

Golden Dawn

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THE STORY

CHAPTER I.—Theodore Gatlin decided to adopt a baby in a final effort to solve his matrimonial troubles. But all his love for their foster daughter could not shelter her childhood from the heart of his wife, who had never wanted her. Their affairs ended in the divorce court but ten-year-old Penelope was given into the keeping of Mrs. Gatlin, except for two Sunday afternoons a month. On their first day together they set out joyfully to a baseball game. A ball hit into the bleachers struck Penelope on the nose and the neurotic Mrs. Gatlin removed her from the hospital to which her former husband had hurried her. Mrs. Gatlin spirited the child to Europe. Gatlin retired from business, willed Penelope all his money, and was about to begin a search for his daughter when a motor accident ended his life.

CHAPTER II.—Some ten years later, in San Francisco, Stephen Burt, a rising young psychiatrist, was presented by Dan McNamara, chief of police, with a new patient—Nance Belden, a girl whose terrible childhood had left her with a dual personality, for which her "saddle nose" was in part responsible. McNamara did not think she was a responsible criminal and obtained Burt's expert testimony in court. Even Lanny, the doctor's faithful office nurse, was won over to her cause despite Nance's hard-boiled exterior.

She found a comb and brush in Dan McNamara's bureau and combed and smoothed the dank, straggly black bob, and when that was done she rubbed long enough to implant a kiss on the white brow. "Poor lamb!" she murmured. "Nobody's poor but darling!"

The girl's eyelids flickered. "Is that you, Lanny?" the girl murmured faintly.

"Yes, dearie. And you're all right, so don't worry. Nobody's going to take you back to San Quentin."

"The cops chased us at the boat landing, Lanny. Are you sure we shook them off?"

"Of course you did—the big boob! Now, listen dearie, I'm going to tell you something, but don't let it disturb you. Take my word for it you're safe. Do you remember Dan McNamara, the chief of police?"

"Of course. Old Daniel's my boy friend."

"Well, you're in his bed. The cops were on your trail, dearie. They suspected you might come to my house, so Dan tipped me off they were coming and to beat it with you out to his house."

Terror shone in the girl's dark eyes. "I'd never trust a cop that far," she wailed. "Oh, Lanny, you've let him make a sucker out of you."

She began to weep hysterically. "If you don't stop that," Lanny promised, "I'll bat you over the head with this skillet," and she picked that homely utensil up and shook it at Nance. "Dan McNamara's your friend."

"Yes, and the chief of police, too, Lanny, I'll die if they take me back. They'll put me in the dungeon—I'm afraid of the dark."

"Shut up. You're not afraid of anything. You've got your little red badge of courage, you scaramouch! You afraid? My foot! Didn't you crash the gate and swim for that speedboat under fire?"

"Machine-gun fire, at that," Dan McNamara supplemented, from the doorway. "They opened on her and the boat from the towers." He came to the side of the bed and grinned down at the terrified girl. "Don't you worry, Nance. You're safe. I'm a cop, but I'm not without some sporting blood—you getaway earns three rousing cheers from old Dan McNamara." His big hand strayed over her face.

"You're a good old hunk of cheese," she assured him.

She turned her head toward Lanny. "Am I going to die, Lanny?" she asked.

"Not unless I kill you—which I'm liable to do if you don't buck up and believe what I tell you. You've been shot, but it doesn't amount to much. You'll be all right in a week or two."

"Then I'll be good, Lanny." The tired eyes closed and while Lanny stood by, wondering what to say next, Nance sank into a sleep of profound exhaustion.

"Let her alone until Stevie comes," Lanny suggested. "The wound has stopped bleeding. Come out into the living room and if you're as crooked a cop as you ought to be you've got liquor in the house, and I've got to have a drink of it." Her middle-aged face was very serious.

"Those cops at your house will stick around, Lanny, and when you return they'll want to know where you've been. What are you going to tell them?"

"Tell them nothing. Let those two cops sit in their car in front of my house all night and watch it. What do I care? At least they'll keep burglars away. And when finally they do round me up and walk me down to central station to be questioned, you'll do the questioning, will you not?"

"Lanny," said Dan McNamara, "if you were a man and on the force



Terror Shone in the Girl's Dark Eyes.

I'd make you a detective sergeant. You're a bear-cat, that's what you are. But you smuggled that letter out of San Quentin for Nance and turned it over to Sapphire Susie!

"Maybe you didn't know it, but you gave Sapphire Susie a lift in your car from the main gate at San Quentin down to Greenbrae. The guard remembered seeing her hanging around the main gate as if she was waiting for somebody; later she got into a coupe with a middle-aged lady, who looked so respectable he took another look at the pass she had just surrendered to him and remembers that the name on the pass was yours. The pass entitled you to visit Nance Belden. Guards may not remember such incidents until something happens. Then they're fast on their feet, Lanny."

