

LOVE FICTION MONTHLY  
JUNE -

LOLITA ANN WESTMAN

VINA LAWRENCE

ALMA PORTEGAZ

ROSAMOND BOTSFORD

PEGGY GADDIS

KAY MEREDITH

DORIS KNIGHT

CORA MARTINE

KAREN COOKSON

"IF YOU'RE FOR SALE" NOVELLETTA

ONE KISS TOO MANY SS

HOLLYWOOD HIGHLIGHTS ART

ONCE A FLIRT NOVELETTE

A TRAILER FOR TWO - SS

IN THE LOOKING GLASS - ART

TEMPERAMENTAL LOVER - NOVELETTE

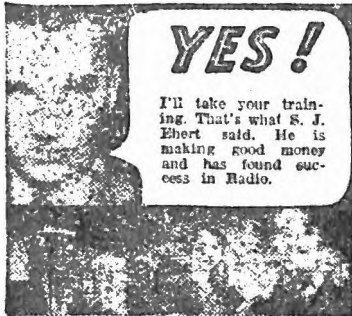
LOVE (ARTICLE) (FINAL INSTALLMENT)

I'LL BET YOU A DIME

NO ORDINARY MAN



# Read what happened



**YES!**

I'll take your training. That's what S. J. Ebert said. He is making good money and has found success in Radio.

to these  
two men  
when I said:



**NO!**

I'm not interested. That's what this fellow said. Today he would be ashamed if I gave you his real name.

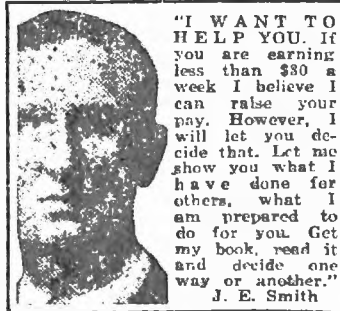
## I will Train You at Home in Spare Time For a GOOD JOB IN RADIO

These two fellows had the same chance. Each clipped and sent me a coupon, like the one in this ad. They got my book on Radio's opportunities. S. J. Ebert, 104-B Quadrangle, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, saw that Radio offered him a real chance. He enrolled. The other fellow, whom we will call John Doe, wrote that he wasn't interested. He was just one of those fellows who wants a better job, better pay, but never does anything about it. One of the many who spend their lives in a low-pay, no-future job, because they haven't the ambition, the determination, the action it takes to succeed.

But read what S. J. Ebert wrote me and remember that John Doe had the same chance: "Upon graduation I accepted a job as serviceman, and within three weeks was made Service Manager. This job paid me \$40 to \$50 a week compared with \$18 I earned in a shoe factory before. Eight months later I went with station KWCR as operator. From there I went to KTNT. Now I am Radio Engineer with WSUI. I certainly recommend the N. R. I. to all interested in the greatest field of all, Radio."

**Get Ready for Jobs Like These. Many Radio Experts Make \$30, \$50, \$75 a Week**

Do you want to make more money? Broadcasting stations employ engi-



**"I WANT TO HELP YOU.** If you are earning less than \$80 a week I believe I can raise your pay. However, I will let you decide that. Let me show you what I have done for others, what I am prepared to do for you. Get my book, read it and decide one way or another."  
J. E. Smith

neers, operators, station managers and pay up to \$5,000 a year. Spare time Radio set servicing pays as much as \$200 to \$500 a year—full time Radio servicing jobs pay as much as \$30, \$50, \$75 a week. Many Radio Experts own their own full time or part time Radio businesses. Radio manufacturers and jobbers employ testers, inspectors, foremen, engineers, servicemen, paying up to \$6,000 a year. Radio operators on ships get good pay and see the world besides. Automobile, police, aviation, commercial Radio and loud speaker systems offer good opportunities now and for the future. Television promises many good jobs soon. Men who have taken N. R. I. Training are holding good jobs in all these branches of Radio.

**Many Make \$5, \$10, \$15 a Week Extra in Spare Time While Learning**

Practically every neighborhood needs a good spare time serviceman. The day you enroll I start sending you Extra Money Job Sheets. They show you how to do Radio repair jobs that you can cash in on quickly. Throughout your training I send you plans and ideas that have made good spare time money for hundreds of fellows. I send you special Radio equipment and show you how to conduct experiments and build circuits which illustrate important Radio principles. My training gives you valuable, practical experience, while learning.

**Get My 66-Page Book Free**

Mail the coupon now for "Rich Rewards in Radio." It's free to anyone over 14 years old. It describes Radio's spare time and full time opportunities and those coming in Television; tells about my Training for Radio and Television; shows you actual letters from men I have trained, telling what they are doing and earning; tells about my Money Back Agreement. MAIL THE COUPON in an envelope, or paste it on a penny postcard—NOW!

**J. E. SMITH, President  
National Radio Institute  
Dept. 7FAS, Washington, D. C.**



### FOR FREE BOOK OF FACTS ABOUT RADIO

J. E. SMITH, President, National Radio Institute, Dept. 7FAS, Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Smith: Without obligating me, send "Rich Rewards in Radio," which points out the spare time and full time opportunities in Radio and explains your 50-50 method of training men at home in spare time to become Radio Experts. (Please write plainly.)

Name ..... Age .....

Address .....

City ..... State .....



Please mention ACE FICTION GROUP when answering advertisements

# ACCOUNTING

the profession that pays—

Accountants command big income. Thousands needed. About 14,000 Certified Public Accountants in U. S. Many earn \$3,000 to \$20,000. We train you thoroughly at home in your spare time for C. P. A. examinations or executive accounting positions. Previous bookkeep-

ing knowledge unnecessary — we prepare you from ground up. Our training is personally given by staff of experienced C. P. A.'s. Low cost — easy terms. Write now for valuable 64-page book free, "Accounting, the Profession That Pays."

**LA SALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY**  
Dept. 649-H Chicago, Illinois



## STOP Your Rupture Worries!



C. E. Brooks, Inventor

Why worry and suffer any longer? Learn about our perfected invention for all forms of reducible rupture in men, women and children. Support fitted with automatic air cushion assists Nature in a natural strengthening of the weakened muscles. Thousands made happy. Weighs but a few ounces, is inconspicuous and sanitary. No stiff springs or hard pads. No salves or plasters. Durable, cheap. Sent on trial to prove it. Beware of imitations. Never sold in stores or by agents. All correspondence confidential.

**BROOKS COMPANY, 167-H State St., Marshall, Mich.**

## RAISE GIANT FROGS

FREE BOOK



Easy to Start! Good Market!

Frog legs in big demand at good prices the year round! Easy to start!  
**WE BUY** sell to us in addition to owner writing market.  
Men & Women. Small print starts you. See what others are doing. Free book explains unusual offer to beginners.  
**AMERICAN FROG GAMING CO.**  
(Dept. 198-H) New Orleans, La.

## EPILEPSY

GET THIS KNOWLEDGE FREE!

concerning a way by which epileptics for the past 25 years say they have been relieved of attacks. Simply send name and address for this FREE information.  
F. Lepso, E. Wright St., Milwaukee, Wis.

## TOP BREAK REVOLVERS

BELOW COST

Sensational Sale continued, to close out these brand new, imported Firearms, using domestic and imported ammunition.

Model 25—Double action, top break, auto ejector; slide safety; rubber grips. Only in 32 cal. 3 1/2" and 44 cal. 4 1/2" blued. (Regular price \$8.95.)



\$5.95

Special Sale—\$5.95. Model 26: Hammerless; Top break; double action; faceted eucalyptus Grip safety; auto ejector. Only in 32 cal. 5" and 38 cal. 5 1/2" nickel. (Regular price \$10.95)

Wonderful Bargain at our Special—\$7.95

**AUTOMATIC:**—35 cal. 7 shot—\$8.95; 10 shot—\$7.95; 32 cal. 8 shot—\$8.95; 10 shot

Military Model—\$7.95. \$10.50; Automatics, 7.5r; Revolver, 9.5c; Shoulder, \$1.75; Cartridges Automatic, 95 cal., 65c; 32 cal., 75c box \$8. Revolver, 32 cal., \$1.00; \$2.20 and 38, \$1.50 per 50.

Enclose M.O.—ORDER TODAY! \$2 Deposit required on C.O.D.'s!

New Hargest Catalog: 36 W. Colby, 25th St., Bloomington, Mo. Send to Show!

**LEE SALLE CO., Dept. 182** 25 West 22nd St., N. Y. City

## WHISKEY HABIT

Send for FREE TRIAL of INOXALCO, a guaranteed harmless home treatment. Can be given secretly in food or drink to anyone who drinks or craves Whiskey, Beer, Gin, Wine, etc. Your request for Free Trial brings trial supply by return mail and full \$2.00 treatment which you may try under 30 day refund guarantee at our risk. **ARLEE CO H&Z, BALTIMORE, MD.**

## PILES DON'T BE CUT

Until You Try This Wonderful Treatment for pile suffering. If you have piles in any form write for a FREE sample of Page's Pile Tablets and you will bless the day that you read this. Write today. **E. R. Page Co., 411-B3 Page Bldg., Marshall, Mich.**

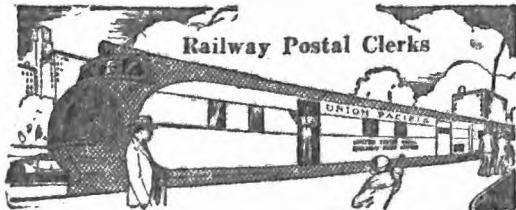


## ENJOY LIFE

MONEY BACK IF NOT SATISFIED

Men—Women—Don't act old. Feel Young again—full of pep and youthful ambition. "Step out and do things." Take **ANGELA MATE**, Harmless, so injurious drugs of dope, delicious and stimulating. Praised by thousands and approved by Physicians. Acts quickly. Six weeks supply, \$1; C.O.D. plus postage. **North American Mate Co., Dept. L8, 120 Greenwich Street, N. Y. C.**

# U. S. GOVERNMENT JOBS



City and Rural Mail—City Post Office Clerks. Clerks at Washington, Post Inspectors, Customs Inspectors, Stenographers—Typists, File Clerks, Accountants, etc.

Common education sufficient  
Mail coupon at once

**FRANKLIN INSTITUTE, Dept. C233,**  
Rochester, N. Y.

Give: Rush to me without charge—copy of 32 page book "How to Get U. S. Government Jobs," with list of dependable positions for men, women and full particulars telling how to get them.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Please mention ACF FICTION GROUP when answering advertisements

# ANNOUNCEMENT of New Coffee Agency Openings



## EARNINGS UP TO \$60<sup>00</sup> IN A WEEK

Within the next two weeks, over 350 men and women will be given the opportunity to open up fine-paying Coffee Agencies right in their own home localities. If you are looking for a bona fide chance to make as high as \$60.00 in a week, starting at once, this company will send you everything you need, give you all the help you require, and back you up with its proven successful plans. You risk no money. A chance to be independent, work as you please, and make more than just a modest living. If you want to know whether there is an opening for you in your own or nearby locality, mail the Application below. By return mail you will be notified whether we have an opening for you, and if we have, you will receive full information about this Coffee Agency Plan. You don't send a penny—just mail the Application. No obligation—you decide after you read the plan. Don't delay. Send your Application at once.

*Clip Out and Mail Today!!*

### COFFEE AGENCY APPLICATION

①

**WRITE YOUR FULL NAME AND ADDRESS HERE :**

Name .....  
(State whether Mr., Mrs., or Miss)

Address .....

City and State .....

②

**HOW MUCH TIME CAN YOU DEVOTE TO COFFEE AGENCY ?**

Mark with an "X"

FULL TIME;  PART TIME

[ Full time pays up to \$35 to \$40 in a week. Part time, either during the day or evenings, pays up to \$22.50 in a week. ]

③

**STATE WHICH BONUS YOU PREFER—CASH OR FORD AUTOMOBILE**

In addition to their cash earnings, we offer our producers a cash bonus of \$500.00 or a brand-new, latest model Ford Tudor Sedan. State which you would prefer if you decide to accept our offer. Mark "X" before your choice.

\$500.00 CASH BONUS;  LATEST MODEL FORD TUDOR SEDAN

④

**CAN YOU START AT ONCE ?**

Mark with an "X"

YES;  NO

If you cannot start at once, state about when you will be able to start.

**ALL APPLICATIONS WILL BE HELD STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL**

### Send No Money

There is no money fee of any kind required with this Application. It merely tells us that you would consider running a Coffee Agency in your locality if we have an opening for you. You will be notified by return mail whether your home locality is available. Then you can decide if the money-making possibilities look good to you. No obligation on your part. Those who apply first will be given preference, so be sure to mail your Application without delay—NOW! No letter is required, just the Application. Mail at once to

**ALBERT MILLS, President**

**3960 Monmouth Ave.,**

**Cincinnati, Ohio**



# OUCH-



## CORNS

come back Bigger, Uglier  
— unless removed Root\* and All

● A corn goes deep. When you cut or pare it at home the root remains imbedded in the toe. Soon the corn comes back bigger, uglier—more painful—than ever.

Why suffer! Use the Blue-Jay double-action method. Pain stops instantly by removing the pressure. Then the entire corn lifts out Root and All.

Get a package of Blue-Jay today. 25¢ for a package of 6.



# BLUE-JAY

BAUER & BLACK

SCIENTIFIC CORN PLASTERS

\*A plug of dead cells root-like in form and position. If left may serve as focal point for renewed development.



## FOLLOW THIS MAN

Secret Service Operator No. 38 is on the job! Running down dangerous Counterfeit Gang. Inside cover prints in considered girl's room.

**Free** The Confidential Report Operator No. 38 made to his chief. Write for it. Earn a Regular Monthly Salary

YOU can become a Finger Print Expert at home, in your spare time, at small cost. Write for confidential full report and details. Written Literature will be sent only to persons stating their age.

INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCE  
Dept. A-749 1220 Sunnyside Ave. Chicago

## FOREST JOBS

available at \$125-\$175 per month, steady. Cabin. Hunt, trap, patrol. Qualify at once.

Get details immediately

Rayson Service Bureau, B-55, Denver, Colo.

## AVIATION is Calling LINCOLN Graduates.

to Thrilling Careers at GOOD PAY!

50 recent graduates of this Lincoln School take responsible positions in Aviation and more are wanted. Aviation prefers Lincoln Trained men. . . . but jobs for many more as soon as they are qualified. One of these good-pay jobs can be yours, if you will start your training now.

Lincoln Government Approved Training is practical, thorough, complete. In just a few short months you are ready to take your place in a good pay job. Airline Pilots get up to \$700 a month; Co-Pilots get \$250 a month. Under Government Licensed Instructors you prepare for your license as Transport, Limited Commercial, Private or Amateur Pilot.

Lincoln Government Approved Mechanics Training prepares you for Mechanic's License. Learn aircraft motor overhaul and repair, airplane design, construction, aerial radio, welding, sheet metal—everything to qualify you for one of aviation's good-paying jobs. Big demand for Licensed Mechanics. Start training now. School now in 27th year; 17th year teaching aviation. Write today.  
LINCOLN AIRPLANE & FLYING SCHOOL 824 A Aircraft Bldg., Lincoln, Nebr.



# Guide To Best Reading

## LOVE FICTION MONTHLY

*Romance At Its Exciting Best*

## TEN-STORY LOVE MAGAZINE

*Gay, Young Love Stories*

## SECRETS MAGAZINE

*Real Stories About Real People*

## TEN DETECTIVE ACES

*Great Variety Detective Magazine*

## SURE-FIRE DETECTIVE

*Powerful Detective Dramas*

## SECRET AGENT X

*G-Men Action Yarns*

## WESTERN TRAILS

*Salty Cowboy Action Stories*

## ROMANCE ROUND-UP

*Tophand Romantic Western Stories*

## SURE-FIRE WESTERN

*Fast-Action Cow Country Tales*

## GOLDEN WEST

*Romances of the Ranch and Range*

## RED SEAL WESTERN

*Two Complete Novels—and Shorts*

## WESTERN ACES

*Human Yarns of Range and Owl-Hoot*

## ACE SPORTS

*Strong, Appealing Sport Yarns*

## CHAMPION SPORTS

*Jumbo Sports Magazine*

## FLYING ACES

*Everything Absorbing in Aviation*

Please mention ACE FICTION GROUP when answering advertisements

# GUARANTEED TIRES!

GOODYEAR·GOODRICH  
FIRESTONE·U.S. and  
Other Standard Makes



**FREE!**  
**LANTERN**  
With Every  
**2 Tires ordered**

**World's Lowest TIRE PRICES**  
Tire users by the thousands all over the U.S.A. vouch for the Long Haul Service of our Standard Brand tires reconditioned with high grade materials and latest methods by our tire experts. Our 21 years experience makes it possible to offer tires at lowest prices, with legal agreement to replace at 1/4 price any tire that fails to give 12 Mos. Service.

Complete with halbrates and correct type radiator bulb. Ready for instant use. Stays steady light. Useful everywhere. Order now.



Complete with halbrates and correct type radiator bulb. Ready for instant use. Stays steady light. Useful everywhere. Order now.

## EVERY TIRE GUARANTEED!

BALLOON TIRES			REGULAR CORD TIRES		
Size	Qty	Price	Size	Qty	Price
20x4-40-21	2	\$12.15	24x4-40-21	2	\$23.48
20x4-40-22	2	\$12.15	24x4-40-22	2	\$23.48
20x4-40-23	2	\$12.15	24x4-40-23	2	\$23.48
20x4-40-24	2	\$12.15	24x4-40-24	2	\$23.48
20x4-40-25	2	\$12.15	24x4-40-25	2	\$23.48
20x4-40-26	2	\$12.15	24x4-40-26	2	\$23.48
20x4-40-27	2	\$12.15	24x4-40-27	2	\$23.48
20x4-40-28	2	\$12.15	24x4-40-28	2	\$23.48
20x4-40-29	2	\$12.15	24x4-40-29	2	\$23.48
20x4-40-30	2	\$12.15	24x4-40-30	2	\$23.48
20x4-40-31	2	\$12.15	24x4-40-31	2	\$23.48
20x4-40-32	2	\$12.15	24x4-40-32	2	\$23.48
20x4-40-33	2	\$12.15	24x4-40-33	2	\$23.48
20x4-40-34	2	\$12.15	24x4-40-34	2	\$23.48
20x4-40-35	2	\$12.15	24x4-40-35	2	\$23.48
20x4-40-36	2	\$12.15	24x4-40-36	2	\$23.48
20x4-40-37	2	\$12.15	24x4-40-37	2	\$23.48
20x4-40-38	2	\$12.15	24x4-40-38	2	\$23.48
20x4-40-39	2	\$12.15	24x4-40-39	2	\$23.48
20x4-40-40	2	\$12.15	24x4-40-40	2	\$23.48

# FALSE TEETH

**60 DAYS TRIAL**



I have been making dental plates by mail for many years. I have thousands of satisfied customers. My methods insure satisfaction, and save you many dollars. Guaranteed unbreakable, good looking, durable and they fit well. Free impression material and directions. Don't delay. Write today.

**DR. HEININGER, 448 W. Huron, Dept. 665, Chicago**

# MAKE MORE MONEY

**Taking Orders For The NIMROD Line**

Earn more every day in the year reconditioning at established firm with a complete line of fast selling necessities: Jeans, Shirts, Work Shirts, Polo Shirts, Neckwear, Underwear, Dresses, Hoisery, Smocks, Pants, Play Suits, Coveralls, Raincoats, Suits, Shoes, Uniforms. Every item guaranteed. Experience unnecessary.

Write quick for **FREE SALES OUTFIT**  
**NIMROD CO., Dept. 215**  
4923-26 Lincoln Ave., Chicago, Ill.



# ANY PHOTO ENLARGED

Size \$10 inches or smaller if desired. Same price for full length or bust form, groups, landscapes, pet animals, etc., or enlargements of any part of group picture. Sale return of original photo guaranteed.

**47c**

**SEND NO MONEY.** Just mail photo of (unpublished only) and within a week you will receive your beautiful life-size enlargement guaranteed including. Pay previous 47c plus postage of one dollar with order. We pay postage. Big check-back advertisement sent C. O. D. 75c plus postage or one dollar and we pay postage. Take advantage of this amazing offer now. Send your photos today. Reply size limited.

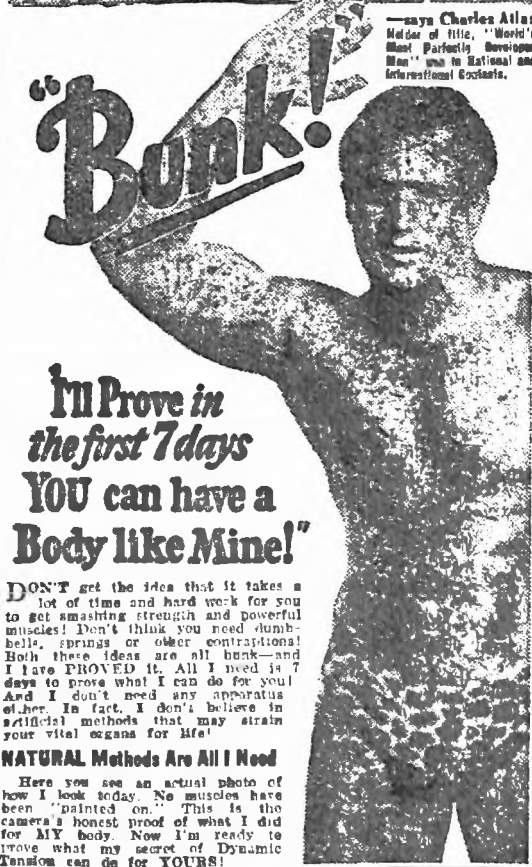
**STANDARD ART STUDIOS, 104 S. Jefferson St. Dept. 87-C Chicago**



Please mention ACS FICTION GROUP when answering advertisements

**GEE...I'd sure like to have real HE-MAN muscles!**

**So would I, but it takes a long while**



**"Bunk!"**

**I'll Prove in the first 7 days YOU can have a Body like Mine!**

DON'T get the idea that it takes a lot of time and hard work for you to get smashing strength and powerful muscles! Don't think you need dumb-bells, springs or other contraptions! Both these ideas are all bunk—and I have PROVED it. All I need is 7 days to prove what I can do for you! And I don't need any apparatus either. In fact, I don't believe in artificial methods that may strain your vital organs for life!

**NATURAL Methods Are All I Need**

Here you see an actual photo of how I look today. No muscles have been "painted on." This is the camera's honest proof of what I did for MY body. Now I'm ready to prove what my secret of Dynamic Tension can do for YOURS!

—says Charles Atlas  
Master of Title, "World's Most Perfectly Developed Man" was in National and International Societies.

A few years ago I was a physical wreck, a 97-pound weakling—flat chested, arms and legs like pipestems. I was worried I would never build myself. Then I found a new way to build myself up. A way that was simple, natural, quick and sure! "Dynamic Tension" is what I called it. In a short time I had the body that has twice won the title of "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."

**Get My FREE Book**

Thousands of others now know from their own personal experience what Dynamic Tension has done for them.

This little coupon brings you my free book, which tells all about it. No cost or obligation.

I just want to give you proof that I can do for you what I have done for so many others; give you broad, powerful shoulders; biceps that bulge with amazing strength; a chest which stands out solid and muscular; and an evenly developed body that will make others look like dwarfs next to you. Mail this coupon TODAY! CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 49V, 115 East 23rd St., New York, N. Y.



**THIS STERLING SILVER CUP BEING GIVEN AWAY**

This valuable cup stands about 14 inches high on a base that makes a magnificent trophy. I will award it to the first man who improves his body with "Dynamic Tension" in 7 days.

**CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 49V  
115 East 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.**

I want the proof that your system of Dynamic Tension will make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscle development. Send me your free book, "Everlasting Health and Strength."

Name .....

(Please print or write plainly)

Address .....

City ..... State .....

# Train for ELECTRICITY IN 12 WEEKS AT COYNE

The Big Coyne Shops in Chicago have a world-wide reputation for training ambitious fellows for their start in this big-pay field in only 12 weeks. Then you get lifetime graduate employment service. By my new plan YOU can take advantage of our wonderful method of learning-by-doing NOW—no need to lose time and money while you strive and save to raise the necessary tuition.

## "ARRANGE TO FINANCE YOUR TUITION"



I have a plan where many get trained first. Then they have over a year to pay for their training in easy monthly payments starting 5 months from the day they start school. If you will write to me at once I will send you complete details of this sensational new plan, together with the Big Free Illustrated Book telling all about COYNE and how many earn while learning and training you can get there without book study or useless theory.

*J. C. Lewis*

### COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL

100 S. Paulina Street, Dept. A7-51 Chicago, Illinois

MR. H. C. LEWIS, President  
Dept. A7-51 S. Paulina St., Chicago, Ill.

Send me all details of your "pay-tuition-after-graduation" plan and your big FREE catalog.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY..... STATE.....

# FISTULA

Anyone suffering from Fistula, Piles or any Rectal trouble is urged to write for our FREE Book, describing the McCleary Treatment for these treacherous rectal troubles. The McCleary Treatment has been successful in thousands of cases. Let us send you our reference list of former patients living in every State in the Union. THE McCLEARY CLINIC, 644 Elm Blvd., Essler Springs, Mo.

## The Unknown Condition In Hay-Fever

You will be surprised how easy it is to relieve the suffering of Hay-Fever once you understand it. Mr. R. O. Murphy, Box 632, Stillwater, Minn., who relieved himself from the symptoms of Hay-Fever, will explain, without charge, to anyone who writes him. Just send your name and address at once because this is the time of the year to treat Hay-Fever suffering. Adv.

## For Kidney And Bladder Trouble

### Stop Getting Up Nights

Here's one good way to flush harmful waste from kidneys and stop bladder irritation that often causes scanty, burning and smarting passage. Ask your druggist for a 35-cent box of Gold Medal Haarlem Oil Capsules—a splendid safe and harmless diuretic and stimulant for weak kidneys and irritated bladder. Besides getting up nights, some symptoms of kidney trouble are backaches, puffy eyes, leg cramps, and moist palms, but be sure to get GOLD MEDAL—it's the genuine medicine for weak kidneys—right from Haarlem in Holland.

Please mention ACE FICTION GROUP when answering advertisements

Which  
of These



# Gov't Jobs Do YOU Want?

No special education or experience usually required. Steady work. Short hours. Vacations. PENSIONS! Age 18-30. Extra Social Security Jobs expected soon. Send for FREE book. Tells how you can pass Civil Service Examination. Mail coupon below at once.

Arthur R. Peterson, (Former Govt. Examiner)  
Principal, PATTERSON SCHOOL,  
243 Case Building, Rochester,  
Send FREE Book,  
How to Secure a  
Government Position.

FREE BOOK

**MEN—WOMEN**  
Start \$1,260 to  
\$2,100 a Year!  
Liquor-Gauger  
Stenographer  
Meat Inspector  
Custom House  
Office Clerk—Typist  
Accountant  
File Clerk  
Income Tax Auditor

Name .....

Address .....

## LONELY?

Join Our Get-Acquainted Society.

Ladies enrolled free. Confidential introductions by mail. Reusable Men and Women of all ages and from all walks of life, seeking new friends and congenial mates. Members everywhere. Many having means. WRITE: Enclose Self-Addressed and Stamped Envelope for Particulars.

NATL. CORSPD. SOCY., 956 W. Endell Ave., SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

## ROMANCE BY MAIL

May I help you meet the ideal man or woman for whom you are seeking? Romantic correspondence by mail has brought happiness to thousands. Join our Friendship Letter Club. Confidential service. Write, free, sealed information.

DAVID BREWSTER, P.O. Box 438, New Britain, Conn.

## LOVE AWAITS YOU!

The mate your heart desires is waiting to know you! Lists selected to fit your tastes and temperament. Free information sent.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE CLUB, Box 256, BLANCHESTER, OHIO

## ROMANCE CAN BE YOURS!

Let us find your ideal sweetheart. Correspondents everywhere. Specialized, confidential service. Stamped envelope brings full particulars.

The American Club, 519 Lake Shore Dr., LaPorte, Indiana

## LONELY?

Join this reliable Club established 16 years. Feel the thrill of Romance. Member

everywhere, many wealthy. Descriptions Free, sealed. MRS. BUDD, Box 752-M, San Francisco, Calif.

## LONELY?

Many others are lonely too. Our service for matrimony or pastime unequalled. Each list personally and scientifically selected. Private confidential assistance. Write Ray Monroe.

ASTRO SOCIAL CLUB, P.O. Box 84, Houston, Texas.

## LONESOME?

Meet just the Sweet-heart or Mate you

desire. Members everywhere. SELECT GOLDEN BOW CLUB, Box 104, Covington, Kentucky.

## LOOKING FOR ROMANCE?

Join my club and receive confidential introductions to desirable people. Members everywhere. Free information sent in plain sealed envelope. DOROTHY DOBB, Station W., Box 8, Dept. J., New York City.

## LONELY?

So are others. You can get together by joining my Romantic Correspondence

Club. Confidential, dignified service to a select group. Write for free particulars.

John Alden Correspondence Club, Box 294, Columbus, Ohio

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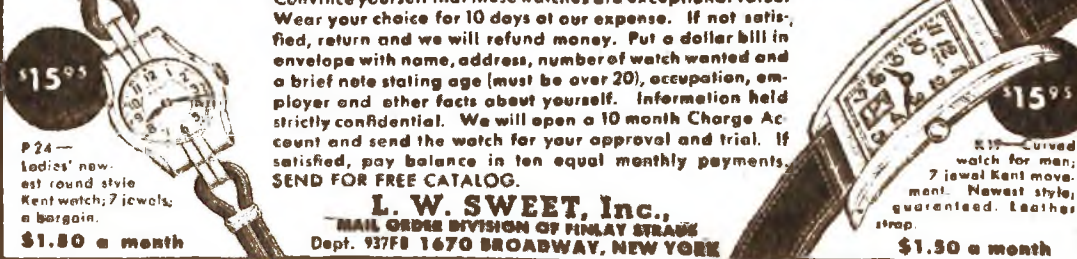
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#### CHAPTER I

**D**APHNE DARRELL stared fascinatedly at the tall, broad-shouldered man as he put away the gun with which he had forced her into a taxi and kept her from making any outcry during the short drive to this sumptuous penthouse apartment atop a Park Avenue skyscraper.

She said, her knees shaking but her voice giving no hint of panic, only of furious indignation, "What's the meaning of this? Who are you?"

Steel gray eyes, tempered by a bold admiration and a disconcerting mocking triumph, bent a steady gaze upon her.

"One answer, I believe, will suffice for both your questions," he

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*Daphne was never sure exactly in what rotation things happened after that.*

drawled in a deep, vibrant voice. "I'm Dirk Bellou."

Daphne's heart should have stopped pounding when she discovered she wasn't in the hands of some high-powered gangster. But instead, it seemed to take a flying leap right up into her throat.

Dirk Bellou! Of course. She might have guessed who he was. And cer-

tainly she should have recognized him from his pictures which crashed the front pages on the average of once a month.

He was notorious on two continents. The millionaire playboy with the string of polo ponies, the swank yacht, the sinfully expensive maroon convertible, a taste in apparel that set men's fashions. He was fully as

*By Lolita Ann Westman*

dangerous as any gangster; for at least bullets put you out of your misery, but the kind of ammunition Dirk Bellou used left feminine hearts maimed for life!

And here she was, at his mercy, thirty-eight stories above the street!

But Daphne wasn't an actress for nothing. And she did the best acting of her career at that moment.

Her full red lip curling scornfully, she flashed, "Is the magic of that name supposed to make me break down and weep for joy?"

"It should," he nodded, a quizzical twinkle replacing the mockery in those steady gray eyes. "I've spent exactly ninety-nine dollars and fifty cents in an effort to impress it indelibly upon your consciousness—with orchids."

"I've already heard your name often enough to decide I don't care to know you—with or without orchids," she said with unflinching bluntness.

Inclining his dark head in a slight bow, he said gravely, "I hope to change your mind. And let me begin by apologizing for this cheap theatrical introduction. My only excuse is that you made it necessary by refusing to meet me in the regular manner."

"I'm not in the habit of bothering with stage door johnnies," she told him contemptuously.

He looked his approval. "Don't blame you. They're a fatuous breed—but I'm scarcely in that category, this being my first offense."

"At stage door johnnying or kidnapping?"

"Both. What else was I to do when you ignored my orchids and my notes and my frantic pleas via your roommate? I'm leaving town in a day or two, and as time got short, I became desperate—so I determined to waylay you as you left the stage door tonight."

She didn't condescend a direct answer, but adjusted her smart little

swagger coat about her exquisitely slim figure. Her small head, set proudly, almost regally, upon the smooth creamy column of her throat, was tilted back, soft gleaming copper hair escaping in fascinating tendrils from under an advance spring toque.

She said, "You've made me late for an appointment. Kindly call me a cab."

"But you're not leaving," said Dirk Bellou very gently.

Her deep, smoky hazel eyes challenged his. "No?"

"No."

"I see. So I'm a prisoner."

"Splendid!" he enthused. "You have a fine sense of romance. Yes, this is a modern tower and you're imprisoned here."

For an instant she stared at him as if unable to credit her hearing. Why, the man must be mad. Only a madman—or a super-egotist—would imagine he could get away with a thing like this.

With difficulty, she curbed the rising tide of her emotion.

"I'm afraid you've let your imagination run away with you, Mr. Bellou," she said, her little chin arrogantly high. "Really, this is becoming tiresome."

"I'm sorry you think so," he said calmly, "because the first act is just started. I haven't even told you I loved you yet."

"Love?" Her laugh, like silver bells out of tune, jangled briefly. "That's very funny—coming from you."

"Would *you* recognize love if you met up with it?"

"I happen to be engaged to be married," she informed him coolly, "and the wedding is set for next week."

"Oh—*that!*" he dismissed with a shrug. "I've been told about that. You're not marrying for love. You're marrying for money."

Her eyes glittered. "That isn't true! But even if it were, would it happen to be any concern of yours?"

"But definitely." He had moved imperceptibly closer to her and as she slanted her eyes up at him, he added softly, "You see, Daphne, you're going to marry me."

"How interesting!" she murmured with a sharp intake of breath. "Your former successes have made you very sure of yourself, it seems."

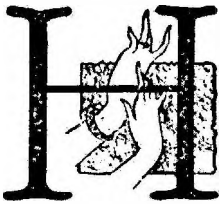
"I usually know what I want and go after it. The moment you came on that stage I knew I wanted you."

Fighting down a sudden rush of stark panic, she said huskily, "You can't get away with this!"

"I think I can," he contradicted equably.

His eyes held hers as if they were magnets. The tense desire in them seemed to dart out to burn her. Before she could move, he reached out and imprisoned her.

"If you're for sale," he told her, "I'm going to buy you—with love."



HER body grew rigid—straining away from him—but his arms were like bands of steel crushing her close to him. The vital strength of him overpowered her, enveloped her. She opened her lips, gulping air, but he closed them again with his own—drawing the breath from her body, the very heart from her breast.

When she finally broke away, she was breathless and trembling, facing him in wild challenge.

"Well?" she demanded.

The man's tone was casual, almost cold. "Take off your coat and hat while I forage in the icebox," he said as if it were an order. "The bedroom's over there. You'll find everything you need, I'm sure." He went out.

Daphne stood for a moment where he had left her, reaction from the last mad, incredible half hour leaving her limp. But in another instant she was at the massive, paneled front door in

a futile attempt to gain her freedom. Of course he had the key.

Next she hunted behind Chinese screens and in small alcoves for a telephone—fruitlessly. There didn't seem to be one.

Praying for a good, old-fashioned fire-escape, she opened the French windows and stepped out upon the tiled roof-garden. Vague shapes materialized at her approach—fantastic, terrifying shapes. Stars spangled the sky, so near it seemed as if she could reach out and pluck one. Yet the midnight lights of the city far below gave her a dizzying sense of being suspended in space.

She went back to the room. Of course there wouldn't be an escape that way. If there were, Dirk Bellou wouldn't have left her alone.

She went into the bedroom, beautifully decorated in subdued masculine brown and yellow combinations. As she dropped down upon the edge of the bed, all the defiance seemed to ooze out of her. She looked like a very scared, very bewildered little girl.

Thoughts raced, without aim or coherence, through her mind. One fact alone emerged from the jumble.

This insane adventure—this mere amusing gratification of a sudden whim to that man out there—was jeopardizing her entire future, threatening the structure of her very life!

She rose, pacing the thick brown rug with rising nervous despair.

If only she had gone out the front of the theatre with Irma tonight she would have escaped this ignominious encounter. She might have known that a man like Dirk Bellou wouldn't countenance being ignored. Her very indifference to his overtures had lent zest to the pursuit.

Irma Colfax, with whom, for financial convenience, she shared an apartment off the Park, had shrewdly predicted as much only that night in their dressing-room during intermission.

"Don't be completely daft, Daphne," she counseled in her amused, brittle fashion. "This Dirk Bellou means business. If you persist in not seeing him, I wouldn't put it past him to kidnap you."

"There are some things even the notorious Dirk Bellou wouldn't attempt!" Daphne had dismissed confidently.

And Irma retorted with ill-concealed impatience, "I wish you'd see him and be done with it! Then he'd get wise that you're not the glamour girl you look from out front, but only somebody's little girl strayed from Corn Cob Centre!"

Daphne had looked up quickly at Irma's voluptuously blond reflection in the mirror. There was a decided sneer on her room-mate's thin scarlet lips. There had been a taut, barbed thrust underlying her banter.

Daphne couldn't help knowing that relations between them had become strained since her engagement to Jerry Lund. Irma was jealous and envious. She had been all primed to annex the Lund fortune herself before Jerry had gone overboard for Daphne's wide hazel eyes and lovely young body.

Well, thought Daphne despairingly, Irma might still have a chance—if Jerry ever found out that she was here, alone in a penthouse, with Dirk Bellou!

**E**XPLANATIONS would be useless with Jerry. She'd be convicted automatically. He was so mad about her and so fiendishly jealous that he wouldn't even let another man hold her in his arms on a dance floor!

The night he proposed, just after they'd left the Stork Club, he'd said huskily, "I can't bear to have another man look at you! You're so beautiful—they must all be in love with you. And, Daphne, I'm not kidding—if I lost you, it would kill me!"

"Oh, my darling," she whispered,

"I love you—and I'm yours—for always!"

She meant it. She loved him. Loved him with a passionate longing to make him happy.

From childhood he seemed to have had such a tough break. Pawn of a sordid divorce case, he had shared his father's bitter disillusionment in the beautiful, selfish woman who had deserted them both for a man who could give her luxuries denied her as the wife of a lieutenant stationed at a remote Pacific naval base.

It was during Jerry's third year at a military academy back in California that the father whom he worshiped was killed in a native uprising while United States warships were speeding to his assistance.

That blow shook the foundation completely from under the tense, neurotic young Jerry's feet.

Vitriolically vowing vengeance, he held the government responsible for his father's death, denouncing the red tape that had caused the fatal delay in sending him protection.

No one had told him of his father's going berserk, disobeying orders because of a woman, dying with that woman who had betrayed him held tight in his arms. If they had, Jerry wouldn't have believed it.

All that was so very long ago, but it had left indelible scars on Jerry's soul. His Uncle Ralph, retired army officer, had told Daphne the story one night when she had had to call him to help her get Jerry home from a honky-tonk night club where they had gone slumming to finish an hilarious evening.

Daphne remembered how horribly frightened she had been. It was the first time she had ever seen Jerry more than mildly tight. The first time she had glimpsed the dark recesses of his mind, the violence of his temper, the deepness of his hatreds.

No one could do anything with him. He wouldn't listen to her im-

portunities. He hardly seemed aware of her presence, even when one of his flailing fists struck her brutally across the mouth.

Daphne never remembered exactly what happened after that. She only knew that she was crying and shouting hoarsely, striking out with spike heels and tiny fists in an attempt to prevent two burly bouncers from using strong arm methods to eject Jerry.

And she failed. She could still hear the sickening thud as Jerry rolled down the flight of steps; still see him sprawled at the bottom—his face ghastly white except for that horrible trickle of blood on his temple.

She had rushed to his side, had knelt beside him, had begged some one to help her move him. Men grinned down at her indifferently; girls sniggered. One of them yelled back at her as she teetered in the doorway.

"Get a derrick, dearie! That is, if you want him. Personally, I'd leave him lay. What good's he to you now, honey, I ask you?"

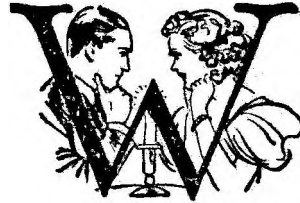
Slumming! Yes, but oh, it wasn't fun. It was filthy, degrading.

Somehow, she got to a phone, called Jerry's Uncle Ralph. And in fifteen minutes he was taking charge with military precision. Together his chauffeur and he lifted Jerry's dead weight into the tonneau of the Packard. All the way to the big, somber but safe house on Washington Square, Daphne held Jerry's head in her arms, trying to ease the jar for him.

It was only after they had him in bed and the doctor had gone that Uncle Ralph had time to notice the trembling girl with the red swollen lips and the wide stark eyes in a strained, tear-streaked face.

