

"Tell Him I Loathe Him."

CHAPTER XXXVI. A FISHY MYSTERY.

CHARLES QUINTARD. Here is your luncheon. Now let us see you make up for time that is lost.

To make her feel quite comfortable he ate with her, chatting as cheerfully as though with an old friend; then when she had finished she arose.

'There!' she exclaimed, smiling. 'I have tested your hospitality well and feel much better. I was so afraid you would turn me away. Then I should have gone to the Seine.'

'Did you think we were heathens?' 'No; but most people in the world think of themselves alone, and are particularly unwilling to burden themselves with a stranger.'

She glanced toward the door as she ceased speaking, for some one had entered. It was Meredith Lansing. He stopped short, gazed at her curiously, a ghastly pallor slowly over-spreading his face.

'Come in, Lansing,' cried Quintard, more gravely than he had spoken in many days. 'I must introduce you to our gift from the stars, Miss Mignon Moreau, let me present Mr. Lansing.'

Instead of the formal bow which Mignon evidently expected, Lansing strode suddenly forward and grasped her by the arm.

'Your name is Mignon Moreau,' he gasped, his face distorted with emotion. 'What was your father's name? Quick!'

'The girl shrank away from him, her fixed upon the haggard face with wilder fright.

'Maurice,' she answered almost inaudibly, 'Maurice Moreau.'

A low cry, a smothered exclamation of 'Thank God!' At last! and Meredith Lansing fell at full length before them.

Even as he lay there, death-like in his stillness, the door opened to admit Erle Childes.

CHAPTER XXVIII. Meredith Lansing's Secret.

WHEN Meredith Lansing recovered consciousness he found himself lying on his own bed, with Erle Childes bending over him.

The bewildered expression gave place to one of agonizing entreaty and doubt. His glance passed Childes and seemed to search the room vainly.

'Where is she?' he whispered hoarsely, raising himself upon his elbow, and seizing Childes' arm. 'For God's sake, tell me that I did not dream it, that I have found her at last!'

'You mean Bebe?' asked Childes quietly.

'No, no; not Bebe! That other one, Mignon! Mignon! Mignon Moreau she said her name was. Where is she?'

'In the other room with Quintard. She is all right and safe enough. Calm yourself, my friend; you will be all!'

'No, no; not now. This is no time for illness. Let me see her. Bring her here, won't you?'

'No. You frightened her before, and you had better be quite yourself before you see her again. What you have to say to her will keep.'

'How strangely you look at me! What is the matter? Has anything happened?'

'Nothing that I cannot tell you another time.'

'No, I must hear it now! Can't you see that I'm on fire? Don't you understand that the anxiety, the suspense will kill me?'

'What I have to say has nothing to do with Mignon Moreau. I know no-

thing of her except that Quintard told me her father is dead and sent her was the handsomest girl, the most exquisite bit of womanhood whom I had ever met, and it is not to be wondered at that I fell violently in love with her at the beginning of our acquaintance. She lived with an aunt to me, asking me to take her to America. I have scarcely spoken to her. What I have to say to you is upon a different subject entirely.'

'What? Go on! I must hear everything! If you have any pity go on!'

For a moment Childes stood in moody silence, then leaned against the foot of the bed, his eyes fixed curiously upon Lansing's disturbed, ghastly countenance, lifted so eagerly to his own.

'I went to-day,' he began at last, 'to call upon—upon—Miss Virginia Beaufort. While there a wounded man sent to ask if he might not see me. I went to him and found him dying perhaps. Who do you think he was, Mr. Lansing?'

The white face had grown a shade paler and twitched horribly. 'How should I know?' Lansing exclaimed, almost fretfully.

'It was Eldridge Appleton Childes, my uncle,' returned Childes slowly, his eyes holding those of the man before him.

He was scarcely prepared, however, for the still, white horror that over-spreading the suffering face. The twitching had ceased. The frozen stillness of the face was that of death.

'Eldridge Childes!' he whispered after a long, terrible silence. 'I was told that he was killed by the caving in of a mine.'

'You were told that he was killed?' replied Childes coldly. 'And yet you told me that you were beside him when he died. You told me that he left his large fortune in your hands for me. You gave that money into my keeping. Now I find my uncle alive, if dying. I find that he has been always unfortunate and poor I find that he never possessed a dollar which he could have entrusted to you. What does it mean? Why should you have come to me, an utter stranger, to place in my hands a large fortune to which I had no right? Why should you have taken me, a man whom you never saw before, but who was under the most horrible ban that ever shadowed any life, into the very bosom and heart of your family? Why should you have deceived your innocent daughter into becoming my wife when you knew so well that I had no love to give her? I confess that I have acted like a weak fool all through, but I am not, for all that, such an idiot but that I can see there is some terrible secret underlying all this. Mr. Lansing, the time has come when I must know what that secret is.'

Not once during the long speech had Meredith Lansing moved. Activity and intelligence seemed to have left him at once. He listened in dumb anguish, his blue lips fallen away from his white teeth with hideous ghastliness.

