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STREET & SMITH'S

# LOVE STORY

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MAGAZINE  
ILLUSTRATED

DEC. 22

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*Christmas*



*Issue*



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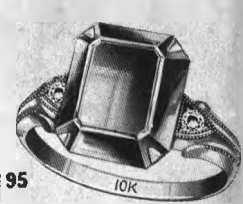


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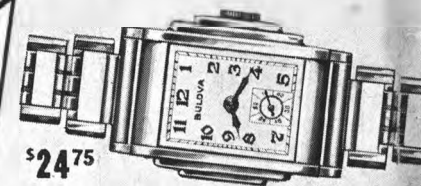
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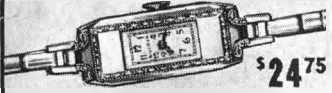
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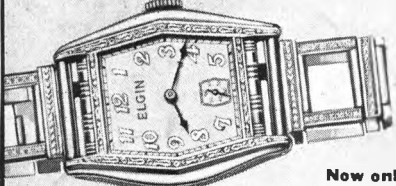
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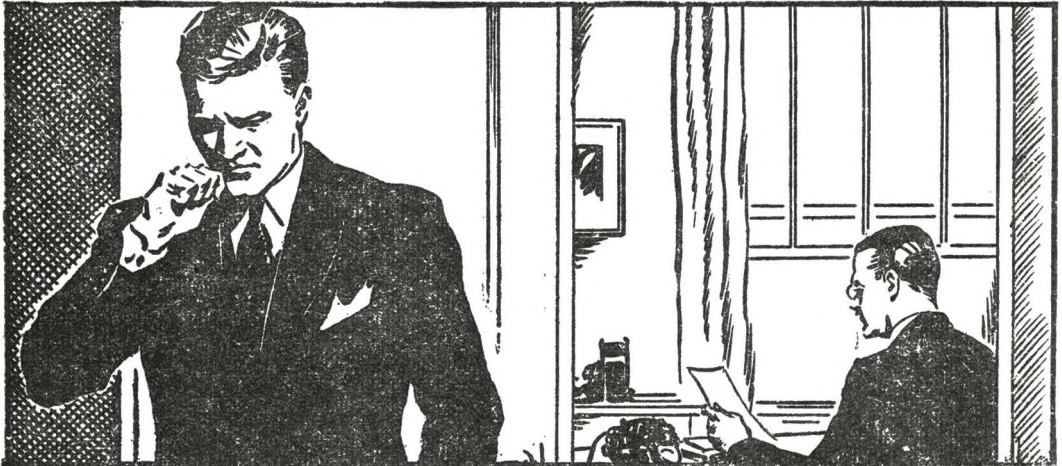
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Beginning next week—"Great Desire," by Olivia Garth.  
Don't miss it!

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# I'll **FILL** your **POCKETBOOK**

and Give You a **Brand New Ford Tudor Sedan** for producing

**H**ERE'S a Wonderful Chance to Step Into a Good-Paying Tea and Coffee Route Right! In Your Own Locality. No Experience Needed—I'll Give You What Little Training Necessary—No Red Tape—Earnings Start at Once.

## Look at These Unusual Earnings

If you have been working for a boss and your pay has been limited; if you are weary of pinching and striving to exist, here's an opportunity to change all this. With my route plan you can stop time-clock punching forever. Here's what some others have already done: Chester Clay, N. Mex., made \$10.00 in two hours. Howard B. Ziegler, Pa., made \$21.60 in a day and \$103.32 in a week. Lambert Wilson, Mich., made \$79.00 in one week. Ray Chapman, Mo., cleared \$73.50 in a week. These exceptional earnings show the remarkable possibilities of my route plan.

## Special Openings for Women

I have a wonderful opportunity for women on local Tea and Coffee Routes. Earnings run up to \$5.00 a day just in spare time. The work is light and pleasant and the profits exceptionally big. Housewives, school teachers, office workers, factory workers—all find my new and novel plans for spare-time work highly profitable. If you have other work to do just start in spare time. Mrs. C. R. Luoma, W. Va., averaged \$10.00 a week for a year on one of these routes. Mrs. Preston Portwood, Ga., quit a \$10.00 a week department store job and cleared \$7.50 the first afternoon. These unusual earnings show what big money women can make. I now have an even better plan to offer you. Send me your name today.

I give brand new Ford Tudor Sedans to my producers. Not a prize or a raffle—but an extra bonus or reward in addition to your regular cash earnings.

## Permanent Food Routes Pay Up To \$60.00 A Week

I'll start you in a big-paying business of your own—you don't risk anything. Sounds astonishing! It is a revelation to men and women in immediate need of cash. This is a public announcement of a time-tried and thoroughly proven plan for quick relief from your money worries. I need more people to operate local Tea and Coffee Routes at once. These routes pay up to \$60.00 a week. Even spare-time Route Owners make up to \$5.00 a day. I back you up and take the risk.

## Immediate Earnings

It's your job to distribute the goods and collect the cash. You keep a big share of it for yourself. You don't have to wait—profits start pouring in immediately. I place "Ready Made" plans for success in your hands just as soon as you join me. I have spent years and a fortune in cash for these things I give you free of extra cost. With my plans you pocket all the profit. You don't divide up with any one.

## Household Supplies Pay Best

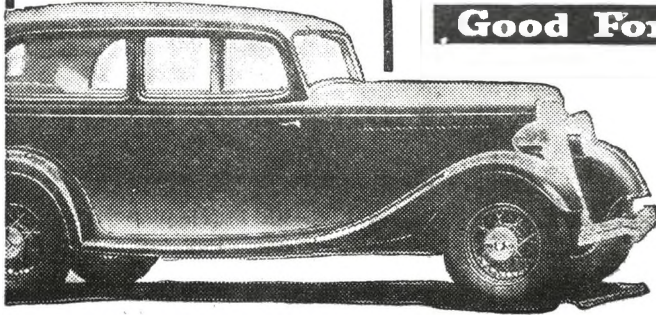
Look around—you will see men making big weekly incomes from laundry routes, dairy routes or bakery routes. My route plans are still better. I manufacture nearly 300 fine food products and necessities used daily in almost every home—things people must buy to live. I furnish you wonderful new route plans, and fine premiums for your customers. Your earnings are big right from the start. Think of having relief from money worries with the thrill of seeing your business grow bigger every week.

## Ford Cars Given

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## Send No Money You Risk Nothing

I want to hear from you at once so I can lay all the facts before you, then you can be the judge. You may be just the person I am looking for. You don't risk a cent. If you need cash don't miss this opportunity. It might not appear again. Right now while it is before you, put name on coupon or penny postcard—mail—rush today.



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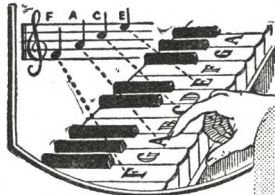
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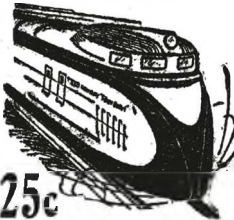
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**25¢**

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DEPT. 13 ..... MADISON, WISCONSIN

# \* BALD MEN!

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\* This advertisement was reviewed and approved by a registered physician.

# Was this a Miracle?



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... and has not returned

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"I had asthma for 17 years. I coughed most of the time and couldn't rest day or night. I tried everything, but grew so weak I could hardly walk across the room. After taking one bottle of Nacor, I could do most of my housework. I am still feeling fine."

So wrote Mrs. Mary Bean, Nashua, Iowa, seventeen years ago.

## Seventeen Years Later— Still In Splendid Health

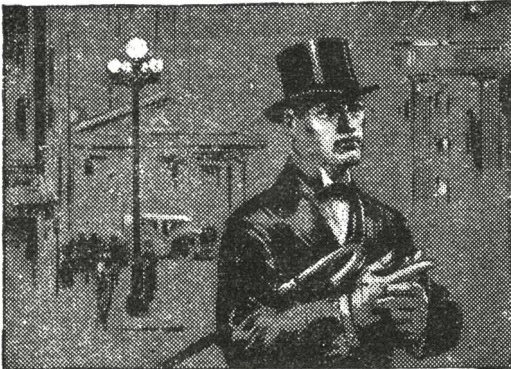
Was her relief merely temporary? Read what Mrs. Bean has to say *seventeen years after taking Nacor.*

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# Christmas

By WINIFRED



**I**T was the most heavenly place she had ever seen! The cottage set far back from the road, half buried in snow, looked as if it had been lifted bodily from a Christmas card. Long icicles hanging from the sloping roof, glistened in the moonlight, the brightness of which blended with the glow from the windows.

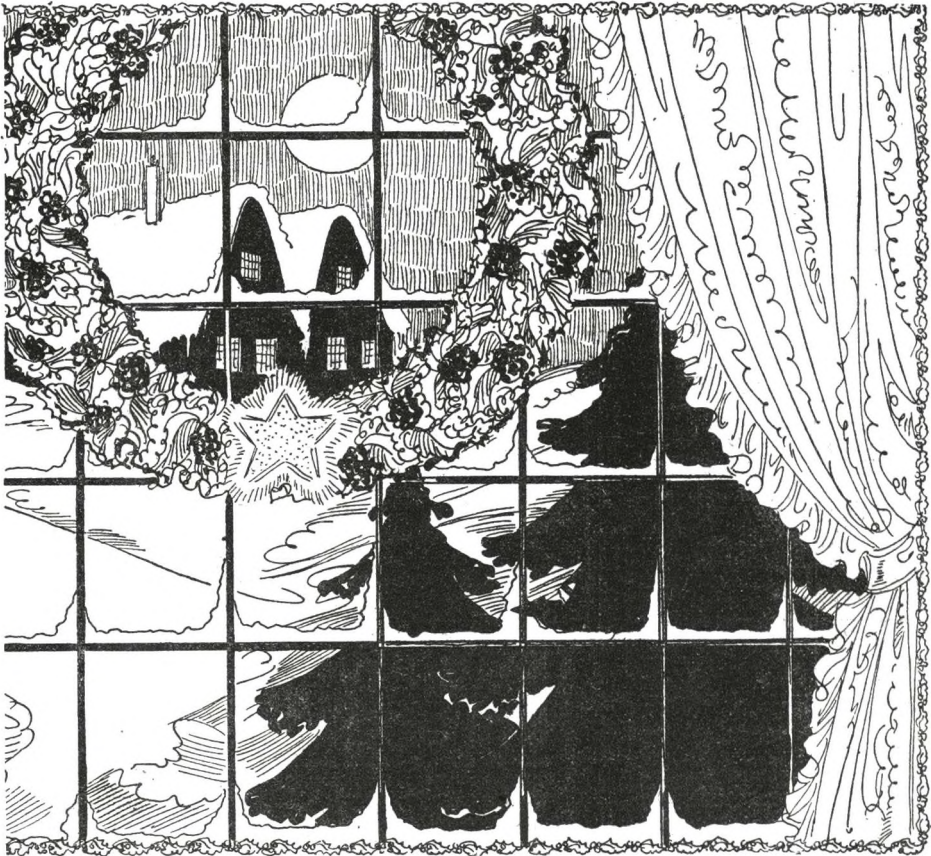
Her sister and brother-in-law were at home, then. They were to-

gether in the tiny house, shut away from the world, secure in their love. Harmony gave an excited laugh. She loved to surprise people, and she could imagine the look of amazed joy on her sister's face when she opened the door and saw her.

What did it matter that she was designer for one of the most exclusive women's shops in Chicago? What did anything matter at Christmas time except home and family

# Card house

WADELL



and a fire, leaping brightly on the hearth? For the first time in months, Harmony wondered if she might not be missing something after all. Helen often assured her in her letters that she was; that a career was a poor substitute for love. But then, Helen was madly in love with her young husband, so naturally she wouldn't understand how a girl, as attractive as Harmony, could prefer a career.

Harmony had meant it when she wrote Helen that she couldn't possibly come for Christmas, but Helen's reply had sounded so woe-fully disappointed, that Harmony had packed her things and started for Maplebrook, all in an hour's time. The shop would simply have to get along without her for a week. Helen was all she had, and to-morrow would be Christmas.

She dismissed the taxi driver

after he had deposited her bags on the tiny front porch. Peeping in the large front window, Harmony could see a young man sitting alone before the fire, his head bowed in his hands. It must be Ted, but he looked so forlorn! Harmony wondered with dismay if he and Helen could have quarreled. He lifted his head, and when he turned, Harmony saw that it wasn't Ted at all. It was a strange young man! It was, in fact, the man she had always known she'd give up her career for. She recognized him at once. Hadn't she carried his image in her heart for years? Maybe he was visiting Helen and Ted. Maybe he had been waiting for her, too.

She rapped on the door lightly. The young man gave a start, but he came to the door at once. He showed no surprise when he saw her standing on the porch, her fur collar pulled high about her face.

"Allene! So you did come!" he cried out. Harmony thought she detected a note of relief and rapture in his tone.

"I'm sorry——" she began. She brushed past him and faced him in the bright light. "I'm afraid I've disappointed you. This is where Mr. and Mrs. Ted Morrow live, isn't it?"

"Why, yes, it is." He regarded her with puzzled blue eyes. "They are away for Christmas."

"Away!" Harmony wailed. "I'm Harmony Dale, Helen's sister. They can't be away. I've come to spend Christmas with them."

"You've come to spend Christmas," he repeated, still staring at her. "That does complicate things," he said, half to himself. Then he seemed to realize that an explanation was expected of him.

"I'm terribly sorry, Miss Dale, to seem so inhospitable. I'm Colin

Hanes, an old friend of Ted's. When Helen and Ted heard that you couldn't make it for the holidays, they decided to visit Ted's aunt in Detroit. I'm sort of keeping house for them." He smiled down at her, and Harmony suddenly felt warm and vibrating inside—not at all like her businesslike self.

"Let me help you with your coat. I'll get your bags, and we'll talk this thing over. Nothing to do for the moment, anyway."

Harmony slipped out of the soft fur coat, with its wide, upstanding fitch collar that framed her face, softening its outlines. She saw admiration in his blue eyes as he placed the coat across a chair, but there was something else there too—a look of restlessness, of expectancy.

She was sitting before the fire when he came back inside, carrying her bags.

"I'll just take these into the guest room," he said. He was plainly upset about something. Harmony wondered who the mysterious Allene was, and why Colin expected her here. She spread her numb hands to the blaze, suddenly realizing that she was cold and tired. It would be just her luck to find the right man at the wrong time. He was doubtless either married or engaged. She was a little idiot. Why should she care anything about Colin Hanes? Why, she didn't even know the man. It was just the setting that made her feel so alone—the cozy, attractive living room, so homy and informal. Colin Hanes was waiting for another girl to share this delightful place with him; he wanted to get rid of her as soon as possible. Well, she didn't care what he wanted. She wasn't going just yet. This was her sister's house and she'd stay as long as she pleased. She didn't know where she could go,

anyway. Christmas in a hotel sounded horrible. She simply couldn't bear it.

"It's really too bad, Miss Dale," he sympathized when he joined her again. "If Helen and Ted had only known there was a chance of your coming! They've told me all about you, how you design dresses that make portly ladies slim and alluring."

"I'm afraid you have an advantage over me," she smiled at him.

"Oh, I write plays, poor ones, fair ones, and even pretty good ones at times." He sat down opposite her. "Please don't worry about all this for a minute. I'll go to a hotel in town, we'll wire Helen and Ted that you are here——"

"No, we won't wire Helen and Ted. It serves me right, anyway, for not letting them know I was coming. They've made their plans, and I won't ask them to change them. How about you? Did you expect to spend Christmas Day here, alone?"

"Well, no—not exactly. I was sort of hoping some one would come."

"I understand," she said, raising her brown eyes to meet his. "You needn't bother to explain."

"But you don't understand. I'm sure you don't."

At that moment, an elderly woman came to the door leading into the dining room. "Pardon me, Mr. Hanes," she said, "but would this be the cook you've engaged for to-morrow?"

"Why, yes, Norah. It would be. Now you may go home." His eyes were twinkling. "I'm sure she can manage nicely. Merry Christmas to you."

"And the same to you, sir, and thank you. Shall I show the new girl about, before I leave?"

"Oh, no. It isn't necessary."

After the woman had gone, he turned to the amazed Harmony. "Can you cook a turkey?" he asked.

"I've never tried it," she admitted. "Why on earth did you tell Norah that wild tale about my being the cook?"

"It seemed the easiest way. I knew she wanted to spend Christmas with her family, and I couldn't get any one to come in for the day. She'd never have left if she knew I didn't have a cook."

Harmony laughed gayly, and after a moment he joined in.

"It is rather funny," he said a bit ruefully. "Here we are, two deserted souls. It's Christmas Eve, there's a turkey in the ice box, and no one to cook it."

"Oh, are you deserted, too?" she asked.

"I'm afraid so." Then he became sober. "The girl I was engaged to is to be married to another man to-morrow."

"I am sorry. When you opened the door, did you think, perhaps, she had changed her mind and come back to you?"

"Yes," he admitted, "I did. I wrote her that I would be here—waiting. You see, I didn't have money enough to be married right away. Allene had to have luxury with love. I received word a day or so ago that one of my plays is going over. Allene is an actress. Maybe you've heard of Allene Dwire. I had offered her the leading part in my play, and when I thought it was going to be a flop, she decided to marry Tudor Leonard."

"I've heard of Allene Dwire, and Tudor Leonard, too. Why, he's an old man. I've seen pictures of him."

"But he's rich," Colin said bitterly.

"Allene may come yet," Harmony encouraged, her own bright dream of happiness fading before her eyes. She knew that Allene Dwire had

already been married and divorced. She must be older than Colin Hanes. Certainly she was more worldly. From stories she had heard about



**"The girl I was engaged to is to be married to another man to-morrow. You see, I didn't have money enough to be married right away. Allene had to have luxury with love. So she decided to marry Tudor Leonard."**



her, Allene thought of herself first, last, and always.

"I've got to talk to some one, Harmony. May I call you that? It's a lovely name." He offered her a cigarette, and when she refused, lighted one for himself with nervous, impatient fingers. "I don't know what I want any more. Just before you came, I had reached the point that if Allene came, I'd be sorry. I didn't want her to come. Yet, when I'm with her, I can't seem to see myself going on without her.

"There's plenty wrong with Allene if she turns you down," Harmony thought, but she didn't say the words aloud. Her whole heart was crying out to him. Couldn't he see that she had been waiting for him all her life?

"If you really loved her, you'd be sure," she said. "There can't be any doubt when you really care."

"But when she is near me, when I have my arms about her——" Colin muttered, an agonized expression in his blue eyes.

Harmony felt as if she would stifle if she didn't move about or do something. She rose from the deep upholstered chair, striving to regain her usual poise. What was the matter with her, anyway?

"I'll go take my hat off and do things to my face," she said breathlessly. "Then I'll make some coffee, since I'm the cook."

"You must think me the biggest egoist you've ever met! Here I'm telling you my troubles, when you're

tired and hungry. I'll go make coffee and sandwiches. You wait right here." He studied her carefully. "And your face doesn't need a thing done to it! It is the loveliest face I believe I have ever seen."

Harmony felt the warm color stain her cheeks. She was blushing like a schoolgirl, and all because Colin said she was lovely! Many men had told her that, but it had never registered before.

"But I really want to make the coffee to prove that I can," Harmony said lightly to cover up her confusion. "Is the guest room down the hall?"

"First door to the right," he directed. "If you insist on making the coffee yourself, the kitchen is at the left. I'd like to help, anyway!"

"Thank you, Mr. Hanes." She made a curtsy.

"Don't you think, since I'm the cook, I should do it alone?"

"You're adorable, Harmony. I believe Fate sent you here to me to-night."

"I hope so," she said, meeting his blue gaze frankly. "I want you to think that, Colin."

When he made a slight movement toward her, she ran out of the room and down the hall, her heart beating a wild tattoo. She wasn't tired any longer. She was in love—madly, hopelessly in love. She knew, now, what Helen meant when she said that love was the most wonderful thing in the world. If Helen were only here to tell her more about



him; to tell her how to make him care for her as much as she cared for him.

In the dainty blue-and-gold bedroom, Harmony decided to change her dress. The evening was young, and she intended to make the most of the hours allotted to her. She took a rich, red velvet hostess gown from her bag, and shook it out carefully. Stepping out of the simple, brown dress she had traveled in, she donned the red velvet with trembling fingers. She knew that she was lovely in it. It fitted her slim figure perfectly, swirling to a short train in the back. The long, full sleeves were copied from one of her newest and smartest models. She brushed her shining, dark hair into place, put lipstick on her lips, and started back down the narrow hall. Then she remembered that she was supposed to make coffee. She'd put water on the stove, then she'd join Colin. While she was looking for coffee, she heard voices in the living room—a woman's voice, and Colin's, surprised and questioning.

She tiptoed into the dining room. She could hear them plainly now.

"I had to come, after I got your letter," the woman was saying in a voice that was metallic and hard. "Are you sure your play has been accepted? How do you know you'll have the say about the lead?"

"Because I have been promised that I could choose the leading lady for it," he answered. "Did you tell Tudor Leonard about us?"

"No, I didn't. He's so frightfully jealous."

"Do you think you're playing fair, Allene?"

"What do you mean?" Then her voice became seductive, pleading. "You're so cold and distant. Don't you love me any more?"

Harmony didn't want to hear his answer. She turned to go back into the kitchen, and tripped over a chair, giving a dismayed little "darn."

"What is that?" Allene asked. "Some one is in the dining room."

"It's the cook," he answered, and Harmony caught a note of amusement in his voice. "A delightful person, but I doubt if she can cook."

But Allene was already in the dining room, before he finished speaking. Harmony turned to face her, flashing the light on as she did so.

"So you're the cook, are you?" Allene said shrilly. "A cook in red velvet. A little unusual."

Harmony returned her insolent stare. Allene was beautiful, but it was a cold beauty that repelled rather than attracted. Her narrow gray-green eyes were dark now with anger; her lips were pressed together in a thin, scarlet line. "I knew that something was wrong with Colin. Who are you?"

"Didn't Mr. Hanes explain?"

"I know he's lying. I'm no fool."

"Then perhaps you'd better go back in there, and let him tell you the truth."

"I know the truth. Pack your things and get out of here. Colin is mine, do you hear?"

"I'm not so sure about that," Harmony replied, hating this girl as she never had hated any one in her life. Why couldn't Colin see her as she was—selfish, mercenary, utterly heartless?

"You get out!" Allene hissed the words through clenched teeth, then turned to go back into the living room.

What should she do? If Colin really loved Allene, it wasn't up to her to save him from something he really wanted. She must know defi-

nately. She finished making the coffee, and took a few scalding sips. It would brace her for the ordeal ahead. When she reached the door, she glanced inside and saw Colin and Allene standing before the fireplace. Allene had her arms around him, and seemed to be pleading for something, but he only shook his head and looked down at her. Harmony saw something else at the same time—something that caused her heart to leap into her throat. It was a face at the window, dark with rage and hatred. She recognized Tudor Leonard at once. She dropped her gaze. She must pretend she hadn't seen that sullen face at the window.

Harmony entered the living room. In a plush box that was lying open on an end table, a diamond-and-sapphire bracelet glittered, dazzling her for a moment. Colin must have given it to Allene.

The girl released her hold on him, and turned angrily.

"Tell her who you really are, Harmony," Colin spoke quietly. "Tell her you are Helen's sister."

"Of course I'm Helen's sister." She was thinking fast. She must do something. Now! Before it was too late!

She walked over to them casually and put her arms about them both. When they looked at her in surprise, she whispered: "At the window! Don't turn!"

"Tudor followed me," Allene gasped.

"Pretend we're all friendly," Harmony directed. "He won't do anything yet. Put your arm about me, Allene. Hand me that bracelet, Colin." She talked in a low, conversational tone. She knew that the man at the window couldn't hear what they were saying, but he could see everything they did. "You gave it to me, Colin. Remember." With

Allene's arm still about her, she stood on tiptoe to give him a light kiss, then held the bracelet out as if to admire it.

"Harmony, go back into the bedroom. I won't have you mixed up in this." He attempted to force her from the room. She glanced up. The face was gone from the window, and the front door was opening slowly.

"I'm already in it," she whispered; then aloud, clearly: "We're so glad you could come in, Allene." Just then Tudor Leonard came into the room.

"So you lied! So this man is your lover!" He was white with rage. "Well, I'll attend to him."

"Tudor! I can explain." Allene drew back, and Harmony saw that the rouge on her cheeks stood out grotesquely against the pallor.

"I'm not believing your lies any longer!"

Tudor Leonard had his right hand in the pocket of his overcoat. Harmony saw him drawing it out deliberately.

She didn't know she had screamed until she heard a choked cry and realized it came from her own lips. She sprang in front of Colin.

"Who are you? What do you want with my husband?"

She leaned weakly against Colin as the man dropped the gun back into his pocket and regarded her uncertainly.

"Harmony, wait!" Colin attempted to force her aside, but she moved as he moved, so that he had to address the other man over her dark head. "Can't we talk this thing over, Mr. Leonard?"

"Is this man a friend of yours, Allene?" Harmony asked in feigned surprise.

"Friend! That's good! I'm just the poor fool who has spent a for-



Suddenly Tudor Leonard came into the room. "So you lied! So this man is your lover!" he cried, white with rage. "Well, I'll attend to him."

tune on her, that's all. Kept her in an expensive apartment, where she entertains other men; showered her with gifts. I was even willing to marry her, that's how much of a sap I am." He turned to Allene.

"I knew you weren't out delivering baskets to poor families. You must have had a pretty cold ride. A hundred miles in this weather."

"Oh, dear!" Harmony gave a long, drawn sigh. "I see it all now.

You're Tudor Leonard, and all this misunderstanding has been caused by my Christmas present from Colin. He asked Allene to help him select it, since he didn't know what to get."

The words had their effect. The man relaxed, and the tense lines in his heavy face disappeared.

"Maybe I've been wrong. I knew you were sneaking out with this fellow. I've had you watched. Why did you lie about where you were going?"

"She was afraid to tell you," Harmony interrupted. "We know how jealous you are, and with no reason at all. Allene told us all about you." She sighed. "To think that my Christmas present caused all this! And poor Colin has been so worried about his play, too. It really is too bad about it, isn't it?"

"What do you mean?" Allene asked sharply.

"Didn't you tell her, Colin?" She turned to him, and her eyes conveyed a message.

"It was turned down, Allene. Tough break!" He laughed harshly. "I'm glad I bought the bracelet for—for Harmony, before I knew."

"Then you tried to trick me into believing——"

Tudor Leonard was watching her, his eyes narrowed.

"We'd been trying to persuade Allene to take the lead, thinking the play would surely be accepted. She refused. I guess you have something to do with her refusal, Mr. Leonard."

"Allene, is that the truth?" He went over to her humbly. "Tell me it is the truth. You know how madly I love you."

"But you doubted me," she said coldly. "I don't know whether I should give you another chance or not."

"Please forgive me and we'll go to Europe. You've been wanting me to take you." He was a ridiculous, pathetic figure as he pleaded.

"I wish you wouldn't be so jealous, darling," Allene exclaimed. "You know how much I love you."

She picked up her mink coat and held it out to him. "Help me with my coat, dear. I just love it. The very thing I wanted most for Christmas." She slipped her arms into the coat and drew it closely about her slim hips. "Good night, Colin and Harmony. Merry Christmas to you." She laughed that hard, metallic laugh. "I was glad to help with the bracelet."

Harmony couldn't answer. She just stood watching them, her eyes bright with excitement. Colin was plainly shaken, too, but he managed a parting shot. "Enjoy your trip to Europe. No hard feeling, I hope."

"Not now," the man answered. He took hold of Allene's arm possessively. "Why anybody wants to live way out here, snowbound half the winter——" they heard him mutter, as the two of them started down the winding path to the road.

Harmony and Colin faced each other across the fireplace.

"I can't just say 'thank you' for what you did to-night," he said at last. "I don't know how to express it, Harmony."

"Don't try. I'm sorry about Allene," she said gently. "Time is a wonderful thing. You'll forget her."

"Forget her! The minute she came in that door to-night, I knew that I was free of my infatuation. I never loved her, Harmony."

"I'm sure you didn't." She turned to keep him from seeing that her lips were trembling. "I'll telephone for a taxi. I'm going back to Chi-

cago to-morrow, so I'll go to a hotel for the night."

"Will you sit down and listen to me first?" He grasped her hands and led her to the couch by the fire. He stood on the rug in front of the fireplace and folded his arms across his chest.

"You said something to-night about being sure when you really love a person. I'm sure now, for the first time in my life. When I saw you and Allene together to-night, I knew that it was you I love. There isn't the slightest doubt, and there never can be. Maybe you won't believe this, Harmony, but I swear it's the truth. I couldn't give the bracelet to Allene, though I had bought it for her. I had taken it out of my pocket and put it on the table. When she saw it, she accused me of giving it to you. I told her it was for you, and that I loved you. You've got to believe me. Say something, darling," he begged, as Harmony sat quietly, as if listening to a story about some one else.

"Yes, I have got to believe you," she said slowly. "I can't bear it if I don't believe you, Colin."

He fell on his knees by the couch, and buried his face in her lap. "I love you! I love you!" he murmured over and over. She stroked his crisp, brown hair. She couldn't speak—not just yet. Things had been happening too fast.

"Please say it," he begged, lifting his head to look into her eyes.

"I love you," she whispered, and bent her lips for his kiss.

The quaint, old grandfather clock in the corner began to strike midnight.

"It's Christmas morning," they exclaimed together, then laughed joyously.

After the first mad, sweet rapture had passed, they sat quietly be-

fore the fire, planning their future together. The flames shot upward, restful and cozy. Harmony was so happy, so very happy! She snuggled against Colin. Desperately, she fought against sleep; consciousness was so beautiful. But her eyelids were heavy, and her head drooped against his shoulder. He lowered her gently, and held closely in his arms, she relaxed like a tired child.

Sunlight was streaming into the room when Harmony woke up.

"Colin!" she whispered, afraid that it had all been a dream.

"Oh, you are awake." He bent to kiss her forehead, her eyes, her soft, waiting lips. "We have things to do, dearest. First we must find a minister. It's Christmas, and it's our wedding day. You haven't changed your mind, have you?"

"Not a chance for you to escape." She sat up to face him, her brown eyes misty with happiness. "I have a new gray dress; it's just the thing to be married in."

"You couldn't look more adorable than you do now." He kissed her again. "We must send a telegram to Helen and Ted."

"And do something about that silly job of mine."

"I want to buy you tons and tons of Christmas presents—if only we can find a few stores open. And I'm going to shower you with orchids, my darling."

"Extravagant boy. Shower me with kisses instead."

"I'll do both." And he promptly started with the kisses.

A clattering of pots and pans from the kitchen interrupted the process.

"It's Norah!" Colin exclaimed. "It couldn't be any one else."

It was Norah. She came to the door, beaming at them.

"I came back to cook dinner for you, Mr. Colin. I got to thinking about that young thing you hired. I didn't get a good look at her, but just the way she sat in her chair—sort of like a lady—made me sure she can't cook a turkey."

"Norah, you wise woman!" Colin laughed. "I hope you don't mind, too much, leaving your family."

"Not a bit of it. I'll see plenty of them." She looked curiously at Harmony.

"This is Mrs. Morrow's sister," Colin explained, "Miss Harmony Dale. She came here to marry me, and she's the sweetest, prettiest, dearest——"

"Colin!" Harmony interrupted. "Isn't that enough?"

"I haven't started yet. Look here, Norah, could you stir up a wedding cake while you're cooking the turkey?"

Norah had recovered her breath. "Well, bless my soul!" she exclaimed. "A wedding! And Miss Harmony is to be the bride. I'm that excited! Are you going to spend your honeymoon here?" she asked, her wide smile showing only interest and joy in their happiness.

"Now, that's an idea," Colin said, after Norah had gone to finish preparing their breakfast. "We'll wire

Helen and Ted not to hurry home because——"

"Because we want to stretch out our firelight romance in this Christmas card house," Harmony finished.

"Perfectly put, darling! And do you know, sweet, that I'm going to love you as long as there's such a thing as Christmas and a fireplace?"

"And you must tell me about it just that long," Harmony breathed happily. "Helen is right. There's nothing more wonderful than love in a darling house, with a fireplace and a sloping roof and perky curtains at the windows and a grandfather clock. We must have a house like this, Colin."

"Just what I was thinking, and I can buy a house for you, now that my play has been accepted. I'd like to give you the world, my darling. Would you consider the world in exchange for a kiss?"

"You are my world, now," she answered simply.

Then there was silence in the tiny house, save for the ticking of the grandfather clock in the corner and the crackle of logs on the hearth. Silence, and a deep enveloping peace, for they both knew at last, the real meaning of Christmas! It was firelight and home and some one to love, and to be loved more than anything else in the world.

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# Date Bureau

By Beth Farrell

**Y**OU know all the wrong people," Constance said hopelessly. "You go loping about the country in that awful old car, your hair every which way. No wonder you haven't a bid for Class Week."

"Nope, not one," echoed Dots, crinkling her nose. "My career as a young deb-to-be is ruined before I've even clutched a bouquet of wilting orchids to my pounding heart."

Would she let Constance guess it hurt her so, she felt actually sick inside? Not for a blouse covered with frat pins!

"There you go. You just don't care! How do you think I feel, having a sister as unpopular as you? Then you had to ruin your last year starting that ridiculous bureau. You're the laughingstock of the whole college."

Dots shook her head. "My dear, outside of you and Peggy and the two deans, no one knows that ghastly fact, and even if they did, it's been a wonderful thing. We've made more matches than——"

"And ruined your own chances," Constance broke in. "All your life you'll be pointed out as the girl who started the Date Bureau. I practically know that's why King Bradley never asked me for a date. All the postgrads know about the bureau. He's a special pet of the dean of women, and she'd tell him, and he wouldn't want to be seen dragging the sister of the Date Bureau. Every one would say that's how he got his date."

"Than which there is nothings," smiled the irrepressible Dots. It was a nice wide smile, and, well pasted on, could cover a load of





"Oh, you're impossible!" Constance flounced into a chair that commanded a view of the window.

"That being that, we will now proceed to open the office," Dots said carelessly, and slit the first envelope of the pile that lay on her desk waiting.

She gave the empty envelope to her wire-haired, Broken Date, but did not read the letter it had held, though Constance may have thought she was doing so. Instead, Dots was staring out the back window.

Magnolias were in bloom, gleaming in the trees like so many silver chalices, set to catch the starlight. One perfect bloom, in a mass of dark, shining foliage, graced the squat black jug on Dots's desk, and the faint, lemony perfume filled the office.

The magnolia bouquet had started the discussion. Constance seemed to sense that her sister had climbed out on the roof of the sorority house and picked the bloom for herself. Even a half-wilted bouquet of daisies presented by a timid frosh would have been all right, in Constance's eyes. The magnolia represented Dots's social life for the past two years.

heartache. If a girl had to look like a comedian she might as well be one, Dots had decided long ago.

Not for any money would Dots ever admit she'd give her A's for Constance's C's, if she could have the same waiting list of cavaliers her sister had. Yet Constance wasn't happy. She didn't have a date for Class Week because she was hoping that, at the last minute, King Bradley would ask her for a date for the week of festivities only two days away.

King had been taking a post-graduate course while marking time between bridge building and road making in the tropics, and had gone his big, dark, unsmiling way through the term without making a single date.

Well, it was silly for Dots to yearn over him when the lovely Constance couldn't make a dent in his attention.

"Don't you know the whole college will laugh if the girl who started the Date Bureau marches in among the spinsters?"

Dots jumped, because she had forgotten Constance. So seldom did her sister honor her with her company for more than a few minutes at a time.

"Darling, must I draw you a picture to show you no one knows who is behind the Date Bureau?" Dots asked impatiently.

"That's where you're wrong, as you'll find out some day. Every one will say you could make dates for others; but for yourself—I'd almost rather march with the spinsters myself, than to have my friends know what a failure you've been. I'll let them think you were engaged to some one back home, were being faithful to him, but when the prom comes and he doesn't show up——" There were tears in Constance's voice.

Dots looked thoughtful. She hadn't known Constance cared that

she didn't take part in the social life of the college. Years before careless nurses had showed off the little girl with the long, golden curls and big blue eyes and left the lanky, wide-mouthed child with straight brown hair, standing wistfully to one side. People admired Constance and pitied Dots, and it had given her an exaggerated inferiority complex, so when school came she had settled herself resignedly to be an "A" student, and shunned the social side entirely.

Thoughtfully, Dots read the letter she had been holding. A short junior wanted a blond date not over five feet tall for the junior prom.

The next letter was from a red-headed girl who wanted a date with a tall senior, and a few letters later there was a six-foot senior too shy to ask a girl for a date, but who wanted a red-headed girl for the senior banquet.

On and on down the fat mail. It grew heavier and heavier as Class Week came nearer.

Constance suddenly jumped up, smoothed down her skirt, and ran out the building. Dots looked curiously from the window in time to see King Bradley run down the steps of the engineering building.

Dots watched, a funny ache in her heart under the prim, candy-striped blouse. He was such a darling with his everlastingly rumpled dark hair, bronzed skin, and white smile flashing under a trim, dark mustache. He wore shirts of raw silk, and whipcord breeches bleached white from many launderings and tropical suns, and shining boots that adoring freshies kept immaculate.

He passed Constance, saluting her shyly, half turned as though to speak to her, then went quickly on, whistling some weird air, the crimson flushing his dark cheeks.

Constance looked after him and stamped her foot angrily.

When he was opposite Dots's window some one hailed him. "Got your date for Class Week, Bradley?"

"No. Couldn't get the girl I wanted, so decided I'd stag it."

"Why not try the Date Bureau? They connected me with a swell little number. It'll be *tum tum di tum* with us when school is out."

The two men passed on, leaving Dots sitting mute before her desk. There wouldn't be any "Wedding March" ever for her. No man wanted a girl five feet eight, with straight brown hair and green-yellow eyes. Yet she could have been attractive if the right man had been interested. Not beautiful ever, but the attractiveness of shining white teeth, and shimmering hair, and flawless complexion.

After a long moment Dots rose and went to her closet, and from the farthest corner dragged out an old portable typewriter. She typed rapidly, then once more buried the machine. Her cheeks crimson, she took the letters she had somehow managed to write in between on the new machine Peggy had presented to the bureau, and went to the post office with them.

That was why the next evening there was a letter in the pile, a queer letter.

DEAR DATE BUREAU:

Please get me a date for Class Week. She must have straight hair, a turned-up nose, a wide mouth and be an "A" student. It won't matter whether she's a good dancer or not, as long as she is too homely for any other man to want to date.

The letter was signed "King Bradley," and Dots's cheeks were scarlet for a long time before she drew the new machine toward her

and composed the reply and a copy of the letter.

The Date Bureau has noted Mr. Bradley's letter, as per the inclosed copy of it, and has found a girl who meets all his requirements. The bureau trusts Mr. Bradley will keep from the girl the exact requirements he set forth in his letter, because all girls like to believe they possess some attractiveness.

Mr. Bradley's date will be at Table 7 at the Hunt Club Sunday morning for the purpose of getting acquainted, and the breakfast will be Dutch treat, as is the requirement of the bureau for the first date.

Dots did not send the letter until late that night, though she duly posted the others. After a long, lonely evening at her window watching twosomes pass and repass the sorority house, Dots sprang up and grabbed the letter and ran with it to the post office. She was breathless when she regained her room—breathless and scared half to death.

She had reason to be. Scarcely was she at her desk in the tiny office back of her room the next afternoon when the telephone rang and an angry voice called for the president of the bureau. It was King Bradley, without a doubt.

"Speaking," Dots managed to say, in a scared voice, because by now she bitterly regretted writing the letter.

"It's this darned date you've made for me for Class Week. I didn't write that letter—some practical joker did."

"What?" exclaimed Dots, with proper simulated surprise.

"Of course, I didn't. A fellow wants the prettiest girl he can get. Do I look like the kind of idiot to write in for such a girl?"

"I really couldn't say, Mr. Bradley. I haven't met you, and couldn't pick you out of a pair of men," Dots managed to say, in her

husky drawl. "Do you look particularly bright?"

There was a sizzling silence, then he spluttered:

"I believe I'm passably so."

"Then you must see that no girl would want to go with you under the circumstances. I will tell the young lady it was a joke, and consider the incident closed."

"But listen to reason," groaned King. "I had intended to ask another girl, the most wonderful and loveliest girl in college. I happen to know she hasn't made a date. I would have asked her for one long ago, but lacked the nerve." Evidently Dots, being an unseen audience, gave him courage.

"It's perfectly all right," soothed Dots. "I'll explain to the girl. Go ahead and get your wonderful date. Under the circumstances, our client would rather march with the spinsters."

"Say, you wouldn't show her that awful letter, would you?" spluttered King.

"We'd have to, to prove we weren't playing a joke on her. It was rather awful, wasn't it?" Dots murmured.

"Say, don't do that. I can take it. I'd rather do it than have any girl see that letter."

"But taking it with the homeliest girl in school would ruin Class Week for you," persisted Dots.

