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# MISCHIEVOUS MAID FAYNIE



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(TRADE MARK)



## **Contents**

- CHAPTER I. THE LOVER'S TRYST.
- CHAPTER II. "YOU MUST NOT MARRY HIM – HEAVEN INTENDED YOU FOR ME."
- CHAPTER III. A TERRIBLE PLOT AGAINST A HELPLESS YOUNG GIRL.
- CHAPTER IV. FOND LOVE TO HATRED TURNED.
- CHAPTER V. "CAN YOU PERFORM THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY AT ONCE, REVEREND SIR?"
- CHAPTER VI. THE VILLAIN AND HIS VICTIM.
- CHAPTER VII. HE RAISED HIS CLINCHED HAND, AND THE BLOW FELL HEAVILY UPON THE BEAUTIFUL UPTURNED FACE.
- CHAPTER VIII. WHAT HAPPENED AT MIDNIGHT ON THE LONELY RIVER ROAD.
- CHAPTER IX. "THERE MUST NOT BE A SINGLE TRACE LEFT TO MARK THE SPOT OF THE GRAVE YOU ARE NOW DIGGING," SAID THE MUFFLED STRANGER.
- CHAPTER X. SNATCHED FROM THE GRAVE.
- CHAPTER XI. "YOU ARE DISINHERITED – EVERYTHING IN THIS HOUSE IS MINE."
- CHAPTER XII. IMPENDING EVIL.
- CHAPTER XIII. IN THE TOILS OF THE CONSPIRATORS.
- CHAPTER XIV. "YOU ARE OUR PRISONER!"
- CHAPTER XV. THE NEW BROOM DID NOT SWEEP CLEAN.



- CHAPTER XVI. THE WILL DISINHERITING FAYNIE.
- CHAPTER XVII. EVERY MAN TO HIS TRADE.
- CHAPTER XVIII MARGERY'S LOVE DREAM.
- CHAPTER XIX. PRETTY MARGERY'S TERRIBLE DISCOVERY.
- CHAPTER XX. A FATHER'S RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION
- CHAPTER XXI. "I LIKE HER BETTER THAN ANY I HAVE MET –  
I SHALL MARRY HER."
- CHAPTER XXII. CLAIRE'S LOVER.
- CHAPTER XXIII THE PROPOSAL.
- CHAPTER XXIV. AN AWFUL APPARITION.
- CHAPTER XXV. "I INTEND TO WATCH YOU DIE, INCH BY INCH,  
DAY BY DAY!"
- CHAPTER XXVI. A FIENDISH ACT.
- CHAPTER XXVII. HALLORAN MEETS WITH HIS REWARD.
- CHAPTER XXVIII. "SOME TERRIBLE PRESENTIMENT IS WARNING  
ME THAT MY DARLING IS IN DANGER."
- CHAPTER XXIX. "GREAT GOD, IT IS A GHOST – THE GHOST OF  
FAYNIE!"
- CHAPTER XXX. AT THE LAST.



## CHAPTER I.

### THE LOVER'S TRYST.

It was five o'clock on a raw, gusty February afternoon. All that day and all the night before it had been snowing hard. New York lay buried beneath over two feet of its cold white mantle, and with the gathering dusk a fierce hurricane set in, proclaiming the approach of the terrible blizzard which had been predicted.

On this afternoon, which was destined to be so memorable, two young men were breasting the sleet and hail, which tore down Broadway with demoniac glee, as though amused that the cable cars were stalled fully a mile along the line, and the people were obliged to get out and walk, facing the full fury of the elements, if they hoped to arrive at their destinations that night.

It could easily be ascertained by the gray, waning light that both young men were tall, broad-shouldered and handsome of face, bearing a striking resemblance to one another.

They were seldom in each other's company, but those who saw them thus jumped naturally to the conclusion that they were twin brothers; but this was a great mistake; they were only cousins. One was Clinton Kendale, whom everybody was speaking of as "the rage of New York," the handsomest actor who had ever trod the metropolitan boards, the idol of the matinee girls, and the greatest attraction the delighted managers had gotten hold of for years.

His companion was of not much consequence, only Lester Armstrong, assistant cashier in the great dry goods house of Marsh & Co., on upper Broadway.

