

FELIX O'DAY

"And why not forgive her this?" She could hardly restrain a sob as she spoke.

His lips straightened and his brows narrowed. "This is not due to her nature," he answered coldly, "nor to her bringing up. She has now committed a crime and is beyond reclaim. Once a thief, always a thief. I must stop somewhere."

"But why not hear her story from her own lips?" she pleaded, her voice choking. "*You* hear it—not Father Cruse, nor me, nor anybody but *YOU*, who have loved her!"

Felix shook his head. "It is kinder for me to stay away. The very sight of me would kill her." His answer was final.

Kitty squared herself. "I don't believe it," she cried, the tears now coursing down her cheeks. "Oh, for the blessed God's sake don't say it—take it back! Listen to me, Mr. O'Day. If she ever wanted a friend it's now. I'd go meself but I'd do no good—nor nothin' I'd tell her would do her any good. It's a man she wants to lean on, not a woman. I can almost lift my John off his feet with one hand, but when I get into trouble I'm just so much putty, runnin' to him like a baby, weak as a rag, and he patten' my cheek same as if I was a three-year-old. Go and get yer arms around her and tell her ye don't believe a word of it, and that ye'll stand by her to the end, and ye'll make a good woman of her. Turn yer back on her, and they'll have her in potter's field if she gets out of this scrape, for she can't fight long—she hasn't got the strength.