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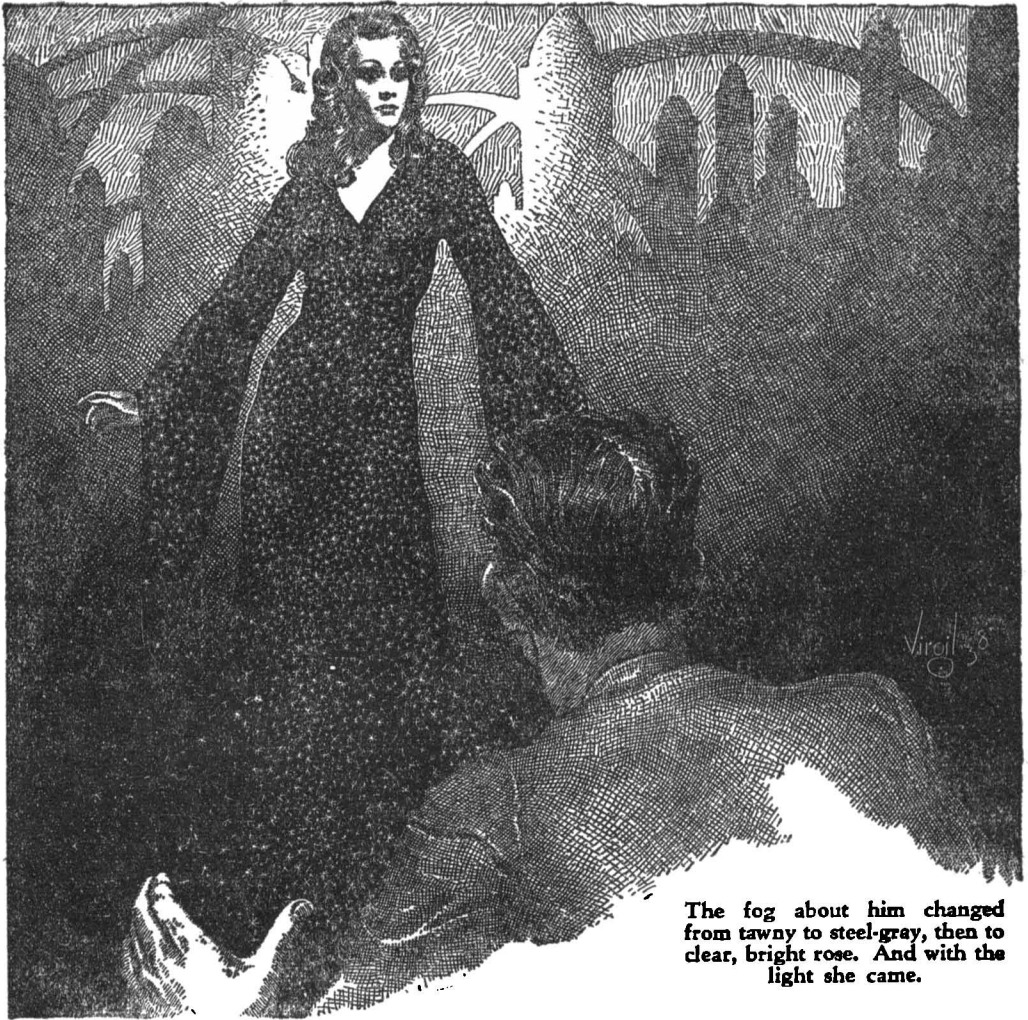
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**WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH**



The fog about him changed from tawny to steel-gray, then to clear, bright rose. And with the light she came.

# More Lives Than One

By SEABURY QUINN

*An unusual weird story that skips through the years and ends at last in America of the present day—a romantic and fascinating novelette*

"... he who lives more lives than one  
More deaths than one must die."  
—OSCAR WILDE, *Ballad of Reading Gaol*.

**I**T WAS a glowing day in late September, one of those days which are an afterthought of summer. The sun shone bright on Bree Straadt

and on all the town of Zaandpoort. The tulip season was long passed, but in the burghers' gardens pruned rose-bushes grew, and in the golden centers of their blossoms bees were humming busily. From a hundred gable chimneys rose the perfumed reek of peat fires,

straight as monuments in the clear, windless air. Peace and silence circled the small town like the circle of the bright blue vault of heaven, for although the Dutchman struggled with the Spaniard for possession of the country and the Netherlands lay under interdict from Dixmuide to Midwolde, there had been no signs of war here for a year and more, nor was it likely that there would be. The Zaandpoort burghers baked and glazed their tile and worked in brass and copper, casting bells and cooking-pots and sometimes, though not lately, cannon; their larders were well stocked, their trade was brisk, it mattered little if they paid tax to his Catholic Majesty of Spain or to the Staadts General, provided they were not asked to pay twice. Lately had come messengers from Leyden, asking that an aid of men and money be dispatched forthwith to help the Prince of Orange in his fight. A handsome purse was straightway raised and sent back with the townsmen's compliments, though no man stirred from shop or kiln or forge or foundry; for war was dangerous and inconvenient, and trade was mounting daily.

But no thought of war or politics or trade was in Lysbeth van de Doren's pretty head as she picked her way down Bree Straadt. Her thoughts were on more weighty matters, for yesterday, the feast of Michaelmas, her marriage banns had been affixed to the church door; at All Saints she and Adrian van Werff would stand before the altar and plight troth. A snatch of song came bubbling to her lips:

*"De kabels los, de zeilen op,  
Dat gaat er op een varen,  
Al warren wij sinjeurs aan wal . . ."*

Now she was almost at the stoep of Mynheer van Werff's house, she must

be more dignified, as became the promised wife of Adrian van Werff, son of the city's leading lawyer and himself a student of the laws and statutes. The sun shone on her face and struck bright highlights from her chestnut-colored hair as she raised the polished knocker of the iron-studded door and struck the secret signal she and Adrian had devised: three light, sharp taps, a pause, and then two more. She was clad from throat to foot in cloak and doublet and full-plaited skirt of brown wool stuff; a broad, flat bonnet graced her head; above her bosom crossed a fichu of fine muslin, and the ribbon of the snood with which her hair was bound in token of her maidenhood was fastened in a dainty love-knot just behind her ear.

Pieter van Werff sat at his ease before the breakfast board. Life had been kind to him. Custodian of more secrets than the parish priest, adviser, counsellor and guide, if not exactly friend, to most of the rich burghers, he had been given guardianship of the fortune left by Dirk van de Doren to his daughter Lysbeth till such time as she came of age.

He had disbursed the gulden of his ward's estate with wisdom, though not always profit; and as the time for balancing accounts drew near, his sleep had been disturbed by very troublous dreams. But now the marriage banns were posted and at All Saints Lysbeth would be wed to Adrian, his son. An estate went to her lord and master with her hand, and Adrian was dutiful to the point of pliancy. There was no need to worry over accounts now. His smile of satisfaction swept his tablemates: Elsa, his wife, black-haired, brown-eyed, pale of face, a little raw-boned; Grootmoeder Anna, high-veined and parchment-skinned, her hair as white as fine-spun tow, her bent old body

fragile as a porcelain figurine; Adrian, his only child, with pale, smooth skin and startlingly black hair, a heritage from Elsa, large, limpid eyes and womanishly-small hands, more the poet and the dreamer than the hard-brained man of law . . . no matter, he had practicality and craft enough for both. Four they were, four members of a close-knit family. Soon they should be five, with addition of a heritage of seven thousand gulden concerning which no questions need be asked, or answered.

"Good morning, little child o' mine to be," he greeted Lysbeth as she came into the dining-hall with the brightness of the sun in eyes and hair and the tang of ocean air and peat smoke on her mantle. "Art up early the day. How fares it with thy Aunt Katrina, is her rheumatiz less of a burden? Wilt have a cup of fresh-brewed chocolate? . . ." Unconsciously, by purely reflex action, he rubbed one hand above another, as though he lathered them with unseen soap and laved them with invisible water.

