

"The Grip of Evil"

Author of "The Wings of the Morning," "The Pillar of Light," "The Terms of Surrender," "Number 17," Etc.
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FOURTH EPISODE.

The Looters. CHAPTER VII.

A Plunge into Politics.
The manner in which John Burton...
And the boss was a hard man to...
There's no time to lose. I'll have...



JOHN SAVES JANE FROM PER KINS.

There's no time to lose. I'll have my stenographer, and you'll hear me play up this sucker for all his worth."
He touched a bell and a young woman entered. She was a delicate girl, thin, pallid, and seemingly overworked, but her cane-like features and the hollows under her eyes, more than her face, showed that under other conditions she might be regarded as remarkably good looking. She coughed as she stepped into the room, and the stifling, smoke-laden atmosphere of the office reached her lungs.
"At first not a man present paid the slightest heed to her. A couple of loungers whose feet were cocked on the table did not consider it necessary to remove them. Hank Perkins, however, who was by way of being a lady-killer, rose with a smile, offered his chair, and cleared a space on the table for the girl's notebook.
Of course, she had to be accommodated somewhere, so Perkins' action might have been merely one of expediency. The girl, however, did not meet his glance, but slipped quietly into the chair.
Maloney noted both his partner's smirk and the girl's aloofness with an amused twinkle of his bulging blue eyes. He knew full well that Perkins was discreet and might be trusted not to interfere with one of the firm's employees. At least, such had been his attitude hitherto. But Maloney missed nothing, and the slightest incident was registered for future guidance.
He plunged at once into the business in hand, and dictated the letter which was to draw John Burton into the net. It was literally astounding that such a man could evolve the flow of moral sentiments which now tickled the ears of his supporters. When the screed was finished, the girl was asked to read it and her clear, well-bred accents struck a bizarre note in that leoprous gathering. The fresh, pure voice actually lent conviction to Maloney's high-sounding periods.
"That'll do the trick," shouted the "boss," slapping a fat knee gleefully. "Off you go, now, boys, and make the crowd wise to the new move. See you blow in tomorrow about the same time. Call me a Dutchman if Mr. Goodly-Goodly Burton isn't here on the tick to meet us."
Jane Carter had nearly finished typing the letter when the door of the outer office opened, and her brother came in. She did not seem very pleased to see him, which was not altogether surprising, because Jim Carter, though resembling his sister in some respects, was as dissolute looking as she was pretty. In him a deplorable weakness of character had taken the place of the girl's charming femininity.
He began at once to whine a complaint that he could never get a job that deprived of a little money for his everyday expenses. At last, to get rid of him, Jane took her purse out of a drawer and handed over a couple of dollar bills.
"That's all you use to me," he grumbled. "I can blow in a couple of bucks in an hour, treating fellows. It won't do me a bit of good."
"None of the men you treat are of any use to you, Jim," came the sad protest.
"What do you know about it, anyhow?" he retorted.
"Not much, perhaps, but I really cannot spare you another cent. You have left me barely sufficient to pay the week's expenses."
"Jim shrugged his shoulders, lit a cigarette, and seeing that his sister meant what she said, went out. Neither of the two knew that Perkins had stopped short when about to come in from the inner office. He had heard and was seemingly impressed by their brief conversation.
Jane started slightly as the junior partner crept up behind her unexpectedly.
"That was your brother, wasn't it, Miss Carter?" he inquired.
"Yes," she faltered, thinking it best to be candid. He has not been at work lately, and I have to help him a little. You see, a young man really must have some money in his pocket."
Perkins, meaning to all appearances only to be sympathetic, laid a hand on her arm.
"Send your brother to me tomorrow, and I'll find him a job," he said quietly.
The girl, who had shrunk from his touch, now faced him impulsively and began to stammer some words of thanks.
"Oh, don't speak of it," he said genially. "I'll do more than that for you when the chance offers."
The following afternoon Jane was

CHAPTER VIII.

Disillusionment.

