

CHAPTER XVIII A HINT FEOM ANNIE BOYLE

Josie was late. In the breakfast room she found but one guest besides herself, an old lady with a putty face. But there was also a young girl seated at a near-by table who was grumbling and complaining to the maid who waited upon her.

"It ain't my fault, Miss Annie," protested the maid. "The cook says you ordered your breakfast half an hour ago, an' then went away. We tried to keep it hot for you, and if it's cold it's your own fault."

"I was talking with Mr. Kauffman," pouted the girl, who seemed a mere child. "I've a good notion to order another breakfast."

"If you do, cook will tell your father."

This threat seemed effective. The girl, with a sour face, began eating, and the maid came over to take Josie's order. The tables were near enough for conversation, so when the maid had gone to the kitchen Josie said sweetly:

"That Mr. Kauffman's a nice man, isn't he? I don't wonder you forgot your breakfast. Isn't this Miss Annie Boyle?"

"Yes," was the answer. "Do you know Abe Kauffman?"

"I've met him," said Josie.

"He an' Pa used to be good friends," said Annie Boyle, who did not seem at all shy in conversing with strangers, "but Pa's soured on him lately. I don't know why. P'raps because Abe is a German, an' everybody's tryin' to fling mud at the Germans. But Abe says the German-Americans are the back-bone of this country, and as good citizens as any."

"He don't seem to like the war, though," remarked Josie carelessly.

"Well, do you know why? Abe's had two brothers and five cousins in the German army, and all of 'em's been killed. That's why he's sore on the war. Says his brothers deserved what they got for not comin' to America an' bein' American citizens, like Abe is. But I know he's dreadful sorry 'bout their bein' killed just the same. German folks seem to think a good, deal of their families, an' so jest to mention the war makes Abe rave an' swear."

"That's foolish," said Josie. "He'll get himself into trouble."

"Abe's no fool; he knows how far he can go, an' when to stop talkin'. He'll cuss the war, but you never hear him cuss'n' the United States. He told me, just a while

ago, that the war'll make him rich, 'cause he's smart enough to use it for his own good. But he said I mustn't talk about that," she added, with a sudden realization that Josie was regarding her curiously. "Abe an' me's chums, an' what he says is between us. P'raps he was only jokin', 'bout gettin' rich. Abe's a great joker, anyhow."

That this was a rather lame retraction was apparent even to Annie Boyle. She gave Josie a suspicious look, but Josie's face was absolutely expressionless. The maid was placing her order before her and she calmly began her breakfast. A moment later, the old lady rose and tottered out of the room.

"Gee! I wish I had her money," remarked Annie Boyle, looking after her. "She's got a wad of stocks an' just has to cut coupons off 'em. Lives here easy an' don't worry. If I had her dough I'd--" She stopped suddenly.

"Money's a good thing to have," said Josie. "There's Tom Linnet, now; he's going to buy a cigar store."

"How'd you know?" asked Annie quickly.

"Why, he told me."

"Oh; are you an' Tom friends?"

"We're not enemies. Tom's in luck to have so much money."

"Wall," said Annie, "he's a fool to flash it all of a sudden. Pa took him for night clerk when he didn't have a cent--and it wasn't so long ago, either. He gets his board an' five dollars a week. Folks are goin' to wonder where he got all his fine clothes, an' them di'monds, an' how he can afford to buy Barker's cigar store. I asked Abe about it an' Abe says he guesses Tom got the money from an aunt that jus' died."

"Perhaps he did."

"Well, where'd he get the aunt? Tom's got two brothers that are peddlers an' a father who's a track-walker, an' he's got a mother what takes in washin'. If there's an aunt, she's some relation to the rest of the family, so why didn't she leave them some money, as well as Tom?"

"I don't know, but I'm glad Tom is so well fixed," answered Josie, rather absently, for her eye had fallen on the menu card beside her plate, and the menu card had somehow conveyed a new thought to her mind. She picked it up and examined it critically. Part of it was printed in a queer, open-faced type--all capitals--while the balance of the list of dishes had been written in with pen and ink. These printed

bills would do for a good many breakfasts, for they mentioned only the staples, while the supplementary dishes were day by day added in writing.

"I wonder who prints your bills-of-fare?" she said to Annie Boyle.

"Why do you wonder that?" demanded Annie.

"I like the type, and I want to get some cards printed from it."

"We print our own bills," said the child. "There's a press an' type an' the fixings in a room in the basement, an' Tom Linnet used to print a new card every day for all the three meals. He did it at night, you know, between two an' six o'clock, when nobody's ever around the hotel. They was swell bills-of-fare, but Tom claimed he couldn't do so much printin', although that's part o' the night clerk's duty, an' Pa thought it used up too much good cardboard at war-time prices. So now we jus' get out a new bill once a week, an' write the extry dishes on it."

"That does very well," said Josie. "Does Tom still do the printing?"

"Yes. Pa hired him as night clerk 'cause he'd worked in a printin' office an' could do printin'. But since Tom got rich he don't like to work, an the bills ain't printed as good as they used to be."

"This looks pretty good to me," said Josie, eyeing it approvingly.

"I guess, if Tom wasn't goin' to leave, Pa would fire him," asserted Annie, rising from the table. "Good mornin', miss; I'll see you again, if you're stoppin' here."

After she had gone, Josie finished her breakfast thoughtfully. Three distinct facts she had gleaned from Annie Boyle's careless remarks. First, Tom Linnet had acquired sudden riches. Second, the type used on the hotel menu cards was identically the same that the disloyal circulars had been printed from. Third, between the hours of two and five in the mornings, the night clerk's duties permitted him to be absent from the hotel office.

Josie decided that Annie Boyle had not been admitted to the inner confidences of the conspirators, and that Tom Linnet was their tool and had been richly paid for whatever services he had performed. She was now gathering "clues" so fast that it made her head swim. "That chance meeting with Kauffman, at Kasker's," she told herself, "led me directly into the nest of traitors. I'm in luck. Not that I'm especially clever, but because they're so astonishingly reckless. That's usually the way with criminals; they close every loop-hole but the easiest one to peep through--and then imagine they're safe from discovery!"