



And so they worked from each end of the car toward the middle. Their hands ran swiftly over bodies with a loathsome familiarity that could only be resented, not forgiven. Their hands dived into pockets, and up sleeves, and into women's hair, everywhere that a jewel or a bill might be secreted. And always a rough growl or a swing of the revolver silenced any protest.

Their heinous fingers had hardly begun to ply, when the solemn stillness was broken by a chuckle and low hoot of laughter, a darkey's unctuous whiff. At such a place it was more shocking than at a funeral.

"What ails you?" was the nearest robber's demand.

The porter tried to wipe his streaming eyes without lowering his hands, as he chuckled on: "I—I—just thought of sunnium funny."

"Funnny!" was the universal groan. "I was just thinking," the porter snickered, "what mighty poor pickings you-all are goin' to get out of me. Whiff! If you had 'at waited till I got to 'Prisco, I'd jest natchely been noshin' money."

The robber relieved him of a few times and quarters and ordered him to turn round, but the black face whirled back as he heard from the other end of the car Wedgewood's significant complaint: "I say, this is an outrage!"

"Ab, close your trap and turn round, or I'll—"

"The porter's smile died away. 'Good Lawd,' he sighed, 'they're goin' to skin that British lion! And I just wore myself out on him.'"

The far-reaching effect of the whole procedure was just beginning to dawn on the porter. This little run on the bank meant a period of financial stringency for him. He watched the hurrying hands a moment or two, then his wrath rose to terrible proportions:

"Look here, man," he shouted at the robber, "ain't you-all goin' to leave these passengers noshin' a tail?"

"Not on purpose, nigger."

"No small change, or nothin'?"

"Nary a red."

"Then, passengers," the porter proclaimed, while the robber watched him in amazement, "passengers, I want to give you-all a warnin' heah and now: No tips, no whisk, broom!"

Perhaps because their hearts were already overflowing with distress, the passengers endured this appalling threat without comment, and when there was a commotion at the other end of the line, all eyes rolled that way.

Mr. Baumann was making an effort to take his leave, with great politeness.

"Excuse, please. I want to get by, please!"

"Get by!" the other robber gasped. "Why, you—"

"But I'm not a passenger," Mr. Baumann urged, with a wistful smile. "I've been going through the train myself."

"Much obliged! Hand over!" And a rude hand rummaged his pockets. It was a heart-rending sight.

"Oh all!" he wailed, "don't you allow no courtesies to the profession?" And when the inexorable thief continued to pluck his money, his watch, his scarf-pin, he grew wroth indeed. "Stop, stop, I refuse to pay. I'll go into bankruptcy to-day!"

"I wish it off," the villain laughed, and it joined the growing heap in the feed-bag.

Kathleen, doubly enraged, broke out viciously: "You're a common, sneaking—"

"Ah, turn round!" the man roared, and she obeyed in silence.

Then he explored Mrs. Whitcomb, but with such small reward that she turned away with a gasp. "You'd oughter have a pocketbook somewhere. Where's it at?"

was on the customs officers at New York.

And now another touch of light relieved the gloom. Kathleen was next in line, and she had been forcing her lips into their most attractive smile, and keeping her eyes winsomely mellow, for the robber's benefit. Marjorie could not see the smile; she could only see that Kathleen was next. She whispred to Marjorie:

"They'll get the bracelet! They'll get the bracelet!"

And Marjorie could have danced with glee. But Kathleen leaned coquettishly toward the masked stranger, and threw all her art into her tone as she murmured:

"I'm sure you're too brave to take my things. I've always admired men with the courage of Claude Duval."

The robber was taken a trifle aback, but he growled: "I don't know the party you speak of—but cough up!"

"Listen to her," Marjorie whispered in horror; "she's flirting with the train-robber."

"What won't some women flirt with!" Marjorie exclaimed.

The robber studied Kathleen a little more attentively, as he whipped off her necklace and her rings. She looked good to him, and so willing, that he muttered: "Say, lady, if you'll give me a kiss, I'll give you that diamond ring you got on."

"All right!" laughed Kathleen, with triumphant complacency.

"My God!" Marjorie groaned, "what won't some women do for a diamond!"

The robber bent close, and was just raising his mask to collect his ransom, when his confederate glanced her way, and knowing his susceptible nature, foresaw his intention, and shouted: "Stop it, Jake. You tend strictly to business, or I'll blow your nose off."

"Oh, all right," grumbled the reluctant gallant, as he drew the ring from her finger. "Sorry, miss, but I can't make the trade." And he added with an unwonted gentleness: "You can turn round now."

