

# STREET & SMITH'S LOVE STORY★

EVERY WEEK

MAGAZINE AUGUST 15, 1931

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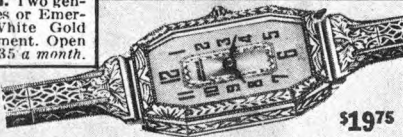


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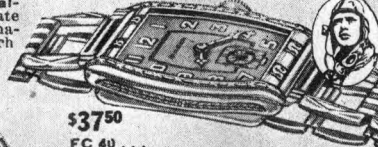
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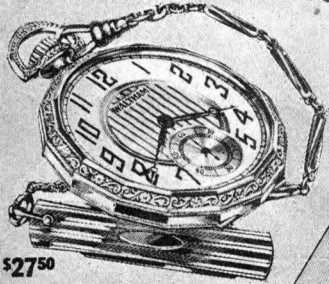
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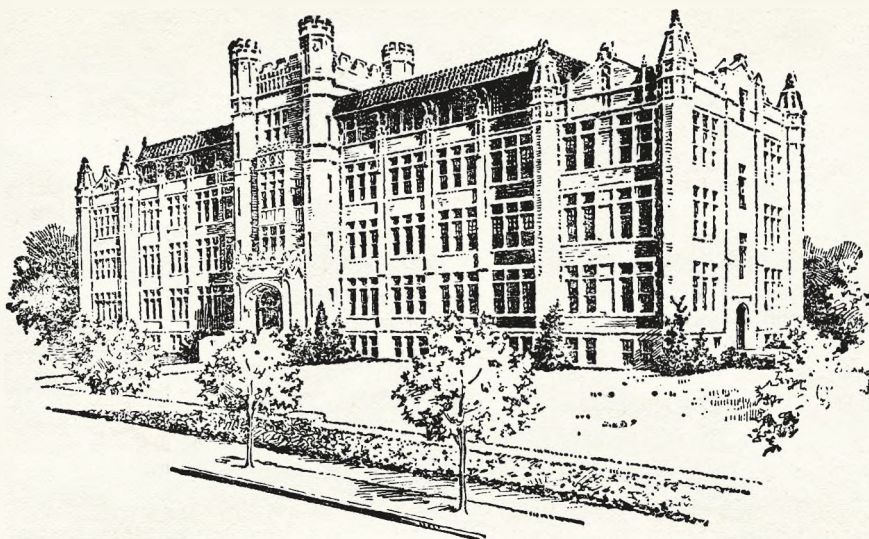
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EVERY WEEK

Number 3

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Beginning in next week's issue, a new serial by a new author, "A Girl Surrenders," by Velma Bradford. Order your copy now!

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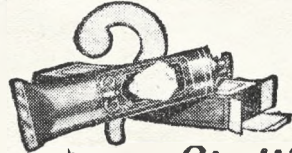
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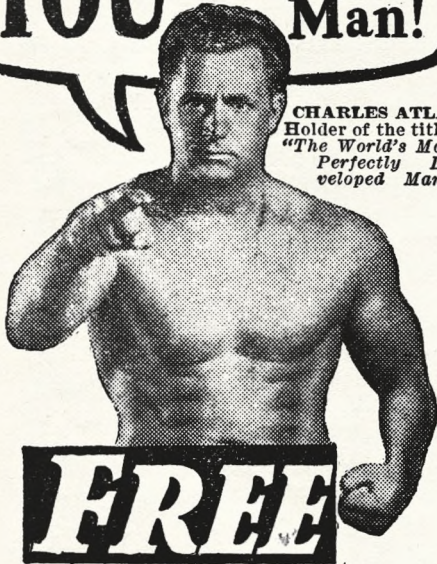
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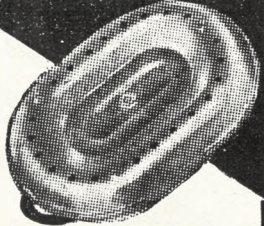
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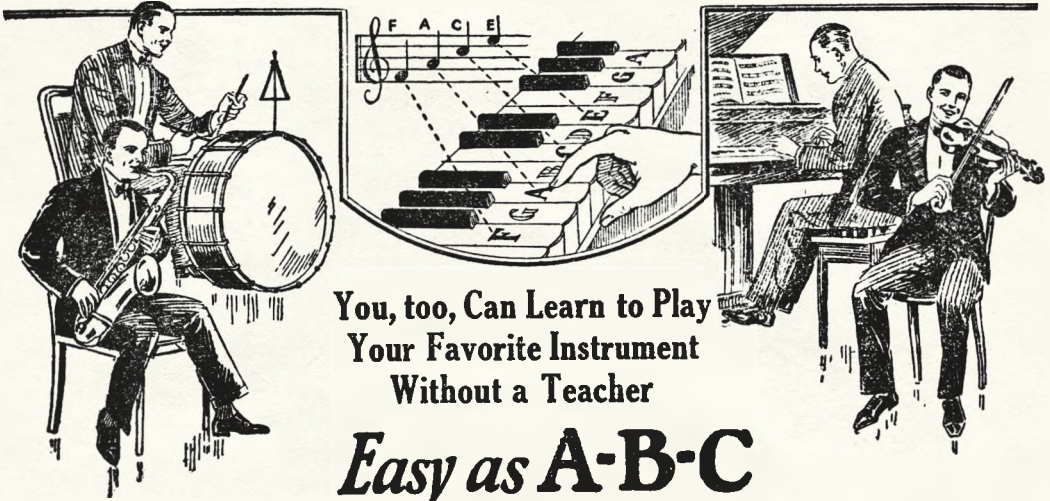
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# Half a Million People have learned music this easy way



You, too, Can Learn to Play  
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Without a Teacher

*Easy as A-B-C*

**Y**ES, over half a million delighted men and women all over the world have learned music this quick, easy way.

Half a million—what a gigantic orchestra they would make! Some are playing on the stage, others in orchestras, and many thousands are daily enjoying the pleasure and popularity of being able to play some instrument.

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Many of this half million didn't know one note from another—others had never touched an instrument—yet in half the usual time they learned to play their favorite instrument. Best of all, they found learning music *amazingly* easy. No monotonous hours of exercises—no tedious scales—no expensive teachers. This simplified method made learning music as easy as A-B-C!

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beginning to end, is right before your eyes in print and picture. First you are *told* how to do a thing, then a picture *shows* you how, then you do it yourself and *hear* it. And almost before you know it, you are playing your favorite pieces—jazz, ballads, classics. No private teacher could make it clearer. Little theory—plenty of accomplishment. That's why students of the U. S. School of Music get ahead twice as fast—*three times as fast* as those who study old-fashioned, plodding methods.

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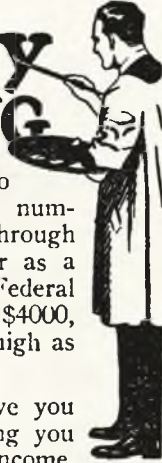
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#### WHAT INSTRUMENT FOR YOU?

- |                                     |               |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|
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| Organ                               | Hawaiian      |
| Violin                              | Steel         |
| Clarinet                            | Guitar        |
| Flute                               | Drums and     |
| Harp                                | Traps         |
| Cornet                              | Mandolin      |
| Cello                               | Sight Singing |
| Guitar                              | Trombone      |
| Ukulele                             | Piano         |
| Saxophone                           | Accordion     |
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## Dancing Partner

By **VIVIAN GREY**

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"Dancing Partner" might be a fairy story, glamorous, fantastic, unreal, did it not give the sense to the reader that Lolita, glove clerk by day and taxi dancer by night, was the very sort of girl that he might well meet around the next corner.

Lolita, looking up into the handsome eyes of aristocratic Phil Nearing, fell suddenly and hopelessly in love with the owner of those eyes, and from then on her life became complicated. There were those who would bar the gate to her entrance to that world of wealth and fashion through which Phil Nearing walked so confidently. Out of a clear sky the false accusation of theft was made against her. She felt desolate, an outcast, and the cruelty of the world cut deep. And then just as suddenly there came a turn in events that brought the gold of sunshine into the blackness that covered Lolita's soul.

Vivian Grey, shrewd, sympathetic observer of youth, wise interpreter of the modern, you have done it again in this altogether fascinating novel.

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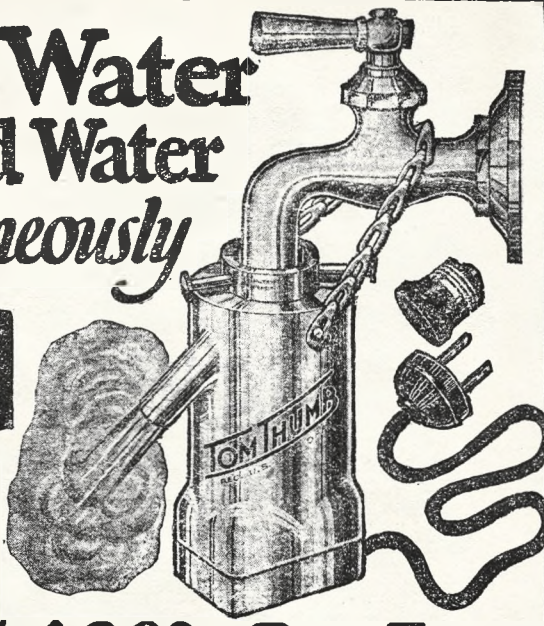
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# Running Hot Water From Your Cold Water Faucet Instantaneously

Only \$3.75 Complete

Agents! This Marvelous Invention Will Make Up to \$40.00 a Day Easy



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## No Installation - Stick One On Faucet and Sale Is Made

Think of it! no installation, no extra expense—nothing else to do but to stick it on the faucet, turn on electricity and it is there ready for duty. Easily removed when not wanted and easily carried to any part of house where cold water is running and hot water is wanted. Has many uses—too numerable to mention here. Weighs only 1 lb., made entirely of aluminum. Cannot rust, no moving parts, nothing to get out of order.

## If \$40 A Day Sounds Good To You Rush Coupon

This new scientific invention offers tremendous sales possibilities. At the low price of \$3.75 you should be able to sell at least forty a day. You pocket \$1.00 cash commission on every sale. If you would like to know all about this proposition, sign your name and address to coupon or, better still, get started selling at once. Attach money order for \$2.75 to coupon and rush to us. We will send complete selling outfit containing 1 Tom Thumb electric hot water heater, order blanks, selling particulars and everything necessary to help you get started making up to \$40.00 a day at once.

Terminal Products Co., Inc.  
Dept. 1508, 200 Hudson St.,  
New York, N. Y.

The Tom Thumb electric hot water heater looks like a big money maker to me. I am sure interested in knowing how to make up to \$40.00 a day with this proposition. I have checked below the proposition I am interested in at this moment.

- Enclosed find money order for \$2.75. Please send me one Tom Thumb Junior, order blanks and selling information. It is understood upon receipt of this sample outfit I will be permitted to take orders and collect \$1.00 cash deposit for every Tom Thumb, Jr. I sell, or \$1.50 for every Tom Thumb, Sr. I sell. It is understood I will send the orders to you and you will ship direct to my customers C.O.D. for the balance.
- I would like to have additional information before acting as one of your agents. Please send this by return mail free of obligation.

Name .....

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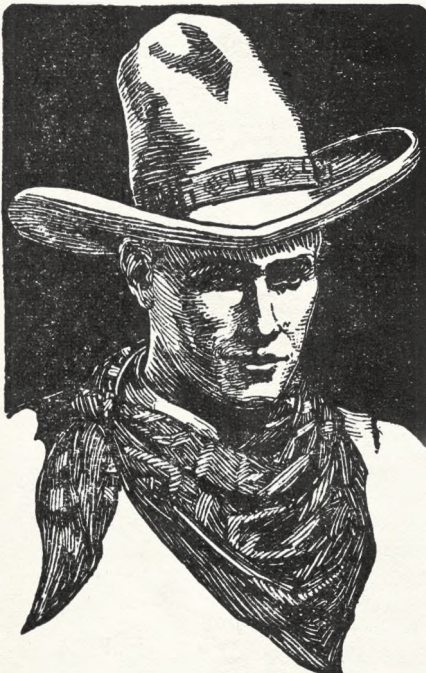
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### Common Old-Age Symptoms

Medical men know this condition as hypertrophy of the prostate gland. Science now reveals that this swollen gland—painless in itself—not only often cheats men of health, but also bears on the bladder and is often directly responsible for sciatica, back ache, pains in the legs and feet, frequent nightly rising, and dizziness, denoting high blood pressure. When allowed to run on it is frequently the cause of the dreaded disease cystitis, a very severe bladder inflammation.

### 65% Have This Gland Disorder

Prostate trouble is now reached immediately by a new kind of home treatment—a new, safe hygiene that goes directly to the gland, itself, without drugs, medicines, massage, lessons, diet or the application of electricity. It is absolutely safe. 100,000 men have used it to restore the prostate gland to normal functioning. The principle involved in this treatment is recommended by practically all the physicians in America. Amazing recoveries are made in seven days. Another grateful effect is usually the immediate disappearance of chronic constipation. Usually the entire body is toned up,

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### Send for FREE Book

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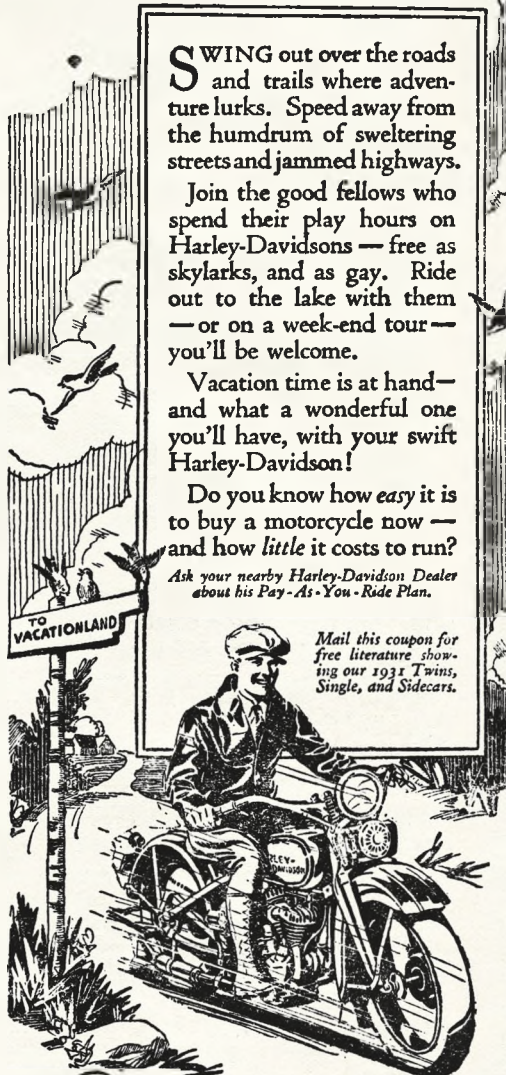
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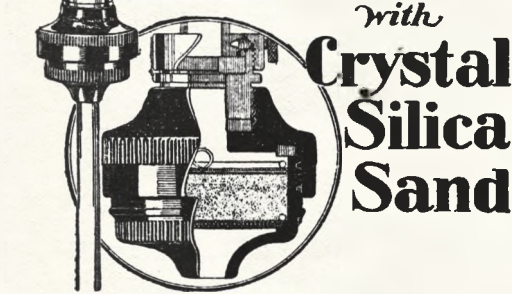
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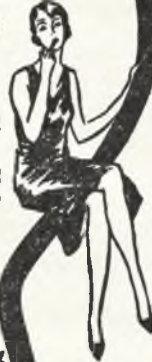
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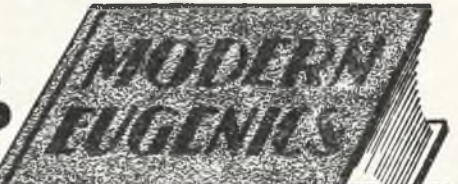
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# New York Love

By Irene Tyler

**H**E is making a plaything of you! I know him and his type. He doesn't mean marriage, Doreen. He doesn't even think of it!"

Doreen Farringway was pulling on a close-fitting hat in front of the mirror, and she turned and faced her sister Melda, her face flushed, her eyes sparkling angrily.

"Really?" she asked. "And how do you know what he means and what he thinks?"

"Because for one thing he has offered me the opportunity of going out to dinner with him more than once," Melda said, scorn and anxiety fighting each other in her voice. "And for another thing, he isn't the only man like that."

LS-1C

"He gives me a good time," Doreen said, setting her lips together.

"Oh, they'll all do that for a while!" Melda said, still with that ring of passionate scorn in her tones. "It's the price they expect to pay—a few dinners, the theater now and then, and a bit of clever flattery. Martin Dornford is like that. He regards girls like us—employees in his firm—as cheap—just fair game. Oh, Doreen!" she burst out. "If you knew how I worry about you when you're with him! If you knew how I hate it!"

"Don't be so silly, Melda! I can look after myself," Doreen said, slipping into her coat. "You don't know anything about it. As a matter of fact, I believe he is going to ask me

to marry him to-night. He said he had something important to say to me." She gathered up her bag and gloves. "And there's no need to wait up for me," she added. "I may be late."

"Doreen!" Melda protested, but it was useless. Her sister had gone, and Melda heard the sound of her footsteps going briskly down the worn stairs of the house where they roomed.

There was the slam of the front door, and—silence!

For a few moments Melda stood frowning, her slim body tense in the simple black dress that made even more exquisitely perfect her pale face in its frame of burnished hair.

The sisters were not alike. Doreen was pretty, with fluffy golden hair and wide blue eyes.

Melda's beauty was cold until she smiled; but her smile transformed her into something lovely, something passionate. She carried her head high, a challenge in the coolness of her gray eyes, and her mouth curved sometimes in a secret, scornful little smile as she looked at men.

She had learned so soon in her life that they worshiped beauty—and destroyed it.

But there were dreams, too, at the back of the coolness of her gray eyes—dreams of a worship that would be of something more than her beauty—dreams that kept her looking with fastidious scorn at the eyes of the men who told her she was beautiful.

Martin Dornford had been one of them, and Melda felt inclined to shudder each time she thought of the pale face and light-blue eyes of the man with whom Doreen, her sister, was spending so much of her time.

Melda knew instinctively that Martin Dornford was unscrupulous, callous, and selfish, and she moved

about the room restlessly as she thought of Doreen, in all her young recklessness and blind desire for pleasure, in his society.

In many ways, Doreen had been causing her anxiety lately. She had a new, hard defiance about her—a reckless gayety that did not ring true, and she was buying and wearing a good many more new clothes than Melda knew she could afford out of her small salary.

There had been a new coat, an evening gown and wrap and slippers that she had said she purchased at a sale.

"Why did I let her go?" ran Melda's restless thoughts. "Why didn't I make her stay?"

She was on the alert, as time went by, for the sounds of her sister's return, and when at last she heard the front door open and close, she moved across to the door of their room and opened it.

Doreen was coming up the stairs, and Melda shut the door again and moved quietly back into the room. It would never do to let her sister know she had been waiting and watching for her return. She would only accuse her of meddling.

Then suddenly she heard something that made her jerk her head upright and listen intently—the sound of a sob stifled in Doreen's throat as she ascended the last few stairs and crossed the landing.

Forgetting caution in the anxiety that possessed her, Melda crossed swiftly to the door and opened it.

"Doreen!" she called, and as she caught a glimpse of her sister, something utterly forlorn and dejected in her attitude struck at her heart. "My dear, what's the matter?"

Doreen's only answer was a sob. She came into the room, and Melda shut the door, following her across to the bed where they slept. The

other girl flung herself face downward on it and gave way to an unrestrained burst of crying.

"What has happened?" Melda's voice was strained. "Tell me, Doreen. Don't—don't cry like that!" She bent down and shook her sister's shoulder. "What's the matter?" she asked again.

"Let me go!"

Doreen's voice was shrill, and Melda, catching sight of her face, saw the ravages of temper in her sister's face.

"Don't be so absurd and childish!" she said, stifling her anxiety as well as she could. "You must tell me what's happened, Doreen. Is it something to do with Martin Dornford?"

"Yes." Doreen jerked herself into a sitting position and looked at her sister furiously. "You knew!" she flung at her. "You and he——"

"Doreen!" Melda's voice took on a note of authority. "I demand to know at once what has happened."

"Nothing," Doreen said sullenly, "except that he wants to see you to-morrow morning at ten o'clock."

Melda stared at her amazed.

"Wants to see me at ten o'clock to-morrow?" she repeated. "Why me?"

"I don't know, but he does," was the sullen answer. "I suppose it is because he is keen on you," Doreen added with a burst of renewed fury, "and you must have known it. I suppose you thought it amusing to let me go on and——"

"Oh, Doreen, don't be so ridiculous!" Melda said sharply. "I told you he asked me to go out with him and I refused. I hate him!"

"Well, then, what does he mean?" Doreen asked, and eyed her sister curiously. "He said I was to tell you from him that only you could make repayment——"

"Repayment!" Melda's face turned white, and her eyes grew dark with fear. "What do you mean by 'repayment'?"

There was no answer for a moment. Doreen's nature was shallow, but something about Melda's white face just then struck right down past her selfishness into her heart.

"I borrowed some money from him," she said at last.

Melda said nothing. She stared at Doreen in horrified silence.

The other girl's control snapped.

"Don't look at me like that!" she cried in sudden hysteria. "I—he offered it to me, and he said it didn't matter when it was paid back. Tonight he said he was hard up and needed it. I thought he was joking at first. He pretended he was surprised I hadn't got it, and——"

"How much is it?" Melda broke in.

"I don't remember—quite!" Doreen said. "I didn't have it all at once. It—it was for those things—my hat and coat and evening gown and——"

"How much?" Melda said again through dry lips.

"Two hundred dollars—I think!" Doreen said.

The other made a little convulsive movement. Two hundred dollars!

This was Thursday. They would both be paid to-morrow, and their united salaries came to a little over forty dollars. Out of that they must pay the rent of their room and feed and clothe and keep themselves for the week.

It would have been funny—if it had not been tragic.

Two hundred dollars! It might just as well have been two thousand dollars for all the chance either of them had of repaying it.

"Two hundred dollars!" she whispered, and suddenly turned away,

sitting down in the nearest chair, realizing that her legs would not hold her up much longer. "Two hundred dollars!"

"Oh, don't keep on saying it as though it was a fortune!" Doreen burst out furiously.

Melda said nothing, and Doreen began to cry again. But Melda, busy with the thoughts that were racing through her mind, did not hear her.

At first Melda had been stunned. The impossibility of their being able to repay such a sum was the beginning and end of her thoughts. Then the recollection that Doreen had said she was to see Martin Dornford at ten o'clock the following day came back to her.

"Doreen," she said unsteadily, "what was it he said about—about my repaying it?"

"I told you," Doreen said resentfully. "He said that only you could repay it, and he would see you in his office at ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

"But in what way did he say I could repay it?" Melda asked again.

"I don't know!" cried Doreen angrily, and went on sobbing.

She had lost her chance. She had dreamed of winning the rich Martin Dornford for a husband, and now the dream had vanished. She hated everything and every one, and most of all her sister, whom her employer had said must repay the borrowed money.

And Melda sat silent, cold with terror, dreading the dawning of the next day, wondering what the future held.

It was five minutes to ten as Melda left her desk and walked across the office toward the door marked with Martin Dornford's name.

She had turned the handle and was about to enter when she heard an angry masculine voice coming from the other side of the door.

"I always said you were a rotter, Martin. That's trickery of the worst description, and I'll not stand for it, I warn you!"

The door opened violently, and Melda, unable to get away from it in time, was struck by it. The papers she held went flying in all directions, and she dropped her arm with a little exclamation of pain. Then she heard a quick apology beside her.

"I beg your pardon. Are you hurt?"

"No."

She looked up quickly into a concerned face bending above her. The man who had caused the accident was standing with an odd expression in his eyes as he looked at her—startled wonder replacing the anger that had been there.

A gentler expression came as he saw her face whiten a little.

"I am sorry. You are hurt," he said quickly. "I—I'm afraid I swung that door open with a good deal of force."

"I'm all right now. It was just for a second," she said, and smiled at him.

David Dornford smiled back, rather ruefully. A second ago he had been so angry that he could have struck the object of his anger. Instead, he had hurt a girl, and one so beautiful that he had thought for one second that he was only dreaming.

She bent to pick up the papers, but he forestalled her and stooped to retrieve them.

"I was clumsy," he said. "I'm so sorry."

"It's quite all right now. It was nothing," she said. "Thank you."

Then she turned again to the door and went into her employer's office.

As she entered the room, Melda wondered who the stranger was, but as she crossed the threshold and looked up to see her employer watching her, everything else left her mind but her own affairs.

She met his eyes fearlessly and coolly as she crossed the room toward his desk, and Martin Dornford, not for the first time, admired the slim perfection of her—her air of aloofness, and smiled in self-satisfaction as he thought of what he had to say to her.

"Sit down, Miss Farringway," he said smoothly. "I hope you weren't hurt by my cousin's clumsiness?"

So that man was his cousin!—she thought rapidly.

"No," she said quietly. "I wasn't hurt." Then she added: "Hadn't we better get straight to the point, Mr. Dornford?"

He smiled, and, sitting there, she hated his smile. It was so self-satisfied. Looking at him, she shivered.

"As you like," he said indifferently.

"My sister gave me a message from you last night," she went on. "You wanted to see me this morning."

"Yes."

He was toying idly with some papers on his desk, and he was still smiling.

Looking at her cool, disdainful eyes, he felt again that thrill of admiration that was succeeded by a thrill of triumph. She had consistently snubbed him—she had made no secret of her dislike of him. Now it was his turn.

He leaned forward.

"Your sister, Melda——" he began, but she cut him short.

"My name is Miss Farringway," she said coldly.

Again she saw him smile as he ignored the interruption.

"—is a charming girl," he went on. "Unfortunately, however, she is a little—shall I say—indiscreet? She should know by now that it is not wise to borrow money from a man."

"Doesn't that rather depend on the man?" Melda asked coldly.

"Possibly." He was not abashed. "However, in this case it was indiscreet, because I wanted the money repaid, and she cannot repay it. As you know, the firm is strict. If it were even rumored that a girl in your sister's position had borrowed money from a man in mine, the firm would dispense with her services, and a certain amount of unpleasant scandal would cling to the incident."

"I know all this," Melda said quietly. "I am waiting to know in what way I can repay the money my sister borrowed from you."

"I will tell you."

He leaned back in his chair and put his hands together—long, cruel hands.

"First of all, I had better explain," he began slowly, "that I am not the type of man who cares for the idea of marriage. But on the other hand, everybody does not share my views. My uncle, Silas Dornford, who, as you know, has retired from an active part in this business, still has the controlling interest. In other words, he owns the business—and a good deal of the money as well."

Melda had seen Silas Dornford once, a grim old man with keen eyes beneath bushy gray brows, who had come through the building finding fault with everything, while a crowd of anxious men hovered about him, trying to please him.

"My uncle thinks that a young man should marry. Also, he wants his name handed on," Martin Dornford added. "My cousin, whom you

saw just now, and I, are the only two surviving members of the family, and my uncle quarreled years ago with David's father. In fact, he never forgave him for marrying David's mother. He dislikes David on that account, so I am in the direct running for old Silas's money and the business—if I can manage to avoid a break with him before his death, which ought to be soon. He has heart trouble."

The callousness of his voice fanned her dislike, but Melda said nothing, and again he went on in his smooth, suave voice:

"That being so, I am prepared to fall in with the old man's wishes—up to a certain point. And that is where you come in."

Melda waited, her clear-cut face giving not a hint of her real feelings.

"I shall produce you as my fiancée—my intended wife," he said calmly. "You're all the old man requires in a wife for me—charming and good-looking."

He smiled meaningly, and Melda stiffened at his tone.



**"What has happened?" Melda's voice was strained. "Tell me, Doreen. Is it something to do with Martin Dornford?"**



"But why me?" she asked, her eyes wide with the horror she could not hide. "Why not some one else?"

He laughed.

"They might take it into their heads to sue me for breach of promise, or be too clinging. Now, your sister, for instance"—and he made a gesture that sent a thrill of hatred through Melda—"she was out for all she could get—thought she'd got me! No girl can do that. You hate me, and that suits me admirably!"

"And supposing I refuse?" she asked coldly, getting to her feet.

He rose, and came and stood behind her.

"Then your sister would be dismissed from the firm, and I expect you would follow," he said smoothly. "I should like to remind you that there are still a good many girls out of work. It wouldn't be easy to get another position."

Melda clenched her hands in despair.

"This is a form of blackmail!" she protested.

He shrugged his shoulders, smiling, but his eyes gleamed with sudden malice.

"You're at liberty to report it, if you like," he said smoothly. "But for your sister's sake, I should advise you to think it over. After all, it won't be so bad. I'll see that you are dressed for the part. You'll have attractive clothes, and I'll give you a good time if you behave."

"Very well. I will think it over and let you know," Melda replied dully.

"I should like to have your decision before you go home," he said with insolent assurance.

She went quickly to the door, and he watched her go.

As the door shut behind her he leaned back in his chair, scowling. He had looked forward to this inter-

view for a considerable time—had anticipated triumph—but somehow Melda had taken all the triumph from him.

"She wants curing of those airs and graces," he muttered as he saw her disappear. "Well"—he laughed unpleasantly—"I'll cure her."

Melda felt desperate as she sat at her desk. She knew that she had no choice but to accept the terms that Martin Dornford had offered her. He had spoken the truth when he said that dismissal would come to Doreen if it were discovered that she had taken money from him.

All the afternoon Melda had tried to find a way out, but there was none.

If she and Doreen sold everything of value they possessed, she doubted if they could raise two hundred dollars. There was nothing to do but give in.

For Doreen's sake and her own she must consent to deceive old Silas Dornford—pretending to be engaged to a man she hated.

She wrote him a note at last, her face whiter than usual as she put down the words.

I have no choice but to accept your terms. But I make it a condition that I am released the moment your need for a fiancée is ended, and that the engagement is in name alone.

She signed it with her name, and sent it in by one of the office boys, and then got ready to go home.

To-night was her last night of freedom! To-morrow she would be, outwardly at least, the affianced wife of a man whom she hated!

She was just leaving when she heard her name spoken rather uncertainly in a masculine voice, and as she turned her head, a man came toward her.

"You will excuse me, I hope, Miss Farringway?"

It was David Dornford, and Mel-da's heart gave a sudden leap of pleasure while a hint of color crept into her cheeks as she stood facing him.

"I only wanted to make sure I hadn't hurt you," he went on.

She smiled instantly.

"Why, no!" she said cordially as he dropped into a walk beside her.

"You see"—and he gave a laugh, half rueful, half with a note of anger in it—"I was angry. I think I still am, and I sent that door flying. I might easily have broken your arm."

"But you didn't," she said quietly. "I knew you were angry," she added. "I was angry myself! So I sympathized with you." Then she changed the subject. "You haven't been with the firm long, have you, Mr. Dornford?" she asked.

"No," he said. "I joined it only this week. It was my uncle's wish. In fact, he insisted on it. I was studying to be a doctor—" He broke off abruptly. "Perhaps I shall like this just as well," he finished doubtfully.

Melda stole a glance at him, seeing his clear-cut features. He was not handsome, but he had a look of strength and utter honesty about him.

In a flash she guessed why Martin Dornford had chosen this time to strike a blow for himself.

Here was a rival for his uncle's regard and affection—his rival for the many thousands old Silas Dornford had made, and for the business he had built up!

Her lip curled. Was it a fight between them? Was this man at her side equally as determined to beat his cousin?—Melda wondered.

Before she realized what she was doing, she had spoken.

"And supposing you don't?" she asked.

"I'll go back to doctoring." The man beside her spoke grimly. "I only threw it up for a whim of my uncle's. He has been good to me in his own way, and he seemed to wish me to come into the business. He made a point of it, and it seemed ungrateful to refuse, since he has educated me. All the same"—and again she heard that note of grimness in his voice—"after to-day I think I'll tell him I'm unfitted for business life, and risk appearing ungrateful!"

Her heart warmed with a sudden little rush of gladness. Here at least was some one honest enough to put the work he cared for before the desire to get Silas Dornford's money.

"Why don't you?" she said impulsively. "It must be so glorious to have work that you really love!"

His eyes lit up as he looked at her.

"It is," he said, and before they knew it, they were deep in talk—the eager, intimate talk of friends who suddenly have found one another.

When they reached the end of the block Melda stopped reluctantly.

"I take the subway here," she said.

David Dornford stopped and looked at her.

No other man had ever looked at her quite as he did just then. Other men worshiped her beauty, and Melda resented their glances. But his she did not resent. It was as though something in her answered to that look.

He spoke at last, hesitatingly.

"I was going to have a solitary dinner somewhere. I don't know any one in town except my cousin and my uncle," he said. "I suppose you wouldn't— It seems impudence to ask you if you would have

dinner with me, but if you would, I should be honored!"

Something deep within her clamored suddenly. She had not forgotten her compact with Martin Dornford. She had agreed to his terms, and to-morrow she would be introduced to every one as his promised wife!

But to-night was her own—her last night of freedom, the last night when she could do as she wished. A sudden recklessness took her by the throat.

"Yes," she said simply, "I'd like to come."

He took her to a quiet restaurant, and sat opposite to her across a softly shaded table. It was delightful and intimate, but all the time she seemed to see the face of Martin Dornford rising before her eyes as though to mock her.

She thrust it aside. To-morrow she would begin to pay her debt. To-night was her own! She would give herself up to the enjoyment of the hour spent with the charming, attractive man who faced her.

It was growing late when David Dornford escorted her to the house where she and Doreen roomed, and as Melda came to a stop, David Dornford was speaking.

"It's been a wonderful evening to me," he said. "I—I would like to see you again."

She felt an impulse to cry:

"No! Never again! This is my last evening. To-morrow——"

She clenched her hands. To-morrow this man who had looked at her as no other man had ever done, who had made her his friend in a single evening, would know that she was engaged to marry his cousin, whom he despised and disliked.

Supposing she told him? She pulled up her thoughts with a little jerk. Of what was she thinking?

She had met this man to-day, and to-morrow their brief acquaintance would be ended.

She laughed—a laugh that puzzled the man at her side, for it was so weary, so bitter.

"Perhaps," she said vaguely. "And perhaps—not! Who knows? Good night, now, and thank you. I must go in!"

She turned without waiting for an answer, and ran quickly up the steps of the house, while David Dornford walked slowly away.

How could he know that she had shut the door to the street and was leaning against it, shaking as she listened to the sound of his departing footsteps, fighting the tears that threatened?

"And so, Melda, my dear, you make conditions, do you?" Martin Dornford said to the girl who was sitting beside him in his car. "That is amusing!"

Melda did not answer. They were on their way to the house of Silas Dornford, and she was to be presented to the old man as Martin's wife-to-be. Payment for her reckless sister's action had begun, and Melda's heart felt cold and without the power to feel anything save loathing of this man sitting next to her, the man whose money had paid for the expensive gown and wrap that she wore.

"The first condition," went on his suave voice, "I shall be happy to grant you. The second—I am not so sure, my dear. You are a very lovely girl, and I am a man."

He laughed, and she shivered at the sound.

As he leaned over and touched her hand she drew back with a gasp.

"Don't be absurd," he warned her. "Besides, look what I have here for you!"

He switched on the light in the car and held out something for Melda to see—a jewel case, in which lay a diamond and ruby ring.

It glittered and gleamed with every hue of the rainbow, and Martin Dornford lifted it out of its case and held it toward her.

"Let me put it on your finger," he said.

"No!" she said coldly. "If I must wear it, I'll put it on myself."

A curious expression flashed across his face. For a moment the savage brutality of the man seemed about to flare up. Then, with a laugh, he dropped the ring in her lap.

"Put it on," he said. "Have things your own way."

She slipped the ring on her finger just as the car had come to a standstill in front of a big, gloomy-looking house.

Martin Dornford alighted and held out his hand to Melda, but she avoided it as she stepped out and went up the steps. The man followed, his mouth curved in a smile that was not good to see, and rang the bell.

The house was as gloomy inside as out. The hall was bare and badly lighted, and the room into which they were shown was still more bleak and dismal.

"Sit down a moment and I'll find out if the old man will see you," he said, and Melda was left alone.

She sat there, proud, yet somehow infinitely pathetic in the bleak, drab dullness of the great room. Once she looked down at the ring on her finger and shuddered. Then she drew herself hastily erect as she heard footsteps coming toward the door.

It opened, and she turned her head indifferently, expecting to see the man she hated.

The next second she had half risen to her feet, and the color

rushed in a wave to her face, then receded, leaving it very pale.

"You!" she said.

With a puzzled frown David Dornford looked at her.

"Yes," he answered. "But—but Martin sent me down. He said I would find—his fiancée in here!"

Melda said nothing, and for a second there was silence, while the man stared at her. Then he moved toward her.

"I——" he began, and stopped short, while Melda saw him whiten and flinch as though some one had struck him across the face.

Then his eyes became like stone—granite that knew no softness or understanding, and his jaw was set.

"I presume they were right, and you are—Martin's fiancée?" he asked her at last.

Melda had to rouse herself to answer. She moved, and the light flashed on the ring that was on her left hand.

"Yes," she said, and the word, barely audible, seemed to her tortured ears like a trumpet call.

"I see," he answered slowly and coldly. "Allow me to offer you my best wishes! Will you come with me? My uncle wants to see you."

Her limbs felt as though they were weighed with lead as she followed him across the dreary hall, and upstairs, where he opened the door of a room on the first landing and stood aside for her to enter.

Melda could see nothing at first for the tears that threatened. Then, as her eyes cleared, she saw the bent figure sitting in the great chair drawn near the blazing fire on the hearth.

She had seen Silas Dornford before, but he had been more vigorous then. Even in a few months he seemed to have grown more frail and older-looking.

But there was nothing old about his piercing eyes, nor about the voice that spoke as she entered the room.

"Is this the girl, Martin? Well, let's look at you, my dear. No need to be frightened of an old man, is there?"

Melda came forward silently, and stood just within the old man's line of vision. She was wearing a simple evening gown of dark red, and her throat rose white and lovely from the chiffon, while above it the burnished gold of her hair shone gloriously.

She saw the old man's eyes move to her face, then suddenly he broke into a dry laugh and turned to Martin Dornford standing at his side.

"I can't think how she came to take you. She's worth some one better. Money, I suppose, in the hope that I'll make my will in your favor now you've done what I wanted you to. Well, I'm not sure that I blame her. Money means a lot these days. Only don't try to fool me it's otherwise."

"My dear uncle," Martin Dornford's smooth voice cut in, "you think of your money too much. You'll live for a good many years to enjoy it, I expect."

"I wonder you don't say you hope it," the old man barked. "David, over there, doesn't. Look at his face—black as thunder."

David Dornford moved suddenly into the circle of light, and as Melda saw his face, something in her heart ached intolerably.

"I do hope it!" he exclaimed stoutly. "And I want to tell you, while I'm about it, that I've decided once and for all to go back to my medicine. I'm not cut out for business. I found that out to-day."

"You understand that your allowance will cease?" the old man flung at him.

His nephew looked at him steadily.

"Yes, I understood that," he said. "I'm grateful to you for all you've done for me, but I don't want you to do any more. And I don't want your money. Good night."

He turned away, but as he went he made a curiously stiff bow in Melda's direction, and without looking at his cousin, went across to the door and out of the room.

"A stiff-necked young fool!" old Silas Dornford growled. He spoke to Melda suddenly. "What do you think of him?"

She flushed suddenly, and wanted to cry out: "Why, he's fine! He's honest and straight! Can't you see that? Are you so blind that you think his cousin is better than he is?"

But she bit back the words, and because of the tumult of emotion she was hiding, her voice seemed colder than ever as she answered:

"He seems very honest."

"One can be foolishly honest!" Martin Dornford added quickly.

"And foolishly dishonest!" the old man said with his dry cackle of laughter, while it seemed to Melda as though he looked at the other man intently. Then he spoke to her again. "And so you are engaged to marry this nephew of mine?" he demanded. "Who are you? What is your name?"

"My name is Farringway—Melda Farringway," she said quietly. "As for who I am——" She broke off as Martin Dornford caught her arm in a sudden grip that almost made her cry with pain.

"Melda is one of society's loveliest members, uncle," said the man she hated. "She——"

"Let her speak for herself," the old man ordered, and turned back to Melda, who had given a start of

surprise. "Now, then, young lady, who are you?"

For a moment Melda was tempted to fling aside all thoughts of caution and confess the truth. She was acting a lie—and she hated it.

Then she thought of Doreen—foolish, reckless Doreen, for whose sake she was enduring this. She thought of the grim specter of unemployment that would haunt them both, and she straightened her slim shoulders.

"You heard what he said?" Her voice had almost open scorn in it. "I can hardly agree with that, can I?"

He gave his dry chuckle, and Martin Dornford's fingers slowly relaxed their cruel, torturing pressure.

"You've wits, as well as pride and spirit, young lady," the old man said. "So I must believe him, must I?"

He looked at her, and she caught some expression in his keen old eyes that puzzled her for a moment. It was as though he was silently asking her a question.

She felt a sudden liking for the grim old man, and she smiled at him for the first time. The coldness and scorn fled from her face, and old Silas Dornford saw the sweetness of



*Melda did not speak. She was watching the other man's face. It was set like iron, and she wondered whether it would soften if she were to tell him the truth.*

her—the dreaming loveliness of her eyes, the truth behind her cold reserve.

"Well?" he shot out the question. "When are you two going to be married? No sense in waiting, is there? I want to see you settled down, Martin, and since, to my surprise, you've chosen a girl infinitely above you, it can't be too soon for my liking."

Melda grew rigid. For the moment she was taken by surprise, and



her blood ran cold with horror as she saw Martin Dornford's eyes flame for a moment as she looked at him.

Then she turned to the older man.

"Not—not for a long while yet," she said breathlessly, and he saw her parted lips tremble with agitation. "I——"

"Isn't it a bit too soon to talk about our marriage, uncle?" his nephew asked smoothly. "It's only a day or two ago since we became engaged, you know."

"There's nothing to wait for—unless you're waiting for me to die first," the old man retorted. "D'you suppose you can trick me like that? That after all the years I've lived

I don't know when I'm being fooled?"

"What do you mean, uncle?" asked Martin Dornford. "Trick you? In what way?"

"If you don't know, I won't tell you," the old man growled. "Now go, and tell David I want to see him. He'll not have gone yet."

"Very well."

The younger man's face as he turned away was not good to look at as he stepped to Melda's side. "We'll say good night!"

That cruel pressure was on her arm again, and she stiffened. She looked down and saw the old man's eyes fixed on her face—saw understanding, and a queer, unexpected kindness in them.

"Good night," he said, and she replied "Good night!" faintly, and turned and went through the doorway with Martin Dornford.

"Now let go of my arm!" she said in a low voice. "How dare you grab me like that?"

"Be quiet!" he told her, and gripped her elbow more fiercely. "So he saw through it! He wouldn't have if you'd played your part!"

"Let go of my arm!" she said again. She felt a wave of hysteria touch her, and gave a little laugh that caught breathlessly in her throat as she went with him down the stairs.

"He knew all along!" she told him.

He looked at her with eyes that took in her proud loveliness, but he did not speak, and suddenly she was seized with a strange, cold sense of terror.

Martin Dornford, when he threatened and blustered, she could meet and conquer, but there was something terrifying about his silence.

A door below them opened, and as David Dornford came out, she caught sight of his broad shoulders.

—his fine, strong face turned up for an instant toward them.

She saw the hurt look in his eyes, and it sickened her. It was as though he said aloud: "You were my friend, and you tricked me."

She wanted to cry out the truth, but instead she walked on down the staircase, and the three of them met in the hall, where Martin Dornford spoke to his cousin.

"Going upstairs to try to please the old man?" he sneered unpleasantly. "You won't find it easy. He's in one of his nasty moods."

"He wants to see you, Mr. Dornford," Melda said swiftly.

David's eyes went to her pale, proud face, but it told him nothing.

The pride that had kept her silent while Martin Dornford's fingers bruised her arm still sealed her lips, and kept her eyes from giving the message that her tortured heart seemed to cry aloud.

And so, in silence he passed them, and walked on upstairs while they went out to the waiting car and drove away.

*Tap-tap!* went the keys of Melda's typewriter, but she worked mechanically, hardly knowing what she was doing.

During the night she had lain awake, saying over and over again to herself in the darkness of the room, with Doreen sleeping peacefully beside her: "I can't do it! I can't go on!"

Yet she knew she must!

"If it weren't for David!" she thought miserably. In her imagination she kept seeing him, white-faced and stony-eyed—kept on remembering him on that night when they had eaten together and talked and become friends.

"Well, it's over!" she thought bitterly. "He thinks I became engaged

to Martin Dornford in the hopes of getting his uncle's money. Oh, let him think it! What do I care?"

But in her heart she knew she cared. She was on the alert the whole time for the sight of him—for the sound of his voice. But the morning passed without a sign of him.

She rose listlessly as Martin Dornford's bell rang. Oh, how she hated him—the thought of seeing him!

He was writing when she entered his office, and without looking up he tore off the slip he had been writing, blotted it, then pushed it across to her.

"I called you in to give you this!" he said.

She met his eyes for a brief second before she looked down at the check made out to her—for three hundred dollars!

She stood still, and a tinge of red rose beneath the ivory pallor of her face, while her eyes darkened slowly.

How dared he think she would take his money!

He rose, and for a brief moment she met his eyes, while his own gleamed with a sudden light as he looked at her.

She picked up the check, and without a word, tore it in two halves, which floated to the floor.

He took a step forward, but she faced him with something in her eyes that stopped his blustering approach.

"What makes you think you have any right to insult me?" she asked coldly.

"You don't understand," he answered. "That was to buy yourself clothes with. I want you to resign from the office to-day. The old man has had another heart attack—it can't be long now before the end, and this bluff has got to be carried through. Do you understand?" he



added with a fierceness that there was no mistaking. "If I——"

Some one turned the handle of the door behind them, and instinctively he moved away from her.

She turned—to see David Dornford standing behind her.

She felt her heart give a great leap. Then his cousin spoke sneeringly:

"Ah, David! Well, how's the old fellow? I understand your devotion led you to go over to him."

"At his request," answered the other curtly. "I have a message to you and Miss Farringway from him. Shall I give it in his own words?"

The scorn in his voice whipped Melda's pride. Under the lash of it she stood straight and silent, waiting.

"Do!" said the man she hated.

"It was this," David said evenly: "If my precious nephew, Martin, and his future wife wish to see any of my money, they had better show me their marriage certificate before I die. Then I'll know I've not been tricked!"

With a startled exclamation Martin Dornford took a step forward.

Then he stopped and looked at Melda, who had not moved an inch, although the rigid whiteness of her face told him that the thrust had gone home.

He laughed.

"That's pretty good, isn't it, Melda?" he asked. "Well," and he stooped and picked up the two halves of the check, thrusting them into his pocket, "that's called our bluff, hasn't it, my dear? I'm afraid you'll have to be content with the salary you get every week."

His eyes had gone from his cousin's face to Melda's, and with uncanny intuition he seemed to have guessed at the unspoken bond between them.

Neither of them spoke, and he went on:

"You didn't know, perhaps, David, but nowadays one can buy almost anything with money—even a fiancée—can't one, Melda?"

She did not speak. She was watching the other man's face.

