

# The Girl and the Bill

By **Bannister Merwin**  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY **RAY WALTERS**



## CHAPTER XI.

### The Way Out.

The sound of the girl's voice brought the men in the room to life. Her words were shaded to a tone of fearless scorn which must have bitten deep, for Alcatraz and the Japanese minister looked like schoolboys caught in wrong-doing. The South American gnawed at his lip; the Japanese looked at the floor, and Orme now realized that the manner which had seemed so indicative of a masterful personality was the manner which springs from power—the manner that is built upon the assurance of a tremendous backing.

The tension was broken by Portol. The little man's dismay suddenly gave way to an eager and voluble excitement, and he rushed across the room, exclaiming: "Oh, my dear miss—"

"No names," commanded Alcatraz, harshly, turning to his subordinate.

"My dear young lady," continued Portol breathlessly, "I am the victim of your misunderstanding. You will permit me to explain."

She answered with an even, cutting edge in her voice: "You cannot explain, Mr. Portol."

"But—" he began, blind to her meaning.

"I do not care to hear you," she said; and Portol slunk back to his former position. From his face it was clear that he had no desire except to get away.

Meantime Alcatraz aroused himself. "My friend here"—he indicated the Japanese—"and myself are here on business which concerns our two nations. Your appearance, I presume, is due to a desire to engage the professional services of Mr. Arima. Or perhaps you were trying to find the fortune teller upstairs." He barely repressed his sneer.

The girl did not answer. She remained by the door, and but for the attitudes of the others Orme would not have known but that she had gone. As it was, he could read in their bearing the disconcerting effects of her continued disdain.

The Japanese spoke. "Will you enter, miss, or shall we direct you on your way? Arima will come out and talk with you, if you so wish."

Still no answer. To Orme, in his hiding, there was something uncanny in her failure to respond. But he could picture her—Truth, calm in the presence of subterfuge.

"Will you not state your desire?" Again the Japanese. He was smiling now, with the false politeness of his race.

And then she spoke: "That envelope on the floor was stolen from my father's home. It bears my father's name."

Before Alcatraz could stop him, little Portol, with some vague hope of making amends, had snatched up the torn envelope and taken it to her. He returned to the range of Orme's vision with an air of virtuous importance.

"The contents," said the girl—"where are the papers?"

Alcatraz and the Japanese looked at each other. It was as if they said, "In view of our failure we might as well make a clean breast of it." But Alcatraz was too cunning to take the initiative in confession. He left that to the Japanese, who spoke unhesitatingly.

"The only papers in the envelope were these." He picked up the torn prospectuses from the floor and held them extended in his hand. "Our surprise is as great as yours."

"Do you expect me to believe that?"

"Whether you believe it or not, my dear young lady, it is true."

There was a moment of silence, then the Japanese continued: "We have reason to think that the envelope was for a time last night in the possession of an American, and that he substituted these circulars for whatever the envelope may have held."

Orme's impulse to declare himself was almost irresistible. A man whose instincts were less cautious would have thrown the table over and ranged himself beside the girl. Orme was not fearful, but he knew that the chances of a successful outcome would be lessened by exposure. Even if he and the girl got safely from the room, there would be a pursuit, and the risk of losing the papers would be great.

As for the girl, she clearly was in no danger. These men would not harm her.

conceal something.

And then came her voice. Her first words brought a glow to Orme's heart: "I know that you are mistaken. No American has those papers." Orme breathed his relief. Then she added the dubious word—"Unless—"

So she did doubt him after all. Well, he could not blame her. The scene in the room—the frankness of the Japanese, which could only be attributed to discomfiture; the empty envelope; the torn prospectuses on the floor, all these conditions pointed to the truth of the explanation she had heard.

On the other hand, there was his appearance on the lake, an hour or more after the episode on the campus. Might it not occur to her that, had he already secured the papers, he would have had no object in the further pursuit of the Japanese? But, perhaps she would think that he was seeking Arima to sell the papers back to him; or that, in spite of his appearance of surprise, he had been a witness of her abduction and had gone out on the water to save her. There were so many things she might think! Indeed, that dubious word "unless" might even signify, "unless he has secured the papers since I last saw him." But no; she would gather from the situation in which she found her enemies that the envelope had not been out of their possession since it was taken from the tree. Orme shut his lips hard. Her doubt of him would have to be endured, even though it shattered his pleasant dream of her complete and sympathetic understanding.

Alcatraz meantime was studying the girl with curious eyes. His look was both perplexed and admiring.

"Do you mind telling me how you happened to come to this place?" he asked.

She answered indifferently: "Supposing the Japanese had stolen the papers, I searched Maku's room at our house. There was a torn envelope there with the name 'Arima' printed in the corner."

