CHAPTER XXXI

OFFICER KELLY arrived at the fifty-sixth floor in due time. The ladder was still swinging. He flashed his light everywhere. There was no sign of Ted save his footprints on a crossbeam and the marks of his arms on an upright girder.

"Be still," the policeman shouted to the ladder. "Isn't it enough to make a poor cop come up here in the bitter cold with his feet slipping on the icy ladders without giving him a dirty swing to climb as well? He did it, that blitherin' monkey. How he did it, the divil knows; but who else would do it? And what'll me sergeant say, the dirty Swede? 'Off post again,' he'll say."

He caught the ladder, held the bottom rung in his left hand though it pulled like a frightened steed to get away, and fished out his handcuffs. He snapped a bracelet on the rung—though it almost cost him his life, and fastened the other in the strand of rope remaining on the girder.

"Now let's see you break away," he said. The ladder tugged, but the gyves held it. Kelly went up quickly.

"My only pair of come-alongs!" he mourned.

"Well, I won't need them with that one. He'll lie still when I'm done. And someone else can bring him down."

He went cautiously up the last ladder, feeling for his gun. It was awkward, trying to get the revolver out of its hiding place, and trying to climb, too. But when he reached the top the gun was in his right hand, and the flash light in his left. Only his feet kept him on the ladder; but he had no fear of falling.

He flashed the light, and a voice in back of him said quietly,

"Drop the gun, Officer."

Kelly dropped the gun. It must have fallen in the snow on a boarded-over floor below, for it made no sound. Ted waited to hear it clink against steel. He heard nothing. He fancied the weapon was falling down to the street, a harrowing distance. For a moment the old fear clutched him, and then he laughed.

"That's right, laugh," said Kelly in an injured tone. "Bring me up here clean off the world, and laugh at me."

He flashed his light on Ted.

"And you without your fine fur coat, freezin' to death when you might be snug and cozy in a nice clean warm jail. Ah, if I'd known you had that gun on you, me fine friend, you'd never got away from me. I'd have shot to kill. What are you doing up here? Ain't you the lunytic, now?"

"Yes, maybe I am a lunatic," Ted said. "I came up here to cross a bridge and kill a man. And there isn't any bridge. Look! They've only started it."

"To kill a man? What man?"

"Carozzo!"

"Well," and Kelly laughed a little, "I don't know anyone needs killing so much—but you'll not kill him to-night, or any other night."

Ted put his weapon inside his dress coat.

"Officer," he said, "I've got to tell you the whole story—because I need your help."

"That's good," said Kelly. "Now I'll tell one."

"Please listen!" Ted shouted. It was necessary to shout sometimes because of the wind. It was necessary to draw close to the policeman. It was necessary, Ted knew, to be absolutely frank with him, so he told him swiftly about Molly Sommers, and her father, about her coming to New York, the reason for her being in the roof-garden cabaret, and the peril that now confronted her.

Kelly did not interrupt him, though at times he flashed the light on Ted's face to see if he were really in earnest.

Two men sitting on top of a white steel world, in the snow and the wind and the icy rain; two tired, bruised, and freezing men, talking—rather shouting—of love and murder and a woman's danger; two animated snow men, one sworn to uphold the law, the other self-sworn to break it—was it strange in

such circumstances that one should find on him a full pint bottle of liquor and pass it to the other? Was it strange that these two men should become firm friends over the bottle, and the story? Was it strange that the policeman should agree to help the man he had come to arrest?

It seemed the only natural outcome to each of them.

"Eileen Drew!" said Kelly. "Aye, I know her. That sweet she is and innocent she might be my own Mary. And her the daughter of Anthony Sommers! Ah, there was a gentleman drunk or sober. It was always 'Kelly, how are they treating you?' with him, and 'Kelly, will you have a drink?' and 'Kelly, here's a good cigar.' Sure the blarney was on him thick. I always knew that he was framed."

The bottle passed again and again.

"Carozzo! He ought to be murdhered in cawld blood!" Kelly's brogue came out with the warmth of the whisky. "The dirty foul beast o' the divil. But I mean it, lad, when I say I'll not let ye do murdher this night."

Ted went on with his story, telling now how he had waked in Platt's suite, and how he had seen Sommers.

