

BEDTIME Stories

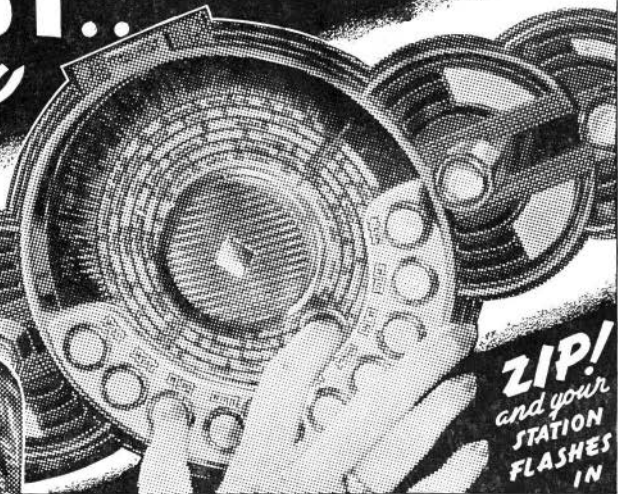
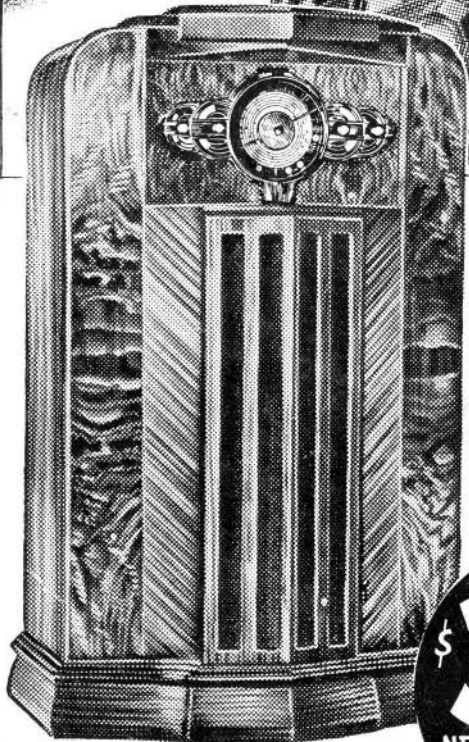
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**HEAVEN
FOR
TWO**
By
TOM KANE



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BEDTIME STORIES



JUNE, 1937

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BEDTIME STORIES, a monthly magazine, is published by the
 Detinuer Publishing Co., Inc., Wilmington, Del.

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 the return of unsolicited manuscripts.*



Let's Write!



NOTICE:—No letter will be published unless the writer gives permission to print his or her full name and address.—*The Editor.*

Dear Editor:

I have been a constant reader of *Bedtime Stories* almost from the first issue and wish to say that the stories are among the best ever published.

I am interested in *Pen Pals* and would like to know if you would publish my letter on your "Let's Write" page. I am 25 years of age—tall, handsome, so the girls say and would like to hear from *Pen Pals* in distant cities.

I was born in Butte, Montana and raised there until I was about 11 years of age when the folks came East.

Please publish this letter—won't you?

Al Delane

Lock Box 205, Oak Park, Ill.

Dear Editor:

I read your magazine and I think it cannot be beat. I would like to join the "Let's Write" column.

I would like to have pen pals from all over the world. I enjoy all kinds of sports. I have brown hair, grey eyes and I am 23 years old.

I would like to exchange letters and photos with everybody.

Very sincerely,

Betty Moore

General Del., Charleston, W. Va.

Dear Editor:

For about one year I have enjoyed reading "Bedtime Stories", and I want to tell you that I think your magazine is grand. The "Let's Write" department is an excellent idea, and

gives one an opportunity to make interesting contacts.

I trust, Dear Editor, that you will publish this letter, so I can greet all members of the "Let's Write" department and tell them I sincerely hope they will heed my call for *Pen Pals*—especially those who live in far away lands.

We are to present this summer, the "Greater Texas and Pan-American Exposition" and there will be much of interest to write to you who may not be able to get here.

I am a young man of medium stature—brown eyes and hair; and have many and varied interests.

Hope to hear from a host of boys and girls.

Sincerely yours,

Horace A. De Ford

1338 Hampton Road, Dallas, Texas

Dear Editor:

I have just purchased my first copies of both your publications, "Tattle Tales" and "Bedtime Stories" and the only word I can find to describe them is "Swell". Needless to say I will be found among your regular readers from now on.

I would appreciate it very much if you would print my letter in the "Let's Write" department, for I wish to correspond with other readers from everywhere.

I am a fellow six feet tall and slim, thirty seven years of age and still single. Come on boys and girls, drop me a line.

Sincerely,

Otis Hutson

Hidalgo, Illinois



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UNINVITED GUEST

By

Arthur Wallace

THE man who drove Kirk Reid up from the station was voluble on the subject of the Spaldings.

"You never seen such a place, Mister," he stated. "I heard tell they ain't got places like it in all of Europe. Why, there's a swimming pool made out of marble near as big as Groton's Pond." He clucked. "There's no tellin' what's likely to happen now that old Peter Spalding's gone. I hear tell that there niece of his is sure cuttin' up."

The station wagon swung into a graveled driveway, pulled up before a huge, pillared mansion. Kirk stepped out, paid off the driver. A butler descended the steps, took his bag.

"This way, sir."

Kirk followed, sweeping his eyes over the far-flung acres of the Spalding estate. From somewhere he could hear the gay, high pitched laughter of women. Two men in white ducks and basque shirts and two women in shorts and breast halters were playing on a double tennis court.

"Miss Spalding is entertaining, I presume," Kirk said.

The butler nodded. "Oh, yes, sir. We have quite a crowd, sir. Most of them are at the pool, sir."

There was a pool. It wasn't too much to expect. Peter Spalding had spent five million dollars developing this estate.

In the mammoth foyer, the butler turned to Kirk. "If you'll let me have your name, sir, I'll know which room you occupy."

Kirk smiled. "Miss Spalding isn't expecting me."

For a moment the butler was nonplussed. He frowned, not at all pleased. "I'm sorry, sir, but Miss Spalding can't see anyone now."

"She'll see me. I'm not trying to sell anything. You say she's at the pool. Which way to the pool?"

"But—but I have strict orders, sir, not to—"

"Forget it, old man." Kirk turned, went down the steps, crossed the meticulously manicured lawn. As he passed the tennis courts, one of the girls, a cuddly, plumpish blonde, reached for

a high one. Kirk blinked as he saw her milky-white left breast pop out of her halter. Calmly, as though nothing untoward had happened, she squeezed the charm back under cover, went on with the game.

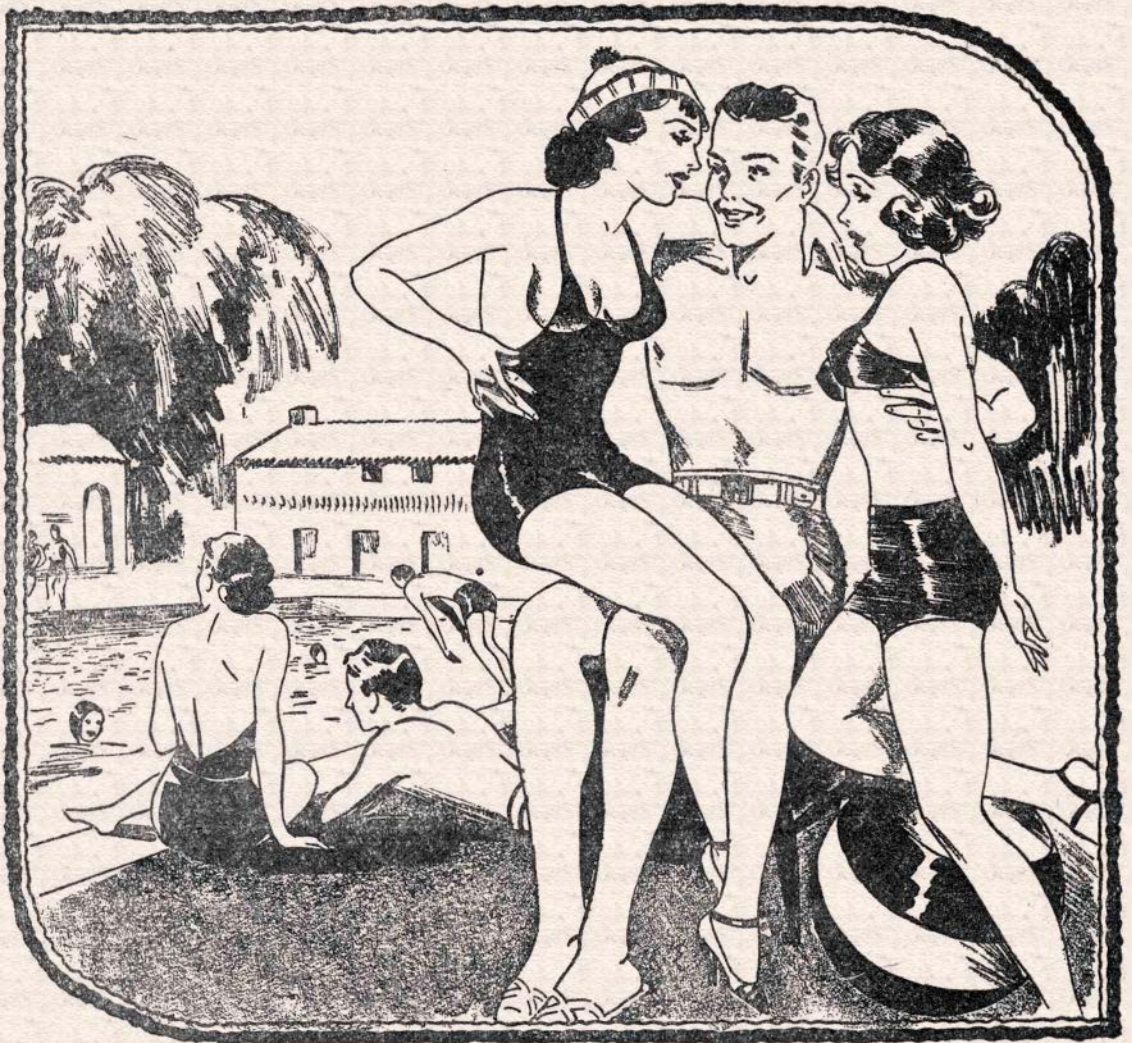
Kirk whistled softly. Old Peter Spalding was probably doing handsprings in his grave. He had always been the epitome of morality. The poor fellow wasn't enjoying much peaceful rest, not with this going on.

Following the sounds of gaiety and splashing, Kirk came upon a tremendous marble pool that had, during Peter Spalding's lifetime, been a sunken garden. A few thousand dollars and Vida Spalding's order had transformed it into a glittering expanse of blue-green water equipped with diving platforms, water chutes and everything conducive to full enjoyment of aquatic sports.

There were at least fifty young people either in or around the pool. Kirk had never seen such a galaxy of femininity, one more shapely than the other. Neither had he ever been an eye-witness to such a collection of abbreviated bathing costumes. They were of all colors, but had one thing in common—brevity. Lastex bras, the cups hardly large enough to accommodate good-sized apples, strove valiantly to cover firm, mature breasts—and failed. Rubber trunks, tight as drum heads, limned the outlines of voluptuously arched hips.

AS KIRK LOOKED ON a tall, broad shouldered young man dove into the pool, came up alongside an amply curved brunette in a white silk bathing suit. The man's arms went around the girl's waist. The upper halves of her breasts, forced out of the bathing suit front, swelled beneath the rippling water. Then, as though it were the most natural thing in the world, the man's mouth swooped down on the girl's encarnadined lips. The crowd around the pool laughed and applauded.

Kirk drew a deep breath. He had heard about Roman orgies and bacchanalian feasts but this was going Nero one better. He could well imagine what went on in the comparative privacy



"I warned you not to look at another female," she said grimly.

of the Spalding mansion boudoirs if this was a sample. Poor Peter Spalding. His soul was probably suffering constant convulsions.

A girl in a red satin suit came running over from the pool, her small, round breasts bobbing like corks on a turbulent stream. She had ash-blonde hair and purplish-blue eyes. She was as pretty as a picture.

"So, you finally did come!" she gasped, grabbing Kirk's hand. "It's so, so good to see you. Now, don't tell me your name. I'll remember in just a moment."

Kirk looked into her glowing eyes. They were fringed with long, curling lashes which added to their soulful limpidity.

"I'm afraid you won't," he said.

She smiled impishly. "Oh, yes I will. A Spalding never forgets."

Kirk started. "Oh, you're Vida Spalding."

This time she laughed. "You see, you didn't even know me! Imagine a guest not knowing his hostess. But I know who you are. You don't think I'd forget a good looking man, do you?" Her retrousse nose crinkled. "Just let me think. You're not Roger Dirk because he's short and fat. You're not Billy Margate because he's in Japan. You're not—"

"I'll save you a lot of breath," Kirk said. "My name is Kirk Reid. I'm from the—"

Her face lighted up. "Of course! Kirk Reid. How could I have been so stupid? I met you at Dolores Vanderveer's cocktail party, didn't I? Weren't you the man who kissed me so divinely on the patio?"

Kirk blushed. "Er—I don't think so. You see, Miss Spalding, I—"

She slipped her hands over his shoulders. "Call me Vida, Kirk. Don't bother explaining now."

Rush into the bath-house, grab yourself a pair of trunks, pick up a cocktail and come on in." She patted his cheek. "But don't you dare look at another girl, understand? You're my own special property this week-end. Now, hurry."

She danced off to the pool leaving Kirk flabbergasted. He watched her go up a springboard ladder, poise for a moment at the cocoa-matted end of the yielding slab of wood, arch out in a perfect swan-dive. So, that was Vida Spalding.

FOR A FEW MOMENTS he looked at the emerald water in the pool. It was a hot day and the train ride from the city had been none too pleasant. One way or the other a swim wouldn't hurt.

The attendant in the bath house picked out a pair of Lastex shorts; white with maroon ribbing. Kirk had been to the beach during the early part of the summer and his nutbrown skin looked well against the white. Too well, to judge from the flock of girls that surrounded him the moment he stepped out.

Vida Spalding rescued him, led him to the pool. "I warned you not to look at another female," she said grimly. "One, two, three . . . dive!"

Kirk went in, still holding Vida Spalding's hand. The water was just cool enough to be delightfully refreshing. When he came up his arm accidentally brushed across the jutting hills of her firm breasts. She felt the contact, smiled up at him.

"Lovely, isn't it?"

Again Kirk turned red. Did she mean the water or her bosom? He coughed to cover his embarrassment.

"Beat you to the end of the pool," she challenged. "A double martini to the winner."

She swam like a fish but Kirk managed to keep abreast of her. Their fingers touched the marble at the same time.

Vida pulled herself up. "Dead heat!" she panted. "That means double martinis for both of us." She motioned to a white-coated waiter. "Two doubles, Andrew."

Kirk swung up, sat down beside her. Now the front of her suit was tight across her breasts. The tautness marked the valley between them. Kirk ran his eyes down her figure. Most girls suffered in a bathing suit. Thighs and legs looked dumpty without high heeled shoes. But not Vida Spalding's. Her thighs were smooth and columnar, melting into slim legs beneath dimpled knees. Her carmine tinted toes twinkled like rubies.

"I must tell you that I—"

"You swim beautifully," she interrupted. "Here

come the drinks. Down the hatch in a hurry because we all have to dress for dinner. It's almost seven."

Kirk took his martini. "But, Vida—"

She placed the rim of her glass against his lips. "A sip for good luck, darling."

Kirk sighed. There seemed to be no way of getting in a word edgewise. Either she cut him off or something happened in the pool that sent her into gales of laughter. When they had finished their drinks, she rose, took his hand.

"Everybody get dressed for dinner!" she announced.

"My clothes are in the bath-house," Kirk said. "I haven't any evening stuff. You see, I didn't—"

Vida pushed him playfully. "Go get dressed. Meet me in the solarium. We'll have a drink together."

KIRK WAS LIKE a Vermont farmer seeing the sights of New York for the first time. He was on a merry-go-round and there was no telling where and when it would stop. He dressed, combed his hair, sauntered over to the mansion. As he walked in, the same blonde whose plump breast had bounced out during the tennis game, took his arm. Now she was garbed in a low-necked satin evening gown that showed the deep cleft between her twin, white globes.

"I'm Dolly Madison," she said, her voice low and throbbing. "Vida told me about you. Why didn't you come last night?"

Kirk gulped. Things were getting more involved every moment. "Because I wasn't invited!" he blurted.

The voluptuous blonde piloted him into the deserted solarium, maneuvered him to a low, comfortable divan. She practically glued her thigh against him, leaned so far over that Kirk couldn't help but see her bosom in almost all its plump, smooth beauty.

"I can't believe it," she cooed. "You're kidding."

Kirk tried not to let himself go. If that happened, the sky would be the limit. "And what's more," he said, "I still haven't been invited!"

The blonde laughed. "Silly goose! You don't have to be invited to Vida's week-ends. You just pack up and come. Everybody does." She ran her blood-tipped fingers over his arm.

Kirk drew a deep breath, inhaled 10 percent air and 90 percent perfume. The former sustained life and the latter set his pulses to pounding. It was a cinch that Miss Dolly Madison was ripe for amour. The rise and fall of her breasts under a low bodice was rapid.

"How about us taking a walk before dinner," she suggested, her cobalt blue eyes wet and sparkling. "Have you seen the garden?"

Kirk was about to consent when Vida Spalding swished into the solarium in a red taffeta gown minus a back and almost minus most of a bodice. What little there was seemed to be glued to her small, round breasts.

She surveyed Kirk on the divan with the blonde. "Cheating on me, are you, Mr. Reid?"

Dolly sighed. "He's divine, Vida. Can't I borrow him for just a short walk in the garden?"

Kirk felt like a heifer up for auction. Vida reached for his hand, practically yanked him to his feet. "Nothing doing my pretty maid. He's my discovery. Aren't you, Kirk? Come on, it's dusk in the garden. Dinner won't be served for an hour at least."

A FULL MOON rode in the western sky. One by one, the stars twinkled as the heavens darkened. Vida, her cool, slim fingers in Kirk's palm,

Kirk dropped down beside her and ran his eyes appreciatively over her figure.

walked him through the fragrant garden, drew up at a log love seat.

This was the opportunity for which Kirk had been waiting. He turned to her, found himself momentarily speechless as he gazed at her perfect features, etched in the moonlight.

"Lovely, isn't it?" she whispered.

Kirk swallowed hard. "Now, listen here, young lady. There's something I've been trying to tell you all afternoon. Once and for all—"

The sweet tips of her fingers sealed his lips. "Not now, Kirk, darling. This moon and the fragrance and the balmy evening. Doesn't it all make you feel—well—romantic?"



Kirk wasn't prepared for what happened, pleasant as it was. He no more expected it than he expected the sky to open up and dollar bills float down. Vida threw her arms about his neck, pressed her parted lips to his mouth.

It wasn't just an ordinary kiss. It was a work of art. Her lips were warm and moist. Kirk could feel her breasts against his chest. He was glad now that he had no evening clothes with him. A boiled shirt would have made the sensation much less enjoyable.

It seemed like blissful hours before she drew her mouth away. Kirk's breath was coming in gasps. Thrills ran up and down his spine when her hands stroked his cheeks.

"I've been this way about you from the moment I saw you, darling," she whispered. "Kiss me again . . . hard!"

There was no denying her. She swayed into his arms, offered her ripe, luscious lips. Somehow, either by accident or design, the bodice of her dress no longer was glued to her bosom. It slipped down, baring all the marbled beauty of her shoulders and part of the perfection of her firm breasts. She sighed softly, squirmed in Kirk's arms and whispered, "Adorable one!"

If she hadn't spoken, the spell would not have been shattered. But the sound of her voice brought Kirk back to earth. This was madness; sheer, unadulterated madness. He released her, sat up.

"This has gone far enough! I want you to know that I came here to tell you that you're broke, penniless!" He gripped her bare arms until she winced. "I'm from the law office of Carter & Wainwright. We have discovered that seven hundred thousand dollars worth of bonds your uncle owned are worthless. At the rate you've been spending money you haven't a dime left. Even this estate is heavily mortgaged. You're broke, do you understand? You're broke!"

SHE SAT THERE, staring at him, almost as though she failed to understand. When she spoke her voice was toneless.

"You—mean all—all this isn't mine?"

Kirk nodded. "That's it."

There was a long moment of silence. It was amazing to Kirk how quickly her manner had changed. The expression on her face was somber seriousness.

"The estate will have to be sold," Kirk said. "What do you intend doing?"

She smiled, wanly. "I don't know. I'll need time to think it over. I'll find something to do

in the city." Her fingers dug into his arm. "Can I come in with you tonight?"

"Yes, but what about your guests?"

"They don't mean a thing to me. I'll ship them back from where they came. I can't be worried about lounge lizards and make-believe debutantes. I've got to go out and get a job."

This time it was Kirk's arms that embraced her; Kirk's lips that brushed against her cheek. "Those words are sweet music, Vida," he murmured.

"I—I don't understand."

His hand crept up her side, gently caressed the curved loveliness of her. "You will, darling . . . soon enough. Now I want to watch you dismiss the gang."

It was a sight worth watching. Kirk would never have imagined she had it in her. Brusquely, she announced the sudden termination of the week-end.

"There's a train leaving at 9:30. Most of you have cars. No dinner will be served. The sooner you leave, the better I like it."

The last befuddled guest departed at nine. A half hour later Kirk and Vida were driving towards the city in Vida's roadster.

It was midnight when they reached Times Square. "I'll stop at a hotel," Vida said. "A cheap one."

Kirk was smiling to himself. "First I'd like you to have a talk with Mr. Carter. He's waiting for you."

WALTER CARTER, THE silver haired lawyer, greeted Kirk and Vida in the parlor of his sedate Fifth Avenue home.

"No doubt Mr. Reid has told you of the unfortunate condition of your uncle's estate," he said. "As executor, it is my painful duty to reiterate that nothing is left. I have no intention of interfering with your plans but I should like to know what course of action you intend to pursue. I can appreciate that it will be hard for one with every comfort—"

Vida grinned. "Fiddlesticks! I'll go out and find me a job. Anything. It's about time I contributed something to society. Don't worry, Mr. Carter. This is the best thing that could have happened to me."

