A Mystery Story for Girls

The Crystal Ball

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Title: The Crystal Ball
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Release Date: October 29, 2013 [EBook #44062]

Language: English

Produced by Stephen Hutcheson, Rod Crawford, Dave Morgan
and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at
http://www.pgdp.net

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The
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By
ROY J. SNELL

Author's Logo

The Reilly & Lee Co.
Chicago

Printed in the United States of America

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THE CRYSTAL BALL

CHAPTER I
MIDNIGHT BLUE VELVET

Florence Huyler read the number on the door. She wondered at the lack of light from within; the glass of the door was like a slab of ebony.

“No one here,” she murmured. “Just my luck.”

For all that, she put out a hand to grasp the knob. In a city office building, ten stories up, one does not knock. Florence did not so much as allow the yielding door to make a sound. She turned the knob as one imagines a robber might turn the dial of a safe—slowly, silently.

Why did she do this? Could she have answered this question? Probably not! Certainly she was not spying on the occupants of that room—at least, not yet. Perhaps that was the way she always opened a door. We all have our ways of doing things. Some of us seize a door knob, give it a quick turn, a yank, and there we are. And some, like Florence, move with the slyness and softness of a cat. It is their nature.

One thing is sure; once the door had yielded to her touch and she had ushered herself into the semi-darkness that was beyond, she was glad of that sly silence, for something quite mysterious was going on beyond that door.

She found herself in a place of all but complete darkness. Only before her, where a pair of heavy drapes parted, was there a narrow slit of eery blue light.

There was no need of tiptoeing as she moved toward that long line of light. Her sturdy street shoes sank deep in something she knew must be a rich Oriental rug.

“In such a building!” she thought with increasing surprise. The building was old, might at any time be wrecked to make parking space for cars. The elevator, as she came up, had swayed and teetered like a canary bird’s cage on a coiled

spring.

“And now this!” she whispered. “Oriental rugs and—yes, a heavy velvet curtain of midnight blue. What a setting for—”

Well, for what? She did not finish. That was the reason for her visit, to find out what. She was engaged, these days, in finding out all manner of curious and fantastic goings on. Was this to be one of the strangest, weirdest, most fantastic, or was it, like many another, to turn out as a simple, flat, uninteresting corner of a sad little world?

Moving silently to that narrow streak that could barely be called light, she peered boldly within.

What she saw gave her a start. It was, she thought, like entering the “Holy of Holies” of Bible times or the “Forbidden City” of Mongol kings. For there, resting in a low receptacle at the exact center of a large room, was a faintly gleaming crystal ball. This ball, which might have been six inches in diameter with its holder, rested on a cloth of midnight blue. Before it sat a silent figure.

This person was all but hidden in shadows. A head crowned by a circle of fluffy hair, a pair of youthful, drooping shoulders; this for the moment was all she could see. The eyes, fixed upon the crystal ball, were turned away from her.

Even as she wondered and shuddered a little at what she saw, a voice, seeming to come from nowhere, but everywhere at once, said:

“It is given to some to see. Observe that which thou seest and record it well upon the walls of thy memories, for thou mayest never look upon it again.”

That voice sent a shudder through Florence’s being. Was it the voice of a woman or a man? A woman, she believed, yet the tone was low and husky like a man’s. As Florence looked she wondered, for the girl sitting there before the crystal ball did not shudder. She sat gazing at the ball with all the stillness of one entranced.

Nor was the strange girl’s perfect attention without purpose. Even as Florence stood there all ears and eyes, she was ready to fly on the instant, but just as determined to stay.

The whole affair, the midnight blue of the curtains, the spot of light that was a

crystal ball, the girl sitting there like a statue, all seemed so unreal that Florence found herself pinching her arm. “No,” she whispered, “it is not a dream.”

At that instant her attention was caught and held by that crystal ball. Things were happening within that ball, or at least appeared to be happening.

The gleaming ball itself changed. It was grayer, less brilliant. Then, to Florence’s vast astonishment, she saw a tiny figure moving within the ball. A child it was, she saw at a glance. A fair-haired, animated child was moving within that ball. She came dancing into the center of what appeared to be a large room. There she paused as if expecting someone. The room the child had entered was beautiful. Real oil paintings hung on the wall. There was a gorgeous bit of tapestry above the large open fireplace. A great golden collie lay asleep before the fire. All this was within the ball. And the animated child too was within the ball.

Florence thought she had been bewitched. Surely nothing like this could be seen within a solid glass ball.

Just then the voice began again to speak. This time the voice was low. Words were said in a distinct tone and all just alike. This is what it said:

“Sit quite still. Let your mood be one of tranquillity. Look with dreamy eyes upon the crystal. Do not stare. It is not given to all to have magic vision. Some see only in symbols. Some see those whom they seek—face to face. You—”

The voice broke off. The girl, seated in that mahogany chair, surrounded by midnight blue velvet, had been gazing at the crystal all this time; yet at this instant she appeared suddenly to become conscious of the change within the crystal ball. Perhaps, since she looked at it from a different angle, her vision had been obscured.

The effect on the girl was strange. She shook like one with a chill. She gripped the arms of the black chair until, in that strange light, her hands appeared glistening white. Then, seeming to gain control of herself, she settled back in her place and, at the command of that slow, monotonous voice, “Keep your eyes on the crystal,” fell into an attitude of repose. Not, however, before Florence had noted a strange fact. “That girl in the glass ball,” she told herself, “is the one sitting in that black chair.

“But no! How could she be? Besides, the one in the ball is younger, much

younger. This is impossible. And yet, there are the same eyes, the same hair, the same profile. It is strange."

Then of a sudden she recalled that she was within the room of a crystal-gazer, that the crystal ball had been credited with magic properties, that one who gazed into it was supposed to see visions. Was *she* seeing a vision?

"How could I see that girl as a child when I have never before seen her at any age?" she asked herself. It was unbelievable. Yet, there it was.

Could the crystal ball bring back to the girl memories of her childhood? That did not appear so impossible. But—

Now again there was a change coming over the crystal ball. A sudden lighting up of its gray interior announced the opening of a door in that fanciful house, the letting in of bright sunshine. The door closed. Gray shadows reappeared. Into those shadows walked a distinguished appearing, tall, gray-haired man. At once, into his arms sprang the fair-haired child. All this appeared to go forward in that astonishing crystal ball.

At this instant Florence's attention was distracted by a low cry that was all but a sob. It came from the lips of that girl sitting close to the crystal ball. As Florence looked she saw her staring with surprising intensity at the ball. At the same time Florence, who read lips almost as well as she could hear with her ears, made out her words:

"Father—that must be my father! My long lost father! It must be! It—"

At that instant something touched Florence's shoulder. As she looked back she saw only the hand and half an arm. It was a woman's hand. From the third finger, gleaming like an evil eye, shone a large ruby. The hand was long, hard and claw-like. It grasped Florence's shoulder and pulled her back. She did not resist, though she might very successfully have done so. She was strong, was Florence—strong as a man. But about that hand there was something terrifying and altogether sinister. Florence had studied hands. She had come to know their meanings. They tell as much of character as do faces. And this, a left hand, seemed to say, "My mate, the right hand, is hidden. In it is a dagger. So beware!"

Florence did not resist. Before she knew what had happened she was out in the dark and dusty hallway. The door she had entered was closed and locked against

her.

“So that’s that!” she said with a forced smile. But was that that? Was there to be much more? Very much more? Only time would tell. When one discovers an enthralling mystery, one does not soon forget. Such a mystery was contained in that crystal ball.

“That’s one of them!” Florence declared emphatically to herself. “It surely must be!

“That girl,” she thought with a sigh, “can’t be more than sixteen—perhaps not that. And her appearance speaks of money. Clothes all fit perfectly and in exquisite taste. Didn’t come from a department store, that’s sure.

“But the look on her face—sad, eager, hopeful, all in one. How easy it is to lead such a person on and on and on.

“On to what?” she asked herself with a start.

“This,” she concluded, “is a case that calls for action. I’ll see Frances Ward first thing in the morning.

“And then,” she laughed a low laugh, “perhaps I’ll take a few lessons in crystal gazing. Just perhaps. And again, perhaps not.” She recalled that claw-like hand and the ruby that appeared to burn like fire. “Anyway, I’ll try.”

Florence, as you may have guessed by this time, was back in Chicago. It had been late autumn when she arrived. So often these days she had been in need of friends. She had found friends, two of them. And such wonderful friends as they were! One, Frances Ward, had given her work of a sort, a very strange sort. The other, Marie Mabee, had given her a home, and a marvelous home it was. Florence had not dreamed of such good fortune. And best of all, Petite Jeanne, the little French girl, was with her.

Jeanne’s airplane, the Dragonfly, was stored away. For the time at least, her flow of gold from France had ceased. Her chateau in her native land lay among the hills where grapes were grown. It was surrounded by grape arbors, miles of them. Some strange blight had fallen upon the vines. Grapes failed to ripen. There was no more money.

“And why should there be?” Jeanne had exclaimed when the letter came. “Who wants money? One is happier without it. I have my friends, the gypsies. They seldom have money, yet they never starve. I shall go to them. Perhaps I may find a bear who will dance with me. Then how the coins shall jingle!”

To her surprise and great unhappiness, she found that her gypsy friends were now living in a tumbled-down tenement house, that they had parted with their vans and brightly colored cars and were living like the sparrows on what they might pick up on the unfriendly city streets.

Disheartened, the little French girl had gone to the park by the lake for a breath of God’s pure air. And there, in a strange manner, she had found glorious happiness.

Jeanne never forgot her friends. She hunted up Florence and made for her a place in that path of happiness quite as broad as her own.

Just now, as Florence hurried down the wind-driven, wintry streets, as she dodged a skidding cab, rounded a corner where the wind took her breath away, then went coursing on toward the south, she thought of all this and smiled.

Two hours later, just as a distant clock tolled out the hour of nine, she found herself seated in the very midst of all this glorious happiness.

She was seated in a room above the city’s most beautiful boulevard. The room was beneath the very roof of a great skyscraper. It was a large room, a studio. Not a place where some very rich person played at being an artist, but a real studio where beautiful and costly works of art were produced by a slim and masterly hand.

Had Florence turned artist? She would have laughed had you asked her. “I, an artist!” she would have exclaimed. She would have held out two shapely, quite powerful hands and have said, “Paint pictures with these? Well, perhaps. But I was born for action. How could I stand for hours, touching a canvas here and there with a tiny brush?”

No, Florence had not turned artist, nor had Petite Jeanne. For all this, the most wonderful thing had happened to them. Often and often they had dreamed of it. In days of adversity when they sat upon stools and washed down hamburger sandwiches with very black coffee, Jeanne had said, “Florence, my very good

friend, would it not be wonderful if someone very good and very successful would take us under her wing?”

“Yes.” Florence had fallen in with the dream. “A great opera singer, or perhaps one who writes wonderful books.”

“Or an artist, one who paints those so marvelous pictures one sees in the galleries!” Jeanne dreamed on.

Even in days of their greatest prosperity, when Jeanne had gone flitting across the country, a “flying gypsy,” and Florence was happy in her work, they had not given up this dream. For, after all, what in all this world can compare with the companionship of one older than ourselves, who is at one and the same time kind, beautiful, talented, and successful?

And then, out of the clear October sky that shone over the park by the lake there in Chicago, their good angel had appeared.

It was not she who had appeared at once. Far from it. Instead, when Jeanne went to the park that day she had found at first only a group of tired and rather ragged gypsies, who, having parked their rusty cars, had gathered on the grass to eat a meager lunch.

Jeanne had spied them. She had hurried away without a word, to return fifteen minutes later with a bundle all too heavy for her slender arms. Inside that bundle were, wonderful to relate, three large meat pies, four apple pies, a small Swiss cheese such as gypsies love, and all manner of curious French pastry. There were a dozen gypsy children in the group gathered there in the park. How their dark eyes shone as Jeanne spread out this rich repast!

These strange people stared at her doubtfully. When, however, she laughed and exclaimed in their own strange tongue, “I too am a gypsy!” and when, seizing the oldest girl of the group, she dragged her whirling and laughing over the grass in her own wild gypsy dance, they all cried, “Bravo! Bravo! She is one of us indeed!”

Then how meat pies, apple pies, cheese and pastry vanished!

When the feast was over, having borrowed a bright skirt, a broad sash and kerchief, Jeanne led them all in a dance that was wilder, more furious than any

they had known for many a day.

“Come!” they shouted when the dance was over. “We were sad. You have brought us happiness. See!” They pointed to a dark cloud that was a flock of blackbirds flying south. “You must come with us. We will follow these birds in their flight. When winter comes we shall camp where roses bloom all the winter through, where oranges hang like balls of gold among the leaves and the song of spring is ever in the air.”

Jeanne listened and dreamed. But her good friend Florence? She was not faring so well. Winter was at hand. How could Jeanne leave her in this great dark city alone?

Just then a strange thing happened. A tall woman of striking appearance came up to the group. She wore a green smock all marked up with red and blue paint. There was a smudge of orange on her cheek, and in her hand a dozen small brushes.

“See!” She held up an unfinished sketch. It was a picture of Petite Jeanne, Jeanne in her bright costume dancing with the raggedest gypsy of them all. On the face of Jeanne and the ragged child was a look of inspired joy.

“You are a genius!” Jeanne cried in surprise, “You have painted my picture!” She was overjoyed.

“I am a painter,” the lady, who was neither young nor old, said. “Sometimes I succeed, sometimes I fail. But you?” She turned to Jeanne. “Do you know many of these people?”

“I—” Jeanne laughed. “I am related to them all. Is it not so?” She appealed to her new-found friends.

“Yes! Yes! To us all,” they cried in a chorus.

When, a half hour later, Jeanne bade a reluctant farewell to the gypsy clan, it was in the company of the artist. The leader of the gypsies had been presented with a bright new twenty-dollar bill, and Jeanne had made a friend she would not soon forget. What a day! What a happy adventure!

CHAPTER II
“JUST NOTHING AT ALL”

The artist’s name was Marie Mabee. It was in her studio that Florence, on the evening after her strange experience with the crystal ball, found herself seated. It was a marvelous place, that studio. It was a large room. Its polished floor was strewn with all manner of strange Indian rugs. Marie Mabee was American to the tips of her toes. Save for one picture, everything in that room was distinctly American. The spinet desk with chair that matched, the drapes and tapestries, the andirons before the broad open fireplace, the great comfortable upholstered chair, all these were made in America.

The one cherished bit from the Old World that adorned the room was a picture. It was a masterpiece of the nineteenth century. In that picture the sun shone bright upon a flock of sheep hurrying for shelter from a storm that lay black as night against the rugged hills behind. Trees were bending before a gale, the shepherd’s cloak was flying, every touch told of the approaching storm.

“It’s all so very real!” Florence thought to herself as she looked at the picture now. “It is like Marie Mabee herself. She too is real. And the things she creates are real. That is why she is such a great success.”

As if to verify her own conclusion, she looked at a canvas reposing on an easel in the corner. The picture was almost done. It showed Petite Jeanne garbed in a bright gypsy costume, flinging arms wide in a wild gypsy dance. In the background, indistinct but quite real, were wild eager faces, a fiddler, two singing gypsy children, and behind them the night.

Marie Mabee had determined that by her pictures there should be preserved the memory of much that was passing in American life. The gypsies were passing. One by one they were being swallowed up by great cities. Soon the country would know them no more. She had taken Jeanne into her heart and home

because in Jeanne's heart there lived like a flame the spirit of the gypsies at their best, because Jeanne knew all the gypsies and could bring them to the studio to be posed and painted. She had taken in Florence as well; first, because she was Jeanne's friend, and second, because, with all others, the moment she came to know her she loved her.

"It is all very wonderful!" Florence whispered to herself as, after an exciting day, she sank deeper into the great chair by the fire. "How inspiring to live with one who has made a grand success of life, whose pictures are hung in every gallery and coveted by every rich person in the city! And yet," she sighed contentedly, "how simple and kind she is! Not the least bit high-hat or superior. Wonder if all truly great people are like that? I wonder—"

She broke short off to listen. A stairway led up from the top of the elevator shaft, one floor below. She did not recognize the tread of the person coming up the stairs. She wondered and shuddered. Somehow she felt that on leaving that room of midnight blue and a crystal ball, she had been followed. Had she? If so, why? She was not long in guessing the reason. Twice in the last few weeks she had whispered a few well-chosen words in the ears of Patrick Moriarity, a bright young policeman who was interested in people, just any kind of people. Patrick had rapped on certain doors and had said his little say. When next Florence passed that way, there was a "For Rent" sign on the door, right where Patrick had rapped.

"Folded their tents like the Arabs
And silently stole away,"

she whispered to herself.

She wondered in a dreamy sort of way whether those people, while they reluctantly packed a few tricks of their crooked trade, had recalled a large, ruddy-faced girl who had visited them once or twice to have her fortune told, and did they know she was that girl?

"Fortunes!" she exclaimed. "Fortunes!" Then she laughed a low laugh.

At once her face sobered. Was it, after all, a laughing matter, this having your fortune told? For some surely it was not. She had seen them seated on hard chairs, waiting. There were lines of sorrow and disappointment on their faces. They had come to ask the crystal-gazer, the palmist, the phrenologist, the reader

of cards or stars, to tell their fortune. They wanted terribly to know when the tide of fortune would turn for them, when prosperity would come ebbing back again. And she, Florence, all too often could read in their faces the answer which came to her like the wash of the waves on a sandy shore:

“Never—never—never.”

“And what do these tellers of fortunes predict?” she asked herself. She did not know. Only her own fortune she knew well enough. Had she not had it told a half hundred times in the last months?

“My fortune!” she laughed anew. “What a strange fortune it would be if all they told me came true! A castle, a farm, a city flat, a sea island, a mountain home, a dark man for a husband, a light one for a husband, and one with red hair! Whew! I’d have to be a movie actress to have all that.

“And yet—” Once again her smile vanished. Was there, after all, in some of it something real? That crystal ball now—the one she had seen that very afternoon. She had been told that visions truly do come to those who gaze into the crystal ball. Had she not seen visions? And that fair-haired girl, had she not seen visions as well?

Once again her mood changed. What was it this girl had wanted to know? She had said, “My long lost father!” Was her father really lost? Who was her father? She was dressed like a child of the rich. Was she rich? And was she in danger?

“I must know!” Florence sprang to her feet. “I must go back there. I—”

Once again she broke short off. There came a sound from without. A key rattled in the lock.

“Some—someone,” she breathed, starting back, “and he has a key!”

Her eyes were frantically searching for a place of hiding when the door swung open and a tall lady in a sealskin coat appeared.

“Oh! Miss Mabee!” Florence exclaimed. “It is you!”

“Yes. And why not I?” Marie Mabee laughed. “What’s up? How startled you looked!”

“Nothing—just nothing at all,” Florence said in a calmer tone as she sprang forward to assist her hostess with her wraps.

“Did you see anyone on the stairs?” she asked quietly.

“No. Why? Have you stolen something?” Miss Mabee laughed. “Are you expecting the police?”

“No, not that,” Florence laughed in answer. “I’ve only been having my fortune told.”

“Is that so dangerous?” Miss Mabee arched her brows.

“Yes, sometimes I’m afraid it is,” Florence replied soberly. “I know of one case where it cost a poor woman four hundred dollars.”

“How could it?” came in a tone of surprise.

“She had the money. They told her to leave it with them for luck. The luck was all wrong. They vanished.”

“But that is an extreme case.”

“Yes,” Florence replied slowly, “it is extreme. And yet, in days like these, people, who might in happier days be harmless, turn wolf and prey upon the innocent. At least, that’s what Frances Ward says. And she usually knows. She says it is the duty of those who are strong to battle against the wolves.”

“And so you, my beautiful strong one, are battling the wolves? Good for you!” Marie Mabee gave her sturdy arm an affectionate squeeze. “That’s quite all right. Only,” she laughed, “please let me know when the wolves start coming up the stairs.”

“I—I’ll try,” Florence replied in a changed tone.

“And now,” said Marie Mabee, “how about a nice cup of steaming chocolate and some of those rare cakes that just came from that little bakery around the corner?”

“Grand!” Florence exclaimed. “Here is one person who can always eat and never

regret.”

“Fine!” the artist exclaimed. “It’s wonderful to be strong and be able to glory in it. On with the feast!”

CHAPTER III
DANGER TOMORROW

“Jeanne, one of your friends has stolen four hundred dollars!” Florence exclaimed, springing to her feet as Jeanne, garbed in a plaid coat and with a silver-grey fox fur about her neck, breezed in from the night. She had been to the Symphony concert. Her ears still rang with the final notes of a great concerto. Florence’s startling words burst upon her like a sudden blare of trombones and clash of cymbals all in one.

“My friend?” she exclaimed in sudden consternation. “One of my friends has stolen all that?”

“From a poor widow with three small children,” Florence said soberly. Then in a changed, half teasing tone, “Anyway, the paper says the thief was a gypsy, so I suppose she was, and a fortune teller as well.”

“Oh! A gypsy!” Breathing a sigh of relief, Jeanne threw off her wraps, tossed back her shock of golden hair, then sank into a chair before the burned-out fire where Florence had sat musing for an hour.

“My dear—” Jeanne placed a long slender hand on Florence’s arm. “Not all gypsies are my friends—only some gypsies. Not all gypsies are good. Some are very, very bad. You should know that. Surely you have not forgotten how those bad ones in France seized me and carried me away to the Alps when I was to dance in the so beautiful Paris Opera!”

“No,” Florence laughed, “I have not forgotten. All the same, you must help me. Mr. Joslyn—he is our editor, you know—sent down a marked copy of the paper. Above the story of the gypsy fortune teller’s theft he wrote, ‘*This is right in your line*.’

“So!” she sighed. “It’s up to me. Until just now I have been a reporter of a sort, rather more entertaining and amusing than serious. But now—” she squared her shoulders. “Now I am to become a sort of reporter-detective, at least for a time.

“And Jeanne,” she added earnestly, “you must help me, you truly must. You know all the gypsies in the city.”

“No, not all. But no! No!” Jeanne protested.

“You know the good ones and the bad ones,” Florence went on, ignoring her denial. “You must help me find this bad one, and, if it is not too late, we must get that money back.

“How foolish some people are!” Her voice dropped. “Here was a woman with three small children. She collected four hundred dollars from her husband’s estate. She hurries right off to the gypsies because one of them has told her two months before that she is to have money. Money!” She laughed scornfully. “Probably they tell everyone that—makes them feel good.

“Then she asks them how to invest it so it will become a great deal of money right away, and they say, ‘Leave it with us for luck.’ She goes away. They vanish. And there you are!”

“Where did this so terrible thing happen?” Jeanne asked.

“In one of the narrow streets back of Maxwell Street.”

“Maxwell Street!” Jeanne shuddered. She had been on Maxwell Street; did not wish ever to go again. But now—

“Ah, well, my good friend,” she sighed, “it is always so. We come into great good fortune. We have marvelous friends. Marvelous things of beauty are all about us. We sigh with joy and bask in the sunshine. And then, bang! Duty says, ‘Go to Maxwell Street. Go where there is dirt and disorder, unhappiness, hatred and poverty.’ We listen to Duty, and we go. Yes, my good friend Florence, tomorrow I shall go.

“And,” she added mysteriously, “when I am there, even you, if you meet me, will not know me.”

“You will be careful!” Florence’s brow wrinkled.

“I shall be careful. And now—” Jeanne rose, then went weaving her way in a slow rhythmic dance toward a narrow metal stairway leading to a balcony. “Now I go to my dreams. *Bon nuit!*”

“Good night,” Florence replied as once more her eyes sought the burned-out fire.

“Strange! Life is strange!” she murmured.

And life for her *had* been strange. Perhaps it always would be strange.

She did not retire at once. The studio, with its broad fireplace, its deep-cushioned chairs and dim lights, was a cozy, dreamy place at night. She wanted to think and dream a while.

Never in all her event-filled life had Florence been employed in a stranger way than at that moment. She was, you might say, a reporter, or, better perhaps, an investigator, for one of the city’s great daily papers.

She had walked into the newspaper office one morning, as she had walked into a hundred places, just to ask what there was she might do. She had, by great good fortune, been introduced to Frances Ward, who proved to be the most interesting and inspiring old lady she had ever known.

“Our paper,” Mrs. Ward had said, “is cutting down on its playground and welfare work. There is—” she had hesitated to peer searchingly into Florence’s face —“there is something I have been thinking of for a considerable time. It’s a thing I can’t do myself.” She laughed a cackling sort of laugh. “I am too old and wise-looking. You are young and fresh and, pardon me, innocent-looking.

“You wouldn’t mind,” she asked suddenly, “having your fortune told?”

“Of course not.” Florence stared.

“Several times a day,” Frances Ward added, “by all sorts of people, those who read the bumps on your head, who study the lines in your palms or the stars you were born under, card-readers, crystal-gazers and all the rest.”

“That,” Florence said, “sounds exciting.”

“It won’t be after a while,” Mrs. Ward warned. “All right, we’ll arrange it. You’ll have to find these fortune tellers. We don’t carry their ads. Some have signs in their windows. That is easy. But those are not the best—or perhaps the worst of them. The most successful ones operate more or less in secret. The way you find these is to say to someone, a clerk in a store, a hair-dresser, a check girl in a hotel, ‘Where can I find a good fortune teller?’ She will laugh, like as not, and say, ‘I don’t know.’ Then, ‘Oh, yes! Mary Martensen, the girl who does my nails, told me of a wonderful one. She told her the most astonishing things about herself. And, just think, she’s only been there twice! Wait till I call her up. I’ll get her address for you.’

“And when you have that address—” Frances Ward settled back in her chair. “You go there and say, ‘So-and-so told me about you.’ You have your fortune told. Remember as much as you can, the fortune teller’s name, her appearance, the kind of fortune she tells you, the setting of her studio, everything. Then you come here and prepare a story for your column. We’ll call it ‘Looking Into the Future.’”

“But I—I’m afraid I can’t write stories!” Florence said in sudden dismay.

“You don’t have to,” Mrs. Ward laughed. “Just tell a reporter all about it and he’ll write it up. It will be a new and popular newspaper feature.

“*Looking Into the Future!*” she repeated softly. “If you do your work well, as I know you will, the feature is sure to prove a success from the start.

“But let me warn you!” Her voice dropped. “You will find it not only interesting and thrilling, but dangerous as well, for some fortune tellers are wolves. They rob the poor people by leading them on and on. These must be exposed. And, though we will conceal your identity as much as possible, there are likely to be times when these people will suspect you. If this—” she looked at Florence earnestly, “if this is too terrifying, now is the time to say so.”

Florence had not “said so.” She had taken the position. Her column had been popular from the start. And now, as she sat there before the fire in the studio, recalling the words of Frances Ward, “not only interesting, but dangerous,” she repeated that last word, “dangerous.”

At that moment a tiny spirit seemed to take up the refrain and whisper in her ear, “Dangerous. That is the place! The midnight blue room is for you a place of

peril. If you go there tomorrow, you are in for it! You can never turn back until you have found the end of the road which winds on and on, far and far away."

"Tomorrow," she whispered as she rose to fling her strong arms wide, "tomorrow I shall return to that place of midnight blue draperies, and I shall ask someone there to teach me how to read fortunes by gazing into the crystal ball." There was a new fire in her eye as she mounted the narrow stairs to enter the chamber which the great artist had so graciously set aside for her use.

CHAPTER IV
THE “TIGER WOMAN”

For Florence fortune telling had always held a certain fascination, not unmixed with fear. Very early in life she had lived for some time with an aunt. Always now, as she closed her eyes, she could see that aunt, straight-lipped, diligent, at times friendly, but always holding close to what she believed was “duty.” Often, too, she seemed to hear her say, “Cards, all playing cards, belong to the Devil. They are of very ancient origin, almost as old as Satan himself. The first cards were made for the purpose of fortune telling. Fortune telling, when it is not pure fraud, belongs to the Devil. Remember Saul. Think how, when he was going to battle he slipped away to that wicked witch. He asked her to tell him how the battle would go. Well, he found out, but little pleasure it brought him! He lost his throne and his head the very next day!”

Florence did not believe all this, nor did she entirely disbelieve it. She tried to look at things calmly and clearly, then decide for herself. All the same, she shuddered as next day she tapped lightly at the door behind which a room was shrouded in midnight blue, and where a crystal ball shone dully.

She smiled in spite of herself as the door opened only a crack and a pair of suspicious inquiring eyes peered out.

