

The Calendar

by Edgar Wallace, 1875-1932

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Chapter 1

“Do you like me well enough to let me use your name?”

Garry Anson stared at the beautiful woman who put this tremendous question so casually.

“To use my name? I don’t quite know what you mean, darling.”

Wenda Panniford shrugged a shoulder impatiently. It was an odd little trick of hers. The beautiful grey eyes sought his for a moment, and then fell.

It was a fortnight before Ascot, and the garden of Daneham Lodge was at the height of its splendour.

They had been pacing the level, shaven lawn, talking of flowers, when the question of Willie Panniford arose. Willie was a source of worry to Garry Anson. He liked the big, blustering fool, drunk or sober; had speculated without profit for a very long time as to what Wenda could see in this husband of hers, and what charm Willie had had that had induced her to throw herself away upon an impecunious Scottish baronet.

He had taken a pride in his faith that he knew Wenda till then—she was almost a complete stranger to him at the moment.

“Honestly, I don’t understand, Wenda. What do you mean, use my name...?”

“Willie is jealous of you. He is ready to believe almost anything about you. If I went to him this moment and told him”—again the jerk of her shoulder—“you know.”

“You mean he would believe it? What a—”

“Don’t be stupid, Garry!” Her voice was a little sharp. “Why shouldn’t he? We’ve known each other since we were children; we’ve always been close friends. Willie isn’t terribly clever. He believes things now without any particular reason; why shouldn’t he believe—I nearly said ‘the worst?’” She smiled faintly. “Would it be the worst?”

Garry Anson was still dazed. The tanned, good-looking face was blank with amazement.

“You mean that I should let my name be used as co-respondent? My dear, I like you too much to allow your name to be dragged through the muck and mire of a divorce case.”

She sighed, again impatiently.

“Never mind about my name, Garry—your altruism is sometimes offensive. Do you like me well enough to make that sacrifice—and all that would be involved?”

He ran his hands over his crisp, brown hair.

“Of course I like you well enough. The idea is monstrous. Isn’t there any way of patching up—?”

“You’re terribly anxious for me to go on with Willie.”

There was a tremor in her voice; chagrin, pain, anger—he could not tell which; never dreamed, indeed, that he had done more than hurt her, and was panic-stricken at the thought. For Wenda Panniford was to him the one woman in the world.

“Of course, if you want it. I’ll do anything. It would be horrible for you, but naturally I wouldn’t hesitate a moment, and when it is over possibly you would care to marry me—”

He saw a look of astonishment come into her eyes, and blundered.

“You needn’t, of course; that isn’t obligatory—I mean, there’s no reason why you should!”

“Of course I’d marry you. Why—” She checked herself. “You love me, don’t you, Garry?”

He loved her very dearly, but realized at that moment with stunning force that he did not love her quite like that. They had been like brother and sister all these years, close comrades, sharing one another’s secrets—at least, she had shared his. Perhaps she realized the starkness of his embarrassment, for she went on quickly:

“Are you going to Hurst Park today? Willie is going with us. I’ll see you there—I expected you would be in Chester; it was a great relief to find you here.”

“But listen, darling.” He was recovering something of his balance. “Is Willie being too frightful? I know he drinks, and that he’s an awful lout in some ways, but there’s a lot of good in old Willie—”

“Don’t let us discuss Willie,” she said shortly. “We’re leaving for Italy on Tuesday. When we come back I want a really serious talk with you.”

And then she changed the subject, and talked about the old General who had died that week.

“Of course, that is why you didn’t go to Chester. I had forgotten. Poor old man! Did he leave a lot of money, Garry?”

“Buckets full,” smiled Garry Anson. “There’s Molly!”

A girl was waving from the other side of the lawn.

“I’ll see you at Hurst Park.”

In another moment she was out of sight. Garry continued his restless pacing of the lawn, his thoughts in turmoil. Wenda—of all people in the world! He knew things were not going too well in the Panniford household, but he had not dreamed that they were as bad as Wenda had revealed.

As he walked slowly back to the house he caught a glimpse of Hillcott, smoking a surreptitious cigarette, on the far side of a heavily laden lilac bush; but by now he was so accustomed to Hillcott’s acts of indiscipline that he never even thought of calling him to account. Indeed, Hillcott made no attempt to conceal the fact that he was taking a quiet loaf at a moment when he should have been engaged in pressing Garry’s trousers. He was butler, valet, had once been cook, to Garry’s establishment; cherished a bitter loathing for all housemaids, and profound contempt for society at large; for Hillcott had once been a burglar, had suffered a term of confinement in one of His Majesty’s prisons, and had come to harbour in Garry’s service, through the War. He had been Garry’s batman, was now almost the keeper of his conscience.

“Lady Panniford coming to breakfast?” asked Hillcott with that easy familiarity which Garry had long since ceased to chide.

“No, she isn’t.”

“Pity,” said Hillcott. “We’ve got mushrooms—picked them meself.”

“Which means I shall be dead before nightfall.”

“You never know,” was Hillcott’s only retort.

Hillcott interpreted the news he had read in the morning papers, and kept up a running fire of comment on men, women and horses, and, requiring no encouragement, came unexpectedly to the subject of Sir William Panniford.

“Heard about his lordship?” he asked, setting a plate for fruit.

He frequently so referred to Sir William; whether in sarcasm or a misunderstanding of courtesy titles Garry was never sure.

“What about him?” he asked carelessly.

“Got soused down at the Boar Inn last night with a lot of clodhoppers—the question is, can a gentleman get drunk on beer? I’ve been having an argument with a groom.”

Garry eyed him sternly.

“You’ll oblige me by not discussing my friends, Hillcott,” he said.

“If you don’t like my style you’d better get another servant, Captain,” said Hillcott stiffly. “I’m a human being and I’m entitled to me opinions.”

“I doubt very much if you’re human, but you’re certainly not entitled to express your opinions to me about my friends,” said Garry furiously, “and you can leave at the end of the month.”

“That’ll do me,” said Hillcott.

Hillcott either gave notice or received a notice regularly once a week, but little came of it. He was amiability itself when he brought out Garry’s field-glasses to the car and, uninvited, placed himself by the side of the driver. Garry gave him up; he spent his life giving up Hillcott.

Chapter 2

PETER HIPPLEWAYNE spotted Garry as he was crossing the course from the members’ motor enclosure, and intercepted him.

“You runnin’ your horse?” he asked.

Garry Anson had no great love for this man, found it at times a little difficult to be civil to him.

“Yes; why?”

Peter fingered his weak mouth and smiled. He was terribly sure of himself, was self-consciously clever, and therefore was a little objectionable.

“Just asked you,” he said laconically.

He stood for a while, gazing down the wide track.

“I thought of giving Ediphos a run,” he said, “but I can’t beat yours.”

Garry gently released the detaining hand.

“I wonder if I can beat yours?” he asked. “On the book you have an outstanding chance, and I doubt if I shall win.”

The other man looked down at him slyly.

“Then why not row in with me?” he asked. “With your horse out of the way, mine is a certainty—you’ll get three to one to your money, and it will be a case of putting it down and picking it up.”

There was nothing sinister in a suggestion that an owner should not run his horse but should back another—if that was Peter's suggestion.

"All right—I'll not run him."

Mr Hipplewayne closed his eyes wearily.

"Don't be silly—of course you'll run your old hair-trunk. Otherwise I'll have to take rotten odds about my own."

Garry's eyes glittered. If Peter's skin had been a little thinner he would have sensed the gathering storm of wrath.

"What is the idea—that I should run mine and stop him?" he asked.

Peter nodded coolly.

"Why not? It is done every day of the week, old man. Are you pretending you don't know that?"

Garry turned away.

"We won't discuss it," he said and the other man caught his arm.

"What a righteous fool you are, Garry! All right! You can't get money at this game if you're too straight."

"There never was a turf crook who didn't die broke," said Garry quietly and saw the young man frown.

"'Crook' is not a word I like," he snapped, and lagged behind.

An hour later Garry was absorbed in one of those minor problems which concern the racing man and, momentarily, he was oblivious of the externals of life. He had watched Rataplan being saddled; now he stopped at the public entrance of the paddock to see the claret and white hoops go flying past on the way to the post.

It was not an important race; the value of the plate was less than three hundred pounds; but his commissioner had gone into the ring with instructions to put on a monkey at the best price—and five hundred pounds was a considerable bet for Garry. He assured himself uneasily that he could afford to lose five hundred—if anybody could afford to lose that amount. Yet was he not going beyond the limit and margin of safety?

Here was a line of thought, uncomfortable in itself, and yet a pleasing relief from the more pressing problem of Wenda. Phew! Every time he recalled that interview of the morning he felt a little chill—but a chill which made him hot under the collar.

Garry strolled under the veranda outside the weighing room, past the unsaddling enclosure, and was turning through the iron gates when Wenda called him. He turned, with unaccustomed embarrassment, to meet her.

Lady Panniford was lovely, had always been lovely as long as Garry could remember her. About her there were two definite schools of opinion: those who thought she had the perfect face and those who swore by her more perfect figure. She was almost as tall as Garry, golden-haired, blue-eyed, flawless of skin. She gave insignificance to even attractive women who had the misfortune to be near her. The girl who was with her at the moment was both conscious and careless of this inequality. She was doomed by relationship to appear with and to attend her sister-in-law.

"You came, then?"

Garry was conscious of the lameness and futility of the remark.

"I've come to back your horse, darling," Wenda smiled.

But there was a challenge in her smile. It said, as plainly as words:

"There is one subject we will not discuss—today!"

"I've just seen Peter Hipplewayne; he told me to back Ediphos," she went on. "So dear of Peter to try to make me some money. But it is favourite, and I hate favourites."

"Then it should win," said Garry, "and if you've backed mine you are going to be disappointed. Hullo, Molly, darling!"

He became aware of Molly—as one became aware of almost every woman whose lot it was to appear in Wenda Panniford's company.

"Where's Willie?" he asked, and might have saved himself the trouble.

Willie Panniford was at the members' bar. He generally met somebody who wanted to go to the bar, a hunting man or a man of his old regiment, or somebody he had met in Cairo, or anybody else who wanted to go to the bar.

Wenda took his arm and led him down towards the rails. Molly followed obediently. She had a sense of humour and a growing consciousness of advancing age. Twenty-one is more certain of itself than eighteen. Wenda was finding it increasingly difficult to cope with Molly. Men were taking an interest in her. Some people thought she was clever. Almost everybody except Garry realized that she was passing from the stage of girlish prettiness to the maturer beauty of her years.

Wenda drew him out of the range of Molly's hearing.

"I told you we were going to Rome on Tuesday, Garry," she said, "but I forgot to ask you something this morning. Do you mind if I delay sending you a cheque for another week or two?"

Garry laughed:

"Wenda, darling," he said, with a mock seriousness, "if I don't get my share of it now I will issue a writ. Of course I don't! I wanted you to keep the whole of the income from that little nest-egg; you know that."

The blue eyes smiled gratefully at him.

"You are good," she said. "Two hundred and fifty pounds doesn't mean anything to you, but it means an awful lot to me just now."

She held twenty thousand pounds' worth of five per cent stock. Garry's one provident act, in a moment of financial panic, had been to make her an official trustee for this sum. His betting was a little too heavy; he knew the time would come when racing must play a less important part in his life and when his betting book would be locked away in a drawer. He had discussed his plan with Wenda. She had agreed to hold the bonds against his need and for her service receive half their revenue.

"Be an angel and write to me," she said; and then, as a thought occurred to her: "I wasn't terribly sympathetic about the General, was I?"

This was the second reference she had made to General Anson's death. He was puzzled to know why. She had known his uncle and had heartily disliked him.

"He was a fine old man," said Garry, "and I admired him tremendously. Here's your boy friend."

Henry Lascarne was coming across the lawn in search of her. He was making one of his rare visits to a racecourse and had probably come under protest.

Certainly nobody but Wenda would have induced this tall, correctly tailored young man to descend from his Olympian heights to the vulgarities of Hurst Park.

“Are you seeing the racing down here, Wenda?”

She looked back at the crowded stands; from their post on the sloping lawn they commanded a fairly good view of the course, could see the horses lining up at the gate and were almost exactly opposite the winning post.

“Let’s stay here. Do you mind, Henry?”

“I’ll go on the stand,” said Garry, and left them.

“Not exactly polite—” began Henry.

His nose had a queer way of wrinkling up when he was contemptuous—and he was mainly contemptuous.

“Garry’s manners are deplorable,” she said gaily. “We will wait here.”

She was a little tense, more than a little excited, Molly noticed—Molly noticed everything.

“They say he’s betting like smoke,” said Lascarne.

“Who—Garry?” Wenda put down her glasses and turned an amused face to him.

“Why shouldn’t he? He’s terribly rich.”

“I wonder if he is?”

It was the first doubt she had ever heard expressed concerning Garry’s prosperity, and her eyes opened a little wider.

“Of course he is! He’s probably enormously rich. Why don’t you bet, Henry? It would be very human of you.”

Henry Lascarne smiled. “Racing is a fool’s game and only blind idiots engage in it,” he said.

He had all the assurance of twenty-four.

“I’ve seen more fellows ruined on the turf than—than—”

“On the Stock Exchange.”

It was Molly who spoke.

He did not like Molly, being well aware that his dislike was reciprocated; and he was all the more irritated because that reference to the Stock Exchange had struck home. There had been a big Wall Street slump and Henry Lascarne’s securities had depreciated in value by over a hundred thousand pounds. It was true that he could bear the loss, for Lascarne had left his son the greater part of two millions, even after the death duties had been paid. But he hated losing money.

“If I may be allowed to say so—”

“Which you are,” said Molly calmly.

“—it is absurd to compare legitimate investment—”

“They’re off!”

Henry Lascarne was annoyed. Things were always happening on a racecourse which interrupted him in his more profound and imposing moments.

He took his glasses from their case and focused them reluctantly upon the field. The horses were moving swiftly along the back stretch, a compact bunch of varicoloured jackets. He could not distinguish Garry’s colours, and had only the dimmest idea of what they were, although he had had them described to him a dozen times.

“Which is Garry’s horse? I can’t see it.”

Wenda's voice was impatient, trembled a little; the hands that held the glasses were trembling too and her failure to pick out any horse was understandable.

Molly was not using glasses. Her keen, grey eyes had found the claret and white hoops as soon as the field had settled down.

"He's on the rails, about third, I think," she said.

"And he'll finish first."

She turned quickly: Garry had come down from the stand and was behind her.

"Will he, Garry—will he?" asked Wenda eagerly.

Again her shaking hands went up, and again she failed to control her race-glasses.

"He's won it there," said Garry. "The only danger is Ediphos, but I don't think—"

He was suddenly silent, nor was his voice raised in the roar which greeted Rataplan as it cantered past the post two lengths ahead of its nearest opponent.

"How wonderful! How wonderful, Garry!"

Wenda's eyes were shining. "I had a hundred pounds on it. What was the price?"

Garry stared at her. Only a few minutes before she had excused herself paying him two hundred and fifty pounds? "But, darling, you're not betting in hundreds?"

She shook her head, a little impatiently.

"Don't be silly, Garry. Of course I hadn't a hundred to put but somebody did it for me. Isn't it wonderful?"

"Very!" Garry's voice was troubled and she misjudged the reason.

"Don't be absurd, Garry. You backed this horse yourself; and when some nice man told me he'd put a hundred on for me—"

"I'm not worried about that; I shouldn't have won that race—I think there's going to be a devil of a lot of trouble about it."

"Trouble?" said Wenda quickly. "Do you mean there's a chance that your horse will be—"

"Disqualified? No. But Ediphos should have won. He wasn't trying. I didn't realize it till they were nearly home."

"Ediphos?" She frowned. "That was the horse Peter said would win. Of course it was trying! Peter wouldn't tell me—"

Garry nodded.

"Peter would sell his own aunt! He is rather a tricky young gentleman—who has tricked once too often. If the stewards didn't see what happened in the race they're blind—and these stewards are never blind."

He had seen Ediphos nicely placed as the field turned the bend into the straight; and then he had seen the horse drawn back and deliberately put behind the two leaders in such a position that he could not possibly be extricated at the crucial moment of the race.

The knowledgeable racing folk were discussing it openly as they streamed into the paddock. Garry heard one pillar of the turf say:

"I've never seen anything more disgraceful..."

At the entrance of the paddock he met the owner of Ediphos and, making an excuse to Wenda, he took him aside.

"There is going to be a row over this race."

"A row—what sort of a row? You won it, didn't you?" asked Peter truculently.

“You didn’t win it—that’s the trouble.” said Garry grimly. “You’d better prepare yourself for an inquiry.”

“Oh, nonsense!”

But the pink face had gone white.

“I gave the jockey orders to come away when he could...”

“I’m just telling you that it’s absolutely certain the stewards will send for you.”

“Nonsense!” said the other, again.

Later in the afternoon Garry met a Press friend in the paddock and learned that the running of Ediphos had been the subject of inquiry and that the matter had been referred to the Stewards of the Jockey Club.

He did not see Wenda again until the last race had been run and then he met her on the way to her car. Willie Panniford was leading the little party, a tall, fattish young man, not in the best of tempers.

“Beastly place, this,” he complained loudly. “Why the devil I ever come racing I don’t know. What a brute you are, Garry—to have a winner and tell nobody!”

“I told Wenda—” began Garry, when a warning glance stopped him.

“You told her what? She said you never mentioned the horse.”

“Darling, your understanding is rather dull this afternoon,” she said sweetly. “I told you that Garry thought his horse might win. He wasn’t very definite about it, were you, Garry?”

Garry was never definite about his horses winning. He had lost all his earlier enthusiasm for communicating his good things to the world, as the result of bitter experience. When an owner confides to a friend that his horse will win and it doesn’t, he is apt to be reminded that the man to whom he imparted the information would have backed the real winner if he hadn’t been ‘put off.’

Willie was in his noisiest mood.

“Nice business, racing, I must say! Did you hear about that fellow Hipplewayne? Stopped his horse—deliberately stopped him, old boy! A disgraceful thing to happen—Hipplewayne is no good! By God, they ought to warn the beggar off right away!”

“Willie, darling”—it was Wenda’s urgent voice—“you’re talking very loudly—and very stupidly.”

He glared round at her. Willie had found the bar very companionable that afternoon.

“If I’m not allowed to express my views—”

“Not in public!” she smiled.

Willie went, grumbling, to his car, cursed the chauffeur for keeping him waiting, swore at the policeman who held him up to let the other traffic pass. Garry imagined he could still hear his voice when the car was out of sight.

He found his little Rolls, and the voluble Hillcott discussing something vital with the chauffeur.

“Well, Hillcott, had a good day?” he asked, handing his glasses and raincoat to the man.

“Not so bad,” said Hillcott. His tone was friendly, his manner more so. “I backed yours and had a saver on Ediphos—what a ramp!”

“It was very stupid,” said Garry.

“I saw old Panniford—”

“When you talk of Sir William Panniford I wish you’d give him his title, Hillcott.”

“How did he get it?” asked that irrepressible little man.

Garry did not argue with him. Hillcott climbed in by the side of the chauffeur and the bonnet of the car headed for Ascot and Daneham Lodge.

Chapter 3

‘THE CALENDAR’ usually arrived on Monday morning, when Garry was living in the country. It was addressed to his house in Knightsbridge and his housekeeper was somewhat dilatory about sending on his correspondence.

He tore open the cover and looked at the first page. There was the announcement.

‘The Stewards of the Jockey Club held an inquiry into the running of Ediphos at Hurst Park, and, having heard the evidence, warned Mr. P. H. G. Hipplewayne off Newmarket, Ascot and the courses under the jurisdiction of the Jockey Club.’

Garry put down The Calendar with a sigh.

“What a fool!”

This meant social death to Peter, resignation from his clubs, ostracism. It was a final and dreadful pronouncement; there was no appeal against it.

Wenda was in Italy. He had had a note from Molly that had amused him. Molly was a shrewd observer, had a quaint knack of description. He was fond of her—he realized this in moments when the One Woman did not occupy his thoughts. Sometimes he remembered that it was Molly who had christened her the One Woman and he wondered if Molly was being friendly or sarcastic.

With Wenda in Italy he could breathe a little more freely. He hated himself for his disloyalty. It had been an act of hysteria on her part—pique at some folly of Willie’s. She couldn’t have meant it—not Wenda.

He had never been in love with her; had grown up with her beauty and her friendship and had not resented her marriage with Willie Panniford. Willie was one of the catches of the season, by common agreement. Only his lawyer and his agent knew how little of a catch he was. People who disliked Wenda, and there were a few, said she was a bitterly disappointed woman when she discovered that the Scottish baronet had little more than a few thousands a year and that his many acres were heavily mortgaged. If she were, she had never expressed her disappointment.

Garry believed that the marriage was a love match. He did not understand how anybody could love Willie, but he was enough of a philosopher to realize that if men and women did not marry until they found mates that were approved by their mutual friends, there would be few marriages in this world.

Willie drank a lot, blustered a lot, was a good and amusing fellow in the club smoking-room, thunderously hearty at a hunt breakfast, a good man to hounds, a champion player of squash rackets—and a bore. Every morning he religiously read the leading articles of the Morning Post, and views and opinions there expressed became his views and opinions for the day and were delivered as such. He believed

that industrial troubles could be settled if Labour leaders were put against the wall and shot—this was his infallible solution for all political difficulties. Sometimes it was hard for Garry to believe that Molly was his sister—she was, in point of fact, his half sister, for his father had married twice.

Wenda he had placed upon a pedestal; he worshipped her, was dominated by her views and opinions, and was absurdly hurt if she ever failed to fulfil his exalted ideas of her.

Many things had happened when Wenda was in Italy. The old general's will had been read and Garry's forecast as to the distribution of the Anson property was justified. He had been left two thousand pounds and a small cottage in Devonshire. The bulk of the property had gone to Garry's cousin, Jack Anson, a struggling naval officer with a pretty wife and an astonishing number of small children. It was like Garry that he should be delighted.

When, a week following the publication of the will, Garry's horse Rangemore won the Newbury Cup, it was annoying, as well as amusing, that the newspapers should confuse his name with his cousin's and, in announcing the victory of Rangemore, should put up the headline: "Luck of Garry Anson," and make copious references to his mythical inheritance. He did not even trouble to correct the misconception.

Another rather alarming letter came from Rome. Willie was being even more trying; matters were 'impossible.' Wenda's letter was written in a fever, almost indecipherably. It left Garry Anson a very troubled man.

The scandal of the divorce did not worry him at all. The prospect of being victimized aroused no sense of resentment. He owed something to Wenda—a life's friendship had its obligations. And he adored her...He frowned at the thought. He could not see himself her husband. The thing had to be faced, if Wenda really meant half she had written. It would mean retirement from England for a year and a revolution in his plans. Minor matters would have to be readjusted. Hillcott, for example... He hated the thought of losing Hillcott; hated worse the idea of giving up Daneham Lodge. Obviously he could not live next door to Willie Panniford.

He had to talk to somebody. John Dory was in town, but would hardly be sympathetic. Oddly enough, Hillcott became the recipient of his veiled confidences. It was whilst that irrepressible Cockney was laying out his clothes one morning that Garry spoke.

"Hillcott... I suppose you realize that one of these days I shall be married?"

Hillcott looked at him sideways.

"It happens to the best of us," he said smugly.

He had never confessed to having a wife, but Garry would not have been shocked to learn that he had several.

"In which case I shall dispense with your invaluable services."

"As soon as you like," said Hillcott, unmoved. And then: "Is it likely to be soon, sir?"

It was ridiculous, but Garry found it an effort to nod.

"Congratulations!" said Hillcott in his blandest and friendliest tone. "I've always thought that was a match, if I might be so bold as to say so."

Garry looked at him stonily.

"I don't know what you're talking about," he said.

"The young lady, sir," said Hillcott patting the crease in a pair of trousers. "The young lady you're going to marry—Miss Molly."

Garry felt a sudden wrench at his heart and knew something that he had known for so long without realizing his knowledge. Molly!

Garry Anson was irritated, worried, felt a curiously illogical resentment towards Molly. He did not dare think of Wenda.

His days were fully occupied in the weeks that followed. Almost every other morning he left Daneham Lodge before six and was on the Salisbury downs at eight, watching his horses at exercise. Chief interest now centred upon Rangemore, a long-striding bay who had two good races to his credit.

He sat on his hack, watching the horses coming across the downs, and Wray, his trainer, rode at his side. At one moment the downs were empty; then, over the crest of a distant rise, four little specks came into sight, increasing in size as they flew towards where he was sitting. They thundered past, Rangemore leading. Wray grinned his approval.

"You've got the Ascot Stakes in your pocket, Mr. Anson," he said.

Garry nodded. He had carried other races in his pocket to many courses—and found his pocket picked by a better horse.

"Isn't there an animal called Silver Queen?" he asked.

The trainer rubbed his nose irritably.

"Silver Queen! She won't see the way this one goes."

Garry smiled.

"You're a little optimistic, aren't you? She's a flier."

Mr. Wray pursed his lips thoughtfully.

"Yes. Anyway, it's not certain that she runs. She's being got ready for a race in France. Her owner is a Frenchman or Belgian, and he's out of the country just now and won't be back till Christmas."

"They'll run her at Ascot all right," said Garry.

He turned his hack homeward and cantered over the downs, riding stirrup to stirrup with Wray, and that shrewd trainer was thoughtful.

"I always try to forget that there is such a horse as Silver Queen," he confessed, when they were sitting at breakfast in his airy dining-room. "She's a smasher, there's no doubt. But then, so is Rangemore. I wonder if she's entered in any races before Ascot?"

He sent for The Calendar and the two men searched the entries together.

The Calendar, or, to give it its full title, The Racing Calendar, is a sober sheet, which few but racing men ever see. It has the staid appearance of a church newspaper, its price is a prohibitive and eccentric one, for it is published weekly at one shilling and ninepence. To the non-racing man or woman it is a dull publication, containing column upon column mainly made up of the names of horses and their owners, and unrelieved by any light speculation. To the follower of the turf it is the oracle which dominates, guides and records the doings of a world within a world. Wars may be waged; political parties may rise and fall; dreadful crimes may be enacted—you search the pages of The Calendar, year after year, decade after decade and find no reference to any such unimportant happenings.

Horses have been named; colours have been registered; partnerships have been entered into; the Jockey Club has amended its rules; entries are open for races which will be run in three years' time by horses that are not born. That is the beginning and the end of world events for the editors and readers of The Calendar.

John Dory came to dine with him that night. Dory was very practical. He was a bald, severe man, who might have been a Chancery lawyer or a successful doctor, but was in truth one of the biggest bookmakers on the turf.

"I hate to see a man betting as you're betting, Garry," he said. "You can't keep it up. This is the game where even millionaires go broke."

"I'll not go broke," smiled Garry. "When I reach the limit—"

He snapped his fingers.

"You'll get out!"

"Don't sneer, John; it doesn't become your gentle nature! Yes, I'll get out. I'll hate to, but there you are."

John Dory chose a peach with great care, and peeled it, not raising his eyes from the plate.

"You're a mug," he said, "and mugs always get into trouble."

"I'm an experienced and knowledgeable owner," said Garry complacently.

"That is the delusion most owners have," replied Dory; "but I won't depress you. How is Lady Panniford?"

"Wenda is very bright. She is coming home next week."

"For Ascot? Good."

There was no enthusiasm in Dory's tone.

"You don't like Wenda?"

"Your Wenda and I are Mr. John Dory and Lady Panniford to one another—she has an amazingly effective habit of keeping me in my place."

Garry laughed.

"You don't understand her," he said. "There's nobody in the world like Wenda! Nobody with her sense of humour, her straight outlook. How she came to marry Willie, heaven knows!"

Dory raised his eyes.

"Don't you know?"

Garry stared at him.

"I? Why should I know?"

Dory shrugged his broad shoulders and returned his attention to the peach.

"People wonder why you didn't marry her yourself."

Garry Anson felt himself changing colour. The conversation was drifting dangerously and for some reason he wished to combat the gossip which linked his name to Wenda's.

He leaned over the table, his face serious.

"You don't understand friendships of this kind, John. I've known Wenda as long as I've known anybody. We grew up together, were children together, played under the same oak. Between her and me there is something stronger, something greater than the bond of marriage or the bond which philandering weaves—"

"Poetical," murmured John.

“Don’t be a fool! Of course I’m not poetical. That would have spoilt everything—marriage, I mean. And probably she would never have forgiven me if I’d asked her.”

John Dory said nothing; he had few enthusiasms, and none of them was for Wenda Panniford.

He finished his peach in silence, went to the and rescued The Calendar from under a heap of papers. For a long time he studied its pages and when he did speak it was not of racing.

“Do you know the most beautiful girl I’ve seen for years?” he asked.

Garry looked up from the book of form he was studying.

“No—have I met her?”

“Molly Panniford,” said John, and went back to his Calendar.

Was it a conspiracy—an ill-conceived joke to thrust Molly upon him?

“Why the devil do you say that?”

Hillcott came in at that moment.

“The Pannifords are coming home next week, sir. I’ve just been over to their house—Lady Panniford’s had a new safe put in the wall.”

“How do you know?” asked Garry.

“Seen it,” replied Hillcott, as he began to clear the table. “What a safe!”

“You’re an authority, aren’t you?” Garry returned to the study of his book.

“In a way,” said Hillcott. Then, after a long pause: “I’ll be glad to see Miss Molly back. That’s a nice young lady if you like.”

Garry Anson looked up and leaned back in his chair. John was watching him from out of the corner of his eye.

“Of course she’s a nice young lady!”

His tone was a little sharp.

Chapter 4

‘WE MET young Hipplewayne in Florence. Isn’t it dreadful about him? Being warned off, I mean. And oh, Garry, he has got so much money that there was no need for him to do anything so awful. He was very nice about you and told me that you had warned him. He is naturally supremely miserable, drinks a great deal more than is necessary for him—he and Willie are quite good friends—and gambles a tremendous lot on cards. Wenda will be in England by the time you get this letter. I am staying over in Paris bring her dresses across for Ascot. Willie is staying to look after me! Isn’t that funny? But perhaps you don’t see the funny side of it.’

Molly was a good correspondent. She had constituted herself the chronicler of the family. Garry had an uneasy feeling sometimes that her very conscientiousness and industry were subtle reproaches.

He had thought a great deal about Molly and was almost shocked when he met Wenda at Victoria and casually mentioned Molly’s name, when:

“Molly? Oh, yes, she’s all right. She’s so terribly right she gets on my nerves.”

“She’s rather a dear—” he began.

Wenda’s glance stopped him.

“She’s a Panniford.” There was a note of bitterness in her voice. “And I should think they are not particularly adorable as a breed.”

And then, quick to realize the impression she made, she went on quickly, with a smile:

“How is the great Rangemore—the horse of the century? What an extravagant man you are, darling! You spend your life finding exaltable subjects!”

“Such as—?”

She shrugged her beautiful shoulders.

“Such as poor me.”

He was driving her down to Sunningdale and they were speeding along the Great West Road when she asked, after a long interregnum of silence:

“John Dory is a friend of yours, isn’t he?”

“Yes,” he said, in surprise. “Do you know him?”

“In a way.” She was vaguely antagonistic.

“But you don’t like him?”

She smiled.

“Don’t be absurd, Garry! Does one like bookmakers?”

“But John was at a public school—” he began.

“Stuff! The prisons are full of public-school men. Somebody was telling me so the other day.”

Again she relapsed into silence, which she broke as they were breasting the hill at Egham.

“Henry is coming down to spend the Ascot week with us and I’ve rather made a muddle of my invitations. I thought Willie would be back, but he insists upon staying in Paris with Molly and unfortunately he won’t be at Welbury when Henry comes down—could you put him up?”

Garry scowled and laughed.

“He bores you. I think he’s rather amusing. But he can go to an hotel—”

“Of course he can stay at Daneham. I’ve about six spare bedrooms and nobody ever accepts my hospitality,” said Garry. “I’ll send him a telegram if you like; though why he shouldn’t stay at Welbury, with a house full of servants, heaven only knows!”

Wenda fetched a quick little sigh.

“I don’t know...Willie’s so difficult. And perhaps I’m a little too correct. Molly is so prudish, which is an ugly word that I don’t very much like.”

Again she looked at him.

“I haven’t congratulated you—you’re a lucky man.”

“You haven’t seen my betting book,” he laughed.

He had begun the journey in a fever of apprehension. Would she speak again of the divorce? Every moment he expected her to return to the subject. For the first time in his life he was relieved to drop her at the door of Welbury House.

When he got home he gave instructions to Hillcott to prepare a room for Henry Lascarne and the little man sniffed.

“Him, eh? It’ll be a change for old Lascarne to get into good racing company,” he said.

Henry Lascarne, arriving on the following night made the acquaintance of a new type of manservant and was not impressed.

He was still less so when, strolling into the lounge next morning, he was an auditor of a sharp exchange between the odd butler and the postman, who had come to the wrong door with his letters.

“What’s the matter with you? What’s wrong with the front door?” demanded Hillcott.

The postman sorted his letters sourly.

“Gone to sleep, all of you?” He handed over the letters. “One registered—sign for it.”

Hillcott took the letters and scrutinized each one deliberately.

“That’s no way to talk, my lad,” he said, scribbling his name on the registered receipt.

Conscious that he had been kept waiting for a quarter of an hour, the postman exploited his grievance.

“Don’t these London servants get up in the mornin’? My wife’s out in the garden every morning at five,” he said bitterly.

Hillcott looked at him thoughtfully.

“So would I be if I was married to you,” he said.

Insult or not, the postman lingered, being human and having certain human weaknesses.

“Do you know anything?” he asked confidentially.

“Everything.” Hillcott was never modest.

“I mean about today. Is the governor’s horse goin’ to win the Ascot Stakes?”

The postman asked this anxiously.

“Don’t ask questions: buy a paper,” said Hillcott in loftiest manner.

The postman went down the garden path, declaim against the nerve of ‘handymen.’

Hillcott looked round, saw Henry, and paused in his task of examining postmarks.

“Clodhoppers,” he said tersely, and added: “Nothing for you.”

“No. My letters will go to Welbury House. Hillcott, will you send my things over after breakfast?”

Hillcott did not disguise his relief.

“Leavin’ us?” he asked; and when Henry nodded: “That’s a pity. Thought we was goin’ to have company.” And then, as a thought struck him: “You needn’t go there for breakfast, you know. They always come here on the first morning of Ascot.”

This was news to Henry. “A sort of ritual?”

Hillcott looked at him. “Ritual” was a new word, and he disliked new words.

“No, ‘abit,” he said.

An odd fellow—an objectionable fellow. But rather the sort of man one would have expected Garry to employ.

“Where is Captain Anson?” asked Lascarne.

“Playin’ golf on the lawn,” said Hillcott. “He’s playin’ against himself—he’s winnin’. Here you are—do you want a paper?”

He practically threw *The Times* at the horrified guest.

