The Only Way

A Fascinating Romance by Alan Adair...

CHAPTER VIII.—(Continued.)

Not the strictest purist on the earth could cavil at his writing to her. As he felt—that is, from his heart—so he wrote to her.

"My Own Joyce: I am breaking my self-imposed resolution to tell you that I am leaving England for Australia on the Condor, which sails next week. I cannot live this life any longer. Do you know I come out at night just to look at the house that contains you? There is no joy for anything, and I am afraid of breaking down under the strain. I must work, sweetheart; I must do something. Life is too hard, Joyce. I do not wish to see you again. If I saw you again I should never leave you, but I must bear them worry. I know if you are well, dearest. I ought to say to you that you should try and forget me, and be happy with some other man; but I cannot. It is tremendous selfishness on my part, but it would kill me if you were to look at another man. But it is not for that I am writing, but to tell you I am leaving. Your own ALAN."

When Joyce received this letter she sat quite still for a little time. She felt as if her heart must break when she thought of Alan, she loved him like mad, and she knew that if he were gone she would be lost. Life would be hard enough in this place, but if he left it life would be intolerable. But she might not be selfish. Perhaps he was going through a crisis in this place, and if he left she would find out and be contented. Perhaps he would be happier in Australia, and so what it was her duty to do was to walk the path of duty, and be content for them. But she could not. Alan was upset, he was not himself, he was down on his luck, she would do anything for him, and then he would be happy. If she could only be clear how to act! But she could not be clear.

She did not come of her prayer. It was not a case where to do, but it was a thing she must do.

Veronica was sitting in her room, the boy was playing in her lap. Never was she more a nurse for him, and she had a pretty home and all comfort. She looked at him, happed them in the old days when she used out a miserable existence by teaching. Then there was something to live for; now she felt nothing.

She heard a tap at the door, and made big trouble. Hutchinson had been a frequent visitor lately, since she had been prosperous. His visit always off her position and shabby old boots, made the house feeling a clutch in her heart on the spot. But she did mind the way he spoke of Alan. He prepared her of for hatred when she heard his knock. He came in, looking more blustered and excited than ever. Lately he had drank very heavily. Today he was sober enough, but he looked more angry than he had done of late.

"So that fellow thinks he is going to elude me," he said as he came into the room; "but he makes a mistake."

Veronica turned pale. She knew he was speaking of Alan, and that he was threatening him.

"What do you mean?" she asked boldly.

"Do you mean to say that you don't know that that precious thousand of yours means to sail in the Condor on Friday? I dare say he wants to elude you, and to go off with that other woman."

"Alan would not do that," said Veronica, quickly. "However much he and she suffer, they will do nothing wrong."

"I dare say he is a saint!" sneered Hutchinson. "Well, he will have a chance of going to heaven quickly, for I've sworn to do for him, and this is my last chance."

Veronica listened. Hutchinson had spoken like this before, and it had come to nothing; still, it was possible that he might be desperate now. He looked it, and if he meant mischief to Alan she must warn him. Not a hair of Alan's dear head should fall by this man's hand. Still, she knew that she must not let Hutchinson see the trap, answered;

"Yes."

"Then it's all right," he said, and went out.

Veronica sprang up from her chair the instant the hall door clanged after him. She knew he meant mischief to Alan. She kissed her boy many, many times before giving him in charge of his nurse. She was always loth to let him out of her sight, but today she almost felt as if she would never look upon him again. At the same time she felt strangely happy, for it seemed as if at last she were able to do something for Alan.

Alan had taken his seat in the train without thinking much of leaving England. It had ceased to be home to him; he thought he might be happier when he was removed from the temptation of seeing Joyce, and when he might now and again hear from her. And as he sat in the corner of his carriage he thought he saw a familiar figure pass. It was Hutchinson's clouch, but he did not think much about it. He pulled his cap over his eyes, and pretended to go to sleep; but although he kept his eyes shut no sleep came to him. Southampton, it seemed to him, was soon reached. He got out of the train and began collecting his belongings. He was turning to go when suddenly he heard the sound of a report and then a woman's cry. In an instant all was commotion. A woman had fallen close beside him—a dark-haired, slight woman. He rushed forward to help her up, quite unconscious then that the shot that had been fired was meant for him, and that the woman had intercepted it. He had a dim idea, too, that he saw Hutchinson slipping away somewhere, but he, as well as every one else, was occupied by the fallen woman.

His were the arms that helped her up, and his were the eyes that took in her face. "My God! the child!" And when they said "Do you know her?" he answered "Yes and the shot has killed her was meant for me."

He carried her to a room near, and when he laid her down she opened the eyes and smiled. "I am so happy," she said softly. "Alan, I never ought to feel your arms around me again."

"Veronica," he said remorsefully, "I would gladly have given my life if this had not happened."

