Rich and Reckless

By Mary Raymond

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CHAPTER V

the side entrance of the store, saw Nelson Whittaker, anscanning the faces of the He looked into her face for a blankly. Then, as Molly recognition leaped to his

n they were seated in the low, ally built roadster Nelson Whitped and stared at Molly. His ion was puzzled, displeased.

"Look," he began, "have you done self? It's a masquerade, isn't me kind of joke on me?"

ly didn't like the tone of his It was irritated, tinged with ent. "Don't you like me as these clothes?" she asked.

denly he smiled. "So that was was a test, was it?"

e absurd! What enormous con- For a moment she almost at she disliked him. Still that't be fair, just because he was g human imperfections. And, were honest, she had been ring if Molly Milford in a $4.98 and a $2.98 hat would be as at- to this romantic new friend ly Milford in an original crea- and a scandalously expensive hat. ers me, if it does you,' Nelson taker spoke abruptly, "but the ack of it puzzles me."

ly was silent for a moment. The had sounded crude. She felt se of disappointment, too, be- he was not quite as handsome right as he had been in the ed glow of "The Red Poppy." didn't quite know what she had ed, but not this pasty, white nor the little lines under the Maybe his work at the bank ght work. Maybe she was doing e injustice when she decided he dissipated and jaded. At any he was properly dressed in a ored blue serge and blue tie ecks of gray.

e University of the World' has him some things," Molly ht. "He might have worn a tie shirked or shoes that creaked. have my democratic feelings Here I am—finding fault al-

proceeded to "turn on the " as Brent always put it, chat- friendly fashion, but her escort ed abstracted, unresponsive.

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ly was troubled. The thought of brought a lump in her throat. wise he was. What foolish, ro- notion had brought her out with a man who was a com- stranger to her? On her way him to some unknown place "Frenchy's"?

it far to Frenchy's?" she asked ly.

turned and she felt his eyes ing her face. "Not very," he "Why?"

ly hesitated. "I was thinking if perhaps it would be best not to re tonight, because I must be y 10."

uble-dating? Well, if you keep iting, that's his hard luck."

Molly decided, I don't like him I wish I were at home. He putting on some sort of act at Red Poppy." Now, for some , he isn't even trying to be

resolved suddenly that after night's experience was safely be- she would never be impulsive Meanwhile, it would not do to morbid and imagine things made her feel cold and unhappy. ntered by this sensible resolu- Molly relaxed comfortably in her and prepared to enjoy the flying landscape, since only monosyl- tidbits in the way of conversa- were being offered.

comfortable?" Nelson Whittaker ed.

s, perfectly," Molly answered. is a grand car. It's new, isn't

ll, almost. I bought it today a fellow because it's some trav-

ing away?" Molly asked.

m thinking of it."

Everybody seemed to be go- way. Molly was wishing now she had gone to Lake Placid, as had suggested. Then she't be moving away from famil- surroundings in a car that could Nelson Whittaker must make rious salary to be able to go buy a car like this so casu-

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re was that little bell again, a warning in her brain. Mor- ly, but just the same, when she "Frenchy's" she would invent excuse and reach a telephone. wouldn't drive back to town to- with this moody stranger.

stole a look at her companion. waning afternoon light, his was revealed grimly lined.

breathed quickly, then spoke ly: "I'm afraid it was only prise, asking me out to dinner, already you're regretting it. Or I hurt your pride accepting invitation and coming dressed this. Somehow I have the feel- you are not pleased. There's thing wrong. Let's turn back."

t a chance!" His voice rang ly. "I'm sorry if I've been To tell the truth, there's a I'm trying to put over. A big and my nerves are jumpy. you've never gambled. If I

s put everything he has into stock and is afraid his judg- was bad," Molly reasoned.

boys who tipped me off got this—well, I can't explain to But I've a feeling that one of would give me the wrong steer ared. You see I don't altogether him. A bird—"

caught himself up suddenly, and felt his eyes on her again.

father says you can't trust who's too anxious to sell you these days," Molly said.

