

Young Love Finds the Way in the Shadow of an Old Man's Tragedy.

NEITHER of us, Justin Terry nor I, remembered until afterward how the green switch targets had shifted from green to red in the semaphore arms at the North Branch bridge while we watched over John Benedict's dead body; and yet there had been something balefully ominous in the sudden flash of the lanterns from emerald to ruby as we stood there in the storm, gazing at each other with the stupid astonishment of people who stumble upon death in the midst of life. So mechanical did the operation appear, however, so removed from human impulse, that we never thought to associate it with the drama of which it blinked until circumstance shoved us into a corner from which we had to grope back through every instant of those portentous moments. Then it was not we, but Kenneth Winerly, who found its significance in the chain of events that began for us when they ended for John Benedict.

The Sunset Trail Limited had gone by in a swirl of snow as I passed the gate of the Benedict plant on Carpenter avenue, a square distant from the station, and I knew that I had time enough to reach the local that follows the other train out of the terminal beyond the bridge. I had been coaching the Wednesday evening drama class at the Carpenter settlement, and I left in good season, since there is no later direct train to Glenwood, but I remembered, as I came by Deane street, that Rita Kubal had told me that Mrs. Foran was dead. I had not known her even as well as her husband, whom I had met once in a while in my comings and goings, for she was a strange, furtive creature, resenting her neighbors quite as much as she resented us settlement helpers. The Forans had lived in almost defiant seclusion, childless and friendless. The thought of the old man's loneliness in his grief rather than any feeling of acquaintanceship with him had turned me down to the shack by the river.

Had I not known the neighborhood quite as well as I knew Glenwood, where we Hagars had lived since Natalie and I were children, I might have drawn back in terror from the darkness of Doane street. Carpenter avenue is forbidding enough on those nights when the Benedict plant is plunged into darkness, but occasional motor and street cars pass, and there are always the broad bands of light from the settlement windows and the narrow stream from the watchman's box at the gate of the plant. Doane street, however, plunging through lumber yards to end at the river, is a blind alley so unlighted that only the whiteness of the whirling snow guided me toward the Foran's shack.

Through one of the windows, as I came abreast of the house, I saw the gleam of tapers. I tried the door and found it locked. I knocked upon it, but no one answered. I turned away with the thought that Mrs. Foran had died, as she had in life, kept out of the little world of her neighborhood. It was not the ways of the poor, and, since comradeship is one of the compensatory blessings of poverty, I sighed over the pathos of the old man who denied it to himself while he brooded over his dead.

All thought of the Forans went from my mind, swept like flashes in the growing gale, however, as I went down the long platform of the railroad station. The Carpenter station is deserted at nightfall and used only by work belated commuters, who signal the few trains that stop there. With a single oil lantern hanging before it, the place has the aspect of some little way station in the West, for all it is set in the heart of a city's factory district. In the three years of my work at Carpenter house I had come to know it too well to regard it with fear, and I had swung well down the full length of the platform before I glimpsed a scene which pierced me with a cold beyond the storm.

On the railroad toward the bridge a man bent over a huddled heap. Something within me kept saying that the heap was a dead man. It said, too, although I tried to put away the thought that the scene was not a casual accident. Tragedy brooded too near to be denied. But, with all my forebodings, I was not ready for my part. For, when I stole myself to step from the platform and go down the track, the stooping man turned toward me. I was near enough to touch Justin Terry before I could see his face. Afterward it seemed strange to me that I never questioned his presence there any more than he questioned mine. But when he said, "Don't look, Edith. It's Benedict," an icy hand closed over my heart. I stood, stupidly staring, while the semaphore signal lights changed color.

