

# THE MASTER MIND

Novelized by Marvin Dana, Author of "Within the Law," From the Successful Play by Daniel D. Carter

Copyright, 1915, by the H. K. Fly Company

"Aw, you needn't get so sorry about it," Walter urged quaveringly. Blount spoke again. "It looks to me as if we were likely to be together for some time to come. As far as I know, you're just Walter Blount. Outside of Walter Blount I don't know who you are, and I don't care either."

Walter strove again to placate the man whom he had so seriously offended. "Aw, I was just kidding," he protested weakly. His attempt at a propitiatory smile was treacherous.

Of a sudden a new curiosity stirred in Walter. "And the girl—that skirt—my sister, you know? What is she?" he demanded. "Is she one of us?"

"She's only been with us a week," Mrs. Blount explained. "Come from across the pond, so how can we tell?" Said Blount:

"We don't know a darned thing about the girl except that she's our daughter. That's all we're supposed to know, and it's all we need to know, at that." A sudden memory moved in the husband's brain, and he continued with increased sternness. "And another thing—don't you dare again to act like you did today at lunch. There we were dining at the Waldorf with fine people, and me bragging about our big ranches and our beautiful home out west. And then I caught you trying to cop a spoon, so that I had to kick you under the table." An old instinct revived from the association of ideas, and he added petulantly, "And it was a plated one, at that!"

"What's the odds?" she demanded very spiritedly. "Lots of perfectly respectable people take things like that at hotels just for souvenirs. Why, I know a lady that hasn't got two towels alike in her whole house. And she's a real rich too."

Walter reverted to the subject of prime interest to him.

"And the girl?" he insisted. He gazed at Blount eagerly. "Do you think Andrew has anything on the girl, like he has on us?"

In an instant Blount had leaped close, his face furious with passion.

"Andrew hasn't anything on us!" he hissed.

A flash of anger gave fleeting courage to Walter.

"Hub!" he exclaimed scornfully. "Don't try and slip anything like that over!"

Andrew came in from the next room and stood directly between the two men. Then he addressed them with contemptuous coldness:

"If through jealousy and bickering you fail to act your parts so that in consequence my plans miscarry, it will count against you far more than would mere disobedience. What was the cause of this row?"

Blount pointed to Walter.

"Ask the whelp!"

"I was just kidding—that's all!"

"Take care, sir," Andrew said harshly. "One of these days my patience will be exhausted." He waited a moment, surveying the youth with a lashing stare. Then, abruptly, he doffed his dominant manner and in its stead assumed the pose of the respected servant. He bowed humbly to Walter, the nominal head of the household.

"Why not show your father through the house, sir?" he suggested.

At once, without any trace of embarrassment, he took the part assigned to him.

"Sure!" he exclaimed, boyishly aglow with pride in the new possession of his city home. He bowed on the heels of Blount. "Come on, dad," he urged tolerantly. "You'll sure find this place all to the good."

## CHAPTER VI. Lucene.

MRS. BLOUNT possessed the feminine trait of curiosity. She made a dawdling round of the room, scrutinizing every detail of its arrangement. At the very last she came to the little table, toward which Andrew had glanced to note the shimmer of blue light. By instinct her eyes went straight to the ring on the instant of her approach. As she beheld the luster of the jewel her handsome face suddenly flamed with greed, and she uttered an ejaculation of delight. For long seconds she contemplated the glittering taunt with rapture, bending her face ever closer and closer as under a spell. Then, in a sudden realization of her avareicious thought, she started guiltily, and peered about the room with furtive glances, to make sure that none spied upon her. Again, she studied the stone with a sensuous ecstasy in its primed brilliance; again, she tore her eyes from its charm, and now she moved from it in resolute effort to escape temptation. But the old habit of life dogged her back to the table, and she put forth a covetous hand, and seized the ring, carried it to her bosom, smiling.

But very soon her mood veered. The smile vanished from her full lips. Her expression became that of poignant grief. By slow degrees the hand that held the ring, moved from her

breast, reached to the table, set the jewel back in its place. It was at this moment that Andrew re-entered. At sight of him Mrs. Blount realized with a shudder how narrow had been the margin of her escape from detection in the very act of theft. She pointed toward the little table and spoke with a catch in her voice:

"Andrew, just look at what you left on that table there. It's a good thing there haven't been any strangers in the house with that lying around loose."

Andrew crossed to the table and picked up the ring. There was a faint smile on his closely set lips as he turned and went to the woman. He extended the ring with a slight bow.

