

"Alias Jimmy Valentine"

Novelized by
FREDERICK R. TOOMBS
From the Great
Play by
PAUL ARMSTRONG

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CHAPTER XIII.

"I TOOK—some of—that money," Avery finally managed to say as he saw his two friends before him. "And you put it back," smiled Valentine. "The minute you touched it you found you couldn't!"

"That's it," put in Avery eagerly as he arose and proceeded to aid Red in restoring the scattered money to its place. "I couldn't take it then. Now I can go out of here and know that I'll never steal again."

"You mustn't go until Doyle comes in, for he might see you on the street," warned Valentine. "When he comes you can go out through the vault room and make your getaway while I stall him here."

In talking with Avery, Jimmy Valentine unconsciously fell into the use of the vernacular of his early vocation.

With a parting handshake Avery went out into the vault room, where Red was to exhibit to him the big new safe. The assistant cashier, now that the tray of money had been replaced on the table, picked up the photograph, hung it in the place of another affixed to the wall at the right of his desk and inspected it with pronounced satisfaction.

The hall door opened, and Rose Lane came into the office. The girl was in a peculiar mood that day—there was no denying it. Valentine had always found his benefactor, young though she was, particularly difficult to fathom, and today she was more baffling than ever.

She talked at length regarding her plans for the children's Christmas celebration, and, standing before his desk, while he stood behind it, she said, "And I want to know what you want for Christmas."

"Is there anything I could want?" he answered in low tones. "Think of what you and two short years have done for me."

"And there's never anything more you want? Don't you ever dream—dreams of, say, two years more?" She turned her eyes to the door.

"Oh, yes, to go on as I've been going these last two, since your father gave me a position of trust, and make everything good and pile up the money for you."

She drew away from him. "Haven't you ever thought there might be something I want more than money?"

Valentine hesitated. His voice became intensely serious.

"I don't let myself think of you only as your employee," he finally answered.

Rose turned sideways to him, so that he could not see her face as she delivered her next question, although she would have given much to have been able to watch the expression of the assistant cashier—her assistant cashier—as she asked it.

"But," she ventured, "you must have thought that I would marry some day."

Silence, with Valentine fumbling in embarrassment a pencil which lay upon his desk.

"Yes—I— he began, but Rose continued his sentence for him.

"And it hurts you to think of it, doesn't it? Say it."

"Yes—"

"Go on."

He could endure the situation no longer. The girl had penetrated his very soul with her questions, had uncovered in Jimmy Valentine the secrets of his new life—the secrets which he had resolved to keep buried forever. But now he must speak. He must tell her the truth about his situation as regarded her—part of the truth, at least.

"And the thought of you brings darkness, desolation," he said, keeping a firm grip on the emotions that threatened to unnerve him. "What is the use? You're all there is to live for—to just see you now and then. You're all there is to life. Men have loved and slaves have loved and animals that have been saved have loved, but never were the three loves fused in one. And you're good, and your life is clean, while mine—but you know all that." He inclined his face from her. "I have forgotten," she said simply. "You cannot. And any day the shadow of other days may fall. But I want you to know this and believe it as your God—my love for you is a holy thing, sacred and deathless." Valentine was looking earnestly into her eyes now. His hand was resting on the desk. She seized it in hers and drew him toward her.

"Take me in your arms, Lee," she cried fervently. "I love you. I'll love you till— Her face was upraised to his as she clung to him. He held her in his arms and kissed her again and again. "Now I have longed for you—"

years—years"— Her words were smothered in his kisses.

"There is no end to the happiness you bring," murmured Valentine at the first moment he thought he could spare his lips for conversational purposes.

"Oh," exclaimed Rose, drawing away at arm's length temporarily. "I want to tell you something, Lee, something"



HE KISSED HER AGAIN AND AGAIN.

"I've known for years and years—we are going to marry!"

He caught her into his arms once more.

