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STREET & SMITH'S

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# LOVE STORY

EVERY WEEK

MAGAZINE

MAR. 9

ILLUSTRATED



MODEL SEEN

MIDNIGHT MADNESS by *Joan King*

# New INVENTION

**3 TO 7 MILES MORE  
PER GALLON**

**MOTORIST SAVES  
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Saves up to Thirty Per Cent On Gas.  
Provides Faster Pick-Up--More Power--  
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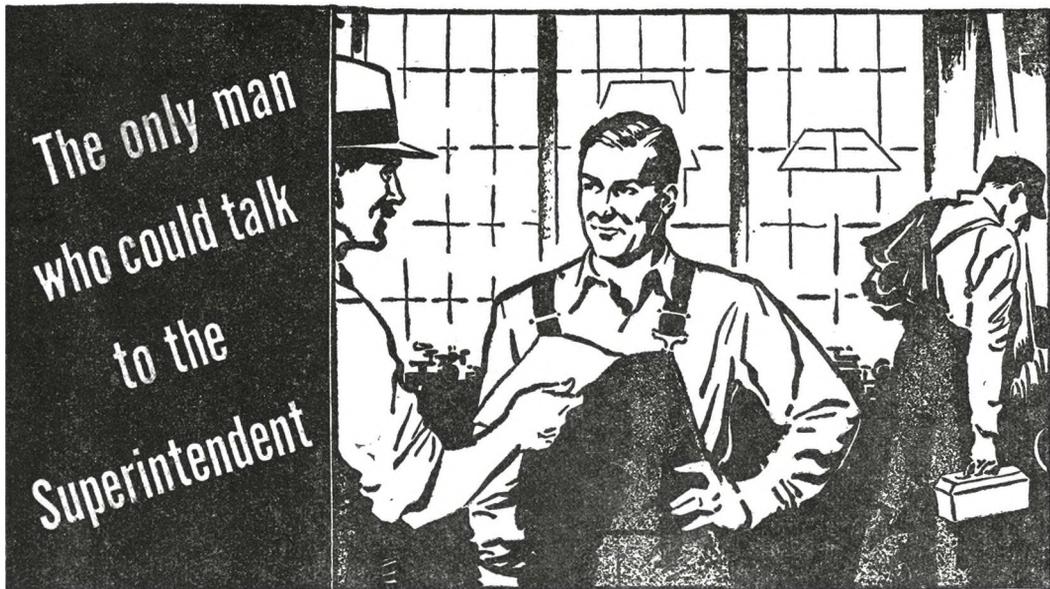
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Beginning in next week's issue—"Primitive Love"—a new serial  
by Cordelia Snow.

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# Help Your Kidneys

## Don't Take Drastic Drugs

You have 9 million tiny tubes or filters in your kidneys, which are at work night and day cleaning out Acids and poisonous wastes and purifying your blood, which circulates through your kidneys 200 times an hour. So it's no wonder that poorly functioning Kidneys may be the real cause of feeling tired, run-down, nervous, Getting Up Nights, Rheumatic Pains and other troubles.

Nearly everyone is likely to suffer from poorly functioning Kidneys at times because modern foods and drinks, weather changes, exposure, colds, nervous strain, worry and over-work often place an extra heavy load on the Kidneys.

But when your Kidneys need help, don't take chances with drastic or irritating drugs. Be careful. If poorly functioning Kidneys or Bladder make you suffer from Getting Up Nights, Leg Pains, Nervousness, Stiffness, Burning, Smarting, Itching Acidity, Rheumatic Pains, Lumbago, Loss of Vitality, Dark Circles under the eyes, or Dizziness, don't waste a minute. Try the Doctor's prescription Cystex (pronounced Sis-tex). See for yourself the amazing quickness with which it soothes, tones and cleans raw, sore irritated membranes.

