

knew very well. And—and walk with me across the platform, through the corridor to the street, if you will. That is all—just that. Wasn't the train late, Bob?" she asked in a different voice, a voice that was neither low, nor guarded.

"Rather," he drawled with an easy laugh. "We lost time all the way down. You are good to come to meet me—Had I better know your name?" he asked in a voice just above a whisper.

"Ruth," she said in guarded tones.

"Through the corridor, Bob," she instructed. "I came down in the carriage. It is waiting there."

"You needn't have taken the trouble to come down to meet me tonight, Ruth?" he said, remembering the girl's instructions for him to talk and saying the first thing that came into his mind. "It is mighty unpleasant out. Has it rained here today?"

"Yes," she replied. "It is raining now."

He noticed her eyes were glancing about keenly, taking in every one in the place. What it all might mean Faulkner was too bewildered still to question. He only knew that the girl was clinging to his arm; that she was walking beside him; that somehow, in some way quite unknown to him he was doing her a service. That was sufficient. He was strangely, most preposterously happy.

They reached the corridor, passed through it, talking light nothings, and came to a row of carriages drawn up beneath the glass canopy. A man in livery on the box of one of these touched his hat as the girl approached.

They made their way to the equipage and Faulkner pulled open the door.

"You have been so good," she said under her breath. "I thought—I thought—but I must have been wrong."

"I have finished my little role?" Faulkner asked gravely. "I don't wish to intrude, but if there is anything further—"

"There is nothing else," the girl said. "You are very, very kind. Please go out this way without going back into the station, and—"

THE words ended in a smothered scream. Faulkner heard a step behind him. He turned to see a man, bent low, running towards them.

There was another scream from the girl. She sprang from the carriage and threw herself in front of Faulkner, but almost instantly she was pushed roughly to one side. Something flashed in the man's hand. Faulkner with never a moment's hesitation jumped straight for him, but he was too late. There was a blinding leap of flame in his eyes, a staccato report. He felt a white-hot streak pierce his right side, and with it came a choking feeling as if giant fingers had gripped his throat. The lights swung about in crazy circles and dripped brilliant sparks in their wake. He staggered back, caught desperately at a wheel of the carriage, and felt his knees going limp beneath him.

Again the flash of lurid fire. Faulkner sank to his knees and toppled forward. Dimly he was aware of a frightful uproar. Screams, yells, raging voices, and the patter of receding footsteps.

A blackness was shutting down upon him—a strangling blackness which he fought with all his puny strength. Someone knelt beside him. His head was gently lifted and pillowed in soft arms. Dimly, as in a dream, he saw that wonderful face bending over him, the eyes wide with horror, the cheeks stained with tears.

"What have I done? Oh, what have I done?" she was gasping in frightened, choking sobs.

Faulkner strove to struggle up, but could not. The left hand—the hand he could move, groped uncertainly for the girl's arm, found it and rested there with a touch of infinite gentleness. His gray lips parted in a smile of reassurance.

"Don't—be—distressed," he said, fighting for audible breath. "If this is—a—necessary—part of the role—if I have been—able—to—do you a service, I am—quite content."

Then the blackness shut out everything.

* * * * *

FAULKNER came back to consciousness some hours later to find himself stretched upon a bed in a big dim room. A little shaded lamp burned softly on a nearby stand, and close to it a white-capped nurse was deftly rolling lengths of bandages. Beside her a gray-haired man, a surgeon beyond the shadow of a doubt, was replacing some glistening instruments in a small leather case.

Faulkner opened his eyes and dazedly took in his surroundings. His whole right side was swathed in bandages; his right arm was bound rigidly to his body. He closed his eyes and strove to collect his scattered wits. What did it all mean? What had happened? Why was he here in this strange house with a nurse and a doctor and these bandages which wrapped him like a mummy?

There had been a letter summoning him from his moose shooting at Bartlett's—yes, a most urgent letter—and a girl at the gate, when he had alighted from the train. He smiled grimly to himself. It all came back to him now—the walk across the station, the affair at the carriage. Perhaps he had been a fool—a nice, soft, easy little old mark, and all because the girl was beautiful.

He tried to lift himself on the pillows, but the movement sent acute pains darting through his body and brought an involuntary groan to his lips.

Instantly the gray-haired man was beside the bed. Faulkner set his teeth and looked up with steady eyes.

"How serious is this thing?" he demanded brusquely.

