

The IMPOSSIBLE BOY

By NINA WILCOX PUTNAM

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SYNOPSIS.

Pedro and the dancing bear, Mr. Jones, prevent a tramp from stealing a young lady's purse. Pedro's ambition to become a painter spurs him to quit Old Nita and the strolling bear dancers. Pedro, Old Nita and the bear trainers start for New York. Pedro paints a portrait for a lunch-wagon man and so earns a meal for the company. Miss Iris Vanderpool quarrels with her artist lover, Sam Hill, and they part. She discovers in her father's desk a portrait which she recognizes as that of Pedro, who rescued her from the purse snatcher. Hill, the dependent lover, meets Pedro and Mr. Jones in Washington square. Hill discovers talent in Pedro's drawings and in a mad desire to lose himself, gives his studio and all in it to Pedro in exchange for Mr. Jones.

CHAPTER V—Continued.

With alacrity Pedro gathered up the implements wherewith to serve himself, and returned from the corner shelf with one hand grasping a bristly bouquet of cutlery and the other balancing some dishes. Pausing before a sketch in plasterine, he looked at it critically, cocking his head to one side, and half-closing his eyes.

"You ought to push the hind quarters of the tiger back of the woman, so!" said he, giving an illustrative twist of the hand which nearly sent the cup flying. "It doesn't quite look—look solid, you know."

Leigh brought the fryingpan over when he came to inspect. He crouched for a moment before his model. Then he turned to Pedro.

"I believe you are right," he said. "In here is where you mean, of course. Are you a sculptor?"

"Painter," said Pedro, "at least, I am going to be."

A gleam of amusement crept into those strange eyes of Leigh.

"Going to be!" he quoted. "Ah! I see! The novice is always the severest critic."

"But I am right about it," persisted the boy, not in the least abashed at being made fun of.

"I did not say you were wrong," remarked Leigh. "Come and eat. You are in no need of championing your views."

Leigh perused Hill's letter between gulps of coffee. Its substance was merely that Hill was going away, possibly for a year, and confirmed Pedro's possession of the studio with the fewest possible explanations. When Leigh finished reading it he attacked the bacon and addressed his guest.

"Tell me again. What's all this about? Did you really never see Hill before last night?"

"Never," said Pedro.

"And what reason did he give for this unexpected desire to leave town?"

"That he wanted to go!" said Pedro with rising inflection, as if surprised that any other reason was necessary.

"Hum!" mused Leigh, thinking instantly of Iris. "I believe I can give a guess, then."

"He took my bear; I took his studio. A very good arrangement, eh?" asked Pedro.

"For you, certainly," said Leigh.

"Ah! but you should see my bear!" responded Pedro earnestly.

The lad was so sincere that Leigh smiled again.

"From something in Sam's letter," said he, "I am pretty sure that I am right about why he has gone. He says I am to look after you. What do you wish me to do for you as a starter? Take you up to the art school?"

"Academy! No!" exclaimed Pedro.

"What do you intend doing, then?"

"Paint," said Pedro.

"Anything else?"

"Find some one whose criticism I can respect!"

"Ah!" said Leigh, "and who will that be?"

"I have not yet decided," said the boy thoughtfully. "I shall have to see the work of all the best men first."

"And when do you go to work?"

"Now!" replied Pedro. "I must go. There is not a moment to be lost!"

He arose and stood looking as though alarmed at the sight of so many precious moments.

"But later?" asked Leigh.

"When it is dark, I will go with you," said Pedro, responding to the unspoken invitation.

"I shall come around for you at about six-thirty," said Leigh. "We must get to know each other better."

Hat in hand, Pedro turned to flash an assenting smile at Leigh before he went out.

When the door had closed upon him, the sculptor stood in deep thought for several moments. Then absent-mindedly knocking the contents of his unit pipe out upon the hearth, he put it in his mouth, upside down, and lunged over to the plasterine sketch that Pedro had criticized. For some time he looked at it immovably, and then stretched out a tentative hand toward the hind quarters of the tiger, withdrawing instantly.

