

The Project Gutenberg eBook of Dorothy Dixon and the Double Cousin, by Dorothy
Wayne

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: Dorothy Dixon and the Double Cousin

Author: Dorothy Wayne

Release date: January 15, 2014 [EBook #44670]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Roger Frank and the Online Distributed
Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net>

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK DOROTHY DIXON AND THE DOUBLE COUSIN

DOROTHY DIXON
and the Double Cousin

BY

Dorothy Wayne

Author of
Dorothy Dixon Solves the Conway Case
Dorothy Dixon and The Mystery Plane
Dorothy Dixon Wins Her Wings

THE GOLDSMITH PUBLISHING COMPANY
CHICAGO

COPYRIGHT, 1933

THE GOLDSMITH PUBLISHING COMPANY
MADE IN U.S.A.

To
DOROTHEA HETTY GUTMANN

*a New Canaan schoolgirl, who
loves our beautiful Ridge
Country, and whose fox terrier,
Professor, really ate the dictionary!*

CONTENTS

- I [THE ENCOUNTER](#)
- II ["FAMILY AFFAIRS"](#)
- III [THE SLEEPWALKER](#)
- IV [MEET FLASH!](#)
- V [ON SECRET SERVICE](#)
- VI [WHO'S WHO?](#)
- VII [PLAYING A PART](#)
- VIII ["WALK INTO MY PARLOR"](#)
- IX [IN THE NIGHT](#)
- X [SURPRISES](#)
- XI [GRETCHEN](#)
- XII [TESTS](#)
- XIII [WINNITE](#)
- XIV [PROFESSOR](#)
- XV [TEA AND ORDERS](#)
- XVI [CAUGHT IN THE ACT](#)
- XVII [PROFESSOR MAKES GOOD](#)
- XVIII [THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT](#)

DOROTHY DIXON AND THE DOUBLE COUSIN

Chapter I

THE ENCOUNTER

"Why—good heavens, girl! How in the world did you escape?"

Dorothy Dixon heard the low, eager whisper at her elbow but disregarded it. She was intent on selecting a tie from the colorful rack on the counter before her. She spoke to the clerk:

"I'll take this one, and that'll make four. I hope Daddy will approve my taste in Christmas presents," she smiled, and laid a bill on her purchases.

"But—please, dear, tell me! Don't you know I'm worried crazy? Who let you out?"

This time Dorothy felt a touch on her arm. She wheeled quickly to face a tall, slender young fellow of twenty-two or three. As she stared at him, half indignant, half wondering, she saw sincere distress in his brown eyes, and in the lines of his pleasant face. Hat in hand, he waited anxiously for an answer to his question, while the crowd of holiday shoppers poured through the aisles about them.

Dorothy's eyes softened, then danced. "It seems to me," she said, "that you have the wires twisted—it's not I who've escaped, but you! Run along now and find your keeper. You're evidently in need of one!"

"Your change and package, miss," the impersonal voice of the haberdashery clerk intervened and Dorothy turned back to the counter.

"But why on earth are you acting this way, Janet?" The strange young man was at her elbow again.

Once more Dorothy turned swiftly toward him but when she spoke her eyes and voice were serious. "Do you really mean to say you think you're speaking to Janet Jordan? Because—"

"My dear—what are you trying to tell me?" He broke in impatiently. "I certainly ought to know the girl I'm going to marry!"

Dorothy nodded slowly. "I agree with you—you ought to—but then, you see, you *don't!*"

The young man crushed his soft felt hat in his hands and took a step nearer to her. "Look here—what *is* the matter with you? I know you've been through a lot, but—" He broke off abruptly, a gleam of horror and suspicion in his honest eyes. "Janet! What have they done to you?"

Dorothy laid a firm hand on his arm. "Sh! Be quiet—listen to me." Then she added gently—"I am *not* Janet Jordan, your fiancée."

"You're not—!"

"No. My name is Dorothy Dixon—and I'm Janet's first cousin."

The young man seemed flabbergasted for a moment. Then he stammered—"Wh-why, it's astounding—the resemblance, I mean! You're alike as—as two peas. If you were twins—"

"But you see," she smiled, "our mothers, Janet's and mine, *were* twins, and I guess that accounts for it. I've never seen Janet, but this is the third time, just recently, that I've been taken for her by her friends, Mr.—?"

"My name is Bright," he supplied. "Howard Bright. Yes, now I can see a slight difference, Miss Dixon. You're a bit taller and broader across the shoulders than she is. But it's your personalities, more than anything else, that are altogether unlike. I hope you'll forgive me, Miss Dixon, for making a nuisance of myself!"

"No indeed—that is, of course I will!" Dorothy laughed merrily. "You're not a nuisance, you know, but," and her tone became grave, "I can see that you're in trouble. Is there—" she hesitated.

"Not I, Miss Dixon—that is, not directly. But," he lowered his voice, "Janet is—is in very serious trouble. And for a moment, when I saw you, I thought that in some miraculous way she had escaped."

Howard Bright's face suddenly became almost haggard and Dorothy's sympathy and concern for her cousin deepened into resolve.

"Look here, Mr. Bright," she said abruptly, "we can't talk here, in this shopping crowd, it's a regular football scrimmage. Let's go up to the mezzanine. A friend of mine is waiting there for me now, I'm a little late as it is, and—"

"But I can't bother *you* with this," he protested, "and especially—"

"Oh, come along," she urged, "Bill is a grand guy when it comes to getting people out of messes. I insist you tell us all about it. After all, Janet's my cousin, you know, and you'll soon be a member of the family, won't you?"

"There doesn't seem much hope of that now." Young Bright's tone was despondent. "But Janet certainly does need help, and she needs it badly—so—"

Dorothy caught his arm. "I'm going to call you Howard," she announced briskly. "So please drop the Miss Dixon. And come on—let's push our way over to the elevators."

The mezzanine floor of the department store was arranged as a lounge or waiting room for customers. Comfortable arm chairs and divans invited tired shoppers to rest. Writing desks and tables strewn with current magazines gave the place a club-like appearance.

Dorothy and her newly found acquaintance stepped out of the elevator and looked about. The place seemed especially quiet after the rush and bustle on other floors, and was almost deserted, save for two elderly ladies conversing in low tones near a window, and a young man, who rose at their approach.

As the good looking youth moved toward them with the lithe, easy grace of a trained athlete, Howard Bright saw that he had light brown hair, and blue eyes snapping with vitality and cheerfulness.

"Hello, Dorothy!" He greeted her smilingly, "better late than never, if you don't mind my saying so. I'd just about figured you were going to pass up our date."

"Sorry, Colonel," she mocked. "Explanations are in order I guess, but they can wait. This is Howard Bright, Bill—Howard, Mr. Bolton!"

The two young men shook hands.

"Bolton—Dixon?" Howard's tone was thoughtful. "Why!" he exclaimed suddenly. "You two are the flyers—the pair who won the endurance test with the Conway motor! I'm certainly glad to meet you both. The papers have been full of your doings. Well, this is a surprise! But you know, I'd got the impression that you were both older—"

"I'm sixteen," smiled Dorothy. "Bill has me beat by a year."

"How about lunch?" suggested Bill. He invariably changed the subject when his exploits were mentioned. People always enthused so, it embarrassed him. "You'll join us, of course, Mr. Bright?"

"Thanks, Mr. Bolton. I really don't think I can butt in this way—"

"There's no butting in about it," Dorothy interrupted. "Howard is engaged to my cousin, Janet Jordan, Bill. And Janet's in a lot of trouble. I've promised we'd do everything we can to help."

Bill, after one look at Howard's worried face, sized up the situation instantly. "Why, of course," he said. "And we can't talk with any privacy in this place. I can see that whatever the trouble is, it's serious."

"Janet's in desperate peril," Howard said huskily.

"You said something about her escape when we met," Dorothy reminded him. "Has somebody kidnapped her? Have you any idea where she is?"

"Yes, she's a prisoner. A prisoner in the Jordans' apartment on West 93rd Street."

"Then her father is away?"

"No. He leaves tonight, I believe."

"But, my goodness!—a girl can't be kidnapped and made a prisoner in her own home. Especially if her father is there. It doesn't sound possible."

"I know it doesn't," admitted Howard desperately, "it sounds crazy. But it's the truth, just the same. She's in frightful danger."

Dorothy looked horrified. "You mean that my uncle and Janet don't get on together—that they've had a row and you're afraid he will harm her?"

"Oh, no, they're very fond of each other."

"Then Uncle Michael is a prisoner, too!"

"No, he is free enough himself, but he can do nothing—it would only make matters worse."

"Well!" declared Dorothy, "I don't think much of Uncle Michael if he can't protect his own daughter."

Bill stepped into the breach.

"What about the police—can't you call them in?"

Howard Bright shook his head. "They would only bring this horrible business to a climax," he explained. "And that is exactly what must not be done. It is more a matter for Secret Service investigation—but I don't think that even they could be of any real help."

Bill and Dorothy exchanged a quick glance.

"Have you ever heard of a man named Ashton Sanborn, Mr. Bright?"

"Yes, I have, Mr. Bolton. Wasn't he the detective who helped you unearth that fiendish scheme of old Professor Fanely?"^[1]

"Bull's eye!" grinned Bill. "Only Ashton Sanborn is quite a lot more than a mere detective. And it so happens that he is over at the Waldorf right now, waiting for Dorothy and me to lunch with him. Let me tell you, Bright, it's a mighty lucky thing for Janet Jordan that he is in town. Come along. We'll hop a taxi and be with him in ten minutes."

Howard hung back. "But really—"

Dorothy caught his arm. "Don't be silly, now," she urged.

"But I can't call in a detective, Dorothy. I know I'm rotten at explaining, but if these devils who have Janet in their power are interfered with they will kill her out of hand!"

"But you spoke of the Secret Service just now. This is not for publication, but Mr. Sanborn is the head of that branch of the government. If anyone *can* help Janet, he can do it."

"I doubt it. I admit I'm half crazy with worry, but Janet is going to be removed from the apartment tonight, and heaven only knows what will happen then. It takes days, generally weeks, to get the government started on anything."

"Not Sanborn's branch of it," interrupted Bill. "We're talking in circles, Bright. If Sanborn can't help Janet, he'll tell you so. At least you can give him the dope and find out. He's an expert and you'll get expert advice."

"All right, I'll go with you. But I'm afraid it won't do any good. Please don't think, though, that I'm not appreciating the interest you're taking. I don't mean to be a wet blanket."

"Of course you don't, and you're not." Dorothy led toward the staircase. "You'll feel a whole lot better when you get the story off your chest."

"And when you've got outside a good substantial lunch," added Bill. "I know I shall, anyway."

"That," said Dorothy, "is just like a boy. I believe you'd eat a good meal, Bill, an hour before you were hung, if it were offered to you."

"I'd be hanged if I didn't," he laughed and followed her down the steps onto the main floor.

[1] See *Bill Bolton and The Winged Cartwheels*.

Chapter II

“FAMILY AFFAIRS”

“Just—one—moment, please!” Ashton Sanborn’s keen blue eyes twinkled as he surveyed his young guests. His heavy-set body moved with a muscular grace as he placed a chair for Dorothy and motioned the two boys to seats on a divan nearby. “Now then, Dorothy and Bill—I want you two chatterboxes to keep quiet while I ask Mr. Bright some questions and get this matter straight in my own head. Your turn to talk will come later.” His quizzical smile robbed the words of any harshness, and the culprits grinned and nodded their willingness to comply with his request.

“Mr. Bright,” he went on, “if you’ll just answer my questions for the present, I’ll get you to tell the story from the beginning in a few minutes.”

“It’s mighty decent of you to take all this interest, Mr. Sanborn.”

The Secret Service Man shook his prematurely grey head—“It’s my business to ferret things out. Now, as I understand it, you mistook Dorothy for her cousin, Miss Jordan, to whom you are engaged. The likeness must be amazing?”

“It is, sir.”

“Yes—well, we’ll get back to the likeness after a while. You say that Miss Jordan is a prisoner in her father’s apartment, and is in danger of her life?”

“Yes, sir.” Howard, tense and taut as a fiddle string, his hands gripping the edge of the cushioned couch, gazed steadily back at his questioner.

“Do you know for certain that she is in actual danger at the present moment, Bright?” Ashton Sanborn’s quiet tone and unhurried manner of speaking was gradually gaining the young man’s confidence. Bill and Dorothy noticed that Howard’s strained look was beginning to disappear, and he had started to relax.

“She has been in great danger,” he replied, “but now, they’ve decided to test her. There isn’t a chance, though, that she will pass the test, Mr. Sanborn. The poor girl is so worn out and nervous she’s bound to fail.”

“Do you know what time she is to be taken away from the apartment?”

“Yes, sir. Lawson told her to pack her clothes today, so as to be ready to leave at midnight.”

“Mmm!” Sanborn glanced at his watch. “It is now one-thirty. That gives us exactly eleven and a half hours in which to get her out of their hands. Now just one question more, Mr. Bright. What made you say that this is a matter in which the so-called Secret Service of the United States should be called in, rather than the police?”

“Well,” Howard’s brows knit in a puzzled frown, “you see, Janet is being taken to Dr. Tyson Winn’s house near Ridgefield, Connecticut, tonight. As I understand it, Dr. Winn has a big laboratory up there where he is experimenting on high explosives for the government. Lawson, the man who told Janet she was to go there, is Dr. Winn’s secretary. It all looks so queer to me—I thought—”

“That *is* interesting!” Ashton Sanborn’s tone was serious and for a little while he seemed lost in thought. Then abruptly he looked up from an inspection of his finger tips, and rose from his chair. “I ordered lunch for three before you young people arrived,” he said with a return of his cheerful, hearty way of speaking. “Now I’ll phone down and have lunch for four served up here instead.” He looked at Dorothy. “By the way, the menu calls for oyster cocktails, sweetbreads on grilled mushrooms, O’Brien potatoes, alligator pear salad, and cafe parfait—any suggestions?”

“Oh, aren’t you a dear!” Dorothy, who had been using a miniature powder puff on her nose, snapped shut the cover of her compact. “You have ordered all the things I like best. No wonder you’re a great detective—you never forget a single thing, no matter what it is.”

Sanborn laughed. “Thanks for the compliment—but those dishes happen to be favorites of my own, too. Now get that brain of yours working, Dorothy. When I’ve finished with the head waiter, I want you to tell us all you know about your uncle and cousin. Before we can go further I must have every possible detail of the case at my fingers’ ends.”

He took up a phone from a small table near the window, and Dorothy turned toward Howard.

“You probably know more about the Jordans than I do,” she said. “I have a picture of Janet that she sent me a couple of years ago. We always exchange presents at Christmas—but we’ve never seen each other.”

“I really know very little about the Jordans, myself,” protested Howard. “You see, Janet and I saw each other for the first time just five weeks ago. It was on a Sunday afternoon, I’d been taking a walk in Central Park, when one of those equinoctial downpours came on very suddenly. Janet was right ahead of me, so naturally, I offered her my umbrella. She’s—well, rather shy and retiring, and at first she wasn’t so keen on accepting—”

“So there *is* a difference between the cousins!” Bill winked at Howard. “If it had been Dorothy, she’d have taken your overcoat and rubbers as well. Nothing shy or retiring about Janet’s double!”

“Is that so, Mr. Smarty! It’s a good thing Howard met her that rainy Sunday. If it had been you, Bill, the poor girl would certainly have got a soaking!”

"You mean she wouldn't have accepted my umbrella?"

"I *mean* you never would have offered it!"

"You win—one up, Dorothy," said Ashton Sanborn when the laughter at this sally had subsided. "What happened after you and Janet got under your umbrella, Bright?"

"Oh, nothing much. We walked over to Central Park West but there were no taxis to be had for love or money. So then I suggested taking her home and we found we lived in the same apartment house. I asked if I might call, but she said that was impossible—that Mr. Jordan permitted no callers."

"Well," said Dorothy, "that didn't seem to stop you. I mean you are a pretty fast worker, Howard, to get engaged with a tyrant father guarding the doorstep and all that."

"Cut it out, Dot," broke in Bill, who had been waiting patiently for a chance to get even. "You can't be in the center of the stage all the time, and your remarks are out of order, anyway."

"I'll dot you one, if you take my name in vain, young man!"

"Silence, woman! Go ahead, Howard, and speak your piece, or she'll jump in with both feet next time."

Dorothy said nothing but the glance she shot Bill Bolton was a promise of dire things to come.

"Oh, I don't mind," grinned Howard, and Dorothy immediately put him down as a good sport. "Well, to go on with it—we used to meet in the lobby, go for walks and bus rides, sometimes to the movies or a matinee. Two weeks ago, Janet, who is just eighteen, by the way, said she would marry me. She seemed to have no friends in New York. I've seen her father, but never met him. Except for this horrible business, which came up a few days ago, all that I know about Janet is that her mother died when she was five, her father parked her at a boarding-school near Chicago, and she stayed there until last June when she graduated. Her summer holidays were spent at a girls' camp in Wisconsin. She was never allowed to visit the homes of the other girls, so Christmas and Easter holidays she stayed in the school. During her entire schooling, she saw her father only five times. Last summer he took her abroad with him. They travelled in Germany and in Russia, I believe."

"Gosh, what a life for a girl!" exploded Bill.

"I should say so!" Dorothy made no attempt to hide her disgust. "The more I hear about Uncle Michael, the less I care about him."

"Tell us what you do know about him," prompted Sanborn. "I want to get all the background possible before Bright explains the girl's present predicament. I know a good deal about Dr. Winn and his secretary. If those men are threatening her, there must be something very serious brewing. Go ahead, Dorothy—luncheon will be up here any minute, now."

"All right, but I warn you it isn't much. My mother, who as you know died when I was a little girl, had one sister, my Aunt Edith, who was her twin. They looked so much alike that their own father and mother had trouble in telling them apart. Aunt Edith fell in love with a young Irishman named Michael Jordan, whom she met at a dance. He seemed prosperous, and my grandfather gave his consent to their engagement. Then he learned that Michael Jordan made his money by selling arms and ammunition to South and Central American revolutionists. Grandpa, from all accounts, hit the ceiling. He was a deacon of the church, very sedate and all that, and he said he wouldn't allow his daughter to marry a gun-runner. And that was that. To make a long story short, Aunt Edith ran away with Michael Jordan. They were married in New York, sent Grandpa a copy of the marriage certificate, and then sailed for South America. For several years there was no word from them at all. My mother, whose name was Janet, by the way, loved Aunt Edith as only a twin can love the other. But she couldn't write to her because the eloping couple had left no address. Six years later, mother had a letter from Uncle Michael. He was in Chicago then, and he wrote that Aunt Edith had died, and that he had placed little Janet at the Pence School in Evanston. Mother and Daddy went right out to Chicago, to see Uncle Michael. They tried to get him to let them take Janet home with them, and bring her up with me. I was only three at the time, so naturally I don't remember anything about it. But what I'm telling you Daddy told to me years later. Well, their trip to Chicago was all for nothing—Uncle Michael refused to let them have Janet. It almost broke my mother's heart. Well, and that is the reason Janet and I have always given each other presents at Christmas and on our birthdays, although we've never even met. Two years ago, she sent me her photograph, and both Daddy and I were astounded to see the resemblance to me. Twice, since then, I've been taken for Janet by girls who were at school with her at Evanston. Perhaps, if we were seen together, you'd be able to tell us apart—I don't know."

"I do, though," declared Howard, "you may be slightly broader across the shoulders, Dorothy, but otherwise you might be Janet, sitting there. You've the same brown hair, grey eyes, your features are alike—"

"How about our voices?"

"Exactly the same. You have a more forceful way of speaking, that's all. I keep wanting to call you 'Janet' all the time." Howard turned his head away, and Dorothy could see the emotion that again overtook him as he thought of his helpless little fiancée, a prisoner in the hands of unscrupulous men.

She glanced at Bill, and shook her head in sympathy. Just then there came a knock on the sitting room door.

"Ah! lunch at last!" Ashton Sanborn rose and put his hand on Howard's shoulder. "Come, no more

of this now. The subject of the double cousins is taboo until we've all done justice to this excellent meal!"

THE SLEEPWALKER

"Mr. Sanborn," said Dorothy, "when you're tired of fathoming mysteries for people, come out to New Canaan and help me order meals. That was the most scrumptious lunch I've had in a month of Sundays." She dropped a lump of sugar in her demitasse and threw her host a bright smile across the table.

"Thank you, my dear," the detective smiled back. "I may take you up on that one of these days. But speaking of mysteries reminds me that now the waiter is gone, it's high time we busied ourselves again with the affairs of Janet Jordan. Now that I understand something of the young lady's background and her family, I want to hear all there is to tell about her present position." He pulled a briar pipe and tobacco pouch out of his pocket and commenced to fill the one with the contents of the other. "All ready, Howard. Start at the beginning and don't skimp on details—they may be and they generally are important."

"Very well, sir. I'll begin with a week ago today." Howard pushed his chair away from the table, thrust his hands into trouser pockets and jumped into his story. "Janet had a date to meet me last Thursday at two p. m. at the Strand. We intended to take in a movie—but she never showed up."

"Then you aren't a business man—?" This from the detective.

"Oh, but I am—a mining engineer, Mr. Sanborn. With the Tuthill Corporation. But I am free on Thursday afternoons, instead of Saturday. It is more convenient for the office staff."

"Hasn't your concern large mining concessions in Peru?"

"It has, sir—silver mines. To make matters worse—but no—I'll tell it this way. I particularly wanted to meet Janet last Thursday, because I had been told the day before by the head of our New York office that I was to be transferred to Lima, Peru. The boat that I'm scheduled to sail on, leaves this coming Saturday. I was fearfully pepped up about it. I'm going down there as assistant manager of our Lima office, the job carries a considerable increase in salary, and, if I make good, a fine future with the firm. My plan was to get Janet to marry me, with or without her father's consent, and to take her to Lima with me. I couldn't bear to think of leaving her to the kind of existence she'd had before I'd known her—and with no way of correspondence—Well, I waited for over an hour in the lobby of the theatre but she didn't come. At last I went up to my apartment."

"Why didn't you phone her?" asked Dorothy, who was nothing if not direct.

"Because Janet had asked me never to do that. She said if her father knew she had a boy friend, he'd pack her off somewhere, and we'd never be able to meet again."

"Nice papa—I don't think!" observed Bill Bolton.

"No comments now, please," said Sanborn. "Go on, Howard. If you couldn't talk to Janet, how did you find out that she was a prisoner?"

Howard smiled. "But we *were* able to talk to each other, Mr. Sanborn. About the time we became engaged, I fixed that. My small flat is on the ninth floor of the building, the Jordans' on the seventh. My three rooms have windows on an air shaft. The Jordans' back bedroom and bath overlook the same airshaft and are directly opposite my sitting room, two flights below. The shaft is only twenty feet wide, so I bought one of those headphone sets that are used in airplanes for conversation between the cockpits of a plane while it is being flown. I lengthened the wires of course, and got a long, collapsible pole. After dark, Janet would come to her window, I'd pass her headphone set down to her, hooked on to the end of the pole, and we would hold long conversations across the court without anybody being the wiser. When we were through talking, I'd pass the pole over to her and draw it back when she'd attached her headset."

