive. So was Beverley, and so was the car. The ambulance wasn't at hand, and time pressed. It seemed as if the offer might be

accepted. The doctor was the physician engaged to attend the employees of Moreton and Payntor, and had authority in the neighbourhood. To test Mrs. Roger Sands' character he abruptly ordered her into the surgical department—"ground floor, close by the side street entrance"—to "fetch out a stretcher and be quick." Beverley responded without hesitation, and in two minutes a startled boy appeared with a canvas thing like a cot.

The doctor and one of the policemen got the childish body on to this while Beverley darted to her waiting chauffeur. He—Robbins, an elderly Englishman—was furious, but short of giving notice then and there, could do nothing save obey. The folding chairs were pulled out: on one was piled the car's best ornament, a large chinchilla rug, and some blue silk cushions. These gave support for the foot of the stretcher, its head resting on the seat; and the other folding chair was taken by the doctor who, sitting there, could hold his patient safely in place. Mrs. Roger Sands scrambled up beside her chauffeur, and did not even notice that the man's face was a thundercloud.

Robbins could have cried. His last situation in England had been with a duke. He would still have occupied it, had he not long passed the "smart" age. Roger Sands had thought him an excellent guardian for Beverley. Robbins didn't approve of America, but he had approved of his mistress. There had seemed to him something queenly about her which "reminded him of home," but to-day he was ashamed of her: to drive through the streets of New York sitting on the front seat beside him, as if she were a lady's maid! Worse than all, her dress, her gloves, were stained

with blood. As for the inside of the new car, it would be ruined. The man felt responsible, and believed that his master would consider him so. Sitting beside Mrs. Sands, with the look of an inferior Roman statue on his square face, the chauffeur resolved to see Mr. Sands before the tale of this morning's work could be told by Sands' American chauffeur, who drove him to and from the office. The Englishman decided to bribe the American to "lend his job" that afternoon. They could arrange an excuse. Harter had a cold. But, as it happened, Roger Sands read of the affair in a second edition of an evening paper while he waited for his car.

To see Beverley's name in big letters gave him a shock. He became conscious that somewhere within him had always been a horror of finding his wife's name in a newspaper, heading "scarelines." His first feeling as he read on was of relief. Why, this was nothing!

Some reporter had worked up the incident into a romance, and his editor, appreciating Roger Sands' importance, had given it nearly a whole column. On the surface it was a tribute to Mrs. Sands' goodness of heart; but as Roger's rush of thankfulness passed, he began to see an unpleasant side of the business.

The reporter had interviewed various persons in the firm of Moreton and Payntor. He had learned that the girl befriended by Mrs. Roger Sands was employed in the restaurant for women "assistants." By certain of these, she had been suspected of small thefts. They had watched her, and it was in the midst of a "scene" following an accusation, that the waitress had suddenly flung herself out of a fourth

story window. She was an Irish girl not long in New York. Her name was Clo Riley, and she had been in the employ of Moreton and Payntor for nearly seven months. She had made no friends, and was considered "Mysterious."

At the Park Avenue apartment of Mr. and Mrs. Roger Sands an interview had been refused; but the reporter had learned from a servant that, if the invalid were "a dear relative" of Mrs. Sands, she could not be more lovingly cared for. The largest and handsomest spare room had been hastily prepared, a trained nurse engaged, and a famous surgeon had been called in consultation with the doctor who had undertaken the case. Following these details came a description of Mrs. Roger Sands, gleaned from an "eye witness" of the "sensational scene" enacted in the street.

The story developed strangely to Roger. He saw something behind it. He knew things about Beverley which, he trusted, few others knew, and saw the affair in another light.

Roger's marriage experiment was a success. He was glad that he had taken the girl "as she stood." To have what she had called a "figure cut off its background out of an unseen picture," was better than to have lost forever a figure of such beauty. He believed that Beverley was as good as she was sweet, but she had been right in her prophecy; it was hideous, sometimes, to see her outlined against darkness.

The incident had happened close to Moreton and Payntor's department store. Beverley had been in the habit of going there lately. She might have had a reason for choosing that shop. Indeed, it struck Roger as incredible that even her impulsiveness could lead her so far, for a

stranger's sake. Besides, why hadn't she telephoned? It looked as if she were determined to carry out her scheme before he could oppose it.

In this mood he went to his automobile. He was surprised to see Robbins, but not sorry, because Robbins had been mixed up in the morning's affair.

"What's this I've been reading in the *Evening Star*?" he broke in.

Here was luck for Robbins! He began to excuse himself for the disgrace which had fallen upon the new car. "It was the mistress's order, sir, and I had no choice; but I can't help thinking if she'd known what a mess the blood would make, she'd 'ave let me call a taxi."

"Another lining is easily put in," said Roger, coolly; but he was angry for the first time with Beverley. Of all women, she was the one who ought to think twice before doing a thing to get herself talked about; but she never thought twice. As he drove homeward, doubts of her crowded into his mind.

At home, Beverley was in the room which had been turned into a hospital ward. The nurse had called her, to announce that the "patient" had returned to consciousness and had begun asking questions.

"I saw it would worry her to be put off," went on Sister Lake, "so I told her a few things. She remembered throwing herself out of the window, and the fall, and then waking up, lying in the street. She said she'd dreamed of an angel-girl bending over her. When she heard what you'd done, she insisted on speaking to you."

"I'll go at once!" Beverley exclaimed.

"Just for a few minutes," the nurse hinted.