"Is he dead?"  
"Yes."  
"How?"  
"I don't know. The Sunset Trail struck him, I suppose."  
"What can I do?"  
"Go back to the gate and call the watchman. I can't leave him here. We must get him off before the local comes."  
I sped down to the street and stumbled on through the snow toward the ribbon of light at the watch box. John Benedict dead—killed. Only those of us who had worked in the shadow of his great plant could be so numbed by his passing. It was as if the ship engines had stopped in the night without warning. For Benedict, ruthless, rugged, dominated the district as a monarch. Ever since I had come to Carpenter house I had been forced into admiration of the man's energy even as I had held hatred of his means and methods of using it. Only tonight the hatred had flamed anew when I had heard the gossip of his quarrel with Justin Terry. Rita Kubal, Benedict's stenographer, had told me the story as she had waited for her role in "The Shadow of the Glen." "Mr. Terry was right," she said, "and Benedict was wrong. But he's so strong, Miss Edith, you forget how wrong he can be."

The epitaph was writing itself on my mind as I ran down the avenue. So strong—and to be snuffed out like a candle flame! I then was I upon the thought that I came to the gate without noticing the limousine at the curbstone until a voice from it spoke to me as I pounded upon the sentry box. Then at my stammered words Benedict's chauffeur leaped from the car. "Killed!" he repeated. "Old Benedict killed! And on the tracks! What was he doing there? He left me nearly an hour ago and told me I thought he'd gone inside."  
The watchman, summoned by our pounding, declared that Benedict had not gone into the plant. "He went out at 4 o'clock," he insisted, "and he never went back. Mr. Terry, the sales manager, left at a quarter to 10. He went off

GREEN LANTERNS

by MARY SYNON

Illustrated by Herbert Morton Stoops



toward the settlement house. He's the last one out."

"He found Mr. Benedict," I said. "He's there now."

The chauffeur and the watchman mounted the car after helping me within, and in a moment we had come to the railroad. They ran up the stairs before me and had come to where Justin stood guard over the dead man when I arrived at the platform. Justin's cry halted me. "But it can't be! He's dead, killed, but not murdered."

"I think it's murder, Mr. Terry," the chauffeur was insisting. "See, his coat's cut right over his heart. A knife did that. And where's his overcoat? He had it on when he left the car. Sure, it's murder."

"It looks like it," said the watchman. "I'll send in a police call."  
He passed me on the run, and I moved closer to Justin. "You'd better go home, Edith," he said. "I'd take you, only I must see this through. They'll want me as a witness."

"Won't they want me?"  
"I hadn't thought of that. I shouldn't have let you go for the watchman. Otherwise you could be kept out of it." He began to pace the platform restlessly. As he passed me for the second time he stopped.

"I quarreled with Benedict this morning," he said. "The quarrel was nothing new. We did that once a week at least, but the occasion for this was different. He ordered me to do something that—well, that I couldn't. We had it out, all over the office. Then I quit. I cleared up everything tonight. Queer, isn't it, the way things work out? If I'd waited till tomorrow—I wish I hadn't said all I did. I've worked for him for five years, and— He drew himself up from his meditations. "O, well what is to be, will be. But I'm sorry."

"Who could have killed him, Justin?"  
"Who knows? He had plenty of enemies, but I can't imagine one of them doing it. It may have been for money. He probably carried a wad of currency. He had that trick. And yet a knife in his back—"

"But his family? Who'll tell them?"  
"He has no family. The only relatives of whom I've ever heard are distant cousins in Omaha."

"Is there any one to notify?"  
"Parsons, the secretary, will know."

He went back to his pacing, apparently oblivious to the immediate problem of the manner of Benedict's death in his regret over having quarreled with the dead man. It was I who remembered the coming of the local and cried warning to the chauffeur. Justin sprang to help him bear the burden from the tracks. They had just succeeded when the train, unannounced by the platform lantern, rumbled past us, leaving the three of us there with Benedict's body. Then, once again, the switch targets shifted from green to red.

Four officers, guided to the place by the watchman, came, with a scurry of authority. One of them, McGrath, Justin called by name. "It's an awful thing," the policeman said, "the way these hold-ups are killing—"

"I don't believe it's a holdup," Justin said. "Benedict has been stabbed."  
"Who found him?"  
"I did."