Cystex is a remarkably successful prescription for poorly functioning Kidneys and Bladder. It is helping millions of sufferers, and many say that in just a day or so it helped them sleep like a baby, brought new strength and energy, eased rheumatic pains and stiffness—made them feel years younger. Cystex is swift, safe and sure in action. It helps the Kidneys in their work of cleaning out the blood and removing poisonous acids and wastes in the system. Cystex is a scientifically prepared prescription and your doctor or druggist can tell you it does not contain any dopes, narcotics or habit-forming drugs. The formula is in every package.

Because of its amazing and almost world-wide success, the Doctor's Prescription known as Cystex, (pronounced Sis-tex) is offered to sufferers of poor Kidney and Bladder functions under the fair-play guarantee to fix you up to your complete satisfaction or money back on return of empty package. It's only 3c a dose. Ask your druggist for Cystex today and see for yourself how much younger, stronger and better you can feel by simply cleaning out your Kidneys. Cystex must do the work or cost you nothing.



**City  
Health  
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Praises  
Cystex**



Dr. W. R. GEORGE

Doctors and druggists everywhere approve of the prescription Cystex because of its splendid ingredients and quick action. For instance, Dr. W. R. George, graduate Medical Dept., University of Indiana, former Health Commissioner of Indianapolis, and Medical Director for insurance company 10 years, recently wrote the following letter:

"There is little question but what properly functioning Kidney and Bladder organs are vital to the health. Insufficient Kidney excretions are the cause of much needless suffering with aching back, weakness, painful joints and rheumatic pains, headaches and a general run-down, exhausted body. This condition also interferes with normal rest at night by causing the sufferer to rise frequently for relief, and results in painful excretion, itching, smarting and burning. I am of the opinion that Cystex definitely corrects frequent causes (poor kidney functions) of such conditions and I have actually prescribed in my own practice for many years past the same ingredients contained in your formula. Cystex not only exerts a splendid influence in flushing poisons from the urinary tract, but also has an antiseptic action and assists in freeing the blood of retained toxins. Believing as I do that so meritorious a product deserves the endorsement of the Medical Profession, I am happy indeed to lend my name and photograph for your use in advertising Cystex." Signed W. R. George, M. D.

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Illustration

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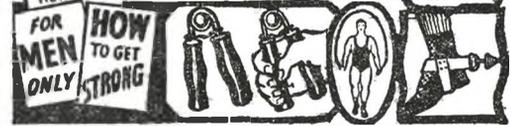
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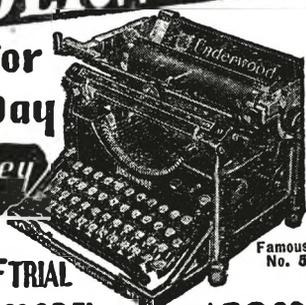
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29x4.75-20	2.50 0.85	34x4	3.95 1.45
29x5.00-19	2.85 1.05		
30x5.00-20	2.85 1.05		
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29x5.25-19	2.95 1.10		
30x5.25-20	2.95 1.10		
31x5.25-21	3.25 1.15		
28x5.50-18	3.30 1.15		
29x5.50-19	3.35 1.15		
30x5.00-18	3.40 1.15		
31x5.00-19	3.40 1.15		
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## WHY—MEN—GET—BALD

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Full particulars of an amazing new discovery that enables people who have dandruff, scalp itch, falling hair or baldness, to harmlessly remove the thin outer layer of scalp skin, have fresh new scalp skin and activate the dormant roots to grow new hair. WILL BE SENT ABSOLUTELY FREE, to any reader of this magazine who will write to Dermolav Lab., Desk 727, No. 1700 Broadway, New York, N. Y. This FREE Treatise explains anatomy of your hair and tells what to do. It is positively amazing. If pleased, tell friends.





# Midnight Madness

By Joan King

A SERIAL—Part I.

## CHAPTER I.

**J**ANICE TEMPLE stood in the employees' entrance of the big dressmaking firm where she had been employed for the last three weeks as an extra seamstress.

She had hoped that when that three weeks were up she would be kept on, but that afternoon when she received her pay envelope, she had been told that the firm regretted that they could make no further use of her services.

She told herself bitterly that she supposed she would have to go back home to the small town where she had been born, and admit that she couldn't make a go of things in New York.