"Mrs. Blount," he said pleasantly, "allow me." Andrew nodded assent as he dropped the ring into her itching palm. "Only a word of counsel," he said. "Remember that who I am and what my exact intentions may be are of no interest to you. So be careful." Having thus admonished her he left her alone to her happiness.

And Mrs. Blount, watching the luxurious play of the varicolored rays from the diamond, murmured contentedly in the softest notes of her throaty voice:

"Gee! It sure pays to be honest."

The servant soon announced to Andrew the arrival of Miss Blount and was directed to show the young lady into the library as soon as she should be ready for an interview.

Andrew descended to the library with an eagerness of expectancy that was almost disconcerting to himself. He ordered Parker, whom he found already stationed in the hall, to maintain the privacy of the library, to bring Walter on hearing the bell. And at last a delicate rustling of draperies sounded at the door, and Lucene entered.

"The girl stopped short at sight of the man, arrested for a moment by the stress of emotion. No least trace of Maggie Flint, nursemaid and convict, remained visible in the poised loveliness of her beauty had been most nobly fulfilled. She was of dainty fairness, with a golden crown of locks like corn silk in the sun, as lustrous, as finely spun. The exquisite features, set in the perfect oval of the face, were pearled

with the suggestion in his words quickened the girl's curiosity. "Oh," she begged, "who is he?" Andrew regarded her quizzically. "It was a small chance, a mighty small one, that you two should ever meet again, the little, friendless waif of the city and the brilliant man of the world. Yet so it was to be. Yes; it was for this purpose that I took the house here. For this same purpose I have created a family for you, Lucene, to take the place of the one you lost when you were a mere child. I have provided for you a father, a mother, a brother. Even I have made for you a blameless past—a past that will stand all the scrutiny it is ever likely to receive and more."

Nevertheless the girl, even in the face of these astonishing revelations, held her chief interest on that ideal around which had clustered the dearest reveries of her heart through the years. So now she made no comment, only:

"Does he remember me?"

"Much more than that," Andrew asserted briskly. "He has tried again and again to find you. Since my having you in charge it has been, of course, impossible for him to learn anything of you. But now the time has come to reveal you."

"The girl's face darkened a little. "Oh," she cried, "why didn't you let him find me, when you knew that?" Her voice broke piteously.

"In order, first, to educate and train you, so that there could be no question as to your fitness, your standing as a woman of refinement and breeding; and, secondly, to gain time for the blotting out of a past which, though you yourself were absolutely innocent, would have forever kept you apart from him."

"The girl acquiesced by silence in the justice of her guardian's reasoning.

"And you really—really do know him?" she questioned.

"At least I have seen him, and I know that he exists right here in this very city just now," Andrew replied, smiling again.

"Oh! And don't you, too, admire him—ever so much?"

"Fortunately for the girl's peace of mind she did not see the unlovely barring of the man's face. But his self-control was strong.

"Why, once he unknowingly rendered me a great service, and I—well, I desire to return it in kind."

"You mean, without letting him know?" In her eagerness the girl looked up into Andrew's face.

"Yes," came the glib explanation.

"You see, Lucene, that's what these old clothes of mine mean. You will please remember that for the present I am merely Andrew Watkins, your brother's valet and confidential man."

"Oh, Mr. Andrew," she objected with some embarrassment, "don't you see that you're asking me to deceive him?"

"My dear little girl," he declared gently, "I am only doing my best to give you a fair chance of happiness."

"The Master Mind walked away from his ward to where the call button was set in the wall. He pushed it to notify Parker that it was time for Walter's presence in the library.

Walter came into the room with curiosity writ large on his boyish face.

Andrew addressed the girl suavely.

"You see, Lucene, to introduce to you your brother, Mr. Walter Blount."

Walter strode forward and heartily shook the hand she reluctantly yielded to his proffered clasp.

"How do you do, Lucy?" he exclaimed.

"Does it surprise you?" She became grave. "I think that I have that virtue—faithfulness," she said, hesitatingly. "It's only an ideal, perhaps, but—she was violently aroused by Andrew's next words:

"I fancy," he said deliberately, "that I'm going to surprise you a bit. You shall see him soon."

The girl started, and her eyes sought those of the speaker in amazed questioning.

"Oh, Mr. Andrew! You can't mean—you can't mean!"

"Yes," the man said with quiet emphasis, "I do mean just what I have said. You shall see that ideal of yours very soon. That I promise you, my dear girl. Yes, you are to meet the one that owes his life to you, yet doesn't even know your name. And you are to meet him speedily too."

Lucene's eyes were like stars now, shimmering with the gusty joy of her heart, and her lips wreathed to a smile of delight.

"Oh, when?" she cried. "Oh, tell me when! It can't be true. It's too wonderful to be true. Is he—quite well?"

