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BY

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CHAPTER I

As the noise of the descending elevator died away in a dim, mechanical sigh, Hugh Farragut opened the door of his apartment. Automatically the hallway flooded with light.

'Wait,' he directed his companion.

He advanced, then nodded for her to follow.

'Dramatic,' she commented. She slipped out of her shimmery opera cloak and subsided gratefully into an old-fashioned easy-chair. 'What do you use for air in here?'

'Sorry.' He opened a window, standing aside from it. The hum of the Fifties, choked with New York's after-theatre traffic, sounded faint and far below. She noticed that he carefully drew the curtains. Dorothy James was noticing much on this, her first visit to the place. 'Highball?'

'No. Fizzy water, please.'

'Sandwich? If I can find the makings?'

'That would help some, after your flat refusal to feed me at a restaurant.'

'There are disadvantages about restaurants.'

'Or dangers?'

'Don't believe all you hear,' he advised brusquely.

'If I believed all I hear, I shouldn't be here,' she smiled. 'I make my own judgments about people,

darling. You don't look a bit like the Terror of the Lawless tonight.'

'If you pin tabloid labels on me, I'll lock the icebox. Ham or Swiss?'

'Swiss, I think. Lots of mustard. Mind if I snoop around while you're making it?'

He left the door open so that he could see her as he cut and spread. With a tug at his heart he thought how her youth and gaiety and loveliness irradiated the careless austerity of his quarters; of how they might irradiate the careful austerity of his life.

Taking the over-thick sandwich, the girl bit into it with the unaffected appreciativeness of health and vigor.

'Beer,' she commented, observing the bottle which he had brought out for himself. 'Is that the extent of your late-hour dissipation?'

'Definitely.'

'Bright young idea of mine, having you bring me up here,' she proceeded. 'Were you surprised when I suggested it?'

'A little.'

'Shocked?'

'Less.'

'This is the year of grace and enlightenment, Nineteen Hundred and Forty,' she observed. 'My generation is insulated against shock. Yours —— How old are you, Hugh?'

'Thirty-six.'

'No more than that? Think of all the trouble you've made already. Is it fun, being special prosecutor and

racket-buster and having your name in headlines seven days a week?'

'Not always.'

'When you say that you look grim enough to be fifty. Other times you act like twenty. You must be a double personality, Hugh.'

'Not at all. I've got a single-track mind. It's been exclusively concerned with trying to marry you since first I set eyes on you.'

'That's only six weeks ago. I'll admit we've covered a good deal of ground in that time.'

'More than I ever hope to get back. Or want to.'

'Of course I've always known a lot about you. You knew nothing about me. That gives you an unfair advantage.'

'Gives *me?* I should think ——'

'Think harder,' she advised. 'Having no background of knowledge, you can judge me by what I seem to you.'

'An unsafe basis,' he returned gravely. 'Nobody could be quite what you seem to me. Not even you.'

'That's silly. Or, is it? Anyway I have to guard myself from being dazzled by your glittering personali—— Hugh! Please give me back my sandwich.'

'Not unless you moderate your language.'

'No,' she protested, 'I'm being serious. You're partly a newspaper figment to me. That can't be helped. How am I to see you as a person, as a man; how am I to judge how you affect me as individual when my vision is distorted by the glamour of your career?'

'There's darn little glamour and a lot of dull, hard work about what you call my career.'

The telephone buzzed. With an exclamation of annoyance, he turned to it. His expression changed, became tense, rigorous, concentrated. Another man — she thought — a man I don't know. Which man should I be marrying if I do marry him?

'No,' he snapped. 'Not an inch of concession. Why should we?... Help? I'm not the one that needs help.... Are you threatening me?... That's final.'

'What was that?' she asked curiously.

'Just a man who thinks he's too big to go to jail,' he said with impatience. 'We were talking about more important things.'

'Yes. Ourselves. And now you look about twenty again. How did you ever land in this work, anyway?'

'Special racket prosecutor? I expect it goes back to my playing football opposite a big Percheron from Cornell, thirty pounds heavier than I.'

She estimated his chunky, hard trimness. 'You don't look like a line-man.'

'I wasn't. They put me in to be slaughtered.'

'Were you?'

'Pretty nearly. But they didn't make much money around my end while I lasted,' he chuckled.

'How does that connect up with this job of yours?'

'The big Cornell Percheron's uncle is now Governor of New York. My ex-enemy of the gridiron recommended me when they were looking for some lawyer not too easily sidetracked.'

'Or scared,' she supplied. 'I don't suppose they will

make much around your end.' She paused. 'While you last,' she supplemented. 'How long are you likely to last, Hugh?'

'Until the job is finished, I hope.'

'Hasn't your life been threatened?'

'Every public man is threatened,' he returned impatiently. 'It means nothing.'

'Does it mean nothing to be shot at? To find bombs planted in your car?'

'Bogy-tales. You mustn't believe all you hear, Dorrie.'

The telephone sounded again. This time the voice came through and clacked in the air, a woman's voice, dehumanized by the transformation of the mechanism, but still instinct with mortal terror.

'Is it you, Mr. Farragut? . . . Oh, thank God! It's our boy; our baby. . . . Yes. The letter came tonight. . . . No; I don't know how it came. . . . Oh, Mr. Farragut, what shall I *do?* . . . I daren't go out and I daren't stay . . . No. My husband hasn't come home. . . . Isn't he at your office?' (It was almost a shriek now. Dorothy James fought an instinct to close her ears against it.)

The prosecutor spoke a few quiet, supporting words. His face had darkened to a sort of savagery. He called a number.

'Tell him he's got to come. . . . I don't care if he's asleep, sick, or dying. . . . Is that you, Kirkbride? . . . Yes; it's the Girtners. . . . What's that? You can't do anything? Are you the head of the department or aren't you? . . . Get this, Kirkbride; if anything hap-

pens to that family, you'll be a special witness before me tomorrow morning.... That's better.... Good night.'

'Was that Chief Kirkbride?' asked Dorothy, marvelling.

'He's Chief Kirkbride now. He may not be long.'

'It's rather terrifying to have such power,' she said, quite low. 'And dangerous.' She forced herself to a lighter tone. 'Do you know why I wanted to come here tonight, Hugh?'

'To give me opportunity for advancing my forceful and convincing arguments why you should marry me. Now if, the Court pleases ——'

'Out of order. I came to see how you live. To find out if there wasn't perhaps *something* about you not to like.'

'There's my looks,' said he helpfully.

'They're not beautiful, certainly; and they can be downright forbidding at times. But somehow I like 'em.'

'Then you're lost,' he asserted with conviction. 'Why try to dig up points against me?'

'To keep myself from marrying you, naturally.'

'Don't you want to marry me, Dorrie?'

'Terribly. But I'm afraid.'

'That you wouldn't be happy with me?'

'That I'd be too happy. That I'd become so wrapped up in our life together that if anything happened I shouldn't know how to live without you, having lived with you.' All lightness had passed from her bearing. There was a hint of suppressed emotion in the tight, sensitive lips.

'What should happen?' he asked gravely.

'I don't know. I've heard so much of the risks you run. Don't you ever consider that, yourself?'

'Not specially. It's all in the game. Who's been talking now?'

'Dolly Simms. You remember her?'

'Of course. She was at the house party where I first saw you.'

'Dolly's a pretty level-headed sort. And she's fond of me.'

'How could she help but be!'

'And she thinks you're grand. But — shall I tell you what she said to me? You won't like it.'

'My skin's been toughened by experience.'

'She asked me if I wasn't becoming too much interested in you, and when I said, "What do you mean, too much?" she said, "Old Hugh's a swell sort, but how would you like to be the Widow Farragut?"'

'That's all rot,' he retorted disgustedly.

'Dolly says you haven't a year to live if you keep on as you're going now. And she isn't the only one.'

'Bogy-tales,' he repeated. 'I wish people would keep their fool mouths shut.'

'Isn't it true that your clues are leading up to bigger and more dangerous game, all the time?'

'Bigger, yes. It's a foul tangle, Dorrie. I'm not sure yet how far and high some of them may reach. You seem to know a lot about all this for a girl of twenty-three.'

'Everybody talks politics, these days. I've always liked to listen. More than ever now that I happen to

be interested in the most talked-about individual,' she concluded with a smile.

'But, Dorrie, darling, all this talk of danger is so exaggerated.'

Rising, she stood over him and looked down with an enigmatic smile. 'Hugh, if I say I'll marry you, will you have your life insured?'

'It is insured.'

'Will you have it insured for more?'

His scrutiny was puzzled, incredulous. 'Going mercenary on me, Dorrie?'

'It looks that way, doesn't it? For a lot more,' she pursued. 'For — for a hundred thousand dollars more.'

'If you want me to.'

'I don't.'

'Then why ——'

'You aren't a bit a good liar, Hugh, darling. You know that no company would so much as look at you as a risk. Don't you?'

He grinned in rueful confession.

'Do insurance companies believe in bogy-tales?'

'Just what are you driving at, Dorrie?'

'I want you to give up this dreadful work.' She slipped to the floor in a half-kneeling, half-sitting posture, and gripped both his hands in her strong, browned fingers. 'Look at me, Hugh. Do you know what would be the worst betrayal I'd have to fear from you?'

'Do you trust me as little as that?' he asked sorrowfully.

'The worst betrayal,' she repeated sombrely. 'It would be for you to take my life into your hands, and then leave me to live it out alone. I'm asking you to live, Hugh,' she said passionately. 'For me. With me. Is it too much to ask? Aren't I worth it to you?'

More to himself than to her he muttered, 'I was afraid that was coming.'

'Will you?' she insisted.

'Dorrie, I can't.'

She made a hopeless, desperate little gesture. 'Oh!'

'My problem isn't finished. Ask me a year from now.'

'A year from now! And you expect to be alive a year from now?' she retorted bitterly.

'With you to live for? Darling, I'm ordering a suit of chain armor from my tailor tomorrow.'

'Can't *anything* make you serious?'

'Yes. You can. When will you marry me?'

'And live in fear? Like that dreadful voice on the telephone?'

Now he was serious. 'I'm not denying there's some risk, though you are making it out worse than it is. Suppose it were war and I were going to the front.'

'It isn't the same. It isn't fair.'

'Yes; it's the same. It's a war. You're asking me to desert.'

'It's a crusade. Father says that a crusader is only an adventurous criminal gone pious.'

'Clever but hardly just. However, I'm not thinking of myself as a crusader. Only as doing a job that I can finish better than the next fellow.'

'You've been at it for nearly four years. Let someone else carry on.'

'No one else can.'

'I wonder,' said she in discouraged accents, 'whether people who have made a big success always come to consider themselves indispensable.'

'Oh, I know what they say about me,' he returned with unaffected good humor. 'That publicity has gone to my head; that I'm eaten up with political ambition; that my vanity has set me to running amuck. But who are the men that say it?'

Her smile was constrained, rueful. 'My father, for one.'

'Yet he's an idealist, too, in his way.'

'Of course he is!' she cried warmly. 'I'm so glad you recognize that, Hugh. So many people don't. So many who don't understand him pretend to think ——' She checked herself sharply. 'Yes; you're both idealists, though not exactly the same type,' she concluded.

'Our work is so different,' said he comfortably. 'Still, I dare say we wouldn't differ much on essentials.'

'He's more of an optimist than you are, though.'

'Is he? How's that?'

'He knows that the world is getting better little by little.'

'Do you believe that, Dorrie?'

'Yes; I do,' she averred stoutly.

'You mean that you try to. Even in the face of the waste that Europe has become, since the slaughter began in 1938? Even in the face of what has happened to Asia?'

'We—ell, I was thinking more of our part of the world. This country.'

'You think that we get better just by sitting by complacently and telling ourselves that everything is perfectly lovely?'

'Why, Hugh! You sound so bitter. It's that awful work of yours that makes you like that.'

'Perhaps. I try not to be bitter. Or frightened. It's hard sometimes.'

'I can't imagine you frightened.'

He pondered that. 'Believe in prophets, Dorrie?'

'Not of the political kind. I've heard too many.'

'This one's different.'

'Where do you find him?'

'On the radio.' He glanced at the clock. 'He'll be on soon.'

'Prophets are either fakes or apostles of gloom,' she complained. 'Who is this one?'

'Nobody knows who he is or who pays for the time on the Call to the Creeds.'

'Oh, that! I've heard of it. It's old, isn't it?'

'As old as Nineteen Thirty-Six. And as true today, four years after, as it was then. Truer. Four times a year it's repeated, at midnight. How many people listen in on it, I wonder. Not so many, perhaps. But I'd be pretty sure that it's an audience any man would be glad to have. Glad and proud.'

For the sake of saying something she remarked:

'Nineteen Thirty-Six. That seems so long ago. I was going to college dances then.'

'So were most of us, without regard to age. Or might

as well have been. Our outlook was sweetly collegiate. Everything was lovely. The halcyon birds were chirping their sweet, commercial lay of a permanent prosperity. Franklin D. Roosevelt was still President of the United States and we had all those alphabetical agencies, pouring out treasure to help the underprivileged and the casualties of competitive capitalism. Then the New Deal was bringing a new abundance, a new opportunity, a new idealism to the hopeful people of the nation, always ready to believe in anything if only it were new and idealistic and did not involve too much trouble on their part.... Darling, I'm drifting into a stump speech. Listen to a better man.'

He switched on the radio. A deep, powerful, and strangely quiet voice came to them from out the void.

'Remember, he is speaking four years ago,' said Hugh, very low.

They came in on the message in the middle of a sentence.

CHAPTER II

'... SERENE self-satisfaction of those too enclosed within their own immediate interests to see. Portents are stirring about us. With what do we charge our minds? We listen to Rudy Vallee on the air. We watch Shirley Temple and Clark Gable on the screen. We debate profoundly whether Joe Di Maggio is a greater ball-player than Babe Ruth ever was.

'Is something of importance rudely thrust upon our notice? Then we deplore the unrest in the industrial regions, but tell ourselves that it will all shake down and work out. While prosperity warms us, there are still millions who are cold and jobless and frightened. Do we give thought to that? No. We are too busy with other matters. We play bridge, golf, badminton. We dance to degenerate music. For mental exercise we sweat our brains over million-dollar picture puzzles.

'True, we go to church respectably, some of us. It is to you respectable church-goers that I specially address this. How much heed do you pay to what the church stands for, or to what the wiser priests and pastors and rabbis warn? Our inner convictions are of the sanctity of the dollar, the creed of success. We have forgotten God and his gentle commands. Mercy and love, kindliness and sympathy and simple decency; these are the eternal ways of God and we turn from them. We replace God with self.

'Not that we are consciously and deliberately such great sinners. The lives we lead are too careless and petty for that. But ours is the sin of supinely tolerating inhuman ruthlessness, dishonesty, corruption, and godlessness in the characters of our leaders, industrial, political, and proletarian, asking only that we be let alone comfortably to practise in our own small sphere our own ruthlessness and petty dishonesty.

'Thus the fabric of our national character disintegrates. Our schools are deficient in any ethical instruction. We teach bookkeeping, but make no effort to inculcate fundamental honesty, honor, loyalty, principles. We make our children competent, practical — and unmoral. We are becoming a nation of moral defectives in a world which, plunging toward chaos, may yet stretch vain hands to us as its last hope.

'I look to Europe, beating its plowshares into swords, frantically preparing its own suicide, and I see, through the murk of the future, a smouldering shambles, wolf-haunted, peopled sparsely by purposeless, hopeless wraiths of humankind.'

The two listeners drew closer together. 'How could he know! How could he know!' whispered Dorrie, awed by the vision which the years had so hideously confirmed. The solemn voice continued:

'I look to Asia and see it liquidating, in unimagined slaughter, its teeming surplus of misery. Their sins, their follies have been no greater than ours.

'For us, too, there will be a price to pay, perhaps not less hideous. True, we may segregate ourselves

for a time from the foreign holocaust. But who shall save us, blind that we are, from our own doom?

'Too comfortable in our wellbeing, too smug in our apparent superiority to consider anything beyond our assumed impregnability and the pleasant promise of our future estate, we do not see that internal forces are creeping up on us invisibly, like throttling hands in the dark. An unseen, secret coil of crime and plot and plunder is enmeshing us like a mighty serpent, and we, by our cowardice, our torpor, our laxity, our evil tolerance of evil, contribute to its power.

'Many of us have fearfully envisaged the possibility of war to come; a cruel class war, capital against labor, the old standards and beliefs against the new. But this which I call you to face is profoundly different, profoundly more dreadful and feral; the assault of systematized criminal power against law and order and all human decency. Already the mighty and monstrous criminal minds control the daily life of many of our cities, political and commercial. As yet the system has not fully coalesced. But it is only a question of time when some master-mind, some terrible dictator of the crime-world, will gather the threads into his control.'

Hugh Farragut's grip was harsh upon the wrist of the girl he loved. Half to her, half to himself he said, 'I've been watching it come.'

There was a click. Silence succeeded the solemn, sad voice. Dorrie had shut off the current. She was pale.

'Do you believe all that, Hugh?'

He said again: 'I've been watching it come true. Through the years.'

'But how can you believe? You don't even know who he is. He may be some cheap sensationalist who ——'

'Was he right about Europe?'

'Terribly right. But ——'

'And Asia?'

'Yes. And yet ——'

'Did he sound like a cheap sensationalist?'

'No. No; he didn't. One couldn't help feeling his fervor,' she admitted. 'But, Hugh; it can't be true about us. Not this country. It can't be as he says.'

'I hope to God it can't. Sometimes I think it can't.'

'I wish I hadn't listened.' She shuddered. 'Why did you let me? Let's talk about you; I don't want to think of gloom and destruction.' Yet, inevitably, she merged the two topics. 'If it is true, if it's only partly as bad as he says, what can you do? What could any one man do?'

'His own job.'

'But you've done yours, darling,' she insisted. 'You can't keep on forever.'

'I can't let up. Not now.'

'Why not? What would happen if you did?' said she persuasively.

'For one thing, and the first, the combinations of vice and crime that are on the run now in New York would close ranks, solidify, and fasten their grip again on the city, so that it would have to be done all over again. People who have trusted and supported and

fought under me would feel that I had betrayed them. Others without my protection would be persecuted in ways that you can't even imagine. I could name a dozen men and women whose lives wouldn't be worth anything the day after my resignation was announced.'

'And yours?' she whispered.

'Oh, safe! Perfectly safe. Safe as the Rock of Gilbraltar. If I resigned,' he replied contemptuously.

'Isn't your life worth more than theirs?'

'That's sophistry.' His keen face deepened with contemplation of her, as if he were trying to read through the lines of youth and beauty to the essential character beneath. It was an almost impersonal reckoning.

She stirred uneasily. 'You've never looked at me like that before,' she murmured.

He seemed to have made up his mind. 'I couldn't be so deeply in love with you if I didn't trust you,' he told her. 'You want to know why I can't resign, even to marry you. That's your right. What I'm going to show you only one other person in the world has seen. He's the man who would take over my staff and do as best he could to carry on if, for any reason, I should quit.'

He led her to an inner room where stood a formidable safe. 'Two of the best hands in the country have had a crack at that,' he remarked. 'Strong political powers, including a member of the Cabinet in Washington, are now hard at work trying to get them pardoned out of state's prison. They won't succeed while I'm in office.' Carefully he spun the wheel, drew

open the massive door, and lifted out a scroll, which he spread upon the table. To the girl's widening, wondering eyes it suggested a vastly complicated web, made up of colored filaments. Here and there were set names, numbers, legends.

'What is it?'

'The jungle. And those are the trails.'

'And you're the hunter.'

'It's unclean hunting. Like tracking foul, underearth creatures, through lightless caves. See this blue tracery? That's the drug ring. The dope peddlers. Morphine, heroin, cocoaine. The yellow line is commercialized prostitution. It's intertwined with the blue in places, because drugs help supply the trade in girls. Green is for the gambling combine: all the games are crooked. Black is the labor racket. It's highly specialized: fish, building, poultry, restaurant, laundry. Then here are the small threads in purple that hook up with all the rest: they're the intimidators; the organizers of gangs for hire to bullying corporations or laborer criminals alike; traders in illegal weapons; handlers of stink-bombs and the more deadly "pineapples."'

'There are tiny red dots everywhere.'

'They are murders. Quite incidental.'

She shuddered. 'Hugh, it's awful. I can't bear to think of you involved in it.' She stared at the grisly document. 'I see a lot of names in circles, with numbers.'

'Convictions. Here's Pasiano, the vice-czar. He got fifty years. We sent Hocks Lannigan, of the Fulton

Market gang, up for twenty. Ten years for income tax is the best we could do for Pim Schwartzfelder of ——' The buzzing telephone interrupted him.

With instinctive shrinking she glanced toward the other room to which he had gone. What brutal message of dread or threat was coming over the wire now? He shut the door, but through it she could presently hear his voice, sharpened with distress.

'... Where were our men?... That's no excuse.... His wife, too? Good God!... Yes. Well, if they were warned.... Hands off, for the police. This is our affair now.'

He was white when he came back through the door. Something told her it would be better to ask no questions. She touched his hand as he leaned over the chart, and he set his lips to her fingers before he spoke again.

'If you could follow all the convolutions of those threads you would know more about crime than any person in New York.'

'It makes me feel small,' she whispered. 'And terrified. And you are caught in that network.'

'We're cutting our way through fast. Do you see that vacant spot in the centre, on which all the lines converge?'

'Rather like the South Pole on the map. What does the big Z stand for?'

'Everything that is worst and most destructive in the city. The focus of political corruption and criminal power. Sometimes I have believed that Z was three men, a trinity of the underworld. Lately I've become convinced that he is a single individual, very artfully

inconspicuous. As yet I haven't found out much about his personality. He is the final refuge of the underworld; the Big Fixer, the agency that apportions the spoils, handles protection, bribes juries, blackmails judges, and buys pardons. Imagine all those threads to be streams of corruption; each one of them pours its percentage of tribute into his pockets. His influence stretches up into the very highest nerve centres of government, state and national. When that problem' — he struck the chart lightly with the flat of his hand — 'is reduced to its elements, he'll appear as the final beneficiary of the processes that make drug addicts of school children and send innocent girls to the slavery of the brothels. Oh, very likely he's a kindly, generous, clean-living family man in private life,' he went on with a bitter smile. 'In fact, I've heard that he is. Probably he has never touched a drug or mistreated a woman in his life. But if there's any such thing as eternal justice, he'll live to see his sons, if he's got any, corrupted by dope and his daughters kidnapped and ruined and made into women of sale, and himself —— He stopped, arrested by her strained face. 'I'm sorry, Dorrie,' said he with an effort. 'I didn't mean to make a jury speech to you. And I try to keep personal feeling out of this work of mine. But with that sinister figure, I can't. He's balked me too often by his secret methods. Before it's over, either I'll get him or he'll get me.'

'I wish, you wouldn't, Hugh,' said she in an appalled voice. 'Something dreadful is going to come of this, if you keep on. I know it. I feel it.'

'You still want me to quit?'

'Oh, if only you would!'

'Now I'm going to be the lawyer and present my own case. You've got a level head, Dorrie, and, I think, a fair mind.'

She shook the level head. 'Don't bank too much on the fair mind where your safety is involved.'

'Anyway, here's my argument. Gilroy James is an able surgeon, isn't he? One of the ablest.'

'Yes.'

'I've heard that there are radical and desperate operations that he alone dares undertake.'

'There's one, at least, that he invented.'

'Suppose, in the middle of such an operation he cut himself and some virulent and possibly deadly pus got into the cut. Would he leave the patient to die while he attended to his own wound, or would he take the risk and finish?'

'It isn't a parallel,' she protested.

'It is. Answer me.'

'I suppose he'd finish.'

'You know he would. At whatever risk to himself. Well, the city is my patient. For the sake of the argument we'll admit a certain risk in what I'm trying to do for it.' His regard held her reluctant gaze. 'Now, what would your father think of you if you tried to hold him back when it was a question of life or death ——'

'*Who?*' she interrupted.

'We're talking of Gilroy James,' said he impatiently.

'Gilroy James isn't my father.'

It was his turn to be astonished. 'He isn't? Why, he motored you to the house party and I heard you call him Pop when you kissed him good-bye. And you've been living in his house.'

'Visiting. That's another story.' She laughed, not quite easily. 'He's my second cousin and godfather. I've always called him Pop.'

He was too engrossed in pursuing his argument to take this up. 'It doesn't matter for the moment. The point is the same. Would you feel the same respect for Gilroy James if he set his own safety before that of his patient?'

'No,' she admitted.

'Respect is an old-fashioned idea, I know,' he went on gently. 'But if I know you as I think I do, you and I couldn't quite do without it between us. It would be no good, would it, Dorrie?'

'No; it would be no good,' she agreed. She peered down at the document. The threads, red, green, blue, yellow, purple, seemed to writhe before her like tentacles. 'One can get over fear, I suppose. Or learn to live with it.' She raised her face and spoke with a clear steadiness. 'All right, Hugh, you win. I'll go into the web with you.'

'You? Into *that?*' He thrust aside the paper so strongly that it wavered to the floor. 'Don't be a fool, Dorrie!'

'Do you expect to keep me outside your life?'

'Yes. That part of it.'

'A half-marriage? Do you want me for a half-wife? Is that what you think of me? I'd feel like a mistress.'

Restoring the scroll to the table he leaned over it, scrutinizing it as if it held for him a portent not before descried there. 'You!' he muttered. 'In that tangle! I never thought of it so.'

'I heard you over the telephone. You said: "And his wife, too?" I don't know what it meant. But was she a half-wife? It didn't sound so.'

'Oh, my God!' he groaned.

'What is it, Hugh? Darling!'

'That message — told me — one of my undercover men — hacked and beaten to death — in his own home — and — and his wife with him. They'd been married only a month.'

The girl paled. But she spoke without a tremor. 'Why not? Wasn't it better so? If they loved each other.'

Through rigid lips he said: 'It might happen to my wife. To you.'

She answered him steadfastly; 'Why not? Wouldn't it be better so? Since I love you.'

Face and voice hardened to support what he had to say. 'You were right. You mustn't marry me.'

'Hugh! Are you going to turn coward?'

'Yes. For you. We'll have to wait.'

'Until you come home from the wars?' she taunted. 'When will that be?'

'God knows. Years, perhaps.'

With a peculiar intonation she asked, 'And you expect me to wait?'

'I can't face the thought of you in constant danger, through me. You don't know what I'm up against.'

'No?'

To his amazement a soft warmth of laughter sounded in his ears. She was suddenly possessed of a wild gaiety and exaltation. 'Darling, what time is it?'

'I don't know,' he answered vaguely. 'It must be after midnight.... Good Lord! It's nearly two.'

'Two o'clock and me an unprotected maiden alone in a man's apartment. And now he says he won't marry me.'

'Dorrie!'

'Have you ever been blackmailed, Mr. Hugh Farragut?'

'Not very successfully.' His tensity began to relax. Impossible to face that radiant and excited beauty of hers and maintain the high, tragic note. 'Are you thinking of trying it?'

'I am. Unless you abase yourself properly and take it all back, and play the part of an honorable and remorseful gent——'

'Well?' he prompted as she paused for effect. In spite of himself, he was smiling down into the smiling face so close beneath his.

'—— I won't go home till morning, till daylight doth appear.'

'And then?'

'I'll call up my father and tell him all about it.'

'I see.' The infection of her levity had captured him. 'And he'll come, armed with righteous wrath.'

'And a shotgun. Don't forget the shotgun.'

'And a preacher. Don't forget the preacher.'

'And so they were married and lived happily ever

after.' Her arms were around him now; her mouth pressed to his. 'Oh, Hugh, darling! I'm not afraid any more. If the danger is for both of us, I can face it. So can you.'

He drew a deep breath. 'Yes,' he yielded. 'So can I. It's all wrong. It's weak and indefensible in me, but I can't stand out against you. Perhaps someone else can, though,' he added, with a return to his former grimness. 'If that father of yours has good sense, he'll bring his shotgun, not to forward our marriage but to prevent it.'

'Oh, no; he won't,' she contradicted. 'You don't know my Dad.'

'True enough. But, Dorrie, you certainly let me believe that you were Gilroy James's daughter.'

'That shows how little you really know about me after these long six weeks,' she returned gaily. 'Though we haven't been together more than half a dozen times in all, have we? Aren't you afraid to take such a risk, Hugh?'

'The first time convinced me.'

Her chuckle was sheer happiness. 'And you're not a terribly inquisitive person.'

'No? Some of the local politicos would hardly agree with you.'

'You didn't ask, and I didn't volunteer. Shall I tell you why I cheated a little? It was Dad's idea.'

He was amused. 'Do you always do as your father says?'

'Always. And he always does as I say. Family harmony, one hundred per cent.'

'But why should he want to be kept in the background?' Puzzled, Hugh began to feel uneasy.

'We — ell, believe it or not, Dad has quite unparental respect for my opinions on people. As a political philosopher, he's interested in your career, though he's suspicious of young reformers, on principle. But you won't mind that, when you meet and talk with him. You'll love him. Everybody does. Anyway, he suggested, when he knew that I was going to meet you, that if you knew who I was you might shut up like a clam and not talk politics at all, and that I'd miss something, because he thought your political talk would be interesting. It has been... Darling, I've simply got to go home.'

His brows drew down, heavy with suspicion. 'Wait a minute. Who is this political philosopher father of yours?'

'Harold James.'

'Harold James? Happy Harold James, of the Old Thirteenth?' He had turned away from her and was staring at the chart.

'Yes. Happy James. Isn't it a nice nickname! They call him that because he brings happiness to so many people.'

'I might have known,' said he thickly. 'You — Happy James's daughter! And you hid it from me.'

'Hugh! What is it? Why do you speak to me that way?' she asked piteously.

He spread his two hands across the scroll.

'Z is Happy Harold James.'

CHAPTER III

WHEN the blur cleared from Dorothy James's brain she saw Hugh holding out her opera cloak.

'You want me to go?' said she dully.

'Isn't your errand completed?'

'Errand? I don't understand.'

'Haven't you learned what you were sent here to find out?'

'Hugh! You *can't* think that of me.'

'It all fits neatly into the pattern,' he pointed out, in quiet, impersonal accents. 'Your concealing from me who your father was; your pretending interest in my work, and leading me on to open up to you about what we are trying to do. I've told you enough tonight to ruin the plans that we've been building up for years. You see, I trusted you.'

'You've got to keep on trusting me.' She set both hands upon his shoulders, compelling him to meet the sorrowful and courageous challenge of her regard. 'Look at me, Hugh. You *don't* believe that I came here as a spy. Do you?'

The tensity of his features relaxed. 'No. No; I don't believe that.'

She gave a little half-sigh. 'You couldn't.'

'As to Happy James ——' he began, when she broke in:

'But, darling, you're so *wrong!*'

'I'm afraid not, Dorrie.'

'You don't even know him. If you did, you'd see how impossible, how ridiculous all this is. How can political differences distort sane minds this way?' she demanded passionately. 'You've been listening to his enemies. Why not go to his friends? They'll tell you he's the squarest shooter in politics. Why, Hugh, everyone knows his goodness and kindness. Ask the charity people. Ask the church people.'

'To whom he gives money,' was the grim response. 'Blood money.'

She threw out her hands in despair. 'How cruel you are! How unfair! Oh — oh — oh! Dad has always told me that reformers go crack-brained and think that anyone who opposes them must be a crook at heart, when the crookedness is really in their own brains.'

'I expect that is what he says of me.'

'No; it isn't. He thinks that you are going far if you don't get off on a wrong slant. He admires your courage and skill against the racketeers; but he thinks you are too much given to seeing a super-racketeer in every politician, honest or dishonest.'

'The old gag,' said Hugh wearily. 'And of course he hinted that I'm politically ambitious and success has gone to my head.'

'Well, yes; he did.'

'That's the charge the crooks always bring when they can't find anything worse to say.'

Discouraged, she murmured: 'How hard you are, Hugh! I'd better go now.'

'Yes. We can pick up a taxi below.'

'I'd rather go home alone.'

'Very well.'

There was silence between them in the elevator, lasting until they reached the street. There she said:

'Good-bye, Hugh.... Oh, no! Not good-bye. I can't.'

A man stepped quietly, swiftly out of the shadow. He held an object, which was lifted and pointed. With a choking cry, Dorrie threw her body across Hugh as the flash came. She was flung aside, catching at the awning stanchion for support as she watched him overtake the speeding figure, heard the shatter of glass and saw the fugitive reel and collapse into the gutter. Hugh came back to her, nursing his right hand.

'That picture won't be worth much,' he remarked tersely.

'Was it a camera? I thought ——'

'I'm taking you home, Dorrie.'

'Yes,' she yielded.

In the taxi she sat, slumped back into her own corner. He heard her slow, difficult breath. 'What can we do? What can we *do?*'

'We can get married,' said Hugh Farragut.

'How could we, when you believe that my father is the worst criminal in New York?'

He made an unexpected response. 'You thought that chap on the sidewalk had a gun.'

'Yes.'

'And you put yourself between the muzzle and me.'

'There wasn't time to think what I was doing.'

'When you did that, you gave yourself to me once and for all. Do you think I would ever let you go now? As for your father, one of us is right and one wrong. If I'm wrong, I'll be only too ready and glad to admit it. If you're wrong ——'

'I couldn't be. Not about Dad!'

'I'm going to prove to you that you are.'

'I'll hate you if you do.'

'Do you mean that, Dorrie?'

'Oh, no, no! I don't know what I mean,' she cried desperately. 'It all seems so wicked and crazy.'

'We've got to talk this out when we're not so worked up over it. When am I to see you again?'

She pulled herself together. 'Will you do something for me, Hugh?'

'Anything.'

'I want you to talk with Dad before we see each other again.'

'To tell him that I want to marry you?'

'Not yet. First, tell him what you believe about him. Give him a chance to prove how wrong you are.'

Startled, he thought this over. 'Very well. If you think that's best, I will,' he assented gravely. 'Good night, Dorrie.'

'Good night, my darling.' She kissed him as if she could not bear to let him go. 'And, oh, be careful!'

In the entry of the quiet old house on the once quiet old square, she stopped to press the lines of shock and distress from her face, for a light in the front room told her that Happy James, never a secure sleeper, was

still up. But he was not alone. A strange voice with a stress of anger and threat in it, said:

'I'll give you till tomorrow night.'

Then her father's calm reply, 'It'll be the same No as before.'

'Then, by God, I'll go to Farragut. You can't make a hors——'

'Oh, I don't believe I'd go to Farragut, Niemer.' The interruption sounded temperate, conciliatory, almost amused. It was the utterance of a man confidently in command of himself and of his temper.

'That's what I'll do, just the same,' snarled the visitor.

Out he strode, slamming the door viciously. In the hallway he almost collided with Dorrie. He thrust out a hand at her.

'Who are you? One of his spies?'

'I am Dorothy James,' said she.

'Oh! That's it. I've heard about you. Well, you can tell your old man ——' He paused. In his distorted face she could read both fury and fear. Suddenly he raised both fists and shook them in the air. 'They can't do that to me,' he declared in a sort of sob. 'Not to Chris Niemer. I've been on the up-and-up with them.' His arms dropped. His face deadened. 'Excuse me, Miss,' he said dully and walked down the stairs, stepping carefully.

Dorrie entered her father's study. He was standing at a window. She saw him raise a hand, as if in signal to someone outside. At the slight rustle of her entry he said, without even looking around:

'You've made your decision and I've made mine, Niemer.'

'It isn't Niemer, Dad.'

He whirled about. Not only his expression, but his very bearing, changed.

'Well, Miss Dolliver!' He had called her by that absurd and affectionate nickname since she was a motherless child of three. 'Had a good time?'

'Of course, Dad. Don't I always?'

'I expect so. Where have you been?'

'Theatre. Supper.' She was not ready yet to speak of Hugh.

'Good!'

Happy James trusted and respected his daughter too much ever to put intrusive questions. That was one of many reasons why there existed between them, in addition to the loyalty and affection of the blood-tie, a rooted friendship. They were happy companions. Until she knew Hugh Farragut, no other man had ever come into her life whose company she found as amusing and stimulating as her father's. On many points they differed heartily; for example, she regarded his social views as antiquated. They argued, fought, derided one another's opinions, denounced one another's obstinacy and laughed it all off over their shared breakfast, only to go at it again with equal vigor on the next occasion. Complete mutual confidence was the basis of their love.

'Who's the man that just left, darling?'

'Oh, a sorehead. He's nothing.'

'I met him in the hallway.'

'Did you? Did he say anything to you?'

'Yes. He asked if I was spying on him.'

'He's got his nerve,' said Happy James, sharply and uneasily.

'Dad, I think he's badly frightened.'

'I've always credited you with having eyes in your head, Miss Dolliver. He's got himself into a small jam, and he's been trying to bluff himself out. Skip him. There are more important matters before this meeting. What would you say to chicken wings and chilled ale?'

'Grand!' said Happy James's daughter.

How preposterous it all seemed, what Hugh Farragut had dared to say, now that she was sitting there before the kindly twinkle of the blue eyes, listening to the quiet humor of her father's speech. How absurd to suspect that he could be even remotely connected with crime and grief except to use his power in preventing the one and assuaging the other.

Dorrie went to bed with her faith in Happy James unimpaired. But she slept uneasily and late, and her first waking thought was the troubled problem of divided loyalties. How to bring together in friendship and understanding these two men whom she loved, who loved her? Unless she could bring that about, her life was disrupted.

With Happy James she anticipated little difficulty; his was a mind so open, so supple and elastic in the face of opposition (always excepting their own little differences of opinion, where he could exhibit a quite mulish obstinacy!), so ready to make charitable allowances for the other viewpoint.

But Hugh, she feared, would prove more obdurate. He was too little tempered by experience for the easier, kindlier tolerance. His was the uncharitableness of the young zealot.... 'And the greatest of these is charity.' Why, she thought passionately, could not honorable men face their natural differences, adjust their innate prejudices, with the charity of spirit which never failed Happy James? In any case not Hugh Farragut nor another could persuade her that her father was anything but what he appeared to her loving heart.

Purposely she had not risen, hoping that she would hear from Hugh. It was after one o'clock when he called up. Even over the wire she sensed a stress in his manner.

'Dorrie?... Is anyone there who can overhear?'

'No. I'm in my own room.'

'Was there a man with your father when you got home last night?'

'Yes. Chris Niemer.'

'You know him?'

'I never saw him before. I met him in the hallway as I was coming in. He spoke to me. I thought he was a little crazy.'

After a moment's hesitancy Hugh's voice asked, 'How long had he been there?'

'I don't know. He was just leaving.'

'Did you hear what they said?'

'What is this, Hugh? A cross-examination? Why are you putting me through all this rigmarole?'

'I ought to have told you that first. Dorrie, Chris Niemer is dead.'

'Oh, Hugh! How dreadful! Did he kill himself?'

'No. He didn't kill himself. Why do you ask that?'

'I thought he seemed desperate enough for anything. What did happen?'

'Within an hour after you saw him, his car ran off the viaduct at 129th Street.'

The constriction at her heart loosened. 'It was an accident, then.'

'Too many fatal accidents happen to men who interfere with powerful leaders like Happy James.'

For the moment she was daunted. Then she recalled her father's dignity and restraint under Niemer's threats. A man who had anything to fear would never have met menace with such composure. There was a tinge of contempt in her indignation as she said:

'Even you could hardly be fanatic enough to hold Dad responsible for a motor accident ten miles away.'

'In any case, the meeting with your father is off.'

'That's as you please.' Dorothy's spirit was rising. She was not a meek person.

'I may have to summon him to my office. Officially.'

'Officially? Why that?'

'To explain his part in this — accident.'

'You're an enraging person, Hugh. When you get a fixed idea, reason doesn't exist for you. It would be laughable if it weren't ——'

'Laughable! You can't laugh off murder.'

There was a click in her ear. She stared at the apparatus. He had cut off. And after daring to use that tone to her. This was the man who pretended to be so desperately in love with her. In her righteous

anger she told herself that she wanted none of that kind of love. When he called up again, she would stand on her dignity; teach him that she was not to be treated in that cavalier way. Perhaps Happy James was right; all young reformers became obsessed with a conviction of infallibility.