“Something to hide,” was the thought that came to her. But was this quite fair? There were policemen always loitering about in the hallway of her own newspaper office. Perhaps all of life was a little dangerous these days.

“Marian Stanley sent me,” she hastened to say before the door might close. “She is the night clerk at the Dunbar Hotel. She told me about you, how—”

“Won’t you come in?” The door was wide open now. Before her stood a short, stout woman with strangely tawny hair. “Like a tiger’s,” Florence thought, “and I

believe it’s a genuine shade.”

“I—I’d like to learn about crystal gazing,” she said as she entered the room of midnight blue. “Is—is it frightfully difficult?”

“To learn?” The Tiger Lady, as Florence was to call her, elevated her eyebrows. “A certain way, it is not difficult. But to go far, very far, as I have done—” the Tiger Woman sighed. “Ah, that is a matter of years. Then, too, there are secrets, deep secrets.” Her voice took on an air of mystery. “Secrets regarding the meaning of light, sound, and feelings; secrets regarding the moon and the stars, which we who have journeyed far could not afford to share.

“But if you care to go a little way—” she spread out her hand. “Then I am here to show you for—let me see—” She pretended to consider. “Oh, you shall pay me two dollars. Huh? Will that be O. K.?” Her voice took on a playful note.

“Two dollars will be all right. And may I begin at once?” There was in Florence’s words a note of eagerness that was genuine.

“This,” she was thinking, “is a fresh way of approach. Perhaps there *is* something to this crystal gazing. I may become a famous gazer. How grand that will be!

“Besides,” came as an afterthought, “I may be able to discover some worthwhile facts about that girl who saw those pictures in the crystal ball. Surely those pictures were real enough. But how did they come there? Could her imagination produce them? If so, would I too be able to see them?” She had a feeling that they had been produced by some strange magic—or was it magic? She could not be sure.

“Now—” Madame Zaran, the crystal-gazer, took on a manner quite professional as she hid Florence’s two dollars on her person. “Now we shall proceed.”

She motioned the girl to the ebony chair beside the table where the crystal ball rested. Then with nervous, active fingers she began arranging articles on that table.

Florence was interested in these few objects. A raven carved from black marble, a bronze dragon with fiery eyes, and a god of some sort with an ugly countenance and a prodigious mouth, all these were on that table. Madame

arranged them about the crystal ball, but some distance away from it. Then, as if the ball were a sacred thing, she lifted it with great care to place it in a saucer-like receptacle over which a bronze eagle perpetually hovered.

The girl was much interested in the gazer's hands. In her wanderings about the city in search of fortune telling facts, she had picked up interesting bits about hands. She was convinced that long slender fingers belonged to a person of a nervous and artistic temperament and that a very broad hand told of force coupled with great determination. Madame's hand was fairly broad, but her fingers were not long. Instead they were short and curved. "Like the claws of some great cat," the girl thought with a shudder. Never had she seen fingers that seemed better suited to clawing in hoards of gold.

"And she would not care how she came by it," Florence thought. And yet, how could she be sure of that?

"Now," Madame said in a changed tone, "look at the crystal. Concentrate. There is no spirit moving in the crystal. You need not draw one out. The pictures of past and future you are to see by gazing in the crystal are to come from within your own mind, or shall come to you from the spirit world outside the crystal.

"Do not stare. Relax. Look quietly at the crystal. In this room there is nothing to disturb you, no radio with its noise, no ticking clock, nothing. The light is subdued. I myself shall retire. You have only to gaze in the crystal. This time you may see much. Then again, you may see nothing. It is not given to all, this great gift of looking into the future.

"If it is given you to see, you will find first that the crystal begins to look dull and cloudy, with pin points of light glittering out of that fog. When this appears, you shall know that you are beginning to have crystalline vision. In time this shall vanish. In its stead will come a sort of blindness wherein you shall appear to float through great spaces of blue. It is against this background of blue that your vision must appear.

"Ready? Concentrate. Gaze.

"I am gone," came in a tone that sounded faint and far away. Florence was alone —alone in the room of midnight blue and the faintly gleaming crystal ball.

CHAPTER V
FLORENCE GAZES INTO THE CRYSTAL

She was alone with the crystal—or was she? She could not be sure. Which is more disturbing, to be alone in a room where a half-darkness hangs over all, or to feel that there is someone else in the room?

Only yesterday she had been seized by a clutching hand and ushered out of that room. Where now was the owner of that hand? She had no way of knowing. One thing was sure, that had not been Madame Zaran's hand. Those fingers had been long, slim and bony. Madame's were not like that.

"But I must concentrate!" She shook herself vigorously. "I must gaze at the crystal." As she focussed her attention on the crystal ball, she became conscious of two gleaming green eyes. These were small but piercing. They belonged to the bronze eagle that, hovering over the ball in this dim light, seemed to have suddenly come alive.

"Bah!" she exclaimed low, "what a bother sometimes an imagination may become! It must be controlled. I shall control it!" she ended stoutly.

In the end she did just that and with the most surprising results. Settling back easily in her chair, feeling the cool darkness of the place and heaving a sigh, she fixed her eyes dreamily upon the crystal ball. For a full five minutes there was no change. The ball remained simply a faintly gleaming circle of light. Then, ah, yes! a change came. The ball lost some of its distinctness. It turned gray and cloudy. Pin points of light like shooting stars appeared against the gray.

This continued for some time. Then, of a sudden, warmth came over the girl as she saw that gray turn to the faint blue of a morning sky. Leaning eagerly forward, she waited.

“Yes! Yes!” Her lips formed words she did not speak. The lower portion of that blue turned to gray and green. She was looking now at rocky ridges half overgrown with glorious trees—spruce, birch, and balsam. Beneath this were dark, cool waters. Above, fleecy clouds raced across a dark blue sky. On the water were no boats, in the forest no people. She was gloriously alone.

“Oh!” Florence breathed, stretching out her hands as if to gather it in.

Now there came another change. Fading away as in the movies, half the trees became bare and leafless. The rocks, the grass and all the barren branches were bedecked with snow. The surface of the water glistened. “Winter,” she whispered. Then, as a strange emotion swept over her, she cried, “Where? Where?”

As if frightened away by that sudden sound, the vision vanished and there she sat staring at a glass ball that was, as far as her eyes could tell her, just a hard glass ball and nothing more.

“How strange!” She pinched herself. “How very strange!”

But now a change was coming over the room itself. It was slowly filling with a dim light. She made out indistinctly a broad, black, dead fireplace, and above it on the mantel a great green dragon with fiery eyes.

Then with a sudden start she sat straight up. On the opposite wall, against the midnight blue velvet, a shadow had appeared, a very distinct shadow of a man. Or was it of a man? The nose was long and sharp. The chin curved out like the tip of a new moon. It was a terrifying profile.

“The—the Devil!” She did not say the words—only thought them. At the same time she seemed to hear her dead aunt say, “All this fortune telling business belongs to the Devil.”

“Well? How about it?”

Florence could not have been more startled by these words had they been shouted in her ear. They had been said quietly by Madame Zaran. She had returned. And in the meantime the sinister shadow had vanished from the wall.

“I—why, I—” With a sort of mental click the girl’s mind returned to her vision

of water, forest, and sky. “I saw—”

“Wait! Do not tell me, not now.” Madame held up a hand. “Ah, you are one of those who are fortunate! It is given to very few that they shall see visions in the crystal ball on the very first time of their trying. You will go far. You must come again and again.”

Madame’s hands were in motion. Florence fancied she could see those claw-like fingers raking in piles of crisp new greenbacks.

“But I may be doing her a grave injustice,” she reproved herself.

“I shall return,” she found herself saying to Madame Zaran.

“Perhaps tomorrow?”

“Perhaps tomorrow.”

Scarcely knowing what she did, the girl let herself out of the room, caught the elevator, and next moment found herself in the bright sunlight, which, after all that midnight blue darkness and air of mystery, seemed very strange indeed.

“Now for Sandy and his glass box,” she thought to herself when her mind had become accustomed to the world of solid reality about her. Sandy was her youthful red-headed reporter. Sandy was her “ghost writer.” She supplied the material of her own column, “Looking Into the Future.” It was Sandy who pounded it all into form on his trusty typewriter. His “glass box,” as she laughingly called it, was an office on the sixth floor of the newspaper office building that looked down upon the city’s slow, easy-going river.

Sandy was not at all like the river. He was up-and-coming, was Sandy. The instant she came into his glass box he bounced out of his chair.

“Hope you’ve got something good today!” he cried. “Big Girl, we’ve got a real thing here. Knocking ’em cold, we are. Look at this!” He put his hand on a wire basket filled to overflowing with letters. “All for you, all fan mail. And the things they want to know!” He laughed a merry laugh. “Old maid wanting to know some charm for attracting a man; a mother wanting the name of a crystal-gazer who can see where her long lost boy is; men wanting a fortune teller that will give them tips on the stock market. Funny, sad, tragic little old world of

ours! It wants to gaze into the future right enough. They—

“But say!” he broke off to exclaim. “You look as if you’d seen a ghost.”

“Do I?” Florence’s eyes brightened. “Well, I’ve got a real story this time. I—

“Wait a minute!” Florence broke short off to go dashing out of the glass box, then started gliding on tiptoe after a girl who was hurrying down the long narrow corridor.

“It doesn’t seem possible,” she whispered to herself. “But it’s true. That’s the girl I saw in that room of midnight blue velvet, the one who saw moving figures in the crystal ball. And here she is hurrying along toward Frances Ward’s desk. I’ll get her story. I surely will. I *must*!” she murmured low as she hurried on.

She was mistaken in part at least. There are some people whose stories are not to be told at a single sitting. The girl hurrying on before her was one of these.

Frances Ward it had been who found Florence her latest opportunity for work, mystery and adventure. As Florence thought of all this now, a great wave of affection for the gray-haired woman swept over her.

Frances Ward was old, perhaps past seventy. Her hair was frizzy, her dress plain and at times almost uncouth. Her desk was always covered with a littered mess of letters, paper files, scribbled notes and pictures. “A poor old woman,” you might say. Ah, no! Frances Ward was rich—not in dollars perhaps; still she *was* not altogether poor at that—she was rich in friends. For Frances Ward was, as someone had named her, “Everybody’s Grandmother.” She called herself, at the head of one column, “Friend of the People.” This, in a great busy sometimes selfish, sometimes wicked city, was Frances Ward at her best, the Friend.

Because of this, the mysterious young girl whom Florence had only the day before seen gazing into the crystal ball and apparently seeing most mysterious pictures of her early life, was now calling upon Frances Ward for advice.

As Florence reached the door of Mrs. Ward’s office, she heard the mysterious girl say, “I—I am June Travis.”

“Oh!” There was a note of welcome in the aged woman’s voice. “Won’t you have a chair? And what can I do for you?”

Frances Ward did not so much as look up as Florence, after slipping by her, seated herself before a narrow table in the corner of her office and began scribbling rapidly. This was not Florence's accustomed place. But Frances Ward was old. She understood many things.

"Well, you see—" the strange girl's fingers locked and unlocked nervously. "I—I read your column al—almost every day. It—it has interested me, the way you—you help people. I—I thought you might be able to help me."

"Yes." Frances Ward bestowed upon her a warm, sincere smile. "I might be able to help you. Will you please tell me how? You see—" she smiled broadly. "I am neither a mind reader nor a fortune teller, so—"

"No!" The girl shuddered. "No, of course you're not. But just think! It is partly that, about fortune tellers, I wanted to ask you. Do you believe in them, crystal-gazers and all that?"

"No—" Frances Ward appeared to weigh her words. "N-no, I'm afraid I don't, at least not very much. Of course, some of them are keen students of human nature. If they can read your face, understand your actions, they may be able to help you to understand yourself so as to meet with greater success. But—"

"Do you believe they could make you see people in the crystal ball—people that you have not seen for years and years?" The girl leaned forward eagerly.

"I should say that would be quite unusual." Frances Ward smiled. "I should like to witness such a feat. I should indeed."

"Perhaps you can!" June Travis exclaimed. "I saw it only last evening, saw it with my own eyes. I saw my father, whom I have not seen for ten years—saw him distinctly in the crystal ball!"

"You seem quite young." Frances Ward spoke slowly. "You must have been a very small child when your father—" she hesitated. "Did he die?"

"No! Oh, no!" the girl exclaimed. "He—he just went away. But he didn't desert me. He left money, plenty of money, for my care. That—that's why I am so anxious to find him now. It's the money. There is quite a lot of it, and I shall soon be sixteen. And then—then I shall have to manage the money all by myself. And that—that frightens me."

“Money. Plenty of money,” Florence was repeating to herself in the corner. Strangely enough, at that moment she seemed to see the shining crystal ball. About the ball, with wings that carried them round and round in ever widening circles, were bank notes. Ten, twenty, fifty, one hundred dollar bills, they circled round and round. And, swinging wildly, clawing at them frantically but never catching one, was a hand, the Tiger Woman’s hand, the hand of Madame Zaran, the crystal-gazer.

CHAPTER VI
GYPSIES THAT ARE NOT GYPSIES

While Florence was having a close look into the mystery of the crystal ball, the little French girl Petite Jeanne was not idle; in truth, Jeanne was seldom idle. She was like the sparrow of our city streets, always on the move.

Since the artist did not require her services as a model that day, she considered it her duty to search out the haunts of certain gypsy groups, and to discover if possible what had happened to the poor widow's four hundred dollars.

"Bah! I don't like it!" she exclaimed as she drew on an old gray coat and crowded a small hat over her gorgeous golden hair. "It is dangerous, this looking for a thief. But it is exciting too. So there you are! I shall go." And go she did.

Since Maxwell Street had been mentioned in connection with the theft, it was to that street she journeyed. It was a bright winter's day. Wares that had been dragged indoors during severe weather had been hauled out again. And such wares as they were! Rags and old iron were offered as clothing and tools. There were stalls of vile smelling fish, racks of curious spices, crates of weary looking chickens and turkeys, everything that one may find in the poor man's market of any great city. Jeanne had seen it all in Paris, in London, in New York and now in Chicago. Always she shuddered. Yet always, too, her heart went out to these poor, brave people who through sunshine and storm, winter's cold and summer's heat struggled to sell a little of this, a little of that, and so to keep themselves alive by their own efforts rather than accept charity.

Out of all this drab scene one figure stood bright and colorful, a dark-eyed maiden dressed in all the many-hued garments of a gypsy. Jeanne went straight to her.

"Want a fortune told?" The girl's eyes gleamed. "Step inside. Read your palm.

Tell your fortune with cards. Perhaps today is not so good." She looked at Jeanne's purposely drab costume. "Tomorrow may be better—much better. You shall see. Step right inside."

Jeanne stepped inside. The place she entered was blue with cigaret smoke. Idling about the large room, on couches and rugs were a half dozen girls dressed, as this other one, in bright costumes. At the back of the room was a booth, inside the booth a small table and a chair.

Instantly Jeanne found herself ill at ease in these surroundings. She had seen much of gypsy life, but this—somehow a guardian gnome seemed to whisper a warning in her ear.

Turning, she said a few words. She spoke in a strange tongue—the lingo of her own gypsy people. The girl she addressed stared at her blankly. Turning about, she repeated the words in a louder tone. Every girl in the room must have heard. Not one replied.

"You are not gypsies!" Jeanne exclaimed, stamping her foot. "You do not know the gypsy language."

"Not gypsies! Not gypsies!" The swarm of girls were up and screaming like a flock of angry bluejays. "We *are* gypsies! We *are* gypsies!"

"Well," said Jeanne, backing toward the door, "you don't seem much like gypsies. You should be able to speak the language—"

"Paveoe, our mistress, she speaks that silly nonsense!" one of the girls exclaimed. "Come when she is here and you shall hear it by the hour."

"And does she run this place?" Jeanne asked. She was now at the door and breathing more easily.

"Y-yes," the girl said slowly, "Paveoe is the woman who runs this place."

"I'll be back." Jeanne opened the door, closed it quietly and was gone.

"I wonder if this Paveoe is the woman I am looking for," she whispered to herself. "Perhaps she has the money. Perhaps that is why she is not here."

As she crowded through the ragged, jostling and quite merry throng on Maxwell Street, Jeanne found her heart filled with misgivings. A spirit of prophecy belonging to gypsy people alone seemed to tell her that this woman, Paveoe, was bad, that they should meet, and then—. At that point the spirit of prophecy failed her.

Meanwhile, in Frances Ward's office the mystery girl, June Travis, was saying:

"No, I do not remember my father—that is, hardly at all. And yet, it seems so strange I recognized him instantly when I saw him in—in the crystal ball! And the girl who was with him—it was I." June broke off to stare out of the window and down at the slow-moving river.

Florence wanted to say, "Yes, yes, she was in the crystal ball. I saw her. It could have been no other." She opened her mouth to speak; but no sound came out. She had recalled that she was there to listen and not to talk. "But what a story this promises to be!" she thought to herself. Then, with a sudden start she began taking notes.

"June Travis. Plenty of money. Much money when she is sixteen," she wrote. "Money—" her pencil stopped. She had thought of the poor widow with four hundred dollars and the gypsy fortune tellers. "Wolves," she thought, "human wolves, they are everywhere." Once again her pencil glided across the paper.

"It does seem a little extraordinary." Frances Ward was speaking slowly, thoughtfully. She was facing June Travis, still smiling. "Strange indeed that you should see yourself as you were more than ten years ago, and that you should recognize your father."

"It was a beautiful room." A look of rapture stole over the girl's face. "A very beautiful room. Books, a fireplace, everything. Just the sort of place my father must have had to live in—for he must be rich. If he wasn't, how could he leave me all that money?

"And he was to come back." Her tone became eager. "He *will* come back. Madame Zaran, that's the crystal-gazer, says she's sure he will come back. She's told me wonderful things. I am to travel—California, the Orient, Europe, around the world.

“But father—” her voice dropped. “She says she can’t get through to father. That will take money, much money. And very soon I shall have much money. Only —” she shuddered. “Somehow that makes me afraid.”

“Yes.” Frances Ward nodded her wise old head. “You must not forget to be afraid, and to be very, very careful. I should like to meet this wonderful Madame Zaran.”

“You shall meet her!” the girl exclaimed. “But, Mrs. Ward, you are so kind! You have helped so many. Can’t you help me find my father?” Her voice rose on a high note of appeal.

“Yes.” Frances Ward spoke with all the gentleness of a mother. “Yes, I think perhaps I can. But first you must do everything possible for yourself. Where is your money kept?”

“In a great bank.”

“Good!” Frances Ward’s face lighted. “What do they tell you of your father?”

“Nothing.” The girl’s face fell. “The man my father left the money with at the bank is dead. The others know that the money is for me and how it is to be given out.”

“And you live—”

“At a very fine home for girls, only a few girls, twelve girls, all very nice.”

“And what does the person in charge tell you of your father?”

“Nothing—nothing at all. I was brought there by a woman who was not my mother, a little old gray-haired woman who said I was to be kept there. She gave them some money. She told them where the other money was. Then she went away.”

“Strange,” Frances Ward murmured softly, “very, very strange. But, my child!” Her tone changed. “You may be able to be your own best helper. You were not a baby when your father left you. Under favorable conditions you might be able to think back, back, back to those days, to recall perhaps rooms, houses, faces. You might describe them so accurately that they could be found. And, finding them,

we might come upon someone who knew your father and who knows where he has gone."

"Oh, if only I could!" The girl clasped and unclasped her hands. "If only I could!"

"That," said Mrs. Ward, "may take considerable time, but I feel that it is a surer and—" she hesitated, "perhaps a safer way than some others might be.

"My dear," she laid a hand gently on June's arm, "you will not go to that place at night?"

"Oh, no!" June's eyes opened wide. "We are never allowed to go anywhere after dark unless Mrs. Maver, our matron, is with us."

"That's good." The frown on the aged woman's face was replaced by a smile.

"Florence!" She turned half about in her chair. "You should know June Travis. I feel sure you might aid her. Perhaps you'd like to take her out for a cup of something hot. What do young ladies drink? Nothing strong, I hope." She laughed.

"Not I!" Florence replied, "I'm always in training."

"Which every girl should be," Frances Ward replied promptly.

"My dear," she put out a hand to June, "I have a 'dead-line' to make. You wouldn't know about that, but it's just a column that must be in the paper a half hour from now. You will come back, won't you?"

"Yes, I will," said June. "Thank you. I feel so much better a—about everything now."

"That," said Florence as the two girls walked down the corridor, "is 'Everybody's Grandmother.' She's truly wonderful. She knows so much about everything."

"And," she added aside to herself, "she knows just how much to say. If she had told this girl I was engaged in the business of hunting fortune tellers, that would have spoiled everything. But she didn't. She didn't."

“Have you visited fortune telling studios before?” she asked the bright-eyed June as they sipped a hot cup of some strange bitter drink Florence found in a narrow little hole-in-the-wall place.

“Oh, yes, often!” The girl’s eyes shone. “I’m afraid I’ve become quite a fan. And they do tell you such strange things. Honestly,” her voice dropped, “Madame Zaran told me things that happened weeks ago and that only I knew about—or at least only one or two other girls.

“But this—” her voice and her face sobered. “This is different. This is what Polly, one of our girls, would call ‘very tremendous.’ Think of seeing yourself and your own father just as you were years and years ago!”

“Yes,” Florence agreed without hypocrisy, “it *is* tremendous.”

“But it costs so much!” June sighed. “Don’t you tell a soul—” her voice dropped to a whisper, “I saved and saved from my allowance until I had it all—two hundred dollars!”

“Two hundred dollars! Did they charge you that for gazing into the crystal? Why, they—”

Florence did not finish. She was trying to think how much those people would charge for their next revelation when, perhaps, this girl had come into possession of much money.

As she looked at the young and slender girl before her, a big-sister feeling came sweeping over her. “We—” she placed her large, strong hand over June’s slender one, “we’re going to stick together, aren’t we?”

“If—if you wish it,” the other girl replied hesitatingly.

“And now—” she rose from her chair. “I must go. There’s a wonderful woman on the south side. Everyone says she’s marvelous. She’s a fortune teller too, a voodoo priestess, black, you know.”

“From Africa?”

“No. Haiti. She tells such marvelous fortunes. Her name is Marianna Christophe. She’s a descendant of a black emperor. And she has a black goat with golden

horns.”

“Perhaps,” Florence laughed, “she borrowed the goat from the gypsy girl in a book I once read. What’s the address? I must have her tell my fortune.”

“It’s 3528 Duncan Street. I wish—” the girl hesitated. “I wish you were going now.” She shuddered a little. “She’s black, a voodoo priestess. She has a black goat with golden horns. I’m always a little scared of black things.”

“Say!” Florence exclaimed, seized by a sudden inspiration, “why don’t you wait until tomorrow, then I can go with you to see this voodoo priestess?”

“I—I’d love it.” The girl’s face brightened.

“She’s beautiful, this June Travis,” Florence told herself, “beautiful in a peculiar way, fluffy hair that is not quite red, a round face and deeply dimpled cheeks. Who could fail to love her and want to protect her?”

“Let me see,” she said, speaking half to the girl, half to herself, “No, I can’t go tomorrow. How will the day after do?”

“That will be fine.”

“You’ll meet me here at this same hour?”

“Yes.”

“Fine. Then I’ll be going.” Florence held out a hand. “Goodbye and good luck. I have a feeling,” she added as a sort of afterthought, “that we are going to do a lot of exploring together, you and I.”

As she hurried toward Sandy’s glass box Florence repeated, “An awful lot.” At that, she had not the faintest notion what a truly awful lot that would be.

CHAPTER VII
THE BRIGHT SHAWL

When Jeanne left that place of many gypsies who were not gypsies, she quickly lost herself in the throng that ever jams the narrow sidewalks on Maxwell Street. She was glad, for the moment, to be away from that place. It somehow frightened her. But she would go back; this she knew. When one is looking for a certain person, one looks into many faces, to at last exclaim, “This is the one!” Jeanne was looking for a certain thieving gypsy woman. She must look into many gypsy faces.

But now, pushed this way, then that by the throng, she listened with deaf ears, as she had often done before, to the many strange cries and entreaties about her. “Lady, buy this! Buy this and wear diamonds.” “Shoe strings, five cents a dozen! Shoe strings!” “Nize ripe bananas!” “Here, lady, look! Look! A fine coat with Persian lamb collar, only seventeen dollars!” The cries increased as she passed through the thick of it. Then they began to quiet down.

As she looked ahead, Jeanne spied a crowd thicker than all the rest. It centered about a rough board stand. Since she was a small child Jeanne had been unable to resist crowds. She pressed forward until she was in the thick of this one.

Just then a man mounted to the platform, took up a microphone and began to speak. His voice carried far.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” he began, “there is to be conducted on this platform a dancing contest. It is open to gypsy dancing girls only. Let me repeat, gypsy dancing girls.”

Gypsy dancing girls! Jeanne’s heart bounded. It had been a long time since she danced in public. But always, as long as she could remember, she had danced. By the roadsides of France, on the streets of gay Paris, in the Paris Opera, in

light opera in America she had danced her way, almost to fame.

“And now to think of dancing on *this* street, before this crowd! Why should I think of it?” Yet she had thought of it, and the thought would not quiet down. Once a gypsy, always a gypsy. Once a dancer, always a dancer. And yet—she would wait.

“Where are the gypsy dancers?” Jeanne asked a slender girl in a bright shawl who was packed in close beside her.

There were gypsy dancers enough, Jeanne saw this at once. They came on, one at a time. A four-piece orchestra played for them. Some were bright and well-dressed, some ragged and sad. Some brought their own music and flashed their tambourines in wild abandon. Some danced to the music that was offered and did very badly indeed. “None,” Jeanne thought, “are very good. And yet—”

Of a sudden she began to wonder what the purpose of it all might be. Then she caught the gleam of a movie camera lens half-hidden behind an awning. “They’ll be in the movies,” she thought. This did not thrill her. To be in movies of this sort, she knew too well, was no great honor.

And yet, as she stood there listening to the mad rhythm of saxophone, violin, oboe and trap-drums, her feet would not stand still. It was provoking. She wished she might move away, but could not. She seemed to have lost her will power.

Then she once more became conscious of the slender girl in the bright shawl.

“The prize is twenty-five dollars,” the girl was saying in a low tone. “How grand to have that much money all at one time!”

Jeanne stared at her with fresh interest. As she made some manner of reply, she found herself, without willing it, dropping into the curious lingo that is gypsy speech. To her surprise, she heard the girl answer in that same lingo.

“So you are a gypsy,” she said. “And you dance.” She could see the child’s slim body sway to the rhythm of the music. “Why do you not try for the prize?”

“I would love to,” the girl murmured. “God knows we need the money! And I could beat them, beat them blind, if only—”

“If only what?” Jeanne breathed.

“If only I did not have a bad knee. But now, for me to dance is impossible.”

At that moment Jeanne became conscious of a coarse-featured, dark-faced woman who was pushing forward a young girl. She recognized the girl on the instant. She was one of those girls who, but half an hour before, had insisted they were gypsies, but who could not speak the gypsy language.

“Yes,” the woman was saying, “yes, she can dance, and she is a gypsy. Try her. You shall see. She dances better than these. Bah!” She scowled. “Much better than these.”

“I do not believe she is a gypsy,” Jeanne whispered to the girl beside her.

“She is not a gypsy,” the lame girl said soberly. “But if we tell—ah, then, look out! She is a bad one, that black-faced woman.”

“So we shall be very wise and keep silent.” Jeanne pressed the girl’s arm. How slender it was! Jeanne’s heart reproached her. She could win that dance contest in this girl’s stead. And yet, she still held back.

The girl, pushed forward by the dark-faced woman, was now on the platform. She danced, Jeanne was forced to admit, very well, much better indeed than any of the others. The crowd saw and applauded.

“She is a good dancer,” Jeanne thought, “very good. And yet she is sailing under false colors. She is not a gypsy. Still,” she wondered, “am I right? Do all American gypsies know the gypsy tongue?” She could not tell. And still, her feet were moving restlessly. Not she, but her feet wished to dance.

And then, with the suddenness of the sun escaping from a cloud, came great joy to Jeanne. A powerful arm encircled her waist and a gruff voice said:

“*Tiens!* It is my Jeanne!”

It was Bihari, Bihari, Jeanne’s gypsy step-father! She had supposed him to be in France.

“Bihari!” she cried, enraptured. “You here?”

“Yes, my child.”

“But why?”