He had entered their employ as a cashboy; had grown to manhood in their service, and he had no further hope for the future, save to remain in his present position by strict application, proving himself worthy of a greater opportunity if the head cashier ever chose to retire.

He lived in the utmost simplicity, was frugal, dressed with unusual plainness, and put by money.

He hadn't a relative on earth, save his handsome, debonair cousin, who never sought him out save when he wanted to borrow money of him.

Clint Kendale's salary was fifty dollars per week, but that did not go far toward paying his bills at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, keeping a fast horse and giving wine suppers. In his early youth he had begun the pace he was now going. He had received a fine collegiate education, and at his majority stepped into the magnificent fortune his parents had left him. It took him just one year to run through it, then, penniless, he came from Boston to New York and sought out his poor cousin. Lester Armstrong succeeded in getting a position for Kendale with the same firm with which he was employed, but at the end of the first week Clinton Kendale threw it up with disgust, declaring that what he had gone through these six days was too much for him. He had rather die than work.

He borrowed a hundred dollars from his Cousin Lester and suddenly disappeared. When he was next heard from he blossomed out, astonishing all New York as the handsomest society actor who had ever graced the metropolitan boards, and caused a furore.

There was another great difference between the two cousins, and that was a heart; just one of them possessed it, and that one was Lester Armstrong.

On this particular afternoon Kendale had lain in wait for his cousin at the entrance of Marsh & Co.'s to waylay him when he came from the office. He must see him, he told himself, and Lester must let him have another loan.

Lester Armstrong was glad from the bottom of his true, honest heart to see him, but his brow clouded over with a troubled expression when he learned that he wanted to borrow five hundred dollars. That amount seemed small, indeed, to the lordly Kendale, but to Lester it meant months of toil and rigid self-denial.

"Come into the café, and while we lunch I will explain to you why I must have it, old fellow," said Kendale, always ready with some plausible story on his glib tongue.

"Haven't time now," declared Armstrong. "I must catch the five-twenty train from the Grand Central Depot; haven't a moment to lose. I will be back on the nine o'clock train. If you will come over to my lodging house then I'll talk with you. I cannot let you have the sum you want. I'll tell you why then, and you will readily understand my position. Ah, this is your corner. We part here. Wish me luck on the trip I am about to take, for I never had more need for your good wishes."

"You are not going off to be married, I hope?" exclaimed Kendale in the greatest of astonishment.

A light-hearted, happy, ringing laugh broke from Armstrong's mustached lips, the color rushed into his face, and his brown eyes twinkled merrily.

"There's the dearest little girl in all the world in the case," he admitted, "but I haven't time to tell you about it now. I'll see you later."

With this remark he plunged forward into the gathering gloom, leaving Clinton Kendale standing motionless gazing after him in the greatest surprise. But the cold was too intense for him to remain there but an instant; then wheeling about, he hastily struck into a side street, muttering between his teeth:

"He must let me have that five hundred dollars, or I am ruined. I must have it from him by fair means or foul, ere the light of another day dawns. I've borrowed a cool two thousand from him in four months. I wonder how much more he has laid by? I must have that five hundred, no matter what I have to resort to to get it, that's all there is about it. I am desperate to-night, and a person in my terrible fix fears neither God nor man."

Meanwhile Lester Armstrong pushed rapidly onward, scarcely heeding the bitter cold and terrible, raging storm, for his heart was in a glow.

He reached the Grand Central Depot just as the gates were closing, but managed to dash through them and swing himself aboard of the train just as it was moving out of the station.

The car was crowded; standing room only seemed to be the prospect, but the young man did not seem disturbed by it, but settled

his broad frame against the door and looked out at the sharp sleet that lashed against the window panes with something like a smile on his lips.

He had scarcely twenty miles to ride thus, but that comforting remembrance did not cause the pleasant smile to deepen about the mobile mouth.

He was thinking of the lovely young girl who had written him a note to say that she expected him at the trysting place, without fail, at seven that evening, as she had something of the greatest importance to communicate to him.

"Of course my dear little girl will not keep the appointment in such a blizzard as this. She could not have foreseen how the weather would be when she wrote the precious little note that is tucked away so carefully in my breast pocket; but, like a true knight, I must obey my little lady's commands, no matter what they may be, despite storm or tempests—ay, even though I rode through seas of blood!"

