

The GIRL and the BILL

SYNOPSIS.

At the expense of a solid hat Robert Orme saves from arrest a girl in a black touring car who has caused a traffic jam on State street. He buys a new hat and is given in change a five dollar bill with "Remember the person you pay this to," written on it. A second time he helps the lady in the black car, and learns that in Tom and Bessie Wallingham they have mutual friends, but gains no further hint of her identity.

Senior Porito of South America and Senior Alcatraz, minister from the same country, and some Japs try to get possession of the bill. Two of the latter over-power Orme and effect a forcible exchange of the marked bill for another. Orme finds the girl of the black car waiting for him. She also wants the bill. Orme tells his story. She recognizes one of the Japs as her father's butler, Maku. A second inscription on the bill is the key to the hiding place of important papers stolen from her father. Orme and the "Girl" start out in the black car in quest of the papers. In the university grounds in Evanston the hiding place is located. Maku and another Jap are there. Orme falls Maku and the other Jap escapes. Orme finds in Maku's pocket a slip of paper. He takes the girl, whose name is still unknown to him, to the home of a friend in Evanston. Returning to the university grounds Orme gets in conversation with a guard at the University station. They hear a motor boat in trouble in the darkness on the lake. They find the crippled boat in it are the Jap with the papers and "Girl." Orme jumps into Orme's boat, but the Jap eludes pursuit. Orme finds on the paper a look from Maku the address "341 N. Parker street." He goes there and finds Arima, teacher of Japanese, in the third floor. He calls on Arima, Arima, on the fourth floor, seconds by the fire-escape and conceals himself under a table in Arima's room. Alcatraz, Porito and the Jap minister enter. Orme finds the papers in a drawer under the table and substitutes a newspaper for them. He learns that the papers are of international importance with a time limit for their substitution. The girl appears and leaves again after seeing that the American has the papers. Orme attempts to get away, is discovered and set upon by Arima and Maku. He eludes them and is hidden in a closet by the fire-escape. Orme escapes during a scene given by Arima. On the sidewalk he encounters Alcatraz. Orme goes to find Tom Wallingham. Alcatraz hangs on and tries to get the papers. During the excitement caused by one of Alcatraz's tricks to delay Orme, the latter sees the girl and follows her back to Wallingham's office. He and the girl are locked in a giant specimen refrigerator by Alcatraz.

They confess their love and when they had almost abandoned hope of escape Orme breaks the refrigerator coils and attracts the attention of a late-going clerk. They are liberated.

CHAPTER XV.

From the Devil to the Deep Sea. "How shall we go?" asked Orme, as they descended to the street level.

"By train. There is no other convenient way, since my car is at home." She looked at him doubtfully, and added, "but they will be watching the railroad stations."

He nodded. "A motor would be safer—if we can get one." He gave her hand a secret pressure while the elevator boy was opening the door for them, and as she passed before him she flashed upon him a look so filled with love and trust that the sudden thrill of his happiness almost stifled him.

At the La Salle street entrance Orme had a fleeting glimpse of the watching Alcatraz. The South American, after one astonished stare, darted away in the dusk. He would follow them, of course, but Orme decided to say nothing about him to the girl.

"I must telephone," she said suddenly, stopping as if to turn back to the building. "Father will be very anxious."

"The booths in the building must be closed," he said. "We'd better try a drug store."

Accordingly they made their way to the nearest, and the girl went to the booth. The door was shut for a long time.

While he was waiting, Orme glanced through the brilliant window. In the light of an electric lamp across the street he discerned faintly a motionless figure; without hesitation he crossed the pavement, recognizing Alcatraz more clearly as he left the dazzle of the store.

The minister did not budge. His face, as Orme approached, was cold and expressionless.

"Senior," exclaimed Orme, "does your trade include murder?"

"Not at all. Why do you ask, Mr. Orme?"

"Because only a lucky intervention has saved you from the murder of a young lady and myself."

"You are exaggerating, my dear sir," Alcatraz laughed.

"Is it your custom to lock people into all-night chambers?"

"All-right?" Alcatraz was clearly disconcerted. "I did not suppose that it was all-right. Also, I did not dream that the young lady was there. But this game is a serious game, Mr. Orme. You do not appear to understand. When one is working for his country, many strange things are justified."

