



The Man on the Box

By HAROLD MacGRATH
Author of "The Grey Cloak," "The Puppet Crown."

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CHAPTER XXI THE ROSE.

On Wednesday morning, clear and cold; not a cloud floated across the sky, nor did there rise above the horizon one of those clouds (portentous forerunners of evil!) to which novelists refer as being "no larger than a man's hand." Heaven knew right well that the blight of evil was approaching fast enough, but there was no visible indication on her face that glorious November morning. Doubtless you are familiar with history and have read all about what great personages did just before calamity swooped down on them. The Trojans laughed at the wooden horse; I don't know how many Roman banqueters never reached the desert because the enemy had not paid any singular regard to courtesies in making the attack; men and women danced on the eve of Waterloo—"On with the dance, let joy be unconfined;" my heroine simply went shopping. It doesn't sound at all romantic; very prosaic, in fact.

She declared her intention of making a tour of the shops and of dropping into Mrs. Chadwick's on the way home. She ordered James to bring around the pair and coupe. James was an example of docile obedience. As she came down the steps, she was a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. She wore one of those jackets to which several gray-squirrel families had contributed their hides, a hat whose existence was due to the negligence of a certain rare bird, and many silk-worms had spun the fabric of her gown. Had any one called her attention to all this, there isn't any doubt that she would have been shocked. Only here and there are women who see what a true Moloch fashion is; this tender-souled girl saw only a handsome habit which pleased the eye. Health bloomed in her cheeks, health shone from her eyes, her step had all the elasticity of youth.

"Good morning, James," she said pleasantly.

James touched his hat. What was it, he wondered. Somehow her eyes looked unfamiliar to him. Had it been there I could have read the secret eas-



WENT SHOPPING.

ily enough. Sometimes the pure pools of the forests are stirred and become impenetrable; but by and by the commotion subsides, and the water clears. So it is with the human soul. There had been doubt hitherto in this girl's eyes; now, the doubt was gone.

To him, soberly watchful, her smile meant much; it was the patent of her innocence of any wrong thought. All night he had tossed on his cot, thinking, thinking! What should he do? Whatever should he do? That some wrong was on the way he hadn't the least doubt. Should he confront the colonel and demand an explanation, a demand he knew he had a perfect right to make? If this should be evil, and the shame of it fall on this lovely being? No, no! He must stand aside, he must turn a deaf ear to duty, the voice of love spoke too loud. His own assurance of her innocence made him desire to fall at her feet and worship. After all, it was none of his affair. Had he not played at this comedy, this thing would have gone on and he would have been in ignorance of its very existence. So, why should he meddle? Yet that monotonous query kept beating on his brain: What was this thing?

He saw that he must wait. Yesterday he had feared nothing save his own exposure. Comedy had frolicked in her grinning mask. And here was tragedy stalking in upon the scene.

The girl named a dozen shops which she desired to honor with her custom and presence, and stepped into the coupe. William closed the door, and James touched up the pair and drove off toward the city. He was perfectly indifferent to any possible exposure. In truth, he forgot everything, absolutely and positively everything, but the girl and the fortification plans she had been drawing.

Scarce a half a dozen bundles were

the result of the tour among the shops. "Mrs. Chadwick's, James." The call lasted half an hour. As the story-teller I am supposed to be everywhere, to follow the footsteps of each and all of my characters, and with a fidelity and perspicacity nothing short of the marvelous. So I take the liberty of imagining the pith of the conversation between the woman and the girl.

The Woman: How long, dear, have we known each other?

The Girl: Since I left school, I believe. Where did you get that stunning morning gown?

The Woman (smiling in spite of the serious purpose she has in view): Never mind the gown, my child; I have something of greater importance to talk about.

The Girl: Is there anything more important to talk about among women?

The Woman: Yes. There is age.

The Girl: But, mercy, we do not talk about that!

The Woman: I am going to establish a precedent, then. I am 40 or at least, I am on the verge of it.

The Girl (warningly): Take care! If we should ever become enemies! If I should ever become treacherous!

The Woman: The world very well knows that I am older than I look. That is why it takes such interest in my age.

The Girl: The question is, how do you preserve it?

The Woman: Well, then, I am 40, while you stand on the threshold of the adorable 20s. (Walks over to picture taken 18 years before and contemplates it.) Ah, to be 20 again; to start anew, possessing my present learning and wisdom, and knowledge of the world; to avoid the pits into which I so carelessly stumbled! But no!

The Girl: Mercy! what have you to wish for? Are not princes and ambassadors your friends; have you not health and wealth and beauty? You wish for something, you who are so handsome and brilliant!

The Woman: Blinds, my dear Betty, only blinds; for that is all beauty and wealth and wit are. Who sees behind sees scars of many wounds. You are without a mother, I am without a child. (Sits down beside the girl and takes her hand in hers.) Will you let me be a mother to you for just this morning? How can any man help loving you! (Impulsively.)

The Girl: How foolish you are, Grace!