"No, by George!" said he aloud, "I think it's all right just the way it stands."

But nevertheless he went to work upon another group, leaving the diminutive sketch alone.

Half past six (it being then dark) found Leigh on his way to the studio in Muldoon place, strolling along meditatively through the half-lit mystery of Greenwich.

At the corner of Seventh avenue he halted, slumped his pockets, unbuttoned his pipe and pouch, and proceeded to light up. Then, to make up for the few moments lost in this operation, he dived down the little short cut called Paradise place. It was very dark in the little fragment of a street, and half-way down its narrow span he bumped into two men who were in the act of parting from each other with low-voiced adieux. The taller of these two muttered an apology almost in the same breath with Leigh's, and was hurrying away, when the sculptor, catching sight of the face under

the peak of the cheap and shabby hat, called his name.

"Vanderpool!"

The millionaire heard, for he made an irresolute little movement as if to return, but, changing his mind, only pulled his hat over his eyes, and walked off rapidly. For a moment Leigh almost doubted the veracity of his recognition. Reginald Vanderpool in what amounted to a disguise! Such a circumstance seemed far from likely! And yet he could not be wrong, for in the folds of the man's coat he had distinctly seen the black ribbon and dangling monocle which were characteristic of Iris's father. Deuce take the man, it was very odd for him to rush off in that manner without speaking! But, for the matter of that, Vanderpool had always been something of a mystery to his acquaintances!

With a shrug, Leigh resumed his walk, only to have it borne in upon him after a few moments, that the second of the two men whom he had interrupted was preceding him. Even when he turned into Muldoon place there he was again, crossing the little paved court twenty-five feet in advance, and entering at the basement door!

"Well, if that isn't the damndest thing!" said Leigh as he mounted the stairs, puzzled, but thereafter thinking of it no more.

He found Pedro engaged upon a pencil drawing of a very pretty girl in the act of washing herself with the aid of a cake of soap which she held in a prominent manner. Leigh started slightly, as he looked at it, but all he said was:

"Still working?"

"No," responded Pedro, "I stopped when the light gave out."

He waved his hand toward the smaller easel where stood a canvas, upon which a picture—a street scene—had been blocked in. Leigh crossed to look at it, and although the artificial light made any real judgment of what he saw difficult, he bent before it interestedly, though still without comment.

"So you have stopped working," said he. "What do you call the thing you are doing?"

"This is not my work," explained Pedro, arising, and laying down the drawing-board. "This is just to live. I have seen many pictures in advertisements like this, often less good."

"No, our wealthy patron would be difficult to defraud. He is a man to whose capability I make my bow! And his caution! By the way," he added abruptly, "who lives on the top floor of this building?"

"A painter by the name of Samuel Hill," replied Pedro, "an easy-going young man. He's the landlord."

"Have you any acquaintance with him?"

"No more than is absolutely necessary!"

"Ah! your exclusiveness! Sometimes I think that it is a mistake—that it will attract attention! But of that, later. Tell me, is this landlord of yours a tall, homely fellow?"

"No," said Pedro, "why do you ask?"

"Because when He-of-whom-you-know and I were parting just now, such a person interrupted us, whether intentionally or not, I cannot tell. But he recognized Vander—recognized him, of that much I am certain. And what is more, he followed me to this house and is upstairs at this moment!"

For a moment Rowe glared at the other with an expression of intent alarm. Then his features relaxed.

"A great, tall fellow, did you say?" he mused. Then a light broke upon him.

"A giant, with a long face and ungainly carriage; that would be Leigh, the sculptor, a great friend of the landlord. And he would know him, also! No need to worry about that. As for his following you, that was mere coincidence. He comes here to visit Hill almost daily."

