

**another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory**



**21 Park Place** by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | SEP  
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New York City on a cold, cloudy afternoon in late January of 1860. William 'Bill' Carter, age 16, is at work in the warehouse of a bootery located at 21 Park Place in lower Manhattan.

"Bill, I'm leaving now," his wiry, middle-age, Caucasian boss said at 3:05 PM. "I think it may start snowing at any moment. Mr. Hall won't be in today. Jane has already left. Just string a few more pairs of shoes with Mary. It should be slow. You two can then leave at four o'clock. Remember to put the *CLOSED* sign on the front door. And, make sure that you lock the back door with the bar."

"Ok, thanks, Mr. Benedict," Bill replied. *He's a good kid. I think he'll go far in life.*

After Mr. Benedict left, Bill gathered some boxes of women's boots out of the second-floor stockroom and then went down to the front of the building where the retail store was. Mary, a 19-year-old lass with brownish red hair, was seated behind the checkout counter, reading a newspaper.

Bill set the boxes down on the counter. "Mary, Mr. Benedict said that we could lock up at four and go home."

"Ah, that was nice of him. I have a lot of washing to do."

"I need to get a high school education, but I don't think one early exit from here is going to help with that."

“Hey, at least we are in America. My parents told me that they were literally starving to death in Ireland after the potato crop failed. I’m grateful to have food to eat every single day.”

“Yes, having a full stomach is great, Mary. But, do you ever aspire to anything better than just being hired help?”

“I’m happy to have a job here, Bill. The owners treat me nice. I have two young mouths to feed. I’m very appreciative. What about you?”

“I want to go to college, but that is never going to happen. Getting a high school diploma isn’t even going to happen. My fate has been set: I’ll just be an errand-runner and a shoe-stringer. I can already see myself being old and bitter.”

“Oh, don’t say that, Bill. This is New York! Anything can happen. You don’t know who you might meet. Just maintain your good work habits and things will fall into place.”

Bill looked down. His dark bangs dangled as he opened two boxes of boots. They then began to lace them in silence. *Why is he so down today on his future here? He just got a raise three weeks ago. Everyone likes him. / I wish I could be as positive as Mary, but I just can’t pretend away the bleakness of my prospects.*

At 3:57 PM, Bill put the lid on the last box and looked at Mary. “I’m tired of this world. I’ve had enough of it.”

“Oh, Bill, don’t be like that. You’re still quite young. You can’t expect a king’s ransom in just nine months. You never know where you might be several years from now.”

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