"It really isn't my Class Week. I had mine four years ago, but it is this girl's you've chosen for me. She positively would have to march with the spinsters?"

"Oh, yes, she's heartbreakingly

homely," Dots cried passionately, and could almost feel King wince over the telephone.

"Then it goes," he said gruffly. "I'll be at the Hunt Club Sunday, as you suggested."

Dots hung up and turned from the instrument, cheeks scarlet. Why hadn't she let him cancel the date! The most wonderful and loveliest girl in college would be Constance, of course, and Constance was dying to go with King.

If she were decent she'd release him, even yet. Drop him a letter telling him the girl was ill. Dots twisted her hands together, agony in her eyes.

"I can't, I can't! It's too much to ask, now I've gone so far." She bowed her sleek, braid-crowned head on her arms. "Surely I deserve one break for all those I've given others."

A year before Dots had conceived the idea of the Date Bureau out of her own heartache. Pretty, shy girls, plain girls, and girls too busy to make their own friends, had passed through her hands without

their ever knowing whom they had to bless for meeting the men of their dreams. She had advised them on dress, hair, and deportment, and the deans had blessed the opening of the crazy bureau if only because it had brought so many shy unknowns together.

"King Bradley has a date!" stormed Constance, rushing in, eyes filled with tears. "I asked him if he was going to be here for Class Week and he said yes, he'd just been arranging his schedule with his date."



"Oh." Dots suppressed a pleased cry. He hadn't told Constance how his' date came about, but he wouldn't. He was true-blue. Saddled with a homely girl, expecting, heaven knew what, he still could be honorable. No one but they two would ever know but what she was his real choice.

"What will you do now, Con?" Dots asked quietly.

"I've told Dubs Parker I'd go with him to the prom," Constance's voice was defiant.

"But, Con! He'll be half seas over, and wholly so before the end of the evening."

"That's what I want. I'm going to get King Bradley for my own, no matter what. My gowns are a knock-out. He can't resist me in them. I was so sure he meant to ask me. His eyes have been asking me things for days. Well, it will be a bad week for his date, I promise you that." Constance rushed away again, to make further plans for squelching her own sister.

Dots set her lips. With Constance on the warpath, the Hunt Club breakfast was her only real chance with King, even though he'd be duty bound to drag her to the other functions. And the wind-up, for the fraternity house party at the inn in the bayous, would be his to choose his own partner. That would be Constance.

Sunday morning, Dots Gallantry, paler than ever, left her mount in the hands of a groom and walked bravely through the long breakfast room toward the table she had suggested. She was not a stranger to the club members, for riding had been her one passion. Hands went up as she passed and friendly greetings and breakfast invitations were tendered her, to all of which she

gave an unsmiling but friendly refusal.

They saw a tall, graceful girl in fawn-colored jodhpurs, soft tan blouse, and bright-orange scarf knotted about her throat. She wore her sleekly braided hair coronet fashion, and it was extremely becoming.

King Bradley, also in riding togs, sat at Table 7. He rose, frowning incredulously as Dots came directly to his table. There was a queer, baffled look in his eyes, and Dots's heart sank to her smart tan boots.

"You!" Just the one word, but Dots read in it all the disdain in the world, and wished the shining floor of the dining room would open and swallow her up.

"You are Mr. Bradley, I know. I am Dorothea Gallantry," Dots managed to say, bravely. "It was nice of you to ask me to breakfast."

"It was nice of you to come—you don't know how nice," King supplied easily, as he pulled out her chair and seated her.

"Oh, heavens, this is horrible. Why did I ever do such a thing! He's simply appalled at what he has to drag through Class Week," groaned Dots's thoughts.

It was an exaggeration, of course, because Dots's teeth and skin were lovely, her hair soft and shining, her carriage and figure perfect. If she had the same colored hair and eyes of a thousand girls, and an over-large mouth, it was easily overlooked if one did not worship mere beauty.

"This is a perfectly dreadful situation. We both know it. I'm scared to death, and you're probably hating yourself for getting a date as you did. Maybe it will be easier if we talk about you. I've been reading up on your work, and I'd like to know more about the bridges you've

built. You see, I'm taking engineering myself, which every one will tell you is a perfectly mad thing for a girl to take."

"Why mad? When I heard a girl was taking the course I thought it rather wonderful of her," King said frankly.

"It is mad, because the best a girl can hope for is a position in some engineer's office, when what I want to do is to go into the field."

"Why can't you?"

Dots lifted expressive hands, and they were nice, strong hands and beautifully cared for. "Because I'm a girl. Oh, I knew all this when I started but I wouldn't stop. My uncle has washed his hands of me. He thinks I'm insane."

"And I think you're splendid. I'd like to talk to your uncle."

"Men only talk to uncle about Constance, my sister," twinkled Dots, now perfectly at ease.

"She *is* gorgeous. Now what about you?"

Dots actually gasped. He was dismissing Constance like that, to return to her. Of course, it was more of that innate courtesy of his, but it only made her love him more hopelessly.

After what seemed minutes but was actually hours, Dots looked at her watch.

"Do you realize we've been here hours? I've cut chapel, and I had used all my cuts."

"They won't care since you're a senior, and it's your last week. We haven't made any arrangements about Class Week. I don't know the flowers you prefer, the color of your dress or anything," King protested.

"My dress is pale-lavender, and I prefer sweet peas. Did you ever hear anything so plebeian?"

They passed down the now empty room where waiters were setting places for lunch, and went out on the wide gallery where the attendant brought Dots's horse to the rail. She did not, as other girls would have done, ask King if he were going her way, but mounted, gave him a nod and a flashing smile, and rode away toward the college.

King Bradley stared after her, confusion on his face.

Dots found Constance waiting in her room. "Where on earth have you been?" she scolded, as Dots dashed in, sending gloves, crop and tie into a chair, and shedding her blouse as she started for the shower.

"Riding, breakfast with King Bradley, and some dishes of gossip after," chanted Dots, pulling on her shower cap and dancing about on one foot, trying to pull off her jodhpurs.

"King Bradley? Really? He wanted to talk about me, I suppose," purred Constance. "Well, what did he say? Did he tell you why he didn't ask me for a date?"

"Hardly, since he had already asked me," Dots said, stepping from her scanties and plunging under the needle shower.

"Why—why, I don't believe it!" gasped Constance, angrily.

There was no reply save the roar of the shower and the slap of tap-dancing feet on the tiled floor.

When Dots, wrapped in a white linen robe, came out, Constance sat rigid, her eyes snapping, her face white.

"Of course, you know I won't let you pull this off," she said coldly, glaring up at her tall sister.

"But you see, I have. He's taking me to the cocktail dance the postgrads are giving to-morrow night, and I'm taking him to the



prom the next night. It's all settled."

"And I am going to the cocktail dance with King's engineering prof," sparkled Constance, "so just watch me walk off with your man. You needn't look so hurt. Your life work is engineering, mine is men, and I'm beginning on King. He's got loads of money, and doesn't need to build bridges and roads. I mean to be Mrs. King Bradley be-

*Dots was enjoying a pleasant rushing by the men, and was happier than she had ever been in her life. Her cheeks were flushed with excitement, and her eyes were gold-and-green flames.*

fore the end of the house party his frat is giving. We will see then if he leaves for Brazil to take that new job

Professor Spelton is raving about. Spelton goes to China. Has a leave of absence to build a bridge there, you know."

"Yes, I know," Dots replied dully, but did not add that he had asked her to go along as his secretary.

The cocktail dance began at five.

At four a square box came from the florists' for Dots, and her hands shook as she opened it, for it was almost her first flowers from a man. Sweet peas, large and fragrant, and delicately beautiful. They somehow gave Dots the confidence she lacked now that the actual moment had arrived when King would advertise to the world she was his choice for the Class Week festivities.

She pinned on the corsage, her eyes soft and shining, their odd green softened by golden lights of happiness.

Constance, running over from her own house, to twit her sister with more of her plans for taking away the date she had urged Dots to get to save her face in the prom march, was silenced by something about that radiant figure. An uneasy doubt entered her vain head. Dots actually looked moonstruck. Surely she wasn't in love with King Bradley, couldn't be. It was too fantastic. Homely Dots. Of all the men in college, how like her to choose King Bradley.

Constance felt that Dots's date was somehow managed through the Date Bureau, but she couldn't decide just how, since she was sure King had meant to ask her for the week, when he overcame his shyness. That was why, when King was announced and Dots had gone down, Constance coolly unlocked the former dressing-room door and ransacked the files of the Date Bureau, keeping Professor Spelton cooling his heels in the parlor of the Beta house.

As King rose to meet Dots the other girls looked enviously after her. Dots looked actually beautiful to-night in her rustling taffeta gown of palest lavender, a corsage of sweet peas on her shoulder. The dress was quaintly made after a pic-

ture of her great-grandmother, and was exactly right for the sleek head crowned with soft brown braids.

"May I tell you how lovely you look?" King asked gravely, and was rewarded by a soft blush that tinted Dots's pale skin with lovely rose.

"And may I tell you how lovely the flowers are," Dots returned serenely. "I think we're going to have a nice time."

"I hope 'nice' is a very tame word for the kind of time I hope to give you," retorted King, as they crossed the campus toward the fraternity house where the dance was being held.

Constance was late, and Dots hoped King would have her card filled before her sister arrived, then was promptly ashamed and made quick amends.

"You must save a dance for my sister. She has wanted to know you for a long time."

"A girl as popular as your sister would scarcely have time on her card for an old postgrad," King said, with his shy smile, "but I promised Spelton I'd give him a break with you. He didn't even know you danced. How is it you haven't attended any of the college affairs?"

"You don't honestly know?" asked Dots.

"I'm afraid not."

"It's—it's because I'm so plain. I never would go on a blind date because I knew the luckless boy would be disappointed when he saw what he had drawn, and dates of my own— Well, there are so many more glamorous girls, and after all, I'm a working student. When my uncle found what I meant to study he had already paid my tuition for the first year, but told me he would not fritter away his money on a second year, so I had to find a way, and it kept me terribly busy."



They danced, and Dots's tallness did not make her tower over her partner. He was a comfortable few inches above her, even though she wore high heels, and the fact helped take away the ache that persisted every time she remembered how she had tricked him into this.

Constance came in looking flushed and a little ruffled, and more than a little cross. Dots was enjoying a pleasant rushing by the older men, friends of King's, and was happier than she had ever been in her life. Her cheeks were flushed with excitement, and her eyes were gold-and-green flames.

She had a soft, chuckling laugh that was very flattering to the men who entertained her and, all in all, was proving a grand success. Too much of one for her sister's peace of mind.

Constance tugged Professor Spelton over to Dots's side. She could make Dots look big and awkward and colorless in a minute by standing beside her, but to-night somehow she failed.

Dots, in her old-fashioned taffeta gown and braided hair, merely looked sweet and dignified beside King, and, even though light-brown, her hair gleamed against the background of King's black coat.

When Professor Spelton claimed her for his dance, Dots tried not to watch King and Constance over his shoulder. Constance was pouting adorably as they danced, her lovely face raised invitingly toward King, and King was talking eagerly, breathlessly to Constance. Then they danced through the French doors out of sight on the darkened gallery.

When King came to claim Dots he explained rather apologetically, "I've been getting acquainted with your sister. There were some things

I wanted to tell her. She's a little beauty, isn't she?"

"Yes," Dots somehow managed to agree.

"I canceled the other dance you had with Spelton. I hope you don't mind. I explained to your sister, and I think she understood. I had thought more extras would be played, so did not keep enough for myself. She said they were leaving early so she'd be fresh for the prom."

Dots's sore heart lifted, and stayed that way for the rest of the evening. Constance, her eyes full of anger and fear, pointedly stayed away from her, but did not leave until the dance was over.

Arm in arm, Dots and King slowly walked back to Dots's house.

"You haven't regretted asking me to your prom?" King asked, as they stood under a chinaberry tree beside the house.

"How silly. You aren't using that as a loophole of escape from the date, are you?" Dots asked lightly, then held her breath for his reply.

He looked down at her. "Aren't *you* foolish?" He put his hand under her chin and turned her face up to the starlight. The lilac fragrance of the chinaberry blooms drifted across it like a perfumed kiss.

Dots looked steadily at him, color staining her cheeks. Then he bent his head and kissed her lightly on the mouth, and turned and went quickly away.

Slowly Dots went up to her room. The color had faded from her face, though the kiss still glowed softly on her lips. She felt that it was a duty kiss, because not so did Constance's escorts kiss her—she had seen the long, ardent caresses many a time.

"You fool, you have had more now than you expected or—deserved," she stormed, then paused in consternation as she unlocked her door. The room and the office beyond were in confusion—clothes, papers and books strewn everywhere.

As she straightened the place she tried to figure it out. She had nothing of value, or had she? Dots raced to her private papers. The letter she had written the Date Bureau in King's name was gone, and so was the carbon of her reply. Even then she did not guess the culprit, nor was she terribly troubled since King would have shown his friends, if the letters came out, that he could take a practical joke even if it meant drawing Dots for a partner.

There were pale sweet peas, big blue violets and lilies of the valley for Dot's prom corsage. This time King had not asked her preference.

Dots was in pale-green, the same rustling taffeta, the same quaint style, and when she saw the admiration in King's face, she blessed the inspiration that had made the Date Bureau the success it was.

Constance had never looked lovelier than she did in her trailing ivory satin, but she was far down the line of march, for Dots as the star girl student came second in line, the star man student ahead with his date.

The grand march and first dances over, King led Dots to the punch bowl where Constance and "Dubs" Parker were the center of a group, Dubs already tight.

Constance whispered something in Dubs's ear as her sister and King came up, and Dubs saluted Dots.

"Li'l ole Date Bureau herself, how are you? How 'bout getting me a date with a snappy blonde?

Connie wants a date, too, with a dark man."

Dots paled and did not reply, but her eyes were full of scorn as they rested for a moment on Constance's face.

King scowled. "You're drunk, Parker."

"But nosh too drunk. You get your date at the Date Bureau, fella? Pretty slick, the president giving you herself as a date, huh?"

"Don't pay any attention to him, Dots," Constance said gently, but she did not meet her sister's eyes. "He just found out you're really the Date Bureau, and can't get it off his mind. Come, Dubs, let's get some air." She led Dubs away, having done next to her best in making trouble.

King handed Dots a glass of punch. "Drink this, you look like a ghost."

Dots obeyed. He took her by the arm and led her away, and they resumed dancing.

"I wonder what you think of me," Dots said miserably, as she tried to read his inscrutable face.

"Was there really a letter?" King asked gravely.

"Yes, I wrote it," Dots replied quietly, her lips ashen but her eyes brave. "I heard you say you didn't have a date, and Constance felt so disgraced because I wasn't going to take my place at the head of the line because I hadn't a date, and it was my last week at college."

Some one saved her King's reply by cutting in. What a fool she had been! Both at preparatory school and here she could have had a good time if she hadn't been so self-conscious about her lack of beauty. A girl didn't need beauty; brains and style of her own, not aping fashion's decrees if they didn't suit her, were all she needed.

King's name did not appear on her program for a number of dances, though he could have cut in, but didn't. He seemed to have disappeared entirely, and so had Constance. Dubs, too, of course, but he was sleeping it off somewhere.

When King did claim her he did not try to talk, though he studied her face with eyes that struggled for comprehension. But Constance looked like a small, smug, white cat, and Dots could fairly hear her purr as some one cut in, and King went to her and cut in immediately.

The beautiful dance had turned to ashes, the *Prince* was just an angry man. A justly angry man, Dots had to admit, and it was time for *Cinderella* to return to her rags.

Somehow, Dots got through the supper at King's side, and danced with him the following dance. When her next partner came to claim her, King said hurriedly, "After this next one, I want to talk to you about the house party. This—this has changed my plans greatly."

Dots nodded miserably and went into the arms of her next partner, but before the dance was over she excused herself and fled to the powder room where she scribbled a note and sent it to King.

I know you meant to ask Constance for Class Week. You said you had wanted to ask the most wonderful and loveliest girl in college. I know you want to tell me you intend to take Constance to the house party, and that is all right with me. I haven't cheated you entirely, because you'll have her much longer than you have given me. Thank you for everything. I'm ashamed of what I did, but not sorry.

DOROTHEA GALLANTRY.

At the house she plugged the telephone, hung an "Engaged" sign on her door and shut herself in to misery that lasted until it was time for the graduation exercises in the big bowl.

LS-3D

King's beautiful bouquet came early, and Dots stared at it in amazement. There was a card with a brief message under his name.

I'm sorry.

Meet me at the oak and let me explain.

Dots went through the graduation exercises, white and still under her black cap, but instead of going to the oak, she fled to the safety of her room and the shelter afforded by the plugged phone and "Engaged" card.

Constance, with her usual freedom, invaded her room at the end of the afternoon. She was beautiful in a white suit.

"On my way to the house party. King's pretty sore at you. I told him you wouldn't mind his taking me to the party, since I was his intended date, anyway, when you fixed up that pretty plot. It's all over college, by the way. Some one remembered your old machine, and the rest was easy. If I were you I'd take a train home after dark and not see any one."

"It couldn't have been *you* who remembered about my old typewriter," Dots said sarcastically. "And I don't suppose you were the one who turned my room upside down to find the letter and answer."

Constance flushed. "Yes, I did. I told you I'd do anything to get King, and I meant it. It'll teach you to let my men alone. It didn't do you any good, anyway. King took me home from the prom last night, and we're going to the house party together."

"Where is the house party? Did they finally decide?" Dots asked wearily. It did no good to quarrel with Constance, who had a faculty for never seeing that she was in the wrong.

"At the Flaming Youth. It's

pretty far out, but we don't mind." Constance's eyes shifted. "If I were you I'd stay in until time for the eight o'clock train, and take it. You could take a taxi to the other station and wouldn't meet any one."

"Thanks. It's a good thing for the seniors that the college is through with them, because the Flaming Youth is forbidden to students, you know."

Constance laughed gleefully. "That isn't all. It *is* closed. If I don't come back from there Mrs. King Bradley— Well, I won't be seeing you again, I reckon. King won't want to see you, of course, after the way you've spoiled Class Week for him." Constance was gone, her shrill laughter floating back like the snarling of an angry kitten.

So she was to sneak around and hide, was she? How little Constance knew her! Dots took the "Engaged" sign off the door, and changed to a heather sports suit. She was scarcely dressed and through packing when Peggy, her assistant in the Date Bureau, rushed in.

"I was afraid you'd get away without saying good-by to me. Of course, you're going to the house party at the Bayou Bernard Lodge, you lucky thing!"

"But I thought it was at the Flaming Youth," Dots said slowly.

"Say, that's funny. I just met Mr. Bradley and he asked if you were gone, and said he was on his way to the house party at the Flaming Youth, too. I told him it was at the Bayou Bernard Lodge, and he went off to check up on it."

Dots looked puzzled. "Is it pretty bad what they're saying about me?" she asked diffidently, deciding to ferret out the puzzle of Constance's lies later.

"About you? People are simply thrilled to death. They're dying to tell you how much you've done for them. Constance told every one you were sick and couldn't see any one. The house mother has a roomful of flowers for you," chatted Peggy.

"No, no, no, I mean about King Bradley," Dots corrected.

"They say he's no more than you deserve. There's some sick men since you appeared as belle of the cocktail party and later of the prom. Not one knew what a grand person you were. If you were here another year you'd have more dates than a palm."

Dots somehow shook off the excited Peggy and made her way into the night. Constance had lied right and left. No one knew about her plot to get King for Class Week, no one except Constance, and even she hadn't dared tell, unless it was to King.

King and Constance at the notorious Flaming Youth alone. Dots saw the light with dazzling clearness. For some reason Constance had hoped to get King there alone with her, and when the last train had gone— Dots felt slightly sick. She had not thought even Constance would go so far.

How lucky for King that Peggy had met him and told him the truth about where the house party was to be held. He would have despised the Gallantry sisters more than ever if Constance had tricked him to a padlocked road house and forced them to spend the night there, since there'd be no trains out until morning.

Back at the house there were flowers for her, but she didn't want to see them now. She wanted the cool night air on her hot cheeks. She wanted a last walk over the

campus where she had gained her goal as engineer, and had a brief moment of happiness.

Some one's hand was on her shoulder, slid down and passed through her arm and held it snugly to his side, as King fell into step beside her.

"I have laid in wait for you ever since graduation," he said quietly. "Constance said you would be at the Flaming Youth, then I met Peggy Marne and she said Constance was mistaken, that you were in your room packing to go home."

"Why did you wait for me? Haven't I done enough to hurt you?" choked Dots, her head drooping, as he forced her to walk slowly at his side under the magnolias.

King laughed. "I've been going around in circles ever since you told me you had planned this week for us, yourself. One minute it meant one thing, and the next minute I would not believe what I wanted to."

"What was that?" Dots asked curiously. "Didn't you think I was a bold, scheming creature?"

He brushed that impatiently aside. "Your sister hasn't told you a thing I told her to, I can see that," he said wonderingly. "After Dubs spilled the truth I told Constance

how I felt about you and asked her if she thought it meant you liked me at all, or just needed a partner. I told her how wonderful I had thought you, ever since I first saw you far down the engineering room, and that I had even thought of asking her to get me a date with you for Class Week. I was afraid to ask for myself, afraid you'd turn me down, but I thought if your sister would intercede——"

"But—but I heard you say, yourself, you had wanted a date with the most wonderful and loveliest girl in college," protested Dots.

"They were pretty feeble words to use to describe you. No wonder you did not recognize yourself in them."

Dots stopped and leaned dizzily against a tree, staring at King with big, dazzled eyes.

"Something is the matter with

my ears," she complained. "I hear you saying the craziest things."

King put a hand either side of her head against the tree trunk, holding her there.

"You hear me telling you I love you, and you call it crazy. I was crazy to believe you could love a dub like me. Your sister told me so, too. She said you were wrapped up in your work."





*"I thought this dream would never come true," said King as he bent and covered Dots's wide, sweet mouth with his own in a deliciously maddening kiss.*

Dots's eyes crinkled. "Maybe you call it work," she gasped, looking at the arms blocking her escape. "If it is, I hope I'm wrapped up tighter than this."

She spoke lightly, believing it would not hurt so terribly when she wakened from the wonderful dream she seemed to be having.

King's hands fell, but they took Dots into the circle of his arms, holding her breathlessly tight.

"Why, I thought it was Constance," whispered Dots.

"Darling, there are a million Constances, but there's only one lovely, wonder-girl. When I saw you com-

ing to me in the Hunt Club I thought all my dreams had come true—except one. Was I wrong to want to believe you liked me enough to plan this?"

"The great King Bradley could never be wrong," breathed Dots. "What was the other dream?"

"This!" He covered Dots's wide, sweet mouth with his own, and he did not know that mouth was the despair of her life because it was so generous. She never remembered it again either, for it exactly fitted King's in a deliciously maddening manner as no rosebud mouth ever could.

"Spelton said something about your going to China as his secretary," King said, rather breathlessly. "Are you, or are you going back to the house and see how quickly I can make you the engineering partner and wife of one man Brazil bound?"

"What do you think?" Dots asked contentedly. King turned her about, and they set their feet toward the house.

"I'll only be long enough to get the chaplain. I've had the license since the morning after the prom."

"Which was this morning," twinkled Dots.

"It was a million years ago, and if it wasn't as long ago as that, you don't love me a quarter as madly as I do you," King said reproachfully.

"It was two million years," laughed Dots happily, and fled up the steps.

Constance, growing angrier and angrier as the time for the last train came and went in the closed, sordid road house, and a peering proprietor made conversation, fled at last toward the distant station and a telephone.

She called the sorority that housed her sister.

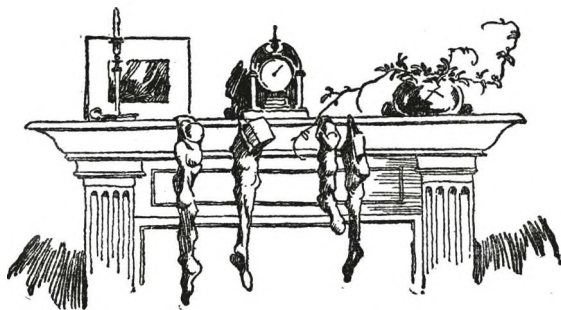
"Why, your sister and her husband left for the house party at

Bayou Bernard Lodge, three hours ago. Mrs. Bradley made a beautiful bride, and almost the whole college sent her flowers. I do think Mr. Bradley had sense to choose brains and fresh youth in preference to mere beauty, don't you? He's mad about her, too. They're sailing for South America right after the house party. But, of course, you know all these things, though we were much surprised you weren't present at your sister's wedding."

Dots, being rushed by her handsome young husband, still felt it was all a wonderful dream from which she'd waken to find Constance in her place, while she looked unhappily on.

It didn't seem possible that King thought her beautiful as well as clever. That she was the inaccessible person he had wanted to ask for Class Week still seemed unbelievable, but that night when the big house party was quiet and there was nothing but the sighing pines outside the window and her husband's arms around her, his mouth hard against her own, the dream faded at last, and blessed reality took its place.

This happiness was hers, and something that no one, nothing could ever take away.





# Thrill Girl

By Helen Brehm Long

**B**LISS SHERIDAN and Andy Buckler were zooming up the white highway that led back to Chicago when she saw pennants flying, and heard the squeal of calliopes—Keeley's Kolossal Karnival. They were a hundred miles out, and both expected at Mimi Margrave's for dinner. Yet—

"Darling," cried Bliss ecstatically, "we must stop. I adore carnivals!"

"You'll never get the smell off you," warned Andy, who was driv-

ing. "Hot dogs, doughnuts, ginger beer, hoi polloi——"

"What's hoi polloi? Sounds delicious!"

Andy groaned and applied the brakes to his yellow roadster. "You have the most beautiful face, and the most horrid tastes of any girl I know!"

"And you have the most stubborn chin and the sweetest disposition." She fluttered her eyelashes in her most enchanting manner.



"Always hunting thrills in dirty places," Andy grumbled as he strode along after her, a nice red-haired young man in white linen.

"Darling, I never hunt thrills," Bliss protested. "They hunt me."

Barkers shouted their invitations to the delights of Bessie, the Fat Lady; The Calf with Three Heads; Yasmini, the Fortune Teller. Tom-toms beat upon the air. Paddle wheels flipped. Grease smoked on portable griddles which advertised red hots, hamburgers, chop suey sandwiches. Many heels ground peanut hulls and pop-bottle tops into the soft earth of the Roseboro fair grounds.

"We'll be late for Mimi's dinner," warned Andy, as they sauntered. "You won't meet that cousin of hers she's been talking about all summer."

"Pooh," said Bliss, with a rude sniff. "I didn't want to. He's bound to be dull, vanilla-flavored—like Mimi."

"But, my dear girl, you can't deliberately break the engagement."

Bliss paid no attention. She was peering into a shooting gallery full of sliding geese and ducks on the wing. "I'll get some ideas for the club party. Vee and I are entertainment committee, and her idea of something exciting is to sell chances on a hooked rug. Darling, see the crowd around the man with the scales!

"I could use a machine like that at the party," mused Bliss. "Give canes when we missed their weight within ten pounds."

Andy shoved his hands into his pockets, disapproving. "Your most generous patrons will also be your fattest. Why insult them? Mrs. Welby and Grandpa Harrington would gather up their dollars and go home."

Bliss fell into thought. "Throwing balls to knock a clown into a tub of water would be difficult. But some one important in satin is sure to be splashed."

"Might substitute a girl in a white bathing suit," suggested Andy, his eyes straying.

"Nasty old philanderer," chided Bliss absently. "We have no Siamese twins or midgets in the club. Fortune tellers are horribly old."

"Not this one." Andy nodded toward a striped tent, and the dark-skinned, elaborately costumed beauty before it. "I'd like to have her tell my future." He looked at her meaningly.

"You'd like to have her hold your hand," Bliss returned.

Andy sulked. "You won't hold it for me. You don't care anything about me at all, do you, Bliss?"

"I don't believe in love."

"It might be more fun than you think," he urged.

"While it lasts, maybe. But what a hangover it leaves." She cast about for a simile, and her eyes fell on a booth of paddle wheels.

"Love's a gamble, Andy, and the house always wins. You may have a run of luck for a while, but that's all. The smart thing to do is to play a system—a little on the red, a little on the black, and don't mind if you lose. Never plunge on any one man, because you're sure to lose."

"Plenty of people have been willing to plunge," he argued.

"But it's not once in a hundred that they succeed in breaking the bank, Andy darling."

He sighed bleakly. "You're not in love with me, or you'd be willing to stake the maximum. You've never been in love at all, or you wouldn't talk about playing a system."

"You're a cherub, Andy, but you have no zizz," Bliss went on.

"No what?"

"Zizz. What goes up your nose when you drink champagne or soda pop; what goes down your spine when your number turns up at roulette. I could never love a man without it, so I'll probably never marry. Go on over and have Yasmini hold your hand. I'll just meander about, and try my luck on the wheels. Meet me by the merry-go-round."

Thus she forestalled the fourth proposal of the day.

By four o'clock, Bliss had won a kewpie doll, a stuffed elephant, a toy cornet, and a tin teapot. Still avid for speculation, she paused before the automobile raffle, the big moment of the carnival.

It was there that she met the man with zizz. Bliss stole a guarded look at him.

He resembled the villain in a play. He looked hard-boiled, with rough-hewn features, a roving eye, and a small mustache. Zizz personified.

Casually, Bliss dropped the kewpie doll. She had not intended that it fall on his foot, only near.

"Ouch!" he muttered in a thrilling bass voice. He picked it up for her.

Her blue eyes could be very tender. "I'm so frightfully sorry. Did I hurt you?"

His brown ones could be very bold. "You have scored a complete knock-out."

He looked at her searchingly. Thrills like chain lightning coursed through Bliss.

"Here's my other foot," the young man offered earnestly. "Would you like to have a try at it, too?"

"I can never forgive myself," mur-

mured Bliss, dropping the elephant.

He bent to retrieve it. "Mayn't I hold some of your trophies for you?"

"I've won so many things, I'll have to get this car to put them in! Where does one buy numbers?"

His eyes never left her. "I'm afraid they're all gone by now. But I've a few extra ones I'd be delighted to give you."

Bliss dimpled. "It's terribly sweet of you. I suppose the wheel's weighted, and none of us has a chance, anyhow."

"I knew I hadn't a chance," returned the young man fervently, "the moment you walked in the gate."

Demurely, she lowered her eyes. "I mean, the raffle couldn't possibly be on the level."

"Nothing's on the level. Everything's going round and round, upside down and zigzag. But I like it. It's like stunting in an airplane, or falling down an elevator shaft."

Kolonel Keeley was rapping a gavel for attention. "Ladeez and gentlemen, the raffle will now commence. This is absolutely not a sales scheme. This beautiful car is to be given away this afternoon absolutely free to the winnah of the lucky numbah."

"It's funny, there are so many other pretty girls in the world, but somehow I've managed to overlook them," said the dashing young man.

Bliss lifted a delicate eyebrow. "I can't imagine your overlooking a pretty girl. Not with your line."

"Ladeez and gentlemen, this is absolutely not a sales scheme," he insisted to her.

"Then you must be a little mad," Bliss said.

"Completely," he said, seriously.

"Open to all comahs not employees of the carnival," the man



at the wheel was continuing. "I am going to call upon a membah of the audience to turn the wheel, in ordah to convince you, my friends, that the raffle is completely impartial."

"I hope you lose," said the young man, as the wheel began to turn.

*She stole a guarded look at him, then, casually, she dropped the kewpie doll. Quickly he picked it up for her. He looked at her searchingly. Thrills like chain lightning coursed through Bliss.*

At Monte Carlo, Bliss knew, one never wishes a friend good luck. Nor looks at the pigeons in the Place before going into the casino to play. Nor wears green. A flash of recognition came to her. Now she knew who he looked like! A professional gambler, one of those who used to ply the Mississippi steamboats, in tall silk

hats and fancy waistcoats. He was entirely in the *Cameo Kirby* tradition, in spite of his palm-beach suit and panama hat.

"Ladeez and gentlemen, the wheel is turning."

The great wheel moved with agonizing slowness. Useless for Bliss to remind herself that it was probably weighted, that the winner was a plant in the audience; she could not stop the quivers that raced up and down her spine. Wheels affected her that way. And the man beside her was no calming influence.

"Numbah 77777. Ladeez and gentlemen, 77777 is the lucky winnah. Will this party kindly step forward and receive the cah?"

"Why, it's mine!" cried Bliss.

"My dear girl," said Andy, looking mused up and cross, "where have you been? I've been looking all over for you."

Bliss had forgotten there was an Andy.

"And wait till you hear what's happened," he went on gloomily. "A bunch of small-town hoodlums have punctured our tires. All of them. We'll never make Mimi's party now."

Bliss caught his hand. "We shall, Andy, really! I've got a car of my own. I just won it!"

"You what? My dear girl, you've been overindulging in pink lemonade. You're full of zizz."

"Oh, am I! I had the most exciting time. A man gave me some tickets on the car that was raffled, and one of my numbers won."

Andy was suspicious. "What man?"

"Oh, I don't know; I wish I did. I picked him up at the raffle. He was a perfect darling, but when I went up to claim the car, appar-

ently the earth opened and swallowed him."

"I'm amazed at you, Bliss, picking up men at carnivals."

Bliss's eyes were dreamy. "I dropped a doll on his foot, and that was how it all began. We've got to find him, Andy, because, you see, it's really his car. But I'm sure he'd let us run up to Chicago in it. We could take him along! He would zizz up Mimi's dinner no end. I'm sure he's a professional gambler."

"I repeat, Bliss, that you have the most beautiful face and the most horrid tastes of any girl I know."

She did not hear him. "Here's my car. Isn't it a beauty?"

"Hm-m-m," answered Andy dubiously, climbing into the driver's seat. "Get in and we'll take a little trial run."

"I'll have to locate the man it belongs to."

Andy was backing deftly out of the fair grounds, onto the paved highway. "He'll wait if he really wants it."

"Don't speed, Andy," she pleaded, as they rocketed past filling stations and fruit stands. "The first five hundred miles aren't off yet, you know."

Andy hooted laughter. "The first fifty thousand were well off a couple of years ago. Also a couple of hub caps, and no telling what else."

"You're just jealous because you didn't win a car," retorted Bliss. "Turn back, or he'll think I've run off."

Andy stepped harder on the gas. "What if he does? He gave you the winning ticket, didn't he? He has no claims on the car."

"He has, too. Andy Buckler, have you no ethics?"

"Don't be an idiot, Bliss. I thought you were big enough to take

care of yourself. Picking up an acquaintance with such riffraff."

"He wasn't riffraff!" she protested. "He was perfectly thrilling, and I want to see him again, find out who he is!"

Andy's eyes narrowed. "Unfortunately that he didn't seem to feel that way about you. Otherwise he'd have waited, wouldn't he?"

Bliss's pink mouth fell into an "O" of incredulity. "What a horrid thing to say!"

"After all, my dear girl, you can charm all the men some of the time, and some of the men all the time, but you can't charm all the men all the time."

"Andy Buckler, I hate you. And you'll have to stop. There's a cop behind us, and you're doing sixty!"

"Speedometers on these cheap cars are always speeded up," Andy assured her calmly. "And the motor's noisy. That makes it seem faster than we're really going."

"That cop has followed us all the way from Roseboro."

"Maybe it's your boy friend," he scoffed.

She was instantly alert, kneeling on the seat, nose pressed against the rear glass. "He'll have us arrested for stealing his car, and I don't blame him."

"Nuts!" snorted Andy, increasing speed. "What's the guy look like? A *Romeo*, I guess."

"He's tall and dark and handsome," answered Bliss. "Reminds me of a gambler. On a Mississippi steamboat. Black mustache. Wicked eyes!"

"A Mississippi steamboat on Route 49? I thought you said a

cop on a motor cycle." He turned his head.

He peered down the road.

It was a fatal gesture. They both grabbed for the brake, but they were too late. The little car scuttled like a jack rabbit for the nearest ditch, and was stuck fast.

Bliss came up with her hair and mouth full of mud. The cop had buttonholed Andy.

"You were doing sixty."

"Sixty couldn't be done in that kiddy car, officer."

"Besides that, it's stolen."

"I can explain the whole situation. You see, this young lady won it at the carnival in Roseboro. A man gave her his number——"

"Say, too bad she didn't get all that guy's number. You mean the slick-looking one with a mustache?"

Bliss nodded. "Is he really prosecuting me? I was afraid of it. Andy, it's all your fault."

Leaning against his motor cycle, the officer laughed gently. "Listen, young lady, Slicker Morin's not prosecuting anybody. That whole raffle was a set-up. We expect a Keeley drawing to be crooked, but we didn't think he'd have the brass to put up stolen cars. It was probably Slicker's idea—he's not satisfied with the gravy he gets in Chicago. He has to muscle in on all the little rackets for a

hundred miles out."

Bliss interrupted him. "You don't mean that the man whose number won this car is a crook?"

"Crooked as they come. But try and get anything on him. He's got big connections. Runs one of those high-class gambling joints that you





Suddenly the car scuttled like a jack rabbit for the nearest ditch. Just as Bliss and Andy picked themselves up, a cop drew up. "You were doing sixty," he said. "Besides that, it's a stolen car."

get in through a peephole and a steel-plated door. They call it the Andiron."

"The Andiron?" Bliss caught her breath. "I know about it. Oh, this couldn't be the same man."

"Dark fellow? Classy dresser, and a fast worker with the ladies?"

"The description seems to tally," commented Andy grimly.

Bliss gave him a malevolent glance.

The officer went on: "He sure piles in the jack. Why, Slicker Morin's got a yacht and an eight-hundred-acre estate, and he's never done a day. Nobody will squeal. They know what would happen if they did. Why, last year he and his bodyguard had a little disagreement and one day the fellow mysteriously disappeared."

"I read about that case," nodded Andy. "His picture was in the *Journal*. It's the same man. Good heavens, Bliss, what a chance you ran!"

"And how," affirmed the policeman chattily. "He's got a sweetheart that'd scratch your eyes out if she caught you fooling around her man. But I figure he wasn't seriously interested in you, miss. He had the raffle number on him that would win the car, but when he saw some police around, he didn't want to risk claiming a stolen car. He planted it on you, and beat it. You can't ever get anything on him. Somebody else is always left holding the bag."

A calliope shrilled. Pennants waved. Barkers called their wares. The barkers were lovely young women, in abbreviated costumes, with rakish derbies set over one eye, and the occasion was the club party.

Bliss was barking along with the rest of the lovely young women. "Ladies and gentlemen, the greatest tent show on the grounds. Only five dollars. A swimming match. An aquarium of exotic tropical fish. A hula-hula girl performing her native dance. The complete works of Shakespeare engraved on a rolling pin. All under one top!"

She stopped abruptly. "You!"

His eye was as bold and roving as ever. "You don't seem very happy to see me."

"What have you come to chisel here?" she demanded haughtily.

"Chisel?" He was unabashed. "Speaking of chisellers, did I hear you say you charged five dollars to see a hula-hula girl on a pin and Shakespeare doing a dance?"

"Nobody's forcing you in, my friend."

Grinning, he pulled a bill from his pocket. "I only wanted you to know I'm onto your racket. Two goupies in a goldfish bowl, with a match floating on top. The dancer is a photograph, and I strongly suspect that the complete works of Shakespeare is engraved on a rolling-pin big enough to hold me."

Bliss viewed him coldly. "There's probably no form of racketeering, no matter how petty, you're not familiar with. And people expect to be fooled here—that's why they come to the party. It's different from a village carnival," she added, pointedly. "Why are you here? I'm sure no one invited you."

"Fairs fascinate me. The scents, the sounds, the pretty girls, the pink lemonade. Won't you join me in a glass?"

"You're right. I won't. I've found out rather a lot about you since that day at the carnival."

"And I've learned something about you. You're the prettiest of the Sheridan girls. You're not married, nor engaged, although there's a red-headed young man with hopes and——"

"It should be obvious to you by now," sighed Bliss, "that I don't care to continue my acquaintance with you."

"When may I call?"

"I'm out on second Tuesdays. And I think I'll phone the police now and have you ejected."

"Good heavens!" He recoiled slightly. "If I were sensitive I'd

think you were prejudiced against me for some reason."

"For many reasons, all valid. Would you like to buy a ticket for our car drawing? You're lucky at such things, aren't you?"

He flushed. Guiltily, thought Bliss. She pointed out the ancient flivver, bright-orange with green wheels, decorated with collegiate slogans, the most conspicuous of which was: "The Mayflower—a Puritan Came Across in This." There were no tires. The windshield was broken.

"The raffle will begin in a minute or so. Five dollars a ticket."

He reached into his pocket again. "If you can assure me that my chances of winning it are sufficiently small——"

"The chances of anybody's winning anything here are practically nil," she assured him. "Haven't you ever been to a charity bazaar before? It's something like a gambling den. The object is strictly commercial. Here's your number."

"It's 77777," he read. "Sounds vaguely familiar." His ardor still unquenched, he asked, "If I should happen to be lucky, will you take a ride in it with me?"