"You are lucky, sir, extremely lucky," said the surgeon. "If that first bullet had been an inch lower—well, it wasn't and we have that to be mighty thankful for. It is serious enough as it is, but not necessarily dangerous. We have both the bullets, thank goodness—that one and the one that smashed your arm."

"What was it, anyway?" Faulkner went on. "I was shot, wasn't I? Who did it and what was it done for? I'd like to know that, at least."

The surgeon shook his head. "Let me suggest ab-

The grim smile grew more pronounced. "It explains a good deal, eh, Norris? It tells quite plainly for one thing why I am here in town just at present. But it doesn't tell why I am here in just this shape. That is something I couldn't fully explain myself. I only know that she was very, very beautiful and in evident distress and—and—well, I am not an impulsive man generally. In fact I am counted a rather hard-headed chap—one of the kind who counts the cost of every move before he makes it. I have a reputation—a rather unsavory reputation, if you will, of looking out for Crandall Faulkner and no one else; which makes this move of mine tonight all the more bewildering even to myself. I don't thoroughly understand it yet myself, except that, as I say, the girl was such a girl as every man, even men like myself, are proud to serve staunchly and unquestionably. A girl like that, Norris, a girl like that—"

He stopped abruptly and his eyes were turned almost appealingly to the man beside him.

"For God's sake, tell me who she was," he finished beseechingly.

"My sister," said Norris with a light of understanding in his own eyes.

He saw a sudden glow in the face on the pillow. He felt the fingers of Faulkner's left hand tighten

about his own. Without a word he stepped to the door and into the hall.

"Ruth," he called softly, "Ruth!"

There was a swish of skirts. Through the doorway came Norris and the girl Faulkner had seen at the station. Her eyes were red and swollen from weeping; but in them, as she looked at the man on the bed, was a great, tender pity, and something, too, of contrition that tightened Faulkner's throat.

"You must tell him, Ruth. It is your task," Norris was saying quietly.

Then he beckoned to the nurse and doctor, who followed him out of the room, and Faulkner was aware that he and the girl were alone.

A MOMENT she stood there, silent, irresolute, her eyes fixed on those steady, glowing ones that looked at her so quietly.

Then with a little low cry she crossed the room and sank on her knees beside the bed.

"I don't know what made me do it," she said, speaking breathlessly. "I must have been beside myself with fear. I could think only of Robert and his danger. He went up the river today to get Red Toomey's confession. They knew he had gone and what it would mean to them all if Toomey confessed. Then the warning came. It was late, after the train had made the last stop, before it reached here. It was unsigned, that note of warning; it said that Toomey had confessed fully; that Robert was coming back and that when he reached the station there would be an attempt on his life.

"I called up police headquarters, but they scoffed at the idea of any trouble. They did tell me, though, that there would be plenty of protection for Robert at the station when the train came in; that nothing would happen. But somehow I couldn't trust

them. I knew how they felt towards Robert, and I knew that the police department would be thrown into panic at Red Toomey's confession.

"I hurried to the station to warn Robert, and while I was waiting for the train to come in I saw a man watching me closely. I was frightened, horribly frightened. I was sure that man knew who I was and that he was waiting there, too, for Robert.

"And then, while I was wondering what I could do the train came in, and I saw you, and I thought at first you were Robert. I know that man thought so, also, for I saw his eyes when you came up to the gates. And before I knew really what I was doing I had made my plan and—and I ran up to you and greeted you to deceive that watching man and I asked you to walk with me to the carriage because I knew, if anything were to happen, they would mistake you for Robert. I was thinking only of him; that he must be saved at any cost. I didn't realize what I was doing until we reached the carriage, and—it happened."

She paused and caught her breath in a little sob. Faulkner was looking at her with a wonderful light in his eyes.