That her father could explain the Niemer matter she had not a doubt. Explain? What was there to explain? Even to ask him about it would be an insulting reflection. She would say nothing unless he spoke of it first. Dressing, she went to his room. She found him packing two valises. For an instant the thought that he might be running away shocked her.

'Where are you going, Dad?'

'Royal command,' he answered jovially. 'Off for Washington. Address, the White House tonight and tomorrow. Then I have to go to Cleveland. May not be back for a week or ten days.'

Dorothy's spirit bounded. Here was something to confound Hugh's suspicions. A man invited to the intimacy of the President's personal hospitality could hardly be tainted with crime.

'I'll miss you. There was something I wanted to talk over with you.'

'Was there, Miss Dolliver? I haven't much time.'

'It can wait.' She was inwardly relieved to be able to put off the difficult discussion of Hugh's crime chart. How absurd that now seemed, in the light of the presidential invitation! 'Any final instructions to your lieutenant, Captain?'

His aspect sobered. 'Yes. Not too pleasant. That

poor devil, Niemer, whom you saw here last night, is dead.'

'I heard he was.'

He gave her a swift glance. 'I can't be here for the funeral. Would you mind going, to represent me? Send flowers, too; you'll know what.'

'I'll look after it.'

'And, Miss Dolliver.'

'Yes, Dad?'

'Snoop around a little, will you? Find out how the family is left. I'm afraid there isn't too much money. Niemer had been drinking for some time. Drugs, too, I believe. If there's anything needed, see to it. I've left a signed check on my desk.'

'I will, Dad.' Her heart swelled. If only Hugh could have been there to overhear the man whom he dared hint at as having been implicated in the politician's death!

'I ought not to have let him go,' muttered Happy James. 'He was acting pretty crazy. I did have one of the boys follow him, but he couldn't save him.' He sighed. 'He was a good friend of mine, too, until he went wrong.'

Dorrie gave him a small, extra hug to go with her good-bye kiss. 'Darling, I think maybe-perhaps you're the best man in the world.'

'I'll remind you of that next time you call me a prehistoric mollusc,' he chuckled. 'Oh, by the way; you'll find some memoranda in the usual place. Take your time about them.'

Downtown Happy James maintained an obscure

office with a single stenographer. But Dorothy regarded herself as his private agent and confidential secretary. Those special enterprises about which he liked to throw a veil of secrecy were in her hands. Popular and in constant demand though she was, she set aside from her social commitments a certain number of hours each week for this work, which she loved, and which she had been doing ever since her graduation from Farmington. It was her pride that she often overruled her father's little projects and saved his slack and credulous generosity from impositions.

The dossier to which she turned as soon as he left was familiar material. There was the hospitalization of a crippled girl to be arranged, three impoverished widows to be interviewed, an alien peddler to be rescued from the clutches of a loan-shark, help to be extended to a brilliant young scholar working his way through Columbia, public contributions and private donations here, there, and everywhere. No wonder Happy James was the most popular leader in the organization. More than once she had speculated on the inexhaustible source of all this money which flowed so freely. But on this subject he was reticent.

'There'll always be enough for what we want to do,' he would say, with his easy smile.

One document in the lot puzzled her, a sinister discord in this harmony of benevolence. Under the typed notation, 'L–D 420,' were entries in terms of heavy-calibre munitions. At one point there stood a marginal note in her father's neat writing.

'Tear gas? Why not perfumery? This is going to be no carnival when it comes.'

When what comes? Was the peaceable and humane Happy James presaging war? Preparing plans for it? There was nothing to show from whom the memorandum came; the stationery was plain. Once before she had chanced upon similar data and asked her father about them. At first confused, he said that government officials sometimes consulted him on technical details. But there had been no departmental insignia on the earlier communication any more than on this recent one. She dropped it into a private drawer.

To her surprise and indignation Hugh did not call up to apologize for his unmannerliness; nor the next day nor the two days following. Now she was ready to believe that his love was a poor thing. But on the fourth evening she met him at a large dinner-dance, and at sight of the haggard strain shown in his face she forgot her resentment.

'Why haven't you telephoned, Hugh?'

'I had to keep away from you while this Niemer thing threatened to break.'

'Is it going to?'

'No. Every track is covered. Complete washout.'

'You see!' she retorted triumphantly. 'And you thought Dad was mixed up in it.'

'I still do.' He looked at her with an altered and imploring aspect. 'Dorrie, whatever happens I'm not going to let you give me up.'

'I couldn't.' It was straight from the heart, that whisper.

'Can't we forget this wretched business and be just you and me?'

She considered. 'We can't talk here. Take me to your place.'

'It may be watched,' he warned.

'If you're fatally compromised,' she laughed, 'you can always say that I promised to marry you.'

In the apartment she at once became serious. 'Let's talk about you, Hugh. What are you aiming at? What's your real ambition?'

'It's a double-header. To get this job off my chest and take Dorothy James Farragut to the South Pole to see the penguins.'

'Noble thought,' she approved. 'But I was speaking of political ambitions.'

'That's out. Politics to me means something I have to fight.'

'You'll get into it, though. You can't keep out. What do you think is going to happen, Hugh?'

He outlined the national situation as he saw it. The Republicans, still under control of the Old Guard, had nominated Azar B. Chadwick, a steel magnate and a bitter-ender in the anti-union fight. Fear of the coercive measures which he advocated with frank courage had drawn together the warring elements of labor so effectually that the A.F. of L. and the C.I.O. had merged behind the new Forward Party candidate, Frank J. Winters, who, as the right-hand man of John L. Lewis, had won the reluctant respect of even the hardest-boiled industrialists by his desperate and finally successful fight to compel the unions to live up

to their commitments. To this end he had conducted a ruthless party purge, deposing and expelling many of the racketeering sub-leaders, and incidentally aiding the New York special prosecutor in his more local campaign. Hugh outlined Frank Winters to Dorothy as a slow-moving, calm-spirited, unbluffable man, with a sound equipment of shrewdness, lacking any special appeal of personality, but honorable and wholly reliable. Despite his efforts, however, there still remained in many key positions survivors of the old, corrupt régime, maintaining their 'inside ring' and awaiting orders from their secret leader. He did not tell her that this secret leader was Happy James.

The probable winner, he believed, would be Senator Niles, Franklin D. Roosevelt's chosen heir and staunch advocate of the New Deal. True, the conservative Democrats, alienated by the Supreme Court issue and the impractical alphabetic idealism of some of the theories, had quit the party to unite with the Republicans, but not in sufficient numbers, he thought, to realize the forlorn hope that was Azar B. Chadwick. More likely, if the split went deep enough, it might elect Winters.

'Dad will be for Niles,' said the girl thoughtfully.

'I'm not so sure.'

'Of course he will. He's always stood with his party.'

'Openly, yes.'

'Are you trying to make me believe that he's a political double-crosser?' she demanded incredulously.

'I thought we'd agreed to leave him out of it this evening.'

'But this is politics . . . I expect you're right, Hugh. Whom are you going to support?'

'No one, if I can help it.'

'Dad says — I mean, the general belief is that you can't help it.'

'Possibly not. I'll stay out as long as I can.' He looked at the clock. 'I've got an appointment that I can't dodge.' Rising, he drew her to him. 'Dorrie, love; before we go, what about those penguins?'

She released herself with a sigh. 'They'll have to wait. How can we be married with all this unsettled between us?'

'I can't argue against that,' he returned gently.

'This time you mustn't go with me.'

He nodded his agreement. At the door he said in an undertone: 'Watch that car, parked across the street. If it follows you, don't go direct home.'

Giving a clear-voiced direction to the taxi-driver, she returned to the dance.

Eyes bulging, young Harris Magill, a confidential secretary in the special prosecutor's office, dashed into his chief's room.

'There's a man on the phone who says he's Harold James.'

Hugh grinned at him good-naturedly. 'Why not?'

'It couldn't be *Happy* James, could it?' demanded the youth in awe-struck tones.

'I don't know why it couldn't. He's probably got a telephone. In fact, I'm sure he has. And a telephone book. So what's to prevent his calling up?'

Mingled with the confidential secretary's adoration of his chief was a permanent uncertainty as to how to take him. Hugh had a disconcerting trick of treating matters which seemed to the younger man of the most vital importance with a sort of levity.

'But — but *Happy* James. He says he wants to talk to you.'

'Then let's give him credit for meaning what he says. Why not put him on? He can't bite me over the telephone, you know.'

'But it might be some trick.'

'Calm down, youngster. You're here to protect me.'

The young assistant's official zeal, which had a dime-novelish tinge complicated by a tendency to see dark plots in the simplest contacts and lurking villains in every shadow, was a source of never-failing amusement to his principal. But he also valued and was touched by it. Harris, who at twenty-five had exhausted the thrills of yacht racing, aeronautics, and polo, had found a final excitement in the anti-racketeer campaign, and had astounded his friends by abandoning in its favor the frivolities of a hitherto totally useless millionaire existence. He and a club-mate, Carson Wilde, whom the prosecutor had extricated from a blackmailing entanglement, had constituted themselves a bodyguard for Hugh, at times more efficient than discreet, both having been famed football players and having resumed training in the ardor of their devotion to the cause and to its leader. They had confided to him a singular bet of which he was the subject which they seemed to regard as a species of

life insurance for him, and from which he had been unable to dissuade them.

If the telephone call was a trick, Hugh pointed out, there could not be much harm in it. Nevertheless, the secretary lingered watchfully until it was over.

'Yes. This is Hugh Farragut.'

'Harold James speaking. Happy James. I think we have some matters to talk over, Mr. Farragut.'

'Not that I'm aware of. At least, not yet.'

With an amenity unabated by this rebuff the other said, 'Personal, not political.'

Still cautious the lawyer answered, 'You will have to be more explicit.'

'How do I know who may be listening in?' protested the politician reasonably. 'Not naming any names, I've had a letter while out of town containing matters of intimate interest to you, if you get me. I think we should talk. Will you come down here?'

'To your office?' (Violently dissuasive gestures from Harris Magill) 'Do you think it likely?'

'Shall I come up there, then?'

'If you did, the reporters would assume that it was under duress. Would you like that?'

'Now, that's very fair-minded of you, Mr. Farragut,' said Happy James admiringly. 'I wouldn't wonder but what we shall get along very well together. Neutral ground then, and' — he chuckled — 'no mechanism in the walls. Do you know Father Dulany of Saint Columba's?'

'Everyone knows Father Dulany.'

'Would you regard him as trustworthy?'

'Wouldn't anyone!'

'Fine. Can you meet me at the parish house this afternoon?'

'Yes. At three.'

After a vehement argument with Magill, who almost wept at not being allowed to go along, Hugh departed for his appointment. He was welcomed by the old, fat, sad-visaged priest, whose luminous eyes seemed to distill a benison wherever they rested, and was presented to Happy James. During the brief triple conversation which ensued, the lawyer made his observations of the politician. What first struck him was the suavity and good-humor of the handsome elderly face. The eyes, not as deep-hued as Dorothy's, were a lively blue. Yet back of them Hugh sensed a vacancy; he could guess that opponents, gazing into that void, might recoil as from the brink of a deadly abyss. The face was plump, rounded and ruddy, but it was underlaid by a formidable structure of jaw and brow. Altogether a striking and attractive personality.

Without the formality of an excuse the priest, after contemplating first one, then the other of his guests with a tolerant smile in which there seemed strangely to be something of compassion, withdrew. James handed a cigar to his companion, lighted one himself.

'My Dorothy thinks she is in love with you.'

'I am in love with her.'

'So you have made her believe. Like Mr. Webster, I am a little hard to persuade. What's your price?'

'What's your objection?'

The political strategist studied the younger man

for a moment before speaking. 'Farragut, I know you're after me. You'll never get me.'

'I thought we were speaking of Dorothy,' Hugh reminded him.

'We are. When you make love to my daughter in order to fish for evidence against me, you're playing a dirty game. I know your kind. Too cold-blooded to be in love with anyone but themselves. You're after her for what you can get on me.'

Hugh flushed sharply. 'That's a lie.'

'It's no lie.' Happy James practised two methods of passing an opponent's guard. One was to terrify; the other, to anger. He was shrewd enough to perceive that the first would not serve with Hugh Farragut and correspondingly gratified by the success of the alternative. 'Didn't you jockey her into talking about Chris Niemer?' he demanded with a show of indignation.

'I have used nothing of what she told me. And I shall not.'

'Until you're good and ready. So you'd like to be my son-in-law. A pleasant family combination. Perhaps you consider my daughter engaged to you already.'

'I do. So does she.'

'She may change her mind. When she hears certain things about your private life and nocturnal habits.'

Hugh scrutinized his antagonist. A sudden suspicion popped into his mind which would have amused if it had not so annoyed him. 'I think I'd go cautiously there if I were you.'

'I dare say,' retorted the father with lofty satisfaction. He stepped to the window. 'There's her car, now. She's always prompt to the minute.'

'Do you intend to give her details of my private life, as you call it?'

'I do. With proof.' He observed with relish the consternation on the visage before him.

Had Hugh intended to protest, there would have been no time, for a knock on the door was followed by James's summons:

'Come in, Miss Dolliver.'

She entered, went to Happy James, kissed him, and would have passed on to Hugh had not a grip on her hand retained her.

'Wait,' directed James with grave, paternal protectiveness. 'There is something you should know about Mr. Hugh Farragut's character.'

'It sounds like old stuff,' remarked Dorothy, unimpressed. 'Just before the curtain in Scene II.'

'This is not play-acting,' said her father sternly. 'There is another woman, perhaps other women, in his life.'

'Since he and I have met?' she queried skeptically.

'Yes.'

Smiling, she turned to the accused. 'What about it, Hugh?'

'Not a word of truth in it.'

'He'd deny it, naturally.'

'You would hardly expect me to admit it when it isn't so.'

'I'll make you admit it. I've got absolute proof.'

'Then perhaps you'll come down to something explicit,' said Hugh with quiet patience.

Ignoring him, Happy James said to the girl: 'Three weeks ago he had a woman visitor in his apartment until early morning. Ask him.'

Hugh found himself on unexpectedly difficult ground. The only woman, of course, who had visited him was Dorrie. Evidently she had not told her father. Therefore he must cover her tracks. With the assumed bravado of one who does not look for belief he said:

'That was one of my office staff, if you must know.'

'Was it the same one who went to your place again last week?'

'I suppose it was.'

'Do the lady members of your staff visit you in evening clothes, and go back to the Waldorf after their "business" calls are over?' queried Happy James, with a particularly suave and unpleasant intonation.

'Where?' said Dorothy with a start.

'The Waldorf. Long after midnight.'

'Oh! How long have you been keeping tabs on Hugh, Dad?'

'I sometimes receive reports on sidelines of political matters,' was the dignified response. 'I could hardly foresee that this one would strike so near home.'

'You don't know how near. Dad, I'm afraid you're going to get a jar.'

'*I* get a jar?'

'Yes. You see, the woman who left Hugh's apartment and went back to the Waldorf happened to be me. So was the other one.'

'You? At night? Alone in his apartment?'

'Yes. I know it looks bad, but ——'

The complacency of Happy James's face crumpled. 'Is it bad?' he asked piteously.

'No.'

It would never have occurred to him to doubt her given word. Only for that startled moment had he doubted her virtue. But this made the matter far more serious in his eyes. If Dorothy loved and trusted this man to the extent of risking her reputation for him, she would be immovable. Very well; she should have him, as she had always had everything within the parental power to procure for her. But on Happy James's own terms. He asked the girl to leave them.

Going over to Hugh, Dorothy kissed him. 'Try to understand each other, you two,' she pleaded. 'If you want to make me happy.' She still believed that the division between the men was no more than political.

Happy's expression was unwontedly soft, as he let his glance follow her. 'One point on which we can get together,' he murmured to Hugh. 'Happiness for that girl.'

Almost weakening, Hugh answered, 'Yes.'

James lighted another cigar, let it go out, chewed on it reflectively, meditating his play. Hugh waited. That quality of still patience impressed the shrewd judge of men. He could use that sort of chap in his own activities. Not for the dirty work; there were plenty to handle that; but in the higher reaches of law and politics. The master manipulator hitched his chair forward and spoke:

'You and I are practical men, Farragut. We want you with us, with the organization. You've made us a lot of trouble; you've got some of us worried. No; not me; you'll never reach the key position. But I don't deny that you could make a stink. So I'm ready to talk turkey. Drop this reform bunk and play in with us. You'll be a millionaire in five years. Do you want to go on the bench? We'll fix it. Political office? Anything you can ask. And Dorothy. She loves you, and I'm ready to believe that you love her if you'll prove it to me by looking to your future and hers.' He dropped a warm hand on the younger man's knee. 'Think it over, my boy; think it over.'

Farragut said, amiably enough: 'That's straight talk, at least. Will you listen to my proposition?'

'Certainly.'

'Quit the rackets, take a year's voyage as evidence of good faith, and I'll stretch a point and drop my investigations of you. Heaven knows, I don't want to send Dorothy's father to jail. I'd do anything to save her that shame and grief, if it can be done.'

'And I'd do anything to save her from having her heart broken and her life ruined by an obstinate young fool who hasn't the sense to see what he would be leading her into. The headlines have gone to your brain, my lad; that's what's wrong with you,' he ended viciously. He recovered control of himself, went to the door, and called.

Dorothy came in with the priest. The girl's swift consideration of the two men left her beauty and hopefulness shadowed.

'It didn't come to anything?'

Hugh shook his head. 'How could it?'

'He doesn't want to marry you, Miss Dolliver,' said her father acidly. 'He'd rather save the world.'

'Only the grace of God can save the world,' said Father Dulany solemnly.

In his soft, melancholy voice he began telling them of conditions in his parish: school children corrupted by dope peddlers; young girls lured, or even kidnapped into vice-slavery; strange disappearance of those foolhardy enough to protest; murders unsolved; robberies untraced; decent citizens living under the threat of blackmail, and paying tribute for the privilege of being unmolested; the police supine; the courts subservient; church and law powerless.

'That is the condition all over the nation,' declared Hugh. 'We are in the clutch of crime, organized into craft-unions operating by chains, and the chains are tightening until soon they will strangle all freedom and independence.'

'Oratory,' said Happy James, with an indulgent smile. 'People aren't as bad as that. They're not perfect, either, and you have to make the best of them as they are.'

'We have to make them better as we can,' murmured the priest. 'Law alone cannot achieve that. It must be brought about by the power of eternal righteousness.'

'You hear Father Dulany, Hugh,' said Dorothy appealingly. 'You can't reform the world alone. Surely you've done more than your part already.'

'What do you expect of me, then?'

'Give it up,' she urged. 'Your ideals are fine, and I love you for them. But don't carry them to the extent of fanaticism. You have a right to your own life. And mine,' she said softly.

'Are you offering yourself to me as a bribe, Dorrie?' said he hoarsely. 'Your father has already done that.'

'And he nobly turned you down,' retorted Happy James. 'He'd rather give you up than this crank's dream of his.'

'Gently, gently,' warned the old priest. For a moment he studied the girl's sombre and appealing countenance, then moved over and set a hand on the young man's arm.

'Cranks' dreams have changed the course of history before now. Sincerity is one of the most terrible forces in the world. You, my son, believe in what you are trying to do. I have seen your kind achieve great good, and,' he added sorrowfully, 'infinite harm. Martyrs are made of such stuff; and despots.' He turned to James. 'It is not for a humble priest to judge between your worldly creed and his. But this I do say.' His tone deepened. 'For man or woman to seek to divert him from this, which he believes his duty, is both foolish and sinful — and futile.'

'Why did you bring me here, Dad?' breathed the girl in profound depression.

'To show you how foolish and hopeless it is for you to keep on.'

'Never that,' she returned. 'I'm going now.'

The Father accompanied her to the door. At once

the expression of the two antagonists hardened. Happy James said:

'My proposition stands. Come over to us and you can write your own ticket. Two weeks to decide.'

'So does mine stand. Get out of the rackets and I'll do what I can.'

'And the alternative?'

'Roughly, fifty years in Alcatraz. Until Election Day to give me your answer.'

'I wonder whether you'll live until Election Day,' speculated Happy James mildly.

After Dorothy's final word there was nothing for Hugh to do but wait. Within a day the waiting was made worse by a telephone call.

'Hugh, darling, I've had to make a promise.'

'To your father?'

'Yes.'

'Not to see me?'

'Yes. For two weeks. I hated to do it.'

'I've been expecting something of the sort.'

'He says you're going to make a decision.'

'It's already made.'

'From the way you say that, I know what it is,' she replied sadly.

'It couldn't be any other way, Dorrie.'

'How wrong you are! How obstinate and wrong!'

She heard a sigh across the wire. Then, 'What has your father made you believe about me?'

She hesitated before answering. 'Nothing against you. I know you're honest and honorable just as I

know he is. But, darling, I do think you're impractical and visionary. Politics is a practical game. You can't change nature,' she went on, with the familiar philosophy of easy and tolerant cynicism which she had straight from Happy James's plausible tongue. 'I know I can't stir you from your position,' she concluded. 'All I hope is that you will come to judge Dad as kindly as he judges you. He does admire you so, Hugh. Good-bye now. It's going to be a long two weeks, but I expect we'll have to live through it.'

It was not a long two weeks, but less than half that time when he got a call from her, urgent with distress.

'Hugh? . . . Oh, I'm so glad I caught you. A horrible thing has happened.'

'Are you in danger?' he asked quickly.

'No. It's you.'

A wild surmise shot through his mind. Could Happy James have repeated his threat to her? No; that was absurd. He said lightly:

'Who's being visionary now?'

'Do you know a man named Cuprane?'

'What's that?' he returned sharply. 'We can't talk about that over the 'phone. I'd better see you.'

'My promise,' she began doubtfully, but he cut in:

'You've broken it already. And — you're frightened, my darling.'

'Yes. Where could we meet? At Father Dulany's?'

'In half an hour.'

She was the first to reach the parish house, and went to him and clung to him trembling before she could

control herself and tell her story. Going on one of her father's errands of mercy (and politics), she had encountered Cuprane, whom she knew as one of the leader's minor lieutenants. The young fellow seemed 'queer,' she said; not drunk, perfectly amiable and respectful, but excited and prone to loose mirth. Hugh nodded.

'Coke,' he said. 'He's one of them. What did he say?'

'I don't know how your name came up, but he began to giggle and said that you'd already been measured for a cement overcoat. Oh, Hugh! He said it was all fixed up, and it wouldn't be two weeks now.'

'Perfectly typical hallucinative boastings of the addict,' was the prosecutor's calm opinion.

'That isn't all. He said that nobody who went up against the Big Shot lasted long. He said, "Look at Chris Niemer." Oh, Hugh!' she faltered, 'what did he mean? Does he believe that my father——' She could go no further.

Filled with pity, he tried to save her. 'I told you, darling; nothing that a cocaine fiend says is entitled to the slightest credence. I've been up against them in case after case. Pay no attention to it.'

Her relief was manifest. 'He babbled about other things that I didn't understand. He seemed to assume that I knew a lot about the district from my father.' She looked puzzled and unhappy again, then brightened. 'Still, if you say that all cocaine-users lie——'

'They all lie and they all talk too much. But if he talks in that vein, *he* won't last two days, let alone

two weeks. You haven't spoken of this to — anyone else?'

'Oh, no!'

'I must go back now. I'll have the coke specialist check on our records and call you later this afternoon.'

A voice unfamiliar to her called at five o'clock and said cautiously: 'There are two men of that name on our records. Which one is it?'

Not so cautiously, she answered, 'Nick Cuprane.'

A noise in the doorway drew her attention. Happy James stood there.

'Nick Cuprane,' he repeated. 'What about Nick Cuprane?'

'He was at the relief station when I called about the Arkey case.'

'I'll have to have a talk with Nick Cuprane.'

Something in his face, as he took the telephone from her flaccid hand, recalled to her Hugh's words — 'Not two days, let alone two weeks.'

Shivering, she left the room.

CHAPTER IV

BREAKFAST in the James household normally started the day with laughter. There was no mirth between father and daughter over their next morning's coffee. Happy James was grave and weary. Dorothy was not frightened; she could not remember the day when she had been afraid of her father; but she was uneasy. As soon as he lighted his cigar, she said, with an assumption that nothing had occurred to disturb the family serenity:

'You came in very late. I don't approve of such hours.'

'I had important business,' was his curt reply.

'Any orders for the day, Captain?'

He said, 'You broke your word to me yesterday, Dorothy.' That he should use her name and not the familiar Miss Dolliver both hurt and warned her.

'Yes.'

'That's bad.'

'Yes; bad.'

'We are drifting apart since Farragut came between us.'

She felt a stab of pain. 'I know. I hate it.'

'Why did you telephone him about Cuprane?'

She had her answer, not wholly ingenuous, ready. 'Cuprane had been making threats against him. In

what might be a life-and-death matter, I thought I was justified.'

'I can't trust you,' said he sorrowfully.

'Oh, you can, you can! I'll be honest with you, Dad. I not only telephoned him. I saw him, too. At Father Dulany's. I meant to tell you anyway, and explain why.'

There was no need to tell him of the visit to the parish house. It had already been reported by his efficient spy system.

'This man won't do,' he burst out. 'He's a four-flusher; a cheap climber. He's so swollen with his notion of himself that he won't listen to reason. I've almost got down on my knees to him. I've thrown you at his head. You've thrown yourself at his head.' (The girl's chin went up proudly.) 'What's his answer? He can't give up his precious career. His mission to reform the world. These amateur Christs! Your happiness doesn't mean anything to him. Nothing does but his own ambition. He's going to bust the machine, is he? He's going to show us all up, and turn my own child against me! Well, he'll be the one to be shown up before we're through with him.' He calmed down. 'All I need is a little time. I've got a line on stuff he's pulled that will convince even you.'

Happy had been listening to certain hopeful reports on Hugh Farragut from his imaginative aides, and was only too willing to accept them as true. Practical politicians of his kind see so obliquely that all men look crooked to them. 'I warn you now that when the proof is ready you'll make your choice between us.

You can't be that hypocrite's wife and my daughter.'

Happy James's daughter had inherited some of the qualities which made him a leader. She could exhibit a spirit as dogged as his own. 'I'm not going to be forced into a choice. I'm not going to give up hope of bringing you two together. You've told me it was mostly politics, Dad. When election is over, you'll both cool down and be sensible again.'

Election! He had practically committed himself to murder before Election Day by his rash threat to Hugh Farragut. Rash or not, Happy was not the man to let a threat die unfulfilled. Still, if the election brought about the result which he now confidently expected, the special prosecutor would be powerless and he, James, beyond the reach of any reprisals, political or legal. And if Dorothy could be alienated from Hugh, that young four-flusher might live and rant till he rotted, for all the father cared. He brooded upon this for a time.

'Will you play fair with me? Will you promise to cut out Farragut entirely until Election Day and this time keep your word?'

'But that's nearly a month!' she cried grievously.

'Is it too much to ask, Miss Dolliver?'

At the affectionate nickname she softened. 'No. Not if I can see him after that.'

'If you still want to,' he agreed. Then, more briskly, 'Have you his private number?'

'Of course.'

'Call him up.'

She obeyed. He took the apparatus from her hand.

'Farragut, you have been seeing Dorothy.'

'That's true,' answered Hugh's composed voice.

'I want your word of honor that you will not try to see her or communicate with her until after election.'

'You can't have it.'

'She wishes it, too.'

'Let her say so, then.'

'She will.' He handed over the mechanism to her.

'Darling,' she said, and Happy James's face darkened. 'I'm going to keep my word this time. It isn't so terribly long, and whatever happens it can't change anything between you and me... Oh, no! You mustn't feel that way. I can't bear to have you worried.'

Happy saw the receiver jerk in her hand. He would have given a great deal to listen-in on the message borne by the wire. What he would have heard was Hugh's tones, low and urgent:

'You remember what I said about the two days. *Two days.* If I'm right in that, you'll *have* to believe me right in the bigger matter. If that is true — you understand what I'm talking about: two days, or it might be three — if that comes about, promises don't count. Get in touch with me at once in that case, and come to me as soon as you possibly can. Will you?'

Blackly suspicious, Happy James saw her terrified look veer to him, heard her faint 'I — don't — know ... *Yes.*'

He pushed her away. 'Farragut, if you try to double-cross me, I'll send her to Europe by the next ship.'

'Thank you. I'll have the piers watched. We might need her as a witness.'

Happy James cut off. He had not thought of that. Under legal pretext the special prosecutor's office could certainly prevent her from leaving the country or even the state. He turned to the girl. It struck her with a kind of sorrowful fear that he had grown old in those few minutes.

'If you walk out on me this time,' said he harshly, 'you needn't come back.'

Dorothy's spirit rose in arms. 'Is that part of the agreement?'

'If you like.'

'Very well.' It seemed to him, too, that she had grown older and perhaps harder. 'I'll take it as a condition of my promise.'

He glowered upon her in sudden misgiving, but she came over and put her arms around him. 'Oh, Dad! We mustn't quarrel.'

His expression lightened. He returned her caress. 'But I don't understand you at all lately, Miss Dolliver.'

Other matters were worrying him, too. There was a small but important dinner being given at the Manhattan Club for the Democratic candidate, Senator Niles, which he must attend if he were to avoid suspicion of party treachery. Hypocrisy was a practice which Happy heartily disliked. To exhibit goodfellowship toward the man whom he had pretty well decided to abandon irked him. But he saw no alternative.

Presenting himself, as was his invariable rule, for Dorothy's inspection, in his impeccable dinner garb with its small white rosebud, he submitted to the minor adjustment of his tie which was part of the program.

'Dad, you're the best-looking man I know.'

'Without prejudice?' But there was a touch of wistfulness in his mockery.

'Well, the *nicest*-looking, anyway. I'm amazed that some designing female hasn't grabbed you.'

'You and I do pretty well as a team, don't we?'

She nodded. 'I'm making no complaints. Make a good speech tonight, darling.'

'Not me. I'm not much on the talky-talk. That's for the lads who haven't got more important things to do.'

After a pause she said, 'Hugh may be there.'

'So you know even his political plans,' said Happy James testily. 'Well, I'll promise you we won't draw guns on each other.'

That same dinner invitation had been a problem for Hugh Farragut. Honest though he had been in announcing to Dorothy his intention of keeping free from partisanship, he had almost admitted to himself the impracticability of a neutral attitude. Because his influence in the pivotal state of New York might be decisive, the special prosecutor was being wooed by all three parties. The question and doubt in his mind was where he could be most efficient, for his view was pessimistic.

Whoever won, he could see nothing but trouble ahead, quite possibly culminating in national catas-

trophe. Realizing, as perhaps no other man in the country could, the entrenchment of corruption and crime, he reckoned upon no adequate capacity in any of the rival factions to grapple with a problem of such magnitude. Chadwick and the Republicans were committed to a dangerously reactionary policy. The New Dealers were still enmeshed in theories, none of which offered, in Hugh's opinion, a cure for the national disease. Labor was new and politically inexperienced; furthermore, it was still irresponsible, still riddled with the racketeering policies which kept it irresponsible (for cash to those responsible); and that at a time when every resource of high leadership and farsighted wisdom was needed if the country was to avoid disaster.

In accepting the invitation, Hugh made it plain that he was not committing himself. He was there merely as an observer. One of his first observations of interest was the presence of Happy James. He knew that James had been undermining Niles in the local organization, and so effectively that New York was now considered by shrewd judges to be 'in the bag' for the Forward ticket. Any day James might flop openly. To watch the assumed heartiness and sunny sincerity with which he accosted the candidate whom he was preparing to knife inspired the lawyer with a faint disgust. He resented it when Happy came over to shake hands and suggest that they have a little talk.

'About what?' said Hugh, not too courteously.

'Your health, my boy.'

'It's excellent, thank you.'

Happy shook a solicitous head. 'You don't look well to me.'

'Wishful thinking possibly,' suggested Hugh, with a tight smile.

'Not well at all. Overwork is telling on you, I'm afraid. It's dangerous, that sort of work. A man with your prospects ought really to be more sparing of himself.'

Hugh grinned. 'First in the parish house of a Catholic church; now at a public dinner: you choose queer places for your Black Hand threats.'

'Threats? Not at all,' protested the other. 'Only a natural concern. Well, what do you think of the political situation?'

'What do you? You're in a position to judge. When are you going to swing?'

'Swing?' Again the master politician pretended injured surprise. 'I'm an organization man, Farragut. I stick. You've been reading the gossip columns.'

Hugh was unimpressed. 'When your political convictions do shift,' he remarked carelessly, 'let me know. Maybe I'll follow you.'

No sooner had he spoken the words than the subconscious thought of which they were the expression took hold upon him. Of course! Why had it not occurred to him before? If Happy James went over to the new party, he and his criminal key-men could control the inside organization. Winters and the honest group of labor leaders around him would be shorn of power. The crooks would establish the most complete mechanism of plunder on a huge scale in the

history of graft unless something were done to check them. To be effective that something must come from within the ranks. Then and there he reached his decision. He would formally join the Forward Party.

In the excitement of that determination, together with the strain of his enforced alienation from Dorothy, Hugh was guilty of a dereliction. He had intended to assign a pair of trustworthy men to Nick Cuprane. Not until late the next evening did he think of it. Then he could not reach the right men until morning. Their initial report was unsatisfactory. They had not located their man. It included an item to the effect that a young girl, beautiful and smartly dressed, had been making inquiries about the missing Cuprane.

Dorothy had been less forgetful than Hugh. Although it was not her day for making the rounds, she went down into the heart of the district. Little information resulted from her search. Satellites of Happy James, usually only too eager to help out his daughter, were uneasy and evasive under her questioning. With difficulty did she find out where Cuprane lived, with a little dressmaker's assistant named Adele, in a quiet Second Avenue rooming house. It took the better part of twenty-four hours to locate Adele. This was partly due to difficulties in the telephone service. Inexplicable delays and cut-offs hampered her. She became suspicious that the wire was being tapped.

Going uptown to a hotel booth, she finally got the girl.

'Is this Adele?'

A broken, frightened tremolo came to her over the wire. 'Who — who is it?'

'You wouldn't know me. Can I see you somewhere? At once.'

'I don't know who you are.'

'I'm Miss James. I don't mean you any harm,' said Dorothy persuasively.

'I don't know you,' reiterated the voice, with a sort of piteous obstinacy.

'It's about Nick.'

'I don't know. I wouldn't dare —— Oh, please, please don't ask me.' The voice broke off in miserable sobbings. The wire clicked once and was silent.

Not until morning did Dorothy receive final confirmation of what she dreaded. The newspaper account was not very conspicuous, because occurrences of the kind had become so common. Someone had given information about a gang of marijuana smugglers, operating by plane. There had been a road battle outside the flying field in New Jersey, with one fatality. Papers on the dead man indicated that he was a minor crook named Nick Cuprane.

Dorothy fought off her dizziness. She tried to persuade herself that this was no more than the logical, inevitable outcome of a criminal career. It would not do. First Niemer, now Cuprane. Then all the rest of it must be true; everything that the hideous map in Hugh's rooms had indicated with their spiderish webs. How could it be? How could she believe her father such a monster?

A burning necessity beset her. She must see Hugh. But she dared not trust the telephone. In the next block was a telegraph office. She hurried thither, and

sent her message in duplicate to Hugh's office and his apartment. She came back to wait feverishly.

An hour, two hours, three hours. No answer. A car drove up. She hurried to the door to forestall the maid. Happy James confronted her.

'How long since you have written to that lover of yours?' he asked in a deadened tone.

'I've never written him in my life.'

He nodded. He had learned something of importance for him to know. Suddenly he thrust the pale-blue form of a special-haste telegram into her face.

'You telegraphed him, though. Did you? Answer me.'

'Yes.'

'Here's the telegram. He'll never see it.' He tore it to bits and scuffled them under his feet. 'Miss Judas!' he spat at her.

CHAPTER V

MADISON SQUARE GARDEN was packed to the last seat. It was the final, great Forward Party rally of the campaign. Frank J. Winters, the nominee for President, was there with his running mate, Caleb Keeler, and half a dozen lesser but still nationally known figures. But the man whose presence aroused even the oldest and least impressionable of the men in the press seats below was Hugh Farragut. He was to speak, to champion the new cause; so much they knew. But what line would he take? No copies of his address had been handed out. Rumor spread and swelled that the special prosecutor was going to 'rip off the lid.' With him were the two devoted young giants, Harris Magill and Carson Wilde, whom the political writers had dubbed Right Guard and Left Guard.

No man among the massed thousands was less excited nor, perhaps, more unhappy than the focus of this interest. In Hugh Farragut's pocket rested a note, written in even, clear, unhurried script, such as seemed to him the very embodiment of Dorothy James's personality.

Hugh:

You have forced the choice on me and I have made it. I know at last how unkind and unjust you have been. Please do not try to see me again — ever.

DOROTHY

Just at the time when Nick Cuprane's 'planted' murder should have brought Dorrie to him, this message had been delivered to his apartment. What lay back of it? What ingenuity of fraud had Happy James devised to turn her against him? What could he do? How could he get to see her, persuade her to listen, undeceive her? There had been no time to go to her house, even had an effort to force himself upon her promised any success. His telephone call had met with a toneless assurance from a maid that Miss James was out of town. For long? Indefinitely.

It was a shattering blow. But Hugh had to carry on. What else was there to do? If only he could make it seem to himself worth while now; make anything seem worth while without Dorothy; convince himself that the fight in which he was enlisted was bigger than any love. Everything seemed purposeless, meaningless. There was no substitute for Dorrie; not duty nor acclaim nor the sense of service performed. He tried desperately to free his mind of her; for the moment to concentrate on what was before him; to centre his immediate thought upon Caleb Keeler who sat near him.

The vice-presidential candidate was an example of what he most distrusted in labor's political ranks. A solemn, puffy man in his early fifties, he had abandoned his loyalty to Old Guard Republicanism and joined the new party, obviously for profit. His record was that of a faithful machine politician, dubious of repute and until recently, obscure. Because of his new prominence, and a few other suspicious phases of

leadership, Hugh had deferred thus long his own allegiance to the new cause. Keeler, he believed, must be handled later.

Hugh's name was being spoken by the chairman. He rose to face a roaring multitude. Without gift of ornamental oratory, he knew how to capture and retain men's attention by simplicity and directness. Now he had to make an effort to shake off his lethargy of spirit, to forget the pain and emptiness within. He began: all that he had to say, he told them, could be said in fifteen minutes.

'I am in this fight because not politics but crime is the issue. In four years of specialization I have learned something of crime. It is an organized industry. A group of powerful, hidden men control it. Through it they intend to control our national destiny. They are in the councils of all parties. Their authority is growing, and with it their boldness. Should their plans work out, the savagest tyranny of fascism, the wildest excesses of communism, which have brought Europe to ruin, will be nothing to what we, the law-abiding, freedom-loving citizens of the United States, will be made to suffer.

'What have the old parties done to check the advance of these plotters? Nothing. Big Business, dominating the Republican Party, is too much the ally of the master-racketeers — though often a reluctant, even an enforced ally — to clean them out. The Democracy, split and wavering, has shown no capacity to meet the threat. If we are to be saved, we must have a national alignment against crime. That is

why I am for Frank J. Winters, the candidate of the Forward Party.'

In the cataclysm of applause, a few of the wise reporters noted that he had ignored the custom of naming both nominees.

'I have talked with Frank J. Winters about these hidden men. I have told him what I now tell you: that because of their power and protection banks are robbed, drugs are peddled to innocent children, girls are seduced and enslaved, business is systematically blackmailed, gangsters operate unchecked and unafraid, and our jails are delivered, by corrupt judges and prostituted boards, of their convicted murderers, thugs, and rapists. From every such crime these hidden men draw a percentage.

'Without political convictions, with no other thought but profit, they have burrowed into every party. And by that I mean this Forward Party as well as the others. This, too, I have told Frank Winters. I have warned him that, if I am to speak, it must be without any check. He said: "Go ahead, Farragut. Tell 'em the facts. We can stand it."