"Was he dead?"  
"Yes. I thought the train had struck him. It was passing as I came up the stairs. I saw something on the roadbed and ran toward it."

"Did you see any one running away?"  
"No one. I did not know it was murder until Lane, the chauffeur, and the watchman examined the body. His wallet is there, with \$200 in it."  
"And the lady?" He looked at me.  
"Miss Hagar came up to take her train, the local that follows the limited. She found me just after I discovered that the man was Benedict."

"I see." He gave an order to the other officers, then one to us. "You'll have to come with me to the station," he advised us.  
We went, driven in Benedict's car, and with a strange sense of the incongruity

of our presence in it under the circumstances. At the police station a startled captain but us through a routine of queries, then bade us hold ourselves in readiness for summons to the inquest. Afterward Benedict's chauffeur insisted upon driving us to Glenwood. "It's just as easy as going back downtown," he declared, and I accepted with a realization that he wanted to work off the nervous tension of the tragedy.

Through the long ride, as we whirled beyond the outskirts of the city and into the first of the suburban towns, Justin was strangely silent. I knew, however, that it was not Benedict's death as much as his own problem of living that troubled him. He had held to the Benedict plant, in spite of its disagreeable alterations that all John Benedict's men suffered, because of his desire to marry Natalie. Somehow, no one could imagine Natalie marrying any one who was not assured, I could have done it, and gladly, for a man whom I loved and who loved me as Justin loved my sister, but to expect sacrifice in Natalie was to look for sturdiness in an orchid. Now, with his job gone, flung away for whatever reason had precipitated his conflict with Benedict, he was facing a long wait—and a hurt, disappointed Natalie. "Don't worry, Justin," I strove to reassure him. "It will all come right."

He patted my hand, as if in gratitude for the comforting, and I realized anew how much of a boy Justin Terry was, for all his record of hard and successful work.

"I should have thought of all it meant before I went off," he confessed.  
"It's done, however, and it may be for the best. But, even aside from that, I'm sorry, Edith, that I said to him all those things I'd stored for years. They are not true, as I see them, but I'm not the judge."

We had come to our house, and I saw a light in the library. "Won't you come in?" I asked him. "We can put you up for the night, you know."  
"No," he said. "Lane is going back downtown, and he'll take me. It's pretty late."

Because I realized that Natalie would with reason, be angry at him for not coming in, I refrained from telling her that he had come out with me when she came into the hall to meet me. "What on earth kept you?" she demanded. "Martin met the train, and was going back for the midnight. Why didn't you telephone?"

I told her the story hastily. She listened with wide open eyes that began to flash ere I finished. "Do you mean to tell me," she cried, "that Justin quit the plant today just because he didn't like something Benedict told him to do? Why should he care? It's Benedict's plant, and he has a right to order anything he wants in it, hasn't he? And now Justin, because he—" She broke off one line of thought to rush to another.

"And of course the two of you will be wanted as witnesses, and the newspapers will have stories and photographs, and we'll have tribes of reporters on the veranda, the way the Harmons had when Elsie ran away, and we'll be gossiped about and laughed at, and I suppose people will confuse me with you and start asking what I was doing at Carpenter with Justin at midnight. And it all comes of your going to the settlement. Edith! You know that mother always said that trouble would come out of it."

"Well, it hasn't come yet," I said as I went upstairs.

But I was wrong. It had come, though I did not yet know it. It was only when the inquest ended the next afternoon, with the evidence of six people presented, Justin's, Lane's, the watchman's, McGrath's, the coroner's physician's, and my own, that the coroner called Rita Kubal. Wide eyed, puzzled, the girl told the story of Justin's quarrel with Benedict. Ten minutes later the jury brought in the verdict that John Benedict had met his death by stabbing and requested the holding of Justin Terry to the grand jury.