"By Jingo!" cried Bill. "I'll say that's clever!"

"It sure is, Howard!" Dorothy was quite as enthusiastic. "You certainly deserve to get Janet after that."

Howard shook his head. "We'll have to do something really clever to get her away from the bunch who are holding her prisoner. Well,—as I say, when I got to my flat, I sat down by my sitting room window, and pretended to read a book. In reality, of course, I was watching Janet's window. Presently she appeared. Even at that distance, I could see that she had been crying. She held up a slate, for we never dared to use the headphones in the day time, and slates are a good medium for short messages. On it she had written, '*After dark.*' Well, that was one of the longest afternoons I'd ever put in. About five-thirty, she came back to her window and I passed over the headgear. When I heard her story, I went half crazy, and I guess I've been pretty much that way ever since."

"You see, Mr. Sanborn, Janet has told me that occasionally she walks in her sleep, especially when she isn't feeling very well. The evening before, that was a week ago Wednesday night, she had a headache and went to bed early. When she awoke, she was terrified to find herself seated on the floor of their living room, behind a large Chinese screen. There seemed to be seven or eight men in the room, including her father. Of course, she could not see them, but she could hear every word they said. By the clock on the wall above her head, she saw that it was one in the morning. She soon realized that this was a meeting of the heads of some large society or organization and that these men had come there from all parts of the world. There was an air of mystery about them and their

talk. No names were mentioned but they addressed each other by number. Mr. Jordan was Number 5; Number 2, who spoke with a foreign accent, was evidently conducting the meeting, in place of the absent Number 1, whom they all seemed to hold in great awe. Janet realized that she must have entered the room before the meeting started, while she was still asleep. She saw that so long as the meeting lasted, there would be no way of escape. Gradually she became terrified at her predicament, and—

“Just a moment,” interrupted Ashton Sanborn. “Has Janet ever told you anything of her father’s business?”

“She really knows nothing about it, Mr. Sanborn. I asked her myself some time ago, and she said then, except that he seemed to travel a lot, she hadn’t the slightest idea what he did for a living. Once when she asked him outright what it was, Mr. Jordan flew into a rage. He said it was his own affair, and that so long as it brought them in enough money to live comfortably, he did not wish her to bring up the matter again. The one thing she does know is that he doesn’t go regularly to an office. Men frequently come to see him at the apartment, but their conversations are invariably held behind locked doors.”

“I see. Go on now, with Janet and the meeting.”

“Well, sir, as I’ve said, she was behind that screen, listening to what the men said—and in fact, she couldn’t help listening. Not that she understood much of what they were saying. Number 2 made a long speech and the gist of it was that now they were agreed upon the use of Formula X, the demonstration (whatever that was) must be made in their respective sectors at the same time on the same day. He also proposed that Number 5 (Janet’s father) interview Number 1 and learn from him when the demonstrations should be made. This motion was carried unanimously. Then Number 3 asked the chairman if they could not in future hold their meeting in some safer place than the Jordans’ apartment. ‘For all we know,’ he said, ‘someone may be secreted behind that screen!’ Mr. Jordan laughed at this, and told Number 3 to close up the screen if it made him nervous. So the first thing Janet knew, the screen was dragged aside and she was staring into the face of a Chinaman. Seated in a circle behind him were the others, her father among them.”

“Gosh!” exclaimed Dorothy. “I’ll bet that scared the poor kid silly.”

“It did,” admitted Howard. “She was absolutely petrified. And then there was the dickens to pay. All the men started talking at once. The Chinaman pulled a revolver and pointed it straight at her, yelling that she had heard their secrets and must be immediately executed!”

“‘She has heard nothing!’ her father told them. ‘She frequently walks in her sleep. She was asleep when she wandered in here before the meeting, and she is sleeping now—look!’ Then he lit a match and held the flame before Janet’s eyes. ‘You see,’ he said, ‘she doesn’t even blink. Janet has heard nothing, gentlemen.’”

“Of course Janet had taken her father’s hint, and followed it. She knew that he was doing the only thing he could to save her life, so she kept right on staring in front of her without moving, while the Chinaman held the automatic within a foot of her head. But the strain she was under nearly broke her nerve. She knew that the slightest sign on her part that she was conscious would mean a bullet through her brain. A furious argument followed. Most of the men—there were eight of them including Mr. Jordan—wanted her put out of the way at once. But at last, her father and Number 2, a big man with a long beard who seemed to be more humane than the rest, prevailed upon them to let him lead her back to her bed. Her father was forbidden to hold any intercourse with her whatsoever. She was locked in her bedroom, afraid even to cry, for fear she would be heard, and not knowing what moment the door would open and they would drag her to her death.”

“Horrible!” Mr. Sanborn’s pipe had gone out but he didn’t seem to notice it. “That experience was enough to un hinge a person’s mind. Janet may be shy and retiring, but she evidently doesn’t lack grit. By the way, did she say she recognized any of the men at the meeting?”

“No. She said that without exception she was sure she’d never seen any of them before, although they were all on good terms with her father. Each one seemed to be of a different nationality. One was a black man who wore a turban—an East Indian, probably. Another, also pretty dark, wore a red fez. The others were apparently Europeans, but as they all spoke English together she had no way of guessing what they were. Number 2, the man with the long brown beard, she thought might be a Scandinavian. She was sure, though, that her father was the only American or Anglo-Saxon in the group.”

“Tell us what happened next morning,” proposed Dorothy. Her coffee, now cold, remained untasted in the cup.

“I’m getting to that. At eight o’clock her door was unlocked and a woman, a stranger to her, came into her bedroom with a breakfast tray. She put the tray on a table and went into the bathroom and turned on the water for Janet’s bath, then left the room and locked the door after her. At nine this same woman came back, brought some books and magazines to her, made up the bed and put the room straight. Whenever Janet spoke to her, she shook her head and put her finger to her lips. But Janet said that even now she doesn’t know whether the woman is actually dumb or only acting under orders. She has brought and taken away her meals ever since, but she has never been able to get her to speak.”

“But how did she find out about going to Dr. Winn’s house?” asked Bill Bolton, who had shown an interest quite as keen as Dorothy’s or Sanborn’s.

Howard Bright drank a glass of water. “I’m getting to that part now,” he explained. “I’m not much of a story teller and I seem to be taking an awful time to get through this one—but I’m doing my

best just the same.”

“Of course you are!” Dorothy motioned Bill to keep quiet. “You’re doing noble, Howard! Pay no attention to that goof over there.”

“O.K., Dorothy.” Howard replaced his empty glass on the table. “At about noon of the first day of Janet’s imprisonment in her room, the door was unlocked and Mr. Lawson came in. She knew him as a friend of her father’s who had dined with them two or three times. She had always thought him quite a jolly sort of chap and knew that he was private secretary to Dr. Winn, the celebrated chemist. Naturally, she felt rather relieved to see him, and she opened up on him at once. She still felt that her only hope for life and freedom was to pretend absolute ignorance of the happenings of the night before. And she managed to keep up that pretense before Lawson, though what he had to do with the affair she hadn’t any idea, nor does she yet know where he comes into the picture. Anyway, he wasn’t at the meeting. She let him know, though, that she was very indignant and astonished to find herself kept a prisoner, and demanded to see her father. Lawson, she told me, was most affable and kind to her. He said that she of course did not realize that she had been very ill during the night and that she was now under doctor’s orders. He also told her that her father had been called away on business, so he had come to her as an old friend of the family, to be of any help that he could. Janet said that his sympathy almost undermined her suspicion—she almost confided in him. But luckily, she didn’t. He has been to see her every day since, and she is now convinced that his part in this devilish scheme is to gain her confidence, and to find out whether she actually did hear or see anything at the meeting. Yesterday he told her that it had been decided she should visit him and his wife at Dr. Winn’s house while her father is away, and that in order to occupy her mind, she should act as secretary to Mrs. Lawson, who assists Dr. Winn in his work.”

“Maybe they don’t really mean to harm her after all,” said Dorothy hopefully.

“Janet is certain,” said Howard, “that they want her at the Doctor’s for close observation. She took a secretarial course at school, so that part of it is all right, but I believe with her that one slip, one sign that she is deceiving them, will mean that she will simply vanish and never be heard of again. She knows that Lawson lied about one thing: her father is still living in their flat. She has heard his voice several times.”

“But what I can’t understand,” said Dorothy, “is why, just as soon as you knew all this, you didn’t go to the nearest police station and have that flat raided!”

“Because, Janet won’t hear of it.” Howard’s tone was thoroughly wretched. “I worked out some other plans to release her, but she refuses to budge.”

“Is the girl crazy?” This from Bill.

“No—she’s as sane as any of us—maybe saner. She says that if the police are called in or I help her to escape, that crew will believe her father knew all the time that she was faking—as of course he does. And she says she is sure they will have him killed out of hand, once they discover that. To make matters worse, if possible, my firm thinks I’m going to sail for Lima the day after tomorrow! If I turn them down, I’ll lose my job here and ruin my future. I’ve been hoping against hope that something would turn up so Janet could sail with me. I certainly shall not sail without her. I was buying some clothes for the trip when I ran into you this morning—” Howard’s voice trailed off hopelessly.

“Gee!” It was evident that Dorothy was not far from tears. “You poor dears are in an awful fix! I do wish I could help you. Do *something*—so that you two could get married and sail for Peru!”

“Perhaps you can.” Ashton Sanborn knocked the ashes from his pipe into an ash tray.

“*How?*” shouted three voices simultaneously.

Chapter IV

MEET FLASH!

"Dorothy, have you ever done anything in the way of amateur theatricals?" Ashton Sanborn stroked the bowl of his pipe reflectively.

"Why—er—yes, a little." She looked a bit bewildered. "I've been in the Silvermine Sillies for the past two years."

Sanborn nodded. "How is it you're out of school on a Thursday?" The question seemed irrelevant. He was leaning back in his chair now, surveying the ceiling rather absently, but there was nothing lackadaisical about his crisp tones.

"Christmas holidays. Why?"

"Because, if you're willing, I may want you to work for me for a few days. I suppose I can reach your father by telephone at the New Canaan bank?"

"No, you can't—Daddy is down in Florida on a fishing trip. He's on Mr. Bolton's yacht, somewhere off the coast. They won't be back until Christmas Eve."

"That," said the Secret Service man, "complicates matters. Who, may I ask, is looking after Miss Dixon while Mr. Dixon is away?"

"I'm looking after my own sweet self, sir." Dorothy grinned roguishly.

"Then who is to take the responsibility for your actions, young lady?"

"Why, you may—if you want to!"

For a moment or two the detective studied her thoughtfully. There was a certain assurance about this girl's manner, a steely quality that came sometimes into her grey eyes, an indefinable air of strength and quiet courage—

"Do you think you could impersonate your cousin, Dorothy?"

"Why—of course!" Dorothy showed her surprise. "We look exactly alike. Didn't Howard take me for Janet?"

"He did—but from what he has told us about her, your natures are entirely different. Janet, from all accounts, is a rather meek and demure young lady. Remember, that in order to convince anyone who knows her you would have to submerge your own personality in hers. And nobody would ever describe *you* as a meek, demure young lady!"

"An untamed wildcat—if you ask me," chuckled Bill.

"Why, thanks a lot, William!" Dorothy's hearers were abruptly aware of the changed quality of her voice as she continued to speak in melting tones of pained acceptance. "But nobody *did* ask you, darling, so in future when your betters are conversing, be good enough to button up that lip of yours!" She finished her withering tirade in the same quiet tones and with a positively shrinking demeanor that sent the others into shouts of laughter.

"Say, you're Janet to a T!" cried Howard. "Her voice is always like that if I happen to hurt her feelings."

"How about her hair, Howard? Is it long or short?"

"Oh, she wears it bobbed like yours."

"I suppose," Dorothy said to Mr. Sanborn, "that you want to smuggle me into the flat and have me change places with her?"

"That's the idea exactly," admitted the detective. "And I don't want you to make your decision until I explain my plan in detail—or, rather, the necessity for the risk you will be taking."

"Shoot—" said Miss Dixon, "but I can tell you right now, risk or no risk, I'm going through with it. Janet, after all she's been through and from what Howard has told us, is bound to flop once she gets to Dr. Winn's. Nervous, and probably high strung, the chances are against her being able to hold up under the strain."

"I think you are right about that. But although Janet is in serious danger, she could be rescued and her father guarded without bringing you into the picture, Dorothy, if it were not for one thing. These men who hold Janet in their custody are in some way mixed up with Dr. Winn, who has undertaken to make some very important experiments for the United States government."

"I make a bet that he is Number 1 of the gang!" ventured Bill, the irrepressible.

"Very possibly. That has yet to be discovered. But what I want you young people to realize is that this is no ordinary gang. Quite evidently we are up against an international organization. Their treatment of Janet is concrete evidence of their cold-blooded ruthlessness when they believe their plans to be in jeopardy. If you take your cousin's place, Dorothy, of course we will see that you are well guarded, but even so, your part in clearing up this mystery will entail a very great element of risk."

"I'm willing to take the chance." Dorothy met his inquiring eyes steadily. "Naturally, I'm sorry for Janet and I want to help her. The only thing is, I've got to be back at High School by January

fourth."

"I think I can promise you that this job will be cleaned up within a week."

"I reckon," smiled Bill, "that you haven't told us all you know about these lads with numbers instead of names."

"Not quite all." Sanborn smiled back at him. "But that is neither here nor there just now. By the way, Dorothy, how are you on shorthand and typewriting?"

"Oh, not so worse. It's part of the course I'm taking at New Canaan High."

"Good enough. Frankly, young lady, I would not consider using you, had not the New Canaan Bank robbery, the affair of the Mystery Plane and the Conway Case proved conclusively that you have a decided flair for this kind of thing."

"Thank you, sir," said Miss Dixon with mock coyness. "Them kind words is a great comfort to a poor workin' goil. Do I pack a gat wid me, Mister?"

"You do not. In fact, you will take nothing except what belongs to your cousin. If I am able to get you into the Jordan flat and they carry you up to Ridgefield in her place, just being Janet Jordan, who never woke up when she was sleepwalking last week will be your best protection. Of course, I'm not deserting you. Either I or some of my men will find means of keeping in touch with you constantly."

"And when the villains scrag me, the secret service boys will arrive on the scene just in time—to identify the deceased! No thank you. If the gun is out of orders, Flash will have to go. Of course my jiu jitsu may help at a pinch, but Flash is more potent and ever so much quicker."

"What are you talking about, Dorothy?" Ashton Sanborn looked puzzled.

"It's a cinch you can't drag a dog along if that's your big idea," declared Bill.

"It is not the big idea, old thing." Dorothy grinned wickedly. "Flash and I have got very clubby this fall. He's really quite a dear, you know. We travel about together a lot."

"The mystery of this age," observed Bill, "is how certain females can talk so much and say so little."

"Then," said Dorothy cheerfully, "I'll let you solve the mystery right now. Catch!" She tossed him a macaroon from a plate on the table. "Go over to that bedroom door," she commanded. "Stand to one side of the door and throw that thing into the air."

"But, I say, Dorothy!" interposed Ashton Sanborn. "This is no time for fooling, we've got—"

"This is not fooling, you dear old fuss-budget," she cut in. "It's—well, it's just something that may save you from worrying so much about me. Now, Bill, are you ready?"

"Anything to please the ladies," retorted that young man wearily. He got up and walked to the far end of the room and took his stand beside the closed door. "Is Flash a cake hound? Will he jump for the cookie?"

"He sure will—toss it in the air."

The small cake went spinning toward the ceiling, and at the same instant Dorothy's right hand disappeared under the table. With the speed of legerdemain she brought it into view again and her arm shot out suddenly like a signpost across the white cloth. There was a streak of silver light—and the three male members of the quartet stared at the bedroom door in open-mouthed wonder. Quivering in the very center of its upper panel was a small knife, and impaled on the knife's blade was the macaroon.

"Meet Flash!" said Dorothy.

"Great suffering snakes!" exploded Bill, plucking out the blade, and examining it. "The thing's a throwing knife."

"Six inches of razor-keen, leaf-shaped blade," said Dorothy, "and three inches of carved ivory hilt, beautifully balanced—that's Flash. How do you like him, fellers?"

"You," declared Howard, who was still goggle-eyed with surprise, "you are the most amazing girl I've ever met, Dorothy!"

"And you don't know the half of it," said Bill with unstinted fervor.

"Think I can take care of myself at a pinch, Uncle Sanborn?" Dorothy was laughing at the expression of astonishment on the detective's face.

"You win, young lady." He chuckled softly. "After this I'll keep my worries for Doctor Winn and his friends. Who'd have thought you had anything like that up your sleeve!"

"Not up my sleeve, old dear. A little leather sheath strapped just above my left knee is where Flash came from."

"Regular Jesse James stuff, eh?" remarked Bill as he handed back the knife.

"Oh, yeah?" Flash disappeared as quickly as he'd come, and Dorothy stood up. "What's on the boards, now, boss?" she asked sweetly.

"Howard—" said Ashton Sanborn, "will you let me have the key to that apartment of yours? Thanks. Bill and I will need it this afternoon, and even if things go according to Hoyle, we'll be powerful busy. In the meantime, I've got a job for you and Dorothy." He took out his pocketbook and extracting a sheaf of bills, handed them to the girl.

"You and Howard are going to have a busy afternoon, too. See that you're back here in time for dinner at seven, and—"

"But what under the sky-blue canopy is all this?" Dorothy was thumbing the bills, counting them. "Why, I've never seen so much money—"

"Use it to buy your cousin a trousseau. Have the things sent to Mrs. Howard Bright's apartment at this hotel. And remember, that when she arrives here, Janet will have nothing but the clothes she is wearing. You don't mind doing this, do you?"

"Mind! Why, I'll love it!" Dorothy turned a dazzling smile on Howard, who was simply tongue-tied by the detective's announcement. "Isn't he swell, Howard? Isn't he some guy?"

Ashton Sanborn laughed. "Don't thank me. Uncle Sam is paying, so you needn't bring back any change."

Dorothy thrust the money into her purse. "Don't worry, old bean, I won't. So long, you two. Come on, Howard, we're going to have a beautiful afternoon!" She caught young Bright by the arm and whirled him across the room to the coat-rack. She jammed a bright green beret over her right ear and slung her leopard-cat coat onto her shoulders. "All set for Fifth Avenue!" she called out merrily as she preceded Howard out of the room.

Chapter V

ON SECRET SERVICE

To say that Dorothy enjoyed her afternoon's shopping would be putting it mildly. Give any girl plenty of money and tell her to go out and buy an entire trousseau for herself—or even for somebody else—and watch her jump at the chance!

Howard trailed along in more or less of a daze. This sudden change in his outlook; being drawn from the depths of despondency to the hope of a future with the girl he loved, and all in the space of a couple of hours, was a little too much for him to realize at once. Ever after, he had but a hazy recollection of that shopping tour. The afternoon seemed but a whirling maze of lingerie, stockings, street dresses, party frocks, coats, hats, shoes and accessories, upon which his advice was invariably asked, and never taken.

They were bowling hotelwards in a taxi, jammed with cardboard boxes and packages of various shapes and sizes, before he returned to normal.

"Whew!" he looked at Dorothy. "I should think you'd be dead!"

She shook her head and laughed. "No girl ever gets tired of shopping," she told him gaily. "Wait till you're married—you'll find out."

"But what's the idea of bringing all these things back with us? I thought Mr. Sanborn said to have them sent."

"He did—but I have a better idea. This is part of it. I'll tell you all about it when we get to the hotel. Keep still now—I want to go over the lists and see if I've forgotten anything!"

Howard sighed in resignation.

At the hotel desk they learned that Ashton Sanborn had not returned as yet, but had left word that they should go to his rooms. With the assistance of three bellboys, they piled themselves and their packages into the elevator.

"Gee! This looks like the night before Christmas!" Howard dropped his hat and overcoat and stared at the boxes and bundles piled along the wall of the sitting room. "Janet certainly will be surprised when she sees all those things!"

Dorothy pulled off her close-fitting little hat, and tossed it with her purse and coat onto the table. Then she sank into an easy-chair. "Well, I only hope she'll approve. My, this was a strenuous afternoon. You'd better sit down."

Howard followed her advice. "You said it. But I know Janet—she'll be crazy about the things you've bought."

"Oh, you boys are all alike." Dorothy yawned unashamedly.

"I don't get you."

"What I mean is that as soon as a fellow goes round with a girl for a while, he invariably says 'Oh yes, she'll like this,' or, 'she won't like that'."

"And—?"

"Ninety-nine times out of a hundred you guess wrong."

"Why?"

"I think it's because girls like to do their own choosing. Especially when it comes to buying clothes. Well, anyway, I think the things are darling, and they'll be becoming, too. At least they look well on me."

"Don't worry—those clothes will make her look like a million dollars."

"I know they will. I'm tired, I guess." Dorothy yawned again and closed her eyes.

Howard started to say something, thought better of it, yawned, and let his head pillow itself on the soft upholstery.

Three quarters of an hour later, Ashton Sanborn and Bill Bolton marched into the room to find the two shoppers sound asleep in their respective chairs. The detective coughed discreetly and both the young people awoke.

"I see that you've brought your spoils back with you," he smiled, pointing to the boxes and bundles. Dorothy stared at him, only half awake, then sat upright in her chair as she realized where she was.

"Looks to me," said Bill, getting out of his overcoat, "as if she thought Janet was going to start a shop of her own. Why did you cart all the stuff back here instead of having it sent?"

"Because, Mr. Inquisitive—well, just because. You and Howard run along now and prepare your handsome selves for dinner. The principles of this piece are going into conference now."

"My *word*—" began Bill, but at a shake of the head from Sanborn, he took the still drowsy Howard by the arm and together they disappeared into the bedroom.

"Pretty tough time you've had, I expect?" Mr. Sanborn's eyes twinkled, though his tone was grave.

"Oh, but it was lots of fun," cried Dorothy. "Thanks to Uncle Sam, and Uncle Sanborn! And look

here, I've got a great idea."

"Which has to do with your bringing back the packages yourself?"

"Quite right, it has. Do you think those boys can hear what we're saying?"

"I doubt it, Dorothy—but Bill, as you probably guessed at the end of the affair of the Winged Cartwheels, is a full-fledged member of my organization and—"

"Oh, I don't mind Bill," she interrupted in a low tone. "But Howard mustn't get wind of it. He might make a fuss."

She rose from her chair and going over to the detective, began to whisper in his ear.

"But that's impossible, Dorothy!" he protested, although he allowed a smile to come to his eyes. "And what's more, my dear, I'm afraid it would be illegal."

"Oh, no, it wouldn't! Not if you—" And again she brought her lips close to his ear.

"You're a young scamp!" he laughed as she ended. "But—well—you're doing a great deal for me, so —"

"So you'll go downstairs and start telephoning right away!" she prompted eagerly.