Deep in thought, she turned into Fifth Avenue. Quite unaware of the many heads that were turned in her direction, of eyes that narrowed with admiration as they rested on her face, she paused to stare blindly into the window of a jeweler's shop.

A man who had been watching her paused beside her with a murmured, "Good afternoon."

Furious at the insult, Janice turned to walk on and almost ran into the arms of another man who was emerging from the shop.

She drew back so swiftly that she lost her balance, and the man with whom she had so nearly collided, flung out his hands to steady her, then stared at her as though he recognized her. Yet, Janice knew that she had never seen him before. How long she remained looking up into his eyes, she never knew.

It could have been for only a few seconds, then he raised his hat with an apology and entered a car that stood waiting by the curb.

Never had she seen a man who looked more weary and disillusioned.

Janice stood on the train platform, watching the crowd around her.

There was still ten minutes before the train left—ten minutes before she would have to turn her back on all her dreams of romance and success.

When she left home six months before, she had been so certain that she would succeed.

She felt that it wouldn't have been so bad if she had had parents to go to—parents who would understand. But there was only the aunt who had brought her up, and the cousins who would rejoice over her failure.

She decided suddenly that she couldn't sit in the train with nothing to do but think. There was still time to go back and buy a paper.

Intent on her object, she began to walk swiftly back along the platform, and she had got a little more than halfway when she suddenly be-

came aware of a tall man standing with his back to her.

There was something oddly familiar about that broad-shouldered figure in its faultlessly fitting blue suit and, as she came almost abreast with him he turned, and she recognized the man whom she had encountered on Fifth Avenue that afternoon.

As she hurried past, she wondered if he recognized her, and told herself it was not likely.

Janice passed through the gate and, reaching the news stand, bought her paper.

Returning to the gate, she was about to pass through when the collector stopped her with an imperative, "Ticket, please!"

"You've punched it once," she reminded him, as she opened her bag, and then a little gasp broke from her. The ticket was not there. She must have dropped it at the news stand. She ran back, but a hurried search revealed no sign of the piece of pasteboard.

Then she hurried back to the gate.

"I've lost my ticket," she explained. "You did clip it—surely you must remember. Please let me through. I may have dropped it on the platform."

"Then I'm afraid you'll have to get another," was the retort.

"But there isn't time," Janice pleaded; "the train is going."

How could she explain that she had not enough money to buy another ticket?

The man turned to shut the gate.

Janice was in despair. Her fare home had taken nearly all the money she had. If she were forced to remain in New York, she had hardly enough to pay for a night's lodging.

Then once again, she became

aware of a tall, blue-clad figure, of a man's eyes looking into hers over the head of the ticket collector. A charming, well-bred voice, with a note of irritation in it, exclaimed:

"There you are at last, Gina—come on for Heaven's sake! There's only about half a minute to spare."

A hand reached out, catching her arm, and she was drawn through the gate, while the blue-eyed man added impatiently:

"I've got the lady's ticket—here it is, and keep a civil tongue in your head. Come, Gina—run!"

Janice felt herself lifted under one elbow, thrust onto the train platform, and as her companion followed, the door banged, a whistle sounded, and the train was moving.

For a moment, there was a breathless silence, then the man, who had guided her into the compartment at one end of the coach, and seated himself opposite her, exclaimed:

"Oh, boy, that sure was a close shave!"

"I—I don't understand," Janice said. "There is some mistake. My name isn't Gina and I don't know you."

"I'm perfectly aware of that," he said.

For a moment, Janice simply stared, then, as it dawned on her that there was a touch of mockery in his eyes, she felt a stir of anger.

"It was good of you to come to my rescue," she faltered, "but I don't understand why you did it."

Watching the lovely face of the girl opposite, framed in its close-fitting hat, which just showed the red-gold of the hair beneath, it seemed to him almost impossible to believe that he was actually looking at a girl whose name he did not even know.

