

TWO IN CAPTIVITY

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Two in Captivity by Vincent Brown

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VINCENT BROWN

**TWO IN
CAPTIVITY**

Two in Captivity

BY
VINCENT BROWN



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Contents

BOOK I.	<i>Page</i>
THE WOMAN	3
BOOK II.	
THE GREATNESS OF MAN	87
BOOK III.	
CHERUBIM AND A FLAMING SWORD	165

Deep. Exch. Div. 15: 24

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

BOOK I
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THE WOMAN

Two in Captivity



I

LORD BIR on an afternoon in June tried to kill his friend Lewis Krehl.

Now, in the accounts of men, Krehl was no coward. If, when the bullet sang among the roses, Lady Bir had called on him to save himself, it may be that he would not have stirred from the terrace. But Lady Bir did not speak: she seemed for the moment not to comprehend that this murderous thing had been done; and Krehl, the instinct of self-preservation flaming within him, fled.

He fled into the wood: Bir being a house in a wood, in the swollen deep heart of it; and Lord Bir fired a second time — and as he tried to kill, he had nothing to say, but stood before the open

4 TWO IN CAPTIVITY

window out of which he had walked, less than sober, his face rather less than human.

At the third shot his wife in an abject terror flung herself upon him.

"He is innocent!" she cried; "we are innocent!"

But Lord Bir struck her in the face and called her the name of infamy.

For the blow she cared nothing. It was not the first, and physical pain was a relief. The infamous name took possession of her blood like an ineradicable slow poison.

Krehl, having got beyond the undergrowths into the wood, neither saw nor heard these things. Bits of bark and dried twigs cracked under his feet, and occasionally he sank in leaf-mould and had a sensation as of going through the earth.

He was not more than half an hour in finding his way out of the wood; but the impression upon him was of immeasurable time. It seemed to him that he had been pitched up violently to the doors of space.

He felt utterly defenceless and vaguely