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## KINDRED OF THE DUST

By PETER B. KYNE

### CHAPTER XXXVIII.

It is probable that mere man, who has never been able to comprehend the intensity of feeling of which a woman is capable, is not equal to the problem of realizing the effect of solitude, misunderstanding and despair upon the mind of a woman of more than ordinary sensibilities and imagination. The seed of doubt, planted in such soil, burgeons rapidly, and when, upon the very day that Mr. Daney had made his last call at the Sawdust Pile, Nan, spurred to her decision by developments of which none but she was aware, had blazed forth in open rebellion and given the Tye Lumbee Company's general manager the sight of his prosaic existence.

### CHAPTER XXXIX.

AFTER leaving the Sawdust Pile, Mr. Daney walked twice around the light of Tye before arriving at a definite decision as to his future conduct in this intrigue, participation in which had been thrust upon him by his own loyalty to his employer and the idiosyncrasy of three hare-brained women. Time and again as he paced the lonely strand, Mr. Daney made audible reference to the bells of the northern regions and the presence of the panther tracks! This was his most terrible oath and never employed except under exceptional circumstances.

At length Mr. Daney arrived at a decision. He would have nothing further to do with this horrible love affair. In the role of Dan Cupid's murderer he was apparently a Tumble Tom; for three months he had fallen through! "I'll carry no more of their messages," he declared aloud. "I'll tell them so and wash my hands of the entire matter. If there is to be any asking of favors from that girl the McKaye women can do it."

It was after midnight when he returned to his home, and his wife was sitting up to receive an explanation of his nocturnal prowling. However, the look of desperation with which he met her accusing glance frightened her into silence, albeit she had a quiet little crying spell next morning when she discovered on the floor of Mr. Daney's room quite a quantity of sand which had worked into his shoes during his agitated spring around Tye beach. She was quite certain he had indulged in a moonlight stroll on the seashore with a younger and prettier woman, so she resolved

to follow him when he fared forth and catch the traitor red-handed. To her surprise, Mr. Daney went out no more at night. He had kept his word given to himself, and on the morning succeeding his extraordinary interview with Nan he had again summoned the ladies of the McKaye family to his office for a conference. However, the capable Elizabeth was the only one of the trio to present herself, for this young woman—and not without reason—regarded herself as Mr. Daney's mental superior; she was confident of her ability to retain his loyalty should he display a tendency to betray them.

"Well, dear Mr. Daney," she murmured in her melted-butter voice, "what new bugaboo have you developed for us?"

"You do not have to bother calling upon the Brent girl, Miss Elizabeth. She says now that if Donald asks her to marry him she'll accept. She has an idea she'll be mistress of The Dreamerie."

Elizabeth arched her eyebrows. "What else?" she asked amiably. "That's all—from Nan Brent. I have a small debt to make on my own account, however. Miss Elizabeth, from this minute I wash my hands of the private affairs of the McKaye family. My job is managing your father's business affairs. Believe me, the next move in this comedy-drama is a wedding—if Donald asks her in all seriousness to marry him—that is if he insists on it. He may insist and then again he may not, but if he should, I shall not attempt to stop him. He's free, white and twenty-one; he's my boss and I hope I know my place. Personally, I'm willing to wager considerable that he'll marry her, but whether he does or not—I'm through."

Elizabeth McKaye sighed. "That means that we must work fast, Mr. Daney. Donald will be feeling strong enough within two weeks to call on her; he may even motor down to the Sawdust Pile within ten days. Mother has already broached the subject of taking him away to California or Florida for a long rest. Dad has seconded the motion with great enthusiasm—and that stubborn Donald has told them frankly that he isn't going away for a rest."

"Gosh!" Mr. Daney gasped. "That makes it a little binding, eh?" She met his clear glance thoughtfully and said: "If her house should burn down—accidentally—today or to-night when she and her baby are not in it, she'll have to leave Port Agnew. There isn't a house in town where she could find shelter, and you could see to it that all the rooms in the hotel are taken."

"You forgot, my dear," he replied with a smile, "I have no further interest in this affair and moreover, I'm not turning firebug—not this year." "Absolutely. What is to be will be, and I, for one, have decided not to poke my finger into the cogs of destiny."

"Well—thanks awfully for what you've already done, Mr. Daney." Again she smiled her bright, impish smile. "Good morning." "Good-morning, Miss Elizabeth." As she left the office, Mr. Daney noticed her debutante slouch and gritted his teeth. "Wonder if they'll call on Nan now, or make a combined attack on the boy and try bluff and threats and tears," he soliloquized. As a matter of fact, they tried the latter. The storm broke after luncheon one day when Donald declared he felt strong enough to go down to Port Agnew, and, in the presence of the entire family, ordered the butler to tell his father's chauffeur to bring the closed car around to the door. Immediately the astute Elizabeth precipitated matters by asking her brother sharply if his projected visit to the Sawdust Pile.

"Why, yes, Elizabeth," he answered calmly. The Laird scowled at her, but she ignored him.

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ignored the scowl, so old Hector flashed a warning glance to Jane and her mother—a glance that said quite plainly: "Let there be no upbraiding of my son."

"Do you think it quite—ah, delicate of you, Donald, to call upon a young lady at her apartments in the absence of a chaperone, even if the lady herself seems to have singularly free and easy views on the propriety of receiving you thus?"

He saw that she was bound to force the issue and was rather relieved than otherwise. With a mental promise to himself to keep his temper at all hazards he replied: "Well, Elizabeth, I'll admit the situation is a trifle awkward, but what cannot be cured must be endured. You see, I want to have a talk with Nan Brent and I cannot do so unless I call upon her at the Sawdust Pile. It is impossible for us to meet on neutral ground, I fear. However, if you will write her a nice friendly little note and invite her up here to visit me, the question of a chaperone will be solved and I will postpone my visit until she gets here."

"Don't be a fool," she retorted bitterly.

"As for Nan's free and easy views on the subjects, who in Port Agnew, may I ask, expects her to act differently? Why, therefore, since she is fully convinced that I possess a few of the outward appearances of a gentleman, should she fear to receive me in her house? To conform to the social standards of those who deprecate her virtue? Elizabeth, you expect too much, I fear."

"Hear, hear," cried The Laird. He realized that Elizabeth was not to be denied, so he thought best to assume a jocular attitude during the discussion.

"Father," his eldest daughter reminded him. "It is your duty to forbid Donald doing anything which is certain to bring his family into disrepute and make it the target for the tongue of scandal."

"Oh, leave him alone, you pestiferous woman," old Hector cried sharply. "I had it not been for the girl he wouldn't be living this minute, so the least he can do is to express his compliments to her. Also, since this disagreeable topic has again been aired, let me remind you that the lass isn't going to marry Donald. She came out here, Donald," he continued, turning to his son, "with the distinct understanding that her job was to humor you back to health, and for that you owe her your thanks and I'm willing you should call on her and express them. Don't flatter your self that she'll marry you, my boy. I've had a talk with her—since you must know it sooner or later—and she promised me she wouldn't."

The Young Laird's face paled a little but he maintained his composure. "I greatly fear you misunderstood her, father," he replied gently. "She promised me she'd marry me. You see," he added looking the old man resolutely in the face, "I think she's virtuous, so I'm going to marry her."

His father smiled sadly. "Poor lad, God knows I'm sorry for you."

"The girl doesn't impress me as one who would lie, Elizabeth. Who told you this?"

"Andrew Daney."

"Bear with me a moment, son, till I call Andrew on the telephone," the Laird requested, and went into the telephone booth under the stairs in the reception hall. When he emerged a few minutes later, his face was pale and haggard.

(To be continued)

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