Lysbeth looked away as she declined refreshment with a shy, half-frightened smile. She was in awe of Mynheer van Werff, and his habitual Pilate-like hand-washing terrified her, why she could not say. Her troubled gaze found Adrian, and comfort. Adrian was sweet. Adrian was gentle as another maid, understanding, sympathetic, kind. At school when they were children he had taken blame for her misdoings more than once and had his hands—and buttocks—soundly beaten for no fault of his. Never had he raised his voice to her, never had they quarreled since their infancy, for certes, two must make a quarrel, and Adrian had never spoken to her save in kindness. What matter if he were not rough and robust, if he skated not so well, and refused to take part in the

snowball battles or the races when winter glazed the canals with bright ice and the young men drove their two-horse sledges on the two-mile course from van de Venter's foundry to van Die-man's wharf? He was her own, her very own, her true and perfect lover, and time and time again he'd told her he would lay his life down for her. She believed him, too! She knew that he would suffer any hurt before he'd let harm come to her . . . her Adrian. Her blue eyes warmed and softened as they rested on him.

But her smile died like a sinking flame and she laid a hand against her breast as sudden tumult sounded in the street. Somewhere outside a woman screamed, a man's shout rose to die in a high, choking shriek, the bang of pistols was punctuated by the pounding of shod hooves upon the paving-bricks, and the brazen bellow of a trumpet sounding "Rally!"

"Asturian dragoons . . . the Duke of Palma's men . . . dear Lord, sweet father of us all, have mercy! But we be peaceful subjects of King Philip, our young men make no war upon the Spanish, we pay our *impuestos* without murmur."

A LOUD and peremptory clatter of pike-butts against the panels sounded at the iron-strapped front door, and with a file of dragoons at his heels the Spanish commandant entered. "By sainted Catherine's tresses, here is more gallows-meat!" he swore as he surveyed the quintet in the dining-hall. "Put them in bonds, *mi sargento*——"

"*Señor—Señor,*" implored Mynheer van Werff, "we are no rebels, I assure you, but good and faithful subjects of our rightful liege and king, Most Catholic Philip——"

"Ha? So?" broke in the Spaniard. "What may your name be, sirrah?"

"Van Werff, your excellency. I am a peaceful man of law, and loyal subject to the King, and these are of my family——"

The commandant waved his hand for silence while he unrolled a parchment scroll and scanned its contents rapidly. "No," he returned at last, "your name is not among the *proscritos*, but I have small doubt that ye are secret rebels, none the less. Didst furnish aid and comfort, especially money, to the renegade of Orange?"

"I, your excellency? Before heaven, no! Neither I nor mine would give aid to a rebel 'gainst the crown——"

"H'm, that may be as that may be, we'll see to it anon. Meantime, where can one find the traitress Lysbeth van de Doren? Her name is on the list, but none can tell us of her whereabouts. Perhaps I should say none *will* tell us. Belike a little taste of rack and thumb-screw, gunpowder poured in a raw wound and lighted, or similar mild persuasive measures may loosen their tongues——"

"What business have you with the Jufvrow van de Doren, *Señor Capitán?*" asked Lysbeth.

"Why, only the slight business of her hanging, *Señorita,*" for the first time since he came into the house his somber, swarthy features softened as he looked at her. "Some little while ago came envoys from the Orange rebel asking funds to carry on his insurrection. Your townsmen sent him gold enough to pay for killing a brigade of loyal troops, more, by San Juan, than they ever sent his Catholic Majesty! But we are not to be imposed on, nor do our loyal spies sleep overmuch. The names of every man—and woman—who subscribed to this disloyal fund were sent

to us forthwith, and the traitress van de Doren's name leads all the rest. Five hundred golden florins she dispatched to help this fox of Orange flee our Spanish sleuth-hounds——"

"I am Lysbeth van de Doren——"

"San Cristóbal! Thou——"

"But I know naught of any contribution to the Prince of Orange. I am an orphan in my nonage. I have not the spending of a maravedi from my fortune on my own say-so——"

"Ha, sayest thou? And who, then, ordereth the lavishing of thy gold——"

Before she realized, Lysbeth's eyes had turned upon her guardian, whose palsied hands were fumbling over one another as though they sought to wash an ineradicable stain away. She wrenched her glance away almost before it came to rest upon the cowering wretch, but the Spaniard was no fool.

"San Salvador!" he chuckled. "One sees the staff that bears the banner, now. A sly old Reynard, art thou not, *amigo mio?* One who scampers with the hare and courses with the hounds. The lily-whiteness of thy name is left unsmirched when we inquire of treason; should the rebels clamp down on thee, canst show the lavish contributions thou hast made from thy ward's moneys.

"Take him away, *sargento mio,*" he bade the grinning Asturian, "we'll hang him on the highest gibbet on the square—or stay, perhaps impalement would be better. Let him die slowly in the sight of all his fellow townsmen that they may see the fate that awaits traitors and be made a afraid."

"Mercy, *excelencia,* mercy!" croaked Mynheer van Werff. "I pray——"

"Hadst best be making prayers to heaven, old man," the Spaniard cut in derisively. "Only heaven can avail thee now, and the greatest blessing thou canst ask is that thy body will not hold

thy soul too long when my sweet lambs begin to work on it."

"*Señor Capitán*, I prithee have compassion on him!" Lysbeth started forward, almost laid her hand upon the Spaniard's arm. "What little aid he gave the rebels was forced from him, doubtless by their threats, and he gave them somewhat of my heritage that he might hold the rest intact for me. Oh, hear me, *caballero*"—her little hands were clasped before her as in prayer, her blue eyes swam with tears, her voice was heavy with the burden of petition—"hear my plea as one day you may hope the blessed saints in heaven will hear yours! I know no more than you how great or small my fortune is, but with my guardian's permission I will give it all to you to prosecute the war against the rebels. Surely, that will more than make amends for the little which was given in my name, and doubtless given under fear of threats from the *rebeldes*."

Señor Don Esteban José Diego Gonzales de Quesada y Lopez, lieutenant-captain in the armies of his Catholic Majesty of Spain, looked at the pleading girl and tweaked the black mustachios that grew like little horns upon his upper lip. He was a handsome man, albeit his features had a somber, almost morose cast in repose. Now he gave a smile that flashed white teeth and full, red lips, and stroked his small mustache again. "Thy fortune—all of it, *muy señorita mía?*" he asked slowly, almost musingly.

"Aye, *caballero*——"

Something in the gleam of his long-lashed black eyes arrested her. From her snood-bound chestnut hair to the square-cut tips of her small shoes his gaze traveled as though he totted up a line of figures and was not quite certain of their sum. Then irresolution van-

ished and a satyr unrestrained and shameless looked out of Don Esteban's black eyes. "Why, certes," he replied. "I'll take thy fortune i' the King's name gladly—if the heiress gives herself to me with it."

"But, *Señor Capitán*, I am affianced to the young Heer van Werff——"

"Who doubtless also is a heretic and *renegado*——"

"Not so, *mi capitán*. I swear he is a son of the true faith——"

The smile went from the Spaniard's face and left it bleak as sunset on a moor in winter. "Here is my offer, *Señorita*," he announced. "Take it or reject it, but be quick. I shall not proffer it again:

"Those men and women we have taken into custody must hang, and hanging is a merciful concession when you stop to think that they are traitors taken *flagrante delicto*. Less than half of those whose names appear hereon—he tapped the parchment in his hand—"are taken. Accept my offer and I burn this treason-roll forthwith. The King's justice will be appeased by these few executions; as to the rest—we Spaniards have a saying that he must have sharp eyes who can look through a golden hoodwink. Come, what sayest thou? Thy purse and person as a ransom for the lives of half a thousand of thy neighbors, not to add"—his mocking glance swept over Mynheer van Werff and his family—"the lives of those whom doubtless you hold dear?"

A CHOKING sound, half cough, half lingual spasm, came from Mynheer van Werff. "On behalf of my ward I accept your offer, *Señor Capitán*," he murmured in a throaty, trembling whisper, eager to conclude the bargain as a roving chapman is to close a sale.

"Speak when thou'rt spoken to, old man," the Spaniard reproved. "What say'st thou, *Señorita*?"

"And—and if I say thee yea?"

"Then by the bones of all the sainted martyrs I will keep my contract to the letter. But if thou sayest nay—*Sargento!*"

"*Si, Señor Capitán!*"

"Make ready cords to bind me these vile rebels for the executioner——"

"No, no, your excellency! She cannot hold herself so dear. One life for five hundred, the guerdon of her honor in the balance 'gainst our death by torment——" Now they were round her like a pack of beggars round the dispenser of largess, imploring, weeping, pleading. Upon their knees they made a ring about her, and held up piteous hands or bent and kissed her garment's hem, the margin of her cloak, the very silver buckles of her shoon. They quoted Scripture to her: It is better that the limb should perish than the whole body. . . . Greater love hath no man than that he should lay down his life for his friends. . . .

