

MAFALDA

By John Goodwin

Mafalda turned on her in a sudden flash of passion. She never looked upon her acquaintance with Mr. Heatheridge in this way. She had no idea that Mafalda was anything about it. She looked at Mafalda, her lips trembled, and eyes filled with tears.

Mafalda stepped right up to her and slid an arm around her neck.

well. He was supple as a snake about to strike. But he looked exactly what he was—a typical young "tough," very carefully dressed in his best clothes. His skin was a clear olive, and an ailed black curl lay over his forehead. There was an air of strength and activity about him. Like a man built on steel wires and springs.

"Will you come in?" said Jill quietly. "Mafalda will be down in a moment."

Pete entered and stood twisting his hat in his hands, like a man embarrassed.

"Fraid I'm in the way, Miss Jill," he said.

His voice and tone surprised Jill, and he saw it and smiled quickly. When he smiled his face lit up and lost the rather sinister and dangerous look it wore normally.

"I got you," he said. "You're wondering I don't talk like a spashetti! That's sass. My folk were born at Lehigh, but I was raised in N'York."

"New York!" exclaimed Jill.

"An' wish I was back there. I worked at the ferry wharf; afterward I was on Boss Peley's team. Two years ago I came here. You'll have heard of me here, but that's all cut out."

Jill was silent.

"Say," he observed, "I'm on the level. You want to get that. Right on the square. See?"

"Oh—yes," said Jill, embarrassed in her turn. It was disconcerting to have her thoughts read like this.

"And I'm mighty glad," he said earnestly, "that Mafalda's got a sister like you. You're just the sister Mafalda ought to have! There's nobody like Mafalda. I know I ain't good enough for her. But I wish she an' you had always lived together, 'stead of only since you came here to this place. She ain't had the advantage you have; she was raised different—but there's only Mafalda on the map! I've only seen her I said 'that's the one!' I fell to her, once an' for all. And I'm on the level, don't forget that. I'm looking after Mafalda."

His expression changed so swiftly that Jill, looking at him, felt afraid.

"Geel!" he said through his teeth. "If a guy was to try an' start anything with Mafalda—"

At that moment Mafalda came down, resplendent and glowing. She called out joyfully to Pete, who took her hands in his, and Jill watched his face.

"Come on, Pete!" said Mafalda. "Goodby, old Chatterbox dear. We mustn't be late getting there."

"And don't be late coming in," said Jill.

"I'll see she ain't late, Miss Jill," said Mafalda quietly.

Mafalda took his arm and passed out with him into Fisher's alley, with Jill's five shillings as her sole capital.

Jill sat down and looked at the piano where Gareth Pembroke had sat. For a while she was silent. With a tightening at the throat, she wondered what she would do if any man ever looked at her as Mafalda. Pete had looked at Mafalda.

And reflecting, she remembered that Mr. Cecil Heatheridge had looked at her rather like that. But Mr. Heatheridge was different.

At 10:50 Mafalda came in. The dump of the street glistened like jewels on her hair; her eyes shone with a sleepy, cat-like luster.

"Had a great time, Jill," she said, as her sister rose from the chair by the fire. "What do you think of Pete? Isn't he like Juan Rodriguez in 'A Child of the South'? That's what Pete is. That's what I am, too. I belong where the sun shines an' the blood runs warm." She shot a sideways, provocative glance at Jill. "Pete used to carry a knife. He gave it up on my account."

Jill looked up, startled.

"But I told him to keep an with it. Why shouldn't he? Sometimes I think I'd like to carry one myself."

"Mafalda," said Jill, aghast.

Mafalda laughed gently.

"It's easy to scare you, Jill." She stretched her hands to the dying embers of the fire. "Get anything to eat? It didn't run to supper."

"There's some bread and cheese—and some cold rice pudding."

"Ugh!" said Mafalda. "I hate bread and cheese, and I loathe rice pudding. You're an awful housekeeper, Jill! You can't soar above rice pudding and sausages. Sausages for breakfast, sausages for tea!" She lit a candle. "I'm going to bed. Give me some more candles—I can't go with only this thing. I want to get the right light on my face before I turn in. You don't understand that."

Jill gave her two half candles out of a box in the cupboard. With a perfunctory word of thanks, Mafalda took them and went upstairs to the top bedroom.

She locked the door, lit the candles, and setting them at her side she shifted them from time to time, varying the light on her face as she studied it in the glass, the tiny facial muscles contracting and relaxing, the eyelids narrowing and opening.

It was no surface vanity which impelled the girl frequently to sit there hour after hour, often starved and cold, trying to catch on her childlike face with its yet unsmugged lines and contours the whole range of human experience. Mafalda was self-centered, and the concentration of her desires and will upon one object boded well for her success. Densely ignorant of the world and of life, Mafalda had none the less a wonderful inborn mimic power. Day by day, at the cinema where she was so earnest a votary, she was learning to mimic the shadow pictures of the actors.

Many a highly trained actress of international fame would have been surprised at the effects obtained by this apparently brainless flapper, sitting cold and lonely before her cracked mirror pulling faces at her reflections, conquering the delicate shades of the facial expression of emotion, with the facility of an acrobat climbing at itself in a pool.

The candles burned down and guttered. The church clocks struck one.

Mafalda rose cold and stiff from her chair before the glass.

"I've got it!" she muttered, "got it as I never had it before. I'm getting rid of that dolly look. Give me another year—and a chance—and I'll have the Chih girl beaten to mush! Oh, if I could only be a year older—and get the kiddishness out of my face!"

"Jiminy. Ain't I cold!" she added. She started to undress, allowing her clothes to fall about her untidily on the floor. Mafalda always hung up



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CHAPTER V A Voice from the Past

Just as Jill moved the coffee sump over the hottest glow of the little gas stove she heard the flap of the letter box click, and the rattle of letters falling on the door mat. The o'clock post had arrived.

Jill hurried into the sitting room. Miss J. Seaton.

The Moorings.
Fisher's Alley, S. E. 12.
Dear Miss Seaton—

Jill robbed her eyes. It was strange that John Brough should write to her at all, but still more surprising to

find herself addressed like this. If he ever wrote to an employee it was in the third person.

(To be continued)

Tennessee Anti-evolution Code Attacked In Courts

(U. P. Leased Wire to The Bend Bulletin)
KNOXVILLE, Tenn., Aug. 7.—A bill demanding that the federal court enjoin enforcement of the Tennessee anti-evolution law on the grounds of unconstitutionality, was filed in United States district court here today by John H. Nease, chief defense counsel in the recent Scopes case.

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