She turned to Kirk and her eyes were soft and wet. "There's only one hitch. I guess now that I'm just nobody you—you—" Her voice choked up.

Kirk came over to her, twined an arm about her waist. "I guess you're wrong, Vida. Whenever you say the word I'm ready."

She smiled wanly. "Can I come into the city with you tonight?" she asked.



She brightened. Walter Carter hid a smile behind his hand. "So," he said, "it's gotten that far, Kirk. Well, I think Miss Spalding could do lots worse. Now I'm content that she'll have someone to watch her money."

Vida laughed. "What money?"

"The money in your uncle's estate. Over a million dollars. You see, he mentioned in his will that he wanted to be certain you had moral and physical courage. I think you have and as executor I willingly turn over the estate to you."

Vida slipped her arms around Kirk's neck. "Not to me, Mr. Carter. To Kirk."

Kirk kissed her tenderly. "To us." He sighed. "Where there's a will—"

Vida finished it "There's a way."

By Phoebe Hart



...LOVE

BETTY came through the front door of her home very quietly, a grim, bitter look on her wan young face. She went into the dining room, picked up a crystal decanter of straight whiskey and trudged on up the steps with it. Her mother and father were in Maine and would not return until tomorrow. The house was very silent, very empty and almost ominous. Such a big old house, it was, with its twenty rooms and its furniture that was getting shabby

and the mortgage that was hanging all over it and would until she married Gadsby Troth.

Upstairs Betty went straight to her room on the front and stood for a long moment at the window watching Gadsby climb into his car, watching the precision with which he opened the door and stepped in and rolled away from the curb. She made a wry little face at the long sleek car as it disappeared into the night. But the wryness turned to stark bitterness as Betty began peeling off

Pandemonium broke loose! For there in the midst of the wedding stood Pansy— Peter's giraffe!



MY PET!

her clothes, one by one, and tossing them over a chair. The straps on her petticoat were broken; one on her brassiere was broken. She turned up a disdainful nose. She hated Gadsby but she had to marry him because her mother had said, "Betty, you must marry Gadsby. He's rich. He has everything. And as you well know your father hasn't been able to get into his old stride since the crash. There is nothing for you to do but marry Gadsby. Oh, I know he is no Adonis. But

he is tall and dark and he has kind eyes."

Betty winced at the thought of Gadsby's kind eyes. He had the kind of eyes that slid over a girl, making her feel undressed, making her feel silly and oh, very occasionally, thrilling her. She supposed she didn't really hate Gadsby. You couldn't let a man hold you in his arms and kiss your lips and caress your loveliness if you hated him. No, she didn't hate him. Just hated to have to marry him for his money. Because her mother

had told her she had to marry him.

Betty sat down then on the chaise longue. She looked very lovely in her blue satin brassiere with her big, voluptuous breasts straining against the soft material and the blue satin panties fluttering silky and lacy around her long, shapely legs. Her hair was the color of wheat with the sunset on it; her eyes were cornflower blue. Even as unhappy and wan and disgusted as she was, her face was lovely. Betty Carmichael Davis had a beautiful little face.

She picked up the decanter of whiskey then and poured herself a tall drink in the crystal glass stopper. She thought: "I'll get drunk. I'll get very, very, very drunk. Then I won't care about anything. Not even about having to marry Gadsby next Wednesday. I won't care that I've never known love and never shall. Yes, I'll get pickled."

And she began wondering how much it would take of the bright fluid to pickle her. She had never taken one drink in her whole young life. But she had heard that in whiskey was forgetfulness and there wasn't anybody who needed forgetfulness more than she did now.

She gulped the drink then. Her blue eyes popped wide open, she choked and sputtered and gasped. "Whew-w-w-!" Then she wondered if her stomach was going to flame. It had never felt so hot. She sat there for some minutes then courting forgetfulness. But she could still see Gadsby's face in her mind, she could still feel the warmth of his kiss on her mouth, the excited caress of his fingers on her shoulders, her arms, her legs. She poured another drink. A bigger one. "This will do it," she told herself grimly.

AND THEN, JUST as she was about to gulp down the second one, her eyes bulged, her heart began to pound and a damp perspiration broke out on her temples. She jumped up from the chaise longue in horror, her big jellied breasts quivering and shaking on her frame. She cried out, "Oh-h-h-h-, I've got D T's. On one drink! I've got D T's!" For she was seeing things. She was seeing a horrible thing! For at the window was a Thing, a queer, strange, inconceivable thing with blazing eyes and funny ears and a snoutish sort of face. She thought, "I had heard you saw pink elephants—but—but not monsters like that! I'd rather think of Gadsby—than have that Thing before my eyes. It's worse than pink elephants. It's—it's awful!" And she closed her eyes and hoped fervently that when she opened them the Thing would be gone.

But it wasn't. It was still there with its fiery eyes and its fuzzy face and the door bell was

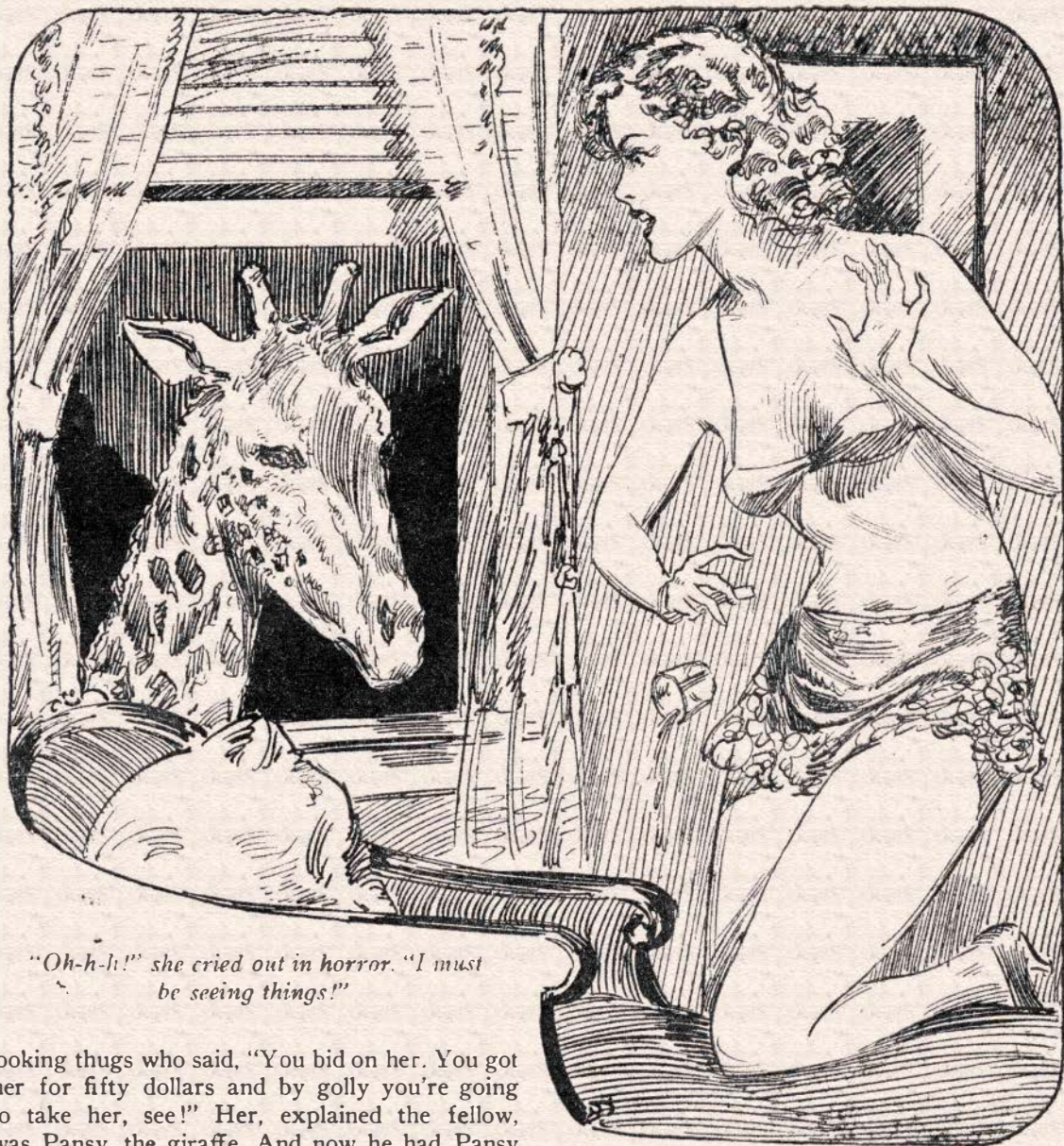
ringing furiously. "Why it's ringing the bell!" she cried out. "That monster is ringing my front door bell!" And her heart pounded more wildly than ever and her legs felt fluid beneath her. Then, all at once, she was conscious of a voice. Was it that monster's voice? She heard it saying "Hey, I can see the light in there! Why the hell don't you answer my ring. Say-y-y, for Pete's sake answer the bell, open the door. . . . I need help!"

Betty's brain began to clear then. That monster wouldn't have a voice like that. A husky, mannish voice. She went to the window, almost fearfully; her legs shaking. She peered out. And there at her front door stood a tall young man, a very handsome blond young man, holding a rope. And the rope was around the neck of the monster. Only it wasn't a Thing or a monster at all. It was a giraffe! It was a very pleasant benign looking giraffe when you really looked at him. Betty began to laugh. She leaned out of the window. "What on earth," she asked, her eyes dancing.

The young man scratched his blond thatch, he grinned up at her. He said, "Help a fellow out, will you? Come down and let me in. I'll tie Pansy—that's this giraffe—to one of the pillars." Then his face sobered, his eyes became beseeching. "Please," he went on, seriously. "I've got to have help. I can't go streaking into the city with this animal."

Betty hurried down the steps forgetting that she had on only the blue brassiere and the blue panties. But she remembered quickly enough when the tall, blond young man stepped through the door and then stopped short, his gaze moving dark and secret all over her. She remembered then and tried to cover the whole of herself with her hands but the fellow only laughed and said, "Don't. Please. You're too lovely like that. And besides that bras and those panties aren't any more revealing than the modern bathing suits."

Then he was going into the living room and pacing anxiously up and down the floor. He was, he told her glumly, on a spot. He had been to the circus just outside of town. The circus had gone broke. The sheriff was there and creditors and what not. For it turned out that it wasn't a circus after all. It was a public auction. The circus people were auctioning everything they had, including Pansy. "And I got Pansy," said the young man, clucking his tongue lugubriously against his teeth, "by merely scratching my head. I always scratch my head. It's a habit. But this time the auctioneer thought I was bidding and the first thing I knew I was surrounded by five ugly



"Oh-h-h!" she cried out in horror. "I must be seeing things!"

looking thugs who said, "You bid on her. You got her for fifty dollars and by golly you're going to take her, see!" Her, explained the fellow, was Pansy, the giraffe. And now he had Pansy and she wouldn't fit into his car and he couldn't walk the ten long miles into town and he didn't know how to ride a giraffe.

He had seen the light in Betty's room. Her house was the only one around these parts that he could see. He was in a tough spot, he needed help and advice. What should he do. "I," finished the chap, lamely, "am Peter Vine. And I'm open to suggestions!" And he began scratching his head anxiously.

BETTY DROPPED DOWN into the depths of a barrel chair, her long legs sprawled before her, her breasts quivering with the laughter that shook her small body. For a long while she laughed and

the young man just stood there in the center of the room, resenting that laugh at first, and then staring at her and seeing how lovely she was, he began to laugh, too. A laugh that was all mixed up with blood that was flaming in his veins and pulses that were throbbing and a queer little indescribable feeling surging all through him.

Peter Vine had never seen a girl as pretty as Betty Carmichael Davis! He had never seen a girl before who made him want to go straight to her and take her in his arms and kiss her fiery mouth. He was feeling like this now, with his heart thundering and his troubles all oozing away under the spell. Indeed, he almost forgot Pansy

who was tied outside awaiting her fate. Peter said, "Who are you?"

Betty stopped laughing finally. She told him who she was and that she was sorry for his plight. "But," she giggled. "I can think of no out for you. I'd like to. But I can't. And Pansy is rather big for a household pet."

"I have a house," said Peter, glumly, "on the other side of town. I'm from New York. I just bought it because I went rustic, wanted a horse of my own and stuff. Now I wish I had stayed in New York. Acquiring a giraffe isn't only rustic . . . it's damned junglish."

Betty said, "I'll tell you what . . . !" And then her voice broke off on a sharp note, the words died on her lips. For she was looking into Peter's fine blue eyes, she was reading the message in them . . . the admiration and sincerity and the kindling of love. Her blood flamed and her heart contracted, almost painfully. She felt his eyes moving down from her face to her shoulders, the blue brassiere, the little expanse of flesh at the top of her panties, the long, white legs.

She thought, excitedly, "I must remember I'm engaged to Gadsby. I mustn't go hay-wire now over a man I've never seen before." But when Peter began, the emotion he was feeling resounding in his voice, "What were you saying, Betty?" and she could not find words, could not speak but could only sit there going hot and cold alternately, she realized with something almost like fear in her heart that there was such a thing as love at first sight and that she was now the victim of it.

"Why I don't remember what I was saying." She stood there then, her fists clenched at her sides, looking out at Pansy who was nibbling leaves from the high branches of a sycamore.

She heard Peter coming softly across the dark room behind her, and then when he put one hand on her bare shoulder and looked deep, deep into her eyes, she thought, wildly, "And I'm to miss love! I'm to miss loving and being loved by a man like Peter! I'm to marry Gadsby whom I don't love!"

Peter said, "You're feeling this, too, Betty. I can see it." He paused, swallowed hard. "I always thought love at first sight was just a lot of truck. But it isn't. Tonight has proved that."

ONE ARM WENT GENTLY around Betty's waist, one hand slid up the smooth warm flesh of her arm. A quick tremor shot through her and her blonde head whirled. She told herself, "Steady, Betty. Steady. This isn't playing cricket with Gadsby. This isn't sporting. You're engaged. You

owe Gadsby fidelity. And you ought not to be thinking about Peter Vine's muscular arms, his fine big body, his almost sensuously magnetic mouth!" Aloud she said, "Please don't, Peter. Please."

Peter was breathing hard now, there was infinite tenderness and love in his blue gaze as it swept over her—her face, her young trembling body, the blue satin brassiere that was rapidly rising and falling, the long white legs that were shaking a little at the knees. Peter whispered, "Betty . . . Betty!" And as he took her in his arms, crushing her wildly, desirously to him, Betty thought: "After tonight I'll never know love. I'll never have a chance to. It couldn't do any harm if I love Peter tonight—and give my mother and Gadsby my future! I owe myself this one hour of love! I'll never forgive myself if I don't grab it now and hug it to my heart forever and forever, a memory to keep me warm and make me feel alive when I'm Gadsby's wife!"

And when Peter's mouth moved gently over her face and came at last to her lips, he found them warmly responsive; he found her body responsive, too, meeting pressure with pressure, her young arms curved close and warm about his shoulders. She felt him stiffen excitedly, she heard his voice in her ear, "You see, Betty—it is love at first sight. Oh, I knew you felt it, too."

And then his kisses were everywhere, on her lips, her cheeks, the soft curving white of her throat and shoulders. His hands went wildly over her, a voyage of blissful discovery. And finally with a little groan, a little gasp, Peter swung her up into his arms and carried her masterfully to the sofa in the unlighted library across the hall. He deposited her gently on the sofa and his lips found hers again, his hands moved over her as before. With his kiss, a kiss that was destined to last an infinite time—if not in reality, always in Betty's memory—Peter whispered, "Betty . . . Betty—tomorrow we'll be married, darling. Tomorrow!" Betty didn't deny it. She didn't say anything. She couldn't. The moment had stolen her voice, her words, her very thoughts. She sighed rapturously.

And Pansy was forgotten.

A LONG WHILE LATER Betty was feeling as if her young heart would break. Peter had left. Peter had left pulling that rope and guiding Pansy along behind him. And Peter had left furious when she had told him that she was to be married next Wednesday to Gadsby Davis.

Peter had turned starkly white. He had jump-

ed up from the sofa, "You can't mean it," he had cried out. "Not now—not after tonight! I don't believe you!" But in the end he had believed her though he didn't know why she was marrying Gadsby nor why she had let him hold her in his arms and make love to her. And he had left, puzzled, worried, scratching his blond thatch.

Betty was sleeping fitfully on the sofa in the library when her mother and father came bursting into the house, dragging suitcases behind them, calling lustily, "Betty! Betty! Darling, we are back!"

do that. Gadsby would help father once she was married to him.

Mrs. Davis said, importunately, "Run upstairs and get dressed, angel. We've got your trousseau to buy, you know. I want you to have lovely things. A bride should. We'll charge them, of course. Our credit will be good when the stores know you're marrying Gadsby Troth on Wednesday. They'll bow to us so much they'll have humps on their backs! It'll be fun!"



*"You little spitfire!" he cried
"What is the matter with you?"*

Betty went out then to see them and she kissed her mother indifferently and her father warmly. Father was a peach. Father had said, over and over, "Mother, don't rush Betty into this marriage with Gadsby. She doesn't love him. We can get along somehow without that. I think I'll be able to land a position, a good paying position, soon. I have leads and hopes. Don't make Betty marry Gadsby."

Betty had known then that she was going to marry Gadsby as much for father as mother. Father was so down, so desperately in need of money. And it would be nice to see father smiling and happy and secure once more. Gadsby could

So Betty and her mother had gone shopping. All day they went from store to store, buying, charging, having gorgeous dresses and night-gowns fitted, selecting infinitesimal wisps of lingerie. The Paris *couturier* at the Francaise Shoppe was a man. A slim, good looking dark young man who had a smile rather like Peter's.

Betty kept looking at him, thinking of Peter; and when they were in the little booth alone, Mrs. Davis having gone galloping around the store for handkerchiefs, pocket-books and a good many other things, Pierre began taking a long while to fit Betty's wedding dress. His hands swept over her, across her shoulders, around her slim waist

and down the smooth line of her lovely hips.

Pierre said, "Ah, lovely, *Mademoiselle!* You will make a gorgeous bride!" And he kissed the tips of his bunched fingers to her, he sighed, he gurgled. Finally, when Pierre was fitting the bodice of the gown, his nimble fingers tucking the thick ivory satin beneath the pout of her big breasts, the man began to tremble.

Betty said, "What on earth is the matter with you?"

Pierre looked into her face with wild eyes. "*Monsieur Troth* is so fortunate. I am beside myself with envy!" And a little crooked smile played about his lips, the corner of his mouth turned down so like Peter's. Something came into her eyes and Pierre saw it. He thought it was meant for him. He gurgled, he took a step toward Betty. He cried, "*Mademoiselle!*"

And he crushed her in his arms. Almost before Betty knew what was happening Pierre was kissing her fiercely, his hands sweeping over her. Finally, her wits collected, Betty shoved him off. "What on earth is the matter with you?" she asked, furiously.

Pierre's gaze widened. He was breathing hard. He could hardly talk. "But *mam'selle's* eyes," he stammered. "I read *mam'selle's* eyes. I thought—"

"You thought wrong," snapped Betty. "Get on with your sewing and fitting—and control yourself!"

Pierre bit his lips. He was thinking now of his job. If *Madame Francaise* found out about this he would be fired before anyone could say Lafayette! He became unctuous. He said, "A million pardons. The look in your eyes was for *Monsieur Troth*. I am sorry. I misunderstood. Always brides are not in love with the men they have chosen to marry, *mam'selle*, and . . ."

THE AWKWARD, DIFFICULT moment was broken by the appearance of Mrs. Davis, her arms full of bundles. "I bought myself some things, too!" chirped Mrs. Davis. And Betty groaned. "Now I'll have to marry Gadsby," she thought, miserably. For until this minute she had thought there might be a way to escape—some opening—something—perhaps Peter . . . !

But now it was hopeless. Father could never pay these bills. They would crush him burn out his last pitiful hope. No, there was no out now but Gadsby. Betty lifted her chin, her eyes became grim. What had to be, had to be. She would make Gadsby a good wife. A faithful one. And never again as long as she lived, except on very special moments, would she think of Peter and

remember his smile and his eyes and his hot young kisses.

The weeks passed in a blaze of parties for the affianced couple. Wedding gifts in crisp white tissues poured into the Davis' house. Mrs. Davis fingered the expensive silver with ardent eyes, she purred over the tapestried wing-back chair that came, the Limoges dinner set, the Sevres breakfast set, and the other priceless lovely gifts that were sent.

Betty didn't see Peter again and she wondered where he was and what he was doing and what had become of Pansy. Peter had probably given him to the city zoo by now or he had sold him to another circus unit. She thought, miserably, "I shall never be able to look another giraffe in the eye without my heart aching!"

After the parties each evening Gadsby always suggested a drive in the country "to get the smoke out of their lungs and to put the sparkle of life back in their eyes". That's what Gadsby said but that wasn't what he meant. Gadsby had a particular place in the country to which he drove. A little secluded lane. A place where there was no traffic. He always went straight there, parked the massive roadster that had cost five thousand dollars and turned off the ignition. Then he said, "Ah, isn't this lovely!" and presently he would take Betty in his arms and kiss her mouth and caress her knees and arms and shoulders.

For a few nights Betty had thrown herself into a responsive mood, hoping valiantly that Gadsby's kisses and his gentle caresses would help her to forget Peter. But each night she grew more restive beneath his affection, more resentful and on Tuesday night, just twelve hours before they were to be man and wife, she boxed his ears soundly and spat out, "Stop it!—do you hear! Stop it!"

Gadsby's black eyes blazed. His shining black hair had almost risen on his scalp with indignation. He had cried, "You little spitfire! What is the matter with you?" And then he saw the tears brimming on her lashes and her lips puckering with an effort not to cry, he said, "Oh, say, I am sorry. Too many parties, eh. Too much excitement. Perhaps you need rest." Betty nodded gratefully only in the next second to go sick and quivery around the heart. For Gadsby was not to be put off with a slap or because of her fatigue as he had described it.