Grootmoeder Anna knelt before her, her head thrown back, the faded eyes set in the pastel pallor of her wrinkled face awash with tears of supplication. "Myself am old and have but small time left, dear child," she mumbled. "'Tis not for me, but for them that I plead. My son, my grandchild, all my family must perish miserably if you refuse. Think of your neighbors—your old playmates and your father's friends. They must surely hang unless you do relent. . . ."

Adrian, her promised husband, held her hand in both of his and laid his cheek against it. "Thou'lt do this—make this sacrifice for us, sweetest Lysbeth?" he entreated. "Oh, Lysbeth, save us, I implore thee."

A dreadful surge of weakness, as if everything inside her had been turned to water, swept through Lysbeth. "And thou, my Adrian, canst *thou* ask this of me?" Wide and serious, a little puzzled, wholly disbelieving, her blue eyes rested on his tear-filled dark ones.

"Not for myself, dear love—oh, never think it!" he gasped. "Gladly would I die the death a thousand times for thee—thou know'st it well—but for my sire and mother, and the aged grandame." Sobs choked his voice, and as his wont was when he cajoled her with love's endearments, he spread her fingers out against his hand, kissed each rosy tip, then pressed a kiss against her palm and folded her five fingers tightly over it. "Please, Lysbeth dear, my sweet, my only love, say thou wilt do this thing for us!"

"And if I do it, if I give myself that ye may live, ye'll not think hardly of me? Oh, Adrian, my love, my life, my very dearest dear, to promise in advance is easy, but to forget the price thou askest me to pay will be so difficult! I may give my body to the Spaniard, for he has bought me as his slave, but always and for ever, dear, my heart is thine. Thou'lt not forget, nor hate, nor yet despise me? When in the goodness of the Lord his time this cruel war is ended, should I come back to thee—" A retching, deep sob split her words, but Adrian answered the half-completed question:

"I shall be waiting for thee, precious love, though years have passed and I be but a dotard. In all the earth and sky there is none other for me but thyself, my Lysbeth. 'Tis not dishonor, but to honor like that of the blessed saints thou goest. Did not the good Saint Paul endure the hangman's whip and suffer forty stripes save one? And were they not a badge of honor rather

than disgrace, because of Him for whose sake he suffered them? Indeed!

"Thou dost not lay thy virtue by in doing this, sweet Lysbeth. Thou dost but lend it for a little time—pledge it as a gage and hostage for the lives and safety of thy friends and loved ones. Oh, thou art purer than the wind that sweeps the ocean, chaster than the moon at full; thou art thy people's savior and their very patron saint!"

She had no words to speak her self-renunciation. But her silent nod of acquiescence told the Spaniard he had won, and he held to his bargain. Stepping to the fireplace where a cone of peat was smoldering beneath the steaming kettle, he thrust the roll of doom into the flames and watched it as it turned from brown to black and finally crackled into gray, curled ash.

"And now for the accounting, good Mynheer Iscariot," he bade van Werff. "'Twere well for thee if thou hast gold enow to make the payment cash in hand, and mark ye, not a groat less than the whole will I accept.

"And what may be the lady's fortune?" he demanded as they closed the door of Mynheer van Werff's counting-room.

"Three thousand gulden, excellency." The lawyer's hands were fumbling over one another till it seemed they surely must be flayed.

"No more than that? By Santa Catalina, I had thought it would be twice as much!"

"We be honest, but poor folk, your excellency. Our wealth, such as it is, is heaped together groat by copper groat. The Jufvrouw van de Doren is a very wealthy woman for these parts." He eyed the Spaniard under lowered lids, but Don Esteban was thinking more of Lysbeth than her money, and made no reply.

Mynheer van Werff was much put to it to maintain an air of seemly gravity as he told out the broad gold pieces. It was not every day one met four thousand gulden rolling up the hill to greet one.

While this was toward in Mynheer van Werff's office the family showered blessings upon Lysbeth's head. They smothered her with kisses, buried her beneath a flood of fulsome praise, declared she was a saint and holy martyr. Then, one by one, as if they left the corpse-bed of a dear departed one, they went out. Last of all went Adrian, leaving her a kiss upon the hand—did she notice that he did not kiss her yearning lips?—with a final promise: "Fare thee well, my noble love, until we meet again, for sometime, somewhere, meet again we shall."

Then in agony of heartbreak past endurance Lysbeth cast herself full-length upon the floor, and in utter misery and bitterness of spirit beat her brow upon the polished boards.

THE wind that blew across the dykes and dunes and ice-bound canals was as bitter as a curse, the ground was cold and hard as death's own self, the snow fell fast and faster. But Lysbeth van de Doren bent her hooded head against the tempest and drew her fur-lined cloak more tightly round her as she stepped onward through the storm, the song within her heart up-welling till it overflowed her lips:

"From the dungeon of night  
The moon hath respite,  
But shadows her fleeing path mark;  
For, love, thou art late,  
And lonely I wait,  
Alone in the dark . . . in the dark."

"But not much longer, heart o' mine," she whispered. "Ah, sweetest of my heart, it's been so long, so very



long! I know now how the little birds must feel when they cross the sea in springtime to come nesting in their old home once again. The last few miles are weariest, soothly."

For five eternal years she had been "Doña Isabella" to the officers and gentlemen of the Spanish camps and garrisons, always the object of that grave courtesy with which the Spaniard treated women, often finding friendships unexpectedly among her country's enemies. His fellow officers had no hesitancy in accepting Esteban's "*mujer*" at her face value, for a soldier's woman was his own affair, whether she was married to him with bell, book and candle, or joined to him by *vis armata*.

Now her period of servitude was done. The English and the French had joined to help the Netherlanders, and prideful Philip had made truce with his rebellious subjects ere they drove his legions at pike-point into the sea. Don Esteban had been regretful at their parting. So used to her had he become that he even offered marriage if she would stay with him, but: "Nay, *Estebanito mio*," she refused. "I gave my fortune and lent myself in ransom for my people, and you performed your contract honorably. But while I brought my body with me, I left my heart behind. Now I go to seek it. *Adios, amigo caro*."

"*Muy bien*, as you will, *mi Isabelita*," he returned. "How one can love a cow-eyed Dutchman after knowing Esteban's affection is more than I can comprehend, but *un mono es hermoso á otro mono*—even a monkey is beautiful to another of his species—as the proverb has it. *Va con Dios*—go with God—my little pigeon, and may you find such happiness throughout your life as you have given me these last five years." Then he pressed a heavy purse—two

hundred of her own gulden—in her hand, and to the skirl of fifes and growl of drums marched off with his command.

Now she retraced the paths of childhood. Yonder was the *Vrouw van Bokkelen's* house where she and Adrian had gone to school, and he had literally suffered more than once for her sins. Lovingly she fingered the small jewel she had bought for him in Antwerp, a golden wire tied in a love-knot and set with diamonds and small pearls. It had cost her all her hoard beyond her passage money, but what bootied it? How fine it would look on his doublet! She would pin it there with her own hands and tell him: "'Tis the symbol of our love unbreakable, my dear. All through the years I trod the valley of despond with bleeding feet it was the promise of your waiting that sustained me. We be bound by ties unloosable, we twain."

Like a nun who strengthens tempted faith by repetition of her credo, she repeated for the hundred thousandth time his parting words: "I shall be waiting for thee, precious love, though years have passed and I be but a dotard. In all the earth and sky there is none other for me but thyself, sweet *Lysbeth*."

Ah, but he was no dotard, nor was she aged, either! They both were young, the years stretched out before them, years of love and trust and comfort, unmarred by war's alarums. The journey had been long, the faring cruelly hard, but she was home at last.

In every window candles shone, on every stoep there stood a row of wooden shoes, for it was Christmas Eve, and good Saint Nicholas, whom some called Santa Klaus, would be upon his rounds anon to leave mementoes of the blessed Lord his birthday in the empty shoon.

Now she stood before the door of

the van Werff homestead, and as she paused she saw three pairs of shoes upon the stoep. One a man's, that would be Adrian's; then a somewhat smaller pair, his mother's, doubtless. But none to represent Mynheer van Werff or Grandame Anna? For five years she had had no word of them; perhaps they had been called to heavenly rest . . . but what were these? A small and dainty pair of shoon, all bright with fresh new gilding. Too large to represent a child, yet . . . some neighbor maid's, perhaps, mayhap a relative who came to live with them. The Low Countries were filled with orphans these days.