"What does it mean?" I asked him. Natalie had not come, and we sat to-

gether in the dingy room of the police station.

"It means," he said, "that they think I killed him."

"But it's absurd, ridiculous. I saw—"

"You saw me bending over him. Rita heard our quarrel. That's about all there is to it, but it's enough for indictment with no other motive established. But don't worry, Edith, and don't let Natalie worry. It's just a tangle, but we'll get through. I've telephoned Carmichael to get me bail. I'll have to wait till he comes."

"Can't I do anything for you?" I asked him.

"Nothing," he said, "but keep up Natalie's courage."

The keeping up of Natalie's courage would have been a possible though difficult task had she felt for a moment the need of that virtue. As it was, I found when I reached home that the newspapers had carried the verdict before me. As I went into mother's sitting room I knew that another verdict had been passed. Mother, whiter and tenser than Natalie and looking far more grim than grandmother, announced it. "We feel that your part in this affair is unfortunate, Edith," she said, "but not of your own making. We believe, though, that Justin brought this upon himself, and so we have decided that it is only fair to Natalie that he shall have nothing whatever to do with her until this cloud is removed."

"But you don't believe, you can't believe, that he killed Benedict?"  
"Hardly that. But can't you see how unfair it is to Natalie that she should be associated with him under the circumstances?"

I looked at Natalie, expecting from her an outburst of denial, for I had thought that with all her false standards of people and things she really loved Justin; but she was gazing out of the window at the snowy landscape as if she were not under discussion. "Can't you see," I burst out, "how unfair to him it is that you should not stand by him when he needs us, Natalie most of all?"

"I see that you are as absurd and quixotic as ever," mother said hotly, and went out of the room. Natalie followed her without a word. As I rose to go grandmother halted me. She was seated in the wing chair by the window that we sometimes call her throne because of her magnificent air of command in her utterances out of it. Even though she seemed to be reading the newspaper, I knew that she had missed nothing of our words, and I expected from her a revised and more direct version of mother's unjust point of view. "Sit down," she bade me. I obeyed. No one disobeys Mme. Marshall, who has ruled three households in turn, her mother's, her own, and her daughter's.

"I suppose," she said, taking off her spectacles and transfixing me with her bright little eyes, "that, after you think it over, you will decide that, while your family is wrong, peace must be purchased."  
"I didn't do that about the settlement," I combated her.  
"No," she said. "That's why I have hopes for you now. To begin with, Edith," she counseled me, "that Terry boy is a fool."  
"He is not."  
"A fool," she repeated. "Here he goes mooning over Natalie, thinking he's crazy over her, and all the time depending on you for sympathy and comradeship and loyalty. Just like a man," she snapped, "wasting his bread and cake at the same time, and thinking the cake will make the meal. And you're a fool for loving him."

"Don't!"  
"Don't lie to me, Edith. But seeing that you're both fools, I suppose I must take a hand in this game. You don't believe he killed that Benedict man, do you?"

"Of course, I don't."  
"And you want to make sure that he'll be acquitted?"  
"Then go and see Kenneth Winerly. Why he's—"

"Yes, he's the head of the Winerlys. Tell him that Mary Marshall, your grand-

mother, sent you. And remember to tell me what he says when you say it."

"Thank you, grandmother," I told her. I sought Kenneth Winerly the next morning. As I went into the offices of the world's most famous detective agency I thought that access to the head of the institution might be difficult, but the messenger at the railing came back for me at once when he had taken in my card, leading me to an inner office, where a big man was seated at a huge table, from which he arose at my entrance. Pleasant voiced, keen eyed, reassuring, he held out his hand with more than passing friendliness. "You are Frances Marshall's daughter, aren't you?" he asked me.

"Grandmother told me to say I was Mary Marshall's granddaughter."

