

THE GREED of JOCELYN JEFFREYS

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and almost sobbed for very joy.

"You are the best friend that I have ever had," she told him.

They sat down and discussed the details of his plan. His proposition was to go to Ellenbogen and to buy him off in order to release Jocelyn from her unprofitable contract. Then to employ for her, as her teacher, the biggest Metropolitan artiste that they could get. After that, to buy her entries, at the cost of thousands, if necessary, as prima-donna in any big production that happened at the psychological instant to be the production of the hour.

"I'll see Ellenbogen, at once, to-morrow," he exclaimed. But she checked him.

"Not so fast, friend Wainwright," she protested. "It's true you are a spendthrift, but you are not a business man. Come, do you claim to be one?"

MONROE flushed and admitted that he was not. "Even Bellamy owes me a cool five thousand and I can't get it back," he said.

"You have no business head," she went on, her eyes sparkling, "otherwise your head is very super-fine—I like it—you have a good head—you have fine hair, my friend, hair that one would like to touch, to thrust one's fingers through, not like that plaster headed Bellamy, but the little bee of business—it is not there, eh? No, you furnish the money and I will do the business. I know the ropes."

And so it was arranged. And, with less hesitation than ever, this strange enigma called Jocelyn Jeffreys held out her hand repeatedly for Wainwright's cash. To him constantly she reported progress. She had gotten Ellenbogen down to his bottom figure, and was already negotiating with an artiste at the opera house. Everything looked propitious. "Only," she told him, "it takes money, more money than we thought, and all the time."

"I wish I was worth millions," sighed Wainwright, "so I could buy you a theatre, like the rest of these millionaires do."

But she placed her hand upon his mouth. "Not that, not that, my friend," she said. "It is things like that that make too much talk, and, as for me, I am not to be talked about, do you see? It would be well, though," she continued, naively, "for me to have—say—well ten thousand dollars."

Wainwright actually whistled, but not audibly, only to himself. The girl at times seemed to him insatiable in her demands for more, and yet he could not refuse her. Bellamy had warned him a dozen times and a dozen times had been rudely thrust out of the Barristers with instructions never to renew the conversation, and yet through it all, such was the art of the woman, that it seemed to him that he was having the time of his life. He had never lived, perhaps, more economically so far as his personal expenses were concerned. He had never lived more temperately, and yet he felt as though he were going the pace, and it was Jocelyn Jeffreys who made him feel it. Jocelyn, who plucked his heart strings and his purse strings at the same time. All the spice of life seemed to be concentrated in this girl, whose nature was as frankly cold and greedy on the one hand as it was fascinating on the other. Her demands meanwhile upon him kept increasing, but her progress in the making of herself a star seemed correspondingly slow. He noted, as time went on, that there was a slight but ever-growing change in her manner toward him. The more money he lavished upon her, the less friendly, so it seemed, the girl became, until at last—this strange coldness having grown almost imperceptibly into a barrier—he was met one night by Miss Smith, Jocelyn's grim guardian, with the curt statement that Jocelyn

was not at home."

"But I've got to see her," exclaimed Wainwright.

"She is not at home," persisted the cool and cruel Miss Smith, and yet, at that very instant, Wainwright could have sworn he heard the swish of skirts inside the living room.

He went out, considerably abashed, met Bellamy, and made a fair attempt to drown his disappointment in champagne. He found, however, that while it was no easy matter to drown Bellamy, who was always ready for another quart, that his own feelings declined absolutely to be subdued. He found himself telling Bellamy about it, something, save for the champagne, he would never have done.

"Well," said Bellamy, "you are a plain jackass. I always knew you were and this proves it. That girl has simply drained you dry—she's got every dollar that you had and then thrown you overboard."

"Not every dollar," said Wainwright, "I've got some left." How much he had left, in sooth, Wainwright did not know. He was startled one day by a curt note from his bank requesting him to call there at his earliest convenience between the hours of ten and three.