Ashton Sanborn held up his hands in mock despair. "Nieces," he declared, "should not badger hard-working old uncles. But since this niece has been a good girl today, Uncle will do as he's asked."

"I shall never call you anything else but Uncle Sanborn, now," Dorothy cried delightedly.

"Thanks, my child, and I'll do my best for you."

"Angel uncles can do no more," she laughed.

"Right-o. I'll be on my way, then. Come along in about fifteen minutes with Bill and Howard. I'll arrange for a table for dinner and meet you three in Peacock Alley." The detective caught up his hat and hurried out of the room.

Although Mr. Sanborn was a perfect host, and did all he could to make that dinner entertaining, he confessed later that he would always consider it one of the few failures of an otherwise unblemished career.

Notwithstanding the delicious food, the charm and beauty of the huge room with its lights and music and scores of well-dressed men and beautifully gowned women, the dinner was not a success. All three of the young people were too excited by thoughts of what would happen later to do justice to the meal. Dorothy, moreover, had the added annoyance of feeling that her tailored frock, smart enough for luncheon or shopping, was definitely not the thing to wear at dinner in a fashionable hotel. Each endeavored to be sprightly and at ease. But since they knew that the one thing they wanted to talk about was forbidden in public, conversation flagged. Upstairs at last in Mr. Sanborn's sitting room, he came directly to the point.

"Now I know you're just rearing to go," he said. "And perhaps the sooner we get under way, the better." He turned to Bill. "You go ahead with Howard," he ordered. "Dorothy and I will follow you in about ten minutes. Go straight to the apartment. We'll meet you there."

"O and likewise K, boss," Bill returned. "Get into your rubbers, Howard. And don't look so gloomy. You're on your way to meet your best girl, remember."

When they had gone, Dorothy turned at once to the detective. "How about it, Uncle Sanborn?" she asked eagerly.

"To quote Bill, 'O and likewise K,' niece."

"Gee, you *are* a dear!" Dorothy clapped her hands. "And now that that is that—I don't care what happens."

"But I do, Dorothy." Ashton Sanborn was serious. "Listen to me, young lady. From now on you're working for the U. S. government, under me, and I must have my orders obeyed to the letter."

"Yes, sir, I understand." Dorothy's tone was crisp and business-like.

"Good. I let those chaps go ahead of us as there is no need of having us all arrive at that apartment house at the same time. This afternoon, Bill and I made all arrangements, so that you can change places with your cousin shortly after you arrive."

Dorothy felt secretly proud that this keen-eyed secret service man took her at her word, and did not ask her again if she were really willing to go through with it. "May I ask you a question?"

"Certainly."

"Well, suppose that after you manage to get me into Janet's room, she refuses to leave it. Do you want me to force her?"

"Heavens, no." Sanborn laughed. "That has all been taken care of, Dorothy. I talked to your cousin by means of Howard's headphone set shortly after dark this afternoon. I explained the whole thing to her and when she understood that her father would be brought into no extra danger because of our plan, and that I had drafted you into becoming a secret service operative, she consented."

"I'm glad of that," said Dorothy fervently. "She could easily have misunderstood and spoiled everything."

"Well, we'll have a lot to do to put it over, even though Janet is willing. I persuaded her that by

doing exactly what you told her, once you arrived, she would be serving her country like a loyal American. You, of course, will use your own judgment, when you see her. The principal thing is to change clothes and get her out the way you came just as soon as possible."

"But how am I to get into the Jordans' apartment?"

"Good soldiers, Dorothy, do not ask questions. There's no secret about it, but I've other things to tell you now. Lawson will probably come for you—or for Janet, as he will believe you to be. He is a tall, slender man, about thirty, rather good-looking, dark curly hair and a small mustache. Your Uncle Michael, if you should run into him, is heavy set and rather short. He has reddish hair, turning grey, and is clean shaven. Janet has never met either Doctor Winn, or Mrs. Lawson. Now just a word about the lady. She is a very beautiful and a very clever woman. Be on your guard with her, continually. I believe that the principal reason that you, or rather, Janet Jordan, will be taken to Ridgefield, is so that you may be studied at first hand by this woman. There is no need for me to tell you to keep up the Janet personality day and night. Incidentally, you will have only a very short time to study your cousin, so make the most of it. Well," he concluded, "I guess that's about all. You will receive further orders within the next day or two. In the meantime, simply carry on as Janet Jordan. I am taking a great responsibility in letting you go, my dear. For I won't hide the fact that you'd probably be safer in a den of rattlesnakes than in the same house with Mr. and Mrs. Lawson."

"I'm not afraid, you know," said Dorothy simply and smiled up at him.

"I know you're not. But it would really be better if you were. For then you'd be much more careful, and you must watch your step every minute until I get you out of it. Here's your coat. Slip into it and we'll get going. The sooner I get you safely into Janet's room, and that young lady out of it, the easier will your Uncle Sanborn feel."

Chapter VI

WHO'S WHO?

The December evening was cold and wet as Dorothy and Ashton Sanborn crossed the sidewalk and entered their taxi-cab. The day had been a dreary one, and now a dense, drizzling fog lay low upon the great city. Dun-colored clouds drooped over a muddy Park Avenue as they were swept up town. On the side streets the electric lights were but misty splotches of diffused light which threw feeble circular glimmers upon the slimy pavements. The yellow glare from shopwindows streamed out into the chill, vaporous air, and threw a murky, shifting radiance across the crowded thoroughfare. To Dorothy there was something eerie and ghostlike in the endless procession of faces which flitted across these narrow bars of light. She was not in any respect a timid girl, but the dull, heavy evening, and the prospect of the strange venture in which they were engaged, combined to make her feel nervous and depressed.

At 59th street the taxi turned west and rolled steadily along the shining black asphalt, stopping now and then for the red lights. They crossed 5th Avenue and swung into Central Park. Dorothy caught glimpses of the gaunt shapes of trees in silhouette against the cold fog. She closed her eyes and resolutely turned her thoughts to the events of the afternoon.

So engrossed had she become in the contemplation of her delightful buying orgy that she was surprised when their cab pulled up with a jerk and Ashton Sanborn opened the door.

"Muffle up in your fur collar, Dorothy," he said. "The fewer people who see your face, the better."

Now that the ordeal had arrived, Dorothy's nervousness vanished. She buried the lower part of her face in the soft fur collar and walked at Mr. Sanborn's side into the lobby of the apartment house.

A darkey in brass buttoned uniform stood by the elevator. Two shining rows of white teeth flashed in a smile of greeting for the detective.

"All the way up, George." Mr. Sanborn gave the order as the car started upward.

"Yaas, suh, boss, I understand." George smiled again, and presently the elevator stopped.

With Mr. Sanborn in the lead, Dorothy walked along a corridor and up a narrow flight of stairs. The detective opened a door at the top and the damp cold of the night swept in upon them. A moment later they were crossing the flat roof of the apartment house toward a small group who stood near the parapet at the roof's edge. As they drew nearer, she saw that the group awaiting them was composed of Bill Bolton, Howard, and a stranger. They were standing beside a small crane.

The secret service man nodded a greeting and turned to Dorothy. "We are directly above Janet's window, which is three flights below," he said quietly, and glanced at the luminous dial of his wrist-watch.

"And you're going to let me down with the auto-crane?" she asked with just a tremor of excitement in her voice.

"That's the idea. It's perfectly safe. Bill tested it this afternoon."

Dorothy gave a little laugh. "Oh, I'm not scared, Uncle Sanborn."

"I know you aren't, my dear."

"When do I take off?"

"Whenever you're ready."

"All set now, then, please."

"Good. You'll go in a minute. Here are last instructions. You will seat yourself in that swinging seat that Bill is holding. The cable to which it is attached runs through the pulley at the end of the crane's arm. This building is nine stories high. The Jordans' flat is on the seventh floor, you remember, so Janet's window is the third one down." He moved to the low parapet and leaned over. "The window is dark, so everything is O.K.," he said, coming back to her. "Pull your seat in with you when you enter, Dorothy, and pull down the shade, of course, when the light is turned on. When Janet is ready, switch off the light again and have her give a couple of pulls on this guide rope." He placed the rope in her hand. "Then we will hoist her up. Ready for your hop now?"

"Yes, thanks."

"Good luck, then. And remember that although you may not see us, I or some of my men will be near you all the time."

Dorothy shook hands with her three friends and stepped into her swinging seat. She sat down, steadying herself with a grip on the cable.

"All serene?" asked Bill.

"Shove off!" said Dorothy.

Bill motioned to the stranger, there came the low whir of an electric motor. Her feet left the roof and she felt herself swung upward. Then the ascent stopped, the arm of the crane swung outward and with it her pendant seat. Her feet cleared the parapet and she was over the narrow airshaft.

Blurred lights from closed windows of the various apartments gave her a glimpse of many empty ashcans in the small courtyard far below. But the crane was lowering her now close to the wall of

the building. She was facing the wall, and looking upward she made out four heads leaning over the parapet at the edge of the roof.

The descent was slow, but at last she passed two windows and came to rest beside the third, whose lower sash she saw was open. Then two arms caught her about the knees and she was pulled into the room.

"Dorothy—oh, Dorothy!" sobbed an excited voice so like her own that Dorothy gave a start.

"Well, here I am, Janet." It was a prosaic reply, but her own heart was beating quickly, nevertheless. "Gee, it's dark in here! Be a dear and shut down the window on this cable—and draw the shade, then turn on the light. I'm busy getting out of this thing."

She heard the window and shade come down with a rush. As she stepped free of her conveyance, the lights flashed on, and the cousins flew into each other's arms.

"Janet!"

"Dorothy!"

For a long moment the girls hugged each other and Janet, the more over-wrought, sobbed on her cousin's shoulder.

Dorothy was herself deeply touched, but managed to control her feelings. "Come, dear," she said at last. "We'll just have to get going, I guess. They're waiting for you on the roof—and somebody is likely to come to the door. We mustn't be caught together, you know."

"I know it." Janet released her and again Dorothy gasped, for she heard her own voice speaking although the words came from Janet.

"Look, Dorothy!" Janet pointed to a long mirror in the corner of the room. "I knew that we were a lot alike, but I never could have believed—"

"Well, talk about two peas in a pod!" In the glass Dorothy saw herself standing beside her cousin; and had it not been that she wore a coat and hat, while Janet was dressed in a wine-colored silk frock, she would have had difficulty in knowing which was her own reflection. "Maybe I'm half an inch taller, or hardly that," she said after a bit. "Lucky we both have had our hair shingled. You wear a bang, though—but that's easily fixed."

She whipped off her small hat and went over to the dressing table where she picked up a pair of nail scissors. Two minutes of snipping and Janet's bang was duplicated on her own forehead. The hair she had cut off had been carefully placed on a magazine cover and opening the window a trifle she dropped the ends into the night.

"Now," she said, closing the window. "You and I had better change clothes, Janet. And we'll have to make it snappy."

"Yes—and oh dear—" Janet was slipping off her dress—"I've got so much to talk about. You can't realize what a horrible time I've had—and then to find you, only to lose you again!" Janet was very near to tears.

"But you won't lose me long," Dorothy flashed her a comforting smile as she got out of her own dress. "Meanwhile, you'll have Howard. He's waiting on the roof, now. And Ashton Sanborn says he can clear up this business in a few days."

"You certainly are wonderfully brave to do this for me," sighed her cousin. "If Mr. Sanborn hadn't insisted that by changing places with you I'd be really helping the government, I couldn't allow you to do it. As it is, I feel I'm cowardly to go through with it—"

"Why, you're nothing of the sort," Dorothy protested. While Janet talked and they both undressed, she watched her cousin's mannerisms, storing away in her memory, for future use, every gesture, and inflection of the voice so like her own.

"Who's who?" she giggled, and now her tone was softer, an exact duplication of Janet's manner of speaking.

Her cousin smiled. "In our undies," she admitted, "even I am beginning to wonder if I'm not seeing double and talking to myself. How about shoes and stockings, Dorothy?"

"Chuck 'em over, Janet, we'd better do it up right. I sp'ose most of your things are packed in that wardrobe trunk over there?"

"Yes. I packed it this afternoon. You'll find some handkerchiefs and gloves in the top bureau drawer. I left the trunk open on purpose. When Mr. Lawson comes, you might be putting them in—it would help to make things natural."

"Right you are—that's a good idea."

"My arctics and my hat and coat are in the closet. Your coat is much better looking than mine. It's a shame to take it from you."

"What's a coat between cousins who love each other?" laughed Dorothy and put on Janet's dress.

A few minutes later, the change of clothing had been made, and the girls regarded each other in awed wonder.

"I'll bet," Dorothy declared, "that when Howard sees you he'll think I've come back again."

Janet blushed. "Well, he'll soon find out different. But it's a shame to leave you here, darling. If there were *only* some other way!"

"But there isn't. So cut along now, and just remember that this kind of thing is my stuff—I love it."

"Some day I'll make it up to you—if I ever can!"

Dorothy hesitated for a moment, then smiled. "You can do it tonight, if you want to."

"Why—what do you mean?"

"Just follow any suggestions that Mr. Sanborn may make."

"But, what does that—you're hiding something from me!"

"Perhaps I am."

"What is it?"

"Never mind, now."

"But, Dorothy—"

"No time for that, Janet. Get into that swing arrangement with your back to the window."

"All right, but kiss me goodbye, first."

They held each other close for a second. Then as Janet took her place on the seat attached to the steel cable, Dorothy switched off the light.

"I'll—I'll do as you ask, I mean, about Mr. Sanborn," whispered Janet.

"Thanks, darling, I—" began Dorothy, her hand on the window sash ready to raise it. Then suddenly she stopped.

Somebody was unlocking the door into the hall.

Chapter VII

PLAYING A PART

Dorothy ran to the door and caught hold of the knob. "Who's there?" she cried.

"It's I—Martin Lawson, Janet. May I come in?"

"Oh, please, Mr. Lawson, not right now." There was a soft tone of pleading in her voice. "You see, I've been lying down and I'm not quite dressed."

"But I thought I heard you speaking."

"You did." The real Janet, shivering by the window, caught her breath and heard Dorothy's tone sharpen slightly. "To myself. Being cooped up like this for hours on end, I'm glad to hear the sound of my own voice. I often read aloud. But I'll be ready shortly, if you want me."

"All right, then. I'll be back in five minutes. Your father is here and he wants to say goodbye."

The key turned in the lock and with her ear close to the panel Dorothy was sure she could hear the faint tread of footsteps retreating down the hall. With her heart pumping sixty to the second, she dashed back to Janet and carefully raised the window.

"Heavens! that was a narrow squeak—" her cousin whispered shakily. "What nerve you've got! I nearly fainted—"

"Never mind," Dorothy whispered back, "you've got to get out of here—and right now!"

"Oh, but I can't, Dorothy. I'm afraid!"

Dorothy gave the signal rope two savage pulls. Almost immediately the cable began to tighten. "Close your eyes and hang on with both hands," she ordered.

"But Dorothy—I'll scream—I'm going to—I know it!"

"No, you won't!" Quickly Dorothy clasped the frightened girl's fingers around the taut cable. A dive into the pocket of Janet's coat brought forth her own handkerchief which she hurriedly crumpled into a ball and thrust into her cousin's mouth. The seat, with Janet in it, was rising slowly. She caught the paralyzed girl below the knees, steadied her as the crane drew its burden clear of the sill and pushed her carefully into the outer darkness. When Janet's feet were on a level with the upper sash, she pulled down the window and shade and switched on the light again.

"Skies above!" Her breath came in short gasps and she leaned against the end of the bed to steady herself. "Talk about your thrills! That was worse than my first solo hop, by a long shot." She ran her fingers through her short hair. "Let's see—what next? Oh, yes—I was supposed to be lying down."

She caught up a book from the table and tossed it open onto the bed. Then she lay down, rumbled the coverlet, made sure that the pillow showed the impression of her head, and sprang up again. An adventurous past had taught her the need of being thorough.

She went to the window and raising it, looked out and upward. Neither Janet nor the crane were in sight. Thankful that her cousin was safe at last, she pulled down the sash.

Two or three minutes later, when the door was unlocked, the two men who entered surprised her in the business of packing the contents of the top bureau drawer into Janet's wardrobe trunk.

And now came as pretty a piece of acting as has ever been seen upon the stage; acting that Dorothy's audience of two must not realize was acting, and furthermore, one of these men was the father of the girl she impersonated. Why hadn't she remembered to ask Janet what she called that mysterious father of hers? Father, Papa, Dad, Daddy—which should she use? A mistake now would be fatal. Even her uncle must not become aware of her real identity. There was no time for hesitating. He was speaking now.

"Janet, my dear—" he began.

Dorothy ran to her uncle and throwing her arms about his neck, buried her head on his shoulder. "How could you leave me like this?" she wailed. "Why do you let these people keep me locked in my room? And now they are going to take me away!" Her voice grew louder, almost hysterical. She sobbed pathetically and clutched him a little tighter.

"My dear child—you mustn't cry this way—you really mustn't!" Mr. Jordan patted her back in the silly way men do when they want to be comforting. "Mr. Lawson and his wife will look after you in the country, while your Daddy is away."

She released the embarrassed man, and pulling a handkerchief from his breast pocket, dabbed her eyes with the cambric until she felt certain they looked bloodshot enough to pass inspection. "But I don't *want* to go, Daddy. Please don't let them take me," she begged, her voice trembling as though she was using all her will power to gain self control. "If you can't take me with you, why can't I go back to school?"

"But that's impossible, Janet. You are going to be Mrs. Lawson's secretary. Don't be foolish. All arrangements have been made."

"Well, I'm eighteen," said Dorothy with a show of temper. "My mother was a year younger than that when she ran away and married you. I am no longer a child. I don't like being packed off like—like a bag of potatoes."

"Are there any other reasons why you don't want to come to Ridgefield with me?" Mr. Lawson spoke for the first time. His words fairly dripped with suspicion.

"Yes, there are." Dorothy turned on him angrily. "Daddy goes off on a trip, and for reasons which appear to be a secret, you keep me locked in my room for more than a week, Mr. Lawson. And you seem to wonder why I resent it."

"But you have been ill, my dear Janet."

"If I'm so ill, why has no doctor been to see me?" Her voice was full of scorn.

"I have been keeping you under observation myself."

"Quite possibly. I've been allowed to see nobody except that maid who acts as if she were deaf and dumb. If you are trying to tell me that I'm mentally deranged, I won't stand for it! The mere fact that you now propose that I act as your wife's secretary proves that you consider me capable. What right have you to keep me a prisoner in my own home? Who are you, Mr. Martin Lawson, to take upon yourself the regulating of my life?" Dorothy burst into angry tears.

"But my *dear* child—" protested Mr. Jordan. "I've never seen you behave like this—"

"No! And up to now," she stormed, her eyes flashing, "you've never given me cause. In the first place I'm no longer a child—you forget that—and then—what kind of a life did you give me as a child? You are my father and you say that you love me, but can you expect deep affection from a daughter whom you ship to boarding school at five? You wouldn't even let me visit friends during the holidays. For years at a time you never took the trouble to come and see me. How can you expect love and obedience after years of neglect?" She drew a sobbing breath, then went on: "For a while we traveled—you were nice to me—I enjoyed it. We settled down here. I forgave what you'd done to my childhood. I tried to make this flat a home for you, even though I was kept like a cloistered nun and you allowed me no friends. But this is going too far."

"And what, may I ask, are you going to do about it?" inquired Lawson with a disagreeable smile.

"What can a defenseless girl without friends do to stop two big bullies? I shall go with you, Mr. Lawson, because I can't help myself. But don't expect me to like being used as a slave, even though I may be of some comfort to that long-suffering wife of yours. Oh, that makes you angry, does it? Well, let me tell you, that you are not half as angry as I am. You can practice your strong-arm methods on defenseless women and get away with it—some day you'll try it on a man—and by the time he gets through thrashing you there won't be enough left for the boneyard." She flashed a smile of contempt on the furious man, and turned to Mr. Jordan who was speaking again.

"What has come over you, Janet?" he was saying. "I've never heard you speak so rudely to anyone before. You've always been such a quiet little mouse—"

"And you've taken advantage of it," she interrupted. "What you forget is that even a mouse will turn and fight when it's cornered. If you really loved me—if you had a spark of manhood in your selfish body, you'd thrash this man to within an inch of his life and throw him into the street. Get out of here—both of you!" she cried hysterically. "And please—no more silly arguments—I don't want to be forced to say before outsiders what a contemptible person my father is proving himself to be."

This last tirade seemed to stun Mr. Jordan. From the almost agonized expression on his face, she saw that at last conscience was at work. The man was utterly miserable. He could not hide it.

"Will you—will you be ready to leave in half an hour, Janet?" His voice was a mere whisper and shook with suppressed feeling.

"Yes, I'll be ready. Go now, please—both of you!" She turned her back on them and walking over to the window, she threw up the shade and the sash. As she stood there staring into the night, she heard them leave the room.

This time the door shut without being locked. Dorothy streaked across the floor and pressed her ear to the keyhole. Just outside the men were talking.

"You're a fool, Lawson, if you still think that Janet wasn't asleep during the meeting," she heard her uncle say. "Tonight proves it. And let me tell you this. From now on, my business and my home shall be kept separate and distinct. Never again will I allow myself to be placed in a position to be dressed down by my own daughter. There was no comeback either. Every word she said was gospel truth. It's a terrible thing when a daughter makes her father realize what a low, cowardly creature he is at heart. Well, how about it? Aren't you now convinced of her innocence?"

"I am." Lawson clipped off the words, and as he went on speaking, there was insolence as well as a hint of nervousness in his tone. "But when it comes to giving me a thrashing, Number 5—well, I shouldn't try it if I were you—not if you value your—er—health!"

"Stop talking like a fool!" retorted Janet's father. "Is the girl to be sent to Ridgefield or not?"

"Now you're talking rot, yourself," snapped Lawson. "You know quite as well as I do that Laura won't take our word for it. She told me this morning that any clever woman or girl for that matter, could twist a man around her finger without half trying. Laura wants to study your daughter herself—and that's all there is to it."

"I hope Mrs. Lawson has a pleasant time of it." Mr. Jordan said sarcastically. "But I'm afraid my hope will not be granted."

"Laura," answered that lady's husband, "can be rather disagreeable herself when she's roused. Let us hope for Janet's sake, that she doesn't try her tantrums on my wife. By the way, what are you doing now?"

“Getting away just as fast as I can, thank you. No more scenes for me, tonight. I wouldn’t meet Janet on her way out of here for a million dollars!”

They moved further along the hall and Dorothy went slowly back to the window. Across the narrow court, two flights up, the shaded windows of Howard Bright’s flat shone a dull golden yellow in the black wall. For several minutes she stood watching the windows, her thoughts upon what she had done and what she had just heard.

Suddenly, shadows appeared on one of the yellow rectangles. The shade was raised and framed in the window were Janet and Howard. Just behind them stood a stranger who wore the round, conventional collar of a clergyman. The young couple were smiling happily. Both waved, and Janet held up her left hand.