"Platt?" said Kelly. The name warmed him more than the liquor. "Oh, well, if you're a friend of Geoffrey Platt's, that's different. Don't be afraid of annything at all. Sure, here in New York it isn't so

much 'what have you got?' or 'who may you be?' But it's 'who do you know?' that counts.

"Sure, Geoffrey Platt is that close to the commissioner he might be his brother—only more friendly, of course. And his pull wid the district attorney——

"But mind ye now, lad, if ye kill this ould divil I had no part in it! And if ye leave the gun by his fat carcass, d'y'see, nobody can prove it wasn't his own. And I'll swear ye were up on the building wid me all the time. Oh, if ye know Geoffrey Platt, son, ye can have lunch wid Jimmy Walker."

"Thanks!" said the shivering Ted.

Kelly handed him the bottle again.

"Finish it," he said. "You need it more nor I. Well, glory be—who'd think it? Here I am like a flagpole sitter, aidin' and abettin' the crime o' murdher. I had hell's own work climbing up here to put ye undher arrest for assault and battery, dhrunk and disorderly, disturbin' the peace, resistin' an officer, attemptin' escape, entherin' a skyscraper in the night wid felonious intent, carrying concealed weapons, makin' threats, and desthroyin' a laddher.

"And I'm plotting murdher, breakin' the prohibition law, connivin' at the escape of a prisoner, dhrinkin' on duty, desertin' me post, and settin' a bad example to the young. Well, leave us go down now, and I'll see that you go up in the Allegheny elevator, and be damned to them all."

"No, that would take too long. I've got another plan," said Ted. He stood up, stamped his feet, rubbed his numbed hands.

There was a derrick on the roof, and piles of snow-covered girders. It would be comparatively easy, he pointed out, to hoist a long girder out over the space between the two buildings, and to use it for a bridge.

"They've started the bridge from this building," he said, "and possibly from the Allegheny side also."

"How did you know the derrick was up here?" the policeman asked.

"I didn't," said Ted. "I thought the bridge had been completed. You can imagine how I felt when I saw it had only been started. Well, will you help me?"

"Will I? Sure, who could go to hell in a better cause?"

He began to clear the snow off a long I-beam.

It took time to fasten the boom cable about the beam, and to swing it out into the space between the two buildings. Their stiff fingers were bleeding and bruised before they had even fastened the cable. Then they hunted for the bull-stick needed to turn the derrick. It was Kelly who thought of that.

"You put the stick in a socket," he explained, "and then walk in a circle, for all the world like a spavined horse in a merry-go-round. Many's the time I watched them do it. You walk around in a circle, and the derrick boom thravels wid you, d'y'see,

wid the girder hangin' from the cable. And when the girder gets above the place you want it, you stop and take out the stick. And there you are."

Kelly found the bull-stick and walked around the derrick. Ted stood, holding to a girder at the very edge of the building, directing operations. The beam was swung over the gap, and lowered to the level of the sixtieth story.

It was too short.

"No," Ted said, "it can't possibly do. It's at least six feet out, from the far end of the bridge on this side—and about the same from the near end of the bridge on the other side. If we could only make the girder firm on this side I could jump from the end of it onto the bridge."

"Jump is it? Jump twelve feet?"

"A schoolgirl could jump farther than that," said Ted. "Isn't there some way we can anchor that beam to the sixty-first floor?"

"Sure, but that would still give ye twelve feet to jump. Is it crazy ye are?"

"Twelve feet. I can make it if you can hold that beam steady some way."

"Lindbergh could do it," said Kelly. "But then he was half Irish, and he had a plane."

Kelly, with the aid of the derrick, raised the beam and swung it in. He attached another cable to the beam, hooking it in the loop of the boom cable, and wrapping it several times around the near half of the

beam, and then around the outer crosspiece on the sixty-first floor.

"There," he said. "There's two feet or so of cable between the edge o' the roof and the end o' the beam. Do ye get on now, and hang onto the boom cable, in the centre. I'll shwing ye out as far as I can. That'll give ye a ten-foot jump. Not twelve feet, me lad, only ten, and down at that."

"Ten feet, and a down jump," said Ted. "It's easy."

