

The WOMAN

A Novel by **Albert Payson Terhune**

Founded on **William C. de Mille's Play**
Illustrated with Photos from the Play
and Drawings by V.L. Barnes



SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I—Congressman Standish and the woman, believing themselves in love, spend a trial week as man and wife in a hotel in northern New York under assumed names. The woman awakes to the fact that she does not love Standish and calls their engagement off. Standish insists on being devoted.

CHAPTER II—Wanda Kelly, telephone girl at the Hotel Kenwick, Washington, is seduced by Tom Blake, son of the political boss of the house. He proposes marriage and it is refused.

CHAPTER III—She gives as one of the reasons her determination to get revenge on Jim Blake for ruining her father, Congressman Frank E. K... Congressman Standish, turned insurgent, is fighting the Mullins bill, a measure in the interests of the railroads. The machine is seeking ways to discredit Standish in the hope of pushing the bill through.

CHAPTER IV.

The Clash.

The telephone girl looked up a minute later to see Tom Blake hanging ice more over the rail.

"I got a telegram from Grace," said she. "She sent it to me, I suppose. Instead of to dad or Mark because she saw I'd be loafing around the hotel this hour and she didn't know when they'd be coming back from the capitol. Says she'll be in Washington at eight. But, being a woman, she's thinking I'm a mind reader, she hasn't say whether it'll be eight this evening or eight tomorrow morning. I've been looking everywhere, since I got it, to find Mark and—Excuse me!"

Ex-Governor Robertson was crossing the corridor toward them and Tom hurried to meet him with the telegram. Robertson's cold face, as he read the dispatch, softened in a way that would have amazed his political enemies.

"Good!" he said emphatically. "But why doesn't she tell whether she means tonight or in the morning? Isn't that just like Grace?"

"Why not call her up on long distance?" suggested Tom. "If she'll be here at eight tonight she'll have left New York long before now. And if she isn't coming till morning—"

"Good idea!" assented Robertson, starting for the telephone alcove. Sometimes you actually show a gleam of human intelligence, Tom, in spite of the way you've taken to mooning round lately. I'll—"

He stopped short, and the unwanted look of happiness froze from his face and Tom, on their way to the alcove, were passing the short flight of steps that led down from the outer foyer to the corridor.

And a man was coming down those steps. A tall man, whose shoulders were slightly stooped, whose dark hair was beginning to grizzle at the temples, whose swarthy and somewhat heavy face was lined and hardened by marks that did not seem to have come from time's brush alone.

At sight of him Robertson halted, his face darkened and his hands in voluntarily clenched. The newcomer glanced across and his eye met the ex-governor's lowering gaze; then he passed carelessly on to Tom.

"Good evening, gentlemen," he said.

"Good evening, Mr. Standish," answered Tom.

Robertson barely returned the other's nod. But as Standish made as though to pass on, he took an impulsive step toward the insurgent chief.

"Well, Standish," he observed, treading his voice by a palpable effort into some semblance of civility, I understand the fight's on for tonight."

"Yes," answered Standish, pausing a though merely to wait until the other should move from his path. "An all-night session, probably."

Again, with a nod, he started toward the dining room. But once more Mark Robertson's voice checked him.

"Did it ever occur to you, Standish," demanded Mark, "that by opposing the Mullins bill you are betraying the party that elected you?"

Standish regarded him a moment with somber eyes from which all personal emotions seemed long since to have been burned away. Then he said in a heavy measured voice that had or years... a characteristic of him:—

"Did it ever occur to you, Robertson, that by trying to force the Mullins bill through, you are betraying the people who voted for you?"

"Oh, be sensible!" urged Robertson; and Tom, who knew his brother-in-law, noted the mighty effort with which the attempt at conciliation was kept up.

