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This Issue

# Breezy Stories

and YOUNG'S  
MAGAZINE

20¢

FEB.



**SINLESS SINNERS**

*Helen Adams*

**LORD BILL**

*Doris Stead*

**CO-RESPONDENT**

*Joan Davis*

**WHEN YOU  
COME BACK**

*Louise Lann*

**THE TULE FOG**

*Peggy True*

**Thrilling  
Novelette**

**SOME ONE HAPPENS ALONG**

*Ruth U. Tuthill*

**THREE WOMEN IN LOVE**

*Dorothy Dow*

**THE LOVE GAMBLER**

*Charlotte Wilma Fox*

**SOMETIMES IT'S DANGEROUS**

*Mary Sears*

**SIDE-STEPPING DELILAH**

*Hazel Keller*

**TWO KIND OF WOMEN**

*Stepan Dostev*

**PICK UP THE PIECES**

*Cornell Woolrich*

# Wouldn't you like to get thru the winter *without* **CATCHING COLD?**

**Your chances of doing so are better if you will treat a cold for what it is — an infection calling for germicidal action**

SOMETHING new is going on—something that will interest you if you are subject to colds and sore throat.

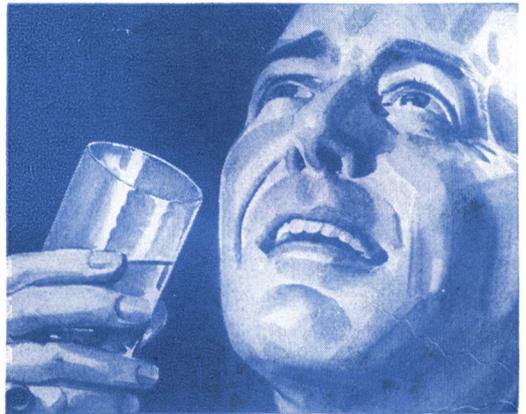
People who used to catch colds and dose them vainly, now take steps to fight having them at all. They have stopped planning to cure, and have begun trying to prevent these troublesome and often dangerous ailments.

Today, colds stand revealed in their true light. They are no more nor less than infections, involving germs. The way to treat such infections is with germicidal action which destroys bacteria.

We ask you to read carefully the results of several tests, made under medical supervision, during the winters of 1930-1931, 1931-1932, and 1934.

During these years, large groups of people were divided into two classes: those who gargled with Listerine twice a day or oftener, and those who did not gargle at all

In a majority of tests it was shown that those who gargled with Listerine caught fewer colds than those who did not gargle with it. More-



over, when Listerine users did catch cold, the colds were milder, and were of shorter duration, than the infections of non-users.

Against sore throat Listerine was similarly successful—fewer cases for those who used it.

Bear in mind that these results did not spring out of one test made during one year but out of many tests made during several years. Thus does science lend corroboration to the testimony of literally thousands of satisfied Listerine users who have found this safe antiseptic so helpful in checking respiratory infections.

Don't wait till a cold takes hold of you, and you are forced to dose it with internal drugs of questionable effect. Get in the habit of using Listerine twice a day as a preventive measure. Listerine not only kills germs associated with sore throat and colds, on the mucous membrane of the oral cavity, but also renders the mouth clean and sweet and the breath agreeable. Lambert Pharmacal Company, St. Louis, Mo.

## Listerine

*- relieves Colds and Sore Throat*

# BOTH HAD THE SAME CHANCE - BUT READ WHY ONLY TOM MADE GOOD

## HERE'S WHAT HAPPENED TO TOM



**YES, BILL**  
I'M CONVINCED  
OF RADIO'S  
OPPORTUNITIES.  
I'M GOING TO  
START TRAINING  
FOR RADIO  
NOW!



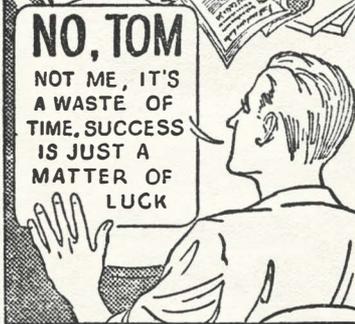
JUST THINK - I STARTED  
TRAINING ONLY A FEW  
MONTHS AGO AND  
I'M ALREADY MAKING  
GOOD MONEY IN  
SPARE TIME



OH TOM! I'M  
PROUD OF YOU.  
YOU'VE GONE  
AHEAD SO FAST  
IN RADIO

YES! I'VE GOT A  
GOOD JOB NOW -  
AND THERE'S A  
REAL FUTURE  
FOR US IN  
RADIO. N.R.I.  
TRAINING  
CERTAINLY  
BROUGHT ME  
SUCCESS.

## BUT READ WHAT HAPPENED TO BILL



**NO, TOM**  
NOT ME, IT'S  
A WASTE OF  
TIME. SUCCESS  
IS JUST A  
MATTER OF  
LUCK



SAME OLD GRIND -- SAME  
SKINNY - PAY ENVELOPE.  
I'M JUST WHERE I STARTED  
FIVE YEARS AGO.



GUESS I'M A FAILURE  
I'LL NEVER GET ANY-  
WHERE -- I'M NOT  
LUCKY.

YOU'LL ALWAYS  
BE A FAILURE -  
BILL UNLESS  
YOU DO SOME-  
THING ABOUT  
IT. WISHING  
WON'T GET  
YOU ANY-  
WHERE

# I will train you at home

**Many Radio Experts  
Make \$30, \$50  
\$75 a Week**

## IN YOUR SPARE TIME FOR A GOOD RADIO JOB



J. E. SMITH, President  
National Radio Institute

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Davis J. Shumaker, R. 2, Box 105F, Vicksburg, Miss., wrote: "I am manager of Radio Service Department of one of Mississippi's largest furniture stores." Frank Reese, 222 S. 60th St., Philadelphia, Pa., wrote: "I have my own Radio business which shows \$300 a month profit."

**Many Make \$5, \$10, \$15  
A Week In Spare Time  
While Learning**

Hold your job. I'll not only train you in a few hours of your spare time a week, but the day you enroll I start sending you Extra Money Job Sheets which quickly show you how to do Radio repair jobs common in your neighborhood. I also give you Radio equipment for conducting experiments and making tests that teach you to build and service practically every type of receiving set made.

Otis Denton, 14105 Lorain Ave., Cleveland, Ohio, wrote: "I picked up \$1,800 while studying." Gordon Angwin, 1815 Barrett Ave., Richmond, Calif., wrote: "I average \$400 to \$500 profit a year in spare time."

Mail the coupon now. Get the facts about Radio—the field with a future. N.R.I. Training fits you for jobs in connection with the manufacture, sale, operation and repair of Radio, Loud Speaker and Television apparatus. It fits you to go in business for yourself, service sets, operate on Board Ships, in Broadcasting, Television, Aviation, Police Radio and in many other jobs. My FREE book tells how to learn quickly at

home in spare time to be a Radio Expert. My book has shown hundreds of men and young men how to make more money and win success. It's FREE to any ambitious person over 15 years of age. Investigate. Read now Radio has grown in a few years to a giant industry. Read about developments. Find out what Radio offers you—what my men are doing and earning—about my Money Back Agreement, and the many other N. R. I. features. Mail the coupon in an envelope, or paste it on a 1c postcard TODAY.



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National Radio Institute, Washington, D. O.

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Name.....Age.....  
Address.....  
City.....State.....

**MAIL  
THIS  
NOW**

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# TRUE-LIFE TALKIES

**JOHN DISCOVERS HOW TO "GET THE BREAKS"**

I'M SORRY JOHN - BUT I CAN'T SEE YOU TONIGHT

NO JOB - NO MONEY - AND NOW, NO GIRL

SO!... THAT'S WHY RUTH BROKE HER DATE WITH ME

HELLO JOHN WHAT'S THE IDEA OF THE LONG FACE? - LOSE YOUR JOB? - OR YOUR GIRL?

BUT I HAVEN'T HAD THE MONEY FOR TRAINING LIKE THAT, GEORGE - AND BESIDES, I LOST THE AD YOU GAVE ME

BUT YOU DON'T NEED MUCH MONEY WITH THEIR NEW FINANCE PLAN. COME ON UP TO THE HOUSE - I'VE GOT ANOTHER ONE OF THEIR ADS - YOU CAN SEND IN THE COUPON RIGHT NOW!

BOTH! - IT SEEMS LIKE A FELLOW'S GOT TO HAVE A CAR AND PLENTY OF DOUGH TO GET THE BREAKS THESE DAYS

WELL YOU COULD HAVE 'EM AND THE GIRL TOO, IF YOU'D TAKEN MY TIP ABOUT COYNE TRAINING AND ENROLLED WHEN I DID

**THREE MONTHS LATER:**  
IN THE COYNE SHOPS

BOY! - THIS CERTAINLY IS A GREAT WAY TO LEARN ELECTRICITY - I'LL BE THROUGH IN ANOTHER WEEK AND READY FOR A REAL JOB - THEN LET RUTH AND GEORGE WATCH MY SMOKE!

**SIX MONTHS LATER:**

COME ON, SUGAR! - WE'RE GOING TO CELEBRATE - I GOT ANOTHER RAISE, TODAY, AND THAT MEANS WE'RE READY TO SET A VERY IMPORTANT DATE.

OH, JOHN! - HOW WONDERFUL. I KNEW YOU COULD DO IT WITH COYNE TRAINING - BUT IT TOOK GEORGE'S HELP TO REALLY WAKE YOU UP.

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*W. C. Lewis*



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Dept. 26-66, 500 S. Paulina St., Chicago, Ill.

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CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_



Young's Magazine Building

# Breezy Stories

The C. H. Young Publishing Co., New York



Washington Square

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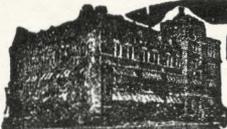
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## This Revelation Will Startle Men Past 40!

**BUT IT MAY BRING YEARS OF COMFORT TO THEIR LIVES!**

**H**AVE you lost much of your strength? Do you suffer from pains in back, legs and feet? Are you forced to get up 2 to 10 times at night? Are you a victim of nervousness, fatigue, dizziness, mental depression, chronic constipation, sciatica, bladder trouble? Many men past 40 often mistake these ailments for symptoms of approaching old age. They undergo prolonged treatments that frequently bring no relief and a life of miserable old age ensues, because they have failed to strike at the real trouble.

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## Some One Happens Along

By RUTH U. TUTHILL

**M**AXINE stood behind the battered screen in Paul's studio. She'd been posing. When the knock came at the door Paul had waxed profane,

"Curses!" he'd said—and other

things! "Who in hell is that? Just when I was making such a swell job of that left knee of yours!"

Maxine hadn't stirred from her pose. Her head was high. One hand was on her hip, while the other held

aloft an apple. She was dressed— Well, why go into that? The name of Paul's masterpiece was to be "The Young Eve." Enough said! She stood there smiling, firm and taut and vibrant.

"Maybe it's a customer, Paul?"

"Oh, yeah?" Paul was bitterly scornful. "Maybe it's Greta Garbo! More likely it's the gas-man to take out the meter."

The knock came again more insistently.

"Well, anyway," said Maxine, "let him in. And me for the screen."

"Hell!" Paul said.

Maxine retired from the rough platform where she'd held that pose again and again until she was ready to drop. She sat down in the rickety chair behind the canvas screen. She'd have liked a cigarette, but nothing doing. They were all out in the studio. Her clothes were there, though. She pulled her year-before-last's coat around her. It was never warm in Paul's studio. As who should know better than she who'd shivered there in scanty raiment so often? She'd brought the apple in with her. It was big and red and enticing. She wished she could eat it. But that was out, apple munchings were so darn audible. Anyway, she didn't need to eat the apple. She was no unsophisticated Eve. She already knew good and evil, although she sometimes couldn't tell which was which. She heard Paul open the door and a woman's high-pitched, brittle voice.

"Oh, Mr. Dowe, I've had the most awful time finding you!"

Then Paul's baritone with the intriguing rough edge to it in reply.

"Mrs. Sturges! This is a surprise!"

"Nice one, I hope," from Mrs. Sturges. Maxine could imagine the look with which it was accompanied. Provocative was the word.

"Nicest ever."

"Do you really mean that?" A

pause and another look. "Well, aren't you going to ask me in?" Clatter of heels and the door closing. "Oh, what an interesting place! And you're working!"

"I was!" Rather grim Paul sounded. Maxine could hear him turning his easel to the wall. He loathed anybody seeing his stuff half done. "Have a cigarette?"

"Oh, thanks, I have my own." An interlude and the odor of freshly lighted smokes, maddening to one who was starving for a puff herself.

The screen was so old that you couldn't tell what color it was originally. There was even a hole in it. One big enough to see through. Maxine applied a long-lashed eye to it.

Well, where had Paul picked up that woman? And why hadn't he told her of such a find? Park Avenue and the Lido were written all over her. She was the kind of woman who drives in Rolls-Royces and had country houses all over the place. Severely garbed in black and white with a definite stream-line effect, Maxine could see that her get up must have cost twice what her own clothes did for at least two years. Those sables alone. Two years? Ten! She was handsome, too, with black and white *motif* of eyes and hair and skin disturbed by full, vividly red lips. There were huge pearls screwed into her ears. She was smiling at Paul through her tobacco smoke and her teeth were beautiful.

About thirty-five, thought Maxine, and going strong. Better looking now than she was at eighteen probably. The kind of a woman who knows her stuff.

Maxine earned a modest living writing stories for the less important magazines, when she wasn't posing for Paul. She had a way of summing up her heroines. Her posing for Paul often ruined her more actively creative moments. She figured she lost out sometimes to the

tune of fifty bucks a month, and, of course, got nothing in return. Nothing except Paul's very satisfactory love and the joy of knowing she was helping him in his career. Paul wasn't like her. He refused to have anything to do with potboilers. Paul was going to strike it big someday. Then she'd have her reward.

The conversation in the studio went on. That woman was making up to Paul. Paul saw through her, but was flattered just the same. Maxine could see that. He was suggesting tea. That meant there'd be no more posing that afternoon. Maxine felt slightly irritated. Did Paul expect her to sit there while he entertained? Well, he'd be surprised. She got herself into the few garments that she habitually wore and appeared from behind the screen.

The woman looked startled. But she was undeniably a lady of poise.

"How exciting!" she exclaimed. "Were you there all the time? Why didn't you tell me, Paul? Did I say anything I shouldn't have?"

"Paul!" She'd dragged that in by the scuff of its neck just to show how well she knew him. Maxine was wise to such tactics.

She replied for Paul. "Not a thing! I was dying for a smoke and I heard Paul mention tea, so I came out. Paul, the cigarettes please."

"Maxine, this is Mrs. Sturges," said Paul.

"Adeline, to you!" said his guest with another look which didn't include Maxine.

"To me then, too," she said. "Paul and I share things fifty-fifty."

Adeline Sturges smiled. "Yes? How cosy!"

Maxine glanced at Paul. She expected he'd give her the glad eye in recognition of her ability to put interlopers in their place. But he was puttering among the odd cups and saucers. He didn't look any too well pleased, however.

There was another knock at the door. Adeline Sturges treated Maxine to one of her brilliant smiles. Yes, she did have dazzling teeth—you'd have to give her that.

"I fancy that's my nephew, James Frobisher, Junior. I told him to pick me up here. We were having tea at the Plaza, but he'll like this lots better."

Paul being busy, Maxine opened the door. James Frobisher, Junior, gave her an appreciative glance and got down to business.

"Is Mrs. Sturges here? Oh, there you are! Coming, Adeline?"

"Darling, no. We're having tea here instead. Meet the gang, Jimmy."

Maxine sized James Frobisher, Junior, up as a personable young man of twenty or so. He had eyes that would have done for a girl and a moustache that had evidently been coaxed. As he gave the studio the once-over she noticed that his glance lingered on the nudes appraisingly. She did not know, of course, that at that stage of his evolution James Frobisher, Junior, was comparing every female form he encountered with Nan Fields, wife of his father's ex-bootlegger. He'd never seen Nan with her clothes off, but he had hopes, and he was training for the occasion by going in for strip-tease acts and that sort of thing in general. He had got acquainted with Nan during the prohibition period when he'd often stopped at her apartment to get a pint or so for Dad. Now that these pints could be obtained openly he continued his visits. Nan laughed about him afterward with her husband.

"Keep it up, babe," was his advice. "The kid's got a lot of money back of him."

With his eyes still on a particularly intriguing nude, Jim took out a hip flask and suggested high balls.

"No ice," said Paul.

That settled it. James Frobisher,

Junior just passed the flask around and they drank it straight.

Maxine saw that the Sturges nephew had taken quite a shine to her. He was at the age when to lure a gal into a remote corner and monopolize her seemed to him distinguished. There were no remote corners in Paul's studio, but there was the screen. He arranged it before the window, placed two chairs close together behind it, and conducted Maxine hither. It was almost as though he'd been instructed by Aunt Adeline so that he might leave the studio proper—or improper—free for her and Paul. But, as obviously, Aunt Adeline hadn't known that the necessity would arise, there could have been no coaching. James Frobisher, Junior's tactics were instinctive.

Adeline had been letting them into quite a lot of intimate personal history. She'd been telling them about her three children.

"None of them have the same father, of course," she said. "But my husbands have all been charming. One tires after a year or two, of course, and men are so seldom faithful—especially the charming ones. They have so many temptations. I shall *never* marry again." She had looked at Paul when she said that as though she dared him to shake her resolution.

"You, too, are charming," her look said. "But never again! Unless you dare me!"

Maxine knew that Paul was not one who took a dare. That look of Adeline's would have made her rather nervous if she hadn't been so sure of Paul.

From behind the screen they caught bits of a conversation continued in somewhat the same vein.

"Adeline sure is some vamp!" said James Frobisher, Junior apropos of what they overheard. "Three husbands—and a kid by each! Experimental, you know. I call them the

three little Trouts. Eugenics,—that sort of thing. You know—that place out at Cold Spring Harbor. Adeline's got a place on the North Shore, too. Guess that's what gave her the idea. There was another kid, too, without any dad at all. Adeline didn't even bother to marry the guy. She went away for a year after she'd divorced her first husband and came back home with another baby. Quick work! It was a flop though, it died. Guess that discouraged Adeline having love-children. She went into marriage in a big way after that. You wouldn't think it to look at her, but Adeline sure has the mother-instinct."

"Maybe you've got it mixed with the mating instinct and not being able to avoid paying the price," said Maxine.

She was stirred by all this. She saw that James Frobisher, Junior was going to join her group of male turner-inside-outers. There had been quite a lot of them before she'd got tied up this way with Paul, and she missed them, rather. She'd concocted many a pot-boiler from their indiscreet disclosures. But now, since most people knew how hard she'd fallen for Paul, about her only source of lurid confession was Gen Claxton. An a woman's confidences were so much less instructive than a man's. Better lead him on to further revelations.

"What an interesting life your aunt has had!" she remarked.

"You've said it. She'd never have been able to get away with it, if she wasn't a hundred per cent blue book. Related to all the high hats in New York. And dough! Three million from her dad when he kicked off—and did she get alimony from those men she married, or did she get alimony! Oh, boy! My dad's only a stepbrother. We're mere mutts compared with Adeline." He paused and looked at Maxine smilingly. "Got such a thing as a radio?"

"Over there in the corner."

He went and turned it on. A great voice rumbled something about housing and a signature for a jazz orchestra took the air. He came back grinning.

"Makes the room safer for intimate conversation," he explained.

Maxine could see by his face that he didn't mean the intimacies to stop at conversation.

"Oh, yes?" she said coolly.

He moved his chair nearer hers. "What you doing in this dump?" he wanted to know. "Model?"

"Yes. Here in this dump. No-where else."

"Only pose for this one guy you mean?"

"Only for this one guy."

"I see. Ever pose in the altogether?"

"Sometimes."

"Wish you'd pose for me!"

"Don't be silly!" was the answer to that. Maxine was amused by his assurance. He was a little lamb playing at being a big bad wolf.

He bent toward her and placed his arm along the back of her chair.

"Say, I think you're a swell dame!" he remarked with his eyes on the curves of her knitted blouse.

Maxine leaned back against his arm and laughed at him.

"What do you know about dames? You're nothing but a kid."

His hand clasped itself around her shoulders. He pulled her nearer.

"Oh, is that so? You'd be surprised!" He thought of Nan in her peacock-blue *négligé*. He would like to talk to some one about her, and he didn't quite trust Adeline. She might give him away to the old man. "Maybe I'll tell you about my girl-friend and me some day if you're good."

"I can hardly wait!" said Maxine.

She let him demonstrate in various ways having to do with tentative advances how swell he thought her, with her ears pricked for what was

going on in the studio. But a radio worked both ways. Paul and his lady-guest were also safe for intimate conversation.

"Jimmy, darling," called Adeline at last. "Got to be going now." The party was broken up.

"See you later," Jimmy darling said to Maxine as they went away. . . .

Maxine fell into Paul's arms.

"My word! What a pair! That kid's a fast worker. Like his aunt. But she's rich, darling. Just lousy with gold according to Jimmy. Better cultivate her. Perhaps she'll give you a commission.

"She has."

"Paul! How divine! Her portrait?"

"Nope. Her three children. In the garden of her chateau in France. With the French *bonne* in full regalia."

"Oh, Paul! That's not so good. You'll have to go to France."

"Of course. But it's a big break. Xine. It'll bring in enough so we can get married when I come back."

"I'm not awfully keen on marriage. Especially after meeting your friend. I'd rather go on just as we are."

"Okay. That's up to you. But, anyway, Xine, I've landed my first real job and it's bound to lead to others. Adeline Sturges knows all the right people. . . . Let's go out and get a good dinner for once. Got any money? I'm flat broke."

All that evening as she dined and danced with Paul, and later when she lay awake on the studio couch, for Paul had asked her to stay with him that night because her own small apartment was way uptown and it was simpler to decide on the studio, Maxine thought about France and Adeline Sturges and of the dare she had seen in Adeline's eyes when she looked at Paul.

Then she laughed and kissed Paul softly so as not to wake him and went to sleep herself. She was sure of Paul. Absolutely sure. Maxine

hadn't been to church since she had been dragged there as a child, but she believed in something to which she didn't give a name—something that the orthodox called God. But not any more than she believed in Paul.

## II

SHE felt pretty sunk after Paul closed his studio and went abroad. The night before he sailed was a memory of ecstasy and despair. The steamer had left at noon and Maxine's last glimpse of Paul was not reassuring. He was leaning on the rail waving to her and Adeline Sturges, who had made herself scarce until then, had come forth from somewhere and was leaning at his side. She'd passed her arm through Paul's. Linked like that Maxine saw them go.

She glanced at James Frobisher, Junior who'd hurried down the gang-plank just before it was pulled in. But he was gazing at nothing at all and seemed occupied with some secret sorrow. Even when they went uptown together in his taxi he didn't come out of it. He didn't chatter as usual, nor make attempts at necking. Maxine was glad. She'd grown rather fond of Jimmy, but all she wanted just then was to get back to her apartment and be alone.

But she didn't do any brooding. She believed in Paul. Gen Claxton said she was a simp to believe like that in any man. But Gen had a past that tended to make her skeptical. Although so far as Maxine could judge from Gen's personal revelations, it was the men who'd suffered rather than Gen.

"I sure hope you're right, dearie," Gen had said to that. "Anything rotten you can do to a man doesn't make up for the disadvantage of being a woman, believe me!"

Gen lived down the corridor from Maxine where apartments were bigger and better. She wasn't technically a kept woman. She happened to be married to the man who kept her, but she confessed to Maxine that she had no love for her husband.

"No,—I can't see him at all," she said, pouring herself another cup of very black coffee.

"I'd hate it! Living with any one I didn't love," said Maxine.

Gen was casual-plus. You could see with her it wasn't really a problem.

"Oh, I don't know," she said. "It isn't so bad. Any man is better than no man at all. And they're all pretty much alike when it comes to the romantic stuff. Sid's a swell provider. I like him better than I did when I first married him,—I can say that, anyway. He's the sort that kinda grows on you. If I could get Bill Garrard out of my system, I'd fall hard for hubby, perhaps."

Maxine had heard about Bill Garrard. He seemed to be Gen's deep-rooted wild oat.

"Why don't you get him out of your system then?" she asked. It seemed to her the simplest solution.

"Can't be done. If you ever see Bill, you'll understand. He's a knockout. Comes from somewhere south of the Mason-Dixon line where they get those voices and those winning little ways. I've kissed a lot of men in my day, not to mention nights, and not one of them could put into a perfectly simple, honest-to-goodness kiss what Bill can. Honest, kid, Bill's something to write home about when he's just sort of friendly, but, believe me, when he falls for you hard, he knows his stuff! Only he never has any money."

"What difference does that make?"

Gen stared. "A whale of a lot, I can tell you. Don't make me laugh." However, Gen did laugh loud and long. Apparently Maxine had said



*"Thanks. I'm not interested!"*

something excruciatingly funny. "You're a scream, Xine," she said when she was able to speak. "I suppose you think it's indecent to live with a man if you don't love him."

"Yes, I do."

"The mid-Victorians had a name for it. They called it marriage."

"I don't believe in marriage," said Maxine. Said it decidedly thinking of Adeline Sturges and her three husbands.

"I suppose you believe in love."

"Yes!" said Maxine with the same decision. She was thinking of herself and Paul.

"Well, so do I—if it's Bill Garrard's brand. But there isn't any reason why I shouldn't mix my drinks, is there? I knew Bill before I met Sid. Think I'd have married him if Bill had had money? 'I can't give you anything but love, baby.' That was Bill's theme song all right.

So Sid came along with his ten thousand a year job and I married him."

"And kept on with Bill?"

"Of course. Why not?"

"That was pretty rotten."

"Says you! Sometime I'll introduce you to Bill, and you'll get wise to what I mean."

"Thanks. I'm not interested."

Paul had been gone a week and they were having breakfast in Gen's apartment. At least it was breakfast for Gen. Maxine knew she was chiseling, but a meal at twelve-thirty answered for her luncheon. It saved her money. Besides, the sight of Gen opposite her in a red crêpe *négligé* with black feather trimming worn over black lace pyjamas was stimulating. Gen had a weird taste in dress, just as she had in furniture, but even at breakfast she was almost as easy to look at as Marlene Dietrich, for whom she might have doubled, given the latest thing in fake eyelashes.

Her furniture, however, wasn't so easy—like a page torn from a mail-order catalogue. The most expensive page of course. Overstuffed to suffocation. Atrocious copies of sentimental paintings heavy in gilt frames adorned the walls. "I like a picture that tells a story," said Gen. Gen's apartment gave Maxine a headache, but she looked at Gen and forgot it. Gen had the type of pulchritude that most men find irresistible.

Gen lit a cigarette and, as though she read Maxine's thoughts, remarked:

"Well, so long as Sid don't get wise, I'm sitting pretty. But, believe me, if he does there'll be some blow-up. I'll have to choose in a hurry—boy-friend or hubby."

"Which will you choose?"

Gen flicked the ash from her cigarette and grew thoughtful.

"I don't know—I really don't know. Bill's a little bit of all right, but I'd be a darn fool to give up everything

I've got and stick to him. Anyway, as I said before, Sid's the kind that sort of grows on you. He's got a way with him. Now last night—" She broke off and smiled reminiscently.

Gen was frankness itself in discussing the intimate details of her loves. Maxine had obtained quite a lot of interesting material from her. Only most of it was of the kind that wasn't fit to print.

Gen seemed to be going off in her looks. For a month now she had been pale and listless. Even make-up couldn't camouflage her general weariness and lack of pep. Maxine regarded her critically over the black and silver coffee-cups.

"What's the matter, Gen?" she asked. "You look all in."

"I feel all in. Did you know I'd given Bill Garrard the air?"

"No! When?"

"Oh, about two months ago. It happened one night!"

Well, he deserved what he'd got. But just the same Maxine felt rather sorry for boy-friend Bill.

"How did he take it?" she asked.

"Hard! Awful hard! I had a hell of a time with him. But you wouldn't want a guy to take a turn-down without making a fuss, would you? It wouldn't be flattering."

"No, I suppose not. So that's why you've been looking so sunk, Gen."

"Not on your life," Gen laughed. "If I'm looking sunk it ain't Bill got me that way. It's Sid." Maxine didn't understand. She offered Gen a cigarette. Gen shook her head. "They make me sick lately."

"Sick? You? Why, you used to live on them."

"You've said it! But not now. You see it's like this. I had a hunch that Sid was getting wise to things so I turned Bill out. And now Sid's got me cinched."

The nature of Gen's trouble began to dawn on Maxine.

"You don't mean *that*?"

"Yes, I do. Just that!"

"How ghastly, Gen. I can't imagine anything worse. It's rotten for you."

But Gen apparently didn't agree. "Say, kid," she said, "don't get me wrong. Love ain't everything by a long shot. If I could have had Bill with Sid's trick of making money it might be different. But you can't have everything and I've made my choice. Sid's all right, anyway. He hasn't got Bill's technique, but he's all right. I've had my fling and I'm ready to settle down and have a kid if Sid wants one. I saw the cutest dress in Lane-Bryant's the other day. Honest, it had class."

"I can't see you in that kind of a dress, Gen."

"You will, old dear, you will. And it won't be long now. Say, Xine, why don't you take over this apartment when we leave? Our lease isn't out for six months. It's better than yours and you can have it for the same price as you're paying now. We'll be out the difference, of course. But Sid's got his mind set on a place he looked at on Riverside Drive. One of those joints that used to be mansions once. It's done over in floors. He says he wants an honest-to-goodness nursery when the kid comes. Can you beat it?" . . .

Maxine was terribly lonely after Gen left. She saw nothing of her now. Since her plunge into heavy domesticity Gen looked upon Maxine disapprovingly. A girl with a boy-friend, who declared openly she didn't believe in marriage! You had to draw the line somewhere. Maxine encountered her one Sunday walking in the park with Sid. She was garbed in the latest expectant-mother togs and she was clinging to Sid's arm. Quite the devoted little wife—so soon-to-be-a-mother type was Gen. Sid looked devoted and proud. "Look what I've done!" was apparently his attitude. Maxine wondered what Sid

would say if he knew what she knew. It was just as well that he didn't. They passed Maxine with a brief salutation. It was evident that she belonged to a past that Gen wanted to forget. Well, anyway, inheriting that apartment was a good thing.

She settled down in it to the same old routine. Tapping out potboilers on her typewriter, looking for letters from Paul, and getting returned manuscripts instead; sometimes a much-needed check. They came with frequency enough to keep her going, with what Paul occasionally sent her. He said he might be back any time now. Could she make twenty bucks do until he could send her some more? Sums like that. Well, it didn't matter so long as she could keep going until he came.

But "any time now" ceased to mean much. It became vague and indefinite. "Depends how I get on with the new job I've just landed. I've got another commission from Adeline. Now that I've finished the portraits of the kids," the letter went on to explain, "she wants them painted with herself *en famille* 'in the grand manner' she calls it, parked under the cypress trees at her villa in Florence. 'Fraid I won't be able to make America before spring, Xine. I can't turn Adeline down, after all she's done for me. Besides, it will mean a thousand bucks."

A thousand bucks! They could use them all right. But what were a thousand bucks compared with the fact that Paul wasn't coming "any time, now." Black disappointment came down upon Maxine. The chronic hunger for Paul grew acute and unbearable.

"I'm a starved woman," she said. "And I must go on starving till spring. Oh, darling, you wouldn't stay away like this if you wanted me the way I want you. You couldn't!"

But she never put things like that in letters. She told him that she

loved him and things were going swell. "And," she said, "darling, here's the key."

### III

SHE had tossed all night. Nothing unusual about that. Lately she had hardly slept at all. That terrible longing for Paul kept her awake. She tried not to think of the nights they'd spent together. It only made it worse.

Then she'd experimented with aspirin. Sometimes it worked—more often it didn't. She supposed that finally she'd take to veronal, habit-forming drugs, stuff like that. Anything to put you to sleep. But even if you slept, you had to wake in the morning weak and sick with the old starvation. Oh, what was the use?

Finally she went to sleep. Only to be wakened by the janitor coming through the corridor to empty the waste baskets and the garbage pails waiting sordidly outside doors.

She heard rain beating against her east windows and the whistling of wind through aials. Then she roused herself completely, sat up in bed in her pyjamas, the pale blue ones Paul had given her the night before he sailed, and stared into the eyes of a man. He placed his finger on his lips. He was too cautious to whisper, but his face said: Don't make a noise.

She shook her head and imitated his gesture. Together they listened to the receding noises that accompanied the janitor on his rounds. When the sounds had died away the man ventured a whisper.

"Don't be afraid."

"I'm not."

She wasn't. She'd dreamed so often of seeing a man's face above her like that,—Paul's,—that in the first bewilderment of waking she believed her dreams had come true. But those

startlingly blue eyes under the dripping felt hat weren't Paul's. The old black disappointment swallowed her up again. There wasn't enough of her left to be afraid.

The man's smile showed a flash of teeth as startlingly white as his eyes were blue.

"You sure don't seem to be much scared," he whispered approvingly. "Most women would have let out a yell."

"I'm not that kind. How did you get in, anyway? Isn't the door locked?"

"Yes, but you see I had a key."

"Well," said Maxine, "that's interesting. Where did you get it?"

"I'd better not tell you that," he said.

Maxine didn't insist. She saw it would be useless. She'd never seen anybody look more quietly determined than this morning's trespasser looked when he said that. The unique informality of the encounter was intriguing. She ought to be phoning for the police, she supposed. Any well-conducted young woman would be doing it this minute—or fainting! Probably the latter. But that only proved that she wasn't a well-conducted young woman. Never had been. Paul was her first real sin, but she'd always had the possibility of lawlessness. That was the reason she didn't mind finding a man at her bedside. Any man! She wasn't brave. She was loose!

The rain lashed the panes. The aials moaned. In the dimness she could see that his coat was streaming.

"You're terribly wet. The steam's coming on. Better hang your coat in front of the radiator in the other room."

"Okay."

"And stay there. I want to get up."

He left her obediently.

She laughed as she stood under the



*"Don't be afraid!"*

shower. "Some are born adventurous; some achieve adventure; and some have adventure thrust upon them. Well, what's the answer? *Me!*"

She got into her day pyjamas, arranged her bob, applied a dash of rouge, powder, and a reckless amount of lipstick, and joined her guest. She hadn't felt so pepped up since Paul left.

The walls of the big room were hung with Paul's paintings, unframed. There was never any money for frames. There was a sketch, blue

hills, a pine-tree, gold-brown grass cutting its way through melting snow. There was Paul's most pretentious still-life, apples and grapes and peaches piled high among crystal candlesticks holding tall black candles grouped around a modernistic center piece in which sculptured tulips broke on silver stems in a shallow crystal basin. There was Paul's portrait of herself. And there was what he said was the best thing he'd ever done, "The Young Eve."

Her guest was standing in the middle of the room. He was smoking

and he seemed interested in the exhibit.

"Say," he said, "this place of yours has got personality all right. You've sure changed it."

"Changed it? What do you mean changed?"

He didn't answer her. "Is that a picture of you?"

"Which?"

"Either of them."

"Both."

She knew he hadn't meant "The Young Eve." But she was feeling excited and reckless, and he'd responded to her excitement and recklessness. He was the kind that would. The more you got that way the more he'd go you one better. She sensed that.

He regarded "The Young Eve" somewhat casually, but critically. Maxine felt sure he was comparing it with the other undraped woman he'd seen. She felt he had quite a field for comparison. There was no doubt of his sophistication.

"You got a pretty shape," he commented. Then he pointed to the portrait. "But that's the one I meant."

"Like it?"

"Not much."

"Why?"

He considered for a moment inhaling deeply, sending out a cloud of smoke, inhaling again, his blue eyes narrowed.

"It's you, all right. But the guy that painted it left out something that I got first of all. Before I even noticed how good-looking you are."

"Well, so long as you've noticed it now!"

He smiled. "You should worry! He's got it all in—the way your mouth curls up at one corner when you smile and the way your eyelashes grow so long that they look as though they'd get all tangled up if you didn't watch out. But the things he's left out are important, too. I got wise to them first of all."

"Well?"

His eyes left the portrait now. They were fastened on hers. Maybe there were eyes as blue somewhere in the world, but never ones bluer. She thought of lightnings, of sunny winter skies after a snow-storm, of the Blue Grotto at Capri. She pulled her gaze away from his with a sense of something resistant, torn.

"As you were saying?"

"What? Oh, yes, the part that guy's left out. The thing I saw first—that you're the kind of girl who'd stick to a man if you believed in him, no matter who didn't. Crimes wouldn't phase *you* any if you loved a man!"

Their eyes met again, a long look. Over with the same sense of resistance, tearing. Looks like that might lead to almost anything if you didn't take care. Maxine took refuge in slang.

"You can't prove it by me. I never met an honest-to-goodness criminal in my life."

"Haven't you? You'd be surprised."

Maxine laughed. "Are you trying to make me think I've met one this morning?"

"Well, I couldn't make the judge believe anything else if he should happen to drop in."

They were having breakfast by this time. You really couldn't let anybody go out into the storm again—wet through and hungry.

"You might as well get it off your chest," said Maxine.

"Well, you see it's like this. I'm out on bail and I'm jumping it. Lousy way to treat a friend who's come across and handed over fifteen hundred bucks for you. The worst thing about the whole damn business is, that Fred's going to size me up for a rotter, until I can raise the dough to pay him back."

"Fred's an awful fool if he thinks you're a rotter," said Maxine. "Though, after all, why so sure?"

"What did you do to get into such a jam?"

"Nothing."

"Haven't you got an alibi?"

"Yes, a peach. But I can't use it. I'd get some one in Dutch if I spilled the beans."

"It sounds noble."

"But it doesn't sound likely! Say, you took the words right out of his honor's mouth! But, believe me, I'm not going to serve time for something I didn't do. There's a boat sails late this afternoon. I was raised down Texas way and I'm heading for Old Mexico."

"Or the last round-up, which? Why didn't you keep going? Why did you stop off here instead?"

He frowned. "I don't know. Fate or something. I'd have been all right if I'd had about twenty-four hours. But I reckon some one must have put the cops wise. I was in a taxi trying to get to the boat, but I had a hunch some one was following. So I got out when there was a traffic jam and went hiking down side streets. Then it began to rain like hell."

"So you came in out of the wet. And nearly got caught by the janitor."

"All but! This is the last place in the world I would have picked believe me—but any port in a storm. If I hadn't seen your name on the post-box in the lobby I wouldn't have dared use that key."

"My name? What difference did that make?"

"All the difference in the world. What did you think when you looked up and saw me, anyway?"

"I thought you were some one else. I thought you were Paul."

She hadn't meant to mention Paul. But it slipped out—his beloved name. It was silly, girlish. It showed how crazy she was about him. So crazy that just speaking his name gave her a thrill, a happiness in her heart.

Her guest looked interested. "Who's Paul? Your boy-friend?"

"Paul's my darling!"

"So *that's* why you didn't scream. You'd be glad to see him?"

"Glad!"

"Say," he remarked, "you do love him! It's great to be in love, isn't it?" She nodded. "When it isn't hell! But mostly it's hell." She nodded again thinking of those torturing, sleepless nights. "Well," he said, "I guess I'd better be going. Sooner I get on board the better. By this time tomorrow I'll be on my way. If I have luck!"

"And if you don't have luck?"

"It'll mean that they've pinched me again. But I'm not going to serve a jail sentence, if I can help it, that's a cinch. Not for something I didn't do."

"I don't believe many innocent men get sent to jail."

"Here's one that isn't going to, anyway."

He got up and took his coat from the chair before the radiator. She went over to the telephone. He started slightly.

"I suppose you're going to phone for the police!" His smile was less assured.

She took her time about finding the number in the telephone directory. It wouldn't hurt him to be in suspense.

"No, a taxi," she said, as she dialed, "to take us to the boat."

"Us! You mean you're going with me?"