Molly was coming across the lawn, her arms full of newly cut flowers. If there was a ritualism at Daneham Lodge this was it. Every year since the days when she was a little girl and Garry was rather a lank, awkward youth, she had brought him flowers, at first shyly, in later years as a matter of course.

She came into the room and stopped for an amused second, watching them—she could almost sense Henry Lascarne's resentment.

"Good morning, Hillcott!"

"Morning, miss." He turned with a grin.

He jerked his head significantly and a little derisively in the direction of Henry, picked up the doormat and went out.

Mr. Lascarne greeted her languidly.

"Hullo, Molly! You're an early riser. Did you and Willie get home last night or this morning?" he asked.

He was more than ordinarily interested in the movements of Willie at that period.

Molly went over to the desk, took the old flowers out of the vase and began to replace them with fresh blooms. She had a trick, very irritating to Henry, of thinking a long time before she answered the simplest question he asked her.

"This morning—one a.m. We caught the four o'clock from Paris." She looked at him, a smile in her eyes. "How did you sleep in this house of sin?"

He shrugged.

"Oh, quite well, really."

"How curious!" she mocked.

"It really was very good of Anson to have me here," he said, hastening to amend a speech which lacked grace.

He came across to her.

"I say, Anson's terribly fond of Wenda, isn't he?"

It was an assertion rather than a question. She felt he was asking for confirmation.

"Terribly fond of her?" she scoffed. "My dear, she's the world's only woman!"

He smiled at this; this loosely framed young man rarely smiled.

"I can understand that—"

She looked at him.

"You can understand what?"

"I mean, I think she's most charming." He blundered. "It's a great pity she's—"
He stopped.

"Married to Willie?" she suggested, and left him a little breathless by the brutal directness of her speech. "Go on, say it!" she laughed. "Don't spare a sister's feelings. I certainly think it's a pity they're married. At the same time, it's easier to get rid of a husband than a boy friend!"

Lascarne looked at her, aghast: it was not the words the surprise that Molly should use them.

A new Molly—new to him, at any rate. He always thought of her as a schoolgirl.

"You are not suggesting that Anson—"

"No, I'm not."

He was justifiably annoyed.

“One of these days you will let me finish what I’m trying to say,” he snapped and she laughed at him.

“Henry, you so seldom say anything that’s worth finishing.”

She heard somebody come into the room and turned quickly.

“Garry!”

Garry Anson was looking at her thoughtfully, gravely. So serious was he that Molly was surprised into a laugh.

“Why, Garry, you’re looking at me as though I was an unwelcome intruder.”

She was a stranger to him: he realized this as he looked. A new individuality, somebody he had never seen as he was seeing her now. She was lovely; she had not the mature beauty of her sister-in-law, but something sweeter, something more delicate.

He met her joke with a laugh which was almost artificial.

“Hullo, darling!”

He kissed her gently; he had always kissed her; why did he feel such a fool now?

“I see you’ve met our lodger.”

He jerked his head towards the slightly amused Henry.

“It was very good of you to put Henry up,” she said.

Garry poured out a glass of water from the carafe. His hand was shaking a little and he wondered why.

“Would you believe it—he wouldn’t stay the night in the same house as Wenda! What is this generation coming to?” he scoffed.

Henry stiffened.

“It was Wenda’s idea, and I think a very sensible idea,” he said.

He was somewhat prim, and primness, added to a certain latent pomposity, can be ludicrous. It was so now. Molly had an insane desire to shriek her laughter, but she restrained herself.

“Shut up!” said Garry scornfully. “You couldn’t compromise anybody who was grown up—and if Wenda’s not grown up I am a babe in arms!”

Hillcott came in laboriously with the doormat he had been shaking on the well-swept garden path. Presently the gardener would come along and voice his woes and his wrath; but Hillcott lived for the moment.

“Did The Calendar come?” asked Garry.

Hillcott pointed at the table.

“You’re looking at it,” he said.

Garry picked up the folded Calendar and opened it.

“Go and hurry up breakfast.”

Molly was arranging flowers on the writing-table.

“Could you live without The Calendar?”

Henry had heard about The Calendar before. It was a mysterious publication which interested the oddest kind of people.

“What is it?”

Garry smiled grimly.

“There are only two Calendars, Henry—the Newgate Calendar and The Racing Calendar—the losers of the past and the losers of the future.”

He smoothed out the crumpled pages.

“Are you going to the races?”

Henry inclined his head graciously.

"I hope so."

"Good," said Garry. "I'll give you a winner."

Henry Lascarne's nose went into the air.

"I don't bet."

"Good—I'll give you two."

"In fact," Henry hastened to exculpate himself from an suggestion that he was attached to this social evil. "I don't know one horse's name from another."

"You're going to have an interesting week," said Garry.

Lascarne looked round. Hillcott had gone and, remarkably enough, had closed the door behind him. This was not a weakness of Mr. Hillcott, who was tremendously interested in all the happenings of the household and never closed an avenue of information. He did not deliberately eavesdrop, but he made eavesdropping a possible accident. Nevertheless, in spite of the closed door, Mr. Lascarne, who was a little uneasy about Garry's servant, lowered his voice.

"I say, who is that fellow of yours?" he asked.

Garry stared at him.

"That fellow of mine—?"

Molly explained.

"He means Hillcott."

"Oh, Hillcott!" Garry kept a perfectly straight face. He always found it difficult to be serious when he was discussing Hillcott; he found it more difficult now that he saw Henry's concern. "Why, what's the matter with him?"

Lascarne hesitated.

"Well, he's rather unusual, isn't he?"

Garry nodded, and then sympathetically:

"I know what you mean—he's damned impertinent. Have you noticed that, too?"

"Well—er—yes," hesitated Henry.

"That's right." Garry nodded again. "He's not a good servant—that's why I keep him. He's a souvenir, a sort of war relic. Other people brought home odd bits of shell and put 'em on the mantelpiece, and cartridge cases and turned 'em into dinner gongs. I brought back Hillcott. I'm not so sure he shouldn't be in the National War Museum."

And then the look of perplexity on Henry's face broke him down and he laughed.

"A war relic?" repeated Lascarne. "I don't quite—"

"Of course you don't. I mean, he was my batman—my servant. You don't quite approve of my gambling? It is not my worst habit—he is!"

"Was he a butler before the war?" asked Henry.

Garry shook his head.

"No, a burglar," he said calmly, and Henry jumped, for he was on the lawful side of life, being an immensely rich young man, to whom all men who threatened the rights of property were without the pale.

"A burglar?" he gasped.

"Yes. You know the kind of creatures that we racing people associate with," said Garry. "The lowest of the low! Don't you know that racing is wicked? Don't you know that any three or four toughs who get together and start a fight become

officially a race gang? We racing people love burglars. If we can't get a good burglar for a butler, we get a pick-pocket."

"You're pulling my leg," said Henry.

"Of course he is!" scoffed Molly. "Don't you know Garry better?"

Henry ran his fingers through his long hair.

"Anyway, he's not a very bright—" He hesitated to criticise the servant to his host, for he was a well brought up young man and a considerable sum had been spent upon his social education.

"Butler?" suggested Garry. "No, he isn't. But I believe he was a scintillating burglar."

The object of their conversation came in at that moment. Hillcott had a distressing habit of drawing attention to his presence with a low, sibilant hiss. He hissed now and since his eyes were fixed upon Henry, it was obviously that young gentleman's attention he wished to hold.

"The telephone," he said. "Will you speak here or in the 'all?"

Henry looked round helplessly.

"In the hall," he said, and walked to the door.

"It's Lady Panniford," Hillcott called after him; and now Garry was really annoyed.

"Hillcott," he said sharply, "how often have I told you not to mention the name of the person who is calling anybody in this house?"

Hillcott looked round, hurt, a little indignant. Slowly he began to untie the string of his green baize apron.

"I don't seem to be givin' much satisfaction here, Captain, do I?" he said truculently. "I think I'll hand in my notice. Nothing I'm doin' is right."

Garry shot out an accusing finger.

"It's not your turn to give in your notice," he said sternly. "Tie up your pinny. You'll leave at the end of the month."

Hillcott flamed with indignation.

"You gave me notice last time!" he said.

Garry considered this domestic problem for a little time.

"Did I? I don't remember. Very well, I'll accept your notice."

Molly waited till Hillcott had strutted from the room, and her laughter followed the annoyed little man.

"What a child you are, Garry!"

But he did not heed her.

"I'm sure he gave me notice. He's so darned unfair, that fellow."

She looked at him, still amused; then the smile died out of her eyes. She was faced with a much more important problem than the eccentric relationship between Garry and his servant.

"What do you think of Henry?" she asked.

He looked round at her, startled.

"Does one think of such things?" he asked.

But she was not joking. And then:

"What does he do for a living?"

"Nothing," replied Molly, adding inconsequently: "He's at the War Office."

It was very difficult for Garry to think of Henry Lascarne. There are people in the world who have no value to us, however valuable they may be to themselves, and to others. 'Set' is a glib name for an association of people with more or less identical interests. It keeps them in separate compartments, and usually one set is ignorant of the identity, the habits or the pleasures of the other.

Garry belonged to the racing set, a big brotherhood of men who touched all manner of interests but were essentially of the turf. To them, racing was the beginning and the end of all recreation and amusement. They had no politics, paid only cursory attention to the doings of the outside world, were conveniently conservative, drank a little, hunted a little, played around a little at fashionable night clubs, but were immensely bored with the pleasures which satisfied other men.

Henry's set was distinctive but, as far as Garry was concerned, unintelligible. Henry read and understood poetry, could play golf, was interested in amateur theatricals, collected cameos, and was a pseudo-authority on Russian art.

"He's rather rich, isn't he?"

Molly nodded.

"That worried me—a little," she said.

He frowned.

"Why should Mr. Henry Lascarne's prosperity ruffle the brow of pretty Molly Panniford?" he said grandiloquently.

Again he saw that odd look in her eyes.

"Pretty, am I?"

"Darling, you're lovely," he smiled, heard the quick intake of her breath, and:

"You're an odd one, Garry," she said.

"Why? Because I think you're lovely? Darling, I'm sure hundreds of people think that."

"Thousands," she said sardonically; but when he tried to pursue the conversation she turned it.

He opened The Calendar, read down column after column, until he came to the acceptances for the Northumberland Plate, and amongst the non-acceptors he saw a name that set his heart chortling.

"Good Lord!" he said happily. "Silver Queen hasn't accepted!"

"Has she been asked?" said Molly, busy with her flowers.

"Don't be silly—I mean the horse. She hasn't accepted for the Northumberland Plate, which means that I shall win it."

He dropped the paper on the writing-table, remembering something he wished to ask her.

"Why were you so late getting into town last night?"

Molly shrugged.

"We missed the twelve o'clock train," she said. "Willie went to the buffet."

She hated herself for her disloyalty. There was so much more she could have told, she might reasonably permit herself this one act of betrayal. She could have told how near they were to losing the late train, of Willie staggering up the long quay of the Gare du Nord, assisted by porters, and being hoisted bodily into the train, of the rather unpleasant scene on the boat coming over when, in his most quarrelsome mood, he fell foul of an innocent fellow-passenger and narrowly

escaped a fight. Willie was like that: a genial fellow on the first bottle, a brute thereafter. Garry only suspected as much. He had never plumbed the depths of Willie Panniford's weaknesses.

"What a mug! Can't Wenda do something?"

It was curious that Molly never thought of Wenda with sympathy except when she thought of Wenda and her brother together.

"Can you stop a man drinking who wants to drink?" she asked.

Garry was puzzled.

"But why the devil should he want to drink? He used to be the most abstemious fellow. Has anything happened to him lately?"

She shook her head. He walked across to her, caught her by the shoulders and looked down into her face.

"Molly, you're being mysterious."

"No, I'm not," she said in a low voice.

"He's got the best woman in the world for a wife," said Garry slowly. "Wenda couldn't make a man unhappy."

He felt a curious sense of insincerity as he said this. Did he believe all he was saying? Was Wenda such a paragon? All his life he had built up a mental statue of Wenda Panniford. A radiant, glorious thing, worshipful, almost unhuman.

She was eyeing him closely.

"You adore her, don't you?"

He came from a reverie which was not too pleasant, at last, guiltily.

"I believe I do."

He remembered at that odd moment a fact he had forgotten for many years.

"I once wrote a poem about her. Did she ever show it to you?"

Molly shook her head.

"No, but I expect she's got it. She's a great hoarder."

He looked his disbelief.

"Well, she does hoard a little," insisted Molly.

"God bless her for it!" said Garry. "And if you ask me why, I won't tell you."

"You can't expect any woman to be enthusiastic about her sister-in-law," said Molly. "Garry, you're a darling, but—" She looked up. "You think you know Wenda?"

She felt his change of attitude.

"What do you mean?" he asked coldly.

"You think she's everything that's wonderful," said Molly quickly, breathlessly, as one who was taking a plunge into chilly and unknown waters. "You think she's big and generous—"

"Generous! What has she got to be generous about, poor darling? Has Willie got a lot of money?"

Nobody knew better than Molly how little money Willie had.

Willie had never quite forgiven his father for dividing his fortune into equal parts, one for the son and one for the daughter; forgave him less when his own patrimony had been squandered and there was nothing left to him but his bare Scottish acres, the rent from his farms and the other items which went to make up his meagre income.

“She has—Wenda has, I mean.” Molly, realizing she was on the defensive, grew nervous. “I mean, Wenda has a lot of money.”

“Are you sure?”

“She has dividends and things,” said Molly defiantly. “I’ve seen the warrants. She’s always well off on quarter days.”

“Are you sure?” he asked again, and her heart sank.

The one thing in the world she did not wish to do at this moment was to annoy Garry.

“Now you’re angry with me. I was an idiot to talk about her.”

She was turning away when he caught her hand.

“Darling, you’re a cat,” he said with a smile.

Perhaps she was. She was prepared to admit as much, and be even worse than a cat, if she could only—

“Molly, my dear,” he went on, “I don’t like to hear you I talk about Wenda in that way. Honestly, it rather hurts me, because I’m very fond of you. Do you know—terribly fond of you.”

She looked at him steadily.

“Are you, Garry?”

He nodded.

“So fond of me that you hate me talking about Wenda?”

“Now you’re hurt with me.”

He regained the hand she had drawn from his.

“Not really,” she said.

She walked over to the table, picked up and examined his letters.

“Yes, you are. I’m lecturing you, and nobody likes being lectured...Yes, darling, it’s a big post—begging letters mainly.”

She smiled.

“The luck of Garry Anson.’ I saw it in the newspapers when we were in Italy.”

He frowned.

“Oh, the old general’s death? But you knew all about that before you went.”

“How much did he leave?”

He had almost forgotten.

“Five hundred thousand, I think, and the Hereford property. A nice old boy, but he didn’t like me.”

She stared at him, open-eyed.

“If he didn’t like you why did he leave you his money?”

“Leave me his money? Who told you he left me his money?”

She slid down from the table and faced him. Was that shadow, then, to lift—the nightmare that had oppressed her since she heard the news to be dispelled?

“The newspapers said I had the money, but they were all wrong. I thought you knew?”

She shook her head.

“I don’t want that kind of money, anyway,” said Garry cheerfully. “Dead man’s money, live man’s worry. Give me a horse with twenty-one pounds in hand—that’s my idea of a legacy.”

“He didn’t leave you anything?” she gasped.

“Not a bob.”

Her heart was racing. She had never dared hope for this. She was being selfish, wickedly selfish. With that money Garry would have been a rich man. He was not poor now; she salved her conscience with the thought. But with that money—so many things would have happened that it were better should not happen.

“But, my dear, everybody believes you came into the money—we read about it in Florence, ‘Luck of Garry Anson’—that was the headline. Wenda sent you a telegram from us all, congratulating you. Didn’t you receive it? Of course you did, Garry! You answered, ‘Thanks, darling.’”

He was trying to remember; and then he found the solution of the mystery.

“Oh, Lord! It was the day after I won the Salisbury Cup with Rangemore. I thought that was what the telegram was about.”

She regarded him with mock pathos.

“Then you aren’t half a millionaire? Oh, Garry, and I’ve been so respectful to you!”

He had never seen her like this, never realized her peculiar humour. She was lovely to look upon, altogether a delightful companion. He could wish to find a subject to carry on this conversation indefinitely. She had a soft voice, rather musical, a little husky; the most pleasant of grey eyes. He didn’t know Molly, hadn’t known her at all until now. The amusing child of yesterday was a most agreeable woman of today. And then there flashed into his mind the knowledge of an obligation which had become suddenly ugly; and at the thought of it his heart went cold.

“Here’s Wenda,” said Molly.

It seemed to him that she dropped her voice; there was a suggestion of intimate understanding which made him absurdly happy.

Chapter 5

WENDA CAME through the french windows that opened on to the lawn, part of the garden itself in her flowered dress. She was lovely—there was no getting away from that fact. Here was temptation to depart from lines of sanity—and decency, Garry made this mental addition.

It was the very beauty of her that made the scheme all the more revolting to him. He looked past Wenda to Willie, stumping his way across the lawn, a scowl on his face, his walking-stick slashing viciously at a flower which offended him. Willie was the sort who was offended by objects which expressed placidity.

Garry looked from Wenda to Willie, from the flower to the weed, red-faced, thick-necked, sour. He stood, looking into the room, his hands thrust in the pockets of his jacket, his thick lips curled in a sneer, as he watched the greeting between his wife and Garry Anson.

He was a little afraid of Garry, hated him more than a little. He would sit up at nights over interminable whiskies-and-sodas and imagine ugly possibilities, wherein Wenda and Garry were involved; he could see himself shooting Garry in peculiar circumstances and appealing to a sympathetic jury for acquittal. Willie’s

soul was cut to a mean pattern. He was a great eavesdropper, a listener at doors, a surreptitious opener of letters and was not above employing a private detective.

He had had the report of one of these agencies in his pocket for the greater part of three months; could have confronted Wenda at any time, but lacked the requisite courage. And it required courage to face Wenda in one of her cold rages. She had a command of language, could hurt cruelly, knew all his weaknesses and the tender surfaces of his vanity. So he kept the crushed and soiled letter in his pocket, glowered over it secretly and let his hate for Garry Anson grow.

He watched them now, saw Garry's lips peck her cheek.

"You might think they were just friends," he growled to himself. "A bit of camouflage, that!"

All women were actresses. Wenda was talking.

"It was so nice of you to put Henry up last night," she said. "I simply couldn't cope with him. My maid is down with flu, Mrs. Johnson is away and I hadn't the slightest idea what time Willie was arriving."

Willie's nose wrinkled unpleasantly. He could have added a cutting rejoinder, but the moment was not propitious.

"You've got a prudent wife, Willie," said Garry. "I jolly nearly went over to Welbury and slept there myself."

"Then you jolly nearly had an unpleasant shock," smiled Wenda. "I shouldn't have opened the door to you."

Willie hunched his shoulders impatiently.

"Can I have a whisky-and-soda?" he asked huskily.

Wenda looked at him and sighed helplessly.

"Before breakfast? Don't be stupid, darling."

"I can do almost anything before breakfast except eat," he snarled.

He picked up and examined one of Garry's putters critically and laid it on the table. Here was a moment for a gesture or a word of defiance, yet the awe she inspired in him was such that he could only add a justification. That was his trouble, he told himself a hundred times: he treated Wenda too well. When he should be furious with her he was more often only apologetic.

He was apologetic now.

"I've had a terrible head from that crossing," he said. "I didn't have a drink all day yesterday—did I, Molly?"

Molly looked at him without reproach.

"Not one," she said, but there was a little too much emphasis on the last word to encourage him further.

Hillcott came in.

"Get Sir William a drink, will you?"

"A whisky-and-soda, Hillcott," said Willie.

Hillcott nodded.

"I know what you want," he said.

Here again Willie Panniford might have asserted himself. It would at least have filled up a very awkward gap in the conversation.

Garry was getting very uncomfortable. For the first time in his life he was not at home with Wenda. Everything was rather awkward. He found himself trying to make conversation.

“Why did you stop over in Paris?” he asked Molly.

She had had to collect Wenda’s clothes and bring them over. Willie (she did not explain this) had had some mysterious business which made a day and a night in Paris vitally necessary.

“You’re going to be the best-dressed woman, are you, darling?”

Garry turned to Wenda; he was safe on the subject of clothes. She smiled at this.

“Heaven knows I can’t afford to be, Garry.”

Hillcott came in and put a silver tray, with bottle and glass, on the table at Willie’s elbow, made that odd hissing noise which he invariably employed to attract attention and shuffled out.

“In fact,” said Wenda, almost gaily, “we’re broke—aren’t we, Willie?”

“Never mind, my dear.” Garry’s gaiety was a little artificial. “We’ll win a fortune today, and tomorrow I’ll run away with you.”

Willie raised his heavy eyes at this.

“Some people don’t have to run very far,” he said and choked as he said it.

“That’s a very cryptic remark, Willie,” said Garry quickly.

“Willie’s always cryptic after a bad crossing.”

Wenda nodded to Henry Lascarne, who lounged into the room, at that moment. Sir William Panniford was on his feet, pouring out his drink.

“That isn’t terribly clever, Wenda,” he said, a little breathlessly, astounded at his own daring. “I mean, I can stand a joke against myself if it’s clever.”

“A joke against you doesn’t have to be clever,” said Wenda coldly.

He brooded on this, did not speak again except when he heard Henry say what a relief it was to get away from War Office, army forms and statistics. The word made Willie shiver. It was what that infernally unpleasant sergeant at Vine Street had asked him to say on one occasion when he had been pulled up for driving a car erratically.

Then he heard something which made him prick up his ears. It was about money and Willie was tremendously interested in money.

“Eh, what’s that? You owe Wenda a hundred? What for?”

Garry had taken five twenties about Honeywood at Newbury and he had the money in his pocket. When he betted for his friends it was invariably in ‘ready.’

“The last time you and I went racing you had a fiver on it but it lost,” he said. “I told you I’d back it the next time out.”

“If you want to back horses, back them for me. She’s always winning money.”

He picked up the open newspaper.

“Is your horse going to win the Stakes today?” he asked.

Garry nodded. Here he was on a subject which he could discuss without embarrassment. To his mind, there was no doubt about Rangemore winning the Ascot Stakes. The trainer’s letter he had received that morning was emphatic, and at that moment he was waiting to see the jockey.

He had not gone down on to the course to see the horse do his canter and was waiting expectantly for Andy Lynn to make his usual call and report.

“I think he’s a certainty—”

The loud booming of the breakfast-gong interrupted him and Hillcott came in, beckoned him mysteriously, and imparted the information that the milkman had not called and that there would 'be only one egg apiece.'

Usually Garry had looked forward to this Ascot breakfast of his with the greatest enthusiasm. He loved to have Wenda at his table, could tolerate Willie, and find satisfaction in the patronage he extended to Molly the child. But Molly wasn't a child; was entitled to her share of intelligent conversation, and for the life of him he could think of nothing to talk about. It was as embarrassing as carrying a doll to a favourite godchild and discovering her reading something advanced in the shape of novels.

Willie was truculent; to say that he was unpleasant would be to put it mildly. Evidently he was emboldened by the success of his first essay in insubordination and, as almost mechanically his glass was emptied and filled, he became more and more impossible. Garry was relieved when Hillcott summoned him into the hall with one of his odd gestures. He was about to rise when Wenda stopped him.

"Did I hear Hillcott say it was the trainer? Ask him if he heard anything about today's racing."

He looked at her, startled. "I say, you re not betting, are you?" he asked.

She laughed, one eye on the glowering Willie.

"What a question to come from you! Why?"

"Well...something Willie said."

She made a little face.

"I really bet very little—and only on your horses, darling."

"Why do you bet at all?"

She shrugged.

"I want money."

"What do you want money for?"

It was a fatuous question. There was a note of acerbity in her voice when she spoke.

"Don't be a fool. Why does anyone want money. Money is the only kind of independence a woman knows."

"But Willie gives you—" he began.

"Willie gives me, you give me—" In her irritation she raised her voice. "How would you like to be a charitable institution? Do you depend on what people 'give' you?"

Once more he had said the wrong thing. Molly was looking at them curiously.

"Poverty is a horror to me," she went on. "Never to be able to say I'm going to do this or that without asking somebody for the money to do it. I'd rather...I don't know what I wouldn't do!"

"You can't make money betting, my dear," he said lamely enough, but by now she had recovered her good temper.

"We can't all be interior decorators, or have hat shops, or write for the Sunday papers. What would you suggest?"

Hillcott was at the door, beckoning urgently. Willie now had gone to the sideboard and was fumbling with an unopened bottle.

“Do you know, sometimes you give me the impression that you dislike me, darling,” Garry said in a low voice. “I suppose I am rather exasperating—I’m rather a lecturer—I told Molly so this morning.”

“Garry, you’re a darling.” Her voice was light and her smile gay, but there was something very hard in her eyes. “Go along and see your trainer—and tell me all the news.”

He found Andy Lynn and the trainer waiting for him in the study. Andy had done ‘riding work’ in the morning and was in his jodhpurs and his high-necked sweater. Ascot or Alexandra Park—they were all one to him and every race just a race, whether it was a selling plate or the Derby. He was a jockey who lived a normal jockey’s life: in bed by nine every night, on the downs by seven in the morning and after a meagre breakfast dashing off by car, sometimes hundreds of miles, to the day’s meeting. He starved himself cheerfully; earned his ten thousand pounds and lived on dry toast and lean mutton chops. He was a brown-skinned, thin little man without illusions and without any great respect for the people who employed him, or the horses he rode. A really good horse only comes once in a while to a jockey. He spent his life in the unpleasant task of proving that the swans of his enthusiastic owners were the commonest of geese. He had learned subtlety and the exercise of that peculiar form of deception which is half flattery and half truth.

“Good morning, Mr. Wray,” he shook hands with the trainer. “Good morning, Andy. Well, how did the horse go this morning?”

“I never saw him look as well,” said Wray. “He strode out like a lion, didn’t he?” Andy Lynn nodded.

“He certainly went well. He gave me a feel this morning that he could pull a bus and win. Everybody on the course was talking about him.”

He could be enthusiastic without an effort, for he was speaking the truth.

Garry chuckled.

“That’s not too good,” he said. “One doesn’t want all the world talking about him.”

But Wray was not perturbed.

“I don’t know, captain, they’ll go six to one the field. There are half a dozen horses fancied. Mind you, if you bet like you sometimes do—you’ll have to take five to two to your money.”

Lynn was examining a copy of *Racing Up To Date* which he had taken from his pocket.

Garry nodded.

“Right you are! We’ll have a dash. Can you do the eight?”

The jockey grinned.

“I was in the baths all last night—I got off a pound. I’m not having any breakfast this morning.”

“That’s one egg saved! All right. It looks like a good thing. You’re on the odds to fifty, Andy, and you too, Mr. Wray. I don’t see what is to beat us. What is it?”

Lynn was shaking his head and examining the form book. “What about the filly?” he asked and Garry took the book from his hand.

“Which filly?” The jockey’s thumb was against the name of a horse. “Silver Queen? Is she running? She is marked as a doubtful starter in this morning’s papers.”

“They think she’ll walk it,” said Lynn.

Garry was thoughtful.

Silver Queen had come to be one of his nightmares. Rangemore had met her in several races and they had run consistently to form. With Silver Queen in the field he could not regard his horse as a certainty. For some reason he had expected her to be an absentee from the Ascot Stakes and now he realized why she had not “accepted” for the Northumberland Plate.

It was a more serious problem than it appeared, for Garry had lost a great deal of money lately and had had warning after warning from John Dory which both irritated and depressed him. He was not a rich man. He had a fixed income which enabled him to live comfortably, to this had been added a legacy which had given him a margin to indulge himself in his favourite sport, and the margin was rapidly disappearing.

The Ascot Stakes is a valuable race and, garnished with a bet, he might be relieved of all his immediate trouble. Between him and success loomed this vision of Silver Queen, one of the best stayers in England.

“That’s why they didn’t accept for the Northumberland Plate. Are you sure she’s running?”

Wray was certain.

“I was talking with her trainer this morning. He can’t get in touch with the owner but he’s running her.”

Garry’s face was glum.

“Then she’ll beat us.”

“I don’t know—with a bit of luck—” he began, but Garry shook his head.

“When I back horses, I don’t bet on my luck but on my judgement. To have a betting chance I’ve got to be able to win this race with the luck against me,” he said, and found the wise jockey in agreement with him.

“I don’t like it,” said Andy. “She looks well, too, that Silver Queen. I’ve never seen her so much on her toes. They tried her last week to give Merry Mite a stone and she won pulling up and wouldn’t have blown a candle out. Harry Dark was riding in the gallop and he told me about it.”

The prospect was less rosy and Garry stood undecidedly, fingering the pages of the form book.

“Please yourself, Captain Anson. If it was my horse, I’d let him take his chance,” suggested Wray.

“If he was my horse,” said Andy, “I’d give him an easy race today—finish fourth or fifth—and win the Northumberland Plate with him. I can’t see him losing it.”

The suggestion was a striking one, but it was not unusual. Even the straightest of men do not ask their horses to attempt the impossible. The difference between winning and losing is that little extra call which is made upon a horse and which may ruin him for racing in the near future. Ahead was the Northumberland Plate and the certainty that, with Silver Queen out of the way, he would win not only a nice stake, but any bets he made.

Garry was rather shocked at the bluntness of the suggestion. It had been hinted to him before. Usually the trainer will take the responsibility out of the owner's hands by telling him that his horse hasn't an outstanding chance, but that 'the race will do him good,' and at that moment there came to him the realization of his powerless condition.

If he wagered a large sum on the horse today he might find it very difficult to meet the settling on the following Monday morning; he could not afford to guess. The idea of not trying at Ascot was nauseating, and yet other owners had not been so squeamish. He thought of the unfortunate man who had been warned off and who was now loafing about in Italy, avoided by his old friends and living the life of a social outcast. But that was ridiculous! That man had pulled his horse. Rangemore would not be pulled, he would just be—It was difficult to salve his conscience.

"Is there no chance of buying Silver Queen?" he asked.

Wray shook his head.

"Not a chance. The owner is on the Congo shooting; he's a rich Frenchman, a Mr. Bucelle, and money's no object with him."

Lynn rightly diagnosed the state of his employer's mind.

"I don't know what you're worrying about, captain. You'll get a strong market for the Northumberland Plate and you could back Rangemore to win a fortune," he said.

"Of course, I needn't run him today—" began Garry.

"Then you'll have everybody waiting for him at Newcastle," interrupted Lynn, "and you'll get seven to four to your money—if you're lucky!"

Garry was rattled. He had never felt so uncertain about anything in his life and was, if the truth be told, more than a little unbalanced by the suddenness of the problem.

"All right," he said breathlessly. "I'll leave it to you."

Wray heaved a sigh of relief. He had his own doubts, but the business of a trainer is to be outwardly sure.

"In that case," he said, almost cheerfully, "I should have a good bet on Silver Queen if I were you," but Garry's expression arrested any further suggestions.

When they had gone he stood drumming his fingers on the writing-table, trying to readjust his standards at a moment's notice.

This was the fact beyond any dispute; he had given instructions for Rangemore to be stopped at Ascot; he was thief, a cheat; no other description was possible. He—Garry Anson—was no better than the crooked little owners who battled for a living on the turf. In the eyes of the world, with his opportunities, he was worse than they.

He heard a step in the passage and turned to meet Wenda. She had come out alone. Her lips were trembling with anger. He guessed the cause.

"What's the trouble, darling?"

She sighed impatiently, took a cigarette from the box on the table as she passed, and dropped into the big settee.

"Willie," she said laconically. "He is impossible! He's reduced Molly to tears—and that takes some doing. No, don't go, Garry." She put out a detaining hand to stop,

him. "Please don't. He would only be rude to you, too. He was saying the most appalling things."

"About me?" he smiled.

"About everybody. He reached the limit when he talked about young Hipplewayne."

Garry went suddenly cold.

"What did he say about young Hipplewayne?"

She shrugged one beautiful shoulder.

"He said that all owners of racehorses were as bad as he, that racing was crooked, and that even you would stop a horse if it paid you to. Can you imagine anything more horrible than that?"

Garry looked at her for a long time, and then:

"No," he said slowly. "I can't imagine anything more horrible than that."

Chapter 6

IT WAS right. Willie, that drunken lout, had said no more in his uncharity than was true. Garry Anson realized, with a horrible, sick feeling in his heart, just what he was going to do. He was as bad as Hipplewayne—worse.

Wenda was looking at him curiously.

"I didn't want a row, but I had to say something when he accused you of being a thief. I am afraid there was a bit of a scene. I hope Hillcott was not shocked."

Garry smiled faintly.

"I wish you hadn't," he said.

He was embarrassed, awkward, felt immeasurably a hypocrite.

"People say those things about all sorts of owners," he said, trying to get a note of lightness into his tone and falling dismally. "I'm afraid the turf isn't very popular with Willie."

"I'm afraid nothing is very popular with Willie just now, and I the least of all."

He frowned at her; he was, she noted, genuinely concerned.

"Are you unhappy?"

She shook her head.

"Not particularly. Willie isn't offensive—not often."

"The fool!" he growled. "He's throwing away something a man would give his head for."

She smiled up at him and took the cigarette from her red lips.

"Me—or am I flattering myself? He's a dear, but he's going through a phase."

"Another woman?"

She shook her head.

"I don't know and I don't want to know."

He looked at her thoughtfully for a long time without speaking.

"If you knew you wouldn't tell me. He's not jealous of me really?"

She put the cigarette between her lips and puffed steadily.

"No, my dear, I think he's just jealous—of me."

And then a thought struck him, a thought that had been at the back of his mind for quite a long time.

“Does he know anything about our little financial arrangement?”

“No.” Her tone was short, almost brusque.

“I don’t mind your telling him,” he said.

“No, he needn’t be told that. He wouldn’t understand.”

Garry paced up and down the room, his hands thrust in his pockets. Willie was a problem, would always remain such, but a different kind of problem from Wenda; yet in the end he might be a problem so intensified by Wenda’s mad schemes that he would become insuperable. Was Willie jealous of him? The thought was frightening. Or—

He turned suddenly.

“He isn’t jealous of Henry—” he began.

She stared at him.

“That boy is always around, you know.” He stopped. “I suppose he’s quite a decent fellow, though he’s not the kind of decent fellow that I like.”

“Don’t be silly,” she said scornfully. “That boy! No, curiously enough, he isn’t. If he’s jealous of anybody, I suppose it’s you.”

Garry shook his head.

“It’s a pity, isn’t it?”

She raised a warning hand.

“Don’t tell me for the umpteenth time that it’s a pity I haven’t children, or that I ought to be raising a young family to keep Willie’s mind occupied! It would be rather a big price for giving Willie an occupation—I think I’ve told you that before. Darling, you’re wonderful, but you’re rather old fashioned. You don’t know much about women, do you?”

