

SUNNY-SAN

By ONOTO WATANNA.

PROLOGUE

It was the night of the Festival of the Full Moon, but Hirata, the proprietor of the House of a Thousand Joys, was infuriated, for was not Madame Mary Smiles, the famous dancer, lying dead among her robes? At her feet knelt her child, crushed and hurt by a grief that nothing could assuage, and it was for the sake of her mother's honour that presently she stood a-tiptoe on the tight-rope, laughing at the sea of faces round her and throwing her kisses right and left. So charming was she that the Lord of Negato, amorous for this lovely child, tossed her a jewel and a handful of coin, which she cleverly caught on her fan but, acting under a sudden impish impulse, she suddenly threw them in her admirer's face and, jumping to the ground, vanished into the tea-house.

A party of English students visiting Japan had witnessed this scene and, learning that she was to be punished for her sight to the Japanese nobleman, they made a sudden raid on the tea-house and carried off the girl before Hirata's ash could fall a second time upon her shoulders.

These four students and their tutor then decided to adopt Sunny-san, the dancer's child, whose father was a white man. They formed a syndicate, and together raised sufficient money to provide for Sunny during her lifetime.

Soon a time came when the Englishmen had to return to their own country, and they regretfully departed, leaving Sunny in charge of a missionary. She begged them to take her with them, but the hardest moment came when she said good-bye to Jerry Hammond, who had been her faithful champion from the first. However the ship carrying the Englishmen sailed away, and left a sorrowful Sunny languishing in Nagasaki.

As time went on, Sunny's friends across the sea reached a period where they thought of her as a charming and amusing episode of an idyllic summer in Japan. One bleak March day, Jerry was surprised to learn, on the telephone, that Sunny-san was in London and waiting instructions from the Syndicate. He hastily collected her other friends, and while they were discussing the position Sunny entered. She had grown to be a charming young woman, and her friends, agreeably surprised, cannot do enough for her. Jerry cabled to the Professor to return from Canada to take charge of Sunny, but he was unable to do so, and she took up her abode in Jerry's flat.

Sunny has proposals from Monty, Bots, and Jinx, but refuses them all. Acting on the advice of Hatton, Jerry's valet, she decides to wait till Leap Year, and then ask Jerry to marry her. He learns then that Jerry is already engaged, but he goes home to break off his engagement, because he realizes that his love is Sunny. Two days later Jerry's mother and *fiancee* arrive and drive Sunny out of the flat while Hatton is in a drunken sleep, and Jerry returns to find her gone.

CHAPTER XIII

HE shot the questions at her frantically. Mrs. Hammond began to whimper, dabbing at her face with her handkerchief.

"For Heaven's sake answer me. What have you done with Sunny?"

"Jerry, how can I tell you? Jerry—Miss Falcon—er, and I—we—we thought it was for your good. I didn't realise that you cared so much about her, and I—and we— Oh-h-h"—she broke down crying uncontrolledly—"we have driven that poor little girl out—into the streets."

"You what? What is that you say?"

He stared at his mother with a look almost of loathing.

"Jerry, I thought—we thought her bad and we—"

"Bad! Sunny! Bad! She didn't know what the word meant. My God!"

He leaped up the stairs, calling the girl's name aloud, as if to satisfy himself that his mother's tale must surely be false, but her empty room told its own tale, and halfway across the gallery he came upon Hatton. He kicked the valet into wakefulness, and the latter raised up, stuttering and blubbing, and extending with shaking hand the letter Sunny had left. The words leaped up at him and smote him to the soul. He did not see his mother. He did not hear her cries, imploring him not to go out like that. Blindly, his heart on fire, Jerry Hammond dashed out from his studio, and plunged into the darkening street, to begin his search for the lost Sunny, who had disappeared into that cesspool that is London.

CHAPTER XIV

Despite all that money and influence could do to aid in the search of the missing

girl, no trace of Sunny had been found since the day she passed through the door of the studio apartment and disappeared into the seething throngs outside.

Every policeman, every private detective in the country, aided in that search, keen to earn the enormous rewards offered by her friends. Jerry's entire fortune was at the disposal of Scotland Yard. Jinx had instructed them to "go the limit" as far as he was concerned. Bobs, his newspaper instinct keyed up to the highest tension, saw in every clue a promise of a solution, and "covered" the disappearance day and night. Young Monty, changed from the cheeriest of medical students to the most pessimistic and gloomy, developed a weird passion for the morgue, and spent hours hovering about that ghastly part of the hospital.

The four young men met each night at Jerry's studio and cast up their barren results. Jinx unashamedly and even noisily wept, the big tears splashing down his no longer ruddy cheeks. Jinx had honestly loved Sunny, and her loss was the first serious grief of his life.