"Don't be alarmed. Only as far as the pier. They probably aren't looking for a man accompanied by a woman, are they? I thought I might do as a kind of disguise."

"And yet you think I'm lying when I say I'm innocent!"

"I don't know. But why all the surprise? You know what you said about me just now—that it wouldn't be a crime that would phase me."

"If you loved a man, I said."

"Do you think a woman never runs true to type, unless she's in love?" she asked him.

He gave her another of his disturbing looks.

She was taking out her ancient orange wool suit, when she heard steps coming down the corridor. Two pairs of thick boots and the soft thud and shuffle of the janitor's sneaks. Through her half-closed door came the familiar whisper.

"Sounds like it might be cops. Any place I can hide?"

"No."

The steps came nearer. It was a long corridor. It was some time before they paused before her door. Maxine's brain kept time to the steps. Beating out an idea, an inspiration. How Paul would enjoy the joke when she told him. Paul, darling, beloved Paul! Even at that tense moment the thrill, the happiness in her heart.

There was a knock and then she heard the janitor thrust his pass-key into the lock. Now was the psychic moment. She came out of her room, put her arms around her guest, and pressed her lips to his.

"Darling!" she said. With her arms still around him she looked over her shoulder at the janitor and two red-faced officers.

"Oh!" she exclaimed and started from him. Then she laughed. "Well, you certainly have surprised us this time. Caught red-handed! Gentlemen, meet my fiancé. He came unexpectedly in all the storm. We're going down to City Hall this morning to be married."

She did it very well. Her sense of drama told her that. She got it across. After a brief inspection the door closed on their grins and rough apologies. The steps receded down the hall.

They stood staring at each other still close together.

"That was almost worth going back to jail for!" he said.

"Was it?" She moved away from him. "It's nice to know you feel that way about it. But how about me?"

What right had he to kiss her like that? She could still feel the enfolding tenderness of his arms—the way his lips had answered hers. More than answered! Even the fear of being hailed back to jail hadn't prevented him from getting all there was out of the contact. She had a feeling that all of Paul's kisses had been obliterated—wiped away by those firm lips that had pressed against hers. Until Paul kissed her again her lips would belong to this stranger. An annoying idea!

"What made you kiss me?" he asked.

"I wish I hadn't." She hoped he'd believe that. "Nothing personal in it, I assure you. I thought it would be convincing. It's probably what Paul and I would be doing if we were going downtown to be married. But Paul and I would never do anything foolish. I don't believe in marriage."

"Don't you?" The blue eyes were entangling hers again. She gave a little gasp.

"Heavens, I must hurry! The taxi will be here before I'm ready."

#### IV

THE city blocks went by them in a blur of traffic lights and rain. It's a long way from above 125th street to the waterfront. Maxine sat at the extreme width of the seat from him. He seemed satisfied with the arrangement. She could still feel that kiss of his having its way with her lips. It was irritating. A kind of a theft of what belonged to Paul. She took out her lipstick and applied it lavishly.

"You got too much of that stuff

on already," he observed. And then: "I'm going to let you into that alibi of mine."

She continued to paint her mouth. Let him cut out the beauty hints.

"Then you've really got one?"

"A man can't be in two places at the same time, can he? I was keeping company with my girl that night."

His girl. Somehow Maxine didn't quite like the idea. But why not? Probably he had dozens of dames parked all over the place. A man who kissed like that!

"Well, was that anything to be ashamed of?"

He grew thoughtful. "I reckon it was, maybe. You see, she's got a husband. She ditched me to marry him. Well, not exactly that, either. She said I could keep on coming to see her just the same. He had a job that kept him away three nights a week. There'd be lots of chances. We sort of fixed it up between us. Funny how being crazy about a woman makes rotten things seem okay! Anything so you can be with her. I could see her side of it, too. She's the kind that needs money. Needs it in gobs and I was so cracked about her I was willing to let some other man give her money if she'd keep on letting me give her love. 'I can't give you anything but love, baby.' That's me all right."

"I can't give you anything but love, baby.'" Some connection there. Maxine couldn't remember. Never mind, it would come.

"So you see I couldn't use her as an alibi. It would be all up with her husband if he knew she'd cheated on him. Now here's the joke. The night I got pinched was the night she threw me down hard. Nothing doing at all! She said she couldn't be bothered with me, anymore. And she damn well meant it. So I beat it."

"And her name was Gen and you didn't give her back her key!"

It had come to her now.

He glanced uneasily at the chauffeur. "Shush! You got me. When I saw there was another name on the postbox in the lobby, I made up my mind to take a chance. I'd never have dared risk it if it had been Gen's. I'd go to jail for life rather than get her into trouble, believe me."

"You may have to at that!" said Maxine unfeelingly. She somehow wasn't terribly happy to find out that he had belonged to Gen. Gen had told her too much about him. Well, what was the matter with her anyway, that she felt all hot and bothered about knowing that he'd kissed Gen millions of times the way he kissed her once?

"How nicely you explain things," she said. "So you're Mr. William Garrard in person. I was wondering where you learned the way the sophisticated woman likes her kisses. But I see now. Gen taught you. Gen's the kind that can teach a man a lot of things."

He laughed. "Is that so? I reckon if there was any teaching I did it. You ask Gen sometime."

"Can't. I never see her any more. She's turned me down now she's gone domestic and is going to have a baby."

He looked sufficiently startled. "A baby! By that husband of hers? She said he was the better man. I guess that proves it, all right. Well, I suppose I deserved what I've got. But it sure makes me out a fool, all right."

"It sure does! How does a man feel when he finds a woman's made a fool of him? Does he keep on loving her just the same?"

He looked out of the clouded windows at the rain. "I suppose he does," he said thoughtfully. "Yes, he does!" Then his eyes came back to hers with one of those extremely personal looks. "Unless some one happens along," he added.

They were at the dock now. They got out of the taxi and entered the dusky sheds. But before they reached the gang-plank they were stopped. Two plainclothes men showed their badges. Maxine could have cried. How futile it had all been. She might have known she couldn't pull it off.

She looked up at him and he smiled at her. He was taking it on the chin.

"I'm so sorry. Is there anything I can do?" she asked.

"Yes. . . . Something."

"What?"

He gave her one of those looks. "You might kiss me again, if you don't mind."

She put her lips to his. She hadn't meant it to be the same kind of a kiss as the other. But it was. Even more so! Gen had been right when she boasted of her boy-friend's technique. Oh, well, if a man who was going to jail for a crime he'd never committed wanted a kiss, that was the least you could do. Instantly, they were enveloped in an unbearable brightness. The camera men! Well, she didn't blame them. It would make a swell picture for the tabloids.

"So long!" he called after her as he went away between the two detectives. "Don't worry about anything, honey."

But she did worry. She cried a little as she went back alone in the subway. She hadn't enough money for a taxi.

She dabbed at her eyes with her handkerchief. "Wonder what I'm crying about?" she asked herself somewhat bitterly. "Paul or that technician?"

What a mess life was! She didn't even know at that what they said he'd done! It didn't make any difference, anyway. She believed in him. Not the way she believed in Paul, of course, but, anyway, enough so that it didn't make any difference. . . .

She bought the paper the next day. There it was. Kiss at parting. A very good likeness of herself clasped in the arms of a man who was evidently having, if not the kiss of his life, at least one of them. "If Will Hays saw that!" she thought.

Some one said hello, and she hastily folded the incriminating evidence.

"Oh," she said. "It's you, Jimmy! Where have you been all my life? I haven't seen you for a million years."

James Frobisher, Junior, looked gloomy. "No," he said. "I've been too sunk. Come on in and have a drink. I've got to talk to some one. I'm all in."

He looked quite desperate. Even his little moustache seemed to have grown thinner. Maxine could see that what she'd known from the first was bound to happen, was about to take place. Jimmy was going to join her depleted gang of turner-inside-out-ers. Far be it for her to discourage him.

They ordered Martinis. After three, Jimmy began to talk:

"It's about me and my girl-friend," said Jimmy. "I did a fool thing to get her to come across and she sure came. But now I'm getting cold feet because I'm not so damn hard-boiled to like the idea of seeing a man go to jail for something he didn't do."

"An old American custom!" said Maxine thinking of the plainclothes men and the clicking cameras. "He won't be the only one."

"That don't make it any the better," moaned Jimmy. He looked extremely miserable. Maxine could see that his remorse was sincere. "Honest, Xine, I didn't want to get anybody into a jam. But it was so darn easy at the time. And now I don't know where I'm at."

Maxine leaned toward him and patted his hand. "Well, get it off

your chest, Jimmy. Perhaps I can help you." If Jimmy would only talk there might be a fifty-buck pot-boiler in this, who knew?

"Hell, I will! Let's have another drink."

"Which will be the last," said Maxine firmly.

But Jimmy was making no rash promise.

"You see," he began, "it was like this. There's a certain dame I've had my eye on for a long time. But I couldn't make her. Gee, Xine, but she's a knock-out! Sort of Mae West—Fay Wray combination, if you get me. Some baby! But all she did was to laugh at me and call me 'puppy-lover' when I told her I was crazy about her."

"Older than you, I take it."

"What the hell difference does that make?" demanded Jimmy fiercely. "It made her all the more interesting. I hate junior leaguers. Give me a woman that knows her way around!"

"I would, Jimmy, if I had one to give," said Maxine soothingly.

"Now you're laughing at me, too! Don't you know a man's grown up at twenty? Well, I do, if you don't. Anyway, I spent all my allowance on her and got in debt up to my ears and it wasn't enough. She'd take what I handed out and look like it was dirt and laugh at me and say: 'Why don't you try pearls, Jimmy?' And every time she'd say that I'd see the necklace that the mater kept locked in the safe in her room. But of course I'd never intended stealing it. At least, I don't think so. Fat chance I had, anyway, with it always locked up or round the mater's neck!

"Well, I had a date with Nan—Gee, I didn't mean to tell you her name! Well, it can't be helped now. She phoned her husband was in Cuba buying up a swell brand of Baccardi and would I drop round? Would I? With bells on! But I knew all the

time there wouldn't be a darn thing doing. She'd give me a few kisses and throw me out. But I just couldn't keep away. Anyway, I was always hoping I'd break down her resistance."

"Springs, the human breast, and all that, Jimmy!"

Jimmy ignored the frivolity. He was in no mood for jokes.

"The mater was giving a dinner party that evening but I made her ask somebody in my place. I told an awful yarn about a chap I'd known at Prep sailing that night and I'd just have to see him off. Pretty phoney, but the best I could think of at the time. The mater was peeved because I'd messed up her dinner and wouldn't be on hand to take in the sweet little bud she'd picked for me. But she let me off. The mater's a peach and I felt pretty rotten lying to her. But I guess any man would pull a fast one in my place."

"Not a doubt of it, Jimmy."

"You've said it! I was going to take my girl-friend some orchids, but when I was going down the hall to get a taxi I had to pass the mater's room. She'd left the lights burning and there right on her dressing-table was something a whole lot better than orchids. She hadn't put her jewel box back in the safe and there it was half open and that string of pearls was hanging over the side! Waiting just for me!"

"Rather careless I'd say, Jimmy."

"You're darn right it was careless! But I knew how it had happened. The mater's always behind time. She'd probably got into her togs in a hurry and heard the first guests breezing in before she'd finished dressing, and she'd rushed down just in time to give them the glad-hand. I'd heard her say she was going to wear her opals that night. Honest, Xine, I don't think I meant to pinch the stuff even then. I thought I'd go in and put the pearls back in the

box and lock the whole thing up in the safe. But when I felt that necklace in my hands I thought of Nan and what she was always saying and I just stuffed them into my pocket and reached into the box and lifted an emerald bracelet and then I beat it!"

"The girl friend seems to have come high. Weren't the pearls 'enough?"

"Gee, you'd think so! But I guess I must have been having a brain storm. All I thought of was getting my woman. Lucky thing I was wearing gloves. There'd have been finger-prints all over the place!"

"Well, get on with the story, Jimmy, old dear. Was the girl-friend glad to see you?"

"Was she? Say! When she got wise to those pearls she came right off her perch! And her husband being away and everything! Well, I guess you don't want to hear the details, perhaps."

"Not necessary. I can imagine them."

For the first time Jimmy grinned. "Think so? I'm not so sure! Well, anyway, when she turned me out about four a. m. I was walking on air I can tell you. I thought those pearls would keep me sitting pretty for some time. And damn it all, she seemed to love me, too! But I was glad I had the bracelet to string her along with when the pearls were an old story. I reached in my pocket to be sure it were safe. Nothing doing! Somehow I'd lost the darn thing."

"How about a little pickpocket?"

"You mean Nan? I thought so myself at first. But I found out different when I got home. Nobody had gone to bed and there had been a hell of a row and they said some guy was in the can because they'd found him with the goods. He'd told a phoney tale about having picked the bracelet up, and he said he didn't

know a damn thing about the pearls. And dad was praising the police for being right on the spot and pinching the guy they caught with the goods. 'Says he picked up that bracelet I gave your mother on our twentieth anniversary! Says he was going to turn it in at the precinct. And expects us to believe it. I thought crooks at least had brains!' It made it so darn easy for me at the time that I let it go at that. And now I don't know what to do. But take it from me I'm damn sorry for that poor cuss that's going to get his good and plenty."

"The proof of being sorry is to do something about it, I'd say. Don't sit here handing out sob stuff. Do something!"

"I don't know what to do," said Jimmy helplessly, looking like a naughty schoolboy.

"Well, I do, old dear. Get those pearls from your lady-friend and give them to your mother and tell her what you've been telling me. She'll forgive you when she sees her necklace again."

He looked doubtful. "It won't be as easy as you think. That gal has sure frozen on to those pearls. It won't be like taking candy from a baby. If I make her give them back it will be good night! Hell! To pull off a thing like that and then to have the dame you did it for go sour on you!"

Maxine thought of Bill Garrard's affair with Gen. "Yes," she said, "dames have a way of going sour on you I hear. The more you do for them the sourer they go. Nice to think that men never treat women like that!"

It would be if it were true. Come to think of it, she'd done quite a lot for Paul. Suppose he went sour on her! But Paul never would. Never! No matter how much she did for him. And every day was bringing spring nearer and with it Paul!



*"Then that's okay!"*

V

**B**UT she didn't have to be patient until spring. One night she came in late and found him waiting for her. How glad she was she'd sent him that key! She'd always dreamed of just this happening and had always waked. But this was reality! He was sitting there in the

deapidated easy chair where he'd sat so often before. The battered old bit of furniture that could be made to accommodate two, if you didn't mind being crowded! A pile of cigarette butts overflowed the ash-tray on the table. He looked surprisingly well-groomed and prosperous. About him was none of the swaggering shabbiness which had made him pic-

turesque in the days before he'd met Adeline Sturges. His eyes said none of the things they had always said.

"Paul!" She threw her arms around him and pressed her lips to his. Now she'd get rid of the fantastic idea that had haunted her for weeks—that those two kisses she'd received from Bill Garrard had stamped her mouth with his claim.

But Paul didn't return her kiss. He unclasped her arms and left her kneeling there forlorn and weak.

"Don't be a damn hypocrite, Xine," he said.

A hypocrite! Because she'd kissed him with her whole heart throbbing with her love for him? That was a rotten kind of kidding, if he meant it for that.

"Oh, darling, what's the matter?"

He burst out then. "Matter? Not a darn thing of course! How do you think I felt when Adeline showed me that picture of you in that lousy tabloid?"

She hadn't thought of that. She hadn't supposed an American tabloid could penetrate to the villa in Italy where Paul painted Adeline and her family "in the grand manner" under the cypress trees. But apparently it had. Well, he'd laugh when he heard about it. Looking into those eyes which regarded her so coldly, eyes that seemed to have forgotten all the lovely, intimate moments they'd had together, she explained in detail down to the clicking cameras:

"Paul, don't you understand? It was just an adventure," she said to those eyes that didn't believe it.

"The whole thing is disgraceful," said Paul. "Enough to ruin any girl's reputation."

She laughed. She couldn't help it. It was funny to hear Paul coming out strong for the conventions at this late day. Paul, who'd been so reckless about appearances! Who'd done things openly that might have ruined her reputation a hundred times over,

for all he knew. Not that she cared. But it didn't ring quite true now. There was something he wasn't telling. He was using her indiscretion as an excuse for something which she sensed with a feeling of despair he was going to do.

"Running around with a jailbird. That's a bit too thick!" he said.

It was more his eyes and his unsmiling lips than his words that told her what he meant.

"You're throwing me over, Paul!"

"What did you expect after what's happened?"

"Nothing's happened. Nothing! I've been true to you always, darling."

"How do I know? I have only your word for it."

Unbelievable that Paul could say a thing like that!

"Yes, only my word for it!" She'd been huddled up there on the floor by his chair. But she got up now and stood before him very proud and straight. Just as well he didn't know how her knees were trembling! "All right. If you feel like that about it, we'd better call it a day."

"That's okay by me!" said Paul. He was thinking of what Adeline had said when she handed him the tabloid. "Now you have a swell excuse for letting yourself down easy. Now, darling, you can belong wholly to me!"

Well, it had worked out that way. To belong to Adeline Sturges was worth a lot to an artist with his way to make. He'd already had several big, bad moments with her. If she wanted to go on with them permanently, he was willing. After living in luxury for months with Adeline it wouldn't be so easy to go back to poverty and Xine. And now he was getting a break.

"Do you mean you want to call it off, Xine?"

"I want it more than anything in the world!" she told him.

"Then that's okay," he said, and got up to go.

Oh, what was she doing? She was sending him away from her when she wanted so passionately to have him stay, to feel his arms around her again, to shut her eyes and drift with him into the ecstasies. She pressed her hands to her heart and looked at him through smarting tears. She cried out to him:

"Oh, Paul dearest, don't let's quarrel. Put your arms around me, darling. Love me! Stay with me. Stay!"

His expression did not change. "Sorry!" he said. "It's impossible. Adeline's waiting for me at the Ritz. We came over together on the *Roma*."

He took a key from his pocket. The usual gesture at such partings! He placed the key on the table. He'd never need it again. It was final.

Maxine picked it up and held it. It gave her trembling hands something to do.

"Congratulations," she said. "I suppose before long you'll be having a little Paul or Pauline. Just to prove the marriage is a success."

He went away without answering and she saw that her attempt at sarcasm had hurt her more than it had him.

She turned and twisted the key in her hand. Silly old key! And if it hadn't been for one just like it none of these things would have happened. Too bad that Gen Claxton's ex-boyfriend hadn't made the inevitable gesture, too. Then there would have been no early morning rendezvous, no tabloid version of parting, no excuse for Paul to hide behind. Well, Bill Garrard wouldn't be dropping in again, any way. He was safe in jail. And serve him right for messing up her life! Why in hell couldn't she forget the touch of his lips?

And then everything was swallowed up in the realization that it was Paul's key in her hand. That he

wasn't going to use it again. That he was gone forever. Whenever she thought of him now she'd see him lying in Adeline Sturges' arms.

But the hardest part came afterwards. For days and days, she didn't know how many, it went on. Eating, sleeping, trying to write, always with a despair of loneliness drowning her. She despised Paul, loved him, loathed him, desired him, ached. Mood after mood, and always the loneliness, the inability to concentrate, to think of anything but Paul.

Her room was dark. She'd sat in the darkness night after night drowning in the loneliness, crying sometimes, despairing. If the phone rang she didn't answer it. If the doorbell buzzed she didn't speak through the tube. It was a comfort to know that, anyway, she was safe from intrusion.

Then one night the key turned in the lock and some one came in and switched on the lights. For a wild minute she thought it was Paul, before she remembered that he had no key, recognized the old felt hat that had been streaming with rain the first time she'd seen it, knew that under it were eyes as blue as the grotto at Capri.

"You!"

"Yes, me. I phoned and phoned and you didn't answer. And I've emptied all the juice out of the battery ringing your bell. So I came up. I had a hunch you were in. Anyway, I still have the key."

He walked across the room and stood looking down at her. It seemed to Maxine that something came rushing out from him. A strength, a consolation. She couldn't give it a name. But there it was. Then she was frightened.

"You're running away again!"

He laughed. "Running away nothing! I'm free. Didn't you know? It was in the papers."

"I haven't been reading the papers."

"Well, there wasn't much. Hushed up by the family. It was a kid named James Frobisher, Junior, that took 'em. His mother's own junk."

Of course! This completed the vicious circle. Her talent didn't run to detective stories. She was exhausted with the whole darn thing.

"I know," she said wearily. "He told me. So you're the innocent man he got cold feet about sending to jail."

"Yes. I'll tell you all about it later. Never mind about me now. I'm okay. But what's the matter with you? Who's been making you cry?"

"I haven't *been* crying!"

"Yes, you have." He knelt by her chair and put his arms around her. They felt good; warm and comforting. "Look here," he said, "you can't bluff me! It's that Paul of yours. You're worrying because he doesn't come."

"He did come."

"Oh!" He paused. His arms relaxed and she didn't like it. Then they tightened and she felt the comfort in them. It was as though he said: "I don't care a damn. I'm going to hold you tight!" "When's he coming again?" he asked.

"Never. He's married, I suppose, by now."

He put up one hand and pressed her face to his. She hid her eyes on his neck. It was warm and firm and smelt of tobacco.

"Oh, honey," he said, "I know how you're feeling!"

She turned her head and her lips were where her eyes had been. She felt how his heart was beating. The pulse in his throat beat too. But she didn't say anything. Just sat there letting the warmth and strength of him and the comfort steal through her like wine.

"Say!" he said suddenly as though it had just occurred to him. "How would you like to go to Texas with me and live on a ranch for a while?"

I bet life on a ranch would cure you of thinking so much about that guy Paul. Fred Fisher's put up the money and I'm aiming to breed polo ponies. It would be easier if you married me, of course, on account of the darn Mann Law. But I wouldn't want to tie you down. You might try me out and if you liked me, we might hit it off for keeps. Oh, honey, what do you say?"

When a man's been made a fool of by a woman, he keeps on loving her just the same. Was it like that, too, with a woman? *Unless some one happens along!* Well, some one had happened along, a vagabond, an unexpected sort of person whose first kiss had somehow the power to wipe away all of Paul's. She didn't know what it would all lead to. She didn't care.

"All right. I'll go!"

He gave a little sound between a laugh and a sob. He pulled her closer. Now that she had consented he'd apparently grown shy.

"Oh, honey," he said, "do you mind if I kiss you?"

Mind! There wasn't any answer to that except to turn her lips until they rested against his. Then suddenly it came down upon her, the unforgotten thrill and excitement of Bill Garrard's kiss. She was glad now that Paul had turned away from her—glad that there had never been anything to take away the feeling that her lips belonged to the lips that were holding hers. Had Gen felt that way? And all those other women that she knew must have been before her? It didn't matter.

He was whispering to her between his kisses. Dear, foolish little words. And then:

"Oh, honey, I've loved many women in my time, but never one of them the way I'm going to love you!"

"I know it!" she said. After all what was the use of doubting anything that made you so happy?

# Lord Bill

By DORIS STEAD



**T**HE rain beat down furiously, in straight silver lines. The earth smelled sweet and came alive under its whipping. The leaves and bushes danced and were a polished green from it. Then the sun broke through and made lovely diamonds on the shimmering streams that ran from the rooftops; a dusty gold sun; a sure-of-itself sun. And the rain stopped suddenly as though it had been laughed at and was ashamed.

It is like that almost every day in

Singapore; the torrential rains a little after noon, and then the sun, bringing out the lovely smell of spice and cloves in the little gardens. It is as if the sun says: "All right, the rain has stopped and everything is safe now." And the door and windows along the low buildinged streets are flung wide again, and life goes on where it left off.

Yet it is pleasant, this rain time; like a sign to stop for a cup of tea. For instance when the clouds start to gather, the men say: "Let's go down to the Golden Swan for a bit." And down to the Golden Swan they go, until after the downpour.

Now, the Golden Swan is a tavern at the bottom of the street by the sea. Its bar is white-scrubbed, as are the little round tables. On the looking glass that stretches halfway around the green walls there is a lot of writing. The names of sea captains and great personages; the names of far-away cities, and odd drinks and toasts, all written in chalk. It is very interesting to read the names while you sit and drink. At least it used to be. Perhaps all that is changed now. . . .

The Golden Swan was owned by Lord Bill. They called him "Lord" because he looked like one; distinguished and moustached and always so immaculate in white linens. His manners were beautiful and when he spoke, his language made one think of music and great books. His age, some said, was every bit of fifty, but when he talked with this one and that, his tales of the world and the Seven Seas made his age seem like a thousand years, because he knew so much and was so wise.

One day, just before the rain, an old black ship pulled into the harbor (you could see the harbor from the tavern window). Sang Lee, the little Chinese waiter, busy with glasses and bottles, chuckled to himself. He knew that Captain Horrocks of the *Denby* would be calling on Lord Bill, and that Lord Bill would be well pleased; these two had been friends for years.

"The ship *Denby*, she in now," he told Lord Bill, and Bill smiled and stroked his elegant moustache. It had been a long time since he had seen his friends. They would have a lot to talk about.

He told Sang Lee to grill a fine steak and to see that the best wine was on ice. Then he sat by the window and waited for Captain Horrocks, who would come very soon up the little narrow street, waddling like an old duck.

The *Denby*, Bill thought, needed

some paint. It leaned as though it were tired; like a great bird; an old bird, with patches where the feathers had worn off.

A few sailors stood on deck together in little groups, shouting over the rail to a saucy lot of girls on the dock below. The girls laughed in coarse voices. One of them caught a note which had been thrown down. Lord Bill wondered what was in it, although he could guess. There would be dancing all night and plenty of love-making; there always was when a ship came in. Then he saw Horrocks, and Horrocks saw him and waved his hat, but Lord Bill didn't wave back because the Captain had a girl with him. Now that was very strange; the Golden Swan wasn't a place for women. It was a place where men went to get away from women.

As they came closer Bill saw that the girl was very pretty, and he became more and more bewildered. He went out to meet them and took them to a part of the tavern where there wasn't any noise or drinking, a nice room with photographs and books and fat old chairs and a rack with six pipes hanging.

Horrocks settled himself and lit a cigar. The girl sat with her eyes looking down at the red rug.

"Her name's Sally," said Horrocks. "Isn't it, Sally?"

"Yes," said the girl without looking up.

Lord Bill felt uncomfortable. He wasn't used to women.

"Played a trick on me," said Horrocks, with a flourish of his cigar. "Sneaked in at Sydney. Didn't know it till yesterday."

The girl raised her head. She was very beautiful. Bill saw that her lips were red, and that there was a dimple in each cheek. He saw that she was very young.

"I've had my fill of stowaways," Horrocks went on. "Remember when

the old *Crumby* made her trip from——”

“I think,” said Lord Bill, “we’d better have something to eat; then we’ll talk!” He knew that when Horrocks started a yarn there was no stopping him.

“But the girl here, she’s got pluck,” Horrocks put in. “I’m going to help her.”

“Captain Horrocks thinks——” Sally looked at Lord Bill appealingly.

Horrocks coughed and bounced in his chair. “I think you need a woman around the place. I’ve never seen a woman around here.”

“But——”

“She could look after you. Mend. Cook. You know how women are; they soften life a bit.” He coughed again, this time because he was embarrassed.

Lord Bill straightened up. If ever he looked troubled it was at that moment.

“I’ve got Sang Lee to do the things I want done,” he said gently, because he didn’t want to hurt any one. “And there’s the mulatto and one or two others. I couldn’t possibly do with any more help. Besides, this is no place for a girl.”

His eyes flew to the girl’s face and back. It was a wretched situation. Horrocks should learn that it was, when they were alone.

The girl got up from the chair and went to the window. Her cheeks were very pale. Lord Bill saw that her shoulders were quivering. He knew that she was crying. Now, that touched him very much; you see, he wasn’t used to women.

“It’s a little early for dinner yet,” he said. “I think I’ll ring for some tea. You’ll feel much better after some tea,” he added, addressing the girl. But that wasn’t what he had meant to say. He looked at Horrocks who was rocking furiously, and made a gesture with his hands. Horrocks glanced at Sally, and nodded.

“See here,” he said good naturedly, “we’ll have some tea and then get down to some real talking. I’m sure when Lord Bill, here, knows the facts he’ll let you stay.” He winked at Bill.

Sang Lee brought a large green teapot, some cakes, bread and butter and a bottle of Scotch. “And don’t forget the jam,” said Lord Bill.

Sang Lee smiled and went away to get some jam.

But the girl didn’t eat a thing. She drank some tea and looked shyly about. The men talked and rattled the ice in their glasses. The rain stopped and the sun shone on Sally’s hair, making a great light where she sat. It played on the silver tray and on the teaspoons.

Lord Bill watched her from the corner of his eye. He thought how lovely to look at she was, and how sad for one so young.

“You old blighter, you’re not listening,” Horrocks said.

“I’d like to know about Sally,” said Bill. “Sally, won’t you tell me why you ran away?”

The girl put her cup down and leaned back. “There isn’t much to tell. I ran away from my stepfather. He was cruel and always drunk. I had heard of people getting on ships. It seemed an easy thing to do. I planned to get work somewhere. I really had planned that. I don’t want to go back.”

“Poor little devil,” said Horrocks; and then: “You’ll excuse me, Sally?”

“I don’t mind being called a poor little devil.”

“You were taking a great chance,” said Lord Bill, with a frown between his eyes. “They’re not all great fellows like Captain Horrocks.”

“And they’re not all great fellows like Lord Bill,” said Horrocks slyly. “He’d do anything for anybody.”

“Hm, I wouldn’t say that,” said Bill. “I’m not a saint, you know.”

“If you could find something for

me to do—anything, please, just *anything*. I don't mind how hard it is for I can't go back."

Lord Bill looked at her kindly. "I wouldn't upset myself like that. I'll see what I can do."

"There, didn't I tell you?" Horrocks rubbed his hands together and looked pleased.

"I think you need a rest," said Lord Bill authoritatively. "If you'll come along with me I'll show you where you can have a fine nap."

It was a large bed with mountains of pillows and wine-colored quilts. Lord Bill drew the shutters. They wouldn't shut close. Little bits of sunlight stealing in, made spider-web shapes on the mantel clock. Sally watched them and fell asleep.

The next day the *Denby* weighed out again. Lord Bill and Sally watched it go and waved good-by. When the ship was nothing but a black speck, they went back to the Golden Swan—and Sally started life in Singapore.

There wasn't any looking about for a job; she simply stayed on with Bill. She did the things that Sang Lee couldn't do. Fixed large bowls of flowers about the rooms. Read aloud when Lord Bill felt the fancy. Walked with him in the evenings under the stars, along the path by the edge of the sea. Sometimes they sat on the portico, not talking at all. Lord Bill grew very used to her and fond of her; in fact, he fell in love with her.

The gossips said that he was living with her. They whispered and shook their heads when they saw them together. And when they didn't see them, they fancied what Lord Bill was doing with the girl. The stories they made up were very bad stories indeed.

The men who came to the Golden Swan each day during the rain time, now come, not because they were thirsty for a drink and a lazy chat,

but because they hoped to get a glimpse of Lord Bill's woman; and when they did, they would wink and nod and say that there was no doubt about it, she was a beauty, and Lord Bill knew how to pick them. . . .

Then "Slits" Grayson entered the picture, and trouble started. Grayson was a red-headed roustabout with evil-looking slits for eyes, and an enormous mouth. He was an ugly-handsome sort of devil. Women liked him for his swaggering ways and because he was a spender. They liked him because he teased them and because he knew how to make love. When he drank, which was most of the time, his right eye would wink continually. He'd say:

"I gotta bit of coal in it when I was a kid."

The night his ship dropped anchor at Singapore, he betook himself, on a whim, to the Golden Swan. It was very dark, and the tavern lights winked golden eyes at the trees that stood around. Grayson felt in his pockets and discovered that he hadn't much change. Well, it doesn't matter. There wouldn't be any women to spend it on. There never were, at the Golden Swan. He'd drink a bit and then go back to the ship.

But after a few rums he didn't want to go back to the ship. He got nasty when Sang Lee refused to bring more drinks. He swore and brought down his large fist on the table with a bang, making the glasses topple and crack. He said he would smash up the place if there wasn't any more drink coming.

Sang Lee trembled. His little face wrinkled in a knot. He shuffled back to the bar and rang a bell which could be heard only in the kitchen. Sam, the mulatto, a stranded mariner whom Lord Bill had once befriended and who was now a part of his life, came flying. He knew that there was trouble. Sang Lee pointed to the young man with the winking eye.

The mulatto wasted no time. He ordered Grayson to get out. But "Slits" only wiped his mouth and grinned.

"I'll take that grin off your face if you don't clear out," said the mulatto.

Grayson stopped grinning and stood up. The huge bulk swayed. The one green eye that wasn't winking stared wildly.

"I'm here for the night. I want a drink in a hurry. I want a dozen drinks." He flunked down again.

"*Pronto*, you want a drink like that, eh?" sneered the mulatto.

"Like that, godam yes." Grayson snapped his fingers and roared and spat a long way into the brass cuspidor with the snake around its middle. "That there's too good for spit," he said. "Let's see how it'd look on your head, darky. It'd make a swell pot for a big head like yours." The mulatto knocked him back into his chair. Grayson looked ugly. "What the hell!" he said. "Where's my drink?"

"Where's your drink, *pronto*, eh?" the mulatto mimicked from beneath his teeth. "Well, maybe you like this *pronto*—"

The mulatto struck Grayson across the jaw. Tables, bottles, two parrots, fifteen men and a monkey heaved together. The fight was on. Sang Lee beat his hands against each other and went running for Lord Bill, who was in his study writing letters.

When Bill came into the bar the place stopped breathing. The men straightened themselves, arranging the tables and chairs. Grayson lay bleeding on the floor. His mouth was open. Three teeth had been knocked out. There was a cut over one eye. He looked like one dead.

Lord Bill stared at Sam.

"I don't like this," he said. His tone was angry.

"He was a tough customer. He'd **have** smashed the place up."

"You should have thrown him out."

The mulatto looked ashamed. "He was too much for me," he said.

Lord Bill softened. "Here, one of you fellows give Sam a hand. Put him up in one of the rooms. His head is in bad shape."

When Grayson came to, he was lying in a soft bed with clean sheets. The sun told him that the night had gone, and the pain in his head reminded him that he had been in a fight. He tried to remember, but couldn't. He never did, after such bouts. They were a habit with him, and as long as he didn't get killed, it didn't matter very much. The window was open and through it came the sound of the sea and a girl's voice singing. A sweet scent of flowers filled the room from the garden.

Grayson raised himself and looked about. It was a long time since he had had such a feeling of paradise; and even with the pain roaring in his head, this was a paradise.

Then he saw Sally!

She was trimming a golden bush to the shape of a swan, leaving a full blossom for an eye and a sharp little branch for a beak. Her hair fell over her shoulders, pale, the color of candle-flame; her voice and the scissors made lovely little music.

Grayson gasped. "Chrise," he said, and "Chrise," again. He watched her—what a lovely body she had! He thought of all the women he had had, and of how much more time there was left to have a thousand more. He thought of all the women he had loved and left and found again. But this girl here—the shape of her, the full round youthful shape of her. He fell back on to the pillow again and slept, with his head full of lustful images.

When next he woke, Lord Bill was sitting by the bed.

"Your ship leaves in an hour," he said.

"Aye," said Grayson feeling with his fingers the place where the teeth

were missing, "but I'm not going with it. I've other things to do." He grinned and the empty space in his gums gave him a snarling expression.

Lord Bill's eyes flashed, as they did sometimes when he was alive with temper.

"I treated you like a man last night," he said with contempt. "You're nothing but a filthy swine. Take a look at yourself."

Grayson laughed. "The old mug suits me, Governor,—suits the women too. I'm a devil with the women." He laughed until the tears ran down his face.

"Get your clothes on," said Lord Bill.

"Clothes! Shivering cats, look at them pants! Must have been a hum-dinger of a brawl last night, what?"

"Get dressed. You're going down to that boat," said Lord Bill.

Grayson's face went long. "What you got against me? What's to stop me staying here?"

"You're a bad character, Grayson."

"The hell you say!"

"And I don't want you hanging around here."

Grayson's eyes narrowed. He sat up. "You mean, you don't want me hanging around *her*!"

He jumped out of bed and ripped his shirt across. "Get an eye full of this," he said, punching his chest.

Lord Bill looked and was sick. He stared and stared.

What he saw was the nude image of a girl, and, tattooed beneath, in large red letters, the name of Sally!

Grayson moved the hairy chest; the body of the girl shook. Grayson gave it a smack. "Goes to bed with me every night, does Sally." Lord Bill stopped looking. "She ran away from me," said Grayson; "the little devil! She won't get the chance to give me the side-slip again."

He started to dress. Lord Bill watched him thoughtfully.

"Were you living with her?" he asked.

"On and off," said Grayson. The green eyes went alight. "She's a nice little piece."

He fastened his shirt and smacked his fat thighs. "You living with her?" he asked, as easily as if they were talking about cattle.

"Yes," said Lord Bill.

Grayson chuckled. "Guess you thought you was the first one, eh? Never told you about me, eh?"

"Yes, she told me about you."

Grayson stopped short. "Go on, she never!"

"She told me about you long ago, Crayson."

Grayson spat. "Well, strike me pink!"

"She told me what a beast you were."

"She did, eh? The little devil!" He spat again. "They're all alike are women."

He was quite dressed now. His coat was torn and dirty from the night before, his face bruised, and hair stuck together from the blood. The cut over the right eyes gave him a quizzical look.

"How do I look, Governor?" he asked.

"We'll get down to the boat," said Lord Bill without looking.

Grayson didn't move. "That boat business is off," he said. "Me and Sally are going to get together again."

"We'll get down to the boat," said Lord Bill with emphasis.

"You're damned cocky for an old duffer; but she was mine first," said Grayson lighting a cigarette.

Lord Bill's lips tightened. "We won't beat about the bush any longer," he said. "The girl is my wife. We were married three months ago."

Grayson stopped smoking his cigarette and threw it out of the window. His face darkened. That doesn't

stop me," he said fiercely. "Nothin' stops me when I want what I want." He moved a step forward. His fists clenched. His eyes little evil slits. "Get me?" he yelled.

Lord Bill's face didn't change. He looked calm and sure of himself. What he said next Grayson wasn't ready for.

He said: "Last night in my tavern you killed a man, Slits Grayson. Do you know that?"

Grayson wavered. "I killed a man?"

"You did."

"How?"

"He died this morning from a blow on the head."

Grayson scowled.

"Now you see the sense of getting on that boat?"

"No," said Grayson.

"D'you want me to call the police?"

"No."

"Then what?"

Grayson grunted.

"I've got witnesses—my own men," said Lord Bill in a matter-of-fact tone. "But I'm an authority around here. And there's the girl. She means more to me than a dead man. I'd rather you'd go—that she should never know you've been here. Sympathy—a man on trial for his life. Women are funny that way. However, I'll tell the police, if——"

"I'll get along," Grayson said, but he wasn't pleased.

They walked together down the narrow street to the boat. Grayson swinging his heavy feet in a sulk. Lord Bill looked at the sky. Soon it would rain. He was glad to get Grayson off his hands before the rain came. It was like an evil omen. He said when they finally reached the docks:

"I'd advise you to keep away from Singapore. I've got a good memory, Grayson. So have my men."

Grayson threw him a dirty look; the place where the teeth were miss-

ing made a dark hole; he spat through it, and was gone.

Sally saw Lord Bill coming up the street and ran to meet him. His heart went sick at the sight of her. He loved her. He loved her more than he dared think. What he had found out about her didn't change that feeling; it only saddened him. What *he* knew of the girl was sweet and clean; the rest of her life, the part that hadn't touched him, was another Sally in another world. The thought of Grayson and Sally— But he mustn't think. Still he'd probably have to let her go now; send her away; Grayson would come back. He knew that.

"Where have you been all morning?" she asked, when she caught up to him. Her voice was as clear and lovely as the sea.