He got her brandy; made her drink every drop; put her in a deep chair by the fire. It was there she sat with the white-haired colonel pacing up and down before her while he told

her the story behind Jerry's frightening, incomprehensible raving before the opiate the doctor had given him took effect. The story of Jerry's childhood.



WHEN he had finished, she sat there quietly, unable to speak for the sobs that had welled up in

her throat, feeling weak, shaken.

Poor, poor Jerry.

She was thinking: You fell in love with a boy whom you met one night when you were invited out to a party at the El Morocco. It was a swell party. You weren't accustomed to going to such parties. Heretofore, you'd gone to Child's for a bite after the show with the juvenile, maybe, or a couple of kids from the chorus that you'd known before Lorimore gave you a chance at a nice "bit."

Once in a while, as a special treat, you went to one of the cocktail bars on West 52nd. Usually, Dutch. You never thought of life behind the scenes as glamorous or exciting. It was merely a way to earn a living, a hard way, for you knew you didn't have much talent, you wouldn't get far because all you really had was looks.

Where you belonged was back in that little old Ohio town that you'd left when your father died. Your code fitted that little town. People didn't think you were a prude or a wash-out because you didn't go for wild parties and gin and promiscuous petting.

And then, when you were so fed up that you felt like screaming, you were invited to the El Morocco and you met a boy like Jerry. A handsome, tall, dark boy with flashing, reckless dark eyes and a bitter mouth that somehow tugged at your sympathy. It was such a young mouth to be so defiantly bitter.

He fell for you. Fell for you so hard that he didn't laugh at your dreams and illusions but wanted to share them. And you fell for him, too. For the first time in your life you saw that there *was* glamour and fun and high adventure. And you didn't have to run your finger down the price list before you took it!

Oh, naturally you took it! Naturally you loved the person who made it possible. Roses to greet you in the morning. Kisses to send you to sleep. Hard, tender kisses sweet with the promise of fulfillment.

And then suddenly you found out that it wasn't glamour and fun and high adventure, after all. And there *was* a price tag.

This was it.

Daphne sat there quietly, but it was as though every glittering incident in the last two months wove itself into a fantastic pattern before her eyes.

Not that it brought disillusionment. She'd always taken life on the chin. She'd had to. And she knew that this was life in the raw and that she'd been trying to escape into a dream. The poor girl, the wealthy man dream. The Cinderella dream. But you couldn't escape life. No one could. Not even if you rode in a limousine and wore sables.

The colonel came and stood before her. She could still remember raising her eyes, seeing the buttons on his dark worsted coat straining under the pressure as he leaned slightly toward her.

"Do you love him, Daphne?" he asked her very quietly.

She raised her eyes to his lean, strong face, furrowed and roughened by much exposure to sun and wind.

It was a long moment before she spoke, before she said honestly, "I don't know, Colonel Lund."

Uncle Ralph straightened, walked to the fireplace, took down his pipe

from a rack, slowly tamped tobacco into the bowl. After he had lit it and taken a puff or two, he turned, his back to the glowing coals.

"I hope you love him, my dear," he said, very low. "It's his only salvation. This other girl who threw him over almost at the altar—she didn't count, really, except to make him a trifle more cynical. But you—I think if he lost you—" A prophetic shrug completed the sentence.

Daphne leaned forward in the chair; she could feel her nerves beginning to writhe again.

"But how can I go on like this, Colonel Lund? How can I?" she whispered tensely.

"That's for you to decide. If you love him, I think you can go on. If not, I shouldn't attempt it. The job's too big for anything but love to conquer."

He had the chauffeur drive her home. She crept into her own room so that Irma wouldn't hear. She undressed and bathed her puffy cut lips with warm water.

Huddled under the sheets, she stared up into the darkness and thought: "—the job's too big for anything but love to conquer."

Did she love him enough to tackle it? To make the world over for him? She was sure, lying there until the dawn seeped through the curtains, that she didn't.

But she was wrong.

When you saw a pseudo-sophisticated, cynically gay young Lothario of the night clubs turn into a contrite, heartbroken boy who clung to you desperately, begging for forgiveness, reasons and resolutions and analyzations vanished into thin air. You only knew your heart was aching for him, overflowing with compassion.

Was this love? She didn't know. How could you ever be sure what love was, she wondered? It was so much more than strong arms around you



and kisses that whirled you into ecstasy. All sorts of emotions went into its making. Pity, affection, an abiding maternal urge to protect and cherish and to be needed.

And Jerry needed her so! His dawning belief in things like loyalty and faith deepened upon her. Experience had taught him to doubt God, country, love. Yet he believed in her.

Daphne was afraid of the consequences if she ever failed him.

She stopped short in the center of the room now, her hands clasped tightly before her to still their trembling.

Some way, somehow, she had to go out there and make this Dirk Bellou realize the vital necessity of releasing her immediately.

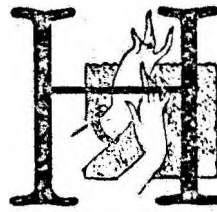
Fortunately, she had made no appointment to meet Jerry tonight. He was tied up at a social gathering of senators, statesmen, army officers and naval men at Uncle Ralph's. But he'd be sure to put through his usual good-night call around one-thirty and would be alarmed—perhaps even suspicious—if she failed to answer the phone.

Striving hard to think with her usual clarity, she went to the dressing-table, taking off her hat. No use getting scared. She knew her way around. She ought to be able to cope with Dirk Bellou, even if he were reputed to be the most irresistible male on the loose in Manhattan.

As she ran a pocket comb through her clipped, shining hair, she decided upon an approach of complete frankness. After all, the man wasn't a movie villain. When he found that she wasn't impressed by his caveman tactics, he'd undoubtedly listen to reason and let her go.

A pat of powder on her piquant little nose, a straightening twist to the golden-tan wool crepe that fitted with snug enticement over slim hips, and she was prepared to face him again.

## CHAPTER II



He hadn't returned to the living-room, so she continued into the small, glassed-in dining-room beyond the luxurious drapes.

Gleaming polished surfaces reflected subdued wall-bracket lights and the candles at either end of the long table upon which supper had been laid out. There was a chafing dish, a bubbling coffee pot, heavily crested silverware, a low bowl of new violets. There was a bucket with ice around a bottle of champagne.

Daphne's breath came a little quicker. There was something so charmingly clandestine about the set-up. A rendezvous in the sky, with all the customary accoutrements for drugging consciences. Oh, Dirk Bellou knew his stuff, all right, she reflected, her lovely mouth curling with brief, cynical amusement.

She walked on to a door that obviously led to a butler's pantry. Pushing the swinging door experimentally, she discovered that room also to be vacant.

Was it possible that Dirk Bellou had walked out on her?

But, no. He was in the kitchen. And when he saw her, he groaned, "Say, help me clean up this mess, will you? I was hunting for butter and dumped over a whole bowl of soup!"

Daphne stood transfixed for a second. The Great Lover, the arch-philanderer, on his knees before the electric refrigerator, trying to scoop up spilled asparagus soup with a teaspoon!

The incongruity of his ludicrous appearance released a tight spring that controlled Daphne's emotions.

She stood there and laughed at him until tears came to her eyes. Then she grabbed a towel from the rack and went to help him.

The floor all clean again, still on

their knees, they looked at one another.

"Unfeeling wretch!" he growled with a grin.

Daphne's mouth was all dimply, making her very, very young and very, very adorable.

"I couldn't help it," she confessed. "It seemed too utterly ridiculous to find you like this. You! The romantic Mr. Bellou!"

His grin widened, was reflected in his gray eyes, putting a warm friendly twinkle in them.

"All right," he said. "You win."

"But—do I?" she asked quickly.

His eyes narrowed upon her an instant. Then, getting to his feet, he brushed off the knees of his knife-creased trousers and ran his fingers through tousled brown hair before reaching out a hand to help Daphne to gain her feet beside him.

Her eyes, shining like lustrous velvet, met his. A pulse leaped in her wrist as she drew her hand away. He *was* irresistible. Softness over steel; boyishness shining through sophistication. An almost fool-proof combination.

His features, she saw at close range, were more boldly chiseled than his newspaper likeness would have led her to suspect. A jaw that was plenty stubborn, a mouth that was wide and hard and demanding. Color rushed into her cheeks as memory brought back the moment when that mouth had pressed flamingly against hers.

"Look," she proposed, a flutelike quality in her voice, "I tell you what I'll do. As long as you've gone to all this trouble, I'll have supper with you—and then, really I must get home. I'm expecting a phone call. It's terribly important."

"But I can't expect to impress you with my sterling qualities in that short time!" he objected lightly. Frowning in elaborate concentration, he added presently, "But—tell you what I'll do. I'll match you. If you promise on your word of honor to

marry me, I'll take you home long enough to get that phone call. Then we'll head for a minister."

"Now you're being ridiculous," she chided.

He sighed exaggeratedly. "Very well, as you refuse to meet me half-way, I'm sorry, but there's nothing I can do except keep you in the tower until you consent."

She looked up at him, her eyes clear now and direct and sincere. "I shan't consent—ever," she said very low. "You see, Mr. Bellou, you were wrong. I—I happen to love him."

The banter faded from his expression, leaving him grin, older. "I don't believe it. You couldn't. He's nothing but a dissipated young fool."

Daphne rushed to Jerry's defense. "Oh, he isn't! You don't know him as he really is. Drinking has only been an escape to him—but that's all over now. He's—he's finding himself."

Irony was in his, "Ah—the martyr complex! Going to reform him, is that it?"

"No! Of course it isn't! I'm giving him something to work for, something to *live* for, that's all!"

"And he's taking you from the insecurity of theatrical life; giving you furs, automobiles, servants and jewels. A good swap, isn't it?"

"Oh." She felt as if he had repaid her confidence with a slap in the face.

"Or," he added with baffling significance, "is there an even greater motive for this strange loyalty of yours?"

"I—I don't know what you mean."

"No? Then—shall we say that your self-sacrificing little tale simply fails to click, my dear? And that—supper is ready?"

**H**IS cool, deep voice, with the undertone of sarcasm, struck at the very core of her being. The last few casual moments might never have been. His apparent delightful

humanness, she knew now, had only been an act, a part of the insidious, despicable method he used to break down feminine resistance.

Suddenly she had never loathed anyone as she loathed him. Her voice lashed out at him contemptuously.

"Who gave you the right to judge me? Or Jerry? You—a man who takes delight in breaking women's hearts as carelessly as he breaks his polo ponies' legs!"

His mouth tightened. "So you believe everything you read in the newspapers."

"Your exploits are common gossip!"

"Indeed."

"I happen to have heard about Olga Trent who went over an embankment in her car at a most convenient moment for you—when she was about to sue you for breach of promise!"

"Is that an insinuation?"

"Merely a deplorable fact, Mr. Bellou." She hurled the words at him like icy little pellets, wanting desperately to get under that inscrutable, calm exterior, to hurt him—if he *could* be hurt!

"I happen also," she went on inexorably, "to have heard of Sylvia Carlton whose husband divorced her,

naming you as correspondent. And little Alice Dugal whose heart you took for a ride in Miami—who was only saved from suicide by the timely arrival of the fire department with a pulmotor. Shall I go on?"

"Please do. It's all very interesting."

But she couldn't. Tearful rage choked her. At last she managed, "You're a cad! You ought to be horse-whipped until you begged for mercy!"

"You're beautiful when you're angry."

He had moved closer to her and all her defenses rose up to do battle against the suffocating dizziness that swept over her at his vital nearness.

"Oh, I hate you! I loathe you!" she cried, the words rasping her throat. "All your life—because you've had money and position—you've done exactly as you pleased and never been called to account. But this time you're going too far! There's a law against kidnaping and I can see that it's enforced!"

"Can you?"

"It isn't only my life you're playing with. It's Jerry's. I love him and I won't let you do this to us!"

He didn't answer. If only he had answered, his voice might have

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broken the mesmerism of his gaze, probing, searching, as if it sought to dissect the very heart of her!

Her will fought his—violently, hysterically—but her body seemed to float toward him against her volition!

Shamed scarlet mantled her cheeks with the knowledge that, though she despised this man with every fibre of her being, he could still exercise the powerful attraction of his personality upon her.

In a broken, choked voice, she made one last desperate plea.

"Please let me go, Mr. Bellou!"

For a second she thought her appeal had registered, but then his face set into lines of grim ruthlessness.

"Not a chance," he said.

It was then that the bell rang, like an exclamation point to her acute disappointment. It seemed to Daphne's distracted senses that it sounded the death-knell of all her happiness.

It couldn't be Jerry! There was no possible way, as yet, that he could have known she was here. But if it were a stranger, it meant that her presence here alone, at midnight, with Dirk Bellou would be publicized!

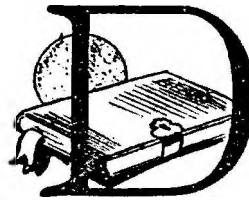
She stared strickenly up at him. Would he answer the summons? Did she want him to? Wouldn't it be safer to chance breaking down his indomitable will, than to run the risk of having her reputation blasted by whoever stood outside that door?

And then, as the bell rang again—sharply, insistently—she threw up her head defiantly. Pride and a fatalistic calm took possession of her. She had done nothing wrong. She would not sidestep nor hide!

"Well, are you going to answer it?" she asked.

For one instant longer he took her measure. Then, grimly, purposefully, he strode the length of the kitchen to the door leading to the rear of the front hall.

Daphne steeled herself to follow him. She was standing in the hallway—tense, white-faced—when Dirk opened the door to Jerry Lund and Irma Colfax!



APHNE stood there, rigid, stunned, unable to grasp the significance of their appearance together. She had known for a long

time that Irma was a calculating opportunist, but she hadn't suspected her of rank duplicity like this!

It came over her with a rush, the whole diabolical scheme. Irma—biding her time, urging Daphne to go out with Dirk so that she could spy on her, then report to Jerry! Jerry—whose jealousy made him so vulnerable for her unscrupulous tactics!

It was Irma who broke the tableau.

"Sorry, Daphne," she drawled with cool triumph, "but you couldn't expect to cheat forever without getting caught." Sauntering with insolent poise past the two men, she trilled, "But—what a charming apartment! I imagine it's hard *not* to be wicked in a place like this, isn't it?"

Daphne had a sudden feeling that she was slumming again. She experienced that same nausea at the pit of her stomach.

And then Jerry took a threatening step toward her, his thin, handsome face raging with suspicion, his voice, when he spoke, hoarse, unrecognizable.

"So it's true! Everything she said about you is true! You're nothing but a cheap Broadway gold-digger out for the main chance!"

Daphne looked at him pleadingly. "Jerry," she begged, "you can't believe that. You know it isn't true!"

"I know you've been putting on an act!" he snarled venomously. "The sweet little innocent—pretending to be looking out for my welfare, pretending to restore my faith in hu-

man nature! And all the time milking me for all I was worth!" He threw back his head, laughing with queer lack of mirth. "And you nearly put it over too! I was going to marry you!"

Daphne's face was colorless. "Jerry!" she managed through stiff lips. "How can you say such a thing? How can you? I didn't come up here of my own free will. I've done nothing wrong. You must listen to me!"

"Listen to you? What for? So you can play me for a sap all over again?" His eyes bored into hers—a dangerous gleam in their black depths. And suddenly his hand darted out, the fingers fastening like talons on her arm. "I ought to kill you!" he gritted.

Dirk Bellou spoke for the first time. "If there's any killing to be done," he said curtly, "you can start on me. Daphne has told you the truth, I forced her to accompany me here at the point of a gun."

Jerry's dark, murderous gaze swung to the other man. "How romantic! But hardly necessary. A check book would have done as well!"

"I think you've said enough."

"Maybe you're right!"

He released Daphne's wrist with a violence that made her clutch at the drapes to keep from falling. Then he made for Dirk, his fists knotted menacingly.

But Irma had stepped between them, had caught Jerry's arm.

"Come on, darling!" she urged. "She isn't worth fighting for. I would have saved you this scene but I knew you wouldn't believe what a heartless two-timer she was unless you saw it with your own eyes!"

"Well, you've seen it," said Dirk Bellou. His voice was abruptly flint-like, authoritative. "Now get out—both of you!"

"With pleasure," Jerry leered. "Sorry to have intruded. I've had my inning. Now it's *your* turn."

It was Irma who dragged Jerry out and closed the door before the

fury that mottled Dirk's face could find an outlet in physical combat.

Irma had accomplished her purpose. She didn't want a fight on her hands!

But Daphne started precipitantly for the closed door. Only she had sensed the soul sickness, the shattering disillusionment, behind Jerry's sneering vituperation!

**D**IRK barred her way, pinioning her arms to her sides. "Stay where you are!" he ordered harshly.

"Let me go!" Daphne half-screamed. "Oh, let me go! You've got to let me go to him!"

"Why?" demanded Dirk in a hard, clipped voice. "He doesn't love you. If he did, don't you suppose he'd trust you, despite appearances? Or at least give you a chance to explain?"

"You don't understand! He didn't mean any of those awful things he said! Another girl shattered his faith when she threw him over two days before their wedding! And now he thinks I've done the same!"

Her fists came up to beat in hysterical frenzy against his hard chest. "I'm afraid! I tell you—I'm afraid of what he'll do! Let me go! Let me go."

His hold on her arms hurt. "You don't need to worry about that bird!" he rapped out. "He'll turn to your friend Irma on the rebound—and from what I've seen of them, they'll make a swell team. Birds of a feather!"

"Oh," she gasped, "how dare you?"

"But, whatever happens, you're not leaving here tonight. Is that clear?"

Pure rage wiped out all other emotion as, with a furious wrench, she freed herself, running along the hall to the living-room and thence into the bedroom, slamming and locking the door.

She stood braced against it, her breath coming in hard, jerky sobs.

It was fantastic, inconceivable, that she, who had always been kidded

as straight-laced, should suddenly find herself in a situation like this. Only a man as devoid of principle and conscience as Dirk Bellou could have brought it about.

Simply because she had momentarily caught his fickle fancy, he had deliberately wrecked her whole future. By the time he wearied of this game he was playing, she'd have lost fiancé, reputation, job. And, according to precedent, he'd merely dismiss it with an indifferent shrug as one more amusing incident in his hectic career.

A little moan left her lips at the thought of Jerry. She couldn't hate him for the things he had said. From his viewpoint, they were justified. And, emotionally unstable, he was liable to go completely haywire unless she could find a way to save him from himself and a girl who would stop at nothing to gain her ends!

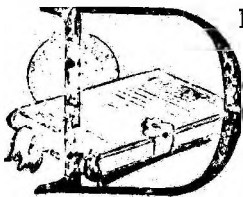
Her hands pressed against her temples, pushing the hair back from her hot face. Daphne paced the room. She must have walked miles. Certainly it seemed that she walked for hours. But she knew what she was going to do!

There was one way she could get out of this apartment and she was going to take it!

Resolutely she applied make-up in an effort to obliterate lines of worry and anguish which, peculiarly, only seemed to enhance instead of detract from her arresting beauty.

She gave attention to her hair again, then she was ready.

### CHAPTER III



**D**IRK BELLOU was in the living-room and, if countless cigarette butts smudged into ash-trays meant anything, apparently he had been as agitated as she!

He was facing her from the other

side of the room when she opened the bedroom door, but she didn't falter. Crossing to him, she said fearlessly:

"Thinking me the sort of person you do, you couldn't possibly love me any more than I love you—but if you still want me, I'll marry you."

It seemed at first that he hadn't understood her. His expression did not change by so much as a flicker. But presently he said crisply. "Now you're showing sense. After all, I'm as good an alimony bet as young Lund. Perhaps even better." He tossed his half-smoked cigarette into the fireplace. "How about having the knot tied right away? Nothing as romantic as an elopement in the middle of the night, you know."

"By all means," she agreed unflinchingly.

Of course she had no intention of going through with it. All she wanted was to escape from this apartment. After that, there would surely be an opportunity to give him the slip. And she wouldn't hesitate to use it. She could be as tricky as he.

Evidently, however, she wasn't clever enough to disguise her purpose. He must have suspected that her sudden capitulation was only a ruse, for all during that interminable drive to Armonk, the latest Gretna Green, he kept her unobtrusively under surveillance.

Once when they stopped for gas, she walked up the road a little way without objection, but no wonder! The place was absolutely isolated. There was nowhere to run to. No one to appeal to save the puny old man who was filling the tank.

Daphne, shivering, got back into the car.

"Cold, darling?" Dirk asked, solicitously tucking a robe about her feet.

He was playing the ardent lover now, no trace of superciliousness in his manner toward her. She caught glimpses of that captivating boyish

quality, that irresistible charm of his.

They might really have been an eloping couple, hurtling through the night—past sleeping villages, past peaceful farm lands, stretching calmly back from the shiny band of road.

There was nobody in the world except the two of them. Nothing seemed real except the great yellow moon high in the sky, except this man beside her, the muscles in his shoulder moving against her arm as his strong hands dexterously manipulated the wheel.

Everything else seemed very far away—and unimportant. She tried to think of Jerry—of Irma—of Uncle Ralph. They all seemed persons she had known a very long time ago, almost in another incarnation.

Victim of a devastating lethargy, all the more dangerous because it was so sweet, Daphne had, actually, to whip her thoughts into line, to remind herself that she was waiting for a moment when she could turn her companion in for kidnaping!

But that moment didn't materialize until she was inside a small, frame house, in the living-room with the what-not in the corner, and the minister's kind, scrawny wife was playing the wedding march on the old-fashioned organ!

Then, all she had to do was to rush to the phone in the hall under the stairs and call the police. Dirk Bellou wouldn't dare use force with the benignly sweet old man who was polishing his glasses and getting out his Bible. She'd have protection until help arrived—and then, all Dirk's money and influence couldn't save him from the charges she'd file!

Only—she couldn't do it!

The fortifying defiance that had spurred her to outwit this man had crumbled during that long intimate drive, and she was trembling so uncontrollably that her knees wouldn't support her and she had to sink onto the horsehair sofa.

Oh, what a fool she was! What a consummate fool! Hadn't she been praying for rescue for hours? Dirk Bellou had ruined her life, knocked over all her hopes and plans with one fell swoop. Now she held the power to smash him. Why didn't she use it?

In feverish dismay, her eyes flashed to Dirk as he came toward her and drew her to him by her cold clenched hands.

Instantly her whole being flamed to his touch. The magnetism of his gaze enslaved her, body and soul and mind.

And suddenly she had her answer. She was going through with the marriage. She was going through with it because she couldn't help herself. She loved him.

THE knowledge came to her with the piercing swiftness of an arrow. It should have seemed devastating, preposterous. Yet, deep in her heart, she knew that, ever since she had first looked into his gray eyes—was it only a few hours ago?—she had been fighting against a force as inevitable, as elemental and natural as the wind blowing through the trees or the sun rising. She had been born to love Dirk Bellou.

The minister adjusted his glasses, opened his book. He was asking Dirk questions, asking her questions. She tried to make herself realize how momentous, how sacred, this moment was. But her answers were mechanical and quite meaningless.

So this was love. This shattering emotion that defied logic and reason and the dictates of intelligence.

Dazedly she looked at Dirk's strong, bronzed profile as he said, "I do."

And she thought wildly: "It's crazy. It can't be. Yet it is. I love you—and you'll break my heart just as you broke Olga Trent's, Sylvia Carlton's, Alice Dugal's and heaven knows how many others!"

Then it was over. Magically they were alone in the room, she and Dirk. He was looking down at her, his

gray eyes darkly intense, his breath coming unevenly.

Abruptly he reached out for her, drawing her tight against him, so that she thrilled to the trembling of his body. Dimly she heard the involuntary groan that tore through him before he set his mouth on hers.

The fire of that kiss snaked through her veins in tortuous ecstasy. Everything else was forgotten in a blinding moment of yielding that seemed to fuse her being with his in divine perfection.

And then he was putting her away from him with savage repudiation. Tight-lipped, his eyes smoldered darkly as he fought for control.

"All right," he said hoarsely, "let's get going."

Daphne swayed there before him. Her eyes were a phosphorescent green in the stricken whiteness of her face. For just an instant she stared at him uncomprehendingly. Then she turned gropingly toward the door.

Miles slid under the tires before either of them spoke. Daphne sat, pale and shaken, staring unseeingly at the flying landscape, sparkling color in the new sunlight.

At last his voice came with taunting grimness. "Success story. 'Little Girl from Ohio Makes Good in the Big City. Lands Millionaire!' Which millionaire? Oh, but why bring that up? It's as easy to love one millionaire as another, isn't it, Mrs. Bellou?"

Her heart leaped at his use of that name, only to thud with pain at its implication.

Of course he meant Jerry! His detestable sophistication would allow him to ascribe no other motive for the transference of her affections but a desire to "feather her nest." He thought that, having missed out on the Lund millions, she had staged a cagy right-about-face to annex his! And the low husky words she managed were pitifully inadequate to refute him. "I was sorry for Jerry. I never loved him. I know that now."

Her halting explanation drew nothing but a sharp-edged laugh and a light, "So glad. I'd hate to know my wife was pretending she was kissing some one else every time she kissed me."

Daphne stifled a choking sob in her throat. Oh, how could he? Had he wanted her merely for the sadistic satisfaction of hurting and humiliating her?

They stopped at a Westchester roadhouse for their wedding breakfast. It was ghastly. She knew now that Dirk hated her, that, even while he was vowing to buy her with love, he had been hating her.

One word beat monotonously, maddeningly, upon her consciousness. Why? Why?

Why had Dirk Bellou kidnaped her? Why did he hate and despise her? Why had he professed to love her? Why had he married her?

She was playing a game with him—a bewildering, tragic game—without knowing any of the rules or the goal or the stakes!

But she was near the finish line, that much she did know. There wasn't any use going on after your opponent had won!

And oh, he had won! Completely, thoroughly. It was over. Now, all she wanted to do was get away. He had duped her into marrying him—for what possible reason or purpose her confused brain and bruised heart couldn't fathom—but there was no law on earth that could compel her to endure the agony of being his wife!

It didn't take clever strategy to get away from him now, for he had relaxed his vigilance.

An excuse to freshen up in the rest room while he put through a phone call, and she was slipping out a side door to beg a ride of the country-bumpkin sort of fellow who drove a meat truck! They must have been miles away on a cross-country road before Dirk even realized she was gone.





UCK, which had seemed to desert her for so long, now appeared to be on her side. The truck delivered her in White Plains exactly in time to board an express for New York.

Commuters thronged the cars. They looked bright-eyed and freshly scrubbed and shaved and pressed. She felt besmirched and exhausted by contrast. But it was an exhaustion that wouldn't let her relax. When she closed her eyes, her thoughts seemed to gather speed, whirling around and around in her tired, dazed brain.

She wondered where she was going, what she was going to do. It was intolerable to think of going back and picking up the dangling threads of her life as it had been before she met Dirk Bellou.

Even if Jerry woke up to the fact that his jealousy had been entirely unfounded and begged her forgiveness, she knew everything was finished between them.

She had been laboring under a delusion in thinking she could help him find happiness. No one could. He was doomed, by his own nature, to tread always the dark unhappy byways. In breaking their engagement, he had released her from a promise that

could only have brought them both endless, soul-searing misery.

Somehow, she couldn't quite figure how, she had snarled up her life in New York so badly that she was sure extrication would be impossible. She'd gone to conquer Broadway and Broadway had conquered her. She hated its sham and its glamour and its high-powered salesmanship. They even took your love at the point of a gun! And then trampled on it with merciless satisfaction!

Only one thing she was certain of. She had to get away. And before the train pulled into Grand Central, she knew where she was going. It was the only obvious retreat. Like a wounded homing pigeon, she was going back to that little town in Ohio. There, among familiar childhood surroundings and friends, maybe she'd regain her sanity, maybe her heart would heal and she could learn to forget.

Once she made up her mind, Daphne lost no time in executing her plan. Why wait? She had managed to save a few hundred dollars, enough to tide her over until she found some sort of work back home. That is, if she started now. She wasn't losing anything financially by leaving for, in anticipation of her marriage to Jerry, she had already given in her two weeks' notice at the theater, and had been replaced in her part.

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But above all, her haste to leave town was motivated by panic. She was afraid of herself if Dirk Belou chose to exercise the prerogatives of a husband. She knew, from the insane events of the previous night, that he could cast a spell upon her that sapped all her initiative and made her a willing slave to his bidding!

She took a cab to the apartment on Central Park South, hoping she could get her things and pack without encountering Irma. At best, they had never had anything in common except their stage work, and now, after her treachery, Daphne hoped never to see her again.

Her hope showed every indication of being realized. Irma had cleared out, bag and baggage! The place showed unmistakable signs of hasty departure. Dressing-table drawers pulled out and not replaced. Clothes hangers on the floor, closets strewn with tissue paper and discarded hat boxes.

Well, Daphne thought with a heavy sigh, her roommate had taken no chances of having Jerry slip through her predatory fingers, it seemed. It looked as though she had already gone away with him.

Poor Uncle Ralph! Daphne found herself pitying the brave, upstanding old man who had bent every effort to raise Jerry to follow in his footsteps. It was he who would pay, not Jerry. And when the time came for a showdown, Irma's demands would not be lenient. She rated her voluptuous charms highly!

The morning was well advanced by the time Daphne had bathed and changed, packed and wound up her affairs. A few hours to erase three years from her life! She was making a clean break. She dared not think of the future—but she was burying the past, every last bit of it!

Her railway and berth tickets had just arrived by special messenger and she was signing off with the landlord for the apartment when the

bell rang—startlingly, portentously.

She stood still in the center of the room, her hand, with the invalidated lease in it, arrested in mid-air.

"Is anything wrong, Miss Darrell?" the landlord asked anxiously, looking at her set face without a vestige of color in it.

"No. No, thank you, nothing's wrong," Daphne faltered, taking hold of herself, meeting his eyes with a fleeting, vacant smile. "And thank you so much for your consideration. It would have gone hard with me if you'd been obdurate about my finishing out the year."

"Even landlords have been known to be human to a desirable tenant like yourself, Miss Darrell. We'll be glad to have you back at any time."

THE bell rang again. Daphne told herself it was absurd to feel this sinking sensation in the pit of her stomach. It must be nerves and lack of sleep. Undoubtedly it was the assistant manager with the inventory or the expressman.

She walked to the door with the landlord, chatting pleasantly and not knowing a word she said. She opened the door, to be confronted with neither the assistant manager nor the expressman, but with Jerry Lund!

In spite of her consternation, however, she managed to invite him in and usher the landlord out as if she were receiving at tea instead of opening the door to further heartbreak.

Jerry was the last person in the world she had expected to see. She had visualized him on a lawless honeymoon with Irma. Yet, as she faced him after they were alone, she found herself stoical, calm. Strangely, she could look upon him almost impersonally. For the first time she could see the weakness in his lean, tragic face, and be only slightly moved by his bleary, sunken eyes.

"Daphne, Daphne!" he cried out hoarsely.

But emotion seemed drained from her. She wanted to feel sorry for

him, but instead had to fight down irritation at the delay his appearance was causing her.

It was he who had severed the ties between them, he who had judged her without a hearing. And now he expected a few broken phrases to reinstate him in her life. "Sorry . . . must have been insane . . . didn't mean it . . . got to forgive me . . . can't live without you . . ."

But curiously, it had all ceased to matter. Yes, she forgave him. How easy it was to forgive when you didn't care! How stiff and cold and possessed you could be when your heart was like a lead thing in your breast. She had lost the power to feel even sorry that she could not be sorry.

Yet gradually she became aware of something deeper in his pleading, a deadly fear that communicated itself to her.

She looked at him sharply, looked at him as he licked dry lips before he could speak in a strangled whisper.

"Daphne, you've got to marry me! We'll go away—Europe or South America or Hawaii—anywhere you say. Only you can't say no! It's the end for me if you do. I can't take it! Do you hear? I can't take it!"

What was he saying? With new perceptions, she noted what her dulled senses had laid to passion for her. It wasn't that at all!

"Jerry," she cried, "what do you mean? What are you talking about?"

He stood there, crouched over, as if his spine had bent with the burden upon it. Words came pantingly from between his clenched teeth.

"I did it!" he babbled incoherently. "Don't you understand? I did it!"

"Did what? Jerry, what have you done?"

"I swore I'd get even for my father's death! Well, I've done it! I've sold out my country. I've sold out Uncle Ralph!" His voice rose hysterically, pounding the incredible truth home to her. "Well, why don't you say something? I'm a traitor! If I

don't get out of the country—it means death or prison!"

When sheer horror held her silent, he stepped forward to grip her arms, clinging to her fiercely.

"Daphne, you can't let me down now! I'll kill myself!"

When he released her, it was to collapse onto the divan, his fists covering his inflamed eyes, as convulsive dry sobs lacerated his slight form.

A tight band seemed to clamp itself about Daphne's temples. This was Jerry who had confessed this atrocious crime. Jerry who, up to last night, had been the most important person in her life! And he was right. She couldn't let him down!

She was trembling violently as she went to him, put her arms around his shaking shoulders.

"Oh, Jerry," she moaned, "how could you have done it? How *could* you?"

Kneeling before her, his head on her knees, it came out—the whole wretched story of a man's final degradation in a few blurted sentences.

"It was simple. You know, of course, that Uncle Ralph isn't retired at all. He's working confidentially for the government. All I had to do was keep my eyes and ears open when he had some diplomat or statesman at the house. An unguarded word—a chance to eavesdrop—and I was able to pass along tips to the foreign agent.

"I was gleeful about it. At last I was avenging my father's death! And getting some excitement in the bargain. I didn't realize the magnitude of the secrets I'd sold until I overheard Uncle Ralph in conference with a secret service man—trying to figure out where the leaks had come from!"

"Go on!" she said when he paused. "What's the rest?"

"Then I met you and you showed me there was something to live for besides revenge. Until last night! I knew last night there would be an

important conference at the house—in the guise of a social gathering—but I didn't intend to use any information, I swear I didn't!

"Then Irma phoned, told me to meet her. I must have been insane to believe her, but I did. I let her lead me to Bellou's penthouse. Afterwards—well, I guess I went haywire. . . ."

Daphne surmised the rest. "You—you went to your foreign agent and sold him information you had obtained at the meeting."

"Yes. One of the navy department's most secret codes!" he admitted huskily. "It was passed on to my uncle last night."

"And then?" she pursued relentlessly.

"I was followed! I didn't realize it until I rejoined Irma in the car—after I'd seen my man. But then I knew they were on to me. I tried to shake the tail—Irma got wise, and went blooey on me. Said she knew plenty of rackets but that was one she was steering clear of. She left me flat. I've been driving around all night! Daphne—what shall I do?"

Daphne stood up, walked to the window and stared down at the taxis speeding their fares to the Plaza for lunch or a drive through the park.

Down there life was going on quite as usual. Up here she had just listened to an impassioned confession laying bare a man's ugly, warped soul. Seconds passed before she could subdue the sick anguish that picture brought her.

When she turned, it was to say carefully, "There's only one thing you can do. Make a clean breast of the whole thing to your uncle."

Jerry went white. "Are you crazy? He'd have me clapped in jail within an hour!"

"It's where you belong, Jerry. You can't escape punishment for what you've done. Your uncle will deal fairly with you. That's as much as you can hope for."

His temper flared dangerously. "That's where you'd like to put me,

isn't it?" he sneered. "Behind bars! That would suit you swell! You could play around with Dirk Bellou to your heart's content!"

Daphne looked at him steadily. "I never want to see Dirk Bellou again," she said.

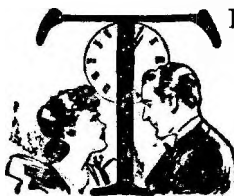
There was something in her tone that cowed him, shamed him to stumbling apology. But it took another half hour of blazing argument before she could convince him that throwing himself on Uncle Ralph's mercy was his only salvation.

Yet he backed down on that as the cab in which they rode approached Washington Square.

"Daphne, you tell him!" he begged hoarsely. "He'll listen to you!"

In the end, she agreed. The thought went sadly through her mind that she owed it to the memory of the love that might have been between them.

#### CHAPTER IV



HE butler admitted them. Jerry made immediate tracks for his room. Daphne asked where Colonel Lund might be found.

"Colonel Lund has a visitor just now," the servant said. "Will you wait in the library, Miss Darrell?"

"Yes, I'll wait."

She followed him into the cool darkened room done in majestic mahogany and red leather. She sat down in the chair before the cold hearthstone, remembering the night when Uncle Ralph had ensconced her in this same chair, made her drink brandy, and told her the tragic story of Jerry's childhood.

Now she had come to tell him that his nephew had sought retribution through the betrayal of his own soul!

Shivering, she sat on the edge of the chair, her gloveless hands clasped so tightly that the knuckles shone white against the chair arms.

And as she sat there a voice came to her—a deep vibrant voice that brought her to her feet in startled incredulity.

Surely she must be dreaming! Dirk Bellou! Dirk Bellou in this house, in the den beyond the library, talking to Uncle Ralph!

But even as amazement held her rigid, breathlessly listening, she could distinguish the words he spoke.

"I'm terribly sorry, Colonel. I know how this hits you. But I did my best to prepare you. It had to be Jerry. There was no other possible leak."

Then came Uncle Ralph's voice, just the faintest quiver betraying his perturbation. "You mean—it worked? The trap we set—worked?"

"Conclusively. I had him shadowed from the moment he left here last night to meet Irma Colfax. After they left my penthouse, they were tailed to Ito Suruki's. Jerry left Irma in the car while he went inside. He was gone for ten minutes. My men rushed Suruki's as soon as Jerry had left. They found the paper with the secret code on Suruki's desk—the code we planted here last night."

"My own nephew. It seems impossible," Uncle Ralph said in a heavy, strange monotone. "And Daphne—docs she fit in, too?"

"I'm thoroughly convinced she had nothing to do with it!" Dirk Bellou said. "I'm so sure of it that I took definite steps to keep her entirely clear of any complicity. There can be no possible suspicion attached to—my wife."

"You—you married Daphne?" was the slow, stunned query.

"I did. It was the only way I could be certain to follow your wishes, Colonel. I know the high regard you have for Daphne, sir; the good influence you feel she's been in Jerry's life."

"And Daphne—she consented to marry you upon such short acquaintance?"

"Women do strange things, Colonel. Unfortunately, I haven't your exalted opinion of their motives. Daphne had nothing to do with this espionage business—but she's out for the main chance, like all these little Broadway floosies. And when she thought she'd lost Jerry, she wasn't averse to taking me—and my bank account—as a stop-gap."

"I can't believe that of Daphne. I don't believe it. But feeling that way, my boy, why did you carry my wish for her protection to the extreme of—marriage?"

Daphne, her breath suspended in her aching throat, strained to hear the answer.

"Because I love her," said Dirk Bellou.

And before Daphne could move, the door between the two rooms opened under his hand, disclosing her to his startled gaze.

But after that first breathless glance, Daphne saw that his eyes had shifted, that he was looking beyond her toward the hall door.

"I wouldn't try it, Lund," he said sharply. "The place is surrounded."

Daphne whirled—to find Jerry standing there, a Gladstone bag on the floor beside him, a shiny, blue-nosed automatic in his hand!

"Stand back, all of you!" he ordered menacingly. "I'm going out that door and the first one who tries to stop me gets it!"

His bloodshot eyes, slitted now, focused upon Dirk. "I have ways of getting information, too, you know. It happened to come just now over the telephone. Very clever, aren't you? An undercover man for the U. S. Secret Service—posing as a notorious playboy so you can trick people to their deaths!

"That Olga Trent you got the goods on! She was selling out to Russia. Okay. You gave her the choice of a firing squad or going over an embankment. Merciful, weren't you? Correspondent in the Carlton divorce! That was rich, that was! Taking her

off his hands before he went to Alcatraz! Even the little Dugal kid who tried to take a powder when she found you'd only been using her to trick her father into a spy's grave! Pretty, isn't it? Noble!

"Well, Mr. Bellou, you don't get a chance to chalk me up on your list of credits. I'm blowing!"

"**J**ERRY, put down that gun!" said Colonel Lund from Daphne's side. "You haven't a chance of getting away."

"And what chance have I got staying?"

"I promise to get you the best break I can."

"You think I'd believe a guy who could trick his own flesh and blood? Sure, you laid a trap for me—and I fell into it. So what? So I'm lighting out for parts unknown."

"I consented to the trap because I was so sure you were innocent. Don't try to leave now, Jerry. I'm warning you."

"Thanks. But I'm in no danger, my dear uncle. You see, Mrs. Bellou is coming with me."

"You're insane!"

"Yeah? Maybe. But it just so happens that I've got a score of my own to settle. Pretty smart, weren't you, Mrs. Bellou, tricking me down here for your husband?"

"Jerry!" Daphne gasped. "Oh, Jerry, you can't think I did that!"

"Enough of this!" Dirk Bellou said grimly, stepping forward. "Either you put down that gun or I'm coming to get it!"

"Swell!" enthused Jerry, with a crazy, leering grin. "Come ahead! I've been hoping for a chance to plug you!"

Daphne was never sure exactly in what rotation things happened after that. She acted instinctively when she saw Dirk's big frame tense for a rush, when she heard Jerry's maniacal laugh as his gun arm came up with deadly accuracy!