Monty hugged his head and ruminated over the darkest possibilities. He had suggested to the police that they drag certain parts of the Thames, and was indignant when they pointed out the impracticability of such a thing. In the spring the river was swollen to its highest, and flowing along at a great speed, it would have been impossible to find what Monty suggested.

Jerry, of all her friends, had himself the least under command. He was still nearly crazed by the catastrophe, unable to sleep or rest, taking little or no nourishment, frantically going from place to place. In his studio he could not keep still an instant, but paced up and down, as if half demented.

Despite the fact that her son seemed scarcely conscious of her existence and practically ignored her, Jerry's mother continued to remain in the flat, and away from the somewhat overpowering influence of his father, she was seeing a new light. Many a tear she dropped upon Jerry's sketch-books, and she suffered the pang of one who had had the opportunity to help one she loved, and had withheld that

sorely needed sympathy. For the first time, too, Jerry's mother realised his right to choose his own love. In their anxiety to choose for their son a suitable wife they had overlooked his own wishes in the matter. Now Mrs. Hammond became poignantly aware of his deep love for this strange girl from Japan. She began to feel an unconscious tenderness towards the absent Sunny, and gradually she became acquainted with the girl's nature through the medium of the left behind treasures and friends. Sunny's little mongrel dog, the canaries, the goldfish, the nailed-up hole where she had fed the mice, her friend the "caretaker gentleman," the liftboy, the butcher gentleman, the policeman on the beat who had never failed to return Sunny's smiling greeting with a cheery "Top o' the morning to yourself, miss," Hatton—all these revealed more plainly than words could have told that hers was a sensitive and rare nature. In Hatton's case Mrs. Hammond found a problem upon her hands. The unfortunate valet blamed himself bitterly for Sunny's going. He claimed that he had given his solemn word of honour to Sunny, and had broken that word, when he should have been there: "Like a man, ma'am, hin the place of Mr. 'Ammond, ma'am, to take care of Miss Sunny."

Far from reproving the man, the conscience-stricken Mrs. Hammond wept with him, and asked timid questions about the absent one.

After a long, sniffing pause, Hatton said one day:

"Begging your pardon, ma'am, I'm thinking that I don't deserve to work for Mr. 'Ammond any longer, but I 'aven't the 'eart to speak to 'im at this time, and if you'll be so kind to hexplain things to 'im, I'll betake myself to some hother abode."

"My good man, I am sure that even Mr. Jerry would not blame you. I am the sole one at fault. I take the full blame. I acknowledge it. I would not have you or anyone else share my guilt, and, Hatton, I *want* to be punished. Your conscience, I am sure, is clear, but it would make us all very happy, and I am sure it would make—Sunny"—she

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spoke the word hesitatingly—"happy, too, if—if—well, if, my good Hatton, you were to turn over a new leaf, and sign the pledge. Drink, I feel sure, is your worst enemy. You must overcome it, Hatton, or it will overcome you."

"Hi will, ma'am. Hi'll do that. If you'll pardon me now, hi'll step right out and sign the pledge. I know just where to go, if you'll pardon me."

Hatton did know just where to go. He crossed to the park to the east side and came to the brightly-lighted Salvation Army barracks. A meeting was in progress, and a fiery-tongued young woman was exhorting all the sinners of the world to come to glory. Hatton was fascinated by the groans and loud "Amens" that came from that chorus of human wreckage. Pushing nearer to the front, he came under the penetrating eye of the Salvation captain. She hailed him as a "brother," and there was something so unswervingly pure in her direct gaze that it had the effect of magnetising Hatton.

We leave him then, the pledge having been taken, marching forth from the barracks with the Salvation Army, his head thrown up, and singing loudly of glory.

On the third day after the disappearance of Sunny Professor Timothy Barrowes arrived in London with dinornis skeleton of the quaternary period, dug up from the clay of the Red Deer cliffs of Canada. This precious find was duly transported to the Natural History Museum, where it was set up by the skilled hands of workmen who were zealots even as the little man who nagged and adjured them as he had the excavators on the Red Deer River. So absorbed, in fact, was Professor Barrowes by his fascinating employment that he left his beloved fossil only when the pressing necessity of further funds from his friend and financial agent (Jerry had raised the money to finance the dinornis) necessitated his calling upon Jerry Hammond, who had made no reponse to his telegrams and letters.

Accordingly Professor Barrowes wended his way from the museum to Jerry's studio. Here, so enthused and happy over the success of his trip, he failed to notice the abnormal condition of Jerry,

whose listless hot hand dropped from his, and whose eye went roving absently above the head of his volubly chattering friend. It was only after the restless and continued pacing of the miserable Jerry and the failure to respond to questions put to him continued for some time that Professor Barrowes was suddenly apprised that all was not well with his friend. He stopped midway in a long speech in which words like Mesozoic, Triassic, and Jurassic prevailed, and snapped his glasses suddenly upon his nose.