"The fact is," he said in the slow, delightful voice of his, which seemed

to have the power to touch a chord in her heart that had remained mute until she heard it, "although your name may not be Gina, you are so like her that when I saw you on the Avenue this afternoon, I could hardly believe for a minute that I wasn't dreaming. For the rest"—he slipped a hand in his pocket and drew out a big square envelope—"will you read that, and then I'll tell you more."

Janice took the envelope. Almost at once she was aware of a faint, heady perfume which hung about it. She could not name it, but she knew at once that it was very expensive. Involuntarily, she glanced down at the envelope. It was addressed in a square feminine handwriting to "Roger Greville, Esq., Pantheon Club."

After a slight hesitation, she drew out the sheet of paper it contained, unfolded it, and read:

DEAR ROGER: You'll think all kinds of things, I know, but it is no use, I can't go through with it. You know that I told you from the beginning how I hated the idea of tying myself up, but you were so sweet, and I suppose that the moonlight and the music did the rest. I ought never to have promised. Anyway, I'm backing out. Forgive me if you can. GINA.

As Janice scanned the note and read between the lines sufficiently to understand the meaning of it, she was aware of the indignation in her heart.

When she raised her eyes to the man's he saw that she understood, and shrugged his shoulders with a laugh that did not ring true.

"I expect you've guessed it," he said. "I've been jilted. Would you like to hear the story?"

She nodded and, taking a flat gold cigarette case from his pocket, he opened it and offered it to her.



*The man with whom she had so nearly collided, flung out his hands to steady her, then stared at her as though he recognized her. Yet, Janice knew that she had never seen him before.*

As she refused, he asked her permission and lighted a cigarette.

"The fact is," he explained, "I've always been looked upon as a confirmed bachelor, and my dear father received the news of my engagement with the greatest delight. You see, if I don't marry, the estate will go to a very distant relative, and the idea has been worrying the old boy more than I had guessed.

"Frankly, I hadn't any more desire to tie myself up than the girl who wrote that letter, until I met her a few weeks ago on board the ship which was bringing me back from South America. We became engaged, and I cabled the news to my father, saying that I was bringing my fiancée home. On my arrival, I found a letter from him, overflowing with delight. It was arranged that we should go to our country place to-day. Five minutes before the train left, I received that note."

"But I don't see how all this concerns me," said Janice.

He gave a short, mirthless laugh.

"When I saw you this afternoon, I had just been buying the engagement ring. I came out of that shop, my thoughts full of the girl whom I believed I was going to marry, and when I looked down at you, I could hardly believe it possible that any two girls could resemble each other as strongly as you two. You are amazingly like her. Perhaps her hair is darker, her eyes are certainly more golden than yours, but any one who had seen only a photograph of her would never know the difference.

"Doesn't it strike you," he asked, "that the fates have thrown us across each other's paths for some reason? It is true that I don't know who you are or why you wanted to take this train——"

Janice was not at all sure that she wanted to tell him, and yet, she found herself doing so in a few brief sentences. As he listened, a gleam of satisfaction dawned in his eyes.

"You're out of work," he told her. "Going back to uncongenial surroundings, if I guess rightly. You don't want to go home, do you?"

As she shook her head, he leaned toward her.

"Then, why go? Don't you understand what I want you to do? I want you to come back with me, to let me introduce you to my people as my fiancée."

For a moment, she stared at him, unable to speak for amazement.

"I think you must be mad," she gasped at last.

"Not in the least," he retorted. "I was never more sane in my life. They've seen a snapshot of Gina—I sent them one a day or two ago. They would never know the difference. Don't you see"—a note of impatience crept into his voice—"I don't like turning up alone, telling them that I have been jilted. Later on, it won't matter so much if my engagement is broken. Meanwhile, you'd have a very good time, and I'd pay you well—a thousand dollars for, say, a month."

Janice was silent. Never in her life had she been so strongly tempted.

Suddenly, she saw what it would mean if she did as this man wished.

It wasn't so much the money that tempted her. That hardly seemed to matter at the moment; it was the thought of a month of the sort of life that she had always longed for—lovely clothes, luxurious surroundings, nothing to worry about.

"Well?" he asked.

