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# WHEN THE LID WAS ON

Continued from page 4

in. As the only lights were in the parlor, there was no danger that she would be pounced by a glare on her eyelids.

Her windows were hung wide, and the night air was streaming in. As soon as his eyes expanded so that he could see by the starlight he made out her form in the bed, her face on the pillow, the thick braids of her dark hair round her small head—those delicate, childish features. "Why, she's only a child! God help me! What have I done, marrying her? I must have been crazy! I must be worse than I thought!"

For him, as for Punk, sport was a rise in life, was the pursuit of the loftier of the only two careers opening from his school of the streets and the gangs—the career of professional crook and the career of professional sport. But love and marriage had set him to doubting, to thinking that perhaps for "the kitten's sake" he would do well to drop his profession for one she would be less likely to have a prejudice against. Now—Two weeks married, not a cent in the world, prison stripes surely his unless the right answer came to the telegram he had sent his one flush and friendly acquaintance, old Shag—prison stripes, and this child wife of his awakening from her dream of love to realize all in one blasting horror that she was the wife of a gambler and jailbird! A jailbird's wife! Jack groaned aloud. Then he reined himself in so sharply that his heart almost stopped beating.

The form so gracefully billowing the covers stirred. "Jack, is it you?" came in a low voice, feignedly full of sleep.

"I didn't mean to wake you, Olga," he said regretfully. And he made for his door.

"Good night, dear."

"But I'm wide awake now," she pleaded.

"Please come and talk to me a minute."

"In the morning," he said confusedly. "I'm dead tired, and you need sleep, little girl."

"Please, Jack!" She was sitting up in bed.

Her movements had shaken into the air the perfume of her flowerlike youth. It came drifting to him. He clenched his teeth to suppress a sob. "Just one kiss, at least!" she said, emboldened by the dimness.

She looked like a saint to him, she was a saint to him. He worshiped the humblest of her garments strewn carelessly about the room; for, in her motherless bringing up, she had not been taught order. He advanced with slow, reluctant feet toward the bed. At the touch of her fingers on his cheek, he shuddered. When her lips, persisting, found his, he grew dizzy and faint. Suddenly he caught her to his breast. "You do love me now, don't you?" he cried. "Don't you, my little Olga?"

"I do—I do!" she murmured. "And no matter what you did or what became of us, I'd still love you!"

He drew away in alarm. Then he realized it could have been no more than some chance foreboding that made her put the situation so exactly into words. "No, you wouldn't—you couldn't!" he said. "But you do love me now!" Under his breath. "At least, I do have her! They can kick me down to inferno; but they can't take that away from me!"

"No matter what you did," she persisted solemnly, "and he knew her instinct had felt some part of the truth. "I'll love you always—always—Jack!"

"That's good!" he cried lightly. He hadn't the faintest temptation to tell her. Crowd 'em! Crowd 'em—that had ever been his motto. He would hold up his hand, would play it to the last card! He was sure to lose, he had lost already. But he'd not throw down his hand—not he! He kissed her again, tenderly, cheerfully. "Good night, kitten," he said.

She drew in her breath sharply,—a kind of childlike sob.

"What is it?" he asked.

"I—I love you—so!" she murmured.

A knife thrust could not have caused a keener pain. "Good night," he muttered, rushing into his own room. Every nerve in his body was jumping. But, as if her eyes were seeing, he hung off his evening clothes, whistling softly, splashing carelessly about in the bath room, rolled into bed like a man in a hurry to get the sleep that is impatiently awaiting him.

HE lay until his nerves rebelled against the restraint; then he rose, closed the door between the bed rooms, and with stealthy step paced the floor until, toward seven, he heard her stirring. He began to dress, making a great deal of noise about it. After a shave, cold plunge, and fierce rub-down, he felt better; so, vigorous and dominating is body over mind in youthful health and strength. "Crowd 'em! Crowd 'em!" he said with a hopeful energy that was not altogether pretense. And, though it was only by determined effort that he kept the cheerful expression on his features, the sight of his apparently care-free countenance in the glass gave him a further lift. After all, it was by no means the first time he had dangled in the ragged, raveling edges of ruin. "It's only fear for her that's putting my nerve on the bum," he thought.

