

## OUT OF THE WEB

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possessed a miscellaneous acquaintance, comprising a wide variety of types, ranging from dwellers in the slums and habitual frequenters of the police court to the very inner circle of the social elect.

From the beginning of his newspaper career, which dated back to a phenomenally early age, he had evinced unmistakably "the nose for news" and the gift of not only scenting a "story" in the most unpromising circumstances, but of transcribing it in terse, telling forceful English, qualities which had endeared him to the city editor and secured his rapid promotion. He was an active, alert, rather athletic-looking youth and his keen gray eyes with their disarmingly casual and ingenuous gaze seldom overlooked anything of importance.

Certainly they missed no slightest detail of the scene enacted two minutes later. Though apparently intent upon his selection, he saw, without seeming to see, the entrance of a young girl, very young and sufficiently pretty to have attracted a less trained attention than that of the *Star's* star reporter; saw her seat herself at the counter in front of the ubiquitous soda fountain, give her order and place her silver mesh bag before her, along with her muff and a package or two; saw a youth of good appearance enter an instant later and range himself beside her, brushing bag, muff and packages to the floor in so doing; saw both stoop hastily to recover them; saw the youth gallantly rescue and restore them, with apologies the most profuse and then, with a lift of the hat, leave the store. Also he saw something else—a something, which though he had an important engagement and barely time in which to meet it, caused Chan Ewing to seat himself deliberately and order at random some unspeakable new drink.

Presently she put down her cup, rose—rather unsteadily, it struck Ewing—crossed to the cashier's desk, settled her score and started for the door. But instead of going out, she paused, wavered slightly, turned back and sank into a seat upon one of the leather-covered oak benches that flanked the door. Ewing, watching narrowly, saw that she seemed faint and dizzy and that she was palpably striving to pull herself together. He saw her head sink heavily against the high back of the settle and her eyes close drowsily. Even had the girl been less lovely, the situation would have intrigued his reportorial interest; as it was, no knight of old ever burned more eagerly to protect and defend the beautiful lady to whom he had made his *devoirs*. Ewing told himself inwardly that he would "see the thing through."

He had not long to wait. Within five minutes an imposing limousine drew up before the door and a woman descended and entered. Ewing's eyes narrowed as they fell upon the new-comer. A reporter's calling often takes him into strange places and among strange people.

A clerk advanced politely.

"Something to-day, Madame," he inquired suavely.

"Thank you, no," with a charming smile—"I was to call here for my daughter after the matinee. Has she perhaps—why, here she is. Evelyn, dear! Why she seems faint, ill—I must get her home at once." Ewing advanced authoritatively.

"Permit me to assist you, Madam." Before she could object, he had raised the almost unconscious girl, had half led, half lifted her across the threshold and placed her in the machine. Ere the older woman could protest, he had seated her beside her charge, had given the chauffeur the indefinite order "Anywhere!" had stepped into the car and settled himself opposite the two women.

The younger of these had sunk back into her corner, apparently oblivious of her surroundings; the elder paled perceptibly as she recognized her vis-a-vis, cowering visibly as she met his piercing gaze. After a long look at the girl's quiet face, Ewing leaned forward and spoke as the car shot into a maze of traffic.

"Now, see here," he began in low, guarded tones, "I'm on. Witnessed the whole play—saw your confederate drug this girl's chocolate and stuck around to see what was next. I didn't have long to wait. You made your entrance and I'm here to block your get-away. You know me, I think—Ewing of the *Star*. I know you at any rate—and that's sufficient. We'll take this young lady home—know the address? After that I'll attend to you!"

The woman shook her head sullenly. "Won't tell me? All right—find out for myself." He glanced at the girl, who had apparently not stirred. Very gently he drew from her nerveless fingers the bag she still clutched—and thanks to Mrs. Brown's foresight—found therein the name and address he sought.

He gave the chauffeur an order; then he turned to the woman opposite, who had lapsed into a silence, half sullen, half defiant, and addressed her fluently, yet concisely and convincingly for full five minutes. After which, he folded his arms, lapsed also into a grim silence, and turned his eyes upon the still face of the

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