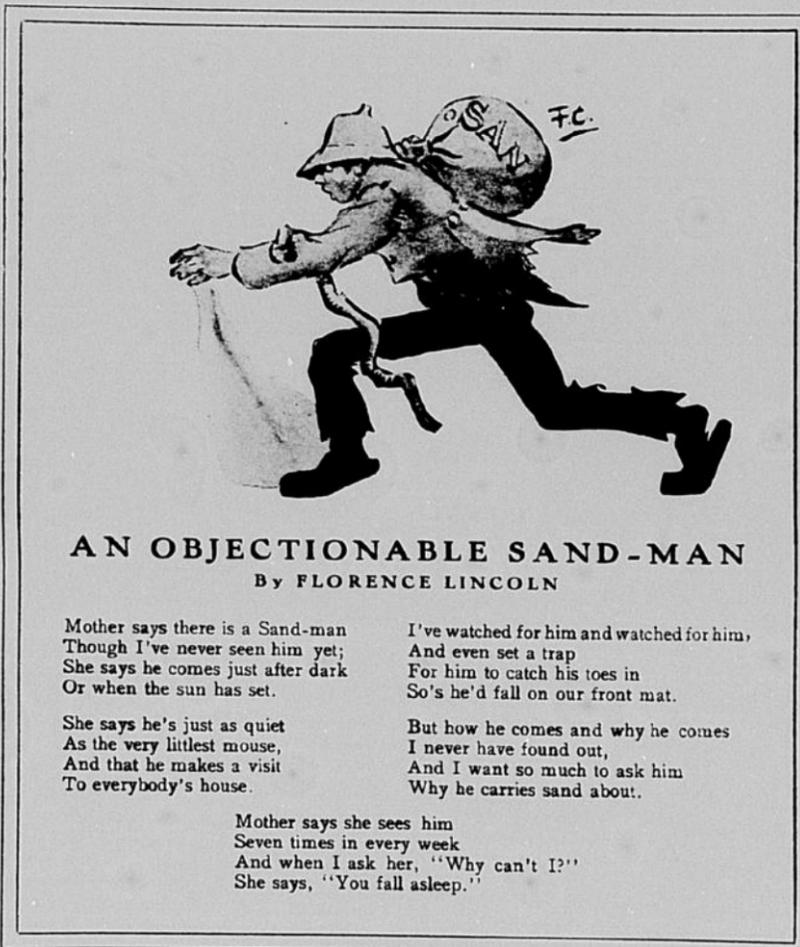
"And then—and then," she hurried on brokenly, "when you laid there and I thought you were dying, you—you smiled and told me it was all right, and—and—"

Faulkner's eyes were burning with a strange new light in them. His quiet voice interrupted the girl beside him.

"It was all right," he said slowly. "It would have been all right in any event—even if that man had shot truer. I saw things very differently in those few moments we were walking together through the station.

"We can live a lifetime in a moment under certain conditions. The only life I have ever really lived—"

(Continued from page 6)



AN OBJECTIONABLE SAND-MAN

By FLORENCE LINCOLN

Mother says there is a Sand-man
Though I've never seen him yet;
She says he comes just after dark
Or when the sun has set.

She says he's just as quiet
As the very littlest mouse,
And that he makes a visit
To everybody's house.

I've watched for him and watched for him,
And even set a trap
For him to catch his toes in
So's he'd fall on our front mat.

But how he comes and why he comes
I never have found out,
And I want so much to ask him
Why he carries sand about.

Mother says she sees him
Seven times in every week
And when I ask her, "Why can't I?"
She says, "You fall asleep."

solute quiet for tonight," said he. "Tomorrow will be time enough for all that."

A stubborn light came into Faulkner's eyes. "Hardly," said he with quiet determination. "I'd like to know about it now—at once. You can grant me that much. I'll take the chances on its affecting me badly."

The surgeon looked at him keenly. Then without a word he turned on his heel and left the room. Faulkner heard him talking in low tones with someone in the hall outside, and presently he came back with a tall, pleasant-faced man of about Faulkner's own age.

The latter walked straight to the bed and took Faulkner's left hand in both his own. His mouth was twitching as he looked at the white face on the pillows. Evidently he was under the spell of some powerful emotion.

"I don't know what to say about this," the young man said in a deep and none too steady voice. "I feel very much the stigma of it all. I don't know what possessed her to do it. She had no right to shelter me this way at your expense. I should be lying there wounded where you are. I was the one they wanted."

Faulkner was looking at him keenly. "What were you wanted for? Who are you?" he demanded.

"I am Robert Norris," said the man beside the bed quite as if this information would answer both Faulkner's questions. "And you?"

"Norris," Faulkner repeated. "The district attorney, of course?"

The other man nodded. Faulkner's face twisted in a peculiar smile. "My name is Faulkner," he said slowly. "Crandall Faulkner."

Norris started. "Faulkner of St. Louis?" he asked. "Faulkner of St. Louis," Faulkner repeated.