Lord Bill took her arm and they walked together slowly. "I had a little business," he said.

"Let's not go home yet. Let's walk by the croton bushes."

"It's going to rain, Sally. We'll get caught. We'd better go on in."

But Sally won and they walked a little way.

"There was a fight last night," she said. "Sang Lee said that it was rather a bad fight."

"Oh, just a drunken fool——"

"Sang said he stayed all night——"

"Sang talks too much. What else did he say?"

Sally frowned. "He didn't say a great deal. Why?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing." His voice sounded tired. Sally looked at him and stopped walking.

"You seem worried. What's the matter?" she asked.

"Sally, I've been thinking——"

"What have you been thinking?"

"Tomorrow the *Denby* gets in again. I want you to go with Captain Horrocks. I've a sister in London. She is a splendid woman and you'll meet the right sort of people there with her." His voice broke.

Sally drew her arm in his. He looked over her head so that she couldn't see his eyes.

"I don't want to go. What have I done that you want me to go?"

"It isn't anything you've done, Sally. "It's just that I've done—a lot of thinking. The Golden Swan isn't a place for a woman. Besides, you'll want to get married one of these days and you'll meet the right sort of chap in England. You'd never meet him here. This isn't the place for you." It took his breath away to say these things; made everything damp and cold, like a fire going out.

Her eyes widened with terror. "I know! You've heard something—about me. That's it, isn't it?"

He took her face between his hands. "I've heard nothing about you that wasn't sweet, Sally. You mustn't imagine things."

"But there is something—something I've been wanting to tell you for a long time."

Lord Bill took his stick which had dropped on the sea-wall.

"We'd better be going back," he said. "The clouds are getting pretty thick; the air smells of thunder."

They got back just in time. The rain tore down in a great battle, with lightning flashing a thousand swords.

Sang Lee lit the green lantern and brought a tray with tea things, and some letters.

When he had gone Lord Bill resumed his talk.

"You'll like it in England, Sally," he said. "There's no other country like it; always fresh and green. It's a haven of mocking birds and sunsets and cups of tea and fine old castles. And," he added, "it's a grand feeling when they're changing the guard at Buckingham Palace. Makes you want to whistle and shout and wave a lot of flags."

Sally looked miserable and said nothing. Lord Bill gave up then and opened his letters. Tomorrow he

would get things settled. He would tell Horrocks, and Horrocks would help Sally to understand. She would go with him to England because it was the best thing to do. And when she had gone, he would let his heart break. He mustn't let it loose yet, it wasn't time. Thank God, no, it wasn't time—yet.

The next day, when Horrocks was sitting with him over some breakfast, Lord Bill said:

"I want you to take the girl to England." He told him why he wanted this. His voice trembled and his coffee went cold.

"You've lost your heart to her, that's true, isn't it?" Horrocks said.

"That is part of the story," said Lord Bill. Then he told him the rest, about Grayson and how afraid he was of Grayson showing up again.

"I even went as far as telling him that he had killed a man," he said. "But that kind—they always come back. Murder doesn't stop them, when there's a woman."

"Does she know that you know?" Horrocks asked.

"She does not, and I don't want her to know. I'd feel very bad if she knew that I knew."

"She shan't know," said Horrocks.

"I told him that we were married."

Horrocks put down his fork. "Hm, to protect her, I suppose?"

"I'd do anything in the world for her, Horrocks. That's why I'm sending her away. I want to give her the right chance. Besides, there's a lot of filthy talk going on around here. I didn't get on to it till lately. It's been worrying me."

"About her?"

"Us both. They think I'm living with her."

"For God's sake!"

Sally came in with her arms full of flowers. She ran her fingers through Lord Bill's hair. He laughed, and took a flower for his coat. She pinned it for him and did the same

for Horrocks. Then she sat down and asked a lot of questions about the trip he had made.

"You're coming back with me," he said. "Lord Bill, here, thinks you should see England."

She looked from one to the other. "Then you really are serious?" she sighed, gazing at Lord Bill, who was making a ship on the tablecloth with a match.

He nodded.

Her head went down and they knew that she was crying. Sang Lee came for the dishes. She didn't move, but just sat there bent and sobbing. Lord Bill couldn't stand it. He went out into the garden. Horrocks put an arm around the girl's shoulders.

"He's doing this for you," he told her. "He thinks you should meet some fine fellow. He thinks you are wasting your young days here."

"He thinks! He thinks! He *thinks!*" she cried, catching her breath. "Then, if he thinks so much, can't he see that I love him?" She stopped crying and looked at Horrocks. "I've got it!" she said. "I've got it! He must know that I'm crazy about him, yet he wants to send me away! It annoys him to have me here, feeling that way."

Horrocks drew his arm away.

"Sally! Sally!"

"That's it! Don't you think that's it?"

Horrocks pulled a large handkerchief from his pocket. "Here, wipe those tears away. You're spoiling the color of your eyes."

Sally wiped her eyes.

"Sally," he said, "you've damned well knocked me off my feet."

The girl's lips quivered. "I didn't know what love was until I came here," she said in a blind voice. "I didn't know there was a man in the world like Lord Bill. Life was one hell for me before I came on your ship. That story I told you about a drunken stepfather was a lie. I

had to tell you *something*—if you'd known the truth, you wouldn't have been so kind. Lord Bill—I love him. I don't want to go away. I don't! I don't!" Her head went down again; she wept, her body convulsed. "I've made a fool of myself," she said. "I've ruined everything. I've let him see that I'm crazy about him!"

"There," said Horrocks. "There."

"I'll go anywhere you want me to go, but don't take me back to Sydney. I don't want to go back to Sydney."

"Pack your things," said Horrocks kindly. "I'll see that you don't go back to Sydney. You can't stay here as things stand."

"No, I can't stay here, if he doesn't want me."

She went to pack her bags.

Lord Bill and Horrocks took a walk together. They talked a long time. Bill's heart was heavy and he felt miserable. But Horrocks didn't tell him of Sally's love.

They found a little street where there was a confusion of shops. Lord Bill bought things he thought Sally would like; some books and a few little trinkets and a white lace collar. He was shy about selecting these things, and Horrocks pretended that he wasn't looking.

The *Denby* was to sail in an hour. Sally said that she would like to go to her cabin. She wanted to get it over. Her eyes were red and swollen and she felt sick. Sang Lee strapped her bags for her. His eyes were strange, too. He was very fond of Sally. She had been a friend to him; they had had many secrets together and many laughs, and there was the little garden they had built together, with the scarlet flowers dripping over the rocks they had brought from the beach.

Before she left, she went into the bar, and when no one was watching, wrote her name in very small letters on the looking glass next to that of

Lord Bill. It was then that she got a surprise. There, in big ugly letters, written in a circle, was the name of "Slits" Grayson! There was no denying it; she knew the writing and she knew the name.

There was only one "Slits" Grayson—and he had been here! He might be in Singapore *now* this very moment! The thought was terrifying. If he found her, he would kill her for leaving him! And Lord Bill would find out how bad she had been—that she had lived with a thug like "Slits" Grayson! She had been young then—so terribly young. She had believed all his promises of marriage. But that wouldn't matter to a gentleman like Lord Bill. He would consider her unclean, defiled.

She asked Sang Lee to carry her bags down to the boat. She said that she wanted to go before Lord Bill came back. She didn't want to say good-by, she couldn't.

When Horrocks joined her, he said that it was all right for her not to have seen Lord Bill again. It was

no use making things sadder than they were.

"You'll feel better when you're out at sea," he said. "I'll show you some pretty sights. Wait till you see a bushel of them saucy porpoises playing on the waves like cats. And there's nothing like the moon when she's tired and lays herself on the sea, turning the night into a sheet of silver, with the stars a-twinkling like they're platinum worlds on stick-pins. I'm telling you, Sally, you'll feel a darn sight better."

Horrocks was right. Sally did feel a darn sight better. But then Horrocks had a way with him. For, when the time came for the *Denby* to sail out of the harbor, he had them on it! Sally—and Lord Bill!

He had a fine cabin, with jade-green shutters, and two lemon-colored chairs, and two berths, and two, well, two of everything—all ready for them. And he married them at sea; with the crew drinking to their health, and the ship's scanty band playing the wedding march.



## I LOVE MYSELF

By *Edith Loomis*

I love myself today, for I am loved  
 By one whose love is all of life to me.  
 What beauty may be mine,  
 Of grace, of wide star eyes,  
 Are his to have forever;  
 Are his, whose touch is poetry and pain;  
 Whose glance has filled my heart with glad  
 surprise.  
 All that I have is his,  
 For in his arms,  
 I have no more to gain.

# 63,571

By L. H. HAYUM



**F**IVE-and-ten nail-polish had been too good for her, five days ago. Then he had followed the line around the cafeteria fence, ordered hot cakes from her red-hot grid-dle, given her a smile with a half-dozen meanings and made a date. All, while you wait. That was the sign hanging over her head: "*Hot Cakes and Waffles—While You Wait.*"

"Pretty hot work, kid?"

"You've said it."

Then he cast a half-glance at Sara, who stood nearby and poured the syrup in the little thick jugs and sliced the butter. But Sara wasn't listening. Sara's hopes were never beyond the butter pats and sticky syrup. A monotone sing-song trav-

eled through Sara's one-way brain, thanking heaven for her job at the minimum wage and the maximum hours. Sara was that way. But—

"How would you like to have somebody else make your hot cakes?"

"You just ask me!" The dough began to bubble, which meant that the three browning cakes were to be turned over.

"Working tonight?" he asked.

"Until five."

"I got a car. We could drive out and have a feed on the road somewhere. Huh?"

"I guess so."

"Not keen about it?"

"Sure, I'm keen about it, all right, but—"

The hot cakes were finished and so was the date. . . .

The car wasn't the sort that she expected. It was bigger, newer, high-powered. The seats were soft and springy. She was glad her dress was new and that she'd had the dollar to make the down payment.

"Say, this is swell. I didn't know — Say, how come you eat in a joint like that cafeteria when you sport a car like this?"

"I got another one. Not so big. You can have it. Ever drive a car?"

She hadn't.

"What do you do? I mean where do you get your money?" Right off the bat, he told her. That's the sort of fellow, Jay Myers was.

"Stick-ups!"

"Don't talk silly. Where did you get this car?"

"From a guy down in San Diego. Doctor. Changed the license plates. Waited until it got cold. That's all."

She believed him. Her face felt hot, and little sticking pins seemed pricking her flushed cheeks. Her heart missed a few beats and then came back with such violent throbs, that he felt them jerk her body.

"Scared of me?"

They were on the highway, with the ocean roaring on one side and a steep, uninhabited cliff on the other. Nevertheless, she jerked open the door. That was the sort of girl Janet Morgan was, nineteen, black-at-the-roots blonde and recent girl friend of more than one youth about town. Ready to step out and run the chance of being killed, rather than ride with a stick-up man. Of course.

"You can't get out here. You're coming with me, kid. I got a place down here at Begonia Beach. My hide-out. You're coming with me."

But she was too quick. Out she stepped. The car was making forty-five. So she fell in a heap of pale pink rayon, satin ribbons and dirt. Down on the brakes, the car in re-

verse, and he was back at her side, just as two flashing headlights flared around the corner.

"Hurt, kid?" He repeated the question. But no answer. By the time, the other headlights blinked and stopped by the road, she was in his arms and he was carrying her back to his car.

"Accident?" From the other car.

"Nothing much." From Jay's car.

"Need any help?"

"No, thanks!"

When she woke up, he was feeding her beef broth out of a spoon, and her foot was tightly bound at the ankle. It was a white room with pink-rose paper on the wall and a bunch of pink roses in a vase on a table.

"You've been out of your head for a couple of hours. You're okay now. I bound your foot. A sprain. This is my shack on the beach. You're going to stay and you're going to like it."

"Why, you big——"

His lips closed out the word.

"No use getting excited. It's better than frying hot cakes for a living. We'll hang out here for the summer, then if— Well, if I get the cash, we'll blow ourselves to Europe. Huh? Don't get so fussy. You can't get away. Anyway, you told me, you didn't have relations. Nobody will be looking for you. I like you. See?"

"You—you got to let me out of here. I'll scream."

"Why? Don't you like me?"

"You crook! You dirty crook! Of course, I don't like you! I'm going to give you up! You can't stop me. You can kill me, but that's the only way——"

"I ain't done nothing, but take a couple or so cars from rich guys. I'm not going to kill anybody. Nix on that. Just the same, it wouldn't be so good for you to be seen in my company. They're looking for me. The police. They're always looking

for me. I'm an ex-con, kid. I was nothing but a number for three years. 63,571. Now you got the dope."

"Huh! Think you can scare me. Well, you can't. I don't give a darn if you shoot my head off, but that's the only way you can keep me. Why,—you dirty bum! You——"

"Go on and when you've finished digging into me, let's have some lunch."

"Me? Lunch with you." Then she cried. Loud,—then not so loud. Her nerves were crumbling and her heart seemed choking her. "Let me go, please."

"Why?"

"Please. You got me wrong. I'm not the kind who would help you. I'm afraid of a gun and anyway I hate men like you. I think the police ought to shoot you down on sight. That's what I think about you."

"No, you don't."

"I don't?"

"You wish that I weren't that sort. You wish I'd paid for that car, and you wish I had honest money jingling in my pants' pockets. Then you'd be willing to string along with me. But you don't want the police to get me. You'd feel sorry, if I was to lay down there dead. Wouldn't you?"

Then she screamed. But nobody heard her. Jay's little stucco beach cottage was alone on a big rock that had nothing between it and China but a wide stretch of Pacific Ocean.

"This is kidnaping and they could hang you for this."

"Kidnaping? Is it?"

That was all. The door was locked while he prepared lunch. A good one. All sorts of cold things: cheese, salami, ham, pickles, hard-boiled eggs, pickled pigs feet and some red wine. He set it before her and fixed a place for himself.

"Not going to eat?"

"Of course not. Listen here—you got to let me out of here. You——"

"It's too late, kid. You know my hide-out. You know everything. I thought you was a game little thing. I thought you fell for me. I thought you was too good to fry cakes and fade away with never a nice thing in all your life, and then, end up some day, an old hag standing in a breadline. I was willing to share with you, kid. I liked your face. Sweet, and not too strong. You know, enough of the woman in you to want things. To care about pretty things and to know a good guy, when she met up with him——"

"Meaning?"

"Yours truly. I ain't bad. Not really. This is straight. Oh, I know what you're thinking. An ex-con can't be good. Well,—you've got a lot of folks on your side, girlie. But listen here——" He was making himself a sandwich as he talked, ham and cheese and pickles. When it was pressed together he slipped it in her hand. She didn't take a bite for ever so long. But, when he reached the part in his story about the fatherless chap, himself, who had been refused probation and sent on up to the penitentiary for a first offense, stealing some auto junk to turn into cash for radio equipment, well, she began to nibble, took a bite, two bites, then a drink of red wine.

"How long did they keep you?"

"Three years."

"And you never got to finish that radio you was making?"

"No, I never wanted to. I'd lost all my hankering for inventing. My mother tried to get that judge to give me another chance. He'd been sort of lenient with a lot of big oil guys that morning, so I guess he thought he'd have to send somebody up, so that he could get re-elected. They didn't want no chicken-hearted judge. My mother died six months after. I never did know what become of all my radio stuff. I never cared. I met up with fellows in there who

showed me the way to keep going and I been going ever since!"

"How long ago, was that?"

Another sandwich in the making. Another glass of wine.

"I'm twenty-five now. That was about eight,—no, about six years ago. I been places and seen things since then, girlie." The cork back on the bottle of wine. She was rather glad of that. Unwarranted joviality on his part would only have added to the various sorts of torment that were plugging away at her reasoning power. "I've seen the world. Sure—I been to the Argentine and I been to China. You know, I used to think I'd like them places. But I never was much for women. They tell me—" A cigarette, one taken from the glossy white package, that belonged in the pocket of his soft blue shirt. He offered her one. Maybe she wanted it. A cigarette always tended to hush down Janet's nerves. But not one of his—no smokes from a guy who had a number. . . . Down below, an incoming tide roared and cracked against the rocks with a resounding violence, that almost drowned out the slow, low monologue, that he was so leisurely spinning together. She heard it, every word. Not that she was paying much attention, but while one portion of her consciousness was listening, another portion was manoeuvring escape. "They tell me, the women in them countries fall for a guy from U. S. A. I never had no cash—"

"What's the idea?"

"Idea?"

"Yes. You holdin' me here. You just said you didn't care for women. Well? Let me go." Much softer, her voice. Much softer, the glance from her eyes. "I swear I'll not tell. I'll not give you up. Go to it, and nab all the cars in the state. Let me go, kid."

His eyes were very brown, almost black and they had a very young

look. Why—he was only a boy. There had been no boys in her life. Strange thing. All men. Men of a sort.

"No. I'm goin' to take you with me. One more big haul. We'll drive down over the Border, then through Mexico and back up again, maybe. Leave it to me. And you'll have things. Maybe I'll marry you, if that would straighten things any."

"You let me out of here, or I'll kill myself."

"Yeah?" A short silence, while one cigarette—two cigarettes turned to ashes, then: "Hate me that much? I liked you, sister. I wanted you. I'm not so bad, when it comes to looks, am I? Couldn't you— Couldn't you like me if—"

"If what?"

"If, maybe I'd change my way. You know. Get rid of this junk and me and you start over. Huh? Forget that I was ever 63,571. I can keep on movin' and we could buy a—a—well, we could buy something with the cash I'd get from this junk. Huh? I fell for you. You was so sweet. See? I'm just an ordinary guy. There ain't nothin' different about me. I got off to a bad start. But my mother went to church and gosh, my dad was mayor or something like that of a little town back in Kansas, once. I hate myself, kid, as much as you do. Think I'm a damn fool, don't you. Say—" He was very close now and his hand caught hers. She—she forgot to draw away. "I've been sent up and I've served time, but listen, kid, I'm clean. You know. Women ain't got nothin' on me. I never give none of my cash to that sort. I never went to queer places and met them kind of girls. I liked your looks and I wanted a girl. I knew you was good, or you wouldn't have to fry cakes. So, I fell for you. Honey, you've got to like me. We can make a getaway. Forget—will you?"

"You're crazy. You're nothin' but a common stickup. And I——"

"You're okay."

"You won't let me go?"

Four hours later, she asked it again. Not so loud. Not quite so determinedly. Evening had come down over the sea and there was an orange sunset, that seemed to lend the proverbial tint of rose and glamor to things in general. She refused to take part in the canned chicken-soup supper. Refused to answer his questions, until the sun disappeared and a treacherous moon struck the little rock-bound cottage with some shimmering beams. Then in a moment, quite suddenly, his arms tightened about her and for the first time, his kiss was returned.

"You—you care. You like me a little. That's swell. That's swell. I'll be okay. You won't be sorry. You'll not get into no trouble. I'm too slick. You understood everything. Huh? How I wasn't near as bad as they made me out. Lookee here——" From his back pocket came a finely folded paper. Creases—more creases. "Five hundred dollars reward for my capture. See what they say about me. Tall and handsome! Cut that part. But, down below—see— Does not care for women companions!"

"Five hundred dollars reward. They must want you pretty bad."

"Maybe. They'll never get me. I'd shoot myself first. But—they won't ever find me. I—I got a woman now."

Down went the paper to the floor. Scarlet flushed her cheeks.

"Is that why you took me?"

"Sure."

"Not because you liked me. Liked my looks. Not because you wanted me?"

"Of course not."

"You dirty sneak. Well,—I'll give you up!"

"Honey, you ain't got a Chinaman's

chance. They'd not believe you wasn't in on that last job. The car we come out here in. See? You'd get two to life, if I were caught. But I ain't goin' to get caught. You neither! And—girlie, you're mine. Not because I say so. Because you can't help it. Huh? You're fallin' in love with me. You was mad when you thought I was usin' you as a blind. You wanted me to say, I loved you. How about it?"

"Maybe. Maybe you just got in wrong. I hadn't thought of it that way."

"Sure. You can forgive anybody who gets in wrong and then makes a break for the right way. That's my way of thinkin'. And you?"

"It's mine okay. I'm ready, big boy to start over with you. I must be a darn fool. But I'll forget."

"Sure. That's the way. I've told you my story, And now— What's your name?"

"Janet. I—I've got a story too. Mine started when I was fifteen. He was married. I got a baby—and I worked for it. I made good money because I was pretty. I put my baby in a swell home. She had little pink blankets and clean milk bottles. Then she died! I've never been good since then. I—just got off to a bad start. I been workin' at the cafeteria not because I was reformin', but because I needed the money. I didn't care. But I never liked a guy in all my life till now."

Time for his arms to tighten and his lips to press the words back into her mouth. Time for the slow lap of ebb tide to play a rhythmically tuned accompaniment to his endearing words of forgiveness and hope for a future. . . . Nothing of the kind! Not a bit of it. Jay Myers, just wasn't that sort. That was all. He just wasn't that sort.

"So—that's what you are!" One hand on his gun, that lay hidden in a back pocket. Hidden, but on the

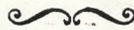
alert. "Well, girlie, i don't want you. I got you wrong. I was wrong. Now, you get the hell out of here. I been servin' time and been up against a bunch of lousy crooks, but your kind that hang around corners and the like— Go ahead—get out of here."

"But, you got to listen. I did it for my baby. My heart wasn't ever in it. Then, I got branded and there wasn't no other way, kid. You got to

let me stay with you. See? I'll give you up. I'll get that reward and give you up. You can't send me out alone. You're afraid—you don't dare! You're afraid!"

"Am I? Guess again. I'll drive you down to the P. E. street car. It runs all night. Then go to it, sister. Give me up. Collect your five hundred bucks. I don't want you—wouldn't have you. See?"

She saw!



## THE MOTH

*By Cristel Hastings*

Frail and fragile,  
 Gauzy-winged,  
 Spirit of a summer night—  
 Dancing, searching  
 Restlessly,  
 In the fitful candle-light.

"Just a night moth,"  
 Was my thought,  
 As I watched your restless flight.  
 Gray dawn found you  
 Lifeless—burned!  
 You had danced too near the light.

# Two Kinds of Women

By STEPAN DOSTEV

**W**HEN Ed Coffroth met Janice he wasn't married. Ed had ideas about marriage, and while he thought Janice was a swell girl he never thought for a moment of her in connection with marriage. She was a good sport. He'd met her at a party which had been lots of fun and whenever he was with her it was jolly.

He'd been brought up within the narrow boundaries of a good New England family. He'd moved to New York like most other aspiring young men and he'd worked hard, trying to get ahead. In the back of his mind was the thought that some day, when he had got to a good place in the world he would marry and settle down. But he would marry a girl who was virginal and innocent. Certainly Janice wasn't virginal. She hadn't made any secret of that. Even if she hadn't told him that she had known other men he would have guessed it, because she taught him a lot about the physical side of love.

Ed was on the road for his firm then. He was about twenty-eight or so. A big fellow, with dark hair, beginning to thin on top and a figure that was already filling out. He had the New England territory for his company and he knew how to sell the folks from Rhode Island all the way to Maine.

The road, any one can tell you, is a lonely place. A man will do things while on the road that he wouldn't think of doing elsewhere. Not only single men, but married ones. You drive into a town if you're a car-

using salesman and by mid-afternoon you've finished your calls and made out your report and there's nothing at all to do. Not a damn thing. There are usually a couple of movie houses in the town, but like as not you've seen the pictures, and if you haven't you're sick and tired of movies night after night. You don't want to sit in your bedroom; and the lobby of a small-town hotel is no inspiring place.

So out of that sheer loneliness comes the commission of things that wouldn't be done otherwise. A visit to the local red-light house, or a date with a local girl who is used to traveling men, or poker in some one's room; or a party. It was on a party that Ed met Janice.

Harry Seligson, who was in silks, got up the party and asked Ed to join it. Harry knew a girl in a show that was playing the town they were making. Harry was round-faced and good-natured.

"Bring along a couple of bottles after you're finished tonight," he told Ed when they met that morning. "There'll be some girls up from the show. Anyhow even if nothing happens it'll kill an evening."

"Thanks," Ed said and meant it. It was something to look forward to. Not that he had any intentions of being interested in the women. He'd met enough show girls not to know there wasn't anything exciting to expect. Drinks and noise and probably the hotel manager sending up to say would they please make less of an uproar. Then a girl passing out

and a chance that she might not get hysterical.

But he finished up his report that afternoon and went down and had his dinner. Then he went to a movie and dozed, despite the fact that he didn't want to. That made a man lie awake after hitting the hay. But he went back to the hotel and washed up and sat down to figure out a few things and before he knew it the phone was ringing and Harry Seligson was saying:

"You asleep? There's a party on, ain't there?"

Ed took up his bottles and settled his tie and went down to Harry's room. There was quite a crowd there. Four girls and two other men beside Harry. He knew the men. He was introduced to the women. It was the usual gathering. The women pretty well made-up, not having bothered much to take off their paint when they left the theatre. They were all moaning about how they hated the road and how swell it would be to get back to little old New York.

The girls were pretty young. The oldest of them was about twenty-five. And she was the quietest of the lot. A girl named Janice Davis. Big and blonde, with the stillness that sometimes blonde women possess. Her eyes were gray and she was very attractive. She sat with her glass in her hand and smiled, and now and then she said something in a voice as quiet as her face. Ed liked her, because he wasn't like Harry. He couldn't make an impression immediately; couldn't reach out and grab a girl to him and kiss her before everybody and then go on talking, making every one laugh. A good guy, Harry. He had a wife and two kids. He showed the kids' pictures at every opportunity. He was showing them when Ed came in.

It was a Saturday night and the long Sunday stretched before them, the dullest day of the traveling man's

week. The party was determined to go on; at least until dawn, and then when every one woke up most of Sunday would be gone.

Ed had a drink or two and found himself sitting with Janice Davis. It was easy to talk to her. She seemed to understand. It wasn't as lonely she said on the road for them. There was always rehearsals being called and the show going on. But she had been in vaudeville, a sister act, before vaud folded. Even now she'd have been in New York, taking her chances on odd jobs and with radio bits, if it wasn't that this road show had turned up with a bit part in it for her and she thought she might as well take the money. She'd been on the road before and she knew how to economize. She could save enough to carry her over a lot of bad spots.

That came out slowly, after Ed had grouched about what a hell of a place the road was and how tired and lonely a man got. He told her about New England and college and Janice told him about being born in New York and making her way. She wasn't married either, and the way she shook her head told Ed a lot of things.

But they just sat there and talked and Ed drank, not knowing he was taking so much. The stories were going among the others, but Ed and Janice kept it clean and decent, like two people at a home gathering. Then, all of a sudden, maybe the closeness of the room or something, the liquor hit Ed. He turned white and got up quickly and Janice followed him. He was good and sick in the bathroom. She held his head and helped him. He was pretty shaky. He drank the contents of the glass she gave him and apologized.

"I'm sorry as anything. Didn't realize I'd had so much. I'm not a drinking man. Not a good one."

His legs were shaky and his head buzzed. Janice said:

"You'd better call it a night."

Ed said: "Yes. I guess I had." He started for the door. The others were too busy to pay any attention, even if they could have seen clearly through the cigar and cigarette smoke that filled the room. Janice took his arm and helped him. She picked up her bag as they went past the corner they had been sitting in. The air of the corridor was bracing to Ed. He said, "I guess I can make it."

But Janice just kept his arm and he was glad of it. His room was down the hall from Harry's and he pushed open the door and fairly fell on the bed. But he was quite clear-headed. It was only that the liquor had hit him all of a sudden and knocked him out. He couldn't stand. He smiled apologetically at Janice. She put down her handbag and closed the door. Then she opened his bag and got out his pyjamas and threw them on the bed. She took up one foot and removed his shoe and then the other.

"Lord," Ed mumbled, "I'm giving you all this trouble."

"It's all right," Janice said. "You couldn't help it." She threw open the windows and came back to help him with his collar and shirt. She went into the bathroom and mixed him another sedative and Ed had got into his pyjamas when she came out.

He took the drink and downed it. Then he lay back in the bed and Janice sat down beside him. He began to feel better immediately. He was still a little tight, but the helpless intoxication went quickly. And he was aware of her then, and not of himself. Of how lovely she was and how appealing. Sitting there beside him, in the dimness of the room, for only the bed-lamp was on. And he could smell the warmth of her. He put out his hand and touched hers:

"It was fine of you."

"That's all right," Janice said

again, but her fingers did not leave his.

It was grand having some one in the room with him. Nothing ever so emphasized the loneliness of the road as hotel rooms. Her hand was warm and dry. She shifted the pillow for him, bending over, and the warm fullness of her breasts brushed over his arm. Ed looked up at her and Janice smiled her slow smile at him and then she bent down and kissed him. Ed said:

"It'll be lonely when you go."

"I won't go if you don't want me to," Janice said.

"Lord, Janice," Ed said, "I don't want to sympathize you into anything——"

"Don't you want me to stay?" she asked quietly.

"Of course I do," Ed said. "You're the grandest girl. To have you here with me——"

"It's all right," Janice said. "I want to as well. We're both pretty lonely and it isn't as if I didn't know what I'm doing. You want me to stay and I know you do—and I want to. We're free, white and more than twenty-one."

She reached up and put out the light, but when Ed put out his hand he felt her weight lift from the bed. He could hear her moving in the dark; hear the rustle of her clothes; catch the faint sound of her breathing. He lay there, realizing the fun of it. He knew he'd probably forget all about her the next day or the day after, but for the time being he couldn't think of anything he'd rather be doing than just lying there in that dumb hotel room waiting for a girl he hadn't known five hours before to come and put her mouth on his.

He felt her near him. Her hand, warm and dry as ever, found his. Then her warm bosom was close against him and her arms cradling him. He sighed in her clasp and

caught her to him. "I couldn't ever be lonely with you around," he said. She did not answer but her mouth was warm and pliant against his own.

They didn't say much the next day. Ed took her out in his car. They had dinner in the dusk, for it was late when they had left the hotel and then they came back. He saw her off at the train late that night, and then he went back to catch up on his sleep before pushing out himself the Monday morning. He'd taken the show's itinerary and given her his. But he didn't think he'd see her. He wanted to. He thought she was swell. Of course, a girl that knew men—had probably known a lot! That sort of girl was labeled in Ed's credo. It even made him wonder that a girl that did things like that could be so swell. He remembered her a long time. When he got a letter from her some weeks later he was gratified. It was flattering to feel that he had meant something to her. He wrote her.

It went on like that. The show was on the road more than a year. In all that time Ed didn't see Janice. At Christmas she sent him a gold tie-clasp with his initials on it. Ed was sorry he hadn't sent her anything. But he began to think that maybe she liked him more than the average man she had a party with. It made him feel good. He did already feel very friendly towards Janice, but most of all he remembered the softness of her; the way she could soothe him.

He was called back to New York to take the assistant sales-manager's job for his firm. A big step up! There was a big raise with it. He got himself an apartment in Tudor City and he began to go around a lot.

Then Janice came back to New York and took herself a little place on West 77th. Ed went up to see her. She hadn't changed. Just as

big and blonde and quiet as ever. He stayed there with her that night and after that he saw a lot of her. Sometimes she was busy and Ed said nothing. He was a man of the world. He took it for granted that she had other friends and she was the sort of a girl who liked to make a man happy. He found himself thinking that of her, not with disgust, but admiringly. He took her to the theatre, and when he was a bit blue he would call her and take her to dinner. They didn't always pass the night together. They became good friends. When Ed first met Edna Blake he told Janice about her.

Right from the beginning Ed thought of marriage when he looked at Edna. She was young and dark, with a slim, cool figure. It took weeks before she even let him kiss her and then her lips were almost hard. But that was the nature of the girl—of any girl who was virginal. Gosh, Ed's father could have told him that. How could she know anything? She shouldn't.

Her eyes were dark and her coloring also. She could wear clothes like a whiz. Her father was dead and Edna lived with her mother on the east side of Madison Avenue. The old lady had known better times, but they didn't seem to bestarving. After about three months Ed proposed and he was accepted.

He told Janice. She said she was glad. But then Janice never made a fuss about anything. She was doing bits on the radio and now and then she'd get a split week in vaudeville in Newark or Philly. She didn't seem to expect to meet Edna and Ed didn't offer to have her. All Janice said when she kissed him was:

"Maybe, after a while you'll look me up. Let me hear from you, Ed. We've been good friends, haven't we?"

"You bet we have," Ed said. "I don't intend to lose track of you,

Jan. You've been my best friend. Maybe not just at present. I don't think Edna would understand, but we'll see one another."

There was such a difference between Edna and Janice. He'd been intimate with Janice the very first night he met her. He knew her type. And he knew Edna's too—he told himself. She was the girl a fellow was going to marry. She wore his ring and he took her to the theatre in evening clothes and to dinner at the Waldorf. Some nights they would sit in the Blake apartment and after the old lady had gone to bed they would talk. Ed would kiss her a little, but he didn't try anything more. He was content to wait.

Her friends gave her showers and his friends gave them parties. The wedding took place with ushers and bridesmaids and they went off on a honeymoon. Ed thought everything was perfectly all right. Edna was his wife. Wives weren't like girls one was free with. You sort of closed your eyes to sex when you were married to a young and virginal girl. You made love to her with a sort of apology, as if she was too decent to be — well, — ordinary, free, unrestrained. Edna gave herself to him quite willingly at first and Ed was intoxicated with her beauty. Her lack of response didn't matter. A man brought up as he was didn't believe in a wife acting like a mistress. It wasn't expected of her.

They came back to New York and took an apartment on West Thirtieth. Which is Chelsea. Ed worked hard and Edna played bridge and gave teas and they went out and had people in. He kept his nose to the grindstone and she always looked swell. They were used to one another by now and, although he kissed her each morning and night, Edna seemed to expect him to, he didn't often make love to her. Sometimes she wasn't feeling too well, and at

others she just didn't want to be fussed. But at other times she was pleasant enough. To Ed that was the regular way of married life.

He stood pretty well with C. J. Mayer, the boss. From assistant salesman, Ed became manager and then vice-president in charge of sales. He had a lot to do. C. J. came up and had dinner with them now and then and took them out. He was a divorced man with a son at Yale. A good-looking guy and pretty rich. But Ed was proud of how well Edna always looked when they went out with C. J. She was the social side of the family. He did the business.

Ed did work awful hard, and he hated to bring his problems to Edna. She never seemed to understand; and when he wanted comfort in her arms he was afraid she thought that all he felt was just desire.

That's how he came to see Janice again. Tired as anything one night when Edna was away with her mother, he called Jan. She didn't answer and he felt depressed. He called her the next week and she was in. Back from a week in Baltimore. He went up to see her the next free night and it was good to be there. He could be himself. He had a couple of drinks and told her all his troubles and she listened and nodded. They seemed to clear up when he talked them over. He kissed her good night. That was all. He didn't think it was fair to Edna to do more than that. But he admitted to himself that it would have been fun to stay. He said to himself, with what he thought was amazing broad-mindedness that the French were right, a man should have a mistress as well as a wife.

He got home before Edna came. She certainly looked grand as she got ready for bed. Ed lay in his twin bed and looked at her. She was prettier than Janice maybe, but in a different way. He wanted to take

her in his arms. He got up and came over to her and put his arms around her. Edna didn't move, but her face took on a sort of patient expression. Ed turned her about and kissed her. Then he kissed her harder and his hands went up to hold her more warmly. Edna said:

"Oh, don't do that, Ed."

He felt apologetic. "Sorry, honey, but you look so grand."

"I'm glad I do," Edna said, "I like to look well. It ought to make you proud."

"It does," Ed said, grinning. "But it also makes me sorta bothered."

Edna looked disgusted. "Don't talk like that. It's vulgar and common."

Ed said again, "Gee, I'm sorry."

He went back to his bed, and lay looking at her. He wanted her to come to him, but when she was ready Edna went over to her own bed, and turned off the light. Ed said, "Honey, may I come and kiss you good night?"

"Oh, please, Ed," Edna said. "I'm so tired. Running around with mother. You might have a little consideration."

"All right," Ed said. He always felt apologetic. He turned over on his side and he thought of Janice: Maybe he could go up and see her now and then. Of course it was different. Janice was a woman who knew men and was used to playing up to them. She wasn't a good, clean, innocent sort like Edna. You could expect things of her that you couldn't expect of some one like Edna.

So gradually he slipped into going to see Janice more and more. To being out of town; or being held up with a client until late. Edna didn't make any objections. And it was so soothing for him to spend an evening with Jan the way he had before. If he felt tired she just sat at his feet, or on the chair with him, pillowing his head against her soft shoulder and let him talk. Always things seemed to straighten out when he

discussed them with her. She didn't ever make any advances, but when he suddenly realized again and again the appeal of her warm, rounded body, she became as if a key had been turned,—eager, receptive, responsive.

He told himself it was because Janice satisfied the animal in him that he no longer cared that Edna seldom wanted any demonstrations of affection, and that he didn't mind. He could look at Edna and admire her and yet not feel that he wanted her. That, he was sure, was because Janice satisfied that part of him. The time went on and Ed realized suddenly that there were gray hairs in his head. They'd been married two years and they hadn't any children. Edna said she hadn't time for children. She was socially ambitious and always after him to do more and more.

He kept hard at work and when he got too tired even to think he would go up and see Janice. She hardly ever left New York now. Ed was glad of that. Glad too that he never had to meet any of her other friends. He told himself that he admired her for the way she kept her men from meeting one another. A good idea.

Edna went out a lot. Sometimes she stayed with her mother. Ed didn't object. He was too tired to go out. C. J. was putting all the work on him and often C. J. didn't show up for weeks. Ed didn't like that. He was the whole works, doing everything and C. J. wouldn't give him a bigger share of the stock, move into the chairmanship of the board and let Ed be the president. Ed talked that over with Janice, and she listened and then said:

"Maybe you'd better wait a while. It's not fair, but your hands are tied just now."

"Yes," Ed said. "They are,—aren't they?"

It was at the convention in Atlantic City that Ed got the offer from Simpson. Edna had gone down with him and he was proud of her. C. J. always wanted her on every party and she was bright and vivacious. She and C. J. got along swell and Ed thought that Edna would help him with C. J. He would have liked for Janice to have been there. In her quiet way she would have liked all the fun. He was sorry she wasn't just a friend of Edna's too, so that she could have been there. But he knew what Edna thought of women like Janice.

Simpson he had met before. A competitor. Not as big a firm as C. J. Mayer & Co., but older and sound as a dollar. Simpson said to him one night:

"Did you ever think of changing your firm, Coffroth?"

Ed looked at him. "Every man has," he said.

Simpson nodded. "You're pretty well up with Mayer. Has he given you a full partnership yet?" He caught Ed's look and said: "I wouldn't ask anything as personal as that if I didn't have a good reason." He looked at his cigar, a lean, dry New Englander. "If you become a partner I couldn't possibly offer you anything to compare. In fact, if you come with me, which is what I have in mind, you won't be getting as much, I'm sure, as you are with Mayer. I can offer you a full partnership on the basis of what we do now and what I expect to do. But frankly my expectations are based on what I know you've done and can do. You see?"

"Yes," Ed said. "Thanks a lot. But I do expect a partnership, and in that case——"

"Of course," Simpson said, "but think it over, anyhow. A smaller firm, a lot of hard work to do all over again that you've put behind you, but a free hand."

"Thanks," Ed said again and they went back to join the party. Edna was dancing with C. J. and Ed didn't get a chance to talk to either of them. He wished he could talk to Janice and on the spur of the moment he went out and called her Long Distance and told her. Janice listened and then said:

"Don't do anything yet, Ed. Sleep on it a while. It was nice of you to call me though."

"Hell," Ed said, surprised. "Who else have I ever talked things over with but you?"

He came back to New York with Edna and C. J. and was immediately immersed in work, but he gave the matter a lot of thought. He discussed it with Janice and then one evening went to dinner with C. J. and told him flatly.

"Simpson has offered me a partnership."