"Come! Come! What is it? What is the trouble, lad?"

A tortured cry broke from Jemmy's lips.

"Oh, for God's sake, Professor Barrowes, why didn't you come when I asked you to? Sunny—— Oh, my God!"

Professor Barrowes had Jerry's hand gripped closely in his own, and the disjointed story came out at last.

Sunny had come! Sunny had gone! He loved Sunny! He could not live without Sunny—but Sunny had gone! They had turned her out into the streets—his own mother and Miss Falconer.

For the first time, it may be said, since his discovery of the famous fossil of the Red Deer River, Professor Barrowes's mind left his beloved dinornis. He came back solidly to earth, shot back by the calling need of Jerry. Now the man of science was wide awake, and an upheaval was taking place within him. The words of his first telegram to Jerry rattled through his head just then: "The dinornis more important than Sunny." Now as he looked down on the bowed head of the boy for whom he cherished almost a father's love, Professor Barrowes knew that all the dried up fossils of all the ages were as a handful of worthless dust as compared with this single living girl.

By main force Professor Barrowes made Jerry lie down on that couch, and himself served him the food humbly prepared by his heartbroken mother, who told Jerry's friend, with a quivering lip, that she felt sure he would not wish to take it from his mother's hands.

There was no going out for Jerry on that night. His protestations fell on deaf ears,

and as a further precaution Professor Barrowes had secured possession of the key of the flat. Only when the professor pointed out to him the fact that a breakdown on his part would mean the cessation of his search, would Jerry finally submit to the older man taking his place temporarily. And so, at the telephone, which rang constantly all of that evening, Professor Hammond took command. A thousand clues were everlastingly turning up. These were turned over to Jinx and Bobs, the former flying from one part of the city and country to another in his big car, and the latter, with an army of newspaper men helping him, and given full licence by his paper, influenced by the elder Hammond and Potter. Finally, Professor Barrowes, having given certain instructions to turn telephone calls over to Monty in Bob's apartment, he sat down to Jerry's dishevelled work-table, and glasses perched on the end of his nose, he sorted out the disordered mail. The afternoon letters still lay unopened, tossed down in despair by Jerry, when he failed to find that characteristic writing that he knew was Sunny's.

But now Professor Barrowes's head had suddenly jerked forward. His chin came out curiously, and his eyes blinked in amazement behind his glasses. He set them on firmer, fiercely, and slowly read that two-line epistle over again. The hand holding the paper shook, but the eyes behind the glasses were bright.

"Jerry, come hither, young man!" he growled, his dry old face quivering up with something that looked comically like a smile glaring through threatened tears. "Read that."

Across the table, Jerry reached over, and took the letter from the famous steel magnate of London. He read it slowly, dully, and then with a sense as of something breaking in his head and heart. Every word of those two lines sank like balm into his comprehension and consciousness. Then it seemed that a surge of blood rushed through his being, blinding him. The world rocked for Jerry Hammond. He saw a single star gleaming in a firmament that was all black. Down into immeasurable depths of space sank Jerry Hammond.

Sunny, after she left Jerry's apartments might be likened to a little wounded wild thing who has trailed off with broken wing. She had never consciously committed a wrong act. Motherless, worse than fatherless, painfully young, appallingly innocent, and dangerously lovely, how should she fare in a land whose ways were as foreign to that from which she had come as if she had been transplanted to a new planet?

As she turned into the main street, with its overloaded buses, crammed with the home-going workers of London, she had no sense of direction and no clear purpose in mind. All she felt was that numb sense of pain at her heart and the impulse to get as far away as possible from the man she loved. Swept along by a moving, seething throng that pressed and pushed and shoved and elbowed by her, Sunny had a sick sense of home longing, an inexpressible yearning to escape from all this turmoil and noise, this mad rushing and pushing and panting through life that seemed to spell London. She sensed the fact that she was in the Land of Barbarians, where everyone was racing and leaping and screaming in an hysteria of speed. Noise, noise, noise, incessant noise and movement—that was London. No one stopped to think; no polite words were uttered to the stranger. It was all a chaos, a madhouse, wherein dark figures rushed by like shadows in the night and little children played in the mud of the streets.

The charming, laughing, pretty days in the shelter of the studio of her friend had passed into this nightmare of noise, where all seemed ugly, cruel, and sinister. Life in London was not the charming, kindly thing Sunny had supposed. Beauty indeed she had brought with her, and that, though she knew it not, was why she had seen only the beautiful, but now, even for her, it had all changed. She had seen faces with hatred and malice; she had listened to words that whipped worse than the lash of Nirata.