'So tonight I am going to bring these hidden men out of hiding. I am going to give you their names; eminent names, some of them, in law, in finance, in labor as well as in politics. For every one I name, I have the convincing record.'

This time the clamor carried a new note; amazement, excitement, anticipation, with perhaps a deeper undertone of protest. The occupant of a front gallery seat rose, yelling foul threats. He was pulled down.

Gracey of *The Sun*, his lips close to the ear of Parlett of the *Herald Tribune*, trumpeted:

'This'll be the big whoop of the campaign.'

'Libellous as hell,' the *Herald Tribune* man returned.

'If Farragut says he's got it, he's got it.'

The man on the rostrum was leaning forward now, making dumb-show appeals for quiet. He leaned further, groped, clutched the microphone, sagged down, then, with face twisted, recovered himself. The hubbub died. A shriek rang out from below him, the more shocking for being from a man's throat. A great voice bellowed:

'Shot! By God, they've shot him.'

'They've got Farragut, the bastards!'

'Where's the son-of-a-bitch that ——'

'That's him, in the side gallery. He's trying to make a getaway.'

'No; he made the lobby.'

'Get him!' 'Kill him!' 'Kill the murderin' thug!'

A wave of frenzy swept the assemblage. Fights broke out in a dozen spots. A massed rush clogged the aisles. Some fool shouted, 'Fire!' Riot was imminent.

Winters had jumped from his seat and was scattering the platform guests right and left before the impact of his heavy shoulders as he thrust his way to Hugh, now being supported by Harris Magill and Carson Wilde.

'Did they get you, Farragut?' he cried.

'It's nothing. In the shoulder. I can go on.'

'For Christ's sake, Chief!' sobbed the giant Magill, agonized.

'Are *you* going hysterical on me? Get me up, both of you.'

'Let me get a doctor,' pleaded Wilde.

'Later.'

'Don't take the risk, Farragut,' protested the candidate.

Speaking strongly, Hugh said: 'There's going to be hell to pay in a minute if someone doesn't get this crowd in hand.... Now, boys; hold me as high as you can. Steady! Right.'

A wild yell rose from the mass as the wounded man raised his good hand.

Towering above the tumult, with voice and gesture and by the force of a magnetism hitherto unexerted and unsuspected by himself, he brought the turbulent thousands into subjection to his will; compelled them to attention. He was smiling when, above an awed and murmurous hush, he began to speak again.

'Some enthusiast,' said he, 'led away by the fervor of his convictions, has used an argument for which I have no immediate answer. It points, however, certain charges which I have just advanced to you. If for the moment I am unable — am unable — to — to ——'

The smile faded. Hugh's head lapsed slowly forward.

'He's gone!' yelled someone. A deep, vengeful roar followed.

They lowered him to the platform. He was carried out through crowds which sombrely parted before him in a silence more formidable than any tumult.

Parlett, pressing forward, panted in the ear of his fellow reporter:

'This'll make him.'

'If it doesn't kill him.'

At the hospital the first reports were cautiously optimistic. The wound, deep though it was, had not touched the lung. Barring complications, there was no cause for worry. But Gilroy James, located after midnight and brought in to add the weight of his surgical authority to the prognosis, looked dubious. He had seen that type of wound before.

Hugh Farragut had been shot with a Crittenden compression-pistol, silent and of great penetration. Wounds of this kind too often set up infection. The wouldbe murderer had escaped; no trace of him was found.

Within forty-eight hours Hugh was alternating between delirium and coma. In his semi-lucid moments he would say but one word, over and over: 'Dorrie! Dorrie! Dorrie!' Sometimes in accents of complaint and reproach; again pleading, beseeching. Consultation of the leading medical experts brought concurrence upon one point; whoever 'Dorrie' was, she must be found and brought there.

'I know,' said Gilroy James. 'I'll get her.'

But his best endeavors went for nothing. Meantime, and within that same forty-eight hours, the name of Hugh Farragut leapt to the eye of every headline reader, rang in the ears of every radio-listener in the country. His martyrdom, if such it were to prove, would sweep the Forward Party to victory. On such fortuitous events rather than on principles does a great democracy base its vital decisions. Hourly

bulletins were issued from the hospital. The newspapers set a death-watch. Letters, telegrams, flowers poured in. No message came from Dorothy James.

Clean blood and a hardy constitution finally prevailed over the infection left by the steel missile. Officially Hugh Farragut was pronounced convalescent in a few days. But a deeper wound was still poisoning his vitality. He was making no effort to recover. Nothing interested him. He was a model patient, docile to every direction; but he threatened to develop that most baffling of post-operative sequels, the passive willingness to become 'hospitalized,' to sink into an unresisting negativity.

Even the triumph at the polls of the party, to which he had so greatly contributed, left him unmoved. Frank J. Winters himself came to see him, to ask him whether he would consider a Cabinet post. Hugh only regarded him with lack-lustre eyes and said that he had other work to do if he could muster up energy to do it. Gilroy James, entering, turned out the coming President of the United States, and authoritatively barred all politics until further notice.

Something, however, had to be devised to keep that flaccid mind stirring. Office work was restricted to vital decisions and limited to one hour per day.

The patient went through with it conscientiously and without a trace of interest.

Doctor Gilroy James was a great surgeon, one of the greatest. But he was something more, a psychologist of penetration and resource. He decided upon a new angle. Hugh Farragut was making little effort to live

on his own account; possibly, when he came to appreciate what his life meant to others, it would stir his enfeebled powers of resistance.

Coming in upon the sick man one noon as he lay staring at the ceiling, the surgeon growled:

'Stick out your ear, young fellow. I've got something to hang on it.'

'All right, Doctor.'

'"All right, Doctor," be damned! I've had about enough of your sulks.'

'I'm not sulking,' returned Hugh wearily.

'I don't know what you'd call it, then. You're giving us no help. You're laying down on your job.'

'Why don't you let me go back to the office?'

'And have you back here in a week? Your job right now is to show some guts and get well. You're not half trying.'

'What do you want me to do?' queried the patient, with that docility which was one of the most disheartening symptoms.

'You're supposed to be a gentleman, aren't you?'

Hugh managed a thin smile. 'Allowed, for the sake of the argument.'

'I propose to see that you act accordingly. All kinds of people have been flooding this place with all kinds of trash for you. Messages, gifts, flowers, telegrams, letters — I don't know what-the-hell-all. There's a vanload of flowers alone, outside.'

'Give them to the sick people in the wards.'

'There you go!' sputtered the surgeon. 'That's a sweet attitude, isn't it! What about the people who

sent 'em? A lot of 'em are your friends. All of 'em are your well-wishers. It wouldn't hurt you a bit to get busy and do a little personal acknowledging. Now, suppose we get in a husky, free-acting secretary and go to it.'

'Just as you say,' agreed Hugh, so uninterestedly that the surgeon went out and almost bit a nurse.

Dutifully the patient waded through the formidable list. At least it tired him out and he slept less fitfully. On the second day he came upon a card which had accompanied a huge box of roses. 'Miss Dorcas Danvier Simms, 20 East 70th Street,' with a scribbled line, 'You can lick this handicap.' Who on earth was Dorcas Danvier Simms? Dolly Simms! he remembered now; Dorrie's friend who had joshed her about being the Widow Farragut. He recalled further having once rashly offered her a handicap of three strokes a round, which cost him just twenty dollars and the loss of some self-esteem as a golfer. Dolly Simms! She might know. The nurse, overjoyed at the new liveliness exhibited by her patient, willingly acceded to his request and telephoned Miss Simms. Certainly; Miss Simms would be down within the hour.

Greeting the small, tawny creature, bright-eyed and alert, who stopped to consult her for instructions, the nurse, Miss Garland, wondered whether this might not be the sought-after Dorrie, but was disabused of that notion by her first words in the sick-room.

'Hello, old lad. Winged you, did they?'

The nurse withdrew, leaving them alone.

'Do you know anything about Dorrie?'

'Hasn't she been to see you?'

'No. I didn't expect that. But where is she? Is she all right?'

'Why didn't you expect it?'

'It's all off,' he answered dully.

'Hugh Farragut,' said Miss Simms, suddenly become severe, 'I know Dorrie James. She's had more men crazy over her than any girl in our lot. I don't think she ever gave a serious thought to anyone until you came along. And when Dorrie is serious, she's *serious*. If it's broken off, it's your fault. What have you been up to?'

'It's no one's fault. But it was she who broke off. She wrote me.' He made a listless gesture toward the bedstand.

'The letter's there? Meaning I'm to look at it?'

'If you like.'

Dolly drew the note from its envelope. Her breath caught; her eyes widened. 'When did this come?'

'What does it matter? It's plain enough . . . The day I was shot.'

'Excuse me a minute. I want to ask your nurse if I'm staying too long.'

Against his peevish protest she went out. To Miss Garland she put an anxious question:

'How much nerve has he got?'

'Not too much. No reserve.'

'Can he stand a jar?'

'What kind? Disappointment?'

'No. The other way. But a shock.'

'Certainly. All you can put on the ball.'

Dolly came back to Room 340, walked to the invalid chair and stood over its occupant.

'You're an idiot, Hugh.'

'All right: I'm an idiot. Why?'

'Don't you know Dorrie well enough to realize that it isn't in her to write a note like that?'

'There's the note.'

'It isn't Dorrie's.'

'*What!*'

'That isn't her writing. Not even a fair forgery. Here! Lay off! I'm not Dorrie,' she laughed, for he had both her hands and was gripping them bloodless.

'But where is she?' he demanded when he had recovered poise. 'Why hasn't she sent me any word?'

'Ah, that I don't know.' The gay visage became grave. 'Nobody has seen her. I don't like it, Hugh.'

Hugh Farragut lifted himself from the chair. Life had come back into his eyes; resolution into the set of his mouth.

'I'll find her,' said he. 'Will you send Miss Garland to me? And that secretary in the waiting-room. And — and God bless you, Dolly! Come again and make it soon. Nothing can stop me now,' he proclaimed exultantly.

Doctor Gilroy James tried stopping him. His percentage of success was small. To be sure, he did manage to extort a promise that his patient would stay in hospital another week. But only on condition that he be allowed to see his office force and do what work he chose. Also Hugh put in a request for a sirloin steak

and a bottle of ale. Doctor James announced to a reporter whom he encountered in the hallway that Hugh Farragut was cured.

Spurred by an urgency which had been missing for long weeks from his chief's voice, Harris Magill answered his telephone summons on the jump. At sight of Hugh, he gave a yelp of joy.

'What kind of shot did the Doc give you, Boss?'

'Never mind that. I've got a hot job for you.' The giant had been one of those who had reported no progress on the earlier effort to locate Dorothy James. 'Miss James has got to be found. She is somewhere where she doesn't see the papers, or I'd have had word from her. I believe her to be under guard.'

Magill nodded. He fiddled with his hat, cleared his throat, looked uneasily at his large, gnarled hands.

'Well, come on!' snapped his superior. 'Got any ideas?'

'You aren't — er — well — you aren't secretly married or anything to Miss James, are you, Boss?' he finally got out.

'What are you getting at? What do you mean? Or anything?' demanded Hugh wrathfully.

'Well, I only meant you wouldn't have any of her petticoats or anything like that around, I suppose.'

'Certainly *not*. What's in that alleged mind of yours, you young idiot?'

'Don't go violent on me, Boss. You know, I was on the laundry racket. And I learned some things. Even laundry in New York has its own individual markings for its customers. So I had a thought. If

we could raise some of her lingerie, I'd set a watch on every washee-washee in and around New York. If she's anywhere near here ——'

'Stout lad! Why, the big mastodon's got brains beneath that brawn. Watch the James house for the next laundry call. Get the marking and spread your net. If they'd only let me out of this damned germ-coop,' he continued boyishly and ungratefully, 'I'd get after it, myself. But I dare say you'll do it better.'

'So do I,' returned the underling complacently. 'You stick around and figure on politics. What's this I heard about Winters wanting you for Attorney-General?'

'I turned him down. Maybe I'll reconsider,' said Hugh. 'I'm feeling different now.' Vigor and the strong man's lust of battle in a good cause were running again in his veins. With Dorrie restored to his hopes, he could face anything.

In particular he desired to face Happy James. That astute judge of men and events was not over-surprised at receiving an invitation to visit the hospital. Would he come? Most certainly. Delighted to. He expected and was prepared for an attempt to ferret out some news of his daughter. But beyond a courteous inquiry as to her health, Hugh ignored the topic. After thanking the politician for his call, Hugh remarked reflectively:

'Election Day has passed.'

'Yes. You win,' was the good-humored reply.

'At least I'm still alive.'

'That's something,' conceded the other. 'But I

don't think you're looking too well. Are you sure you're out of danger?'

Hugh's smile was genial. 'Precisely what I wanted to speak about. I'm not as sure as I'd like to be. Since I've known Dorrie, I've come to set a new value on living.'

The father murmured dubiously that it would not be wise to build too much upon that.

'Yes; I'm counting on living a long time,' pursued the younger man with unabated cheerfulness. 'In fact, I'm specializing on it. Apropos of that I'm going to tell you of an interesting bet. At least, it should interest *you*.'

'I'm not much of a betting man, myself.'

'No. You prefer sure things. I rather think this would come under that head. The bettors are two young friends of mine; rather sporting in their tendencies. You'll pardon me if I don't mention names. They have put up quite a sum of money on what I believe to be a unique proposition. Wouldn't you like to make a note of it?'

'My memory is good, Farragut. As you may have heard.'

'Yes? Well, here's the bet. Fifty thousand dollars a side. If I should justify your dark misgivings and die under unusual or suspicious circumstances, the pot goes to the one who first shoots you.'

'Me?' said Happy James, for once startled and discomposed. 'Shoot me?' He appeared quite aggrieved at the idea. 'Is that fair?' he demanded.

'The bet? As a matter of fact, it isn't,' admitted

Hugh. 'One of the bettors is a crack big-game shot. He should give odds to the other, don't you think?'

The leader recovered his poise. 'This is a strange place,' he observed, 'to threaten a man with murder.'

'Stranger than the parish house of a Catholic church?'

Happy coughed. 'I'm sure my daughter will be interested in learning of your gangster activities.'

'I'm sure she'd approve. You see, Dorrie wants to keep us both alive. So do I. So, I trust, do you. This seems to be the best way. Thank you so much for coming, Mr. James.'

Happy James left in a frame of mind hardly appropriate to his nickname. He would have to find some way of saving his bacon other than wiping out Hugh Farragut.

Four days later, Hugh heard from Harris Magill. The laundry trick had worked. He had located Dorothy James in a private retreat for the dangerously insane near Riverhead, Long Island.

CHAPTER VI

'CRAZY?' said Honor Slogage. 'She's no more crazy than I am, if you ask me.'

'Nobody has asked you, my dear,' said her husband, with austerity. 'It is no concern of yours or mine.'

The William Slogages had been for three years trusted employees in Doctor Courtenay Tell's Retreat for Mental Cases, seven miles from Riverhead, Long Island, he as superintendent of the estate, she as a sort of combination guard and nurse.

No institution in the country is conducted with more privacy and discretion than the Tell Retreat. The charges are high, five hundred dollars a week minimum. Everything is done on a superior scale; the patients live in luxury. Melancholia is the prevalent type among the inmates. Once committed, few get out.

The Slogages enjoyed a remunerative position. They lived in a pleasant cottage inside the high, guarded walls which enclose four acres of park and garden, with their five-year-old twins. Honor Slogage was a superb valkyr of a woman, a formidable athlete who had twice won a berth on the Olympic team, in shot-put and hammer-throw. Her husband, a bony, stooped, bespectacled, keen-witted little man, fifteen years her senior, found it expedient to treat her with

condescending severity, lest the natural superiority of the male be infringed.

It was the second day after Dorothy James's arrival, accompanied by her sad-visaged father and a solemn alienist, that Mrs. Slogage delivered her opinion and meekly received her consort's rebuke.

'And she's so bewildered and so plucky, poor child,' added Honor beneath her breath.

Dorothy's mind was struggling out from beneath a cloud. Something seemed to be pressing upon it, dulling it; there had been a strange, not unpleasant inertia of body and soul which she would not even try to shake off; a queer, tainted taste in her mouth which seemed to date from her morning coffee the day after that dreadful scene which ended with her father's calling her 'Miss Judas.' She was leaving her father's house forever that morning, to go to Hugh. How she did in reality leave it was lost in that thick mental blur. Vaguely she could recall being questioned by grave men who occasionally withdrew for consultation, and seeing her tearful maid pack her trunk. It did not matter. Nothing mattered except Hugh, and she was too dulled to plan about him. That must wait.

Then came the grisly realization, when she looked through the barred windows of her luxurious suite, upon uniformed guards patrolling the walls. All the high courage of her character was needed to save her from a nervous collapse which might well have become mental. If the purpose of this imprisonment was to break her down and alienate her mind, she would fight it to the end. She would make no protest:

it would, she knew, be futile. She would concentrate her hope and her faith on Hugh Farragut. Sooner or later he would search for and find her. She knew nothing, of course, about the forged letter.

Isolation was the hardest phase of her imprisonment. Newspapers were denied her. She had no access to radio. Only the vaguest rumors of what was going on in the world reached her. With the double purpose of keeping her mind busy and of fitting herself for life with Hugh, she sent out for books on government, economics, and politics, and prepared for herself a course of study. Sooner than she had hoped she found that, though unhappy, she was no longer in fear.

The shock, when it came, was the more disruptive. She had risen with the sun, and looking out idly noted two of the guards, relieved of night duty, chatting as they walked beneath.

'They got that guy, Farragut, at last.'

'Good job. He ain't dead, though, is he?'

'Not yet, but soon.'

Already she knew the discipline of the place. No employee was allowed to discuss with the patients 'outside' matters, or to answer questions without referring them to Doctor Tell, the presiding genius of the place. She sent a message and when he came begged for news of Hugh.

Blandly he advised her that she must not trouble her brain with such matters; she was there for complete rest and detachment from outer interests. He ordered a soothing draft before bed. Dorothy threw the dose out of the window and set her teeth in a

bitter determination. If Hugh was dead, she would kill her father and herself... No; not that. Even to think such things would lead to madness. Better to believe with all her forces that Hugh was alive. She must believe it. She would believe it.

A petty near-tragedy brought unexpected relief from the unendurable strain of uncertainty. Of the Slogage twins the boy, an untamed little demon with a cherubic face and seductive manners, had formed a violent attachment for Dorothy, and would leave the most exciting pastime to trot around the garden after her, with voluble confidences. She soon came to return his affection; it made a soft spot in the rigor of her existence. Now, with this new terror upon her, she sought out little Philip.

Philip was an omnivorate; he tested everything he found with tooth and tongue, frequently involving himself in grief. As Dorothy, seeking him, came into the rose-circle, she heard alarming sounds and beheld an inverted twin, suspended by the heels and forcefully shaken in his mother's mighty grip. The child was black in the face.

There flashed into the girl's mind an episode at a dinner-party where a Russian diplomat had saved a choking guest from imminent death and had afterward illustrated his method before an admiring group. Wrenching the boy from his mother's grasp, she set him on his feet. But he was already too far gone to stand. Exerting all her powers she held him dangling by the wrists. Honor began to clutch the air and shriek for Doctor Tell.

'Stop it!' snapped the girl. 'There's no time. Do as I tell you. Hold him like this.'

Transferring her burden to the other, she spread her arms, scissor-fashion and brought her two forearms inward upon the laboring diaphragm with all the force of her lithe muscularity. There was a spasmodic '*Ough!*' as the wind was forced upward as from a sharply compressed bellows. The little fellow's eyes protruded; his mouth flew open and a large, black button, popping from it, rolled on the ground. He began to cry. In her relief Honor gave him one tremendous spank and keeled over in a dead faint.

The next morning the two Slogages came to Dorothy's suite. Their thanks were fervent, though brief. It was evident to her that something important was coming. Honor Slogage began:

'This is against the rules. If it's known, we lose our jobs.'

'Let me do the talking, my dear,' put in her half-portion husband. He addressed the patient. 'Something has happened to you. You're not so well. What is it? Can we help?'

The girl braced herself for what might be coming. 'Will you tell me something?'

'That depends,' said the man cautiously; but the mother breathed, 'Anything on God's earth.'

'Is Hugh Farragut alive?'

The pair exchanged glances. 'Yes,' answered both.

'Is he going to get well?'

'They think so.' Honor moved forward to set an arm around her, but she freed herself.

'I'm all right,' said she, with an effort. 'Is there any way in which I could get a note to him?'

This time the glance exchanged by the pair was troubled. That was too great a risk.

'Never mind,' amended the girl quickly. 'Could you get a message to him by word of mouth?'

'Not to let him know where you are,' stated Slogage.

'I shouldn't expect that.'

'I know some nurses at St. Luke's,' said Honor. 'It might be arranged. What's the message?'

'Just tell him that I love him always.' For the first time since her incarceration the girl smiled. 'I think it might help him to get well.'

(It did, indeed, help Hugh to get well, when delivered three days later, and with such undesirable impetus that the authorities had to set a guard on his room lest he break parole and escape.)

Up to this time, had Happy James come to the Retreat, Dorothy would have refused to see him; if compelled to see him, she would have refused to speak. Now she evolved another plan.

It could hardly be expected of the daughter of that blood that she should be wholly without guile. She was now ready to adopt any plan which might give her a chance of being restored to the world and of joining Hugh. By an adroit pretence she might prevail upon her father to let her free.

There was little joy left in life for the political schemer after he had engineered her removal to the asylum. Bitterly he regretted that 'Miss Judas.' What, after all, had she done? What proof was there

that she intended to betray him to Hugh Farragut? A girl who imagines herself in love cannot be held to the strictest accountability. Happy accused himself of having been too hasty and certainly too harsh. At the same time, he could not afford to take any chances with her. But his heart was sore with loneliness. To the Retreat he had been sending daily messages, frequent flowers, and books, all of which were unacknowledged. At last word came from her; she wanted to see him. With high hopes he hurried to the spot.

A subdued and thoughtful Dorothy met him. She spared him any reproaches or questions. His story was to have been that she had suffered a sudden and mysterious attack which had left her mentally weakened — oh, only temporarily, of course. It was not necessary for him to produce it. She accepted the fact of her being where she was without protest. The startling thought came to him that perhaps she was, in fact, a little unbalanced, realized it, and was cooperating in her own cure. But she was perfectly calm and sensible when she began to talk to him about her reading.

Too astute to pretend a complete and abrupt switch to his side, which would have been patently absurd, she assumed a judicial attitude. Her intensive study of political methods and operations, she explained, had convinced her that she might have been too ready and too prejudiced in her judgments between Hugh and Happy. Crime, of course, she did not condone; but she could comprehend that in a complex political

organization, the leaders could not control all details. She was honestly trying, said she, to keep an open mind.

Tears of relief came to Happy James's blue eyes. Here was a chance to win his 'Miss Dolliver' back to him.

With all those arts of persuasion and plausibility of which he was master, he expounded the text that omelettes cannot be made without broken eggs. That he had been obliged to wink at things that he regretted, he did not deny; but he had never connived at crime or corruption. On the contrary, now that his power was becoming co-ordinated, he planned a campaign to eliminate the baser elements. Dorothy listened with a sweet gravity.

Warming to his theme, Happy branched out into his own personal projects. Victory had expanded his ego. The election of Frank J. Winters, he told his astonished listener, was his own strategic achievement. Quietly he had switched from the Democratic cause and by his tactics had carried New York State for the Forward Party, all from the loftiest motives, based upon his belief that the future of the nation would be safest in that control. Not Winters's control, however. The President-elect was a well-meaning man, but an idealist, a dreamer, impractical. The actual party management would be vested in the Vice-President, 'Cale' Keeler, who would operate behind the scenes, backed by a hand-picked Congress and a string of labor organization men covering the country, each responsible to a central control. Had the ex-

pounder designated these key-men, Dorothy might have identified several of the names as having been on Hugh Farragut's secret crime-map.

'And do you know who is to have the controlling hand in all this?' he continued, leaning forward and lowering his voice. 'Happy Harold James! I may not even take an office; that isn't decided yet. But I shall be IT. We'll move to Washington, Miss Dolliver, and you'll see the machinery operate as no woman in our history has seen it — from the very centre. You'll have a hand in it, too. You know how much I think of your judgment. You and I are going to be the Inner Council. You'll have Power, my girl, Power with a big P. There's nothing in life so exciting, so exhilarating, so glorious as Power,' he rhapsodized.

'Mussolini? Hitler? Franco?' he continued. 'They overplayed their hand, all of 'em. And look at Europe now! We're the only great nation left on the map. And your old Dad is the man who's going to run it, and you're going to help. Is that better than being the wife of a little two-by-four legal dachshund!' he exulted.

Astounded and appalled at this revelation of the dictator-complex back of that handsome and suave visage, the girl wondered for the moment whether he was not, himself, a fit subject for the Retreat. It was too monstrous to be quite sane. Was it in this way that tyrants developed?

An inherent dramatic talent helped her to assume a mien of marvelling admiration.

'Shall I really go to Washington with you, Dad?'

'I wouldn't go without you.'

'When?'

'Ah, that's another matter.' Exaltation passed from him. Confident though he was of having re-established his sway over the girl, he was not taking any final chance on it; not until Hugh Farragut had been safely shorn of power. There was another reason, too, which he would not reveal to her. 'You will have to be patient, Miss Dolliver. You're not unhappy here?' he asked wistfully.

'Unhappy? No. But I do long to get into the big game with you.'

'That'll come. That'll come. Just get a good rest, and the next you know you'll be hunting for the swellest house in Washington.'

He bade her good-bye with the affectionate promise to look in every few days, though, he informed her with a complacent smile, he was being kept pretty busy these days, as she could understand.

While Happy James was spreading the peacock's tail of his ambition before his daughter, another intimate interview was in process which threatened his plans.

Frank J. Winters had all but forced his way into the St. Luke's Hospital room. Hugh was glad to see him. He had already estimated the successful candidate as a man of rugged purpose, sound principles, and receptive intelligence. With such a man one could talk openly.

Winters wasted no time. 'Are you fit to talk business?'

'Yes.'

'I need you even more than I thought, as Attorney-General. Will you take it?'

'No.'

'Why not?'

'Your administration is going to be packed with crooks and racketeers.'

'Root 'em out, then.'

'How could I? I wouldn't have a free hand.'

The Winters jaw jutted. 'Who says so?'

The young prosecutor straightened on his elbow. 'Who says I would?' he countered.

'I do. Is that good enough?'

Hugh looked at him long and penetratingly. Then he said: 'Yes. But there is one condition. Hands off and no immunity for any man no matter who he is.'

'Hugh Farragut,' said Winters slowly, 'if you get the goods on any man in our party or any other party, I'll be back of you. That's a promise. Want it in writing?'

'If I needed writing from you, I wouldn't touch the job.'

'Thank you,' returned the other. 'Shall I give it out to the papers?'

'Not yet. I've got something else on my mind. Until that is cleared up, I'd rather keep away from print as much as possible.'

The President-elect shook hands and left. An event of overwhelming historical importance had been settled in eight minutes.

CHAPTER VII

WHAT first struck Doctor Courtenay Tell about his visitor was his extraordinary calm; extraordinary since most callers at the Retreat were, for one reason or another, excited. This quietude might, in the expert's opinion, indicate repression. It might be symptomatic of a deranged mind. To professional alienists of Doctor Tell's type, a majority of the human race are under suspicion of mental derangement. The rest are uninteresting.

The visitor said, 'You are Doctor Tell?'

'I am,' boomed the physician. He had cultivated the demeanor, even when indoors, of one who habitually lives under a top-hat. To this he added a touch of annoyance. He disliked callers immediately after breakfast. He did not know who this pale, thin young man with the confident manner was, nor how he got in there. He said as much rather sharply.

'I am Hugh Farragut.'

The alienist stiffened. 'The special prosecutor?'

'Not for the purposes of this interview.'

'Then to what am I indebted ——'

'I would like to see Miss Dorothy James.'

'Impossible. Quite impossible.'

'Miss James is still here?'

'This is a private institution, Mr. Farragut. If yours is a private errand ——'

'I should be glad to keep it so.'

'—— it can surely wait until I communicate with the family.'

'I'm sorry. It can't.'

Doctor Courtenay Tell rose. 'You may return tomorrow at visitors' hour, ten-thirty.'

'Doctor Tell, I am going to see Dorothy James and I am going to see her now.'

'Upon whose authority?'

'My own. We are going to be married. At once.'

The alienist regarded him with an indulgent smile. 'Ah! That I should consider doubtful. Very doubtful.'

'Why?'

'There would be difficulties in obtaining the necessary medical permit. The patient's mental condition is not such as to justify present marriage.'

Hugh felt a stir of misgiving. He knew something of the power and cohesiveness of the medical ring which had since 1938 become dominant in New York over the old, conservative, high-minded element; encroaching steadily and subtly by virtue of political, judicial, and even criminal hook-ups, and he knew Courtenay Tell's position as a member of that ring. For himself he was not afraid. Dorothy was another matter.

'Who put Miss James here?' he demanded.

'That is a question which I am not obliged to answer,' was the bland reply. 'However, I may inform you that a medical commission of unimpeachable professional status attested the commitment. Further,

I may remind you that I am, myself, a member of the Council of the American Medical Association.'

The implication was not lost upon Hugh. All the prestige of that great and once honorable body would back a member of the Council. 'Yes,' said he. 'I've heard that racketeering has broken in even there. I haven't got around to that yet.'

The offended physician stalked to the door and threw it open. 'When you return tomorrow you may ask for my assistant. I can hold out little hope of your being permitted access to the patient.'

'If I return tomorrow,' said Hugh, with deceptive mildness, 'it will be with a writ of *habeas corpus*.'

Quite undisturbed by this familiar threat, since he and the local courts had a working agreement, the alienist unconsciously plagiarized an earlier Long Island politician, possibly forgetting that that gentleman's legal interpretations had landed him in Sing Sing. 'Writs,' he declared, 'don't go here.'

'My subpoenas do.'

Doctor Tell blinked. 'I understood that you are not here officially. Have you a subpoena for Miss James with you?'

'No. I shall not need one. Any court will issue a subpoena duces tecum for you. The duces tecum will cover your records on the James case — *and* the patient.'

'The patient is in no state to be taken into court.'

'Tell, I'm not going to shadow-box with you any longer. A legal process with its inevitable publicity on this would be just as undesirable to me as to you. But

if you force my hand, I'll dig up evidence on this joint that will close your doors for good.'

'Blackmail, eh?' growled the alienist.

'Versus kidnapping,' retorted Hugh, unmoved. 'Are you going to let me see Dorothy James?'

The proprietor of the Retreat withdrew from the door and sat down at his desk. 'I'll have to call New York on that.'

'When you get it,' said Hugh blandly, 'would you kindly ask for Ostrander 7–1111? That is my office.'

The physician capitulated. 'Very well. You may see her. But the responsibility, legal and medical, is yours. And I shall insist upon being present.'

Glumly he led the way to the girl's suite. Dorothy, at his summons, came languidly from the bedroom, saw Hugh, stopped dead with dilated eyes and working lips; then, with a cry, sprang to him.

'I knew you'd come! I knew you'd come! Darling, how white you look!'

'I'm all right,' he said, 'now that I know you are.'

At that her long and valiant control broke. She pressed to him, trembling convulsively. 'Take me away! Take me away from this place!'

'Steady, Dorrie. Steady, darling.'

The composure of his voice, the comforting support of his arms restored her. 'Forgive me,' she murmured. 'I've been so terrified for you.'

'And I for you. It's all right now. I shan't leave you again.'

'No; don't. I couldn't stand it.'

'You don't propose to take Miss James away from

here without any formality of discharge,' protested Doctor Tell.

'I do.'

The physician said, in a despairing voice, 'How can I explain to Happy James?'

The others looked at him in surprise. The solemn and pretentious physician was shaking as if with ague. Evidently he was in desperate fear. Dorothy became a little pale. How was her father able to inspire such dread in a man of Doctor Courtenay Tell's standing unless he enjoyed the tyrannical authority, backed by a system of terrorization, which Hugh had attributed to him? She said:

'May I use your telephone?'

'To call Mr. James?' He hesitated. 'Oh, I suppose so.'

All three returned to his office. The girl signalled to Hugh to stay close by: the miserable alienist remained near of his own volition. They heard her say:

'Dad?... Yes.... Hugh is here.... Never mind; I haven't time now. We're coming up to town.... But I *am* coming.... Won't you please let me finish first? Then you can talk with Doctor Tell. But it won't make any difference.... Yes; leaving now.' She turned to Hugh. 'He wants us to come direct to the house. Will you?'

'Do you think that's best?'

'Yes. I want you to talk with him once more.'

'I'll take you there. But I won't leave you there.'

'No.' She spoke again into the transmitter. 'Yes, Dad; we'll both come.... No; we won't let anyone know we're coming. Be there in two hours.'

Hugh's car was waiting on a side road. Once settled into it with Dorrie beside him, he felt the immediate past dissolve like a sinister dream. Troubles ahead there might be: he would not give them a thought now. The joyous excitation of the girl's nearness exorcised fear. They would have it out with Happy James, once and for all, and no matter what his arguments or objections, they would be married by special emergency license which he could obtain under a new law.

'Oh, yes!' Dorrie exultantly agreed. She began to giggle in the reaction from the long strain. 'I'll put down my age as sixteen. I don't feel a bit older. In fact I feel a little crazy. That's funny, isn't it, darling; to be in an asylum and feel perfectly sane, and to get out and feel quite batty... 'tend to your steering, Hugh! You shaved a scale of paint off that post. Besides, remember that you're a dignified and important public official.'

Hugh grinned. 'Like secrets?'

'Love 'em.'

'Keep 'em?'

'Till death do us part — them and me.'

'Then I'll tell you one that only one other living person knows. You're going to be Mrs. Attorney-General of the United States.'

'*Hugh!* Truly? Isn't that marvellous!'

'Frank Winters offered me the job. Promised me a free hand. I've accepted. Think you'll like Washington, Dorrie?'

'This is the second invitation I've had to go there.'

'Is it? Who's my rival?'

'Dad. He's offered to let me pick out my own house.'

Gaiety waned from Hugh's expression to be replaced by speculation. 'Happy James going to Washington? What for?'

'I don't know exactly,' she replied, troubled. She could not bring herself to retail to Hugh those magniloquent braggings, those dreams of dictatorial sway. Wistfully she added: 'I still can't believe he's what you think, darling. It just isn't in his character.'

'He shut you up in an insane asylum,' came the grim reminder.

'I know. But he says there was a special reason. He's going to explain it all soon.'

'Maybe he can explain at the same time where all his money comes from.'

The girl brightened. 'It just happens that I know where he gets a good deal of it. I've seen papers. It comes from a gold mine in New Jersey.'

'New Jersey?' Hugh's eyebrows went up. 'I knew there used to be some small mines there. But I didn't realize that there was any commercial mining now.'

'Very commercial in our mine. It makes us quite a lot of money. And, you know we don't live extravagantly, dear,' she added, believing that she was telling the truth.

'Oh, no!' he commented. 'You've got only four cars, one country place, that new-fangled midget airplane of yours, two motor boats — by the way, do you

mind cutting out the airplane after we're married, except when I'm along?'

'No; I don't mind anything after we're married,' she answered contentedly. 'What are you going to do as Attorney-General, Hugh?'

'The same thing on a bigger scale,' he replied. Glancing at his face, Dorothy became suddenly unhappy. The spell of her father's charm was still upon her. It could not be true that with the assumption of his new official duties her husband would be hunting down her father like a beast of prey. Somewhere there was a misunderstanding; somewhere there must be solution, compromise.

They found Happy James waiting. As they came in, the light of a great relief glowed in his face. It puzzled Hugh. What fear had made him look ten years older? The two men shook hands without rancor. The politician's first word to Hugh was:

'Were you followed?'

'Not as far as I know.'

'Any trouble on the way?'

'Only Hugh's mad driving,' said the girl. 'Why?'

'Nothing.'

Dorothy plunged. 'Dad, we're going to be married. Right away.'

'Are you, Miss Dolliver?' he returned sadly. 'Then you've turned against me.'

'I haven't! I haven't!' she cried passionately. 'Oh, why must you both be so obstinate and bitter! If I could only make you understand each other.'

'I'm afraid we understand each other too well,' said

Hugh in a low tone. His heart was sore for Dorrie.

'I'm not being unreasonable,' argued Happy, with his most plausible air. 'You have the makings of a big man, Farragut, a man I'd be proud to have for a son-in-law, if you'll only quit this reform racket and make the most of your opportunities. It will never get you anywhere.' (The girl involuntarily smiled.) 'You've heard Dorothy say how she feels about it.'

'Not any more. I've changed, Dad.'

Both men turned to her, Happy startled and frowning, Hugh with an unspoken warning that she must not reveal too much.

'Yes; you've changed,' agreed her father, with profound melancholy. 'You've changed, Miss Dolliver.'

'I don't mean to change toward you; I don't want to change. Oh, Hugh! Can't you do something?'

'I've tried. Mr. James, you know how much respect I have for your ability. You are head and shoulders above the other men I've come up against. God knows I don't want to fight you. It's forced on me. You're forcing it on me. Why don't you give it up while — while there's time? Surely you have all the money you need. Let up a little. Take a vacation for a year. That's all I ask. It isn't so much, is it? The happiness of three of us may depend on it.'

Happy James spoke through a constricted throat. 'If I refuse, you steal my girl from me; poison her mind ——'

'That isn't fair, Dad,' broke in Dorothy with spirit.

He rose and came toward her, gasping. His face was

agonized, frightened. He staggered, struggling for speech. Both ran to him.

'Dad! What is it?'

'Don't know,' he muttered. 'Drink. In desk.'

'It's a stroke,' she cried.

'Who's his doctor?' asked Hugh sharply.

'Doctor Wilfred Cutler. There's the telephone book.'

'No. No doctor.' The stricken man had rallied a little. 'Don't need doctor. Get me upstairs. Don't leave me, daughter. Don't leave me now.'

'I won't,' she promised, terrified. Urgently she motioned to Hugh to telephone. He relinquished his hold to go to the instrument. Dorothy was leading her father to a chair when his form went limp, he sagged forward breaking the clasp of her arms, fell full length, and lay, sprawled, on the floor.

To Dorothy it seemed a blessing from Heaven that Doctor Cutler should be in his office, the more so since his hours had not yet begun. She could not know that this was not the sheer luck that it seemed. The physician was at the house in ten minutes.

'Grave,' he pronounced. 'Very grave. Did something occur to excite him?'

'I'm afraid so,' said Hugh.

Doctor Cutler's stern scrutiny took in both lovers. 'It must not recur. We shall need a nurse.'

'No. No nurse,' the sick man murmured. He clutched at Dorothy's hand.

'Couldn't I take care of him?' she asked the physician.

'Yes; yes,' from the sick-bed.

'If you feel able to,' agreed the physician.

At a time of less excitement it might have occurred to Hugh that high medical authorities do not, as a rule, yield so complacently to a patient's whims. He felt depressed. There would be no immediate marriage. Dorrie shot him a look of appeal. Her lips formed the silent words, 'I can't help it, Hugh.' He was obliged to leave.

For the rest of the week, though he called daily, he saw her for only a few moments. Her patient demanded all her attention. While reluctant to give an opinion as to the nature of the seizure, Doctor Cutler expressed himself satisfied with the progress made, but believed that weeks would be required to put the patient on his feet. To Dorothy's hopes of marriage he set a curt veto. It might be fatal to Happy James.

One morning, when Hugh had dropped in without telephoning, he found Dorothy in the library, her charge being asleep.

'Hugh, I'm going back.'

'Back where?'

'To Doctor Tell's.'

'Over my dead body!'

'I don't mean, to stay. I want to pack up my things. Doctor Cutler says I can leave Dad for a few hours.'

'It doesn't look good to me, Dorrie. Send your maid down.'

'That wouldn't do. There's someone there I have to see. You didn't meet Honor Slogage, did you?'

She told him of the woman athlete's devotion.

Hugh agreed that she ought not to leave permanently without bidding Mrs. Slogage good-bye.