The Woman: Ah, to blush like that! The Girl: You are very embarrassing this morning. I believe you are very sentimental. Well, my handsome mother for just this morning, what is it you have to say to me? (Jestingly.)

The Woman: I do not know just how to begin. Listen. If ever trouble should befall you, if ever misfortune should entangle you, you will promise to come to me?

The Girl: Misfortune? What is on your mind, Grace?

The Woman: Promise!

The Girl: I promise. (Laughs.)

The Woman: I am rich. Promise that if poverty should ever come to you, you will come to me.

The Girl (puzzled): I do not understand you at all!

The Woman: Promise!

The Girl: I promise; but—

The Woman: Thank you, Betty.

The Girl (growing serious): What is all this about, Grace? You look so earnest.

The Woman: Some day you will understand. Will you answer me one question as a daughter would answer her mother?

The Girl (gravely): Yes.

The Woman: Would you marry a title for the title's sake?

The Girl (indignantly): I?

The Woman: Yes; would you?

The Girl: I shall marry the man I love, and if not him, nobody. I mean, of course, when I love.

The Woman: Blushing again? My dear, is Karloff anything to you?

The Girl: Karloff? Mercy, no. He is handsome and fascinating and rich but I could not love him. It would be easier to love—to love my groom outside.

(They both smile.)

The Woman (grave once more): That is all I wished to know dear, Karloff is not worthy of you.

The Girl (sitting very erect): I do not understand. Is he not honorable?

The Woman (hesitatingly): I have known him for seven years; I have always found him honorable.

The Girl: Why, then, should he not be worthy of me?

The Woman (lightly): Is any man?

The Girl: You are parrying my question. If I am to be your daughter, there must be no fencing.

The Woman (rising and going over to the portrait again): There are some things that a mother may not tell even to her daughter.

The Girl (determinedly): Grace, you have said too much or too little. I do not love Karloff. I never could love him; but I like him, and liking him, I feel called upon to defend him.

The Woman (surprised into showing her dismay): You defend him? You!

The Girl: And why not? That is what I wish to know; why not?

The Woman: My dear, you do not love him. That is all I wished to know. Karloff is a brilliant, handsome man, a gentleman; his sense of honor, such as it is, would do credit to many another man; but behind all this there is a power which makes him helpless, makes him a puppet, and robs him of certain worthy impulses. I have read somewhere that corporations have no souls; neither have governments. Ask me nothing more, Betty, for I shall answer no more questions.

The Girl: I don't think you are treating me fairly.

The Woman: At this moment I would willingly share with you half of all I possess in the world.

The Girl: But all this mystery!

The Woman: As I have said, some day you will understand. Treat Karloff as you have always treated him, politely and pleasantly. And I beg of you never to repeat our conversation.

The Girl (to whom illumination suddenly comes; rises quickly and goes over to the woman; takes her by the shoulders, and the two stare into each other's eyes, the one searchingly, the other fearfully): Grace!

The Woman: I am a poor, foolish woman, Betty, for all my worldliness and wisdom; but I love you (softly), and that is why I appear weak before you. The blind envy those who see, the deaf those who hear; what one does not want another can not have. Karloff loves you, but you do not love him.

(The girl kisses the woman gravely on the cheek, and without a word, makes her departure.)

The Woman (as she hears the carriage roll away): Poor girl! Poor, happy, unconscious, motherless child! If only I had the power to stay the blow! . . . Who can it be, then, that she loves?

The Girl (in her carriage): Poor thing! She adores Karloff, and I never suspected it! I shall begin to hate him.

How well women read each other!

James had never parted with his rose and his handkerchief. They were always with him, no matter what livery he wore. After luncheon, William said that Miss Annesley desired



HE HESITATED.

to see him in the study. So James spruced up and duly presented himself at the study door.

"You sent for me, Miss?"—his hat in his hand, his attitude deferential and attentive.

She was engaged upon some fancy work, the name of which no man knows, and if he were told, could not possibly remember for longer than ten minutes. She laid this on the reading-table, stood up and brushed the threads from her little two-by-four cambric apron.

"James, on Monday night I dropped a rose on the lawn. (Finds thread on her sleeve.) In the morning when I looked for it (brushes the apron again), it was gone. Did you find it?"

She made a little ball of the straggling threads and dropped it into the waste-basket. A woman who has the support of beauty can always force a man to lower his gaze. James looked at his boots. His heart gave one great bound toward his throat, then sank what seemed to be fathoms deep in his breast. This was a thunderbolt out of heaven itself. Had she seen him, then? For a space he was tempted to utter a falsehood; but there was that in her eyes which warned him of the uselessness of such an expedient. Yet, to give up that rose would be like giving up some part of his being. She repeated the question: "I ask you if you found it."

"Yes, Miss Annesley."

"Do you still possess it?"

"Yes, Miss."

"And why did you pick it up?"

"It was fresh and beautiful; and I believed that some lady at the dinner had worn it."

"And so you picked it up? Where did you find it?"

"Outside the bow-window, Miss."

"When?"

