



"Please," She Said Gently—"Please Tell the Cabby to Take Me Home, Mr. Maitland."



SYNOPSIS.

"Mad" Dan Maitland, on reaching his New York bachelor club, met an attractive young woman at the door. Janitor O'Hagan assured him no one had been within that day. Dan discovered a woman's finger prints in dust on his desk, along with a letter from his attorney. Maitland dined with Bannerman, his attorney, Dan set out for Greenfield, to get his family jewels. Maitland, on reaching home, surprised lady in gray, cracking the safe containing his gems. She, apparently, took him for a well-known crook, Daniel Anisty. Half-hypnotized, Maitland opened his safe, took therefrom the jewels, and gave them to her, first forming a partnership in crime. The real Dan Anisty, sought by police of the world, appeared. Maitland overcame him. He and the girl went to New York in her auto. He had the jewels. She was to meet him that day. A "Mr. Bannist" introduced himself as a detective. To shield the girl in gray, Maitland, about to show him the jewels, supposed, by a crash was heard at the front door. Maitland overheard the crook, allowing him to escape to shield the young woman. The girl in gray made her escape, jumping into a cab. An instant later, by working a ruse, Anisty was at her side. He took her to attorney Bannerman's office. There, by torture, he tried in vain to wring from her the location of the gems. He left her a moment and she "phoned the gems." The girl in gray, in the words: "Tell Mr. Maitland under the brass bowl," the hiding place in the latter's room, when Anisty heard her words. Bannerman also was revealed as a crook. He and Anisty set out to secure the gems and leave town. The girl was still imprisoned. Maitland, finding the girl, searched his rooms and unearthed the jewels under the brass bowl. He struck Anisty in a big office building, where the crook was killed. Maitland and girl in gray confessed love for each other.

CHAPTER XVI.—Continued.
"I dunno." Hickey licked his lips, watching with a somber eye the preparations being made for the removal of Anisty's body. "I'd give a farm if I could've caught that son of a gun alive," he added at apparent random, and vindictively. "All right. Yeh be responsible for th' lady, if she's wanted, will yeh?"
"Positively."
"I gottuh have her name 'nd address."
"Is that essential?"
"Sure. Gottuh protect myself 'n case anythin' turns up. Yeh oughttuh to know that."
"I—don't want it to come out," Maitland hesitated, trying to invent a plausible lie.
"Well, any one can see how you feel about it."
Maitland drew a long breath and anticipated rashly. "It's Mrs. Maitland," he told the man with a tremor. Hickey nodded, unimpressed. "Uh-huh. I knowed that all along," he replied. "But seein' as yeh didn't want it talked about . . . And, apparently heedless of Maitland's startled and suspicious stare: "If yeh're gort to see yer fren', yeh better get a wiggle on. He won't last long."

gent. He was hard to handle, sometimes. I wasn't sure, you know, about the jewels; I only said I thought they were at Greenfield. Then I undertook to find out from you, but he was restive, and without saying anything to me went down to Greenfield on his own hook—just to have a look around, he said. And so . . . so the fat was in the fire."
"Don't talk any more, Bannerman," Maitland tried to soothe him. "You'll pull through this all right, and— You need never have gone to such lengths. If you'd come to me—"

The ghost of a sardonic smile flitted, inconspicuously, across the dying man's waxen, cherubic features.
"Oh, hell," he said; "you wouldn't understand. Perhaps you weren't born with the right crook in your nature—or the wrong one. Perhaps it's because you can't see the fun in playing the game. It's that that counts."
He compressed his lips, and after a moment spoke again. "You never did have the true sportsman's love of the game for its own sake. You're like most of the rest of the crowd—content with mighty cheap virtue, Dan. . . . I don't know that I'd choose just this kind of a wind-up, but it's been fun while it lasted. Good-by, old man."
He did not speak again, but lay with closed eyes.
Five minutes later Maitland rose and unclasped the cold fingers from about his own. With a heavy sigh he turned away.
At the door Hickey was awaiting him. "Yer lady," he said, as soon as they had drawn apart from the crowd, "is waitin' for yeh in the cab downstairs. She was gettin' a bit high-steerical 'nd I thought I'd better get her away. . . . Oh, she's waitin' all right!" he added, alarmed by Maitland's expression. But Maitland had left him abruptly; and now, as he ran down flight after echoing flight of marble stairs, there rested cold fear in his heart. In the room he had just quitted, a man whom he had called friend and looked upon with affectionate regard, had died a self-confessed and unrepentant liar and thief.

