

Kitty mistrusted Johnnie's judgment. She foresaw that he might occasionally need a firm hand.

"Oh, nothin' much. Tell you about it later, honey." The kidnaper mopped the perspiration from his forehead. At that moment he wished profoundly that this brilliant idea of his had never been born.

He led the way down the aisle into the next sleeper and stopped at one of the staterooms. Shakily he opened the door and stood aside for her to pass first.

"You want me to go in here?" she asked.

"Yes'm."

Beatrice stepped in. Johnnie followed.

Clay rose from the lounge and said, "Glad to see you, Miss Whitford."

"Did you bring me here to say good-bye, Johnnie?" asked Beatrice.

The Runt's tongue stuck to the roof of his mouth. His eyes appealed dumbly to Clay.

"Better explain to Miss Whitford," said Clay, passing the buck.

"It's for yore good, Miss Beatrice," stammered the villain who had brought her. "We — we — I — I done brought you here to travel home with us."

"You — what?"

Before her slender, outraged dignity Johnnie wilted. "Kitty, she — she can chaperoon you. It's all right, ma'am. I — we — I did n't go for to do nothin' that was n't proper. We thought —"

"You mean that you brought me here expecting me to go along with you — without my consent — without a trunk — without —"