"I love you. It will never end," he whispered fondly.

The telephone bell rang at his desk. As he released her and placed the receiver at his ear she encircled his neck in her arms and kissed him. "Hello!" he called. As the response came she felt a tremor run through him. Haggardness came into his eyes. He seemed almost to forget her presence.

"Yes, yes," he answered; "I'll see the gentleman in a few minutes."

He hung up the receiver. "God," he groaned, "Doyle!"

Valentine turned toward the girl, who surveyed him anxiously.

"What is it?" she asked. She saw that he was deeply worried.

"I don't know," he stammered, "but it is most important—most important."

"Well, I'll run downtown; the car is waiting," she said happily. "Then I'll come back and get you and dad and take you home."

His face had taken on the pallor that marked the visages of men who came from Warden Handler's game of solitaire.

"Yes, but should this man have business which would take me out of town?"

"But you mustn't go out of town—now hear me." She, of course, had not the slightest suspicion of the true importance of that telephone call.

"I won't if there's a way out."

"Well, just don't—just don't," pleaded Rose. "I am going to leave the children here to take care of you."

"Rose," he cried, going to her. "Rose, it was chance that brought us together; it was chance that brought you to a prison one day. Chance is uncertain, capricious, and that same chance may separate us suddenly."

"Nothing can separate us," confidently.

"Let that be our prayer to all the gods. But this I want you to remember—from my soul I love you. Now go."

She kissed her hand and waved it toward him as she went out of the door.

"Goodbye, Rose."

He stood a moment; then, taking down the telephone receiver, he said into the mouthpiece:

"Hello. All right. Send the gentleman in." After a pause: "What? He's gone into Mr. Lane's office?" The telephone receiver fell to the desk with a crash. Doyle went into the office of Mr. Lane, Rose's father. Here was a new complication, a new danger, one which Jimmy Valentine had not included in his calculations. Well, come what may, he must face the situation.

"Miss Taylor—Miss Mabel," he called, taking up the receiver and asking for the "central" of the bank's private exchange, "give me Mr. Lane's office. Hello, Mr. Lane. Oh, now regarding that Gormond note, he says that he— Oh, you are coming into my office now with a Mr. Doyle? All right. I'll be here. Very well. Goodbye."

The receiver clattered into its wonted position on the hook, and Jimmy Valentine stood at his desk awaiting the arrival of Rose Lane's father and Detective George Doyle.

CHAPTER XIV.

AFTER a few moments Valentine again glanced at the photograph of the dinner group. Next he opened a drawer at his left and took out a square green book with the legend "Scrap Book" in fancy green letters on its cover.

He placed the volume in a drawer at the right of his desk and on top of it laid several other books taken from another drawer. He slammed the drawer shut, straightened himself and walked across the office to the table on which was laid the tray of gold, silver and greenbacks.

"I'm going to beat you, Mr. Doyle!" he said fiercely, half aloud. "I'm going to beat you, and I'm going to make you like it."

He seated himself before the tray and began counting the money as the

door opened to admit Mr. Lane, followed by Detective Doyle.

Valentine looked up. "Mr. Randall," began Rose's father, "this is Mr. Doyle, a detective, who has been asking me some questions about you that I feel you can better answer."

"Indeed?" looking at Doyle. "What is the name?" Valentine asked innocently.

His attitude made Doyle snort with anger.

"Doyle," the detective grunted impatiently, staring at the man he had known as No. 1289.

Valentine rose and shook hands with Doyle. "Glad to know you, Mr. Doyle."

He seated himself before the tray. "Well, what can I do for you?" he asked.

The detective's mouth gaped open. He glared at the smoothly speaking, indifferently acting ex-convict before him, then at the tray containing thousands of dollars in bills and coin. Valentine went on counting the money as unconcernedly as though playing a game of jackstraws with Bobby or Kitty.