Timidly she took the knocker in her hands and beat upon the panels with the secret knock which she and Adrian had used to make their comings known to one another since their childhood. Three light, sharp taps, a pause, and then two more. As she raised and dropped the knob of polished brass her heart beat faster, like an echo of its knocks.

No answer came to her first summons, nor her second. But at the third a step scuffed on the boards beyond the door. Then the portal was thrown open, and Adrian stood limned in the opening, with the firelight and the candlelight upon him. Within the circle of his arm stood a young woman, fair-haired, pink-cheeked, fragile as a child.

Now she was face to face with him, her thousand-times rehearsed speech fainted on her lips. She could but stretch her empty hands out to him for the heart she'd left in his keeping, and: "Adrian, beloved, it is I. I have come home," she faltered.

The fair-haired woman's gaze was sharply questioning upon him. "What means this, husband?" she demanded.

His eyes dropped to the snowy door-

step. He would not look at either of them; then: "'Tis some woman of the town or camps come to make sport with us," he answered. "I know her not. 'Fore heaven, I never saw the wench until this moment, wife.

"Be off, thou wicked wanton," he bade Lysbeth, and as he slammed the door upon her, drew a silver thaler from his purse and cast it directly at her feet.

At the corner of the street a lantern gleamed, and in the darkness shone upon steel caps and cuirasses and pike-heads. With ordered tread the watch came marching, and their captain flashed his light into her face. "Why, by Saint Nicholas, 'tis Lysbeth van de Doren!" he announced. "Lysbeth the traitress, who deserted friends and promised husband for a Spanish lover! Be off, thou barracks-drab, for if the daylight find thee here, thou'lt feel the hangman's whip upon thy pretty back. We want none such as thee in our good town!"

**T**HEY found her frozen in the snow on Christmas morning. Clapsed in her hand was a small jewel, a love-knot fashioned out of gold and pearls and diamonds, doubtless a token of inordinate affection from her Spanish paramour.

Since she had no kin nor any who would undertake her funeral costs, they sold the sinful gewgaw to buy grave space in the churchyard, and it was Adrian van Werff who bought it. By odd coincidence the price he gave just paid for her sepulcher, and there was nothing left to pay for so much as a single low mass for her soul's repose.

That evening Adrian showed the bauble to his wife, who laughed and said it was a pretty thing and pinned it on his doublet next his heart.

**A**DRIAN VAN WERFF lay dead in the great carven bedstead where nine and forty years before he had been born. He knew that he was dead, for there his body lay with its head upon the goose-down pillow, the eyes half closed, the mouth half open, the tongue thrust forth a little, as though he made an idiot-face at life. Beside the bed his newly widowed wife was kneeling with her hands pressed palm to palm, as became a devout daughter of the church, but no tears trickled from her eyes, nor did her shoulders shake with sobbing. Presently the sick-nurse tiptoed to the bed and bound his hands together with a length of linen, bandaged up his sagging jaw and laid gulden on his half-closed, staring eyes. "Nay, *Tante*," bade the Murvrouw van Werff, "he needs not gold to weigh his eyelids down. Copper will do quite as well." She rose and bustled from the room, the house-keys jangling at her girdle.

Adrian went with her. It was remarkable how light he felt, how easily he moved. He was dead, no doubt of that, and yet he felt no difference. He could move and think and talk and feel, or could he? He stamped his foot against the stair, and no sound resulted. "Wife," he began, "be thou of cheer, for I still see thee——" He ceased, for though he knew he spoke, no sound came from his lips. It was as if he thought the words. "I will be heard!" he shouted. The deep silence was undisturbed.

Now they had passed the turn of the broad stair and came into the central hall. Above the overmantel of the fireplace was a great mirror, and the woman paused before it to arrange her hair. Adrian stood beside her, but only her face looked back from the glass. He laid his hand upon her shoulder, but she paid no heed, and when he put

his fingers on her curling golden hair the strands were not disturbed.

Of late years, since his hair had gone to join his youth, it was his wont when puzzled to run his hand across his thin-thatched poll. He did so now, or, rather, tried to do so. But when his hand and head met, or whether there were hand and head to meet, he could not say, for there was no feeling of resistance nor any image in the mirror to record his actions. "Better hell than this!" he screamed and fell upon his knees to crawl into the fireplace where a bed of peat was smoldering. Elbow-deep he thrust his unseen arms into the glowing mass, but as far as any answering sensation told him, he might as well have put them into water.

Then Adrian van Werff went mad. Stark, staring crazy, he rushed and bounced and bounded round the hall, banging into chairs and chests and settees, meeting no resistance from their solidness, since he flowed around and over them as though he had been air, feeling no sensation of discomfort as he struck them. Oh, for pain, for the feel of hurt, for bruise or cut or wound, for anything to tell him he had sentient form or substance, however tenuous!

His wife was entering the office where for three-score years and more he and his sire had done the legal business of the city. She was sitting at the ancient desk of Flemish oak where he had sat to notarize a thousand documents; she had taken up a goose-quill from the copper tray and was mending it with a penknife. Now she dipped it in the ink-horn and began to write upon a sheet of foolscap:

My very darling:

It is finished and the old man sleeps the sleep that knows no waking. How long he delayed going, how frenziedly he clutched at life, as if it still held something for him—he who forswore love and broke his pledged word to the maid who

saved him and his family from the stake that he might do his father's will and wed me and my fortune!

But all of that is done with now, my sweeting. His lips are stilled, his eyes are blind, his hands are holden in the grave. Tomorrow we consign him to the churchyard clay, and after that come quickly to me, dear, for the time we still may spend together grows shorter day by day, and I can scarce contain me till I make you master of the fortune he amassed. Oh, come, my love, do not delay; there's many a cup of wine in Adrian's tuns for us to quaff, many a bright gold piece in his treasury for our spending.

Yrs. ever fondly,

MARTHA.

She folded the epistle, sealed it with red wax and superscribed it with the name of Doctor Latimus Brandt, the young German imperic who with degrees from Milan and Cologne had lately come to Zaandpoort to dispense physic and take the women's hearts with the snare of his blond beard.

And now, although he was incapable of body-pains, Adrian van Werff felt pangs of hell. Like shadows in a lantern-show the memory-pictures reeled before him. The covert word, the secret, meaning glance, the smile that spoke a volume in its subtleness—he had seen them all when he and Martha went to church and the learned Doctor bowed before them in his ceremonial robes of black, but never till this moment had they had a meaning for him. Poor, purblind fool!

He raved and screamed and stormed at her. The only sound within the room was that the copper kettle made as it steamed on the hearth. He beat her with his insubstantial hands, and not a curling, fine-spun hair of her blond head was lifted from its wonted place. He sought to snatch the document that testified his shame up from the desk, but though he struggled till he felt as though his heart would burst with effort, he could not budge the lightly folded paper.

Hark! From the Groot Kerke steeple came a peal, deep, resonant, final as the knell of doom. One—two—three; one—two—three; one—two—three! "Nine tollers mark a man"—it was the passing bell.

Martha sank down to her knees and joined her hands what time she mumbled almost soundlessly. Now she finished, ". . . *mater Dei, ora pro nobis peccatoribus, nunc et in hora mortis nostrae. Amen.*" She signed herself and rose, then rang a bell.

"Take this to Doctor Latimus Brandt," she told the servant who responded. "Quickly, sirrah, and inform him you await his answer."

"No, no; I forbid it!" Adrian shouted.

Stillness, more clamorous than brazen gongs, lay on the room where Martha, comely, thirty-four years old, rich and a widow, sat and smiled as she awaited a reply from her lover.

Adrian raised his phantom voice and screamed a silent scream. Had he possessed a heart to break it surely must have shattered. Forsaken, impotent, unwept-for and unmourned, he was nothing. Less than nothing. . . .