A brief interview with the chief of police resulted in some Carter being set at liberty. The boy had been drinking in a low-class saloon, was caught in a fight between rival gangs, and was arrested when the police came. As is usual in such cases, the principals escaped, only the weaklings and those who were knocked out in the row remained to be made an example of.
Perkins brought the boy home to his sister, who received him with tears, yet hung her arms around him in sheer joy at his rescue. Jim, though sullen and embarrassed, was not altogether bad. He realized that his sister had saved him from very serious consequences, and was minded to promise now that his conduct would be better in the future. Perkins watched the scene with an air of respectful sympathy until, in his opinion, the time had arrived when he might deepen the good impression his action had already created.
He gently disengaged Jane's arms from her brother's neck, led her to a chair, and patted her on the shoulder.
"There is nothing to worry about now," he said. "Your brother's name will be struck out of the record, and I have not forgotten my promise to give him a job. He can start tomorrow collecting accounts for me. You see, knowing you as I do, I feel that any relative of yours must be thoroughly trustworthy. So I'll fix Jim in a responsible position straight away."
The girl was convinced now that the junior partner in the firm of Maloney & Perkins was a very fine man indeed. True, some strange things had come to her notice in the course of her duties at the office. But she had not been long engaged in business, and was ready to persuade herself that certain crude people required to be dealt with on lines that differed greatly from the accepted standards among those of good repute. Moreover, it was reassuring to find a man like Mr. Burton working hand-in-glove with the weird creatures who formed the political associates of her employers.
Matters progressed quietly for a few days. Some of the genuine reformers of the town visited John, but he was able to convince them that "Boss" Maloney had really changed his coat, and was now striving with might and main to purify the life of the city. Three or four notorious saloons had been closed, one or two gambling dens raided and the proprietors and frequenters held in jail for trial, while a set of gummen had been literally chased out of the city. Men who had known Maloney for years were perplexed and suspicious, but necessarily muzzled. John himself was enthusiastic.
"Set a thief to catch a thief," he quoted when reminded of the man's previous record.
In a word, the astute "boss" had completely nixed the issues for the forthcoming election, and was bamboozling a section of the community which would have destroyed his influence had it joined forces with the supporters of Kramer.
Burton was so taken up with his new interest in life that he allowed himself to be humbugged courageously. The genuine and unexpecting hearty reception he was given by working class audiences literally blinded him to other features of his candidature.
The most egregious instance of the folly he was guilty of at this time was his childish acceptance of everything said by Maloney. For instance, Jim Carter's collection consisted of nothing more or less than the levying of blackmail in the red-light district. One of the most notorious characters therein, a woman who rejected in the appropriate name of Mrs. Ketchum, resented the amount of her assessment and called in person at the office of Maloney & Perkins to give the firm a bit of her mind. She was received by Jane Carter, who did not like her manner or appearance, and was correspondingly surprised when Maloney indicated that Mrs. Ketchum must be admitted at once. Perkins was present, too, and a first-class row sprang up almost before Jane could close the door.
The incident was driven from her mind, however, when John Burton entered. He had seen her several times since their first meeting—had even lent her his horse ride—and was apparently wishful to make life pleasant for her in many ways. Just now, however, he was up to the neck in election matters.
"Can I see Mr. Maloney for a moment?" he said, smiling. "I'll not detain him, as I am due to address a meeting during the dinner hour at the woolen mills."
"Go right in, Mr. Burton," said Jane with an answering smile. "There is a lady inside, but I think she wants to quarrel, so an interruption may be helpful."
As John opened the door, a babel of angry voices arrested him as he was the first to recover his composure.
"Glad to see you, Mr. Burton," he said. Then he indicated Mrs. Ketchum with a smug grin.
"The lady is one of your ardent supporters. She's a prominent suffragette, and, as you know, is firmly convinced that we men are a mighty bad lot."
John bowed to the curious-looking person whom he was now meeting for the first time.
"At any rate, you may feel sure, madam," he said, "that if I'm elected, I shall do everything that lies in my power for the protection and social advancement of your sex."
A voluble person on earth, seemed to be struck dumb. She mumbled something which John Ketchum politely handed forth, but still as a mouse, listening intently while Maloney and the candidate ran through a list of names together. When Burton had left the room, however, she recovered her speech.
"What's all this funny business about?" she demanded acidly. "Why were you stringing me about being a suffragette?"
"That's the new mayor," said Perkins. "He's a wise guy and no mistake. Now, you come across, and see what we'll do for you when the election is through."
Mrs. Ketchum realized that some deep game was being played, but thought it best to fall in with the powers that be. With a final growl, she said, "Perkins, guessing that Jane and Burton were talking in the outer office, escorted her to the door, and saw her off. He was just in time to see Jane Carter entering the marquis' car, while her brother was exchanging a word with both of them, and evidently well pleased at finding his sister in such company.
Perkins scowled. The growing friendship between the mayor-elect and the pretty stenographer did not suit his purpose at all. He must have a heart-to-heart talk with Jane before election day.
The election was fixed for a Tuesday, and the rival parties naturally focused every effort on the preceding day. True to his methods, "Boss" Maloney left much of the outward or visible control to his lieutenant. Thus Perkins raved about the city in an automobile, while Maloney remained in the office, and expostulated, argued with, soothed or bounced the various malefactors who came to him in trepidation because of the era of civic reform which seemed to have set in with such remarkable severity.
Perkins, swaggering about in the limelight, was literally compelled to drink more than usual. As the day wore, he became tipsy, and a casual glimpse of Jane Carter tripping homeward after she had left the office induced amorous thoughts. At the first opportunity, therefore, he drove to her apartment house.
On the way he passed Burton, who was delivering an impassioned harangue to a number of workmen at a street corner. Among the audience, flimsily attired and open-mouthed with surprise, was Mrs. Ketchum. Now, for the first time, she was learning John Burton's real sentiments, yet she knew him as the intimate associate of Maloney and Perkins. Small wonder, therefore, that Mrs. Ketchum and her like should fail to appreciate the true position of affairs, and Perkins had good reason for the sardonic laugh with which he greeted the spectacle.
To his delight, Jane was alone in her flat. She greeted him very pleasantly, being still most grateful to him for the kindness shown to herself and her father by the assistance he had given her brother. He did not leave her long in doubt as to the object of his visit.
"I'm fed up on politics, Jane," he said thickly. "They're all right for a time, but today I'm bored stiff, and I'll just seek a little relaxation. You don't mind my coming to see you, do you?"
"No," she said timidly. "Why should I? You have been so good to my brother."
"Never mind your brother, Jane," he leered. "It's you I want now. You're the one woman in the bunch that I really care about. Come here and I'll whisper to you."
He grabbed her by the shoulders and tried to kiss her. "Resting herself free with a startled cry, she fled to her door, and Perkins followed, telling her that she was a coy little devil, but he would get her now for sure. He caught her before she could tear the door open and crushed her forcibly in his arms. She was screaming loudly, and resisting with the frenzy of despair, when her brother entered unexpectedly.
"Jim Carter might be a weak-minded fool, and an ass, but he would not do anything to dishonor his sister's name, and he could not see his sister struggling in the arms of a drunken brute and remain unmoved. For the moment, too, Perkins was disconcerted, and released the girl, who appealed hysterically to her brother for help.
"Jane came forward, probably meaning to do little more than utter a protest, but Perkins, enraged at the interference of this jacker, struck her a violent blow in the face, which so frightened the boy that he ran out. Jane, however, succeeded in reaching her bed room and locking the door. But Perkins was not to be denied. He rushed at the door, pounded viciously on the panels, and told Jane that if she did not come out he would smash the lock.
Meanwhile Jim Carter's one thought was to secure the help of someone whose influence would be sufficiently powerful that his employer would be compelled to desist from the folly which seemed to have overtaken him. An appeal to the police would be worse than useless, but Burton was talking at no great distance. He was the man! Perkins would not dare face him, so Jim forced his way through the crowd, nor did he hesitate to stop John in the middle of a sentence and mutter in his ear:
"Come quick, for God's sake!" he hissed brokenly. "Perkins is mad drunk and chasing Jane around her room. When I tried to stop him he

