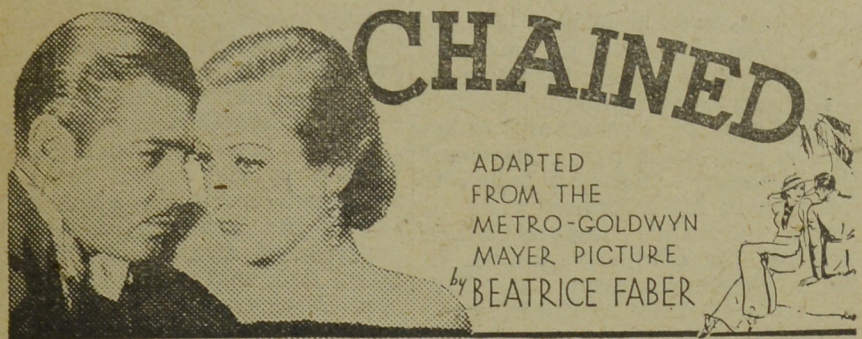


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ADAPTED FROM THE METRO-GOLDWYN MAYER PICTURE BY BEATRICE FABER

## CHAPTER ONE

### DAUGHTER OF THE RICH

Ah Love! could you and I with Him conspire To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things Entire, Would not we shatter it to bits—and then Re-mold it nearer to the Heart's Desire

—OMAR KHAYYAM.

**D**AZZLING sunlight spread its widening rays over the Hudson River. The water sparkled to the warm caress with a shimmering of jewel-like ripples that mirrored the brilliant blue of the sky.

Its calm placidity was suddenly disturbed, however, as a speed-boat, splitting the wide ribbon of river shot down from under the George Washington bridge and headed south like a bat out of hades.

At the wheel, riveting the eye, was a creature—and Beauty. Her reddish brown hair whipped back in the wind, not just a girl, but a glorious goddess—a cocktail of Youth Eyes as blue as sapphires glowed with excitement as the boat sped along. The T-shirt and white slacks she wore revealed, rather than concealed the classical perfection of broad slim shoulders, swelling breast and long, slender legs.

Nearing 125th street, the girl, with a strong lift of her arms, cut the wheel and swerved across the bow of an oncoming ferry with a great arc, then continued the mad course onward. Laughing at the near-encounter, she turned to look back at the grizzled old Scot boatman sitting in the stern.

"I'll get one at Forty-second Street," she shouted over her shoulder, gleefully. "They're much bigger." On the boat went, weaving its wild-bullet course down through the 42nd Street area, in and around the harbor shipping, until, rounding the island's tip, it slowed up, and, at a much reduced speed was seen to head for one of the dock-sheds bearing the huge sign—Field Line. Inter-Americas Navigation Company. There, with almost a swagger, it proceeded to dock next a huge yacht.

The girl jumped gracefully out of the boat. "Thank you, Mac." She turned to the old Scot. "If we go again we'll play leap frog with the 'Leviathan'."

His answer was a chuckle of delight as he touched his forelock. An elderly maid, holding a polo coat and silk muffler, fluttered over to her. "I thought you'd drowned—" she began querulously.

"Amy—you're an old sissy." A few moments later she was at the private elevator of the Field building. Arriving at the 20th

floor she could see, through the opaque glass of the outer door, the large office staff at work. An elderly efficient-looking secretary looked up at her in slow surprise. "Why—hello, Diane."

Diane offered her hand with a pleasant, engaging grin. "I haven't seen you for ages, Miss Robbins."

"N-no." "Is he busy?" Diane nodded towards the door.

"I think it's all right to go in," Miss Robbins said a little hesitantly.

Diane smiled, then turned to the door marked Private—Richard Field. The familiar elegance of the room greeted her. It was always a source of quiet pleasure



He gathered her into his arms with a great bear hug saying, "And I keep asking myself how can an old man like—"

to renew acquaintance with the pictures on the wall, most of them of Field Line vessels—to run her hand caressingly over the small ship model on the English antique cabinet.

Richard Field was talking into an ediphone, his back slightly to Diane as she approached his desk. Though nearing forty-eight—his hair almost entirely grey—he yet had the lean, well-knit body of a younger man. His face was finely cut and, powerful and decisive as he was by repute, his mouth betrayed his innate sensitivity.

"—yes," he was saying, "We've decided to start the Carribean on coastal out of Savannah. That will put the Southern Cross on the Rio-Buenos Aires run till next December. Then she'll join with the Amer-central for the West Indies cruise."

A smile crossed his face as he looked up to see Diane. With a sound of endearment, soft as a dove's murmur she put her cheek to his hair and kissed each graying temple in turn. Field patted her hand as it lay on his arm. He was brought out of the distraction of the moment as the voice on the ediphone barked through,

"What about the Lloyd affair?" "Eh—what's that?" "I said—what about the Lloyd affair?"

"I'm taking that up at the next Atlantic Conference. That's all." Field flicked the switch and stood up, taking Diane's two hands in his. Then he held her away, flooding her from head to foot with an adoring smile. "Well—well. How's my little girl today?"

