

THE MASTER MIND

Novelized by
Marvin Dana, author
of "Within the Law,"
from the suc-
cessful play by
Daniel D. Carter



and my wife here is president of the Mothers' club. You can look up our record there right through for the last four years. We've lived straight, and we're going to remain straight. Now let me tell you something else. If you want to look any further back than that you're looking for trouble—and a chance to get crooked!"

There was a deadly ferocity in the tones.

"Aw, you needn't get so sore about it," Walter urged quaveringly.

Blount spoke again.

"It looks to me as if we were likely to be together for some time to come. As far as I know, you're just Walter Blount. Outside of Walter Blount I don't know who you are, and I don't care either."

Walter strove again to placate the man whom he had so seriously offended.

"Aw, I was just kidding," he protested weakly. His attempt at a propitiatory smile was tremulous.

Of a sudden a new curiosity stirred in Walter.

"And the girl—that skirt—my sister, you know! What is she?" he demanded. "Is she one of us?"

"She's only been with us a week," Mrs. Blount explained. "Came from across the pond, so how can we tell?"

Said Blount:

"We don't know a damned thing about the girl except that she's our daughter. That's all we're supposed to know, and it's all we need to know, at that." A sudden memory moved in the husband's brain, and he continued with increased sternness. "And another thing—don't you dare again to act like you did today at lunch. There we were a-dining at the Waldorf with fine people, and me a-bragging about our big ranches and our beautiful home out west. And then I caught you trying to cop a spoon, so that I had to kick you under the table." An old instinct revived from the association of ideas, and he added petulantly. "And it was a plated one, at that!"

"What's the odds?" she demanded very spiritily. "Lots of perfectly respectable people take things like that at hotels just for souvenirs. Why, I know a lady that hasn't got two towels alike in her whole house. And she's real rich too."

Walter reverted to the subject of prime interest to him.

"And the girl?" he insisted. He gazed at Blount eagerly. "Do you think Andrew has anything on the girl like he has on us?"

In an instant Blount had leaped close, his face flushed with passion.

"Andrew hasn't anything on us!" he hissed.

A flash of anger gave fleeting courage to Walter.

"Hub!" he exclaimed scornfully. "Don't try and slip anything like that over!"

Andrew came in from the next room and stood directly between the two men. Then he addressed them with contemptuous coldness:

"If through jealousy and bickering you fail to act your parts so that in consequence my plans miscarry, it will count against you far more than would mere disobedience. What was the cause of this row?"

Blount pointed to Walter.

"Ask the whelp!"

"I was just kidding—that's all!"

"Take care, sir," Andrew said harshly. "One of these days my patience will be exhausted." He waited a moment, surveying the group with a look

be ready for an interview.

Andrew descended to the library with an eagerness of expectancy that was almost disconcerting to himself. He ordered Parker, whom he found already stationed in the hall, to maintain the privacy of the library, to bring Walter on hearing the bell. And at last a delicate rustling of draperies sounded at the door, and Lucene entered.

The girl stopped short at sight of the man, arrested for a moment by the stress of emotion. No least trace of Maggie Flint, nursemaid and convict, remained visible in the poised loveliness of this gentle maiden. The promise of her beauty had been most nobly fulfilled. She was of dainty fairness, with a golden crown of locks like corn silk in the sun, as lustrous, as finely spun. The exquisite features, set in the perfect oval of the face, were pearl



"It sure pays to be honest."

pure of coloring, save where the blood that blushed in cheeks and deepened winsomely in lips.

At his smile Lucene came to him swiftly.

"Oh, at last!" she exclaimed. His smile grew as he spoke:

"You're not going to be lonesome for France, are you, Lucene?"

"Indeed, no!" was the joyous answer, given with a half disdainful pout of the red lips. "I was happy enough there. But, after all, it wasn't America—it wasn't home."

Now, since her first strong emotion at the meeting was past, Lucene was constrained to astonishment over something strange and unexpected in the appearance of the man before her.

"Why, Mr. Andrew," she said, with some show of confusion over her own temerity, "how odd you look! What is it? Oh, yes, of course! It's your clothes. What can it mean? Tell me, please."

At the request the smile vanished from the face of the Master Mind.

"Patience, patience!" he admonished. "You shall know all about everything presently, but not quite yet. It isn't necessary now."

Then he continued:

"Tell me, instead, has our little girl left her heart in Paris or has she brought it back intact? Though he put the question so lightly, it was of import to him in his scheme of vengeance."

"Oh, neither the one or the other," Lucene declared, with a moue of resentment against the idea. "I left my heart here, sir, when I went away. You should know that, for I told you all about my one very meager romance, which can never come to anything, of course."

"Never is a long time," Andrew suggested drily, aware of the intricacies

he had set in motion by his mechanism for the coining of destiny. "So, then, you have actually remained faithful to the old memory all this long time?"

"Does it surprise you?" She became grave. "I think that I have that virtue—faithfulness," she said, hesitatingly. "It's only an ideal, perhaps, but," she was violently aroused by Andrew's next words:

"I fancy," he said deliberately, "that I'm going to surprise you a bit. You shall see him soon."