Alcatraz bowed. "You are cleverer than most Americans, my dear young lady," he said. His lips curved into a smile that disclosed his fangs.

"That," she replied, "is as it may be. But I have not your admiration for trickery, Mr. Alcatraz."

Again he smiled. "Ah," he exclaimed, "trickery is the detail work of diplomacy." Then with a shade of seriousness in his voice, he asked: "Why did you use that word 'unless'?"

"Why, indeed?" She made this non-committal answer, and if Alcatraz had hoped to soothe her into friendliness and draw from her a clue to her suspicions, he was disappointed.

There was another period of silence, broken at last by the Japanese. "The fact that we have failed, my dear young lady," he said, "makes concealment unnecessary. I know, of course, that this matter will never become public. You understand that the representatives of great nations often have to take steps which, as private citizens, they would never think of."

"Yes," she answered, "I understand. There is no more to be said. Good-day."

There was a step and the sound of the door closing. She had gone.

Alcatraz and the Japanese looked at each other. "We have not failed—yet," said Alcatraz in French. "The girl does not know where the documents are, or she would not have come here. If her father does not have them before midnight our plans are safe. We remain merely at a loss as to the details of the documents, and we already know what they contain in a general way."

"Yes," agreed the Japanese, "things do not look so black, perhaps. But I am interested in your former advice."

"Yes?"

"Find the American! That is what she will try to do."

"We had an appointment with him this morning," said Alcatraz grimly, "but when you said that your man had the envelope, it no longer seemed necessary. We—you and I—still have the same object in view. I suggest that we now set out separately."

"As you wish," said the Japanese calmly. Doubtless he knew that Alcatraz was grasping at a straw which might still give him the advantage in future negotiations. "I am honored by your co-operation thus far."

He bowed formally.

Alcatraz returned the bow and, beckoning to Portol, left the room.

The Japanese minister turned to Arima and talked rapidly in his native tongue. From his manner it was plain that he was giving orders. At last, with a little gesture of authority, he put on his hat and walked out. The door closed after him with a slam.

Arima, now alone, seated himself in a chair and appeared to meditate. Again his hands were clasped about his knees and his beady eyes fixed on the floor. For fully fifteen minutes he

sat thus; then, with a little clucking sound, he leaped to his feet and hurried into the next room.

Now was Orme's chance. He lifted the table cover and rose to his feet. Arima had not closed the door after him, but Orme was not in the line of direct view into the other room, and he had to risk the possibility of being seen before he reached the window.

Or should he try for the door? It all depended upon what part of the next room Arima was in; but the window seemed safer, for the opening and closing of the door would be sure to attract attention.

Orme moved toward the window slowly, watching the opening through which Arima had disappeared. He got half-way to the window; three more steps would bring him to the sill. And then, without warning, Arima leaped into the room. Even in that moment Orme caught a glimpse of a mirror in the farther room, and knew that the Japanese had seen his reflection.

At this instant another man appeared, close behind Arima. A bandage was wrapped around his head. It was Maku, who presumably had been in the apartment all the time.

Orme stood little chance of overcoming the two. Quick as cats, with muscles like steel springs and a great variety of scientific tricks of offense and defense, they could handle him as they willed in a direct encounter. If Orme had had a revolver, he would now have drawn it. Yet he knew that this was not a case for firearms. Obviously, if he used a dangerous weapon in these men's rooms and was afterward caught, it would fare hard with him, for the real facts would be suppressed and he would be sentenced as an ordinary housebreaker, perhaps with some clemency due to his personal standing.

A quick intuition told him that he would not escape lightly if they fairly got their hands on him. The two Japanese had hitherto shown much patience with him. Their desire seemed to have been to avoid hurting him any more than was necessary. But there is a limit to Japanese patience. The scathing words of the Japanese minister must still be burning in Arima's brain. And Maku, who had controlled himself while Orme was following him through the streets of the North side, no longer had a diplomatic reason for restraining his rage against the man who had struck him down. In any event, the eyes of Arima and Maku glittered angrily, and Orme realized that he could expect no mercy.

He caught up a chair and raised it over his head, prepared to bring it down on Arima, who was only a few feet from him and coming fast.

The Japanese raised his arms to fend the expected blow. With sudden inspiration, Orme hurled the chair at his opponent's feet. There was a crash. Arima sprawled headlong. Maku, who was close behind, tried to leap over Arima, but his feet went through the rungs of the chair, and he, too, crashed to the floor.

As he threw the chair, Orme leaped back. Before the Japanese could get out of their tangle, he had jumped over the window sill and was running up the fire escape. Madam Alla was at her window, a look of startled inquiry on her face. She stepped back as he crowded into the room.