Dorothy knew the significance of that gesture, and threw them a kiss. Then she saw the shade roll down, and she turned away.

“And so they were married and lived happily ever after.” She sighed. “Uncle Sanborn kept his promise, like the fine old sport he is.”

She stuffed the last of Janet’s belongings into the trunk, slammed it shut and locked it.

“Now for the dirty work—and Laura Lawson.” She smiled grimly and went to the closet for Janet’s hat and coat.

Chapter VIII

“WALK INTO MY PARLOR”

The sedan, with Martin Lawson driving and Dorothy beside him, purred smoothly through the dank, cold night. Now that they were past the realm of traffic lights, it lopped off the miles between them and Ridgefield with the regularity of an electric saw cutting planks from a log.

During the entire journey, now nearly over, Dorothy had spoken no word to the man beside her. She wanted him to believe that she was still furiously angry. As a matter of fact, she had felt antagonistic toward him from the first moment she laid eyes upon him; his smug overgrooming, the highly polished fingernails, the small waxed moustache and too immaculate clothing, all repelled her. She knew at once what it had taken Janet some time to realize: Martin Lawson might be and probably was a very clever man; he was, on the other hand, a man to be wary of. His manner was just a little too complacent, too smooth. Notwithstanding the forewarning she had received regarding his character, Dorothy knew instinctively that he was not genuine and not a trustworthy person in any respect. She detested him thoroughly.

He was a careful driver, she gave him credit for that. They found little traffic to impede their progress along the Boston Post Road, once the long tentacles of the great city were left behind. But the black swath of highway leading out and on from their moisture-coated headlights glistened wetly in their reflection. After they turned into the hills behind Stamford, heading for the Connecticut Ridge Country, the road for a mile or more at a stretch was covered with wet leaves. They crawled along at a snail's pace to prevent skidding and a crash into the New England stone fences that rambled along the roadside dividing woodland from the rolling meadows.

Just beyond New Canaan, they drove past Dorothy's home and Bill Bolton's, for the properties faced each other across the ridge road. Before they reached Vista it was raining dimly, and Lawson had the windshield wiper going. Dorothy was thankful that the sixty-mile journey from New York was nearly over. At last they reached the outskirts of Ridgefield, and the car swung into a driveway between high pillars of native stonework. In the glow from the electric globes on the gate posts, the blue stone driveway curved and twisted like a huge snake, winding through landscaped lawns and gardens as formal and precise as a public park.

It was raining harder now, and Dorothy could see nothing beyond the path of their headlights. Although she had never been in the grounds before, she had driven past the Winn place numbers of times. Finally, she made out the bulk of a great stone house. Martin Lawson stopped the car beneath a porte-cochere. They had arrived.

Massive doors of wrought iron and glass swung open. A butler and two footmen in livery ran down the steps. The butler, a tall, important-looking individual, snapped open the car door.

“Good evening, Mr. Lawson,” he said. “Good evening, Miss.”

The voice with its high-pitched Oxford drawl still smacked of Whitechapel. Dorothy, who had travelled in England, was sure that under stress, the cockney in this personage would come out. She knew he was careful of his aitches.

“Good evening, Tunbridge,” Lawson returned briskly, and Dorothy smiled pleasantly. “Is Mrs. Lawson still up?”

“Madam is awaiting you in the library, sir.” Tunbridge helped Dorothy to alight and handed Janet's overnight bag to a footman. “Jones,” he said to the other flunky, as Lawson stepped out of the car, “drive round to the service entrance. Miss Jordan's box is in the back of the car. See that it is taken up to the Pink Bedroom and have Hanley garage the motor-car.”

“Very good, sir,” returned the man, and he got into the automobile.

Tunbridge ushered them up the broad stone steps. Dorothy caught a last glimpse of a leafless, dripping hedge across the drive, and the giant skeleton arms of a tree that seemed to menace earth and sky; then she entered the house, wondering what the next act of this strange drama would bring forth.

She found herself in an enormous hall, furnished with objects such as she had never seen outside a museum. Elaborately carved oak, suits of armor, stone urns, portraits, a wide stone staircase mounting upward to surrounding galleries, stained glass windows, tigers' and lions' heads, antlers of tremendous size, strange and beautiful weapons, all ranged in confusion before her eyes and suggested a baronial castle rather than the home of an American scientist, in the Connecticut hills.

Tunbridge led to a door on the right, where he knocked, then opened, as a muffled “Come in” was heard.

“Miss Jordan and Mr. Lawson, Madam,” announced the butler, and he stood aside to let them pass.

Dorothy walked into a room whose walls seemed built of books. The furniture was richly attractive and looked luxuriously comfortable. A fire blazed in a fine chimney and a table near it was set with a glitter of splendid silver and hot water plates below shining metal covers.

A tall, superbly beautiful woman, with dark eyes and coal-black hair that grew in a widow's peak on her brow, rose from a chair on the wide hearth and came toward them. Her clear, white skin, and a broad streak of silver across the black hair gave her a strangely ethereal appearance, as though she might have been a being from another planet. The hand she held out to Dorothy was exquisitely

formed, the fingers long and tapering.

"How do you do, Janet," she said pleasantly. "Welcome to Winncote. You are later than we expected. The Doctor has gone to bed, but he left his greetings."

"Thank you," Dorothy returned formally and shook hands. "You are very kind, Mrs. Lawson."

Laura Lawson gave her a smile, but the girl saw that it was a smile of the lips alone, her dark eyes remained somber. "Did you have a breakdown?" she asked her husband, taking notice of him for the first time.

"Slippery roads—it was impossible to do much more than crawl, Laura." He lifted a dish cover on the table and inspected its contents. "Glad you thought to order supper—I'm famished."

"So am I," admitted his wife and her words seemed to carry a double meaning. "It's long after three. Come over here by the fire and get warm, Janet. Now Tunbridge—if you'll please serve us?"

Tunbridge seated them at the supper table and uncovered the dishes.

"Just a light meal," announced the hostess, "scrambled eggs, toast and cocoa, but it will warm you up and help you last until breakfast."

"It looks delicious!" said Dorothy, who discovered at the sight of food that she was starving. In fact all three were hungry, and for some little time conversation was dropped while the soft-footed Tunbridge waited upon them.

"We will have a chat tomorrow, Janet," Mrs. Lawson said presently. "Tonight you are tired and so am I. We take breakfast in our rooms. Ring for it when you're ready, but don't hurry about getting up, I'll see you down here about eleven-thirty. Have you had enough to eat and drink, my dear?"

"Plenty, thank you, Mrs. Lawson." Dorothy thought it would be just as well if she played the demure mouse until she had a chance to size up her employer.

"Then I think we'll go upstairs, Janet, and I'll show you your room." She looked at her husband. "You'll be coming up soon, Martin?"

"Just as soon as I finish this pipe, and get a bit warmer."

"I think," said Mrs. Lawson, "that both you and Janet had better take a hot lemonade before you go to bed. I don't want to have you both laid up with colds tomorrow." She smiled solicitously at the girl.

"I hate the filthy stuff," protested her husband.

"Don't be ridiculous," she answered coldly and turned to the butler. "Tunbridge, have hot lemonades sent to Miss Jordan and Mr. Lawson in about twenty minutes, if you please."

"Very good, madam."

Laura Lawson slipped her arm through Dorothy's. "Don't be long, Martin."

"I won't. Good night, Janet."

"Good night, Mr. Lawson."

Mrs. Lawson seemed lost in thought as they slowly mounted the stone stairs. Suddenly she began chattily: "Men are such stupid creatures, Janet. So stupid about taking medicine or anything else that may be good for them. Martin and that hot lemonade is a case in point. I hope that you haven't any foolish ideas like that?"

"Oh, no, indeed. I'm rather fond of it."

"That's fine. Now promise me you'll get into bed and drink it just as hot as possible. There's nothing better to ward off a cold, and you'll sleep like a top into the bargain. Well, here's your room, my dear. It's late, so I won't come in, but I think you'll find all you need to make you comfortable. If you want anything, ring. Good night, Janet. Sleep well."

"I'm sure I will, Mrs. Lawson. Good night."

The older woman passed along the gallery and Dorothy entered her bedroom. It was a good-sized room, attractively furnished with everywhere evidence of a woman's taste. Pink-shaded electric candles gleamed from the walls papered in cream and scattered with tiny pink rosebuds. The small grey-painted bed displayed pink pillow cases, sheets and blankets. A dainty writing desk in one corner of the room was also painted grey as was the chaise longue and the chairs, where the upholstery carried out the note of pink. A soft grey rug, pink-bordered, covered the floor, and Dorothy's feet sank into its thick, warm pile as she investigated her new quarters. She saw that the room was nearly square, and opposite the door a rounded alcove sheltered a bow window, hung with pink taffeta, and the window seat below it was cushioned in pink.

In a corner against the wall stood Janet's wardrobe trunk, and near it was a door that led into a spacious closet. Dorothy hung her coat on a padded hanger, and then looked into the rose and onyx tiled bath.

As she re-entered the bedroom she stopped short in surprise. A small piece of white paper protruded from beneath the door to the gallery. Quickly she stooped, snatched the paper and opened the door. The gallery was empty. Crossing to the balustrade she looked down upon the great entrance hall. That also was deserted and nobody was to be seen on the staircase.

She turned back, closed and locked her door. Then she spread out the paper she had crumpled in her hand. Printed on one side in pencil she read the words:

"BE ON YOUR GUARD. DO NOT DRINK THE LEMONADE. DESTROY THIS AT ONCE."

"Now I wonder..." Dorothy muttered softly, "who sent me this note?"

Chapter IX

IN THE NIGHT

Dorothy turned over the piece of paper to find as she expected that the other side was blank. No signature. Nothing but the double warning, and the admonition to destroy the missive and to do so at once. Evidently the writer either believed or knew for certain that she would shortly be disturbed. There was no fireplace in the bedroom. Even though she tore the note into bits, some of the scraps might be found and pieced together should she throw them out the window; and her room might be searched at any time. How could she make way with it? For a moment or two Dorothy was at a loss. Mechanically her fingers tore the paper into fine shreds.

Then she smiled. "I guess we'll let the plumbing take care of you," she said, gazing down on the little pile of paper on her palm, and she disappeared into the bathroom.

When she returned, Dorothy opened Janet's over-night bag, took out a pair of green silk pajamas, bedroom slippers and toilet accessories, among which was a new toothbrush in a case. This, and the underwear she had on were the only belongings of her own that she had retained.

From Janet's purse, she extracted the trunk key. After some rummaging in that large travelling wardrobe, she found a quilted bathrobe of pale pink satin on a hanger toward the back. It was too late to unpack entirely, and she was about to close and relock the trunk, when she decided to leave it open. The Janet Jordan she was portraying had never waked up at the famous meeting of last week. That Janet would feel outraged at her imprisonment, her father's seeming callousness and would naturally be furious at being packed up here willy-nilly: but she would have no cause to be suspicious of these people in this big stone house. If she had locked the trunk—Dorothy realized she had almost made a mistake, although a minor one—and in her present position mistakes were dangerous affairs.

Although it was very late and the day had been a strenuous one Dorothy did not feel tired. While she undressed, she went over in her mind the new vistas opened up by this mysterious note she had just destroyed. As she dissected it word by word from memory, she was astonished to find that the scrap of paper carried much interesting information between the lines.

Undoubtedly, Ashton Sanborn had planted a member of his organization in the house, but how that had been possible, she could not imagine. First of all, there was the warning to be on her guard. That Mrs. Lawson was indicated she had no doubt. Her hostess, while seeming most charming and courteous, had nevertheless suggested the hot lemonade which the note told her not to drink. It was quite likely that her unknown adviser had reason to think that the lemonade would be drugged. And then these people could hardly mean to poison her so soon after her arrival. For their whole idea in bringing her to Winncote, as she understood it, was to make sure whether the real Janet had heard their secrets or not. No—they merely wanted her to sleep soundly. But why?

Dorothy pondered on this for several minutes. There could be only one reason, she decided. Somebody was planning to enter her bedroom tonight, and wished to do so without her knowledge. What their purpose might be she could not guess and she did not bother about it. To a girl of a nervous temperament, such as Janet Jordan, the knowledge that such a visit was planned and success arranged for by means of a drug, would have been torture. But Dorothy, who could feel "Flash" in his holster just above her knee was merely worried for fear that lemonade or no lemonade she would fall asleep. The arrival here had been uneventful enough after what had happened at the Jordans' apartment. At least, to all outward appearances it had been smooth sailing. She was beginning to realize that nothing with these people was what it seemed to be. She had climbed her Vesuvius and was standing at the crater's edge. Already the first rumblings of the eruption had been heard.

Her position, though seemingly secure, was nothing of the kind. The sooner Ashton Sanborn gave her the orders he had promised, and she could carry them out and get away from this place, the better for Dorothy Dixon. And yet she could not help a feeling of exhilaration.

There came a gentle knock on her door. Wearing her quilted wrapper and slippers she turned the key and opened to—the imposing Tunbridge. He bore a small tray on which stood a steaming tumbler, a bowl of sugar, two spoons and a napkin. "Your hot lemonade, Miss Jordan," he announced in his pompous voice and rather as though he were offering her a priceless gift. "Mrs. Lawson's instructions are to drink it after you get in bed, Miss. May I mention also that it is very hot?"

Dorothy took the tray. "Thank you, Tunbridge, I'll be careful. Good night!"

"Good night, Miss."

The butler departed in the direction of the stairway, and Dorothy closed the door and locked it again.

She set the tray on a chair beside her bed and put two spoonfuls of sugar into the tall glass. It was too hot for anyone to drink yet, so she went into the bathroom to get ready for bed.

Five minutes later she switched off all the lights except the one on the head board. Then she got into bed, picked up the glass and stirred her lemonade, making sure that the spoon tinkled against the glass. If anyone was listening outside her door they would naturally think she was drinking the stuff.

After waiting a moment or two longer, she set the glass down on the tray with a thump that might have been heard on the gallery. But the glass remained in her hand. Off went her light now, and still holding the lemonade she got quickly and quietly out of bed. A silent trip to the bathroom in the dark and she emptied the lemonade into her washbowl. Then she came back and placed the empty glass on the tray. She hurried over to the bow window, opened a sash, turned off the heat in the radiator and crawled into bed again.

The bed was to the left of the door as one entered the room. By lying on her right side Dorothy held the entire room within her view. After the soft glare from the shaded electric lights, it seemed inky black, but soon her eyes grew accustomed to the gloom. In the wall just beyond the foot of the bed was the closed door of her closet. The trunk stood beyond that in the corner. The alcove and window seat took up a large section of the farther wall and in the corner, diagonally across from where she lay was a dark spot—the writing desk. Opposite her bed was the half open door to the bathroom. The dressing table, the door to the hall but a few feet from her head—mentally she had completed her tour of the room.

Then for a long while, or so it seemed to the excited girl, she lay there waiting. Of course her door was locked, but the affair of the Winged Cartwheels a few months before had taught Dorothy that keys may be turned from the outside with a pair of small pincers. Her mind now set itself on the key in the door. In vain she listened for the warning click that would come when it turned in the lock. Now that she was lying in bed she began to discover how tired she was. It became harder and harder to stay awake.

She knew that she must have dozed, for without warning a light appeared, a golden circle on the center of the rug. Instantly she was wide awake and her hand beneath the blankets drew her throwing knife from its sheath. Through half-closed eyelids she made out a dark figure holding a flash light pointed toward the floor.

Then the glowing circle moved to the empty glass beside her bed, and Dorothy closed her eyes. For a moment it rested upon her face and she heard a low chuckle. Dorothy knew that voice. Her visitor was Laura Lawson.

The light swept away from her face. Mrs. Lawson touched the wall switch by the door and the bedroom sprang into light. The drug in the lemonade must have been a strong one, for it was evident that the intruder had no fear of her awakening. Without wasting another glance on Dorothy, Laura Lawson went to the wardrobe trunk and commenced a detailed inspection of its contents.

The woman's back was turned, so Dorothy had no difficulty in watching her movements. Everything in the trunk was taken out, glanced at and put back exactly as it had been. This took some time, and it was fully half an hour before her hostess finished with the trunk. Next she overhauled the small travelling bag and the purse. Then the empty drawers of the dressing table and desk came under the woman's eye. The pillows and cushions of the window seat were lifted. The rug was turned back. Every nook and cranny of the room and closet came under observation. Then she went into the bathroom.

"What under the shining canopy can she be looking for?" Dorothy marveled. "It can't be the note I got tonight. She proposed the lemonade before that could have been written. I wonder if she'll search the bed? She mustn't find Flash—"

When Laura Lawson returned to the bedroom, she saw that the sleeper had turned over and was now facing the wall. For a moment she gazed down on the girl, then her hand crept under the pillow. Finding nothing there, the covers were pulled back to the foot of the bed.

Dorothy felt the cold breeze from the open window blowing on her pajamaed body, but she did not move. Presently sheet, blankets and silk comfort were replaced and the woman left the bedside. Dorothy chuckled inwardly. Flash was still safe. She was lying on him.

Off went the light. Dorothy knew that Mrs. Lawson's slippered feet would make no sound on the thick pile of the rug. She waited to hear the door open and close, but heard nothing. With her face to the wall, she could see nothing. The strain of lying motionless became nerve wracking. What was the woman doing anyhow? Slowly she rolled over again. So far as she could tell, the room was empty.

For what seemed an age Dorothy lay, listening. Except for the wind sighing through the bare trees outside her window, there was no other sound. She felt nervous and unpleasantly excited. She must know if the door had been left unlocked. Slipping out of bed she tiptoed across to it and tried the handle. The door did not give.

Suddenly she froze against the panels. A dim glow appeared on the opposite wall as the closet door swung slowly back, and outlined in the opening was the tall figure of Tunbridge.

Chapter X

SURPRISES

Dorothy's experiences, since she had shopped for neckties for her father that morning had been quite enough to lay up the average girl for a week, and to wreck her nerves into the bargain. Laura Lawson's appearance in her bedroom had strained tightened nerves to the breaking point.

The arrival of this second intruder was just too much. As the butler stepped out of the closet and started to close the door, Dorothy's self-control snapped like a rubber band. She forgot that she was playing a part; that it might be suicidal to show her hand so early in the game. Fear gripped her throat. Had this man been sent to kill her? If not, then what was he doing, stealing into her room through a secret entrance like an assassin of the middle ages? Self-preservation bade her act. The consequences could take care of themselves.

"Stop!" The harsh whisper, as her hand dove for Flash, sounded like the voice of a stranger. "Move another step, and I'll pin you to that door!" Flash was in her raised hand now, the extended blade reflecting the light in the closet as though the polished steel were glass.

She saw the man start in surprise and turn his head in her direction. As she was about to hurl the knife, Tunbridge found his voice.

"Ashton Sanborn sent me, Miss Dixon. Please don't throw that knife."

Gone was the English accent, and the pompous intonation of the British man servant. Tunbridge, if that were really his name, spoke the American Dorothy was accustomed to hear, the accents of the cultured New Englander. For the second time in her life, Dorothy fainted.

She awoke to find herself in bed. Tunbridge was beside it. She could just make out his tall, powerful figure in the darkness.

"Goodness—did I faint?" she said weakly.

"You certainly did, Miss Dixon." His tone was little above a whisper. "Please don't raise your voice—and drink this. I found the aromatic spirits of ammonia in the bathroom. You need something to steady you. No one is cast iron—you've been through a frightful lot today."

Dorothy took the glass and drained it. Then she lay back on her pillow. "I got the scare of my life just now. Why didn't Ashton Sanborn tell me about you, Mr.—"

"Tunbridge is really my name, Miss Dixon. John Tunbridge, and very much at your service. I was afraid my rather abrupt appearance would startle you, and especially coming so soon after Mrs. Lawson's—er—visit. I got a shock myself when I saw your white figure by the door just now, and all ready to split me with that knife, like—like a macaroon." He chuckled, and removing the tray, sat down on the chair beside her bed.

"Oh, then you've seen Ashton Sanborn this evening, Mr. Tunbridge?"

"Heard from him, Miss Dixon. As you must know by now, I am a secret service operative and I am working under Mr. Sanborn. There isn't time to go into detail now, but a couple of months ago, our department received an anonymous letter saying that Doctor Winn would bear watching. Shortly before that the Doctor had engaged Mrs. Lawson, who is an expert chemist by the way, to take charge of his laboratory. Her husband has been Doctor Winn's secretary since last spring. We thought at that time that Mrs. Lawson might be the mysterious letter writer. Since then we've altered our opinion. Mr. Sanborn decided that inasmuch as Doctor Winn was working for the government it would be well to have a secret service man in the house. We prevailed upon the butler here to resign and I took his place."

"Then Doctor Winn knows you're a government detective?"

"No one in this house knows that, except you, Miss Dixon. The whole matter was arranged through an employment agency. Doctor Winn and the others here have no idea that I, like you, am simply playing a part."

"Well, you're certainly a splendid actor, Mr. Tunbridge."

"Thank you, Miss Dixon. As you've no doubt discovered, acting, convincing acting, often plays a large part in our profession. You are doing brilliantly in that respect yourself. Mr. Sanborn thought, however, that it would be better if you did not know about me until the necessity arose. Mrs. Lawson, he knew would be watching you like a hawk when you arrived. If you had been aware of my identity, your position would only have been more difficult. She might have had her suspicions aroused in some way, which would have given you a wrong start from the beginning. I think you will realize tomorrow how hard it will be to treat me as though I were merely Tunbridge the butler."

"Oh, I think you're right. Tell me, how did you find out about the lemonade?"

"I overheard the Lawsons talking, yesterday. Made it my business in fact. It seems that Mrs. Lawson has had the idea that if Janet Jordan was only shamming sleep at that meeting, she would do her best to communicate with her father in some way. The natural thing to do would be to write a note and slip it in his hand or his pocket, when he came to see her. Martin Lawson was sure he would detect anything of the kind when he brought Jordan to say goodbye to Janet tonight at the flat. If not, the plan was to drug the girl with hot lemonade so that Mrs. Lawson could search her belongings for the note tonight."

Dorothy nodded. "I watched her closely while she was in here, and so far as I could make out she didn't find anything that interested her particularly. The Lawsons must have guessed wrong about Janet writing her father."

"Well, no, they didn't," declared her new ally. "Janet wrote a letter, just as they surmised."

"But where could it be?" asked Dorothy in a startled whisper, and sat bold upright in bed.

"Probably destroyed by this time," Mr. Tunbridge chuckled. "There's no need to worry on that score, Miss Dixon. When Ashton Sanborn spoke to your cousin this afternoon by means of Howard Bright's headphone set, he learned that Janet proposed doing just what this clever pair here figured upon. Of course she had already written the note, and as there was no safe way to get rid of it in her room, he told her to take it with her when she left. And now if you'll be good enough, I wish you'd tell me what happened after you took her place in the flat."

Dorothy gave him a short sketch of her encounter with her uncle and Martin Lawson in Janet's room, and of the conversation between the two men in the corridor afterward. "All the way up here," she ended, "I pretended I had a grouch. Mr. Lawson tried to start a conversation several times, but he soon found it wasn't much fun talking to himself and he gave it up as a bad job."

