

DRAGONS DRIVE YOU

By **EDWIN BALMER**

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CHAPTER XII—Continued

"Yes," said Agnes, losing breath. "Can you do something?" She caught his sleeve. "I don't know whom to turn to. Father can do no more just now; and Jeb—Mr. Braddon—Davis would be frantic if he helped him. But you can't put up money for him." "I can't," admitted Cathal, "—not to any amount such as he will need. But that's not all there is to do." "He got his capital by borrowing on his life insurance. I don't know how one does that; do you?" "Yes—when's his birthday?" "October 29. Why?" "It was just something I wanted to know," said Cathal, and held out his hand. Hers was in his; he held it; and then he let go.

Cathal drove away with a calendar superimposed over the other excitements in his mind. Today was the twenty-fifth of May. So Davis Ayreforth's birthday was four days and five months away. That meant that in all probability he must make his heavy payments of life insurance premiums within four days. For life insurance practice fixes the date upon which a man's age "changes" an even half-year—six months—before his birthday. Davis Ayreforth's age "changed," therefore, on the twenty-ninth of April; and on that date, undoubtedly, most of his insurance policies were written, and



He Got His Capital by Borrowing on His Life Insurance.

the premiums each year were due. But the companies, by common practice, extended date of payment by a month's "grace." So the final day for payment would be May 29—just four days off.

Cathal drove to the city that night, lost only at times in the delights of his dreams of her; with these, he was haunted by desperate eyes and men's bitten lips—Linsdale's and Ayreforth's.

Cathal did not forget Davis. He received on the twenty-eighth the full special reports which he had ordered from the commercial agencies, and further, a verbal report from his own investigator; and on the forenoon of the twenty-ninth, Cathal went to Davis' office.

Davis, after a time, sent out word he could not see Mr. O'Mara.

Cathal, standing, stared past the secretary who brought this message; he strode past her, then, and tried to turn the knob of Mr. Ayreforth's door. It did not turn. It was locked.

Perhaps, during his wait, Cathal unconsciously had prepared the plan which immediately he adopted. He had not expected exactly this situation; but he did not delay an instant. He went to the window of the outer office which adjoined the partition wall. It was open, and he stepped out upon the sill. A twin window, also open, was on the other side of the partition, with a step between their sills. Cathal caught the sash and made the step—and he was in Davis' office.

Only after he had entered did Davis seem to have heard him. Davis was sitting at his desk with pen in his hand over paper. He had been trying to write something.

He jerked about, dropping his pen. He saw O'Mara, and started to rise but he did not. His hand darted to an open drawer beside him, and came up with a pistol, which he lifted, not toward Cathal, but toward his own head.

Cathal caught him; and they fought for the pistol.

It was like grappling a madman. Cathal blocked his arm so that the hand with the pistol pointed off, but Cathal could not get the pistol away.

Then suddenly the pistol dropped. It was on the floor; and for the moment, Cathal was outwitted. He

thought he had won; and he let Davis go.

Davis fell back from him, and Cathal stooped for the pistol. And he had it safe, and had snapped the cartridges out, when he realized Davis was at the window—12 floors above the street.

There must be for a man still sane, mostly, a second's halt before self-destruction, and so again Cathal caught him.

He clutched him with both arms from behind, and bracing his feet below the window, he pulled Davis back into the room; and then Cathal took no more chances. He let go and regained his feet first; and as Davis stood up, Cathal swung with all his weight in the blow upon Davis' chin.

Davis dropped to the floor on his face.

The office people were pounding at the locked door and shouting for admittance.

"Is Mr. Remble there?" Cathal called through; and when the partner answered: "You come in; keep everybody else out," he unlocked the door, swung it enough to let Remble in, and bolted it once more.

Ken Remble stood gaping, his partner at his feet. The cartridges which Cathal had ejected were scattered on the floor.

"He shot himself!" Ken Remble whispered.

"No," said Cathal. "I took the gun away from him. He's knocked out; that's all."

"Who are you?"

"O'Mara. I'm a lawyer."

"Lawyer?"