He thought for a moment. "In the morning, Miss."

"Take care, James; it was not yet 11 o'clock at night."

"I admit what I said was not true, Miss. As you say, it was not yet 11. James was pale. So she had thrown it away, confident that this moment would arrive. This humiliation was premeditated. Patience, he said, inwardly; this would be the last opportunity she would have to humiliate him.

"Have you the flower on your person?"

"Yes, Miss."

"Did you know that it was mine?"—mercilessly.

"Yes; but I believed that you had deliberately thrown it away. I saw no harm in taking it."

"But there was harm."

"I bow to your superior judgment, Miss,"—ironically.

She deemed it wisest to pass over this experimental irony. "Give the flower back to me. It is not proper that a servant should have in his keeping a rose which was once mine, even if I had thrown it away or discarded it."

Carefully he drew forth the crumpled flower. He looked at her, then at the rose, hoping against hope that she might relent. He hesitated till he saw

an impatient movement of the extended hand. He surrendered.

"Thank you. That is all. My way go." She tossed the withered flower into the wastebasket.

"Pardon me, but before I go I have to announce that I shall resign my position next Monday. The money which has been advanced to me, deducting that which is due me, together with the amount of my fine at the police-court, I shall be pleased to return to you on the morning of my departure."

Miss Annesley's lips fell apart, and her brows arched. She was very much surprised.

"You wish to leave my service?"—as if it were quite impossible that such a thing should occur.

"Yes, Miss."

"You are dissatisfied with your position?"—icily.

"It is not that, Miss. As a groom I am perfectly satisfied. The trouble lies in the fact that I have too many other things to do. It is very distasteful for me to act in the capacity of butler. My temper is not equable enough for that position." He bowed.

"Very well. I trust that you will not regret your decision." She sat down and coolly resumed her work.

"It is not possible that I shall regret it."

"You may go."

He bowed again, one corner of his mouth twisted. Then he took himself off to the stables. He was certainly in what they call a towering rage.

If I were not a seer of the first degree, a narrator of the penetrative order, I should be vastly puzzled over this singular action on her part.

[To Be Continued.]

WHEN LONGFELLOW SANG.

Singing Schools Were the Rage and "Joseph" Had Caught the Fever.

The office of station agent at Georgetown was held for a number of years by William Horner. In those days singing schools flourished throughout the country districts, and Horner was one of the most prominent in this diversion, relates the Boston Herald.

On one occasion a friend from Boston was visiting him, and he wished to show him the country. Accordingly after the last train had gone, Horner hitched up his horse and drove the visitor down to Plum Island, returning through Newbury somewhat after midnight.

When he came to the old Longfellow place on the hill, where Joseph Longfellow was then living, he pulled in his horse. "I want to stop here a minute," he said.

Leaving the astonished visitor in the buggy, Horner went to the door and rapped loudly. The old gentleman within, hearing the noise, arose and came at once to the door. As soon as he appeared, Horner, without a word, began to sing:

"Should auld acquaintance be forgot—"

Longfellow, standing in the doorway, clad only in his night clothes, took up the song, and together they finished it. Horner turned and rejoined his companion, while the old gentleman went back to bed.

The visitor was sufficiently astonished by this time to exclaim at the unusual occurrence.

"Oh," said Horner, "anybody in this country will get up to sing with you!"

"Any Time You Say."

A Boston financier whose summer home is on the south shore, recently paid the fines imposed on a group of lobstermen after the raid of the state fish commission for short lobsters. At that particular beach the broker's name has the prestige of the president's. One Saturday afternoon, as he seated himself in his touring car at the railway station, he directed the chauffeur to follow a certain road to his estate in order that he might pass the shanties of the lobstermen. Having plans for a sail, and noticing, as he followed the shore, that it was then about half-tide, he inquired of the first lobsterman he met when it would be high tide. With hat in hand, the man in oilskins replied: "Any time you say, Mr. X."—Boston Herald.

Seemed to Have Him Cornered.

The teacher was discoursing to the class on the wonders of nature. "Take the familiar illustration of the sting of a wasp," he said, "as compared with the finest needle. When examined through a microscope the sting is still sharp, smooth and polished, while the needle appears blunt and rough.

"It is so with everything. The works of nature are infinitely superior to those of art. Try how we may, we cannot improve on nature."

"It isn't so with my eyes, teacher," said a little girl in the class.

"Why, how is that, Nellie?" he asked.

"'Cause nature made me cross-eyed," she said, "and the doctors fixed my eyes all right."—Youth's Companion.

Not Ambitious for Father.

A New Hampshire man who had at various times been a candidate for public office, says the Boston Herald, has a small son about six years of age. The Herald says six years, and that part of the story is probably as true as the rest.

The lad, who had been meditating upon the uncertainties of kingly existence, asked his mother:

"If the King of England should die, who would be king?"

"The Prince of Wales."

"If the Prince of Wales should die, who would be king?"

The mother endeavored to explain but the boy, with a deep breath, said: "Well, anyway, I hope pa won't try for it."

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