"We're both politicians. There's no sense in spouting noble sentiments for my benefit. Keep them for your parsons. I was promised the speakership. And to get it away from me you turned insurgent. The Mullins bill—tonight's battle—means nothing to you but a test of power. There's no principle involved. If you can kill the bill—it will prove only your strength enough to depose our speaker and put yourself in his chair. That's your game. Why pose as a reformer?"

"You're quite wrong," said Standish, with a certain irritating patience. "I haven't any pose. If I had I should not bother to display it for your benefit. I am not hypocrite enough to say I don't want every legitimate political reward I can earn. Who doesn't? But that's not why I'm fighting this Mullins bill of yours. And at heart you know it isn't. I'm trying to kill this bill because it is an offense to the coun-

try's nostrils. The bill is innocent enough on its face. Van Dyke and the rest saw to that, I suppose. But when I looked at it more closely I saw it was framed to legalize the over-capitalization of every railroad in the United States and to undo what little good a few decent lawmakers have been struggling for years to accomplish."

"Then—"

"You know I'm right. That is the Mullins bill's real object. That is why you people tried to rush it through before we could have a chance to pick it apart and to hunt for the 'nigger in the wood-pile.' Well, I've studied it closely enough to make sure the pile contains very little except niggers. And I've made the public see it, too."

"Never mind bringing in your services to the dear public. You get your pay for that from them, not from me. The point is, you are lining up with our enemies. Standish, I'm not given to threatening; but from now on you're going to have an active life."

"I understand. And I look for nothing else. If the party that elected me is betraying the people, then I must fight that party. And I'm going to. Understand me clearly. I'm going to. And the heavy slow voice held no note of threat, nor did it show the faintest tinge of excitement. To Tom Blake, the conversation's non-combatant, the insurgent's rather turbid words carried far stronger message for this very absence of emotion. But they served merely to strip from Mark Robertson his last shreds of diplomatic armor.

"You talk like a reform candidate for poundmaster at Pompton, N. J.!" he retorted. "I've done nothing every one else isn't doing every day. Nothing that the custom of centuries hasn't legitimated; and nothing, I believe, that you haven't done. You've made the people think you're a little tin god. But you can't make me think it."

"I can't now remember," said Standish wearily, "having tried to."

"Well, you probably know it would be time wasted," snapped Robertson. "There must be something, somewhere or other, in your past life, that wouldn't shine out to any advantage in print. I'm going to camp on the trail of your past performances. And when I strike the crooked-by-path I'm looking for, I'll—"

Standish's dark face broke into a smile. The red angry politician's threats seemed to strike within the insurgent some genuine chord of meritment.

"In that case, Governor Robertson," he said pleasantly, "I advise you to waste not one minute of time in setting to work. Because, though I've been able to upset several pet plans of yours during the past six years, you'll find everything I've done to you will be as mere child's play compared to what I'll do as soon as I'm in the speaker's chair."

"The speaker's chair!" roared Mark, diplomacy, caution and even a cool fighting knowledge thrown to the four winds. "The speaker's chair! You'll never sit in it! Never in ten thousand years. Not if I have to—"

"Why, hello, boys!" drawled a voice from the doorway.

A man came leisurely down the stairs and laid one hand on Robertson's arm. Voice and action were calm, even peaceful. Yet they slammed shut the New Yorker's floodgates of wrath and left him speechless, nervous, almost apologetic.

A hundred pairs of eyes from all parts of the long corridor turned as by occult attraction and fixed themselves in wide interest upon the newcomer.

CHAPTER V.

Jim Blake.

The man whose advent in the Kenwick corridor caused more attention among the loungers than would the arrival of a stage beauty, had at first glance little about him to justify such interest. He was long rather than tall, thin with a wiry compactness, and of a pleasant non-committal face. His

age might have been fifty. But a closer glance at his half-shut eyes always gave an odd impression that they were fully a thousand years old. Perhaps this was why Jim Blake seldom opened them wide.