Bliss looked at him levelly. "I don't like the kind of rides *you* take people on, Slicker Morin."

Then it was time for the drawing.

"Ladeez and gentlemen, the drawing is now ready to begin. Each of you has deposited the stub of your ticket in this receptacle and holds the rest of the precious bit of paper."

Bliss shouted through her megaphone, conscious of a pair of dark eyes on the outskirts of the audience.

"To prove that everything is fair and aboveboard, I am going to call on the little girl in the front row to select the winning number."

The little girl was blindfolded and led to the receptacle. She was turned around three times before she dipped her fingers into the numbers.

The number was chosen, and Bliss scanned it seriously.

"Number 77777 wins this lovely car, people. Will the holder kindly step forward to claim his prize and receive my congratulations? I might add that the Acme Junk Co. will haul off the remains for five dollars."

There were excited murmurs as the tall young man with the small dark mustache stepped forward. Bliss gazed down into his bold eyes from the height of her platform.

"You, sir, are the lucky winner. One stipulation is always made in these club drawings. The car is yours upon the payment of three thousand dollars into our club treasury. Here, Mr. Morin, is a blank check in case you haven't one with you."

His dark eyes could be very fierce. Her blue ones could be most nonchalant.

As chairman of the entertainment committee, Bliss was among the last to leave the hall. But she was going on to a dance with Andy, so she had changed her costume into something feminine and fluttery, the color of hyacinths. She had added a maddening bit of scent.

"By the way," she remarked to the winner of the car, "that was a gag about the junk company. You'll have to look up your own."

"And if I leave it here, I'll be charged storage space?"

"Afraid so." She powdered her nose. "Frightful, isn't it, the way the city's racketeered? Every other person you meet is a gangster."

He caught her by the arm. "Lis-





*"Andy poisoned your mind against me. Listen, Bliss, I'm not Slicker Morin, and I fell in love with you the moment I saw you."*

ten to me. You've got a nerve talking about racketeers. I expected to be robbed when I came to this party, in a mild way. But why was I singled out to make the ruinous contribution of three thousand dollars? It's piracy!"

Bliss shook him off. She looked vague. "Singled out? The drawing was perfectly fair."

"But every number in that confounded tub was my number, and you hand-picked me as the sucker to draw it. Why?"

"Because I couldn't get hold of a weighted paddle wheel, chiefly. The stores don't carry them."

"Do I look like a millionaire?"

"Not in the least." She fluttered her eyelashes. "Satan, if any one. But it was a choice between you and Grandpa Harrington, and Mrs. Welby, and Andy. I had to have some one who wouldn't miss a mere three thousand from his bank roll."

"And you think I wouldn't? You put me in a position in which I couldn't possibly refuse to pay up, of course. But what would you do if I told you I haven't a bank account?"

Bliss was untroubled. "I'd tell you to sell a yacht, or a speed boat, or a bond or something. Really, I hadn't expected you to howl so about a paltry three thousand."

"I'm not howling," he said, resigned. "I just wanted to know why I was the soakee."

"I'll tell you why." Her face was white, close to his. "I decided to pay you off for what you did to me. You knew my ticket would win the car at the carnival."

"Naturally."

"Not naturally. Crookedly. You disappeared before I could find you afterward. You simply blew."

"I blew because I saw you had another escort."

Bliss closed her eyes. "I should have been suspicious of you from the first. You look like a villain. You have a lady-killer's line. I wondered what it was about you that gave me the creeps, and now I know."

"Creeps?" He was stung.

"I shivered at the sight of you. All the time you were spreading your toils. Why, out of all the girls at the carnival, did you pick me? Did I look easy and stupid?"

"You looked beautiful and adorable. I believe I mentioned it at

the time. I thought at first you were a local kid, and that you'd be pleased to win a car. I didn't realize how much it would take to give you a thrill."

"I had my thrills, thank you. We ran into a ditch five miles from town. I ruined my clothes and missed a dinner party. The woman who gave it hasn't spoken to me since. Besides which, I was arrested for possession of a stolen car, and if the police hadn't been nice about it, I'd probably be doing time this minute. Oh, I was thrilled!"

"I'm beginning to see light."

"When you came in to-night, I seized my chance. Oh, I know who you are. I was told that everybody's afraid of you, but I'm not. I made up my mind you would pay. You take in thousands from that gambling place of yours. Why shouldn't my club have a cut of it?"

"She's even prettier when she's mad," he said reflectively.

Bliss stamped her foot. "No doubt you thought that just because I happened to speak to you at the carnival I liked you, that you'd be free to crash in anywhere you liked and chisel off my friends. Well, you're not, no matter how many yachts and country estates you have, Slicker Morin!"

"I'm not Slicker Morin," he told her patiently. "I have no estate, no yachts. The check I just gave you cleaned out my account except for two dollars and sixty cents."

"You don't run the Andiron? Oh, I might have known! Not even a big-time villain, just a country-fair hanger-on! Oh, go away!"

"You don't really want me to, Bliss."

"Of course I do! Andy's waiting for me downstairs. He'll get a traffic ticket and be up on his ear."

He drew closer. "His ear's as

good a place as any for him to be. I don't like him. He poisoned your mind against me. Listen, Bliss. I'm not Slicker Morin, and I dropped into that show out of curiosity, just as you did. Kolonel Keeley button-holed me right away with a dishonest proposition. He must have thought I looked like a villain, too. Anyway, that's the way it seems.

"His outfit was giving away a car, but they wanted a plant in the crowd. Their last plant had taken root in a jail two towns back. He couldn't risk a local person, or any one in the show, and when I didn't shudder at his veiled suggestion of skullduggery, he offered me ten dollars to hold the lucky number, and turn the car back later."

"And you took it! You *are* a villain."

"I didn't know the car was stolen. And I had no evidence of bribery except my own statement. Local police don't like to prosecute a show that brings business to the town. I thought of a way to pay Keeley back in kind."

"Meaning me?"

"Exactly. I decided to donate my ticket and the car to the prettiest girl in the crowd. Keeley wouldn't be able to protest. You, Bliss, were not only the prettiest girl at the carnival, but I strongly suspect you of being the prettiest anywhere. I

fell in love with you the moment I saw you."

"It sounds plausible, but villains are always plausible," Bliss commented.

"But I'm not a villain," he protested.

"Aren't you?" She was disappointed. "But perhaps you're some one of whom my family will disapprove," she added hopefully.

"Not even that. I'm Nick Fitzgerald, Mimi Margrave's cousin, and if you hadn't met me at the carnival, you'd have found me at the dinner party you and Andy missed." He held out his arms to her.

She went into them unerringly. "Isn't Fate an old dear?"

And Bliss, who had said she didn't believe in love, found out why people plunge.

Ten minutes later, Andy tore up a traffic ticket and stamped back to the hall. It was deserted. The floor was covered with confetti and paper hats, and the exhibits were in a shocking state of disarray. He did not see Bliss.

It did not occur to him to look inside the roadster that had been won by Number 77777—"The Mayflower—A Puritan Came Across in This."

Annoyed, he switched off the lights and stamped on down the stairs again.





# Destiny

By Edna E. Davies

A SERIAL—Part VI.

## CHAPTER XVII.

**H**OW beloved Ian was; how infinitely dear! The love which Denise had thought forgotten was taking her by the throat with a grip she had never known it possessed before. That momentary contact with him, as his strong hands prevented her from falling

against him, had revealed the truth in its naked outline to her mind, which could be bluffed no longer.

What was the use of denying it? She loved him. She loved him with every atom and every fiber of her being. She would have gone through fire and water to have the right to hold him in her hands and tell him how much she cared. With

him, she was a woman reborn; without him, only a husk.

He was the *only* man; and she had cast him away for a scruple.

She managed, somehow, to make her voice sound casual. She had learned many things during the past six months. Many, many things.

"Goodness, of course! I'm glad to see you. Hugh will be sorry he was not here."

They walked across the grass, side by side.

"You must let me give you some tea."

She was babbling inanities. Both of them knew it.

"I ought to go," he said, as they reached the terrace.

Then, for the first time, she looked at him. How worn and old he looked!

"Don't be stupid," she said. "We had to meet sometime or other."

Over the tea table, set on the terrace under the trees, she studied him. She let him talk, encouraging him now and then with an occasional interjection. He talked like a man hungry for conversation—about Polly, about his work, about everything under the sun but their own problem and their own past relationship.

He still loved her, then. That realization sent a glow of something approaching hysterical happiness through her. He still loved her, even as she loved him. Marriage to

some one else, even the distance of almost the world between them, could not change it.

How lined and tired he looked! Fool that she had been ever to have left him. Their destinies were linked together through the ages; and she had acted like a frightened, conceited child.

How could formalities and conventions fight against destiny?

She hardly realized that he had stopped speaking, until, suddenly, she became aware that he was asking a question.

"Are you happy?"

Very dangerous ground. Infinitely alluring ground.

The shadows were creeping over the tall trees. The last ray of scarlet had dropped below the horizon. The air was definitely chilly now, but neither of them heeded it.

Their eyes met and held. A choke rose in Denise's throat, and her hands fluttered a

little, desperately. Then she spoke.

"Of course. Why shouldn't I be?" she whispered.

He was looking past her, into space.

"If I thought you were unhappy—I have heard things. I was in town yesterday. I saw your husband."

She understood. She laughed, to hide the humiliation that tore at her. That Ian, the man she loved,

#### THE STORY SO FAR:

Denise Lorrimer, left alone at her father's death, becomes engaged to Ian Urquhart, not knowing that at one time he was her mother's lover. As Denise is having lunch in a hotel one day, she is approached by a woman who tells her she is her mother, Stella Lorrimer. While intoxicated one night, Stella tells Denise that Ian is the man with whom she ran away years ago. Denise breaks her engagement to Ian. She meets again her old playmate, Hugh Catteral, who is in love with her. A telegram comes from Ian telling Denise that his young daughter is ill and wants her, and she goes immediately. Ian pleads with her to marry him but, though she loves him, Denise is firm in her decision that she can never marry him knowing that he had been her mother's lover. She marries Hugh Catteral instead. Right after the ceremony, Hugh discovers that she doesn't love him and they live together just as friends. About six months after her wedding, Denise comes home one afternoon and finds Ian there.

of all men should be able to criticize the man she had married.

"Oh, Hugh and I understand each other," she said with an attempt at lightness.

The shadows were steadily deepening. His face was only a blur to her now. The big house, behind them, was very silent, wrapped in peace.

Only between them, quivering like a knife in the still air, was that tension, wreathing to and fro, connecting them like an electric current.

Ian Urquhart had never been a fencer.

"In Heaven's name, why did you do it?" he asked huskily.

She made no attempt to misunderstand.

"Oh, fear, if you like," she answered wearily. "Why does a woman do these things? Does any one ever know? Because I did not understand, because I was young, and inexperienced, I suppose. Because I thought that love was something to be ashamed of, instead of something to glory in."

She fell silent, with an indescribable gesture.

Ian was staring at her. The light from the room behind them fell on her face though it left his in darkness. She was pale, showing signs of sleeplessness. But her appeal to him was a thousandfold increased by the suggestion of maturity that showed in her slender lines, by the curve of the lips that had always been so serene.

His whole being was an ache of longing to take her into his arms, where she belonged. He reminded himself, just in time, that she belonged to another man, even though that man had long ago forfeited all right to claim her.

"I ought never to have come," he muttered.

Denise pushed back her chair. They were utterly alone. The servants had all retreated to their own quarters. Ian rose, too. There was only the table between them.

"I am glad you came," she whispered. Mad thoughts were swirling in her head. Madness was in her veins. She took a step toward the house.

"I get lonely sometimes," she whispered.

He held out his arms and, somehow, she was in them, her hands clasped around his neck, her head on his shoulder, clinging to him, quivering in every nerve and every limb.

So they stood there, while the moon came up and caught them.

"Denise—my dear—my dear!"

Instinctively, without knowing they did it, they had moved into a shadowed corner of the terrace.

She drew away from him.

"You must never come here again. But just this once—to remember you by."

As from time immemorial, woman has deceived herself!

She clung to him again, giving him her warm mouth, surrendering to the passionate glory of being against him. Not yet was shame to come to her. The wellspring of her soul had overflowed its boundaries, and no power on heaven or earth could have checked her.

So the moon rose, flooding the grounds with silver. The silent house, looming in the background, kept its secrets. These two whom destiny had meant for each other from the beginning of time, stood close to each other in that perfect communion of souls which only the evanescent moment can bring to humanity.

For that brief space both Denise



*He still loved her. That realization sent a glow of happiness through her. He still loved her, even as she loved him.*

and Ian knew the limits of utter happiness.

He spoke abruptly, tightening his grasp of her, his hunger tearing at him.

“Denise. Come away with me.”

Her heart leaped in answer, and the warm tears of overburdened emotion ran down her cheeks. She put her fingers across his mouth.

"Ian, I can't. You know I can't. I shall forget you ever said that."

After a moment, he bowed his head.

"I am sorry. I was mad!"

The spell was over. The night had grown suddenly cold. The moonlight was no longer glamorous, but cold and pitiless, revealing the full truth of what they were doing.

Gradually, as though reluctant to accept the decree of fate, they drew apart. Still they devoured each other with their eyes, soul calling to soul across the deep which separated them.

Hugh Catterall had come to life again. To Denise, he seemed to be there in the flesh, standing between them, mocking, telling her she was being foolish.

She even seemed to hear his voice.

"What are you worrying about? I don't worry. You die if you do, you die if you don't. I've got my friends. Why don't you have yours? It's only a matter of discretion; no one need ever know."

She shuddered, throwing out her arms in an appealing gesture. She shrank pitifully against the wall, covering her eyes with the back of her hand, trembling in every limb at the situation which was rising so clearly before her, repudiating the intrigue of it all, the falseness of it all, the shame of it all, from the very depths of her own fastidiousness.

"Ian! Go away! Leave me! Don't come back—never come back again! I can't bear it! I love you! You know I love you, and, if it gives you any consolation to know it, my husband is nothing to me, and never has been. I was mad! I thought I could fight destiny, and now we have both to suffer for it. Oh, I've learned—I've learned! If

only we could go back, and you could ask me now, as you did then, to marry you, how differently I would answer. But it is too late!

"Please go now, Ian. I cannot stand any more. Leave me to my memories!"

Without a word, Ian Urquhart went, stealing softly down the steps and across the grounds to the drive, as though fearful that even the sound of his footsteps might precipitate tragedy.

Reaching the roadway, he looked back. She was still standing there, in the shadow, her white blouse showing starkly. He thought, for a moment, that she raised both arms toward him, but he could not be sure.

The roar of his car died away in the distance. A heavy silence followed. Denise turned, slowly, and with a great effort, walked into the house.

The servants had turned on the lights. A decanter and glasses stood ready. A fire blazed in the hearth. But that was all. She picked up the evening paper, looked at it, but saw nothing. She let it fall again, and crossed to the hearth, staring into the flames.

Still that strange, pregnant silence gripped her. It must have been fate, destiny again, that no one had called. Hugh was in town. He would not be back until late, if he came back at all. The servants were all in their own quarters. She had the place to herself.

The loneliness was getting on her nerves.

She sat down, and picked up the paper again, but she could not read. She let it fall into her lap, and stared into space.

Why had she ever refused Ian's



love? How trivial her reasons seemed now. How had she ever come to think they were vital?

She was another man's wife. Though that man was nothing to her, and preferred to spend his time with other women, she was his wife.

She could not condemn. Perhaps if she had been kinder to him, Hugh would have been different.

Even as she phrased that thought she knew she was being unfair to herself. Had she been the most perfect wife in the world, Hugh would not have remained constant for long. He was not that type. He was bred of the generation of men who believe in one law for the woman and another for the man. The first flush of married life over, the gilt worn off, he would regard his wife much as he regarded his stables or his kennels.

How men changed, after marriage! How complacent and matter-of-fact they became.

It was only men like Ian Urquhart who had suffered and been tested, who never changed. Their principles and emotions were not those of expediency, but those born of urge and strife.

They loved not because they wanted children and a home, but because they wanted that vital companionship of women which was necessary to their existence, and which no woman but the one could give them.

She had been drawn to Ian from the first day they met. Destiny—though she had not known it! He had been drawn to her!

He, before then, had learned his lesson. He had made his mistakes, imagined the false to be the true, mistaken infatuation for the real comradeship. He had known, when she met him, that she was the love of his life.

She, inexperienced as she was, had not understood. She understood now; for had not she, in her turn, made her mistake and come to understanding? They could meet on common ground now, but it was too late.

The very thing which had put her on an equal footing with him had placed a barrier forever between them.

She understood, at last, too late!

A coal fell with a crackle onto the hearth. The telephone bell shrilled in the hall. She rose, listlessly, to answer it. The voice which came to her, echoing over the wire, was the voice of her husband.

"That you, Den? Say, I'm sorry but I shan't be able to get back tonight. The car has broken down, and I've missed the last train. They can't repair it until morning."

The ghost of a bitter smile touched Denise's lips for a second.

"It's all right," she answered. "Where are you now?"

There was a momentary hesitation.

"The club," finally came the reply.

"All right. I won't wait up for you."

She replaced the receiver, and stood quite still. Her eyes were fixed on space.

"The club," he had said. Her lips took on an even deeper smile of disillusionment.

Hugh's staid and respectable club knew of no such things as jazz bands, and shrieks of laughter, yet that was what she had distinctly heard as a background to his voice.

Night club, was nearer the truth. Strange how childish men were, and how credulous they believed their wives to be!

Or was it that he did not care whether she knew the truth or not,



*Why had she ever refused Ian's love? How trivial her reasons seemed now that she was another man's wife. Though that man was nothing to her, and preferred to spend his time with other women, she was his wife.*

so long as the threadbare veil of formality was kept up?

She felt abruptly very weary and, somehow, soiled.

Hugh returned just before lunch and greeted her gayly with an affec-

tation of friendliness that, unusual though it was, did not in any way deceive her.

He threw his arm around her shoulders, in an evident effort to regain the mood of the old days.

It was the first time since their

marriage that she had known him to show the slightest interest in her, and she might have been deceived had she not known the underlying reason.

She escaped from him without much difficulty, and drove into the village. When she returned, he was out with the dogs, so she assumed that his conscience was no longer disturbing him.

The minister and his wife called after tea to discuss the arrangements for the proposed fête, and she had plenty to occupy her mind until they left.

Alone at last, she went out onto the terrace. It was a night exactly similar to the last. The same crimson flashes of flame on the horizon. The same tang of approaching winter. The same stealthy approach of dusk.

Poignantly, memory came to her. How could she reproach Hugh when she, herself, had on this very spot only twenty-four hours ago, given her lips to another man? Did the fact that she had been driven by love, whereas Hugh was only driven by habit, excuse her?

After all, what was a married life like this? She had no right to demand of her husband that he should not have other women friends, even though their relationship was of no seeking of her own, when Hugh had deliberately chosen to ask her for nothing, realizing that she could not give in fullness.

What a terrible, tragic mess she had made of her life.

Memory of Ian was so insistent that she could not stay here. She turned and went indoors.

Hugh had not returned. He was

later than usual. She settled herself in a chair and tried to read.

Eleven struck. Still he had not come in. A fit of panic began to attack her. He had never been as late as this. The dogs were not back, either, so he had not been in and gone out again.

Suppose some accident had happened to him. Suppose he had been run over, or something. After all, was she guiltless? Might not their married life, his married life, have been different had he only married a woman who loved him? Might it not have been different if only she had kept her secret and made him believe that she cared?

She arraigned herself before the bar of her own judgment, seeing herself as she had never seen herself before. She knew, with a fatal certainty, that whether Hugh Catterall was the unfaithful type of man or not, she had never made an effort to hold him. She had, in fact, been

only too glad to accept his decision as to their relationship.

Fear catching at her, she stood up. The servants had long ago gone to bed. She went to the front door and stood on the steps, staring into the night.

Only the looming trees met her anxious gaze.

After a while, she closed the door and went in, again. He had never been as late as this, before.

Something must have happened. The telephone bell suddenly rang.

For a moment, she dared not answer it for fear of the news that might be awaiting her. In that instant, she felt that she would be nothing less than a murderess if anything had happened to Hugh.



Nerving herself, she finally answered it. The call was from the town, a telegram. Hugh had long ago made arrangements for telegrams to be delivered after hours by phone.

"Telegram for Mrs. Catterall. Are you ready? Message: 'Please — come — at — once — your — mother — seriously — ill. Duval. Doctor.' Sent from Paris. I'll repeat that."

Denise never heard the repetition. She was still standing there, the receiver in her hand, when the front door opened and Hugh walked in.

At first she wondered what was the matter with him. Then, in a flash, she understood, and with understanding came a revulsion of feeling that swept through her whole being.

She could have laughed aloud. While she had been fearing for his safety, Hugh had been out drinking.

He staggered across to her, now, with a leering attempt at a grin, and threw an arm around her shoulder.

"You're best, after all," he exclaimed. "Better than all the other girls. Let's make it up an' be friends. After all, you're my wife. A man wants his own wife, sometimes. Give us a kiss, my dear."

Denise looked at her husband in absolute dismay.

He had caught her arm in a strong grip. There was a light in his eyes that she had never seen there before.

"Give us a kiss," he repeated thickly. "You're my wife, Den, when all is said and done."

A shudder of revulsion ran through her. She wrenched herself free and stepped back. She knew only one thought—that she must play for time, somehow or other. To give herself to this man, now,

however possible it might have been when they were first married, was unthinkable.

"Why this sudden change?" she asked coldly. "You have not wanted me before? What has happened to change your mind now?"

He made a gesture which she could not interpret.

"Oh! I've been a fool, I suppose," he muttered. "One grows older, you see, and one meets people."

Then, abruptly, Denise laughed.

"So some one has been talking to you?" she snapped. Sudden anger flared in her. "Why don't you go to one of your other girl friends? You have plenty of them, haven't you? Or have they thrown you over?"

She warded him away as he would have taken her into his arms again. She scarcely knew what she was saying, so urgent was the necessity to defeat him.

At any other time, it might have been different. Now, with the memory of Ian fresh in her mind, this episode was horrible.

"You need not think that because I have said nothing I've been blind," she went on, her voice rising in her anger. "I know all about your trips to London! If you prefer that sort of woman to your own wife, who am I to object? But why this sudden change?"

She laughed again.

"I'm afraid you are too late! If you had acted differently from the beginning I might have learned to care for you. Heaven knows, I wanted to learn, I wanted you to teach me. But you refused. Now it is too late. You see, I am leaving you to-night."

Distinctly she heard his gasp.

"Denise!"

Again she laughed, but without mirth.

"No! Not that way. I'm going to Paris. I have just had a wire. Mother is ill. She may be dying. If you can pull yourself together sufficiently I'd like you to make arrangements for me to go by air. I'm going to get ready now."

Hugh looked at her. He did not speak. After a moment, he went across to the telephone and picked up the directory.

"There is no night service," he said, "but I'll try to get a private plane."

### CHAPTER XVIII.

Stella knew that she had not long to live. The doctors had told her the worst, only a few hours ago. The disease which had taken its subtle grip on her years before, would not be stemmed now.

Whether she regretted the past, whether she thought at all of what might have been, no one was ever to know, for she said nothing. But a strange calmness had come to her. She had grown incredibly old. Her face was gray.

So Denise found her.

For a moment their eyes met. Then, with a choking cry, Denise fell to her knees beside her mother's bed.

"Oh, mother!" she wailed.

Her mother was all she had left to cling to, and now she, too, was to be taken away from her.

Stella stretched out a feeble hand and touched Denise's bowed head. Her eyes looked into space. Her lips moved, but no words came from them. A slow smile crossed her thin lips.

"You mustn't worry, my dear," she whispered. "We all come to the end of the way, sooner or later."

With a desperate effort, Denise pulled herself together. If she

broke down like this she would only make her mother worse.

She pulled up a chair. The nurse stole softly from the room, and left them alone.

Distantly, the roar of the early-morning traffic came through the opened windows, and the breath of a new day crept across the roofs of Paris.

Stella was watching her daughter closely. What her thoughts were no one could guess.

"My dear," she whispered, at last. "I wanted to see you—before it was too late. I have been thinking—wondering— Perhaps being ill makes one see clearer. Have you seen Ian lately?"

Denise's cheeks flamed to scarlet, and then went white.

"Why should I see him? I am married now?"

Some of the tension left Stella's face as though the answer were a relief to her.

"Then you have forgotten him? You are happy with your husband? I have been so afraid—afraid that I had ruined your life by coming between you and Ian Urquhart. But if you have forgotten him, if you are happily married, I can die in peace."

Denise forced the lie to her lips.

"I am happy."

Stella's head relaxed onto the pillow. Her eyes closed for a moment, and then opened again.

"I was mad, I think. Your father was so cold, so self-contained, and so grim. I thought I was in love with Ian. He was only a boy, then. I knew he was attracted to me, and that if I led him on I could turn it into love.

"I did not realize, then, that he was not that sort. I thought he would take the initiative, and take



*With a choking cry, Denise fell to her knees beside her mother's bed. "Oh, mother!" she wailed. Her mother was all she had left to cling to, and now she, too, was to be taken away from her.*

me away. When I discovered that it was useless to expect any help from him, I became desperate!

"If I had stayed with your father another day, I would have gone mad. I wanted lights, gayety——"



She broke off and commenced to ramble.

Denise rose, intending to call the nurse, but did not do so. Stella was talking about Ian again, living the past anew. Spellbound, listening

against her will, Denise stayed. She caught her mother's hand in hers, but Stella no longer knew her.

Desperately, Denise clung to her. Her short period of consciousness was over and the mists were cloud-

ing her mind again as they had been doing, on and off, all night.

"I thought that if I went to him in town, without telling him I was coming, he would have no choice but to take me away, then! It would be too late for him to talk about honor and heroics."

A feeble chuckle broke from the gray lips.

"I did not know him. Shall I ever forget how mad he was with me, how he turned me out of his rooms, and took me back to the station, how he bought my ticket and made me promise to go back home? I had to promise, or he would have come with me, and that would have spoiled everything, for I never intended to go back. Even if he did not want me, I was not going back. Daphne had often asked me to visit her in Paris. I knew she would keep me.

"I watched him. I made some excuse, and persuaded him to leave me, instead of staying to see the train start. As soon as he had gone, I got out of the compartment and called a taxi.

"What a fool he was to think I would ever go back, when I had once got away. While he thought I was going home, I was on my way to Paris——"

The murmured voice ceased. The eyes opened, and fixed themselves on Denise's face. Stella was conscious enough to know what she was saying, and to whom she was speaking, but she had no understanding of the meaning of what she said. She was reciting a story, like a child, reveling in her own cleverness as she looked back upon it.

"Every one blamed poor Ian," she chuckled. "Your father always thought I had run away with him."

Denise's dry lips formed words

that sounded strange in her own ears.

"But you didn't, mother?" she heard herself ask.

Stella tried to laugh.

"He wouldn't have me," she said.

She sighed and closed her eyes again.

"I'm tired. I think I could sleep. Don't go."

Denise wondered why she could not see. It was a moment before she understood that her eyes were blinded with tears.

She pressed a bell on the tiny table. The door opened, and the nurse came back. Stella slept, breathing peacefully, like a child. Very gently, Denise withdrew her fingers from her mother's.

Two hours later, Stella died. She never recovered consciousness again. The wayward soul which had fought for the lighted pinnacles of life and bruised itself against the immutable obstacles of an everyday existence, had passed into the keeping of the Power which, knowing all, can forgive all.

Hugh Catterall held his wife's letter between his fingers. He stared over it into the heart of the blazing fire.

"What is the use of our carrying on, like this?" Denise had written. "Had you acted differently from the beginning, and tried to help me, been understanding, we might have been happy together. Instead, you thrust me out of your life. When I was hungering for love and understanding, you gave me condemnation and cynicism.

"I know the blame was as much mine as yours, but things have gone too far, now. At least, I have been faithful, and you have not. You have not needed your wife. You do not need me now. There are other



women who can be to you all that you need a woman to be. Ours is a hollow mockery of a marriage, Hugh, and it would be better if we ended it now. I am not coming home, yet. You can easily arrange a divorce. I don't know anything about such things."

Hugh Catterall laughed. He seemed, somehow, very different from the Hugh Catterall of his youth. Denise need not have blamed herself for the change in him. It was not due to his marriage. It would have occurred in any event, for the nature which was developing in him now was hereditary.

Before his father died, he had not possessed the means to indulge himself. Now, his own master, in command of all the money he could spend, the way was open.

Money unlocked the doors, and it was Hugh Catterall's nature to use the key to its fullest purpose.

He seized a sheet of paper from the desk at his elbow; and glanced down the lines he had already written.

DEAR DENISE: There is no need for any divorce. You are exaggerating things. In any event, I could not possibly countenance legal proceedings. I could not consider for one moment dragging the Catterall name through the divorce courts, therefore I hope you will arrange to return home as soon as you can make it convenient, when we can come to some sort of arrangement as to our future relationship.

HUGH.

Hugh Catterall laughed again, and folded the letter into an envelope. He sealed it, and rose, ringing the bell. His figure, clad in heavy tweeds, loomed gigantic, like some tremendous shape, against the walls as the firelight shadowed it into silhouette. For a moment, he dwarfed everything in the room.

To the servant who answered, he gave the letter.

"See that this catches the mail and have the car brought around. I am going to town."

The servant nodded. "Very good, sir."

Hugh strolled into the hall, hesitated, and picked up the telephone. He gave a number, waited.

"That you, Pearl? Hugh speaking. What about a show somewhere? And supper together. All right, I'll call for you in a couple of hours' time."

When Denise received Hugh's letter it took her some time to understand it. At last she realized that he would not release her.

She did not deceive herself. In fact, she ought to have realized from the beginning that he never would.

Men like Hugh Catterall did not marry for love. They married because their position in society demanded a wife and a hostess, because it was the correct thing to do.

They might carry on clandestine affairs behind their wives' backs. They might, even, though that was less likely, tolerate their wives' affairs with other men. But they would not go through the publicity of a divorce.

Marriage was a business proposition to them, and they would see no reason for upsetting the even tenor of their lives for a mere sentimental scruple.

Denise sat, staring into space. Since the night of her mother's death, her whole outlook on life had changed. Even before then, she had begun to understand how youthful callousness had caused her to place herself in the position of judge.

She had long ago realized that

she had no justification for setting herself up as a critic of Ian's past.

Now she understood everything, she felt that she could have gone down on her hands and knees and pleaded for his forgiveness for her hardness.

At first, she had resented his silence. Why had he not told her the truth? Then she realized that he had done so, but she had refused to understand. Under the circumstances, considering that even though they had been separated for years Stella was her mother, he could have done no more.

She wondered if he knew of Stella's death. She had not heard from him.

How could she go back to Hugh now, back to that mockery of married life, back to the husks which she had herself chosen? How could she do it, with the revelation still fresh in her brain and her blood, with this passionate craving to abase herself before the man she had wronged so greatly still churning in her veins?

Only now was she able to see how immeasurably above her Ian was, how immeasurably more charitable in his outlook, how immeasurably greater. Almost, with her new understanding, she elevated him in her own mind to the likeness of a god, whom she, in her narrow-minded bigotry had dared to judge.

If only she could go down on her knees to him and tell him that at last she understood, she felt that life would be more bearable.

A light tap on the door aroused her. She went to it, and opened it. A bell boy stood outside, a folded note on a tray.

Mechanically, she opened it. Who could be inquiring for her? Some more of Stella's friends, no doubt.

Her heart ceased beating. The old, familiar handwriting stared up at her.

I have only just heard. I am tremendously sorry. Is there anything I can do? I shall understand, if you would rather not see me. IAN.

For a brief instant, Denise faced the crisis of her life; while decision swung first this way, and then that. The boy watched her.

She drew a deep breath.

"I shall be down in five minutes," she said.

They met in the entrance hall. Their eyes met. Denise broke the tension.

"It is good of you to have come."

"I only heard an hour ago," said Ian simply. His eyes never left her face. She could almost feel the intensity of their gaze probing to the very depths of her being, and the warmth that stole through her was like a revelation.

She, who had believed herself alone and forsaken in the world, was still loved and still wanted by at least one person. What a difference that made to life.

"There will not be many people in the coffee room," she said.

They found it empty save for a waiter who came to take their order and, being experienced in his job, withdrew as soon as he had filled it and left them to themselves.

She studied him, hungrily. Her hands were yearning to reach out to him. He had not changed, except that he seemed sterner than ever. But she had learned to see beneath the mask! She had learned that beneath Ian Urquhart's sternness lay a tenderness unsuspected by the world, even as beneath her own husband's mask of good-humored cama-



*The intensity of his gaze probed to the very depths of her being, and the warmth that stole through her was like a revelation. She, who had believed herself alone and forsaken, was still loved and still wanted by at least one person.*

raderie lay a callousness which no one but his own wife would ever gauge.

LS-5D

How deceptive appearances were! The boy with every outward sign to recommend him turned out to be

selfish and self-centered to a point verging on cruelty. The man who appeared grim and hard was just the reverse.

How many other women throughout the lifetime of the world, she thought, had been deceived by outward appearances even as she had.

She looked Ian straight in the eyes.

"I learned the truth before she died," she said simply.

There was a brief second of silence. Ian Urquhart's hand suddenly covered hers.

"You poor child," he whispered.

Then—they would be restrained no longer—the tears came. They ran down her cheeks.

Denise sobbed like a child, and clung to the one hand that could sustain her.

"I feel ashamed of myself," she wailed. "So ashamed I don't know what to say, what to do. I did not understand. I ought to have guessed. Oh, Ian!"

Ian Urquhart picked up the full cocktail glass the waiter had set before her.

"Drink this," he said.

Denise stared at him. After a moment, she obeyed, though it was only with the greatest difficulty that she kept the glass steady.

When she replaced it on the table, it was empty. She stared at him again, desperately, helplessly.

"What are we going to do?" she whispered.

Ian Urquhart controlled himself with a strong effort.

"Where is your husband? He ought to be here?"

Denise shook her head. "I couldn't have had him here. I wanted to be alone. I told him he need not come."

"And he actually let you go through this by yourself?"

Denise smiled pathetically.

"He could not very well come over in the face of my definite request that he should not do so."

But she knew that Ian would have come, whether she had told him to stay away or not.

Momentarily, Ian Urquhart's self-control broke. He spoke sharply.

"Oh, my dear! If only you had given me the right, but you are another man's wife, and I ought not, even to be sitting here now."

"Another man's wife," echoed Denise in a spasm of uncontrollable bitterness. "Wife of a man who does not even want me, who prefers others——" She stopped, abruptly, but it was too late.

Ian Urquhart's face had changed completely. The old, hawklike lines had sprung into prominence. He gripped her hand, crushing her fingers. He leaned toward her across the tiny table.

"Then you are *not* happy. I always suspected it. It is too late, now, to deny it. You've practically admitted it. If I had not believed you did not know, I would never have kept silent as long as this.

"Denise, you can't go back to him. He is not faithful. His type never is, never will be. It's a crime that you should live in the same house with him. I'd never have spoken, but since you know yourself, why should I keep silent?"

Denise stared at him wearily.

"I've known for a long time, now," she admitted. "But what can I do?"

Ian Urquhart stared at her, and there was that in his eyes which penetrated to every corner of her being with a glorious flood of warmth and promise that came to her misery and her loneliness like fire to snow.

"Don't go back! He must release

you! You have made a terrible mistake, but it is not too late. We can start again, you and I, and—  
 Oh, my dear, I'll spend the remainder of my days making you happy. It was all wrong from the beginning, but all the future is before us. We can go away somewhere. When he has made the necessary arrangements, we can be married. Denise, you can't go on like this, neither of us can."

Every speck of color left Denise's face. Slowly, she withdrew her hand. Softly, her words reached him.

"My dear, if only it were possible. But Hugh will never divorce me. He has said so."

When the waiter came back, they were staring at each other, hopelessly.

What was there left for them to say?

The waiter avoided looking at them. Mechanically, Ian paid their bill. The waiter departed. Denise moved. Her frozen calm deserted her. Suddenly, she stretched her hands across the table.

"Ian," she breathed. "My dear, take me away with you."

TO BE CONTINUED.



CHRISTMAS GIFT

ONE will send her orchids  
 Purchased from a store,  
 And one will send a prayer rug  
 For her polished floor;  
 One will offer her a gem,  
 Once a nation's pride—  
 Taken from the ancient tomb  
 Of a king's bride.  
 One will send a silken sash  
 From a geisha's hips;  
 But I shall send her mistletoe,  
 And kiss her on the lips!

HELEN BAYLEY DAVIS.



# Moonlight Lover

By Ethel Le Compte

**R**OSANNE, get a load of what's being flashed around by the boss!" whispered Kathy excitedly. "Every girl in the store is making eyes at him, and the customers aren't missing him either. Boy! I bet he's the original Mr. Tall-dark-'n'-handsome!" Her eyes followed the tall figure walking through the store with the manager.

Rosanne, transferring a tray of three-for-ten tumblers from carrier

to counter, turned to look. Without even a cry, she dropped to the floor, the glasses crashing to ruin. Lips parted, eyes dark and wide in a paper-white face, she sat there motionless, amid the splintered glass.

*Crash!* A moment of dead silence! Then every one speaking at once—every one but Rosanne.

Kathy was breathlessly pouring out excuses for her friend's accident. Then a volley of furious scoldings

from Leon Doughton; expressions of commiseration from customers.

The tall young man commanded sharply: "Don't move! You'll cut yourself." He reached over the swinging door, and lifted one hundred ten pounds of burning shame out of the débris.

"Thank you," breathed Rosanne, now scarlet. She pushed a red-gold wisp of soft hair into place, then stood trembling, her lower lip caught in her teeth to keep it steady. She raised her violet eyes, and met a friendly, encouraging smile. There was no recognition in the eyes that looked into hers. "He doesn't know me!" Rosanne's heart wailed. "Oh, Eric—Eric! My dearest, my moonlight lover!"

Tears welled up into her eyes. Her long lashes lay like golden fibers on her wet, flushed cheeks.

"Don't cry," Eric said gently. "Mr. Doughton doesn't mean all he is saying, I'm sure." He laid a placating hand on Leon Doughton's.

"Of course not, of course not," blustered Leon. "I was afraid that Rosanne—er—Miss Ray might have hurt herself. Take a relief, Miss Ray, if you still feel shaky. I didn't want Mr. Winship to get an impression of inefficiency. He's here from the West for a few weeks to learn how we successful Easterners run chain stores." He patted Rosanne's quivering shoulder with a pudgy hand, and leaning close to her, whispered: "I'll be up to the house tonight, hon." Then he followed Eric Winship, who had moved on.

"Love o' Pete, what came over you?" Kathy asked anxiously.

"I—suddenly felt faint," Rosanne told her, and hurried away to the rest room. There she dropped onto a wicker sofa, and lay still.

"Eric," she murmured brokenly, "you did not know me!"

Leon's words came back to her: "He's here from the West——" But ten weeks and one day ago, Eric had been here in New York. That sultry Sunday in September had been Rosanne's day of days! A day to be lived over and over in her thoughts, and never to be forgotten as long as she lived! It had started out all wrong—had ended wrong, too, for that matter—but there had been an interlude, an hour of utter ecstasy.

She had awakened early that hot Sunday, crept from the small, airless room she shared with her sister Violet, through her mother's and the boys' room, into the parlor. Leaning out the window for a breath of air, she had watched boys and girls setting out, two by two, with lunch and bathing suits, for a day on the beach, or in the country.

Suddenly, she decided to go on a picnic of her own!

Let Violet wash the dresses and undies, and clean the parlor for a change. Let Leon come that evening and find her gone. Leon, who was always too tired, or so he claimed, after a week of managing the store, to take her anywhere, but to the talkies! Leon, who drank more than he should, who could fire her, and refuse to give Violet a job at the next vacancy, if she broke with him!

At noon, Rosanne Ray became a truant for the day. Perched comfortably on a huge slab of rock atop the picturesque Palisades, she watched the rolling Hudson far below. There were crowds of people on the beaches, on the roads, in boats, but here, in this cool strip of woods, there was a tranquil peace. She had eaten her lunch, read her favorite magazine, finding between its covers, a dreamy romance, over which she contentedly drowsed, and

awakened to find that the sun had set.

She lingered to watch the moon rise; reluctantly she started away from the rock, now drenched in silver light. As she turned, she stopped short. A cry escaped her, and her bag and book dropped from her trembling hands.

With horrified fascination, she watched a tall, white figure, coming toward her. As it reached the edge of the cliff, Rosanne forgot her terror, and she automatically leaped forward. Catching the man around the waist, she struggled with him, and together they crashed backward onto the ground. Rosanne scrambled to her feet, then knelt beside the prone figure. She divined at once, that the man was desperately ill, and must have escaped from his nurse in some way. His body felt hot through his thin silk pajamas, and he was babbling incoherently.

"Let me take you home," Rosanne said. "Where do you live?"