Garry shook his head.

“Less and less,” he said.

She had upset all his ideas of women; he said so. There was a note of triteness in the assertion; he had said it before.

“My father had funny ideas about ‘em. He used to say that women were men with a different code of honour; that they made their biggest sacrifices for things that didn’t matter—not for their children or their husbands, but for something that wasn’t worth two hoots.”

She had thrown away her cigarette; he offered her another, and struck a match, watching that beautiful face with a puzzled, uneasy self-consciousness which was strange in him. “Your father was a very unpleasant old gentleman,” she said. “Are you worth two hoots?”

It was coming now. He had avoided so carefully a repetition of that conversation which had been weighing on him like a thundercloud and now he had offered her an opening. He cursed himself for his own tactlessness.

“Why?” he asked lightly. “Would you make remarkable sacrifices for me? I wonder!”

She nodded slowly.

“You’re wondering, are you? Well—” she rose from the sofa and shrugged her shoulders “—you haven’t shown much curiosity, have you?”

“About what?”

Again that odd movement with her shoulder.

“Well, about me and all the marvellous things I think about.”

Garry smiled blandly.

“Curiosity brought scandal to the Garden of Eden, darling,” he said.

“But it made the Book of Genesis very interesting, Garry.”

She sat on the end of the settee and looked at him searchingly. He chuckled at this.

“What are you offering me?”

“Well, an apple a day, you know—”

“That’s what the serpent said,” said Garry. “But it didn’t keep the doctor away.”

Again that hard, penetrating look.

“I’m beginning to doubt whether prosperity is a good thing for you,” she said.

“I’ll tell you some day.”

She walked out of the door into the passage and bent her head, listening. Willie’s loud voice still sounded. She closed the door softly.

“I suppose you’ll get married—now?”

“Why now?”

“Molly’s rather fond of you,” she said.

She did not look at him as she said this, but threw the remark away as though it had no importance. Probably in her mind it was no more than a piece of banter; but it struck home to him. Was it sarcasm? Did she mean it?

He felt the blood come into his face. She was ridiculously, childishly embarrassing. Molly! Of course that was absurd! He was beginning to give a new importance to Molly, but that she should envisage him as anything but a middle-aged man, who took an almost paternal and certainly patronising interest in her career, was unthinkable. He was of that age, in the neighbourhood of thirty, when people under twenty are the veriest children.

“Did you hear what I said?”

Then she had meant it!

“Molly is very fond of you.”

Garry swallowed.

“Everybody is—my popularity is a public scandal.”

“Why don’t you marry?” she challenged.

She reached out her hand and he took it.

“The ideal woman is married already.”

“Or run away with somebody?”

“You, darling?” He almost scoffed.

He tried to keep the conversation to a frothy level and failed dismally, and was conscious of his failure.

“Well, how does that idea strike you?” she asked.

He heard the door open, and turned. Molly was standing, regarding them with grave and understanding eyes. She moved down into the room behind her lumbered Willie, red of face, rather untidy of hair, chewing at a cigar which he had lit on one side only.

“Come along, Willie.” Wenda walked to the windows that led to the lawn. “We shall be late.”

“What’s the hurry?”

When Willie had had a little too much to drink he had a disconcerting habit of shouting. He shouted now. He walked across to Garry and thrust his inflamed face almost into his host's.

"I'm going to give you a tip, Anson. You're a bit of a tipster, aren't you?"

"Why 'Anson'? You're getting very formal of a sudden, Willie."

Willie Panniford's thick lips curled in a smile.

"It's about time we had a little formality, I think," he growled.

It was Molly who made an attempt to turn the conversation.

"Your Mr. Hillcott's been over to Welbury quite a lot lately, hasn't he?"

"Really? What's the attraction?"

Molly smiled.

"The new housemaid's name is Emily."

"You'd better keep your silver locked up, darling."

Willie's guffaw was a prelude to something offensive.

"I don't understand a gentleman employing a burglar. It seems a queer thing to do."

"But Hillcott's such a nice burglar," said Wenda sweetly, and her husband turned on her with a sneer.

"Yes, a very useful go-between."

Garry saw her stiffen.

"What do you mean—a go-between?"

"You know what I mean," said Willie offensively. "You understand English, don't you? There's a lot going on here that I don't understand."

"Naturally," said Garry dryly and, undeterred by his savage look, took Willie Panniford gently by the arm and led him to the door. "Go home, you quarrelsome old devil, and dress."

Panniford wrenched his arm free.

"What I mean to say is, I'm not such a fool as I look," was his parting shot.

It was difficult to believe.

As he stood in the doorway, Wenda brushed past. Molly was waiting for him, her back against the desk, her hands holding the edge.

"Willie is rather—" he began.

"Isn't he?" She was very cool, very self-possessed. She must have grown accustomed to Willie; his fury, his absurd boorishness no longer distressed her apparently. It was difficult to believe that he had reduced her to tears, that morning. Certainly they had left no trace.

She was looking at him steadily. He grew uncomfortable under her gaze.

"Well, Molly?"

"Garry, some things aren't worth while. Do you realize that?"

If he did not understand her, it was because he did not dare. He had an insane desire to stand well with this child who was no longer a child; he was frantically anxious to preserve any good opinion of him she had, or to establish one more exalted.

"I don't quite—" he began.

She nodded.

"Yes, you do! There are things that aren't worth while, and people who aren't worth while, Garry. Unfortunately, they are the sort who get everything."

“Do you mean Willie?” he asked and was hurt by the look of reproach which she gave him.

“I’m going to change. I’ll see you in your box—or possibly we’ll come back and you can have the honour of driving me in your car; and if that isn’t throwing myself at your head, I don’t know what is.”

He walked with her along the crazy pavement through the garden, and met John half-way. John Dory was resplendent in his grey topper and his perfectly fitting morning suit. He was just what a bookmaker doesn’t look like in pictures.

She passed him with a smile and a nod; she rather liked this brusque man, who could be so uncomfortably frank and never attempted to disguise either his likes or his dislikes.

“I wanted to see you, Garry.”

They watched the girl out of sight, and John, taking the arm of his friend, paced him towards the house.

“About Rangemore?”

John Dory nodded. His round, placid face looked unusually pink that morning. Garry remarked on it.

“A thick night?” he asked.

The other shook his head.

“No, a thick morning. A little trouble—purely domestic.” Garry Anson had never met the pretty shrew who was Mrs. John Dory, but he had heard stories of the unenviable state of the Dory household.

“Are you backing Rangemore?”

Garry shook his head.

“No, not for a bob.”

John deposited his hat carefully on a side table and stripped his gloves with maddening deliberation.

“You are not backing your horse—why?”

Henry Lascarne came in at that moment. He did not see the bookmaker, was possibly too preoccupied with the scene he had witnessed at breakfast.

“Pity, isn’t it?” he began. “About Willie, I mean. He has a couple of drinks and always goes back to the same subject.”

“Yes; that is because he always goes back to the same bottle,” said Garry shortly.

He was not anxious to discuss Willie Panniford before his visitor, of whose presence Henry became suddenly aware.

“Have you ever met a bookmaker?” asked Garry, and introduced him. “He’s never met one before.”

John offered his hand.

“Really? Congratulations!”

There was a look of consternation on Henry Lascarne’s face. He had seen bookmakers from a distance; knew that they were noisy people who lived on the blood of people who backed horses. That he should meet one socially came rather in the nature of a shock.

“Ask him what’s going to win,” suggested the amused Garry. “He’s an authority on the thoroughbred racehorse.”

John smiled.

"He's pulling your leg. I don't know two horses; apart; they all look alike to me. I know they are horses and if they've got horns they're cows."

Garry was wondering how he should get rid of the young man, when Hillcott arrived and solved his problem.

"I've sent your clothes over to Welbury."

Henry regarded him coldly.

"I'm dressing here," he said.

"You said 'after breakfast,'" said Hillcott loudly. "Your case went over ten minutes ago by one of the domestic servants."

"Tons of time, Henry," said Garry soothingly. "Five minutes' walk—good for the figure—or you can have the car."

When he had gone, and Hillcott, who lingered, had been dismissed:

"I don't understand this. Aren't you backing Rangemore?" asked Dory.

Garry shook his head.

"You're running it?"

"Yes, Rangemore's running."

John Dory sat down, and bit off the end of a cigar. He was very thoughtful.

"I met your girl friend—sorry! The last time I said that you were very annoyed."

"You don't like Wenda Panniford?"

Dory considered this as he lit his cigar.

"Why do you dislike Wenda?" Garry asked again.

The other carefully laid the match stalk in an ashtray.

"Why does one like or dislike people? Possibly it is that our auras clash. I am very sensitive to auras. Sounds silly, doesn't it? But I can tell you that when a man comes up to me and is absolutely confident about a horse he is backing, I know—"

"A blessed gift for a bookmaker!"

"She is very lovely." It was quite a lot for John Dory to concede. "And she is one of the best-dressed women I have ever met. She doesn't like me, but that's nothing to do with it. There are quite a number of decent people who don't like me."

"Isn't Wenda decent?" asked Garry irritably.

"As far as I know—admirable. I just don't like her—that's the truth of it. It's a silly conversation—how did it begin? Oh, yes, I met Lady Panniford and she had fifty pounds on our horse."

"Good Lord!" Garry was concerned. "Is she betting in fifties?"

Dory was annoyed with himself.

"I'm talkative—forget that I told you. No, she seldom has more than a fiver, and she always wins, anyway."

"You can cancel that bet." Garry went to his desk, picked up the telephone but put it down again. "No, I'll send a note—I don't want all the girls at the exchange to know my business."

He took out the one solitary sheet of notepaper from the rack.

"Ring that bell for me, John, will you? One sheet of notepaper, and that one grimy!"

He scribbled rapidly and read aloud as he wrote.

"Darling, I've cancelled your bet. My horse isn't trying—"

John Dory, pacing the floor restlessly, stopped as if he had been shot.

“You’re not sending a note like that? Are you mad?”

Garry chuckled.

“Don’t be silly—it’s to Wenda.”

The bookmaker snorted his protest.

“Why send, any note at all? I’ll cancel her bet with the greatest of pleasure.”

“She may put some of her friends on to it.”

Garry licked down the envelope.

“But you can’t write things like that, my dear chap.”

Garry scribbled a postscript.

“What have you written?”

“I have asked her to burn this note unless she wants to get me warned off. Is that all right?”

John Dory could only regard him with pained amazement. Personally, if he had had to mark down the one person in the world to whom such a note should not have been written, that person would have been Wenda Panniford. He felt towards her something more than the antagonism he reserved for uncongenial souls.

All the years he had known Garry and all the years he had been dimly acquainted with Wenda, he had disliked her. Yet, strangely enough, in the early days of their acquaintance she had given him no cause for dislike. Her attitude had never been worse than one of gentle patronage. But it was not this he resented; it was no new experience to be treated like a superior servant. It was part of the convention of his profession that the impecunious aristocracy, who so often bilked him, should adopt this attitude towards the bookmaker they shamelessly robbed. There was something deeper than a pique founded on slights, real or imaginary.

“The trouble with you is mental, Garry. You judge all people by yourself. I tell you again that you cannot afford to send that sort of note—” He stopped suddenly.

Looking round, Garry saw Lascarne and hailed him.

“Be a messenger, Henry; take this note over to Wenda, will you? I presume you are on your way?”

Henry took the letter. He was peeved; evidently something had annoyed him and Gerry, who understood the eccentricities of Hillcott, did not inquire too closely as to the cause.

John’s eyes followed the young man across the lawn until he disappeared round a clump of rhododendrons which hid the road.

“You are what I call a clever mug, Garry,” he said. “I have only met two men like you and they both died broke.”

“Thank you for that encouraging remark.”

John nodded.

“I am not trying to be encouraging or discouraging. I wouldn’t have sent that letter to my dearest friend.”

“Well, Wenda falls into that category,” said Garry a little stiffly.

“Do you mind if I am very frank, Garry?”

“Are you going to talk about Wenda?”

“I am not. I am going to talk about that letter you sent, or rather the contents of that letter.”

Garry Anson picked up The Calendar and dropped on to the sofa with a look of resignation.

“You’ve been racing for years,” said John. “You know the game and how it is played. There are certain people who’d rather get a crooked bob than an honest quid.”

“You’re not complaining?”

Dory shook his head.

“Me? No. I make money out of ‘em. I like ‘em tricky—they always lose in the end. It’s the mug I’m afraid of; he’s sometimes right. Now tell me, how did you gallop this horse of yours?”

Here was a more congenial topic.

“I galloped him at a stone with Lanceford and Redmoss.”

The bookmaker gasped.

“Did he beat Lanceford at a stone?” he asked.

“He lost him!” smiled the other.

“Well, what are you afraid of?”

“The Frenchman,” replied Garry emphatically, and John Dory laughed contemptuously.

“The Frenchman! Your ancestors weren’t afraid of Napoleon Bonaparte. Silver Queen! There can’t be a pound in it one way or the other.”

Garry threw down the paper and rose.

“But when I bet there are to be no ifs—I can’t afford to take a sporting chance.”

“There is never a time when you couldn’t afford that, Garry,” said the other sharply. “Are you losing?”

“I’m not going too well.”

“I was wondering about that.” Dory took a notebook from his pocket. “Do you know what you’ve lost to me in the last two months?”

“A lot of money.”

“Eight thousand six hundred. And you haven’t been betting with me alone.”

Garry moved uncomfortably.

“You’re trying to depress me.”

There was a silence, and then John Dory asked the question that had been at the back of his mind for a long time.

“Did you ever do what you said you were going to do, years ago—put some money by that you couldn’t touch for betting?”

Garry stared at him.

“Good Lord! You’ve got a better memory than I! I don’t remember telling you I was going to do that. Yes, I did.”

The other man heaved a sigh of relief.

“Thank God for that! You bought a lot of bearer bonds—or you were going to. You put them in trust, I suppose?”

Garry deliberated this.

“Yes, I put them in trust.”

He was reserving something. Dory, was too sensitive to reservations to overlook this fact.

“You can’t touch the money?”

Garry shook his head.

“No, not till I’ve finished with betting for good—and that’s going to be pretty soon.”

The bookmaker’s hand fell on his shoulder.

“Well, there’s no need to play the fool, Garry, eh? Let the horse run it out if it’s only for the stake.”

He could not guess the turmoil of Garry Anson’s mind. It was a subject not to be pursued. Every word was a reproof. Garry’s irritation grew with the knowledge that all this man said was sane and well-founded, that even by the rough and ready code of the ring he was despicable. Yet he needed approval very badly, and he was not getting it. Instead, here was a bookmaker, one of the class regarded as the backer’s natural enemy, sitting in judgement on him. He was very fond of John, but he wished he could be left alone to fight out this problem and settle it—by himself.

What a lot of fuss about stopping a horse! They were stopped every day—not perhaps deliberately stopped, but run in races of a higher class than they could win, sent out on the racecourse with a jockey whose instructions were “not to knock them about.”

“I’m bound to win the Northumberland Plate with him. I couldn’t lose my money in that race.”

“Back him today.” Dory was inexorable.

“No.”

Garry dropped down in a chair, weary of the battle, and John Dory lowered over him.

“What’s the matter with you, Garry? You’ve never done these monkey tricks before—why start now?”

“What tricks?”

“You’ve never stopped a horse. You’ve run ‘em when they haven’t been quite cherry ripe—and you’ve run ‘em when they’ve been so badly handicapped that they couldn’t win. But you’ve never stopped one.”

Garry snapped round on him.

“I’m not stopping this one. Well...I suppose I am. What about it?”

Dory shook his head wonderingly.

“Garry, you’ve—well, you’ve rather shocked me.”

The younger man laughed.

“Marvellous! I’ve shocked a bookmaker!”

If there was scorn in the words John Dory did not notice it.

“You’re a pal of mine. Ordinary people couldn’t shock me. I’ve had shocks on a racecourse—how do you think I lost my hair? But I’ve never been shocked by seeing the best man I know thieving.”

Garry sprang to his feet.

“Thieving?”

“Sounds a bit ugly, doesn’t it? But it’s thieving. I’ve nothing to gain by telling you this. I can lay your horse and win a lot of money. All the wise fellows who’ve been watching the gallops will be falling over themselves to back it, and the little fellows who come down by charabanc will be losing their bobs too. You can’t send notes to all those birds and tell them you’re not trying!”

He took a newspaper from his pocket, turned the pages quickly and found the sheet.

“Read that paragraph. It’s from the best sporting writer of the day.”

Garry took the paper and began reading where John Dory’s finger was pointing.

‘And now I come to the horse which above all has claim to our respect—Rangemore. The public have two great incentives to back this horse. The first is the knowledge of Rangemore’s own sterling qualities—by Swynford out of Fyne. There is no more honest animal in training. He deserved his victory, in the Newbury Cup and the two miles of the Ascot Stakes is his best distance. He should be backed, as he is the property of that popular owner, Mr. Garry Anson and people who back his horses know they are on a trier. He is the type of man who is an acquisition to the turf. The majority of owners are straight, but Garry Anson could not do a crooked thing...’

Garry put the paper down on the table.

“It shows how little these writing fellows know,” he said.

He had weakened on his plan. It was his last gesture of bravado.

Chapter 7

LONG LINES of charabancs were crawling with painful slowness through Windsor Park and the town of Staines was jammed with large cars, going at snail’s pace towards the bridge; where the Ascot Road turns off by Virginia Water the block was even greater.

All the world was converging upon Ascot. Polished limousines, ancient Fords, hired cars stood wing to wing in every road and side road leading to the course. The broad heath was already crowded, the stands black with sightseers. Every one of the hundreds of boxes held its gay little party.

Garry Anson’s house was set on rising ground. He had a view, the merest slit of a view through high chestnuts, of the road which runs before the grandstand; and he watched the slow procession for a long time without speaking. He was not a vain man, but that newspaper paragraph had touched him on the raw.

“Will you see Lynn?”

He looked round. Hillcott was standing in the doorway, nonchalantly manicuring his nails with a matchstick.

“Is he here?” he asked, startled, for at that moment the jockey was in his mind.

“Should I have asked you to see him if he wasn’t here?”

“Lynn’s riding, of course?” said John.

Garry nodded.

“Show him in.”

“Shall I go?”

Garry shook his head.

“No, wait. You’re in it, and you may as well see the reformation completed.”

Lynn came in. Hillcott lingered in the doorway, head bent, anxious to acquire any information which might be going.

“About this horse—” began Garry, saw his servant and jerked a dismissal. Mr. Hillcott went reluctantly and resentfully.

“About this horse—” began Garry again.

“I came to see you about it, Captain Anson,” said Lynn. “I’m a bit worried—in fact, that’s putting it mildly.”

He looked suspiciously at John, and Garry smiled.

“All right, you can say what you like in front of Mr. Dory. Why are you worried?”

Lynn shook his head.

“I don’t know how I’m going to ride him. I’ve been thinking out a dozen ways, and I can’t find one that’s satisfactory. Rangemore always pulls himself to the front before the field has gone half a mile. If I start trying to hide him up they’ll know all about it on the stands. He’s a very difficult horse to drop out.”

“Well, don’t drop him out,” smiled Garry.

Andy Lynn did not quite understand that this was an instruction.

“I couldn’t do it, honestly,” he said. “You know the horse, Mr. Dory—he isn’t the sort you could put in behind something. The moment some horse in front of him fell away or laid off, he’d pull himself through and I couldn’t stop him. He always runs his own races, and that’s the kind of race he runs.”

“Let him run his own race today,” said Garry, and Lynn’s eyes opened.

“You’re trying with him? That’s a load off my mind! I think you’re right, too, I’ve been working it out, and he’ll just about win.”

Garry pulled a wry face.

“I don’t like that ‘just about win’; I like ‘em to win with a bit in hand. All right, tell Mr. Wray that I’ve changed my plans.”

Lynn nodded.

“He’s a bit nervous, too. He was saying that you’ve never done this before, though he needn’t have told me that. And I was a bit worried, too, because I suggested it. I must be mad—at Ascot...”

Garry slapped him on the shoulder and half pushed him towards the door. He wanted to be through with his interview; he required neither commendation nor the implied reproach of Lynn’s approval.

“No, I’ve never done it before, and it’s too late to start now. I’m sorry I ever thought otherwise.”

Lynn paused in the doorway.

“I shall win the last race—”

“You said that before,” said Garry. “Win the second—that’ll amuse me more. Thank you.”

He turned to John when the man had gone and made an extravagant gesture.

“John, you’ve saved my soul.”

“Don’t be a fool,” growled John Dory. “I’ve given you a bit of advice that’ll cost me a lot of money. Now what about Lady Panniford?”

Garry stared at him.

“Lady Panniford? What has she—”

“If I remember rightly, you sent her a little epistle a few minutes ago,” said Dory dryly.

Garry whistled. “So I did. I’d forgotten all about it. I’ll send Hillcott over with a note.”

“Ask her to destroy the other,” said the cautious John; and Garry laughed.

“It’s burnt already,” he said.

He rang the bell and Hillcott came in with suspicious alacrity.

“There’s no paper on this desk—notepaper, I mean. Go and get some.”

As the man turned, he had an idea and whistled Hillcott back. If the truth be told, Garry’s attitude towards his servant was almost as unconventional as Hillcott’s attitude towards him.

“Wait.”

He took out a pocket case, opened it and extracted a banknote. For a moment he sat, his pen poised, frowning.

“A pen’s no good. Where’s a pencil?”

Hillcott fumbled in his pocket and produced a greasy stub.

“Here you are.”

Garry wrote rapidly on the back of the banknote, folded it into an envelope and handed it to the servant.

“Rush this over to Lady Panniford,” he said. “Don’t lose it and don’t pinch it.”

Hillcott held out his hand with great dignity.

“Talking about pinching—my pencil!”

Garry watched him across the lawn, and, after he had gone:

“What have you done, Garry?”

“I wrote and told her it was a joke, and that she could back my horse—for a little.”

“What was the paper you wrote on?” asked John curiously. “It looked to me like a fiver.”

“It looked to me like a hundred,” said Garry.

John chuckled helplessly.

“You’re crazy.”

“I owed her that,” said Garry. “I won some money for her at Newbury on Saturday—in fact, I meant to give her the note before she went.”

John gathered up his glasses and hat.

“How much do you want on your horse today?”

“Not a shilling. I think Silver Queen will beat me. I may change my mind—I don’t know; I’m just like that about it. I can’t afford to lose money just now.”

“Tell me when you can afford to lose money, and I’ll come and stay with you,” said the sardonic John.

Hillcott arrived at Welbury in time to hear the rumbling of a passing domestic storm. Willie was a great shouter; he had no reticence; servants were non-existent, their opinions did not worry him. He came from a long line of Scottish lairds to whom servants were part of the furniture. Wenda, flushed and angry, was in the hall when Hillcott arrived. She opened the note and read it. The note puzzled her. The printed inscription on its other face to some extent calmed her fury. She went upstairs and, without knocking, walked into Willie’s room. He was adjusting his cravat before the glass.

“I suppose you know Hillcott was here just now and heard your big, bellowing voice?”

“I don’t care a damn whether he heard it or if your lover heard it!” he roared.

She was ice cold.

"To which particular lover do you refer?"

"I'm talking about Anson. You know damned well who I mean. I've got proof..."

"I wish to God you'd produce it," she said. "What a boor you are, Willie!"

"You prefer the genteel Garry, I suppose—and he's rich, eh? That'll be a good match for you, Wenda. By God, you know on which side your bread is buttered!"

"What is your proof?" she asked again.

"You'll find out in time." He turned again to the glass. "You can get out of my room. I'm supposed to have a little privacy, aren't I?"

"I'm going over to Garry's."

"Naturally," he snarled. "Go and get him to sympathize with you—brutal husband and all that sort of thing. You'll go a little too far one of these days, Wenda, and then you'll know all about it."

Wenda left the room, slammed the door behind her and went downstairs.

Molly was not yet down. She waited for a second in the hall indecisively, then, crossing the garden, unlatched the little iron gate which led to Garry's garden. As she came up the flagged path she saw John Dory disappearing towards the road, heard the whirr of his car as he went on his way.

Garry was sitting on the end of a sofa, reading a small brown book of form. He looked up as she came in.

"You've got rid of Dory, thank heaven!" she said. "I do dislike that man."

He put down the book.

"Why, darling? You don't owe him money, do you?"

"Did he say so?" she asked quickly.

Garry laughed.

"Don't be silly. I was joking. You're looking very beautiful!" And then he saw the envelope in her hand. "I see you got my expensive note."

She nodded.

"Yes, that's why I came. What was the idea of the first, Garry? Why the mystery?"

"What mystery?" he asked.

"Why did you say your horse wasn't going to try?"

She slipped the banknote into her bag.

"I was only joking. I changed my mind."

He had not been joking. She looked at him steadily, but this was not the moment for cross-examination.

"Aren't you dressing? It won't be very long before the first race. I thought I'd take you with us."

He shook his head.

"You'll be crowded. My little Rolls will just hold me and my thoughts. Where's Willie?"

Wenda shrugged her shoulders.

"He's picking me up."

She glanced back across the park. There was no sign of Willie, and if the little time she had was to be utilized she must come straight to her subject.

She sank down on to the settee and caught Garry's hand

"I want you to be awfully patient with him today, however ungracious he is," she said. "That's one of the reasons I came over to see you."

Garry shifted uncomfortably.

“Oh, he really is suspicious about me?” he asked awkwardly and when she nodded: “What a stupid fool!”

“Do you remember what I asked you once before?” She dropped her voice.

Too well he remembered. Instinct told him there would be a repetition of the question.

“Would you?” she asked.

“Would I what?”

She made a little movement of impatience.

“Would you let your name be used? Don’t tell me you don’t want to drag my name through the mud—you’ve already told me that. Garry, will you?”

He tried to speak, but could not. Something in him inhibited the agreement which was coming. And why did Molly suddenly appear as an all-powerful factor in his life? It was absurd, a piece of romantic sentimentality which was foreign to his nature.

“We could go away somewhere till this was all over, and then settle in the country, at your place in Hereford.”

“But I haven’t a place in Hereford,” he protested. “I wasn’t me who came into the half million—it was Jack Anson, my cousin.”

She took one step back.

“But the papers said—”

“My dear, the papers, as usual, got it all wrong.”

She was bewildered. If he had struck her in the face he could not have given her a greater shock. She had never doubted that the old general would leave his money to his nephew. The fact that there was a second nephew she had dismissed as unimportant.

Before she could speak, a shadow fell across the threshold and Willie blundered in. His face was black with anger; he was breathing heavily, like a man who had run a long distance.

“How long are you going to keep me waiting?” he demanded roughly. “I say, old boy, you can come over to Welbury and see Wenda whenever you like; she needn’t spend so much time here, I mean.”

He stopped, out of breath, and when he had recovered:

“It’s not at all necessary. I don’t like this hand-holding sort of business, Anson—to be perfectly candid with you.”

Wenda turned on him in a fury.

“Don’t make a fool of yourself,” she said, and he laughed bitterly.

“I’m letting other people make a fool of me—that’s my role—silly Billy. I’m not blind or deaf.”

“Oh, shut up, Willie!” said Garry wearily.

“It’s got to come out, and it might as well come out now.” Willie Panniford almost shouted the words. “Adelphi Hotel, eh? Does that sound familiar?”

He stepped close to where Garry stood, his fingers working convulsively.

“Not particularly,” said Garry coolly.

“You don’t happen to know the lady and gentleman who were staying together as Mr. and Mrs. Sundridge at the Adelphi Hotel?”

Molly had followed him into the room and now she uttered a cry of protest.

“You keep out of this!” snarled Panniford. “You don’t deny it, Anson? You were with Wenda last March in Liverpool—before you went abroad!”

Garry could only look at him.

“Liverpool! Good God, what a place to commit adultery!”

“You don’t deny it—you were the man?”

So the moment had come. Garry Anson’s decision had been made for him. This was what Wenda wished him to say, the moment which Wenda had planned. There was Molly, looking at him, calm, self-possessed and apparently unconcerned; watching him with a searching glance in which there was no suspicion but a great deal of curiosity.

“No, I don’t deny it.” He found his voice at last.

“That you were the man!” Willie’s arm shot out and his fat finger pointed. “And Wenda was the woman?”

Garry nodded. Then came an interruption which momentarily paralysed him.

“It’s a lie!” Wenda’s voice was shrill and angry. “It’s a lie! How dare you say that, Garry?”

He could only shake his head and throw out his hands helplessly.

“All right, it’s a lie, if you want me to say it’s a lie. I don’t care—whichever way you like.”

Willie Panniford leapt at him. Garry twisted aside, caught his assailant and thrust him back.

“Willie, for God’s sake don’t make a scene!” Wenda almost wailed the words.

She walked swiftly to the garden door and stood waiting.

“Are you coming?”

“All right, I’m coming.” Willie Panniford mumbled the words. “I’m through with you, Anson. I never want to see you again. If you come into my house, if I ever find you there...by God, I’ll kill you!”

Chapter 8

GARRY ANSON stood in the pleasant little room long after the party had gone out of sight. It was Hillcott’s voice that roused him to a sense of reality.

“That’s our whisky talking,” said Hillcott. “What trousers are you going to wear?”

As the glittering procession passed up the centre of the course a band crashed into the National Anthem and every head was bared. Garry, standing on the steps leading to the box, watched the scarlet outriders, the gracious figures bowing in the draped landeau, and went slowly up to his box.

He was a very unhappy man, more unhappy because there were two distinct causes for distress. He had passed Wenda in the paddock—or would have passed her, thinking that that episode was all over and done with, but not caring to risk the direct cut. It was a day of surprises. She called him to her and was her old amiable, pleasant self.

“Willie’s tamer now,” she said coolly.

“Did I make a fool of myself, too? It was rather an amusing morning,” he said sardonically.

“You needn’t look round,” said Wenda. “Molly isn’t hiding behind me. I’ll talk to you later. If you see Willie, don’t hit him! Honestly, he’s very penitent.”

“Where is Molly?” he asked bluntly.

“With her brother,” said Wenda sweetly. She never failed to emphasize that relationship.

He saw Wray in the paddock, and the trainer was looking more cheerful than he had been when they left.

A pleasant place is Ascot. The Royal Enclosure and the paddock are great club grounds where friends meet, and, where even the presence of a few thousand total strangers does not destroy the sense of privacy.

Rangemore came on to the course from his stable, and was put into a box. Garry looked him over and failed to fault him. There was not a superfluous ounce of flesh on him, and he had grown big on his work. He was one of those phlegmatic and kindly dispositioned horses that have little interest beyond their manger.

“He’ll never be any fitter,” said Wray. “And if Silver Queen is better than he is, then she’s a smasher.”

He saw Willie in the distance and neither approached nor avoided him. Herein he was wise, for the account which Wenda had given of Willie’s sudden accession of amiability was mainly fictitious, but he was more mellow than he had been in the morning, so that when she called out of the box into the narrow corridor behind, he was at least receptive.

“Unless you do what I’ve asked you I’m going home,” she said.

Willie scowled awfully.

“I’ve done nothing to apologize for, and I won’t. And as for lunching with the blighter—I’ll go and eat on the balcony.”

Wenda nodded.

“Very well, I shall go home and go straight back to London. And that’s the end of things, Willie, so far as you and I are concerned.”

It was a threat often employed, and as often effective. Willie became the suppliant.

“I only asked for an explanation,” he protested. “I mean to say, I’m human, Wenda. I certainly lost my head a bit, but I’m terribly fond of you, and I said—well, damn it, I’m jealous. It’s a compliment to you, really.”

“I’m not asking you to apologize to me. You’ve offended me beyond forgiveness,” she said.

He wriggled unhappily. What a fool he had been to tell her that he had employed a private detective to watch her! That had come out in one of his ebullitions of temper, and he had been cursing himself ever since. He was always putting himself in the wrong with Wenda; that was a normal condition. He was too fond of her—that was his trouble. He told himself this as often as he told Wenda.

“Well, there was a woman staying in the Adelphi—” he began.

“I won’t even discuss it,” she said.

Willie went on another tack.

“Anson admitted it. He said ‘I was the man and you were the woman.’ I mean to say, Wenda, when a fellow says—”

“You know Garry,” she interrupted. “He was just being exasperating. Probably it was his idea of humour,”

But Willie was not convinced.

“It’s a queer thing for a fellow to say. I mean, I wouldn’t admit I was staying with a woman, if I wasn’t—or even if I was.”

She snapped round at him.

“I don’t care what you would say or what you wouldn’t say.”

Somebody passed within earshot, and she was silent for a moment. Then:

“Where does this ridiculous story about Liverpool come from?”

“Well, a fellow I know said he saw you there going into the hotel; and then I put two and two together and made inquiries—it’s the sort of thing that one does in a moment of impulse. You know me, Wenda—my cursed impulses have got me into trouble before. I remember once—”

She was not to be led astray by the red herring of reminiscences.

“You’ll see Garry at once—at once, Willie—you understand what I mean?”

“All right.”

He was sulky, and when he was sulky he was tractable.

“The last thing I want to do is to make you look cheap. You know what it is—a couple of drinks on an empty—well, before breakfast—”

“Here he comes,” she interrupted quickly. “I’m going to talk to Molly. Remember, Willie, this is your very last chance.”

She slipped into the box as Garry came into view, leaving her husband standing, a not too attractive or inviting figure. Garry returned his nod with a grin.

“Hullo, Willie! Are you sober?” he asked.

Willie made a face.

“I say, I’m sorry about that business this morning, Garry.”

Garry nodded.

“You are sober! You wicked old devil!”

“I’m terribly fond of Wenda—” began Willie lamely.

“Yes, I’ve noticed it! I hope she roasted the soul out of you.”

“I can’t do any more than apologize to you,” snapped the other.

“My dear fellow, I don’t give a damn what you say about me. You’re a so- and-so to talk like that about Wenda. Forgive if I’m a little bit emphatic on the point, but I’m very fond of your wife. And take that look off your wicked old face! You know what I mean.”

“All right, I’m sorry,” mumbled Willie. “There’s no need to rub it in.”

He took the offered hand reluctantly.

“Go into the luncheon room and have a soda-and-milk,” said Garry. “I’m going to back my horse.”

“Don’t put anything on for me, old boy,” said Willie.

It was a pathetic attempt to be jovial.

“Here’s your friend.”

It was John Dory who was hurrying up the narrow corridor, book in hand. He signalled Garry into an empty box and turned the pages of his book rapidly.

"I've got you twelve hundred to two five times," he said, "fourteen to two twice, thirteen hundred to two three times. That's about all you want. It's more than I thought you wanted—two thousand quid!"

"What is the price of the horse now?"

John lowered his head, listening, and out of the babble of sound that came from Tattersalls ring his trained ear caught one familiar voice.

"Jackson's offering five to one. That means you could get eleven hundred to two half a dozen times. It's a very strong market."

Garry jerked his head.

"Go and get it to a thousand pounds," he said, and his companion gaped at him.