“Does it matter now?” Bihari’s tone was full of serious joy. “All that matters now is that you must dance. You are a gypsy. We are all gypsies, all but that one, the one who, without your dancing, will win. She is an impostor. She is no gypsy. This I know. Come, my Jeanne! You must dance!”

“Here!” Jeanne sprang forward, at the same time dragging the bright shawl from the slender girl’s shoulders. “Here! I, too, am a gypsy! I, too, will dance.”

“She a gypsy?” The dark-faced one’s cheeks purpled with anger. “She is no gypsy! Did I not this moment see her drag the shawl from this girl’s shoulders?” She lifted a heavy hand as if to strike the little French girl. That instant a hand that was like a vice closed upon her uplifted arm.

“Put that arm down or I will break it off at the elbow!” It was the powerful Bihari.

The woman’s cheek blanched. Her hand dropped. She shrank back into the crowd.

“She *is* a gypsy,” Bihari said quietly to the man on the platform. “I am her step-father. She traveled in my caravan. I will vouch for her. And she can dance—you shall see.”

Perhaps Bihari, the gypsy smithy, was not unknown to the man on the stand. At any rate, Jeanne had her chance.

She had not forgotten her own bright gypsy shawl of days gone by, nor the prizes she had won while it waved and waved about her slim figure. Now, in this fantastic setting, it all came back to her.

Once again, as she stood there motionless, awaiting the first haunting wail of the violin, she felt herself float and glide like a cloud over the dewy grass of some village square in France; once again heard the wild applause as her bright shawl waved before a sea of up-turned faces in the Paris Opera.

“And I am not doing this for myself, but for that poor child with the lame knee,”

she thought as her lips moved in a sort of prayer.

It is safe to say that Maxwell Street will not soon again see such dancing as was done on that rough platform in the moments that followed. Jeanne's step was light, fairy-like, joyous. Now, as she sailed through space, she seemed some bird of bright plumage. Now, as she floated out from her bright shawl, as she spun round and round, she seemed more a spirit than a living thing. And now, for ten full seconds, she stood, a bright creature, gloriously human.

Seizing a tambourine that lay at the drummer's feet, she struck it with her hand, shook it until it began to sing, then tossing it high, set it spinning first on a finger, then upon the top of her golden head. And all this time she swayed and swung, leaped and spun in time with the rhythmic music.

When at last, quite out of breath, she sprang high to clear the platform and land squarely in the stout arms of Bihari who, holding her still aloft, shouted, "*Viva La Petite Jeanne!* Long live the little French girl!" the crowd went mad.

Was there any question regarding the winner of the dance contest? None at all. When the tumult had subsided, without a word the man on the platform tossed the sheaf of bills straight into Jeanne's waiting hands.

"Here!" Jeanne whispered hoarsely to the frail girl whose shawl she had borrowed, "Take this and hide it deep, close to your heart!" She crowded the prize money into the astonished girl's hand. Then, as the crowd began surging in, she threw the bright shawl to its place on the girl's shoulders.

"Tha—thanks for trusting the prize with me." The girl smiled.

"Trusting you!" Jeanne exclaimed low. "It's yours, all yours! Take it to your mother."

"You can't mean it! All—all that?" Tears sprang to the girl's eyes.

"I do," Jeanne replied hurriedly. "This is the spirit of the road. We are gypsies, you and I. Today I have a little. Tomorrow I shall be poor and someone shall help me. This is life."

Next instant the crowd had carried Jeanne away. But close by her side was Bihari.

As the crowd thinned a little Jeanne caught sight of a forbidding face close at hand. It was the woman who, a few moments before, had believed her own dancer to be the winner. Stepping close, she hissed a dozen words in Jeanne's ear. The words were spoken in the language of the gypsies. Only Jeanne understood. Though her face blanched, she said never a word in reply.

"Bihari," she said ten minutes later as they sat on stools drinking cups of black tea and munching small meat pies, "do you remember that dark woman?"

"Yes, my Jeanne."

"She is a bad one. I wonder if she could be our thief who stole the poor widow's four hundred dollars?"

"Who knows, my Jeanne? Who knows? I too have read of that in the paper. I too have been ashamed for all gypsies. We must find her. She must be punished."

"Yes," said Jeanne, "we must find her." Then in a few words she told of her own part in that search.

"As ever," said Bihari, "I shall be your helper."

"But you, Bihari," Jeanne asked, "why are you not in our most beautiful France?"

"Ah!" Bihari sighed, "France is indeed beautiful, but she is very poor. In America, as ever, there is opportunity. Right here on Maxwell Street, where there is much noise and many smells, I have my shop. I mend pots and pans, yes, and automobiles too, for people who are as poor as I. So we get on very well." He laughed a merry laugh.

"And because I am here," he added, "I can help you all the more."

CHAPTER VIII
A VISION FOR ANOTHER

That same afternoon Florence met Sandy at the door of his glass box. “Are—are you leaving?” she asked in sudden consternation. “I didn’t get my story in.”

“Oh, that’s O. K.” Sandy, who was small, young, red-haired and freckled, threw back his head and laughed. “I did it for you. It’s gone to press. Remember that psychoanalyst who wears some sort of a towel wrapped round his head and claims he is a Prince of India?”

“Oh, yes. He was funny—truly funny. And he wanted to hold my hand.” Florence showed her two large dimples in a smile.

“Yes. Well, I did him for you. So! Come on downstairs for a cup of coffee.”

“Sure.” Florence grinned. She was not on a diet and she was ready for just one more cup of coffee any time. Besides, she wanted to tell Sandy about her latest finds, Madame Zaran, June Travis, and the crystal ball.

“It’s the strangest thing,” she was saying fifteen minutes later as, seated in a remote corner of the cafeteria maintained for employees only, she looked at Sandy over a steaming cup of coffee. “I gazed into the crystal and, almost at once, I began seeing things!”

“What did you see?” There was a questioning look on Sandy’s freckled face.

“Trees, evergreen trees.” Florence’s eyes became dreamy. “Trees and dark waters, rocks—the wildest sort of place in the great out-of-doors.”

“And then?”

“And then it all changed. I saw the same trees, rocks and waters covered with ice

and snow."

"That surely *is* strange!" The look on Sandy's face changed. "You must have been seeing things for me."

"For you?" The girl's eyes opened wide.

"Absolutely." Sandy grinned. "You see, they're trapping moose on Isle Royale, and—"

"Isle Royale!" Florence exclaimed. "I've been there, spent a whole summer there. It's marvelous!"

"Tell me about it." Sandy leaned forward eagerly.

"Oh—" Florence closed her eyes for a space of seconds. "It—why it's wild and beautiful. It's a big island, forty miles long. It's all rocks and forest primeval. No timber has ever been cut there. And there are narrow bays running back two miles where, early in summer, marvelous big lake trout lurk. You put a spoon hook on your line and go trolling. You just row and row. You gaze at the glorious green of birch and balsam, spruce and fir; you watch the fleecy clouds, you feel the lift and fall of your small boat, and think how wonderful it is just to live, when Zing! something sets your reel spinning. Is it a rock? You grab your pole and begin reeling in. No! It moves, it wobbles. It is a fish.

"Ten yards, twenty, thirty, forty you reel in. There he is! What a beauty—a ten pounder. You play him, let out line, reel in, let out, reel in. Then you whisper, 'Now!' You reel in fast, you reach out and up, and there he is thrashing about in the bottom of your boat. Oh, Sandy! You'll love it! Wish I could go. Next summer are you going?"

"Next week, most likely."

"Next week! Why, it's all frozen over. There are no boats going there now."

"No boats, but we'll take a plane, land on skiis. You see," Sandy explained, "our nature editor has gone south. Now this moose-trapping business has come up and our paper wants a story. The thing has been dumped in my lap. I'll probably have to go."

“Oh!” The big girl’s face was a study. She loved the wide out-of-doors and all wild, free places. Isle Royale must be glorious in winter. “Wish I could go along! But I—I can’t.”

“Why not?” Sandy asked.

“I’ve got this girl, June Travis, on my hands. And, unless something is done, I’m afraid it will turn out badly.”

“June Travis?” Sandy stared.

“Yes. Didn’t I tell you? But of course not. It’s the strangest, most fantastic thing! I should have told you that first, but of course, like everyone else, I was most interested in my own poor little experience.”

“Tell me about it.”

Florence did tell him. She told the story well, about June gazing into the crystal ball, the moving figures in that ball, June’s fortune which she was soon to possess, the voodoo priestess and all the rest. She told it so well that Sandy’s second cup of coffee got cold during the telling.

“I say!” Sandy exclaimed. “You *have* got something on your hands. Look out, big girl! They may turn out too many for you. My opinion is that all fortune tellers are fakes, and that the biggest of them are crooked and dangerous, so watch your step.”

“Oh, I know my way around this little town,” Florence laughed. “And now allow me to get you a fresh cup of coffee.”

“Sandy,” Florence said a moment later, “the little French girl, Petite Jeanne, was with me on Isle Royale. She’d like to hear all about your proposed trip to the island. We may be able to think up some facts that will be a real help to you. Why don’t you come over to our studio for dinner tomorrow night? I’m sure Miss Mabee would be delighted to have you.”

“All right, I’ll be there. How about your gypsy girl friend preparing a chicken for us, one she has caught behind her van, on the broad highway?”

“Her van has vanished, much to her regret,” Florence laughed. “We’ll have the

chicken all the same."

"And about this story of the crystal ball," Sandy asked as they prepared to leave the cafeteria. "Shall I run that tomorrow?"

"Oh, no!" Florence exclaimed in alarm. "Not yet. I want to dig deeply into that. I —I'm hoping I may find something truly magical there."

"Well, don't hope too much!" Sandy dashed away to make one more "deadline."

That had been an exciting day for the little French girl. After she had crept beneath the covers in her studio chamber at ten o'clock that night, she could not sleep. When she closed her eyes she saw a thousand faces. Old, wrinkled faces, pinched young faces and the half greedy, half hopeless faces of the middle-aged. All that Maxwell Street had been as she danced so madly for the prize that meant so little to her and so much to another.

"Life," she whispered to herself, "is so very queer! Why must we always be thinking of others? Life should not be like that. We should be free to seek happiness for ourselves alone. Happiness! Happiness!" she repeated the word softly. "Why should not happiness be our only aim in life? To sing like the nightingale, to dart about like a humming-bird, to dance wild and free like the fairies. Ah, this should be life!"

Still she could not sleep. It was often so. It was as if life were too thrilling, too joyous and charming to be spent in senseless sleep.

Slipping from her bed, she drew on heavy skating socks and slippers, wrapped herself in a heavy woolen dressing gown; then slipping silently out of her room, felt about in the half darkness of the studio until she found the rounds of an iron ladder. Then she began to climb. She had not climbed far when she came to a small trap door. This she lifted. Having taken two more steps up, she paused to stare about her. Her gaze swept the surface of a broad flat roof, their roof.

"Twelve o'clock, and all's well," she whispered with a low laugh. The roof was silent as a tomb. She stepped out upon the roof, then allowed the trap door to drop without a sound into its place. She was now at the top of her own little world.

And what a world on such a night! Above her, like blue diamonds, the stars shone. Hanging low over the distant dark waters of the lake, the moon lay at the end of a path of gold.

Here, there, everywhere, lights shone from thousands of windows. How different were the scenes behind those windows! There were windows of homes, of offices, of hospitals and jails. Each hid a story of life.

So absorbed was the little French girl in all these things as she sat there in the shadow of a chimney, she did not note that a trap door a hundred feet away had lifted silently, allowed a dark figure to pass, then as silently closed. Had she noted this she must surely have thought the person some robber escaping with his booty. She would, beyond doubt, have fled to her own trap door and vanished.

Since she did not see the intruder upon her reveries, she continued to drink in the crisp fresh air of night and to sit musing over the strangeness of life.

Some moments later she was startled by one long-drawn musical note, it seemed to have come from a violin, and that not far away. Before she could cry out or flee, there came to her startled ears, played exquisitely on a violin, the melodious notes of *O Sole Mio*.

To her vexation and terror, at that moment the moon passed behind a cloud and all the roof was dark. Still the music did not cease.

Awed by the strangeness of it all, captivated by that marvelous music played in a place so strange, Jeanne sat as one entranced until the last note had died away.

“There, my pretty ones!” said a voice with startling distinctness, “how do you like that? Not so bad, eh?”

There was something of a reply. It was, however, too indistinct to be understood.

“Could anything be stranger?” Jeanne asked herself. She knew that the voice was that of a young man, or perhaps a boy. She felt that perhaps she should proceed to vanish.

“But how can I?” she whispered, “and leave all this mystery unsolved?”

Oddly enough, the very next tune chosen by the musician was one of those wild, rocketing gypsy dance tunes that Jeanne had ever found irresistible.

Before she knew what she was about, she went gliding like some wild bewitching sprite across the flat surface of the roof. She was in the very midst of that dance, leaping high and swinging wide as only she could do, when with a suddenness that was appalling, the music ceased.

An ominous silence followed. Out of that silence came a small voice.

“Wha—where did you come from?”

“Ple—oh, please go on!” Jeanne entreated. “You wouldn’t dash a beautiful vase on the floor; you would not strangle a canary; you would not step upon a rose. You must not crush a beautiful dance in pieces!”

“But, ah—”

“Please!” Jeanne was not looking at the musician.

With a squeak and a scratch or two, the music began once more. This time the dance was played perfectly to its end.

“Now!” breathed Jeanne as she sank down upon a stone parapet. “I ask you, where did *you* come from—the moon, or just one of the stars?” She was staring at a handsome dark-eyed boy in his late teens. A violin was tucked under his arm.

“Neither,” he answered shyly. “Up from a hole in the roof.”

“But why are you playing here?” Jeanne demanded.

“I came—” there was a low chuckle. “I came here so I could play for the pigeons who roost under the tank there. They like it, I’m sure. Did you hear them cooing?”

“Yes. But why—” Jeanne hesitated, bewildered. “Why for the pigeons? You play divinely!”

“Thanks.” He made a low bow. “I play well enough, I suppose. So do a thousand

others. That's the trouble. There is not room for us all, so I must take to the house-tops."

"But how do you live?" Jeanne did not mean to go on, yet she could not stop.

"I play twice a week in a—a place where people eat, and—and drink."

"Is it a nice place?"

"Not too nice, but it is a nice five dollars a week they pay me. One may eat and have his collars done for five a week. The janitor of this building lets me have a cubbyhole under the roof, and so—" he laughed again. "I am handy to the pigeons. They appreciate my music, I am sure of it."

"Don't!" Jeanne sprang up and stamped a foot. "Don't joke about art. It—it's not nice!"

"Oh!" the boy breathed, "I'm sorry."

"What's your name?" Jeanne demanded.

The boy murmured something that sounded like "Tomorrow."

"No!" Jeanne spoke more distinctly. "I said, what's your name?"

The boy too spoke more distinctly. Still the thing he said was to Jeanne simply "Tomorrow."

"I don't know," she exclaimed almost angrily, "whether it is today still, or whether we have got into tomorrow. My watch is in my room. What I'd like to know is, what do your parents call you?"

"Tomorrow," the boy repeated, or so it sounded to Jeanne.

Then he laughed a merry laugh. "I'll spell it for you. T-U-M, Tum. That's my first name. And the second is Morrow. I defy you to say it fast without making it 'tomorrow'!

"And that," he sighed, "is a very good name for me! It is always tomorrow that good things are to happen. Then they never do."

“Tum Morrow,” said Jeanne, “tomorrow at three will you have tea with me?”

“I surely will tomorrow,” said Tum Morrow, “but where do I come?”

“Follow me with your eye until I vanish.” Jeanne rose. “Tomorrow lift that same trap door, climb down the ladder, then look straight ahead and down. You will probably be looking at me in a very beautiful studio.”

“Tomorrow,” said Tum Morrow, “I’ll be there.”

“And tomorrow, Tum Morrow, may be your lucky day,” Jeanne laughed as she went dancing away.

Tomorrow came. So did Tum Morrow. Jeanne did not forget her appointment. She saw to it that water was hot for tea. She prepared a heaping plate of the most delicious sandwiches. Great heaps of nut meats, a bottle of salad-dressing and half a chicken went into their making.

“Tea!” Florence exclaimed. “That will be a feast!”

“And why not?” Jeanne demanded. “One who eats on five dollars a week and keeps his collars clean in the bargain deserves a feast!”

The moods of the great artist were not, however, governed by afternoon appointments to tea. When Tum Morrow, having followed Jeanne’s instructions, found himself upon the studio balcony, he did not speak, but sat quietly down upon the top step of the stair to wait, for there in the center of the large studio, poised on a narrow, raised stand, was Jeanne.

Garbed in high red boots, short socks, skirts of mixed and gorgeous hues and a meager waist, wide open at the front, she stood with a bright tambourine held aloft, poised for a gypsy dancer.

To the right of her, working furiously, dashing a touch of color here, another there, stepping back for a look, then leaping at her canvas again, was the painter, Marie Mabee.

Evidently Tum Morrow had seen nothing like this before, for he sat there, mouth wide open, staring. At that moment, so far as he was concerned, tomorrow might at any moment become today. He would never have known the difference.

When at last Marie Mabee thrust her brushes, handles down, in the top of a jug and said, “There!” Tum Morrow heaved such a prodigious sigh that the artist started, whirled about, stared for an instant, then demanded, “Where did you come from?”

Before the startled boy could find breath for reply, she exclaimed, “Oh, yes! I remember. Jeanne told me! Come right down! She has a feast all prepared for you.”

She extended both hands as he reached the foot of the stairs. Tum took the hands. His eyes were only for Jeanne.

It was a jolly tea they had, Jeanne, the artist, and Tum. Tum’s shyness at being in the presence of a great personage gradually passed away. Quite frankly at last he told his story. His music had been the gift of his mother. A talented woman, she had taught him from the age of three. When she could go no farther, she had employed a great teacher to help him.

“They called me a prodigy.” He sighed. “I never liked that very much. I played at women’s clubs and all sorts of luncheons and all the ladies clapped their hands. Some of the ladies had kind faces—some of them,” he repeated slowly. “I played only for those who had kind faces.”

“But now,” he ended rather abruptly, “my teacher is gone. My mother is gone. I am no longer a prodigy, nor am I a grown musician, so—”

“So you play for the pigeons on the roof!” Jeanne laughed a trifle uncertainly.

“And for angels,” Tum replied, looking straight into her eyes. Jeanne flushed.

“What does he mean?” Miss Mabee asked, puzzled.

“That angels come down from the sky at night,” Jeanne replied teasingly.

“But Miss Mabee,” she demanded, “what does one do between the time he is a prodigy and when he is a man?”

“Oh, I—I don’t know.” Miss Mabee stirred her tea thoughtfully. “He just does the best he can, gets around among people and hopes something will happen. And, bye and bye, something does happen. Then all is lovely.

“Excuse me!” She sprang to her feet. “There’s the phone.”

“But you?” said Tum, “you, Miss Jeanne, are a famous dancer—you must be.”

“No.” Jeanne was smiling. “I am only a dancing gypsy. Once, it is true, I danced a light opera. And once, just once—” her eyes shone. “Once I danced in that beautiful Opera House down by the river. That Opera House is closed now. What a pity! I danced in the *Juggler of Notre Dame*. And the people applauded. Oh, how they did applaud!

“But a gypsy—” her voice dropped. “With a gypsy it is different. Nothing wonderful lasts with a gypsy. So now—” she laughed a little, low laugh. “Now I’m just a wild dancing bumble bee with invisible wings on my feet.”

“Are you?” The boy’s eyes shone with a sudden light. “Do you know this?” Taking up his violin, he began to play.

“What is it?” she demanded, enraptured.

“They call it ‘Flight of the Bumble Bee.’”

“Play it again.”

Tum played it again. Jeanne sat entranced.

“*Encore!*” she exclaimed.

Then, snatching up a thin gauzy shawl of iridescent silk, she went leaping and whirling, flying across the room.

In the meantime, Miss Mabee, who had returned, stood in a corner fascinated.

And it was truly worthy of her admiration. As a dancer, when the mood seized her Jeanne could be a spark, a flame, a gaudy, darting humming-bird, and now indeed she was a bee with invisible wings on her feet.

“That,” exclaimed the artist, “is a tiny masterpiece of music and dancing! It must be preserved. Others must know of it. We shall find a time and place. You shall see, my children.”

Jeanne flushed with pleasure. Tum was silent, but deep in both their hearts was the conviction that this was one of the truly large moments of their lives.

CHAPTER IX
JEANNE PLANS AN ADVENTURE

The dinner served in Sandy's honor at the artist's studio was an occasion long to be remembered. Jeanne had chanced to speak of her gypsy step-father, Bihari.

"And is he now in America?" Miss Mabee asked with sudden interest.

"Yes. In Chicago!" Jeanne replied joyously.

"Then we must have him at our party tonight. Perhaps I might like to paint his picture."

"Oh, you are sure to!" Jeanne cried. "There is no one in the world like Bihari."

So Bihari was sent for. Tum Morrow too had been invited and, to help the affair along, had volunteered to bring three boon companions, all destitute musicians, and all glad to provide music in exchange for Jeanne's gypsy-style chicken dinner.

When the hour arrived all were there; so too were the great steaming platters of chicken with dumplings and gravy. And such a feast as that was! Bihari had persuaded two good cooks of his own race to prepare the feast. And, because of their love for Bihari and Jeanne, they had spared neither time nor labor.

"That," said Sandy, as at last the final toast of delicious fruit juice had been drunk, "is the finest feast I have ever known."

"And now," he said to Jeanne, "tell us about this magic isle I am to visit, this Isle Royale."

"You?" Jeanne looked at him in surprise. "You are going to Isle Royale? In winter?"

“Yes. In an airplane.”

“In an airplane?” The look of surprise and longing on Jeanne’s face was a wonderful thing to behold. Her own Dragonfly was stored away, but never would she forget those golden days when she had gone gliding through the air. Nor would she forget the glorious days she had spent on the shores of the “Magic Isle.”

“You are going to Isle Royale in an airplane,” she repeated slowly. “Then I shall tell you all about it—but on one condition!”

“Name it.” Sandy smiled.

“That you take me with you.”

A little cry of surprise ran round the room. For a space of seconds Sandy was silent. Then, with a look of sudden decision on his face, he said, “It’s a go!”

“And now, Jeanne,” Miss Mabee arose, “when our good friend Tum has put another log on the fire and we have all drawn up our chairs, suppose you tell us all about this very wonderful isle.”

So there, with the lights turned out, with the glow of the fire playing over her bewitching face, Jeanne told them of Isle Royale. She spoke of the deep, dark waters where lake trout gleam like silver; of the rocky shore where at times the waters of old Lake Superior come thundering in, and of the little lakes that lay gleaming among the dark green forests.

She told of wild moose that come down to the shores at sunset to dip their noses in the bluest of waters, then to lift their antlers high and send a challenge echoing away across the ridges. She told of the bush wolves who answered that challenge, then of the slow settling down of night that turned this whole little world to a pitchy black.

“And then,” she whispered, “the moon comes rolling like a golden chariot wheel over the ridge to paint a path of gold across those black waters. And you, not to be outdone by a mere moon, touch a match to your campfire and it blazes high to meet the stars.

“That,” she exclaimed, springing to her feet and executing a wild dance before

the fire, “that is summer! What must it be in winter? All those tall spruce trees decorated with snow, all those little lakes gleaming like mirrors. And tracks through the snow—tracks of moose, bush wolves, lynx and beaver, mysterious tracks that wind on and on over the ridge. To think,” she cried, “we are to see all this!

“But Sandy!” Her mood changed. “You said they were trapping moose. Why should they trap any wild thing? That—why that’s like trapping a gypsy!”

“Some gypsies should be trapped.” Sandy laughed, seizing her hand teasingly. “But as for the moose of Isle Royale, they have become too numerous for the island. They are trapping them and taming them a little. In the spring they are to be taken to game sanctuaries on the mainland where there is an abundance of food. But look!” he exclaimed. “We are taking up all the time raving about this island. What about our musicians? Let’s have a tune.”

His words were greeted with hand-clapping. Tum Morrow and his companions tuned up and for the next half hour the studio walls echoed to many a melody. Some were of today, modern and rhythmical, and some of yesterday with all their tuneful old melodies.

During this musical interlude Florence, seated in a dark corner, gave herself over to reflections concerning the amusing, mysterious and sometimes threatening events of the days just past.

“It is all so strange, so intriguing, so rather terrible!” she was thinking to herself. “This Madame Zaran, is she truly a genius at crystal gazing? How could she fail to be? Did I not, myself, see a vision in the crystal ball? And that girl June, who could doubt but that she saw herself as she was when a child, with her father? And yet—” the whole affair was terribly disturbing. They had compelled the girl, a mere child, to pay two hundred dollars for this vision. How much for the next? They had promised to reveal her father’s whereabouts, tell her when he would return. Could they do that? “Ten years!” she whispered. “One is tempted to believe him dead. And yet—”

Then there was the voodoo priestess, she with the black goat. They were to visit her on the morrow. “And I have an appointment with Madame Zaran too. A busy day!”

She thought, with a new feeling of alarm, of Jeanne’s experience on that day.

“Wish I hadn’t told her of that thieving gypsy fortune teller. Get her into no end of trouble. Dangerous, those gypsies!” Then, at a sudden remembrance, she smiled. It was good that Jeanne had won the dancing contest; good, too, that she had helped that gypsy child of the bright shawl. Jeanne had “cast bread upon the waters.” It would return.

Then of a sudden as the music stopped, she gave a start. Before her eyes there appeared to float a shadow, a curiously frightening shadow. It was the shadow of a face she had seen on the midnight blue of Madame Zaran’s studio, a face that had somehow reminded her of Satan. “My dear old aunt used to say Satan had a hand in all fortune telling,” she whispered. But then, aunts were almost always old-fashioned and sometimes a little foolish.

Now the music played so well by Tum Morrow and his companions came to an end. There was instant applause, and Florence was wakened from her disturbing day dream.

“Can you play one of Liszt’s rhapsodies?” Miss Mabee asked.

“I’m sorry,” Tum said regretfully, “I have never studied them.”

“But yes!” Bihari, the gypsy blacksmith, sprang up. “Let me show you! The best one it goes like this. Every gypsy knows it.”

Taking the violin from Tum Morrow’s hand, he began drawing forth a teasing, bewitching melody. “Come!” he exclaimed, nodding his head at the other musicians. “You know this one. Surely you must!”

They did. Soon piano, cello, clarinet and violin were doing full justice to this glorious gypsy music written down for the world by a master composer.

A perfect silence fell over the room. When the violin dropped to a whisper and was heard alone, there was not another sound.

As for Jeanne, while Bihari played she was far, far away beside a hedge where the grass was green and the midnight blue of the sky was sprinkled with golden stars. Again, with her fellow wanderers she breathed the sweet free air of night, listened to the call of the whippoorwill and the wail of the violin.

“Wonderful!” Miss Mabee exclaimed as the music ended. “You almost make me

want to be a gypsy. And Bihari, you shall make me famous. I shall paint your picture. You shall be seated on your anvil, playing Liszt's rhapsody to a group of ragged children. In the background shall be a dozen poorly clad women holding their pots and pans to be mended, but all carried away by that glorious music. Ah, what a picture! Shall I have it?"

"If you wish it," Bihari replied humbly.

"Tomorrow?"

"If you wish."

"Done!" the artist exclaimed. "And all the ones with ragged shawls and leaky pans shall be well paid.

"And now, Tum, my dear boy," she turned to the boy musician. "You give us a goodnight lullaby, and we shall be off to pleasant dreams."

A half hour later Miss Mabee and Florence sat before the fire. Florence had just told of her experience as a crystal-gazer.

"You were day-dreaming, my dear," Miss Mabee laughed lightly. "Had you been looking dreamily at a spot of light or a blank wall, you would have seen the same thing. You are fond of the wide out-of-doors and our bits of American wilderness. Day-dreaming is our most wonderful indoor sport. Were it not for our day-dreams, there are many who would go quite mad in these troublous times. But when life is too hard, off we drift on our magic carpet of dreams, and all is well."

CHAPTER X
A VOODOO PRIESTESS

When Florence and June Travis arrived at the home of Marianna Christophe, the voodoo priestess, next afternoon, they met with a surprise. The surprise was not in the building—it was unpretentious enough, a long, low building with a pink front. The surprise came when they found several large and shiny automobiles parked along the curb before the door.

“Our visit is off,” Florence sighed. “Must be a funeral or something.”

