

Watching Tудie Get Her Cue

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don't say anything; but just waits while she devotes a few minutes to the silent stare business. Then all of a sudden she turns and springs a new one on me.

"Torchy," says she, "I am going to face him. I'll give him a chance to say what he wishes. Only I can't go through it all alone, and—and there isn't anyone I can call on but you. Will you come?"

"Well," says I, "I can't say I'm strong for mixin' up in any fam'ly rows."

"You needn't," says she. "I shall not expect you to say a word or do a thing, no matter what happens. And no doubt I shall deserve whatever he says to me. But not alone! You know something about me—you were nice to me when I came near losing my cat, and—and I want you there."

"Count me in then," says I. "I'll swell up as big and imposin' as I can."

"Good boy!" says she. "Home, Stephen; side entrance," and in ten minutes more we rolls up to one of these big fam'ly hotels somewhere along in the 70's.

THERE'S some class to the joint Tудie opens up with her latchkey, too,—Turkish rugs, swell door draperies, and big vases full of long stemmed roses. Also there's a snappy eyed French maid who looks like she might be onto her job.

"Has Mr. Westover come in with Quito?" says Miss Tremaine.

"Non, M'selle," says the maid. "And the other—is he still waiting?" says she.

"Oui, M'selle," says Annette. "Then 'phone down to the office and say I will see him in five minutes," says Tудie. "Torchy, will you wait here?"

"I'm as good as nailed down," says I. With that I curls up cozy in a windowseat where I can get a look out onto upper Broadway, and prepares to do the patient dummy act. The five minutes is hardly up before there's a ring at the apartment door, and Annette shows in Z. K. Looks a good deal like his pictures, too; one of these smooth faced, iron gray old boys, with a hard jaw and a pair of narrow set, gunmetal eyes.

He seems sort of surprised at discoverin' me, and stops as if he was goin' to duck out.

"It's all right, Governor," says I. "I'm only the third party. Miss Tremaine'll be out right away, I expect."

"Thank you," says he, about as cordial as if I'd invited him to jump off the dock, and that's as chatty as we got.

It's nearly ten minutes more, though, before there's a swish of the portieres and Tудie glides in from the next room. And, say, I hardly knew her for the same girl; for most of the puffs and ringlets has been shook out or unpinned, and she's let her own hair down until it hangs loose in a knot at the back of her neck, and she's washed off the artificial complexion and unhooked the ear pendants.

That way she looks more like the Mary Dinneen I used to see dodgin' through the boardin' house hall in an old dressin' gown; but this clingin' lacy affair with the low cut neck wa'n't any punk article of that sort. It brings out her figure stunnin', and she looks no more than the twenty she claims.

MR. WESTOVER, he seems a little jarred at first; but he recovers quick and goes through the preliminaries polite and easy. Then, glancin' my way, he suggests that he'd like a few minutes' private conversation with Miss Tremaine.

"It's only a young friend of mine," says Tудie. "I prefer that he should stay."

"Very well," says Z. K.; "but it may be embarrassing to all of us. I—er—my errand concerns my son, Miss Tremaine, and—er—his relations with you."

"Then there is nothing that needs to be discussed in private," says she. "Torchy knows. I've just told him all about it."

"Indeed!" says Mr. Westover, liftin' his eyebrows. "May I trust that you will be equally frank with me? I wish to know, first of all, just how big a fool you have made of Duke."

"Why," says Tудie, with one of them gurgly laughs of hers, "it seemed to me the job had been finished before I had a chance. Was Duke ever so wise, then?"

Which was battin' it up some, eh? He's a game old sport, though. He never squirms or so much as colors up. He just bows and wrinkles them square mouth corners a bit.

"I believe we have never taken much pride in Duke's wisdom," says he; "but at least he has avoided making his folly conspicuous, until recently. We—er—his mother and I, hardly appreciate the honor you do us. May I ask for the exact status? Is there a formal engagement?"