"Garry, that's not you," he said, troubled. "You've never had three thousand pounds on a horse—it's not a certainty."

"What is?" asked Garry recklessly. "Go along, John; we'll have a flutter."

Dory hesitated.

"They're backing Silver Queen—she's a strong nine to two chance. Why don't you save on her?"

Garry shook his head.

"No, this is my swansong," he said.

He heard the thud of hoofs on the turf and swung back to the edge of the box and watched the horses as they cantered down to the post.

"There they go—Terrace, Waterfield, Silver Queen—she looks well, by God! I've never seen her look better."

And then he saw his own claret and white hoops.

"There goes mine. What's the matter with Rangemore, eh?"

John looked and admired. He had never seen a horse so full of himself.

"He goes to the post like a winner," he said cautiously.

"Will he come back like a winner?" asked Garry.

He slapped his friend on the back.

"Go and get that money on—you're neglecting your business."

He looked over the narrow partition. Two boxes away he saw Henry Lascarne and beckoned him. Henry came at his leisure.

"Well, Henry, are you excited?"

"Quite intriguing," said Mr. Lascarne. "But the bookmakers are awfully noisy!"

"Are they?" said Garry, in mock surprise. "Well, tell them to shut up."

"I don't know any of them," said Lascarne. And then, lowering his voice: "I say, what's the matter with Willie? He's like a bear with a sore head."

"That's putting it very nicely," said Garry.

"He said things about Wenda. I wanted to knock him down."

Garry patted him on the shoulder.

"Thank you—for wanting to."

"Wenda, who's the very soul of—" the rhapsodical Lascarne went on.

"Yes, yes. You'll miss the start."

Garry was in no mood to rhapsodize on the subject of Wenda.

Stepping out into the passage, he saw Molly coming towards him. She was passing with a nod when he stopped her.

"Are you annoyed with me?"

She looked at him thoughtfully.

“Is there anything you wouldn’t do for Wenda?” she asked.

“What do you mean?”

She was passing on, but he caught her by the arm and drew her into the box. There was no privacy here, for the corridor was lively with passing box- owners.

“Just tell me exactly what you mean by that,” he asked.

Looking across the partition he saw Wenda’s eye fixed on them.

“What do you mean by ‘Is there anything I wouldn’t do for Wenda?’ What have I done for her?”

“You know,” she said quietly. And then: “Why did you admit you were the man?”

He scratched his chin.

“I’m blest if I know. I felt that way.”

“Because Wenda asked you.”

He stared at her.

“No,” he said quickly.

“Because she asked you. You’re not a good liar, Garry. And then she changed her mind.”

He did not attempt to contradict her now.

“Why did she change her mind?”

Molly shook her head.

“I don’t know. What were you talking about before we came?”

He frowned.

“I’m blest if I know. Willie, I think—”

Molly smiled faintly.

“Did you tell her that you didn’t come into the Anson money?”

He nodded.

“There’s your answer,” she said quietly.

His jaw dropped.

“What a horrible thought, Molly, darling!”

She nodded.

“I know; I’m less than the dust. But that is why she changed her mind. When she came to you she thought you were a millionaire; and if you had been a millionaire she’d have gone on with it, admitted she was the woman in the case; there would have been a divorce, and—” She shrugged her shoulders.

He was horrified at the suggestion.

“You must hate her,” he breathed, and her voice was so low that he could hardly hear her above the babble of sound.

“Yes, I do.”

“In the name of heaven, why?”

“You’d hate me if I told you.” Her eyes came up to his.

“Have you any personal reason? Is it something to do with Willie?”

“You’ll miss the start and I shall too,” she said, and turned abruptly away.

He saw her reappear in Wenda’s box a few seconds later.

They were lining up at the post. The grey filly, Silver Queen, was a little fractious, refused to face the tapes, had to be coaxed and driven up to her position, only to whip round and lose it again instantly. And when she was in her place, two other horses had their backs to the tape and it seemed impossible that they could ever be brought into line. Then, just as the impossibility became

apparent, Silver Queen came round with a jerk and the tapes flew up. There was a roar from the crowd.

Garry watched the field sweep past towards the bend and heard his name called.

“One moment. I want to see them round that turn.”

He glanced back over his shoulder. It was Wenda.

“Hullo, darling!”

“Sorry to be a nuisance,” she said.

“That’s all right; they’ve got two miles to go and nothing much will happen in the next ninety seconds.”

“There was a postscript to your letter on the banknote, saying you wanted to see me,” she said. “In the hullabaloo of Willie’s stupidity I forgot to ask you what it was about.”

He had forgotten the postscript.

“Oh, yes. I may want to see you tonight. That’ll be awkward, won’t it?”

She shook her head.

“Willie’s going back to London. He’s dining with the Arkwrights.”

There was a little pause.

“Why do you want to see me?”

“I’ll tell you after the race.”

She came into the box and looked over his shoulder.

“What is happening, Garry? I can’t tell one horse from another.”

“Mine’s leading from Lord Kelly’s horse,” said Garry. “There’s a long interval, then comes Silver Queen, Waterfield, Pathan, that thing of Basil’s, the Belgian horse—what do you call him?—Fleur du Sud...he’ll win nothing.”

She watched him in silence, and then:

“Garry, dear, have you backed your horse for much?”

“A modest fortune, darling,” he said lightly, and heard her sigh.

“I hope you win.”

“I have a little hope in that direction myself,” he said. “I say, Wenda”—she was close to him, her chin against his shoulder. He was still looking through his glasses as he spoke.

“Yes?”

“Did you really think I’d come into the old general’s money?” he asked.

He dared not look at her lest he found confirmation of Molly’s theory.

“Well, it was in the papers, Garry.”

“Yes, I know; but you weren’t awfully disappointed when you found I hadn’t inherited... you know?”

“Of course not.” Her voice was a little strained, her intonation forced. She heard his sigh of relief.

“Of course you weren’t—money has never meant anything to us.”

“Who said it had?” she asked quickly.

“Nobody, only—naturally you’d be a bit disappointed for my sake.”

“He left you nothing...?”

“Not a bob.”

“The old beast!”

“Darling, there was no reason why he should.”

The field was going into Swinley Bottom. Silver Queen was moving like a winner. Rangemore was there, but Garry's eyes were for the grey, and for the jockey who sat motionless on her back. The bell clanged as the field came into the straight. To Garry's practised eye there could only be one of two results. The Belgian horse was being driven hard; the whip came up and fell, and yet he did not quicken.

John had come into the box.

"The Belgian stays for ever," he said.

"The race will be over before then," said Garry.

John Dory's lips were against the ear of his friend.

"There'll be no tax on most of these bets of yours," he said.

"Why not?"

"I've had to do them that way—some of the dodgers lay the best prices."

Garry frowned.

"I don't care very much for the tax, but I'm not very keen on dodging it..."

The Belgian had dropped back, beaten; 'shut up like a knife,' Garry described it. Waterfield was going, well, but nothing so well as Silver Queen. She looked as if she could go to the front whenever she wanted.

He heard the bull roar of Willie's voice.

"What's that horse in front, Garry? I don't see yours anywhere—"

"Mine's the one in front, you fool."

Silver Queen was lying on the inside; Rangemore a length or a half a length in front of her.

"You're winning, Garry!" It was Molly's shrill, excited voice.

Up the straight they came, neck to neck and head to head, grey and bay racing side by side. Both jockeys were now at work on their horses. Nearer and nearer the post and they flashed past, seemingly locked together.

"You've won it, Garry!" John Dory's voice was hoarse. He knew better than any man how much depended on the race. "You've won it! It's a hundred to one on yours."

Garry shook his head slowly.

"I'm beaten," he said. "I know that angle. Just beaten—but eaten."

Molly came flying into the box.

"Garry, you've won it—I'm sure you've won it!"

"I've lost," said Garry quietly. Then the number went up. "Number nine," somebody cried. Silver Queen had won by a short head.

Chapter 9

GARRY PUT down the glasses that he had turned towards the judge's box. He saw an official hold up a square signal "SH" intended for the information of the men on number board.

"Short head, eh? Nearer than I thought. Silver Queen! Good filly that. But mine ran as game as a pebble."

He did not recognize the sound of his own voice. Dory with difficulty found his.

"Yes, yours ran gamely enough," he said huskily.

Garry nodded. Rangemore was game. That was the consolation of a cataclysmic moment.

Wenda came up to him and slipped her arm through his; there was something mechanical in the movement; he had a sense of unreality, as though they were both playing a part in which neither believed.

"Oh, Garry, what bad luck!"

"Is it, darling? Poor old Rangemore! She was just good for him. Her dam never foaled a bad one. All that stock is game."

Every word he uttered was an effort, yet he was sincere enough and she could only wonder and in her wonder was some contempt, that he could find praise for the horse that had beaten him.

Willie had had a fiver on the winner; a friend of his told him to back Silver Queen and he was elated with his success. The possible consequences to Garry did not give him a moment's uneasiness.

"Run along, Molly." Wenda's voice was very sweet and matronly: she patted Molly on the shoulder gently, and Molly hated that form of caress at any time.

"Must I?" She was momentarily rebellious.

"Don't be trying, darling," said Wenda. "I want to talk to Garry."

If the truth be told, she was dreading the interview.

"Is it something that a young girl shouldn't hear?" asked Molly mockingly.

Wenda's smile was charming; it did not charm the girl.

"Darling, you're getting more like Willie every day!"

Molly laughed.

"Oh, Wenda, how can you! Willie adores you," was her parting shot.

Wenda was apparently amused.

Now they were alone together in the box, and he was even more unhappy than she.

"Do you want to see me tonight?" she asked.

"I think I may. I'll tell you after the last race," said Garry.

In his heart he was certain that the interview was inevitable, but he would not let himself believe that his ill-fortune could go unretrieved.

For the moment she was relieved. The postponement of the inevitable clash was at any rate welcome.

"I'd better come over to you. Will you be alone?"

"Dory will be dining with me," he said.

"About ten o'clock?" she suggested.

"Yes. You're sure it isn't going to make trouble for you, darling?"

"With Willie?" She smiled.

"Anyway, I may not want to see you."

"That isn't very polite." And then, dropping the note of flippancy: "I was rather hateful this morning, wasn't I?"

"A little incomprehensible, darling," he said.

She drew a long breath.

"I was panic-stricken. I do things like that in a panic. You must have loathed me...I'll explain some day."

He looked into the next box, where Dory sat, hunched over his book.

"Tonight, perhaps. Can you get rid of that man?"

"John? Yes. He and I are going to have a painful going through my accounts. Do you want me, Molly?"

Molly had appeared at the entrance of the box.

"Willie's getting rather restless," she said. "I know that doesn't impress you, Wenda, but he is!"

When the women had gone he called John over to him.

"Come and feed."

John Dory was in his glummiest mood.

"I feel responsible for all this," he said.

"What's your name—Silver Queen?" asked Garry scornfully. "I wish I could buy her—what a game 'un!"

"Your horse ran gamely enough."

"Didn't he?" breathed Garry. "I've never seen a better race or had a worse one!"

He took John's arm and led him down the corridor.

"Know what's going to win the next? Straight from the horse's mouth!"

For the rest of the day Garry moved amidst a confusion of sound, in a sort of mental haze, behaving normally, answering those questions that were put to him intelligently, being sane in all respects save in his choice of horses. John Dory was afterwards to tell him that he was betting like a drunken sailor.

He was conscious of a curious aloofness on the part of Wenda, conscious, too, that Molly always seemed to be near him, anxious, rather repressed. Once or twice she seemed on the point of speaking to him, but changed her mind. Between the last two races she led him down into the broad, leafy square where a band of Guards was playing, and made him sit down.

"Garry, you've lost a lot of money, haven't you?"

He smiled at her. It seemed to him like a foolish grin.

"I'm afraid I have, but what is money when one has good health and the brightest prospects?"

His triteness jarred on himself. He had lost heavily and at a moment when he could not afford to lose. But there was something more than financial loss at the back of the sustained uneasiness of his mind: a sense that something big was slipping away from him; a sense of lost opportunities. He felt curiously irritated with Molly; he could not understand himself.

Molly was just being sweet and wonderful and trying hard to bring him back to normality. Why should he be annoyed with her?

It was after she had left him to join Wenda, who was signalling to her urgently from the steps leading from the boxes, that he realized with a shock just the cause of that irritation. It was Molly he was losing. His consternation was almost laughable; there was nothing to lose. She was just a nice little girl—no, not a nice little girl, a woman now—and she was very sweet and altogether adorable, but—well, she was Molly, the Molly he had known for so many years, and who had suddenly got away from childhood, ducked under his patronage and could meet him on level, if not superior, terms.

John, coming in search, found him the solitary occupant of a garden seat facing the empty bandstand, for a race was in progress and the band were human.

"Are you betting on this, Garry? It's the race Andy Lynn told you he would win."

Garry shook his head.

“God knows I don’t want to advise you to bet, but this is a certainty. The price is short, but I have taken fifteen hundred to a thousand about it for you.”

“I don’t want it.”

“Then I’ll stand it myself.”

“No, no, I didn’t mean that. What does it matter? I’ll have it. My bet will stop the horse winning: the luck is so diabolically out that I couldn’t possibly win.”

They walked out on to the lawn. Over the heads of the crowd they saw the jackets flashing up the straight and Garry stood uncomprehending and silent amidst the uproar as the field passed the post.

“Well, you’ve won that anyway! Let’s go home. Are you taking anybody with you?”

Garry shook his head.

They passed slowly through the main entrance on to the road, waited a few minutes and then Garry’s car came up with Hillcott sitting beside the driver. Other racegoers might wait hours for their cars, but Hillcott was a great wrangler and a deceiver of the Berkshire police; in many ways he was invaluable.

As the car went down the hill towards the railway station (they were obliged to make a wide detour) Garry said.

“I wonder if I asked Molly to come back to tea?”

“You didn’t; she is with Lady Panniford. I saw her just before I picked you up. What is it to be, Garry?”

Garry awoke from an unpleasant reverie with a start.

“What is what to be?”

“Are you through with racing, or are you just temporarily through?”

Garry considered this problem. His mind was now clearer.

“Half an hour ago I should have said I was through with racing, but that’s stupid; it’s in my blood, and I can’t get it out, and although I’ve been bent, I’m not broke, except for immediate ready money. No, I shall race tomorrow and get some of these cobwebs out of my mind. At the moment I feel very sorry for myself. I’d burst into tears for tuppence!”

The bald, burly man by his side smiled sardonically.

“Have a good cry, it’ll do you good!” he said. “You started wrong today, Garry, you know that?”

“Started wrong? What do you mean?”

“You started as I started—with a row. I don’t know who it was with but it was a row. Mine was with my lady wife, who was not as much of a lady as she might have been. Panniford?”

Garry shrugged his shoulders.

“I was a fool to quarrel with Willie.”

“So you quarrelled, eh? Well, that’s always a bad start for a day’s racing. Racing is like golf—it’s a mental exercise. You require perfect equilibrium, a contented mind, a pleasant outlook. If you haven’t that, you are finished for the day. You cannot win. You’d better stop betting right there and then until your mind can walk the tight rope again.”

It was a warm day and the maid had laid tea in the shady corner of the lawn, where the shadow of the house fell. Garry sank into the deep basket chair, took the tea that was handed to him, stirred it absent-mindedly.

"I was talking to one of the Stewards, Lord Forlingham," began John.

"You're getting on, Mr. Dory—you know all the top people!"

"Forlingham is a decent fellow. He was talking about you."

"That doesn't make him decent."

"Nevertheless, he was talking about you," said the patient John. "He was saying what a pity it was you weren't married."

It was ridiculous, but Garry was annoyed.

"I wish Forlingham would confine himself to his Shorthorns and his oppressed tenantry," he said rather avidly.

"Don't be silly; he's a really nice fellow. He likes you, Garry. If you ever come before him you will have a friend at court."

Garry sat bolt upright.

"Why should I come before him?"

Dory put down his cup of tea and shook his head reproachfully.

"Have you lost your sense of humour? That was a joke. I have to explain most of my jokes, but that one didn't need an explanation." Then, in a different tone: "Garry, you've got some money, haven't you? Twenty thousand pounds, isn't it?"

Garry nodded.

"Who has it?"

"A friend," said Garry.

"Lady Panniford?"

"No!"

He wondered why he should deny it. Perhaps it was the knowledge that John Dory, hated Wenda and that the admission would provoke some comment that he would resent.

"Exactly how much are you worth, reckoning that twenty thousand pounds, with all your bills paid and your debt settled?"

Garry considered. He had a villa in Florence, a few outside interests which added up and made up a little; his stable—he made a rough and unflattering calculation. Daneham Lodge had a monetary value; there were some pictures his father had left him, which, for sentimental reasons, he had never sold. They were stored at the bank.

"I suppose about thirty-five to forty thousand."

"You can live on that—without betting."

Garry looked at him slowly.

"I suppose I could; of course I could! But I could not—"

He stopped suddenly. He was going to say 'I could not marry on that.' Why on earth should he marry, anyway? There was nobody in the world—

"But you could not marry on it?" John went on as though Garry had spoken the words. "I'm not sure. I know lots of people who are married on a hundred pounds a week and live very comfortably. And quite a lot are married on ten pounds a week and they live very happily. I suppose you could earn something if you were put to it? If it came to that, I would give you a partnership."

Garry laughed silently.

"I should always be robbing the firm, or be afraid of robbing the firm. Honestly, that side of racing has no appeal for me. No, there is nothing to worry about financially, and happily there is no need for selling Daneham or cutting out the racing game. What I shall have to do is stop betting, confine myself to two-pound wagers, keep a horse or two— certainly old Rangemore—and live as an impecunious gentleman should live."

There was a long silence. John poured himself out another cup of tea, stirred it thoughtfully.

"Has Panniford got any money?" he asked abruptly,

"Willie? Good Lord, no! He had a lot some time ago, but he did it all in."

"Has Molly any?"

Garry looked up sharply.

"Molly Panniford?" He had not considered this. "Yes, I believe she has. In fact, I know she has. She had her share of her father's fortune and she had a big legacy from her grandmother. Why do you ask?"

John took out a cigar, bit off the end and lit it carefully.

"I was just curious."

He got up from his chair.

"Come on, show me your flowers and I'll tell you their names. I'll bet you four hundred pounds to a shirt button that you couldn't do that."

Garry Anson was almost cheerful when the time came to dress for dinner.

Chapter 10

THERE WAS little cheer in the gloomy house whose chimneys he could see above the elms from his window. Wenda had returned from the races snappy and bad-tempered. There had been a brief but one-sided exchange between Molly and herself, and then Willie, instead of going to London, had come home to get his suitcase and he had not made matters any easier. He had had a fortunate day.

"There is a touch of Midas in me, old boy," he said to Henry Lascarne, offering him the sixth cocktail. "I haven't backed a loser. I thought Mr. Garry Anson looked a little green about the gills, didn't he, darling?"

He turned to Wenda who was lying on the couch. She did not answer.

"I think so!" Willie chortled. "It's a joke, isn't it? Here's a fellow who is so cocksure that he knows all about racing and he comes a mucker, when a poor old mug like Silly Willie rakes it in! I must have won three hundred today, darling."

"Then you can pay me back that hundred you borrowed in Paris," said a quiet voice from the shadows.

There was no sentiment about Molly where her brother was concerned.

"Don't be stupid, darling. Those beastly bookmakers don't pay until Saturday. What a miser you are, Molly! You are simply rolling in money—money that should have come to me if that dithering old Maggie McLeod hadn't gone off her head."

“Oh, shut up, Willie!” snapped Wenda. “We all know Molly is very rich and you are very poor, but I don’t want to be reminded of it too often, and I am sure Henry doesn’t.”

Mr. Lascarne moved uncomfortably. This young man also hated to discuss finances, especially in the presence of his host, who had on three unhappy occasions borrowed respectable sums of money against mythical dividends that were shortly accruing.

Willie had changed his clothes and his big Bentley was at the door. He often went to London to dine with the Arkwrights, “the Arkwrights” being a pleasant fiction. Colonel Arkwright and his wife had been happily separated for a number of years and Mrs. Arkwright had a beautiful little flat near the Albert Hall. She did a little entertaining and generally her chief and only guest was Willie. An attractive lady, who despite the passing of years had succeeded in retaining an untroubled face and a mop of goldish-yellow hair, she had learned at an early age that life was a comedy to those who think and a tragedy to those who feel; and since she associated comedy with the red-nosed men on the stage and she abhorred tragedy of all kind, she had schooled herself steadfastly neither to feel nor to think, and she was, in consequence, an ideal companion for Willie.

Henry went up to his room to escape another invitation to a cocktail. He had changed into a dinner jacket but had forgotten to put in his cigarette case. He was feeling in his morning coat and the suit he had worn that morning, when he missed something. Rapidly his hands went over his pockets. It was not there. He turned a shade paler. He remembered having it that morning, or was it the night before, when he had come down to Daneham Lodge?

Yes he remembered now, he had put the pocketbook into the inside pocket of his grey overcoat. That was where he had seen it last. He went hurriedly down the stairs into the hall, opened the door of the cupboard where they were hanging and searched both his coats. The pockets were empty. He could hear Willie’s voice booming dogmatically and he walked softly out into the servants’ hall. Willie’s valet was also his gardener. He was drinking a glass of beer and apparently Henry’s arrival had interrupted an intimate and interesting conversation, for silence fell upon the assembly on his appearance.

“No, sir, there was nothing in your pockets when I brushed your coat. I’m always careful to feel because sometimes gentlemen leave money. You’re sure you brought it down, sir?”

Henry was perfectly sure he had brought it down.

“Perhaps,” said the valet-gardener, “you have left it at Daneham, sir? I’ll call up Hillcott, if you like. I hope there was nothing valuable in it.”

The implied reflection upon Hillcott and his well-known antecedents passed Henry by.

“No, no, I’ll go over there myself a little later,” he said hastily.

Panniford’s voice sounded in the hall. Mr. Lascarne waited until the door closed; and his hesitation was food for the humble speculation of his silent watchers.

When he returned to the drawing-room Wenda was alone, Molly having gone up to her room.

“Aren’t you going to dress?” he asked, and then solicitously: “I hope your headache is better?”

“Yes,” shortly. “Where did you go?”

“I missed something—I went to look for it.”

There was something in his tone that arrested her attention.

“Missed something? What was it?”

“A wallet,” he started to explain haltingly, and in the end blurted out the truth.

She looked at him, horrified.

“Henry, you must have been mad! What a stupid thing to do, to carry it about with you!”

“I know it was senseless of me, but I don’t suppose it’s far away.”

“Are you sure you had it at Daneham?”

Molly’s arrival interrupted the conversation and shortly afterwards Wenda went up to change.

At dinner there was an atmosphere of strain which Molly had noticed before when she was dining alone with Wenda and this young man. The conversation was artificial and painfully manufactured. In an effort to lift it from the banal she talked about Garry, but found her advances in this direction coldly received.

“Garry is a fool!” said Wenda impatiently. “It was just greed putting all that money on a horse! He can’t afford it and when these wretched bookmakers send their bills in he is the sort of man who will pay them!”

“Of course he’ll pay them, Wenda,” said the girl, amazed. “What else could he do?”

Wenda lifted a white shoulder and turned the talk in desperation to Willie’s fitness to drive a high-powered car.

“Some day he will have a dreadful accident and, of course he will be certified as drunk, because he is always drunk!”

Wenda put brutal things brutally, but Molly was past wincing.

“What time do you expect him back?” asked Henry.

Usually she answered this polite question politely; tonight she was in no mood for subterfuge.

“Some time tomorrow. He will probably come down with the Arkwrights, or at least one of them.”

“Why don’t you leave him?”

Molly put the question so calmly that Wenda did not realize its outrageousness.

“Leave him? Willie? What are you talking about?”

“Why don’t you leave him?”

“How am I going to live?”

Molly smiled.

“I don’t think there would be any difficulty about that, would there?” she asked. “If Willie would not help—”

“You would, I suppose?”

There were two spots of red on Wenda’s cheeks. She was shaking with fury. She wanted just this excuse to let forth all the anger and resentment she had kept suppressed.

“Is this an inducement, or a bribe, or what? If you want Willie I will leave him. When you want to live your own life, Molly, you can go. You are of age, you can afford it, you can even hire somebody to chaperone you.”

“That isn’t very necessary,” said Molly quietly. “I was really trying to be very nice. I think Willie is abominable, almost impossible to live with.”

“Why do you stay here?” snapped Wenda, and Molly smiled.

“You’ll never guess,” she said.

“To be near Garry?”

“Yes.” Molly was not embarrassed. “I like being near Garry—he is such good fun and so decent. Garry couldn’t do any of the low things that”—she paused—“that I have seen people do. No, that’s not the real reason why I want to stay. I want to be near Willie for a little while—and near you.”

Their eyes met in a long challenge. Wenda was the first to withdraw.

“You are silly, Molly!”

Her laugh was not very convincing.

After dinner she and Henry went into the darkening garden. Molly watched them from her window. Through the trees she saw the glimmer of light that told her where Daneham Lodge was. Why did Garry want to see Wenda that night, she wondered? He had sent a message over. Hillcott had not been content with delivering the note, but had repeated the substance of it. There was little that was written at Daneham Lodge that Mr. Hillcott could not have recited.

She saw Wenda come back by herself, heard her footsteps on the stairs, and then the door of her bedroom closed.

Wenda, too, had remembered her engagement. She drew the blinds, switched on the lights and went to the head of her bed. There was a small picture by the side of it. She pressed a spring and it opened out. Behind was a circular steel safe. She twisted the combination, pulled open the thick door and, thrusting her hand inside, took out a bunch of documents which she threw on to the bed. She stood for a few minutes, sorting them out and placing them in a neat little heap. One paper had not left her hand: it was the hundred pound note that Garry had sent to her that morning. She read the message again. How stupid of Garry to write on the back of a banknote! Thank heaven it was in pencil and it could be rubbed out before she paid it into her bank. She opened four imposing certificates from which a number of coupons had been detached, read them, folded them carefully and replaced all the papers in the safe.

The one paper she had sought for was not there. She had known before she made the search that Henry had had it. She wished to heaven that she had taken the thing and burnt it. She slammed the door of the safe, turned the combination savagely and replaced the picture.

When she came out on the landing Molly was there. The girl’s eyes were surveying her critically.

“Have you been crying?” she asked.

“Don’t be a fool! Of course I haven’t.”

Wenda brushed down the stairs without another word and went in search of the gloomy Henry.

It had not been a pleasant meal at Daneham, but it had not been unpleasant. The shadow of settling day had lain on the table and was not to be dispelled.

“Have ye cast up yer accoonts?” asked Garry in a pitiable attempt to be Scottish.

“I will do that after dinner. Nobody will ever sympathize with you, Garry, because nobody will ever know what you have lost.”

“Oh, you mean the tax dodgers?”

At this period the betting tax was in force, a tax which was bitterly resented by the racing fraternity; and when a law is resented by any large body of men it is inevitable that there shall be evasion.⁸⁸⁸

Some of the men who used to bet in Tattersalls to big figures became suddenly dealers in small amounts. What they did was to reckon pounds as shillings; a five-pound bet was a thousand. Lynx-eyed inspectors, who examined every book, were powerless; they could only charge the tax on the fifty pounds, when they were pretty certain that the taxable in amount was twenty times as much. It was all very reprehensible and more or less dishonest but as John said philosophically: “What would you?”

“If ever I had to show those bets—” began Garry.

“What could you have to show them for?” said the other. “Unless you are writing a book on racing reminiscences. No, Garry, you must take things as you find them. But it makes book-keeping very complicated!”

The dining-room window was open. Henry, crossing the lawn, saw the two men at the table and signalled Wenda, and they passed noiselessly to the iron and glass door, that gave admission to Garry’s study. The door was closed. Henry saw somebody moving about and guessed it was Hillcott. He tapped gently, motioning Wenda to cover. Hillcott came to the door after an intolerably long time, opened it and surveyed his visitor without favour.

“Oh, it’s you, is it?”

“Hillcott, I want to see you. Did you pack my things this morning?”

Hillcott brightened visibly. Mr Lascarne had a reputation for nearness. He had gone that morning without leaving behind him any visible evidence of his satisfaction with the service that Hillcott had rendered.

“Yes, sir, I looked after you.”

“Do you remember seeing a red pocketbook about so big in my room?”

“About so big?”

Hillcott indicated with his grimy forefingers something that was the size of a portfolio.

“No—smaller.”

Hillcott shook his head.

“No.”

“You didn’t see it in a pocket or somewhere?” asked Henry anxiously.

Hillcott shook his head.

“You couldn’t miss it—it’s red.”

All hope of pecuniary consequence had vanished from Hillcott’s mind.

“I’m colour-blind,” he said loudly. “I’ll tell the gov’nor you’re here.”

“Wait, wait,” said Henry. “The maid didn’t find it?”

Hillcott turned with great dignity.

“I’m not on speaking terms with the housemaid, but I’ll lower myself to ask her.”

He waited till he was alone, then began a rapid search of the room. He turned over cushions, felt in the pockets of armchairs, looked carefully along the window-seat where he had sat and Wenda, who had come to the door, watched him.

“Have you found it?” she asked in a low voice.

“No.”

“How stupid of you, Henry!”

“I’m terribly sorry—” he began.

“Why did you keep a thing like that?”

He turned with a wail.

“I kept it as a memento.”

“It was absolutely unpardonable of you—hush!”

There came an interruption from the passageway. It was Garry’s voice, clear and distinct.

“Wenda! Don’t be absurd! Wenda couldn’t do a mean thing. If an angel from heaven told me she could, I shouldn’t believe it!”

Chapter 11

THERE WAS the sound of a closing door. Wenda stepped out of the room into the garden, and was hardly out of sight before Garry came in.

Lascarne had picked up the first paper he could lay his hand on. It was The Calendar, and the sight amused Garry.

“Hullo! Improving your mind?”

Lascarne grinned awkwardly.

“The Racing Calendar! An extraordinary paper, isn’t it?” He looked at the headline. “Price one and ninepence. Who edits it?”

“The Recording Angel,” said Garry dryly. “I hope your name will never appear in it.” And then, at the other’s superior smile: “You don’t think it could? Don’t be sure. A lot of people who have no interest in racing have figured in that interesting publication. It hasn’t pleased them, but it has happened, and nobody is more surprised than themselves.”

Henry was turning the pages one by one, looking a little baffled at the serried columns that confronted him.

“This is all Greek to me,” he said.

“I wish it was Greek to me,” said Garry ruefully. “I should have a pretty good knowledge of the classics! Anyway, I won’t corrupt your young mind by attempting to translate. How are all the good people? Have they recovered from their strenuous day? By the way, Willie made money, they tell me? What a thing it is to be a mug!”

“Yes, Willie made money.”

Henry folded the paper and dropped it back on to the table.

“I knew there was something I wanted to tell you. Wenda asked if you would excuse her coming over tonight. She has a headache.”

“Oh? That’s all right. Sorry she’s under the weather.”

“She said she would come over tomorrow before the horse racing begins,” went on Henry.

“Not the dog racing? Oh, I see. Poor old girl! Tell her there’s no great hurry. I’ve got a bit of a headache myself, but it’s not the kind that aspirin can cure. How is Willie?”

Henry hesitated.

“He was rather a brute before he went to town, as a matter of fact.”

“Brute, was he?” said Garry. “Quite normal again?”

“He got into one of his sour moods—about you, as a matter of fact. I don’t know that I ought to tell you this; it sounds as if I’m being rather underhand—”

“Don’t let that worry you. Was he very bad—I mean to Wenda?”

Henry hesitated. If he had told the truth, Wenda was more ‘bad’ to Willie than he had been to her.

“Not really. He was being rather absurd. He said you were broke and were selling off your horses. Of course, that’s ridiculous—”

“Not so ridiculous as it sounds. He was pretty well informed. I don’t know where he got his information, but I can guess.”

Garry turned his head as John Dory came in to collect his glasses and hat. He nodded curtly to Lascarne.

“I’m going home. I’ve had rather a strenuous day.”

“Don’t go yet. You’ve met my bookmaker, haven’t you, Henry? You’d almost think he was a gentleman, wouldn’t you, the way these fellows get themselves up!”

It had struck Henry, who had a very imperfect knowledge of bookmakers, that Dory was rather well dressed.

“I always thought that bookmakers wore a sort of—” He moved his hand vaguely over his coat.

“Oh, quite,” said John; “but the moths got into mine, so I sent it to the cleaners.”

“It must be a queer sort of job,” said Henry curiously. “I suppose you meet some odd people?”

John looked at him coldly.

“Only after dinner, old boy.”

And then, to Henry’s consternation, Hillcott came back.

“She ain’t seen it,” he announced loudly.

“Who ain’t seen what?” asked Garry.

“Oh, it’s all right,” said Henry hastily. “It’s nothing at all.”

“But what is it?” asked Garry.

“Oh, something I thought I’d left behind.” He was rather agitated.

“A red wallet, about so big,” explained Hillcott.

Garry shook his head.

“I haven’t seen it.”

“It’s absolutely unimportant.” Henry Lascarne was almost terrified in his desire that the search should be dropped.

“If it’s unimportant you’ll find it.” said Garry good humouredly. “Where is Willie now?”

Lascarne wiped his moist brow, and, looking at him with a cold, discerning eye, John Dory could only wonder at the cause of the agitation.

“He drove up to town before dinner.”

Garry remembered.

“You must be having quite an uneventful evening.”

“Everybody’s going to bed, I think,” said Lascarne. He was standing by the door. “Terribly dull, this Ascot week. Much more fun coming down for a game.”

"Marbles?" growled John.

Garry was looking at the cushions on the sofa.

"We must find this wallet of yours, though."

"I wish you wouldn't." He almost walled the words. "It's not worth troubling about, really. There's nothing in it except a few odds and ends—absolutely valueless. Goodnight."

"Give my love to Wenda," said Garry. "Hullo, darling!"

An unexpected apparition had appeared in the doorway. It was Molly; she was out of breath, as though she had been running.

"Where's Wenda? Isn't she here?"

"Here? Of course not," said Garry, in surprise.

Molly turned to the young man.

"Where is she?"

"At Welburn, I suppose," said Henry uncomfortably.

"I thought she was with you. I saw you both in the garden."

"I left her there," said Lascarne. "She said she was going to bed."

"Well, she hasn't gone to bed." The tone was unusually sharp for Molly, "She's been awfully depressed and nervy since she came back from the races."

"Did she lose a lot of money?" asked Garry.

"No, she won. Usually that cheers her up."

Garry chuckled. He walked over to her and gently shook her.

"You'll probably meet her on the road. You can see in the dark, can't you pussy?"

"She's probably strolled over to the orchard," said came. "Come on, Molly. Goodnight."

He went out, but Molly did not follow him.

"Is anything wrong?"

"I don't know," said Molly.

She was obviously worried.

"I wish Willie hadn't gone to London."