He kissed her again and groaned a little with delight when she did not repeat the slap and Betty said in her miserable thoughts, "Oh, why not. *Why not*. I might as well get used to Gadsby kissing me. I've got a life of his kisses be-



fore me!" and she went limp in his embrace and Gadsby thought he had never known her to be so sweet and responsive before!

MRS. DAVIS HAD decided that the wedding should be on the lawn. "Because," she had explained to Betty and Mr. Davis and Gadsby, "I think a wedding out-of-doors is so picturesque. So utterly lovely. Something to remember always and always! And we've invited around three hundred people and though our house is large, the out-of-doors is larger!"

And so now it was Wednesday morning and the florist was on hand making an altar of roses and roping off an aisle with white satin ribbon and sticking up wicker posts with cornucopias of flowers. The caterer was on hand, too, spreading tables for the wedding breakfast far back of the house in a bower of rambler roses. It was going to be a very pretty affair, thought Betty standing at the window, her white satin flowing like water over her lush young curves, the tight bodice that Pierre had fashioned bearing up nobly under the pressure of her enormous breasts.

There was only one thing wrong with the whole wedding—and that was the bridegroom. If only she wasn't marrying Gadsby. If only she were marrying Peter! Tears sprang into her eyes then and she fought them bravely for her father mustn't see how unhappy she was. It would be like her father exactly to race around at the last minute and call the whole thing off. He would do that, too, if he had the least suspicion of her misery.

At high-noon Mrs. Davis fluttered in, resplendent herself in a new beige lace dress with a ruffled skirt, and helped Betty with her veil. She pinned it on Betty's curls, she expertly adjusted the orange blossoms, her nimble fingers swept down over the frothy white tulle drawing it out in back where it lay gracefully on the long white satin train. Then Mrs. Davis stood back and clucked her tongue against her teeth and said, "Ah-h-h, Gadsby Troth is a lucky man! Betty, you're utterly beautiful!" Mrs. Davis was standing there then, wagging her head right and left, staring at her daughter, thinking what superb breasts she had and such a trim waist and long, lovely legs, when the telephone shrilled through the house. Betty's eyes glowed, her heart jumped, "It's Peter," she thought instantly. "It's Peter!"

But it wasn't Peter and even if it had been she couldn't have done anything about him. It would have been too late. Too late! It was Pierre

Shoppe. His voice was excited, the wire almost vibrated with his words, "Mam'selle," he spouted. "I cannot get you off my mind. Since that day—ah, mam'selle, I can feel your softness beneath my fingers. I can feel the warmth of your lips. Mam'selle, do not marry Monsieur Troth. He is too old for you. He cannot show you love—life. Mam'selle, if I come instantly in my little car, will you run away with me? Will you?"

Betty said, "Oh, for heaven's sake," and hung up. Pierre begging her to run away with him. Tears stung behind her eye-lids, a lump rose in her throat. Mrs. Davis said, "What on earth was it, Betty?" And Betty made a feeble attempt to grin. "Nothing. Just a wrong number," she said.

AFTER THAT BETTY hardly knew what happened. She vaguely remembered walking down the broad white steps of her house with the noon day sunshine beaming all around her; she remembered her hand in her father's arm and her father saying, "Don't be nervous, dear. Don't tremble like that. It'll all be over in a minute." She remembered him saying, too, "Are you sure you want to marry him, Betty? It's not too late to change your mind, you know. I don't want you sacrificing your life for mother and me. We've had our day—and our happiness. Your life is just beginning."

She remembered trying to smile and saying, "I want to marry Gadsby, Daddie, darling. Don't worry. I wouldn't if I didn't want to!" And then she had walked that hesitating step down the ribboned aisle feeling three hundred pairs of eyes on her and Gadsby's black eyes watching her approach him. . . . Gadsby standing there at the end of the aisle with his good looking best man at his side. She thought, "No man walking to the chair at Sing Sing ever felt any worse than I do this minute!"

And then she was at the altar, slipping her gloved fingers through the crook of Gadsby's proffered arm. The ceremony began—then someone in the congregation screamed and that scream was taken up by another woman and still another woman, until presently everyone was screaming and people were running pell mell all over the lawn. For there in the midst of the wedding stood Pansy! And around Pansy's tall, thin neck was a huge sign in bold black letters. The sign said:

"Don't do it, Betty! You love me! I love you. . . Peter!"

Gadsby was howling, "What the hell is the meaning of this. Who did that! Who brought

this beast to the wedding?" Mrs. Davis was being held up by Mr. Davis who was about to give out with her weight.

Mrs. Davis was yelling, "Oliver! Do my eyes deceive me? Is that a giraffe? Oliver, I didn't have too many drinks before the wedding, did I? Oliver, tell me you see that giraffe, too! Tell me I'm not tight!"

Mr. Davis said soothingly, "You aren't tight, darling. There is a giraffe at the wedding. I think he's harmless." Then Mrs. Davis saw the sign. Her eyes bulged. She cried out, "What is the meaning of that? Betty doesn't know anybody named Peter. I know everyone Betty knows! There's a lunatic at large around here. Oliver, save me! Save me!"

And Betty, in the midst of all this, began laughing. She laughed until tears streamed down her cheeks and the satin bodice split across her big jutting bosom and her chaste white veil went askew on her golden curls.

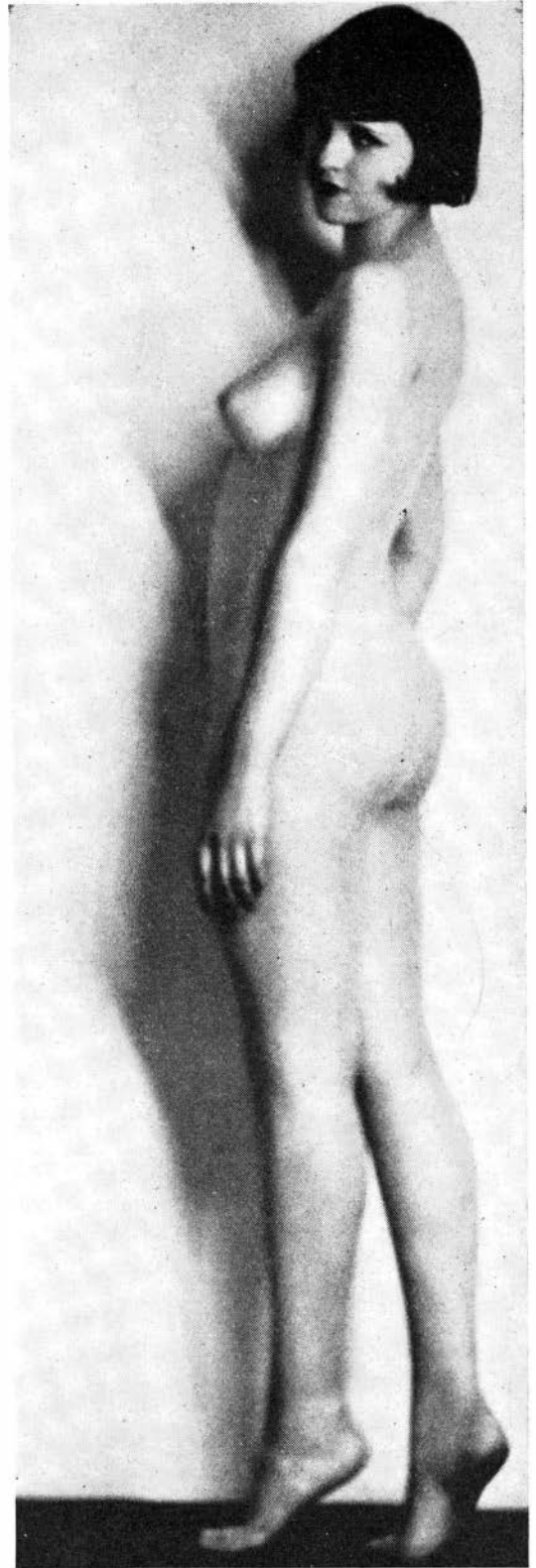
But when she saw a long maroon roadster exactly like Gadsby's pull up at the curb, when she saw Peter stick his blonde handsome young head out of that roadster and grin at the confusion, she ceased laughing. She went straight to that car, furious. She looked Peter in the eye. She said, "You don't know what you've done!"

"I've broken up your wedding," said Peter. "I meant to. I found a use for Pansy." He grinned again. "You can't marry Gadsby Troth, Betty. You love me. You know you do."

BETTY'S LOWER LIP BEGAN to pucker. She fought the tears that crowded into her eyes. And she fought the weakness of her heart—a heart that was crying out for Peter, wanting him, loving him, not at all furious with him though he had done this terrible thing to her mother and father. It took only the bills at the stores and the remembered hurt and worry in her father's eye to give her courage, however.

Then she said, evenly, "Yes, I love you, Peter Vine. I love you with all my heart. I'll always love you. But I have to marry Gadsby. I have to!" And she told him everything, the words tumbling one over the other through her pretty crimson mouth. When she had finished tears were streaming down her cheeks from beneath her long black lashes. She said, "So now you know. Now you know why I'm marrying Gadsby though I don't love him."

Peter opened the roadster door. With one big grasp he had Betty under the arms, he was drawing her into the car on the seat beside him, he was kissing her lovely, quivering mouth. He said,



"Oh, you little darling. You precious little darling! I thought I loved you before—with all my heart! But seeing you again, now, in your beautiful white satin that is ripped across your bosom, darling—and your white veil!—and knowing the goodness of your heart, the unselfishness . . . why, I love you more than I thought it was possible for me to love any one!"

"But Peter," said Betty. "Let me go. I explained everything. Call off your giraffe, Peter. Take him away. I've got to marry Gadsby!"

And then they saw Gadsby streaking across the lawn towards them. Gadsby's face was shaken with fury, his hands were clenched at his sides until his knuckles showed white, the cords of his neck were rigidly livid. Peter said, "Whew! Look at that cyclone bearing down on us!" And before Betty could catch her breath he started the car, pulled away from the curb and was hitting it down the pike at seventy-five miles an hour. He was saying, "I know a nice Justice of the Peace up the road. You'll make a beautiful bride. Mrs. Peter Vine. Mrs. Betty Vine! And that makes a pretty name, too."

"Peter!" screamed Betty. "You can't do this! You can't!"

"You love me, don't you, Betty?"

"Oh, yes, Peter . . . but . . ."

"And you were marrying Gadsby for his money—to help your dad—to obey your mother!"

"Yes-s-s-s-s-s. . . .!"

"Well, when you marry me, Betty, you will have killed two birds with one stone, sweets! You see you love me—and I have money. I'm lousy with money!"

"Peter, you're lying!"

"I'm not," said Peter, grinning. "I'm rich as hell. And for the first time in my life I'm damned glad of it."

"Peter!"

Peter only grinned again and stepped on the gas, holding the pedal to the floor. Another five miles down the road he swung his long roadster

through stone gates. Into a magnificent estate. Up before a great stone mansion of early English architecture—medieval—a moat, a drawbridge, turrets and towers. It was a gorgeous place and Betty knew that it must have cost a fortune to have built it. Peter said, "This is my home—our home, Betty—where you and I will live happily forever afterwards! And your family, too, if you want them. Though they may prefer a home to themselves!"

Betty could only gasp "Peter!" her blue eyes sparkling.

AND THEN PETER WAS pulling Betty out of the car, he was leading her across the lawn and down to the edge of a little brook that was enclosed from all eyes by pine shrubs and azalea bushes and big clotted cedars. He swept her excitedly behind a perfumy shrub and crushed her in his strong young arms and kissed the half-parted lips hungrily.

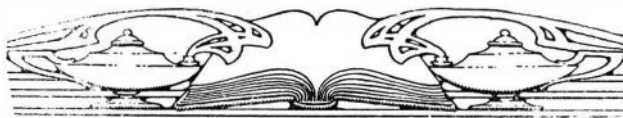
He said, tenderly, "I had to bring you here. Betty—I had to kiss you—love you—oh, just a little before we dash along to the Justice of the Peace. I've waited a week to do this, darling . . . and I couldn't wait another minute. I'm an impatient guy."

And then his mouth was mashing down on hers, his hands were all over her, his heart thumping wildly against one of her pouting breasts. Betty went limp with joy and excitement. She returned Peter's kisses with fervor, with utter abandon. She said, into one of them, "I love Pansy, Peter. You must find her a nice Zoo!"

Peter lifted his mouth from Betty's only long enough to shake his head. He said, "I wouldn't part with Pansy for a million dollars. Not now, Not after what she did for me today. Pansy stays! Love me—love Pansy!" Peter finished with a commanding voice.

"It's easy to love Pansy!" whispered Betty. "I adore Pansy!"

Which she certainly did!





New Moon—New Love

By

Otto Nelson

TAKE the profile of a big movie star, the physique of a college football hero, the charm of the worldly sophisticate and the clothing of a popular New York clubman and you have a slight idea of Dave Orth. For good measure mix in plenty of money and then sit back and wonder why and how it was that Dave had such an appeal for the opposite sex. Women went for him like hungry trout after brightly colored flies.

With the attractive Dave it was a case of off with the old love and on with the new. He loved 'em and left 'em in quantities. But he never broke any hearts, was never mentioned in any divorce suits and his lady loves, although they sighed a little sometimes, always remembered him kindly.

Dave's worst enemy couldn't say he didn't play the game squarely. He was really an expert in all amorous matters. He never horned in, unless absolutely necessary, when a girl was interested in someone else. And, to his credit, Dave left married women strictly alone.

"Try to make a good little wife," he said more than once, "and all you'll get out of it is a beautiful headache and a lawyer's bill. Nix on the gals who leave their wedding rings at home!"

One sunny spring morning Dave received an engraved invitation to a week-end party at the Schuyler's Westchester estate. The place was near Rye and was called Sunny Acres. Dave liked everything about the invitation. Rye—that appealed to him. Sunny Acres—wide porches, garden nooks, woods for walks in the moonlight. Every time he had gone there he had always run into some interesting young lady who made the week-end one hundred percent perfect. He always returned to town with a couple of brand new telephone numbers, collars smeared with lipstick and the memory of particularly delicious kisses enjoyed from Friday's dusk through to Sunday night.

He had his coupe washed and polished for the occasion. His man Wilson pressed all his best sports clothes and his dinner suit. Came

the afternoon when he was ready to shove off for Sunny Acres and—a telephone call.

That was from Gladys Joyner, an old flame with whom Dave was on the best of terms.

"Listen, priceless," Glad cooed. "Bound for the Schuyler's perchance?"

"Nowhere else but," Dave assured her.

"You can't see my thumb but how about giving a gal a lift?"

SO AT FOUR-THIRTY Dave lingered long enough at an address on Seventy-second Street to pick up the vivacious Miss Joyner.

She climbed in beside him, a slender, dark girl with flashing white teeth and dreamy eyes. Her romance with Dave had lasted longer than most. It covered one spring, one summer and half of a golden autumn.

"Expectant?" Gladys asked, when they were headed north.

"Naturally. The birds, the bees, the butterflies and the balmy spring air in the country."

"Not to mention the blondes, the brunettes and the platinums. Oh, Dave. When are you going to snap out of it and settle down?"

He grinned. "I haven't even settled up yet."

Gladys stared pensively ahead through the windshield. "Sometime," she murmured, "you're going to make a mistake and then there's going to be hell to pay. No man, unless possibly he's a Sultan, can get away with it. You're going to slip and then the fun'll begin, for everybody but you."

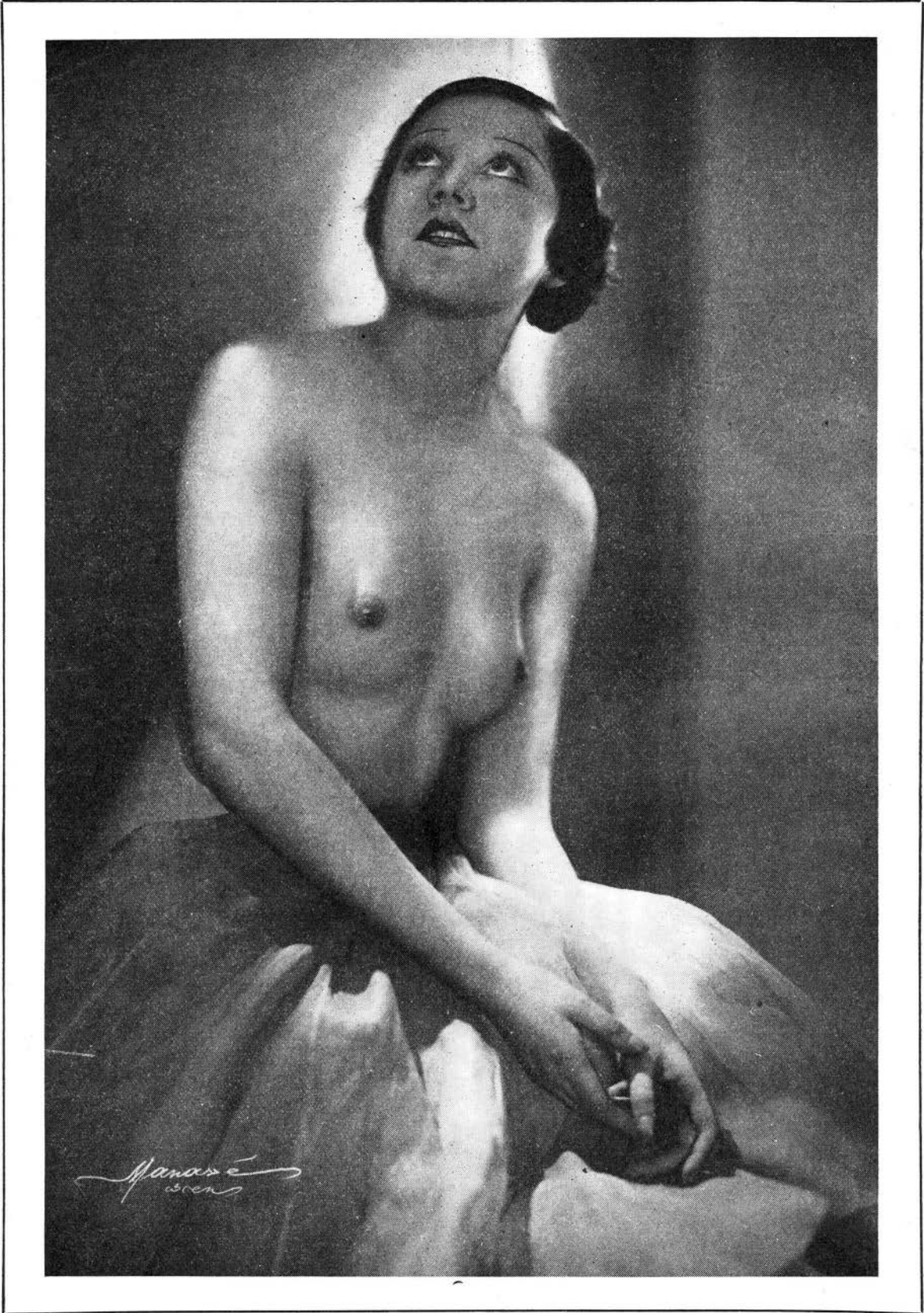
Dave stretched out a hand and patted her knee. It was a nice knee, rounded and only lightly concealed by thin knitted wool.

"Yes, darling, undoubtedly. But I shall never worry while you're around. You won't let me fly out at center field or get caught off first."

Laughter escaped the red lips of Gladys. "Wouldn't I? Don't be too sure, my fine fellow. Perhaps I still have enough sentiment in my system to be just a little jealous—to be mean enough to get a kick out of seeing you in a jam, Davey boy. Get that?"

"Merciless jade!"





Gladys pursed her crimson lips. "I'm serious. I mean it. If you get yourself in a spot at Sunny Acres you'll have to get out of it yourself. I'm not waving any red flags or tipping you off."

They pulled into the Schuyler's place toward five o'clock. Sunny Acres was one of those miniature pseudo-English estates with a faithfully copied timbered villa, a pond full of swans and cygnets, formal gardens dished up all over the works, tennis courts and a private nine-hole golf course.

Old Thompson Schuyler had made his dough in the carpet business. He had doubled it in Wall Street, married an ex-show girl, stocked his cellar with the best liquor and settled down to grow prize nasturtiums and a red nose. Hospitality was his middle name and his parties and week-ends were as well known as the Crossing of the Delaware or what's new in feminine underwear.

The minute Dave Orth turned the coupe over to a chauffeur and gave his luggage to a servant, he spotted a gorgeous little blonde. She had evidently just come up from a couple of hot matches on the tennis court and was still ignited. Moisture brought about by stiff competition made her silk, sleeveless shirt stick to her in a way that was plastically intriguing. It showed Dave the firm, rounded hillocks that were so entrancingly suggested.

She also wore white shorts and they, too, clung to her tantalizingly. Her legs were symmetrically rounded and classically perfect. Had she lived in another age she might have been a model for the sculptor who knocked out the Venus de Milo.

The rest of her costume consisted of flat heeled little tennis shoes and woolen socks.

To Dave's experienced eye she looked about eighteen, maybe a year more or less. She had the bluest eyes he had ever observed anywhere, the loveliest coloring and a pair of full, soft red lips that were inviting to say the least.

The girl stopped long enough for old Schuyler to introduce them.

"I say, Dagmar, m'dear, you know Gladys Joyner?"

"Very well. Howya, Glad?"

"How about Dave Orth?" Schuyler continued. "No? Well, that's a novelty. Didn't know there was a woman in this part of the country who had escaped him. Dave, this is Dagmar Daniels. Say hello to her."

"Better than that," Dave grinned, "I'll carry her racket case anywhere she wants."

DAGMAR, IT APPEARED, was bound for the show-er room. Dave went along, admiring the way she walked. He liked the hips that swayed ever so sinuously in the shorts, the easy sway of her breasts as she pattered down the tile-lined corridor. This girl had plenty of what he looked for. He began to know the usual keen anticipation that made life such a pleasant, inspiring thing.