"You relieve my mind, Rowe," replied Yznaga, lighting a cigarette. "And now for our project. He-of-whom-you-know refuses absolutely to commit himself on paper. He will spend, yes! It is for a great purpose, in a noble cause! But he will sign nothing! What have we to hold him by?"

"The money he spends!" replied Rowe grimly.

"Will that suffice? This business is against the law, you know, and—"

"I have something that will hold him," replied Rowe. "I still have the thing by means of which I first interested him!"

"Which is?" said the other suggestively.

Rowe laughed, an unpleasant laugh that was characteristic of him, and reached for the wine.

"That, my simple friend, I am not going to reveal," said he politely. "But its efficacy you need not doubt. Has it not sufficed so far? Why should you doubt that it will work in the future, until we have succeeded in this simple American gentleman's dream? Pugh! I hold him in the hollow of my hand!"

"So you possess knowledge of some secret that he fears the exposure of? Ah, I suspected as much."

"I have not said so," replied Rowe, smiling confidently at the end of his cigarette. "Be content, Yznaga, that my knowledge serves its purpose."

"And serves to keep you leader of this enterprise!" snapped the visitor. "Very well. Have it as you will! Thank the blessed saints you have no hold over me! I should dislike to find myself in those nicotine-stained fingers of yours, amigo mio!"

"Perhaps you are in them," remarked Rowe, amused.

"! What nonsense!"

"How about your connection with this affair? Does it not place you somewhat at my mercy? A respectable member of the international commerce committee—"

"Hush!" said the other, paling a

trifle. "You are right. I admit the precariousness of my position. But, granting that you can control him and myself, what have you to offer the mob? The people, or any body of them, must have an idol, or an ideal for which to fight. Nothing else will really arouse them, nor hold them. It must be politics or emotion. In this case, as you are well aware, the political side of the question is not sufficiently strong. Can you invent an ideal that will appeal strongly enough to start a revolution? Here we have the cart-before-the-horse. In other words, strong financial backing; a patron whom we (or rather you) can absolutely control; a complete knowledge of our country; everything, in fact, except the sentiment of the people. In short, it is a highway to power for us both, blocked by the apathy of half a million ragged half-breeds!"

"Yznaga, my esteemed and admired friend," began Rowe, never losing his amused smile, "you are such a charming, well-bred, representative person that you fit the role of pseudo-cabinet minister to perfection; and you are such a fool that you are the ideal minister of state. I don't wonder that our respected patron actually believes you are what you represent yourself to be!"

The man opposite sprang to his feet with an oath.

"A fool!" he cried; "you call me a fool!"

"Sit down, and stop confirming my opinions so nicely," grinned Rowe, "or you may bring the house down about our ears with that yelling."

Yznaga complied, but sat frowning.

"Very well," said he, "say what you like. But calling me a fool will not prove you a wise man."

"Admitted," said Rowe. "But I am wise enough to be forehanded about a matter like this of public sentiment in our beloved country. Let me ask you a question. What would the people rise for? Think well. You know the answer!"

Yznaga was silent for a moment, rubbing the palms of his hands together as he thought hard. At last he spoke, but it was as one who mentions a desirable but unobtainable circumstance.

"There is Signora Daussa and her child," said he slowly. "But of course that is out of the question. No one knows where they are, and in all probability they were killed during the big uprising."

"That was never known as a certainty," said Rowe with meaning.

Yznaga looked up sharply.

"You mean to say—" he began.

Rowe raised a hand, warning him to silence.

"Listen!" he said, "I have for years known the whereabouts of our ex-president's wife, and am in daily—hourly—communication with her. Indeed, she is less than a mile from this very spot! She has practically no English, and therefore it is safe enough to take her about with me a little sometimes. As for explanations; that is easy. She has no money except what she could get for her few jewels, and she has deigned to accept my assistance. She is accepting it for a purely personal service, also, which is confidential, and which consequently I cannot tell you. But all this is irrelevant. The main thing that I wish you to understand is the fact that I have in her the one thing which will create a popular feeling. In other words, her restitution!"