It was set like iron, and she wondered whether it would soften if she were to tell him the truth. Then she wanted to laugh aloud.

To tell him the truth would simply mean that she and Doreen would be out of work—turned out of their room at the end of the week, and after that starvation would stare them in the face.

What was the use of being hurt—of letting her heart ache? David Dornford's opinion didn't matter to her—couldn't matter!

She forced a laugh to her lips.

"Well," she said, and looked at Martin Dornford. "That, as you say, is the end of it!"

She was thankful that the hateful pretense was at an end. She told herself that as David Dornford, without another word, and without looking at either her or his cousin, left the room.

But her heart was numb. Nothing mattered now. The tangle of life had seized hold of her, and she was caught in its web.

Oh, why did things happen like this? Why—why should torture come to her?

She turned blindly to go, but Martin Dornford's voice recalled her.

"Just a minute, Melda."

He came toward her—moving between her and the door, and turned the key in the lock.

"Just to make sure we're not interrupted for a moment or two," he said. "I have something to say to you."

He took a step forward, and she

heard his breath come quickly as he caught her wrist.

"Listen!" His voice had a new note in it that she had never heard before—a sound that frightened her more than she had ever been frightened before. "I always said I wouldn't marry—couldn't stand the idea. But—but I'm changing my mind." He bent nearer, his face close to hers. "I shouldn't mind you, Melda. You're interesting. I shouldn't get bored with you, and there'd be the money for us."

His grip had tightened. Melda found herself staring, with wildly beating heart, into his eyes. And they had changed. In some way they looked just like a wild animal's—a beast of prey that saw its victim within its reach.

A great shudder shook her, and she drew her breath in a gasping sob. Then, quite suddenly, she was ice cold again.

She jerked up her hand and dashed it, with all her strength, into that face bending above her.

"You little wild cat!" she heard him say.

But he had released her, and she was over by the door, fumbling for the key, while she tried to find words.

"I'd never marry you! Never—never—if I starved!" she cried in little broken sobs. "I don't care what you do! I'd rather die than marry you!"

He made a movement toward her, but she had the key turned at last, and had flung open the door. In another moment she was in the corridor, running toward the safe sanctuary of the general office.

It was nine o'clock as Melda entered the lobby of the Grand Hotel and looked about her. Then, seeing no sign of Martin Dornford, she pre-

pared to wait, idly watching the people coming and going.

It had been almost five o'clock when she had received a note from her employer that evening.

I owe you a sincere apology. I lost my head for a moment. In reality I still have no wish to marry. After to-night I shall consider that our compact is at an end, but I learned on telephoning my uncle's house this afternoon that he would like to see us both this evening for a few minutes. He did not say for what purpose, but I should be glad if you would come. Please meet me at the Grand Hotel at nine o'clock. I shall wait for you in the lobby.

As she tore the note up, Melda had decided that she would keep the appointment. She liked old Silas Dornford. If he wanted to see her again she would go.

She had waited a bare ten minutes when a bell boy came toward her.

"Miss Farringway?" he asked, and with a little start she acknowledged her name.

"A message has come from Mr. Dornford over the phone," the boy said. "His uncle is dying, and he is unavoidably detained. He does not expect, however, to be long, and would like you to wait for him. Will you come this way, please?"

She followed as he led the way across the lobby and to an elevator which took them upstairs.

They reached a softly carpeted corridor, and the boy led her to a door and opened it.

"If you will wait in there," he said.

The room was dark, and she took a little step forward as the door shut.

She felt something brush her arm, and cried out. Then the lights were turned on, and she found herself looking full into the face of Martin Dornford!

She stared at him stupefied, ut-

ter surprise swamping everything else, then, suddenly, panic overwhelmed her.

In that minute's silence, while they stood face to face, a thunderous voice seemed to echo in her ears, and a thousand things leaped into her brain at once.

Silas Dornford was not dying! Martin Dornford had lied again to her!

But why take the trouble to trick her like this? She had come to see him as he had requested.

It was the man who broke the silence.

"That was very neat, you must admit, my dear," he said.

The sneering familiarity of his voice awoke resentment in her, and steadied her.

"Very!" Scorn was in her voice. "But as I came at your request to meet you this evening, I can't quite understand the reason for this."

"You apparently don't quite understand," he said in the same familiar way. "You are here to listen to a proposal of marriage. You are already my fiancée—to-morrow you will become my wife!"

"No!" she said steadily, although fear was knocking at her heart.

He smiled—not pleasantly.

"Very well. Then you stay here with me in this private suite of rooms until to-morrow morning," he said, "and I shall ask you the same question again then, and see if your answer is any different."

There was silence after that—a silence that was more frightening than anything she had ever remembered. She wanted to scream—but no voice would come from her throat. She wanted to move, but her limbs were chained to the ground.

He leaned toward her, catching her arm, and at his touch the hate in her flared up.

**LS—2C**

"Don't touch me!" she panted. "Do you hear me? Don't touch me!"

For a second he was taken back by the fierce hatred in her face. Then, with a laugh, he reached out and swung her into his arms.

It lasted but a second—that embrace—for with superhuman strength she thrust him away from her, and gasping and sobbing for breath raced across the room toward the window.

"If you touch me again I shall jump out!" she cried.

"Don't be foolish!" He stood where she had left him, looking at her, and the flame had not died down in his eyes. "It's fifty feet to the ground. Be sensible."

"I mean it!" she said wildly.

He realized that she was desperate, and knew he must be careful.

"Have it your own way," he said. "Personally I should like some supper, and I expect you would. I'll go down myself and order it." He made a low bow. "And meanwhile perhaps you would care to examine the suite. Allow me to assure you I have seen to it personally that every door is locked. The walls are soundproof. If you want anything you will find it through that door!"

He pointed to a door at the farther side of the room, near the spot where she crouched, and she watched him as he took the key out of the lock and opened and shut the suite door.

She heard the key grate and turn in the other side. Then there was silence.

For a second she stood as though frozen. Then swiftly she moved. The window was flung up, and she leaned out.

Yes, he had spoken the truth. The ground was more than fifty feet



*He had released her, and she was over by the door, fumbling for the key, while she tried to find words. "I'd never marry you! Never—never—if I starved!" she cried.*

below, and to jump would mean death.

And then—just as she was about to close the window—she saw the iron fire escape.

It was to the right of the window where she was leaning out—to the right. And that door to which Martin Dornford had pointed was to the right as well.

Like a flash she was through the door that communicated with a bedroom beyond. She shut the door, and locked it swiftly on her side, lest

he should come back, then, moving to the window, she opened it, and looked out.

The fire escape was still to the right. Evidently a door in the corridor opened onto

it—the next door to the suite. But the iron platform that would mean escape—freedom—was within five or six feet of her, with only a little railing separating her from it.

She knew it was her only chance. If her blood ran cold, her head at least was steady as she got out on the narrow sill, and without giving herself time to think, made the leap.

She found herself on her knees, bruised and shaking, now that it was over. But the open window was behind her, and in front the iron

staircase stretched down into the safety of the streets of New York.

Trembling she began the downward climb, and it seemed to her rasping nerves to be never-ending.

But she struggled on fiercely, and when she at last got to the bottom, she began to run wildly.

She would have hailed a taxi, but she had not the money to pay for it with her, and she knew that such an amount was not in her possession even in her room.

The strain of the whole thing was telling on her, and she swayed every now and then, while her great dark eyes stared rather unseeingly in front of her as she walked, blind to every one, terrified of pursuit.

"Melda—Miss Farringway!"

That voice brought her back from the mists. She stood still, her hands hanging helplessly at her sides.

"Melda!" called the voice again.

"David! Oh, David!" Her voice was a terrified sob.

"My dear, what is it?"

David Dornford gripped her arm, and with the other free hand hailed a taxi. Before the little curious knot of people who had witnessed the incident could see more, he had helped her into it, and given the man some hurried instructions.

He was by her side. There in the darkness of the cab he was beside her, and the dangers and horrors of the night faded and were gone as his arms went around her, infinitely comforting.

"I've no right to say I love you." His steady voice was very grave. "But I do. For what it's worth, it's yours dear, and if I can help——"

"I think you saved me—just now—from going mad!" she said in a whisper.

"Tell me," he urged quietly.

And so she told it from the beginning, the miserable story of Do-

reen's folly, and as it unfolded itself, his hands clenched.

"Martin wants thrashing!" he said at last grimly. "To think I never guessed——"

"How could you?" she broke in. "Never mind him. After all, it doesn't matter—now."

She looked up at him. Through the unreal torture of that night his face had seemed to be there, in front of her. She had heard him say he loved her. What did the rest matter?

She gave herself to his arms, lifting her lips in perfect surrender to his, content to love and know that she was loved.

The cab swung on, through the darkness of the New York night, and it was Melda at last who came back to everyday things sufficiently to remember where they were.

"But we can't go on around and around New York," she protested. "Tell him to go to my home, David."

"Very well!" He gave the driver the address, then leaned back frowning. "But I'd rather you didn't stay there," he said. "Martin knows it. He might go there. You get your sister and go to a hotel for the night, and to-morrow we'll talk over things—arrange our wedding."

Long after he had left her and Doreen at the small hotel, Melda seemed to feel his kisses on her lips, his arms around her—arms that would never let her go.

She was David's wife!

It was like a dream to Melda as she came out of the quiet church, and stood for an instant leaning on David's arm.

His wife! She caught her breath in sudden realization! That other had been a dream—a nightmare of horror. This was real!

They hardly spoke as they made

their way through the now familiar streets to old Silas Dornford's house, and as they were admitted, she felt David's hand grip hers reassuringly.

"You're mine—don't forget it!" he said as they went upstairs. "Nothing can take you from me, now."

The house was very quiet as they knocked on the old man's door, but the moment they opened it, at Silas Dornford's gruff bidding, they heard Martin Dornford's voice.

"The girl was a thief," he was saying sullenly. "She got away with two hundred dollars of mine——"

Then, at the sound of their footsteps, he swung around.

His face went curiously gray as he saw Melda, standing with David's arm at her elbow, and in the terrible silence they heard the old man's dry chuckle of laughter.

"Just as I planned it," he said. "That'll do, David, you can stop looking murderous! Martin will be sufficiently punished when he realizes what he has lost. Not only my money when I'm dead, Martin—and the doctor tells me that with care I can live for some time yet—but the position you hold in my business now!"

His voice changed suddenly with the next words. It was as though fresh life came back to him—and a blaze of honest disgust was in his eyes as he added:

"Get out of this house—and stay out! Don't let me see you again!" he said. "You're a disgrace to your name! Now—go!"

Martin Dornford turned, and Melda could have found it in her heart to pity him then for he was beaten. But as she made a movement toward him, David's hand gripped her arm.

"You can do nothing. Let him go!" he whispered.

It was afternoon when they entered Silas Dornford's house. It was evening when at last they left it, and David Dornford's face, as he turned back to look at the one lighted window in the gloomy place, was oddly thoughtful.

"He's a queer old man," he said.

"He's a dear," Melda said softly, and she blew a little kiss back at that lighted window. "He's made everything easy. You're to go back to your beloved doctoring——"

He laughed suddenly, a deep sound, with a note of excitement in it.

"With—my wife," he broke in. "Melda, do you realize that?"

She turned to him in the misty darkness of the night, and her eyes as he looked down, held something that suddenly silenced him.

"It's our marriage day, and our wedding night," she said in a hushed voice.





# The Adorable Infant

By Gertrude Schalk

**H**ELLO!" Betty Ann's red lips parted in a decided yawn before the mouthpiece of the telephone. Her blue eyes were half closed, and her tumbled dark head leaned sleepily against the wall. Imagine any one calling up so early—it wasn't ten yet—when he must know everybody in Hillview had been up till all hours the night before at the lawn party.

"Hello?" she said again, and then suddenly she smiled, still sleepily, like a lazy kitten disturbed by the parent cat. "Oh, daddy? Yes, you woke me up, cruel thing! What? . . . Yes, Margie and Eve are still asleep. Nice of you to get your own breakfast this morning . . . Yes . . . No," and then suddenly, explosively, Betty Ann awoke. The sleepy look fled from her eyes. "Daddy! You did what?"

Margie's door opened slowly just then, and Margie's golden head poked out crossly.

"For Heaven's sakes, infant, what's all the noise about? You might take it more quietly and let a person sleep," she said, blinking dark lashes over equally dark eyes. Even half awake, Margie was beautiful.

For once Betty Ann didn't answer her older sister. She was still staring wide-eyed into the telephone.

"Daddy! You can't mean you've already invited him! But . . . I know, but there's nothing in the house, and we haven't cleaned this week, and—and—why, you couldn't! Daddy . . . listen, daddy!" But daddy had already hung up.

"Where's the fire?" Margie yawned, and retreated into her room. "Waking people up at this unearthly hour!"

"Margie!" Betty Ann rushed into her sister's room, her little face positively tragic. In her blue pajamas Betty Ann looked like a ten-year-old rather than a very grown-up young lady of eighteen. "Daddy's gone and invited a strange man down for the week-end!"

Margie, who had already settled back in bed, jerked erect like a rubber ball on the rebound.

"Betty Ann, he never did!" she whispered, her eyes wide.

Betty sat down on the foot of the bed, curling her toes under her, lips drooping disconsolately.

"And the whole house is upset. The guest room hasn't been cleaned for ages," she went on gloomily.

"Nonsense, I cleaned it myself two weeks ago," her sister interrupted.

"Well, it sure needs another cleaning now." Betty wouldn't be comforted. "The whole house is practically dirty. You know we didn't clean this week because of that old lawn party at church."

"As if I didn't know that!" Margie groaned, and lay back in bed.

"And there isn't a thing to eat in the house."

"Well, sitting here talking about it isn't fixing it either." Margie swung her feet slowly to the floor. "We'll have to call the stores right away and order something, and put the ice card out, and—oh, good heavens, wouldn't you know dad would pull something like this when everything was all topsy-turvy?"

"And they'll be here on the 1:15," finished Betty, as if she hadn't heard her sister.

Margie whirled, aghast. "What! Not that early!" she gasped. "Why, I thought they'd at least wait till the 3:30."

Betty shook her head sadly. "No, daddy says to expect them on the 1:15."

Margie clapped her hand to her head, and started for the bathroom.

"Good heavens! Call Eve, will you? We've got to do some tall hustling!"

Betty Ann stirred, sighed, and got into action. She ran into Evelyn's room and shook her second blond sister into wakefulness, then repeated the story of her dad's fall from grace.

"And he's a stranger to us, and they're coming on the 1:15," she finished excitedly.

"Daddy would do something like that," Eve grumbled, getting up reluctantly. "But still, a strange man is——" Her eyes brightened. "Hm-m-m, wonder if he's young."

"Oh, you're always thinking about new men," Betty Ann pouted. The three girls were congregated in the bathroom, taking turns under the shower. "You and Margie never give me a chance when a new man shows up."

"Why, infant, surely you don't care about men?" Margie laughed lightly.

"Well, I never get a chance to see whether I do or not. You might leave one of 'em alone and let me get a word in," retorted Betty.

"You're too young," Eve giggled.

"Is that so?" Betty bridled. "You're only twenty yourself, Miss Evelyn, and you were going with Jimmy when you were eighteen! So there!"

"Knocked out of the ring that time, Eve," Margie winked. "You might as well give up gracefully, and let the infant have this new man."

Eve shrugged carelessly. "O. K. with me. He's probably a dud anyway," she finished, yawning. "Take him with my compliments."

"And mine," put in Margie.

"Thank you kindly, sir," she said. Betty ducked under the



shower, and thus began the eventful day.

Ten thirty found Margie and Eve cleaning house like two distinct golden whirlwinds. Betty Ann was to clean the guest room and get lunch.

"Make some of those delicious little rolls, infant," Margie had instructed her. "And do the guest room. Eve and I will clean the rest."

Betty Ann, looking like a child playing at housekeeping in a last year's short faded gingham dress, her brief curls tied back with a blue ribbon, mixed the dough and set it to rise. Then with a last look at the oven she ran upstairs to clean the guest room.

And that's where the trouble started. For Sara, the family cat, had evidently decided that the air of the guest room was better for her week-old kittens than the cool air of the shed. Six fuzzy little kittens parked under the bed with Sara standing guard met Betty Ann's astonished gaze.

"Sara! I ought to spank you!" she cried, gathering the kittens up in her lap. "You march yourself right downstairs and out into the back yard!"

And Sara marched reluctantly, with many a backward look at Betty and the kittens. With the cat and the kittens established once more in the shed, Betty went back to clean the guest room. And in between spurts of dusting and sweeping, she ran downstairs to fix her dough, to make jelly, to cool lettuce and the hundred other little duties attendant on making up a nice cool luncheon.

The second time Betty went downstairs Sara sneaked back into the house with two kittens. There was more carting of squirming bits of fur down into the yard by Betty.

By that time Betty was beginning to feel slightly peeved.

The last time she went into the kitchen to mold the rolls and test the oven, she burned her hand. How it smarted! Tears gathered for a brief moment in the corners of her blue eyes. Something always happened when one was in a hurry.

Then she scorched her best organdy dress when she tried to press it.

"Oh, dear!" Betty Ann's lip quivered. Everything was going just as wrong as it could go. And it was nearly one o'clock. The lunch was all ready to put on the table, even to the crisp vegetable salad. Upstairs she could hear her sisters rushing about dressing.

With a last look at the rolls set back on the stove to keep warm, Betty Ann gathered her dress up on one arm and started up the stairs. She met Sara coming down with a guilty look on her whiskered face.

"Sara! You haven't——" Betty gasped, sighed, and almost cried then and there with vexation. Sara must have brought her family back into the house while Betty Ann fixed the table.

Hastily Betty carried her dress to her room, and then almost running, she went back to the guest room. Sure enough the newly-swept floor was alive with tumbling little kittens. Five of Sara's six babies were enjoying the seclusion and quiet of the clean room.

"Oh, this is terrible!" Betty began to collect them again. She got four quite easily, but the fifth wandered on unsteady little legs way under the bed, and refused to come out again.

A few minutes later when a certain tall young man with twinkling gray eyes was ushered into the guest room, he found a pair of slim bare

tanned legs waving frantically from beneath the bed.

Betty captured the kitten at last, and crawled out from under the bed. She had gathered a nice little patch of dust on the very tip of her piquant nose, and the dark curls that never would stay put anyway had escaped from the confines of the blue ribbon and were wildly mussed.

"There!" she said crossly to the five kittens, who had begun to scramble about in her lap. "You little imps!"

And then some one laughed—a deep masculine laugh.

Betty Ann jumped and looked up in amazement right into the twinkling gray eyes of a strange young man, who looked a positive giant in his gray tweeds. He grinned down at her.

"Who—who are you?" Betty's voice, never very big, sounded awfully small and far away. In fact, it just suited the short gingham dress and the hair ribbon.

And then occurred the most unfortunate thing of the whole morning. The strange young man laughed some more, and stooping over, picked Betty Ann up under her arms and tossed her ceilingward, just as though she were a child!

"So this is the baby of the family, the infant herself!" he cried gayly, tossing her up again, all five feet of her. "I've heard so much about the infant."

Betty Ann was too astonished to speak. Her eyes were so wide they looked like blue pansies, and her mouth was a big "O."

"And look at the funny little nose all dirty," went on the impossible man, chuckling. "Isn't she just the sweetest little infant?"

Then Betty Ann caught her breath. Tears filled her eyes, brimmed over, and ran down her

dusty cheeks, leaving faint white tracks.

"Oh, you let me down—you!" she cried, her voice trembling pathetically. "You let me down!"

Immediately the young man let her down and stood regarding her five feet of short-skirted dustiness with anxious eyes.

"Oh, don't be mad, infant," he urged. "I didn't mean to make you cry."

Betty Ann stamped her foot. "I—I am not c-c-crying," she wailed, the tears coming down faster than ever. "You let me alone."

He was so big and tall that he fairly towered over her. Now without warning, he bent over and lifted her in his arms again.

"Now, infant, don't cry any more. Let Jerry kiss all those tears away."

He did kiss them away, one by one all down one stained cheek, and his lips touched her cheek so lightly that Betty wondered if he really were kissing her at all, and she forgot to cry for two whole minutes. Then when he had just begun on the other cheek Betty heard footsteps, and right away her anger returned.

"You let me down, you!" she whispered fiercely, doubling her little hands into equally little and futile fists. "You big brute!"

Jerry laughed indulgently, as any grown-up would laugh at the queer actions of a child.

Betty Ann fled from the guest room as if a thousand imps were after her, just as Sara marched solemnly up the stairs with the sixth kitten in her mouth!

Safely in her own room with the door locked, Betty Ann stood in front of her mirror and cried just as hard as she could. Jerry—that was his name, the big, hulking, horrid brute! He was red-headed, too—shades removed from it anyway.

And he had called her infant and baby, and—and kissed her!

That was the man Margie and Eve had given her unseen with their compliments!

"I don't want him; I wouldn't have him!" Betty Ann cried storm-

ily, and her fingers trembled as she unbuttoned the old gingham dress.

Margie had to call her twice for luncheon, and when Betty Ann finally descended the stairs looking more grown-up in the long full organdy dress, everybody was standing around in the dining room waiting to sit down.

"Come on, infant," daddy called cheerily. Betty Ann's heart hardened. It was all daddy's fault. In the first place he had no right to call



Betty Ann jumped and looked up in amazement right into the twinkling gray eyes of a strange young man, who grinned down at her.

her infant in front of a strange young man who might misunderstand. And if he hadn't gone and invited that strange young man for the week-end, she wouldn't have burned her hand or scorched her dress, or had to clean that old guest room and lug Sara and the kittens everlastingly out to the shed.

Evidently daddy didn't realize just how much in the wrong he was, for he held out his arms as usual and beamed on his youngest.

"Come on; got a kiss for your dad?"

Without even glancing at the strange young man, Betty walked to her father's side and obediently lifted her cool soft cheek. Behind her she heard that odious red-headed man gasp in surprise. Betty felt a warm blush rising over her face. What could he be thinking of now? Heavens, she hoped he wouldn't remember kissing those absurd tears away!

Daddy hugged her tight, and then turned her about to face the man.

"Well, Adams, here's the infant," he said genially. "Betty Ann, this is Jerry Adams, son of an old friend of mine."

Betty Ann inclined her head coolly in the general direction of Mr. Adams.

"How do you do?" she said indifferently. What if he laughed! Betty Ann found herself waiting for it to happen.

But Jerry didn't laugh. He couldn't. His mind was all upset trying to jump bewildering hurdles. The infant was a grown-up young lady, not a child as Tompkins had inferred! In fact, she was not only grown-up, but winsomely pretty. Somehow he couldn't take his eyes off that heart-shaped little face turned so coldly from him.

He'd certainly put his foot in it that time, kissing away her tears,

bouncing her in the air, calling her baby!

Then Jerry's humor came bobbing to the surface. When one got over the surprise of it all, it was very funny. He began to grin, and when Jerry grinned, every one within seeing distance followed suit.

Daddy didn't even know what the joke was, but he grinned, too. And then both Margie and Eve grinned! Betty Ann's eyes were fixed on her plate, but she could just feel those grins boring into the top of her head. Oh, the brute!

Betty Ann stiffened her short backbone and flashed an icy glance at the red-headed young man. His mouth was spread from ear to ear, laughing at her; Betty swallowed hard, and then choked!

Jerry jumped up and ran around the table to pat her on the back. That was really the last straw. Quick tears dimmed Betty Ann's eyes, and with a muttered excuse she ran from the room.

Jerry stared in surprise. Somehow, he had thought she'd see the joke, too, and laugh with him. But somewhere or other, something had gone wrong. She not only didn't see the joke, but she was decidedly angry with him.

"Don't mind Betty Ann," Margie said indulgently. "She's tired from last night, and then working this morning, too."

"She—she doesn't like me, I guess," Jerry said, and his gray eyes were unknowingly wistful.

Eve raised her eyebrows. "Nonsense, she hasn't seen you long enough to know whether she does or not."

But Jerry, remembering, shook his head slowly. "You don't know; I do."

And he seemed to be right. For all during the afternoon Betty Ann

spent her time avoiding him. Everybody noticed it. They really couldn't help it. It was so obvious. Whenever Jerry sauntered out on the porch, Betty Ann promptly deserted it for the living room. Then if Jerry followed her, she ran upstairs to her own room. It was all very puzzling to her family.

"I've never known Betty Ann to act like this," her dad worried. "She can't be well. Why, usually Betty is the life of the house, and she's never a bit disagreeable."

Jerry, who had gradually grown quieter and quieter, scuffed his feet boyishly on the porch railing. With nervous fingers he rumpled his almost-red hair.

"I told you she didn't like me," he said, and again that wistful light was in his eyes.

"Too bad, too bad," sighed her dad, frowning. "I thought my infant would take to you right away."

So things went on from bad to worse. Betty Ann cooked dinner, not because she wanted to. It was really Eve's turn to get dinner, but Betty didn't want to sit around the house with Jerry under her nose, so she hid herself in the kitchen.

Dinner was rather quiet. Jerry's grin came less often, and his gray eyes pathetically avoided the proud little head opposite him. Both Margie and Eve had given up wondering what it was all about, and were planning to round up the gang for the evening.

"Let's go canoeing," Eve suggested eagerly. "There's a gorgeous moon."

"Great! I'll phone some of the bunch and tell them to stop by for us." Margie jumped up and went to the phone.

After dinner the gang came by, three carloads of noisy young folks. Of course Betty Ann went. She

didn't want to, but it would have seemed queer if she hadn't. But she took good care that she wasn't in the same car with that odious Jerry fellow. She squeezed into one of the other cars, while Margie and Eve took Jerry in the family roadster.

If he thought for a minute that she'd forget what he had done—well, he was mistaken. If she could just slap that grin off his face maybe she'd feel better. But in order to slap a person one must be rather close, and Betty Ann really didn't want to get that close to Jerry.

Then they were all at the boat club, deciding who was to pal off with whom and all that. And while they were arguing Betty Ann slipped away. She wasn't going to take any chances on being paled off with Jerry. Not while she was conscious!

Through the silvery night she sped on light feet down to the river. The canoes were all drawn up at the float, and it was an easy matter to slip into one and push off into the slowly moving current.

Drifting down the river through the moon-filled dimness, Betty Ann felt more at peace with the world than she had all that day. The quiet of the night entered her sore little heart and soothed it gratefully.

She'd certainly taught that odious young man a lesson, all right. He'd be more careful how he treated young ladies the next time he went visiting.

Betty Ann paddled slowly, and then drifted until the canoe bumped gently against the graveled beach of a little island. It was a favorite picnic spot of the gang. Many a burned frankfurter had Betty Ann eaten on that beach, and many a moon had she watched from the little hill that rose in the center of the island.

She caught hold of a bush and dragged the canoe close to shore.

She'd get out and stretch her legs before she paddled back. Betty stepped out onto the beach, and turned to pull the canoe farther out of the water. Then suddenly a tall figure seemed to materialize out of the silvery air, a tall dripping figure with almost red hair. Betty could see it shining wet in the moonlight.

"Oh!" she gasped faintly, retreating as if from a ghost.

"It's only me," Jerry said with an assumption of bravery. "I thought I'd take a swim."

"With all your clothes on?" Betty couldn't help exclaiming.

Jerry looked down. "Why, so I have; how careless of me." He grinned. "I guess I was in a hurry."

Betty drew herself up to her full five feet nothing. "You followed me," she accused frigidly.

"Well, sort of." His grin faded a little. A little cool wind had sprung up the way night winds usually do, and he was beginning to shiver. "I—I thought maybe you oughtn't be out on the river alone."

Betty Ann had almost begun to feel sorry for him; he looked so miserable. But when he stammered out those last words, she hardened again.

"I am not a child," she said stiffly, "and you had no right to follow me." She turned on her heel and marched up a little path that led to the tiny hill. "And you'd better leave me alone, too!" she flung back over her shoulder.

She left him standing there disconsolately in the moonlight. She knew he stayed there, for she peeped back at him when she reached a protecting bush. He looked so forlorn that a tiny twinge of pity touched her.

"Good enough for him, getting wet." She hardened her heart against the creeping weakness. "He

had no business following me, the big silly."

But she couldn't help thinking uneasily about him sitting on that cold beach in wet clothes. The river wind was notoriously chilly at night, even for those in sweaters. What must it be for him in wet clothes?

And people had been known to get pneumonia from such careless things as sitting around in damp things. Why, only last summer Bob White had done something like that and had nearly died.

Betty shivered. Of course, Jerry wouldn't get sick like that. He was too big. But Bob had been pretty big, too.

Betty shivered again, despite her sweater. She crouched on a rock and began to worry about Jerry. Not that she cared about him, but still he was her father's guest, and it would be terribly sad for daddy if Jerry got sick.

Then before she fully realized what she was doing she found herself running down the path to the water. Just before she reached the little bush she stopped and began to walk slowly. She mustn't let him think she was really worried about him.

He was sitting on the rough little beach, his head in his hands, his shoulders bowed. And he was shivering terribly! Betty could see him shake. She forgot to be cautious and slow. With a little cry Betty ran the few feet that separated them, and bent over Jerry.

"You're cold," she said, her voice trembling. She was taking off her sweater. "Here, you put this on."

He looked up slowly, and his face was suddenly old and haggard. His teeth chattered so he could hardly speak.

"N-n-no, thanks," he managed to get out. "You keep it."

But Betty was forcing the warm garment about his shoulders.

"You take it, do you hear," she demanded. "And I'm going to take you home right now."

He didn't protest much after that. He seemed too sick to care what happened then. He even got into the canoe and laid back among the cushions without demur.

Betty got her feet wet shoving the canoe off, but she didn't care. For suddenly she was terribly afraid. She had seen real sickness only once or twice in her life, but she knew the signs. Jerry looked awfully sick.

She paddled back up the river against the current that was slow yet powerful. Betty thought she'd never reach the float. Every minute seemed an hour. Jerry lay in front of her, shivering uncontrollably, his eyes closed, his breath coming in whistling gasps from between blue lips.

By the time Betty reached the float, her breath almost gone, her heart pumping noisily, she had forgotten everything except the fact that Jerry of the almost-red hair and the contagious grin was very, very ill.

She had an awful time getting him out of the canoe. He was sluggish, dazed. Whatever it was that had come over him, had worked quickly and well. Once they both almost fell back into the water. Only by a heroic, sudden effort did Betty pull him toward land instead of letting him drop into the river.

The walk to the parking space where the family car was parked was the longest Betty had ever taken. It seemed miles instead of rods, with Jerry's big figure bent almost double beside her. Somehow she got him into the car. Then she drove home with Jerry's damp head lolling against her shoulder, his breath com-

ing terribly hot and difficult against her cheek.

Betty Ann was crying when she pulled up at the house, and saw the welcome glowing tip of daddy's cigar on the porch.

"Daddy—daddy, come here—quick!" she cried, and all the time the tears were running down her face and wetting Jerry's face.

Daddy came running, muttering under his breath.

"The young fool, just out of the hospital, getting over pneumonia and he does a crazy thing like this!" daddy growled just loud enough for Betty to hear as they were dragging Jerry up the stairs into the house.

Just out of the hospital! He'd been sick, and now he would probably have a relapse! And relapses were dangerous! Betty felt faint. But there wasn't any time to faint now. She must rush and call the doctor, and fix hot-water bags and get out blankets.

By the time Margie and Eve got home, hours later, Jerry was bundled up in the guest room and the doctor was with him. Betty Ann, her tears dried in childish streaks on her face, was sitting on the top step near the guest room door, waiting for the doctor and daddy to come out.

Margie saw her first and stopped at the foot of the steps, her brows raised.

"And where have you been, young lady—you and Jerry?" she demanded.

"*Sh!*" Betty Ann tiptoed downstairs, quick tears filling her eyes again. "He—he's sick—awfully sick, and it's all my fault!"

She had to rehearse the whole thing over again for her sisters' benefit. When she got through, Margie and Eve turned astonished eyes to each other.

"And the young dumb-bell drifted down river behind you!" they marveled, and Betty Ann felt worse than ever.

Then the doctor came out of the sick room, his face grave.

"How is he, doctor?" Daddy had followed him anxiously.

Betty crouched against the wall, her hand against her lips. If she took it away she might scream, and that would upset Jerry. She must keep very quiet.

"I can't say just yet," the doctor was saying softly. She had to hold

her breath to hear him. "He's had a bad chill, but you've worked on him pretty well with the hot applications. He might pull out of it without anything more than a slight cold. And then again——" He shrugged his shoulders, and Betty wanted to sob.

"What shall we do to-night?" daddy went on.



"Don't make me go," she whimpered. "He—he wants me—and I want to stay."



"Oh, keep him warm, give him hot drinks as often as he can be made to take them, and keep him quiet." The doctor walked away with daddy.

He wasn't going to die then, not right away. A tiny sob slipped from behind Betty Ann's shielding hand. Oh, if anything happened to him! She'd been so mean! He really hadn't meant to call her a baby. After all, it was daddy's fault for calling her infant.

Then she was running upstairs.

A few minutes later when Margie came into the guest room with hot water, Betty was crouched beside the bed, her lips drooping pathetically.

"You go to bed," whispered Margie sternly. "I'll sit with him."

"You won't!" Betty Ann whispered back fiercely. "I'm going to stay with him, and you can't make me move!"

Jerry stirred suddenly.

"Atta girl, infant," he said with the ghost of a chuckle.

Betty crimsoned and bent forward eagerly. What if he did call her infant?

"Jerry?" she said softly.

Jerry opened his eyes slowly, tiredly. It seemed an effort to do anything. Everything was so hazy, that is, everything except a small glowing face bending over him. Who was it? Why, the infant of course!

"Jerry, you want me here, don't you?" she whispered anxiously.

Out in the hall she could hear Margie protesting to daddy:

"She shouldn't be there—it'll upset him," and daddy mumbled something. They came in then, tiptoeing. Betty Ann pressed close to the bed and lifted fearful eyes to her father.

"Don't make me go," she whimpered. "He—he wants me—and I want to stay."

"Daughter, be quiet." Daddy was very firm. "You must go."

"Who's going?" It was Jerry, stirring again, moving his rumpled head uneasily on the pillow. "Where's Betty Ann? Where's the infant?"

"Here I am," Betty breathed gladly. Her hand found his under the top cover and clung to his fingers.

"I want the infant," Jerry muttered drowsily. "Must have the infant."

Daddy and Margie stood uncertainly together. Defiantly, pleadingly, Betty looked at them over her shoulder.

Then daddy smiled and shrugged, and took Margie out with him.

Betty sat back, her hand still clutching Jerry's fingers.

All night she changed hot-water bottles and forced hot drinks down his protesting throat. At last the final tiny shiver was gone, and he lay quietly sleeping. Then just as the first faint gray light of dawn touched the window, he opened his eyes.

"Betty Ann," he said distinctly, and his gray eyes were fearful. "Betty Ann, are you there?"

Betty bent over him, her heart in her throat. He looked so strange, so pale and cold in the queer light.

"I'm right here, Jerry," she said bravely.

He saw her then. His eyes went to hers and clung; his hand came from under the covers and reached for hers.

"Then I didn't dream it," he whispered. "You were here—beside me when I woke up."

"All night, Jerry." She used his first name unconsciously.

"Betty Ann, you're not angry with me now?"

Betty smiled tremulously and shook her head. "Of course not."

He sighed in relief. His fingers tightened on hers.

"I pulled an awful flop last night, didn't I? Falling out like a baby!"

"Hush!" Betty laid a finger on his lips, and then stopped. For Jerry quickly brought up his other hand and pressed that little finger tight against his lips, his eyes were pleading, begging.

"Betty Ann!" It was a cry from his heart. Somehow Betty knew without being told, and her heart jumped to answer it.

She was kneeling by the bed now, her blue eyes close to his gray eyes.

"Betty Ann, I love you." His face changed, grew brighter. "You knew all the time I loved you?"

She shook her head. Outside the birds twittered sleepily, and the first rays of a hidden sun touched the still world.

"You must have known, dear," he insisted, and his hands were drawing her nearer. "Please tell me you don't hate me."

Fear still lurked behind his gray eyes. Betty could see it there. Did she hate him? Had she ever hated

him? No, a thousand times no! Why, she loved him—really loved him!

"Oh, Jerry darling!" She hid her head beside his on the pillow. She could feel his warm breath on her cheek.

"My dear, my dear!" he was whispering in her ear. "Look at me! Don't hide from me sweetest!"

Then she lifted her head, and her face was as adorably pink as a newly opened rosebud. Jerry's gray eyes searched it, and then the last lingering bit of fear vanished.

"Jerry!" Betty gasped faintly. She wanted to say much more, but the words wouldn't come. However, just that seemed sufficient to Jerry, for he drew her down compellingly.

His lips touched hers and clung.

"Love me?" he whispered.

"I love you, Jerry," she whispered back.

"My infant," he kissed her cheek, her ear, the dimple in her chin. "My own adorable infant!"

And strangely Betty Ann didn't mind. Rather she gloried in it—and kissed him back!



### HEART'S DESIRE

**Y**OUR lips to kiss, your hair to touch,  
 To find my dreams in your shadowed eyes,  
 Caress your fragrant, soft white cheek—  
 Ah, this is a dream of paradise!  
 My heart has been an empty vase  
 Awaiting the glory of your love;  
 Now I have found my heart's desire  
 Safe in your arms 'neath stars above.

HELEN K. ROBERTS.

LS-2C



# Her Choice

By Cynthia Thorne

I DON'T really know you very well."

"But you like me, Lola, don't you?"

"Oh——"

"You know you do, honey. I'll be around at eight. So long."

Debonairly, Leland Hawks strolled off through the lobby of the Hotel Empire. Lola watched him until he was out of sight. He was nicer than any of the men she had met since she had started to work at the candy and cigar stand in the lobby. He wanted to show her a good time, he said, and Lola liked good times.

She stepped from behind the counter for a second to steal a look at herself in a long modernistic mir-

ror. Her yellow wavy hair, wound into a little roll at the nape of her neck, was in order, but the dainty white collar and cuffs of her long black dress, she decided, needed a little pull here and a pat there.

She had been warned that the men would get familiar with her, and that the only safe course was to take their banter lightly and let it go no farther. She had followed this advice for six months, and had lost nothing by it—but what had she gained? How did a girl meet nice men, especially when she was alone in the city, living in a furnished room?

Lola had come to New York from the little town up State to go on the stage, but there were, she found, too

many other girls with the same idea. Besides, they told her that the show business was in a bad way. Lola had finally considered herself lucky to find this job in the hotel. Lots of the girls she had run into had not done as well.

The men who had shown an interest in her here had been mostly middle-aged and fat. But Leland was different. He was a man in his thirties, tall, with sleek, black hair, well-dressed, and with a certain swagger of worldly wisdom. He stopped frequently to chat with her at her counter, and now he had asked her to go out with him. He looked as though he could dance divinely.

When she was ready to go off duty at eight, he appeared.

"All ready?"

"I never said I'd go—and anyway I couldn't go dressed like this."

"Sure you could, honey. We can go some place where they don't dress. Ever been to Harlem?"

"No."

"But you'd like to go, wouldn't you? Come along, and we'll grab a taxi, and be on our way."

"Well, all right," she consented.

Half an hour later they turned into a shabby old house on One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street, and went down a flight of steps into a murky darkness. "What an adventure!" Lola thought. A green searchlight pierced the gloom, and focused on a group of slim brown girls dancing grotesquely in scant costumes on a platform in the center of the room. Tables were scattered around the inclosure, and to one of these Lola and her companion were led. The light changed color as another group of girls came on to do their act. It was barbaric, exciting, with the steady undertones of the orchestra suggesting a tom-tom.

When the act was over the lights came on again and revealed the patrons of the place eating and drinking at their tables. They were a strange assortment. Lola did not like their general appearance and preferred the place with less light.

"Would you like to dance?" Leland asked later. Lola assented, and they went inside the inclosure. As she had guessed, he could dance. How nice it was to be dancing again! It had been Lola's greatest pleasure, and she had missed it during the last hard months.

"You sure can place your feet!" Leland exclaimed admiringly when they reached a spot far enough from the loud music to make conversation possible. "Where did you learn all that?"

"Most of it just came natural, and then I was working to go on the stage."

"But you couldn't get a job, so you're selling the vile weed to the patrons of the Hotel Empire?" he guessed shrewdly. She nodded.

"It's a tough game. The trouble is you need a friend, some kind of pull. But a sweet little girl like you——" He held her more tightly as they swept through the madly dancing crowd.

"You dance like a professional, yourself," Lola remarked later as they were sipping refreshments at their table. To his surprise she had refused his proffered cocktail.

"Me, a professional?" He laughed. "No, my dear, I work hard from morning till night at my business." She looked up inquiringly. "Selling automobiles."

On the way home he sat close to her and slid an arm around her shoulders. She started to draw away, but he held her.

"You're a sweet kid, honey. Have a good time?"

"The best I've had in months."

"Want to go out some more with me?" She hesitated, feeling his hold grow tighter. "And maybe meet some people in the show business with a say-so?"

"That would be nice, but——"

"Don't be scared, honey. I wouldn't hurt you. Just one little kiss. What harm will that do?" His face was very close to hers.

"No!" She struggled to get free.

"Aw, come on. You'll like it." And then his lips were hard on hers. She could not get away, and after all, she only half wanted to. Leland was nice and so good-looking that she would be proud to be seen anywhere with him. She had been longing for some one to love her. Perhaps he was the one. He made love as well as her favorite movie star, but when the "just one little kiss" was multiplied to several she protested.

"You mustn't."

"Why not?"

"I don't want a man to kiss me when I don't know him—the very first time I go out with him."

"Oh, don't you?" he answered with a little smile. "I thought you did."

Lola felt a flush of anger rise across her face. The man took too much for granted. Sensing her annoyance, he squeezed her hand.

"Sorry, baby, I love you, so don't get sore. And by the way," he went on, changing his tone, "don't you go and fall for one of these hog callers."

"Hog callers? What on earth do you mean?"

"You know—these big men out of the West who are going to plaster the town with gold next week."

"Oh," she smiled, "you mean the convention of stock raisers that's coming to the Empire."

"That's it."

"Don't worry. I didn't fall for any of the tobacco growers, or silk makers, or prune kings, or even the corset men. They all want to be friendly, though."

"Do they?"

"Oh, yes. Most of them are pretty much strangers, and they like somebody to talk to. I get acquainted with quite a few, but I never go out with them."

"That's right, honey. Stick to the man you can trust."

The cab pulled up at her house and he helped her out. She did not ask him in, and he left her a few minutes later at the door, after squeezing her hand as he said good night.

Although she thought about him a great deal, Lola did not see him again for a week. In the-meantime the "hog callers" had arrived. Coming from all parts of the country, they proved different from the prune kings, the corset and silk men. Their big-muscled frames and tanned faces contrasted notably with those of the pale city dwellers. Most of them were middle-aged and had a habit of chewing tobacco. They were good-humored, rather noisy, and determined to do the city up right in the week at their disposal. Some had wives, and some, in addition, children, but many had come alone.

Lola had noticed one in particular, although he had never stopped to chat with her as many of the others had. He was tall, blue-eyed, younger than the average, and wore a wide-brimmed hat which struck Lola as amusing. He did not seem to mix easily, and was often alone.

"Getting ahead with the hog callers?" inquired Leland, appearing one noon in the lobby. Lola started when she heard him. She had thought of him so frequently, but he had let a week go by without

looking her up. She was determined not to be overcordial.

"Just the normal progress," she replied distantly.

"What's the matter, honey? Trying to high-hat me?" She shook her head faintly. "I've been wanting to see you, but I've been away. Had to go up to Detroit on some business. Let's celebrate the return with a party to-night." Then as Lola considered: "I've got a good idea for you."

Thinking it might be related to a stage opening, she consented.

"We might go somewhere dressy this time," suggested Leland. "I'll stop at your house for you."

When he called he found her ready in a long dress of honey-colored satin that matched her hair. The little roll had disappeared from the nape of her neck, and in its place was a cluster of curls.

"You look good enough to eat, baby," he said, smiling his approval.

"You're not so homely yourself," she commented, seeing him for the first time in dinner clothes.

"In that case everything's all set for a big evening." He took her arm as they went down the steps to the waiting taxi. They went first to a musical comedy, and then to the roof garden of a near-by hotel. There was nothing rowdy about the place, in contrast to the one they had visited previously. An orchestra played unobtrusively in the corner, while well-groomed men danced or sat at the tables with women in beautiful evening gowns. Leland was attentive, an ideal escort, and Lola sighed with satisfaction.

"So you're getting acquainted with some of the hog callers," he mused, late in the evening.

"Oh, just a few. Why?"

"Well, I tell you, honey, I've been wanting to make some contact with

a couple of them, and I think you could help me. It would mean a lot in my business."

"I'll be glad to help you if I can, but I don't see just how. Why couldn't you just go up and introduce yourself?"

"That would be too blunt. I can't work it that way. If you'll help me out on this I'll see if I can put you in touch with a couple of producers I know."

"Will you? That would be wonderful! Let's see now." She rested her chin on her hand for a minute, and then told him the best way for her to help him was with an introduction.

"That sounds fine, honey, but let's not think of business any longer. This isn't the place or time." She slipped into his arms, and they were off again on the polished floor. During an intermission they wandered over to the edge of the roof garden, and looked out over twinkling golden lights of the city.

"Isn't it wonderful?" she breathed rapturously.

"Not half so wonderful as you," he answered, taking her hand. "Honest, darling, you look so sweet to-night I've got to kiss you."

"No! Not here. People will see."

"What if they do? It's their fault for looking."

Suddenly she was again in his arms, her head bent back under the pressure of his fierce kiss. When she finally freed herself she stood looking at him with angry eyes. Again she had the feeling that he was taking too much for granted.

"I didn't say you could!"

"You didn't say so last time, either, but you liked it."

"I want to go home right now."

"Aw, honey, stay for another dance. I didn't mean to make you mad, but I'm just so crazy about

you I couldn't help it." He looked at her repentantly and Lola relented.

"All right, one more dance—but only one."

The next morning, according to their plan, Leland was sitting on the far side of the lobby in sight of the counter. After a while a plump gentleman from the corn belt strolled over to buy a cigar, and engaged Lola in conversation. She responded in friendly fashion, and as they talked, she reached up and pulled the string of the light overhead. The light went out and then she pulled it on again. At the signal Leland came over and asked for a pack of cigarettes.

"Oh, Mr. Hawks," said Lola, "this gentleman was asking how you get to the Yankee Stadium. Could you tell him how? This is Mr. Hawks, Mr.——"

"Werckle. Glad to meet you."