"Even murder?"

"Even murder—sometimes."

Orme had an inspiration. "Thank you for the truth, senior," he said. "I, too, am working for my country. If you continue to follow us, I shall assume that you have murder in your mind, and I shall act accordingly."

Alcatraz smiled coolly.

"This is fair warning," continued Orme.

He glanced to the drug store and saw the girl coming out of the telephone booth. Hastening across the street, he met her at the door.

"If father had had any idea of such complications when we came west," she said, "there would have been plenty of men near by to help us. As it is, we shall have to act alone. It is

not a matter for detectives—or for the police. I—I almost wish it were," she faltered.

Orme wondered again whether this father could have realized what dangers the girl was encountering. But, as if divining his sudden anger against the man who could let his daughter run such risks, she added: "He doesn't know, of course, the details of our adventures. I have permitted him to think that it is simply a matter of searching."

"And now he is reassured?"

"Yes. Oh, you have no idea yet how important it is."

"You were a long time in the booth," he said.

A mysterious smile flittered across her face. "I thought of another person I wished to talk to. That person was hard to get."

"Long distance?"

"It proved necessary to use long distance."

Then she caught a glimpse of the figure across the street. "There's Mr. Alcatraz," she exclaimed.

"Yes, I have just had a talk with him."

Her face showed concern.

"Don't let him worry you, dear," he added. "He will try to talk us. We must expect that. But I think I can take care of him."

"I believe it," she said, softly.

He wondered whether she could guess how relentlessly he was planning to deal with Alcatraz. Would she justify the course he had in mind? As to her attitude, he felt doubtful. Perhaps she did not agree with the South American that murder was sometimes necessary in the service of one's country.

Moreover, while Alcatraz was undoubtedly serving the interest of his country, Orme had no real certainty that he himself was in a similar position. He had every reason to infer that the papers were of importance to the United States government, but after all he could only go by inference. The affairs of some private corporation in the United States might have a serious bearing on problems in South America and the far east. He decided to sound the girl for information that would be more definite.

But first the question as to their next move must be answered.

"Do you know where we can get a motor?" he said.

"No"—she prolonged the word doubtfully. "We may have to take a motor cab."

"It would be safer than the railroad or the electric line." Then he asked with great seriousness: "Girl, dear, I don't know much about the meaning and value of these papers in my pocket, and I don't care to know any more than you choose to tell me. But let me know just this much: Are they as important to you as they are to our enemies? Have you really been justified in the risks you have run?"

"You have seen how far Alcatraz and the Japanese have been willing to go," she replied, gravely. "I am sure that they would not hesitate to kill us, if it seemed necessary to them in their effort to get possession of the papers. Now, my dear, they are even much more important to my father."

"In his business interests?"

"Much more than that."

They were walking along the glimmering canyon of La Salle street, which was now almost deserted in the dusk. A motor car swept slowly around the corner ahead and came toward them. It had but one occupant, a chauffeur, apparently. He wore a dust-coat, a cap, and goggles which seemed to be too large for him.

Regardless of Alcatraz, who was following them, Orme halted the chauffeur. "Will you take a fare?" he called.

The man stopped his car and, after a moment of what Orme interpreted as indecision, nodded slowly.

"How much by the hour?" asked Orme.

The chauffeur held up the ten fingers of his two hands.

Orme looked at the girl. He hadn't that much money with him.

"If I only had time to cash a check," he said.

"All right," she whispered. "I have plenty."

They got into the tonneau, and the girl, leaning forward, said: "Take the Lake Shore drive and Sheridan road to Evanston."

Again the chauffeur nodded, without turning toward them.

"He doesn't waste many words," whispered the girl to Orme.

While the car was turning Orme noted that Alcatraz had stopped short and was watching them. It was some reason for surprise that he was not hunting for a motor in which to follow.

Perhaps his plans were so completely balked that he was giving up altogether. No, that would not be like Alcatraz. Orme now realized that in all likelihood the minister had foreseen some such circumstance and had made plans accordingly.