“But I have an appointment at four o’clock!” June protested.

“Oh, well, we’ll see.” Florence lifted an ancient brass knocker and let it fall.

Instantly the door flew open and a brownish young lady with white and rolling eyes peered out.

“I have an appointment,” June Travis said timidly.

“I’ll look.” The brown one vanished, to return almost at once.

“Yass’m! Jest step right in!” She bowed low. “The priestess will see you, ’zactly at four.”

The reception room which the girls entered was large. Along one side was a row of comfortable chairs. All but two of the chairs were filled. If one were to judge by their rich attire, these people were the owners of the cars parked outside. They were all women. One was old and one quite young. The others, four in all, were middle-aged.

“She’s marvelous!” one of the waiting ones said in a half whisper. “The first time I saw her she told me I had a boy who was not yet sixteen and who was

more than six feet tall. She said I had been married twice, but that I have no husband now. She said my principal jewels were a necklace of pearls coming down from my grandmother, a diamond bracelet and three diamond rings. All of this is exactly right. And think of it! She had never seen me before! I had not so much as given her my name. Wasn't that most astonishing?"

Florence listened in vast surprise. This woman was speaking, beyond doubt, of the voodoo priestess. Could she indeed tell you all about yourself, your innermost secrets? She shuddered. Who could want any stranger to know all that? She looked at June. She, too, had heard. Her face was all alight. "All these people believe in her," she whispered. "They are much older than I, and must be wiser, and they are rich. Surely she will tell me where my father is, and when he will come back. It—it's so very little to ask." There was an appealing note in the girl's low voice that went straight to Florence's heart.

"I have ten dollars left," June whispered. "Next week I'll have a little more, and soon a very great deal."

"Yes," Florence thought, "and therein lies your great peril! In such times as these much money is a menace to any innocent and unprotected person. We must find her father, we must indeed! But how? There's the trouble."

Her thoughts were broken in upon by the brown girl of the rolling eyes. "The priestess will see you all now," she whispered.

"June," Florence asked in a low tone, "have you been here before?"

"Never." The girl shuddered.

"And yet," Florence thought, "they are passing her in ahead of those others! Can it be that this priestess has already heard of this child's money?" For the first time in her life she began to believe that at least some of these fortune tellers knew everything, even the innermost secrets of one's heart. The feeling made her uncomfortable.

The room they entered was weirdly fantastic. Its walls were covered with paper so blue that it seemed black. Over this paper flew a thousand tiny imaginary birds of every hue. The floor was jet black. On a sort of raised platform, in a highly ornamental chair that seemed a throne, sat a very large black woman with deep-set dark eyes. She was dressed in a robe of dark red. As the two girls

entered, she was swinging her arms slowly up and down as if to drive away an imaginary swarm of flies, or perhaps ghosts.

“I am—” June began.

“No, child. Don’t tell me.” The woman’s tone was melodiously southern. “I’s a priestess, a voodoo priestess. I’s the great, great granddaughter of Cristophe, the Emperor of Haiti.

“Listen, child!” Her voice dropped. It seemed to Florence that the lights grew dim. “At midnight in the dark of de moon, on de highest mountain in Haiti, dey took me an’ a big black goat, all black. Dey sacrificed de goat in de dark of de moon. But me, honey, me dey made a priestess. To me it is given to ask and to know all things. As I look at you now, I seem to see no father near you, no mother near you, but girls, one, two, three, oh, mebby a dozen. That right?”

“Yes, I—”

“Don’t speak, honey. You come to ask where your Daddy is, and I—I am here to tell you. Only—”

“I—I’ve got ten—”

“Don’t speak of money, not yet. I—”

The priestess broke off suddenly. Florence had entered silently, but had fallen back at once into a dark corner. For the first time the priestess became conscious of her presence.

“Who’s that?” she demanded.

“Only my friend,” June replied timidly.

“Well, she can sit over there.” The priestess pointed to the farthest corner.

When Florence was seated the woman began again her monotonous monologue, but she spoke in such low tones that Florence could catch only a word here and there.

“Darkness,” she heard then—“Spirit of Cristophe—darkness—the black goat—

gold, gold, gold—spirit of darkness."

Even as these last words were spoken, the lights began slowly to fade. Then it was that for the first time Florence became conscious of some living creature in the corner opposite her own. As she looked, she saw it was a black goat with golden horns. Strangely enough, as the light continued to fade, she felt herself imagining that the goat was a spirit, the spirit of that black goat sacrificed on the highest mountain at midnight in the dark of the moon. This, she knew, was pure nonsense.

But why all this failing light? Was this some trick? She was about to leap to her feet and demand that the thing be stopped. Then she thought of the ones who waited in the room beyond the plastered wall. "Nothing serious can happen." She settled back.

But what was this? The room was now almost completely dark. Along the far side of the room she seemed to catch sight of something moving. It rose and fell, like some filmy shadow or trace of light.

"Like a ghost!" She shuddered. "Yet it is not white. It shines like ebony. It—"

She could not really think the notion that formed in her mind which was, "This is Cristophe's ghost, a black ghost."

As the thing moved slowly, oh so slowly across the wall, there came the sound of whispers—whispered words that could be heard but not understood.

Florence was ready to flee. But what of June? She must not leave her. This thing was horrible. Yet it was fascinating.

And then, close beside her, there was a movement. Looking down quickly, she caught two golden gleams. "The goat's horns. He has moved, he is near me!" She was filled with fresh terror.

And then the light began returning. Slowly as it had faded, so slowly did it return.

Once again Florence looked at that spot close by her side. The goat was not there. Her eyes sought the opposite corner. There lay the goat, apparently fast asleep.

“I have asked the spirit of Cristophe.” The priestess spoke in her usual melodious drawl. “He says dere must be gold, much gold. A statue to his memory must be built. There must be gold, much gold. He will tell all things—all—all things for gold.

“There now!” she ended abruptly. “Some other time, you shall know all. There must be gold, much gold—”

And then, for the second time, Florence saw it, the shadow on the wall. It was the same, the very same as that she had seen on Madame Zaran’s midnight blue drapes. There was the sharp nose, the curved chin, all that made up a perfect Satan’s face. One second it was there, the next it was gone. But in that second Florence saw the large black woman half rise as a look of surprise not unmixed with fear overspread her face. Then, as the shadow faded, she dropped heavily back into the arms of the chair that might have been a throne.

A bell tinkled. The brown girl appeared. They were led out into the light of day.

“She—she didn’t even take my ten dollars,” June whispered.

“No, but she will in the end, and much, very much more!” These words were on the tip of Florence’s tongue, but she did not say them. This surely was a strange world.

“June,” said Florence after they had left the home of the voodoo priestess—her voice was low and serious—“you must be very careful! Such things as these might get you into a great deal of trouble; yes, and real peril.”

“Peril?” The younger girl’s voice trembled.

“Just that,” Florence replied. “Most of these fortune tellers, I’m convinced, are rather simple-minded people who earn a living by telling people the things they want to hear. They read your palm, study the bumps on your head, tell you what the stars you were born under mean to you, or gaze into a crystal. After that they make you happy by saying they see that you are to inherit money, have new clothes, go on a journey, marry a rich man and live happily ever after.” Florence laughed low.

“They charge you half a dollar,” she went on. “You go away happily and no real harm is done.

“But some of these people, I think—mind you, I don’t know for sure—some of them may be sharpers, grafters in a big way. And when a dishonest person is prevented from reaping a rich but unearned reward, he is likely to become truly dangerous. S—so, watch your step!

“Anyway,” she added after a time, “your problem may perhaps be solved in simpler ways. Remember the suggestion of Frances Ward? She said you should be able to recall more than you have told thus far. If you could remember the place where you lived with your father, perhaps we could find that place. Then, it is possible someone living near there would remember your father. That would help. In time perhaps we could untangle the twisted skein that is your mysterious past.”

“Oh, do you think we could?” June’s tone was eager. “But how can I remember a

thing I don’t recall?”

“There are people, great psychologists, who have ways of making people think back, back, back into the remotest corners of their past.”

“Do you know one of them?” June asked excitedly.

“Not at this moment, but I could find one, I think.”

“Will you try?”

“Yes, I’ll try.

“And now—” Florence’s tone changed. “I’ll have to leave you here. I—I have an appointment.”

Florence was, in the end, to find a psychologist, and that in the strangest possible manner. Meanwhile, her appointment was with Madame Zaran and her crystal ball. There was just time to make it.

She arrived, rather out of breath, to find the place much the same, yet somehow different. The crystal ball was in its place at the center of the room. The chair, the rug, the midnight blue draperies were the same. Madame Zaran came out with a smile to greet her. All was as before, and yet—the big girl shuddered—there seemed to be an air of hostility about the place.

“Yes, you may gaze into the crystal.” Madame’s claw-like hands folded and unfolded. “You may see much today. I have read it in a book, the book of the stars. You were born under a remarkable constellation. Yes, I do horoscopes as well. But now you shall gaze into the crystal ball.”

She withdrew. Florence was left alone with her thoughts and the crystal ball.

There followed a half hour’s battle between her thoughts and the magic ball. Her thoughts won. No beautiful island came to her in the ball, no stately trees, no still waters, nothing. Only the sordid little world which, it seemed, pressed in about her, stifling all beauty, all romance, filled her mind. With all her heart she wished that she was to fly away with Sandy and Jeanne to the magic of Isle Royale in winter.

“But I will not go.” She set her will hard. “I must not!”

And then there, standing before her, was Madame Zaran.

There was a strange light in the fortune teller’s eyes. She said but one word:

“Well?”

In that one word Florence seemed to feel a dark challenge.

“No vision today,” she replied simply.

“No!” Madame’s voice was harsh. “And there will be no visions for you. Never again. You have betrayed the sacred symbol!” Her voice rose shrill and high. Her short fingers formed themselves into claw-like curves. Her tiger-like hair appeared to stand on end.

“You—” her eyes burned fire. “You are a traitor. You—”

She broke short off. Her weak mouth fell open. Her pupils dilated, she stared at the midnight blue drapes. Then, for a third time, Florence saw it—the shadow, the long, thin face, the narrow nose, the curved chin, the shadow of Satan, all but the horns and the forked tail.

While Madame still stared speechless, Florence slipped from her chair, glided from the room, caught the teetering elevator, then found herself once more upon the noisy city street.

“Ah!” she breathed. “There was a time when I thought this street a dangerous place. Now it is a haven, a place of refuge.”

She walked three blocks. Her blood cooled. Her heart resumed its normal beat. She was in a mood for thought. What did Madame Zaran know? Did she know all? There had been a little in her column that day, the column “Looking Into The Future,” that was about Madame Zaran’s place and her methods. No names were mentioned, no address given. It was written only as an amusing incident.

“And of course my name was not signed. It never is,” Florence thought to herself. “How could she know that I conduct that column? And yet—” Here truly was food for thought.

“Jeanne,” she said as, two hours later, they sat reading beside a studio light, “these fortune tellers have an uncanny way of finding out all about you. That black priestess today told June all about herself. And yet, she had never seen her before. Jeanne had made an appointment over the phone, that was all. I don’t believe in black magic, though I did see something very like a black ghost. But how do they do it?”

“How can they do it?” Jeanne echoed.

“I’ve got a notion!” Florence exclaimed. “We’ll try it out on one of the fortune tellers of the simpler sort, you and I. What do you say?”

“Anything for a little happy adventure,” Jeanne laughed.

“All right, it’s a go! We’ll start it tomorrow. And finish it, perhaps, the next day.”

“My dear, I am intrigued!” Jeanne threw back her head to indulge a merry laugh.

Florence was glad that someone in the world could laugh. As for herself, she felt that things were getting rather too thick for comfort. She felt that somehow she was approaching an hour of testing, perhaps a crisis. When would the testing come? Tomorrow? Next day? In a week? A month? Who could say? Meanwhile, she could but carry on.

CHAPTER XI
FIRESIDE REFLECTIONS

“Fortune telling with cards,” Jeanne said thoughtfully after a time, “is very old. Madame Bihari told me all about it many, many times. She truly believed that cards could foretell your fate. Do you think she was wrong?”

“It is strange,” Florence replied in a sober tone. “It is hard to know what to believe. The whole thing seems impossible, and yet—”

“There are many thousands who have believed,” Jeanne broke in. “Many years ago there was a very famous teller of fortunes. He used seventy-eight cards. Those were terrible times, the days of revolution. Men were having their heads cut off because they were called traitors. No one knew who would be next to be suspected and led away to the guillotine.

“Men used to come creeping to Ettella’s place in the middle of the night to ask if their heads were to fall in the morning.

“Can you see it, Florence?” Jeanne spread out her arms in a dramatic gesture. “A dimly lighted room, a haggard face opposite one who quietly shuffles the cards, invites the haggard one to cut the cards, then shuffles again. He spreads them out, one, two, three, four. Nothing to laugh at, Florence—no joke! It is life or death. Could the cards tell? Did they tell? When the fortune teller whispered, ‘You shall live,’ or when he said hoarsely, ‘Tomorrow you shall die,’ did he always speak the truth? Who can say? That was more than a hundred and fifty years ago. But Florence,” Jeanne’s eyes shone with a strange light, “even under those terrible circumstances, men *did* believe. And they still believe today.”

“Yes.” Florence shook her shoulders as if to waken herself from a bad dream. “But—many of them are frauds of the worst sort. I can prove that. We—” she sprang to her feet. “We shall try it tomorrow. This time you shall have your

fortune told. What do you say?”

“Anything you may desire,” Jeanne answered quietly. “Only let us hope it may be a good fortune.”

“That will not matter,” was Florence’s rather strange reply, “for in the end I feel certain that I can prove the fortune teller to be a cheat. And that,” she added, “in spite of the fact that I only know her name is Myrtle Rand and that her ‘studio,’ as she calls it, is in the twenty-five hundred block on North Clark Street.”

“We have agreed to try this,” said Jeanne, “but how will you prove that she is a fraud?”

“You shall see!” Florence laughed. “This wonderful ‘reading’ is going to cost you two whole dollars. This is my prediction. But if you feel it is not worth it, I shall make it up to you out of my expense account.”

“Very well, it is done. Tomorrow my fortune shall be told.” Jeanne lapsed into silence.

It was Miss Mabee who broke in upon that silence.

“Jeanne,” she exclaimed, “we must do something for this beautiful boy musician you found upon the roof! What is it he calls himself?”

“Tum Morrow.”

“Well, we must turn his tomorrow into today. He is too splendid to be lost in the drab life of those who never have a chance. Let me see—

“I have it!” she exclaimed after a moment’s reflection. “There is Tony Piccalo. He is owner of that wonderful restaurant down there in the theatre district. He is a patron of art. He paid me well for two pictures of west side Italian life. He has often urged me to display my pictures at his restaurant. All the rich people go there after a concert or a show. I shall accept his offer. I shall display all my gypsy pictures.

“And of course—” she smiled a wise smile. “We must have gypsy music and gypsy dancing to go with the pictures. You, my Jeanne, shall be the dancer and your Tum Morrow the star musician. What could be sweeter?”

“But Tum is not a gypsy,” Jeanne protested.

“Who cares for that?” the artist laughed. “A few touches of red and brown on his cheeks, a borrowed costume, and who shall know the difference? If we bill him as a gypsy boy, no one will insist upon him joining the union. And who knows but on that night he shall find some good angel with a good deal of money. The angel will pay for his further education. And there you are!”

“But, Miss Mabee,” Jeanne protested, “they will become so absorbed in the show, they will forget your pictures!

“But no!” She sprang to her feet as a sudden inspiration seized her. “We’ll make them look, and we’ll give them one grand shock!

“This is it!” Her manner became animated. “You paint a sketch upon a large square of thin paper, then mount it in a frame. Set it up with all your other pictures, only have it close to the platform where I am to dance.

“I—” she laughed a merry laugh. “I shall entertain them with the wildest gypsy dance ever seen upon the stage, and right in the midst of it I shall leap high, appear to lose my balance, and go crashing right through that picture!”

“Rather fantastic,” said Miss Mabee. “I agree with you in one particular, however. It *will* give them a surprise. And that, in this drab world, is what people are looking for.”

“You will do the picture?” Jeanne demanded eagerly.

“I will do the picture.”

“A very large one?”

“A very large one,” Miss Mabee echoed.

“And we shall have one very grand show!” Jeanne went rocketing across the floor in that wildest of all gypsy dances.

Three days later the colorful sketch of gypsy life, done on a large square of paper, was finished and framed. It was a beautiful bit of work. At a distance it could scarcely have been told from a real masterpiece.

“Why did you make it so beautiful? How can I destroy it?” Jeanne wailed at sight of it.

Well might some sprite have echoed, “How can she?”

The picture was to meet a stranger fate than that, and to serve an unusual purpose as well.

CHAPTER XII
JEANNE'S FORTUNE

Next morning it was arranged that Jeanne should go unaccompanied to the fortune teller on Clark Street. Florence would be loitering on the street, not too far away.

Jeanne, as she started forth on this exciting little journey, cut a real figure. She had put on her finest silk dress. White gloves that reached to her elbows were on her hands. Her hat was from one of the best Michigan Avenue shops. And, to make sure that she would be taken for a "little daughter of the rich," she had borrowed the famous artist's very best fur coat.

"Ah!" she breathed, "it is wonderful to be quite rich!"

The place on Clark Street surprised her a little. A plain dwelling with ancient brownstone front, it suggested nothing of the mysterious or supernatural. Inside it was no better. A sign read, "Knock on the door." The door in question was a glass door that had been painted a solid brown.

Jeanne knocked timidly. The door opened a crack, and a feminine voice said, "Y-e-s?"

The eyes that shone out from the narrow opening registered surprise. Such a gorgeous apparition as Jeanne presented in the borrowed coat, apparently had seldom crossed that threshold.

"Dorothy Burns, who sells rare stamps at the Arcade, told me how wonderful you are," Jeanne murmured wistfully.

This was a well-memorized speech. She was at that moment recalling Florence's last words before they parted.

“The fortune teller will not ask your name or address. Don’t give them to her. She *will*, under one pretext or another, ask the name and address of some person whom you know, quite probably a rather humble person. However that may be, give her my name and address. Give her our telephone number, too, and tell her I am always in between three and four in the afternoon.” Jeanne smiled in spite of herself, recalling these words.

But the fortune teller was saying, “Won’t you come in, please? There now. Shall I take your coat? You wanted a reading? Is that not so? My very best readings are two dollars.”

Jeanne removed her coat and placed it upon the back of the chair offered her. She produced two crisp one-dollar bills.

“Ah!” The round face of the fortune teller shone. “You are to have a very wonderful future, I can see that at once.”

“I—I hope so.” Jeanne appeared to falter. “You see—” she leaned forward eagerly. “I have been—well, quite fortunate un—until just lately. And now—” her eyes dropped. “Now things are not so good! And I—you know, I’m worried!”

Jeanne *was* worried, all about that gorgeous coat. She hoped Florence was near and perhaps a policeman as well, but she need have had no fear.

Florence was near, very near. Having slipped through the outer door, she had found a seat in the dimly lighted corridor. There was a corner in the plastered wall just beyond her. From behind this there floated faint, childish whispers.

At last a face appeared, a slim pinched face surrounded by a mass of uncombed hair. A second face peeked out, then a third.

“Come here,” Florence beckoned. Like birds drawn reluctantly forward by some charm, the three unkempt children glided forward until they stood beside her chair.

“Who are you?” Florence whispered.

“I’m Tillie,” the largest girl whispered back. “She’s Fronie, and he’s Dick. Our mother’s gone away. Myrtle takes care of us, sort of like.”

“We—we’re going to have ice cream and cake for dinner!” Fronie burst forth in a loud whisper. “The beautiful lady gave Myrtle two whole dollars. We always have ice cream and cake when Myrtle gets a dollar. This time it’s two.” The child’s pathetic face shone.

Within, Myrtle Rand, the fortune teller, was saying to Jeanne:

“You may shuffle the cards. Now cut them twice with your right hand. That’s it.

“Now—one, two, three, four, five, six; and one, two, three, four, five, six. I see a change in your life. I think you will go to California. Yes, it is California. One, two, three, four, five, six.” She spread out a third row of cards, then paused to study Jeanne’s face intently.

“Your hair is beautifully done,” she said in a low tone. “Who does it for you?”

“You—you mean you’d like her address?” Jeanne started. How nearly Florence’s words were coming true!

“Yes, yes I would.” There was eagerness in the fortune teller’s tone. Then, as if she had been surprised into revealing too much, she added, “But then it does not matter too much. You see I have a daughter who has a very good position and—”

“She might like to try my hair-dresser,” Jeanne supplemented. “Here, I’ll write it down.”

With the pencil proffered her she scribbled down a name and address. The name was Florence Huyler and the address that of their studio. Then she smiled a puzzling smile.

Outside, Florence was saying to Tillie, “How do you know the beautiful lady has given Myrtle two dollars?”

“We—we—we saw them through the crack,” Fronie sputtered. “Two whole dollars! Mostly it’s only quarters and sometimes dimes that Myrtle gets for telling ’em things. Then we have bread that is dry and hard and sometimes soup that is all smelly.”

“Myrtle, she’s good to us,” the older child confided. “Good as she can be. But the rent man comes every week and says, ‘Pay, or out you go!’ So all the quarters get gone!”

“For a quarter Myrtle, she tells ’em their husbands will come back next week, and some day they’ll have money, plenty of money.” The little girl leaned forward eagerly and confidingly.

“But for two whole dollars—o-o-oh, my, what a swell fortune! She—”

Just then the outer door opened. A shabbily dressed woman, carrying a bundle that looked like a washing she was taking home to be done, came in and dropped wearily into a chair. Her eyes lighted for an instant with hope as she stared at the closed door, then faded.

The children vanished. A moment later a second drab creature entered, and after that a third.

“All working women,” Florence thought, “and all ready to part with a hard-earned quarter that they may listen to rosy prophecies about their future.” She found her spirits sinking. She hoped Jeanne’s fortune would be a short one.

It was not short. The cards were shuffled three times. Then the crystal ball on the table was gazed into. Jeanne’s fortune grew and grew. “I see fine clothes and a big car for you. You will go to California. Yes, yes, I am sure of that. And money—much money. You have rich relatives. Is it not so? And they are quite old.” Myrtle Rand went on and on.

At last Jeanne said, “I—I think I must go now.”

“But you will return?” Myrtle Rand’s tone was eager. “There is much more to be told. Very much more. Next time I will tell of your past. I shall tell you many strange things. It will surprise you.”

Jeanne managed to slip from the room without committing herself. A moment later the poor woman with the large bundle took her place before the crystal ball.

“Well,” Jeanne laughed low as she and Florence walked into the bright light of day, “I have a very rosy future! I am to have all that heart could desire—love, money, automobiles, travel, everything!”

“And next time you are going to be very much surprised,” Florence added.

“How did you know that?” Jeanne stared. “You can’t have heard.”

“No, but it’s true nevertheless.”

“And you,” Jeanne laughed afresh, “you are now my hair-dresser. You are to be at home between three and four o’clock tomorrow afternoon. Why you made me tell that fib is something I don’t at all understand.”

“You will,” Florence laughed merrily. Then, “Here’s our car. Let’s hurry.”

Next day Miss Mabee and Jeanne journeyed to Maxwell Street in search of Bihari and his gypsy blacksmith shop. Jeanne carried a stool and folding easel, Miss Mabee her box of beautiful colors and her brushes.

It was a lovely winter’s day. Even the drab shops of Maxwell Street seemed gay.

Bihari’s shop was not hard to find. Miss Mabee fell in love with it at once. “Long and narrow. Plenty of light, but not too much. The very place!” was her joyous commendation. “And here are the women!”

Sure enough, there was a group of women patiently waiting to have their pots and pans repaired.

“But where are the children?” she asked.

For answer Bihari stepped to the door, put two fingers to his lips, blew a loud blast, and behold, as if by magic the place swarmed with children.

“This one. That one. This, and that one.” Miss Mabee selected her cast quickly.

Disappointed but not in the least rebellious, the remainder of the band moved away. The shop door was closed and work began.

Never had Jeanne experienced greater happiness than now. To be the constant companion of a famous artist—what more could one ask? It was not so much that Marie Mabee was famous. Jeanne was no mere hero-worshiper. The thing that counted most was their wonderful association. Somehow Jeanne felt the

power, the sense of skill that was Miss Mabee's flowing in her own veins. And now that she, for the time, was not the model, but the onlooker, she experienced this sense of fresh power to a far greater degree.

To sit in a remote corner of Bihari's long narrow shop, to witness the skill with which Miss Mabee assembled the cast for a great picture, ah, that was something! To watch her skilful fingers as by some strange magic she placed a daub of color here, another there, twisted her brush here and twirled it there, sent it gliding here, gliding there, until, like the slow coming of a glorious dawn, there grew a picture showing Bihari, the powerful gypsy blacksmith, the ragged gypsy children, the anxious housewives, all in one group that seemed to glorify toil. Ah, that was glory indeed!

Jeanne would never be a painter, she knew this well enough. Yet she had sensed a great fact, that all true art is alike, that a painter draws inspiration and fresh power from a great musician, that a novelist listens to a symphony and goes home to write a better book, that even a dancer does her part in the world more skilfully because of her association with a famous painter. So Jeanne basked in the light that Miss Mabee spread about her and was gloriously happy.

In the meantime Florence was keeping an appointment on the telephone and, to all appearances having a grand time of it. She was saying:

"Yes, yes—yes, indeed!—Oh, yes, very rich.—And old. Oh, quite old, perhaps eighty—Famous?—Oh, surely, terribly famous.—Glorious pictures. Yes—In Hollywood? She hasn't told me for sure. But yes, I think so."

This went on for a full ten minutes. From time to time she put a hand over the mouth-piece while she indulged in peals of laughter. Then, sobering, she would go on with her conversation.

When the thing was all over, the receiver hung up, she went into one more fit of laughter, then said as she slowly walked across the floor, "That's great! I wonder how many of them do it just that way? Perhaps all of them, and just think how they can rake in the money if they go after it in a big way!"

A big way? Her face sobered. That beautiful girl, June Travis, had met her once more at the newspaper office. She had confided to her that Madame Zaran had asked her for a thousand dollars.

“A thousand dollars!” Florence had exclaimed. “For what?”

“To tell me where my father is.” She turned a puzzled face toward Florence. “Why not? If you were all alone in the world and if you had even a great deal of money, wouldn’t you give it all just to get your father back?”

“Yes, perhaps,” Florence replied slowly, “if they really did bring him back.”

“Oh, they will!” the girl exclaimed. “They will! Madame Zaran knows a truly great man in the east. He has done wonderful things. His fees are high. But great lawyers, great surgeons ask large fees too. So,” she sighed, “if my father is not found before I get my money, I shall pay them.”

“Yes, and perhaps much more,” Florence thought with an inward groan. “But her father shall be found. He must be, and that in natural ways. He really must!

“But how?” Her spirits drooped. How? Truly that was the question.

A key in the door startled her from her troubled thoughts. It was Jeanne back from Maxwell Street.

“Did you find that thieving gypsy?” Florence asked.

“No, but we did a glorious sketch of Bihari in his shop.”

“But what of the poor widow? She can’t eat your pictures.”

“N-no.” Jeanne put on a sad face. “I shall find her for you, though! Perhaps tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow,” said Florence with a lightning-like change to a lighter mood, “you shall go to that place on North Clark Street and have your past as well as your future told.

“And,” she added with a chuckle, “lest you be too much surprised by your fortune, I will say this much: Myrtle Rand will tell you that you have a grandfather who is very old and very rich—”

“But, Florence, I have no grandfather. I—”

Florence held up a hand for silence. “As for yourself, she will tell you that you have been a gay deceiver, that you are a truly famous young artist, a painter of landscapes, a—”

“But, my dear, I—”

“Yes, I know. But how can I help that? This is to be your past and future. If you don’t like the future, you may ask her to change it. But what is done is done! You can’t change your past!

“As for your future,” she went on, grinning broadly, “you are to journey to Hollywood. There you shall be employed by a great moving picture company simply to plan magnificent backgrounds against which the world’s greatest moving picture dramas are to be played.”

By this time Jeanne was so dazed that she had no further questions to ask.

“Only tomorrow will tell,” she sighed as she sank into a chair.

CHAPTER XIII
A STARTLING REVELATION

And tomorrow did tell. Scarcely had Jeanne paid her two dollars to the fortune teller, Myrtle Rand, than the fortune Florence had promised her began unfolding itself.