She hesitated, feeling again that queer, swift quickening of her heart-beats as she looked across and met

his eyes fixed upon her. She supposed that she ought to refuse this extraordinary offer outright, but instead she found herself asking:

"But, suppose some one should find out the truth?"

"Impossible," he answered. "I know for a fact that Gina is obliged to go abroad at once. It was understood that our marriage would not be able to take place for six months, because she had a lot to settle up over there beforehand. It isn't as if she were a girl who is well known, and the announcement of our engagement had already appeared."

"But I might make an absolute failure of the part," Janice protested.

"I don't think you need worry about that. I never yet met one of your sex who wasn't capable of slipping into any rôle for which she was cast. Isn't it proverbial that all girls are good actresses?" There was a note of bitterness in his voice. "I'll coach you well, and you will always have some one to come to in any difficulty."

Again she hesitated.

But something stronger than herself seemed to be urging her on, whispering to her that it would be madness to refuse.

"Very well," she said in a low voice, "I will do as you wish."

Janice could not have told whether she was glad or sorry as she stood twenty-four hours later in the lovely bedroom at Barrington Towers, the beautiful old family home of the Grevilles.

The maid who had unpacked the trunks had just withdrawn, shutting the door behind her, and for almost the first time that day Janice found herself alone.

Yesterday afternoon, she had been nearly crazy, seeing every-

thing she wanted most in the world slipping further and further away from her.

To-day, she had more lovely clothes than she had ever possessed in her life; she was here in this wonderful old house, surrounded by every luxury, a welcome and honored guest.

It was true that she was bearing another girl's name. She was no longer Janice Temple, but Gina Mornington. It was that part of it that she hated, for there was something in her which had always shrunk from deception. She had felt particularly mean when handsome gray-haired old Piers Greville had welcomed her as his son's future wife.

Yesterday, after he had gained her consent to the masquerade, the man to whom she was supposed to be engaged had left the train with her at the next stop and wired that their arrival at Barrington Towers would be delayed.

Then, they had motored to the nearest big city, put up at the principal hotel for the night, and Janice had spent this morning buying all the things it would be necessary for her to possess in her new position.

Lovely gowns for day and evening wear, coats and hats, dozens of pairs of silk stockings, and gloves, stacks of sheer lovely underwear—they were all here, hanging in the big wardrobe or stowed away in the drawers of the bureau and the chest of drawers.

As she faced her reflection in the long mirror, she wondered if it really could be the same girl who had always hated the cheap clothes which she had been forced to wear—this lovely vision in a gown of brown-and-orange-printed crêpe, the coloring of which had the effect of making her hair look like golden flames,



*"I want you to come back with me, to let me introduce you to my people as my fiancée. I don't like turning up alone, telling them that I have been jilted. I'd pay you well—a thousand dollars for a month."*

with exquisite silk stockings incasing her slender legs, and brown kid slippers which had cost as much as she'd earned in a week, on her feet.

The coat, collared with brown fox, and the tiny hat of brown straw,

which she had just taken off, lay across the satin cover of the bed.

The maid had told her that the first dressing gong would ring in half an hour, when she would return to help her dress for the evening.

LS--1C

Janice felt tired after her journey and all the excitement she had gone through, and taking off her dress, she slipped into a negligee of blue satin, and, thrusting her feet into tiny mules to match, sat down in a deep armchair and, leaning back, closed her eyes.

She was aroused from her reverie by a tap at the door and, thinking that the maid had returned, called permission to enter. Then, as the door opened, she got to her feet quickly, drawing the folds of her negligee closely about her, for on the threshold stood Roger Greville.

"Forgive me for disturbing you," he apologized, "but I want to speak to you, and I knew there would be no one to disturb us at this hour. May I come in?"

"Yes." She was angry with herself because she felt the color mounting to her cheeks.

But, apparently unaware of her embarrassment, he closed the door and came forward with calm unconcern. Yet, had she but known, he was poignantly aware of the lovely picture she made as she stood there facing him, the soft satin of her wrap outlining the slender, rounded curves of her figure.

"I quite forgot you were not wearing an engagement ring," he told her, putting a hand in his pocket and drawing out a small case.