C. J. smiled and looked at him. "They do about one quarter of our volume, Ed. You'd be a fool."

"Maybe I would," Ed said. "The point is, where am I heading for with C. J. Mayer & Co.?"

"You never know," C. J. said. "You're getting fifteen thousand now. Tomorrow you'll be getting twenty." He smiled at Ed.

Ed shook his head, "I'd rather be getting ten as a full partner in the firm."

"And taking the risks," C. J. jeered. "If you go with Simpson you'll be lucky if you get ten, and you'll have all the risk on your head."

"But I'll be a partner," Ed said.

"I'm sorry, Ed," C. J. shrugged, "that's all I can offer you at present. Of course I don't want you to go. I'd be a fool to say I did. But I think at twenty thousand a year you'd be more sensible to stick with us than take your chances with Simpson. He's liable to fold any moment."

"Been going forty years," Ed said.

"More reason to watch out," C. J. said.

So Ed left it at that. "I'll let you know," he told C. J.

He had a few more conferences with Simpson and he took a sheaf of figures back with him to the office and pored over them. He talked it over with Janice and she said:

"Ed, I can't advise you. It's something you've got to decide for yourself. I refuse to take the responsibility of the decision. And I've never decided anything for you, anyhow. I've just listened while you've told me things, and then you've made the decision yourself."

"Yes," Ed said with a rueful smile, "but I don't seem to be able to make up my mind about this one."

"You will," Janice said and pulled his head back to rest against her soft bosom while her finger-tips gently massaged the graying temples.

He decided one day that he simply had to make up his mind. Simpson wanted his answer. He worked at the office all day and then called Edna and told her he wouldn't be home for dinner. She said that was all right since she was going out with her friend Mrs. Austen and she wouldn't be back until late either. Ed hung up and cleaned up his work. He called Janice and asked her would she have dinner with him. She said quickly:

"You sound so tired, Ed. Don't you think you'd better have dinner here? I'll get you a good steak and you can relax."

"That'll be swell," Ed said gratefully. He went into C. J.'s office and spoke to him and then said, "Well, I'm off."

"Simpson?" C. J. said with a grin and Ed nodded. He wasn't seeing Simpson, but there wasn't any harm in letting C. J. think so. Not that he appeared to care. There had been something in C. J.'s manner for quite a time that Ed didn't like at all.

He thought he had taken the papers with the figures with him. He meant to look them over. Because the decision had to be made. He knew he would be giving up a lot of cold cash in going in with Simpson. Perhaps it would be better to stay with C. J. and put away what he could. Though Edna needed a lot. She'd moved them to lower Fifth and wanted to move to Park. Lately though she had stopped bothering him about that.

Janice welcomed him in a blue house-dress and said:

"You make yourself comfortable, Ed. Put on your slippers. The evening paper's there. Dinner won't be ready for a hour."

Ed put an arm around her and squeezed her, absently but affectionately. She reached up and kissed his cheek. He went into the cheerful living-room and looked at the paper and then began to think about the matter of Simpson and C. J. He reached for his coat to take out the papers and realized he hadn't them. And he wanted them. There was one item he couldn't remember. So he went into the kitchen and said:

"Jan, I've forgot some papers at the office. Have I got time to get them? Half an hour?"

"Yes," Janice said. "I won't put the steak on until you come. And I can use the extra minutes to tidy up." She looked so flushed and pretty in the warm kitchen.

Ed took a cab and drove to the office. It was quiet and deserted that far downtown. The elevator man on duty took him up. A few office doors were lighted in his corridor. His own office was dark. He went in and was going to turn on the switch when he heard voices in C. J.'s office and saw a crack of light under the door. He thought nothing of it until he heard C. J. laugh and then a woman laugh as well. He grinned. C. J. wasn't an anchorite.



*Ed just stared at them*

But then his grin froze. That voice, speaking, was Edna's!

He wondered what she was doing there. Perhaps she'd come to call for him. Then he remembered he had told her he would be out and she had said something about going out too, with Mrs. Austen.

Ed went across the rug and pushed open the door. C. J.'s office was bright with mellow light and C. J. was at his desk and Edna was in his arms. Ed just stared at them. Stared at Edna, leaning back in C. J.'s arms, teasingly. Then she gave with a laugh and C. J. bent her back and

kissed her. Ed was surprised that he felt no emotion—none at all.

He closed the door and they turned. C. J.'s face got pasty. Edna's eyes darkened.

"You sneak!" she said.

Ed looked at her incuriously. Then he looked at C. J. He didn't need to be told. This wasn't just a flirtation—a few kisses. They'd been together. He could see it in C. J.'s face. Mayer was behind his desk. He said:

"Ed, listen. It's not what you think. There's nothing sordid about this."

Edna came and faced Ed. She said: "You might as well know. I'm going to get a divorce. I'm going to marry Charles. I made up my mind some time ago!"

Ed just stared at her. He could see it. C. J. and Park Avenue. She'd do anything to get on. That was all it meant to her. He turned and looked at C. J. and he felt sorry for him. He said:

"Don't be afraid. I'm not going to beat you up, you old fool. You can have her and welcome. What I want to tell you is that I've just made up my mind. I'm going in with Simpson." He turned to look at Edna. He could see the cruel lines about her nose. He wondered that he had ever thought her beautiful. In another five years the vinegar would be all on the surface. He said:

"You get your things out of the apartment. If you're there when I get back tomorrow I'll kick you right out on your face. And don't stay there tonight. You can use one of the hotels you and your Charlie have been hiding out in." He slammed the door behind him. When he got downstairs he realized he'd forgotten the papers again.

Janice had left the door on the latch for him. Ed went into the warm, homey place. The faint smell of cooking pie was tickling to his appetite. He didn't feel angry at all. He began to laugh. Then he frowned. Hell, where did Edna stack up against Jan? Why was she considered better? All right. Maybe she was virginal when he married her, but a woman who played about behind her husband's back.

"Ugh," he said. When Jan came out, all bright and blonde, with an apron over her blue dress, he looked

at her. "I'm going with Simpson," he said.

"That's fine!" Janice nodded.

"I'll tell you why," Ed said and told her. She stood, listening. Then she came to him:

"Oh, I'm sorry, Ed."

"But I'm not," Ed said. He looked down into her face. "Jan, where do I stand with you? I want to know. Maybe I've been cock-eyed a long time. I know you've been—been friendly with other men. Somehow that doesn't seem to matter. I——"

Janice looked up at him. "I'm a grown woman," she said, "I've got some intelligence. When I met you I knew I'd found what I wanted, even if I couldn't have it. But no man has touched me since I've known you, Ed. Not since that night I met you."

Ed nodded slowly. "I'm pretty dumb," he said. "I should have known. I guess I've loved you a long time an' never knew it to name it."

Janice smiled at him. "Do you know it now?"

"Yes," Ed said. "I know it now." He took her in his arms. She put her hands on his shoulders.

"Ed, I'm a woman. I love you and you're mine now." Her eyes were gray and wide. "I'd like to have a child of ours, Ed." She misunderstood the look that came into his face. "Maybe I'm selfish. But it's what I've dreamed of. And you don't have to marry me. That never bothered me. It doesn't now. You don't have to, you know."

Ed took her face between his hands. "Just you try and stop me," he said. "Just you or any one else."

They remained like that, their faces close, searching each other's eyes and then Janice sighed and slipped her arm in his.

"Come into the kitchen with me," she said quietly. "It's time I put the steak on."

# When You Come Back

By LOUISE LANE

NO one, looking in casually on this Long Island swimming party, would have suspected for a moment that she was the guest of honor and the fiancée of her hostess's brother, Joan thought bitterly. She might have been a shabby and unwanted country cousin for all the attention that was being paid her. Heartsick and miserable over the whole affair, she sat a little apart from the crowd gathered around Susi Merrill's luxuriously appointed pool, wishing fiercely that she'd never heard of Susi, never met her, and most certainly never accepted an invitation to visit her.

She looked across at her now. In a white rubber bathing-suit that revealed every curve of her small, seductive body, Susi was dancing languorously, gracefully, back and forth over the smooth tiled terrace in the arms of Greg Costain, her current innamorato. She was a little tight. She clung to Greg in frank abandon as they danced, one round white arm wound close around his neck, her eyelids drooping, her full red lips half parted in a sort of dreamy sensuousness of expression. Joan turned her head away uncomfortably as though she'd stumbled unawares upon a scene of too intimate revelation.

"You'll like Susi. She's a great kid, married to a great guy. They've got a swell place out on the Sound where the gang hangs out in summer. I can't wait for you to see it," Toby had said three months ago down in Bermuda where they had met during

an enchanted April that seemed, in retrospect tonight, to have happened in some other lifetime.

Bermuda. Soft tropic winds, redolent of salt and palms and roses; bland wash of moonlight on white coral beaches; stars clustering, warm and golden, in a sweep of dark blue skies. There is no place in all the world more conducive to romance, no place where emotions flower more swiftly than on that island of perennial springtime.

They had met, Toby and she, near the end of the tourist season when most of the gayer element had departed and the big hotels were beginning to close up for their summer hibernation. Toby had gone down to recuperate from an attack of influenza, and she had been staying with her aunt, an Englishwoman who owned a charming cottage in Paget.

They'd fallen in love almost at once. Toby had seemed so sweet, so tender, the answer to all she'd ever wanted from life. She had thought herself the happiest, most fortunate girl in the world when he had asked her to marry him. Their engagement had been announced two weeks ago and they were to be married in October. Immediately after the formal announcement, Susi had written her a cordial enough note, asking her to visit them and to meet Toby's "hoodlum family and friends," as she called them.

She'd never had a sister of her own, and she'd thought warmly that it would be lovely to share one with Toby. But that dream had been shat-

tered abruptly from the moment of her meeting with Susi. Between them, in the past two days, there had sprung up one of those blind, senseless antagonisms which exist occasionally between women of widely dissimilar tastes and interests. Not that Susi was openly rude or hostile, she was much too clever for that. She worked by innuendo, by eloquence of lifted brows, by certain nuances of tone. . . . "Joan's so quiet. Toby'll have to learn the art of settling down." . . . "Isn't it amusing that Joan doesn't drink? If she weren't so pretty, we'd accuse her of being provincial!" . . . "Are we shocking you, darling? So sorry!" Slyly, lightly, digging in her little seeds of spite.

At first, Joan had been baffled and bewildered by an attitude of mind which seemed to defy analysis. She knew that she did not fit in this liquor-drinking, sensation-loving bunch of so called sophisticates. She knew that Susi did not like her, that she thought her a totally unsuitable match for Toby, but she had not understood the real cause of her resentment until the night before when she had overheard Susi in conversation with Toby on the terrace beneath her window.

"This house party's dying on its feet, Toby. We'll simply have to do something to liven it up. Let's summon Cinda."

"Aw, Susi, better not!"

"And why not, for heaven's sake? Cinda's amusing enough to make any party go, besides being my best friend, which you seem to have forgotten." Her voice had been edged with challenge.

"All right, all right then, go ahead, but you know how things are. It's all off between Cinda and me."

"More's the pity," Susi had said cuttingly.

"We won't go into that," Toby's voice had been a little sulky, as

though the subject was one of long contention between them.

"To have had a grand girl like Cinda, money, looks, everything, and then to've gone off and fallen for a little English church mouse! Somebody ought to examine your head, Toby Starr!" Susi's voice had trailed off in angry exasperation.

"Oh, for God's sake, pipe down! I'm sick of your crabbing." Joan had heard the scrape of his chair as Toby had flung himself away.

He had told her in the beginning a little about Cinda. "There's a girl at home I'm supposed to be crazy about. One of Susi's pals. Nothing definite, y'understand. Anyway, nothing for you to worry that curly head of yours about. Cinda's a keen number, but she's not little and sweet and cuddly like my baby!"

At the time, safe in the vantage of Toby's arms, she'd thought of that unknown Cinda with a vague pity. Poor girl, to have known Toby's love and then to have lost it! But the moment she'd seen her, climbing out of her yellow sports roadster on the driveway that morning, surrounded by more luggage for a casual weekend house-party than most people take on a cruise to Europe, she'd known that her pity had been wasted. Cinda Hunter wasn't the type with whom the word pity is ever associated. She was a thin, excessively smart-looking girl; the kind who manages to look as glamorous in a pair of slacks and a sweat shirt as in a Paris frock. She had a quick tongue, a witty turn of speech, and a way of making scandalously ribald remarks out of the corners of her flexible scarlet mouth. At luncheon, she had deliberately excluded Joan from the conversation, steering it insolently into channels of her own choosing.

"Toby, darling, remember the time you were tight at Placid and tried to go skiing?" "Oh, will any of you

ever forget the time Toby and I came home on the milkman's wagon?" Susi, bright eyed and malicious, at one end of the table, had encouraged Cinda delightedly. Toby, flushed with wine and flattery, had been apparently oblivious of the insult.

At the far end of the pool, Cinda sat beside Toby now, smoking a cigarette in a white jade holder. Her long legs which were a poem of perfection, dangled carelessly in the water. Everything about her matched. Black and white and scarlet was her color scheme. Black hair, white skin, long, scarlet-tipped fingers, brief, backless scarlet suit and twisted white bandana completed an ensemble which was as daring as it was effective.

Toby, beside her, looked blond and immense. His splendid body, bared to the waist, was clad only in a pair of Lido trunks. The muscles of his arms and shoulders rippled sleekly as he swung a cocktail shaker to and fro with rhythmic grace. He was laughing at something Cinda was saying to him. His teeth looked very white against his sun bronzed skin. He looked up, caught Joan's eyes upon him, waved a careless hand:

"Hi, baby, want a drink?"

She shook her head, smiled a smile of which she was not very certain. Cinda drawled sweetly:

"Why, Toby, asking that of the pure in heart?"

There was a burst of laughter. Joan felt her face grow hot with embarrassment. Toby called out a little sharply:

"Loosen up, kid. Get in the spirit of the thing!"

"Thash it. Get in the sphrish of the thing," mumbled Howard Merrill, Susi's big blond stockbroker husband. He lay, sprawled out full length upon one side of the terrace, his head in the lap of a girl whose name Joan had not caught. He lifted an unsteady hand, touched her brown leg. "Um!"

he said happily. She let out a little half-squeal of protest, the kind without much conviction behind it.

"Attaboy, Howard, that's the stuff!" cheered Toby. He turned, gave Joan a brief, appraising glance, made a motion to rise—then, Cinda's white hand was on his arm:

"Race you to the end of the pool, big boy!"

"Come on, kid."

Joan looked away from them, her heart heavy with unhappiness. This pert, wise-cracking, half-naked Toby, this Toby who drank too much, who was capable of rudeness and neglect, wasn't her Toby of starlit Bermuda nights, that Toby to whom she'd given herself on the night before he sailed back to New York.

Here in this rowdy, half-drunken crowd, it was hard to recapture the shining quality of a night which had seemed at the time wholly justified in its passionate fulfilment. Still, she had only to close her eyes to smell the fragrance of oleanders and the pungent clarity of cedars which crowned the hillside where they'd sat, listening to the surf pounding on the rocks below. There had been a moon, obscured now and then by fleecy drifting clouds. There had been a sense of exquisite pain in both their hearts at the imminence of separation, a feeling that the moments going past were like grains of sand slipping through their fingers, infinitely precious, infinitely fleeting. Toby's lips had been a sweet fire on hers, his arms had strained her heavenly close.

"If I could only have you now!" he'd groaned.

Like a flame fanned by a wind, passion rose in their hearts, beat in their bodies, throbbed in their quivering pulses.

"Joan, Joan, why do we have to wait? Let me love you now! I want you—so, honey. I want you—now!" Toby had whispered huskily, eagerly.

The moon went under a cloud, dark-

ness closed, warm and thick, over the hillside. And then, his wild kisses on her lips, his warmth, his nearness, their aching need of each other crying out for fulfilment, had blurred all sense of right and wrong, of good and evil. There'd been only love and starlight, and a strange, sweet, thrilling ecstasy that beat like a living heart in the soft spring night.

Somehow, in spite of all Toby's tenderness that night, his protestations of undying love, she'd never quite lost the little stinging sense of shame that comes to a girl who has given herself without benefit of clergy. It had, therefore, been dismaying, devastating, to discover that Toby apparently expected them to resume relations exactly where they'd left off in Bermuda! She thought now of his half-amused, half-truculent remonstrances in the garden two nights ago:

"Aw, come on, Joan, be sweet! Don't be a little frigidaire!"

But she'd shoved away his insistent, seeking hands, turned her mouth away from his too eager kisses, beat down the flame between them.

"No, no, Toby! Just because we lost our heads once doesn't mean that we mustn't keep them now! Wait, darling—wait until October when we will really belong to each other!"

"You're a queer one!" He'd lit a cigarette, laughed without much amusement in his voice.

Oh, it had hurt, hurt like the ache of a burn to realize that Toby did not understand. Was it only for her body that he loved her? For the warmth and softness of her arms, for the fires kindled by her kisses. Surely, love was more than this—a thing imprisoned in the flesh! Her heart was troubled whenever she looked at Toby now.

"Well, you and I seem to be about the soberest people at this party, and the only two who haven't been introduced!"

Startled, Joan lifted her head to meet the amused, quizzical smile of a tall man who had come up directly behind her. He was wearing a bathing-suit, recently donned, she thought, noticing it had not been dampened by water.

He said whimsically: "It's really all right to speak to me, you know. I'm Bob Monroe and a friend of Howard's. I'm a little late getting here, but I'm a week-end guest."

She said: "And I'm Joan Buckley. I'm staying here, too."

He said: "Of course. You're Toby's girl, aren't you? I've heard about you. I might have guessed Toby would pick a winner. I haven't had a chance to congratulate him yet, but I certainly want to do it now. He deserves it!"

He was older than most of the crowd. Howard's age rather than Toby's, she thought fleetingly. Not good-looking. Attractive though. Easy and sure and competent-looking. His eyes were very blue and merry in the brownness of his face, and his mouth suggested humor and kindness as well as steadiness of purpose. He sat down beside her, waved a greeting to Susi who called out to him.

"'Lo, Bob. Grand you're here. Have a drink or sumpin!" She lifted a glass uncertainly in his direction.

"Quite a party, isn't it?" he said, grinning a little as he turned back to Joan.

"Quite!" Joan's chin trembled absurdly. He must have noticed it, for he said quickly and lightly: "I'm glad you've stayed sober so I'll have somebody to talk to. It's too hot a night for necking, if you ask me!"

She felt a warm little glory of gratitude for his tact. He didn't say: "You poor kid, it's a shame you're being neglected!" Instead, he saw to it that she wasn't any more. He drew her out by skillful questioning, by talk of England and Bermuda, both

of which he knew well. He talked smoothly and impersonally of a dozen different things and succeeded in diverting her mind from its troubling thoughts.

He said suddenly: "Do you know what? I like you, little Joan. Toby's a lucky guy. Now, let's take a swim, shall we?"

They swam the length of the pool together and then pulled themselves up on the ledge at the far end for a smoke. The party had grown gayer now, more abandoned. Couples lay sprawled about on both sides of the terrace in frankly amorous embrace. Blue and silver lights, simulating moonlight, played across the water. Somebody called out loudly: "Why the lights? It's too damn bright around here, a fella hasn't got a chance!"

Laughter. An obscene remark. Then, Howard got up and swayed unsteadily toward a switch on a nearby tree. The scene darkened abruptly. There was only the uncertain glimmer of a young half-moon and the reflection of lights from the big house a few hundred feet away.

Bob said in amused exasperation: "Oh, for Pete's sake! Now watch 'em get hot!"

There were shrieks, squeals, Susi's high laughter, the tinkle of ice in a cocktail shaker, the splash of water, the sound of shuffling feet, of whispering voices.

"Hi, kid, you still here?"

In the dimness, Joan made out Toby's form groping his way along the terrace.

"Here, Toby," she turned her head to greet him.

"Hello, Toby, how's the boy?"

"Who's zat? Oh, ole Bob! Looking after my girl, were you, keed?" He flung himself down on the tiles, slid a possessive arm around Joan's shoulders. He said: "Havin' fun, baby?"

"Yes!" Joan moved a little away

from him. His hot breath reeked unpleasantly of liquor, of stale cigarettes. He said: "Swell party, eh, Bob?"

"Swell," said Bob. He lit a cigarette. His face showed up in the brief spurt of flame, controlled, inscrutable.

Toby rose with a sudden abruptness, pulled Joan to her feet.

"Come on, sweetness. Everybody 'round here's goin' in for lovin' in a big way tonight. Let's you and me take a walk!"

"No, I'd rather stay here, Toby. Let's sit and talk," she said persuasively. His hand tightened around her wrist.

"Come on, baby, don't be that way! Don't spoil my party!"

"Don't go if you don't want to, Joan!" Bob Monroe spoke quietly.

"What the hell've you got to do with it?" Toby turned belligerently.

Joan said quickly: "Never mind, I'll go, Toby."

He half led, half dragged her down the steps, across a lawn heavy with dew and darkness, until they came to a deserted summer-house some distance away from the pool. Vines, thickly tangled, hung over its entrance. Massed clumps of shrubbery partially obscured it from view.

"What luck!" Toby chuckled gleefully.

"Let's sit outside, Toby," Joan said uneasily. "It's—it's so dark in there."

"Not a chance!" He lifted her off her feet, carried her over the threshold. An overhanging branch scratched her cheek. She could feel his heart thudding heavily against her breast, hear his uneven breathing. He found a rustic bench, pulled her down into his lap. His mouth came down hurtlingly hard upon hers, his arms crushed her closer, took away her breath. "Lil' funny Joan, now I've got you where I want you!" he muttered unsteadily.

"Don't please, Toby, you're hurt-

ing me!" She strained away from him desperately.

"Whassa matter with you? Aren't we engaged? Haven't I got any rights around here?"

Joan said shakily: "Not the right to maul me in private and neglect me in public."

This seemed to amuse him. "Jealous, baby, aren't you? Come here to papa!" He pulled her back into his arms, then, kissed her in a sort of rising, savage fervor. His hands, hot and seeking, caressed her body; his lips buried themselves in the soft flesh of her shoulders, in the hollow between her breasts.

"No, no, Toby!" She struggled like a wild thing caught in a trap, beat against his bare chest with her one free hand.

"Yes, I say." His voice was thick, unnatural. "Be *still*, can't you?" He was panting like an animal now, inflamed by desire. There was no tenderness, no beauty in this moment. Only passion, base and naked. Suddenly, she grew frightened, hysterical. The heavy darkness like a jungle closing in, his hard breathing, his utter ruthlessness awoke a sort of sick terror in her soul. Something snapped in her brain. She drew back, struck him full across the face with all her strength. Furious, thwarted, he let her go.

"Why, you hit me! You hit me, you little devil you!" he stammered.

She was trembling like an aspen leaf as she drew away from him to the end of the bench. She said miserably:

"I'm sorry I had to do that, Toby, but you're not yourself tonight. Tomorrow, you'll be sorry."

He said angrily: "Tomorrow, you'll be the one to be sorry. No girl ever hit me before and no girl's goin' to get away with it." He got to his feet, swaying a little. He said sullenly: "Might as well go back, I guess. No use staying here!"

Silently, picking her way with difficulty, she followed him across the grass. He strode ahead of her, lurching uncertainly. Her heart was sick with shame and misery. Shame for Toby and misery for herself. They seemed to have traveled such a long way, he and she, from those shining Bermuda nights, that pure young ecstasy. Was the way back too far to find, too lost in tangled briars of misunderstanding? Joan did not know, and her throat ached with tears unshed.

A blue spotlight played upon the terrace. Music from a portable victrola blared out into the night. A rhumba tune, primitive, insistent, relentless in its rhythm. Somebody was dancing alone. Somebody with a slim white body, nude to the waist, and shining black hair that fell around her thin, mocking face. Somebody who swayed with the grace of a flower on its stalk or a flame in the wind. Cinda!

"God!" said Toby very softly. Joan turned her head slowly to look at him. His eyes were glazed, intent on Cinda's swaying body. He wet his lips nervously, shifted uneasily on his feet. In a sickening wave of comprehension, it came to her then, suddenly, sharply, as such things do.

"Why, Toby and Cinda have belonged to each other. He's had her, known her, just as he's had me!"

Wilder and wilder beat the music. Like a storm rising at sea, like a tomtom beating in a jungle, emotions rose and beat with its rhythm. Cinda was dancing now with reckless abandon, sensuously, insinuatingly, swaying and dipping in the spotlight.

Joan heard Toby's breathing quicken sharply. Then, with a muttered, wordless excuse, he pushed her abruptly aside, shoved his way through the crowd. Cinda saw him coming. She flung back her head, laughed as she danced away from him, challenging, provocative, elusive. He

caught up with her, dragged her back into his arms. Deliberately, he bent her body back, laid his lips on the long white column of her throat. Her arms went around his neck. Laughing, she relaxed like a limp rag doll against him. He lifted his head. Their lips met in a long, clinging kiss, passionate, unashamed.

The record clicked to a stop. The spotlight wavered, went out. Somebody laughed self-consciously. Somebody said:

"Whew! Where're the drinks? Turn on those lights!"

Joan felt a hand on her arm, turned to meet Bob Monroe's quiet gaze. "Toby's tight, Joan. That's all there is to that. Don't feel too badly."

She said dazedly: "It doesn't matter. It's—it's quite all right, really."

She thought in scattered confusion: "This isn't real. It's like a scene from a dirty play, but it will be over soon," and found comfort in the thought. Tomorrow, Toby would be himself again, sane and sweet and normal. Why, Toby was like a small boy, showing off, strutting his stuff. "I'll make you sorry," he had said. That was all he was tonight, a sullen little boy, making her sorry in the only way he knew. The icy band around her heart thawed a little. She turned back to Bob Monroe, managed to smile.

"You're awfully good to bother about me," she said gratefully. "I'm going to slip up to bed now though. Nobody'll miss me, and I *am* a little tired."

He said. "Do that. This darn racket'll probably keep up until morning. I'm going to turn in myself, pretty soon. Good night, Joan. See you in the morning."

She tossed fitfully, uneasily on her bed through all that night. Once she thought she heard Toby's voice saying her name. Cars seemed to be coming and going continuously upon the driveway. Crunch of tires on

gravel, shrieks of drunken laughter rose with maddening distinctness up to her ears. Finally, she covered her head with a pillow and dozed off into a restless slumber.

The clock on the bedside table pointed to ten when she woke at last. She got up, took a shower, and dressed in a green linen frock. Fastening the belt, she remembered that Toby liked her in green, that it was his favorite color. Toby! A wave of tenderness, the kind a mother feels for a naughty child, swept through her then. She must be very casual, very light with him today. He'd have a hangover probably; he'd be cross, irritable, and he'd want to get away from the crowd, to be alone with her. She went down the stairs, humming a soft little wordless tune. Bob Monroe sat smoking alone upon the south terrace, a morning paper in his hand. He got up at her approach, said cheerily:

"Hello, early bird, you're just in time for breakfast with me. I think I smell food coming now!" A smiling maid appeared, wheeling a wagon laden with silver-covered dishes. Bob said: "Gee, that looks swell! I'm hungry as a bear. How about you, Joan?"

They were idling over coffee and cigarettes, pleasantly relaxed, when suddenly she heard her name called in a quick, demanding voice.

"Joan, Joan, where are you? I want you!"

"Here, outside!"

Susi, in a pair of black and red pyjamas, her blonde head tousled, her blue eyes blazing with excitement, came rushing through the doorway.

"Joan, Bob! "Oh, thank the Lord I've found you! The most *appalling* thing has happened!" She paused dramatically, her hand on her heart, her little pointed breasts rising and falling hurriedly. "I don't know *what* to do! Such a position to be placed in!"

Bob said sharply: "Stop talking in

circles, Susi! Tell us what's the matter!"

"It's Toby and Cinda, they've eloped! They've just telephoned, woke me out of a sound sleep, too. Oh, dear God, what are we to do?"

The cup in Joan's hand crashed unheeded to the floor. Susi's face, Bob's face, the garden, the yellow morning sunlight blurred and shimmered suddenly. The world rocked sickeningly. And then, she felt a hand, a big warm hand, close over hers.

"Steady, kid," said Bob quietly.

Susi's high excited voice flowed on and on. "They drove off together last night in Cinda's roadster, tight as ticks. Nobody paid much attention to them—we were all a little high. . . . Toby's always been crazy about her. . . . Oh, dear, the papers, the talk, and *you!* Joan, poor girl!" Her eyes, bright with curiosity, swept over Joan's shrinking self like a searchlight.

Bob stood up abruptly. "I think it would be easier and less embarrassing all around if I drove Joan back into town before the gang gets up. She won't want to play questions and answers this morning." He touched her shoulder gently. "Okay, Joan?"

Joan said dully: "I'll get my things."

Susi trailed her upstairs, perched herself on one end of the bed while Joan packed. Her eyes gleamed with a sort of malicious triumph as she watched Joan folding things, putting them away carefully. She said cat-tily:

"It seems to me you're taking it pretty calmly, Joan. No tears, no hysterics. You can't be minding it so much!"

Joan said: "Please, please, Susi!"

Somehow, they got away, and the nose of Bob's car was turned toward the city. He drove swiftly, silently, his sunburned hands easy on the wheel, his blue eyes narrowed and intent. Joan crouched down in one

corner of the leather seat, too miserable for speech.

He said as they crossed the bridge: "Where do you want to go, Joan?"

She named a small hotel in the East Fifties where she had stayed on other occasions.

"Okay." He turned east.

He drew the car up to the curb, switched off the ignition, and waved away the doorman who started toward them. He said:

"I want to talk to you, Joan, like a Dutch uncle whatever that's supposed to be." He leaned back, his mouth incisive, his eyes unsmiling. He went on slowly: "I suppose you've just had about the most humiliating experience that can come to a girl. Now, you can do one of two things: run away and hide somewhere or stay and take it on the chin. Toby's pretty well-known around town and Cinda's always good for front page news, so the next few days and weeks aren't going to be any picnic for you whatever you do."

She said: "I know." Her hands twisted the leather strap of her bag. Her heart cried out like a lost and bewildered child: "Toby, Toby, how could you?"

Bob said, looking out at the traffic going past: "When Toby sobers up, he's going to feel rotten over this. I'm willing to bet money those two won't last six months together. They're too much alike. Personally, I think you got a break, but I know that's not much comfort to you now when you're all raw wound and ache." He turned a little, smiled down at her. "Well, how about it, little Joan? Will you stick around here and let Uncle Bob look after you, keep you from being lonely, or are you running away?"

Something he'd said echoed back in her mind, ticked on like a clock. "Those two won't last six months together." She thought: Toby'll come back, want me, need me! He didn't



*"It's Toby and Cinda—they've eloped!"*

know what he was doing last night. It's me he loves, not Cinda. Toby, Toby! She turned slowly: "I'm staying, Bob!"

He touched her gloved hand lightly. "That's the girl."

The evening papers carried the story, prominently featured. Somehow or other, they had got hold of a

picture of Joan, a snapshot taken in Bermuda. Susi must have given it to them. There were pictures of Toby and innumerable poses of Cinda, lovely and arrogant on horseback, on the tennis court, in evening frocks. Reporters besieged Joan for statements, camped in the lobby, hung on her telephone. Bob Monroe

disposed of most of them briefly and efficiently. His broad shoulders shielded her from much unpleasant notoriety, from the sort of pink-sheeted publicity which she could never have evaded alone. Easy, tactful, impersonal, he stood between her and the morbidly curious in those first difficult days after the news broke.

"Why are you doing this for me, Bob, a girl you scarcely know?" she asked him one night wonderingly.

"Because you've got brown eyes, because you've got curly hair—maybe, because I like you a little," he had answered her teasingly.

So, kindly, unobtrusively, he smoothed the way for her in so far as it lay in his power to do; but all his kindness, all his tact could not wholly dull the ache in her heart, or ease the smarting sense of shame which bit like acid into her pride. Wherever she went, she felt as if jeering fingers pointed at her back, mocking voices whispered:

"There she goes—the girl Toby Starr jilted!" Jilted! It was as if the word were branded on her soul, lettered on her forehead.

"Does one never get well of this sort of thing?" she would wonder despairingly, lying awake through long summer nights while heat waves broke and sizzled over the city. Toby was cruising Canadian waters now. Toby was sleeping with Cinda's dark hair spread fan-like across his pillow. Did he think of her sometimes, remember her with regret, with shame, with poignant yearning? Or didn't he care at all? Questions, endless and unanswerable, turned ever in her heart.

Days piled up, multiplied, became weeks. She met new people, went places. Country inns where she dined on red bricked terraces and little fugitive breezes blew from off the river. Roof gardens where, in summer chiffons and pastel colored slip-

pers, she danced to current tunes. She bought new clothes, learned to do her hair a more becoming way—brushed back from her face, little brown curls piled high upon her head. She affected a brighter shade of lipstick, a new brand of perfume. Bob said casually one night:

"You're getting to be a darn good-looking girl, Joan. When Toby comes back, he'll get an eyeful!"

"When Toby comes back!" That was the rhythm to which the world was keyed, to which her whole life beat. Beyond that, she did not, could not think or plan!

August went past. September slipped in. Cooler days and nights now. People drifting back to town from summer holidays. A smell of autumn in the air. Fall clothes appearing in shop windows. A quickened sense of anticipation, of something-about-to-happen just around the corner.

Then—it happened.

Dining one night with Bob upon a hotel roof in a flowered chiffon that was her most becoming frock, laughing with him over some small absurdity, she glanced up from her plate and then, her very heart stopped beating as though giant hands had squeezed it of its life. Coming down the long space, between the rows of little tables, guided by an obsequious head waiter, were the two people in the world whom she wanted most, yet dreaded most to see—Cinda and Toby! Cinda, looking cool, looking poised, smartly turned out in a new exotic print; Toby, big, blond, handsome as ever in conventional black and white. They were coming toward them! They were pausing! Bob rose, smiling, napkin in hand.

"Hello, you two! Swell you're back. I think you both know Joan!"

Something, mockingly elusive, flickered across Cinda's scarlet mouth. She held out a long, slim hand.

"Rather! How are you, Joan?"

Toby said: "How's the girl?" His voice was blustering, too hearty. A dull brick-red tide of color rose from beneath his collar, stained his face.

Joan found her voice, cool, steady. "It's very lovely to see you both again. Won't you sit down?"

They sat down. More food came. More champagne. Conversation was general, trivial. Bob sat, easy and affable, guiding it lightly, lifting it when it lagged. Joan thought confusedly: Toby's here, after all these weeks! If I put out my hand, I can touch him. He's just the same!

But he wasn't the same. He'd put on weight. There were little pouches beneath his eyes where self-indulgence and too many good times had left their marks. His mouth was looser, weaker somehow. He had a sort of swaggering gayety, the kind that talks too much and laughs too loud. Cinda's red mouth was petulant, not happy. . . . Bob said:

"Dance with me, Cinda?"

They got up, moved off together across the floor. Joan's eyes followed them slowly. She thought: Silly to mind the way Cinda's hand looks against Bob's arm. Absurd to notice it!

Beneath the table, Toby's foot found hers, pressed it meaningly. Her eyes came back to his face.

He said: "Oh, God, kid, why did I do it?"

She took a sip of water, was briefly thankful for the steadiness of her hands.

"I wouldn't know about that, Toby. That's your business."

"I was tight, you'd made me sore, and it seemed like a good way to get even with you. I didn't know what I was doing."

"It doesn't matter now, Toby!" she said indifferently.

He pushed aside his glass abruptly, leaned over, arms on the table.

"It matters like hell to me, baby.

Cinda and I aren't clicking. We'll be washed up before winter. Joan, Joan, you're lovelier than ever! I wish I could hold you, kiss you, love you tonight!" His voice thickened suddenly, his eyes warmed, grew ardent.

Joan sat very still, looking back at him long and levelly. She looked at him as if she'd never seen him before, and she thought: Strange how love can go, how one can be freed in a moment from all the things that held one chained, from hopes and doubts and fears. Strange and wonderful!

His voice went on and on, saying things that held no meaning, no interest anymore. Excuses, expostulations, complaints. And she thought of another voice that never dragged or was dull, of a wit that was keen, but never cutting, of a man who could stand alone or lift others to the level of his strength. Her heart stirred like a nascent bud, aware of the full green sweetness of spring.

Cinda and Bob came back to the table. Cinda said sweetly: "Reminiscing?" Toby scowled at her. His face went sullen, secret, like an angry little boy's. Cinda shrugged her shoulders, stared at them insolently, then brightened her mouth carefully with lipstick.

Joan wanted to laugh. She wanted to sing. Nothing that they said or did could hurt her any more. Gone with a summer's going were the things she'd believed important. She thought: Cinda and Toby. Toby and me. She took him away from me once. I could take him away from her now! It made a silly, senseless pattern. Over their heads, she met Bob's smiling eyes.

The evening wore on, came at last to a close. They said their somewhat strained good nights upon the pavement, reiterating polite promises to "call each other soon"; and then she and Bob were alone.

He said: "Let's take a ride through the Park, shall we? It's early yet."

The park was deep and cool, like a tarn sunk in the city's heart. In the shadow of a tree, beside a small dark lake, Bob stopped the car. He leaned forward, one arm against the back of the leather seat behind her, not quite touching her dress. He said:

"Well, your big moment's come and gone. You've seen him. How do you feel?"

She drew a long breath. She said: "How does a bird feel that's let out of its cage, or a prisoner released from prison?"

Bob's voice was a little unsteady. "Do you mean that, Joan? Do you mean you've stopped loving him?"

She said: "I never loved him really. Somebody else did—somebody who got confused by too much moonlight and love-making. I came to my senses there all of a sudden tonight at the table seeing him, listening to him, and I thought: Suppose I had to spend the rest of my life with him. Why, I couldn't bear it!"

The lean, dark face bending over hers was lit with laughing tenderness. "So," he said. "I win my bet."

"Your bet?"

"A little private bet I made with myself. I bet you'd come to when you got another look at that guy. That's why I asked them there tonight. They didn't just happen along. I ran into Toby at the club the other day and told him I had a swell new girl I wanted him to meet. I told him we were going to that roof tonight and suggested that he and Cinda come along and make a foursome. He fell for the idea like a ton of bricks!" Bob chuckled softly. "He didn't know what I was gambling on. Little did he know!"

Joan's heart began to flutter exquisitely. She said: "And what were you gambling on, Bob?"

His arm came down around her

shoulders then lightly, caressingly. He said: "Can't you guess? Don't you know you've been tops with me ever since the night I met you? I knew then that you were too good for Toby, that you'd outgrow him some day. Then, when he married Cinda, your pride was so hurt that you couldn't see things in their right perspective; but I kept hoping you would. That's why I've hung around all summer. I wanted to be on deck when you saw him again. I knew you'd either get worse or be cured!" He leaned nearer, his arm tightening its hold. "Sweet, I'm not good enough for you either, nobody is, but I love you, want you to marry me!"

Somewhere out of heaven, a clear bell chimed and the far stars sang. Life, warm and throbbing and sweet, surged up in her veins. She lifted her bare arms to his neck, pulled his head to hers.

"Oh, Bob, Bob, I love you, too. I've loved you all along, only I didn't know it until tonight!"

Then, and then, in the moment before his lips came down on hers, she remembered another night, a starlit tropical night, and other arms that had held her. Pain stabbed her dully like an old rusty sword. She drew away from the warm circle of Bob's embrace, put both hands against his chest, holding him off. "Wait, darling. There's something I have to tell you. Down in Bermuda——"

But he stopped her with his finger on her lips, pulled her back into his arms. He said:

"My dearest, I knew that long ago. Toby told me once when he was tight, the rat! It isn't important. I don't care what you've done. The lovely, poised person you are now will never get confused again, I know. Don't look back, sweetheart. Look ahead with me; or rather, look up at me now!"

Then, the sweet fire of his kiss shut out the world.