To Kuonnon, the Goddess of Mercy, in the streets of the European city, the girl of Japan sent out her petition:

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"Oh, Kuonnon, sweet Lady of Mercy, permit the spirit of my honourable mother to walk with me through these dark and noisy streets."

The shining Goddess of Mercy, trailing her robes among the million stars in the heavens above, surely heard that tiny petition, for certain it is that something warm and comforting swept over the breast of the tired Sunny. We know that faith will "remove mountains." Sunny's faith in her mother's spirit caused her to feel that it walked by her side. The Japanese believe that we can think our dead alive, and if we are pure and worthy we may indeed recall them.

It came to pass that after walking for many hours that she stopped before a brightly lighted window, within which cakes and confections were enticingly displayed, and from the cellar of which warm odours of cooking were wafted to the famished girl. Sunny's youth and buoyant health responded to that claim. Her feet, in the unaccustomed shoes—in Japan she had worn only sandals and clogs—were sore and extremely weary from the long walk, and a sense of intense exhaustion added to that pang of emptiness within.

By the baker's window, therefore, in the dingy suburban street, leaned Sunny, staring in hungrily at the food so near and yet so far away. She asked herself in her quaint way:

"What I am now to do? My honourable insides are ask for food."

She answered her own question at once.

"I will ask the advice of first person I meet. He will tell me."

The streets were in a semi-deserted condition, such as follows after the home-going throngs have been tucked away into their respective abodes. There was a cessation of traffic, only the passing of the trains breaking the hush of early night that comes even in the city of London. It was now fifteen minutes to nine, and Sunny had had nothing to eat since her scant breakfast.

Kuonnon, her mother's spirit, providence—call it what we may—suffered it that the first person whom Sunny was destined to meet should be Katy Clarry, a shop girl by trade. She was crossing the

street, with her few small packages, revealing her pitiful night marketing at adjacent small shops, when Sunny accosted her.

"Aexcuse me. I lig' ask you question, please," said Sunny with timid politeness.

"Whell?"

Miss Clarry, her grey, clear eye sweeping the face of Sunny in one comprehensive glance that took her "number," stopped short at the curb and waited for the question.

"I are hungry," said Sunny simply. "and I have no money and no house in which to sleep these night. What I can do?"

"Lord!" Katy's grey eyes flew wider. The girl before her seemed as far from being a beggar as any one the shop girl had ever seen. Something in the wistful, lovely face looking in the dark street at Katy, tightened that cord that was all mother in the breast of Katy Clarry. After a moment:

"Are you stoney broke, then? Out of work? You don't look's if you could be. What you doin' on these streets? You ain't—? No, you ain't. I needn't insult you by askin' that. Where's your home, girl?"

"I got no home," said Sunny, in a very faint voice. A subtle feeling was stealing over the tired Sunny, and the whiteness of her cheeks, the drooping of her eyes, apprised Katy of her condition.

"Say, don't be fallin' whatever you do. You don't want no copper to get 'is hands on you. You come along with me. I ain't got much, but you're welcome to share what I got. I'll take care of you till you get a job. Heh! Get a grip on yourself. There. That's better. Hold on to me. I'll put them packages under this arm. We ain't got far to walk. Steady now. We don't want no copper to say we're full, because we ain't."

Katy led the trembling Sunny along the dirty, dingy road to a melancholy side street. They came to a house whose sad exterior proclaimed what was within. Here Katy applied her latch key, and passing through the dark and odorous hall, they found their way up four flights of stairs. Katy's room was at the far end of a long bare landing, and its dimen-

sions were little more than the shining kitchen range of the studio.

Katy struck a match, lit a kerosene lamp, and attached to the one half-plugged gas-jet a tube, at the end of which was a small gas-ring. Sunny, sitting helplessly on the bed, was too dazed and weary to hold her position for long, and at Katy's sharp, "Hi, there, lie down," she subsided back upon the bed, sighing with relief as her exhausted body felt the comfort of Katy's hard little bed. From sundry places Katy drew forth a frying-pan, a pitcher of water, a tiny kettle, and a teapot. She put two knives and forks and spoons on the table, two cracked plates and two cups. She peeled a single potato, and added it to the two sausages frying on the pan. She chattered as she worked, partly to hide her own feelings, and partly to set the girl at her ease. But indeed Sunny was far from feeling an embarrassment such as Katy in her place might have felt. The world is full of two kinds of people: those who serve, and those who are served, and to the latter family Sunny belonged. Not the lazy, wilful parasites of life, but the helpless children, whom we love to care for. Katy, glancing with a maternal eye ever and anon at the so sad and lovely little face on her pillow was curiously touched and animated with a desire to help her.