"Is it about me, or something to do with me?" asked Garry.

"No," she said softly. "I'll phone back and tell you. I'm probably making a lot of fuss about nothing."

Garry walked to the door and looked out into the darkness after her.

"I wonder what it's all about."

"Lady Panniford was coming over, wasn't she?" asked Dory.

"Yes," said Garry, "but she's got a headache. Well you've been quick—what's the total?"

John opened his book and shook his head.

"Four thousand seven hundred pounds. You were betting like a drunken sailor."

Garry laughed softly.

"Shall I see you tomorrow?"

"I don't know—possibly. Generally speaking, my racing career is finished."

"Rot!"

"I mean it."

Then John remembered something which he had intended to tell his host during dinner.

"I met Ferguson, the trainer of Silver Queen, tonight. I met him in the hotel, just before I came here. He has wired the news to the owner, who's shooting on the Congo."

John Dory laughed helplessly.

"Fancy a fellow having a big winner, not knowing it and probably not backing it!"

"Having a big second, knowing it and having backed it is worse," said Garry dryly.

John paused irresolutely, trying to find topics of conversation, obviously loath to leave his friend on a despondent note.

"I heard a rumour about your selling your horses," he said.

Garry nodded.

"So did Willie. Yes, I offered them to Harrigan—he's a talkative fellow. The whole bilin' lot! I want to keep Rangemore if I can; he's too good to lose—but the rest must go."

John thought it would not be a bad idea to throw up racing for a time, and said so.

"For all time, John," said Garry.

"That's one of the resolutions you ought to sleep on," said John.

Hillcott came in with a big carton of cigarettes and began to replenish the silver box. Garry glanced round.

"I see you've got some stationery, Hubert?"

Hillcott nodded complacently.

"What sort of day did you have?" he asked, in his friendly way.

"Rotten," said Garry.

Hillcott looked at his employer and then at John Dory.

"You can't both win, can you?"

"That," said John, "is one of the well-known laws of the Medes, or possibly the Persians."

"I had a couple of bob on his horse," said Hillcott. "Bless your life, I never win anything. There's a sort of curse on me, you know. If I have a winner he's disqualified. I don't believe in horses or jockeys or anything!"

"You're an atheist," said Garry, intent upon his betting book.

"No," said Hillcott malignantly. "I believe in the totalizator."

"That's what I call an atheist," said John Dory, nodded to Garry, took up his hat and went out.

Hillcott was busy at the table. Garry thought he had gone, till he heard the inevitable sound of something being dropped on to the floor; then he looked round.

"I don't know whether I shall be able to keep, you after this month, Hubert—I'm broke."

"You don't keep me," said Hillcott indignantly; "I keep myself. You mean pay my wages?"

Garry nodded.

"That's the worst of the capitalist classes," said Hillcott; "they think wages is charity!"

"I beg your pardon," said Garry politely.

"Granted," said Hillcott.

He went to the iron door and locked it, looked up at the lights and yawned. "I'll put the things away and go to bed if you don't mind. Want me to put the lights out?"

"You mean, do I want to sit in the dark?" asked Garry "No."

Hillcott went out, wishing him happy dreams. It was his inevitable goodnight.

Chapter 12

TO BE completely ruined is so crashing and so stunning that the very shock of the blow might destroy all sensation. To be consciously and nearly ruined is not so pleasant a sensation.

Garry went over his bets for the tenth time, totted up the amount on a sheet of paper, again mentally reviewed his financial position and gave a reluctant agreement to his own stability.

It was going to be a very dull life without racing—and without Molly. He could not do all the things he would like to do now; he was no longer his own master. For a man is only just as independent as his banker allows him to be. It is true, there was nobody to say 'Go thither' or 'Come hither', but there were certain cold-blooded figures in a book which said as plainly as words: "You won't be able to do this, you can't do that."

It was an ugly, uncomfortable feeling. Garry had sufficient intelligence to know that tens of thousands of his fellow creatures, no, hundreds of thousands, had his sensations in a more acute form and his discomfort without any of the saving factors in his own situation.

He did not hear the first tap at the door, but the second time it was repeated, more loudly and impatiently, he looked round. Through the blur of the ground glass he saw a figure, and went to the door and unlocked it. It was Wenda. She gave one frightened glance behind her and came in.

"Shut the door, please!" she said breathlessly.

He stared at her in wonder; she was so unlike her usual self. She had lost something of her poise, something of her old command over herself and over all who came into contact with her. Her face was whiter than he remembered; she was a little haggard; the mouth was down-drawn.

"My dear, what has happened?" he said, concerned.

And then, for a second, he had a panic sense that she was going to tell him something he did not want to know and did not wish to hear. He was relieved when she snapped:

"Nothing—nothing at all."

"You're looking ill," he said.

Truly she had the face of a woman in pain.

"I don't want to discuss myself at all," she said petulantly. "Isn't it possible to discuss something else for a second, Garry?"

The 'Garry' was forced; the friendliness in it was so completely artificial that it had no meaning. He could almost hear her mind dictating the term.

"You've not had a row?" he said.

She dropped her head to the side, a quick, nervous, angry gesture which he remembered having seen before and having thought rather cute. It was neither cute nor pretty now.

"Willie's gone to town—you know that."

She walked swiftly to the end of the sofa, and again it was with an obvious effort that she turned to face him.

"What did you want, Garry?"

"What do I want?" He had almost forgotten that he had asked her to come over to him.

"Of course! Don't be so tiresome, darling. You know asked to see me...well, here I am!"

"It'll do some other time," he said. "Henry told me you had a headache. Did you see him, by the way?"

"No, I didn't." Her voice was sharp, defiant.

He noticed her tone and frowned. He himself was worried.

"My dear, what's the matter? Something has upset you—what is it?"

"Leave me alone." She almost hissed the words, half turned away and came back to face him with a jerk. "What is all this talk about selling your horses?" she asked.

He nodded.

"It's true."

"You mean that you're broke?"

"Not dramatically ruined, thanks to you, darling, but broke," said Garry.

He tried to keep his tone light and gay, and failed dismally.

"I lost four and a half thousand today," he said. "That was exactly four and a half thousand too much!"

She drew a long breath.

"How stupid of you, Garry!" she said, dropping on to the settee and drumming her long, white fingers impatiently on the end. "If you can't afford to lose you shouldn't bet."

He opened his mouth in astonishment, and then laughed.

"Where have I heard that dear old phrase before?" he asked. "It's not very original, is it, darling? I suppose people have been saying that sort of thing right throughout the ages, from the time the old knights rode for a purse of ready money—"

"I've lost a lot of money myself," she interrupted, "on the Stock Exchange. It's awfully unfortunate this should happen now."

She spoke nervously, jerkily, was galloping along to a predetermined destination and would not stop till she had reached it.

"Naturally I'm sorry, Garry, that you've lost so much...if I can help you—"

He stared at her blankly.

"If you can help me? What on earth are you talking about, Wenda?"

She did not answer.

"Darling, your manner is extraordinary Was it this wretched affair this morning? Was I stupid? I mean that stupid row with Willie about the Adelphi Hotel. I didn't

know what you wanted me to say—I thought you wanted me to pretend it was true, and like a true gentleman I owned up!”

“Don’t,” she said harshly.

This was a new Wenda, one he had never seen before, who was entirely novel to him; one of the many new Wendas he had met with and had been shocked by in the past few weeks.

“Wenda, darling, have you been having a row with Molly? You look dreadful.”

She came up to her feet.

“For God’s sake leave my appearance alone!” she breathed. She must have seen the shocked look in his face, for instantly her manner changed.

“I’m sorry, Garry...give me a cigarette.”

As he went to the table to get a box:

“Is anybody here?” she asked.

“No—John Dory’s gone back to the hotel,” he said.

She lit the cigarette and smoked in silence for a while, her eyes avoiding his seemingly absorbed in some inner problem which distressed her. Then:

“Well, what did you want to see me about?”

He noticed, curiously, that from time to time she glanced back towards the curtained window and the locked door, and her chin dropped as though she were listening. He had scarcely formed the sentence which was to break an embarrassed silence when she raised her hand.

“Listen! Is that somebody in the garden?”

As he walked to the door:

“Wait!” she whispered and vanished into the corridor.

There was nobody outside; the garden was entirely empty. He waited for a while, heard no sound but the distant melody of a nightingale, then he closed the door and called her.

“There’s nobody there. Who did you think it would be?”

“Lock the door.”

He went back and locked it, half amused, considerably worried by her agitation.

“Willie’s gone to London, hasn’t he?”

She nodded.

“Yes; you needn’t be afraid of Willie.”

He laughed at this.

“You know, darling, that’s almost offensive.”

He waited until she was seated again and had lit another cigarette in place of that which she had thrown away, and then:

“I’ll be businesslike—I’m chucking racing.”

She looked up at him quickly.

“So it’s true, what he said—what they’re saying about you?”

“I don’t know what they’re saying,” said Garry ruefully “but it’s true that I’ve reached the point where I’ve got to stop. I knew I should sooner, or later. I told you so.”

There was a little pause.

“So I shall keep the promise I gave you and I shall give up racing for good.”

“I think you’re very wise,” she said politely. “Well?”

She did not make it easy for him. He had never found an interview so entirely embarrassing.

“Well, some time this week I’ll ask you to arrange with your bank to let me have back my little nest egg,” he said, “and I’ll endeavour to find a more profitable interest than racing.”

He stood back with an extravagant gesture. “There’s a nice little speech!”

She nodded.

“It’s very nice, but I don’t know what you mean.”

He did not grasp the significance of her words.

“I mean I shall want my money, darling.”

Slowly she turned her head and their eyes met.

“What money?”

The words were metallic; they expressed neither surprise nor complete ignorance. They were intended to mean just what they did mean, a complete and defiant denial.

Momentarily he was knocked off his feet, and thought she did not understand him.

“Darling, the money... you know... the twenty thousand pounds.”

He sat down by her.

“You know, I bought four bearer bonds of five thousand each and I asked you to keep them for me and not to let me have them until I’d finished with racing and came to you with a solemn promise that I wouldn’t bet again. You remember?”

Her eyes did not waver; they searched his coldly. Then she spoke, slowly and with the greatest deliberation.

“I remember your handing me bearer bonds for twenty thousand pounds—yes.”

He sighed his relief.

“Well, darling?”

“But that was a gift to me—you know it was.”

If she had struck him he could not have been more greatly shocked, more utterly paralysed.

“Wenda, I don’t understand you. I told you to keep half the interest—why, we’ve talked about it lots of times in the past five years.”

She shook her head.

“I’m terribly sorry, but I’ve always regarded it as a gift. I still regard it that way.”

He came to his feet like a man in a dream, staring down at her, like something unreal. And was there anything in the world more unreal than Wenda at that moment, any object of life so grotesquely conceived or fashioned as the thing she had created out of herself?

“I’m not dreaming this, am I?” He laughed. “You’re trying to pull my leg.”

She shook her head. It was coming to him now; all that blurred sense of unreality was dispersing like mist that hid the view, and the ugly shape of her mind was becoming sharply defined.

“You don’t mean this?” His voice was tremulous. “It’s impossible! Good God, Wenda. I’d give you the money rather than that you should talk like this! I’d, lose it a hundred times rather than lose you.”

She did not speak. Like a dog throwing the water from himself he shook his head.

"I don't want to talk about it any more tonight," he said. "You're not normal, and I'm a bit off my balance, too. Wenda, darling, I'm sorry I asked you to come over."

Wenda got up, brushed a speck of cigarette ash from her dress.

"I'm not," she said. "It's terribly embarrassing, but evidently it had to be got over."

Her tone was so cool and matter-of-fact that he could only gape at her.

"You really mean, then," he said slowly, "that the money I handed you five years ago was a gift—a personal gift to you?"

"That is how I took it," she nodded.

"I said to you: 'Wenda, take charge of this money. When I chuck racing I'll come to you for it,' and you agreed. And I never had an uneasy thought about it—why should I?"

"I don't remember your saying that."

His anger was rising now. Angry with Wenda! It didn't seem possible.

"Then why did you send me half the first year's interest?" he demanded, and saw he had hit her.

"I don't want to discuss it and I'm not going to be cross-examined."

Suddenly he stepped up to her, grasped her by the shoulders and drew her round so that she faced him.

"Are you in your senses? I want the money, Wenda. Have you lost it? Has Willie had it?"

"I'm not going to answer any questions." She struggled to escape. "You gave me the money."

She drew herself free from him. His hands relaxed.

"As a matter of fact I have lost it."

"You can look me in the face and tell me that! It's incredible! Wenda, who put you up to this?"

Again he had gripped her; and again she wrenched herself free.

"It's none of your damned business! The money was mine and I could do what I liked with it."

The world was tottering about him. It was unbelievable; and yet, for some reason, there was in his despair, his fury, his bitter disappointment, one golden thread of satisfaction. Later this came to him with greater force, but even in this cataclysmic moment he caught the faint glitter of it.

"Have you lost all sense of right and wrong, Wenda? Give me some line to get hold of. I'm losing more than money. Tell me something—excuse yourself. Don't stand there brazen and horrible. I've worshipped you all these years; you've been the biggest thing in my life. You've been fond of me, haven't you? It hasn't only been the money, has it? Why, this morning you practically asked me to take you away! You wanted me to go to that place in Hereford."

Even as he looked at her, her lips parted in a slow smile.

"The place in Hereford!" Her voice was hard. "I had a narrow escape, didn't I?"

Now he knew. That was the truth, then—all that Molly had said was true. Wenda thought he had come into the Anson money and when she found he had not, she had changed her mind. That was the reason for the sudden volte face, the amazing and inexplicable change of mind. She made no attempt to conceal her

thoughts; she was frankly unashamed, felt no discomfort at his discovery of her character.

She had never cared for him; had never even valued his opinion of her, except that it should be one which might yield her profit.

It was too horrible to be true. He had once read a story about such a woman, and had tossed the book aside as too fantastic for belief. And here was the real story, the real woman, the woman who could not be—and was. Not even unique, so far as he knew, but, if unique, a living reality, She was not Wenda any more, not the beloved, nor the trusted friend; just a plain citizen against whom he must ask the law's protection.

The idea was so monstrous that he could have laughed. Monstrous or not, it was true. Wenda Panniford was a name which must appear on a printed statement of claim; a vulgar writ must be issued in the High Courts of Justice. His mind was working that way when he said:

"I don't know what proof I have that I gave you the money in trust, but I'm pretty sure I have proof of some kind."

"Surely you're not going to sue me, Garry?" she asked ironically.

"I shall do everything that's possible to get that money."

His voice was shaking; he lacked a few hard qualities essential in a ruthless creditor.

She threw away the half smoked cigarette and lit another.

"I don't think you'll sue me," she said with a smile.

"Don't you? Then you're going to have a shock."

Her eyes narrowed.

"You'll have a shock yourself if you threaten me."

He swung round on her.

"Good God, Wenda! You're a thief! Don't you understand what you're doing?"

"You're not so damned honest yourself!" she came back at him. "You were pulling your horse this morning, only you hadn't the courage to go through with it!"

Here was a slap in the face that he had not expected; worse because it was true. He had no answer; he could not even protest that he had changed his mind to his own confounding.

"I'll ask my lawyers to write to yours tomorrow morning," he said.

He was trying to be businesslike and falling.

"You'll be sorry if you do," she breathed.

"We'll see what you say in court."

It was all very banal and childish, but it was a moment when the best balanced and sanest of men may be excused their excesses.

"My word is at least as good as yours," said Wenda. "It may be better than yours."

He realized that he was not quite as sure of himself as he had been and that the real pain of this interview was the blow to his vanity. He was hurt beyond anything he had ever imagined. Giving up racing was a wrench; it was a joke now. Vanity! Nothing more or less. He did not love Wenda, was relieved to an incalculable degree that he could not now be called upon to go through with that mad scheme of hers. Vanity—just that.

It was not an idol that had been tottered from its pedestal, but a pleasant and a flattering mirror that had been taken down.

"I'm sorry you're taking this so badly, Garry. You're not a good loser, are you?"

"I've never had anything stolen before," he said brutally, and saw a flush come into her face—it was his first touch.

"You'd better forget that word," she said harshly.

They had heard the sound of many cars passing along the road outside and now they heard one that stopped. Then came a tinkle of the door bell. She gathered up her wrap and moved swiftly to the garden door.

"See who it is," she whispered.

He went out into the hall. Hillcott had gone to bed, and even if he were awake, he would never dream of coming down, especially as he knew his master was about. Garry fastened the chain, snapped back the lock of the door and pulled it open. To his surprise it was John Dory.

"What on earth do you want?"

"I've got a bit of news." John's voice was eager, shaking. He, too, had been through some phase of exciting discovery. "What do you—what do you imagine—"

"Wait here, will you? I've got somebody inside," said Garry in a low voice; and there was no need for his visitor to ask who that somebody was. "I'll be back in a second."

Garry went wearily to end the interview, but the study was empty; the open door leading into the garden told him why. Stepping outside, he had a glimpse of a dim figure melting into the shadows. He came back to the library, slammed the door and called John.

Mr Dory was not an excitable man; he accepted the most impossible situations with the greatest equanimity. Nothing rattled him; nothing visibly pleased him. But now he was in one glow of enthusiasm. He came bustling into the room.

"I have a great bit of news for you. The most amazing thing has happened!"

Garry sank wearily into a chair.

"Yes, I know that," he said grimly.

"You've heard about the horse?"

The other looked up.

"The horse?" he said dully. "What horse?"

"The filly—Silver Queen." John's voice was eager. "What's the matter with you, Garry? Have you lost your senses? The winner of the Ascot Stakes I'm talking about. Have you heard the news?" And, when Garry shook his head: "By God, your luck's in!"

Garry Anson smiled wryly.

"Is it?" he asked. "I'm delighted to hear it."

John pulled up a chair; he was brusque and businesslike, and yet there was in his narrative the dramatic fancy of a romanticist who was building up his story to a crashing climax.

"The office phoned me through from London tonight. As a matter of fact I was in bed, and nearly didn't come down. You remember Buselle, the owner of Silver Queen, the fellow who was shooting in Africa?"

Garry nodded.

"Yes, I remember."

John Dory took a step backward. Here was his drama.

“He died last Thursday—sunstroke.”

Garry stared at him.

“Died last Thursday? Well, what’s that got to do with me? I’m terribly sorry, though I didn’t know the poor chap.”

“Don’t you see?” asked John impatiently. “Silver Queen is automatically disqualified!”

Garry tried hard to grasp what all this meant. Disqualified...and Buselle was dead, poor chap! What bad luck! He said this aloud.

“Bad luck be damned!” said Dory impatiently. “It makes over twenty thousand pounds difference to you—twenty-two thousand with the stake.”

Garry passed his hand before his eyes.

“Do you mind telling me this all over again?” he asked.

John nodded.

“The nomination of Silver Queen became void on his death. The horse wasn’t qualified to run, and the race goes automatically to Rangemore.”

Garry nodded slowly at each sentence. Now it was that Dory became aware of the change in his friend. His depression, then, was due to some other cause than loss of money.

“What’s the matter?” he asked.

Garry shook his head.

“Has something upset you?”

“Yes, but I don’t want to discuss it.”

Dory’s eyes were fixed on his friend keenly.

“Garry, you’ve had a smack in the eye from somebody.”

“Yes, I think that describes it pretty accurately,” said Garry. “I’ve had a smack in the eye. Help yourself to a drink, John, and don’t ask questions.”

Dory went across to the decanter, poured a little whisky into a glass, and grew reminiscent.

“I had a facer myself this morning before I came down,” he said. “One of the most unpleasant half hours that has ever disfigured my matrimonial career.”

Garry remembered. There had been a little trouble, “purely domestic’.

“Is it discreet in me to ask what the bother was about?”

“A woman who owes me a lot of money wrote a very unpleasant letter to my wife about me,” said John; “and when I say ‘very unpleasant’ I am stretching euphony to its utmost limits.”

“Why should she write that way? You must have done her a pretty bad turn.”

John Dory shook his bald head.

“On the contrary, I’ve done her many good turns. She hates me for quite another reason—have you ever noticed, when people owe you money, or have done you a dirty trick, how they loathe you?”

“What?” Garry’s startled face came up. “But why?”

“Because of their own meanness,” said John. “We don’t hate people for what they are, but for what we are. As a matter of fact, she and I were quite good friends; before I was married I was rather keen on her. She sent to my wife a letter I had written to her in these days.”

Garry made a face.

“Women do queer things.”

“They certainly do,” said John.

He brought round two foaming tumblers and handed one to Garry.

“It’s a lesson to me—never write letters to people who don’t burn them.”

He sat down on the sofa and held the glass to the light. Then a thought struck him.

“By the way, that silly letter you wrote to Lady Panniford—that’s burnt, I suppose?”

Garry said nothing.

“Of course, it’s all right with Lady Panniford,” said John. “You’re a friend of hers. Suppose you found her out in some mean little trick—I know you’re going to tell me that’s impossible, but suppose you did, and she had a terrible grudge against you for that reason? And suppose she had a letter, like the fool letter you wrote to her about stopping your horse...”

“I wonder what she’d do,” said Garry, after a long pause.

Dory smiled and raised his glass.

“I’ve given up wondering,” he said. “The ladies—God bless ‘em!”

He drank the contents of the glass at a gulp.

Garry did not drink his. Long after John Dory had gone, he sat twiddling the full glass between his fingers.

Chapter 13

HE SLEPT fitfully, was awake enough at dawn. Through the trees he could see the chimneys of Welbury. What should he do? Pshaw! She would have burnt it. Wenda had been panic-stricken because she had lost the money. There was no harm in Wenda. You couldn’t imagine her doing anything quite as beastly as making use of the letter, even supposing it still existed.

The proper thing to do would be to see her and have a talk, make the best of things... and get back that letter. He winced at this, but he was wincing at his own cowardice. Why should he compromise with somebody who had been so incredibly base? Of course he had no intention of suing her. The matter must end where it was; there must even be a semblance of friendship between them. He could not betray Wenda; still less could he betray his own folly.

By an odd coincidence, Fenton, his lawyer, came down that morning. Garry had been negotiating for the purchase of a nine-acre meadow adjoining his own property. He had planned a little farm and had already paid a respectable sum by way of earnest money.

Fenton arrived just before breakfast, a bright man perennially young, who kept up a running, staccato fire of comments on all phases of human activity. He was a lover of racing, invariably spent one day at Ascot and had only two regrets in life; one that he had never smoked, the second that he was no longer allowed to drink champagne.

They strolled together in the garden whilst Hillcott was laying breakfast.

"I've been going into the question of this property you're buying," he said. "A man I know very well says that in wet weather—"

"I'm not completing the purchase," said Garry. "I suppose there's no chance of getting the deposit money back?"

"Not an earthly," said Fenton. "You can regard that money as well and truly done in. I think you're wise not to buy the land. What made you change your mind?"

Garry hesitated.

"I had a bad day yesterday."

"The devil you did! Not really bad?"

Garry nodded.

"Any man who has more than two pounds each way—" began Fenton.

"Oh, shut up!" said Garry. "If you start moralizing before breakfast I shall be ill."

Fenton glanced towards Welbury.

"I saw the baronet in town last night, so well and truly pickled that he might have been a mere esquire. How's the beautiful lady?"

Garry remembered that Fenton had never liked Wenda. It was curious how men of the Fenton and Dory mentality had always shied at this entrancing woman.

"We're not particularly good friends at the moment."

"Lovers' tiff, eh?"

Fenton was a worldling. Nothing shocked him. He thought the worst of most people and was generally right. Platonic friendships moved him to derisive amusement. He had no faith in the philosophy of Plato, remembering that the philosopher was not without his own little affairs.

Then Garry began to talk about his future and, realizing for the first time how badly hit he was, Fenton became serious. The strip of lawn they paced was the one section of Garry's demesne that Wenda could see from her bedroom window. She had been sitting at the open casement when they came into view. She recognized Fenton immediately, and stiffened. Garry had lost no time, then. She was panic-stricken for a moment. Garry must have proof—he said he had and she did not doubt his word. She had written to him, and must at some time or other have mentioned the money he had placed in her care.

He might recover the money; that was very important to her. But more so was the possibility that the case would go into court, and that she would stand revealed to hundreds of thousands whose opinion meant nothing to her, yet from whose tacit approval she drew the very reason for her existence.

Fenton she knew and disliked as she disliked most of Garry's friends. If she had stopped to think she would have remembered that Fenton always came down to Ascot for the second day's racing; and she knew, too, about the contemplated purchase of the meadow; but she could not take reasonable views at this moment. All she saw was Garry in the witness box, testifying against her; the flaming headlines in the evening newspapers. She could have repaid a portion of the money; some of it was irretrievably lost. For one wild moment she thought of, going over to him and throwing herself upon his mercy...But it would be a lot of money to surrender. Fifteen thousand pounds remained of the twenty, and the thought of losing it was like a knife stab.

Molly knocked at her door and came in.

"I'm going over to see Garry," she said.

"I think Fenton's with him," said Wenda, steadying her voice.

Molly nodded.

"Yes, I saw him from my window. That's one of the reasons I'm going over. He's such a jolly little man. Are you coming?"

Wenda shook her head.

"I don't want to see Garry. He was abominably rude to me last night."

Molly opened her eyes wide.

"Last night? Did you see him last night?"

"Yes I did," defiantly. "He asked to see me. He—he wanted to borrow money."

Molly Panniford's brows met.

"Wanted to barrow money from you? But how stupid, Wenda! He knows you have no money—and why should he want to borrow it?"

"Because he's broke," said Wenda viciously.

She wanted to hurt the girl, and had the secret satisfaction of knowing that she had succeeded.

"Broke?" said Molly quickly, "Do you mean to say that he lost so much money yesterday—oh, no, Wenda, that's impossible. And why should he borrow money from you? He knows jolly well you haven't any. Why, he's been helping you!"

"Nonsense!" said Wenda loudly. "Helping me? If that's he impression he's been giving you..."

And then, as Molly was leaving the room:

"Darling, will you do something for me? I don't often ask you, do I?"

"What is it?" asked Molly.

"Don't go over to Garry's this morning. It will make it rather difficult for me."

"Stuff!" said Molly unromantically, and was gone.

Afterwards Wenda was glad the girl had disregarded her wish. At least she would learn what was happening at Daneham. Perhaps Garry would tell her—no, he wouldn't do that. Garry would be foolishly loyal, even to his shattered ideals.

After Molly had gone she went down into the garden, crossed the lawn and passed into the shade of the orchard. Beyond this lay Garry's grounds, separated from Welbury only by a shallow dip. As she stood she saw the two men approaching, and drew back behind the trees. It was one of those quiet, windless mornings that precede a day of rain, when every sound seems amplified.

Garry and the lawyer were pacing slowly side by side along the narrow gravelled path which fringed his lawn. For a little while they were silent, and then, just as they came abreast of her, she heard Fenton say:

"I doubt if we can get the money back, but at any rate I'll have a good shot at it...I suppose you have correspondence of some sort..."

Wenda breathed heavily and again she was in a panic. If Garry had consulted his lawyer there was no sense in trying to resume the old relationship. She knew him, easy-going and simple—up to a point. In some respects he was ruthless.

She remembered a feud he had had with a man who had once been his friend. There was just that touch of hardness about Garry which terrified her sometimes—she was terrified now.

She went straight back to the house, up to her room and locked the door. She waited for Molly to return. A quarter of an hour, half an hour passed and then,

acting on an impulse, she unlocked the safe and took out a letter and a banknote. She must rub that message off the back of the note, she decided. In the meantime...

She stood, undecided, by her writing-table; and then, suddenly, she almost tore a sheet of paper from the rack, wrote a brief note and stuffed that and the letter inside an envelope. She relocked the safe, went downstairs, and found the gardener. She was trembling violently, found it difficult to articulate. The man, looking at her curiously, wondered first if she was ill, then decided she had been drinking. He had definite views about the drinking habits of the upper classes.

She gave him instructions which dumbfounded and bewildered him. He had the simple minded confidence about exalted people who lived behind gates and doors and were protected from approach by uniformed custodians. She dismissed him at last and he was gone before she realized the full measure of her perfidy. Not that she regarded the treason of it; it was the inevitability which gave her a shock. There were no telephones or places of call at which the man could be stopped and the note retrieved.

She hated Garry—really hated him. She had never realized that before. All these years she had despised him but had liked him, and now she hated him. Why? She was afraid of him—afraid of the revelation he could make, the ignominy which would be hers; but more particularly there was this concrete consideration—fifteen thousand pounds, a fortune for anybody who has never owned fifteen thousand pounds.

She searched her desk in the drawing-room for a piece of india-rubber and went up to the bedroom, locked the door, and again took out the note. But the words defied erasure.

She was thunderstruck, angry again. The harder she rubbed the more the writing smudged. There was the rather dreadful alternative of putting it by indefinitely or burning it. Safer to burn it, said caution—a piece of sane advice which she instantly rejected. Destroy a hundred pounds with a match? The idea revolted her.

She threw the rubber down, locked away the banknote and came out of her room face to face with Molly ascending the stairs.

“Hullo!”

Molly was quite offhanded. There was nothing in her manner of tone that even suggested that Garry had confided the story of their quarrel.

“I didn’t see Garry for more than a minute. He’s got Fenton there.”

“Is Garry having a lawsuit?”

“I don’t know.”

Wenda’s voice was cold.

“Are you coming to the races?” asked Molly and Wenda started. Ascot was finished as far as she was concerned; but she had made no other plans for the day. Willie would meet her at their box.

“Yes; I’ll change.” She spoke awkwardly.

“Why change? There are hours yet. Are you going over to see Garry this morning?”

“No.”

Molly looked at her oddly.

“Have you had a row?”

“Don’t be stupid. Where is Henry?”

“Feeding the chickens,” said Molly flippantly. “I don’t know. I met him down the road. He asked me if there wasn’t a Saxon church somewhere in the neighbourhood. What is a Saxon church? I didn’t know Henry was religious.”

“Where is he now?”

Suddenly Wenda was boiling with impatience.

“I don’t know... I suppose he meant a pre-Norman church. Isn’t there one somewhere on the road to Windsor?”

Wenda brushed past her down the stairs and went out into the garden, shading her eyes from the white glare of the sun.

Big clouds were rolling up from the west; there was promise of an unpleasant morning, and possibly a soaking day. Henry she saw at last ambling through the orchard, and called him to her.

“We’re going to the races, Henry. You haven’t forgotten?”

“Of course I haven’t forgotten,” he said, a little dumbfounded. “I say, must we go into Anson’s box?”

“You don’t like him?”

He shook his head.

“Not terribly. There’s something unpleasant about that fellow, and he’s a Socialist—ugh! I mean, it’s odd, isn’t it, making a friend of a bookmaker, for example?”

“I don’t want to see Garry today. I’ve had a little trouble with him and he’s been offensive to say the least. The Willmotts aren’t coming, and they’ve offered me their box. We’ll go there—it’s the other end of the tier.”

Henry sighed his relief.

“Nothing will please me better,” he said.. “To tell you the truth. Wenda, I was rather dreading today. It’s good fun, Ascot... I mean, one meets a lot of people... I mean, the racing’s a bit of a bore... I mean...”

What he meant she could guess.

Molly accepted the new arrangement with equanimity. Something had happened, something especially vital. She had the curiosity which is human and which is peculiar to neither sex, but wedded to this was a certain blind faith in the omniscience of Garry.

It was not unusual to drive straight to the course without calling at Daneham Lodge, except on the first day of Ascot. There was little association between the two houses. What there was had, in the past few years, been a little strained, due mainly to Willie’s growing hostility.

Garry Anson’s first intention had been to give racing a miss, to draw a line there and then under his turf adventures; but the day had opened fortunately. Fenton, his lawyer, had got into touch with the owner of the land on which Garry had paid a large deposit and that gentleman was only too willing to return the money. He had had a better offer.

“Money for jam,” said Garry gaily.

His lawyer sniffed.

“And for the bookmakers?”

“They must live,” said Garry.

He rang up John and told him to meet him in his box, and drove over to the course. It was Hunt Cup day, the roads were thick with traffic, and he progressed at snail's pace. It was annoying for him and immensely embarrassing for Wenda that their cars moved for a hundred yards almost side by side, slowly overtaking and passing one another, only in turn to be passed. This incident amused Molly; it infuriated Mr Lascarne. He regarded the whole thing as a plot on the part of Garry to annoy him, and he was relieved when they reached the open road and the tormentor disappeared.

Garry's intention was not to bet. But on this day of all days he needed something to hide up ugly memories and to drive away all thoughts of that poisonous interview of the night before. He met a man in the paddock, an officer in his old regiment and a brother owner.

"You ought to back mine in the first, Garry. He's never been so well as he is today."

Ordinarily Garry would have wagered a tenner; today he was in a queerly exhilarated mood which refused to be analysed. He told himself it was because he was done with a desperate business, because Silver Queen had been disqualified; told himself everything except the truth, which was that the road was clear for Molly. Steadfastly he refused to face the possibility that Molly might have views of her own that did not run with his...

He went across the crowded Royal Enclosure to the rails and took fifteen hundred pounds to three hundred about his friend's horse. A ludicrous bet, as John told him across the rails a few minutes later.

"I could have got you ten to one."

"Get it to two hundred," said Garry.

John realized it was no moment for argument. He carried out the commission and had the satisfaction of seeing the horse Garry had backed win cleverly.

They lunched together, he and John Dory, in his room behind the boxes.

"We're not exactly a festive party, but I don't suppose you mind that."

They dawdled through the lunch, talking of horses and men, of Garry's future plans, and the possibilities of the horses engaged in the Hunt Cup. When they parted Garry strolled back to the paddock. He was standing by the ring watching the Hunt Cup horses being led round, when somebody touched his shoulder. He turned; it was an attendant.

"Would you come to the weighing-room, sir?"

Garry was puzzled. He had no horse running. Wray had gone home that morning to Wiltshire.

He followed the man to the one-storeyed building which housed the officials of the track, and found one of the secretaries waiting for him.

"Oh, Captain Anson"—his voice was a little constrained—"the stewards would like to see you."

Garry frowned.

"The stewards? What on earth do they want to see me about?"

Then it occurred to him that some question might have arisen over the disqualification of Silver Queen. He followed the secretary into the room, where three men were standing. He recognized them as the stewards of the meeting.

"Sit down, Captain Anson. Close the door, Willoughby."

They seated themselves at a table at one end of the room.

"Rather a serious complaint has been made," said one. "It is to the effect that your horse Rangemore was not trying in the Ascot Stakes."

Garry stared at them.

"Not trying?" he said incredulously. "You saw the race!"

The senior steward nodded.

"Oh, yes, we saw the race. The point is this, Captain Anson: when you came to the course yesterday morning was it your intention to win with Rangemore, or had you some other plan?"

Garry was momentarily staggered.

"I don't quite understand what you mean—" he began.