He was more and more inclined to believe that Alcatraz had but half expected to keep him long imprisoned in Wallingham's office. Then what had been the purpose underlying the trick? Probably the intention was to make Orme prisoner for as long a per-



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"Does Our Chauffeur Remind You of Any One?"

od as possible and, in any event, to gain time enough to communicate with Porito and the Japanese and whatever other persons might be helping in the struggle to regain the papers. The probabilities were that Alcatraz had been using the last two hours to get in touch with his friends.

And now those friends would be informed promptly that Orme and the girl were setting out by motor. This analysis apparently accounted for Alcatraz's nonchalance. Orme and the girl seemed to be escaping, but in truth, if they approached their destination at all, they must run into the ambuscade of other enemies. Then the nearer the goal, the greater the danger.

As the motor slid smoothly northward on La Salle street, Orme looked back. Alcatraz had made no move. The last glimpse that Orme had of him showed that slight but sinister figure alone on the sidewalk of the deserted business street.

They crossed the Clark street bridge. "Keep on out North Clark street until you can cross over to Lincoln park," said Orme to the chauffeur.

The only indication that the order had been heard was a bending forward of the bowed figure on the front seat.

Orme explained to the girl. "It will be better not to take the Lake Shore drive. They may be watching the Pere Marquette."

"You are right," she said. "As a precaution, we'd better not pass the hotel."

"How surprised I was to find you waiting for me there last evening," mused Orme—"and how glad!"

"I never called on a man before," she laughed.

"I had made up my mind only a little while before," he continued, "to stay in Chicago till I found you."

"I'm afraid that would not have been easy." She returned the pressure of his hand, which had found hers. "If it hadn't been for those papers, we might never have met."

"We were bound to meet—you and I," he said. "I have been waiting all my life just for you."

"But even now you don't know who I am. I may be a political adventurer—or a woman detective—or—"

"You may be," he said, "but you are the woman I love. Your name—your business, if you have one—those things don't matter. I know you, and I love you."

She leaned closer to him. "Dear," she whispered impulsively, "I am going to tell you everything—who I am, and about the papers—"

"Wait!" He held his hand before her mouth. "Don't tell me now. Do as you planned to do. Be simply 'Girl' to me for a while longer."

She moved closer to him. Their errand, the danger, were for the time forgotten, and the motor hummed along with a burden of happiness.

"You haven't looked at the papers yet," said Orme, after a time. They were turning east toward Lincoln park.

"Do I need to?"

"Perhaps not. I took them from the envelope which you saw at Arima's. But here they are. I did not look at them, of course."

He drew the parchments from within his coat and placed them in her hand.

While she examined them, he looked straight ahead, that he might not see. He could hear them crackle as she un-

folded them—could hear her sigh of content.

And then something occurred that disquieted him to a degree which seemed unwarranted. The chauffeur suddenly turned around and glanced swiftly through his goggles at the girl and the papers. The action was, perhaps, natural; but there was an assured expectancy in the way he turned—Orme did not like it. Moreover, there was something alarmingly familiar in the manner of the movement.

Somewhere Orme had seen a man move his body like that. But before his suspicions could take form, the chauffeur had turned again.

The girl handed the papers back to Orme. "These are the right papers," she said. "Oh, my dear, if you only knew how much they mean."

He held them for a moment in his hand. Then, after returning them to his pocket with as little noise as possible, he caught the girl's eye and, with a significant glance toward the chauffeur, said in a distinct voice:

"I will slip them under the seat cushion. They will be safer there."

Did the chauffeur lean farther back, as if to hear better? or was the slight movement a false record of Orme's imagination?

Orme decided to be on the safe side, so he slipped under the cushion of the extra seat another mining prospectus which he had in his pocket, placing it in such a way that the end of the paper protruded. Then he put his lips close to the girl's ear and whispered:

"Don't be alarmed, but tell me, does our chauffeur remind you of anyone?"

She studied the stolid back in front of them. The ill-fitting dust-coat masked the outline of the figure; the cap was so low on the head that the ears were covered.

"No," she said, at last. "I think not."

With that, Orme sought to reassure himself.

They were in Lincoln park now. Over this same route Orme and the girl had ridden less than twenty-four hours before. To him the period seemed like a year. Then he had been plunging into mysteries unknown with the ideal of his dreams; now he was moving among secrets partly understood, with the woman of his life—loving her and knowing that she loved him.