Nelson Whitaker nodded. "Just let catch any of my friends selling wrong kind of stock! Well, here we at Frenchy's."

assisted Molly from the car, and entered the building with a feeling lief. "Frenchy's was really not perhaps 10 miles or so from the The restaurant was painted on the outside and decorated in what was now much tar- gilt.

re's 'Frenchy' himself," her companion said. He raised his hand in salute. "Hello, 'French'!"

The wrinkled, dark-haired old man who had advanced to meet them stared a moment, perplexed. "Back from the dead!" he whispered.

Nelson Whittaker laughed. "More alive than ever, 'French.' Ghosts don't drive 12 miles for good food and wine."

"You're welcome, and I'm pleased to offer the best we have. Whatever you and the lady wish—"

His startled eyes had never left Nelson Whittaker's face, Molly saw. He had barely glanced at her.

The air of this place was heavy with the odor of tobacco and liquor. On the walls, as her companion had said, were paintings which might be called "French landscapes," but they were crude and wholly unimaginative. Waiters stood negligently around. There were few diners at this hour, and the group of boys who "sang tears to your eyes," were occupied in listlessly thumbing sheets of music.

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The table at which Molly and Whittaker were seated was directly in front of the orchestra stand. Molly stared at the young musicians frankly. Already a plan was forming in her mind. One of the youths had a sensitive, attractive face. He would be the one to aid her, if a way opened for her to communicate with him.

"Ask them to play something from Leoncavallo's 'I Pagliacci,'" Molly said quickly, and was rewarded by seeing the blank amazement in her escort's eyes. He didn't know grand opera, Molly saw, and would be loathe to reveal his ignorance.

"May I send them a little note with a request number?" she asked, smiling flatteringly, straight into his eyes. "I've decided on something more romantic. From 'Butterfly.'"

"Certainly. Here, waiter, pencil and paper."

The waiter was suddenly animated. He placed a stubby pencil and pad of paper before Molly.

When the note went up Molly saw the young man with the sensitive face smile. She had requested Butterfly's aria, "Some Day He'll Come," and as she listened to the tender music she thought of Brent.

"Frenchy's" guests were regarding the extraordinary young lady who appeared to care more for music than wine with momentary interest. Molly's companion, his mood mellowed by his first drink, whispered indulgently: "You women, with your music!"

Molly's long lashes swept her cheeks and were raised suddenly to reveal deliberate admiration. "For you men!" she said.

She sipped the wine cautiously. A long time ago—a very long time ago when she was safe and protected—she had heard that sometimes knockout drops were administered in wine in dangerous dives. So she raised the glass to her lips but barely tasted its contents.

Some impassioned Wagner music flowed about them now. The dark-haired young musicians were playing with fine feeling. Boys who could play like that could surely be trusted. Maybe they didn't know this was a wicked sort of place. Or maybe it wasn't wicked. You couldn't judge a place always by the people who came to it. Molly knew now she had definitely decided Nelson Whittaker was not to be trusted.

The elderly French man was making his way toward their table. "For you," he said to Whittaker. "A man out front—Louis he called himself—wants to see you."

Molly waited only a moment after her companion had left. She wrote an address on a slip of paper. On the other sheet she wrote: "Am at Frenchy's. Twelve miles from the bridge. Place with a green front. Please come. Molly." Taking the bill from her purse—she noted it was $20—she folded it within the paper. Then, quickly crossing to the orchestra stand, she placed the papers in the hand of the young musician.

She saw him read one message and place the other in his pocket. After a moment he looked toward Molly and nodded, a smile lighting his dark eyes.

"He thinks I've repented of a bad bargain and am sending for my best beau," Molly thought. Adding audaciously to herself, "Well, I am!"

(To Be Continued)

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