"You're dog-tired, ain't you. How long have you been out of work? I always feel more tired when I'm out o' work and looking for a job than when I got one, though it ain't my idea of a rest exactly to stand on your feet all day long shoving out things you can't afford to have yourself to folks who mostly just want to look 'em over. Of course, if I were in one of them big stores up West, I could give a customer the laugh when the bell sounded for closin', but you can do no such thing here. We're still in the pioneer stage up here. I expect you're more used to Bond Street shops. You look it, but, say, I never got a look in at one of them jobs. They favour educated girls, and I ain't packed with learning, I can tell you."

Sunny said:

"You loog good to me"—a favourite expression of Jerry's, and something in

her accent and the earnestness with which she said it warmed Katy, who laughed and said:

"Oh, go on. I ain't got much looks, neither. There now. Draw up. Dinner is served. Stay where you are on the bed. Drop your feet over. I ain't got but the one chair, and I'll have it meself, thank you, don't mention it."

Katy pushed the table beside the bed, drew her own chair to the other side, set the kettle on the jet which the frying-pan had released and proudly surveyed her labour.

"Not much, but looks pretty good to me. If there's one thing I love it is a hot dog."

She put on Sunny's plate the largest of the two sausages and three-quarters of the potato, cut her a generous slice of bread and poured most of the gravy on her plate, saying:

"I always say sausage gravy beats anything in the butter line. Tea'll be done in a minute, dearie. Ain't got but one burner. Lord, I wisht I had one of them two deckers that you can cook a whole meal at once with. Ever seen 'em? How's your dog?"

"Dog?"

"Sausage, dearie?"

"How it is good," said Sunny, with simple eloquence. "I thang you how much."

"Don't mention it. You're welcome. You'd do the same for me if I was busted. I always say one working girl should help the other when the other is out of work and broke. There's unity in strength," quoted Katy, with conviction. "Have some more—do! Dip your bread in the gravy. Pretty good, ain't it, if I do say it who shouldn't?"

"It mos' nices' food are ever taste," declared Sunny earnestly.

While the tea was going into the cups:

"My name's Katy Clarry. What's yours?" asked Katy, a sense of well-being and good humour towards the world flooding her warm being.

"Sunny."

"Sunny! That's a queer name. Ain't it pretty? What's your other name?"

"Sindicutt."

"Sounds kind of foreign. What are

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you, anyway? You ain't British—at least you don't look it or talk it," said the shopgirl with scorn. "Meaning no offence, you understand, but—well, you just don't look like the rest of us. You ain't a Dago or a Sheeny. I can see that, and you ain't a Hun, neither. Are you a Frenchy? You got queer kind of eyes—meaning no offence, for personally I think them lovely, I really do. I scen actresses with no better eyes than you got."

Katy shot her questions at Sunny, without waiting for an answer. Sunny smiled sadly.

"Katy, I are sowry thad I am not be English girl. I are born ad Japan——"

"You ain't no Chink. You can't tell me no such thing as that. I wasn't born yesterday. What are you anyway? Where do you come from? Are you a royal princess in disguise?"

"No, I are not princess," said Sunny sadly. "I not all Japanese, Katy, jos liddle bit. Me? I are three kind of blood on my insides. I sawry that my ancestors put them there. I are Japanese and Russian and English."

"Gee! You're what we call a mongrel. Meaning no offence. You can't help yourself. Personally I stand up first for the home-made English article, but I ain't got no prejudice against no one. No one'll be the wiser. You can trust me not to open my mouth to a living soul about it. What you've confided in me about being partly Chink is just as if you had put the inflammation in a tomb. And it ain't going to make the least bit of difference between us. Try one of them crackers. Sop it in your tea now you're done with your gravy. Pretty good, ain't it?"

"Katy, to-night I are going to tell you some things about me, bi-cause I know you are my good frien's now forever. I lig' your kind eye, Katy"

"Go on! You're kiddin' me, Sunny. If I had eyes like yours it'd be a different matter. But I like the idea of havin' you for a friend just the same. I ain't had a chum since I don't know when. If you knew what them girls was like in my shop—well, I'm not talkin' about no one behind their backs, but, say—Sunny, I could tell you a thing or two 'd make