The girl started, and her eyes sought those of the speaker in amazed questioning.

"Oh, Mr. Andrew! You can't mean—you can't mean!"

"Yes," the man said with quiet emphasis. "I do mean just what I have said. You shall see that ideal of yours very soon. That I promise you, my dear girl. Yes, you are to meet the one that owes his life to you, yet doesn't even know your name. And you are to meet him speedily too."

Lucene's eyes were like stars now, shimmering with the gusty joy of her heart, and her lips wreathed to a smile of delight.

"Oh, when?" she cried. "Oh, tell me when! It can't be true. It's too wonderful to be true. Is he—quite well?"

"Quite."

"When they took him away in the ambulance," she continued pensively, "I was sure that he must die, in spite of what I had tried to do for him."

"And so he would have died," Andrew said gravely, "but for you."

"I did do the right thing, didn't I?" she said appealingly.

"Yes," Andrew agreed. "You did the only thing that could have saved him. But tell me, if you please, how did you ever learn to make a tourniquet?"

"Why, as to that," came the ready reply. "I'd seen pictures of them in those 'first aid' things on a placard in a train, and I studied them until I understood the principle just because I had nothing else to do at the time. And then," a tremor was in her voice at the memory, "when he was thrown from the automobile right there at my feet almost and lay bleeding so dreadfully, then somehow I remembered."

"And you never forgot him," the man exclaimed, betrayed into open expression of his wonder over this lightning welding of hearts. "And you never forgot," he repeated softly, with a half envious note in his voice. "You never forgot, though neither of you even so much as knew the other's name."

The suggestion in his words quickened the girl's curiosity.

"Oh," she begged, "who is he?"

Andrew regarded her quizzically.

"It was a small chance, a mighty small one, that you two should ever meet again, the little, friendless waif of the city and the brilliant man of the world. Yet so it was to be. Yes; it was for this purpose that I took the house here. For this same purpose I have created a family for you, Lucene, to take the place of the one you lost when you were a mere child. I have provided for you a father, a mother, a brother. Even I have made for you a blameless past—a past that will stand all the scrutiny it is ever likely to receive and more."

Nevertheless the girl, even in the face of these astonishing revelations, held her chief interest on that ideal around which had clustered the dearest reveries of her heart through the years. So now she made no comment, only:

"Does he remember me?"

"Much more than that," Andrew asserted briskly. "He has tried again and again to find you. Since my having you in charge, it has been, of course, impossible for him to learn anything of you. But now the time has come to reveal you."

The girl's face darkened a little.

"Oh," she cried, gripped, "why didn't you let him find me, when you knew that I?"—Her voice broke pitifully.

"In order, first, to educate and train you, so that there could be no question as to your fitness, your standing as a woman of refinement and breeding; and, secondly, to gain time for the blotting out of a past which, though you yourself were absolutely innocent, would have forever kept you apart from him."

The girl acquiesced by silence in the justice of her guardian's reasoning.

"And you really—really do know him?" she questioned.

"At least I have seen him, and I know that he exists right here in this very city just now," Andrew replied, smiling again.

"Oh! And don't you, too, admire him—ever so much?"

Fortunately for the girl's peace of mind she did not see the unlovely hardening of the man's face. But his self-control was strong.

"Why, once he unknowingly rendered me a great service, and I—well, I desire to return it in kind."

"You mean, without letting him know?" In her eagerness the girl looked up into Andrew's face.

"Yes," came the glib explanation. "You see, Lucene, that's what these old clothes of mine mean. You will please remember that for the present I am merely Andrew Watkins, your brother's valet and confidential man."

"Oh, Mr. Andrew," she objected with some embarrassment, "don't you see that you're asking me to deceive him?"

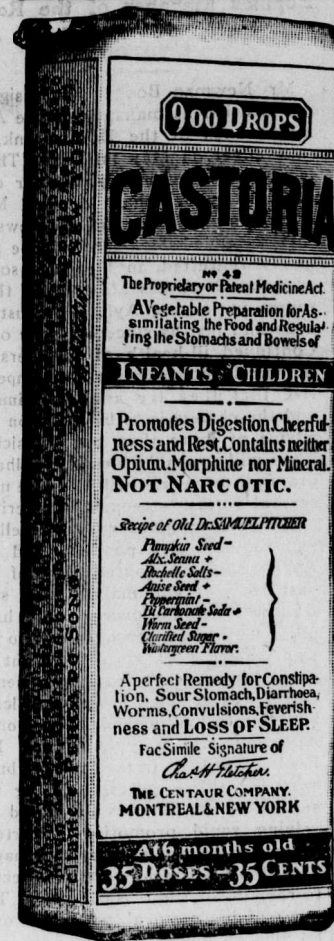
"My dear little girl," he declared gently, "I am only doing my best to give you a fair chance of happiness."

The Master Mind walked away from his ward to where the call button was set in the wall. He pushed it to notify Parker that it was time for Walter's presence in the library.

Walter came into the room with curiosity writ large on his boyish face.

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(Continued next week.)



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