"I found this in my suitcase. I had just bought it when I first saw you yesterday."

He touched a spring, and as the case flew open, there on the satin lining a big opal surrounded with tiny brilliants lay gleaming as though imprisoned in its heart were a thousand multicolored fires.

Without making any comment, he took the ring out and, tossing the case aside, took her left hand in his and slipped it on her finger.

As it slid into place, Janice felt as though a flame shot up her arm, and she did not realize that it was the touch of the hand which still held hers that sent that strange thrill through her.

As he looked down at her a little flame flickered for an instant in Roger Greville's eyes.

How exquisite she was and yet he felt that for him her beauty must always be marred because it resembled so closely that of the girl who had come very near to wrecking his life—the girl whom he didn't know now whether he loved or hated.

Nevertheless, he was filled with a sudden strange, wild temptation to crush Janice in his arms, to hold her close and kiss that red, alluring mouth which seemed to have been made for kisses.

With a quick, impulsive gesture, he raised the hand he still held to his lips.

"I hope you know that I am greatly indebted to you," he said, and then he turned and went out, leaving her alone.

Janice stood quite still, looking down at the hand he had kissed, a dazed expression in her eyes.

In that moment, it seemed to her as though her whole life, as though she herself, had changed utterly. Deep down in her being, she was aware of that change, only she did not understand it. She was aware of a wild throbbing, of a strange desire to cry and cry in an effort to relieve the new burden which had settled on her heart.

In that moment, she would have given the world to be able to undo the thing that she had done, to be miles away from Barrington Towers.

But it was too late to draw back now and, as she moved her hand and saw the lights gleaming in the stone

upon it, she remembered that opals were unlucky, and she shivered, wondering if ill fortune lay in wait for her.

## CHAPTER II.

Janice leaned over the stone parapet of the terrace which ran along outside the first-story windows at Barrington Towers. It was more than three weeks now since her arrival. She had been fêted and petted and spoiled by every one, accepted as the promised wife of Roger Greville.

She had soon got used to her new position, and had slipped into it as easily as though it were a glove that had been made for her. It was only when she was with Piers Greville that she never could quite stifle her sense of shame.

The old man was so kind to her, so genuinely happy to think that his son was to marry a girl whom he believed to be perfectly suited to him and the position she would occupy as his wife.

It made her feel sad to think of the disappointment which awaited him when the time arrived for Roger Greville to announce that the engagement had been broken.

Now a deeper sorrow, which she felt to be strangely personal, for she had grown very fond of the older man, had fallen on her.

Yesterday, Roger's father had been found unconscious in his library. He had had a stroke and lay now just hovering between life and death.

Janice knew that Roger Greville was suffering intensely, for he was devoted to his father.

During these weeks, it seemed to her that she had learned curiously little of the man whose fiancée she was supposed to be. She had seen

a great deal of him. He had been charming to her when they were alone, and before people, his manner had lacked nothing of the devotion which was expected of him.

Yet, she felt always that the real man was shut away from her behind a mask, and sometimes she longed to know what that real man was like.

She turned at the sound of a quick footstep on the terrace, and saw Roger Greville coming toward her. He was curiously pale and his handsome face looked drawn and haggard.

"What is it?" she cried involuntarily. "Has anything happened?"

He shook his head. "Will you come inside for a minute?" he asked.