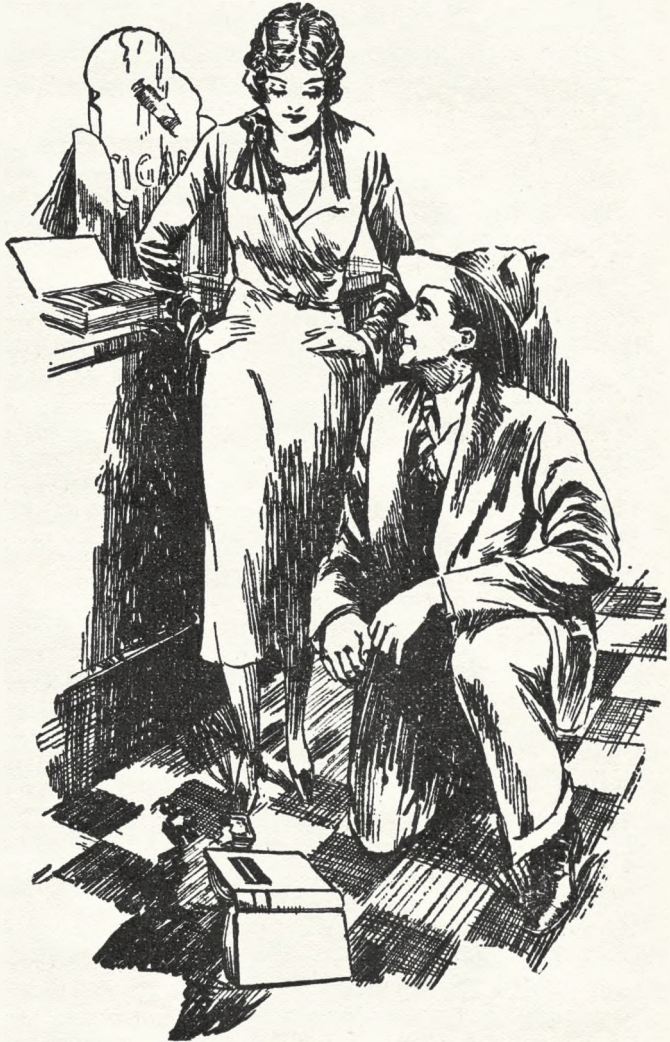
"I'm going up that way myself this afternoon," Leland said affably. "Want to come and let me show you the way?"

"Fine. I got lost yesterday and spent most of the day in the wrong subways. What time does the game start?"

It had worked beautifully, thought Lola, as they went off together. Well,

now it was up to Leland to do her a good turn.

Along toward the middle of the afternoon, at the sound of a vexed exclamation, she looked up from a magazine she was reading. There in front of her counter was the tall young Westerner, looking ruefully at the floor. His package had come untied, and a bottle of perfume had slipped to the floor and broken. As he looked, a book dropped in its



*"Oh, what a shame!" said Lola, going around in front. The young man blushed and looked very uncomfortable.*

wake and landed in the pool made by the heavily scented liquid.

"Oh, what a shame!" said Lola, going around in front. "And such a pretty bottle, too." The young man blushed and looked very uncomfortable. "I'll call a man to wipe it up," she offered sympathetically, "but I'm afraid that the book is spoiled."

"It doesn't matter about the book. I can order another easily enough, but I'm certainly not going back to that perfume store again." He laid the remains of the package on the counter and then put his big hat down beside them. Out of his pocket he drew a vast, red-bordered handkerchief and fervently wiped his brow.

"Let me tie up your package for you," said Lola.

"Thanks. That's sure kind of you. I'd rather put in a week working in the sun down in Texas than spend an hour shopping up here. But I promised them I'd bring them the things."

He took out his wallet and extracted from it a piece of note paper bearing a list. With a puzzled frown he studied it while Lola made the bundle secure.

"Where can I get a Persian mat with a white background? And where are the brass shops? Then I still have some music and a doll to get." He gazed down helplessly at Lola.

"I can tell you where to go for those things. I love to shop, but I hardly ever buy anything."

He looked relieved and then paused for a moment. "Would you," he began and then blushed, "would you—go with me and help me—and then go to dinner?"

Lola did not know what it was that made her decide so quickly. "Yes," she replied, "I think I could.

I get through early to-day, and I'll be free at four."

"Sure would be great." His face lighted up with a pleased smile. Pulling an enormous watch from his pocket, he looked at it. "It's three thirty now. I'll go along to my room with this stuff, and then call around for you."

It took him just five minutes to make the trip to his room and return to the lobby. Studying his watch again, he settled himself in the chair nearest Lola's counter.

"Let's get all this marketin' done in a hurry and then do somethin' worth while," he suggested when her time was up.

"All right. Most of those things we can get close by. The brass shops are way downtown, though. It would be late when we got down there, and anyway I think you'd find it an interesting trip some day. It's all rather slummy and foreign down here."

"Then they couldn't have these high-glazed salesladies, would they, that act like they thought they were duchesses?" he inquired anxiously.

"No, don't worry. All you'll find will be men, foreigners who can't understand anything except dollars and cents, but they know all about them."

Relieved of that worry, he looked more cheerful as they started walking toward the shopping center of Fifth Avenue. Lola had some difficulty keeping up with his long strides. She had not realized before how tall he was, or how well-built. She noticed that he attracted more than casual attention from the passers-by. It was due partly to his height, she thought, but more probably to the broad-brimmed hat. It did look strange on Fifth Avenue, but she no longer thought it was funny.



"You break the trail," he directed. "And by the way, my name is Peter L. Strong. What's yours?"

"Lola Mills," she replied. "Let's go across the street first." He looked up and down the wide street with a frown, as three lanes of traffic in each direction made crossing difficult. When the lights changed he was ready, and taking her arm in an iron grasp he led her masterfully to the other side.

But as soon as they entered the doors of the store Lola felt that their positions were reversed. Peter L. Strong, in spite of his six feet three of tan and muscle, was looking to her for protection. He took out the list and handed it to her.

"Let's get the perfume, the mat, and the doll here," she suggested.

"You go right ahead and I'll follow. And don't bother about prices." The girl at the perfume counter looked at the pair curiously as Lola selected a dainty flask of imported scent. Peter stood back uncomfortably during the operation.

Next they chose the mat, woven of goat's hair and embroidered in bright colors. They then went to the toy department.

"What kind of a doll would your little girl like?" asked Lola. He looked at her in surprise.

"It isn't my little girl! I'm not married." He seemed astounded at the idea. "Great Scott, no! It's my sister's little girl. She had infantile paralysis, and she's best off at the ranch. That's why Sally can't get away. She knows all about this town, used to be a singer before she got married. The little kid's about six, so get anything you like."

"I like them all," sighed Lola, looking at the rows of exquisitely dressed dolls. "But if she's sick I think I know what she'd like best." She turned to her companion, but

he was not there. An electric railroad had caught his eye, and he was down on one knee beside the track. Lola turned back to the dolls and decided on a little French import about a foot high, but which came in a trunk fitted with all the accessories that even a French doll could require. Then she turned with a smile toward Peter. He had evidently forgotten all about her in his absorption with the railroad. She went over, and he looked up delightedly.

"I didn't know they made things like this, but I've got to have it. Janie might like to watch it," he finished weakly.

Lola looked at him understandingly. "You didn't have toys like that when you were small, did you?"

"No. There was always so much goin' on outdoors with the horses and stock that we never thought much about toys. I always wanted a train, though." With keen interest he examined the possible additions to the set brought him by the salesgirl—signal towers, switches, lights, hoists, sidings, locomotives, and cars.

"I'll take them all," he told the girl, and gave her the address of his ranch in Texas.

"Shall I send the doll, too?"

"No, just send that to me at the Empire." When the clerk had gone he turned to Lola. "Could have had them all sent, I suppose, but I think they'd rather have me bring them."

When the brief visit in a music store was finished, Peter said: "Now I've just got one more thing to get. I want you to help me pick out something for a girl—some kind of jewelry, I guess. A bracelet, perhaps would do; something pretty. We ought to be able to pick it up in here."

They were passing the windows

of a famous jeweler. Lola had never been inside. It was not the sort of place where one went "just looking." Together they went up the steps and walked through the aisles of polished glass cases in which lay fortunes in gems and jewelry. Peter noticed a tray of bracelets, and asked the clerk to take it out.

"Do you think this is all right?" he asked Lola, picking out a slender chain of platinum links set with sapphires.

"Beautiful!" exclaimed Lola.

"All right. I'll take it." Lola gave a little gasp when she saw the sum he handed the salesman. In a few minutes he was given the small package, and put it in his pocket.

"The lucky girl!" thought Lola to herself.

"There," said Peter with finality. "That's over. Let's see some sights or eat or go to a show. Anything's all right with me. You know the town and I don't."

It was too early to eat. To fill in the time before dinner they took a bus and saw the sights of the city from its open top. Peter had lost his shyness, and now that his mind was eased from its burden, had begun to enjoy himself heartily. He had heard of Greenwich Village, he said, and would like to see it. They stayed on the bus when it turned around uptown, and went back to Washington Square. There they started out to find a restaurant with atmosphere. But when they went inside one that was typical, Peter hesitated.

"It's too dark and crowded in here," he whispered to Lola, "and I bet you can't get a square meal in a place like this. Let's go to a hotel where they have good food." After making their way back uptown, they had dinner in a grill where there was dancing between courses.

"I wish I could dance," said Peter longingly.

"You can, can't you? There's nothing to it. Wouldn't you like to try?"

He shook his head. "I'd fall all over myself, and I sure wouldn't want to hurt those little feet of yours. Some day I'm goin' to learn, though."

In snatches during the bus ride, dinner, and later a musical comedy, Lola heard about Peter's life. His father had gone to Texas when land was cheap, and had acquired thousands of acres. Peter had grown up on the vast ranch, living for the most part outdoors, riding horseback to school, but learning more from his cultured mother. Both his parents had died by the time he was twenty-one, leaving him with the responsibility of the ranch. Then oil had been struck on one corner and the land sold at a price which removed financial worry from him and his sister for the rest of their lives. Aside from this unexpected fortune he had made the ranch pay. He was deeply interested in scientific stock raising. That was why he had come to the convention.

Lola listened with delight to his descriptions of life on the enormous ranch and in the big old ranch house. How different it was from the cramped life she had always led! But he was as interested in the things she told him about New York. He had always wanted to travel, but he had been so busy he hadn't gotten around to it.

When he took her home that night his embarrassment returned. He wanted to say something, but did not seem to know how. After Lola had thanked him for the pleasant evening he drew a deep breath.

"I'm not much accustomed to girls," he blurted out, "especially

New York ones, but you sure enough have changed this town for me." Reaching in his pocket he took out the little jeweler's box and handed it to her. Then he raised his wide-brimmed hat and strode rapidly off down the street.

"Well, of all things!" gasped Lola, watching him disappear around the corner. She ran up the stairs to her small, bare room and opened the box. There it was, the same exquisite piece of jewelry, deep-blue sapphires gleaming darkly out of the platinum links. Why, she had done nothing to deserve it, just given an hour of her time and then spent an enjoyable evening. He hadn't waited for her to show any gratitude, hadn't waited even until she could thank him. He had asked nothing from her, not even a kiss.

That reminded Lola of Leland. She had not thought of him since morning—and for the last week he had occupied the central place in her thoughts. She had a date with him to-morrow night. He would try to kiss her. Would she let him? The memory of the other evenings swept over her. She had been angry with him, particularly when he excused his action by saying that she liked it. But it had been partly true. He was handsome and polished. Any girl would like him. She sensed, too, that he might be dangerous, and that made him interesting. Undeniably she liked dancing with him. Would she tell him about Peter?—Lola wondered. No, she had said she never went out with convention men, and she had better let the story stand.

Lola worked until eight o'clock the next evening and then went home to dress. Leland was in good spirits when he called for her. It was late for the theater, and, instead, they went to a movie before

going to dance. In the darkness of the great motion-picture house he reached for her hand and held it all through the show. When they danced later he was more affectionate than on the previous evenings.

"Honey, you look too sweet to be real," he whispered in her ear. She smiled up at him and he kissed her before she knew it. Blushing, she hid her face against his shoulder, whereupon he brushed his lips against the tip of her ear. Then as the orchestra played he sang the song softly to her.

She closed her eyes to listen better as they swept across the floor. A moment later, looking up, she found his eyes, hard and brilliant, gazing down at her. Suddenly she was terribly afraid; she did not know why.

"I'd like to sit the next one out," she suggested.

"What? Tired so soon? You don't want to rest, honey, and I don't want to let you out of my arms," he pleaded, but she was firm. At the little table she tried to veer the conversation around to the subject of the stage. He caught the implication.

"You don't really want to go on the stage, do you, baby? It's a hard life, rehearsing and keeping in trim, and places in a chorus aren't always easy to keep. A girl's career is pretty short—just a few years and she's touring the sticks unless she's one in a million. There's nothing much worse than the sticks."

"I'm not getting very far where I am."

"I am, though, honey. That business you helped me start off is going over big, and when it does I'll be fixed for a long time. Listen, when I clean up this time I'm coming around and grab you under my arm and carry you a good long way off."

Leland reached for her hand across the table.

"You mean—you want to marry me?"

"Sure, honey. Did I forget to say so?"

Lola looked at him pensively. "I don't know for sure."

"But I do. I'm not even asking you if you will. I know you will."

Lola blushed and looked down. As she did she caught the sparkle of Peter's bracelet on her wrist. She wondered if he was having a lonely evening. He had asked her to go out, and had been disappointed to learn that she had an engagement.

But that wasn't to the point. Another man was asking her to marry him. He was still holding her hand.

"Give me more time, Leland, and a chance to know you better."

"Well, maybe a couple of days," he conceded. Lola laughed.

"A couple of days? You are a fast worker." He pressed her hand, looking at her steadily.



*"Say," she said in a low voice, "if you know what's good for you, you'll lay off that guy."*

"You sure are right about that, baby."

When Lola went to work the next morning she found a florist's box waiting for her. In it was a cluster of beautiful orchids and a card in an envelope. Could it be from Leland? Lola had never had an orchid, much less a cluster of them. She tore open the envelope and read the brief message on the card.

Please don't be busy to-night.

PETER L. STRONG.

Peter sending orchids! Her hog caller from Texas! Suddenly she found herself wishing to see him. There was something appealing in those blue eyes. He might not know how to dance, but he was natural and sincere.

What should she do with the orchids? Certainly she could not wear that gorgeous cluster on her simple sports dress. And if she put them in water on the counter they would cause comment. But then, if Peter should happen along and not see them he wouldn't understand. That would be worse. She compromised by putting them in a glass in a corner where they were almost hidden by display cartons. He would find them if he looked closely enough.

During the morning a dark girl, smartly, almost flashily dressed in black, came up to buy some cigarettes. Lola noticed the girl looking at her strangely. The stranger said nothing, however, until her keen eyes noticed the orchids. Then her eyes flashed.

"Say," she said in a low voice, "if you know what's good for you, you'll lay off that guy."

"Why, what do you mean?" demanded Lola.

"Just what I'm telling you," she snapped, and was gone before Lola could question her further. What could she mean? Peter had not told her of knowing any girls in the city, and this girl did not look like his type. But Peter L. Strong, she reflected, had barrels of money and was very guileless.

That evening he called for her and took her to the theater. Wearing the sapphire bracelet and the orchids pinned to the shoulder of her pale-blue chiffon dress, Lola felt a thousand miles removed from the humdrum cigar girl of the Empire lobby. She could tell by Peter's eyes that she looked well, even if he did not know how to tell her so. But the compliment was there and she was pleased. After the show he hailed an open cab and told the driver he wanted to see the whole city by night and to go as far as he liked. The delighted driver touched his cap, headed his car north, and took them to the end of Riverside Drive, down the speedway along the East River, back to the Drive, and downtown again. Then he looked back inquiringly.

"Want to go farther?"

"Keep on going," directed Peter. "There's more to see, isn't there?"

The driver grinned. "O. K., boss." Considering a minute, he plunged again into the traffic. That time he took them down through the Bowery, Chinatown, the deserted business section, and the Battery.

"This sure looks different at night," commented Peter, looking up from the empty streets to the dark towers of the downtown skyscrapers. "When I was down here to-day these little streets no bigger'n a back alley were so jammed a garter snake couldn't have wriggled through."

"Oh, you were downtown to-day?"

"Yes," he drawled, "seein' the Stock Exchange and the sights of Wall Street. It's nothin' like I thought it would be. I'm goin' to do a little cleanin' up down here myself."

"Are you playing the market?"

"Not exactly. A man I met told me about a thing that sounds right good, and he's goin' to handle it for me. You don't see things like this down in Texas," he added as they swung around the curve of the Battery and looked up Broadway, the narrow cleft in the dark line of towers.

"Do you like New York, Mr. Strong?"

"Don't call me 'Mr. Strong.' My name is Peter."

"Well—Peter."

"I didn't like it at first. People rushed around too fast, and they look sort o' peaked. And if I had to go to work in the subway every day I wouldn't be workin' long. But then when I got to know you I got to thinkin' differently of New York. Now I've been here I'm comin' again, and some day I'll take a ship and see what's over there." With a sweep of his hand he indicated the Atlantic.

The cab carried them across Brooklyn Bridge, and there from another angle they studied the city's sky line.

"I've been wantin' to tell you," confided Peter, "that I'm learnin' to dance."

"Good for you! And you like it, don't you?"

"Not so bad."

"Is some friend teaching you?" asked Lola, thinking suddenly of the girl in black.

"Shucks, no. What friend would I have? It's just a place where they

teach. I have to be gettin' along back to the ranch day after to-morrow, and I thought maybe we could go somewhere like that other place where they were dancin', the last night I'm here."

"Oh, you're going so soon?" Lola felt a curious pang. At her tone Peter looked down at her with a tenderness she had not seen before.

"Sorry I have to leave, but"—his voice dropped—"I'll be back, little girl."

He wanted to take her out the next night, but as she said she was tired and needed sleep, they compromised on dinner. A curious thing happened the next day, but Lola did not ask about it when she and Peter went to dinner. She had been looking down toward the far end of the lobby which was not readily visible from her counter, when she thought she saw Leland Hawks. Usually he came and spoke to her, and as he failed to do so, she thought perhaps it was some one else. As he stood there he was joined by another man, and there could be no doubt in that case. It was Peter, unmistakable in his big hat. They had shaken hands, and then went to the elevator. It was curious that they should be together, she thought. She couldn't ask Leland about it without revealing her interest in the hog caller, and it certainly was none of her business to ask Peter. Perhaps Leland was trying to sell him a car.

Before she had been in her room long that evening after dining with Peter the telephone rang.

"Hello, is this you, honey?"

"It's Miss Mills speaking."

"That's all right then. This is Leland. Listen, honey, my heels are itching for a little dance. Do me a big favor and help me ease it off."

"Oh, I don't believe I could. I

really have to get some sleep, Leland."

"Now, honey, a little exercise will do you good. Let me come around for you. Nobody in the world can dance like you. Say you will!"

"I can't."

"Come on, baby. There'll be lots of nights to sleep."

"Well——"

"Fine! I'll be there in twenty minutes." The receiver clicked, leaving Lola with an unexpected date on her hands. She felt guilty that her fondness for dancing had led her to go out with another man when she had refused to spend the evening with Peter. What sort of spell did Leland have over her that made her do things she would not have thought of before? She felt vaguely uneasy, but she soothed her conscience by determining to come home early. Exactly twenty minutes later her bell rang, and she went to join Leland.

"I just had to see you, baby. It's been too long since the last time."

"Not so long," smiled Lola.

"Years and years! But we'll make up for it." With his polished courtesy he helped her into the cab. "And now for some fun," he said as they drove off.

He danced as divinely as ever. Time seemed to cease when they whirled out on the floor together. In perfect harmony she followed his lead through a series of intricate steps. All her fatigue was swept away in the tide of music and rhythm. She sighed when the music stopped. Reluctantly releasing her, he led her back to their table in the corner.

"A girl like you oughtn't to have to work," he told her softly.

"It would be nice to be rich," mused Lola, "but I guess I'm lucky to have a job."

"Listen, honey, remember what we were talking about the other night?" She nodded. "The deal is going through and I'll have a stack of money—and I want to spend it on you. That's why I wanted to see you to-night. I wanted to tell you that I'll buy you clothes and jewelry and take you to live in a stylish place, and we can go places to dance every night. You wouldn't have a thing to worry about."

"Not have a thing to worry about?" repeated Lola wonderingly.

"I'll give you anything you want, baby. I know a nice little apartment we could get, and a maid to do the work. I have a car. You're mine, darling—and you know it!" The music started again, and without a word they rose, drifted into each other's arms, and danced the whole dance through. Still silent, they came back to their table.

"Come away with me to-night," he whispered. Startled from her reverie, Lola shook her head.

"To-night! Why, we couldn't get a license or anything."

"We could go to Connecticut. You can fix things up in a hurry over there, and I have friends who know the ropes. Why wait, baby? You know you love me, and I'm crazy about you."

"No, Leland. Not to-night."

"Then make it to-morrow night. That would give you plenty of time. You could work as usual if you wanted to, and then we could pick up and leave—and you'd never have to work again."

Oh, Leland, I can't decide like this—and then I'm busy to-morrow night."

"You've got to make up your mind, honey, or I'll make it up for you. To-morrow's the last chance. It's then or never. Maybe you want to keep on living in a little hole,

spending your time working in a hotel lobby where all kinds of men get fresh with you. Don't be silly, baby. What would you do if you lost your job?"

"But I'm not sure I love you."

"You like me plenty, baby, and I'll make you love me!"

The thought of Peter drifted through Lola's mind as she sat looking at Leland's dark, handsome features. Peter could not dance; Peter wore outlandish clothes; Peter lacked sophistication—and Peter was going away. Involuntarily, Lola sighed. Leland was a man of the world which Lola had longed to enter. He was offering the things she had always wanted. He said he loved her, and what he had said about her job and her prospects was, she knew, very true. If she lost her job, where would she be? There was nothing in the show business for her, it seemed. She had no pull, and anything would be better than going back to the poverty of the little town from which she had come.

Two weeks before, Leland's proposal would have made her tremulous with delight, but in the intervening time Peter had come. But Peter was going away. If he did come back, as he had said, it would probably not be for a long time, and there was no telling where she might be by then.

"Will you, honey?" Leland was saying, and Lola, partly because he was attractive, partly because of her uncertain future, heard herself answering: "Maybe."

That was enough for Leland. Sweeping her into his arms he led her on the dance floor with a triumph and mastery that left her trembling. He attracted her, overpowered her, but at the same time faintly frightened and repelled her.

"Leland, please take me home,"

she asked as the music stopped. "I must get some rest, and I came on condition that it wouldn't be too late."

"If you insist," he agreed reluctantly.

When they reached her doorstep he drew her into the shadow. "Kiss me good night, baby," he begged, and without waiting for her reply he took her in his arms and pressed a kiss so hard and masterful on her soft lips that she struggled to get free. Unwillingly he let her go, and as she darted away toward the stairs, he called in a low voice: "Until to-morrow, darling."

Although Lola had gone home to sleep, she found that sleep was out of the question. Her lips burned from Leland's kiss. Was she doing the right thing? Again and again she went through all the arguments. She reasoned that his proposal was an opportunity a girl in her position could not afford to miss. And Leland had been nice to her. She liked him. What was it in the bottom of her heart that troubled her?

Then she remembered the loneliness of the days and evenings before she had known him, and with that weapon she defended herself against the tiny, persistent protests. She would be far-sighted, she decided, and let her head rule her heart. Arriving at this decision, she dropped into a troubled sleep.

When she went to work the next day she found something that brought her a sudden twinge of pain. On her counter was another box of flowers, bearing a characteristic message on the card.

I will see you to-night, and if anything happens to your slippers I will make them good.  
PETER L. STRONG.

It hurt her to think that she was going to disappoint Peter, walk out



on him on his last evening in the city, never give him a chance to show his new skill at dancing. But she had made up her mind. She was going to cast her lot with Leland, and Peter would soon forget. She ought to let him know in some way, but she did not want to have him question her. She recalled that he would be busy during the day, and that she probably would not see him until evening. During the morning she stole to a phone booth and called the hotel operator.

"Please take the following message for Peter L. Strong," she directed, "and deliver it at five minutes to eight this evening. The message is this: 'I am very sorry not to keep our engagement for this evening, but I am leaving the city on short notice for an indefinite stay. Best wishes. L. M.'"

The day wore on in humdrum fashion. Business, unfortunately, was dull, leaving too much time for thinking. Lola had been paid the day before, and during the noon hour, she bought herself a few new things for her trousseau. It was a poor little trousseau, she reflected sadly, but soon she would have more than enough.

Half an hour before she expected Leland, she looked up and noticed the dark girl in black sitting on the far side of the lobby. She did not look like the usual type of Empire guest, and Lola wondered about her. Then as the dinner hour passed people strolled out of the dining room, and many stopped at her counter. She wondered if she looked strange. Her heart was beating so hard it seemed as though others must be able to hear it. A glance at the clock told her that in five minutes Leland Hawks, her future husband, would be coming to take her away.

And then he came.

Carrying a cane, he strode jauntily up to the counter, waited until the customers had been served, and then leaned an arm on the glass.

"All ready, baby?" he asked in a low voice. Lola's heart jumped. Her mind was made up, but she hesitated. There he was, handsome as ever, but she was afraid.

"I'm not sure yet, Leland," she faltered.

"Yes, you are, baby," he insisted and added briskly: "Let's get going."

"But——" Before she could finish a shrill voice called:

"There he is! Grab him!"

Turning like a flash, Leland made for the door. But before he had gone five steps a revolver barked, and he was down. He struggled to his feet, tried to reach the door, but passers-by held him until an officer and Morris, the house detective, reached his side. With them was the girl in black, her face white, her eyes blazing with hate. Morris snatched a smoking revolver from her hand.

"You didn't get away with it this time," she flung at the injured man. "I don't care what happens to me so long as you get what's coming to you!"

Lola, terror-stricken, had seen the flash, had seen Leland sink to the floor and a crowd rush around him. At the girl's words she found strength to run toward her.

"Who are you?" she demanded.

The girl gave a nasty laugh.

"I thought I was that man's wife until I found he had tricked me—and I happen to know he was going to elope with you to-night along with the money he had worked off some poor sucker."

"Why, what do you mean?" said Lola.



"Don't act so innocent. I know you were out together last night and a lot of other nights, and to-night you were going to beat it with the pile he just lifted," she replied.

"Lifted——" Lola whispered incredulously. Then suddenly she felt dizzy, weak, and a whirling darkness swallowed her up.

"Are you all right, little girl?" The words drifted to her slowly, through baffling waves of fogginess. Where was she? Why was she lying on a lounge in the lobby? Why was Peter there? Then she began to remember.

"Where's Leland? What——"

*"Now see here, little girl," he began, "I can't risk goin' all the way off to Texas and leavin' you here till I get back."*

"They've taken him off to the station, him and the girl. I'll tell you all about it pretty soon—as soon as you feel better. But first I'm goin' to get you some cold water."

Lola looked after him, bewildered, as he disappeared, and then came back with a tinkling glass of ice water. Putting his arm around her to support her he held it to her lips.

"Now you drink this and then we'll go over there," he said, nod-

ding toward a curve in the lobby, screened with luxuriant palms. He helped her up and settled her in a soft, deep chair. Lines of anxiety showed on her forehead.

"But I don't understand. What had he done?"

"Well, you see it was this way," said Peter soothingly. "I thought I'd come early so you wouldn't forget about our little party. While I was in the elevator I heard a bang, and I knew what

that was all right, but I sure didn't look to find the man I'd just done business with lyin' on the floor and lookin' sort of bloody. Then the next thing I saw was you lyin' on the floor, too, all crumpled up. I picked you up, and put you on the sofa, and went back to see what happened.

"The officer and the detective were gettin' the guy together, and asked if anybody in the crowd knew him. I said I did, that I'd just bought some stock from him. Then a dark girl spoke up and said: 'So you're

the sucker.' I didn't like that much till I heard all the dope. That guy had been sellin' fake stock for a long time, and I was the latest. They never could locate him before, but the girl gave him away. I got back my cash, and then they took him off. He wasn't hurt much. The bullet just grazed his leg."

"So Leland Hawks was—a crook!"

"That's right, and a pretty smart one, but the girl was too much for him."

Suddenly Lola burst into tears. "Oh, Peter, I'm so ashamed."

He gave her his hand awkwardly to try to comfort her. "It's all right, little girl."

"Oh, but you don't know, Peter. I was going to elope with him to-night. "I almost married a crook," she sobbed, waiting for him to withdraw his hand. Instead he pressed hers gently.

"I know, dear. The girl told me he was tryin' to work the same trick on you he had with her. She knew more about his plans than he figured, though, and she knew he was interested in some other girl. She was waitin' here to-night to see if he'd come back to her or go off with you when he put over his deal. When he didn't, she was set to do anything. She told the police she wouldn't have shot unless he tried to get away. She was one jealous sister."

Tears trickling down her cheeks, Lola told the whole story—how she had been lonely and Leland had been nice to her; how he had said he loved her and would take care of her; how she was worried about the future. "But—oh, Peter, I

should have known better," she finished.

"Don't feel so bad, little girl," consoled Peter. "He fooled me, too, you know," he said with a little smile. "But he got left all the way around, so the trouble's over for everybody except him. It's lucky you found out in time. There'll probably be some testifyin' to do, so I won't be goin' for a few days."

"That's nice," whispered Lola, and hearing her Peter pulled his chair closer and took both her hands in his.

"Now see here, little girl," he began, "I can't risk goin' all the way off to Texas and leavin' you here till I get back. You wouldn't be here. There's too many other fellows in the world, and some of them are just too smart. You need some one to keep an eye on you," he said severely, looking straight into her eyes. "And when I do go back—I don't want to go alone. Understand?"

Lola looked at him gravely and then, ever so faintly, nodded her head. Peter leaned over, placed his lips on hers, shyly at first, but feeling her respond, he put into that first kiss all the love and hunger of a lifetime. Instinctively, Lola's arms stole up around his neck, and when her lips were free, she whispered:

"Peter dear, we won't ever be alone again! Now—we'll have each other."

And as he drew her to him again and held her as though he would never let her go, Lola knew that all her long lonely dreams had ended, that she had found in Peter's love the one thing she had been seeking.





## CHAPTER VI

**BETH** came home to find Sondra, starry-eyed, in the kitchen singing about her work.

She was a bit serious at first when her brother told her what had happened, then she took the younger girl in her arms.

"I'm glad," she said, her voice tremulous. "I know you'll be happy together."

Sondra looked at Beth intently. "You're sure you forgive me for this?" she asked.

Beth smiled.

"There's nothing to forgive, Sondra. I want Tom's happiness more than anything else that I know of and I think yours comes next. I've always liked you, even though I was afraid for him at first. But now that's all gone and the only thing

# Sondra

By

Philip Fair



A Serial—Part III.

I want is happiness for both of you."

Later that evening, when the three of them were in the living room, Sondra brought up the question again—insisting upon telling Beth what her early life had been.

"How strange. How very strange," Beth said, thoughtfully, as Sondra finished the story that she had already told

to Tom early that same morning. "Strange? What do you mean?" Tom asked.

"Why, it's strange, Tom, that a mother, a woman who had really borne a child could treat it that way. I—why, I can't understand that—it's worse than an animal."

Tom started slightly. He stared at Sondra as if seeing something strangely new about her.

"I'd never thought of that," he said at length as if thinking aloud.

"Thought of what?" Beth asked.

"The thing you just suggested—that that woman was not Sondra's own mother!" There was an undercurrent of excitement in his voice. "There is a great deal to work on in that direction! In the first place she has not, herself, any of the traits of character of those people—apparently she is an entirely different person! That's something to work on!"

Meantime, Sondra looked on in growing amazement. She had the feeling that her world was swaying crazily. That the very foundations of existence as she had known it were shaking.

Steps sounded on the wide porch. The three young people in the great old room looked up apprehensively. They seemed to share the feeling that almost anything might happen to all of them at any moment.

But the figure that appeared in the door was the rather orthodox and handsome one of Jordan Graham.

"Jord!" The attorney's eyes lighted at the glad note in Beth's voice as she greeted him.

"That would be worth crossing a continent for, Beth." He looked down into her eyes, after a little bow that took in the other two. "Do you really mean it?"

"You're not trying to flirt with me, are you, Jord?" Beth laughed.

"I wish I could regard you that lightly!"

And then Tom was on his feet striding toward the newcomer.

"You're just the man we need to talk to, Jord," he said, an eager note in his voice. "Suppose—well, suppose some one had been lost from their family for years. How would you go about finding that family, that is, if you hadn't a trace in the world of them, if you hadn't any knowledge of the affair—just a few vague suspicions?"

Graham smiled.

"Vague suspicions, young man, are a lawyer's meat! He gets a real kick out of making facts of them! Who do you want me to find out is who?"

Tom looked at Sondra as if asking consent to reveal her story. Her hands moved in a gesture that seemed to put her whole future in his charge.

For just a moment the young physician stood staring into the face of the older lawyer. And then he seemed to have found what he was searching for.

"I can trust you, Graham," he said finally in a voice that was low and not quite steady.

Graham put out his hand and the other took it. It seemed to be a pledge between them.

Tom told him Sondra's story then and at the conclusion of it Graham looked grave.

"You see," Tom finished, "I haven't a thing to give you as evi-

#### THE STORY SO FAR:

**S**ONDRA NELSON, coming into Terre Haute, Indiana, after a five-year exile on a farm, meets Beth Buchanan. Beth, strongly attracted to Sondra, takes her home with her for a visit. Everything goes along all right until Beth finds that her younger brother, Tom, is falling in love with Sondra, who has never explained her mysterious past. Sondra, loving Tom, finally tells him her story; that she had been beaten and abused by her parents and had run away from home and taken shelter on the lonely farm. Tom insists that he still wants her, and Sondra consents to marry him.

dence. Sondra hasn't an old letter, a scrap of jewelry—nothing to tie her to anybody but those people; but you know how you get a hunch sometimes that you can't down? Well, this thing came to me like that, and I feel as if I had to trace the thing. How would you go about it?"

Graham lifted his hand, palms out.

"I'm like that about it. I haven't the ghost on an idea. You say though that Sondra lived with these people in Circleville, Ohio. Well, Circleville isn't such a large place. It might be possible to find out something about them, how they happened to live there, how long, and the like. That's the only thing we can do now. We'll have to start with that very slim thread. We're starting at the other end of the mystery, as it were."

"Could you start that right away?"

"To-night if you say so. I'll get in touch with a firm of lawyers there."

And so Sondra felt as if she was being whirled to the center of a strange drama, as if she had been called upon to play a part in a mystery.

The idea was weird to her. Too unreal for her to be able to grasp quite completely. She had the feeling that they were talking of some one else. That she was not the Sondra they meant when her name was mentioned, that, somehow, when she answered their questions she was replying for some one else.

And then she found herself alone and looking intently and earnestly and a little puzzledly into Tom's shining eyes while he took her hands and drew her to him.

"No telling what we may discover, dear," he said, happily. "Not

that it makes any difference now that I have you. Only perhaps we'll find something that will lift the shadow over that early part of your life and will give you the image of a real mother to put in the place of that cruel substitute that you had. Strange how it takes a woman's emotional reactions to bring things like that to mind! If Beth hadn't spoken her little speech about mother love I'd never have thought of such a thing!"

"And when it's all over, Tom—you're going to find that I'm just what I am—the child of that terrible home, if you can call such a place by that beautiful name."

"I'm not so sure, Sondra. Of course orchids do grow in swamps, but even a swamp can have beauty while humans that have lost all touch with better things, their Maker, good influences, are—well, you can't compare them with any natural thing. They just aren't natural."

They talked on for a while, Tom's mind deviating from its usual practical method of thought to dream and talk thrillingly of things that Sondra could not even imagine. Life had been too real and hard for her.

Beth and Jordon were still sitting out on the steps talking in low tones when Tom said good night to Sondra.

"It's been a big day." She smiled up at him sweetly for her good-night kiss.

"An overwhelming day!"

Tom waited downstairs for Beth and was startled at the apprehension of her expression when she came in from saying good night to Jordon.

"Oh, Tom, I'm so glad you waited down here," she said, a bit breathlessly. "I'm terribly frightened for Sondra—terribly!" Her voice shook.

"What is it? Beth, what is it?" Tom asked, on his feet instantly.

"It's—Jordon says—well, they're trying to open up that old carnival scandal again! Jordon says Grace's father is behind it, that he's flaying the prosecutor for lying down on the case, taunting him for letting crime go unpunished, for not turning every stone to tag somebody when things like that are done and—and——"

"And Sondra's been mentioned in connection with the case?"

"Yes!"

"And what is their next move going to be? Tell me, Beth! Don't keep anything back! I've got to know so that I can fight it! They're not going to pin anything like that on Sondra, not if it takes every cent I've saved and mortgages my future!"

"Oh, they haven't done anything definite yet!" she cried hurriedly. "Jord says he'll do what he can, but what can any of us do against their wealth and power?"

"I know." The words came tensely from Tom. "If they need a victim badly enough they'll try to railroad her. That's politics! But they won't do it. They won't do it as long as I have a fighting breath in my body."

His face was tense and white. He walked nervously up and down the room.

He wondered suddenly if after all it had been wise to put the story of Sondra's past into Jordon's hands. He seemed to be a friend, Tom was almost sure they could trust him, but he would have felt better if no one had known that Sondra already had one black mark against her—no matter how little she really deserved it.

In cases of that kind the matter of one's real desserts mattered lit-

tle. What counted most was the record of the court against one.

His heart ached for her. Blameless from the very beginning, life had seemed to spread a net of danger and unhappiness in her path.

And through it all she had come uncontaminated, pure of heart, clean of mind and still capable of a deep and enduring love, of a sacrificial love. It was too cruel that she should be so tortured.

Tom felt that night as if sleep would never come to him. He paced the floor of his room and then stood staring out into the night, wondering how he could combat the evil influences that seemed to surround the life of the girl he loved.

Truly her life seemed ill-fated, he thought, if such things really did happen.

Meanwhile Sondra, up the hall a few doors in her own room, slept the quiet, dreamless sleep of the mind at perfect rest. She felt as if she had found a safe haven after all her years of unhappiness. There was a faint smile on her lips as she slept.

She met the new day with a light heart and so occupied was she with her own new happiness that she failed to see the fear and apprehension in Beth's eyes, even though the latter tried to veil them with a smile and Sondra missed the concernedly tender note in Tom's voice as he spoke to her, and failed to notice that all morning long he kept her within sight or hearing.

He left his office door open so that he could see any one coming into the gate and Sondra found him coming out to look in on her at her work every now and then.

She laughed at him.

"I'll never get anything done if you keep this up," she said as he stood gazing at her, his eyes warm with admiration. "Get back to your

office before I drop this sewing and come over and kiss you."

"If I thought you could be tempted that way, darling, I'd stay here forever!"

It was getting toward evening. Sondra had walked out the long path through the garden toward the Third Street entrance of the property and was sitting on a bench behind a thicket of shrubbery when Tom, smoking a leisurely before-dinner pipe, strolled toward her.

He found it impossible to remain out of her sight, since learning that danger hung over her innocent head.

Suddenly, just before he reached her he saw her face whiten and her lips move as if to cry out, but no sound came from them.

"Sondra, what is it?" Tom asked hurrying toward her. "What happened? You looked as if you'd seen a ghost!"

"Oh, Tom—Tom," the words came faintly from her. "I have—worse than that! I'm sure—I'm sure it was—my father. I'm sure!" She hesitated at the word "father" as if she found it hard to apply it to the man she had known as that.

"Not here, Sondra! You must be imagining that! Why, it couldn't be! Not after all these years! Are you sure—quite sure?"

"Oh, perhaps I'm not sure, Tom." She was clinging to his arm like a frightened child. "Not sure—because the years would bring changes. But could there be two people with that horrible cruel face in the world—could there?"

She looked up at him, all of the sweet, feminine appeal of her pleading for his denial.

"There are strange likenesses, darling," Tom said gently, leading her away from the spot, after going around the shrubbery in the direction she had pointed and find-

ing nothing, no one and no trace of a presence. "Perhaps you're nervous, dear. Perhaps you didn't see the man clearly and imagined the resemblance."

"Perhaps," Sondra murmured, trying desperately to keep her voice from trembling. "I could have been wrong. I—I had the feeling that some one was looking at me and when I glanced up—I saw—him—that face, that terrible face."

"The man you knew as your father, you mean?" And once more Tom stood staring out over the grounds, wishing that he might see the man, catch him and drag from him the secret of Sondra, for during the long hours of the night that he had lain staring into the darkness he had become more and more sure that there was a mystery about the girl that even she herself did not suspect.

"Yes, or some one like him, very like him." She shivered as if a chill breeze had struck her. "His eyes made me think of him—even though he wasn't very near, it seemed to me that I could feel his eyes looking at me the way they used to."

The young physician, his arm around Sondra protectively, stood looking down at her, speculatively. He made up his mind that she would not be allowed to go about town alone and that she must not be left in the house alone for even the shortest time. That much he could see to, but he wondered how much farther he ought to go with the thing. If there was anything that he should take to the police—and yet, as he viewed the thing sanely he realized that he had nothing to take the officials; nothing but a fabrication of his imagination, thus far, a thing that would be merely amusing to them for they, practical





*The attorney's eyes lighted at the glad note in Beth's voice as she greeted him.*

beings that they are, rarely worked on other people's hunches.

He drew the girl closer and started back along the garden path toward the house.

"Don't worry about it," he said gently, trying to still her fears. "It's easy to see likenesses in people, especially in a case of that kind where

you've been troubled. Your nerves are on edge, they're cutting up. You'll get over all of this when you know that you belong to me and are safe forever from any of the influences that may try to reach out of the past and touch you. You'll forget all of those hard things, darling."

Sondra's eyes were misty as she looked up into Tom's.

"You're being so sweet to me—so patient with my foolishness."

But Tom, though he encouraged that belief in Sondra, was not so sure that it was foolishness. He had sensed something about the scene, some intangible thing that troubled him in a vague, uncertain way that was more annoying than any actuality could have been.

Sondra was almost smiling as they reached the house again and she hurried to meet Beth as she came along the walk, a happy little cry of welcome on her lips.

But Beth's eyes widened with startled fear when Tom told her of the incident of the garden even though he tried to make a joke of it.

Sondra caught the look. She laughed, but there was a thread of nervousness woven into the gladness of her laughter.

"Don't look that way!" she said. "You shouldn't be afraid, because I'm not going to let myself be. I just imagined that, I'm sure. Perhaps the man wasn't even looking at me and even if he was, people stare at other people loads of times and it doesn't mean anything!"

Tom realized that she was simply trying to talk herself out of her fear, but he applauded the courage that prompted her to do it. He encouraged every move that she made that seemed to be an attempt to throw off all influence of the old life and he hovered about her like a guardian angel.

They sat close that evening and talked in low tones—sat close in the great old living room of the old brick house that had known generations of Buchanans.

Every now and then, one of them, realizing that his tone was the low-pitched tone of apprehension, would

raise his voice and try to speak lightly but involuntarily, without their realization of it, they would drop back to half whispers.

Finally the conversation drifted to the Chautauqua at Merom.

"I'd love to go," Beth said. "We haven't been anywhere for ages. Why don't we take to-morrow off and have a real holiday together, the three of us?"

"Oh, let's! I'd love it! I've always heard of the bluffs at Merom and that old college. I'd love to see it. Let's!"

"Fine! I could stand a vacation myself," Tom put in, and so it was that early the next morning the two girls were busy packing a lunch for the outing and Tom was looking over the car that was waiting at the front curb.

"Funny," said Beth as she packed meat sandwiches into a basket, "that we should pick out Friday for our first real party together! I did not think of that last night, did you?"

"No, but who cares! I'm not superstitious!" Sondra laughed lightly. The prospect of a day in the open with Beth and Tom was alluring. Her life had been all too barren of such things.

"Neither am I! One day's as good as another so far as I'm concerned!"

But Beth had just finished closing the lunch basket when the telephone rang.

She answered it to find that one of the girls in her department at the store was ill and not able to report for duty and so was forced to decide that she herself must go to the store instead of telephoning that she was taking the day off as she had intended doing.

"That's Friday for you!" she said with a touch of impatience as she

joined Tom and Sondra who were waiting for her, ready to go.

"Oh, then we won't go, either! We'll put it off until next week!" Sondra exclaimed.

"Indeed you won't! You'll go right along and perhaps enjoy it the more alone. You haven't had a chance to be alone much anyhow." And Beth's eyes brightened. "They say it's an ill wind that blows nobody good! Go ahead and have your day together. The Chautauqua closes Sunday, so it wouldn't do any good to postpone the trip."

And so Sondra and Tom dropped Beth at the store and then drove on through the sun-kissed Indiana landscape toward Merom, that sleepy, tree-shadowed little town perched on the one bluff that the Wabash River boasts in its entire winding course.

Beth had left them a bit lingeringly, not so much as if she wanted to go on the trip, but more as if she had felt a sense of apprehension. Her eyes had rested for a long moment on Sondra and she had said in a voice that was not quite steady:

"Take care of yourselves, children—you especially, Sondra. Don't let anything happen to her." The last had been directed to Tom and fond as he knew his sister was of Sondra he wondered a little at that.

But rolling over the smooth Indiana roads, past fields that were lush green and little houses nestling in the luxuriant vegetation his heart lifted and he forgot all his fears.

He looked proudly down at Sondra. She had never been lovelier. And as they stopped at a drug store in Farmersburg for something to drink, the glances that Tom intercepted told him that it was not he alone who had an eye for her beauty.

He was as proud as a peacock, basking in the reflected light of her

charm. Unlike some men he seemed to thoroughly enjoy the knowledge that others found his choice desirable, too.

And Sondra bloomed. She glowed. Happiness radiated from her in a warm aurora.

"Happy, darling?" Tom asked just for the pure joy of hearing her lovely voice assuring him.

"Yes," she whispered, slipping her hand into his.

At Merom they walked through the tree-shaded Chautauqua grounds and onto the bluffs that rose from the Wabash. They stood hand in hand looking down at the thread of silver river below and then over at the fields of Illinois that stretched as far as the eye could see.

Something of the calm beauty of the rolling fields touched and lifted their souls. They needed no word to bring them closer, their lips met.

"Beautiful," Tom murmured.

And then they walked back to the big tent. The afternoon slipped away like golden sand trickling through playful fingers.

Evening came. They decided to stay for the program that night. Sondra watched everything with rapt expression. Watching her, one had the feeling of seeing some one standing at the brink of a new and luring world.

The young physician was touched. He realized that evening how much she had missed and vowed over again to let no chance to add to the happiness of her life escape him.

The program—readings, music and impersonations—ended with a poignant little love story.

Tom turned to Sondra to find her lovely deep-green eyes glowing with emotion. He touched her hand gently.

"No more sad love stories for us, dear," he said. "Our own is to be

a happy one, happy from beginning to end."

"Oh, Tom," she cried, in a voice that was tremulous with tenderness, "ours must never end! Never!"

His arm slipped around her in the darkness as they moved out.

"We'll never get past the preface, my dear. It will never end until ——" And he stopped there as if unable to voice the thought that had come to him.

"It must never end—not even then!" Taking up his thought in a panic. "Not even then! Oh, Tom, I'll go on loving you even after I'm dead. As long as there's a soul of me left I'll still keep on loving you!"

"Sondra!" His voice was muted with emotion.

They walked on toward the parked car in silence, the trees branching over their heads, shadowing their path.

And then suddenly Sondra seemed to be snatched from Tom's side. A voice was saying something scarcely intelligible about having found some one and Tom felt as if he were spinning through countless miles of star-shot black velvet to come sickeningly to a stop with a frightful contact with earth and stone.

He lay dazedly for a moment, not quite comprehending that it was really he stretched flat on the earth with stars swinging dizzily in circles above him, and then with a sudden return of his senses and a mighty physical effort that cost him excruciating pain he was on his feet and would have started in the direction that he sensed Sondra had been taken.

A little crowd had collected around him, however, and impeded the poor progress that he might have made with his bruised body.

It seemed to him that he heard her voice raised in terror. He tried

madly to reach her and then found himself confronting officers of the law.