How he came there he had no idea, but he was on a vast and empty plain, a place of utter desolation. Beneath him was a floor of sand; dull brown and lusterless, it stretched away into infinity on every side, level, changeless, monotonous as a waveless sea. Around him swirled—or rather lay, for it was motionless—a thick, dark mist, not gray, not brown, but a blending of both shades. The atmosphere was thick and heavy, but not dark. Rather, it was something like the fog-bound twilight of a winter's day, not light enough to see in clearly, not dark enough to shut out sight. He could not say if it were

wet or cold or dry or hot; he only knew he stood in a place which had been the same since eons before time began, and which would be the same always . . . always, through time and all eternity. The changelessness of it appalled him. He was afraid, desperately afraid, yet what he feared he did not know. He tried to pray, but nowhere could he find words. Something, perhaps the very vastness and the desolation that surrounded him, seemed mocking him. He threw himself face-downward on the sand and sought to hide himself . . . hide from what? There was nothing here to hide from. That was it—nothing! It was the nothingness, the great and awful nothingness, that terrified him.

But now the mist seemed lightning. Slowly, very slowly—whether it took minutes, years or centuries he could not say — the fog was changing from a tawny to a steel gray, then lightening to a clear, bright rose. He watched the slow transition breathlessly. Now it seemed the mist before him, far and far away, was thinning gradually, thinning till it was as clear as air, and through it he descried a city.

Yet it was no city such as he had ever seen or dreamed of. It seemed walled round about with jasper, and its towers, reaching to the very vault of heaven, seemed made of diamond, emerald and ruby. No sun or moon or stars shone on it, but from its very heart there seemed to emanate a light the like of which he'd never seen, a light that combined all the glory of the midday sun, the beauty of the full moon and the twinkling radiance of stars at once. From the wondrous city, more guessed at than perceived, there seemed to come a strain of music more majestic than the organs of the great cathedrals when they thunder forth the Resurrec-

tion pæans at Easter and the mighty choirs take the joyous anthem up.

And then it seemed a voice which shook the earth like thunder, yet which was so soft and infinitely tender that it struck upon his inward ear like the still call of conscience, came to him: "O man, O little selfish man who forswore love and repaid faith and trust with faithlessness and perfidy, what shall be thy portion?"

For a breathless second Adrian considered a defense, thought how his father had insisted that he forget Lysbeth and take the heiress Martha van Grool to wife, thought how he might declare he believed Lysbeth had deserted him and cast her lot in with the Spaniard, but only for a fleeting second did he hold these thoughts. The remembrance of her stricken eyes when he implored her to save him from the Spaniards' torture, the recollection of the look she gave him when he turned her from his door and threw the Judas-silver to her, beat down his spurious defense and left him cowering and without answer to the charge.

"Speak Thou my sentence, Lord," he whispered. "I am not worthy to be burnt in hell, for in denying her who gave her all for me and mine I did deny the faith by which I had a right to hope for mercy on my sins."

A moment or a century—he could not say which—elapsed before he heard the mighty voice again: "Go thou back to earth again, weak, sinful man, and tread the valley of adversity till thou hast made as great a sacrifice as thy wronged love once made for thee. Till then thou art shut out from joy or bliss or any rest beyond the grave."

**I**T WAS pleasant in Cranberry Street. Although the city sweltered in a heat wave that stuffed nostrils and stopped

throats, a cool breeze blew up from the Lower Bay and over Brooklyn Heights. It was good to be there, resting in the shadowed coolness of the old home, free from changing guard and setting pickets, free from orders and discipline and the hundred details of a soldier's life, Captain Brant van Werff thought as he dropped a second chipping from the sugar-loaf into his breakfast coffee and smiled across the table at his young wife.

"It's odd, my dear," he told her as he stirred the sweetening in his cup, "how often they seemed forewarned of our coming. You remember how I wrote you that we'd take them by surprise at Caton's Wells? They were waiting for us with artillery in position and half a regiment of cavalry in reserve. If Custer hadn't come up when he did we should have been wiped out. We were pretty badly cut up, as it was."

Marianna van Werff patted back an embryonic yawn. "Really, Brant, must we discuss the war?" she asked. Daughter of a family of wealthy Williamsburgers, cotton factors and strong Southern sympathizers, she had opposed her husband's going when the call for volunteers came, but she had been a conscientious, even avid correspondent, every letter begging him for information of his next move.

"You seemed interested enough when I was at the front," he countered.

"Oh—then. Why, it's a wife's duty to be interested in what her husband does and where he goes, and so, of course, I wanted to know everything about you. But you're not there fighting Mr. Lincoln's war now, dear. You are home with me again, and we've so many other things to talk about."

"Why, so we have," he agreed with another smile. "How's Harry? Joined the army yet?"

"Of course not. Father needs him at the office. Poor Papa's been so worried, with the blockade making business so difficult——"

A hot retort sprang to Brant's lips, but he smothered it unuttered and passed his angry look off as resulting from a twinge of pain from his hurt shoulder.

"Poor dear," she sympathized. "Does it hurt terribly? Why don't you ask for a discharge? You've given Mr. Lincoln quite enough of you already; you've a wife and children to consider—don't you love us, Brant?"

"I could not love thee, dear, so much,  
Loved I not honor more,"

he quoted. "Come, don't let's quarrel, honey, I've only three weeks' leave, and——"

"'Scuse me, Cap'n van Werff, suh," Delia, the colored maid, bustled into the dining-room, her eyes agleam with self-importance, "but dere's a gen'leman down at de do' ter see yuh. A sojer gen'leman, suh. He says hit's mos' impo'tant."

At her master's nod she turned and ushered in a young man in zouave uniform who saluted as he entered and drew a folded envelope from his cummerbund.

"By George!" Brant gulped the last remaining coffee from his cup and rose, "I'm called for duty in New York, dear."

"In New York? Why——"

"There's a riot there. The criminal element has risen in protest against the draft; the police can't handle 'em, and troops are being called.

"Has the insurrection gone far, Corporal?" he turned to the young soldier.

"Aye, sir. They've burnt th' Provost Marshal's office in Third Avenue, took th' Twenty-first Street Armory an'

kilt or injured half th' po-lice force. Nightsticks an' revolvers ain't no use agin 'em, sir. It needs cold steel."

"All right, Corporal, I'll be with you right away." Captain van Werff took his cap and blouse from the hall rack, but hesitated as he reached up for his sword-belt. "Won't you gird it on me—this time, Marianna, please?" he asked her almost diffidently.

A mask-like immobility spread across her face, her blue eyes hardened till they seemed like little frozen pools. "Never! What can I tell my children if I do? You've been making war against Americans, men and women fighting for their sacred liberties; now you go to cut down peaceful citizens whose only crime is their objection to King Lincoln's odious draft law. Oh, to think my husband and my children's father should——"

He bent and kissed her quickly; then, his saber clanking as he snapped the buckle of his belt, ran down the steps and turned north toward the Fulton Ferry.

"I could not love thee, dear, so much . . ." he muttered half aloud as they strode down the steep decline of Hicks Street.

"What's that, sir?" Corporal Casey asked.

"Oh, nothing. How'd the riot make such headway?"

"They didn't know how bad it wuz until about ten thousand come a-marchin' down Broadway, shoutin' 'No draft' and 'Hang Greeley!' sir. They took it out in yellin' when they seen th' po-lice by th' Provost Marshal's office there, but over in Third Avenue they broke into the Provost's an' burnt th' buildin' down. They beat th' po-lice senseless, an' when fifty o' th' Invalid Corps marched out agin 'em they stoned an' clubbed 'em till they broke

an' run. They tell me they kilt twenty of 'em. Now they've took th' Armory an' th' Union Steam Works. . . ."

NEW YORK was in a state of siege. The July sky curved merciless and baking as a red-hot copper bowl above the stricken city; here and there great clouds of smoke and orange flame belched up; Negroes' bodies swung from trees and lamp-posts; stores and homes were looted. Along First Avenue from Fourteenth to Eleventh Street the roadway had been barricaded with telegraph- and lamp-poles, with barrels, boxes, carts and furniture from pillaged stores and houses piled between. Earlier in the day the mob had fought off soldiers and police and murdered Colonel O'Brien of the Eleventh Volunteers. Now the rabble crouched behind their breastworks and hurled defiance at the detail of zouaves Captain van Werff led against them. Raised like an ensign was a board on which was crudely lettered "No Draft," and as the line of red-and-blue clad troops advanced the mob's war song rose deafeningly:

"We'll hang old Greeley to a sour-apple tree,  
We'll hang old Greeley to a sour-apple tree,  
We'll hang old Greeley to a sour-apple tree,  
And send him straight to hell!"