Unhesitatingly, she ran between them as the gun blazed.

It was seconds before she knew she had been hit. Perhaps because Dirk's onslaught as he went past her was so violent that it threw her against the console table.

A peculiar numbness came over her as, in a detached way, she watched Dirk attempt to wrest the gun from Jerry's fingers, saw Jerry twist free and bolt out the door, down the steps. Then Uncle Ralph cut off her vision as he brought up short in the doorway. There were shouts and what sounded like an automobile back-firing. Then a profound whirring silence.

Uncle Ralph's erect military figure slumped as if he were a very old man. Through a haze, Daphne saw Dirk looming beside the colonel, taking his arm.

"Easy, sir," he cautioned huskily. "Perhaps it's better this way."

"Much better," the colonel said dimly.

Daphne was staring fascinatedly at the floor. There was blood there, forming a tiny pool at her feet. The hall started to rock, the ceiling met the floor, and she was conscious of an excruciating pain in her left arm before she crumpled pathetically forward.

It was hours later when she regained consciousness in a little white bed in the hospital. Hours after that before they'd let Dirk see her.

But at last he was there beside her, holding her small hand in his two big shaking ones.

"Oh, my darling, my darling!" he whispered brokenly. "Why did you do it? You might have been killed! Don't you know that? Why did you do it?"

Daphne's smoky eyes were suffused with an unearthly radiance. "Because I love you," she answered simply.

Dirk's dark head with that boyish wave in it was bowed against her hand.

"Daphne, my precious sweetheart, I don't deserve it!" he groaned. Then

he raised his head to look into her eyes, to tell her the unvarnished truth. "Do you realize I kidnaped you, made love to you, in the hope that you'd crack and let something slip that would be evidence against Jerry and you!"

But remembering the words she had heard in Colonel Lund's library gave Daphne the courage to say, "But you went through with it—even when you thought I was only a Broadway—"

His fingers against her lips stopped her. "Don't!" he begged. "It'll take me a lifetime to make up to you for what I did!"

Daphne didn't think it would take a lifetime, but she was glad he did if his remorse was responsible for that heavenly glow in his eyes.

It was some time later before the other questions that bothered her could be answered.

Yes, poor, unbridled, unhappy Jerry had turned the gun on himself rather than be captured. Uncle Ralph was taking it like a brave soldier.

"This case spelled finis to my service to the government," Dirk told her. "Certain people have found out who I am and I'm no longer of any value. I'm glad, Daphne. It hasn't been pleasant. Even when you know a person is coldly selling out his country for money—sacrificing his soul, his birthright—even when you know he deserves the punishment meted out to traitors—it isn't pleasant to be the one to bring him to justice."

"But—but what will you do with yourself?" Daphne wondered.

And suddenly the hard, grim lines about that strong mouth softened, the gray eyes held an exciting twinkle. "Don't you know you've married a playboy, darling?" he grinned. "Let's really start out to make history, shall we?"

Daphne looked up at him adoringly. "I don't want to make history," she quoted softly. "I—I just want to make love."

And presently she was being transported to paradise as Dirk took her at her word!



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# One Kiss Too Many



"Not a bad wife,"  
he laughed. "Not a  
bad wife at all."

*She Set a Hus-  
band to Catch a  
Husband*

*By Vina Lawrence*

"**L**ADY LOVE on the air!" Jack Pearsall, the announcer for KRC, cried gayly into the microphone. "Lady Love to advise our womenfolk on the gentle art of Holding Your Man!"

"Hello, girls!" Gloria Bennett, known as Glory by her friends, and Lady Love by her public, had a sweet intimate voice that had reaped a small harvest of fan mail in the two short months she had been on the big



Chicago station. "Have you been using your Trueskin nourishing cream every night? I bet if you have, hubby has started kissing you before breakfast again!"

A pause here while Glory and Jack Pearsall gave a perfectly-timed chuckle, then Glory went on:

"This morning I'm going to talk to you girls about that old bugaboo, the Other Woman! As some of you have guessed, men don't begin straying without cause. Have you let your complexion get leathery and spotty?"

Glory was reading her broadcast from the notes in her hands, and her hands were trembling as she read. She was a very beautiful girl, neither too short nor too tall, with soft blond hair and great violet black eyes.

And this morning she was a very frightened girl. For here in the studio behind the glass partition sat the president of the Trueskin Cosmetic Company who sponsored her program.

Nat Copper, lean, sleek and dark, did not seem to be a man who would go about intentionally frightening beautiful blond girls. In fact Nat was looking through the glass at her with a soft dark gaze that said she was very satisfactory indeed.

But to Glory that gaze seemed the calm before the storm. What would happen—*what* would happen, when Nat Copper discovered that Glory had lied to get this job? She had told a very black lie.

There had been reasons for it, of course. Glory had been completely broke two months ago when she applied for this job; she had been broke and alone in Chicago. She knew no one. She didn't even have a ticket back to the little southern town where she had been something of a local sensation over the radio with her little impersonations.

Oh, yes, Glory had been absolutely desperate when she applied for this job two months ago. And when the production manager at KRC had said:

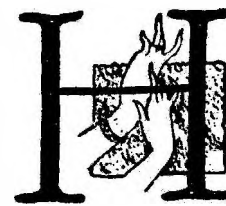
"We have an opening with the Trueskin Complexion Hour, but they insist upon a married woman. You know, they want experience and sympathy for a woman's problems. That sort of thing. You aren't married, are you?"

Glory had blinked twice and swallowed. She had taken a deep breath, smiled convincingly and lied. A deeply dyed black lie.

"Oh, yes," she had said. "I'm married. I've been married for ages. My husband is—er—working here in Chicago."

"Well, that's fine. We'll give you an audition then. You understand, we want the human touch in this program. Good old sympathy and understanding."

Glory had been very successful in her audition. Her voice was perfect, she had just the quality of sobby sympathy required. She got the job. She had been a success in a small way. But now just as everything was running along smoothly, the president of the Trueskin Cosmetic Company had to come along!



HE had appeared in the studio this morning, a handsome, sleek dark man, and had asked to meet Gloria. He had held her hand and looked down at her, his dark eyes soft, and Glory had the strangest feeling, as if she were sinking into his eyes and drowning there.

Nat Copper had said, "I appreciate all you've been doing for Trueskin creams. Won't you and your husband dine with me this evening?"

She and her husband!

Glory had faltered, colored, stammered. "That's very nice of you but—but—"

He smiled delightedly. "Then I'll expect you at the Blackstone at eight. I'm stopping there until I get my estate opened out at Lake Forest.

I've been out on the coast for a number of months and have just gotten back to town. I haven't missed your program, however. I must say I'm very much pleased with it."

And so now Glory stood here reading her notes before the microphone, carefully getting just the right amount of sobby inflection in her voice, carefully laughing at the proper times. But she was not thinking of the program. She was thinking frantically, hysterically:

"Where am I going to get a husband for tonight? I don't even know anyone in Chicago except the people here at the studio. I've been living at a girls' club and I haven't had a chance to meet any men. There's no one whom I can ask to be my husband! They'll find out I've been lying! I'll be fired! Oh, what will I do—"

"Anything the matter?" Jack asked when the broadcast ended. "You look a little upset."

"Oh—just too much rouge, I suppose—" she laughed that off. Well, he'd find out soon enough!

She came out of the studio and Nat Copper came forward to congratulate her on the broadcast. Now is the time she thought. I'll just say lightly, laughingly, "Oh, Mr. Copper, it's—it's funny but—I have no husband!"

She actually said, "Oh, Mr. Copper—" and then the words choked her throat. She looked up at him and found him very handsome, very sure of himself. The kind of man a girl could fall madly in love with. The kind of man who would be perfect to have dinner with—alone. But definitely not the type of man to whom one could confess a lie!

"I'll expect you and your husband at eight then, Mrs. Bennett," he was saying gayly, then he was gone, leaving her there in the outside room, looking blankly at the clock on the wall.

Eleven-thirty. She had just eight and a half hours in which to find a husband!

And she didn't know anyone, not a single soul, who would do!

"Telephone for you, Lady Love!" someone was calling gayly.

Glory went toward the telephone booth wearily. Every morning after the broadcast there were calls for her. People asking advice, people criticizing her, and they all had to be answered with just the proper amount of sympathy and understanding. Glory wished she knew someone of whom *she* could ask advice!

"So this is Lady Love!" a mocking masculine voice came over the phone, a deeply sarcastic voice that held a challenging quality.

Glory suddenly didn't feel like being sobby and sympathetic. She said sharply, "What of it?"

"I have a long list of names that I would call you if you were a man," the voice said angrily. "But since you are a woman, and probably a lady, I'll just call you one name. Nit-wit!"

"Thank you so much," Glory said grimly. "Is that all?"

"Do you realize," the man asked, "that you've broken up a perfectly good romance? Do you have any idea how much harm you do every morning with your dumb advice? If you'd left my girl alone—"

"Now look here!" Glory cried positively. "I haven't time to listen to all this! If you have any complaint—"

"I'm going to make it to you!" he said. "Three weeks ago you broadcast a lot of nonsense about a girl giving a reluctant suitor a little competition. My girl decided to try it. She began running around with another fellow and now—she's eloped with him! If you'd kept such advice off the air, that wouldn't have happened. Do you, by any chance, furnish a new girl to a poor guy when you bust up his only romance?"

THE voice seemed to have wotked off its fit of temper and was chuckling a little now. A very

pleasant voice, really. Glory had a sudden, desperate thought.

"What—are you like?" she asked.

"I mean—I might be able to find you a new girl if you are nice."

"I'm very nice," the man laughed. "Quite a sensation in certain circles. I have red hair, blue eyes, am sales manager for Wentworth Company. And I don't care for love advice over the air!"

"Are you doing anything right now?" she asked.

"This is my lunch hour, and the drug store where I was having lunch was broadcasting your program. I get it every day, and I'm good and—"

"Tired of it!" Glory finished gayly. "I don't blame you. Would you care to come up to the studio and talk to me about it? I might be able to help you out a little. I'm very good with advice."

"You mean—now?"

"Yes!"

She put up the receiver and she stared at her reflection mirrored in the glass door. Well, now she had done it! Wasn't she in enough trouble without getting mixed up with red-headed young men who had violent tempers and busted romances?

"I suppose I'm too impulsive," she thought as she powdered her nose. "But after all, I had to do something and he might—"

She waited for him in the small reception room, and when he was shown in, she saw at once that he would do! He was just the type of man whom you wouldn't mind introducing as your husband. Tall and young and boyish looking with reddish hair and very blue eyes. Well groomed without having the sleek appearance of Nat Copper.

"So you are Lady Love?" he grinned down at her, and there was no malice in his voice now. "I'm sorry I called up and bawled you out, but after all you *did* cause my girl to leave me! My name is Rusty Evans."

"I'm Gloria Bennett," she smiled at him. "And now you are looking for a new girl?"

His blue eyes were laughing into her brown ones. "If I could find something nice in a blond shade, I might consider it."

Glory was suddenly a little embarrassed because this man's blue eyes were traveling very intently down the green silk length of her figure, stopping lightly on her ankles, those neatly turned silk ankles above the little copper leather slippers.

"I—I need some help very badly tonight," Glory confessed, her face growing crimson. "I'd be glad to pay you for it. It—it is very important to me—"

They were still standing in the small reception room, and suddenly she realized this, offered him a chair and a cigarette. He grinned at her.

"You want me to help bury the body?" he asked.

"Well—something like that!" She plunged on. "You see, I—I have to have a husband for tonight!"

He whistled softly. "Am I flattered! Or did you mean—me?"

"I'll pay you of course," she told him, and then explained the whole thing.

"You see," she finished, "I've got to have a husband or take a chance on losing my job. Even if I didn't lose my job, I'd be awfully embarrassed. I guess most of us will do almost anything to keep from being caught in a lie!"

"Even unto asking a strange man to play husband for you!" he grinned. "Well, my dear, you've come to the right man. I'll be delighted. Moreover, you needn't pay me. I'll enjoy the honor and the dinner very much. Shall I come by for you at seven-thirty then?"

How nice he was! They shook hands on it and she felt relieved, as if a terrible weight had been lifted from her shoulders!



As she dressed for dinner that evening in her one nice dinner gown, a black lace with a little pink lamé jacket and pink sandals, a dress that was a mixture of sophistication and innocence, Glory had time enough to think of Nat Copper again.

She was remembering how he had looked into her eyes, how softly he had spoken. Perhaps—you never could tell; he might fall in love with her. If he did, she could confess she wasn't married.

She was having gay dreams when she met Rusty in the lounge of the girls' club. Rusty in a dinner jacket was really a very presentable husband.

He caught her hands and smiled down at her. "Not a bad wife," he said. "Not a bad wife at all!"

And later in the taxi, he turned to her with a grin, his tanned young face very handsome in the lights from the street.

"And what will you do if I decide I won't divorce you?" he asked.

Glory laughed. "I'll have to write Lady Love and ask her how to get rid of a husband!"

He caught her hand and held it in spite of her struggling, and he turned and made her look directly into his blue eyes.

"And what," he asked, "would you do if *you* didn't want to divorce me?"

Partly to dodge his love-making, partly because it was true, Glory said, "Do you know, I'm hoping to use you as sort of a decoy to make Nat Copper fall in love with me."

"Oh, you are, are you? And what has Nat Copper got that I haven't got, my lady?"

"He's frightfully good-looking and awfully wealthy. He's been divorced but he's free right now. They say his estate out at Lake Forest is perfectly beautiful."

"I see," Rusty said a little stiffly. "Well, I hope I can help you land him!"

He sat back on his side of the taxi after that and they rode on in silence.

A few minutes later they were meeting Nat Copper in the big lobby. He led them first into the cocktail lounge and ordered martinis. He was very cordial to Rusty, but his eyes were on Glory, on her soft golden curls, her enormous dark eyes, the pink and black length of her in the dinner gown.

"May I compliment you on your choice in wives?" Nat asked.

Rusty said, "I think she's very nice myself!" and he winked at Glory over Nat's head.

There was a perfect dinner in the dining room where there was an orchestra for dancing. Glory danced with Nat first and she found at once that she had been right—Nat was falling for her!

He held her a little close and whispered into her ear, "Lady Love is an excellent name for you, my dear!"

She looked up into his dark eyes and shrugged a little, giving him a twinkling laugh.

"And what do you mean by that?" she asked.

"Do you really want me to tell you?"

"Is it that bad?"

"Oh, much, much worse than that!"

They both laughed, and then he said seriously, "If you didn't have a husband—"

"Yes?" Her eyes dared him to go on.

"I'd make some very nice love to you, but I suppose I'm a gentleman. Or am I?"

"A very handsome one!"

"I have a terrible suspicion that you are flirting with me!"

"And if I am?"

"I may forget that you have a husband!"

She was still tingling from that when she went back to the table, and Rusty stood up to claim her for the next dance.

Rusty said evenly, "You have the man going in circles. Have you no pity, you awful woman?"

Glory laughed, thrilled to the very toes of her by Nat's words.

"Oh, Rusty, Nat is just—just exactly the sort of man I've always dreamed I'd meet, and—"

"Go on," Rusty said. "I can stand it. And I suppose I'm just the sort of man you have always felt that you couldn't love?"

"Rusty, you are nice! I like you. I already feel just as if I'd known you always! Now!"

THE rest of the evening was very gay, and Nat's attentions became more and more apparent as the champagne warmed his blood. Just before Nat said good-night to her, they had one last dance, and he whispered into the little golden feathers of hair about her ears.

"Don't say this is going to be all?"

"What *shall* I say?"

"Say that you want to see me again!"

Her dark eyes were excited as she looked into his. "I do. Oh, I do!" she cried.

"Then you certainly shall. Soon!"

In the back of the taxi as Rusty took Glory to her club, he said slowly, "Well, I hope I've played the rôle well. I suppose it is time to take off the mask and let down the curtain on the play?"

"You were a lamb, Rusty."

He leaned toward her a little. "You said that you were going to pay me for this," he reminded her.

"But—of course! What—"

"This is all the pay I want—" He had caught her in his arms and was holding her close.

For a moment she struggled, but he held her firmly, smiling down at her, his young mouth rather wistful.

"Is one kiss much to ask?" he demanded.

She laughed a little then and lifted her red young mouth to his. He caught his breath, and then with a little smothered cry he was kissing her, hard and long and sweet. His lips crushed to her lips and for a long moment she was clinging to him, half frightened, wholly thrilled, for a long moment as the taxi sped through Chicago's gay Loop, the two young things were clinging together, moving through the stars and moonlight and sweet mystic perfumed space of a first kiss.

She drew away first and tried to laugh. She thought, "I'm a fool. It shouldn't have been so thrilling. It must have been the champagne." He said nothing at all, and when she looked at him, she saw that his face was white and that he was biting his lip for control. He spoke at last.

"Well," he said, and his voice was strained, "I suppose it would hardly be cricket for me to ask to see you again—after that. You'd only say, no, I don't like cavemen. Or would you?"

She thought sensibly: "It is much better to call this off. I want to marry Nat Copper. I mustn't be falling in love with a red-headed hot tempered young sales manager. Especially when he kisses me like that!"

"Perhaps—some time—" she said feebly.

"I understand." He forced a grin. "The easy let-down!"

They had reached her club by then, and he walked to the door with her. He shook hands solemnly.

"I hope you land the big fish," he said. He added, with a little laugh, "If you need any help, there's always the radio talk at eleven-fifteen!"

He hadn't let her hand go. And suddenly his voice became wistfully pleading: "Gloria, I—I have a chance at a better job in New York City. It'll open up in a week or so, I think. I—I

might have an estate of my own some day—"

There was something about his voice or his eyes or the touch of his hand that sent little thrills over Glory. She drew her own hand away hurriedly. She had to get away from this man! She kept remembering that kiss!

"Goodnight—" she stammered, and fled into the girls' club.



FEW days later Nat Copper was in the studio again listening to the broadcast. He took Glory to lunch t h a t

day in a smart tea room on Michigan Avenue.

He looked across the tea table at her, his dark eyes smiling, his smooth olive face tense with meaning.

"If you were my wife, I'd keep you on a leash!" he said then. "Do you realize how really beautiful you are?"

The mirror on the green wall of the tea room behind Nat told her how beautiful she was. Dark eyes excited in her small pale face, soft golden curls peeping from under a saucy pillbox hat of red felt.

"Do you think so?" she asked.

"I think I'm going mad if I don't find out what your eyes keep trying to tell me! It is something, I know!"

She lowered her lashes. "That's very indiscreet of them!"

He leaned toward her. "I want you to see my place out at Lake Forest. Can you and your husband come out for golf and cocktails Sunday afternoon? There'll be only myself and my sister, but perhaps you won't be too bored?"

You and your husband! Again! She thought, now is the time to tell him! But she couldn't! She just couldn't! Wait just a little until she was surer that he liked her! Rusty would be glad to go with her Sunday.

"We'd love it!" she said.

"About three o'clock then? I'll have my car at the station to meet the train. You'll love my golf course, really superb, and—I hope—you'll love me a little. Or should I have said that?"

"Should you?" she murmured, and she saw the blood rush to his head. Oh, beyond doubt, she had the man going in circles!

But after lunch when she was back at the club, she felt curiously let down about it. Nat Copper was just the sort of man she wanted. Yet—somehow she didn't seem to want *him*. She phoned the department store where Rusty worked and got him on the phone, and his gay voice lifted her spirits.

"Would you care to be a married man again?" she asked.

"You propose with a curious regularity, my dear," he said. "But I suppose I'll have to give in to you! When?"

She told him the details and he said evenly, "This time I'm going to have to demand higher wages."

"Indeed?"

"You'll have to go out dancing with me tonight. Dinner and dancing. If you are very pretty and play your cards right, I'll probably kiss you good-night again. Okay?"

There was nothing she could say but, "yes!"

She didn't mean to be, but she was very thrilled that evening. Dressed in a gay dancing frock of white net ruffles with her hair in little high careless curls.

They danced in all the gay roof places of the town, and had dinner in the Crystal room of one of the brighter hotels. Glory forgot about Nat and all her ambitions and everything. Nothing was real, nothing mattered that night, except the red-headed gay boy who was dancing with her, who was holding her close and grinning down at her.

He kissed her good-night again, a sweet mad long kiss that left her

dizzy and uncertain. And when she reached her room in the girls' club, she stood for a long time before the glass searching her eyes.

"I'll not be a fool," she said aloud, "and fall in love with a red-headed young sales manager when I can just as easily have Nat Copper! I will not!"

Rusty phoned again the next day, but she told him firmly that she could not see him again until Sunday.

**SUNDAY** she was dressed in a new tailored suit. Severely man-tailored black with a pale violet sweater and hat. It was very striking with her violet-shadowed eyes and her luscious golden curls.

She and Rusty didn't speak much on the train going down. He seemed depressed and silent. Once he said, "I'm taking the New York job. Not that you care."

"Oh—it's lovely," she said absently, for her thoughts were already running ahead to Nat Copper.

Nat himself met them with the station wagon. It was drizzling rain and he held his umbrella over Glory, taking advantage of the opportunity to look deep into her eyes.

"Nasty day for golf," he said. "I guess we'll have to make it bridge. Hope you don't mind."

"Not at all," her lips said politely, but her eyes, those naughty black eyes, were saying something quite different. *Are you falling in love with me?* they asked. Naughty eyes, showing her excitement.

So there was the long afternoon spent in the beautiful glassed-in sun terrace of the magnificent Copper mansion. The rain beat a steady torrent on the glass as they played bridge. Nat Copper's tall, sardonic sister played a brilliant hand, and Nat himself played well. Rusty, silent and very formal, played a careful game. Only Glory, nervous and half frightened by the flashes of lightning and by the electric something in Nat's eyes, played badly.

By the time cocktails were served, it was raining violently, a real thunderstorm.

"You'll stay for dinner, of course," Nat said. "It will have slackened up by later in the evening."

They stayed for dinner and Nat controlled the conversation, veering easily from topic to topic in his gay manner. All of his attention was given to Glory, and his dark eyes told her that he wished they might be alone.

More bridge after dinner, and the storm increased! The wind and rain were like demons lashing the trees outside, beating in torrents on the windows.

"You'll have to stay the night," Nat said toward ten o'clock. "It'll be impossible for you to go out in this."

"Oh—we couldn't—" Glory cried.

"It's impossible!" Rusty said. "I—I have to be at work—"

"Nonsense!" Nat said easily. "I'll order nightcaps and we'll turn in at once. Get a good night's sleep and catch the six o'clock train. You'll be at work on time and in fine form!"

He rang for drinks and Glory's frightened dark eyes met Rusty's frightened blue eyes. Stay the night! That would mean—what?

In a calm born of desperation, Glory sipped the nightcap. Dimly she heard Nat's sister telling a servant to prepare the south chamber. Dazedly she realized that Rusty was very pale.

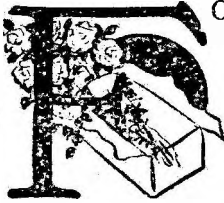
Outside the storm was lashing furiously. What could she say? What could she do to stop this? Ask for separate rooms? Ridiculous! Break down and tell the truth? Impossible now!

Somehow she went through the motions of saying good-night. Smiling. Saying how kind they were. She dared not look at Rusty. Dared not wonder what he was thinking!

Somehow she and Rusty went together up the stairs, led by Nat's sister. Nat's sister was saying hospitably that the servants would have

Rusty's breakfast ready at five-thirty. Plenty of time for him to make the train. . . .

And then they were in the big bedroom, and the last good-nights had been made and the door was closed. They were alone in the south bed chamber!



OR a moment they both stood there staring at the room, a beautiful room, filled with colonial antiques. A great double four-poster bed seemed almost to crowd the big room.

Glory heard Rusty swallow. She turned at last and looked at him, and she could feel the blood in a hot tide in her face.

"What are we going to do?" her voice ended in a childish wail.

He turned to her, his eyes suddenly blazing blue fire. "We can't stay—here!" he cried. "You should have told them—something! I—couldn't! We can't stay—here!"

"We have to stay here! What could I tell them?"

"The truth!" he suggested.

"You know I couldn't!"

"Well, I'm going to do it now! This has gone far enough! After all, it is a ridiculous lie! I'm going now—"

He turned toward the door, his face scarlet with fury, his eyes blazing. She ran to the door and put herself against it.

"Rusty—please! You can't! Wait! What will Nat think—"

He caught her by the shoulders and looked down at her, his mouth grim. "That's all you're thinking about! Nat! All evening you've been making eyes at him, you little—flirt!"

"You can't say things like that to me!" she sobbed out, tears in her eyes now. "And let go of my shoulders! You're hurting—"

"We can't stay here tonight!" he repeated, emphasizing his words by shaking her shoulders, shaking her

until her blond curls tossed across her forehead, until she was sobbing with anger.

"We *will* stay here!" she sobbed out, and she jerked one hand free and slapped him, a ringing blow.

His hands dropped to his sides and he stood for a moment staring at her, his face livid, the print of her hand red across his cheek. Then suddenly he caught her in his arms and was kissing her, a hard, sweet, fierce kiss. Kissing her until she stopped struggling and was yielding, limp, breathless, half swooning in his arms. So sweet—so sweet—

Abruptly he let her go, and she fell back against the door sobbing brokenly in humiliation. He said hoarsely:

"Now you see why—why I can't stay in the same room with you. I—I love you! I want you. I've wanted you since that first night. I—I love you more than anyone I've ever known—"

"And I hate you!" she flared back. "I never want to see you again!"

Something in the fury of her stormy words calmed them both. He spoke limply, dully. "You win. I'll be good. I'll stay here and sleep on the floor and be noble. Stop crying—please!"

She moved across the room to a wing chair and sat down in it, her face still buried in her handkerchief.

"I'll—sleep here," she said. "You take the bed. You have to work tomorrow—"

"Don't be silly! Get in the bed!"

She sat there, silent, stubborn. He jerked a blanket off the bed and lay down on the floor, rolled in it. They were silent for long minutes. Then suddenly he leaped to his feet.

"I wouldn't be that uncomfortable for any woman in the world! And I'm not going to let you sit in that chair all night! Somebody around here has to use a little sense!"

He walked over to her and picked her up like a baby and placed her none too gently on the bed, covering her up. He looked down at her, his



red hair tousled, his blue eyes flashing.

"If you get out of that bed, I'll spank you!" he said. Then he took a blanket and rolled it into a long fold and placed it in the middle of the bed, after which he got in bed himself on the other side.

She gave a little muffled cry. "We can't—this won't do—"

"Shut up!" he said, and he switched off the light.

For a long while Glory lay staring up at the ceiling into the darkness. She was tense, unable to relax. Then she heard Rusty's regular breathing, and she too fell asleep.

**W**HEN she awoke, it was broad daylight and Rusty was gone. She saw that it was seven o'clock and she saw too that the sun was shining through the windows. The stormy night was over!

And—strange—the only part she could remember clearly was the look in Rusty's eyes when he said, "I love you. I want you."

Glory's pink young mouth curved faintly. "The idiot," she whispered aloud. "The sweet idiot!"

Still—there was Nat Copper. And today! She bathed and dressed again in the same suit she had slept in. But she was looking very fresh and radiant just the same when she presented herself for breakfast. Nat was there to greet her.

"Your husband got off in time, Mrs. Bennett," he said. "And I'm going to drive you into town myself for your date at Lady Love!"

A few hours later they were driving into town, when he said suddenly, quite casually, "I keep a hotel room in town. Quite cozy there. You'll have to run over and see it some afternoon. Do you think you would like to?"

There was no doubting the meaning of his voice and eyes, even though his words were cryptic. Glory went crimson. He was—propositioning her! He was doing it with the easy almost

scornful abruptness of a man used to that sort of thing.

And she had hoped—oh, what a little fool she had been!

"I'm sorry—" she said faintly.

"Doesn't matter. I just thought—" he shrugged.

He left her at the studio with an indifferent good-by. And she went in to broadcast, thinking: "Oh, Rusty, darling, I love you! I need you!"

Strange she hadn't known it until then! Of course she loved Rusty! She had loved him since that first night, but she had been blinded by Nat Copper.

Happily, she thought that he would phone her. Today perhaps. Anyway tomorrow. She would tell him then she loved him!

But he didn't phone that day, nor the next. Nor the next! For a week she waited for him to phone, then at last she threw her pride away and called his store.

"Rusty Evans?" a polite voice asked. "Oh, yes, our young sales manager! Why, he left here several days ago to accept a position in New York City, I believe. . . . No, he didn't leave his New York address. . . . No, I'm sure I couldn't tell you, miss. We have no record at all."

Feeling suddenly ill, Glory put down the phone. Rusty was gone! No address!

But she had to get him back! She loved him. He loved her! They couldn't just—drop things! She had to get him back!



**I**T was that night while she was working out her studio program that she thought of the way. A slim chance only.

And the next day at eleven-fifteen, a girl with great, serious dark eyes and trembling hands was saying over the microphone, "Lady Love speaking! Hello, girls! Today I want to speak to you on the very special art of handling a red-headed man!"

She paused while she and Jack Pearsall gave the perfectly timed chuckle. Then she went on, hoping that Jack wouldn't notice the paper trembling in her hands.

"Remember that a red-headed man has a very fiery temper. When a red-headed man takes you in his arms and kisses you and says that he loves you, you'd better not tell him that you hate him, for he may think you mean it. He may not know that sometimes when a girl cries, 'I hate you,' it's because she is terribly in love. He may not know that she will want him back after he is gone and pray to have him back and—and—" Glory's voice caught, "and even maybe make a foolish plea over the air trying to get him back. You see, girls, this week I lost a red-headed man. If any of you see him, will you please return him to me?"

She laughed here, a gay little laugh, but she knew that if Rusty heard, he would understand! Maybe—just *maybe* Rusty would hear!

"Lady Love wanted on long distance phone!" the page boy called just as she left the broadcasting studio.

She fairly ran to the phone, and—it was Rusty's voice! Choked a little with emotion but—Rusty's voice! "Lady Love," he cried, "I've just found a red-headed man. I was wondering if he could be the one you lost?"

Glory clung to the phone, tears of happiness in her voice.

"Describe him, please!"

"Well, he has a violent temper—"

"That sounds like him!"

"He is very fond of blondes—"

"Blondes?"

"Well, one blonde!"

"That's better!"

"And he—"


"Three minutes up, please—" a sharp voice cut in.

"Rusty!" Glory cried, as if she were losing him.

"Glory! I'm coming by plane tonight. Okay?"

"Okay, darling!"



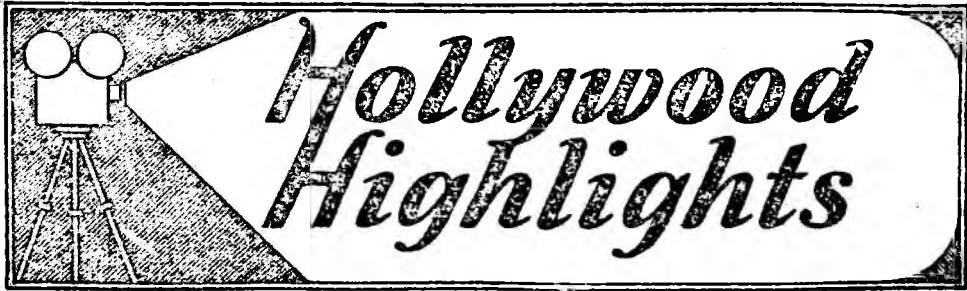


*The cards are stacked against you*

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# Hollywood Highlights

By Alma Portegal

**F**REDDIE BARTHOLOMEW has received a bona fide invitation from Admiral Richard Byrd to accompany him on his next South Pole expedition.

"We'll go beyond the Pole the next time we head south," Byrd told Freddie, "just to see what's on the other side and to get it on a map."

As the next expedition won't leave for another two years, Freddie will have plenty of time in which to consider whether he wishes to accept Admiral Byrd's flattering invitation.

Deanna Durbin will have Andres de Seguro, former baritone of the Metropolitan, as vocal coach when she starts her next picture, "100 Men and a Girl." The singer has been signed by the New Universal to guide and coach the young star.

Now it's Helen Wills Moody, former tennis champion, who is on the verge of signing a movie contract. Helen has gone to the coast to make a screen test for 20th Century-Fox. And Alice Marble, another tennis star, is being sponsored by her friend Carole Lombard for a movie career. Carole is sure Alice has what it takes to achieve movie fame.

Adding another kind deed to her already long list, Joan Crawford played Good Samaritan to three Great Danes who wandered into her Brentwood Heights home. The dogs were starving and had apparently been mistreated. Calling a veterinarian, Joan had them treated. A broken leg and other severe injuries

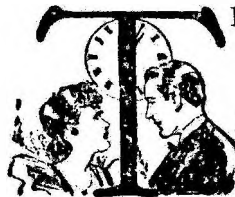
necessitated chloroforming the most seriously injured of the three. It had most likely been hit by an automobile. After trying vainly to discover their owners, Joan adopted them.

Mickey Rooney's orchestra is becoming more than just a hobby. The youthful actor recently received a flattering offer from a Coast-to-Coast broadcasting company, and wants to accept it if his movie work permits.

Wonder if Alexander Korda's two newest girl "finds," Vivien Leigh and Tamara Desni who will be seen for the first time in America in "Fire Over England," will reach the eminence of three other discoveries of the London film producer—Merle Oberon, Binnie Barnes and Wendy Barrie, all three of whom made their screen debut in his production, "The Private Life of Henry VIII."

Betty Furness is so tired of being "kidded" about her unusual hats, that she has gone on a strike and will wear none at all. Even when she goes on trips, or shopping or to a formal gathering, she goes bareheaded.

\* \* \*



**T**HE lovely voice of Gloria Swanson will be heard in two songs in her new starring picture, "Mazie Kenyon." For several years Gloria has been studying with famous vocal teachers in New York and Europe.

You may not be aware of it, but Garbo is very superstitious. She has never admitted it, but her co-workers at MGM have detected several dyed-in-the-wool superstitions.

She believes that befriending stray cats will bring her good luck; she believes that by wearing at least one belted costume in one scene she has insured that picture being a success; she believes the letter "B" in her name brings her luck, but that the letter "B" in the title of her picture would bring bad luck. She has never permitted the letter "B" to appear in the titles of any of the twenty-one pictures she has made.

Maybe it's a fact that you can't embarrass the Marx Brothers, but Newton, the horse used in their new picture, "A Day at the Races," made a good stab at it. Hunting for his usual lump of sugar in Harpo's pockets, Newton bit the suspender buttons off Harpo's trousers without the wearer's knowledge. A minute later Harpo started to mount the horse. Something slipped, and Harpo came to the floor just in time to save his blushes.

There are two pictures this month which stand out from among a list of unusually good ones—"Lost Horizon" and "Quality Street." Both pictures have grand casts. In the former, Ronald Colman, Sam Jaffee, H. B. Warner, and Isabel Jewell all share acting honors; in "Quality Street," Katherine Hepburn and Franchot Tone are supported by the grand performances of Fay Bainter, Cora Witherspoon, Estelle Winwood and Eric Blore.

#### *Cupid's Cooing Corner:*

Lyle Talbot is losing his bachelor standing—the girl who turned the trick is Marguerite Cramer of New York, a non-professional. They will be married before this reaches you.

Another marriage due to occur any day now will join Janice Jarrett, former photo model and now a movie

player at Universal, and Melvin Purvis, former G-Man who is now practicing law in San Francisco.

Tom Brown has been seen lately very much in the company of Natalie Draper. Is it a romance?

The Ronald Colman-Benita Hume twosome is on again; Jean Harlow and Don Freed have William Powell worried; Phyllis Gilman has announced her engagement to Lou Holtz.

The Fred MacMurrays (she was Lillian Lamont) expect a visit from the long-legged bird.

\* \* \*



It may surprise you to learn that nearly half the successful players on the screen turned to acting more or less accidentally, often while seeking some other goal.

Both Dick Powell and Jeanne Madden each cherished an ambition to become an opera singer.

George Raft was trying to become a boxer and learned to dance only to improve his footwork. The dancing soon became a profession and led him to screen success.

Edward G. Robinson was determined to become a criminal lawyer and studied acting while taking his law course because he felt that a knowledge of acting was essential to be effective before juries.

A long time ago Leslie Howard was mentioned for the title rôle of "Lawrence of Arabia." The picture which was to be a London Films production was a "natural" for Leslie and everyone was happy. But a good deal of water has flown under the bridge since that announcement was made, and now that the picture is ready for shooting, Leslie Howard has to bow regretfully out. He's signed with Walter Wanger for the Clarence Budington Kelland yarn, "Stand-In," and before beginning

that, he must finish "Love Derby" at Warner's.

Raymond Massey, the famous English stage and screen star who is being seen more and more frequently in American films, has come to Hollywood for the rôle of Black Michael in "The Prisoner of Zenda." He has just completed work on "I, Claudius," in which he appears with Merle Oberon and Charles Laughton.

Warner Bros. have changed their mind about casting Ginger Rogers in "On Your Toes." Instead they'll co-star her with Dick Powell in "Hollywood Hotel." The brothers Warner got Ginger in an exchange with RKO, whereby Paul Muni went to RKO for the picture, "The Woman I Love."

Now they are talking of Norma Shearer as the Scarlett O'Hara of "Gone With the Wind." But as yet no one has been definitely cast for the rôle. Our own choice is Miriam Hopkins, with Frances Dee as Melanie and of course Clark Gable as Rhett Butler, and Franchot Tone as Melanie's husband.

#### *Gossip Gleamings:*

Betty Furness is teaching Wallace Beery's adopted daughter, Carol Ann, to knit. The youngster visits the "Old Soak" set several times a week to take her lessons . . . Claude Rains tells us he raises enough wool on his Pennsylvania farm to have four suits of clothes and two overcoats made for himself. His wife is trying to get him to raise mink next year so she can have a new coat . . . Gloria Stuart has purchased a weekly newspaper thereby satisfying a lifelong ambition to be a publisher.

Corinne Griffith, once famous star of silent pictures, has bought the Hollywood Athletic Club . . . Victor Moore has given up his Long Island house and plans to buy or build in Hollywood, which looks as though Victor is set to stay with the movies . . . Kay Francis is so fond of travel

that although she has only just returned from abroad she has already begun to study travel folders preparatory to her next trip across the Pacific on a long jaunt to the Far East, Hawaii and Samoa . . . Robert Taylor has the horse-fever bad; he has just purchased his third one . . . Shirley Temple is now in the fourth grade following an oral examination by her special teacher assigned to her by the Los Angeles Board of Education . . . Clark Gable has traded in his foreign car, a Duesenberg, for a Packard.

\* \* \*

#### *Title Changes of the Month:*

Joan Crawford's next picture, "Mannequin," for some reason or other will be called "Three Rooms in Heaven."

"The Woman's Touch," which stars Miriam Hopkins and features Joel McCrea, will be released as, "Woman Chases Man."

"Michael Strogoff" suffers a last-minute retitling, being known now as "The Soldier and the Lady."

The Fred Astaire-Ginger Rogers film is now "Shall We Dance?" instead of "Stepping Toes."

Bobby Breen's next, formerly called "Boy Blue," will be called "Make a Wish."

Two title changes at 20th Century-Fox—"The Great Hospital Mystery," is the final title of "Dead Yesterday," which features Sally Blane, and "Sing and Be Happy" is the final choice for "Everybody Sing," with Tony Martin and Dixie Dunbar in the cast.

\* \* \*

#### *Theatre Items:*

Lois Wilson, former well-known movie actress, will have the principal feminine lead in a new play, "Farewell Summer."

Constance Cummings, who makes movies both here and in England and still finds time for an occasional stage appearance, will be seen in a new

play which has had considerable success in London. The name of the play is, "Young Madame Conti," and it was adopted from the story of Bruno Frank by Hubert Griffith and Benn Levy. \* \* \*

*Heard Along Radio Row:*

Although most of the world knows Crosby Gaige as a producer of Broadway shows (he's been at it for 25 years), his friends know him as an authority on food, too. In fact so widely recognized is Gaige as a gourmet that when the New York branch of the Wine and Food Society with a metropolitan area membership of about 500 was organized two years ago, he was elected and still is chairman of the technical and dinner committee. Now Gaige has gone on the air for the makers of Mueller's Spaghetti and Noodles. His show is called the Kitchen Cavalcade and broadcasts each week day from Monday through to Friday from 10:45 to 11:00 A. M.

Edgar Bergen, the ventriloquist comedian who has become one of the highlights of the Rudy Vallee hour, has been practicing his art since a high school boy. In those days he amused himself and his classmates and confounded his teachers by answering for his friends in classes when they faltered.

Lloyd's of London has a \$50,000 policy insuring Gladys Swarthout against the possibility of missing a broadcast in her new series. The insurance, the first of its kind ever issued to a radio performer, was prompted by the delay in the starting of her new program which was caused by a severe attack of laryngitis.

The NBC broadcasting company is a rainbow of colors. Under their sponsorship they have Francia WHITE who appears on the Fred Astaire Packard hour; Billie BLUE who plays the tuba in Phil Spitalny's all women's orchestra; Frank

BLACK, NBC's musical director; Glen GRAY whose Casa Loma orchestra is well known; Sedley BROWN who is co-director of the Husbands and Wives broadcasts; and Rosaline GREEN who is mistress of ceremonies on the General Electric show.