"Move on! Move on!" one policeman was saying to the crowd.

"Get them! Get them! Don't let them get away—he's kidnaping her!" Tom cried to the officer, but the man whom he had expected to be a friend and ally turned on him sneeringly.

"You can't get away with that stuff. He's her father—he told us that you've been trying to put over some smart stuff with the girl and he's taking her home. You'll come along with us and tell it to the judge in the morning."

Tom, shocked almost speechless for a moment, tried to explain. He tried to tell the officers that they were letting the really guilty man get away while they held him; that almost anything was liable to happen to the girl who had been taken from them.

He explained as calmly as he could at first and then grew mad with panic at the thought of Sondra speeding through the country to some unknown place with some one who must have some hidden motive for wanting her.

"You're crazy!" he shouted. "You're letting a kidnaper get away with a girl while you're holding me here! She's the girl I was going to marry! You can't do a thing like this! You've got to let me follow them and get her!"

"We'll see what we can't and what we can do," said one of the officers who ordered and shoved the crowd away and laid rough hands on Tom to take him to the police station.

"But you can't do this!" And Tom tried to explain who he was, asking them to call his home and identify him, asking them to call any prominent citizen in Terre

Haute, for he felt the case had become desperate enough so that he could no longer resort to secrecy.

But to all his pleading they turned a deaf and sneering ear.

Though he tried with physical force to escape them, hoping that he might get to his car and start out in pursuit of Sondra, the officers were too much for him and he found himself forced to walk with them along the dark streets of Merom to the funny little building used as a police station.

Though he had hoped there might be some one there to whom he could appeal for help, he had hoped in vain, for the place was deserted.

He was locked in, the lights turned out and he was left alone. And there was nothing for him to do but rest his bruised body on the cot and torture himself with wonderings about Sondra.

He had visions of her speeding through the night with her captors, screaming at their possible tortures, begging for mercy. He got up and painfully paced the cell. If he could only have known something about her fate—whether her captors had really been interested in her or whether they had merely seized the first girl they could lay hands on.

He cursed himself for having risked walking in the dark with her and exposing her to danger.

It seemed to him as he stopped his pacing that he could hear her frightened cries again on the night air. He felt as if he should go mad.

The hours of that night in the funny little place that served as a jail were a hideous dream to Tom Buchanan.

It seemed impossible that it could really be true that he should be in jail. He had heard of such things, of people being unjustly thrown into

a cell, but he had never believed that it could really be true.

His life, that had always moved in such a smooth, well-ordered pattern, had suddenly been shot with plenty of the stuff that melodrama is made of.

He couldn't make it seem real. He paced the narrow space allowed him, trying to persuade himself that he was the victim of some strange hallucination. He touched the walls of the miserable room with exploring fingers trying, through the actual concreteness of his imprisonment, to bring himself to a realization of what had happened.

And through it all came Sondra's voice as he had heard it last, that piercing shriek that he had been powerless to answer.

As dawn poked its gray, prying fingers into the tiny cell, Tom stood staring out at it—numbed and chill. The thing that he had waited for through all of those torturous hours of darkness had finally come and found him almost too numbed to plan a course of action.

He moved silently beside the officer who came to take him into the presence of the judge. It was the judge's voice speaking kindly, the judge's face as he leaned far over the bench and looked down at Buchanan that aroused him.

"What have you to say for yourself?" asked the judge kindly.

Tom told his story, simply, directly—all of the details of Sondra being taken from him, of the officers arresting him and letting the real culprits go.

At the conclusion the elderly man sat silently looking at Tom for a while and Tom knew a sinking sensation as if once more he faced defeat and unbelief.

He knew in that moment what Sondra must have suffered when of

all the world there was no one to believe her. And then:

"You men must have been insane." The judge was speaking to the arresting officers who had appeared for the morning session of

court in anticipation of the commendation that their vigilance and persistence the night before might bring them.

"Have you no eyes in your heads? Have you no sense of perception?"



*Sondra was trying desperately to keep her voice from trembling. "I—I had the feeling that some one was looking at me and when I glanced up—I saw—him—that face, that terrible face."*

Have you dealt with criminals all your lives and then fail to know when you hear the story of an innocent man?"

His voice grew more stern as he continued:

"I order that this man be released instantly and allowed to return to his home, with the apologies of the court and that both of you officers scour the surrounding section to find out what you can about the car in which this girl was taken away. Report to me at four this afternoon."

There were no other cases. The routine of court in the tiny little town was a brief affair of little formality.

The kindly-faced, white-haired judge stepped down from the bench, his hand out and gripped Tom's.

"I wish I could have known this last night and saved you hours of anguish," he said. "We deserve all the blame you can heap on us for our stupidity."

Tom looked at him gratefully.

"You'll excuse me if I can't say anything appreciative of your own kindness now?" he said. "I can think of but one thing—getting home to see if any word has come."

"Certainly, and you may count on my cooperation from this end." The words came earnestly from the elderly man.

Tom turned and hurried out of the courtroom.

On the steps of the funny old building he was accosted by a threadbare and shiny individual with a ferretlike face shaded by a black slouch hat.

"Given any thought to suing for false arrest?" the man asked, a whiningly eager note in his voice. "I'd be glad to represent you for a per cent."

Tom stopped, startled. He knew such practices existed, lawyers who

trailed ambulances and haunted courthouse doorsteps to drum up trade. But to have it thrust in his face at such a time—when gain of any monetary sort was the last thing he was thinking of—left him breathless.

He paused just a moment and the shyster lawyer, encouraged, pressed closer, an ingratiating smile on his face. Then:

"No—no!"

And Tom rushed on toward a drug store that exhibited the familiar telephone legend in its window.

He called Beth. As he supposed, she was at home, waiting in distraction for some word from him.

She had sat long into the night Friday, waiting for the return of Sondra and Tom, and when they failed to arrive had sat in a chair near the telephone hoping for some word from them, imagining that they were lying somewhere along the road injured, perhaps dying—while she was powerless to do anything.

She had imagined everything but the thing that really had happened.

But she was surprisingly controlled when Tom told her, urging him in deep concern not to let his anxiety rob him of his caution on the return trip.

## CHAPTER VII.

It was an amazingly clear-eyed, calm-voiced, cool-handed Beth who met him at the garage door as Tom drove into the drive.

"Beth!" The word seemed to be wrung from him.

"I know," she said quietly, though her brother sensed the feeling that ran deep under the words. "I wish I could have been there, but don't

take it too hard. We've both got to keep clear heads to combat this thing. We've got to find Sondra and bring her back—now that we know she is in real danger."

"Beth, you're a wonder!" A note of encouragement sounded in Tom's voice. "Most girls would desert in terror at a time like this. You're pure gold!"

"I'm not! I'm only doing what any decent person would do for a girl like Sondra."

Tom turned to her quickly. His infinitely weary eyes lifted.

"Thanks, Beth," he said, his voice full.

Beth didn't answer immediately. She dared not trust her voice with words. When finally she did speak it was to urge Tom to rest.

"Go up and take off your things and lie down a while and then, when you're rested and your head is clearer we'll talk this over and decide on some action. Meantime I'll be here, so if the phone rings I'll hear it. We may get a message. I know that if Sondra finds any way to let us hear from her she will."

Tom hesitated.

"But I feel as if I ought to do something right now, as if I have to or go insane. And yet what can I do? Put it into the hands of the police now? Have the thing spread over town like wildfire? Or would it be more kind to Sondra to try to do the thing quietly? I'm desperate Beth—too desperate to think straight!"

"Let me call Jord," Beth suggested. "You go have a bath and I'll call Jord and tell him everything. He'll know what to do." And as Tom hesitated, she added:

"Please, Tom! You're in no condition to decide so important a thing. These first steps that we take may be the deciding factor—we

need clear brains and calm ones. Yours can't be after the strain and horror of all you've been through. Rest and let me call Jord. He'll figure out some way of doing something."

And so finally Tom was persuaded to go to bed and try to sleep while Beth called Jordon Graham.

And she wondered as she sat quietly in the old living room awaiting his arrival, that in their hour of dire need it had been of him that she had thought. She had turned to him naturally as a sort of safe haven.

He came, grave-eyed and tender. He took her hands in his.

"I can't tell you what it means to me, Beth, to know that in your trouble you send for me," he said gently.

And it seemed to take just that bit of tenderness to start the tears in Beth's eyes that had tried to be so calm and brave and bright.

"Don't," she said not quite steadily. "Don't be nice to me. I can't afford to break down now. I've got to be the prop for Tom to lean on. I really started all this, you know, by bringing Sondra home—though even now I can't say I'm sorry. She's so worth doing anything for."

The attorney looked down into her eyes, his own tender.

"You're just the sort who would say a thing like that, Beth. And I'm glad you are. Now tell me everything you know."

They sat down on the long davenport and Beth, struggling to keep her voice from disclosing the ragged condition of her nerves after her night of vigil, told Jordon all she knew of Sondra's disappearance.

Jordon looked grave when she had finished.

"Doesn't give us much to work on, does it?" he said thoughtfully.



"And it rather puts a crimp in my gleanings from Circleville—her not being here, I mean."

"Then you have found out something from there?" Beth asked eagerly.

"Yes, but of how much value it is now—is a question. It seems that the people whom Sondra lived with or belonged to—if she did—came to Circleville when she was just a baby. Oh, yes"—at Beth's eager question—"they're known there and well remembered! They decorated the police blotter more than once, it seems. They came into the town rather inconspicuously one winter, moved into the poorer quarter and the husband had himself transferred immediately to the Circleville chapter of his lodge. That's how it happens that we can trace them back that far.

"However he never worked at his lodge theories very hard. His brothers found reason to be ashamed of him and he was dropped from the register. After that it's only through the police record that they can be traced.

"The story that Sondra told is all there. How it could have happened is beyond me. The woman sitting in Sondra's case when she was charged with being a wayward minor was one of the first women judges and had a reputation for taking women over the grade every time she got her hands on them, but how she could have done what she did—when Sondra's family had the record it had—is more than I can understand. How the citizens let her get away with it is worse than a cross-word puzzle to me, and you know what a hot puzzle hound I am!"

He laughed dryly and Beth's lips curved in a quivering little smile. She needed some one like him just

then; some one who would try to make her smile.

"And that's about all I could find out about them, except that they are no longer there. Probation officers have no record of what happened to Sondra after she was released and aside from one or two minor changes that brought the parents into court after that they have just slipped out of sight.

"No one in their old neighborhood—a poor and shifting section—seems to know anything about them."

Jordon paused there.

"And then," Beth's voice came tremulously into the gap, "we're just up against a blank wall, aren't we? You don't think our starting this has anything to do with what has happened to Sondra?"

"No," Jordon murmured. "I can't see why it would tie up at all."

Beth sat staring into space, her fingers knotting and unknotting the large linen sports handkerchief that she held. It was Jordon who finally broke the silence:

"But there's one thing that seems to me to have some significance." He paused as if considering the thing again. "And that is that twenty-two years ago—you said Sondra was twenty-three, didn't you?" He turned to look at Beth suddenly. "Twenty-two years ago a Columbus, Ohio paper carried a story of a kidnaping date lined Old Washington, Ohio. Old Washington according to my understanding and memory—I motored through that section about two years ago—is a charmingly quaint town sleeping its days away in the south of Ohio, almost touching West Virginia. Its one business street is flanked with little stores that close at noon so the keepers may go home for their dinners.

"Its houses are the comfortable, spacious-roomed houses of prosperous Ohio farmers—all except one and that one, a huge brick affair on a corner of the main thoroughfare, surrounded by well-kept, ample lawns, was more grand than the rest. It was called the Mansion."

And while Jordon paused Beth had the feeling of standing breathless at a precipice, of hanging on his words, waiting for the expose.

"The Mansion, full three stories high with huge rooms which looked out through French windows onto the doings of Old Washington, belonged to the Bjorkmans. The second generation was living in the house at that time, twenty-two years ago, and it was the daughter of the Bjorkmans—one of the wealthiest farmers in Ohio's richest farm section—who was kidnaped, stolen, or lost.

"The baby dropped out of sight completely. Of course, then, police and detective signal systems were not perfected as they are now and it would have been easy—or at least easier for a criminal to escape under such circumstances."

"And—and what has all this to do with Sondra, with us?" Beth asked, an eager but puzzled note in her voice.

Jordon seemed to be thinking. He did not answer immediately. Then:

"Mighty clever young fellow that lawyer I met in Circleville. He's got a mind that works in every direction at once. For instance, how many lawyers, asked to look into a case of that kind would have gotten the files of old newspapers for miles around, of that period? Not many—because I've worked with plenty of them.

"But this young fellow dug that lost-child story out of a Columbus paper. Circleville, where he is, is

between the two, Columbus on the north and Old Washington south."

Beth waited. She saw that Jordon was dallying with an idea and that impatient interruptions would avail nothing.

Finally he took up the thread of his thought audibly again:

"Both of the Bjorkmans, parents of the child, are dead. Died of broken hearts, grief and worry. There are now, I think, only two maiden aunts living in the place and running it as a sort of hotel." His voice became a shade more thoughtful:

"Strange coincidence, but I'm sure I know the very place, remember it well. Stopped there at noon one day for a chicken dinner—just before breaking into the mining district of West Virginia. Strange that I should have eaten in that very house!"

He stopped speaking and Beth's hand trembled in his grip, as if some of the weird feeling that he had at looking back to that great old house with its old mystery and tragedy had communicated itself to her.

They sat wordless for a while. Beth was the first to break the silence:

"So there's no one left who would be interested in finding the child, who could identify it if it were found?" she asked.

"No one—unless the family resemblance was so strong that it could not be denied. However, there is one thing—perhaps you can help with it. The women in Mrs. Bjorkman's family—she came from an aristocratic old Southern strain, impoverished by the Civil War and never able to get a foothold again, as a matter of fact she was the last of the line—all bore a small clover-leaved birthmark just below the right shoulder. Was there such a

thing on Sondra—you helped to dress her once, didn't you?"

Beth started. "You think it was Sondra then?" She had known it all along, hoped it was what Jordon was getting at, and yet, put into words, the thing startled her.

"I hardly dare say that much, Beth. It's just the vaguest chance. The only things we have to work on so far are our own suspicions—the fact that Sondra seems so little like the people who claimed to have borne her, the fact that a child did disappear in that part of Ohio at the very time that Sondra was too young to remember any other home than the hideous one she told you of."

"It's an awfully vague thread, isn't it?"

"Very. But I've seen vaguer threads unravel amazing facts."

"But if the Bjorkmans were so wealthy, how was it that they couldn't, with all of their means, raise so much fuss, arouse the section so much, that their child would be restored to them?" Beth asked.

Jordon smiled as one might smile at a child to whom one was trying to teach a difficult lesson.

"My dear girl, if wealth were all that was required to stay human crime there wouldn't be any. The rich are just as helpless victims as the poor. If money was all it took to restore the lost to their families, do you think all of these years, since 1910, would have passed without Dorothy Arnold being restored to her parents? Dorothy Arnold's disappearance from Central Park in New York City on December 12th, 1910, is just as much a mystery today as it was then, in spite of the huge sums of money that have been spent to find her.

"It's trite, Beth, dear, but true that there are times when one must

acknowledge that money is not everything."

"Yes, I see," came quietly from Beth. "But then, if these two aunts are running a hotel in the old home-  
stead, where has the Bjorkman money gone to?"

"It's still held in trust in the funny little bank there in Old Washington. Bjorkman, who outlived his wife by only a few months, left it to be held in trust for twenty-five years, a quarter of a century, hoping that somehow or other his daughter would appear to claim it. If the twenty-five years pass and she has not appeared then it goes to the sisters who are living on the property."

It was a strange story that Beth had listened to. There was something so mysterious about it that she had a sense of unreality, as if Jordon had been reading to her from some old history.

"You haven't answered me, Beth," he said finally. "You helped dress Sondra. Did you see any birthmark on her body?"

Beth started.

"I—I wasn't with her when she was undressed," she said, flushing. "Wasn't that stupid of me?"

"No, not at all. How could you have known that you might be called upon later for such information? It was only on a chance that I hoped you might know."

"And now, with Sondra gone, we're as much in the dark as ever." And then with a sudden new thought, Beth asked: "But what was the baby called, Jord? You haven't mentioned a name at all!"

"The baby was called Mimi."

"Mimi!" she exclaimed, in startled unbelief. "But Mimi Bjorkman! Who would ever combine two such names as that?"

Jordon smiled.

"I'm glad you said that. I'd been wondering what a woman's reaction would be to it. My feeling was that Mimi must have been just a nickname given the child by its frivolous Southern mother. No farmer descended from good, strong old Norwegian stock like Bjorkman could

ever have stood in church and agreed to having his daughter called Mimi! I felt immediately that it must be an outcropping of the mother's Creole blood, because she was supposed to have come from the finest of old Southern stock.

"I had hoped you'd ask me about



*Suddenly Sondra seemed to be snatched from Tom's side and he felt as if sickeningly to a stop with a frightful*

the name. I wanted your reaction, a woman's idea on the thing."

"I think you're right," Beth said. "And somehow I feel more than ever now that perhaps Sondra might be that missing baby. But doesn't it

seem weird? I've read of such things but never dreamed that they could ever touch us. They've always seemed so unreal when I've read them in the papers."

"I know, but it's the unreal things



*he were spinning through countless miles of star-shot black velvet to come contact with hard earth and stone.*

that happen, never the expected and ordinary."

They talked on for a while, questions about their future course of action coming fast and tremulously to Beth's lips.

Jordon's calm answers gave her courage, imbued her with some of the calm purpose that seemed to be him. He asked her not to put the matter into the hands of the police for a few days at least.

"If we can handle the thing quietly, so much the better for all of us, especially since Tom feels as he does about her. If I see that it's beyond our depth, then we'll ask help and we won't wait too long."

"And what about this other thing—that old carnival scandal?" Beth asked apprehensively.

"Well, since Sondra's disappeared they can't do anything about that naturally. And"—and Jordon's eyes darkened, while he grinned—"I'm getting ready to spike any move that old Jones may make. It can be done when a man's taken the privileges with life that that old duck has!"

"Oh, I hope so. It would be too cruel to have them trump up something now just——"

"Just because Grace is jealous," Jordon finished. "That's what it really amounts to. She's sore. And she's stirred her father up to make it so hot for that young fool of a prosecutor so that he'll do anything. But we'll take care of that later. And now——"

He stopped speaking and looked at Beth with eyes that were warm with tenderness.

"Are there ever any rewards for the wicked, when they try to do good?" He spoke softly, wistfully and his arms went out to her.

Beth stood, poised, uncertain for a moment.

"Wait," she said tremulously. "Not now! Not—not until this is over and we know."

"What difference could it make to us, Beth? I mean if you love me, nothing can change that."

"I know, but it doesn't seem right to inject our personal affairs into this right now. It's such a big thing. It means so much to Tom and Sondra!"

"Not any more than it can mean to us. It's love to us and love to them. The biggest thing in the world for any one."

"I know, but it's cruel to think of ourselves just now."

"It's cruel to ourselves not to, Beth. Why let any more precious weeks slip by? Love is too wonderful to deny it, darling. Oh, I know I'm not giving you the first, impetuous love of a boy. I've loved other women, or thought I did in the way that I believed was love then, but it's different now, dear. The thing that I'm offering you is something bigger and finer and more understanding than that first impetuous, selfish rush of feeling could ever have been. It isn't anything like that that's keeping you from me now, is it Beth?"

She looked up into his eyes, met them courageously and frankly.

"I wouldn't be giving you a first love either, Jord," she said softly.

"But it isn't any the less for that. Perhaps it's even a better thing, because I've come to treasure love more now. I know better how much it really means to a woman, that her life is never complete without it, that she just isn't living if she's trying to get by without love."

"Beth!" And his arms claimed her in a close, passionate hold.

"Would you mind that?" she asked finally when she dared speak again. "Would it hurt you to know

that I had given my heart once before, even though not myself."

"Beth!" His arms drew her closer against his heart and held her in a passion of tenderness. "Nothing could make any difference! Nothing, so long as I have you! Anyhow, with my past—why, nothing you could have done would give me the right to criticise you! To question you! I scarcely feel fit to touch the hem of your dress, darling! Scarcely fit to kiss the tip of your fingers!"

Lifting her hands to his lips he touched them with quick, passionate kisses.

And then he sought her lips, his own trembling eager above them.

"Beth," he whispered huskily, "this is your promise! I know you would not let me touch your lips without giving them as a pledge of our future. Tell me that you mean that, Beth! Tell me! Say that you love me! Give me your promise! I must hear it, darling—hear it so that it can echo again and again in my heart through the hours that I cannot yet have you! Darling, say it! Say you love me!"

"Oh, I do! I do!" And she knew then why it had been to Jordon that she had turned in her hour of perplexity. She knew why she had had such confidence in him. "I do love you, Jord! I do!"

"Beth! It seems almost too sweet to be real. I hardly dare believe that after all of these months of wanting you from afar, now you're here in my arms, held close, mine, darling!"

"Yours!"

But they started guiltily apart at the sound of footsteps above.

Tom was up. Soon he would be down with them, asking what had happened, what new thing they could tell him.

"Oh, this is terrible," Beth said in a shaken voice. "To think of my own concerns when there is so much at stake—when Tom's heart must be breaking."

"It would be, Beth," was Jordon's man's philosophy, "if we had done anything to stay Tom's relief and happiness. But we haven't. It won't help him if you and I postpone our love, deny it, crush it until everything seems right for its avowal. That's one thing about this world, dear, that women find it very hard to learn—that the successful happy life is the life of the opportunist. You must take things when they come to you. They may never be offered again. Men know that—they're born with that knowledge. That's why men get more out of life. But the women, overcautious creatures, often wait until it's too late."

"I know, but at a time like this to think of ourselves!" Beth exclaimed, as if shocked that she could have.

And then Tom appeared in the door, a fresh suit on, rested but his face still marked with anxiety.

He looked questioningly from one to the other of the two.

"Nothing," said Beth in answer to his look. "We haven't heard anything yet."

And he seemed to flinch as if from an actual physical blow.

"Tom, dear, don't take it that way! Don't. I can't bear it to see you looking so!"

"But how can I help it when my heart is being crushed out of me. This suspense! That's the terrible part of it! If I knew where she was! If I knew what was happening to her! If I could go to her, do something for her! But all I can do is stay here and wait and wait until I feel as if I'm going mad!"

"Tough, old man," Jordon murmured.

"And then if I hadn't the feeling that it was partly my own foolishness that is to blame for it! I should never have walked along those dark streets at Merom with her alone! I should never have risked that! I might have known after that incident in the garden, but I half believed that Sondra's imagination had been overstimulated by all she had gone through. Fool that I was!"

"Don't blame yourself, Tom. How could any of us have imagined that such a thing would happen? No one could have, or would have dreamed of it. Why, it's like going back into the dark ages! It doesn't sound like the twentieth century at all! No one could have known. No one's to blame!"

"Oh, I am, Beth! I am! I should have found out who it was who frightened her in the garden that day. Girls like Sondra don't turn white over nothing! There was more to that than either of us gave credit for then!"

"I know, old man, but you can't hold yourself responsible for things like that," Jordon put in. "Why, if we always took stock in little incidents of that sort we'd be running around in frightened circles every day. Come, come! You mustn't blame yourself! Brace up and hold onto your nerve. I'll probably need you badly before I'm through and I don't want you to be all played out then!"

"I'd give anything if you did need me." Tom looked into the older man's face earnestly. "I'll go mad if I can't do some active thing toward bringing her back. The uncertainty of it is driving me mad. Who knows what may be happening to her!"

"That's a score I think you can be pretty safe on," said Jordon. "Whoever has kidnaped Sondra—if they really meant to take her and were not mistaking their girl last night—has something more than physical harm in mind, there's something deeper than that back of it, Tom."

Tom stared at him, too miserable for words.

"I'm going to Merom now to find out what I can there. I may pick up a trail. And I may hurry back and shoot over to Circleville and on down to Old Washington. I'll leave no stone unturned. Meantime, Beth, you might tell Tom what we've learned and don't leave the house without one of you here—better yet, both of you. No telling what may happen. Sondra herself may come back any moment, and if you're both here—the better!"

He hurried away, his footsteps echoing on the flagging of the walk. It seemed to Beth, standing in the silence of the big room, looking across into her brother's miserable face, that she had never heard footsteps sound so loudly on the walk.

She had the feeling that she had been standing for hours listening to them; standing for hours waiting for something, waiting for the sound of the telephone bell, for a knock at the door, for some communication from the outer world that might mean word from Sondra.

Tom said nothing. He walked about the room while she went through a low-voiced recital of what Jordon had told her and his wish to keep the thing quiet a bit longer.

At the conclusion, as Beth came to the suggestion of secrecy, Tom turned on her wildly:

"Keep it quiet, eh? He wants to keep it quiet a while longer and give



the criminals who planned this thing a chance to accomplish their purpose whatever it is! What does he want to do? Is he intentionally trying to murder her himself with his desire for secrecy? What do I care what the town knows, so long as I get her back safely! And if I

don't—if she never comes back to me safely and well, then I don't care either. What have I to care for then? Nothing! Nothing at all!"

"Oh, Tom, you can't break like this. You can't!"

"Oh, it's all right for you to try to say what I can do and what I



*"Will you get out of here? Will you, before I kill you?" Tom demanded and started toward the girl while Beth, with a little cry on her lips, rushed toward him.*

can't! But when your heart is being tortured you just do the thing you have to! You haven't any choice then! You're not your own man any more! I don't know what I'm liable to do!"

"Tom! Tom!" Beth cried, in gentle protest.

And then she watched him pace the floor, back and forth, back and forth like a madman.

He started wildly at the sound of steps on the flagging outside, light steps, like those of a girl.

And Beth felt the pulse of her own heart quicken, though she was held to the spot. She dared not go to the window to look out for fear the steps they heard approaching might vanish, for fear the feet that made them were phantom feet. She was afraid to look for fear she would not see the figure that she hoped to see.

And then, at the sound of a voice she stiffened. She saw Tom's body tense, as if he was about to spring. A cry almost left her own lips. She felt them move, waited for the sound, but it failed to echo on summer twilight air.

"Hello everybody!" came a girl's voice from the hall.

And then Grace Jones's dark exotic beauty appeared in the doorway.

"Well," drawled the girl, surveying the two who stood staring at her as if she was an apparition, "where's the funeral? You both look pretty sad, if anybody's quizzing me on the subject."

"No one is!" The words came like flame-tipped bits of steel from Tom.

"Why, Tom, why all the cold shoulder? Learned to hate me all of a sudden?" And then, looking around, she continued: "Where's the beautiful but dumb hunk of beef?"

"Will you get out of here? Will you, before I kill you?" Tom demanded and started toward the girl while Beth, with a little cry on her lips rushed toward him and intervened.

"Tom! For heaven's sake, Tom!"

"Well, get her out of my sight or I'll do something desperate! Get her out of my sight, I say!"

Grace stared at him for a moment, then backed toward the door, her dark eyes flashing fire.

"This is a pretty mess! Has he gone stark mad about the creature?" Her tone was sneering, while Beth pushed Tom out of the room and then turned back to Grace and walked toward the porch, taking the girl with her.

"You'd better go, Grace," she said. "It isn't safe for you to—be around here right now."

"What's the idea?" Grace demanded, her curiosity towering above her fear for her personal safety. "Has the beautiful but dumb given him the air—or what's up?"

Beth stared at the girl. For the first time a thought darker than any that she had ever had concerning Grace entered her mind. She wondered if Grace might have had anything to do with Sondra's disappearance. It seemed too far fetched a thing, too impossible, and yet there had been times when the mental processes of Grace had amazed her.

"I imagine you know what's happened to her better than any one else," Beth said, seriously, looking intently into the girl's face, beautiful in spite of something sinister that she sensed in it.

"I don't know what you mean."

Beth stared through the shadows for a full minute of silence.

"I'm not sure that you don't know what I mean," she said finally.

"I don't. I don't know what you're talking about." Grace's eyes were wide and her voice was indignant.

Beth pondered a moment. She wondered if she dared experiment in spite of Jordon's warning to her to keep the thing quiet. She had the feeling that she might learn something from Grace's expression.

And yet, with more sane thought, she felt that she must be mistaken.

Grace had never been intensely interested in Tom; she had wanted him more, Beth thought, to appease her vanity than anything else, just as she wanted the homage and attention of every man who came to the town and moved in her circle.

It had been merely pique at Tom's indifference to her that night at her ill-fated dinner that had made Grace so unpleasant, there was nothing deeper back of it, no real desire for Tom that would find expression in treachery when it found itself foiled.

"I don't know what you're driving at at all. Funny when a great big hunky stranger can come to town and be put ahead of all of your old friends!"

And then on the crest of the indignation that rose within her, Beth felt the words that she had wanted to say to Grace coming. She could not have stopped them if Jordon had been there commanding silence with his deep imperious voice:

"Grace, you know that Sondra is—gone," she said.

"Gone?" Grace repeated the word in a strange voice after her face had undergone a change of expression that Beth found it impossible to analyze and after she had seen her slim body flinch as if from a physical blow. "Gone where?"

"That's what we're all wondering about," Beth murmured.

And then Grace's laugh echoed sharply on the early evening air, seemed to cut down through it like a grating, unpleasant sound.

"What more proof do you want? She's gone at the first hint of danger! Isn't that self-accusatory?"

"No, it isn't," Beth replied angrily. "I'd never believe anything like that, like the hideous thing you're trying to pin onto Sondra if she confessed to it herself!"

Grace moved back with a gesture as if she had been slapped in the face.

"I know what you're doing," she said suddenly, her own voice low and furious. "You're trying to hide her! Trying to hide her! Well, the law is one thing that you can't hide from! When they get ready to spring their trap, all their evidence in, they'll come here and then you'll have to produce her!"

Beth stared at her in amazement, wondering whether Grace was a very good actress or a fiend in human form.

"You can try all you want to shield and protect her, but you can't, do you hear? You can't!" Grace's voice rose shrilly. "There's nothing you can do for her now! You can't——"

And then Grace stopped suddenly, as if some realization had come to her. She looked at Beth, her dark eyes mad with fury and Beth wondered, fearfully, as she looked into them, if there was something darker back of them than just the color that was visible.

She wondered with vague fears, if they veiled something more sinister. If that half-finished sentence had some horrible meaning.

She felt momentarily as if she must lay hands on the girl and forcibly drag from her the rest of what she would have said, the thing that

she stopped just as the words would have crossed her lips. But Beth knew she must not. That would only add to the difficulty of their situation.

Instead she stood mutely, clinging with her hands to the pickets of the fence to keep them from some desperate move.

"You can't do anything for her now," finally the words came from Grace in a low, hate-weighted tone.

Beth seemed for a moment to be searching for something to say and then, suddenly, as if she thought better of it, she bent slightly, closed the garden gate and walked back into the house, leaving Grace standing staring after her.

From the house she heard Grace's steps echoing along the sidewalk. She shivered. There was something terrible about the sound of them coming so plainly on the evening air. They seemed verily to contaminate the beauty of that summer evening. Indoors she found Tom, standing, white-faced, his hands clenched.

"If she had stayed here another minute I would have killed her," he said tensely.

"Hang onto yourself, lad," Beth said compassionately. "We've got to. We've got a battle on our hands—you and Sondra and I."

Tom looked up at her but he asked no question and Beth was glad. It would have been too hard to have put her fears into words. It would have been too absurd to

have tried to tell the vague, half-formed ideas that lay in her consciousness.

But she knew a very definite and new feeling of fright, of need for action, for strength to combat some terrific and intangible force of darkness that hung over them, all the more menacing because they could not yet see or understand it.

Though her better judgment told her that Grace could have had nothing to do with Sondra's disappearance, still she had a vague feeling of serious distrust for the girl, the feeling that, once aroused as she had been by the occurrence of the dinner, she might be capable of almost anything.

She wished wildly that she had never asked Grace to meet Sondra, that she had never tried to interfere with what now seemed to her to be fate. For Sondra and Tom had been attracted to each other as naturally as if they had been born for each other.

She found a little comfort in that thought and found reason to blame herself less.

It had been fated that Sondra should come into the store and so appeal to her that she took her home, fated that Tom should never meet a girl who attracted him strongly until Sondra came into his life.

It had been fate—all of it. In that thought Beth found some comfort.

TO BE CONTINUED.





# Hard Times And Heartaches

By Irma Mullens

**S**ARA LOU stood on the corner of Canal and St. Charles Streets and appraised the young man waiting a few feet along the curb from her. He had come into the basement of the Hub that afternoon, pushing before him one of those two-wheeled trucks that are used to move cases around stores. The truck had been heavily laden with cases of the pots and pans which were sold in the basement of the Hub, the store where shoppers could buy anything

from a solitaire diamond set in platinum to a ten-cent strainer in the basement.

The young man's clothes interested Sara Lou even more than the young man himself. Those clothes told her so many things about him. They had been made obviously by a good tailor, fitted perfectly, and were of good material. Under normal conditions, young men who wore clothes like that did not push cases of goods around the basement

of stores. It was evident that the young man, like herself, had been caught in the wave of business depression.

Probably he had been a minor executive before the crash. He was too young to have climbed far. There were thousands like him—first assistants to the vice presidents, assistants to the sales managers, drawing good salaries because they took a large part of the work off their immediate superior's shoulders, but the first to be cut off when trimmed sails on the business ship became imperative.

Now as he stood waiting for a street car, there was a droop of utter weariness about his shoulders that Sara Lou could understand. She had felt like that at the end of each of her first few days in the basement. You couldn't leave a position as secretary to the sales manager of a lumber concern at forty per week and start in the basement of the Hub selling pots and pans at fifteen per week with long hours each day, as she had done, and not be utterly wearied and discouraged in the evenings.

The young man's eyes lifted to hers abruptly. She flushed a little as she shifted her gaze to the plate-glass windows across the street. There was a darling dress in the window—nineteen ninety-five. She made hasty calculations and shook her head. Such a purchase was impossible on fifteen a week. That was just too bad. The dress had been reduced from forty dollars.

Her eyes went back to the young man. A swift red mounted in her face as she realized that he was inspecting her just as she had inspected him a moment before. Recognition crossed his face as their eyes met again. He had remembered her as a fellow worker at the Hub. His

smile was friendly without being officious. She found herself answering that smile without knowing why. Sara Lou was firmly, constitutionally opposed to pick-ups.

The street car they were waiting for rumbled around the bend of the tracks into St. Charles. Without seeming effort on the part of either, they were seated a moment later beside each other in the car. The aisle of the car became jammed with home-going humanity. The young man spoke as the car started again.

"It's pretty tough in the basement, isn't it?"

Sara Lou glanced down at his hands, lying in his lap. The palms were reddened. Probably, she thought, he was at the point of losing his nerve, ready to start slipping rapidly farther downhill. His need of a friendly, steadying hand, of a word of encouragement was evident.

"Yes, it's rather hard there, but"—her smile was warm and genuine—"you'll get used to it."

"I wasn't thinking of myself." He had noted her glance at the reddened palms. "I was considering you. I could see the first thing that you hadn't been doing that kind of work long."

"No, I had a nice job," she agreed. "Running a typewriter isn't so bad as standing all day behind a counter full of pots and pans. But the people who owned the typewriter decided to sell it, and since then every machine I've tried to approach has high-hatted me."

His nod of understanding was quick. It told her he recognized the fact girls as well as men must eat. No matter how far a girl tried to stretch the pennies she had saved, she couldn't go on looking for a suitable job forever.

"What you need," he said to her, "is relaxation in the evenings. I'll

bet you haven't even been to a show in weeks."

"That's brilliant! To reason that any one working in the basement at the Hub hasn't money to spare for shows requires an active mind," she told him, and was sorry instantly for the flippancy.

A slow red crept up into his face. He hadn't intended, she realized, to remind her of the slenderness of her means. Probably he had been trying to pave the way for an invitation to go with him to one of the cheaper shows. As the car passed it, a poster in front of a neighborhood theater reminded her that the show that had been seventy-five cents at a movie palace on Canal Street two months before could now be seen for fifteen cents.

He got off at the next corner to transfer to another car. Sara Lou was slightly regretful that she had not encouraged him more. He was rather nice. She watched him as he crossed to the curb from the car. He was tall, straight, except for the weariness resting so heavily now on his rather broad shoulders. Dark hair, inclined to be curly, had been exposed to her eyes as he lifted his hat when he left her in the car. Gray eyes had gazed candidly, honestly into hers as he sat beside her.

The slight regret tingeing her thoughts grew. No doubt he needed companionship, as she did herself. She had found it easy to drift away from her circle of friends and acquaintances when she moved from a nice apartment to the single room with bath across the hall which she now occupied.

The next morning he stopped a dozen feet or more from her in front of her counter to examine his blistered palms. Her eyes met his. Both smiled. He came over to the counter to chat for a moment with

her. She learned that his name was Lee Hall, and did not hesitate when he wanted to know hers. Then the floorwalker bore down upon them, an angry gleam in his eyes as he gazed coldly at Lee.

"Perhaps you haven't been here long enough to know your duties," he suggested. "In that case, permit me to inform you they do not include trying to fascinate pretty girl clerks!"

The floorwalker was a very polished young man, as polished as his own well-oiled hair, except to the under employees of the store, and to them he could be as unpleasant as he seemed to think the offense required. Sara Lou did not judge him too harshly. It was, she guessed, part of his job. His eyes now told Sara Lou that he was finding her easy to look at.

She was not disconcerted. Other men's eyes, including Lee Hall's, had told her the same thing. A slim figure that was not slim enough to mar feminine curves, reddish-brown hair, skin like an ad for cold cream, and a pair of violet eyes had been causing men to turn their heads for the second or third time since her sixteenth year.

Lee's face was red as the card on the counter announcing the price of the pans when he turned back to his truck. She could guess what effort was required of him to keep his lips closed, and she understood the utter discouragement that possessed him now.

The floorwalker leaned on the counter and continued to gaze at Sara Lou as though he were just discovering her presence in the store. Her eyes followed Lee till he was hidden from them by a supporting pillar of the building.

As she stood on the same corner that evening, waiting for her car, she

was not aware of Lee till his hand touched her arm. He was standing there beside her when she turned her head.

Again they sat together on the street car. Both were a little inclined to silence at first, as though the floorwalker's reprimand in her presence had left a veil of embarrassment upon them. He found words at last.

"Well, your friend certainly gave me an earful of instructions to-day."

She shrugged her slim shoulders.

"He's not my friend. I only work there."

"Judging from the way he looked at you to-day, he'd like to be one of your very best friends. But, of course, he's not alone in that desire."

"Oh, isn't he? Well, in selecting my friends I always file applications six months ahead of time."

"I can understand you'd be able to do that. Most any young man would be willing to wait six months for a chance to be your friend."

The pink-and-white of her face became largely pink.

"Oh, yes, even my chance acquaintances are chosen only after a lot of deliberation. Consider the way I met you!"

The quick smile that came to his face was reward for her effort.

"That was different. I fell for you so hard the first time I saw you the whole building was jarred on its foundations," he assured her.

"Oh!" She could think of no adequate reply.

They rode for a moment in silence. He seemed to be regaining his self-confidence rapidly.

The same neighborhood theater that had attracted her attention the day before flashed by the car window. He saw the posters, too, and his eyes met hers.

"Shall we see it?" he wanted to know.

She considered that while the car moved on toward his corner. If she refused, probably the discouragement that had possessed him the day before would return. He needed relaxation and encouragement. Pushing cases of kitchenware around the basement of the Hub was not the most entertaining thing a young man might do.

"Why not?" she replied to his question as the car began to slow down.

"What is your address? Where shall I come for you?" He rose to leave the car.

"I'll meet you on the eight-fifteen car," she told him.

They went to the show and had sandwiches and a soft drink afterward in the drug store beside the theater. She made an amazing discovery: Lee was trying to help her keep her own spirits up! He thought her courage was weakening!

She could not help smiling over the situation. They had been attracted to each other by a mutual desire to help. They were just two items of humanity caught up and swept from secure positions by the tidal wave of hard times, thrown together in the basement of the Hub and clinging to each other for words of encouragement.

They went to other movies, were wildly extravagant one evening after pay day and went to a theater on Canal and had supper and danced in a high-priced restaurant.

Then suddenly Sara Lou Bolton knew that Lee was occupying a too large portion of her thoughts. Two customers in the basement complained to the floorwalker that they had failed to gain her attention when they stood before her counter of pots and pans. It might have been coin-





*Recognition crossed his face as their eyes met. She found herself smiling at him without knowing why.*

vidence, but the floorwalker wanted a date for the evening with her after the second woman had gone to him.

Sara Lou tried to decide whether there was a veiled threat behind his invitation to go to a show with him that evening. Certainly with sales-girls as easy to secure as they were, he had plenty of cause to discharge her. And jobs, even those like selling pots and pans in the basement of the Hub, were hard to find. She

could put off the day when she would have to search for another position by going out for an evening occasionally with the floorwalker, and she

was quite sure that she would be able to take care of herself, so far as he was concerned. These slick-haired young men always wilted when their vanity was punctured with a sharp thrust.

But Jimmie Maloy, the floorwalker, was rather nice. When he was away from the Hub, enough of the polish seemed to slide off to make him human. He didn't try to hold her hand during the excellent

show nor attempt to hold her too close when they were dancing in a night club afterward.

The next evening she went with Lee to the small theater again.

"I'm skidding on curves about you already," he told her.

"You mustn't do that. It's bad for the tires," she observed.

"No, it's bad for the heart. You—you're doing that to me. I want to marry you. I've never felt this way about a girl before."

"Oh, I see. You want to marry me to save me!"

She understood that Lee knew she had gone out with Jimmie Maloy the evening before. One of the other clerks had overheard her conversation with Jimmie, and it had been whispered around. Evidently Lee felt now that he must do something about that.

"No, I want to marry you because I love you."

"Excellent reason! I gathered the idea at first that it was to be an act of pure charity."

"Please, darling!" His hand sought hers lying in her lap. "Sara Lou, I'm wild over you!"

"Well, is there anything I can do about that?" She pulled her hand away from his.

"Yes, you can say that you love me," he replied quickly.

"But I'm not so sure that I do! I was just considering the possibility of it."

"And you find the chances against it?"

"On the contrary, I think the chances are excellent." She smiled at him in the dimness of the theater. "Unless—unless I stop seeing so much of you," she finished.

"Sara Lou, you wouldn't do that?" A quick fear crept into his voice.

"I don't know." There was doubt in her tone. "I'm not sure that I

ever want to fall in love and get married, and if I do there's still plenty of time."

A lot of little silences fell between them during the remainder of the evening.

The next day she refused a date with Lee and stayed in her room during the evening. On the following evening, Jimmie had planned a little party for them. There were two other girls. One of them was Jimmie's sister. Sara Lou understood then that she had misjudged Jimmie in her first estimate of him. But thoughts of Lee persisted in her mind throughout the evening.

Jimmie was falling in love with her, too. It complicated matters. If Jimmie had been the kind Sara Lou had first suspected him to be, it would not have mattered, but he wasn't.

Lee stood before her counter the next day with a glint of steel in his gray eyes.

"I won't have you going out with that slick-haired sap!" he told her.

She stiffened. His information came too swiftly to have been acquired honestly. He had been spying on her.

"Thanks!" she replied warmly. "I didn't know I ever asked you to help me choose my friends!" They glared into each other's eyes.

There was genuine, unmixed wrath in the gray depths of his.

"I think I'm beginning to understand. If he's your idea of a nice little playmate, then you can count me out!"

"Now that's just too bad!" Her tone was no less warm than his. "I've had the wedding invitations engraved with your name on them!"

His face went pale with the sarcasm of her words.

"I guess I'm just a plain, unvarnished fool!" he said slowly.

"You do seem to have rational ideas at times," she agreed.

"Yes, I've got one now!" He bowed stiffly to her and walked away.

She went to a movie that night with Jimmie.

Lee avoided her during the days that followed. If his work brought him near her with his hand-pushed truck and its cases, he was careful to keep his eyes from meeting hers. Sara Lou hadn't suspected how much it would hurt to have Lee's eyes avoid hers.

On a morning a week after their quarrel, there was a new man pushing Lee's truck around the basement. A swift fear caught at her heart. Was Lee gone? Had he disappeared from her life forever?

Thoughts of him kept running through her mind all day. There was a lot of antipathy in her violet eyes when they rested on Jimmie Maloy. Jimmie was responsible for Lee's going. He hadn't liked Lee. Probably he had caused Lee to be discharged. She hadn't intended to lose Lee like that.

Lee had needed her. He needed her more than ever now! She loved him. She made inquiries of two or three of the other clerks in the basement. They had known Lee, but they didn't know where he had gone.

Days dragged by. Lee would never come back. That thought persisted in Sara Lou's mind with a sickening frequency. If she wanted to cry, she kept it hidden from the other girls in the basement. Jimmie became insistent, asked her to marry him. She tried to find another job, partly to get away from Jimmie but largely because the basement of the Hub would always remind her of Lee. There were no jobs to be had. Thousands of other girls in the city were looking for jobs, too.

LS-6C

Then came the abrupt, discouraging news that the basement store in the Hub was to be discontinued. It had not been paying. It was to be used as a storehouse for the goods sold on the floors above. More startling than those facts, however, was the information that Lee Hall was the man who had ordered the basement discontinued. He was assistant to the manager of the Hub, newly come to the organization, and his work in the basement had been done only to give him a chance to check up thoroughly on the possibilities of profit there.

Jimmie Maloy stopped before Sara Lou's counter on the afternoon of the day when the news first filtered down to the basement.

"You've heard it?" he wanted to know.

She nodded.

"Guess it means we'll all be out of work," he went on. "You know who's responsible for it, don't you? He's hitting at you and me. I don't think his report on the basement was entirely unbiased."

"You mean——" Sara Lou didn't finish the sentence.

"Exactly! He fell for you pretty hard and when you ditched him for me, he decided to even the score by doing away with both our jobs."

"Oh!" She hadn't thought of it in that way. Lee wouldn't do a thing like that. And yet, he had been thoroughly angry the morning when he walked away from her.

"There's no other reason," Jimmie assured her. "I went to the accounting department this morning. The chief clerk was working on the figures. From what he'd worked out so far, the basement seemed to have been showing a nice profit."

Sara Lou stood for a moment with eyes that stared but did not see, while she digested Jimmie's words.

They were convincing. If the basement was showing a profit, then there could be no other reason except Lee's personal grudge for closing it.

When she left the building from the employees' entrance that evening, Lee was hurrying down the street. They almost bumped into each other. He paused for a second. She turned her head quickly. He was mean, small, narrow. Only such a man could have done the petty thing he had. She hurried on to the corner to wait for her car.

A sale was put on in the basement. Full-page advertisements in the daily papers announced that the Hub's entire stock of kitchenware would be sold at prices less than cost. A weary week for Sara Lou followed. The basement was crowded from opening to closing time. Dozens of women shouted at her across the counter, each demanding that she be waited on first. Some of them complained to Jimmie.

At times the crowd seemed just a many-headed monster, threatening to devour her. She had to go on, she kept telling herself through it all. She was in desperate need of that last week's salary. Her face took on a hard, defiant look that was not like her real expression at all.

Yet, even knowing the pettiness and smallness of Lee, she had to admit she still loved him. Nothing seemed to lessen the ache in her heart. She smiled with a lot of bitterness at times over her first foolish idea that Lee had needed encouragement and a helping hand.