"No," says Tудie.

"Perhaps it is a secret one, or only implied?" suggests Mr. Westover.

"There is nothing of the kind," says Tудie, "and there's no prospect that there will be."

"I am relieved to hear it," says he. "That being the case, would it be possible to induce you to send Duke about his business?"

"You mean—" begins Tудie. "To end—er—this sort of thing," and he waves his hand over to where a big photo of Duke is displayed on the mantel.

"I can try," says Tудie. "I have tried."

"Oh, no doubt," says Mr. Westover, smilin' sarcastic.

But that was the wrong place for him to get humorous. I was watchin' Tудie, and I saw them big grape colored eyes of hers turn black in a second. They looks hard and wicked too, and she stiffens up that straight backbone of hers until she looks a foot taller.

"Perhaps you would like to hear me do it?" says she.

"It would be very convincing," says he. "Is he likely to—er—to—"

"He ought to be back very soon," says Tудie. "I sent him out to the park to exercise my dog."

And that gets Pa Westover in the short ribs. He gulps once or twice, and then manages to growl, "With your dog! Young woman, who are you that—that—"

"I should be very glad to tell you precisely who I am, Mr. Westover," says Tудie. "Do you remember, by any chance, the family that occupied tenement H-49 of Mill No. 17 for a dozen or more years?"

"Why—why, no," says he, lookin' puzzled. "We have such a large number of mills, and so many, many—"

"Yes, I know," breaks in Tудie. "The name was Dinneen. Peter Dinneen was head of the family. He was one of the loom fixers in No. 17."

"Why, yes," says Westover, "I believe I do remember an old Peter Dinneen. Didn't he have a large family of boys and girls?"

"Eleven," says Tудie. "I am the youngest."

"You!" says he. "You are one of—of—"

"I was," says Tудie, steppin' up close and lookin' him straight between the eyes. "All the Dinneens have worked at your looms; four of my brothers, six of my sisters. Do you know what that means, Mr. Westover?"

"Why—er—in just what way?" says he. "In the matter of how long they can stand it and live," says Tудie. "Only three of my sisters are left. Do you find me good looking, Mr. Westover? They say I am."

"I—I indorse the popular verdict," says he.

"Well, two of my sisters were much better looking than I when they first went to work in No. 17," says she. "You would hardly believe it to see them now. And when I was sixteen I was sent in to learn to run a loom. I had dreaded it for years; but I knew that my time was coming, for when a family lives on mill wages all who are old enough must help earn. And you know what we got."

Mr. Westover ain't answerin' now. He's just gazin' at her through them narrow set eyes of his.

"But I was a millhand just one day," goes on Tудie; "then I ran away. It broke my poor old dad's heart; but I couldn't go back into that mill again. I couldn't feed myself to your looms as I had seen my sisters feed themselves to them. And I happened to know a way out. I knew a girl who had gone into chorus work. Oh, yes, I knew the kind of girl she had become, all about it; but I took the chance, just the same, with my eyes wide open, and— Well, here I am, you see, and there isn't a Dinneen left in your mills, and—"

JUST then she breaks off; for there's a step in the corridor and we hears a key turn in the door, and in drifts a sappy faced youth carryin' a toy terrier in his arms.

"And," continues Tудie, "here is your Duke!"

"Bah Jove, yes, Tootsie!" says Duke boy, droppin' the dog and gazin' admirin' at Tудie. "Had an awfully jolly tramp with Quito in the park, y'know. Reg'lar lark. And— Well, I'm jolly well dashed! Father!"

"How are you, Duke?" says the old gent, bowin' dignified.

"Oh, I'm rippin'," says Duke. "But what's all this, eh? You're not up here rowin' with Tудie, are you? Cawn't have that, you know."

"Your father," says Tудie, "has merely dropped in to ask me to send you about your business, Duke. I've promised I would, and I'm going to do it now. So run along with Papa. You're an awful bore, anyway."

And you should have seen young West-

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