With Ken Murray and "Oswald" taking over the Campbell's Tomato Juice program, George Burns and Gracie Allen move over to their new sponsors, the Grapenuts program, where they will continue with their own particular brand of comedy.

Sidelights of Ben Bernie, the old Maestro . . . loathes high hats . . . never bets on a horse born in August, but has no inhibitions about horses born in other months . . . is an inveterate cigar smoker; once lost a sizable bet to Maurice Chevalier when he failed to go without smoking for 48 hours.

\* \* \*

*Radiophonics:*

Fred Allen's personal stationery bears a caricature of himself caught between the pages of Joe Miller's Joke Book . . . Don Ameche, now as well known on the screen as he is on the air, is married to Honore Prendergast. Their romance started when they were both students at college in Dubuque, Iowa . . . Conductor Robert Emmett Dolan is married to Vilma Ebsen, sister of Buddy Ebsen . . . Shep Fields is only 26 years old, yet he is the oldest man in his Rippling Rhythm orchestra . . . Bob Burns, bazooka virtuoso and champion booster of Van Buren, Arkansas, plans an important development for his home town. He is creating a recreational center on a 20-acre tract of land he recently purchased in the nearby Ozarks. The plot will be open, without a fee, to campers and tourists.

Lanny Ross—the son of professional parents; his mother was accompanist for the great Pavlova and his

father a noted Shakespearian actor . . . . made his first bow in vaudeville at the age of two. At four years of age he appeared in London in, "As You Like It," and at six played in New York in a musical show.

Kenny Baker, featured singer of Jack Benny's Jello radio program, will be featured in "The Great Crooner," a Warner Bros. production.

Another movie star has gone on the ether waves. This time it's Ray Milland who will appear with the Lucky Strike program.

Grace Moore's weekly appearances on the Nash-Lafayette program will continue on from Hollywood where Grace has gone to prepare for her next picture.

MINUTE INTERVIEW

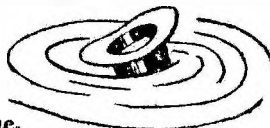
LUISE RAINER . . . . born in Dusseldorf, Germany, on January 12th . . . . her father, Heinz Rainer, is a wealthy merchant who loved to travel

. . . . Luise toured Switzerland, France, Austria and Italy as a child . . . . was interested in music, art and modeling before deciding upon a theatrical career . . . . has appeared in Dreiser's "American Tragedy," in Shakespeare's "Measure For Measure," and in Pirandello's "Six Characters in Search of an Author" . . . . while playing in the last named was persuaded to come to Hollywood . . . . her first American rôle was in "Escapade," with William Powell . . . . she scored an immediate hit . . . . has made only two other pictures since; they are "The Great Ziegfeld," and "The Good Earth" . . . . is at present at work on "The Emperor's Candlesticks," again with William Powell . . . . is fond of athletics, tennis, swimming, and loves to fly . . . . has taken a great fancy to two typical American foods—ice cream and apple pie, things she hadn't tasted before coming to America . . . . is the bride of Clifford Odets, the playwright.



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*"How dare you!" she cried, and beat on his broad chest with two clenched fists.*

CHAPTER I

**J**INNY'S gang had had a lot of drinks at Leon's, and Jinny was feeling pretty high. She could feel her nerves tightening, like the

strings of a violin. She was getting to that reckless stage where nothing mattered. That was the way she liked to be! Reckless and brittle and made



# Flirt . . .

By  
Rosamond Botsford



## *Life was a One-Sided Game to Jinny—Until She Met a Man who Chal- lenged Her Score*

like a diamond, so hard that nothing could mar or scratch her mood.

She liked to drive when she felt this way. It was fun seeing how near she could come to tearing into oblivion. She felt keen, like a razor blade, live like a "live" wire. These were the

times when the faces of the gang no longer made her want to scream with boredom. Bob, and George and Larry. They got to be like little paper-doll boys all dressed up in evening clothes with their handsome faces wiped clean of expression.

Through the red mist that swirled around her head, Jinny saw Larry in the seat near-by. He was yelling an insane song about "Little sweetheart of mine." Bob and George, in the back seat, were intoning the chorus. She stepped on the gas—harder.

Suddenly, there loomed a car right in front of them. Jinny's hand was pretty good on the wheel, even when she was feeling high. She swerved, just in time. A fender tore off with the sickening noise of a boiler factory exploding.

She stopped. The boys piled out. The car that had collided with them was backing in the road. It came to a stop, alongside. There was a big man at the wheel. He wore a slouch hat pulled down over his eyes.

He unfolded himself from the seat and stood up. Bob and Larry and George rushed him, like little jumping Jacks-in-the-box dressed in evening clothes.

"Hey! What the heck!" drawled the man in the slouch hat.

"C'mon and fight, you road-hog!" yelled Larry and George. Bob made passes with his doubled fists.

"Tough guys, eh?" drawled the big man. He was much bigger, Jinny saw, than them all put together.

"Yellow, eh?" screamed Larry.

Then the big man's fists lashed out, once—twice—three times. It was an orderly, neat way he had.

Larry and Bob and George tumbled head over heels into the grass at the side of the road. The big man pulled his hat a little farther down over his eyes. He dusted his hands. Jinny's heart was beating fast. She was mad! It burned her up to see her three men sent sprawling by one man.

She rushed at him—a queer little figure of fashion, in a slinky evening gown, her hair all tousled by the wind and her reckless mood.

"How dare you!" she cried and beat on his broad chest with two clenched fists.

The man looked down at her. "Well, girlie," he said, "you certainly *are* stewed!"

"I'm not! I'm sober!" shrilled Jinny.

"Oh, yeah?" he drawled.

Then he picked her up and carried her, kicking and struggling, to his car, and put her inside, snapping the door shut. Jinny beat and yelled and threatened. He didn't seem to hear. Instead, he got in and drove away, in a leisurely fashion.

Jinny was trembling all over. Somehow, she knew it wouldn't do any good to try and fight this man. She wasn't

afraid—at least—not much. She mustn't be afraid!

"You let me out of this car!" she gasped.

"Where do you live, little girl?" he asked in a maddening soft voice.

"I won't tell you! I won't! Let me go!"

"Quiet. You're going home. Where do you live?"

"I won't tell you! Let me go, I say! You can't do this to me. Do you know who I am?"

"That's what I'm trying to find out," he answered patiently.

"I won't tell you!" she blazed.

"Then don't. Just give me the street and number—"

"I'll do no such thing!"

"All right—" He drove on steadily and quietly toward New York's distant lights.

Jinny was seething inside. There was something else on her mind besides anger, too. She was ashamed! Ashamed that this man had found her in the company of three pickled nit-wits like Larry and Bob and George, and knew that she had been drinking too.

Where was he taking her?

Presently a new idea came. "Please," she said in soft, pleading tones, "I'm terribly sorry for what happened. I—I'm not used to drinking. The boys gave me some mixture—cognac and champagne—it went to my head. I'm all right now. Won't you let me out at the nearest gas station?"

What she could see of his face, a square chin and a straight nose and a rock-steady mouth, did not change at all. Nor did he answer.

"You're going to make it hard for me," she continued in the same dulcet tones. "You see—I live with my grandmother. She's got heart trouble. The slightest shock might kill her—"

"Don't make me cry," the man said dryly, but still the profile didn't move.

"I wish I could make you understand," she insisted sweetly. "You—you look like a man who *could* understand—"

He stopped the car smoothly at the side of the road. Then with a quick strong gesture, he took her in his arms. "I always understand pretty girls," he mocked. "How's this?"

He bent his head. Jinny knew she could not fight against this strength. It was useless—it was— Then his lips took hers, and she yielded, terribly, completely, to his kiss, letting herself be submerged in a daze of astonished delight that a man's lips could do what his were doing to her.

When he lifted his head, she did not dare open her eyes. It was nice to sit there and just let that marvelous feeling go on and on.

Then his voice roused her. "Night-night, girlie. Better luck next time," he said, and opening the car door with a quick flip of the wrist, he pushed her out into the road.

She fell clumsily, entangled in her long skirts, bruising her arms and shoulder. She gasped and struggled to her feet. The car's tail-light gleamed like an angry eye as it receded into the darkness.



**S**TATE troopers, cruising in their little green sedan, found her trekking toward the city, crying as she went.

They picked her up and took her to a Bronx police station. There was some discussion about a sobriety test. Jinny refused to walk chalk lines and objected to having a big burly man try to smell her breath. She told a garbled story about a lover's quarrel with the boy friend. She said her name was Marie Smith. Things got very thick when Bob and Larry and George were brought in too. They told an entirely different story.

At last Jinny broke down and gave her guardian and lawyer's name and her proper identity. It was nine o'clock and broad daylight before they let her out of the nice little cell where they put her when she slapped a policeman.

Mr. Jason, her guardian, drove her

home. She listened, outwardly meek and broken in spirit, with her hair in a mop and her flimsy dress a wreck, while he told her what he thought about it all. But inside, she was not broken at all.

She was mad, and she was bound for vengeance.

The man who had dared to push Jinny Carter into the road and drive calmly away would have to pay! She would give him back as bad as he had given!

Her determination was increased, if possible, by the perusal of the morning papers.

A smart young reporter had been snooping around the police station. The three dim-wits had talked their silly heads off!

"Brush Heiress Victim of Kiss-and-Run Driver," one paper read.

There were details, culled, heaven knows how, and to cap the climax, the identity of the kiss-and-run driver was disclosed. He was Mac Stewart, West-Coast amateur heavyweight challenger from Oregon, booked to meet the Amateur East-Coast Champion, Jim Brody, in a fifteen round bout at the Boxing Club that very evening.

A prize-fighter!

That explained the way he had dealt with Larry and Bob and George. A boxer from Oregon! Uncouth—illiterate, a wild man from the wild West. That explained his unutterably bad manners! A big hick! A bear from out of the backwoods.

She would deal with him! She would make him wish he had never, never pushed her out into the road and driven away!

**J**INNY took a bath and had breakfast. Then she used the phone vigorously. As the result of her activities, Larry, Bob and George foregathered just in time to shake up a few before dinner.

They were subdued, and a change had come over them. It made Jinny angrier than ever to see how easily they could be squelched.

"I tell you I'm going to that fight tonight!" Jinny insisted.

"You can't," answered George. "No women allowed. It's the last refuge of the male fight fan. Dames are OUT!"

"You are all idiots!" cried Jinny. "There isn't a place on earth a girl can't go if she makes up her mind to it. I tell you I'll get in or bust."

"Then you'll bust," said Larry philosophically.

Jinny's lips whitened with rage. "So you are going to let me down, all three of you! You're going to let a big hick from Oregon beat you up and throw you around like so many toy balloons, and not do anything about it! You who are supposed to be scions of New York society. *Scions!*"

"I never could make out what scions was," mumbled Bob.

Jinny rose to her full five-feet-two. "Get out, all of you! Get out of my sight! I can't bear any of you one minute more!"

Bob and Larry and George made a hasty retreat. They knew Jinny.

## CHAPTER II



MONY can do strange things. It can almost work miracles, such as for instance, getting a girl into a ring-side seat at the Amateur Boxing Club on a challenge night.

When the gong rang for the Brody-Stewart bout, experienced eyes could have detected something "different" about the slim young man who sat between two large, muscular gentlemen and gazed at proceedings from under the brim of a slouch felt hat. He was dressed in a tuxedo, with a soft pleated shirt and he wore a British-cut sports raglan. He kept his hands in his pockets and made himself as inconspicuous as possible. And that, added to the extraordinary interest of the

public for what was going on in the ring, probably saved him from curious speculation. It would have been embarrassing were anyone to question the young man's right to occupy a seat in that male assembly. For the young man was Jinny. And her two companions were hired detectives whose services she had engaged for the evening.

In the third round it became apparent that the champion, Brody, would soon require help to stay on his feet, and in the fourth, he buckled into a corkscrew spiral and hit the canvas where he remained for the count of ten.

Subsequently, Mac Stewart from Oregon was proclaimed Champion Amateur Heavyweight, and the onlookers went wild.

Jinny whispered to her escorts, "Let's get out—now."

The two detectives formed a flying wedge on which Jinny was borne out of the gymnasium and carried to a corridor along which were doors marked "dressing-rooms."

She hadn't long to wait, for soon the new champion came down the hall, followed by a group of enthusiastic fans. He had a robe over his broad, bronzed shoulders, and he was smiling.

Jinny felt her knees knocking together, but she kept her chin up. As he started to go into his dressing-room, she elbowed her way through the crowd, and making her voice as deep as possible, she said, "Hello, Mac! You don't remember me! I'm Senator Bates' boy, Jack!"

The champion stopped short and looked down at the slender mite. Then he grinned. "Jack! Well! Of all people! Come on in and tell me how your dad is!"

He pushed Jinny into his dressing-room, and with a quiet word to his handler and seconds, he stepped in and closed the door.

"So—the girl turns up once more!" he drawled.

Jinny restrained from saying what was on her mind and forced herself to

smile. "They said a girl couldn't get into this place tonight. I did. I had to. I wanted to see you fight. You were marvelous!"

The champ sat down and began to strip the tape off his hands. "Think so, stranger?" he drawled.

"I know so!" cried Jinny. "And stop teasing me! You know very well who I am, and of course I found out who you were—and I wanted to tell you how awfully sorry I was to have made such a fool of myself."

"Sure you didn't come back for another kiss like the one we had last night?" he asked.

Jinny got brick-red. Exerting every ounce of will-power she possessed, she stopped the retort that rose to her lips.

"Is that nice?" she pleaded sweetly. "Here I am trying to tell you how much I regret—"

"Got a date tonight, girlie?" he asked suddenly.

"No, I haven't!" Jinny said just as promptly.

"What about taking off that outfit and dressing up like a pretty girl and going places with the champ?"

"No need to say any more, sir!" laughed Jinny. "I'm practically with you."

The big man took her to the door. "I'll pick you up at your apartment," he said. "Don't worry if I'm half an hour late. I'll be there as soon as I can get away from the boys."

Jinny dashed out and dismissed her escorts. Then she got her own car which had been parked in a lot near-by and drove home.

In half an hour she had changed into her newest and most fanciful evening gown, a romantic little creation of ruffles and lace which was reminiscent of the days of hoop-skirts. She tied her flying curls in a band of blue ribbon. She put on little high heeled sandals that added a couple of inches to her height, and there was a flush on her cheeks that didn't come out of a box.

She waited, pacing up and down, up and down the living-room of her compact but luxurious apartment.

**H**ALF an hour passed, then an hour. She grew impatient, then angry, then frantic, as the clock ticked off the minutes with exasperating slowness. At twelve midnight she phoned the Boxing Club. A night watchman answered and said that Mr. Stewart was no longer there.

At one o'clock, just when she could stand it no longer, the doorbell rang. Jinny didn't even wait for the butler to open. She went herself. There was Mr. Mac Stewart, champion, in very neat evening clothes.

"Don't tell me what you think of me!" he said quickly. "I'm terribly sorry!"

He took her arm and hurried her to the elevator. Outside two cars were waiting.

Jinny saw that they were full of a very merry lot of young people she had never seen before.

"Pile in here!" said the champ, and opened the rear door of number one sedan. He lifted her in, shut the door and went to occupy the driver's seat.

Jinny found herself squeezed in between two vague young men who mumbled commonplaces. Beside Mac Stewart was a gorgeous girl with dark hair, dressed in a stunning gown and furs to match, who was humming a dance tune and smoking nonchalantly. As soon as the champion started the car, she slid a beautiful bare arm along the back of the seat and let her slender fingers nestle playfully in the crisp dark hair at the nape of his neck. Jinny shivered. What was this?

The tall stunning girl leaned her head on her companion's broad shoulder and said, "Where are we going, sweetie-pie?"

Sweetie-pie!

Jinny's lips shut tight in a thin, determined line. So—that was the way he did things, this utterly exasperating bully from Oregon! Inwardly

raging, but outwardly serene, like a volcano on its day off, she let one of the vague young men slip his arm around her.

"Comfy?" he asked.

"I never was so comfortable in all my life!" she answered.

They went to Pat's on Fifty-Second Street. Two carsful of them made eleven people, when they were all in a group. Jinny didn't know a soul among them. They were all terribly gay and excited and festive over the new champ, and Mac Stewart grinned and had very little to say to anyone except the tall Venus who had caressed his hair and called him Sweetie-pie.

Jinny was wedged in somehow alongside of the young man who had put his arm around her in the car—at the wrong end of the table. She was dying a thousand deaths lest some of her coterie of friends should see her thus, in exile, relegated to the last and most humiliating spot in the party.

Had she been alone with the champ, or at his right hand, then the applause and friendly salutes of the dancers wouldn't have mattered—but to be forgotten like this—well, it was torture of a subtle and exquisite nature.

She decided to get good and tight and then make a scene. But, somehow, everybody forgot to fill her glass, and after one scant helping of champagne, she was left dry.

Then the girls in the party danced with the men, big Mac Stewart with his Venus. The odd-number young man at Jinny's right said, "Sorry, I hurt my foot on the track today. No good. Got to keep off my feet."

Jinny began to wonder if she weren't paying too high a price for vengeance tonight. She had almost decided to go home when, in an interval of the music, Mac Stewart came over and said, "Dance?"

She rose with alacrity, and allowed him to engulf her in his big arms.

He grinned down at her. "Dull, isn't it?"

"It's wonderful!" she answered sweetly.

He made a little whistling noise. "You're a stubborn little cuss, aren't you, Jinny?"

"Stubborn?" She opened blue eyes wide. "I don't know what you mean. I think it is wonderful being here with a real champion and so many interesting people. You see, I'm really awfully lonely. I never have much fun—"

"You spend your nights playing solitaire—and your days taking baskets of food to the poor, I suppose!"

"Why do you always make fun of me?" she said with a catch in her voice and tears in the big blue eyes. "You don't know what it is to be a girl all alone, with no relations or parents or anything—and just parasites—yes—parasites, around me! I've got too much money, you see. And it can be a handicap. More than people would ever believe."

He shook his head in grave sympathy. "It must be terrible! Tsk tsk! Money—and parasites. You poor child! I suppose you never do get a chance to relax and be yourself!"

He was kidding her. Kidding her unmercifully. Jinny set her teeth.

"Last night—I never thought you'd be this way," she murmured, pressing her cheek against the breast pocket of his evening coat and clinging closer.

His arm tightened around her. "Go on, baby, turn on the lure. I love it!"

She felt her ribs crack under the pressure of his mighty arms, until she gasped for mercy.

"Please!" she murmured, as he lessened his hold. "If you act that way, I'll begin to believe you care more than you are willing to confess. Otherwise, why would you go out of your way to bully me?"

He grinned. "I see—the narrow line between love—and hate! I don't hate you, sister. I think you're a cute little number, and if it weren't for Luellen, I'd give you a tumble, sure as guns."

"Luellen? She's the lovely dark girl—"

"Yes."

"I understand," said Jinny in a choked voice. She took her hand away

from his shoulder. "Would you mind very much if I took French leave?" she asked. "I'm feeling a bit tired. I guess I'd be better off at home in bed!"

"Of course!" he agreed heartily and led her off the dance floor. She waited while he collected her wrap and bag.

He took her out and had the car called.

"I'll run you home," he volunteered. "It won't take long. They're all dancing. They'll never miss me."

He drove up Fifth Avenue and turned east at Sixty-seventh Street.

"Why wouldn't you tell me where you lived last night?" he quizzed. "I only wanted to do the right thing and take you home safely."

"How did I know you weren't a kidnaper—or worse!" she retorted angrily. "I don't make it a habit of letting myself be picked up on the highway and—and—"

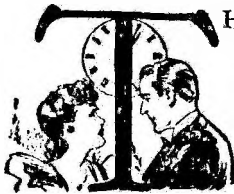
"Say it. And kissed by a perfect stranger!" he laughed. "Well, one must try everything once. I guess you didn't like it. So we'll cut out the good-night kiss this time."

Jinny turned up her little face. "Why?" she challenged. "If you forgot your Luellen long enough to kiss me last night, why can't you now?"

He stopped the car at the curb, half a block away from her apartment entrance, and gravely took her in his arms.

"How do you want it? Tender—sentimental—cavemanish—"

"Just—just repeat—last night!" Jinny answered in a very small voice.



HE memory of his lips dwelled with her long after he had gone, and long into the next day. It kept returning in little rippling thrills that stirred her like the caress of a soft hand.

She hated him. She hated him, and she had to see him again. She thought of the girl he was in love with. The lovely Luellen. That thought pricked

her with an intolerable goad. It made her long to measure her wit and cunning against that of a girl who was already "in." To take Luellen's man away, that would be fun!

It was, of course, a new situation. This Mac Stewart who had won an amateur boxing championship didn't belong to her world and none of the people that surrounded him were known to Jinny. She wished now she had been nicer to his friends and found out more about their habits and background. She didn't even know their names! She didn't know where Mac Stewart lived! She hadn't any artillery at all to load her guns with.

Nothing but the thrill of a kiss which, she thought, must have been shared by the man who had kissed her. Otherwise, why would he have tried it again? Men don't kiss from sheer bravado or boredom. Not when they have a fiancée as beautiful as Luellen.

All that day she was restless and life seemed a bore. Then at five the phone rang and Mr. Stewart was asking for Miss Jinny.

She flew to answer. Mac Stewart said a few friends were throwing a party and would she come? He was at the Grand Plaza. Apartment 2010.

She changed into a little black dress and chic tiny hat and drove the few blocks to the big hotel. As she knocked at 2010, she wondered why it was so quiet inside. Generally these cocktail parties sounded like dinner in the zoo.

Mac Stewart opened the door. He was all alone in one of the de luxe apartments, the windows of which looked out over the entire world. There weren't any bottles around, nor any cigarette stubs; just a lot of flowers and Mac.

"You said there was going to be a party," she accused.

"Afraid of the lure of a bachelor's apartment, eh?" he mocked. "I didn't know you were such a sissy!"

"I'm not a sissy!" exclaimed Jinny, coming in and seating herself. "I just don't like subterfuge."

"Ooof! what a big word for such a little girl!"

"Where is the party?" Jinny asked coolly.

"It's us—just you and I," he said with a grin. "Isn't that ducky?"

"It might be," challenged Jinny. "What's the idea?"

He reached over and took her hand. "You do like me, don't you, Jinny?"

"Of—of course I do," Jinny faltered.

"Then—how about proving it?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well—I'm in a bit of a jam—"

"You—in a jam?" Jinny echoed faintly.

"Yes. On account of Luellen's dad. He doesn't like me. He says I'm a hick and a no-good. He's a big shot in Chicago—and Oregon is just the backwoods to him."

"I still don't see—" murmured Jinny, bewildered.

"I'm telling you," he assured her. "We thought—that is, Luellen and I—thought if I were to be seen around with a real A-1 social registerite like Jinny Carter—millionairess, and absolutely tops as far as family and background goes — perhaps the old man might see I wasn't quite such a zero. Then—when he comes to his senses, you and I could break off, and Luellen and I could stage a comeback and live happily ever afterwards."

"You—you want me to pretend you and I are playing around—" Jinny choked, and for a moment words failed her.

"That's it!" he said in triumphant tones. "I knew you'd catch on! What do you think of the idea?"

Jinny pointed a quivering finger. "You—you and I?"

"Why not? You like me, don't you?" he said with an alarmed expression on his handsome face. "You're always willing to give a fellow a whirl. That's what they told me. I mean—they said you were the kind that played around, but it didn't mean much. I thought while you were playing, you might just

as well turn the game to some good account."

"They—they said I was always willing to—" Jinny stopped. She was thinking hard, and her thoughts weren't pleasant. So, that was what people said about her! Just a playgirl—just a dizzy little dame.

Well, if that was what they thought, then why not? One might as well be hanged for stealing a sheep as a lamb!

She felt a little giddy, as she looked at Mac Stewart again. He was holding her hand, kissing the little blue veins on the white wrist with light playful kisses. Perhaps, she thought, when they had played and played, he would really fall in love with her! Then, she would say, "So long, stranger," and leave him cold. Even Luellen wouldn't want him when Jinny Carter got through with him!

Her fingers tightened around his fingers. She looked up and laughed throatily. "It might be fun—at that," she said softly. "You and I could put up an awfully good imitation of two people who are crazy about each other!"

"Attagirl!" he exclaimed and drew her into his arms. "How about a little kiss to get started? Then we'll get going and I'll teach you how to paint the town a brand new tint of red!"

She nestled against him, lips offered, eyes closed, in that thrilling expectation of his caress. It filled her with ecstatic recklessness that was far grander than the kick of a champagne cocktail. It was grander than speed, and fire and lightning in a sultry summer day. It was grander than the roar of surf when one dives, grander than driving at ninety miles an hour.

There was nothing in all the world quite like it!

**M**AC STEWART'S brand of red was truly different from any the town had ever happened to see before.

There was a new recklessness about him that even frightened Jinny at times. He simply didn't care what he did! It kept her busy trying to stay a



step ahead of him—and because he drank far too much, she was forced to go on the water-wagon. Somebody had to be sober sometimes! If they both got tight, who would keep them out of jail?

Mac said he was pining for Luellen. He said if her father didn't relent, he would drink himself to death.

In the meanwhile, Luellen's father showed no sign of relenting.

"When everything is said and done," Mac mourned one dawn at four-thirty as they sat in a diner and ate hot-dogs, "we might just as well have spared ourselves the trouble of putting on this show of being in love."

Jinny's tone was as biting as the mustard she was smearing on her hot-dog. "Perhaps association with me has ruined your chances completely. Perhaps I've been a blight on your reputation—"

"That might be it," he conceded. "I've been wondering."

"It never occurred to you that perhaps it was Luellen who was trying to give you the air!" Jinny snapped.

"But these letters!" He fumbled in his pocket and pulled out the latest from Chicago. "She says, 'I still love you! Nothing will separate us—if we go on fighting.'"

"It sounds all right, but—"

"But what?" Mac said suddenly.

"It mightn't be true, that's all. It seems to me any girl who really is that crazy about a man would make a big play to get him. And in Luellen's place, I'd simply walk out and get married and explain later. After all, you're not poison and she is free, white and eighteen—"

"Is that what you'd do if you were in love?" Mac asked dreamily, staring over the rim of a thick china coffee cup. "Defy the world—and go to your love and—"

Jinny said, "Stop talking nonsense, Mac. Pay the man and let's go home. Do you know what time it is?"

Mac threw a quarter on the counter and got down from the stool.

"Defy the world—and go to your love," he repeated. "That's swell. I'm going to call Luellen on the phone and tell her that's what to do."

Jinny's heart was like lead as they drove home.

Somehow, tonight, the whole world seemed topsy-turvy. What was this all about, anyway? They ran around in circles, doing things she had no desire to do, making fools of themselves, drinking, playing fiercely—what for?

Never before had she stopped to wonder why. She had lived from day to day—impishly content to get away with things. But now it was different.

Here was a man she had hated—and now she loved him. Once she had decided to wreck him—now she was the one who was being wrecked, while he used her as a tool to get another girl.

He kissed her when she left him at the hotel as he always did. Then he hurried off.

One of these days he would go hurrying out of her life. She couldn't bear it!

That night she lay awake for hours, and just as the sun rose through the shot silk of her window curtains, she had an idea.

**T**HAT night a big crowd motored out to Mandy's barn on Route 18. They had dinner and danced and drank.

Then they had some supper and drank some more and danced. Mac was tighter than anybody.

At last Jinny knew the right moment had come. She was dancing with Mac. She put her arm around his neck and drew down his head and kissed him. Then she whispered, "Let's go and get married, Mac. That'll make Luellen good and mad."

"Married?" he repeated. "Swell idea! Let's do it now!"

They ducked out of a side entrance. Jinny drove to the town of Morcaster where a justice of the peace sold them a wedding ring and a license and a marriage ceremony and declared them

to be man and wife. Mac appeared to be in a daze when they came out.

Jinny drove him to New York to the Grand-Plaza. She managed to get him up to his apartment, on to the lounge, where he lay in a sleep-drugged heap.

Jinny left him there, and went into the bedroom. She kicked off her sandals and slipped out of her dress and step-ins and donned a pair of Mac's pajamas and went to bed.

When she awoke the next morning, she saw some one in the bed beside her. It was Mac, dressed in another pair of pajamas, sleeping peacefully.

She leaped out of bed with the speed of a grasshopper. Then she remembered—they were married! Married! And he didn't even know it! Probably thought he had been sleeping with his pet terrier—

Gathering all her courage, Jinny went around to Mac's side and shook him.

He didn't budge. Once more she shook him.

He turned over—then he saw her!

"What in the name of thunder—" he began, as he sprang out of bed. "Is this another gag?"

"We're married!"

"Married?"

"Yes—married. Don't stand there repeating things!"

He sat down weakly. "You mean to say I went off and—"

Then he began to laugh.

The queer shaky excitement Jinny had felt began to give way to anger.

He laughed, and the more he laughed, the angrier she became.

"I'm glad you think it is funny," she said primly. "We can get it annulled, of course—"

He stopped laughing and seemed to consider that. Then he shook his head. "No—we won't do that," he said gravely. "You've killed my chances of marrying Luellen and I might as well hold on to you." He reached for the phone.

"What are you going to do?" gasped Jinny.

She ran around to him and tried to hold his arm. He pushed her away and held her while he asked the telephone operator to get him Miss Jinny Carter's apartment.

"What are you phoning my apartment for?" cried Jinny.

"You'll need some clothes, won't you?" he said shortly when he had finished his call. "We're leaving on the first plane for Oregon. I'm done with New York. I'm taking you home."

### CHAPTER III



T was a strange wedding trip. They traveled from Newark Airport to Washington, Oregon. There, they drove into the mountains, through gorgeous country the like of which Jinny had never seen before.

It was late spring, the first green of budding trees, the flowering prairies and meadows were gay against a background of snow-capped mountains.

Since they had reached Mac's home state, he was different. Less wisecracking, less talkative in fact, and his eyes smiled hardly ever.

Jinny was a little bit afraid of him this way.

The man about town was the man she knew. The man of the open spaces was a stranger. He was aloof and remote as the snow-capped peaks on the horizon. He had not touched her save to help her in and out of the plane since they left New York. He had not kissed her. She wore the ring he had slipped on her finger on that wild night. Legally, she was his wife. In reality, they were like a couple of people that meet in a railway station.

All day long they drove through wild beautiful country, and toward nightfall, they crossed a pass at the neck of a broad valley through which wound a silvery river.

He pointed ahead. "Down there is where we live," he said.

It took them two more hours of fast driving to reach their destina-

tion. When they drove through a big white-painted wooden gate, it was dark.

Jinny saw a ranch house, low, rambling, comfortable.

They stopped and an old man came out holding up a lantern.

"Hi, Pop!" Mac greeted him.

"Well, if it ain't Mr. Mac!" quavered the old man. "I didn't expect you till tomorrow mornin'. Howdy, boss! Howdy!"

"This is Pop Barton, Jinny," said Mac. "Barton, this is Mrs. Stewart."

The old man let the lantern light shine upon Jinny. "Kinda peaked, ain't she?"

"Peaked?"

Mac laughed. "A little undersized, Pop, but there's plenty of muscle in the mite."

The old man seemed pessimistic. "Looks kinda peaked—" he repeated as he led the way into the ranch house.

"Does he think I'm livestock?" Jinny asked under her breath.

"Oh, no!" Mac answered cheerfully. "Maybe he thinks you aren't capable of handling things. You know, the women are a pretty husky lot out here. They have to be. There's plenty of work to be done."

They entered a big, low-ceilinged room, finished with rough-hewn logs and furnished with heavy, handmade pieces that seemed part of the forests themselves. There were fine Indian rugs on the floor and a piano, and shelves full of books.

It was a man's room, Jinny saw. No woman had ever lived here.

"What have you for dinner, Pop?" asked Mac.

"There's some trout and a good steak I cut for you. The missus can beat up some biscuit. I reckon. We're short of bread." The old man turned to Jinny. "Effin' you'll excuse me, ma'am, I'll be goin' out to bed down the cows—"

He took his lantern and shuffled out, closing the door softly behind him.

"Alone at last!" said Mac and sat down in a low chair and reached for a

pipe and a jar of tobacco on the table nearby. "I'm tired, Jinny. Would you mind getting supper?"

Jinny pulled off her hat and coat. "Of course!" she said dully. "I'm a grand cook! Where is the kitchen?"

He pointed to a small door. "In there."

Jinny went into the kitchen. It was a nice big room. It was filled with the biggest stove Jinny had ever seen. It was a large black stove with a long stove pipe that disappeared through the roof.

There was a sink and near the sink there was a pump with a long handle.

That cupboard with the wire netting door would be the place where they kept provisions.

She opened it and saw some beautiful little trout lying on a bed of leaves in a wicker basket. There was also a very enormous red piece of meat. That — reduced to civilized dimensions — might be the steak.

As for making biscuits—that was out! Jinny had no more idea how to make biscuits than a kitten has how to play bridge.

She knew the first thing one needed in order to cook is fire. Then a frying pan—

There were red coals in the stove. She got a piece of wood from a box near the stove and put it in.

Then she found a frying pan and put in the fish. It was easy. Mac Stewart could sit there and gloat! She'd show him she wasn't afraid of a little cooking.

About the steak—she wasn't quite so sure. One broiled steaks. There wasn't any broiler on this stove.

In the cupboard there were canned vegetables of assorted kinds. She chose peas and beans and tried to open them with a large and antiquated model of can opener. They wouldn't open. She took a hatchet from the wood box and split them open. Lots of peas and beans scattered all over the floor. But there were enough left.

A queer cannibal smell was coming from the frying pan. In it were the

charred remains of what had been a fine mess of trout.

She opened the kitchen door and dumped them in the darkness.

**T**HE kitchen was filled with horrid-smelling smoke. It made her eyes smart. They smarted so that big tears rolled down her cheeks. She felt so sorry for herself that she sat down on the wood box and had a good cry.

Then, at last, she stopped. It wasn't any good crying. If she kept that up, she was licked. Jinny Carter—Jinny Stewart—if that was her name, couldn't be licked by a mess of burned fish.

She scoured out the frying pan with yellow soap and sandstone that she found in the sink. Then she remembered that they put butter into pans when they tried to fry things. There was an enormous piece of butter in the cooler.

She got the steak fried all right and heated the peas and beans.

When dinner was ready, she went to call Mac. He was still sitting quietly in his chair, smoking.

"I've got something ready," she said. "Where shall we eat?"

"Oh! The kitchen will be okay," he said and got up and put away his pipe. He helped her set the table with knives and forks and heavy china plates and carved the steak and served it and dished out beans and peas.

Jinny was in agony lest he should find everything terrible, but when he had eaten the first mouthful of steak, he said, "Best piece of meat I've had since I left home."

"I burned the trout," she confessed.

"Yes. I guessed that!" he answered dryly.

There were a million things Jinny wanted to know but she didn't dare question him. He was so quiet. She knew that something had happened to him. Either he was awfully sad because he had lost Luellen, or else he was awfully mad because they had gone and got married in that silly way.

He finished eating in silence and got

up. "I guess I'll go out and have a look at things," he said. "Your room is down the hall, first to the right."

He said "good-night" and went.

Jinny sat in a daze, staring at the dirty dishes. She wouldn't wash them. She wouldn't do anything. Next morning she would go back to New York and get her marriage annulled.

The bedroom her "husband" had assigned her was a cubbyhole of a place with a small iron bed that sagged in the middle. On a table there was a wash basin and pitcher, and a pail was placed nearby to pour off the dirty water.

Jinny had seen rooms like this one in the movies. It was the first time in her life that she had been requested to sleep in one.

She crawled under the gray blankets and sobbed bitterly until she fell asleep.

Wakening the next morning, she heard cow-bells. It was a sweet silvery sound that reminded her of Switzerland and her childhood days.

She got up and went to the window. The old man of the night before was driving a fine herd of cattle into pasture.

Bright sunlight streamed over a grand new world. The mountains glistened, far off, under their snowy mantle.

"God's country," she thought.

She threw open the window and took a deep breath of the cold clear air. It was stimulating as wind. She washed her face in icy water and used a dash of lipstick and combed out her rebellious curls.

She thought of coffee! How wonderful, a big steaming cup with cream!

She tiptoed down the little hallway into the living-room. There was no one there. But Mac was in the kitchen with a big apron tied about himself, washing dishes. The stove was going full blast, and the delicious smell of coffee filled the air.

"Hello!" he said as Jinny came in.

"Good morning."

"Breakfast?"

"I'll have coffee, thanks."

Jinny sat down stiffly. Let him serve her. Why shouldn't he! She folded her hands.

He brought the cup of coffee she craved and pushed a big pitcher of thick cream across the table. "I'll have the rest in a jiffy," he said. "Bacon and eggs and biscuits."

Jinny sipped her coffee and said nothing. Later she would tell him her decision to leave.

He brought fried eggs and bacon and delicious biscuits fresh from the oven.

He gave her her share. They ate in silence.

When he finished, he pushed his plate aside and leaned his elbows on the table. "Isn't it about time we talked things over, Jinny?" he asked.

Jinny's spine straightened. "I wanted to talk to you," she answered. "It is about leaving."

He smiled a queer smile. "Why did you sleep in the hired hand's room last night?" he said disregarding her remark.

Jinny grew pink. "I—I didn't know," she stammered. "You said—"

"I said in the room on the right. Our room. But if you chose to disregard my wishes—"

"This is ridiculous!" cried Jinny, springing to her feet. "Let's not go on bickering like a couple of kids. You know our marriage was a gross mistake. It was my fault. I—I tricked you into—into—" She could go no further.

"I think I understand," he said quietly. "This is a sort of revenge business, a hangover from that first time we met. You thought you'd take the hick for a ride. Well—girlie, as far as I'm concerned, you've done it."

"I'm going!" she cried. "I'm going now—"

"You are free, madam!" he mocked. "Isn't that what they say in the good old classics?" He rose to his full height. "Too bad, I needed a cook around the place—and it would have been nice to have a loving little wife—

to sew on buttons and mend my socks!"

He sighed. "Well, I guess it's just my bad luck with women—"

"Suppose you hire a cook and housemaid instead of a wife!" cried Jinny, red with indignation. "There isn't a man in the world I'd mend socks and sew on buttons for! Good-by, Mr. Champion Mac Stewart! My lawyers will get in touch with you."

She turned and ran out of the room.



HE was trembling all over and her hands shook so that she could hardly pack the few toilet articles she had taken from her dressing-case. She put on her hat and coat and hurried out of the house. She didn't want to see Mac again. Ever!

The sedan in which they had traveled the day before was standing in front of the house. The key was in the ignition keyhole. She got in and tried to start it. There was no sound from the motor. She tried over and over again, with no success.

Mac appeared in the doorway. "I'm afraid you won't be able to use the car," he drawled. "It's gone wrong. Ben will fix it when he comes back with the part that went bad."

"When will Ben come back?" Jinny snapped.

"Day after tomorrow."

He turned and went into the house. Jinny picked up her dressing-case and started up the valley, on foot. She'd show him! She didn't need his help.

The air was crisp and cool. Her shoes were comfortable. Twenty miles would be easy—she thought. Mac had said something about another ranch twenty miles away. Then, too, there was the hope that a car might pass and she could get a lift.

At the end of the first mile her dressing-case weighed like lead. She threw it away. The sun was riding higher in the sky and she had become uncomfortably hot. She took off her

coat, and later when it made her arm sticky, she hung it on a bush and left it there.

By noon, she was desperately hungry and so tired she could hardly drag one foot after another. At three o'clock, her right heel came off and she had to take off the other one in order to walk at all.

Not a car—not a horse—nothing in sight.

Later, the sun sank. Then purple shadows gathered and it became very cool.

She was so hungry and tired now that it didn't matter.

Her feet were just two aching parts of her aching body. Night was coming. She would be alone, in these great open spaces.

She stumbled and fell to her knees, and lay there and let the waves of weariness surge over her like a bather in the surf.

Hours later, it seemed, when her body was just a little quaking thing and her brain was numb with fright, she heard the whirr of a motor and saw the gleam of headlights coming up the valley. When the car came near, sheaved madly. It stopped.

It was a battered Ford, and Pop was at the wheel.

"I reckoned you'd be somewhere along about here," he said calmly, and opened the door. "Get in. T'ain't safe for you to be out at night round these 'ere parts."

They covered the distance to the ranch in very little time compared to the agonizing hours it had taken her to walk the same distance.

As Pop got out, he said, "The boss ain't here tonight. He won't be back until mornin'."

Jinny followed him into the ranch house. "Will you get me something to eat?" she said faintly. "I don't think I'm up to it."

While she devoured a big plate of onion and potato soup and two fried eggs and large pieces of bread, she couldn't think of anything except how good it tasted.

When she had finished, all she could think of was sleep. She crawled into the little room she had occupied the night before and fell like a stone into bed.

THE next morning, she felt refreshed and keen of spirit. Now, she thought, she could cope with the situation properly. She must try and get somebody's help.

The old Ford had wheels and it could go. She would talk to Pop, offer him money, lots of money, to take her out of the valley.