Saturday night came at last. There was a little typewritten memorandum in her pay envelope, asking her to report to the executive offices of the Hub Monday morning. She understood. It was Lee's way of

throwing a bone to a dog. She considered ignoring the request. She didn't want anything that came from him. But memories of weary days of tramping the streets, of waiting in employment offices, of answering ads in the papers only to be told that the places were already filled, caused her to be there waiting when Monday morning came.

An office boy took her name in to Miss Barrow, a kindly, middle-aged woman, who seemed to be secretary to one of the officials. Miss Barrow's smile was genuine and friendly.

"You're to be Mr. Hall's secretary," Miss Barrow told her. "Your desk is in his office." Miss Barrow motioned toward a door on her left.

Sara Lou stiffened for a moment. She wouldn't work for him! It was Lee's way of humiliating her further. She wouldn't do it! Then she remembered that beggars must necessarily take whatever scraps were thrown their way, and went back to the cloak room to pull off her hat.

Lee had not come in when she went into his office. She sat down at the desk and uncovered the typewriter. Lee came in a few moments later, and his "Good evening!" was as cool and wholly businesslike as though she were an utterly strange girl whose application for the position had been accepted.

He ran rapidly through some papers on his desk. Sara Lou hated him thoroughly in that moment. He had made a place for her, but there were all those other people who had worked in the basement, thrown out of their jobs. Probably his grudge had been largely against Jimmie, and what a little, mean way he had taken of fighting back! A more startling thought than that flashed through her mind. He might even think that forcing her into daily association

with him would help his cause with her.

"Will you take some letters, please?" His voice was still as cool as though he were seeing her for the first time.

She swung around from the machine quickly, poised a freshly sharpened pencil above a notebook, and prayed that her shorthand would come back to her easily. His unhurried dictation would have been easily taken in days gone by, but now she had to ask him two or three times to repeat. If he was annoyed by that, he gave no sign of it. His eyes were studying her face intently

when he finished and she lifted her gaze from the notebook.

Illogically, she thought of the way his hair waved back from his forehead. He was still watching her as she inserted paper into the machine. She began typing. He rose to leave the room. He did not return until two hours later. The finished letters were lying in a neat pile on his desk.

He glanced at the completed work and then at her. Sara Lou turned her eyes swiftly away. He sat down and began signing the letters.

"I think you missed part of my dictation on this one," he told her



*"Darling!" His arms were opened to her and Sara Lou walked straight into them. Miss Barrow surveyed them for a moment and knew that she would have to find another secretary for Mr. Hall.*

calmly, as he rose to lay one of the letters on her desk. "It's rather confusing as you have it written."

She sprang up swiftly.

"I was just an idiot to think I could work for you!" she told him.

His gray eyes gazed quizzically into hers.

"You need the job, don't you?" he wanted to know.

"I can't work for you!" she repeated.

He nodded slowly.

"I guess I was wrong in having the place offered to you. But I love you! It was natural, I suppose, that I should hope you'd quit seeing me as just another piece of obnoxious scenery." He moved toward the door. "I'll have Miss Barrow transfer you to the billing department and send one of the girls there to take your place," he promised.

She followed him to the door. Miss Barrow was not in her office. Lee went on out into the hall. A girl was busy at a filing cabinet in Miss Barrow's office. Sara Lou stood uncertainly at Miss Barrow's desk. The girl turned. It was Rose Mason, who had worked at the counter next to Sara Lou's in the basement.

"Hello," Rose offered.

"What—what are you doing here?" Sara Lou asked.

"I'm filing clerk. You left too early Saturday to get the news, didn't you? Everybody working in the basement was given another job. I see you were promoted, too. Jimmie Maloy's salary was doubled. He's on the third floor in charge of men's furnishings. Mr. Hall did it! Miss Barrow told me he insisted to

the manager that not one employee be let out."

Lee came back into the room before Sara Lou had time to reply to that.

"Miss Barrow is busy at present," he said to Sara Lou. "If you don't mind finishing those letters now, I'll attend to the other matters this afternoon. I wanted to get those letters off in this morning's mail."

She followed him back into his office. Her throat was dry and parched. She was sure that words would not come, however great was the effort she made.

"Lee!" Her eyes met his bravely. "I—I'm—what I said about my being an idiot was true! But it wasn't because I thought I could work for you. It's because I wouldn't admit that I love you! I want to work for you all the rest of my life!"

"Darling!" His arms were opened to her as he took one swift step toward her.

Sara Lou walked straight into those arms. She knew that with that action she was accepting a position for life. The position Lee was offering her now would end hard times and heartaches for her. It would be permanent. A vast sense of security and gladness settled over her as she lifted up her lips to his.

Miss Barrow, responding to Lee's inquiry for her, stood in the door and surveyed them for a moment. She knew as she turned back to her own office that she would have to find another secretary for Mr. Hall almost before this new one had begun. She had seen such things happen before.





# Fires Of Fate

By Peggy Gaddis

**B**EFORE the ship had been twelve hours out of San Francisco, everybody on board knew that the frilly, gay, pretty golden-haired Elise Hamilton was engaged to that big, good-looking, adoring Gerald Martin, and that under the chaperonage of the self-important Mrs. George Hamilton, they were en route to Honolulu, so that Elise's army-officer father, unable at that season to get leave of absence, could witness the wedding.

Judith Laurence, from the depths of her steamer chair, watched them as they paraded the deck—Elise, very smart, very pretty in her soft-blue sports costume, a little blue béret the color of her long-lashed eyes making futile efforts to control her fly away blond hair; Gerald, tall and good-looking, smiling down at

her as though every word that dropped from her red lips were a pearl of rare value.

Judith told herself that she was being unreasonable in feeling a sharp little stab of envy every time she looked at Elise. Yet, what right had Elise Hamilton to everything, including an ideal man any girl might want for her own, while she, Judith Laurence, equally deserving, had nothing?

Here was Elise speeding light-heartedly on her way to marriage and happiness with the man she loved, while Judith was on her way to hard work as governess in a family of four children, whose father was an American business man in China. Judith's mouth, as red and lovely as Elise's, twisted a little at the thought.

But she caught herself up with a mental shake. She had determined to enjoy this voyage, since she could not reasonably expect to enjoy a great deal of the life toward which she was traveling. She was grateful for the offer of a position in the home of a wealthy cousin. A winter in which she had fought for a job of any kind, for a chance to live, for the barest existence, in New York, had left her battered, bruised, shaken, for the time being, completely defeated. Her cousin's offer, bringing with it transportation to Shanghai, had been received by Judith with delight. At least, she would be assured of shelter, friendly voices, food, life! And in the last few weeks in New York before her cousin's letter had arrived, she had begun to be afraid that she would be denied even the means with which to go on living.

She would not have noticed Elise, her mother, and Gerald Martin so closely had not chance in the shape of the second steward seated them all at the same small table. It happened that the following morning when she came down to the dining salon for breakfast, she found only Gerald at the table.

"Good morning!" he greeted her eagerly. "I was beginning to be afraid I'd have to have breakfast alone, and I loathe that."

"But where is Miss Hamilton? Surely she's not seasick on a sea as calm as this!" Judith said politely.

"No, but Elise considers eight o'clock an unholy hour for anything, including breakfast. She's never about until noon," grinned Elise's devoted fiancé.

"Oh, but that way she misses the nicest part of the day," protested Judith.

"I know it, but I haven't been able to convince her about that. I

will, though. Elise is sufficiently broadminded to be willing to look at other people's viewpoints, as well as her own," boasted Gerald, attacking his grapefruit with the enthusiasm of a hungry man anxious to dispense with frills and get down to facts.

Judith studied him narrowly. Privately, she had her doubts about Elise's adaptability, but, of course, she couldn't tell Gerald Martin that. So she merely murmured something politely noncommittal.

After breakfast, Gerald suggested a stroll about the deck, to which Judith readily agreed. There were few others on deck, for the morning was crisp with a wind that felt out thin places in one's apparel, and made one shiver. They strode along, laughing, discovering mutual interests, quarreling amiably over differences of opinion, making their way slowly but surely along the path to a firm friendship.

When Elise, as dainty as a freshly dressed French doll, stepped out on deck shortly before noon, her eyes widened with anger and surprise at sight of Judith and Gerald in adjoining deck chairs, laughing and talking like the most devoted of friends.

Gerald sprang up, greeting Elise with delight. Judith, looking up, met Elise's blue eyes, and saw the signs of frosty dislike in them. Elise's full, beautifully painted scarlet lips thinned to a less attractive line.

"If you aren't too busy, Jerry dear, I thought we might have a little walk before luncheon—if I'm not intruding!" said Elise, her voice velvety, her manner very sweet. Only another woman would have sensed the harshness behind that velvet, the acidity of that sweetness.



"Of course, darling—intrude? As if you could!" said Jerry happily, tucking her small hand through his arm. "You'll excuse us, Miss Laurence?"

Judith nodded, smiled, and watched them go. Elise sent her a glance that was sultry and suspicious, a glance that said as plainly as words: "Hands off my man!" And Judith smothered a little wicked grin. What a little cat this Elise child was! She was soft and cuddly and warm, purring gently beneath a stroking hand, but hissing, spitting, and clawing when things didn't go exactly as she wished.

Judith shrugged and picked up her book. It was not for her to worry over Elise Hamilton's disposition, although she felt a little thrill of pity as she remembered Jerry Martin's confidence in his fiancée's sweetness and adaptability.

Elise saw to it that Jerry had not another moment with Judith during the day, but the following morning they once more breakfasted alone, and had a long and interesting walk on deck before Elise appeared. That time Jerry made a deliberate effort to draw Judith into the deck games that occupied so much of Elise's time and interest aboard ship. The fact that Judith played a good game, that she proved herself popular with the other players did not endear her to Elise. But Elise was far too wise to betray openly her jealousy and dislike of the other girl.

On the third morning, Judith, unable to sleep, got up very early with the intention of watching the glory of the sunrise. The eastern sky paled, turned to gray; suddenly there was a streamer of the palest opalescent pink, deepening a little, fading to pearl at the edges, a streamer of faintest lavender that deepened to

violet. Breathless with delight, Judith watched as the colors blended, deepened. Suddenly, like an expertly managed stage property, the sun popped a golden, gleaming rim above the horizon. And somebody who stood beside Judith said with a deep breath:

"I feel there ought to be a fanfare of trumpets, a glory of melody to accompany such a miracle as that!"

Judith turned, startled, to find Jerry Martin beside her, smiling down at her, sharing her delight in the spectacle they had just witnessed.

"Wasn't it gorgeous?" she murmured unsteadily. "Imagine people wasting such an hour in sleep—and missing that!"

Jerry smiled down at her with a queer, odd quickening in his eyes. And suddenly he smiled warmly, and tucked her hand through his arm, as he had done yesterday with Elise.

"Come on; let's walk and talk. I like you!" he grinned boyishly.

"All right; I like you, too!" she laughed, matching her step to his.

There was a new quality in their comradeship that morning. During breakfast, they found themselves silent, suddenly looking at each other, smiling into each other's eyes. Already they had progressed far enough down the road to understanding to find speech unnecessary as either a cloak or a revelation of their inner feelings. They had discovered mutual interests, thoughts in common. In the few days aboard the *Empress Maru*, they had come to know each other better than they might have done in months of ordinary meetings on land. The close association of fellow travelers that is an inevitable part of an ocean voyage had flung them together, and

not even Elise Hamilton, with her little pointed, painted face and her velvet paws that concealed sharp claws, could quite succeed in keeping them apart.

Throughout the day as they went about the routine of amusements possible on board a ship, Jerry and Judith exchanged little glances, secret smiles. Now and then their hands touched, and each felt the same thrill of delight that filled the other.

That night at dinner there was another guest at their table, a young Englishman, not quite so tall as Gerald, thin, a trifle pale. It was easy to accept his explanation that he was taking an ocean voyage in the hope of regaining his health. Ronald Heathcote and Elise seemed to find mutual interests, five minutes after meeting.

Later, it was because Ronnie Heathcote was dancing with Elise that Jerry was able to dance with Judith. The music was a popular song that enjoyed wide popularity; the very spirit of romance was in it. Jerry danced dreamily, his arm lightly about Judith. Her hand was warm in his, her face only a few inches away, while the song wove its spell about them.

Somehow—Judith never quite remembered in exactly what way—she and Jerry were on deck alone in the moonlight. She was unconscious of the fresh wind, although her two-year-old black chiffon dress offered little warmth. She was conscious only of two arms that were about her, holding her close to a heart that beat tumultuously against her own, and conscious only of a face that was pale in the moonlight, bent above hers, of a voice that said on a soft, vibrant note of wonder:

"I—love you, Judith—do you hear? I love you!"

The soft, excited insistence of that whisper sent a little sharp stab of delight through her, and she clung to him.

"Do you, Jerry?" Her small, shaken whisper barely reached his ears. "I'm awfully glad, because—I love you, too!"

She felt his arms tighten about her, as he bent his head for the kiss that she so freely offered, that he so joyously took.

They clung together, tremulous with happiness, everything forgotten but the bright perfection, the inescapable glory of that moment. The music ended on a throbbing note; the last notes of the singer's voice reached them with its burden of agonized pleading, breaking the spell that held them. At the sound of laughter, voices, approaching footsteps, Jerry reluctantly let her go. They were standing at the rail when Elise and her partner reached them.

Ronnie Heathcote excused himself to go in search of the girl with whom he had the next dance. The moment he was out of earshot, Elise prattled excitedly:

"He's not just plain Mr. Heathcote at all—he's a viscount! And if his uncle dies without an heir—and the uncle is terribly old and an invalid—Ronnie will succeed to his title! Isn't that thrilling?"

Fortunately, she was too excited over her news to notice the strain through which Jerry and Judith were going. Elise took Jerry away with her, leaving Judith standing at the rail, her face turned to the moonlight and the restless sea, her clenched hands clinging to the railing.

She heard Jerry's and Elise's footsteps die away, but still she stayed on, clinging to the rail, fighting with every atom of her strength for the

self-control that would enable her to put out of her mind the thing that had just happened. For her own sake, she must forget! But even as she fought the mad, sweet tide of love that swept over her, she seemed to feel again those strong hard arms about her, holding her close, Jerry's heart beating hard against her own, his lips seeking hers, his shaken voice saying, "I love you!"

Suddenly, soundlessly, she beat her clenched fist hard against the rail. She couldn't forget! Why try to blind herself to that fact? She loved Jerry Martin, adored him! What difference did it make that he belonged to another girl? She could never be his wife, but she could never stop loving him! She had no place in his life; she must go out of it just as she had come into it, but she could no more stop loving him than she could stop breathing! She was twenty-two. She had never loved any man before, so she knew that love was no small affair with her, lightly taken, lightly given, easily forgotten. This was love, perfect, indestructible. There was no use in fighting that conviction, trying to deny it.

Unable to face the others again, unwilling to dim the lovely memories of that moment just passed, she slipped away to her own stateroom. She lay there, wide-eyed, staring into the darkness, hugging close to her heart the lovely memory of Jerry's kiss, the strong clasp of his arms about her, knowing remembrance must warm the long, dull, dreary years stretching ahead of her.

In the morning, when she stepped out of her stateroom on the deck, she found Jerry waiting for her. He was a trifle pale beneath the sun-bronze of his skin, a little grim about the mouth, his eyes dark with

unhappiness. He had been waiting for her an hour.

He looked at her for a long moment, and Judith met his intent, hungry gaze with eyes that were gentle, loving. He took an involuntary step toward her, his hand out, and Judith knew with a sure instinct and a little surging of delight in her heart that he was about to take her into his arms. But memory came back in a compelling tide, and he suddenly stopped.

"I have been waiting to speak to you, Judith!" he said quietly. "To apologize for last night!"

Judith smiled faintly and shook her head.

"There's nothing to apologize for. I—quite understand! We were both a little mad. Perhaps it was the moon," she told him gently.

"It wasn't the moon!" Jerry contradicted her almost violently. "I love you, Judith—I told you that last night and I meant it! I'll always mean it; I'll always love you, but I am honor-bound to Elise!"

Judith drew a deep, unsteady breath and paled a very little, though her eyes still met his, tranquil, unashamed.

"I understand, Jerry," she told him. "It's quite all right."

There was a brief silence, and then he said:

"I haven't the right, dearest, but won't you please say it just once more so I can treasure the memory in my heart forever?"

And Judith, womanlike, understood. Her eyes very gentle, her voice low, controlled, vibrant, she raised her head proudly, and spoke the words he was waiting for:

"I love you with all my heart, and I shall love you as long as I live!"

Jerry was silent for a moment, his brown eyes seeming to plumb the very depths of her gray ones,



*Elise sent Judith a glance that was sultry and suspicious, a glance that said as plainly as words: "Hands off my man!"*

and then, half under his breath, he said huskily:

"God bless you for that, beloved!"

Throughout the day, Judith lay in her steamer chair, her gray eyes on the troubled, restless, eternally changing ocean. She refused to en-

ter into the various deck games. Her chair was in a secluded corner, and with her book, she made it plain that she wanted solitude.

Elise, thoroughly content to have Judith so aloof, kept both Jerry and young Ronnie Heathcote at her beck and call throughout the day. It was

obvious that she was interested in Ronnie and that the interest was mutual, but it was also obvious that Elise meant to retain both men as long as she possibly could without having either one suspect her little game.

So while Judith spent the longest day of her life, alone in her steamer chair, saying good-by forever to her dreams of love, Elise spent a joyous day, clinging to her fiancé and trying with every feminine wile to annex another man.

Judith did not go down to dinner until she was quite sure that Elise and her mother, attended by Ronnie and Jerry, had dined and left the salon. She felt that she could not sit quietly face to face with Jerry without betraying to the keen, watching eyes of the other two women something of her inner turmoil. After dinner, she slipped out on deck in the moonlight, away from the brightly lighted main salon where the passengers were gathered—the younger ones dancing, the older ones gossiping or busy with their eternal bridge.

Judith strode along the deck, her hands sunk deep into the pockets of her warm shabby coat, her thoughts bittersweet. They were bitter with the knowledge that Jerry could never be any more to her than he was at that moment, yet sweet with the memories of last night and of that little, lovely moment that morning in the crystal-clear light of dawn.

Suddenly as she rounded a corner where a shrouded lifeboat made a thick, dark shadow, she heard the murmur of voices—a girl's soft, excited laugh, a man's plea. There was no mistaking the little incident there in the darkness. A man pleaded for what he called love; a girl held back coquettishly, yet with-

out concealing the fact that she was more than willing.

It came over Judith suddenly, sharply that the girl was Elise and the man was Ronnie Heathcote! Here they were flirting in a dark corner, indulging in a casual petting party, despite Elise's engagement to Jerry. The girl was cheapening her love and Jerry's. Judith barely smothered a little exclamation of disgust, and took a backward step, anxious to get away without being seen.

But they had heard her. Elise and Ronnie stepped out into the moonlight, facing Judith. Elise was white with fury; every bit of softness and charm and beauty was wiped from her face by the anger that shook her.

"You little spy!" she snarled like a savage, spitting, little cat. "How dare you trail around after me, just to get something to tattle to Jerry? It won't do you any good. I'll tell Jerry you lied—and he'll believe me!"

With difficulty Judith controlled her disgust and shame for the other girl.

"I wasn't spying! Nothing you could ever do would interest me in the slightest—nor have I any intention of tattling!" she said icily, and turned away.

"Don't try to tell me that! I know you're going straight to Jerry—but I'll deny everything!" cried Elise shrewishly.

"Oh, now really!" protested young Mr. Heathcote helplessly, and the look he gave Elise there in the moonlight warned the girl.

She forced herself to a measure of composure, and turned to him, very sweet and soft and appealing again, like a kitten.

"I'm terribly sorry, darling, to make a scene, but I couldn't bear to

think she was spying on our beautiful love! It degraded it somehow!" she murmured, her voice like honey, her manner all charm and sweetness.

Judith turned away with a little sick feeling of disgust, and went swiftly to her stateroom. She did not look back to see Elise caught once more in Ronnie Heathcote's arms, or to hear what his answer might be to Elise's plea.

In her own room, Judith sat on the long window seat, and looked out of the porthole over the moonlit water. That little cat was the girl Jerry had promised to marry. That girl indulged in casual kisses with stray young men in shadowy corners, yet held Jerry to his promise! And Jerry was so fine and honorable that even though he loved Judith, he felt honor-bound to the girl to whom he had first given his promise.

If she and Jerry weren't so honorable, Judith told herself with a sorry little laugh, she could go to him and tell him what she had seen. Then Jerry could demand a release from his promise to marry Elise, and she and Jerry could be married and happier than she had ever dreamed it possible to be. But even while the reflection touched her, Judith knew that she couldn't do it. Her code forbade such talebearing, just as Jerry's code forbade his breaking with Elise.

They, being self-respecting people with a code of ethics to which they must be true, would have to stand by while a girl who apparently had neither code nor self-respect, played fast and loose with two men at once.

Her bitter reflections were interrupted by a knock at the door, and to her amazement, Elise walked into the room. Little bright spots of color shone high in Elise's smooth

cheeks, and her eyes were a little frightened. Her manner was very sweet and coaxing, although it didn't deceive Judith in the least.

"I—I—came to apologize for—the way I behaved just now," she stammered, and Judith knew that it wasn't easy for her to say even so much. "I really had no right to say such things. Ronnie gave me a terrible talking to when you had gone, and said I must come straight to you and apologize."

Judith faced her, cool, disdainful, slightly contemptuous.

"There was no necessity for an apology," she said coldly. "I do not require one!"

Elise looked a little uncertain, but there was something she wanted to say and she was determined to get it over with.

"I—I wanted to ask you not to tell Jerry that you saw—Ronnie kiss me!" she stammered after a moment. "Of course, he had no right to kiss me—I was furious with him, really—but he's promised to be good if I'll still be friends—so you see, there's really nothing to tell Jerry!"

Judith's face burned at the implied insult.

"I've told you repeatedly that I have no intention of telling anybody anything. I'm not at all interested in your affairs——" she began, hotly, but Elise cut in quickly:

"Of course—oh, I know that—but I thought—— Of course, I know you're terribly poor and all that, and I thought perhaps you wouldn't mind if I made you a little gift to be quite sure that you forgot what you saw just now."

And to her complete amazement, Judith saw in the girl's hand a twenty-dollar bill. This amazing, impossible girl was offering her money to forget! She was bribing her as one bribes a servant! The

insult took Judith's breath away. She had never been so angry, so humiliated in all her life. She was too stunned for coherent speech, and Elise misunderstood her incredulous silence.

"I suppose it isn't enough—Ronnie gave it to me for you—but I'll get you more in the morning. This is just sort of on account."

"Keep quiet, you—you horrible little cat!" Judith cried hotly, trembling with rage and humiliation. "How dare you? Oh, you and that—that Heathcote—why should you measure others by your own standards? I've told you that I have no intention of telling any one anything. Now get out of my room!"

Elise stared at Judith, startled by her anger. Her surprise at its reception intensified the insult. Elise looked uncertainly at the money and then at Judith. With a little shrug, she folded the bill and tucked it into her evening bag.

She walked to the door, and from there she looked back contemptuously at Judith.

"I think you're a fool to refuse twenty perfectly good dollars, but if you can't use it, I can. Good night, Miss Prunes and Prisms!" she drawled, and closed the door behind her.

Judith crouched on the window seat, shaking with anger at the other girl's cool insult. It was unthinkable that such a creature should be about to marry Jerry, with his ideals, his sense of honor, his ardent heart and brilliant mind! What would such a girl do to him? She dared not think!

She stayed in her own room the following day, feeling unable to face Jerry without betraying something of her inmost feelings. And that would only make things harder for both of them. She shrank, too,

from facing Elise and Ronnie. She was ashamed for them—ashamed for the lack of shame they seemed to feel for their behavior.

Late in the afternoon, when most of the passengers were dressing for dinner, she sat alone in her steamer chair, her eyes on the horizon, her thoughts dark with unhappiness. Just two days away lay Honolulu, where she must say good-by forever to Jerry. A brilliant wedding was awaiting Elise and Jerry in Honolulu, while Judith faced nothing more than a day ashore, before returning to the *Empress Maru* for the rest of the journey to Shanghai.

Suddenly she heard racing footsteps, and looked up to see a white-faced sailor running as though the very hounds of despair were snapping at his heels. An officer spoke to him, caught him by the shoulder and shook him roughly. Judith was too far away to hear what was said, but she knew by the man's actions that he was reporting some grave happening below deck. She saw the quick alarm in the officer's manner, and saw him turn hurriedly to accompany the sailor.

But the officer saw Judith, and instantly his manner altered. He strolled casually along beside the sailor, who was too white and frightened even to pretend.

They disappeared from the deck, and Judith sat on alone in the gathering darkness, puzzled, uneasy. What was the news the terrified sailor had brought to the officer? Why had the officer's startled manner changed as soon as he saw Judith? And why had he hurried away with the sailor? Was the ship in difficulty?

At the thought a little spasm of terror shook her. She slid out of her chair and stood upright. But the steady throb of the engines vi-

brating the big ship was unchanged. Overhead, the blue dusk was clear, with here and there the glow of an early, brilliant star.

She straightened a little, and smiled at her sudden moment of fright. Everything was quite as it should be, she told herself. The thought of the ship's being in serious difficulties seemed absurd. She smiled at the thought, yet how horrible it would be if there were something wrong! She looked out over the vast expanse of tumbling water, and the ship filled with people suddenly seemed tiny,

helpless, combating all the elements of space and nature. Judith shuddered and forced herself to reason more calmly. There was nothing wrong; perhaps a fight among the sailors had sent this white-faced man scurrying for authority. It must be something as trivial as that, she told herself.

At dinner, she saw that the cap-



*"Keep quiet, you—you horrible little cat!" Judith cried hotly, trembling with rage and humiliation. "How dare you? Get out of my room!"*



tain was in his place at the head of his table, smiling, pleasant, affable, his ruddy face proclaiming to all the world that all was right with the ship. The other officers were dotted about the dining salon, each in his official place at the head of a table. The white-coated stewards were hurrying about, serving the well-cooked and appetizing meal. Everything was quite as it should be.

As she glanced about the table, she saw that Ronnie Heathcote seemed a little overallert, as though he, too, might suspect something. He was nervous, though he made a manful effort to disguise the fact. Judith saw him glance now and then toward the door through which the stewards entered with their laden trays. She felt a little uneasy.

The meal was almost over, when there came a sudden commotion in the corridor leading to the dining salon. A man in the blackened clothes of a stoker came tearing into the dining salon, his face livid beneath its oily grime. His eyes blazed with a light of madness.

"You fools!" he screamed, fighting with the strength of madness against the men who sprang to hold him—all officers and stewards, Judith noted; the other men in the dining salon were palpably too surprised to act. "You fools, don't you know the ship is on fire?"

The dreadful word "fire" seemed to hang, tremulous, in letters of scarlet against the air of the great room.

"You're sitting here stuffin' yourselves with food, laughin' like fools, and below deck men are fightin' for your lives!" cried the man. "Fools—fools! Can't you feel the decks hot beneath your feet?"

There was a moment of stunned, horrified silence. People sat with forks halfway to open mouths, staring wide-eyed and appalled. The

stoker was fighting with a desperate, fear-maddened strength against the flying wedge of stewards, officers, and crew, who were trying to drag him out of the room.

"Fire!" he screamed horribly; and again, "Fire! Fire!"

And then he was borne, still screaming, away, fighting, struggling, exhausted from the battle he had put up below decks against the fire and here against the crowd of officers.

The awful word still seemed to hang in the air—a thing of crimson, man's most ancient enemy! Here the people were, miles from shore, miles from help, on that floating death trap. It took a full, stunned moment for the horror of it to reach the crowd, and then bedlam swept the room. Where there had been men and women, smartly groomed, dallying pleasantly with appetizing food, chattering lightly—now there were madmen, madwomen, fighting, clawing, scratching, cursing, screaming—a scene of horror in which primeval fear stripped away the last vestige of civilization.

The captain and his officers were trying with all their strength to quell the panic, realizing that the maddened crowd would do more harm to themselves in their unreasoning panic than in any other way.

"Quiet—all of you! Quiet, I tell you—quiet!" roared the captain, in a voice that had cowed half-savage seamen on nights of terrific storm, and that now for a moment stilled that blind, unreasoning rush. "I won't attempt to lie to you—there is a fire in the hold—but I give you my solemn word of honor that we have it under control!"

The thunder of his voice had caught their attention. Uneasily, they milled a little, but some of those closest to the captain were

convinced by the sincerity of his voice, the look in his ruddy face. Encouraged by their attention, the captain went swiftly on:

"We have already wirelessed for help—the *Princess Victoria* is speeding to us, ready to stand by in case we need her. We are proceeding on our way with full speed ahead. I swear to you that I have every reason to believe that we will make port some time to-morrow evening in perfect safety. But if there seems any danger, the *Princess Victoria* will take every passenger on this boat to safety! We have plenty of lifeboats for an emergency, so I give you my sworn word that you are in no danger!"

The loudness of his voice, the assumption of calmness, the vigor of his speech, the patent honesty and sincerity of the man, all had their way with the excited, terrified passengers. They huddled together, uncertain, yet very eager to believe him.

"I want to ask every passenger on this ship to give me his word to stay either on deck or in the main salon, not to attempt to go to his stateroom under any consideration!" the captain went on firmly.

The little group at Judith's table had been held spellbound by the whole thing. Jerry turned swiftly to Judith. She forced herself to meet his eyes calmly, steadily, unafraid, and saw the quick relief, the adoration in his eyes. Then, tardily, he turned to Elise, but she was clinging to Ronnie Heathcote, not caring who saw her, her arms about Ronnie, clinging to him, begging his assurance that she was safe. Across her golden head, Ronnie looked at Jerry, blushed painfully, and looked away.

Then the passengers were being herded quietly in as orderly a man-

ner as possible up the companionway to the main salon. Some of them crept out on deck, where the beauty and peace of the evening laid a cool hand upon their hot terror. The sky overhead was thick with stars that were so big and bright and seemed to hang so low that one might almost stand on tiptoe and gather them like daisies in a basket. The moon had not yet risen; a glow of pale lemon-yellow light shot with amber and scarlet and gray lay low on the western sky where the sun had recently set.

It was incredible that in that scene of calm, peaceful beauty, a horrible death stalked at the heels of more than two hundred passengers and an unnumbered list of officers and crew!

Judith leaned over the railing and looked down. She thought she saw a wisp of smoke curling from one of the lower portholes, and she shuddered and drew back. Suddenly Jerry was beside her, his white, strained face eloquent of his emotion.

"Are you all right, Judith darling?" he asked her swiftly.

The little endearment slipped out—he was scarcely conscious of it—but Judith caught the word and held it close to warm her heart. It gave her the courage to smile up at him faintly, her white face lovely in the starlight.

"Quite all right, Jerry, and not at all afraid. You mustn't worry about me," she answered gently.

He looked down at her gravely, steadily, and for a moment his very heart stood forth in his eyes for her to see. She held her breath for a startled instant at the wonder of what she saw there.

"But of course I shall worry about you, beloved. I'll always worry about you, and wonder about

you——” He broke off suddenly, and turned almost violently away.

Mrs. Hamilton, her face white and strained, her eyes frightened, came out on deck and called to Jerry.

“Jerry, have you seen Elise? She doesn’t seem to be anywhere about. I’ve searched the main salon. You don’t suppose she’d go to her state-room, do you?” she asked anxiously.

“No, of course not! The captain forbade it. She must be on deck somewhere! Come—we’ll look for her,” Jerry suggested comfortingly.

Mrs. Hamilton spoke to Judith, drawing her willy-nilly into the little impromptu searching party.

“The poor child is just a bundle of nerves. I’m afraid she may be in hysterics somewhere. We must find her!” she fretted.

Judith tried to soothe the frightened, distracted woman, and the three of them moved along the deck, peering into shadowy corners, growing more and more alarmed as they went farther and farther from the lighted main salon along the darkened decks.

Suddenly as they rounded the bow of the vessel, there came a murmur of voices. They turned to see outlined against the faintly glimmering white wall an eloquent shadow—two people locked in a close embrace.

“Oh, Ronnie dear, I do love you! I’m not a bit afraid with you!” came the soft murmur of a girl’s voice drugged with emotion—a voice that each of the three recognized instantly as belonging to Elise.

Mrs. Hamilton cried out in a little shocked voice, and instantly the two sprang apart, and after a hesitant moment stepped out into the moonlight—Ronnie Heathcote and Elise Hamilton.

Elise looked sulkily at her mother and then at Jerry. But before she

could manage to say anything to him, she saw Judith, withdrawn, uncomfortable, and Elise’s temper slipped its leash.

“Oh, so it’s you, you snooper! You brought them here to spy on me after you promised me last night that you’d say nothing!” she cried hotly.

Jerry spoke up deliberately.

“Oh, then this isn’t the first time you and Heathcote have staged one of these little parties?”

Elise caught her breath, realizing how she had betrayed herself.

“Miss Laurence didn’t bring us here. Your mother was alarmed because she couldn’t find you, and she asked us to join in the search. We had no idea we were intruding!” Jerry went on, after a moment in which Elise almost visibly struggled for something to say.

“Elise, what does this mean?” Mrs. Hamilton cried sharply. “I can’t believe it of you—just on the verge of your marriage to Jerry!”

Elise flung up her head, and her eyes flashed dangerously in the moonlight.

“I’ll tell you what it means—it means that I love Ronnie, not Jerry! And that I’m going to marry Ronnie! We love each other—we’ll be happy! I could never marry Jerry after having known Ronnie!” Then she stepped backward, drawing Ronnie’s arm about her.

“Oh, really!” stammered Ronnie, frankly aghast, uncertain just what he should do about this unexpected development.

Elise looked up at him, still holding his arm about her.

“You do love me, don’t you, Ronnie? And we’ll be married as soon as we arrive in Honolulu?” she demanded.

There was a barely perceptible hesitation. Judith, studying Ron-



*"Ready to go ashore, darling?" he said in a low voice, and together without a backward glance at the amazed, furious Elise, they walked away.*

nie's suddenly pale young face, saw the almost desperate light in his eyes and the glance he gave to Jerry.

"Oh, why, of course! That—that will be fine," he faltered.

Jerry stepped forward, facing him. Ronnie took a single backward step, seeming to flinch from Jerry's height and breadth and apparent strength.

"So you're throwing me over, Elise? You're releasing me from my

engagement? You—want to call quits?" Jerry asked almost grimly.

For answer, Elise tore the beautiful square-cut diamond ring from her finger, and held it out to him.

"Give it to her," she sneered, nodding to the silent Judith. "She doesn't mind secondhand things! And she's crazy about you—anybody could see that with half an eye!"

"Elise, you don't realize what you're saying, what you're doing!" wailed Mrs. Hamilton in acute distress. "All our plans—your wedding! Jerry's a fine boy."

"Don't worry, mother, I know exactly what I'm doing! I'm going to marry Ronnie and be a viscountess—and some day better than that! We'll have a gorgeous time, won't we, Ronnie?" Elise smiled up at him fondly.

And Ronnie managed a faint: "Oh—oh—yes, quite!"

Jerry, without a word, pocketed the ring and turned to Judith. He said nothing, but even in the moonlight she could see the radiance in his eyes, the little smile that touched his lips.

He held out his hand to her.

"Come along, Judith!" he said gently, and together they went along the deck, away from that shadowy corner where Mrs. Hamilton, in tears, was being persuaded by Elise that her daughter had not made a grave mistake in throwing over Jerry Martin and his sizable fortune for a slim blond young man with a title.

Back in the lighted part of the deck, Jerry turned Judith around and took her two hands, studying her, his eyes grave, steady, adoring, alight now with a radiance that lighted twin candle flames in her own eyes. Neither of them spoke; there was no need for it. Heart spoke to heart through their glowing eyes, two hearts that sang a mad pæan of utter delight.

The night wore on. Groups of people about the lighted salon tried

to while away the tedious hours, tried to deny their anxiety, to put a gallant front on the horror that stared all of them in the face. Mothers put tired children to bed on the long cushioned seats beneath the windows; elderly men and women napped uneasily in big armchairs. A few played bridge; others restlessly paced the deck.

And at last the dawn came, and with it word that the fire was under control. There was no further danger. By noon, when the smoke was all out of the staterooms and corridors, they would be able to return to them.

Under the magic of relief that news brought, the passengers were very gay at breakfast, and the day passed without undue comment. Late in the afternoon, they were allowed to return to their staterooms, with the assurance that they would dock at Honolulu very early in the morning.

Judith, after the long vigil of the night and day, left Jerry in the late afternoon, and tumbled into bed, and was instantly asleep. She did not awaken until an hour before the boat docked. Then she finished her packing, and hurried out on deck.

Jerry was waiting for her, and his greeting, for all its matter-of-fact words, was a caress. His eyes lingered on her lips with a kiss that she could feel through all her glowing being. He drew her hand through his arm, and they stood at the rail, watching with the other passengers as the ship came slowly into the harbor, feeling her way.

Elise and Ronnie were close at hand, Elise blooming, her hand through Ronnie's arm, her voice eager, her eyes gay. Ronnie was pallid, his eyes glancing this way and that.

Judith idly watched the captain,

one of his officers, and two strangers coming down the deck. The little group stopped behind Elise and Ronnie, and she heard one of the strangers greet Ronnie in strange words:

"Well, well, if it isn't Bon Voyage Bertie, up to his usual little tricks!"

Ronnie whirled about, his face livid, his fists clenched, his eyes blazing. The two strangers, the captain, and the ship's officer made a little semicircle about him so that he could not escape. Elise, bewildered, stared from one to the other.

"Raw stuff, Bertie!" the stranger assured Ronnie casually. "Always thought robbery was out of your line. You do better at burglary."

"What are you talking about?" blazed Elise furiously. "This is Mr. Ronald Heathcote, a titled Englishman!"

The stranger glanced at her with a trace of pity in his weather-beaten, middle-aged face.

"Titled Englishman, my eye! He's no more English than I am, and his only title is conferred by the rogue's gallery! He's a notorious crook, working the transatlantic ocean liners. He's been warned off them, so he's hiding out aboard the *Empress Maru*! Suppose his usual means of crookedness failed him here—not many gambling games—so when the fire started and the passengers were forbidden to go to their staterooms, it occurred to him that here was a swell chance for a little burglary! When the passengers began to report robberies of their rooms, the captain wirelessed ahead. We came aboard with the pilot, and the minute I set eyes on Bertie I knew he was the one—even before we found the loot in that cleverly concealed false bottom of his trunk!" he told her.

Elise, shaken, utterly confounded, shrank a little, staring up at Ronnie, waiting for him to deny what the middle-aged stranger was saying. But Ronnie merely avoided her eyes, and his manner, his very appearance, told her that the accusation was only too true.

The middle-aged man had a sudden thought.

"Say, you—did you set that fire just to give yourself a chance to work the cabins?" he demanded sharply.

"No! Don't be a fool! Would I risk my own life just for a few miserable dollars?" growled Ronnie, but now his intonation was no longer that of a cultured gentleman. He was stripped of his disguise, for he knew the utter futility of any further maintenance of his masquerade.

"Well, if the investigation proves you did, I'll hold you for something a whole lot worse than burglary, my boy!" growled the stranger, and, with his partner, took Ronnie away with them.

Elise stood perfectly still, leaning her back against the rail, her face as white as the dress she wore, her eyes wide and incredulous. She looked up, caught the curious, amused, pitying eyes of the passengers upon her, and her face turned scarlet. She looked up at Jerry, with an attempt at a honeyed smile, and said in a low, deliberately luring voice:

"Jerry darling, where's my ring?"

Jerry stared at her in amazement. Surely she wasn't going to try anything so brazen as that! Obviously, though, she was. She put her hand through his arm, and rubbed her cheek against his shoulder in a little kittenish caress.

"'Lise is awful sorry she was a bad girl. 'Lise wants to be Jerry's

girl again. 'Lise didn't mean to flirt with nassy man. Jerry forgive 'Lise?" she cooed.

Jerry drew his arm free of her clinging hands, making no attempt to disguise his disgust. His eyes were cold and impersonal, his voice level.

"Sorry, 'Lise; we can dispense with that!" he told her firmly. "You made it quite plain you cared nothing for me, and you gave me my freedom. It was your own choice, and so far as I am concerned, you'll have to abide by it."

He turned to Judith, his eyes adoring, his manner warm, protective.

"Ready to go ashore, darling? Then—come along!" he said in a low voice, and together, without a backward glance at the amazed, furious,

white-faced Elise, they walked toward the gangplank.

The minute they were in the taxi, Jerry caught Judith in his arms. Wordlessly, his lips found hers and held them in a long, breathless kiss. Judith gave a little sigh and settled in his arms.

"My darling!" he whispered. "Oh, I love you so! And I thought I'd never be able to have you, never be free to love you as I want to. Dearest, will you let me tell the driver to take us to wherever people get marriage licenses in Honolulu? Will you marry me, sweetheart, right away?"

"Yes, Jerry!" It was only a tremulous little breath of a whisper, but it told Jerry that her heart, her life were delivered into his hands for safe keeping.



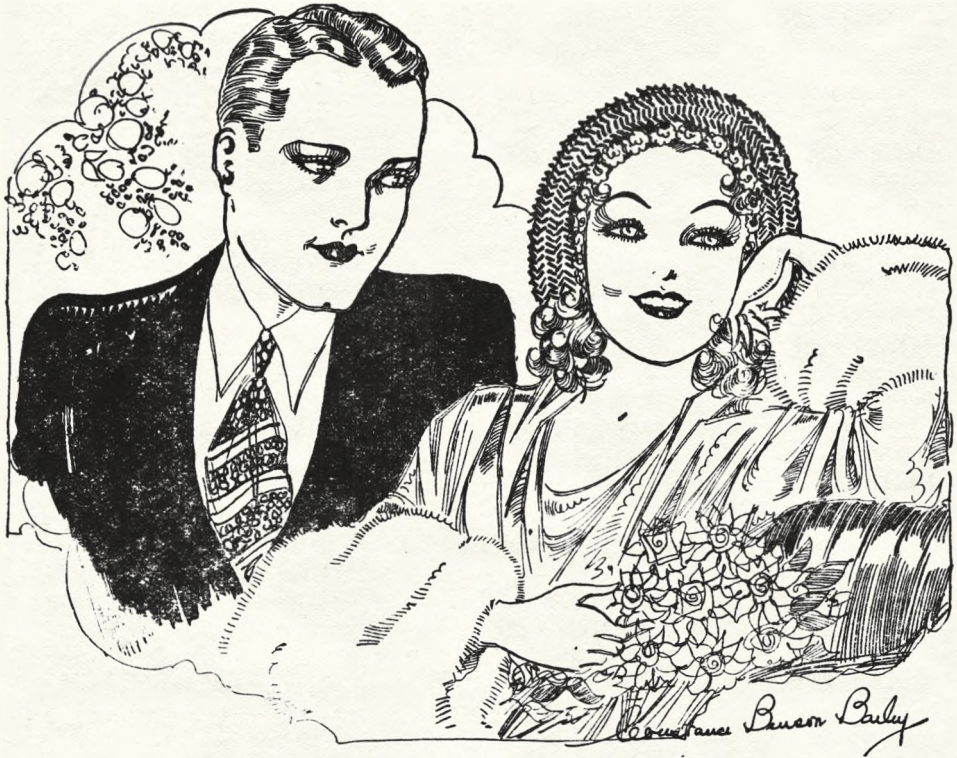
### THE MAGIC OF YOU

THE moonlight is spilling its glory  
Over the night of your hair!  
Dearest, my flower of evening,  
Magic of moonlight you wear.

The brilliance of stars in the heavens  
Are lit from the gleam in your eyes;  
You are the world's shining beauty,  
The stars and the moon in the skies.

But though the moon lose its luster,  
And lost is each star from my view,  
Still I will have the lost magic  
As long as I am with you.

RUBY WOODARD.



# The Perfect Bride

By Jean Seivwright

Part II.

## CHAPTER IV.

**T**HE color flamed in Auriol's cheeks and Barry's name sprang to her lips as she took a quick step toward him. Then she stopped—rooted to the spot. There was no look of recognition in his brown eyes as he walked rapidly past her. Slowly the color ebbed from Auriol's lips.

Her lips quivered and violet shadows darkened the blue of her eyes. Then Purdie had been right. Barry

had never meant what he had said. His promises were made only to be broken. He had never really loved her. It was her money he had wanted. That was what had lured him to her side.

A bitter smile came to her lips. Did Barry know that once again she was an heiress?—she wondered. Yet, in spite of everything, she had always felt that some day he would return, some day he would explain the reason for his strange behavior.

But now that would never be.



After such a deliberate cut, Auriol confessed to herself that Barry had made his choice. It was perfectly evident that he had completely forgotten her, that he did not want to renew their friendship. She could no longer make any excuse for his cruelty. She must tear every memory of the man she loved from her heart.

Auriol forced a smile to her lips. She must be brave. No one liked a girl who felt sorry for herself or the way fortune had treated her. As she reached the house where she roomed, she started up the front steps. Then suddenly, remembering she had not eaten, she came down again. Tightening her lips—for in spite of her determination to be brave they trembled—she entered the Rosemary Tea Room. Going to her accustomed table she smiled to the waitress as she said good evening.

"You're awfully late to-night, miss," remarked the girl as she handed Auriol the menu. "Been working overtime?"

"No, but I had to write some letters before I came out. Is there anything left?"

"Not very much, but I'll see that you get a good dinner." The girl laughed as she picked up her tray and hurried toward the kitchen.

Auriol took a sip of water. Then, as she broke a roll, she congratulated herself she had made one score. She had not betrayed the fact that her love dream was now broken—broken beyond repair, for the waitress who had served her meals for several weeks, and who was quick to sense her guests' moods, had failed to see that something tragic lay beneath Auriol's apparently carefree manner.

A number of late comers entered the tea room, so the waitress, hustling from table to table, had no

chance to chatter with any of her regular customers. Finishing her coffee, Auriol rose, paid her check and left the restaurant.

The thought of returning to her stuffy little room, with no one to talk to, was more than Auriol could stand. She crossed the street and walked toward the park. At the entrance stood a flower seller, and as the perfume of violets and fragrant roses reached her nostrils it brought back a vivid memory of Barry. The last flowers he had given her had been a gorgeous bunch of violets. She had always loved these flowers, but now the very sight of them awoke such memories that she was almost overcome.

Auriol was lonely—lonelier than she had ever been before, for now there was no one to whom she could turn. Even in the park the rushing crowds seemed to intensify her loneliness, while the noises of the city shouted their menace at her. As she started to cross the road her thoughts were with Barry, trying to figure out the meaning of his strange action.

Suddenly the shrill sound of an auto horn jarred her ears, and brakes screeched loudly as a motorist jerked his car to a swift standstill within a foot of her. Quickly Auriol stepped back, trembling at the fate she had so miraculously escaped, while the driver swore softly and started on. She looked at the long line of cars that had been held up. A dark-green sports roadster came toward her and stopped. A voice that brought a flutter to her heart called, "Don't you want to come for a ride, Auriol?" and the door of the car was flung open.

Auriol's startled gaze rested on Mac. "I'd love to," she answered as she slipped in beside him.

Mac closed the door, shifted gears,

and swung back into the long line. "Well, this is luck," he exclaimed as he flashed a smile at his companion. "I didn't know you took your exercise in the park," he added as a traffic officer held up his hand, and the trail of cars stopped. "But, little lady, you should look where you are going," he admonished.