Dagmar Daniels. He cudgeled his brain, trying to place her. He couldn't but that wasn't unusual. The Schuyler's guest list extended from New York to Los Angeles. Dagmar might have come from any place east or west of the Mississippi. Dave didn't care particularly. The thing that mattered was that she was there, that he had met her and from this day until Sunday night anything might happen.

"Well, I see you've found something," Gladys managed to get time to whisper to Dave, when the elaborate dinner was over.

"A rose in a garden of love!"

"Watch out for the thorns!"

Dave grinned. "She ain't got none. She's been de-thorned, which has left her de-lovely."

Gladys wrinkled her nose. "And I suppose you are de-lighted."

They danced on the Spanish tiled terrace. The right number of lanterns made the correct amount of light and shadow. The musicians wore white mess coats and blue trousers. About forty people shuffled around between drinks.

Dave waited his chance and cornered Dagmar. "May I?"

"Love to."

And that was that.

He found her a delicious, exhilarating armful. Her evening gown was spotless white, her jewelry pearls. He looked at her slim, bare fingers for a glimpse of a wedding ring. He found no evidence of one, not even the white line left where the suntan hadn't intruded.

Skilfully Dave went to work. With the same, delicate, expert touch he used in all affairs of the heart, he proceeded to establish an amiable friendship. That was important. He never hurried a girl, started to play an overture to passion before the prologue of good, honest camaraderie was founded.

The trouble with most men was that they wanted to skip the essentials and get down to the object of their desires without a preliminary build-up. Women took time to grow interested. You could no more hurry them than you could expect a Missouri mule to go into a gallop at the flick of a whip.



They danced, had a few drinks and, at Dave's suggestion, wandered down into the garden. It was charming there. The nocturnal flowers breathed perfume, a silver fountain made tinkling music and a goldfish pool trapped the sailing moon.

STILL, DAVE PLAYED a waiting game. Cleverly, he asked a few questions to get her to talking and then did what every woman enjoys so much—he listened. She talked, touching lightly on various subjects without telling him much about herself. But Dave didn't care. This new amour was fascinating. He really couldn't remember when he had been so keyed-up about a girl. Besides beauty Dagmar had intelligence and personality which, in themselves, were a sparkling attribute to the glamor of her youth.

That night he made no move to kiss her or to show interest. When he left her it was with the certainty that he had planted himself successfully in her mind and imagination. He had turned on the charm to the fullest and was confident

she had absorbed a generous quantity of it. Tomorrow night, he vowed, would be different.

"How are you doing, Romeo?" Gladys inquired during the progress of a stand-up, buffet breakfast the following morning.

"Fair enough."

"I saw you dip down in the garden," Gladys continued pensively. "I wonder what the flowers know that I don't."

"She's sweet, lovely, desirable and delicious," Dave murmured, wiping grapefruit juice from one eye.

Gladys sighed with mock regret. "Familiar words. Wasn't I all those things, too, not so long ago? Say, by rights I ought to be sore as an athlete's foot. It's good for you I'm not mean or petty or revengeful. If I were I certainly wouldn't stand by and let this dame enjoy what I've lost."

"Atta pal," Dave murmured, digging into the grapefruit again and dodging nimbly.

"Expect to make her?"

"Not later than tomorrow," Dave retorted

calmly. "And what a make! Turn on the best symphony orchestras, polish up the brightest stars, set the rhythm of the world to gay two-four time and ring all the bells in the neighborhood. I've got a brand new love!"

He played a little tennis with Dagmar and let her beat him. That made her sympathetic. He had lunch with her on the terrace and clicked off eighteen holes of golf in the golden afternoon.

"About tonight," Dave said carelessly, when they went back to the locker rooms together. "Dancing is all right, but I know of better things."

Dagmar gave him a rose-lipped smile. "Such as—"

"Motoring in the moonlight. There's a place about twenty miles up the line called Crow's Nest Mountain. I haven't been there for years—months, anyway. On a clear night the view is superb."

Dagmar wrinkled her creamy, tanned forehead. "Do you think tonight's going to be clear?"

"I'm sure of it."

"Well, it's okay with me."

Warm triumph swept through Dave when he dressed for dinner later. Crow's Nest Mountain! How familiar that spot was. It was there, on a sultry summer night, that he had driven out with Gladys. Together, arms around each other, they had watched the night fade and the circle of the sun rear up over the rim of the eastern world.

And tonight!

Dave's imagination glowed. New love, new lips to kiss, a new war, pliant figure to cuddle in the cradle of his arms! New secrets to be told and a fresh damask cheek to rest against his. He thrilled at the thought.

DINNER HAD NEVER seemed so long drawn out or so stupid. It was after nine o'clock when Lydia Schuyler finally gave the signal to arise for the coffee to be served in the lounge room. Dave caught Dagmar's eye and nodded significantly. She nodded back. Out in the wide corridor Dave dropped out of the throng heading for the lounge room, gained the foyer door without being observed and melted into the dark outside.

On quick, restless feet he hurried to the garage and maneuvered the coupe into the bluestone driveway. When he got back to the edge of the garden a shadowy figure was waiting. He expelled a deep breath of relief as he opened the door.

"Nine o'clock!" Dave said. "I'll have to step on it if we're to have any part of this night!"

Dagmar climbed in beside him. She had taken the precaution of bringing a light velvet wrap with a hood on it to cover the thin material of her evening frock. Her eyes were challenging when Dave looked into them, but her mouth smiled and her hand was restless when he touched it.

An exotic emotion filled him as he drove along the cement highway. New love. New night. New moon!

"Happy?" he asked.

"So happy."

"Isn't this better than wearing out the shoe leather on glazed tile?"

"I'll tell you later," she answered enigmatically.

The twenty miles clicked off in no time at all. Dave made the correct turn for the mountain road. They exchanged cement for water-packed macadam. In second gear they climbed a twisting road that was hedged in by high woods. At length they came out on a broad plateau. That was the summit and below the countryside spread out in a pattern of toy proportions.

Dave snapped out the lights, fished a prepared thermos from the front compartment. Two folding silver cups completed the ensemble. He drank a toast to her and lighted cigarettes. For some minutes they looked at the view, trying to pick out the villa at Sunny Acres, from the smears of twinkling lights below.

Dave moved closer to her. His hand went in under the velvet wrap. His fingers skimmed over the lightly powdered, bare shoulder and arm. They lingered briefly, while he waited to see how she would react.

Dagmar didn't draw away or attempt to capture his wrist and push his bold, inquisitive fingers from her. Instead, he heard her sigh and felt her relax a little.

"I suppose you know," he whispered, "that the night has nothing on you for beauty. You're the most gorgeous girl I've ever met."

Her head tipped to his shoulder and rested there. "I'm glad you think so," she said drowsily.

Dave played with the shoulder strap of her evening gown. It was little more than a silk ribbon. The lightest touch only was necessary to draw it down over shoulder and arm. He had the impression she was even helping him by moving a trifle.

"The night bewitches me!" he continued huskily.

"Me, too," she confessed. "What is there about stars and a moon that gets under your skin?"

As his embrace became tighter, he somehow had the idea that this experience wasn't entirely new to her. There was none of the naive hesitancy the novices of his other conquests had. It was as if she wanted to make it appear so but couldn't.

In the singing confusion gripping him, Dave paid no attention to that thought. A tingle ran through him when he felt her grow warm and limp. She quivered a little, moving closer to him on the leather seat.

"You're a magician," he heard her exclaim throatily. "You brought me out here, comfortably sane, to look at a view. Now, what are you doing? You're turning friendship into something else. You're making a positive wreck of me!"

"I love you!" he said, with all the sincerity he was capable of.

"Ah, love—" she breathed.

He took her entirely in his arms then, pressure in his embrace, madness in his rapid breathing. Her lips were waiting and ready for his. They went together in a quick, passionate kiss that sent tremors to shake Dave. Their mouths clung for unreckoned minutes while the moon rose higher and the stars glistened and seemed to draw nearer.

Dave's mind was a crucible of confused ideas and memories. So many weeks ago—this same spot—Gladys! Now—a new love—a new way of kissing!

"I love you!" he told her. "I'm going to love you forever and ever and then some!"

Slowly her arms coiled about his neck. She rested against him. He kissed her again, ardently, tempestuously and with all the emotion that flooded him.

The night was fading and the stars had grown dim when the coupe rolled into the drive at Sunny Acres. Dave put it away. Then, like two conspirators, they crept in through the unlatched conservatory door and tiptoed up the stairs.

At the door of her room Dave held her for another cycle of enchanted seconds.

"Good night, my love," he whispered. "Remember, I'll love you always!"

Her slim fingers caressed his flushed face. "Dear Dave!" she whispered back, before the darkness of her room received her and the door swung shut.

LATE ON SUNDAY afternoon, Dave watched the servant put his luggage back in the rumble of the coupe. A serene, smiling Gladys climbed in the front seat beside him. The Schuylers and

others waved adieu and the coupe rolled out, turning its aristocratic nose toward the huddle of Manhattan that lay to the south.

"Just another week-end for the book," Gladys murmured. "Terribly sweet of you to take me home, Dave."

"Not at all. I brought you, why shouldn't I return you?"

She lighted a cigarette from the gadget on the instrument panel.

"Why? Principally because I've done you wrong, my friend. I've been mean to you—deliberately and on purpose."

Dave turned and looked at her. "How do you mean?"

Gladys smiled a little. "I wanted revenge. You know, loved and left. The discarded plaything, the toy of temptation, broken and cast aside. The withered rose tossed into a convenient ashcan. I thought it would be swell if I put one over on you."

"Did you?"

Gladys nodded coolly. "And how! I asked Tommy Schuyler and the others to soft pedal the fact that Dagmar Daniels is really Mrs. Clay Daniels, wife of the millionaire importer who is now in Paris. I figured that she was cute enough to catch your eye and flirtatious enough to fall for you. I was a hundred percent right on both counts."

"So what?"

Glad daintily flicked the ash from her cigarette. "So there you are. Your new love won't do you much good. Dagmar sails to join her husband Tuesday on the *Romany*. With all that dough at stake she's got too much sense to leave him—even for you and your subtle artifices. That's my revenge, pal. You're on a spot. You're crazy in love and it's not going to do you a bit of good. You're licked before you start!"

Dave smiled faintly. "Again, so what?"

Gladys drew a deep breath. She threw her cigarette away and leaned to him earnestly.

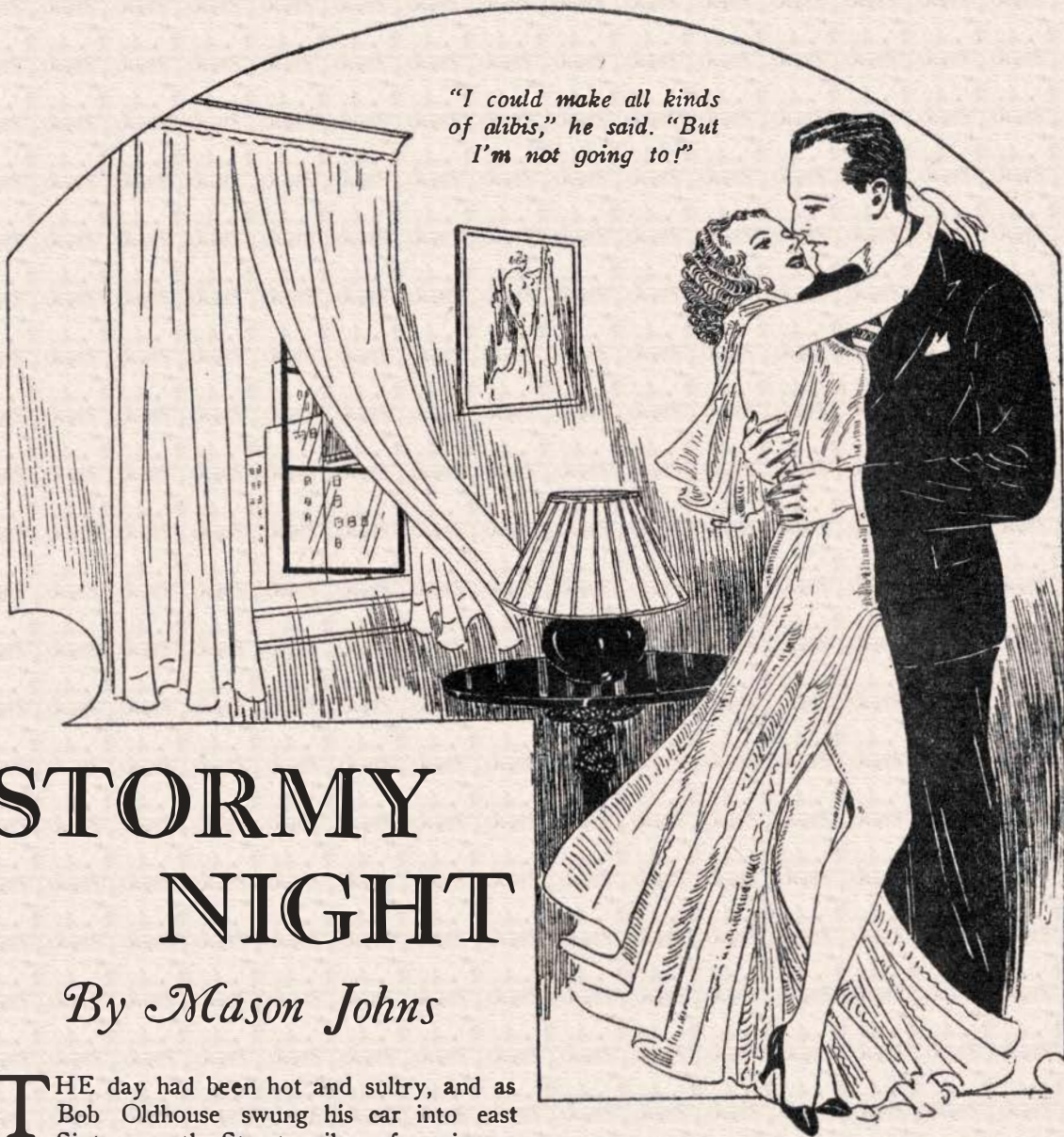
"Dave, I'm willing to forgive and forget. I'll take you back and make up for the harm I've done. I'll guarantee that I can put Dagmar out of your mind. All I ask is a chance. Come and have dinner with me at my apartment Tuesday night and I'll explain in detail. Will you?"

For a long time Dave said nothing. Then he laughed. "Sorry, honey, I can't."

"Why not?"

"Because," he explained, "I'm sailing Tuesday at noon—on the good ship *Romany*!"

"I could make all kinds of alibis," he said. "But I'm not going to!"



STORMY NIGHT

By Mason Johns

THE day had been hot and sultry, and as Bob Oldhouse swung his car into east Sixty-seventh Street, piles of ominous-looking clouds were trundling in from the west.

Bob eyed them apprehensively. Not that he cared anything about electric storms: but somehow they seemed a bit symbolic. In spite of the agreement he had with Myrtle Digby, Bob had a vague notion that the impending disturbance was not going to be confined to the heavens.

He parked the car outside a remodeled brownstone house, locked it and crossed the steaming sidewalk. It occurred to him that no place in the world could be so uncomfortably hot in June as New York.

Bob jabbed the button under Myrtle's name, and the lock on the door gave tongue. He entered and the door swung silently to behind him. His

footsteps sounded empty and hollow as he mounted the uncarpeted, slippery stairs.

Myrtle was waiting for him on the landing. She was wearing a thin chiffon negligee and, since the sunlight was behind her, Bob could see that that was all she was wearing. That was going to make it still worse.

"Hello, Myrtle," Bob said.

"Hello. Hot enough for you?" Had Myrtle not said that, then something would have been the matter with her. Bob did not answer. Myrtle followed him into the sun drenched apartment and closed the door.

"How about a planter's punch?"

Bob smiled. "An excellent thought," he said.

"You're not wearing very much, are you?"

Myrtle glanced down at herself. Her full, red lips parted in a wicked little smile. "I never wear much when it's hot."

She came to him, draped her soft, bare arms about his neck and held him close. Bob felt the quickening of his pulse. His hands dropped to her padded, just-about-covered back. The perfume of her hair was in his nostrils, and he could feel the flattening of her lush, unbrassiered bosom against his chest.

"Kiss me," Myrtle whispered languidly. Her eyes fluttered shut and the sunlight played hide-and-seek in the waves of her sleek, taffy-colored hair. Bob pressed his lips to hers. His grip on her tightened and his hands commenced to run over her chiffon draped body. Myrtle was close against him and her caresses were thrilling.

After awhile, she wriggled out of his embrace. Her head on one side, her lips parted and her eyes sparkling, she said, "How's about the planter's punch?"

"I could get good and drunk on you alone," Bob said.

"But you wouldn't be any good in that condition."

Bob watched her while she mixed the drinks in the tiny kitchenette. Through the thin material, he could see the outline of her large, slightly pendulous bosom. The negligee clung tenaciously to her hips, accentuating their width and hinting broadly at the strength and size of her white, solid thighs. Myrtle was on the large side: but to Bob that merely meant that there was all the more to her to love.

THEY SAT SIDE BY SIDE on the couch in front of the open window. The sky was a threatening black, and the rising wind ruffled the curtains.

Bob sighed and breathed deeply of the cooler air. "Going to have a storm," he said.

"It'll clear the air," Myrtle said. She said it in such a strange tone, Bob glanced at her. Her cold blue eyes were on his. Had she guessed?

Bob took a long, healthy pull at the planter's punch. Myrtle continued to stare at him. Huge drops of rain splattered on the window sill. In the distance, somewhere over New Jersey, thunder rumbled. Bad omens. All of them.

Bob said, "Remember, Myrtle, when we first teamed up, we agreed that when the time came for parting, there was to be no fuss and bother?"

"I remember," Myrtle said slowly. "Has the time for parting come?"

"I'm afraid so," Bob said.

Torrential rain swept the empty street below. A jagged fork of lightning caromed across the sky, and the town shook under the impact of the thunder. Myrtle sipped her drink.

"Give," she said shortly.

"You've heard me speak of Jinny Bryant?"

"I believe you have mentioned her now and then. I don't seem to remember much about it."

"Jinny and I were brought up together," Bob explained. "The last time I saw her she was fifteen. Now she's twenty-five and I'm supposed to marry her."

"Who says so?"

"My mother," Bob said simply.

Myrtle sneered openly and a bit theatrically. "And you have to do what mama says, huh?"

Bob finished his drink before replying. Outside the storm raged with increased violence. He shut the window. "Now, listen, Myrtle," he said. "I could make all kinds of alibis: but I'm not going to. I'm going to tell you the truth. I'm a weakling, I know it but it isn't my fault. It's the way I've been deliberately brought up. I've never been taught anything and I can't do anything. There is absolutely no job of any kind I could hold. I am absolutely dependent for the food I eat on the money my mother gives me."

"At least you've got the guts to admit it," Myrtle conceded grudgingly.

"I've tried to write as you know, and I've finally wrung one concession out of Mother. She has taken a cottage for me in Vermont for the summer. If I can finish the play and sell it, that's that and Jinny can go to the deuce. Otherwise, I marry her with as good a grace as I can muster. Mother doesn't think I'll make the grade. Hence the generosity on her part."

"And where do I come in?" Myrtle's tone was surprisingly calm.

"You don't enter the picture at all," Bob told her frankly.

"What a cad you turned out to be," Myrtle said scornfully.

"No. Not at all. I don't love you, Myrtle and you don't love me. Eventually you and I would have reached the parting of the ways. This attitude of Mother's has simply precipitated things. I don't want to marry Jinny. I wouldn't know her if she walked into this room now. This is the one chance I have of carving a career for myself and I'm going to be selfish enough to take it."

Myrtle said nothing. She got to her feet, picked up the empty glasses and walked again into the kitchenette. Bob watched her. Whether or

not she had done it deliberately, he did not know: but the fact remained that the negligee gaped above the waist. He found his resolution to ditch her getting weaker and weaker. With fresh drinks, Myrtle returned to the couch.

"Okay," she said cheerfully. "I'll be a sport about it. I'll stick to the agreement. Could I sneak in a week-end sometime this summer?"

Bob grinned with undisguised relief. "Sure!" he said cordially. "I'll let you know the address when I know it myself."

Myrtle nestled close against him. "We've had fun, haven't we?" she asked.

Bob dropped a heavy arm to her almost naked shoulders. "I'll say we have," he answered enthusiastically. Her head dropped to his chest, and her heavy lashes fanned her cheeks. Bob could smell the perfume of her as she rested against him, and owing to the manner in which the negligee had been disarranged, he could see

quite a bit of her lush rounded curves.

After a while, he said, "Unless you get up and leave me alone, I won't be responsible."

Myrtle smiled, showing her white teeth. She snuggled closer against him. "I'm one of the unbudgeables," she answered.

Bob's arm tightened about her. Their eyes met. Then her soft and naked arms stole about his neck and her moist lips were close against his. The outline of her almost nude body was against him.

Outside the storm continued. Inside there was a hushed silence.

JINNY BRYANT ONLY half listened as her mother and Mrs. Oldhouse talked over their coffee. Her fingers strayed lightly over the piano keyboard and she did not take her eyes from the framed photograph of Bob which was stuck up in front of her. If a girl could be in love with



Jinny's eyes were closed and Bob gazed longingly at her. . .

a picture, Jinny was in love with Bob's. One reason she liked having dinner with Mrs. Oldhouse was that she could gaze helplessly at the picture of the man both elder women wanted her to marry.

Mrs. Oldhouse set aside her cup. "I have taken every possible precaution," she said sententiously: "and I don't see how anything can go wrong. I have engaged as his cook, companion and chaperone one of the dourest Scottish women it has ever been my misfortune to meet."

"Respectable, I hope?" Mrs. Bryant's tone was anxious.

"To the Nth degree," Mrs. Oldhouse assured her. "She lives in Yonkers. 17 Hadley Place. I've been there. Neat as a new pin and the neighbors assured me the woman's reputation was impeccable. She's a good fifty-five."

Jinny had pricked up her ears. She swung about on the piano stool and took a little more interest in the conversation.

"What you tell me, my dear Emma," she said, "is very reassuring. The only thing is . . . will Robert actually finish his play?"