Therefore she had always come in her dressing gown to watch him shave. He wondered why the door between their bed rooms remained closed, until he remembered that he was rising much earlier than usual. "She's gone back to bed," he decided. "Maybe I'll get a chance to make a sneak without having to face her again." Without having to face her again!—Why, probably he never again would face her, would see her, his saint, his light, his love! Weak as a rag, he dropped

to a chair, and the miseries of his plight tortured him like a swarm of rats eating a pinned man alive.

A sound at the door between the bed rooms! He sprang to his feet, changed his expression, his whole mien. When her eyes found him, he was at the mirror, making a bright scarf into a bow at his neck and gaily whistling "Champagne Charley," which happened to be the barrel organ favorite of the moment.

"You feel better this morning, don't you?" said she, the beautiful light in her eyes which made him feel as if he were hearing the music of the great organ under the lofty arches.

"Yes, indeed," he cried. He ventured a look at her. "And you?"

"Oh, I'm all right," she assured him.

But he saw that she was not. He didn't like the heaviness of her eyelids, the deep red of the flush in her cheeks. He went to her.

"It's warm—terribly warm, to-day," she said nervously. "And I feel a little exhausted, that's all."

He took hold of her arms. Through her night dress he could feel the fever. "She was ill! Ill at last, as the result of worrying over his strange conduct and of concealing her worry! One more misery, one more huge rat in the banqueting swarm! He picked her up and carried her back to bed. "I'll get a doctor," he said lightly. "You have some fever. You probably caught a little cold."

"I guess so," she said gratefully. "It's really nothing at all. I don't need a doctor."

"Who's boss in this family?" he demanded with tender railleury, as he tucked her in and kissed her. "A stitch in time saves nine. We're not going to have the kitten down sick."

But in his own room again, he muttered between his set teeth, between his white drawn lips, "Crowd 'em! God! how they're crowding me!"

ON the way back to the hotel with the doctor he said abruptly, "Look here, doctor, I'm a sport,—a professional gambler. I was punched last night. My wife comes of a good family, and she don't know about my business, nor about my being punched. She's from a small town out West, and is dead innocent and as good as the push with the wings up yonder. And she's not to know, do you understand?"

"Certainly," said the doctor coldly. "I shall be discreet."

"I've got to go to court in an hour," continued the young man. "But I gave another name when I was arrested, so, if I get off, she needn't ever know."

The doctor looked at him with the dutiful pity of respectable for pariah. "My young friend," said he, "do you know that all common gamblers caught here now are sent up for a year?"

"So I've heard," said Delancey with every appearance of tranquility.

"What hope have you that—"

"None," replied Jack with a shrug.

"How will it be possible to explain this to your wife, when you don't return?"

"I'd be much obliged if you could answer that question," retorted Jack.

"Have you said nothing to break the shock, to pave the way, to—"

"Nothing," cut in Jack. "Nothing! What the deuce could I say? When you see her, you'll understand."

The young gambler's cool indifference irritated, exasperated the doctor, who was a deeply religious man. "I'm amazed at your heartlessness!" he cried. "Have you thought what will happen when she learns how you've treated her?"

"Yes, I've thought of it," said Delancey; and now his tone and look made Dr. Sedley suddenly revise his opinion. "I'm a gambler," he went on; "but by the holy! I'm human."

"I—I beg your pardon," stammered Sedley; and he had to resist the impulse to slip his arm through Jack's. The impulse was the easier to resist because there was something in the straightness of that lithe form, in the thrust of those strong features, that made the idea of trying to support and help seem much like rushing to the assistance of a tall tree rocking in a storm.

When they were at the elevator, Delancey said, "I'll not go up with you. I'll hurry along that nurse you telephoned for. I'd be of no use up there. I want her to think I'm not worried about her. Besides—I can't face her again."

"I'll take care of all that," said the doctor gently. "Wait here in the office, and I'll let you know how she is."

But Jack knew. Hers was the sort of fever that would pass in twenty-four hours if her mind could be freed; but if her mind were not relieved, or if there were any fresh anxieties—"Still, she's young," he tried to reassure himself. "She'll pull through. Only—" Wouldn't she wish she had died? Wouldn't death be better than staggering on with such a burden of shame?

IN court, he stood at the bar, erect, white, calm, beside pasty, quivering Mullins. The amateur sports did not appear, and their bail was declared forfeited. Then the case was heard. There was no defense; there could be none. Mullins was sentenced—one year at hard labor. Delancey stood up and faced the Judge alone.

"Bennett," said the Judge, for that was the name he had given the police, "you are a

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