"Hello, boys," repeated Jim Blake, glancing genially and inexpressively from one to the other, from beneath his hanging lids. "Seemed to me I smelt something burning. How are you, Standish? What's up, Tom?"

"Why," answered Tom vaguely embarrassed, "nothing very much. Just a little political discussion."

"So I gathered," yawned Blake. "Mark, you seemed to have been supplying the fireworks for it. I don't suppose it occurred to you that the whole surrounding landscape is fairly crawling with reporters? Nice little story for the morning papers, hey? 'High Words Between Speakership Aspirants in Kenwick Lobby.' And a half column more of what you both would have said if you'd said what the reporters thought maybe you might have said. Fine business. Especially at this time."

"He called me—" burst forth Mark. "And you showed your hand?" hazarded Blake. "Good poker, Mark. But punk politics. Mark, I'm afraid we're keeping Mr. Standish from his dinner."

"Good night," replied Standish, taking the broad hint with no show of feeling.

"Good night—till the house meets at ten o'clock," said Blake. "I suppose you'll lead your gallant insurgent cohorts in person this evening?"

"Yes."

"Don't want to call it off and come into the fold again, I s'pose?" suggested Blake quizzically.

"No, thanks," smiled the insurgent, and passed on toward the dining room.

"Hello, Van Dyke!" called Blake as the lawyer, with Nelligan and Gregg in tow, came along the corridor toward them, from the bar. "What brings you to Washington? What's up?"

"That's what I'm trying to find out," answered Van Dyke, shaking hands with Blake and instinctively leading the way to the adjacent amen corner.

"What is up? You're supposed to be managing this fight, Jim. And here we find ourselves in the very worst hole we've been in since ninety-seven. If you and I hadn't fought shoulder to shoulder for years and years, I'd be tempted to say you were lying down."

"The crowd down on Broadway," answered Blake, "have handed us a raw proposition in this Mullins bill. The bill smells so rank that even the dear, dear public have got a whiff of it. And when the public gets its sense of smell into good working order—Oh, what's the use, Van Dyke? You can see what we're up against. You know the temper of the country. We can't, even defend that bill of yours. And this is no time to put over such a raw one. It's like—"

"Still," argued Van Dyke, "you said you'd be able to put the deal through. And there's surely enough in it for us all."

"I said I could put it through. And I could—when we started. But Standish wasn't fighting it then. This isn't the Bill versus the People. It's Mat Standish versus the Organization. And Standish has the people—the waked-up people—behind him. He's their idol. He's the parsons' pet. They look on him as the Worthy Young Man who couldn't do wrong if he tried and who isn't wicked enough to try. In other words, he's never been found out. There's only two classes of men that I ever met—the sort that have been found out and the sort that haven't. If we can damage Standish in the eyes of the people—if we can make the clergy repudiate him—"

"That's just the point," cried Van Dyke. "Why haven't you been able to do that, instead of sitting peacefully to one side and waiting for him to wreck himself?"

"We've had detectives on him," put in Nelligan. "I told you all that, Van Dyke."

"Detectives?" snorted the lawyer. "What good is that? Your detectives will charge you seven dollars a day and expenses—mostly expenses—for giving you a full report of the way Standish spends the day and what he has to eat and the number of cigars he smokes and the addresses of some of the letters he writes. You'll never get Standish that way. If ever he's broken a law—and most men have—"

"Oh, not so many," gently contradicted Blake. "Two jails would be plenty large to hold all the folks who have broken any law. And the two jails could be built real easy—just by running a high wall around the equator. But you're right in one thing, Van Dyke. We'll never get Standish in the way these boys have been going about it. So, it's lucky I happened to put a man of my own on the job."

"Yes. While I've been lying down, as you call it."

"I didn't say you had been—"

"No. But you thought it. Just because I don't run around in circles, barking, and now and then biting a piece out of the ceiling, you folks think I'm doing nothing. And I'll never teach you any better."