'Yes; you'll have to go. I'll go with you.'

'I hoped you would,' said she simply.

Each time he had come to the house since Dorrie's return, Hugh had taken note of several huskies unobtrusively hanging about. As he held open the car door for her, this contingent vanished singly around the corner. That was all right, too. He had rather expected it.

Past Roslyn his companion said, 'Hugh, we're being followed by a car.'

'Two cars,' he corrected. 'But I hoped you wouldn't notice.'

'I'm not afraid.'

'You needn't be,' he chuckled. 'One of them is manned by my two young friends, Right and Left Guard. They'll take care of the others. Let's give 'em a run.'

Hugh's was a fast car. Pursuing motor-cops dropped away when they saw his number. Make what speed he might, he could not shake off the large open car with four occupants. A train held him up at Riverhead Crossing. The pursuers drew abreast. The two athletes from the office were not ten seconds behind. The nearest man of the quartette reached out toward Dorothy and found himself looking at an automatic in Hugh Farragut's steady hand. He did not flinch.

'Will you sign this, Miss?' he requested quietly.

Dorrie eyed the slip of paper. 'What is it?'

'For Mr. James. To prove that you got here safe.'

'Shall I, Hugh?'

'I can't see any reason why not.'

But he was troubled and puzzled. What sort of trick was this? Or was it a trick? Certainly Happy James's relief at seeing his daughter safe when she had come up from the Retreat was unfeigned. And now this safeguarding of her movements. Would the escort wait to accompany them back? Apparently not, for the man, after a glance at the signature, thanked the girl politely and gave a curt order. The car turned around and vanished. The two 'Guards,' however, followed to the gates.

No sooner had Dorothy and Hugh left the house than Happy James hopped out of bed, clapped Doctor Cutler on the back, dressed himself, took a drink, and called up Doctor Courtenay Tell's Retreat for Mental Cases to give certain instructions.

Happy was well content with his strategy. Without flattering himself that he had thwarted the young people's plans, he had at least successfully postponed them. In fact, he now favored the marriage. If all worked out as he forecast, it would be the most effective method of removing the trouble-making prosecutor from his path. Wanted to send him, Happy James, on a world tour, did he? Well, for a bet, it would be Hugh who took the tour; a wedding tour, and a long one. When he came back, his power for damage would be lost, and, what was more important, Dorothy would be safe. His strategy was based upon his

estimate of Hugh's character, into which a reluctant admiration entered. Hugh could not be scared off by any danger to himself. He could by a peril that threatened Dorothy, as was now very really the case.

Happy James's reckoning of human motives was apt to be about ninety-nine per cent correct. In this instance he had omitted one factor: Dorothy's character, now tempered to a finer quality through the ordeal of the asylum and through her understanding love of Hugh Farragut.

CHAPTER VIII

EVIDENTLY following orders, the gateman admitted them without parley. Magill and Wilde waited outside. On the way to Dorothy's suite, the fiancés encountered Doctor Courtenay Tell, who, after a courteous greeting, accompanied them. This did not please Hugh.

'It will not be necessary for you to stay here, Doctor Tell.'

'Pardon me; it will. A rule of the institution. No private interviews with patients.'

'Miss James is no longer a patient.'

'My understanding is to the contrary.'

'Do you intend to use compulsion?'

'I am informed that Miss James's interests will be best conserved by her remaining here,' returned the alienist pompously.

Dorothy intervened before Hugh's wrath burst. 'Could Mrs. Slogage take your place, Doctor Tell?'

'I see no objection.' The doctor withdrew.

One look at Honor Slogage's candid face, one grip of that mighty hand, went far to convince Hugh of her character and competence.

'This is a real friend, Hugh.'

'I can believe it.'

'I've been hoping you'd come, Mr. Farragut,' said

the athlete in a low tone. She passed from window to window, scanning the ground below. Taking a chair she drew it to the centre of the floor, motioning the others to do the same. Hugh was rather amused at the effect of melodrama, but his amusement died in contemplation of the woman's gravity.

'Miss James trusts me,' she began.

'Implicitly,' confirmed the girl.

'That's enough for me,' said Hugh.

'What are your plans for Dorothy?' Unconsciously and for the first time she used the girl's given name.

'To take her back to New York and marry her. Right, Dorrie?'

Dorrie moved to the arm of his chair, resting her cheek on his head. 'Yes,' she confirmed, with a sigh of contentment.

Honor Slogage smiled at them. Then she, too, sighed. 'No,' she said gently.

Dorrie was startled upright. 'No? Why?'

'Too dangerous,' breathed the other.

'I've heard all the talk of danger that I'm going to,' declared Hugh.

'Danger to her, not to you.'

'We've been all through that,' began Dorothy, only to be interrupted.

'Not through this. Why do you suppose your father balked at letting you out?'

The girl's face fell. 'Because he was afraid I'd give away some things — well, some things that are going on. I wouldn't,' she asserted. 'Not even to you, Hugh. No matter what he's done — and I still don't

believe it — I couldn't give him away. You know that, Hugh.'

'I wouldn't want you to, darling.'

'You're wrong about Mr. James, Dorothy,' said Honor. 'That isn't the reason he wants to keep you here. He's afraid to have you outside these walls.'

A thought struck Hugh. 'I believe that's true. It accounts for his having his house guarded and sending that car down with us.'

'But what's he afraid of?' asked Dorothy, puzzled.

'Murder. So am I.'

Shaken by her quiet earnestness, Hugh said, 'You'll have to be more explicit.'

'Mr. Farragut, we folks who are mixed up with championship sports get to hear a lot of undercover stuff.'

A nod from Hugh. He was conversant with the curious hook-up between top-notch athletics and inside politics.

'Somehow it has got around that Dorothy James knows too much for the safety of certain pretty important and dangerous people. It's known that she has been going about with you. These people have put two and two together. They're scared, Mr. Farragut. And men of their kind, when they're scared, are about as human as a nest of rattlesnakes. That's why I'm afraid for her.'

'Do you believe this, Hugh?'

'I don't know, Dorrie. I don't like it. Who are these men, Mrs. Slogage?'

'I'm risking my job, as it is. Do you want me to risk my life?'

'No. Don't tell me, then. And please don't think me ungrateful. But ——'

A knock at the door startled them. Motioning for silence, Honor went to open it. 'Oh!' she cried, in relief. 'It's you. I'm so glad.' She let in a swarthy, weazened little man. 'My husband; Mr. Farragut,' she announced proudly. 'I was just going to tell them about Big Bill,' she informed the newcomer.

'Suppose you let me tell it,' directed the little man, and the athlete humbly subsided. 'Do you remember the Beckenthaler case?' he continued.

'Before my time.'

'Yes; before you got into your present line,' agreed the other. 'But you probably know something about it. Big Bill Marley was in it, you know. His body was being nailed in to be taken to Potter's Field when a reporter at the Morgue recognized it as the former East Side leader.'

'What happened to him?' asked Dorothy.

'Plenty. He knew too much. Word went out that he was set to spill. Very few people knew about it when he was taken to an asylum. My wife and I did. We were there.'

Hugh made an effort of memory. 'I thought they found the body in a railroad siding.'

'They did. He made a getaway from the asylum. Error on his part. The escape was planted for him from inside; but he wasn't wise to that. They met him outside, and what was left of him when they got through the train fixed up. He would,' said William Slogage, with quiet emphasis, 'have been safer in the asylum.'

Through the silence that followed came a throbbing which swelled to the roar of the Montauk Express making its hundred miles an hour eastward.

'My God!' whispered Hugh.

'Worse things than that might happen to a woman.'

'Don't, William,' said his wife, very low, seeing Hugh's face.

'Some of that same gang are after Miss James now,' pursued the little man relentlessly.

Hugh got to his feet. Never had the girl who loved him seen him look as he did.

'That's enough,' he muttered. 'I'm convinced. Come, Dorrie. The trunks can wait.'

'What are you going to do, Hugh?'

'Take you back to New York and marry you today.'

'Do you expect to be able to protect her?' asked Honor Slogage pityingly. 'Twenty-four hours out of the day?'

'Today and tomorrow, maybe,' supplemented her husband. 'But what about next week? Next month? The weeks and months to follow?'

'I know,' agreed Hugh, dry-mouthed. 'I'm not running the risk. I wouldn't dare. We're going away.'

'You're going to take me away? Where to?'

'Anywhere where it's safe. There must be places left in the world where the law protects life.'

She stared, wide-eyed. 'But Hugh! Darling! What about the new job? You prom——'

'Damn my promises!' he cried out. 'I've stood all that flesh and blood can stand. I've a right to my happiness. I've a right to you.'

Only a short time before it was she who was pressing this same argument. But it was a changed Dorothy who now faced a changed Hugh. The poison from the bullet had undermined his vitality; temporarily weakened his purpose, and even his character, by leaving him defenseless against this deadly fear. She must be his defense.

'I'll marry you, Hugh. Whenever you say. You know that. And I'll face whatever comes. But I won't run away with or without my husband.'

He dropped back into his chair with a groan. 'You're right, of course. We could never come back if I quit now. Dorrie, will you go away for a while?'

'Leave you? How long?'

'Until something is settled. Until I've cleaned out this den of wild beasts.'

'I've got a better idea than that, Hugh.' She turned to the Slogages. 'Wouldn't I be safe here?'

Mr. Slogage drew himself up to his full five-foot-five. 'Absolutely. Ain't I here?'

'Happy James controls this place,' added his wife. 'There's no spot safer for his daughter in America.'

Hugh made a brave attempt at a lighter appeal. 'Penguins, Dorrie.'

She smiled at him. 'They'll wait. They're patient birds, darling.'

'I'm not,' retorted Hugh.

'You'll have to be. We'll both have to be, darling.'

He reflected. 'The escort car didn't wait. Doesn't that look as if your father didn't expect you to come back?'

'Not necessarily. I think he had another idea. Two strings to his bow. One was that I might stay here; the other that I might return with you to be married. In that case we'd have a guard from the institution. Take notice of that large car with three of Doctor Tell's huskies in it.'

'How much of this did you know before we came, Dorrie?'

'Not a thing. Would I have been likely to conceal it from you?'

'To keep me from worrying, you might have.'

'The first inkling of danger to myself I had was when I found that Dad was guarding me. Then I began to use my reasoning powers. Don't look skeptical, lawyer-man; I've got some. And I know Dad's mental processes. He must have telephoned down here that we were to be told of the plot to get rid of me' (Hugh shivered) 'as soon as we arrived. Isn't that so?' she appealed to the Slogages.

'Yes,' said the man. 'But we'd have warned you anyway.'

'Couldn't it all be a bluff on his part to separate us?' queried Hugh hopefully.

'No; it's true,' answered Honor, and he had to believe her.

'Dad's other scheme, as I guess it, was to safeguard me and incidentally get you out of the way. I think he figured that, when you learned of my danger, you'd take me out of the country as fast and as far as possible.'

'So I would have, if you'd consented.'

'Yes; he was right, so far. Dad's a shrewd judge of men.' She smiled wanly. 'He isn't quite so wise about women.' She said to Honor: 'Couldn't you give us five minutes to ourselves?'

The pair consulted with their eyes and withdrew to the inside room. Hugh said sadly:

'A month ago you were begging me to leave everything. You'd have gone anywhere with me. What changed you, Dorrie?'

'You,' said she simply. 'While I was shut up here, I read everything I could lay hands on about politics. I came to have some notion of the big work you have to do. Oh, don't think I'm going noble on you, darling!' she added, with a little chuckle. 'It isn't as impersonal as that. I'm terribly proud of you and I'm going to be prouder. You're going places, Hugh, and I'm going with you.'

His expression lightened. 'If you don't, I don't go.'

'There's Mr. Winters, too. I've read his speeches. That's a great soul, Hugh. He's going to need men like you around him.'

'Therefore we must give up our happiness,' said he sadly.

'Postpone it,' she corrected. 'Hugh, I told you once that I was afraid to marry you because I didn't want to be a widow. Well, dear,' she twinkled at him, 'I don't want you to be a widower, either.'

'Couldn't we be married here, Dorrie?'

'And you leave me here? *Are* we that kind of people, Hugh?'

'No. No; we're not.' He burst out in a surge of fury:

'By God! If I'm not man enough to take my wife home and keep her there, safe against murder, what kind of world is this? What kind of man am I?'

'I told you I'd go,' she returned steadily. 'I won't marry you and stay here. I'll marry you and go home with you. But, Hugh, will you answer me honestly?' She set her two hands upon his shoulders. Her deep, quiet eyes challenged his.

'Yes.'

'Wouldn't you be thinking of me all the time?'

'I think of you all the time, as it is.'

'You'd better!' She kissed him for that. 'What I mean is, having me on your mind like a weight. If we were in New York, wouldn't you be in constant fear for me whenever we were separated?'

'Yes.'

'Could you do your work against that handicap?'

'No.'

'Would there be any real happiness or peace for either of us?'

'You're right. You're damnably right,' he groaned.

'Next January when you go to Washington it would be different, wouldn't it?'

'Unless the secret service has gone out of business, it would. I can pretty well guess the make-up of the gang that's after you. When I get to Washington I think I can keep them busy enough to discourage their murder enterprises,' he concluded grimly.

'Say good-bye to me now.' She slipped into his arms, and remained there for a long minute. 'When shall I see you again?'

'I'll come down every day.'

'Is that what the state pays you for?' she laughed. 'Once a week. Well, maybe twice. But there are mails. I'm going to call the Slogages now.'

Her final word to him was a tender admonition that he was not to worry about her. She would be safe.

CHAPTER IX

ALL possible secrecy was cast about the plans and personnel of the incoming administration. Since his promise to join it Hugh had not seen Frank J. Winters in private and had received but one letter from him, tersely confirming his specification that the Attorney-General should have a free hand in the conduct of his office.

Summoned to Washington, the special prosecutor met the President-elect secretly. Winters shook hands and, as was his custom, went straight to the point.

'How long before you can clean up your calendar?'

'New Year's.'

The other frowned. 'That doesn't give much time.'

'It's the best I can do.'

'Have you decided how you will start in?'

'Yes. I want to break up the link between the local political rings and the crime chain.'

The leader smiled faintly. 'Some contract. What's your idea of procedure?'

'First of all, make murder a federal crime.'

'To get us away from the controlled courts and the pardon peddlers?'

'Exactly.'

'Sound notion. I'll back it. But will the Supreme Court stand for it?'

'I have an argument prepared on this basis. It is agreed that the life of every man is at the call of the Federal Government in case of war. Therefore it is potentially the property of the Government. Doesn't it follow that a crime against a citizen's life is a crime against the Government?'

'Very ingenious. I hope you make it stick.'

'Some of the developments may make things difficult for you, Mr. President. I'm afraid that some of your friends ——'

'Never mind my friends.' The older man laid a hand on his visitor's shoulder. 'A President has no right to friends...'

'Nevertheless, I think you should be warned.'

'I can't use warnings. Facts, yes. I have time only for facts. When you have proof, bring it to me and I'll act. Not before.'

'It might be too late then,' persisted the lawyer.

Positive proof against Happy James he did not expect to obtain before the inauguration, and he had been hearing disquieting rumors of the master-politician's underground workings in the Forward Party. 'It would be easier to get rid of threatening influences in advance,' he pointed out.

'They can't influence me,' returned Winters, with a calm confidence which inspired an equal confidence in his hearer. 'Give me proof and out they go. Satisfactory?'

'It has to be,' assented Hugh, without too much enthusiasm.

If Frank Winters had one fault, he reflected, it was

his insistence upon being oversure of his ground before moving. But when he did act, it was swiftly and relentlessly.

Too tired to take a late train back, Hugh decided to spend the night at the Cosmos Club, the rendezvous for Government specialists, particularly on the scientific side.

As he entered, he was hailed from a corner:

'Hey! Hugh! Highball?'

It was Ralph Stoner, a brilliant young geologist who had been in the class above him at Hamilton. The newcomer accepted.

'Now, what was it I had in mind to ask you about, Ralph?' said he. 'Oh, I know! What do you know about gold mining in New Jersey?'

'Nothing.'

'How come?'

'There isn't any.'

'Another bright young mind gone wrong. There's an active mine, now turning out fat profits.'

'Where?'

'I don't know exactly. Somewhere around the Palisades.'

'Palisades, your Aunt Melinda! I hope you haven't bought any stock in it.'

'No such luck.'

'Freshman class in Geology. The Palisades are not metalliferous. Gold, my little pupil, is not found in that kind of rock.'

'I'm telling you that they've found it.'

'Then it's been put there.'

'Hmmm! I never thought of that.' Hugh stared at his friend. An idea of possibly far-reaching significance had been implanted in his mind. 'By Jove!' he exclaimed softly. 'Say that again, Pinky.'

'I say that if there's a gold mine there it's been salted. With a view to catching the ever-recurrent sucker.'

'No; I don't think that. I mean, I doubt if it's a sucker-trap. Something much bigger, I wouldn't wonder.'

Among other phases of systematized crime, one that Hugh had marked for further investigation was the disposal of the gold taken in by jewelry thieves. This might well be the answer; an underground clearing-house for the precious metal, whereby it was shipped to Happy James's mine there to be secretly melted down and 'produced' from a supposed vein.

It would be difficult to trace. New Jersey was rotten with gangsterism, from the Governor down through the legislature to the least of the county officials. Crime, organized in New York, had, in fact, captured the state. Moreover, the special prosecutor's powers did not run beyond the borders of New York. But those of the Attorney-General of the United States would. Hugh made a note to detail an investigator to the task. The mine, he judged, would be rigorously guarded, but there was always a chance of working in a man as an applicant for a job.

A slight man, stooped, white and bent, with the appearance of great debility, paused in the doorway, peering uncertainly about.

'Do you know who that is?' asked Stoner in a low voice.

'No.'

'Robert Vignal, the Swiss chemist.'

'Surely not! I thought Vignal was quite a young man.'

'Forty-one. And he looks eighty. That's what war does to a man. Would you like to meet him?'

Hugh nodded. At a word from the geologist the foreigner moved stiffly forward and shook hands. One whole side of his face had been eaten to the bone by some rodent substance, leaving it earless and hairless and with the eye almost destroyed. Yet he was still an impressive personality. In careful English he expressed his pleasure at meeting Hugh, with whose career he seemed familiar.

'You are fortunate, Monsieur, in being an American.'

'I think so,' agreed the prosecutor.

'There is no more Switzerland,' said Vignal, with profound melancholy. 'There is no more Europe, as you and I knew Europe. Nothing is left but a shell. No more science. No more art. No humanity.' He sighed. 'A ruin in which prowl starving wolves who were once men and women.'

Stoner explained that his fellow scientist had been caught in the vast chemical bombardment that signalized the beginning of the end, and that only his knowledge of protective chemistry had saved him and a handful of his fellows. Turning the piercing brightness of his remaining eye upon Hugh, the Switzer said abruptly:

'Tell me. You should know. Do you prepare secretly for war in your America?'

'Secretly?' repeated Hugh, surprised. 'Why, no. Why do you ask?'

The other hesitated. 'You can place implicit confidence in Mr. Farragut,' Stoner assured him.

'Have the goodness to regard this as private information,' said Vignal.

In his mournful voice he went on to say that the few eminent scientists, chemists, engineers, devisers of delicate mechanisms, inventors, who had survived the European slaughter had formed a small colony in Panama where they had re-established their enterprises. Lately they had been prosperous because of heavy orders from the United States. Hugh was puzzled.

'Are you speaking of munitions?'

'No; no. Not munitions. Instruments of precision, range-finders, night-glasses, serums, anti-gases; all articles which might be employed in war.'

'Then, of course, they are being bought by the War and Navy Departments.'

Not at all. All orders, it appeared, were for private persons or obscure firms. Certified checks accompanied every order. They came from all parts of the United States; state capitals, industrial centres, small peaceful towns, as well as the large cities. The scope of distribution precluded the possibility that the shipments were for strike use, even had not the sweeping Forward Party victory brought temporary peace into that field.

'Can you give me names of the buyers?' asked Hugh.

No; this was confidential. Moreover, it was kept as private as possible. For himself, M. Vignal added, he was done with destruction. Henceforth, his efforts would be directed to alleviation.

'Have you heard of the *capsule d'espion*?' asked Stoner. 'He invented that. Tell Mr. Farragut, Vignal.'

The chemist explained that toward the close of the war, when all sides had gone mad, spies and suspects were subjected to the most hideous tortures. As an escape M. Vignal had devised a container for one of the least known of the deadly cyanogens, so small that it could be concealed between the fingers or even set into a hollow tooth. He added that one of his best friends had found a merciful end after capture, through this means.

'And the Azrael bomb,' suggested the Washington man.

M. Vignal's wasted form shrank and shuddered. '*Trop d'horreur*,' he muttered. Making his adieus, he left them.

What little Ralph Stoner knew of the new and practically untried poison bombs he told Hugh. These, too, were the invention of Vignal, together with a Belgian physician, since killed. Only once had a small one been tried. The effects were so dreadful that the inventors had refused to reveal the secret of composition and were under sentence of death by court-martial for their defiance, when the final catastrophe set them

free. Vignal alone possessed the formula, if, indeed, he had not destroyed it. Stoner thought that he might have done so. Too much horror, as he had brokenly said.

Hugh went back to New York with plenty to think of.

It was a grave Dorrie who welcomed her lover when, at the first opportunity, he ran down to the Retreat.

'Hugh, do you think my father is going queer mentally?'

'It hadn't occurred to me, darling. Why?'

'I told you something of his dictator-complex.'

'Yes. Is that growing on him?'

'No. He's been extraordinarily secretive lately about his own plans. But now he is urging me to leave this country.'

'That's sensible enough, isn't it, considering his fears for you?'

'Oh, he hasn't breathed a word of that to me. Nor I to him. His reason is much more curious. He seems to think that something dreadful is likely to happen here.

'What kind of something?'

'He wouldn't say directly. What I guessed to be in the back of his mind was war.'

Jarred though he was at such a suggestion confirming what he had heard from the Swiss scientist, Hugh contrived to make his tone casual:

'War? I can't imagine with whom. No other nation or combination has the temerity to tackle us.'

'Exactly what I figured. It doesn't seem quite sane.'

'I shouldn't worry about it. Since the holocaust in Europe any of us is likely to suffer from war-jitters.'

'Anyway, try and get me to leave the country while you're in it!' she laughed.

'I'm going to be very much in it from now on.' He outlined briefly his basic plan of campaign against chain crime.

The girl said thoughtfully:

'Dad is extremely interested in your political future.'

'Does he suspect anything about my appointment?'

'I wonder. He's been asking a lot of questions.'

'You didn't tell him anything, Dorrie?'

'Is it likely? Oh, no; you'll find me a very prudent and close-mouthed official wife, darling.'

'I've something to tell you. For the present I'm setting aside the case against Happy James.'

'Oh, Hugh! I'm so glad! Why are you doing it?'

'Because I'm a corrupt and unworthy official,' he returned, with a wry smile.

'Oh, yes! Of course. One can easily believe that. Any other reason?'

'It's the real reason. For a while I'm putting my personal interests before my official responsibilities. When I take office I shall concentrate first on rounding up the gang who are out to get you, and let everything else go. That may take two months; it may take three. The day I have them safely jailed, I'll ask you again to marry me.'

'I'll be ready.'

'Until that time Happy James is a side issue. Oh, I

don't say that I'm abandoning the trail of "Z."' For the first time since that agonizing interview in his apartment, he referred to the central letter in the crime-map. 'I can't do that. In fact, we're working on a new line now. But for the present there will be no action, unless he forces it. In the meantime, try to persuade him to take that vacation I suggested.'

She shook a discouraged head. 'He'll never do that, Hugh.'

The new clue to which the prosecutor referred was the New Jersey gold mine. His first orders on his return to his headquarters had been to Harris Magill. A trusted man was to be assigned to the case. One report had already been received from James Donner, the man selected; the vicinity of the mine, and even a side shaft opening out from the cliffs above the Hudson, were rigidly guarded by a force of heavily armed men. In this there was nothing out of the way. Any source of gold would naturally be protected. The operative believed that information would be slow and difficult.

Two weeks of clean-up work in his office left Hugh Farragut little time for any outside considerations. Only three times in that period did he find opportunity to go to Riverhead. Dorothy complained that he was working himself to death; she thought, too, that he looked harassed, worried. To this frame of mind she unconsciously contributed by asking:

'Is Mr. Winters in good health, Hugh?'

'Strong as a horse. He'd better be,' he added.

'I wondered. Dad talks politics with me a lot now

when he comes down. He seems to have some doubts whether Winters will finish out his term.'

Hugh looked up sharply.

'Why that?'

'Unless it's his health, I can't imagine.'

'Neither can I,' said he, frowning. 'I can't see myself lasting long under an administration headed by Cale Keeler.'

'The Vice-President? Dad has a high opinion of him.'

'He's a very practical sort of politician,' conceded her companion.

'Who else is going to be in the Cabinet with you; do you know?'

'It's supposed to be secret still. Frank Winters has a genius for concealing things he doesn't want known. You can take your pick of a thousand rumors. Most ideas along that line would be mere guesswork for me. But I can think of half a dozen good men who are likely to be in on it.'

'And Hugh Farragut the best of them all,' said Dorrie, with loving pride.

'We'll know about it soon. I have my summons for the Monday after Christmas.'

For this occasion the President-elect had chosen the great new Hotel Luxor, facing Central Park. All day long men of prominence in the political and financial world came to and departed from his suite, to be waylaid by the eager reporters, and to deny any definite knowledge of the slate. Of the scores of visitors, a handful were retained. These were the men who could

have given out news if they would. Hugh was not sent for until five o'clock. As he entered the hotel a door-captain identified him.

'Mr. Farragut? There's a message for you, sir. Urgent.'

Hugh went to the desk. There was an important telephone call from his office. Carson Wilde's strained voice said:

'That you, Boss? Can you come down to headquarters?'

'No,' returned Hugh sharply. 'You're holding me up as it is.'

'Can't help it. This is bad. I think you'd better come,' urged 'Left Guard.'

'What's it about?'

'Jim Donner. On the Jersey case,' was the cautious response. 'I don't want to talk over the phone.'

Hugh pondered. It was four days since any word from the operative had reached the office. There had come, however, a mysterious and interrupted call from an unknown man which seemed to be an agonized appeal for help.

'I'll be down at once,' said Hugh.

He scribbled a line of apology to the President-elect, saying that he would be delayed half an hour.

He was not wholly unprepared for the news which he found at his office. James Donner's body, stabbed and stripped, had been picked up in the Hudson River.

After detailing three of his most experienced, careful, and skilled men to the investigation with instructions to proceed with every possible precaution, the special

prosecutor hurried back to the Luxor. Determinedly he put aside the sadness of having sent a faithful aide to his death. It was the fortune of this war without quarter in which he was enlisted.

Without quarter? What about Happy James?

As he entered the apartment furnished as a directors' room, Frank J. Winters rose to greet him, and the dozen others seated about the table rose with him.

'You're not the latest,' said the President-elect pleasantly. 'The Postmaster-General has been delayed, too. Nevertheless, I shall proceed with introductions in order. Ladies and gentlemen; the Vice-President, the Honorable Caleb Keeler. I think we all know him.'

Keeler rose and bowed, to a polite ripple of applause. At each place was a scratch-pad and pencil. Hugh drew his to him, prepared to note the names and his impressions as the announcements were made. Opposite Keeler's he set down, 'Whose bread I eat, his song I sing.'

'The Secretary of State, Judge Grayson Gerritt,' said Winters in his clear, easy tones. A gaunt, tired man stood up.

('A good man if he can last the course,' on Hugh's pad.)

'The Secretary of War, General John Martingell.' This was a jowly, pursy man of fifty.

('A led captain. Who's on the other end of the leash?')

'The Secretary of the Navy, the Honorable Arthur Clerf.' Obviously a Southerner, Secretary Clerf gave graceful and courteous salutation.

('Good front. What's back of it?')

'The Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. Arthur Traymore.' This was a swarthy, lofty-browed, close-lipped man of sixty.

('Watchdog crossed with weasel.')

'The Attorney-General, Mr. Hugh Farragut.' When Hugh resumed his seat, he set a small question mark after his own name.

'The Secretary of the Interior, Senator Price Duryea.' Senator Duryea beamed.

('Smiles and promises.')

'The Secretary of Agriculture, Mr. Henry Hartshorn. Pronounced Hart-shorn, if you please, ladies and gentlemen.' The Secretary's surly and rubicund visage essayed an expression of pleasure without marked success.

('Honest, suspicious, and slow. A tough customer.')

'The Secretary of Commerce, Mr. Isaac Levinson.' A dark, gentle-looking Jew helped himself up with a crutch.

('Intellectual power and probity, with a touch of mulishness.')

'The Secretary of Labor, Mr. Simon Burtis.' Burtis stood stiffly up, a chunk of a man with a sly amiability for a face.

('Rubber stamp; smooth finish.')

'The Secretary of Health and Public Safety, Mrs. Martha Larrabee.' A graceful, modishly clad woman made an equitable distribution of smiles about the group.

('Sex in politics.')

'The Secretary of Arbitration and Adjustments, Mr. Timothy McBride.' For all his veneer and assumption of modesty, McBride could not rid himself of the traces of the strong-arm practitioner who had worked his way up to dominance in one of the racketeering labor combinations through cleverly mingled adroitness, brutality, and physical prowess. He smirked around the circle.

'Cut out the Mister,' he suggested, in the spirit of good-fellowship.

('Manicured Gorilla.')

'The Secretary of Education, Miss Lucy Harbesson.' This one was a frump, with deep eyes and a firm mouth.

('My money on her.')

President-elect Winters turned to the door. 'And here at last is our Postmaster-General.'

Hugh's pencil fell from his hand and rolled. Suave, smiling, and forceful, buttoned neatly into his perfect morning coat with its slightly too perfect gardenia, the late arrival stepped into the room.

It was Happy James.

CHAPTER X

No one around the table showed signs of special surprise at the entry of Happy James. To most of them he was just another standardized politician, conventionally rewarded for services rendered. None, from the general bearing, could have had conception of his actual character and importance. For one wild and angry moment Hugh Farragut speculated avidly upon what would happen were he to jump to his feet and proclaim:

'This man is a criminal and a leader of criminals.'

Cooler second thoughts controlled the impulse. There would be plenty of time for the declaration of war. It could be made more effective later.

Leaning to him, Isaac Levinson, the Commerce appointee, whispered:

'Did you know of this?'

'No.'

'Keeler did. Look at him.'

The Vice-President-elect had flurried forward with hand outstretched and fleshy face alight with effusive welcome, closely followed by Tim McBride.

'Well, well, *well!* Who'd-a thought it!' he bumbled in pretended amazement and smote Happy's shoulder blade.

Mrs. Larrabee beamed into his face. Something which might have been interpreted as cynical resigna-

tion settled upon Judge Gerritt's fine features. Senator Duryea's smile might have meant anything or nothing, but Henry Hartshorn's habitual scowl deepened. At the far end of the table, Miss Harbesson had rested her chin in her cupped hand and was intently regarding, not the late arrival but the man responsible for his being there. To Hugh's interpretation that scrutiny was compounded of an unspoken query and challenge:

'Why have you done this thing, Mr. President?'

Well, why *had* he done it? Hugh would have to know that, and soon.

In his early career another nickname had attached itself to Happy. His intimates called him, with admiration and envy, Immunity James. Politically and legally he led a charmed existence. Time after time he was involved in apparently inextricable complications which led his associates into exposure, scandal, and even jail. Always he came through, unscathed. Powerful sponsors, complaisant prosecutors, friendly newspapers conspired with his luck and address to save and protect him. Now he had achieved the final immunity, the official countenance of the nation's head. Within a few days he would enjoy a position where nothing could touch him, as a member of the President's official household.

Nothing? Hugh would see about that! If he had to take on the President of the United States in his fight against criminal domination, he was ready. Indeed, in his hot fury at having been, as he saw it, tricked, he would have welcomed the chance.

For the present he would play a waiting game. He would take office. Then, when he had mustered his material, he would resign, giving chapter, verse, and line for his unprecedented action. With the newspaper furor which would follow a Cabinet officer's resignation as a fulcrum, he would pry off the lid and expose the whole rotten cabal, always supposing that Winters had played him false. Even though this were not the case, how could any leader hope that a house, so divided against itself as that motley symposium around the table, could stand? In his resentment Hugh did not stop to consider party exigencies.

The President-elect was on his feet now, speaking a word of acknowledgment and welcome to his prospective associates:

'You are more than departmental heads. You are my advisors. You are the board of directors in the most hopeful enterprise in today's troubled world, and, as your chairman I bespeak your support, your counsel, your frank and honest criticism. Mine is a task of too great burden to be borne alone. I need your help.'

His heavy-lidded eyes passed from face to face of the intent circle.

Caleb Keeler said, with bluff heartiness:

'I'm sure we can all pledge our unqualified support to our chief.'

It was a false note; a little cheap, a little tawdry; the typical politician's ready response. Tim McBride, Mrs. Larrabee, and General Martingell clapped vigorously. The man at the head of the table ignored

the interruption. He drew a deep breath, set his hands upon the polished mahogany, and, leaning forward, made what struck Hugh as a strange and rather touching appeal.

'If at times my procedure, my actions or policies seem to any of you incomprehensible or perhaps even suspicious, I beg of you to defer judgment until all the facts are known to you.'

With a shock Hugh realized that the deep eyes were directly upon him. Chance — or intent?

'A man in my position cannot always be a free agent. I shall make mistakes. I shall make' — he hesitated — 'enemies. I can only hope and pray that my mistakes may not be misjudged and that the enemies will never be of my own household.'

The silence was unbroken now. All appeared subdued by the solemnity, the simplicity of the man's words and manner. A luminous characterization of a great American philosopher and poet came into Hugh's mind: 'His sad sincerity of soul.' Yet this was the man who had appointed Happy James!

As if by a process of mind-reading, Isaac Levinson said in his ear:

'Wait before you do what you are planning.'

Hugh muttered in reply, 'Are you waiting?'

'Yes.' The sensitive, austere Jewish face had cleared. 'And hoping.'

'But I've got to have it out with him,' breathed Hugh.

'Of course. I hope you will tell me the result.'

Hugh had known Levinson only casually. But he

recognized in him a quality of high and altruistic shrewdness rare in his experience; together with standards of judgment by which he, himself, might profit.

'Then you trust him,' said he, nodding toward the head of the table.

'Can one help it?' was the quiet retort. And, conning again that broad face with its expression of patience, of charity, of mournful fortitude, the lawyer, accustomed to stern judgments, still asked himself how he could withhold confidence, even though Happy James sat opposite. There *must* be an explanation.

When the meeting broke up, he found himself face to face with the enemy.

Happy held out his hand.

'I see your health is better,' he remarked, with a significant quirk of the smiling mouth. 'Mine's pretty good, too.'

'We can shake hands on that, at least,' returned Hugh sardonically. He understood that there would be no further gun-play as far as he was concerned. His counter-threat had been effectual.

Fortunately, Hugh had not taken permanent living quarters in the Capital, though he had found an attractive house which would be suitable, subject to Dorrie James's approval. Now he would not sign the lease.

As he lay awake that night in his hotel room, it seemed to him unlikely that he could remain in the Cabinet. Assuming that Frank Winters had been

fooled into appointing James, how could he, Hugh Farragut, work with a man so gullible, a man whom the James faction were able to deceive and perhaps eventually to control? No; in a few weeks, at most, he would be retiring to private life. Private? Well, not exactly, he corrected himself with a tight grin. He purposed to be a public figure of prime magnitude for as long as he could manage it, with the single aim of telling the nation what kind of betrayal threatened it.

First, however, he must see Frank J. Winters; hear his explanation of the Postmaster-Generalship. To seek an interview with the busiest man in America in the few days before the inauguration was much to ask. But Hugh made his request urgent. He beat down the expert excuses and evasions of the executive 'dodger,' the secretary whose duty it was to protect his chief from all avoidable contacts.

Threats cannot be used to the President-elect of the United States; they can, at need, to his secretariat. The 'dodger' was impressed and alarmed. He said he would see what could be done. Twenty minutes was allotted to the applicant on the following Friday. Well, history had been made in twenty minutes. With no overweening estimate of his own personal importance, but with an inflexible conviction of the necessity of his mission, Hugh believed that he might be making history in that brief interview.

Weariness and anxiety clouded the broad visage of the leader as Hugh came to him, but his smile of welcome was warm and friendly. His confidential stenographer was near-by. The visitor said at once:

'I had counted upon privacy.'

'Very well.' The stenographer left. 'Now, what's on your mind, Hugh?'

'Happy Harold James.'

'What about him?'

'Why did you appoint him, Mr. President?'

Winters said patiently, 'Why not?'

Holding to a predetermined policy of going slow and making the other show his hand, Hugh answered:

'He represents a brand of politics which I should not have expected to find in your Cabinet.'

Winters sighed. 'I know. All Presidents, I suppose, have to make concessions.'

'Might I ask to whom you had to make this particular one?'

'To a powerful wing of the Forward Party. I shall be quite open with you, Farragut. There are two factions in the Cabinet as there are in the party. This is only fair; the other side has a right to representation. Whether wisely or not, I agreed to let Caleb Keeler name for his faction a certain proportion of my Cabinet.'

Hugh had come there determined upon absolute frankness.

'Not wisely, I fear,' said he.

'You may be right,' was the patient reply.

'James is his choice, of course.'

'Yes.'

'I think I could pick out the others, but my present concern is with him. If you had given me a chance to enlighten you as to James's record, this situation might have been avoided.'

'I don't understand,' returned Winters, with a puzzled frown. 'You are the last person from whom I should have expected such an objection.'

Hugh returned the frown with a scowl of perplexity: 'And now I don't understand.'

'Farragut, what are your relations with Happy James's daughter?'

'I am going to marry her.'

'So I was given to understand,' was the grave reply.

Illumination burst upon the visitor. 'By Happy James, himself?'

'Certainly. He was perfectly frank with me; told me of your political differences and that you had made harsh allegations against him, but that it was all smoothed out; that you admitted being hasty, and that he was pleased to welcome you as a son-in-law. It never occurred to me to suspect any deception. In any case, your confirmation of your engagement to the young lady would seem to settle it. May I offer my congratulations?'

In his consternation the young man ignored this courtesy. 'I see,' he muttered.

What a coil his love for Dorrie had got him into! And how astutely Happy James had manipulated the situation to his own ends! To blame Frank Winters for accepting so plausible a presentation at face value would be absurd. No; the President-elect had acted in good faith. For this discovery Hugh was profoundly thankful. Even this, however, could hardly render his own position tenable. No council table ever put together was broad enough to accom-

modate Postmaster-General James and Attorney-General Farragut. Said he:

'Mr. President, there isn't much time left. You'll make allowances for my bluntness. Must I send Happy James to jail in order to convince you that he isn't fit for your Cabinet?'

'Send your own father-in-law to jail?'

'I can't marry his daughter without making him my father-in-law, unhappily,' retorted Hugh.

'There is something very strange about this.' A note of sternness had come into Winters's voice. 'It must be cleared up. Can you bring Miss James to see me?'

'That, unfortunately, is impossible for the present.'

'Then I must ask you for an explanation.'

Only one method would serve, now, in the face of his natural suspicion; entire candor.

'Mr. President, I am in a difficult and painful position. In spite of evidence — the evidence that I was prepared to present to you as occasion offered, and would have done had I foreseen the appointment — Miss James cannot be wholly convinced that her father is the brains of a great politico-criminal conspiracy.'

The other caught at one word. 'Evidence? What evidence?'

'Not legal as yet. You once told me that you would consider nothing else.'

'I told you, Mr. Farragut, that it must be sufficient to convince me.'

'That is only fair. Do you wish me to reconsider and decline the portfolio of the Department of Justice?'

'Is this an admission that you cannot produce proof to back your charges?'

'It is not!' snapped Hugh. 'I'll bring proof. But it will take time. And I may tell you, Mr. President, that one of my first acts after taking office — no, my first act' (remembering that he was now abandoning his plan to put Dorrie James's pursuers in jail first, he breathed a silent prayer for her safety) 'will be to round up the gangsters of the James régime. And nothing is going to stop me.'