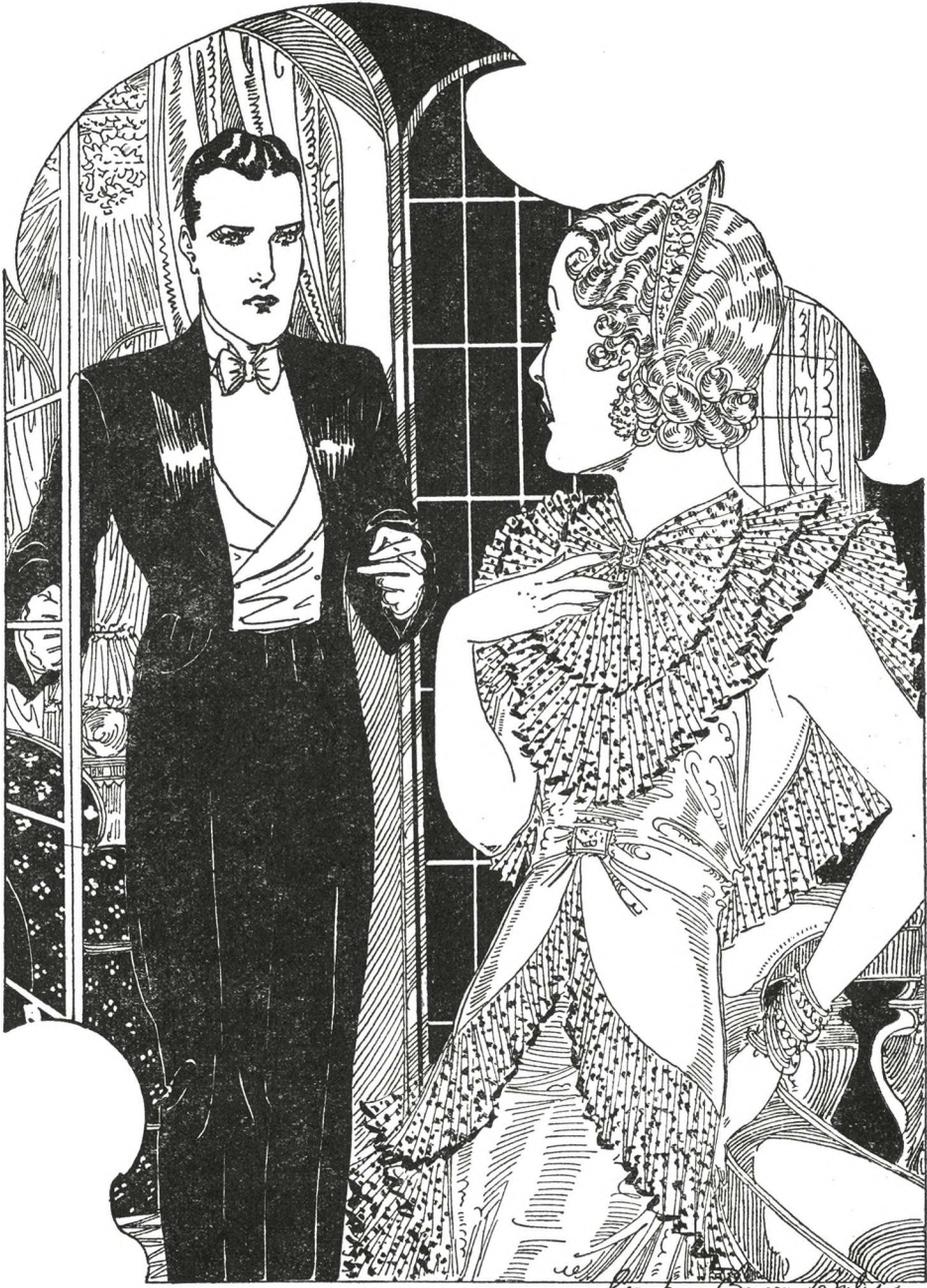
As she followed him to the long windows which led into the library, he stood aside for her to pass him. A moment later, they stood together by the tall carved mantelpiece, and with an obvious effort, he broke the silence.

"I've just left the doctors," he said. "My father is dying. He may live until the end of the week, but there is no hope."

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" The tears rushed to her eyes. "I suppose you will find it difficult to believe how fond I am of him. He has been so sweet to me and I have felt so ashamed of the part I was playing. If only I could do something for him."

"You *can* do something." His voice sounded hard and curt, and there was something like a challenge in his eyes as they met hers. "He is conscious. He knows that he cannot recover and he has only one wish—that before he dies, he should know that you and I are married."

She gave a little cry, but he silenced her with a gesture.