# The Tule Fog

By PEGGY TRUE

THE night was not made for romance. The air was portentous with a thin scud of mist. Harbinger of one of those treacherous Tule fogs . . . Vivie McCaskie wished now, as she settled down in the big Cad, she had brought her coat, the tricky little black velvet jacket with big puff sleeves. You would never dream it had been made out of what, until she, Vivie, had coveted it, had been her sister Jenny's best dress.

But then, Jen, good old Jen—her sister was all of nineteen—had no need of good clothes. She never went any place any more. Hadn't since she split up with Mark Tanner.

Gosh, wasn't it a kick the way she, Vivie, had grabbed that big palooka right out from under Jen's nose, played around with him for a while, and then discarded him as carelessly as she stepped out of her dainty scanties at night? She had never really wanted him. He was her idea of a heel. A truck driver! She just did it to prove she possessed sex appeal and personality plus. A girl has got to guard against complexes and inhibitions and all that old scientific hooley.

Not that it was imperative to prove her charm. She was only sixteen, and the beauty of the family. She was destined, to use her mother's mid-Victorian phrase, to be a lady, marry wealth. Hadn't this been drummed into her little shell-tinted ears ever since those glorious blonde curls of hers showed a natural tendency to kink up in the most ador-

able little tendrils and curly-cues that ever turned a human head into a riot of "sun-kist" beauty?

Vivie should never become a drudge, the mother had declared. Vivie was going to be somebody. She was to have a secretarial education if they could ever scrape enough money together to pay for a course in the most select business college in Oakland—and since Jenny had become forelady of the packing-room at the candy factory she had contributed largely to the general fund. A hundred and fifty dollars to make a lady out of Vivie! They only needed fifty more. The miracle accomplished, Vivie was to marry a millionaire's son. With her almost breath-taking beauty it surely was in the bag.

This was the sum and substance of the McCaskie dream. And the conceit of Vivie had been fed on this absurd pap until the vain little peacock believed the phantasy herself. Sure, she was fearfully and wonderfully made! She admitted it. No man could resist her. She had but lately met the millionaire's son, over at the Paradise Gardens, that perfectly ducky place that Ma, in her old-fashioned prejudice called a "den of iniquity" and a "hell-hole." Of course, she was not sure he was a scion of millions, but he represented wealth. It was written all over him; clean-cut, tailored, groomed, manicured nails and white hands! True, he was a bit puffy under the eyes and there was a hint of jowls, but weren't all wealthy playboys a bit

jowly and thick about the middle? Anyway, he was class, and darned good looking at that. She decided to drag a proposal of marriage outa him before the night was over, or else—

Golly, the night was almost over already. It had been two hours since they left the Paradise Gardens and had been cruising around in this spiffy car ever since. He hadn't proposed, but he certainly had pawed and necked her! It certainly was time that *something* was happening. Maybe she hadn't given him the right line. Men don't like girls to be too elemental. They go for the shy, demure ones in a big way. She'd try that.

She leaned back languidly against the seat, folded her exquisite little hands that had never known the dish-pan, smiled a demure, tired little smile, and looked up at him out of eyes suddenly angelic from beneath long lashes.

But the young man was becoming a bit bored with it all, with her poses. He, too, thought it was about time something definite shaped up. This little teaser and thrill-chaser had him pretty heady. A luscious little wench, at that, whose adolescent contours suggested delightful possibilities for philandering. Vulgar and impossible, of course, this little rough-neck from down by the gas-house, but exquisitely lovely. A man can't expect everything. You seldom find culture and refinement and restraint and all that sort of thing in a public dance hall. He wondered just how old she really was. Jail bait, no doubt.

Damn that chill! A fog must be coming up. The air was filled with mist. He wished he had brought his coat. Oh, well, this little hot tamale would add heat to the situation. He leaned over, drew her to him.

"Where to now, enchantress?" he asked.

"Any place is okay by me," she told him in her most dulcet tones.

"A night club?"

"You took the words right out of my mouth!"

She had never been to a night club — "palaces of sin" Ma called them. The crowd of young hoodlums she had herded with couldn't afford it—and she was fed-up with beer joints. She craved lights, color, romance! The wah-wah of laughing trombones, the croon of saxes, rhythm of bull fiddles; hi-nonny-nonny and a hot cha-cha! Against such a background she could live lavishly. Against such a background a man would propose— God, how she had been wasting her years!

But, he looked her over, and thought, impossible! Besides, too, he might run into some of *his* crowd at the Green Lantern, Levy's or the Club Vienna. They would rib him to death, with this little rough-neck! But he did know just the place, down by his gun-club. A rough and tumble, knock-down and drag 'em out bawdy sort of a place down below Martinez. Good enough for a dance-hall pick-up.

"A night club!" she cooed, as she thrilled with ecstasy.

She could picture herself on the dance floor. A bird of paradise among crows! She wished now she had on one of those billowy organ-dies that make a girl look like an angel right out of heaven, instead of this sleazy old crêpe that had been tubbed so many times. She wished for the little jacket again, too. She was chilly, no foolin'. She settled down against him, adored his profile, murmured something about being cold.

"Yes," he agreed, "there's a fog coming up. Usually is cold down this way."

"Which way?"

He told her, as they whipped into the highway that they were headed

for a little place down by the duck marshes.

Duck marshes! It didn't sound so hot. She felt the first misgiving. But she grinned:

"Gonna shoe a duck?"

"Wait and see, enchantress!"

Five miles, ten miles, fifteen! Fifteen miles from the McCaskie flat! They drew up in front of an unexciting-looking place beside the road. A few cars, mostly Model "T"s, were parked around. But glittering lights, pageantry, laughing trombones—?

"It's a dump!" said Vivie with remarkable intuition.

"But smell the duck marshes! Doesn't it put a keen edge on the old appetite?"

She did smell the marshes. Brackish. Sulphurous. The fog, too, was rolling in from the tule swamp in a thick, yellow blanket. She glanced back the way she had come. How far, back there, through this on-creeping, flattened monster of mist was it to home?

"Oh, well," said Vivie, with the fatality of her kind, "let's see what the dump looks like inside?"

They entered. She saw—another beer joint!

A long, narrow tawdry place with a bar. A few half-drunken couples dancing in the spasmodic jumpy fashion of silly automatons. A few more half-drunken couples sitting about little tables, wise-cracking, boisterous; an orchestra of three—traps, banjo, piano. Three high-school kids, apparently, trying to pick up a few extra dollars. Glamor, glitter, color—where was it? She could have screamed her disappointment. She glanced at a staircase over against the wall. Where did it lead to? God only knew! Following her glance, Jimmy said it led up to a private dining-room and the duck feed.

"The guy who runs this joint usually has a couple of birds on ice," he explained. "I'll order some right

away." He went over to the bar, and introduced her to the man behind it, a dirty, bristly man with a paunch. "This is Vivie, Charlie. Got any ducks?"

Ducks, ducks, ducks! Is that all he could think of? His *stomach*—when she was looking for romance!

Yes, Charlie had some ducks. He said he'd pop a couple into the oven right away. Did they like 'em with celery and garlic? Oke! Go right on upstairs and he'd bring 'em their drinks. How about a little gin? Oke, again. He ogled Vivie as she slithered up the stairs behind Jimmy, and glancing back she thought: The old fool! As if a girl would give him a tumble!

The private dining-room was even more disappointing than below. The funniest, old-fashioned place! It would have made a hit with Ma. Besides the dining-table and chairs there was a couch with some of the craziest old cushions. One was fashioned of cigar ribbons. A leather one had an Indian head painted on it. Another one, purple and gold, was the souvenir of an Elk's convention, dated 1910. And on the walls—the most outlandish pictures. Were *they* a kick? Old-time prize fighters, jockeys, and Man-of-War looking natural enough to neigh. Some ladies in tights and with hour-glass figures. Jimmy explained that Charlie had been a card in his day, was an old-time barkeep, and had come back into his own with repeal. There was a radio, though. He closed the door and dialed in some dance music. This was a little better—if a girl had plenty of imagination. You could just imagine the glitter and glamor. Oh, well, the important thing was to make Jimmy propose before the night was over.

There really was no need to waste any more time. She'd get the old allure to working, strut her stuff. No guy had been able to resist her yet.

This one surely wouldn't prove the exception. . . . Just then Charlie arrived with the drinks, exchanged a couple of spicy wisecracks with Jimmy, shuffled out again. Ah, that's what she needed to get her going. A good stiff shot of whatever was in that bottle.

She gulped down the drink handed her. Hot digity dog! She nearly strangled on it! Jimmy had one. She had another. They both had another. Cinked glasses—and the show began!

All the little devils of recklessness in her cut loose. She wanted to dance. Jimmy wouldn't dance. Okay. She'd dance, an exhibition dance, for his benefit, to get him going, just a rough idea of what she could really do. Hadn't she won three cups for the rumba over at the Paradise Gardens? And tap— Say, Ruby Keeler had nothing on her! She went into a tap.

"Look, Jimmy! How'm I doing? Hey, hey!"

Jimmy did look. He looked at her through blurry mist, through a sudden hot wave of passion. Delicious little Bacchante! If she wasn't so vulgar, so impossible!

A new dance band went on the air. Hot rhythm. Kettle drums boomed. Shrill piping of clarinets. Trumpet obligato. Primitive, sensuous as a jungle juba dance. She strutted, she swelled her young chest, adolescent young breasts out-pointed, tantalizing, challenging. Be'god, thought Jimmy, this exquisite little vulgarian looks almost *virginal*! Perhaps she is. Naw. Couldn't be. A public dance-hall jade! Disgusting little exhibitionist! Trying to make him lose his head, compromise him. Jail bait!

Vivie, catching his greedy gaze, thought triumphantly, the old allure is working! He's mine!

She went down on one knee, exposing white flesh almost to her thigh. She shimmied, arms undulat-

ing like snakes. Slithered up again, hips swaying in hula rhythm. Finally, panting, she glided over to him, and slipped down on the couch beside him. She threw back her head, arched her lovely young throat, challenged:

"You can kiss me now, Jimmy!"

Kiss her he did! His hot, greedy lips came down on that silken throat like voracious things! But, hadn't she asked for it, little tease! He tore at her dress. She was a delicious little wench! He gathered her up, held her so close that she thought she would scream out. Suddenly she whispered prayerfully:

"Dear God, make him want me *decently*! Make him want me for his wife!" In that moment, wrapped up in the thick hot blanket of her own desire she was sure she loved him—loved him madly.

"And you love me?" she prompted.

How could he resist her? Hadn't everybody she had gone out with groveled before her amazing beauty? And hadn't she been saving herself for this—the big moment! But Jimmy refused to commit himself. He just pressed hot lips against her adorable youth and softness. "Am I an orchid girl?" she prompted again. A high-school kid had once called her that.

He laughed. She had pronounced it "or-shed." Oh, she was impossible, all right! He gazed at her with a ludicrous expression. An orchid girl? This tawdry little fledgling who had been nested in the eaves of a tumble-down shanty! She was a *lily*. Her small piquant face was the heart of a lily. Her exquisite hands, her throat, her waxy eyelids, all were lilies. She must be that white all over.

He began pawing at her clothes as he said thickly:

"A lily girl! The whitest, loveliest little bit of human flesh this side of heaven!" Then almost regretfully:

"But, unfortunately, a lily that bloomed on a dunghill!" She pushed his hands away, caught her dress together, chilled with the first sense of impending disaster. Was this the way a man proposed to a girl? By *insulting* her? He amended, "A mud-puddle lily."

"You—you mean——"

"I know your origin, enchantress. It is stamped all over you, my little proletarian!"

Proletarian! What was that? Was he insulting her again? This time with a word he had learned in college? Did he mean she wasn't *good*?

Oh, she'd chased around with boys, yes! But there wasn't a man on God's green earth who could say she had gone the limit!

"Say," she suddenly suspected the truth, and it made her burn all over with righteous indignation, "what did you bring me here for, anyway?"

"What do you—think?" he questioned with a suggestive leer, eyes boring through her clothes.

What did she *think*? What had she *thought*?

"Why, that you *loved* me! Wanted to *marry* me!"

"Marry *you*! A girl like *you*!"

It was the most absurd thing he had ever heard of! She had actually taken him seriously. He leaned back against the wall and laughed. He laughed and laughed. Held his sides to keep them from splitting and laughed until the drunken tears rolled down his cheeks. As she watched him, disillusioned, it suddenly occurred to her that he looked like nothing on earth so much as a bloated, repulsive little toad.

He leaned forward, still amused, but pointing an impressive finger:

"Shay, this isn't some sort of a badger game, is it? You're not trying to frame me, hang something on me? There isn't an irate parent in the offing ready to pop up like an

avenging genie with a shotgun in his hand, is there?" Then he held his sides and laughed some more.

She stood there, white faced, stunned, defeated. Laughing at her! Ridiculing her! And she had nursed the delusion that she was irresistible to men, that any man would want to marry her! That she had allure, sex appeal—gobs and gobs of it! She had been so sure she could have any man who appealed to her, simply because she had walked off with her sister's lover. But this man, the first one she had really wanted—God, he *laughed* at her!

Allure, allure! Oh, she had it all right, but not the right kind. Damn her folks for ever filling her head with such nonsense! Why, Jen, the dutiful, the dependable, had more of what it takes than she had. Mark Tanner had asked Jen to marry him. But he'd just lost his head over her, Vivie, had pawed her, dumped his hot breath on her throat, just as this one had! Oh, my God, how did you go about it to get a man to ask you to be his wife? Was there something in that old-fashioned idea of Ma's about being a lady, after all?

The room seemed to eddy in little circles about her. In her frustration and shame she prayed for the floor to open up and swallow her. She wanted to crawl away and hide. Her pride, her colossal conceit had received its death blow. What had he called her? A lily that had bloomed on a dunghill! A mud-puddle lily! What was he saying now? Insulting her some more?

He had stopped laughing, sobered somewhat by the stricken look on her face. He was saying, "My dear child——"

It was enough! She could stand no more. The castle of the impossible dream tumbled about her. She stood amid the wreckage, blazing; her eyes flashing.

"Shut up!" she screamed. "Don't

you 'dear child' me in that better-than-thou-manner!"

Still he tried to placate her.

"Why create a scene? Why not act like a lady? Ladies don't make scenes." (Lady! Lady! If he said it again she would scream.) "You and your kind are always so ready to make an issue of everything. Why be so inexpressibly vulgar? Does it get you anything by acting like a virago?" (What in heaven's name was a virago? Just the opposite of virgin?)

"I realize your vanity has been stabbed to the quick. I suppose girls like you do have some finer sensibilities, your pride and all that sort of thing. But you are such beastly poor losers. You invite insults, and when a man does lose his head—" He swallowed. Straightened his tie. Tried to assume an impressive attitude. Pursed his lips. Went through the usual routine of a man in his cups pulling himself together, prepared to lecture her. "Now, just listen to me—"

He got no further.

This cool composure maddened her. Flaunting his poise now!

"Shut up!" she shrilled again. "You shut up and listen to me! Now, it's my turn to insult you!" And she let him have it—a hot blast of the McCaskie sense of outrage. He quailed before it. For, all at once this little McCaskie rowdy was rather magnificent.

So, she wasn't good enough to take to a classy place? She was a mud-puddle lily and only fit to take to a beer joint—was that it? Well, what was he? Should she tell him? Not in his fancy, educated language, but in the vernacular of the gas-house gang.

He was the filthy thing that crawls into the garbage can to filch what it finds there. A rat! A dirty little thieving rat! A parasite! He wore the clothes of a gentleman, but un-

derneath it all was the mangy hide of a rat—and a guy who lived off his people, a guy who wouldn't work, who kept his hands white and his fingernails polished! A guy who went out of his own station in life and down into the dance halls looking for little fools like herself, to despoil, to ruin—as Ma would say. A guy, who, because he had put out fifty cents for gas to bring a girl out to a joint like this, felt that was all her honor was worth because she didn't travel with his toney, high-class crowd! He intimated that she was no lady, wasn't good enough! "I may not be polished and educated like some of your classy lady-friends," she screamed, "but if going to college made a gentleman out of you, I'll be darned if I can see it!"

He raised a deprecating hand. But, she wasn't through with him yet.

He might be a son of wealth and all the world to his family, but he was a dime a dozen to her! A play-boy, a cheap necker, a pawer who wanted to wrestle a girl! He probably lived in a brownstone mansion, while she lived in a dirty little four-room flat down by the gas-house, but she was right here to tell the cock-eyed world, he was no bargain! And just because she didn't speak his language—

"That's just it," he managed to cut in. "We just don't speak the same language."

At this point Charlie poked his head in at the door. Wise old diplomat! He had probably been within earshot all the while, but had deemed it politic to hold a strategic position until a lull in the hostilities. He commenced now in conciliatory tones:

"Well, kids, the duck feed is ready—"

He got no further. The infuriated Vivie turned on him and let him have the last shot from the gun.

"To hell with your duck feed!"

she screamed. "I've got a fifteen-mile hike ahead of me!"

She grabbed her little black velvet beret and jammed it down on the golden curls that just naturally grew that way. And almost knocking the flabbergasted keeper of this inglorious tavern over in her flight, she was outside the door. She paused just long enough to let Jimmy have the last volley of her scorn.

"To hell with you, too! And I guess that's a language we both speak!"

With that parting shot the darling and the pride of the McCaskies was gone! Pell-mell down the stairs, elbowing drunks aside, pell-mell past the bar and through the door, pell-mell out into a blanket of thick yellow fog! . . .

There it hung before her. The tule fog! A smothery vapor obscuring her view as completely as a theatre curtain of gray asbestos, nauseous with the stench of the marshes. She had heard people speak of the tule fogs that swept in off the marshy swamps around the little town of Martinez. The treachery of them. How they came up so suddenly and so dense that occasionally highway traffic was stalled, and cars sometimes skidded into the sloughs and ditch water. People had been lost in the foggy swamps, and had drowned. Tule fog! Until now, something as remote as the fogs of London. But now, a curtain of treachery between her and home!

Yet, driven by her hysteria, she plunged into it. She would find her way home somehow. Girls had walked home through things as bad, or worse. She was still half drunk and reeled a little dizzily, just when she needed her wits, too. Chilly winds whipped her hard in the face, sobering her somewhat, and she began to string her thoughts together on the chain of her pride.

So, men didn't pick the future

mother of their children out of a gutter, eh? Well, she knew one who would. Mark Tanner, good old commonplace Mark Tanner. He wore overalls, but he'd make a good husband, and she'd win him yet. When she *did* — she'd show this smug Jimmy she *could* get a man. Just wait until she got home. She'd get in touch with Tanner——

She stumbled blindly through the fog a few moments, thinking these frenzied, outraged thoughts, when suddenly it occurred to her there was no end to it! She was very cold now, and already the sleazy yellow crêpe was saturated with mist; it wrapped about her body tenaciously, a dripping shackle, flimsy as a cobweb, yet seeming to impede her progress.

No, it wasn't the dress! It was the fog itself, that sticky, sebaceous mass, that was bent upon holding her back. The terrible density of it confused her sense of direction. Why, it had become a treacherous, diabolical thing that was evidently determined to balk her. She couldn't fight it off! It pressed in on her, hanging about her with the weight of a dreadful, slimy incubus; all the elements of cold and wet and obscurity had incorporated themselves into a monster that seemed to have but one purpose—to defeat her!

She staggered about now in circles. She was becoming a little panicky from this futile plowing through nothing! Oh, she mustn't become panicky now! That could come later, on Mark Tanner's breast, good old reliable Mark Tanner! Suddenly she made a discovery. The ground under her feet had become soft!

Why, she was walking in ooze! Sinking in ooze up to her ankles! A crawling, sort of ooze that was mushy beneath her feet; an ooze that had fingers, for it suddenly stripped one of her flimsy satin pumps from

her foot. Another step, and the other pump was ripped from her foot as neatly as if done by a human agency. Water began to creep between her toes like little cold snakes.

Then all at once something dreadful happened! Suddenly, without warning, she stepped off what might have been a bank into water up to her knees! No, above them! It was then she started screaming. Only to be answered by the sepulchral chill and the blackness of the night and the waters.

If only she could *see*! If only morning would come, bringing with it light, to dispel the fog, to lead her out of this horror and darkness!

She knew what had happened now. She had wandered through the blinding fog into the swamp! The treacherous marshes! She thought, soon I will be dead. She thought again, this is that law of compensation, this is my punishment. Thinking this, she also thought of her family, for the first time in a long time, tenderly; of their sacrifices to save her from her own wantonness. She thought of her sister Jenny. Poor Jenny, whose man she had stolen, whose heart she had broken, and who only that evening had been called upon to make the one last supreme sacrifice.

As a drowning man re-lives his whole past life in a single moment, she, too, recalled that scene of the earlier evening. How silly and melodramatic it had seemed to her at the time, as she had paused just outside the kitchen door, on her way to the dance, eavesdropping. The same old eternal argument. Her mother was saying: "We've got to get her off the streets! Outa those hellholes! Into business college. We need fifty more dollars. You've got to go to Tanner and get it!"

Jen had moaned, twisting her hands in that helpless way of hers: "How *can* I go to him for money? What will he think! He might even

think I am offering myself for sale——"

"We don't care what he thinks! We've got to save your sister!"

Vivie had only giggled, as she rushed on to the dance. How seriously Jen always took things! She shoulda been in pictures!

But, as she recalled the scene now she did not giggle. She just felt a poignant need of her family. Not their sacrifices—but their love, their protection. Especially did she long for her mother's arms. It had been such a long time since she had permitted them about her. Her mother's arms! If they could only reach out through all this chill and wet and darkness and save her. Despairingly she called out:

"Ma, come to me! Save me!"

As if her desolation was not complete, to it was added a new horror. Something cold and slimy slid through stagnant water. Her skin seemed to crawl over her body as she shrieked her fright. Involuntarily, she made a frantic effort to escape, and fell, floundering!

She churned and slashed about. She groveled and floundered among the reeds, and in her frenzied struggles she sucked in great draughts of slough water. She pawed at the rushes. She seized a clump of them with the clutch of the drowning person. She could feel nothing beneath her now at all—but water! Save for her face, and one cold little naked arm, she was completely submerged. All that kept her from going under was her clutch on the reeds. She knew she could not buoy herself up by this slender support forever.

Then, for the first time in her life, the spoiled, willful darling of the McCaskies thought of God in a personal way. God, who, too, until now had been something remote. Now, only God could save her. But, how? If Almighty God would only send His precious day, the dawn, His lamp

to light her way out of the darkness. Aloud she said: "God help me!" Then again: "God save me!" And again: "Send the morning! Send light!"

She whimpered a little. After that she was very, very still!

The sun came blazing through the front window of the McCaskie flat. The first splash of gold of a radiant sunlit Sunday morning. It fell on the ashen face of Mrs. McCaskie staring through the parted lace curtains. But it did not warm her. Instead she shivered violently, and continued to search the street for a pair of home-coming dancing feet. Never before had her darling remained out all night.

This, in itself, was a premonition, the beginning of the end. What sort of an end she could only surmise. But, how did wayward girls usually end? They went down in the quicksands of their own follies, floundered and were lost in the swamps of ignorance. But, Mrs. McCaskie was not a woman who spoke in metaphors. A girl who rushed off to the notorious Paradise Gardens also rushed swiftly into hell. That was her plain, old-fashioned way of putting it.

The mother glanced up at the sun. It suddenly struck her as peculiar that the sun should be blazing away like that. Last night had been foggy and cold. The weatherman had forecast clouds for today. This sudden, brassy glare burnished that forecast with a golden lie. She traipsed back to the kitchen once more. Glanced out the back window, down the back window, down the back steps. No Vivie in sight. The mother's face became a little grayer.

She came back, pattered about the kitchen, made a pretence of occupying herself with the usual morning tasks. Filled the coffee-pot at the sink, lit the gas, set the pot on to

boil, started for Jenny's door, to awaken her. No, let her sleep. It was Sunday. After a ten-hour day in the candy factory she needed the rest. Last night had been an ordeal, too. Still, she shouldn't have been so hysterical about it. Jen should have gone to Tanner. He would have let her have the money. When a man has been in love with a girl, engaged to her— It had been foolish to make such a fuss about it. Jenny was queer, a little bit too strait-laced. Yet, if Vivie was more that way— No, a girl can't be too strait-laced.

She went back to the kitchen window and peered out. Face like ashes. Perhaps she had loved the wayward one too much. A mother shouldn't show partiality. This was God's punishment— She glanced up again at the sun. Funny; it was like a miracle to see it shining like that. So early in the morning, too—after such a dismal night!

At nine o'clock a messenger boy appeared at the front door.

News, news at last! But suppose— No, she didn't dare suppose anything. Her hands shook so she could hardly hold the envelope as she tore it open. Some oblong slips of green fell out. Money! She counted it quickly. Fifty dollars! Just the money. No other message.

She dismissed the boy, went quickly to Jenny's room, looked in. The bed was rumpled, but empty. The threadbare rug before the bed was twisted and awry. Suddenly all was clear. She pictured Jenny in the night fighting with her problem. Jenny adored the wayward one, too.

If she had gone to Tanner— Then why hadn't she returned? Brought the money herself? Surely this steadfast one wouldn't— No, no, Tanner was an honorable man! But she chilled. Aloud she said:

"My poor, poor girls!"

She started traipsing from window

to window again, from front door to back door. Finally she went over by the gas-range, slumped down on a chair, twisted her hands. She thought: I'll give her another hour. Then I'll notify the police—

She stared straight ahead at the kitchen door. She did not see a door. She saw something she alone could see. A phantasmagoria of regrets, a terrible fusion of mistakes. It had been a mistake, the McCaskie dream. All this talk of beauty marrying wealth! It had filled the adored one's head with dangerous ideas; this beautiful miracle child the Lord had sent. It had made her vain, reckless, impatient, killed the good that was in her. And she, the mother, was to blame. She had destroyed her own child with the will-o'-the-wisp, false, impractical teachings. Now—and now—

The mother continued to stare straight ahead in bewildered despair. All at once her vision was attracted by something outside the realm of her imagination. The back door was being slowly opened. It unclosed gradually. Inch by inch, without the slightest sound. As if the impetus behind it was a ghost. Then the door opened wide.

A phantom stood there—a phantom that was altogether hideous! The mother uttered a muffled sort of a cry, neither scream nor sob, and stood up still staring, her face the color of flesh that has been drained absolutely dry of blood.

This thing standing there in the door looked like a strange little monster of some sort. It was covered from head to foot with dry caked green slime and mud. The hair of it was a mat of dry mire. If the apparition wore garments, they adhered so tightly to its body that one got the impression the spectre was naked, or swathed like a mummy. But the eyes of a mother can penetrate any disguise.

With a low cry, Mrs. McCaskie went forward, approaching it step by step, went as a mother would go to meet the ghost of a dead child, trembling with joy at its sudden return; then swooped down upon it, covering it with the spread of her arms as the mother bird does her young with the maternal spread of her wings. She gathered the mud-covered thing to her, sat down in a nearby wobbly old kitchen rocker, holding it close to her bosom. She cried over it. Her tears fell upon it, baptizing it. She did not scold. She asked no questions. With her apron she wiped the swamp filth from the beloved face.

Presently the lips began to move; then came a jabber of unintelligible words. The three used most frequently were "fog" and "cold" and "water"! Finally the girl straightened up almost rigid in her mother's arms and screamed out in a frenzied sort of ecstasy: "The sun! The sun!" The mother tried to drag her back. But she writhed, screaming: "See, Ma! The sun! The sun!"

The distracted mother, making no sense of any of it, pacified this fevered, tortured child of hers with, "Yes, Vivie, mother sees it. The sun. It's a lovely sunshiny morning. And the paper said we would have clouds." She smoothed the hot forehead. She wondered what has happened to her? Where has she been? She is burning up with fever.

Finally, in a torrential flood of hysteria, the explanation came, in disjointed fashion. A confused jumble of words to be pieced together later in some semblance of coherency. Swamp lands, marshes and cold, fog and water. Fifteen miles from home. She was drowning there in the black swamp. There was not one little ray of light to lead her out. A pitchy black night, and it was almost morning, too. But dark, dark. Fog, fog, the tule fog and



*The sun was shining through*

blackness. When she knew she was going to die it all came to her, what a wicked, wayward girl she had been! How her family had sacrificed for her, that she might be somebody. A lady! And being a lady didn't seem so silly when death is near. Sud-

denly she called out to God for light, light!

"And He heard me, Ma. He gave me a break. He sent the most beautiful light! The whole swamp was covered with it!"

And the light brought some duck

hunters, some boys who saw her there, drowning in the swamp. They came just in time! Just as she couldn't hold on to the rushes another minute. They dragged her out—just as she was going down—and brought her home in their old flivver!

"It was a miracle!" breathed the mother.

The room was very still, save for the soft, jerky sobbing of the repentant girl. It was still, until the front doorbell ringing again, aroused them.

Mrs. McCaskie gently released the beloved prodigal, still a little dazed by it all, got up and let the girl sink back into the big old rocker. Vivie drew her feet up beneath her, buried her face in her arms and wept softly. Mrs. McClaskie went to answer the door, still bewildered, muttering: "A miracle! It must have been! The paper said clouds——"

It was the messenger boy again, with another message. She took it, signed for it, a little abstracted, returned to the kitchen tearing it open. Who would send it? Another message from Jenny! But before she read it she turned again to Vivie. The exhausted girl was saying, wearily, eyes closed as she drifted off into tired slumber:

"I'm going to be your good girl now, Ma, from now on. Stop chasing

around. Settle down and marry Tanner, if he'll have me."

Marry Tanner?

For the first time the mother smiled faintly, and with an intense relief. She was reading:

"Dear Ma:

*"I went to Tanner last night. He let me have the money and I sent it to you right away. He's a good man. We are going to be married today. Going away for a while. He has worked like a dog, so have I. We have both earned a rest.*

*"Jenny."*

Still smiling faintly, she dismissed the import of the message. She should have known Jen would stick to her old-fashioned principles. And there was nothing startling in her marriage to an unromantic plodder. Such things happen every day. But miracles—the end of the McCaskie dream!

She glanced again at the regenerated pride of the McCaskies. Her darling! Was it really the end of the dream? Perhaps just the beginning. For, from between those adored lovely lips, as the tired girl drifted off to sleep, came her mother's own mid-Victorian phrase:

"I'm going to be a lady!"





## Three Women in Love

By DOROTHY DOW

“I CAN take it, darling,” the girl with the copper-colored hair said, leaning back at her end of the divan, looking almost teasingly at the nervous young man whose profile showed a straight nose, curly fair hair, a slightly harassed smile. “You were scared, weren’t you?” She sounded amused. “That’s why you didn’t come near me for a week, or answer any of my telephone messages. That’s why you had your office tell me you were out of town—”

“I was out of town, Claire. Honestly, I was.”

“In Harbor Point, for the week-end.” Claire gave a light laugh, tipped her highball glass at an angle, to get the last precious drop. “Of course you were, Dicky darling. Are you telling me? The whole town’s told me, already. Jane Davis, for one—

and Ann Brennon for another—and Mary-Louise! Gosh, she couldn’t get here fast enough with the news.”

“Claire,—absolutely! Well—”

“You don’t need to try making apologies, lamb. I told you that when I finally managed to get you at your club, didn’t I? I didn’t want to make a scene. You ought to know me better than that, Dick. My heavens, after all we’ve been to each other,—and all! I never did make scenes, did I? Of course, that time at the Villa. But that was different. And the time you didn’t let me know you were lunching at the Key, and I ran into you. But those were just little things. When a big thing comes along I can take it on the chin. You ought to have trusted me.”

“I did trust you,” he murmured miserably, shifting a little, so that his face was turned toward her, now,

slightly less harassed, since her voice was so consistently pleasant. "Only—well,——"

"I knew that an affair like ours wouldn't go on forever, just like I said to you half an hour ago. I'm not a complete idiot, you know. Love 'em and leave 'em, that's what men do nowadays. And gosh, we weren't tied. Of course, people had sort of more or less taken it for granted——"

"Now, Claire——" he moved uneasily and stood up.

"Oh, I wasn't going to say what you think I was going to say. Sit down, you bad boy. My, you're nervous. It must be love. Only I think you might have come around and told me instead of letting me see the engagement announced in my paper this morning, over the breakfast table. Just as if it was the engagement of a perfect stranger. Just as if you and I had never been—just about—well, everything, to each other, for months and months!"

"Claire, I've said——"

"Hush, now." She put her perfumed hand over his mouth. "I'm not going to scold you another word. I just wanted to clear things up. End it with a good taste for every one. You were scared, Dicky. That hurts me. To think that after we've been—what we've been to each other, you knew me so little. You were scared I'd make a fuss. I just wanted to tell you to your face it was all right with me. I'll probably be announcing my own engagement one of these days as far as that goes. You just happened to get over it all first. Men do, I guess. But now," she smiled her prettiest smile, "you sit down, and we'll have a drink together. A drink to the fact that we're just friends, lovers no more, from now on. Do you remember that old song, Dicky, sweet? We used to dance to it." She leaned close to him, her voice suddenly dreamy. "Just friends, lovers no more. Just friends, but not

as before; it breaks my heart to see you, day after day, turning away, as much as to say, you never loved me——"

"Honestly," the young man removed her hand from his coat sleeve determinedly and wiped his brow with a very expensive handkerchief. "I—can't have another drink, Claire. You see, I'm late already for—for—well——"

"For cocktails with the one and only girl." Claire kept right on smiling brightly. "But you might be just a little bit late, mightn't you? Just a tiny teeny bit late!"

"I'm late already, you see," he said, with great politeness. "I'm really terribly late. And since we've had this nice little talk—well, I'll just have to be running along."

"But you'll call me up tomorrow, won't you, and stop in and have a drink with me? Just to make me know that you do understand that I'm not the awful sort of person you suddenly seemed to think I was. Tomorrow about four?"

"I'm terribly sorry, Claire. But you see, I'm going out of town for the week-end——"

"On Wednesday?" The girl laughed, a little too gayly. "My, how long the week-ends are growing."

"That isn't it. But, well, since I'm going on Friday, I'll have a lot of things to look after, you see, and, well, I just couldn't make it, no matter how hard I tried. Nor," as she started to say something, "Wednesday or Thursday either. I'm terribly sorry, Claire."

"So am I," she said, with determined sweetness. She watched him pick up his hat and stick, and his gesture was queerly like that of a man getting away from something that frightened him a little. Claire went close to him, put her arms around his neck, tilted her face: "You're not going to go without kissing me, you know. Just once,

between friends. A good-by kiss!" It was a long kiss. Claire made it long. When she finally moved away, the young man was visibly shaken. She laughed, softly. "Funny, that it doesn't seem any different kissing you now than it did when you were in love with me. Because you were in love with me a little bit, weren't you, Dicky? It was real for a while, wasn't it? I'll always have that to remember, anyhow. Not that I'm complaining. I told you that I could take it, didn't I?"

"You're a swell girl, Claire," he said, opening the door a shade too hastily. "And if I can ever do anything at any time——"

"I'll call you," she promised. "Now run along. I know you're just dying to. And the best of luck, my dear, but don't quite forget me if we don't see each other for a long time."

She shut the door after his quickly departing back, with no haste, but wearily, lacking the smile she had worn a moment before. Twilight had seeped into the room; she turned on the lights hurriedly and started the radio going. At first she walked about, aimlessly, and then she went to the telephone and called three different numbers, asked for three different men. The first two were out, the third, as the conversation proved, was busy. Busy, but he would give her a ring the first of the week.

"Damn!" said Claire, aloud, into the silence. She picked up a book, and sat down, and stared at the first page for fifteen minutes without reading a line. The maid brought in the cocktail shaker and two glasses; she put the tray down at her elbow, and went out again. Claire looked at it wryly, and then she filled both glasses, drinking each in turn. What a great party this is, she thought. What a hell of a party this is. I'm sitting here alone at home, and Dick's sitting with his new love, having a cocktail with her, kissing her——

She got up and started to pace back and forth, restlessly. It wasn't six o'clock yet. It would be ages before it was seven o'clock. It would be a century before it was midnight. The silly old clock hands didn't move at all—they just stood still, mocking her.

She began to sob, thickly at first, and then loudly. The maid came to the door and hesitated there staring, then she went away again. The clock said six o'clock, ten minutes after six, twenty minutes after six——

"Oh, God, I can't stand this," Claire sobbed thickly. "I can't stand it, I tell you."

She wiped her eyes, and stalked to the telephone. "Whitehall 6-4354. No, Whitehall, I said. Please. Please. Oh, hello. Is this Whitehall 6-4354? Is Mr. Richard Christie there at this moment? He is? Will you be good enough to call him to the telephone? It's important. Please." She tapped her foot on the floor, and sniffled now and then, to keep the tears back.

"Dick? Dick, this is Claire. . . . Claire, I said. Dick, I—I—hope I'm not disturbing you too terribly, but you see, Dick, I forgot that I had some things to say to you. . . . Oh, nothing. Nothing I can tell you over the telephone, I mean. But I thought we might somehow manage to get together tomorrow. If you can't drop in later, I might—well, meet you for lunch. . . . But—well, really, Dick. Well, then, the next day? . . . What? What? . . . Listen, you can't treat me this way. You can't just stop seeing me, throw me into the discard, and get away with it. Who do you think you are? Oh, I didn't mean that, Dick. I just wanted to talk to you—talk things over, sort of. . . . What? No, we have not talked them over enough. . . . This afternoon? This afternoon we didn't talk at all, really. I've got a lot of things to say myself, as far as that goes. Not very pleasant, maybe, but maybe you'd bet-

ter listen. . . . Threatening? That's not a very nice thing to say to me after— . . . What? But I *have* to see you, Dick. You could stop in for a while later tonight . . . What—what—Dick——”

She waited a few minutes, after the bang of a receiver hung up rudely had come to her over the wire, and then she hung up her own telephone receiver carefully, as if it was fragile. Her pretty face was ravaged, and she had cried all her careful make-up away. The radio tenor of the moment sang, melodiously:

*“There goes my heart—there goes the one I love!*

*There goes the one I wasn't worthy of—*

*There goes my happiness—it couldn't be!*

*There goes somebody else in place of me!”*

She rushed over, and began beating at the wooden box with her clenched fists as if it were a live thing:

“Damn you!” she cried, bitterly. “Damn you, damn you, damn you! Do you have to rub it in?”

## II

“WELL, have a good time,” Linda said. She looked up from her book reluctantly, as if what she was reading was terribly important. Marion stood in the doorway, all pink organdie and cart-wheel hat, hesitating, her eyes on Linda. She said, tentatively:

“But I think you're such a nut not to go. I mean, when they have a man for you, and everything. It isn't as if you were going to be a fifth wheel. Darling, honestly, we all want you. It's going to be a binge. Dinner at the Key, and then to the Malibou or the Mexican vil-

lage later. Heaven knows where after that. Connie's celebrating——”

“Listen, haven't I said ten times, if I've said it once, that I'm just sunk. Dead! I couldn't go stepping with the Prince of Wales if he rang me up tonight. I'm sorry they bothered to get an extra man. I would have brought Peter, if I'd gone——”

“Well, they weren't sure——” Marion stopped short.

“I've just been laying off Peter a little lately, because I think it's silly to let a thing like that get too serious. I mean, he's swell, and we have a grand time together. But I don't want to get married, and he doesn't want to get married. Not with business like it is now. So why get involved? But you don't need to worry about extra men for me, Honey, I can always bring my own.”

“I know you can, darling.” Marion picked up her gloves and her purse, and started to open the door. A horn honked outside insistently, and then was still. “You ought to get out and take a walk,” she went on. “Anyway. You haven't been outside the apartment for three days.”

“I will take a walk before I go to bed. Honestly, I will take a walk.”