"But—"

"Oh, yes. I put a man of my own on to Standish's record. I told him not to bother about anything that had happened during the last three or four years. Your men would be busy on that; and there'd be nothing to find, anyhow. I set my man to scratching up ancient history. I told him to go back and back and back, in Standish's record; and to keep on going back till he found something."

"Well?" chorused the others as Blake paused and searched his clothes with maddening slowness for a match.

"Well," drawled Blake, "he's found—"

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"No?" chuckled Nelligan, wildly elated.

"The story is long," said Blake; "but I can shorten it up considerably for you. Along about five years ago friend Standish fell in love with a girl. Right sort of a girl, you know. Good family. Father rich and all that. Standish wasn't very well off—he was always



"Oh, Yes, I Put a Man of My Own on to Standish's Record."

honest, you know. And he and she were going to get married on the quiet and keep their marriage secret. But she had to go to Europe. And for some reason or other—the secretary didn't know why and it doesn't matter, anyhow—the wedding was sidetracked. Instead, they took a notion to run off to a little country hotel, for one of those honeymoons that—that never came through the custom-house."

"No!"

"Yes. And, as an afterthought, yes, again. I can show you the hotel register with—"

"The fool didn't register under his own name, did he?" demanded Gregg.

"No," said Blake. "Registered under the name of Fowler. But any handwriting expert can prove he wrote it, and the hotel manager can swear Standish was the man. The manager is ready to swear Standish called the woman his wife, too."

"Oh, the joy!" grinned Gregg, the worldling.

"You see," went on Blake, "he really expected to marry her. They were just taking time by the forelock. And then—here's the queerest tangle of all—after that week there, it seems she backed out and wouldn't marry him at all. No, Gregg, it wasn't he that threw her over. This was the other way around. The woman jilted him and went back to her family. One week of Standish was about all she was up to. And she balked at making a life job of it. I don't wonder."

"But didn't her family find out?"

"It seems not. They thought she had been away visiting a girl friend in the country. She got home safe, and everything looked proper as a rainy Sunday in a grave yard. Some women sure have luck."

"Go on," urged Van Dyke.

"That's about all," finished Blake. "She woke up, as I told you, to find it was all a mistake and no-harm-done-thank-heaven. And as far as I can make out, they haven't seen each other since. I won't swear to that part of it. But if they have, his secretary doesn't know it. Nor—"

"Who was the Woman?" queried Robertson.

"That," answered Blake reluctantly, "is the one thing left to find out."

Van Dyke fairly groaned.

"Then," he demanded, "how is this miserable story going to help us?"

"Oh," replied Blake, "the net's closing around her. I hope to have her name tonight."

"Tonight! We've got to have it tonight. Before the Mullins bill comes up. The name's no use to us after that."

"But," asked Robertson, "even if we do get it tonight, what use can we make of it? The house will be on the final debate of the bill by ten o'clock. By making use of every trick we know we can fix only a few hours' delay at most. What good—"

"What good?" retorted Blake. "Just this: Standish's long suit is morality. A lot of us have had smirches on our names from time to time. He never has. So the clergy are for him and the people swear by him. It's his chief pull with both church and public. Now—if we can get this story, properly authenticated, on the floor of the house tonight, it'll give a lot of men—Gregg, here, for instance—an excuse to swing over to us."

"Oh, we've got him! We've got him!" muttered Robertson once more, his usually quick mind losing blissfully over the single grand idea.

"Yes," amended Van Dyke dryly, "we've got him—if we can get the Woman's name in time. It all depends on that. Without it, our story is worthless. Thus far, it seems, no one knows her name."

"Except Standish," corrected Blake.

"What good does that do us? He won't tell."

"What one man knows," returned Blake sententiously, "another can find out."

"And," put in Gregg, lowering his voice, "speaking of 'finding out,' reminds me. That little devil of a telephone girl over there—Do you suppose she could have heard anything we've been saying?"

Continued on Page 6



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