"Let me put the matter plainly. A complaint has reached us, supported by evidence which is beyond question, that you told your friends yesterday morning that your horse was not trying—in fact, you wrote a letter to that effect."

"To Lady Panniford?" said Garry quickly.

He saw the stewards look at one another.

"Was that the lady's name?"

"There was no signature. After racing today we will hold an inquiry. Is your trainer here?"

Garry shook his head.

"In that case we'd better have the inquiry tomorrow morning," said the second of the stewards.

A day of bewilderment followed, a night of futile discussion. John came over and was told everything.

"She must have sent the letter to the stewards. It seems incredible, but it's the only explanation. She sent it anonymously."

"Why not ask her?" suggested John.

Garry took up the phone and called Wellbury. He was told that Lady Panniford had gone to town and had gone with her.

"She couldn't possibly have done it. It's too ridiculous," said Garry, for the twentieth time. "Wenda's a—well, she's not that kind of a person."

"It was the letter you wrote?" said John thoughtfully, and whistled. "I was always afraid of that."

"Afraid!" scoffed Garry. "How could you be afraid? Could any man in his senses imagine that a woman would do such a thing? Anyway, it'll be easy, though a little embarrassing, to explain. We backed the horse."

John Dory wriggled uncomfortably in his chair.

"That's the devil of it," he said. "We can't prove we backed the horse. None of those bets is on record and the books can't be altered, even if we could get them altered. I hope the stewards will not be sufficiently intelligent to go into that side of the question. The point is, what made her do it?"

"Wenda?" Garry shrugged his shoulders. "I've come to the conclusion that I do not understand women, and Wenda least of all. Anyway, she wouldn't have sent it—there must be another explanation."

It was twelve o'clock, an hour and a half before racing started, that the inquiry opened and, like all inquiries of the kind, was conducted expeditiously. Wray gave evidence; the jockey told his vague story—but the chief witness did not appear.

The evidence was so scrappy and unconvincing that Garry had no doubt in his mind that the charge would be disposed of then and there. To his amazement and consternation he was called into the stewards' room after the last piece of evidence had been given and was met with grave faces.

"This is a very serious charge, and we do not feel competent to deal with it summarily," said the senior steward. "We are referring the whole matter to the Stewards of the Jockey Club, for their action."

Garry went out of the room with a sinking heart. The Stewards of the Jockey Club were the final turf tribunal; and somehow he had a feeling that, by the time they heard the case, the evidence would be straightened out and would weigh heavily against him.

Chapter 14

DAYS PASSED, a week, before the fateful summons came. Wenda he could not reach; she was staying with some friends in the country. He had a wild idea of taking Molly into his confidence; but why should he burden her with his troubles?

The next issue of The Racing Calendar contained the ominous item:

'The Stewards of Ascot inquired into the running of Rangemore and, not being satisfied with Captain Garry Anson's explanation, reported him to the Stewards of the Jockey Club.'

The announcement was taken over into the evening newspapers, deserved in one a scare headline.

Molly must know now. He braced himself for her shock, and might have spared his nerves. Molly had been called away to Italy. She had an old governess, living in Florence, who had been taken ill, and Molly was flying off on the Rome express, ignorant of this development.

He was relieved more than he would have imagined when he learned this.

John Dory came over, incoherent with dismay.

"You never told me, Garry, that things were going this way. I understood from you that the stewards were satisfied with your explanation."

Garry shook his head.

"Apparently they weren't. There's the answer." He pointed to the paragraph in the newspaper.

"It's horrible," said John, pacing up and down the room tragically.

"Anyway, you should have been prepared for this. I told you—" began Garry.

"I know I know," said the other impatiently; "but thought you were in one of your gloomy moods. I don't what they can do, what proof they can have—"

"The proof is my letter to Wenda. It wouldn't be sufficient in a court of law, but it might very easily convince the stewards. It's pretty bad, because somebody has been making a fuss about the stewards only dropping on little owners and little trainers."

"Where's the meeting to be held?"

Garry shrugged his shoulders.

“Does the place of execution matter?” he asked. “At Newmarket, I suppose. The stewards only sit at Newmarket and London, except that they sit at York and Doncaster during the race meetings—are you interested in the geography of the situation?” he asked, a little irritably.

John Dory did not answer. Then:

“What does Molly say about it?”

“She has said nothing about it because I gather she hasn’t heard—she had to go off to Italy; an old nurse or governess or something is dying.”

“The whole thing is diabolical!” exploded John. “In the first place it’s a lie that you weren’t trying—”

“It is and it isn’t,” said Garry quietly. “You know the line, ‘A lie that is half the truth is ever the blackest of lies.’ Unfortunately it is a fact that I had no intention of letting Rangemore go for the Ascot Stakes. It is a fact that I intended keeping him for the Northumberland Plate. That’s the A B and C of it. If I were wholly innocent or wholly guilty, it wouldn’t be so difficult; but I’m guilty in intent—I shall tell the stewards the truth.”

“About Rangemore and your not trying?” asked John incredulously.

Garry nodded.

“I’ve had enough of lies and half lies. I’ll tell them exactly what happened.”

Dory went to the sideboard, poured himself out a stiff whisky and soda and held it up to the light.

“Why did she do it?”

“Wenda?” Garry shrugged again. “Who shall fathom the heart of a woman?”

“You had a row with her, I suppose? In fact, I know you did. Just pique, eh? It was a pretty big thing to do for spite wasn’t it? I don’t understand it.”

“Then don’t come to me for an explanation,” said Garry.

“She’ll give evidence, of course,” said John thoughtfully. “She’ll have to. They’d hardly convict you on that letter. What about the second one you wrote, on the back of the hundred-pound note?”

“That’s my only hope,” said Garry. “I have notified the Bank of England and they’re keeping a look out for it. Unhappily I don’t know the number. There’s only one thing John, I want to ask you: if Molly comes back before this case is on, or even after it is heard, I don’t want her to know that Wenda was responsible.”

“Why on earth not?” asked the astonished Dory.

“I just don’t wish her to know, that’s all,” said Garry shortly.

It was not solicitude for Wenda’s fine feelings which urged him to this decision. It was the thought of the conclusions that Molly might draw from this drastic act of vengeance on Lady Panniford’s part that terrified him. Would Molly believe that his relationship with her sister-in-law had been innocent? Or would she think, as she was entitled to think, that only some colossal act of injustice on his part could have brought about her denunciation?

To the outside world it would seem like the act of a slighted woman, a woman who had loved too well and who had been brutally affronted by the man for whom she had made the greatest sacrifices.

And yet there was some consideration for Wenda that prevented him telling the truth about the money, either to Molly or to John Dory. A man will more readily admit that he has been wicked than that he has been a fool; and of his own folly

Garry had constant reminders. The tragedy of it all was that there had been no need for him to ask her for the bonds she held in trust. He had won heavily on the second day of Ascot and, most unexpectedly, he had learned that the old general had left him a substantial sum. A codicil of the old man's will had been overlooked and had been found amongst his papers. It did not materially affect his fortunate cousin who had inherited the bulk of the property, since the legacy took the shape of shares held by a New York bank, of which the executors had been ignorant until the paper had been found.

He was a fairly rich man, could continue his racing if he wished; and although the loss of twenty thousand pounds was no flea-bite, it was not one which would have crippled him financially. And here, with money to his hand, with all the essentials to the fulfilment of what had once been a vague but was now a definite dream, the flaming sword of fate barred him from the paradise he had created in his imagination.

Two or three days later he received a letter from the Secretary to the Jockey Club, telling him that the inquiry postponed owing to the absence of an important witness. It was the first intimation he that Wenda had gone abroad.

She went in something of terror. She had been stampeded by the demand of the stewards that she should appear before them and support the letter. She had never dreamed that would be necessary, or even that she would be identified as the sender of this damning note. It was only then she realized that she had sent the letter under cover which bore her stamped address! It was a stupid, unpardonable mistake to make. She was furious with herself, but the mischief was done. She answered the polite request of the stewards to appear before them with a hurried note, saying that she had been called abroad, and left for Paris.

She reached Florence the day Molly had planned to return, persuaded her to remain at their little villa and was careful to censor all the English newspapers which came to the house. She hoped that in her absence this matter of Rangemore would be settled, and was disagreeably surprised to receive another request unerringly addressed.

"What are these people writing to you about, Wenda?"

Molly picked up an envelope incautiously left on the table.

"Oh," said Wenda, embarrassed, "about my box at Ascot. I forgot to pay for it before I came away."

"Stuff! You didn't have a box," said Molly scornfully. "And anyway, you have to pay cash on the nail for it. Garry told me."

Molly was incurious and not at all suspicious. She knew Wenda and her furtive ways and her peculiar habit of lying when lying saved the trouble of explanation. Not for a second did she associate Garry with these communications, which now came at regular intervals. Her own theory was that Wenda who, she knew, was a notorious bilker of bookmakers, into serious trouble with one of them and had been reported to the Club. If that was so, there was no reason to wonder why her sister-in-law was up early enough to sort the letters before Molly had a chance of seeing them.

Henry came out to them in August, complaining of the heat and the mosquitoes. Apparently his duties in Whitehall were not very onerous and he had a lot of time

to himself. He and Wenda used to go up to Montecatini to drink the waters and Molly had a lot of time to herself; time she occupied in writing letters to Garry.

‘...Tell me if you’ve won any more races. Wenda is so terribly brusque when I discuss you that I gather your little feud continues. What is it all about? Why don’t you come out here for a week or two? It is painfully hot and dull, but there’s a lovely swimming pool in the gardens. Wenda is going to Rome for a few days and you needn’t meet her. There’s a most excellent hotel less than a kilometre from here...Henry adds to even the dullness. He spoke for half an hour without stopping on the iniquity of prohibiting the sale of plovers’ eggs. Apparently, since they have been absent from the restaurant he has eaten nothing...Willie threatens to arrive at any moment, but I doubt if he’s got past Paris. There’s a lot that’s very nice about Willie, but it takes a lot of discovering!...’

Garry wrote a long letter in reply, but made no mention of the cloud that was hanging over him. The inquiry had been postponed again and again; there was some talk of dropping it and the matter might have been shelved, only a small owner was hauled up before the stewards for a similar offence—a man named Woburn, who had been caught, so to speak, red-handed. It was a particularly flagrant case, the charge in some respects resembling that which was hanging over Garry. The man was warned off and the question of shelving the Rangemore case was now beyond possibility.

On one point the Jockey Club is especially sensitive, and that is the suggestion of favouritism in meting out punishment to small people and overlooking the delinquencies of the great. There was never any hope that the case would escape examination. An unusual note appeared in *The Racing Calendar*.

‘Owing to the difficulty in securing the support for documentary evidence in the case referred to the Stewards of the Jockey Club by the Stewards of Ascot, the hearing is postponed until a later date.’

Garry had sold several of his horses and had sent Rangemore to the stud. He was debarred from attending race meetings, but he had no desire either for the sympathy of his friends or for the curious glances of the outside racing public.

It was late in August that he heard Wenda was on her way home. He received a notification from the Club’s secretaries, informing him that the case would be heard on the first day of the Doncaster Autumn Meeting and that his presence was required at twelve o’clock noon at that venue.

Chapter 15

IT WAS a chilly September morning. Garry’s car came leisurely along the Great North Road, crept round the edge of the racecourse and pulled up before the entrance to the stands. He had timed his arrival accurately; it was a quarter to twelve when he reported himself to the secretary of the Club.

Early as he had been, somebody had arrived before him. In spite of the hasty closing of a door, he caught a glimpse of a woman in the secretary’s office.

“Lady Panniford has arrived, I see.”

“Yes, she came back yesterday morning. It’s rather a trying time for you, Captain Anson.”

Garry nodded.

“A little trying,” he admitted. And then, suddenly: “Is Lady Panniford alone?”

“Yes,” said the secretary, in surprise.

Garry hesitated.

“I was wondering if she had brought her—her sister-in-law. I shouldn’t think she would, though.”

The other man shook his head.

“No, I met her at the station. She came alone.”

If it was an unpleasant experience for Garry it was no more cheerful for the stewards. Lord Forlingham, the junior steward, came into the chilly room where the inquiry was to be held, warmed his hands at the fire, glanced up at his secretary, who was arranging his papers and could think of nothing more illuminating to say than that it was very, cold, to which there was a polite agreement.

“It’s a long way from Ascot. Good heavens, it doesn’t seem as if it happened in the same year,” said Forlingham.

He was a thin, spare man, with a deep, sepulchral voice; prim, staid, old-fashioned and a pillar of the church, he had stringent views on the morality of the time, to which he was never tired of giving expression.

Lord Forlingham lived in a little castle of his own, a righteous area in a desert of iniquity. He had certain definite views which never varied. He believed that people who made wars should fight them, that strikers should be shot, that all women were like his mother, which happily they weren’t, that cars were an abomination and telephones the invention of the devil.

The senior steward, who joined him, was a worldling who found the world rather amusing. Sir John Garth believed the best of everybody, without having any foolish illusions. A man of the world to his fingertips, he had figured in many discreet affaires and in consequence was extraordinarily human,

The third of the stewards, a tall, clean-shaven man, shared his humanity but not his patience. Lord Innsbrook had been intended for the Bar, in which profession he would have shone, but the war had taken him to his natural profession. A clean, shrewd man impatient of subterfuge, he and Garth were the type that Garry would have chosen if he had had to pick the rulers of the turf.

“I was saying it’s a long way from Ascot,” said Lord Forlingham, who seldom said an original thing, and said most things twice, “Good heavens, it seems like last year.”

Garth nodded, hung up his hat, walked to the table, turned over some papers and looked over the half curtained window at the gathering crowd in the paddock outside.

“Why has this case been held over?” asked Lord Forlingham.

Sir John shook his head sadly.

“My dear chap, this matter has been referred to at least three times in the past two months,” he said, with some asperity. “The case was held over because the principal witness was in Italy and showed no urgent intention of returning.”

Forlingham fingered his thin chin.

"You can't expect a lady—" he began.

"You can expect anything of a lady except punctuality," said Garth.

Lord Forlingham pondered this.

"The original communication we received was anonymous, wasn't it?" he asked.

Garth smiled. He had answered the question identically worded, some half a dozen times.

"Yes, it was anonymous," he said.—"She didn't put her name to the covering letter, but we traced it easily enough. Very foolishly, if she intended to remain anonymous, she had written on her own notepaper. She was very sick about it when we insisted she must come and give evidence, and we had a devil of a lot of trouble to get her across. After the Woburn case we had to go into this thoroughly. She's back now, is she?"

"She's in my office," said Mr Rainby, the secretary, looking up from his papers.

"Good," said Garth, relieved. "I wondered if she'd turn up. If she hadn't we should have had to drop the case altogether; there'd have been a great newspaper hullabaloo, but I don't see what else we could have done."

Forlingham pursed his lips.

"I should have thought the letter would have been sufficient," he said, though he might have known that it was much too important a case to decide on a letter.

"A beastly business," said Innsbrook, with some disgust. "There's a lot behind it we don't know anything about. I can't quite see Lady Panniford's object."

Garth, with his odd knowledge of men and women, smiled largely.

"I'll bet it's something outside of racing," he said. "There's a little bit of the needle in it."

Lord Forlingham frowned.

"A little bit of the—" He paused expectantly.

"Needle," said Innsbrook brusquely. "He doesn't understand the vulgar tongue. He means spite, old man."

Forlingham's mouth opened. He scented a scandal.

"Oh, has she been his...I mean, have they been..."

Garth patted him on the back.

"Keep the party wholesome, old boy," he said. "This is a meeting of the stewards, not the judges of the Divorce Court. She used to be a great pal of Garry's." He addressed Innsbrook. "What a stupid fool that fellow has been!"

"You can't get over the letter," said Forlingham.

He held on to this point of the letter; it was the one aspect of the case which he perfectly understood.

"I knew Anson's father very well," said Innsbrook.

"So did I," interrupted Forlingham. "Capital man to hounds. Garry has always been as straight as a die."

Garth stared gloomily out of the window.

"It's very unpleasant."

Forlingham murmured something about the letter, and the senior steward drew back a chair and sat down.

"You've got the letter, by the way?"

Rainby sorted the telltale note from his correspondence and passed it over. Garth read it again and swore softly under his breath.

“Well, let’s make a start. There’s only an hour before racing,” he said.

The secretary pressed a bell.

“I suppose we shall have to see Lady Panniford?” protested Forlingham, but the senior steward frowned at him as the attendant came in.

“Ask Captain Anson to step inside, please,” he said, and, when the man had gone: “Certainly. Lady Panniford is the one person we have to see.”

They were doing an unpleasant job and Innsbrook voiced the opinion of the stewards when he said:

“This sort of thing makes a bad impression on the public. A man as well-known as Anson. I honestly can’t understand it.”

Garth, who had long since given up trying to understand why people did odd things, made an expressive gesture. He had been too long in the racing game to be surprised at anything, though he would have admitted that the thought of Garry Anson being crooked had never occurred to him.

“How well off is he?” he asked.

Innsbrook made a face.

“I don’t know. You never know how rich people are nowadays, what with taxation and death duties and heaven knows what. His mother left him a lot of money, I think his father was fairly well off and he’s the only child. But do people do crooked things because they want the money, or because they want the fun of catching the other chap out—the other chap being the bookmaker?”

Garry came in, outwardly calm, inwardly quaking. Garth motioned him to a chair. His smile gave Garry some encouragement; his attitude was friendly, almost paternal. But Garry Anson knew his class too well to be deceived. These men would be polite till the last dread moment, as judges are polite to prisoners whom they will eventually, consign to death.

Sir John Garth sorted out the various statements before him. One of them was Garry’s. He fixed a pair of pince-nez on his nose, and looked across them at the waiting young man.

“Now you know why we’ve called you here?” he said, in a businesslike tone. “It is a matter that has been reported to us by the Stewards of Ascot and it concerns the running of Rangemore in the Ascot Stakes—the race which you eventually won on the disqualification of Silver Queen.”

Garry nodded.

“The Stewards of Ascot,” Garth went on, “received a complaint on the day after the Ascot Stakes that your horse wasn’t trying, and that was supported by a letter which you had written, or which it was stated you had written. I will give you an opportunity of seeing it; possibly you may wish to deny its authenticity, though I don’t notice, from the report of the Ascot Stewards, that you made any such denial when you were before them. You know, of course, that there is such a charge?”

Garry nodded again.

“Yes, I knew that,” he said. “When the case was before the Stewards of Ascot, they were a little vague as to who the writer of the letter was. The witness was not named.”

Garth looked at him steadily.

“You don’t know who it is?”

Garry hesitated, and was silent.

“You didn’t tell anybody you were not trying with your horse?” asked the senior steward.

“One would hardly do a stupid thing like that if one weren’t trying,” said Garry.

Nobody recognized sooner than Garry how feeble was his evasion. But he was desperately anxious, more anxious than the unconscious Lord Forlingham, to keep Wenda’s name out of the case unless the matter was absolutely forced upon him by a direct accusation. Even now, at the eleventh hour, he hoped that the stewards might accept his explanation, and that the necessity of calling Wenda might be avoided.

“Now listen to me, Captain Anson,” said Sir John quietly. “I have the letter here, written in your own handwriting on your own paper. It is addressed to a lady. I don’t propose to call that lady unless it is absolutely necessary—one wants to keep women’s names out of these things if one can.”

“Yes,” said Garry. His anger was rising. “The lady hasn’t kept my name out of it, I gather.”

Lord Forlingham, staring at the ceiling with his hands clasped on the table before him, moved a little uncomfortably.

“I’ll read the letter,” Garth went on, and took up the paper.

“Darling, I have cancelled your bet. My horse isn’t trying. Love, Garry. PS—Please burn this note unless you want to get me warned off.”

Garry inclined his head.

“Well, what exactly does that mean?” asked Innsbrook.

The young man rose from his chair and came slowly towards the table where the three stewards were sitting.

“I don’t know how far frankness is going to help me,” he began hesitantly. “I don’t even want to tell a lie, even a minor lie, if there is such a thing.”

“Frankness will help you a lot,” said Garth, “the right kind of frankness. You’re not sworn, you know. We don’t even put you on your honour. Well?”

Garry licked his dry lips.

“I wrote that letter. It was a mad sort of thing to write. I wrote it to a lady who was a dear friend of mine—how shall I put it? I don’t quite know. She was one in whom I had absolute and complete trust.”

Garth said nothing for a while, and then:

“What did it mean, that letter? What exactly did you mean when you wrote it?” he asked.

“Well I meant all I said at the time.” Garry found himself getting breathless. “I’m not going to tell you it was a joke, even a joke in bad taste. I told her it was, but it wasn’t. Honestly, I meant to stop Rangemore in the Ascot Stakes, and win the Northumberland Plate with him. As far as my original intentions were concerned I’m guilty. I’m being perfectly honest with you.”

“Well, we appreciate that, Anson,” said Garth. “We are not here to consider your intentions, good or bad, except in so far as they relate to the act. If we had to go into the question of intentions in racing we should have our time pretty well occupied. It’s not what a man intended doing, it’s what he does on a racecourse that counts.”

“Did you change your mind about stopping the horse?” asked Innsbrook.

Garry nodded.

“What made you change your mind?”

“The advice of a great friend of mine.” said Garry. “He knew what I was going to do. When he heard, he was horrified.”

“When was this?” asked Forlingham.

“Round about breakfast time on the Tuesday, that is to say the first day of Ascot,” said Garry.

“What procedure did you follow?” asked Garth. “Did you tell your jockey to stop the horse, or your trainer—”

“No,” said Garry quickly.

“On your honour?” asked Forlingham.

Innsbrook turned impatiently to his friend.

“He’s not on his honour. I don’t think that’s a matter we need pursue. If Captain Anson had told his jockey or trainer to stop the horse, I should be very much surprised if he incriminated his servants now.”

Garth jotted down a note on the pad before him.

“When you changed your mind and decided to run the horse,” he said without looking up, “what did you do to correct the impression you had given to the lady? You had already told her you weren’t trying. You wouldn’t let her go to the races under the impression that she couldn’t back your horse?”

Garry realized that vaguely, in some indefinite way, the senior steward was trying to provide him with an excuse, with an alibi, with some channel by which he could retract the more serious charge he had brought against himself.

“I sent her a message,” he said, “a few lines I scribbled on the back of a hundred-pound note.”

Garth stared at him.

“I owed the lady this money; I won it for her at Newbury.”

“Why not on a piece of writing paper?” asked Forlingham.

He was the type of man who asked obvious questions, but was none the less dangerous for that.

“For some reason or other there wasn’t any writing paper on my desk that morning,” said Garry; “and even if there had been I should probably have done the same thing. It was a sort of”—he shrugged—“whimsical impulse, I suppose you’d call it. It’s not the first unusual thing I’ve done in my life.”

“Did you take or do you know the number of the note?” Garth asked quickly.

Garry shook his head.

“No, it was paid to me by a bookmaker at Newbury. When I’m betting for my friends I always bet in ready money.”

There was a whispered consultation between the stewards, Garry looked round the bare room, studied the portrait of the great sportsman above the fireplace, then his eyes rose along the polished surface of the long table, striving in a hundred ways to bring his mind to a normal level. He had never realized how trying this ordeal would be. The hand he brought up to his mouth shook.

“Well, what did you write on this note?” asked Garth after the conference had finished.

Garry drew a long breath.

"I said, as far as I can remember, that she wasn't to take any notice of my previous letter, that she was to back Rangemore. I thought it was going to win."

Sir John Garth pursed his lips.

"Of course, that would put a different complexion on story."

He did not add 'if it were true' nor, to do him justice, did he mean that.

"Have we got anything about the second note?" asked Innsbrook.

The secretary shook his head.

"Nothing."

"Oh yes there is," said Garth quickly. "There is a reference to it in the statement by John Dory."

Rainby, with an apology, searched his papers and produced a foolscap sheet, which he passed across to the senior steward.

"I'm very sorry. Of course there is." He pointed out the passage, which Garth read carefully.

"You realize," asked Innsbrook, "this means that we shall have to bring the lady before us?"

"I'm afraid you must," said Garry curtly.

He walked back to the chair and sat down. There glowed within him a sudden intense anger directed towards Wenda. For no especial reason the realization of her perfidy, her sheer wickedness, had come to him. Wenda, for whom he had done so much, on whom he had spent so much, this trusted friend of his, had robbed him and now, to cover up her treachery, would ruin him. And yet, behind his resentment was that odd feeling of relief he had experienced before. There was no question of divorce, no question of linking himself for life to a woman of her character. Garth was reading a typewritten sheet of paper.

"You say, in the statement you made before the Ascot stewards, that you backed your horse?"

Garry nodded.

"Well, that's a simple matter to prove," said Garth. "If you weren't trying you wouldn't back it, would you? Who did you back it with?"

Garry was as cold as ice now. This was a key question; and on the way the stewards received his answer depended his future.

"I backed it with John Dory," he said.

Innsbrook knew Dory; indeed, most of the big men of the turf had had transactions with John.

"He's not here, but we have a statement from him," he said. "He underwent an operation for appendicitis yesterday."

"Yes," said Garry, without enthusiasm.

It was lucky for everybody concerned that nobody had seen him dining with John the previous night in a little restaurant in Soho.

"He's a personal friend of yours, I believe?" said Innsbrook, and laughed. "We shan't be shocked if you say yes. Some of the best men racing count bookmakers amongst their friends—in fact, I went to school with two men who are now standing up in the ring. But he is a personal friend?"

"Yes, sir," said Garry.

"And the only proof we have that you backed the horse are his books—the books of a personal friend?"

There was a note of dryness in his voice that Garry did not like.

"I suppose he backed the horse with other people," he said. "I don't know how he arranges these things."

Garth gently shook the sheet of foolscap that he had been reading.

"You know, I suppose, that Mr Dory states he is unable to tell us the names of the people with whom he backed the horse?"

Too well Garry knew; it had been the subject of the overnight dinner discussion.

One in that room had an understanding of the situation.

"I presume that his explanation would be that he was betting with people who were evading the payment of the betting tax," said Innsbrook. "He doesn't say so in his statement, but we understand that such things happen."

Garry did not answer.

"You realize how important it is that you should produce evidence that you backed the horse?" asked Garth.

"I can produce evidence that I received over eight thousand pounds from Dory at the end of the Ascot week."

Garth shook his head. "Yes, but that proves nothing except that you won on that week. You were backing other horses, I suppose?"

Garry assented.

"If you were backing other horses and received money, that proves nothing except that you were a successful punter in a general way. Dory would be your agent—I mean, he wouldn't stand the bets himself?"

"Yes, he was in a sense my agent," said Garry after consideration.

Lord Forlingham had at least seen a point which he could exploit.

"It comes to this," he said, in a deep sepulchral voice, "that you can't give us any detailed and convincing proof that you ever backed Rangemore?"

"Only the proof that Mr Dory can supply," said Garry quickly.

"And he doesn't come here to give evidence," said Garth with a smile.

Innsbrook leaned forward. He had the quick, incisive style of a successful counsel; he was the one man at the table of whose justice Garry had no doubt, but of whose perspicuity he stood in some fear.

"You'll agree, Captain Anson, that if there is anything fishy about this transaction Mr Dory's appendicitis is rather convenient?" he asked.

Garry smiled.

"It could be put that way."

Very much it could be put that way, he thought ruefully, and wondered if the indiscreet John had been seen by some friend of the stewards overnight; by the stewards themselves, since it was likely they had come up by the early train and had spent the previous evening in London.

"Your story is this," said Garth, "that on the morning of the Ascot Stakes you intended stopping Rangemore, and afterwards repented and backed it. You further say that you backed Rangemore with Mr John Dory and that you are unable to tell us the names of the other bookmakers with whom his bets were placed; that you had no intention of pulling your horse when you arrived on the course, although you had previously informed Lady Panniford that you weren't trying, is that a fair summary of your evidence?"

Garry nodded. Again that whispered consultation.

"We'll have Mr Wray in," said Garth.

The secretary pushed a bell and an attendant opened the door and received his instructions. It was no surprise to Garry that Wray was to be called. He had been before the Ascot stewards and he was in as unhappy a position as his master. He had been suspended for the best part of a month. Recognizing the possible injustice of such an act, however, the stewards had granted him permission to continue training, to Garry's heartfelt relief. That was the trouble about racing: you could not fall alone, must drag down with you the partners in your errors and even the confidants to whom you confided your intentions.

"Mr Wray has trained for you for some years?" asked Garth.

"Yes." said Garry. "He's a very decent fellow, as straight as a die. I hope the stewards will believe me when I say that Mr Wray had no knowledge whatever of my intentions."

"Though he would have had if you'd carried them out," said Innsbrook. "I've known Wray personally for many years; in fact, he used to train for me. I see you've scratched your horses—you've sold some of them?"

Garry nodded.

"You're giving up racing, whatever the result of this inquiry?"

Garry hesitated.

"No; I hope to go on racing for many years," he said, "but that is a matter for you gentlemen to decide."

Wray came in, nervous, his florid face a little paler. He nodded to Garry, smiled at Lord Innsbrook, and, receiving no answering smile, allowed his features to droop dismally.

"Good morning, Mr Wray," said Garth. "This, as you know, is an inquiry into the running of Rangemore in the Ascot Stakes. What do you know about it?"

Wray drew a long breath.

"Nothing, sir, except that the horse did his best but wasn't quite good enough. I've known horses to do that sort of thing before. You bring 'em out in the morning fit to run for their lives, and in the afternoon—"

"Yes, yes." said Garth impatiently. "We know something and what they do. We also know that when the jockey who is riding them receives instructions—you gave no instructions to the rider except to win?"

"That's right, sir," said Wray.

"Did you hear of any suggestion made by Captain Anson that the horse should be pulled?" asked Forlingham.

"No, my lord," said Wray loudly.

"Or," added Garth, "that he should be given an easy race at Ascot and go out for the Northumberland Plate?"

Mr Wray was not a good actor. His amusement at the suggestion convinced nobody.

"Good gracious, no, sir! I never heard of such a thing. Captain Anson would never dream of such a thing!" he said scornfully.

But Garth was impressed neither by his heartiness nor by his scorn.

"Now, Mr Wray, are you sure you never heard Captain Anson suggest that the horse should be pulled in the Ascot Stakes?" he asked sharply.

"No, sir. Captain Anson is incapable of such an action."

Innsbrook leaned over the table, his thin hands clasped.

“Mr Wray, you saw Captain Anson on the morning of the race, didn’t you?” he asked, with the suavity of an examining lawyer.

“Yes, I believe I did, my lord.”

“Did you go to his house?”

Wray looked up at the ceiling and considered.

“Yes, now that you mention it, my lord, I did. After the gallop. That’s right, I went in and saw the Captain. He had some people over to breakfast—”

“Never mind about that, unless you went to breakfast?” said Garth.

“No, sir,” Wray shook his head. “I never have breakfast—just a cup of tea and a bit of toast when I get up. I always find that if you’ve got a lot of riding to do in the morning—”

“Well, some time after breakfast,” said Innsbrook impatiently. “You saw him then?”

“After the gallop, my lord,” said Wray. “I went in and told him how well the horse was moving. He was delighted—oh, he was delighted! He said: ‘I’m going to have a big bet on that horse, Mr Wray.’”

“Was anything said about the Northumberland Plate?” asked Garth.

Again Mr Wray considered elaborately.

“Why, yes, sir, yes, sir.” I said: “He’ll win the Northumberland Plate with his penalty.”

“Is that all?” asked Garth. “He said nothing about stopping the horse?”

Mr Wray was amused.

“No, sir—oh, no, sir. Captain Anson said: ‘I’m going to have a big bet on Rangemore and you’re on the odds to fifty.’ I said: ‘You’ll win the Northumberland Plate with him, now they haven’t accepted with Silver Queen.’”

Even as the words left his lips he tried to arrest them and now he stopped in consternation. He had said the one thing which he should not have said. Garry recognized this and his heart sank.

Garth leaned back in his chair, his grey, eyebrows met in a frown.

“Oh, I see.” His voice was very soft. “You thought Silver Queen might have beaten you in the Northumberland Plate, and yet you didn’t think it would beat you in the Ascot Stakes? The horses carried exactly the same weights in both races; the distance was exactly the same. Why should you be so sure you’d win the Northumberland Plate with Silver Queen out of the way, and yet be equally sure that you’d win the Ascot Stakes with Silver Queen running?”

Wray was panic-stricken, incoherent. There was nothing he could say.

“I didn’t think of it beating us anywhere.” he stammered.

Lord Innsbrook smiled.

“You were afraid of Silver Queen beating your horse in the Northumberland Plate,” he nodded, “and you were rather relieved when you found it wasn’t running—and yet you weren’t afraid of it beating you in the Ascot Stakes?”

There was no answer to this. Mr Wray was not quick witted. He was only conscious of his terrible error, only desirous of flying from the room and hiding himself in some place where Garry Anson’s reproachful glance could not follow him. In truth, there was nothing reproachful in Garry’s smile. This was fate, an

inevitability. Wray was merely an instrument of the inscrutable, malignant power which was dragging him down.

Garth heaved a sigh.

“Mr Wray, in your desire to help Captain Anson you’ve said a little too much.”

“I knew I’d say something,” said Wray despairingly. “The Captain is as good a master as ever I’ve worked for, and I’ve trained for you, my lord; and I’ll swear on my oath the horse was trying!”

Garth looked at Garry.

“Do you want to ask any questions?”

When Garry shook his head:

“All right, Mr Wray.”

The trainer went hurriedly from the room.

Sir John Garth looked at his watch.

“We’ll have the jockey in,” he said. “The man’s riding in the first race, but I don’t suppose his examination will take long.

“I told him to get himself weighed out in good time,” said the secretary as he called in the attendant.

“Where did you say Lady Panniford was?”

“In my room.” And then, to the man who stood in the doorway: “Send in Lynn, please.”

“We’d better see her after,” said Garth.

Forlingham rolled his head protestingly.

“It’s very painful asking a lady of her position awkward and possibly embarrassing questions,” he said. “Can’t it be avoided?”

“I’m afraid not,” said Innsbrook, slightly amused.

“The only thing I’d like to say—” began Lord Forlingham, but the arrival of Andy Lynn cut short the statement he was to have made.

Andy was in breeches and boots, and under his light overcoat he wore the claret and white hoops of a lady owner. He was nervous, as all jockeys are nervous who make their appearance before the supreme tribunal. Was there not an historic occasion when one, on being told he could go, opened a bookcase and tried to walk into it?

He stood now, his hands behind his back, holding his silken cap, his fingers nervously twiddling at his whip, his keen eyes searching the faces of the three men who sat in judgement.

“Lynn, you rode Rangemore in the Ascot Stakes?” asked Innsbrook.

Andy licked his dry lips.

“Yes, my lord,” he said.

“What were your orders?”

“My orders, my lord?” Lynn coughed to clear his husky throat. “My orders were to jump off in front and make the running. If I couldn’t do that, to lie up with the leaders and take a steadier somewhere round Swinley bottom. I was to keep to the rails if I could and wait on Silver Queen in the straight and get first run on her.”