When Erle Childes ceased speaking a silence that seemed almost tangible oppressed the room. It seemed to weigh upon them both with a heaviness that was suffocating.

At last, when Childes could bear it no longer, he heard a groan that seemed to issue from the very depths of the man's soul; then he was conscious that Meredith Lansing had risen, but being unable to stand, was crouching back in an armchair, his eyes glittering like those of an animal that helplessly faces death, knowing that no escape is possible.

He lifted his hand feebly and raised the damp hair from his forehead as though its weight distressed him.

'It has come at last!' he said, under his breath in a tone that none would have recognized. 'The secret which I have kept for years, and which I have always told myself would make a madman of me, must be made known, and to you! Oh, God! If I might but have escaped it, I am a coward, Erle! A frightful, cringing coward. Give me time!'

Childes was striving with all his might to find something to say, but no words seemed to suggest themselves. He was dumb.

Then Meredith Lansing, grasping the arms of his chair to gain strength, began again, his voice too dead to admit of even a quiver.

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ALL DRUGGISTS

'More than twenty years ago, Erle, I met Mignon Blair at... Well, what matters it when or where? She at the time of our meeting, a sister of her father's, a grasping, hard-hearted woman as ever disgraced the name of woman. I was rich, but in the humility that is born of love I forgot that. For some months I worshipped in silence; then, unable to keep my secret longer, I told it to Mignon. When I had done so I expected nothing but my rejection, but to my surprise and delight Mignon said she would be my wife. There was none of that shy tenderness in her manner that characterizes a woman who loves; but, blind fool that I was, I could see nothing of that. She did not resist when I drew her to me and kissed her, and in my ecstasy I saw nothing of that which afterward came to me with stunning force: the strange whitening of her face, the cruel clinching of the small hands, the look of desperation in the passionate eyes.

'The time that followed was a blissful dream to me, and afterward a torturing curse. I loathed myself because I had been a blind fool! I loathed—God! Let me get away from that time and go on. We were married. I shall never forget the day. I did not see Mignon until she joined me in the church upon the arm of her father; but, madly infatuated as I was, the terrible pallor of her face, the wild yearning in her eyes, startled me. The next moment, standing beside her, I had forgotten it. I don't know how to tell you of what followed. It was horrible! horrible!

'From the moment of our marriage my wife seemed to take the most frightful dislike to me. If I came in-

to her presence, she uttered a low cry and fled through another door. If by accident met her in the hall, she trembled like a frightened animal. She locked her door upon us though she feared my presence. Then, one day, when I was about yielding to the hideous belief that she was mad, I received a letter from her. It was entreated me to allow her to go away for a time with her aunt, assuring me that she would return a better wife to me.

'To tell it sounds so cold, but the intensity of its pleading touched me. I consented. She left the house afterwards she returned as suddenly as she had departed. Her aunt had written me several times that Mignon was well and would be home soon giving me no address, however. When my wife came, the terrible pallor of her face, her wasted form, shocked me; but you can never realize my joy when she came up to me of her own accord and lifted her face to be kissed.

'Meredith,' she said, 'I want you to forgive me for my conduct to you, will you not? I have been very wrong, but I am sorry, dear. If you can forgive me, you shall have nothing to complain of in future. If I had not loved you before, your patience would have made me love you now.'

'Then you do love me?' I asked, miserably enough.

'More than my life,' she answered earnestly.

'From that day, Erle, existence began anew for me. My life was a dream. My wife was tenderness itself, and I was happy, until—One day she came to me and asked if she might go for another trip with her aunt. She was very much out of health, and as I could not leave my business then I consented.

'Mignon wrote me every day. Then,

at last, a week passed and I did not hear. A telegram from her aunt explained it. I was a father, it said, and mother and daughter were doing well. God! how happy I was. Still, with a man's brutal yielding to the chains of business, I did not go to her. The next I knew I received a letter from the physician who had attended her, saying that he had ordered her away to Europe, as her health was extremely poor. Terribly alarmed, I ran down to see her. 'She received me with hysterical tenderness. The baby, I was told, was suffering with its eyes, and until the doctor had procured some sort of an arrangement for it, the little thing could not be taken from the dark room. I held it in my arms and kissed it, but I never saw its face. 'Well, Erle, she went away. Her letters, gentle and loving, came regularly. Her health was improving, she told me; but while the baby was remarkable constitutionally, she was rapidly growing blind. She was astonishingly large, a stonishingly strong, astonishingly precocious, but it seemed that nothing could save her sight. It was a terrible grief to me. Her life was take her to all the best specialists in Europe, but it was useless. At the end of a year she strengthened and precocity, but totally blind. How I adored them both! To be continued.

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UNCLAIMED LETTERS, REMAINING IN G.P. to NOV. 1st, 1910.

Table with columns A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z. Lists names and addresses of individuals with unclaimed letters.

SEAMEN'S LIST.

Table listing names and details of seamen, including ship names and agents.

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