A brick came hurtling from a housetop and a soldier in the front rank fell, his musket clattering against the cobblestones. "Halt! Right face; forward, march! Rear rank, about face; forward, march!" Captain van Werff shouted; then as the marching men reached east and west curbs of the street: "Halt! 'Bout face—right file, shoot every man you see in every building opposite you; left file, shoot to kill if anyone dares show himself in buildings across the street!"

There was a moment's pregnant si-

lence; then, furtive as an alley cat, a man crept to a roof-coping and leaned across it, gun in hand. *Crack!* a zouave's rifle barked and the mobster toppled to the sidewalk. Several more attempts to snipe were similarly dealt with; then van Werff brought his men in company front and marched them toward the barricade.

The troops the mob had fought thus far were raw recruits or sick and wounded members of the Invalid Corps. Outnumbering the soldiers by a hundred to one, they had showered them with stones and bricks and bullets and clubbed them in close conflict, then retreated when the fighting grew too hot. Now they were massed behind breast-high defenses, armed with gun and ax and pistol, and were three hundred to each soldier.

But the men who came against them now were neither raw recruits nor invalids. Veterans of Antietam, Chancellorsville and Gettysburg, slaughter was no novelty to them. They had faced — and twice defeated — soldiers of the finest army in the world led by officers the peers of any. Shots and stones and jeering execrations of a mob could not intimidate a corps to whom the Rebel Yell could not strike terror. "Fire!" cried Captain van Werff, and ere the echo of the volley died away: "Charge bayonets!"

Like a breaking, smashing tidal wave of blue and red the zouaves boiled across the barricade, their long sword-bayonets stabbing, cutting, flailing, spreading blood and terror through the close-packed street. The rabble's banner went down, its bearer slashed to shreds by knife-edged bayonets. Howls and cries and screams for mercy sounded everywhere. Artillery is deadly, and so is cavalry, and the Gatling gun and musket take their toll. But

the bayonet is a bonny tool to work with! In twenty minutes they were through the barricades, in half an hour they were in an empty street, save for the corpses and the moaning wounded strewn upon the cobbles.

Outstanding in the mob had been two leaders, a one-armed giant with an iron-studded club and a young man dressed in dirty overalls. These had singled out van Werff at the first impact of the charge. The one-armed man flailed a tremendous blow at his head, but as the bludgeon fell the Captain drove his saber through the giant's throat, and sank upon one knee to dodge the club whose blow his death-stroke could not halt. Just as he knelt the overalled young man brushed past him, thrust his pistol almost in his face and fired. A bayoneted mobster fell against him as he pulled the trigger, and the bullet crashed through van Werff's wounded shoulder, stunning him.

But as the desperado fired the Captain recognized him. Harry—Harry Briggs, his brother-in-law. A murderous Copperhead! Northern born and Northern bred, he had no call to espouse the South's cause, or, if he felt that the Confederates were right, he might have joined them and fought honorably in their army. But he was here, dressed as a laboring man, inciting criminals of the lowest grade to rob and burn and murder, stirring up rebellion among gangsters of his native city, striking at his war-torn country from behind.

Did Marianna know of this? . . .

**T**HE pallor of the pre-dawn died and in the east above Jamaica and Flushing a faint rose crept into the sky, as color returns to the cheeks of one reviving from a faint. Captain van Werff stumbled twice upon the flagstone walk



as he toiled uphill from the Fulton Ferry; at the corner by his house he would have fallen had he not seized a lamp-post in the curve of his left arm. His right hung helpless in a sling; fatigue was now so deep it had become impersonal; his eyes were gritty with lost sleep. Pain from his freshly wounded shoulder throbbed and burned through every inch of him. Three times he strove to mount the brownstone steps of his front porch before he was successful.

Down the stairwell splashed a feeble fall of gaslight from his wife's boudoir. He sighed—the dear girl waited up for him.

Slowly, with halting, infirm steps, he climbed the winding stair, leaned against the wall to gather strength and tottered down the hall toward Marianna. Voices sounded in the dimly lighted powder room, hers and a man's.

Brant drew a deep breath, laid his hand against the wall for leverage and lurched into the room.

Shadows advanced and receded in quick-changing patterns as the gaslight flickered in the light breeze blowing from the River. Marianna sat upon a hassock, elbows on her knees, chin in palms. Her wine-red dressing-gown splashed out around her on the gray-green China matting like an ever-widening pool of fresh-spilt blood. On the rattan settee by the window lounged a man, a dandified coxcomb in purple swallowtail, fawn-colored pantaloons and flowered linen waistcoat. Harry Briggs, his wife's brother—the Copperhead!

With cold steadiness van Werff's eyes rested on the visitor as he fumbled at his holster with his left hand: "Don't move, Briggs. I arrest you on a charge of treason!"

But Briggs did move. Lithe as a cat

he leaped up from the settee, and as he rose his eyes were pitiless.

"Quick, Hal," thus Marianna, "before he calls for help!"

The gaslight glinted on the derringer in Briggs' hand. "This time I shan't miss," he announced, and squeezed the trigger.

Brant van Werff was stepping backward, slowly, like a man who wades waist-deep in water. Across his throat, above the velvet collar of his tunic, a red stain was spreading, soaking through the broadcloth, darkening the dark blue of his coat a deeper shade, and in his eyes was unbelieving horror as he turned them on his wife. He tried to speak, but something stopped his mouth. He swallowed it, threw up his hands like one who fights for breath, and gasped a single word: "Lysbeth!" Then he went down so quickly that the impact of his limpness on the floor was like a hollow echo, jarring the bright-polished brasses by the empty fireplace, starting little tinkling chimings from the cream-jars and the perfume-flacons on the dressing-table.

"Oh, Hal, why did you do it? He was hurt, you could have got away——"

Calmly, her brother blew down his derringer barrel to clear away the smoke-sediment. "It wasn't quite so simple," he replied. "He spotted me among the mob this afternoon. I was as good as hanged already, and so, my dear, were you. Don't you think that they'd have found out how we used the information in the letters that he wrote you? Come, help me with him. No one heard the shot, apparently; we'll leave him in the street."

Panting from exertion, Marianna leaned against the doorpost. "Wha—what was it he said before he—just as he was——"

Her brother wiped a blood spot from his fingers daintily. "It sounded like a woman's name, 'Lysbeth'."

"What could that have meant——"

"My dear, sweet, simple sister, why so naïve? It's fairly obvious the noble, patriotic Captain had another interest of the heart besides your charming self. I've always heard that dying men call on the thing most dear to them."

HE SAT upon the terrace at the front of the old house, turf-ringed flagstones underfoot, boughs of new-leaved oaks above, the scent of early roses in the air. From the bay the lawn curved softly upward, rising in twin knolls to right and left as though it were a giant, tender bosom nourishing plant and tree and bush. Some time ago the sun had set; now a sickle moon shone in the sky, its thin-cut image faintly mirrored in the softly swelling wavelets of the Chesapeake.

How long had he been here? A week . . . ten days . . . a month? What did it matter? When one is quits with life it makes small difference where he is, or for how long. Like a motion picture spooled through the projector in reverse his recent past flashed on his memory-screen.

The Joralemon Street Station, Baltimore, Annapolis, then here. Before that, going through the old house in Cranberry Street, himself a ghost among the linen dust-slips and the gray festoons of cobweb. This he would keep, that he would send to the salesrooms, finally the selling of the house itself, with another signing for him as trustee, since convicts who have lost their civil rights cannot contract or be contracted with. And civil death had been part of his punishment. Tandy van Werff, tennis champion, polo player, holder of the Médaille Militaire and

the Croix de Guerre with palms, was a legal corpse until such time as, after due petition, the Government should see fit to restore his civil rights. "To hell with 'em!" he'd muttered as he left the penitentiary. He'd see 'em damned before he'd whine for pity. He was beaten flat by fate's relentless bludgeoning, but his hard, high pride still held. A van Werff did not cry quarter.

He had been too young to fight, barely seventeen, when war broke out in Europe, but he drove a car with skill and reckless daring which brought him up repeatedly before the traffic courts. Almost before the Central Powers reached Liège he was piloting a Ford "puddle-jumper" in the Section Sanitaire. Then l'Escadrille Lafayette, and finally, with scars and ribbons thick upon him, the American air force.