She got up and went to look for him. He wasn't anywhere around. The Ford was gone too.

While she was looking, a rider came down a trail. As he came in, she recognized Mac. Restraining the desire to tell him what she thought of him, she went over and said, "You win—Mac. Now, will you help me?"

He grinned. "I told you to wait until Ben comes back and fixes the starter."

"I don't want to wait until tomorrow. I want to go now."

He hitched his horse to a post. "That's the trouble with you, Jinny," he drawled. "You've never learned that there are a few things you can't get just for the wanting!"

"I'm willing to buy that old Ford for a thousand dollars if you'll sell it," she said, controlling her anger.

Mac scratched his head. "Too bad!" he said. "I'd make the deal in a minute, only the car doesn't belong to me. It's Pop's and he's driven out to the cow-lick to put out salt for the herd."

"Will you sell me that horse?" she said desperately.

He hesitated, then he shook his head. "Sorry, I need Nelly around the place. I just couldn't part with her. Not with Nelly."

Jinny boiled up and over. "Stop making believe!" she cried. "I'll buy your whole silly ranch and everything on it for fifty thousand dollars and then give it back to you if you'll just get me out of here!"

Mac Stewart grinned down at her with maddening calm. "I'm beginning to think you and I might get together, darling!"

"Not in this life!"

"I'd hate to wait for eternity!"

"You conceited fool! What makes you think a girl would want to bother with a man like you? What have you got to offer?"

He came close and seized her by the elbows. "Tell me, Jinny, what have you got to offer?"

Her eyes defied him. "Other men know what I've got—"

"Did you say men? Or did you mean those dressed up dummies I saw hanging around you in New York?" he laughed. "You never met a real man until you met me!"

His fingers pressed into her flesh. "No real man would be bothered knowing you! You couldn't be a wife to anybody. A wife is a woman—not a hysterical gin-mad hussy! A wife will give—and give more—of her time and herself and her love. She'll only ask love in exchange. And when I say love, I don't mean just mad kisses. I mean sacrifice—and work—and devotion. The things you know nothing about!"

Jinny was white to the lips. As he loosened his hold upon her, she drew back, and slapped him with all her strength, a stinging resounding blow.

The force of it sent her reeling. He caught her, and steadied her, and then, tipping her cheek so that there would be a larger surface to slap, he slapped back, a resounding, smacking slap.

Through the fury that blurred her eyes, she saw him smiling that exasperating smile which had the power to drive her to a fever heat of rebellion.

"If I had a gun—" she choked. "I— I'd shoot you!"

Quickly he reached into his hip pocket and something flashed in his hand. "Here you are. Go ahead and

shoot!" he said and held out a revolver.

She took it—then swayed and fell into his arms. The gun dropped into the dust.

"Mac! Oh, Mac! Hit me again!" she sobbed. "I'm just a crazy little fool—because I love you—and because you love somebody else. It was—my fault—that you didn't marry the girl you love!"

"But I did!" she heard him say through the tumult of her mind and senses.

"I don't understand!" sobbed Jinny.

He held her close, rocking her softly in his arms. "Don't try! Just relax and let someone else do the thinking—for awhile."

**A** WHILE later they drove through the big gates of a fine country estate, and Mac Stewart said, "This is home."

Jinny stared in amazement.

He stopped in front of the steps leading up to a big veranda. A beautiful girl came running out to meet them.

It was Luellen.

"Jinny!" she cried. "Mac! I'm so glad!"

Mac looked at Jinny. "Luellen is my sister, darling!"

Big tears came to Jinny's eyes. She stumbled as she started to get out of the car. Mac picked her up like a baby and carried her into a big cool room, filled with flowers and exquisitely furnished.

He sat down and held her on his knees. "This is home, if you like it well enough to stay, baby!" he murmured.

Jinny's arms crept around his neck. She could feel the hot tears rolling down her cheeks. She could still feel the place where he had slapped her, as she put her cheek against his.

"Do you want me?" she whispered.

He answered with his lips on hers. "I do."



By  
Peggy Gaddis



## *A Trailer for Two*

**J**UST as she stepped from the curb, the traffic light changed to red. She slid around a truck, and there before her, bright and shiny, stood the trailer. Hitched to a small, sturdy looking roadster in which sat a young man whose mind was on the traffic light and not on his house-on-wheels behind him.

Sandy didn't stop to think, to reflect. There was no time. She simply wrenched open the door of the trailer, stumbled inside and shut the door behind her as a warning bell rang and the traffic light switched to green. The trailer lurched as the roadster started, then rolled smoothly on.

*She Ran Away from Danger—into the  
Arms of a Strange Young Man*



Sandy dropped down on one of the small Pullman seats that faced the narrow shelf of a table. She looked swiftly about her, trying to still the trembling that shook her. Her heart was racing like mad. Had she made good her escape? Had any one seen her? Would they be following her? She fought down the panic that rose with such thoughts, and tried to concentrate on the immediate surroundings in an effort to rationalize her thoughts.

From where she sat, the whole trailer was before her. The tiny galley with its small, compact stove, the icebox and sink facing it; at the far end the full length couch, and above it a cupboard and a small shelf on which there were books and a small radio. The place was neat, compact as the interior of a smart yacht. Sandy loved it at first sight. It was like a doll's house, she told herself eagerly. Living in it would be like "playing house."

The trailer was rolling across the bridge now, leaving Jacksonville behind. There was a brief pause while the driver paid his bridge-toll and Sandy flattened herself against the wall lest someone should see her. She breathed more easily when the car went rolling on its way again.

Perhaps an hour passed while Sandy sat huddled there watching the scenery slip past her. And then with a little jolt the trailer came to a halt. She peered out between the narrow curtains of striped, gaily colored basket-cloth. They were in the country. No town. No sign of a habitation. Only the tall pines and scrub-oaks stretching away on each side from the ribbon of a darkly shining road that seemed to have been cut with a sharp knife between the woods.

The next moment she gasped and sat erect, for the trailer door had opened and the young man who had been driving the roadster stepped into the room.

"And now," he demanded of the

temporarily speechless Sandy who cowered away from him in startled fear, "what the dickens is all this about?"

He was a tall, broad-shouldered young man. Not particularly good-looking, though there was a clean-cut rugged quality to his sharply cut features and a steady look about his eyes that told Sandy she could trust him. He was dressed in careless tweeds, well cut but now undeniably shabby.

"I saw you hop into the trailer back there in Jacksonville," he told her with a trace of grimness. "I couldn't imagine what it was all about. But the traffic was pretty thick and I didn't stop to investigate. Didn't have time. But now, if you *don't* mind, we'll have a good, old-fashioned showdown. And even if you *do* mind, we'll still have a showdown."

"I—I—well, I'm a hitch-hiker," stammered Sandy experimentally.

The young man's eyes swept over her, taking in the smartly tailored suit, the gay, impudent little hat, the silver fox scarf flung carelessly about her shoulders, the jeweled clip that held the collar of her immaculate soft white blouse.

"Oh, yeah?" he retorted grimly. "Well, I'm Mahatma Ghandi—and this is where you get off, young lady. Out with you! There's a bus station just a few feet ahead."

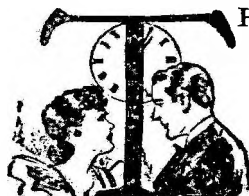
Sandy cried out in sharp protest, violet-blue eyes touched with panic. "Oh, please—don't make me get out. Please let me ride with you—just to—the next town. I'll pay you. See, I've got some money—" she held out her smart black leather bag and let him see the pleasantly thick roll of bills it contained.

The young man pushed his hat still further back from his lean, good-humored face and stared at her, puzzled and frowning.

"What the heck—" he exploded. "Shut that purse, you little idiot! Don't you know any better than to go around flashing a roll like that? I

might be a highwayman, a cut-throat, for all you know."

"I'm not afraid of you," said Sandy promptly and honestly, looking squarely into his eyes. "Will you let me ride with you? Just—to Daytona Beach, maybe?"



HE young man sat down opposite her. The narrow shelf of the table was between them. He folded his arms on the table, leaned forwards her a little and, with his keen gray eyes meeting hers squarely, he said grimly:

"Whether I ride you to Daytona Beach or to the bus station just ahead depends entirely on you. If you want to tell me what all this is about—why a girl like you, dressed within an inch of her life, is bumming a ride in a trailer with a strange guy—then maybe I'll ride you to Daytona Beach. Otherwise, you get out at the bus station. Now shoot! Who are you? What are you doing here? And why is it so necessary for you to get to Daytona Beach, and why couldn't you have taken the train?"

"My name is Sandy—that is, Sandra Wallace," said Sandy, searching carefully among the parts of her story she dared not tell him, and trying to pick out the most convincing bits of that part which it would be safe for him to know. "And—well, I'm running away. And—and—there would probably be—detectives, maybe, watching the railroad stations or the airport. And—that's why I've got to—what was it you called it?—bum a ride with you."

"You've overlooked an extremely important detail, my lamb," said the young man ever so gently. "Which is—why are you running away, and from what?"

Sandy's color burned hotly, but she forced herself to meet his eyes and to say with an almost childlike sim-

licity, "From marrying a man I don't love."

"Poppycock!" snapped her unwilling host rudely. "You're at least eight-  
een years of age, my gal, and this is the twentieth century, or hadn't you heard? And in this day and time, girls can't be forced to marry men they don't want to marry. It's a good yarn, but not good enough! You'll have to think up a better one—or it's the bus station for you!"

Sandy flung up her head and her blue eyes were blazing. "Poppycock or not, it's the truth," she told him haughtily. "Maybe I'm lacking in moral courage or something. Anyway, when my—my guardian made such a point of my marrying his nephew, and when I couldn't move a step without the guardian and his nephew constantly under foot, and when I had worn myself out with arguments, and they were sort of closing in on me, I just—ran away. Into your trailer, because it was right under my nose at the moment and it seemed such a grand place to hide."

The young man was still studying her grimly and she saw that he was completely unimpressed by her story. Yet it *was* the truth. She was suddenly terrified lest he carry out his expressed determination to put her out of the trailer. And all at once it became desperately important to Sandy to stay in this enchanting doll's house. She rushed on eagerly while the young man studied her in frank indecision.

"Look, I'm a grand cook, honestly, and you need a cook. And I'll pay for my transportation and I'll be very gay and amusing. I *can* be, honestly, when I'm not scared half to death as I am now. And we'll have fun! You'll see, if only you'll be a good sport and let me ride with you. *Please!*"

The young man scrubbed his chin with a reflective thumb nail while he studied her intently. Finally he heaved a little sigh and said guardedly, "Your story is a shameless fabrication, of course—one can't call a pretty girl a liar to her face, can one? But you get

the idea, I'm sure. Well—Daytona Beach it is, and there you take a train or a bus, or something besides my trailer.”

Sandy cried out, flushed and delighted, “Oh, thanks—I didn't get your name?”

“How could you?” answered the young man still a trifle grimly. “I didn't mention it, did I? However, it happens to be Scott Richardson. And believe it or not, *I'm telling you the truth!*”

Before she could answer that parting shot, he stepped out of the trailer, slammed the door, and a moment later the sturdy roadster took up its interrupted journey.

As the trailer slid past the bus station, Sandy made a face at it and went joyously to work inspecting the larder. She felt a little guilty twinge at not having told this nice Scott Richardson person all the truth. Still, what was the old line about self-preservation being the first law of nature, or something like that? She simply *had* to get out of town, and the railroads and the airport were out of the question. Obviously, some such method as this was her only hope.

She inspected the interior of the trailer as well as the larder. She saw that it could easily accommodate four people. The small Pullman seats on either side of the table folded ingeniously into a very comfortable looking bed. While the couch at the opposite end of the trailer converted into a double bed. With a curtain hung in the center of the trailer, just about where the stove stared sternly across at the ice box, the trailer would make commodious sleeping quarters for two people. And with that discovery, her agile mind went swiftly to work and her eyes danced wickedly.

When Scott stopped for lunch, high above the beach where the ocean hurled itself in great foaming white breakers, he sniffed appreciatively as he stepped into the trailer.

“Gosh, that smells good,” he said hungrily, as Sandy placed a platter on

which was a toothsome looking concoction on the table.

Sandy had removed her coat and hat; rolled up the sleeves of her immaculate white blouse and pinned a towel about her slender waist in lieu of an apron. She looked busy and importantly housewifely as she brought the coffee, poured it and hospitably invited Scott to be seated.

“We'll have to have some more supplies at Daytona—” she began eagerly halfway through the meal

Whereupon Scott put down his fork and said sternly, “What do you mean *we*? I do very little cooking. I get most of my meals in restaurants along the way.”

“Just a tenderfoot sissy!” sniffed Sandy disdainfully, to hide her mortification.

“Want any help with the dishes?” asked Scott when the meal had been finished in a silence so dense you could almost see it.

“Of course not! You get on with your driving. I'm anxious to get to Daytona,” she told him haughtily. Whereupon Scott went out and shut the door with an almost definite slam.

**WHEN** she had the little cabin-like interior neat and shining as a new pin, she sat down beside the window and watched the passing scenery. But without any real pleasure. By now they must have missed her back in Jacksonville and there'd be a great hue and cry about it. She was quite sure no one had seen her get into the trailer. At least, no one who knew her or would remember when the news of her disappearance had been broadcast.

She reflected, a trifle happily, on the excitement and the anxiety that would sweep over Uncle Herbert, her guardian, and James, her fiancé, when she did not return to the hotel. She hoped they would be plenty worried, she told herself vengefully, and that they would remember how she had pleaded for a little time to herself; for the freedom they so sternly re-

fused to give her. Well, she was having some time to herself and she was enjoying a brief taste of freedom. And if she was at all lucky, she promised herself more of both!

They were entering Daytona Beach now and once more the trailer came to a halt. The door opened and Scott looked in on her. She was still hatless, her sleeves rolled up, the towel pinned about her waist. He said grimly, "I have to go to the telegraph office. I'm expecting a wire. I'll drop you off at the bus station over in town." And without waiting for her answer, he closed the door and went away.

Sandy sat still, fighting the tears. It was perfectly absurd, of course, to care a darn that he liked her so little he was perfectly willing to throw her out of the car at the first chance. What difference did it make whether he liked her or not? Surely he and his old trailer were not sufficiently important to make one scrap of difference in her life hereafter!

She was aroused by a brisk knock at the door. Puzzled, she rose and opened it. Below her on the sidewalk stood a police officer in uniform. He touched his cap and smiled at her.

"Sorry to disturb you lady, but we're on the lookout for a dame that slipped out of Jacksonville this morning," he said cheerfully. "They thought she was traveling in a trailer. So we got orders to check up on all the trailers coming through today."

Sandy's heart stood perfectly still for a full moment. She saw Scott coming toward her, and almost before she was conscious of the intention, she was saying, "Here's my husband now, officer. Perhaps you'd better talk to him."

Scott was close enough to hear the words, spoken clearly and sweetly. The officer turned to him, and above his head Sandy smiled triumphantly at Scott. If he denied that she was his wife, he would be in a not too pleasant spot. If he told the truth about her—then she was sunk. If he saved him-

self at her expense—would he? Her heart hammered furiously.

Scott shot her a glance that told her there would be a settlement later, but for the moment he made no denial that she was his wife. Instead he answered the officer's questions courteously and willingly; showed his driver's license and certain credentials which the officer inspected, then thanked them both and went away.

And then Scott stepped into the trailer and faced Sandy, his eyes blazing.

"And may I ask what you hope to gain by all this, my fine lady?" he snapped. "Just what sort of hocus-pocus is all this, anyway? What did you do back in Jacksonville to get the cops on your trail?"

Sandy shrugged, just as though her heart was not racing like mad. She pretended to be very airy and very casual about it.

"Oh, I suppose my guardian and my—er—fiancé are worried about me and are trying to check up on me. You remember I told you about running away from my own wedding?" she reminded him brightly.

"Sure. I remember. But I also seem to remember I told you I didn't believe a word of it," snapped Scott furiously.

Sandy shrugged. "I'm sorry you refuse to accept my word," she said haughtily.

Scott caught her by her slim shoulders and shook her by no means gently. "And now you're going to tell me the truth," he blazed. "What in blazes is this all about?"

"I won't tell you a single thing!" snapped Sandy just as hotly. "But I will get out of this trailer and go straight to the police and tell them I'm the woman they're looking for."

"Oh, no you won't!" said Scott sharply. "You spoiled that. I don't know just what sort of a mess you're in, but I won't be dragged into it. I'm down here on the first vacation I've had in ten years, and darned if I'm

going to have it spoiled by being dragged into some trouble with the police. I *would* have something like this happen to me. It serves me right for not flinging you out of the car back there in Jacksonville."

Sandy watched him with bright, interested eyes. She had been lying to him and it was, at the moment utterly impossible for her to tell him the truth. Not yet, anyway. Two or three days from now and it would be all right. She could tell him and everything would be all right. If *only* she could make him take her along for the next few days! The trailer could easily be transformed into two Pullman berths like in a speeding railway train. It would be quite as respectable as a train, and anyway, she knew she was perfectly safe with Scott. She was so certain of that, that the unconventional aspect of the situation troubled her not at all.

Scott said suddenly, "All right. You win. We'll make Deland and stop at a hotel for the night."

"Why?" asked Sandy innocently.

Scott stared at her, puzzled. "Why?" he repeated. "Because this is a trailer, and there is no guest room. And I refuse to spend an uncomfortable night in my roadster."

"But why should you?" protested Sandy promptly. "Look. A blanket—you've an extra one for I found it beneath the couch there—a blanket hung across from here to here turns the trailer into two completely equipped bedrooms. With all the privacy and respectability offered by a Pullman compartment."

Scott stared at her for a moment, frowning a little. "You're—well, you're not—unduly alarmed at the prospect? After all, you know, the situation is—well, scarcely—"

"Oh—you mean do I trust you?" asked Sandy sweetly. "Well, of course. Naturally! Otherwise I'd never have figured it all out that way."

Scott looked as if he couldn't decide whether to shake her again or

to laugh at her. But finally he laughed, with a little gesture of resignation.

"All right, you win!" he said finally. "You are really the most amazing, the most incredible person. There's no defying you, and I'm a sap to try. Like to come and ride up front? Or would you prefer your solitude back here?"

"Oh, I'd much rather ride up front. It's so much more cozy," said Sandy happily. She whipped off her apron, slid into her coat and stepped out of the trailer and into the roadster. And a few minutes later one might have seen a shiny new trailer, hitched to a sturdy looking roadster with two young people on the front seat, driving out of town and along a beautiful, shining, tree-bordered highway headed south.



HEY stopped for the night at a trailer camp along the famous Indian River. It was, of course, Sandy's first experience with a

trailer camp and she watched everything with eager, excited eyes. As they were having supper, several of their neighbors in the camp strolled past, greeted them with the easy friendliness that is an inalienable part of trailer-camp life. And after supper they sat outside and gossiped with their neighbors, while a great yellow disk of a moon heaved itself above the river and laid a tremulous golden light over the satin-surface of the water.

They were quite matter of fact about the blanket a little later that divided the interior of the trailer into two small, but complete bedrooms. It was, as Sandy had pointed out, quite as "respectable" and as conventional as though they had had compartments in a sleeping car, and Sandy fell asleep almost as soon as she was in bed.

The camp was astir early, and the scent of bacon and eggs and toast that

drifted in at the open windows from adjoining trailers awoke Sandy the next morning. There was a tiny bath in the trailer, but Scott had made use of the camp bath-house, and when Sandy had breakfast ready she found him outside the trailer, chatting with an elderly, white-haired man who, with his plump little dumpling of a wife was their nearest neighbor.

"I was just saying to mother last night," the old man greeted Sandy with a beaming smile, "that the one thing about living in trailer camps is that you don't often see young folks about. Except when they're on their honeymoon same as you and your husband here. We get kinda lonesome for young folks."

"That's very kind of you, Mr. Virginia," said Sandy, following the camp custom of addressing transient neighbors by the name of their state.

"I just hope you and your husband will be as happy and live together in peace and contentment as long as me and mother has," said "Mr. Virginia," and Sandy beamed at him happily, though Scott was brick-red and not entirely comfortable.

Before Sandy and Scott had finished breakfast, the trailer camp was on the move. A constant stream of voices, shouting "good-bys" and laughing; the sound of motors; of slamming doors.

"It makes you wonder why people ever want to live any other way, doesn't it?" said Sandy happily when she and Scott were once more on the road. "When I was a child, I used to envy the gypsies that came to camp every year in the woods on the hill. I never dreamed one day I'd be a gypsy—a gasoline-gypsy!"

Scott looked down at her and said curiously, "Tell me about when you were a little girl."

Willingly, Sandy did, and Scott laughed appreciatively at her spirited anecdotes, topping them occasionally with one of his own. And the day sped past and it was night again, and again

they parked in a trailer camp, and Sandy prepared supper while the moon rose and laid a silver-gilt radiance over the camp, and men and women talked and laughed in the ease and friendly companionship that is half the charm of life in a trailer.

It was the next morning that Sandy, while she was getting breakfast ready, saw Scott with a morning paper in his hands. Some enterprising newsman had driven out from the near-by town with a batch of Jacksonville and Miami papers and was doing a thriving business with them. Sandy saw Scott stop suddenly as he turned towards the trailer. He was holding the paper clenched in his hands and he was reading something on the front page that obviously held his attention riveted. Watching him, she saw his face was suddenly a little gray and set. As he came towards her, after a moment, the paper was crumpled in his two hands and his eyes were cold as he said briskly:

"I think we'd better omit breakfast and get started. We've—rather a long way to go today."

Sandy studied him for a long moment and then she said quietly, "May I see the paper, please?"

Scott thrust it behind him and said harshly: "I'd rather you didn't, if you don't mind. It's—nothing of any importance. Nothing you would care about reading. Can you have your breakfast while I drive? Good. Then we'll get going."

Sandy sat down in front of the little table on which she had spread a gay cloth and on which were peasant-pottery dishes and thin glasses and a shiny pot of coffee. The trailer lurched as the roadster settled down to movement and then swayed smoothly on its way.

Sandy was realizing that she knew nothing about Scott. That he might be anybody or anything. That what he had seen in the papers had obviously been something very unpleasant. She felt reasonably certain that

it had not concerned her for she knew that her guardian would go to almost any lengths to keep anything about her disappearance out of the papers. He would not have called the police in. He would have waited at least twenty-four hours for her to "come to her senses" and return; when she did not, he would call in highly paid and extremely discreet private detectives who would leave no stone unturned to find her, but who would do everything privately and stealthily, so that the newspapers and the police would not know. No, Sandy told herself, it had not been a story about herself that Scott had found in the morning paper. Her guardian would have seen to that.

But what had it been? Something that had made him go a little pale and his jaw set hard. Something that had made him feel that flight was absolutely necessary. For the first time, Sandy began to be frightened. And to realize the truth. She loved Scott with all her heart. No matter what he might have done; no matter who or what he might be, she loved him!

She tried to laugh to scorn any suspicions about Scott. They were absurd. Ridiculous. He had said he was on a vacation. Yet—why had he been so anxious to get rid of her? Normal young men with no reason for secrecy usually welcome the company of a pretty girl. Yet he had been almost insultingly anxious to get rid of her. Had only very reluctantly been persuaded to let her stay; and now he was rushing off without even stopping to eat breakfast she had prepared for him. There had been something in that paper that frightened Scott!

Sandy, rousing from her thoughts, was startled to realize that Scott had turned sharply aside from the highway and was traveling an old abandoned road. Why, suddenly, did he find it necessary to avoid main-traveled roads? It was only too obvious that for some reason he was trying to avoid being seen.

THE trailer came to a halt after about twenty miles of this sort of road. Sandy waited breathlessly. Scott came back to the trailer, closed the door behind him and faced her, his chin up, his eyes steady, his whole manner that of one who has slowly and painfully reached a decision from which he does not intend to deviate, come what may.

"Sandy, there's a little town just ahead," he told her almost grimly. "There's a Justice of the Peace there and we will not require any special license to be married at once. Will you marry me?"

Sandy gasped and sat down suddenly because her trembling knees refused to support her any longer. She stared at him with wide, startled eyes, quite sure that she had not really heard him.

Scott managed a faint smile as he added: "Oh, yes, of course. I forgot to say that I love you very much and that I can't imagine anything more terrible than having to live without you."

Sandy said, shaken, "But, Scott—oh, my dear, you don't know one single thing about me—who I am—"

"And you know equally as little about me," said Scott levelly. "But I thought we might sort of—get acquainted after we were married. That is, if you feel we need to be any better acquainted than to be in love with each other. That is, I'm in love with you."

"Oh, my dear," said Sandy in a little gust of a whisper. "I—adore you. I just discovered it a little while ago. But I can't marry you without telling you—about me."

"You don't have to, darling," said Scott quietly. "I know all about you."

Sandy gasped and her eyes flew wide. "You know—" she stammered faintly.

Scott nodded. "And it doesn't make the slightest difference to me, dear—do you understand? Not the slight-

est! And now—will you marry me when we get to that little town half a mile ahead?"

"Oh, yes!" stammered Sandy rashly, and the next moment she was in his arms, being held close and hard against him, and her face was lifted for the hard, eager downdrive of his kiss that seemed almost defiant. As though he tossed a challenge into the very teeth of fate and dared it to do its worst.

A plump, comfortable old man beamed happily on them when they presented themselves at his shabby little stucco bungalow and announced that they wanted to be married. It was over almost before Sandy realized what it was all about and they were back in the roadster, her slender third finger adorned by a handsome, worn seal ring that was so large she had to close her hand into a hard little fist to keep it from slipping off. Scott, beside her, about to release the clutch, looked at her. She held her clenched fist before her eyes and was looking down at the seal ring as though fascinated by it. And Scott, with a little soft chuckle that was in itself a caress, caught her close, raised the little fist to his lips, and then kissed her full on the mouth.

"Never mind, darling. We'll replace it with something more suitable at the next town," he promised her.

"I'd rather have this one," answered Sandy quite honestly. "Because it's one you used to wear yourself. Oh, Scott!" She looked up at him with shining eyes. "I can't believe it. I just can't!"

"Neither can I, sweet. But it must be so—we've got the 'marriage lines' to prove it," he told her tenderly and his jaw set hard. "I'd like to see somebody take you away from me now!"

The words stabbed her with fear. Take her away from him? Oh, no—no! She remembered again his expression when he had been studying the paper that morning. The curiously

grim, set look of his pale face, his cold, stern eyes. He had seemed almost like a stranger. And now—he was her husband! It was a glorious thought. But it was almost a terrifying thought, too, and she sat quietly beside him as they drove, her face turned away, her unseeing eyes on the scenery through which they were traveling.

They had returned to the new highway now. A bright, shining ribbon that connected the east and west coast, and there was considerable traffic. It kept Scott occupied so there was little opportunity for conversation. A fact they both faced with some relief. They stopped for a brief lunch at a hotel in a small town, rather than lose time by preparing it in the trailer. And it was almost dark when they drove into a trailer camp for the night.



Such is the rule in auto-tourist camps, Scott parked the car in front of the trailer office and went in to register and to pay his parking fee for the night. From where she sat in the roadster, Sandy could look into the small, brightly lighted office. There were three men there. One sat behind a desk, in his shirt sleeves, a big book before him. A book he turned towards Scott who leaned and wrote briskly. The two men who lounged in the office had a queer attitude of waiting, Sandy thought, and her nerves grew tense. As Scott straightened, one of the men rose and came over to him.

"She is my wife!" Sandy heard Scott say sternly. And her heart beat fast.

One of the men turned and came out of the office towards the roadster. Scott lunged after him, followed by the man who had questioned him. The three men reached the parked trailer at about the same time. The stranger looked up at Sandy and said grimly: "Well, I must say, Miss Wallace,



you've given us quite a chase. But we've found you at last."

"Yes," said Sandy thickly, her eyes swinging to Scott's with something like fear in them. "You've found me at last. And now that you have—what are you going to do about it?"

"You can't arrest her. I'll post any amount of bond for her and hire the finest lawyers in the country. She's my wife and I *dare* you to lay so much as a finger on her!" Scott blazed furiously.

The two detectives glanced at him, puzzled, their eyes narrowed a little. "Who's going to try to arrest her, fellow?" demanded the spokesman. "All we are supposed to do is tip off her family where she is and that she appears to be in good health. They've been plenty worried about her since she took a run-out powder on 'em. Her fiancé is doing some fancy agitating. And her guardian isn't doing much better."

Scott looked as though he had just had a savage blow in the solar plexus. He stared at Sandy, who stared back at him, wide-eyed, breathless.

"You're not—being hunted by the police for passing bad checks?" demanded Scott when speech was once more possible to him.

Sandy gasped and cried, "Goodness, *no!* Wherever did you get such an idea?"

"Out of the morning paper," said Scott grimly. "A pretty woman, smartly dressed, got away with a couple of sizable forgeries in Jacksonville and managed to escape. There was a report that she had been seen to hop into a trailer, believed driven by an accomplice."

"And you thought that was me?" gasped Sandy, wide-eyed.

"I know it sounds crazy as all get-out—but drat the luck, you wouldn't tell me anything about yourself and you *did* behave as though you had something on your mind," Scott managed his apology so that Sandy could only lean down and kiss him, her eyes

misty. "Can you forgive me, darling?" he pleaded, emboldened by her caress.

She caught her breath on a soft little chuckle of laughter. "If you can forgive me!" she confessed, with shining eyes. "I thought you'd seen something about yourself in the paper and that you were—some sort of law-breaker."

"And in spite of that you were willing to marry me?" marveled Scott.

"Why not? You were willing to marry me!" Sandy pointed out reasonably enough.

One of the detectives cleared his throat ostentatiously and said briskly: "I might as well get your uncle on long distance and relieve his anxiety, Miss Wallace—I mean, Mrs. Richardson. Where shall I tell him you'll be located?"

"Lot forty-three, this park, for the next couple of days," answered Scott happily, as he got into the roadster and drove off.

After they were parked, and while Sandy was joyously busy in the kitchen of the trailer, Scott parked the roadster and made things ship-shape for the night. It was not until they sat opposite each other at the small table that Scott stared at her, suddenly startled, and said, "Good grief, now that I come to think of it, who the dickens *are* you, darling?"

Sandy laughed radiantly at him and showed him her hand with the sealing tied securely in place by a string.

"Mrs. Scott Richardson—don't you remember? I'm your wife!"

There was only one answer to that and when Scott had made it satisfactorily and they no longer sat opposite each other but side by side, he remembered to ask, "Sure, I know. But before that—who were you?"

"Alexandra Wallace," she answered quietly, and waited, her eyes on his face, pleading with him to understand.

He stared at her, puzzled, frowning. "Alexandra Wallace, daughter of the tin-plate king? One of the richest girls in the world?"

She nodded, her two hands clinging hard to his. "I'm sorry, darling—do you mind very much? The money has never brought me any real, lasting happiness. We'll give it all away—endow a hospital or something. I don't care what. As a matter of fact, I've a suspicion that there isn't nearly as much money as people think. My guardian's been terribly anxious to get me married to his nephew and I suspect that it may be because my guardian wouldn't have to answer any embarrassing questions about why the estate has shrunk so terribly in the last ten years. So maybe there isn't so much money after all—do you mind my being Alexandra Wallace? I'd much rather just be Sandy Richardson!"

There was a suitable reward for that, too. And then Sandy, emerging a little from the fog of rapture that

held her, stared at him severely and demanded, "Now that I come to think about it—who the dickens are *you*?"

Scott chuckled and looked like a slightly embarrassed small boy. "Did you ever hear of the 'Masked Minstrel' on the radio?" he asked.

"Well, of course. He's one of the four most popular entertainers on the air—I'm crazy about him!" answered Sandy and stared at him, suddenly startled. "Do you mean *you're* the 'Masked Minstrel'?" she gasped.

He nodded, chuckling a little. Then his arms tightened about her, and he held her very close, his cheek against hers. "Darling," he said very low, "I love you so much! Do we have to talk any more?"

And Sandy, lifting her mouth for his eager kiss, said like the dutiful, adoring little wife she would always be, "Darling, of course not!"

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By Kay Meredith

**Y**OUR Looking Glass has been shopping in no-man's-land. I've combed the cosmetic counters and salons for new and exciting aids to beauty. And there's loads to tell you.

Everywhere I heard the same prediction about summer complexions. The light-toned, peaches-and-cream type with delicate shades of make-up will be the smartest. The sun-tan rage has gone into a decline. You won't have to sunbake your skin to a glowing bronze or coat it with dark make-up to be fashionable this year!

So when you do your summer beauty shopping, invest in a good sunburn preventive. Helena Rubinstein has a

new protective cream that's a dandy. It makes a good powder base for everyday use to keep your complexion fair. And a very light film of it will protect all parts of you that are exposed when you wear a bathing suit

or shorts and halter.

Front page beauty news is a permanent wave you can give yourself at home! A small box contains everything you need to put a permanent curl in your hair and complete illustrated directions on how to do the job. It takes eight hours for coarse hair and ten hours for fine hair. This home permanent wave started in Hollywood and now most department stores carry it. Its name is Endura. There's a new beauty

### Fashion Flashes

Shiny black straw sailor hats strike a jaunty note in the fashion parade. They're worn off-the-face when you have front curls to display.

Dressy hats are bedecked with flowers, cherries or ribbons. Some have streamers down the back.

Veils still reign, but they're up in back instead of down in front.

Favored colors are navy and white, black and white and cherry red, champagne to buttercup yellow, hyacinth blue and pastel or blush pink.

Linen comes out in stripes or prints for hot weather dresses.

Puffed sleeves, belted-in waistlines and full skirts, ending at the middle of the calf, feature some of the newest party dresses in taffeta, linen or stiff cotton sheer.

Silk coats have staged a comeback. Most of them are fitted in at the waistline and they flare moderately.

Capes continue strong, some silk, some lightweight wool. There are rectangular capes with squared shoulders and swing capes that flare or fall into "umbrella" pleats.

Twin flowers are new and smart. They may be worn in both lapels of one's cape or coat. Or they may be tucked under the chin when these wraps are collarless.

cream made of milk. Ever since Cleopatra bathed in milk, it has been reputed to have unusual powers to beautify the skin. This new face cream is made of oils extracted from fresh milk. A dairy company first made it and delivered it with the milk. It became so popular that it's now sold all over the country in drug and department stores. Creme of Milk, as it's called, is used for cleansing, lubricating and as a make-up base.

The latest news in perfumes is that there's a big revival in lavender. It's been divorced completely from "old lace" and the idea that it's "just right for Grandmother, but not for me." The new rage for lavender started with young girls who found its delicacy and daintiness pleased men who were tired of ultra-sophisticated scents.

Carnation perfume is stealing the show from gardenia which held the center of the stage in floral scents for so long.

Perfumed eau de Cologne and toilet water grow more and more popular, especially for hot weather. It's so refreshing to spray or splash your scent directly on your skin, instead of putting it on a drop at a time! And of course these lighter forms of perfume are much less expensive than the concentrates. There's a new form called "Composé de parfum" that's stronger than toilet water but not as strong and not nearly as expensive as perfume proper.

Now that we're on the subject of scents, I'm going to tell you my prize discovery for preventing unpleasant under-arm odor. It's a cream called "Taboo" that checks perspiration better than anything I've ever used. Don't let anyone tell you it's harmful to check perspiration under your arms. It isn't. You simply divert the perspiration to other parts of your body where it evaporates quickly so it doesn't have time to cause odor.

Your Looking Glass, being frankly feminine, couldn't possibly go on a shopping tour without bargain hunt-

ing. So I made the rounds of five-and-ten cent stores. I found plenty of beauty bargains to help you look your loveliest on a minimum of money.

I discovered some of my favorite face creams and lotions in attractive small-sized jars, bottles or tubes. It's a fact that you frequently get more for your money in these ten-cent store packages than when you buy full sizes. They are bought in such large quantities that the manufacturers can afford to sell them at a very small profit. Besides, the makers look upon these small sizes as advertising, like samples, to get women acquainted with their products. They've told me so, and I've checked up by measuring.

Besides being bargains, these small sizes of well-known beauty aids are wonderfully convenient to take on vacation trips, week-end jaunts or to keep in a desk drawer at the office. You can get an attractive box or a little waterproof cosmetic bag and make yourself a complete beauty travel kit, just as convenient as the fitted bags that cost a fortune at exclusive beauty salons.

Some of the best liquid fingernail (and toenail) polishes I ever found came from the five-and-ten. They go on just as smoothly and last just as long as other polishes that cost ten times as much. There's always a variety of smart shades, as the makers of low-priced polish keep up with the fashion trends just as much as the exclusive beauty specialists. And you can mix two shades of the same brand to get a color that you feel is just right for you without destroying the quality. I know a girl at a fashionable beauty salon who does just that, rather than having manicures that would cost her nothing. And her nails always look lovely!

As for make-up, I found a million dollar lipstick in a five-and-ten cent store. It's swivel style, like expensive lipsticks, and a lovely smooth consistency that goes on easily and lasts just as long as could be expected of

any lipstick, whatever the price. I found a shade that was perfect for me, and you probably would, too, because there's a vast variety. Its name is "Irresistible" and it certainly deserves to be called just that. Compact rouge by the same name is smooth and flattering, too.

I noticed small boxes of face powder of some of the best brands. When it comes to face powder, it pays to be careful in your selection. The quality of your face powder has a great deal to do with keeping your skin clear and fine-textured. So, if you buy it at the five-and-ten, pick a little box of one you know rather than a larger quantity of some cheaper brand.



AND don't hunt for bargains in choosing perfumes. You'll make a better impression if you use no perfume at all than if you use one that's outright cheap.

There are excellent bath powders and talcum powders and hand lotions to be found at five-and-ten cent stores.

But it's a good idea to select the ones that are very mildly scented so they won't clash with the perfume that you want to be the real expression of *you*.

In my shopping around, I've heard a lot of theories about harmonizing your make-up with your clothes. I'm going to tell you the one that I think is right. Choose the face powder that blends best with your own skin tones. Select eye make-up (mascara, eyebrow pencil and eyeshadow) to accentuate the color of your eyes. These remain the same, whatever color you wear. Only your rouge and lipstick need to be harmonized with your costume.

You can wear any shade of rouge and lipstick with black, navy blue or white. The ones with orange tones are best when you wear yellow or hyacinth blue. Any shade of red, purple, wine or pink calls for rouge and lipstick with purplish tones. Brown tones in make-up are going out with the decline of the sun-tan era.

Your Looking Glass will be back with you next month, and there will be lots more news to tell you about fashions and beauty then.

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I liked best the following stories in the June issue \_\_\_\_\_



# Temperamental Lover

*Complete Novelette*

*By Doris Knight*

It was all part of the stage set, because Randy was bringing home another of his fraternity brothers for dinner. Joyce should have known. Should have guessed! It had happened often enough in the past. But this man was different. He was the nicest chap Joyce had ever seen. That made her mother's obvious match-making all the more odious.

"Hello," said the tall young man, looking at Joyce with distinctly approving eyes. She liked his voice. It was deep and resonant and it awakened strange little echoes in Joyce's heart. "Seems to me I remember my mother being terribly annoyed with me because I tramped across the kitchen floor when her cake was in the oven and the cake fell." The young man eyed the oven with a speculative eye. "No chance of that happening now, would there be? I'd hate to have you annoyed with me."

Mrs. Lathrop's famous laugh rippled out. "My dear boy, Joyce is just beginning to make her cake. Can't you see all the materials spread out on the table? You'll have a chance to sample her cooking at luncheon. This is cook's day out. And now, come along and meet my other two girls."

## CHAPTER I

"**A**ND this is my little girl, Mr. Harte. This is my baby. She's the domestic one of the family. Our little housekeeper. I'm sure I don't know what we would do without her if some man tries to steal her from us one of these days."

Joyce felt her very toes curl with shame. She understood now why her mother had insisted that she put on the orange smock that made her dark eyes look darker than ever and her white skin seem whiter by contrast. She knew why her mother had asked her to make one of her famous cakes.

*The kissing was a breathless sort of business.*

*It Wasn't the Touch of a Wand that Transformed This Cinderella; It Was the Touch of a Young Man's Lips*



The young man shook his head. "If you don't mind," he said, "I think I'll camp right here." His eyes twinkled at Joyce. "That is, if your daughter doesn't object to my staying."

Joyce didn't object at all. Mrs. Lathrop rustled away ecstatically. Joyce quite distinctly heard her say to Verne, "I think he likes her! Oh, wouldn't it be wonderful if he is really interested!"

Joyce's face went crimson with shame. She marched over to the kitch-

en door and she shut it with a bang. "This is a crazy household, Mr.— Mr.—" She bogged and came to a complete stop.

"Mr. Nothing! I'm Alex Harte, and I hate being called mister by people I like," said the surprising young man, settling himself leisurely in the one comfortable chair in the kitchen. "What's your name?"

"Joyce." For the life of her, Joyce couldn't add anything else. She bent over the cake materials. She mixed

the cake ingredients together any which way, and she only sifted the flour once. Because the nicest man she had ever met, was talking to her as if she were the nicest person in the world.