"I came here as his friend."

"Oh... What's our move now?"

"Yours," said Cathal. "Is to quiet your people. Tell them anything you please; and tell me later. I'll stay with him."

He was alone with Davis again behind the locked door.

Davis sat up dizzily. "What time is it?"

"Time?" said Cathal; and before he brought the desk clock into Davis' sight, he turned the hands. "It's after twelve, Ayreforth," he said. "It's two minutes after noon. Your insurance has expired."

"I didn't do it!" he broke down utterly. "I didn't do it—for her."

Cathal remained with him, in the office, until two o'clock, when he was able to communicate with Robert Gleneth in his office; and Gleneth came for the Dark One's husband and took him home.

That evening, when he arrived at the Linsdales', Cathal received a message to call Miss Gleneth. She would wait for him, Agnes told him, no matter how late it might be before he could come to the house.

It was Agnes who opened the door; and they were alone in the hall.

She spoke to Cathal so quietly that he asked: "He's all right?"

Agnes glanced toward the silent stairs. "Bee's trying to get him to sleep. He wanted to do it—for her."

She caught his hand. "What can I say to you?"

"Nothing," said Cathal, his hand burning from her touch. He wanted to turn his hand and clasp hers; he wanted—how he wanted to draw her to him! But he did not.

"But for you," she whispered, "but for you—" She closed her eyes, and could not finish. Then she looked up at him again. "We've shared some terrible things, you and I, Cathal O'Mara," she said.

"May we share more?"

The burning that had been in his hand was throughout his body. "Not more troubles, I mean!" he said. "Yet, may I have my part in putting them from you, if they are to come!"

Her hand was gone from him, but she was leading him out onto the terrace, where the lights from the house dimly shone. "Do you remember—the lightning?" he asked.

"I remember everything we've done together," she replied with her honesty that excited him through.

He was keeping himself from her; carefully, he kept to himself; and she wanted him closer. When he did not move, she did.

"The times we've met," she heard him say, "could be packed in a day; do you know it?"

"I know it. What a day!"

"Do you live in it—ever?"

"Ever? Again and again, over and over! Do you?"

"Do I?" He could speak no further to her. He stood, keeping himself off as he had, searching her eyes in the dim light; but slowly, slowly his hands went to her.

She saw them and waited for them; but they stopped, and she seized his suddenly, and she clasped her fingers through his; and so, as he held to her, she held to him. And they felt each other quivering.

"So it's come to you too!" he whispered.

"Yes, Cathal O'Mara, it's come to me too."

Their fingers twisted together in glorious agony.

"But what can we do with it?"

"Do? What do you want to do?"

"Live in our kingdom; can we?"

"Our kingdom? Where?"

"Wherever you will be—with me—if you believe it."

"Believe what, Cathal?"

"That it's not the world of others that levers live in; it's the kingdom of themselves alone."

"It may be a marvelous, movable kingdom. For it's wherever one finds the other. In the city to have it, you need but together to shut the door; or it may surprise you from no more than a meeting, unexpected, amid the crowd of the street, . . ."

"There, I've told you. But I know—I know it's in my fancy, only. With all the differences between us, can it ever be?"

CHAPTER XIII

Bee, not yet undressed, lay on the bed beside her husband. He had worn himself out; and the bromide which she had brought him had made him sleepy at last; but she could not sleep.

A car drove away; and Bee crept from the room, closed the door carefully behind her, and waited at the top of the stairs. Agnes did not appear; and there was no sound below. "Agnes! Agnes!" Bee called cautiously; and for a moment she had the fear that her sister had driven away with O'Mara. "Agnes!"

Agnes turned from the door where she had stood since he left her. She heard Bee at last, and looked up and saw her.

She went slowly, almost as if with difficulty; and indeed, difficulties assailed her, but she did not feel them as her own. For herself, she felt no doubt at all. She was defiantly, exultingly sure—of herself, and of him.

"Agnes, what have you done?"

"Done!" said Agnes breathlessly. "What I'll never, never undo—what ever anybody says. Bee, I've told Cathal O'Mara I'll marry him."