The flash of anger produced an unexpected reaction upon Frank Winters. He smiled faintly.

'Ah; that's better! I see you believe what you're saying.'

'Was there any doubt of that in your mind, Mr. President?'

Winters shook his head. 'It's a tangle,' he muttered.

'I'll bring you to believe it, too.'

'Maybe you can. You'll get your chance.'

'That's all I ask.'

'Anyway, you're not to resign. I'm going to need you. Time, you say. How much?'

On the verge of replying, 'Months, anyway; perhaps a year,' the lawyer caught himself. There was a quicker way, if less comprehensive, assuming that he could trust Ralph Stoner. In his legal practice it was his principle to retain the best experts and then rely upon them. As a geologist, Ralph was a top-ranker. Hugh plunged:

'Would proof that Happy James is acting as a fence for stolen gold satisfy you?'

'Reasonable proof of any criminality will satisfy me.'

'Give me six weeks, Mr. President.'

Winters dismissed him with a benign nod and turned back to the revision of his inaugural address.

CHAPTER XI

THE inauguration ceremonies were conducted in the midst of an unseasonable January thunderstorm. The new party President of the United States spoke briefly and with almost Lincolnian simplicity.

The Forward Party, as represented by this administration, he said, would not be a party of destruction. Though dominantly a labor party, it did not seek to uproot capital, but to cultivate, direct, and control it so that all might share, not equally but equitably, in its profits. Alone of the great nations America had maintained its system. He promised no millennium. But he foresaw the development, under American progress, of a prosperity more widespread, stable, and equitable than had ever before been attained. To this and to justice for all without regard to party he pledged his administration.

Newspapers practically without exception gave favorable, even enthusiastic, recognition to the sincerity and moderation of the address. As to the make-up of the Cabinet, there was division and criticism. Internal warfare and stormy sessions were freely forecast. Several Washington correspondents of the foreign press predicted openly, and presumptively by inspiration, that Happy James would develop into the real boss of Cabinet, party, and finally of

the administration. The impudent and independent writer of a political gossip syndicated letter went so far as to print a roster of the official family as follows:

Presidential Faction — Secretaries Gerritt, Clerf, Farragut, Hartshorn, Levinson, and Harbesson.

James Faction — The Postmaster-General, the Vice-President, Secretaries McBride, Larrabee, and Burtis.

Fence-sitters and Cat-jumpers — Secretaries Martingell, Duryea, and Traymore.

To Hugh it seemed a reasonably accurate estimate. It did not take him long to determine that the cleavage ran through all officialdom.

In his own department there were leaks which he could not trace. Several minor tests convinced him that spies were reporting his intended movements to those whom he already classed as the enemy. Whom to trust was likely to become a vital problem.

Fortunately there was his old staff to fall back upon; they, at least, were staunch. Though he had officially severed all connection with the special prosecutor's office in New York, he could still call upon the loyalty of Harris Magill and the others. Through them, he decided, he must pursue the inquiry into the New Jersey mine. To work through his own department was to risk betrayal and frustration.

Through Magill he obtained the names of the three operatives who were working in New Jersey: Green, Garbrod, and Messer. They were instructed to call him by telephone the instant anything of importance developed. To this end he arranged for a daily

schedule of his movements. There would be hardly an hour of day or night when he could not be reached.

The week passed without word. Nor had Magill anything to report. Proceeding with extreme caution in accordance with Hugh's previous instructions, the field men had as yet secured no footing.

Pressed though he was with work and anxiety, Hugh found himself at the week-end with an overpowering eagerness to see Dorothy James. Every day he had talked with her over long-distance. It was not enough. He needed the comfort of her near presence, the assurance of her love. Furthermore, he was sure that other ears had listened in on several of their talks. He could spare three hours from his work. Anyway, he *would* spare it.

A lavish Congress the year previous had allotted to each department head one of the new, swift autogyros for personal use. He could make Riverhead in less than an hour. Dorothy's joyous voice, when he telephoned her, bade him hurry; she would be waiting for him in the garden.

The small airship fluttered into a meadow across the road from the Retreat, and the interested guards witnessed the spectacle of a Cabinet officer doing one hundred yards in really creditable time.

Dorrie released one arm from his neck for the purpose of leaning away and saying proudly:

'Am I important!'

'To me? Most important feature of this present universe.'

'Not to you alone,' she twinkled at him. 'Who do

you think called me up yesterday? The President!'

'What for?'

'To congratulate me. When *you* announce an engagement, you certainly begin at the top, darling.'

'That was more or less an accident. Forced upon me.'

'You don't seem pleased. He was awfully sweet about you. He thinks you're quite a person, darling. Now may I be strikingly original and ask how you like Washington?'

'I'll like it better after you're there.'

'So will I. Weren't you surprised when you found Dad across the table from you?'

'I was,' he returned dryly. 'Why didn't you tell me?'

'I didn't know it, myself, until after the Hotel Luxor conference. Of course that's what he had in mind when he wanted me to pick out a place to live in Washington.'

'Pick it out, if you like. Then set your mind on picking out another for us.'

'I'm going to love Washington.'

'You mightn't if you had my job.'

'Why not?' she asked, surprised at his darkening face.

'Because I hate an environment where the man I'm supposed to be working with may be a spy set on me,' he broke out. 'Where I don't know whom to trust, or how far to trust him, from the Cabinet down.'

'Is it as bad as that?' said she softly. 'Oh, Hugh; I'm sorry! You know,' she continued, 'I've been

reading all the political history I could get hold of. And I've been thinking —— Would it be very presumptuous to make a suggestion to a Cabinet member?'

'As you're going to be a Cabinet member's wife, I should think you might get away with it.'

'Do you remember the investigation of the Department of Justice, several years ago?'

'Something about it.'

'Senator Mercer of Montana conducted it. The Department of Justice set its secret service on him, tapped his wires, rifled his mail, and cooked up a fake indictment on which he was acquitted. It was a pretty crooked deal.'

'Well?'

'Are there any of that lot left in your office?'

'You ought to be running this show instead of me,' stated the Attorney-General with conviction and admiration. 'That hadn't occurred to my dull brain. If I send you a list, will you check it up for me?'

'Yes.'

'Now, if you don't mind shifting to more personal matters, darling ——'

'But I do. I mean, I'm not through yet. Does your department guard the President?'

'No. Another branch of the secret service looks after that now. Why?'

The girl lifted her voice. 'Honor!' Mrs. Slogage appeared from back of the fountain. 'Tell him,' directed Dorrie.

The woman athlete was obviously reluctant. 'I

don't want to get mixed up in any politics,' she demurred.

'You won't be involved, Mrs. Slogage,' promised Hugh.

'Are you pretty close to the President, Mr. Attorney-General? Personally, I mean.'

'Not particularly.'

'But you could get a message to him?'

'Hardly, if it were a personal one,' answered Hugh, with distaste. Was this just another dodge on the part of a favor-seeker?

'It's a matter of his personal safety.'

'Ah, that's different!' returned Hugh quickly.

'Mind you, I don't *know* anything. I've only been hearing. There was a stable of crooked fighters out in Chicago that was broken up. Some of 'em landed in the secret service; don't ask me how. They'll bear watching.'

'Surely none of them is in the President's bodyguard!' said Hugh, aghast.

'Not yet. But there might be shifts.'

'Can you give me the names?'

'They'd all be Illinois appointments,' said the woman evasively. 'Senator Slazey would know.'

'Would it be profitable to question him about it?' asked the other, with a smile.

'I wouldn't think so,' replied Honor Slogage gravely.

Hugh's short hour, which was all that he could allow himself with his fiancée, terminated without her having brought up the matter of the changed status between

her lover and her father. Better so, he considered; there could be nothing but pain to both of them when the showdown came on Happy James, unless, indeed, the gold clue proved abortive. Almost he hoped that this might be the case, even though it would compel his own retirement.

At least, there would be a respite for a brief time now. Poor Dorrie! Too evidently she assumed that Happy James's appointment had quashed the issue between the two antagonists instead of bringing it to a head. It was going to hit her hard when she discovered the truth.

Back in Washington he wrote a letter to the President with his own hands, suggesting in guarded terms that Winters look into the matter of his personal protection, and requesting that he, the Attorney-General, be confidentially informed in case of any projected change in personnel. The message was delivered by an employee in whom Hugh had every confidence. It got to the White House all right. It never reached the President.

In the following fortnight Cabinet meetings were held every weekday and on one Sunday. Congress was working equally hard. The Winters administration was dubbed 'Labor's sweatshop' and went far in those opening days toward justifying the jest. Without undue modesty Hugh believed that, as the youngest member of the Cabinet, he would better keep in the background for a time. This gave him opportunity for estimating his associates.

Two of them, he soon determined, were implicitly

to be trusted both for character and intelligence. Judge Gerritt of the State Department, and Levinson of Commerce. Upon the others he tried to suspend judgment, although he found himself more and more inclined to follow the journalistic rating. Discussion in the conferences was open and often spirited, but good-humored, and to the amenities of the occasion Happy James was chief contributor.

Never had the practiced politician worked more faithfully and expertly upon the structure of his own popularity. He was at his charming best in these gatherings, direct, forceful, considerate of his allies, courteous to his opponents, and ever ready with the tactful word of conciliation or compromise to smooth over dissensions and difficulties. Unconsciously, the President was coming to rely upon him; a tendency which Hugh observed with misgivings. He was by all odds the most winning personality there, and, as Hugh was compelled to admit, here at least he had achieved his end worthily.

Still nothing definite from the three detectives in New Jersey. Green and Messer had left the vicinity of the Palisades and were investigating the smelter where the supposed ore was worked, near a remote and abandoned zinc mine in the central part of the state. One significant fact they turned up at once: the smelter concern was conducted by a group of dubious politicians and known gamblers, all identifiable to Hugh as members of Happy James's underworld aristocracy. Garbrod, whom his ex-chief counted the best man of the three, remained in the vicinity of the

Palisades, where he had got a job as handy man in a roadhouse.

An evening session of the 'sweatshop' was being held when, at nine o'clock, Hugh was called outside to receive a telephone message. Nothing that was not of prime importance would have been relayed to him there. He anticipated something from his old office in New York. But it was an unfamiliar voice that said:

'Hello. Can you hear me?'

'Yes.'

'Can you hear me?' asked the man again. The repetition was an old office signal, an intimation that someone might be listening-in, a warning that the conversation must be confined to guarded terms.

Hugh made the response indicating comprehension. 'Clearly.'

'I'm talking from Widener's Roadhouse.' By this Hugh knew that it was Garbrod. 'It's about that real-estate proposition in Jersey. Smith and Crandall, you know.'

'Oh! Yes?'

'It's a good buy. The property is as represented.'

'That's good.' With difficulty he kept the excitement out of his voice. Garbrod must have definite proof.

'The river site is fine,' continued the voice. 'It commands wide view. And the site — snug. Do you get it?'

'No, I don't think I do.' What was this about a view? And 'snug.' What sense did a snug site make?

'Snug in a big way,' stated the voice insistently.

'That's all at present.' There was a hint of haste in the utterance now. 'Our representative will get in ——' The voice stopped.

'Hello. Hello. Hello!' called Hugh urgently.

Silence from the other end of the wire.

Several times in the course of the ensuing conference, after Hugh's return, Secretary Gerritt on one side and Secretary Martingell on the other had to nudge the Attorney-General to attention when the President was calling for opinions. All of Hugh's faculties were focussed upon the pad whereon he had transcribed the last portion of that peculiar message.

The first part was comprehensible: 'As represented' could mean nothing other than that the 'gold' mine was a plant. But why the reference to the site commanding a wide view, and the cryptic sequel? He studied the pencilled words over and over again.

'And the site — snug. Snug in a big way.'

... What was this? The Secretary of State had pushed a slip of paper scrawled upon with his almost undecipherable handwriting:

'Appointment Billington to command army now up. Bad.'

Secretary Harbesson rose to ask permission to read an excerpt from a Congressional inquiry of two years previous. The President bowed his assent. She read from the *Record*:

> *The Chairman* — Then you condone the shooting down of unarmed men, women, and children.
>
> *General Billington* — If the officer in command followed orders, I approve it, sir.

The Chairman — Do you recognize no moral question?

General Billington — An officer on duty has no right to any moral standards above the commands of his superior.

Senator Clemons — Then you, yourself, would commit murder without questioning the authority which directed you?

General Billington — Certainly, sir. It is part of my profession.

'This is the man,' said Miss Harbesson, 'whom the Secretary of War proposes to set in command of the United States Army.'

'*I* am in command of the United States Army, Miss Secretary,' the President mildly reminded her.

'My apologies, sir. I will amend my statement to say that this General Billington would represent army standards to the minds of the army and of the public.'

Discussion at once broke out, became animated, excited, finally rancorous. Tim McBride flung out the word 'sissies' and General Martingell backed him up with 'mollycoddles.' Secretaries Larrabee, Clerf, and Duryea stood with them, as did the Vice-President and Happy James, who, however, made his characteristic appeal for peace and reason. The appointment was held up.

Temporarily diverted from his more intimate problem, Hugh now turned back to it. As so often happens, an oblique ray from the brain brought illumination where the direct effort had failed. As the solution leapt out at him from the paper, he was stung

with exasperation that he could have been so dumb.

The answer lay in one word. Sure that he was being overheard, Garbrod had risked a word-trick familiar to all children, in the hope that his hearer would get it, the device of inversion. 'Snug' was the key. The operative had repeated it; Snug—guns. Guns 'in a big way.' Therefore big guns. And 'commanding a wide view' from the gunsite, over the river.

It required no effort for Hugh to recall that the other operative had reported a shaft of the alleged mine opening out upon the Hudson. Artillery, masked in the shaft, would command not only the Hudson River craft but the railroad opposite and the principal artery of motor traffic beyond.

Fake gold mining became a minor issue in Hugh's whirling brain. Here was a far graver menace. How many similar emplacements were there, overlooking the approaches to New York? How many in the vicinity of other cities? The Swiss scientist's intimation of widespread war preparations came luridly to mind. Upon what terrifying discovery had his operative stumbled?

Hugh slept over the problem and awoke with a mind made up. He would see what could be done with Happy James. Wily and resourceful though he knew the politician to be, he hoped that, confronted with exposure of his mining enterprise, he might get rattled and betray himself. The information about the guns he would hold in reserve. There was another matter on which he wished to tackle the politician; he would lead off with this.

Telephoning for an appointment, he was courteously invited to luncheon at the small and luxurious Burning Tree Golf Club, where they could be private. He accepted. Declining a cocktail, Hugh presented to his host a list of five names. They were the hold-overs, indicated by Dorothy James, from the old, corrupt Hartington administration. Dorothy's father glanced over them.

'This appears to be your department, not mine.'

'I thought perhaps you could make use of the list.'

'How so?'

'They're going to be out of a job. They have too many outside interests for the present set-up in the Department of Justice. I'm stopping a leak. In fact, I suspect they aren't as straight as one might wish.'

Happy James eyed him with quiet curiosity. 'Where do you get your information as to that?'

'It might be a shock to your nerves if I told you,' answered Hugh, with a grin. 'It's historical and reliable. I'll pick my own liaison men hereafter, and they'll report to me, not to other departments.'

Happy shrugged. 'So you've learned that there is espionage in politics. Has anyone pointed out the Washington Monument to you yet?'

'I've heard there was one,' admitted Hugh. 'How about my job-lot that I'm letting out? Would you like references on any of them?'

'Can't use 'em. Their value is over.' Once again Hugh found himself near to admiring the man's cool cynicism. 'Is that what we're here to talk about?'

'Not entirely. Why don't you resign?'

'Now that *is* an idea,' said Happy admiringly. 'But, on the other hand, why should I?'

'To save yourself and the Administration trouble.'

The Postmaster-General sighed. 'Man is born to trouble ——'

'I know. "As the sparks fly upward." There's pretty hot fire underneath these sparks, James.'

'How you ever got a girl as straightforward as my Miss Dolliver to fall in love with you,' ruminated Happy James, 'beats me. Can't you ever be direct about anything?'

'I can about your New Jersey gold mine.'

'So it was your men that were nosing around,' observed Happy, quite unperturbed. 'They didn't find out much, I imagine.'

'Plenty,' returned Hugh, not quite ingenuously. 'There's no ore in that mine except what's salted with the stolen stuff shipped in to you and melted down.'

Taking a long draw on his cigar, the Postmaster-General murmured: 'Very ingenious, Farragut. Ver-ry pretty.'

'How are you going to answer expert testimony from geologists that there is not and could not be gold deposits in the Palisades formation?'

'I expect I'd have to admit it,' was the placid rejoinder.

'Would you admit it, before the Cabinet, for instance?'

'There won't be any occasion, I hope. Now, my boy, I'm going to be frank with you, as I always have been. That gold is planted. But it's not stolen. It

belongs to a small group of us who, when the Government called in all gold some years ago, objected to being swindled out of what we had salted away for a rainy day. That gold today is worth thirty-five dollars an ounce. Why would we turn it in at sixteen dollars to a Government which, by the way, repudiated our gold bonds, bought and paid for in good faith? It doesn't make sense. This little mine project of ours is the answer.'

Hugh was astounded at the ingenuity of the explanation. He could not be sure that it was untrue.

'Of course you know it's illegal.'

Happy James waved his cigar. 'Oh, technically. By a decision unsound in morals, whatever it may be in law.'

'Do you think the President is going to be satisfied with this?'

'Why bother him with it? Be sensible. Don't make a mess of things. You'll do yourself no good. Aren't you convinced yet that your only course is to play ball with us?'

'Not yet,' said Hugh steadily.

'Try to see things as they are,' advised the politician persuasively. I'm giving you this last chance, though you don't deserve it, on Dorothy's account. If it weren't for her you could fry in hell as far as I'm concerned. I don't like young reformers. She apparently does.' His lips wrinkled in a wry grin. 'Well, if she wants you I'll have to save your precious skin.' He jabbed a finger at Hugh. 'Listen. We're the Government. We've got Congress. We've got the inside

track in the departments. And we've got something bigger. This is fundamentally a Labor administration, isn't it? Well, we've got Labor. All through the country we've got our men in key positions in the unions. What are you going to do about that?'

'You haven't got the President.'

'Frank Winters? He's a figurehead. A puppet. What can he do but jump when the Party pulls the strings?'

'When you say "the Party" do you, by any chance, mean Postmaster-General Happy James?'

'He *has* discovered the Washington Monument,' chuckled the other.

'And you, I suspect, are in process of discovering the United States Treasury,' retorted Hugh. 'I still think,' he added, 'that you'd better resign.'

'If that's a threat, I'm quite prepared for any emergency. And I advise you, earnestly and officially, Mr. Attorney-General, both in your own interests and those of the country, to stop right there. Stop, look, and listen!'

'Will you excuse me for a moment?' requested Hugh. 'I must telephone.'

He called up his former headquarters in New York and got Harris Magill. 'Can you send Garbrod down here at once?'

'Sorry, Chief. Garbrod hasn't reported since last Friday and we can't get any trace of him,' answered the assistant's depressed voice.

It was on Friday evening that Hugh had received the telephoned 'snug' message. There was now no

question of his confronting James with the charge of having planted artillery as well as gold. That must wait. His face was pale and his jaw set, when he returned and took his place opposite Happy James.

'I shall demand your resignation in full Cabinet meeting,' said he.

A shade of sadness, of doubt, darkened the countenance of Happy James. Violent and lawless though the soul within him was, it may still have shrunk from a decision fraught with such incalculable consequences as that now presented to him. Or he may have sensed in his opponent the spirit of an America still too true to itself, too formidable to be safely defied even by his mighty army of crime. In a low, strained voice he said:

'This may be a question of peace or war, Farragut.'

Still ignorant of the broader implications, Hugh took this to be a reiteration of the old personal challenge.

'It will have to be war, then,' he said.

CHAPTER XII

How far would the President go along with him? To this vital question Hugh Farragut must find the answer. No longer did he distrust Frank J. Winters's probity. But could he be relied upon for the courage and steadfastness to follow a course which must inevitably split his party? Among the better elements the real leaders of policy and principle were one hundred per cent loyal. But there was another faction, and Hugh's racketeering experience in New York had taught him that Happy James was not dealing in windy boastfulness when he claimed control of it. It was perilous ground.

One way to force a showdown would be to bring up the issue between Hugh and James before the Cabinet without notice. Though Happy James had forewarning of the gold issue, the charge of establishing an artillery base would take him as much by surprise as it would the President. Even so, Hugh was not perfectly sure of his ground. He might have misinterpreted that message over the telephone.

Again, would this abrupt procedure be altogether fair-dealing on his part toward the man who had appointed him? As a rule he was accustomed to make his own decisions. This was too weighty. He felt his inexperience in the political arena. Three of his fellow

Cabinet officers he could unreservedly trust, perhaps four, counting Miss Harbesson. About others he considered that he lacked adequate data, as yet. There was no pressing haste in the present situation. No meeting would be held for three days. He laid the question, in strict confidence, before Gerritt of the State Department and Levinson of Commerce, withholding nothing.

Long habitude of the bench had made Judge Gerritt cautious. His advice was to go slow. Levinson, on the other hand, felt that there was danger in postponement. Both pointed out the inconclusive nature of the evidence. Both agreed that no action should be taken without previous consultation with the President. To this Hugh assented. It coincided with his own calmer view.

'Winters will demand James's resignation,' was the Secretary of State's opinion.

'And if he can't be forced out?' countered Hugh.

'Then you will be forced out,' said Levinson. 'And I will go with you. Others, too, I think.'

Hugh's eyes brightened. 'And tear the lid off the whole rotten business?'

The Secretary of Commerce looked grave. 'No man can tell whither that might lead us.'

Judge Gerritt pronounced the word, 'Revolution.' He asked Hugh, 'Had you thought of that?'

'I've tried to think of everything,' answered the young Attorney-General sombrely. 'Certainly I have no thought of revolution against Winters.'

'Winters would be with us. It isn't a question of

whether he has the will, but whether he has the power,' said Levinson. 'You say that the Postmaster-General seemed quite confident when you taxed him with his fake mining operations.'

'Quite. Can you imagine Happy James being stampeded?'

'I don't like it,' said Levinson heavily. 'He has something in reserve.'

Judge Gerritt said to Hugh: 'I shall be frank with you, Mr. Attorney-General. Your plan seems to me premature if not ill-considered and reckless.'

'There's a proverbial advantage in getting in the first punch.'

'If one is seeking a fight. Should we not rather strive to avoid that? In any case, I stand unreservedly with the President.'

'That is what I should expect of you, sir.'

'Win him to your plan, and I will support it to the finish.'

'And that is all I could ask of you. I thank you, gentlemen.'

Compunction was his first feeling when, at ten o'clock on the following evening, he called at the White House by appointment. That face, so seamed, so lined, told of a burden of care approaching the limits of human capacity. Why — thought the visitor in an access of sympathy and pity — should any man wish to become President of the United States? Yet he must add to the burden under which that mind was courageously plodding.

His terse statement did not evoke the expected

surprise. True, Winters's heavy brows jerked upward at Hugh's description of the James 'mine.' But the presumption of the big guns moved him only to nod his slow head.

'You already know something of this?' queried the visitor eagerly.

'Not of this. But reports along the same lines have reached me from other parts of the country.'

'Secret armaments?'

'There followed a pause. Then: 'Yes. Rumors only. Nothing definite.'

'Then you credit my information, Mr. President?'

'You are a lawyer. What is your own opinion of your evidence?'

'Worthless in a court of law.'

'That would be my estimate. What do you propose?'

'To bring it up before the Cabinet.'

'A direct accusation against the Postmaster-General?'

'I thought I might feel my way as to the guns. James knows that I am on his trail in the gold operation, but not in the other.'

'And you expect to shock him into some self-betrayal?' The President smiled sadly. 'I'm afraid you underestimate Mr. James's qualities.'

'There may be others in the Cabinet who have knowledge of this.'

'Yes, that's true. Others not so self-controlled,' muttered Winters. He fixed Hugh with his melancholy and thoughtful glance. 'What is the alternative to my approval of your idea, Mr. Attorney-General?'

'Happy James and I cannot sit at the same table after this.'

'How could you?' assented the other. 'It boils down, then, to a choice between you two.'

'I'm afraid so, sir.'

'A choice easily made, if my own inclinations were my guide. Unhappily, there are other considerations in the background, considerations possibly involving terrific consequences to the nation.'

It came upon Hugh in a flash that he had underestimated this man, too. Frank J. Winters was not blundering ahead in the dark. He knew!

The grizzled head rested upon the upturned hands. Winters said, very low, 'Give me until —— No, we'll settle this now.' Slowly he rose. 'Do what you think is your duty to the nation, Farragut,' he said strongly. 'And may God have mercy on us all.'

Hugh's lids tingled as he left the room. Never had he heard prayer wrung from recesses of man's soul so deep.

Two of the longest days that he ever passed followed. He reviewed with minute care his plan of attack. That there was the chance of failure he fully recognized. Should Happy James stand pat, should there be no sign from any of his accomplices in the ring, no course would be left to Hugh but withdrawal and silence until he could bring positive proof. Would not the wiser course be to wait?

Probably. But he was afraid to wait; to afford the enemy more time for building up their hidden offensive.

It was a comforting reflection that if his strategy did fall, he would fall alone; the President would not be involved. And, at worst, he could seriously damage James before resigning, by exposure of the gold cabal. What would be the answer of the Postmaster-General and his clique to a demand for an immediate secret-service investigation of the Palisades Mining Company? Hugh's might be a snap charge, but at least he had a double-barrelled weapon.

Tension was in the atmosphere when the members of the Cabinet gathered in the outer room before the President's arrival. It was evident to Hugh, whose own nerves were none too tranquil, that the Postmaster-General had warned his associates that trouble might be coming. Tim McBride glowered at him with such patent hostility as to arouse in Hugh the half-humorous speculation as to whether the former gorilla and strong-arm basher might not have a blackjack or other convenient weapon on him. Duryea and Mrs. Larrabee murmured together in a corner. Happy James talked apart with Vice-President Caleb Keeler. The Vice-President, so Hugh thought, seemed unusually alert and, in a way, expectant. General Martingell sat apart in heavy thought. But the Secretary of War habitually presented the aspect of heavy thought — if it was thought. As Hugh was talking with Secretary Levinson, a hand was laid on his shoulder.

'May I have a word with you, Mr. Attorney-General?'

'Certainly.'

Hugh followed Happy James to a window em-

brasure. Noting the strained anxiety of the eyes, the troubled effect of the expression, Hugh thought with elation —— He's going to offer to get out. Or compromise. — The other at once dispelled the idea.

'This is not official, Farragut. It's about my daughter.'

'Anything wrong?' asked Hugh quickly.

'Have you been trying to kidnap her?'

'I? Why should I?' returned Hugh contemptuously. 'Are you out of your mind?'

'Almost,' returned the other. 'If you haven't, someone has.'

'Kidnap Dorrie?' queried Hugh, with such a stress of voice that his companion cautioned him:

'Sh-h-h-h-h! Quiet!'

'Who? How? Where?' demanded the younger man.

'This morning. At Doctor Tell's.'

Suddenly Hugh was furiously angry, made so by his fears for the girl he loved. 'You're the boss of the underworld of New York. Can't you protect your own child?' he growled.

'I have, this time. Another time —? Do you think I'm not trying?' he asked in a muffled groan.

'I'm sorry, James,' said Hugh, with quick and genuine contrition. 'We're of one mind as to Dorrie, anyway. It's the Nick Cuprane case, isn't it? She's supposed to know too much about it.'

James gave him a sidelong glance. 'I suppose so,' he muttered. 'If it wasn't you.'

'You don't seem to understand,' said Hugh gently and patiently. 'There would never be any occasion

for me to kidnap Dorrie. She is ready to marry me as soon as it is safe for her to leave the Retreat — or before, for that matter. Obviously it isn't safe now.'

'Good God, no!'

'You and I between us must make it so. But that will have to wait. I think I shall fly up to see her tomorrow.'

The father studied him for a long ten seconds. 'That will be all right,' he decided. 'Will you take a sealed letter, to be destroyed if not delivered?'

'To Dorothy?'

'To whom it may concern. If there should be any — well, interference with you, produce the letter. It may be useful.'

'I see,' answered Hugh. 'Thank you.'

James went to a desk, wrote a line, sealed it in an envelope upon which he scrawled 'From H. J.,' and returned. The men parted without a word upon the issue which, as one of them knew might happen, was to convulse the nation. To those two foes the safety of a girl was the paramount and immediate consideration.

Routine business consumed the first hour of the meeting. Then, upon a sign from the President, Hugh Farragut rose. Instead of addressing the chair, he altered his position to turn to his neighbor on the right.

'May I put some questions to the Secretary of War?'

General Martingell returned a surprised and grumpy assent.

'Has the War Department available information

upon private armed forces and military establishments in the United States?'

'If we had such information, it would be a departmental matter.'

'Every fool knows,' put in Tim McBride, 'that some industrialists have their own troops.'

'There are the unions' "beef squads" also,' Hugh mildly reminded him.

'What is the purpose of this inquiry, Mr. Attorney-General?' inquired Secretary of Health Larrabee in her sweetest manner.

'That will appear shortly.' Again Hugh addressed himself to General Martingell. 'I will be more specific. Have you data regarding gun emplacements along the Hudson River?'

The Secretary of War made an essay at sardonic humor. 'The Attorney-General may have heard of a place called West Point.'

'I do not refer to West Point,' answered Hugh, with undisturbed equanimity. 'I have in mind a masked battery, concealed in the Palisades.'

'Rot!' barked the military man, and Hugh, with the tenth of his mind which could be devoted to the reply, guessed the General's ignorance of the situation.

The other ninety per cent of Hugh's attention was centred upon Happy James. The Postmaster-General did not betray a flicker of excitement. He sat calm, pensive, and serious as if striving to fathom the problem of the General's annoyance.

'Look at McBride,' whispered Levinson.

Hugh shifted his gaze. At once he realized that he

was on sure ground. The labor leader's visage was a vivid betrayal, from the frightened stagnancy of the eyes to the twitching hide of his sub-indigo chin. Not yet ready to strike home, Hugh turned to the representative of the Navy.

'Perhaps you, Mr. Secretary, can throw light upon this.'

After a marked hesitation, Clerf replied: 'I believe that our information service has been interested in certain rumors. Whatever we have is at the Attorney-General's service, with the President's approval.'

Hugh revised his estimate of Clerf's attitude. He was not with the James-Keeler-McBride coalition. As for Martingell, he was apparently nowhere.

'May I ask whither all this innuendo is leading?' demanded Secretary Duryea testily. But Hugh perceived symptoms of alarm in that small face also.

'To Postmaster-General James.'

There was a dead silence around the table, as Hugh swung about to face the man opposite. Happy sat impassive.

'Proceed,' directed the calm voice of Winters.

'Mr. President, I protest,' boomed Caleb Keeler. 'This is an outrageous statement. I — protest.' He was white and shaky. He looked to the Postmaster-General as if for instructions.

'Let him go ahead,' said Happy James.

'I shall present reasons for the immediate resignation of the Postmaster-General,' continued Hugh.

Tim McBride's fist descended upon the mahogany with a force that made the papers leap. 'No, by God!'

he roared. 'If there's any resigning, it'll be you that resigns.'

The President leaned forward. He fixed the Secretary of Arbitration with a steady glance. 'Quiet,' he said.

McBride slumped back under the rebuke.

Without special emphasis Hugh brought his charge. 'The Palisades Mining Company, controlled by Mr. James and his associates, produced not ore but stolen gold.'

'Is this true?' asked President Winters.

'No,' said Happy James.

'Without withdrawing the charge, I will amend it to substitute illegal for stolen gold.'

'That can be satisfactorily explained,' said Happy James.

'I doubt it. In the mine shaft overlooking the Hudson the operating company has planted guns of long range and heavy calibre.'

'If this unsupported accusation is true, which I take leave to doubt ——'

'It is true,' struck in the President.

Every head jerked around to face him. Hugh Farragut was taken as much by surprise as the rest. Happy James's color faded, but he maintained his outward appearance of calm.

'—— the guns were brought there without my knowledge. Nor can I conceive for what purpose unless to protect the mine against robbery.'

'Is that the best you can do, Mr. Postmaster-General?' queried Hugh, with an irritating effect of pity,

and became conscious of a murderous glare directed upon him from McBride's contorted visage.

'A squad of army engineers is now in possession,' stated President Winters.

General Martingell surged to his feet, purple with wrath. 'By whom was the order issued?' he demanded.

'By the Commander-in-Chief of the national forces,' was the calm reply. 'Need I be more specific with the Secretary of War?'

'Over my head?'

'It was an occasion for prompt and quiet action.'

'Then, sir,' retorted Martingell, with a very creditable assumption of dignity, 'I must offer my resignation.'

'Be good enough to put it in writing.' The President stood up. 'Are there any other resignations?'

His scrutiny swept the rapt faces about the board. For the first time Hugh saw in him a personality, dominant, formidable, ruthless where principle was involved, a man to inspire fear as well as respect.

The Presidential regard hovered upon Mrs. Larrabee. She drooped. Upon Duryea, who sent an imploring glance, winging vainly toward Happy James. Upon McBride, whose savagery was still focussed on Hugh Farragut. Hugh's interest was, for the moment, absorbed in Keeler. Across the rubicund features of the Vice-President spread a glow of elation, of expectancy, of what might have been triumph. What could that mean?

'Mr. James?' In Winters's tone was the crackle and the threat of latent electricity.

The Postmaster-General's sleek head dragged up as if impeded by a heavy weight.

'Are you asking for my resignation, sir?'

'I am demanding it.'

'Without a hearing?'

'I advise you not to press a hearing. Papers have been found.'

Happy James looked down at his hands as if amazed to find them twitching uncontrollably. His vocal cords, however, were still under control as he asked,

'How long may I have?'

'Ah! I am as ready as yourself to avoid the appearance of scandal for the present. Shall we say a week?'

'That will be quite sufficient,' returned Happy James, with an intonation which brought Hugh's eyes around upon him.

Tim McBride lumbered to his feet. The President bent upon him an expectant glance, but the ex-gorilla's mind was not upon official, but direct action.

'Look out!' cried a voice stridently, and before the words had died, McBride's powerful form was around the foot of the table. Hugh recognized the ex-thug's objective. But he would have had no time to push back his heavy chair and set himself for defence, had it not been for an unexpected interposition.

Saturnine Henry Hartshorn, the Secretary of Agriculture, rose in the path of the bull-like rush. Two terrific blows beat him to the floor, stunned and bleeding. The momentary check gave Hugh just the half-second needed. With the instantaneous instinct of the trained athlete he had mapped his procedure.

Berserk madness always drives a fighter forward, smashing. Hugh was too wise to attempt the direct counter for that rock-like jaw. With his shorter stature it was easy for him to swerve beneath the murderously flailing fists and drive upward and forward with left and right, into the distended paunch of the attacker. With a gasp and a belch McBride tottered back. An overturned chair thrust toward him from the rear caught him beneath the knees. He rolled on the floor, where he was pinned by two guards who had rushed in from the outer room.

The most tumultuous Cabinet meeting in American history was adjourned in a near-hysterical confusion. Nursing a sprained left wrist, Hugh found himself faced by Lucy Harbesson, who was the coolest person present.

'Do you carry a pistol?' she asked.

'No.'

'Get one.' She moved on, allowing him no chance to ask an explanation of her terse advice.

Going to Winters, who was pale with anger, Hugh said:

'My apologies, sir. I had to do it.'

'You did it thoroughly,' was the grim response. 'Can you come to the White House late tomorrow afternoon? Say five o'clock?'

'Yes, sir.'

'I shall expect you.'

Gone was Hugh's anticipation of a whole afternoon with Dorrie James at the Retreat. When could he hope again to call even a scant few hours of life his own?

Released for the time from official pressure, Hugh thought wistfully of the quiet and detachment of the Cosmos Club atmosphere. Ralph Stoner had sent him a courtesy card. Probably he would find Ralph there. After an early and lone dinner, he walked around to the place.

The geologist was playing the new, cross-auction bridge at one fiftieth of a cent. Declining an invitation to 'bid in,' the visitor sat watching for a restful half-hour. Between 'crises' as the cumulative points were termed, Stoner turned away from the play to inform his friend:

'Vignal is in the library.'

'What is he doing?'

'Brooding, I'm afraid. I'm worried about him. I have never known a soul so darkened. Why don't you go up and talk with him?'

Hugh nodded and climbed the stairs. He found the Swiss scientist huddled in a chair, staring into vacancy. Vignal rose and shook hands.

'You're not looking well,' said the American. 'Is there anything I can do for you?'

Vignal threw up his hands in a gesture of desperation. 'This world! This terrible world!'

'You are safe enough here,' Hugh reassured him.

'I think not so much of my own safety. I am but one life among millions that are imperilled.'

'Here? Are you thinking of this country?'

'Are you then immune from universal madness,' cried the scientist, 'you other Americans?' He lowered his voice, though there was no one else in the

room. 'We spoke before of my Azrael bombs. Azrael, the Angel of Death, descending from the heavens.' He laughed, and Hugh wondered whether he was quite sane. 'Do you recall, Monsieur?'

'Yes.'

'We have a query at the Panama Cercle d'Industrie, how many could I supply of these bombs, and upon what terms?'

'Surely you wouldn't,' began Hugh, but was cut off.

'Sooner I would swallow one of these.' He brought out a steel box which he opened, revealing in neat rows the tiny, shining *capsules d'espion*, fabricated from what appeared to be some light metal. 'That would be at worst a swift and kindly death. You know the Latin proverb: "*Bis dat qui cito dat.*" I offer you an improvement upon it. "He dies but once who dies quickly."'

Hugh stared at him. His mind veered to Dorrie in a sick panic. They had tried to kidnap her, that gang of unspeakable creatures. If ever they laid hands on her, could she hope to die quickly? Hugh tapped upon the box.

'Are these obtainable?'

'For yourself?'

'For a woman?'

'Ah! Also there was a woman whom I loved. Happily I had supplied her with one of these. Her hand to her lips — so. It was all over. Instantly. Mercifully. ... Yes; you shall have it. You shall have two. One for yourself at need.' He waved away the suggestion

of payment. 'I bid you adieu. Tomorrow I go away. Shall we meet again? I think perhaps not.'

'Leave me your address, Monsieur,' requested Hugh.

'You can always reach me through Panama.' He reflected, and came to a decision. 'There is a quiet spot on the West Virginia hills where I sometimes go to escape all this — and wait,' he added in a lower tone which chilled the listener. 'I shall enclose the address with the capsules. Remember,' he warned. 'They are strong, they will resist shock. But, once broken, instant death to any within the radius of the enclosed gases.'

Threats of peril were in the air, mused Hugh. First Miss Harbesson; now this queer foreigner. Bidding good night to Ralph Stoner, he went, not to his hotel, but to the Department of Justice, which never closes. The night superintendent, making little effort to conceal his concern, found for him, at request, one of the improved Lehrer automatics.

'Let me send a man back with you, sir,' he begged. 'These are queer times.'

'They are, indeed, MacDonough.' The old man had a record which warranted Hugh's confidence in him. 'But I'm not going back for a while. I have some work to finish. You might call Graves at the airport. Tell him we take off at dawn.'

'Yes, sir.'

Presently MacDonough returned with the information that he had been unable to locate the Attorney-General's personal pilot, but that a substitute aviator named Fresneau would be ready.

Fresneau was not known to Hugh. That did not matter. He felt an intense urgency to get to Dorrie as soon as possible, as if some inexplicable but special motive were impelling him. Leaving a note of his destination on his desk, at five o'clock he had a bath and a shave, took the official car to the Union Station for breakfast, and thence to Alexandria. He was early at the airport. The substitute pilot arrived at six-thirty. Fresneau was a slender, swarthy, competent-appearing young man who greeted the Attorney-General courteously.

'Good morning, sir. Conditions are not too favorable.'

'Do you advise holding off?'

