

"No," she declared fiercely, "not mine, one forged in my name to trick—" She stopped. "Why did you answer this advertisement?" she demanded abruptly. "Let us sit down, Miss Graham," said he soothingly, "and I will tell you exactly how I stand, and with what light you can shed we may be able to see our way clearer."

She sat down reluctantly, keeping her eyes suspiciously on him. He could see she was torn between anger and misery, and his pity went out to her.

"Let us begin by pleading guilty," he said in his most sympathetic manner.

should seem that I had lured him to his—"

"Pardon me, my dear lady," protested de Lys. "It is I you would seem to have lured."

She stared as if incomprehending. "Oh, yes," she said at last. "I forgot. Well, it doesn't matter about you; but it does matter that he should think I was trying to lure him."

"I don't quite see how he is to think that, unless he is a remarkably suspicious young man," said de Lys, stroking his chin pensively.

barred, and, pushing aside the curtains he peered out. What it looked out upon he never discovered, for he found himself, to his amazement, gazing into the shadowy and unrecognisable face of a man.

"Good evening!" began de Lys courteously. "What can I do for you?"

The man, who had apparently succeeded in pushing aside the unfastened shutters which should have barred the window, came forward without a word. He gave a quick glance about the room, breathing somewhat heavily as if from previous physical exertions.

"Where's Miss Graham?" he turned on de Lys to ask abruptly.

De Lys eyed him speculatively. The stranger was young and alert. He could not be a burglar, since he asked for Miss Graham. It occurred to de Lys that he might be one of Mr. Swainson's detectives.

"It's no use," he said, shaking his head. "The man has got away."

"Who has got away?" asked the young man.

you are to be arrested. Mr. Swainson—"

"But they don't know I'm here," protested the real Frederick in surprise. "No one can know, for I followed Mr. Swainson's cab in the dark all the way from the Serpentine."

"You were the man hanging over the bridge," said de Lys with a sudden inspiration.

"Why, this must be he—this is he," cried the young man, turning on him fiercely. "He's the detective."

He seemed about to lay hands on de Lys, but the girl's voice stopped him.

"No, Frederick. I confess I don't know in the least who he is, but I don't think he's a detective. In fact, he pretended to be you."

Mr. Channing eyed him suspiciously, and de Lys hastened to say.

"Don't you think we had better postpone recriminations, and face the situation?"

"I'm hanged if I know what the situation is," said Mr. Channing gloomily.

De Lys reminded him. "There is a warrant out for your arrest."

"And a detective is coming up almost at once. I told Mr. Swainson," put in Miss Graham.

"To send a detective to arrest me?" asked Mr. Channing in horror.

"No, no, I can't explain—him," said Miss Graham with agitation.

"Let me," said de Lys placidly. "Miss Graham and I thought that by my pretending to be you it would divert attention from you, wherever you might be, and so enable you to escape quietly from the country."

"But I'm not going to escape," protested Mr. Channing almost angrily.

"Oh, Frederick!" It was plain that both Miss Graham and de Lys regarded this as a rather rash statement, and the young man displayed indignation.

"I have sufficient evidence to demonstrate my entire innocence of participation in the mad crime of my partner," he said with lofty hauteur. "I have been collecting proofs. I wrote to you I was innocent," he added reproachfully. "Why didn't you wait?"

"I believed it—I do believe it," she cried. "Of course he is innocent," she said, turning indignantly on de Lys.

"Of course he is," agreed de Lys.

"You might," continued Mr. Channing with great pathos, "you might have waited till I was proved guilty before throwing me over, and giving my ring to somebody else."

"I never—what ring?" demanded Miss Graham excitedly.

He pointed with dignified sorrow to de Lys's hand, which that gentleman endeavoured to hide. Miss Graham leaped upon him like a tiger.

"What are you doing with my ring?" Where did you get that?" she asked.

"I got it from Mr. Swainson," said he, surrendering meekly to the onslaught.

Miss Graham had captured it, but it would not come off.

"Oh, it's scandalous!" she panted. "Do



"I don't know who the deuce that is," said Swainson, "but this is your man." He indicated de Lys and the detectives moved forward.

"I have never believed these agony ad-off place. I saw one, and I decided to test it."

"It is no excuse—it's no reason," she cried piteously.

"I admit it," he said gravely. "I am willing to repair my mistake. I have stumbled into something which does verisimilitude genuine. I have always thought them faked, practical jokes, the larks of young fools whose idea of wit is a damp squib. That was my jumping-exist, which is not altogether a sham. I am willing to pay."

"Pay," she echoed wilyly, and was suddenly silent, lost in grief.

"I take it," said de Lys gently, "that Mr. Swainson was responsible for the advertisements. And I take it also that you are aware what he wants."

"He wants me to—to break with Mr. Channing," said the girl sadly.

"Will you please tell me about Mr. Channing?" urged de Lys.

"Mr. Channing is a partner, a junior partner, in the firm of Grange & Channing, Solicitors," said the girl in an even, emotionless voice.

"Grange & Channing?" De Lys seemed to recall the name somehow. He remembered suddenly. "I think I understand," he said softly. "Mr. Grange's death was the occasion of the discovery of large defalcations by the firm."

"By Mr. Grange," corrected Miss Graham quickly. "Mr. Channing was ignorant of everything."

"You know that?" he asked.

"He wrote and told me so," she said simply.