One short day had brought all this to pass. He had heard it said that Love and Time are enemies. The falseness of the saying was clear to him in the light of his own experience. Love and Time are not enemies; they are strangers to each other.

On they went northward. To Orme the streets through which they passed were now vaguely familiar, yet he could hardly believe his eyes when they swung around on to the lake front at Evanston, along the broad ribbon of Sheridan road.

But there was the dark mysterious surface of Lake Michigan at their right. Beyond the broad beach, he could see the line of breakwaters, and at their left the electric lights threw their beams into the blackness of little parks and shrubby lawns.

The car swept to the left, past the university campus.

"Do you remember?" asked the girl, in a low voice, pressing his arm. Then, "Don't!" she whispered. "Some one will see!" for he had drawn her face to his.

"They came to the corner of Chicago avenue and Sheridan road, where they

had halted the night before in their search for the hidden papers. "We'd better give him further directions," said the girl.

But the chauffeur turned north at the corner and put on more speed.

"He's taking the right direction," she laughed. "Perhaps his idea is to follow Sheridan road till we tell him to turn."

"I don't quite like it," said Orme, thoughtfully. "He's a bit too sure of what he's doing."

The girl hesitated. "It is funny," she exclaimed. "And he's going faster, too." She leaned forward and called up to the chauffeur: "Stop at this corner."

He did not seem to hear. She repeated the order in a louder voice, but the only answer was another burst of speed.

Then Orme reached up and touched the chauffeur's shoulders. "Stop the car!" he cried.

The chauffeur did not obey. He did not even turn his head.

Orme and the girl looked at each other. "I don't understand," she said.

"I'm afraid I am beginning to," Orme replied. "He will not stop until we are where he wishes us to be."

"We can't get out," she exclaimed.

"No. And if I pull him out of the seat, the car will be ditched." He puzzled vainly to hit on a method of action, and meantime the moments sped.

They passed the university grounds quickly. Orme retained an impression of occasional massive buildings at the right, including the dome of an observatory, and at the left the lighted windows of dwellings.

He saw, too, the tower of a lighthouse, a dark foundation supporting a changing light above, and then the road turned sharply to the left and after a few hundred yards, curved again to the north.

Suddenly the chauffeur slowed down. On either side were groves of trees. Ahead were the lights of an approaching motor.

Orme was still at a loss, and the girl was awaiting some decision from him. When the chauffeur at last turned and spoke—three short words—Orme realized too late the situation he and the girl were in.

"We stop now," said the chauffeur.

And the girl, with a hurried gasp, exclaimed: "Maku!"

Yes, it was the Japanese.

Calmly he put on the brakes and brought the car to a standstill by the roadside; then, removing his goggles, turned to Orme and the girl and smiled an inscrutable smile. There was an ugly bruise on his forehead, where Orme had struck him with the wrench.

But quick though Maku was, he was not quick enough to see a motion which Orme had made immediately after the moment of recognition—a motion which had even escaped the notice of the girl. Perhaps it accounted for the coolness with which Orme met his enemy's eyes.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Struggle.

The approaching car now drew up near by, and three men jumped lightly to the road.

In the radiance of the lamps on the two cars, Orme recognized Arima. The men with him were also Japanese, though Orme was not conscious that he had ever seen them before.

It was clear enough how he and the girl had blundered into the hands of the Orientals. Maku had undoubtedly secured a car and had driven it to the vicinity of the Rookery in response to a telephoned order from Alcatraz, transmitted, in all likelihood, through the Japanese minister.

The appearance of the car on La Salle street had been expected by the South American. Perhaps he had anticipated that Orme would halt it; the probability was that he had wished Maku's assistance without a definite idea of what that assistance should be, but the use of the car by Orme fell in nicely with his plans. He had assumed readily enough the direction the car would take, and getting promptly into telephonic communication with Arima, had arranged this meeting on the road.

Orme now remembered that Arima's car, when approaching, had sounded its horn at regular intervals, in series of three—evidently a signal.

"Don't worry, girl, dear," whispered Orme. "I—" he broke off his sentence as the newcomers clustered about the tonneau, but the confident glance of her eyes reassured him.