Kathleen was glad to hide the blushes of defeat, but Marjorie was still more bitterly disappointed. She whispred to Marjorie: "He didn't get the bracelet, after all."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Wolves in the Fold.

Marjorie's heart sank to its usual depth, but Marjorie had another of her inspirations. She started every body by suddenly beckoning and calling: "Excuse me, Mr. Robber. Come here, please."

The curious gallant edged her way, keeping a sharp watch along the line: "What do you want?"

Marjorie leaned nearer, and spoke in a low tone with an amiable smile: "That lady who wanted to kiss you has a bracelet up her sleeve."

The robber stared across his mask, and wondered, but laughed, and grunted: "Much obliged." Then he went back, and tapped Kathleen on the shoulder. When she turned round, in the hope that he had reconsidered his refusal to make the trade, he informed her by growling: "Excuse me, miss, I overlooked a bet."

He ran his hand along her arm, and found her bracelet, and accomplished what Marjorie had failed in, its removal.

"Don't, don't," cried Kathleen, "it's wished on."

"I wish it off," the villain laughed, and it joined the growing heap in the feed-bag.

Kathleen, doubly enraged, broke out viciously: "You're a common, sneaking—"

"Ah, turn round!" the man roared, and she obeyed in silence.

Then he explored Mrs. Whitcomb, but with such small reward that she turned away with a gasp. "You'd oughter have a pocketbook somewhere. Where's it at?"

Mrs. Whitcomb blushed furiously: "None of your business, you low brute."

"Perdoce, madame," the scoundrel snarled, "perdoce the purse, or I'll hunt for it myself."

Mrs. Whitcomb turned away, and after some management of her skirts, slipped her handbag into the eager palm with a wretched: "You're no gentleman, sir!"

"If I was, I'd be in Wall street," he laughed. "Now you can turn round."

And when she turned, he saw a bit of chain depending from her back hair. He tugged, and brought away the locket, and then proceeded to sound Ashton for hidden wealth.

And now Mrs. Temple began to sob as she parted with an old-fashioned brooch and two old-fashioned rings that had been her little vanities for the quarter of a century and more. The old clergyman could have wept with her at the vandalism. He turned on the wretch with a heartless appeal:

This reminder sobered the weeping thief at once, and he went back to work rubbially. "Oh, all right, Jake, Sorry, ma'am, but business is business." And he dumped Mrs. Temple's trinkets into the satchel. It was too much for the little old lady's little old husband. He fairly shrieked:

"Young man, you're a damned scoundrel, and the best argument I ever saw for hell-fire!"

Mrs. Temple's grief changed to horror at such a bolt from the blue: "Walter!" she gasped, "such language!"

But her husband answered in self-defense: "Even a minister has a right to swear once in his lifetime."

Marjorie almost dropped in his tracks, and Marjorie keeled over on him, as he gasped: "Good Lord, Dr. Temple, you are a—minister!"

"Yes, my boy," the old man confessed, glad that the robbers had relieved him of his guilty secret along with the rest of his private properties. Marjorie looked at the collapsing Marjorie and groaned: "And he was in the next berth all this time!"

The unmasking of the old fraud made a second sensation. Mrs. Fosdick called from far down the aisle: "Dr. Temple, you're not a detective!"

Mrs. Temple showed her back furiously: "How dare you?"

But Mrs. Fosdick was crying her luscious-eyed mate: "Oh, Arthur, he's not a detective. Embrace me!"

And they embraced, while the robbers looked on aghast at the sudden obliviousity of the old man. They focused the attention on themselves again, however, with a ferocious: "Here, hands up!" But they did not see Mr. and Mrs. Fosdick steal a kiss behind their upraised arms, for the robber to whose lot Marjorie fell was gazing over his well-filled wallet.

Marjorie saw it go with fortitude, but noting a piece of legal paper, he said: "Say, old man, you don't want that marriage license, do you?"

The robber studied Kathleen a little more attentively, as he whipped off her necklace and her rings. She looked good to him, and so willing, that he muttered: "Say, lady, if you'll give me a kiss, I'll give you that diamond ring you got on."

"All right!" laughed Kathleen, with triumphant complacency.

"My God!" Marjorie groaned, "what won't some women do for a diamond!"

The robber bent close, and was just raising his mask to collect his ransom, when his confederate glanced her way, and knowing his susceptible nature, foresaw his intention, and shouted: "Stop it, Jake. You tend strictly to business, or I'll blow your nose off."

"Oh, all right," grumbled the reluctant gallant, as he drew the ring from her finger. "Sorry, miss, but I can't make the trade." And he added with an unwonted gentleness: "You can turn round now."