When a man is barely twenty-one and for four years has grinned back derision in the bare-boned face of Death, he does not take to peacetime ways with ease. He was trained to no profession, being barely out of prep school when he went to war; the thought of selling bonds or real estate or clerking in an office made him retch. He could not go to school. One who has acted as pall-bearer for an era and crowded more of life into four years than most men live in eighty cannot rub elbows with a herd of callow undergraduates or sit with patience through the lectures of a faculty of cloister-bred professors.

Raw death demands raw life, and Death had been his bedfellow and boon-companion since before a morning shave accompanied his daily shower. He had thought of America as a place where life ran high, untainted by the saturnalia of blood which had drenched Europe. Within a month of his return he longed for Montmartre as a country boy may long for green fields

in the city. Even burdened with its war restrictions, Paris was a place of life. Humanities still kept their freshness there, the nights were filled with soft and meaning voices, amorous glances . . . amorous little hands and lips . . . those who ride a joust with Death at dawn have little use for sleep the night before.

Repatriation was an anticlimax. Professional reformers held his native country in a grip more stultifying than that which Samuel Parris fixed on Salem Village. Save in the painfully bohemian rendezvous of Greenwich Village or the speakeasies which were already starting to spread like a chain of leprous lesions, he met with no response to shouts for "more wine and madder music!"

One night he had a breakdown on the Merrick Road and when a passing truck offered a lift to Brooklyn he accepted gladly. Just outside of Freeport they were set upon by hijackers. The man beside him tumbled back, ripped through the shoulder by a slug, and automatically he snatched the wounded gangster's Thompson submachine gun. Here was life again! The reek of cordite fumes, the vicious *spat* of bullets splintering wood, the almost soundless muttered blasphemies of men who dared to tweak the feathers from the wings of Death. With instinctive accuracy he fired, and as his gun spewed havoc, burst into a roaring chanson:

*" . . . elle rit, c'est tout P' mal qu'ell' sait faire,  
Madelon, Madelon, Madelon!"*

They crashed the ambush as a dogfish crashes through a herring-seine, and as the bootleg truck careened toward Brooklyn, Tandy dressed the wounded mobster's shoulder. From Freeport to Brooklyn his companions praised his "noive," whispering ful-

some compliments from the corners of their mouths. When he left them at the Museum station of the Eastern Parkway subway they pressed a dirty card into his hand and invited him to come and see "d' boss" next afternoon.

Joe Lanzilotti, sometime barber, later saloonkeeper, most lately interested in "the numbers," was among the first to scent potential fortune in a national thirst which seemed only to have been salted by the legislatures' pious fiat against alcoholic beverages. Quickly branching from the retail to the wholesale market he sold his speakeasy in Bleecker Street and devoted himself to supplying others with increasingly popular "wet goods." From Montauk Point or nearer places on Long Island he brought in smuggled liquor, cut it thriftily until one bottle took the place of four, and sold it at a profit past the wildest dreams of avarice. Being well known in the trade and having earned a reputation for delivering goods on time, he suffered from no competition, except when hijackers waylaid his caravans. Accordingly, just as mediæval merchants hired bands of free companions to defend their argosies against Barbary pirates, he enrolled a squad of sharpshooters to defend his shipments. Good trigger men were hard to get, however, and harder still to keep. Theirs was not a trade conducive to longevity, and better offers lured them to Chicago or Miami where the technique of their calling was in great demand. So when enthusiastic henchmen told him of the swell guy who had helped them shoot a breach through Frankie Bruno's gang the night before he was most favorably impressed. At half-past four next afternoon he greeted Tandy with a show of friendship he reserved for those who could be useful to him.

What Joe saw pleased him greatly: A young man, twenty-five or -six, perhaps, slightly but compactly built, with a lean, tanned face already starting to harden into lines of power; a man who used broad A as naturally as he wore his English-tailored suit of Harris tweeds without a sign of discomfort in July. There was neither truculence nor mock-ferocity in the heavy-lashed gray eyes that sized him up so coolly but with the gangster's instinct Lanzilotti knew that he'd prefer to stand clear if the other held a pistol or machine gun.

What van Werff saw was not so pleasing: Behind the broad, flat-topped oak desk a man of less than middle stature, dark-skinned, curly-haired, and black-eyed. His gray, almost white suit had been pressed in knife-edged creases, from his breast pocket spilled a gray-silk handkerchief, he had been freshly shaved and manicured, and exuded a faint odor of lilac perfume. His brown skin shone as if it had been rubbed with oil; his eyes danced with a light more sinister than merry; his full, too-red lips framed a smile more nearly contemptuous than good-humored.

However deviously his mind might work, Joe Lanzilotti's methods were direct, always. "Thanks for the help you give us last night, pal," he said, and counted out five hundred-dollar bills across the desk. "Just an insurance premium, see. We don't want we should owe nobody nothin'."

Van Werff was equally direct. He could use five hundred dollars. "Would you like to buy insurance regularly?" he asked as he folded the bright yellow bills and thrust them into his pocket.

**A** NEW character had been added to the underworld's *dramatis personæ*. From South Brooklyn to the Bronx the mobsters spoke respectfully

of The Duke and his assistants. Few were privileged to know him, even those who hired him had no idea what his real name was, for interviews were brief and to the point; generally Joe Lanzilotti acted as the go-between, making all arrangements, collecting fees and personally guaranteeing satisfaction.

Frankie Bruno passed out quickly, dying bloodily if not heroically when The Duke and three tommy-gun experts chased his seven-thousand-dollar limousine for a mile down Brooklyn's Fourth Avenue and finally crowded it against the curb at Thirty-ninth Street. His gang vowed bloody vengeance; The Duke machine-gunned his entourage when they gathered for his obsequies with all the aplomb he had shown when he bombed German ammunition dumps.

Steadily the toll mounted, until to let it be known one had hired The Duke's protection was almost tantamount to immunity. But when Nick the Greek gave out information he had bought The Duke's services without first taking care to pay the usual retainer, Nick became the *pièce de résistance* at a sumptuous funeral. After which nobody thought it wise to take The Duke's omnipotent name in vain.

Meanwhile Tandy van Werff bought himself a little house of eighteen rooms near Easthampton, leased a duplex suite in Park Avenue and gathered honors as a polo player and a tennis champion. If his friends were puzzled by his sudden affluence they did not worry over it. Anything could happen in an era when domestic servants and bus boys and waitresses in short-order restaurants were operating in the stock market, when respectable brokers negotiated loans to finance liquor syndicates and legislators, tipsy till they had

to grasp their desks for support, rose to extol Prohibition as "the greatest moral victory since Emancipation."

**H**EIDI was exquisite. From the top-most of her little, childish-tight blond curls to the pink tips of her childish-small toes she was lovely as a Watteau shepherdess or a Hebe sculptured out of living marble by Praxiteles. She had little formal education, but she knew life thoroughly. New York had been her oyster, and when its opening had proved a harder task than her few talents could accomplish she had fallen back upon the most effective weapons of a pretty woman. Her odyssey was not unique: hat-check girl in a night club, next cigarette vendress, then a member of the chorus, finally a place she called her own that overlooked the Hudson and the Jersey Palisades. Her friend, protector and provider bore the patronymic Theophilatos, but in his working hours he was known as Nick the Greek.

Misfortune came to Nick one night by way of a machine gun in the practised hands of Tandy van Werff, alias The Duke; whereupon the lovely Heidi went to Tandy as part of the spoils of war, and things continued much as they had been.

Hoodlums came and went. Some died kicking with machine-gun slugs in their vitals, some suffered sudden death beneath the wheels of furiously-driven motor cars, some were fished up from the river in a shocking state of putrefaction, the picture-wire bound about their wrists and legs and necks proclaiming that they were not suicides. A few were taken by the law, but this was little matter for concern, since skilful lawyers could be hired at a price.

Tandy never bothered with such minor annoyances as the income tax.

How could a man in his profession make returns? Under Income from Business: "Rubbing out Dutch Pete, \$1,000?" Under Business Expenses: "Thirty gross machine bullets, \$180?"  
Hardly!

Little, pretty Heidi found a way to use her little, pretty pink-tipped fingers while The Duke was out on business. She didn't find much, just a few old pads of check-stubs, showing what he had deposited in a ten-month period, and the name of a bank where he kept some safe deposit boxes.

But that was all the Treasury Department needed.

Her voice was charming, cultured, musical, when they called on her to testify against him. Only her eyes were slightly repellent because of their hardness and their disillusion. She did not look away, she looked full at him while the damning words fell softly from her painted lips—while she identified the check-stubs and told how she'd discovered where he stored his private records—and her slow words, heavy with contempt, carried all the impact of a physical assault.

