

# PAID IN FULL

Novelized From Eugene Walter's Great Play



EUGENE WALTER, Author of "Paid In Full" and "The Easiest Way"

That "Paid In Full" is a story of absorbing interest has been proved by its phenomenal success in dramatic form. For two seasons there has been no diminution in the drawing power of this vital piece of realism. In its present form it is not less engrossing. The features which made it so powerful as a play are not less potent in the serial. It is the same keen exposition of human motives put into the simplest forms of expression. There is no waste of material, no attempt to moralize, no break in the continuity. The three men who are the central figures in the story stand out in admirable distinctness from the very first, and the one woman whose splendid rectitude illuminates it all lives from the moment of her appearance. Although it is certain to produce frequent thrills, the story is neither melodramatic nor sensational. Its power lies in its humanness.

He was all bad, eh?  
She hesitated, pondering the question as something so utterly beyond ordinary cogitation that it could not have presented itself to her and was not to be lightly decided.  
"I don't know what to think," she mused. "I've always loathed a thief and a liar. I know there's an awful lot of dishonesty—in business. Father always declared that a man to drink or gamble or dissipate might be weak, but that a man who stole or lied to injure people was vicious. Somehow I think that too."  
"Maybe you're right, but I wondered if you'd been in his wife's place you'd sort of forgiven the man and helped him get right."  
"Perhaps—I don't know," she replied doubtfully. "But I think if anything like that ever happened it would almost kill me."  
Her thoughts were diverted from the subject by the ringing of the telephone bell. She answered it.  
"Captain Williams calling," she said to Smith, then through the phone:  
"Ask the gentleman to come up, please."  
Jimmy, anxious and much troubled, regarded her thoughtfully.  
She turned from the telephone and advanced to him, holding out her hand. He took it hesitatingly and wonderingly.  
"Jimmy," she said earnestly, "I've never quite understood you before."  
"No?" he interrogated.  
"But after what you told me to-night, she went on, "I've had a little peek behind the curtains. You are a good man, Jimmy—a good man. That means everything."  
For the second time in his entire life—the first having been when he proposed to her—Smith displayed trepidation.  
"Now, Emma, be careful," he re-  
plied. "There ain't no celestial medals pinned on my coat signifying an angelic career, and don't you start tossing bouquets in my direction."  
The doorbell rang as he settled himself in his chair again.  
"Ah! There's the old sea dog," said Mrs. Brooks, hastening to let the captain in.  
"Good evening, Mrs. Brooks. Glad to see you."  
Captain Williams grasped her hand as his eyes wandered over the comfortable room, and he added:  
"Hello, Smith! Meet you every time I come here."  
"One of my hangouts," agreed the superintendent genially.  
"Sit down, captain," invited Emma, motioning him to a chair.  
"Thanks," he said. "Where's your husband?"  
"He's just gone out. He'll be back in a little while. Jimmy has been telling us about your eventful trip."  
"Eventful trip?"  
He echoed the words with a bewildered air.  
Smith pushed his chair back so that Mrs. Brooks could not see him without turning in his direction and, unobserved by her, motioned warning signals to his employer, who did not understand them.  
"Spinning a yarn about that little revolution down at Guatemala," he prompted.  
"Eh? Guatemala—oh, yes—the revolution—very bloody affair—very serious," replied Williams, who had suddenly realized that he was expected to confirm a story that Smith had found it expedient to relate to Mrs. Brooks.  
"Jimmy said there wasn't a shot fired," she told him.  
Smith, seeing that the captain understood, drew his chair forward.  
"Emma, don't you let the captain fill you full of yarns. He can lie faster than I can," he laughed.  
"No," protested Williams; "there ain't nothing can beat you Smith. Well, Mrs. Brooks, how have you been?"  
"Splendid. When did you get in?"  
"When did I get in? Let me see, Smith, when did I get in?"  
"You look as if you had just got," suggested the superintendent.  
"Today—yes. But what time? I should say at 10, maybe 11 o'clock."  
"That's probably why Joe hasn't seen you," observed Emma. "He's