'That's for you to decide, sir,' was the placid reply. 'It may be clearer as we get away. Which way do we go?'

'North. To Long Island. Riverhead.'

The aviator climbed to his place, tested the gyroscope, then shut off the engine. 'Is there time for me to telephone my wife, sir?'

'Yes. But be quick about it.'

Three minutes, to the passenger's impatience, was not 'quick.' A poor wire was Fresneau's explanation. The tiny monoplane seemed to leap into the air, swiftly nosing into the eternal clarity above the clouds. A red sun came over the rim of the world.

The flight consumed less than fifty minutes. Hugh indicated the Retreat and the landing place in the meadow opposite. They made a silent landing. As he disembarked, the passenger thought that he saw

movement in a thick copse, bordering the field to the east.

'Interference' Happy James had said, in giving him the sealed note. Was it coming now? With his hand on his weapon, Hugh walked rapidly to the entrance. Nobody followed him. But now he was sure that there were men in insufficient hiding.

The Retreat guards were obviously disturbed at his application for entry at so unusual an hour, but admitted him. Few portals are closed to the Attorney-General of the United States.

Beneath the iron-barred window of the girl's apartment, Hugh called her name. A joyous cry answered.

'Hugh! How grand! Breakfast in ten minutes.'

'Then you knew I was coming?'

'Yes. Washington has been calling you.'

The statuesque figure of Honor Slogage appeared. 'Good morning, Mr. Attorney-General. I'm glad you're here.'

'Why? Anything wrong?'

'There came near being. We had a scare. Did you notice some men hanging about?'

'Yes. After Miss James?' His heart was in his throat.

'Not this lot. They're Happy James's men. In case of another raid.'

Hugh pondered that. To be sure, it safeguarded Dorrie. But what of himself? He must consider his own safety, not in his own interests, but in those of the nation which he was serving. Until Happy James and his associates were ousted, there could be no truce.

Circumstances had made him leader in that campaign of patriotic duty. He had no right to take chances.

Accompanied by Honor Slogage, he went to Dorrie's suite and at once picked up the telephone. At that hour the special prosecutor's office would not, of course, be open. But he was reasonably sure to find Harris Magill at his apartment. A slumberous voice answered him:

'Hello, and be damned to you, whoever you are! It isn't morning yet.'

'Hugh Farragut speaking.'

'Oh, great gosh! Sorry, Chief. Where are you?' There was no lethargy in the tones now.

'At Riverhead. The Retreat. How soon can you get Wilde?'

'Two minutes.'

'Good. Pick up four or five of the squad. Can you get an armored car?'

'If I have to steal it!'

'Get here as soon as you can. Wait outside until you're needed.'

'Right, Chief. Sounds like old times. Two hours, or maybe sooner.'

'Make it sooner. Good-bye.'

Dorrie at his shoulder said reproachfully, 'I'm among those present, also.'

'I know, darling.' He satisfactorily attested his appreciation of her presence. 'You're all right, aren't you?'

'I've been having a bad time with Dad. He accuses

me of having given away some of his business secrets to you. I haven't, have I?'

Hugh experienced a qualm of compunction. 'The gold business?'

'Yes. I didn't know there was any secret about it. And I told him that even if you did get anything from me, you would be too honorable to make use of it,' said she trustfully.

'I have made use of it, I'm afraid,' he answered heavily.

'*Hugh!* I don't believe you. You wouldn't do that to me.'

'I'm afraid I didn't give it enough weight at the time. But even so ——' His eyes searched her paling face, anxious, imploring — 'Dorrie, darling, try to understand this thing. It's so much bigger than any one person, any one interest.'

'Bigger than our love?' she breathed.

He threw his hand upward. 'I don't suppose a woman can understand. Put it that I unwittingly broke faith with you, Dorrie. I suppose I have. But I'd do the same thing again. Your father is engaged in a criminal conspiracy against the nation and this ——'

'My father has never broken faith with me,' said she doggedly.

'You've got to choose between us finally. I've always told you that. It might as well be now. Are you going to make this issue the basis of your choice?'

Her face slowly turned from him. Her eyes were heavy with pain and uncertainty.

'I love you, Dorrie,' he said.

'I know. I know. That's what makes it so difficult to understand. I don't know whom to trust. How can one love without trusting?'

They stared at one another across an *impasse*, both with appalled faces. The telephone buzzed startlingly. She motioned to him to answer, and stood very still beside him. She could hear the wooden tinkle of the voice, so strangely dehumanized.

'Washington calling the Attorney-General — Ready? — All right, you're connected ——' Then Hugh's quiet query.

'Yes? MacDonough? All right. Go ahead... What's that?... Yes, of course I'm safe.' He clapped his hand across the receiver, 'Dorrie, this is official business.'

Her hand went to her breast. 'It isn't. It's danger. To you.'

He raised his voice. 'Mrs. Slogage! Will you take her out?'

Instantly he was clasped in an encirclement of arms whose strength amazed him. The girl's face, pressed violently to his. Her voice, broken though it was, held a violence of its own as she gasped, 'I won't go! I won't! I'm going to hear this, to know what it is that threatens you. I've a right to know. I've a right!'

A great surge of thankfulness welled up in his heart. It was her decision, her surrender. Her choice was made finally.

MacDonough's words came through more clearly. Sometime in the early morning a squad of local

police had gone to Hugh's hotel, forced their way into his rooms, and rifled them.

'I know whose work that is,' commented Hugh. 'After my papers. They wouldn't find much there.'

'They had handcuffs with them,' said the telephone.

'Oh!' cried the girl.

Hugh put out a hand to quiet her. 'Anyone else?'

'There's a rumor that Secretary Levinson is in jail and that an attack on Secretary Gerritt was beaten off.'

'Thank you,' said Hugh. 'Keep me posted.' To Dorrie he said: 'It's come. Sooner than I expected.'

'You can't go back there,' said she pleadingly.

'That's absurd. I must.'

'Then I'm going with you.'

'I'm afraid that's absurd, too, my darling.'

'Hugh, if you leave me here now do you realize that we may never see each other again?'

Shaken he begged: 'Don't make it too hard for me.'

'For *you!* Think of me.'

'If only I knew what was happening ——'

'Whatever it is, it couldn't be as hard for me as being left here to agonize in doubt.'

He rose. 'God forgive me,' said he. 'I'll take you.'

She gave a little cry of exultation. In the nervous reaction of her relief, she began to chatter.

'May I take luggage? A suitcase? Two? Honor, help me pack. Shall I wire Dad? Better not, perhaps.' Her face clouded. 'Oh, poor Dad! I'll wait till I see him.'

She darted into the bedroom, commenced hauling

open drawers, tossing clothes and toilet articles onto the bed, gaily bossing Honor Slogage. Again she heard the telephone ring, and Hugh's response, 'Hello?' Then nothing more.

She danced back to him, waving a nondescript garment. 'More news?' she asked.

Hugh sat, staring at nothing with an expression which appalled her. The receiver, fallen, dangled beside him.

'What is it?' she cried. 'Oh, Hugh! What is it?'

'The President has been found dead in his bed.'

CHAPTER XIII

HUGH sat flaccid in his chair, his face twisted as if by a stroke. Dorrie's lips on his hair brought him to himself.

'Darling, darling!' she murmured.

He caught her hand, pressed it to his cheek.

'I warned him,' he said lamentably.

'Warned him? Hugh! You don't think ——'

'Yes. Murder.'

Struggling for control, she protested: 'But they said only that he was found dead in bed, didn't they?'

'Yes. But ——'

'Who was it on the telephone? It may not even be true.'

'That's what I've got to find out,' he muttered. He got heavily to his feet.

'I suppose you must go back.'

'Of course. At once.'

'Is it safe? Especially if what you think is true?'

'Safe? How can it be safe? Nothing is safe.'

She went to the door and called: 'Honor! Am I packed?'

'Just finishing,' came the response from the inner room.

Hugh turned to her with anguished incertitude. 'How can I risk taking you with me now?'

'How can you risk leaving me?'

'Yes; it's as bad one way as the other.'

'At least we'll be together.'

At that he caught her to him in a desperate embrace. She gave a small, startled cry. Doctor Courtenay Tell had opened the outer door. Back of him stood three guards. Hugh stepped before the girl just as Honor Slogage appeared from the inner room, carrying a small week-end trunk.

'What is this?' he demanded.

'Mr. Attorney-General,' returned the physician, 'I shall have to ask you to leave.'

'I am leaving. Miss James is going with me.'

'That I cannot allow.' He stepped forward. One of his attendants closed and bolted the door.

Hugh measured the situation. Any one of the trio, heavyweights all, would be a handful for him. That they were armed he made no doubt. So was he. But if he started gunplay not only would the odds be against him, but Dorrie would be as likely a target for a bullet as anyone else. It wouldn't do. He played for time.

'If she stays, I stay.'

'That, also, is impossible,' said Doctor Tell.

'Cahm-on, fella. Get goin',' hoarsely advised the nearest of the strong-arm squad.

Hugh heard the thud before his astonished mind fully appraised the development. The weighty piece of luggage, swung from Honor Slogage's practised hand, had knocked the man completely out. Almost before he was on the floor, she had dived into the biggest of the thugs and tossed him over her shoulder into the

wall, where he crumpled, groaning. Sweeping a heavy inkwell from the desk — this was no time for the niceties of combat — Hugh laid out the third gladiator, whipped out his automatic, and stood over him.

'Open that door.' He snapped out the command to Doctor Tell, who, white to the gills, obeyed.

Operating with the briskness of the expert, Honor frisked the fallen men, collecting three weapons. One she gave to Dorrie, keeping the other two herself.

'What'll we do with this lot?' she asked Hugh, indicating the four invaders.

'Lock them in the bedroom.'

They were bundled inside, and Hugh fortified the door with the heavy desk.

'I have a notion,' remarked Honor, 'that I'm about to become a jobless lady.'

'Hugh,' said Dorrie, 'we can't leave her. Not after this.'

Action had cleared from his brain the last remnant of the numbness into which the shock of the long-distance message had plunged it. Once more he was his steady and competent self.

'Wouldn't think of it,' he agreed.

'What can we do about it?'

'I'll send her to New York with the boys.'

'And leave my William and the twins here?' said Honor.

'We'll take them, too.'

The Slogage clan was swiftly mobilized for retreat. No interference was offered at the gate. Carson Wilde came forward to meet the group.

'Something doing in that patch of woodland yonder, Chief.'

From the place indicated, Fresneau, the substitute aviator, stepped out, followed by another man. He hurried to the plane, raising his hand to Hugh as if for a signal of readiness.

'Get back of the car,' Hugh sharply directed the girl. To the pilot he called: 'Come over here, Fresneau.'

Instead the man climbed to his seat. Hugh reached back for his gun but did not draw it.

'Get out of that plane.'

Fresneau thrust forth his head, as the other man moved toward the propeller. 'Ain't I flying you back, sir?'

'Can you fly that machine?' asked Hugh of Dorrie.

'Yes.' The heavier-than-air type was not made that she would have hesitated to tackle in an emergency. She stepped to his side.

The man on the ground spun the blades. In the roar of the engine the shot from Fresneau's pistol was smothered. Involuntarily Hugh dodged bullets which had already spurted earth back of him.

'Come, everybody!' he shouted, and as the gyro drew the plane almost vertically upward, he ran forward, shooting. Still the mechanism rose.

Scattered reports sounded from the underbrush of the adjacent woodland, and were instantly answered by the rattle and birr of the armed car's machine guns. Right and Left Guard had gone into action without waiting for orders.

There were cries from the patch of woods. Dimly seen figures scuttled into deeper cover. That diversion was over.

Reckless of himself, Hugh discharged his last two shots almost directly upward. The plane levelled out. It veered. It seemed to shiver. Then it darted at full speed and with a sidelong sweep crashed in an orchard. A flame shot hideously forth.

Hugh ran back to Dorrie. Her face was buried in her hands. She was swaying.

'Are you hurt?' he cried, terror-stricken.

'Oh! Oh!' she sobbed out. 'He's killed. You've killed him.'

Seizing her by the shoulders, he shook her harshly. 'Hush! Get a grip on yourself. This is war.'

With an effort she recovered control. 'Sorry,' she muttered.

Harris Magill and Carson Wilde came on a dead run. 'Any damage?'

'Damage!' snapped Hugh, his jaw tense. 'How am I to reach Washington now?'

Dorothy said, 'Can you get me to Southampton?'

'What for?'

'My Terris "Dart" is there. I'll fly you down in it.'

The lurkers in the woods had, in their headlong departure, abandoned their car. Hugh helped Dorrie in and turned to say, close to Harris Magill's ear:

'If I'm alive and out of jail at six o'clock tonight, I'll telephone.'

'Great God, Chief! You don't think ——'

'Good luck,' cut in his superior, and settled himself at the wheel.

Bent upon making all possible speed, he concentrated on his driving. Nor did his companion speak until the radio before her began sparking. It was the Universal Clearance signal, indicating that the air was given over to an impending message of prime authority and importance.

'Washington,' breathed Dorrie.

Unconsciously Hugh slackened speed. An emotionless enunciation delivered a formula.

'The Government of the United States, speaking on all wave-lengths. Stand by at twelve o'clock, noon, for a Clearance message.'

'What does it mean?' whispered the girl.

'They're holding back. Covering up something.'

'Who?'

'Whoever is responsible for Frank Winters's death.'

'Who do you think is responsible, Hugh?'

Tonelessly he answered, 'Wait.'

She bent forward. He would not meet her eyes. There was no need; she could read the grisly suspicion in his mind. Back into memory floated her father's confident boast, 'I shall have more power than Mussolini or Hitler ever had, and exercise it with more skill.' Could he have known what was coming to pass? No; she could not believe that. She must not believe it!

The car was now making, eighty, eighty-five, and still the needle advanced in its arc, near to the hundred. Dorrie lowered her head and set her teeth. Whistles

sounded as they zoomed perilously through the main street of a town. She thought she heard the crack of a shot. It hardly seemed that even a police bullet could overtake them; certainly no police motor-cycle could .... They roared into the wide driveway of the James estate, east of Southampton. Dorrie's amazed mechanic came running out from the private hangar.

'How long to tune up?' she shot at him.

'Belding isn't here. I'll have to work alone. Maybe half an ——'

'I'll help you.'

The man grinned. He had no special respect for Miss James's habitual and notorious impatience of delay when she wanted to get somewhere; but he had a well-founded appreciation of her mechanical skill.

'In that case, fifteen to twenty minutes.'

'Let's get at it.'

Hugh said: 'Can you get me a typewriter, paper, and carbon?'

She took him to her study, called a maid, gave brief instructions, and left him. In a little more than eighteen minutes she was tapping at the window.

'All ready, Hugh.'

'Come in here.'

She entered.

'Where are you going when we reach Washington?'

'Wherever you go.'

'No. I won't let you. You'd be in the way.'

'You know I wouldn't. That isn't it. You're going into danger and you're afraid for me.'

'Yes; I'm afraid for you,' he admitted. 'Terrified.

So much so that with you on my mind I couldn't do the work that I must do. Are you going to help or hinder me, Dorrie?'

'Do you have to ask me that?'

'Sorry. I ought to know you better.'

'I'll go to Dad's house,' she decided. 'You'll know where to find me. What are the papers?' He was holding out to her carbon copies of his hasty script. There were a score of sheets.

'Emergency plans,' he replied shortly. 'If anything goes wrong when we land ——'

'What could go wrong?'

'Well, I might be arrested.'

'And then?'

He evaded the question. 'It probably won't happen. They aren't going to let the news break before noon if they can help it, and they have no way of knowing that it has reached us. And it isn't likely that they can have traced us. But if I should be intercepted, take those papers to the Secretary of State if it's the last thing you ever do, and tell him, for the love of his country and his God, not to question or delay, but to carry out the instructions.'

Quietly she asked, 'Do you want to tell me anything more, Hugh?'

'There isn't time. If what I fear comes to pass, it may be war tomorrow. These plans are the answer — if there is any answer,' he added with ill-controlled dejection.

'Shall we start?'

His gaze enveloped her with an intensity hardly to

be borne. His left hand went slowly to a pocket, withdrew empty, and was plunged back again. It was disturbingly unlike Hugh Farragut's usual unhesitating assurance.

'Don't look like that, darling,' she besought. 'You — you frighten me. What is it?'

Between finger and thumb of the hand, which had once more been drawn forth, was a small object. It was M. Vignal's *capsule d'espion.*

'No one can tell what may happen from now on, Dorrie. I can't be with you to watch over you. I can't protect you against death, if it threatens. But I can save you from what might be worse.' He held out the tiny gleaming object, and briefly explained the nature of the instantaneous and merciful poison. 'Only at the last extremity,' said he hoarsely. 'I can trust you, my darling?'

She took the capsule, and for a moment held it to her heart with a gesture infinitely touching.

'Yes; you can trust me.' Setting both hands upon his shoulders, she kissed his lips, long, closely, clingingly, without passion.

The plane rose and levelled out upon its appointed course.

No commotion or excitement was noticeable when they landed in the forbidden precincts of Potomac Park, back of the White House. Motor and foot police gathered with a rush, but withdrew their protests upon recognizing the Attorney-General of the United States.

'Set a guard on the plane until I send my men to

relieve you,' he directed. He looked at his watch. It was twenty minutes past nine. Washington would not yet be at its official business. A taxi drew in.

'Where to, sir?'

'Department of Justice.'

'Then you *are* going to take me with you,' said Dorrie hopefully as they started.

'No. That was for the police,' he answered. 'I'm taking you to Dupont Circle. Do you mind stopping for a moment on the way? I want to see Bennett Eyre, if, by good luck, I can catch him this early.

Eyre was a veteran newspaper man, now in charge of a great syndicate's Washington office. As he did not deal in immediate news, it was his duty to interpret trends and movements; to know in advance what of vital significance was likely to develop tomorrow, next week, or a month hence; to be a repository of inside information. He was widely informed, universally trusted, careful in judgment, and of wise counsel.

Stopping the taxi before the G Street office, Hugh sent the driver up to ask if Mr. Eyre would come down, or, if he was not there, to locate him.

Eyre appeared at once. Habitually the neatest of men, he looked as if he had slept in his suit and slept exceedingly ill. Barely acknowledging his presentation to the girl, he said to Hugh with a penetrating glance:

'I heard you had left town.'

Hugh wasted no time inquiring who had been reporting his movements. 'I had,' said he. 'I came back.'

The newspaper man's bloodshot eyes still scrutinized him queerly.

'Why?'

'Why would you think?' parried Hugh. He wanted to acquire, not impart information.

'I don't know. I don't know anything of what's going on. I've been working in a damned fog. There's something hellish in progress right now, Mr. Attorney-General,' he blurted out, 'and I believe you know what it is.'

Dorrie, who had been studying him with absorption, brought to bear that swift and analytical judgment of men upon which her father had so often based his own decisions. This, she felt, was someone who could be trusted.

'Tell him, Hugh,' she urged.

'Eyre, do you know anything about the President since yesterday?'

'No. I've had a feeling that there was something. The announcement of the noon broadcast — Is that it?'

'I believe he is dead.'

'Dead?' Eyre's face was chalky now.

'I think they've put him out of the way.'

'Happy James!'

Dorothy gave a cry.

'This is Happy James's daughter,' said Hugh sharply. 'I think you did not understand.'

Only momentarily discountenanced, the journalist continued, with an assumption of completing an interrupted sentence. 'Happy James becomes the real President. Keeler is a piece of putty. I'm going to the White House.'

'Get in.'

The taxi buzzed into Pennsylvania Avenue, stopping opposite the main entrance to the grounds.

'Are you coming in?' asked Eyre.

'Not now. Officially I'm not here. Everything I have said is in strict confidence, you understand. There's a chance that the report which reached me may not be true.'

'I wish to God I could believe that,' returned the veteran gloomily. 'It fits in too well with certain things I know. Are you going to wait?'

'Yes.'

'If I don't come back soon, I'll get word out to you.'

They watched him cross to the gate, where he was held up. An angry altercation followed. Eyre came back to them, his face heavy with anger and inquietude.

'Couldn't even get into the grounds,' he told them. 'That's the first time it's ever happened to me. They even refused to take word to any of the secretaries.'

'Who is on the gate?' inquired Hugh.

'A shifty thug named Gristman seems to be in charge.'

'Sam Gristman?' asked Dorrie quickly.

'Yes. What do you know of him?' inquired Eyre, surprised.

'He was one of the old gang shown up in the Mercer investigation scandals.'

'Of course he was! How could I have missed that? He's recently taken over this White House assignment.'

'Oh, Hugh!' cried the girl. 'Didn't you warn the President of what Honor told you?'

'Certainly, I did. Almost immediately.'

'Warning? About Gristman?' queried the veteran, looking from one to the other. 'Did you speak to the President personally?'

'No. Sent him a message, marked "Confidential and Official," by one of my own men. Perhaps I shouldn't have trusted to writing.'

'You shouldn't,' returned Eyre bluntly. 'Ten to one it never reached him. One thing that I discovered several days ago is that there has been a conspiracy of isolation surrounding Frank Winters. Both official and personal stuff has been blocked off by the Secret Service crooks.'

'Why didn't you warn him? You've had access to him.'

'I tried to,' replied the other sadly, 'but I never got a chance to see him alone. And he was impatient of any suggestions as to his own safety.'

'That's true,' assented Hugh. 'If he'd only been a little less so!'

'This looks worse and worse every minute,' said Eyre. 'I'm going out to do some scouting.'

'Come to my office at noon,' invited Hugh. 'We'll get the broadcast together.'

To Dorrie he said: 'You'd better go to your father's. You can drop me at the Department.'

On the way they tried to talk of their own affairs, their own hopes. It was useless. The pall of impending tragedy was over them, rendering all personal interests petty and insignificant.

'If I don't call you this afternoon, get in touch with me at the office,' he directed as they parted.

CHAPTER XIV

ISOLATED at his desk, Hugh postponed all appointments and refused all messages except those of major importance. He talked briefly on the telephone with the Secretary of State and with the venerable and beloved Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Thomas Severn, both of whom had called up to ask guardedly that he hold himself in readiness for a conference any time that afternoon or evening. He could not make out how much they knew or suspected.

With more than an hour clear, he settled himself to the development of the plans which he had commenced at Southampton. He wished that he dared call in experts from the War and Navy Departments; he sorely needed their advice. But whom could he trust?

At three minutes before noon Bennett Eyre was admitted. He was haggard.

'Washington is in such a state as I've never before known, and I've seen three wars and two panics. It's like hidden insanity. There's suspicion and dread everywhere. The city's on a hair-trigger.'

'Stand by for Universal Clearance,' announced the suave voice of the radio. 'Dale Arbuthnot speaking for the Government. All citizens are urged to remain calm in the face of tragic news. President Frank J.

Winters has been found dead in his room. Death was from natural causes... Doctor Selah Minturn's examination shows ——'

'Minturn! That discredited quack!' broke in Bennett Eyre violently. 'Why, he's deep in the Federal dope ring.'

He sat lost in thought while the mournful and liquid syllables of Arbuthnot's trained locution dribbled from the radio. When he lifted his head, his voice was hard with conviction.

'There is just one man in the country who can handle it. Mr. Attorney-General, this is up to you, now.'

Something like fear darkened Hugh Farragut's expression. There was no doubt in his mind as to what the veteran correspondent meant. He, as Attorney-General of the United States, must take action, and at once, if the country was to be saved from the politico-criminal control of Happy James and his conspiracy.

But action of what sort? What ground had he for taking the initiative? How could he prove the fraud and murder which he suspected? The legal head of the Government was now Caleb Keeler. Action against Keeler would be action against the Government. It would be rebellion, treason. Dare he assume the responsibility, even if he had the power to plunge his country into a fratricidal conflict?

Yet the crisis was not new to his thought, though the circumstances were terrifyingly different. Ever since his investigations into racketeering had revealed

to him the co-operation and coalition of the crook-rings all over the country, forming a national Crime Bund, he had foreseen the day when the combination would make its attempt to take over the reins of government.

He had even taken the initiatory step of forming a counter-force of key-men in various localities, whose loyalty and courage were attested. In some of the larger cities there were secret Committees of Six, watchful of developments, who reported suspicious occurrences to his New York headquarters. But this was the merest skeleton organization. It was no basis for armed resistance. It could not formulate a war.

War! That was the point to which all his fevered thinking inevitably led. Unwittingly he must have spoken the word, for Bennett Eyre, whose presence he had temporarily forgotten in his black absorption, echoed it.

'Yes; war, if there is no other way.'

'Who would declare it, and lead it?'

The reply was that which he expected and dreaded: 'You, when the time comes.'

'On what issue?'

'James and Keeler will supply us with issue enough,' was Eyre's grim prophecy.

'Nothing that they might do would surprise me. They'll be drunk with power. And still I can't see ——' Hugh lapsed again into tense abstraction.

'Mr. Attorney-General, there is one man in Washington who has, above anyone else, the respect and confidence of the whole nation.'

'The Chief Justice.'

'Thomas Severn,' assented the other gravely. 'I have just come from his chambers. Why don't you call on him, unofficially?'

Hugh scrutinized him sharply. 'Have you made this suggestion to him?'

'It would be no great surprise to him to see you.'

'I see. When you talked with him did he know of the President's death?'

'I did not ask him and he did not mention the subject. But few men in Washington are more surely and swiftly made cognizant of vital events than the Chief Justice,' was the quiet reply.

'I'll go at once,' decided Hugh.

Asking Eyre to keep him informed, he got into his waiting car and was driven through seething streets to the Supreme Court Building.

Upon receipt of the news from the White House the Court had adjourned. The Chief Justice received him without delay. In spite of his years he was as straight and firm as a white ash tree, and Hugh thought, with an access of sorely needed comfort and confidence, that he had never been confronted with a countenance so expressive of benignity, resolution, and high purpose. The old man smiled faintly.

'They cheered you outside. That is a happy omen.'

'Did they, sir? I didn't notice.'

With a contained simplicity the Chief Justice said: 'Mr. Farragut, I shall not mince words in this crisis. Do you believe that President Winters was murdered?'

'I do.'

'By direction of the Keeler-James faction?'

'In their interests, at least.'

'Can anything be proved?'

'Nothing, so far.'

'Is it true that President Winters, in Cabinet meeting, had demanded Postmaster-General James's resignation?'

'It is, sir. On charges brought by me.'

'The fact is sufficient. We have no time to go into the nature of the charges. As to Vice-President Caleb Keeler's character and qualifications, I may assume, I think, that we are in agreement.'

'*President* Caleb Keeler. God help the country!' amended Hugh bitterly.

'Not yet President. The Act of Procedure of 1938 prescribes that a successor to the Presidency shall be inducted by the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, if that official is available. I shall refuse to administer the oath of office to Acting President Keeler if there is public intimation that he achieved his office through a crime to which he was party. It is a maxim of common law that no man may legally profit by his own crime.'

'Have you any idea in what grave personal danger such a course might involve you, sir? Do you realize what kind of men you are dealing with?'

'I do,' was the tranquil response.

'Then I need not tell you ——'

'You need not, Mr. Attorney-General. As chief prosecuting officer of the Government, what steps do you propose to take in the interests of justice?'

'An emergency Cabinet meeting is called for five o'clock this afternoon. I shall demand an autopsy upon the body of Frank J. Winters.'

'Good! Pending the findings of such autopsy, Caleb Keeler will be well advised to defer the formalities of assuming office.' From his desk the jurist took a slip of paper, inscribed with a list of names in his own small and strong handwriting. 'I am inviting these gentlemen, together with yourself, to meet here at ten o'clock this evening. Have you any suggestions?'

The roster was short: Secretaries Gerritt and Hartshorn, General Devoe, Admiral Maxwell, Associate Justices Marin and Cresswell, George M. Wheeler, Jr., head of the new Aeronautical Board of Control, and Truslo Jones, President of the General Radio Corporation.

'I should like to add Secretary Levinson, and to have Mr. Bennett Eyre within call,' said Hugh. 'He may be a valuable source of information.'

The Chief Justice made a note. His face was inscrutable as he said:

'Efforts to locate Secretary Levinson have been futile.'

'Since when?'

'Yesterday morning. Night before last, rather.'

Hugh frowned. 'You don't think, sir ——' he began, when the old man broke in:

'I think, Mr. Farragut, that we must be prepared for any eventuality. *Any* eventuality,' he repeated. 'I assume that you agree with this view.'

'I do.'

'If you have devised any plans for arousing the

country to the gravity of the situation, it might be well to have them in form for presentation. At ten o'clock, then. I thank you for coming to me.'

As Hugh ran down the steps there was applause and subdued cheering from a group on the corner, mingled with a few hisses. Already the public was splitting into hostile camps, inspired by that vague political intuition which sometimes mysteriously informs crowds in great crises.

Three hours remained to Hugh before the Cabinet meeting. In that brief period he must amplify and clarify his defence. Shutting himself into his private office, he gave orders that he would receive no messages or callers, tolerate no interruption of whatsoever kind until he opened the door.

Nearly two hours had passed when a crash of glass brought him to his feet. A rock had shattered the pane opposite his desk and rolled across the floor. Hugh jumped to the window.

Below, a man in the garb of a Catholic priest stood, passive, in the grasp of a policeman whose broad, Irish face expressed consternation and uncertainty. Father Dulany's calm and powerful voice called up:

'It is necessary that I see you at once, Mr. Farragut. There was no other way but this.'

'Bring him up,' ordered Hugh.

He was shocked when the priest entered. Not all the rigid training in emotional control imposed by the Church had sufficed to keep the marks of anguish from the benignant face. He faltered toward the desk, the officer supporting him. Hugh pushed a chair back

of him and motioned the policeman out. Father Dulany said:

'When was he killed?'

Hugh's nerves gave a leap. 'You knew what was going to happen?'

'Too late. Something hastened their plans. As soon as I knew I came here to warn you. I should have wired. I shouldn't have waited; I shouldn't have waited. But I thought I had time to spare.' Tears ran down his cheeks.

'Don't blame yourself. You probably couldn't have reached me anyway. Tell me whatever you can.'

'Peter Sully, the leader of the Ninth, was poisoned last night, by a woman. An old political feud was back of it. He was one of the inside ring. Before he died at eight o'clock this morning he told me of the plot against the President, in the hope of making his peace with Heaven. The ring had an agent in the White House. Sully did not tell me the details, but in the course of time the President, you, and several others were to be put out of the way, Caleb Keeler would be President, and Happy James would be in control. Something must have forced their hand. Perhaps you know what it was.'

'Yes; I know,' answered Hugh, pale and sickened. His own patriotically inspired denunciation of Happy James had brought about the premature killing. 'Is there any supporting proof?'

'None. Nothing but the unsubstantiated statement of a man now dead. But, my son, it was truth, spoken by a dying penitent in the fear of his God.'

'You will, of course, not speak of this to anyone else, Father. Can you meet me here at nine-forty-five this evening?'

'Yes.'

'I may ask you to repeat what you have told me before a gathering of men who can be trusted.'

'I will do whatever I can,' returned the priest sombrely.

Working up to the last moment, Hugh arrived at the Cabinet meeting on the precise hour. All his colleagues were already in their places except Levinson and Happy James. In the outer room he noticed General Billington, now commanding the army, with two aides, all three in uniform, a circumstance which struck him as ominous.

Taking his seat, the Attorney-General made a covert survey of the strained faces about him. Both women members looked as if tears were not far from them. Duryea and Burtis, he thought, were two frightened men. Hartshorn sat, glowering. His neighbor, Tim McBride, was excited and, the observer thought, expectant. Traymore absently made figures on a sheet of paper: a strange time, thought Hugh, to be figuring percentages. From the bearing of the War and Navy secretaries nothing was to be learned. Judge Gerritt's contained dignity was overshadowed with grief. At the head of the conference table, Caleb Keeler nervously fumbled some papers while casting glances toward the door.

For more than five minutes the meeting sat in a silence broken by infrequent interchanges of whispers.

The door opened to admit the Postmaster-General. His usually ruddy face was pallid as parchment. There were cruel hollows beneath his eyes. One might have thought him stricken with sorrow. Hugh, for one, knew better.

Caleb Keeler opened the meeting with a formal and official notice of the President's death, and read a stiff little eulogy. At its close, his regard rested querulously upon Happy James. The Postmaster-General sat inert. It was Hugh Farragut who rose to claim the attention of the chair, and at that James raised his head and slowly shook it. Keeler took his cue.

'I will hear no matter foreign to this sad occasion,' he pronounced.

'I had no such thought in mind, Mr. Acting President,' stated Hugh, with a slight accent upon the qualified title. 'My suggestion I believe to be pertinent. I ask that an autopsy be performed upon the body of the late President.'

'This is improper to the time and occasion ——'

Henry Hartshorn lifted his harsh and gloomy eyes. 'Why?' he boomed.

'And therefore out of order,' pursued Keeler, but with less conviction.

'I consider it eminently relevant,' said its proposer.

Up from his chair shouldered the thick form of the Secretary of Arbitration and Adjustments. His expression was twisted into a snarl.

'What's the idear?' he demanded, projecting his belligerent jaw toward Hugh. 'What you got in your mind?'

The Interior Department came to his support. 'Yes; is the Attorney-General hinting at something which he is unwilling to express openly?'

'The Attorney-General does not deal in hints,' retorted that official.

'Then what is the purpose of this extraordinary and shocking suggestion?' sniffed Mrs. Larrabee.

'To allay public unrest,' answered its proponent blandly. 'And suspicion,' he added. Secretary Traymore diverted his attention from his figures long enough to mumble nervously: 'Yes, yes. Must allay public unrest. Nothing to be done when public is suspicious.'

'I consider the Attorney-General's proposal both fitting and necessary,' stated Secretary of State Gerritt in his level tones.

'I consider it damned, insulting nonsense,' bumbled Secretary of War Martingell.

His colleague of the Navy more mildly opined that there was nothing to be gained by such a course.

'Those that try to stir up public unrest better think twice,' declared Caleb Keeler, glaring threateningly at Hugh.

'I offer a motion that an autopsy be immediately performed by competent medical authorities upon the body of the late President Winters,' said Hugh, unmoved.

'The chair refuses to entertain such ——' began Keeler, when he was checked by an imperative gesture from Happy James, who had risen and was now facing Hugh with a frozen smile.

'I can see no objection to the Attorney-General's proposal,' said he smoothly. 'Ugly rumors are being circulated. As to their source and authenticity I shall not speak now. They will increase if nothing is done about them. It is necessary that they be silenced. That there may be no possible doubt, the autopsy should be certified by high medical authorities. I therefore suggest Doctor Selah Minturn of this city, Doctor Abner Fothergill, formerly of the staff of Johns Hopkins, and Doctor Courtenay Tell of Long Island.'

The cynical effrontery of the selections astounded Hugh. Minturn was a medical pariah. Courtenay Tell was practically an employee of Happy James. As for Fothergill, his standing and repute had been unexceptionable, but he was now a purblind and doddering relic. However, to protest the choice then and there would be useless. The Acting President accepted the nominations. But as the announcement of adjournment was made, Hugh gave the gathering something to think about.

'The Department of Justice,' he announced, 'reserves the right to conduct its own examination with its own experts.'

It was a bluff. Hugh knew well that his men would never be allowed entry to the White House as long as the body of Frank J. Winters lay there.

Happy James still smiled. But Hugh had the satisfaction of hearing Burtis suddenly gulp, and of seeing Keeler's jaw loosen momentarily in its sockets.

Father Dulany had remained at the Department. On Hugh's return he said:

'I forgot one part of my errand. Look out for Chicago.'

Hugh was momentarily puzzled. 'Is that all?'

'It was the last word spoken to me by Peter Sully before he died. "Tell them to look out for Chicago."'

'I was expecting Detroit first,' muttered Hugh. 'I'll see what I can get.' He gave orders over the telephone. A moment later he looked up with a blank countenance. 'All connections off.' He barked into the telephone, 'Get me Detroit.' The attempt proved equally futile. With a sinking heart he called up New York. All was clear there, and Harris Magill's cheery voice asked how he was. He instructed his Right Guard to establish touch with the various representatives and ask them to stand by for important communications within the next twenty-four hours, preferring to trust the New York organization rather than his own untested Department.

'I'll probably be up tomorrow morning,' he told his ex-aide.

'We'll be ready for you, Chief. When's it going to break?' (Trust Harris to know when something important was going on!)

'I don't know just when or how. But certainly soon.'

With the hours still at his command he sent for Truslo Jones, the most powerful radio magnate in the country, and George M. Wheeler, Jr., head of the Air Control. Shocked and incredulous at first, their skepticism was shaken by the Attorney-General's report of the Cabinet meeting, and they were finally

convinced by Father Dulany's recital. Thereafter they were swept along on the current of Hugh's dynamic impetus. Among them they had, before the hour of the meeting, worked out an initial design to cover the nation from coast to coast and gulf to lakes. When the final decision was made, Paul Revere's spirit would that night ride the air on wings and waves, bearing the summons to a new Revolution.

CHAPTER XV

WHAT historians were afterward to designate as the Counter-Cabinet met in its first session at the Supreme Court Building. At Hugh's request, Father Dulany accompanied him thither and found a chair in the anteroom, where he was to hold himself at call. Hugh had expected to find Bennett Eyre there, but the veteran correspondent had not appeared. Instead there was a note, in his writing, which the Chief Justice handed to Hugh. He read it, reflected for a moment with a white face, and restored it to its envelope.

The meeting opened with Chief Justice Severn in the chair. He introduced Hugh.

'The Attorney-General of the United States has charges of the gravest import to present. I ask your most careful consideration of them. You will then form your own opinions as to their credibility and determine upon what action if any is desirable. Upon your decisions depends the future of the United States of America.'

In the simplest and briefest terms Hugh stated his suspicions. A dead silence followed. Associate Justice Marin was the one to break it:

'This is all assumption, Mr. Chairman. The circum-

stances are, I admit, suspicious. But should we be justified in acting hastily and on mere suspicion, in a matter of such vital national concern?'

'Hastily if at all, I fear,' returned the Chief Justice. 'Will you hear Father Dulany, gentlemen?'

The priest was summoned. His ascetic and saintly personality, not less than the simplicity and restraint with which he told of the death-bed avowal, profoundly impressed his hearers. But the two Associate Justices were still unconvinced.

'The implications of all this,' said Justice Cresswell, 'are certainly suggestive. I am inclined to credit the Attorney-General's theory. But I join with Justice Marin in questioning whether we should act upon evidence which still remains inconclusive.'

'If there is time, I should like to adduce some collateral facts,' said Hugh.

'We shall expect all the information in your possession,' returned the Chief Justice.

'Then I invite the meeting's consideration of these instances. Secretary Gerritt stood firm in opposition to the policies of Postmaster-General James. He can testify that, after the Cabinet meeting where he voiced his objections, he was made the subject of an abortive attack, the purpose of which we can only conjecture.

'That is true,' confirmed the Secretary of State.

'Secretary Levinson joined in opposing the James cabal. I shall read you a message just received from Mr. Bennett Eyre, a gentleman in whom I have every confidence.'

He read: 'Secretary Levinson found dead in a culvert in Rock Creek Park. Body spirited away. News suppressed. Workmen who found it under arrest and *incommunicado*.'

A shocked murmur passed through the group.

'That, gentlemen,' said Hugh, 'is government by murder.'

'Have you been threatened personally, Mr. Farragut?' queried Truslo Jones.

'Both directly and indirectly. I had not intended to speak of myself. But since you ask, I killed a man this morning who had first tried to kill me. That man had been assigned to my personal service by my own Department.'

Someone said, too low for identification: 'Good God! what are we coming to?'

'A crisis,' returned Hugh. 'Unless the law-abiding element in this country stands together with every force at its command, the United States will become literally a government of criminals, by criminals, and for criminals.'

'With Happy James at its head,' added the Secretary of State.

It was with a mien notably altered that Justice Marin turned to Hugh to ask:

'What do you propose, Mr. Farragut?'

'To dispatch at once a fleet of airplanes to all parts of the country, with warnings,' replied Hugh with vigor. 'To reach every radio listener with news of what threatens the peace and freedom of every American. To call them to their own defence.'