Mrs. Oldhouse smiled. "Not if I know Robert. And even if he does—it'll never be produced. Robert is representative of the male side of the Oldhouse clan . . . stupid to the core. Decorative: but ineffably stupid."

Jinny resented this with all her heart. She was young, dark, lithe and stunningly pretty. She was dressed in a flowered chiffon evening gown which clung subtly to her young body, bringing out the immature loveliness of her pert bosom and the lush sweep of her hips. Except for the obvious fact that her face had character, she reminded one of the girls one saw on the stage.

Through her alert little brain ran one thing. 17 Hadley Place, Yonkers.

BOB DROVE HIS loaded car up to the barn and switched off the ignition. He got out and stretched. He looked about him.

His abode for the summer was a rambling old farmhouse well back from the little traveled road. It was surrounded by trees and he caught a glimpse of a large, glittering lake. He liked the look of the place. The door suddenly opened and a girl came towards him. She was dark and young and the hem of her house dress came just below her knees. Bob was quick to notice that she had swell legs.

"Hello," Jinny said, for, of course it was she. "You are, I take it, Mr. Robert Oldhouse?"

Bob grinned. "I am. And you?"

"I'm your housekeeper."

Bob's eyes widened. "Housekeeper? My mother told me she'd engaged a Scotchwoman from Yonkers."

Jinny showed her perfect teeth. "I come from Yonkers," she said. "Let me help you with your things."

Together they walked to the car. Bob took in every detail of her and that was not hard to do considering the lack of substantial clothing. He very much doubted if she were wearing anything but panties under the gingham house dress.

He noticed the gentle sway of her bosom as she bent over, and through the V of the gown, he could see the outline of each white curve. Her hips fascinated him and he had all he could do to keep from touching them.

As they lugged bags and stuff out of the car, Bob said, "Far be it from me to doubt the wisdom of my mother. If she engaged you . . . it's oke by me. What shall I call you?"

"Jessie," Jinnie said.

"Okay. How about a swim when we're through moving?"

Jinny straightened and brushed a lock of coal black hair out of twinkling eyes. "With your housekeeper?" Her tone was mocking; and there was a wicked little smile on her full, cherry red lips.

"You brought a bathing suit with you, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Then let's see how you look in it."

They walked, loaded down like pack mules, towards the house. "It looks," Jinny said, "as if it might turn into a rather informal summer."

"Two minds"

SIDE BY SIDE, they sat on the little jetty which jutted into the lake. Jinny's eyes were closed and Bob gazed at her without knowing it.

The swimming suit she was wearing was nothing short of scandalous. What little there was to it merely accentuated the lush curves and hollows of her superb little body. Her thighs were round and white, and he knew now how full and wide were her untrammelled hips. Narrow strips of material barely concealed from him the splendours of her young and vibrant bosom.

Bob found that his mouth was drying up. He got abruptly to his feet. "I'm going in," he announced.

"Okay." Jinny did not move. She stayed there, her eyes closed and as she heard his footsteps disappearing up the gravel walk, a slow smile played about her lips.

THE THUNDER STORM which struck at three the next morning merely expedited what was a fore-gone conclusion.

Jupiter seemed to have deliberately picked on the remote farmhouse deep in the Vermont hills. He unplied his wrath, and the ancient structure trembled. Two doors opened simultaneously and two people collided in the darkness of the living room.

*"Oh, Bob," she whispered.
"I'm terrified of the storm!"*



Jinny clung to Bob in genuine terror. She was dressed in a filmy nightgown through which he could feel every line and curve of her.

"Oh, Bob," she whispered, using his first name for the first time. "I'm terrified of the storm. Light the lights."

His arm about her, Bob fumbled for the switch. The current had been turned off. "Haven't we any oil lamps?" he asked.

"In the kitchen," Jinny said. Her teeth were chattering and she was standing as close to Bob as she could get.

"I'll fetch one!"

"Don't leave me!" she pleaded softly.

They groped their way into the kitchen, found the lamp and matches and made a feeble, flickering light. They returned to the living room. The storm raged and howled about them.

Bob placed the lamp on the table and sat down.

Jinny crept into his lap and huddled close against him. Bob was not in the least frightened and he found that the nightgown she was wearing was the most revealing thing he had ever seen. His mouth commenced to dry and he dared not touch her.

"You'll have to get up early, Jessie," he said huskily. "I simply cannot stand it. Tomorrow you must leave."

Jinny refused to budge. "I won't," she said. "I'll die of fright if you leave me."

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GETTING EVEN

By

Bill Storm

JANE KITTEREDGE knew that the Durwards had gone through rough sledding the last two years but there was nothing to denote the fact in Ken Durward's manner. He stood stiffly by the door of the reception room in the big Kitteredge summer home and Jane noted that his blue eyes were just as arrogant, his lithe, square-shouldered figure just as jaunty, as ever. She felt a little surge of inexplicable anger.

"Your chauffeur delivered the message to me last night that K. W. wanted to see me," Ken explained evenly.

"Then my chauffeur made a mistake—or you misunderstood him!" Jane said quickly. She knew that Ken Durward was badly in need of a job—any kind of a job—for the summer and she was hoping to see his handsome face register disappointment. He merely shrugged and reached for the doorknob.

"In that case," he said easily, "just pardon the intrusion!"

Jane's wilful face grew a bit pink under the totally unnecessary rouge. She had half a mind to let him go—until she remembered her purpose. Several years ago when she was a romantic college freshman and he was a football hero, Ken had snubbed her heartlessly. And the last time it had happened, he had positively humiliated her—after she had done a lot of foolish bragging to the sorority. She had decided then that she would get even, if it took a lifetime. Their fathers had owned rival canning factories, but Ken's had recently gone under. And now Jane discovered that the old hurt still rankled; she wanted to hurt Ken Durward, to humiliate him, as much as ever.

She patted her lovely crimson lips in a make believe yawn and rose languidly from the divan. She knew that his eyes were taking in the voluptuous grace of her gorgeous figure as she half turned her back on him to arrange some potted flowers on the window ledge; she knew, too, that he must be taking note of the change that just a few years had wrought in the impetuous co-ed whom he had called a "spoiled brat" to her very face. Her heart beat triumphantly and she allowed the clinging dressing gown she was wearing over her

frothy lingerie to gape at the neck enough to reveal the deep, crowded valley of her beautiful white breasts.

"As a matter of fact," she said carelessly, when he had the door half opened, "I sent for you. I've decided that I need a boatman—one who knows the water around here. I shall be having guests all summer and naturally I want them to be in capable hands whenever we decide to go cruising. Father recommended you!"

This last was a lie, but Jane wasn't thinking about lies just then. As a matter of fact, old K. W. Kitteredge had warned her gruffly that Ken would consider the offer an insult and that he wouldn't blame him a damned bit if he told her so. But—

Ken stopped and turned to face her. His weather-tanned face might have been just a bit ruddier than usual.

"I have the offer of a similar position at two-hundred a month. If you can top that, I'll consider the job!" he surprised her.

"Suppose we make it three hundred?" she told him sweetly.

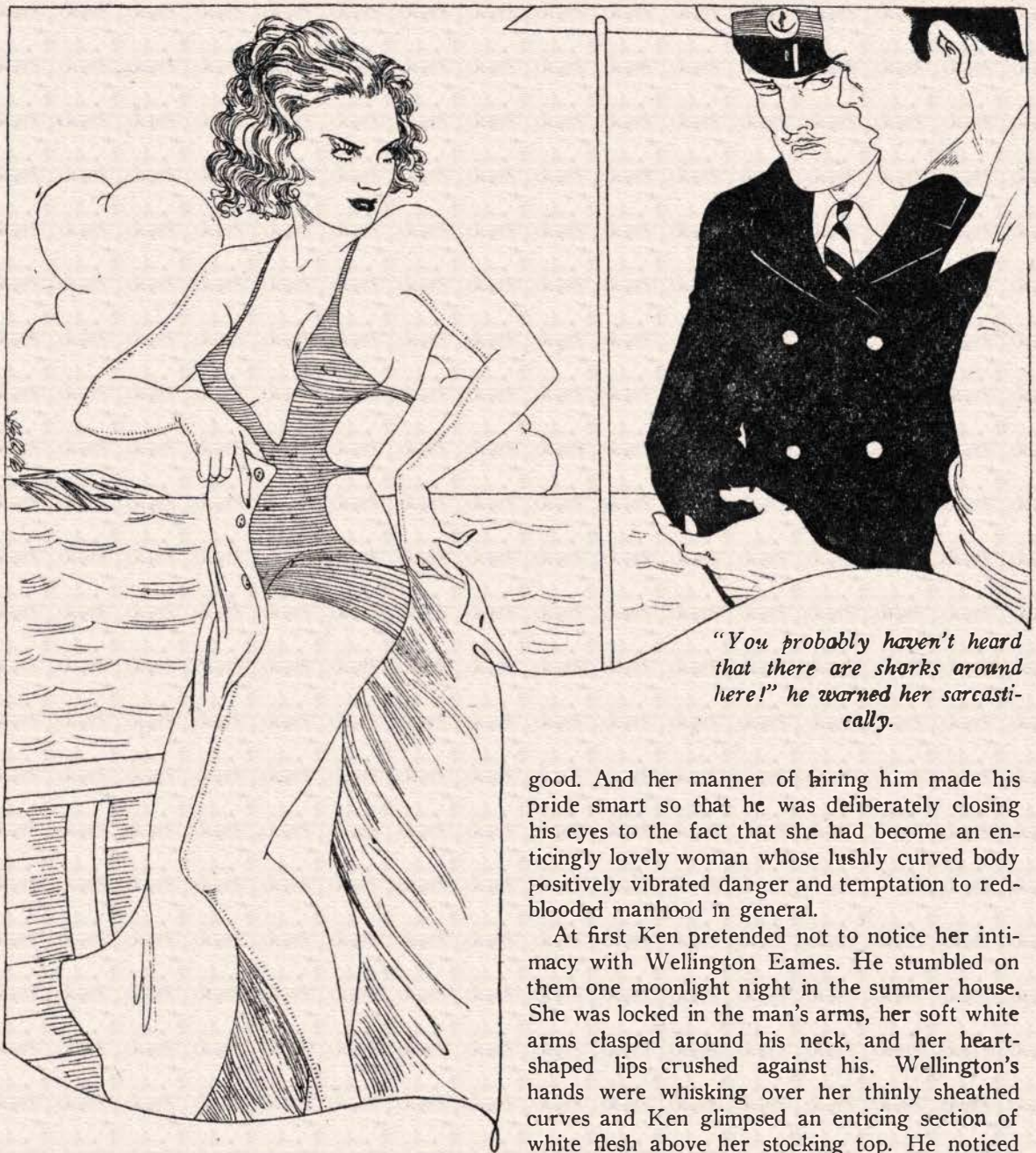
"When do I report for work?" he asked promptly.

Jane yawned again. "You can move to your quarters over the garage any time today—the chauffeur will show you your room. You'll eat with the other servants in the kitchen and I'll call you by phone when I need you."

She was watching him covertly, her gaze concealed by the sweep of her long dark lashes. But he only nodded. There was an amused sort of grin on his hard, up-curved lips as he turned away. Jane gazed hard at the closing door. A little surge of anger rippled through her. She sat down slowly. Then abruptly she sprang to her feet, kicking viciously at a cushion that had fallen to the floor.

"He'll earn his three-hundred!" she promised herself. "That and more too before I'm through with him!"

KEN ESTABLISHED HIMSELF over the garage promptly, but other than looking the big cruiser



"You probably haven't heard that there are sharks around here!" he warned her sarcastically.

over, and the smaller runabout, he had nothing to do for almost a week. The first of Jane Kitteredge's guests had arrived, and from the chauffeur he learned that his name was Wellington Eames, a globe-trotter, and from the looks of things the future husband of the haughty Jane as well. A "lucky stiff" the chauffeur called him.

And perhaps Ken would have agreed with the chauffeur, if he had not still been prejudiced against Jane. He was still doggedly trying to think of her as only the spoiled, cock-sure youngster who needed to be put in her place, for her own

good. And her manner of hiring him made his pride smart so that he was deliberately closing his eyes to the fact that she had become an enticingly lovely woman whose lushly curved body positively vibrated danger and temptation to red-blooded manhood in general.

At first Ken pretended not to notice her intimacy with Wellington Eames. He stumbled on them one moonlight night in the summer house. She was locked in the man's arms, her soft white arms clasped around his neck, and her heart-shaped lips crushed against his. Wellington's hands were whisking over her thinly sheathed curves and Ken glimpsed an enticing section of white flesh above her stocking top. He noticed also that her breasts were rising and falling excitedly, their upper rondures exposed. Ken excused himself hurriedly, but they didn't even notice him.

He went immediately to his room over the garage. He knew that his face was a bit red. He was subconsciously thinking of the pleasure it would give him to seize Mr. Wellington Eames by the seat of his immaculately creased trousers, balance him with another grip on his coat-collar and toss him into the swimming pool!

His phone ringing interrupted the pleasant flow

of his thoughts. Jane's crisp voice sounded in the ear-piece:

"Durward? Have the cruiser at the slip at eight in the morning—and be prepared for an all-day run among the islands. That's all!"

The phone at the house clicked off before he could hardly acknowledge the order.

THE GREAT COLONIAL home of the Kitteredge's topped a hill that sloped gently down to the beach. Ken had been waiting at the boat slip nearly an hour since the appointed time and he was beginning to get angry. Then he thought that it made little difference—waiting would certainly be as pleasant as anything else connected with his new duties; probably more pleasant, for he could do that alone.

Toward nine he saw Jane and Wellington Eames sauntering down, followed by the chauffeur carrying a big hamper. Ken's eyes noted the suave dark handsomeness of Wellington Eames only briefly; then they strayed in spite of themselves, to the enticing allurements of Jane's attractively clothed figure.

She was wearing a silken sweater and very short skirt. The sweater was tucked inside her waist band and clung tightly to her torso, molding the jutting, up-thrust globes of her breasts in a breath-taking manner, revealing, as it did, the firm rounded loveliness of them. Her hair, a thick crinkly mass of light brown, glinted with the sheen of brushed silk as it bunched in a girlish cluster at the nape of her neck. Her face, softly curved and dusky with the tint of being much outdoors, was vivid with vitality and the excitement of living. All in all, with the breeze whipping her skirt about her graceful legs and causing it to mold the inspiring taper of her round, full-fleshed thighs in the most revealing way imaginable, Jane was a perfect model for any magazine cover artist. As Ken noted the proprietary manner in which Wellington Eames' eyes roamed over her vibrant feminine figure, he found himself growing positively sullen.

Her companion jumped aboard and extended his hand to Jane. Ken, casting off the bow line, was treated to a tantalizing vision of white, gleaming thigh as she stepped up to the deck. He leaped aboard and started the motor.

"We're going to spend the morning at one of the islands, Durward!" Jane informed him crisply, "Preferably one that has a sand beach. We may want to bathe."

"Spruce Island it is!" Ken's voice matched the crispness of hers and he was pleased to see a faint flush dye her oval cheeks.

On the run down, Ken, with his duty at the wheel, kept his back to them. But he knew that they were lolling on the cushions under the awning as intimately as though he had not existed; and occasionally, above the drone of the motor, he could hear Jane's laughing and slightly excited protests. The low, vibrant murmur of Wellington Eames' ardent voice—and the intimacy of his slender hands as they caressed the lush curves of her body—tightened Ken's grip on the wheel and made him regard a hard brown fist speculatively.

"Two spoiled brats!" he muttered.

When they dropped anchor in a sheltered inlet of Spruce Island, Wellington Eames was all for going ashore immediately. The smooth light green of the sea, the fringe of lace where it lapped the sand beach, made him think of a shipwreck experience of his in the South Seas, he explained. Jane drew in her breath deeply and eyed the cool invitation of the water.

"We'll swim ashore!" she decided. "I'll race you in—and later Durward can bring the lunch hamper in the tender!"

Suiting action to words, she immediately freed her skirt and stepped out of it. Then she peeled the sweater over her head and stood before them clad, only in about the scantiest of one piece bathing suits that Ken had ever seen, short of a fashion book. He felt his pulse quicken as he took in the startling feminine beauty of her. He had never imagined any girl could be so magnetically lovely. He discovered that he was staring at her; staring at the half exposed curves of her firm lush bosom and the nudity of her long, enticingly tapered legs; and he experienced a fleeting feeling of surprised wonderment that human flesh could be so delectably tinted with golden tan and creamy white, as hers proved to be.

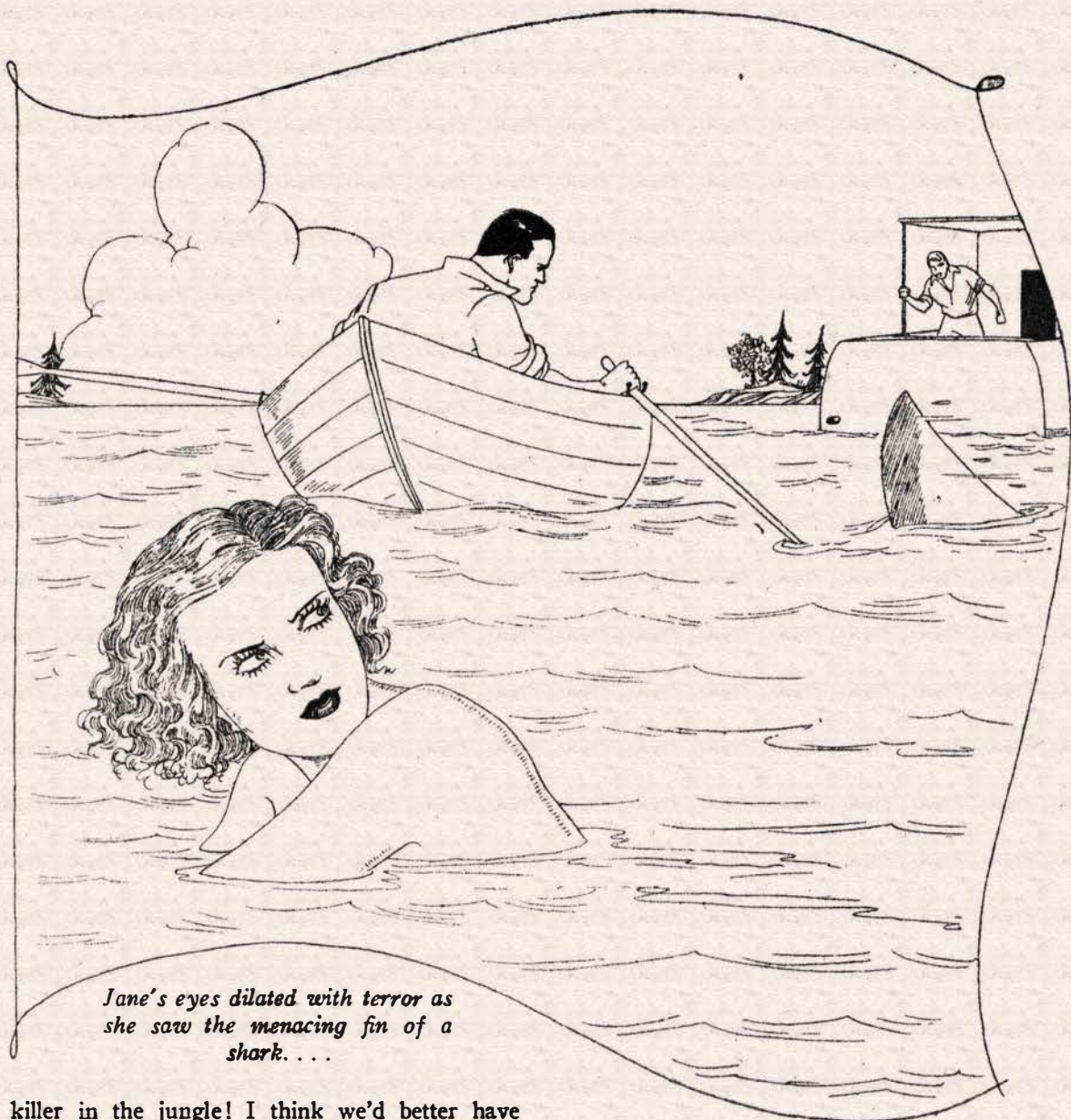
Jane stepped gracefully onto the brief rear deck and poised for a moment before plunging. She turned her head, obviously to see if Wellington were ready to follow. But it was taking him somewhat longer to get free of his outer clothing.

"You probably haven't heard the report, but there are sharks down around these islands!" Ken warned her. "The fishermen are catching them in the weirs every day!"

Jane stared at him coldly. "Who cares about an odd shark or two!" she said flippantly. "Come on, Welly!"

But Wellington Eames was hesitating. His lean swarthy face had paled noticeably.

"But—didn't you hear what Durward just said?" he asked feebly. "I'd sooner face a man-



Jane's eyes dilated with terror as she saw the menacing fin of a shark. . . .

killer in the jungle! I think we'd better have Durward row us ashore!"

"All right—you two row ashore, then!" Jane snapped. "I'm doing just as I planned. I think Durward's been dreaming, anyway!"

BEFORE EITHER OF the men could protest, she knifed cleanly into the water and they saw the arching flash of her body before her head plopped to the surface. With a taunting laugh, she struck out for shore, swimming with powerful overhand strokes.

Ken shrugged, turned to enter the cabin. His companion's hoarse cry spun him around.

"Sharks!" he gurgled, pointing wildly seaward, "I saw one—c-coming this way!"

Ken stared. Sure enough, a hundred yards out the blue-black fin of a cruising shark appeared, cutting the water swiftly. Ken's eyes turned quickly to Jane. His heart thumped sickeningly against his ribs as he saw that she was no more than half way to shore, swimming leisurely. With a leap he was on the rear deck, untying the painter of the tender. Wellington Eames jumped after him, but somehow on the narrow stern deck of the craft they collided as Ken turned swiftly—and with a stifled oath, Wellington Eames lurched backward, hitting the water with a terrific splash. Ken jumped into the tender and grabbed the oars.

"Grab the gunwale and pull yourself out!" he shouted at the spuming Wellington.