“The cards say this—” Myrtle Rand shuffled and dealt, shuffled and dealt again. “I see this and this and this in the crystal ball.” Nothing of importance was changed. Jeanne had heard it all before. Florence had told her.

“But how could she know that the fortune teller would say all this?” she kept asking herself. “And almost all of it untrue.”

She was still asking herself this question when she joined Florence for lunch two hours later.

“How could you know?” she demanded.

“Very simple,” Florence replied in high glee. “I told her all that over the phone.”

“But why?” Jeanne stared.

“Can’t you see?” Florence replied, “I was testing her system which, after all, is a very simple one. The first time you visited her she, on a very simple pretext, got the name and address of someone who knows you. On still another pretext she called me on the phone to ask about you, thinking me your hair-dresser, and I told her things that were entirely untrue.”

“And if they had been true,” Jeanne exclaimed, “if I had known nothing of the phone call, how astonished I should have been to find that she could get so much of my past from the cards and the crystal ball!”

“To be sure. And, quite naturally, you would have had great faith in her prophecies for the future.”

“Florence!” Jeanne cried, “she is a fraud!”

“Yes,” Florence agreed. “But not a very great fraud.

“Tillie, Fronie and Dick will have ice cream and cake for dinner,” she said softly.

“Who are they?” Jeanne asked in surprise.

“They are three foundlings that Myrtle Rand is befriending. So-o,” Florence ended slowly, “I shall not write up Myrtle Rand, at least not with her real name and address. I shall, however, make a good story of our grand discovery.

“And that,” she added abruptly, “brings me to another subject. Sandy is flying north tomorrow to witness the moose trapping.”

“Tomorrow!”

“That’s it. You may as well hurry home and pack your bag. As for me, that may spell defeat. I’ll have to write my own stories, and if I fail—” She did not finish, but the look on her face was a sober one. She had come to love her strange task. She had planned some things that to her seemed quite important. She must not fail.

That evening at ten they sat once more before the fire, Florence, Jeanne and Miss Mabee. Because Jeanne was to go flying away through the clouds next morning, they were in a mellow mood.

Marie Mabee rested easily in her deeply cushioned chair before the fire. She was wrapped in a dressing gown of gorgeous hue, a bright red, trimmed in deepest blue. Upon the sleeves was some strange Oriental design. On her feet, stretched out carelessly before the fire, were low shoes of shark skin, red like the gown. With her sleek black hair combed straight back from the high forehead, with her deep dark eyes shining and her unique profile half hidden by shadows, she seemed to Florence some strange princess just arrived from India.

“What is it,” Marie Mabee spoke at last, “what is it we ask of life?”

“Peace. Happiness. Beauty,” Jeanne spoke up quickly.

“Success. Power,” Florence added.

“Peace—” Marie Mabee’s tone was mellow. “Ah, yes, how many there are who seek real peace and never find it! I wonder if we have it, you and you and I.” She spread her long slender hands out before the fire.

“And why not?” She laughed a laugh that was like the low call of birds at sunset. “Is this not peace? We are here before the fire. No one wishes to do us harm, or at least they cannot reach us. We have food, shelter and a modest share of life’s beautiful things. Do we not have peace? Ah, yes. But if not, then it is our own fault.

“‘The mind has its own place, and of itself can make a heaven of hell, or a hell of heaven.’

“But beauty?” Her tone changed. She sat bolt upright. “Yes, we want beauty.” Her eyes swept the room. There were elaborate draperies, a tiny clock of solid gold, an ivory falcon, an exquisite bust of pure white marble, all the works of art she had gathered about her, and above them all, one great masterpiece, “Sheep on the Hillside.” “Yes,” she agreed, “we have a craving for beauty. All have that perhaps. Some much more than others. But beauty—” she sprang to her feet. “Beauty, yes! Yes, we must have beauty first, last and always.”

As she began marching slowly back and forth before the fire, Florence was shocked by the thought that she resembled a sleek black leopard. “Nonsense!” she whispered to herself.

“Happiness? Yes.” Marie Mabee dropped back to her place of repose. “Happiness may be had by all. The simplest people are happiest because their wants are few. Or are they?”

Neither Jeanne nor Florence knew the answer. Who does?

“But success,” Florence insisted. “Yes, and power.”

“Success?” There was a musing quality in Marie Mabee’s voice. “I wonder if success is what I am always striving for? Or do I make pictures because I enjoy creating beauty?

“After all—” she flung her arms wide. “What does it matter?

“But power!” Her tone changed. “No! No! I have no desire for power. Leave that to the rich man, to the rulers, anyone who desires it. I have no use for power. Give me peace, beauty, happiness, and, if you insist, success, and I will do without all the rest.”

After that, for a long time there was silence in the room. Florence studied the faces of her companions, each beautiful in its own way, she wondered if they were thinking or only dreaming.

For herself, she was soon lost in deep thought. To her mind had come a picture of Frances Ward. Her littered desk, her tumbled hair, her bright eager eyes, the slow procession of unfortunate and unhappy ones that passed all day long before that desk of hers—all stood out in bold relief.

“What does Frances Ward want?” she asked herself. “Peace ... beauty ... happiness ... success?” She wondered.

Here were two people, Marie Mabee and Frances Ward. How strangely different they were! And yet, what wonderful friends they had both been to her!

“Life,” she whispered, “is strange. Perhaps there was a time when Frances Ward too wanted peace, beauty, happiness, success for herself, just as Miss Mabee does. But now she desires happiness for others—that and that alone.

“Perhaps,” she concluded, “I too shall want only that when I am old.

“And yet—”

Ah, that disquieting “And yet—.” She was wondering in her own way what the world would be like if everyone sought first the happiness of others.

Upon her thoughts there broke the suddenly spoken words of Marie Mabee, “Let us have beauty. By all means! Beauty first, last and always!”

Two hours later Florence sat alone in the half darkness that enshrouded the studio. The others had retired for the night. She was still engaged in the business of putting her thoughts to bed.

It was a strange little world she found herself in at this time. Having started out, with an amused smile, to discover novel and interesting newspaper stories about people who pretended to understand other men's minds, who read their bumps, studied the stars under which they were born, psychoanalyzed their minds, told their fortunes and all the rest, she found herself delving deeper, ever deeper into the mysteries of their strange cults. Ever striving to divide the true from the false, tracking down, as best she could, those who were frauds and robbers, she had at last got herself into a difficult if not dangerous situation.

"There's that gypsy woman who stole from a poor widow," she told herself. "Jeanne's going away. That cannot wait. I'll have to find that gypsy. And then —?"

Then there was June Travis and her lost father. Madame Zaran was on her trail; the voodoo priestess too. June had made one more visit to the priestess. She was afraid the girl had said too much. At any rate, she was sure the priestess had demanded a large fee for finding the lost father.

"*I* shall find him," the big girl said, springing to her feet. "I must!"

Her eyes fell upon a picture standing on a low easel in the corner. It was the one done on thin paper. "That is for Tum Morrow's party," she thought. "Well, Tum Morrow's party will have to wait.

"Jeanne's going away will leave us lonely," she sighed. "But who can blame her? Isle Royale was beautiful in summer. What must it be in winter?"

For a time she stood there dreaming of rushing waters, leaf-brown trails and sighing spruce trees. Then she turned to make her way slowly across the room, up the narrow stairway and into her own small chamber.

One question remained to haunt her even in her dreams. Were all fortune tellers like Myrtle Rand? Did they secure their facts in an underhanded manner, then pass them on to you as great surprises? Who could answer this? Surely not Florence.

CHAPTER XIV
FIRE DESTROYS ALL

A great wave of loneliness swept over Florence as on the morrow's chilly dawn she bade good-bye to her beloved boon companion and to Sandy, then saw them mount the steps of their plane and watched that plane soar away into the blue.

"Isle Royale is hundreds of miles away," she thought to herself. "They will be back, I'm sure enough of that. Airplanes are safe enough. But when shall I see them again?"

It was not loneliness alone that depressed her. She was experiencing a feeling of dread. She had dug deeper into the lives and ways of some fortune tellers than they could have wished.

"They are wolves," she told herself, "and wolves are cowards. They fight as cowards fight, in the dark." She told them off on her fingers: the dark-faced gypsy woman was one, Madame Zaran a second, Marianna Cristophe, the voodoo priestess, a third. And there were others.

"And now," she thought, "I am alone."

Alone? No! Her spirits rose. There was still Frances Ward. "Good old gray-haired Frances Ward!" she whispered. "Everybody's grandmother. May God bless her!"

It was Frances Ward who helped her over the first difficult hurdle of that day. Sandy was gone. She must write her own stories. This seemed easy enough, until she sat down to the typewriter. Then, all thoughts left her.

"My dear, try a pencil," Frances Ward suggested after a time. "A pencil becomes almost human after you have used it long enough; a typewriter never. And why don't you write the story of your little lost girl, June Travis? Use no names, but

tell it so well that someone who knew her father will come to her aid."

"I'll try." Florence was endowed with fresh hope.

With four large yellow pencils before her, she began to write. The first pencil broke. She threw it at the wall. The second broke. She threw it after the first. Then thoughts and pencils began flowing evenly.

When, an hour later, Florence presented a typewritten copy of the story for Mrs. Ward's inspection she pronounced it, "Capital! The best that has been in your column so far."

It may be that this extravagant praise turned the girl's head, leading her to commit an act that brought her into great peril. However that may be, at eight o'clock that night she fell into a trap.

The thing seemed safe enough. True, Florence did the greater part of investigating in the day time. But a "spiritual adviser"—who would expect any sort of danger from such a person?

That was what Professor Alcapar styled himself, "Spiritual Adviser." Had his sign hung from a church, Florence would not have given it a second thought. But the card that fell into her hand said his studio was on one of the upper floors of a great office building. Perhaps this should have warned her, but it did not.

"I'll just take the elevator up there and ask a question or two," she told herself. "Might get a grand story for tomorrow." She did, but she was not to write it—at least, not yet.

There was no glass in the door of Professor Alcapar's studio. A light shone through the crack at the edge of the door. She knocked, almost timidly. The door was opened at once. She stepped inside. The door closed itself. She was there.

Save for one small light in a remote corner, the room was shrouded in darkness.

"More of their usual stuff," she thought to herself without fear. "Darkness stands for secrecy, mystery. At least, these people know how to impress their clients. Spiritual adviser, clothed in darkness."

She became conscious of someone near her. Then of a sudden she caught the

distinct click of a lock, and after that came a flood of light.

She took two backward steps, then stood quite still. With a single sweep of her practiced eye, she took in all within the room. She started as her eyes fell upon—of all persons!—Madame Zaran. She was seated in a chair, smiling a complacent and knowing smile.

The person nearest to Florence was a small dark man with beady eyes. Farther away, with his back to the door, was a powerfully built, swarthy man whose broad neck was covered with bristles.

More interesting than these, and at once more terrifying, was a second small man. He was working at a narrow bench. He wore dark goggles. In his hand he held a sort of torch. The light from this torch, when he switched it on, was blinding. With it he appeared to be engaged in joining certain bits of metal. There was, however, on his face a look altogether terrifying.

“I am trapped!” the girl thought to herself. “Ten stories up. And it is night. Why did I come?”

“You wished to see Professor Alcapar?” a voice asked. It was the little dark man who stood before her.

“Yes. I—” the words stuck in her throat. “They have locked the door!” she was thinking a trifle wildly.

“I am Professor Alcapar,” said the little man in a perfectly professional tone. “Perhaps these good people will excuse me. What can I do for you?”

“Why, I—” again the girl’s voice failed her.

Truly angry at herself, she was ready to stamp the floor, when the smooth voice of Madame Zaran said, “Won’t you have a chair? You must have time to compose yourself. The Professor, I am sure, can quiet your mind. He is conscious of God. He makes others conscious of divine power.” The words were spoken in an even tone. For all this, there was in them a suggestion of malice that sent a cold shiver coursing up the girl’s spine.

“You have been kind enough to visit our other place of—of business,” Madame Zaran went on when Florence was seated. “You see us here in a more intimate

circle. This is our—you might say, our retreat."

"Retreat. Ah, yes, very well said, our retreat," the Professor echoed.

Florence allowed her eyes to wander. They took in the window. At that moment a great electric sign, some distance away, burst forth with a brilliant red light. Across this flash of light, running straight up and down, were two dark lines. She noted this, but for the moment gave it no serious thought. It was of tremendous importance, for all that. A simple fact, lightly observed but later recalled, has more than once saved a life.

"You wished to see the Professor," Madame reminded her. There was an evil glint in her eye. At the same time the torch in the corner hissed, then flamed white.

"Yes, I—well, you see," the girl explained in a voice that was a trifle weak, "I am interested in religion."

"What kind of religion?" Madame Zaran smiled an evil smile.

"Why, all kinds."

"The Professor," said Madame, "is the sole representative of a religious order found only in the hidden places of India. It is a very secret order. They are mystic, and they worship fire, FIRE."

She repeated that last word in a manner that caused the big girl's cheek to blanch. The torch in the corner went sput-sput-sput.

"Fire," said the Professor in a voice that was extraordinarily deep for one so small, "Fire destroys all, ALL! All that I know, all that *you* know may be destroyed by a single breath of flame."

"Yes, I—"

Florence's throat was dry. To calm her fluttering heart she gazed again at the window. Once more the red light of that street sign flared out. As before, two dark lines cut across it, up and down. Then, like a flash, the girl knew what those lines were. They ran from the roof to the ground. She had noted them in a dreamy sort of way as she entered the building. Now they appeared to stand out

before her in bold relief.

Then there burst upon her startled ears a sharp cry of anger. She looked quickly at Madame's face. It was black as the western sky before a storm.

"You do not even listen!" She was fairly choking with anger as she fixed her burning eyes on Florence. "You did not come here to seek spiritual advice. You came here as a spy. A *spy*!" Her breath failed her. But in the corner the white-hot torch sputtered, and to Florence's terrified vision, written on the wall in letters of flame there appeared the word, SPY!

"He could burn those words upon one's breast," she thought. "With that torch he could burn out one's heart!" She gripped at her breast to still the hard beating of her heart.

"Why do you spy upon us?" Madame was speaking again. "Is it because we are frauds? Because we pretend to know that which we do not know? What is that to you?

"Is it because we take money from those who can well afford to give? Look you! We are poor. We have no money. But we must live, and live we will! Why not?" She laughed a hoarse laugh. "Why not? And what is it to you if we do live well at the expense of those who are weak and foolish? You and your paper! Bah!" She arose with a threatening gesture. As she took two steps forward her hands became claws, her teeth the fangs of a wild thing.

Florence sprang back in sudden terror.

But the woman before her tottered on her feet. Her face turned a sickish purple.

"No! No!" She gurgled in her throat. "It is not for me! Come, Beppo!"

The man at the bench turned half about. At the same time his torch glowed with a more terrifying flame.

"Fire! Fire!" the Professor mumbled.

But for Florence there was to be no fire. She was half way across the room. Ten seconds later she had thrown up the window and was standing on the ledge.

Caught by surprise, the others in the room stood motionless, like puppets in a play. What did they think—that she would dash her life out on the pavement below? Or did they just not think at all?

To Florence life had always seemed beautiful; never so much so as at that moment. To live, to dream, to hope, to struggle on and on toward some unseen distant goal. Ah, yes, life! Life! To feel the breath of morning on your cheek, to face the rising sun, to throw back your shoulders, to drink in deep breaths of air, to whisper, “God, I thank you for life!” This was Florence always. She would not willingly dash out her own brains.

Nor was there the need. Before her, an easy arm’s length away, were two stout ropes. The roof was undergoing repairs. Material was drawn up on these ropes. They ended in a large tub on the sidewalk ten stories below.

There was not a second to lose. The paralysis inside that room would soon pass. And then—

Her two strong arms shot out. She gripped a rope. She swung out over space. Her feet twisted about the rope. She shot downward. There was a smell of scorching leather. Windows passed her. In one room a char-woman scrubbed a floor, in a second a belated worker kissed his stenographer good-night, and then, plump! she landed at the feet of a young man who, up until that second, had been strolling the street reading a book.

The young man leaped suddenly into the air. The book came down with a loud slap.

“Do—do you do that sort of thing reg—regularly?” the young man stuttered when he had regained a little of his dignity. He looked up at the rope as if expecting to see a whole bevy of girls, perhaps angels too, descending on the rope.

“No,” Florence laughed a trifle shakily, “I don’t do it often.”

“But see here!” the young man exclaimed, “you look all sort of white and shaky, as if you—you’d seen a ghost or something! How about a good cup of java or—or something, on a stool, you know—right around the corner? Perfectly respectable, I assure you.”

“As if I cared just now!” Florence thought to herself. “Imagine being afraid of a young student on a stool, after a thing like that!” She glanced up, then once more felt afraid.

“Fire!” She seemed to hear the Professor say, “Fire destroys all.”

“Yes! Sure!” She seized the astonished young man’s arm. “Sure. Let’s go there. Quick!”

CHAPTER XV
THE INTERPRETER OF DREAMS

“Curiosity,” said the young man as he reached for the mustard, “once killed a cat. But anyway, I’m curious. What about it? Were you winning a bet when you came down that rope?”

They had arrived safely at the little restaurant round the corner. Perched on stools, they were drinking coffee and munching away at small pies for all the world like old pals.

“No, I—” Florence hesitated. He was a nice-appearing young man; his eyes were fine. There was a perpetually perplexed look on his face which said, “Life surprises me.”

“Well, yes,” she said, changing her mind, “perhaps I was winning a bet with—” she did not finish. She had started to say, “a bet with death.” This, she reasoned, would lead to questions and perhaps to the disclosing of facts she wished to conceal.

“What do you do beside reading books on the street at night?” she asked quickly.

“I—why, when I don’t study books I study people,” he replied frankly. “I’m—well, you might call me a psychologist, though that requires quite a stretch of the imagination.” He grinned. Then as a sort of afterthought, he added, “Sometimes I tell people the meaning of their dreams.”

“And you, also!” Florence exclaimed, all but dropping her pie. She began sliding from the stool.

“No, no! Don’t go!” he cried in sudden consternation. “What in the world have I said?”

“Dreams,” she replied, “you pretend to interpret dreams. And there’s nothing to it. You—you don’t look like a cheat.”

“Indeed I’m not!” he protested indignantly. “And there truly is something in dreams—a whole lot, only not in the way people used to think. Slide back up on that stool and I’ll explain.

“Waiter,” he ordered, “give Miss—what was that name?”

“Florence for short,” the girl smiled.

“Give Florence another piece of pie,” he finished.

“You see—” he launched into his subject at once. “I don’t ask you what your dreams are, then tell you ‘You have dreamed of an eagle; that is a good sign; you will advance,’ or ‘You dreamed of being married; that is bad; you will become seriously ill, or shall have bad news from afar.’ No, I don’t say that. All that is nonsense!

“What I do say is that dreams tell something of your inner life. If they are carefully studied, they may help you to a better understanding of yourself.”

“Interesting, if true.” Florence took a generous bit from her second small pie. “But it’s all too deep for me.”

“I’ll explain.” The young student appeared very much in earnest. “Take this case: a woman dreamed of seeing an elephant balancing himself on a big balloon and sailing through the sky. Suddenly the balloon blew up, the elephant collapsed, and the woman wakened from her dream. What caused that dream?” he asked, wrinkling his brow. “The woman had seen both elephants and balloons, but not recently. Truth is, the balloon and the elephant were symbols of other things.

“When a dream interpreter questioned her, he found that she lived in a large, badly furnished house which she hated. All but unconsciously she had wished that the house would collapse or blow up. The collapse of the elephant symbolized the destruction of the house.”

“And s-so,” Florence drawled, “she had the old house blown up.”

“No, that wasn’t the answer!” the youthful psychologist protested. “The thing that needed changing was her own mental attitude. The way to fit our surroundings to our desires is often to change rather than destroy them. She had the house remodeled and refurnished. And now,” he added with a touch of pride, “she is happy. And all because of the proper interpretation of her dream.”

“Marvelous!” There was a mixed note of mockery and enthusiasm in the girl’s tone. “And now, here’s one for you. I too dreamed of an elephant—that was night before last. I was in a jungle. The jungle seemed fairly familiar to me. I was passing along a narrow trail. There were other trails, but I seemed to know my way. Yet I was afraid, terribly afraid. The surprising thing was, I couldn’t see a living thing, not a bird, a bat, or even a mouse.

“And then—” she drew a long breath. “Then in my dream I heard a terrible snorting and crashing. And, right in my path there appeared an immense elephant with flaming eyes, eyes of fire. *Fire.*

“Fire!” She fairly gasped at the apparent revelation of her own words. “Fire destroys all,” she murmured low.

“And then?” her new-found friend prompted.

“And then,” Florence laughed with a feeling of relief. “Then I woke up to find the sun streaming in at my window. And, of course,” she added, “it was that bright sun shining on my face that caused the dream.”

“I’m not so sure about that,” said the student. His tone was serious. “I have a feeling that you are in some sort of real danger. I am surprised, now that I recall it, that I did not see the elephant, or whatever he symbolized, coming down that rope after you. You—you wouldn’t like to tell me?” He hesitated.

“N-not now.” Florence slid from her stool. “Perhaps some other time.”

“O. K. Fine! I’m greatly interested.”

“So—so am I.” These words slipped unbidden from her lips.

“Here’s my card.” He thrust a square of pasteboard in her hand.

“Thanks for the pie!” They were at the door.

“Oh, that’s more than all right. Remember—” his hand was on her arm for an instant. “Don’t forget, if you need me to interpret a dream, or for—for—”

“Another piece of pie,” she laughed.

“Sure! Just anything,” he laughed back, “just give me a ring.”

“By the way!” Florence said with sudden impulse, “there *is* something. Can you help people recall, make them think back, back into their past until they at last remember something that may be of great help to them?”

“I’ve done it at times quite successfully.”

“Then I’d like to arrange something, perhaps for tomorrow or the next day. I—I’ll give you a ring.”

“I’ll be waiting.”

“Good-bye.”

“Good-bye.”

He was gone. Florence felt better. In this great city she had found one more substantial friend. In times like these friendships counted for a great deal.

There come periods in all our lives when life moves so swiftly that things which, perhaps, should be done are left undone. It had been so with Florence. As, a short time later, she found time for repose in the studio under the eaves of a skyscraper, she wondered if she should not have called the police and had that tenth story haunt of Madame Zaran and the Professor raided.

“And after that—what?” she asked herself. To this question she found no answer. The police might tell her she had been seized with a plain case of jitters. Truth was, not a person in that room had touched her. Madame Zaran had indulged in a fit of passion—that was about all.

“Besides—” she settled back in her chair. “It is not yet time. There are things I want to know. How was it that I saw real moving figures in that crystal ball? How much of Madame Zaran’s work is pure show? How much is real? I must know. And, meantime, I must do what I can for June Travis.” With that she went

away to the land of dreams.

CHAPTER XVI
THE SECRET OF LOST LAKE

Jeanne toiled laboriously up the side of Greenstone Ridge on Isle Royale. From time to time she paused to regain her breath, to drink in the cool clean winter air, and to revel in the glorious contrasts of the white that was snow and the dark green that was spruce, fir and balsam.

She was on Isle Royale. More than once she had been obliged to pinch herself to make sure of that.

“Airplanes are so sudden, so wonderful!” she had said to Sandy. “Now we are in Chicago; now we are in Duluth; and now we are on Isle Royale.”

Their trip north had been just like that, a short whirring flight, and there they were coming down upon Isle Royale. Landing on skiis, they had taxied almost to the door of the low fisherman’s cabin which was to be their temporary home.

Here Sandy was to study wild life, find out all he could about trapping wild moose and send interesting stories out over the short-wave radio. Here Jeanne was to wander at will over the great white wilderness. And this was exactly what she was doing now.

“What a world!” she breathed. “What a glorious world God has given us!” Her gaze swept a magic wilderness.

Her heart leaped anew as she thought of the chance circumstances that had brought her to this “Magic Isle” sixty miles from the Michigan mainland in winter.

“I am going to like Vivian,” she told herself. “I am sure she is quite grand.” She paused a moment to consider. Vivian was the fisherman’s daughter. Her hands were rough, her face was tanned brown. Her clothing of coarse material was

stoutly made to stand many storms. Jeanne was dressed at this moment in a sweater of bright red. It was wool, soft as eiderdown. Her dark blue knickers were of the latest cloth and pattern. Miss Mabee had outfitted her in this lavish manner.

“Vivian and I shall be the finest friends in all the world!” she exclaimed.

With that, she squared her slender shoulders, threw back her thick golden hair, drew her wool cap down tight, then went struggling toward her goal.

Twenty minutes later a cry of pure joy escaped her lips. “How wonderful! How perfectly gorgeous!

“And yet—” her voice dropped. “How strange! They did not tell me there was a lake on the other side, a gem of a lake hidden away beneath the ridges. I—I doubt if they knew. How little some people know about the places near their own homes!

“I—I’ll give it a name!” she cried, seized by a sudden inspiration. “It shall be called ‘Lost Lake.’ Lost Lake,” she murmured. As she looked down upon it, it seemed a mirror set in a frame of darkest green.

“Hemlock turned to pitchy black
Against the whiteness at their back.”

“My Lost Lake,” she whispered, “I must see it closer.”

Little did she dream that this simple decision would result in mysteries and adventures such as she had seldom before known.

“How wonderful it all is!” she exclaimed again, as at last her feet rested on the glistening surface of the little lost lake.

She went shuffling across the dark, deeply frozen surface. The first spell of severe weather of that autumn had come with a period of dead calm. All the small lakes of the island had frozen over smooth as glass. And now, though the ice was more than a foot thick, it was possible while gliding across it to catch sight of dull gray rocks and deep yawning shadows where the water was deep.

Only the day before on Long Lake, which was close to Vivian’s home, Jeanne

and her friend had thrown themselves flat down on the ice, shaded their eyes and peered into the shadowy depth below. They had found it a fascinating adventure into the great unknown. In places, standing like a miniature forest, tall, heavy-leafed pikeweeds greeted their eyes. Among these, like giant dirigibles moored to the tree-tops, long black pickerel lay. Waving their fins gently to and fro, they stared up with great round eyes. Here, too, at times they saw whole schools of yellow perch and wall-eyes. Once, too, they caught sight of a scaly monster more than six feet long. He was so huge and ugly, they shuddered at sight of him. Vivian had decided he must be a sturgeon and marveled at his presence in these waters.

Recalling all this, Jeanne now slipped the snowshoes from off her feet and, throwing herself flat on the ice, began her own little exploring expedition beneath the surface of her own private lake.

She had just sighted a school of tiny perch when a strange and apparently impossible sight caught her gaze. Faint, but quite unmistakable, there came to her mental vision a circle of gold, and within that circle these letters and figures: D.X.123.

One moment it was there. The next it was blotted out by the passing of that school of small fish. When the fish had passed, the vision too was gone.

“I didn’t see it at all,” she told herself. “It was just a picture flashed on the walls of my memory—something I saw long ago. It is like the markings on an airplane—the plane’s number. But it really wasn’t there at all.

“I have it!” she exclaimed. “That must be the number on the airplane that carried us here. I’ll look and see when I get back.”

She straightened up to look about her. As she did so, she realized that the sun had gone under a cloud. Disquieting thought, this may have been the reason for the vanishing picture in the depths below.

“The fish hid it. Then the sun went under that cloud. I must look again.” She settled down to await the passing of that cloud.

“What if I see it again?” she thought. “Shall I tell the others? Will they believe me? Probably not. Laugh at me, tell me I’ve been seeing things.

“I know what I’ll do!” She came to a sudden decision. “I’ll bring Vivian up here and have her look. I’ll not tell her a thing, but just have her look. Then if she sees it I’ll know—”

But the sun was out from behind the cloud—time to look again.

Her heart was beating painfully from excitement as she shaded her eyes once more.

For a time she could make out nothing but rocks and deep shadows. Then the school of small fish circled back.

“Have to wait.” She heaved a sigh almost of relief.

But now something startled the perch. They went scurrying away. And there, just as it had been before, was the circle and that mysterious sign: D.X.123.

Ten seconds more it lingered. Then, as before, it vanished. Once again the bright light had faded. This time a large cloud was over the sun. It would take an hour, perhaps two, for it to pass.

“I must go back,” she sighed. Slipping on her snowshoes, she turned about to make her way laboriously up the ridge.