The color rose in Auriol's cheeks as she murmured, "I was busy thinking."

"Just what I thought," said Mac. "So pleased with your success that you forgot where you were."

Auriol smiled wistfully. How could she tell this man where her thoughts were—that her triumphs of the afternoon had waned before the tragedy of Barry's repulse?

"Well, you certainly scored a hit," said Mac. "Now I suppose you'll be madame's head manikin."

Auriol's lips curved upward in an engaging smile. "I don't know," she answered, while she wondered how much of madame's confidence the genial manager shared.

"Well, anyway, let's have a little celebration," Mac said as he swung the car west into One Hundred and Tenth Street and then turned north when he reached Broadway. The traffic was heavy and he did not speak again until they were quite a distance uptown. "I know a nice place on the Hudson. Shall we go up and have supper and dance?"

"Oh, that would be lovely," answered Auriol. Then suddenly she remembered. "But I'm not dressed." She looked rather deprecatingly at her exquisitely tailored suit.

"That doesn't matter," said Mac. "You're all right as you are. It's quite informal, but if you'd prefer it we can leave the dancing for some other night."

"Well, if you don't mind, I'd rather," answered Auriol.

"Whatever you say goes," Mac replied. "I'm going to make for a back road or we'll never get anywhere. There's too much traffic here." In a few minutes he turned off the crowded highway and soon they were in the open country.

"Oh, this is lovely," Auriol exclaimed as they drove past picturesque homes set in landscaped lawns.

"Not a bad road," answered Mac, as they swung around a sharp curve. "Quite a good view of the river from here. Well, here's the place," he added as he turned into a tree-bordered road which led to a quaint Swiss chalet. "It's not so swell, but they serve good food and the music's O. K."

There were not a great many guests in the dining room, but at Auriol's suggestion they sat at a little table on the veranda.

"I think this is fascinating," she said, as she looked around at the waiters in their native costumes, and the many decorations on the walls.

"Not so bad," replied Mac who was finding Auriol even more charming than he had imagined from his brief encounters with her in the shop.

As the meal proceeded Auriol felt that she had made a real friend, and listening to Mac's tales of his boyhood in the Canadian wilds, his travels during the last five years and then his stumbling into the dress business, Auriol did not realize how time was flying.

Suddenly the striking of a huge clock broke the silence. "Oh, I didn't realize it was so late," she remarked, glancing at her wrist watch. "Don't you think we'd better be getting back?"

Mac shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, if you want to reach home

before midnight, I'll say we should," and Mac called for his check.

Despite the lateness of the hour a steady stream of cars was heading for the city, and Mac had to give all his attention to driving. As the cool wind blew against her face Auriol felt that perhaps she should have told Mac about the good fortune that seemed to be lying just around the corner for her. He'd been very frank with her and she sensed that he loved her.

When they reached the house where Auriol lived, Mac stopped the car and looked down at her. "Won't you let me see you again soon, or maybe you'd like to picnic with me Sunday?"

"You mean we'd drive far out into the country?" Auriol's eyes were sparkling.

He nodded his head in reply.

"Of course I'll come," said Auriol who felt that this would offer her a further opportunity of forgetting Barry. "I've had a lovely time," she added as she said good night.

"I'm a lucky fellow to have had this evening with you, and thank you," he said as he walked with her up the steps to the door of the rather shabby-looking house which was her home.

Although it was past midnight, Auriol was too excited to sleep. The trip out of town had refreshed her, for the weather was getting quite warm and the heat in her stuffy little room was sometimes almost unbearable. While Mac might not be the man of her choice, there was no denying he was a good companion, and after all, Auriol thought, perhaps that was better than having a man who professed he loved you madly only to throw you down.

At last sleep came to Auriol, but it was a broken sleep. Once she started up with Barry's name on her

lips. Try as she might she could not rid herself of the strange feeling that in spite of his apparent heartlessness, she was wronging him by thus thrusting him forever from her mind.

When she opened her eyes in the morning, all her dreams vanished. It was of Mac and her work that she was thinking as she hurriedly dressed. Yet as she drank her coffee her visions of the night before haunted her. She felt that Barry was calling her. Then she laughed bitterly. Barry had had his chance yesterday and he had spurned it.

But had Auriol only understood a little more of the workings of the mind, how many anxious hours she might have been spared. If only she had obeyed her impulse and put her arm on Barry's as he walked swiftly past her, she would have seen that unseeing look in his eyes vanish quickly before his smiling recognition, and all their tragic misunderstandings would have been swept away. So deeply was his mind filled with thoughts of finding the girl he loved that even while his eyes apparently looked into hers he really had never seen her.

When Auriol arrived at Madame Claire's the place was strangely silent. Taking off her hat she started toward madame's office conscious that she was a minute or two late. But as she crossed the hall, she met Miss Jacinth.

"Isn't it terrible?" she exclaimed.

Auriol looked at her in bewilderment. "Terrible? What do you mean? What's happened?"

"Oh, madame's daughter met with an accident. She was driving up to Boston with some friends, there was a smash-up and now she's in the hospital."

"How dreadful!" exclaimed Auriol. "Has madame gone to her?"

"Oh, yes. She left by plane two hours ago. She thinks the world of her daughter. I hope it's not really serious."

For a moment Auriol wondered if madame had left any message for her then, realizing the shop would not even be open at that time, she

walked back with Miss Jacinth to the workroom. Whatever it was that madame had to tell her would have to wait, for every one knew that madame was devoted to her only child.

A little later Dolores lounged into the workroom, and, turning to



*Auriol was lonely—lonelier than she had ever been before, for now there was no one to whom she could turn.*

Auriol with a sneering look, said: "So it was all a bluff about your getting Dawn's job? I might have known it," and, flicking the ash from her cigarette, left the room.

The color rose in Auriol's pale cheeks, as she bent more closely over her work.

"Don't worry about what she says," comforted Judith. "Every one's raving about how wonderful you were yesterday. Melanie says she's sure madame will give you Dawn's job. Then you can get even with Dolores."

"Oh, Judith, but I really don't want it. I'd rather be here with you."

"Well, goodness knows, we'd miss you, but for Heaven's sake if you get a chance at a better job, take it," answered Judith whose whole life had been a struggle to get a job and keep it. "Oh, there's Mac. I wonder what he wants now. Seems to be finding a lot to interest him in the workroom lately." Judith turned her sharp eyes on Auriol.

A sudden understanding light flashed into them. "Say, Auriol, I guess you've made a hit with him, too. Well, Mac's all right with the right girl."

In spite of her confession that Mac's comings or goings made no difference to her, Auriol's face was suffused with delicate color when Miss Jacinth called her over to her table.

"Mr. McGuire tells me that Miss Drusilla Sayre's in the salon—she's one of the newspaperwomen who were here yesterday, but had to leave before the wedding gown was shown—and wants to see it so she can write it up for the paper. I want you to put it on. Melanie will help you."

"Oh, must I really?" asked Auriol. "Couldn't Dolores——"

Miss Jacinth interrupted impatiently. "No, Dolores can't do it. Of course I've no instructions from madame, but I know she'd want you to model it, for Miss Sayre's a good friend of madame's."

"Sure she would," answered Mac. "Any way, I'll take the responsibility," he added. Then turning to Auriol he said, "Just leave your sewing. Miss Sayre's in a hurry."

When Auriol entered the lounge and started to undress, Dolores called, "What do you want here? There's no show to-day."

"I know that, but I've got to show the wedding gown."

Instantly Dolores was on the defensive. "There's no customer in the showroom, and besides if there was I could show it. Better get back to the workroom where you belong."

At that instant Melanie entered, the exquisite gown in her arms.

"Now, Auriol, if you'll slip this on, I'll fix the veil. I don't believe we've any flowers, but maybe that won't matter."

"Say, what's this for?" asked Dolores, turning from the mirror. "Have you gone crazy?" Auriol, with nervous fingers, was slipping off her dress and did not answer.

"I'm going to see Mac about this," continued Dolores, and left the room.

A moment later Auriol, looking lovelier than ever as the sunlight shone on her red-gold hair, entered the salon where Miss Sayre was being entertained by the genial Mac.

"Oh," exclaimed the newspaper woman, "what a gorgeous gown! I must have a photograph of this. What a lovely girl! She's new, isn't she?" questioned Miss Sayre who was well acquainted not only with all the creators of fashionable dress, but also their girls.

"Yes," replied Mac, as he introduced her. "She made her *début* yesterday."

"Well, madame certainly has an eye for beauty, and what exquisite lines the gown has. I'm so sorry madame's not here to-day, but you won't forget to tell her what I think of it, and that we'll feature this model. Now, I'm going to find out all about the materials and so forth from this young woman," and Miss Sayre rose and picked up the lovely lace veil, while Mac left the room to answer a telephone call.

When they were left alone the unsuspecting Auriol revealed the strange fate that had taken her from her own job in the workroom to be the star of the fashion show. Then suddenly she raised her blue eyes to Miss Sayre. "Oh, dear, perhaps I shouldn't have said so much. Madame mightn't like it. So please say nothing about what I've told you. You see, it might mean I'd lose my job."

"Oh, that's all right. Your secret's safe with me. I won't say a word to any one. Well, I've got to be toddling along. Promised I'd help one of the girls in the news department. I suppose I'm on a perfectly hopeless quest, but the girl's more or less of a newcomer, and she does want to make good."

Miss Sayre was taking a torn sheet of a newspaper out of her capacious bag. Smoothing out the creases, she laid it on the table before her. "There's a report that this missing heiress is in New York, and we're trying to locate her."

Auriol glanced at the piece of paper. The color flooded her pale cheeks and even the pink lobes of her tiny ears grew rosy-red. Miss Sayre was looking for *her!*

Suddenly the newspaperwoman raised her eyes and met those of the

girl beside her. "Great Cæsar!" she exclaimed. "You're not the missing heiress, are you?"

In Auriol's frank gaze she found the answer to her question.

"Oh, this is wonderful!" declared Miss Sayre, "I must call up the city editor right away. Come, tell me all about it, child."

"I don't really know much—just what I've seen in the papers. I've written to the lawyers. You see, I never knew I had an uncle." Quickly Auriol told her strange story.

Miss Sayre rose. "I'm going right back to the office. That will be better than telephoning."

Impulsively Auriol put her hand on the older woman's arm. "Must you tell them that you've found me?" There was a wistful smile on Auriol's pale face.

Miss Sayre smiled. "It's a wonderful scoop," she answered.

"Maybe it is," replied Auriol, who had no idea of what a scoop might be, nor any appreciation of what this would mean to the woman beside her, "but madame might be displeased, and if it should be a mistake— Oh, won't you please keep it to yourself—at least till I hear from the lawyers?"

Drusilla Sayre studied the girl beside her. Auriol looked so appealing, that in spite of her newspaper training she wavered. Then, laughing lightly, she said, "I know I shouldn't fall down on the job, and that's what's keeping this to myself will mean, but after all this is your affair." She sighed. "What a chance to lose."

"You're awfully kind," Auriol murmured. Then she added, "If I find it's all true—although really I can't believe it—I'll tell you right away. Then you can put it all in the papers."

"You won't forget, will you?" asked Miss Sayre as she stuffed the papers in her bag again.

"No, you'll be the first one I'll tell."

The door had hardly closed behind the newspaperwoman when Mac appeared. "Say, young lady," he exclaimed, "you seem to be mighty popular these days. I just had a long-distance call for you. Very important, the party said, but of course I couldn't call you from the showroom. I told them to call back in half an hour. It's against rules, but, seeing it's for you, we'll overlook it."

As Auriol took off the magnificent satin gown with its exquisite pearl embroideries, her heart was in a flutter. Who could be phoning her? She thought of Barry. Then her thoughts turned to Miss Sayre. How strange that none of the folks around her had guessed her identity, when the newspaperwoman had read of her secret at a glance.

Auriol did not have long to wait for the call. She was just picking up the flowered organdie dress on which she had been working when Mac appeared. "Will you come to madame's office for a minute, please?" he asked.

As he walked alongside her, he said, "You're remembering about Sunday, aren't you?"

"Of course I am. I'm terribly thrilled with the thought of our picnic." Auriol turned her shining eyes toward Mac.

A moment later she picked up the phone, while Mac closed the door and went down the hall.

It was a very excited girl who emerged from madame's office a few minutes later.

"You've surely had some good news," Mac remarked as he passed into the salon.

"It's wonderful news. Shall I tell you?" asked Auriol.

But the phone rang furiously again and Mac hurried from her side, a puzzled look in his brown eyes. What did Auriol mean? Was there some other man who could bring such a sparkle to her eyes?—he asked himself.

## CHAPTER V.

"It's quite impossible for you to see Miss Kent," announced Dolores to an elderly gentleman who had just entered the salon. "Madame does not allow her employees to receive personal callers during business hours. Perhaps you can meet her when she goes to lunch." Dolores, dressed in one of madame's newest creations, haughtily turned away.

"But this is an exceptional case. Won't you please tell Miss Kent I must see her. I feel sure if madame knew the circumstances she would wish me to talk with Miss Kent immediately." The man presented his card.

"I'll tell Auriol," replied Dolores, taking the card, "but it's against the rules." As she disappeared behind the curtain, Dolores changed her mind. Turning from the workroom, she went toward madame's office.

The door was ajar, and she could hear madame talking quickly to Mac, telling him about her daughter's accident, then fervently thanking the stars above that it was not so serious after all, and that, apart from scratches, a broken arm was all the injury she had received.

"Oh, madame," exclaimed Dolores, "I thought I'd better bring this to you." She handed the card to her employer. "This man insists he must see Auriol."

"What does he want with her?" madame asked, for already she feared that the story of Auriol's success as a manikin might bring offers from rival concerns more tempting than she could possibly meet. Then, glancing at the card, she noticed the out-of-town address. Shrugging her shoulders, she rose. "I will attend to him," she said and walked toward the salon.

"You wish to see Auriol—Auriol Kent?" she asked. "But it is not convenient. She is very busy, and if I once break my rules, then every one expects I break them again."

"But, Madame Claire, I do not believe anything like this will ever happen again, and I am sure if you forbid my seeing Miss Kent this morning, you will deeply regret it. I do not wish to discuss my client's affairs even with you, without her permission, but perhaps you are not aware of Miss Kent's identity? If you are you will realize that it is quite possible you may lose her services immediately."

"So that's it. Just what I thought. She makes a great success. Then some one wants to take her away from me." Madame put her hands up to her head. "But no. I am giving Auriol the finest offer she could have. So it is unnecessary for you to see her." Madame handed back his card.

"But, madame," he exclaimed, "I'm afraid you don't understand this, and I must confess I don't know what you are talking about. I have no offer for Miss Kent. Furthermore, I don't believe she would be interested in any offer."

Madame smiled. "I have never seen a manikin who would not be interested in an offer, especially a good one."

"Oh," said the man, "now I understand. We've been talking at

cross purposes. Perhaps you will realize why I must see Miss Kent when I tell you I believe she is the missing heiress about whom you may have been reading in the papers."

"Missing heiress!" shrieked madame. "You mean she is a rich girl, and not— Then why has she taken a job in my workroom, and glad to get it? I do not understand."

Then the lawyer unfolded his story.

"Well, I'm happy for her good luck," said madame, "but it is bad luck to me. Yes, I will call her. I am sorry to have kept you waiting so long." Madame started to leave the room, then, turning, she said, "I think it will be nicer for you to talk in my office. I will send Miss Kent in there." And bustling along the hall she told Dolores to send Auriol to her.

Then madame darted into the workroom. "Oh, Jacinth, what do you think?" she exclaimed as she wrung her hands. "We're going to lose our lovely Auriol, and I was going to give her Dawn's place. Oh, it is too bad! Such luck I have!" Madame wandered about the workroom in a frenzy of excitement.

Miss Jacinth, accustomed to madame's sudden change of mood, waited. She knew that eventually madame would explain. "What do you think? Our Auriol is an heiress. So rich she can buy us all out."

Dolores, standing in the doorway, felt her jaw drop. Auriol—an heiress—a rich girl, and she had treated her like dirt! Just her luck to have put her foot in it. The cigarette in her hand remained unlighted.

Meanwhile in madame's office, the lawyer was explaining to Auriol about the fortune that her uncle had left her. Breathless she learned of the tragedy that had caused the



estrangement between her father and his older brother, and of the sudden change of heart that the old man had had when he realized that death was not far away.

"Of course some formalities have to be gone through and it may even

be a few months before the estate can be settled, but in the meantime we shall be very glad to make an advancement—whatever you may need," said the lawyer.

"Thank you," replied Auriol, "but I'd rather not have it. I shall stay



*"There's no customer in the showroom, and besides if there was I could show the wedding gown. Better get back to the work-room where you belong."*

here meantime. I do not want to disappoint madame when she has been so good to me. Besides"—Auriol smiled—"riches sometimes have a way of vanishing. A fortune coming to me seems almost too good to be true."

"Very well, just as you say. But you need not fear that this one will fly away. Your uncle was a very shrewd man, and now may I congratulate you again on your good fortune," said the lawyer as he rose.

"Well, now," said madame as she met Auriol, "I suppose I shall lose you." There was a touch of bitterness and resignation in her tone.

"Not unless you want me to go."

"Then you will stay with me?"

Madame put her arms around Auriol. "Oh, that is wonderful. You shall have Dawn's place. Not another hour will you stay in the workroom. Run and tell Miss Jacinth to get another girl. Then come to my office. I want to design a special dress for you to wear in the salon."

Auriol walked back to the workroom with her self-confidence renewed. All her fear of the great city whose rewards seemed to be reserved exclusively for the successful, was gone. The fear that she might lose her job was also gone. She was independent. That very moment—if she chose—she could walk out of madame's and become once more a woman of leisure. Such was the power of money.

Suddenly Auriol remembered her promise to Miss Sayre. When noon came she hurried to a telephone booth. But when she called the newspaper office she was told that Miss Sayre was out and that her return was uncertain. A wave of disappointment swept through Auriol as she retraced her steps to a restaurant where she ate her lunch. Finishing quickly she hurried back

to madame's, but as she hastened along the passage to the back entrance, she glanced at her watch. There was time to call again if she could find an empty booth in the corner drug store.

But as she passed the front door, the doorman suddenly opened it, and Miss Sayre appeared. "Oh," exclaimed Auriol as she rushed toward her, "I've been trying to get you on the phone. I wanted to tell you that——"

"That I may publish your story?" exclaimed Miss Sayre. "I've just been talking to madame. She's terribly excited. Seemed a little bit doubtful at first about your good luck, but now that I've convinced her that her business will increase by leaps and bounds when her customers learn her chief manikin is an heiress, she's terribly pleased."

Auriol smiled. "Will you be angry with me if I say I hate newspaper publicity?" She shuddered as she remembered all the frightful stories in the papers at the time of her father's tragic death.

"I think I understand how you feel," answered Miss Sayre, "but may I put your story in?"

"Yes, and I hope that will end all the publicity," laughed Auriol as she entered the side alley again.

As she entered the workroom, Judith said, "Gee, Auriol, or I suppose I should say, Miss Kent, now, you're a lucky girl. First you make a hit at the show, then Mac falls for you, and now you've been left a fortune. Guess you won't be bothering with a job any more, nor a guy like Mac, and I don't blame you with all the money you're getting." For gossip had already credited Auriol with a fortune that ran into millions.

"Well, Judith, it's nice to feel independent again, but you know I'll never really believe it's mine, till I

have it in my hands. That's why I'm going to stay with madame."

"S'pose you're right. There's often a slip, and, gosh, but it's hard getting a job when you want one." And Judith bit a thread off the spool in her hand, while Auriol made up her mind that she would surely remember this girl when she got her fortune.

The afternoon sped swiftly away. Auriol passed through the hall and met Mac. There was a troubled look in his brown eyes. He had not forgotten about the phone call, and he had just learned the astounding news of Auriol's good fortune from madame. He stopped when he saw her. "Auriol—Miss Kent——" he began.

But Auriol had put her hand on his arm, as she exclaimed, "Not Miss Kent—just Auriol."

"Well," continued Mac, and his usually gay spirits seemed to have deserted him, "I'm afraid you'll think I've an awful lot of nerve taking you out, but I never dreamed you were an heiress. If you say so, our date's off to-morrow."

"So far as I'm concerned it's very much on," replied Auriol. "I've been looking forward to it ever since you asked me. I think it would be a shame to let me down now."

"All right. I'll call for you about ten. Is that too early?"

"No, I'll be waiting for you." Auriol smiled gayly as she left him.

Convinced now that it was only a question of time until she should inherit her uncle's fortune, Auriol suddenly realized that half the fun of having a fortune would be in having some one with whom to share it. As she sat by the window of her room that night and looked across the untidy back yard with its straggly grass and old bottles and broken dishes in the corners, instinctively

her thoughts turned to Barry. Quickly she strove to banish them, as she remembered Mac's downcast look when he had discovered about her money. But events were moving so rapidly with Auriol that she could not sit still for any length of time, and when the darkness fell she was glad to get ready for bed.

Sunday dawned fair and Auriol, dressed in a smart sports suit of green angora with a white blouse and rough straw hat, trimmed with a green-and-white-ribbon cocarde, stepped into Mac's car. As they drove up through the hills of Westchester, they chatted inconsequentially about the various things they had in common till they reached the Green Hen and entered the tea room where Mac had arranged for their lunch.

Mac seemed to have lost his air of assurance, and while they were drinking their coffee Auriol said, "What crime have I committed that you seem so serious to-day?" Her eyes were dancing.

"It's I who have committed the crime. I've fallen in love with you, and"—Mac smiled boyishly—"I don't suppose you care a bit for me?"

Auriol looked down. Then raising her eyes, she said, "You know I do."

Mac stretched his arm across the table and covered her hand with his. "You do, Auriol? You'll marry me?"

For a second Auriol's memory taunted her with the thought of Barry. Then remembering Barry's utter indifference to her, she smiled, and quietly withdrew her hand from his clasp. "Let's go on the lake," she whispered.

"Then you like the water?" he questioned as a waiter hovered about them.

"I'm crazy about it." But even as she answered came the thought of Barry's promise to take her to their favorite trysting place on the lake near her old home. Biting her lips and stifling the sob that sought to rise in her throat, she said, "You'll let me row."

"Yes, honey," answered Mac. "If you want to, but"—and he slipped her arm in his—"are those little arms really strong enough to pull the oars?"

"Why, certainly," replied Auriol with a note of gay defiance. "Every ounce is real muscle and bone."

Pulling the boat away from the shore, Auriol rowed steadily upstream, determined to get away from the crowd of little boats that swarmed about the edge of the lake. At last they reached a bend in the shore, and pulled into a cove.

As Auriol rested her arms in her lap, she said, "I think I owe you an apology."

"What's that, little one?" questioned Mac lazily as his eyes glided in the gorgeous color of Auriol's hair.

"I wanted to tell you, myself, about my good luck—at least this fortune I'm supposed to be getting. It seemed rather horrid that you should have heard it first from madame when you've been so good to me."

"Nonsense, my dear. I'm only too glad for your sake, although"—he took Auriol's hand in his—"I'm afraid this may come between us."

"Come between us? Never! Besides, I haven't actually got the fortune, and you never can tell what may happen."

"Then, Auriol," said Mac, "you mean you really care for me even if you're worth a million or more?" Then drawing his hand away he exclaimed, "Oh, my dear, this seems too wonderful. Yet somehow I feel

one of these days you'll be stepping out of my life—yet once I thought —" Mac stopped suddenly and his brown eyes lost their sparkle.

"What did you think, Mac?" questioned Auriol softly as she slipped her hand again in his. "Tell me," she added huskily, as they left the boat and walked into the woods.

For answer Mac gathered her to his heart and kissed her hungrily. "Oh, sweetheart, I love you. I've been dreaming of the day when you'd be my bride, since I first held you in my arms that day you stumbled on the stairs. You'll marry me, darling? Tell me you will."

Auriol shivered. After all, was half a loaf better than none? "Maybe I don't love you enough. I hardly know you yet," she whispered as she sought to release herself from his arms.

"Then you do care a little?" cried Mac impulsively as he drew her close to his heart again.

In the haven of his arms, Auriol felt secure from the world—almost as secure as when her father was alive. She did not answer, but laid her soft cheek against Mac's coat.

"You'll give me the right to care for you, princess, even if I'm only a pauper?" said Mac whimsically.

"Maybe," answered Auriol as she raised her blue eyes to his.

"You'll never regret it, little sweetheart, never. I promise I'll always be true to you. Oh, Auriol, you've made me so happy. I feel like a king." And Mac showered his burning kisses on Auriol's rosy lips and pale cheeks.

The days passed quickly at Madame Claire's for Auriol had proved a big drawing card, and many new customers were added to madame's list. While the work was tiring, Auriol enjoyed it. It was sheer pleas-

ure to her to wear the dainty creations that madame designed, for every one agreed that madame was unusually successful in creating styles for the deb, and sub-deb.

Auriol had never spent a summer in New York before, and as the weather grew warmer there were days when she almost hated to go to work, days when it seemed as though walking on the sunny pavements would burn her feet. If it had not been for Mac's devotion in taking her for rides in the cool of the evening, Auriol sometimes felt she would have died.

One noon, when she felt half dead with the heat the door of the salon opened. A tall, blond girl entered as Auriol went into the lounge. Her expression seemed familiar to Auriol, but for the moment she could not place her. Then Dolores stuck her head outside the velvet curtains. "Well, look who's here. My goodness, if it isn't Dawn. Where did you come from?" she asked as she went into the salon. "I suppose you're a big movie star now. When are we going to see your first picture?"

"Say, take it from me," answered Dawn dropping languidly into one of the chairs, "the movies aren't what they're cracked up to be. I'm through with them and the talkies, too. This bunk about fortunes being made in Hollywood may be all right, but you've got to show me."

"Don't you like Hollywood?"

"Not on your life. After all, there's no place like New York, to my way of thinking. Where's madame?" she asked. "And how come Auriol's on the floor?"

Dolores laughed cynically. "Lots of things have happened since you gave madame the go-by. Auriol's got your job, and you'd better ask Mac about the rest."

"Good grief!" cried Dawn. "What do you mean about Mac? And that kid? She's the girl from the workroom. Don't kid me," laughed Dawn. "Well, I'm going to see madame."

"Better look out what you say to that kid. They say she's an heiress. Of course, after all, it may be the bunk, but she has madame and Mac and the whole caboodle all worked up over some story about an uncle leaving her a million. Seems funny to me she'd stick around this joint if she has."

The heavy curtains were drawn apart, and Mac stood before them.

"Hello there," cried Dawn, as she ambled toward the handsome Irishman. "Aren't you going to kiss me?" she asked as she raised her face to his. "Don't you want to welcome me home?"

"Welcome you home? What's wrong with Hollywood? Thought you'd said good-by to us forever when you left."

"Oh, I suppose Hollywood's all right for them that like it, but honest, I'm sick of the whole place." Suddenly as Dawn spoke Mac realized that doubtless the tone of her voice and her lack of education had been the stumblingblocks to her success. "Well, I want to see madame," and Dawn passed through the lounge.

It was a rather disappointed-looking Dawn who strolled away from madame's office a few minutes later. The excitable Frenchwoman could not so easily get over the fact of Dawn's desertion, nor of how Auriol had saved the day for her.

As Dolores walked to the door with Dawn, and held a whispered conversation for a few minutes, Auriol was suddenly apprehensive. She could not forget that she had seen Dawn deliberately kiss the man to



whom she was engaged, nor could she understand Mac's sudden embarrassment on Dawn's arrival.

A swift sense of desolation swept over her. Would Dawn's return spell the ruin of her happiness?

## CHAPTER VI.

"I knew madame wouldn't lose the chance of getting me back again. Marguerite's getting a month's vacation, so I said I'd help till——" Dawn stopped abruptly as Auriol

stood before her. "Oh, here's my understudy. Pleased to meet you again. Madame wants you in her office," Dawn said insolently as she turned to Dolores.

A week had passed since Dawn had made her unexpected appearance, and as madame had not seemed very sympathetic at that time, Auriol was amazed to see Dawn back again, evidently on her old footing.

"Madame wants to see me?" repeated Auriol fixing the collar of her lavender linen frock.



Mac stretched his arm across the table and covered her hand with his.  
 "You do care, Auriol? You'll marry me?" he asked.

"Sure thing," answered Dawn.  
 "Better trot along."

Auriol's dainty feet appeared to have lost their lightness as she walked along the hall. What had Fate in store for her now? But as she entered madame's office, she forced a smile to her lips.

"Good morning, my dear," exclaimed madame. "Dawn's with us again, but I don't want you to feel upset about it. You've done beautifully, only I felt you would be leaving us soon, and so"—madame shrugged her shoulders—"I decided to take her back."

"Oh, but madame, the money seems as far away as ever. So many complications are turning up I don't know that I'll ever get anything."

Madame raised her eyebrows. "That's too bad, but even if you don't get it, you have other plans?" She smiled knowingly. "Haven't I heard whispers of marriage?"

"Yes, but that won't be for some time yet," Auriol answered, suddenly realizing she was fighting for her job.

"There, don't think I want to get rid of you. I want you to stay as long as you can; and now we shall all be happy together." Madame rose. "Come to the stock room. I want to select some materials."

While Auriol worked with madame, feeling as though the stars had set in their courses against her, she would quickly have changed her mind had she known that Barry was in the salon, demanding to see her. But to all his demands Dawn gave a haughty refusal. Then, as he announced he would call again, Dolores, who had been listening, stepped forward, "Here's her home address. She'll be there about six or seven to-night."

"What's the idea?" questioned Dawn savagely as the door closed behind Barry, but Dolores, remembering her interview with the lawyer, merely shrugged her shoulders.

As Auriol returned to the lounge she felt that everything would be different now that Dawn was back. Dolores who had ceased her petty persecutions of late, would now have an ally. Then Auriol smiled as she looked at her engagement ring—a gorgeous diamond with diamond incrustated filigree setting—Mac would stand up for her, and at that moment she was proud of his love.

The day passed slowly, and it was with lagging feet that Auriol finally

reached home. She glanced toward the table where the mail was usually left. She'd heard from Purdie confirming the lawyer's story. There was no one else to write to her. But as she looked casually through the lot, her eyes almost popped out of her head. A special delivery for her—in Barry's handwriting! Clutching it to her heart, she ran upstairs, all her weariness forgotten. With trembling fingers she tore the envelope open.

Auriol kissed the closely written sheets passionately. Just to see Barry's handwriting once more. To know that his dear hands had held the paper. Then Auriol read:

Oh, my darling, I know you must think I've deserted you, but please do not pass judgment on me till you read this.

Quickly, Auriol glanced over the closely written pages, with their strange tale of love and tragedy, of his accident, his slow convalescence, his incessant search for her and his seeing her picture in the wedding gown in a Sunday paper. He told her, too, how he had been to madame's that very day only to be refused the chance of seeing her.

Auriol's heart was singing. "Oh, Barry," she whispered, "you're coming back to me." She kissed the letter again as she glanced at the last paragraph. "I will call for you at seven, my darling. With all my love, Barry."

Auriol looked at her watch. In half an hour Barry would be with her—Barry, the man she loved! Then like an icy shower came the remembrance of her engagement. Suddenly she realized she was bound to Mac. Her heart rebelled. How could she marry him now? Yet she had given him her promise. She burst into tears as she dressed hurriedly. There was a sharp knock at



the door, and the landlady announced Barry's arrival.

Quickly powdering her face, Auriol hurried downstairs. The door of the living room was opened and she could see Barry impatiently pacing back and forth. He stared at her a moment as she came into the room, then he crossed the room rapidly and took her in his arms. "Oh, my darling. At last I've found you." He kissed the soft lips that were upturned to his. "It's been agony not being able to find you, but now I'll never let you go again." He looked down at her tenderly. "Auriol, do you still love and want me?"

Auriol grew rigid in his arms. "Oh, Barry, Barry," she whispered, and there was heartbreak in her voice, "you've come back too late."

"Too late?" cried Barry. "You're not— Is there another man?" His arms fell to his side.

There were tears in Auriol's eyes and her lips trembled.

Once more Barry drew her to him. "Not that, sweetheart. Tell me there's no one else. Tell me you love me as I love you." Barry paused as he gazed into her blue eyes.

"Such a lot of things have happened, and—Mac has been awfully good to me," murmured Auriol, her face pale.

"Honey, forgive me," said Barry as he held her more tightly. "You've been working all day and you're dead tired. Get your hat and let's have dinner. Then we can talk."

In the quiet restaurant where they ate, all the tragic happenings that had shattered their romance were discussed. Auriol's heart beat happily. Once more she was with Barry, and while they talked, the very existence of her fiancé was forgotten.

As they walked slowly back to the house where Auriol roomed, Barry

said, "Tell Mac, dearest, you cannot marry him. Surely he will understand. You know you don't really love him."

But as Auriol choked back the bitter sobs that rose in her throat, she whispered, "I can't, Barry," and ran swiftly up the steps.

Once inside her room she cried bitterly. Why had she not kept faith with Barry in spite of everything? Why had she let her doubts rise against him? Yet even as she had promised to marry Mac she knew she could never love him as she had loved Barry. And now that she knew she loved Barry more than ever, she must banish his love from her heart.

The next morning when Auriol arrived at the shop, madame had her slip on some of her new creations which Miss Jacinth had just finished. "Take this tennis dress to the salon," she said, after she had approved it, "and tell Mac to put it on a form. I'll decide about the others later."

Picking it up, Auriol walked toward the salon, but as she passed through the lounge, the murmur of voices reached her ears. She stopped suddenly.

"I don't think you're much of a man forgetting me so soon." Dawn was speaking. "And, after all your promises, too. Gee, Mac, have a heart."

"That's no way to talk to an engaged man," answered Mac.

"Engaged! Then you're really engaged to that girl? And what about that ring you gave me? Doesn't it mean anything? And all the dinners we had together, and you swearing you'd never care for another girl, and—well, Mr. McGuire, maybe I'll have something to say to this. You're a fast worker, all right." Dawn's voice was biting.

"Go on, Dawn," replied Mac. "You know there was never anything between us."

"That's what you say, but oh, boy, I haven't forgotten."

"Well, look here, quit this nonsense, I'll meet you to-night at Jerry's."

"That's my own sweet boy," answered Dawn.

Auriol's heart was beating madly. So Mac had been interested in Dawn. Hesitating as to what she should do, she stooped down to pick up the belt of the dress which had fallen to the floor, when Mac, coming out of the salon, stood before her. A quizzical look flashed into his brown eyes when he saw Auriol coming toward him.

Handing him the sports dress, Auriol smiled and said, "You're the very person I want to see. Madame wants this put on a dummy."

Mac smiled to himself. Then Auriol had not heard what Dawn had been saying. As Auriol turned to leave him he slipped an arm around her slender waist, and whispered, "How about a ride to-night?"

"Not to-night," answered Auriol. And Mac, unlike his usually impetuous self, did not insist.

"Remember our party to-morrow. I'll call for you about eight." Nodding her head, Auriol left him.

When noon came Auriol felt too tired to go out to lunch so, sending for a sandwich, she set down beside Judith to eat it.

"Getting married soon?" asked Judith who was always interested in the romances of the girls who worked with her.

"Oh, I don't know. Marriage is so serious. Sometimes I wonder if ——" Auriol hesitated.

"You like Mac, though, don't you?" continued Judith, remembering how Auriol's eyes had sparkled

when Mac used to talk to her in the workroom.

"Yes."

"You don't sound as though you were madly in love with him. Well, I shouldn't be butting in, but I don't think Mac's good enough for you."

"What do you mean?" asked Auriol, looking at the ring on her finger.

"Oh, Mac likes you, and you're a good looker. You dress well, but I don't know if I should say it." Judith stopped and looked at Auriol.

"There's some one else?" questioned Auriol.

Judith shrugged her shoulders. "He used to be kind of interested in Dawn, but I guess she ditched him — thought she'd catch something better when she went to Hollywood, but now it looks as though she'd be glad to take any one for a meal ticket."

"So that's how the land lies," said Auriol quietly.

"Oh, I really don't believe there's anything to it. Maybe you won't thank me for telling you, only I bet if you weren't going to inherit a fortune, Mac mightn't be so devoted. There, I've said it, Auriol. I hope you're not mad at me."

"I'm glad you've told me," answered Auriol quickly as Dolores called her to the showroom.

Dressing the next evening for the party to which she and Mac had been invited, Auriol wished that he would call up and declare their engagement at an end. Yet when he arrived, and helped her pin an exquisite spray of orchids on her evening gown, she realized there was something very fascinating about him. Had Barry never returned she might have grown quite fond of him. Surely Judith had misjudged him. He could not be so thoughtful for her if it were only her money he wanted.



*Courtesy Benson Bailey*  
"Darling, are you ready to marry me?" Barry asked, looking into the lovely eyes of the girl in his arms.

The evening wore on, and as the champagne flowed, Mac became more amorous. After supper he whispered, "Say, now that we're in Connecticut, let's get married."

"Oh, but, Mac, I want a big wedding." And Auriol suddenly realized that this was a Mac she had never known before.

"But it'll be all right. You don't have to worry about what folks will say. With your money you can afford to be independent."

Auriol suddenly stiffened as she answered, "I'd rather not."

"Come on and dance then. We'll decide about that later."

After another hour of drinking

and dancing they started to drive home, but again Mac begged her to marry him. Suddenly Auriol felt afraid, and to avoid a quarrel murmured, "All right." But even as she agreed a brilliant idea flashed into her mind. She thought of Barry and her heart was singing.

When they neared the little town where Mac had planned to rouse the magistrate, Auriol whispered, "Mac, there's one thing I want to tell you before we get married."

Mac laughed boisterously. "You'll have to be mighty quick, for we'll be there in a few minutes. Anyway you can keep it till after we're married."

"No, I think it's only fair you should know before."

"Know what?" questioned Mac jovially. "I'm sure you've no dark secrets in your life."

The color rose in Auriol's pale cheeks. Mac had stopped the car and was holding out his hands to help her alight.

"Please listen, Mac. I must tell you."

"All right, honey. But hurry up."

"My fortune was only a pipe dream after all, and I'm a poor working girl again. Do you still want to marry me?"

"You're kidding me," laughed Mac good-naturedly. "Come along."

"No, Mac. I'm serious. I've nothing but my job and even that seems shaky."

Mac sobered suddenly. "I can't believe it. Of course it makes no difference to me, only if you feel you don't want a poor man now, maybe we should wait a while."

"Then you don't want to marry me?" interrupted Auriol as she pulled off her ring and handed it to him.

"I don't want that," he answered hoarsely as he pushed it from him. "Put it on your finger again."

"No, Mac," she answered as she thrust it into his hand. In spite of his protests, she knew he did not love her. "We've made a mistake. Come, take me home." And drawing her evening wrap more closely about her, she looked straight ahead as Mac started the car.

The next morning Auriol was awakened by a sharp knock at her door as the landlady called, "A telegram for you, Miss Kent."

Jumping out of bed, Auriol opened her door. There was a startled look in her eyes, but as she read the message, her fears vanished and with a smile on her lips, she said, "There's no answer."

Auriol closed the door, and read the message again:

Calling to take you to breakfast Saturday morning.  
BARRY.

As Auriol hurried downstairs a few minutes later, she met the landlady just coming up. "Another telegram for you, Miss Kent."

Hurriedly Auriol opened the envelope, and pulled out the sheet of yellow paper, while she quickly read the message:

Can you meet me Saturday morning at eight thirty in Grand Central. PURDIE.

"Oh, dear," whispered Auriol to herself as she looked at her watch. "What's happened to Purdie, I wonder?"

The doorbell rang and Auriol answered it. A moment later she was in Barry's arms. "Darling, I couldn't wait till Sunday," he whispered as he kissed her smiling lips. "Are you ready to marry me?" he asked, looking into the lovely eyes of the girl in his arms.

"Yes," replied Auriol. "I couldn't marry Mac, and, oh, Barry, I'll tell you everything later—look at that."

She thrust Purdie's telegram into his hand.

"What does this mean?"

"I don't know, but we'll have to hurry or we'll be too late to meet her."

As the taxi started for the station, Barry said, "Let's get married this morning. Then we can leave for the West to-night. Of course, dearest, I haven't very much to offer you, and camp life is rather rough. One of these days I may get another chance to go to South America, but, honey, I hope you won't find it too lonely in the mountains."

"Too lonely, Barry?" Auriol caught Barry's tanned hand in hers. "If you're there, that's all I want."

"Darling," murmured Barry, as he grasped her hand more firmly.

"Well, here we are," said Auriol as the taxi stopped. "I believe I'll just have time to phone madame before the train comes. For Barry had insisted that she leave madame's immediately.

The train was late, but when the gates opened Auriol said, "Maybe I'd better meet Purdie alone. It might be too big a shock if she should see you with me. Go and get a table for us in the restaurant and I'll bring Purdie there."

"All right, dear heart," answered Barry as he disappeared in the crowd.

A moment later the old woman appeared, and caught Auriol in her arms. "What a hot day," she exclaimed. "No wonder you're all tired out, but you'll soon be all right, for I'm taking you back with me to-night."

"Why, Purdie, what do you mean?"

"Well, I just decided that this was no weather for you to be in New

York, and I knew you'd never come if I just wrote, so here I am ready to take you back with me. You said you were engaged. I suppose you'll be getting married in the fall, and then, what about this fortune? Oh, I've lots of questions to ask," said the old woman, as Auriol piloted her toward the restaurant.

"My engagement's broken." Auriol was smiling.

"You look pretty happy about it. I suppose you'll be telling me next your fortune's all a fake. Well, seeing who left it to you, I wouldn't be surprised. I've just felt I shouldn't have left you alone all this time."

"Oh, but Purdie, you've been far too kind to me already. It's darling of you to want me to go back with you to Lake George, but, Purdie, can you stand a fearful shock? The most wonderful thing has happened—Barry's come back, and we're going to be married to-day."

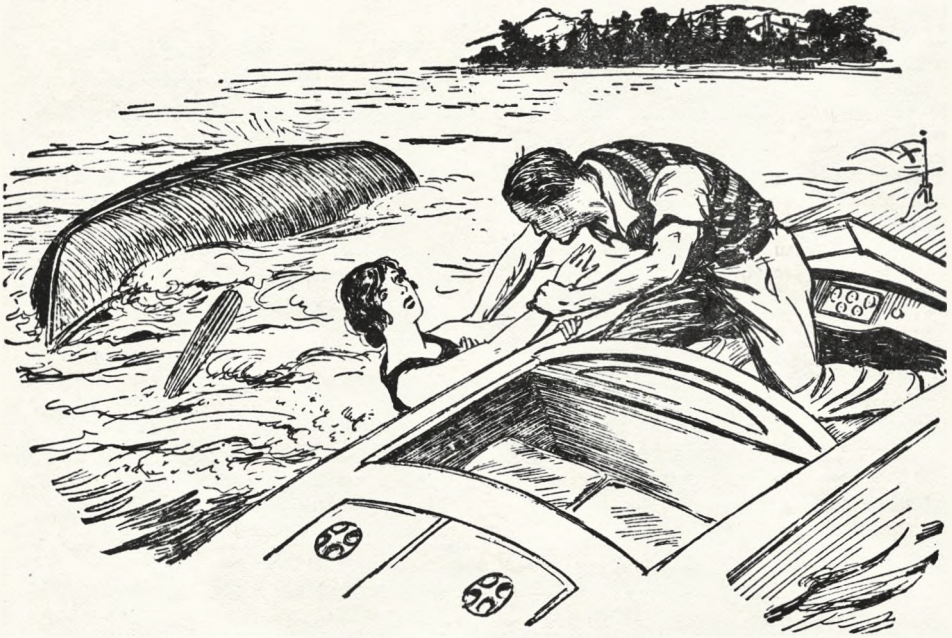
"Land's sake!" exclaimed Mrs. Purdie. "What's this you're saying?"

But at that moment they reached the restaurant and found Barry waiting for them. He escorted them to the table he had reserved and ordered breakfast for three.

"It certainly seems good to see you, Mr. Barry. And I'm glad that Miss Auriol is going to have some one to look after her."

Barry smiled fondly at Auriol. "Yes, she is going to have some one look after her now. And I promise you that she'll never have an unhappy moment if I can help it."

Then breakfast arrived and in between eating they discussed plans for the future. In half an hour they set out for city hall where Auriol and Barry were going to be married, and from where they planned to set out on their voyage of life together.



# Anne Proves Her Choice

By Helen Hibbard Dau

**P**ADDLING around near shore in her red canoe, Anne Crowell suddenly discovered the speed boat that was running back and forth a mile or so out. Abruptly she lifted the dripping paddle from the water, laid it heedlessly across the blue linen skirt that covered her knees, and stared out across the wide blue bay with a sudden intense interest.

The boat rushed through the water, leaving a wake of glistening foam behind it and lifting on either side of the bow a curved silver wing of water that broke along the edge into a feathery spray and caught the sunlight in an iridescent sparkle. It would go in one direction just so far, slacken speed, slide around, and turn back again.

It was Marcia Bayly's boat all right, Anne assured herself in a fever of excitement. No one else in the shore colony owned a custom-built mahogany speed boat with an engine in it that did fifty-five. And it could mean just one thing—that Terry Northcourt was at the wheel!

Of that she could be reasonably certain. Marcia never ran the boat herself, having little interest in it beyond a pride in possessing the neatest craft of its kind in the vicinity. The only member of the Bayly household who did run it was the chauffeur, who, Anne happened to know, had driven Mrs. Bayly to New York for a few days. And the *Harbor Herald* had said that Terhune Northcourt, the famous aviator, was visiting at the Bayly home.

It hadn't mentioned any other guests, and however remiss the *Herald* might be in reporting international, Federal, or State affairs it could be relied upon usually for local social news.

The more certain Anne became on reviewing these facts, the more excited she grew. Then suddenly another certainty plunged her into gloom. Marcia must mean to marry Terry. Why else would she have the popular aviator at the house with just her father and herself and no other guests? Of course that was it! Marcia meant to climax her celebrity-hunting career by marrying the most popular celebrity of them all—Terry Northcourt.

It was a devastating idea to Anne, who ever since she had known of Terry's approaching visit had been all wrought up with dreams that concerned herself and the aviator. They were dreams in which the aviator's dark eyes kindled with love for her, not Marcia.

She drew a sigh of deep despair. There wasn't any use for a girl with a head of tousled black curls, a turned-up nose with four much-despised freckles on its tip, and a pair of wide blue eyes that could just as well have belonged to a child trying to compete with that cool, self-assured, blondness of Marcia's. She might as well make up her mind to marry a nice, dependable boy like Tim Taylor, who would succeed his father at the head of an enormous wholesale grocery, and who had about as much imagination as constant contact with groceries would allow, and let it go at that. The interesting men in the world belonged to girls like Marcia.

Anne had just about made up her mind to admit defeat and go in to lunch—it was almost two and Manda had promised biscuits and

honey—when she realized that Terry must be out there alone. At least she could see no dark spot that would be a person on the seat beside him. She could paddle out and look at him—that would be something. And perhaps since he was alone, he would wave to her or call good morning—that would be something to remember during all those dull days when she was married to Tim!

Farther out the wind had whipped the bay full of little choppy waves, but Anne decided that if she took them head on it wouldn't be dangerous. She headed the canoe out toward the path of the speed boat.