He sat up, peered at her with fever-bright eyes, then caught her hand to his burning lips. "Naomi! You have come back to me!" he cried. "Promise you will stay with me, Naomi *mia*." He did not wait for an answer. On and on he went, pouring out impassioned words.

Now, two months and more later, she saw him again, well, properly clothed, and in his right mind. All those weeks, she had been living in a dream world of her own, peopled only by Eric and herself. Now she had found him, and he didn't know her!

"He must! He must know me!" she thought agonizingly. For he had suddenly snapped out of his delirium that night, and in a clear voice said: "You are not Naomi."

"No, I am not Naomi," she had told him softly.

"You are a young thing," he went on, in a voice that stirred her. "Lovely, fresh as a May morning." He pressed her palms reverently against his lips, then planted little kisses from her sweetly rounded arms to the shoulder. "Dressed in cotton, too. How much sweeter than sleek silk!" Then, sharply: "Who—are—you?"

"I am Rosanne," she whispered.

"Rose-anne! Just the name for a little love girl. You are trembling, child. You mustn't be afraid of Eric, you know."

"Not afraid," she denied stoutly, and pressed his arm timidly.

He had held her close, searching her face in the moonlight; he had kissed her hot cheeks, and her tremulous lips tenderly, softly. It was different from any kiss she had ever known, stirring her strangely.

"You will never leave me, will you?" he whispered in the middle of another kiss.

"Never leave you," she promised, and offered her lips again.

He had relapsed into delirium, then fallen asleep. Terrified, she had sat there, holding his head in her lap. A confusion of wild thoughts came to her: The exposure might kill him. If she left him, he might wander again, fall to his death—

Then a dog's sharp bark shattered the quiet. Voices called:

"Eric! Eric!" Then: "Find your master, Tops. Find Eric."

She had kissed him once more, gathered up her possessions, and fled like a frightened deer, hiding behind the rock, until they carried him away.

Then she had wept as she wept now—quietly, hopelessly.

When Leon arrived at the Ray apartment that evening, he was in as dark a mood as he had been the





*"It was to hold my job that I promised to marry him," she blurted out. "But I never would have married him now that I've found out what it really is to l——" She stifled the word "love" just in time.*

Monday after she had played truant, and had failed to keep her date with him Sunday evening. But now, as then, his angry words did not even reach her. She had a shield, her memory of Eric, of that rapturous hour, even if Eric had forgotten her.

She listened to Leon's complaints

about the stupidity of his subordinates, and tried wearily to pacify him. She knew very well, that if it were not for Terry Casey, his assistant, Leon would have lost his job long before. Yet she must agree with him, if she wanted to keep her own job.

"This Winship," he burst out. "I don't like the idea of his coming here. For all I know, he may be a spy, a snoop."

"But you said he came from the West; that he owns stores there."

"His people own a Southwestern chain. He came here last summer, became ill, then went away to the mountains to recover. Living with some relatives over in Englewood. Well, think I'll be moving. Big day ahead of me."

She shuddered as he kissed her unyielding mouth, and slipped his arm around her waist. With relief she shut the door behind him, and went to bed, only to lie awake, visualizing, dreaming of Eric. If he were to be at the store, she would see him daily, she recalled with delight. But—ah—it would also be anguish!

Rosanne did not see him, however, for several days. On Thursday, as she was rushing along the passage between the office and the stock room, she met Leon. She saw at once that he had been drinking.

"Where—you—going?" he demanded drunkenly, catching her by the shoulder.

"To the stock room for some salad plates."

"Why don't you send the stock boy?"

"I can't find him. The customer is waiting."

"Why did you let your stock get so low?"

"We had a special on those plates, and before we knew it, they——"

"Excuses for everything from everybody! And with that damn' Winship snooping around——" He mopped his flushed face, and tugged at his collar.

"If you think he's spying, why do you drink during business hours?"

"Say," Leon shouted, "I'm not

taking that sort o' talk from you, or any one else! I'm sick o' your high-hat ways, too. We're quits. Understand? Get your time, and get out."

He turned and wove his unsteady way toward the back door, leaving Rosanne, dazed and white-faced.

She wanted to run after him, to beg for her job. Her legs, however, just wouldn't go! Instead, she wheeled around, and fell hard against the office door, which at the impact, opened, and let her crash to the floor.

For the second time, Eric Winship lifted her from the floor. This time he was not smiling. His face was grim. He placed her in a chair, and got her a glass of water.

Rosanne drank thirstily. "Customer waiting," she said, and got up.

"Sit still. What was Doughton calling you down about?"

Recollection of the event rushed over Rosanne again. She hid her face in her hands, and wept like a broken-hearted child. "He discharged me," she sobbed.

"But he told me he was going to marry you," Eric exclaimed.

Rosanne was thankful that her face was hidden. She felt herself tingling with hot shame, that Eric should know of her wretched affair with Leon.

"It was to hold my job," she blurted out, between sobs. "And he promised to give my job to my sister when I married him. You see, my father died, and mother has four of us, and only dad's insurance and my wages——" A torrent of tears strangled her words. Then, wildly: "But I never would have married him now—now that I've found out what it really is to l——" She bit her lip, and stifled the word "love" just in time.

"So it's the job that's the cause of your tears, eh?" Eric asked. "Well,

dry them. You shan't lose it. Terry Casey tells me that you're one of our best clerks. Can you keep a secret, Miss Ray?"

Could she keep a secret! If only he knew the secret she was keeping.

At her nod, he went on: "The Western chain is buying this one, and I'm the big boss around here for a while. Your job is yours, and you're not under any obligation to any one for it."

"Oh!" was all Rosanne said, but her eyes spoke volumes, as they were raised to his. She managed a tremulous smile, and dabbed at her wet cheeks.

"Strange," he muttered, frowning intently. "Your face— Have you ever posed for ads, Miss Ray?"

"Why, no!" Rosanne shook her head in startled wonder.

He went on: "I've seen your face somewhere. Heard your voice, too. There's a happy association—" He shrugged, and laughed whimsically. "Don't think I'm goofy, please," he begged. But his eyes, despite its humorous glints, were baffled.

"As if I would," Rosanne reproved him gravely. Within her, the conflict, whether to give him the answer to the puzzle or not, tormented her. She took a deep breath. No! She would not tell him just yet.

"Now—if you were a stenographer," he was saying thoughtfully.

"But I am! I mean, I took a course. I've had no experience, though."

"Well, I do need a secretary. Think you'd like to take a stab at it?" he asked, smiling encouragingly.

"Yes! Oh, please let me try!" Rosanne's heart rose hopefully.

"It will be no sinecure," Eric assured her crisply. "Hard work and plenty of it! Everything is in a dis-

graceful mess here. I'll go easy with you at first. But I think you'll make the grade." His eyes softened. Then with impersonal kindness: "Now, run along home, and get a rest. To-morrow will be a busy day."

Rosanne managed a word of thanks before she hurried away.

A real job! No Leon to placate! No more of his kisses!

And she would be with Eric every day! Perhaps— She laughed softly, happily, blushing at her thought.

She delivered the delayed plates, told Kathy the good news, and rushed home. Having announced the news to her jubilant family, she found herself practicing shorthand, with special emphasis on the word "Eric." That night, she dreamed of hooks, and angles, and curves, and of "Eric—Eric" written in stenography.

It was not until she was at the desk that Eric had installed for her use, just outside his private cubicle, that Rosanne wondered how Leon would take the news of her promotion. Then Eric appeared, an alert, friendly smile on his face, and she forgot Leon entirely.

He lost no time in getting to work, and was so sympathetic with her inexperience, that she got through the morning surprisingly well. The gratitude and admiration she felt for him swelled her heart with ever-increasing love.

"Have you," he asked abruptly in the middle of dictation, "ever felt that you were reliving an episode in your life?"

Rosanne, her eyes on her notebook, was sure that he must hear the loud beating of her heart. "I think we all feel that at times."

"But with me, it is so vivid, and recurrent." He hesitated, and then

plunged on: "It has to do with you. You, your eyes, your voice, everything about you haunts me. Why, your very name—Rosanne—awakens some dormant memory in me. It has something to do with the fever I had last summer." He passed his hand over his eyes, and frowned.

Rosanne's heart threatened to tear itself loose. If only she could tell him the truth! But, then, tell him that she let the first stranger who came along make love to her? Hardly! Doubts filled her.

Then the answer came. She would not tell him, but she would win his love! Win it for herself! Make him forget that elusive wraith whose enchantment had cast such a spell. She drew an ecstatic breath, and smiled.

Eric's laugh made her look up. "Well, youngster, so I'm not the only one, who dreams around here. Penny for your thoughts."

Hot color rushed to Rosanne's face.

"Rose-anne," murmured Eric. "You are a red rose now. Your lips are its satiny petals. Your eyes are flowers all by themselves—dewy violets and——"

"Very pretty, very poetical!" sneered a thick, furious voice.

In the doorway, swaying slightly, stood Leon, wearing the vicious expression that always chilled Rosanne.

"What d'y'want here, Doughton?"

Eric demanded, striding toward him.

"Plenty! You took my job, but you're not taking my girl. Get your hat 'n' coat, Rose, and come along with me," he ordered.

"I thought," Eric said quietly, but with biting emphasis, "that you understood last night you were through here. I don't want to have you thrown out, but——"

"How about throwing me out yourself, you big double-crossing, woman-stealing——"

It all happened so quickly and quietly, that before Rosanne could gasp in protest, Eric had firmly deposited Leon out in the alley. He came back frowning. "Gosh, I hated to do that," he said, "but it was coming to him. He ought to be arrested for stealing, too. He's been doing some fancy fig-

ure-juggling lately. I'm giving Terry Casey his job."

"Oh, Kathy will be so happy. They're engaged, you know. They plan to be married this spring. My sister will be through school in February. If you could give her Kathy's job——"

"Of course. Tell her to understudy this job, too," he added.

Rosanne's heart fluttered. She stared at him wide-eyed, but he was studying a long invoice, and his expression was that of detachment.

Once again, during the afternoon, he made her heart leap.

"Would your hair look white in the moonlight?" he asked suddenly.



"I—I wouldn't know," Rosanne told him. "Why?"

"We'll find out, the next full moon. It may give me a clue to a certain apparition that bothers me." He spoke lightly, but his eyes were thoughtful. "Let me take you home in my car this evening. Doughton is probably hanging around. To think that that drunken scoundrel wanted to marry you!"

It was wonderful enough to ride home in comfort, instead of in the subway; but to be with Eric, even a quiet, preoccupied Eric, such as he was this evening—it was heavenly! She did not feel like talking, herself. It had been a trying day, and she was not at all entirely self-confident in her new job. Then, too, her head ached at the thought of Leon, even though she was infinitely relieved to be rid of him.

But she was not rid of him, she found. After a grateful "Good night" to Eric, she raced up the four flights of stairs to the Ray apartment. As she opened the door, she heard Leon's angry voice, and her mother's nervous, placating tones. She hurried into the parlor.

"How dare you come here, and upset my mother?" she burst out.

"I've always been welcome enough before," retorted Leon.

"And you expect to be, after firing me? Making a scene to-day and——"

"I came to warn your mother against Winship. When a married man gives a girl a job in his office, and then makes love to her, it's——"

"He's not married, and he didn't make love to me!"

"Not married, eh?" Leon thrust a folded newspaper at her. "His home-town paper. I found it on his desk." His pudgy finger tapped the picture of a strikingly beautiful woman, with platinum-blond hair.

Rosanne read the caption under it: "Mrs. Eric Winship, née Naomi Preston, who won the Southwestern Bridge Tournament at New Orleans."

Rosanne felt a sickening plunge of her heart. For a moment, her body was cold and rigid, while her temples throbbed with the surging blood. She sat down abruptly. She had never thought that Eric might be married. She knew that he had loved some one named Naomi, but thought from his delirious ravings, that the affair was over.

"Knocked you flat, eh?" jeered Leon.

"Certainly not!" Rosanne recovered her poise quickly. "The job that Mr. Winship gave me has no strings attached to it. Do not judge him wrongly. Now, will you go?"

"Sure I'll go, but I'll get Winship. Shoot him like the dog he is."

"Leon, don't talk like that," cried Mrs. Ray. "You've been drinking." She followed him anxiously down the hall.

Left alone, Rosanne studied the picture of Naomi, scanned the page for further comment on the Winships, and found none.

Her mother came back to find her sitting there, with a deathly pallor.

"Are you so upset because Mr. Winship is married?" she asked sharply.

"No," Rosanne lied. "I am afraid Leon may harm him."

"Silly, drunken threats, that's all. Get a warm bath, dear, and lie down. I'll bring you something to eat."

Rosanne thought, as she slipped into a profound sleep: "At least I didn't tell Eric about that night. If I had, I never could face him."

During the days that followed, Rosanne worked harder than was good for her; but work was a neces-

sary drug. Eric, too, worked hard and long. Rosanne, watching his grave face, wondered if he, too, was using activity as a narcotic. If so, was it to forget Naomi, or to forget the wraith that haunted him—Ros-

ward a warmer friendship, coolly disregarded. Rosanne hurt herself as much as she hurt him, and often cried herself to sleep at night.

Late one afternoon, Naomi Winship walked into the office. Rosanne



anne's tortured mind kept inquiring. Often, he smiled at her quizzically, and asked: "Rosanne, haven't you been in my life somewhere, sometime?"

Rosanne always answered: "You know I have not, Mr. Winship."

It was she who kept their relationship on a purely business basis. Eric's offers to drive her home were politely refused, his overtures to-

knew her at once, and her pulse nearly stopped.

Her hair, pure white, instead of blond, as it seemed in the photograph, made her beauty startling. Rosanne could not help staring, and found that Naomi was staring at her with equal interest. Rosanne flushed under the hard, speculating eyes.

"Mr. Winship, please," the visitor demanded imperiously.



*"What a beautiful office wife you have, darling! Ought I to be jealous?"  
Naomi laughed, and walked past him into his private office.*

Eric's door opened, and he strode forward, his brow like a thunder cloud. "Why have you come here, Naomi?" he asked sharply.

"Nice welcome—after the weeks I've spent tracking you down," laughed Naomi. "What a beautiful office wife you have, darling! Ought

I to be jealous?" She laughed again, and walked past him into his private office. Eric pulled the door shut.

Rosanne sat motionless for a while, listening to the murmur of angry voices. Then she shook herself impatiently. She closed her

desk, snatched up her bag, and hurried to the rest room. It was plain that Eric did not love his wife, but—she was his wife!

The closing bell rang. Rosanne automatically got her hat and coat, and went out the employees' door, still utterly unstrung. As she turned into the avenue, Leon took her arm. His face was flushed, his breath reeked of liquor, and his eyes were menacing.

"Don't pull away," he growled. "I've got a cab waiting. You're coming with me, Miss Ritz, and listen to what——"

"I'll call a cop if you don't let me go," Rosanne interrupted quietly.

He thrust her hand into his overcoat pocket. "Feel that!" he muttered. "It's a gun. If you don't come with me quietly, I'll go back and shoot that double-crossing Winship through the head."

Terror seized Rosanne as she felt the weapon and heard Leon's threat. But she held the revolver in a firm grip, and tried to pull it and her hand free.

Leon twisted her wrist brutally, forcing her to loosen her hold.

"Well, here comes Winship," he said. "Want me to let him have it?"

"No! I'll go with you," Rosanne decided impetuously.

Winship was alone, she saw. She half turned, met his astonished, suspicious look, but restrained an impulse to rush to him for help. She managed a cool smile for him. At that, his expression changed, and he climbed into his car, but did not drive away, as Rosanne hoped he would. Once Eric was out of range, she could tear herself loose from Leon, she believed.

She fairly tumbled into the cab Leon had waiting. When it started, she demanded steadily: "Where are you taking me?"

"You'll see. You'll never go back to that dog." He produced a flask, and took a long drink. The cab moved slowly on through the heavy traffic. Suddenly, Leon slumped into his corner, his swollen eyelids drooping with drunken sleep. Rosanne gritted her teeth, breathed deeply, and transferred the gun from his pocket to her bag. Her whole body was trembling, but her mind was cool.

The first time the cab stopped for a traffic light, she flung open the door, and darted out swiftly, threading her way between the rows of cars to the opposite curb. Five minutes later, she was on a subway platform.

She made her way to a refuse can, but despite her cold courage, she dared not open her bag and drop the gun into it, as she had planned, for fear of being observed. She finally boarded a train, the weapon still in her possession.

She found her mother home alone, and poured out the whole story, taking the gun out of her bag, and laying it on the table. At the sight of the revolver, Mrs. Ray promptly fainted.

Oblivious to her own weak and unnerved condition, Rosanne lifted her upon the sofa, and went for water. The bell rang as she reached the kitchen, and Rosanne, hoping it was Violet or one of the boys, hurried to open it. There stood Leon, his face a mask of malignant fury.

Rosanne turned, and raced back to the dining room. But before she could get the gun, he had caught her. He struck her violently across the cheek. "You will be smart, will you?" he snarled, and closed his fist over the gun.

Rosanne cried out in pain and anger. "You're out of your mind, Leon," she panted. "Give me that



gun—you'll——" The words died on her lips, as she saw, over Leon's shoulder, Eric's tense face. Finger to lip, he signaled silence, but Rosanne's expression had already betrayed him.

Leon spun about, but as he did so, Rosanne leaped, and grappled for the gun. Eric, too, had leaped. There was a loud report. Rosanne screamed, as she felt a burning sensation in her shoulder. She dropped to the floor, and lay still, looking up at blue smoke, curling from a gun gripped by a hand, that was in turn gripped by another hand.

Then she slid off into darkness, only to start up again as she heard another shot. She saw through a mist two men dropping to the floor. Rosanne tried to rise, but fell backward into peaceful tranquillity.

But they wouldn't let her rest. They moved her. Did things to her. Voices drifted into her flickering consciousness. She heard herself cry out in agony. She sank, finally, into blessed oblivion.

She awakened in a hospital room. Shadowy forms moved around in the dim light. "Then I didn't die," she breathed.

"You are getting well, dear," a quiet voice told her.

"Mom!" she demanded, and her mother was there, holding her hand.

"Eric?" she asked.

"Eric is all right, darling, and Leon won't bother you any more. He shot himself in the fight. Now close your eyes, and sleep. I'll stay right here, and Eric will come as soon as the doctor says you are strong enough for visitors."

Days and nights slipped by, but the wounded girl had no reckoning of time. Then, one day, Eric was in her mother's place at the bedside. Rosanne smiled up at him. "Don't

look so frightened," she murmured. "I'm not going to die, Mr. Winship."

Eric smiled back and took her hand. "It's the nurse who scares me," he confided. "A regular dragon! Says I can stay only ten minutes." He bent closer, and in a voice suddenly husky, went on: "You saved my life, Rosanne, at the risk of your own." He raised her hand to his lips. "What a fool I was to let you get into that cab with him! I followed the cab, somehow guessing that he was abducting you, then got caught in the traffic and lost you. I raced to your home——" Eric's voice broke.

"I was terribly frightened," Rosanne shuddered at the recollection. "Please don't talk about it any more. I want to forget it." She closed her eyes. There was something else she wanted desperately to forget—a beautiful woman, with a crown of hair like soft snow, and a hard smile.

"I brought you some playthings," Eric said presently. "And when you get out of here, I'm going to give you the world, with a diamond on each pole and a million rubies around the equator."

Rosanne opened her eyes.

With the air of a magician producing a rabbit from a hat, he drew a froth of chartreuse chiffon and cream lace from a tissue-lined box; then came a cut-glass bottle. "*Le Muguet*," Eric pronounced, "'Lily of the Valley,' for young loveliness. Like it?"

Rosanne took the bottle. "Love it. Empty it all over me!"

"Time to go, Mr. Winship," announced the nurse crisply.

"Er—if you would just put these in water." Eric handed her the copper roses, and blue Queen Anne's lace he had brought.

The nurse smiled as she took

them, giving him what he wanted, a few more precious minutes with her patient.

"The flowers are your name, Roseanne," he whispered.

His very tenderness tore at her heart. She closed her eyes so that he would not see her love, reflected in them.

"I've tired you, dear," he said contritely. "And I'm so anxious to have you well and strong again."

"You mean—so that I can go back to my job?"

"So that I can talk to you about another job. One out West."

"Talk to me about it now," Rosanne demanded excitedly.

The nurse entering, frowned. "I did wrong to let you stay," she scolded. "Miss Ray, you're upset and feverish."

On Eric's next visit, he brought magazines, games, fruit, and flowers. Rosanne thanked him, but more important matters weighed on her mind.

"Tell me about that job," she said.

Eric smiled his fascinating, rueful smile. "I want you to have it," he told her, taking her hand in his, "but there's some one else—I— Oh, Rosanne, the job is being my wife— You know that, don't you, but—"

"Naomi," she put in succinctly.

"Naomi?" he repeated, plainly puzzled. "What has she to do with it?"

"A lot, I should think, being your wife."

"My wife! Good heavens, child, Naomi isn't my wife."

"But Leon showed me a newspaper picture of her, and it said she was Mrs. Eric Winship, and she came to the office and asked if she ought to be jealous." Rosanne took a deep breath, preparatory to telling him of his delirious cries for

Naomi on that never-to-be-forgotten night, but the words stuck in her throat.

Eric was looking at her queerly. "And all this while you thought I was married!" he ejaculated. "Darling, Naomi is my stepmother. She married my father last year. You see—" he hesitated, then went on: "I may as well tell you the truth. I became infatuated with Naomi when I was in college; she was a young widow at the time. When she found out that my father was a widower, young, handsome, and more of a playboy than his serious-minded, hard-working son, she transferred her affections.

"Naturally, she thought she would get the millions at once in that way, instead of waiting for them, but it happens that my grandfather had no use for his son, and did like his grandson. So I inherited the bulk of the business, along with the responsibility. Dad has a good income, but not enough for Naomi to be happy on. She's been gold-digging me on every opportunity. She came East to do it—the time you saw her. Gosh, if I thought you had any idea that we were married—"

"But didn't it make you wretched, when she married your father?" Rosanne interrupted. "Haven't you ever thought of her, wanted her?"

"I did feel upset, but got over it in a hurry. Never give her a thought now." A frown creased his forehead. "Funny thing, though, when I was ill last summer, she was mixed up in my delirium somehow. I seemed to want her, then to find her, but on waking I had no use for her."

Rosanne's spirits soared like a bird on wings! Color came to her pale cheeks, and her eyes shone. He



*"Oh, my beloved, from this minute on, life is so full, so worth while, so grand! Let's live, love, and laugh together always—always——" His lips sought hers and found them.*

was not married! He had told her the truth about that night!

Then her heart sank. "If it isn't Naomi," she said with a catch in her low voice, "who—— You said there

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was some one else——" She faltered.

"No! In reality, there is only you, Rosanne. She—I mean the other one—is a dream girl. She

came to me in a dream I had, out under the harvest moon. She was so sweet, so tender—I shall never forget her, even though I cannot visualize her face." He sighed softly.

"But, sweetheart," he continued tenderly, "I fell in love with you the day I lifted you out of the splintered glass, and your eyes looked into mine, and you smiled that sugar-sweet smile of yours. When Doughton told me he was going to marry you, I felt pretty low, but I made up my mind to win you, Doughton or no Doughton! Then you told me it was just to hold your job, and you'd found out what it really was to love, I knew you meant that, and I dared hope it was I you loved." He paused. "Loving you like this and yet—" He shook his head ruefully.

"That dream girl?" Rosanne asked, making her voice sharp.

Eric nodded. "You cannot imagine how strong a hold that dream girl has on my affections, darling."

Rosanne clapped her hands and laughed gayly. "But I can, Eric. You see, I have a dream man, and I love him with all my heart. I kept him from falling over the Palisades one Sunday night—under the harvest moon. He kissed me. I kissed him. And I've loved him ever since!"

"Rosanne!" The name was like a prayer. His lips, crushed on hers, burned like holy fire. As it had been that night beneath the star-studded heavens, so it was now. That kiss was an emblem of delight and rapture for both.

"Lovely, adorable you," he breathed ecstatically. "And you're mine—mine!"

Presently, he held her away from him and said: "Little rascal! Why didn't you tell me? Sweetheart, it's been a nightmare loving two girls at one time. Loving them both with all my heart. Little love, it's heaven now, though. I want to love just one girl for the rest of my life, and now I can—and that girl is you. Say you love me, darling," he entreated.

"You love me," Rosanne repeated demurely.

"Tease! Say: 'I love you, Eric, and I will marry you.'"

"I love you, Eric, and I will marry you." Rosanne drew his dark head down, and kissed his mouth. "I love you," she said again. "I'm leaving here to-morrow, you know," she told him.

"Then, the day after, you start on your new job! It's no sinecure," he said crisply. "Plenty of hard work! I'm just starved for affection, and your kisses. Think you can make the grade, miss?"

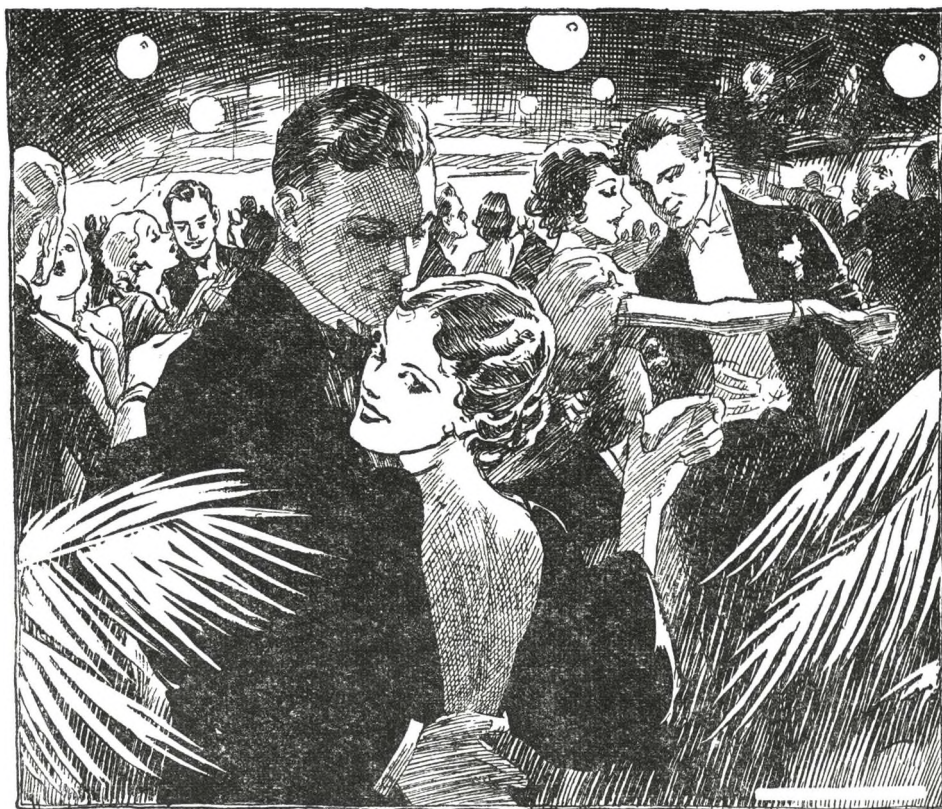
"If you show me how, mister!" She looked at him, starry-eyed.

"Well, you start like this," he instructed, and kissed her gently. "But wait until I get you in my power, away out on the lone prairie. Then we'll see if you can take it!"

He laughed happily.

"Huh! Who saved your life twice, sir?" Rosanne asked, cocking her red-gold head pertly.

"This small person," Eric answered meekly. Then, gathering her to his heart: "Oh, my beloved, from this minute on, life is so full, so worth while, so grand! Let's live, love, and laugh together always—always—" His lips sought hers and found them.



# Lucy's Christmas Present

By B. Virginia Lee

LUCY could not help studying Facine. They had been together a year and a half now, business partners as well as roommates. They had shared the profits of Pair O' Dice lunch room, just as they had planned it together, even sketching the two big dice which the electric sign company had copied and put up over the place. The idea had brought Jim Blunt of

the *Record* over the first night they opened.

"Crackajack idea, that," he said, motioning to the dice ornament on the building, while the electric lights blinked off and on, making the dice appear as if they were being thrown and landed naturally as a seven, then as eleven. "Always a winner," he read the line of red-and-blue electricity as it spelled out the let-

ters below the dice. "I'll give you a write-up if you can make apple pie," he laughed, and Lucy assured him it was their speciality. After he'd sampled it he did give the Pair O' Dice a write-up, and there was no doubt the girls received a lot of business from that little service. But he'd never so much as asked either of them for a date, until the week before at noon he came over and asked Lucy if she'd go to the corner with him a minute.

"Of all the——" whispered Facine to Lucy. "Can you beat it, asking you? I've been eying him for a year and a half now."

Lucy wasn't long, and when she returned Facine felt better about it. "Well, be at peace," Lucy informed her. "He only wanted me to select a diamond and a wedding ring, one that a practical girl would like. He's been trying to select it for nearly six months, he says, and now is afraid he'll get cold feet or something and spend the money he has for the ring on something else."

"Of all the surprises. That's why he never asked me out—a girl on his mind all the time. Might have known it," laughed Facine.

"Well, I sure picked out a beautiful one. He's going to give it to her for Christmas, I guess. Gosh, I wonder what Ray will get me?" Lucy sighed deeply. Ray was the only one of the long list of men who came to the Pair O' Dice who had picked her in preference to Facine. She had met him just a year ago now, and surely he would be buying her some kind of present this year. She wouldn't be like she was last year, with not a gift from a man, and Facine with the bed full of boxes of candy, stockings, and silk underthings that Lucy dared not even dream of. "If Ray would only get me one like the one Jim Blunt's

going to give his girl, I'd be in heaven," said Lucy, and she busied herself about her work.

Facine didn't comment, and now as Lucy considered the events of the past half hour she knew why Facine had said nothing at that time. The two girls had shared all things in business. In fact, they'd shared everything except Facine's ability to pick whomever she wished to go out with. Ray was the last to go over to Facine's long list of conquered. And Ray, Lucy had thought, was her very own. But Facine's eyes, her talk, or her way had at last won him over.

"You don't mind Lucy, do you?" she said, and Lucy shook her head and was surprised at herself. She really didn't mind about Ray, but she was strangely puzzled because she hadn't the slightest idea of the way Facine had won him over. Ray, whom Lucy thought would never change in his affection toward her. But he had, and here she had been dreaming of the time they would be married and have a home of their own and a Christmas tree each year, instead of having to have one in the window of the Pair O' Dice.

Well, there wasn't any use trying to fool herself. Here he was on Facine's night off. He'd come as though it was Lucy's night off, but Lucy wasn't mistaken at all.

"I thought this was your night off, Lucy, but since it isn't, if Facine hasn't a date, I'll take her over to the dance." He said it just like that, and Lucy knew there'd never be a diamond from Ray like the one she had picked out for Jim Blunt's girl.

Looking at Facine and Ray, Lucy thought of a perfectly good answer, but she didn't say it. She could so easily tell him that Facine would change her night off, but she did

nothing of the kind, for Facine had come to the lunch room dressed to go out.

It was kind of them to consider her feelings this way, she thought, and again she didn't like the idea that they assumed she would be hurt. After all, she decided, practically, Ray had never proposed to her, as all Facine's boy friends had. Lucy really had nothing to feel justified in claiming Ray as her own.

Facine adjusted her hat, over her short fluffy hair, applied her lipstick generously, then turned about, taking in both Lucy and Ray with the same glance.

"It's nice of you to be willing for Ray to take me out, Lucy, as I didn't have a date, and was just wondering what on earth I'd do."

Lucy, watching Facine's every move, wondered what Facine would do if she said, "Well, Facine, if you didn't have a date, and since Ray really came for me, I'll just exchange nights off with you." But she kept silent, for she knew Ray and Facine had planned all this.

Facine was putting on the finishing touches when the door opened and Jim Blunt came in for his usual piece of apple pie.

"So Facine is stepping out with your boy friend?" he said jovially, seating himself on a stool before the counter.

"He thought it was my night off," Lucy explained, for somehow she didn't want Jim Blunt to think the only man who came there who had cared for her, had cast her aside for Facine.

Facine opened the gate that lead to the outside aisle, and gave Jim Blunt a freezing look. "Your mistake, big boy," she said, and then went out the door which was being held open for her by Ray.

Jim Blunt turned up his coat collar and blew on his hands, signifying he'd caught every bit of the arctic atmosphere in which Facine regarded him. "What'd she mean?" he demanded of Lucy. "My mistake? Doesn't like me much, does she?" He laughed as Lucy, without waiting for his order, placed a big piece of apple pie before him.

"I guess she likes you, all right, but she doesn't like to be kidded."

"Or rather," he put in caustically, "she wanted to inform *me* she'd hooked your boy friend—and just before Christmas. Funny how some girls get so nice to certain fellows just before Christmas." He dug into his pie. "Hm-m-m, some pie, Lucy." But when he looked up Lucy had her back to him. She was wiping her eyes.

In spite of the way Jim Blunt made her feel, Lucy liked his manner

of saying things; liked him even now for not rushing over the counter and telling her he was sorry. Maybe working on papers made people like that. She wished she could be that

way, too—not care what happened, and not— She turned about quickly and faced him squarely.

"What can I do to make myself popular, like—like Facine? What does she do to get them? I'm not



bad to look at. I can dance. I can do a lot of other things, everything she does and more, but what is it?" she demanded half fiercely.

"Well"—Jim Blunt swallowed a piece of pie, as if her sudden demand had caused great astonishment—"what makes you think I should know?"

"Because—because you do know. I know all the boys she knows, but I just sit around. Even when Ray does take me out it's to a movie or a walk in the park or something, and here under my very nose, Facine walks off with him to a dance."

"Care a lot about him?" Jim took another bite of pie, the remaining piece on the plate. "Gosh, that's great pie," he said, and without waiting for him to order another, Lucy replaced the empty plate with a fresh serving. "Who made it, you or Facine?"

"I did, silly." Then, remembering what he had said before, she added indignantly, "No, I don't care a lot about Ray, but even if I did, I wouldn't now, after this. Not that I'm jealous, but to think he'd change that easy. She really doesn't care about him, either. That's the joke."

Jim continued with the second piece of pie, and finishing it, wiped his mouth with his napkin, reached in his pocket for a half dollar and gave it to her.

Lucy took it, rang up the sale and gave him his change. "Well, you haven't told me what to do. Can't you give me a prescription for love?"

"You really want to sweep them off their feet and all that?"

"I certainly do," she laughed. "I want to see them coming from all directions when I appear." He had no idea, she told herself, how true

her words were, and she knew what a foolish desire it was.

"You're too good at making apple pies. That's the trouble. Too efficient. You don't give a fellow a break."

"Meaning?"

"Tell 'em they're wonderful, manly, dance divinely, do great things, are strong or something. Whatever it is, let them think you think they do it better than any one else in the world." He was getting down from the stool.

"But I don't think they're wonderful, usually," objected Lucy.

"Well, say so anyway. They fall for it sooner or later. Ever tell Ray his necktie was an especially good selection?"

Lucy laughed. It was so ridiculous. Jim waved a good-by and melted into the night.

Lucy sat down and laughed heartily. Telling Ray his tie looked good! How utterly silly. She was always telling him how badly his tie matched up with the rest of his attire. Then something came over Lucy. She stopped laughing. Jim was right. She was frank about everything. Facine wasn't.

She could see Facine leaning over the counter, dishing out food and cooing into the ears of the men customers. "You certainly can dance. I saw you last night. But what a shame that girl you were with couldn't follow you better. It cramped your style. I don't mean to be——"

And the customer would smile back and assure Facine she wasn't being anything at all except the most adorable girl in the world, and as a matter of fact, the girl really didn't follow his lead at all. Then Facine and he would be off on a chase of words, and she would have a good tip, and in a night or so,



she'd have a date with the customer.

Jim Blunt was right. Lucy sang as she washed his dishes, and she was merry and gay when the next customers came in. They were the Howards for beer, on their way out. Mrs. Howard looked exceptionally pretty, Lucy thought, and Bill Howard looked grouchy as usual. Lucy smiled.

"How lovely you look to-night, Mrs. Howard," she said, placing a glass of beer in front of her.

"Thank you, Lucy," she replied, and glancing at her husband she added sarcastically, "Husbands never notice such things."

Bill glared.

Lucy shook her head as if she had the knowledge of the world packed inside it. "If he didn't he wouldn't be taking you out. After all, he chose you, which proves you thought he was pretty keen, yourself, to let him do the choosing."

Bill beamed at Lucy, and Mrs. Howard was also pleased. "You think that's true, Lucy?" he asked, still smiling.

"I don't think—I know," Lucy continued. "Every time you pass I'm reminded how lucky Mrs. Howard is to have a handsome husband like you to take her places and always be proud of."

They were both pleased. Bill asked his wife to have another glass of beer, then when Lucy took the dollar, Bill waved the change aside. "Too bad you have to stay here. Why don't you close up and come along?"

"Can't do it," Lucy replied gayly. "I really enjoy this. Have a good time, both of you." Her heart sang. It worked. It had worked like a charm on that old, disagreeable Bill Howard!

The next night was her night off, and Ray came as though nothing

had happened. But Lucy could see his eyes were on Facine, and Facine's eyes were warning him about something.

"Where are you two going?" Facine challenged.

But Lucy answered. "Wherever he decides to take me. You know I've always been keen about Ray's dates. Always something different." She smiled at Ray who was looking amazed.

Facine shrugged and tied an apron around her, while Lucy made up her face. "Doesn't Ray look great to-night in that blue tie?" She breathed a sigh of admiration. "Lucky girl I am to have Ray. Not many fellows would take their girls' chums out, like Ray did last night."

Facine didn't like the conversation. "Really," she drawled.

But Ray was smiling his appreciation. He held the door open for Lucy and they stepped out into the evening together.

"You know, Lucy, I haven't had a chance to tell you—I hated to take Facine out last night, but what could I do?"

"Nothing, silly. You didn't do anything but exactly what you should. She didn't mention it, but I know if you dance like you do everything else, she certainly had a good time."

Ray tightened his grip on her arm. "Let's take a taxi. Would you like to go over to the Wheel and dance?"

Lucy's heart was singing within her. It was just as Jim Blunt had said.

"You're a Prince Charming," she cooed into Ray's ear. "I'd love it."

At the Wheel Jim's prescription worked plenty. There was Hal Jenkins—whose mother had threatened to disinherit him because of his

reckless driving—the richest boy in town, putting his name down on her program for as many dances as he dared, and all because Lucy had told him she could not see, for the life of her, why people thought he was reckless. “Honestly,” she smiled, “the way you went around the corner yesterday, I could have sworn you’d been a racing driver.”

Lucy wished Jim Blunt might be there and see her triumph. Why, Ray was actually acting as if he were jealous.

The music was good, and Lucy floated about as though she were on air, first with one, and then another. To each one she plied the art of Jim’s teachings, and all to great success.

Then at last she saw Jim. He was there, and alone. She hoped he’d come over so she could tell him how things were turning out. Perhaps he’d dance with her. She wondered if he didn’t dance rather well.

Jim saw her. She smiled, but he nodded briefly and lost himself in the crowd. She wished he’d come by so she could thank him, but there would be to-morrow night, and she’d tell him as he had his pie.

But when he came the following evening there were three other fellows sitting at the counter, and talking joyously with Lucy. It was not hard to see how Lucy had fared by his instructions. He ate his pie without a word. It was Facine who brought it to him.

At last Lucy came over and leaned across the counter. “It certainly worked. I was hoping you’d come over last night to where I was sitting, so I could tell you——”

“Sitting?” He gave a sarcastic little smile. “I didn’t see you sitting much, and you didn’t have to tell me. Glad you’re happy.”

“I am. I’ve a date for every night this week.”

“Yeah?” He was getting off the stool. “That’s fine. I’ll be over for another report soon.” And with that he was gone.

Facine noticed a change in Lucy, and she didn’t like Lucy’s popularity with the boys. Lucy had never before been in her way. Now she was. The boys all seemed to enjoy Lucy’s chatter, insincere as it was.

“You don’t believe a thing you’re telling them,” Facine said threateningly. “I’ve a notion to warn them.”

“I suppose you mean all you say. The thing is,” continued Lucy, “you never told me how you did it, but all of a sudden a little bird whispered in my ear, and I thought I’d try it. It works beautifully. I bet I’ll get as many presents this year as you. I’ve already been asked to a Christmas Eve party.”

That was the beginning of the end of the partnership. Facine lost interest in the Pair O’ Dice, and began to talk about going East for Christmas. It finally ended by splitting up partnership, sharing the profits and saying good-by. Facine departed and Lucy stayed on at the Pair O’ Dice.

“I hope the business keeps up,” Facine told her at the depot. “But you know, most of it I brought.”

Lucy hoped so, too, for deep in her heart she realized that Facine spoke the truth. She had brought a good trade to the Pair O’ Dice, to be sure, but Lucy had brought them lately. What if she lost the trade Facine had brought? And suddenly Lucy realized she had already lost her star customer, the only regular she had really thought came entirely on her account—Jim Blunt.