He spoke rapidly, without punctuation, repeating faultlessly the speech he had rehearsed.

“You had no other orders?”

“No, my lord,” said Lynn.

“Who gave you those orders?” asked Innsbrook.

“Mr Wray, the trainer, my lord.”

“You carried them out?”

Again Lynn coughed.

“As best I could, my lord. Silver Queen was always going better than my horse in the last four furlongs and I had to take up my whip to keep Rangemore going. He was dying under me in the last furlong, but came on again under the whip and I was beat a short head—it ought to have been a length, but Silver Queen pecked a few strides from the stick—the post, I mean.”

All this in one breath. He stopped and breathed heavily.

“Now listen to me,” said Garth. “Did you ever receive orders from Captain Anson or anybody else to stop Rangemore?”

The jockey shook his head.

“No, sir.”

“You know what I mean—did you have orders not to win on him at Ascot?” asked Garth deliberately, spacing each word.

“No, sir, I did everything I could—” began Lynn, but the senior steward stopped him with a gesture.

“That is not in question,” he said. “Both his lordship and I saw the race when it was run, and we are quite satisfied that as far as you are concerned you were trying. The horse was running clear of everything except Silver Queen and was under the whip for the last two furlongs. I saw where you had hit him when they brought him into the unsaddling enclosure; the marks were very clear. What I want to ask you is this, Lynn: was it ever suggested to you that you should stop this horse?”

“No, sir, never.”

Garth looked at his friend on the right; and Innsbrook leaned forward, his long fingers rubbing nervously.

“Did you see Captain Anson before the race?” he asked.

Lynn knew Lord Innsbrook by repute. He had never been before the stewards, but he had been warned that this was the one steward of all that demanded caution.

“Yes, my lord, I saw him at his house in the morning. I saw him twice.”

“Twice?” said Garth quickly. “Did he send for you the second time?”

“No, sir, I called in,” said the jockey.

Lord Forlingham was interested.

“Did he tell you on the second occasion—the second time you called—that he’d changed his mind and was going to try with the horse?”

Lynn hesitated for a fraction of a second. Forlingham did not observe this, but the other two men noticed the hesitancy and exchanged glances.

“No, my lord,” said the jockey. “He never said anything much either time. He said that I needn’t waste to ride the horse at Gosforth Park, because I’d have a penalty. I’ve never known the Captain to stop a horse in my life—”

Garth raised his hand to arrest the eloquent tribute.

“Do you wish to ask this man any questions, Captain Anson?”

“No, sir,” said Garry, and the jockey went hurriedly out as from a place accursed.

Chapter 16

TO WENDA PA17IFORD, sitting in the little office of the secretary, every minute seemed an hour. One by one she heard the witnesses called, and waited with some apprehension for the moment when she would be summoned.

She had never dreamed that all this fuss would be made, or that an inquiry by the Stewards of the Jockey Club carried with it the unpleasant atmosphere of a law court. It was mean of Garry to demand that she should give evidence at all. The secretary had told her that there was a possibility that her presence would be dispensed with. Then he had dropped in for a second to warn her that Garry wanted her evidence taken before the Stewards. How like Garry to humiliate her!

She wished she had never sent the letter. She would have given a great deal to have got it back.

Willie knew only a little of what had happened. He had gathered from the newspapers that Garry was in some trouble, but as to the part his wife had taken he was absolutely ignorant. To do him justice, he would have been horrified if he had known that Garry was to be charged on evidence she had supplied.

As for Molly—by a miracle she had kept the truth from the girl, had gone out of her way to deceive her into believing that the inquiry had been indefinitely postponed. She wondered whether there was a reporter in the room, and whether her evidence would be given to the world. She asked one of the minor officials who came in and was relieved to learn that the proceedings were secret; not even the names of the witnesses were officially made known.

She hated racecourses; she hated racing; most of all she hated Garry Anson. Suppose, in revenge, he did sue? So far he had made no move. She had not even received a letter from his lawyer. Perhaps he was waiting to discover how the case would go; and if it went against him she would have another ordeal to face. But would anybody take his word against hers—the word of a man who had been in trouble for pulling his horses against Wenda Panniford's?

She was frank enough with herself to admit that there were quite a number of people who would not hesitate to accept Garry's most extravagant statement against her own. For Wenda was not especially popular, even in her own set. She had hated the long journey, wished she had induced Henry Lascarne to come with her. Though, if the truth be told, he had not offered to be her companion; had, in fact, anticipated any request on her part by telling an unconvincing story of a conference at the War Office where his presence was urgently needed.

Even in that moment of fury and anxiety, Wenda could see the humorous side of an important conference at which the presence of Mr Henry Lascarne was desired.

Suppose the worst happened? Suppose Garry sued her? She could represent his action as a piece of malice born of the service she had rendered to justice.

She was turning this matter over when she heard the door close behind the jockey.

“We will have the lady in,” sad Garth. “You might explain to her that she’s not on oath.”

Garry rose and walked to the table. He was making one last desperate effort to avoid the presence of Wenda.

“May I ask, sir, how you can reconcile your own observations—you saw the race and heard the evidence of the jockey—with the suggestion that the horse was stopped? Naturally, I don’t want Lady Panniford to be brought into this case if it can be avoided, and if it’s possible for you to reach a decision favourable to myself without the necessity of calling upon her for evidence. You’ve heard the trainer, you’ve heard the jockey. You yourself, sir, said that you saw the horse and he had been marked—”

Garth shook his head.

“We’re not trying the horse, Captain Anson, or the jockey. It’s quite conceivable that you may have given instructions which were not carried out. The offence lies with you. There are such things as betting jockeys who disobey orders for their own advantage. We are men of the world and we understand that such things happen and that jockeys do bet.”

Garry made a gesture of despair and went back to his seat as the door opened and Wenda walked slowly into the room. She was wearing a dark dress that gave a certain spiritual value to her pallid face. She did not look at Garry, but stood for a moment, waiting, until the Club secretary put a chair for her; then she sat down, her hands folded primly in her lap, her eyes meeting the curious scrutiny of Sir John Garth without faltering.

It was an awkward moment. Lord Forlingham was visibly embarrassed, avoided looking at the witness throughout the rest of the inquiry with such persistence as to suggest that to see her would be to commit a mortal sin.

Garth picked up the letter from the table and held it towards her.

“Do you know this letter?”

She nodded.

“It came into our possession. It was one written by Captain Anson to you. We will not discuss at this moment how it came to us.”

He looked at Garry. It was a challenge and a request, and Garry smiled.

“Captain Anson was a great friend of yours?”

“A very great friend,” said Wenda in a low voice.

“This method of address—er—’darling’—it means nothing, of course. Everybody uses the word nowadays.”

He heard a shocked murmur from the worthy Forlingham, smiled to himself and went on.

“The letter was written to you in confidence?”

“I should like to make this clear,” said Garry, “that my relationships with this lady have been of the most correct nature. We were like brother and sister. I think it is only fair that this point should be emphasized.”

“That’s very generous of you,” said Wenda, not looking round.

“Generous to me.” said Garry sternly. “I wish to retain just a little self-respect!”

“Good for you!” said Garth, but said it under his breath.

“About this letter, Lady Panniford,” he said aloud. “He wouldn’t write anything like that as a joke—I mean, he never has done such a thing?”

She shook her head.

“No, I was surprised to get it.” she said.

“I don’t know whether you bet or not—?”

Yes, Wenda betted. She admitted the fact modestly.

“Did you back the horse?”

“I’d already backed it.” If her voice was low, it was very clear. “Captain Anson saw the bookmaker, Mr Dory, and asked him to cancel the bet.”

“It’s perfectly true,” said Garry. “I did cancel the bet.”

“This letter,”—Garth held up the incriminating document—“was brought to you by a friend? Someone who spent the night at Captain Anson’s house and was going on to Welbury Manor—that is where you live?”

She nodded.

“He brought it across in the morning before the races.”

“Did you receive any other letter?”

There was an expectant pause.

“Yes, there was a note from Captain Anson saying that he wanted to see me that night,” said Wenda steadily. “His servant brought this to the house just before I went over to see him.”

“Nothing more than that?” asked, Innsbrook, eyeing her keenly.

She shook her head.

“Lady Panniford,” said Garth, “Captain Anson says that he sent you a message, written in pencil on the back of hundred-pound Bank of England note—money that he had won for you.”

She smiled incredulously.

“You say that isn’t true?”

“Yes.”

“This letter,” Garth pursued, “purporting to be written on a banknote, said the earlier letter was a joke.”

“No.” Her voice was a little louder.

“And he told you that you could back the horse?”

She shook her head.

“You didn’t receive it—the hundred-pound banknote?”

“No,” said Wenda.

Her voice was clear, loud, defiant.

But Garth was not to be shaken off.

“In Mr Dory’s statement here,” he went on, “he says: ‘I was present when Captain Anson wrote to Lady Panniford telling her to back his horse. This letter was written on the back of a hundred-pound note with a pencil which he borrowed from his servant.’ You still say that you didn’t receive this banknote?”

Wenda’s smile was one of bland amusement.

“Why should he send me a hundred pounds?”

One man was listening to her, amazed; if there had been occasion for speech he would have been speechless. He could not believe it possible that Wenda could sit there, with the face of an angel and tell lie after lie, each designed to drag him deeper into the mire.

“He said he had backed a winner for you at Newbury,” said Garth.

Wenda shook her head.

“He never told me anything about it,” she said.

Garry found his voice.

“Good God—”

A look from Innsbrook checked him.

“I’m sorry.” Garry’s voice was shaking. “I don’t mind what she says. Nothing really matters very much. Still, it’s incredible that she can sit there—”

“Captain Anson.” Innsbrook stopped him again.

“I’ll ask you once more,” said Garth. He never took his eyes off the woman. “And I do wish you to realize that Captain Anson’s whole future probably depends upon your answer. Did he send you a subsequent note, telling you that the first letter was a joke and that you were to back his horse?”

“No!”

The answer came like the note of a clarion.

Sir John Garth looked at her in silence, and when he eventually spoke his voice was very grave.

“Lady Panniford,” he said, “it strikes us as rather remarkable that you should have gone out of your way to denounce Captain Anson to the Stewards. He was a very old friend of yours. Naturally, we are not concerned with your motives, but we do like to know, when we are to judge between two witnesses, what personal bias there is on one side or the other.”

Wenda’s chin went up.

“I didn’t know you were judging between two witnesses—you have his letter. We were good friends; I admit I have a personal bias. He behaved very dishonourably to my husband and myself.”

Garry was looking at her in amazement. Here was something new.

“I don’t want to say any more than that,” she said.

Garth waited, but she said no more.

“Do you wish to ask the lady any questions?” he asked.

“I wish she would say more than that,” said Garry with rising passion. “I would like her to tell you in what way I have behaved dishonourably to her and her husband, unless, of course, her powers of invention are exhausted.”

“That is hardly a matter for us, is it?” asked Innsbrook coldly.

Wenda was gone, and as the door closed behind her a great weight and the ugliness of the ordeal seemed to drift away. Garry Anson knew just how badly the inquiry had gone for him. He was dealing with three men who would be ruthless in their administration of the racing law. Nothing he could say could make any difference.

Nevertheless, he clung desperately to one hope, which he voiced when Garth asked him if he had any witnesses to call.

“No; I’ve got my servant here,” he said, “but he’d only bore you. And he’s not very convincing—I believe he’s an ex-convict.”

Garth nodded.

“Yes, we knew that,” he said significantly, and Garry smiled.

“Of course, she’s told you.”

Wenda would not have lost that opportunity.

“No, I’ve no witnesses and no defence beyond the inherent probabilities of the situation.”

They talked together along the table and then Garth asked him to go out. When the door closed on him, Sir John rose, shook his head, and reached in his pocket for a cigarette.

"It's a case exactly on all fours with the Woburn case," said Innsbrook, and Garth was obviously undecided.

"You can't make fish of one and fowl of another," said Forlingham. "There's the letter."

Innsbrook ran his fingers through his short hair.

"The jockey was probably lying and old Wray certainly was. There's the letter, as you say. If he'd brought proof that he backed the horse..."

"I don't know," said Innsbrook. "The story of the hundred pound note almost convinced me. That woman's a—"

"I wonder what she's done to him?" said Garth, speaking more to himself than to his companions.

Innsbrook threw his cigarette into the fireplace.

"It's the Woburn case all over again," he said, "and on the Woburn case we must judge."

Garry came back and as soon as he caught sight of Garth's face he knew all and more than he wanted to know.

"Captain Anson, we are agreed," said Garth harshly. "You have committed a very serious offence and we must decide on the evidence upon which we can rely—the letter which you admit you wrote. I'm terribly sorry...you've been very foolish; but we feel, in the interests of the turf, there is only one course to be taken."

Garry knew too well that course, and nodded.

"You are warned off Newmarket Heath and all courses under the jurisdiction of the Jockey Club."

As he turned and walked to the door, Garry Anson heard the sound of the saddling bell. It was the knell of his hopes, his ambitions and his faiths.

Chapter 17

HE CAME OUT into the paddock like a man in a dream, did not even see the waiting Hillcott, who followed him through the crowd and out into the road, where the car was waiting. Hillcott spoke no word; one glance at Garry's face had told him all he wanted to know. He swung himself up by the side of the driver; the car turned and made for London.

Warned off! Garry repeated the words a dozen times without fully realizing what they meant. He had heard them before, but they had applied to odd and unpleasant people, the Hipplewaynes of life.

Warned off! Social death! Men he knew would cross to the other side of the street to avoid the embarrassment of meeting him. The secretaries of his clubs would write politely, asking him to put in his resignation. A score of hospitable doors would be closed to him. Life, as he understood life, was ended.

He only dimly sensed at that moment the enormous tragedy by which he had been overtaken. He was blotted out, as much an outcast as a leper. It almost seemed as if he had been deprived of his citizenship and was a man of no country.

He was too shocked even to resent the part which Wenda had played, too bitterly hurt for resentment. This was the end of things. He was one of the living dead; must be born again in a new social sphere, create new friends and keep from them the story of his past; take a new name perhaps Did Hipplewayne do that?

It was amazing that such a thing could happen, that here: that here in lawful England three men should have the power to sit down and make him taboo; and yet that was what had happened. He did not resent this either; it was part of the game. He knew the rules; they had been broken in intention and there was nothing for him to do but to stick it.

He hardly noticed the passage of the miles, and was driving through the suburbs of London almost before, as it seemed, the journey had well begun.

He drove to an hotel. He had to see his lawyer and he sent Hillcott down by train to Sunningdale. He learned for the first time that Molly was back in London; she had returned that morning.

How Hillcott secured these items of information he had never discovered. Possibly it was servants' gossip. Hillcott was very friendly with the pretty housemaid at Welbury.

"Where is she staying?" he asked.

"Search me," said Hillcott. And then: "Here, Captain, why didn't they let me go in and give evidence?"

"What?" said Garry, startled out of unpleasant thoughts "You give evidence?" He smiled. "Haven't I enough trouble?"

"I could have told them something," said Hillcott.

"They've probably heard it before," said Garry. "Now, off you go to Daneham. I'll be down late tonight. You'll find Mr Dory there," he said, as a thought occurred to him. "Ask him to wait."

So Molly was in London! He winced at the thought. The news would have to be broken to her before she read it in the papers. He called, up Wenda's flat but had no answer. Then he tried the hotel where the Pannifords sometimes stayed and learned that Molly had just left for the country. If the country meant Ascot, he would see her that night.

The room he had overlooked Hyde Park. He looked out over the browning foliage of the trees and by one of those curious coincidences which are part of the laws of chance, he saw Wenda and had no difficulty in recognizing her companion. They were pacing slowly along a gravelled path, she and Henry Lascarne, talking earnestly and he guessed that he was the subject of the conversation.

He had a brief and not too pleasant interview with his lawyer, settled up the question of the land sale and gave him instructions to go on with the disposal of Daneham Lodge.

"It's disgraceful that you weren't allowed to be represented by counsel," said Fenton.

"Stuff!" said Garry. "If you allowed lawyers at these inquiries they'd never end and the wrong man would always get the verdict."

“What are you going to do?” asked Fenton curiously.

“Get away out of the country grow oranges in California, or cattle in Alberta.”

Fenton considered this soberly.

“I know a man who has a ranch for sale—” he began.

“Don’t be silly,” interrupted Garry. “I was speaking figuratively. No, I shall go on to the Continent, and in the years ahead you will meet a strange, old-looking gentleman in rusty black, babbling about Rangemore and Ascot, and you’ll know it is poor old Garry Anson who has gone off his head!”

He drove down to Ascot leisurely. There were so many things to do, most of them unpleasant. He had to see Molly—facing realities, he put his worst trial first. He had to clear up affairs at Daneham and leave that pleasant place, never to return.

Chapter 18

MOLLY HAD arrived at Welbury half an hour before her sister-in-law. All that day she had been trying to get in touch with Garry and had called up the house from London half a dozen times, only to hear that he was out. She had learned only that morning that there was trouble over the running of Rangemore; a man she knew had told her on the journey between Paris and Calais. And she had arrived home in a state of apprehension.

Wenda came back with a face of gloom, pleaded a headache and retired to her room. Henry, who came down with her, was absolutely uncommunicative.

The girl began to get frightened, rang up Daneham Lodge again and to her joy was answered by Hillcott.

“Hillcott, where is Captain Anson?” she asked breathlessly.

“In town, miss. He’s coming down tonight.”

“What is this in the newspapers, about there being an inquiry into the running of Rangemore?”

Hillcott did not answer for a moment; when he spoke it was with the directness of his class.

“Yes, that’s right, miss—warned off.”

She could only stand, speechless.

“Hillcott... it’s Miss Molly speaking—what did you say?”

“Warned off, miss.”

“Not Captain Anson!” She almost, walled the words.

“Warned off,” said Hillcott again, with a choke in his voice and she heard the click of the receiver as it was hung up.

She could not comprehend, dared not believe. Hillcott might be drunk. He was especially sober when he came back to the room where John Dory was sitting, a paper on his knees. He made some rough attempt to tidy up the table, and then suddenly, flinging down the newspapers in his hand:

“I’d like to have had a word with ‘em! They wouldn’t let me go in—blimey, they knew something!”

John Dory looked up from his paper and surveyed the servant gravely.

"I expect they were a bit afraid of you," he said, but Hillcott was impervious to sarcasm.

"So they ought to have been!" There was a tremulous note of pride in his voice. "I've had to deal with real judges! And I've got 'em in a trance!"

John nodded, a smile in his eyes.

"I'll bet you did! When they came round I suppose you got the usual?"

Hillcott considered this.

"A bit of time, but it was all me own."

He walked down to where Dory was sitting.

"Do you know what I'd have said to the stewards?"

John put down his paper with a sigh.

"You'd better tell me, or I'll be guessing wrong," he said.

Hillcott struck an attitude designed to be dramatic.

"I'd have said: 'I understand human nature, and if you believe a—'" he gulped—"a lady like that before a man like this, you want your 'eads shaved.'"

John Dory passed his hand over his shining pate and shivered.

"It must be a rather unpleasant sensation," he said. "Anyway, they wouldn't have given you a medal for that."

He picked up the newspaper, stared at it for a long time without reading a line, and then:

"Where did you say you left Captain Anson?"

"Hyde Park Hotel," said Hillcott. "He said he'd be down by ten."

Dory frowned, as though it were he who was recalling the unpleasant memories of the morning.

"How did he take it?" he asked.

Hillcott smiled.

"Like I used to take it—smiling! I used to say to the judge—he came a little closer and grew confidential—I used to say to the judge, 'You can't 'ang me.' and that's true—they can't 'ang you.'"

John chuckled.

"But they can mess you about, eh? That's true."

"Jockey Club?" said Hillcott scornfully. "Why, there ain't a jockey that's a member of it! They wouldn't join it! They're going about under false pretences all the time."

He heard the tinkle of the bell and went resentfully forth. It was Molly.

"Hillcott," she quivered, "what you told me just now—it isn't true...is anybody here?"

"Mr Dory."

She came quickly into the room and there was agony in her eyes.

"Is it true?" she asked in a low voice.

There was no need for her to be more explicit; he knew exactly what she was talking about.

"I'm afraid it is."

He looked round for Hillcott; but Hillcott had not returned to the room.

"How dreadful! What will it mean?"

John Dory shrugged his shoulders.

“He’ll probably go abroad,” he said.

She caught a quick breath.

“You mean that he’ll have to resign from his clubs and all that sort of thing?”

The burly bookmaker nodded and patted her gently on the shoulder.

“Well, that’s rather dramatizing the situation, but yes. It’s desperately unpleasant and that’s putting it mildly. Here, young lady, you sit down.”

He caught her by the arm and lowered her gently to the settee. Her face was white, her lips colourless. But she shook off his hand impatiently.

“But how could they? The horse won—or nearly won.”

John nodded.

“Yes, but unfortunately Garry wrote a letter—but anyway, you know all about that.”

She looked up quickly.

“A letter?” she said in surprise. “You mean about the race...but he didn’t write that the horse was not trying to win?”

“I’m afraid he did,” said Dory.

“But he must have been mad!” she gasped.

Somebody showed them the letter. That was it, then—some friend of his, to whom he had written, had betrayed him! It seemed almost impossible that such a thing could happen, but she knew something of human nature. Was it Hipplewayne, she wondered? But Hipplewayne had never been a friend of Garry’s, and anyway he was not a man with whom Garry could have had any confidences.

“To whom did he write?” she asked.

John Dory looked at her in amazement.

“Don’t you know?” he asked incredulously.

She shook her head, her confused mind ranging the circle of mutual acquaintances for the culprit.

“He wrote it to Lady Panniford.”

“To Wenda?” Her voice was little above a whisper. “She...she didn’t show the letter?”

Again he nodded.

“Was she there today? Is that where she’s been—to Doncaster? She didn’t give evidence?”

She was half crying.

“Oh, she couldn’t!”

“Have you spoken to her?” asked John.

The girl shook her head wearily.

“No. She’s been in her room, resting, since she came back. I knew she’d been in the country somewhere—she told me that, or rather, sent a message to that effect.”

“How did you come to know about this?” asked John.

He poured out a glass of port and handed it to her. She sipped it before she realized what she was doing, then passed the glass back to him.

“No, thank you.”

“How did you know about it at all?” he asked.

“I saw a paragraph in the evening paper, saying there was an inquiry into the running of the winner of the Ascot Stakes,” she said. “I’d heard something about it

on the way from Paris. Then, when I got here, I got on the telephone to Hillcott and he told me. You're absolutely sure about Wenda?"

He was perfectly sure. He explained that he himself could not go before the stewards and that he had invented an appendicitis.

"There wasn't much I could have done for him if I had been there—I might have made the case look a bit blacker."

She sat there, clasping and unclasping her hands, her head shaking helplessly.

"I can't—I can't believe it! I simply can't believe it. It's like a horrible dream. What has he done to her that she is so malignant?"

"What has she done to him?"

There was a meaning in his voice. She looked at him quickly.

"What do you mean?"

"That's my experience," said John Dory. "There's no surer way of making some people hate you than by lending them money or doing them a good turn. They loathe to be under any obligation."

Too well she knew that Garry had done Wenda many a good turn; but at the moment she was incapable of logical thought.

She heard the whirr of a car outside and sat up. The front door opened and closed, and she heard the sound of Garry's voice and went blindly to meet him. She gripped him by the coat, incapable of speech, her white, tear-stained face eloquent—too eloquent for Garry's peace of mind. He caught her in his arms.

"Shut up and don't be silly!" he said tenderly.

Hillcott was behind him, an interested, almost cheerful spectator.

"Get me a drink."

Garry led the girl to the sofa and sat down.

"Dry them blinkin' eyes," he said gaily and with his handkerchief mopped the tears from her cheeks. "Molly, you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

It was a long time before she could speak coherently.

"Oh, Garry, you won't do anything stupid, will you?"

"Shoot myself or something?" he chuckled. "Not likely."

He looked round at John.

"How's the appendix. Look at him, Molly! He had an operation today. That was the only laugh I got at the inquiry."

"How could they, Garry?" she quavered.

He held her at arm's length and looked at her. There was a gay tune whistling in his heart; all the burdens and problems of the day had by magic smoothed themselves away.

"Now, darling, they were very fair," he said, "very unimaginative and very English. It was all very dull! They couldn't go behind the letter; and that was the beginning and the end of it."

"I can't think about Wenda," she said.

"You're a fortunate girl," he said dryly. "I wish I couldn't."

"Garry, what have you done to her?"

"Ach! Don't let's talk about it."

He reached out his hand for the drink which Hillcott had brought to him.

"What's this, Hubert?"

"The stuff that mother likes," said Hillcott. "If ever a man had an excuse for a souse, you've got it."

"You haven't," said Garry, and pointed to the door. "I don't want one."

Garry looked round the room curiously. It was as if it were not his own, a strange room in a strange house.

"Does anybody want to buy a nice cottage, with or without Hillcott?" he asked.

Molly looked at him in consternation.

"Oh, Garry, you're not going to sell Daneham?"

Garry waved his hand extravagantly in the manner of an auctioneer.

"Pleasantly situated amongst pines, gravel soil, four acres of old-world garden, etcetera, etcetera."

She would have bought it. It was on the tip of her tongue to say so, and such was the perfect sympathy between them at that moment that he could read her thoughts.

"No, you don't want to be saddled with a place like this," he said. "But I shall have to do something."

"What do you want to do?" asked Dory, lighting a cigar.

"There's only one thing I'd like, and I've never wanted so much to do it—to be on the top of a stand and watch the field come into the straight. I'd like to go back on everything I've said and sleep in some place where I could hear horses kicking at their boxes in the night. That's what I want to do. What I shall do is to go abroad somewhere—a villa in Italy—delightful! No horses, no—"

He felt a lump come in his throat and laughed at his own weakness.

"I think I'm being immensely, sorry for myself."

He heard the tinkle of a bell and looked round.

"Who the devil's that?"

Then Molly remembered.

"It's probably Henry Lascarne; he came over with me."

"Good Lord! You shouldn't have left him outside."

Garry flew into the passage. It was the opportunity the girl wanted.

"Mr Dory, do you mind if I see Garry alone for a minute?" she said in a low voice.

He understood, was foolishly pleased and when Garry returned, holding an embarrassed Henry Lascarne by the arm, was thinking out a good excuse to leave.

"What the devil do you mean by staying outside?" demanded Garry.

Lascarne cleared his throat.

"I'm very sorry about this business—" he began, and even Garry's gesture did not stop him. "Wenda's terribly upset—isn't she, Molly?"

"Why ask me?"

She was showing the nearest approach to anger that Garry had ever seen; her voice trembled, the colour came back to her face.

"I don't really know what it means," Lascarne ambled on. "Something pretty awful, isn't it?"

Here was John Dory's excuse. He strolled across to where the lank young man was standing.

"Do you play rummy?" he asked.

Henry gaped at him.

“Cards? No, I’m not very good at cards.”

John sighed patiently.

“Would you like to see Garry’s stamp collection?”

Henry considered this. He wasn’t really interested in stamps, and said so.

“Nor in goldfish?” asked John and then, grabbing the alarmed Lascarne by the arm: “Come along,” he said, “I’ll show you my appendicitis!”

The door of the dining-room closed on them. The amused Garry turned to the girl.

“You’re not to worry about this business, Molly. I know you can’t help worrying. I can’t either. But at any rate make it the minimum of worry. You mustn’t think about it. I’ll clear things up, then I’ll get out.”

She was close to him now, her head sunk.

“Garry, there’s something I want to say to you,” she said in a low voice. “I don’t want you to go to Italy... or anywhere, amongst strangers... with nobody to look after you I mean... without taking somebody with you... Not anybody you love very much, but somebody you like, who can do things for you and won’t bore you... You know...?”

He caught her face gently between his two hands and lifted it.

“I mean...you haven’t got to be... in love with them,” she went on breathlessly, “or think you’re going to spoil their lives and say no because of that...What would spoil their lives would be leaving them to fret and worry. Do you understand?”

He understood; his eyes told her.

“I knew you would. You’re probably hating me for this...I’ve given you something new to worry about. But I’ve got an idea, Garry, it isn’t the first time a woman has proposed to you, is it? I’m not being sympathetic, Garry, or—or noble, or anything like that; I’m being selfish and taking advantage of... well, you know... to get something I want.”

Garry looked at her, and the love in his eyes was balm and stimulant and everything she wanted at that moment. Without a word he kissed her, walked with her to the door and stood waiting till she had vanished into the night.

That would be worth a fight, something worth battling for, something to give an incentive to the slackest of men.

He heard John come back into the room, but scarcely noticed him, heard his flippant and wholly imaginary message from Henry.

“What’s the matter, Garry?”

“Nothing...only I’ve just found something worth living for.” And before John could ask the question which he had no intention of asking, he poured himself out another drink. “Well, it’s been a very interesting day,” he said, in a matter-of-fact-voice.

“What decided it? Was my statement any good?”

Garry grinned at this.

“About as good as a pain in the neck! You nearly got me warned off without Wenda’s letter. Why the devil did you back the horse with people who couldn’t show the records of the bets?”

Dory groaned.

"I've explained that so many thousands of times—Garry." Garry, who was sitting at the writing-table, looked round. "How's the old bank balance?" asked John carelessly.

"What little there is is good," smiled his friend.

John did not know of the legacy that had come to him. He had found no opportunity of telling of his good fortune; indeed, the matter had only been definitely and irrevocably fixed the previous week.

"I suppose you're pretty well squared up on your winnings and the sale of your horses, with a balance on the right side?"

Garry nodded.

"Thank the Lord for that!" said John. And then, as a thought occurred to him: "Have you touched the little nest egg?"

Garry looked at him in amazement. He had forgotten all about the money that Wenda had held.

"The money you put aside," said John.

Garry shook his head.

"No, I haven't touched it."

"Is it all right?" asked John.

"Of course it is," said Garry loudly.

"Who holds it?"

"My dear fellow, I wish you wouldn't ask questions."

Garry's anger surprised himself. The question aroused too many unpleasant ghosts for his happiness.

"Sorry I asked you," said John soothingly.

There was a long silence.

"Don't forget I owe you five and a half thousand—I took eleven to two to a thousand pounds for you on the Leger. You remember I told you?"

Garry shook his head.

"You wicked old devil!" he said. "You invented that on the spur of the moment because you think I'm broke. Well, I'm not. No, I'm not going to take money from you."

John Dory protested.

"I said if the horse was all right on the day of the race I'd back it for you."

"You never mentioned any horse," said Garry; "and the winner of the Leger has been second favourite for a month. No, you're not going to make me a present of five and a half thousand—God bless you for the thought!"

"Make you a present!" John laughed hollowly. "Don't be silly! Whoever heard of a bookmaker making presents?"

And then, as Garry continued to smile and shake his head, he threw up his hands in despair.

"Why did this happen?" he asked irritably.

"Let's forget it," said Garry.

"Is there nothing I can do—"

"There's nothing you can do," said Garry. "I'm warned off. You can't warn me on again! Warned off! It's like a nightmare. It'll be in The Calendar—The Stewards of the Jockey Club held an inquiry into the running of Rangemore in the Ascot

Stakes, and, having heard the evidence, warned Captain Garry Anson off Newmarket Heath and all the courses—”

“Shut up, for God’s sake!” said John harshly. “It was my fault. I made you back the darned thing.”

“Your fault? You’re drunk!” said Garry. “No, it was the letter. Wenda swore she never had the second note. That settled me. Fine old English gentlemen, they couldn’t disbelieve a lady.” He drew a long breath. “I’d have given something to have had a criminal judge on that inquiry!”

“Do you mind if I ask you something?” said John, after another interregnum of quiet. “This isn’t a case of spite because you’re—well, because you’ve dropped her?”

Garry shook his head.

“No, that would be easy to understand. But she was never mine to drop. We have never been anything but the best of friends. No, John, this is a case similar to the one you told me about—it’s hatred because she’s played me a dirty trick, hates herself for doing it and hates me worse because she hates herself.”

Dory stared at him. Suddenly he understood.

“Your money!” he said. “She had it and she’s gone back on you!”

“No!” said Garry loudly.

“She had it—she was the person who was holding it, and when you asked her for it she turned you down!”

“She lost it,” said Garry, “Don’t let’s talk about it; it’s very unpleasant—”

“Lost it!” scoffed Dory. “She never lost anything in her life! When she loses she doesn’t pay—she’s on the back of my book for six hundred.”

“Your book?” said Garry incredulously. “You mean she owes you six hundred pounds?”

Six hundred pounds was a modest estimate, as John Dory knew, but it was sufficient to open Garry Anson’s eyes.

“Her name is Mrs Never-pay,” he said bluntly. “She’s a monkey woman.”

Then, seeing his friend’s expression.

“You know how they catch monkeys, don’t you? They put a bit of fruit in a gourd with a narrow neck; the monkey puts in his hand—I mean his paw—grabs the fruit, and his fist is so big that he can’t get it out. He hasn’t the sense to drop the fruit, and he’s caught. He won’t let go—she won’t let go! She’s got your money—phew!”

He strode tragically to the table, picked up an empty whisky decanter and looked at it thoughtfully.

“She must be a remarkable creature.” Garry was speaking half to himself. “The pluck of it—to say: ‘I’ve got your money and I’m not going to give it to you.’ Could you do that?”

John turned with a start.

“No, but I’ve known backers do it,” he said feelingly. “Can I have another drink?”

“Surely. Ring for it. And all these years to pretend! Well, John, there’s the enemy.” He slapped his knees and rose to his feet. “What am I going to do?”

“What have you done?” asked John.

"I threatened to sue her. Of course I couldn't have done that. But she probably got into a panic and sent the letter to the stewards. That's the only explanation I have for her behaviour."

John was looking at him thoughtfully.

"There was nothing—how shall I put it?—between you?" he asked tentatively.

Garry laughed.

"That's a pretty original phrase! No, she's a—well, whatever she is, she's a virtuous woman. I don't believe that Liverpool story of Willie's. If I'd only taken the number of that banknote!"

"Do you think it's gone back to the bank?" asked John.

Garry considered this.

"Why shouldn't it? She could easily have rubbed out the message."

Another possible solution came to Dory, who placed no great value on the reform of ex-criminals.

"Do you think our friend Hillcott slipped it out of the envelope?"

"Hillcott? Rubbish!" said Garry scornfully. "No, I trust my old burglar pal. Besides, I saw it in her hand."

That hundred-pound note puzzled him. Knowing Wenda as he did now, he had been baffled by her attitude. She was a woman to whom money meant so much more than it meant to any other person he knew. That she should have burnt it was unthinkable, and he had at the back of his mind a dim conviction that she had made no attempt to pass it again into circulation.

"I was probably a fool not to call Hillcott as a witness before the stewards," he said, sitting down at his desk.

"That's what I say."

