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thing; and not at all in his line, for another. This, however, was a crisis calling for staggering novelties.

Monte walked slowly to her side. She turned and met his eyes. On the whole, he would have felt more comfortable had she continued looking out the window.

"Marjory," he said—"Marjory, will you marry me?"

She shrank away.

"Monte!"

"I mean it," he said. "Will you marry me?"

After the first shock she seemed more hurt than anything.

"You aren't going to be like the others?" she pleaded.

"No," he assured her. "That's why—well, that's why I thought we might arrange it."

"But I don't love you, Monte!" she exclaimed.

"Of course not."

"And you—you don't love me."

"That's it," he nodded eagerly.

"Yet you are asking me to marry you?"

"Just because of that," he said. "Don't you understand?"

She was trying hard to understand, because she had a great deal of faith in Monte, and because at this moment she needed him.

"I don't see why being engaged to a man you don't care about need bother you at all," he ran on. "It's the caring that seems to make the trouble—whether you're engaged or not. I suppose that's what ails Teddy."

She had been watching Monte's eyes; but she turned away for a second.

"Of course," he continued, "you can care—without caring too much. Can't people care in just a friendly sort of way?"

"I should think so, Monte," she answered.

"Then why can't people become engaged—in just a friendly sort of way?"

"It wouldn't mean very much, would it?"

"Just enough," he said.

He held out his hand.

"Is it a bargain?"

She searched his eyes. They were clean and blue.

"It's so absurd, Monte!" she gasped.

"You can call me, to yourself, your secretary," he suggested.

"No—not that."

"Then," he said, "call me just a *camarade de voyage*."

Her eyes warmed a trifle.

"I'll keep on calling you just Monte," she whispered.

And she gave him her hand.

**EVIDENTLY** young Hamilton did not hear Monte come down the stairs, for he was sitting in a chair near the window, with his head in his hands, and did not move even when Monte entered the room.

"Hello, Hamilton," said Covington.

Hamilton sprang to his feet—a shaking, ghastly remnant of a man. He had grown thinner and paler than when Covington last saw him. But his eyes—they held Covington for a moment. They burned in their hollow sockets like two candles in a dark room.

"Covington!" gasped the man.

Then his eyes narrowed.

"What the devil you doing here?" he demanded.

"Sit down," suggested Monte. "I want to have a little talk with you."

It was physical weakness that forced Hamilton to obey. Monte drew up a chair opposite him.

"Now," he said quietly, "tell me just what it is you want of Miss Stockton."

"What business is that of yours?" demanded Hamilton nervously.

Monte was silent a moment. Here at the start was the question Marjory had anticipated—the question that might have caused him some embarrassment had it not been so adequately provided for in the last few moments. As it was, he became conscious of a little glow of satisfaction which moderated his feelings toward young Hamilton considerably. He actually felt a certain amount of sympathy for him. After all, the little beggar was in bad shape.

But, even now, there was no reason, just yet, why he should make him his confidant. Secure in his position, he felt it was none of Hamilton's business.

"Miss Stockton and I are old friends," he answered.

"Then—she has told you?"

"She gave me to believe you made a good deal of an ass of yourself this morning," nodded Monte.

Hamilton sank back limply in his chair.

"I did," he groaned. "Oh, my God, I did!"

"All that business of waving a pistol—I didn't think you were that much of a cub, Hamilton."

"She drove me mad. I didn't know what I was doing."

"In just what way do you blame her?" inquired Monte.

"She wouldn't believe me!" exclaimed Hamilton. "I saw it in her eyes. I couldn't make her believe me."

"Believe what?"

Hamilton got to his feet and leaned against the wall. He was breathing rapidly, like a man in a fever.

Monte studied him with a curious interest.

"That I love her," gasped Hamilton.

"She thought I was lying. I couldn't make her believe it, I tell you! She just sat there and smiled—not believing."

"Good Lord!" said Monte. "You don't mean that you really do love her?"

Hamilton sprang with what little strength there was in him.

"Damn you, Covington—what do you think?" he choked.

Monte caught the man by the arms and forced him again into his chair.

"What I meant," said Monte, "was, do you love her with—with an honest-to-God love?"

**WHEN** Hamilton answered this time, Covington saw what Marjory meant when she wondered how Hamilton could look like a white-robed choir-boy as he sang to her. He had grown suddenly calm, and when he spoke the red light in his eyes had turned to white.

"It's with all there is in me, Covington," he said.

Monte looked puzzled.

"Just what does she mean to you?" he asked.

"All that's left in life," answered Hamilton. "All that's left to work for, to live for, to hope for. It's been like that ever since I saw her on the boat. I was coming over here to go the old rounds, and then—everything was changed. There was no place to go, after that, except where she went. I counted the hours at night to the time when the sun came up and I could see her again. I didn't begin to live until then; the rest of the time I was only waiting to live. I thought at first I had a chance, and I planned to come back home with her to do things. I wanted to do big things for her. I thought I had a chance all the while, until she came here—until this morning. Then, when she only smiled—well, I lost my head."

"What was the idea back of the gun?" asked Monte.

Hamilton answered without bravado.

"I meant to end it for both of us; but I lost my nerve."

"Good Lord! you would have gone as far as that?"

"Yes," answered Hamilton wearily. "But I'm glad I fell down."

Monte passed his hand over his forehead. He could not fully grasp the meaning of a passion that led a man to such lengths as this. Why, the man had proposed murder—murder and suicide; and all because of this strange love of a woman. He had been driven stark raving mad because of it.

Monte rose from his chair and paced the room a moment. Suddenly he wheeled and faced Hamilton.

"It seems to me," he said, "that if a man loved a woman—really loved her—then one of the things he would be most anxious about would be to make her happy. Are you with me on that?"

Hamilton raised his head.

"Yes," he answered.

"Then," continued Monte, "it doesn't seem to me that you are going about it in