

**TWOK: A  
NOVEL. PART 1-3**

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Twok: A Novel. Part 1-3 by Watson Griffin

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**WATSON GRIFFIN**

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# TWOK:

*A NOVEL.*

BY

WATSON GRIFFIN.

(PART 1. - 11)

HAMILTON, ONT.  
GRIFFIN & KIDNER.

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# TWOK.

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## CHAPTER I.

WHY she was Twok, or who Twok was, Twok did not know. Sometimes she was not quite sure she was Twok at all, or anybody else. Then she would look at her hands and feet, pinch her cheeks and pull her hair, after which she would feel quite sure that she was somebody at all events, else why did it hurt so? Her earliest recollection was a very vivid one—so vivid that it seemed to obliterate all that went before. A little room with a low ceiling, dimly lighted by one window and heated by a wornout stove; a table in the centre covered with an assortment of odd dishes; in one corner a heap of baskets of all sizes and shapes, reaching almost to the ceiling; in another corner a bed on which lay an old man with a long gray beard, who seemed to be in great pain; sitting on a chair beside the bed a sallow-faced old woman. Twok had no recollection of her own place in the room, but knew her heart was aching because she could not ease the old man's pain. Turning uncasily on his bed, the old man raised himself on one elbow and looking eagerly into the eyes of the woman said,

"I would never have left her with you if it had not been for this accident, but if you do her any harm—if you teach her any wickedness—I'll haunt you, old woman, I'll haunt you every day of your life. I haven't made many prayers in my life—not enough to be bothersome—so I guess this one won't be refused. 'Taint like as if I'd been pesterin' Him with prayers mornin' and night till He got tired listenin' to

me. I haven't asked for anything for years before, but ever since I knew this accident was goin' to kill me I have been prayin' that I might be able to haunt you if you do Twok any harm. And I'll do it, Meg, if I have to spend an eternity in hell to pay for it after you are in your grave."

The old woman tremblingly protested that she would not harm the child for the world.

"Then," he continued, "you'll find all I've got in a bag under those baskets. You may have half for keeping her and the rest is for her. You must——"

The sentence was never completed. The old man gasped for breath and fell back on his pillow, dead. There was another blank in Twok's memory after that. Meg's Rest was one of the most popular cheap lodging houses among the canals of Buffalo. The police always had their eyes on Meg, for although they had never detected any violation of the law they knew that she observed it rather from fear than from love, and her lodgers were not always of the most respectable class. Whether or not she believed that the old man would carry out his threat, she never tried to teach Twok any wickedness. She never asked her to lie, or beg, or steal, but endeavored on the contrary to check any such propensities by saying very often,

"If you do that, you'll have the Law on you."

Now, what the Law was Twok did not know, but it became the only terror of her life. She was not at all a timid child, but she had an unbounded dread of this awful, indefinite, vengeful Law. She had once seen a mad dog rushing by and had an impression that the Law was something like that only a thousand times as large. Twok's idea of Law was very like some people's idea of God. Of the fiercest and most wicked of ordinary men she had no fear, but she would hide in fright at the approach of policemen, for they were officers of the Law.

The rough men who frequented Meg's Rest were proud of Twok. They taught her to dance and sing, and when



the little bare feet tapped the floor, while the lovely face was aglow and the blue eyes sparkled with pleasure at their praise, they would have killed anyone who offered to do her harm. Had she been older, they would not have hesitated to urge her to a life of shame and misery ; but she was only a child then, and her purity and beauty made them mannerly in her presence. Perhaps after all their company was better for her at that time than that of the children of the neighborhood, whose young lives were already full of vileness. Meg kept Twok away from other children, never allowing her to play with them.

Many people have an unreasoning dislike of the use of the word "luck." They ascribe everything good and evil to God, and wonder greatly at the mysteries of Providence. Luck is the outcome of a combination of circumstances the result of design but not designed. Many different people design to bring about many different things. They act and react on one another and the result of their designing is a train of events bringing to one evil and to another good. Twok had a piece of good luck one day. She had no idea of her age but must have been about eight years old when passing a store she stopped to examine some gay goods displayed in front. Among other things was a bright red dress which greatly pleased her. Lifting it up she held it beside her own shabby dress. She had no intention of stealing—she knew that was against the Law ; but the store-keeper coming out saw it in her hand and said,

"Ah, you little thief, I'll have the Law on you !"

She was off like a shot, still holding in her hand the dress which she had forgotten to lay down in her fright. The store-keeper ran after her, calling "stop thief," and soon a crowd was following. Twok never looked behind. She was fleet of foot, and as she heard the panting crowd in pursuit she thought the great mad Law was after her. Turning a corner sharply she ran against a tall man.

"Oh, ha ! child," said he, "what's the matter ?"

"The Law is after me."

He did not wait to question, but snatching her up ran swiftly across the street, darted down a lane and slipping into a doorway, closed the door with a bang. Then without stopping he walked slowly up a pair of winding stairs and opening a door at the top entered a room so small that there was only space for a single bed and a wash stand. Sitting down on the bed with Twok still in his arms he looked in silence first at her and then at the dress which she clasped tightly in her hand. At last he said,

"So you've been stealin', have you?"

"No," said Twok, dropping the dress and looking at it in dismay, "I didn't mean to. I was only lookin' at it."

"Well," said he, looking somewhat incredulous, "Who are you and where is your folks?"

"I'm all alone. I have nobody but myself."

"Don't you live with nobody?"

"Yes, I live with old Meg, but she don't belong to me."

"Meg of Meg's Rest?"

Twok nodded.

"Oh, I've heard of you. Do you want to go ho— back?"

Twok looked up at the man. He was thin and haggard and shabbily dressed, and would not have been considered attractive by most people; but there was a kindly look about the eyes and mouth that inspired confidence. She nestled up close in his arms as if sure of his protection and said,

"No. The Law might get me."

"Well, I'm an unlucky dog myself. Was born unlucky— always been unlucky, and you won't get much good from me, but you'll perhaps be better off than with her. Will you go with me?"

"Yes."

"Can you stand hunger?"

Twok nodded.

"And cold?"

Twok nodded again.

"And bein' tired?"

"Yes."

"Well, then it's a bargain. Would you mind givin' me a kiss?"—and he looked half apologetically down at the flushed little face. For answer she put her arms about his neck and kissed him, and then nestled down in his arms again.

"My name is Jake," he said in a moment. "Same as you I have only one name. Never had no father. Leastways I never saw him and he never saw me. We'll both start fresh now. The first thing is to get out of this city. I think we'll steer across the line. That's where you came from, I've heard."

"Where?"

"Canada. Meg told me that your granddad brought you from Montreal when you was a baby. We'll go there. I ain't never got no good in this country and no more have you. Perhaps we'll have better luck there."