After all, she had been Nick the Greek's girl friend. Indeed, as it developed, she had been his lawful, wedded wife, and was the mother of his two-year-old daughter. And so she was, a trifle—just a very little—heroically, his avenger, also.

They sentenced him to ten years at hard labor, and the warden took them at their word. No office work, no school teaching for this man sentenced for an income tax evasion because they could not prove the score and more of killings which they knew he had committed. The rock pile, the machine shop, the jute mill and the laundry were his portion while the sands in Time's hour-glass slowly mounted to a pyramid

of ten years. Then they turned him free, a tall lean man of thirty-seven, looking fifty, with gaunt features and hair as gray as pewter.

His old haunts were no more. Repeal of Prohibition had smashed the crime trust's golden backbone. The criminal no longer enjoyed social sanction, gangsters and hoodlums were no longer tolerated by law-respecting citizens; now they could buy their liquor legally, and those who still clung to the rackets as a means of livelihood were Ishmaels with every man against them and relentless law-enforcement officers giving them no rest. There was no more place for him in this new social order than there had been in the old when he returned from war.

His house out on Long Island had been long since sold to satisfy the fines assessed against him; only the old family home in Brooklyn and the place in Maryland remained. He sold the city house and came here to the quiet peace of Anne Arundel County, where a living dead man might sit tranquilly and wait the sundering of flesh and spirit.

**T**HE call for help came suddenly as lightning from a still sky, quavering eerily across the starlit water. For half a minute he sat listening; then it came again, pleading, sharp-edged, then with mortal fear. Next instant he was charging full-tilt down the sloping lawn, flinging coat and shirt away, pausing for an instant at the sand to slip off trousers, then in tennis shoes and shorts to dash across the pebbly shingle and out into the gently-murmuring water.

He swam swiftly with double over-arm stroke, heading straight as a launched crossbow bolt for the white arm waving a distress sign ninety yards from shore. For an instant he reared up and shouted, "Keep afloat, I'm com-

ing!" then thrust his face into the waves again and sprinted toward the drowning woman.

Now he was beside her and had braced an arm beneath her shoulders. The faintly star-illuminated light struck on her face as he supported it, and in spite of his exhaustion and the urgent need for haste he paused a moment, treading water as he looked at her. An eery feeling ran through him. As one who comes upon a place entirely strange to him may suddenly exclaim, "I know this—I've been here before!" he knew this woman's features as an aging man can limn the face of his first sweetheart in his memory, or a long-forgotten song is suddenly remembered in entirety. It was like a face long imagined suddenly become real: abundant chestnut-colored hair rippling with rich shadow-laden waves, a small and pointed chin, a small, straight nose whose delicately cut nostrils seemed to palpitate above the full-lipped crimson mouth, purple eyes with long, dark, curling lashes. . . .

He struck out for the shore, swimming easily, for she was almost bubble-light, and, now that he had come and she was not in momentary peril, she was composed enough and gave him no trouble.

Arm-stroke — kick! Arm-stroke—kick! he cleft the scarcely-curling waves, then:

"O Lord, have mercy!" A little distance off, but swinging nearer in a series of concentric circles, was the blue-black dorsal fin of a great shark. This was no porpoise, no cetacean—he knew the lumbering antics of those ocean clowns. This was a shark, a killer. He had seen its kind in the sea off Morro Castle at Habana. What it did so far north he had no idea; that it was near, and circling nearer, there could be no doubt.

Desperately he beat and churned the

water. The fin wavered, veered away a little, then edged closer.

With agility born of despair he drew his foot up, wrenched a tennis shoe away and hurled it at a spot three feet or so before the fin. His aim was good, and for a moment the astonished shark gave water while Tandy struck out for the shore with every ounce of his remaining strength.

Ten yards—fifteen—he had gone when the warning of V-shaped ripples gliding back from V-shaped fin told him the shark had returned to investigate. Once more he doubled up and tore a shoe away, once more hurled it at the curious, deadly monster; again he had a moment's respite.

She was growing heavier, heavier by the second. No mere buoyancy about her; it might have been an iron statue which he sought to bring to land. Time and again her dead-weight bore him down; his mouth was filled with water repeatedly, his breath came laboredly, all strength was gone from him.

By a supreme effort he raised his head above water. There was the shore, not fifty feet away. The beach shelved sharply here, he'd swum over every inch of it, and knew it as he knew his garden paths. Six feet—ten feet away, at most — was shallow, knee-depth water. If he could let her go . . . the shark was just behind, less than twenty feet away. He set his teeth: "The van Werffs don't cry quarter!"

Gangster, killer, ex-convict he might be, but he was a van Werff, a gentleman, a graduate of Adelphi and Poly Prep, a medaled soldier. What was it Sydney Carton said before the guillotine blade fell—"It is a far, far better thing that I do now than I have ever done?"

With all of his remaining strength—"Help me, Lord, just this one time!"

—he thrust the woman from him and saw her struggle feebly for a moment, then rise to her knees. Then he slid back into the deep water like a plummet broken from its string.

The shark was waiting. . . .

OUT and out, beyond the bounds of farthest infinity, the great plain stretched, level, changeless, monotonous as a waveless sea. All round about him was a thick mist, not gray, not brown, but a blending of both shades. His frightened spirit shuddered in the chill of it, and with a dread that knew no boundaries, for in a flash he had been given memory: He knew himself as Adrian, as Brant, as Tandy, always with the same surname, ever faring under an ill-fated star because of the great perfidy he committed against love and trust.

Somehow, though, he seemed a little different. He had feeling, of a sort. He knew the fog was cold, cold with the utter chill of interstellar space, and the freezing bitterness of it gnawed at him like a starving wolf.

But now the mist was lifting. The fog about him changed from tawny to steel gray, then to clear, bright rose. And with the light She came. Beautiful as the morning when it comes to end a night of storm she was; her chestnut-colored hair, rippling with rich shadow-laden waves, hung down her shoulders and each side her face. Her little, pointed chin was perfect, as was her small, straight nose whose delicately cut nostrils seemed to palpitate above her full-lipped, crimson mouth. About her clung a robe of palest lavender tissue—or was it plastic, fabricated light?—and from beneath its hem her feet shone, white as ivory tipped with pearl-shell, slender, small, exquisite.

These things he saw, and, seeing, rec-

ognized her. "Lysbeth——" he began, then faltered into silence at the glory of her eyes. Love was in them, love and trust and pride—and a devotion which could know no wavering. "Lysbeth!" he breathed once again, and fell prostrate before her.

A light touch rested on his shoulder, and he felt a thrill of warmth glow through him. The coldness of the fog no longer bit into his bones. He was alive.

"Do you—can you—oh, I am not worthy, even, of your hate, but if you'll say that you can some day forgive me——" he faltered.

"Beloved!" Softly spoken, the three syllables were like an absolution and a benediction. "Long and long ago I did forgive whatever little hurt you did me, but it was not mine to pronounce pardon till your soul was purified by suffering, dear. Oh, how I've wept to see you bound tight in the web of circumstance, betrayed, deluded, mocked—but it was I who helped you at the last, dear love. I prayed to be allowed to go to you as you sat by the water, and to help you step across the barrier that separated us—I knew that you'd not fail me, that when it came to choice between a dreadful death and rescuing a woman you had never seen with fleshy eyes, you would not falter. I had faith in you——"

"It was that faith that gave me strength!" he whispered.

Her hands were in his, now, and from her touch he found the strength to stand. "Come, my dear, my very love," she bade him gently.

"Whither do we go?"

"Unto the City Beautiful. Behold!" She pointed, and in the distance showed a city walled about with walls of jasper, and its towers, reaching to the very vault of heaven, seemed made of diamond, emerald and ruby. No sun or moon or stars shone on it, but from its heart there seemed to emanate a light that combined all the glory of the mid-day sun, the beauty of the moon at full and the twinkling radiance of the stars at once.

"And do I—shall I live there?"

"Always and for ever, heart of mine."

"But surely, when I have grown old——"

"Yonder is neither age nor death nor pain nor tears nor weeping, very dearest. Come."

Then suddenly the fog which hovered round about was filled with music more majestic than the organs of the great cathedrals when they thunder forth the Resurrection pæans at Easter and the mighty choirs take the joyous anthem up. So, hand in hand, they walked into the City Beautiful.