He didn't say any of the things that other men had. He didn't say, "How does it seem to belong to this marvelously talented family?" He didn't rave about Doreen's acting or Verne's music or her father's genius at designing public buildings, nor did he quote from her mother's latest poem, nor predict Randy's great future. No. He talked about Joyce herself, the odd one in the family without any special talent.

"Don't look so cut up over what your mother said," he grinned at her. "I know you aren't one of those girls out to marry. You needn't look so stricken. It doesn't matter at all, you know." His grin broadened. "And it won't scare me off."

"What?" gasped Joyce, letting one of the eggs slide into the batter without any beating at all.

"I don't scare easily," went on Alex. "Not when I meet a girl as pretty as you."

Joyce made herself smile. "Your line's a fast one," she said casually, but her heart was thudding like mad.

"Not a line," commented Alex, looking calmly out the window at the Sound. "I always knew that when I fell in love, it'd be with a crash. And I have. I can still hear myself falling."

He got up and prowled across the room towards her. Joyce flopped the rest of the batter into the third layer tin with vast disregard for smoothing it down around the edges and seeing that each layer was equal. She wondered if this amazing chap were going to take her in his arms then and there. And she felt a delicious confusion at the very thought.

But he didn't. He just leaned over her shoulder and he read the title of the cake she was making from the cook book. "Him," he said. "Cinderella

cake, eh? Odd name for a cake. How come?"

His tweed-clad arm was brushing her shoulder. Joyce could smell pipe-smoke and shaving powder. She slammed shut the book in sudden panic at her own agitation. "It's mother's cook book," she said. "When her poetry doesn't sell well, mother writes cook books. All the cakes have fancy names. So has everything else."



HE didn't add that she made the Cinderella cake most often because it seemed so appropriate. Verne and Doreen were such beauties. They were so talented. They got all

the attention. Unless she went with the family, Joyce never went anywhere. She was twenty years old, and she'd never been kissed. She felt that was the most horrible disgrace that could happen to a girl. And yet she knew she was pretty.

She had big brown eyes and her dark hair curled naturally, and she wasn't too tall and she wasn't thin, neither was she too stout. She wore pretty clothes and she wasn't a dub at talking. But when Doreen swept into a room with her burnished crest of glorious hair and her thrilling voice, men stopped looking at Joyce. Verne had dead-white skin and dead-black hair and eyes like saucers. She had a figure like those in the underwear ads in magazines and when she had a violin tucked under her chin, and was playing like an angel, Joyce could creep out of a room absolutely unnoticed by any man.

"I like the way your hair grows down on your forehead in a widow's peak," said Alex, watching her shove the cake into the oven without first testing the oven to find out the temperature. "I think you're the prettiest girl I've ever seen."

Joyce slammed the oven door. "You haven't seen my sisters yet," she said. But she felt buoyant, all at once. As



if she were a leaf being swept along before a gale. She thought to herself: "It's come! I'm in love. It's a wonderful feeling. No wonder mother's always been keen for me to get in love. No wonder Doreen's always falling in love. It's grand! It's—exhilarating!" Her eyes sparkled as she bent over the making of the frosting. Her breath came fast.

Alex looked at her. "You like me as much as I do you," he said calmly. He reached across the table and he caught her arm and drew her towards him. Joyce found herself trembling horribly. Yet she wasn't afraid. "I always thought it would be like this," said Alex contentedly, sweeping her into his arms.

Joyce felt the mad beating of his heart. Her face was just heart-high, she found out. Alex lifted her up in his arms and kissed her. The kissing was a breathless sort of business. For an instant, his lips trembled against hers, then they steadied, and grew masterful and compelling. They kept on kissing Joyce till the tips of her fingers tingled and she felt like fainting and she knew that a kiss was the most wonderful thing in the world, and that she belonged to Alex Harte forever and ever.

And then Doreen came sweeping into the kitchen. She said, "Oh!" in her throaty voice, and stood quite still. She was wearing a gold sports frock and she looked divine. Joyce stood away from Alex and shivered. She felt as if she would die if Alex looked love at Doreen, the way all the rest of the men did.

Alex said lightly, "You really ought to knock before you come in rooms!" He put his arm about Joyce's shoulders. "I'm in love with your sister," he said calmly. "Do you mind?"

"Good heavens, no," said Doreen. "I only came out to tell Joyce that father wants his lettuce-and-carrot salad instead of a dessert, and Randy isn't eating any chicken. He's a vegetarian this week. And Verne is afraid she's

gaining an ounce, so she's just going to have orange juice. And I think I'd best have slices of lemon on my usual fruit salad because I feel a wee bit hoarse, and you know my play is moving to the Garfield Theatre to-morrow. I must be at my best."

Joyce threw back her head and laughed for sheer happiness. Alex wasn't looking at Doreen as if she were an angel from heaven. He looked straight through her, in fact.

"My family are all geniuses, Alex," Joyce said. "They always want funny things to eat. All geniuses do, it seems. That's why we can't keep a cook."

Doreen lingered. "You're awfully good-looking," she said speculatively to Alex.

Alex grinned. "Just an optical illusion—because I'm in love with Joyce here," he said.

Doreen shrugged her lovely shoulders. "Good hunting, Joy!" she said and she went out.

A minute later Randy bounded in, tennis racquets in his hand. "Come along, Alex," he said impatiently. "Joyce'll never get chow ready if you don't leave her alone. Come on out and try our courts. They're pretty good."

"Don't want to go," said Alex. "Want to stay right here!"

But Joyce smiled tremulously at him. "Run along," she said. "You're too distracting around here. And you won't get any lunch if you don't leave me all by my lonesome."

Alex got up reluctantly. "Driven out of paradise," he complained. "My name ought to be Adam. I don't see why I have to go, but since I do, remember that I just love to eat. I'm not dieting. I don't want any raw salads. I adore chicken smothered in butter gravy and I intend eating half that cake!" He took the heavier racquet from Randy and they went out together.

**J**OYCE went on getting lunch in a flutter. She could see the tennis courts from the kitchen window. Alex

was like poetry of motion on the court. He was so tall and so blond and so bronzed. Joyce thought to herself: "And he's not a genius. Thank God, he's not a genius!" She remembered some of the other men Randy had brought home from college. Long-haired poets, interior decorators, actors, musicians.

"Thank heaven, he's just a regular person!" thought Joyce contentedly. "I'm so sick of geniuses. I'm so weary of hearing the chatter of the stage and books and music. It'll be heaven to forget that there are such things as geniuses in the world."

She was thinking that as she set the dining-room table and surveyed the living-room through the archway. She had to admit that it was a beautiful room. Only a genius like her father could have designed it. It was thirty feet long by twenty feet wide. It had a huge fireplace at one end and a balcony reached by romantically twisting steps at the other end. The wood was mahogany, unstained and hand-rubbed, and glowing with high-lights. The floor was polished teakwood. A cinnabar cabinet at one side of the room contained rare treasures brought home from the far parts of the earth by Joyce's father.

"Just the same, I'd rather have a simpler and homier place," said Joyce aloud, not even knowing that she spoke.

A man got up out of the big white leather chair that was as big as two ordinary easy-chairs. He had been completely hidden from view. "I think so, too," he said. "All this makes me feel like being in a museum. It's pretty, all right, but not real enough. Too much like a stage set. These bric-a-brac things must be the devil and all to dust, too!" He glared at the three-centuries-old cinnabar cabinet which her father had brought home from China, as he spoke.

"Oh, it is!" agreed Joyce. She had always been shy and ill-at-ease with men. But with Alex's kiss still tin-

gling on her lips, and the feel of Alex's arms still around her shoulders, she felt as if she could fascinate anybody. She saw that this chap was young and brown-haired and sturdily built. He had the look of being dependable and thoroughly nice. But not very exciting.

"It must be a crazy household to work for—all these nuts who go in for the arts. Mad set, I'd say."

Joyce blinked—and suddenly understood. He had taken her for the maid! A natural enough mistake, since he had seen her making many trips back and forth to the kitchen. Before she could open her mouth to set him right, Verne came in.

Verne was wearing a vivid shade of orchid that made her raven-black hair startlingly dark, and her white face more pallid than ever. "Oh, Bert!" she cried. "Why didn't somebody tell me you were here?" To Joyce's amazement, Verne's voice shook a little and her breath came fast. Could Verne possibly be attracted by this rather ordinary chap? Verne, who had been sought after by dukes and millionaires?

"I banged with that fancy knocker on the front door," said Bert, explaining carefully. "Nobody came, but the door opened of its own accord, so I came on in. I've just been waiting in here." His voice was a shade plaintive. "Your maid came along a minute ago and I was just going to ask her where you all were."

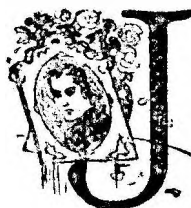
"My maid?" echoed Verne blankly. Then she understood. She glared at Joyce as if the mistake were hers. "This is my *sister*, Joyce," she said.

"Your sister? Oh, I am sorry!" He looked so contrite that Joyce was quite touched.

"I don't mind," she said. "Not in the least. I'm not one of the genius-Lathrops, you see. I just bake cakes and cook and go generally domestic." She sniffed. "Good heavens, I think I smell the chicken burning." And she darted off.

The chicken was quite all right, however. Joyce had known that from the beginning. But she felt she had to get away by herself, to digest a new sensation. The man named Bert hadn't stopped looking admiringly at Joyce when Verne came into the room! In fact, he looked more admiringly than ever. That was the second time today that this miracle had occurred.

Joyce went over to the little mirror perched over the green enamel sink and looked into its depths. No. She was the same person men had been in the habit of passing by, like part of the furniture. She hadn't changed at all. Except, perhaps, for the sparkle in her eyes and the heightened color in her cheeks. Yet two men had gazed admiringly at her.



**J**OYCE was breathing fast as she touched the Chinese gong which gave forth a silvery chime and was the summons for luncheon. She felt that anything might happen on an exciting day like this! She almost prayed that Alex had meant the nice things he had said. And most of all, that he had meant that kiss!

The lunch was divine. Everything turned out beautifully. Alex had two helpings of the chicken and dumplings.

"Swell cake!" said Bert Adams, blinking at Joyce.

Alex agreed with Bert extravagantly. "Best cake I've ever eaten," he said. Then he added, "I watched Joyce make this cake." His eyes smiled straight into Joyce's eyes, and a lovely little tremor went over her. "Maybe that's why this cake was so extra-special," he added softly.

Doreen said carelessly: "Oh, Joyce's cakes are always perfect. You needn't take any credit to yourself, Alex."

After dinner, Joyce and Alex went off by themselves. They climbed into the Nile green canoe that lay on the

beach in front of the house and paddled out into the Sound. After awhile, Alex laid the paddle across the canoe and leaned his elbows on it, letting the canoe drift along. "I always thought I'd know the one girl for me, once I saw her," he said quietly. "I was right."

Joyce's heart began to thud at an alarming rate. She sat motionless, looking at the way Alex's unconsciously clenched fists whitened along the knuckles. There was no mistaking the fact of his sincerity.

"I met you for the first time, two hours ago—or maybe it was three," he went on. "That doesn't matter. It took me exactly three minutes to make up my mind that I wanted to marry you. That if you wouldn't have me, life was going to be an empty business for me from now on. Anybody with any sense would keep still and wait and get you liking me, bit by bit. But somehow, I don't want it to be like that. I want you to love me—tumultuously—the way I love you. I want you to say 'yes' to a proposal made by a man you've only known three hours. Would you—could you—marry me, Joyce dear?"

Joyce felt breathless and trembling and horribly alive, all in a minute. Twice she had to try, before she could speak. "I—I hope we both love watching sunsets and going to the theatre and the smell of gardenias and looking up at leafy green trees—because if we don't, one of us will have to learn in the years before us." Her voice was very husky, but she managed to keep it steady.

A wonderful look came into Alex's face. He seized the paddle. He paddled like mad to the nearest landing—which proved afterwards to be a mile from home. He got out and he lifted Joyce out bodily.

She gloried in his strength, even as she cried: "Put me down, Alex! What if some one should see!"

"Let 'em!" cried Alex masterfully, as he bent his head to hers. "They'll

just see a man kissing his fiancée! No law against that, I hope!"

Joyce thrilled to his kiss. She adored him. She had never been so happy in her life. She felt as if she were in the middle of a beautiful dream. She kept being terribly afraid that she was going to wake and find it had all been a mirage and that Alex had vanished in the morning light.

They walked along, hand in hand like two children. They laughed a great deal, at everything and nothing. They began sentences and forgot what they had meant to say, in the manner of lovers from time immemorial. They told snatches of their early lives, eager to share each other's every thought.

At tea-time, they came to a charming little place where tea was served in a rose-covered arbor. They had the arbor to themselves and the fragrance of the roses was almost overpowering. Joyce poured the tea and blushed delightfully when she had to ask Alex how many lumps of sugar he took.

"I ought to be getting home to make dinner," said Joyce at last, dreamily.

"Can't the family get along without you, just this one evening?" begged Alex. "I want this wonderful engagement day to last forever."

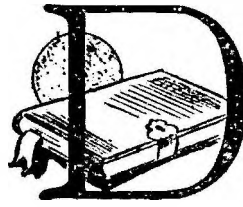
So Joyce went in and telephoned to her mother and told her that she and Alex were going to the movies and that they had eaten so much tea they had no appetite for dinner.

Alex found a garage down the road and they hired a car to take them to Rosedale. They went to the movies and saw a very sentimental picture.

"Let's not tell anybody we're engaged. Not for a few days," said Joyce suddenly as they came out of the theatre. "I want this—this wonder of being engaged all to myself for a little while."

Alex looked disappointed, but he nodded. "All right," he said. "Just as you say."

## CHAPTER II



DOREEN was in the middle of some of her impersonations when they came into the house. "Don't stop," said Alex, so Doreen went

on. Alex and Joyce sat there and held hands under the cover of the twilight-like glow that the imitation street-lamps gave in the living-room. They thought no one saw them, but Verne noticed and gave a little sigh of relief and drew a bit nearer to Bert Adams. And Mrs. Lathrop saw and nudged Mr. Lathrop triumphantly. Only Doreen was indifferent. She was deep in her art.

A moment later, when Doreen had finished her last impression of the latest star of tragedy, Joyce had a shock.

Bert said in his prim, precise voice: "I'm sorry. Hate to break up this nice party. But I've got to be getting back to town. I'm with Towne, Thorp and Adams, real estate and insurance, you know. It's up to the junior partner to be on the job bright and early." He looked around. "Anybody else going up to town? I've got my car and there's lots of room."

"Thanks. I'd be glad of a lift," said Alex.

Joyce gave a choked little cry. "But—I thought you were staying," she said blankly. "I thought you came up with Randy from Princeton for the week's holiday. Aren't you taking the summer course, too?"

Alex grinned. "No, gal. I'm out in the world on my own. My college days are two years behind me. And I've got to see a client first thing in the morning. It's important that I make this sale." He dropped his voice to a whisper. "Now, especially." He squeezed Joyce's hand meaningly. "I'll be down on the five-o'clock train tomorrow in time for dinner, if I may."

"Yes. You may!" whispered Joyce, her eyes starry.

Bert shook hands with Joyce and his fingers lingered against hers. "If I got invited down for dinner to-morrow, I could drive Alex down," he grinned.

Verne was upstairs, looking up some new music in her cabinet. Joyce said, "I'm sure Verne would love to have you come."

Bert said: "I don't want this invitation to come from Verne. I want it to come from you. Would you be glad if I came to dinner, Joyce?"

Joyce was so startled that she almost gasped, but she said, "Why, yes, of course. Come, by all means."

When Bert turned away, satisfied, Alex took both Joyce's hands. "I'm jealous as heck!" he whispered wonderingly to her. "Gosh, I'm in love with you, sweet!"

The words made Joyce's breath catch in her throat. That morning, she hadn't known that Alex existed. Now, he was her very life! She watched him get into the car with Bert. She waved to them both, impartially, but she was saying, "Darling, darling, darling!" to Alex in her mind.

She wondered what business Alex was in as she turned to go back into the house. Insurance probably, she conjectured, because that was what Bert did. She hurried upstairs before anyone could stop her, wanting to be alone, to think about the wonderful love that had come to her.

She went into her room and shut the door behind her. It was quite dark, but she did not light the bedside lamp. Instead, with the ease of long practice, she groped her way across the room to the window seat and sank down. She was thinking: "Oh, how thankful I'll be to get out of this atmosphere of cleverness. To be just a plain person, with a plain husband, who isn't a genius. Only, of course, he isn't plain. He's the most wonderful, marvelous man in all this world."

The door opened noisily. "You here, Joyce?" called Verne's voice. The light came on with dazzling brilliancy. Verne stood there, clad in silk pajamas of a dead black, edged with a wide orange border. Mules of bright purple dangled dejectedly from her small feet. Her whole body was limp with misery. Her face was wet with tears.

"Darling!" Joyce jumped up. She ran to her sister. "Whatever is the matter?" She put her arms around Verne's shoulders. Verne shrugged her aside.

"Go away from me," she said. "I am miserable. I want to die. I'm twenty-two years old and life is over for me."

Mentally, Joyce added another year to that age. Doreen was twenty-five. Verne was twenty-three. Randy was twenty-two. Joyce herself was twenty.

"Why whatever has happened?" Joyce stared at Verne.

Verne threw herself across the bed in an abandonment of grief. "I'm in love for the first time in my life!" she cried dramatically. "And you have stolen him from me. You, my own sister."

"You don't mean Bert?" gasped Joyce, light breaking. "Why, Verne—he's not your type. He's ordinary. He hasn't any genius about him."

"So—you call him by his first name, do you? And you've just met to-day!" Verne sat up with a bounce. "This is more serious than I thought."

Joyce was getting annoyed. "Don't be ridiculous," she said crossly. "I don't want your Bert and you're just imagining things."

"You flirted with him all during luncheon," Verne insisted.

"I didn't flirt with anyone. He spoke to me and I had to reply, didn't I? One person in our mad family of geniuses has to have some manners," she snapped.

"Of course, darling. You're quite right. And I see you don't care a snap of your finger about my Bert!" Verne was talking now with that imitation French accent she had once heard a

famous prima donna use. "You like that so-nice big blond Alex who had eyes for nobody else but you. Is it not so?" She wiped her eyes and beamed at Joyce.

Joyce said, "Stop acting like an idiot and get out and let me get some sleep!"

Verne kissed her and went off, and with a grim face Joyce locked the door. She flung off her clothes and got into bed. A ray of moonlight shone across the bed. That same moon was shining on Alex's bedroom, wherever he was. She had a moment of panic when she thought how little she knew about Alex. She didn't know where he lived or what profession he followed, or much of anything about him. Except that she loved him. Oh, how she loved him!

She went to sleep, to dream about a calm, ordered existence, with Alex coming home every night from work to a well-cooked meal in a spotlessly clean little home. One of those houses that Joyce's artistic father raved against, and called, "eyesores" and "abominations." Little plain houses with no tricky gadgets nor funny curlicues about them. Joyce smiled happily as she slept.

The next thing she knew, it was morning and Mrs. Lathrop was smiling down at her. "Look what just came by special messenger!" she cried, holding out a big florist's box.

Joyce sat up with a bounce, sleep forgotten. In mad haste she tore open the box. Roses were inside. Long-stemmed red roses. There was Alex's card. On the back was written, "I love you, sweet. Can't come down tonight. Must close this deal. It's important to me. *You know why.*" That was underlined twice.

Mrs. Lathrop beamed at Joyce. "I told you the young man liked you," she said as she rustled away in her trailing morning dress.

Joyce buried her face in the roses. Her eyes were starry; her cheeks crimson. Alex loved her! He had

written it out on a card! Somehow, seeing the words written like that made everything so much more real. She was heartbroken that he was not coming. But she liked it, too. Because that showed he was a business man. Not like her father who was sometimes affluent and sometimes broke.



**B**ERT ADAMS came out that evening. He didn't seem to mind the fact that Verne had got an engagement to play at a concert in town. He said, surprisingly enough, "Yes. I knew she wasn't going to be here. It wasn't Verne I came to see. It was you."

Joyce gasped. She couldn't quite believe her ears. Cinderella, with two strings to her bow! Incredible! She made an excuse to slip out into the kitchen to think things over. She did something she had never done before. She opened the oven door to see how the new Cinderella cake was getting along instead of peering through the glass in the oven door. The middle of the cake went down with a little sighing sound. Joyce closed the door carefully and turned away, biting her lips. It seemed like an omen, having the cake fall that way. A bad omen.

Mrs. Lathrop was talking to Bert in the living-room when she came in to call them to dinner. "Joyce is a marvelous little cake-baker," she was saying. "She's never had a failure with a cake. Never."

Joyce said drily, "There seems to be an exception to every rule. The top went phutt! Sorry! I'm filling up the cavity with icing. Excuse it, please!"

Mrs. Lathrop murmured archly, "My little girl must be in love, I'm afraid, if she fails on a cake."

Bert looked quickly at Joyce. It never occurred to her that he might think Mrs. Lathrop was referring to him. Her whole heart and mind and

soul were filled with thoughts of Alex. There was room for nobody else.

Mr. Lathrop was very chatty at dinner. He was sure he was going to win the prize in the competition for the best designed school-building. Randy had a lot to say, too. He had an idea for a new essay which he thought the best he had ever had. "By the way, where's Alex? I thought he was coming down to-night," he said, between mouthfuls.

"Alex had to work to-night," said Joyce, coming out of a blue study. Just saying his name made her heart beat faster.

Randy nodded. "Oh, yes. The sale," he said. "He told me about that. Means a lot to him. If he lands it, he'll be made."

Mrs. Lathrop smiled archly. "He sent our little Joyce the most *beautiful* bouquet of roses. Where are they, Joyce? I imagined you'd bring them down to the dinner table."

Joyce just smiled vaguely. She had no idea of bringing down her beloved roses. They were hers. Hers alone.

Bert said, "This is the best dinner I've ever eaten in all my life. It's a better dinner than my mother cooked, and she was considered the best cook in our village." He spoke solemnly. His fulsome praise grated on Joyce a little.

"I—" she began.

Just then the doorbell rang. "Maybe that's Verne. She may have decided she didn't want to play at the concert, after all," murmured Mrs. Lathrop calmly. "She wasn't in the mood. Go and see who it is, will you, Joyce?"

Joyce went. She knew, even when she saw his shadow on the door. It was Alex. With quickening breath, she flung wide the door. She made a choked little sound in her throat that was meant to be a greeting, then she was caught up bodily in Alex's arms. His lips went down hard on hers in one of those tumultuous kisses that

seemed to shut out the rest of the world.

Still holding her, Alex cried: "You're good luck, darling. I've made the sale. Oh, I could shriek and yell for sheer joy. Come on. Let's go out on the river where nobody can get us, and I'll tell you all about it."

Joyce reminded him, "We left the boat down by the Smithson's Landing. Don't you remember?"

"Right. Then let's go down there and get it and paddle back." Alex let her down, reluctantly.

"We've got company. Bert Adams is here," said Joyce demurely.

"Let him be!" Alex put his head inside the door and bellowed, "Hi, everybody! I'm kidnaping Joyce. We'll be back later!" Then he slammed the door shut and hurried her down the curving garden path with its crazy paving in all the colors of the rainbow.

Joyce gave a happy little sigh. She snuggled her arm against his. "I thought I'd die of loneliness this evening," she said shyly. "When I found out you weren't coming, the bottom went out of everything."

"That's how I felt about things, too," said Alex. "That's why I simply tore out here the minute I closed the deal." He released her arm long enough to go fishing about in his vest pocket. "Look!" he cried triumphantly. "I've always had my eye on this ring. It's the perfect engagement ring for a perfect girl. All I was waiting for was to find that perfect girl. You do like it, don't you, dear?" he broke off to demand, anxiously.

Joyce was looking at the lacy tracery of the ring and the flashing brilliancy of the stone. "I—I adore it," she said huskily.

He took her hand and slipped the ring on to her engagement finger. His own hands weren't very steady. Joyce liked the fact that his fingers trembled against hers. "Till death us do part," he said solemnly.



JOYCE felt the tears stinging the backs of her eyes. She was so happy, she wanted to cry. Gently, solemnly, he bent and kissed her, and his kiss was like a benediction. They were walking along the water's edge. It was just sunset. The day was dying in a splendid blaze of color. Hand in hand, they walked in silence, seemingly straight into the heart of the afterglow.

"Gorgeous colors!" said Alex huskily. "I wish I could catch that shade of amber. Burnt umber is the nearest shade to it. But that isn't quite right."

Joyce wasn't listening. She pointed to a little house set back from the river a short distance. It was one of the new, plain little houses her father so despised. "I'd like to live in a place like that!" she murmured dreamily, nestling her hand closer in his.

Alex looked at the house. "Awful place, isn't it?" he said calmly, showing that he, too, hadn't listened. "Don't see how anybody could live in an ugly house like that. No curves nor arches. All straight, ugly lines."

A cold little feeling went up and down Joyce's backbone. The same sort of feeling one has when danger threatens. "You're talking like my father now," she said lightly. "How do you know so much about curves and arches? If you're trying to please me, don't! I hate that sort of chatter. I get it all the time at home."

"Oh," said Alex. His voice sounded blank. It seemed to Joyce that his hand wasn't as warm against hers. He went on, after a breathless little silence. "But—of course I'd talk like that. I'm not putting on, or anything, just for the effect. After all, an artist and an architect aren't so far removed."

"An—artist?" whispered Joyce. Without realizing that she was doing

so, she pulled her hand away. Alex let her go.

"Of course," he answered in a puzzled tone. "Why? Do you object to my calling myself an artist? I am one, you know. I've been exhibited at all the big galleries. And to-night I sold my picture, 'Sylvan Music,' for two thousand dollars. That's the deal I've been working on for two months. I—"

"An artist!" cried Joyce hysterically. "A genius! Another one. And I thought you sold houses or insured peoples' lives. I thought you were a human being, instead of just—just another stuffed shirt!" Her voice broke.

The last rays of the setting sun had disappeared. A cold little wind sprang up and blew chill and dank, like a cold hand, across Joyce's face.

"But I thought that was one reason why you and I understood each other so well," Alex said. "Because you were brought up in a family of artistic people. Because—" He was plainly at a complete loss to understand.

Joyce cut in: "I hate artistic people! Understand? I hate them. I like plain, regular people who live plain, regular lives. I never would have fallen in love with you if I'd dreamed you weren't in business of some sort. I'm sick and tired of living in a pink house named 'Genius House,' and eating off lavender dishes. I want somebody who is real. Real! Do you understand? Not a make-believe person who dabbles in paints like a little boy with a paint-box!"

"What you want is a man like Bert Adams who never had an idea outside of his precious insurance business and whether it's going to rain or not!" Alex's temper had flared to match Joyce's own.

"Well, at least Bert is a man, not a—a play-pretend person!" stormed Joyce. She hadn't meant to say all these horrible things. It seemed to be somebody else outside herself who was saying them. Her heart hurt hor-



ribly. She felt as if she were fainting.

"And you don't consider me a man just because I happen to paint pictures for a living instead of digging ditches!" said Alex grimly. He faced her in the gloom of twilight. "Look here, Joyce, you can't mean you—don't love me, just because I have a job you don't fancy."

Joyce twisted her hands together. "It—it isn't a job at all," she whispered miserably. "I wish it were. Being an artist is like being a musician—or an architect. One day there's something to eat and the next you starve. There's nothing orderly and—settled about your life. Oh, I've had enough of artistic temperaments, and excitable people, and genius!" She was drawing little sobbing breaths now. "I thought you were a business man. I never would have fallen in love with you if I'd known!"

ALEX spoke very quietly. He seemed to have withdrawn suddenly. "Are you trying to tell me that you've stopped caring for me just because you've found out I'm an artist? Is that it, Joyce? Are you the sort of person who can turn love on and off, like a tap?"

Joyce faced him, desperately in earnest. "No. I'm not. I do love you. I'll always love you. But I won't marry you. I can't marry you. Not if you keep on being an artist. I—I just can't, that's all. Oh, Alex, couldn't you give up art and go into some real business? Couldn't you, for my sake?"

"I could!" Alex's voice was more aloof than ever. "As a matter of fact, my dad shares your same views. He owns a steel works. He'd like me to go in there as manager. He thinks being an artist is a silly sort of work for a man. He'd be delighted if I gave up art!"

Joyce caught hold of his arm. "Oh, please, won't you go into your father's business—to please me?"

Alex waited quite a long time. Then

he said, "No." Just that one word. Nothing to qualify it.

Joyce felt as if every vein in her body had turned to ice. Her heart hurt so terribly that she unconsciously doubled her fist and pressed hard against her breast. "I won't—marry you—if you don't give up being an artist," she whispered.

There was an even longer silence, then Alex said slowly, "I'm sorry, Joyce. It's an impossible thing you're asking."

Joyce took the glittering ring from her finger. In the darkness, the stone gleamed like a tear drop. She gasped, "It's a good thing we found out so soon, isn't it? Before we told anyone."

They walked back home. Neither of them had any heart for the romantic canoe. A thin moon was rising in the deep blue of the sky. Alex broke a long silence. "If you ever change your mind, send for me, Joyce. I'll keep on loving you—always."

He left her at the garden gate. Turning on his heel, he strode off without a backward glance.

Joyce tried to slip into the house without anyone seeing her, but Bert Adams rose up out of the depths of the big chair on the wide veranda. "I told your mother I'd wait out here till you got back," he said.

Joyce murmured something in reply. She was thinking of the things Alex had raved out at her when they first started home. "You want to marry a kitchen stove, not a man! You want to live the existence of a comfortable caterpillar!" Those two sentences kept beating against her mind like two little sharp hammers, battering at her heart.

"I like to do things right," Bert was saying. "I don't like hurrying things this way. But my dad is anxious for me to get settled in life. He's offered me a house, on a good lot, if I'll marry this year. He doesn't expect to live long, you see. That's why he's so keen for me to marry some nice sensible girl."

Joyce felt an hysterical impulse to laugh. She smothered the impulse.

"Your mother wants you to marry. She told me so. To-night." Bert got up. He was very serious. "I've always wanted to find a girl who could cook like my mother did. You can. I've always wanted a girl who was as sweet as she was pretty. You are."

"No, I'm not!" cried Joyce wildly. "I'm—I'm horrible." And she fled past him into the house and up the stairs to the sanctuary of her room, where she flung herself on the bed and wept till she was almost ill.

### CHAPTER III



MONTH later, she promised to marry Bert Adams. Joyce realized Verne couldn't have been serious about him else she wouldn't have accepted that concert engagement to tour South America for six months. And Bert knew Joyce was only fond of him—she told him she didn't love him—but he was satisfied, and sure that love would come later.

It was a horrible nightmare of a month. The days seemed like years. The nights were hideous. She kept waiting for Alex to come back. She kept haunting the post-box and hanging about the telephone. But no letter came and the telephone would not ring. No. Alex had meant what he said. He wasn't coming back till she sent for him.

But she couldn't send for him. If she sent for him, it meant—marrying a genius.

Bert's ring was a very modest affair. "When I make more money, I'll buy you a better one," he said. "But we want to save for our house right now. And we don't want to go into debt."

Joyce had a momentary, fleeting vision of a glittering diamond that must

have cost four times what this ring had. The perfect ring for a perfect girl, Alex had said. An extravagant ring—bought in the same, extravagant way her father bought things. Joyce found herself stifling a sigh.

The house Bert's father had given them had every convenience. The wall-paper in the front room was green. The wall-paper in the dining-room was tan. One bedroom was blue and one bedroom was pink. The bathroom was blue-and-white and so was the kitchen. There was nothing whimsical nor different in the house. It was just—a house.

When Bert and Joyce had been engaged for a month, they went to select the furniture. "I'm glad you don't like mad arty things," said Bert comfortably. He waved away the living-room set the clerk was showing them. "Too fancy," he said. Bert picked out the living-room set and the bedroom furniture. Joyce found that she was merely supposed to agree. She didn't mind. Nothing mattered. Nothing at all.

They bought all the furniture for the whole house that afternoon. Bert was very proud of the fact that they had been so speedy about selecting everything. "Some people make too much fuss over their houses," he said. "A house is just a place to live. Comfort. That's what's needed."

Joyce wouldn't let Bert come home with her that evening. She pleaded a headache and she slipped away alone.

She looked around at "Genius House"—Mrs. Lathrop had named it that—when she came into the living-room. She looked at it as if she were a stranger, seeing it for the first time. The rugs were lovely and soft-shaded and romantic. Bert had bought good carpet that would last a lifetime. Carpet with little creeping roses all over it. Joyce bit her lips. The cinnabar cabinet that was so hard to dust was a thing of beauty. The white chairs were startling, but lovely. The rounding doorway and the rounded arch of

the windows were graceful. The wood-work was a glorious color.

"Darling, I'm so glad you've come home!" Mrs. Lathrop came dashing into the room. Tears were running down her face unheeded. "Oh, where is Bert? We need him so much! Your father hasn't a cent in the bank and they won't take a check and we just can't have Randy in jail all night. Think of the disgrace! We'll just have to get hold of a thousand dollars right away. Lucky it isn't more!"

Joyce cried, "Mother, what are you talking about? What's happened?"

"It was Randy's latest essay. He got it printed in that awful paper that prints things nobody else will print. And now they've arrested him and the publisher and the printers and everybody. They're all in jail. And Randy will stay there. Unless we get a thousand dollars right away. Of course Bert will let us have it. It's just a loan. What is Bert's number? They'll let Randy out the minute we get the money—Oh, darling, I'm so glad you're marrying a sensible, steady young man like Bert!"

Joyce flew to the telephone and called Bert's number. He wasn't at home. His mother said he might be at the office. She telephoned there. A voice answered. The voice she had been hearing in her dreams, ever since the day Alex and she parted. Alex's voice!

She was so overcome that she could not speak for a minute. Her voice stuck in her throat.

"Yes. Hello," repeated Alex.

She managed to stammer, "I—I want to speak to Bert—to Mr. Adams, please. It—it's Joyce Lathrop."

"I know," said Alex's voice grimly. "Your Bert isn't here, I'm waiting for him myself. Going to get my life insured. Any message for him?" His voice was cold as ice. He sounded as if he were a perfect stranger. As indeed he was, thought Joyce forlornly to herself.

She was so excited and worried that

she blurted out the exact truth. "Randy's in—in jail!" she gasped. "He wrote one of those essays of his. They said it was—was scandalous or something. Mother is wild! We've got to get bail for him. Will—would you please tell Bert about it and ask him to go right around to the—the jail? Tell him how terribly urgent it is!" Her voice quavered into silence.

"Certainly. Sorry about Randy. I'll tell your Bert." His voice was terribly cool. There was only the slightest suspicion of an accent on the "your."

"Thank you." For some reason, Joyce did not hang up. She clung to the telephone with stiff fingers.

"Randy always was a fool for saying things he shouldn't. A genius, if there ever was one!" Alex was saying. "Always getting into fusses, geniuses are. Never staple and stolid and—and solid—" There was a little silence, then he went on, "By the way, Bert tells me you and he are being married next month. Allow me to congratulate you. I admire a person who gets exactly what she goes after.

"You wanted a kitchen stove and an unimaginative plodder to go with it. You ought to be very happy. And let me tell you that I think your house is a monstrosity! I never saw anything worse in all my life. I wouldn't live in it for a king's ransom." The phone banged down.

Joyce hung up, feeling like a person in a dream. Her knees were trembling strangely. She felt hot and cold by turns.

"I thought I was all over caring for Alex," she thought drearily. "And just hearing his voice makes me feel like this!"

"Did you get him?" asked her mother anxiously. "Will Bert get Randy out of jail?"

"Yes," said Joyce, answering at random. She hadn't an idea what her mother had said. She went up to her room and turned the key in the door and sat down on the edge of the bed.

After awhile Joyce became conscious of a great clatter and commo-

tion and chattering downstairs. She stood it as long as she could, then she went down. Verne had come home unexpectedly. She had got tired of her concert tour in South America, and had cancelled the rest of her engagements. For that reason, they fined her most of her pay, but she hadn't cared.

"Verne!" cried Joyce happily.

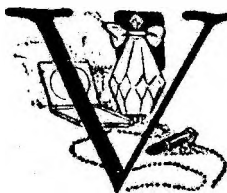
Verne greeted her in a chilly fashion. It was plain that she was still interested in Bert and resented the engagement ring on Joyce's finger. Mr. Lathrop asked questions. Mrs. Lathrop wept sentimentally.

Into this bedlam came three persons. Randy and Bert and—Alex!

When Joyce saw Alex, her hands flew to her hair, smoothing down the dark waves excitedly. Her cheeks went pink. She could hardly breathe.

Mrs. Lathrop transferred her tears to Randy. Randy looked very subdued. He got Joyce aside almost immediately. "Bert is a peach!" he said in an undertone. "He got me out in no time. And I won't have to stand trial or anything. I used to think Bert was pretty dumb, Joyce. I thought you should have fallen for somebody more exciting. Somebody like Alex, for example. But now I'm all for Bert. We need somebody stable in this family. Somebody who isn't an artist. I'll work like the devil and pay him back, of course."

Joyce was watching Alex. Alex was talking to Doreen. She studied his face, impressing each feature on her memory. Somehow, she had almost forgotten, in these two months, how Alex looked. And she mustn't forget. Not ever.



ERNE was greeting Bert in a warm fashion, but when he saw Joyce, he came right over.

"I've got a surprise for you," he said. "The furni-

ture people said they could get the stuff out right away. I had them set it

up in the house. They've got a special service, you know. Two interior decorators arrange everything. So—it's all done. Even to the drapes and curtains." He was beaming delightedly. "Not like some couples starting out, is it, Joyce?" he added. "Not like the way some girls have to work and fuss over their homes. Come along and see things. I can hardly wait."

Joyce said blankly, "You mean—the house is—is all furnished—by somebody else?" She couldn't quite take it in.

"Oh, no. Not by somebody else. It's the furniture we picked out." Bert sounded a little impatient at her denseness.

"I think that's a grand way to do things," cried Verne smiling up at Bert. "That's the way I'd love things done. May I come along to see the house, too?"

"Of course. We'd love to have you," replied Bert quickly.

Alex had been looking at Joyce with a queer expression in his eyes. "I'd like to go along, too. May I?" he asked, almost humbly.

Joyce wanted to hit him. "You won't like things. They aren't your taste!" she snapped. She was tired and worn out emotionally, and she hadn't had anything to eat.

"No. I'm curious to see what your taste will be," answered Alex, almost grimly.

They went over to the house, which was only four blocks away. Bert swaggeringly touched the electric light switch.

Alex blinked in the dazzling glow which ensued. Bert did not believe in inverted lighting, nor side lights. The chandelier in the middle of the room blazed with high-powered lights.

Alex grinned. "Why not get a spotlight?" he asked jeeringly.

"I am going to get one. For the front lawn. So Joyce won't be nervous if I should have to work late at the office." Bert was perfectly serious.

Joyce couldn't take her eyes off Alex. She had to fight to keep from

rushing over to him and throwing herself into his arms and begging him to hold her close forever. Now that she saw him again, nothing she had thought so important seemed to matter.

She looked around at the house she was to live in, and she found it hideous. It was everything she had thought she wanted—and now she saw it, she found she didn't want this type of house at all. The stiffly arranged furniture made her want to scream. The fact that it was all done—completed by an interior decorator—took away her sense of possession. This wasn't *her* house. Bert had picked out the furniture and the decorator had set things about. Anger welled in her heart that she had been thus deprived of the thing she had been looking forward to all her life. Building a home.

"I hate those curtains!" she said suddenly and sharply. "They're a hideous shade of dark blue. I won't have them."

Bert looked astounded. "Why—the man said they would wear better than anything else in the shop," he said, and his voice was reproving. "He said they would last a lifetime."

The repetition of that phrase was too much for Joyce. She stormed, "Who wants anything to last a lifetime? Don't you expect our ideas are ever going to change? Do you think I'm going to stay exactly the same person, always, with the same ideas I have now? Don't you imagine I'm going to grow up some day? Do you think I'm going to leave this—this centerpiece on that horrible shiny center-table always, in exactly the same way?"

She snatched up the offending machine-embroidered scarf and flung it on the floor at Bert's feet as she spoke. The scarf had been set under a blue china vase which had a dried and painted flower stalk in it. The blue china vase crashed to the floor also and smashed in bits. The hand-painted thing that had once been a flower,

blooming in a field, struck Bert across the face.

Bert looked at her and his eyes were grim. "I thought you weren't temperamental like the rest of the family," he said.

Joyce felt like a bad-tempered small child. She wanted to burst into tears and weep on somebody's shoulder. She was all the more ashamed that her outburst had taken place in front of Alex. He was looking at her with a queer expression on his face.

"Sorry!" muttered Joyce sullenly.

"I'll have them get us another vase to-morrow," said Bert. He spoke like a school-master reproving a bad pupil.

"Awful looking vase, anyhow," said Alex cheerfully. "No loss." He kicked the fragments under the corner of the rug and winked at Joyce. Joyce wanted to dance and sing and shout all at once. Bert and Verne went into the dining-room.

## CHAPTER IV



ALEX looked at Joyce.