"That's just like her," he laughed. "She was my first love, you know. Not a sentimental valentine love, but a real one. She was a young married woman with three little girls, and I was a boy of 11 or so when she came to live next door to us. She gave me cakes, and cookies, and gingerbread, and scoldings, and advice, and a lot of good mothering. My mother was dead. And I loved Mary Marshall. I still do. Now, what can I do for her granddaughter?"

I told him. He listened without looking at me, but staring at the ivory paper cutter which he twirled. "And you want evidence to acquit young Terry?" he asked me when I had ended the telling of all I knew of the case.

"Do you think you can get it?"  
"Well, if Mary Marshall sent you to me, I suppose I must. It'll never do to let her know I couldn't." He pressed a buzzer beneath his desk and the messenger came in. "Send Rothan," he ordered. A moment later a tall, lean man appeared, giving me a casual glance that I felt recorded me beyond possibility of later mistake. "Get all the existing evidence in the Benedict murder," he bade him. "Can you come back tomorrow at this time and bring Terry?" he asked me.

"Will they let him come?"  
"O, yes, he's on bail," Rothan said. "With Rothan interested already," he said, "we've turned corner. The lean man smiled as I went out.

I telephoned to Justin at his apartment, asking him to meet me at the Athletic Club. He came, I think, for news of Natalie. He looked so worn and troubled that I hesitated to tell him the truth. "Mother thinks," I tried to smooth it down, "that it would be better that you didn't see Natalie just now."

"What does Natalie think?"  
"She's so distressed and troubled that she is letting mother think for her. She isn't much more than a child, you know."

"But you came in—and saw Winerly?"  
"But I'm—"

"Yes, you're different." He gave me a strange look that sent the blood pounding up to my ears. "I don't want Natalie to worry," he said after a moment's pause. "Tell her I leave the full decision to her. If she wants to see me she'll let me know. I'll do nothing until she does. I'll have enough to think about," he said bitterly, "in fighting this charge."

"But Winerly—"  
"What can Winerly find out that we don't know?" he protested. "It's good of you and Mme. Marshall to interest him, but here are the facts: John Benedict is murdered, and his body set on the tracks near the bridge. I am found stooping over him. No one else seems guilty, so a jury of my peers picks me."

"O, if I hadn't seen you!"  
"Some one else would have."

"But will they make me swear that I found you there?"  
"That'll make no difference. Tinner, the watchman, will testify that I left the plant at 9:45. Lane will testify that Benedict left the car about 9:20. Hanner knows he didn't go into the plant. Rita Kubal and a dozen others will testify that Benedict and I quarreled bitterly that morning and threatened each other. Men do, you know, when they are angry enough, and Benedict and I were angry. He had ordered me to run in substitutes, low grade stuff, in the sales. I refused,

One word led to another. He was ugly, anyhow, that morning. Something—a telephone call, I think—had upset him."

"Who called?"  
"I don't know. And, anyhow, I'm the one held. It all pieces together against me."

"But there's the knife. It hasn't been found."

"It may be lost in the snow."  
"Winerly will find something."

"I haven't your faith, Edith," he said as I left him, but the look he gave me lingered in my heart.  
I went out to Carpenter house, only to meet there a definite and general opinion that Justin had killed John Benedict. They all deplored it, of course, wondering how he could have committed the crime, and, in a way, since Benedict was popular and the murder not sordid, rather hoped he would come out free; but the impression of his guilt persisted in spite of my defense of him, and I went to the weaving room to be alone.

Rita Kubal's sister followed me there with the news that a man wanted to see me. The hope that some might bring us a key on which to hang hope led me to tell her to bring him in. When he came my heart sank to see that my caller was Tom Foran.

The old man looked crushed by the grief of his wife's death. "I heard that you came over right before last," he said, twirling his battered old cap in nervous hands. "I want to thank you, miss, for coming."

"I'm sorry I couldn't get in," I said. "Is there anything I can do now?"  
"Would you want to come to the funeral?" he asked, watching me with wistful eyes. "It'll be this afternoon. A few of the men who have worked with me will be there, but I thought perhaps you might have liked to have a woman come. And I don't know any women."