gave me a clip behind the ear that put me out of business."
John heard with amazement, but could not refuse to credit the frightened boy's veracity.
Arranging hurriedly with another speaker to take his place, Burton made off. They reached Jane Carter's apartment just as the bed room door was yielding to Perkins' violence. The man had now aroused himself to a state of bestial fury. No sooner was he aware of Burton's entrance than he sensed the object of this unforeseen interruption and tried to put a summary stop to any attempted parley by hurling a chair at the newcomer.
John dodged quickly and avoided the heavy missile, but Jim Carter was not so lucky and was knocked almost senseless. The two men closed forthwith in a fearsome struggle. Burton was bigger and stronger than his opponent, but Perkins, maddened with drink and animal passion, entered the fray with such vicious fury that for a minute or more the combatants met on equal terms.
The room was literally wrecked before Burton resolved to bring matters to a climax, once and for all. Exerting his great strength to the utmost, he wrenched himself free, delivered a mighty punch and Perkins went down like a stone.
By this time Jane was overcome with terror. She wept bitterly and could not control herself, even when John's protecting arm was around her shoulders. The mere sight of Perkins lying insensible on the floor seemed to shake the wits out of her. Seizing her hat and coat, she ran out of the building, and Burton could do nothing but follow her, wondering where she was going and how he was to restore her self-possession.
At that unlucky moment he saw Mrs. Ketchum coming down the street, and, remembering that she was reputedly a leader of the suffragist party, decided that he might safely intrust the frightened girl to her care.
There never was a woman more perplexed than the keeper of a notorious dive when the mayoral candidate introduced Jane and began a hasty explanation.
"This young lady, as you see, is very greatly upset," he said. "It will be a personal favor to me if you will take her to your home and safeguard her there until other arrangements can be made."
At that, though tongue-tied with astonishment, Mrs. Ketchum thought she understood. She nodded agreement, whereupon John hailed a taxi, put the woman inside and handed the driver some money. But the fog of doubt was rapidly evaporating in Mrs. Ketchum's brain. All men were alike, she reflected, so she favored John with a knowing wink as the vehicle drove off, thereby mystifying him greatly. He remembered that suffragettes, like the Pharisees, are not as other people.
Meanwhile, Perkins slowly recovered his senses. The fight and the knockout had partially cleared his drink-sodden wits, and the one thing he craved for now was revenge. Every other consideration yielded to the demand that his powerful and seemingly successful rival should be humiliated.
He avoided both Maloney and Burton. The former thought him busy rounding up the "boys." The latter was too engrossed in election work to think of causing a row between the partners at that crisis. Moreover, he allowed for the fact that Perkins was drunk, and had been punished sufficiently already.
So a vindictive scoundrel was left free to work out his desperate plan. At the psychological moment he rushed around to Burton's support, and with the specific instruction that their candidate was to be "turned down."
"It's the 'boss's' orders," he insisted, when met with blank amazement. "You've got to switch every man to Kramer. Don't let a vote go to Burton if you can help it."
Now, this change of front, though wholly unexpected that day, saved Maloney's methods. Not only had such a thing happened before in a city election, but Burton's candidature, with its extraordinary demand for purity in public life, had bewildered every grafter and ward-heeler who had prospered for years under Maloney's rule.
It was assumed instantly that Kramer and the "boss" had come to terms, with the result that Burton was to be side-tracked. The work was to be done, too, swiftly and silently. None must know of the new policy until the election was a settled thing, while, of course, there could not be the slightest question of disputing the right of Perkins to speak for his chief.
Therefore, the most surprised man in that part of America was "Boss" Maloney himself when the votes were counted and revealed a landslide for Kramer.
Instantly a scene of terrific excitement broke out in Maloney's office. For once in his life the man dropped his sphinxlike attitude and rained vituperation on the astonished dupes who thought they had been obeying his orders. John Burton, of course, was saddened and distressed by an almost phenomenal failure, but enlightened.