'Is not this a declaration of rebellion?' asked Justice Cresswell.

'Essentially it is.'

Secretary Hartshorn exploded into a savage oath. 'Then I'm for it!' he shouted.

'And I,' said George M. Wheeler, Jr. 'Our airplanes are ready.'

'I can see no other course.' This from Truslo Jones.

'Most reluctantly, but of necessity I assent.' The Secretary of State's voice trembled as he spoke the words.

The two Associate Justices of the Supreme Court conferred briefly. Then Justice Cresswell, the senior, rising and formally bowing to the Chief Justice, said:

'My colleague and I, sir, will concur in whatever decision you reach.'

'My mind is made up,' returned the Chief Justice with equal solemnity. 'I accept the formula of the Attorney-General.'

'Thank God!' breathed Hugh to Gerritt.

Chief Justice Severn turned his keen old eyes toward the corner where General Devoe and Admiral Maxwell had been sitting in attentive silence.

'These gentlemen are conversant with the general situation,' said he. 'General Devoe?'

The soldier rose. His face worked. 'Gentlemen, I am sworn to uphold the Government of the United States.'

'The Government of the United States has passed into the hands of thugs and murderers,' retorted Hugh.

Devoe made a helpless gesture. 'I can recognize only my responsibility to constituted authority.'

'If Army and Navy are against us, what chance have we?' growled Hartshorn.

'What else can we be but against you?' sadly asked the Army man.

'Not me, by God!' cried choleric old Admiral Maxwell, jumping from his chair. 'I know what hell those fellows have been playing with the Navy. I'm fed up with Clerf and Company. I'm resigning my commission. Gentlemen, if it's war I'm with you, and there'll be plenty more to follow my lead.'

Hugh rose to face Devoe. He knew the General for a gallant officer, upright, intrepid, honorable, and rigid in his conception of professional duty. He knew also the potency of the influence which, by virtue of his military record and high character, he wielded among his fellows.

'I could produce proof, sir,' said he, 'of how the morale of the Army has been undermined and corrupted by the agents of the men now trying to seize power. For the present I can only hope that you will set patriotism above technical loyalty.'

The other said painfully: 'I cannot be a traitor to my duty as I see it.'

Hugh was holding a card in reserve. 'Assume that it is the control of the Army that is traitorous.'

'How can I entertain any such assumption?'

Again the Attorney-General produced the sheet of paper scrawled over with Eyre's hasty message, only half of which he had presented before the meeting, hold-

ing the rest for the occasion of its greatest usefulness.

'I spoke a moment ago of my confidence in Mr. Bennett Eyre, whom some of you here know personally. No man in Washington has more reliable sources of information. Here is further matter from him.' He read: 'A massacre is in progress in Chicago. Mayor and other officials of reform administration killed by organized gang, which has captured the City Hall and is looting the city. Taxi army converging on Springfield to take over State Government, aided by three regiments of Regulars, said to be acting on secret instructions from War Department.' (General Devoe started.) 'Colonel Shore, Major Dibble, and several company officers refusing to follow instructions have been shot by their men. Communications cut off and Governor reported a fugitive.'

Devoe addressed the Chief Justice. 'May I use a telephone, sir?'

'In the room outside.'

Several minutes elapsed before he returned. He was tense and grim.

'Gentlemen, I am convinced,' said he. 'You may count on me.'

'Would it be useful to us to know what took place?' asked Chief Justice Severn.

'I got the Department and put certain questions. The answers were unsatisfactory. I served notice of my resignation. It was refused. I am to be cited for court-martial.'

'Loyalty!' snorted old Admiral Maxwell. 'To that bunch of gangsters!'

'How much aid can we expect from the regular forces if it comes to an issue?' inquired Justice Marin.

'No one can tell,' answered the soldier. 'Reports for the last six months have indicated an infiltration of the criminal element into the rank and file.'

'Happy James's fine hand,' interpolated Hugh.

'Discipline and professional tradition are powerful factors,' pursued Devoe. 'But if we can get the facts over to them, I believe that fifty per cent of the officers will be with us.'

Maxwell soberly nodded his agreement. 'A little better than that for the Navy, I hope,' he added.

The gathering settled down to a consideration of procedure. It was decided that Hugh Farragut should make the appeal to the Nation at noon, broadcasting from New York, with Chief Justice Severn lending the vast prestige of his office and his personality by presenting him. Secretary of State Gerritt would follow briefly, and finally the two Service officers, calling their comrades of Army and Navy to the defence of the country.

As the meeting adjourned and the participants passed into the entry room, they saw Bennett Eyre seated at the telephone. He urgently motioned Hugh to wait. The others, also, stopped.

'O-kay,' they heard him say. 'That rips it wide open.' He carefully replaced the mechanism.

'What is it now, Eyre?' asked Hugh.

'Every newspaper in town has been put under censorship by Cale Keeler.'

'What does that indicate?' inquired Truslo Jones.

'It's the first step. If you ask me, gentlemen, I would risk a prediction that a State of Emergency will be declared not later than tomorrow. That means that the James-Keeler combination comes out in the open and takes over the show. In my opinion, it is time to leave while the leaving is good.'

To Hugh this seemed sound advice. Washington would be in complete control of the administration gang. For the opposition there would be little chance of anything but jail, or worse.

He heard the level tones of the Chief Justice appointing a meeting-place in New York for those who could reach there. He looked at his watch and was astounded to find that it was after three. Not too much time for his own plans of departure. Would there be any chance of his seeing Dorrie James before he left, quite possibly for the last time? In any case, he would not go without making the effort.

'Dupont Circle,' he directed the waiting chauffeur.

One wing of the James house showed lights. To his surprise Hugh found the front door yielding to his tentative pressure.

Heavy-toned discussion was in progress in a room to his right. There seemed to be several participants. Tiptoeing past the door, he went up to the second floor. Having no way of knowing which room was Dorrie's, he tapped lightly at door after door. Finally her voice responded:

'Who is it?'

'Hugh.'

He heard her feet, swift across the floor. The door was flung open.

'Hugh! Oh, darling; I'm so glad. I've been so frightened.' She was like a child in his arms.

'Have they been after you here, too?' he demanded sharply.

'No. Of course not. It's you I've been frightened for. There's so much going on that I don't understand. Dad won't tell me anything. Isn't it dreadful about the President!'

'What is the meeting downstairs?'

'I don't know. They've been at it all night.'

'I can't stay here,' he began.

'No. No; you mustn't. It isn't safe.'

'I'm leaving for New York as soon as I can. There's no telling when I'll see you again. Can't you put on something and meet me in the Circle?'

'Yes. Of course. It won't take me five minutes.'

As he cautiously descended the stairs and reached the door of the council room, Hugh could hear Happy James's angry accents.

'Fools! Damned idiots! Why didn't they wait for the word?'

A sulky rasp answered: 'Couldn't hold 'em, Big Boy. They wanted action.'

'Action! And the general plan only half worked out. Two weeks longer and we'd be all set. First that crazy lunatic in the White House. Now this Chicago break. Well, we're in for it now.'

The outer door opened silently. Two men appeared, taking the listener wholly by surprise. Before he could

move he was covered by an automatic in the grip of an ugly reptilian creature faintly familiar to Hugh's memory. The other visitor was Tim McBride.

'Look who's here,' sniggered the gunman. He threw open the door to the occupied room. 'Gents; the You Ess Attoiney-General,' he announced.

Happy James jumped to his feet. Amazement was succeeded on his visage by a still and savage satisfaction. 'This is most opportune,' said he silkily. 'Come in, Mr. Farragut.'

Hugh entered. There were eight men seated about the place with cigars and whiskey glasses.

'Good evening, gentlemen,' said he.

Unpleasant laughter answered his greeting. Happy James resumed his seat and waved the newcomer to another.

'Yes; most opportune,' he repeated. 'I shouldn't have known just where to find you.'

'You were trying to locate me?' politely asked Hugh.

'Yes. To order you under arrest.'

Hugh's eyebrows went up. 'Indeed? On what charge, may I ask?'

'Just plain murder.'

'I suspected that there had been murder going on hereabouts,' returned the other composedly, 'but I am not aware of having any hand in it.'

'You shot down Louis Fresneau in cold blood.'

'Not exactly. So he was a friend of yours. Perhaps even an employee?'

The human reptile who had held the gun on Hugh now sidled up to him.

'Leave me handle this boid,' he snarled. 'You don't know me, do yeh, fella?'

Hugh coolly examined the face thrust up beneath his own. 'Why, yes. You're on my New York records as Something the Gimp, I believe.'

'You sent my brother up last year. Railroaded him on a vice charge. "Somethin' the Gimp," heh? Well, you'll be Nothin' before I'm through with yeh. You'll be breathin' mud and mortar, brother. And breathin' it *slow*.'

The meaning was plain. Hugh cursed himself for the recklessness which had led him into this blind alley. Not even his love for Dorrie justified him in laying himself open to the risk of a life which was no longer solely his own, having been sworn to the service of the Nation.

Martyrdom he could have faced in the cause. But this would be a sterile martyrdom. In the hands of the James gang he would simply vanish.

'You understand, of course, that there will be explanations demanded if I do not return,' he said to James, with the intention of at least giving him some small occasion for worry.

James ignored this. 'Take him ——' he began, when the captive saw his expression alter and stiffen.

His daughter was standing in the doorway. She went straight to her father.

'What are you doing to Hugh?'

'Go back, Dorrie. Please go back. You can't do anything.'

She did not even look at her lover. Her whole

attention was directed in fierce concentration upon Happy James.

'What are you doing to him?'

'You must not interfere. This is government business,' was the stern reply.

Slowly she turned, silently, briefly interrogating each face in the circle. The thug at Hugh's elbow made a movement; she became aware of the half-concealed weapon. A cry burst from her.

'Hugh! They're going to kill you.'

'Oh, nothin' like that, sister,' smirked the gunman. 'At least, not very quick.'

'They are. Dad, you can't let them do that!'

'This man has committed a cold-blooded murder. You must not interfere.'

'A murder? Hugh? You expect me to believe that?' she retorted with scorn. 'If you do anything to him ——'

'That's enough, Dorothy.' Not three times in her life had Happy James used that tone to her. 'Go to your room.'

'It's the best thing you can do, Dorrie,' confirmed Hugh quietly.

'Dad, do you want to kill me?'

'Damned theatrical nonsense! Take him away, boys.'

She set her back to the wall. Her fingers crept to her throat, opened an old-fashioned locket there. A tiny object gleamed in the clasp of finger and thumb.

'If you take Hugh I'll be dead before he is out of the house.'

'Ah, she's bluffin',' said Tim McBride contemptuously. 'Get him out of here.'

'I'm running this,' stated Happy James sharply. He faced the girl with an uneasy flicker in his eyes. He knew too well her courage and determination.

'Daughter,' he began.

Her hand rose slowly to her lips. A hoarse shout broke the tension.

'No! No! Don't let her! For God's sake, *Dorrie!*'

'What's this?' demanded James in a changed voice. The anguish on the young man's face was no bluff.

'It's a poison, a deadly poison.'

'Quick and sure,' said she. Now she was smiling at her father, a smile that daunted him more than any violence of threat.

In his terror for the woman he loved, Hugh found an argument which he hoped would save her from herself.

'This is a legal matter, Dorrie. They can't do anything to me except through regular legal processes,' he assured her with fervent mendacity. 'I'll have my day in court.'

'Yes,' assented James through fear-stiffened jaws. 'It's — it'll be a regular process. Everything legal.'

'Liars!' retorted the girl with quiet scorn. 'But I'm not lying.' To her lover she said: 'Do you think I would live after you were dead? I'm not afraid of dying. But you' — she probed Happy James's face with pitiless eyes — 'you are afraid to let me.'

Something like a sob came from his lips. 'Yes, I'm afraid. Let him go.' He turned to Hugh: 'You have an hour to get out of town.'

A low growl arose and spread. Tim McBride gave it words. 'What's the idear, lettin' him go? Who made the pinch? I guess ——'

As swift as a snake and as dangerous, Happy James was out from behind his desk and had covered the intervening space. He was unarmed. His hands knotted and unknotted themselves as he thrust close to Tim McBride. There was that in his eyes which the ex-strong-arm man could not face. In a voice hardly more than a whisper he said:

'Are you giving orders or taking them, God damn you! Make up your mind.'

No reply came. Slowly he pivoted, his stare falling cold and heavy on each member of the group.

'Anyone else got anything to say?'

Silence. A gulp or two. Heavy breathing.

'All right, then. We understand each other.'

Happy James was still the gangmaster. He turned again to Hugh.

'One hour,' said he.

'Taken. And thank you,' said the Attorney-General courteously. To Dorrie he whispered, 'Good-bye, my darling.'

'Not yet,' she pleaded. 'Let me fly you up.'

'No; you're safer here. But you can come with me to the airport.'

While they drove out, he outlined his plan. She listened in silence. But as they got out and approached the waiting plane, she crept close to him in the darkness.

'You've got to live, Hugh!' said she passionately. 'You've *got* to. Because I'll be waiting.'

At noon she was standing by her radio. She got the Universal Clearance signal. She heard the Chief Justice's briefly solemn words bespeaking for the man who was to follow the faith and support of all good and patriotic citizens. Then the clear strength of Hugh Farragut's voice:

'The Government of the United States has fallen into criminal hands through a criminal conspiracy. I call upon all citizens to be prepared for any eventuality, any sacrifice in defence of the Nation....'

CHAPTER XVI

CONCERNING the Three Weeks Insurrection, the historian, Professor Zelon Outerbridge, has written:

'It was not war in any formulate or military sense, but rather a series of sporadic, vaguely interrelated outbreaks, notable chiefly for their rabid fury and their disregard of the rules of humanity. Enjoying the enormous advantage of possession and occupation, the Government must have prevailed but for one radical failing, lack of capacity for co-operation.

'Indiscipline is the weakness of the criminal type. Inevitably, being a sublimated egoist, the criminal is violently an individualist; his mind disorganized and disorganizing. From the premature murder of President Winters to the premature assaults upon local governments in Illinois and elsewhere, the Chain Gang, so-termed, perpetrated a series of blunders, cumulative and eventually fatal to their project.'

To Hugh Farragut the prospect held out little hope as he sat in the Council of Defence, composed of Chief Justice Severn, Secretary of State Gerritt and the other seceding members of the Cabinet, General Devoe, Admiral Maxwell, Truslo Jones, George M. Wheeler, Jr., and a score of local agents, hastily summoned to the lofty Turrets Building in East Forty-Sixth Street.

From the window Hugh stared down into the busy city. So peaceful. So normal. Moving so smoothly upon its lawful occasions, and all the time secretly, unwittingly in the grip of a dominant, pervasive, and ruthless underworld. What would it be like in another twenty-four hours? In what dreadful, flaming disruption was he about to involve it, and with it the nation whose life-blood ebbed and flowed through that mighty heart?

The microphone stood before him, an implement of potential havoc more formidable than a thousand cannon. The newly devised and still secret pre-emptive ray had cleared the air for him. The Chief Justice's clear voice, solemn with emotion, was speaking his name. And now his own voice. At the outset it sounded alien to his ears. But soon he was in full swing.

'This is a call to save the Nation from a usurping conspiracy. I charge that Caleb Keeler is not the lawful President of the United States. I charge him and his associates with procuring the murder of President Winters. I call for the impeachment of Caleb Keeler and the arrest of Happy Harold James. Let us exhaust all peaceful and legal methods. But if these fail, only an instant and universal uprising of true Americans, ready to fight and die for American principles, can save us.

'This is no struggle of party against party, capital against labor, industrialism against the proletariat, fascism against communism. No principles or standards are involved except those of law-abiding citizen-

ship against organized crime. Until the Chain Gang of Crime, now entrenched at Washington, is eradicated, there can be neither safety, security, peace, nor an honorable life for any good citizen. I call upon you, without respect to party, creed, or condition, to stand together in this impending struggle. We fight under the American flag.'

Father Dulany supported him in brief words of appeal to all denominations to unite in a Holy War. Secretary Gerritt and the two Service officers added their pleas. It was now up to Washington.

The Council resumed its session to consider the general scheme of the campaign which Hugh had plotted out, and to which the professional soldier and sailor had contributed the elaboration and amendment of their technical knowledge. Foundation for the revolt had already been laid.

Twenty-seven planes had landed in as many cities, and others were still in the air, speeding west, with instructions for the formation of the League of Public Defence. Meetings were being organized. The program was to take over, wherever it could be achieved, all arsenals and armories, railroads and communications, telegraph, telephone, and radio; to call out the National Guard, to guard water systems and power and light plants, to segregate and conserve food supplies, to commandeer and mobilize airplanes, automobiles, and trucks, to persuade or compel doubtful governors to call out the National Guard, to seize and claim the Stars and Stripes as their emblem, and to be ready to fight to the last man in the last ditch.

'How does it look to you?' Hugh asked the General.

Devoe shook his grizzled head. 'If we had time,' he replied, 'there would be a fair chance. Some of the Army are swinging our way. Maxwell has similar hopes of the Navy. But if Washington strikes quickly, it will all be over in a week.'

Inexplicably Washington did not strike. Only afterward did they learn the reason. Acting President Keeler and Happy James had split on methods of procedure. Worse than this, a bitter jealousy had sprung up between the pair, with the result of halting activity when every hour was invaluable.

Here was Hugh's golden chance. Against the protests of his colleagues, who considered the risk to his life too great, he inaugurated that campaign of personal and radio propaganda to which future historians credited the deadlock in New York. Working sleeplessly, he spoke in churches, clubs, labor-union halls, the public squares, anywhere where he could get a hearing; and everywhere he swayed the crowds by the passion of his sincerity. Father Dulany seconded him with all the power of his inspiring eloquence. New York listened.

Everywhere the agents of the League of Defence reported progress. But was the progress rapid enough to overcome the terrific handicap of their start? The political clubs were all tools of Happy James. The financial powers and the leaders of the business world, by nature static, inclined to the established order, even though they distrusted its representatives. Most encouraging support to the insurgents came from the

National Guard, where Hugh's friends had done yeoman work. The great universities in the northwestern part of the city, too, were ninety per cent sympathetic. But, as all well knew, the final decision would rest with the Regulars of Army and Navy.

Consequently the Council was the more inspirited when three companies from Governors Island marched up through a hostile lower Broadway and established themselves as a guard outside the Turrets. Their officers reported serious disaffection among the garrisons of the local forts, though the opinion was that military habit would hold a majority to their technical loyalty.

It remained for Admiral Maxwell to bring the most heartening news; almost to a ship the South Atlantic Fleet had declared for the Defenders and were storming northward under forced draft and cleared for action. Indications from the naval units in the local area were less encouraging; their commanders were mainly of the old school and would obey orders.

What was going on in the outer world was veiled in uncertainty. The newspapers, faced with a crisis wholly unprecedented, were indecisive in their attitude. Moreover, they suffered from lack of material. The sparse and scattered indrift of news from the country at large hampered them severely. At first the Chicago massacre and march upon the capital loomed large; soon that source was closed. It was apparent that telegraph and telephone systems everywhere had been seized. Even the air-borne news was uncertain and fragmentary.

More than twenty-four hours passed before the Government's response to what it termed 'the voice of sedition' took the air. The accents were those of Caleb Keeler, but the words smacked rather of Happy James's style.

'Fellow Americans; a crisis has come upon us. It is the work of men who are traitors to the American ideal and rebels against the constituted authority of the Government, your Government and mine. Under a false and specious pretence of reform, they seek control of the Nation for their own wicked and tyrannical ends. They aspire to set up a dictatorship. The head and front of this conspiracy, the man who is willing to whelm our beloved country in fire and blood for the purpose of his personal ambitions, is Hugh Farragut, formerly but no longer the Attorney-General of the United States.

'I hereby denounce him as a traitor and a fomenter of treason. I brand his statements as baseless lies. And I call upon all good and loyal citizens to unite in support of the lawful Government of the United States and to put down this rebellion which, if successful, means the death of true democracy in our country.'

Instructions, threats, and promises followed. All the forces of the Nation were being systematically mobilized to crush the opposition. It was an able and persuasive presentation, with the tremendous advantage of direct appeal to the public's instinct for peace and adhesion to lawful methods and established procedure.

'We must answer that,' said Hugh, and the anxious Council unanimously agreed.

It was decided that the weak point of the Government was its failure to meet adequately the murder charge. Here could best be directed the counter-attack.

Doctor Gilroy James supplied an issue. He brought to Council headquarters copy of a formal demand upon the Keeler Administration for an immediate autopsy upon the body of Frank J. Winters, with official representatives of the American Medical Association in charge. If this were denied or ignored, suspicion would be magnified. Hugh decided to hold in reserve the Council's formal support. Doctor James returned to his task of building up a medical service.

Reports from many parts of the country began to seep in, continuing for several days. Philadelphia was under full control of the gangsters, as were Kansas City, Detroit, Cleveland, Seattle, New Orleans, and Miami.

Outside of the two latter cities, the South was generally sympathetic to the League cause. In Baltimore the Defenders, backed by the city administration, had fought the Chain Gang to a standstill, and were preparing to resist a threatened attack from Washington, under command of General Billington.

Buffalo, too, was a League stronghold. Violent warfare, with the issue in doubt, was progressing in Cincinnati and St. Louis. Boston was being shelled from the sea, and street fighting had broken out. Private industrial armies in Pittsburgh and the neighboring steel towns had turned upon their em-

ployers, and here the singular spectacle was presented of organized labor resolutely battling shoulder to shoulder with the steel-mill owners and officials against the professional strike-breakers, and holding their own after an early retreat.

Illinois had gone gangster. Fragmentary reports of appalling outrages and cruelties were coming in. As much through the horror and revulsion evoked by them as from any other influence, Wisconsin and Minnesota had declared for the revolt, and forces were organizing in Milwaukee and the Twin Cities for a march upon the gangster state when the time should come.

San Francisco was in flames, with a hastily rallied force of Defenders stubbornly retreating southward, and contesting every inch. Every jail in California, beginning with Alcatraz, had been thrown open and the convicts armed. In Hollywood, the studios, at first wavering, took up the cause of the League on news of the prison deliveries, and with every noted star enlisted threw all their powers of organization into forming an army.

Still New York City maintained its precarious peace. As news from without accumulated, it became more and more apparent that the centres of population were battering themselves into a deadlock of destruction and ruin. Devoe and Maxwell, however, evinced an increased hopefulness. Since the criminals, with all the advantages of the initiative, had been unable to capture the Nation as a whole, there was still a chance. While the Council was codifying and studying the

information, a rumpled attendant entered and addressed Hugh.

'There's a lady outside, sir. Says she must see you. Something personal.'

Hugh's heart jumped. Could it be Dorrie? 'Who is she?' he asked.

'She wouldn't give her name. But she's thrown one doorman down the stairs and got the other pinned to the wall.'

'Shall I escort Mrs. Slogage in?' asked Harris Magill with a grin.

'I'll go out.'

Hugh welcomed the woman athlete who released her captive to shake hands. 'Any news from Miss James?' he asked eagerly.

'No. This is business. I been hearing things by grapevine, and I got an idea.'

Before she had finished her outline, Hugh was hustling her into the room, where he presented her to the august gathering. In no way flustered by the array of dignitaries, Honor selected the Chief Justice as her foil.

'D'you know who led the murder squads in Chicago?' she demanded.

'No, madam; I do not.'

'Big Bill Mengrum. He's head of a stable of crooked fighters and into all the dirt there is. The sporting world fell into line. They're a tough bunch in Chi. In New York it's different. That's where my idea comes in. Offhand, Judge, your Honor, who'd you say was the class in the fight game in the last ten years?'

Upon the dignified features of the jurist appeared a thin smile. 'While I do not profess expert judgment in that field, I should name Mr. Tunney and Mr. Dempsey.'

'Keno. Go to the head. What-say we get 'em?'

Interested, the Chief Justice leaned forward. 'For what purpose?'

'Listen. There's crooks in the New York sporting fraternity, like there is everywhere. But mostly they're straight shooters. And will they follow a couple of champs! Jack Dempsey's had his troubles with the racketeers; he hates their guts; he'll play along with us. And Gene's a regular. He's got no use for the crooks and phonies. If we get that pair of lads to round up four or five hundred crack athletes, we'll have something. I'm the first lady member of the New York Athletic Club. What's the matter with my starting something there?'

The two Service men lent their instant support. A military squad was detailed to escort Honor Slogage, and she left, having definitely raised the morale of the meeting.

Information brought by local scouts, however, was dispiriting. The trend of public opinion was now definitely adverse to the League. Bad though it was, the established Government, to the minds of the solid citizenry, represented primary safety and stability.

All these charges of murder and criminal conspiracy — what proof of them had been brought? Presumably relying upon reports of this feeling, Washington now issued an official statement from the post-mortem

committee ascribing the death of President Winters to a heart attack. No representative of any medical body had been present; the request fathered by Doctor James had been ignored. Furthermore, it was noted that the once-honored name of Doctor Fothergill, the Government's own choice, was not appended to the report.

With this as an opening, Hugh decided upon a second attack. Father Dulany was announced to speak from the steps of St. Columba's on the following noon.

An immense crowd gathered in the square. The priest began by saying that he would deal with the Government's devious handling of a profoundly suspicious death. Before he could go farther, there was a spatter of sharp sound from a tall building opposite, and he fell, riddled and shattered by a fusillade of sub-machine-gun bullets.

Dreadful as was the tragedy, it served a purpose. A martyr's heroic end brought the reward of martydom, in service to the cause. A priest, known and loved by the whole city for his loving-kindness of heart, his charity of mind, had been struck down in the shadow of the church he served. Not Catholics alone, but Protestants and Jews equally were horrified. It was a terrible and illuminating object lesson in the ruthless purposes of the men who now formed the Government of the United States. More than any other crime could possibly have done, it lent color to the charge that President Winters had been murdered, and shocked the thinking public into a realization of

the crisis. In the midst of his sorrow for a man he had loved and revered, Hugh felt that this might be the turning of the tide.

The priest's murder did indeed bring matters to a head. From now on, as Washington must have realized, the drift would be against the Government. It was time for the James-Keeler faction to act.

CHAPTER XVII

THE dawn of January 24 was one of those rare days when the warmth of spring seems already to have come. With Harris Magill and Carson Wilde in attendance, Hugh started out at eight o'clock to make a tour of inspection. Everywhere the streets were filling with crowds, nervous, unstable, avid of information, seething with rumors. A strange and ominous hiatus in the normal life of the city, without parallel in the memory of living man, was reflected in the apprehensive faces. Not a newspaper had appeared on the streets. The suppression was complete.

Small squads of men were seen moving along southward. A few of the apparent leaders were recognized by Hugh as minor politicians or crooks whom he had come up against in his racketeering campaign. He suspected that their goal was the City Hall and that they aimed at capturing the municipal machinery. From time to time, a line of those small, mobile fortresses which banks use to convey bullion sped along the streets.

One of these, turning too abruptly from Madison Avenue into Forty-Second Street, ploughed into the human mass, and whirled onward, leaving shattered bodies in its wake. What shocked Hugh quite as deeply as its uninterrupted progress was the apathetic

attitude of the near-by spectators, who made only the most perfunctory effort to aid the injured or lift the dead. They were like creatures stunned and brutalized by the weight of dread bearing down upon them. Should that apathy burst into panic, what horrors might not follow!

At twelve-thirty, noon, the gigantic voice of a loud-speaker set on Weehawken Heights blared its message of warning across the river.

'Non-combatants have twenty-four hours to leave. All non-combatants to be off Manhattan Island by noon tomorrow. No life will be safe after that hour. All women, children, aged people, and non-combatants must be out before tomorrow noon, to escape death. By order of the President of the United States.'

The iteration continued at fifteen-minute intervals. Whenever the dire, inhuman cadence sounded, the crowds were stricken first into immobility, then into feverish activity. Thus began that tragic exodus which choked every bridge, every tunnel, every possible outlet with the fugitive panic of millions.

Orderly amidst the turmoil, the small squads which Hugh had earlier noted kept forming and marching south. Advice came that the Empire State Building had been taken over, and that this and other large edifices in the neighborhood were receiving super-machine guns and ammunition. A cordon was drawn across Thirty-Fourth Street. The military council of the Defenders determined upon Fortieth Street for their line. A runner from the Central Park Station announced that the Sportsmen's Battalion, mustered

by the two famous heavyweights, was receiving recruits faster than it could handle them.

At four o'clock the raucous drone of the mechanized announcer again traversed the water. It commanded all men not enlisted in defence of the Government to lay down their arms and disperse on pain of death. No entry to the city, it announced, would be permitted by land, air, or water until rebellion was crushed.

Of all the nerve-strung men at Council Headquarters, George M. Wheeler, Jr., in charge of air operations, was the most jumpy. The squadrille which he had expected from the west had not appeared. Just before dusk the lookout on the loftiest turret top reported planes approaching at a high level and in wide formation. Wheeler, Devoe, and Hugh took the elevator.

'Our lot,' declared the air expert with a great breath of relief. Almost at once he cried: 'What's wrong?'

The first two planes were wavering. They ducked, then spiralled. Two more did likewise. Parachutes plunged and opened. One after another, as the remainder of the formation approached, they went out of control. In three minutes there was not a plane left aloft. The watchers looked at one another, aghast.

'There must be a demagnetizing force working,' gasped Wheeler.

'I've heard of it. I never believed it,' returned the General. 'That's worse than anything I'd foreseen.'

With darkness a battered aviator crawled in. Alone of the force, he had maneuvered his parachute into the

river and swum ashore. He was bewildered. Without warning his controls had gone dead on him.

'Nothing will get through to us now,' said Wheeler gloomily, 'unless it circles wide of that zone.'

For the staff in the Turrets there was no sleep that night. The rising sun was saluted with heavy cannonading to the south, which the officers judged to be coast artillery answered by passing warships. Later it was augmented from along the Sound.

Too strung-up and impatient to remain in seclusion, Hugh took to the streets, and had his first experience of the savagery of building-to-building warfare which was filling the air with cross-fire above Thirty-Fourth Street.

Rumors from uptown led him to Central Park, South. There the Sportsmen's Battalion, fighting with desperate gallantry, had met an assault by a largely superior force, delivered from the north and east, and after heavy losses in the first hour was now slowly driving the enemy back. Hugh's armored car, with its mounting of needle guns, was a welcome adjuvant in the counter-attack. He and his Right and Left Guards fought until a peremptory order from General Devoe brought them back, reluctant as growling dogs, but obedient to discipline. Risking a life as valuable as his, the military commander sharply informed Hugh, in a petty and inconclusive mêlée was unjustified folly. The issue would be decided, not from within the city, but from without.

This expert opinion was strengthened by a rising thunder-roll of great guns from all around the island.

Across the Bay, the guardian forts, dividing their allegiance, were smashing each other to bits at close range. Along the Sound, too, the same pointblank warfare was being waged until, one after another, the guns were silenced.

A signal ray from an approaching battleship brought tidings from Rear Admiral Cazenal, commanding.

> Four of our ships sunk. Several crippled. Still able and ready to fight. Where is Government naval force?

From northward a thick bank of cloud drew in, and for the remainder of that day and the night the quiet snow halted man's enterprises of devastation. The next noon a brisk west wind dissipated the curtain, and the city looked upon its doom. Both flanking rivers were crowded with the fighting ships of the hostile causes, the Government in the North River, the insurgents holding the East. General Devoe issued his instructions to the Council:

'Gentlemen; we cannot remain here. Reassemble in half an hour in the sub-basement of the Corporation Trust. Keep to the middle of the street and watch for falling walls.'

As they filed out into the hallway a terrific shock sent them reeling. With the aid of the two 'Guards,' Hugh raised the Chief Justice, who had crumpled against the wall, and half carried him to the elevator.

The shaft was out of plumb. All the cars were paralyzed.

'We'll have to take to the stairs, sir,' said Hugh to his charge.

The old man nodded. 'I'll try,' said he, with unshaken courage.

At the tenth floor Carson Wilde went to a window to reconnoitre. One of the new type 'soft' bombs exploded outside, a few yards distant. Before he could draw back, the vacuum thus created plucked the athlete's great frame out through the shattered sash and sent him hurtling to death on the pavement far below.

The walls on that side of the building began to bulge perilously.

Horrified and saddened, Hugh nevertheless kept his head. With Harris Magill, unmanned and sobbing but still serviceable, he managed to get Justice Severn to the Forty-Sixth Street exit. There he and Magill peered out.

Both were hurled back by a blast that opened out the ten upper stories of the opposite edifice like a paper bag. Whether indoors or out was now more deadly, no man could tell. The order from General Devoe determined Hugh's course. He helped his companion over a heap of débris, and they found clear going for a space.

A mass of sound like a tornado's breath swept in upon them from the east and was repeated and magnified from the west. The navies had engaged, and back of the Government ships the massed land artillery on the Jersey side was discharging its volleys. They saw Radio City crumple and dissolve, banking Fifth Avenue unmeasured rods deep in its welter. Almost beneath their feet the Grand Central tunnel

split its thin shell, spewing forth steel and stone, mingled with tattered remnants of humanity. Seismite, the newest explosive, put to its first test in actual warfare, was hideously justifying the lethal claims of its inventor.

Now a deafening succession of intolerable detonations split the air. The old man pressed his hands to his head, wavered, and dropped.

'You must go on,' he feebly bade Hugh.

The younger man dragged him to the shelter of a doorway. It was futile. He was lifeless, untouched by any missile, but smitten to death by the hammer-strokes of sheer, cumulative iterated sound.

Through a great gap in the skyline where the Transportation Group had stood a terrific dog-fight between tiny gadflies at the mile-high level was visible. Every minute, it seemed to him, one of the distant combatants came whirling down. He watched an aeronaut who had bailed out descend straight into the roaring hell of flame which had been the Hotel Luxor, and found himself shrieking vain warnings to the falling parachute.

The Bus Terminal, too, was afire and burning with a high, clear flame. The Chrysler Building had lopped grotesquely outward; its sides were semi-transparent where the wall fabric had fallen away from the skeleton.

Whether from the incessant clamor or from a whiff of some explosive, Hugh's mental control began to slip. He retained his senses; he could hear and see and afterward remember, but his power of direction was

lost. No longer could he determine where he was going. He wandered.

A sharp concussion sent him head over heels. He lay for a time, stunned. Dragging himself upright, he could discover no injury. But Harris Magill was nowhere to be seen. Killed, probably, thought Hugh dully. What did it matter? No life could long endure in that holocaust.

Turning up Fifth Avenue, he saw a parachute zigzagging down toward what was left of the roof-line. There was a puffy explosion, releasing a cluster of greyish globules. As they slowly rolled, separated, and sank, these disintegrated into long spirals, hardly visible. Warning had been issued at the Council meeting against the infamous 'torture gas' which was said to be part of the Government's equipment. This, Hugh guessed, must be it.

He hurried back into the side street. A moment later awful, inhuman shrieks, arising from the places where fugitives had taken shelter, told him that the fumes had found their victims.

He must press northward. Those were the orders. One street was like another now; he could only hope that he was going in the right direction.

From time to time he was conscious of other vagrants rushing hither and thither, making mad gestures, plunging into doorways like helpless, hunted creatures. To him they were unreal; too small to be reckonable in the orgy of destruction. This was not war. It was a vast convulsion, a hideous, lethal ferment, the abomination of desolation wrought through

man's diabolical ingenuities against his fellow man. Hugh dimly suspected that he was insane. Why not? The world was insane.

Someone laid hold on him. He recognized one of Truslo Jones's assistants.

'Down these steps, Mr. Attorney-General.'

Blindly he had reached the place he was seeking. He followed the man into what seemed the very bowels of the earth. The refuge was roomy and presumably safe, if there were any safety left in a disintegrating universe. Fifteen members of the Council were already at work there.

A voice said, 'Here we are, Boss.'

It was Harris Magill. He was propped against a wall.

Thankfulness welled up in Hugh's heart. Only the awful fate of Carson Wilde had brought home to him the depth of his attachment to his devoted henchmen.

'So you beat me here. Thank God, you're all right, lad.'

'Not exactly,' said the Right Guard. 'They didn't leave me any legs to speak of. I'm through. It was a swell fight for a while.'

A body with a coat across it lay near. Hugh recognized it as George M. Wheeler, Jr., from a lapel button; nothing else about the shattered form was identifiable. Devoe and Maxwell were consulting across a table. Doubtless planning strategy. Hugh struggled with a mad desire to laugh. It was like two midges devising schemes against an avalanche.

Between the bursts of concussion, under which the

solid rock of their shelter quivered, Secretary Gerritt was methodically dictating before a typewriter. Hugh caught fragments of the wording. It seemed to be a plan for reorganization of the Government. The desire for laughter died. There was a man! He possessed the unshakeable courage to assume that, after this cataclysm, there would still be a nation to direct.

After a time someone set before Hugh bread and a cup of milk. The processes of life were still extant, it seemed! A man who was sprawled, sleeping or stunned, in a chair, weaved across, raising a blank face to Hugh, who gave him a slice. Only after a second look did Hugh recognize the Mayor. He said, in a plaintive voice:

'Thank you. Something has happened in my head. Besides, I'm blind.'

Overpowering lust of sleep conquered Hugh. Later he found that this was one effect of the sound-hammering.... Back to consciousness, he could make no estimate of how long his nap had lasted. He consulted his watch. It had stopped. He asked the time. No one knew. All watches had been disorganized by the repeated shocks. Time, it appeared, no longer existed.

An explosion, followed by a powerful thudding, different from what had preceded, brought around every head with a jerk. The air dimmed with impalpable dust. A voice said, 'I think the building has fallen in on us.'

It was what was needed to rouse Hugh from his

torpor. Death he had already accepted as a matter of hours or minutes. But the idea of dying in that tomb revolted him. A blueprint of the successive basements lay on the table. Selecting the likeliest spot, he rallied the others to him, and they began to dig methodically. Blessed chance was with them. A gush of air penetrated. They pushed upward with renewed hope. When they finally burst through, there was no light of day to greet them. They were gazing into the black dome of night, relieved only by fierce glares from south and east. The bombardment had abated.

Surmounting the heaped-up ruins, he found himself alone, felt inconceivably alone as if forever separated from his fellows in a world singly devoted to destruction. Even the silence, broken only by rare detonations now, was full of threat. Some vague, ancestral instinct toward the safety to be found in open spaces drove him. To reach Central Park was his one dominant obsession.

Park Avenue with its broad spread might be open. Hugh headed for it. Many of the lofty apartment houses and hotels had collapsed, leaving, however, the centre of the parkway clear, though dangerous because of the gaping holes into the tunnel below. By the time he had reached Fifty-Ninth Street, dawn was paling the horizon. Presently faint and complaining threads of sound whined from above where in the stratosphere faint specks moved. The sky opened and from invisible depths of air rained clamor and death once more.

Where the small, flanged missiles struck and burst, unquenchable flames sprang, spreading with incredible

fury. Fatalistically Hugh plodded on, and by some miracle still escaped harm.

Central Park was horrible. Trees were twisted and torn or wholly uprooted; the evergreen copses were withered by poisonous blasts. Here the remnants of the Sportsmen's Battalion were still maintaining formation. An officer with one ear seared away approached Hugh.

'Three quarters of us are gone,' said he. 'I'd like to meet up with those wise war prophets of 1927 who proved that defensive warfare would always match offensive. I'd give 'em the freedom of the city to theorize in,' he added bitterly.

Hugh asked for Gene Tunney and Jack Dempsey. The captain shook his head mournfully. Honor Slogage, then? He indicated the opening of an underground comfort station. 'There's our medical centre.' Hugh climbed down into it over wrecked stairs.

'Hello, youngster,' a voice greeted him. Doctor Gilroy James laid a hand on his arm. 'They haven't got you yet, eh? Well, there are a few of us left.' He made a motion toward an inner room. 'That Slogage gal. She's a good one. A worker. No; don't go in to speak to her. She might crack, and I need her. The twins and her husband were wiped out before her eyes yesterday. Thermite bomb.'

'Do you suppose it's like this in the other cities?' asked Hugh fearfully. 'Washington, for instance?'

