discover me either to him or to the neighbours, there was not much choice; but I could not bring myself to do more than edge a few paces nearer the window. There I stuck fast, and with death in my heart witnessed the relentless approach of dawn.

There was a lemon light in the Eastern sky when, very distinctly, I heard a step within the room, and thereon the hollow slam of the door. At last! I squirmed my way along the gutter and laid my hand upon the window. I had to watch my feet, and it was not until I had steadied myself on the window-frame that I ventured to glance into the room.

What I saw there seemed to turn my blood to ice.

CHAPTER XXX

"HEUTE MIR, MORGEN DIR"

With his hands raised above his head and his back to the door, Nigel Druce confronted me. In the foreground, between him, as he faced the window where I precariously balanced myself—it looked straight along the room to the door—and me, Grundt's vast back bulked enormous. The attic was mysterious with the russet shades of dawn, though in the corners the darkness yet lurked, and in the leaden half-light I could clearly distinguish every detail of the two motionless figures.

Druce was smiling; but his eyes were wary. He did not see me, for he was watching Grundt and the great hairy paw, held level with the waist, which I knew must be grasping a pistol, though from where I was I could not see it. Thus they stood in silence, eyeing one another, whilst I watched them fascinated.

The half-drawn curtain before the bed told me at a glance what had happened. Clubfoot had concealed him-
self behind it to wait, and on Druce's appearance had stepped out and surprised him. I must have appeared at the window almost at the moment of their meeting, for Druce was not a pace from the door, and Grundt was standing on a level with the alcove.

A sudden movement of the massive torso before me caused me to withdraw as much of my body as I could, leaving only my face peering round the window. Clubfoot was laughing silently: I could see the tremendous shoulders heaving.

"Lieber Herr," he remarked softly, "you must forgive my unseemly mirth. But really, as a student of human nature, I find the irony of the situation irresistible. I can understand your dismay in descrying my somewhat Simian traits and rotundity of line in place of the bewitching face and sylph-like form of the delightful lady who shares, as I perceive, not only your fortunes, but also . . ."—he waved his stick airily in the direction of the alcove, and I felt my cheeks grow hot. "Na . . ." he broke off. "But," he went on, "the expression on your face on seeing me was so unutterably comical. Pardon me, but my profession offers so few opportunities for a hearty laugh." And he chuckled wheezingly.

Druce's face darkened. The raillery died out in his eyes, and I could see his hands, as he held them above his head, trembling. "We'll leave the lady out of it, if you please," he said, in a suffocating voice.

"Ah, but we can't," Clubfoot retorted blandly. "Like all Englishmen, you are doubtless addicted to the pleasures of the chase. You can certainly appreciate the beauty of a right and left. . . ."

Druce shrugged his shoulders, but he did not speak. Only his eyes narrowed.

"An allegorical way of saying," the cripple went on with smooth mockery, "that your charming companion
is by this time in the bag. You I bring down with my right; her with my left. Pan, pan, and the thing is done! Kolossal, nicht wahr?" Still chuckling audibly, he moved to the table. "You don't know perhaps that she left a message for you?"

Druce's face lightened suddenly, and he made an instinctive movement forward. "Stay as you are, you dog," Clubfoot bellowed savagely, every vestige of jesting banished on the instant, "or this gun may go off before it has to." He picked up my note. "I will read you the billet-doux." And in strongly guttural English he read out my message. "Do you know where she has gone?" he asked softly.

"As you see," said Druce stiffly, "Miss Dunbar has not acquainted me with her plans."

"A rift within the lute, hein? Perhaps I can enlighten you. Would it surprise you to learn that the lady has sought the protection of the Stars and Stripes?"

For the briefest instant a look of utter panic appeared in Druce's face. Prompt as he was to regain control, he was not quick enough for Clubfoot. "Schau, schau," was Grundt's comment, "old Clubfoot is not often out in his guesses. I thought you'd read the newspaper wherever you were. So you noticed my little paragraph announcing Herr Transome's return to Berlin, eh? And the lady flew straight off to her friends." He gurgled. "Na, one of my young men will have to do the honours in the Herr Botschaftsrat's place. Herr Transome has taken his wife to America, you see! But Miss Dunbar will be most welcome at the Viktoria-Strasse. It's dull work watching a house; and my people have been there for the past week...."