Her sister seized her. "What? . . . Agnes!"

"Yes," whispered Agnes. "I told him. That's what I did. But he fears I don't know what I mean. That's why he's gone away."

"What are you talking about? Come into my room," begged Bee, before she remembered Davis just beyond her door. "No; yours," said said to her sister; and Agnes followed her into her own room.

"Now, tell me," the Dark One commanded.

"For two weeks," said Agnes confusedly, "he means to stay away. We're not to see each other; he won't come here. He won't even call me."

"Why?"

"So I'll have the time to myself to be surer."

"Do you need to be surer?" Bee asked. "Look at me, Agnes! . . . Oh, damn it, you've got it! You've got it! . . . And I never had! And I've my third child within me."

"I've got him yet. I'm glad of that, you know. Don't you? . . . He knows. I've made him know! . . . He tried to kill himself—for me. . . . But you, Agnes; you go ahead! Do hell with everything else! Be happy—happy! Happy, I tell you!"

Daylight laid upon Agnes no dismay. Through hours after Bee had returned to Davis, Agnes lay awake; but she had slept at last, to rouse to objects that showed again their sharp edges, to glares and to shadows.

She shut her eyes again and curled to relieve the enjoyment of his arms about her for the moment before he had put her away from him—when, though he held her and she clung to him, his own faith had failed him. For he knew that it must be—it was, in some degree at least, the world of others that they must live in; and no desperate denials of his own, even though she joined in them, could screen that world away.

Job called up. And it was strange to talk to him and never to Cathal. Stranger still that he, and never Cathal, came to the house. But she kept herself from Jeb's hands.

Her father was involved again in Davis' affairs; and Jeb again—and unknown to Davis, Agnes hoped—was helping him salvage something.

Every other day, it seemed, Cathal's name was in the papers; and always accorded the new respect; for he spoke of men accused, or about to be put on trial, who too recently had ruled.

Queerly and pleasantly, on unsummoned occasions through these long, listless days, she recollected everything he had said to her, from the very first, and with a clarity and completeness as if, at the time, she had memorized it.

So on one day—it was the ninth of the ordeal of the fourteen—she recalled how he had told her that his grandfather had died in the Cold Storage fire in the Fair of '93.

It had meant nothing to her; but now she inquired of it; and the next afternoon she was in the Tribune tower, asking to see the files of the paper for July, 1893. So there, upon the brittle and yellowed page, she read his name—Cathal Martin O'Mara; and she read what that Cathal O'Mara, nearly forty years ago, had dared and done, and how he had died. And his wife, who had been young then, had had to look on.

Winnie, that was, Winnie, who had been at the trial!

Agnes went out to a taxi.

Winnie, on this afternoon, was home alone, as she often was, and especially on the afternoons of Tuesday and Friday, for then she baked. Bread, first, and next cakes.

She timed this baking to the school-bells which, at half-past three, would ring their release to the little girls and boys.

She stirred a great bowl of smooth golden batter, did Winnie, and she poured a scant half of it into the big round tin for the family cake. The bigger half, by far, Winnie turned into her tins of dozens of little cupcakes for the boys and girls. And for them, when they came, she had plenty of milk in the icebox.

She had quarts of it today—quarts beyond the family need. For these were bitter times for them about here, as well as for the rich, or them that had been rich.

So Winnie sat with her huge bowl in her aproned lap, stirring the batter smooth with her big wooden spoon, to be ready once more for the children—boys and girls; and it was strange that it was the little, bold, hungry boys in patched trousers and scuffed shoes who most caught at her heart?

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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If a few slices of bacon are placed in the bottom of the pan in which a meat loaf is baked it will give it a delicious flavor.

Windfall apples make excellent jelly and jam.

When preparing mustard add a drop of salad oil to it while mixing. This will greatly improve the flavor.

After frosting cakes dip a knife in hot water and smooth over the frosting to make it glossy.

After flowering plants have faded and been removed from piazza boxes fill boxes with small growing evergreens or pine boughs.

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