



# The WOMAN

A Novel by **Albert Payson Terhune**

Founded on **William C. de Mille's Play**  
Illustrated with Photos from the Play  
and Drawings by V.L. Barnes

## SYNOPSIS.

Congressman Standish and the woman, believing themselves in love, spend a trial week as man and wife in a hotel in northern New York under assumed names. The woman awakens to the fact that she does not love Standish and calls their engagement off. Standish, protesting undying devotion, Wanda Kelly, telephone girl at the Hotel Keswick, Washington, is loved by Tom Blake, son of the political boss of the house. He proposes marriage and is refused. She gives as one of her reasons her determination to get revenge on Jim Blake for ruining her father, Congressman Frank E. Kelly. Congressman Standish, turned insurgent, is fighting the Mullins bill, a measure in the interests of the railroads. The Mullins is seeking means to discredit Standish in the hope of pushing the bill through. Robertson, son-in-law of Jim Blake, and the latter's candidate for speaker of the house, tries to win Standish over, and failing, threatens to dig into his past. Jim Blake finds out about the episode of five years back at the northern New York hotel. He secures all the facts except the name of the woman and proposes to use the story as a club to force Standish to allow the Mullins bill to pass. Tom Blake and his father have a family row over the father's political theories. Jim Blake lays a trap to secure the name of the woman. He tells Miss Kelly that he is going to have a talk with Standish, and that as his conclusion the latter will call up a number on the telephone to warn the woman. He offers Miss Kelly \$100 for that number. At the conclusion of the interview with Blake, Standish gets a New York wire and calls Plaza 1001. A few minutes later Robertson tells Miss Kelly to call Plaza 1001 and get his wife or one of the servants on the phone. Miss Kelly refuses to give Jim Blake the number called by Standish. Blake has a story of the Standish episode prepared ready to send out as soon as the woman's name is learned. Tom Blake tells his father of his love for Wanda Kelly, and a family row ensues. Blake's daughter Grace arrives with her husband, Governor Robertson. Miss Kelly calls on Grace to warn her that her good name is threatened by impending exposure of Standish and is insulted for her pains. Grace appeals to Standish to give up the fight in order to protect her name. He refuses. Grace sends for Miss Kelly, apologizes for her rudeness and begs Wanda's assistance. Wanda declares she will never betray the woman.

## CHAPTER XV.

### A Wasted Plea.

Grace started guiltily at her husband's troubled question. He took her face between his hands and raised it to the light.

"You're ill!" he exclaimed in quick dread. "You look actually ghastly. Shall I send for a doctor?"

"What nonsense!" she laughed. "I'm all right. Just a little tired. A good night's sleep will put me on my feet again."

"I've buried myself so deep in politics," she frowned self-accusingly, "that I hadn't sense enough to remember that you might be worn out and might want to go to bed. But I didn't notice that you looked badly at the station. It wasn't till just now when the light happened to strike your face—Oh, but I'm glad to see you here again, sweetheart!"

"Really?" she asked almost timidly; drinking in her husband's words as a condemned man might gaze on his last sunset.

"Glad?" he cried. "Indeed I am. I'm afraid I'll never get past the honeymoon stage. You don't want me to, do you?"

"I wonder," she faltered, "—if you'd never met me—if you'd—"

"I'd never have known what I missed. That's where nature is kind. People who miss the real love never know. We only know when we've found it."

"But," she pursued, "when people find out too late—afterward—That's the bitterest thing in life. I should think. It isn't easy to judge people—women, especially—who find out too late—and who try then to get their birthright of happiness in spite of everything."

"Such people have lost their birthright," he answered. "They've sold it for a mess of pottage. That's one of the problems of the ages, Grace. And man has made laws to govern it. Laws that are wise and—"

"And often bitterly cruel."

"Laws are for the many. Not for the few. And the few must obey them for the good of the many. But I didn't give the rest of the crowd the slip. Just to bore you by discussing ethics. Was it foolish of me to run away, simply to have a few extra minutes with you? I've been fighting so hard—"

"And fighting fairly, too, I know. Dear, you'd never take an unfair advantage of—"

"Politics," answered Mark, "is war. And war is the science of finding the weakest point in your enemy's armor and hammering away at it till he yields. For instance, we've just found the weakest sort of spot in Standish's armor and—"

"You have? What is it?"