He hadn’t been to the place in quite a while. Why hadn’t he come?



—she wondered. Perhaps he'd gone off and married the girl he'd bought the ring for. But thinking of his absence did strange things to Lucy. She decided to call him up.

"This is Lucy. Just wondering if you were sick—or something."  
 "No," he answered. "Been busy. How you getting along with your bag of tricks?"

"Marvelous. You can't imagine how grateful I am to you. Why, I never was so popular. In fact, with Facine gone, I think I'll have to get

*Bill was helping her fix the tiny Christmas tree, when suddenly he took hold of her hand. "Lucy," he said, "what do you say to wearing an engagement ring? I—I've got it here."*

a couple of girls to help instead of one, as I'm dead tired most of the time, and of course, one has to talk to the trade."

"Yep. Well, hope you get along. If you need any other advice, call me."

Jim didn't come that night, nor the next, nor the next. Lucy began to tire of her round of dates. It was nice to be popular, but the game which made her so popular was boring her. It was so silly to tell

Bill Wade he danced divinely, just because his father had a big factory over across town. Bill simply walked all over one's feet, but Lucy had been so convincing in telling him how marvelously he danced, that he actually proposed marriage to her.

He was helping her fix the tiny Christmas tree which was to have a place on the counter, when suddenly he took hold of her hand. "Lucy," he said, "to-night's Christmas Eve, you know, and you're going to that party with me. What do you say to wearing an engagement ring to it? I—I've got it here. I was going to put it on your finger to-night if you'd let me, because you look so cute trimming that tree that——"

Lucy wished Facine was there. She'd like to have her hear Bill proposing. Facine wouldn't believe her if she wrote about it, because Lucy knew she wasn't going to accept Bill's proposal. Poor girls didn't refuse rich men's sons in Facine's world, and Facine would never believe he had proposed if Lucy didn't say "yes."

But Lucy didn't have to make up her mind right then. The smell of overrunning juice in the oven jerked her thoughts back to realities. This was the first time she'd ever let the pies cook too much. It would be just her luck for Jim to come for pie that night. Then: Why did Jim Blunt come into her mind at such times as this?—she wondered.

She turned to Bill, still waiting by the Christmas tree. "Bill, I'll tell you to-night. You get along now, because if you don't, I won't be able to go with you at all, as I've got to do my work first."

When Lucy looked at the pies she tried to tell herself she didn't care if Jim did come for pie that night.

She wouldn't be there. She'd be out with Bill Wade, and she'd have a diamond on her finger as large as the one she'd picked for Jim's girl. But just the same, she decided, she didn't want Jim to know she had made the pie!

And suddenly she realized she wanted more than anything else on earth to please Jim Blunt. But she knew in the same instant how utterly foolish it would be, for he had already set his heart on another girl.

She didn't like to think of him like that, so she gave directions to the new girl for the evening and joined Bill Wade who had come back for her in his roadster.

They had not turned the corner when Lucy saw the figure of Jim walking into the Pair O' Dice. She breathed a sigh of relief and dismay. Bill's words were far off. She hardly heard what he was saying. She was overcome with the desire to rush back and greet Jim, pie or no pie. But already she and Bill were miles from the Pair O' Dice.

As they turned into the long, smooth stretch of highway toward the country club, Lucy clutched his arm. "I've got to get back. I forgot to tell Mary something." And Bill, obedient to her every wish, turned around and headed back. But half an hour was consumed before they were again in the neighborhood of the Pair O' Dice.

Lucy saw Jim as they turned into the street. He'd been to the lunch room and was now turning into the jewelry store. Lucy felt resentful toward the girl who could hold Jim Blunt's attention like that. Then suddenly her heart beat fast in a determined decision.

"Bill, let me out and drive on. Don't ask me why. But I can't go with you to-night."

"But——"

"Don't argue." It was a new Lucy speaking. He jumped out of the car and opened the door. "All right, Lucy, if you insist, but I don't see why you want to get out here and——"

She was already out and in the jewelry store. Then panic seized her. What on earth did she intend to say to Jim, anyway?

Jim's back was to her. The jeweler was talking to him. "But, Mr. Blunt, it's such a good buy. I think you're foolish to want to turn them in. Sure I'll do it, but she seemed so delighted with them."

"Yeah, I know. But things have changed. She's changed. Wouldn't give a hang for me now."

Neither Jim nor the jeweler had seen her. She backed out the door as quietly as she had entered and made for the lunch room. So the girl had changed, had she? That would mean she, Lucy, might have a chance with Jim. Her heart beat faster. Lucy knew, then, she had always loved Jim. But how on earth could she win him? He was like no one she knew, but there must be a way. "Tell 'em they're wonderful, better than any one else. They all fall for it sooner or later." Jim's words drumming in her ears!

As she walked the short block to the lunch room the little red lights in the paper bells over the street lights seemed to nod gently back and forth to her. Her own tiny tree in the Pair O' Dice window seemed to be winking at her gayly.

She opened the door and went in. "Say, Miss Lucy, a big, tall fellow

was in, asked for you and pie. I gave him some and he turned up his nose like nobody's business. Said something about couldn't even bake pie any more, and out he went. Didn't even pay for what he had."

Lucy laughed. Poor Jim. He wanted pie and maybe, just a tiniest chance, he wanted to see her. Without changing her dress, she pulled on an apron and started mixing dough.

"What are you doing?" questioned the astonished girl.



"I'm making a Christmas present for that tall fellow, Mary, an apple pie. He's a special customer." She whistled a gay tune as she trimmed the crusts laid over a row of fresh apples, generously sprinkled with nutmeg, sugar and butter. As she slid the pie into the oven she formed her plan.

Half an hour later, Lucy called the *Record* office. "Hello, Jim?"

"Yeah. I suppose you just got married and want to report," he said with undisguised disgust.

"Nope. I just made you an apple pie, Jim. Come over and get it."

"Too busy, and already had a piece."



*Outside, Jim kissed her for the first time. "Oh, Jim, you kiss so divinely," she murmured, her heart beating fast as she lifted misty eyes to his.*

"Oh, but this is pie. Jim, please. I want to talk to you."

"Suppose you want to tell me how wonderful I am, eh?" He laughed sarcastically.

"Jim, you know what I think of you. If that girl you're engaged to doesn't appreciate you——"

"I'll be over." His voice was gayly surprised. A warm, fuzzy feeling crept over Lucy, and her knees were trembling.

"Mary, you may take the evening off," she said hurriedly.

Lucy picked up the morning *Record* and scanned it. She must know something about it. She looked for Jim's column. It would please him to think she read it. To her surprise, "On The Other Hand," his special column, was not there. Lucy had no more time to look at the paper, for as Mary walked out, Jim walked in.

"Here's your pie," Lucy said gayly.

He smiled. "What's this about the girl I'm engaged to?"

"I was just saying, any time she doesn't want you, come over and I'll try my tricks on you, but then you'd know what it was all about. You'd be too wise to let me put it over you that way. And Jim, what happened to 'On The Other Hand'? I've not seen it lately, and really, it was the best thing in the *Record*."

"Did you like it, Lucy? I never thought very much about it."

"Oh, Jim, it was so clever—just like you."

She took away the empty plate and shoved another piece of pie before him.

"Some pie, Lucy. You make it, or the girl?"

"I did, silly. But I shouldn't have. When are you going to get married, Jim, and have you given her the rings yet or are you waiting until to-morrow? I think I have a right to know."

Why didn't he tell her he'd had a fight with the girl and it was all off? It would give her a chance then, but Jim did nothing of the kind. He pulled out his watch and looked at it.

"Engaged to any one, yourself, Lucy?"

Lucy laughed. "You would. Not that your tactics weren't perfect, though. Bill Wade proposed and I was going to get the ring to-night. Your prescription for love certainly is effective. But I've decided to devote my time to making pies. Now, you haven't answered *my* question."

"I'm getting to that. Come on, we're going places."

"I can't. Mary won't be back."  
"Then lock up. You're going with me."

Down the street they went.

"What on earth are you going to do, Jim Blunt? You're crazy."

"Maybe you think I'm not! But I like it."

They were inside the jewelry store and Jim was calling to the proprietor. "Say, she's still enthusiastic about them, so tote 'em out."

Lucy stood there, hardly believing what was happening.

"Here they are. Lucy. You picked them for yourself. Had you in mind, and then you went haywire on this popular stuff and fell down on——"

"But I didn't, Jim. Wasn't that pie good?"

Jim Blunt consulted his watch again. Lucy could hardly speak.

"Now you're coming to the office with me and we're going to write something about true love and a real Christmas present in my column, for the morning edition."

"But, Jim, I couldn't help you on that. No one could do as well as you. But I'll go with you."

Outside Jim kissed her for the first time. "Oh, Jim, you kiss so divinely," she murmured, her heart beating fast as she lifted misty eyes to his.

Jim bent his head and kissed her again. He was hers by his own prescription, "Tell 'em they're wonderful," and he *was*, quite the most wonderful present any girl could ever wish to have on Christmas Eve.





# Odd Man

By Elise Phillips

**O**H, this is fun!" Kay exclaimed. She drew in a great breath of the spicy mountain air and flung out her arms in a sweeping gesture.

Larry, at her right in the back seat of the car, captured her hand and held it.

"I'll say it's fun," he agreed, squeezing her fingers significantly, "having you all to myself for a week."

Winthrop Crandall, at Kay's left, scowled.

"That's not the idea at all," he protested.

Kay smiled and repeated softly: "This is fun!"

Aloud she said: "Don't start fussing before we even get to camp! I've promised to spend exactly the same amount of time with each of you. That's my plan. Here in the woods, I'll get to know both of you better, be able to decide——"

"Better be careful," Winthrop interrupted, with a warning glance at the driver's back.



"Careful!" Larry mimicked him with a jovial shout. "That's your religion, Crandall! Now take me—I'm never careful. I don't care who knows I love Kay. If she wants to spend a week thinking it over, that's O. K. What's a week? We'll be married a long time."

Kay's green eyes were serious as she turned to him.

"You're very sure!" she retorted. "How do you know I shan't decide on Winthrop?"

Larry's grin flashed a row of white teeth. He tossed his cigarette away and leaned closer to her. "I'm sure because I want you so much."

A new voice interposed! For the first time since meeting them at the station, the driver spoke.

"Better not throw away lighted cigarettes," he said in a slow, soft drawl that sounded oddly inconsistent with six feet of brawn. "The woods are mighty dry."

"Another child of care!" Larry mocked dramatically. "And what's it gotten him? He's guiding camping parties for five dollars a day."

Kay saw the man's shoulders stiffen, saw a slow tide of red creep up the back of his neck above the collar of his khaki shirt.

"It's a splendid life," Winthrop observed. "I shouldn't mind it myself, if I didn't have a great business on my hands."

Kay flashed him a look of appreciation, mingled with amusement. Win's tone was certainly too patronizing to please the mountaineer, but at least he was tactful.

They approached the cabin which, set upon a ledge with the mountains rising steeply behind it, radiated a homelike coziness. Kay, in her pleasure, forgot the problem that had been gnawing at her mind for the past two months.

Smith, the guide, carried her suit-

case into a small, roughly furnished bedroom, then stood for a moment in the doorway, his lean face impersonally courteous.

"Anything else I can do for you, ma'am?" he asked.

Kay pulled off her hat and ran her fingers through the crisp, red crop of hair.

"Not a thing, thanks!" she declared with a laugh. "Except have a big supper ready. I'm starved!"

Alone, she hurried out of the navy suit she had worn on the train, donned cream-colored whipcord breeches and a white cotton shirt. Lacing the knee-length elk boots, she fell once more into a thoughtful mood. Larry and Win both loved her, both had proposed marriage to her, again and again, and each time she had put them off, begging for more time.

Unlike each other as two men could possibly be, each attracted her differently.

"There are times when Larry seems the ideal lover," she told herself. "He always gives me a good time. He can stir my pulse, set my heart hammering by his kisses."

But there was more to marriage than kisses, more to life than parties, she reminded herself soberly. And it was to the more practical side of her nature that Winthrop appealed. Owner of the mill village where her father was doctor, he took his responsibilities seriously, saw to it that every employee was decently housed and adequately paid.

He hadn't quite liked this idea—the three of them coming to the woods for a week.

"People may talk," he had pointed out when she suggested it.

"Nonsense!" Kay had retorted with a laugh. "You're behind the times. Besides, when we come back,

I expect to be engaged to one of you. I promise to decide by the end of the week."

At that, Win had drawn nearer, taken her hand.

"Why wait?" he urged. "I'm sure. Let that be enough! I'll give you everything you want. You can refurnish the house, change it——"

"Don't!" Kay had interrupted. "Houses, furniture, money—what difference do they make?"

"A good deal," Winthrop told her with a dry chuckle. "I know several girls who would try marriage for the sake of 'houses, furniture, and money.'"

"Well, I'm not one of them!" Kay said vigorously. "Oh, I don't deny I like nice things. What girl doesn't? But love comes first. The rest is only secondary." A mischievous laugh escaped her. "Besides, you're forgetting. Larry is as rich as you are."

"He's an idler," Win had protested. "He's content to live on the income he inherited from his grandfather, gadding about——"

"He can't gad much in the mountains," Kay broke in. "And you won't be able to attend committee meetings. Up there, I'll get to know you both."

Finally Winthrop had consented. Larry had been enthusiastic about the plan at once. And now, Kay reflected, they were actually here, and in a week she would have to make up her mind!

Sighing doubtfully, she went to join the men in the main room of the cabin.

Larry sprang to his feet at the sight of her.

"Just in time!" he exclaimed. "I've made cocktails."

He pointed to the glasses on the rough pine table.

Winthrop offered one to Kay and took one himself.

"To the future Mrs. Crandall!" he toasted.

"Hey," Larry protested. "I can't drink to that."

"Why not?" Kay asked, her eyes dancing mischievously, as she raised the glass to her lips. "None of us knows who she may be." Inwardly, she was amused. The serious Win had scored one on Larry that time!

As she finished her cocktail, Smith came in from the kitchen. He carried a great platter, heaped with steaming ears of golden corn.

"If you'll all help yourselves," he suggested gravely, "I'll bring in the rest of the supper."

Kay sat down with an odd feeling of having been rebuked.

"That feller should have been a parson," Larry grumbled. "Looks at a cocktail shaker as though it were a snake. Told me he didn't think there'd be enough ice if I cracked any for drinks."

"Probably expects to be paid extra for it," Winthrop added, in agreement with his rival for once.

"Hush," Kay warned.

The kitchen door opened again. This time Smith brought biscuits, temptingly browned on the outside. These were followed by crisply fried ham and eggs, country butter, and a great, flaky berry pie.

"I brought that pie from home today," Smith observed. "I think you'll find it good. Is there anything else you'll want?"

"Oh, but aren't you going to sit down with us?" Kay cried.

His thin lips parted in a smile.

"I've had my supper, thank you, ma'am," he said.

Kay watched him leave the room, strangely disappointed at his going.

The food was so delicious that both Larry and Winthrop were too

absorbed in it to think of anything else for a while. Kay, as the meal progressed, found herself stealing glances first at one, then at the other, revolving the same old question, over and over. Which? There were times when she thought she loved them both.

After supper, Larry sprang to his feet.

"Come on, Kay," he urged. "We'll go outside and see if the moon really does come over the mountain."

"It's growing chilly," Winthrop observed. "We'd better take our sweaters."

"We!" Larry repeated with a laugh. "Watching the moon is a job that can be handled by two—and by two only!"

"I'll be back soon," the girl promised.

Outside, on a soft carpet of pine needles, she and Larry walked to the edge of the small clearing around the cabin. Below them, the heavily wooded ground fell away abruptly. The moon hadn't yet come up, and the only light was the tiny glow of Larry's cigarette.

Abruptly he tossed it aside, swept the girl into his arms.

"You little monkey," he murmured, lips so close against her neck that she felt the warmth of his breath on her flesh. "Getting me here, making me want you more than ever! I'm wild about you. Why should we wait? We can be married at Big Rock tomorrow. But tonight—you're here, I'm here—and I want you. Now!"

His kisses burned the soft hollow of her throat, her lips, her eyes. Kay lay quietly in his arms for a mo-

ment, then struggled free. She felt no anger, only keen disappointment.

"So you didn't understand——" she began, but was interrupted.

"Kay, where are you?"

She spun about to see Winthrop coming toward her in the dusk. She felt a rush of gratitude, of pleasure.

She ran to him, slipped her hand through his arm, facing Larry.

"You're shaking," Win said, covering her fingers with his own warm hand. "I knew you needed a coat."

"So that's what you want?" Larry jeered. "A nurse! Not a man!"

Kay flung up her head. "A man can be decent, a gentleman——"

"Oh, cut it," Larry interrupted. "I'm through."

He turned and went off toward the cabin.

"There goes a spoiled child, sulking if everything he wants doesn't fall into his hands," Win commented.

Kay nodded, then stiffened into a listening attitude.

"He's taken the car!" she cried. Anger rose hot within her. She started to run toward the road, but Larry was already beyond the bend.

"Let him go," Win counseled. "Smith will have to walk to town in the morning and bring back the car."

He slipped an arm about Kay's shoulders, tenderly, protectingly.

"I'm not going to ask what happened between you and Larry," he said. "But I hope it means you've decided to be sensible."

"You mean—sensible and marry you?" Kay questioned. Win's answer was cut short by a warning shout:

"Look yonder!"



The man and the girl whirled about, astonished. It was their guide!

As Smith joined them, they saw a thin line of fire spreading up the hill. Kay experienced a feeling of hollow terror.

"You fools!" Smith exploded. "One of you threw a cigarette butt down there!"

Kay felt Win grow rigid.

"You'll remember to whom you're speaking," he began with dignity.

"Don't be silly," Kay interrupted. "Larry did it. Look! The breeze is carrying the flames right this way. What shall we do?" Instinctively she turned, not to Win, but to the mountaineer.

"We'll have to backfire," Smith said grimly, his voice once more under control. "That is, we'll start a fire of our own, beat it toward the other, and burn a strip wide enough so that the flames can't jump it. That's our only hope of saving the cabin."

He stood silent a moment, intently studying the territory.

"We'll start over there," he said presently, turning to Win.

"Cut yourself a stout pine branch," he directed, each word clear and crisp. "Set fire to the grass at the edge of the clearing, and keep the flames straight ahead of you. Don't let them burn back toward the cabin."

"Just a moment," Win interrupted in his best chairman-of-the-committee tone. "Let's go at this in an orderly way. The first move is to notify the authorities. The fire warden——"

Smith's voice was curt. "The warden is twenty miles away and we have no telephone. The fire's between us and the road."

He was cutting a pine as he spoke. He held it out to Win.

"If you'll go over there——"

Win made no move to accept the brush.

"I'll pay you well to get through to the road and bring help. I'm responsible for Miss Leonard's safety."

"Leave me out of it," Kay commanded. "This is a place where money won't help."

"I'll make it a thousand dollars," Win put in, ignoring Kay. "Two thousand——"

"I couldn't do it if you offered me a million," the mountaineer called over his shoulder.

He was already stringing a line of fire along the edge of the clearing. Then, brush in hand, he beat it back, keeping it under control. By this time, it was possible to hear the roar of the larger conflagration, as it swept up the slope.

"I'll help," Kay cried suddenly. "Cut me a pine."

If she expected Smith to protest or to praise, she was doomed to disappointment. He handed her the pine he held, and silently cut himself another. Then he moved farther along the line, leaving her to keep the stubborn blaze traveling against the wind.

"This is nonsense!" Win shouted, his voice a crescendo of fear and anger. "Let the cabin burn. I'll pay for it. Let's go farther up the mountain to safety."

"Go ahead!" Smith shouted back. "My farm's up there. If I let this fire get away from me, it will take all my stock and buildings."

Win approached Kay.

"Come," he urged. "There's no use risking our lives for his farm."

Kay shook his hand off her arm.

"I'm staying," she said briefly.

Time lost all meaning. To Kay it seemed as if she had been doing this always, rushing to beat out a



*"This is nonsense!" Win shouted, his voice a crescendo of fear and anger. "Let the cabin burn. Let's go farther up the mountain to safety. There's no use risking our lives."*

spark here, running back to catch another there. Her arms ached; her throat was parched. Tears rolled down her cheeks as the smoke, thick and stinging, hurt her eyes.

"Get back!"

She looked up at Smith.

"We've done all we can," he said. "See——" He pointed to the ruthless tide of red, below them. "Either she'll jump it or our line will hold."

Kay turned to scramble up the rough ground. Something caught at her foot. Lurching forward, she

would have fallen, but powerful hands seized her, then lifted her.

"Lie still," Smith ordered, when she would have struggled to her feet. "I'll get you up to the cabin in a jiffy."

At the porch he halted, set the girl down gently.

"Look!" he ordered.

Together they watched, as the fire reached the burned strip of land. Kay held her breath, then heaved a sigh of relief. The flames were dying down. The danger was past!

"It's all right!" she exclaimed. "Oh, I'm so glad!"

But Smith did not seem to hear.

"Why did you come up here with those two men?" he asked briskly.

Without hesitation, Kay answered truthfully: "Both of them wanted to marry me. I didn't know which I loved——"

"That means you don't love either," Smith broke in, a note of satisfaction in his deep voice. "When you can't make up your mind, it isn't love."

Kay nodded. "I know that now."

The man put his hand gently on her shoulders, trying to see her face in the dim light.

"Which one is it? The spoiled playboy, or the man who thinks money can buy everything, and disappears in danger?"

"Neither."

His fingers tightened their grip. For a moment, he said nothing.

"I knew it!" he spoke finally, and his voice was tender. "The minute I saw you, I knew at once that you were the one I'd been waiting for. I wanted to knock those two fools on the head and carry you off. I——"

"Why didn't you?" Kay broke in. She wondered if he could hear the tumult of her heart. He was right; when love came, there was no ques-

tioning. It was final, as gloriously inevitable as it was sudden!

She melted into his arms, raised her mouth for his kiss. As his lips met hers, she knew her doubts were over—forever. Never again would she feel complete without him.

"I've got a good farm and a decent house, but I'm not rich," he warned her, when they were seated on the cabin step, his arm holding her tight against his heart. "It will mean fighting, dear, side by side, as we fought this evening. Not fire, maybe, but dry seasons, wet seasons, sickness. Are you brave enough to face it?"

Kay laughed a little. "Silly," she reproached. "I'm not brave enough to face anything—without you."

Unexpectedly she sat up straight. "What is it?" the man asked.

"I've just thought! I don't know your first name."

The man laughed.

"It's John," he said.

"John," Kay repeated, as though the simple monosyllable held all the beauty of an exquisite poem. "John Smith, I think it's lovely."

"I know a lovelier name than John Smith, darling," he whispered.

"Nothing nicer!" Kay smiled, sinking back into his arms.

"Mrs. John Smith!" he explained.

"Mrs. John Smith," Kay repeated dreamily after him, and suddenly, as though this happiness were too much for her, she rubbed her eyes to see if she were dreaming.

Yes! It had to be true, she decided happily. You just couldn't dream this very real embrace by two such arms! Nor could you dream that your chin was being tilted up gently, and that your mouth was being kissed again and again. Nor could you dream a voice, husky with tenderness, whispering in your ear:

"Kay, my dear one!"



# Kissing Acquaintance

By Marietta Earle

A SERIAL—Part III.

## CHAPTER VI.

**T**HE mystery of Grant's disappearance had been solved hours before the awakening of the camp. Deputy Kay brought with him the morning paper which ran the news in headlines. And with him came reporters and cameramen.

"It's a snatch, all right," Kay told the four as he handed them the paper. "They wired his old man out of Chicago last night. Told him to keep it dark, but he cracked to the police right away. Paper says he's on the way here by plane. They want fifty grand and he's got six banks rustling the dough."

Myra breathed a sigh of relief and Bee, too, knew a cessation of her fear.

The camp was in a turmoil all day. More and more reporters came. More and more cameramen invaded the place. They took pictures of the camp, the abandoned car, the chained raccoon, and of every one who had known Grant.

Johnny Hay, however, proved to be camera-shy. He pulled his cap low over his eyes for one group shot and then disappeared for most of the day. At night he chatted briefly with Morry Fine; then, strapping a huge blanket roll on Morry's motor cycle, disappeared completely.

Morry took over *Long Hop Inn* and Bee found him representing it as his own. She went to Morry then and pleaded with him to tell her where Johnny had gone, but the boy declared he was bound to say nothing.

"He's all right," he declared, "and he's left a letter around here for you somewhere. Don't worry and he'll be back in a week or so. Don't let any one know he's gone, if you can help it."

Bee searched earnestly for the letter, but Morry didn't know where it was and she began to think he had been wrong until she gave up the hunt and opened the coffeepot in process of getting dinner.

There she found a hastily folded message.

DEAR BEE: Don't let any one see this and don't worry about me. I had to leave you once before and I've been forced to again. It will upset everything if any one finds me. Stick with Morry and tell Myra that I said for her to stick. Then you'll all be O. K. and I'll be back before you know it. I love you. JOHNNY.

She wanted to treasure it as her first love letter, but reluctantly she held a tip of it to the kitchen flame and saw the letter burn to black ash.

What was the mystery of Johnny Hay? She thought Myra knew and asked her about it as they moved about preparing the meal.

"Did you know Johnny was gone?" she asked in a low voice.

"No, but it was about time."

"He said for us to stick to Morry. Do you know where he goes?"

"I know, yes. But I'd better not say anything. There is a good deal at stake. For you and Johnny both, I think."

"Is that why he doesn't tell me?"

"He doesn't tell any one. My father told me or I wouldn't have known."

"There isn't any doubt that he'll be back?"

Myra smiled. "None in the world, my dear, if I'm any judge."

"Can't you tell me anything? I think I'll die if I don't know."

The other girl sat silent. It seemed a long time.

"It's all in the paper there if you can find it," she laughed presently. She pointed to one of the "extras" that had been brought out from town.

Bee caught up the paper and hid it in the interior of her car.

"I'll look after dinner," she said and presently the girls sat down with Morry and Deputy Jim Kay to the belated meal.

"Say, where's that other fellow who was around here?" the deputy demanded suddenly as he lighted his after-dinner cigar.

"He went into town. He'll be back soon." Morry's answer was quick. Bee wondered why it wasn't recognized at once as an evasion. But the officer seemed to accept it without question.

Mada Gold materialized out of the approaching dusk and sat on the ground beside Morry. She confined her gyrations at the moment to a few bends and twists.

"You haven't questioned the Lost Tribe," Morry suggested.

Mada giggled and Jim Kay inquired what was meant. Mada explained and the man, attracted by her sparkling eyes and supple body turned his attention to her while Bee breathed with relief that the reference to Johnny Hay had been safely passed. She wondered if the child could have planned to divert the man's mind, for she knew there was



a subtle showmanship in Mada that was put often to practical use.

This was true now, for when the deputy began to question her she went into such a series of bends and leaps, handstands and flips that he had soon forgotten the trend of his investigation in admiration of her prowess.

When the officer had taken his leave for the night, Mada, as had come to be her practice, attached herself to Morry until he rumbled her hair over her eyes and announced that he was going to bed.

The girl flitted happily off then in the direction of the Lost Tribe and Bee expected to see no more of her that night.

But the rear window in *Hortense* looked out over a tiny meadow beyond a screen of hedge and there in the moonlight Bee saw a shadow that seemed to be at play. Music from the truck radio had not yet been stilled and to the softened strains, Mada Gold was dancing her heart out in adoration of Morry Fine.

Underneath the small light that she used for her work on dark days, Bee searched the newspaper Myra had pointed out to her. Here, Myra had said, lay the secret of Johnny Hay and his mysterious disappearances.

Far into the night she scanned the closely printed columns but could find nothing. Everywhere, it seemed, was news of the kidnaping and the demand for ransom. Everywhere was comment about the actors she knew in this strange drama. But nowhere could she find mention of Johnny Hay.

The name of Jim Kay reminded her of Hay and set her heart beating when she chanced to spy it. A boy on one of the sports pages, in

golf togs with tousled yellow hair, reminded her of Johnny but he was some one named McKay. In the market section was a mention of Hay & Co., whose stock was down because it was expected to pass a dividend.

But nowhere was there anything that could be used as the key to the mystery she sought to unravel. She looked till her brain reeled and her eyes ached and she found herself falling asleep over the paper. Finally she gave up. She clipped out the picture that looked like Johnny, folded it in one of her portfolios and flung herself down to sleep. In dreams, Johnny bent over her but when she held out her arms to him, he was gone and at last she waked to the new day.

Jim Kay brought word that Grant's father had decided not to come to the camp but to stand by at home for negotiations with the kidnapers. State officers and Federal men were with Kay that day and he had his hands full, but Bee brought him to her side with a smile by the simple expedient of waving an early-morning wheat cake at him.

"Do you think they will let us go on?" she asked.

"In a day or so," he thought. "If they are right sure just how the thing happened and that nobody in this crowd fingered Hurder, they won't hold anybody."

At that the thought struck the girl that Johnny Hay might have run away from the officers, that he might have been guilty of pointing out or "fingering," as Jim Kay called it, the gilded youth who followed her, selecting him as a victim for criminal associates. Perhaps the Schaefer's had had nothing at all to do with it. Perhaps the Schaefer's were Johnny Hay's allies and that grim scene when Johnny seemed to

face death before Don Schaefer's gun had been merely intended as a bluff.

She remembered, however, that Johnny had helped to truss them and to leave them behind, helpless, in their own car when Morry Fine came to the rescue. There was something that kept nagging at her, that kept whispering that everything was not as it seemed. Maybe this had all been a part of some mysterious terrorism.

Her mind ran away with her and she could picture Johnny Hay, friendly to the ruffians, running his bluff of courage when they seemed to be about to kill him and then, when they were beaten, sneaking back on the pretense of taking a gun and cutting them loose so that they might easily escape before dawn.

She dismissed this thought as unworthy, but it came back again and again with the realization that there had never been any news of the discovery of the Schaefer's after they had been left tied. They must have been released or have gotten away before the camp awakened.

What was the mystery of Johnny Hay? Why had he disappeared from time to time? Why had he seemingly run away when policemen and newspapermen invaded the camp after Grant was taken?

These were questions she couldn't answer. And the more she fought them the more suspicion clawed at her mind and whispered at her against the man she loved.

Wasn't he, after all, only a likable boy, an easy-going youth with a wandering foot who had to be helped out by others when the going became really hard? What would either Johnny or she have done without Morry Fine?

In vain she answered with the language of reason when these

doubts assailed her. The only force that held doubt back was her love.

"What do I care who he is or what he is?" she cried out in anguish at these doubts finally. "He is the man I love. He is good and he is strong. But even if he were not good or strong, I would love him. I do love him. No matter what he is or what he does, I love him."

Thus she wrestled with herself throughout the days that shortly followed, but she could not convince herself that she had won. Love without pride she knew in her own heart was a seedless thing that must presently wither and die unfruited on its stalk.

To love Johnny Hay she must be proud of him. She could not love or honor a weakling or a failure. These things were relative, of course. But they counted. After all, love must have a hero, even though he be self-made.

The battle still went on in her heart.

Myra Dane set off the struggle over again when she sat beside Bee one afternoon while the dark girl worked at her desk in the car.

"You know," she said reflectively. "I could be crazy about that Grant. He may be sullen and he may be spoiled but he knows what he wants and he goes after it and if he doesn't get it the first time, he goes after it again. I suppose he'd strong-arm you or he'd crook you but at any rate, there is nothing namby-pamby about him."

Bee smiled. She remembered Myra's tears the night that Grant disappeared. She knew how much more the girl's words meant than they actually said. She found herself marveling at a new picture of Grant in her mind's eye. There was, she decided, something admirable about Grant's doggedness and de-



*"What do I care who he is?" Bee cried out in anguish. "He is the man I love. No matter what he does, I love him."*

termination, the fact that he could justify almost any action to gain the thing on which he had set his heart.

Would Johnny strive so directly for a goal? Would he drive ahead so determinedly for her love if it

were denied him? She wondered about that for a long time till Myra brought her back to a realization that she had not replied to the girl's remark.

"Grant's all right," she said then, "if you understand him. His chief trouble is that he has no tact. It never occurs to him to make things easier for himself by smoothing the way with thoughtful words. I hope he doesn't get too tough with the kidnapers. They might be just as tactless as he is."

Myra laughed. "How he must be boiling to be made to go anywhere

or do anything against his will! If only he doesn't try something foolish."

"Oh," Bee rejoined, "he can be canny and cautious when it serves his purpose. He rather likes to be sly, but the trouble is, he's not very good at it."

She folded up the desk and climbed out of the car for a stroll with Myra before dinner.

As they set out, Morry Fine came from town with a newspaper tucked in the pocket of his trousers. They halted him to learn the latest news and saw that his face was grave.

"Johnny Hay's up against it. They've got a warrant out for him."

He spread out the paper and they read glaring headlines.

Johnny's disappearance had been noted. Suspicion had fallen on him. He was believed to have quarreled with Grant over "one of the girls in the party" and to have taken his revenge by turning the attention of kidnapers upon him.

"Finger Man Sought" was the caption under a picture of him. It was a shadowed face enlarged from a group photograph and made him look like Jesse James, as Myra at once proclaimed.

"Poor Johnny Hay," she sighed. "I'm afraid his sins are about to find him out."

Bee was frankly amazed at her own reaction to the news. Where before she had doubted, now all doubt was swept away. It was as though the accusations against him, the warrant for his arrest, had suddenly shown the ridiculous nature of her suspicions.

She could not be wrong, she told

herself. Johnny was everything he seemed to be. He was not weak. He was not criminal. The ideas were preposterous. And so pride rose in her heart again to sustain her love.

Her own spirit returned and she flashed answers at the newspapermen who questioned her that scorned them and at the same time brought them to her feet, so that she and Myra became the center of the camp section of the investigation.

It was her agreement to flash each one in the event of a break on the story that encouraged them to withdraw after the camp vigil had ceased to pay profits in news of the case.

The suggestion came to her from "Pop" Harris, bespectacled and bald old fellow peddling auto polish and quick paint from an automobile that served as demonstration car.

"I was a reporter once," he told her, "and I know how they hang on. Trouble with them is they know there ain't no more news around here but none of 'em dast leave for fear the rest will stick around and make him look bad. You tell 'em all on the quiet you'll let 'em know if anything turns up and they'll be gone in twenty-four hours. But be sure you keep your word or they'll never let loose of you again."

Bee began trying the system out and found that it worked.

"You want to be gittin' along out o' here, don't you? Well, don't make no fuss about it, then. Jest pick up and go like you was intendin' to all along, no sooner and no later. Some'll foller you at first but after a couple jumps they'll let you alone."

They moved along the next day and found the prediction true.



Nothing was done or said to deter them. Pop Harris moved along with them and so did the Lost Tribe. Morry rode in state in Johnny's *Long Hop Inn* with the mascot riding atop. Mada Gold was with him on the truck's front porch and ecstasy lay in her eyes even as she chinned herself on a top brace or sat on the truck roof for a few moments beside Won Hop.

Grant's car had been taken in charge by the police and negotiations with the kidnapers were said to be under way. The kidnapers' letters came from Chicago and it was in that vicinity that the hunt for Grant was being carried on. Other news came from Buffalo or Batavia and the request had now come for the police to withdraw from the case.

Connection of the Schaefer brothers with the abduction seemed to be disproved when they were found in Milwaukee and offered evidence at habeas corpus hearings to show that they had not left that place since some time before the crime. They had been released and it was now declared they had disappeared.

Word from Grant was found in the ransom letters which announced that he was being well treated, but that he had been flatly told that he would be killed if the ransom was not paid.

"I don't think we need to worry about Grant," Morry told the girls. "His folks will pay."

But Myra Dane could not overcome her anxiety.

Bee's chief alarm was over Johnny Hay but Myra told her not to worry, that Johnny's difficulties would iron themselves out in time.

"He's too much of a cherub to be suspected long," Myra laughed and, when Bee protested because he had

not yet been found and thought that his hiding might make matters worse for him, the golden girl tried again to reassure her.

Pop Harris comforted her, too. He sat in the sun smoking his pipe and seemed completely uninterested in selling paint or auto polish. She confided in him.

"There's something about Johnny I don't quite understand," she said. "If it had been Grant, I'd be sure he fixed it up with those two gunmen to pick a fight so that he could knock one of them out and probably take the gun from the other. But Johnny isn't like that. He doesn't do any bluffing or boasting that I know about. He's just the other way, in fact. He dodges cameras and says so little about himself that you wonder."

"What do you wonder?" the old man asked, rubbing the bowl of his pipe against his nose.

"It seems to me he has some secret business, like a detective or something. You don't suppose he's on the trail of some one?"

"Might be. Might be undercover man for the department of justice or something. Still, they mostly use older men and men that don't get themselves suspected like you're suspecting him or like they got this warrant out against him."

"I suppose that's right. If he's a detective or anything like that, he's not really very good, is he?"

"Not 'less he, maybe, wants to be suspected. Had you thought of that?"

The girl hadn't and she gave the matter some thought as she sat beside a small camp fire with Myra and watched Mada Gold's complete devotion to Morry Fine.

Bee wondered if Morry was bothered by Mada's open admiration, but decided it must be flatter-

ing to him, though Morry seemed the last person in the world to be moved by flattery.

Then she saw that, as he moved about the camp, he kept an eye out for her and left room for her always near him wherever he sat. Something inside Bee glowed, then, for she knew that Morry Fine loved the child-woman of the dancing feet.

That night Bee lay long awake dreaming about the two and about herself and Johnny Hay. Until his voice seemed to speak to her, outside her window. She did not answer, believing her ears had tricked her. But the voice came again.

"Johnny!" Bee gasped into the startled night.

"Don't make any more noise than you can help," Johnny Hay said in a low voice. "I've got to talk to you. Don't bang the door."

The girl crept out of the old car and stood with him presently in deep shadow beyond the camp. Neither seemed conscious of the fact that their arms were about each other.

"Johnny! You shouldn't have come back here. They're looking for you."

"I know it. But I've got to see Morry. There's an old geezer lying out there on the grass asleep by the truck. Do you suppose you could get Morry out here?"

"Oh, that's only Pop Harris. He sells car paint. I've told him about you."

"Well, whoever he is——"

But Bee was off in a rush to get Morry. Then till Morry came she waited in the restful haven of Johnny's arms and the no-more-kiss rule was off.

"Don't worry about me, honey," he whispered when she made known her fear for him. "I'll be all right one way or another in a couple of weeks. Good night."

His calm dismissal of her maddened the girl. She watched the two move farther from the camp and then, when she knew that the sounds of their voices would never come to her, she saw Pop Harris move casually along beyond the camp fence till he stood quietly where he could hear every word they spoke.

As she watched, Myra suddenly stood at her side.

"What do you suppose they're talking about? Johnny shouldn't have come back here," Bee cried.

"Oh, is that Johnny? Well, Pop Harris will tell us in the morning."

Myra's tones were unalarmed and they served to brace Bee.

Suddenly they saw the dwarf slip quickly away. Johnny Hay stood very still in the deeper shadow. And old Pop Harris moved slowly down a path that led to the dim light of a small railroad station.

Then Morry hurried back. He and Johnny fairly ran down the road and the sound of Morry's motor cycle came from where it had been hidden beyond the camp.

"Listen, Bee," Myra suddenly cried, "there's something about Grant connected with this. Throw on a wrap and let's follow them. They can't make much speed riding double and we'll see what becomes of them."

In a flash the two girls were racing for Myra's car. A moment more and it roared throatily and bounced over the camp road. Then it plunged forward down the highway.

It was a mad ride in the night, an eight-cylinder sportster chasing a motor cycle double-laden, but the girls clung to the sight of the dancing red tail-light till they pulled up at the ferry slip on the Straits of Mackinac.

They dared not let the boat get



*Suddenly a man approached them. He spoke very softly. "Say, where did you come from? Stand up and march. Down the hill to the road. And then to the house."*

away without them. There was nothing to do but brave detection and they drove aboard, suddenly amazed to see no sign either of the motor cycle or its riders.

"They're lying low," Myra whispered. "Don't let them get a flash at us. They may not recognize the car. Here, bury your nose in this." She thrust a magazine from a side

compartment into Bee's hands and herself pretended to be busy hunting for something else. They were soon left alone in the car and not all Bee's cautious glances about could discover the motor cycle anywhere.

Myra was sure now that they were on some errand connected with the kidnaping. "They don't dare let themselves be seen. That's the answer to all this," she said.

And so it proved, or seemed at least to be, throughout the crossing.

When the heavy craft touched shore, they drove hurriedly away to take a stand commanding the ferry slip and it was not till they had watched for some time that they saw the motor cycle being taken from the boat.

Once more they followed the dancing light and it was now clear that the two riders were timing their arrival for the morning or for that dark hour just before the first faint whisper of day.

Silence shrouded the small city of St. Ignace as they passed through. The roads being deserted, Myra had driven for some miles without lights so that their following would not be observed.

As dawn broke they scanned the twisting road for the motor cycle track, since its light had disappeared some time before, and it was Bee's steady glance that detected where the track left the road. They drove past the spot and then concealed their machine in a brake of young cedar before they crept out and made their way back toward where they thought the motor cycle would be.