"What can you do?" exploded Doyle. "You can do nine years for—"

"You will excuse me," interrupted Mr. Lane, stepping toward the door. "I have no interest in the conversation. I am sure. And, Mr. Doyle," he said pointedly to the bewildered detective, "I want you to thoroughly understand that I have every confidence in Mr. Randall, as also have all the other directors." The door closed be-

hind him and Valentine was alone with George Doyle.

"Well, I'll be blowed!" ejaculated Doyle, turning again to the assistant cashier. "You're in pretty sweet here, aren't you?" pointing to the tray. "I really didn't expect to find you here in the daytime."

"Why?" perplexedly.

"Oh, I thought you'd duck when you got my wire."

"Wire? Oh, did you send that telegram?"

"Yes, Jimmy."

"Jimmy? What's the idea? I don't follow you—"

"Oh, you don't know, eh?" angrily. "Got the old boy—Lane—stalling for you, and you're going pretty strong, eh?"

"Exactly what do you mean?" asked Valentine indignantly, rising as he spoke.

"Come on, Jimmy, not with me. Sorry to tear you away from so soft a place, but the state of Massachusetts wants you."

"From the occasional words of intelligible English you speak from time to time," retorted Valentine easily. "I gather that you imagine I am a person named Jimmy." His words were accompanied by the most aggravating of smiles.

The now thoroughly irate detective bent toward the assistant cashier and peered intently at him.

"Imagine—imagine! Well, isn't it funny that I should imagine your name to be Jimmy?"

"It is, indeed," suavely. "As a matter of curiosity, might I ask Jimmy's other name?"

"I'll give you just one guess," pointedly.

"That's exceedingly kind of you, but this same experience having happened before I will likely guess it." He settled back comfortably in his chair.

"Well, what do you think of that?" Doyle found it difficult to control his temper.

"Well, what is the other name?" Valentine responded with the utmost coolness.

"You mistake me for a Mr. Valentine."

"Jimmy Valentine, the very name, and you are Jimmy Valentine, and I want you," snarled the detective.

"Now, is it come along or requisition?"

"Oh, I'm to be arrested for this Jimmy Valentine, am I? The last time I was mistaken for him I was only embarrassed by having a tough on the street in Chicago claim my acquaintance. You are really amusing, Mr. Doyle." The assistant cashier chuckled softly.

"So that's your game, eh?"

"No game that I can see."

"I suppose you are going to deny that Bill Avery called on you today?"

Doyle watched the other intently to note the effect of this shot. But Valentine was entirely equal to the occasion.

"I do not know your friend Bill, Mr. Doyle," positively.

"No," exasperatedly. "Then a man with iron gray hair, wearing a top hat and carrying a cane, did not get off a train here today and come straight here?"

(To be continued.)

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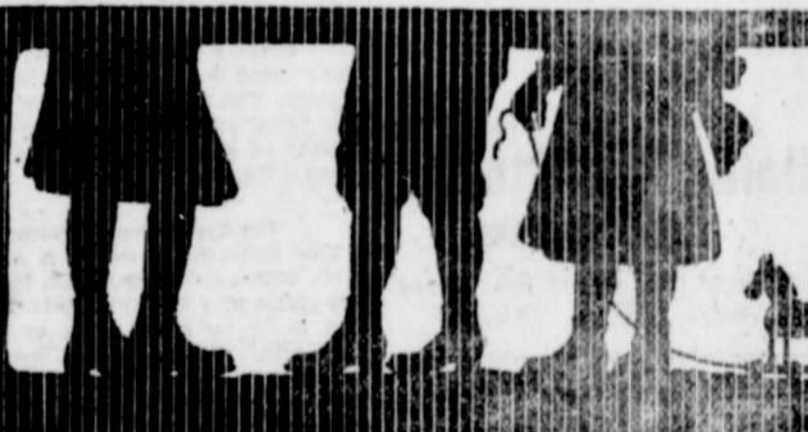
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