"Is it, indeed? I wouldn't do it for all the money in the world. And ye'd best take off your shoes—and ye'd best walk out to the end o' the beam before ye jump. Don't run. The beam's still shlippery—and it's a long, long drop to Broadway."

Ted took off his shoes, his coat, his vest. He must not be hindered by his clothes.

"Stop there, me lad," Kelly commanded. "I may compound a felony, God forgive me, but indacent exposure I will not permit. Put on yer vest. You'll need it. Are them socks silk or wool?"

"Woollen."

"Good. And good luck to ye, Mr. Morehouse. 'Tis a fine gentleman ye are, and may God make your bed in heaven—but not this night. Amen! And remember what I said about the gun."

Ted took his place on the girder. Kelly moved him out, farther and farther from safety, nearer and nearer to the Allegheny. His eyes were on a level with

the bungalow. Below him was nothing but the street and a girder six inches wide. The wire rope to which he clung seemed as thin and fragile as a string—and it swung!

Ted looked down. But he was not afraid now. The wind was bitter and strong, the snow blinded him, and the sleet stung him; but he felt nothing save the desire to get to the Allegheny roof, and take Molly from Carozzo. The revolver was in his trousers pocket.

The lights in the roof-garden bungalow crept near and nearer. They stopped, and Ted knew that the beam had travelled as far as it could.

He looked back, and was surprised to see Kelly so clearly. The dawn had come. It was time for him to act. The Corsairs' show was nearly over.

He walked calmly out to the end of the beam. Slowly. Slowly. It quivered under him, but he didn't notice it. He poised himself a moment on the edge and jumped.

CHAPTER XXXII

My countenance hath deceived him to his destruction, and yet hath he not committed sin with me, to defile and shame me.

ALL DAY long, and all the evening, and all during the show, the triumphant song of Judith banged against Molly's mind like a shutter in the wind. Sometimes it brought her an echo of her mother's voice and a memory of her mother's eyes. Sometimes it brought her a little hope. But mostly it mocked her.

She would be thinking of her father, thinking that he could not possibly have left the penitentiary; she would be thinking of Platt and trying to find him; she would be thinking of Ted—and suddenly that song of Judith was singing in her brain.

She had not seen Platt, though she had searched New York for him. He was not at the club, though he was giving a party there this morning. His guests, a dozen newspaper men or more, sat at a long table near the dance floor, but Platt did not appear.

She had not seen Carozzo, though he had sent word to her that he was better, and was expecting her after

the show. She had not seen Marcia save during the few moments when the girl was singing:

"Fish gotta swim,
Birds gotta fly,
I gotta love
One man 'til I die."

Marcia stood in the balcony as she sang, with the strong light on her, and Molly could see agony in her face, an agony that no paint could hide. The patrons below her drank and talked and laughed, unconcerned, unheeding. The song stopped, and Marcia fell, and lay quiet. Two waiters had rushed up the steps, and borne her down, and taken her out onto the roof. Molly had seen no more of her.

Molly had seen Babe as soon as she entered the club. Babe had been waiting for her, worrying, nervous. And yet her only words were reproaches.

"You oughta be ashamed of yourself," she began. "Staying away all day. Where you been?"

"I can't tell you."

"I guess you don't want to," Babe said sullenly, and then she seized Molly's hands, and her tone altered.

"Listen, Dearie, I'm not knocking you for trying to get all you can out of that old buzzard. That's business. And if a girl can get away with it decent—that's swell. But when you throw over a boy like this

Morehouse for that wop—Dearie, it ain't right. And if you go through with it——"

"Yes?"

"I'm offa you for life. Huh! Him ready to wreck New York for you. And you——"

"Please don't talk about him," Molly begged.

"Oh, damn it, kid, I can't stand to see you do this" —and Babe ran away from Molly, crying noisily.

Molly had encountered Pio Mora after her last song. He was waiting for her outside the dressing-room door. His discoloured eyes showed through the white paint of his clown make-up. The painted smile he wore was a hilarious one; but he was solemn, even pathetic, she thought.

He placed in her hand a stiletto with a silver blade and a gold handle freckled with red stones. On the handle was an etching of her face, and the words, "*Memento Mora.*"

"*Madonna,*" he said softly. "It ees the leetla present I geeve you. No? For your wedding day I geeve it. Maybe some day——" His voice failed, and he left her quickly, his earrings jingling merrily.