"And who, if you please, is Sapphire Susie?"

"She did a stretch in San Quentin for blackmail. She was discharged a week before you visited Nance, and before Susie left the Big House, Nance fixed it with her to lead a helping hand. Apparently Nance didn't want to confide the minute details of her plan of escape to Susie. Susie's a swell looker but a little bit dumb—she levied blackmail through the mail, understand, and signed her name, instead of hiring a smart slyster lawyer. So Nance decided to send her written instructions out by you, and Susie agreed to pick you up, pinch the let-

ter and deliver it."

"Dan, I assure you I wasn't in any plot to effect a prison delivery. If I'd thought for an instant I was doing anything wrong—why, Nance told me to read her letter and if I disapproved of its contents to destroy it. I didn't see any harm in that."

"You violated the rules of the prison and you could be punished for it by a term in the same prison."

"I'm a respectable woman—"

"That gets you nowhere. I was a respectable chief of police once—and now look at me. If your part in this leaks out you can only be punished—and you can't be convicted unless you talk in your sleep. If my part in this should leak out I'll be punished and disgraced and thrown out of the best job I ever had. However—" he raised his glass to her—"mud in your eye, Lanny."

"Happy days, Dan, you gorgeous softy."

The doorbell rang. Dan opened it and Doctor Burt stepped in. He paused in amazement at sight of Lanny, glass in hand; she motioned him with it down the hall. "First door at the end, Stevie. You'll find your patient there."

"That girl with the dissociated personality, Nance Belden, escaped from San Quentin late this afternoon, Chief," Stephen began, and handed the latter a newspaper. "Big story. First woman to escape from San Quentin." He gazed severely upon Lanny. "What are you doing here, Lanny?"

"All right to pay, Stevie dear, and no pitch hot. That Belden girl is here with a bullet hole in her shoulder; she's suffering from shock and submersion and chill and loss of blood and she's cold as a penguin's tail. I've given her a stiff noggin of Dan's terrible booze and a fortieth of a grain of strychnin and an alcohol rub. She's sleeping. Did you bring those hot-water bottles?"

"Yes," he said humbly, indicating a bag he carried. Lanny fell upon the bag, and retired to the kitchen to fill the hot-water bottles and tuck them in alongside her child patient. "Lucky if she doesn't develop pneumonia, Stevie."

Doctor Burt stood looking down at the sleeping Nance. "Out of the warden's arms and straight into yours. You guessed she'd call on Lanny, eh, Dan, you're an old fox."

"No, Doc, I'm not. A fox has brains."

"He's a lamb, Stevie, just a big ram lamb."

While Lanny was assisting Doctor Burt in dressing Nance Belden's wound, Dan McNamara sat in his plain little living room and read the story of her escape from San Quentin. It appeared that throughout all of Sunday afternoon two men, in a motorboat, had been anchored in the cove off San Quentin apparently fishing for striped bass, which abound at this particular point in San Francisco bay. There were other boats anchored there also—eight in all. The guard at the entrance to the women's quarters had observed them, until, about four-thirty p. m., just before locking-up time a guard in one of the lookout towers on the hill had telephoned him that a boat had approached close to the shore.

The guard had thereupon stepped out of his kiosk and around to the rear of it, which faced toward the beach, less than thirty feet distant. He had shouted at the men in the boat and warned them to be off, that they were not permitted to approach that close, that they were within the deadline. To this the men replied that they couldn't help it; that their motor had gone dead and that the tide had set them in; that they were trying to make repairs and would be off as soon as they could.

While the guard was in the rear of his station, engaged in this conversation, Nance Belden had approached the gate, kicked off her shoes and, digging her toes into the quarter-inch wire mesh of the sixteen-foot gate, had scrambled to the top with incredible rapidity. She was just climbing down the outside of the gate when the guard in the tower on the hill saw her and immediately telephoned to the guard

at the main gate; also to the guard arguing with the men in the motorboat. Upon hearing the telephone bell ringing in his station, that guard had walked back into it; at the same time, keeping the kiosk between her and the approaching guard, Nance Belden had dashed down to the beach and commenced swimming rapidly toward the motorboat, the motor of which instantly started, and the boat commenced edging in to pick her up.

When the guard in the kiosk, apprised of what was taking place, ran out with a rifle in his hand and shouted to Nance Belden to come back or he would shoot her, a machine-gun in the motorboat promptly came into action against him. He had not been hit, but a shower of bullets had splattered the ground around and in front of him and another burst had gone over his head and through the sentry box. The guard had fired once at the Belden woman and hit her, but immediately thereafter, fearful of being killed, he had thrown himself flat on the ground.

