



ON TRIAL Novelized by Charles N. Lurie From the Great Play by Elmer Reizenstein

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Strickland's last question had been put in a voice that marked the last degree of repression. He had held himself in leash since the outbreak in which he had wrenched the purse from his wife's grasp. It had been a mighty effort, and as he had questioned his wife his hands had clinched and un-



climbed, the veins on his forehead had stood out. Now his passion passed the bounds of restraint, and he fairly shouted at her:

"That's the last lie you'll tell me!" "What do you mean?" "I mean that this address is in Trask's handwriting." The words struck the woman like a blow. With a little cry she seated herself on the sofa and rested her head on one hand. He followed her across the room and stood over her as he went on: "I want the truth now. You met Trask before tonight?" "Yes."

"He came here?" "Yes." "When?" "Night before last." "And you arranged to go down there yesterday? He was there? You went down there to meet him—my God!" It was her very last chance, she thought. Doing her utmost to collect herself, to summon up all her powers, to call to her aid the love and trust he had always given to her, she said: "Robert, dear—"

"The effort failed. He was too far gone in anger, in suspicion, in doubt, to heed the appealing tone. His voice had lost none of its passion as he asked: "May, why did you go down there? I'm waiting." She faltered. "Because—no, no; I can't tell you; I can't tell you!" Perhaps there was a lull in the fearful thunderstorm that was about to break over the couple. Perhaps it was the prompting of affection for the stricken woman that made Strickland say:

"May, if you love me—if you ever loved me—" "You can't tell me? You mean—no; say it's not true!" He paused in his distraction, still hoping perhaps that his wife could expiate herself from the horrible suspicion that had been gathering in his brain. She could not answer for a few seconds. She was gathering strength for a last final appeal to him. "Won't you answer? Is it true?" he begged.

May turned to him with arms wide-spread, pleading for time, begging for a chance. In a voice that was preternaturally calm, but surcharged with emotion, she said slowly—oh, very slowly indeed—laying tremendous stress on each sentence: "Robert, dear, you mustn't ask me any more questions, because I can't answer them. There is something I can't tell you. You must trust me, Robert. We've loved each other all these years; believed in each other. You've everything that life means to me—you and Doris. We're going away together now to begin a new life. Perhaps some day when we are in our new home I'll tell you, but not now. You've always believed in me. Believe in me now."

ed determined to wring from her. For a full minute they were speechless. Then he turned from her, rushed to the table, drew from the bag the revolver which Doris had dropped therein, at his bidding, but a short time before, and ran from the room. In a moment the banging of a door told that he had left the home that had been so happy.

May Strickland half sat, half lay on the sofa, with her head resting on her arms and her body shaken by sobs. The nerve wrecking scene had exhausted her mentally and physically, and for a few minutes she could not rise. Her sobbing was not loud, but was distinct, and it shook her body from head to foot. At last the dreaded significance of her husband's actions revealed itself to her, and she rose with a scream:

"He's gone! He's gone! If he finds him he'll kill him! His whole life will be ruined!" The words spoke eloquently of her devotion to her husband. No thought now of her own ruined life—only that of her husband lying in ashes! She rushed to the telephone and seized the receiver, at the same time calling excitedly into the transmitter: "Hello, hello! Give me 182 River!" Again a telephone call rang in the home of Gerald Trask that night.

Before "central" could reply to May Strickland's frantic request for "182 River" her daughter Doris rushed into the room from the adjoining bedroom. The child cried: "Oh, mamma, I'm afraid, I'm afraid!" The mother took her in her arms. "Oh, my darling! My baby! My little girl! Hello, hello!" Doris Strickland had told the story of the tragic last night in her home. All the courtroom—judge, jurymen, attorneys, attendants, spectators—had listened spellbound to the child. She was a bright youngster and had required but little leading by David Arbutkole. "Several times District Attorney Gray, jealous of the interests of his client, the sovereign people, had objected to questions put to the child by Arbutkole on the ground that they were leading questions and therefore calculated to bring out the answers which the attorney wanted. But Judge Dinmore had ruled that the age of the child was such that her testimony must be allowed to the attorney for the defense.

Even the judge himself, learned, grave, stern and impartial, had been favorably impressed by the child's manner on the stand and had smiled at her, thereby encouraging her to go on with her story even when she was tired.

Now, however, the limit of the child's strength seemed to have been reached, and she sobbed in childish yearning for a mother's comforting presence. Alas, that mother had not been found in spite of diligent search by prosecution and defense! Was she alive or dead? No one knew. Had she sought relief in voluntary death, and had her body gone the way taken by so many life weary women in New York—the way of the cool green tides leading down the river, through the bay and into the limitless ocean?

It was for her mamma that little Doris cried: "Mamma! Mamma! I'm afraid! I'm afraid!" Arbutkole soothed the little one. "Don't cry, Doris. I won't be much longer. When did your mother call up?" "Mr. Trask. But he wasn't there?" "How do you know he wasn't there?" "Because mamma said, 'I will call again.'"

was an ideal man for the task, and he won the admiration of the entire courtroom by the way in which he handled the witness. Even Judge Dinmore involuntarily nodded his head in approval. "Don't be afraid. We'll be finished in a minute. Your mother said, 'Is that you, Gerald Trask?' What happened then?" "I don't remember."



Mrs. Strickland Took the Stand.

ness, deemed it his duty to interfere again. He addressed the judge: "If the court please, I must again insist that my friend refrain from leading the witness."

Before Judge Dinmore could rule Arbutkole said: "I submit, your honor, that the child is laboring under a terrific strain and that I must be allowed some latitude." For a moment the judge hesitated, his palpable sympathy with the little witness struggling within him with his duty to hold the scales of justice even. His words to Arbutkole were cautionary, but his manner was kindly as he said to the lawyer for the defense: "Try not to lead the witness."

The momentary rest had done Doris good, and when Arbutkole asked her, "You say you heard a noise, Doris?" she seemed a trifle less exhausted. She answered, "Yes, sir." "What kind of a noise was it?" "I don't know—a funny noise—like a little threcker."

"And what did your mother do when she heard the noise?" The vivid recollection brought back all of Doris' terror and weariness. She made a brave attempt to answer, saying: "She screamed and said, 'My God, he's killed him!' Then the child fainted and cried out, 'Please let me go. I don't want to talk any more.'"

"Just one more question and you'll be all through. What did your mother do after she said, 'My God, he's killed him?'" "She took me in her arms and kissed me and said, 'Goodby.' And I cried because it hurt when she kissed me. And she went away."

"And have you seen your mother since that night?" The child sobbed: "No, no. I want to see her." She looked up, and her eyes rested upon her father, sitting in the prisoner's chair and staring at her in sfrained attention. Doris rose from the witness chair and started from the platform toward her father, crying: "Daddy, dear, why did you make mamma cry and run away from me?"

Before Doris could set foot on the floor of the courtroom Arbutkole caught her in his arms and said to the court: "That's the child's story, your honor." Strickland had started to his feet when his little daughter had turned to him. His right arm was suspended in the sling. With his free left hand outstretched he appealed to the judge, exclaiming: "For God's sake, you're torturing my little baby!"

MARCONI IN DEBUT AS ITALIAN SENATOR Rome, Dec. 17.—William Marconi made his debut as a Senator today, speaking on the statement made Dec. 1 by Foreign Minister Sonnino relative to Italy's policy. Senator Marconi said that of all the belligerent countries he had visited, Italy is the one where the greatest liberty is enjoyed.

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