"Excellent," applauded the secret service man, "and quite in keeping with your behavior in the flat. You have done most remarkably well, Miss Dixon. Only—you won't mind if I warn you not to let first success make you careless."

"Do you really believe that these people mean to do away with me if they discover I am not what I appear to be, Mr. Tunbridge? It sounds a bit too melodramatic, don't you think?"

"These Lawsons, husband and wife, are playing for gigantic stakes." The detective's voice, though barely audible was extremely grave. "They will stop at nothing. When crooks have at least two murders behind them, they're not likely to stop at a third."

"Then—then they are *not* what they pretend?"

"Certainly not. They're a pair of high class European crooks named du Val."

Dorothy shuddered. "And *murderers!*"

"Undoubtedly. They're wanted both in England and in Austria for their crimes."

"How did you find that out?"

"Oh, you see I recognized them when I arrived here, Miss Dixon."

"But—but I can't see why—why you didn't arrest them then and there! You knew that they were after the secret of Doctor Winn's new explosive, or whatever it is he has invented."

"Yes, we realized that the formula for Doctor Winn's explosive gas was the magnet that drew the du Vals to this house; but until today we had no idea how they proposed to dispose of the formula after stealing it."

"I see. And now you realize that they probably intend to sell it to the organization of which my uncle is a member?"

"You are right, Miss Dixon."

"Then why can't you arrest the Lawsons now?"

"We can take the Lawsons at any time," Tunbridge explained. "But we want to catch the ringleader of this organization. We know the group exists and for no good purpose, but what their definite object may be we still have no means of telling. We can't arrest them on suspicion alone. Once they actually buy the formula from the Lawsons, it will be quite a different matter."

She shook her head slowly. "But why hasn't the formula been stolen before this? They've had plenty of opportunity, surely—"

"Because it is not completed. At dinner tonight I heard the Doctor say that by tomorrow afternoon the work would be finished, and that he expected to take the formula to Washington the day after tomorrow."

"Then you expect?—"

"I expect that the Lawsons will make their attempt tomorrow night."

"And where do I come in on this business, Mr. Tunbridge?"

"You are going to take the plans from Doctor Winn's safe before the Lawsons get to it."

She drew her breath sharply. "That's a pretty large order—"

"I know it, but—of course you'll have the combination of the safe—"

"Are you going to give it to me now?"

"Too dangerous. They are quite capable of searching your belongings again—or your person, for that matter—at any time. I'll get it to you with exact instructions just as soon as the Doctor completes that blooming formula and locks it in the safe."

"That's all very well, Mr. Tunbridge. But has it occurred to you that if I steal this paper—I suppose it will be a paper?—"

"Probably several of them—"

"Well, if I take these papers before the Lawsons can get them, how are you going to arrest my uncle

and the other men?"

"You," directed Tunbridge, "will simply make a copy and replace the original documents where you found them. This is a safety-first move. We must have a copy in case the originals are destroyed."

"It looks like a very complicated matter to me," Dorothy admitted candidly. "Why not put the old gentleman wise? After all, it's his formula, and if he made his own copy it would save us a possible run-in with the Lawsons, and—"

Mr. Tunbridge stood up. "Perhaps you're right," he said, making a brave attempt to stifle a yawn, "but Doctor Winn would never agree to it. For a scientist who dabbles in high explosives, he's the most nervous man I've ever met. He'd give the whole show away. No, that's out of the question. Doctor Winn must be kept in ignorance of the whole proceeding. And now—" a yawn got the better of him this time— "and now to bed. You need sleep even more than advice just now. Good night, or rather, good morning, Miss Dixon. Pleasant dreams, I hope."

He started toward the door and Dorothy sprang out of bed and reached for her dressing gown.

"I want to see that secret passage, Mr. Tunbridge," she said in a low tone.

"Oh, yes, come along." He opened the door and stepped inside the closet. "It works this way. Press your foot on the board in the farthest right hand corner, like this, and a panel in the back wall slides up—like that—"

Dorothy stared at the gaping black hole, then as the detective-butler snapped on his flashlight she saw that a narrow circular staircase led downward in the wall.

"That stair curves down to the ground floor," he explained. "It comes out through the side wall inside the big fireplace in the hall. To open the panel down there you press a button under the left-hand corner of the mantel. To close either panel you simply put it down, once you're inside."

"Are there any more of these passages in the walls?"

"Very likely, but I haven't found them yet. Winncote is an exact copy of the Doctor's ancestral home in Wales. Those old houses were honeycombed with priest holes, secret passages and whatnot. And Doctor Winn had his architect copy the original Winncote across the water down to the last stone, with modern improvements such as bathrooms and steam heat, added."

"Funny old fellow, isn't he?" commented Dorothy sleepily. "Then I'm simply to carry on until I hear from you again?"

"That's right. But whatever you do, watch your step with the Lawson woman. She is fully as heartless as she is beautiful. If you had never heard of that meeting in the Jordans' flat, it would be much better for you. She will try to trap you, so please be on your guard continually. Well, good night, again."

"Good night, Mr. Tunbridge."

The panel in the back wall of the closet slid into place, and Dorothy went back to bed. She realized now that this matter of impersonating her cousin was not going to prove to be the easy job she had fancied. A slip on her part now would not only put her own life in danger, it would probably ruin all government plans to apprehend these desperate criminals.

At last she fell into a troubled sleep wherein she dreamed that a long circular staircase curved round and round her bedroom, and that Mrs. Lawson, dressed as a butler, had set her to watch every step of it.

Chapter XI

GRETCHEN

Dorothy awoke from troubled dreams to find that it was another day. Through the open window she saw the swirl of snowflakes driven in a high wind. The bedroom was cold and in the grey light of the winter morning it had lost its cheerful air.

She heard a knock on the door.

"Who's there?" she called drowsily.

"It's the maid, miss. Mrs. Lawson thought you might be wanting your breakfast now."

Dorothy looked at her wrist watch. The hands marked ten-thirty. She jumped out on the rug, which felt cold and clammy under her bare feet, went to the door and unlocked it. Then she scampered back to bed and snuggled under the warm covers.

In walked a trim little figure wearing the small white apron and gray uniform of a chambermaid. Dorothy saw a round merry face, and a pair of big blue eyes beneath the white lawn cap, and thick flaxen braids were coiled round the neat head. She was surprised and somehow pleased to discover that this attractive member of the household staff could not be much more than sixteen, just her own age.

The little maid shut the door softly, crossed to the window and closed it, turned on the steam heat and came to the bedside. "Good morning, Miss Jordan." She smiled engagingly. "I'm Gretchen, miss. Will you have your breakfast in bed?"

"Why, thank you, Gretchen—that will be cozy. But if it's going to give you any trouble, don't bother." With the covers drawn up to her eyes, Dorothy smiled back at the girl.

"Oh, no, miss—it's no trouble at all." Gretchen was insistent. "It's all ready now. I'll run down and bring it up."

She whisked out of the room and Dorothy rolled over for another cat-nap.

"If you'll be good enough to sit up now, Miss Jordan—I have your breakfast here."

Dorothy awoke again, yawned and stretched luxuriously. Gretchen stood beside her bed with the breakfast tray.

"If you'll be good enough to sit up, miss?" she repeated.

Dorothy punched the pillows into position behind her, slipped the quilted gown about her shoulders and leaned back. Gretchen moved nearer—then almost dropped the tray.

"Why—why—miss—"

Dorothy leaned over and steadied the tray. "What's the matter, Gretchen?" The little maid was staring at her open-mouthed, her big blue eyes as round as saucers.

"Oh, I—I beg your pardon, but it's—it's the resemblance, miss—Miss Jordan." She set the tray over Dorothy's knees and drew back still with that astonished look. "I couldn't see you very well before, miss, with the covers up to your eyes. But when you sat up, it sure did give me a start."

"What do you mean, Gretchen? The resemblance to whom?" Dorothy, outwardly calm, fingered her glass of orange juice, but her thoughts raced toward this new complication.

"Why, you look so much like Dorothy Dixon—the flyer, you know, miss. She's my hero—I mean, heroine, Miss Jordan. I've read everything the newspapers printed about her and Bill Bolton. You must have read about them too, everybody has?"

"Oh, yes, I've heard about them." Dorothy hoped her tone sounded indifferent. "But you know, Gretchen, newspaper pictures are often very poor likenesses."

The girl smiled and nodded. "I know that, Miss Jordan. I've got them all and there isn't no two of the pictures that looks alike."

"Then how—?"

"You see, it wasn't the newspaper pictures I was thinking of, miss, but Dorothy Dixon herself. You see I know Miss Dixon," she went on proudly, "and you two are certainly the spittin' images of each other, if you don't mind my saying so."

Dorothy minded very much, but it was not consistent with the part she was playing to admit it. Here was a contretemps not even Ashton Sanborn had foreseen. Yet, of course, New Canaan was only ten miles away. She had many friends in Ridgefield, and she'd been there hundreds of times. But she simply couldn't remember having seen Gretchen in any of their homes. Her answer was but a feeble stall for time.

"So you know her then?" she said lamely.

"Oh, yes, miss. Not well, you understand. I saw her and Mr. Bill Bolton first when they finished the endurance test on the Conway motor this fall. Then a few days later, I drove over to her house in our flivver—over to New Canaan, you know, and I called on Miss Dixon. I wanted her to autograph a picture of herself I'd cut out of the Sunday paper."

"And you met her?" Dorothy remembered the incident perfectly now. But the maid's uniform—and

her hair—when she had seen her, Gretchen had worn two braids over her shoulders, very much the schoolgirl. No wonder she hadn't recognized her. But now what should she do? Would it be possible to keep up this camouflage with a girl whom she had met and with whom she would come in daily contact? Gretchen was talking again.

"Yes indeed, I met her. And she was just darling to me, Miss Jordan. She even gave me one of her own photographs and wrote on it, too. You see, us Schmidts came over from Germany about a hundred years ago, but we're honest-to-goodness Americans just the same. Father was in the American army during the war. He was an aviation mechanic. He found one of them Iron Crosses of the Germans on some battlefield in France and kept it for a mascot. And would you believe it, miss, Father never even got wounded once, the whole time he was over there! Perhaps it was the little Iron Cross, and perhaps it wasn't. Anyway, he thought a lot of his mascot. When I was ten years old, he had it fixed on a thin gold chain for me to wear around my neck, and gave it to me on my birthday. Well, when I went to see Miss Dixon this fall, I took it with me. She goes up in her airplane so much and does so many other exciting things, I wanted her to have it. She didn't want to take the cross at first, but I persuaded her to, just the same. And you don't know how nice she was to me, Miss! Took me out to see Will-o-the-Wisp—that's her plane, you know—she calls it Wispy for short. And I had a perfectly grand time. She's my heroine, all right. And you, miss—I hope you'll excuse me for talking so much about it—but you look exactly like her, and your voices are just the same, too. It's wonderful!"

"So you are Margaret Schmidt," Dorothy said slowly.

"Yes, miss, that is so, though everybody calls me Gretchen. How did you know my given name, Miss Jordan? Is Miss Dixon a friend of yours? Did she tell you about me? But that's silly—she wouldn't remember me."

Dorothy looked the little maid straight in the eyes. "She remembers you, Gretchen. Would you be willing to do something for her—to keep a secret, a very important and maybe a dangerous one? Do you think you could do it?"

Gretchen looked awestruck, then she smiled. "Mother says I'm the closest-mouthed girl she ever saw, miss. They could cut me in pieces before I ever let out any secret of Dorothy Dixon's. I'd never tell—not me! You can trust me, Miss Jordan."

"I'm sure I can, Gretchen. And I'm going to." Dorothy slipped her hand into the V-neck of her pajamas. "Remember this?"

"Why—it's—it's my Iron Cross—that I gave Dorothy Dixon. How in the world—?"

"I am Dorothy Dixon." Dorothy broke into laughter at the bewildered expression on the girl's face.

"But—but I don't understand!" Gretchen stammered as though her tongue was half-paralyzed. "I knew the resemblance was wonderful—but—they said you were Miss Janet Jordan—and—"

"You sit down on the end of the bed," said Dorothy, "I'll go on with my breakfast before it gets cold, and explain at the same time. We won't be disturbed, will we?"

"Oh, no, miss."

"How about your work, Gretchen? Will you be wanted downstairs?"

"Mr. Tunbridge told me to unpack your trunk, miss—Miss Dixon—and to make myself generally useful."

"Fine," smiled Dorothy, pouring out a cup of coffee. "But keep on calling me Miss Jordan—otherwise you'll be making slips in the name in front of other people and that would be fatal."

"Yes, Miss Jordan," Gretchen grinned happily.

"After this beastly business is over," Dorothy went on, "we'll be Gretchen and Dorothy to each other."

The other girl looked a trifle embarrassed. "But I'm only a chambermaid, Miss Jordan," she said shyly.

"Don't be silly!" Dorothy waved away the argument with a sweep of her spoon. "You're proving yourself a real friend—and that's that."

"Very well, Miss Jordan."

"Now pin back your ears, Gretchen." Dorothy lifted the cover from her scrambled eggs. "I am taking my cousin, Janet Jordan's place as Mrs. Lawson's secretary. Nobody in this house knows who I am except Mr. Tunbridge, nor must they be given the slightest hint that I am anybody but Janet Jordan. As you've probably guessed, Janet and I look almost exactly alike. Our mothers were twins and that probably accounts for it."

"Gee—" breathed Gretchen. "It's just like a story in a book!"

Dorothy bit into a slice of buttered toast. "Maybe it is," she admitted, speaking with her mouth full. "But the point is that you and I are living this story and it may come to a very abrupt and unpleasant ending unless we're both terribly careful. Let's see—where was I? Oh, yes. Mr. Tunbridge and I are working together on this case, working for the United States Government."

"Secret Service?" asked Gretchen in an awed whisper.

"Yes."

"Then I'll be working for the secret service too?" Dorothy could see that the girl was very much

impressed with the idea.

"You will, Gretchen—that is, you are—under me. But don't get too pepped up about it. The work we are on is serious and it is extremely dangerous into the bargain. I wouldn't have brought you into it unless I had to. Right now I haven't the slightest notion how you are going to be fitted into the picture. But I couldn't have you going around, talking about how much Janet Jordan looks like Dorothy Dixon, could I? Doctor Winn and the Lawsons have no idea of either the resemblance or the relationship. If that came out and they got wind of it—well, there's no telling what might happen."

"Especially," chimed in Gretchen, "after all the detective work you did in those three big cases over to New Canaan this summer and fall."

"You've got it," declared Dorothy, and sipped her coffee. "A robbery is being planned here, Gretchen, a robbery of some very valuable papers from Doctor Winn's safe. The thieves will probably try to pull it off tonight. These papers, which have to do with an invention of the Doctor's are worth a million dollars or more to any number of people. So you see the thieves are playing for big stakes, and I might as well tell you that they aren't the kind that would let a thing like murder stop them. And now that you know the facts, are you willing to go on with it?"

Gretchen seemed horrified that Dorothy should doubt her. "Oh, Miss Jordan, I don't want to get murdered any more than anybody else—but, I'm not afraid—honest I'm not!"

"I knew you were true blue," smiled Dorothy. "So we'll call it a deal, shall we?"

"You bet!" The two girls solemnly shook hands. "What do you want me to do first, Miss Jordan?" Gretchen asked eagerly.

"Move this tray onto the chair over there, please. Then while I'm taking a bath and dressing you might unpack Janet Jordan's clothes. I'll choose something to wear later."

"Very good, Miss Jordan." The little maid took the tray, then stopped short, her round blue eyes very serious. "But what about the secret service work?"

"Just carry on as usual for the present." Dorothy slipped out of bed. "And remember—not a word to anyone about what I've told you—not even Mr. Tunbridge. I don't know myself exactly what I'm to do yet. Mrs. Lawson expects me downstairs in about half an hour, so I've got to hustle. If I need your help later on, I'll get word to you somehow."

"I hope you will need me, Miss Jordan." Gretchen was taking Janet's frocks from the wardrobe trunk.

"And I hope I shan't!" said Dorothy, and she disappeared into the bathroom.

Chapter XII

TESTS

Dorothy came down the wide staircase a few minutes before eleven-thirty. She wore a dark blue morning frock of her cousin's, its simplicity relieved only by the soft white collar and deep cuffs. Except for being rather tight across the shoulders it fitted her as though she had been poured into it. She had selected this dress because she knew it was just the sort of thing a new secretary would be expected to wear.

She crossed the broad hall to the open door of the library, and there found Mrs. Lawson standing before a window staring into the storm. Although Dorothy's footsteps made practically no sound on the thick pile of the handsome Bokhara rug, the woman turned like a flash at her entrance.

"Oh, good morning, Janet." The frown on her face gave way to a pleasant smile. "I hope you were comfortable last night. Did you sleep well?"

"I dropped off as soon as my head touched the pillow," she answered, taking Mrs. Lawson's outstretched hand. Dorothy did not believe in telling a lie unless it was in a good cause; but when necessary, she invariably made the lie a good one.

"I hope the storm didn't wake you," smiled Laura, holding Dorothy's hand.

Dorothy did not reply at once. Two long fingers were lightly pressing her wrist, and she saw that Mrs. Lawson's eyes had strayed to the grandfather's clock in the corner of the room. "Test number one," she said to herself. "Mrs. du Val, alias Lawson is counting my pulse. Well, I've got a clear conscience, perhaps I can give her a shock." She drew her hand away and answered the woman's question in her normal voice. "Oh, the storm! No, I never heard it, Mrs. Lawson. If that hot lemonade had been drugged, I couldn't have slept any sounder!"

"What makes you say that?" snapped her employer, and beneath the velvet tone, Dorothy sensed the ring of steel.

She dropped her eyes, and turning toward the open hearth, held out her hands to the crackling blaze. "Oh, I don't know," she said sweetly and like the clever little strategist that she was, opened her own offensive in the enemy's territory. "I have the bad habit of occasionally walking in my sleep, Mrs. Lawson—and especially when I spend the night in a strange bed. Perhaps it's nervousness—I don't know."

Mrs. Lawson threw her a sharp glance. "Sit down, Janet," she suggested, pointing to a chair near the fire, and taking one herself across the hearth. "You're—I mean, you don't seem to be at all nervous this morning."

"Good old pulse!" thought Dorothy. Then aloud—"No, I feel splendidly, thank you. But, you see, I didn't walk in my sleep last night."

"But surely you can't tell when you do it!"

"Oh, yes, I can." Dorothy's manner and tone were those of the simple schoolgirl proud of an unusual accomplishment.

"You don't expect me to believe that you know what you're doing when you walk in your sleep, Janet. That's impossible!"

"Not while I'm sleepwalking, Mrs. Lawson. That wasn't what I said—but when I have been sleepwalking—there's a difference, you see?"

"Well?" The lady of the house objected to being contradicted and took no trouble to hide it.

"It's really very simple," explained Dorothy, painstakingly, as though she were speaking to a rather stupid child. "I found out how to do it. You see, I've been walking in my sleep ever since I was a little thing. When I get in bed at night I leave my slippers on the floor beside it pointed outward—away from the bed. We all leave them that way, I guess. It's the natural thing to do."

"But what have slippers got to do with it?" Laura was becoming impatient.

"Everything, so far as I'm concerned, Mrs. Lawson. When I've been walking at night, I always find them in the morning beside the bed, but pointing *toward* it. I evidently slip them off before I get back into bed, and—"

"I'm beginning to think you are quite a clever girl, Janet."

"Oh, thank you," said Dorothy with a guilelessness that was sheer camouflage. "Has anybody been saying I'm stupid? I've always stood high in my classes at school."

"Oh, not stupid, child—but nervous—perhaps a little unbalanced, especially this past week."

Dorothy raised her heavy lashes and looked Mrs. Lawson squarely in the face. This might be a test she was undergoing and it probably was; but here was a heaven sent chance to stir up discord in the enemy's camp. She must work up to it gradually.

"I know that I was nervous and upset past all endurance." She leaned forward, her hands on the arms of the chair. "How would you like your father to lock you in your bedroom for a week, without ever coming to see you, or giving you any explanation for such outrageous treatment? Am I a child to be handled like that? To be shipped up here to strangers, whether I wanted to go or not? How

would you feel about it, Mrs. Lawson, if you were me? Don't say you would submit to it sitting down."

"But I am taking you on as my secretary," the lady hedged. "Offering you a good position for which you'll be paid twenty dollars a week. That's not to be thought of lightly, especially in these times."

"But it doesn't seem to strike you that I might like to have something to say about it," Dorothy replied calmly. "As for the salary—that's no inducement. My mother left me five thousand a year. I came into the income on my last birthday, so you see I have nearly a hundred dollars a week, whether I work or not."

"I didn't know that, of course," Mrs. Lawson admitted and none too graciously. "Your father wants you to be here while he's away. I hope you aren't going to be difficult, Janet."

"I hope not, Mrs. Lawson. I shall be glad to stay here for a while and do the work you'd planned for me; but if I do, it must be as a guest and not as a paid dependant."

"But you are a guest, Janet."

"I shall not accept a salary, Mrs. Lawson."

"Very well, my dear, if you wish it that way."

"Thank you very much."

"To get back to our former topic," Mrs. Lawson said, and lit a cigarette. "I can understand that your father's conduct in confining you to your room might be exasperating—but why should it make you nervous? And my husband tells me that when he visited you in your room you acted as though you were in deadly fear of something or somebody every time he saw you. What was the trouble, Janet? Was anything worrying you?"

"Yes, there was, Mrs. Lawson."

Dorothy looked down at the andirons, and her hands on the chair arms twisted embarrassedly. From the corner of her eye she saw a smile of satisfaction light up the older woman's face. She knew she was playing with fire and that Mrs. Lawson was watching her as a hawk watches its defenseless prey before it strikes. But all unknown to her inquisitor, Dorothy had been leading her into this trap as a move forward in her own game. Genuine dislike for the woman as well as a mischievous impulse on her part drew her to make the scene as dramatic and convincing as possible.

"Yes—I—I—was afraid," she went on, dragging out the words slowly.

"Then don't you think you'd better tell me about it, Janet? I'm nearly old enough to be your mother. Let me take your mother's place, dear. Give me your confidence. I feel sure I'll be able to help you, child."

This reference to Janet's dead mother by a woman who was the vilest kind of a hypocrite swept away Dorothy's last compunction. She herself was going to commit justifiable libel. Mrs. Lawson, on the other hand, was attempting to lead Janet Jordan into a confession of shamming sleep at the fateful meeting a week ago. And such a confession meant a sentence of death from this beautiful siren who gazed at her so winningly, who puffed a cigarette so nonchalantly while she waited for an unsuspecting girl to commit herself.

"Well, I don't know—I can't help hesitating to tell *you*, Mrs. Lawson," Dorothy began timidly.

"There's no need to be afraid of anything," replied the woman, only half veiling the sneer that went with the words.