"I've been doing some house-buying, too," he said casually. "I bought that old tumbledown house by the boat-landing a mile down the Sound. You know. The one where we left the canoe—once." His voice was elaborately casual.

Joyce felt her heart turn to ice. Did that mean that Alex was getting married? Married to some one else? She wanted to claw this unknown woman's eyes out! She wanted to die. "Are—are you getting married?" she asked in a small voice that shook.

"No. Not just yet," said Alex. "But it's well to be prepared. Don't you think so? And the house is a dream of a place. Infinite possibilities. It'll need a lot of making over, of course. But I'll wait and let my wife do the fixing up. No interior decorators in mine. I want to feel my home is m

own—not part of a shop-window display. And a darn' bad display, too, if you ask me!" He looked around at the living-room and shrugged. "Good thing you jilted me the way you did," he went on in a conversational tone. "I got straight to work on a new picture, instead of loafing about, and spending the money for the last one. Finished the picture yesterday and sold it to a charming young lady."

"She's probably in love with you!" snapped Joyce cattily, unable to keep back the words.

"Possibly," conceded Alex with tantalizing good humor. "Anyhow, I bought the house with the money I got for the picture. That is, I made the first down payment. When the lady I'm going to marry, says 'yes,' I'll get her to tell me how we should remodel it inside. If you don't mind, I think we'll copy your dad's house a bit. That was always my idea of the perfect home."

"I don't mind," said Joyce stiffly. "After all, it isn't my house."

"No," Alex pursed his lips. "I keep forgetting. This is your house, isn't it? The perfect home for a person who dislikes everything artistic."

Luckily, Bert and Verne came back just then, or Joyce might have said something she regretted.

Verne was clinging to Bert's arm. "It's a perfectly darling house," she gushed. "I'd love a place just like it. There's every labor-saving device. The place will practically run itself."

"You'd like it because you'd never be home anyhow," said Joyce, surprising herself at her own bad temper. "I love a house. I intend to stay in mine."

On that very bad note, they all walked home in silence.

Joyce got dinner hastily that night. She wasn't thinking what she was doing and she put salt in the whipped cream instead of powdered sugar, so the strawberries were ruined. And the creamed tuna she had hastily warmed was scorched.

Bert was quite nasty about everything. He complained dreadfully. It seemed he had been looking forward to one of Joyce's extra-special dinners.

Verne said abruptly, "I learned a very nice dish in South America. It just takes a minute." She got up without more delay and went into the kitchen. The dish took quite a while to prepare, it transpired. Verne's minute stretched into fifteen.

Bert slipped out of his chair. "I think I'll go see how Verne is getting on in the kitchen," he said.

Nobody paid any attention to his going. Bert was like that. When he was in a room, people ignored him. When he was gone, they promptly forgot him.

Suddenly Joyce thought to herself, "I can't marry Bert. I can't. I was mad to have ever thought that I could. You can't put one man out of your heart by taking on another. You just get yourself into a worse mess. I'll tell Bert to-night that it's all been a mistake."

Now that she had made up her mind, she felt as if a huge load had slid off her heart. She looked down at the tiny ring on her finger that seemed such a fetter. She went on thinking: "I must be kind to Bert when I tell him."

She decided to get it off her mind right away. She got up and tiptoed out of the living-room.

**R**ANDY barred her way, when she was almost at the kitchen door. "I couldn't thank Bert for going bail for me," he said in an embarrassed sort of way. "I felt so fussed up that I couldn't say a thing. But you tell him I appreciate what he did. Will you, sis?" He had hold of her hand now and was giving it a squeeze. "Of course, I realize he was doing it really for you. But it was fine of him, just the same. He had to put up a thousand dollars, you know. That was a lot of money for him to risk on me. It'll be years before I can pay it back. But of

course, since you're marrying him, it's all right."

"Since you're marrying him!" The words seemed to echo in Joyce's ears like a tocsin of doom.

"Oh!" she said weakly. She had forgotten all about Randy and his bail. All day long her dislike of Bert had been mounting—beginning with his high-handed buying of the furniture in the shops that afternoon, and leading up to the way he had ignored her at the new house. Then, seeing Alex again had convinced her that if she could not bring herself to marry him, she could not marry anyone.

And now, Randy was reminding her that Bert had gone his bail. That Bert had bought his right to consideration at her hands. "A thousand dollars," she echoed weakly. "That was a terrific lot of money."

Verne's South American dish, surprisingly enough, turned out beautifully. At ten o'clock that night, they all sat down to eat a highly seasoned affair of corn meal and eggs and tomato-sauce and cheese, garnished with olives.

The only one who did not eat was Joyce. She toyed with the food on her plate and wondered why Alex didn't go home. He seemed in not the slightest hurry to go. He joked with Doreen. He praised Verne's cooking, extravagantly. He was the life of the party. And he didn't seem the slightest bit broken-hearted.

Joyce thought to herself, "It's that girl! He's got over me. He's going to marry that rich girl that buys his paintings. She doesn't care if he's a genius or not. She doesn't know what temperament is and what she'll have to put up with."

Alex went home without telling her good-night. Joyce cried herself to sleep. Bert's ring was still on her finger. Bert had lingered after all the rest had gone. He was sweet and considerate and loving. He said over and over how happy he was. He managed to stress his kindness in doing everything that Joyce asked of him. He

talked romantically about their home and how happy it made him to think of her being his bride. He did not say a word about her outburst earlier in the evening when she had smashed the vase. He was so nice and so happy, planning for the future, that Joyce let him go home without saying a word about breaking the engagement.

A week dragged by. Joyce grew irritable and thin and she began to burst into tears at the slightest provocation. Her wedding was just a fortnight off. Joyce felt like a mouse caught in a trap. The worst of it was, it was a trap of her own making. She had told Bert she would marry him. Nobody had coerced her into promising to marry him. She had said she would be his wife of her own free will.

One morning Randy remarked, "I hear that Alex is rushing a debbie around at a great rate. She's eating him alive, they say. One of those genius-devourers." He ate his last piece of buttered toast hurriedly. Randy had a job now. He had given up college and had joined the staff of a magazine.

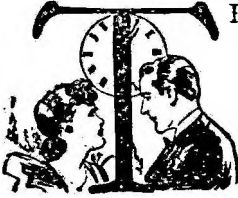
Joyce said nothing. Abruptly she stopped eating. She hoped she wasn't going to cry. She fought wildly against the tears which crowded her eyelids.

"By the way, sis, why didn't you go in for that cake competition our magazine sponsored?" Randy was getting up hastily, with most of his attention on the clock that looked like a jug, which was ticking softly on the black-lacquered sideboard. "I ran into Alex with this girl of his yesterday. He wanted to know why you hadn't gone in for it."

"What's the prize?" asked Joyce steadily, her cheeks burning.

Randy had discovered that the jug-clock was five minutes slow. "Five hundred bucks," he mumbled. "Competition closes to-night."

Joyce stared after Randy as he left the house. Then she went out into the kitchen and set to work making a cake that would get her five hundred dollars.



HE cake turned out a dream. It was fluffy and had exactly the right grain. The frosting was a poem. Joyce packed the cake carefully in one of the boxes a wedding present had come in. As she did so, she thought to herself that she shouldn't use the box. Because the present would have to go back. Luckily, it was the only one that had arrived as yet.

Joyce didn't know why she had decided so suddenly that she couldn't go on with the marriage. But she had. This time she didn't intend to let anything stop her. There was to be no weakening. She would have five hundred dollars to pay back to Bert. Randy could pay the rest. She would be breaking Bert's heart and his faith in women. But it would be better than marrying him, hating Bert and his house and everything he stood for.

Breathlessly, Joyce ran for the four-twenty to town. It would get her to Forty-fifth Street by five o'clock and the competition closed at five-thirty.

Bert was on the train! He looked surprised when he saw her, and rather guilty. The guilty expression astounded Joyce. She wished the train hadn't been so crowded so that she could have managed to sit with him. She could have given him back his ring then and there and had it over with. But she couldn't shout, "I won't marry you. Here's your ring," while Bert rocked back and forth on his heels, balancing a white pasteboard box the size of the one she had the cake in. It just couldn't be done.

"Where are you going?" asked Bert, gripping the back of the seat he had surrendered to Joyce. "I didn't expect you on this train."

She said stumbingly, "I've baked a cake. For a competition." It didn't occur to her to tell anything but the truth. She kept wondering why Bert

looked so guilty. Then it came to her. He had told her that he could not see her that day, because he was so busy working at the office. And yet he had been at Rosedale. She wondered why he should have bothered to lie to her.

The train stopped. Bert swayed perilously. Joyce took the cardboard box out of his grasp and put it down on the floor next to the box containing her cake.

"Good. I hope you win out," said Bert. He was regaining his composure. "I have some work to do, or I'd come along with you to see how things go. I'll carry your cake up to the office, though."

Joyce tried to shake him in that determination, but she couldn't. He saw her up to the competition room, carrying her precious cake carefully, as well as his own box. "I want to talk to you about something. Very seriously," said Joyce as he opened the door for her. "Can you come over early to-night?"

Surprisingly, Bert blushed. He looked more guilty than ever. He pushed the box into her hands and mumbled, "Sure thing," and hurried off. He went so fast that his going seemed like flight.

Joyce hadn't any time to think about that. She was in the competition room surrounded by cakes. All the competitors were gone. But the judges weren't. Joyce had eyes for only one of those judges. Alex.

Her heart came up into her throat and she hesitated uncertainly on the threshold. Alex had been frowning over an angel-food cake. Glaring at it as if had been a personal foe. Magically his face cleared as he saw her standing there. He came forward, his eyes smiling into hers. "I thought you'd come!" he cried triumphantly. "I was betting on it. And I wagered with myself that you'd bring a Cinderella cake. Did you?"

"Yes," gasped Joyce. Then idiotically, "I think so."

The world seemed to be going



around and around. She remembered what Randy had said about Alex being eaten alive by a debbie. Suddenly she wanted to kill that girl.

Alex had taken the box from her. He pulled off the cover, talking all the time. "I knew you'd come. This was my idea, you see. My very own competition! I'm putting up the prize. Just to get you in my clutches again. I—"

He stopped, staring astoundedly into the box. "Wh-what?" he gasped.

Joyce's heart was beating so that it almost shook her to bits. Just being near Alex did that to her. She managed to cross the room and look around his arm into the box he was staring at in such an idiotic fashion.

**A** SPRAY of orchids was in the box. Nothing else. Nothing but a card with Bert's name on it. Joyce reached around Alex's arm and got the card. Her hands were shaking so, her fingers brushed against his wrist. She seemed to feel the wild pulse leaping there.

With incredulous eyes she read, "With my love, dear Verne. The love that we must deny forever." She tore the card across and across. Her fingers had stopped shaking.

Bert was in love with Verne. He must have been seeing her a lot lately. It came to Joyce with appalling suddenness that he hadn't been around much for a couple of weeks. She had been so filled with her own misery that she hadn't noticed. And all the time Bert had been finding out that he loved Verne best. Wishing he weren't in honor bound to marry Joyce!

Joyce laughed aloud, a joyous chiming sound. She stripped the ring from her engagement finger and put it carefully on the silvered ribbon which bound the orchid corsage. Then she looked up. Alex was watching her with shadowed, worried eyes. All the laughter had gone out of them.

"If you love him, don't do that," he

said slowly. "I tell you frankly, I got up this cake stunt just to get to see you again. I hadn't the nerve to come out to your house again when you didn't send for me. I was nut enough to think that if you came down here with a cake, you might change your mind about marrying Bert, or— Oh, the whole thing was crazy. I see that now. I saw it when I got your wedding invitation this afternoon. But I couldn't give up without trying—" His voice trailed off into silence. He stared at the orchids with the tiny, glittering ring on top of them. "Don't give him up without a fight if you love him, Joyce," he finished tersely. "It's—the devil—loving anyone when you can't—have them."

"But—" began Joyce.

The door opened with a bang. Some one came in, bringing a white cardboard box. It was Bert and his face was crimson and his eyes looked wild. "I say," he was beginning. Then he saw the orchids and the ring.

"Joyce, I was going through with the marriage," he said miserably. "I wasn't going to see Verne again and I wasn't going to let you down. I—I found out it was the glamour of your family I was in love with. I'm such a dub myself—I can't play wonderful music, nor write, nor paint pictures, nor plan houses. I—"

Joyce snatched the cake box out of his hands. She saw that it lacked five minutes of the competition closing time. She went dashing over to the judges. The three of them were standing over in the far corner of the room, trying valiantly to seem as if they were blind and deaf. "Here's my entry!" she cried. "Please look at it."

They looked at Alex uncertainly and he went over to join the other judges. They took out Joyce's cake and began noting down points.

Joyce said to Bert, "I told you I wasn't in love with you!" She spoke in a husky, furious whisper. "Why didn't you come straight to me when you found out you liked Verne best?"

"I thought you'd changed. That you

did love me," answered Bert unhappily. "You were so—so sort of gentle and—and subdued."

Alex came back to them. He had a slip of paper in his hand. "You got the prize, Joyce," he said grimly. "Here's your check. Your Cinderella cake had 'em all beat to a frazzle." He stood there looking into Joyce's eyes, waiting.

Joyce gave a great gasp. She handed the check to Bert. "Here's half your money," she said. "Randy'll pay you back the rest later. It was good of you to put up the bail money. I'll never forget you for that."

A dull red spread over his face. "But I didn't pay the bail, Joyce," he said honestly. "How could I? I'd just paid for the furniture and all. It would have cramped our—my wedding and honeymoon plans."

Joyce cut into the middle of his stumbling explanations. "Somebody paid that money. If you didn't, who did?" She was breathing fast. How ironical it would have been had she married Bert first and then found out she had paid her brother's debt to the wrong man!

Bert put the cover of the box on the orchids. But first he took out the ring and put it carefully in his vest pocket. "Alex paid it, if you must know," he said sulkily. "He made me promise not to tell." He looked at Joyce. "I'm going to Verne's dressing-room and ask her to marry me," he said. "She'll play better at the concert to-night if she knows everything is settled."

Alex made a growling noise in his throat. He took a step forward. Bert scuttled out of the room with the box of orchids tucked under his arm.

Joyce faced Alex breathlessly. "Here's the check. It will be my first payment to you," she began.

Alex wouldn't let her finish. He swept her up in his arms in the old impetuous way. He kissed her till she was breathless. "You'll pay me by marrying me and being a genius' wife," said Alex. "You'll pay me by loving me to pieces, just like I love you."

Joyce clung to him with all her might. "I'll love being the wife of a genius!" she whispered, kissing him wildly. "I never have stopped—loving you!"

"I bought that house for you!" whispered Alex with his lips against her cheek. "It was in the nature of a bribe. But I'll even live in a monstrosity house with a blue vase on the center-table, if I can have you."

"Darling!" whispered Joyce ardently.

Then she happened to remember the three judges. She turned around with a little gasp. She needn't have worried. They weren't paying any attention to the lovers. They were eating the last crumbs of the Cinderella cake!

Hand in hand, Alex and Joyce went out of the office. "Let's tell the world we're in love and going to get married!" cried Alex.

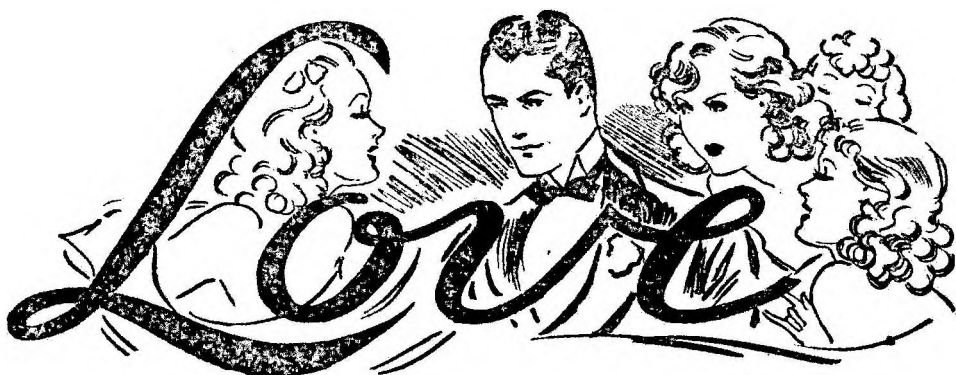
"Let's!" agreed Joyce.

### *In the July Issue—*

BORN A HUSSY      LOVE BEGINS AT MIDNIGHT  
*Unforgettable Novelette*      *Delightful Romance*  
 By JEAN JOHNSON      By ETHEL MURPHY

**LOVE FICTION MONTHLY**

## *A Man Tells You How to Get a Man*



*Final Installment*

### *How to Turn a Boy Friend Into a Husband*

**I**N the first article on the modern approach to romance we discussed the problem of attracting a man's attention. Having done that, in the second article we showed you how to hold his interest long enough to give him a chance to know and like you. Which brings us to the last—and most important—part of the course. How can a girl change liking into love? How can she arouse in a man the desire to love and cherish her forever and a day?

This isn't easy. And unlike the other stages, it can't be done with a bag of tricks. But if you are sincere in your desire, if you are willing to work on yourself as well as the man, let me assure you absolutely that it can be done!

You don't have to be beautiful or brilliant to do it, either. But you do have to have a quality far bigger and finer than either of those things—real character.

What do I mean by real character? Simply this: qualities that aren't just an attractive veneer for a cheap, worthless personality, but that go deep into your heart and soul, virtues that can stand the strain and strife of everyday life, that will wear well and last for a lifetime.

And believe me when I say that when a man contemplates marrying a girl he at least wants to think that she has the qualities that will stand the wear and tear of three-hundred-and-sixty-five days a year.

Remember, a lovely face and figure may attract a man's attention, gay, amusing companionship may hold his interest temporarily, but they aren't the things that make him fall truly and permanently in love. It's a well-known fact that the longer we know people the less we see their features. It's the spirit that grows behind them that lasts through time. And the largest eyes in the world can be spoiled by a hard, unsympathetic expression, the most dazzling smile distorted by selfishness and vanity—yet the plainest face can become lovely when touched by tenderness, loyalty and true love.

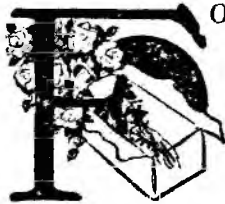
That fact explains why so many beautiful, popular girls are unable to hold their boy friends or change them into husbands. Sooner or later the men see through the attractive surface to the real girl who lies behind it. And it's the real girl he must love before he can be filled with the desire to marry her.

So, having done what we could

about the outside covering, the time has come to look at our real selves. Do you honestly feel that you have the qualities that *wear long*—tenderness, loyalty, pride (not a superficial vanity, but a deep-rooted self respect) ambition, a sweet disposition, understanding, patience, generosity, unselfishness—and last, but by no means least, real honesty?

Does that sound like a rather staggering array? Do you feel that nothing less than a saint could possibly possess all those virtues? Well, cheer up. No man will ever demand perfection. But you should have enough of these qualities not to be afraid to let a man look closely into your heart and soul. If you haven't got them, start developing them. Otherwise, sooner or later the veneer will crack—the expression on your face, the insincerity of your smile, the tones of your voice will give you away, if your actions haven't already done so.

Surely it's not much more work to correct faults than to go to the trouble to hide them.



**I**OR example, let's take patience. Do little things irritate you? Do you fly into a temper when things go wrong? The next time this happens, stop and say to yourself, "These things aren't important; they will straighten themselves out if only I have a little patience." You'll be surprised how much easier life will be.

Which brings to mind one of the most frequent causes of smashed romances—that horrible green-eyed demon, jealousy. It causes more women to lose their heads than any other one thing I can think of. They simply can't take it when their boy friends praise another girl. Women seem to have an almost irresistible impulse to say, "Yes, Mary is pretty, but she's an awful flirt." Or, "Jane's a very smart girl, but she's one of

the bossiest persons I've ever met."

Don't do it! When you feel the temptation to run down another girl, don't let the words come out! Instead, admit frankly that she *has* good qualities. It will raise your own prestige a hundred percent in your boy friend's eyes, instead of lowering it. It will show him that you are fair-minded, and that you have the imp Jealousy well under control. Remember, you can never build up your own product by belittling your competitors.

And don't talk about your own ex-boy friends too much. A man is soon bored by listening to tales of your past conquests. It's much more important that you make him like you sincerely for your own sake.

When you find the man you really want, you should work every day to raise your value higher and higher in his estimation. You should be glad and willing to do everything you can to improve yourself so that you will be able to be not only the wife your husband wants, but the one he needs to make him happy.

Certainly you don't want to lure a man into marriage with a bag of pretty tricks, only to have him learn that he has made a very poor bargain. The ever increasing divorce rate in this country has certainly shown that far too many women—and men—put on a good front until after the wedding bells ring, and then face endless dissatisfaction and disillusionment.

That is the inevitable result when you sell some one something he doesn't really want.

If you are willing to marry a man, you must feel he is something pretty special. Since that is so, don't be afraid to let him see it. There is no more potent charm in the world to make people like and love you than admiration. But it must be *sincere admiration*. If you can make the man you sincerely love feel that he is a king among men, you're practically on your way to the altar!



"Diana's got to get off this boat at once!" gasped Mae.

*When a Hard-to-Get Girl Meets a Can't-Be-Made Man*

## *I'll Bet You a Dime*

"I'LL bet you a dime I'll snag that good-looking, stuck-up South Sea Island Lothario before the evening is over, or—"

"I'll bet you a dime you won't!"

"You'll see!"

"I'm waiting!"

"And so am I, girls!" drawled a man's voice. Mae and her friend Grace whirled. Just behind them was

*By Cora Martine*

Mark Carteret. *The Mark Carteret*, subject of their wager.

Grace fled in a cascade of giggles, but Mae held her ground.

"People with big ears always hear things they shouldn't!" she said, her cheeks coloring. She wasn't afraid of him, not even if he *were* six-feet-two, the prom guest of honor, and a man who made charts of the sea and wrote indigestible books which no one had any desire to read.

"Another Kate!" he said, and there was a maddening smile on his lips.

"Kate?"

"Katherine, the Shrew, from William Shakespeare's play, 'The Taming of the Shrew,' my dear!" he said in an affectedly pompous manner. "Don't you read your classics in this institute of higher learning?"

"Is that supposed to be funny?"

"Oh, no!" he answered airily. "Merely inquisitive." He motioned to a seat on the terrace. "Suppose you tell me how you go about snagging a man. It's a part of life I have never understood."

Mae sat down demurely and spread her chiffon skirt into a pretty, old-rose fan. She looked out archly from under long-fringed lashes. "How wonderful your lecture was, Mr. Carteret!" she breathed. "I think you are so interesting! I listened to every single word you said, and—"

"That's enough!" he interrupted dryly. "You're not doing so good. We hardboiled guys don't fall for the gush—and smile—technique any more."

"What kind of technique *do* you fall for?" she asked, half angry, only half amused, and feeling that she was somehow losing ground.

Mark Carteret leaned back and gazed up at the bright round disk of the moon. "We don't fall!" he drawled. "We lean—we tip—totter—dip—but we don't fall. That's part of a free man's business. What would a South Sea Island Lothario do, for instance, with the impediments of a wife? Lotharios don't marry—they philan-

der! As a philanderer, I'm Number One Boy. Why don't you take me on as such?"

"I wouldn't be bothered!" declared Mae.

"But you made a bet with your little friend! You put a whole dime on it that you'd snag me before the evening was over!"

"The evening isn't over!" she challenged.

Mark Carteret transferred his reflective gaze from the moon to her. "Correct!" he said. "The evening isn't over." There was laughter in his eyes but his lips were grave. "Tell me, pretty maiden, why wouldn't you take a man like me seriously? I've been told that I am, in very truth, the answer to a maiden's prayer."

"How modest of you!"

"I know," he answered, his face straight. "Modesty has always been one of my qualities. You see, I am awfully good-looking. I wear impeccable evening clothes with the same non-chalance I possess in bathing shorts. My hair is that glossy, slightly wavy dark-brown that looks black in the moonlight; my shoulders are broad; I have that trim, athletic figure so fashionable today; I dance well; I have brains and a fortune. I am not a playboy; I neither drink nor do I lose my head about chorus girls. On the contrary, I am a serious-minded young man, with a hobby, shall we say, that combines business with pleasure."

Mae sprang to her feet. "I think you're the most conceited, asinine self-centered and impossible man I ever met!" she cried. "I wouldn't take the trouble to win that bet; not if it were a million. As far as I'm concerned, you can go back to the South Sea Islands and stay there!"

She whirled, her billowing skirts swishing around her slender ankles, and started to the door of the ball-room.

"Oh, no you don't!" he said low, caught her wrist and whirled her

around again so that she faced him. "I happen to have made a bet, too, and I'm not going to lose a sporting chance of winning!"

"Let go of me!" she cried angrily, trying to twist away from him.

"Don't fight!" he said quietly. "I'm strong, and I'm a man with an idea."

"Let go!" Mae cried, struggling madly.

"Aren't you the teeniest bit curious about that bet I made?" he asked, holding her with ease.

"No!"

"But you are!"

"Impudent!"

"You see? Now you're insulting me. That's a sign you're beginning to like me!"

"You—you—" Mae was rapidly coming to a boil. "Let go of me or I'll scream!" she cried.

"Go on and scream!" he answered.



HE opened her mouth, and with a lightning gesture, he took her in his arms and his lips clamped down over hers, suffocatingly, so that the scream died in Mae's throat.

It died, and in its stead was born a thrill such as she never felt before. A shuddering thrill that swept through her like a warm, electric current, charging her blood with excitement and her imagination with strange, unthought-of fires.

No one had ever done this to her. Mae wasn't the kissing type. She hated petting, and the mawkish attentions of sophomores merely disgusted her. But this was different! This was life knocking at the door of her heart. This was adventure—painting strange and beautiful pictures on the screen of her brain. This was—romance!

She yielded utterly to the strength of his arms, her soft slender body pressing against the strong sinewy one. And as her mouth returned his caress, her arms slid around his neck and clung, in ecstatic surrender.

Then he put her away from him, gently, delicately, as one sets a doll upon its feet.

"Very nice—very nice indeed, miss!" he said, and taking out a silk handkerchief, he wiped a trace of her lipstick from his lips. "You kiss like a veteran. I admit you got me going for a moment. But the technique wasn't quite—quite new enough! Now—take the girls in Tapua Loa—it's a tiny island in the Lomi group—"

Mae had turned white. Every ounce of blood in her body seemed to ebb to her heart, churning up a tempestuous torrent of emotion.

"You—you low cad!" she cried. "Now that you've kissed me—go and try somewhere else! Kisses are cheap on the campus! We girls have men like you tabulated and numbered! The woods are full of you! And when the showdown comes, you get taken for a real ride by the cheapies no decent man would marry! Good-by, Mr. Lothario! I give you that dime!"

This time, he let her go. As she went through the long French windows, she heard him call, "My boat is the *Siren*, anchored at Headley. Come down and see me sometime!"

Mae didn't turn her head. She went into the first pair of arms that were offered, and danced away into the crowd. But as she danced, she felt faint. The room seemed close and stuffy.

"Do you mind?" she asked her partner. "Steer for the door and that's where I get off—"

The blond boy said, "Sure—" and did as she asked.

She went upstairs to her room. She was trembling all over, and in the mirror she saw a pale little face with big tragic eyes.

"What's the matter with me?" she thought wildly. "Am I going mushy just because a man kissed me?"

She sat down at her dressing-table and dabbed rouge on her pale cheeks.

The door opened and Gracie came in. "What happened?" she said in a

stage whisper. "You stayed out there an awfully long time!"

"You win your bet, Gracie!" answered Mae wearily.

Gracie looked doubtful. "You mean—he really fell for you?"

Mae shook her head. "He didn't fall. He crashed. And there was plenty breakage!"

Gracie made an "o-oh" with her mouth round. "Did he really get as far as kissing you?"

"What do you suppose? I had to earn the dime, didn't I?" retorted Mae with a hard note in her voice as she applied lipstick plentifully.

Gracie sighed. "It must have been swell! He's the good-lookingest man at the dance. All the girls are raving about him. And you get him, of course! Did he date you? When'll you see him again?"

"Never!" answered Mae.

**D**RIVING back to Boston with her aunt who had come for graduation exercises, Mae was very quiet.

"What's wrong with you, child?" asked Mrs. Lawrence.

Mae said nothing was the matter with her.

Mrs. Lawrence patted her hand with gnarled, be-ringed fingers. "When I was your age, my dear, they gave me sulphur and molasses when I looked the way you do. Now I suppose it's a man. Who is he?"

Mae reddened to the ears. "There's nobody, I tell you!" she cried vexedly.

Mrs. Lawrence's old face took on an indescribable expression that reminded Mae of an ancient and very inquisitive fox. "That's good," she said. "I was afraid you had become involved with some cub from Cambridge. There's a man that I want you to meet. Awfully nice fellow, and his mother was a good friend of mine. He's been away for years, knocking about in the Islands somewhere—studying fish—or is it birds?"

"Do you mean Mark Carteret?" Mae asked in a small voice.

"Yes! Do you know him?"

"I met him at the prom. He came to give a lecture and stayed for the dance."

Mrs. Lawrence beamed. "How nice!"

"What's nice about it?"

"I asked him to dinner tonight!" her aunt replied. "Have you any objections?"

"Of course not, auntie!" said Mae smoothly. "I'm simply dying to meet Mr. Carteret again."

Mrs. Lawrence smiled and relaxed. "I thought for a moment you weren't going to like the idea. I'm glad you do. He's just the kind of a young man I want you to know."

There were six people at the circular dinner table in the beautiful old Lawrence mansion dining room that evening.

Judge Alden was at Mrs. Lawrence's right, Dan Norris, her favorite attorney, at her left. Mae sat next Norris. At her left was Mark Carteret, and the dazzling, vivacious Diana Norris, second wife of Dan Norris, sat between Carteret and the judge.

Mae's greeting to Mark Carteret had been deceptively pleasant and cordial. She appeared to chuse to forget the incident of their first acquaintance, and at once established their new relationship—Mark, friend of the household—Mae, joint-hostess, very much at her ease, and looking ravishing in a cool linen evening frock the color of cornflowers which set off her blond beauty to perfection.

Judge Alden claimed her attention during the first course and complimented her upon her graduation, asking her a dozen affectionate questions about her studies. When finally she could turn to Carteret, she found him engrossed in a rapid-fire conversation with Diana Norris.

The divorcee who had preferred Norris' Bostonian solidity and substantial fortune to the precarious wealth of a New York stock broker was a woman of about thirty, dark-haired, with deep, alluring eyes, and a very feminine appeal. All through



the dinner she listened while Mark Carteret talked.

Her technique, Mae thought, was slightly obvious. The good old "tell me all about yourself" variety, with variations on the "we are the same sort" motive.

Mark seemed to like it.

Indeed, he liked it so well that his attention never flagged once from the hors d'oeuvres to nuts. He appeared to have forgotten Mae completely, and this, Mae thought, could either be a pose—or else he really was interested in Diana Norris.

The tête-a-tête continued in the drawing-room until Dan Norris broke it up. He was notoriously jealous of his beautiful wife, and it was quite evident that Mark Carteret annoyed him.

"Danny," said Mrs. Norris, "Mr. Carteret has asked us to come and see his yacht, the *Siren*. It's all fitted up with gadgets for exploring the ocean. I think it would be thrilling."

Dan Norris made vague noises from which emerged the fact that he was a very busy man, and his wife had better go alone. He turned his back, and strode over to talk to the judge. Mae who had been watching the little scene joined Carteret and Mrs. Norris.

"Wouldn't you like to come and see my boat too?" Mark asked her. "I'd love to have you."

"Thanks," she answered, "I'd love to."

"We can drive down together."

"A good idea," Mae acquiesced.

"What about Saturday?" suggested Mark.

Mrs. Norris accepted the date for Saturday and left Mae and Mark to go and speak to Mrs. Lawrence who had called her.

"Well?" Mark thrust his hands into the pockets of his white Shantung silk dinner jacket. "Shall we be friends?"

"Why not?" asked Mae lightly. "After all there has been between us—"

He grinned wickedly. "Since you speak of it, I apologize!"

Mae's eyebrows arched. "But why?" she asked. "I was looking for trouble, wasn't I?"

He smiled. "You were. But I don't make it a habit to go about kissing babies!" He ignored the spark in Mae's eyes, went on maddeningly, "Furthermore, I like my kisses—for me alone. I've always steered clear of the campus menace!"

"Aren't you being rather impertinent?" asked Mae smoothly, her nails digging into her palms.

"It's a rotten habit I have," he retorted.

"You always use the right word!"

"I like clean-cut language!"

Mae found that her breath was disagreeably short, and her heart was doing strange things under the cool linen of her gown.

"I thought we were to be friends," she said, laughing a little. "You have a most aggressive personality. One would almost think you had fallen in love with me!"

A look of amused irony came into his eyes. "Tch tch!" he clicked, his tongue against his teeth. "You're out of school, young lady! If you turn sentimental on me, I'll break down and cry!"

Mae's head went up, her eyes flashed. For a moment, she wished she dared slap his handsome face.

Then, the very idea of what a slap would do in that austere and dignified drawing-room in which Boston's elite gathered turned her anger to laughter.

"Aren't we being a bit silly?" she said. "Suppose you let me show you my aunt's rose garden. It is one of the sights of the Bay City."

She led the way and he followed. The heavy perfume of a thousand blooms filled the air with an intoxicating fragrance. On all sides, the velvet-petaled roses raised their heads, fresh to the touch, and soft like a baby's cheek.

"Such beauty holds my roving heart in thrall—" he quoted softly, his head raised to the soft mystery of the twilight sky.

"Who wrote that?" she asked quickly.

"I did."

"A poet—too?"

His tone broke the still charm between them. "I'm a Jack-of-all trades, and an expert at none," he answered. "The only thing I really do well is travel. I've made travel a profession. That's all."

Silently they went back into the house. As soon as they entered Mrs. Norris' throaty contralto voice lifted to say, "What do you think about Spain, Mr. Carteret?" And in the discussion that followed, he seemed to forget that Mae even existed.

Seething within, she wondered how a man could have kissed her as he had—and remain so frigid. It was like flinging a challenge at her—a challenge to bring to life again the flame she had once kindled in him.



ON Saturday morning, she drove Diana Norris to Headley. They were to stay for the dinner dance and week-end. Diana's husband would join them late Saturday evening.

Mark Carteret's yacht *Siren* was off shore, and he was waiting to take them out in his dinghy.

Before ten minutes had elapsed, Mae knew that Diana Norris was making a heavy play for Mark. And, phrasing it in the popular manner, "He was taking it."

They formed a little committee of two, leaving Mae out as thoroughly as though she had been a four-year-old child.

The *Siren* was a fascinating craft, filled with technical instruments, charts, sound-depth recorders, and a complete radio sending apparatus.

It was snug, planned for economy of space, and yet there was a comfortable salon, and master's cabin as well as quarters for a crew of two.

A small auxiliary engine provided for windless tropic seas, and there were great glass tanks in which to preserve rare specimen of fish and sea fauna.

Mrs. Norris explored every nook and cranny and asked a hundred questions to which Mark answered, seemingly with pleasure.

Mae got sick of it after awhile and went on deck and lay flat on the warm boards, sunning herself.

They didn't call her until the enticing fragrance of frying bacon and eggs pervaded the atmosphere.

Mrs. Norris had done the cooking. A big apron tied over her white linen yachting costume, she was prettily and becomingly flushed with her culinary efforts. After lunch, she said "Mark" had promised to take them for a spin!

Mae looked at Mark. His sun-tanned face was unreadable. "I'm afraid I'll have to let you two go alone," she said quickly. "I've a date with the hairdresser."

Diana Norris did not even trouble to say, "Do come," and Mark just helped himself to more scrambled eggs.

He rowed her ashore and said, "Cheerio!" and went back to the *Siren*.

Mae saw the big white sail break out. The yacht headed into the Bay.

She got into the car and drove back to the club house.

It was difficult to analyze one's sensations, she thought, when they were so confused, and criss-crossed with contradicting emotions. She was angry because of Mark's behavior, his outright rudeness, and yet she felt there was something more than mere surface rudeness there. She sensed he was making an effort to be rude. It intrigued her. Perhaps that was what he wanted! In which case she would give him no satisfaction at all! Nor would she let him see she did not en-

joy watching him flirt with Diana. On the contrary! She would make believe it amused her mightily!

On the way back to the club, she saw Dan Norris' big sedan parked there.

For a moment she was startled. He hadn't planned to come before ten that evening.

She found him sitting alone with a highball. He hailed her and asked, "Where's Diana?"

There was a look in his face Mae didn't like. She forced herself to answer a casual, "I don't know. Around somewhere, I think—" and went up to her room.

When she got there, she found, much to her amazement, that she felt very nervous and unhinged. What had made her this way? After all, if Mark Carteret and Diana wanted to risk a flirtation that was their own business. Diana knew her Othello of a husband. As for Mark, if he could afford to take the rap—why not?

Nevertheless, she was terribly relieved when, on going downstairs about eight o'clock, she saw Diana and Mark and Dan Norris having cocktails together.

They must have come in some time earlier, for all were dressed for the evening.

"I beat you down, Mae," called Diana gayly when she saw her. "We were a sight, weren't we, after that cruise aboard the good ship *Siren*!"

Mae was conscious of Dan Norris' keen eyes upon her. She saw Diana—a little pale, a little tense—too tense.

"Anybody would be," she answered with a laugh. "There's nothing like life at sea to tear down a girl's finger waves!"

Dan Norris relaxed visibly. "Come on, let's have dinner!" he said briskly.

The club terrace was gayly decorated and many Bostonians and Bay people had gathered for the Saturday night dinner dance. A good band was playing. Dan asked his wife to dance.

"Will you?" said Mark to Mae.

She accepted his invitation.

When they were dancing, he said softly, "Why did you run away?"

"Don't they say, 'two is company'?" she answered.

"Just what does that mean? Are you being nasty?"

"I'm not. But Dan Norris might be."

"He's a fool—"

"Why not say he's in love with his wife?"

"He's crazy if he thinks I'm interested."

"Then why give the impression that you are?"

He held her a little closer. "Look here, young lady, are you by any chance giving me a lesson in behavior?"

"Call it anything you will."

"Jealousy?"

"You flatter yourself!" cried Mae and drew away from him angrily. His eyes were full of thunder.

"Why not be honest with yourself, Mae?"

"How embarrassing for you, if I were jealous!" There was a jibe in her words and Mark seemed to perceive it clearly.

His tone changed. "We *are* dramatic!" he laughed. "You mustn't ever take me seriously, Mae."

"I won't! Don't worry. I only wish Dan Norris had my sense of humor."

**T**HE dance ended, and they went back to the table. Diana and her husband were already seated, and Mae could see at once that they had been quarreling. Dan was sullen and morose, and Diana smoked nervously, forcing a smile when they joined them.

As soon as the music struck up again, Diana said, "Let's dance, Mark," and defiantly, she went out on the floor with him.

Mae looked at Dan Norris. He was livid. His eyes were angry. Suddenly he ground his cigar into an ashtray and rose, "Excuse me, will you Mae, I'm afraid I'll have to be going."

"Going?" asked Mae.

"Yes. I'm taking the midnight train to New York to see a client who is on his way to the coast." He left abruptly and Mae heard the angry roar of the accelerator as he stepped on the gas and drove away.

"Well!" thought Mae. "Storm warnings ahead!" She was shocked at the display of temper she had just seen, and at its cause. When Diana and Mark took their seats again, she said, "Dan went back to town."

Diana shrugged her shoulders. "He says he's got some stupid appointment with a man in New York. I don't believe it! He—" she broke off and bit her lips.

Mae intercepted a glance between her and Mark. She wondered what they would have thought had they seen Dan Norris when he flung out of the club in anger?

If they were so blind—?

Diana rose to dance with a friend from a near-by table and once again Mark asked Mae out onto the floor.

"What do you think it is all about, Mae?" he asked. Before she could answer, he swung her out off the dance floor and led her to a side porch. Standing there in the shadows, near him, Mae was frightened at the tumult in her heart.

"I don't think I care to know," she murmured. "It's really none of my affair."

"All problems can be considered in the light of analysis," he said quickly. "Here we have a woman who is desperately in love with her husband—and a husband who is in love with his wife. The wife is sure—mind you, *sure* that the husband is carrying on a sentimental side-show with an old flame in New York. The husband is positive that his wife is flirting with the fascinating Mark Carteret—"

"And the fascinating Mark Carteret is flattered out of his little wits, and heaps coals on the fire and fans the flame, so that at one moment or other everything will go 'boom' and blow up, is that it?"

He looked at her steadily, and she could see the darkness of his eyes.

"Complicated, isn't it?" he whispered.

"It's more than that. It's not nice. It's not decent. I hate things that aren't decent!" she cried passionately.

His arm went around her. "Why don't you hate me?" he asked, his lips against her cheek.

Mae drew off with a sudden recoil of all her body. "I *do* hate you! I hate you and I have no respect for you which is worse! Why don't you go back to your islands and leave everybody alone!"

She strained against his tightening arm, frantic to feel that strange blissful panic she had felt before creeping over her when he held her.

"You don't really mean that?"

"I do! I do!" she cried.