As she struggled on, climbing a rocky ridge here, battling her way through a thick cluster of balsams there, then out upon a level, barren space, a strange feeling came over her, a feeling she could not at all explain. It was as if someone were trying to whisper into her ear a startling and mysterious truth. She listened in vain for the whisper. It did not come. And yet, as she once more began the upward climb it was with a feeling, almost a conviction, that all she had done in the last few days—the flight to Isle Royale, her hours about the cabin stove, the climb up this ridge, her discovery of Lost Lake and that mysterious D.X.123—was somehow a part of that which she had left behind with Florence in Chicago.

“I can’t see how it could be,” she murmured, “yet somehow I feel this is true.”

That same evening in Miss Mabee’s studio an interesting experiment was in progress. Made desperate by her terrifying experiences in that tenth floor “retreat” of Madame Zaran and Professor Alcapar, and quite convinced that the

beautiful June Travis was in great danger, Florence had resolved to use every possible means to discover the whereabouts of June's father and bring him back.

"Gone ten years!" Doubt whispered to her, "He's dead; he must be." Yet faith would not allow her to believe this.

She had put herself in touch with June's home and had secured permission to invite her to the studio. When June arrived, she found not only Florence, but the young psychologist, Rodney Angel, and Tum Morrow. Tum had his violin.

"The point is," the psychologist launched at once into the business at hand, "you, June Travis, wish to find your father. If you can recall some of your surroundings while you were with him, we may be able to locate those surroundings, and through them some friend who may know at least which way he went.

"Now," he said in a tone of perfect ease, "we are here together, four friends in this beautiful studio. Our friend Tum is going to give us some music. Do you like waltz time?"

"I adore it."

"Waltz time," he nodded to Tum.

"While he plays," he went on, "we shall sit before the open fire, and that should remind you of Christmas, stockings and all that. I'm going to ask you to think back as far as you can, Christmas by Christmas. That should not be hard. Perhaps last Christmas was a glad one because all your friends were present, the one before that sad because some treasured one was gone. Think back, back, back, and let us see if we cannot at last arrive at the last one you spent with your father."

"Oh!" The look on June's face became animated. "I—I'll try hard."

"Not too hard. Just let your thoughts flow back, like a stream. Now, Tum, the music."

For ten minutes there was no sound save the sweet, melodious voice of Tum's violin.

“Now,” whispered the psychologist, “think! Last Christmas? Was it glad or sad?”

“Glad.”

“And the one before?”

“Glad.”

“And the one before that?”

“Sad.”

So they went on back through the years until with some hesitation the girl said once more, “Sad.”

“Why?” the psychologist asked quickly.

“I wanted a doll. I had always had a new doll for Christmas. The lady gave me no doll.”

“But who always gave you a doll at Christmas?” In the young psychologist’s eye shone a strange light.

“A man, a short, jolly man.”

“And the last doll he gave you had golden hair?” He leaned forward eagerly.

“No. The hair was brown. The doll’s eyes opened and shut.”

“So you opened its eyes and said, ‘See the fire!’”

“No. I took the doll to the window and said, ‘See the tower.’”

“What sort of tower?” The air of the room grew tense, yet the girl did not know it.

“A brownstone tower. A round tower with a round flat roof of stone. There was a bell in the tower that rang and rang on Christmas Eve.”

“Could you draw it?” He pressed pencil and paper into her hand. She made a crude drawing, then held it up to him.

“It will do,” he breathed. “Now, one more question. What kind of a house was it you lived in then?”

“A red brick house—square and a little ugly.”

“Fine! Wonderful!” Rodney Angel relaxed. “I know that tower. There is only one such in all Chicago-land. It was built before the Civil War. It is a college tower. I doubt if there is more than one red brick house within sight of it. If there is not, then that is where you lived. And if you lived there, we will be able to find someone who knew that short, stout, jolly man who was your father.”

“My father!” the girl cried, “No! It can’t be! He is tall, slim and dignified.”

“Do you know that to be a fact?” The young man stared.

“I saw him in the crystal ball.”

“Oh!” Rodney heaved a sigh of relief. “Well, perhaps your father is subject to change without notice. We shall see.

“And now—” he turned a smiling face to Florence. “How about another cup of coffee and just another piece of pie, or perhaps two?”

“To think!” June looked at the young psychologist with unconcealed admiration. “You helped me do what I have never been able to do before. You made me think back to those days when I was with my father!”

“Some day,” Rodney said thoughtfully, “people will begin to understand the working of their own minds. And what a grand day that will be!

“In the meantime,” he smiled a bright smile, “if you girls have had any dreams you don’t quite understand, bring them to little old Rodney. He’ll do his best to unravel them.

“Now,” he sighed, “how about the pie?”

CHAPTER XVII
FROM OUT THE PAST

In the meantime, Jeanne, having returned from her little voyage of discovery on Isle Royale, was learning something of life as it went forward at Chippewa Harbor. Here, on the shores of a little cove, Holgar Carlson, a sturdy Scandinavian fisherman, had his home. There were four children; two girls, Violet and Vivian, about the same age as Jeanne, and two small boys. From November until April no boats visit the island. It would be difficult to picture a more completely isolated spot. And yet Violet and Vivian, who were to be Jeanne's companions, were never lonesome. They had their duties and their special interests which kept them quite fully employed. And, had they but known it, the coming of Jeanne meant mystery and unusual discoveries.

"Discovery." Ah, yes, to Vivian, the younger and more active of the two sisters, this was one grand word. On this unusual island she had made many a discovery.

"This," she was saying to Jeanne with the air of one about to display rich treasures, "is our curiosity shop. Not everyone who comes to Chippewa Harbor gets a peek in here."

After removing a heavy padlock she swung wide a massive door of varnished logs.

"You see," she explained as Jeanne's eyes wandered from one article to another displayed on the shelves of the narrow room, "each article here has something to do with the history of Isle Royale."

"Only look!" Jeanne exclaimed. "Arrowheads and spear points of copper! A gun —such an old looking one! A pistol, too, and a brass cannon. Some very queer axes! Did you find them all by yourself?" she asked in surprise.

“Oh, my, no!” Vivian laughed. “They come from all over the island. Fishermen are constantly finding things. Some were found where long lost villages have been, or around deserted mines. Then, too, some were taken up in nets.”

“In nets?” Jeanne’s voice showed astonishment.

“You’d be surprised!” Vivian’s face glowed. She had something truly interesting to tell.

“We set our nets close to the lake bottom. Sometimes the water is deep, sometimes shallow, but always the net is on the bottom. Storms come and bring things rolling in. The waves work heavy objects over our nets. If a net is strong enough, when it is lifted, up they come.

“And not so easily either!” she amended. “Sometimes it takes a lot of pulling and hauling. Not so fine when it’s freezing on shore and snow is blowing in your eyes. If you get a log in your net, all water soaked, and so long you never see both ends of it if you work for an hour, then the net slips from your half-frozen fingers, and it’s just too bad! The net is gone forever.

“Look.” She put a hand on some hard mass that rested on the lower shelf. “We brought that up in our net.”

“What is it?” Jeanne asked.

“Lift it.” Vivian smiled.

Lightly Jeanne grasped it. Then she let out a low exclamation. “Whew! How heavy!”

“Eighty pounds,” said Vivian, not without a show of pride. “Solid copper.

“You see,” she went on, allowing her eyes to sweep the place, “it is just this that has made me realize that history and geography are not just dull things to be studied and forgotten. When father brought in that mass of copper, I wanted to know all about it, how it got there and all that.

“Well,” she sighed, “I didn’t find out everything, because no one seems to know whether it was put in its present form by the grinding of glaciers or by the heat of a volcano. I did find out a great deal, though.

“Then,” she hurried on, “one day while I was hoeing in our garden I found this.” She held up a copper spear point. “It belonged to the time when Indians roamed the island, building huge fires; then cracking away the rocks, they uncovered copper. I read all I could about that.

“Then—” she caught her breath. “Then Mr. Tolman over at Rock Harbor gave me this.” She held up a curious sort of pistol. “They called it a pepper-box. It is more than a hundred years old. Perhaps it belongs to fur-trading days, perhaps to the beginning of the white copper-hunter. Anyway, it took me along in my study. And—”

“And the first thing you knew,” Jeanne laughed, “history and geography had come alive for you.”

“Yes, that’s it!” Vivian smiled her appreciation.

“But look!” Jeanne exclaimed. “What’s this? And where did it come from? Looks as if it had been at the bottom of the sea for a hundred years.”

“Not quite a hundred years perhaps,” Vivian said slowly, “and not at the bottom of the ocean; only Lake Superior. It’s an old-fashioned barrel-churn, and we caught it in a net.”

“How very strange!” Jeanne examined it closely. “It’s all screwed up tight.”

“Yes,” said Vivian, “the fastenings are all corroded. You couldn’t open it without tearing it up, I guess. It’s empty.” She tapped it with the ancient pistol butt, and it gave forth a hollow sound. “So what’s the use of destroying a fine relic just to get a smell of sour buttermilk fifty or more years old?” She laughed a merry laugh.

“But you got it in a net at the bottom of the lake?” Jeanne’s face wore a puzzled look.

“About fifty feet down.”

“If it’s full of air it would float,” Jeanne reasoned, “so it can’t be quite empty.”

“Lift it. Shake it,” Vivian invited.

Jeanne complied. “That’s queer!” she murmured after shaking the small copper-bound barrel-churn vigorously. “It’s heavy enough to sink, yet it *does* appear to be empty.”

As Jeanne lay in her tiny chamber that night with the distant roar of old Superior in her ears, she found herself confronted with two mysteries. One was intriguing, the other rather startling and perhaps terrible. The first was the mystery of the unopened churn, the other that of those figures and letters with a circle, D.X.123.

CHAPTER XVIII
D.X.123

“There it is. Or is it?” Rodney Angel turned enquiring eyes upon June Travis. They had traveled by the third-rail line twenty miles into the country. There before them stood a large stone building topped by a circular tower. Rodney held his breath. If the girl said “No,” all this work had gone for nothing.

June half closed her eyes. A dreamy expression overspread her face. Once again she was thinking back, back, back, into the dim, misty realm of her childhood.

“Yes,” she said quite simply, “yes, that is the tower. I have seen it before. That must have been when I was very young.”

“Then—” the word was said with a shout of joy. “Then right over there is the brick house you once lived in with your father.”

“Our house!” Who can describe the emotions that throbbed through June’s being as she looked upon the home of her earliest childhood?

She was not given long to dream. “Come on,” said Rodney. “There is a little cottage next door to it. Looks as if it were half a century old and been owned by the same person all the time. That person should be able to help us.”

“That person” turned out to be a little old dried up man with a hooked nose.

“Do I know who lived in the red brick house ten years ago?” He grinned at Rodney. “Yes, and forty years ago. There was Joe Green and Sam Hicks, and—”

“But *ten* years ago!” Rodney insisted.

“Oh, yes. Now let me think. It was a—oh, yes! That was John Travis.”

“J—John Travis!” June stammered, fairly overcome with joy. “Oh, Rodney, you surely are a wonder!

“Please!” There were tears in her eyes as she turned to the old man. “Please tell me all about him! He—he is my father.”

“Your father? Yes, so he might be. There was a small child and a woman, a little old woman that wasn’t his wife nor his mother—

“But I can’t tell you much, miss,” he went on, “not a whole lot. He didn’t live here long. Wanderin’ sort, he was. A gold prospector, he was. Made a heap of money at it. Short, jolly sort of man, he was, short and jolly.”

“See?” Rodney reminded her, “Your memory was O. K.”

“Short and jolly—” June murmured, “I can’t understand. In the crystal ball—”

The little old man was talking again. “He seemed to like me, this John Travis. When he went away in an airplane, he—”

“Airplane!” June breathed.

“Why, yes, child! Didn’t you know? He went in an airplane. He invited me to the airport. I saw him off. Just such a day as this one, fine and clear, few white clouds afloatin’. I can see that plane sailin’ away. Recollect the number of it even. It was D.X.123.

“And they say,” he added slowly, “that he never came back!”

“Wh—where was he going?” June’s voice was husky.

“That’s what I don’t know. He never told me that.” The old man looked away at the sky as if he would call that airplane back.

“And that,” he added after a time, “is just about all I can tell you.”

That too was all they found out from anyone that day. The other people living close to the red brick house were recent arrivals. They knew nothing of John Travis.

When June, weary and sleepy from travel and excitement, arrived at her home, she found a telephone number in her letter box.

“Florence wants me to call,” she thought. “Wonder if she’s found out something important. I’ll have a cup of tea to get my nerves right. Then I’ll give her a ring.”

CHAPTER XIX
ONE WILD DREAM

Jeanne watched a blue and white airplane soar aloft over a lake of pure blue. Now the plane was two miles away, now one mile, and now—now it was right over her head. But what was this? A tiny speck appeared beneath the airplane. It grew and grew. Now it was the size of a walnut, now a baseball, now a toy balloon, now—but now it was right over her head! It had fallen from the plane. It was big, big as a small barrel. It would crush her!

But no! She would catch it. She put out her hands and caught it easily as she might have a real toy balloon.

She looked at it closely. It was a barrel-like affair, an ancient churn.

“Not heavy at all,” she whispered.

But what was this? She was sinking, going down, down, down. She was in the lake, sinking, sinking. But that did not appear to matter. She could breathe easily. The churn was still in her hands when she reached bottom.

Fishes came to stare at her and at the churn, friendly fishes they appeared to be. They stood away and stared.

But now they were gone, scooting away in great fright. A scaly monster with big staring eyes rushed at her. She screamed, made one wild rush—then suddenly awoke to find herself sitting up in bed. She had been dreaming.

But what bed was this—what place? For one full moment she could not tell. It was all so very strange! The ceiling was low. There were two other narrow beds in the room. A large black pipe ran through the center of the room. The place was cold. She shuddered, then drew the covers over her. Then, of a sudden, she remembered. She was in a fisherman’s cottage on Isle Royale in Lake Superior.

She had come there by airplane with Sandy, who was to watch men trap wild moose.

Her real airplane ride was to be a long remembered adventure. To go sailing over miles and miles of dark blue waters, then to catch sight of something very white that really was an island but which, at a distance, looked like a white frosted cake resting on a dark blue tablecloth—oh, that had given her a real thrill.

“All that was no dream,” she assured herself, “for here are my two good friends, Vivian and Violet Carlson, sleeping close by me in their own beds. And that,” she decided, “is why I dreamed of an airplane.”

But was it? And what of the barrel-churn? The churn—ah, yes, she remembered now. Vivian had shown it to her in her curiosity shop. It was closed tight, all rusted shut, and it had been picked up from the bottom of the lake in a fisherman’s net.

“But it’s heavy,” she told herself. “I’d like to know what’s inside it, if anything at all. I’ll find out, too. You can make things unscrew, even if they’re terribly rusted, by putting kerosene on them. I’ve seen father do that. I’ll ask Vivian if I may try to do it, perhaps tomorrow.”

For a moment, lying there listening to the crackling of the fire in the stove below their room, she felt all comfortable and happy. She was in a strange little world, a fisherman’s world on Isle Royale. Everything was new and lovely. There were sleds and snowshoes, wild moose to trap, everything.

Then of a sudden her brow wrinkled. She had recalled the airplane in that dream. What did it mean? Then, as in a vision, she saw a circle, and inside the circle D.X.123.

“I saw it at the bottom of that little lost lake,” she told herself as a chill ran up her spine. “Anyway, I thought I saw it. And I must know!” She clenched her hands hard. “I must know for sure! I’ll just *make* Vivian come there with me. I’ll tell her to look down there, ask her to tell me what she sees, then I’ll know for sure whether it is real or only a sort of day-dream.

“I must,” she whispered, “must—must—must—”

Once again she was lost to the world, this time to a land of dreamless sleep.

When she awoke, Vivian was sitting up in bed.

“Hello, there!” was Vivian’s cheery greeting. “Sleep well?”

“Fine!” Jeanne laughed. “Everything seems strange, but I love it.”

“Not quite like a city,” Vivian agreed, “but we all like it. We seem so secure. Father earns enough in summer to buy flour, sugar, hams, bacon and lots of canned stuff, so we won’t go hungry. The lake brings us some wood and the ridges give us plenty more. We won’t get cold. So—”

“So you’re safe as a meadow mouse in his hole!” Jeanne said happily.

A half hour later she was seated at a long table pouring syrup on steaming pancakes. A sturdy, bronze-faced young man sat at her side.

“Are you the moose-trapper?” she asked timidly.

“Why, yes.” The young man’s hearty laugh reassured her. “Yes, that’s what you might call me.

“Like to see one trapped?” he asked suddenly.

“Yes! Oh, yes, I’d love it!” Jeanne cried quickly.

“All right. You and Vivian come along with me after breakfast. We’ve baited the trap with some very tempting birch twigs. We’ll watch it from the ridge above. I shouldn’t wonder if we’d get one. Anyway, you’ll see the trap.”

Donning mackinaws and heavy sweaters a half hour later, they crept out into the frosty air of morning—Jeanne, Vivian, Sandy MacQueen, and the moose-trapper.

Snow lay thick everywhere. About the ends of ridges it had been blown clear, only to be found piled in drifts not far away. In quiet spots it was soft and deep. Only the use of snowshoes made travel possible. In silence they marched single file up the rise at the back of the house, then through a forest of spruce and birch to the barren rocky ridge above.

From this vantage point they could see far out over the dark endless waters of

Lake Superior. But this did not interest them. Their eyes were focused on a narrow stretch of low growing timber almost directly beneath them.

“You can’t see the corral fence for the trees,” the moose-trapper explained in a whisper. “Only here and there you catch a glimpse of it. We built a four-foot fence of woven wire at first. But the moose,” he chuckled, “they didn’t know it was a fence, so they lifted their long legs and hopped over the top of it. After that we put poles above the wire. That worked better. We—”

“Listen!” Jeanne broke in. “What was that?” Her keen ears had caught some sound from behind.

“Might be a moose,” Vivian whispered. “It *is* a moose. Look!”

“Oh!” Jeanne started back.

“He won’t harm you,” Vivian whispered.

The moose, not a stone’s throw away, was trying in vain to reach the lowest branch of a balsam tree.

“How huge he is! And such terrible antlers!” Jeanne crowded close to her companions.

“He’ll be losing those antlers soon,” Vivian whispered back. “They grow new ones every year. He—”

At that moment the moose, whose keen ear had apparently detected a sound, made a quick, silent move. Next instant he was gone.

“He—he vanished like magic!” Jeanne exclaimed. “And with never a sound.”

“Most silent creature in the world.” The moose-trapper’s voice was low. “And one of the most harmless. It seems strange that anyone should wish to kill such an attractive wild thing. And yet, thousands pay large prices for the privilege of shooting them! It’s up to the younger generations to be less cruel.”

“Girls don’t wish to kill wild things,” said Jeanne.

“That’s right. Most of them seem to have a high regard for the life of all

creatures," the moose-trapper agreed. "They have their part to do, though. They can teach the boys of their own neighborhood and especially their own brothers to be more humane. We—

"Look!" he exclaimed. The quality of his whisper changed. "Down there is the trap. See that large square made of boards that seem to hang in the air?"

"Yes, yes!" Jeanne replied eagerly.

"That's the door to the trap. The moose springs the trap. You see there's a narrow corral. It's half full of birch and balsam boughs. The moose smells these. He is hungry. He goes through the door, munches away at the branches, at last pulls at one. This drags at a string and down goes the door. He's a prisoner.

"But a *happy* prisoner," he hastened to add. "There are ten moose in the big corral. When we got them they were little more than skin and bones. Now they are getting fat. We feed them well."

It is doubtful if Jeanne heard more than half that was said. Her eyes were upon a brown creature that moved slowly through the thin forest below. "He's going toward the trap—our moose," she was saying to herself. "Now he's only fifty yards away. And now he walks still faster. He's smelled the bait in the trap. He—

"What will happen to those who are trapped?" she asked quite suddenly.

"Probably be taken to a game sanctuary on the mainland where there's plenty of moose feed," the trapper said.

"Oh!" Jeanne whispered. "Then I hope we get him."

"Looks as if we might." The moose-trapper's face shone with hope. "He's the finest specimen we've seen yet."

Moments passed, moments that were packed with suspense. Now the great brown creature stood sniffing at the entrance to the trap. Now he advanced a step or two. Now he thrust out his nose in a vain attempt to reach a branch that was inside. Jeanne laughed low. He surely cut a comical picture, long legs, extended neck, bulging eyes.

Another step, two, three, four, five.

“He—he’s inside!” Jeanne breathed.

Yes, the moose was inside. He was munching twigs and small branches, yet nothing happened. The suspense continued. Would he satisfy his hunger and leave without springing the trap? Jeanne studied the moose-trapper’s face. She read nothing there.

Of a sudden the moose, seeming to grow impatient of his small twigs, reached far out for a large balsam bough, and bang!—the trap was sprung.

Startled, the moose sprang forward. Next instant he was racing madly about the small enclosure. Almost at once an opening appeared and he dashed through it to disappear from sight. “He—he’s gone!” Jeanne exclaimed.

“Only into the larger corral.” The moose-trapper chuckled. “He’ll find a number of old friends there. They will tell him they’ve found a good boarding place. Soon he will be as happy as any of them. And say!” he cried, “What a grand big fellow he is! Jeanne, I believe you have brought good luck with you.”

“I—I hope so.” Jeanne beamed.

That bright winter’s day passed all too soon. At times Jeanne thought of asking Vivian to accompany her to the top of the ridge and down to the little lost lake, but always she was busy with household duties. Night found the request lingering unexpressed on her lips.

“Darkness fell on the wings of night.”

Lamps were lit, kerosene lamps that gave forth a steady yellow glow. Pulpwood logs, gathered from the shore where they were stranded, roared and crackled in the great stove.

Jeanne sat dreaming by the fire. Not all her dreams were happy ones. One thought haunted her: she must take Vivian to that little lost lake. What would she see? What would she?

Jeanne was asking herself this question when her thoughts were caught and held by a conversation between the young airplane pilot who had flown them to the island and Sandy MacQueen, the reporter.

“I’d think you could write a whole book about mystery planes,” the pilot suggested.

“Mystery planes?” Sandy sat up straight.

“Yes,” the pilot replied. “Planes that have flown away into the blue and just vanished. There have been several, you know.” His tone was earnest. “During the war there were aces of the air that vanished. What happened? Did they grow sick of the terror of war and just fly away?

“There have been several in recent years,” he went on. “One started for Central America, the X.Z.43. Nothing was ever heard of it. One headed for Japan, the B.L.92. And then there was the D.X.123. Queer about that!”

“The D.X.123!” Jeanne whispered the words. She wanted to scream them. She said nothing out loud, just sat there staring. D.X.123! Those were the letters and figures she had seen down at the bottom of the lost lake. Or, *had* she seen them? Had she just imagined them? Had she seen them in a paper and was this only an after-image?

She wanted to ask the pilot what happened to the D.X.123. She could not. At last she rose from her place.

“I—I’m going for a little walk,” she said. “All alone. I won’t get lost. I’ll watch the light from the house. It will guide me back.”

The crisp night air was like ice on a hot summer day to her burning cheeks. Her mind was full of wild thoughts. How strange life was!

Then she looked up at the heavens. The stars were there, had been there since earliest history of man, and long before that. Back of the stars was God. And God was from everlasting to everlasting.

“God guide me aright!” she prayed reverently.

So she wandered on and on over the trail that ran up the ridge and led to a view of the great Lake Superior. She wanted to see the moon as it shone upon the dark waters of night.

She was not destined to have her wish. Suddenly as she rounded that clump of

spruce trees, she heard a groan that sent a chill of terror coursing up her spine.

Turning quickly about, she saw, not ten paces behind her, the most gigantic moose that had ever lived, or so it seemed to her. His antlers were like broad flat beams and his eyes, as she threw her flashlight's glow upon them, shone like fire.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "Go back! Go back!" But the giant moose came straight on.

CHAPTER XX
SOME CONSIDERABLE TREASURE

June Travis felt her hand tremble as she took down the receiver to call Florence. “Whose hand would not tremble?” she asked herself. And indeed the events of the past few days had been exciting. Now Florence had left word to call her. “Something very important to talk about!” That was her message.

“Hello! Hello!” she heard. “Yes, this is Florence.

“Oh, June, the strangest things do happen!” she exclaimed. “You remember that little story I wrote about your lost father?”

“Yes. I—”

“Well, today while I was out, a little lady in gray called at the office. Frances Ward talked to her. And was she mysterious! Wanted to talk to me, no one else. After that, she said she would talk to you, or to both of us at once. Had something tremendously important to tell you. It—it’s about your father.”

“Oh!” June gasped.

“Of course—” the voice at the other end of the line dropped. “Of course, you must not expect too much. She said something about mind-reading, mental telepathy and all that. She may be just one more fortune teller. But somehow I can’t help but feel that she isn’t. She lives in quite an exclusive section of the city. Mrs. Ward says she wouldn’t be allowed to put out a sign in that section. And what’s a fortune teller without a sign? So—”

“Oh, I’m all excited!” June thrilled.

“Well, you mustn’t be—at least not too much. Tomorrow I’ve got to go after something else. Remember that gypsy fortune teller who stole four hundred

dollars? I've got to find her."

"But won't that be terribly dangerous?" June's voice wavered.

"Danger? What is danger?" Florence laughed. "Anyway, it's part of my job. I really haven't accomplished much yet. Been drawing my pay all the time. Perhaps this will be a scoop."

As you shall see, it was a "scoop" in more ways than one.

If Florence was anticipating trouble, Jeanne, on far-away Isle Royale, was in the midst of it at that very moment.

Who can describe Jeanne's fright as she turned about on the wintry trail to look into the gleaming eyes of a giant moose? She expected nothing less than a wild snorting charge from the monster.

And where should she go? To swing about and dash back over the trail was impossible. The way was too narrow. To go forward meant that she would come at last to the brink of a rocky precipice. At the foot of this precipice, piled up by an early winter storm, were great jagged masses of ice.

"Go back!" she screamed at the top of her voice. "Go back!"

But the moose did not go back. Instead he lowered his great antlers, took three steps forward, then after opening his great mouth and, allowing an apparently endless tongue to roll about, he let forth a most terrific roar.

To say that Jeanne was frightened would be not to express her feelings at all. She was fairly paralyzed with fear.

As if this were not enough, her startled eyes caught some further movement in the brush that grew to the right of the trail. As her trembling fingers directed the light of her torch there, a second smaller pair of eyes gleamed at her, then another and yet another.

"Wolves—bush wolves!" Her heart sank to the depths of despair.

She raced forward in a mad hope of finding foothold for descending the cliff that

led down to the lake's shore. She caught the magnificent picture of dark waters white with racing foam, a path of gold that was moonlight, and beyond that, limitless night. Then a strange thing happened. The giant moose, having given vent to a second roar, took one more step forward; then stumbling, fell upon his knees.

Strangest of all, he did not rise at once. Instead, as if the great weight of his towering antlers were too much for him to bear, he allowed his head to drop forward until his broad nose rested on the ground. For one full moment he remained thus.

As for Jeanne, she raced on to the edge of the precipice. Instantly she shrank back. Surely here was no way of escape. A sheer drop of fifty feet, and beneath that, up-ended fragments of ice standing like bayonets waiting for one who might drop. This was what met her gaze.

Strangely enough, in the midst of all this terror, the glorious scene—limitless water, golden moon and night, so gripped her that for the instant her mind was filled with it.

"The heavens declare the glory of God," she murmured.

Perhaps it was just this consciousness of the nearness of God and the glory of His world that quieted her soul and gave her the power to see things as they truly were.

As she turned back from the precipice, she saw the moose struggling to regain his feet. "Until he is up again, he is harmless," she assured herself. Having thrown her light full upon him, she cried out in surprise.

"Why! The poor fellow! He is like a walking skeleton! He must be starving!"

Like a flash all was changed. Fear gave way to pity and desire to aid. She recalled the moose-trapper's words: "We think they are underfed—perhaps starving." Here was one who had failed to find food. How could she help him?

For a moment she could not think. Then it came to her that the food in the moose-trap was branches of white birch, mountain-ash and balsam. Close to the moose, who still struggled vainly to rise, was a clump of birch trees.

“They are small, but the branches are too high for him,” she told herself. “If I cut down the one that leans toward him, it will almost touch him. If I do—”

She hesitated. At her belt hung a small axe in a sheath. Dared she use it? Could she take the dozen steps toward that moose and wield her axe upon that tree with a steady hand? Her heart pounded painfully. Then, as if whispered in her ear, there came to her, “He notes the sparrow’s fall.”