At that moment Druce caught sight of me. He had raised his head and was gazing rather miserably past Clubfoot out of the window. His expression did not alter; he showed not the slightest sign of recognition; and
presently his eyes turned to Grundt once more. But in that instant communication was established between us, and I was conscious of the strong sense of confidence his presence always gave me.

Now Druce was listening to Clubfoot again. "The game's up, lieber Herr," the German was saying. "You know what I want. Hand it over!"

Druce smiled. "Your guesses aren't always so good after all, Herr Doktor. You may not believe me, but I assure you that I have nothing that can possess the smallest interest for you..."

"So?" The ejaculation rang through the garret like a pistol shot. "You'd lie to me, would you, you gaolbird? We'll see about that, you gallows-fruit!" The heavy boot clumped on the boards, as with clumsy agility the baboon-like figure scrambled forward. "The report, you scum," the great German squealed, "or I'll spatter your brains over the door behind you?" He slowly jerked up the pistol. He had halted three paces from Druce.

There was an instant's tense silence, then Druce said: "Oh, all right, you shall have it." I realised his purpose: it was to draw Clubfoot away from the window.

"Where is it?" Clubfoot demanded.

"In the inside pocket of my coat..."

"Turn about and face the wall. And remember, at the slightest attempt to lower your hands, I blow the back of your head off. Vorwärts!"

Druce turned about. Grundt tucked his stick under his arm and his left hand shot forward. His long fingers fastened themselves in the collar of Druce's coat and, with a violent wrench, tore it away. His eyes never left his victim as his fingers explored the jacket pockets. Then the coat dropped to the floor and I saw the blue envelope in Clubfoot's hand.

He raised it to his mouth, and with his teeth ripped the
envelope across. He shook out a folded sheet of folio paper and, dexterously catching it in his fingers while the envelope fell to the floor, spread it out, always with the one hand, glanced at it and grunted. He thrust the document in his pocket and called out to Druce: "You can turn round again."

Druce, in his shirt-sleeves, obeyed. His face was impassive; but there was something about him, perhaps merely the way he held up his head, which told me he had not lost all hope.

"A chancy business, this job of ours, Herr Kollege," Clubfoot remarked amiably: his gust of rage seemed to have blown itself out. "You know our German proverb: 'Heute mir, morgen Dir'—my turn to-day, yours to-morrow. I can't help feeling sorry about you. You've got remarkable aptitude for the profession, quite remarkable, jawohl, and, had circumstances been different, I might have been able to make you an offer which would have interested you. But in this affair, so very delicate, involving, as you will have probably realised, one of His Majesty's immediate entourage, it is quite out of the question that, on the losing side, there should be any survivors..."

Every word he spoke in his deep, resonant bass came to me distinctly. I was cold with horror.

"A pistol shot will rouse the house," said Druce evenly. "I suppose you've thought of that? You'll hardly want a scandal, will you, if discretion is so important?"

"There's been one suicide here already," Grundt rejoined. "A second won't be unduly remarked. Gott ja, every week some poor devil in this city shoots a bullet into his head. And a down-and-out actor—that's your present cover, I think?—will never be missed..."

* * * * * *

It was abundantly clear to me now that this savage
meant murder. Only I could do something! Between us we would have to get possession of that pistol. But how? Grundt was at the far end of the room from me. Were I to burst blindly in upon him, I knew he would not scruple to shoot down his prisoner before turning to face me. What plan could I most usefully adopt?