Kathleen was glad to hide the blushes of defeat, but Marjorie was still more bitterly disappointed. She whispred to Marjorie: "He didn't get the bracelet, after all."

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But Jake, who was chosen Marjorie's left hand, roared: "Say, you cheated! All I got is this measly plain gold band."

"Oh, don't take that!" Marjorie gasped, clenching her hand.

Marjorie's heart ached at the thought of this final sacrilege. He had the license, and the minister at last—and now the fiends were going to carry off the wedding ring. He controlled himself with a desperate effort, and stooped to plead: "Say, old man, don't take that. That's not fair."

"But both of you," Jake growled, and jabbed him again with the gun.

He gave the ring a jerk, but Marjorie, in the very face of the weapon, would not let go. She struggled and tugged, weeping and imploring: "Oh, don't, don't take that! It's my wedding ring."

"Agh, what do I care!" the ruffian snarled, and wrenched her finger so viciously that she gave a little cry of pain.

That broke Marjorie's heart. With a wild, howling, "Damn you!" he hurled himself at the man, with only his bare hands for weapons.

CHAPTER XL.

A Hero in Spite of Himself.

Passion sent Marjorie into the unequal fight with two armed and desperate outlaws. But reason had planned the way. He had been studying the situation since the time, as if the villain were a war-map, studying his gestures, his way of turning, and how he held the revolver. He had noted that the man, as he frisked the passengers, did not keep his finger on the trigger, but on the guard.

Marjorie's little battle threw the desperado off his balance a trifle; as he recovered, Marjorie struck him, and swept him on over against the back of a seat. At the same instant, Marjorie's right hand went like lightning to the trigger guard, and gripped the fingers in a vise of steel, while he drove the man's elbow back against his side. Marjorie's left hand meanwhile flung around his enemy's neck, and gave him a spinning fall that sent his left hand out for balance. It fell across the back of the seat, and Marjorie plinked it with elbow and knee before he could get up.

All in the same crowded moment, his left knuckles jostled the man's chin in the air, and so bewildered him that his muscles relaxed enough for Marjorie's right fingers to squirm their way to the trigger, and aim the gun at the other robber, and finally to get entire control of it.

The thing had happened in such a flash that the second outlaw could hardly believe his eyes. The shriek of the first robber's prisoner, as he crashed backward, woke him to the need for action. He caught his other gun from his holster, and made for a double volley, but there was nothing to aim at. Marjorie was crouched in the seat, and almost perfectly covered by a human shield.

Still, from force of habit and foolhardy pluck, Bill aimed at Marjorie's right eyebrow, just about Jake's right ear, and shouted his old motto: "Hands up, you!"

"Hands up yourself!" answered Marjorie, and his victim, shuddering at the fierce look in his comrade's eyes, gasped: "For God's sake, don't shoot, Bill!"

Even then the fellow stood his ground, and debated the issue, till Marjorie threw such ringing determination into one last: "Hands up, or by God, I'll fire!" that he caved in, lifted his fingers from the triggers, turned the guns up, and slowly raised both hands above his head.

A profound "Ah!" of relief sounded through the car, and Marjorie, still keeping his eye on Bill, got down cautiously from the seat. The moment he released Jake's left hand, it darted to the holster where his second gun was waiting. But before he could clutch the butt of it, Marjorie jabbed the muzzle of his own revolver in the man's back, and growled: "Put 'em up!" And the robber's left hand joined the right in while Marjorie's left hand lifted the revolver.

Marjorie stood for a moment, breathing hard and a little incredulous at his own swift, sweet triumph. Then he made an effort to speak as if this desperate romance with their rival outlaws every morning before breakfast, but his voice cracked as he said, in a drawing-room tone:

"Dr. Temple, would you mind relieving that man of those guns?"

"What shall we do with these damned sinners?"

He felt like apologizing for the clerical relapse into a pulpitation, but Marjorie answered briskly: "We'd better take them into the smoking room. They scare the ladies. But first, will the conductor take those guns and distribute the contents to their rightful owners?"

The conductor was proud to act as lieutenant to this lieutenant, and he quickly relieved the robbers of their loot-kills.

Marjorie smiled. "Don't give anybody my things," and then he jabbed his robber with one of the revolvers, and commanded: "Forward, march!"

The little triumphal procession moved off, with Bill in the lead, followed by Dr. Temple, looking like a whole field battery, followed by Jake, followed by Marjorie, followed by the porter and as many of the other passengers as could crowd into the smoking room.

The rest went after those opinionated feed-bags.

(Continued on Page 6)

CHAPTER XL.

Clickety-Clickety-Clickety.