"Quick!" he said. "They'll be after me. Hide me somewhere."

"Come!" She took his sleeve and pulled him to a corner. There she pushed aside the dingy hanging and Orme saw that the wall was covered with a wainscoting that ran from floor to ceiling.

The medium looked at him with bright eyes. "You're the real sort," she whispered, and a wave of color in her cheeks brought back the sug-



For Fully 15 Minutes He Sat Thus.

gestion of girlish beauty. "I saw that scap there through a hole in the floor. You're the goods." She pressed his arm almost affectionately, then, with her free hand, she pushed against the paneling. Noiselessly a section of it turned inward, disclosing a dark cavity. "Get in!"

Orme quickly slipped into the darkness, the panel closed, and he heard the swish of the hanging as it dropped against the board.

It was not too soon. Two soft thuds told him that the Japanese had dropped over the sill into the room.

He heard the woman give a well-feigned scream of surprise.

"Seuse us, miss"—it was Arima's voice—"we looking for sneak thief. He come in here."

"Be off with you. I've just come from the front room there, and there wasn't a soul came in."

"We saw him."

"He must have gone out to the hall, then." The woman's voice had a note of mollification—as though she had suddenly recognized the light of the

two Japanese to enter the apartment. "I didn't hear him."

A few words of Japanese colloquy; then Arima: "I look around. My friend go to hall." A door closed; evidently Maku had gone out; and then Orme heard steps. After this there was a long wait, while the Japanese examined the other rooms, the woman evidently offering him her aid. At last they returned.

"Well, I go back," said Arima. "I saw him come in the window. My friend will know. See you later."

Presently the woman raised the hanging and whispered through the boards: "He went back down the fire escape. His friend's in the hall. He'll find out you haven't went down, and then he'll come back."

"I'll try the roof," whispered Orme. "Perhaps I can get on to another house that way."

"Wait till I see." She walked away, but soon returned.

"No use," he heard her say. "That Jap's sitting on the fire escape watching. He grinned when I looked down."

Orme pondered. "Help me out of this," he whispered, "and there'll be something in it for you."

She moved impatiently. "Cut it out! I don't want nothing. You're a good sport, that's all." She paused. "Not that I'd mind having a present. But I don't want no money."

Orme caught the distinction. "I'll remember," he said. "And what shall I do now?"

"You'll have to stay in there a while, I guess."

"I simply must get away—and within an hour or two."

"I'll manage that," she answered confidently.

"But how—?"

"You'll see. Just leave it to me."

Orme smiled to himself, there in the darkness. Of course, he would leave it to her; but he did not see how she was to rid him of the watchful Japanese.

"There's just one thing," he whispered. "Whatever is done, will have to be done without help from outside. This is not a matter for the police."

"I understand. Why can't you just leave it to me? I don't believe you trust me a little bit!"

"But I do," he protested. "I am absolutely in your hands."

He heard her sigh faintly. "I'm going to put down the window now," she said. "It ain't safe for me to stand here talking to you unless I do. That Arima fellow might pop up the fire escape any time."

She was back in a few moments. He had heard the window creak down, and slipped past him in the closet and he had wondered whether the action would add to Arima's suspicion.

"If he comes up now," she explained in an undertone, "the glare on the outside of the window will keep him from seeing in very plain."

After that she did not speak for some time, but the occasional movements of her body, as she leaned against the panel, were audible to Orme. He found himself wondering about her—how she had happened to take up the career of fortune-telling. She must have been a handsome woman; even now she was not unattractive.

The delay grew more and more irksome. It seemed to Orme as though he had been behind the panel for hours. After a while he asked: "What time is it?"

"About two o'clock. Ain't you hungry?"

Orme laughed softly. "I hadn't thought about it."

"Wait a minute." She moved away. When she returned she pulled up the hanging and opened the panel. In her hand was a thick sandwich.

"I was just going to eat my own lunch when you came back through the window," she explained.

He took the sandwich. She looked at him boldly. He was standing close to her in the opening. There was an expression that was almost defiant in her eyes. "I—I want my present."

"You shall have it, Madam Alla," he said.

"You ain't my kind—and it won't make no difference to you." Her voice faltered and her eyes dropped. "I want you to kiss me."

Orme looked at her, and understood. He put his arms around her and kissed her gently on the lips. There was no disloyalty in it. He was simply satisfying the craving of this poor woman's soul—a craving for a tribute to which she could always revert as the symbol of a high friendliness. She felt that he was of a different world; he knew that the world was all one, though partitioned off by artificial barriers, but he could not correct her view.

She clung to him for a moment after his lips left hers, then released herself from his clasp and moved back into the room, her face averted. Was it to hide a blush? Orme did not ask himself, silently closed the panel and was again in darkness.