The doctor read his mind. 'Your young lady isn't in Washington. She's one of the few neutrals permitted to operate. I made a deal with the medicals on the

other side, and she's flying serum to both camps. If you see a silver plane with an S brand, don't shoot.'

'She'll never come through, will she?' asked Hugh, white-lipped.

'Who of us will?' retorted the physician gravely. 'This looks like America's finish to me. We're paying the penalty of our smug and blind heedlessness of the past.' His hand was heavy for an instant upon the younger man's shoulder. 'You know, my boy, there may be something in that theory that the wages of sin is death.'

Intervals of snow rendered the warfare desultory for a time. There was nothing for Hugh to do either there or at headquarters. The local forces on both sides were stunned into inaction. Even had they been able to operate in the choked highways, what was now to be gained by victory?

After a period the duel of the big guns was resumed with pitiless ravages. Edifice after edifice crumbled. Again Hugh suffered that dulling of the senses which was Nature's feeble attempt at self-preservation. Nothing mattered. Whether he was to be blown to bits the next minute or smothered in a wreath of gas in an hour was immaterial. Why should one desire continuance of life on an earth surrendered to such horrors!

When it was that a slackening of the thunders impinged upon his consciousness he did not quite know. An hour? A day? Two days? Yes; the hammer-strokes were mitigating. Perhaps ammunition was running low. Or the opposing guns were gradually

putting each other out of action. He began to feel a rising curiosity; a resurgence of the living interest in life which had been battered into apathy. Once more he wanted to see, to know what had happened, what was still happening.

Towering in the air a few blocks distant stood a grotesque skeleton. A penetrant bomb had pierced the centre of the Midtown Building, and the tremendous expansion of the released explosive had blown the fabric of the walls clean out, leaving the frame twisted but intact.

No sane man not a steeplejack would have dreamed of climbing that structure. Hugh had lost the sense of danger. He set himself to the feat. Up the diagonals, back and forth he made his steady and reckless ascent. In an angle of what had been the tenth floor a madman sat, singing hoarsely, and this was the song that he sung:

> The Son of Man goes forth to war,
> A kingly crown to gain.

Hugh shut his ears to it. It had too hideously perverse an appositeness.

At the eighteenth story the view opened out to him in its completeness. He could now perceive why the firing had almost ceased. Cannonade from the hostile navies, re-enforced by the land artillery, had cleared away, one by one, the impeding buildings of the island, until the two fleets were firing at each other, point-blank, across the scant two and a half miles. It was a duel to the death. Nothing afloat could stand that

withering, steel-studded breath. One after another the mighty ships burned or sank.

To the lone observer on his height, the waters presented a strange aspect of being stippled with tiny islands. These were the up-ended prows and sterns of vessels, interspersed with the protruding fighting-tops in the shallower fringes. Fire had run the waterfronts, swallowing up every slip and pier. Beneath the tatters of Brooklyn Bridge a craft of the small destroyer type, with a heavy list to port, was squattering along the surface like a wounded duck. It swerved out and crashed on what remained of Governors Island. Nothing else moved upon the face of the waters.

Turning his glasses upon the land below him, the outlooker saw only ruin. No squads marched. There was no space for marching. Streets and avenues were mere vague lines of heaped refuse over which minute human pedicules aimlessly crawled. The mighty city, only a few brief days before so ignorantly centred upon its own multifarious pursuits, was a desolation and a desert.

Enough. He had seen all that he could bear. His brain was seething with the insoluble, intolerable tragedy of it. He set himself to the dizzy descent. Down, across, down again, floor by floor. The madman on the tenth was still singing, still beating time for himself with careful hand. Hymns. Of course! What could be more appropriate? Hymns of the church militant; inspirations to conquest; paeans of battle and victory. The religion of the gentle Christ had for centuries raised its children on them. Inspira-

tion for the rising generations. Inspiration to — what? The answer lay in smoke and stench far below.

'Christian, rise and smite them!' bellowed the maniac.

Slaughter and destruction in the name of the Most High. Thus had man made God in his image; omnipotence typified by the bloody sword. Jesus in the panoply of Mars.

'See, the mighty host advances,' exulted the worshipper.

In his haste to escape the sounds, Hugh missed a footing and fell half a story, checking himself on a girder by a convulsive reach and clutch. Here a small area of flooring was left. He crawled to it. On it stood a table with a typewriter, the sheet of paper, weather-stained and crumpled, still fluttering on the platen. The writing was blurred but legible.

> Hello pet:
>
> The Old Boy is out to lunch and I am writing you on my own time. When are you coming back to town? It is quite thrilling here. Nobody knows what is going on. Some folks are talking war, but I think it is the bunk. Men are awful simps, all but you, sweetie, but they could not be such boobs as that. Not after what has happened to the rest of the world. Business as usual in this joint, and I am for it. I guess we know when we are well off and sitting pretty in these good old Unit ——

There it broke off. No date identified the time of writing. Hugh pitifully wondered whether the writer had lived long enough to see her confident and comfortable optimism terribly refuted.

He regained the surface of the earth. What appeared like a raw, improvised breastwork barred his way into Columbus Circle. It had been heaved up by a succession of the heavier shells. He mounted the rim and sat down to rest on a protruding beam, dangling his heels over the charnel-pit below. He felt mortally weary.

From the matted jungle of Central Park, streaked with abandoned trenches, a figure crawled, rose, reeled, and staggered toward him with brandished arms. Hugh knew what that mad rush meant. Some lingering, invisible breath of the torture-gas, which wreathes its victim in invisible flame, had touched the man.

'Kill me! For Christ's sake, kill me!'

Uncertain, reluctant, Hugh reached for his revolver. He was saved the grisly and merciful deed. The writhing creature saw the chasm before him, and plunged headlong into it, another tribute to mankind's scientific advance; one of several millions whose rotting bodies poisoned the air.

High in air appeared winged shapes, below the light, filmy clouds. Airplanes? Hugh looked about for shelter, and abandoned the idea. Of what use to attempt concealment against the terror that descended from the heavens? But these soarers were noiseless, almost motionless. Mechanical man's superb ingenuity in murder had not gone so far as to produce a bombing plane that could float. Then Hugh saw that they were buzzards. Their presence added a touch of horror. What could be more fitting than the arrival in new and promising haunts of the carrion-birds?

A voice back of him, hoarse and weary, said, 'Stick up your hands.'

He obeyed, turning to see his challenger. On the newcomer's arm were the intertwined circles of the enemy force. He held upon Hugh the new miniature pocket weapon, the spray gun, which at close quarters spreads blinding and poisoned steel dust, and cannot miss. It wavered. He lowered the muzzle.

'Oh, hell!' he muttered in discouraged tones. 'What's the *use!*'

'Yes; there's been almost enough killing,' Hugh agreed. 'Where do you come from?'

'Down there somewhere,' he answered vaguely. 'Got any water?'

Hugh handed him a canteen. He drank in ravening gulps. Hugh knew that symptom. His suspicion was confirmed a moment later by the stranger's anxious inquiry:

'How do I look? Is there — anything?'

Unmistakably there was. The greenish pallor, the occasional twitching of the facial muscles, the anxious expression, not unlike that of a cholera victim, told the tale. Hugh had several times seen the effects of the mysterious disease germs with which the poison-flyers had, early in the week, sprayed certain localities. In this form medical science had contributed its bit to facilitate exit from a troublous world. But why tell the poor devil? As encouragingly as he could, Hugh answered:

'You're all right. Sit down and rest a minute.'

'I don't feel too good. I'm a runner. Military

message. Don't suppose there'll be anyone left to deliver it to, though.'

He lapsed slowly down. The retching took him. Mercifully soon came the spout of blood. He lay still.

Hugh was shaken by a new fear, the crushing weight of an unbearable loneliness; the dread of being left the sole survivor of desolation. The obsession of a mind temporarily unhinged, of course, but potent enough to inspire the idea of killing himself at once, as he had seen scores of unfortunates do, rather than face the horrors of that week. One sane thought checked him. Dorrie. There was hardly a chance that she had survived. But as long as any doubt remained he would try to keep alive.

The thought came to him that perhaps but for her, but for their love, this whole catastrophe might have been averted, or at worst postponed.... Dorrie as the Helen of their preposterous Ilium's toppled towers. How she would have laughed at the idea of herself in that rôle! Would he ever again hear her deep, happy laughter?... Would anyone in this ruin of a world ever laugh again?

The body beside him twitched once and was quiet. Poor victim of a fate and an authority of which he was a negligible puppet.

To examine the poisoned runner's notebook was a matter of military routine. From the scant data this afforded, he judged that the siege of New York had practically ended that noon with the collapse of the Empire State Building and the overwhelming of the little band of desperate fighters who had manned seven super-machine guns on the fourteenth floor.

To whom the victory had gone, whether there had emerged from that welter anything that could be characterized as victory, the scattered notes failed to indicate.

With the book and pencil in his hands, there came to Hugh the notion of leaving a record of his own. It was little more than the instinctive human revulsion against the total eradication of his personality, a feeble and improbable attempt to leave in a perishing world some interpretation of the catastrophe. Possibly, if Dorrie survived, it might some day reach her. He wrote:

> The world has gone smash. I am sitting above the great, jagged crater, filled up with débris and slaughter, which was Columbus Circle, wondering whether anyone else is left in the wreckage of civilization with brain not too stunned to retain some interest in figuring out why and how it went to pieces. It seems unlikely that I shall live through this night. Few have lived thus long. Manhattan is an abbatoir; a dump heap. The five bridges over the East River are wreckage. The waters of the Hudson roar through the Holland Tunnel and the seven subway systems. Just now the guns on the Palisades, on Staten Island, and on Brooklyn Heights are quiet. No airplanes are overhead, ready to drop more of the torture-bombs. New York is quiet, but it is the quiet of damnation. The reek of death rises from the jack-tumble of junk and the annihilation of hundreds of thousands who had lightly thought that it would all be over in a few hours.
>
> Somewhere a miraculously surviving bell has just struck seven. As if convulsed by the impertinent and absurd indication of time's continuity, the earth to the left of me upheaved with a sound like a huge sob, vomiting forth a mass of twisted subway cars, sprinkled

and dotted with the gleaming tiles of a station. Probably one of the terrible seismite bombs with a delayed charge. A lofty building near-by has leaned out of plumb. Why it does not crash over I do not know. From its roof there waves crazily in the twisting air currents a sign:

A BOON TO THE MOTOR PUBLIC
THE SUPER-CAR OF 1940

Braggart man, still at his commercial boasting in the face of the annihilation he has brought upon himself and his works. Nineteen Hundred and Forty. The year of the Lord, Nineteen-Forty; the year of the judgment of the Lord upon a people blinded and gone mad in the lust of their power and the dazzle of their vainglory.

For there has been throughout all a horribly inevitable logic. I do not believe that this hell on earth which now encompasses us, this reek of blood and carcasses — whether New York or Detroit, San Francisco, New Orleans, or Chicago — I do not for an instant believe that all this is the whim of some capricious power, wreaking a casual grudge. Rather do I believe that we are reaping what we have sown, because we have forgotten God and His gentle commands. Mercy and love, kindliness and good will and simple decency; these are the eternal ways of God, and we have turned from them.

This is the inevitable harvest, a harvest of annihilation. From our altars of reckless, bloated prosperity-worship rises a smoke that has too long affronted the patient skies. The nation which should have led back to sanity the peoples of less fortunate countries has betrayed them and itself.

To this has come the America of Washington, of Lincoln, of Wilson. We are the guilty. May God forgive us.

There sounded a distant roar from across the North River, a nearer whirring and moaning of violent air currents. The earth to the right of Hugh opened up like a volcano as the seismite from the giant missile ripped its way outward.

A secondary explosion sent him rolling to the foot of the slope. His head struck something. The light died out.

When he came to, Hugh Farragut was master of his own mind once more. The invincible will to survive reasserted its sway. One objective, one desire above all else now possessed him:

To find Dorrie James.

CHAPTER XVIII

HUGH'S course lay plain before him. If Dorothy James was alive, she would be at the Southampton place, or in its ruins, waiting for him. And he felt a profound conviction that she was alive. The source of that assurance was not subject to any analysis of the reasoning mind. When death is unleashed upon the world, strange powers, strange clarities come to the human spirit.

All things worked together in his behalf throughout that day. Walls, toppling before him, beside him, left him unscathed. Once and again he felt the warning sting of invisible terrors and swerved aside in time to avoid the gas. The words of an old song, gallant and tender, came to his mind like a prophecy:

> For if once the message greet him
> That his true-love doth stay,
> Though Death come forth to meet him
> He will find out the way.

The East River was his first problem. Bridges and tunnels were, of course, gone. Smouldering wreckage of the docks shut off access, but he found a surviving pier and looked hopefully for some small boat. The naked ribs of half a dozen mocked him. There was only one other way. The current was swift and cold, but he was a competent swimmer and never doubted his ability to make the opposite shore. Twice he found

temporary rest where the wrecks of the mighty fighting ships protruded from the surface. He finally pulled in through a ferry slip still afire, and stood there in the grateful heat, restoring himself.

That part of Brooklyn presented the same hideous effect of cataclysm as the New York side. He struck eastward for the open ways, through streets clogged almost to the point of obliteration. If necessary he was prepared to walk day and night until he reached his goal. He hardly hoped for contributed transportation. One does not thumb a ride on the Day of Judgment.

More and more the spaces opened until he found himself approaching the grounds of the ill-fated Exposition of 1939. Leaning up against a tree, as if waiting for a lost owner was what had once been a Synchrona Sedan, Twelve. The top had been sheared clean off. Near-by lay the remains of what might have been the driver.

Lifting the hood, Hugh anxiously examined the engine. Apparently it was intact. With his heart in his throat he pressed the starter. The mechanism responded. He jumped to the wheel, and that tattered scarecrow of a once proud and luxurious pleasure car shot forward.

By what circuitous routes, avoiding ruined towns, threading fireswept woodlands, traversing a blighted countryside set with flaming farmhouses and barns, he reached Southampton, he never clearly recalled. The town was half wrecked and seemed abandoned, but as he turned into the main street he heard, from a small

chapel, the voices of men and women united in solemn words of prayer. So there were people on earth who still valiantly maintained their belief in their God. Hugh had not been a particularly religious man, but now he pulled in to the curb and sat for a moment with his head bent. He went on, refreshed.

With a quickened and grateful heart he saw the chimneys of the James house rise before him, still intact. Blaring on his horn, he whirled down the driveway. Dorrie was standing on the side steps. On her face was a light that drove from his heart the last remnants of the bitterness, the terrors, the hopelessness that had all but submerged it. In his arms she said:

'I knew you'd come.'

'How could you know?'

'I don't know how. I just felt it. That's why I'm here.'

'Your Red Cross work?'

'It's over.' She made a gesture of despair. 'Darling, there's nothing left to work with. There's almost nothing left to work on. We've gone mad and destroyed ourselves.'

Into the medical centres from which she had been making her excursions of mercy had seeped more news than Hugh had been able to gather. Most of the great cities, as she had been able to piece together the day-to-day history, were in much the same state of devastation as New York; masses of ruins held in deadlock by small bands of survivors mad from lack of the simplest necessities of life.

Yet there was no surrender. To such savagery had the war inflamed men's spirit that each side believed extinction would be its fate if it yielded. Of the important cities only Chicago and Washington, both in the hands of the Chain Gang, and Baltimore, held by the League, remained practically intact. Elsewhere there was either no authentic news, or it was the same dreadful repetition of hopeless fighting by hopeless men for a sterile result.

'What are your plans now?' asked Dorrie.

'You're my only plan. I've found you. That's the most important thing in the world.'

'Yes. To us. But there's still a world outside.'

'Is there? Only a few hours ago I thought it was ended.'

'The Council,' she reminded him.

He sighed. 'We'll have to try to build up a new one. It's too much to hope that anything is left of ours.'

'Nothing's too much to hope — now,' she declared, pressing to him. A gleam of the old gaiety crinkled her eyes. 'Do you suppose there are still penguins at the South Pole, Hugh?'

'Why not? Penguins don't go mad, wholesale, and wipe themselves out. They have much more sense than humans. If only that airship of yours could take us there! But what kind of world should we come back to?'

Soberly she said: 'The world's got to go on. It's got to be made fit for us to live in. And fit for our children. If you can't believe that much, darling, what is there left for us to hold to?'

He studied her with sombre and longing eyes. 'Sometimes I think the best we can hope for is to die together... No; that's yellow! Are you going to be my pilot tomorrow?'

'Yes, if we can find gas. You'll have to take me to town.' She climbed into the car.

They located an abandoned station, where they filled all the ten-gallon cans they could collect. As they drew out, an elderly man staggered into their path. Dorrie cried out as the brakes jammed on barely in time.

'Why, it's Mr. Burrows, our rector.' The light of a sudden and excited daring made more vivid her beauty. 'Hugh! I'm going to be a bold and forward hussy. Do you want to marry me? Now?'

'Do I!' He sprang from the car and approached the clergyman, who had sat down on the curb. The old man listened with expressionless attention. He lifted a haggard face.

'Marry you?' he said. 'Marry you! Give the Church's sanction to a union which may bring children upon an earth irrevocably cursed by Heaven for its sins? God forbid!'

The young people looked at one another, unspeakably shocked.

'I forgot,' whispered the girl as they moved away from the bowed figure. 'It must have been he whose family was burned to death in the first raid.'

Hugh was silent, pondering the bitterest denunciation of humanity that had yet come to his ears. Back at the bleak and empty mansion Dorrie found some

oddments of food for them. She made only one reference to the rector's refusal.

'That was like the end of everything,' she murmured.

In the morning they were wakened by the distant detonation of guns. Men were still alive, then, and still striving to blast out life from their fellows.

'There's one final chance, Dorrie,' said Hugh over their cold and meagre breakfast. 'I've been shying away from it. I've been afraid to know even its exact nature. But I can see now that nothing would be too bad, provided it ended the war.'

'In whose favor, Hugh?'

'Does that matter?'

'I'm still Happy James's daughter, darling.'

'He'll have his chance to give up.'

'You don't know him.'

'Anyway, I'll do all I can to save him if we do win. Dorrie, there's a man named Vignal that I've got to find.' He spread out a motor map and indicated a spot in the West Virginia hills, not one hundred and fifty miles from Washington. 'Do you think you could get me there?'

'If there's a clearing large enough for the landing-gyropter.' She scanned his face. 'Hugh, you're not making me betray Dad?'

'I tell you, I'll save him if it can be done — if he'll give me that chance. You'll just have to trust me, darling.'

Only echoes of the war had reached Pierre Vignal in his remote retreat. Hearing the birr of an aeroplane, he came out of his laboratory, peering.

'What? You are alive?' he greeted Hugh. 'But this is wonderful.'

Hugh presented him to Dorrie, then took him aside. 'Are the Azrael bombs available?'

The scientist's visage darkened with melancholy.

'There has been much demand,' he replied slowly. 'From both sides. They do not realize what they ask.' He shook his whitened head. 'Me, I make no decision. Who am I to decide which is in the right, which the wrong?'

'Give me fifteen minutes and I can convince you,' declared Hugh. He set forth his case with the passion of utter conviction. As he listened, Vignal's face became momentarily more strained and pallid.

'I believe you,' he said finally. 'Stoner foretold something of this, too. But — but you do not know what the Azrael bomb is, what it can do.'

'The more terrible, the better,' returned Hugh firmly. 'The only possible hope of ending this slaughter now ——'

'Is by a means worse than slaughter,' broke in the other.

'— is to strike such terror to their souls that they dare not go on.'

The Swiss bowed his head in his hands. When he raised it, his words were barely audible.

'Since you will have it so, I shall exhibit for you the effects of a miniature Azrael. We have in our experimental pens animals... No, mademoiselle,' he forbade, as Dorrie, seeing them move, rose to join them. 'This is not for your young eyes. I beg you not even to question us afterward.'

They were gone more than an hour. When they returned, the girl could hardly bear to look at her lover, so ghastly and seamed was his face.

'Remember,' said the scientist, his accents low and harsh and difficult, 'with human beings it is the same. Only slower. But as sure. And as dreadful.'

'What is it, Hugh? Oh, what is it?' pleaded Dorrie.

Hugh only shook his head. 'How many planes?' he asked Vignal.

'Two stratoplanes for the scope of your — experiment. Where will it be?'

'One of Chicago's suburbs.' He added defensively: 'It's a nest of the worst thugs and crooks and gangsters in America, the very cesspool of the city. We'll give warning in time for the women and children to get away. And — and it may not be necessary after all. I've got one other attempt to make, if you'll give me writing materials.'

Seating himself, he wrote, sealed the letter, and placed it in the girl's hand. 'You can reach your father in Washington, can't you?'

'Of course.'

'Then, after you've left me in Baltimore, give him this. He'll know where to reach me.'

'You're not telling me what's in it?'

'No. And, darling, if — if I shouldn't see you again, try to forgive me.'

'And me,' said Vignal. 'We shall all need forgiveness. Adieu, mademoiselle.'

The lovers bade each other good-bye at the Balti-

more airport and the silver plane rose and sped on its errand.

The first glow of happiness that Happy James had known for many a day lighted up his worn, unshaven face as he greeted his Miss Dolliver. She delivered her missive.

'From Hugh Farragut, Dad.'

'You've been with him?'

'Yes; I've just come from him.'

'You're still set on marrying him?'

'We tried. The clergyman wouldn't marry us. It can't make any difference. I'm just as much his. I'll never give him up.'

Happy James sighed. 'It's an anchor to windward,' he allowed, 'if they should come out on top. But they can't.'

He applied himself to Hugh's rapid scrawl with a deepening scowl. 'It's a damned bluff,' he asserted violently. 'Do you know what's in this?'

'No. Hugh wouldn't tell me.'

'He's inviting us to lay down. With everything breaking our way, too.' This was hardly true, but Happy James would always make the best of his own case. 'Trying to throw a scare into me. Fat chance!' His laughter was hardy with scorn, but not quite assured. 'I wonder what he has got up his sleeve,' he reflected aloud.

'Something horrible,' breathed the girl. 'When he came out of that laboratory, he looked as if he'd seen worse than death.'

Happy rallied. 'It's probably nine-tenths bluff.'

'Don't you know Hugh any better than that, Dad? Are you going to send an answer?'

'By you? I am not! You've got a pressing invitation to stay right here with the Old Man where you're safe.' He ruminated. 'I'll tell you this much. He's threatening an attack unless the Government consents to talk terms. Well, you can take it from me, Miss Dolliver, the attack won't get anywhere. Chicago's one hundred per cent ours, and the country all around it. I'll play in this far with him, though. He wants us to send out a radio reporter by plane — he guarantees no interference — three hours after he pulls his stunt. All right; we'll send Dale Arbuthnot. He'll give us the real McCoy. They can't bamboozle old Dale. We'll tune in on him tomorrow afternoon. But tonight's tonight. What do you say we tackle a bite of cold chicken and a can of cold ale, Miss Dolliver? Like old times. And forget the darn' war until Dale gives us the latest tomorrow.'

The girl shuddered throughout her lissome body. 'I wouldn't dare listen in tomorrow,' she muttered.

CHAPTER XIX

'DALE ARBUTHNOT speaking, Universal Clearance for the legal and constitutional Government of the United States of America, Caleb Keeler, President. I am in a gyropter-plane, approaching Chicago. The rebel government, if they can claim to have such a thing, has given us safe-conduct over the zones which they claim to control. Now we're over loyal territory again. The reason for my being here? The rebels claim to have made some sort of mysterious attack upon part of the city, from high-flying stratoplanes, at noon today. Bogy-tales, if you ask me. We shall see what we shall see.

'The threat was against the Cicero section. Well, here we are, approaching Cicero, my pilot, Joe Gansever, and I, and I can't see but what everything is all right. Nothing so far to get excited over. If you ask me, we're wasting gas on just another insurgent fairy tale.

'What's that, Joe? The pilot says that Chicago is trying to get something over to us . . . Or to someone . . . Yes; Joe; I can hear now. No sense, though. Sounds hysterical. He seems to be warning us or somebody to keep our height . . . What's that? Story? . . . Oh, yes; he's in the thirty-seventh story of the Mercantile Exchange, so he's safe, he says. What does

he mean, safe? Safe from what? Asks if we can't land and take him away. Must think we're circus stunters. He's jittery. Can't say two connected things on end ... All right, Joe; we'll circle slowly and take a look-see.

'Flying at two thousand feet. As I thought. *As* I thought. There's no damage here to speak of. It's a bluff, a bust, a flivver, all this threat of some terrible doom. Last gasp of the rebel propaganda machine. The streets are busy; full of people. It doesn't look to be business as usual, though. I remember Armistice Day with everybody milling around in the open and cheering. Shut her off a second, Joe; let's listen ... No; that doesn't sound like cheering ... I don't know ...

'What's this? Some crazy fool is shooting at us. Pull out, Joe. Here we are, over the lake. Now we're going to swing around and move alongshore. Those are the directions. Flying low now. What's doing here? The roads are fairly crawling with people. All moving out from the city. Some of them are clinging together. They're travelling in close bunches as if for protection against something. Mostly men. A few women and children. Autos, too. There goes one, running amuck. And another. It's crashed. Nobody pays any attention. They're like drugged men. Or are they crazy?

'There's the line of the lake. Yes; they're crazy. They must be. They're crowding into it. Right through the silt ice. Bathing! In midwinter!

'That's crazy. They can't be doing that. My God!

They're drowning themselves. I can't believe it. You look, Joe. Are they? What is it? What *is* it?... There's an old man with white hair. You can see his hair, floating. He's trying to hold himself down... Look at that woman! The one with the two children. Don't let her! Stop her! She — she's holding them under... Now she's gone under, herself... I can't stand any more of this.

'What's that? Landing? Make a landing? Do we have to, Joe? Orders? Oh, yes; of course, orders. All right; orders... We're going down.

'We've landed. Do you hear that sound? I wish I didn't. They're wailing. It isn't human. Like lost souls, creatures without hope. What in Heaven's name is the reas —— Wait! I think I —— Oh, no! *No!* Not that! Oh, God! They're blind. All blind. No; there are a few who can still see. They're leading the rest. But they're groping. The light is passing from their eyes, too. Thousands of people, tens of thousands, all blind or going blind. Take me away, Joe. I can't stand it. This — broadcast — is — over.'

CHAPTER XX

(From the hitherto unpublished records of Senator Hugh Farragut)

BALTIMORE, where Dorothy left me, inspired new hopes. There the League of Defence had been successful from the first. So swiftly and effectually did it organize that an advance of Government troops from Washington met with a smashing repulse.

To the city had rallied volunteers from Richmond, Wilmington, and smaller communities. A motorized attack on Washington was being planned by the local council when I joined it. My advice to await the effect of the Chicago test was accepted.

Through an admirably devised and distributed intelligence system, frequent advices were received from League spies at the National Capital. They, of course, picked up Dale Arbuthnot's broadcast and reported upon the profound impression made by it.

Washington was thrown into a state of near-panic. Dread was in every heart that what had befallen Chicago might next be visited upon Washington. Here was an object lesson, concrete and horrifying.

The white-faced inhabitants thronged the streets, asking what they were to do, what refuge or defence they could find. Death, mutilation, destruction; these had become the commonplaces of daily report. Familiarity had dulled their terrors. But this new and hideous menace, this picture of hordes stricken into hopeless, helpless blindness, doomed to a life-in-death

or choosing the swifter way of self-destruction, was too heavy a burden for human fortitude. The panic flight began. To check it and prevent its becoming a general rout, a military cordon was thrown about the district. Dale Arbuthnot, attempting with his family to penetrate the lines (he knew too well what was coming!), was shot and killed.

The Government went into action. Through its controlled press and radio it undertook to soothe the fears of the public and minimize the threat. It was spread abroad that the Chicago reports had been grossly exaggerated. Dale Arbuthnot had lost his nerve, become hysterical. Later reports from the West, carefully devised and bolstered, contradicted the earlier ones. The public morale was reported as stiffening.

It soon weakened again under pressure of a propaganda device which I borrowed from the enemy strategy of the early days in New York when the loud-speaker on Weehawken Heights proved so effective. Holding up Pierre Smylie, chairman of the local council, after a meeting, I asked:

'Could you find me a really fine bass singer?'

He stared, so evidently concerned for the state of my intellect that I failed to suppress a grin.

'Are you joking?' he began, when one of his aides broke in:

'The National Opera Company is stranded here. Rodrigo Woeller, their first-string basso, has been fighting with our forces, and is out of action with a slight wound. Would he do?'

He would! The star readily assented to my plan. Thereafter, four times a day, at ten o'clock, at noon, at six, and at midnight Washington was shaken, as by the voice of doom proclaiming:

'Remember Chicago. Washington is next.'

It struck home. Our information sources reported after three days of this that there were signs of revolt. Secret meetings were held, and groups formed. Dissension arose in the Cabinet itself. It was rumored that the Postmaster-General had come into direct and violent conflict with President Keeler over his (James's) proposal that some composition be made with the enemy.

I could well believe this of Happy James. Always an opportunist, he would know when he was beaten, and would be prepared to make terms and take what pickings might be available from the collapse of his schemes. Moreover, he had Dorothy to think of. Happy James might yet be an ally.

Keeler was of a different type. Upon his brutish stupidity the Chicago horror would make small impression. Having become President, and with his vanity and arrogance bound up with the office, he would cling to his powers and emoluments at any cost. The majority of the Cabinet, his own appointees, backed him.

Whisperings were heard that Happy James and Tim McBride were working under cover to form their own counter-organization. If the President suspected this, he did not act upon it. The Postmaster-General was still too powerful to be arrested or 'liquidated.' But he

was said to be under surveillance, and many believed that his shrift was now short.

And if his, what of Dorrie? I was deeply unhappy and apprehensive.

After Woeller's great and solemn voice of warning had boomed through Washington for five successive days, we received at headquarters an important cipher, smuggled out by one of our most trustworthy informants. The Government had tightened. By way of counteraction to the defeatists, Keeler had authorized General Billington to inaugurate such measures of repression as he deemed suitable — and no questions asked.

Billington formed a Special Home Guard, made up of the toughs, thugs, and irresponsibles among his forces, and turned them loose with full license. They operated in small squads, known as 'Billy's gorillas,' and their path was marked by murder, looting, and outrage. The secret meetings were discovered, broken up, and turned into shambles. Washington was terrorized. My colleagues in Baltimore felt that we must now prepare to strike before the internal support for which we hoped when the attack was launched should be wholly dissipated.

Smylie and Colonel Reddington, our military leader, favored attempting a contact with Happy James, and, if this failed, delivering the attack with the Azrael bombs. This last I was prepared to oppose to the end, unless in some way Dorrie could be brought out of the threatened area.

Meantime I saw plainly how dubious and precarious

my position was becoming. It was known to my associates that I had access to the bombs. Naturally my reluctance roused their suspicions. Unable to understand it, they pressed for action. Every day the Capital was more and more subdued to the Keeler-Billington reign of terror. Why delay?

Before an inner council of five I made a clean breast of my case. The answer was what I feared and expected. I was sternly reminded that no individual life, no love, counted as against the greater issues. Through me the most potent weapon yet discovered was within reach of the Defenders. Either I was whole-heartedly for the cause, or I was a traitor. There was no middle way.

No middle way, indeed! Their logic was irrefutable, relentless. I, who had with such bitter reluctance forced myself to be the agent of that slaughter of Chicago's worst, must now deal out the same fate to the woman I loved. For the first time, in the course of all the horrors I had seen and undergone, I thought longingly of the tiny, silvery cylinder, the *capsule d'espion* which had never left my possession, and its promise of release, sure and painless — and cowardly. Not that, while Dorrie was alive.

I asked for twenty-four hours. It was allowed me, though not without demur. I had no plan, no hope other than the dim one that there might yet be an outbreak at the heart of the Chain Gang Government.

In the morning a message reached me; could I come at once to the aviation field?

I identified the silver plane with its insignium of

neutrality and immunity before I saw Dorrie. She came to me and stopped, and there was in her face a still grief and a sort of wondering fear.

'Oh, Hugh!' Her voice was hushed and tremulous. 'I listened to Dale Arbuthnot. I didn't mean to. I wish to Heaven I hadn't! How could you! How could *anyone?* I never dreamed of anything so awful. And that it should be you ——'

I tried to defend myself. 'It was war. We did it to save worse things later on, utter ruin unless this stops. They were thugs and murderers.'

'Not all. I heard things ——' She choked up, recovered herself, and said mournfully: 'I mustn't judge you. It's all so dreadful... I've brought you a letter from my father.'

Before I opened it I could have foretold its tenor. Shrewd enough to foresee the inevitable, Happy James was playing for his own hand. The start was typical of his cheerful and brazen cynicism.

Dear Farragut:

Practical politics vs. idealism once more. This time idealism looks to have the edge. I'm a practical man. Therefore I'm ready to turn idealist. Let's deal....

The remainder of the precious missive suggested in general terms that he could aid in bringing about an 'arrangement,' in return for which he would expect immunity and 'suitable recognition.'

'Do you know what is in this?' I asked Dorrie.

'No. What answer shall I take back?'

'None. Dorrie, darling, there is to be a gas-bomb attack on Washington. I've been trying to hold it off

because of you. I can't do it any longer. Do you think for a moment that I'm going to let you go back there?'

Sadly, steadily, she answered, 'You can't help it, Hugh.'

'Can't I?' I cried. 'We'll see if I can't.'

'Hugh, Dad is in Washington.'

'Then let him get out!' I shouted. 'Let him get out before midnight.'

'How can he? He's virtually a prisoner.'

'That's his lookout.' I was conscious of my own brutality, but in my dread for her I did not care. 'You're safe here, and you're going to stay safe.'

She said with a composure more formidable than any outburst, 'Hugh, do you want his life to stand between us always?'

I gave up. There are some loyalties against which nothing counts. A final hope came to my mind.

'How do you know you can get into Washington again? If you can't, will you promise to come back here?'

'Yes. But I'm sure I can make it. Unless the Billington squads stop me. They did, as I was starting, but let me go.'

'Where was this?'

'At their barracks. They're near the new aviation field, across the Caswell-Hoare Bridge.'

'How many?' I asked quickly.

'I don't know. It's their general encampment. Several hundred, I should think.' She regarded me with growing apprehension. 'Hugh! You're not thinking of trying to get through? You'd never do it.'

'I'm not going to try, darling.' My smile must have reassured her a little. Her arms went out to me. 'Thank you for letting me go,' she whispered brokenly. A strange and touching farewell.

The full Council listened to the new plan which Dorrie had unwittingly suggested to me. No opposition was advanced. Even the die-hard Colonel Reddington accepted it as a hopeful alternative to the gassing of the whole city. At once the massing of a picked force in fast tanks, armored cars, and other motorized units began. The orders were for one o'clock in the morning.

At midnight a dirigible air-torpedo, bearing two of the 'soft' bombs, burst lightly in the open space before the Special Home Guard's night barracks, across the Potomac from Washington. A wind from the river fortunately safeguarded the city from the swiftly expanding fumes. Most of the sentries were instantly killed. At the alarm, the barracks turned out.

With the first light of morning the survivors of 'Billy's gorillas' poured irregularly across the spacious Caswell-Hoare Bridge. Such as still retained a modicum of vision established a pitiful semblance of command. In the course of the crossing nearly a third of the force, groping their way to the rails, clambered over and hurled themselves into the icy current. A city stunned with horror received the remainder.

I entered the stricken city with the first detachment of armored cars. The outposts had been drawn in; we met with almost no opposition. The news had spread on wings of terror, and already there were mobs in the streets, shrieking for peace at any price. What effective

fighting force was left centred upon the public buildings, and extended uptown into the better residential sections.

In light, sporadic fighting our squadron of fast 'motor fortresses' made its way along Connecticut Avenue. Short of Dupont Circle, the car which had been turned over to my command swung aside, and as we thundered through a narrow alley there came to my ears the sound I had dreaded to hear — rifle fire from the open space beyond. With the minor battle, such as it was, I felt no longer any concern; I had but one objective.

My first attempt at individual initiative was misjudging the locale from the rear. I broke into a house which I at once perceived was not the James mansion. I ran through to the front. A bullet grazed my shoulder, but not before I had seen enough to correct my error. As I dodged back, I saw the first rush of the Richmond men clearing the Circle from the upper side.

The front of the James house was shattered and riddled. Stretched on a chair in the hallway lay the Postmaster-General. A woman, manipulating a hypodermic syringe, bent over him. She looked up. It was Honor Slogage.

'He's done for,' said she.

'Dorrie!' I cried. 'Where is she?'

'I locked her in the cellar for safety. Too much shooting here,' returned the sturdy and loyal athlete. I heard a hammering sound and a muffled voice. 'Hold his head. This way.' Turning over her patient to me, she ran out.

Partly recovering from the effect of the drug, Happy James opened his eyes and peered up at me. I thought to read an expression of incredulous wonder in his face. Then a wry grin curved the humorous and sensitive mouth.

'You win, Farragut,' he said in an astonishingly clear voice.

His words were echoed. And with what bitterness! Dorrie's grip was on my arm. She had made her own interpretation of the words which she had overheard. I hope never again to confront such an expression of grief and shattered trust.

'You promised me his life. And he is dying. You win! You've killed him.'

'Hush, child! Hush!' Honor tried to quiet her.

'You've killed him. You're his murderer. And what have you left me to live for? Nothing.'

Her hand went to her breast and, as she backed away, the fingers were clutching a tiny object which I could identify without seeing. Never have I felt such an agony of helplessness. I dared make no move. The poison would have been at her lips in an instant.

She stopped. Happy James's breath was fluttering. The anguish of that cry in the voice that he loved had rallied the last spark of life, and with that last spark he strove to restore the chance of happiness to her. His speech, faint though it was, was still clear.

'No, Miss Dolliver. It was the other crowd fixed me, not Farragut. He wins. But he played fair. You'll be safe with him.'

He smiled and sighed, and Honor, bending over,

closed his eyes. Dorrie buried her face on his shoulder. But her hand went out toward me gropingly.

I think of that last scene as little as I can. But when I do I like to remember that the last deed of Happy James's life was a testimony of generosity to an enemy and love for the one who loved him so loyally to the end.

Once again I am standing on that heaved-up parapet which overlooks the shell-crater of Columbus Circle. It is six months since the most desperate and cruel war of history ended. With the death of Happy James and the flight of Caleb Keeler, the rule of the Chain Gang collapsed. Judge Grayson Gerritt, miraculously rescued from a living tomb after a whole reach of Fifth Avenue buildings had fallen in like toppling dominoes, is President of the United States — what there is left of it. The toll of ruin is too long for me to tell here.

What a fearful price we have paid for our cynical tolerance of evil, bred of long years of ease, of heedless and licentious prosperity, of that individual laxity of fibre, that neglect of personal responsibility, that ignoring of the eternal and immutable laws of God, bound to poison us, body and soul, in the inevitable end! Shall we ever recover?

I gaze down into the chasm, only a few short months ago a pit of death and chaos. Small figures move busily about in valiant toil, digging, shoring, repairing, replacing the structure of this tiny corner of the world. A symbol of the indomitable spirit, still vital

in the Nation's heart. What man has destroyed, man can restore.

Is that the lesson of this purposeful endeavor? What of the millions of lives blotted out in terror and anguish? Is anything worth that price? Perhaps, if one could be sure that after this hideous example, war would never again rear its head. For, in spite of all, the Nation still persists, sobered, chastened, purged, and once more united.

A touch on my arm. 'I, also, am among those present, you know,' I am reminded, in rebuke of my reverie.

There are few antidotes to depression as effective as Dorrie. I force myself back to the one overwhelmingly dear reality of life.

'This,' I tell her, 'is where your husband lost his nerve and his mind and had them shell-shocked back into him.'

'You weren't my husband. I wouldn't have owned a husband so dumb as to believe that the world had gone to smash.'

'My world had. I never expected to see you again.'

'That's better.' The hand went to my shoulder. 'And still not too good. Men have no sense' — this very loftily. Then, with the sublime and confident egotism of love:

'How could the world go to smash before you and I had found each other again!'

THE END