Half a score of times the engine became firmly wedged in snow-drifts in traversing as many miles. There were loud exclamations of discomfiture on all sides, but the handsome young man never heard them. He was still staring out of the window—staring without seeing—and the smile on his face had given place to an expression of deep wistfulness.

"Sometimes I wonder how I have dared to aspire to her love—the beautiful, petted daughter of a millionaire, and I only an assistant cashier on a very humble salary—ay, a salary so small that my whole year's earnings is less than the pin money she spends each month.

"If she were but poor like myself, how quickly I would make her mine. How can I, how dare I, ask her to share my lot? Will her father be amused, or terribly angry at my presumption?

"This sort of thing must stop. I cannot be meeting my darling clandestinely any longer. My honor forbids, my manhood cries out against it.

"But, oh, God! how the thought terrifies me that from the moment they find out that we have met, and are lovers, they will try to part us—tear my darling from me!"

They had met in a very ordinary manner, but to the infatuated young lover it seemed the most ideal, most romantic of meetings. The pretty little heiress had gone to the office of Marsh & Co. to settle her monthly account. The old cashier was out to lunch. His assistant, Lester Armstrong, stepped forward and attended to the matter for the pretty young girl, surely the sweetest and daintiest that he had ever beheld.

That night he dreamed of the lovely, dimpled rosebud face, framed in a mass of golden curls; a pair of bewildering violet eyes, and a gay, musical voice like a chiming of silver bells, and lo! the mischief was done. The next day the assistant cashier made the first mistake of his life over his accounts. The old cashier, Mr. Conway, looked at him grimly from over the tops of his gold-rimmed glasses.

"I hope you have not taken to playing cards nights, Mr. Armstrong," he said. "They are dangerous; avoid them. Wine is still worse, and above all, let me warn you against womankind. They are a snare and a delusion. Avoid them, one and all, as you would a pestilence."

But the warning had come to the handsome young assistant cashier too late.



## CHAPTER II.

### "YOU MUST NOT MARRY HIM—HEAVEN INTENDED YOU FOR ME."

Slowly but surely the sturdy engine struggled on through the huge snowdrifts, reaching Beechwood a little after seven, over an hour and a half behind time.

Lester Armstrong swung himself off the rear platform into fully five feet of snow, floundering helplessly about for an instant, while the train plunged onward, and at last struck the path that led up over the hills in the village beyond.

Beechwood consisted of but a few elegant homes owned and occupied by retired New Yorkers of wealth. Horace Fairfax was perhaps the most influential, as well as the wealthiest of these; his magnificent home on the brow of the farthest hill was certainly the most imposing and pretentious.

Lester Armstrong's heart gave a great bound as he came within sight of it, standing like a great castle, with its peaks and gables, and windows all blazing with light and the red glow of inward warmth against its dark background of fir trees more than a century old, and the white wilderness of snow stretching out and losing itself in the darkness beyond.

All heedless of the terrible storm raging about him, the young man paused at the arched gate and looked with sad wistfulness, as he leaned his arms on one of the stone pillars, up the serpentine path that led to the main entrance.

"What I ought to do is never to see Faynie again," he murmured, but as the bare thought rushed through his mind, his handsome face paled to the lips and his strong frame trembled. Never see Faynie again! That would mean shut out the only gleam of sunshine that had ever lighted up the gray somberness of his existence; take away from him the only dear joy that had made life worth the living for the few months. He had drifted into these clandestine meetings, not by design; chance, or fate, rather, had forced him into it.

Mr. Marsh, the senior member of the firm by whom he was employed, also resided in Beechwood. It was his whim that the keys of the private office should be brought to him each night. Thus it happened that the performance of his duties led Lester each evening past the Fairfax home.

One summer evening he espied Faynie, the object of his ardent admiration, standing in the flower garden, herself the fairest flower of all. It was beyond human nature to resist stopping still to gaze upon her. This he did, believing himself unseen, but Faynie Fairfax had beheld the tall, well-known form afar down the road, and she was not displeased at the prospect of having a delightful little chat with the handsome young cashier.

Faynie's home was not as congenial to the young girl as it might have been, for a stepmother reigned supreme there, and all of her love was lavished upon her own daughter Claire, a crippled, quiet girl of about Faynie's own age, and Faynie was left to do about as she pleased. Her father almost lived in his library among his books, and she saw little of him for days at a time.