For a time he stood there quietly. His back was against the wall—his hands easily touched the paneling that shut him off from the room. He wondered what this secret place was for, and taking a match from his pocket he lighted it.

The inclosure seemed to extend all the way across the side of the room. Farther along, lying on the floor and standing against the wall, were contrivances of which at first he could make nothing—poles, pieces of tin, and—were those masks, heaped in the corner? From a row of pegs hung long robes—white and black.

The truth flashed into Orme's mind. He was in Madam Alla's ghost closet!

To be continued.

Carl Sergum was an Omaha passenger on the afternoon train today, where he was called on business.

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## CHARLES A. KINOMAN, A FORMER PLATTSMOUTH CITIZEN DIES

Born in This City About Forty-four Years Ago and For the Past Thirteen Years Has Lived in Lincoln.

From Wednesday's Daily.

Charles A. Kinoman, of 1258 Vine street, Lincoln, died this morning at 2 o'clock of a complication of erysipelas and pneumonia, from which he had been suffering for the past two weeks. Mr. Kinoman's mother, Mrs. Louisa Kinoman, and his sister, Mrs. Gartlemann, went to Lincoln Monday to attend his bed side.

The deceased leaves a wife and three children, the oldest a young lady of seventeen.

Charles A. Kinoman was born in Plattsburgh about forty-four years ago, and grew to manhood in this city. He was for some years employed in the freight department of the Burlington here, and was freight agent when transferred to Lincoln about thirteen years ago.

About eighteen years ago he was married to Miss Orpha Featherly, a teacher. To this union three children, two daughters and one son, were born, who with his widow sur-

vive to mourn his loss.

Mr. Kinoman is also survived by his mother, Mrs. Louisa Kinoman, of this city, and three brothers and two sisters. His brothers being William, Philip, and L. L., of this city. His sisters are Mrs. Nellie Gartlemann and Mrs. Ida Fields, both of Plattsburgh.

Mr. Kinoman was highly esteemed by all who knew him, and his friends in this city are numerous. He was prominent in political circles at Lincoln, being a staunch democrat, and was the choice of his party last fall for the office of county clerk of Lancaster county. For a time after removing to Lincoln Mr. Kinoman was connected with the freight department of the Burlington there, but later was with the Western Weighers' Association, and at the time of his death was engaged in the insurance and real estate business.

The funeral will occur from the home at 2 o'clock tomorrow, Thursday, afternoon.

## PARCELS POST A DEAD LETTER

Assurance that Nothing Will Be Done at the Present Session of Congress.

It is given out with an assurance that can be termed official that there will be no parcels post legislation at this session of congress. This ought to be final so far as pending bills at least are concerned. The nation-wide proposed parcels post at one uniform carrying price has no backing outside merchandising in a few points. The parcels post on rural routes is simply a subterfuge, an attempt to gain by indirection and deceit that which cannot be gained by nation-wide measure at one carrying price. It is admitted that the rural route bill had no motive behind it except to use it as an entering wedge to secure the unlimited parcels post. On account of its conception in deceit in this way it was unworthy of serious consideration, says the Lincoln Trade Review. If you get to the real sentiment of those who favor in a general way parcels post and individualize the sentiment it will be found that nineteen out of every twenty, when they analyze the question, favor a zone system of charges and a post that would pay its own way. None of the bills in congress are along these lines. None of the present bills or none likely to be presented contemplate the zone system because that would not give the advantages to the special interests who have thus far been the impelling power behind the bills. The one argument that has caused most people to align themselves as favorable to parcels post, is that the express companies are opposed to them because they now have nearly a monopoly of the carrying of parcels. But there is

an easier solution for getting away from this monopoly than the one proposed by creating another one. Make the railroads do the express business of the country as they already do the carrying and then the parcel carrying will be subject to the same regulations and rates that prevail in freight carrying and which protect the public entirely in a reasonable price for the carrying, so that the railroads would be simply adding to their duties as common carriers and great department of government would not need to abandon the foundation on which it is laid, the promotion of communication, to become a competitor in the carry trade.

## NIGHT POLICEMAN TROUT SHOOT A MAD DOG

Every indication of an early spring is in evidence just now. Sunday afternoon a thunder shower, attended with more lightning than was seen all last summer, visited this vicinity. And yesterday afternoon night policeman Henry Trout killed a dog on north Sixth street which had every symptom of hydrophobia. The dog was acting queerly, frothing at the mouth, blood issuing from his nostrils. Some of the citizens in the neighborhood became alarmed at the dog's actions and sent for the police. The dog was dispatched at once.

Gus Hyers, of Havelock, was a Plattsburgh visitor between trains for a few hours today.

## Poultry Wanted

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