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just taken mother and Beth as far as the theater. I don't know what keeps him. He should be back before this."  
"I guess he ain't run away," opined the captain, with a suspicion of grimace. "I'll wait."  
"You know, Emma, that's one of the best things the captain does," said Smith.  
"What?"  
"Waiting. When it comes to patience and persistence he's got most Indians beat a dozen city blocks."  
"Don't you mind what Smith says Mrs. Brooks," grinned the captain. "The years he's been working for me he never showed any special signs of hurry or nervousness. How's your husband?"  
"Fairly well. I think he seems a little worried over business."  
"That so? What's the matter?"  
"You see, in his new position he feels his responsibility."  
Williams looked surprised.  
"Has he any special new responsibility?" he asked, his eyes wandering inquiringly to Smith, who did some more warning signaling unobserved by their hostess.  
"Well, since you raised his salary, captain, and gave him his extra work naturally he's anxious to make good." Again prompted the superintendent.  
"Anxious to make good? Well, he'll have a chance, and soon at that."  
Mrs. Brooks rose, hand outstretched, and went to him, with a happy, grateful smile.  
"Now that it's out I want to thank you ever so much," she said.  
"Thank me?"  
"Yes, for Joe's raise and that six months' back pay."  
"He told you that?"  
"Sure he did," put in Smith.  
"He has forbidden me to speak of it to either you or Jimmy," Emma told him, "but since you have mentioned it first I can thank you, can't I?"  
He did not return a direct answer, but rubbed his chin dubiously as he said:  
"So I raised his pay, eh? And dated it back six months?"  
"Of course you did," asserted Smith with emphasis. "Don't let him fool you, Emma."  
"You don't know how happy it's made us all," went on Mrs. Brooks gratefully. "I feel like a new woman, and mother appreciates it."  
"Well, seems that I done all these things—"  
He stopped abruptly as the door opened and his eyes rested on Brooks. The latter's underjaw dropped, and he turned livid with fear at the unexpected presence of the captain. He was, in fact, so startled that he nearly collapsed.  
"Ca-captain Williams!" he stammered, advancing tremblingly toward him. "W-will you shake hands, captain?"  
"Sure," replied Williams in a firm voice. "How are you, Brooks?"  
"I—I'm all right, I guess."  
"You know, Joe, you told me not to thank the captain. But he brought it up—the raise and the money," said his wife, still full of the subject and her gratitude.  
"No, I did, Joe," corrected Smith. "You see, the captain feels—"  
Brooks turned upon them, snarling like a wolf at bay.  
"What are you trying to do—make fun of me? Don't you think that's it?"  
"Now, Brooks," interrupted the captain authoritatively, "you are nervous. Your wife has just been telling me—how she enjoys your new income."  
Mrs. Brooks, startled and alarmed, gazed at her husband.  
"Why, Joe, are you sick?" she demanded.  
"No, no! Maybe it's the heat," he replied weakly, passing his tongue over his dried lips.  
There was a moment of general embarrassment, during which Captain Williams took stock of the room.  
"You are fixed up mighty snug here, Mrs. Brooks," he commented, breaking the awkward silence.  
"Yes, it is pleasant," she answered, now seriously worried.  
Williams rose. "Well, I must go," he remarked.  
"Do you want me to go with you?" asked Joe.  
"No; tomorrow morning will do to see you. You know my lonely little quarters ain't more'n half a block from here, and I like to hang out there."  
"The captain," added Smith, "lives in a little south sea island nook moved into his flat. He keeps it so dirty that some say it's attractive."  
"That's what you get for being a bachelor," laughed Williams.  
He moved toward the door, and the others rose.  
"I'm glad to see you so happy, Mrs. Brooks," he observed, pausing and looking about him again.  
"Thank you," said she.  
"I never did know before what a little money meant to a woman."  
"Perhaps that's because you don't know women."  
"Oh, I know women—one kind, anyway. But Brooks is lucky in having a girl like you for a wife."  
"Emma, he's giving you a little south Pacific blarney," put in Jimmy.  
"Maybe I am and maybe I'm not,"