"Quite."

"When they took him away in the ambulance," she continued pensively, "I was sure that he must die, in spite of what I had tried to do for him."

"And so he would have died," Andrew said gravely, "but for you."

"I did do the right thing, didn't I?" she said appealingly.

"Yes," Andrew agreed. "You did the only thing that could have saved him. But tell me, if you please, how did you ever learn to make a tourniquet?"

"Why, as to that," came the ready reply. "I'd seen pictures of them in those 'first aid' things on a placard in a train, and I studied them until I understood the principle just because I had nothing else to do at the time. And then," a tremor was in her voice at the memory, "when he was thrown from the automobile right there at my feet almost and lay bleeding so dreadfully, then somehow I remembered."

"And you never forgot him," the man exclaimed, betrayed into open expression of his wonder over this lightning welding of hearts. "And you never forgot," he repeated softly, with a half envious note in his voice. "You never forgot, though neither of you even so much as knew the other's name."

The suggestion in his words quickened the girl's curiosity.

"Oh," she begged, "who is he?"

Andrew regarded her quizzically.

"It was a small chance, a mighty small one, that you two should ever meet again, the little, friendless waif of the city and the brilliant man of the world. Yet so it was to be. Yes; it was for this purpose that I took the house here. For this same purpose I have created a family for you, Lucene, to take the place of the one you lost when you were a mere child. I have provided for you a father, a mother, a brother. Even I have made for you a blameless past—a past that will stand all the scrutiny it is ever likely to receive and more."

Nevertheless the girl, even in the face of these astonishing revelations, held her chief interest on that ideal around which had clustered the dearest reveries of her heart through the years. So now she made no comment, only:

"Does he remember me?"

"Much more than that," Andrew asserted briskly. "He has tried again and again to find you. Since my having you in charge it has been, of course, impossible for him to learn anything of you. But now the time has come to reveal you."

"The girl's face darkened a little. "Oh," she cried, "why didn't you let him find me, when you knew that?" Her voice broke piteously.

"In order, first, to educate and train you, so that there could be no question as to your fitness, your standing as a woman of refinement and breeding; and, secondly, to gain time for the blotting out of a past which, though you yourself were absolutely innocent, would have forever kept you apart from him."

"The girl acquiesced by silence in the justice of her guardian's reasoning.

"And you really—really do know him?" she questioned.

"At least I have seen him, and I know that he exists right here in this very city just now," Andrew replied, smiling again.

"Oh! And don't you, too, admire him—ever so much?"

"Fortunately for the girl's peace of mind she did not see the unlovely barring of the man's face. But his self-control was strong.

"Why, once he unknowingly rendered me a great service, and I—well, I desire to return it in kind."

"You mean, without letting him know?" In her eagerness the girl looked up into Andrew's face.

"Yes," came the glib explanation.

"You see, Lucene, that's what these old clothes of mine mean. You will please remember that for the present I am merely Andrew Watkins, your brother's valet and confidential man."

"Oh, Mr. Andrew," she objected with some embarrassment, "don't you see that you're asking me to deceive him?"

"My dear little girl," he declared gently, "I am only doing my best to give you a fair chance of happiness."

"The Master Mind walked away from his ward to where the call button was set in the wall. He pushed it to notify Parker that it was time for Walter's presence in the library.

Walter came into the room with curiosity writ large on his boyish face.

Andrew addressed the girl suavely.

"You see, Lucene, to introduce to you your brother, Mr. Walter Blount."

Walter strode forward and heartily shook the hand she reluctantly yielded to his proffered clasp.

"How do you do, Lucy?" he exclaimed.



"Does he remember me?"

"Parker will take you to Mrs. Blount," he said.

The girl went rather hastily out of the room.

The face of Andrew was forbidding as he spoke to Walter.

"You perceive," he said sharply, "that this young lady is not of your class. You must understand that thoroughly, and you must remember it, sir. Never presume."

The thief scowled heavily.

Andrew continued:

"When Wainwright comes and the conversation begins, you must bear in mind my written directions for your guidance." He went close to the door into the hall. "Now, if I stand in the position corresponding to this in the drawing room, then, according to your instructions, in my memorandum for you, what form of conversation must you adopt?"

Walter answered with the alert confidence of a schoolboy, sure that his lesson has been well conned:

"The lonely stranger gag."

Andrew moved to the end of the library table and paused there.

"And if I stand by the large table there?" he demanded.

"The gay White Way."

The teacher went to one of the windows at the end of the room.

"And here?"

"The hard to get acquainted gag. But just the same, you'll find this work all for nothing," Walter declared aggressively, in a new access of rebellion.