"There are only two weak spots in most men's armor. One is money crookedness. The other is women. In Standish's case it was a woman. An affair he got tangled up in five years ago."

"And you'll stoop to use such a weapon as that?" she cried indignantly.

"Why not? He'd use the same sort of weapon against us, fast enough; if he had it."

"But that isn't fair fighting, Mark. It's disgusting scandal."

"That's his lookout, not ours. If he's chanced to know something damaging in my private life, he'd use it in a minute."

"But if I asked you—if I begged you—"

"Don't ask me, dear. This is one of the things you don't understand. You'll have to leave it to me."

"Perhaps," she retorted desperately, "I may understand it far better than you do. You say there's a woman concerned in it. This scandal will pillory her and—"

"That type of woman belongs in the pillory."

"You are cruel!" she cried. "You yourself admit that there is a chance the woman may have repented. Are you going to refuse her the benefit of that chance?"

"The chance is too small to be considered. Don't let's talk of it. You can't—"

"Then," she continued, unheeding, "There's something else you don't consider. She may have married. She may be the wife of some honorable man who loves her and thinks she is perfect. All his heart and all his ideals may be bound up in her. Are you going to ruin his life, too?"

"Dear," sneered Mark, "the sort of fool who marries women of that kind (like the man who teaches his wife to be a 'dead game sport') deserves what he gets. And generally he gets it. Though, in both cases, he doesn't always find it out. Don't waste sympathy on him. If he married her he probably knew what she was. If he didn't know, it's time he learned. No sane man should want to live in a fool's paradise."

"But her family! Her parents? Her brothers or sisters? Surely they aren't to blame. And they will be disgraced, too."

"Such things are rather apt to run in families. Cankered flowers don't grow from clean roots. You're wasting a lot of sympathy over a woman and a man who are unworthy to speak your dear name. There are your father and the rest, getting out of the elevator now. Go to bed, dear girl, and try to get a good rest. Don't sit up for me. I'll probably be up all night on this Standish affair. Good night, sweetheart."

As he bent to kiss her, her arms clung to his neck like a frightened child's. She tried to speak, faltered, and hurried from the room.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### Sixty Seconds Leeway.

In they trooped, Jim Blake at their head—Van Dyke, Neligan, Gregg, and (sulkily bringing up the rear) Tom.

Grace had quitted the library at her husband's order. Now, starkly unashamed of the eavesdropper's role, she was standing tense, expectant, her ear to the closed door leading to the inner rooms. Through the thin panel she could hear every syllable from the library. Her own name was the first word she caught.

"Grace turned in?" Jim Blake was asking; and Robertson replied:

"Yes. She's all tired out. We can talk freely here. No one will inter-

rupt. Sit down. The cigars are over there. And here's the Scotch."

"Has Standish been around yet?" queried Van Dyke.

"Oh, he'll be here all right," vouchsafed Blake, before Mark could answer. "He knows we've got him in a hole. He'll—"

"But have we?" argued Van Dyke. "As far as I can see, it's still the other way around."

"It's bad enough to be delayed by anything," fumed Mark. "But it's ten times worse when we're blocked by a damned little—by the person who got this information," he corrected himself, catching a warning glint from Blake's half-shut eyes.

"Whatever the price is," suggested Gregg. "I say pay it! Pay it and save time."

"No," contradicted Blake, his glance shifting as if by accident to Tom. "Her—the price is too high."

"Too high?" snorted Neligan on whom the undercurrent of Blake's refusal was entirely lost. "It's the first time we've ever economized."

Before Blake could reply the buzzer sounded.

"There's Standish, now," said Jim. Let him in, Neligan. Take the lead from me, all of you. And don't disgrace me by acting like wild asses of the desert."

Neligan, in obedience to his chief, had opened the outer door. Standish, after a quick and seemingly indifferent look that itemized the room's occupants, walked forward. Neligan carefully closed the door behind him.

The men nodded stiffly, uncomfortably, in response to the visitor's slight bow.

"Good evening, gentlemen," said Standish pleasantly. "This setting of the stages seems to suggest Daniel in the lions' den. I hope none of you has made the error of casting me for the role of Daniel."

Neligan's lips flew apart with the force of a retort that leaped to them. But the words were never formulated. For Blake, beaming on the newcomer like a father upon his dearest loved son, exclaimed affectionately:

"Why, how are you, my boy? How are you? Take a chair. Neligan, get him a—"

"Thanks," declined Standish. "I can talk better on my feet."