That was how I happened to go to the funeral of a woman whom I had hardly known in her lifetime.

I had seen death more than once in the course of the years I had worked at Carpenter house, but it seemed to me that I have never seen it in so lonely, so tragic a guise as it wore when it came to the Forans. The little shack, pitifully bare, made gloomy setting for the simple service through which poor old Tom Foran sat in a trance of grief while the minister, shabbily feathering himself, read the solemn words: "I am the Resurrection and the Life," he ended. Then four men lifted the bare coffin to the waiting hearse, and they, the old man and I entered a big black car and drove to one of the new cemeteries to the westward. Under a gray sky that drooped with threat of another storm, we watched the box lowered into the snow of the broken ground. Perhaps it was because my own worries brought me closer to the sorrows of others, but nothing in all my life saddened me as had that somber scene.

I left the men at the cemetery gate and took the street car back to the settlement. I could not face mother and Natalie then. They seemed too detached from the realities of life, too sheltered for understanding of them, and so, to avoid them, I waited until late before I started for home. Natalie and mother had gone to bed and apparently to sleep but grandmother called me as I passed her door. I went in and told her of Kenneth Winerly and his talk of her. "He certainly liked cake," she chuckled. "Well, maybe it was cast on the waters."

Justin and I went to Winerly the next afternoon. Rothan had given him a summary of the evidence, but the finding of Benedict's coat on the side of the tracks and the declaration of McGrath that the footprints in the snow had been obliterated by the shifting of the icy particles was all that had been added to what we knew. Winerly went over them like a man scanning a column of figures, and I was reminded by his method that he was a great executive rather than a great detective of the sleuthing school. I began to wonder if he were really the man he swung around to question us.

Over and over our story he went, leading us in an out of the telling, but apparently unsatisfied with our meager tale. "Benedict went back that night with a definite purpose," he reasoned. "Rothan finds he left the plant at 4, attended a conference at the Manufacturers' Association, and had dinner alone at the Union Club. Then he rode out to Carpenter. He left his car and did not go in the plant. Whom had he come to meet? That's the question."

"Some one telephoned him that morning," I said. "Justin and Rita Kubal have both said the call seemed to make him more than usually ugly."

"Did the switchboard operator notice the call?"  
"There were a hundred a day for Benedict," Justin said. "All she remembers is that a man called who seemed unused to telephoning. He used a pay telephone because he had trouble about the coin."

"Hm," said Winerly. "That begins to look as if we'd have to go back quite a distance to piece the puzzle. Perhaps Rothan has."

Rothan, while he had already delved back into Benedict's life, had no clew out of his information garnered from the storehouses of the Winerly office. Benedict, born in Missouri, had gone West with the extension of one of the transcontinental railroads. From track construction laborer he had risen to the superintendency of one of the contracts. He had gone into railroad construction contracting, starting the work on a small scale that grew with rapidity under his sledgehammer driving. For a couple of years he had lived in a little town named Staley's Bend, up in the Colorado mountains, leaving it for Denver. He had lived in Denver for six years. Then he had come East.

"Did he ever marry?" Winerly asked. "Denver wires no record, but some gossip," Rothan answered. "Woman came to Denver with him, but disappeared in a short time. That was twenty-seven years ago."

"Was there anything in his papers to give a line on a revenge motive?"  
"Nothing except ordinary business transactions. Some of them are fairly ugly, but they don't fill the bill."

"Have you seen everything?"  
"Everything but the will. His attorneys hold that for probate."

"Watch it. And if nothing develops here within forty-eight hours, send an operator to Staley's Bend." He turned to us as Rothan went out. "I may be wrong," he said, "but a knife suggests vendetta."

"It's queer, isn't it," I speculated, "that he should be killed on the tracks after the years he has spent in building railroads?"  
Kenneth Winerly focused on me a blue-bright look. "Are you sure, quite sure," he demanded of me, "that you saw