"I know it, she said. "But think of me for one moment. Alan, you see I was so happy. Do I not deserve to be forgiven? Perhaps I may see you sometimes. Alan, you have made me so happy. It was only Alan. The one man."

"Yes, Alan." "Kiss me, Alan, for I am dying."

And with the tears in his eyes he kissed her. "Joyce, Alan, Alan," she gasped, and then she was gone. Some one must go to tell her, he thought, but he could not leave the room. He was sitting there when the door opened, and a woman came in. He recognized her at once, she was Alan's wife. He rose to go, but she motioned him back. He was sitting at the foot of the bed, and she came and knelt down by the side of it. He could see her face, and it was ghastly. Presently she raised herself and looked at him. "Is she dead?" she asked. "Yes, I answered. "Poor Veronica!"

COFFIN TORPEDOES.

Southern Invention Intended to Outwit Body Snatchers.

[illegible]

Dorothy Ingledew's Revenge.

The harvest moon climbed slowly up the cloudless sky, shining white and clear on the sleeping town at Tunbridge Wells. The silence of night was on the sleeping town. Two women, closely cloaked, crept stealthily along, the elder remonstrating.

"It's a great risk you run, mistress," she whispered.

"If you fear to come with me, Betty, I go alone."

"Nay, madam, my fears are not for myself. I know my place better than to leave my mistress alone to meet wild Sir Harry Fortescue."

Meanwhile pacing slowly backwards and forwards in the shadow cast by high banks half hidden by brambles, a form waited their approach. As the women came into sight he advanced to meet them.

"It is late five minutes by the clock since I came, madam, yet I dare swear that the moments have been leaden footed as so many hours. The poor chaise waits for me in yonder hollow, and we have many miles to go before dawn."

"The chaise can wait," she said. "I seek a word with you first, sir."

"A thousand, if you will, sweetheart!" He caught at her hand as he spoke.

"Sir!"

"Nay, I will not say that, if you prefer it."

The moonlight fell full on the group, and Dorothy looked upon him with a shudder. He was a handsome man, her brother, and she knew that he was unscrupulous. He was a gamester, and he was in debt to the Jews. He was a man who would do anything for money, and he was her brother. Yet she was afraid of him. Her face was pale with anger, save where a red line showed where her blow had fallen.

"Had a man struck that blow he would not have seen tomorrow's sun! But a woman is privileged to some extent. I will fence with you, madam, since you insist, and when you are disarmed I will take my revenge in kisses."

The moon flung their shadows on the ground in grotesque confusion, and glittered on the blades of the foils as they thrust and parried. She fenced with care and skill that come of long practice.

At first the man carelessly parried her thrusts, laughing and jesting at the strange fate which led him, a noted duellist, to cross swords with a woman. But by degrees the jest and laugh died on his lips, and his gaze remained fixed on something over Dorothy's shoulder. It may have been fancy, or the flicker of the moonlight on his adversary's unlovered hair, but he thought the face of Winifred looked over her sister's shoulder.

He began to falter, and a lunge Dorothy made remained unparried.

"Winifred," he cried, and as the words left his lips Dorothy felt a pang at her heart. He stumbled, then fell at her feet. For a moment she stood aghast at the fulfillment of her vow, then flinging away the foil she knelt at his side.

His eyes opened and as they fell upon Dorothy the mocking smile came back again to the white lips. "There was no wound but my pride," he gasped. "Forgive me, Winifred."

His head fell back, and Sir Harry Fortescue was dead.

Dorothy flung herself on the body and kissed the lips, the eyes, and again the lips. "Winifred, I did it for your sake!"

"Forgive me, Dorothy!" the girl sobbed.

Dorothy lifted her head and looked at her sister. "Do you know what we have done? We have killed a man, and I am a murderer. Madam, I know no more of Winifred than you do. Sister, go home, I pray, and leave me to my fate."

"Madam, I will not leave you!" she cried.

"He wronged Winifred with my consent," she said. "Go, I command you!"

Dorothy was a woman who was used to be obeyed, and Winifred, who had tired of and deserted her, knew she had no right to disobey her. Dorothy without considering, followed her sister home, and the girl, who had married a wife, and little dreaming that she had sent her husband to his death, was overwhelmed with remorse.

"I stole nothing. Your brother, if he is my husband, owes me a debt which I am glad to pay. He lost and I won, fairly in the game." He lost and I won, fairly in the game." He lost and I won, fair play, Dorothy."

"He was a boy. You took advantage of his youth." Dorothy said, with a scornful laugh. "Do you think when she comes to know what you have done she will be proud of you? Do you think she will be proud of the man who has killed her brother?"

"I will risk it," said Winifred, and she went to her husband and told him the story. He was a man of honor, and he knew that he must be true to his word. He was a man of honor, and he knew that he must be true to his word. He was a man of honor, and he knew that he must be true to his word