And then, as though he could read my thoughts, Druce supplied the answer to my question. "Your German proverb 's a good one," he said to Clubfoot, in rather a loud voice. "But there 's an English one you should know, too. We have a saying, 'While there 's life, there 's hope!' And let me tell you another one, ' There 's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip!' which applies rather neatly to this work of ours which, as you remark, is apt to be chancy. I 've been in tight corners before, and somehow I 've never felt absolutely certain that my number was up. Why, even while we 're talking here, I have a feeling that anything might happen to avert the fate you have in store for me, even if it were an angel from Heaven that came flying in through that window behind you with a terrific crash of glass. . . ."

He had given me my cue. I was to distract Clubfoot's attention. Without hesitation, I drove my knee into the window-pane and, with the glass tinkling and clattering all about me, hurled myself into the room. I was watching Grundt, and I perceived how he started at that resounding crash and, for the merest fraction of a second, deflected his gaze from the man before him. In that instant Druce sprang.

I saw the colossus rock and sway under the shock of that terrific impact. I waited for the shot; but no shot came. Above their heads, as they were locked together, Grundt's right arm pointed straight upward at the ceiling, with Druce's lean hand clutching at the pistol grasped in the hairy paw. As I gathered myself up from the floor I
heard Clubfoot grunt stertorously as, with a supreme effort of muscle, he forced that ponderous arm downwards to level his weapon at Druce’s head. But in the same moment he seemed to lose his balance, or else his crippled foot failed him, and he toppled over backwards with Druce still fastened to him like a tiger to its prey. He landed on the boards with a thud that shook the house, his head striking the leg of the table with sickening violence. Druce was on his feet by the time I reached him, the pistol in his hand. He was breathing rather hard; but the laughter danced again in his eyes. “Oh, well done, partner!” he murmured.

Behind him on the floor the huge mass lay limp and still. “Is he... is he dead?” I said. Druce shook his head and stepped aside.

The body sprawling on its back was like the carcase of some giant gorilla flung down by the hunters. The eyes were closed, the lids yellowish and pursy, and the face, with its prodigious bony development and its pads of hair on the cheeks, was scarcely human. The bulbous lips were blown out rhythmically to the labouring heaving of that mighty thorax. The head, with its greyish, shaven scalp, reposed in a dark and sticky pool.

Suddenly I felt my senses slipping. The floor seemed to tilt. I must have uttered some sound, for Druce, who had dropped to his knees beside the prone figure, looked up in alarm. The next thing I knew his arms were about me: his cheek brushed mine: and, as though out of the far distance, I heard his voice: “Oh, my dearest dear...”

I did not faint. But I clung to him as the room swayed about me, caring nothing that the whole world should slide away from under my feet now that he had come back to me. He held me very close, and I yielded myself to the comforting protection of his arms. In happy surrender I listened to the voice I thought I might never hear again.
"Oh, my dear," he said, "everything's all right. The car is waiting for us, and we can make our way back to England together. When I came in and found you gone, and that savage in your place, I didn't care what became of me, for I thought I'd lost you. But now that I've found you again, you've given me something to live for. Olivia, dearest, you're quite safe with me. I'm going to take you home to England. Won't you speak to me?"

I opened my eyes. The floor was steady once more. "I've been so frightened," I said, in a voice that sounded in my ears like some one else's. "I thought I'd lost you, too; I never meant us to part like that. But I was angry, and when I'm angry I say and do horrid, stupid things. Can you ever forgive me... Nigel?"

His blue eyes were gazing into mine. I tried to turn my head aside to hide the tears that were very near the surface; but he held me fast. Suddenly his head dropped upon my breast, and he clung desperately to me, even as I, a moment back, had clung to him. "Olivia..." he murmured brokenly. I bent and laid my lips softly upon his raven hair.

"Nothing matters now," I told him.

At that he raised his head and fell back a pace, staring at me in wonder. For a brief instant we faced one another in the rosy flush of sunrise which transfigured that shabby room. And then I was in his arms again.

CHAPTER XXXI

IN WHICH WE PART FROM CLUBFOOT AND EMBARK ON A JOURNEY

The rapture of that moment—a, how often in my present loneliness my thoughts fly back to it!—was speedily ended. There was a movement on the floor. Quick as