Jane heard the commotion and turned lazily on her back to wonder what had happened. She saw Ken pulling rapidly toward her; then her eyes dilated with terror as, nearly opposite the leaping tender, she saw the menacing fin of the shark. She shrieked, attempted frantically to increase her speed. But terror was sapping the strength from her limbs and it seemed as if her body were anchored. Weakly she closed her eyes—and then Ken seized her under the armpits and she felt herself leaving the cold horror of the water.

Ken let her lay in the bottom of the little craft with her head resting against the stern thwart. A thrill tingled through him, a little unwanted surge of rapture, as he noted the surprising transformation of her face. For, lying there with her eyes closed, it had suddenly become the face, tender and sweet, of a very weary little girl, who might have dropped asleep from playing too hard. Not a single trace of the wilfulness and hauteur which he had associated with her so long, remained.

HE HARDLY REALIZED that he kept on to shore until the keel scraped on the sand. He jumped out, then stooped to get his arms under her shoulders. The cool damp flesh of her thighs against his hand, the yielding helplessness of her body molded so tightly against him, filled him with an elation that almost took his breath. She shivered slightly and he saw the enticing tremor of her taut white breasts. The valley between them was deep and shadowy. At that moment, when he had taken just a few steps up the beach, she lifted her arms and clasped them around his neck, and he felt a pang of regret when he noticed how involuntary the gesture was; as though she were still dazed by her terror in the water—a simple reflex action on her part, entirely meaningless.

"You're all right, now!" he murmured against the damp curls at her ear. "Just relax and forget all about it!"

She opened her eyes—eyes that were very blue and filled with a clouded light that seemed to reflect the state of her mind.

"I know!" she whispered, and her red lips seemed ineffably sweet and tempting for the moment. "I'm all right—for a girl who's just been frightened out of her wits. Thanks for getting me out, Ken!"

Ken hadn't meant to do it. Kissing her should have been the farthest thing from his thoughts. But before he realized, he had lowered his head and his lips were pressing ardently against the

moist, cool slash of her mouth. He felt her tremble for an instant, but she did not draw her lips away. Neither did she unclasp her arms from his neck. It was as though his caress had stunned her, left her incapable either of response or repulsion.

"I'm sorry!" he said stiffly.

He lowered her to the soft springy grass beneath a great spruce and she lay there, staring up at the white clouds. Ken looked away, out to the cruiser, where Wellington Eames was humped disconsolately on the rear deck, staring shoreward.

"As soon as you're ready, we'll go back to the cruiser," he said.

She looked at him soberly. There was a look in her eyes that startled him.

"I—I'm cold!" she whispered. "C-couldn't you put your arms around me, Ken?"

Ken could. He did. At first quite tenderly, because that was the mood the sight of her lying there so weakly, the small-girl look on her face, had aroused in him. But when his arm was around her and she lay with her back against his knees, gazing up at him with a mystery in her darkly veiled eyes and a tremor to her vivid, heart-shaped lips, his arm suddenly tightened. In an instant their lips leaped together; again her soft arms clasped around his neck; and their kiss was a living thing that seemed to shake them apart from the past completely in the vibrantly thrilling ecstasy of it.

Her arms tightened even as his; her lips parted in response to the mastery of his kiss. He felt warm blood singing through his body; and the rapid beat of her heart told him that she too, was experiencing the intoxication of the moment.

She moved in his arms and the narrow shoulder strap of her clinging bathing suit slipped down over her shoulder. Ken gasped at the revelation of smooth white flesh, vibrant for the caress of his fingers. Her lips were compelling, as his hand curved over the satiny flesh.

Suddenly she sat up, staring toward the cruiser and he saw a slow wave of pink suffuse her cheeks. He followed her gaze and saw the figure of Wellington Eames standing with his back to an awning support. At that distance it looked as though he was shading his eyes with his hand and staring in their direction.

"I was forgetting him!" Jane said, springing lithely to her feet. "Row me back to the cruiser, please!"

And Ken, as he noted the abrupt change in her manner, scowled and was aware all at once that the lilting throb of his heart had changed

to a dull, sullen beat. And later on the return trip, when Jane and Wellington Eames resumed their accustomed intimacy against the cushions under the awning, he grew profane under his breath and tried to appease his smarting pride with the oath that never again would she have the chance to make a fool of him.

HOBSON, THE CHAUFFEUR, lay on his couch and turned a wry face to Ken as he entered in response to his summons. Hobson pointed to the dangling ear-piece of the telephone on the wall.

"You're in for it tonight, Durward, old man. She wants to speak with you. But don't blame me if I'm sick!"

Ken placed the receiver to his ear. "Yes," he said crisply, "This is Durward!"

"I want you to drive the car tonight!" Jane's voice ordered. "Hobson is ill. And—you'd better take along whatever you require for a three day's trip. Bring the phaeton around at eight-thirty—and don't make any unnecessary noise. That's all, Durward!"

"Damn!" Ken said quietly. "What does she think I am?"

"But you'll go, won't you, Durward?" Hobson asked, raising himself to an elbow. "Sit down and I'll tell you what you should know about the car and things!"

At eight-thirty Ken had the big car waiting in the drive. He was not surprised to see Wellington Eames appear with Jane. Eames seemed in the best of spirits. Jane was tensely excited and vivacious. She made a picture that simply etched itself on Ken's heart as she stepped into the tonneau.

"Our luggage, Durward!" she ordered. "And I see you're not in uniform. Evidently Hobson's did not fit you!"

Ken gnawed at his lip as he loaded a half dozen traveling bags into the trunk. Hobson was short and rotund as she damned well knew.

"Take route 21, East, Durward!" Jane ordered, as Eames lingeringly tucked the robe around her thighs and legs. "I hope father isn't too angry with us!" she remarked to her companion. "After all running off to Canada to be married is hardly necessary—though it is tremendously exciting! And saves the formality of waiting, too!"

Ken, glancing up at the mirror, saw Eames place his lips for a moment against the crimson softness of Jane's. He twisted the mirror roughly out of that line of reflection, and banged through the gears.

"I was so nervous, Ken," she said. "All I could think of, was to come here."



At midnight they crossed the border and into a darkened little Canadian town. Jane suddenly decided she was too tired to continue. Ken grinned, a bit sulkily. For hours he had tried not to miss a single bump in the humpy tarred road! He drew up before a small hotel, which seemed to be deserted, and actually was, except for the dozing clerk.

It must have been two hours later when Ken tiptoed down the corridor and let himself quietly into his room, which was removed the corridor's length from the neighboring rooms occupied by Jane and Eames. He moodily pulled on his pajamas; but instead of getting in bed, he put on a wine-colored velvet bath robe and sat down to glare out into the deserted street.

"By morning they'll know I'm the prize sap of two countries," he muttered. "I should have taken Jane Kitteredge and wrung her neck before I let her get into this mess!"

HIS SAVAGE RUMINATIONS were interrupted by a soft rap on the door. Then, before he could rise, the door pushed open and Jane slipped into the room. Her face was pink and her breath came in repressed, excited gasps. She was wearing a red, almost transparent dressing gown over her black nightie; and the color effect of these, combined with the ivory of her flesh, which shimmered nebulously through the sheer material, had a most breath-taking effect upon Ken. He sprang abruptly from his chair and stared at her.

"I—I had to come here, Ken!" she whispered, and he saw the agitated resiliency of her thinly covered breasts. "Wellington—he seems to have forgotten his manners. He was angry because—because—"

"You mean, he doesn't like his own room?" Ken asked coolly.

She nodded vigorously, "I was nervous, Ken, so—so all I could think of was to come here. He's been knocking on my door and making all kinds of excuses! His voice sounded ugly—it terrified me!"

"But," Ken reasoned coldly—as coldly as he could, with the slumberous gleam of her big dark eyes upon him, the tempting pout of her vivid lips so near his own, "but, isn't that all right? Don't you love him?"

She moved toward him. She stood so close that he could almost feel the warmth of her soft, lushly curved body.

"Do you—really—think it's all right, Ken?" she whispered.

"No—and it never has been!" he answered suddenly, sweeping her into his arms. "Oh, Jane!"

he muttered brokenly, "I don't know what you're trying to do to me, nor why! But I love you! I love you so much that I can't sleep nights, and days—every day that I've worked for you has been a nightmare. Why do you do these things to me?" he demanded savagely, bitterly.

Her arms clasped around his neck, her body, soft and warm, molded to his. Deliberately her lips lifted to his and the sweet tenderness of them was a revelation that left him stricken with giddy, intoxicating rapture.

"Oh, Ken!" she whispered thrilling him to the heart with the vibrancy of her voice and body, "Can't you guess, Ken? When a girl goes through what I've gone through—with a man like Wellington— Oh, Ken, you stupid darling, you obstinate, pig-headed, sensitive, adorable—didn't you know—even for a minute—that I was trying to make you jealous? Jealous enough to—overcome your prejudice against me—and do something about it?"

Ken's arms tightened but she didn't wince as her soft body flattened against his. She felt the contact of his hands against her back, knew that shortly they would start roaming over the vibrant curves of her body. And she was almost breathless from the delectable expectancy of it!

Abruptly Ken lifted her in his arms.

"What a lucky break for me Hobson was sick!" Ken gloated. "Only think, if he had driven you, how different things would have been!"

Jane kissed him again, rested her hot cheek against his.

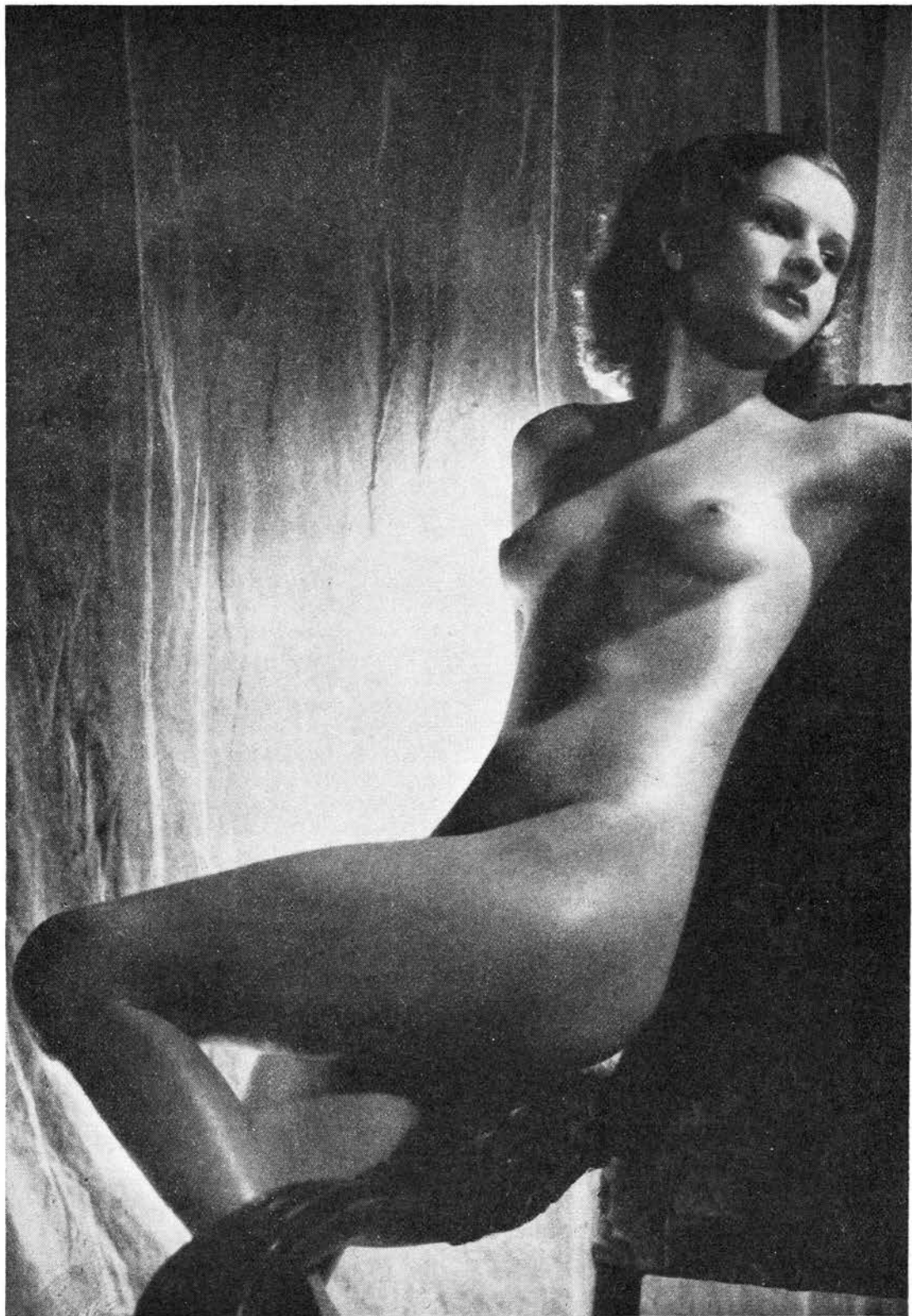
"Didn't you even guess, sweetheart, that—that Hobson was only obeying my orders? And I was so afraid that you'd see through the whole thing—guess my intentions from the very start! Why, all the way down, I imagined that you were laughing at me—because, I guess I wasn't sure that you loved me!"

Ken lowered her gently, but her arms still clung possessively. He couldn't have escaped them if he had wanted to—which he most certainly did not!

After a long time, when the room was slowly filling with gray light, Jane stirred sleepily. Ken promptly yielded again to the still growing temptation of her lips. His eyes roved over the loveliness of her body with a hunger that was almost awesome. There was a curious mixture of love and pride in Jane's slumberous eyes as she tightened her arms about him.

"Darling!" she whispered, "I've got to make another confession—so that you'll understand—always—about Wellington and me. There's never

(Please turn to page 64)



Lively Competition

By

Delmar Dillon

HOSEA CROCKETT was an easy-going parent and willing to pay the bill for being such, because he wished to spend his declining years in peace. Only occasionally did he protest his daughter Allana's whimsies and that was when she insisted on going into business. To Hosea, her latest ambition was the most fantastic yet. He had just finished telling her so.

Allana's dark glossy head was still bent over a pad of figures; she had been aware of the rumble of Hosea's querulous voice but had not bothered to follow the detail of his monologue.

"I've got it all figured out!" she announced shortly. "For twenty-five thousand dollars I can have a roadhouse built from my own plans, and located down at the cross roads it would be a howling success right from the start! I shall have a cocktail room, dancing pavillion, restaurant—"

"No!" Hosea barked, dabbing at the perspiring dome of his bald head, "No daughter of mine is going to become a cheap nightclub hostess!"

"Proprietress," Allana corrected calmly. "There's all the difference in the world! What you can't seem to understand, Father, is that this is a day of equal opportunity."

Hosea had gone through all that before and he didn't intend to have his arguments flouted in his face again.

"The main reason why I shall not supply the money for such a hare-brained enterprise," he remarked with sudden inspiration, "is because it hasn't a chance of success. Imagine an outfit such as you plan with an old shack of a blacksmith shop, a stack of rusty horse shoes and a litter of old wagon tires practically in the front yard! Why that old shop of Dan Vickers' would make you a laughing stock!"

Allana pouted her vivid lips disdainfully. She pushed the pad of figures across the table for his inspection.

"If that's all," she said triumphantly, "consider the matter settled and deposit a check on my account in the morning! You'll notice that the first item I've accounted for is the removal of Dan Vickers' blacksmith shop—a mere thousand takes care of that!"

Hosea shook his head hopelessly, but his voice was resigned.

"If I owned that shop, young lady, it would take more than a mere thousand of your money to buy it—and if I know anything about young Vickers, it will anyway. I suggest you approach the subject with deference and caution!"

BUT DEFERENCE AND caution were words which Allana knew practically nothing about. Next morning she braked her big crimson roadster to a violent stop before the open door of Dan Vickers' shop and chimed the horns imperiously. Dan Vickers, working before the blazing forge, unhurriedly buried a horse-shoe in the coals and sauntered out. His lean face was pleasant enough as he recognized his visitor, but there was a hard gleam in his dark eyes as they took in Allana's vivid loveliness.

The customary hauteur of summer people with cottagers in the sleepy old village bothered him not in the least; but Allana was different. Only a week ago he had fastened a shoe on her riding mare—and her attitude had tempted him to take her slimly matured figure across his leather-aproned knees and whack some of the egoism out of her!

"Oh, Mr. Vickers," she greeted loftily, "I've decided to buy your shop. You'll probably attempt to hold me up, but I'm prepared for that. If you tell me your price, I'll meet you at the notary's office this afternoon and we'll settle the matter. Good day, Mr. Vickers!"

Dan Vickers' lean dark face reddened under its grime. Allana, her haughty blue eyes straying over the humble clutter of the weather beaten old shack, saw him apparently for the first time as he stepped closer and placed his foot on the running board.

"Do you mind repeating that little piece?" he asked coolly. "Something tells me you need practice on it! The inflection isn't right—and the manner and posture is simply ludicrous! Suppose you go home and rehearse, then come back tomorrow and let me see how you've improved!"

Allana couldn't comprehend, at first. Then she



remembered the talk about Dan Vickers at the riding club. Some of the girls had raved about him quite disgustingly; some of them professed to know him intimately and bragged about it! A college fullback who preferred to carry on the humble work of his fathers' to a more elevated and profitable profession, might be a problem to handle after all! Allana, her oval face coloring to the tint of pink roses, stared at him—and discovered that there was something about this village blacksmith that she had overlooked. For the first time in her imperious young life, a mere

man was making her feel like a very small—and spoiled little girl!

"Oh!" she gasped, clutching her pink fingers around the steering wheel. "I didn't come here to be insulted!" She should have driven off then—but she didn't.

"I know!" Dan Vickers said conversationally, "You came here to do the insulting. My shop isn't for sale, Miss Vickers! You see, horses require intelligent handling. I'm afraid you would not make a good blacksmith!"

His eyes were roving over the vibrant beauty

of her trim figure while he was speaking. Quite leisurely they took in the chiffon-smooth gracefulness of her legs, the rounded delight of her knees, the enticing shape of her thighs. When she discovered his appraisal, he was staring at her breasts. Her face flamed.

If there was any part of her vibrant curved young body that Allana was sensitive about, it was her breasts. Somehow, Allana had never been able to reconcile the jutting white gourds which graced her upper torso with the career of a successful business woman! They were altogether too feminine, to begin with; and they were altogether too detracting to end with! Ordinarily it made her angry to discover men staring at them.

But strangely she found that the emotion she felt as Dan Vickers' dark eyes continued to linger over the smoothly molded globes of her bosom was nothing akin to anger! She felt a delicious, exciting tingle that started in her heart and spread like an intoxicating drink, warm and potent, to the very tips of her fingers and toes.

"Oh!" she said softly, "I didn't mean to offend you, Mr. Vickers. I assumed, of course, that if the price was right you'd be willing to sell your shop. Especially, since I hear that the riding academy is closing for good this season! That, of course, would practically ruin your trade! But suppose you call at my home this evening—after you've thought the matter over? Say, at eight?"

Dan Vickers gazed at the tempting curve of her vivid red lips. He noted the quick rise and fall of her gorgeous breasts.

"Very well!" he conceded. "I'll call—but I'm not expecting to change my mind!"

THAT NIGHT WHEN Dan knocked on the door of the big Crockett cottage, lights were streaming from every window. He was rather surprised—and a bit disappointed—when Hosea himself let him in.

"Allana asked me to call," Dan explained, "but she didn't say there was a party on here tonight. Perhaps I'd better not trouble to come in, because I haven't the slightest intention of selling my shop."

"Good boy!" Hosea applauded guardedly, grasping him by the arm and pulling him in, "but that's got nothing to do with your stopping a while. Allana'll be down shortly."

They were walking past the open door of the reception room. Dan glanced in curiously, recognizing some of the fellows and girls who patronized the riding academy. They were chatting a bit boisterously and sipping cocktails.

"Wonder what's keeping Allana?" one of the men asked at that moment.

"Oh, she suddenly remembered that she'd invited the village blacksmith to call tonight!" his companion giggled. "She told me that she had to put on extra war-paint to vamp him into making some sort of a bargain or other!"

Dan tried to pull away from Hosea. His dark eyes were blazing with anger. But Hosea pulled him along to his library and closed the door after them.

"I want to apologize, Vickers!" he said quickly. "Pay no attention to those rattle-brains. Sit down and let's talk awhile—it isn't often I get the chance to talk sensibly. So you're not going to sell your shop, huh?"

"No!" Dan said grimly, his hand on the door knob.

"Sit down, can't you?" Hosea snapped. "I told you I want to talk!"