"If the others—the doubting ones—could but see her once, we would have them with us heart and soul!" said Yznaga.

Rowe thought for a moment.

"Yes," said he, "I had intended that they should, of course, sooner or later. In a few weeks' time they shall see her. In the meantime your work will be to prepare their minds for that event. You must take bogus messages from her to them; give them every confidence that she is in sympathy with the movement. But one thing must be strictly observed. He-of-whom-you-know must be told nothing of her existence until I give the word. Remember that. To be frank with you, I do not believe that she will be in sympathy with us. She cares little for pomp or power. When the time comes for her to see the others, they must be warned to say very little to her, and I shall see to it that she, on her part, does not betray the ignorance in which I think it will be best to keep her."

"As you will!" replied Yznaga. "I am too much dazed by this revelation to dispute with you. I shall go now, and during the next few weeks I shall procure those estimates. And now good-night!"

"Va usted con Dios!" said Rowe as to a beggar, closing the door after him.

The exact nature of the trouble he could not determine, and neither could he see the woman very distinctly, but the air seemed to revive her, and presently a cap appeared, into which she was put, and driven off with one of the men. The rest then re-entered the house, closing the door with a bang. The little episode affected Pedro strangely.

Again he stepped to the inviting window and pressed his face against it, only to be confronted instantly by a mass of red-gold hair! At first he could scarcely believe his eyes; but it was true—there was no mistaking those gleaming braids—she was there, the Madonna Lady, standing within the warm room, her shoulder turned toward him. Acting on a sudden impulse, Pedro ran to the door, and knocked.

Almost at once it was opened by a little man with a smooth, boyish face and sandy hair. Although far from handsome, the magnetism of his personality struck Pedro immediately, awakening an answering chord in the reader, for a moment the little man looked the fer over, and then his weird, expressive face broke into a smile.

"Were you looking for Milligan?" he asked.

"I was looking for a party," said Pedro, smiling in return.

"Well, there's several inside," said the little man, waving a hand toward the dimly lighted room behind him. "Some friend of yours here?"

"I just wanted—" began Pedro, when a girl's voice broke in:

"He is a friend of mine, Don," said

Through the Fall Academy they wandered, too, and smaller exhibitions in the backs of shops, and in the lesser galleries. And from one of these latter visits came about Pedro's choice of the great De Bush as his future adviser. Ah! there was a painter for you!

That this rose-colored existence should continue forever was taken for granted by Pedro, whose sole lack was Mr. Jones. But one day Leigh sent word that he had been called from town by a commission, and might be gone a week or more.

During the span of six days Pedro managed very well alone, simply getting up earlier than ever, and work-

ing harder; for Leigh had come to satisfy him so completely that he fancied no one else could take the sculptor's place. On the seventh day, Leigh not having as yet returned, he ate a solitary meal, and feeling lonely, went to the gallery of a theater.

The play was a melodramatic affair, and on either hand sat people who refused to respond to his critical analysis of the dramatist's work; so, after the second act, he left, much bored, and filled with a longing for dancing and companions, for laughter and inconsequential talk; a most natural and wholesome desire for the amusements common to his years.

"I wish," said Pedro aloud, "that I was going to a party."

Then a thought struck him. If a party was what he wanted to go to—why not go to one? There were the cafes—but no! He wanted a real party, with invited guests, and laughter, and refreshments, hospitality offered.

Suddenly he felt like a prisoner, jailed in a prison that is limitless, yet cramped because it is, in fact, a prison. To shake off this morbid fancy he began to run, and sped through the silent, frosty streets as though the gruesome, sardonic spirit of civilization was speeding after him with handcuffs.