"Anxious to make good? Well, he'll have a chance."  
said the captain. "That," he continued emphatically, "is the only thing that if I had a girl like you I'd knuckle down and earn enough money to make you happy—eh, Brooks?"  
"I suppose that's all you'd do," assented that man without without kinking to please you, Mrs. Brooks, if you looked to me to make good for you."  
"Emma," declared Smith, with his quiet smile, "if you were single I'd suspect captain of getting a little soft."  
"But I'd earn the money," went on the captain, pursuing his train of thought. "That's the only way to get along. Well, I'll say good night, Mrs. Brooks."  
"Good night, captain. Thank you again."  
"Good night, Smith."  
"I may drop over later," remarked the superintendent by way of reply.  
"Wish you would," the captain assured him with some eagerness.  
"I'd like to smoke a pipe and talk awhile. Good night, Brooks."  
"Good night, sir."  
Brooks went forward and opened the door.  
"Try to get down to the office by 8 in the morning," recommended the captain, gazing at him with sinister contempt.  
"Yes, sir."  
"There'll be some gentlemen there who may be anxious to meet you."  
"I'll be there."  
"Didn't know but what you might oversleep now that you're so prosperous. Good night."  
Brooks shut the door and stood leaning against it, clutching the handle for support. The muscles of his face were twitching, and he gazed with frightened, haunted eyes from his wife to Smith.  
"Have you told her, Jimmy?" he demanded.  
Smith raised his hand in protest.  
"No, Joe; it ain't the right time yet, and—"  
"Why isn't it the right time? I'm trapped, and Williams—"  
"Joe, see here," he expostulated; "you can't talk."  
"What is it? What do you mean?" demanded Mrs. Brooks, very pale.  
Smith still sought to spare her, to keep the dreadful truth from her.  
"There's just been a little trouble, Emma," he said evasively. "Joe here is all worked up—excited."  
"I'll tell you what happened," cried her husband in a choking voice, staggering to the table. "You think I got a raise, I didn't. You think that man Williams gave me six months' back pay. He didn't. All this money you've been living on—all of it—I stole. I took it from the company! Williams trapped me. He wanted me to steal. Now he knows—now he knows, and I'm done for!"  
He fell into a chair and doubled forward, burying his face in his hands.  
For once Smith was at a loss what to say.  
Mrs. Brooks, paler than ever, stood rigid, as though turned to stone, staring at her husband.  
"You mean," she articulated in low, slow tones, "you mean that you—"  
"I'm a thief," he moaned brokenly without raising his head. "They know it. Detectives are downstairs watching—watching—tomorrow—tomorrow—I'll be in jail."  
Another long, awkward silence ensued. Smith ended it.  
"You see, Emma, Joe here ain't so much to blame. He—"  
"And you didn't let me know?"  
There was cold reproach in her voice and in her gaze.  
"It wasn't time," explained Jimmy uneasily. "There's a chance things can be squared—there's still a chance."  
"Still, you didn't let me know?"  
"The thing to do is to sit down quietly and talk this over. To begin with—"  
"No, Jimmy. Please go home. I—I want to be with Joe—alone."  
Smith took up his hat reluctantly and prepared to depart.  
"Just as you say, Emma—just as you say," he said. "I'll do all I can to-night and let you know. Maybe it'll be all right."  
"I know, Jimmy. Good night."  
"Good night."

foundation of peculation. Oh, the horror! Oh, the shame of it! On the very morrow the name she bore would be held up to disgrace and derision. He would be cast into prison. The misery of their struggles with poverty was as nothing compared with that of their sudden downfall.  
Numbbed though her heart was with the shock, shrunk by the terror of their ghastly position, it was yet not impervious to pity, and the hopeless wretchedness of her husband inspired it. She thought of how he had lavished his stealings upon her, how he appeared to be moved by the one desire to make her comfortable and happy.  
She went to him and put her hand on his head, smoothing his hair.  
"Oh, Joe! Oh, my boy!" she said brokenly. "How could you do it? Didn't you know sooner or later you'd be found out? Now I know why you've been interested in the races—you've been betting on the horses."  
"I—I wanted to get the money back," he sobbed.  
"But didn't you know you couldn't? Oh, why didn't you leave things as they were—the fat, the struggles, and all that? Why did you bring me here and show me all this—this happiness—with money that you stole?"  
His sobbing ceased, and he pushed her away and rose.  
"That's right. You call me a thief! If there was one person in the world I thought I could turn to it's you, and you turn on me."  
"Joe, you mustn't say that. I haven't turned on you. Only I can't help but think—"  
"What? That man Williams drove me to taking money?"  
"Drove you?"  
"Yes, he did. He went away so I could take it. I expected you to stand by me. Do you know the hole I'm in?"  
There are three central office men downstairs watching. If I make a move I'll be nabbed. It's all very well for you to stop and preach—you always were so d—d saintly—but what of me? That's the question—what of me?"  
He thumped his breast violently.  
She drew back, hurt by his reproaches.  
"If I thought you were yourself I'd never forgive you for saying that to me," she declared.  
"I'm not asking your forgiveness, not your mother's, nor your sister's. What I want now is somebody to help me out. I don't want to go to jail. It would kill me."  
"Do you think I want you to go to jail? Do you think I want the disgrace?"  
"The disgrace—that's it! I knew that would come sooner or later, but I didn't think it would come from you. There's always somebody to hammer that into a fellow when he's down."  
"I'm not trying to hammer anything into you. What I want to know is what can be done, what are we going to do?"  
"I don't know—unless—"  
"Unless we can get the money to pay back. There's Jimmy."  
"That won't do. It's too much. He hasn't got it. Besides, it's too late. Williams means business. He won't take the money. He's not that kind."  
"Oh, if I only knew a way—if I could only help!"  
She wrung her hands and sank hopelessly into a chair by the table.  
Brooks paced the room restlessly, like a wild animal in a cage. Now and then he shot a peculiar, furtive glance in the direction of his wife. Finally he sat opposite to her, leaned toward her on the table and said in a low, intense voice:  
"If anything is to be done it's got to be done tonight, Emma. Williams is the only man. You can square it with him."  
"I can?"  
"Yes, and so one but you."  
"What can I do?"  
He looked at her meaningly.  
"He likes you."  
Startled, she returned his gaze inquiringly.  
"Yes, he does," he went on. "He always did. Women are his weak point. He's been married years. That's why he hangs around. I've seen it and heard what he's thought about what he'd do for a girl like you. He meant that, Emma. He'll do anything you ask him if—if you go to him right."  
Beginning to understand what he wanted of her, she rose slowly, incredulous horror in her eyes. He rose also and went toward her.  
"He's home now," he urged eagerly.  
"You can go. No one will know but just Williams, you and me. And you can do more than that—you can make him give us money, more money, to keep on living like this, and there won't be any risk."  
She recoiled from him, consumed with rage and shame, her eyes blazing.  
"I hope I don't understand aright," the words came in quivering gasps. "You mean me to go to his apartment tonight to see him—and—"  
"No one will know the difference," he coaxed softly. "You can handle him all right. Besides, you know how far you can let a man go—all women know that."  
"Oh, I can't believe I'm debating it! You! A husband to ask a wife—"  
She stopped, pressing her cheeks between her clenched hands, appalled at his infamy.  
"Then you won't do it?" he cried angrily. "You won't come to the front? I suppose you don't think I ought to ask. Why shouldn't I? Who did I steal the money for? I did it because you made me!"  
"That's what!"  
"You know it's the truth. When I married you your father was to help me, and he died, and then you had to do your own work, and you whined and complained."  
"That's another lie!"  
"Oh, you never said so in so many