your hair stand on end. And as for tellin' me about your own past, say if you'll tell me yours, I'll tell you mine. I always say that every girl has some tragedy or other in her life. Mine began in the slums. It ain't nothing to brag about, but it's Heaven here compared with what's down in my old home. I used to live in that gutter part of the town where God's good air is even begrudged you, and where all the dirty forriners and Chinks—meanin' no offence, dearie, and I'll say for the Chinks that, compared with some of them Russian Jews—you're Russian, too, ain't you, but I don't mean no offence! Take it from me, Sunny, some of them forriners—I call them just that to avoid givin' offence—are just exactly like lice, and the smells down there! Well, the rotten dust got into the lungs and the spine of them all. Father went first. Then mother. Lord only knows how they got it—doctor said it was from the streets, germs that someone, maybe, dumped out and come flyin' up into our place that was the only clean spot in the tenement house. I'll say that for my mother. There was two kids left beside me. I was the oldes', and not much on age at that, but I got me a job chasin' around for a millinery shop, and I did my best by the kids when I got home nights; but the cards, was all stacked against me, Sunny, and when that infantile paralyssus come along the first to be took was my baby brother, and me li-little s-sister she come down with it, too, and— Ah-h-h-h——"

Katy's head went down on the table, and she sobbed tempestuously. Sunny, unable to speak the words of comfort that welled up in her heart, could only put her arms around Katy, and mingle her tears with hers.

Katy removed a handkerchief from the top of her blouse, dabbed her eyes fiercely, shared the little ball with Sunny, and then thrust it down the neck of her blouse again. Bravely she smiled at Sunny again.

"There you got the story of the Clarrys of London. You can't beat it for— for tragedy, now, can you? So spiel away at your own story, Sunny. Don't spare me, kiddy. I'm braced for anything in this r-rotten world."

CHAPTER XVI.

It was well for Sunny that her new friend was endowed with a generous and belligerent nature. Having secured for Sunny a position at the Bamberger Emporium, Katy's loyalty to her friend was not dampened when on the third day Sunny was summarily discharged. Hands on hips, Katy flew furiously to her friend's defence, and for the benefit of her brother and sister workers, she relieved herself loudly of all her pent up rage of the months. In true Union style Katy marched out with Sunny. The excuse for firing Sunny was that she did not write well enough to fill out the sales slips properly. Nasty as the true reason was, there is no occasion to set forth the details here.

Suffice it to say, that the two girls, both rosy from excitement and wrath, arm and arm marched independently forth from the Emporium, Katy loudly asserting that she would sue for her half-week's pay, and Sunny anxiously drawing her along, her breath coming and going with the fright she had had.

Here they were indeed, back in the small ugly room of that fourth floor, sitting, the one on the ricketty chair, and the other on the side of the hard bed. But the eyes of youth are veiled in sun and rose. They see nor feel not the filth of the world. Sunny and Katy, out of a job, with scarcely enough money between them to keep body and soul together, were yet able to laugh at each other and exchange jokes over the position in which they found themselves.

After they had "chewed the rag," as Katy expressively termed it, for awhile, that brisk young person removed her hat, rolled up her sleeves, and declared she would do the "family wash."

"It's too late now," said Katy, "to job hunt this morning. So I'll do the wash, and you waltz over across the street and do the marketin'. We can boil some of them bones and get a good soup. I always say soup is just as fillin' as anything else, especially if you put a onion in it, and have a bit of bread to sop it up with, and I got the onion all right. So cheer up, we'll soon be dead, and the worst is yet to come."

Sunny was standing now by the bureau. A very thoughtful expression had come to Sunny's face, and she opened the top drawer and drew out her little package.

"Katy," she said softly, "I are some little—here are some little thing ad these package which mebbe it goin' to help us."

Sunny was picking at the red silk cord. Lovingly she unwrapped the Japanese paper. The touch of her fingers on her mother's things was a caress and had all the reverence that the Japanese child pays in tribute to a departed parent.

"These honourable things belong my mother," said Sunny gently. "She have give them to me when she know she got die. See, Katy, this are kakemona. It very old, me be one tousan' year ole. It belong at grade Prince of Satsuma. Thas my mother ancestor. This kakemona, he are so ole as those ancestor, Katy," said Sunny reverently.

"Old. I should say it is. Looks as it it belonged in a tomb. You couldn't pawn nothing like that." What's that you got there, Sunny?

"That are a letter, Katy. My mother gave me those letter. She say that some day mebbe I are need some frien'. Then I must put those letter at post office box, or I must take those letter in my hand to thad man it are write to. He are frien' to me, my mother have said."

Katy grabbed the letter, disbelieving her eyes when she read the name inscribed in the thin Japanese hand. It was addressed both in English and Japanese, and the name was Stephen Holt Wainwright.

"Some one hold me up!" cried Katy. "I'm about to faint dead away."

"Oh, Katy, do not be dead away! Oh, Katy do not do those faint. He are those cracker. I am not so hongry as you."

"My Lord! You poor ignorant little kid, don't you reckernize when a fellow is fainting with pure unadulterated joy? How long have you had that letter?"