There was no further hesitation. Gripping her axe, she advanced boldly. As she did so, the moose gave vent to one more terrifying roar. But Jeanne scarcely heard. She had formed a purpose. It should be carried out.

Thwack! Thwack! Thwack! Her axe sounded out in the silent night. Came a cracking sound. The small tree swayed, then went down. The top branches switched the great beast’s nose. He did not appear to mind, but, reaching out, began eating greedily.

“There!” Jeanne breathed. “Now we’ll do one more for good measure.”

A second tree tottered to a fall; then, still gripping her axe, Jeanne sped on the wings of the wind toward the cabin where the lamp still sent out its inviting gleam.

One sound gave speed to her swift feet. The blood-curdling howl of a bush wolf was answered by another and yet another.

“I’ll fix those wolves!” Mr. Carlson exclaimed as Jeanne, five minutes later, in excited words told her story. Taking down his rifle, he disappeared into the dark outside. Shortly after there came the short quick crack-crack-crack of a rifle. After that the night was silent.

“That moose,” said Violet, the quiet, studious sister of Vivian, who took an especial pleasure in watching all manner of wild creatures, “must have been Old Black Joe. We called him that,” she laughed, “because he was almost black, and because he was so old.

“How he does love apples!” She laughed again.

“Yes, and you fed him almost half a bushel!” said Vivian reprovingly. “As if there were apple trees on Isle Royale.

“We had to buy them,” she explained to Jeanne. “Brought them all the way from Houghton.”

“But think what I got out of it in the end!” Violet reminded her sister.

“Yes,” Vivian agreed.

“You see,” Violet explained enthusiastically, “Old Black Joe got so tame after I had fed him a peck of apples, one at a time, that he’d follow me about like a pet lamb. And oh, the noises he’d make way down in his throat asking for more apples!

“Then one day a man came here to get pictures of wild life. Old Black Joe and I put on a real show for him. I didn’t quite ride the old fellow’s back, but I did almost. The picture came out fine. When the man left he gave me a whole twenty dollar bill for our boat. Wasn’t that grand?”

“Depends on how good a boat it was,” said Jeanne.

“We haven’t the boat yet. We’re saving for it,” said Violet.

Jeanne looked puzzled. “I thought you sold him a boat for twenty dollars.”

“Oh, no!” Violet laughed merrily. “He gave that money to us so we could apply it on the boat we are going to buy. But of course,” Violet paused. “You wouldn’t understand. For quite a long time Vivian and I have been saving up to buy a boat, a smart little motor boat we can use for taking people on picnics, fishing trips and cruising parties. You saw the cabins at the foot of the hill. Tourists come to the island and rent them in summer. Vivian and I could help father out with the family expenses if we had a boat.”

“And next year we want to go to high school on the mainland,” Vivian put in.

“We’ve got nearly sixty dollars,” Violet concluded, “but of course that’s not nearly enough.”

For a moment there was silence in the room. Then Violet said, “If that really is Old Black Joe, we must manage to get him into the corral. There are a few apples left. I’ll just lead him right in.”

“Y-yes,” drawled the moose-trapper, “and after he’s in, you’ll have to feed him. He’s so old he’s almost sure to die on our hands. What we’re after is good live young moose that will stand shipping.”

“All right! All right, sir! We’ll feed him!” the girls agreed as with one voice. “And you’ll see. He’ll be the prize picture of the big show in the spring.”

Jeanne did not go over Greenstone Ridge and down to her Lost Lake next morning. It was a day of wild storm. The wind whistled and sang about the cabin. The spruce trees swayed and sighed. The wind, like a white sheet, rose and fell as it swept across the frozen surface of the harbor.

Despite all this, the three girls hunted up Old Black Joe. He had fallen asleep beneath a cluster of cedars. Had the girls not found him, this sleep might well have been his last. As it was, only by eager coaxing and reluctant flogging were they able at last to usher him into the trap that was in truth a haven.

“There!” Vivian exclaimed. “Now we have let ourselves in for a winter’s work. That moose-trapper does not like bringing in boughs any too well. He’ll surely hold us to our bargain.”

“But I’m sure poor Old Black Joe needs a friend,” said Jeanne.

“And he’ll pay us back, you’ll see!” said the sentimental Violet. “Don’t forget that line about casting your bread on the waters.”

“We’ll cast our brush on the snow,” Vivian laughed, “but it’s really all the same.”

When they were back at the cabin and well thawed out, Jeanne found herself thinking once more of the mysterious airplane, D.X.123, that had vanished, and the strange coincidence of her seeing those signs at the bottom of Lost Lake. Soon she found herself brooding over the possible discoveries she might make in the very near future.

“This won’t do!” she told herself stoutly. “Surely dread has spoiled many a fine life, and more often than not there is really nothing to be feared.”

To clear her mind of this dark shadow, she began searching about for some bright dream when, with a mental “I have it!” she sprang to her feet. She had

thought of the ancient churn. “Another mystery,” she told herself, “and this will be a joyous one, I feel sure.”

She went in search of Vivian and, to her vast astonishment, found her cooped up in a tiny room heated by an oil stove. Over the girl’s head a pair of ear-phones were tightly clamped. By the expression on her face, Jeanne knew her to be so absorbed as to be completely lost to the world.

For a full five minutes Jeanne stood patiently waiting. Then, with a start, Vivian looked her way. “Oh!” she exclaimed, “I didn’t know you were there.”

“But what are you doing?” Jeanne asked. “There is a radio in the living room. Surely you don’t have to—”

“Coop myself up in here to listen?” Vivian put in. “No. But this is not just a receiving radio. It is a radio station; short wave. We are licensed to send messages free of charge. And we *do* send them.” Her eyes shone with pride. “We are the only station on the island. We saved a boy’s life by calling a doctor from the mainland. We called for the coast guard when a hydroplane crashed on Rock Harbor. Oh, yes, and we’ve done much more. But now, I was about to get off a message telling of the moose trap. You see, we’re the radio news reporter for this corner of the world.”

“I’m sorry I disturbed you,” Jeanne apologized. “It must be fascinating.”

“But Vivian,” she changed the subject, “do you mind if I look at the things in your museum?”

“No. Here’s the key.”

“And Vivian—I—” Jeanne hesitated, “I’d like to try opening that old churn.”

“Whatever for?” Vivian exclaimed.

“Just a feeling about it.”

“All right. But you won’t break anything?”

“Not a thing.” Jeanne took the key and hurried away, little dreaming that the short wave station she had just seen was to have a large part in the mystery

drama that was to be played by the inhabitants of Chippewa Harbor on Isle Royale, in the days that were to come.

Armed with a bottle of kerosene and a small knife, Jeanne slipped into the “museum” and closed the door. It was a wintry spot, that small room, but warmed by her enthusiasm, she began her task without one shiver. Soon she was scraping away at the corroded metal clasps, applying kerosene, scraping again.

For a long time there was not the least sign of success. She was all but ready to give up when, as her stout young hands turned at one screw it gave forth the faintest sort of squeak.

“Oh, you will!” she breathed exultantly. Then she redoubled her efforts.

At the end of another half hour that one clamp was entirely loose. Three others remained. Another half hour and, quite suddenly, as if resistance were no longer possible, two clamps loosened at once. “Oh!” she breathed. “Now I have you!”

This was true, for once three clamps were loosed, the cover could be removed. Here she paused. Though an only child, Jeanne had never been selfish. She had always shared her joys, whenever possible. She was about to open a thing that had been closed for half a century or more. What would she find? “A whiff of sour buttermilk,” as Vivian had prophesied? If more than this, what then?

“A laugh or a secret is always better when shared,” she told herself.

Opening the door, she called softly, “Girls! Come here!”

When Vivian and Violet had entered she closed the door. “See!” she said in the most mysterious of tones. “It’s done like this. You turn this screw, then that one. Now this one, now that one, and, presto! It’s open.”

It was true the churn smelled of sour buttermilk, and such a sourness as it was! This was not all, however. Wedged into the churn so it could not possibly be shaken about was some heavy object.

“It’s copper!” Vivian exclaimed. “A lump of pure native copper taken from the rocks here on the island. How strange!”

“Look!” Jeanne whispered. “Here, tucked away in a crevice of the copper, is a

bit of paper."

"A note! It's written on!" Violet cried.

As Jeanne's trembling fingers unfolded it, at the very center of a small page filled with writing, her eyes caught three words that stood out like mountain peaks. The words were: SOME CONSIDERABLE TREASURE.

CHAPTER XXI
BATTLE ROYAL

“Why can’t people take care of their money?” It was on that same afternoon that Florence found herself asking this question. There was a scowl on her brow as she journeyed slowly toward the home of Margaret DeLane, the widow who had been robbed by a gypsy fortune teller. “Some people are so stupid they don’t deserve any help,” she was thinking as she studied the faces about her on the street car. Stolid and stupid they surely appeared to be. “Not an attractive face among them all. They—”

She broke off to stifle a groan. The woman she sat next to was large. This had crowded her half into the aisle. A second woman, in passing, had stepped on her foot. Instead of appearing sorry about it, the woman grinned as if to say, “Ha! Ha! Big joke!”

“Big joke!” Florence thought grimly. “Life’s a big joke, and the joke’s always on me.” Life had not seemed so joyous since Jeanne had gone away. It is surprising that the absence of one person can mean so much to us.

The street car came to a jerking halt. “My street.” She was up and off the car.

Her street, and such a street as it was! Narrow and dirty, its sidewalks were lined with ugly, blank-faced, staring frame buildings that appeared to shout insults at her. She trudged on.

At last she came to the worst building of them all, and there on the front was her number.

Following instructions, she came at last to a side door. Having knocked, she was admitted at once by a dark-haired girl. This girl, who might have been twelve, wore an apron pinned about her neck. The apron touched the floor.

“Does Mrs. DeLane live here?” Florence asked.

“Yes, that’s my mother, and I am Jane,” said the girl. “No, she isn’t here. She’s out scrubbing. She’ll be back very soon. Won’t you sit down?”

The child was so polite, the place was so neat and clean, that Florence felt as though the sun had suddenly burst through a cloud.

Two younger children were playing at keeping house in a corner. How beautiful and bright they were! Their eyes, their hair, even their simple cotton garments fairly shone.

“And this,” thought Florence, swallowing hard, “is what Margaret DeLane lives for.”

Then suddenly her spirits rose. “Why, this is what we all live for, the little children!” she thought. “We all at times are foolish. Many of us break the law. Few of us who are older deserve a great deal of sympathy. It’s the children, poor little innocent ones, who are too young to do any wrong—they are the ones who suffer.

“And they must not!” she thought with sudden fierceness. “They must not. We must find that gypsy robber and get that money back!”

As if in answer to this fierce resolve, the door opened and in walked Margaret DeLane.

“It was that I wanted to do so much!” the woman all but sobbed as she told her story. “Mrs. Doyle, two doors away, asked a fortune teller how she should invest her money. She said, ‘Buy a house.’ Mrs. Doyle bought a house, one of the worst in the city. Someone wanted the land for what they called ‘slum clearance,’ and Mrs. Doyle doubled her money. So—”

“So you asked a gypsy woman what to do with your money, and she stole it?” Florence sighed. “Well, we’ve got to go and find that gypsy woman and get the money back. It will be difficult. It may be dangerous. Are you ready?”

“Ready?” The weary woman reached for her coat. “But you?” She held back. “Why should you—”

“Oh, that’s part of my job.” Florence forced a laugh. “It’s all in a day’s work. So —come on.”

They were away, but not until Florence had placed upon the walls of her memory a picture of three smiling children’s faces. “These,” she thought, “shall be my inspiration, come what may!”

Their search for the gypsy was rewarded with astonishing speed. Scarcely had they rounded a corner to enter noisy and crowded Maxwell Street than the widow DeLane gripped Florence’s arm to whisper, “There! There she is! That’s her.”

Florence found herself staring at a dark and evil face. The woman was powerfully built. There was about her a suggestion of crouching. “Like some great cat,” Florence thought as a chill ran up her spine.

That the woman resembled a cat in other ways was at once apparent. With feline instinct, she sensed danger without actually seeing it. Standing, with her eyes turned away, she gave a sudden start, wheeled half about, took one startled look, then glided, with all the agility of a cat, through the crowd.

Florence might not be as sly as the gypsy, but she was powerful, and she could stick to a purpose. With the widow close at her heels, she crowded between a thin man and a fat woman, pushed an astonished peddler of roasted chestnuts into the street, hurdled a low rack lined with cheap shoes, knocked over a table piled high with cheap jewelry, to at last arrive panting before a door that had just been closed by the gypsy.

“Locked!” She set her teeth tight. “What’s one lock more or less?” Her stout shoulder hit the door.

Quite taken by surprise by the suddenness of her success in breaking open the door, she lost her balance and tumbled into the room, landing flat on the floor.

She had tumbled before, many, many times. In fact, she could tumble more times per minute than anyone in her gym class. Locks and tumbles were not new to her. She was on her feet and ready for battle in ten split seconds.

The gypsy woman was not slow. The widow had followed Florence into the room. There came a glitter of steel as the gypsy sprang at her.

But not so fast! As the gypsy's arm swung high, Florence caught it from behind, gave it a sudden wrench that brought forth a groan, then shook it as a dog shakes a rat, until the needle-pointed stiletto gripped in the murderous gypsy's hand flew high and wide to sink into the heart of a gaudy dancing girl hanging in a frame on the wall.

Whirling about just in time to save herself from the grip of five girls in gypsy costumes who swarmed at her, Florence sprang towards them to scatter them as a turkey might scatter a bevy of pigeons.

Meanwhile the distracted widow had dashed from the room, screaming, "Police! Police!"

Deprived of her deadly weapon, the gypsy woman did what harm she could with tooth and nail. This lasted just long enough for Florence to receive two ugly scratches down her right cheek. Then the dark-faced one found herself lying flat upon her back with one hundred and sixty pounds of Florence seated on her chest.

"Now—now rest easy," Florence breathed, "un—until the police come."

"I didn't take it!" the woman panted. "I didn't take the money. I—I'll give it back. Let me up. I'll get it back for you. I—"

At that moment there was a stir at the door and there stood Officer Patrick Moriarity.

"Oh! So it's you!" He grinned at Florence. "They told me someone was being killed. But if it's you doin' the killin', it's O. K. You wouldn't kill nobody that didn't need killin'."

Patrick's young sisters had attended Florence's playground classes in the good days that were gone. More often than was really necessary, Patrick had looked in to see how they were getting on.

Now, with a grin, he said, "I'll just be toddlin' along."

"You'll not!" said Florence in sudden fright. "This woman stole four hundred dollars. You've got to do something about it."

“Only four hundred?” Patrick whistled through his teeth. “Why bother her?

“But then,” he added as a sort of afterthought, “we might take her to the station. She’ll get four years. These gypsies like a nice soft spot in jail.”

The woman let out an unearthly wail, then struggled in vain to free herself.

“She told me,” Florence said quietly, “that if I’d let her up she’d give me the money.”

“She did?” Patrick studied the walls of the room. “Door and both windows right here in front,” he reflected. “I think we might try it out. Let her up, and we’ll see.”

Once on her feet, the woman was not slow in digging deep among the folds of her ample skirts and extracting a roll of bills.

“Let’s see!” Patrick took it from her. “Ten—twenty—forty—” he counted.

“But say!” he ended, “it’s four hundred and ten! How come?”

“The ten is mine,” the gypsy grumbled.

“Fair enough,” said Patrick. “Your man got a car?”

The woman nodded sulkily.

“All right. Now you take this ten and buy gas with it. Turn that old car south and keep it going until the gas is gone. And if I see your face again on Maxwell Street—” He made the sign of handcuffs. “Mostly honest people live on Maxwell Street. You don’t belong here. Scram! *Scram!*” He gave her a sturdy push.

The woman was gone before Florence could think twice.

Patrick turned to Florence. “And now, when do I sign you up as a lady cop?”

“Never! Oh, never!” Florence fingered her bleeding cheek. “Do—do you think she’s poisonous?”

“No, not very poisonous.” Patrick smiled. “Just a little antiseptic will fix that up, fine an’ dandy. But really,” he added, “you should carry a piece of lead pipe or maybe a gun. You can’t tell what they’ll do to you—you really can’t.”

“I’m staying on the Boulevard from now on.” The big girl’s tone carried little conviction. Truth was, she knew she would do nothing of the sort.

“Well, anyway,” she said to Frances Ward two hours later, “the widow got her money back. I got a story, and those three cute kids will get a fine break for months to come. And after all,” she added soberly, “it’s for the children, the little children, I did it. Everything we do is for them.”

“Yes.” Frances Ward wiped her glasses with a shaking hand. “Yes, it is always for the little children.”

CHAPTER XXII
LITTLE LADY IN GRAY

“Read it! Read it aloud!” Vivian Carlson insisted as Jeanne still stood staring at the three magic words, SOME CONSIDERABLE TREASURE, that stood out at the center of the note they had found in the ancient churn.

“Al—alright, I will.” With considerable effort Jeanne pulled herself together. She was all atremble, as who would not be if he had succeeded in unscrewing the fastenings of an ancient churn, lost half a century, to find inside, as it seemed, a message from the dead?

“I, Josiah Grier,” she read in a low, tense voice, “am obliged to leave this cabin on the island. It is the dead of winter. I have but a small boat. However, because wild creatures have consumed my supplies, I must endeavor to reach the mainland. In this churn will be found a sample of such copper as abounds on this island. Be it known to any who open this churn that there is on the island *some considerable treasure*. It is to be found on the Greenstone Ridge at the far side, in a grotto which may be found by lining up the outstanding rocks off shore with the highest point of the ridge.”

“Some considerable treasure!” Violet breathed softly. “Jewels and gold hidden there by lake pirates perhaps.”

“Or old silver plate smuggled here from Canada,” Jeanne suggested. She loved ancient dishes and silver.

“Probably it’s nothing you’d ever dream of,” said practical Vivian. “A curious sort of treasure I’d guess, for this Josiah Grier, if I guess right, was a queer sort of chap. Think of hiding a piece of copper worth about two dollars and a half in an old churn!”

“What time do you suppose he could have belonged to?” Violet asked thoughtfully. “Was he a trader when the Indians owned the island, or a white copper miner of a later time?”

“Must have had a cow,” Vivian suggested. “Churns go with cows. There were cows here in the copper days. Plenty of grass was planted for them. There is timothy and clover growing wild today, everywhere.”

Needless to say the minds of the three girls were rife with speculation. There in the chilly seclusion of the museum they pledged one another to complete secrecy regarding the whole matter.

They screwed the churn’s top back and replaced everything, leaving the place just as Jeanne had found it that morning when she had gone in to work with kerosene on the rusty fastenings of the old churn.

“We’ll surprise ’em,” Violet whispered.

“Surprise them. Surprise them,” the others echoed.

It was in the midst of the evening conversation about the roaring fire that, for the time at least, all thoughts of treasure were driven from Jeanne’s mind.

“It’s strange about that airplane, D.X.123,” Sandy MacQueen, the reporter, drawled. “I had a sharp reminder of its disappearance only last month. Sad thing it was, and rather haunting. A girl with an appealing face, not sixteen yet I’d say, came into the big room of our newspaper office. Happened I wasn’t busy, so I asked her what she wanted. And what do you suppose it was she wanted?”

“What?” The moose-trapper sat up to listen.

“She said her father had gone way several years ago, when she was too small to remember much about him.”

“What did she have to do with the disappearance of the D.X.123?” the moose-trapper drawled.

“Perhaps nothing,” Sandy replied. “And yet, it is strange. The name of one man who went in that apparently ill-fated plane was John Travis.”

“John—John Travis!” Jeanne exclaimed.

“And you know—” Sandy turned to Jeanne. “That girl Florence got interested in —her name was Travis too.”

“June Travis,” Jeanne agreed.

“Of course,” said Sandy, “it may be a mere coincidence. Yet I sort of feel that he might have been her father.”

“The D.X.123. June Travis,” Jeanne was thinking. “John Travis, D.X.123.” Her mind was in a whirl. Springing to her feet, she seized Vivian by the shoulders. “Come on,” she said in a strange tight little voice, “we’re going for a walk.”

Drawing on their heaviest wraps, the two girls went out into the night. The storm which had been raging all that day had passed. All about them as they walked was whiteness and silence. The stars were a million diamonds set in a cushion of midnight blue.

They took the trail that led across the narrow entrance to the frozen bay. From the shore a half mile away came a ceaseless roar. Lashed into foam by the fury of the storm, the lake’s waters were beating against the barrier of ice that lay before it.

They walked rapidly forward in silence. Jeanne felt that she would burst if she did not talk; yet she said never a word. What she wanted to say was, “Vivian, that girl June Travis is a friend of mine. Her father is dead. We must send a wireless message to her. I saw her father’s airplane at the bottom of that little lost lake. It must have been there for years. He must be dead.”

Strangely enough, she said never a word about the matter. An unseen presence seemed to hover over her, whispering, “Do not say it! Do not say it! It may not be true.”

Was it true? Jeanne could not tell.

At last they came to a spot where they might mount to an icy platform and witness the blind battling of mighty waters against an unbreakable barrier.

The moon came out from behind a cloud. Water was black with night and white

with foam. A cavern of ice lay before them. Into this narrow cavern a giant wave rushed. Its black waters were churned into white foam. It rose to stretch out a white hand and to utter a hiss that was like the angry spit of a serpent. In sheer terror Jeanne shrank back.

“It can’t reach us!” Vivian threw back her strong young shoulders and laughed.

“Vivian!” Jeanne suddenly gripped her companion’s arm. “Do you see that ridge?” She pointed away toward the island.

“Yes.”

“Vivian, tomorrow, whether it storms or not, you must go with me to the top of that ridge and down on the other side.”

“To find the treasure told about in the old churn?” Vivian asked.

“Oh, no! No!” Jeanne exclaimed in shocked surprise. “It is something more important than that—far, far more important.

“And yet—” her voice dropped. “I may not tell you about it now, for, after all, it may be just nothing.”

At that, with Vivian lost in a haze of stupefaction, she said with a shudder, “This is too grand—all this beauty of the night, all this surf line power. Come! We must go back.”

And they did go back to the cheery light, the cozy warmth of the fisherman’s home.

In the meantime, in the far-away city Florence was meeting with an experience well calculated to make her believe in witches, fairies, and all manner of fantastic fortune telling as well. She and June Travis had gone to visit the little lady in gray.

Florence had, after a considerable effort, contacted the little lady.

“Come to see me any time tomorrow,” had been the little lady’s invitation.

“Some time tomorrow,” Florence had agreed.

So, ten o’clock next morning found Florence and June Travis in the vicinity of the mysterious little lady’s home.

“It’s strange,” said Florence as they alighted from the car, “that anyone interested in telling fortunes should live in such a rich neighborhood.” She allowed her eyes to take in three magnificent apartment buildings and the smaller homes of pressed brick and rich gray stone that surrounded them.

“But then,” she added, “I suppose she gets a great many wealthy clients, and that’s what really pays. And, of course, she may not be a fortune teller after all.”

“It’s over this way,” June said, paying little heed to her companion’s talk. She was eager to reach the little old lady in gray. Some kind fairy seemed to be whispering in her ear, “This is the one. You have searched long. You have traveled far. You have met with many disappointments. But here at last you are, face to face with reality.”

“Here! Here it is!” she exclaimed in a low whisper. “Such a cute little cottage, all in gray stone.”

“And no sign on the door.” Florence was puzzled more and more.

June’s fingers trembled as she lifted a heavy knocker and let it down with a bang that was startling.

For a short time there was no sign of life in the place. Then, somewhere inside, a door opened and shut. The outer door opened, and there before them stood the Little Lady in Gray.

She was little—very small indeed, yet not really a midget. She was quite gray. And her dress was as gray as her hair.

“Won’t you come in?” she invited. “I have been expecting you for an hour.”

“That’s strange!” Florence thought with a sudden start. “We didn’t tell her when we’d come—just said sometime today.”

“So you are June Travis!” said the little lady. They had been led into the coziest

sitting-room it had ever been Florence's privilege to see. The little lady looked June up and down, as much as to say, "How you have grown! And how beautiful you are!" She did not say it.

Instead, she pointed to a chair, then to another as she suggested, "If you will kindly sit there, and you there, I shall take this large chair, then we can talk. It is a little large," she looked at the chair that did indeed appear to have been made for a person three times her size, "but with cushions it can be made very comfortable indeed."

Florence wondered in a dreamy sort of way why so small a person, who apparently could have anything she wanted, should have chosen so large a chair. She was destined to recall this wondering a long time after, and to wonder still more.

That the little lady *was* very well off, Florence was bound to conclude. The curtains were of finest lace and the draperies of rich, heavy material. The rugs were oriental. The few objects of art—three vases, four oil paintings and a bronze statue in the corner—had cost a pretty penny; yet all this was so arranged that it appeared to harmonize perfectly with the two swinging cages where four yellow canaries swayed and sang, with the reddish-brown cat that dozed on the narrow hearth, and with the little lady in that big chair. It was strange.

"You have been wishing, my dear," said the little lady, "to hear some news from your father—some good news, to be sure. I have it for you."

"Yes, I—" June leaned forward eagerly.

"But wait!" said the little lady, "I have omitted something." She touched a bell. A tiny maid in a white cap appeared.

"The tea, Martha."

The little lady folded her hands.

Florence could see that June was tense with emotion. She herself was greatly excited. Not so the little old lady. She did everything, said everything in the spirit of absolute repose and peace.

"And why not?" the girl asked herself. "What's the good of all this jumping

about like a grasshopper, screaming like a seagull, and living all the time as if you were racing to a fire? Peace—that's the thing to seek, peace and repose."

"Ah, here is the tea." The little lady's eyes shone. "Do you have sugar or lemon? Lemon? Ah, yes. And you? Lemon also. That makes us three.

"And now—" she sipped the tea as if she were about to say, "I had muffins for breakfast. What did you have?"

What she did say was, "I heard from your father, my dear. It was only the day before yesterday. Oh, not by mail, nor by wire. Not even by radio. He is rather far away and, for the moment, shut off. But I heard. Oh, yes, my dear, I heard—" she smiled a roguish smile.

June was staring, eyes wide, ears straining, taking in every expression, drinking in every word.

"He has been out of my circle of influence for a long, long time," said the little lady. "But now he is not so far. It is an island—that's where he is."

"Wha—what island?" June's tongue stuck to the roof of her mouth.

"That, my child, it is strange!" The little lady smiled a curious smile. "He does not know, nor do I. It is a very large island, this I know. He is well. He is not alone. He is very short of food, but hopes to find more presently. He will, in time, find his way off this island. He is convinced of that. And so am I. And then, my dear, then—"

"I shall see him!" This came from June as a cry of joy.

"Then you shall see him."

"Wha—what is my father like?"

For a full moment the little lady looked at her without reply. Then she said, "He is short and rather stout. He is jolly."

"See?" Florence whispered in June's ear.

"He has always been well-to-do," the little lady went on. "Now he may be rich.

It is strange. His thoughts are clouded on that point. It is as if he had been rich, as if for the moment great wealth had escaped him, but that in a short time he hoped to regain it.

“And now—” her words appeared to fade away. “Now I must ask you to excuse me from further talk.”

At that moment Florence experienced a peculiar sensation. It seemed to her that with the fading of the little lady’s words she also faded. She seemed to all but vanish.

“Pure fancy!” Florence shook herself, and there was the little lady, bright and smiling as ever.

“No, no, my child!” she was saying to June, “Put up your purse. No money ever is passed in this room. This place is sacred to loyalty and friendship, beauty and truth.”

A moment later the two girls found themselves once again in the bright sunshine of a winter’s day.

“That,” said Florence, “is the strangest one of them all. Or is she one of them at all?”

“No,” said June, “she is not one of them.” She was thinking of Madame Zaran, of the voodoo priestess and all the rest. “She—” she hesitated, “she is the spirit of truth. All she said is true. But how—” her face was filled with sudden dismay. “How are we to find this large island?”

“Perhaps,” said Florence with a broad smile, “we shall not be obliged to find the island. It may find us, or at least your father may.”

CHAPTER XXIII
STRANGE TREASURE

“Vivian! Look down there!” Jeanne’s lips were drawn into a tight line as she pointed to a spot on the smooth frozen surface of the little lost lake.

It was the day following the storm. All was clear, bright and silent now. They had climbed the ridge, those two. Then they had gone slipping and sliding down the other side.