If now he were to find the girl another time vanished—if this had been but a ruse of hers finally to elude him—if all men were without honor, all women faithless—if he had indeed placed the love of his life, the only love that he had ever known, unworthily—if she cared so little who had seemed to care much . . .

CHAPTER XVII.
Confessional.

I.
Put the cab was there; and within it the girl was waiting for him.
The driver, after taking up his fare, had at her direction drawn over to the further curb, out of the fringe of the rabble which besieged the St. Luke building in constantly growing numbers, and through which Maitland, too impatient to think of leaving by the basement exit, had elbowed and fought his way in an agony of apprehension that brooked no hindrance, hooded no difficulty.
"He dashed round the corner, stopped short with a sinking heart, then as the cabby's signaling whip across the street caught his eye, fairly hurled himself to the other curb, pausing at himself with joy to find her faithful in this ultimate instance.
She was recovering, whose high spirit and recuperative powers were to him then and always remained a marvelous thing; and she was bending forth from the body of the hansom to welcome him with a smile that in a twinkling made radiant the world to him who stood in a gloomy side street of New York at three o'clock of a summer's morning—a good hour and a half before the dawn. For up there in the tower of the skyscraper he had as much as told her of his love; and she had waited; and now—and now he had been blind indeed had he failed to read the promise in her eyes. Weary she was and spent and overwrought; but there is no tonic in all the world like the consciousness that where one has placed one's love, there love has burgeoned in response. And despite all that she had suffered and endured, the happiness that ran like soft fire in her veins, wrapping her being with its beneficent rapture, had deepened the color in her cheeks and heightened the glamour in her eyes.
And he stood and stared, knowing that in all time to no man had ever woman seemed more lovely than this girl to him; a knowledge that robbed his mind of all other thought and his tongue of words, so that to her fell the task of rousing him.
"Please," she said gently—"please tell the cabby to take me home, Mr. Maitland."
He came to and in confusion stammered: Yes, he would. And he climbed up on the step with no other thought than to seat himself at her side and drive away forever. But this time the cabby brought him to his senses, forcing him to remember that some measure of coherence was demanded even of a man in love.
"Where to, sir?"
"Eh, what? Oh!" And bending to the girl: "Home, you said—?"
She told him the address—a number on Park avenue, above Thirty-fourth street, below Forty-second. He repeated it mechanically, unaware that it would remain stamped forever on his memory, indelibly—the first personal detail that she had granted him; the first barrier down.
He sat down. The cab began to move, and halted again. A face appeared at the apron—Hickey's, red and moon-like and not lacking in complacency; for the man counted on profiting variously by this night's work.
"Excuse me, Mr. Maitland, 'nd—"