It was Hillcott's smug voice. He had come in, as was usual in his case, without knocking, without making his presence known. Hillcott was not above acquiring first-hand information on most subjects by any means which suggested themselves to him.

Garry looked at him for a long time thoughtfully. It was extremely doubtful if the stewards would have accepted Hillcott's unsupported statement that he had given the note into Wenda's hands, particularly as she had already conveyed to the turf authorities the man's doubtful antecedents. But there was another possibility...

"Hillcott, do you remember my writing a letter on the back of a banknote on the first day of Ascot?" he asked.

Hillcott nodded. He remembered the circumstances very well, had retailed the story, not to Garry's housemaid, whom he loathed, but to his cronies who, curiously enough, comprised the household staff of Welbury Hall.

"Yes. I lent you the pencil," he said.

Garry's eyebrows went up.

"Of course you did!"

Fumbling in his pocket, Hillcott produced two inches of dingy wood.

"Here it is—the very one!"

He held it up for inspection.

"I've had it for years. In fact, I've marked my shirts with that pencil for four years."

John stared at him.

“Marked your shirts with it?”

“On the collar,” explained Hillcott. “You know what happens to a shirt at the laundry, don’t you? You send out a new shirt and get back an old camisole.”

Garry Anson reached out his hand and took the pencil.

“And you mark them with that pencil?” he said slowly. “Let me see it.”

“They don’t cost much,” said the informative Hillcott. “You can buy ‘em for sixpence. I pinched that one from the milkman.”

Garry wetted the end of the pencil, rubbed it on his finger and gasped.

“Well, what do you think of that?” he asked breathlessly.

John walked across, examined the blue mark on the finger and was still unenlightened.

“What about it?”

“A copying pencil,” said Garry slowly. “Do you see?”

Hillcott smirked.

“That’s right—indelible.” he said. “That’s why it’s lasted so long.”

The full significance of the discovery dawned upon John Dory.

“Good Lord! Then the message on the back of the note wouldn’t rub out!”

That was the thought that filled Garry’s mind. He had neither seen nor handled a copying pencil since he was a child, but his thoughts flashed back to a certain incident when he was a schoolboy and had marked a library book, to his own undoing.

“If she couldn’t rub it out,” he said slowly, “the note has not gone back to the bank.”

He heard a gasp from Hillcott. The tremendousness of the man’s conclusion had rendered him speechless and he was making ineffectual and grotesque signs.

“What’s the matter with you?” asked Garry, in astonishment.

“If it’s not gone back to the bank,” Hillcott found his voice, and a very hollow voice—“I’ll bet you it’s in that tinpot safe of hers!”

“Safe?”

Garry knew Welbury House very well. He had never seen a safe there and indeed there was very little that either Willie or his wife had that was of such value that it could be put behind closed doors.

“What safe?” he asked.

“She’s got a safe in her room,” said Hillcott, almost tremulously.

“In her bedroom?”

The little man nodded.

“That’s right, in her bedroom.”

“How do you know?” demanded Garry sternly.

Hillcott was visibly embarrassed.

“I’ve seen it,” he said.

Garry ran his fingers through his hair, bewildered.

“You’ve seen it? You mean you’ve been in Lady Panniford’s bedroom?”

Hillcott inclined his head gravely. It was, he felt instinctively, not a moment for jest.

“The ‘ousemaid showed me round the ‘ouse,” he said “Lady Panniford wasn’t there.”

“I should hope not!” said Garry indignantly. “Well?”

"I seen it," said Hillcott. "Mind you, I've seen that sort o: thing before—hundreds of 'em, you might say thousands of 'em—jag jog jig jug!"

Garry stared at him. John Dory was momentarily suspicious.

"What do you mean by that?" asked Garry.

"Bag beg bog big," said Hillcott.

The two men exchanged glances. John nodded.

"I'm afraid he has looked upon the wine when it was red," he said.

"Are you drunk?" demanded Garry.

Hillcott closed his eyes wearily.

"I wish you meant it," he said. "No; I'm talking about the safe. It's a Weiler. There's hundreds of 'em in country houses They're fireproof and rainproof. A burglar doesn't have to open 'em, he just breathes on 'em."

He gave an illustration; it was annoying to John, who stood nearest to him.

"They're easy, are they?" asked Garry.

"Easy?" said the scornful Hillcott. "They're not easy, they're childish! They're combination safes. Jag jug jig jag, bag beg bog big, sit sot set sat—"

A light dawned on Garry.

"I see what you mean—a combination safe of thee letters."

Hillcott nodded.

"You've only got to try thirty combinations and you're bound to get it open. You can always hear when you've struck the first letter—it makes a sort of little click. A feller I know used to take a stethoscope—one of them things doctors have to listen to your chest—"

"A stethoscope," suggested Dory.

"Something like that. You put it against the safe and you can hear when you've found the first letter. Personally, I can hear it without."

"Did you ever open one of these in your professional career?" asked John.

Hillcott smiled pityingly.

"You might as well ask me if I've ever opened a cupboard door. Yes, I've opened a dozen, but I never had the luck to find anything in one."

A long silence followed, Garry looking thoughtfully at John.

"That's all right, Hubert," he said. "Bring some more whisky."

Hillcott was visibly disappointed. The conversation had taken a most interesting turn; he thought events might have developed on fascinating lines. He picked up the empty decanter and strolled out. He did not close the door—Hillcott never closed doors or any other avenue of vicarious information. Garry crossed the room after him, pulled the door shut and came back to where John was standing.

He knew all that his friend was thinking; there was no need to go into any elaborate preamble.

"What do you think?" asked Garry.

Dory pursed his lips.

"It's a pretty desperate idea," he said.

"It's a pretty desperate situation," said Garry.

"Is she staying here the night?"

Garry nodded.

"Is Willie here?"

"I don't think so. I have a dim recollection that somebody said he was in London, or had gone to London. Lascarne, of course, is staying there—he's the only man in the house, and what a Hercules!"

He dropped into a deep chair. John could almost see his mind working.

"What was it Molly called her?" he mused. "Hoarder! I think I understand Wenda a little. She could no more destroy that hundred-pound note than I could smash a looking-glass."

"Do you think it would be there, in the safe—wouldn't she keep it at her bank?"

Garry shook his head.

"I don't know. I shouldn't imagine she'd take it to the bank—Good Lord, of course she wouldn't! She's told me half a dozen times that she wouldn't keep money in a bank vault. She has an idea that the manager has a duplicate set of keys and goes down and examines the contents of all the deposit boxes. Wenda has queer ideas about people."

Garry bit his lip thoughtfully.

"I don't know...I don't even know which is her room. But Hillcott does!"

"Are you sending him to—um—do the job, if you'll excuse the expression?"

"Good Lord, no!" scoffed Garry. "Send Hillcott? That'd be a dirty trick."

"No more than she deserves," suggested John.

But Garry was not thinking of Wenda's fine feelings: his mind was on Hubert, who had had two convictions and would certainly get penal servitude for the next.

"I don't suppose he'd do it, anyway," said John.

"Do it!" Garry laughed. "He'd jump at it. It's any odds that he's spied out the land already. It would be second nature to him."

"If you don't send Hillcott you'll do it yourself?"

Garry nodded. The idea was already taking definite and exciting shape in his mind.

John Dory drew a long breath.

"Well, I'm not a very good burglar—" he began.

"You're a bookmaker," said Garry, "which is the next best thing!"

"—but I'm very good at holding ladders."

John Dory was trying to be cheerful and made a dismal failure of it. At a signal from Garry he rang the bell and Hillcott came back with a full decanter.

He moved at his leisure, anticipating the demand for information which was coming to him. He lingered long enough for Garry to make the plunge.

"Hillcott." He called the man over to him. "Which is Lady Panniford's bedroom?"

There was a mysterious look of scepticism in Mr Hillcott's eyes.

"Don't you know?" he asked. "In the left wing, looking towards the lawn. It has two casement windows; there's a little dressing-room built out in front. There's a gardener's ladder hanging against the potting shed—it's easy!"

"What did I tell you?" breathed Garry. "He's reconnoitred the house from roof to basement!"

Hillcott purred, then suddenly felt he had to justify himself.

"It's a matter of habit, you see—not that I ever thought of doing anything wrong, Captain. I'd no more dream of going wrong—"

"Your sentiments do you credit, Hillcott," interrupted Garry. "Where is the safe located?"

"It's in the wall, between the bed and the window," said Hillcott eagerly. "You put your hand round the window to open it."

He stepped back and looked at Garry.

"I could work out the combination in five minutes—I used to know 'em by heart."

He looked at John Dory furtively, then at his employer.

"Do you want me to do a bust?" he asked in a hoarse whisper.

"A bust?"

Hillcott wagged his head impatiently.

"Well, a burglary, to use a more vulgar expression."

Garry chuckled.

"No, Hubert, bless you! I'll do all the busting that's necessary."

He walked quickly to his desk and sat down, pulled out a sheet of paper and unscrewed a fountain pen.

"Come over here; I want to get this right. Come along, John, you're in this too. Anyway, now that the totalisator's come you'll have to learn a new trade."

He drew a rough sketch plan from memory.

"Roughly, here's the front of the house," he said.

Hillcott, leaning over his shoulder, prompted him.

"There's another bedroom there," he pointed. "There's the landing, and that sticking out bit is the dressing-room or bathroom. There's the window—there's another one there. There's the bed—a very nice bed, too, though personally I like a bed to be a bed and not covered with cupids and whatnots."

Garry sketched the marvellous bed.

"And there's the safe." Hillcott pointed. "Put an 'e' against it for 'easy'. It's about so high from the floor." He indicated his throat. "You can't see it; there's a little picture that hides the door of the safe."

"A picture of what?" asked Garry.

"Young women," said Hillcott. "It's farcical—they've got no clothes on. The frame works on a hinge—it opens like that." He wagged his hand to and fro.

"Supposing she's got a gun?" said John.

"Don't be silly!" said Hillcott outrageously. "If she had a gun she'd only shoot herself. Women can't use firearms, as all the world knows. Now, listen, Captain, I could do this job for you sweet."

Garry shook his head.

"No, you're not going near the place."

"It's not a job for an amateur," said Hillcott.

"I'm not an amateur, I'm a professional bad man," said Garry grimly. "Now tell me where that ladder's kept?"

It was kept, as Hillcott explained, in a potting shed behind the hedge, and he drew Garry's attention to the fact that he had not drawn the hedge.

"Now, Hillcott, you know nothing about this."

"Naturally," said Hillcott complacently.

"You're not coming into it at all."

Hillcott smiled.

"Don't worry about me; I know how to talk to a judge."

"I know," agreed Garry. "That's what I'm afraid of. If anybody goes to prison it will be Mr Dory or me—probably both."

John blinked hard.

"That'll be very interesting."

"You won't go to prison," said Hillcott. "If you do, ask to be sent to Parkhurst; the food's better."

John Dory lit another cigarette; his hand was shaking slightly.

"What is it like at Brixton? I'd rather be in town."

Hillcott, who had very little sense of humour, accepted the inquiry literally and was explaining the relative values of prison dietaries when an idea struck him and he turned to Garry.

"I know what you're going after—that hundred!" And, when Garry nodded: "I'll go and watch and see when the lights go out," he said.

"Now listen, Hubert! You'll stay here with the housemaid and establish an alibi. Ask her to sit up with you."

"I'd sooner do six months!" said Hillcott loudly.

"You're out of this, Hubert—you understand?"

"What do we want in the way of clothes?" asked John.

The novelty of the situation was brightening up an otherwise dismal prospect.

They would want, explained Hillcott, rubber overshoes and gloves, preferably thin gloves to work in. Gloves were an essential part of the burglar's equipment: they left no fingermarks. And a small torch was necessary. There was one upstairs, he remembered. And also a pair of thick socks.

"To put on your feet?" asked the interested John.

"Put 'em on the top of the ladder, so that you don't make a noise against the brickwork. But for the Lord's sake don't forget to bring 'em back—they've got your name on!"

"Do we want a jemmy?"

Hillcott made faces to express his derision.

"A jemmy! Why, a paperknife ain't necessary! I'll go and see if I can work out the combination—jag jug jog jig, beg big bog bag, din dun don den..."

"Look at my hand," said Garry, when he had gone. It was trembling.

"That's not too good," said Dory.

"I'll get over that in a minute," said Garry. "It isn't the fear of burgling a house, it's the thought that I can go tomorrow to Garth and Innsbrook and stop that notice."

"Tomorrow? When is The Calendar published?"

"In the afternoon."

"The warning-off notice will be there—"

"It won't!" Garry almost shouted the words. "If I have to kill somebody it won't!"

Then came Hillcott, unbidden, carrying in his hand a little red pocket book. For a moment Garry thought that it might contain some secret instrument for the accomplishment of his purpose.

"I forgot all about this," said Hillcott.

"What is it?" asked Garry curiously.

The man was turning the thing over in his hand, rubbing off against his cuff the dust that covered one side of the book; a reprehensible practice of Hillcott's, but one which Garry was prepared for the moment to overlook.

"Do you remember old Lascarne—" he began.

"Mr Lascarne—yes," said Garry. "I don't have to exercise my memory very hard. He was here tonight."

"Do you remember old—Mr Lascarne losing this, the week he was here at Ascot?"

Garry frowned.

"Why, of course. You looked for it and couldn't find it. I'll give it to him tomorrow. Where did you find it?"

"In the cupboard under the stairs."

As Hillcott handed the book across, something fluttered to the floor.

"What's that?"

"A bill," said Hillcott.

Garry looked at him sternly.

"I suppose there's nothing in this pocketbook you haven't read?"

"Nothing at all," said Hillcott. "Otherwise"—this with great unction—"how was I to know it was old Lascarne's?"

Garry opened the bill and looked at it uncomprehendingly. It was an hotel bill—a Liverpool hotel—and it was made out to Mr and Mrs Sundridge. Even then he did not understand. And then dimly he remembered the scene in that very room on the morning of the first day of Ascot, and Willie's accusation, and Wenda's indignant denial. Here was the bill...in Henry Lascarne's pocketbook.

"Well, I'll be—" began Garry.

For the moment he forgot the projected burglary.

Chapter 19

FATE HAD given him a tremendously powerful weapon, a weapon he would not scruple to use if the occasion arose.

Under the direction of Hillcott he equipped himself for the evening's work. Hillcott refused to be left behind; he, also, was a holder of ladders and might be—probably would be—invaluable on the field of action.

The thin gloves were most difficult to come by. Garry ransacked his bureau to find two pairs. Eventually Hillcott got them from the cook—two pairs of cotton gloves, one white, one a genteel grey. They had been bought in Ostend.

"It's funny, you wouldn't think the old girl had ever been out of England, would you? She went on a two days' excursion—"

"Spare me details of the cook's follies," said Garry.

He tried on the gloves; they were too big but would serve. Hillcott had found a couple of electric torches and there were rubber goloshes in plenty. Garry reduced the lights in the study to one and then they crept out into the garden.

The easiest way would be through the garden itself, which adjoined Welbury; but Hillcott counselled the road.

"There's nobody about at this time of night," he said. "The village copper goes home at nine. His wife's expecting a baby. The patrol sergeant went by a quarter of an hour ago—I saw the light of his bicycle."

They walked in single file along the dark road. On the right, midway between the two houses, was a narrow lane; as they passed, Garry threw up the light of his torch, more to test it than for any other purpose.

"Don't go flashing that about," began Hillcott sharply. "Is there anything there, sir?"

Garry had stopped. Parked in the lane he had seen a car.

"That's a pretty big fellow," he said. "Come and have a look, John."

It was not only big but new, an Italian car of imposing performance, with an enormous radiator that glittered in the rays of his torch. It was brand new; the paintwork shone like lacquer. It could not have come from the makers' hands more than a few days before. Throwing his torch on the speedometer, Garry saw that it had covered less than a thousand miles.

"Who on earth leaves a brand new Isotta in a dark lane with all its lights out?" he asked. "Who's got an Isotta round here, Hillcott?"

Hillcott had never seen, it before, could not even guess its ownership. Garry was puzzled. He walked round the machine; three large suitcases were strapped on the roof grid. There was a heavy overcoat on the driver's seat.

"That's odd," he said, and came back to the main road.

Before he had time to discuss the mystery of the car he saw a figure walking slowly towards it. He was in the middle of the road, and recognized the shape and movement of it.

"You two get back and try the garden entrance," he whispered. "I'll go on. I think he spotted me."

"Who is it?" asked John.

Garry signalled him to get back and he himself went on, lighting a cigarette. Lascarne stood in the middle of the road, waiting for him. He wore a light overcoat turned up to his ears, for the night was chilly.

"Hullo! Taking a stroll?" he asked. "I'm just off to Ascot."

"I thought you were spending the night here."

"Don't be absurd, my dear fellow. I couldn't stay the night—Willie's in town. I'm walking over to collect my car at Ascot. I say, I'm terribly sorry about this business."

"I think you said that before," said Garry.

For the moment he had forgotten 'this business', and he certainly had no wish to be reminded of Stewards and Racing Calendars and the consequences of his Ascot indiscretion.

"Wenda's terribly upset. She's gone to bed."

"Willie's in town, is he?" asked Garry, more to change the subject than from any interest in Willie's movements.

"Yes; he's coming down tomorrow. What are you doing out so late?"

It was a bold question, coming from Henry. Mr Lascarne was, as a rule, entirely incurious about other people's business.

“Good for the figure, Henry, a little walk after supper.”

He passed on, but Lascarne’s voice brought him back.

“I say—” he was awkward and embarrassed “—I hope you don’t mind me saying this...but if things aren’t going too well with you—I mean financially—you can—er—call on me for anything you want—I mean...money...”

He was so embarrassed, so obviously sincere, that Garry warmed to him. Henry Lascarne was the last man in the world he expected would offer him help; it was another of those curiously unexpected things that happen in real life.

“That’s terribly good of you, Henry; but really, I don’t want money.”

“I know I’m not a friend of yours,” Lascarne stumbled on. “I mean, I’m not exactly—”

“I know what you mean.” Garry patted him on the shoulder. “I’m awfully grateful. But honestly, I’m rolling in wealth.”

He would have gone on, but Henry again interrupted him.

“I mean, I’m not giving you something for nothing. I should charge you interest and all that sort of thing, because it’s business.”

Garry’s laugh stopped him.

“Don’t spoil it, Henry. I’m leaving you with a feeling that you’re a generous old soul and you insist on representing yourself as a usurer.”

Henry puzzled him; but then he realized that Henry had always puzzled him.

He was nearing Welbury House when he heard the sound of a car coming towards him and wondered if it were the new one he had just passed. The noise it made, however, was familiar. The car slowed as it passed him and he saw its tall light disappearing into the drive of Welbury House. Here was a new complication, for he had recognized the car as Willie’s.

Going ahead cautiously, he turned into the drive and had another surprise, for he found the car parked on the grass verge in the shade of a big chestnut. The radiator was hot. Why had Willie left it here? There was a big stable yard into which it was usually driven.

Garry went farther along, keeping a sharp look-out for the man, but did not see him. The house was in darkness. Wenda’s room he could now distinguish, thanks to Hillcott’s plan. There was no light in her window or in the lower part of the house.

Willie had a room in the farther wing, with a private entrance. Garry moved noiselessly to the far wing, but found no evidence that the owner of the house had reached his apartment. He went on to the lower garden and here he found John Dory and Hillcott and held a whispered council of war.

“It almost looks as if Panniford had come down from London to collect something and he’s going away immediately. He’s left his car in the drive near the gate.”

“Everybody’s leaving cars about tonight,” said Dory irritably. The adventure was getting on his nerves.

“We’ve got to take the risk, anyway,” said Garry. “Where’s that ladder?”

They found it after a brief search. It was chained to the wall, but then, as Hillcott explained in a whisper, ladders are very often chained to walls without really bothering the people who needed them. With the aid of an ingenious instrument he carried, he wrenched out the staples and the three men lifted the

ladder to the ground. Getting it through the complications of a kitchen garden, through the lych gates, around peculiarly acute angles of walls, was a difficult and hair-raising business. Hillcott seemed to have the eyes of a cat. He went ahead, with one hand steadying the end of the ladder, which the two men carried and, thanks to his guidance, they were able to reach the lawn without mishap, though John Dory had twice blundered into a frame, happily without hurt, for the glass lid of it was raised.

There was still no sound from the house and no sign of life or movement. Hillcott drew the socks on to the end of the ladder and himself raised it and placed it gently in position. One of the casement windows was ajar. Again he repeated to Garry the exact location of every article of furniture in the room.

“Up you go,” he whispered and Garry began the ascent.

His heart was beating wildly; he was almost sick with excitement; his mouth and throat were dry; the hands that gripped the side of the ladder were trembling. Worse than this, his legs were curiously powerless; he could hardly drag his feet from rung to rung.

Half-way up he stopped to get breath and to gain resolution and quietude of mind, then, he continued to the top, pushed open, the casement, lifted the catch noiselessly and, with his head whirling, groped one leg into the room and gently lowered himself to the floor.

There was, in this room of Wenda's, a curiously lovely fragrance that was so faint as to be almost imperceptible, yet so distinct as to overpower him. He stood in the shadow of the curtains listening. There was no sound but the loud thumping of his own heart. At that moment he would have given all he possessed to be safely in his own study.

And then there came to him a realization of what it would mean to him if he found what he had set out to find and that thought steadied and nerved him.

Still no sound. He put out his hand gingerly and groped along the wall. Presently he found the outline of a picture frame. He pulled at its edge, as Hillcott had directed. It swung back like a door and beneath he touched a cold steel knob.

He listened again; there was no sound. Wenda was sleeping heavily. It was odd to think that she was here, within reach of him, the woman who had betrayed him, who had lied him to ruin, sleeping peacefully...It was unbelievable, unrealizable.

He threw a pinpoint of light from his torch on to the dial beneath the knob of the safe and began working out combinations, listening for the clicks which would tell him he had found the first letter. Hillcott's hearing must have been more acute than his, for he heard nothing. He tried twenty combinations and was growing desperate. Then, suddenly, a voice said:

“Who's there?”

It was Wenda. He stood still, hardly daring to breathe.

“Who's there?” asked the voice again, and he heard the creak of the bed as somebody moved.

He edged nearer to the window, when suddenly came a click and a flood of light. Wenda, her dressing-gown wound round her sat on the other side of the bed, staring at him.

“Garry!” she gasped. “Garry!”

He saw her eyes go swiftly to the bolted door, then they came back to him. Then they fell upon a little clock on a shelf near where he stood. He noticed mechanically that it was an alarm clock and that the alarm hand was pointing at four. Why did Wenda want to wake at four, he wondered vaguely.

“Good God! Garry! You! What are you doing here? You’ve been trying to open my safe!”

It brought his mind back to his objective and to his own position. He felt uncomfortably foolish.

“Yes, I’ve been trying to open your safe.”

It was a futile rejoinder, but there was no other that suggested itself at that moment.

“What do you want?” she asked.

What did he want? Even that important detail had gone out of his mind.

“Money,” he said.

Her brows met.

“Money?”

He nodded.

“A certain hundred-pound note.”

He was feeling more sure of himself, less of a fool.

“Oh, I see,” she nodded. Then the corner of her lips curled. “I never had it. I’d forgotten that little fiction of yours...how ridiculous!”

“It doesn’t make me laugh,” said Garry.

There was a little pause; he saw the colour coming back to the pale face. It was not embarrassment but anger which moved her.

“Get out of here before I call somebody.”

She reached for the telephone. Garry could afford to smile.

“It’s all right, my dear; you needn’t bother to phone—the wires are cut. I have forgotten nothing.” He pointed to the wall. “Open that safe.”

“Are you mad?” she gasped.

“No, I’m very sane. I want that safe opened and I want to see what’s inside it,” he said.

He was cool enough now. She had lost the first round of the fight, and knew it.

“If you don’t get out of here I’ll call Willie,” she said. “It is monstrous—”

“I shouldn’t call Willie if I were you. It is much easier to open the safe. Just think how foolish I shall look if the thing I expect to find there isn’t there at all!”

Again she looked at the door and now her manner changed.

“Oh, Garry. don’t be a fool! You’re drunk! just imagine how ridiculous you’d look if I sent for the servants and a policeman. Whatever induced you to do a stupid thing like this? Come over and see me in the morning—and talk things over.”

Garry shook his head.

“I’ll talk things over here and now. By morning that note will be burnt. It would break your heart, but you’d do it. I want a hundred-pound note with a message written on the back.”

He could speak with assurance, almost with certainty. He knew now that the note was there, would have wagered his life on it. Wenda would never have parleyed if the safe had been empty. She was fencing for time, could even in her

rage simulate the old attitude of geniality and friendship. How much of a simulation it was she showed him immediately, when her tone changed.

"I'll see you dead before I give it to you!" she breathed, and his heart leapt.

"A word will open this safe. Give me that word," he said.

She was clasping and unclasping her hands, her bright eyes never leaving his.

"Oh, Garry, don't be so melodramatic! Now go home and be sensible."

"I want to search that safe," said Garry, "and I'll not go until I do."

"Then you'll stay here until I send for the police," she said furiously.

His answer was to strip his gloves and throw them on the bed.

"Send for them. I'm sorry now I cut the wire."

He looked round the room. It was quite a charming room. Hillcott had said so, and he was a man of taste. Wenda did not hide her fury now; she almost sprang towards him.

"You beast...you..."

"Will you open the safe?"

"I'll be damned if I will!" she breathed. "You should have sent Hillcott to do this work—he wouldn't have wakened me. I should have left it to the alarm clock—"

"What's happening at four this morning?" he asked.

She drew back as though she had been struck.

"I—I don't know what you mean," she faltered.

"I notice your alarm clock is set at four."

"I never use it...it's been like that since I had it."

He lifted the clock and was about to turn the hands when she snatched it from him.

"How stupid you are! Garry, you're behaving like a man in a play."

She looked towards the safe.

"You don't imagine you'd find anything here, do you? I paid the note into the bank."

"Did you rub out the message?" he asked.

"Of course I did."

No simulation now. She was being quite frank to all appearance.

He shook his head.

"The message was written in copying pencil and it couldn't be rubbed out—I suppose you discovered that for yourself."

"Will you go?" she said. "If Willie knew you were here—"

"Call him," he suggested and she took hold of herself, checked the exasperation that was near to panic.

"You're blackmailing me!"

"Yes, I'm blackmailing you."

He took from his pocket a little red cover.

"Do you see this?"

She looked at it; for a moment it had no meaning.

"What is it?"

"Something to go into your safe when it is opened," he said slowly and deliberately. "A pocketbook containing an hotel bill. The Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool...Mr and Mrs Sundridge. Somebody kept it as a souvenir and lost it."

Her face had gone a shade paler. Knowing all that he knew a few days later, he could never understand what she found in that bill so discreditable that its possession by himself was unbearable to her. Was there an especial romance in this, or was it that she wished to clear up the one incident that might bring her into court and disturb the serenity of the life she had planned?

She walked swiftly past him, turned the knob deftly and surely and he watched.

“Sin—s-i-n” he repeated. “Hubert didn’t think of that.”

She was going to put her hand into the deep recess that was revealed when the circular steel door swung open, but he caught her by the wrist.

“I’ll look.”

He pulled out paper after paper. Almost the first things he found were the bearer bonds that she had lost. He stuffed them in his pocket and continued his search. Then his fingers closed on something crisp and he drew out a banknote and could have shouted with joy when he saw the blurred message written on its back.

“What have you got to say?” he breathed.

“Here’s the twenty thousand you lost and the message you never received.”

He looked at the note again.

“You tried to rub it out, but you couldn’t.”

“Give me that book.” Her voice was hard, unemotional.

His heart was full of sorrow for her in that moment of her humiliation.

“Wenda, how could you do it? How could you do it?”

“Give me the book.”

He took the bonds from his pocket and turned them over.

“There’s fifteen thousand here. You used the other five. You thought you might as well hang for a sheep as for a lamb. Wenda, you fool, if you’d wanted money—”

“If I wanted money!” Her pent fury, burst forth in a torrent. “Who are you...what are you to sit in judgement on me? I hate you! I’ve always hated you! You had no right to give me the money. You knew I was poor, that I hated poverty, that I’d got a sot of a husband; you tempted me the only kind of temptation that a man like you could offer me! Now give me the book and get out!”

He held up his hand suddenly to check her. He had heard a sound outside, the creak of a floorboard.

“Where does Willie sleep?” he said in a low voice.

“He’s in London—” she began impatiently.

“He’s not in London; his car passed me on the road. I saw it in the drive as I came up.”

Her mouth opened in consternation.

“You’re trying to frighten me...you’re lying!”

“Don’t be absurd.”

He caught her by the arm and drew her to the window. From where they stood he could see the dim lights of the car twinkling through the overhanging leaves of the trees.

“It’s there.”

He could hear her quick breathing.

“How long has it been there?”

“Over half an hour. The radiator was hot when I passed.”

“But—”

The palm of his hand went over her mouth. His lips went close to her ear.

“I saw the door handle turning. Is it locked?”

She nodded.

“Wenda! Open this damned door, will you? You’ve got a man there—I know you’ve got a man there!”

It was the roar of Willie’s bull voice.

“Open the door or I’ll break it in!”

The door shook furiously. Wenda looked from the door to a small table by the side of the bed. For the first time Garry noticed that her open dressing- case was there and that on a chair near by were her folded clothes.

“What am I to do?”

He thought quickly.

“There’s nothing for you to do. It’s up to me.”

To her horror he walked straight to the door, turned the key, slipped back the bolt and flung it open. Willie came staggering in. He was in dishevelled evening dress; his tie had worked round under his ear, his hair was untidy, his red, inflamed face distorted with fury.

“Ah, Garry!” He almost screamed the words. “Garry Anson, eh...I guessed it!”

Molly came in, her face as white as death, drawing on her dressing-gown as she came.

“What is it? Oh, Willie, what is it?”

She stared at Garry, unbelievably and then at Wenda; and then her eyes wandered to the open safe; and Garry, watching her, saw her smile and knew that she understood.

“You want to know what it’s all about do you?” quavered Willie. “That’s what it’s all about!” He pointed to Garry. “I’ve known this has been going on for some time...now I’ve caught you!”

“Don’t make a fool of yourself,” said Garry.

“You thought I’d gone to London, eh, didn’t you? You thought I was out of the way—you came to make it up, I suppose?”

He drew near threateningly, but Garry did not move.

“If I had a gun I’d shoot you...you swine!” He glared at his wife. “As for you, you little brute, you lying, deceitful...!”

He lurched drunkenly towards her. Garry caught him by the lapels of his coat and swung him round.

“Willie, when you’ve recovered from your hysteria you will see that a burglary has been committed.” He pointed to the safe.

“Don’t tell me a lot of—”

“Shut up! Do you want all the world to know what a fool you are?” said Garry and pushed him bodily towards the evidence of burglary.

He staggered up, blinked at the open safe door and then at the stockinged top of the ladder against the window.

“Burglary?” he rubbed his head stupidly and then glowered down at Garry. “What are you doing here?”

“I’m being a good neighbour,” said Garry lightly.

It was here that Wenda found her voice.

“Are you satisfied?” she asked.

“What’s he doing here?” Willie pointed a shaking forefinger at the intruder. “That’s what I want to know.”

“If it comes to that,” said Garry, “what is John Dory doing here?”

He walked to the window and whistled. John Dory, who had stood on the lawn undecided whether he should fly or stand his ground, came to the foot of the ladder.

“Just step up and meet a friend of mine, will you, John?”

John came up with visions of prison and solitary cells dangling before his eyes. His first words when he reached the window level, were:

“Well, I’m in it too! I suppose we’ll get ten years for this.”

“You saw the burglar, didn’t you?” said Garry loudly. “You remember, we found the ladder against the window and we came over to see what help we could give.”

Willie’s fury had died out. He lumbered across the room to where Wenda was sitting and laid his heavy hand on her shoulder.

“Sorry, old girl,” he mumbled.

Garry took Molly by the arm and led her to the door.

“You get to bed. I’ll not be seeing you in the morning; I’ve got a long journey ahead of me, but you will dine with me tomorrow night and we’ll fix things.”

He kissed her and Wenda permitted herself to smile sourly.

“Replenishing your fortunes, Garry?” she asked avidly.

Garry nodded.

“Something like that,” he said.

Willie went away, at his suggestion, to interview the police—it had been Hillcott’s idea to cut the telephone wires, on the whole a very excellent idea. Garry waited until the drone of Willie Panniford’s car had died away and then he held up the little red book. She would have snatched it from him, but Garry had another request to make—a letter that he had brought with him, addressed to the stewards. For possibly it needed this confession to support the evidence of the banknote and with amazing readiness she signed the document.

“I’m terribly sorry, Garry, that this happened as it has. I think I told you once before that I get panic-stricken—I’m afraid you’ll have to put it all down to panic and hysteria and all the odd things that women plead in extenuation of their most desperate deeds!”

She was flippant, almost gay and he wondered why.

“You’ll marry Molly, of course? I always thought you would—I hope you’ll be happy. I suppose you don’t want me to give you a receipt for this book?”

There was a touch of the sardonic in her voice. “All you need do is to say ‘thank you’”

“Why ‘thank you’?” she asked innocently.

“I’ve saved your fair name.”

She laughed at this. “I’m sorry you haven’t got all your money back, but really my friendship was worth five thousand pounds. I’ve taught you something about women that you didn’t know before. As for Henry—well, I’m awfully fond of Henry. By the way, have you seen his new car—that beautiful Isotta?”

Garry walked to the door and paused.

“Why did you want to be wakened at four?”

She waved him out.

“Curiosity brought trouble to the Garden of Eden, Garry.” she said and he remembered a certain morning at Ascot and shuddered.

They were waiting for him below, Dory, with the socks in his hand, impatient to be gone, Hillcott a little bored. They went back to Daneham Lodge through the garden. It was nearly three o’clock before they finished celebrating the great event and then Garry’s chauffeur brought the Rolls round.

As they moved down towards the road, a car reared past. Garry had a glimpse of it—a brand new Isotta, with three big cases piled on top. It was half past four...Wenda had not gone back to bed again and the alarm that was to call her at four o’clock for an important engagement was unnecessary.

Garry heard all about it from Molly when he came back from Doncaster. He stopped in London to collect The Calendar, which was wet from the printers’ hands.

“They must have gone straight to the Continent, she and Henry. Willie was heartbroken for nearly an hour. There’ll be a divorce, of course and then I hope Mrs Arkwright will make an honest man of him. But I do wish I knew where Wenda had gone—it would be so embarrassing to meet her when we’re on our honeymoon, Garry.”

“Look at this.”

He picked up The Calendar from the table and paraded it triumphantly. It was the same sedate publication she knew, but with a difference. On the front page was a blank space, where evidently a notice had been expunged at the last moment.

“The printers had to saw off the tops of the type with a chisel,” said Garry. “It was my warning-off notice. I’m going to have that Calendar framed!”