The guard in the watch-tower on the hill had then brought his machine-gun into action. His first burst had been short, and drew answering fire from the machine gunner in the boat. Although the range was four hundred yards, the first burst from the motorboat tore through the wooden watch-tower, which rather distracted the aim of the guard there; nevertheless, the latter stuck to his gun and continued to fire, splattering bullets around the swimming girl and into the boat.

The men in the boat did not hesitate, but came on through the hall of bullets; the escaping prisoner had in the meanwhile either sunk or dived; at any rate a widening tinge of red appeared on the water. She was down about thirty seconds, then her head emerged close to the boat, and she swam with one arm to the side of it; a man reached over and grasped her under both arms and jerked her into the boat, which instantly turned, put on full speed and raced away close past two other boats. Fearful of killing innocent people, the guard in the watch-tower held his fire until the escaping boat was in the clear; then he and the guard in another tower came into action again. But a target moving at a speed of forty-five miles an hour is not easily hit; the fire was either over or short and the boat did not stop. When it was out of range, it turned and in the rapidly fading light of the winter day, headed up into San Pablo bay, running close to the scath shore to avoid the chop of the waves in this shallow expanse of water. They ran without lights.

While the course they had taken would seem to indicate a desire to run up Carquinez straits to the Sacramento or the San Joaquin rivers, land and escape in a waiting automobile into central California, the warden realized that his quarry was not lacking in intelligence; that, fast as they fled, they would realize that the telephone is faster; that the roar of their motor must betray them a mile away. He had, therefore, taken the precaution to notify the chiefs of police of Pittsburg, Martinez, Sausalito, Richmond, Berkeley, Oakland and San Francisco, leaving to these the task of notifying intermediate points. The warden had a suspicion the fugitives would double back to San Francisco, particularly since the girl was wounded and must be hidden in order to receive medical attention.

"And here she is," Dan McNamara muttered. "Cripes, what a woman! Lord, how I love a woman with brains and courage. Just a little simple matter of taking pains and taking risks. She didn't go in to the dining hall for dinner with the other prisoners. Smart! Knew she couldn't make a fast swim on a full stomach. Smart enough to notice the warden's oversight to fill in with barbed wire topping that eighteen inch space at the top of his gate. Of course they figured they needn't bother with that, because no woman could climb a sixteen-foot wire mesh fence anyhow, and if she did she'd only drop down into the waiting arms of the guard, who is

never absent, night or day. But Nance Belden knew she could climb that fence barfoot; she knew she had thirty seconds to do it and a drop on the other side from the top of the gate. Her job was to induce the guard to turn his back—and her friends in the boat did that!

"She knew she'd been seen from the watch-tower on the hill and the guard at the gates notified by telephone; as he returned from the edge of the beach, around the south side of his kiosk, Nance slipped by him on the north side and was in the water as the guard took up the phone. Smart! She knew no guard would stick under machine-gun fire at fifty yards, merely to stop a woman convict escaping from prison. Smart! Sank and swam under water—and then the zigzag course between the boats of the other fishermen, after they picked her up. Fine psychology—she en-gineered it all—and I know she's a nut! And then straight to Lanny for medical attention—straight to the one human being she knew she could trust—no, I'll not send her back. And I don't particularly want to catch her friends, either. I'll say they're friends! Wish I had a couple of friends that'd come on through machine-gun fire for me!"

Stephen Burt came out of the bedroom and sat down and stared at the chief of police with grave interest. "Well, my good Javert," he said presently.

"Your good what?"

"I called you Javert. Don't you know who Javert was?"

Dan McNamara shook his head. "I never picked him up, Doc."

"You wouldn't. He was a character in 'Les Miserables,' a novel by Victor Hugo. He was a fly-cop in Paris, and he pursued an ex-convict named Jean Valjean for twenty years, because he believed the man was a crook. Once a crook, always a crook, was Javert's philosophy. And when he discovered at last he had the goods on Jean Valjean and it was his duty to arrest him, he discovered simultaneously that Jean



"I Never Picked Him Up, Doc."

Valjean was also a good and noble man, which proved extremely embarrassing to Javert."

"I understand how that could be, all right, Doc. What did Javert do then?"

"He climbed up on the railing of a bridge over the Seine, unplanned his shield, threw it into the river, and jumped in after it."

"He committed suicide in order to give his man the breaks."

"Exactly."

"Well," Dan McNamara decided after pondering this a half minute, "I wouldn't be boob enough to do that. He should have made a stool pigeon out of Jean Valjean and maybe he'd have gotten somewhere in his

(Continued next week.)