"Oh!" deprecated Blake, in pathetic disappointment. "You've come to talk? I was hoping you had come to—"

"To lie down?" supplemented Standish.

"Well," answered Blake oracularly, "the man who lies down can get up again. But the man who is knocked down, is apt to take the count."

"The question is this, Mr. Standish," broke in Mark, impatiently at his father-in-law's slower method of reaching the point. "Will you support us, or will you not?"

"I will not," returned Standish.

"Or at least resign your leadership?"

"No. I thought we had settled all that."

"Then," asked Van Dyke, "you are prepared to take the consequences, Mr. Standish?"

"If there are consequences—yes."

"Oh, there'll be consequences, all right," Blake assured him. "Hell's full of 'consequences.' So you won't even protect the woman?"

"You haven't found her yet."

"No?" smiled Blake. "Son, I told you there was a trap. Well, it caught her. And we'll have her name in half an hour at most. Probably sooner. If you think that's a bluff, you're welcome to. But you've only a half-hour to look on thinking it."

"Look here, gentlemen," said Standish, turning to the others. "All this does not interest me in the least. I came here tonight for just one reason—to appeal to your sense of justice."

A ripple of derision from his hearers stirred his slow voice to slightly faster measure.

"You can't beat me," he went on. "And you know it as well as I do. I am secure. But, for the sake of others, I ask you not to make political capital out of something in my private life."

Gregg's loose mouth parted in a grin. Neligan laughed aloud. But Mark Robertson could see no humor in the situation.

"You're wrong, Standish," he declared. "This scandal will beat you."

"Let us suppose, for argument's sake, that it would," agreed Standish. "Can't I appeal to your honor? Won't you fight fairly?"

"We'll publish the truth," retorted Mark. "If that's unfair."

"It is unfair. If not to me, then to the woman."

"It is too late to go into that matter now, Mr. Standish. Your presence here tonight is, by itself, strong proof against you; if further proof were needed."

Standish made a gesture of weary impatience.

"Proof?" he echoed. "I don't deny the story. You wouldn't dare use it if you couldn't prove it. But, gentlemen, there comes a time—even in politics—when we've got to be men first and politicians afterward."

"Then," suggested Blake, "be a man. Give up the fight."

"No," replied Standish, "I won't be blackmailed. The affair was over and done with before I asked the people to accept me as their leader. Long before. It has no bearing on my present fitness."

"That's your misfortune," sneered Mark. "The people have a right to know who represent them. In the newspaper articles we have prepared, there are no facts we cannot prove; your affair with the woman—your failure to carry out your pledge to marry her—"

"Then the story is written?" exclaimed Standish.

"It is in type," put in Van Dyke, "and waiting our word to send it out to the whole country."

"I see," mused Standish. "And I see how such a story will be handled in print. You'll use every trick of suggestion, every fact inferring a lie—"

"And," cried Mark, "it will beat you. It will beat you, man—and that's what we've been working for, for years."

"I'm not beaten yet," retorted Standish. "And I advise you, Governor Robertson, to be careful—"

"Oh, we shall be careful," returned Van Dyke. "The proprietor of the hotel is coming tonight. The hotel where Mr. and Mrs. Fowler were registered. We may not need him to identify her. But he'll be on hand in case we do. Take my word for it, Mr. Standish, you'll save a great deal of unnecessary trouble if you'll quietly step down and out."

"If I did," said Standish, "I would be politically dead. You know that."

"You're politically dead, anyway," insisted Mark. "If this story will beat you tonight it will beat you 20 years from today. Particularly if this woman proves to be—what shall we call it?—a trifle off color?"

"Robertson!"

"Ah! That hurts, does it? Then it's probably true. If the woman is the kind that—that would not do you credit, you can understand how much more effective it will be."

"You are wrong!" denied Standish. "She is of good family. She—"

"She may have been a good woman when you found her," said Mark. "But there must have been a bad streak in her, somewhere. You left her to sink as low as I expect to find her and—"

"Drop that, Mark!" burst out Tom Blake, jumping from his seat and confronting his brother-in-law. "Don't! I can't listen to it any longer. Standish is right. What you men are doing is vile. If you've got a scrap of manhood left in the whole bunch of you, you won't drag this woman into your dirty schemes. I—"

"Oh," drawled Blake with the air of a sleepy man bothered by a fly, "for the love of Mike, don't you butt in!"

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