It was here that they realized the futility of their mad ride for, though they wore beach pajamas they were not dressed for the work before them and their light slippers were soon ruined as they made their slow

progress through the wooded glen.

At length, however, they found the motor cycle and pressed on to overtake its recent riders or to learn what had drawn them to this spot.

The going became rougher at the crest of a small hill but as they came into view of the valley, they saw at once that a cabin stood there. It was a sturdy affair of heavy lumber and smoke rose from its rude chimney.

"The boys must be in there," Bee remarked. "We'll have to wait for them to come out. I'm sorry we came."

"Looks as though we'd made fools of ourselves," Myra whispered. "But we may just as well see it through."

## CHAPTER VII.

That curiosity and sense of impending drama which had brought the two girls so far now held them for a time crouching in the edge of the clearing and intently watching the cabin.

A rear door gave in their direction and it was not long before a man stepped out to empty a basin of water.

Bee gasped.

"That's Don Schaefer," she whispered. "What can Johnny and Morry be doing here with him?"

Myra's eyes widened. "You mean," she asked, "the gangster that was going to kill Johnny?"

"Yes. I'll bet they're both here, Don and Joe Schaefer, and if they've tricked Johnny and Morry into——"

As Bee spoke, Don Schaefer went back into the house but another man came out and walked around the house.

"That's Joe——" Bee broke off and watched silently till, from the



other side of the cabin toward the point where Joe Schaefer had disappeared, there came the sound of an automobile starter and presently the roar of a motor.

The car now appeared. It was a black sedan and it moved across the clearing in the general direction of the ridge where the girls lay. When it had gone from sight, they gave it no more thought except that Bee remarked:

"Well, if John and Morry have only Don to deal with, they ought to be out soon."

But Myra suddenly leaned forward and, finger to lips, she gestured excitedly toward two figures that wriggled in the grass.

"There they are. They aren't inside the house. They're watching it, trying to creep closer."

And as she looked where her companion pointed, Bee was swiftly aware that this was more serious business than she had realized.

She had a quick feeling as though she had been through all this before, as though she knew that cabin in the clearing and knew that red Indians would presently sweep out of the surrounding fastness to dance fiendishly around it and its burning victims, after setting it afire.

But there were no red Indians now. The cabin still lay peacefully below. The smoke still curled from its chimney into the morning's sunlit haze. The grass still waved in the small clearing and birds flitted from the trees that closed it in.

Particularly the grass waved, for those two crawling figures had disappeared and there was nothing to mark their place except an occasional deeper ripple in the waving bit of meadow.

Bee sought in vain for another sight of these two, for she knew that they crept into danger and she knew

that injury to either would crush her with disaster. Myra had almost the same interest as she in the tense scene. After all, Bee told herself, Myra had known Johnny all his life as she had known Morry Fine. Even though she might not be madly in love with him, she must have a tremendous sentimental attachment for him.

They lay there without speaking now, the two girls who had ridden crazily through the night. But they seemed to sense that some danger was creeping upon them, for they moved restlessly and looked fearfully about from time to time.

Yet the sense of alarm was not enough.

The dark figure of a man approached them from behind. It slid closer and closer. It stood presently almost within arm's reach of one of them and then it spoke very softly and in a voice calculated to cause no alarm.

"Say, where did you punks come from?"

Instinct alone saved the two girls from screaming and it was the instinct of the pioneer woman who guards with her silence till the last moment the secret of her mate's retreat.

"Joe Schaefer," Bee's lips whispered and the man laughed.

"Stand up," he commanded.

The two obeyed him.

"Now march. Down the hill to the road. And then to the house."

They stumbled forward and he came close behind. They tried to veer toward the place where the long grass rippled in the sunlight but he forced them to the road. They might not be seen at all by the two hidden youths unless they used that rear door.

And this they did not do. Bare steps before a door in a bare wall

led them to a long room with bunks at either end. A ladder and a trapdoor told of a rude attic above. And in the door at the rear where a kitchen seemed to be, Don Schaefer stood with an ugly weapon in his hands, a single-barreled affair with double grips and short stock which Bee recognized as a submachine gun.

"What's this?" he demanded.

"Couple women prowling around in the woods," his brother answered.

"What you bring them in here for?"

"Find out what they're after. Notice who the dark one is?"

"Well, well. The Stinger herself, eh? No wonder."

Joe Schaefer turned to the two girls. "You two better set down there," he told them. "Now what are you hanging around here for?"

"Camp's over there a ways," Bee suddenly lied. "We were exploring."

The two men exchanged glances.

"That wouldn't be so hot," Don ejaculated. "But I don't think so."

"Then that's worse. Means somebody knows something. I wonder."

Don strode over to the rear window, the machine gun still clutched in his hands.

"You'd better take a look around and see if there's anybody else buzzing around here," he said grimly. "I'll take care of the explorers here till you get back."

Bee sat frozen to the wooden chair. She could not think or speak. This gunman had gone out to hunt the man she loved, and the other man sat with a machine gun across his knees watching her and watching the approaches to the house.

It was as though each held death as a missile ready to strike on sight. It was as though these men were half gods with the power of death in

their hands but not the power of life.

For an instant the illusion held and then she realized they were only mad dogs in the guise of men. For all men had the power of death in their hands. Or if they had not, they could have it for the asking. Even animals had the power of death. But neither animals nor men had the power of life.

And because these men had taken the power of death, they were the hunted. Johnny and Morry were hunting them now, were hunting as well as being hunted, and Bee sent up a scared prayer in her heart that they might not be slain, that none of them might be shot down in this skulking chase.

But fear ruled her, fear for the youth whose love she had taken into her heart and fear for the hunchback boy whose adoration had been a part of her life almost since she could remember.

Her eyes turned to Myra and she knew that fear lay upon the golden girl as well.

The man with the machine gun moved restlessly. He stood first by one window and then by another. He looked to the mechanism of the terrifying weapon and then he watched again the approaches to the house.

"Who's out there?" he suddenly demanded. "Who came here with you?"

The girls did not reply. He whirled on them in a rage.

"Who came with you?" he roared and at the sound there was a distinct movement in the room above, in that open attic to which a ladder and a trapdoor led.

This seemed to be what Myra Dane had waited for. In a flash she was on her feet and had cried out.

"Grant!" she screamed.

"Shut up," rasped the machine gunner, swinging his weapon to bear upon the girls.

Myra did not scream again, but as the sudden silence rose to swift tension waiting for the answer, Don Schaefer thrust out a heavy foot and kicked one of the chairs across the room till it raised a deafening clatter.

The answer might have been lost had it come then, but it waited an instant and then was distinctly heard.

"Here I am. Up here in the attic. Help!"

"You fool," snarled the man with the gun. "Don't you realize that ends things for you?" He was looking straight at Myra but it was clear he spoke to the two girls. "Neither of you can ever expect to leave here alive."

"Fool!" cried Bee. "You are the fool if you don't see the chance you have."

"What do you mean?" the man's voice rasped.

"I mean you've got three hostages now. Why not try to collect on all of us?"

At the word "hostage," a new light came into the man's eyes. This seemed to mean something, but it was not that which the girl sought to suggest.

"Hostage? I'll say. We'll keep you here. We'll make them leave us alone. And if they don't, we'll kill you by inches."

He turned to the window. His brother was coming back alone to the house. A moment more and he shut the door behind him.

"Find anything?" Don queried.

"Their car," the other said. "Looks like they came alone."

And at that instant the voice of Grant Hurder lifted again.

"Let me out of here," he bellowed. "Let me out of here, damn you, or I'll put the Schaefer brothers onto you. The Schaefers are friends of mine."

Joe Schaefer looked at his brother and then he roared with derisive laughter.

"That punk," he sneered. "He takes all the prizes."

"Yes, maybe. But you do pretty well yourself. What do you figure we do with these dames?"

"I'll take the blonde," Joe guffawed.

"Yes, and the blonde knows who's upstairs there. And so does the other one."

"We'll cut both their throats." Joe's face was a hideous mask as he spoke.

"We'd better hold them a while to see whether anything comes of this. We'll need them for hostages." Don was clearly for saving their lives.

"Anyway, we'll make these cuties wish they hadn't followed us," Joe growled.

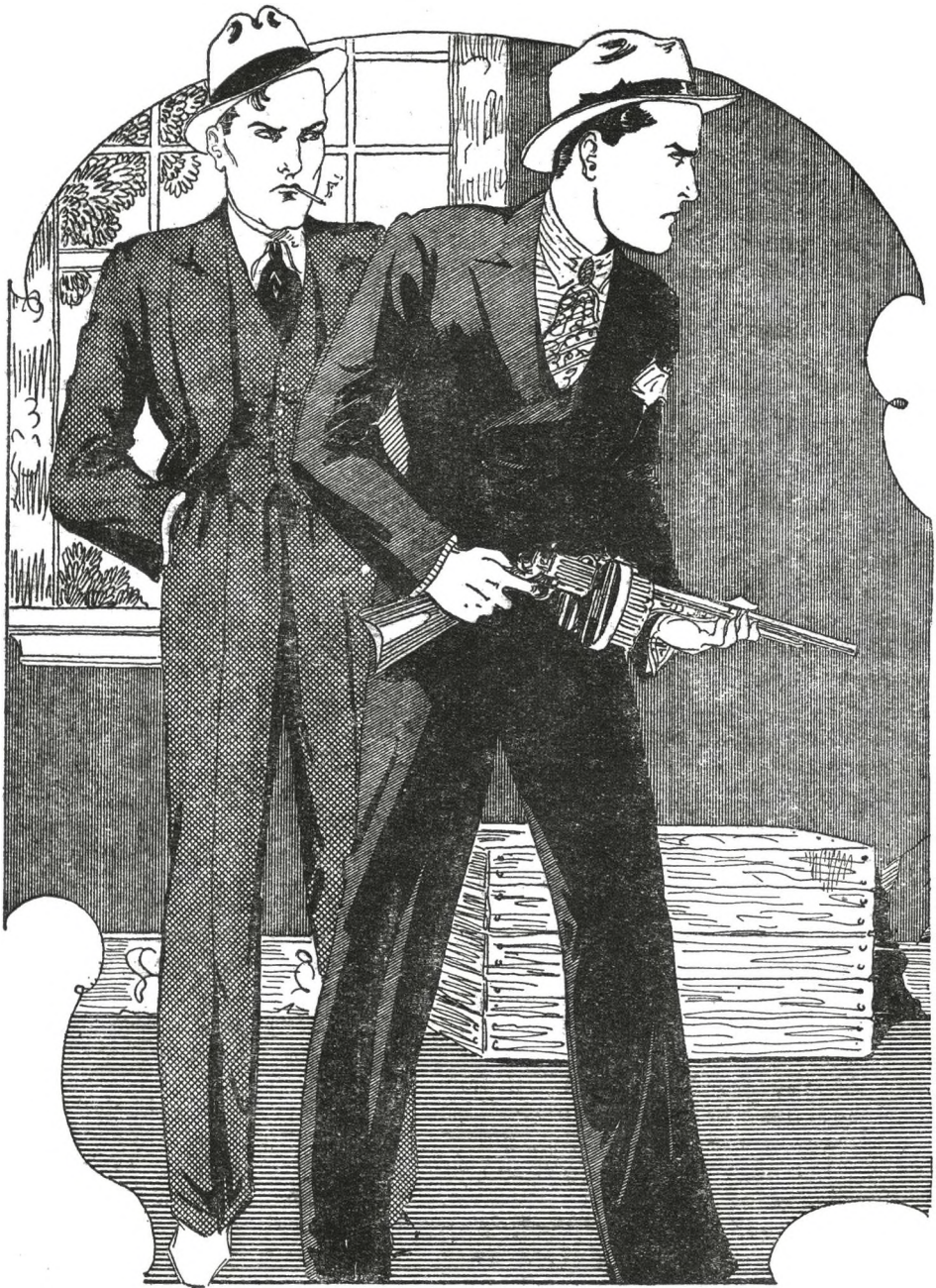
He bent a cold-blooded, murderous gaze upon the two girls and then he said something in a guttural tongue that Bee and Myra could not understand.

The man with the machine gun responded and there was a quick passage between them in the strangely muttered syllables.

"I'll shoot you Indian dice for the brunette," Don presently interposed in English.

"O. K.," the other responded, "but





*"We'll make these cuties wish they hadn't followed us," Joe growled. He bent a cold-blooded, murderous gaze upon the two girls as Don interposed: "I'll shoot you Indian dice for the brunette."*

keep your eye on the window. We can't afford to get picked off now."

"All right. But we roll them to

the wall and it's best two out of three."

Don Schaefer took up his stand



by the window. His brother rummaged in pockets and a table drawer till he produced five dice. He tossed the white cubes onto the floor.

His brother looked about. "Give us the tin cup," he suggested. "You're too smart with your fingers to suit me."

He rattled the dice in the cup and flung them against the wall.

The girls stared in fascinated horror. Myra's fate, seemingly, had been decided in those guttural accents. The men were gambling to decide whether Bee was to live or die. If Don won, she might live.

Joe's luck appeared to be uncanny. Don threw deliberately, and again and again the game was tied up.

Bee grew panicky as the game progressed. She looked about for some possible avenue of escape if Don lost. It was an instinctive action and so was the scream that she quickly choked into a frightened moan.

"Keep still, Stinger." Joe laughed uproariously. "We can't bother with you now."

But Don was on his feet with the machine gun at ready, his eyes flashing to the windows.

Bee sank down and buried her face in her hands. For she had seen the face of Morry Fine at the opposite window.

The game went on then. And, amid the curses of Don Schaefer, Joe began to win.

Bee could hardly control herself. She watched the dice presently and saw that Joe took the second game. They shook again. Again Joe won.

"All right," Don bellowed. "Your way goes with her, too. Now we'll shoot for this."

He laid his revolver on the floor beside the dice.

"What's that for?" Joe wanted to know.

"Which of us does the job?" Don demanded levelly. "Shoot for the gun."

"Never mind," Joe demurred. "I'll do the job."

So engrossed were the two men that they did not realize Bee had

slowly risen to her feet. Desperation had seized the girl. She determined to make one frantic effort to escape.

There was no time to try for the door or to open the window. Only one thing she could do, with the machine gun nestling in the arm of Don Schaefer, was to plunge through the glass panes.

Straight for the window she flew as one of the men whirled and yelled but before the gun could speak she had crashed through the light sash and was rolling down the steep bank outside.

The fear-crazed Bee could not have timed her plunge more perfectly if she had known the whole drama that was being enacted outside.

As she slid down the bank, a machine gun roared behind her. Don Schaefer stood for a moment in the window and a hunched figure took careful aim and sent him down with a scream. Then Morry Fine flung himself across the battered Bee and covered her body from the bullets that Joe Schaefer now sent more cautiously down the hill.

Not till a trickle of blood coursed across her face did Bee realize that Morry had been hit. It was Johnny Hay then who covered the window, firing from time to time as he dragged first the girl and then the wounded Morry to the brush near by.

Suddenly an attic window burst open and Myra Dane sent screams hurtling across the valley and at that instant Federal men closed in on the cabin from another side.

When it was over and Bee had helped carry the injured Morry up the hill, they found Myra Dane clinging to the unshaven Grant Hurder while the Federal men worked on the handcuffs that still bound him.

Inside the cabin, bunk blankets had been tossed over two fallen forms. The Schaefer brothers had lost their last desperate gamble with the dice of life.

Safe in Johnny Hay's arms, Bee had eyes only for the pinched face of Morry Fine. Something she saw there made her scream and fling herself forward to rain her tears on Morry's face.

"T's all there is, keed. I'm about through. Good luck, keed. And tell that little Mada—I loved her—next to you."

Only Bee's ears caught the whisper from Morry's lips.

Johnny Hay roared off on the motor cycle for St. Ignace and the doctor who might save the boy's life.

But Bee was not waiting for the doctor.

"Morry, quit it," she cried. "You've got to live, Morry. I'll make a hero out of you if you don't. I'll tell them about how you covered me up there till they quit shooting at me. That makes a hero out of you, Morry Fine, if you don't get well. It's your own fault. You never wanted to be a hero. But the only way you can stop it now is to get well."

Morry laughed then and Bee sobbed hysterically.

"You go crying over me, keed," Morry said. "You go feeling sorry for me and pinning tin medals on me and I'm liable to take that old *Hortense* of yours apart when I get out of this."

The girl knew then that the battle had been won.

"I'll give your motor cycle to Mada Gold," she threatened, "if you don't get back on your feet."

"Listen, Bee," the boy whispered, "you tell that Mada girl I want her. I want her up here right away."

And then he fell asleep and slept peacefully till the doctor arrived.

Bee and Johnny got Morry to the nearest hospital, then they rushed for the camp to find Mada. Grant Hurder, snatched by police officials for hasty questioning, promised to pay all the bills. Myra declared she would look after both Grant and Morry till they got back.

Not till Myra told them the results of the investigation did they learn the secret of that help which arrived so suddenly and when it was so badly needed. Pop Harris was a Federal operative set upon the group in the camp to watch and follow them after the snatching of Grant Hurder.

He had been on guard particularly as he pretended to sleep near Morry's bunk in the truck for the possible return of Johnny Hay. He had heard the conversation there in the dark, and he knew Morry and Johnny were on the way to what they believed was the kidnaper's hide-out.

At the tiny railroad station, he had quickly telephoned the news and a score of men closed in upon the lonely cabin shortly after the arrival of the girls.

The capture of Bee and Myra had all but upset the official plans as it had those of the two watching youths. The pair had crept closer in those dreadful moments and Morry Fine had managed a single look into the cabin window.

Hidden in the glen below, the two had been on the point of trying to bring out the pair with a shot through the glass when Bee's spectacular leap brought her almost to their feet.

News of the battle had already reached the camp when Bee and Johnny arrived in Myra's car. Mada Gold was at first nowhere in sight,



but Bee found her crouched in the interior of the battered *Hortense*, clinging to a picture of Morry that the boy must have given her.

She drank in the story of Morry's heroism and then burst out with a plea.

"I want to go there. I want to be with him!" she cried. And when they told her of his request she was

*"I love you, Bee, even more than I loved you that first night we met." Johnny held her in his arms and his lips found hers in gentle, tender kisses.*

almost beside herself until Pop Harris agreed to drive her to St. Ignace.

Pop already had the secret of what lay back of the kidnaping. Grant Hurder, jealous of Bee, had hired the Schaefers to make trouble and to

drive Johnny away. When they failed, he refused to pay them and they kidnaped him.

A cousin of the two had executed the crime and had guarded Grant



till the Schaeferes established their alibis. Then they relieved him. His talk had come to the ears of Johnny Hay from one of his tournament following in the play that had come just in time to throw suspicion on Johnny.

For Johnny was the dark horse of the golfing season and his every act was under command of his trainer.

"I love you, Johnny Hay," Bee whispered when the camp was asleep and the two had stolen out into the night. "I love you as much as Mada loves Morry Fine."

"And I love you, Bee, even more than I loved you that first night when you sat with me on the porch of the truck."

He held her in his arms and his lips found hers in gentle, tender kisses.

"It took me a long time to guess," the girl said presently, "but I think I know why you were so kiss-shy. Is it all over now?"

"No. There's the biggest tournament yet. But Bob Dane says it's in the bag if I don't go stale again. He's Myra's dad, you know, the best trainer in the golf business. I told him I'd do what he ordered. He told me girls were out and then you knocked me off my feet. I didn't know what to do at first, but I'd promised to tell nobody who or what I was till Dane agreed."

"You'll never know what crazy things I thought," Bee put in. "But I finally decided that it didn't make any difference, because I loved you, anyway."

"I was afraid about that. Every time I ducked out for one of the tournaments I staged a rebellion. But the old man told me that I was coming along and promised me the championship if I'd stick. I made

up my mind you'd like to have me top of the heap and I hung on."

"Then you didn't put the game above me, did you?"

"I forgot all about the game when you came along. That's why Myra showed up. She thought maybe I would forget about it too much. I'd overtrained and Dane told me I mustn't play at all unless he sent for me. He said he wanted me to get hungry for golf so I'd run wild when I hit the links again, and he figured out this tour for me. Myra saw that I was steamed up about something and she soon had me telling her all about you. She said she'd stick to you and tell you everything if you got a wrong idea. But I was for chucking the whole thing at first. I'd have done it, too, if I hadn't given my word."

"She's a peach, that girl," Bee laughed. "She gave me a puzzle to work on and I nearly muffed it. But I did cut out your picture, thinking it was somebody else who looked like you. Is your name really Johnny Hay?"

"Yes, but there's a Mack in it. It's my middle name and every time I give it, some fool newspaperman or clerk of the tournament balls it up and writes it Johnny McKay. So I let it ride and that's my professional name."

"So I'm in love with the great Whiff McKay!"

"Yes, and as I said before, he's in love with you and so is just plain Johnny Hay if you like that better."

"Well, I decided once that I'd love you even if you weren't a hero. And now I find you are and I love you more."

"Golf heroes don't last more than a season or two, so don't get excited about it."

"The newspapers are making quite a fuss over you for finding

Grant Hurder. Funny they haven't tied you up yet with Whiff McKay."

"They will. That's one thing that bothers me. But I may be able to stall it off till I take the open. Then it won't matter so much. A thing like that always makes it tough on a man's game."

"It begins to look as though Myra would see to it that I don't marry Grant Hurder before fall, doesn't it?"

"Thank fortune, yes. And, boy, does she love that cave-man stuff he uses!"

"I thought for a while she was the reason you wanted me not to marry, that you wanted me for a spare in case she turned you down."

"And still you promised. But, of course, I'll let you off to marry me."

"Not much, Johnny Mack Hay. There'll be no marrying in this family till after the big tournament and maybe not then if you don't bring back that cup," Bee finished threateningly.

"Now, Bee," Johnny pleaded, "that's not fair. You talk like that and my game is likely to go all to pieces."

"It had better not. Myra and I both are going to help you keep in training now. And I think it's about time for the no-more-kisses rule to go back into effect."

"Ah, Bee, have a heart." The boy's arms were still about her and his lips pleaded.

And so she relented for the sake of the love that had been born in jealousy's cavalcade.

THE END.



#### SOLVED PROBLEM

I SOUGHT to brighten somber lines  
 With particles of wonder:  
 The radiance that countersigns  
 The sky before the thunder,  
 The gentleness of slanted rain,  
 The blue of mountain flowers,  
 The quickness of a slender vane,  
 The patience of the hours.  
 When finally I thought it through  
 I came to realize  
 That all I really had to do  
 Was write about your eyes.

BROCK MILTON.



# Miss Perfection

By Cecily Fearn

**A** GIGGLE came from behind the closed office door of Richard Osborne, vice president of Hamilton Tile—a silvery, giddy giggle. It belonged to Millie Johnson, the new stenographer in the office. Luckily, only one person could hear it—Susan Aiken, the vice president's secretary, who sat just outside, at her desk, and she was so

torn between resentment and hurt that the tears kept getting between her and the long record she was copying.

For several weeks now Mr. Osborne, tall, handsome, brilliant, had given her long, detailed work to do, keeping his personal dictation for Millie. Shallow, reckless, but attractive Millie, with her sheer

dresses, her slim, shapely legs, which she took care to show often, her mass of curly red hair. And, more than that, her sharply pretty face, with its provocatively pursed lips, her wide gray eyes, their lashes accentuated with mascara, the soft whiteness of her skin.

Whenever Millie went in to take dictation from Mr. Osborne, she always closed the door behind her. They seemed to have a good time together, for she always came out, dimpling, and looking around self-consciously—with her notebook full of errors.

There was some grim satisfaction to Susan in the fact that Millie usually had to do her letters over, yet, on the other hand, that meant she saw Mr. Osborne twice as often.

No, there was no use trying to find a silver lining in the cloud that had suddenly come between Susan and her job. For three years, from the time she had graduated, at eighteen, with highest honors from secretarial school, she had been Mr. Osborne's secretary. He had told her that she was priceless, that he couldn't get along without her. She took care of all his private affairs—depositing money in the bank for him, having the power of attorney to draw it out, keeping track of his investments. She even shopped for him when he was busy, and he was invariably pleased.

"You have good taste," he told her smiling up at her from his desk. The trouble was she had too good taste. She wore neat dark dresses to the office, with modest touches of white at the throat and wrists. Her shining brown hair, parted in the middle, was drawn back into a knot, becoming, but it made her look older than her twenty-one years.

She used the smallest amount of rouge on her lips, and her huge blue

eyes, deep as night, were fringed by a natural luxuriance of thick, dark lashes. Looking into those eyes was to realize how beautiful Susan really was. But Richard Osborne took her for granted now, and those beautiful eyes for granted, too.

He called her "Miss Perfection"—and dictated all his letters to Millie. Two tears rolled over and splashed onto Susan's immaculate page. She didn't care. Let them drop. She didn't even care that those tears were an admission of her love for Richard Osborne. Nothing seemed to matter now.

Hurriedly, she brushed away the signs of her momentary weakness when she heard footsteps coming down the corridor. She looked up, prepared to smile, prepared to go on being the perfect automaton, until she saw who it was.

"Well, well!" The smile of Everett Rask was bland and decidedly cocksure as he greeted Osborne's attractive secretary. Not his type, to be sure, but not bad, as female guardians of business men went. "And how are you this morning, my dear Miss Aiken? Is Mr. Osborne in?" He nodded toward the closed door. "If you'll just tell him I'm here——"

"He's busy at the moment," Susan said coldly. She hated this man, and distrusted him thoroughly. This was his fourth visit, and he was trying to sell some stock in a silver mine to Mr. Osborne. The stock was cheap, now. But shortly, Mr. Rask had assured his prospective client, it would go swooping up. A group of big men were reopening a famous old mine where a new vein had been discovered. From his actions, Susan knew that Osborne had been more than half interested in what Rask had told him, but something told her the thing was no good,

that he would lose anything he put into it.

"I'll wait until he's not busy," Rask grinned at her amiably, and all Susan could do was to shrug.

She was almost sorry, for once, to see Mr. Osborne's door finally open, and Millie emerge, because Rask went right in.

Susan was on pins and needles until he came out, and then her heart sank, for he was grinning, and as he shook hands with Mr. Osborne he kept saying: "You'll never regret it—you'll make a killing. Don't forget the letter or you'll lose out."

Richard Osborne smiled back.

"I'll send it out this afternoon."

When Rask had gone, he turned to Susan. "Oh, Miss Aiken, get out my bank books and go over them, will you? I want to know my balance, over and above outstanding obligations."

"Yes, Mr. Osborne." Susan kept her head down, for fear he should see her worried eyes.

He got his hat then, and went out for lunch. As Susan went through the hall—she would order a sandwich and glass of milk to eat while she worked—she saw Millie enter the elevator with him. Evidently, they were bound for lunch together.

Never, in the years she had been there, had he asked Susan to lunch.

On his return he was all pepped up. He smiled and rubbed his hands together as he came in, and threw his hat onto the clothes tree.

"Well, now," he called out to Susan. "Have you finished with those figures?"

"Yes, Mr. Osborne." She was working in his office, where the safe was in which his private papers were kept. He bent over her shoulder as she sat at his desk.

"Fifteen thousand?" he asked. "You're sure that's the limit of my

tether? I can't go higher than that? Well, that's a fairish sum to play with. You know, Miss Aiken"—he smiled at her engagingly—"I'm going to make some money without lifting my hand."

Susan looked up, her eyes grave.

"I hope so, Mr. Osborne."

His smile faded.

"You *hope* so. I know so. I've done some investigating into this proposition of Rask's, and I'm convinced it's a gold mine. Or rather"—the smile came back briefly—"a silver mine. You just don't like the man, that's all. I've felt your disapproval. But the man doesn't make the mine, you know."

Susan flushed. He had paid her the compliment of having noticed her reactions, but he was reprimanding her for them just the same. His tone said further that he could get along without her opinions.

"That's quite true, Mr. Osborne." She was too proud to apologize. "But I'm sorry to say I still don't think much of Mr. Rask or his mine." Her words were very calm and clear. With them she rose, cleared the desk of the papers she had been working on, and put them away in the safe. "Is there anything else?" she turned to him before she left the room.

"Nothing," he said curtly.

Millie was called in to take some letters that afternoon. Susan went on with the long report she had been working on in the morning. She wondered if he was as displeased with her actions and disapproving words as he had seemed. Would he fire her? Should she quit? These two thoughts went round and round in her head while her efficient fingers went on with the typing. She could get a job some other place, for he certainly would give her a good ref-

erence, but she didn't want to leave! She admired him for the work he did for the firm, and she felt somehow that he needed her. Love and duty, so far as Susan was concerned, both were concentrated in Richard Osborne.

Millie came out of the office. There had been no giggling this afternoon. The red-haired girl looked rather peevish. "Look at all I've got to do." She leafed over her notebook for Susan to see. "Well, I can only do the best I can."

About four thirty she took her batch of letters in for the vice president's signature. She came out with several unsigned.

"Miss Aiken," she sidled up to Susan, "won't you please do these for me? When there's figures and all that, I always get them mixed, and besides, I have a date for five o'clock."

"Very well." Susan took them without glancing up. "I'll do them." She wondered if Millie's date was with the boss.

"Oh, thank you," Millie gushed. "I'll do as much for you some day."

Putting her own work aside, Susan started on the letters.

"Miss Aiken," Richard Osborne halted briefly beside her, hat in hand, "you'll kindly go over my mail and sign it for me when Miss Johnson finishes it. I'm leaving now. Good night."

His tone toward her was less curt than it had been that morning, but it was still stiff.

It was only after he had gone that she came across a letter that made her heart beat fast and her fingers refuse to copy. It was addressed to Mr. Rask, of the Sterling Bar Silver Corp.

DEAR SIR: I agree to buy fifteen thousand shares of stock in your company at two dollars per share, for which I will send

you, not later than to-morrow morning, fifteen thousand dollars, the remainder to be on margin, with my stock in the Hamilton Tile Co. as collateral. You will buy the stock for me, and advise me when to sell, per our agreement.

Over Millie's mistakes were the corrections in his own handwriting, which made it all the more personal, and terrible. Susan felt he was mortgaging his very future. Imagine putting up his own company stock, which he would lose in case the new stock went down! She sat there shuddering, waves of cold dread going over her. If the Hamilton Tile Co. knew he was doing this, he might even lose his job. He would certainly risk losing the reputation for brilliance and dependability he had built up.

With sudden decision, Susan began to type:

DEAR SIR: After careful consideration, I find I cannot invest in the Sterling Bar Silver Corp. This is final. Thanking you for the opportunity you gave me, I am,  
Yours sincerely—

She signed his name, "Richard Osborne," sealed and stamped it before she had a chance to change her mind. Almost running, she hurried out and thrust it into the mail chute. There! It was done, for better, or for worse. The phrase made her smile weakly. That's what they said in wedding ceremonies, to bind a sacred vow, but it seemed just as solemn now, and this was only business.

But that wasn't true. She had done it because she loved him. Loved him better than life itself. What she had done would have been inexcusable, otherwise.

When he came down the next morning, the vice president seemed to have forgiven his secretary, for his mood was very cheerful.

"Draw the fifteen thousand out



*He stood looking down at her with a smile. "You're quite beautiful, Susan. And you've been hiding this from me all this time."*

her employer's personal papers, including his bank book, in which the fifteen thousand, still intact, mocked her as she rode the rest of the way to his house.

At Richard Osborne's apartment, she was shown into the library, a pleasantly large, rich, dark-paneled room, suitable for a bachelor who was rapidly becoming an important

young executive. Her heart beat very fast. Here he would come in a moment, his face jubilant, expecting to tell her he had tripled his money or even more, and that he'd received word to sell and realize his profits.

When the door opened, Susan turned slowly toward it, standing very straight and tall in her flame-colored gown.

"It's not—you, is it?" His voice was surprised, as he came toward her.

"I brought what you wanted, Mr. Osborne," said Susan, her cheeks aflame to match her gown. And now he was closer, and stood looking down at her with a cryptic smile, his face rather somber in the upward glow of the single library lamp.

"You're quite beautiful, Susan." His voice was soft and rather weary, but his eyes dwelt on her, paying her tribute. "And you've been hiding this from me all this time." He halted.

"I must tell you—your judgment was correct," he went on, as she stood confused under his glance. "You told me I shouldn't have bought that stock. Well, I'm wiped out completely. Mr. Rask was all that you thought him. His crowd pushed the stock way up, and sold—without, however, giving their victims the same chance. I couldn't get hold of Rask all day." Again that somber smile. "No doubt he's vanished from the State."

Involuntarily, Susan put a hand to her throat. She could hardly believe what she was hearing.

"You mean—the stock broke?"

"It's down to a half point. I asked you to come over to-night to bring my Hamilton stock, principally. That will have to go as well as my fifteen thousand." He looked at her for a long moment, then reached over and took one of her hands. "It's hard for a man to acknowledge he was wrong, but I'm afraid you're still my Miss Perfection."

"Wait, Mr. Osborne," Susan cried. "You mustn't say such things. I'm not at all perfect. I disobeyed your orders." And now the words came tumbling out, as she told him how she had changed the letter. "You're suffering now, when you think you've lost everything, but I can't tell you how I suffered when I thought it was I who had lost you everything." She stopped, afraid of giving her feelings entirely away.

He grasped her meaning, her full meaning at last, when she showed him the bank book, the fifteen thousand still intact.

She was trembling, her emotions all awry from the mixture of joy and shame that she felt. Her breath caught sharply when he looked down at her.

"But don't you see," he was saying, "you're still perfect! Your judgment, your insight saved me. If you were my wife, you couldn't have looked after me better."

Then suddenly, with a bound, he had her in his arms.

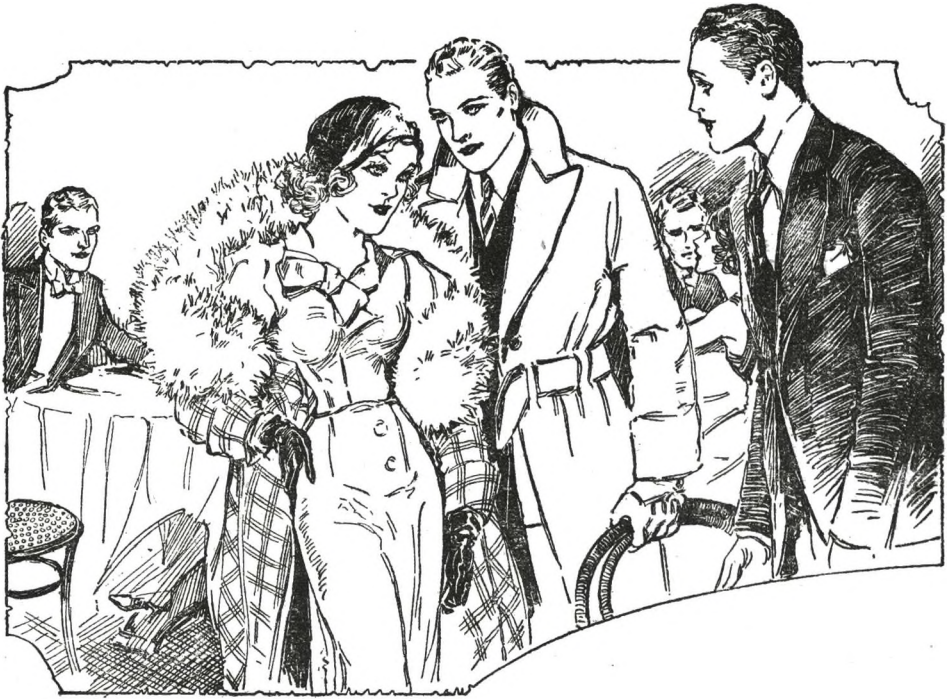
"Darling! That I should have been blind so long. My wife—that's what you should be—what you shall be! I need you, I want you so!" His arms tightened about her.

"Oh, Richard! It's been so lonely, loving you, having to keep it to myself." She nestled closer, and his rough chin rested on her shining braids. Then, very slowly, he tilted her lips up to his.

"My sweet, my own," he murmured reverently, and then his mouth was on hers in a flaming kiss that lighted the fires of ecstasy in her heart, to burn brightly, forever.







# Not Beautiful

By Florence Eberhard

**D**OCTOR BILL JEFFRY brought his coupé to a stop before the Cummings' house. Pat stifled a sigh. It was such a short distance from the hospital to her home. She made no move to get out, hoping Bill would invite her to go with him on his country calls.

"Well, here you are, Pat," he said.

Pat opened the door of the coupé. "Thanks for bringing me home, Bill."

"Don't mention it. See you to-night."

Pat turned, her brown eyes opened wide. "What time?" she breathed.

LS-9D

"Adele said to come about nine."

For a long second Pat stared at him. She liked everything about Doctor Bill—his brown pleasant face, his long brown hands resting lightly on the wheel, his tweed clothes and the smell of drugs that always clung to them—everything!

That is, of course, she liked everything but the way he treated her, making dates with her older sisters and acting toward her as if she were just an amusing child. He never actually called her "infant," but his older-uncle manner implied that he thought it.

"Oh, it's Adele to-night," she said.

"Going to a dance at the club," Doctor Bill supplied. "Like to come along with us?"

Pat flashed him as cheerful a smile as she could manage, and turned away.

Her older sister, Adele, met her in the hall. Of a cream-blond complexion, she was so beautiful that Pat sighed despairingly whenever she saw Doctor Bill drive away with her.

"So-o," Adele said accusingly. "You've been calling on some one in the hospital so that you could graft a ride home with Bill."

"How sil——" Pat began and stopped, open-mouthed. For Adele was holding an important letter in her hand, Pat's answer from the "Advice to the Lovelorn" columnist, Jane Reynolds, to whom Pat had written in desperation.

She leaped for the letter but Adele moved back too quickly for her.

"No use making a rough and tumble, Patricia," she said sweetly. "I've memorized it. I could quote every word to Bill. What a laugh he'd get!"

Pat went scarlet. "You couldn't be so mean!" she gasped.

Adele smiled, her blue eyes suddenly ice-cold. "That depends entirely on your conduct, little one. I've wondered why you always tag along with us. I've suspected why you're always cluttering up the living room when Bill's here. And I've thought a lot about those tempting midnight suppers you're always serving. Being the sweet and helpful little sister, eh?"

"Oh, Dele!" exclaimed Pat.

"Oh, Pat!" Adele mocked. "You better make yourself scarce in the future, or you can bet your last cent I'll tell Bill. Bill's mine!" Her furious tones reached a shrill pitch.

A strikingly handsome girl sauntered from the living room into the hall. This was Rilla, another sister. As dark as Adele was fair, not quite as ravishingly beautiful, she was known as the "clever Miss Cummings," in local literary and art circles. Pat thought ruefully of the way people spoke of them. They always said "the beautiful Miss Cummings," and "the literary Miss Cummings," and just plain "Patricia."

"So Bill is yours?" Rilla asked in cool, clipped accents. "Since when?"

"He may go to dull lectures with you," Adele began furiously. "But he's——"

Pat took advantage of Adele's relaxed attention at that moment to snatch her letter. She fled upstairs, and behind locked doors, tore the incriminating evidence into fine bits. Much good that would do her when Adele could quote it, she thought bitterly.

Her goose was cooked now, all right, done to a turn and served with garnishes. It wasn't even as if Jane Reynolds had given her such hot advice.

She had poured out her heart to the columnist, asking if there wasn't something, anything, she could do to attract that marvelous man who was dividing his attention between her sisters. Pat had humbly acknowledged that she was an ordinary mortal, compared with the other two, so rich in beauty and brains, but she did love him. More than they did, she was sure. So much that it hurt to see him!

Jane Reynolds had written:

The first thing for you to learn, my dear, is that men like to do their own pursuing. There's nothing in the world you can do except be a sweet, helpful girl, and let matters take their course. If this man can't make up his mind between your



*Millie sidled up to Susan. "Won't you please do these for me? I have a date for five o'clock." Susan wondered if Millie's date was with the boss.*

of the bank, get a certified check and send it to Mr. Rask," he directed her.

"Yes, Mr. Osborne," Susan answered, her heart beating fast.

She pretended to go to the bank, but went instead to the public library where she spent an unhappy half hour. What if Rask, angry, should come to the office again and

get to Mr. Osborne with the letter she had sent? Well, there was no use crossing bridges until she came to them. The worst that could happen would be the loss of her job.

"Look at this!" It was three days later, and Richard Osborne loomed over Susan's desk, the financial page in his hands. "Sterling Bar has gone

up to three. I'm fifteen thousand dollars ahead, I've doubled my money!"

He was jubilant. Susan managed a little smile, but inwardly she was frantic. What if he sold—or rather, tried to sell? She moistened her lips.

"Are you going to sell now, Mr. Osborne?"

"I should say not. This stock is going up farther than this, my girl! I'm going to hold it until I get the tip to sell. There's every chance I'm going to make some real money on this deal!"

He returned to his office then, and Susan breathed easily again. At least she was safe for the moment.