ment came when Maloney turned on Perkins and was about to consign him to destruction.
Perkins was rescued with difficulty. Some cooler heads decided that he could be dealt with more effectually later. In the midst of the turmoil, Jim Carter rushed in. The boy was pale and disfigured from the injuries received when struck by the chair, but he was wildly excited, and his voice cracked as he shouted at Burton:
"What's this I hear about my sister? What have you done with her?"
"Your sister is all right," said John calmly. "She's being well looked after. I put her in the care of Mrs. Ketchum."
"Mrs. Ketchum!" screamed the lad. "What sort of fool can you be? Don't you know that Mrs. Ketchum keeps the most notorious dive in the city and pays these scoundrels \$100 a month for police protection?"
John turned on Maloney.
"Is this true?" he demanded with a cold fury that might have brought a warning at any other time to the experienced "boss." But Maloney was beside himself with rage.
"Get out of this, you psalm-singing sucker!" he bellowed. "I'm sick of you and your Billy Sunday notions! Get out, I tell you, while the goin's good!"
It was not fear of Maloney or his crew that drove John headlong to his waiting car. He was almost unnerved with loathing and apprehension. He could hardly credit that he could have been so hounded by circumstances. Dragging Jim Carter with him, he urged the chauffeur to travel at top speed.
But the would-be rescuers arrived too late. The hapless girl, awaking from a stupor of terror and exhaustion only to find herself a prisoner in a house where no decent woman might live, had thrown herself from the topmost story. John and his brother reached the place only in time to see a crowd gathered around some mishapen object on the pavement.
It was in such wise that Burton's scheme of regenerating mankind by political reform came to an end.
Seldom, indeed, had any man ever been given more convincing reasons for the dread belief that humanity is in the grip of evil.
(End of Fourth Episode.)