Breathless at last, and indignantly helpless, he came to a standstill beside the open gateway of a little inn, a passage that had once or twice attracted his passing attention. From wall to wall it was paved with uneven flagging, and down the center ran an open gutter. The buildings were squat two-story affairs of old brick, and had once been stables, but as he looked more closely, the light of the scattered bracket-lamps revealed the fact that they had been converted into studios. All the other buildings but one were dark, and like a bit of the old world, the miniature street nestled timidly almost in the shadow of its giant neighbors, the sky-scrapers. At its hospitable aspect Pedro felt better directly. From the lighted building, half-way down its limited stretch, a soft radiance shone out, uncurtained and cheery, and the sounds of revelry came muffled to his ear. Quite shamelessly he walked to where its window met level with his shoulder, and flattening his nose against the pane, looked in.

A dimly lit room full of animated people met his gaze. A youth, with a cigarette dangling from the corner of his mouth, was playing softly on the piano, while, just beyond, two couples were dancing. Immediately in front of the watcher was a row of heads, their owners being seated upon a bench which ran directly beneath the window.

Suddenly the street door was flung wide to emit a little knot of men who carried between them the limp form of a woman. Pedro drew back into the shadows and watched.

The exact nature of the trouble he could not determine, and neither could he see the woman very distinctly, but the air seemed to revive her, and presently a cap appeared, into which she was put, and driven off with one of the men. The rest then re-entered the house, closing the door with a bang. The little episode affected Pedro strangely.

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He Came to a Standstill Beside the Open Gateway.

the red-haired girl, emerging from the crowded studio. She had noted his entrance and immediately made her way toward him. "Aren't you going to let him in?" she concluded.

One would have sworn that she had been expecting him, thought Pedro. Evidently she had not forgotten the roadside encounter.

"Pedro is the humble servant of you both," said he, with that sweeping bow of his.

"And this is Mr. Milligan, our host," said she.

The two shook hands, and even while Milligan muttered something by way of acknowledging the introduction, he was carried off by a phalanx of men who came up, clamoring for more beer. With a swift gesture the girl beckoned to Pedro, and he followed up a narrow, winding staircase, which brought them out upon a little balcony. The Madonna Lady seated herself upon a divan and motioned Pedro to follow suit.

"Madonna, I saw you through the window, and I could not resist coming in, even though I was a stranger to the house."

"She smiled at him.

"You saved me just in time," he continued, "else I might have failed of entrance."

"And you really came because you saw me?"

"For what other reason?" said he. "Madonna, what is your name?"

"Iris," said she, lifting her great eyes, that were like those selfsame blossoms. "My father's name is Vanderpool. What other name have you, besides Pedro?"

"I have no other," he replied after an almost imperceptible pause.

She raised her head, as if in disbelief. Ah! that wonderful line from chin to breast! Surely some day he must contrive to paint it.

"I am speaking as I must," he told her. "Will you not believe me when I say that the only name I can give you is that which you have heard?"

"This had a perfume of mystery, but while it added to her already keen interest in him, she maintained her pose of offense.

"If it was only to be unkind, why did you rescue me just now?" he asked.

She laughed a little.

"You once saved me from real danger," she replied; "the least I could do was to spare you, in turn."

Swiftly Pedro leaned toward her. In his eyes shone a light that might have meant pure mischief, but this she did not see, for she had turned away her head again. His voice was very vibrant, carrying a subtlety of meaning which was delicate in the extreme.

"Madonna Iris!" he said, "when you turn your head so, it is lovely beyond words! Do you know that the line of your chin and throat is like the silver-white edge of the young moon? Ah! Now you are angry. Forgive me; but I have dreamed of that line since first I saw you!"

There was a tense pause between them.

"No, I am not angry," she said at last in a low voice, looking intently at the sticks of her fan as she spoke. "You see, I had not forgot you, either."

"I shall not give you chance to forget!" he exclaimed to his companion. But before she could reply, a youth who had been watching her, rushed up and claimed her for the dance. With a smile she was gone; and in a few moments he saw her and her partner emerge upon the floor below.

While he stood watching her, a man joined him, and after a nod and the

proffer of a cigarette, which was accepted, stood beside him at the balcony rail.