touching the rim of his derby—"yeh, too, ma'am, fr' buttin' in—"
"Hickey!" demanded Maitland, suddenly, in a tone of smoldering wrath, "what the—what do you want?"
"Yeh told me tuh call round to-morrow, yeh know. When'll yeh be in?"
"I'll leave a note for you with O'Hagan. Is that all?"
"Yep—that is, there's somethin' else . . ."
"Well?"
"Excuse me for mentionin' it, but I didn't know—it ain't generally known, yeh know, 'nd one uh th' boys might 've heard me speak tuh yer lady by name 'nd might pass it on to a reporter. What I mean's this," hastily, as the Maitland temper showed dangerous indications of going into active eruption: "I s'pose yeh don't want me tuh mention 't yeh're married, jes' yet? Mrs. Maitland here," with a nod to her, "didn't seem tuh take kindly tuh the notion of it's bein' known—"
"Hickey!"
"Ah, excuse me!"
"Drive on, cabby—Instantly! Do you hear?"
Hickey backed suddenly away and the cab sprang into motion; while Maitland with a face of fire sat back and raged and wondered.
Across Broadway toward Fourth avenue dashed the hansom; and from the curb-line Hickey watched it with a humorous light in his dull eyes. Indeed, the detective seemed in extraordinary conceit with himself. He chewed with unaccustomed emotion upon his cold cigar, scratched his cheek, and chuckled; and, chuckling, pulled his hat well down over brows, thrust both hands into his trousers pockets, and shambled back to the St. Luke building—his heavy body vibrating amazingly with his secret mirth.
And so, shuffling sluggishly, he merges into the shadows, into the mob that surges about the building, and passes from these pages.

II.
In the clattering hansom, steadying herself with a hand against the window-frame, to keep from being thrown against the speechless man beside her, the girl waited. And since Maitland in confusion at the moment found no words, from this eloquent silence she drew an inference unjustified, such as lovers are prone to draw, the world over, one that lent a pathetic color to her thoughts, and chilled a little her mood. She had been too sure.
But better to have it over with at once, rather than permit it to remain forever a wall of constraint between them. He must not be permitted to think that she would dream of taking him upon his generous word.
"It was very kind of you," she said in a steady small voice, "to pretend that we—what you did pretend, in order to save me from being held as a witness. At least, I presume that is why you did it"—with a note of uncertainty.
"It is unnecessary that you should be drawn into the affair," he replied, with some resumption of his self-possession. "It isn't as if you were—"
"A thief?" she supplied, as he hesitated.
"A thief," he assented, gravely.
"But I—I am," with a break in her voice.
"But you are not," he asserted almost fiercely. And, "Dear," he said, boldly, "don't you suppose I know?"
"—what do you know?"
"—That you brought back the jewels, for one minor thing. I found them almost as soon as you had left. And then I knew—knew that you cared enough to get them from this fellow Anisty and bring them back to me, knew that I cared enough to search the world from end to end until I found you, that you might wear them—if you would."
But she had drawn away, had averted her face; and he might not see it; and she shivered slightly, staring out of the window at the passing lights. He saw, and perforce paused.
"You—you don't understand," she told him in a rush. "You give me credit beyond my due. I didn't break into your flat again, to-night, in order to return the jewels—at least, not for that alone."
"But you did bring back the jewels?" She nodded.
"—Then doesn't that prove what I claim, prove that you've cleared yourself—?"
"—No," she told him, firmly, with the firmness of despair; "it does not. Because I did not come for that only. I came with another purpose—to steal, as well as to make restitution. And I—I stole."
There was a moment's silence, on his part incredulous. "I don't know what you mean. What did you steal? Where is it?"
"I have lost it—"
"Was it in your hand-bag?"
"You found that?"
(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Rather Discouraging.
"You want to present 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' at the opory house?" said the sheriff of Bacon Ridge. "Why, that blamed show was here a month ago."
"That so?" responded the advance agent in the blue vest.
"Yes, stranger, and the dogs chased 'Liza."
"They always do that, sir."
"Then the dog catchers chased the dogs."
"Ah, that was an added feature."
"And old Mrs. Wiggs chased Little Eva for walking at her husband as he sat in the front row."
"Rather startling, I assure you."
"And old Bill Jones, who runs the Eagle house, chased Uncle Tom for a board bill."
"Great Brutus!"
"And then the boys got together and chased the whole blamed show out of town. Better present some othe, show, mister."

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