

CHAPTER X - AT FEINHEIMER'S.

Feinheimer liked Jimmy's appearance. He was big and strong, and the fact that Feinheimer always retained one or two powerful men upon his payroll accounted in a large measure for the orderliness of his place. Occasionally one might start something at Feinheimer's, but no one was ever known to finish what he started.

And so Jimmy found himself waiting upon table at a place that was both reputable and disreputable, serving business men at noon and criminals and the women of the underworld at night. In the weeks that he was there he came to know many of the local celebrities in various walks of life, to know them at least by name. There was Steve Murray, the labor leader, whom rumor said was one of Feinheimer's financial backers--a large man with a loud voice and the table manners of a Duroc-Jersey. Jimmy took an instinctive dislike to the man the first time that he saw him.

And then there was Little Eva, whose real name was Edith. She was a demure looking little girl, who came in every afternoon at four o'clock for her breakfast. She usually came to Jimmy's table when it was vacant, and at four o'clock she always ate alone. Later in the evening she would come in again with a male escort, who was never twice the same.

"I wonder what's the matter with me?" she said to Jimmy one day as he was serving her breakfast. "I'm getting awfully nervous."

"That's quite remarkable," said Jimmy. "I should think any one who smoked as many cigarettes and drank as much whisky as you would have perfect nerves."

The girl laughed, a rather soft and mellow laugh. "I suppose I do hit it up a little strong," she said.

"Strong?" exclaimed Jimmy. "Why, if I drank half what you do I'd be in the Washingtonian Home in a week."

She looked at him quizzically for a moment, as she had looked at him often since he had gone to work for Feinheimer.

"You're a funny guy," she said. "I can't quite figure you out. What are you doing here anyway?"

"I never claimed to be much of a waiter," said Jimmy, "but I didn't know I was so rotten that a regular customer of the place couldn't tell what I was trying to do."

"Oh, go on," she cried; "I don't mean that. These other hash-slingers around here look the part. Aside from that, about the only thing they know how to do is roll a souse; but you're different."

"Yes," said Jimmy, "I am different. My abilities are limited. All I can do is wait on table, while they have two accomplishments."

"Oh, you don't have to tell me," said the girl. "I wasn't rubbering. I was just sort of interested in you."

"Thanks," said Jimmy.

She went on with her breakfast while Jimmy set up an adjoining table. Presently when he came to fill her water-glass she looked up at him again.

"I like you, kid," she said. "You're not fresh. You know what I am as well as the rest of them, but you wait on me just the same as you would on"--she hesitated and there was a little catch in her voice as she finished her sentence--"just the same as you would on a decent girl."

Jimmy looked at her in surprise. It was the first indication that he had ever had from an habitue of Feinheimer's that there might lurk within their breasts any of the finer characteristics whose outward indices are pride and shame. He was momentarily at a loss as to what to say, and as he hesitated the girl's gaze went past him and she exclaimed:

"Look who's here!"

Jimmy turned to look at the newcomer, and saw the Lizard directly behind him.

"Howdy, bo," said his benefactor. "I thought I'd come in and give you the once-over. And here's Little Eva with a plate of ham and at four o'clock in the afternoon."

The Lizard dropped into a chair at the table with the girl, and after Jimmy had taken his order and departed for the kitchen Little Eva jerked her thumb toward his retreating figure.

"Friend of yours?" she asked.

"He might have a worse friend," replied the Lizard non-committally.

"What's his graft?" asked the girl.

"He ain't got none except being on the square. It's funny," the Lizard philosophized, "but here's me with a bank roll that would choke a horse, and you probably with a stocking full of dough, and I'll bet all the money I ever had or ever expect to have if one of us could change places with that poor simp we'd do it."

"He is a square guy, isn't he?" said the girl. "You can almost tell it by looking at him. How did you come to know him?"

"Oh, that's a long story," said the Lizard. "We room at the same place, but I knew him before that."

"On Indiana near Eighteenth?" asked the girl.

"How the hell did you know?" he queried.

"I know a lot of things I ain't supposed to know," replied she.

"You're a wise guy, all right, Eva, and one thing I like about you is that you don't let anything you know hurt you."

And then, after a pause: "I like him," she said. "What's his name?"

The Lizard eyed her for a moment.

"Don't you get to liking him too much," he said. "That bird's the class. He ain't for any little--"

"Cut it!" exclaimed the girl. "I'm as good as you are and a damn straighter. What I get I earn, and I don't steal it."

The Lizard grinned. "I guess you're right at that; but don't try to pull him down any lower than he is. He is coming up again some day to where he belongs."

"I ain't going to try to pull him down," said the girl. "And anyhow, when were you made his godfather?"

Jimmy saw Eva almost daily for many weeks. He saw her at her post-meridian breakfast--sober and subdued; he saw her later in the evening, in various stages of exhilaration, but at those times she did not come to his table and seldom if ever did he catch her eye.

They talked a great deal while she breakfasted, and he learned to like the girl and to realize that she possessed two personalities. The one which he liked dominated her at breakfast; the other which he loathed guided her actions later in the evening. Neither of them ever referred to those hours of her life, and as the days passed Jimmy found himself looking forward to the hour when Little Eva would come to Feinheimer's for her breakfast.