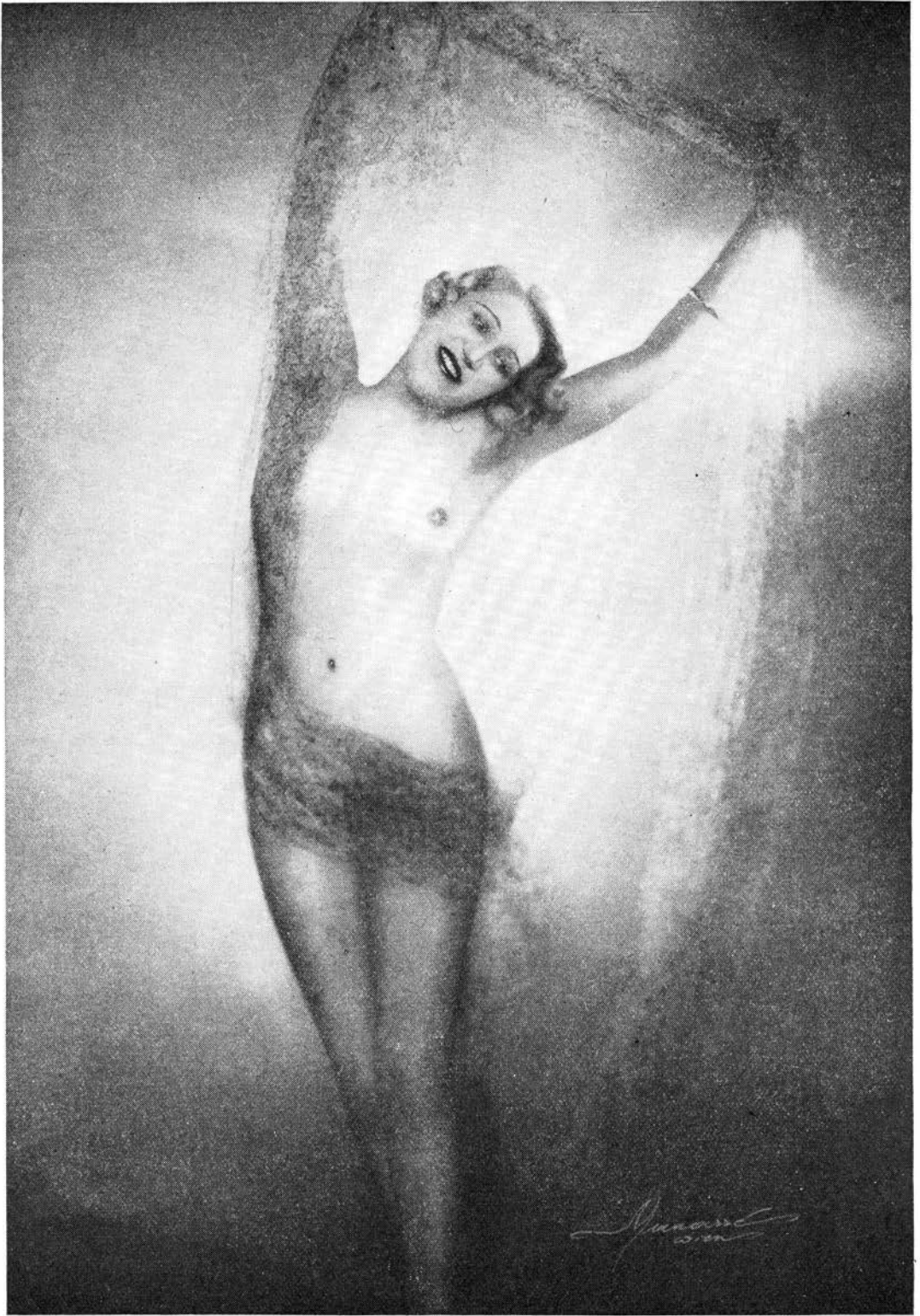
FOR TWO HOURS Allana had left her guests to shift for themselves. She had found Dan still in the library and had immediately taken possession of him. She had tucked her arm through his and strolled out into the garden. For two hours Dan had been fighting various urges, not the least of which was to take her in his arms and crush some of the nectar from her wilful red lips.

They were seated on a rustic bench completely hedged in by hydrangea trees and there was enough light from the sickle moon and the stars for him to drink in her fresh and alluring beauty. She was wearing a black satin gown that clung to her slender figure and faithfully limned every supple curve. The elongated V of her bodice exposed practically all of her gleaming white shoulders and back, and allowed a tantalizing vision of the wide valley between her jutting breasts.

Dan was uneasily conscious of a growing excitement every time his eyes strayed to this dazzling display of soft feminine flesh; and especially when they traced the scantily molded outline of her big saucy breasts. The pocketlike straps of her gown were so thin that they left little to the imagination.

Allana had talked steadily and a trifle excitedly at times. But strangely, she had not yet broached the topic of the sale of Dan's shop. Dan had talked but little and some girls might have considered his silence as boorishness; but Allana was so inexplicably thrilled by the soft gleam of his dark eyes, the attentive cast of his lean, handsome face that she hadn't given the idea a thought.

Dan finally rose, fighting back the impulse to



remain. It seemed hard for him to believe that she was not sincere.

She let her small soft hand fall on his arm and gazed up at him from languorously veiled eyes.

"It's so early, yet!" she said softly, "And I've enjoyed the evening, so! Must you go, really?" She turned so that her knees touched his. It might have been this thrilling contact—it might have been something that he saw in her eyes. It might have been an intention that he had had all along. But in the moment Dan dropped down beside her again and his arms were around her.

Their lips met in a startled, heart-throbbing kiss that was breath-shattering in its reaction. Allana started to tremble; she started to draw away at the first instant; then her arms went around his neck and her soft lips responded with an eagerness that was proof enough of the delight this kiss awakened in her.

Dan reveled silently in the totally unforeseen ecstasy of the moment. While their lips clung tenderly, his hand dropped to her knees. The rounded delight of them, warm and silkily smooth, accelerated his pulse so, he could hardly hear for the pounding of it in his ears. She trembled and her lips became possessive. He felt the probing of her gorgeous breasts against his chest.

Voices, low and ardent, which bespoke the approach of another ardent couple, broke them reluctantly apart. Allana smoothed her skirt. Dan noticed that her hands were trembling and that her resilient breasts were rising and falling with her excited breathing. She leaned away a bit.

"About the shop!" she began. "I'll give you your price, as I told you—provided it's within reason."

Dan rose just as Allana's friends appeared around the hydrangeas. He shrugged his broad square-cut shoulders.

"And, as I think I've had the pleasure of telling you before, Miss Crockett, my shop is not for sale. Thanks for a pleasant evening. Good night!"

He heard Allana's startled gasp as he sauntered away.

ALLANA STUBBORNLY WENT ahead with her plans. Her pride forbade her seeking Dan Vickers again; and shortly after work had started on her elaborate road-house it seemed that there was going to be no further need. For a crew of workmen completely demolished the old blacksmith shop directly across the road in a single afternoon. Allana wondered. A thrill of tenderness

shot through her at the thought that Dan was doing this for her.

But the thrill gave way to speculation as a new structure began to rear itself in place of the old. She thought that Dan might be going modern in the way of blacksmith shops. And she kept on thinking so until the opening day of the *Red Robin*—as huge neon lights proclaimed the name of her establishment.

She had gone home at dark to dress for the gala occasion. Dinner reservations had been snapped up already and Allana was radiant. She dressed hurriedly—but ravishingly—and drove back to experience the thrill of success. And then, as she stepped out of her roadster, multicolored lights flashed from across the road, a beautiful, eye-catching display which she had no trouble at all in recognizing as a huge blazing forge and a no less gorgeous anvil.

Her eyes popped, then blazed in consternation as this legend appeared in brightly glowing letters that flashed on and off: "*The Forge and Anvil—Dining, Dancing, Broadway Floorshow—The Best in Entertainment*".

Allana watched the display. She saw flashy automobiles drive up and stop—and she saw a lithe, tuxedoed figure greet the elaborately dressed couples and direct them to the care of girls garbed prettily in extremely daring costumes. As the whole significance of the affair struck her mind full force, Allana started to sob. She hurried unseeing into her elaborately furnished office and threw herself onto a divan.

After a few minutes she rose, her eyes blazing furiously. She was too mad to reason. She could see only that Dan Vickers had tricked her. And she knew that the almost unclassifiable feeling that she had had for him at the beginning was hate—sheer hate! That night in the garden, she had gone soft for the purpose of winning him over. She could see that, now!

She dabbed powder on her flaming cheeks and hurriedly removed traces of her blinding tears. Then she slipped on her mink wrap and hurried out, unmindful of her own slowly gathering guests.

DAN VICKERS, SUAVE and courteous and stunningly handsome, met her at the entrance of his establishment with apparent surprise.

"Why, Miss Vickers! How neighborly! I thought you'd be so busy with your own opening that you'd hardly give a thought—"

"You despicable—blacksmith!" Allana said levelly. Dan took one look at her slowly whitening face—then grasped her by the arm.

"In my office—if you've got to tell me what you think of me!" he said quickly. "One of my rules is that no troublesome guests shall be allowed!"

"Oh!" Allana gasped furiously, as he propelled her briskly through the maze of palm shaded tables and to a door near the orchestra dais. He

"I don't want a drink!" she said bitterly.

"Then—what do you want?" he insisted.

"I—d—don't know!" Allana sobbed. "I'm s-s-o miserable!"

"Go over and take care of your customers," he suggested gently. "Maybe it'll make you feel better."



opened the door and pushed her through.

"Now!" he said levelly, staring down at her.

Allana started to speak, but instead a sob choked up in her throat.

"Say it!" he encouraged. "You'll feel better!"

"I hate you!" Allana flared. "You did this just to spite me! You've ruined the only business I ever planned that—that might have worked! But I'll fight you—I'll fight you until you have to crawl back to your blacksmith shop!"

"What you need is a drink!" Dan said calmly. "Wait here and I'll get you one!"

A week later, Allana knew that she was licked. While patronage increased steadily at the "*Forge and Anvil*", her own steadily dwindled away from that of opening night. She thought desperately of imitating, or duplicating, the gay tone that prevailed in Dan's place—of hiring pretty girls and costuming them to appeal to the male customers, of hiring a Broadway floorshow, of increasing the size of her orchestra—but discarded the idea because she would be admitting Dan's leadership.

In the middle of her dullest night, Allana went

to her office to think. She knew only that she was sick of the whole thing. She knew at last that her father was right about women in business. She had just reached these enlightening conclusions, when her door opened softly.

SHE LOOKED UP, startled, as Dan eased in. His face was serious.

"I've come to make you an offer!" he explained simply. "May I sit down!"

Dumbly Allana nodded toward a chair. He walked over instead and sat down beside her on the divan.

"Do you want to buy the *Forge and Anvil*?" he surprised her. He was gazing at her with a curiously watchful gleam in his dark eyes.

"No!" Allana gasped. "I hate the place! I hate this place!"

"Then I have another offer," he resumed. "Will you marry me?"

Allana stared at him. Slowly rich color glorified her face. But before she could answer he swooped her into his arms.

For a moment she beat feebly, with totally inadequate fists, against his chest. Then, gasping, she met the insistent pressure of his lips. A thrill of rapture pervaded her trembling body as her arms glided around his neck. Her lips parted and their kiss evolved into an intoxicating bliss, wherein everything but the ecstasy of it was forgotten.

She felt his lithe body tremble against her, and her own responded. She felt the hammering of his heart against the soft, up-thrust cushion of her breast, and her own kept pace. His fingers moved gently over her shoulder and she gasped with giddy delight. They fumbled awkwardly at the neck line of her gown and her face flamed.

"Dan—dearest!" she breathed excitedly, "my sweet, my dear, do you love me?"

"Yes," he whispered vibrantly, as his fingers curved tenderly over warm vibrant flesh. "You're wonderful!" he breathed tensely. "All this while I've loved you—and I didn't know—I wasn't sure that you—"

"Stupid!" she thrilled him. "Oh, darling! Why did you take so long to find out? I'm mad about you! I tried to fool myself that I hated you—"

"You almost fooled me," he said throatily. His

hand, caressing the round delights of her knees, moved upward to her stocking top, taking her gown with it. At the contact of his work-hardened hand she shivered with reckless delight. Her arms tightened around his neck and her fingers combed through his crisp hair. She closed her eyes and gently pressed her tremulous, warm moist lips to his eyes, his ears, his hair, pressing ardent, soft kisses in unceasing succession upon his upturned countenance until she reached his mouth. With a tremulous sigh she fastened her lips avidly to his and clung there as though she would draw his very soul out of his body and into her questing mouth.

The guests outside gradually left. The orchestra went home. The "*Red Robin*" was plunged in darkness. But in Allana's office time stood still while a village blacksmith proved most delightfully and convincingly that shoeing horses was among the least of his really worthwhile accomplishments.

DAWN'S ROSY FINGERS were curving over the eastern sky when Dan and Allana walked softly onto the porch of the big Crockett cottage.

"We'll awaken father now and tell him!" Allana said softly. "He's going to be furious and I want you with me! He blames you for ruining everything! Oh, Dan, darling! Promise me that you'll be kind to him— That no matter what he says, you won't get angry! After all, you're taking me away from him, remember!"

Dan folded her in his arms. His kiss immediately made her forget her troubles. She thrilled almost unbearably as his hands moved gently over her vibrant curves. Her lips made him giddy with their sweetly reckless abandon.

"Darling," he whispered, "there's nothing to worry about! I couldn't tell you before, but your father planned the whole thing. He owns the *Forge and Anvil*! He wanted to cure you of your business schemes! He wants you to marry—and be sensible—instead. He tempted me with his scheme—and I fell, because I hoped that I might land at your little feet!"

"And for a mere blacksmith," Allana sighed rapturously, "you certainly know how to land!"

HEAVEN FOR TWO

By
Tom
Kane



*"Listen, Baby," he continued.
"How about being nice to a guy?"*

RITA sat in the tiny dressing room and thoughtfully smoked a cigarette. She felt unduly nervous and she did not quite know what to make of it. Situations like the one she knew she was about to face were nothing new to her. For years she had been coping successfully with them. Therefore, she wondered, why this sudden apprehensiveness?

Beneath the kimono which was belted tightly about her slender waist, she was wearing nothing at all. Her long, bare legs were flung out in front of her and her naked feet were stuffed into feathered mules. The top of the kimono sagged a little, and now and again one could catch a glimpse of Rita's large, high and mature bosom.

If her body had not been one hundred percent perfect in all respects, she would not have been sitting in that dressing room. But quite apart from the symmetry of her lines, she was breathtakingly lovely. Strong sunlight set fire to her red hair, and long, dark lashes actually swept her cheeks. She was a little pale, and she was a little underweight. But then she had been ill and had not been on her feet very long.

Impatiently, she tossed the cigarette into a tray and rose to her feet. Rita was tall, and oh, what a figure that girl had. She commenced to pace about the small room, and beneath the clinging silk of the kimono, her soft curves undulated, and the subtle movement of her lush, unhampered bosom was enough to set a man's heart on fire.

Suddenly the door of the dressing room opened and a young man barged unceremoniously in.

"Hello, Rita," he said. "Sorry to've kept you waiting but I got held up."

"That's okay Johnny. What's on the fire for this morning?"

"Underwear, Toots." Johnny surveyed her frankly, his head on one side. "Ye gods and little mothballs," he said, "it gets harder and harder to view you just as a model. Rita, my good woman, I never saw such a shape and I've seen them by the million."

"Now I know what's been bothering me. Give me the underwear Johnny and clear out while I get into it. Get going with the camera."

Johnny set a small box on the table. "It's in there," he said absently. He took a step towards her. "Listen, baby," he continued, "how about being nice to a guy? I could make things pretty easy for you if you'd only give me the chance."

Rita backed against the wall and held the kimono tightly about her. "Nothing doing, Johnny. I've had that kind of offer before. It's never cut any ice and it's not going to get to work now."

Johnny was near and she was being squeezed into a corner. "Let's have some fun," he said.

Rita pinned him with a cold eye. "Being nice to you wouldn't be my idea of fun," she said.

Johnny placed his hands on her silk covered shoulders. Rita calmly shrugged them off. Through the gap in the kimono, he could see the outline of the white mounds of her breasts, and his eyes were seeing the width of her hips and the strength and roundness of her thighs in quite a different light. His face was flushed and when he spoke his tongue sounded furred.

"I'll give you anything you want," Johnny said.

"I get paid ten bucks for posing. That's all I'm going to do, and that's all the money I expect. You're wasting your breath, Johnny. I'm not interested. Now get the hell out of here and let me get into that underwear."

For several seconds Johnny eyed her balefully. There was no doubt in his mind but what she meant every word she said. His disappointment turned to anger.

"You'll be sorry," he flung at her, "damned sorry!"

"Don't be a sap, Johnny. Try it with some of the others. You seem to have forgotten that I'm from show business where a girl goes through this sort of thing as part of the regular routine."

Johnny backed towards the door. "Snap into it," he said. He slammed the door after him. Rita crossed to it and turned the key in the lock.

Then she slipped out of the kimono and stood in front of the mirror and studied herself.

THOUGHTFULLY, SHE RAN her hands over her svelte curves admiringly. Rita sighed, picked up the box containing the underwear and ripped it open.

The bandeau just about covered the lush delights of her bosom, and the panties fitted her as though she had grown up inside them. Looking far more seductive than if she had been nude, she fluffed out her flaming hair, opened the dressing room door and entered the studio.

Fortunately, Johnny was an artist and it did not take him very long to become thoroughly immersed in what he was doing. He fussed and fiddled with the lights and camera. Frequently he was called upon to touch her; but he moved her this way and that as impersonally as if she had been a statue. Not a word was said and Rita obeyed him to the letter.

It was hot under the lights and the various poses were difficult to hold. But the ordeal was over at last and she was free for the day.

Johnny watched as she stepped down from the platform. His eyes glittering, he said, "Can I come into the dressing room and help you?"

"I thought we'd disposed of that?" Rita's green eyes bored into his.

Johnny shrugged his shoulders with simulated indifference. "Okay, Toots . . . but you're going to be damned sorry you took this attitude."

"I won't be sorry until you find a model who looks better in the underwear you advertise. And that—if I do say it myself—is not going to be for some little time. Perhaps never."

She stalked majestically into the dressing room and again locked the door.

When Rita fully, if not too smartly clothed, stepped into the outer office, she found Ann, the telephone girl trying to get rid of a good looking, enormous and very persistent young man.

"So," the young man was saying, "you'll stand in someone's way, huh? This might be the break some girl's been looking for."

"The orders are," Ann said for perhaps the fifth time, "not to give the names and addresses of any of the models to anyone. I don't know who you are."

"But I've told you! Listen, baby, call this number; ask for Mr. Golden . . . he'll tell you who I am."

"Go peddle your papers," Ann said.

Rita happened to glance at the magazine the young man was holding. It was folded at an advertisement for bath salts. The girl in the ad

was scantily clad in steam from the tub; and the girl was Rita. Smiling, she tapped the young man on the shoulder.

"Can I help you?" she asked.

The young man whirled on her. "I want this girl's name," he said. "I want to know where she can be found. I'm Tiny Wilson, talent scout for Pinnacle Pictures Incorporated. D'you know who she is?"

Rita's smile widened. "Sure I do. It's me--- Rita Wray."



"Can I come into the dressing room after we finish?" he asked.

"It's I," Tiny corrected her. "Thank heavens I've found you. Let me look at you."

"Go ahead."

TINY STEPPED BACK AND subjected her to the closest scrutiny she had ever suffered. First he looked at her in her rather shabby spring suit. Then she could see his eyes peeling the clothes from her. His eyes glowed and his lips parted in a broad, happy grin.

"Lady," he said, "the photograph did not flatter you. How about a spot of lunch?"

"Are you on the level? Or is this just another racket?"

Tiny sighed windily. "Call up Mr. Golden. Anyway, what can I do in a restaurant? After lunch I'll take you to the office and you'll be out of my hands. I just want to get a line on you."

"All right. You look honest enough."

Together they left the building. It was not until she was marching along beside him that Rita realized quite how tall her escort was. She was no midget; yet he towered head and shoulders above her and he was nearly as broad as he was tall. No wonder people called him Tiny.

Over their coffee, Tiny leaned back in his chair and said, "Talk. Tell me something about yourself. Tell me the truth if you want to. If not . . . tell lies. I want to get a line on your voice and so forth."

"There isn't much to tell," Rita said. "I'm twenty-two, an orphan, I've never been married—and I like fun. Up until a few months ago I was a chorus girl at the Popular Theatre. But I sprained my ankle and had to give it up. The ankle still isn't strong enough to dance on so I

made what I could by posing for advertising photographs."

"Uh-huh. Would you like a crack at the picture business?"

"I most certainly would," Rita said emphatically.

"Very well, my little one, that crack shall be yours. This afternoon you are going to meet the one and only Mr. Golden. And don't fear any monkey business because neither Mr. Golden nor I go in for propositions."

Vaguely, Rita was disappointed.

He seemed to sense what was running through her mind. "Rita, little one," he said, through a haze of cigarette smoke "let us wait to see if you pass the screen tests. If you do and I have no axe to grind . . . you and I might see a lot of one another."

"I should like that, Tiny," Rita said simply.

"And so should I. Let us on to Mr. Golden."

RITA PASSED THE tests with flying colors. Her voice recorded as well as her face and figure photographed and she was awarded a modest contract. Options studded it like nails in a coffin: but if she hurdled all of them, seven years hence she would be making enough money to have a Rolls Royce for a beach wagon.

Everything looked lovely. Tickets had been bought for Hollywood, she was girding herself for the promised running around with Tiny, when the blow fell. All a-twitter, Rita dashed one morning into Tiny's office.

"Ah, Rita, little one," he greeted her. "We shall start with lunch, then cocktails, then dinner and a show. After that . . . heaven will—I hope—be served for two among the penthouses of New York."

Rita dropped breathlessly onto the top of his desk. She swung her legs. She did not seem to notice that her skirt had crept well above her knees or that the low V of her flowered dress was showing a great deal more of her white and lush bosom than was customary. Tiny noticed these things and he looked forward to the heaven which seemed in the offing.

"Tiny," Rita said, "I'm in one sweet jam."

"Unload," Tiny said. "No problem too great—no problem too small. All details attended to personally."

"Remember that photographer I was working for when you got hold of me?"

"I never met him but I remember his joint. Proceed."

"He'd been on the make for me ever since I went there to work . . ."

"He showed excellent taste. He can hardly be blamed. Proceed."

"I wouldn't give him house room because I no like. See? Of course he's heard all about this picture stuff and he called me up this morning. He said he was going to run every picture taken of me in underwear, steam from a bathtub, stockings, vague bathing suits and so forth. Using my name."

"The low cad," Tiny said. "Vindictive, huh?"

"As you see. Will it make any difference, Tiny? Will it sour the public before I even get a chance?"

"What we could do," Tiny said, "is start a press campaign. After all, you've done nothing illegal, nothing shady and nothing immoral. Your photographs have appeared in the best periodicals, and they've been seen by millions of people. Nevertheless, the public is funny. The safest thing is for us to have the negatives of all those photographs and as many of the prints as we can get."

"There wouldn't be many prints. But the negatives are in a safe in Johnny's studio."

"Did Johnny proposition you over the telephone this morning?"

"He did. He said he would give me all the negatives if . . ."

"You'd be nice to him, huh?"

"Exactly."

"Did you believe him?"

"No and I told him so. He said I could come to the studio and he'd give me the negatives."

Tiny swept Rita into his lap and held her against him. The softness of her thrilled him, and he made no effort to hide from her the fact that he was enjoying this. What he saw he liked.