It all haunted her relentlessly, though. She began reading the financial pages herself, and she watched the stock go up day by day with an uncanny precision— $3\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $3\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $3\frac{3}{4}$ .

Richard Osborne didn't gloat any more over his paper profits in her presence, but his whole manner radiated joy and an inner excitement. These days he was touched with a bit of madness, like all gamblers.

The morning Sterling Bar hit 4, Susan was sent on some business for the firm, out of town. By the time she made the journey up-State and back, it was too late to go to the office, so she went straight home instead. She was tired, from the trip and from the strain of the past week.

As she came in, she saw her landlady in the sitting room. "Mrs. Rainey," she told her, "I won't be down to dinner to-night."

The landlady hardly waited for her to finish.

"Well, you'd better eat something, my dear, because you've more business to attend to this evening. Mr.

Osborne called, and wants you to come over to his house this evening with some things." She hurried over to her desk where she found a note. "He wants you to bring all his personal papers, and said for you to come as soon as you could."

The landlady saw Susan turn white.

"Why, what's the matter, my dear?" She looked at her anxiously. "I think it's awful that you have to work to-night, after that long trip to-day. Just let me call Mr. Osborne and tell him you can't come. I guess his business isn't as important as all that!"

Susan stopped her as she went to the phone.

"I'm all right," she smiled wanly. She hurried up to her room. "I'll just take a bowl of soup upstairs before I go."

When Mrs. Rainey came with the soup, she found Susan changing her clothes. Susan turned to her.

"I'm getting into something a little gay, to perk up my spirits," she explained.

"That's right!" Mrs. Rainey approved of the gown Susan had slipped over her head. It was a warm flame color, and clung alluringly to Susan's slim figure. "And your hair!" the landlady cried. "Why, isn't that lovely, braided and wound high over your head. You look grand that way—like a movie star or something!"

When Mrs. Rainey had left, Susan looked at herself in the mirror. Her face was very grim.

"At least," she said to herself, "I shall go out in a blaze of glory!"

Slipping a loose flame-colored coat over her dress, Susan went downstairs and hailed a cab. First she went to the office, where she secured



sisters, it must mean that he isn't serious about either. Just go your own way. If this isn't the right man for you, another will come along.

Pat dug her heels resentfully into the carpet. She had been sweet and helpful; she had visited the sick at the hospital—at the right time—and prepared toothsome dainties for Bill and Adele, or for Bill and Rilla. But that was ended! There was nothing she could do now, but keep out of Bill's way.

She got out of the way very promptly that evening when he came into the living room, resplendent in dinner clothes. She moved speedily toward the hall.

"Hello, Pat," said Doctor Bill.

"Good evening," she returned distantly.

He laughed. "Why the sudden chill?"

Pat didn't even look at him. She kept on going. Rod Denning waited at the curb, pressing the siren of his car. Rod didn't count at all with her; she disliked pinkish blonds; but she intended to stay out with him until all danger of running into Bill again to-night was past.

They went to a movie, then took a long drive, and at midnight stopped at the Black Cat. Pat went in, determined to order a great quantity of food and take a long time consuming it, so that she wouldn't get home before two o'clock. Suddenly she paled!

Doctor Bill was sitting alone at the first table, just beyond the door. He rose with a warm smile of welcome.

"Well," he said genially, "this is nice. You must join me."

Rod already had his hand on the back of a chair in a gesture of acceptance, when Pat interposed.

"Sorry, Doctor Jeffry," she murmured in a small voice. "I've got something to tell Rod. I mean, you know how it is——"

She marshaled Rod to a table on the far side of the room. Through lowered eyelashes, she saw that Bill looked puzzled and faintly hurt.

"What do you have to tell me?" Rod asked.

She leaned forward, careful to assume the pose of one, whispering intimate secrets. "Nothing, stupid! I didn't want to sit with him."

Rod beamed. "Good girl! Half the girls in town've got a crush on that guy." He reached over, covering her hand with his. "But you like me a little, don't you, honey?"

His voice was eager.

Doctor Bill rose abruptly and left. He telephoned the next morning; fortunately Pat beat Adele to the phone.

"Listen, Pat," he began, "what struck you last night?"

Pat swallowed. This was awful, with Adele standing an eyelash away. The sword that hung over her head was suspended on a very weak string.

"Why, nothing, Rod," she said loudly. "Why, nothing at all."

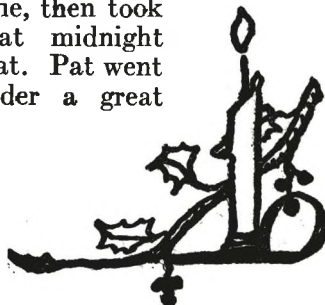
At the name "Rod," Adele moved away with a shrug. "The name is Jeffry," Bill informed her a trifle grimly. Jeffry. Do I sound like that—— Oh, never mind! I want to know

what I've done to offend you."

"Why, nothing, nothing at all," said Pat nervously.

Bill sounded relieved. "Fine! Then I'll pick you up in ten minutes. I'm going out to the country and——"

"No!" Pat almost shouted. "No!



I've got other plans," and hung up.

"You needn't tell all the neighbors," Rilla observed, raising an eyebrow.

Pat made herself scarce, just in case Bill should come. She made herself scarce every time he came, fluttering out of his way like a little white ghost. He telephoned frequently and even sent roses, the long-stemmed, thorny kind.

"Rod's growing up," remarked Adele condescendingly.

Having learned her lesson by the Jane Reynolds letter, Pat destroyed the note that accompanied the flowers, although it almost broke her heart to do it.

Bill had written:

I miss you, Pat. What in the world went wrong with us? I thought we were pretty good buddies. Does Rod take every minute of your time?

Pat didn't even thank him for his gift. He looked at her inquiringly that night when he dropped in informally, but Pat faded from sight, leaving him to Rilla. She was growing expert on disappearing gracefully. She might have kept it up indefinitely, if it hadn't been for the dance which Adele decided to give.

The family held council to make plans. Pat's mother talked decorations, and Pat's father talked expenses.

"I'll invite Bill, of course," said Adele.

Rilla's eyebrows lifted. "Why 'of course'? Privilege of the oldest?" she asked sarcastically.

Adele flushed and started to speak.

"Now, girls," Mrs. Cummings intervened hastily, "don't wrangle. Settle it between yourselves. Whom will you invite, Patricia?"

Pat's eyes widened. "Me? Oh, I'm not going."

Her father reached forward and pinched her cheek. "This is costing so much, baby, that the three will share the fun, or there won't be any dance."

Tearfully, Pat tried to beg off. She knew that it was tempting fate too much, to be in the same room with Bill. He had been so persistent lately with phone calls and flowers, that it was only a question of time until Adele would see. And when Adele saw, the sword would drop.

When Pat found her father unexpectedly firm, she appealed to Rod.

"Now, listen," she cautioned him earnestly on the night of the party, "if Bill Jeffry asks for a dance or tries to cut in, you're to refuse."

"Gosh, Pat," he protested. "You can't do that. You're one of the hostesses."

"I'm going to do it nevertheless," she said firmly.

Rod shrugged. "You've got an obsession about that guy. He's a good egg."

Pat didn't need Rod to tell her that. She watched Bill dancing with Adele, who had won the right to invite him by cutting high card. She watched him dancing with Rilla and wished that the evening was over, especially when she saw him heading toward her.

Doctor Bill tapped Rod's shoulder. "Sorry," Rod said gruffly. "We're making a non-stop flight."

Bill's stunned, hurt expression almost broke Pat's heart. She hated to be so rude, but she didn't dare risk being in his arms. She might cry—tears came so easily these days—or worse, she might anger Adele. Adele had issued a special warning about her conduct to-night.

An hour later there was a blue-dance, one of Rilla's plans for something different. The dancers moved like shadows in a spotlight of



*"I always loved you, Pat darling," said Bill gently. "It was because I was afraid that you'd think me too old that I didn't tell you before."*

ghostly blue, with the orchestra wailing out a popular blues song. Pat was dancing with Sam Corcoran —then suddenly she wasn't.

Startled, she looked up into Bill's set face. "We're going to have this out right now, Patricia," he said grimly. "You've been avoiding me like the plague for two weeks, and I intend to know why." Every word shot out, distinct as a firecracker.

A lifetime, an eternity seemed to elapse before Pat summoned the necessary courage to look up at him. Even at that, she only stole a glance at him from under the long fringe of eyelashes that swept her cheeks. Then she lowered her eyes again:

"I've been busy," Pat faltered.

"Busy dodging me," Bill agreed brusquely. "I've understood that. I want to know why."

Pat cast a desperate glance around the room.

"No use," said Bill. "If he comes, I'll tell him we're making a non-stop fight. On second thought——"

On second thought he guided her masterfully toward the door and with a firm hand on her elbow, propelled her out into the moonlight.

"Now, Patricia Cummings," he said sternly. "Here you are, and here you stay until you tell me what I want to know. If I've done anything to offend you——"

Pat's face was pale in the moonlight. "Nothing, Doctor Jeffry," she said faintly. "Nothing."

Bill gave a short laugh. "There you are! 'Doctor Jeffry'! I used to be 'Bill.' Pat"—his voice lowered to a husky pitch—"Pat, don't you see this means everything to me?"

She tried to draw away, but his arms were strong.

"I love you, Pat, darling. You're the sweetest, dearest——"

"Oh—please," she moaned.

"But I must." His head lowered until his lips met hers. Pat closed her eyes. She realized vaguely that the blues song had come to an end, but that didn't matter. Nothing mattered—nothing, but the sharp quivering thrill that ran along every nerve.

Some one coughed. Some one tittered. Those sounds brought Pat to reality. She tried to jerk away from Bill.

"You mustn't think—that doesn't mean——" she stammered.

"You don't care for me?" Bill asked, very gently.

Adele was moving toward them, and it seemed to Pat that at least a million people were following her sister. She shook her head in answer to Bill's question.

"Adele," she said, making that one word an eloquent plea for mercy.

"Oh, here you are, Bill!" Adele said sweetly. "You must watch yourself in the moonlight with this kid sister of mine."

"Adele!" Pat cried again.

Her sister's sweet, amused voice flowed on. "She's had expert advice from Jane Reynolds on how to vamp you, Bill."

Pat didn't wait to hear another word. She fled. Down the veranda steps and across the garden, she ran at full speed. Footsteps pounded after her. She ran faster. The footsteps were gaining.

Adele and Rilla watched that mad flight and pursuit, along with every one else. Rilla whispered to her sister: "You were awfully dumb, Dele, to make her keep away from him. Terribly dumb! I saw it all along. Jane Reynolds said that men like to pursue. Looks as if she's right."

Doctor Bill not only pursued. He caught Pat and held her, one hundred pounds of struggling, fighting fury.

"Let me go!" she cried, her small fists beating his chest futilely.

"I'll never let you go. Now that I know——"

"If you were a gentleman," Pat gasped, "you wouldn't mention that——"

"I'm not a gentleman," retorted Doctor Bill. "I'm just a human being, who loves you, adores you—and who will become a raving maniac if you don't stop torturing me."

Pat still strained away from his embrace. "But if I hadn't avoided you, you wouldn't have——"

"I always did—always loved you," said Bill gently. "I always knew you were the pick of the bunch! My pick, anyway, darling."

Pat stopped struggling. "Adele's so beautiful," she said wistfully.

"Not as lovely as you."



"And Rilla's so clever."

"With a tongue like a razor blade." Suddenly Bill groaned. "Pat, I tell you, it was because I'm nine years older than you, and afraid that you'd think me too old——"

This time, it was Pat who stopped him—with a kiss.

"Pat, do that again!" Bill's voice sounded breathless.

She obeyed. And utterly indifferent to the gaping crowd on the veranda, they kissed again and again.

"She sure hates that guy," remarked Rod to the rest of the guests, as they watched the silhouettes, one slim and tiny, in the close embrace of the other, tall, muscular and strong.



GOLDEN MOMENTS

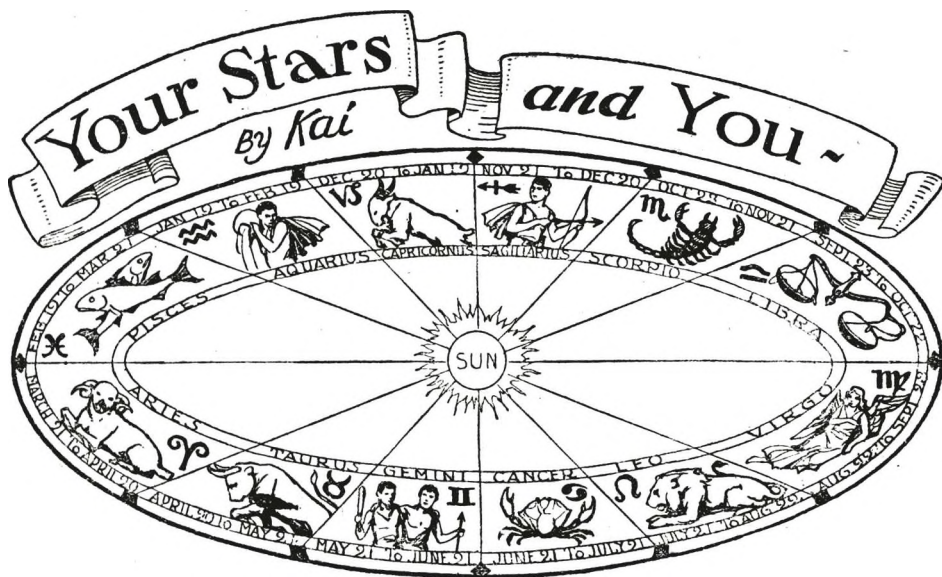
THIS life is ours for such a little while,  
And love, itself, is such a fragile thing!  
The gods will frown more often than they smile—  
I'll gladly take the love that life may bring!

And when the moon lends magic to the night;  
When love has cast its heart-enthraling spell;  
I'll seize each golden moment in its flight,  
And lock in it my heart, and guard it well!

And then, when life replaces joy with pain;  
Each time that clouds of gloom obscure the sun;  
I'll open up my heart and, once again,  
Count all my golden treasures, one by one!

J. HARVEY THOMPSON.





The trend is fairly good this week, but not quite as favorable as that of the foregoing seven days. There will be many opportunities for pleasure, however, and you may make plans for a festive holiday season. Consult the "Day by Day" section for a more detailed description.

#### DAY BY DAY

Hours mentioned are Eastern standard time

**Saturday, December 22nd** ♃  
 To-day brings the emotions into play and the influences are not very good. Do not yield to impulse this evening and do not expect too much of your social engagements. You will be inclined to be extravagant with your money and emotions this morning. The afternoon is the best period of the day.

**Sunday, December 23rd** ☺  
 The aspects are excellent to-day and very energetic. You can expect to accomplish a great deal and have a festive time. Your mental processes will be rapid and you will feel like getting things done. Those engaged in literary or inventive work could not wish for better cooperation from the planets.

**Monday, December 24th** ♃

Some features of to-day are not very good. You will have to be careful of the written and spoken word this morning and not allow your enthusiasms to influence you too much. Between noon and 3:00 p. m. there is an excess of emotion which will be uncomfortable and there will be minor delays. The evening period will be hectic and there is the tendency to quarrel and be temperamental. Try to avoid criticizing or being the subject of criticism. Act with restraint and discretion.

**Tuesday, December 25th** ♂

Christmas Day. The general trend to-day is very good. There will be disappointments and delays before 8:00 a. m., but the later hours and those prior to 3:00 p. m. are harmonious, pleasant, and exciting. There will be an unusual amount of activity. The evening period brings pleasure, stimulated emotions, gaiety and entertaining discussions. This department hopes the astrological indications have contributed toward your happiness to-day.

**Wednesday, December 26th** ♃

Energy and diligent application feature the hours before 10:30 a. m. There will be little desire for work during the afternoon and the evening will bring the inclination to enjoy yourself. Most of the evening influences are favorable and harmony will prevail, with emphasis upon heart affairs and social recreation.

**Thursday, December 27th** ♉

There is just enough energy in the heavens to-day to enable you to stay on the job and execute necessary details. However, it is a lazy day mostly and those who do not have to work will devote most of their time to enjoying themselves. Any one doing creative or artistic work will find the planetary urge most helpful.

**Friday, December 28th** ♀

The written word will have to be handled very cautiously to-day prior to 6:30 p. m. It would be a good idea, too, to watch your speech closely and refuse to engage in meaningless discussions. The early-evening hours will be pleasant, but the influences become more inauspicious as the hours advance. Restraint and caution are imperative around midnight.

**IF YOU WERE BORN BETWEEN**

**March 21st and April 20th**  
(Aries ♈)

—Aries people born between March 21st and 27th will find the week difficult emotionally. Emphasis will be laid upon partnerships and business. Curb your feelings. If born between April 1st and 9th, you will be concerned mostly with the solving of financial problems. If born between April 12th and 20th, you will have an energetic week and find pleasure in originating new plans and forming new schemes. Be inventive.

**April 20th and May 21st**  
(Taurus ♉)

—Taurus people born between April 20th and 25th will have a pleasant week, but must protect their health. If born between

May 1st and 9th, you will form associations and feel creative. Put all business matters to a practical test. If born between May 14th and 21st, you will find some of the phases of the week disappointing. Do not try to move too fast and do not argue about anything.

**May 21st and June 21st**  
(Gemini ♊)

—Geminians born between May 21st and 26th will have an active, pleasant week, and harmony will surround most of your activities. If born between June 1st and 10th, you will be confused by several features in your life, but there will be opportunities for enjoyment. If born between June 14th and 21st, there will be irritating factors in your life, but there is an underlying stability which will help you to control some of your wilder impulses. Postpone vital decisions concerning associates.

**June 21st and July 21st**  
(Cancer ♋)

—Cancerians born between June 21st and 27th will not care for the trend of the current week because of the emotional strain. Affairs in the home will be disturbing. There will be opportunities for enjoyment, however. If born between July 1st and 9th, you will have a very pleasant, inspiring and satisfactory week. If born between July 14th and 21st, you will be able to adapt yourself to conditions and the underlying tension and restlessness should be ignored.

**July 21st and August 22nd**  
(Leo ♌)

—Leo people born between July 21st and 26th will have an active and enjoyable seven days with emphasis laid on pleasure rather than business. If born between August 1st and 8th, you will be inclined to spend too much money, but the current week will bring you many pleasurable incidents. If born between August 14th and 22nd, you will have a very active week and should occupy yourself with details. Your judgment is fairly good and you will find the pressure relieved to some extent.

**August 22nd and September 23rd**  
(Virgo ♍)

—Virgo people born between August 22nd and 28th will have a pleasant week and an energetic one. Devote the necessary hours to business, which you will find un-

usually stimulated, and give yourself over to amusement in your leisure hours. If born between September 1st and 9th, you will feel uncertain about some phases because of intense emotions, but you are operating with good influences if you stay on the practical side. Plan to enjoy yourself. If born between September 14th and 23rd, you will have petty annoyances and irritations because of so many things which are to be done. Do not be too critical and try to live with coordination.

**September 23rd and October 22nd**  
(Libra ♎)

—Librans born between September 23rd and 28th will have a hectic week because of the pressure of events and increased emotions. It would be better to use restraint and keep a tight hold on your feelings. If born between October 1st and 9th, you will have a pleasant time and will be able to use inspiration and creativeness in your life. This is a good financial period. If born between October 14th and 22nd, you will find your affairs highly stimulated at this time, with an undercurrent of stability. Your judgment is good and the written and spoken word will be profitable.

**October 22nd and November 21st**  
(Scorpio ♏)

—Scorpio people born between October 22nd and 28th will have a favorable week. There will be pleasant emotional experiences and a general feeling of harmony. It is a good business period, too, and general conditions will be improved. If born between November 1st and 8th, you will find affairs proceeding slower than expected, but you are operating with favorable influences and there will be opportunities for advancement gradually. If born between November 14th and 21st, you will have a pleasant week in many ways in spite of the restrictions and minor disappointments. Do not proceed too rapidly.

**November 21st and December 20th**  
(Sagittarius ♐)

—Sagittarians born between November 21st and 27th will have an active and pleasant week. Most of the attention will be focused upon recreation and enjoyment, but you can anticipate a satisfactory week. If born between December 1st and 8th, you will find your business affairs uncertain and it would be well to keep your feet firmly placed on the ground. There are opportunities for expansion and you should

strive to build a foundation now which can be useful to you later. If born between December 12th and 20th, you will have an active week. You will find your judgment good and an undercurrent of stability. Concentrate upon commercial affairs as much as possible and utilize original methods.

**December 20th and January 19th**  
(Capricorn ♑)

—Capricornians born between December 20th and 26th will have hectic experiences and your emotions will cause you difficulty. Try to avoid strain and tension. Be careful in all dealings connected with the heart because you are likely to overdo it. If born between January 1st and 8th, you should make important contacts at this time and rely upon your inspiration and intuition. It is a favorable week. If born between January 12th and 19th, you will have a few upsetting conditions, but the underlying circumstances are favorable and you will be unusually active.

**January 19th and February 19th**  
(Aquarius ♒)

—Aquarians born between January 19th and 25th will find their emotions stimulated and recreational activities will engage your attention. Your energy will be increased and you should find it an enjoyable period. If born between February 1st and 9th, you must be careful of finances and, if possible, avoid making vital decisions about money matters, especially if related to partners. If born between February 13th and 19th, you will have an active week and be stimulated mentally. There will be delays, but you will be able to plan for the future. Be patient and wait for developments. Do not be pessimistic, try to force issues, or be intolerant.

**February 19th and March 21st**  
(Pisces ♓)

—Pisceans born between February 19th and 27th will be more concerned with social activities than anything else and you can expect to derive much enjoyment from domestic situations and friends. If born between March 1st and 10th, you will be stimulated emotionally, and relations with those closely connected with your life, especially at a distance, will be satisfactory. Put all commercial matters to the practical test. If born between March 13th and 21st, you will have minor irritations this week and it would be well to be cautious about the written and spoken word.

There are changes in order, but the underlying stability will help you to make wise and careful decisions.



CHATTING WITH KAI

Happy Christmas to all you folks! I am sure most of us can appreciate the improvement in conditions in comparison to this time last year. The general influences are decidedly better and, even though complete recovery and adjustment have not transpired, there are signs which look decidedly optimistic to this observer. As you will note, the planetary indications for Christmas Day are quite good and most of us will be able to fill the day with joy and festivity. In my opinion, it would be a good idea to make the proverbial resolutions now. Do not forget to include in those promises to yourself that you will not be pessimistic and that you will be more tolerant and understanding. "Peace on earth and good will toward men" is a fine foundation and a prayerful determination to make this truth a foundation for living is an excellent way to begin a new life. In a sense, we are really participating in a commencement. Allow fresh hope and optimism to include themselves in your plans. I greet you all most sincerely and join the universal spirit by wishing you a cheerful, happy and festive Christmas season. Make it a merry one!

Faithfully yours, KAI.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
 ★ THE STAR QUESTION BOX ★  
 ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

B. L., born December 28, 1913, 4:00 a. m.: You can definitely depend upon it that you have endured a crisis the past four years which will not recur for some time to come. You are the type of person that takes everything very seriously and you become morbid by being too pessimistic. However, I have a cheerful opinion about your outlook for the future. Accept my birthday congratulations and be assured that it brings a change with improved conditions. You Capricornians have had a hard time of it and you can be happy that the tension is lifting rapidly. There will be opportunities for you to raise yourself above circumstances in the very near future. You are entering a three-year period of accomplishment and contentment be-

cause of the coöperation of the planets. Much of the progress you make depends upon you, of course, but you can depend upon your intuition and upon a more hopeful viewpoint which is improving daily.

MRS. E. B. C., born October 13, 1893, Massachusetts, 4:00 a. m.: Your husband is nearing a period in his life which will be the best one he has had in eight years. The planetary indications in his chart are good and improve as 1935 advances. He will make many changes and have an opportunity to increase his earning capacity. The first seven months next year will be hectic to the extent that there will be many outlets for his energy and he will have to make wise, deliberate decisions. Tell him not to make hasty decisions of any nature either personally or in business. You have been through the worst of the crisis. You are a balanced person and you can help conditions by not allowing the upheaval to worry you.

MRS. P. A. R., daughter born July 29, 1931, Illinois, 6:15 p. m.: It is against my rules to answer a question such as you ask about your little girl and, anyway, this reply will probably reach you too late. It seems to be, however, as if your physician's advice is good and the chart bears out his diagnosis. I am quite sure that definite action is necessary and there is more difficulty in this direction in the spring of next year. She is not under favorable influences and will not be until the end of 1935. So you will have to watch her health closely.

J. E. S., born December 12, 1914, Illinois, 9:00 p. m.: You need have no fear about the possibility of your marrying. There is every indication of your having a deep attraction in 1936 with the possibility of marriage in the fall months. By the way, your chart indicates artistic talent, and I believe you could be a successful designer or illustrator if you undertook the study. All planetary conditions in the immediate future improve steadily for you. You have the capacity for a career. Think it over.

B. L., born September 19, 1911: You are not being fair to me. Here you give me a verbal scolding for not answering your inquiries, which you state have been numerous, and yet you have not abided by the rules of this department. You did not furnish me with the hour or place of your

birth. The only way I can answer you, which I do not consider definite at all, is to say that the general positions in the two charts do not blend well. As near as I can observe, this alliance would not be a happy one or permanent.

D. M. L., born June 26, 1913, New Jersey, 10:00 a. m.: Am sorry to tell you that I do not like the looks of the two charts for marriage. The young man is not as constant as you are and does not believe in early marriages, it seems to me. So, if I were you, I would not count too much upon his interest. There is a strong physical bond here, but there are other factors which could create inharmony. You can think this over and make your own decision. The stars are never wrong, though, only the interpretation. Use your own judgment, but take my remarks seriously. Furthermore, the influences in 1935 point toward quarrels and a break in the affair.

Miss G. J. W., born December 26, 1917, North Carolina, 9:00 a. m.: If you have the funds to enter college when you finish your present schooling, I advise you to do

so and study home economics, dietetics, or pharmacy. These subjects would appeal to you more than nursing, in my opinion, and I believe you could probably finish the course in two years. This suggestion is prompted by the fact that you have favorable influences in 1937 and 1938 that will bring you the opportunity to make money. Do not think about marriage for a few years yet.

M. O., born July 9, 1910, Pennsylvania, 11:15 a. m.: I can appreciate your dilemma because it is obvious from the comparison of the three charts that both of these persons appeal to you. We will begin with the September man. There is a strong physical attraction indicated and a similarity in outlook. The February person appeals to your intelligence and you like his personality. I do not think you would have permanent happiness with either one of them and believe you would have extreme difficulty in adjusting yourself to a life with the September man, although he is evidently the favored one at the moment. You have influences for marriage in 1935, and I urge you to consider

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**MONTHLY**

**ALL NEWS STANDS**

your moves very carefully. I believe some one else will come along who will interest you much more, so I suggest that you postpone your decision until next spring."

Miss J. J., born September 21, 1907, Canada: Without the complete data I am unable to answer you as definitely as I would like. However, a study of the general positions in your chart at birth show that you have entered the right profession, one especially fitted for your talents. You need not be discouraged by the lack of opportunity to exhibit your knowledge. You finished your course when there was little activity shown in your chart and will have chances to utilize your knowledge. In fact, your influences throughout the fall appear to have been quite favorable and the contacts you made at that time will be helpful to you. There will be openings for you in 1935 which will assist you in establishing an income. Have no fear about pushing yourself.

Miss M. E., born March 29, 1903, Canada, 6:00 a. m.: It is my hope that you will be able to overcome this attraction. Your ideas are so different from his and I do not believe you could ever adapt yourself to a permanent life if you form this alliance. The combination of the charts do not look favorable to me at all. Naturally, I am considering it from your angle. He is decidedly fixed in his ways and ideas and you are a volatile person. The restrictions would be very irksome to you. I do not see how a change in locations would remedy matters. The situation goes deeper than that.

E. H., born February 16, 1905, Massachusetts, midnight: Many of you readers probably believe it has become a custom for me to discourage you in your heart affairs. I do not understand how some of you young folks have allowed your hearts so much elasticity that you have made the wrong selection, and I am wondering if it is just because it is a reaction after the strenuous economic times we have just lived through. Anyway, E. H., there is

little harmony between your chart and that of the person you say holds your affections. I believe you will agree with me and have been waiting for some one to discourage you in the idea. The combination of the charts is certainly unfavorable and I hope you will be able to arrive at the proper perspective about it.

A. E. S., born July 7, 1908, New Jersey, 11:00 p. m.: Sorry, but I have had to discontinue omitting the birth data. There were too many of you making this request and it was unfair to the other readers. There is every indication that you will marry in 1935. The planets will stimulate your emotions and you will wish to assume the responsibilities. You may feel confident of the opportunity for marriage and it appears to me that it will be a most satisfactory affair. The best period for taking this step is in the late summer months.

#### WHY QUESTIONS ARE NOT ANSWERED

*Kai does not send answers by mail.*

Miss M. E. R., May 23, 1901: What "things" do you mean?

Mrs. E. DE B., January 7, 1910: I cannot answer your question without the birth data of all persons concerned.

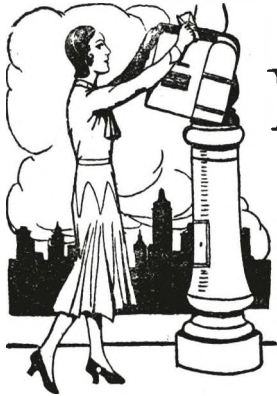
Mr. J. H. S., August 10, 1910: Sorry, but I cannot answer your question without the birth data of both girls.

Miss I. M. B., March 25, 1912: I wish you had told me something about yourself and been a bit more explicit in your question. What sort of change do you mean?

Miss D. V. B., August 29, 1911: You did not ask a question.

Questions are not answered unless letters are signed by the writer. All letters are strictly confidential.

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, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.



# 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. All reasonable care will be exercised in the introduction of correspondents. If any unsatisfactory letters are received by our readers, the publishers would appreciate their being sent to them. 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.

**T**HE cure for loneliness," writes Loumary, "is lots of letters from Pen Pals everywhere." Here is a friendly, sociable Pal you can confide in, girls. She is eager to share her joys with you and send you her sympathy when you are blue. All you lovers of friendship, whatever your age, write to her. She's the kind of Pal to interest every one of you!

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Won't some of you Pen Pals please write to me? I hate to see the mail man pass by without leaving me some letters. I'm a young married woman of twenty-three, peppy, full of fun, very good-natured and sympathetic. Tell me your troubles, girls, and about your good times. I play a fair game of tennis, and enjoy other sports, too. I also like to embroider and crochet. How about it, Pals? The only cure for loneliness is lots of letters from Pen Pals everywhere. Who'll be the first to write? LOUMARY.

Boys, don't fail to write to  
B. B. B.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young man of twenty-five, an American, but for the past eight years I have been making my home in Canada. I graduated from two universities, and at present I am working nights for a large concern. I'm interested in sports, have traveled considerably and will exchange snapshots. B B. B.

A New York Pal.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young man living in New York, interested in art, music, the theater, and, above all, making friends. I would like to correspond with young men everywhere, regardless of age. I promise to answer all letters promptly, and will exchange snapshots. Boys, you won't regret giving me a chance to prove what a good friend I can be. J. ROBERT.

She promises to be a true Pal.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Please include my plea in your Corner. I'm a girl of twenty-two, crazy about football, enjoy reading,



movies, dancing, but have few friends, and am very lonesome. I want to hear from girls everywhere, and promise to be a true-blue Pen Pal. Who'll write to me?

ANNA BEE.

Music and singing are her favorite pastimes.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Will you please print my plea for Pen Pals in your Corner? I'm a girl twenty years of age, Irish, not quite five feet tall, with dark eyes and hair. I enjoy all sports, including fishing and hiking. I like movies, dancing, reading, music, and singing. The last two mentioned are my favorite pastimes. I promise faithfully to answer all letters. Won't some one please write?

IRISH MONICA.

Mata believes in having a good time.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young girl interested in sports and making friends. I have some friends in my home town, but would love to have a few Pen Pals. I'm a happy-go-lucky sort of girl, and believe in having a good time in a nice way. I hope lots of girls between seventeen and nineteen years of age will drop me a line. I promise to answer all letters.

MATA.

You can write to her in either French or English.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of eighteen, and would love to hear from Pen Pals all over. I'm a high-school graduate, at present unemployed, am very fond of dancing, movies, outdoor sports, and am considered a fairly good artist and singer. Girls, you can write to me in either French or English. I'm French, and live in Canada.

ALINE V.

A call for San Diego Pals.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I have been a faithful admirer of your Corner, and think it is just fine. I hope you can help me find a few San Diego Pen Pals. I'm a young married woman of twenty-two, have one child, and hope to visit California next year. I'll be delighted to hear from all who find letter writing a pleasure.

VANCOUVER MRS.

Another girl from New Jersey.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a very lonesome girl of seventeen, five feet two inches

tall, with brown hair and eyes. I have a sunny disposition, love to write long letters, and want to hear from girls living in Hollywood, Florida, and New York. Of course, every one is welcome, and age is no barrier. I'll answer all letters, and am sure that I can keep you interested. Who'll be my very first Pen Pal?

RIVERDALE SAL.

A warm-hearted office girl.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Wanted—Pen Pals everywhere! Who wants to write to a peppy, friendly girl of nineteen? I work in an office, but have plenty of time to write letters. I'm interested in every one, love to make friends, and hope lots of you girls will write to me.

HILL ROAD DOT.

Medical studies interest Questionnaire.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young man twenty-eight years of age, well-educated, like to make friends, and hope to find a few Pen Pals who are interested in medicine. Of course, every one is welcome. I will exchange snapshots, and can promise lively letters. Fellows, let's get acquainted!

QUESTIONNAIRE.

She's met all types of people.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young married woman, have a two-year-old child, and would very much like to hear from single and married Pen Pals living in Connecticut, Maryland, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, although every one is welcome. I have traveled some, and have met all types of people. Pals, do write to me.

WELCOME.

Jorie misses her college friends.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Won't you please enter my plea in your Corner? I've just come to the city to work, and miss all my college friends and old pals in my home town. I'm a girl, fond of sports, love to make friends, and I'm sure I can write interesting letters. So won't all you girls who are not boy crazy please drop me a line? I will answer every letter.

JORIE.

You can depend on her.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of eighteen, considered good-looking, have brown, wavy hair, and brown eyes. I would like to hear from Pals all over the country. Any one between seventeen and twenty-

five years of age is welcome. Please don't keep me in suspense, girls. I always answer my mail promptly, so you can depend on me.  
M. M. of CHI.

Show Smiling Slim your friendship, boys.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Please help me find some Pen Pals. I'm a young man twenty-four years of age, considered good-looking, but am very lonely. I'm connected with the movies, and if any of you Pals want to find out something about motion pictures, or would like to have photos of screen stars, just let me know and I will do my best to get them for you. Come on, fellows, let's get together and talk things over.  
SMILING SLIM.

Cheerful Phil hails from Australia.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May I hope to hear from some American Pen Pals? I'm a girl of fifteen, live in Australia, am fond of sports, and have won many trophies for running and jumping. I've had three years of high school, and am now working in an office. I hope to receive lots of letters in answer to my plea.  
CHEERFUL PHIL.

Married Pals, write to this young mother.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Won't you please print my S O S for Pen Pals? I am not really lonesome, but I do like to write letters and cheer up any one who is blue or discouraged. I'm a young married woman of twenty-four, and have a husky little son of two. Pals, won't you let me tell you all about myself? I want to hear from every one.  
GALLA.

A happy home girl.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm just a happy home girl seventeen years of age. I love dancing, listening to the radio, and enjoy the movies. I would very much like to hear from girls around my age, and as I really have lots of time to write letters, I promise prompt replies. I'll also exchange snapshots.  
EVIE.

Want to hear about Canada? Then write to this Pal.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a Canadian girl of twenty-one, adore dancing, sports, and love to write long letters. I want to hear from girls living in the United States.

So, please, Pals, don't keep me waiting. If you are at all interested in Canada, I can tell you a lot about this country. Come ahead, Pals!  
SOUTH MOUNTAIN GERT.

Nampa Art drives his own car.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young high-school chap of nineteen, own a little roadster which I drive to school every day, enjoy all sports, like to dance, and hope to find a few true-blue Pals to correspond with. I will exchange photographs, and promise to answer all letters.

NAMPA ART.

Girls, here are some Pen Pals whom you will surely find interesting!

CAYUGA, twenty-two, wants to hear from ranch girls; JACKIE M., eighteen, enjoys playing harmless pranks; TAP-DANCING HELENA and SPUTS are fifteen, and have several lively hobbies; NINA OF THE COVE is thirty, loves pets, and collects all kind of pictures. DANNA, eighteen, promises prompt replies and will exchange snapshots; MAEVELYN, twenty, will exchange picture post cards and snapshots with any one; GLENITE, twenty-one, hails from Prince Edward Island. And here are a few sixteen-year-old Pals: LONELY KITKAT, MISS MARY, BESS OF STAFFORD, LAKEDALE MYRT, and BILLIE THE KID.

Cowboy enthusiasts, here's a real cowboy for you!

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young man of twenty-nine, an ex-cow-puncher, for since I've been in poor health I have had to give up riding bronchos. I was born in Wyoming, and have ridden the range since I was five years old. I would like to hear from Pals who are interested in Western life and people. I can play the guitar, and sing cowboy songs. Come on, fellows, and write. I will exchange pictures.

LUCKY COWBOY.

Uda likes to hunt, fish, and paint.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Have you room in your Corner for another lonely girl? I'm thirty-two years old, and, perhaps, some of the Pals will consider me old. But I'm quite young for my age, considered lively, enjoy hunting, fishing, and am working as part-time clerk in a store. In my spare time I paint. I also collect stamps. Pals, won't you try me?

UDA.

LS-9D

She knows something about the movie industry.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm another lonesome girl looking for Pen Pals. I'm nineteen years old, peppy, good-natured, and can tell you lots of interesting things about the movie industry. I recently moved to Sunland, a town twenty miles from Los Angeles. I will exchange snapshots of interesting places in California. Won't some one write?  
SUNLAND PAL.

A lonely sailor's wife.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Can you find room for one more Pal in your Corner? I'm a lonely sailor's wife of twenty-five, live in California, and want to hear from single and married Pals everywhere. I'll be a good listener to any one who writes to  
GLENORE.

Her hobby is dressmaking.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm thirty-one years old, and the mother of two lovely children. I live in Kansas, and my hobby

is dressmaking. I would very much like to hear from single and married Pals everywhere, and promise to answer all letters. Won't some one please write to me?  
VALLEY FALLS MAE.

Get your letters from peppy Ella May.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of seventeen, peppy, good-natured, and quite popular. I would very much like to correspond with Pals everywhere, and especially those living in the United States. I hail from Saskatchewan. I'm sure those who answer this plea will find me a cheerful, lively Pal. I will exchange snapshots and answer all letters.  
ELLA MAY.

This girl needs your cheer.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I don't know whether or not any one will care to correspond with a lonely, discouraged girl of nineteen who has a lung infection but perhaps some one won't mind dropping me a few lines. I spend much of my time in a sanitarium. I am considered good-looking,

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have a cheerful disposition, and will gladly exchange photographs and long letters.

DORRY OF BUFFALO.

### Two true-blue Pals.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: We are two girls fifteen and sixteen years of age. One is a blonde, and hopes to be an author some day; the other is a redhead, and is planning to become an artist. We have traveled in this country, and at present our home is in Seattle, Washington. We have met many movie stars, collected autographed pictures, enjoy music, dancing, and sports. We promise to answer all letters.

TWO SEATTLE PALS.

### A professional singer.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a faithful reader of your Corner, and as I have been very lonely since the death of my mother a year ago, I have decided to ask your help to find a few real friends. I'm a young man twenty-two years of age, interested in people and their hobbies. My main hobby is music, as I am a professional singer. I will answer all letters, and promise to be a true friend.

F. J. OF OHIO.

### Her chief ambition is to find lots of Pals.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Won't you please print my plea for Pen Pals? I'm a girl of eighteen, fond of all sports, love to dance and sing, but my pet ambition is to find oodles of Pen Pals, especially in the Far West and Far East, and in Africa. Girls, I promise prompt replies to all letters received, and can send you lots of news.

QUAKER JAN.

### She loves fun and life.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: You seem to be able to help every one find friends; please try to help me. I'm a girl twenty-one years of age, love fun and life, am considered modern, and enjoy good times. I am fond of sports, and am greatly interested in music. I would like to correspond with Pals everywhere. Girls, please show me a little friendliness.

JOY OF TROY.

### A call for married Pals.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Won't you please print this plea so all married Pals around twenty-two years of age will read it and drop me a line? I'm a young married woman, and the mother of a four-year-old

girl. I like to read and write letters, am very good-natured, and would love to have Pen Pals all over the country. All you married Pals, please write.

CAMDEN GIRL.

### Girls, don't overlook Snooky.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Just another seventeen-year-old girl whose weakness is writing and receiving letters. I like all sports, love to dance, will exchange snapshots, and can promise some very interesting news. Girls, won't you give me a chance to be your friend? I'm sure you won't regret it. Come one, come all!