Flies, Heat and Dust Stop Fights On Mesopotamia

(Correspondence of The Associated Press.)
British Headquarters in Mesopotamia, July 29.—Flies, heat and dust, the three principal plagues of Mesopotamia, are what have stopped the fighting for the last several months in this theater of the great war.
Flies are so thick that soldiers say it is impossible to keep them out of their food. A squadron of cavalry coming down a road looked as if they were wearing chain armor. When they came close enough it was found that what looked like mail was the steely blue metallic mesh of flies.
At night the flies disappear and the mosquitoes and sand-flies relieve them. Many species bite or sting. The thermometer runs up to 130 degrees in a tent. All the men wear a sun-gard over their helmet and a spine pad, for a person can get sunstroke here through the small of the back.
The persistent hot wind is better than complete stillness, though it flings sand and dust in the faces of the men, who eat sand, breathe sand, lie in sand, have sand in their ears, eyes and clothes.
There are different kinds of heat—the mounded heat of the Euphrates and the Shat-el-Arab, the parched and desert heat of the Tigris and the Karun. Each variety has its attendant insects and peculiar ailments, which often take the form of boils and eruptions. Disease has incapacitated more troops than bullets.

Chinese Pirates Board Schooner and Murder Crew

(Correspondence of The Associated Press.)
Tokio, July 25.—The Japanese legation at Bangkok reports that a Malayan schooner laden with salt was boarded off Minala recently by Chinese pirates, who massacred the entire crew with the exception of two, who saved themselves by swimming ashore. The Siam government dispatched a gunboat in search of the murderers.

Austria Preparing for Another Winter Campaign

(Correspondence of The Associated Press.)
Amsterdam, July 26.—War office advertisements appearing in Vienna newspapers indicate that preparations are being made in Austria-Hungary for another winter campaign. Tens of thousands of winter campaign suits and woolen goods of all kinds for the protection of the troops against cold. Deliveries must be made before September 15.

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