Marjorie, as the supposed wife of the rescuing angel, was permitted the first search, and the first thing she hunted for was a certain gold bracelet that was none of hers. She found it and seized it with a prayer of thanks, and concealed it among her own things.

Mrs. Temple gave her a guilty start, by speaking across a barrier: "Mrs. Mallory, your husband is the bravest man on earth."

"Oh, I know he is," Marjorie beamed, and added with a spasm of conscience: "But he isn't my husband!"

Mrs. Temple gasped in horror, but Marjorie dragged her close, and poured out the whole story, while the other passengers recovered their properties with as much joy as if they were all new gifts found on a bush.

Meanwhile, under Marjorie's guidance, the porter fastened the outlaws together back to back with the straps of their own feed-bags. The porter was rejoicing that his harvest of tips was not blighted after all.

Marjorie completed his bliss, by giving him Dr. Temple's brace of guns, and establishing him as jailer, with a warning: "Now, porter, don't take your eye off 'em."

"Lordy, I won't bat an eyelid." "If either of these men coughs, put a hole through both of 'em."

The porter chuckled: "My fingers is just a-itchin' for them lovin' triggers." Marjorie pocketed two of the captured revolvers, lest a need might arise suddenly again. As he hurried down the aisle, he was received with cheers. The passengers gave him an ovation, but he only smiled timidly, and made haste to Marjorie's side.

She regarded him with such idyllic glances that he almost regretted his deed. But this mood soon passed in her excitement, and in a moment she was surreptitiously showing him the bracelet. He became an accessory after the fact, and shared her guilt, for when she groaned with a sudden drop: "She'll get it back!" he grimly answered, "Oh, no she won't!"

He hoisted the bracelet into a little pool by the side of the track, with a farewell: "Good-bye, trouble!"

As he drew his head in, a side glance showed him that up near the engine a third train-robber held the miserably weary train crew in line.

He found the conductor just about to pull the bell-rope, to proceed. The conductor had forgotten all about the rest of the staff. Marjorie took him aside, and told him the situation, then turned to Marjorie, said: "Excuse me a minute," and hurried forward. The conductor followed Marjorie through the train into the baggage coach.

The first news the third outlaw had of the counter-revolution occurring in the sleeping car was a mysterious bullet that flicked the dust near his heel, and a sonorous shout of "Hands up!" As he whirled in amazement, he saw two revolvers aimed point blank at him from behind a curtain. He hoisted his guns without parley, and the train crew trussed him up in short order.

Marjorie ran back to Marjorie, and the conductor followed more slowly, reassuring the passengers in the other cars, and making certain that the train was ready to move on its way.

Marjorie went straight to Dr. Temple, with a burning demand: "You dear old fraud, will you marry me?"

Dr. Temple laughed and nodded. Marjorie and Mrs. Temple had been telling him the story of the prolonged elopement, and he was eager to atone for his own deception, by putting an end to their misery.

"Just wait one moment," he said, and as a final proof of affection, he unbuttoned his collar and put it on backwards. Mrs. Temple brought out the discarded bib, and he donned it meekly. The transformation explained many a mystery the old man had unmeshed himself in.

Even as he made ready for the ceremony, the conductor appeared, looked him over, grinned, and reached for the bell-cord, with a cheerful: "All aboard!"

Marjorie had a sort of superstitious dread, not entirely unfounded on experience, that if the train did not under way again, it would run not under some new obstacle to his marriage. He turned to the conductor:

"Say, old man, just hold the train till after my wedding, won't you?"

It did not much to ask in return for his services, but the conductor was tired of being second in command. He growled:

"Not a minute. We're 'way behind time."

"You might wait till I'm married," Marjorie pleaded.

"Not on your life!" the conductor answered, and he pulled the bell-rope twice; in the distance, the whistle answered twice.

Marjorie's temper flared again. He cried: "This train doesn't go another step till I'm married!" He reached up and pulled the bell-rope once; in the distance the whistle sounded once.

This was high treason, and the conductor advanced on him threateningly, as he seized the cord once more. "You touch that rope again, and I'll—"

"Oh, no, you won't," said Marjorie, as he whisked a revolver from his right pocket and jammed it into the conductor's watch-pocket. The conductor came to attention.

Then Marjorie, standing with his right hand on military duty, put out his left hand, and gave the word: "Now, parson."

He smiled still more as he heard Kathleen's voice wailing: "But I can't find my bracelet. Where's my bracelet?"

"Silence! Silence!" Dr. Temple commanded, and then: "Join hands, my children."

Marjorie shifted Snooks into her left arm, put her right hand into Marjorie's, and Dr. Temple, standing between them, began to drone the ritual.

When the old clergyman had done his work, the young husband-at-last gratefully received military law, re-

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