He attended at ten o'clock sharp, and the cashier caught him as he was passing into the bank and dragged him into a private room.

"Rightie, old boy," said the cashier to him, "you'll have to sell a mortgage or some stocks, I guess."

"What for," demanded Monroe.

"Overdrawn your account to about nineteen hundred odd dollars," said the cashier, "and I guess you'll have to build her up again. What have you been doing with all your money anyhow that you've checked out of this bank, Monroe? Keeping it in soap boxes at the Barristers?"

MONROE did not answer. He looked at the page in the ledger that was dedicated to himself, and allowed the fact to sink home, that he was nearly two thousand dollars short. He was still brewing over this fact, when the cashier turned to another page.

"Monroe," he said, "I'll show you a tidy little bank

account—an actress, too. What do you think of that, Monroe?"

Monroe looked upon the page and gasped. It was headed by the name of Jocelyn Jeffreys, and the credit side showed her to be possessed of more, considerably more than one hundred thousand dollars.

"Hasn't she drawn any of this," demanded Wainwright.

"Not a dollar," answered the cashier.

"That's a funny thing," mused Monroe, "she must be tight as thunder."

"She's as good as gold," added the cashier, closing the book. Then he nodded seriously. "You had better sell some stock and jack up your account, and do it right away. We don't like these overdrafts."

Monroe turned pale. "I'll do the best I can," he said, forcing some lightness into his tone. And then he strode out, and walked the streets for hours.

"Sell a mortgage—sell some stocks," he muttered to himself. He had no stocks—he had no mortgages—he had nothing. He was two thousand dollars to the bad and no way to make it up, and, what was worse, she had done it. Bellamy was right, he had simply been a plaything—a catpaw. He had had money, the one thing she needed, and probably she needed it for somebody else.

"Well, she got it, anyway," he muttered to himself. After that Wainwright went down into the depths. It did not take him long. He had no credit—his friends were of the kind that expected him to lend rather than to borrow. He sold his jewels, such as he had—left the Barristers, went into innocuous desuetude. He was literally down and out. In the midst of it all, he went back to Jocelyn Jeffreys. He noted that she had stopped playing at the Gaiety, but had failed to see her name in any paper. But he felt that he must see her, must take a final plea to her, if not for mercy, then for money. And again he was met by the redoubtable Miss Smith. "Miss Jeffreys," she told him, glibly, "is out of town; she will not return for six weeks, at the very least. Good day."

The next weeks constituted purgatory for Wainwright Monroe. He had no business ability and no practical ability of any kind, save to spend money. He lived on the East side and nothing a day—he starved. Once every day he sought Bellamy at the Barristers to get back one thousand—a hundred, or even a dollar that Bellamy owed him. Bellamy simply cut him and sought the friendship of some more prosperous man.

Once, as he walked the streets, he saw her, Jocelyn Jeffreys, in a limousine with Bellamy. He could almost hear her high-voiced laughter through the beveled plate-glass windows. She had cast him off forever, that much was sure.

One day the bellboy at the Belvedere handed him an envelope. There never was any mail for him, as a rule, but this time the unusual had happened. He looked at the envelope and gasped. It was in her handwriting. Hastily he tore it open, devoured its contents, and then he fell back gritting his teeth. She had invited him to her Christmas dinner. Everybody was to be there. She had new friends to introduce to him. He must come, looking his best and feeling his best.

HE went back to his East Side lodging, digging his nails into the palms of his hands as he went. Yes, she knew, she understood, she was laughing at him now—she was going to ask him there to make a laughing stock of him before her friends—the man that she had drained dry and had cast aside like some worn out glove.

Suddenly a new idea occurred to him. He would go, not in the evening clothes that he had no funds to redeem from pawn, but he would go as he was—starving—gaunt—almost ragged. He would go and shame her before them all. At the very least, she was a thief—he stopped himself, as he uttered the

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Drawn by Will Frost.