She got out safely enough, having skill in handling a canoe, but the boat was going away from her. She had to wait, bobbing up and down on the waves and paddling from one side to the other to keep the canoe head on, so that it slid around and came back again. She watched with eager eyes and quickened heartbeat.

As the boat came nearer its driver slackened speed so as not to kick up too much of a sea for the canoe. Gradually Anne could make out the man behind the wheel of Marcia's boat, and as she did so her jaw dropped with astonishment. It wasn't Terry Northcourt at all but a redhead, and never in her life had she seen so many freckles on one nose. She suffered a pang of acute disappointment and grew a little angry when she thought of the biscuits she had missed just for a glimpse of a man who might easily be another Tim Taylor.

The man in the speed boat was staring too and frowning hard with disapproval as his boat swished past. Then without going the length of the course he had been keeping, he brought the boat around and came back.

Leaning far over the side he called: "You ought not to be out so far in that canoe."

Freckled, red-haired, and bossy! It was more than Anne's disappointment and hunger could bear.

"Redheads are supposed to be awfully smart, aren't they?" she retorted indignantly, and then was sorry. It sounded so childish.

Quite unfazed, the man grinned back. "Smart enough to know that it's too rough out here for that canoe."

The speed boat was slipping away again, but Anne meant to have the last word if she died for it. Ignoring her perilous position in the waves, she leaned forward and shouted:

"Well, I want you to know——" But the rest of the words were literally drowned. In her unguarded moment the waves had swung the canoe around and slapped it broadside. Before Anne could get her paddle into motion or could realize what was happening, she was flapping around in icy water and swallowing great gulps of it along with her words.

When she came up sputtering the first thing she saw was the speed boat, bobbing around a few feet away.

"Swim over here," the redhead ordered, and Anne did.

With the man's efficient help, she managed to lift herself out of the water and scramble over the side of the boat.

Hungry and wet and shivering, she was a very much subdued young lady. Meekly she allowed him to wrap a sweater around her shoulders, and sat in silence while he manipulated to rescue her paddle, hook up the anchor rope of the upturned canoe, and fasten it to the speed boat for towing.

When he took his place on the red leather cushions beside her he paused to scrutinize her with clear gray eyes that managed to hold a twinkle in spite of their seriousness.

"Just what were you trying to do?" he asked, looking at her sorrowful, dripping face. "You might have drowned if I hadn't been here. It's a good mile or more to shore, and with those heavy shoes on——"

How nice it would have been, Anne thought, to be rescued from drowning by Terry Northcourt. But this rescuer was different. He was just an ordinary man.

"I wouldn't have been here at all if you hadn't," she retorted. "And I wouldn't have been upset if you had minded your own business!"

"I fail to make connections," he said.

With a steady purr of the motor the boat began to move forward, slowly because of the canoe behind.

"I wanted to see who was in the boat," she explained.

"And do you always rush off so recklessly on as little provocation?"

"It wasn't a little provocation. It was Terry Northcourt. I thought he was in the boat."

"Oh, are you a friend of his?"

"Hardly. I just wanted to see him."

"Why?"

She gazed up at him in amazement. "Why?" she echoed incredulously. "Why would any one want to see Terry Northcourt? Because he's—he's—he's—well, he's Terry Northcourt, that's all."

"Oh, I see. You think you're in love with him."

"Who wouldn't be?" she demanded, her voice suddenly gentle.

He looked intently into her small face which wore an expression of rapt, eager wistfulness. Then he looked away again and sighed.



"Just what do you find so attractive about him?"

"Everything. He's been every place and seen everything."

"I see. You like him because he's worldly?"

"It gives him atmosphere."

"But you're on the wrong track. You don't fall in love with a man

for his atmosphere. You fall in love with him for his own self, what he has inside him."

"But atmosphere is created by what a man has inside him," Anne persisted. "For instance if he's interested in groceries he has an unimaginative, practical, uninteresting atmosphere."



*"Ever since I pulled you out of the water I've had an irresistible desire to kiss the tip of that funny little nose of yours."*

"That's nonsense. I've known a grocer to have the soul of an angel, and some of these dashing heroes —" he broke off.

Anne frowned. Was he trying to belittle Terry? The idea filled her with an angry desire to punish him.

"That's nonsense, too. What a man does, he is. Now anybody would know that you'd never been any place but—but maybe on a trip to Niagara Falls."

He turned to her suddenly and grinned. "You may not mean it that way, but that's one of the nicest things I've ever had said to me. I think it's terrible to go around looking important."

They were getting near shore and Anne saw with secret excitement—for it might mean a glimpse of Terry—that he was taking her in to the Bayly dock. It softened her a little toward him. She even conceded to herself that he had an engaging smile. She noticed, too, that it was a little wistful, and suddenly it occurred to her that he might feel toward Terry the way she did toward Marcia.

"You want to marry Marcia!" she exclaimed.

He laughed disparagingly. "In a dim moment this morning I thought that I might grow to want to, but in the last—well, say ten minutes I've learned differently."

He looked into her wide blue eyes with a significance that made her furious and completely effaced any sympathy she might have felt for him a moment before.

She said angrily, deliberately trying to hurt him: "It must have been a dim moment if you thought a girl like Marcia would marry a redhead with freckles when there are men like Terry Northcourt in the world!"

He appeared immensely amused at that. His gray eyes peered with

good-natured mocking at the four freckles on her nose.

"We have something in common," he exclaimed.

"Oh, you're horrid!"

He frowned at that. "It's too bad you think so, because I've just decided that you're the girl I want to marry."

Anne gasped. The impudence of the man!

"It's sudden, of course," he went on calmly, "but I've had to learn to make quick judgments that are as dependable as long-thought-out ones. That's why I can be sure about a thing like this so quickly. You're just the girl for me."

"Oh! The idea! I think you're—oh!" she sputtered in wrathful indignation.

He ignored her outburst. "Yes, you're just the girl for me," he went on casually. "And you'd fit into my life perfectly. You're fearless, although you'll have to learn caution. And your dress is a wreck, your hair mussed and soaked, and the powder washed off your nose, and still you manage to look nice and pretty—I like that. And I have an idea"—here he inserted a good-humored grin—"that you're honest and frank. Then you need some one to take care of you—I'd be splendid for that. And ever since I pulled you out of the water I've had an irresistible desire to kiss the tip of that funny little nose of yours. Yes, without a doubt it would be a perfect match. Besides," he finished teasingly, "a man has some claims on a girl he's rescued from drowning."

"I may look like a child," Anne stormed, finding her voice at last. "but I'm almost twenty-two. And I want you to know that if there's anything I loathe it's being taken care of! I don't care who whether you

think I'm pretty or honest or any other old thing. You'd bore me to extinction. I never want to see you again!"

"You've got spirit, too," he chuckled. "I like that."

He guided the boat up to the dock, and Marcia and Terry, coming down the lawn, hailed them. Anne forgot all about the man beside her.

Terry Northcourt was dark and handsome, with a small mustache, the manner of a medieval gallant, and a boldness in his dark eyes. There was an element of the theatrical about him, but underneath, you sensed a deep honesty and kindness. His exploits in the air were cold and daring. There were better pilots in the country but none so sensational.

A shudder of excitement passed through Anne as she saw him coming toward her. But when she saw Marcia, cool, blond, and lovely in white silk, and thought about her own damp curls plastered tight against her head and her blue linen dress, now a sodden wreck, her heart sank. What a way to meet Terry!

Marcia appeared a little surprised at the sight of Anne, but called pleasantly: "Why, Anne Crowell! So you're the one who had Sid out playing hero! We saw from the terrace. Lunch is waiting."

Sid grinned amiably. "Guess you'd better ask Miss Crowell, too. I imagine she's missed her own lunch. And have you anything dry for her to slip into?"

Anne was going to protest—she wasn't going to have an impudent redhead boss her around—when she thought of what a thrill it would be to lunch with Terry. Her anger faded abruptly.

"If you only would, Marcia," she said sweetly.

It was Terry who extended the invitation in his easy, informal way. "Come along, you little drowned mouse." He reached a hand to help her up on the dock. She took it, looking up at him and feeling a little giddy with joy.

He walked up to the house with her, while Marcia walked with Sid. Anne wasn't quite sure just what tactics Marcia was using in thus surrendering her celebrity, but she was glad anyway. She wished the lawn were a thousand miles long so she could walk it with Terry Northcourt.

The four of them lunched on the terrace overlooking the great blue bay. Anne, neat and dry in a yellow silk sports dress of Marcia's, her eyes quite dazzled by the sight of Terry across the table, failed to notice Sid's quiet gray eyes as they rested almost exclusively on her small, glowing face, or to see Marcia's occasional scowl at the sight of this attention.

She did, however, manage to gather a few desired bits of information. They were glad that she had happened along. They needed another girl since Sid had come—he had dropped in the night before without warning. He and Terry were both staying for three or four days.

Because they urged her she spent the whole afternoon with them, lolling in the big terrace chairs, chatting and laughing, or playing around the miniature golf course. The minutes of that glorious afternoon ticked away all too quickly, but when it came time for her to go they begged her to join them for the dinner dance at the club that night. Because Terry seemed particularly anxious—and for other reasons—she accepted.

As she bathed and dressed Anne

went over all the interesting things that had happened to her that day, even Sid's rather abrupt proposal. She could look at that, now that Terry had been so perfectly sweet to her, with a tingle of pleasure. It was nice to have a man like you right off that way, very flattering indeed. And Sid was really nice. He had a nice smile and she did like the reverent way he had of looking at her—as though she were something awfully precious. But of course he didn't count much when she had Terry to think about.

Terry was so tall—well, so was Sid when she thought about it, tall and broad and good-looking in spite of the freckles. There she was thinking about him again! She laughed at herself. She supposed it was because Terry was so exciting. There wasn't any one thing that she could point out definitely about him the way she could about Sid. She could think how honest Sid's eyes were, or how strong he had been when he pulled her out of the water, but when she thought about Terry's eyes, she remembered how thrilling he had been, and everything else was confused in that.

When she had finished dressing Anne paused before the mirror. Her reflection came back to her all soft and fluffy and dreamy-eyed in a long, floating dress of blue chiffon that matched her eyes. She flashed a radiant smile at herself before she hurried downstairs.

The crowd at the club that night was very gay, partly because Terry was there, and partly because the season was only two weeks old and every one was just beginning to get into the swing of things.

Marcia's party sat at a small table for four in a partially secluded nook away from the dance floor where Terry wouldn't be stared at too

much. He was being terribly nice to Anne, very friendly and cheerful. And Anne was thrilled to be there with him, dancing around the crowded, colorful floor to the quick rhythm of the jazz orchestra, his arm around her, everybody craning for a glimpse of him.

Marcia had taken undeniable possession of Sid. Anne was oddly disturbed by the way she took him off and left her alone at the table with Terry. Not that she objected to being alone with him, but she wondered if Marcia was trying to make him jealous. She couldn't help but see that Terry was a little jealous by the worried way his eyes followed Marcia whenever she led Sid away, laughing up into his rather unresponsive but polite gray eyes.

Once Sid, looking wretchedly anxious, begged a dance from Anne. But by the time the music had started the waiter had served the main course of the dinner, and Marcia insisted that they eat it while it was hot. Before the music started again she had maneuvered to have Sid take her upstairs on the balcony for a breath of air and a view of the bay under moonlight.

"Perhaps you'd like a glimpse of the moon, too?" Terry asked when he and Anne were alone.

Anne would love it, so they stepped out of the French windows that opened out onto a flagstone terrace, and wandered down the sloping lawn. They stopped by the sea wall, a sweeping view of the bay shimmering under moonlight stretched before them. The moon hung in the sky above the water surrounded by a thousand winking stars. The night air blew softly against them, and at their feet sounded the gentle lapping of the water as it fell upon the sand.

Anne's cheeks were warm, her

head up, her eyes shining. She and Terry in the moonlight alone! Now she knew what heaven would be like!

She stole a glance up at him. He was staring hard out at the bay, only not seeing it really. And he wasn't thinking about her at all, but about Marcia. Anne knew. It made her feel a little sad, and deprived the night of some of its glory. But after a moment, when she had reconciled herself to the idea that Terry would never really be interested in her as she wanted him to be, she strove to console him.

"I—I can't see why Marcia's so attentive to Sid," she ventured.

He looked down at her with a trace of amusement on his face.

"Can't you? Marcia's a celebrity hunter, you know."

"I know, Terry, but with—with you here, how can she want any one else?"

"Nonsense, Anne! Don't try to flatter me. I know Sid's worth six of me."

"Six of you! Oh, Terry!" Her voice was a gentle reproof. "You're worth a dozen men like Sid. Why, he's only——"

"Rot! Sid's got it all over me and don't think I don't know it. What he does amounts to something in the world. I'm just a flash in the pan. And since you brought up the subject—why do you let Marcia get away with him, Anne? Anybody can see that he's simply gone on you. But you've got to hang on to him if you want him. Marcia knows her business."

Anne drew back, startled. "I don't know what you mean."

"I mean Sid, of course. Now don't pretend. Any one with half an eye could see that you're just made for each other. Marcia's not serious enough for Sid. Sid believes in

things. He has a steady hold on things that count. Marcia likes to flutter around and win the applause and attention of a crowd. That's why she's always showing off her celebrities. I know how harmless she is. We get along famously together. She was just going to accept me when he turned up. And she'd never go to Africa or the ends of the earth with him. It would mean that he'd have to give up his wife or his life's work. It's the sort of thing that would ruin his life, and Sidwell Millan means too much to the world—or will some day—for that."

"Sidwell Millan!" Anne echoed blankly.

"Doesn't that mean anything to you? He's the young medical student who was chosen to join Colonel Appleton's expedition in South Africa to study tropical diseases."

"Oh! Not the one who made that thrilling rescue of Colonel Appleton from the natives?"

"The same," responded Terry calmly. "Probably to a million people who have heard of me only a thousand have heard of him. But he's going after something real. What he braves he braves for a cause—and I'm brave only to feed a little excitement to my tired senses. I'm at my peak now. In a few years only a few scattered newspaper reporters will remember me while Sid will be slowly climbing to the top to stay."

"Oh, how awful!" One of Anne's hands moved up to her throat.

Terry looked down at her suddenly stricken face.

"What's the matter?" he demanded concernedly.

"Oh, Terry!" she moaned. "What have I done? He asked me to marry him—the very first fifteen minutes he knew me. I thought he was



*He caught her in his arms and held her close. The next instant his lips met hers and clung for a long rapturous moment.*

some one—oh, terribly uninteresting—like Tim Taylor in groceries. And—and I said terrible things to him. Isn't it awful? It was on account of you, too, Terry."

"Me!"

She nodded. "I thought you were in the boat this morning. That's why I went out. When I found him instead I was mad clean through. He said I was the girl he wanted to marry and I told him—oh, Terry!

This morning I was so thrilled about you, but all evening when I was dressing I kept seeing his red head instead of your dark one. Then I knew it was really Sid I was falling in love with in spite of freckles or any old thing. But I wouldn't admit it even to myself. I made myself think about you. I made myself believe it was you that I cared for, and now— Do you suppose he's changed his mind?"

He looked at her closely. "I don't," he said firmly.

"I—I think you're splendid, Terry," she said tremulously, and then swung around and fled back up the lawn to the clubhouse.

She passed Marcia on her way up to the dressing room.

"Where's Sid?" she demanded quickly.

Marcia hesitated, eying her coldly, and then said with a shrug: "I left him on the balcony."

Without another word Anne whirled around and raced up the stairs to the balcony at its head. She came to an abrupt halt in the doorway, her heart pounding wildly. There was Sid, a still and passive silhouette against the moonlit bay beyond. For just a moment she stood there to realize more fully the sweetness of the tender, glowing feeling she had just discovered for him. Then she stepped out.

She began apologetically, for suddenly there was something about the straight and rigid way he stood that frightened her.

"Sid, Terry just told me about you. Why—why didn't you tell me yourself? I mean I wouldn't have talked to you so impudently—about being bored and never wanting to see you again and—oh, Sid, I do love you."

But Sid's expression was stern and cold as he stared down into her small face with its solemn remorse.

"And now," he said chillingly, "that you have discovered that Terry is faithful to Marcia and that I might have a little fame, too, you will condescend to marry me, I suppose."

"Oh, it's not that at all, Sid. You make it sound awful."

"That's the way it seems to me."

"Oh, Sid!" she gasped helplessly. "You don't mean that you won't

forgive me—that you—you don't love me, after all?"

She stepped toward him appealingly, but he clasped his hands behind his back and refused to be moved by her words.

"I mean that I don't care anything about the sort of love you're offering me," he said with finality. "Love that is for whatever little fame I may win and not for me—not for myself!"

"It isn't that, Sid. I loved you all the time, but I didn't know it. Don't you understand?" she pleaded miserably, a catch in her voice and quick tears rising in her eyes.

He interrupted sharply. "Philip Mooney, the famous war correspondent and novelist, is coming tomorrow. I think perhaps he beats both Terry and myself. He's a little older—but I suppose that will make it more interesting."

She stood motionless for a moment, staring up at him, her cheeks flaming.

"Oh, thank you," she snapped at last. "That will be a thrill." She turned abruptly away from him and stumbled toward the door, praying that he hadn't heard the smothered sob his words had stung from her.

Philip Mooney arrived the next day, and Anne Crowell swooped down upon him with all the gay abandon of her happy nature. She flung herself headlong and unreservedly into the business of charming him, and when an extremely pretty girl chooses to act like that a man hasn't a chance.

She didn't go about it in the usual way. The first five minutes after his arrival she had seen a dozen women ready with soft glances and flattery, and had decided that he must be fed up with that sort of thing. So by acting as frank and

as prettily saucy as she knew how she succeeded in winning a little of his attention, and after a while all of it.

Two nights later they had wandered down to the dock from the Bayly house where an impromptu dance was being held. They sat on the steps leading down to the boat landing.

Anne had been teasing him, mimicking all the girls who had been fluttering around him on the dance floor. They were both laughing together.

Suddenly he said: "I never saw any one like you, Anne."

"I expected something better than that from a novelist," she returned.

"Anne, you're simply delicious!" he laughed, and then his manner softened. "I never thought of marrying. It always looked like such a let-down from the side lines. But, Anne——"

"Are you proposing, Phil?"

"Well, I might have worked around to it."

She gave a whoop of joy and leaped to her feet.

"You were easy as anything, Phil, and I never would have dreamed it—you being a war correspondent and a novelist. And I'm sorry if you meant it, but I guess by tomorrow you'll have forgotten. And now—good-by," she whispered suddenly in a gentle voice. "I'll explain later." With a parting pat on the top of his head she fled up the lawn to the house.

She paused in the doorway that led in from the terrace, her eyes scanning the gayly dressed dancers. But Sid was not among them.

Suddenly Terry came out of the crowd toward her.

"You little idiot!" he scolded unceremoniously. "You've let him get away from you."

Her eyes widened. "Away?" she echoed blankly.

"Yes. He's gone to the station. He's going to join the Crossman expedition to South America. They've wanted him for weeks, but he had other plans and refused to go. He wired them to-night. The expedition was to sail at daybreak, but they'll wait until he gets aboard now."

"Oh!" Anne clutched desperately at his sleeve. "I have time to catch him at the station here, haven't I?"

Terry drew out his watch. "His train is leaving this minute—twelve ten."

"Oh!" moaned Anne. She saw the room before her in a dizzy blur. She seemed to have lost all sense of everything but a deep, miserable, overwhelming loss.

"When—when will he be back?" she asked weakly.

"Three years—perhaps longer."

Three years! Three years before she would see Sid again! She felt as if she were going to faint; her knees were sinking beneath her; the room was reeling.

With a quick movement Terry placed a strong hand beneath her elbow. "Steady there," he warned.

She pulled herself together and managed a wan smile.

"Oh, I'm—I'm all right," and with trembling fingers she pushed back the dark curls that had tumbled over her forehead.

"He told me just before he left," Terry said, "that he had said something to you the other night—he didn't say what—but afterward he was sorry and looked all over for you, but you had disappeared. The next day before he saw you Phil had come. The way you flirted was scandalous, Anne! He said that he knew then that he had been right in what he had said."



"Oh, Terry!" she groaned.

He peered intently into her small, miserable face.

"You did care then!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, don't ride me, Terry," she pleaded helplessly.

"Anne," he said suddenly, "his train gets into the Grand Central Station in six hours. I can get you there in three."

"Terry!"

"Only we haven't time to talk about it. Run—get yourself bundled up, and I'll bring Marcia's car around front to drive us to the field."

It was a very much astonished Sid who looked into Anne Crowell's eager little face as she met his train in the Grand Central Station early the next morning, her white evening dress pulled up under a heavy sports coat and a small hat jammed down over her dark curls.

"Terry brought me," she explained quickly. "I came to tell you that Philip Mooney wants to marry me."

"How nice," exclaimed Sid coldly, as he handed his bags over to a redcap.

"He's a very famous man, isn't he?" she asked quietly as she fell in step beside him walking up the incline.

"Yes," her companion commented shortly.

"Much more important really than just—well, a young man who was starting out to be a sort of doctor-explorer?"

"Oh, much."

"If a girl wanted to marry for—for fame she couldn't be far off in accepting a man like him, could she?"

"Indeed not."

She drew a deep breath. "Well, I told him that I didn't want to

marry him—because I want to marry the doctor-explorer."

She saw the muscles of his jaw tighten, his hands clench at his side, but he didn't look down at her.

"Why?" he asked evenly.

"Because," she whispered up at him, "I love the—the young doctor."

She heard him draw in a sharp breath, but he kept his eyes steadily ahead, his pace even.

"It would mean Africa or South America," he said.

"I'd love it."

"Africa is hot and sticky, and damp, and uncomfortable—natives everywhere, sometimes wild beasts. No pretty clothes, no theaters, no——"

"I'd love it."

"It would mean——"

"I'd love it," she interrupted firmly.

He looked down at her now, his gray eyes shining, his voice vibrant. "Why?" he demanded.

"Because—because I would be with the man I love!"

"Anne!" He made a quick move toward her.

"Sid! You're not going to kiss me right in the middle of the crowded station!"

"Of course I am," he laughed, pulling her to him. "It's a great place. Every one will think that I'm meeting my wife—and all the time I'm only practicing!"

And then he caught her in his arms and held her close. The next instant his lips met hers and clung for a long rapturous moment. Anne responded to his kiss, hoping that it would never end. It brought her an ecstasy she had never thought to feel. Her heart beat wildly as everything—the people, the station, the hurrying life about them—faded

from existence in the magic of their love.

"Anne — Anne darling!" Sid looked adoringly down into her eyes. "You sweet, marvelous girl! Do you really know how terribly I love you?"

Anne nodded, bright tears in her eyes. It was so wonderful to regain the happiness she had lost.

It was so wonderful to think that Sid wanted her as she wanted him.

She raised her lips to his for a soft, tender little kiss. In her heart of hearts she was riotously, thankfully happy—too happy for words. Now she knew that she had proved her choice, and that Sid was the only choice in the world her love could have made.



### LIKE A ROSE IN JUNE

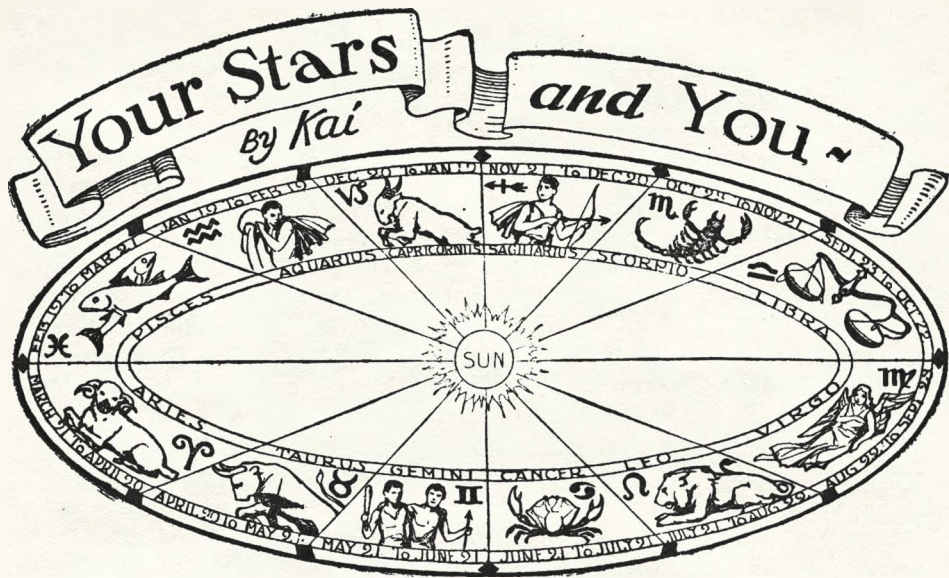
LIKE a song of exquisite melody  
Is my love, each glad note in tune.  
She is like a rose, whose perfect bud  
Unfolds at the soft kiss of June.

As sweet as the wind's æolian harp  
Are the cadences of her voice,  
And the soft caress of her white hands  
Makes my longing heart rejoice.

Like a sudden glimpse of bright sunshine  
Is the smile on her tempting lips,  
That are sweeter than the nectared wine  
That the wooing wild bee sips.

And I love her. Ah, yes, I love her,  
How much even I did not know,  
But I do know I'm supremely happy—  
Her promise has made me so.

H. H. FARISS.



### YOUR WEEK

This week is favorable, and while the events will not be quite as spectacular and exciting as those of last week, there is a sound, stable trend to affairs. The planets will help you work and will tinge your minds so that you may be able to do some practical and constructive planning. You may seek pleasure during the current days, but you will be better off if you stick to business. The planetary positions at this time will incline you to think seriously and deeply, and this produces worry. There is some agitation generally that will tend to reform old methods of living and antiquated processes of thought. The next seven days are excellent for study, research workers, writers, salesmen, and any field where deep scientific investigation is necessary.

### DAY BY DAY

Hours mentioned are Eastern standard time

**Saturday,  
August  
15th**

♃

Use to-day for business, for constructive criticism, and any matter where you are required to use fundamental principles of action. None of the aspects is of a social nature, and you can dovetail most of the problems you are confronting and adjust all the slight details if you want to take the trouble to do so. The entire day is excellent.

**Sunday,  
August  
16th**

☺

The day is favorable until seven p. m. It would be wise to use caution during the evening hours, especially while traveling or in conversation. Mars is exerting its force in the heavens until midnight, and while this influence is active and energetic, sometimes it brings hasty judgment and unforeseen developments of a sudden nature.

**Monday,  
August  
17th**

☾

Here is a mixed day when it would be just as well to postpone important matters. The most favorable hours are between one and two thirty p. m. and after nine thirty p. m.

**Tuesday,  
August  
18th**

♂

The day is favorable. However, the influences are high-powered and dangerously emotional. The evening hours are not good between eight and nine thirty. Try to keep yourself under control and maintain an even trend in all affairs.

**Wednesday,  
August  
19th**

♁

Postpone important negotiations and interviews until tomorrow. To-day is mixed and unpleasant, and the only favorable period is between noon and six p. m. The eve-

ning hours are depressing, and the tempo will be slow. Deal with subjects that are serious between nine p. m. and midnight. After all the emotional strain and the activity of the past few days, the evening is more adaptable to rest and relaxation than to anything else.

Thursday,  
August  
20th

♋

Here is a confusing and unstable day generally. The aspects do not become favorable until after ten p. m. The evening hours are adaptable to expansive plans and social activity, but it is unreliable emotionally.

Friday,  
August  
21st

♋

The morning hours are favorable for energetic programs, for business, and for getting the thing done which has to be accomplished. The remainder of the day is favorable until eleven p. m. If you have important letters to write or changes to make, the morning hours and the afternoon hours are good, but the changes are not of a permanent nature. Keep as cool and collected as possible—you will only impede your progress by acting nervously or without proper consideration of important details.

#### IF YOU WERE BORN BETWEEN—

March 21st and April 20th  
(Aries ♈)

—you will have to stay right on the job and avoid becoming too excited over the conditions in your life at this time. Protect your health, finances, and change with the times. This applies particularly to you who have birthdays between April 6th and 13th. Do not rebel against the change. You have been too far on the other side of the fence, and when you make the leap in the other direction, do not jump too far. Bear with conditions; this will not last forever. If you have a birthday between March 26th and 31st, the general tone of your life will become improved and will follow along more optimistic lines. Do not be too extravagant, and do not forget all the fundamental experiences you have learned during the past two years; you are

on the up grade and may take advantage of your opportunities. There will be an undertone of pleasantness and some social activity during the current seven days for those who have birthdays between April 6th and 13th.

April 20th and May 21st  
(Taurus ♉)

—you Taurus folks are under very fair conditions, and even though you cannot put your finger on the reason for the satisfaction underlying your lives, you may be sure there is an intangible favorable influence working in your existence. Blend your activity with the life flowing about you and discard any thoughts which may creep in to influence your general acceptance of better conditions ahead. The above remarks are applicable especially if born between the dates of May 7th to 13th and between April 23rd and 29th. You folks do not have very much to worry about, and if you will control your emotions and financial expenditure you are O. K.

May 21st and June 21st  
(Gemini ♊)

—your general influences are favorable, except for confusion in the lives of you who have birthdays between May 25th and 30th. This present period is very good for you if born between June 8th and 14th; you will have new channels of activity, travel, changes, and days which are filled to the brim. The folks who were born between May 25th and 30th are under the influences of the planets which bring uncertainty about life in general, deception, and false judgment concerning those who are intimately associated with their lives; but there is a favorable aspect from the expansive planet Jupiter. This Jupiterian influence offers a protection to you and brings you fresh opportunities. If you will not become too expansive, if you will judge people and propositions according to their true worth and utilize your powers of discrimination and analysis, you should benefit from this period in your lives.

June 21st and July 21st  
(Cancer ♋)

—this is a mixed period for you, and if you were born between July 7th and 14th, expect unpleasant domestic and partnership difficulties, financial limitation, and an atmosphere of futility surrounding you. There isn't a great deal for you to worry

about if you refuse to treat the situations emotionally and endeavor to exert your reasoning power over your feelings in all matters. I do not advise you to make a change which might appear to be for the better at this time. If you were born between June 26th and July 4th, you are under releasing influences which will produce order out of chaos and a happier frame of mind. Act sensibly and untangle the threads which have been restraining you from acting normally. Do not try to move too fast, but move in a constructive direction.

#### July 21st and August 22nd

(Leo ♌)

—you are favored by the planets at this time and may take steps to improve your financial situation and exert every effort to further your personal interests. For you who were born between July 27th and 31st this should be a very happy period. Your reactions will be mostly emotional, but your outlook on life will assume optimistic and hopeful proportions. You may give in to your feelings safely; but, generally, we have not entirely finished with some of the limiting influence in the heavens, and it would be a wise course to insert conservatism and stability into your program when making plans and in following your daily lives. This is an excellent period for you who were born between August 10th and 15th. There will be social activity, travel, a favorable change in your routine, new ideas, and valuable contacts. Get the most out of life right now, and place yourself in a position to benefit from every new phase of your existence.

#### August 22nd and September 23rd

(Virgo ♍)

—you are under mixed influences, but there is a favorable undertone to your affairs, and you can shape your lives constructively, depending upon how you handle the angles that are presented to you. If you were born between September 8th and 15th, you will be able to adjust old misunderstandings and problems and stabilize your life in every direction; handle legal and land matters during this period. Do not look at the world through rose-colored glasses at this time if born between August 27th and 31st. Keep your feet on the ground, and judge people and conditions according to their true worth; protect your nervous system and be careful of your diet.

#### September 23rd and October 22nd

(Libra ♎)

—there is a better underlying current in your lives, but you are still under the influence of the cross-opposition of the planets if born between October 9th and 14th. Do not act in such a way to complicate your lives further, and act sensibly in clearing up the misunderstandings which now exist in your domestic and partnership affairs. Postpone decisions of importance and handle your problems diplomatically and with caution. There will be some health complication this week, if you indulge in excesses, for you who have birthdays during the first week in October. There is release, new opportunities, emotional interests, and pleasant relations with the opposite sex and those contacting your life if born between September 27th and October 2nd.

#### October 22nd and November 21st

(Scorpio ♏)

—you are under excellent influences and should take advantage of all new angles that present themselves to you. There will be all kinds of chances for you to adjust your life, and you will be wise to exert yourself to establish yourself permanently in the surroundings and conditions which will be most beneficial to you. Be careful of your emotions and your finances if born between October 28th and 31st avoid extravagance. You may act freely and make changes for the better, handle real-estate matters and legal angles if born between November 8th and 12th; this is a favorable time for your affairs.

#### November 21st and December 20th

(Sagittarius ♐)

—you have been progressing and are due for further progress. Handle your affairs with deliberation and good judgment, and you will be O. K. Those under the favorable influences of the planets were born during the first week in December and between December 8th and 14th. Protect your health, your diet, and your nervous system if you were born between November 27th and December 2nd, but use every opportunity that is legitimate and based on fundamental business principles that is presented to you. You can do a great deal with your lives now if you will control your enthusiastic ideas and adopt a conservative policy. Remember that a big idea can often turn into a pretty bubble which will burst under pressure, and you will be all right.

**December 20th and January 19th**  
(Capricorn ♄)

—be patient with the details and conditions in your life at this time which offer complications and problems to be solved if you were born between January 6th and 12th. The rest of you Capricornians are coming under better conditions, and the present period is favorable and relieved of pressure if born between December 30th and January 3rd. Do not make radical changes, and see that you are protected in financial dealings. Avoid any action which is not aboveboard, and do not put yourself in line for criticism in your business dealings.

**January 19th and February 19th**  
(Aquarius ♒)

—the Aquarians are sorted into two groups during the coming week. Part of you—those who have birthdays between February 5th and 11th—may benefit through the influences. Your affairs are in line for reconstruction and may be pushed into great channels of activity for your personal and monetary gain. Use this period to your advantage. If your birthday occurs between January 25th and 30th, use your powers of self-control, do not go off into the emotional bypaths, and make a mental resolution you will treat the other fellow as you yourself would like to be treated. Avoid excesses which would lead to ill health.

**February 19th and March 21st**  
(Pisces ♃)

—you are like the Aquarians during the current seven days; there is a group which will benefit through favorable influences, and a portion of you who have birthdays between the above dates will have to exert caution in handling the situations presented to you. Those who will benefit and who will feel the improved undertone were born between March 6th and 12th; you folks should wake up and use this period before you come to the realization you have waited too long to seize the opportunities that are within your grasp. If you have a birthday between February 23rd and 28th, stop dreaming and thinking of what might have been. You have a confused condition in your life during the current week, and if you cannot make a clear-cut decision, take the advice of some one you trust and pull yourself together. Judge every condition from a purely mental standpoint and

forget your feelings temporarily. You will be extremely foolish to do otherwise.

**FAMOUS PERSONS BORN UNDER LEO**

- Sir Harry Lauder.
- Sir Walter Scott.
- Alfred Tennyson.
- William Powell.
- Clara Bow.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
★ THE STAR QUESTION BOX ★  
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Mrs. L. G., born November 12, 1903, midnight, Illinois: So sorry not to have gotten around to your answer before this, Mrs. G. You are under favorable conditions at the present time, and between now and Christmas you should be able to adjust your financial affairs to your satisfaction. You are not the only one who has been worried over her finances, you know, and worry in this connection does not relieve the pressure. Your husband should protect his health during the next six weeks, and in some respects his influences are not as favorable as yours. If there is a crisis where judgment is involved, you should rely upon your own shrewd commercial sense and, if necessary, take the full responsibility of making the decision. I am sure you will be able to make a satisfactory adjustment, and if you are forced to make concessions, do so gracefully.

Mrs. L. M. H., born October 3, 1891, Ohio, hour unknown: Well, you have my sympathy and also my admiration. You have had a hard time and seem to be carrying on very well. It helped a little, did it not, to know your accident was not entirely your own fault and the movements of the planets had something to do with it? I am glad to know your library carries astrological material. All libraries which are up to the minute on current affairs should do so. Hope you are feeling better by the time you read this, because you are about at the end of conditions which have been very trying. Do not marry that Capricorn man unless you are willing to endure some of the unpleasantness you experienced with your Aries husband. The charts of these men do not blend well with yours. I feel you are well off and do not know it. At least, if you are determined to marry again, wait until 1932.

Miss B. M., born February 14, 1909, twelve forty-five a. m., West Virginia; man born March 11, 1904, five forty-five p. m., Ohio: You will probably marry the first of next month, no matter what I tell you to do, Miss M., because you are under influences for marriage, and the human impulse is strong. There is no strong conflict between your two charts, although the next three years for you two people will not be as peaceful as you might wish. Your fiancé is under favorable influences at the present time, but will have an adjustment to make during the next twelve months. You are there on the ground, and if you feel your financial circumstances justify your taking on the responsibility of marriage, do so. I hope you are very happy, although you probably know I am not in favor of young men and women marrying early in life, and I feel you are too young to have had enough experience to meet serious problems with proper balance. Remember marriage is a give-and-take proposition.

"Glad." born July 26, 1904, Wisconsin: I cannot answer your question concerning the compatibility between yourself and the man whose date you send, without the time of birth. You were born under the sign Leo; he is a Pisces man. The general positions are not definitely unfavorable between your two charts, unless you are willing to have all the ambition for the two of you. Conditions for you are better after 1932, as far as marriage is concerned, although you will have difficulty in resisting the impulse to marry during the present month.

Customer, born April 15, 1910, Idaho: Hope you are able to identify this answer, whoever you are, because you failed to give your time of birth, and you did not sign your name to your letter. You ask me whether or not your financial affairs will be more settled. I do not know whether you are man or woman, because you did not volunteer that bit of information either. But I can tell you there are changes for you throughout the present year and during the summer months of 1932, with specific periods which are critical in December, 1931; January, 1932; May and December, 1933, and in February, 1934. Prepare for those times by building up your financial reserve. Do not speculate or follow tangents. You need to acquire caution and conservatism.

Mrs. C. W., born April 5, 1899, Texas, between six and seven in the morning: I

am impressed over and over again by the generosity and magnanimous spirit of the troubled and unhappy spirit of you people who write to me. Here is your case; you are willing to step aside without bitterness in your heart, only love, for your husband's happiness. The four planets in Fire signs in your chart indicate generosity, but you have a possessive instinct which makes it difficult for you to relinquish something you feel belongs to you. Your chart has been under affliction this year, and your husband's chart has been influenced unfavorably since the summer of 1930. He is not happy, either, and if you two could wait until the pressure is lifted somewhat, you might be able to adjust your misunderstanding. There was a release from the intensity of your situation in May of this year, a further exertion of pressure in July, and there will be some feeling of futility and despair in January, 1932. However, September brings a new condition which will do much to improve your state of mind, and there is more than one helpful indication which will assist you in undergoing the January, 1932, period. Bear with conditions and hold onto your feelings. There is every possibility you will be able to adjust yourself and assume a happier existence. Live your days fully between now and December of this year and maintain a cheerful outlook. Do not make important decisions in January or February of next year, and I assure you there will be no regret. Your husband is due for very favorable conditions next fall, beginning in September, and I would not precipitate a break in your relations, if I were you. Your husband will be able to strike a better balance now that his influences have changed for the better. Sit tight and do nothing further to antagonize him. You have a bigness of soul which he may fail to appreciate; but that sort of thing always works out some time in life, and you will not regret your loyalty twelve months hence.

#### STUDENTS' CORNER

Mrs. E. W. C., born November 17, 1907, Pennsylvania, two a. m.; husband born December 5, 1907: Dear Mrs. C., I want to tell you a story. I know a man who had been a "mother's boy" all his life, and before he had time to feel the strength in his own legs, after reaching manhood, he married a wonderfully fine girl. How much she is responsible for the man he has become, I do not know. But I suspect she deserves sixty per cent of the credit. They

were married ten years ago and have two children—a girl eight years old and a boy four. I could use a strong word to tell you what they have been through, but the editor would use the blue pencil, so I shall leave it to your imagination. During the first six years of their married life, Mr. A. held a responsible position with an organization, and built a foundation in his specialized work which made it possible for him to refuse four offers three years ago which would have taken him to any one of the four large cities in the United States, and the salary attached to the offers ran into five substantial figures. He accepted another position at that time which has placed him in the front ranks of his work and in line for bigger things in the future. The point to the story is this: During those hard first six years of marriage, he studied law at night and was admitted to the bar. He is not a practicing lawyer, but he knew that legal knowledge would be invaluable in the work he is doing. I am telling you this, Mrs. C., because you write me that your husband has been studying and trying to put himself in a position where he will be recognized for his efforts. You know, and I know, that the money, his time, your patience and cooperation, and the sacrifices you are making are not lost.

zodiac you were—Scorpio—and her ambition was the same as yours. She wanted to be a dancer, too, and she has been very unhappy over not being able to fulfill that hope. I think she has decided now she enjoys being “Mr. A.’s wife,” and is happy in reflecting his success. I hope this true story will help you in clarifying your picture of the future, and will mitigate some of those “blues” you have been experiencing. Thank you for your nice letter, although I did not understand just what you meant about “you heard I had bordered paths.” Write me again and let me know how you and your husband are getting along. Best wishes.

Miss A. G. F., born January 16, 1910: I would like to answer you, but your question is too indefinite.

Mildred, born February 14, 1908: I cannot help you until I know just what is wrong with you.

Mr. L. E. D., April 21, 1907: I must know what business you are interested in before I can answer you.

Mrs. H. C., November 25, 1896: I am very sorry, but I cannot give your whole family a complete horoscope reading. If you are a steady reader of the department you know that each reader is permitted to ask only one question. Our space is limited, and we try to serve as many readers as possible.

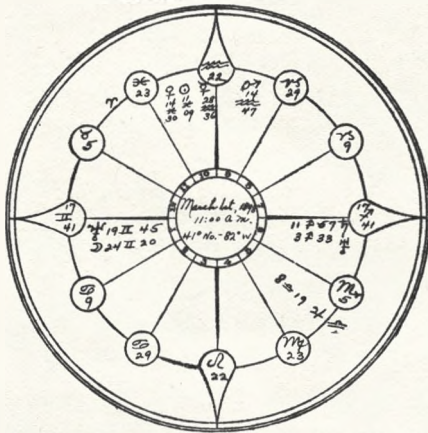
Mrs. P. G., March 2, 1910: Your question is too vague.

E. L. R., May 6, 1901: You did not ask a definite question.

Mr. W. C., April 24, 1889: I must have more definite information.

Mr. T. R. G.: If you will send me your address or write to the editor of this magazine, the information about books that you asked for will be sent you. You failed to put your address on your letter.

Mr. A.'s Chart



It may interest you to know that Mr. A.’s wife was born under the same sign of the

**Editor’s Note:** Questions for this department are answered only through Street & Smith’s Love Story Magazine. Each reader is allowed to ask one question. Be sure to give the following data in your letter: date, month, year, and place of birth, the hour of the day or night, if possible, and sex. Address your letters to KAI, care of this magazine.





# The Friendliest Corner

By MARY MORRIS



Miss Morris will help you to  
make friends



Miss Mary Morris, who conducts this department, will see to it that you will be able to make friends with other readers, though thousands of miles may separate you. It must be understood that Miss Morris will undertake to exchange letters only between men and men, boys and boys, women and women, girls and girls. Please sign your name and address when writing. Be sure to inclose forwarding postage when sending letters through The Friendliest Corner, so that mail can be forwarded.

Address Miss Mary Morris, Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

**W**HO'S interested in service? Here are two Pals who know its deeper meaning. Eve and Jack have devoted their lives to others, healing the sick, helping the wounded in the War, studying to be of greater help. Think of the romance of it—two sixteen-year-olds running away from home to offer themselves to the Allied cause! Think of the things they've seen, the dramas of war and peace enacted at many bedsides! All you Pals trying to choose a profession, Pals who would like to choose again, Pals merely in search of adventure, write to Eve and Jack and find it!

DEAR MISS MORRIS: We are twins, a boy and a girl, of Scotch and Irish ancestry. Eve has red-gold hair and blue eyes, and is a registered ex-army nurse, at present taking a postgraduate course. Jack is studying for the medical profession, and is also an ex-service man. Both of us ran away from home at sixteen to enlist in the British army in 1917, and can tell exciting things about it, as well as our past thirteen years in Chicago and California. Let's get organized, friends!  
EVE AND JACK.

She'll prove friendship's the same the world over.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a Filipino girl in the far-away islands, sixteen years old and a high-school senior. I have dark hair and eyes and a complexion tanned by the burning sun of the Orient, and I'm fond of tennis and music; in fact, I'm now learning to play the violin. Come on, girls; won't you comfort a lonely little girl?  
RERNEDIAS.

Boys, let your American friendliness cheer him up.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a very unhappy and lonesome French boy, way out in Illinois, one thousand one hundred and seventeen miles from home. I'm twenty-one, with black hair and eyes and a tan complexion. I'm fond of writing and will make a good Pal to all you boys.  
ILLINOIS FRENCHMAN.

Here's youth at any age!

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I wonder if you have room for another lonely lady. I'm a widow of fifty, have traveled a great deal, and am not the least like an old lady. I'm wide awake, interested in music and art, love to dance; but am usually at home over

the kitchen range, making pies. Pals, don't forget a  
LITTLE GRAY-HAIRED LADY.

Girls, write to a sister of the fleet.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young Illinois girl with dark eyes and black hair, the sister of a sailor; so, if any one wants to hear about the navy, just write to me. I've a large mail box. Who's going to be the first one to have a letter in it?

SISTER MARGARET.

Let her put her broncho-riding energy into letters.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I broke my arm recently, and can't do much of anything but write letters. I'm a girl twenty-one years old with brown hair, brown eyes, and an olive complexion. I'm fond of sports, and sure would like lots of lasting friends.

ARIZONA TOMBOY.

His friendship stretches from pole to pole.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young man twenty-three years old with a mop of red curly hair. I'm lonesome for a Pal who's interested in things and people. All you boys, anywhere between Greenland and the Cape of Good Hope, write to  
IRISH RED.

Get close to celebrities.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of seventeen, broadcasting direct from the Pine Tree State. I'm interested in movies, sports, poems, and postal views. I've been introduced to Count Eric von Luckner, the daring German seaman, and would be glad to tell about it. Please, girls, write. You'll let a lightning reply.  
MAINE GIRL.

A Pal of thought and muscle.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a boy—or a man, depending on how I feel when I wake up—of twenty-four, with dark-brown hair and a variable disposition. I'm interested in travel, psychology, music, and physical culture, and would like to hear from Pals who've been around and have a practical outlook on life.  
DODO.

She mothers the whole world.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a married woman of twenty, have no children of my own, but have adopted a little boy and take care of my sister's little girl. I haven't

many friends, and sure would like to hear from every one, especially mothers of adopted babies.  
MOTHER WINNIE.

Singing blues songs over the dry Texas air.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a blue-eyed girl, nineteen years old, fond of sports, movies, and music. I'm a blues singer, and was a radio artist for several years. Girls, get busy and let me hear from you.

DALLAS BLUES GIRL.

She'll give you firsthand notes on literature.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Will you let me into your Corner? I can tell my Pals interesting things about a famous author who lives in my town. I'm a married woman, past twenty-five, right there when it comes to letters.  
KATHERINE OF MICHIGAN.

Friendship will mean something in the lives of his Pals.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young man of twenty-one years, tall, dark-haired, gray-eyed, with a pleasant disposition. My best friend died several years ago, and I've never found another. I've written newspaper stories and crooned over the radio, and enjoy life in general. I stand for frankness and sincerity in friendship, and hope to have Pals who understand.