This new acquaintance was a thick-set young man, blond and rugged of feature. He was not in evening clothes—indeed, only two or three of the men were—and he did not look over-prosperous. But he fairly radiated energy and enthusiasm, and his face was strong and arresting. For several moments they stood looking down into the crowd.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Rebuked.

The Germans—as all extensively traveled persons know—are great sticklers for titles. One must not only say Herr Cancellarius Bolz, Herr Doctor Baron Meler, Professor Schmidt; one must also say Frau Cancellarius Bolz, Frau Doctor Baronin Meler, Frau Professor Schmidt. Also there are fine distinctions in titles. If one title is higher than another by so much as a hair's breadth, the way-faring man must not call the rightful owner of the higher title by the lower title. Never.

A certain public school teacher who already enjoyed the title of master was promoted to head master. Next day young Fritz, quite unaware as yet of the honor that had come to his instructor overnight, greeted him with his usual cheery "Good morning, master."

"Perhaps," said the new head master with dignity, "perhaps you'd rather just call me Adolf."—New York Evening Post.

THE NEWS TOLD IN PARAGRAPHS

Latest Happenings Gleaned From All Over the State.

LIVE NOTES AND COMMENTS.

Child Finds Mother Dead—Mother Saves Family From Fire—Five Hurt in Gasoline Explosion, Steeple Jack's Fall Fatal.

William Zimmerman, a well-known Dauphin county farmer, was found dead in bed at his home in Hallowell.

Fremont Lenke, financial secretary of Camp 52, P. O. S. of A., at Tower City, was sent to jail for one year for embezzling \$133 belonging to the camp.

James V. Murray, corporation clerk in the Auditor General's department, and a taxation expert, has resigned to resume his practice.

Members of the Dolphin County Bar endorsed the candidacy for Judge De Kunkel for Supreme Court Justice and named a Campaign Committee.

David Reber, an aged resident of Cresona, was arrested by State police, charged with setting fire to his own home at that place.

In a fall from a wagon, when the seat tilted, August O. England, of West Chester, suffered fractures of both wrists.

The Cumberland County Grand Jury found a true bill against Max Morgan, charged with the murder of John M. Rupp, a farmer.

George S. Thiele, a brakeman, of Pottsville, was badly injured when he fell from his freight train between two cars. He may recover.

Orlando Dowlands, of West Cain, has been arrested for the larceny of a lot of school books from the wagon of Israel Berry, one of the School Directors.

John Miller and his son David were seriously injured when the rope of the scaffold on which they were painting at Schuylkill Haven broke. They fell more than thirty feet.

Fire that is thought to have been caused by mice nibbling at matches caused a loss of \$1000 to the home of Alfred Shehstolt at Boyertown. The family were almost suffocated by the smoke.

A little child of Mrs. David Weitz, thirty-four years old, of Baumtown, found her dead upon the kitchen floor from inhaling illuminating gas. The keyholes and windows were found stuffed.

Morris Brehm was probably fatally burned and four other men seriously hurt when a gasoline tank blew up in a garage at Harrisburg. Brehm had only been working in the establishment a week.

Mrs. John Shaffner, wife of a farmer living near Harrisburg, saved the lives of her five children by throwing them out of windows when their home caught fire. The father jumped from the window first and caught the youngsters. The home was destroyed.

The Stewartstown Agricultural Association, which annually conducts fairs all over York county, has been chartered with a capitalization of the thousand dollars. Sixty-nine names of subscribers are attached to the charter.

Losing his balance while working on a church steeple, Frederick Hiltz, seventy-two years old, of Bannock Springs, fell fifty feet there and sustained injuries from which he died an hour later. It was the steeple-jack's first accident in the fifty years he had followed that dangerous trade.

Mrs. Alene Troxell, who shot her husband, former Assemblyman Harry S. Troxell, as he was entering their home last Christmas night in Criminal Court at Williamsport, entered a plea