Marion went out, and Linda let the book slide to the floor. Maybe it was dumb not to go on this party. The Key was the best place in town, right now. Every one went there. Maybe they had a really cute man for her, a man nicer than Peter, who would buy her drinks at the long bar, and fall in love with her at first sight. That would be a joke on Peter, she told herself. He thinks he can do anything he wants to with me. He thinks he can call me up or let me alone. He won't call me up now, because he says I'm getting too possessive. Just because the last time, when he didn't call for two days, I called him. And because when he came around, I said a lot of things about expecting him to call. It was

dumb to say anything about expecting him to call. Men want you to be waiting for them, but they hate it, if you say you were. They don't like to have you nag them about things. I nagged Peter last time, and that's why he's staying away so long. He had a right to be sore. I'm perfectly reasonable about it now. That's why I wish he'd call up and see that I'm reasonable about it. We aren't engaged—we're just friends. Maybe if I hadn't had a headache, I'd have had more sense. Instead, I had to go into an act like any other idiot. Why haven't you called me? Why didn't you answer the messages I left at your office? It's no fun sitting and waiting, and waiting for you to call, I said. He said: Well, there's no law about you sitting and waiting for me to call.

She went to the mirror and looked at herself carefully. Black hair, smooth and shining; blue eyes, fair skin . . . there was nothing wrong with that. What did men want, anyway? What did they want?

Probably he won't telephone to-night, anyway. I'm crazy to stay in. I wish I was over at the Key, having a Manhattan, with a big fat cherry, and then eating dinner in the back room upstairs, with the big sofa, and the cute little tables at the side. I wish I'd gone on the party and met the new man, she thought. If any one calls up, I'll say yes, whatever it is. Some nights every one in town calls up, and other nights the phone might just as well be disconnected. She yawned, not from sleepiness, but from boredom, and then stiffened into rigidity, as the doorbell tinkled sharply. That might be Peter. Peter usually telephoned before he came, but still, it might be Peter—

"Be sweet to him," she told herself, waiting a moment to answer the door. "Be sweet and gay, and talk about all the amusing things you've been doing. Don't act as if it was

any time at all since the last time you saw him. Be lovely and dignified and pleasant."

She opened the door, smiling her prettiest, most careful smile. The tall fair man who stood in the doorway beamed down at her:

"Baby, if this isn't luck! Never thought I'd find you in on Saturday night of all nights in the week. But I was around at a cocktail party on Cedar Street, and when that broke up, I thought I'd take a chance—"

"That was sweet of you, Tommy." Her voice managed to be less disappointed than her eyes. "Awfully sweet of you. And lucky for me that you came just at this time, so that I could say hello. I have a late date, you see, and I'm going out in half an hour. I have to change my clothes, so I can't even ask you in."

"Oh, listen, let me come in and sit and yell at you through a crack in the door, the way I used to, while you dress. Nothing wrong about that, is there? And the boy-friend might be late—"

"He's always on time, Tommy. Sorry." Her lips curved continuously upward. "I have to dress all over the place and rush out and answer the phone in between. You know how that is. But some other time—"

The tall man said, gloomily: "Well, oke, of course, if that's the way you feel about it. I sort of thought we might go over to the Chez, Veloz and Yolanda are there now, and chin a little. I want to know what you've been doing with yourself lately. No one's seen you anywhere for a coon's age. What you up to, Angel?"

Sitting at home waiting for the telephone to ring. Sitting at home, you fool, wondering whether Peter will want to see me or not. She wanted to scream that at him nervously, but, instead, she kept on smiling. Lord, let me get rid of him before Peter comes, if Peter should happen to come, because if Peter

comes and finds him here he'll say, oh, sorry, you're busy, and then he'll barge off, and leave me alone with Tommy, and I can't stand that. Oh, Lord!

She said: "Well, I've been in and out of town a lot of the time lately, visiting, and doing some resting, to tell you the truth. And an old friend from the Coast has been here, and we've been doing the town. I was thinking just the other day that it was funny I never saw you places."

"Well, what about going some place with me tomorrow night?" Tommy urged ardently. "The Tavern, or the Saddle, or any place you say. Anything you want to do. Dinner, dance——"

She hesitated. Don't be a damned fool all your life, she told herself. One man is as good as another man. No, that's a lie. There's all the difference in the world between Peter and any one else. If Peter doesn't come around tonight, he probably will tomorrow night.

"Sorry," she said politely, as if she was really sorry. "But I'm tied up all week. Ring me the week after."

"I'll do that," said Tommy, looking glum and hurt as he went away.

She went back and sat by the window. Sitting by the window was the best way to hear a car drive up, if a car did drive up. Maybe she had been a fool, to refuse to let Tommy come in and talk. Anything was better than sitting here alone, worrying, feeling lost.

"He isn't tired of me," she told herself. "He just can't stand being nagged, that's all, and I did nag at him, that last time. Yes, and the times before that, too. I won't do it again. I swear I never will again, if he'll hurry and call me up."

The doorbell rang, and she rushed to it. The man who stood there was tall and dark.

"Peter!" she cried. "Peter, darling,

darling, darling!" She pulled him inside, her hand on his arm. She stood tip-toe, so that he could kiss her. He was handsome and rather tired looking. For a minute, it was enough just to have him sit down, light a cigarette, yawn, and say, lazily:

"Lord, what weather!"

"It's been terribly hot, hasn't it? I've—stayed inside a lot."

"Hot? Hotter than hell. Never knew such a summer."

"I'm so sorry——"

"Can't stay inside, nothing to do outside. No place to go——"

Suddenly, sharply, all the secret grievances were alive in her, implacable, urgent:

"I thought you must be going lots of places, lately," she said. "I thought you must have gone out of town, as a matter of fact. You haven't called me in a week."

"I've been busy, my dear. Busy as the deuce."

"Apparently," she laughed, tautly. "Oh, yes. Well, you must have been pretty busy, if you were too busy even to phone me, or to call back when I left a message for you. I don't see why you can't phone me, Peter, and tell me that you're too busy to see me. I mean, if you'd phone me, then I could make other plans."

"You can always make other plans," Peter said, with a faint weariness in his nice voice. "Good Lord, I haven't any strings on you, honey, you know that."

"That's easy to say, but you know I'd rather see you than any one else. You just don't care."

"Listen, honey, I said I'd been busy. On the level. What's the use of acting that way?"

"You're always busy lately."

"Maybe I am," said Peter. He had stopped smiling, and looked almost sulky. "So what?"

"There was a time when you

weren't. Maybe you don't remember, but I do, that——"

"You're starting again, are you?" Peter asked heavily. "Oh, listen, baby, I like you a lot. You're a grand girl. But we aren't married, you know, or anything like that. If you don't like the way I do things, why bother with me? I like you, but I hate like hell to be nagged every time I see you. Maybe you like it. But it's not my idea of fun."

"You don't have to stay here if you don't like it," Linda remarked distantly.

"That's right, I don't!" Peter got up, stood in the door with his hat in his hand. "I'll be seeing you when you feel more amiable," said Peter. "Try to be different about this, will you, Linda?" He paused, to light a cigarette. "I wanted to see you tonight, or I wouldn't have dropped by. I thought it would be nice to see how you were, and everything. But you light right into me, as if I was a criminal——"

"A lot of difference it makes what I do to you," cried Linda. "You got what you wanted, didn't you? And now you don't want it. I mean, you wanted to make me fall in love with you, and all, and now that I am, you treat me this way! You come when you want to—you never call me if you have anything else to do!"

"Oh, Lord!" said Peter. He picked up his hat, and went out, slowly, and Linda called, on the banging of the door:

"If you go now, like this, you don't need to ever come back, ever, ever, ever——" and then listened, tensely. His footsteps never wavered. He went on down the corridor. There was the sound of the elevator door, opening, shutting. . . .

"Oh, God!" Linda cried to nothing at all. "Make him drive around the block, and then come back, and say he's sorry, and love me again, the way he used to. Make him do that,

dear God. I won't nag him this time about neglecting me. I won't be mean and possessive, and all the things he doesn't like. Honestly, God, I won't. Make him come back. I'll be so nice——"

### III

SHE took so many pains with her dressing, that you could tell without asking a single question that she was going to see a man who admired her, or a woman she detested very much. Her rose-colored velvet cocktail gown exactly matched the roses in the tall white vases, on each side of the fireplace; vases almost two feet tall, roses almost four feet tall; a modernistic fireplace, with no fire in it, and with mirrors and painted peacocks' tails giving a strange impression of flame.

When the bell rang she hurried to the door, with a last glance at her face. She looked pale, lovely, sad; there were violet smudges under her lovely eyes, as if she had been lying awake at night, and there was the faintest hint, so faint that it could not possibly be unbecoming, of pink, about her eyelids. It was as if she was a decorative design— Woman who has been crying——

The man who came in was tall and stoutish, with graying hair; he had a large box under one arm, a smaller box sticking out of his left pocket, and a worried look on his face.

"Hello, dearest, I'm so glad you feel better. I've been so frightfully worried about you. When I got the note last night about your pain, and that you couldn't see me, I was almost crazy. You can imagine——"

"You really cared"? The woman spoke intensely, as if she did not quite believe him. "Ah, did you, really? I lay awake last night, suffering, wishing I could be sure that you did care. Wishing that you were

in the room, close to me, so that I could put out my hand and feel your warmth, your strength."

"You sweet, you darling!" he exclaimed. He took her into his arms impetuously, but she gave a little cry and he loosened his grip, and kissed her with great care instead of wildly, as he had intended to do. She faded from his clasp, and huddled at one end of the sofa, looking small and lost and forlorn; her fair gold hair slightly mussed, her mouth unhappy. He took her hand and kissed it, and then he sat down beside her, and opened the boxes, one after another.

"I guess this shows how much I care, doesn't it?" he asked eagerly, happily.

She leaned forward; then perhaps she thought better of that sudden movement, because she sat back languidly, while he drew from the large box two beautiful silver fox skins and from the small one a pair of diamond earrings, lovely and fragile and striking.

"Like 'em?"

"They're—simply — beautiful!" she said. Her voice broke on the last word, as if she could not help a little sob. She put her hand up to her face suddenly and started to cry, as a child might cry. He bent close, his arm curved about her, carefully, his face distracted.

"Lila, darling darling, what is it? Are you suffering so much? Have I done anything to hurt you? Darling, I can't bear to see you like this. I simply can't stand it! You *must* tell me!"

"It's nothing, absolutely nothing!" her voice was beautifully martyred, stubborn, bitterly desolate. Tears fell down her cheeks, and he wiped them away, with deft gestures.

"But it can't be nothing, Lila. It isn't like you to weep about nothing. Some women, yes, but not you. You must tell me. Something has hap-

pened to hurt you—is it something I've said, or done?"

"It's nothing you've done," she whispered, as one who forms her words with difficulty, fighting against tears.

"Then what is it?"

"It's just— Oh, Arthur——"

"What? Tell me, Lila."

"You bring me such beautiful things——"

"I'd like to bring you all the beautiful things in the world. But you can't tell me that's anything to cry about!"

"It is, though. Because you give big gifts and all I want is such a small one, such a little thing! One that will cost you nothing! Something so simple—and yet I feel like a beggar, asking for it."

"Lila, belovedest, you know I'd get you the moon if you said you wanted it. I don't give a damn about anything in the world but you. If you'll only tell me——"

She turned the lovely oval of her face straight, facing him. Her eyes were large and luminous with tears. She fingered his lapel with one hand, a slim white hand, as if she was strangely shy. She said, very slowly, almost as if she was ashamed of what she was saying. She breathed, huskily:

"If you'd only stay here tonight! Just tonight with me, because I'm so alone! Oh, dearest, I know I'm asking a lot, but——"

"Lila! Sweet!" There was a great pleased pride, a masculine vanity, in his voice. "I'm so flattered that you want me. I love having you want me! I'd stay in a minute, you know I would. But this is Friday night, have you forgotten, dearest?"

"Friday night——?"

"We're having a dinner party. Olga's having a dinner party, for the Senator, I told you that, last week. I can't skip that, Lila. Any other night——"

She started crying again, sobbing painfully. She pushed him away when he tried to comfort her. She sobbed, thickly.

"Any other night wouldn't do. I'm sick tonight. I'm bitterly unhappy, tonight. I only want you. Not things that cost money. Not things to show the world. Just you!"

"Lila, you're being unreasonable."

"And you put a silly dinner before me!"

"It isn't that!"

"You care more about pleasing her—about pleasing an old woman who never gives you a thought—a woman who isn't charming or beautiful or clever, or anything at all!"

"It isn't pleasing her. It's considering appearances!"

"I don't believe that!" Her voice rose hysterically. He sat, looking suddenly older, weary, as if this was a thing he had gone through before. "But you know it's true! I know it's true that you always consider Olga before you do me!" she cried bitterly, wildly. "Tonight, for instance, when I'm sick, suffering and alone, you have to go home to dinner; either to please her or because you're afraid of her!"

"We've gone all over this. You know how I feel about Olga. She's nothing to me. But I can't afford a divorce now. You know that. All I do is the least possible in the way of keeping up a public pretense. It's only decent!"

She started to cry loudly. When he tried to take her in his arms, she pulled away, and ran to the other side of the room, leaning against the back of a tall chair, staring at him with tortured eyes.

"Yes, it's only decent! I know that! I know all about it! Only you see there are times like tonight when I can't stand it! Even if you do love me best—even if you do care for me—I just can't stand it, dear." She was trying to make a piteous

attempt to pull herself together, to stop sobbing. "Times like this when I just want to see you for a day or two, until I can forget, that in the eye of the public, she belongs to you, you belong to her, and I'm nowhere! Just nowhere at all!"

"Except in my heart."

She smiled gratefully through her tears. "Oh, I love to have you say things like that! But, Arthur, don't misunderstand, don't get angry, but somehow your not being able to be with me tonight does something to me—hurts so dreadfully, that I think if we didn't see each other for two or three days, it would be better. Give me time to get myself together, time to act as reasonably as you want me to."

"Darling, but we'd planned luncheon tomorrow and a matinée" he began, disappointedly. She brushed the words aside, going close to him, lifting her face pleadingly:

"I know. It hurts me to give up anything I might do with you. But there are greater hurts. I have to fight them out alone! You understand, where another man would be too stupid to do so, dear. You realize that it is for your sake as well as mine, for the sake of keeping our love free from fusses, that for the next two or three days—say, until Monday, when I'll be over this cold, feeling, and quite myself, that we'd better not see each other, not even talk to each other over the phone." She kissed him and went on persuasively: "You'll give me my way about it, Arthur, to make up for the fact that I'll have to be so terribly alone tonight and I'll be bitter. I don't want to be, but I won't be able to help it. I'll cry in the dark all night, tomorrow I'll face things myself, face them, and banish all the ugly thoughts that spoil our times together."

"I understand," the man said, a little heavily. He put his arms about

her, and held her close, and kissed her, too, three times. "I'll not even call you, until I hear from you, Monday. But it will be a terribly long, lonely week-end——"

"For both of us—but the best thing!"

"Maybe you're right. You won't mind if I send you some roses—just a few?"

She laughed, tenderly. "Roses—champagne—guinea hen—caviar! Anything you wish."

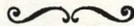
"Then I'll send all of them."

It took him a long time to kiss her good-by, give her orders about taking care of herself. He was gone, the door was shut behind him, finally. The woman leaned against the door, drew a long breath, and changed, subtly.

It was as though suddenly new vigor, new life, new strength rushed through her veins, at his going. She rushed across to the telephone. She dialed a number with fingers that shook with eagerness. She waited,

the telephone pressed against her beating heart, her cheeks flushed.

"Jack? Hello, hello, Jack? Lila, honey, listen. It's all right. For the week-end, I mean. I can go out to the country with you. I got rid of my—er—elderly relative with practically no trouble. He had to see some relatives on his wife's side. He won't be around until Monday and we'll have our three days together in the country! Three short, heavenly days of love!" She laughed, at what he was saying over the telephone. She shook her head, as if in reproof of some boldness. She cried gayly: "If you talk like that now, I'll be afraid to go with you! I didn't know you were such a wild man! Oh, and listen, sweet. Put a hamper in the back of your car. I'm expecting some things, gifts, from a friend. Caviar, guinea hen, and some champagne. It'll be fun to have a midnight supper, on the balcony—" She breathed, into the phone: "Good-by, for half an hour. But, oh, do come soon!"



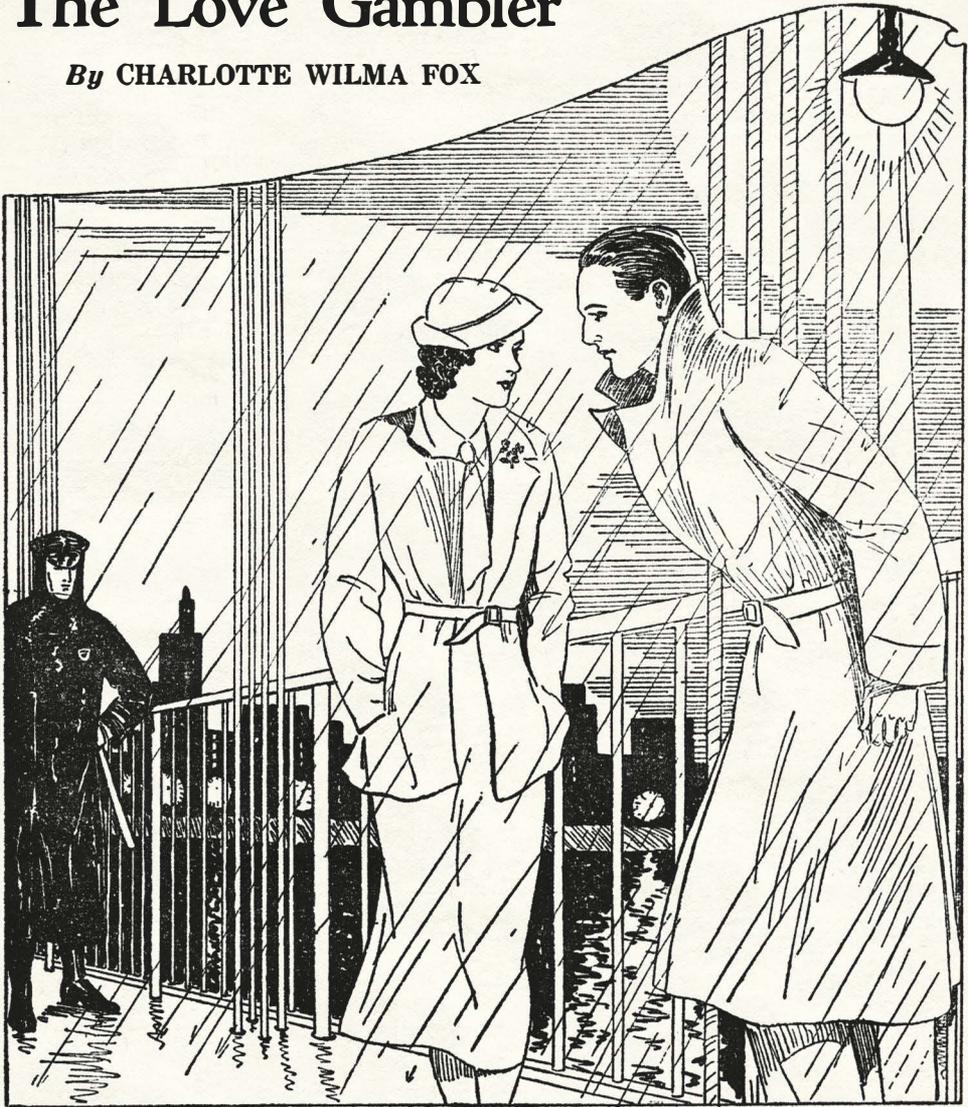
## COMPROMISED

*By Fred B. Mann*

She wondered should she ask him in,  
 Or should she say good night;  
 She didn't want to get in wrong,  
 Nor do what wasn't right.  
 Uncertain, then, just what to do,  
 She chose a middle ground—  
 They sat upon the porch until  
 The milkman came around.

# The Love Gambler

By CHARLOTTE WILMA FOX



**A**RABY LAND had waited until dusk. The bridge over the quiet, swift-flowing river would be more deserted then because of the intermittent rains. When the hands of the clock, in a tower dimly visible through the mist, but high against the sky-line, pointed to six, she would climb up to the top of the steel cables and jump off. There was a spot in the very middle. She had chosen it carefully. The water ran

deeply there with a dangerous undercurrent. It would all be over in a heart-beat. Her zero hour was approaching. She looked up at the murky, unfriendly sky and down at the eddy stream with its white-tipped, greenish depths boiling in sinister circles.

A little involuntary shiver shook her, but she pressed her lips convulsively together. Sharp, criss-cross lines blurred her vision and far be-

low, distorted, gnomelike figures were leaping crazily in a sort of fantastic dance. Their waving arms seemed to be gesturing to her—in-  
viting her urgently to join them.

In the back of her mind, however, she knew, with familiar certainty, that she was giddy and slightly light-headed because of a cruelly empty stomach, empty since last night.

The idea of self-destruction had been haunting her all day. She had been unable to shake it off. It had first started as she stood on the street corner in the rain with discouragement wrapping her spirits in a cloud as gray as the weather. Her feet were wet. Her hands in their worn gloves, were cold. Her mouth drooped like an inverted bow.

"Take a look at yourself," she taunted her forlorn image in a show window as she passed. "You're just another chorus girl, broke and out of a job, and perilously near the end of your rope. So what?"

Pedestrians were scurrying into office buildings to escape the cold, drenching rain, but heedlessly, Araby stood and watched with fascinated eyes a poignant little drama of the gutter. The last of the winter snows had melted and with tiny, querulous gurgles the swollen waters ran mud-dily toward the sewers. There, borne relentlessly on its tide, a small flotsam white rose was making a gallant fight against ultimate destruction. Twisting, turning, resisting, it spun resolutely around and around, until, wet through and soggy, the brave derelict was submerged and swept irresistibly onward to its obvious destiny—the manhole grating that sucked it down avidly. When it was lost to view Araby had sighed sharply regretfully, and turned bitter, disillusioned eyes on the hurrying tide of humanity indifferent alike to the growing panic on a girl's pale young face and the tragic fate of a discarded flower.

She had come to the city so hopefully a year ago bringing with her that distinctive brand of dewy innocence that had been fostered in a small town, and a lilting voice that had soloed constantly in the choir there.

A sad tragedy that had ended violently the lives of both parents had left a never-to-be forgotten mark upon her soul. Now, after a year she was still virtuous, but not innocent. Her seraphic blue eyes were wide open to the pretense and intrigue that went on in the back-stage everyday drama of the glorified girlie shows on Broadway.

The hardening process had been subtle and gradual. At first she had blushed in agonized shame at the sight of her firm, milky young-girl body stripped almost naked of every vestige of covering. If only they hadn't placed her in the first row, she had protested to Adrienne, the warm-hearted, lively little redhead who had befriended her.

"Don't be a hick, kid," that hard-boiled young trouper had warned, good naturedly, "at least, not any longer than you can help. Show business is show business and they don't hide a face and figure as easy on the eyes as yours in the back row. You'll get used to it. It's a break I'd give my right ear for."

For a long time Araby had never clothed, or rather unclothed, her glamorous young body in artfully inadequate applied flowers over firm, pink breasts nightly, or slipped the tempting roundness of bare, tapering legs into the briefest of satin shorts without a shiver of fastidious rebellion. After a fashion she had grown used to it; used to the fact that seductive figures plus a pretty face constituted an asset that gay, greedy Broadway literally ate up year after year. But she had remained curiously aloof from the other girls and had made few friends.

Broadway's idle play-boys had strained to "make her," but at parties she appeared bored, indifferent, when she was only stunned from trying to absorb too much of life at one gulp. She had been tagged "dumb cluck," "mystery girl," and "snow maiden" on various occasions.

"She's a ritzy little piece. You'd think she was the Queen of Sheba or something," snorted one girl in disgust.

"That's why she's in the front row. It takes class and she *is* different," had been another's sage deduction.

But Araby knew that she just didn't belong, and definitely never would. She had lived, unhappily, in a sort of No Man's Land of her own making.

Then, abruptly, the show had closed and had pitched her, head first, out of work. She had tramped the streets day after day with failure dogging her footsteps like foul black bats flying. New York, it seemed, was crammed with show girls with pretty legs, the ability to carry a dance routine and a fairly good singing voice.

As she had walked down the street in the rain today, her eyes had encountered an arresting sign over a movie theatre. It bore the legend, "Death, Take My Hand." Well, why not? The idea intrigued her. Why fight on any longer? Perhaps, like that drifting white rose in the gutter, she too, was predestined for annihilation. The city was breaking her heart.

At the next corner a careless taxi had skidded sharply to a stop as the warning red light had flashed. A shower of muddy water flew up suddenly from the sliding tires and splashed her from head to foot. She had looked down in dismay at the stains on her worn tweed swagger suit and up again in furious resentment at the occupants of the vehicle. But oblivious to everything

about them, the man and the woman inside were quarreling with whole-hearted abandon.

The man was Colin Heather, the young, good-looking backer of "Lovely Lady" which had closed so disastrously two months ago for Araby. The woman was Lotus Cleve. Colin's slim attractiveness had caused a flutter of anticipation among the predatory dolls of the chorus on his very first appearance backstage. Did he prefer blondes, little and cuddly, or did he have a yen for tall, statuette brunettes?

Eventually his choice had fallen upon the most glamorous girl of all, Circe-like Lotus Cleve. Lotus, who had everything. From the soles of her gay, dancing feet to the crown of her golden head she was desirable to men—and was serenely aware of it. She wasn't a one-man girl, but Colin hadn't known that. He was completely enslaved.

Then, without warning, a strange thing had happened to obscure little Araby Land. She had fallen hopelessly in love with Colin Heather. A Colin who saw nothing and no one but Lotus, the star of the show. It was curious, but Colin had been the only man who had ever intrigued Araby's desire in all her brief young life. She wondered why she couldn't set traps for him; challenge his attention; make him notice her as the other girls did. She was sure he never even knew that she existed. Yet, in the secret sanctuary of her soul, she had confessed, fearfully, to herself that if she ever yielded to any man it would be to Colin whose eyes were the eyes of a dreamer and whose mouth was the sensitive one of the idealist, born to love and to suffer deeply.

Standing now on the bridge, waiting, she was thinking of the gossip that had gone the rounds of the theatre.

"He's married, but he doesn't live

with his wife. He's mad about Cleve, and she'll use him like she does all of them. One man was never enough for her."

Lotus' lovely face had been flushed with rebellion this afternoon. "You don't own me," she had screamed, and her voice had carried clearly to Araby's ears. "I can't help it if I'm tired to death of you. I'm going to him—and you can't stop me!"

"Lotus, you don't—you can't mean that!" his voice had said hoarsely. "You—you're upset. Why, darling, I love you so." He had tried to take the furious girl in his arms.

At that moment the taxi had jerked forward, but not before Colin's serious dark eyes, filled with sick and tortured misery had met Araby's. That glance was, somehow, so filled with helpless bewilderment that she longed to comfort him, to take his dark head on her breast. Also, she had had a sudden wild impulse to slap Lotus Cleve, hard and repeatedly.

Araby had known with sudden wisdom, as she'd plodded wearily up the street, brushing aimlessly at the muddy blobs of water on her skirt, that she would have given anything that life demanded to be in Lotus Cleve's shoes. . . .

Her hour was striking. It was time. The hands of the clock were pointing to six. Almost unconsciously her lips whispered a little prayer. She placed a firm, calculating foot on the lowest cable of the bridge. It would be so easy. She started upward, casting a swift, furtive glance to left and right. Best to be sure no one was watching! No one was. But, with a gasp of incredible amazement, she saw, not ten yards away, the hatless figure of a man in the very act of clambering inexpertly upward, even as she was doing. His arms were outstretched. He strained to lift himself. There was grim purpose in his action, undeniable de-

termination in the frantic fling of his body against the taut steel ropes. He turned his head. Their startled glances met—and locked.

Simultaneously they both stepped down and backward, hastily, guiltily, and then, as if drawn by a magnet, came slowly toward each other, staring wordlessly. Each young face was alive with the same curious indignation, even frustration, that held a hint of irritated defeat.

Araby thought she must be dreaming. She rubbed away drops of moisture from her blurred eyes and looked again. The man was Colin Heather and he was very drunk. His clean-cut, aristocratic face was white and his well-shaped mouth reckless and more than a little sulky. He bowed to her with exaggerated politeness. There was a fever-bright glitter about his eyes that, at any other time, would have alarmed her.

"What do you make of this?" he wanted to know, violently. "A suicide pact, or something?"

"What do you think?" she returned bitterly. "I'm not a mind reader."

He took her in, then, from head to foot with a hotly appraising glance that seemed to miss nothing. He wagged his head solemnly, disapprovingly at the hollows under the wide blue-gentian eyes fringed with coal-black, up-curling lashes guiltless of mascara; at the small, smart hat that perked so gallantly up at one side to show the soft curls gleaming beneath.

She stood still under his scrutiny. "Well!" she offered at last.

"I've seen you somewhere before," he suddenly asserted, "but—" he frowned, "I can't remember where."

"Does it matter?" asked the twisted, sardonic lips. "This hasn't been exactly a break for me. Suppose you exit gracefully. You're very much in the way."

"Is that so?" he snapped, grimly. "Well, I picked out this place all by

myself and I didn't figure on spectators, either." She smiled faintly. He reminded her so much of a small boy arguing fiercely about whether or not it was his turn at bat that she forgot, momentarily, her own problems. "Besides," he went on triumphantly, "it's anybody's bridge and anybody's river. You haven't bought it, by any chance, have you?"

She grinned again, a tight little grin that warmed only her ardent mouth, but left her eyes cold and unsmiling.

"I couldn't buy even a half-pint ripple of it," she said moodily. "You see, I spent my last nickel on this!" She pointed at the spray of spring arbutus that flaunted itself gayly on her coat lapel. "I didn't need the nickel and—well, somebody had to bring flowers." Her bright, mocking eyes flicked his for the fraction of a second.

"You little idiot," he thundered, sternly, "you should have bought a cup of coffee instead of trying to dramatize yourself."

"So should you," she said unexpectedly. "What's your alibi like?"

"Well, you see," he confided, thickly, lowering his voice to an intimate whisper, "there's twenty million people too many in the world today. Fact, according to the latest statistics—and so——"

"That isn't the reason," she interrupted, firmly, "you've quarreled with the girl friend, took about seven man-size drinks; began to feel sorry for yourself and decided to end it all."

He stared at her reproachfully. "Who's telling this story, you or me?" he questioned, with solemn amazement. "Now, what's your excuse?"

"Mine? Oh, well, maybe I saw a blue moon down there in the water, and thought I'd grab it before it got away. Will that do?"

At that moment a big policeman muffled to the ears in oilskins, came

leisurely toward them swinging his club.

"Now, what's the idea of you two standing here arguing on a dirty night like this?" he demanded authoritatively. "Sure, I've been after watching yez."

They began to protest, both talking at once.

"We aren't arguing—you see, officer, we——"

"G'wan wid yez," said John Law gruffly. "Me orders is to kape folks movin' on this here bridge. No loiterin' y' understand."

"I know, but we aren't harming any one," Araby began, "and—well——"

"Don't give me any of your lip, young woman, or I'll run yez both in as vagrants," he roared suddenly. "Your man's tight. Take him home if yez both don't want to sleep in the station."

The rain was peppering down again in a businesslike fashion. They started to run impulsively. The warm clasp of Colin's firm, guiding hand on her arm brought strange and unaccustomed comfort to Araby. Like two orphans of the storm they scampered away into the fast gathering darkness.

"My apartment. It's down this street. Hurry! Can you make it?" panted Colin as they paused in the shelter of a doorway. She could—and did. But they were both soaking wet before shelter was reached. Araby shivered with cold and nervous re-action.

In the exquisitely dainty bedroom of the modernistic apartment she slipped out of her sodden garments and with a big, fluffy bath-towel rubbed her firm, polished body until it glowed pink as a lustrous pearl under the shaded lamps. Her thick, dark hair dried in tender clinging little ringlets that framed her small wistful face. She had sensed, instinctively, that this was a woman's

room, when she had entered it. Lotus Cleve's room, of course.

She pulled out the sandalwood drawers of the oddly shaped black and gold highboy and found dozens of filmy undies and stockings. She selected a silken bra, hose and a pair of scanties and looked around for an outer garment. Opening the mirrored closet door she found it bulging with feminine wearing apparel. There were sheer chiffons, trailing evening frocks of satin, gold lamé and lace; distinctive sport clothes, street suits and a gorgeous sable wrap. Araby shrugged. So Lotus had walked out on all this. She must have gone berserk, she argued, for Lotus was known to be a greedy, acquisitive little animal.

Araby appropriated without ceremony, a satiny apricot *négligé* from its scented hanger and put it on. It turned out to be a shade scant and left exposed alluring glimpses of Venus-like curving lines of loveliness melting seductively into delicate ankles and feet. She wrinkled her nose and decided it would have to do.

In the huge living-room cheerful logs were burning in the wide fireplace and a table with a silver hotel service for two had been drawn cosily up before the reddening blaze. Colin had had a pick-me-up and it had partially sobered him. He came out of his bedroom looking more attractive than ever in a luxurious wine-colored dressing-gown that accentuated the clear olive of his skin. Just now his face showed a virile tinge of red on the high cheekbones.

"Get fixed up okay?" he asked, regarding her with an appreciative light in his eyes.

She nodded and curled herself up among the deep-piled silk and velvet cushions of the divan. She watched him silently as he proceeded, dexterously, to mix the cocktails.

"Here's to you, beautiful lady of

the storm," he said evenly, touching his glass lightly to hers.

"We should drink," she replied gravely, "to Kismet, or whatever it was that horned in at the psychological moment, don't you think?"

"That'll do nicely," he assured her. "Are you glad it happened this way?"

"It was a strange twist of circumstances," she said slowly, musingly. The cocktail was warming her chilled blood. "Almost as if it were meant to be."

"Perhaps we needed each other," he said seriously. "Who knows?"

Politely, he served her chicken à la King from the gleaming casserole, a crisp green salad, tender baby peas, amber coffee. There were even flavorful little tartlets, secured, she was sure, from the delicatessen around the corner. She ate daintily, and once when she raised her eyes to his, he saw that they were filled with tears.

"Are you always so hospitable to street waifs—on nights like this?" she asked, choking back a little sob.

"But you're not—and it's nothing," he expostulated, rather incoherently. "You've saved me from the blue devils. You know," he went on with a swift gesture, "the kind that have extra large hoofs and horns."

"Of course I know," she returned, promptly. "I'm really very well acquainted with that sort myself. They're rather formidable."

"Right-o! So you see we know the same people. We're really not strangers."

Her silent gaze traveled around the luxury that closed them in. Lingered on the silk-draped windows outside of which the storm had broken out with redoubled fury. Thunder, like Big Bertha guns, was clamoring out a rolling salute and picturesque flashes of lightning lit up the big room like lurid torches of silver flame. Rain flung itself in angry pellets of sound against the balcony outside. She thought of the

eddy circles in the cold, merciless river and shuddered.

"But, you see," she said, softly, "I know who you are. You're Colin Heather. And my name's Araby—Araby Land."

"If my memory serves me rightly, you're the girl in the front row of that flop show I backed who always seemed to be hiding behind Lotus Cleve when she did her numbers," he exclaimed, in a burst of triumph.

She blushed and stammered: "I—well, you see I never liked chorus work and—"

"Neither did I," he confessed. "The only thing I got out of that deal was Lotus, and well,—I haven't got her now. She's passed me up for some one else and it hurts like hell."

He lit her cigarette and they smoked in silence listening to the rain beat against the windows.

"It's happened before," he went on, sombre eyes on the blaze. "I've always waited until she got tired, and then taken her back gladly. She's become a habit I can't break. I'm a fool! An utter fool!"

"Aren't we all fools?" she put in gently.

He raised a suddenly tortured face. "She's ruthless, heartless! I know that now, but, oh, God," he went on vehemently, "she's like a subtle drug. I can't resist her. She's driving me crazy. Making me forget that I'm a human being with a will of my own. Making me forget everything!"

He got up and paced the room raving like a madman while she watched with an almost divine pity and understanding the banners of defeat and anguish fluttering in his dark face. At last he came over to Araby and pulled her to her feet with one impulsive movement. His eyes burned into hers. He held her smooth slimness hard against him. His kisses were bruising, savage, desperate.

"Look at me, my girl," he said harshly, "am I poison ivy or some-

thing? Can't I hold a woman's love? Is there anything wrong with me?"

She met his eyes unflinchingly. "How could there be?" she said simply, soothingly. "What you've known is passion—not love. The two are far, far apart."

The light of sanity returned to his eyes. He grew calmer, more controlled. He drew her down again on the couch beside him and cupped her face gently in his hands.

"How wise and sane you are," he marveled, and then: "Tell me, Araby, do you think there's a cure for a mind diseased; for a man bewitched by an evil spell?"

"Why not?" she asked in a low voice. "If the man really wants to fight back."

"I do want to," he told her earnestly. "Araby, would you—help?"

"You mean—you're asking me to—"

"I'm asking you to take pity on a desperate man, my dear. Don't leave me tonight. I'm afraid of myself; of what I might do!" His eyes searched her face for understanding. "I need you so. You're the sort of girl I've always needed," he said, huskily, again, when she did not speak. "I'll be good to you—so good. I can't marry you. My wife,—well, perhaps you know about her, but you shall have everything else—and no questions about the past. We'll start even."

She raised honest eyes to his, at last. "You need a counter-interest, don't you," she deducted, thoughtfully, "and it's got to be feminine. You want me to be installed in her place when—and if—she comes back. That's it, isn't it?"

They talked it all over frankly and without pretense while the storm blew itself into a gentle drizzle outside. . . .

He slept that night with his weary dark head pillowed on her breast. And when the morning sun broke

upon a fresh and sparkling world he awoke and kissed her red lips gently, again and again and she clung to him with passion. It was surprising that she found herself without even one small regret for giving herself completely and without reserve to the man she loved. . . .

In the months that followed, Araby Land learned how utterly unhappy can be a man whose money could buy any material thing his heart desired. Colin had married a spoiled, neurotic girl whose life was spent flitting restlessly from one expensive health resort to another on the Continent. In the early days of their honeymoon she had gone into hysterics at the very mention of children.

"You should have married one of those emigrant women one sees down in the foreign quarter," she had told him peevishly, "with a shawl on her head and a child on either hip, plus an army at her skirts."

The picture had appalled her. She had staged a violent tantrum and promptly moved herself and her belongings into another room. Deeply hurt, humiliated and turned back upon himself in this most natural and sacred of human relationships, he had never bothered her again.

Then, after a while, Lotus had come along. Lotus, with her Lorelei charm, her disturbing exotic beauty and her torrid, demanding caresses. Lotus, with her indescribable, devastating power to make men ache to kiss her and kill her all in the same breath. He had poured out upon her all his pent-up passion; all the depth of desire and worship of which his strong man's nature was capable. She had laughed at him and left him, periodically, sure that he would be waiting when she returned.

"She's like a hot, deadly simoon that sweeps over a desert oasis and leaves it barren of life," Colin told Araby. "But you, sweet, you're like the cool silver moonlight on a night

in June. You rest and comfort me."

Araby had laughed at that and told him, tenderly, that he was a poet. For the first time in her life she was happy—in love.

She discovered that Colin had a singularly elemental philosophy of life. He thrilled to the beating pulse of humanity. He was intrigued by simple things. They took a quiet house in the country for the summer. There were long serene evenings when they read together or sat hand in hand while she sang to him in that deeply sweet, tender voice of hers the songs he loved. They grew excited over the shy growth of a flower or the planning of a rock garden. They tramped the blue hills with a fishing-rod and one memorable night hung with breathless interest over the birth of four wriggling puppy-things and ministered to the proud, blue-ribbon Boston bull mother.

Long ago, in his turn, he had discovered that he was the first man in Araby's life. Her shy, sweet and wholly unsophisticated acceptance of the gowns and furs and jewels he lavished upon her, had deep charm for him.