INDIANAPOLIS BOY.

A fine little cook and dressmaker.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a fourteen-year-old girl, lonesome for Pals. I have dark-brown hair and gray eyes, and I love to cook, sew, and dance. Girls, don't forget to write to  
RED OAK LORRAINE.

Straight from our biggest State to you.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Here comes a Texas girl, crashing into your Corner. I'm fifteen, weigh one hundred pounds, and have black hair and brown eyes. I love all outdoor sports, and am waiting to hear from Northerners, Southerners, Westerners, Easterners—every one of you!  
JUANITA.

A wife who has traveled.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May a married woman enter your department? I'm

LS-9C

twenty-two and have been married three years. My husband is foreman for a construction company, and we have traveled through a number of different States. I have a small apartment to take care of, but hope you girls will keep me busy writing to you.

FOREMAN'S WIFE.

Brides, get friendly with a Maine newlywed.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of twenty-one, and have been married five months. I have blue eyes, dark wavy hair, and a great desire for Pen Pals. Girls, married or single, won't you write to me?

L. C. OF MAINE.

A refreshing breath of country air for all you city sparrows.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of thirteen, with dark hair and eyes, and I'm interested in every kind of sport. I live on a ten-acre country estate, and hope to get letters from every place imaginable. I can promise everybody an answer.

FRESH-AIR GIRL.

Look in on a happy marriage.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young married woman with the dearest husband and the sweetest baby boy, two months old. I play the piano, sing a little, and get a lot of pleasure out of sports. Won't you girls write to me?

CANADIAN SUNNY.

Who wants a twirl around the rink?

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Here's a real, true Pal, looking for friends everywhere. I'm a seventeen-year-old girl, fond of miniature golf, football, and hockey, and strong for roller skating, too. I'm a brunette with Irish blue eyes and an olive skin. Let's go, girls!

BOSTON SKIPPY.

Boys, here's your connection with the stage.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a man of thirty, five feet eleven inches tall, fond of outdoor sports, art, and adventure. I live in colorful Colorado, but I'm on the road a great deal of the time as advance agent for a show troupe. I have followed theatrical work for a number of years, and am congenial. Boys, I'd appreciate your friendship.

WESTERN ACTOR.

LS-10C

A girl on a famous fishing coast.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Have you any room for another lonesome girl? I certainly hope so, because I want Pals. I'm eighteen years old, tall, blond, and live in Nova Scotia. Girls from all over, let's cheat the miles with letters.

HOPEFUL RUTH.

See what a Texas girl can do!

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of fifteen, lonely because one of my sisters is away at school and the other is married. I can dance, swim, ride horses, and do a lot of other things. I'd love to hear from all you girls, and hope you'll give me a chance.

TEXAS DAISY.

Learn the latest steps from an expert.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Attention, Pals! I'm a blond girl of fifteen, very fond of dancing, and on the lookout for friends all over the world. Girls, dip your pens in the ink and write to

DANCER OF JERSEY.

Her garden keeps her young.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a woman who's looking for some true-blue Pals. I'm thirty-five years old, and I'm interested in outdoor life, with flowers for my hobby. Everybody write; you'll all get an answer.

OHIO'S TRUE PAL.

She'll keep you in touch with romance.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young girl of nineteen, with very dark eyes and hair and an olive complexion. My favorite sports are swimming and miniature golf. I'm in love with the most wonderful boy ever, live in a small New Jersey town, and, as I am out of work, help my father in his cigar store. Girls, with or without sweethearts, write to me and tell me about yourselves.

LITTLE HONEY.

A young dramatist of to-morrow.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm an ordinary young fellow of eighteen, anxious to correspond with boys from all points, East or West. I play the piano and dance, and am interested in reading and writing plays. Won't some one drop me a line?

GREEN MOUNTAIN PAUL.

Write to a wife who's seen the world.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of twenty-six, with fair hair and blue eyes, and I'm modern, married, and have a darling little boy three years old. I've traveled extensively both here and abroad, and would love to tell some of my experiences. Girls from everywhere, let's be friends.

MRS. PAT.

Bring life to her sick bed.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a twenty-year-old girl, a brunette with gray eyes and a fair complexion. I get awfully lonesome sometimes, as I've spent the best years of my life in bed. I don't get out to meet different people, and would appreciate it so much if you girls would enter my small circle of friends. KENTUCKY INVALID.

Boys, learn about the magic of the printed word.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a boy of eighteen, and am taking up a printing trade. I love travel and correspondence with good friends far away. How about writing to me, Pals?

PRINTER PETE.

For mothers with love for other mother's children.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a married woman who would love to hear from every one, far and near. I'm especially interested in foster mothers with adopted children, little and big. Folks who want Pen Pals, here's your answer!

VIOLET OF BUFFALO.

A call from the tropics.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Won't you find me some Pals in Canada and America? I'm a blond girl, aged twenty-one, interested in sports, reading, and current events. I live on the island of Barbados, and could tell some fascinating things about it. I'll be waiting for your letters.

HAPPINESS OF BARBADOS.

At twenty-two she knows life's struggles.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May I come in? I'm a Swedish woman, married, twenty-two years old, and have two children. We are very poor and go out little, so that I

often get lonely. I've lived in Denver, am now in New York State, and would love to have Pals, especially those interested in music.

LONELY ANNA.

He's learned to laugh at life.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young man with a great sense of humor, and I'm looking for Pals. I'm six feet tall, blond, have greenish-gray eyes, and I confess that I don't care for girls. Write to a Toronto boy who won't forget you, Pals.

SHAN.

Climbing the ladder of song-hit success.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young girl eighteen years old, with red hair and blue eyes. I'm terribly lonely, and sure would love to have letters. I've written a few songs that have been published, and would like to have Pals interested in this line of work. Come on, girls; write!

SING-A-SONG HELEN.

Girls, form a club with a book-worm.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of sixteen, go to high school, and love to read books. None of my friends likes reading, so I'm looking for Pals with literary tastes. I'd like to hear about where you Pals live, and will tell about my city. I write stories and poems for our school paper, and hope my mail box will overflow.

BOOK-CRAZY.

Get a close-up of history.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl with blue eyes and a dark complexion, interested in sports and reading. Pals, how would you like to hear about the famous home of Barbara Fritche, located in my home city? Whether or not you're interested in historical places, write to me, girls!

MARYLAND ANN.

He'll tell tales of another continent.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a man of thirty-two, just getting over a nervous breakdown from too much work and no vacations. I sure need Pals. I'm an all-around beautician and barber, and find this Michigan resort lonely. I've traveled in South America and the Canadian Rockies,

have been up in a plane, and hope to tell you all about it.  
FRIEND BILL.

Make friends with a Canadian mother.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a married woman, twenty-seven years old, with four children. My husband is a salesman, away from home most of the time, and I get lonesome. We live in New Brunswick, Canada, and I'm hoping to hear from everywhere.  
M. M., OF CANADA.

Here's friendship for music lovers.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May I enter your Corner? I'm a girl seventeen years old, very much interested in music. I'd like especially to hear from musicians, and promise true friendship.

MICHIGAN BLONDE.

Tune in on the Buckeye State.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a married woman from Cincinnati, Ohio, have never had any Pen Pals, but hope to find an army of them now. I'm thirty-three years old, interested in all ages. Please, girls, write!  
PAULINE.

A man who thinks and lives!

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young man of twenty-two, in my last year of college work, fond of literature, music, medicine, politics, and sports. I write, am broad-minded, have visited many foreign countries, and have a sense of humor. I'd like Pals who write in German, English, or both, and am sure you'd enjoy my letters. Boys, give me a chance.

FAUST IN NEW YORK.

A city boy, longing for the sea.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a boy of twenty-four, tall and dark, and I'm on the lookout for Pen Pals. I want to hear from every one, especially sailors in the United States navy who would be willing to write to a young man about life and adventure on the sea. I'll make my letters interesting. Boys, write!  
LANDLUBBER.

Who wants a taste of Southern life?

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a French girl, seventeen years old, born in Louisiana, but now living in Biloxi, Mississippi, a city surrounded by water. I work in a drug store, and would like to see how people live in other places. Tell me about your home town, and I'll tell you about mine!

MISS BILOXI.

Her hand is on the pulse of life.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Isn't there some one who'd care to write to a fun-loving girl? I love music, art, and literature, and am taking a long, deep drink of the cup of life. I've had fun, and I'm looking for more. Won't some one join me in the search?

BUBBLING OVER.

See a new phase of industry, boys.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young man of twenty-three, an electrician in the ore mines. I can tell a lot about underground work, and hope you boys will want a Pal from Alabama.

SOUTHERN MINER.

A small State sends a big welcome.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a married woman of twenty-nine, and want Pen Pals galore. I don't mind whether they're married or single, young or old. Girls, write to me, and I'll solve the mystery that is I.

DEE OF RHODE ISLAND.

Learn about her fascinating profession.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a lonely student nurse, far from home, a girl of twenty. I have green eyes and brown hair, and I enjoy life to-day. Folks from ten to one hundred, won't you write to me?

COOKIE.

Cheer her through the depression.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of twenty, with brown hair and blue eyes. At present I'm just one of many unemployed girls, and so have plenty of time to answer all the letters you Pals will send me.

JERSEY LILY.



# The Friend In Need

Department

CONDUCTED BY

Laura Alston Brown



**T**HERE always are two sides to every story. We have often heard the story of the neglected mother whose children go out and leave her all alone. We have listened with a sympathetic ear to mothers who complain that their children have not turned out as they should have.

But have we stopped to consider the *other* side of the story? Why some children go out and apparently don't give a whoop about their mothers? And why they sneak out to meet their boy or girl friends on some corner instead of using the front doorway of their own homes?

Has a mother the right to spoil her daughter's friendship by openly snubbing the boy friend simply because she doesn't like the color of his tie or because he has a long nose, or some equally silly reason? Has she the right to monopolize her children's young friends and reveal embarrassing glimpses of family incidents and chagrin the rest of her brood by indiscreet tongue wagging?

Here's a letter from a normal girl of nineteen and her story as to why this eternal conflict between mothers and daughters, and sons too, instead of the tranquil friendship that should exist between parent and child, even if their ideas don't jibe.

What are your ideas on the subject, readers?

**DEAR MRS. BROWN:** Reading about all the squabbles between wives and husbands, young girls and their precious boy friends, the "other women" and those poor sillies who chase about with married men, don't you think it's about time you gave a little space to the way mothers treat their daughters?

Take mine, for instance. I love my mother, and maybe she cares something about me because I happen to be one of her children; but does it make her see things in a fair way—at least, what I would call fair? It does not!

Why do mothers think they are always in the right and that no one else in the family has any brains at all? We're just normal kids. There are four of us—my twenty-two-year-old brother, Bob; Edna, my sister; and my kid brother. Edna's seventeen, I'm nineteen, and the youngest brother is fourteen. Do we get understanding and sympathy at home in a big way? We do not.

The minute we say anything at all, mother begins to sniffle and wail she's nothing but a servant and that no one cares how she feels. Three of us are working—Bob, Edna, and myself. We have fairly good jobs, and, counting what dad left when he died, we are not so badly off. We have a nice home and a fair amount of clothes, but not much freedom, and home is not what it's cracked up to be and what the poets sing about.

We can't do anything according to our ideas. If we bring friends home and mother doesn't quite like them, she snubs them and gives us plenty of what she thinks about them. If they do happen to strike her in the right way, she sits next to them,

tells them all about herself, our family squabbles and other things, so that when they get a chance to get away they never come back.

Haven't working children any rights? We can't have a phone call at the house without mother standing by and trying to catch every word she can. She thinks she's keeping tabs on us that way. Sometimes she even listens in on the extension. We told her lots of times that we have minds of our own and think we ought to be treated like grown-ups, since we bring home the pay envelope; but, because her ideas are different, she thinks we're simpletons.

My brother never brings a girl home any more, and when we meet our friends we do it outside. I date my boy friends at the office, and my sister does the same. We don't like to sneak out and tell lies as to where we are going, but we just can't say a word to her without having her start in about how her children treat her and that they never listen to a word she says. But how can we? Her wailings get on our nerves. Our home is nice and comfortable, and we don't have to be ashamed to bring any friend in; but—there's mother.

Why are mothers like that? Why can't they all be friendly, like some mothers are? Why can't they leave us alone? Why do they kill all our respect for them? I think if mothers really tried to be fair there would be less wayward girls. I hope some mothers like mine will see this and wake up.

I know some mothers who never even let their children have any friends, and the girls have to slave and do all the housework. No wonder they run away.

I'm not down on mothers, Mrs. Brown. I love my mother, but if she only tried to think more our way! A mother should help a child and not make life harder. Don't you think so? DISCOURAGED DAUGHTER.

Yes, I certainly do think that some mothers should try to understand young minds better and encourage their family's interests. A mother should try to be a friend as well as a parent.

Instead of saying, "Why are mothers like that?" you might as well have said, "Why are human beings as they are?" Human nature is still one of those unsolved riddles.

I've often wondered just what some mothers expected to accom-

plish by cutting a child's freedom. A sensible amount of it, of course, is natural, and a girl or boy who is old enough to hustle and bring home the pay envelope is old enough to have friends of their own age. Are any of you who read this going to back me up?

Why not hold a family council, dear? All you kids get together and make mother listen. She has no reason to whine and whimper if you love her and want to do what is right. Ask her if she'd rather have you sneak out and tell lies as to your activities, or if she'd prefer to have you bring your friends home and, beyond the customary courtesies, leave you young folks alone to enjoy each other's society.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am going to ask your advice about something that is very important to me.

I have been going with a fellow steadily for about three months. One night he had to work late, and my father wanted me to go to a town about seven miles away on an errand for him. He got some boy he knew to take me, as he had a car. As we were coming back to our town, we passed my boy friend.

He came over to see me later and told me that he was through and that he could never again trust me. He said that when a girl loved a fellow she would never even dream of going out with any other boy. I tried to explain, but he wouldn't even listen. He said he liked me too much for his own good, and that I was trying to make a fool out of him.

Now, Mrs. Brown, where he lives there are other boarders, and they are always telling him that they had seen me with some other boy. After that we sort of made up, but things are not as they were before. He hugs and kisses me when he comes, but he never comes over to see me. He comes only when he has to come to see my father about business.

Do you think he really loves me? What can I do to win him back and have everything as it used to be? LUCILLE.

Dear Lucille, how can a girl think anything of a boy who has been so

unfair? How can she let him kiss and hug her simply because he used to be her boy friend? How about your self-respect, dear? Isn't it in working order?

Of course he doesn't really love you. If he did, he wouldn't act that way; he wouldn't believe or listen to those who tried to tell him anything about you; he would trust you. Just because he is jealous doesn't prove that he loves you.

Next time he calls, cut out the love-making. Just be friendly, but don't let him come within three feet of you. Go out with other boys, and don't show how much you care for him. He may yet change and want to be back as your boy friend.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I've just finished reading the letter written to you by Lisa regarding her drunken sweetheart, and I'd like to tell her my story.

I was married at twenty to the first man I was ever allowed to go out with. I went with him for a year before marriage, and, although I often saw him drink, it seemed the thing to do. Every one seemed to enjoy it, so I thought it was all right.

My folks had never seen him drink, so they, of course, never said anything.

After we were married, they soon saw him drunk. Finally we couldn't even go visiting; all our friends and relatives quit asking him to their homes.

Now, after six years, we have two boys, aged four and two. Their father comes home drunk, sometimes every night for a week, or even two weeks, and it's got so I hate him. It's so disgusting to see a drunkard coming home, falling in the door, and lying in the parlor unable to eat supper or get to bed.

I'm looking for a position, as I want to leave him. I've been told that it's unfair to the boys to take them from their father. But, really, isn't it better to get them away from such a dreadful environment? Better to live without their father than to see him drunk and acting rowdy around the house? His father was a drunkard, and two of his brothers, and I am so afraid that my boys might inherit this weakness that I feel as if getting them away from it all will help. At least, perhaps they won't acquire the habit through example.

Please, girls, don't ever marry a man who drinks. Love or you can't change him; nothing can, unless he has the will power and desire to help himself. You can't realize how awful it is. Break away now, if your boy friend drinks, before you bring a great unhappiness upon yourself, before you have children and cause them to suffer.

I'm planning on getting a job, keeping my apartment, and finding some capable woman who, perhaps, needs a home and would be willing to care for the children in exchange for a home and a small salary. My husband will have to help support the boys; I'll support myself. What do you think about it? Please advise me. It's so hard to know what's best. Maybe our leaving would wake him up.

MARY LOU.

I think your plan is a sound one, Mary Lou. Maybe it will make your husband realize that life without you and the boys is not such a satisfactory and desirable affair, and that even drink cannot compensate for the loss, nor fill his life when the two most essential things in marriage—a wife and children—are missing.

If he does want you to take him back—and I think he will—then make it very plain to him that he cannot continue on the old scale. True, it does take will power and courage to break the terrible grip drink can have on an individual; but, if he has a shred of respect, love for the children and yourself, he will at least try his darndest to make good and not cause so much unhappiness.

Try out your plan for a while, Mary Lou; consider it as a vacation, and I do hope that in the end your husband will be sober and wiser and that you four will be very happy again.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have been reading your department for a long time, and now I have a question that, perhaps, you can help me answer.

I am a man thirty-four years old. Have been married fifteen years and have one son of thirteen. My wife is a very pretty woman, although she is a little stout. I



went with her for three years before we were married, and afterward we still had a big time in the right way. I mean, we were very happy. We did not go to dances or rough parties, but we entertained and had good times.

After we'd been married about five years, and our boy was three, she either fell in love with another man or wanted to try some other kind of life. I thought I had the sweetest kind of wife, and had as much confidence in her as I would have in an angel. This affair had been going on for some time before I found out about it. It almost killed me, Mrs. Brown, and I felt as though I were going crazy, for I loved my wife deeply.

I told her we'd have to break up and that she'd better go back home to her folks and leave the boy with me. But she begged me to let her stay, and promised that if I forgave her she would never do it again. I loved her and I knew it would be terrible to part with her, so I thought I'd try to forget about it.

For a time after that everything went quite well. Then I found out by accident that there was still another young fellow and, of course, this made me feel worse than before. We didn't part, but we didn't get along at all. I've tried to forget about it, but I can't. My wife said that if I would only forgive her again, she would die before she'd do it again.

I can't be certain whether or not she kept her word. We moved from the country to town, because my work demanded it. I have worked hard all my life, and tried to dress her as nicely as other women were dressed. We went out together again, and I tried to be happy, forget the past; but, somehow, trust was missing.

We had been living in this town for a few years when my wife became acquainted with another woman. This woman is married, but she wants my wife to go out with her so much that my wife has no time for me. And if we do go out, she won't go unless this other woman is along. She wants to be on the go all the time, cares nothing about a home; but I can't afford it. I bought a small house recently, and tried, for my boy's sake, to make something of our marriage; but she doesn't try to help me at all.

Recently she met another married woman who ran around with other men. I asked this woman not to go with my wife. I didn't hear about her for a little while; then some man called my wife on the telephone and talked to her for a half

hour and invited her out. But my wife wouldn't go. After that, I heard her say that the happiest time of her life was when I had my back turned, because she could do as she pleased. My work called me out of town now and then, so she had plenty of time to amuse herself in any way she liked.

On one of my trips out of town I met a married woman who has a little girl. She is as nice a woman as I ever met. Whenever I met her we just talked about things in general. This went on for a long time, and she was always friendly and kind to me. I couldn't help but wish that my wife were different. I did not get any love at home, and my wife was never proud of my working so hard, of our boy and nice home. I was just starving for love and companionship.

I guess you will say it was weak of me to fall in love with this woman. But I did, and I found she loved me, too. I love her as I once loved my wife, before she ruined our happiness. This woman's husband was a drunkard and treated her badly. He found out that she loved me, and it hurt him, I guess; but he said he couldn't blame her, because he knew he hadn't treated her right. He tries to stop drinking now.

Mrs. Brown, I just can't go on living this way. My wife tells me she doesn't love me and won't give up her good times. I told her we can't go on this way. Our boy is fourteen now, and I think he is old enough to go with whichever parent he loves the better. I think he loves me best.

Should I go away with my boy and let my wife live her own life, or should I try to keep our home together? Do you think my wife may change if I am patient?

REV.

Before you make up your mind to leave, you might give your wife her choice of either trying to do her bit to be a wife and mother or to get out and work for a living for a while. Evidently she has had too soft a snap with you. You've been giving, and all she did was take and take. That, of course, is entirely unfair.

As for this other woman, why not let well enough alone, now that her husband is trying to prove himself a better man? You have both been neglected, lonely, and longed for

love and understanding. You met, sympathized with each other, and thought it was love.

She has a child and a husband, and if that husband has seen or begun to see his mistake, you would do well to leave them alone and let them work out their own salvation. And there is the child to be considered, too.

And how about your boy? He needs the influence of a home. Have a talk with your wife. Put up a proposition before her. She can't go on as she has and not be sorry some day.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have been reading your department for a good many years and thoroughly enjoy it.

Although I have never written to you before, I hope you will print this letter, as I think it will help Toledo.

Listen, Toledo, you are only a child, but so was I when I learned my lesson. You are only making a mountain out of a mole-hill. The fact that your husband is kind and jokes with you shows he loves you. Otherwise, he would be kind to, and joke with, somebody else. I know, for I had just such a problem to face.

I was married when I was seventeen, and as a sweetheart my husband was everything a girl could wish for. I loved him madly.

For a while I think I lived in a dream, just loving and petting; but after a while I began to notice that I was doing most of the petting. One time I noticed my husband even looked annoyed.

Well, I was as hurt as only a very young girl can be.

Of course, I howled around like a little calf, but that didn't help any. I was sure my darling was tired of me. About that time a friend of ours left his beautiful wife for his secretary. At first I was shocked, and then I began to be scared. What if that had happened to me? I just couldn't see myself going through life without my husband. I wondered what our friend's secretary had that his wife lacked, and at last I figured out the whys of the case. So I just made up my mind that my husband would never leave me for an "understanding" secretary.

I began to study my husband, as well

as myself. I didn't meet him every night with hugs and kisses. I just called a cheery, "Hello!" from wherever I happened to be, and let him look for me. All men like to look for things. I met his every mood with one to match. If he was tired, I just made him comfy and left him alone, and if he was full of pep, so was I, and I laughed with him. I kept myself attractive, as well as our home, and cultivated a good disposition. Oh, yes, it was hard; but I kept right at it, and after a while it was easier.

I took up cooking, one thing that every bride can stand, because, after all, a man loves good food as well as a good-looking wife. Above all, I didn't smother my husband with affection. Oh, you bet I met him halfway always; but men like to take the initiative.

At first, I think, he was puzzled, then relieved, and finally he was absolutely happy.

Then I had a baby, and six years later another, and now there is another coming soon, and I am happy. I'm thirty now, and how happy the years have been!

Only a few nights ago I overheard a friend talking to my husband, and he said: "George, you have a wonderful wife. She's so understanding." And George answered: "She's all of that. She's perfect. A wife and mother, and yet she's still my sweet-heart."

Oh, boy! I could have yelled with glee. So, Toledo, if you love your husband enough, you can do it. Think of all the happy years ahead of you, if you win. It may be hard, but it will be worth it. Stop smothering him; don't always meet him with kisses. Be mysterious, interesting. Learn to cook well. Let him court you as before marriage. Flirt with him a little.

Toledo, you have to be a pal, too. You have to be many things rolled into one after marriage to be happily married. It isn't easy, but it can be done. I did it, and I'm not a wizard.

This may be a pretty long letter, dear Mrs. Brown, but I just hate to see some young girl start out wrong when she lacks only a little understanding. Or is it much understanding? I hope Toledo will some day be as happy as I am. JEAN.

So do I, dear, and I hope many other readers of our column will take your little talk to heart, for you surely have made some very sensible observations.

A man, or a woman, *can* be smothered with too much loving. There's time and desire for all things. Companionship founded on equality of tastes, on mutual respect for intellectual development, is the essential feature of a happy marriage.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: What is the matter with the modern young men? Or does the fault lie partly with the girls? Why is it that men try to get everything they can, or, rather, go as far as they will be permitted? Really, Mrs. Brown, these and many other questions are giving me and my girl friends gray hair.

More than a year ago I broke my engagement to a very nice young man. My reason for that was because I thought nineteen too young, though I think, if I had really loved Jack as he loved me, I would have married him. However, I sent him away. I think that was the kindest thing I could have done under the circumstances. Jack is now happily engaged, though before he became engaged to this girl, three weeks ago, he called me and asked me whether I had changed my mind yet. I said I had not.

When Jack left me I became morose, and then I really knew how much I missed him and how much his friendship had meant to me. However, my old boy friends soon came back to me after they found out that I was no longer engaged. Yet I wasn't content. There was something missing, something lacking, and I was almost driven to call Jack and tell him I was sorry. Then I met Bob.

Immediately I forgot about Jack. Just as I had been blue and discontented before, I suddenly became gay and happy, and the past eight months have really been the happiest of my life, because I have Bob. Bob is twenty-six, and I don't have to think that he's the man I have been looking for; I already know. However, there is a cloud, and I wonder whether you can help me chase it away.

Here is what troubles me: Bob and I have seen each other twice a week since we met. He also sees another girl twice a week. He told me about her after I had known him a month. Perhaps I should have parted with him then, but I couldn't, for I liked him too well. He has gone with this other girl for almost a year now. I like Bob a great deal—more than I should

—and I want him for myself. I can't help feeling jealous of her. I am that way. It preys on my mind because I have to share Bob with another girl when I want him for myself. And she is divorced, too. Bob told me that a month ago.

Another thing: Bob is very passionate and can't conceal his feelings at all. He hasn't asked me to prove my love, for, even if he did, I think he knows what my answer would be. But he does try to get all he can. I've pleaded with him, scolded him, even deprived him of seeing me, and still I've failed. He won't stay away, because he said that he likes me too much. Don't you think, Mrs. Brown, that if he really liked me so much, he wouldn't act this way? I've always been good, and I've never done anything I am ashamed of. But how can I go on being good with Bob pestering me all the time? I've asked him repeatedly why he acts like that, and the only excuse he can give is because he's weak. Doesn't he realize that it is possible for me to get weak, too?

I don't think I was ever so hurt in my life as I was a few days ago. I asked Bob if he treated Ethel like that. He told me that she never resisted him as I do. I believed him, for he has never lied to me. Once he said: "I don't want to talk about her. I'm saving her for a rainy day." It is needless to say that I was up all night wondering what he meant, and if he means what I think he does, what is to become of me? I can't imagine life without him, for I've become dependent upon his friendship. My opinion is that Bob is serious with her, and by "rainy day" he means when they will be married.

I hope you don't mind my troubling you, but there isn't any one else to whom I could go. Mother wouldn't understand, and she thinks there's no one like Bob. My friends may not believe me, because they, too, think he is so nice.

Should I break up with him before this goes any further? It will be hard to do it, but I'd rather part now than do something I would regret later on. Others think well of him, but that is because they don't know him as well as I do. I like everything about him, but when he has one of his weak moments I want to be a thousand miles away from him. CECELIA.

Instead of breaking up your friendship with Bob, why not go out with other boys? Give him one night a week to call on you, and the

other free evenings go out with your other boy friends. This will probably make him jealous and he will object. But, if he does, you can say you two are not engaged and that you are free to see whom you please. If you were engaged, you might add, it would be "different." If he doesn't take this hint and make himself clear one way or another as to just what his intentions are, then, perhaps, you had better drop him for a time at least, provided you are sure that he means to marry the other girl. You may be wrong, you know.

As to why men try to go as far as they can, most men are very selfish. An upright young man wouldn't try to take advantage of a girl's feelings for him or give the excuse that he is weak just to cover his own selfishness. I don't think he really thinks so much of you, my dear, if he doesn't know how to treat a girl who is true blue.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have read your advice for a long time, and I think the advice you give folks is very sensible. Now I am coming to you, too.

I am nineteen years old, and have been going steady with a girl for nearly two years. We see each other about three times a week, and sometimes she asks me to come over more often. There are days when I have to work overtime, and she gets mad and tells me not to come to see her again if I can't come when she wants me to. She says she loves me, and I know I love her. She is the first girl I ever went out with. She is very jealous, and if she sees me talking to any other girl she gets mad right away, and I can't get near her. That lasts about two weeks.

Whenever I am two minutes late she gets mad, and if we are out and I talk to some of the boys I know, she walks away from me. Ever since we have kept company steady we have a serious quarrel every week. Sometimes she tells me not to kiss her, and five minutes later she wants to know why I don't.

I drive a truck, and whenever I have to go out of town she also is annoyed.

There are many other things I could tell you, Mrs. Brown, but this is my main trouble. Do you think she really loves me? Every time we have a fuss it makes me feel badly, but I think I love her. STEVE.

Since she is your first girl, Steve, you really have no idea that friendship between a girl and a young man can be a very happy, beautiful, and peaceful affair. I don't think you really love her, my boy, and I doubt if she loves you. If she did she would try to make you happy and not miserable.

This may not appeal to you, but I think if you were to see her on the average of one night a week, and go out with other girls whether she likes it or not, you would soon see the difference in friendship. You are much too young to be tied down to one girl. Be friends with other girls, and don't let yourself be bossed as to who your boy friends should be and whether or not you should associate with them.

This girl is leading you around by the nose, so to speak, and seems to be getting away with it. So wake up, Steve; show her you're a man and that you have a say about your own life and friends.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am a young girl not quite eighteen, and I'd give anything to have an understanding and sympathetic mother. I can't remember ever kissing her or any show of affection between us. Since I was twelve years old I have been home almost every evening alone. My mother always goes out to play cards and never comes in until midnight or later. Dad and mother never go out together. He's out all the time, too. He's just another henpecked husband, and my mother is boss.

What I've seen of married life makes me feel I never want to get married. I graduated from grammar school, that's all. My mother didn't want me to go to high school. I went to business college, but I hated it; I wouldn't take work in an office. When I was sixteen I started work with the telephone company.

My folks aren't poor or anything, just

misers. They own two houses. My mother won't let me pay room and board; she thinks that would be awful. Every time I mention it we have a row. She makes me give her fifteen dollars a week. I don't make more than seventeen or eighteen a week. The rest of the money is supposed to be my spending money for carfare, lunch, and movies.

She brought my sister up the same way. She's seven years my senior. She wouldn't stand for it, and left home. She is married now and has two of the cutest youngsters.

My mother won't let me have any friends. If I bring any one home, she bawls me out. I don't mind about not having any boy friends, but when it comes to her choosing my girl friends, that's going too far.

I don't care to go out with boys. The ones I've been out with tried to get fresh. I'm considered quite good-looking, but the boys all think I'm tough. I go with them once, they get fresh and find out what kind of a girl I am, and then they never come around again, for which I'm thankful.

I'm not trying to say that I'm a man hater. I'd like to go out with a nice young man, but I've never met that kind and perhaps never will.

My troubles at home are getting worse all the time. I've been trying to decide if I should leave home like my sister did. I'm sure I'd be able to make my own living. My sister got along nicely away from home. But still I hate to go on account of my dad. If I left for a while my mother may come around to my way of seeing things.

I hope you'll pardon my long letter. I'll be waiting for your advice before I leave or do anything rash.

DEPRESSED.

Whatever you decide to do, honey, don't leave before you have a frank talk with your mother and father. Tell them how you feel about things, and that if they don't decide to treat you like a human being who has a right to a home and some freedom, you will consider striking out for yourself. But be sure that you can get along on what you earn, before you leave, if they cannot see things your way.

A girl of your age, since you are working and bringing home a sal-

ary, is entitled to some freedom, and friends of her own picking if they are all right. It is unfair of your mother to take all your earnings away. I think if you gave her about eight dollars a week, that would be a fair-enough amount to pay your board. Of course, if she buys your clothes and other little things, six dollars or so is enough for lunches and car fare.

Of course you have a right to bring your girl friends to your home. It is most difficult to figure out just why some mothers object to that. Weren't they young themselves once and found great consolation in bringing their girl friends home? Talk it over, dear, and see what a little reasoning brings.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: After thinking it over, I am finally going to ask you for some advice. To make things more clear, I will start from the beginning.

I was forced into an early marriage at the age of sixteen, because my stepmother was so mean to me that I wanted to die. When we were first married, my husband said we would live with his people for two months, until we had a little more money together. I didn't mind it for such a short time, but now we've been married six years and are still with his folks.

I can't tell you what I've been through these six years, but it certainly was far from anything I had expected marriage to be. I had no privacy, and to forget my misery I went to work. I've been working all these years, and had to hand over all the money to my husband. Whenever I needed some new clothes I had to cry and beg first. One day I found a job with more money, so I put that extra money on the side and said nothing about it.

Dear Mrs. Brown, my husband isn't a man who likes to work, although he is a husky man and healthy. He has stayed out late nights as long as we've been married, and he never has taken me anywhere. He doesn't like children, and we've never had any, and I'm thankful for that, because it would have made everything so much harder, and he isn't the kind who could take care of a family. I can't mention a home to him; he gets mad and strikes me. I can never have any friends.

Not long ago I discovered that he was a married man when he married me. His wife had left him because she was unhappy with him and couldn't get along with his people. Once he said to me that I can do as his first wife did if I don't like the way things are. He's bluffed me all these years.

Now I want to get away from it all. I want a home and friends, children, and a man who will be different. Do you think I have a chance? My own folks won't have anything to do with my troubles.

DISGUSTED WIFE.

By all means get away and live your own life. He has nothing on you, as you have never been married to him. It's a wonder he got away with it for such a long time.

Of course it isn't too late to get some happiness out of life, dear. You have a chance to make your existence a far better one than it has been so far. You have a job; pack your clothes and get out. Get a furnished room and board with some nice family. After a time you can have a better place and perhaps your own furniture.

In time, you will meet some man who will really appreciate you and make you happy. So don't despair. It's a good thing you found out this husband of yours before you've spent many more miserable years with him. We've got to fight for our happiness, and if we don't, it will pass us by. So get a grip on yourself, refuse to have anything more to do with him, and start all over again.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am a girl twenty years old, and I am engaged to a boy five years my senior. We have been engaged for about four months. The girls gave me a shower, and I thought I'd be married this coming September; but I guess all that is off.

Recently, on a Sunday, my boy friend was supposed to come to my home at three o'clock. I waited around, and he never showed up until four thirty, and he brought his folks with him. I was sore and wouldn't

speak to him, but my mother made me serve refreshments all around, and in the evening we made up.

Last week, because business is so bad, he and his brother decided to sell their car. When he told me about it I said, "All right." It wasn't my car, even though we were engaged. The next time I saw him he was very sore. He said the only reason he sold the car was because I was jealous whenever any one used it. Of course, that wasn't true.

That same evening we went to see one of my girl friends and stayed to play cards. While we were playing she said, in a joking way, that I would marry any fellow so long as he had a little money. I knew he was sore, so I pinched her to stop, and he saw me. On the way home he asked me if I pinched her because I was afraid she would say something about me and tell things he was not supposed to know. He said I was not in love with him and that I wanted to marry him just because he has a little money.

Of course, that was all silly. I told my girl friend about it, and she called him up and told him she had been joking. He called up later and asked me if she was at my house, and I said she wasn't. He called me a liar and hung up the phone.

Now, Mrs. Brown, we've quarreled before, and he didn't come or call for a week, not until I called him up first. But I simply can't call him up again, and I don't know what to do. How can he love me and act this way? What shall I do?

STELLA.

Sit tight, honey, and wait for results. He is silly to take things so seriously when there's nothing in the whole affair. Silly and unfair. If he acts like this now, can you imagine how he would be after you are married? Perhaps it all happened for the best, and if he is so quick to think ill of you and doesn't trust you, he can't really love you. Even if your heart aches, dear, don't get in touch with him. He will come to you and say he was wrong, if he cares.

In the meantime, if he continues to sulk, go out with some other boy and show him he isn't the only leaf on a tree. That may jar him awake,

and he'll come after you pronto. But if he does, be sure to tell him he's either got to trust you and believe you're playing fair or keep away altogether. If he doesn't come around, let him go.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: After reading Toronto Lupe's letter and your answer, I've just got to write. I wonder which of you is right and would certainly like to hear some opinions of others.

Mrs. Brown, I am twenty-six years old, married, and have three children. But I'm not happy.

When I was sixteen I met the only man I could ever love. We went together for six months when we became engaged. We were only engaged one week when his excuses for his actions were that he wanted to find out the kind of girl I was. He said all men did that. But I gave him back his ring and told him if he had been going with me six months and still did not know what kind of girl I was, he would never know.

Some will say I did not love him. But I did. My thoughts are still of him every day. Foolish, I'll admit; but I cannot help it. Don't think he didn't plead with me to take him back. I refused, as I felt then and still do that no man will insult a girl if he has any respect for her at all. Am I right? It caused me heartache, giving him up. But that's the way I felt then, and I still do.

Toronto Lupe, how you can respect a fellow enough to go with him after he has insulted you is more than I can see. But I'll tell you this much: when the right fellow comes along, I'll be willing to bet you won't want him to say those things to you.

WONDERING.

Same here, sister. I can't see how any girl can continue to apparently love a boy and keep on going around with him, once he has insulted her. What is this fatal attraction that overrules their sense of propriety?

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have been reading your column for a long time. Surely you must be a gift straight from heaven to give us your wonderful advice. I want you to help me. I feel that I am doing the right thing; but I must be sure, as it means so much to me.

I have been married four years. I

haven't any children. But here is the trouble: I don't love my husband, and I do love some one else. Before I met my husband I was engaged to be married to a boy I loved dearly. But he was killed in an accident.

I just couldn't forget him. I was so sure I could never love again that I married hoping to make my husband happy, as he loved me. I have succeeded so far.

After we had been married some time, I met my husband's brother. It was love at first sight for us both. We fought against it a long time, but it was no use. We knew we had to decide one way or the other.

After talking it over, I decided against divorce, and we agreed not to see each other again if we could help it. We are both very unhappy, but I couldn't bring myself to hurt my husband after he had been so good to me.

I hope the man I love will fall in love with some nice girl and forget me. It doesn't seem fair for him to be unhappy, too. Am I doing right? UNHAPPY.

Doesn't your own heart tell you that you are doing right? You have a duty, the duty of a wife to make her husband happy. He loves you, married you thinking that you cared for him, and now you would not want to make him unhappy, break his heart, just to make your own choice a bit easier?

Stick it out, Unhappy. Time will heal the hurt. Perhaps it was not love, just infatuation, between you and your husband's brother. Don't see each other if you can avoid it, and I am sure that time will ease the ache. If you can throw yourself wholeheartedly into the business of making your husband happy, you cannot help but be a little happy yourself, and more as time goes on.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I hope that all your readers who scold girls for going with married men will read this.

I am not sticking up for the girls who go out with married men, because I, too, believe that when a girl knows or finds out that her new flame is married she should give him the air then and there.

Mrs. Brown, there are two kinds of girls

that go out with married men. I just mentioned one, but how about this one?

My girl friend was friendly with a sailor. She went away on a trip, and it seems he had lost her address. Consequently she thought he had forgotten all about her, so she didn't write to him either. When he read the announcement of her engagement he married a girl who was crazy about him.

My friend later broke her engagement and didn't marry the fellow. And now, after three years, they met again, she and this sailor. They still love each other, but she refuses to go out with him because he is married.

She stays home, pining her heart out, much to the despair of her family. What's your opinion of this case?

SINGLE DORIS.

My opinion is that your girl friend is taking this more tragically than she should. If matters can't be helped now, she should do the next best thing, and I don't mean sit at home and pine her heart out. She should keep busy, get out and make friends. Try to be honestly interested in some worthy young man.

Why did this have to happen?—you may ask. Because the workings of Fate are strange indeed. And how can you tell whether, if they had married, everything would have been cake and honey?

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am coming to you for advice as I don't know what to do.

I am twenty years old and good-looking. I'm terribly worried about my boy friend.

I lived with him for three years, and then we broke up when he became interested in another girl.

He soon lost interest in this girl and went away. Then he sent for me, and he claims that he still loves me. I love him so much that I believe him. He lives with his married sister.

When I came to live with them I found another girl living with them.

I hadn't been there very long before this girl told me that she was expecting a baby and that my boy friend is responsible for it. She also told me that she doesn't love him.

Not very long after that his sister told me the same thing. Now, what am I to do—go on or break up with him?

I asked him if he had anything to do with any other girl since we separated, and he said, "No."

He doesn't want to get married yet. He likes his freedom, so he told me.

I still love him, but how could I be sure of him? Please advise me. DOROTHY.

My dear child, the kind of love your freedom-loving boy friend has for you is not love at all, especially since he shows no desire to do the right thing by any girl. He likes his freedom, and he likes being a cad. What manner of a man is he?

Why do you stick to him at all, you very foolish child? Why don't you clear out and live your own life, since he won't marry you? You may think what you feel is love; but I think it's just infatuation, and it's an existence without beauty or honor.

Get out of the mess. You can forget him, for I would not advise you to marry a man who is so undependable in his morals and idea of fair play. Go away, get a job, refuse to ever see him again, and start your life all over again until some day you meet a real man who will offer you marriage and make you really happy.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: After reading 1888's letter I really could not keep still any longer. I am younger than 1888, if that is the year of her birth, for mine is 1896. I think 1888 is a woman all right, but evidently a very narrow-minded one and, in all probability, a sour old maid.

In my estimation, a flapper is a modern word referring to a girl in her teens, and in no way reflects on her character. Since the day of Eve there have been all kinds of girls. Naturally, one can still find in the different classes of life the good, the bad, and also that more common combination of both. How foolish to think that all girls, or flappers, are contaminating, have loose morals, and so forth, because of a few foolish, vulgar ones of the same sex, who probably have the kindest hearts in the world, although they live according to a different code in life than those who have been more fortunate!



Just because there happens to be one bad girl by the name of Mary, that does not mean all girls bearing the name of Mary are bad, does it? Then how can the word flapper hurt a nice young girl, even if one of a common, vulgar type is also called flapper?

No two people are alike, for life would be a terribly monotonous affair if they were, and everybody living has some good qualities, even though they have plenty of bad ones. All of us older folks have had our "something rotten in the woodpile" that we keep quiet about, so why pick on our younger generation?

I say, God bless them for their clean minds and healthy bodies. Their frankness is refreshing beside the subtle, slurry remarks of catty old maids brought up on the prunes and prisms of that age when "nice people didn't talk about such things."

Flappers have to be what they are to-day so that they can stand on their own feet and fight their own battles; and with their fearlessness behind them they will reach heights in the future that the mollycoddled, glass-caged young ladies of the olden times could never attain. They are going to prove that the term "weaker" sex, as women have always been referred to, does not mean a thing, for men and women are equal, and what any decent man or boy can do, any woman or girl can do the same.

Now I will explain why I saw red when I read 1888's letter. I happen to be the mother of two flappers who are in junior high school, and surely I ought to know something about flappers, bringing them up and knowing their girl friends as I do. They are all the flapper age, and I like nothing better than an evening when they gather at our home. Their talk is refreshing, clean, frank, young; their problems are the same as we used to face years ago. Only they have this in their favor: they are not afraid to ask their mother questions about sex or anything else that might come up. I always answer my daughters frankly and to the best of my ability, as I think knowledge is the best preparedness I can give them toward withstanding the temptations that are so numerous these days. 1896.

You're quite right, 1896; all little flappers are not bad, and ever since the world began there have been good and bad qualities in an individual's make-up.

Knowledge, to be of any use, must circulate. An interesting fact to consider is your statement that temptations are more numerous these days. Are they? How about it, folks?

Mrs. Brown will be glad to solve in these pages problems on which you desire advice. Your letters will be regarded confidentially and signatures will be withheld.

Although Mrs. Brown receives more letters than she can possibly print in the department, she answers all the others by mail. So, lay your problem before her with the knowledge that it will have her full attention.

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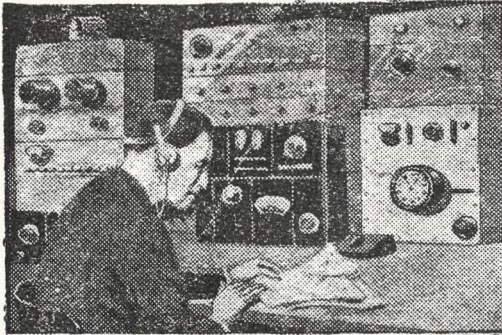
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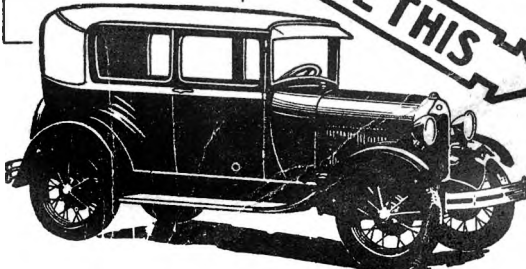
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wiring or installation. No extra up-keep. In the past, millions of motorists have paid from \$10 to \$25 for so-called spot-lights and driving-lights that at best are only make-shifts. This new method costs only a fraction as much and actually doubles road illumination with your present headlights! Through the other fellow's light so you can see the road, yet absolutely cannot glare in his eyes. No wonder fleet owners, manufacturers, taxi and bus line concerns like Blue and Gray Bus Line, W. Va., Wallace & Tierman, N. J., Columbus, Ohio, Fire Trucks, etc., are fast turning to this discovery as standard equipment. It's positively needed on every car in America, new or old right this minute.

#### Offered On Introductory Test

Every driver who ever rolled half-blind down the highway at night knows exactly what such an invention means in added speed, nervous energy saved, perhaps fatal accidents banished. To prove as quickly as possible to motorists in every section what this invention will do, the manufacturer now makes a liberal FREE TEST OFFER. Simply mail the coupon for details. No obligation. Send it today.

**HACHMEISTER-LIND CO.**  
Dept. L-200 PITTSBURGH, PA.

### Agent Makes \$1,400 In One Week

Full-time and spare-time workers. New FREE DEMONSTRATION Plan with SALES GUARANTEED. EXCLUSIVE TERRITORY. Sell in bunches to fleet owners. A real chance for \$8 to \$14 very first hour; \$6,000 to \$10,000 a year. Wehner, Pa., made \$1,125 in 90 days' spare time; Owens, W. Va., made \$500 a month; Davis of Pa., made \$1,400 in one week. No limit for distributors. Use coupon for full details of money-making proposition. It's red-hot! ACT NOW!

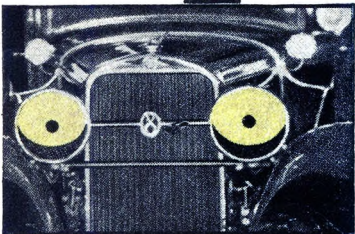
**HACHMEISTER-LIND CO.**  
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Pittsburgh, Pa.

Rush details of your Free Test Offer; also facts about agent's money-making opportunities without obligation.

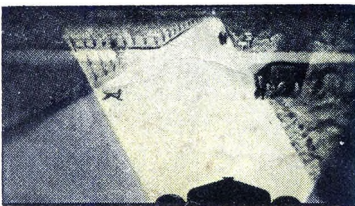
Name.....

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Town.....State.....



These new kind of Lights even LOOK entirely different. No wonder every installation brings a dozen more sales.



Lights up entire roadway, including ditches at side. Gives perfect illumination without shadows or flickering.



Banishes Glare Shields, Spot Lights, etc. Floods the road with light, yet absolutely cannot glare.