Parker appeared in the doorway, announcing visitors.

"Mr. Wainwright, sir, and Dr. Forbes, asking for Mr. Walter Blount."

## CHAPTER VII. In the Toils.

AS Wainwright and his friend, Dr. Forbes, sat waiting in the house of which the titular head was Mr. Walter Blount of Laramie, Wyo., Andrew entered the drawing room, wearing his deferential aspect of the old family retainer, somewhat inclined to garrulity.

"Mr. Blount has been informed of your call, sirs," he said. "He will see you, sirs, at once." He bowed again. "I hope, sirs, you won't mind if I go on with a few bits of my work here, as it's so late."

"Oh, certainly not," Wainwright said, indifferently. Next came the entrance of Walter, who halted just within the doorway, and looked from one to the other of his guests, in obvious perplexity between the two as to which might be Mr. Wainwright. That gentleman, standing up and smiling, went forward with his hand outstretched.

"I am Mr. Wainwright," he said, as he shook hands with his host, "and I must tell you that I'm mighty glad to meet you—again!" The emphasis on the last word was significant. Then, he turned toward the physician; this was Dr. Forbes, a particular friend of mine, who was good enough to accompany me. He is the superintendent of the Powhattan asylum for the insane."

The three men were seated near one another.

"I called," Wainwright explained simply, "in order to deliver in person the thanks you were at such pains to escape last night."

Walter beamed pleasantly.

"Oh, that's all right," he exclaimed, broadly. "Of course, I knew you tonight the minute I caught sight of your face, though the name didn't explain anything to me when your card was brought. I only did what any one would. It's not worth mentioning."

"Awfully glad I happened along as I did," Walter said genially. "Have they caught the man?" he inquired interestedly after Andrew had served lights to the smokers.

Wainwright shook his head.

"No, I'm sorry to say, they have not," he replied with disgust in his voice. "The scoundrel really made a wonderful getaway. And that reminds

me, Mr. Blount—how did you contrive to disappear so soon?"

"Why, the fact is," he said with an assumption of great candor, "I'm a stranger in New York, and I knew, of course, there'd be a big hullabaloo about a thing like this, and I hate notoriety—police courts and so on, you understand—newspapers too. So when I saw the fellow that attacked you had skipped I had the idea that I'd do the same thing, though for a different reason. I just mixed in the crowd a minute and then slipped around the corner into the next block and came home."

He chuckled complacently and then added, in order to change the topic, "But how'd you manage to find me?"

"Well, now," Wainwright answered, "that's a bit odd too. An anonymous person called me up on the telephone at my place last night after I got back, said he'd been among those present at my little adventure, had seen my rescuer and had guessed afterward that I might like to know who it was, and he gave me your name and address."

Walter perceived that Andrew was now occupied in rearranging some magazines on the large table, and he recalled the memorandum prepared for his guidance. Yes, the Great White Way! That must be introduced next. He spoke mechanically.

"Funny," he commented. "You see, I know so few people in New York."

Dr. Forbes peered with curiosity at the young man.

"You're a stranger here, you say, Mr. Blount?"

"Yes," was the answer, very cheerfully given, for now the thief saw his way to carry out the required instruction. "And I can't say that I like your town very much. Of course there are some things right enough. I'll admit that the first month I spent along the Great White Way passed off lively enough. But, you know, a man soon gets enough of that. When dad and mother came on east to meet sister, who's just got back from Europe, I took this place so we could all be together for awhile. Dad's been joshing me about getting homesick," he added, with a shamefaced grin that acknowledged some justice in the charge. "He says I won't be able to stick it out for a year, but I think I will—maybe—just for a stunt."

"Where is your home, may I ask?" Wainwright inquired.

"My home town is Laramie, Wyo. Of course I'll have to admit that it's a dinky little place, but I like it at that. You see, everybody's your friend out there." Andrew had gone to a window at the far end of the room—a fact duly observed by his pupil. "Yes; everybody's your friend out there," he repeated, with a hint of emotion in his voice, "but here it's so hard to get acquainted—that is, with the right sort."

"If I can be of service to you in any way"—Wainwright suggested.

"Oh, I don't mean to butt in," Walter declared modestly.

Wainwright smiled in friendly fashion.

"I'm glad you did last night," he said emphatically.

"Oh, that! But, say, have you got any idea why this particular man tried to kill you or who he was or anything?"

"Nothing definite," Wainwright replied. "I dare say it was just some one with a grievance. You may happen to know, Mr. Blount, that I was for some years district attorney here. During my term of service I was compelled to send a good many men to prison, first and last, and some even to the electric chair. As the last words were spoken Andrew, who had been surreptitiously watching the speaker, turned his face instinctively to hide from view the distortion of hate that transformed it. "Yes," Wainwright continued, unwittingly the feeling aroused in one of his hearers; "a good many criminals have come to hate me."