"Four year now," said Sunny sadly, thinking of the day when her mother had placed it in her hand, and of the look on the face of that mother.

"Why did you never post it?"

"I was await, Katy. I are not need help. I have four and five good frien'

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to me then, and I do not need nuther one ; but now I are beggar again. I nod got those frien's no more. I need those other one."

"Do you know who this letter is addressed to, dearie?"

"No, Katy, I cannot read so big a name. My mother say he will be frien' to me always."

"Sunny, I pity you for your ignorance, but I don't hold it against you. You was born that way. Why a child could read that name. Goodness knows, I never got far, yet I *hope* I'm able to read that. It says as plain as the nose on your face, Sunny: Stephen Holt Wainwright. Now that's the name of one of the biggest guns in the country. He's a financier, or was and is, and he's so rich that he has to hire twenty or fifty cashiers to count his income that rolls in upon him. If you weren't so ignorant, Sunny, you'd a read about him in the paper. His picture's in nearly every day, and pictures of his luxurious home and yacht and horses and wife. They call him 'The Man of Steel,' because he owns most of the steel in the world, and because he's got a mug—a face on him—like a steel trap. That's what I've heard and read, though I've never met the gentleman. I expect to, however, very soon, seeing he's a friend of yours."

"Katy, this letter are written by my mother ad the Japanese language. Mebbe those Fin-an-cier kinnod read them. What I shall do?"

"What you shall do, baby mine? Did you think I was goin' to let precious freight-like that go into any postbox. Perish the idea, lovey. You and me are going to waltz down to his office, and we ain't going to do no walking, what's more. The Tube for little us. Get your hat on now, and don't answer back, neither."

On the way downstairs she gave a final stern order to Sunny.

Laughing merrily the two girls, with music in their souls, danced up the street, their empty stomachs and their lost jobs forgotten. When they reached the subway Katy seized Sunny's hand, and they raced down the steps just as the train pulled in.

CHAPTER XVII

That was a long and exciting ride for Sunny. Above the roar of the rushing train Katy shouted in her ear. Perfectly at home in the Tube, Katy did not let a little thing like mere noise deter the steady flow of her tongue. The gist of her remarks came always back to what Sunny was to do when they arrived; how she was to look; how speak. She was to bear in mind that she was going into the presence of a great man; and she was to be neither too fresh nor yet too humble. Englishmen, high and low, so Katy averred, liked folks that had a kick to them, but not too much of a kick.

Sunny was to make application in both their names. If there were no vacancies in the financier's office, then she could delicately suggest that the financier could make such a vacancy. Such things were done within Katy's own experience.

Katy had no difficulty in locating the monstrous office building, and she led Sunny along to the lift with an experienced air. Sunny held tight to her arm as they made the breathless ascent.

It was noon hour, and Katy and Sunny followed several girls returning from lunch, through the main entrance of the offices.

A girl at a desk in the reception hall stopped them from penetrating farther into the offices by calling out:

"No admission there. Who do you want to see? Name, please."

Katy swung around on her heel, and, recognising a kindred spirit in the girl at the desk, she favoured her with an equally haughty and glassy stare. Then in a very superior voice Katy replied:

"We are friends of the Financier. Kindly announce us, if you please."

A grin slipped over the face of the maiden at the desk, and she shoved a pad of paper towards Katy.

Opposite the word "Name" on the pad, Katy wrote, "Miss Sindicutt." Opposite the word, "Business." She wrote "Private and personal and intimate."

The girl at the desk glanced amusedly at the pad, tore the first sheet off, pushed a button which summoned an office-boy, to whom she handed the slip of paper. With one eye turned appraisingly upon

Onoto Watanna

the girls, he went off backwards, whistling, and disappeared through the little swinging gate that opened apparently into the great offices beyond.

"I beg your pardon?" said Katy to the girl at the desk.

"I didn't say nothing," returned the surprised maiden.

"I thought you said, 'Be seated.' I will, thank you. Don't mention it"—and Katy grinned with malicious politeness on the discomfited young person, who patted her coiffure with assumed disdain.

Katy meanwhile disposed herself on the long bench, drew Sunny down beside her, and proceeded to scrutinise and comment on all passers through the main reception hall into the offices within.

A man had come into the reception-room from the main entrance. He started to cross the room directly to the little swinging door, then stopped to speak to a clerk at a wicket window. Something about the sternness of his look, an air savouring almost of austerity, aroused the imp in Katy.

"Well, look who's here," she whispered behind her hand to Sunny. "Now watch little Katy."

As the man turned from the window and proceeded towards the door Katy shot out her foot, and the man abstractedly stumbled against it. He looked down at the girl impudently staring him out of countenance, and frowned at her exaggerated:

"I beg your pardon!"