He had been bored with life, felt cheated. Now, seen through Araby's eyes, life took on a new and deeper meaning. There was a joyous bubbling quality about the way Araby gave herself and her love that revealed the courage that was in her. Lotus had taken luxury for granted. Araby paid in appreciation. Lotus had drunk the wine of life without stopping to taste it. Araby sipped its bouquet daintily and let its fragrance linger on her lips even in retrospect. She shut her eyes to the evanescence of it all. Knowing it could not last, yet she clung to the joy of the moment and gambled on the future, with love as the desirable and exciting stake. It never occurred to her to regret. Sometimes she was sure Colin had forgotten Lotus and

her cruelty. Sometimes the tortured look in his eyes made her know that he never would.

There came a night when, dressed in an exquisite Paris creation of frosty silver cloth that silhouetted her young body excitingly with every lissome movement, they had gone dancing at the swankiest night club on the Avenue. Lotus was there! Gorgeous and arresting and provocative, laughing up lazily into the eyes of the man who was her latest protector and lover. She reminded Araby of an orchid, beautiful and expensive and breath-takingly vivid. She wore a jacket of glistening golden sequins and several diamond bracelets clung to the warm alabaster of her arms.

With a sharp stab of pain Araby knew suddenly the folly of ever hoping to teach Colin Heather to forget that unforgettable beauty or snatch him away from the magic of Lotus' spell-binding witchery. He danced with her. Araby expected that he would, but she was not prepared for the panther abandon of Lotus' swift and carefully trained technique.

"This man is mine," said the ravishingly allure in strange, almost Oriental eyes that drove men to madness with their promise of languorous delights to follow surrender. "Kiss me and desire—forever," said the contours of a passionate mouth, scarlet and indescribably perverse. Challenge, subtle and tempting in the sweeping grace of the sinuous figure that seemed to twine itself around Colin's as they danced, as her memory had twined itself invincibly around his heart.

To Araby the evening was one long litany of exquisite torture. Every sense suffered. She tried to smile; to hold her ebon head high while her slowly breaking heart lay in a little twisted, bleeding heap inside of her gallantly dancing body.

Going home in her little town car to her apartment, Colin's eyes held a

far-away expression. His replies to her comments on the evening were short and non-committal. An icy wall seemed to have reared itself between them. Neither mentioned Lotus, but Araby sensed that Colin was in one of his sombre moods. She did not see him the next day, and the sun went out of the sky. "Away on a business trip" reported his secretary in clipped business tones. A week passed, slowly.

Premonition haunted her like a black shadow and tore to shreds the security and intimately sweet companionship of the past golden months. Perhaps he was with Lotus. Perhaps like a drug addict he had gone back to the slave-chains with which she had bound him. Perhaps, even now he was in her arms ecstatic with the unquenchable flame of his desire for her. Their affair had ended. He would be ashamed—but powerless. . . .

Then Lotus came. She perched on the edge of a table in the simply furnished apartment looking like some rare tropical bird that had just escaped from its South Sea island home.

"You've stolen my man!" she announced without preamble, her eyelids drooping like creamy magnolia petals over dangerously slitted eyes. "And I've decided that I want him back." She had tossed her gloves on a table; her fur coat trailed carelessly from one chair. Her swanky bag occupied another. "This," she looked around arrogantly, "is mine, you know. Mine, just as Colin has always been mine."

"That is for Colin himself to decide," Araby Land said firmly, facing her rival with her slight figure drawn up very straight and erect.

"But—suppose he *has* decided," suggested Lotus significantly. "What could you do about it? Can't you see—"

"No, I don't see," interrupted Araby stubbornly. "Colin's a man."

He'd tell me himself. He knows what he wants."

She was wishing suddenly in a frenzy of despair that she had succeeded six months ago in plunging down into the swift current of the hungry river.

"Do you think so? Well, he wants *me*," Lotus reminded her sweetly, "You were just pinch-hitting, darling."

"And *you*?" Araby raised great sad eyes to Lotus'. "Do you know what you want? You've made him miserable. Are you sure you want to make him happy now?"

Lotus looked amused. "That's sentimental stuff and nonsense." She snapped her fingers eloquently. "Men—they're all alike. They want what comes high. They're happy when they get it." Her voice rang with cynicism.

"Not Colin," insisted Araby earnestly. "He's a simple person. He needs the normal things. The things that keep a man contented—sane. A home—children! He's like that. You see I—I love him. That's how I know."

Hard to say those words under the cool, laughing eyes with the flags of triumph already flying at top-mast within them.

"Well, every little sinner has an alibi of her own, I guess," Lotus said cheerfully. "Of course he'll make some kind of settlement on you. I'll see to that." Her voice was patronizing. Coolly she surveyed Araby, exhaling through delicate nostrils the thin blue smoke from her daintily monogrammed cigarette. Her eyes were cold.

Araby choked. "That wasn't necessary," she said wearily, but in a voice replete with dignity. "You don't really love Colin——"

"That isn't the point, you see. He loves me—he's my property!"

Araby shook her head. "You mean to take everything then and give

nothing? That's your code?" Her young voice was stern, accusing.

Lotus' eyes traveled speculatively over Araby's figure. "It ain't yours, evidently," she observed caustically. "You've gone off the deep end about him, haven't you? He'll ditch you, sure. Men don't appreciate——"

"What a liar you are, Lotus," said a quiet voice from the doorway, "and how wrong you are about the right kind of men."

Both girls whirled swiftly. Colin came into the room with deliberate, purposeful strides. He grasped Lotus's shoulders and shook her until her teeth rattled.

"You good-for-nothing little so and so," he said curtly. "What are you doing here? Answer me!"

Lotus stared at him. Then: "Why, I—I've come back to you, lamb. Lotus has come back home," she purred, innocently, placatingly, "Aren't you glad to see little Lotus?"

"Oh, skip it," he cut in rudely. "What lies have you been——"

"Colin," faltered Araby in a daze, "I thought you weren't——"

"I took a plane to the coast," he explained rapidly, turning to her with his eyes alight. "My—my wife was hurt in an accident. I didn't want to tell you—until——"

"I'm glad you went," said Araby softly. "Your place was there."

"But she died yesterday, didn't she, Colin?" interrupted Lotus insinuatingly, "I heard that she did—and so——"

"So you came back knowing I was free," said Colin gravely ironical. "I understand your solicitude, of course, Lotus. But it's too late. You see, I've found out the difference between passion—and real love!"

"I'll sue you for breach of promise, if you don't marry me, now," said Lotus, furiously. "After all I've been to you."

"Don't be silly, my dear." Colin raised his dark brows in serene

amusement. "What have you been to me or I to you? I was just a port-of-call. You never loved me."

"I did! I did!" stormed Lotus, her fair face transformed into a mask of ungovernable fury. "You've forgotten, because of this—this angel-faced Madonna. She—why, she's not even pretty. What's she got that I haven't?" she flushed sullenly.

"My love, for one thing," he answered, in a hushed, humble voice. His eyes challenged Lotus', but he drew Araby's slight body close to his side. "Can't you see, Lotus? There are two types of women who are misfits in this world. One's the wife

who ought to be a mistress—and the other's the mistress who ought to be a wife and mother."

"So what?" asked Lotus, flippantly, gathering up her coat and other scattered belongings.

"Just this," he retorted, promptly. "You're just a typical Broadway baby. Made that way. Araby,—well, Araby was intended to be just what she's going to be—my wife!"

Lotus accepted defeat gracefully at last. There would always be men—and more men for girls like Lotus. She shut the door of the apartment on a pair of lovers clasped in a rapturous embrace.



## MY BABY

*By L. B. Birdsall*

My baby walks, my baby talks,  
She's just as cute as she can be—  
I know she thinks the world of me.

My baby's eyes are like the skies,  
She has a saucy, upturned nose,  
A mouth inviting as a rose.

My baby's kiss is packed with bliss,  
And when she cuddles—gosh, it's nice!  
Just like a trip to Paradise.

My baby calls me "Pop," and falls  
Into my arms each time we meet—  
There never was a girl so sweet

As baby—oh! I love her so!  
But, boys, she takes a lot of gold—  
She's nearly twenty-one years old.

# Co-Respondent

By JOAN DAVIS

SIBYL swung her shapely ankles and regarded the tip of one brown pump. "You look so glum," she said coolly, "I'm not sure I want to eat luncheon with you."

"Sorry," apologized Tommy Grayson, 3d, "I may as well tell you that Jim Martin is going to divorce Jennifer—and name me co-respondent!"

"Oh!" the girl raised her head and looked at Tommy. She smiled, "Well, you deserve it, you've been quite shameless about that, really, you know."

Tommy lit a cigarette, "I'm not kicking, but it will be a bit of a shock to the family. However," he stood up, "they'll get over it. I'll marry Jen when the scandal has died down, it would be the only decent thing to do. Meantime, I'm going to New York until the divorce is over. Let's go have luncheon."

Sibyl did not stand up. She patted her brown, suède bag with a brown, suède glove.

"You know," she said casually, "we're both in the same boat. Louis Raymond's wife is naming me co-respondent in her divorce."

"No!" said Tommy. Then, as he looked at Sibyl, he went on: "Well, you deserve it, too."

"There is a way out for both of us, of course," Sibyl said quietly. "You could marry me right away."

"Clever girl!" Tommy paid her tribute. "We could go to that little place in West Virginia, right,—well, now. Then, when it is safe and the divorces are over you could go to Reno."

The girl stood up then, she was nearly as tall as Tommy and Tommy was very tall.

"I wonder why we didn't marry long ago," she said suddenly.

He laughed. "You were ambitious! Remember, you said you wanted to marry money."

"Oh, yes," she straightened her trim hat. "And you were a snob—you were afraid to introduce an O'Hara to the world as Mrs. Grayson!"

They stared at one another, cold and hostile, and remembered. Sibyl O'Hara, whose father was a book-keeper, met Deborah Raymond in high school, and there was something about the vivid flame of Sibyl that attracted cool Deborah Raymond, with her prim plaits and banded teeth. Sibyl, despite her careless laughter, the gay tumble of her hair which was the color of autumn cider and caressed the curve of rounded cheeks, had a clear, ordered mind. She was not slow to realize the value of friendship with a Raymond.

No one but determined Deborah could have managed it, so Sibyl was guest at her début party after both had graduated, and the glow of Sibyl O'Hara brought the stag line, bored with frightened or brash débutantes, to Sibyl's side. She became the fashion. Because women in the Raymond set discovered that to invite Sibyl was to insure plenty of top-hatted and tailed partners, Sibyl was taken up. Even after she became model in a smart gown shop patronized by the women of that same set by day,

her invitations for evening affairs continued to arrive.

Looking at Tommy in the noon sunshine, Sibyl thought, nothing is so hopeless as casual friendship with a man, the sort of friendship where you meet him for luncheon at a popular hotel, and discuss the theater in the grill. That's what has happened to us.

Sibyl loved Tommy the moment she met him. His eyes were laughing and restless, his mouth mocking, but looking at him you felt the thrill of being young and living. His family was one of the most respected in town. They owned a department store which was rapidly failing, a great, gray stone house on a hill, and an art collection. The older people shook their heads at Tommy and sighed because he shrugged at the idea of working—their children loved him because he played so beautifully.

They made a striking pair—Sibyl and Tommy. Sibyl, with her flirting eyes, so tall, bright hair as warm as her laughter; Tommy, blond curls tumbling on tanned forehead, his eager young body, his blue eyes always searching for something new and gay from life.

There was one night in May when they left the others and sat down by the lake under a tree pulsating with the heavy, waxen dogwood blossoms. Tommy had said:

"You are like your name, Sibyl! You're like a drop of crystal dew, hung on a chain moonbeam."

A little lump had pushed its way into Sibyl's throat, her eyes became misty and she had remembered that she hated poverty, that she must marry money, so she had laughed. "What a poet!" and tried to escape Tommy's arms. But she hadn't escaped them, and in a moment she hadn't wanted to. Sibyl had never forgotten that night, the song of white-encrusted waves, strips of silken moonlight, the dogwood blos-

soms, Tommy's face against hers. . . .

Standing in the hotel lobby, she remembered it all very clearly—and Tommy's eyes told her that he remembered, too. . . .

That night that had made them so close, had been the last for Tommy and Sibyl, the madcaps, so very much in love. Deborah Raymond had married, gone south. Her brother Louis and his cold wife came home from the west and Louis saw the sparkle in Sibyl's eyes, bought her diamonds to match it. Jennifer and Jim Martin, bored with France, came home. Jennifer's languid eyes had discovered Tommy and Tommy had warmed to an affair with a sophisticate. Sibyl, reviewing it all quickly in her heart, said:

"Let's not fight. If we're going to be married, let's hurry. You'll have to buy me a ring, there's a ten cent store across the street. One from there will do."

They were married by a justice of the peace and back at Tommy's apartment in time for dinner. Sibyl cooked it. Tommy, asking for a second helping of mashed potatoes, remarked:

"I never knew you could cook, Sib."

"Lot of things you never knew about me," Sibyl smiled coolly. "All poor girls can cook. More coffee, Tommy?"

"Yes, thanks." Tommy buttered a roll. "I'm going to New York tonight. You'd better come. People will think we've gone together, but you can take a later train. I'll send you checks for living expenses to your father's house, he can forward them. In six months you can get the divorce."

"How nicely you have it all planned," Sibyl told him.

He ignored the bitterness in her voice. "I suppose you'll marry Louis later."

"I suppose," said Sibyl. "Olives please, Tommy."

Just before he took her to his car to drive her home, Tommy went into his bedroom and came back with an emerald ring. He put it on her finger next to the cheap wedding-band. "It belonged to my mother. If she were living, she'd want you to have it—you saved the family honor this afternoon," said Tommy unemotionally.

"Part of my pay," Sibyl looked at the liquid green imprisoned in old gold setting.

"How practical you are," Tommy's voice was as cool as the cocktails they had before dinner.

When he had left her on the steps of her house, which needed painting, Sibyl stood in the moonlight, her lips, un-kissed, trembling. She laughed and laughed—until she realized that she was crying. Then she unlocked the front door. She shook her father's shoulder and flashed the light in his eyes.

"What's this?" he grunted angrily.

Sibyl kissed him. "I married Tommy Grayson this afternoon, Dad. I'm leaving for New York."

He was suddenly awake and Irishly tender. "I hope you'll be happy, baby."

"I'm not going on a honeymoon," said Sibyl, "I'm going to enter a hospital and train to be a nurse."

"A nurse now! Well," he grinned, "when you had pigtailed and your front teeth missin' you said you'd be a nurse some day. Then you changed your mind."

Sibyl kissed him again, "Yes,—I decided to marry a man in the Raymond set—and I did. I'm not rich and my husband doesn't love me! I've got a valuable emerald ring and maybe I can earn my self-respect." She laughed: "Don't mind me, Dad. I think I'm a little drunk. I'll send you my address. Good night."

Five months later, a note instead of the customary check arrived from Tommy. Things had "blown up"—

even the big stone house was gone. He couldn't even afford the divorce for a while. Sibyl smiled and tore the letter to bits. . . .

Three years later, Sibyl rushing along Broadway, came face to face with Tommy. He was in khaki and she saw that his mouth was no longer mocking or weak, but it still curled up at the corners so that you knew he was not taking life seriously. Sibyl held out her hands, the fingers with unpolished nails, gloveless, only the emerald winking like an Oriental god on the left hand.

"Hello, Tommy," her voice shook and she cursed it. "Why the khaki?"

He grinned, held her hands in his and she hoped he didn't realize that they were icy.

"After things went smash I had to get a job, and the only thing I knew how to do was fly," he explained. "So I got a job stunting in the movies. Uncle Stephen in Washington thought it wasn't dignified and got me to join the army air corps. But you, Sibyl,—I never saw you like this."

She looked down at her trim, tailored dress, her high-arched insteps that had forgotten the sensation of cobwebby stockings and rose out of cuban-heeled shoes in sensible, heavy silk.

"I'm almost a nurse now, you know," she laughed. "Only seven more months. You're looking well—and happy!"

"I—I thought you'd marry Louis," said Tommy.

"How straight to the point the dear boy is," Sibyl pulled her hands away and buried them in the pocket of her polo coat. "I've never been back since that morning I left. Dad comes to see me here sometimes. And you—" she was suddenly sweet and Sibyl sweet was a dangerous thing. "Do you ever see Jennifer?"

"No," Tommy was cool, and when Tommy was most cool you knew he

was boiling inside. "Jennifer went to London two years ago."

They stood silently then in the September sunshine, awkwardly staring at one another. Then Tommy spoke:

"Well, good-by, and good luck."

"Good-by," Sibyl smiled and added lightly. "Good luck."

She watched him weave through the crowds until a mist covered her eyes, and spilled upon her cheeks. Going into Huyler's she perched upon a stool, and ordered a cup of coffee. Then she remembered, she was Tommy Grayson's wife—and they hadn't mentioned a divorce. "I'll have two sugared doughnuts," she told the clerk and felt optimistic about life in general. Then another idea popped before her: he probably didn't have the money for a divorce, that was why he hadn't mentioned a divorce. "Never mind the doughnuts," Sibyl told the white-coated boy behind the counter. "I guess I'm not hungry, after all."

Sibyl graduated from the hospital as Sibyl O'Hara. She had kept her own name so that there would be no difficulties about training which often arose when a marriage was known. Her first case was Arthur Loomis, millionaire, publisher, widowed. The other nurses sighed. One voiced the sentiment of all. "No one in the world but Sibyl would have luck like that." When he was safely over pneumonia, Arthur Loomis' aunt insisted that Sibyl come to Florida to nurse him through convalescence.

If Sibyl of the old days had been fascinating in a low-cut red velvet evening gown with mink wrap open to reveal pearl skin and curves of two, soft mounds reminiscent of piled-up apple blossoms, Sibyl in sexless, starched white uniform was divine. Arthur Loomis had never known any one as beautiful as Sibyl, and it wasn't only her beauty, the little flames in her brown eyes, the

promise in her lips, it was a something within Sibyl. A something so vivid with eternal youth that you wanted to live forever and share it. There was the way she carried her head, the way her hands curved when she moved them, the vibrant softness of her voice. The night before she left for New York, Arthur Loomis asked Sibyl to marry him. She wrote immediately to Tommy and he came to her New York apartment on his first leave of absence.

He leaned his head against the cushions of the living-room couch, lit his pipe and reviewed:

"Well, you always wanted to marry a rich man. Now there's this Loomis chap that has asked you to marry him. You say you can afford the divorce. That's clear? Where do I come in?"

Sibyl's voice was as cool as the chain of moonbeam Tommy had described that night when he kissed the teasing little pocket of her throat.

"Perhaps you don't know, but it really is the style to tell one's husband there is to be a divorce. It seemed fair to tell you—and you wouldn't have to read about it in the papers then."

"Well," Tommy knocked the ashes from his pipe, pocketed it, "after all, our marriage didn't mean much. Fix it any way you like, old girl." He reached for his hat.

"Your manners are poor," Sibyl looked at him steadily. "Aren't you going to kiss me good-by for luck, Mr. Grayson?"

They stared at one another silently for a moment. Sibyl was suddenly frightened for Tommy's eyes puzzled. Then he straightened his shoulders, tossed his hat on the table.

"Sure," Tommy smiled agreeably. "Come here, Mrs. Grayson." He held out his arms and Sibyl was suddenly in them, holding him close so that she felt the heat of his heart, so that the prim pleats of her tailored dress

were against the dignified khaki of Tommy's uniform. Tommy's lips were suddenly hard, demanding, then he let her go and she smiled at him breathlessly, feeling his hands shaking upon her shoulders.

"Sibyl!" Tommy whispered. "You can't have a divorce!"

"Didn't say I wanted one," Sibyl told him. "I said I could afford it now, even if you couldn't. I didn't say I wanted to marry Arthur Loomis—I said *he* wanted to marry me. I told him no the night I left."

Tommy pulled her down into the comforting softness of the couch. "I never thought you gave a damn! I never thought that night by the lake meant anything to you. I thought you wanted to marry money and I never had much—my salary now is pretty low. I could have afforded the divorce, though I put it off because I was crazy about you."

Sibyl brushed her lips against his ear. "I just talked money because I thought you didn't care, Tommy. I wanted to hurt you some way. It's funny, but when people feel very deeply they often say the opposite of what they mean. I never forgot that

night—that's why I couldn't ever have married any one else. That's why——"

"But Louis——" Tommy asked.

"I used my brains," Sibyl told him and for a moment he caught a gleam of the cold, clever Sibyl who had traded a magnetic personality for material things that made life comfortable. "Any dumb girl can get gifts for something, darling; but I got mine for nothing! That was brains." Then she softened: "But I sent 'em back after I married you. I had the emerald that belonged to your mother—and the ten-cent-store wedding-ring."

Tommy kissed her lashes, the little pocket in her throat, the top of her head and the hair that was like autumn cider.

"You might have known I loved you—or I wouldn't have given you my mother's engagement ring," he told her.

Sibyl's fingers brushed his temples. "I have one confession, Tommy dear. Alice Raymond never was going to name me as a co-respondent; I made that up so that you would marry me!"



## I WANT A SILKEN NÉGLIGÉ!

*By Gladys Mary Houghton*

Black, as midnight in the country!  
 Sheer as cobwebs, fairy spun,  
 Silken like a rose's petals  
 And as fragile. . . Foolish One,  
 Silk is made for lovely ladies  
 Toiling not, in leisure spent.  
*Négligés*, when brass alarm-clock's  
 Set for five, were never meant!

# Sometimes It's Dangerous

By MARY SEARS



**S**IDNEY DORING swung along Fifth Avenue complacently pleased with the world and himself. He was pleasantly aware of the expensive smartness of his gray

tweeds, certain that his spats exactly matched the pearl-gray hue of his new fall hat.

This daily walk was becoming a habit. Soft easy life was adding

alarmingly to his weight. The light stick he carried was of course unnecessary. Carrying it, he thought, gave him an air of jaunty, nonchalant ease.

Up Fifth Avenue and through the park and back to the Markham Club for cocktails and a gossip with the boys about stocks and the news of the day. It had become a regular routine. In fact, frowningly, he realized the truth, his whole life was falling into set habits, all pleasant luxurious habits to be sure, but for a man still in his early forties perhaps not too exciting.

He forgot to admire his tall athletic figure in the glass of shop-windows as he pondered this new realization. For sometime he had been vaguely conscious that his life missed something. Now he knew what it was. His existence lacked exciting change and novelty. Life with Suzanne had been luxurious, but not thrilling, not exciting.

Ten sleek comfortable years marriage with Suzanne had brought him. Lucky day for him when the rich heiress had fallen for the struggling newspaper reporter. He had been sent to get a story from her, about her father's famous art collection, and the homely, stout girl had fallen in love with him.

Of course that had been as he always intended, finding an easy berth—money without working for it. He had been born lazy. He was even lazier now after years of indolent living. It would be quite impossible to work again, although, sometimes, when he was lying restlessly awake at night after too much liquor and rich food, he remembered there had been a certain thrill in hustling after an assignment, in trying to beat the other fellow to it, a certain gay recklessness about his erratic Bohemian life in Greenwich Village.

He had to admit that he had been rather bored lately, bored with his

new cars, selecting new clothes, bored looking up new pleasure cruises, bored following the races and his string of polo ponies which he paid some one else to ride. Suzanne was busy with shopping and bridge and following rigid reducing routines which only made her fatter.

However, he assured himself complacently, just being a trifle bored was really not disturbing at all. He could not honestly ask his life to be changed in any respect. He did not like to work and he did not have to. He did not have a single financial worry. Suzanne had always been generously extravagant with her money, spending it on him freely.

He was decidedly disgusted with his blue mental state. Certainly there was nothing about the crisp autumn afternoon to make one feel depressed. He felt more restlessly alive than he had for days which was probably the very reason for his depression, he decided suddenly with a jolt of misgiving. He felt too vitally alive for the tame stupid program ahead of him, visiting at the club and then home to Suzanne's garishly modern apartment, to smile at Suzanne across the orchids on the dinner-table and praise extravagantly the beauty of her new emerald necklace against her plump, soft neck.

The old life in Greenwich Village had lacked money, but never variety or interest. What a peppy girl Jill had been! What a beauty with her inky-black hair and sparkling brown eyes. How he had raced back from a successful assignment to tell her the good news. What a sympathetic sort of pal she had been the black days when everything went wrong. And always good sport enough to call him into her tiny apartment for coffee and sandwiches when he came home tired after long hard hours.

Sidney's super-polished shoes were treading the gravel of a park path, but he scarcely realized the change

from hard cement. Today, thoughts of the past seemed rebelliously rampant. Generally he did not let himself think much of Jill and her sparkling gay loveliness, so little, so full of vibrant life. No, it was not entirely pleasant to think of Jill because he could not think of her without an uncomfortable sense of self reproach, accusation. He shunned being uncomfortable even in his thoughts so he tried not to admit the truth, although he really knew it was so. He had handed Jill a raw deal, been the worst sort of a cad where she was concerned. Those days and days when she had nursed him through a bad siege of the flu, taking him into her apartment, doing everything for him because he had lost his job and was broke and absolutely penniless.

After he was well he stayed on with her. She wanted him to and he was, he thought, terribly in love with her. Of course they intended to get married as soon as he had a break of luck. Then Suzanne had come along. He had a chance to marry money and—well, he had just walked out on Jill.

Of course she might have made trouble, blackmail, law suits; might have tried in one way or another to get a slice of Suzanne's wealth herself. For weeks after his marriage he had watched the mail, nervously afraid he would see Jill's handwriting, find a letter containing threats. He had walked very little. He might encounter her on the street, in a shop. So he speeded about in his fast car.

After a while he had ceased worrying. Jill had kept right on being a good sport. She had loved him tremendously—it disturbed him sometimes, remembering how generously and extravagantly she had loved him, but Jill had courage and spunk. She could take a blow on the chin and still carry on.

As the years went on he felt sometimes a strong urge to look her up. Occasionally, Suzanne was away at some sanitarium for a rest cure. It would probably have been safe enough to spend an evening, now and then, with Jill. Yet he was a little afraid. Jill would be full of reproaches, or she might make demands, impossible demands. Or he might, in looking her up, discover unpleasant truths that would disturb him. Perhaps there had been a baby and Jill had died or committed suicide or something else horribly depressing. Far pleasanter to make believe that Jill was alive and well and successful. Deft clever fingers and a natural color sense had made the lamp-shades and novelties she contrived above the ordinary and very saleable.

So in spite of several very strong urging impulses to see her again Sidney had kept that door in his life firmly closed. With a discretion and caution that might have belonged to a much older man, he had been scrupulously careful not to disturb the comfortable solidarity and luxury of his life.

As his gaze wandered idly over the park, resting on playing children and nursemaids, his eyes suddenly widened in instinctive surprised alarm. Just ahead of him a young woman was sitting on a bench and something familiar in the figure's instinctive grace, or the proud pretty poise of the head startled him unpleasantly.

It could not be Jill. Greenwich Village was her part of town. Probably she was not in New York at all and that was why he had never heard from her or seen her. Thinking about her as he walked along had made his nerves jumpy and apprehensive.

Still—the red hat was like Jill and the cute smart way it was set on the glossy blackness of her hair. Jill had always had a way of wearing clothes. The dark cloth coat **this**

woman was wearing looked smart, had an air. Of course she looked, sitting there, absurdly young, but Jill had been much younger than himself.

There was a strange racing sensation in his heart that had been so comfortably dormant for a long time. In some subtle way, although the woman on the bench had not turned, he knew that it was Jill. He felt an almost irresistible impulse to speak her name, to go eagerly towards her, but caution restrained him. Better to leave the past alone lest it intrude upon the satisfying present. With a haste that was almost an undignified scurrying pace he retraced his steps.

Then he heard his name called in sweet, surprised accents. His first impulse was to quicken his steps, lose himself from her sight in a twisting path. But that would be making himself absurd and ridiculous. Natural pride made him stop and turn towards her slowly.

"Sidney!" Slim and lovely she was beside him. "How wonderful it is to see you again." Eagerly, she linked her arm through his, drew him back towards the bench.

His heart subsided to a more normal beat. Perhaps he was going to be very glad of this meeting. There would be no reproaches, no tears; and he was thankfully relieved that she looked so young, so radiant, not as if she had been through ghastly unpleasant experiences which would disturb him dreadfully to be told about.

"How young you look, Jill. How have you kept so unchanged?" he marveled, remembering Suzanne's sagging chin and the "crow's-feet" under her eyes.

Even here, close beside Jill, he could look into the lovely face under the pert red hat and see how fresh and unlined was the skin. Such a firmly rounded chin—such a young vivid mouth.

"I'm afraid you have changed a little, Sidney," she said gently. "You don't look at all like the lean hungry reporter who had very little sleep and very little food. There is a certain compensation in life I guess. Working hard for a living does often keep one fit, young. There's a certain excitement about wondering all the time whether you're going to make the grade or not that serves as a sort of tonic, pep stimulant."

He still looked at her intently. If it had not been absurd to think so he might have thought he detected relief in her voice when she said he had changed greatly. Certainly he had forgotten how beautiful she was. Not a sign of gray in the glossy blackness of her hair swooping back from the hat in deep soft waves. The silky jet black lashes curled back from brown eyes so darkly sparkling.

Suddenly he was eagerly excited to know all about this pretty Jill. How she had spent the last ten years, how she lived, and was she happy? But the same cautious restraint which had bound him so long stopped the questions on his lips. He really did not dare ask her what had happened to her after he left her.

Quite uncannily she seemed to understand his uneasiness.

"Let's not be too serious about this meeting," she coaxed, smiling. "Let's just be casual and nonchalant as if, well, as if we had just seen each other yesterday and would meet again tomorrow and everything was normal and ordinary. Let's just get the most pleasure out of this meeting today. We always did have fun together, Sidney. Let's go on—just having fun."

The wave of relief made him feel almost silly and boyish. Never such a good sport in the world as Jill! Not a tear, a complaint or a reproach. His heart seemed to expand with gratitude and thankfulness towards her. It was a long time since he

had been so conscious that he had a heart. It felt warm and excited.

"But don't run away, Jill," he begged. "We must talk some about ourselves. I can't tell you what it means to see you like this. I haven't felt so peppy, so keen and vitally alive for days."

He really had not felt so young for a long time. All nonsense about growing old. He had been bored—that was all! And now, today, when life had actually been seeming rather stale he had found Jill. What a thrill it was meeting an old love, raking over the embers of a fire which perhaps had never entirely gone out. Even his instinctive caution seemed to forget the truth of an old saying that sometimes the last hidden spark of an old fire was the most dangerous, the hardest to put out.

He wanted to prolong these novel, young and exciting sensations. They must go places, be gay. Jill would love that. She had always had such a capacity for getting fun out of even the most simple pleasures. It would be a thrill to take her to a really ritzy tea place, such a place as he could well afford now.

"Let's go somewhere and have tea, Jill," he begged eagerly, "to—well—to commemorate all the countless drinks of tea I used to have from those funny little yellow cups of yours."

She hesitated, but he thought her eyes through the curling fringe of lashes were wistfully eager too.

"I'd love to, only—is it all right for me to go. I wouldn't want to make trouble."

"Nonsense, I'm not in jail, even if I am married!" This time it was he who drew Jill's slim little hand through his arm. "No harm surely in a man just asking an old acquaintance in to a public place for a cup of tea. We'll go to a classy place, the kind we never could afford in the old days."

Sidney had remembered that Suzanne was playing in an auction bridge tournament and would not be home to ask embarrassing questions if he was late. In his easy, carefree life he had almost forgotten the sensation of suspense, but he felt it now. He was so afraid Jill would refuse and he had an overwhelming longing to take her somewhere, give her a good time. He wanted to see the old starry sparkles in her eyes, laughter curving her soft red mouth, a luscious gardenia against the dark fur of her coat.

But Jill flung aside hesitation gayly, with that light, impertinent ease he had always loved.

"Let's go places," she laughed. "I'd love to Sidney. What a lucky break—meeting you on my afternoon off."

Again he wanted to ask her how she lived and where she worked, but shrank from asking a question that might so easily re-open old wounds and grievances.

The orchestra was playing dance music and there wasn't time to talk much anyway, because they danced. Jill had always been crazy about dancing. She was so light, so soft in his arms that Sidney had a queer, shaken feeling when they walked back to their table.

"You are rich, aren't you, Sidney?" She looked up from a tall raspberry *parfait* with wide admiring eyes. "Years ago a place like this would have just been a fairy-tale—to us!"

"Of course it really isn't my money, just what Suzanne gives me," he explained, almost too hastily. Unconsciously, his expression was uneasy. Jill must not think he could give her money easily. Extravagant demands would place him in a very awkward predicament. Of course he would really like to give her a present, now and then, if he could safely do so without any risk. She really deserved something for being such a trump, such a darling.

"I must be getting home." She stood up looking at him, a little wistful droop to her smile that caught at his heart strangely.

He felt his pulses excitedly stirred, his heart throbbing heavily as he stared back at her. She looked chic with the glossy white sheen of the gardenias against her fur, beautiful in a subtly mysterious unfathomable way that made him blurt out with awkward impulsiveness:

"We—we mustn't lose track of each other again, Jill. Haven't you a telephone, a number I could call? What about a cozy dinner some night soon? Not perhaps in a place like this, but some quiet spot with secluded booths where we could be more alone. One of these days Suzanne will be trekking off to a rest cure again and then——"

"Okay with me. I'd like to be your little playmate when wifie's away," she laughed. "You really are a darling, Sidney. I'm tremendously glad we found each other again."

She was standing close behind, not touching him, except with the caress of her dark glowing eyes.

He put her in a taxi and afterwards remembered that the address was different, not Greenwich Village. He felt a pang of regret. Even if he had changed he would have liked to have her unchanged, her life just the same. Next time he really would ask her more questions. In his newly excited mood he knew that he would hardly be able to wait until Suzanne went away so it would be safe to see Jill again and—often. How wonderful had been Jill's love, to have forgiven so much and yet still be able to look at him with that lovely, worshipping light in her eyes.

He thought of her constantly for the next two days. He even wondered how he could have left her for Suzanne and money. His old love burned like new fire in his veins.

Then Suzanne went away into the

hills for a week-end of rest. Sidney, picking up the receiver to call Jill's number, felt young again,—Jill's lover.

The booth where they dined was cozily intimate with candle-light, a soft glow that painted beautiful dark shadows in Jill's eyes, jet black tonight above a simple scarlet dinner gown.

"I like that dress, Jill," Sidney told her, his gaze lingering warmly on the ivory sheen of her shoulders for the soft scarlet stuff was bound closely about her breasts and the bodice was minus shoulder-straps. "It doesn't look cheap. I'm so glad you've been successful, made money."

"Oh, I get along, Sid." Her light shrug dismissed the subject. "Tell me about yourself, all you've been doing."

Tonight he felt safe with her, reassured. He dared turn back to the past, incidents of their life together. But tactfully she, too, steered away from their parting. . . . The candles burned down!

"I must go." Slowly she drew a short velvet cape, black as her hair, about her shoulders.

He leaned towards her pleadingly.

"Let me go home with you this time, Jill," he implored. "I want to see where you live. You'd make it home wherever you were." He was remembering the tiny apartment, its shabbiness concealed by gay cheap cretonnes.

"All right," she nodded gayly. "Let's scram."

He felt a little sad in the taxi. Changes were depressing. He wished they were going to the Village, back to the little place where Jill's love had been so warm and protecting. He looked at her face, like an exotic tropical flower with its brilliant vivid coloring, yet he thought she looked wistful too.

He put his arm around her, felt her soft and fragrant and yielding against

him. His arm tightened. Now he knew what he had been missing for years, in spite of Suzanne's money. He had been missing *love*.

Jill's home was a two-room house-keeping apartment in a dingy brownstone house, inexpensively but charmingly furnished. He felt the "home" spirit of it as soon as he crossed the threshold. He never had felt that—not with Suzanne.

She made him comfortable in the biggest chair with a smoking stand beside him before she left him. Sidney's thoughts were strange and confused. What would it be like to really live in a little cheap place like this with Jill? What if he could find a job, find that it was not so impossible to work again? Would it be worth more than Suzanne's money? In his strange mood of reckless madness he almost thought it would. Yet if he could keep his wife's money and still have Jill for his sweetheart *that* would be the better way.

Jill came back in a silvery-white satin lounging robe, her feet in silver mules, came back with a tray bearing tall clinking glasses. There were tempting-looking drinks in bright red glasses, but Sidney was not looking at the tray. He was looking, fascinated, almost hypnotized, at Jill. If she had seemed beautiful before she took his breath away in this soft, clinging silvery robe. Every time she moved the supple shining folds seemed to outline the slim perfect grace of the figure beneath.

"You see," she explained smiling deeply into his eyes, "I had everything ready, your favorite Russian cigarettes and your pet 'Tom Collins' drink, because I hoped you would come.

"Remember, Sid, we used to drink like *this*." She seated herself on the arm of his chair, her free arm twined around his neck, the glossy blackness of her hair brushing his that was

already a grayish brown and getting suspiciously thin in patches.

The queer hard thumping of his heart was disturbing. Why hadn't he looked Jill up before? She was so dear, so forgiving; he knew now that it would have been perfectly safe. And he had never dared dream that it could be like *this*—that he could have Suzanne's money and—Jill too.

"Jill—darling." With a sudden gesture that was fiercely rough and not at all like the suave slightly bored man about town that Sidney had become, he pulled her down on his knees. "You're wonderful, darling—to be so sweet. You might have reproached me—hated me. How could I ever have left you, Jill?"

A soft perfumed finger closed his lips. "Don't talk about that terrible time," she whispered. "Let's just be happy."

Her lips crushed beneath his filled him with a dizzy mad excitement. He did not know he was holding her so close that she could scarcely breathe. He said, fierce hunger in his voice:

"Jill—let me stay. I'm mad about you, Jill. Don't be cruel. Don't send me away."

Her shining black head moved slightly on his shoulder. She saw his dark flushed face, the eager glitter of desire in his warm burning eyes.

She said softly—"No—Sid. I won't—send you away."

It was six o'clock when Suzanne walked into the apartment with two detectives. One minute past six when she informed Sidney crisply that he would at once be served with divorce papers and that the evidence was sufficient for a speedy complete divorce—without alimony.

When the door slammed behind the trio he looked at Jill pathetically in need of reassurance, encouragement. She would have to help him somehow.

Perhaps she could fix it up with Suzanne. A woman's wit was better than a man's. And, after all, it really was Jill's fault. The beautiful fascinating allure of her eyes had broken down the cautious habit of careful discretion which he had maintained for years.

"Jill—we've got to do something," he told her desperately. "I can't let Suzanne divorce me. I wouldn't have a nickel. It would kill me to go to work. Can't you think up some story to tell Suzanne that would pacify her? I felt safe—thought she was away. I wonder if she deliberately planned to trap me."

"It was *I* who trapped you, not Suzanne," said Jill's clear, strangely triumphant voice. "You poor boob. Did you really think I or any girl could forgive what you did to me? You actually thought it was possible that I still *loved* you. You've lost Suzanne's money, but I've earned a generous big slice of it by the success of tonight's adventure. You see, Suzanne *paid* me to interrupt your walk that afternoon in the park, gave me money for clothes to make myself alluringly beautiful to you, paid me to give her evidence for the divorce she's wanted for a long time."

Jill paused to smile mockingly into Sidney's ashen face before she went on.

"Suzanne was in despair wondering how she could trap you—you never looked at a girl—were so discreet until she thought of looking into your past. She found out about me, looked me up. I needed money pretty badly about then. You see, it hasn't

been just myself to look out for all this time. There's been—your *son* too. He's almost ten now and I've been pretty worried wondering how I could give him an education and a chance in life. And then Suzanne came with her plan. I thought it might work. Men find it fascinating and—sometimes dangerous—raking over the embers of an old love. Besides, there was something ironically just in the idea of taking money away from you, for your son, and a grim sort of justice in Suzanne, who had taken you away, paying me to lure you back again."