Therefore there was no one to notice why Faynie suddenly developed such a liking for roaming in the garden at twilight; no one to notice the growing attachment that sprang up and deepened into the strongest of love between the petted heiress and the poor young cashier.

Lester Armstrong had struggled manfully against it, but it was for a higher power than man's to direct where the love of his heart should go. He made strong resolutions that the lovely maiden should never guess the existing state of affairs, but he might as well have attempted to stay the mighty waters of the ocean by his weak will. All in an unforeseen moment the words burst from his lips—the secret he had attempted to guard so carefully was out.

He had expected that beautiful Faynie Fairfax would turn from him in anger and dismay, but to his intense surprise, she burst into a flood of tears, even though she looked at him with smiling lips, April sunshine and showers commingled, confessing with all a young girl's pretty, hesitating shyness that she loved him, even as he loved her, with all her heart. Then followed half an hour of bliss

for the lovers such as the poets tell of in their verses of a glimpse of Paradise.

Although they exchanged a hundred vows of eternal affection, Lester Armstrong hesitated to speak of marriage yet. Faynie was young—only eighteen. There was plenty of time. And to tell the truth, he dared not face the possibilities of it just yet. It required a little more courage than he had been able to muster up to seek an audience with the millionaire—beard the lion in his den, as it were—and dare propose such a monstrously preposterous thing as the asking of his lovely, dainty young daughter's hand in marriage. Lester was timid. He dreaded beyond words the setting of the ball rolling which would tear his beautiful love and himself asunder. Heaven help him, he was so unutterably happy in the bewildering present.

His reverie was suddenly interrupted by seeing a little black figure hurrying down the path. Another instant, and the little breathless figure was clasped in his arms, close, close to his madly throbbing heart.

"Oh, Faynie, my love, my darling, my precious, why did you brave the fury of the tempest to keep the tryst to-night? I am here, but I did not expect you, much as I love to see you. I was praying you would not venture out. Oh, my precious, what is it?" he cried in alarm, as the fitful light of the gas lamp that hung over the arched gate fell full upon her. "Your sweet face is as white as marble, and your beautiful golden hair is wet with drifted snow, as is your cloak."

To his intense amazement and distress, she burst into the wildest of sobs and clung to him like a terrified child. All in vain he attempted to soothe her and find out what it was all about.

The first thought that flashed through his mind was that their meetings had been discovered, and that they meant to put him from Faynie, and he strained her closer to his heart, crying out that whatever it was, nothing save death should separate them.

Little by little the story came out, and the two young lovers, clasped so fondly in each other's arms, did not feel the intense cold or hear the wild moaning of the winds around them. Through her

tears Faynie told her handsome, strong young lover just what had happened. Her father had sent for her to come to his library that morning, and when she had complied with the summons, he had informed her that a friend of his had asked for her hand in marriage, and he had consented, literally settling the matter without consulting her, the one most vitally interested. She had most furiously rebelled, there had been a terrible scene, and it had ended by her father harshly bidding her to prepare for the wedding, which would take place on the morrow, adding that a father was supposed to know best what to do for his daughter's interests; that the fiat had gone forth; that she would marry the husband he had selected for her on the morrow, though all the angels above or the demons below attempted to frustrate it.

"You will save me, Lester?" cried the girl, wildly clinging to him with death-cold hands. "Oh, Lester, my love, tell me, what am I to do? He is very old, quite forty, and I am only eighteen. I abhor him quite as much as I love you, Lester. Tell me, dear, what am I to do?"

He gathered her close in his arms in an agony that words are too weak to portray.

"You shall not, you must not, marry the man your father has selected for you, my darling. You are mine, Faynie, and you must marry me," he cried, hoarsely. "Heaven intended us for each other, and for no one else. You shall be mine past the power of any one human to part us ere the morrow's light dawns, if—if you wish it so."

She clung to him, weeping hysterically, answering:

"Oh, yes, Lester, let it be so. I will marry you, and you will take me away from this place, where no one, save Claire—not even my father—loves me."

He strained her to his throbbing heart with broken words, but at that instant the shriek of an approaching train sounded upon his ears. He tore himself away from her encircling embrace.

"To do all that I have to do, I must return to the city, quickly arrange for the marriage and a suitable place to take my bride. I will return by ten o'clock. Be at this gate, my darling, with whatever change of clothing you wish to take with you. I will bring a carriage.