Then his glance, turning irritably from Katy, rested upon Sunny's slightly shocked face. He stopped abruptly, standing perfectly still for a moment, staring down at the girl. Then, with a muttered apology, Mr. Wainwright turned and went swiftly through the swinging door.

"Well, of *all* the nerve!" said Katy. Then to the girl at the desk:

"Who was his nibs?"

"Why, your friend, of course. I'm surprised you didn't recognise him," returned the girl sweetly.

"Him—Mr. Wainwright."

The boy had returned, and, thrusting his head over the short gate sang out:

"This way, please, la-adies!"

Katy and Sunny followed the boy across an office where many girls and men were working at desks. At a door marked "Miss Hollowell, Private," the boy knocked. A voice within bade him "Come in," and the two girls were admitted.

Miss Hollowell, a clear-eyed young woman of the clean-cut modern type of the efficient woman executive, looked up from her work, and favoured them with a pleasant smile.

"What can I do for you?" The question was directed at Katy, but her trained eye went from Katy to Sunny, and there remained in speculative inquiry.

"We have come to call upon the Financier," said Katy, "on important and private business."

Miss Hollowell smiled indulgently at Katy's words.

"I see. Well, now, I'll speak for Mr. Wainwright. What can we do for you?"

"Nothing. *You* can't do nothing," said Katy. She was not to be beguiled by the smile of this superior young person. "My friend here—Miss Sindicutt—has a personal letter for Financier Wainwright, and she's my advice not to let it out of her hands into any, but his."

"I'm awfully sorry, because Mr. Wainwright is very busy, and can't possibly see you. I believe I will answer the purpose as well. I'm Mr. Wainwright's secretary."

"We don't want to speak to no secretary," said Katy.

Miss Hollowell laughed.

"Oh, very well then. Perhaps some other time, but we're especially busy to-day, so I'm going to ask you to excuse us. *Good-day.*"

She turned back to the papers on her desk, her pencil poised above a sheet of estimates.

Katy pushed Sunny forward, and in dumb show signified that she should speak. Miss Hollowell glanced up and regarded the girl with singular attention. Something in the expression, something in the back of the secretary's mind that concerned Japan, which this strange girl had now

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mentioned caused her to wait quietly for her to finish the sentence. Sunny held out the letter, and Miss Hollowell saw that fine script upon the envelope, with the Japanese letters down the side.

"This are a letter from Japan," said Sunny. "If you please I will lig' to give those to Fin— Thad is so big a name for me to say." The last was spoken apologetically and brought a sympathetic smile to Miss Hollowell.

"Can't I read it. I'm sure I can give you what information you want as well as Mr. Wainwright can."

"It are wrote in Japanese," said Sunny. "You cannot read that same. *Please* you let me take it to the gentleman."

Miss Hollowell with a smile arose at that plea. She crossed the room and tapped on the door bearing the financier's name.

Even in a city where offices of the magnates are sometimes as sumptuously furnished as drawing-rooms, the great room of Mr. Wainwright was distinctive. The floor was strewn with priceless Persian and Chinese rugs, which harmonised with the remarkable walls, panelled half way up with mahogany, the upper part of which was hung with masterpieces of the famous painters, whose work the steel magnate especially patronised. Stephen Wainwright was seated at a big mahogany desk table that was at the far end of the room. He was not working. His elbows on the desk, he seemed to be staring out before him in a mood of strange abstraction.

His face, somewhat stony in expression, with straight grey eyes that had a curious trick when turned on one of seeming to pin themselves in an appraising stare; his iron grey hair and the grey suit which he invariably wore had given him the name of the "Man of Steel." Miss Hollowell, with her slightly professional smile, laid the slip of paper on the desk before him.

"A Miss Sindicutt. She has a letter for you—a letter from Japan, she says. She wishes to deliver it in person."

At the word "Japan" he came slightly out of his mood of abstraction, stared at the slip of paper, and shook his head.

"Don't know the name."

"Yes, I knew you didn't; but, still, I think I'd see her if I were you."

"Very well. Send her in."

Miss Hollowell at the door nodded brightly to Sunny, but stayed Katy, who triumphantly was pushing forward.

"Sorry, but Mr. Wainwright will see just Miss Sindicutt alone."

Sunny went in alone. She crossed the room hesitantly, and stood by the desk of the steel magnate, waiting for him to speak to her. He remained unmoved, half turned about in his seat, staring stolidly at the girl before him. If a ghost had arisen suddenly in his path, Stephen Wainwright could not have felt a greater agitation. After a long pause he found his voice, murmuring:

"I beg your pardon. Be seated, please."

*Another instalment of this novel will appear in the next issue of the
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