"Gee," Walter ejaculated, "it gives me a chill just to think of it!"

"Oh, you'd soon get used to it!" Wainwright returned indifferently.

Walter shook his head violently.

"Yes," he agreed, "I suppose it's all in the day's work; but, just the same, the idea of receiving threatening letters and all that sort of dope—"

Wainwright interrupted, "My secretary usually destroys them at once."

"There is one notable exception," Dr. Forbes observed in his characteristic precise manner of speech as he refolded his hands carefully and smiled a wintry smile. "I refer to the white card episode."

"The white card episode?" Walter repeated.

Wainwright's face lost its rather bored aspect.

"Ah, the white card!" he said thoughtfully. "Yes, that is something different. And the white card is still coming—coming from some very mysterious person, a sort of genius in his way." He put a hand into the breast pocket of his coat and drew forth a bit of white cardboard, which he extended toward his host. "This is one I received yesterday."

Walter, who had examined the card curiously, looked up in disappointment as he returned it to its recipient.

"Why, there's nothing on it," he complained. "What's the idea? Is it from somebody you sent up?"

"It carries a message in spite of its being blank," Wainwright said solemnly. "As to your question, no, it is not from some one I sent up. I've never seen the man that sent me this and the others like it, and promises to send me more, of different colors."

Wainwright then proceeded to describe the Allen murder, the sentence and the threatening developments thereafter.

Walter's desire for details concerning the curious situation outlined by Wainwright was thwarted by the entrance of Mr. and Mrs. Blount, pursuant to Andrew's privately conveyed in-

structions to them. Husband and wife were in evening dress. He sprang up, as his guests rose, and introduced the twain as his father and mother.

"I'm right glad to meet any friend of my son's," the husband affirmed.

"He proved himself my friend last night," Wainwright said. Blount chuckled.

"Yes, he happened to be right on the job, didn't he?"

Mrs. Blount, who did not approve of being left out of any conversation in her neighborhood, interposed hospitably, as she arranged her ample form in a chair near the guests.

"Now, do sit down," she urged, and beamed on first the one visitor and then the other. She felt a triumphant pride in her position here as hostess in metropolitan society and wished that the members of the Mothers' club of Laramie, Wyo., might see her now, entertaining thus intimately two distinguished gentlemen of New York city. Wainwright remarked, as he seated himself in a chair facing his hostess "I fear we are detaining you."

"Not a bit, you ain't," Mrs. Blount asserted, with forcefulness. "Father and Lucene and I were just going out to have dinner at some restaurant, and we ain't in any hurry at all."

Mr. Blount re-enforced his wife's statement.

"No, sree, we ain't in any rush. We've got a taxi waiting," the westerner went on as he opened a cigar case. "Let it wait, I say. Mother and I don't come to New York often, and when we do come why, darn the expense! Eh? Ain't that right, mother?"

Dr. Forbes made an effort to sustain a share in the conversation by addressing Blount. "You come from the cattle country, I hear."

"It used to be a real cattle country," was the answer, "but nowadays it's all sheep. It's good business, too, all right, though the smell of those critters is something awful. The last few years have been wonderful, I tell you, sir. Why, I can remember when 11 cents for wool was considered a very good price. But two years ago we got 27. That's some price for raw wool, believe me. But of course no one knows what this new tariff"—

Walter interrupted the speaker with an admirable imitation of the pert son's rude manner toward the father.

"Now, dad, for heaven's sake, don't get started on the tariff."

"No, John," Mrs. Blount giggled. "I wish I had a dollar for every hour I've had to listen to that stuff." She turned her eyes on Walter. "I wish, my dear," she said in tones expressive of deepest maternal pride, "that you'd go and ask Lucene to please hurry."

Walter stood up obediently.

"Yes, mother," he said, "if you will excuse me to our guests." And he hurried from the room.

Blount took advantage of the reference to the daughter of the house to enter again into the conversational arena.

"Yes, Mr. Wainwright, and you, doctor, we're just naturally some proud of that girl of ours. You might think four years in France would spoil a girl. So it might—some of them, I guess. But not our girl! Why, Lucene is just crazy to get home again—out to Laramie, Wyo."

"I don't know, father," the wife said doubtfully. "I'm afraid she'll never be really satisfied here in her own country any more."

"I guess that's right," said Walter, who had re-entered in time to hear his mother's remark.

Blount waved an arm in vehement denial.

Then the