For a moment Sidney actually forgot that he had lost his comfortable luxurious berth in life. He felt queerly awed and wondering when he looked at Jill. He had a son whom he had never seen. He had looked at men with their sons and wondered what fatherhood would seem like.

"Jill," he said huskily, "maybe I can prove to you that I'm not an utter cad and sap if you'll let me. Let me stay here with you and—him, and try to find a job. I'll find work. I'll take care of you both someway. I—I'll be awfully good to you and—my son."

Jill's face was white, a little drawn, but her eyes flashed darkly with contempt and scorn. If there was a tiny quiver to her sensitive mouth, the crisp hardness of her voice counteracted it. She opened the door, handed Sidney his coat, his hat—his stick.

"Splendid ideas of yours, Sidney," she drawled in icy, bitter tones, "but unfortunately, they are—just ten years—*too late*."



# Side-Stepping Delilah

By HAZEL KELLER

EVE DAWSON leaned close to the watery mirror, retracing the pouting outline of a Cupid's bow over her firm lips. The dressing-room, although cleaner than most because the Wayside Inn was new, was blazing with light, stifling with powder, reeking with perfumed flesh. Gathering her long lace skirts carefully over her arm Eve stepped across the low sill on to the balcony.

Here was quiet and coolness. At the foot of the knoll water gurgled, frogs rasped peacefully and a million fireflies stitched tremulous diamonds on black velvet. Not bad, Eve thought wistfully. Perhaps there was no such thing as a stag party in the world! Then Jack Ritter struck three random chords, Rosie Moore whooped, and the party was in full swing.

A roar of applause, whistles, cheers; the party was warming up to Rosie. Al was using Rosie more and more of late. Not that you could blame him. Rosie fitted like a glove in the hand that reached out for extra business in the summer slump; Rosie was created for the good-time atmosphere Al needed; Rosie was everything that Eve wasn't. At first she'd had one number to Eve's three, now three to one, and if Eve didn't snap into it— Well! Eve shrugged, shuddered. If she was crowded out of the programme she'd have to work on the floor. She was short already, terribly short of the amount Flossie needed. Poor Flossie; poor silly broken Flossie! And poor Eve! Flossie's little flyer into love was costing them dear.

"Why aren't you in helping to show the boys a good time?" Eve started, and flinched. "That's quite a number the girls are putting on, but if the one you are dressed for is as good as the costume it ought to bring down the house!"

Eve moved hastily into the shadow, but replied without resentment:

"I hope it will; it's my specialty."

"Just what is your specialty?"

"Why, singing." The undercurrent of a sneer puzzled her. "I'm one of the entertainers."

"An entertainer!" A tall blur of a man, with white shirt sleeves rolled to where his elbows would be, his tone studied insult. "Entertaining covers a lot, doesn't it? From singing to—" He finished with a short phrase that brought Eve up, quivering. "Careful! Mama wash its mouth with soap!"

Never quarrel with a customer! So she allowed herself only a mild:

"I wonder that you're here, then."

"Not on my account, you can bet. A fool brother-in-law, and a little sister that can't stand much fooling. I'm here to see that it stops at fooling!" With strong fingers he stripped a slab of bark from the rail and burst, angrily: "Why can't you stay among your own kind, where they're used to you—not come out here to addle the brains of a few poor hayseeds?"

"Maybe they can take it," Eve gibed.

"Oh, them! It's the girls, their wives and sweethearts I'm thinking of. They can't compete; they don't

know how; decent girls—like my sister."

"I'll have you know I'm decent!" Eve's cigarette had burned to her fingers. She cast it over the rail as she would have cast him if she had been able. "I sing—it's my job, like clerking or typing. I sing, and I'm through. I don't go out on the floor! I'm as decent as any one's sister!"

"Decent!" He whirled her back into the oblong of light. "You side-stepping little Delilah!"

"You big bully!" Eve gasped. She struck at his hands, but he held her easily, his sardonic eyes stripping the lace from her as easily as he had stripped the bark from the rail. Struggling, raging, Eve had lost track of time until Al's outraged shout:

"Dawson! Get on the floor! Jack's played your cue twice!"

Crushing her floppy hat on to her head Eve stumbled through the dressing-room. A poor entrance to the floor, and though the audience wasn't critical, Al was. She was short of breath and her voice, never strong, came reedy and without its usual sweetness.

*"Shadowland lover, be near me!*

*Only my shadow can hear me—"*

Mechanically she crooned, swayed, offered her arms to the blur of faces and shirt fronts.

Side-stepping Delilah!

She missed the first step of the tricky interlude and fumbled along a beat behind the piano. The lights died and the orange spot bloomed, moonlike, behind her. A concerted deep breath from the men in front; she looked down at her body, silhouetted slim and black, "a torch in a fog!" She looked up at the impersonal sea of faces, seeing them separate into personalities, greedy, avid. Side-stepping Delilah! She felt sick and faint, her last note, written smooth and full, died away in a breath and she tumbled back into the shelter of the dressing-room.

"For heaven's sake, what ails you?" gasped Rosie.

"Moore, get with Jack for a couple of snappy singles. Move things along," Al's cold smooth voice. "Get out to work, girls, we won't use the ensemble. Nor you, Dawson; we'll use you on the floor. There's an extra; back table, left."

"I hope you're satisfied," Eve said to the extra, at back table, left; a man in a soft white shirt with rolled sleeves.

He was Steve Richter, and the sandy, foolish boy across the table was his brother-in-law, Bud Payne. Introductions were made by a pouting Cissie Evans, for Bud, without Eve's lifting a finger, had attached himself to her chariot wheels. Scowl as the dark-browed Steve might, it cheered Eve to block his efforts to watch over Bud. She kept the boy drinking and dancing until the rest had gone and Steve came, snarling:

"At least let him off to milk the cows!"

Bud was not unpleasant, although silly and a bore when he was drunk, which was, as the astute Cissie stated, as soon as he heard the pop of a cork. Cissie had recovered from her peeve, consoling herself with the gloomy Steve—in fact any of the girls would have consoled themselves likewise. Steve had money!

Rosie's two singles became permanent programme, a baby-faced bundle of dynamite took over Eve's Shadowland and made it the slightly slimy thing Al could use. Eve tapped, counting conscientiously, with the chorus, petted as was necessary, drank more than she should, so that her thrice-split drinks checks would go as far as possible across the gap between what she had and what she must have. Summer panted on its way. . . . Flossie's time came and passed, leaving Flossie and her baby both frail, needing special nursing. They would have to be taken to the

country until well into fall, the physician said easily. The baby wailed itself out of life and Eve coaxed money from Bud for that expense, Richter money. It appeared that all the property was in Steve's hands. But Steve was a good guy, Bud insisted, ol' Steve had sure loosened up. She oughtta be decent to Steve—dance with ol' Steve, that's a girl.

Steve, as usual, sneered while they swished through confetti and swayed under paper streamers.

"Why don't you pick on a man? Plenty here with bigger rolls than Bud." Eve could only wince as his sword found chinks in her armor; pressed against his hard shoulder she felt faint with hate. "But Bud's easy. He'll pay and never call for a show down. You don't dare risk giving value received! Side-stepper!"

"Oh, don't I?" Eve was sick with rage and pain. She wrenched from his arms and called: "Bud! You've been wanting to park; let's park!" Followed by the sheepish Bud she snatched a bottle of gin from a table and swept out into the darkness.

Dawn was greening the sky as they lurched down the rocky track from the Inn. A light shower had fallen, waking Bud from soggy slumber, and the road was greasy. Eve's heart was in her mouth. A dozen times she wished she had coaxed the wheel from Bud and tried to negotiate the hills into Ritterville herself.

The red roadster was Steve's. Swell of ol' Steve to leave it so Bud could take Eve to the train. Steve had sure got to be different; he always had been so darn religious, but now he could stand up to a good time as well as Bud could! Look how he'd teamed with Bud all summer!

"You poor dumb bunny," rasped Eve. "He's only your wife's watchdog—to see 'you don't make a fool of yourself!'" Her soft red mouth, innocent now of rouge, twisted wryly over that last and Bud barked:

"What do you mean?" He stared, his jaws whitening under their blond stubble. "You mean—on Leta's account—you mean Leta knows?" Reading the answer in her silence, he squalled, "She knows! She's been wise all along! Maybe right now she's waiting up for me!"

The red roadster slithered through puddles, spun round corners on two wheels, swayed down the clear. What if a cow should wander out on to the slab? What if another car crept out from a crossroad? But they came safely to the edge of town; Ritterville, speed limit twenty miles. Bud took the turning to Main Street wide and as though it had sprung from the macadam, there was the nose of a sedan, impossibly foreshortened, where no other car could be—unless—

The motors were still throbbing when Eve came back to life and the world, after the memory of rending crash, marvelously still. Then some one began to sob; a dark man with a dark trickle down his cheek, crept like a crippled jack-in-the-box from the sedan window.

"For God's sake, lend a hand here!"

The three of them, moaning Bud, white-lipped Eve and Steve Richter with the blood gushing from under his dark hair, tugged at the sedan and dragged forth the slight figure of a girl, a girl with black curls around a drawn face.

"Leta!" choked Bud. "Leta, speak to me!" But the sunken eyes remained closed and the small mouth terribly speechless.

Steve Richter, his face a mask of blood and dirt, looked across at Eve.

"Your work's complete. He's killed his wife!"

A fat man with dangling galluses officiously rolled out a battered Ford and the broken Leta, with Bud still babbling over her, was loaded into the back seat. Steve Richter, swarthier than ever with hastily applied

bandages, rode away with them and Eve was left standing uncertainly by the roadster, the centre of an interesting crowd. Two women murmured within earshot:

"Mis' Bud Payne. They was already on their way to the hospital when it happened." The blonde woman in curlers pursed her lips and nodded meaningly. "Poor thing. If she wasn't already dead it would go hard with her."

"Steve Richter's car and one of them roadhouse girls. At this time o'day. Wonder how—wonder if—"

Eve welcomed the approach of a sunburned man with the bearing if not the dress of the law.

"Who was the driver of this car?"

"I was," said Eve! . . .

The Ritterville jail was clean and empty, save for a prayerful and repentant negro woman who left before noon. Eve was allowed to write to Flossie untruths as plausible as she could devise; Flossie was to get Eve's pay to use for present expenses; Eve's own expenses would be taken care of for a time! She was fed and cared for by the kind-faced, tight-lipped wife of the marshal who warned her about the little gray man who was editor and reporter for the *News*. "Not that he'd print anything that would hurt the Richters!" She was furnished with entertainment in the shape of back-dated magazines and the fresh daily paper.

*Mrs. Bud Payne fatally injured. . . . Death car driven by girl giving name of Evelina Dawson. . . . Leta Payne's condition grave. . . . Roadhouse girl held without bail. . . . Leta Richter Payne has fighting chance. . . .*

Leta Payne, Leta Richter. Leta Richter—and Flossie. Every blow she, Eve Dawson, had struck against Steve Richter had fallen past him on to the frail shoulders already bowed under a burden, Flossie's burden; the burden borne by all women who bear

a child to a worthless, thankless fool, be he husband or no.

Then, after three days, or years, it seemed, she was released. The Richters would not prosecute.

"But, I'd advise you to get out of town," the sunburned officer said. "Your crowd isn't exactly popular now."

For some fifteen minutes Eve sat on a truck at the station waiting for a train. It passed and she wandered down the track behind it. The few changes of clothing she had needed left her only about enough for a wire, but there was no one to wire to. Al would be of no help, unsympathetic notoriety was no asset in his business; blundering carelessness he couldn't abide.

That night she slept in a farmer's barn, to be discovered at four by the amazed owner and taken to his outraged wife.

"Evelina Dawson! I read about you in the *News*!" . . . She was fed; she could ride to the next town when the farmer, or better, the farmer's wife! took the cream. "I'd do as much for a dog!" Wandering again, down the single street of Browning, Eve saw the sign, *Waitress Wanted*.

The Blue Front Café was in the name of Abner Vale, but in everything else it belonged to Ma Vale, his mother. Ma Vale was a crotchety tyrant whom Gabriel himself, come to earth to "sling hash," couldn't have pleased. Eve washed dishes, woodwork, windows. She tended the counter, waited tables, even turned hamburgers on the grill. One of the expressmen told Eve she had set a record by staying two days. Eve's hands chapped, her nails split, her bones ached and she had no time for make-up, nor take care of the wave in her hair, but eventually she was recognized. "Wasn't you one of the girls out at Casa Caliente?" Deny it though she did, the rumor grew. Ma Vale was suddenly too busy in

the kitchen to tend the grill, Abner bustled behind the counter and at the cash register, brushing Eve's arm, pinching her thigh. Two or three times he was on the outside stairs when she crawled up to her room in the loft.

But Eve had bought a bolt for the door, a few yards of curtain net for the windows, swept the floor and straightened the sticks of furniture.

Saturday night during the rush some one asked her to sing and on her refusal complained to Ma Vale:

"You got a canary here, but she's tongue-tied."

"Sing for the boys!" Ma ordered, perspiring.

So Eve gave them all she knew, old time, classic, popular. The place was packed. Ma and Abner rushed about with food and drink. Eve, at the piano, sang "Shadowland,"—sang it as it should be sung, wistful, haunting. A burly man wearing a star pushed through the doorway and Ma cried, apprehensively:

"We keep a decent place! If there's a bit of gin it's come from outside!"

"There's been some complaints lately, especially from the women. This girl, now."

"Best help I ever had!" Ma shrilled her accolade.

"Reckon you didn't know she was that roadhouse girl that was in trouble over at Ritterville!"

Stirs and glances in the crowd, Ma staring with comprehension, her brain visibly following to the natural conclusion:

"Best help I ever had. Good for business and minds her own business!"

"Reckon it's her own business if she has Ab sneaking up the stairs!"

"Ab!"

The man's brief moment in the light, his snicker, then his cringe.

"I never, Ma! She kept a-coaxing me!"

Eve, at bay against the battered

piano, said bitterly: "I didn't! I wouldn't! Oh, don't listen to him!"

"You hussy! You cheap fly-by-night! Get your things and get out of my house!"

"This way. Don't bother about your things." Guided by a hand on her arm, Eve was, a few seconds later, speeding away in the red roadster.

"You weren't hard to trace," Steve explained. "I got your sister's address from the marshal and ran down to see her last night. She's at our place now taking care of things until Leta gets home." The motor hummed an obligato to his voice, with the strange new note. "Ritterville folks can't figure out what happened. You—and my car! Bud came clean—pretty well tamed, Bud is—and we four are the only ones who know the truth." The strange note deepened as he asked: "Why did you say you were driving at the time of the accident? Was it to save Bud?"

Eve murmured: "Bud was nothing. But I'd kept him out; I'd made him drunk—well, drunker. I didn't know about her, of course, but I wanted to get even with you for what you said."

Tires sang as he slowed, then swung into a wooded path, bumping over roots to draw up under sweeping willows. Without motor or lights the nook was very dark and still, then stars peeped through the boughs and cicadas took up their interrupted song.

"Bud was nothing to me," Eve repeated unnecessarily. "One bottle was all he needed to put him to sleep, that night. So," she added defiantly, "I side-stepped again!"

Steve said: "Try side-stepping the real thing, if you can!" Bending over her head was black against the pattern of stars. Eve felt the familiar faintness—was it hate? Then his arms, and the stars circling—dimming. . . .

"No more side-stepping," promised Eve.

# Sinless Sinners

By HELEN ADAMS

“YOU mustn’t! Oh, really, Mr. Hertzell—*please!*”

Velva Gibson — born Velva Jones, and quite a while ago—pushed her employer’s arm away. But the little push was, like her voice, half-hearted and without conviction.

“No, no, Velva—” The arm came back. “Gee, kid, you’ve got me nuts. I’m crazy over you!”

Velva wished he hadn’t used those words exactly. Some other words, more passionately romantic, would have sounded better. Henry Hertzell’s cheek, pressed against her own, was hot.

“Your husband—he works nights, don’t he?” He was asking now.

Velva, through a thorny hedge of age-old inhibitions, went through the motions of holding back the man with both her hands, but feebly.

“Yes, he does,” she said. “They’ve put John on the night shift at the steel plant. He goes on at four. He gets home at one or so—”

“That’s what I thought.” Henry’s lips were on her neck now. Her neck was the least bit on the scraggly side, but Henry didn’t seem to mind. He kept his lips there quite a while before he went on talking. “And Freda, my wife, she’s gonna be away all week. It’s on account of how an aunt of hers is dead. Out on a farm near Creston. She’ll stay there for the funeral and for a few days after. She took both the kids along.” His lips moved to her cheek. He exhaled a long deep breath at last, and whispered: “Gee, kid, you got me going—”

He had her going too. Any one would know it, had there been any one to see. For a space which neither of the two could measure, the dingy little office was filled with swirling stardust shot through with rose-gold flashes of romance. Time ceased to function, although the big wall clock ticked on.

They were leaning on the shabby and untidy desk. The desk held, among many other odds and ends, some six or seven letters, neatly typed, which Henry had just finished signing. The waiting envelopes were ready. Velva’s outmoded typewriter, across the office on a shaky little table, was covered for the night.

The outside door, beyond the tiny waiting room, was locked. Velva, with her heart near smothering her, had been aware of the faint click when Henry Hertzell locked it at exactly five o’clock. He had never locked the door before while she was in the office. That door was neatly lettered with modest words in black: *Henry Hertzell. Law. Real Estate. Notary Public. . . .*

If it hadn’t been for Henry’s seal, which proclaimed him as a notary, almost anything might then and there have happened. But some amorous move he made, or possibly some more timid answering amorous move of Velva’s, dislodged the seal. It fell with something of a clatter. The harsh metallic sound was startling. It dispelled the rosy clouds which had enfolded them and left confusion in its wake. Two bodies

separated rather sheepishly; but two hearts kept on beating hard.

Henry started folding up the letters and putting them in envelopes. Velva, with her fingers trembling, helped him. Their hands touched as they stacked them up. Henry said uncertainly:

"What say we drive out somewhere and have dinner?"

Velva answered: "Oh, do you think we should?"

"Sure, I think we should. Why not? Gosh, I think it would be jake!"

"But supposin' any one found out?"

"Any one," of course, meant Henry's wife and Velva's husband.

"How're they going to find out? And—well, there's no harm in it, anyway."

No harm, of course, thought Velva. Lots of bosses took out their stenographers to dinners. Velva knew. She'd heard a lot of washroom gossip in her working years. Not Henry Hertzell, though. Not with the kind of wife he had in Mrs. Henry Hertzell. But she was away. She was on a farm near Creston.

And John Gibson, who was much less hard-boiled as a husband than was Mrs. Henry as a wife, was on the night shift at the steel plant now. It would be almost indelicate to argue.

Velva stood before the little square of mirror with coat hooks neatly ranged around it and dabbed powder brazenly upon her face. She touched her colorless lips with a timid red and put on a virtuous-looking little hat. . . .

"It's so nice and peaceful out here!" Velva gazed down from the little balcony of the roadhouse whither they had driven in Henry's shabby car. "I love it," she added in a moment.

"Me too." Henry poured ketchup lavishly on a cool slice of pallid beef.

"There ain't many people here. I guess their crowd comes later."

"Those cows look cute, I think."

White cows with large black splotches on them were quietly at ease in a fenced-off pasture to the right. Below the balcony a little stream went past. Velva thought it exceedingly romantic, despite the tin cans and other rubbish on the edge.

"I'm going to take off my hat." Velva had been struggling with the notion from the first. It would seem more daring and romantic to be here on this summer evening, hatless.

"Sure, go ahead!" Henry said, and put a little dab of butter on a roll.

She fluffed her hair out some. It was nondescript in color, slightly streaked with gray. Velva had turned thirty-six, but, of course, Henry wouldn't know it. When she first came to work for him, she had clipped off four years from her age. And that was five years in the past. She knew, from the statement typed when he decided to become a notary, that he was forty-three. His sandy hair was moving upwards on his forehead. He wore his glasses all the time now, but otherwise there was no change since first she knew him. He was tall and lean, a little stooped from long study over inconsequential legal matters.

They held a conference about dessert.

"I think I'll have the fresh strawberry sundae," Velva finally decided.

"Not me." Henry was briskly masculine. "Apple pie à la mode. It's heartier. Nothing wrong with the old appetite."

They both laughed. Velva knew that Henry carried little tablets in a bottle as an aid to his digestion. He often took one in the office after lunch.

Dessert came with the deepening twilight. They decided on a second cup of coffee—black. They each smoked a cigarette. Henry laughed:

"Why, I never even thought about it," he announced. "We haven't had a drink. Here,—waiter—" The man slouched back to their table. "How about a drink?"

"Okay."

Velva felt a bit uncertain.

She said: "Just beer for me—"

"Beer nothing," Henry countered recklessly. "Highballs, George."

"What kind?" The waiter seemed quite glum about it all.

"Why,—er—make mine Bourbon. How about you, Velva?"

"Velva said: "Me too!" Beer seemed suddenly plebeian.

The drink was, like the food, not much to brag about. But still, it served its purpose—not by its potency. It was really pretty thin. But it brought a feeling of delightful naughtiness to both of them.

The two sat there on the little balcony and started talking about life.

Not about the things they ordinarily discussed in idle hours at the office, like the cost of little Henry's dentistry; the slowness of collections and their meagreness; the difficulty John had in getting jobs these days; the little that he earned when he did get them.

No, this was different. Altogether different!

Henry blew smoke rings into the dimness.

"I used to think that by this time I'd be in Congress. I had great ideas when I was young—"

"That's exactly where you should be," Velva told him loyally. "And I would be your secretary."

"We'd both be in Washington—"

There was a dreamy pause. Velva was wondering, down inside, what could be done with a husband like her John in Washington. Perhaps Henry was wondering, at the moment, just how his Freda would fit in at the national capital.

"It gets monotonous here some-

times, fiddling with small pickings like I do."

"But there's quite a lot of quite important stuff comes in the office sometimes; considering how things are!"

"Of course, when I was in college—you know, I worked my way through—we didn't think that times would ever get like this. We all thought we'd be—well,—big shots in the business. All the big shots are defending gangsters now. Even the corporations don't pay like they used to."

A dim bulb cast its feeble light upon them. Velva's eyes wandered past the screening, into the blackness of the night outside. And then, abruptly, it was almost eleven. Henry made the startling discovery. Velva jammed her hat on while he paid the bill.

"Gosh, I've got to get home now and feed the dog and let him in—"

"And I—my goodness,—I didn't pick things up at home this morning!"

She was remembering too, that she hadn't stopped, after office hours tonight, to buy things for John's lunch when he got home. He always had some supper before he came to bed. Well, she could make out all right from the stuff there was on hand.

They hurried through the little passage and down the short flight of wooden steps. From the main dining-room the music of a radio blared. A few dancers circled drearily on the small patch of shining floor.

It was a short drive back to town. Henry asked: "I wonder if I ought to take you right up to your door."

Velva gasped deliciously. After all, this was adventure, illicit for all its harmlessness.

"Oh, I don't think so. You can let me out on the corner of Fourteenth."

She picked up things with swift expertness and set out John's supper

on the kitchen table. Tomorrow morning she'd get up early and do her buying before she went down town. Leave the evening free.

Tomorrow night was Tuesday. She and Mrs. Libby from downstairs almost always went to movies Tuesday. But not tomorrow night. She'd tell Mrs. Libby in the morning that she had "an engagement downtown" for the evening. It would be nice to say that. Velva seldom had engagements to interfere with Mrs. Libby.

She got to bed at one o'clock, just before her husband came. She heard him moving in the little kitchen, rattling the paper as he hastily glanced through it, eating, undressing in the bathroom, coming finally to bed. Velva pretended to be deep asleep. Now, with the evening back of her, the whole thing seemed exquisitely romantic. Nothing had happened. Henry hadn't even kissed her as they parted at the corner. But still there was a rosy glamor over her, a feeling of warm knowledge that some other man than John desired her. Tonight was only the beginning. There was tomorrow, and the tomorrows that would follow before Henry's wife came home. And after that? Who could tell what was to follow after that?

It had been unnecessary to draw so far over to her own side of the bed. John moved with awkward quietness, lest he awaken her. He plopped almost immediately into his usual heavy sleep. . . .

It was time again to close the office.

All through the business day Velva and Henry had held strictly to matters that pertained to business. But Velva had her best dress on, a turquoise blue, knitted. It clung to her angularities and softened them. She had her white coat too, and hoped it would not rain.

Henry did not lock the office door

at five o'clock, but he did reach a hand across the desk to Velva, saying:

"Well, we're still on the loose tonight? He looked a little anxious and uncertain at his boldness in assuming that he had but to ask and she would go with him. Velva felt her color rise above the rouge applied, before five this time, out in the washroom. She smiled with what she took for roguishness and nodded without speaking. "Let's go out to the same place, shall we?" Henry asked. "I like it there."

"I like it too." . . .

The second evening was—almost—like the first. Except that Henry told her he had made arrangements with the lady from next door to feed the dog, and Velva said there was no hurry for her either.

They had two highballs this time, one before they ate and one with their cigarettes. Henry stopped the car halfway to town and drew her into his arms and kissed her. He kissed her several times. She could feel his lodge charm press against her body through the thinness of her dress. She could feel that he was breathing faster. It put her into a warm, delicious, frightened palpitation. Presently he said:

"Gosh! You're some girl, Velva!"

His voice had thickened. He put her resolutely from him. They drove on silently. He dropped her, as he had the night before, around the corner from the apartment house where she and John were living.

There was a third evening and a fourth. They weren't very different. Somehow, Henry and Velva couldn't quite break down the barriers that were holding them from the green pastures of fulfilment toward which they were heading. But tonight, the fifth evening, Velva felt with fateful certainty, it would be different. Tonight!

She was bright-eyed and warm all

through the day. She had made up her mind to buy another dress, a lemon-yellow, knitted silk. It was in the window of a store she inspected regularly on her way to lunch. She would buy it this noon and get another hat—if there was time.

She found the time all right and wore the lemon-yellow dress and the white hat with its yellow, polka-dotted band, straight from the store when she had purchased them. Henry's eyes gleamed, looking at her, as she came back to the office.

"You're putting on a lotta style," he said with heavy jocularly.

"Well, gee, I've been intending to get some new duds for ages——"

Velva blushed. The two locked eyes for a second's space, then both turned their eyes away. But understanding flashed between them in that instant. Tonight!

It was half-past four. Business for the day was over. Henry put things more or less in order on his desk. Velva went down to the washroom for a final touching up. It took her quite a while because she turned and twisted before the small square mirror up above the wash-bowl, to see as much as she could see of her new dress. Perhaps, too, she felt a little hesitant about going back into the office until it was nearer to the time for leaving. She was thinking that yellow was a swell color for her. It livened up her face a lot. Who'd ever think that she was thirty-six?

There were voices in the inner office as she stepped in from the hall. Clients—at this hour! Velva felt a sense of personal insult. But it was not a client speaking there. It was Mrs. Henry Hertzell! She was saying in her slightly brassy voice:

"Well, the children they didn't like it down there on the farm. There weren't any movies or anything like that. They buried Ida Tuesday. Young Henry just got into every-

thing. So I thought I'd come back home. The kids are in the drug-store downstairs having ice-cream sodas now."

Velva's boss was nodding, saying: "I see. I guess it's pretty tiresome for city kids out on a farm. So you came home——"

Velva's face felt cold and stiff. Her whole body felt that way, except her knees, and they felt very limp indeed. She stood still in the doorway. Mrs. Hertzell saw her:

"Oh, hello there, Mrs. Gibson. How are you? My, you're all dressed up!" She took in Velva's costume with her slightly fattish eyes. "You look real nice," she finished.

Velva's stiff lips smiled somehow. She murmured: "Thanks, Mrs. Hertzell. Did you have a nice time in the country?"

Then thought, to herself, that this was not correct to say, considering there had been a funeral. But Mrs. Hertzell didn't have to answer. The telephone was ringing shrilly. Henry answered it himself:

"It's for you, Mrs. Gibson," he said, and handed it to Velva with politeness. Then he went and got his hat.

Velva listened. It was her husband, John. He was telling her that the steel plant was giving him a lay-off. For a month. He would be idle for a month.

Velva said: "Oh, well——" And then she asked: "Where are you now?"

John was in a downtown poolroom phoning. He could meet her and then they'd go home together.

She said: "Yes,—uh-huh. You can meet me down on Seventh."

She hung the receiver back and put the telephone down on the desk.

Henry Hertzell and his wife were at the outer door. Velva picked up her handbag and joined them. The lock clicked and the three went to the elevator. The two women talked about the weather while they waited for the car to reach their floor. . . .

# Romance and Your Stars

By RUTH GREENHILL

To determine the particular influence affecting you during the month of February find your birthdate. If it falls on or between March 21st and April 21st of any year, read the Aries forecast, if on or between April 22nd and May 21st, read the Taurus forecast, and etc.

## February Forecasts

**Aries (Mar. 21-Apr. 21):** The first week brings trying situations, some of which may have to deal with places of confinement. Care and caution should be a part of the routine until after the 7th at least. A romance suddenly goes wrong near the end of the month and generally speaking those whom you consider to be your friends act in a surprising manner and not at all to your liking. Look within yourself, you may be the cause of it all.

**Taurus (Apr. 22-May 21):** Some danger of being deceived by another during the first part of the month either in purely personal affairs or along lines that have to do with speculation or places of amusement. Near the 8th some boost in business comes along if you do not assume the attitude that the world owes you a living. If born between Apr. 22-24 make no change on the 11th, 14th or 24th. Likely to be confronted with problems that seem to necessitate a change, but wait until your vision clears before deciding.

**Gemini (May 22-June 22):** During the first week indications point to adverse changes in business affairs unless much effort is used to prevent such from happening. Start nothing new until the 8th. Home life seems at sixes and sevens, probably is, but a break won't help matters. The thing to do is, work out your problem when and where you find it. This particular problem must be worked out—might just as well begin now to do it.

**Cancer (June 23-July 22):** Too much confidence and aggressiveness tend toward arguments with close associates during the beginning of the month. Not a favorable time for travel or publications. Watch speech and actions, attend to important affairs on the 8th, 10th and 22nd and do not allow any distorted ideas to take hold of you. Neptune's influence is rather deceptive and it is easy to deceive yourself while under his influence. Relatives cause

some anxiety and the month can be a trying one. To lose yourself in your favorite occupation, is the best antidote for this set up of planetary vibrations.

**Leo (July 23-Aug. 22):** Money or the lack of it, either your own or your partners, tends to upset the even tenor of your way around the 4th. Under no circumstances should you allow yourself to be led into any kind of a business deal that is not strictly open and above board. Those of you who are employed must exercise the greatest care during those first few days in order to retain your position. Look for new positions around the 8th and 10th and perhaps an added bit of money.

**Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 21):** This month calls for the utmost in cooperation with others. Expenses seem heavy in the home, yet things turn out better than you expect in this particular department of life. There is a liability of an associate worker proving his real colors at this time, so be very careful, otherwise you will be involved to a great disadvantage. Much that is unsatisfactory prevails.

**Libra (Sept. 22-Oct. 22):** Do nothing hastily or impulsively with regard to obtaining a position until after the first week has gone by. Health may need attention if the Libra unbalance is indulged in. Nerves are easily upset at this time and the tendency to overwork causes a loss of vitality. Not a good month to deal with friends or relatives, especially near the 11th to 18th.

**Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 22):** Disappointment through a friend and much secrecy or intrigue among those whom are considered friends. Loss comes through gambling, yet on the 8th there is a decided swing upward in financial affairs. Those born Oct. 24-27 should not change occupations nor partners. Ill health comes, too,

as a result of the Uranus opposition for this particular group. Throat especially should be guarded.

**Sagittarius** (Nov. 23-Dec. 22): Those having birthdays from Dec. 8th-13th inclusive of any year, now have the full influence of Jupiter contacting their Sun. This is ever the best position for Jupiter so make the most of it in every way. It favors new positions, favors from those higher up, marriage, new friends, promotions and etc. Do not allow your home life to interfere with your business life during the first part of the month, and do not permit business affairs to be so pressing that your home life is neglected.

**Capricorn** (Dec. 23-Jan. 21): There is a restless activity that leads to quarrels with near relatives, and short journeys will certainly be unfavorable until after Mars gets into the 4th house which is very near the end of the month. Postpone all travel if possible. Some form of light pleasure must come because of Venus in your own sign and also some small amount of money that you do not earn finds its way to your

door. The 24th-26th are unfavorable days for romance.

**Aquarius** (Jan. 22-Feb. 19): Peculiar money situations cause worry and uncertainty; foolish impulses and poor judgment cause actual loss, so that during the first part of the month at least much care should be used when handling money, either your own or another's. Unsettled home conditions add to the financial difficulties on the 11th and 14th. Patience and caution are much needed virtues at this time.

**Pisces** (Feb. 20-Mar. 20): A considerable amount of anger directed toward a partner will get you into trouble and is not the way out of the various difficulties which now confront you. If possible, postpone important matters until after the 7th. An unfavorable time for marriage or for the formation of any kind of partnerships. As the month nears its close you will be called upon to give up some prized thing or person. All Pisces natives need to exercise their will power to its utmost during this month.

**YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED**

If the answer to your question does not appear in this issue, it will follow soon. All questions will be answered through this column.

▼. M. Sept. 5, 1902, Lebanon, Oregon. Much would depend upon the natures of your husband as well as upon your own. In your chart there appear discontent and resentment. The tendency to demand much is pushed forward by an opposition of Jupiter and Mars as is a restless excitability. Try to analyze yourself and see wherein you might be wrong. Virgo is a critical sign. Natives of this sign sometimes "nag" unconsciously, hurting another and themselves of course, because of this tendency. Whether you indulged in that particular outlet of feeling, you yourself know. At the present time and for another year you are under the most invigorating vibrations that have to do with the physical senses. Ordinarily marriage is offered at a time like this, but due to the impulsiveness of the combination, mistakes can easily be made; therefore, you will do well to put a check on your emotional nature and refuse to be drawn into another marriage. In a few years there will be another opportunity for you to try again, but you must give as much as you get in order to ever have a happy marriage. The older person is much the better for you.

C. L. M. Dec. 25, 1909, Atlanta, Georgia. There is a peculiar kind of practical romance in your nature. One that you must guard against, else it brings sorrow and self undoing. The legacy comes only after much difficulty. No, marriage with the one in question is not recommended.

G. B. S. May 5, 1901, San Francisco, Calif. Taurus

natives are always fixed and determined. You are a bit more fixed than is good for you though due to the mental planet also being in the sign Taurus. Taurus people many times place too much value on material things. One lesson all of them must learn before the end of 1943 is to let go—willingly—those things that have no "lasting" value. As Uranus goes through Taurus you are all called upon to progress in every respect. Progression does not mean clinging to old worn-out ideas and things, so when, in 1936 and 1937, Uranus crosses your Taurus planets, expect drastic changes in all of your affairs. Yes, all Taurus natives feel this influence. Those born early in the sign have already felt the influence. Others born later will feel it as the next few years come in.

M. H. A. Mar. 7, 1897, Pittsburgh, Pa. All persons born on or about this date will feel the effects of Saturn and Neptune opposition during 1936. There is no need for you to be unduly alarmed. Worry never helped any condition. Since you are ready for the break in your marriage why "fuss" so much over it. Yes, Pisces and Virgo natives are feeling this influence very much with their marriage and business partners. Sagittarians and Gemini, the other two mutables, feel it in the home and business life mostly. These are general remarks but I cannot go into more detail here. Pisces natives do seek double relationships and marry more than once. You will be free after 1937, then don't abuse the freedom that these major planets bring you.

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Going into this business is not like selling something offered in every grocery, drug or department store. For instance, when you take a \$7.50 order, as much as \$5.83 may be your share. On \$1,500 worth of business, your share may be \$1,167.00. The very least you get as your part of every dollar's worth of business you do is 67 cents—on ten dollars' worth \$6.70, on a hundred dollars' worth \$67.00—in other words two thirds of every order you get is yours. Not only on the first order—but on repeat orders—and you have the opportunity of earning an even larger percentage.

This Business Has  
Nothing to Do With  
House to House Canvassing

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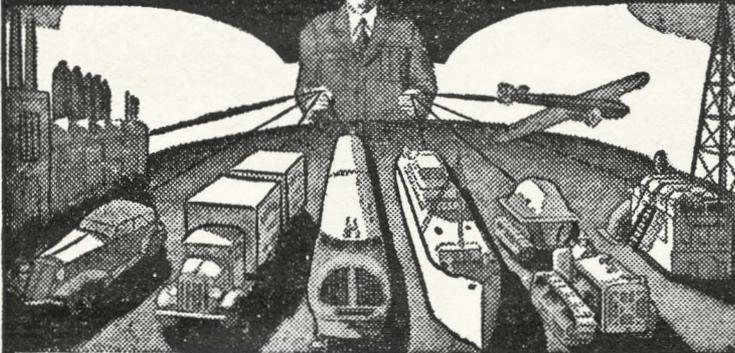
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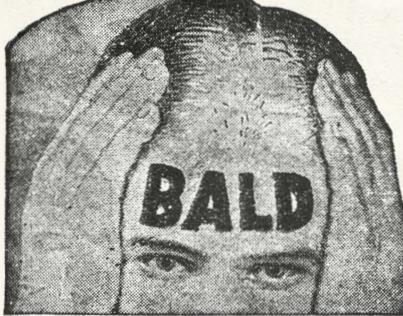
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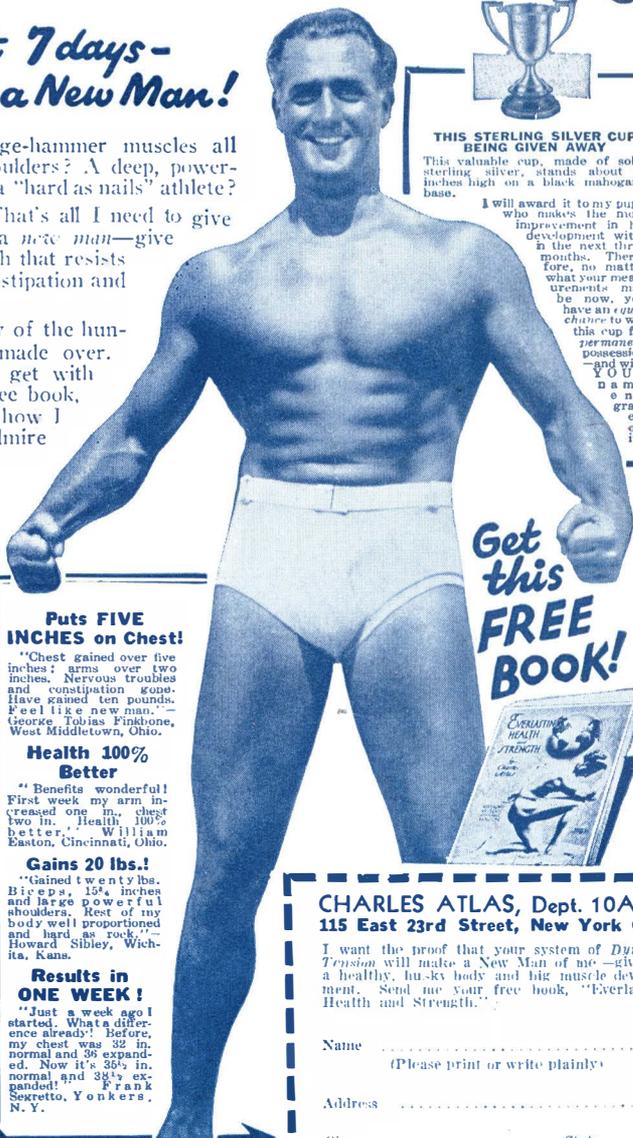
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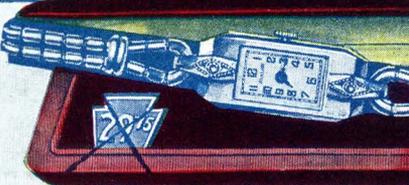
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