"O simplex munditium!" sighed de Lys to himself. "You have seen him then?"

"No." She seemed uneasy at that. "He—the papers say he has disappeared. But I know he is only doing what is right and necessary."

This profound faith was worthy of matters.

"Then you do not share Mr. Swainson's feelings in this matter?" he asked. "Remember, you have been left with me really that we may arrange to break, and so secure my safety. I can see now Mr. Swainson's motives, and his wisdom. You would do anything to secure the safety of Mr. Channing?"

"Yes," she said frankly, looking on him without shame. "I know him. I know he would be guilty of nothing base. I would do whatever he might want. I wrote to tell him so. I will go to him, if he will tell me. I have told him so."

"Has he answered?" he asked gently.

"No," she said with an indrawing of her breath that was like a sob; and then she appeared to recollect. "But you have not said why you are here."

"I have apologized," said de Lys, "and I have now to make amends."

"Oh," she broke out, as if she heard not, or hearing gave no heed, "that it

She was evidently not considering him very seriously, and he endeavoured to direct her attention to the present.

"Well, what are we to say to Mr. Swainson?" he asked almost cheerfully.

"Say!" she stared at him. "It doesn't matter what you say," she returned contemptuously.

"What I mean is, am I to give you up?" he explained. "Because, frankly, I don't like the idea at all."

Her eyes dropped for a moment under his gaze.

"I think I'd better refuse," he said. "What is the use of playing with the situation?" she demanded scornfully. "Do you think it is a time for silly masquerades, when you are face to face with real life?"

He had admired her fidelity as that of the angels, but he did not know now if her emotionalism was not too strenuous. She seemed resolved on tragedy and the bus-kin.

"I am not playing masks," he said mildly. "I am in earnest. If I refuse to give you up I go to prison, and I am right, I think, in supposing that there is a warrant out for Mr. Channing."

She flushed. "It's a shame! It is persecution!" she exclaimed.

"Well," he suggested in his even way, "if suspicion is thus diverted, and he wants to escape, he shall have the chance."

"He does not want to escape," she protested vehemently. "He is not guilty. He—"

"Would you go overseas with him, thus branded by suspicion—unjust of course?" he asked softly.

"Yes," Her answer was defiant. Such faith removed mountains, and was touching; it certainly excused her tragedy airs.

"Very well," he said after a pause. "Go down and tell Mr. Swainson that I refuse to give you up, and that you glory in my refusal. That would make him act."

She hesitated, looking at him with all her heart, so to speak, and then: "You mean this? May God be good to you!" she cried. "Perhaps it will help. Yes, I will accept your sacrifice. You are a good friend."

She turned as she reached the door and ere she fled noiselessly gave him this fire of her fine dramatic eyes.

"A good girl, a nice girl, and a pretty girl," reflected de Lys, left alone, "but a too-emotional girl. He mused: "I should tire of a gusher first of all, I think. They are so wearing on the nerves."

As he reached this conclusion he was aware of a noise that came from the long windows behind him. It was a scratching, scuffling sound, and it drew him to an examination of the windows. One of them was shattered for the night, but the other was only partly

broken, and, pushing aside the curtains he peered out. What it looked out upon he never discovered, for he found himself, to his amazement, gazing into the shadowy and unrecognisable face of a man.

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"It's no use," he said, shaking his head. "The man has got away."

"Who has got away?" asked the young man.

"The man you want," replied de Lys, dallying with the situation easily.

"Humph!" The young man stared at him hard. He was rather short, bright-eyed, and evidently impetuous. "Who are you?" he inquired. Really de Lys hardly knew how to answer this question. He was reluctant to declare himself in his true person, and this near-comer, although he seemed sure of his right to interrogate, was quite unknown. However, he summarily resolved to carry out the plan on the chance of this being one of Swainson's detectives.

"I am Frederick Channing," he said quietly.

The young man started, stared, gaped, opened his mouth to speak, and seemed struck impotent by something. "Whom did you say?" he asked.

"Frederick Channing." De Lys pronounced the names syllable by syllable as for an interrogating child.

There was a momentary silence between them, as the young man seemed to be taking this in, and then he said rather fiercely.

"You're a liar."

De Lys drew himself up. "In that case," he began with great dignity; but he was not allowed to proceed.

"What's that you're got there? How did you get that? Look here, what do you mean by passing yourself off as— as somebody else?" The young man was pointing, in excitement to the ring on de Lys's finger.

"What—the ring?" said de Lys. "Why, it was a present. What's it to do with you?"

"Look here," said the stranger, obviously trying to restrain himself. "I should like to understand a little more of this. You say your name is Channing?"

"Frederick Channing," put in de Lys. "That makes it worse," said the young man, goaded to anger. "Why—"

The click of the door arrested both of them in the midst of this altercation, and



"I am sorry I'm not the real Frederick Channing, and I hope I didn't pinch too hard," he said softly.

they turned to see Miss Graham re-enter the room.

"Doris!" exclaimed the young man with mingled rapture and pathos.

"Frederick!" called out Miss Graham. "Well, I'm — bothered!" remarked Lord de Lys.

"Frederick, what are you doing here? You must go," panted Miss Graham. "There are detectives in the house, and

help, Frederick!" Frederick helped, and the ring was regained after a rough treatment of the finger.

"It seems to me," said de Lys, musing his finger tenderly, "that if Mr. Channing does not want to be arrested he had better go."

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