

avoided them. I know. Same here. When one is down and out—"

"Oh," murmured the girl. "You do understand."

"Of course I do."

"Then come," she cried peremptorily. "That's a bond of sympathy already. If you don't come I won't eat a bite."

The youth didn't really require much coaxing.

"All the same," he said, rising, "I wish it were my windfall. Not that I'd deprive you of your luck, but a fellow hates to be grub-staked by a girl."

"Try and forget the everlasting sex of it," said the girl, a little impatiently. "Can't one pal help another? You'd do the same for me. Let's hurry up before the crowd gets there. Shall we go to the Palace Grill?"

"Anywhere."

But at the park gate they were halted by a park cop—another one.

"I've orders to search everyone leaving the park," he said.

The girl swayed and clutched at the young man's arm for support.

"Oh, that's all right," said the youth, easily. "Your brother officer saw us."

"Did he search you?"

"He didn't need to. Let us pass. This lady is nearly fainting. She—she missed her lunch."

"Orders is orders," insisted the cop. "Everyone has to be searched."

"But I tell you—"

"If she waits a bit there'll be a matron here from the station. There've been too many pockets picked. It's getting past a joke.... No, there's no use going back because the other gate's locked, and there's a policeman there to see that everybody is shunted out this way."

"You're crazy! The park's practically deserted. Only this lady and I—"

"Oh, there's always a pedestrian or two. We've got our orders, anyway, to let nobody pass."

The young man suddenly felt the girl lean heavier. She grew a dead weight.

Startled, he looked down at her.

"There! She's fainted," he exclaimed.

"She—she was too weak with hunger. Let me get her over to the fountain."

"Oh, well, beat it then," and the cop stepped aside.

"It isn't a real faint," whispered the girl. "I just had to do it or he'd have kept us here till dark!"

"Gee!" muttered her companion, admiringly.

"Drag me on a bit, and throw a little water on me," said the girl. "But not too much. Wait! Is he watching?"

"He sure is. Keep it up, little sport."

He seated her on the brink of the fountain which occupied the centre of the little square just outside the park entrance. She wobbled and clung to him. He wet a handkerchief and laved her brow. He chafed her hands. Presently she struggled to her feet and together they walked slowly to the corner. Turning, they saw that the cop had lost interest. He was leaning against a tree

trunk admiring the last rays of sunset.

"That was a close shave," remarked the girl. "For it so happens that I have sixty dollars on me."

"What if you had?"

"Yes, but I—I'm unable to account for it. I've given my solemn oath not to tell where I got it."

The young man looked sharply at her. "That surely would have complicated matters—unless they found the real thief. Can't you elucidate for my benefit?"

"An oath is an oath."

"Some oaths were made to be broken." But the girl shook her head.

"Let's hurry," she said. "Do you know, when I got that money a little while ago it chased away my hunger for a while. Believe me, I'm going to eat!"

"And I'm going to help you. Some day it will be my turn, though, and you've got to be my guest, then."

Under the soft rose-shaded lights in a secluded corner of the luxurious restaurant the two shabby "benchers," facing each other, had their first real opportunity to study one another.

"This is an adventure—for me," said the girl as the second course came on.

"It's heaven for me," said the youth.

There was a certain air of smartness, of style, about his companion that was evident in spite of her worn attire. In spite of her rather pinched look he could see that she was pretty, that her face when animated, lost its old wistfulness. On her side she noticed that he had a strong jaw, a steady gaze and a decided way of speaking, like one who is used to giving orders.

When the very last course was placed before them and the orchestra was playing very softly in their distant alcove the girl leaned back and toying with her ice sent him several penetrating glances which he, devouring his third piece of pie, failed to see.

"I wish you would tell me—about yourself," she began at length. "I'm all at sea. I took you at first for—well, for a lazy good-for-nothing park loafer. But I know now you're nothing of the kind."

He moved the tall vase of pink carnations aside and smiled across at her.

"That's better, eh? I—I've been too busy to do it before."

They both laughed.

"You're nice and candid," he went on, ruefully. "I am a loafer, though, but it's really not my fault, altogether. As I intimated before I'm a returned man, a corporal."

"It's queer that you can't find a job!"

"Well, I'll tell you, I could find one but—I won't take it."

"Oh, you're not uppish, surely?"

"Maybe I'm just plain crazy. It's like this: while I was overseas my job was held by a girl—a smart little girl, too, I believe, and I won't take it from her. That's all."

"How foolish! You have first right."

"Possibly."

"And won't she give it up?"

"I haven't asked for it. I heard coming back on the troopship that she had it and that she was supporting a family, her invalid mother and some small brothers and sisters, on the salary she gets at—at my old office job. How can I rob the widow and the orphan? I fought to defend them, not to—"

The girl was sitting up very straight. An eager light burned in her eyes. She pushed her plate aside.

"Is—is your name Hutchison?" she demanded, quickly.

"Yes, it is," he said, wondering.

"And that reminds me—I don't think either of us noticed, did we?—that we came in here unknown to one another! Please, yours?"

"It made it more adventurous, though. Could—could you make a guess at my name?"

"How could I?" he asked smilingly.

"How in the world did you guess mine?"

"Listen a moment. I happen to know that the girl who replaced you at McAndrews and Blain—that's the name of your firm, isn't it?"

"It sure is!"

"Well, that girl isn't holding your job, Mr. Hutchison. The day you came back to the city she left it. She isn't the kind of girl to—to pinch a soldier's job on him."

"What! Miss Brooke do you mean?"

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