words, but I saw it—for four years around the house. I saw you sighing and moping because you didn't have enough to live on. Then there were that mother of yours and your sister—they never stopped. You tried to make yourself a martyr. Every moment of your life was a mute protest against our poverty—yes, it was, and you know it. Do you remember that night when you said you couldn't go to the theater because you didn't have clothes? That was the first time I took money. That's when I began."  
"You knew I wouldn't have gone if I had known."  
"But you did go—you kept on going, and I kept on stealing for you. God, how I've suffered for you, for the clothes on your back. Every night has been a nightmare. Now I'm going to jail, you know that. I'm going up there on the river for years because you won't do your part."  
"I can't do what you want."  
He became saturnally persuasive again.  
"Why can't you?" he urged. "Other women have for less reason—one to get control of a transcontinental railroad for her husband. I've risked everything for you. If you go there tonight I won't go to jail; I won't be hauled into court; no one will know but the three of us. No one will think the less of you. I've gone through to the limit for you; it's up to you to go through for me."  
"Then if you go to jail you mean that I've sent you there?"  
"Yes, and down in your heart you know you have."  
Every instinct of her pure womanhood, every fiber of her flesh, revolted at this cynical exhibition of his villainess. She contemplated him with loathing.  
"Now that I see you naked in all your nasty-meanness, your contemptible viciousness, I wonder how I ever made the mistake of thinking you even half a man," she said.  
This scathing denunciation made no impression on his hardened sense of honor and decency.  
"You can't dodge the responsibility with fine speeches," he replied, struggling his shoulders. "I've gone wrong for you. What are you going to do? Be square with me and take this chance—an easy chance—and you know you're safe."  
She did not answer, but stood there, her face set in its expression of abhorrence and indignation, deliberating as to the best course to pursue toward this unspeakable villain to whom she was bound and who watched her with anxious, cringing eyes.  
She addressed him finally in cold, harsh tones:  
"Whatever I may do or promise to do, I promise simply because you blame me."  
"Emma, I knew you'd—"  
"Don't make the mistake that I care for you. Whatever I felt for you, and I thought it was love, you've assassinated in the last ten minutes. But I don't want you to go to jail pointing a finger of accusation at me."  
"Then you'll be square—you'll help—you'll—"  
"You understand that if I bargain with Captain Williams for your freedom I make the bargain."  
"I know. I'll never ask."  
"It will be my business alone."  
"Yes, just yours."  
"Is he home?"  
"Yes, I think so. He said he was going there."  
"Telephone and ask him if he sees me—now—alone."  
He jumped to the instrument, but as his hand grasped the receiver he hesitated, and a flush suffused his white, drawn cheeks, brought there by the first true consciousness of the enormity of his crime. He looked around guiltily at his wife. She was standing rigid, her back toward him. He took down the receiver.  
"Seven-six-eight-four Bryant," he called.



CHAPTER XII.  
WHEN Jimmy Smith had told Emma and Joe that Captain Williams lived in a little south sea island nook moved into his flat and that it was dirty the description had done justice to the place in a general way. It was in a hotel not far from that in which the Brooks had so recently taken up their residence, and the living room was a curious combination of natural history museum and ship's cabin.