He knew not what they were to face. The Japanese, he inferred, would not deal with him pleasantly, but surely they would not harm the girl.

Arima opened the door of the tonneau and with a lightning motion grasped Orme by the wrist.

"Get out," he ordered.

Orme was in no mind to obey. There were few of the Orientals against him, and he stood little chance of success in a fight with them, but if he could only delay matters, someone might pass and he could raise an alarm. So he sat firm, and said, calmly:

"What do you want?"

"Get out," repeated Arima.

When Orme still made no move to leave his seat, the steely fingers on his wrist ran up his forearm and pressed down hard upon a nerve-center. The pain was almost unbearable, and for the moment his arm was paralyzed. A quick jerk brought him to the ground. As he alighted, stumblingly, Maku caught him by the other arm. He was held in such a way that for the moment it seemed futile to struggle. Arima, meantime, spoke rapidly in Japanese to Maku. Perhaps he, as commander of the situation, was giving precise orders as to what was to be done.

Orme looked over his shoulder at the girl. She was clutching the door of the tonneau and leaning forward, staring with horrified eyes.

"Keep cool," he counseled.

Her answer was a moan of anguish, and he realized that she feared for him.

Suddenly she began to call for help. Twice her cries rang out, and then one of the Japanese leaped into the tonneau and placed his hand over her mouth, smothering her voice.

The sight of this action was too much for Orme. He began a furious effort to break away from his captors. One sudden motion freed his right arm from Arima's clutch, and he reached for Maku's throat. But after a moment of scuffling, he was again held securely.

"Girl!" he shouted, "don't try to call out. Keep quiet."

The Japanese in the tonneau appeared to understand the words, for he took his hand away from the girl's mouth, though he remained beside her, ready to put an end to any fresh outbreak.

"Now," said Orme, turning his eye on Arima, "what does this mean?"

"You give us papers," replied the Japanese softly.

"I have no papers that mean anything to you."

"We see. Give them to me."

"What papers do you want?" demanded Orme.

"You know." Arima's voice sounded less patient.

"But I have nothing that you care anything about," repeated Orme.

At that Arima began rapidly to search Orme's pockets. There was sufficient light from the lamps of the two cars to illuminate the scene.

Arima's left hand still held Orme's right forearm, and his right hand was free to hunt for the papers. Maku, on the other side, had meantime strengthened his grip on Orme's left arm, at the same time raising one knee so that Orme could feel it pressing against the small of his back.

"What this?" asked Arima, taking a long envelope from the inner pocket of Orme's coat and holding it up for inspection.

"A blank contract," said Orme. "Do you want it?"

Arima took the paper from the envelope and examined it. Then with an exclamation of disgust he replaced it in Orme's pocket, and continued his search.

"You see," said Orme calmly, "there is nothing here."

The Japanese, muttering in his own tongue, ran his hands over Orme's body and even looked into his hat. Nothing was found.

"You might as well believe me first as last," exclaimed Orme. "The papers you want are not here."

Arima was clearly puzzled. "You had them," he began.

"Possibly. But I haven't them now. How would you feel if I should tell you that the young lady and I have made this journey simply to throw you off the scent, and that the papers were being delivered by another person?"

"I not believe," declared Arima shortly.

Suddenly Maku began to jabber at Arima, when after an instant of consideration, gave a quick order to the fourth Japanese, who stood by. This man went to the tonneau and got the prospectuses which Orme had placed under the seat cushion.

Arima snatched the papers with his free hand, then, resigning Orme entirely to Maku's care, and clucking strangely, opened them.

A glance sufficed. With a cry of disappointment, he tore the paper in two and threw them to the ground.

"He thrust his face close to Orme's. 'Where the papers?' he said. Orme did not reply.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Bright Brown, Dull Green.

Brown had married the prettiest woman in the town and Green had married the homeliest, but thought she was a beauty.

One evening they met and the conversation having drifted to their respective better halves, Green remarked:

"I say, Brown, I think you and I married the two handsomest women in the village."

Brown looked at him in surprise a moment, but seeing he was serious, replied cautiously, and with pride:

"Well, old man, I guess you are about half right."

But Green didn't see the point until he told his wife and she began to make a few remarks.