As Vivian heard Jeanne’s words, she gave her a quick look of sudden surprise. “Why—what——”

“Don’t ask me!” Jeanne exclaimed in a low, tense tone. “I can’t tell you. I mustn’t! Just look!”

Without further question Vivian dropped to the frozen surface of Jeanne’s little lost lake, cupped her hands about her eyes and, for one full moment, lay there flat upon the ice, looking—just looking.

To Jeanne those sixty seconds were sixty hours. “That girl June Travis,” she was thinking to herself, “expects her father to come back. Sometimes people have faith to believe such things. God must give them the power to believe. But if her father is down there—if he has been there for years?” She only half formed this last question, and made no effort to answer it.

“Jeanne!” Vivian sprang to her feet with a suddenness that was startling. “I see an airplane down there. There is a circle on the right plane and inside the circle is D.X.123!”

Jeanne uttered a sharp cry. “Then it is true!”

“What is true?” Vivian demanded. “How did the airplane get there?”

Slowly, haltingly, Jeanne told her all she knew of the D.X.123, and all she suspected as well.

“Jeanne!” Vivian’s voice was hoarse with emotion. “There is a great beacon light on Passage Island, four miles off the end of Isle Royale. It is there to guide passing ships. But on a night of wild storm song birds, driven off their course, seeing the beacon and thinking it a place of refuge, come racing in to dash out their lives against the thick glass of the light. The men in that plane must have thought this little lake a place of refuge, and found it only a grave!

“And yet,” she said quickly, “just because the plane is down there is no proof the men are there also. Only last summer an airplane went down in Rock Harbor, just ten miles from here. The plane sank from sight in ten minutes. But before it sank the two men on board were rescued and are living still.

“Come!” Once again her voice changed as she prepared to spring into action. “We must hurry back and tell Sandy about our discovery. We’ll get the short wave at Michigan Tech. They will relay a message to Sandy’s paper. Just think what a scoop it will be for him! Can’t you see the headline: ‘Plane D.X.123 found at bottom of small lake on Isle Royale!’”

“Yes,” Jeanne spoke slowly, “I can see that. I can see more than that. I can see the face of my friend June Travis when she reads that headline. Her father left in that airplane, Vivian. Her father! She may not know all about it, but when she reads that name, John Travis, she will know. But, Vivian, newspapers are often cruel. We must not let Sandy’s paper be cruel; at least, please not yet!”

“Al—alright, Jeanne.” Vivian put her strong arm about Jeanne’s waist and together they made their way across the lake to the foot of the ridge.

“Jeanne,” said Vivian as they left the lake, “I wonder how long paint keeps its color at the bottom of a lake.”

“I wonder who knows?” Strangely enough, there was a fresh note of hope in Jeanne’s voice.

As they reached the crest of the ridge, Jeanne turned back. Her gaze took in not the lake alone, but the lower ridge beyond that, a broad stretch of lower land.

“Look!” she said, pointing to the distant shore. “Smoke below.”

“Smoke?” There was a puzzled expression on Vivian’s face. “Whose fire can it be?”

“Does no one live there?” asked Jeanne.

“No one. There is a cabin there. It was owned by an Indian, John Redfeather. He died two years ago. All his stuff is in the cabin, nets for fishing, canned goods, salt fish in kegs, everything. But, until this moment, I believed we people at Chippewa Harbor were the only ones on the island.

“Vivian!” Jeanne gripped her arm hard. “You don’t suppose—”

“No.” Vivian read her meaning. “How could they? No one could live on this island for years without being seen. Small boats are going around the island all summer long. No, no! It is impossible.

“And yet—” her voice softened. “Those people probably *are* in trouble. They may have been driven across the lake in a small boat.

“Tell you what!” she exclaimed. “Here’s a large flat rock and over there are some small dead trees. Those people may not know we are at Chippewa Harbor. We will build a beacon fire to let them know they are not alone. Then perhaps they will come over and we can help them.”

“All the same,” Jeanne thought as she assisted in laying the fire, “I still have faith.”

“Jeanne,” said Vivian as a half hour later the fire, which had blazed high, was a mass of glowing coals, “we are only a short distance from the highest spot on the ridge. In a sort of cave beneath that spot is to be found ‘*some considerable treasure*.’ Shall we go look for it?”

“Lead on!” said Jeanne.

It was Vivian who talked most of the mysterious “treasure” she and Jeanne were about to seek in the cave-like opening of the rocks on Greenstone Ridge. And why not? Had it not been she who, while lifting her father’s nets, had taken the ancient churn from the bottom of Lake Superior? Had she not cherished it as a mark of Isle Royale’s colorful history? Had she not, with Jeanne’s aid, discovered the note telling of that treasure? What was most important of all,

Jeanne had insisted that if anything of value were found it should be sold and added to Vivian's boat fund.

Vivian was saying as they made their way along the ridge toward its highest point: "I know just the boat we need. It was made by a famous old boat builder. He built it for his own use. He was old. His sight failed him. He never put it in the water. He is quite poor now. If he can sell his boat, how happy he will be!"

"And how happy you and Violet will be!" said Jeanne, suddenly coming out of a brown study. She was still thinking of the lost airplane D.X.123 and of that mournful sight both she and Vivian had seen at the bottom of the little lost lake, the sunken plane.

At the same time she was thinking of that column of smoke rising from the edge of a tiny island along the farther shore of Isle Royale.

"Smoke!" she whispered. "How much it has meant to man through all the years! How he has read the meaning of its upward curlings. If he is wise, it tells him of wind and approaching storm. He signals his distant friends with columns of smoke. Other columns warn him of hiding enemies. All this is of the past. How little that distant smoke says to me! And yet, somehow, I cannot help but feel—" she spoke aloud—"that somehow that smoke is connected with the missing airplane."

"I can't see how that could be," replied Vivian. "All that must have happened years ago. No one could live undiscovered on this island all that time—not even if he chose to."

"And yet—" Jeanne did not finish. Her thoughts at that moment were for herself alone.

"But think, Jeanne!" Vivian exclaimed. "'Some considerable treasure.' That's what we read in that note. Think back over the history of our island. Lake pirates are believed to have hidden away in our long, narrow harbors. Of course, that was years and years ago. But think of the ancient gold and silver plate, the jewels they may have hidden here!

"But then—" she sighed a happy sigh of anticipation. "It may not have been that at all. This island is only sixteen miles from Canada. Think what a hiding place it must have been when smugglers were chased by revenue cutters!"

“What did they smuggle?” Jeanne asked absent-mindedly.

“Silks, woolens, drugs, opium, uncut diamonds and—oh, lots of things.”

“Silks would rot. Who wants opium? I’m not sure I could tell an uncut diamond from a pebble.” Jeanne laughed in spite of herself.

“Well, anyway,” Vivian exclaimed, “here’s the highest spot! Now we go down.”

“But how?” Jeanne looked with dismay upon the sheer wall of rock beneath her.

“This way.” Vivian gripped the out-growing root of a tree, swung into space, tucked her toe into a crevice, caught at a sapling clinging to the rocky wall, found a narrow shelf, then dropped again.

“Oh, Jeanne!” she cried. “Here it is! Here’s the very place! All dark and spooky!”

“Yes,” Jeanne wailed, “and here am I. I—I just can’t come down there! Makes me dizzy to think about it.”

“Wait. I’ll come up and help you.”

In a surprisingly short time Vivian was again at her side. “It’s all in getting used to it,” she breathed. “I’ve always lived here, and I’ve climbed all over. Now when I get down to that first shelf, you grab that root and slide over the side. I’ll catch you.”

With wildly beating heart Jeanne followed instructions. Three minutes later, to her vast surprise, she found herself on a lower rocky shelf looking into a dark cavern that might well have been called a cave.

“You—you’re wonderful!” She patted Vivian on the shoulder.

Vivian evidently did not hear this well-deserved praise. “Now,” she breathed, “now for the treasure!”

At that moment two men, one with his feet garbed in crude moccasins made from a torn-up blanket, were standing on the distant shore close to a weather-

beaten cabin.

“John,” the taller of the two was saying, “that column of smoke is the first sign of life I’ve seen on this island. Who can it be? Do you suppose they’re Indians?” They were speaking of the smoke from Vivian’s signal fire.

“If they’re Indians, they’re civilized, living this far south. Probably got a good supply of food, too, and that’s what we need. Stuff in this cabin is about gone. Wish I knew what island this is.”

“Anyway,” the other said, “we’ve got to get up there and down on the other side, where they live. We’d better start as soon as possible. Be dark before we get over the ridge, as it is.”

“We’ll start at once,” the other agreed. Then they disappeared into the cabin.

“Treasure!” Jeanne was saying at that moment. “He called that treasure—four big slabs of copper beaten out of the rocks, probably by Indians, and hidden here perhaps two hundred years ago. It may go well in your museum, but how is it going to help with that boat of yours?”

“It won’t help much,” Vivian agreed with a sigh.

Flashlights in hand, they had entered the rocky cavern. It was neither very wide nor deep. Well toward the back of it they had come upon these irregular slabs of pure copper. The marks of fire and Indians’ stone hammers were still to be seen upon them. Here at least was proof that wild tribes did mine copper here in centuries gone.

“Copper,” said Vivian slowly, “is worth eight cents a pound, if you have it near a smelter. Up here it is worth very little.

“But there have been times,” she added in defense of the unknown one who had left that note in the ancient churn, “when this pile of copper would have been considered a treasure. It would have sold for two hundred dollars, and that much money would buy a house in a city, or a pretty good farm, way back in the long ago. It all depends—”

She did not finish, for at that moment Jeanne exclaimed from the deepest and

narrowest corner of the cavern: “Vivian! Come here quick! See what I’ve found!”

“Oh—oh!” Vivian cried. “How strange!” Her flashlight played over a narrow shelf-like ledge of rock. On that shelf rested several pieces of crockery.

These were not like any Vivian had seen before. Moulded from bluish clay, then fired to a bright glaze, they bore on their sides strange markings.

“Pictured crockery,” Jeanne murmured. “Seems strange that Indians should have done that!”

“And yet they must have been Indians,” Vivian replied. “Who else could have made them?

“And oh, Jeanne!” she cried with sudden enthusiasm. “What an addition they will make to my museum collection!”

“I wonder,” Jeanne said thoughtfully, “if these could have been the treasure referred to in that note?”

“Treasure? These?” Vivian laughed a merry laugh. “Pieces of old crockery! But,” she added thoughtfully, “they *are* a treasure, of a sort. Come on. I’ll take off my mackinaw and pack them in it. We’ll have to handle them with care.”

A half hour later, just as dusk was falling, they crept out of the cave. After a quarter hour spent in struggling up the steep rocky wall, they went hurrying down the slope toward home.

At the same time two men, one who limped and one who wore rags for shoes, were struggling across the narrow plateau where snow lay deep and wolf tracks were numerous, toward that steep wall of rock in which the cavern was hidden.

Jeanne’s question regarding the pieces of ancient crockery proved not to be so far wrong after all. The moment Sandy MacQueen saw them he exclaimed “What a discovery! Until this moment not a whole piece of Indian crockery has been found on the island, only fragments. And now, here you have a dozen or more perfect ones.

“But what is this?” He fairly leaped at one piece. “Here is the picture of that

heathen god Thor! Can’t be any mistake about it. Why would Indians put such a picture on their crockery?”

“Know what?” His face beamed. “I may be wrong, but if I’m not, this will go far toward proving a story that until now has seemed more than half legend—that Norsemen, driven to the shores of America, perhaps a thousand years ago, came to this island for protection from savage Indians, and that they were the true discoverers of copper on Isle Royale.

“Vivian! Violet!” His tone was low, exciting. “You have your summer boat paid for right now! I know a museum curator who will pay you handsomely for these pieces.”

“I—I sort of wanted them for my museum,” Vivian demurred. “But the boat—”

“Oh, yes, the boat!” Violet exclaimed. “The boat! The boat!” At that she grabbed Vivian and Jeanne both at once and together they went whirling madly around the room.

CHAPTER XXIV
THROUGH THE PICTURE

Florence was in the studio alone. Miss Mabee had been called away to New York. The fire in the hearth had burned out. Florence had not troubled to rebuild it. The place seemed cold, lonely, deserted. As she sat there musing, she seemed to hear the words of Poe's Raven: "Never more."

Never more what? Well, surely never again would she believe in those who told fortunes by reading cards, gazing into a crystal ball, or studying stars.

"Fakers all," she murmured. "Simple, harmless people, most of them; but fakes for all that! They—"

She broke short off to listen. Had she caught some sound of movement in the room? It did not seem possible. The door was securely locked. The door? Two doors really. She recalled discovering a secret panel door at the side of the room.

"Just behind that picture," she told herself.

The picture, on which she bestowed a fleeting glance, was the one Miss Mabee had prepared for the little show to be put on for Tum Morrow's benefit, the paper picture through which Jeanne was supposed to jump. "Wonder if that show will ever come off?" she mused. "Wonder—"

She sprang to her feet. This time there *was* a sound. Yes, and she wanted to scream. There, between two paintings of gypsy life, was a face, an ugly, fat, leering face. She knew that face. It was the man she had seen in the professor's room on that night when she went down the rope. Madame Zaran had sent him. Her illicit business of telling fake fortunes was being ruined by Florence's investigations and reports. She was seeking revenge.

How had the man entered the room? One other question was more pressing: how

was she to get out?

The man was between her and the entrance. He was close to the stairway that led to the balcony. She was trapped—or was she? There was the secret panel door.

“That picture is directly in front of it,” she thought. “Too close. I can’t get round it. But I could—” her heart skipped a beat. “I could go through it. Too bad to spoil Tum’s big party too—”

The man was advancing upon her. With hands outstretched, eyes gleaming, he seemed some monstrous beast about to seize a bird of rare plumage.

She hesitated no longer. She sprang to the right, then dashed three steps forward to go crashing through that picture.

Was the man taken by surprise? Beyond doubt he was. At any rate, Florence was through that door and had completely lost herself in a maze of slanting beams and rafters before she had time to think of her next move. And from the studio there came no sound.

She could not well go back, even though she knew the way, so she groped forward. After ten minutes of this, she caught a gleam of light. It came from under a door. Remembering that nearly all the people in the world are decent, honest folks, she knocked boldly.

The door was thrown open. There, framed in light, stood Tum Morrow.

“Tum!” she exclaimed, all but falling into his arms. “Tum! How glad I am to see you!”

“Why—what—what’s happened?” He stared in surprise. “Come on in and tell me.”

The story was soon told. “And Tum,” Florence ended with a note of dismay, “I ruined that picture! I had to. That puts an end to your big show.”

“Don’t let that trouble you.” The boy smiled happily. “Only yesterday Miss Mabee fixed up something quite wonderful for me. She has a friend, a director of music in a college. He wants someone to play the part of concertmeister in his orchestra and direct the strings in their practice. I have been given a musical

scholarship."

"And you're going to college! How grand! Shake!" Florence held out a hand.

"Grand enough," Tum agreed. "Now, however, you are the burning question of the hour. How and when are you going back to the studio?"

"How and when?" Florence repeated gloomily.

"Tell you what!" Tum exclaimed. "I've got a gun—a regular cannon. My dad used it in the war. Suppose we load it up and march on the enemy. If necessary, I'll play the 'Anvil Chorus' on that old cannon, and there may be less trouble in the world after I am through."

"Grand idea! Lead the way!" Florence was on her feet.

By a secret passage known only to Tum, they made their way to the studio entrance. Their expected battle, however, did not come off. They found the studio silent and quite deserted.

"We'll stack our arms, pitch our tents, build a fire and—" Tum hesitated.

"And serve rations," Florence finished for him with a laugh.

Florence was a good cook. Tum was a good eater, and, if the truth must be told, so was Florence. The quantities of food consumed there by the fire was nothing short of scandalous. But then, who was there to complain?

"Well—" Florence settled back in her big chair at last. "The enemy marched on us tonight. Tomorrow we shall march on the enemy. I'll hunt up Patrick Moriarity. He'll call in a police squad. We'll raid Madame Zaran's place. Yes, and we'll call on the voodoo priestess as well."

"The voodoo priestess and Madame Zaran—are they friends?" Tum asked in surprise.

"Far from that." Florence sat up in her chair. "They're the bitterest enemies. You see, they're both engaged in the same crooked game. Each hoped to reap a rich harvest from June Travis' innocence."

“How did you find out all that?” Tum stared at her with frank admiration.

“I’ve guessed it for some time. Two days ago I proved it.” Florence was away with a good story. “I felt quite sure that the voodoo priestess was reared in Chicago, not in the Black Republic of Haiti. To prove this was very simple.” She laughed. “You see, Haiti used to be a French colony. Even today everyone down there speaks French. So, too, would a real voodoo priestess from that island. On my last visit to her I took along a friend who speaks French fluently. I had instructed her to talk French to me in this black woman’s presence. More than that, she was to say things like this: ‘She’s a humbug. She is a big black impostor!’”

“That,” said Tum, “must have got a rise out of her.”

“Not a bit of it.” Florence laughed again. “She got mad, but not at what we said. She objected to the way we said it. She couldn’t understand a word of French, that’s sure, for we had hardly started when she turned on us, her eyes bulging with anger as she said, ‘Here, you! Don’t you dare speak none of that ugly foreign stuff in dis place! De spirit of de big black Emperor, he objects!’

“And to think!” Florence exclaimed, “French was probably the only language her big black Emperor ever spoke.

“Well then,” she went on after a while, “I asked her why she didn’t gaze into a crystal ball, the way Madame Zaran did. I told her of the moving figures I had seen in Madame’s glass ball. I said Madame would probably get all of June’s money.

“All the time I was talking she was getting blacker and blacker with anger. And the things she said about Madame Zaran! They couldn’t be put in a book, I can tell you.

“Some of the things, though, were interesting, for I am sure she does the same things herself. She said that when Madame Zaran has a rich patron she bribes a maid in the patron’s home, a hair-dresser or someone else, to tell all about her. Then when the rich patron returns for a reading, don’t you see, she can tell her the most amazing things about her past? Oh, they’re a great pair, the priestess and Madame Zaran. I’d like to be around if they met in a dark spot at night. But I won’t,” Florence sighed, “for tomorrow is our zero hour. When the police are through with them, they’ll be in no fighting mood.”

“I rather guess not!” said Tum. Then, “If you feel things are O. K. I’ll be going. Keep my cannon if you like.”

“I—I’d like to.” Florence put out a hand.

“You see,” explained Tum, “the way you play the ‘Anvil Chorus’ on it, you just grip it here, pull on this little trigger with your forefinger, and it does the rest.”

“Thanks! And good-night.” Florence flashed him a dazzling smile.

CHAPTER XXV
A VISIT IN THE NIGHT

Excitement regarding the discovery of that ancient pottery was all over when, at a rather late hour that night, Jeanne crept beneath the blankets in the chilly little room under the rafters in the fisherman's cabin on Isle Royale.

As she lay there in the darkness and silence that night brings, she thought again of the startling news Vivian had wanted to flash out over her tiny radio station to all the world, the word that the airplane D.X.123 had been found.

"Vivian will not send it until I say 'Yes,'" she assured herself. "She is the kind of girl who can keep a secret—a really true friend. And yet, I wonder if I have the right to ask her to remain silent?"

As she closed her eyes, she saw again the wistful, almost mournful look on the face of June Travis. Then she fell asleep.

She did not sleep long. She was wakened by loud banging on the cabin door.

"Let us in!" a voice called huskily.

A light appeared, reflected on the roof above Jeanne's head. She heard the fisherman say, "Who are you?"

She caught the answer clear and plain: "I am John Travis."

Ten minutes later Jeanne was listening to the strange, all but unbelievable story of John Travis, who was, in very truth, the father of her friend June.

Relying upon the word of a dying veteran prospector, John Travis and a friend, who was an air pilot, had flown far into the north of Canada in quest of gold.

They had discovered gold, but had disabled their plane. The story of the years that followed was one of hardships, failure and final success.

“There we were,” the voice of John Travis went on, “with our plane wrecked in the heart of a frozen wilderness.” He stared at the glowing hearth as if he would see again that great white emptiness, hear again the wail of those rushing northern gales.

“We had food for a year. But where were we? We could not tell. We began exploring. Little by little, we widened our circle until one day I came upon a low falls where the water ran so swiftly that even in winter it was not frozen over. And at the edge of that falls, where a low eddy had deposited it, was a handful of sand.” He took a long breath. “In that sand there was a gleam of gold.

“He who has not felt it—” he spoke slowly. “He who has not lived in the North can tell nothing of what the call of the North is, nor the grip the search for gold gets upon your very soul.

“Why did we not come back sooner? How could one leave one’s own people so long, desert an only child? Gold!” He clenched his knotty hands tight. “Gold! We had found gold. At first it was only a little. As days, months passed, we found more and more. And always, always—” The gleam of a gambler shone in his eyes as he spread his hands wide. “Always, just before us, like a mirage on the desert, was the motherlode, the pocket of gold where nuggets were piled in one great heap. We would find it tomorrow—tomorrow.

“Gold,” he repeated softly. “Gold. It’s all there in the cabin of that plane at the bottom of that little lost lake. We’ll lift the plane and the gold when the spring thaw comes. And then, my child, my June shall be rich. And you, my friends—” his eyes swept the little circle, “you shall not go unrewarded.”

“But think of the peril to June,” Jeanne said in a low, serious tone.

“I left her in good hands.”

“But now she is a young lady, sixteen. Her birthday—is it the twenty-first? That must be very soon. Then she gets her money. And money means danger.”

“Money—danger?” The man brushed his hand before his eyes.

“But let me finish. Indians came, fine bronze-faced fellows we could trust. We gave them gold, bound them to secrecy by an oath known only to their tribe, and hired them to bring us food.

“So the years passed until, one day, a plane came zooming in from the south. And at the sight of men of our own race, somehow our blood got on fire. As they talked of cities, of bright lights and music, of pictures, dancing and song, of autos and airplanes and all our great country’s progress, my heart seemed ready to burst with the desire to become a part of it all again.

“Well,” he sighed once more, “they flew away to return a little later with parts for our plane. We paid them with our gold mine, what there is left of it. We sailed away into the blue with our gold. We were headed for Chicago and would have made it, too, if fog hadn’t caught us. It did catch us, as you know. We tried to land on ice. We were successful. We were saved. But the ice gave way, the plane sank!

“But now—” he sprang to his feet. “Now we are safe again. And soon, please God, I shall be with my child again. And this time I am ready to swear it on the open Bible, I shall never again leave her alone!

“Until now,” he ended, “we did not know where we were.”

“But now you know!” Jeanne exclaimed. “Soon all the world shall know. Vivian! Sandy! The radio! We are to be the bearers of good tidings, of great joy!”

CHAPTER XXVI
IN WHICH SOME THINGS ARE WELL FINISHED

“We’ll just get the janitor to go up with us,” said Patrick Moriarity as he and Florence arrived at the building in which Madame Zaran conducted her readings. “They’re gone, more than likely.”

And so they were. The room, as they approached it, was dark and appeared deserted.

As, under police orders, the janitor opened the door, Florence once again felt a thrill run up her spine. In her mind she felt again, as on that first day, the grip of those bony fingers on her shoulders. Once again she saw the shadow against those midnight blue draperies—the shadow of “Satan”—this time in imagination alone.

“Deserted as a tomb,” was Patrick’s conclusion. “We’ll just have a look.” Florence had told him of all the strange doings that had gone on here.

“What’s this?” he muttered as they came upon a narrow stairway hidden among the draperies.

Together they mounted the stairs to arrive at a still narrower platform. Here on a stand they discovered a small moving-picture projector.

“I thought maybe it would be that,” was Patrick’s only comment as he focused the machine, then turned on the motor.

To Florence’s vast surprise, the crystal ball, reposing on the table on the floor below, at once became alive. On its gleaming surface tiny human figures began to move.

“Quite simple,” was the young officer’s comment. “Moving pictures focused

upon a small screen behind the ball—that's all it was."

"And they made the pictures especially for their—their clients!" Florence's tone spoke her astonishment. "Posed people made up to look like them."

"Rather costly, I'd say!" said Patrick. "But then, they were playing for big stakes. I have no doubt they've played their little game before, perhaps many times.

"Come!" he said a moment later, "We'll go have a look on this black priestess of yours. We may find her at home."

They did find the priestess, and many more besides. In fact, there had been quite an affair at her studio that very morning. Truth was, as Florence, leaning on Patrick's arm, looked in upon the scene, she thought there had been nothing quite like it before.

"It—it's like a scene on the stage," she whispered.

"The cold gray dawn of the morning after," Patrick murmured.

And indeed that was just what it looked to be. In the center of the room, her hands still clawing as if for unearned gold, Madame Zaran stood leaning on a table. She seemed dizzy. The reason was a rapidly swelling bruise on her forehead. At her feet lay her thick-necked guard, he who had entered the studio on the previous night. He was out for good. So, too, were two black men in one corner. As for the Professor and the voodoo priestess, they were seated upon the floor, staring at one another for all the world like two spent wrestlers pausing to regain their breath. As Florence and the young officer stood there looking on in stupefied silence, a black goat with golden horns appeared from somewhere. He let out a loud b-a-a, then charged the unfortunate Madame Zaran. He hit her behind the knees, and she collapsed like an empty sack.

"It looks to me," Patrick drawled, "as if there had been a fight."

"Sure does look that way," said a strange voice.

Florence whirled about to find herself looking into a face that resembled a new moon—large thin nose, sharp protruding chin, eyes that bulged slightly. "The Devil," she thought without saying it.

“You’ve seen me before.” The man favored her with a friendly smile.

“I—I guess I’ve seen your shadow more than once,” the girl managed to reply.

“Handy sort of shadow,” the man chuckled. “You see, I’m a city detective. I’ve been on this case for some time. Now it would seem that all that’s needed is an ambulance.”

“I’ll call one,” Patrick said, hurrying away.

Fifteen minutes later, the whole company, including the goat, were on their way to the police station. Shortly thereafter, the greater number of them were transferred to the hospital.

Of quite a different nature was the meeting in Miss Mabee’s studio two days later.

They were gathered there in the studio, Florence and June, Miss Mabee, Tum Morrow and Rodney Angel, when there came the sound of footsteps on the stairs, followed by a rattle at the bell. June started forward impulsively. Florence held her back. “Wait!” she whispered.

Miss Mabee pressed a button. The door opened slowly, and in walked Sandy, Jeanne and a short, stout man. They, the newcomers, all wore heavy airplane coats and carried airplane traveling bags in their hands.

“Well?” The man studied the waiting group. When his eyes fell upon June they lighted up as if by a touch of fire.

“June!” His voice was husky. “How big! How beautiful you are!” Next instant the girl was in his arms.

And after that, as always, there was a feast. At this feast John Travis made a brief speech. “There’s gold on Isle Royale.” He spoke with feeling. “More gold at the bottom of that little lake than any man can use wisely in a lifetime. When it’s been recovered, I shall charter the finest airplane in the country and take you all on a trip around the world. What do you say to that?”

Of course, they said “Yes,” and they said it with a shout of joy. But would they

go? Only time could tell.

“This fortune telling,” Florence said to June as they lunched together next day, “It is all a fake and a fraud.”

“But what can we say of the little lady in gray?” June asked, as she opened her eyes wide.

“Yes,” Florence agreed, “that *was* strange!”

“I’d like to go and see her again and—and thank her.” The younger girl’s eyes shone.

“We will go this very afternoon.”

They did, and with the most astonishing results. They were met at the door by a very large lady. “Large enough,” Florence thought with a start, “to occupy that huge chair.”

“We—we’d like to see the little lady in gray,” June said timidly.

“You must have the wrong number.” The large lady looked at them in surprise. “There is no one here but me.”

“But there *was*!” June insisted.

“You are mistaken!” In the woman’s voice there was a positive note none would care to dispute. “I live here alone with my cat and canaries. There never has been anyone else.”

June opened her mouth to speak again, but Florence was pulling at her arm.

“We’re sorry,” said Florence. “This must be the wrong address.”

“But it isn’t!” June insisted when they were once more on the sidewalk. “I am sure of it.”

“So am I.” Florence smiled in a strange way. “But when some fairy godmother borrows a house for a morning just so she can give you some very good news, you don’t go right ahead and give her away, do you?”

“N—no, I suppose not.”

“Anyway,” said Florence, finally, “I am through with mysteries for a long, long time!”

Was she? If you wish to know, you must read *A Ticket to Adventure*.

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