She looked at the weapon. What a curious thing to give for a wedding present! And what a delicate way of putting it. Wedding! She sighed. "Maybe some day——" What had he started to say? "Maybe some day you'll need this—to kill yourself?" Maybe she would.

She read the inscription once more. "*Memento*

Mora." Remember Mora? How could she forget him? *Memento Mora.* The phrase seemed vaguely familiar to her. Where had she heard it before? Ah—"*Memento mori*"—remember you must die! A Latin pun inscribed by a barbarian. She passed through the door, and began to take off her costume.

The girls were putting on their street clothes, talking, laughing, smoking cigarettes. Several of them were discussing Marcia, and one who had seemed to be Marcia's best friend called her a name that made Molly wince. Some day, she thought, people would apply that epithet to her.

Yet hath he not committed sin with me, to defile and shame me.

She was alone in the dressing room now, rubbing on her face and throat a creamy liquid that smelled faintly of almonds. The stiletto lay on the shelf before her. She wiped off the cream with a towel. Streaks of red and black and yellow came off with it. She looked at the towel as though it were a curious flag, and began massaging her skin with ice.

It seemed a long time since she had seen her face thus, without make-up. It looked strange to her, younger, fresher. It looked innocent. She dusted it lightly with talcum powder, and rubbed her eyebrows with soapy water until they resembled the damp wings of a bird. She brushed her yellow hair straight

back, leaving a widow's peak on her forehead. She brushed it over her ears, twisted it into a knot at the back of her neck.

My countenance hath deceived him to his destruction. .

She stepped into the simplest dress she had, a navy blue with flesh-coloured collar and vest, and pressed a wide-brimmed hat of a dark hue over her hair, put on her shaggy camel's-hair coat.

Any man, she tried to convince herself, would take pity on such a girl as she now saw in the glass. Any man, her reason added, but Carozzo.

She lingered in front of the glass a long time, half-tempted to steal out of the cabaret and take the first train to Sommerville. But that would be cowardice. That would be deserting her father.

She tried to smile at the girl in the glass. At first she could only stare, then gradually her features assumed the smile she had learned in this dressing room. Without the powder and the mascara and the rouge the smile was a hideous grimace, the smile of the hard-boiled children of Broadway.

But even as she looked her face changed, and her own smile came back to her, and she felt herself again, unafraid, determined, able to cope with any situation that might arise. Men, even the worst of them, were but stupid children—and she could handle them. Even Carozzo she could handle.

The smile was still upon her face as she walked into his den and found him in his morning clothes, sitting at his desk. The stiletto was hidden in the right sleeve of her dress.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE room was bright with roses. Great masses of them bloomed on the desk, on the great oak table, in vases near the French windows, in vases on the card tables—long-stemmed American beauties, white roses, pink buds, pale gold buds. Even the dice table had been turned into a rose garden.

"You like them?" Carozzo greeted her. He came toward her slowly. "They are for you, Eileen. Twelve flower shops I bought out. All the roses they had. Eighteen hundred dollars they cost me. Just for you."

"They are beautiful," Molly said, inhaling the perfume of them.

"Eighteen hundred dollars' worth," he said again. "It is nothing—for you."

There was a shyness in him she had never seen before, an awkwardness of manner. They stood a moment, smiling at each other, Molly confident, serene, a little amused; Carozzo hesitant, puzzled at her bearing, puzzled at himself. Ah, this was a lady! And she was his. But why couldn't he take her into his arms at once?

"You are going away?" she asked, looking beyond him to an open suitcase.

"We," he said—"we are going away. On—on our honeymoon!"

She stepped back from him, looked at him as though she had never seen him before; a fat man in morning clothes; a greasy man who had evidently spent hours grooming himself.

"Our honeymoon?"

"But yes." He came closer to her and took her hands. She felt herself growing rigid.

"We are going to be married—this morning, my Eileen. We will have a little wine—a little toast to happiness. So. Then we will get into my car. It is waiting downstairs now. We will go to Greenwich. We will be married there. Everything has been arranged. Pio Mora arranged—arranged everything. You are not glad?"