"Oh, but you see, there is, Mrs. Lawson!" Dorothy's manner was still indecisive. "I don't want—in fact, I hate awfully to hurt you this way."

"Hurt me!" Mrs. Lawson's cigarette snapped into the fireplace like a miniature comet. "Hurt me, child? What in the wide world are you talking about?"

"Just what I say, Mrs. Lawson."

Mrs. Lawson sniffed. "Don't be ridiculous, Janet. Out with it now. What did you fear when you were locked in your room?"

"Your husband, Mrs. Lawson."

"My husband!"

"Yes."

"But—why—I don't believe you."

"Oh, very well. You asked the question, I was trying to answer it, that's all."

Mrs. Lawson bit her lip. She was furious. "As long as you've said what you have, you'd better go on with it," she said acidly.

"There isn't any more," returned Dorothy. "That's all there is."

"But surely he must have given you reasons for your assertion." Mrs. Lawson had walked beautifully into Dorothy's trap. Her own plan to snare an unsuspecting girl had been blotted out by the shadow of the Green Goddess, Jealousy. "Tell me what my husband did or said to make you fear him, and tell me at once."

"It wasn't what he did, Mrs. Lawson—it was the way he looked."

“What do you mean—the way he looked?”

Dorothy had thrust a painful knife into the mental cosmos of her adversary. Now she deliberately turned it in the wound. “Very probably,” she said quietly, looking her straight in the eyes, “you can remember how Mr. Lawson looked when he first made love to you. I don’t want to be made love to, and I don’t like *him*, Mrs. Lawson.”

“What did you do?”

“I told him to leave me—and when he would not go, I simply walked into my bathroom and locked the door.”

“But what happened the next time he came? Martin went in to see you every day, didn’t he?”

“He did. But he talked to me through the bathroom door. Just as soon as I heard the key turn in the lock I’d hop in there.”

The man she had been talking about must have been listening just outside in the hall, for now he strode into the room and up to Dorothy. “That,” he said menacingly, “is a deliberate lie, Miss Janet Jordan!”

Chapter XIII

WINNITE

Dorothy looked up and smiled carelessly at the man. "You're very polite, Mr. Lawson. Perhaps it isn't my place to say it to a man old enough to be my father—but eavesdroppers rarely hear good of themselves."

Martin Lawson, who prided himself upon his youthful appearance, grew angrier than ever. "I— I won't stand for such outrageous libel," he thundered. "I've always treated you as though you were my own—well, daughter, if you like."

"I *don't* like it, Mr. Lawson—but that doesn't make any difference," Dorothy's tone was one of pained acceptance. "If you listened long enough, you will know that I didn't bring this matter up myself. Mrs. Lawson was asking questions and I was trying to answer them, that's all. If you prefer it, I'll say that it was the wind whistling outside the windows that made me afraid." She looked over at Mrs. Lawson, who was watching them through half shut eyes, as though to say, "—you understand, of course—anything for peace."

Martin Lawson intercepted the glance and became even more furious, if that were possible. "You—you little viper!" he snarled. "Laura, don't you believe a word of it. The whole thing's her own invention—a pack of lies!"

"A silly schoolgirl fancy, if you like, Martin." Laura Lawson's tone was expressionless. "But I can understand it just the same. Yes, I can understand it."

"What do you mean—you understand it?"

"I was a girl once myself," she replied in the same colorless tone. "And then, you see, I know you very, very well."

"Oh, you do, do you?"

"He's off again," sighed Dorothy, but quite to herself.

"And you have the nerve to insinuate—?" the angry man went on, beside himself with rage. "You know as well as I do, Laura, that this girl was afraid because of what she saw and heard at the meeting. She—"

"That will be quite enough, Martin." His wife interrupted him sharply. "And what is more—you probably have not noticed that since Janet has been here and with other people, she is very much herself—and afraid of nothing at all."

"What meeting is he talking about, Mrs. Lawson?" Dorothy pointedly ignored the angry husband.

Mrs. Lawson stood up. "Never mind that now," she decreed, albeit pleasantly. "Come along with me to my office. I have some typing I'd like you to do for me before luncheon. Martin!" She swung round on her husband. "You will wait here for me. I'll be back in a few minutes—I want to talk to you." She slipped her arm through Dorothy's and drew her from the room.

Once in the entrance hall, she led her back and under the gallery to a corridor which opened at the right of the broad stairs. Dorothy saw that there were several doors in the right hand wall. Mrs. Lawson stopped at the second of these and opened it.

They walked in and Dorothy saw that they were in the office. It seemed very businesslike and austere after coming from the luxury of the library and spacious hall. Near the one window stood a broad table desk, and opposite that a typewriter desk. Two steel filing cabinets and three plain chairs completed the room's furnishings. The walls were hung with framed blueprints and a large-scale map of Fairfield County, Connecticut.

Mrs. Lawson took some papers from a drawer in the large desk and handed them to Dorothy. "This is in longhand, as you see," she explained, "please type it, double space, and I'd like to have a carbon copy." She glanced at a small wrist-watch set with diamonds. "It is just noon now. Luncheon is at one. Do you think you can finish the work by that time?"

Dorothy glanced at the manuscript. "This won't make more than four typewritten sheets. I can do it easily in an hour and have time to spare."

"Good!" The older woman patted her lightly on the shoulder. "Take your time about it. Do you think you can read my handwriting?"

"Nothing could be plainer, Mrs. Lawson." Dorothy smiled back at her.

"Very well, then. I'll see you at lunch. The dining room is across the hall from the library."

At the door, she stopped and turned as though she had just remembered something.

"Don't let what my husband said bother you, Janet."

"That's forgotten already," Dorothy said easily.

"Like most men, he flies off the handle when irritated. Pay no attention to it."

"I understand."

Mrs. Lawson hesitated for the fraction of a second. "By the way, Janet," she remarked. "When was the last time you walked in your sleep—that you found your slippers pointed toward your bed in the

morning?"

Dorothy pretended to think. "Let me see," she said slowly. "Yes—it was the night before Daddy locked me in my room! I found that I couldn't get out in the morning, and naturally, I wanted to know the reason why. I still do, for that matter. Except for some foolishness about my being ill, I'm still waiting for an explanation. As a matter of fact, I was perfectly well. I'm terribly annoyed, of course, and it worries me to think that Daddy should act this way, but so far as my health goes, I've never felt better."

"I'm glad to hear it, dear. We'll check up on your father when he returns. I'm your friend, you know. Don't let the matter prey on your mind."

"Thank you, Mrs. Lawson. I'll try to do as you say." Dorothy thought she was going then, but it seemed that the woman had still another question that she had been holding back.

"When you are in this somnambulistic state," she said, "when you are sleepwalking, I mean, doesn't it terrify you to awaken and find yourself out of your bed?"

Dorothy frowned and seemed puzzled. "Perhaps it would," she admitted. "But then, you see, I can't remember ever waking while I was walking during the night. I must sleep very soundly. At school the night watchman or one of the teachers would frequently find me walking about the building. They would lead me back to bed, or just tell me to go there, and I would always obey. Until they told me about it next day, I knew nothing of course. That's how I got onto the business of the slippers, you see."

"Oh, yes. I wondered how you'd been able to check on it. Well, I must trot along now and let you get to work. Until luncheon then, my dear."

She was gone at last and Dorothy made a face at the closed door. "Of all the plausible hypocrites I've ever met," she muttered, "you certainly take the well known chocolate cake!"

She sat down at the typewriter desk, pulled out the machine, and slipped in two sheets of paper and a carbon that she found in one of the drawers. Halfway through a perusal of Mrs. Lawson's first page, she looked up. The door opened quickly and Mr. Tunbridge came into the room.

"I've just a moment," he prefaced hurriedly. "They mustn't find me here. What was the row in the library?"

Dorothy explained briefly.

"Fine! Put you through the hoops, eh? I had a good idea she would do something of the kind. You came out of a difficult situation with flying colors, I take it. But be careful about run-ins with Lawson. He's a slick article—in fact, the two of them are a pair of the slickest articles it's ever been my misfortune to run across. And they're going it hammer and tongs in the library right now. I was a bit worried about you, that's why I took this chance."

"When do I get my instructions for tonight?"

"Late this afternoon, probably. I'll get them to you somehow."

"Thanks. And here's something else. This script I'm going to type for Mrs. L. has to do with the properties of a highly explosive gas which seems to burn up everything it comes in contact with and lets off fumes of deadly poison while it's doing that! Shall I make a copy for you?"

"Please do!" His hand rested on the doorknob. "Yes, it's important that we have a copy. That's the stuff Doctor Winn has just invented, without a doubt."

"Awful!" exclaimed Dorothy. "Just think what would happen if that were used in a war!"

"That's the government's business, Miss Dixon."

"Ours but to do—and die—" she quoted and her tone was deadly serious.

"Quite right. But make the carbon copy just the same—and don't let them catch you at it."

"I won't, Mr. Tunbridge."

"Bye-bye, then. I'll get along now. There may be some home truths floating out of the library that will give me extra dope on the du-Val—Lawson pair."

The door closed, and after slipping an extra carbon and a sheet of very thin copy paper into the typewriter, Dorothy read Mrs. Lawson's treatise on "Winnite and Its Properties" from start to finish.

"Horrible!" she murmured, as she finished reading. "Simply horrible!" Again her eyes sought the last paragraph. "The effect is easily estimated of an airplane dropping a single bomb filled with the explosive, inflammable and deadly poison gas, Winnite, upon Manhattan Island, for instance: the bomb would explode upon detonation and within an inconceivably short space of time, not only would the City of Greater New York be in flames, but every living thing within that area would be dead from the poison fumes. This includes not only human, animal and insect life, but all vegetable matter as well."

Dorothy sighed. "And I am supposed to help keep this terrible stuff from the hands of thieves so that our government may use it in time of war. Well—we'll see—and that's not that by a long shot!"

She put down the manuscript and began to type it.

Chapter XIV

PROFESSOR

Dorothy, upon finishing the article on Winnite, laid the original and first carbon copy of the typewritten sheets on Mrs. Lawson's desk. The almost transparent sheets of the second carbon copy she folded carefully as though she meant to place them in an envelope. But instead of this, her right foot slipped out of its walking pump, the sheer silk stocking followed it. Then she put on the stocking again, but now the soft papers rested between the stocking and the sole of her foot. The pump fitted more snugly than before, although not uncomfortably so. Content with her morning's work, she had closed the typewriter and was studying the effect of a new shade of powder in her compact mirror when Mrs. Lawson came into the room.

"I take it you've finished the work?"

"The original and copy are beside the longhand manuscript on your desk," said Dorothy, toning down her efforts with the puff. "I've read it over and I don't think you'll find any mistakes."

Mrs. Lawson ran her eyes over the typewritten sheets. "They are without a fault," she declared, placing them in a drawer. "If you take dictation as accurately as you type, Janet, you'll be the perfect secretary."

"Thank you," said Dorothy demurely and slipped the compact into the pocket of her frock. "It is very nice of you to say that."

"Then we'll go in to luncheon, shall we? That is, if you're ready?"

Dorothy stood up. "Quite ready, Mrs. Lawson, and good and hungry, too."

"Splendid!" enthused her hostess, as they walked down the corridor toward the entrance hall. "Doctor Winn declares this Connecticut Ridge country is the most healthful section of the United States. And even if some people have other ideas on the subject, I can testify that it is a great appetite builder."

Dorothy smiled, but said nothing. She was wondering how healthful she was going to find this particular spot in the Ridge country after what she had to do tonight.

"Doctor Winn always lunches in his study," continued Mrs. Lawson. "That is the room just beyond my office. My husband has been called to New York on business. He won't be back until after dinner tonight, so we will be alone at luncheon."

For some reason of her own, Laura Lawson had become affability itself. And for this Dorothy gave thanks. That she disliked this truly beautiful creature was only natural. But it is much more pleasant to lunch with a person who puts herself out to be charming and affable, no matter what your private opinion of the other's character may be.

The dining room proved to be a low-ceiled apartment paneled in white pine; heavy beams of the satin-finished wood overhead, and on the walls several colorful landscapes in oils, evidently the works of artists who knew and loved this Ridge country. A cheerful log fire burned brightly on the open hearth beneath a high mantelpiece. Outside, the heavy snow continued to drive past frosted window-panes, but within all was warmth and coziness.

Dorothy enjoyed the meal thoroughly. Like most girls, she revelled in luxury when it came her way. Not only was her hostess an interesting and entertaining conversationalist, the delicious food served by Tunbridge and a second man in plum-colored knee breeches, added materially to her pleasure. She was really sorry when the butler lighted his mistress' cigarette and Mrs. Lawson rose from the table.

"I have no work for you this afternoon, Janet," said the lady, as they strolled into the spacious hall with its suits of polished armor and trophies of war and the chase decorating the walls. "I have some work to complete with Doctor Winn, so I won't be free to entertain you. There are periodicals and novels in the library. If it weren't such a beastly day, I would suggest a walk."

"Oh, I don't mind a snowstorm!" Dorothy smiled at her. "I'd love to be out in it for a while."

"But I'm afraid you might get lost. The blizzard is driving out of the northeast—and that means something in this country. You'll find it more disagreeable than you think."

"I'm not afraid to walk in a blizzard," Dorothy argued, "we used to do it a lot at school—I love it."

"Oh, very well, then," went on Mrs. Lawson. "I used to enjoy that sort of thing myself. Somebody had better go with you, though. Let me see—" She hesitated. "Oh, yes—Gretchen will be just the person. She's a nice little thing—a native of Ridgefield, you know. Gretchen can show you round the place, and there'll be no chance of your getting lost."

Dorothy was amused by this pretended concern for her safety. She knew that Mrs. Lawson feared she might take it into her head to walk to the railroad station and board the first train back to town. Gretchen as guide and chaperone would be able to forestall anything like that. Mrs. Lawson was not yet sure of the new secretary!

Dorothy's features betrayed no sign of her thoughts. "That will be ever so much pleasanter than going alone," she agreed. "Gretchen seems to be a sweet girl. I saw her this morning when she brought my breakfast and unpacked my clothes. I'm sorry, though, that you can't come too." Deception, she found, was becoming a habit when treating with her hostess.

"Thank you, my dear—I'm sorry, too." Mrs. Lawson went toward the tasselled bell rope that hung beside the fireplace. "Run upstairs now and get into warm things. I'll ring for Gretchen and have her meet you down here in quarter of an hour."

Fifteen minutes afterward, warmly dressed in whipcord jodhpurs, a heavy sweater and knee-length leather coat of dark green, Dorothy came out of her room onto the gallery, pulling a white wool skating cap well down over her ears. With a white wool scarf twisted about her throat, the long ends thrown back over her shoulders, she looked ready for any winter sport as she ran lightly down the stairs, the rubber soles of her high arctics making no sound on the broad oaken steps.

Gretchen, well bundled up in sweater and heavy tweed skirt was waiting for her.

"You certainly do look like a picture on a Christmas magazine cover, Miss Jordan," the girl exclaimed, while they walked to the front door. "I'm glad you've got warm gauntlets. It's mighty cold out—you'll need them."

Dorothy laughed gaily and swung open the door. "Nothing could be more becoming than your own costume, Gretchen. That light blue skating set is just the color of your eyes."

"That," chuckled Gretchen, "is the real reason I bought it."

They were outside now and standing under the wide porte-cochere of glass and wrought iron.

"It's glorious out here, and not too cold, either." Dorothy sniffed the sharp air enthusiastically. "I hate staying indoors on a wild day like this. Look at those big flakes spinning down and sideslipping into the drifts. It makes one glad to be alive."

"You said it, Miss Jordan. I love it myself—though I never thought of snowflakes being like airplanes before. Which way do you want to go?"

"You're the leader, Gretchen. Anywhere you say suits me."

"Then let's tramp over to the pond, Miss Jordan. The ice ought to be holding. We'll stop at the garage and fetch a broom along. There's too much snow for skating, but we might make a slide."

"That will be fun," agreed Dorothy, as they came down the steps and swung along the white expanse of driveway. "I haven't done anything like that since I was a kid. How far's the pond from here?"

"About half a mile. Doctor Winn owns several hundred acres. It's down yonder in a hollow. This time of year when the trees are bare, you can see it plainly from the house. Today there's too much snow."

"There certainly is plenty of it!" Dorothy was ploughing through the fluffy white mass nearly up to her knees. "A good eighteen inches must have fallen already and it's drifting fast. If it doesn't stop by tonight, Winncote will be snowed in for a while. What's that building over there, Gretchen—gray stone, isn't it?"

"That's the laboratory, miss. It's really a wing of the house. The stables are just beyond, but this storm's so thick, it blots them out. Well, here we are at the garage. If you'll wait a minute, I'll step inside and get a broom."

"Get two if you can," suggested Dorothy. "Then we'll both get some exercise, and they'll come in handy while we're getting through the drifts."

"I'll do my best," said Gretchen. She disappeared through a door in the side of the building.

Dorothy looked about her. Rolling clouds of windswept snowflakes made it impossible to see objects more than a few yards away with any distinctness. The dark shadow of low clouds painted the white of her landscape a cold, dull gray. But she noticed, as she waited, that the storm was driving in gusts, that occasionally there would be a short lull when the sun, tinging the sky with rose and yellow, seemed fighting to break its way through to this white-blanketed world. Then Gretchen, a broom in each hand, joined her.

"Whew! that place was stuffy," she said, handing one of the brooms to Dorothy, and starting ahead at right angles from the way they had come. "Hanley made a fuss giving me two—he would! It's a wonder the cars don't melt in there. He keeps the place like an oven. All the help from the city is like that. They can't seem to get warm enough, and the way they hate fresh air is a caution! I roomed with Sadie, the other chambermaid, when I first came, and you won't believe it, but that girl had nailed our window shut so it couldn't be opened! I spoke to Mr. Tunbridge next morning, and he gave me a room of my own. I always did like Mr. Tunbridge. He's a real gentleman, he is."

They forged ahead through the drifts to the crossfire of Gretchen's light chatter, and Dorothy was given a series of entertaining stories concerning the habits of the Winncote servants and their life below-stairs. It was rough going with the storm in their faces, and Gretchen eventually ceased her gossiping from sheer lack of breath. The ground began to slope gently downward, and finally they came to a belt of trees in a hollow. Fifty yards farther on, a broad expanse of white marked the extent of Winncote Pond beneath its thick, flat quilt of snow.

"Think the ice will hold?" Dorothy walked to the brink of the little lake. "I'd hate to go in on a day like this."

"Oh, that's all right. I was down here for an hour yesterday afternoon with my skates before the snow began, and it was much warmer then. The ice was wonderful—slick as glass and solid as a rock."

By dint of considerable exercise they cleared two narrow paths that ran parallel across the ice.

Then they commenced a series of sliding contests, each girl on her own ice track. Starting at a line in the snow a few yards above the low bank, they would race forward to the brink and shoot out on the ice, vying with each other to see who could slide the farthest. There were several tumbles at first, but the deep snow along the sides of the tracks prevented bad bumps. Soon, however, they both became adepts at the sport. Dorothy, aided by her extra weight, for she was at least twenty pounds heavier than little Gretchen, invariably won.

After a half an hour of this rather violent sport, they cleared the snow from a fallen tree trunk and sat down for a rest. Here in the hollow, surrounded by trees, the wind lost a great deal of its force. But the snow continued to fall unabated, and their hot breath clouded like steam in the cold air. Their cheeks were tingling crimson from the racing, and both felt in high good spirits.

"I can't understand why so many rich people go south every winter," Gretchen said earnestly. "I wouldn't miss out on this fun—the snow and the skating, tobogganing—for anything in the world."

"People like that," decreed Dorothy, "just don't know how to live. You can have lots of fun in summer, of course. I don't know which I love the best. But this sort of thing makes you feel just grand. It certainly put the pep into—" She stopped short and sprang to her feet. From somewhere close by and seemingly below her, had come a low, moaning sound.

Gretchen jumped up. Her doll-like face with its round, blue eyes took on a look of startled wonder. "What was that?" she cried. "It sounded as if I—as if I was sitting on it!"

Again came the low cry in a weird, minor key.

"You were. It's coming from the inside of this log. An animal of some kind."

"Why, I guess you're right. Whatever it is, the thing gave me the heebie-jeebies for a minute."

The snow had drifted over the butt of the half-rotted tree. Dorothy took her broom and swept it clear.

"The log's hollow!" she exclaimed and bent down. "Yes, there's something in there—I can see its eyes—come here, Gretchen! You can see for yourself."

"Not me!" declared that young woman. "I don't want to get bit—I mean, bitten, miss."

"Oh, never mind the grammar." Dorothy was almost standing on her head, trying to get a better view. "But do cut out the polite trimmings when we're alone. You're Gretchen and I'm Dorothy—savez?"

"All right—Dorothy. But please be careful. That thing may jump out at you."

"I wish it would. Then I'd know what it is. And whatever it is, the animal in there can't be much bigger than a rabbit. The hole isn't wide enough."

"Maybe it is a rabbit." Gretchen came nearer.

"Did you ever hear a rabbit make a noise like that?" Dorothy's tone was disdainful.

"Then—maybe it's a wildcat!" said Gretchen fearfully.

"Well, if it is, it's a small one. Here, puss—puss. The silly thing is too far in to reach. She just blinks at me."

"Perhaps she's hurt and crawled in there to die, Dorothy."

"Aren't you cheerful! She probably crawled in there to get out of the storm, and is half-frozen, poor thing."

"Well, I don't know what we're going to do about it," sighed Gretchen, still keeping her distance.

Once more the low moan came from the log, but now that the end was free from snow, the sound was much clearer.

"That's no wildcat, either!" Dorothy twisted her head, first to the right, then to the left, in an attempt to get a better light on the log's occupant. "There's too much of a whine in that cry. The thing's probably a young fox. How does one call a fox, Gretchen? I'm hanged if I know."

"Nor me, neither, Dorothy. It's the first time I've ever heard of anybody wanting to call one."

They both laughed. "You don't seem to know much about foxes," teased Dorothy. "Didn't you ever see a fox?"

"No. But my father says the way they steal eggs and suck them is a caution."

"Well," admitted Dorothy, "we can't stand around here all day, trying to get frozen foxes out of hollow logs. I'll try whistling, and you can make a noise like a sucked egg. If that doesn't work, we'll have to leave him in his lair." With a wink at the giggling Gretchen, she bent down again and whistled shrilly. "Here, boy!" she called. "Come on out to your mama!"

There was a scrambling noise within the log, and Gretchen started for the pond.

"Oh, be careful, Dorothy! Do be careful!" she cried, as she saw her friend gather a small creature into her arms. "What is it, anyway—is it a fox?"

"No, a first cousin." Dorothy shook the ends of her wool scarf free from snow and wrapped them around the small animal.

"A first cousin?" Gretchen came nearer. "What in the world do you mean by that?"

"Come and take a look," her friend invited. "He won't bite you, will you, boy?"

Gretchen saw her pat a little black nose that poked its way out of the scarf. A long pointed head, brindle and white, in which were set two snapping black eyes, followed the nose. "Why, why, it's a fox terrier—a fox terrier puppy!" she gasped. "How do you suppose he ever came to crawl into that log?"