"Kiss me!" he commanded, his face above hers.

"I will not!"

"Kiss me—" he said, his lips on hers.

Desperately, she obeyed, all the pent-up longing for the return of ecstasy expressed in the tremulous touch of her mouth on his.

"Darling—" he said, so softly that she might have dreamed hearing him speak. "Meet me in an hour down at the wharf. We'll sail away together. There'll be someone to marry us without all the fuss of a society wedding. I'm pulling out from New York next week, for the South Seas. You are coming with me!"

Rapturous, incredulous, Mae looked at him with tear-wet eyes. "You—you want me?" she whispered.

"I never wanted anything more." He held her close, kissed the tears from her eyes. "I bet myself a dime I'd marry you before the week was out. I've got to win!"

"Mark!" She clung close, heard the pounding of his heart, and happiness that was fulfillment of her every dream flooded her.

She had loved him from the first moment she saw him.

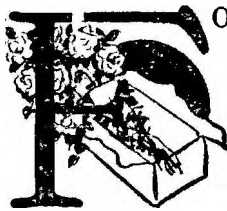
He had loved her . . . .

"In an hour—" he whispered. "Bring a warm coat."

"But—auntie?" cried Mae. "What will she say?"

"She'll be tickled pink!" he laughed. "She knows I want you. I told her so the day after we met."

He kissed her once again and leaped down the porch steps into the darkness.



OR a moment Mae leaned against a pillar and fought to get hold of herself after the storm of his love-making.

There was a great song in her heart. Mark loved her! Now she knew what life was about—to love—to give—to center one's existence on the loved one.

Perhaps she would never quite understand him. He was a creature of high passion and changing moods. She adored him! That was enough!

She ran up to her room to pack her overnight case and get her coat and hat. The car, too, must be taken care of. She scribbled a note to Diana Norris asking her to take it back to town. On a sudden impulse, she added briefly, "Mark and I are slipping away to get married. I wish you would realize that Dan is crazy about you, Diana. What you think is not true. I know. Love—and wish me luck—Mae."

Then she took her things and went down to the wharf.

Looking for the familiar silhouette of the *Siren*, she was amazed to see that the yacht had gone from the moorings.

An old sailor who did odd jobs around the deck was leaning against a pile. Mae asked him about the *Siren*.

"Cast off—gone five minutes," he said. "I rowed a lady out, and she was underway. Not much wind for sails tonight!"

"You mean the *Siren* sailed?" gasped Mae.

"Yes, ma'am," answered the man. "Lady got aboard and they were off." A lady?

Mae's knees were shaking so that she had to put her suitcase down and sit on it.

Intuition told her that the lady was Diana Norris. But—why?

Hot tears, not of sorrow, but of bewildered resentment, came to her eyes, and she choked down a sob. She picked up her suitcase and went back to the garage where she had parked the car. She would go back to Boston—now. She never wanted to see any of them again!

Suddenly she saw Dan Norris' sedan nosed in against the curb. A garage attendant was leaning through the window and Dan's voice, loud, intoxicated, was saying, "Ran away! Ran clean away with a good-looking double-crossing Romeo. Yes, sir! Left me! I'll shoot 'em both on sight!"

His voice trailed to silence.

The garage attendant pulled his head out of the car window. "He's out like a light!" he said to his assistant who was repairing a tire near-by. "That's Norris. Big lawyer from Boston. Better take his car inside and let him sleep it off."

Mae watched in frozen horror while the young fellow pulled Dan Norris out of the driver's seat and drove the car into the garage.

Then she ran back to the wharf. She knew now what she must do. She must find Diana and bring her back before her husband came to. Dan Norris had staged a surprise return to Headley with the sole purpose of catching his wife with Mark. Probably he had taken a few drinks to bolster his courage. He had eaten nothing at dinner. The alcohol had made him sick and drunk. It would be hours before he came to his senses.

There was a small outboard motor launch she had often hired. It was moored in its accustomed place. She got the old sailor to start the motor

for her, and told him she wouldn't be out long.

Mark and Diana couldn't be far. Not twenty minutes had passed since he had hoisted sail. There was little or no wind. In fact, as she cleared the harbor, it seemed as though dead calm had set in. The night was faultlessly clear, the moon was in its last quarter. There to the south she could see a sail. The *Siren*! She was sure of it!

Her red and green signal lights seemed hardly to move at all, and the swift outboard soon gained on the *Siren* until Mae was within hailing distance. Then she saw that the yacht's sails hung limp. She was becalmed upon the glassy waters of the Bay.

She ran the fleet little launch alongside.

Mark was at the stern. He caught the line she threw and she cut the motor.

"Thank God! Mae!" he exclaimed, and his outstretched arm almost lifted her bodily over the side, onto the *Siren's* deck.

"What happened?" breathed Mae, hardly daring to believe what her heart told her.

"A girl in a long coat came aboard. I said, 'Go on below, darling,' and cast off. When we were clear, I found it was Diana!"

"You didn't—want her to go with you?"

"Great Jehosophat! No! Are you mad?"

"Mark! I thought—"

"Don't think!" he laughed. "Women think entirely too much! Look at Diana! First she flirted with me to make her husband jealous and now she's down in the cabin crying her head off because he is jealous!"

"Why did she come aboard tonight?" cried Mae.

He tipped her face up. "Jealous, too?" he laughed. "I thought so. She

came to ask me to do something about Dan. She wanted me to marry you so he would be sure I wasn't in love with her! Whew!" He whistled. "What a mess!"

"Dan's in a Headley garage, dead drunk and waiting to shoot you both on sight!" cried Mae, almost hysterical with relief.

"Splendid! Now we're getting somewhere!"

"Mark! Stop joking!" gasped Mae. "Diana's got to get off this boat, at once!"

"Mae!" said a weak, choky voice.

Mae turned and saw Diana, her hair disheveled, her eyes swollen, looking like a frightened little mask of woe in the soft moonlight.

"Can you maneuver an outboard, Diana?" asked Mae briskly.

"Of course," she sobbed.

"Come on!" Mark picked her up bodily and put her in the launch and started the motor.

Then he leaped back onto the *Siren's* deck, and cast off the mooring rope.

Diana swung the fast craft in a wide swathe of white and sped toward the lights of Headley.

Mark stood for a moment watching. Then he sat down. "We're becalmed, my dear," he said philosophically. "Becalmed and no gas. That shows what love can do to a man."

Mae sat down beside him and sighed.

"Sure you're not compromising yourself, Miss Bride-to-be?" he said, low, tender, his lips against her cheek.

She leaned against his shoulder. "I'm so happy—I don't care!"

"Then—if you're that callous, could you spare a kiss? It's a long time until the tide turns and the wind blows up!"

His dear lips touched hers. Mae knew that she didn't care if the tide never turned, and the wind never blew up again!



By Karen Cookson

# No Ordinary Man



*"The little blonde from the necktie counter!" he murmured.*

**D**OLLY drove slowly past the country club in her father's shabby, small sedan. It was midnight, and she knew that she was a fool, that the doors of this place weren't open to her type of girl, but she couldn't keep away. The softly lighted, low, rambling building had lured her as if it were a magnet. All evening she had been thinking

with longing of this club and this dance.

Girls in Paris gowns. Men in smooth black and white. An orchestra from New York. Flowers, Jewels. Exotic things to eat and drink. Sleek, polished cars. . . .

She had gone to bed back in the neat little house on Maple Street where she lived with her parents and

*Many Men Desired Her, but She Preferred Second-Hand Kisses from the Only Man Who Didn't*

her two older brothers, but she hadn't been able to sleep. The desire to be out at the club was like a fever burning in her blood. It had commanded her to dress and get out the car. To watch secretly, avidly, the things she could not have.

Other girls weren't so silly, Dolly knew. The girls who worked with her in the Metropolitan Department Store, and her best friend Peggy Adams, who was a stenographer, knew that they didn't belong to the country club crowd—and probably never would belong. And that was all there was to it.

That was the end of it—for them. But not for Dolly Stanton. Dolly went on dreaming, planning, praying. Without any of her dreams ever coming true. Without any of her plans ever working out.

She was as pretty as an artist's fantasy, Dolly. Hair of baby gold. Deep blue eyes with incredible black lashes. A mouth that was red and shiny and too wide for perfection.

She could have had dates. She could have had dozens of dates. With the men who worked in the Metropolitan. With men who were friends of Peggy's friends. With men who, seeing Dolly for the first time, cried, "Who is the little peach? Somebody introduce us. Quick!" Salesmen. Chain store managers. Men who owned gasoline stations, or worked in offices, perhaps.

But she didn't want them. She turned them all down. She turned them down inexorably.

Peggy couldn't understand her. Peggy protested, "But you never have any fun, Dolly! What does it get you, being so high-hat?"

"I'm not high-hat," Dolly would try to explain. "It's just that I want something the men you and I know can't give me."

"Money?" Peggy asked. She could understand that. She could understand that a girl might want money for nice dresses, chiffon stockings, a fur coat.

Dolly had shaken her small head. "No, not money alone," she had said. "A way of living. Flowers on the table, and dinner at eight. And lovely fire-lit rooms full of books, and family portraits in faded gold frames. And finger bowls, and first nights. And privacy—"

She couldn't put it all into words, but she knew what she wanted. Vaguely, she knew.

A man like Gid Jordan could give her those things. Or men like Jerry Hamilton, and Alan Harvey and young Doctor Boyle. Jerry Hamilton, who was still at Yale. Alan Harvey, who had recently been made a member of his father's law firm. Handsome David Boyle, the society doctor of Parkville. Debutantes' men, all four. Men Dolly Stanton had never had a chance to meet socially.

She wasn't greedy or avaricious. But, just as some women crave beauty in jewels or clothes, Dolly craved beauty in living.

Take the way she felt about Gid Jordan, whose father owned the Metropolitan, for instance. Gid was rich, probably the richest of all the rich young men in the Parkville Country Club set. But Dolly knew that she would have adored Gid equally were he poor and friendless, careless, yacht-less and plane-less. Adored him for the quick, sure facility he had for always saying the right thing. For his young, gay, casual smile. For the hint of arrogance in the poise of his dark head. For the proud, almost classical chiseling of his features. And for that challenging stare of his that seemed, at times, almost an insolence.

It was exciting, the way Gid Jordan could look at you as he walked down the main aisle of the store on the way to his father's office—or when you were showing him the expensive imported neckties that he selected by the dozens. Cool appraisal in those handsome brown eyes. For a moment there would be a little pleased smile in them as if he were



thinking, "Not bad—not half bad." And then, the disappointing, careless rejection, the rueful moment when his eyes slid away from your baby gold curls and your very blue eyes and your soft red mouth, and you suspected that he was adding, "But not good enough—not quite smooth enough for me to bother with."

Dolly had never felt any resentment at Gid's mental rejection of her. She considered him a most superlative young man; and she believed sincerely that only the most glamorous and most polished girls were worthy of his attention.

She wasn't *that* glamorous, nor *that* smooth—not yet. But she intended to be some day! Some day, Dolly Stanton would be a finished product. A girl who went to dances at the country club and to parties at the important Parkville houses with the utmost assurance.

Her feeling for Gid was all mixed up with her passion for the nicer things of life. Somehow, in her mind, they went together, Gid Jordan and dinner at eight.



HE might have seen him coming sooner if she hadn't been so absorbed in thoughts of him. She might have been able to prevent the accident.

But she was lost in a dream. And Gid Jordan, tearing out of the club driveway at eighty miles an hour in his low, gray, foreign-built roadster, was lost in a tempest of anger and jealousy and recklessness.

When at last they did become aware of each other there in the sparkling June moonlight, it was too late. There wasn't time for either of them to turn out of the other's way. There wasn't time for either of them to apply brakes.

Dolly's car was shabby and small and old, while his was new and shin-

ing and magnificent—but Gid didn't hesitate. He did the only thing that could be done to save Dolly Stanton's life. His was the car that must be wrecked, and he wrecked it. Instead of letting his steel-bodied racing car cut through Dolly's flimsy one in a right-angle collision, he increased his speed with one frantic push of his foot against the accelerator so that his car flashed across Dolly's front wheels and nose-dived into the ditch at her left.

Dolly caught her breath in horror, and finally managed to stop her own car. Then, she was out of it and running across the road to where Gid's roadster lay in a battered, crumpled-up heap in the ditch.

He must be dead!—she thought in terror. No one could emerge from that wrecked mass of glass and steel alive!

But Gid Jordan wasn't dead. He wasn't even seriously hurt. A few scratches, that was all. A few bruises. For, by one of those miracles that sometimes happen, he had been thrown clear of the car, and he had been hurled through the canvas and wood top of the roadster instead of through the jagged glass windshield.

Dolly found him lying in the field, fifty feet or more away from the demolished car. He was just struggling to a sitting position.

"Oh, you're not hurt!" she whispered. "You're all right?" Her incredible black lashes were star-pointed with tears, her soft red mouth was trembling. She knew that he was all right, but she couldn't stop thinking: If he had been hurt! If he had been killed! I couldn't have endured it. I'd have died, too. . . . She didn't realize that her white, anguished face betrayed all of her passionate solicitude for this man she hardly knew; nor that her fumbling, cold little hands, passing anxiously over Gid Jordan's handsome face, smoothing his dark curls, had all the tenderness of a sweetheart's touch.

For one lovely moment that Dolly never forgot as long as she lived, Gid Jordan smiled up at her with companionship and approval and a faint fondness in his spirited dark eyes.

"The little blonde from the necktie counter!" he murmured. "I knew it was you, baby. I saw you quite clearly when my headlights picked you up, and I was certain that no one else in town had hair like a glittering halo of pure gold!"

Dolly drew a long, rapturous breath. "Oh! Then—then you really risked your life to save mine?"

But Gid's mood had changed. Dolly saw that his face was set and sullen, as it had been a few minutes past when he had come charging out of the club driveway at eighty miles an hour. He shrugged.

"I suppose so," he said indifferently, "if you want to put it that way. But please don't go emotional on me! Please, just get in your car and drive me somewhere before some one comes along and starts to ask us silly questions. I'm not in the mood for explanations."

He seemed infinitely weary and remote. And Dolly did what not more than one girl in a hundred has the good judgment to do when a man orders no fussing. She obeyed him. "Okay," she said briefly.

Together, they walked back to her small, shabby sedan and got in. Dolly drove while Gid sat beside her in silence.

He had asked her to take him "somewhere," not to his home. And so Dolly turned into the shadowy river road and drove him out along the bluffs, a favorite spot of her own. They climbed high, until the lights of the town were like mere twinkling gold stars behind them and the river below was a pale, loose silver ribbon that reflected the luminosity, but not the glitter of the moon.

Dolly had glanced surreptitiously at Gid once or twice and seen that the sullen, brooding expression was still

on his face, so she was surprised when he said abruptly:

"It's nice out here in the hills. Let's stop for a while."

Her one wish was to please him. She would have done as he asked, even though she wasn't in the habit of sitting in parked cars with men. But Gid didn't wait for her to stop the car voluntarily. With a sudden, agile movement, he reached over and took the wheel from her, turning the car out onto a little grass-covered clearing, and braking it only when they were close to the edge.

Dolly heard his laugh, a rather strange laugh of mingled excitement and recklessness. Then, he caught her in his arms and began to kiss her passionately, without gentleness, but with a fierce determination.

Dolly lay passive in his arms, stunned, incredulous, trembling with joy. This was a dream come true! She sensed that Gid was kissing her, not because he particularly wanted to, but because he wanted to prove to himself that he could kiss her if he chose. And she guessed that, earlier in the evening, there had been a girl who had not let him kiss her. But none of that mattered in those first wonderful moments when she felt his lips pressed demandingly against her own, when he held her tightly so that their two hearts were beating as one.

She loved him! She had loved him for so long! She would not have been human had she thrust him away.

**HIS** touch kindled little electric flames in her blood. She knew a delight that was almost too poignant to bear.

Although in the beginning his caresses had seemed to be mere technique, it wasn't long before Dolly realized that Gid had caught fire from her own warm sweetness. He strained her to him as if her surrender had intoxicated him, as if he had never before found a girl who was so soft, so tender, so satisfying.

And then, all too soon, it was over. Gid released her with a little moan. "That was rotten of me," he said. "I don't love you, of course. I should never have touched you."

"I know," Dolly replied imperturbably. "But I also know why you kissed me. There is another girl, isn't there? And she hurt you tonight? And so, you sort of went haywire, driving your car at about eighty—and kissing me."

"Helene Wilson," Gid confessed unhappily. "I'm crazy about her, and she says that she's crazy about me, too. But she won't allow me to be the least bit possessive. She just made her debut last winter, and she doesn't want her fun nipped by an early engagement."

Helene Wilson! Dolly sighed. Lovely, sleek-haired, dark-eyed Helene. The coolest and most assured and most sophisticated of all the Parkville society girls. The most glamorous.

There were tears in Dolly's blue eyes suddenly, but she brushed them away angrily. Why was she crying over the fact that Gid was in love with Helene Wilson? She had known all along, hadn't she, that he cared only for Helene's type of girl? And she had known that she, little Dolly Stanton, who worked at the necktie counter in the Metropolitan and lived on unfashionable Maple Street, was definitely not that type.

She heard herself thinking aloud. She heard herself saying defiantly, "I don't care! If it makes you feel any better to kiss me here in the moonlight, it's okay with me. If you want to kiss me, Gid, please do. Because I—I like to kiss you, too!"

And so, once again, Gid Jordan took her in his arms for a few brief recklessly ecstatic moments. His dark, handsome face bent ardently over her. He clung to her with a sort of unhappy intensity. He was miserable because of another girl, and the sweetness of Dolly's tender young mouth was solace.

He didn't love her. But, kissing her, he could forget for a while that he loved another.

But he couldn't forget permanently. Neither Dolly nor he was able to do that. His love for Helene was like a ghost that came between them in the moonlight, haunting them, chilling the warmth from their eager lips, separating them.

Gid put Dolly away from him abruptly. He spoke as if to himself: "No, that's no good. I don't love you—not a bit. I have no right to make your heart beat like that—nor to let you make my heart pound as you've made it pound. You're too good to me, Dolly. I have no way of repaying you for your goodness!"

"There's one thing you could do for me," Dolly said slowly, "if you would?"

"Anything," Gid promised. "Anything."

"Then tell me what's wrong with me."

"Wrong with you?"

"Yes. Why I—why I'm not the type of girl that interests you. Why you never quite went to the trouble of asking me for a date."

She was aware that Gid was disconcerted by her frankness.

"But you're lovely, honey!" he protested.

And then, as her brave blue eyes accused him of hypocrisy, he added wearily, "No, kid, you're not. You're pretty. Pretty as a magazine cover or a movie starlet. But you're not lovely. Too gold and white and blue, see? Too many curls—and those fantastic black lashes! Cute, but not smart.

"Or at least," he added with brutal young candor, "you don't look the way I like my girls to look. And—" he hesitated.

"Go on!" Dolly ordered. "I asked you. I really want to know."

Gid shrugged. "Well, then, I'm not crazy about the way you act, either. I like a girl to be cool and

sure and remote. Untouchable. You're easy—"

"Oh, no!" Dolly gasped. Her face was white. She could take the rest of his criticism, but she couldn't take that! She couldn't let Gid think that she was easy to kiss. That wasn't fair, because his kisses had been practically her first.

She'd have to tell him the truth now. She'd have to share her secret with him.

She lifted her golden head proudly before she spoke. She discovered that she really didn't mind telling him—because she didn't believe that a love as sincere as hers for him was anything for a girl to be ashamed of.

"I'm not 'easy' for everyone," she said, her blue eyes meeting his steadfastly. "Just for you, Gid, because I happen to love you. I've loved you for a long, long time!"

There was a little silence for a moment. The night breeze sighed and rustled the leaves of the tall trees in the background. As if it were aware that these two in the shabby, small car had not properly succumbed to the enchantment of June, it stirred around restlessly, and presently blew the magic fragrance of a thousand wild, sweet roses at them.

And Gid Jordan, catching his breath against the sudden perfume, said sharply, "That's nonsense, Dolly! That's very silly of you! You know that my affections are elsewhere." He moved away from her uneasily, widening the distance between them on the seat.

**D**OLLY watched him thoughtfully. A little pucker appeared between the slim arches of her brows. Her heart began to pound excitedly.

Was it possible that Gid was just the slightest bit afraid of her?—she wondered. Did he, in spite of his disapproval of her type, find her more appealing that he liked to admit? Was there a chance that he might begin to consider her as desirable as any girl in his own set if she were to

make a few changes in her personal appearance? If she could master the art of looking cool and sure and crisp?

She murmured, more to herself than to him, "Perhaps I am a very silly person." But she meant silly to hope, not silly to love him.

Gid said, with what was obviously determination to change the conversation from the personal to the impersonal, "It's just occurred to me, Dolly, that I shouldn't have asked you to drive me around tonight. No doubt my car was found long ago, and the accident reported to my mother and dad. They'll be half out of their minds with anxiety, not knowing what's happened to me. Mother will be sure I'm lying in the fields somewhere with internal injuries, too weak to call for help—or else too dazed. Wonder what time it is? I suspect we've been here for hours."

"I haven't a watch," Dolly said, "but there's a radio in the car. We'll turn it on and see if we can pick up a time announcement."

She snapped on the radio, and then started the car, backing it away from the edge of the bluff, and turning it in the direction of Parkville.

As the radio warmed up, the urgent voice of the announcer at the local station startled them with the staccato repetition of Gid's name ". . . Gid Jordan. . . Gid Jordan, missing from the scene of an automobile smash on Country Club Road. . . Accident occurred about four hours ago. . . Young Jordan believed to be wandering about in a daze from injuries or lying helpless somewhere . . . Will anyone having information about this man please telephone Parkville police. . . Missing, Gid Jordan following accident tonight. . ."

Dolly and Gid stared at each other in consternation. Four hours! They had been out here almost four hours!

"It must be almost dawn!" Dolly gasped. "And my people didn't even know I took the car out! We had better get back at once."

"I'll say we had!" Gid replied grimly. "Do you realize, Dolly, that this just won't do? We can't say that we've been out here alone together all this time—from midnight to four A. M. People would talk. I'll say I've been wandering in a daze. Anyway, that will have to be my story. Neither you nor I could afford to tell the truth. And especially you, Dolly. No matter how innocent her conduct really is, a girl just can't do things like that and keep her reputation."

Dolly was stepping on the gas. Under the anxious pressure of her foot, the little car was fairly flying along. She was trying to give herself the comfort of believing that Gid's solicitude for her was sweet, but she couldn't quite convince herself. Somehow, she couldn't quite shake off the suspicion that it was of Helene Wilson Gid was really thinking. Proud, exquisite Helene, who would be so likely to resent this romantic, inexplicable, midnight-to-dawn interlude of Gid's with a "too gold and white and blue" little girl from his father's store.

"Whatever you say, Gid," she agreed listlessly. "What do you want me to do—drop you on the outskirts somewhere and let you walk until one of the cruising police cars picks you up?"



WHEN at last Dolly, having dropped Gid off as agreed, tiptoed up the stairs of her own home to her own room, the sun was up. Rosy fingers of light were stealing through the curtains; the world that had been eerie and gray was softly, lushly pink.

There were still a few hours left in which Dolly might have gotten some sleep before it was time for her to be at the department store. But she didn't even go to bed. Instead, she took a cold shower. And then, when

she was as fresh and cool and glowing as the early June morning, she came back in negligee to sit before her dressing-table.

It was a labor of love—and she worked tirelessly, combing her hair in one style after another in an effort to eliminate the "too many curls" and the "too gold" effect that Gid had criticized.

But Dolly, unfortunately for her ambitions, had the kind of hair that broke, irresistibly, into the tightest, most ingenious, most glittering ringlets in the world. It would *not* lie in soft waves. It would *not* let itself be combed in demure, ladylike fashion back from her small, heart-shaped face. It would not do anything she wanted it to do.

"All right!" said Dolly furiously to it after more than an hour of futile struggling. "I'll show you who is boss! I'll make you so flat that you'll think you're Ann Harding's hair! When I'm through with you, you'll lie straight and like it!" Her face was white, and her small hands were trembling with the intensity of her emotion. She did not stop to think that it was, perhaps, absurd to care so terribly about one's coiffure. Anything that concerned Gid Jordan took on, for Dolly Stanton, enormous proportions. And Gid had said that he did not like her hair in its natural state!

She rushed into the bathroom and picked up a cake of soap. Under the water tap, she worked the soap into a creaming, foaming lather. And then, she recklessly applied the lather to her silky, shining, golden hair until it was stiff and dull and of a dingy, mouse-brown color.

"There!" she exclaimed in satisfaction at having remembered this starkly effective trick of her childhood.

She combed the stiff, pale-brown mass, and it lay still now. It was spiritless, disinterested; it was like something she had killed. Relentlessly back from her small, wan face it went,

and was rolled securely into an odd little bun at the back of her neck.

Dolly scowled at herself in the mirror. It couldn't be said that she looked like Ann Harding—she had to admit that. But neither could it be said that she looked too curly and too golden—and for that much she was grateful.

She usually wore cottons to the store in summer, linens in cool blues and pinks or dimities in pleasant yellows and mauves. But today she took a dress of plain black crepe from her closet and wore it with a jacket of white which emphasized rather than relieved its severity. When at last she was ready, she looked business-like and chic—except for the absurd little bun of hair—but she was hardly the Dolly Stanton whose golden brightness made you, if you were a man, catch your breath, and whose sheer prettiness made you long to grab her in your arms and cuddle her.

The girls at the store did not approve of her altered appearance.

"Heavens, Dolly! Who died?" they gasped as they looked at her, trim and cold and remote—not at all like the sparkling Dolly they were accustomed to.

And Philip Carter, the section manager, inquired, "What's the idea of going high-hat on us, Dolly? Of course, I knew that you never would give a guy a date—but, honestly, that hairdress is the limit! You look like one of those dowdy European duchesses who don't know how to make the most of themselves!"

"Thank you," said Dolly stiffly. "I don't know why I can't do my hair a new way if I choose without being accused of being high-hat. It seems to me that you're all pretty silly this morning!" At first she had accepted their complaints with good grace—but Gid Jordan had just walked past her counter without even a "good-morning," and now her heart was sore.

She had worked so hard to please him—and he hadn't even bothered to

notice her! Her blue eyes filled with tears. How could a girl like her get anywhere with a man like Gid? By what ruse, by what subtlety, was she going to be able to please him? Or was she destined to get nothing but criticism no matter what she did?

The store opened for the day, and customers began to straggle in. Dolly worked industriously, her head held high, her young mouth tight. Perhaps through hard work she could forget Gid. Forget that he had alternately kissed her and snubbed her. Forget that she loved him.

But she didn't manage to forget him. And when he left his father's office an hour later, and started down the aisle toward her again, she was instantly aware of him.

She tried to force herself to go on arranging her displays, to pretend not to see him. But she couldn't. She looked up, her eyes shy and eager at the same time, her wide, sweet mouth a little tremulous.

Their eyes met, and she saw Gid start. His handsome brown eyes were full of bewilderment.

"Dolly! What have you been doing to your beautiful hair?" he called out before the other salesgirls, before the customers. "No wonder I didn't recognize you before!"

Dolly couldn't believe her ears. She was completely confused. Beautiful hair! Had Gid really said "beautiful hair?" She blushed painfully. Only last night he had said that her hair was "too gold." She stammered, "Oh—but you said—" She couldn't go on.

A certain amusement, a tender amusement flicked into Gid's eyes. He smiled; and for a moment it seemed that his smile was the most wonderful thing that had ever happened to her. There was understanding in it, and fondness and delight. There was love in it—she thought ecstatically. Or was that just her imagination? She didn't know. She couldn't tell. And the next instant Gid's smile was

gone, blacked out by a shadow of worry.

"We'll thresh that out later," he said, so cryptically that she was not at all sure of his meaning. He asked, then, with an abrupt change of subject, "Have you seen the papers yet?"—and thrust one into her hand.

"No, I haven't had a chance to read—" Dolly was beginning giddily, her heart pounding with excitement because Gid was lingering at her side so long. But he interrupted, cutting off both her words and her surging hopes:

"It's important that I see Helene at once!" he said hurriedly and was gone without a backward glance.

**D**OLLY'S day was ruined. Helene! Helene! It was always Helene! And it would always be Helene, she told herself bitterly. She might as well get used to the idea.

She opened the paper with trembling fingers. She longed to hide her hot, unhappy face in it away from the curious stares of the other salesgirls. Her cheeks were pink with shame; she was sure that everyone realized that she was crazy about Gid while he cared nothing about her.

It had seemed to her that Gid had been trying to convey a secret message to her when he had asked if she had seen the papers—and it didn't take her long to find the thing that must have been on his mind.

"GID JORDAN ACCUSED OF DRUNKEN DRIVING!" screamed the headlines. "John Sayres, Washington Avenue resident, claims to have been mowed down by Jordan on Country Club Road. Passing motorists took injured man to doctor, leaving Jordan, dazed from drink, but uninjured, alone at the scene of the accident, from which he afterwards wandered away. . . ."

"JORDAN DENIES STORY, BUT DOCTOR CLAUDE WILKINS, TO WHOSE HOME SAYRES WAS TAKEN, VERIFIES IT."

Dolly read snatches of the lines bewilderedly. It wasn't true! It was senseless! Gid hadn't been drinking at all last night. No man had been mowed down. No motorists had appeared. The headlines had no meaning for her.

She appealed to Philip Carter, holding the paper out to him. "Phil, what does all this mean?" she asked helplessly.

Philip, who had apparently seen the account earlier, stared at her white, frightened face curiously.

"Can't you read, Duchess?" he asked. "It's simple. Plain English. The son and heir of our millionaire boss was evidently out on a foot last night. He smashed his car up opposite the country club, and seems to have been too lit to remember the tiresome little detail of having mowed an old man down. Namely, one John Sayres of Washington Avenue. John had been taking a harmless midnight stroll in the moonlight. The old boy was hurt pretty badly, I guess. Anyway, his lawyers are going to take Papa Jordan for plenty! Gid will be very lucky if he manages to keep out of jail."

"But the whole thing is ridiculous!" Dolly flared. "It isn't true. Gid hadn't been drinking. He never drinks—not that much."

"Really?" Phil drawled ironically. "I suppose you were an eye-witness, Dolly? I suppose you were there when it happened. Don't be silly, infant! Don't you suppose that doctor, and the people who picked the old man up know what they are talking about?"

"But—" began Dolly, and stopped. Her lips were sealed. She couldn't tell Phil that she had been there with Gid when his car had been smashed. She couldn't tell Phil or anyone. For had not Gid, himself, warned her to say nothing of the midnight-to-dawn hours they had spent alone together? Hadn't he said, "A girl just can't do things like that and keep her reputation"?

And Dolly Stanton wanted to keep her good reputation. It was the only weapon she had, really, in her fight to acquire a man like Gid Jordan. For rich, cultured young men do marry working girls now and then, it's true. But never unless the working girl is considered worth marrying!

She closed her lips tightly and turned away from Phil. As she went on with her work, she told herself not to be a fool. She told herself not to even think of spoiling her good name for the sake of a man who was probably going to marry Helene Wilson. And she reassured herself with the reflection that Helene would doubtless be able to clear Gid, anyway. Helene had gone with Gid to the club. Helene had danced with him, quarreled with him. Helene would be able to testify that Gid had been perfectly sober.

Even if she lost Gid, there still might be another man who could give her the things she wanted from life, she argued. Not love—love would be forever lost if she lost Gid—but beauty, luxury, charm. *If* her name was good. But not if she confessed to having been alone on the river bluffs with Gid from midnight until dawn.

No, she resolved fiercely, she wouldn't talk. She wouldn't be a fool!



AND as the day wore on, and she kept thinking about it all, it dawned on Dolly who the mysterious "John Sayres" and equally mysterious "passing motorists" might be. There had been a lot of talk in the newspapers recently of the fake accident rings that had been causing the insurance companies so much trouble. Men of these rings would inflict themselves with bruises and then step deliberately into the path of an oncoming automobile, pretending to be struck and injured—and afterwards collect

huge sums in damages from the insurance companies.

Dolly could guess what had happened last night. One of the rings must be operating in Parkville, and "John Sayres" and the "passing motorists" must be members of that ring. When they heard of Gid's smash-up on the radio, they must have immediately seen a chance to collect money from Gid's father and also from the insurance company that had the policy on Gid's car. They felt safe because they believed—as everyone else did—that there had been no witness to the accident, and that Gid really had been in a daze, and that he remembered nothing of what had occurred.

When Gid came back to the store after lunch, Dolly leaned over the counter as he came along, and asked breathlessly, "Did Helene promise to vouch for you? She is going to tell everybody, isn't she, that she was with you just before you left the club and that you were perfectly sober? She'll be able to clear you, won't she, so that the police will take your word for what really happened?"

Gid didn't seem to want to talk to her. "Helene isn't going to vouch for me," he said dejectedly. "She doesn't want to be mixed up in the affair at all. She has a horror of publicity. But I'm sure that I'll be able to clear myself without her help. A good lawyer—" His words trailed off vaguely, and he hurried past her.

"He'll need a good lawyer!" Phil Carter, who had come up behind Dolly said suddenly. "Seemed rather jittery, didn't he? Well, no wonder. I'd be jittery, too, if I expected to be arrested at any moment for manslaughter."

Manslaughter! That ominous word echoed and re-echoed in Dolly's startled mind. She stared bewilderedly at Phil. Her face turned white.

"Manslaughter?" she gasped. "Why—How—? Gid hasn't—"

"Hadn't you heard?" Phil inquired.



"The old man died at noon. Sure. John Sayres. The man Gid mowed down. It looks bad—"

Yes, Dolly thought, it looks very bad. It looks like murder—and Gid Jordan is not the guilty man!

Slowly she came out from behind the necktie counter and started toward the office of Gideon Jordan, Sr. She didn't care now whether Gid wanted to talk to her or not. She must know what he intended to do. To what absurd lengths he intended to carry his chivalry for Helene Wilson. Helene couldn't speak for him because she disliked publicity. Helene mustn't hear that he had been with another girl last night—not even though the establishment of that alibi might save him from prison—because of her sensitive vanity. It was sickening! Gid might think that Helene Wilson was a goddess whose slightest wish must be considered a sacred law, but she, Dolly Stanton, most emphatically didn't! And she wasn't going to be a conspirator in that kind of nonsense—not when Gid's future well-being was at stake!

Dolly's expressive blue eyes were blazing with indignation as she opened the door of Gid's father's private office without knocking and walked in.

"I must talk with you," she said abruptly to Gid, who was standing at the far end of the room near the windows, talking to his father and to a small, alert gray-haired man whom Dolly guessed was a lawyer.

Gid's brown eyes were not at all glad to see her, although he stepped toward her with formal politeness.

"Miss Stanton, my father and my lawyer, Mr. Woodridge," he introduced tersely in answer to a sharp, annoyed glance from Jordan, senior.

Dolly acknowledged the presence of the other two men with a brief nod. But she addressed herself to Gid alone.

"I didn't know, when you told me that Helene had refused to speak

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for you, that John Sayres had died. Now that I do know, I think that you ought to give Helene her choice to either speak—or else have me—”

“Please be quiet!” Gid interrupted harshly, his eyes as angry as Dolly’s.

And then, as Dolly stared at him incredulously, her blue eyes filling slowly with tears, he went on more gently, “I want you to understand, Dolly, that I don’t blame any girl for not wanting to come forward in this affair. It would mean unpleasant publicity, her pictures in the tabloids, being called the ‘sweetheart of a drunken playboy.’”

“No,” concluded Gid emphatically, “I’ll have to see it through alone.”

“But—” began Dolly.

Gid’s brown eyes, meeting hers defiantly, warningly, silenced her. “After all, it’s my own affair,” he said.

At his words, both his father and his lawyer flung out their hands in despair.

“We can’t seem to make him realize that he is flirting with a sentence of life imprisonment,” the lawyer said wearily to Dolly. “He won’t co-operate with us at all—just tells us that he didn’t run over the man. But I can’t build a defense out of such meager information as that.”

THERE was a knock at the door, and as three men hesitated and looked questioningly at each other, Dolly raised trembling white fingers to wipe her tears away. She was a fool to cry, she told herself impatiently. Gid Jordan was a brute, a beast. He wasn’t worth crying over. He had been hateful to her!

“Reporters!” Gid said disgustedly.

Dolly looked at him. Young, handsome, arrogant. Too darn arrogant, she decided. Her temper was beginning to seethe again.

“So what?” she mocked. And then, before any of the three men could

(Continued on page 124)



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(Continued from page 122)

stop her, she walked across the office to the door and flung it open.

"Come on in and take my picture and my story!" she invited the hordes of news and camera men who stood on the threshold. "I can manage to live through it, I think. I'm not a fragile, neurotic debutante. I won't get a nervous breakdown from having my picture in the tabloids!"

"What are you talking about, pretty baby?" the foremost reporter inquired.

"I'm not pretty," Dolly said. "Not with my hair full of soap and hairpins. Wait!" she ordered. And while the men looked on bewilderedly, she took a comb out of her pocket and ran it deftly through her hair, shaking the confining pins out of it, freeing the flattened subdued little ringlets so that they sprang into a hundred dancing, glittering little curls in the afternoon sunshine. "There!" she said defiantly. "I'm pretty now. And I don't care who says I'm not!" Her eyes met Gid's challengingly, and he came toward her across the room. But she turned her back on him.

"I've a story for you," she said to the reporters, "and an alibi for Gid Jordan, and some information for the district attorney about the murder of John Sayres.

"It must have been murder," said Dolly with conviction, while everyone in the room gaped helplessly at her. "Because Gid didn't run over anyone at all. He simply drove his car into the ditch to avoid hitting me. I was there in my car. And afterwards we went for a drive out along the river road.

"There was moonlight," concluded Dolly simply, "and wild June roses, and warm, dreamy little breezes, and somehow we stayed longer than we should have. It sounds very wicked, I suppose, but it was really very innocent."

It was keen little Mr. Woodridge, Gid's lawyer, who rallied first from

the numbing shock of Dolly's blunt words.

"Of course, I can see it all now!" he said. "The fake accident gang operating again—only they must have overdone the bruising on Sayres this time to make it look real. And poor Gid, too much in love with a girl to involve her in an alibi!"

"Oh, no!" Dolly said. "You still don't understand, altogether. Gid doesn't love me—"

"Oh, yes he does!" Gid contradicted, coming up in back of her and twirling her around with two strong hands so that she was forced to face him. "Gid does love you, Dolly Stanton! And because he loves you, Gid has been doing his darndest to keep you out of this mess—even to the extent of getting real tough with you."

"But that's absurd and ridiculous!" Dolly said. "I thought it was for Helene you were sacrificing yourself—and I thought that you were seventeen different kinds of a sap. I'm such a jealous little meanie!"

"You're beautiful!" Gid said breathlessly. "You're adorable. The moment I left you last night I found out that I could never get along without you after I'd once held you in my arms. I'd never known a girl before who was so tender and satisfying and *real!*" He was drawing her closer to him, and Dolly was almost in his arms. But, remembering an old grievance, she pulled away.

"But you said—" she began.

"I was a fool," Gid told her. "An arrogant, blind fool. Can you forgive me, Dolly, for being such an egotistical, cocksure young idiot as to presume to criticize you?"

"I'll never be cool and sure and selfish like Helene," Dolly said. "I'm just a common, warm-hearted, affectionate little nobody—without brains enough to take care of my own reputation."

"You're not common!" Gid cried. "You're the rarest, most precious girl I've ever met. And you're beautiful beyond a dream."

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Gid slipped his arm around Dolly's slender waist and drew her protectively to his side.

"This is the girl I'm going to marry," he announced to the crowd, with the arrogance and fire that Dolly so loved shining in his proud dark eyes. "Be very careful what you say about her in your papers!"

"We're indebted to the young lady," the reporter who happened to be standing nearest to Dolly spoke up, "and we don't forget our debts. I guess we'll manage to find enough copy in the exposé of the fake accident ring and the manner in which John Sayres must have died without giving your romance any undue publicity."

"That's fine," Gid's tall, handsome father said. Then turning to Dolly, "I congratulate you for your lovely, fearless spirit, my dear, and I wish you all possible happiness in your coming marriage to my son."

"Oh, thank you!" Dolly whispered,

And then, somehow, the room was miraculously cleared of all spectators, and Dolly and Gid were alone. She gazed up at his dear, dark face, touched the curves of his mouth with tender fingers.

"I think I'm dreaming," she murmured. "I've loved you for so long. This must be a dream!"

"Oh, no!" Gid reassured her, drawing her close against his heart, possessing her mouth with his own ardent one. "This isn't a dream, my darling. No dream was ever as lovely as this!"



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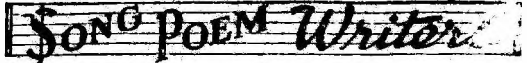


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INVENTOR

An enlarged, inflamed or faulty Prostate Gland very often causes Lambock, Frequent Night Riding, Leg Pains, Pelvic Pains, Lost Urine, Insomnia, etc. Many physicians order massage as a safe, effective treatment. (See Reference Book of the Medical Association, Vol. VII, 8rd edition). Use "PRO-SPECIFIC."

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