"Our date will have to be postponed a few hours," he said. "In the meantime . . . let's put our heads together."

JOHNNY AND RITA sat side by side on the couch in the office of the studio. There was a bottle of whiskey on the desk and the air was blue with smoke. Rita was dressed in the most daring evening gown she could find, and she was revealing more than she was concealing. Her bare white arms gleamed in the soft light, and the valley which separated her magnificent bosom seemed deeper and more shadowy than usual. The gown clung to her thighs, accentuating their strength and straightness.

"What about it, Rita?" Johnny asked huskily.

"I still don't believe that you'll give me the pictures."

"I'm a man of my word."

"That's what you say. I've never had any proof of it. Give them to me now."

Johnny looked instinctively across the huge safe. But he shook his head. "Nothing doing. Like I said . . . later—"

Rita stood up and crossed to the window. She peered out into the blackness of the lush June night. Slowly she lighted a cigarette. The match

And yet this was something quite different. There was no camera to argue with; no fractious lights to push and heave this way and that; no startling effect to get. She was just a supremely beautiful girl, in tight-fitting chemise, high-heeled slippers and nothing else. His hands before him, Johnny started for her.

He was within six inches of her white, pul-



"Our date will have to be postponed a few hours," he said reluctantly.

arched its way into the courtyard. Then she slowly turned.

"Okay, Johnny," she said. "But if you break your word . . ."

"I won't," Johnny assured her in a tight voice. But his eyes said he was a liar. Rita pulled down the shade. She walked slowly to the center of the office.

The cigarette dangling from the corner of her mouth, she started to unhook the scandalous gown at the waist. She held Johnny with her green eyes and his were glittering. Slowly, Rita pulled the dress over her head. She laid it—within reach—on the desk. In only a scanty chemise, she faced Johnny.

It was not the first time he had seen her thus.

sating form, when there was a loud knock at the door. Johnny stopped in his tracks as though shot.

"Open this door in the name of the law!" The voice was muffled but the words distinct.

Johnny rocked to his heels. "Get into the dress!" he hissed. Rita grabbed the dress. Johnny thought she was getting into it. He went to the door. Rita merely held the dress fetchingly in front of her. Johnny opened the door and Tiny and another man walked in. Tiny looked bigger than she had ever seen him. He seemed to fill the small office. He flashed a badge.

"What goes on here?" he demanded gruffly.

"Nothing," Johnny faltered. "Nothing at all." He looked at Rita. The dress was not hiding much.

(Please turn to page 62)

NO EXPERIENCE!

WILTON GREEN leaned forward on his desk, studied the application card under his carefully manicured fingers.

Kay had noticed the polish on his finger nails the moment she entered the office. That and the meticulous perfection of his tie knot, his tailored suit, his sleek black hair that resembled a wig of hot-poured tar. Wilton Green was quite the fop, she decided. Not strong enough to be good looking. His jowls were too flabby, his eyes too weak.

He looked up, the tip of his tongue licking his lower lip. "I see you've had no experience."

Kay attempted a smile. "Not modeling, Mr. Green. I did some selling in—"

He waved his hand. "Forget it. All the selling you've done won't help you here. You've got to be able to sell with your body." His eyes dropped, paused a moment at the pert, tilted cones of Kay's breasts. They were perfectly limned

under the bodice of her silk print dress. "Wearing a brassiere?"

Kay flushed. Instinctively, she raised her arms to cross them over her pouting breasts. "Er—no."

"Bandeau?"

"N-no."

Wilton Green's eyes descended. For all their wishy-washy weakness they glittered when they



By
*Mitzi
Mason*

*"I'm so happy, I could
make love to you till the
cows come home," he
whispered.*

reached Kay's lyre-arched hips. Again his tongue circled his lips.

"Girdle?"

"Just—just a light one."

The employment manager studied the card again. "You may work out," he said. "I'd like to see you in an evening gown. Suppose you go back to the department and have Miss Carlyle put you into a gown." He joined his finger tips, contemplated Kay over them. "White satin," he mused aloud. "Low neckline and fitted waist. No girdle. See Miss Carlyle."

In the dressing room of the evening wear department, Miss Carlyle, the assistant buyer, looked on as Kay eased the shimmering white satin gown over her hips.

"You have a lovely figure," she said. "Your breasts are beautifully firm." There was a curious tremulo in her voice.

Kay smiled. "Thank you."

Miss Carlyle stepped forward, hooked the gown up the side. She was breathing heavily and her own small breasts rose and fell beneath a shirred white blouse.

"Your coloring is perfect for the gown," she said. "I always wanted auburn hair and hazel eyes." She touched her own mouse colored hair. "You're really beautiful."

When Wilton Green looked up his eyes brightened perceptibly. For long, nerve-wracking moments he said nothing, contenting himself with a visual feast. Kay tried not to squirm under his gaze but it was difficult. He seemed to be denuding her of the sleek satin covering.

"Turn around," he instructed.

Kay obeyed, despite the fact that her knees were shaking. She could feel his piercing eyes on her back, on the woman-smooth curves of her. She heard his chair being pushed back but not until the palm of his hand rested on her hip did she realize he was standing behind her.

"I wouldn't have believed it," he said. His fingers explored daringly. "No girdle at all."

Kay was about to step forward, out of reach, when he removed his hand. She turned to face him. There were damning spots of color in his cheeks. His eyes were unnaturally bright.

"I think you'll work out all right," he said. "Report to the Deb Shop." He reached out, curled his fingers about her bare, warm arms. "I want you to come in and see me every so often." His eyes were fastened on the clearly defined mounds of her breasts.

Kay breathed fresh, clean air when she stepped out of Wilton Green's office. It was no novel-

ty for her to have men ogle and paw her. They had been doing it ever since maturity had ripened her figure into the luscious symphony of curves that it was. Frankly, she had expected to have more of a problem with Wilton Green. She might still have.

THERE WERE TWO other models in the Deb Shop; one a tall, lissome brunette who never stopped talking about her social background, the other a petite blonde who had finished at one of the best schools. The buyer, a Mrs. Lord, welcomed Kay.

"I've been asking for a girl like you for heaven only knows how long. Mr. Green just called me about you. He suggests you be used to wear evening dresses." She looked Kay over. "I personally think you could wear anything. Did Mr. Green mention anything about building you up?"

"I don't understand."

"Well, we cater to a rather blue-blooded clientele. They like to think that our models are either exiled Russian princesses or descendents of George Washington. I think we'll make you a Georgia belle. You know, the rich old Southern family reduced to penury by the war. You'll have to cultivate a drawl."

Kay cultivated a drawl. She would have done almost anything to maintain the security the job afforded—even to the point of accepting Wilton Green's attentions, which, as she well knew, would be coming her way in short order.

The weeks went by without the expected call from the employment manager. Kay had almost come to the conclusion he had forgotten about her when she was told to report to his office.

At the time the message was delivered Kay had just finished modeling a sequin-splashed evening gown and was removing it in the dressing room. Corline Vernon, the society brunette, leaned over to Elsa Barcross, the finishing school blonde.

"Now you can understand how some people get jobs," she said in a loud stage whisper.

Kay heard and flushed. She was about to reply to the insinuation when the blonde's thin, piping voice responded.

"I wonder whether she gave Green letters of recommendation . . . or just samples?"

Kay's blood boiled in her veins but she had sufficient presence of mind to control herself. Nothing would be gained by dignifying their caty remarks with a reply. She slipped into her woolen dress, walked out of the dressing room with her pert nose in the air.



She couldn't bring herself to tell him the truth. Living a lie for one glorious night was not too great a crime. . . .

WILTON GREEN RUBBED his hands together when she entered his office. He rose, came around the desk, ran his fingers up her arms until they reached the warm hollows beneath her shoulders. He smelled of violet water and pomade.

"I've had good reports about your work, Miss Lane. Excellent reports." His fingers worked on the warm softness of her arms, rubbing insidiously.

Here it was. You couldn't mistake the manifold manifestations. The pupils of his eyes were dilated. His lips were dry and nervous. The palms of his hands were warm through the sleeves of her dress. What to do? Men like Wilton Green found swift revenge for those who stood in their way.

"You like working here, don't you?" He drew her closer. His eyes fell to the twin projection of her breasts. It was only natural and in keeping with Kay's internal tumult that the resiliently firm hillocks were rising and falling.

She drew away slightly, managed to smile. "Yes, I do, Mr. Green."

One of his hands dropped to her hip, slid around her slim waist. The other, free to wander, fumbled at the front of her dress.

"How about having dinner with me tonight?" he suggested.

The room whirled around Kay. In another moment his hand would be inside her bodice. . . .

Another moment never came. There was a sharp knock at the door. Wilton Green stepped back, adjusted the knot of his tie, drew a deep breath.

"Come in." The door opened and his secretary entered.

"I have the personnel reports, Mr. Green."

"Er—yes." He turned to Kay. "That will be all, Miss Lane. I'll keep in touch with you."

Long after she had left his office, his parting words rang through Kay's ears: "I'll keep in touch with you." He probably hadn't meant them literally . . . or maybe he had.

IT WAS LATE IN the afternoon when Kay was assigned to model a cerise satin evening gown. It was a newly imported model, fashioned in the most daring Parisian lines. The bodice was merely a continuation of the shoulder straps, widened to cup the breasts and yet reveal the hollow between them and their soft, silken outer rondures. Kay, before a mirror, smoothed the shimmering material over her hips, squeezed a recalcitrant beauty back into its satin sheath, stepped from the dressing room.

Ordinarily she paid no attention to the custo-



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mers. They were usually bored scions of the ultra-rich or triple-chinned dowagers who imagined they would look as well in a gown as the model did. But for some strange reason—she found her attention inexorably drawn to the audience before whom she was promenading.

The youngish, blase woman who wished to see the gown was not alone. Standing beside her chair, resting easily on a malaca cane, was the handsomest young man Kay had ever laid eyes on. His was a virile handsomeness, distinguished



by a capable chin, well-set brown eyes and an aquiline nose. He had broad shoulders that tapered down into lean hips.

Kay's heart missed a beat. She almost tripped over the hem of the gown. She tried to tear her eyes away from the young man's face but something held them. He smiled and the blood rushed up to her head, pounded like the beat of tom-toms.

When she reached the end of the red carpet she pirouetted gracefully, started back. Try as she did to keep her eyes on the floor, they were drawn to the young man's, held there by a power beyond her control. Kay saw him lean over and say something to the girl seated in the chair. She smiled, patted his cheek with a gloved hand. He turned and walked towards an escalator.

Back in the dressing room, Kay peeled the satin gown off. She happened to glance at her nude body in the full length mirror. Her breasts were round and faintly pink-tinged. It was a little silly going off the deep end that way. There was no sense falling in love with the moon. You couldn't reach it. And then, he was probably the woman's husband.

A page girl entered the dressing room. "Miss Lane here?"

Kay turned. "I'm Miss Lane."

"Note for you."

Kay took the envelope, slit it, read the contents once, twice, three times. The third time she realized it wasn't a dream; that it was real. She gave it a fifth reading:

My dear Miss Lane:

I should like very much to take you to dinner tonight. Shall we say the Ritz lobby at eight? I'll be carrying the same malaca cane.

Hopefully,
Kenneth Rogers

The page girl was waiting. "The gentleman said there'd be a reply. He's waiting on the floor below."

Kay pressed the note to her breasts. "Yes, there is. Tell the gentleman I'd be delighted."

AT FIVE-THIRTY, WHEN she left the store, Kay hurried to her furnished room, put her hair up in curlers, massaged vanishing cream into her face. Dinner at the Ritz meant formal clothes. She had only one evening dress, a black velvet. It was two years old but still capable of accentuating all her nature-given charms.

He was waiting for her in the Ritz lobby, stunning in a suit of tails, but without the malaca cane. "I forgot I'd be wearing soup-and-fish," he said pleasantly. "You'll have to excuse the absence of the cane."

At the dinner table, Kay found her tongue. "You have me in the dark Mr. Rogers," she said. "I—"

He reached out, patted her hand. "Ken is the name, Kay."



She smiled. "All right, but that's it. How did you know my name?"

"Just by remembering your picture."

Kay's brow creased. "Picture?"

"Uh huh. Oh, about five weeks ago I read an article concerning a charming Georgia belle who, owing to the collapse of her family fortune, was forced to model clothes at an exclusive dress shop. The charming Georgia belle was Miss Kay Lane and I've been trying ever since to come

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face to face with her. I've always had a soft spot in my heart for Southern girls."

Kay gulped. She had long since forgotten the publicity story released by the store; the "glamour tale" offered to the newspapers. Now it was returning like a boomerang.

Ken noticed her frustration. "What's the matter? Have I said anything wrong?"



"Oh—oh no. N-nothing at all."

The music started. "Shall we dance?"

Floating in his arms brought temporary surcease from the bugaboo that seemed to be hovering around her. Evidently the only reason he had asked her out was because of the fictitious publicity release he had read. The fair thing to do would be to tell him the truth.

She couldn't bring herself to do it. It would be like deliberately sacrificing heaven for the reputed tortures of the lower regions. Living a lie for one glorious night was not too great a crime.

At ten they left the Ritz. Ken suggested a night club. En route in a taxi, he coiled his arm about Kay's waist.

"You're so completely lovely," he said softly.

Kay sighed, pillowed her head on his shoulder. She felt like a little Cinderella. There would be an awakening soon. A rude awakening.

"Thank you," she whispered, closing her eyes.

IT WAS AFTER TWO in the morning when the bowing doorman at the *Club Gaucho* held a cab door open for them.

"Two thousand Park Avenue," Ken instructed the driver. Again his arm encircled Kay's waist. "We're stopping up at my apartment for a night-cap. You don't mind, do you?"

A warm wave swept over Kay. "Is—is it all right? That—that woman you were with today—at the store—"

"No, she isn't my wife, darling. I'm free, white and single. And I fell in love with you at first sight. Does that make it easier?"

Kay cuddled close. "I'm glad, Ken. It—it had me worried."

"Sweet." He tilted her head back, placed his mouth against her lips. Slowly, like the petals of a scented flower, her lips parted. His hand made its way beneath her wrap, gently stroked the smoothness of her bare shoulder. Kay tensed, clung to him. The roar in her ears was like the thunder of a giant waterfall. When his fingers touched the swell of her flesh she went mad with new-found happiness.

There was only the brief interlude between the arrival of the cab at the address and their entrance into a gorgeously furnished apartment. Ken removed Kay's wrap, led her to a soft, amorously comfortable divan. The nightcap was forgotten. He extinguished all but one, rose-hued lamp that cast a warm, soft light.

The setting was perfect. Kay's shoulders and the upper fullness of her breasts were like ivory under the dim effulgence. Ken took her into his arms held her gently.

"I've always wondered what it felt like to be in love," he murmured. "I think I know . . . now."



He bent her back, ran his lips over her throat until they reached the heady well-spring of her mouth. Her breasts were against his chest. Again, emotion engulfed her. Kay felt his fingers easing the straps of her gown off her shoulders. Ken's touch was light and thrilling. In a moment . . . in a moment . . . he would kiss her again.

Something snapped in her mind, brought a cold shiver. This was all a lie! He would have to

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know sooner or later It was wrong to lead him into believing. . . .

His lips left hers. He leaned back. "What is it, Kay, darling?"

Her eyes were damp. "There's something I think you should know, Ken. I—I'm not from a prominent Georgia family! I'm not society! That was all a story made up by the store when they hired me! I can't go on letting you believe—"

His shout broke the tense stillness. It startled Kay until she realized it was a shout of joy. He beamed at her.

"Sweetheart, that's the best news I've heard in a month of Sundays. I was wondering how to break my story to you."

"Story? What story?"

"That I'm not the wealthy blue-blood you think I am. That I spent my last dollar taking you out tonight. That I borrowed this apartment from a friend just to make an impression on you because I thought you were used to things like that. That the girl who accompanied me to the store was just my stenographer posing as a debutante. That it was all a scheme to meet you. That I thought I had to match your sex appeal with checks appeal. That I'm so happy I could love you until the cows come home!"

Kay's sigh of relief was also a sigh of longing. "Why don't you?" she whispered.

He did!

Heaven For Two

(Continued from page 53)

"I'll say so," Tiny sneered. He clapped a heavy hand onto Johnny's shoulder. "We've had this place under observation for some time. Open up the safe, brother."

"What for?" Johnny blustered. "This is a private studio. My safe has nothing to do with you."

"Open 'er up!" Tiny ordered. To Rita, "Don't make a break, sister. I'll have something to say to you later."

Pushed none too gently over to the safe, Johnny dropped to his knees and fumbled with shaking hands with the combination. The heavy doors swung open.

"Okay," Tiny said. He tossed Johnny as though he were a sack of wheat into the waiting arms of his companion. "Take him down town, Al and book him. I'll be along with the dame in a few minutes."

Protesting violently, fighting futilely, Johnny was hustled through the door. Tiny kicked it shut. Grinning, he faced Rita.

"How's that, little one? Can I act or can I act?"

"You can," Rita said admiringly. "Where will they take Johnny?"

Tiny laughed. "Oh, somewhere up in the Bronx, I guess. He won't be hurt. Now, let's get those negatives."

It did not take very long as Johnny's filing system was complete and efficient. Tiny stuffed them in his pocket and faced Rita.

"Shall we go?" he suggested.

Rita sat down on the couch. She was still holding the gown coyly in front of her. "Couldn't we have a little drink before setting out?" she asked.

"Good idea."

Tiny sat down beside her. "Will you marry me?" he said, matter of factly.

"D'you think I should?"

"I do."

"Very well, Tiny . . . darling."

She did. Tiny gazed long and lovingly at her beautiful form. He smiled broadly and poured two drinks.

"Not quite the way we'd plan a honeymoon," he said: "but here's to heaven for two!"

Stormy Night

(Continued from page 33)

A thunderbolt dropped into the adjoining field with the noise of a siege gun and Jinny flung her bare arms about Bob's neck. Her scarcely covered bosom was crushed flat against him.

"Jessie," Bob said: "this must stop. You'll think I'm crazy; but I've fallen in love with you and I can't marry you because I haven't a penny in the world and I've got to marry some other girl. Get off my lap or I won't be responsible."

Still Jinny clung to him. "If it's a question of your manly protection, Bob . . . I'll take vanilla."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Oh, you fat-head!" She crushed her lips to his and held him close. Bob got deliberately to his feet. In passing, Jinny held in his arms, he blew out the light.

In darkness, he walked into the other room and the thud of the kicked-to door vied for supremacy with the howling of the storm.

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ON THE JETTY, in Broadway's idea of what the summer vacationist will wear, was Myrtle. In the water, clearly visible and just as clearly disturbed, were Bob and Jinny.

"This is a hell of a note!" Myrtle said savagely. "I sit up all night to come and spend the week-end with you and find this! I'm going right back to tell your mother you . . . mollycoddle!"

Bob said to Jinny, "Am I a mollycoddle, my sweet?"

"If you are . . . please save me from a cave-man."

"Go ahead, Myrtle," Bob shouted. "We're getting married, anyway. Go ahead and tell the old battleaxe. I don't give a damn."

"What'll you live on?" Myrtle taunted him. "Love!"

FOR THE SAKE OF the marriage license which they later applied for, Jinny was forced to give her right name. Bob was stunned and in the dark until she deigned to explain to him after they were made man and wife.

"First," she said, "I told Mother I was going to spend some time with a girl friend on the Cape. Then I went to the Scottish woman in Yonkers and bared the well-known soul. She was doubtful but sentimental. One hundred dollars cash did the rest."

In awestruck tones, Bob said, "You took an awful chance."

Jinny held onto him. "I've been in love with you since I was fifteen. How about starting on our honeymoon?"

"Oh, darling!"

Getting Even

(Continued from page 40)

been anything between us—except what you have seen. When I came here, to your room, I lied to you! I came because I couldn't keep away! Wellington had nothing to do with it—"

Ken grinned. "I know, honey. How could he, when I spent two hours with him just before you came? I fed him so much gin that he passed out completely—minutes before I left him!"

"Poor Welly," Jane murmured happily. "But you shouldn't have done that—unless you had intentions, too!"

"Now that you speak of it, I believe I did have!" Ken admitted.

"Really?" she whispered, stirring in his arms.

THAT WAS GREAT, DEAR!
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changed my name from "Miss" to "Mrs."

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One evening I was sitting in my lonely room gazing from the window. From across the street came the sound of jazz and happy laughter. I could see couples dancing—others talking—all having a good time.

Everything seemed to center around the girl at the piano—Mary Nelson. How I envied her! She had friends, popularity, happiness—all the things I longed for—but *didn't have*.

The next afternoon I dropped over to see Mary—told her how lonely and depressed I felt. To cheer me up Mary sat down at the piano and played waltzes, jazz bits, sonatas. When she had finished, I sighed enviously.

"Thanks, Mary, it was wonderful. What wouldn't I give to play like that! But it's too late now! I should have had a

teacher when I was in school—like you!"

Mary smiled and said: "Ann, I never had a teacher in my life, in fact, not so long ago I couldn't play a note."

"Impossible," I exclaimed. "How did you do it?"

Then she told me about a wonderful new short-cut method of learning music that had been perfected by the U. S. School of Music. You learn real music from the start. When I left Mary it was with new hope. If she could learn to play this way, so could I. That very night I wrote for the Free Book and Demonstration Lesson.

I never dreamed that learning to play the piano could be so simple—even easier than Mary had pictured it. And as the lessons continued, they seemed to get easier. Although I never had any "talent" I was playing my favorites—almost before I knew it.

Then came the big night at Margaret Jones' party. What a moment that was when our hostess, apparently troubled, exclaimed: "Isn't it a shame that Mary Nelson can't be here to play the piano?"

I spoke up, "I'll try to fill Mary's place—if you're not too critical."

Everyone seemed surprised. "Why, I didn't know she played!" someone behind whispered.

As I struck the first rippling chords of Nevin's lovely "Narcissus," a hush fell over the room. I could hardly believe it, but—I was hiding the party spellbound.

When I finished you should have heard them applaud! Everyone insisted I play more! Only too glad, I played piece after piece. Before the evening was over, I had been invited to three more parties. And it wasn't long until I met Tom who shortly afterward asked me to become his wife.

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