SNOOKY.

### This Pal is looking for congenial friends.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I would like to have some Pen Pals, and hope that you will help me find them. I'm a young man twenty-eight years of age, have been out of work for a year, live on Long Island, and have no congenial friends. I'm very broad-minded, interested in everything and every one, have traveled quite a bit, and I'm sure my letters wouldn't bore any one. I'll be glad to exchange snapshots.

L. OF FREEPORT.

### Who wants an Indian Pen Pal?

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young girl nineteen years of age, part Cherokee Indian, and live in Missouri. I have dark, wavy hair, laughing brown eyes, and a sunny disposition. I'm very fond of music and fancy needlework. I want to hear from Pals everywhere. Girls, please don't pass me by.

BROWN-EYED DEE.

### A Pal you'll enjoy writing to.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a lonesome young girl of twenty-one, have been working in and near Evanston for a year, and have found it very difficult to make friends. I would love to hear from Pen Pals everywhere. I like to read, enjoy movies, sports, music, the arts, and am interested in traveling. Come on, one and all. Can't we get acquainted?

I. K. OF EVANSTON.

### She's interested in everything from A to Z.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Here's hoping some of the Pen Pals will take pity on me and drop me a line. I'm a young girl living in Newfoundland, interested in everything from A to Z, love to dance, skate, read, and

can write entertaining letters. Girls, wouldn't you like to know more about me?

RUDY.

Talk things over with Bucky and Bunny.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: We are two girl cousins living in Detroit. We are both eighteen years old, fond of swimming, dancing, basket ball, and will exchange snapshots with any one. We would especially like to correspond with girls living in the West, and promise to answer all letters promptly. Girls, let's talk things over!

BUCKY AND BUNNY.

A pianist of recognized ability.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a constant reader of your Corner, and would enjoy hearing from a few true-blue Pals. Boys, grab your pens and write to a young fellow of twenty-two, who is a pianist of recognized ability. I enjoy sports, have a friendly personality, and appreciate real friendship. How about it, fellows?

HENRY ST. P.

She's waiting for your letters.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young girl twenty-one years of age, very fond of outdoor sports, and although I spend much of my time at work, I still have some spare hours to write letters. Come on, girls, and let me show you what a real, true-blue Pen Pal I can be. I promise speedy replies and will exchange snapshots.

LAURELDALE.

She collects stamps, songs, postmarks, and autographs.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Would any one care to correspond with a lonesome twenty-three-year-old girl? I'm a collector of stamps, songs, autographs, and postmarks. I enjoy skating, dancing, reading, and listening to the radio. Pals of all ages, and from every country, please write to me. I promise prompt replies, and will be a real friend.

AURORE.

She's eager to have American Pen Pals.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a sixteen-year-old Filipina girl, with dark hair and eyes,

and an even-tempered disposition. I love pets, and am very fond of writing letters. I would greatly enjoy corresponding with some American Pen Pals, and girls who live in Mexico. I will be a faithful Pal, and will exchange snapshots. JULITA.

A peppy Pal fond of sports.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Who wants to write to a peppy, good-natured girl of eighteen? I'm fond of sports, love to write long letters, and hope to hear from at least one Pen Pal in every State in the Union. I'll tell you all about myself in my first letter, girls. I hope some one will answer my plea.

RITA OF LYNN.

And here are some Pen Pals all you boys should write to!

MAC D., twenty-four, is broad-minded and lives in Illinois; WALT OF CHI, is thirty, and has a nice disposition; MARCEL, CARBONDALE SAM, HOLYOKER, MARTY K., and HAWK OF MEMPHIS are all seventeen, like sports, and hope for lots of Pals. L. W. OF OREGON is thirty-eight, and a lonely widower; TRAVELER LEE, twenty-five, is an artist, and has just returned from Paris; SOUTH BENDER, thirty-three, hopes to hear from Indiana Pals; KARL L., nineteen, is studying the German language in college; and ED OF CUTLER, twenty-nine, understands life and likes to talk about everything.

She likes music, books, and sports.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl twenty years of age, blond, with blue eyes, five feet six inches tall. I enjoy all sports, music, and good books, but best of all I like to receive and write letters. I want to correspond with Pals everywhere. Girls, do let me hear from you! HAMILTON VI.

A friendly married Pal.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young married woman of twenty, love to dance, go to parties, and read a lot. I go hunting and fishing with my husband, and although I have two small children to take care of, I manage to have plenty of spare time on my hands. Pals of any age, won't you let me hear from you? I promise prompt replies.

Mrs. J. M.

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# THE FRIEND IN NEED



Department Conducted by

Laura Alston Brown



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.

Address Mrs. Laura Alston Brown, Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

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**W**HEN a man refuses to listen to love or reason, the well-known remedies of attempting to arouse a spark of jealousy, trying to appear indifferent, or pretending there is nothing wrong, often prove complete failures.

We can usually rid ourselves of physical and mental ills, but heartaches are not always curable, and there are many wives who, like Ever Faithful, are wondering if there is any way of holding a husband's affection once it has begun to slide down the hill of indifference.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Two years ago I married a man I was deeply in love with, and whom I still love with all my heart. I am twenty years old, and though a wee bit plump, I'm considered good-looking. I dress well, keep my home in fine order, am a good cook, and friends tell me I'm a good hostess.

At first Joe, my husband, seldom failed to tell me how lucky he was in finding a girl like me. He seemed delighted with everything I said and did, and I never had the slightest reason to doubt his love.

I have been his companion, have nursed him through two bad sick spells, have gone all sorts of places with him, entertained his friends and have done everything a good and loving wife could and should do.

And now a cousin of mine, a girl who recently came to live near us, is gradually taking him away from me. She comes over almost every night. She is a good bridge player, and as my husband likes the game, they always drag in some one else to play.

My husband even invites her to go riding with him, and because he doesn't want people to talk, he asks me to accompany them. I hate sympathy, and don't want to be pitied, so I pretend to be gay when I feel as if my heart is breaking. I *know* he's falling for her; a wife can always tell.

I love my husband dearly, Mrs. Brown, but I am so upset I can hardly think clearly, much less fight for him. I would do anything in the world to keep him.

I have tried to make him jealous by going out with another man, but it didn't work. I have tried to pretend that everything is all right, but it isn't, and he knows it. If we are at a party and I fool and joke with some man, he never says a word.

I have cried, threatened to leave him, but even that seems to make little or no impression upon him. He says he loves me, but he admits that he loves this girl, too. The fact that she is my second cousin doesn't seem to bother him. And she, on her part, seems to be crazy about him and apparently never gives me a thought.

Mrs. Brown, is there any help for a wife in my predicament? I will take any advice you care to give me.

EVER FAITHFUL.

Perhaps it will help you, dear, if

you try to remember that true love lasts, while fascination wears out after a time, and that the straying husband usually makes a bee line for the comforts of the fireside.

It is hard to understand why some girls pick on a man who already has a wife, instead of concentrating on a single boy friend. Couldn't you give your cousin to understand, in plain language, that Joe is your husband?

Of course you don't want a lot of soggy sympathy. You have the courage to face matters alone. You, as a wife, have a great deal more in your favor than your cousin. Joe is *your* husband, so try to feel more composed and stop thinking that everything is lost.

I know it can be most trying for a wife in your position to be tolerant, friendly, and gracious to both her husband and the girl in question. But showing your hurt feelings and jealousy will do very little good.

The next time you go to a party, and your husband pairs off with your cousin, bring some other man over to her, and suggest that since a single man is around, she will surely prefer him to "an old married man like Joe." She may not like the idea, but she will hardly want to make a scene and insist on remaining with your husband.

It's a waste of energy to argue with or nag a man who is in such a complicated state of mind as your husband no doubt finds himself at present. Sugar, you know, catches more flies than vinegar. And, above all, don't give in to your feelings of despair. There is a chance this may pass and Joe will regain his senses.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am a girl twenty-one years of age, have a good position as stenographer and bookkeeper, and am well able to take care of myself.

About a year and a half ago I met a young man five years my senior. He is very likable, and although I didn't care much for him when I first started going with him, I am now crazy about him.

He told me that he was married, so I have no one to blame but myself. However, he hasn't lived with his wife for almost four years, and she lives in another State. He hasn't seen her for three years.

Recently he started suit for divorce, but when his wife got her notice, she called him up long distance and begged him to change his mind. She has written to him several times since then. Before that she never wrote except to ask him for money.

He doesn't blame her for the way their marriage failed. He just says that they were not suited to each other. And although they tried over and over again to make a go of things, it didn't work out.

Mrs. Brown, I am sure that we love each other. I have not been dating other men in the ten months that we have been going steady. His parents are dead, and he lives with his two married sisters who share a large house. They are lovely people, and treat me fine.

We have announced our engagement, and now we go about together quite openly. You see, hardly any one except a couple of very close friends know that he has been, and still is, married. I have a lovely ring, and I am looking forward to our marriage. Do you think that we can be happy together?

I have often heard people say that when a man doesn't make a good husband the first time he is married, he never will. But I don't think that's true, do you? Your opinion will be appreciated. TRINI.

It sometimes happens that a man—and this may apply to some women, too—never makes a good marriage partner, regardless of how many times he tries matrimony. But that does not mean that such reasoning applies to every man or woman whose first marriage venture has not turned out happily.

However, it's a bit confusing to understand how any girl can actually feel engaged when the man in question is still another woman's husband. Don't you think it would be wiser for you to separate until he

is free? Surely, if he loves you deeply, this will make no difference.

Then, after everything is straightened out, I see no reason why you should not plan to be happy, if your love is real.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Will you please help me straighten out a tangle? Three years ago, when I was not quite seventeen, I promised a boy in another city to marry him when he got a certain position that would enable us to marry.

I realize now that I was pretty young to make any definite promises, and that a girl of that age doesn't know whether or not she is really in love.

Now, after a lot of steady and hard work, this boy, who is four years older than I, finally got the coveted position, and is waiting for me to set a date for our wedding. But I don't love him; I know it was only puppy love on my side.

But how can I tell this boy how I feel, and that I don't want to marry him? Or do you think that I ought to go ahead and marry him, feeling as I do?

My folks think I would be very foolish to pass up a good prospect like this boy. They know how I feel, but they think that I would be happy because this boy is all a girl could want her future husband to be.

Although I'm not in love with any one else, there is another boy I often date.

This boy has a very jealous disposition. If we go to a dance and I dance with some other boy I know, he glares and gets very peeved. Other boys have often passed me up on account of this. He doesn't want me to go out with any one else. But how can a girl find the right man if she has to go with one boy all the time?

If we quit, every one will say that I've led him on and then dropped him, and that wouldn't be so pleasant for me. I suppose I really did do just that. I thought he was only kidding when he said he loved me, so I did the usual thing and returned the compliment. He doesn't know about this other boy who is waiting for me.

MOLLY.

Although love cannot be commanded, it might be won if given sufficient time and encouragement. Before you break the news to the boy who has made good, why not give yourself more time, six months

or so, and during that period really test your feelings?

Of course, it would be advisable to tell him that you are not as sure of yourself as you wish you were. Perhaps you can arrange to see him more often. If six months is too long a time, make it three months. And see each other with the understanding that, if, after the trial period you still find you cannot return his love, a break is unavoidable.

As for the second boy, if you are so anxious to do the right thing, it seems to me that you will have to face a little music. In all fairness to him, he ought to know that you do not feel toward him as he thinks you do.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I wonder if some of the young wives who have temperamental husbands would like to hear my story? I have been married three years, and we have one child.

My husband and I get along nicely now, but after the first six months of our marriage life was very hard. In the first place, he always harped about money, said I spent too much on running the house, and that he was the one who had to work for everything.

One day I got so mad that when he handed me the grocery money for the week, I just threw it back in his face. Maybe I shouldn't have done that; but, anyway, he picked it up, and we didn't make up that night.

The next day he left without breakfast, although there was enough food in the house. He came home late the next night, and there was, of course, nothing to eat. I went over to a friend's house.

However, the second day we had a frank talk about matters. My husband was brought up with the idea that the husband should be boss. But I finally convinced him that cooking and running the house was the wife's job, and we've never had any arguments ever since.

As for the wives who complain that their husbands threaten to strike them—well, many times my husband threatened to do just that. He probably knew that I was afraid he would do it, but I thought it



would be wiser to make him think I wasn't afraid at all.

One time he flew into a rage and raised his hand. I just looked at him and said, "Go ahead, hit me—if you're coward enough." Then I turned away and started doing something around the house. Nothing happened that time.

Then there was another time when his temper got the best of him. I repeated my little act. That time he looked at me hard, and I stared right back at him. Then he kissed me and said, "You know I couldn't hit you." And so that idea died, too.

If any wife is having trouble with her husband about money, I suggest that she send him out to shop around, just to convince him that she is doing her best to economize. Some men haven't the slightest idea how much a pound of butter costs.

I know that whenever some husbands get mad, they tell their wives to get out. If I were placed in such a position, I would at once start packing, and if my husband didn't stop me, I certainly would get out and stay away until he came after me. That would be a good time to have a real understanding with a husband who doesn't know his own mind.

Wives who allow their husbands to abuse them, are not to be sympathized with. Every married woman has a right to live in peace and happiness, instead of allowing her husband to make a slave of her.

A READER FROM MAINE.

I am sure some discouraged wives will be comforted by your letter. It may give them a workable idea or two. Certainly you have managed to solve your immediate problem to a very satisfactory degree. Some men apparently enjoy bullying their wives, but when their play acting fails to register, they quiet down to natural behavior, especially if a wife has the courage of her convictions.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I'm a young man who has tried hard to forget the girl who jilted me, but I can't do it, and hope that you will suggest some way to ease my heartache.

I know I should hate this girl, and I wish I could, but it just can't be done. She goes out steady with another boy, one she met while she was engaged to me. It nearly drives me crazy to see them out together,

but there's nothing I can do about it, it seems.

Mrs. Brown, I think that if it were not for her parents and her pride, she would make up with me, because I believe that she still cares for me far more than for the fellow she's going with now. I think it's just a crush where this other fellow is concerned, and that it's wearing off.

But, if she ever comes back to me, she is going to do the asking, and I think she knows this. Several times, since we broke up, she told me that she would never be able to forget me, and once she even said that she was not happy with this other fellow.

Why should she say that, and, if it is true that she is unhappy, why doesn't she play fair and tell him instead of leading him on? There are times when I can't picture her married to any one else but me.

Do you think that I ought to try harder to forget her by going with other girls? I think I will always love her, no matter what she does, and I believe that she still likes me a lot. Please tell me what you think of this whole affair. EARL C.

It is often very difficult to judge the actions of others if we have no idea of the motive. But don't you think, that, if your former fiancée told you she wasn't happy with this other boy, and that she would never forget you, she was trying to make up with you without making it too obvious? There is a good chance that she might have thought she loved the other boy, but now realizes she doesn't.

Why don't you pocket your pride and find out if there really is a possibility of returning to your engagement and making plans for your future together? If it may mean your happiness and the girl's, take a chance and be generous. Good luck!

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I'm a junior clerk in a large insurance house, go out often, and usually manage to have lots of fun. I'm eighteen, considered attractive, and have never found it hard to make friends and be popular with boys.

However, it makes me mad when boys start saying that all girls are alike, none of

them are to be trusted, that all they want is for the fellow to spend his money on them, and that the girl is never willing to give something in return.

But don't you think this is downright silly? What most boys want, a girl could never go in for and keep her head up. I have been out with lots and lots of boys, and *they* are certainly all alike.

Boys have a nerve complaining about girls, when they themselves usually spoil the evening by starting a petting party.

If a girl refuses to be mauled, she's a washout; if she doesn't quite refuse, it isn't long before a boy becomes too bold. I don't want to make it seem that all fellows are beasts; but I am sure that every girl who reads this will agree with me that men behave just this way. (It wouldn't be a bad idea if some girls would write in and tell me I'm not wrong.)

Maybe I shouldn't really complain, because I usually manage to have plenty of fun in the right way. Boys always tell me that I'm different, and that they feel at ease with me. I think that's due to the fact that I try to keep them busy telling me about themselves.

However, in the long run, they usually turn out just as I have said. I wonder how they think a nice girl should allow a man to behave. I've never met a man I could fall in love with, for to me, men are all the same. They are conceited and vain, and it would certainly be a great pleasure to meet a man a girl could put her trust in. I'm getting discouraged.

#### DISGUSTED DAMSEL.

Men and women, my child, are like the weather—bad and good. So, try not to be discouraged. You've had the regrettable experience of meeting the type of men who evidently do not appreciate a nice girl, but that does not mean that the right kind of men do not exist. I'm sure that some day you'll find the man Fate intended for you.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am coming to you again with another problem. Seven years ago last July, my friend's little girl, Henrietta Kelso, was stolen by some unknown person, and we are still trying to find her. She was nine years old last August.

We have tried in every way to find out something that would put us on the right

track, and we have not given up hope. She was stolen from Cass City, Michigan. If any readers know anything about this child, I hope they will write to you, and you can forward the information to me.

Mrs. E. W. B.

I'm glad to help you, my dear, and hope that this will prove of some assistance. It would be wonderful if your friend found her little girl. I sincerely hope she does.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: For three years I have been engaged to a young man whom I love dearly, but lately I have begun to feel somewhat impatient about the way he treats me.

In the past two years I have helped him make payments on a car, loaned him money to live on while he was out of work, made it possible for him to pay doctor bills, and have tried in every way to lend him a real helping hand.

In spite of all this, we often had arguments, and while we were not on speaking terms, he cheated by going out with other girls. He lied to me countless times, but I usually overlooked it because I know that men will lie in order not to lose the girl they love.

Without bragging about myself, don't you think I have been very fair with him, and that, after three years, he should be willing to settle down and try to treat me with more consideration?

I'm almost twenty-two; I long to have a home of my own. My friend is twenty-seven. I really think that we should get married while we are still young. He now has a steady job, which pays enough so he could support a wife, although I wouldn't mind working for a while after we were married.

The trouble is that he has a brother of twenty-one who is also working and taking an engineering course at night school. He is boarding with a friend in order to be near school, and also near the office where he works. My fiancé and I live in another part of the city, and he claims that he ought to live with his brother, especially as their parents are dead, and his brother would have no one if we got married.

But don't you think that's a silly excuse? I don't blame them for wanting to be together. But I have stuck to him through all sorts of weather, while his brother didn't care what he was doing. When my friend was out of work, his

brother wouldn't even give him cigarette money.

We've tried to talk about settling matters, but he says he hasn't enough money put away to start housekeeping. I have offered to keep my job, and even said that his brother could come to live with us, but he can't seem to make up his mind.

I am undecided what to do, and am getting very discouraged and impatient. Do you think I should keep on waiting, or give him up entirely? I feel that if we broke up I couldn't keep steady company with another man.

Even though he has failed me several times, I have been absolutely true to him, and he knows it. It would really break my heart to give him up, but I can't go on wasting precious years just waiting around. What would you suggest? If other readers have had similar experiences, I would appreciate hearing from them, too.

TIRED OF WAITING.

When a man doesn't appreciate what is being done for him, one sometimes is forced to adopt rather impressive methods in an effort to awaken some response.

I know it would be very hard for you to suggest a break, dear.

However, before you take this final step, suppose you have another heart-to-heart talk with your friend and tell him in as calm and friendly a manner as you can, that things *cannot* drift any longer, and that rather than go on like this you feel it would be wiser to break the engagement.

When a man really loves a girl, he'll refuse to listen to even the suggestion of a break. And if he agrees to it, then it is high time a girl should find out how she stands.

The excuses your friend makes are not very substantial. His brother can no doubt take good care of himself. And even if your friend lacks the money he thinks he should have before starting a home, he might consider your generous offer to continue working for a while after you are married.

As you say, a girl can't wait forever, and there is nothing more disturbing than that "at sea" feeling.

Hang on to your courage, dear, and take a definite course of action in this matter. Fate has many queer ways of putting us through some unwelcome situations before we can relax and enjoy our happiness.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I'm a young man of twenty-five, foreign born but an American citizen. My parents were always quite strict with the children in our family. At the age of seventeen I fell in love with a girl who lived in another town, and it took me almost two years to get on friendly terms with her.

I suppose it might have been infatuation, but it nearly ruined my life when she suddenly married another man and stopped writing to me, and it took me five long years to get over it.

I had been a steady worker, and had had high ideals of life before this happened. I was just starting up the ladder of success. When this girl married, I seemed to lose all interest in everything, quit my job and became a drifter.

I didn't care where I went or what I did, and with my foolish philosophy I traveled from one end of the country to the other with the idea that all girls were gold diggers, out only for a good time and all they could get out of a man.

For five years I traveled here and there, deceiving and rousing the interest of any girl who showed the slightest friendliness toward me. I sank so low that I was ashamed to go home to my parents, although I must have caused them a lot of unnecessary worry and heartache.

Then I received a letter from my sister in which she plainly showed me that it would be to my benefit to try to straighten out my life, and that I had been very foolish. She also said that if I didn't turn over a new leaf no decent girl would ever have anything to do with me. So I decided to find out just how I still felt about the girl I loved, and went to see her.

To my surprise, I discovered that I no longer loved her at all, and that all these years I had been kidding myself. This girl loved her husband, and when she found out how seriously I had taken the whole thing, she felt very sorry for me.

Since then I have tried to change my attitude toward girls, although it has been, and still is a very hard thing to do, because there are plenty of girls who do not believe in playing fair.

Last spring, however, I met a girl whom I didn't like at all at first. She didn't like me, either. But we had mutual friends, and couldn't help meeting frequently, and before long we realized that we did like each other and had very much in common.

To make a long story short, I decided that we were well suited to each other, and that we could make a success of marriage. Of course, I still don't believe that there is such a thing as lasting love. I'm looking at this affair in a practical manner.

So now I am home once more, have a job, can support a wife, and am planning to marry this girl. Sometimes, however, I can't seem to picture myself married. I know we'll be happy enough, and I really believe we are capable of making something of our life together. I hope that some day soon I'll be able to say that I am really happy.

What do you think of my story, Mrs. Brown? Do you think I should go ahead and marry this girl? TATE.

Well, my boy, as long as you continue to have some doubts in the matter, it might be advisable to hold off a bit until you feel more certain that marriage is what you really want, and that you and this girl have a fair chance to be happy together.

Marriage is not composed entirely of common sense and cold logic. It takes a bit of the stardust of romance, the beauty of high ideals, and loyalty and trust to create the spiritual and mental joy that make one's life so well worth while.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Before I was married my parents were very strict in regard to boy friends, and I always had to be in by ten o'clock. I never really had a good chance to make friends. Whenever I met some boy I thought I liked, my parents usually found something about him that didn't appeal to them.

I was very much discouraged, and after going with one boy openly for a year, and secretly for six months, I finally married him. It happened soon after my father's

death, and very much against my mother's wishes.

We seemed to get along all right for about six months, but later we argued quite a lot, and he would even slap me and pull my hair. After a year and a half of that I had him arrested for assault and battery. When he came home again, he stayed only a few days, and left. I went home to my mother.

Five months later I went back to him, and for two weeks we got along fine, but now it's the same story over again. He wants me to go to work, give him all my salary, and still do all the housework and cook for six people. You see, we are living with his family.

No one helps me, and at night I'm so tired I cry myself to sleep. My husband always leaves me alone, goes out and gets drunk, and spends all his money on what he calls good times.

Recently I met a man who lives in our neighborhood. He invited me to go for a ride, and was so nice to me that for the past two months I have been seeing him quite often. I can't help but care for him, and he says that he loves me and wants me to go away with him.

However, a divorce is out of the question. He is free, but I know that my husband would never agree to give me my freedom. He's the type of man who never gives up anything, even when it is something he no longer wants.

I would go away with this man, only I am afraid that he will tire of me. I love him as I never loved my husband; I don't think I can ever forget him. But still I hesitate to go away with him, although he says that he will always love me.

My husband doesn't work steady, and I hate to see him spend the money I earn. I have tried hard to make my husband change, and he does, but it never lasts. He is twenty-seven, and I am not yet twenty; we have been married three years.

My friend is thirty-three, but looks a lot younger. Do you think it would be advisable for me to take a chance at happiness and go away with him?

I have no one I can confide in, as my mother would never understand. I'll wait for your reply before doing anything. I'm not anxious to spoil my entire life, but I'm unhappy as things are now.

UNHAPPY FELICE.

You are indeed wise to hesitate before you rush headlong into a situation that would prove dis-

astrous for you, Felice; and two wrongs have never made a right.

There are many unhappy people who, in their blind search for happiness, have tried to run away from ties that bound them to inconsiderate and selfish marriage partners. But instead of happiness, they found only disillusionment, although short-lived joy seemed to be theirs for a while.

Going away with this man would not solve your problem, my dear. If anything, it would only complicate matters still further. Perhaps you are in love with him; but when a man is truly in love with a woman, he is anxious to protect her from scandal and the slightest whisper of gossip. Let the matter drop altogether for the time being.

Why not another talk with your husband, and try to establish a new order of things? Surely you are not obliged to hand over your salary if he drinks it up? A wife has certain rights, and should assert herself.

Give him a few months in which to straighten out, but with the full understanding that unless he can learn to keep his word and change for the better, you will be forced to find other ways and means in order to get some joy out of life. If you are firm, he may sit up and take notice.

Remember, Felice, we can run away from others, but we can never run away from ourselves. And in order to be at peace with the world, we must first be at peace with ourselves. Perhaps the following letter from Downhearted Nona will help you.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Three years ago, when I was not quite eighteen, I met a man I fell in love with, and I did something I have since been very sorry for. I let him persuade me to go away with him as his wife.

Every one thought we were married. But it didn't last. After six months he got tired of me, and I had no place to go. I wrote my mother that Jack and I broke up, and she suggested that I come home to stay until we made up again. I still loved him, or thought I did.

Last summer I went to visit a friend of mine, and while there I met a very wonderful young man. I forgot all about Jack; this time it was real love. He loved me, too, but he thought I was married. However, I took a chance and told him my story. He forgave me, and said it would make no difference, and we are still going together.

However, a couple of weeks ago I heard that Jack was going to be married, and as luck would have it, my mother also heard this. Well, you can imagine how upset I was. Mother wanted me to have him arrested for bigamy, but I knew I couldn't do that.

I was forced to tell her the truth about the whole thing, and she carried on something awful. I always thought a mother should stand by her daughter and help her to forget her foolish mistake, but my mother did nothing of the sort.

Since then she is always throwing it up to me. I told her I'm sorry, and that I was a foolish kid, but she won't let me forget. She says she'll remind me of it as long as she lives, and that she'll never forgive me.

What am I to do, Mrs. Brown? I have to live with my mother. I've thought of going away, but as I have a job, and she really needs the money I give her, I don't know what to do.

My friend has a fairly good job, but it will be at least a year before we can be married, as he has to help his folks until his father finds work. I'm so downhearted and unhappy, and hope you have some suggestion to make that will help me.

DOWNHEARTED NONA.

My child, no mistake in life can be so dreadful that sincerity and honesty of purpose can't help to put the offender back on the road to a clean, happy life, in spite of the fact that the way may be filled with all sorts of stumblingblocks. Of course, you feel bad about your foolish misstep, but if you have a chance to marry and be happy, don't you think that it would be

worth trying to stick it out now?

It is indeed sad that your mother is making things so hard for you. Surely if she were in your place she would want sympathy and understanding, and kindness on her mother's part? Show her this with your letter, dear; all of us make mistakes, and expect tolerance from those nearest us.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: My life seems to be in a hopeless mess.

I'm nineteen, and have been married four months. I married my husband the fourth time we went out. There were three other boys I was dating steady, and one I really cared for. But I couldn't marry the boy I loved because I didn't want to hurt the other two. You see, I am sure they loved me.

So when I met the fourth boy, and he said he fell in love with me the first time

he saw me, we were married. I didn't know a thing about him or his family.


Now I realize I don't really care for my husband, Mrs. Brown; but I know that he loves me dearly. I've left him four times, and he always came after me and persuaded me to go back to him. Since then I just sit around and think of leaving, but when I feel I ought to leave, I just can't do it. Do you think it's possible that I care for my husband and don't realize it?

I thought perhaps I should go home to my folks and stay until I can make up my mind what to do. But if I were to leave my husband again, he would come over as he did before, and try to make me go back to him again.

I know now there's a lot more to married life than girls know. I wish I hadn't married in such a hurry. Do you think it's hopeless to try to make something of it all? I seem to be thinking in circles. TEDDIE.

Don't you think, dear, that if you really had loved one of the three

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boys you mention, you wouldn't have married as you did? You are probably so used to the idea that you are in love with some one else, that you are not giving your husband a chance to make you happy.

Why not try to be a little more patient, and give your marriage a fair chance? Forget about parting. Suppose you try to act and think as if you returned your husband's love; try to make him happy.

He deserves that, at least.

Put all your doubts and fears behind you, and give yourself and your husband a fair trial. Your game of pretense may become a fact. Good luck, dear!

DEAR MRS. BROWN: As far back as I can remember I've known only grief and hard luck. My father was a good provider; he loved his home, wife, and children. But he was insanely jealous of mother, and more than once he threatened to do something dreadful.

His jealousy had no real foundation, and mother couldn't stand the quarrels. So when I was eight years old my parents were divorced. There were three other children in the family besides me.

From that time on things went pretty bad for us. My father lost his job and hasn't had a good one since. He can't help me now. Mother has been married three times since she divorced my father, but each of these marriages was a failure. She is divorced again.

There was never enough money to go around, and I had to quit school when I was sixteen. In the fall of that year I thought I fell in love with a fellow I'd met. Things happened, and although I knew I was to become a mother, I didn't want to marry a boy who didn't love me.

Then my mother found out and sent me away to a home. I spent six months there. Finally the boy's mother nagged him until he married me.

We had to live with his folks, and his sister planted the idea in his head that the baby wasn't his. He didn't want the responsibility of taking care of me and the baby after that. Then we went to live in a tiny place of our own, but he deserted me and the baby several times, and the county had to support me.

I stood it for almost two years, then sued for divorce and got it; I was also granted the custody of the baby. On my nineteenth birthday I was a divorced woman!

At that time my mother was still married to her fourth husband, and being the type of man he was, I couldn't ask her to help me. I couldn't get a job, although for months I looked everywhere. Friends helped me in the meantime.

Finally my mother agreed to take care of the baby if I promised to pay for his clothes and doctor's bills. I could have had him adopted, but I knew I would never give up my baby. I went through so much to keep the child, I thought I could bear up under everything.

I was living in a furnished room at the time, and just when I would have had to move because I had no money for the rent, my landlady's brother came along. He liked me, and as he was working, he helped me financially.

We fell in love with each other, but we couldn't get married because soon after we met he lost his job. After a while his money gave out and he could no longer help me. I was still looking for work, and so was he.

Then I met a girl who was acquainted with this fellow's brother. She was one of life's unfortunates, and before I knew it, I followed in her footsteps.

That happened a year ago. I'm sorry to say things have not changed, although my boy friend and I are still trying to find real jobs. My baby is now almost four years old, and my mother is still taking care of him. I would love to have him with me, but how can I? I can't even seem to find housework. What little money I have I send my mother for his support.

My friend says that as soon as he gets a job we'll be married. But sometimes I wonder if he's only leading me on. Everything seems so utterly hopeless. I've tried the welfare bureau, but they tell me that I'm a non-resident, and only residents of the city I'm living in are entitled to unemployment relief.

I suppose you will be disgusted with me, but there is no one else to whom I can turn for advice. My mother thinks I'm living with friends and working part time. I couldn't tell her the truth. Is there any way out for a girl in my situation?

MISSOURI GIRL.

Truly one half of the world doesn't know how the other half

manages to get along. I really am very sorry for you, Missouri Girl. But although things may appear to be altogether hopeless, surely if you were to make a supreme effort you could find some way out of a situation that robs you of your pride and self-esteem.

Perhaps, under the circumstances, the future seems very dark; but no matter how dark it seems, you must remember that you have a child, and it is your duty not only to that child, but to yourself as well, to wipe out the past and make a fresh start.

Why not leave the city you're now living in, and go back to your home town? If this man really loved you, my dear, he couldn't bear to see you placed in such a regrettable situation. And when you are back home again, and it is still necessary for you to ask the county for financial aid, no doubt you'll have no trouble getting it.

I'm no dispenser of sunshine theories; life is hard for all of us, and most of us have our own particular burdens to shoulder. But no girl need remain one of life's unfortunates, if she has backbone and grit, and a strong desire to be fair with herself and, as in your case, with her child. Think it over, and let us hear from you again.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am one of those unfortunates in life who cannot seem to find peace and happiness. When I was fifteen I fell in love with a boy of seventeen. We were too young to think of marriage, although once or twice we talked seriously about it.

However, his father sent him away to boarding school, and it was decided that he should stay there for three years.

While he was away, I started dating other boys. There was one boy in particular whom I liked. He was very good-looking, but had a poor education.

But I started to run around with him in spite of the fact that my mother told me not to. I was so infatuated with him.

Although he seemed to like me, whenever we went to a party he always fooled around with different girls. He always took me home, however, and it wasn't long before he made me believe that when a girl and boy are in love they needn't wait for marriage.

When I discovered that I was to become a mother, I told him that we would have to get married. But he only laughed at me, and didn't seem to care who knew about it. His mother also talked about me and said that her son was not the father of my baby.

The baby is now nine months old, and I don't go to school any more. No matter how much I try to make things go right, everything seems to go wrong. This boy now wants me to marry him. He seems to really care for me, and if any boy starts talking about me he tells him to mind his own business.

I don't know whether to marry him or not. Do you think I should? I still like him a lot, and he seems to be crazy about the baby. My past is always thrown up to me. I have a job now, and my mother takes care of the baby. I've tried to be good, but no one wants to be friends with me. Must I be an outcast all my life? Please tell me what you think I should do. I know I've made a mistake, and I'm sorry.

A DISCOURAGED YOUNG MOTHER.

Of course you feel a little bewildered and crushed, my child, but once you have gotten a firmer hold of yourself, you will be able to think things out more clearly.

Whether or not you should marry this boy is something that is hard for an outsider, who has never seen him to decide. Remember that you must consider not only yourself, but your baby as well. If you feel that you could be happy with him, then marry him. But if you cannot honestly decide, better wait till you are a little older and more sure of yourself.

Try not to feel so discouraged. As time passes you will be able to take a calmer viewpoint of your youthful folly, and will find peace and contentment again.



DEAR MRS BROWN: When I was fourteen years old my parents separated, and I went to live with an aunt in another State. I looked about nineteen, and for two years I worked as housekeeper and took care of two children.

When I returned to my home town I met a young man of twenty-two, and six months later we were married. We were very happy, and very much in love, and a year later our baby was born.

Although my husband's parents were well off financially, and we were just starting out, they made us pay quite a large sum for the small house we rented from them. However, my in-laws liked me, and we got along all right.

Six months after my baby was born, I was left a widow. My in-laws seemed to want to help me, so I let them take care of everything. My husband had a fairly good laundry business, but after he died my in-laws took it away from me. I didn't realize what was going on, as I was so heartbroken.

I continued to live in my home, but I asked my dad, brother, and sister to live with me. However, now I don't know what to do or where to begin. My dad pays me a ridiculously small amount for his board, and the house is never quiet.

Recently I met a young man five years my senior. Although it is not quite a year since my husband's death, I know that I am more than fond of him, and I have good reason to believe that he cares for me.

He has told my aunt, for instance, that I am everything he has ever hoped to find in the girl he wants for his wife. But he also says it is too bad that I have a child.

Of course, Mrs. Brown, I wouldn't expect him to marry me at once. But I feel funny because he doesn't seem to care about my baby. He knows how much I love my little girl.

Do you think I ought to tell him how I feel about him, and ask him what he intends to do about the future? He said several times that it's too bad my baby had to lose her father so early in life, and that he thought it wasn't quite the time for him to express his feelings in regard to marriage.

Do you think that if I were to tell him that I care for him, he would feel less opposed to the idea of being a father to my baby?

I don't know what to do. I feel I've already had so many heartaches, I deserve a little joy in life. I want to be sure, how-

ever, that he is the right man. Tell me what you think about my problem, and whether or not I should show him how I feel about him.

I often think that if my parents had never separated, my whole life might have been different. But, of course, I don't blame any one for my present troubles.

TEOLA.

You're quite right, my dear; in nine cases out of ten children are the real sufferers of divorce and separation. However, yours might have been a very happy marriage if fate had been more kind. But I'm sure that all happiness has not passed you by, and that you still have much to live for.

Considering your friend's attitude toward your baby, it would hardly be advisable on your part to let him see what is in your heart. Second marriages can be very difficult when the man so pointedly objects to being a father to another man's child.

When a man really loves a woman, it is only reasonable to assume that he would at least be tolerant toward her child, even if he could never be as fond of it as he would be of his own. And where a question of this kind arises it is indeed hard to make a decision.

My suggestion is that you wait a while; it is possible that time will effect a favorable change in your friend's feelings for your baby. In the meantime, give yourself a chance to have other friends, and avoid rushing into marriage, if you feel that all obstacles have not been done away with.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am twenty-two, married, and the mother of two small children. My husband and I have been separated for the past three years.

I haven't a steady job, but I try to support myself and my children with outside help, although there are times when I have to go into debt.

I am considered fairly good-looking, like to dance, and I smoke and drink to be

sociable. I board my youngsters with a private family, and I know they are well cared for. I see them twice a week.

My problem is that I am very much in love with a young married man who has one child. He lives twenty miles away, but comes to see me five nights a week. He tells me that he loves me. He lives under the same roof with his wife, although I know that he has his own room and hardly ever takes her anywhere.

What puzzles me is that he never speaks of divorce, or of leaving her. He often says he hates his wife, but if he does, why in the world does he remain with her? He tells me that the only reason they married is because they were forced into it.

Would you advise me to go on loving this man? When he doesn't come to see me, I am terribly lonely. I have been out with a lot of different young men during the past three years, but I know that I am really in love now. He likes my children, and always drives me over to see them.

His wife and family know that he takes me out, and they never say a word. We go to dances, shows, and all my friends approve of him. We have been going steady since last July, and I seem to find it impossible to interest myself in any other man.

Please try to advise me.

WONDERING HELEN.

What other answer can possibly exist to your problem, except that neither you nor this man have any right to each other's time and affection?

It is difficult to imagine a married man desperately in love with another woman, but apparently satisfied to go on sharing his life with his wife, and doing nothing about a situation that is unfair to all parties concerned.

This kind of love on the man's side is often nothing more than a desire for a prop for his own spinelessness. How could you be sure that even if it were possible for you two to marry, he would make a dependable and trustworthy husband, when he takes his present responsibility as husband and father so lightly?

I suggest that you straighten out the tangles of your own marriage before you think of love and marriage with another man. It will save you needless anxiety and unhappiness.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I'm a boy not quite sixteen years old, and am rather serious-minded. Several years ago I met a very pretty girl, and for the past year and a half I have been very much in love with her.

I've tried in every way to show her how much I like her. We wrote to each other for a while, and then she moved to another neighborhood. However, I just couldn't forget her.

Then she came back to stay with her grandmother, and I saw her every day. She gave several parties and asked every one she knew, but she didn't invite me. I was quite cut up over this, especially as she had let me think that she liked me.

When she went home again I wrote to her, and she answered my letter. I wrote again, but received no reply, and I haven't seen her, either.

Would you say that I have a chance to make this girl like me more than she now does? I know you will think I'm rather young to be interested in girls. But I would like nothing better than to be on friendly terms with her. I know that we both have lots of time for anything as serious as love.

Please give me your advice.

YOUNG AND SERIOUS.

Well, my boy, it certainly doesn't look as though the girl you like is anxious to encourage the friendship. However, try not to take it all so to heart.

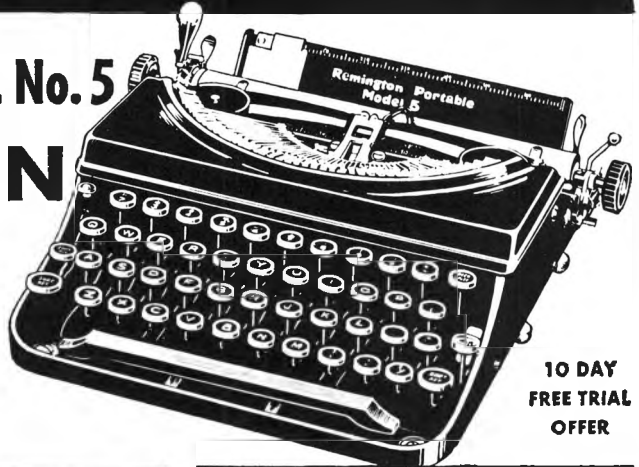
If you have no opportunity to visit the town this girl is now living in, there is nothing you can do except to wait until she comes to visit her grandmother again. And if she still decides to ignore you, the only solution is to forget her.

But in the meantime, why not concentrate on your studies and forget girls for a while? Besides, hard work is good medicine for heartaches.

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