Diane tapped her chest proudly. "I went way beyond West Point—up and back in under two hours."

"Do you like the boat?" Field's voice was fondly indulgent.

"It's too slow—" She laughed as Field raised an eyebrow. "No silly—its Man of War scared of something—that's what it is—" "It's yours."

His generosity brought her up short and sobered her for a moment. Almost wistfully she put her forehead on his shoulder. His unflinching thoughtfulness, his unflagging interest in her slightest going touch her and flooded her with warmth. He smiled down at her, for he knew she was, in her inarticulate way, saying, "Thanks."

In another moment, though, she was her own gay self. She touched him lightly on the chin, then grasped his shoulders and shook them a little.

"Look here, Mister—you must not. Before you know it I'll be a spoiled daughter of the rich, I warn you—"

Field touched her hair, his fingers lingering on it. "Not this level head—" His voice dropped. There was a husky note in it. "This beautiful head." He stroked her forehead with gentle fingers and drank in every feature of her face—the broad smooth brow, the impudent delicately-cut nose, the fine modelling of high cheekbones

that fell into shadowed exotic hollows, and the firm seductive mouth. And he loved her so. Every gesture she made, every slightest word she uttered was dear to him.

Diane raised her head, smiled at him, then kissed him full on the lips.

"Diane!" Field's voice was suddenly vibrant with ardor. His arms tightened around her, while she clung closely to him. Their lips met again for a long moment. These were the kisses of lovers, for so their relationship was to each other.

Then Diane gently disengaged herself, though her hand still clung to his. "Darling," she said tenderly, "I keep asking myself—am I worthy of Richard Field—of all the love and bigness that's in his heart—" she frowned with the effort of conveying her innermost feelings—"and then you kiss me like that—" she shrugged her shoulders—"so I guess I must be" she finished with almost childish candor.

Richard laughed in the manner of a man richly content with what he has heard. He gathered her into his arms again with a great bear hug.

"And I keep asking myself—how can an old man like—"

"Careful." Diane, with mock severity, held up a warning pink-tipped finger. "I'll be furious."

Richard chuckled. "Sorry." He pretended to cower in alarm. It was a little game they played—their standing joke—that at the first mention of his age, Diane would fly into a virago-like rage. And Richard would, perforce, tremble with fright.

Both of them stood together in silence for a moment, almost one in thought, hearkening back to those days, five years before, when Diane had obtained employment in these very offices. It was during an extensive expan-

sion program. Field had been in the office twenty hours a day and Diane was assigned to him for dictation. The expansion had gone on to success and she had been present through the building of it—through the hard grueling days and nights—week after week—from eight in the morning until three the next.

Then, on top of success had come failure—the bottom had dropped out of everything—and there were more days and nights—fighting together to hold what Field had built up—fighting harder to hold than they had to build.

Other girls had cracked—but Diane had gone on—until everything was all over. Then one day Field rang for her and was told she was in the hospital. And with her absence, came realization of his overwhelming love for her. He visited her at the hospital twice—and the third time was informed she was gone, leaving no word. When he had traced her to another office, she had tried to lie—to say that the girls were worked too hard at the Field offices, but Richard, hardly able to believe what he saw in her eyes—had forced the truth from her—that she loved him!

Diane stirred comfortably in his arms. She knew he was retracing their love-story and was happy in the thought.

"Darling," he murmured, his lips close to her hair.

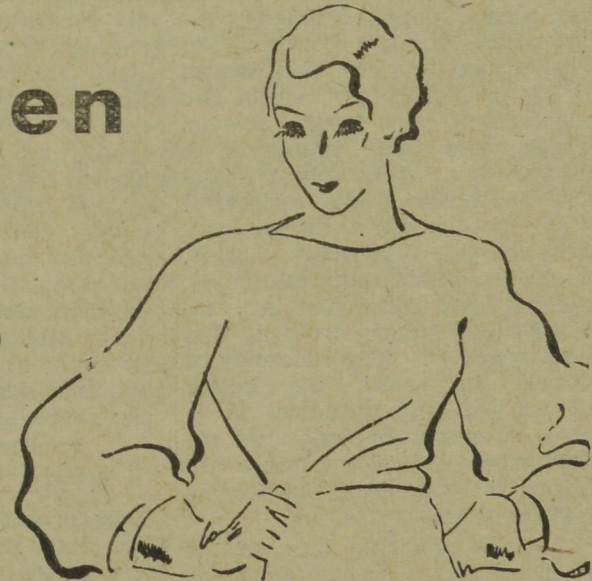
But both their heads turned quickly as the door was flung open with unaccustomed violence. Miss Robbins stood there, embarrassed and agitated.

"I'm—I'm sorry to intrude, Mr. Field," she stammered, "but Mrs. Field is coming in the outer office."

(To be Continued)

Watch for the second installment of this absorbing story of love and adventure next week. Don't miss it!

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