Dorothy patted the dog's head. "Got lost in the storm, I guess. The poor little chap can't be over three months old. Does he belong up at the house?"

"No, he doesn't. What's more, none of the people who live around here have a fox terrier pup that I know of."

Dorothy examined the pup's front paws, but did so very gently. "This little man has come a long way." She covered him again. "The bottom of his feet show it. They're cut and badly swollen. And he's half-frozen and starved into the bargain, I'll bet. Let's go back to the house and make him comfortable."

"I'll carry the brooms," said Gretchen. "You have an armful, with him. By the way, you're going to keep him, aren't you?"

"Surest thing you know! That is, unless someone comes to claim him."

They trudged off through the trees and up the hill, Gretchen shouldering the brooms.

"What are you going to call him?" she asked, after a while.

"What do you think?"

"Why, I don't know. Wait a minute, though—there's a girl who lives over in Silvermine named Dorothea Gutmann. Daddy sometimes does work for her father. Dorothea has a fox terrier pup and she calls him 'Professor.' Do you know why?"

"I give up," said Dorothy, floundering through the snow beside her. "Why does Dorothea Gutmann call her fox terrier pup Professor?"

"Because," smiled Gretchen in delight, "he just about ate up a dictionary!"

Dorothy laughed merrily, and hugged the warm little bundle in her arms. "And when you've got outside a lot of words like that, even a pup would know as much as the average professor, I s'pose."

"That's the way Dorothea thought about it. I've been over to the Gutmanns a couple of times with Daddy and her dog looks enough like yours to be a twin!"

"We run into doubles nowadays, every day!" Dorothy chuckled. "First it's Janet and me who can't be told apart. Then it's Dorothea's dog and mine. I know her, too, by the way. She's in the New Canaan Junior High. But I haven't seen her puppy. Our names are almost alike, too, but not quite, thank goodness. If any more of this double identity business comes along, I'll just have to give up. A girl's got to have some sort of a personality all her own, you know."

"I wouldn't let that worry me," said Gretchen. "There's only one Dorothy Dixon, after all."

"Thanks for those kind words, Gretchen. That's really very sweet of you, though. If the pup was a lady, I'd call him 'Gretchen'. Since he isn't, 'Professor' will do very nicely. We'll try him on a dictionary when we get home, that is, after he's had some nice warm bread and milk, and a good sleep."

"If," smiled Gretchen, "what you said just now was meant for a compliment—well, I'm glad Professor is not a lady. You'd better go on to the house, while I drop these brooms in here at the garage. I'll come to your room just as soon as I can slip into my uniform, and I'll bring up the bread and milk."

"I always knew you were a dear," said Dorothy, and she continued to push her way on toward the house.

Chapter XV

TEA AND ORDERS

After she had changed her clothes and fed the famished pup with a bowl of warm milk and bread, Dorothy took him down to the library. Gretchen brought a small open basket and a blanket and they made him a bed near the open fire. Professor promptly went to sleep, and his mistress curled up in a deep chair beside him, reading and dozing for the rest of the afternoon. To amuse Gretchen, she had placed a dictionary near the basket, to see if Professor would follow his double's example and so justify his name. When he awoke, however, about four o'clock, he merely jumped out of his bed on to the book, and up to Dorothy's lap, where he went to sleep again.

"Good ole pup!" Dorothy rubbed his smooth, warm head between his ears. "You show your intelligence by using the dictionary as a stepping stone to better things, don't you, Prof!"

She yawned, closed her book, and promptly went to sleep again herself.

She awoke with a start, to find Mrs. Lawson smiling down at her. Tunbridge was laying the tea-things on a table at the other side of the fire. "Well, my dear," the lady said, her eyes on the fox terrier, "I see you've found a new friend."

"Oh, yes, isn't he just too darling? I found him out in the blizzard, he was half frozen and almost starved!" She went on to tell Mrs. Lawson about it.

"I'm afraid I'm not very fond of animals, Janet." Dorothy noticed that she did not attempt to touch the puppy. "I don't dislike them, you understand, but somehow they never seem to like me."

"That's too bad," said Dorothy. "I do hope you won't mind my keeping him—at least until we learn who his owner is?"

Laura Lawson looked doubtful. "Well, I don't mind. But—this is Doctor Winn's house, you know, and his decision, after all, is the one that counts. You will have to ask him about keeping the dog, Janet."

"Is Doctor Winn going to have tea with us, Mrs. Lawson?"

"He most certainly is, my dear. That is, if you ladies will pour him a cup."

Dorothy glanced up, and beside her stood an old gentleman, very tall and spare, but bowed with the weight of his years. She knew that the scientist was well over eighty. Catching up the fox terrier, she rose to her feet.

"How do you do, Doctor Winn?" She smiled and offered him her hand.

The old gentleman bent over it with courtly grace. "Good afternoon, Miss Janet Jordan. Welcome to Winncote." Merry gray eyes twinkled at her from behind pince-nez attached to a broad black ribbon. An aristocrat of the old school, Dorothy thought, as she studied his handsome, clean shaven face crisscrossed with the tiny wrinkles of advanced age. She had imagined him to be quite a different sort of person. His next words proved that he read her thoughts.

"You expected to see a musty old fellow, with a long white beard, wearing a smock stained by chemicals, eh?" He chuckled softly. "Now, tell me, young lady, isn't that so? Though I admit these flannel slacks and old Norfolk jacket are hardly fashionable habiliments when one is taking tea with ladies!"

He released her hand and smiled a greeting to Mrs. Lawson. The second footman, he of the plum-colored knee-breeches, set the tea table before that young matron, under the supervision of the stately Tunbridge.

Dorothy liked this gallant old scientist and his courtly ways. Her own eyes sparkled gaily back at him. "Yes, you did surprise me, Doctor Winn," she confessed. "Please don't think I'm being forward, but—but you seem much more like the English fox-hunting squires I've read about, than the world-renowned chemist you really are, with stacks of letters after your name. But ever so much nicer, and jollier, you know!"

Doctor Winn beamed. "Now that, my dear, is a most charming compliment. Old fellows like me aren't used to compliments from young ladies, either. Do sit down again, please, and tell me how you like Winncote and our New England snowstorms. We old people need young folks around. I can see that we are going to be good friends."

He sat down in a chair the butler drew up for him.

"Mrs. Lawson will tell you," replied Dorothy, "that I love it out here in the country." She accepted a cup of tea from Tunbridge and added sugar and a slice of lemon. The butler was followed by his liveried assistant, bearing silver platters of hot, buttered scones and tiny iced cakes. Professor immediately began to show interest in the proceedings. Dorothy held him firmly out of harm's way, and placed her tea and eatables on the broad arm of her chair.

Mrs. Lawson looked up from her place behind the shining silver and old china of the tea table. She smiled graciously. "Oh, yes, Janet loves blizzards, too, Doctor Winn. She went out for a walk this afternoon and acquired a fox terrier puppy, as you see."

"And naturally, she wants to keep him." The old gentleman leaned forward in his chair, the better to look at Professor. "You certainly may, Janet. And by the way, I hope you'll agree that it's an old man's privilege to call you by your first name?"

"Oh, that is sweet of you!" Dorothy cried delightedly, and the Doctor's chuckle echoed her pleasure.

"The dog's got a fine head—a very fine head, indeed. If anybody advertises for him, or comes to claim him, I'll take pleasure in buying the puppy for you."

"Why, you're nicer every minute," declared Dorothy. "Isn't he, Professor?"

The pup yawned with great indifference, which set all three of them laughing. His mistress put him in his blanket where he promptly curled up and fell into slumber once more.

"I sadly fear," said Doctor Winn, as he polished his pince-nez with a white silk handkerchief, "that you are a good deal of a flirt Janet. But inasmuch as I am old enough to be your grandfather, or great-grandfather, for that matter, you are pardoned with a reprimand." He chuckled deep in his throat, a habit he had when pleased. "Now tell me, how you happened to find him out in the snow."

Dorothy recounted the story in detail. When she came to the part about Gretchen's fear of the wildcat and the fox, even Mrs. Lawson, who was none too sure she liked the turn things were taking, broke into a merry peal of laughter.

"Capital, capital!" Doctor Winn beamed. "I only wish I'd been there to see it. But why, may I ask, do you call him Professor?"

Dorothy explained about the dictionary and Gretchen's idea of the pup's resemblance to Dorothea Gutmann's fox terrier.

"Better and better," exclaimed the Doctor. "This is the jolliest tea we've had in this house for ages. We need young people around us to be really happy. You and I and Martin, Laura, have been working too hard of late. 'All work and no play'—We've been bothering too much about things scientific, and neglecting things personal. Well now, we can rest a while, and become human beings again."

Mrs. Lawson leaned forward eagerly. "Then, the formula is complete?" she asked in a low voice, in which Dorothy detected the barely controlled tremor of excitement.

"Yes, indeed. Finished and locked in my safe. I added the final figures and quantities three-quarters of an hour ago. Tomorrow, or if the weather doesn't clear by then, the next day at latest, I shall take it on to Washington."

"I congratulate you, Doctor. And I know that once it is in the hands of the government, a great load will be taken off your mind."

"You're right, my dear, you are right. I've been jumpy as a cat with eight of its lives gone for the past year." He turned to Dorothy. "Thank goodness, you're young and without responsibilities, Janet. There are so many unscrupulous people about nowadays. If those papers were lost or stolen, there is no telling what would happen. I dare not think of it. The whole world might suffer if that formula got into the wrong hands!"

Dorothy could not help thinking that the world at large would be much better off if the formula were destroyed. She, therefore, merely nodded and looked impressed. How this gentle, kindly old man could have brought himself to invent such a ghastly menace to life, she found it difficult to understand.

Laura Lawson stood up. "Doctor Winn likes to dine early, Janet, so if we are to be dressed by six-thirty, we had better start upstairs."

"My word, yes!" The old gentleman snapped open the hunting case of his repeater and got stiffly to his feet. "Time flies when one is enjoying oneself. It's nearly six o'clock. This has been very pleasant indeed, the first of many afternoons, I hope." He snapped the watch shut and returned it to his pocket. "You ladies will excuse me, I'm sure." He bowed to them both, and holding himself much more erect than he had formerly, walked stiffly from the room.

"He's simply darling," exclaimed Dorothy in a hushed voice.

"Yes, he's a very simple and a very fine old gentleman," said Laura Lawson. She seemed lost in her thoughts and evidently unaware that she uttered them aloud. "Sometimes—I hate to hurt him so."

"Why—why, what do you mean?" Dorothy could have bitten her own tongue out for speaking that sentence.

"Mean—? Oh, nothing, child. Run along now, and change. But take your dog with you. I'll see that one of the men gives him a run in the stables while we're at dinner."

"Thank you very much," said Dorothy. She turned the sleeping pup out of his bed, caught up the basket, and with Professor at her heels, ran lightly from the room.

Just outside the door she collided with Tunbridge, and Professor's basket was jerked from her grasp.

"Oh, I'm so very sorry, Miss Jordan!" His acting was perfect. Dorothy knew that Mrs. Lawson was close behind them. Then as they both stooped to retrieve the basket their heads came close together. "Under your pillow!" It was hardly more than the breath of a whisper, but Dorothy caught the words, nodded her understanding, and stood up.

"I'm afraid I'm to blame, Tunbridge. I didn't see you coming."

"Not at all, Miss. It was my fault, entirely. Very clumsy of me I'm sure!"

From the corner of her eye Dorothy caught a glimpse of Laura Lawson watching them from the doorway.

"Don't let it worry you, Tunbridge. I'm not hurt, neither is the basket. Professor will probably park himself on my *pillow* tonight, anyway. Puppies have a way of doing such things, you know. So it really wouldn't matter much if you had smashed it."

She gave him a nod, and picking up the dog made for the staircase.

"So instructions are waiting under my pillow," she mused, as she slowly mounted the broad stair. The afternoon had been a pleasant one, but the evening, with those instructions ahead of her, portended to be something quite different. It had been so nice and cheerful, chatting round the tea table; so cozy sitting before the glowing logs, just talking of jolly things and forgetting all worry and responsibility. Of course, beyond the curtained windows, the blizzard howled. And it whipped the swirling snowflakes into disordered clouds with its arctic lash before it let them seek the shelter of their fellows in the drifts. She felt very much as though she too were a snowflake, tossed hither and thither on the storm of circumstance, to be whipped forward by the secret lash of underlying crime.

If she could only drop down on to her bed and sleep—and awake to find it all a bad dream! She sighed and went toward her door on the gallery. Her pillow held no peace for her tonight—nothing more nor less than detailed instructions as to how Tunbridge wished her to rob a safe. Why didn't the man do his own stealing? Her part was to take Janet's place out here, and kill suspicion in Laura Lawson. Well, she'd done that, hadn't she? And now they loaded this other job on to her. It wasn't fair. She had done enough—she'd—

"Oh, shucks!" She pulled herself up mentally as her hand fell on the doorknob. "I'll be losing my nerve altogether, if I let my thoughts run on this way. D. Dixon, you just *must not* funk it!"

She turned the knob and entered her room.

Chapter XVI

CAUGHT IN THE ACT

When Dorothy went down to dinner that evening, she knew exactly what she had to do. After reading Tunbridge's note which she found had been slipped between the pillow case and the pillow itself, she had memorized the combination to Doctor Winn's safe, and destroyed the missive as she had his warning of the night before. After a bath and a complete change of clothing, she felt refreshed and in a much better frame of mind. She had selected one of the prettiest gowns in Janet's wardrobe, a turquoise blue crepe, with a cluster of silver roses fastened in the twisted velvet girdle, put on slippers to match, and surveyed the result in the mirror.

"Decidedly becoming, my girl," she smiled at her reflection, and gave a last pat to her shining bob that she had brushed until it lay like a bronze cap close about her shapely head. "Might as well look my best at my criminal debut!" She made a face at herself, turned and kissed the sleeping puppy in his basket, and went downstairs.

Doctor Winn and Mrs. Lawson were standing talking in the entrance hall, near the fireplace. The old gentleman, dressed in immaculate dinner clothes, looked more than ever like the English squire in his ancestral hall. He came forward to meet her, both hands outstretched.

"As charming as an English primrose and twice as beautiful!" he greeted gaily.

"Thank you kindly, sir." She dropped him a little curtsey and let him lead her to Mrs. Lawson.

"Our little secretary has blossomed into a very lovely debutante," he beamed.

Dorothy bit her lip, remembering her own phrase of a few moments before, then smiled at her employer. Mrs. Lawson was regal in black velvet, trimmed in narrow bands of ermine. She returned Dorothy's smile, and lifted her finely pencilled brows at the Doctor. "Oh, you men. You are all alike. A pretty gown, a pretty face intrigues you, young or old. Pay no attention to his flattery, Janet. I can hardly blame him, though. You look lovely tonight. That is an exquisite frock. Did you buy it abroad?"

"Oh, no, at a little place on fifty-seventh street." Of course Dorothy had no idea where Janet had bought the dress. "It is a Paris model, though, Mrs. Lawson."

"I thought as much. Ah, here comes Tunbridge with the cocktails. I wonder which side of the fence you are on?"

"I'm—I'm afraid I don't know quite what you mean, Mrs. Lawson."

"I'll explain," broke in the old gentleman. "I'm the prohibitionist in this house, Janet. Mrs. Lawson is one of the antis. She likes a real cocktail before dinner. I prefer one made of tomato juice."

Mrs. Lawson had already helped herself to a brimming glass and a small canapé of caviar from the silver tray Tunbridge was holding.

"Oh, I love tomato cocktails," smiled Dorothy. She took one from the man and helped herself to the caviar. "Daddy asked me not to drink until I was twenty-one—and I'm not so keen on the idea, anyway."

"I try to keep an open mind about such things," the Doctor said seriously, "but I've never found that the use of alcohol did anyone any good. Well, here's your very good health, ladies!" He raised his glass of tomato juice and drank.

Dinner was announced a few minutes later. Doctor Winn offered his right arm to Mrs. Lawson and his left to Dorothy and they walked into the dining room. Dorothy did not enjoy that meal as much as she had her luncheon. True, the food was delicious and the panelled room with its cheerful fire on the hearth and the soft glow of candle light was delightfully homey, while Doctor Winn's easy chatter and fund of interesting reminiscence helped to break the tedium of the courses. But Dorothy found it difficult to play up to his amusing sallies. The old gentleman appeared to be in very good spirits indeed. Laura Lawson, on the other hand, was unusually quiet. At times she seemed distraught and merely smiled absently when spoken to. She drank several glasses of claret, but hardly touched her food. Dorothy felt surer than ever that the Lawsons had planned their coup for tonight. She shrewdly surmised that this cold-blooded adventuress had become fond of the genial, fatherly old man, and realized that at his age the blow she contemplated might very well prove a fatal one.

As the dinner wore on, Dorothy felt more and more ill at ease. The sight of Tunbridge, soft-footed and efficient, waiting on table or superintending his satellite of the plum-colored kneebreeches, sent her thoughts to the night's work ahead every time the detective-butler came into the room. She was glad when at last the meal was over and they repaired to the library where after-dinner coffee was served. Dorothy rarely drank coffee in the evening, but tonight she allowed Tunbridge to fill her cup a second time. There must be no sleep for her until the wee hours of the morning, and she knew from former experience that the black coffee would keep her awake.

Mrs. Lawson, after wandering aimlessly about the room, finally picked up a technical magazine and commenced to read. Doctor Winn suggested a game of chess to Dorothy. She was fond of the ancient game and told him so. Many a tournament she and her father had played with their red and white ivory chessmen. Dr. Winn was a brilliant player, of long experience. Soon he began to compliment Dorothy upon a number of strategic moves. But although several times she managed to place his king in check, it was invariably her own royal chessman who was checkmated in the end.

As the evening wore on, the beatings became more frequent, for Dorothy simply could not keep her mind on the game.

For a while she sat watching the log fire and talking to the Doctor in a desultory way while Mrs. Lawson continued to read. Then as the grandfather clock chimed ten, Laura Lawson laid down her magazine and stood up.

"I think I'll go to bed now, if you don't mind." The half stifled yawn, sheer camouflage thought Dorothy, was nevertheless a masterpiece of deception. "I've a bit of a headache, so I'll say good night."

Doctor Winn and Dorothy got to their feet. "I'm for bed myself," announced the old gentleman, "and in spite of the coffee you drank after dinner, I know you're sleepy, Janet. Your chess playing toward the end proved it." His eyes twinkled at her. "But in storm or clear weather, there's nothing like the air of this Connecticut Ridge Country to make one eat and sleep. By the way, Laura, when do you expect Martin?"

"Oh, I forgot to tell you, Doctor—he won't be back tonight. He phoned me from town just before dinner, that on account of the blizzard, he had decided to stay in until tomorrow. If you need him sooner, he said to call up the Roosevelt. He always stops there, you know."

"Yes, yes, but I shan't need him, thank you." He turned to Dorothy. "The railroad has taken upon itself to discontinue all service to Ridgefield," he explained. "Branchville is our nearest station, and driving will be difficult tonight. There must be very deep drifts by this time."

"I should think it would be mighty unpleasant to get stuck out in a blizzard like this. I'm glad I don't have to go out into it. But in a way I'm thankful for the snow, because we ought to have a white Christmas, and it's ever so much more fun."

"Bless my soul! I'd entirely forgotten that Christmas comes next week. Well, this year we must celebrate the Yuletide in the good old fashioned way. Thank you, Janet, for reminding me."

Good nights were said, and a few minutes later Dorothy was again alone in the Pink Bedroom. Or so she thought, as she entered. But at once she noticed that a single shaded wall-light sent a pleasant glow from the bay window, and curled up in the cushioned recess, Gretchen was reading.

Dorothy stopped short in surprise and the girl sprang to her feet. "Oh, Miss—Miss Jordan, Mr. Tunbridge told me to come and help you undress and get ready for the night. Of course I didn't know if you would want me—" then she added in a whisper, "but he thought you might be sort of blue and I could cheer you up, I guess."

Dorothy smiled at Gretchen's pretty, earnest face. "Why, of course I want you, Gretchen. Tunbridge is very thoughtful. I've never had the luxury of a personal maid and I don't know that I'll ever feel helpless enough to need one! But if you want to stay and talk, I'd love it."

"But I can help you, too," Gretchen insisted. "I'm not really a trained maid, you know, but Nanette—that's Mrs. Lawson's French maid—has been teaching me. Gee, I'd certainly love to be *your* personal maid, Miss Jordan."

"Well, you may be, some day, who knows?" she laughed. "But you can help me tonight, though there'll be no bed for me until much later."

Gretchen, who was arranging the pillows and smoothing the covers on the bed, turned her head sharply. "Secret Service Work?" she queried in an excited whisper.

Dorothy nodded and tossed her dress on to a chair. She continued speaking in a tone just above a whisper. "At twelve o'clock tonight I've got to go downstairs and commit justifiable burglary in Doctor Winn's office. The real thief will be along later—at least, I hope so, for everybody's sake. In the meantime I want you to do something for me—will you?"

"I sure will, miss—gee, this is exciting!"

"Don't let it cramp your style." Dorothy laughed, and pulling off her stocking, she handed Gretchen the packet of thin paper, the manuscript on "Winnite" that she had typed that morning. "When you finish up in here, I want you to find Mr. Tunbridge and give him these papers. You'd better pin it inside your uniform now, and be very careful that nobody sees you giving it to him."

"You can trust me," declared Gretchen, and she put the papers safely within her dress. "Is Mr. Tunbridge really a detective?"

"He certainly is, Gretchen."

"I'd never have guessed it if you hadn't told me. But then, I suppose not looking like one makes him all the better?"

"That's the idea." Dorothy put Janet's quilted satin dressing gown on over her pajamas. "Now that I'm ready for bed, and you've put all my clothes away so nicely, I think you'd better run along, Gretchen. Not," she amended, "that I wouldn't love to talk to you while I'm waiting for twelve o'clock, but we must not let certain people in this house get wise to our friendship."

"And Mrs. Lawson is one awful snoopy lady," Gretchen observed candidly. "Well, good night, Miss Jordan. Thank you a lot for letting me in on this. I'll see that Mr. Tunbridge gets your papers all right. Good night—and take care of yourself." She stood before Dorothy with an anxious frown on her honest brow. "I sure do wish you the very best luck!"

Dorothy grinned. "Thank you. I certainly need it. Good night."

The door closed upon the little maid and Dorothy looked at her wrist watch. It was ten minutes to

eleven. For a time she sat on the edge of her bed and stared unseeingly at the rug under her feet. Presently she got up, locked her door, turned off her lights and went over to the window. She drew aside the curtains and was surprised to see that it had stopped snowing. There was no moon, but what sky she could see was fairly a-crackle with stars. The heavy blanket of snow looked silver in the starlight. A remote world and cold. Dorothy allowed the curtains to drop back into place, and sat down on the window seat. Lost in thoughts pleasant and unpleasant, she sat there for the next hour, while the faint noises of the big house gradually subsided into stillness.