Molly drew her hands from his, sat down in a chair near his desk.

"If I do not look happy," she said, "it is because I am ill. All day I have been worried, and all night, too. My head aches—frightfully. And now you talk of marriage."

She looked away from him, took a rose from a cut-glass vase on the desk, fondled it, let it drop.

"A girl likes to know weeks ahead," she said, as if she were talking to a child. "A girl likes to plan for her wedding day, likes to think of it, to wait for it, to

make little plans, to buy clothes, make her own arrangements."

"You do not wish to marry me?" he demanded. His shyness had worn off. He was sulky, dangerous. She smiled at him, and he was awkward again.

"I thought you would be glad," he said stupidly.

"Would you have me married in this dress?"

"But yes. Any dress."

She laughed at him. It was good to be able to laugh.

"The bridegroom was dressed in striped trousers and cutaway coat and spats," she said. "The bride——" She stopped, with a forced laugh.

"But I will buy you all the gowns you want, Eileen," he said. "We will go to the shops before we start for Greenwich. You shall have whatever you need—and damn the price. And look!"

From his trousers pocket he took a pair of diamond earrings. He shot them out on the desk as he would have rolled a pair of dice.

"For my bride!" he said proudly.

"Give me time," she said, rising from her chair.

Before he could answer there was a knock on the door. Molly pretended fright. She put a finger across her lips. "Wait," she whispered, and darted to the bedroom, closing the door softly.

She sat on the bed, and stared through the bars of the window.

Why did Carozzo want to marry her? She didn't understand that. Yesterday, she knew. he had had no

thought of marrying her. It wasn't like him to want to marry any girl. Perhaps Qug knew something about this, she thought. Why, of course. Qug, the hoodlum, the gangster, had told Carozzo that if he didn't marry "this square dame" he might be killed.

Marriage! Qug *would* insist on marriage! Oh, all these well-meaning chivalrous men. Ted. Qug. Platt. What had they not done to thwart her? Marriage to Carozzo—she wanted to laugh at the irony of the situation, wanted to scream at the horror of it.

She had almost brought herself to the point of giving herself—for a day, a week—for as long as it might take to worm out of Carozzo the truth of the Larkin murder. But marrying him? That seemed more shameful yet. Standing up with him before a minister, and swearing to love, to honour, and to obey. Calling on God to witness her shameful lie!

To live with him here, to sleep with him here, be Mrs. Carozzo to all his world and hers! What a son-in-law to give her father!

Yet, for her father's sake, she was ready even for this last degradation. She would go to him now, and tell him. But Mora was still out there. She knew it was Mora by the jingle of his earrings.

"*Memento Mora!*" Her hand stroked the sleeve that concealed his wedding gift. "Maybe some day——" She knew now what Mora had meant to say.

Silence again in the den. She opened the door a

trifle and looked out. She saw Marcia, and closed the door again. She did not want to hear what Marcia had to say to Carozzo. She went to the window, where she could not hear.

She felt a little pity for this dark girl—but she remembered that Marcia had helped to send Anthony Sommers to prison. Marcia had sworn he was jealous of Larkin because of her. A lie—a lie that had come strangely home to Marcia now.

She walked about the room, looking at the dolls. Marcia's. At the racks of costly perfumes. Marcia's. At the dresser. Marcia's clothes were in there, perhaps—and Carozzo's. Marcia's black silk hat was still on the dresser, between the whisky bottle and the crucifix. Marcia's whip still lay where it had fallen. She looked at the bed on the dais. Marcia's. Marcia's and Carozzo's.

"How can I do it?" she asked herself. "How can I do it?" And she looked at the bars on the windows, and found her answer there.

She was halfway to the door when she heard a shot.

She opened the door quickly, and ran into the room.

Ted was standing near the desk—a revolver in his right hand. There was snow on his hair, snow and ice on his clothes. He was in his stocking feet. He was dripping wet. His hand shook, and his chest heaved like a bellows.

He was looking at something that lay at his feet.

She went to him slowly, fearfully, knowing what had happened.

She saw the body of Big Joe Carozzo lying face upward on the carpet, his eyes open, his shirt front welling red.

There was a red rose in one of his outflung hands.