At exactly five minutes to twelve, Dorothy raised the window, letting in the cold night air. Then she turned off the heat and got into bed. After lying there for possibly a minute, she threw back the covers, thrust her feet into the fur-lined slippers she had left at the bedside and moved like a dim shadow to the closet.

It was crowded with Janet's suits, coats and frocks, and she was careful not to disturb them on their hangers, as she pushed between them in the darkness to the rear wall and pressed her foot on the board in the corner. The panel slid upward with a noiselessness that spoke for well-oiled machinery somewhere in the walls. Dorothy stepped cautiously through the opening. Her fingers sought the handle to this sliding door, found it, and she pulled the panel down again.

Then for the first time she made use of the small flashlight which she carried in the pocket of her gown. She saw that she was standing on the top step of a narrow circular stair that wound downward. Off went her light again—she was taking no unnecessary chances tonight—and with her hand on the metal handrail, she felt her way slowly down the stair, holding her free hand well in advance of her body.

When her extended fingers touched a wall that blocked further progress, she felt with a slippared foot out to the right. The board gave slightly, the wall panel moved upward and she stepped forth to find herself in the great fireplace of the entrance hall, just beyond the embers of the dying logs. The hall was illuminated in the dim glow of a night light in the ceiling. As she turned to pull down the sliding shutter, there came a streak of white from the dark passage and Professor bounded into the hall.

Dorothy was completely startled, and just as exasperated as she could be. She could not call him, for the slightest sound might bring the wakeful enemy to the spot. The pup, after his long sleep, was playful, and scampered about madly, his bright eyes watching her every move. She attempted to catch him, but he eluded her with an agility that made her still more angry. He seemed to think that this was a splendid game, raced across the floor in high glee, but ever watchful to keep beyond her reach.

Dorothy gave it up as a bad job. She dared not pursue him too determinedly, for fear he would bark. She pulled down the sliding shutter in the fireplace, and leaving Professor to his frolic, hurried on to the door of Doctor Winn's office.

Inside the room with the door shut, her flashlight came into play for the second time. It took her but a moment with the memorized combination at her fingertips to open the safe. The door was surprisingly heavy, but at last the interior of the small vault came within her line of vision. From a drawer she took a folded sheet of white paper. Out of her pocket came a pencil and another sheet of paper. In an amazingly short time she copied the formula and replaced the original in the safe drawer. She tucked the copy into the fur lining of her slipper under her bare foot. Then suddenly she sprang up.

Her heart leaped into her throat. In the corridor just outside there came the sound of a footstep. There was no time to do more than shut off her torch and drop it, together with her pencil, into the waste paper basket. The door opened, lights flashed on, and Martin Lawson walked into the room.

PROFESSOR MAKES GOOD

In that moment, Dorothy knew what she must do. A shiver ran over her slender frame and she blinked as though partly awakened by the flash of lights. Then, with eyes wide open and staring straight ahead, she slowly walked toward Martin Lawson and the open doorway.

"Stop!"

The command, though low, was uttered in a tone of deadly menace, and Dorothy saw the blue-black muzzle of an automatic revolver pointed at her heart. She stopped on the instant, but continued to stare straight ahead without change of expression. She noted that he wore a soft felt hat pulled over his eyes and a heavy ulster with its broad collar turned up half hiding the lower part of his face. His high arctics bore traces of melting snow.

"Sleepwalking, eh! Well, I don't believe it." His sharp eyes took in the open door of the safe. "Snap out of that playacting and tell me what you are doing here!"

Dorothy did not move a muscle.

Without warning, he grasped her wrist and jerked her savagely toward him. She screamed and went limp in his arms. Lawson clapped a hand over her mouth.

"So you're up to your old tricks again, Martin!"

Mrs. Lawson, fully dressed, and wearing a three-quarters mink coat and brown felt cloche, appeared in the open doorway. "So our little sleepwalker interrupted a very pretty piece of double-crossing!" She pointed toward the safe.

Lawson flung the weeping girl into an arm chair where she lay apparently half stunned and shaking in every limb.

"Double-cross, nothing!" he snapped at his wife. "How do you get that way, Laura? I came in here just now and found Janet in the room."

"Was she at the safe?"

"No, she wasn't. She was standing in the middle of the floor. Making her getaway without a doubt when I turned on the lights."

"Why do you pretend Janet opened the safe? The Doctor, you and I are the only ones who know the combination. Laugh that off if you can, my dear!"

They were both fast losing their tempers.

"Combination or no combination, the safe was open when I got here," he snarled. "She was after the formula, of course. That father of hers is in back of it. That Irishman is the double-crosser—and how! Figured on working Winnite into his racket without coughing up a cent for it, either. Call me a sucker if you like, Laura. I qualify, and so do you, for that matter. The other stuff's the bunk."

Dorothy stopped her pretended crying and lay back as though utterly exhausted. She knew Tunbridge must be up and about. What in the world could the man be doing?

Mrs. Lawson who seemed to be weighing matters, slowly unbuttoned her coat. "If you are so blameless," she said coldly to her husband, "How do you happen to be here at all? Your part of the job was to bring up the car—or the plane, if it had stopped snowing."

"Well, it's no longer snowing, my dear, and the plane is just where it should be. I got tired of waiting, that's why. Thought there must be a slip-up. You were due out there half an hour ago."

"And I would have been," said Laura Lawson evenly, "if that secret service fool hadn't been snooping outside my door."

"Tunbridge?"

"Who else!"

"What did you do—croak him?"

"No, I didn't. He's not worth burning for."

As they talked, the two dropped their artificial cloaks of refinement as if they had never been.

"It's hanging in this state," sneered Martin.

"What's the difference! I rang for him, instead. When he knocked on the door, I opened up and beamed him with the poker. He'll wake up tomorrow with a headache, but I dragged him into my room and tied him up, just to make sure."

Dorothy's heart sank to the very soles of her bare feet.

"Atta girl!" cheered Lawson. "That's the way! And look here, Laura. Just to prove I'm on the straight with you—go over and frisk that kid yourself. She's got the paper."

"Thanks—I intended to." Mrs. Lawson threw a grim smile at her husband and turned to Dorothy. "Pass it over, Janet."

"But, really, Mrs. Lawson! I don't know what you're talking about—"

The woman cut her short. "Stand up and come here!"

Dorothy reluctantly obeyed. "I haven't any paper," she protested. "All I know is that I woke up just now and found Mr. Lawson—"

"Hold your tongue!" snapped Mrs. Lawson, and after exploring Dorothy's empty pockets, ran her fingers over the quilted gown and the girl's pajamas. In the midst of her search, Professor, still playful, bounded into the room and stood watching them expectantly.

Mrs. Lawson stepped back. "She hasn't got it, Martin." Her tone was acid. "What a hard-boiled liar you are, anyway!"

"Hard-boiled, if you like—but no liar." He strode to the safe and thrust his hand inside. "Here it is," he called, and held up the paper. "I must have got here before she could nab it."

Laura Lawson eyed him appraisingly. "Didn't you say Janet was in the middle of the room when you switched on the light?"

"Sure—she heard me coming, of course."

"If Janet heard you coming, why didn't she swing the door shut? Don't try to pull that stuff on me, Martin. Even if the girl knows the combination she couldn't open that safe in the dark. Why lie about the business? I know you opened it yourself—and what's more, while I've been wasting time arguing with you and searching Janet, the formula was in your pocket the whole time—that is, until you pretended to take it out of the safe, just now!"

Martin Lawson's hard and cruel mouth twisted into a crooked smile. "The world is full of liars," he said equably, "but your husband doesn't play that kind of a racket, Laura—anyway, not to you."

"Then prove it by giving me that paper!" his wife held out her hand.

"Nothing doing, Sweetheart. The formula will be perfectly safe with me."

He started to put it in an inside pocket, when Laura Lawson sprang for the paper. She grasped his wrist. There was a tussle and the folded sheet fell to the floor. Professor, seated on his haunches and very interested in these exciting proceedings, dove forward and snapped it up. For half a moment he shook the paper as though he took it for a new species of rat. Then as they went for him, he darted between Martin's legs and scampered out of the room.

"You big goop!" flared his wife. "Why didn't you pot the cur!"

She rushed out of the room after Professor while Martin stared rather stupidly at the gun in his hand. Suddenly his eyes took on a particularly hard glint and he swung round on Dorothy.

"This," he rasped, "is the second time you've got me in wrong with my wife, Miss Janet Jordan. And there just ain't going to be no third time, kid!"

"Wha—what are you going to do, Mr. Lawson?" She was still playing the terrified, innocent Janet, but she no longer feared the man. During the Lawsons' struggle, she had prepared herself for something like this. She had also shifted her position and was standing near the open door, now several yards away.

"You're going to answer my questions, Janet—and answer them truthfully, or you'll do your sleepwalking in another world after this." He menaced her with the automatic, "It's the bunk, isn't it? The sleepwalking, I mean."

"It sure is, Mr. du Val!" drawled Dorothy with a sweet smile.

Lawson was thoroughly surprised and looked it. "Yes—it naturally would be, seeing you know who I really am."

"And all about you."

"Oh, you do, eh? You were awake, of course, at the meeting?"

"Not me—Janet Jordan."

"What do you mean—not you—Janet Jordan?"

"I mean that certain people have been making fools of you and your wife, Mr. du Val."

"Is that so! In what way, may I ask?"

"Why, you see, I'm not Janet Jordan."

"Not Janet Jordan!"

"I wish," said Dorothy, "you wouldn't echo my words. No, I am not—most decidedly, not Janet Jordan, although even you have guessed by this time that I look like her. We changed places on you, big boy! Night before last, just before you came into Janet's room with her father, Janet was climbing out the window when you knocked the first time. It was rather embarrassing."

"It's going to be even more embarrassing for you in a moment or two, Miss Not Janet Jordan! You know too much to live. Who in thunderation are you—a government dick?"

"That's right, big boy. I also happen to be Janet's double cousin."

"You're her double, I'll vouch for that," agreed du Val alias Lawson. "And all this high-hat cockiness ain't going to do you one little bit of good. What's the moniker, kid? Make it snappy, I'm pressed for time."

"Dorothy Dixon's my name. And—meet Flash!" Her right hand gave a quick twist and Martin Lawson dropped the exploding automatic with a scream of mingled rage and pain. She sprang for

the revolver, covered the man and retrieved the knife from the floor just behind him. "Sit down over there!" She pointed to a chair. "You're not really hurt, you know. Flash only skinned your knuckles. Better tie them up in your handkerchief though. You're ruining the rug."

Gretchen's blond head peered round the door frame. "Oh, Dorothy!" she shrieked, and rushed into the room. "Are you hurt? Did he wound you?" She flung herself on her friend in a frenzy of fright and hysterics.

From the hall came Laura Lawson's voice. "Martin!" she called. "They're out in front of the house. They've got the car! Hurry!"

Lawson wasted no time. While Dorothy struggled with the excited Gretchen, he nipped out of the room and was gone.

"That tears it!" cried Miss Dixon, freeing herself from the little maid's embrace, and she dove into the passage.

Under the gallery she stopped short. There was nobody in sight, but from the staircase came two sharp detonations of a revolver which were answered by two more from the dining room. Then as she moved warily forward, Bill Bolton ran into the hall with Ashton Sanborn close at his heels. Dorothy saw them disappear up the stairs and ran after them.

At the top of the stairs she spied them standing outside a bedroom door. She hurried to join them. "Hello! Gone to cover?"

"You're a great guesser, kid." Bill grinned and nodded.

"Where's Tunbridge?" asked Mr. Sanborn.

Dorothy motioned toward the door. "In there. He's got a broken head and he's tied up into the bargain. Laura Lawson did it. That's her room."

"We've got to get the door down," said Bill, and he stepped back for a rush.

"Just a sec, Bill!" Dorothy fired three shots from Lawson's automatic into the lock.

"Smart girl!" Ashton Sanborn opened the door to disclose the detective-butler bound and unconscious, lying on the floor. Otherwise the room was empty of occupants. "I thought as much," muttered the secret service man, while Dorothy ran to Tunbridge and began to cut his bonds. "They have beat it, all right!"

"Secret passage?" This from Bill.

"Yes, the walls are honeycombed with them. But Tunbridge never learned the secret of this room, poor fellow."

"Doctor Winn would know," said Dorothy. "His suite is right at the end of this corridor. He must surely be awake with all this racket going on."

"I'll get him." Mr. Sanborn was half way to the door. "Look after Tunbridge, you two. Better phone for a doctor." He was gone.

Dorothy and Bill lifted the unconscious man on to Mrs. Lawson's bed. Then while young Bolton undressed him, Dorothy telephoned. She then gave Bill a hasty account of the night's happenings.

"If Gretchen had only stayed put in her room, I'd have caught Martin Lawson, anyway," she lamented.

"Mr. Jordan and the bunch outside will take care of that pair," promised Bill. "Fetch a wet towel from the bathroom. This bird is breathing pretty hard."

Dorothy sped to obey, talking the while. "Not Uncle Michael!" she called back in astonishment.

"Yep. Uncle Michael showed up in Sanborn's New York office this morning, all on his own."

"What was he doing—wanting to turn state's evidence and peach on his pals?" She brought in the wet towel and laid it on Tunbridge's hot forehead.

"Nothing like that, kid." Bill was grinning. "Give another guess."

"Then he wasn't really a member of that gang with the numbers?"

"Sure he was—in good standing, too."

"Oh, spill it, Bill! What do you think I'm made of, anyway?"

"Snips and snails and puppy dog's tails," said Bill promptly.

"Huh! The story book says 'little boys' belong in that category. Come, Bill, out with it!"

"Well, then, cutie pie,—Uncle Michael is a secret service man."

"And Ashton Sanborn didn't know it! Don't talk rot, Bill!"

"I'm not talking rot, Dorothy. Uncle Michael happens to be in the British Secret Service, that's why!"

"Ain't that the nerts!" exploded Miss Dixon.

"You said it, kid! He got on to The Nameless Ones—that's what they call themselves—over on the other side, in Europe, you know—worked his way into their confidence and joined up. Of course, with his government's sanction."

"And what were they up to?"

"Out to blow up the world with Winnite, I reckon. The Lawsons were to get two million plunks for the formula. Martie-boy was Number 1, by the way. The whole thing was financed by the Reds."

"Nice people! What's being done about it?"

"Plenty," returned Bill. "Mr. Jordan brought in the goods—letters, confidential papers of the organization, and that kind of thing. All the ringleaders, both in this country and abroad, have been apprehended and jailed by this time."

"Except," she suggested, "the du Vals, alias Lawson."

"That's right! Let's go downstairs and find out about them. Nothing more can be done for Tunbridge until that doctor shows up. He's had hard luck all the way round this evening. The Lawsons fooled him nicely about the time—and then this crack on the nut into the bargain!"

"What do you mean—about the time?"

"Why, he overheard the fair Laura telling her hubby that they would vamoose at two this morning, and that she would nab the formula just before leaving. That's why Tunbridge specified midnight. He thought that two hours leeway would have been plenty of time for you."

"I 'spose they suspected him then, and were just giving him the razz?"

Bill nodded. "Q.E.D., old girl. You're learning, aren't you?"

Dorothy made a face at him and pushed him out of the room. "By the way," continued Bill, as they entered the corridor, "I wonder if Mrs. Lawson got the paper away from Professor?"

"She did not!" declared Dorothy. "Look!"

They paused on the stairs to view the scene below in the entrance hall. Groups of frightened servants whispered among themselves and here and there a strange man was posted, with somewhat of an air of grim watchfulness. Crouched on the hearth and chewing up the last shreds of some white substance was the puppy.

"The end of a perfect formula," declared Bill. "You'd better call the pup Winnite. He's full of it by this time. Lucky you made the copy, Dorothy."

"It certainly is!" A voice spoke behind them and they turned to see Ashton Sanborn descending the broad stair. "Doctor Winn tells me the passageway from the Lawson woman's room comes out into the sunken gardens a quarter of a mile from the house. And I distinctly heard the whirr of an airplane just now from his open window. They've made their getaway in fine style by this time."

"Well—" Dorothy breathed a deep sigh. "I can't help being glad of it."

Bill stared at her. "Well!" he mimicked. "I must say you have astonishing reactions!"

"What's the matter, my dear?" asked Mr. Sanborn. "You've done brilliant work on this case, and then, you know, you've saved Winnite."

Dorothy was not impressed. "That's just it," she retorted. "If I wasn't a government servant for the time being, I'd destroy the copy of that terrible formula myself. As it is, I've got to turn it over to you!"

Ashton Sanborn laid a fatherly hand on her shoulder. "Fortunes of war, Dorothy. Sorry, but you must, you know."

"Oh, I know!" She took the sheet of paper from her slipper and handed it to him. "And that," she announced grimly, "spoils all the fun on this racket."

Chapter XVIII

THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

Christmas eve was, as Dorothy had predicted, a starry night of frost and blanketing snow. Red candles twinkled in every holly-wreathed window of the Dixon home, and a large fir tree before the house glittered with colored Christmas lights.

If old Saint Nick had peeped into the dining room windows, he would have seen a merry company standing round the dinner table, gay with the crimson-berried holly and waxy mistletoe. At the head of the table stood Dorothy, appropriately and becomingly dressed in ruby-red velvet. On her right there was an empty place, and beyond it, old Doctor Winn, a boutonniere of holly in the lapel of his dinner coat; Mr. Bolton, Bill's father, was next down the table, and just beyond stood Ashton Sanborn. Facing Dorothy at the other end, her father chatted with a bright-eyed Gretchen, who had Bill on her right. Next to Bill came Doctor Winn's ex-butler, John Tunbridge, looking none the worse for his part in the mixup of the fatal night. Beyond Tunbridge stood Dorothy's Uncle Michael, and then another empty chair.

"Just a moment, Dorothy," said her father as she was about to sit down. "We've a surprise for you."

"Oh, are there more people coming?" She indicated the extra places to her right and left. "I thought our party was as nearly complete as possible. Of course it would have been swell if Janet and Howard could have been with us."

"Dum—dum—de dum!" hummed Bill, beating time with his hand like an orchestra conductor. From the drawing room a piano crashed into the opening chords of Wagner's beautiful wedding march.

"Here Comes the Bride ..." sang the guests at table, and Dorothy's heart skipped a beat.

Through the curtained doorway, walked a blushing girl, leaning on the arm of a tall young man. She wore a bridal gown of white satin, and her smiling face, below the draped tulle veil, was the exact counterpart of the astonished girl at the head of the table.

"Janet! Howard!" Dorothy ran to them and was caught in her cousin's arms. "Where under the sun did you come from? I thought you sailed for South America last week!"

"That," said Howard, grinning broadly, "is a surprise that Mr. Sanborn sprang on us the day after we were married. He persuaded me to give up the South American job and got me a much better one with Mr. Bolton."

"Meet Mr. Howard Bright, the new manager of my Bridgeport plant," cried Bill's father, and everyone clapped.

"Why, that's marvelous!" exclaimed Dorothy. "It's only an hour's drive over there from New Canaan. We'll be able to see a lot of each other, Janet."

Then Uncle Michael, looking very happy and proud, kissed his daughter and led her to the chair between his place and Dorothy's.

"Daddy gave me the wedding dress," whispered Janet. "It's a little bit late for it, but he insisted."

"You look simply darling," began her cousin, then stopped. Doctor Winn, who had pushed in her chair, was addressing the company.

"Ladies, and gentlemen," he said, "before we start on the Christmas cheer which our little hostess and her father have so graciously provided, I would like to propose a toast or two, and may I ask you to stand again while you drink them with me?" He held up his glass of golden cider. "First, let us drink long life and great happiness to our charming bride, Mrs. Howard Bright, and her gallant husband!"

The company drank the toast enthusiastically. Then Uncle Abe, the Dixon's darkey butler, better known to some of Dorothy's friends as "Ol' Man River," grinning from one black ear to the other, laid small leather jewel cases before Janet and Howard.

"Just a little Christmas gift, my children," explained Doctor Winn.

"Oh, may we open them now?" asked Janet eagerly.

"You most certainly may, my dear."

They snapped open the lids and the company leaned forward to get a better view of the contents.

"I don't know how to thank you, Doctor Winn," began Howard, fingering his handsome gold repeater and chain.

"Nor I—why—my goodness! I never thought I'd have a string of real pearls. They are simply too exquisite for words!"

Doctor Winn laughed and held up a protesting hand. "I'm sure I'm glad you like them, but guests are requested not to embarrass the speaker. Now, I have another toast to propose; and this time we will drink a very Merry Christmas, long life and great happiness to Miss Margaret Schmidt, my new companion-housekeeper!"

Gretchen was overwhelmed and blushed furiously. Uncle Abe placed another jewel case before her, which she opened and found therein a pearl necklace, the counterpart of Janet's. All she could do was to sit and gaze at it with her wide open china-blue eyes. Mr. Dixon raised the necklace, slipped

it over the embarrassed girl's head, and nodded to the old gentleman.

Doctor Winn took the hint and turned the attention of the table guests to himself. "Third and last, but not in any way the least," he said, "we will drink to the heroine of the already famous case of the Double Cousins. Ladies and gentlemen, I pledge you Dorothy Dixon—whose bravery and loyalty to her country gained the nation's thanks through its mouthpiece, our President in Washington this week. A very Merry Christmas, my dear, long life and great happiness to you and to our friend Professor, alias Winnite! By the way, where is the pup? I have a little remembrance for him, too."

"He's right here beside me, asleep in his basket, Doctor Winn." Dorothy picked up the yawning pup and sat him on her lap.

The old gentleman took a slightly larger morocco case out of his pocket, this time, and laid it on the white cloth before her. With a smile of thanks, she pressed the spring and disclosed, lying on a velvet pad, a double string of gleaming pink pearls. She looked at him, speechless with pleasure, then down again at the necklace. As she did so, she started, for beneath the pearls lay an envelope.

She picked it up and drew forth a paper—"Why! why, it's my copy of the Winnite formula!" she cried.

"The only existing copy, my dear, which I hereby present to your puppy."

"But, Doctor Winn, I don't understand!"

"My terms to the government were that Winnite should be used for national defense alone," he said solemnly. "Washington would not agree. Therefore I wish the formula destroyed."

"Oh, what a darling you are!" Dorothy leaned over and kissed him. "But let's not give it to Professor this time, please. The last one made him horribly sick."

She held the paper over a lighted candle and watched Winnite burn to charred ash. "I certainly am the happiest girl in the world tonight—but there is just one more toast I'd like to propose before we commence dinner. Here's a long life and a Merry Christmas to Mr. and Mrs. Martin Lawson—if it hadn't been for them, think of all the fun we'd have missed!"

THE END

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK DOROTHY DIXON AND THE DOUBLE COUSIN

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE
THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE
PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase "Project Gutenberg"), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. "Project Gutenberg" is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any

way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, "Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation."
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain "Defects," such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the "Right of Replacement or Refund" described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS', WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™

electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations

to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks,
and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.