*"My father is dying," said Roger. "He knows that he cannot recover and he has only one wish—that before he dies, he should know that you and I are married. He begs that the ceremony may take place at his bedside."*

"He begs that the ceremony may take place at his bedside. Wait! It will be easy enough to arrange. I

can go to town now and come back with the license."

"But it is impossible!" she gasped.

Suddenly, it seemed to her that she would rather do anything in the world than marry this man who seemed to think that she had sold him the right to her whole life.

"It isn't impossible at all," he answered. "It is my father's dying wish. Heaven knows I've been a disappointing enough son! How can I fail him now? Don't you see, whatever happens in the future, we must go through with this thing now? We can't refuse."

Janice looked at him in silence, but she was not thinking of the man standing before her. It was the man upstairs who lay dying of whom she was thinking.

Janice stood before her dressing table, filing her nails. The winged mirrors reflected her slender loveliness from every angle, and no one could have wished for a more exquisite picture than she made in the soft white chiffon gown which she had chosen.

If she had been able to please herself, she would have chosen anything rather than white that night, but Roger Greville had said to her:

"Wear the most suitable gown you have, won't you? White, if possible; something bridal. The old man will expect it."

Something bridal!

She dropped the file suddenly, and it fell with a clatter on the glass top of the dressing table.

It was impossible to believe that this thing was really going to happen, that she was going to be married to Roger Greville.

She had tried to make her refusal definite, to make him understand that she would not go any further with the masquerade she had undertaken than she had already gone, but somehow his will had overpowered hers.

It was just a business arrangement like the other, he had insisted; more difficult to end, of course, but divorces were easy to arrange.

She had felt, too, that she could not bear that the old man should die with his last wish unfulfilled. It was for his sake that she was doing this terrible thing.

Roger Greville had gone to town to get the license and, on his way back, he had arranged to stop and get the minister, since it was the old man's wish that the ceremony should take place at his bedside.

Janice could hardly believe that it was true that this actually was her wedding day. Marriage to her had always seemed something wonderful and sacred, a wedding the greatest event in a girl's life.

Now, she felt, with the bitterest resentment, that she was being robbed of her right, and she felt that she hated the man who had forced her into this position.

At first, remembering the story of his broken engagement, she had felt sorry for him. She had guessed that under his cool, rather insolent manner, he was suffering as only such proud natures can suffer.

But now she had felt she hated him.

It didn't make things any easier to feel that he must be hating the whole thing as she did, to wonder how he would have felt if it had been Gina Mornington whom he was going to marry.

Janice turned away from the dressing table and, as she did so, the light caught the big opal on her betrothal finger. She looked down at it shrinkingly.

There was something evil about its beauty. Janice could not understand any girl deliberately choosing such a stone, and yet she knew that it had been Gina Mornington's

choice. She preferred opals to any other jewel, and had defied superstition.

Suddenly, Janice seemed to be carried back to that moment when she had stood outside the jeweler's on Fifth Avenue, looking into a pair of vividly blue eyes, filled with that strange feeling of recognition.

She started at the sound of a sharp tap on the door, and going to open it, found the man who had been occupying her thoughts standing on the threshold.

For a moment, they looked at each other in silence, and behind the coldness of those strangely brilliant eyes of his a flame flickered, as they took in the slender white-clad figure before him.

But it was gone in an instant, and there was a grimace set to his lips, because her loveliness was dimmed for him by the recollection of the girl whose place she was taking.

He told himself that he was through with Gina Mornington. The callous way in which she had treated him had killed any feeling he had for her, and never as long as he lived would any other girl have the chance to fool him.

As for this one—she meant no more to him than a dummy, and as soon as he could, he would put her out of his life altogether. Yet, as he looked at her, he felt an odd quickening of his pulses. Until that moment, it seemed as though he had not known how lovely she could be.

It was Janice who broke the silence.

"I didn't know you were back."

"I have only just arrived," he answered curtly. "May I come in?"

She stepped aside, and he followed her into the room, shutting the door.

"I have the license," he told her, "and the minister is waiting. My

father is very weak, but they are giving him an injection at his own request. The nurse told me they would be ready for us in five minutes."

"Very well." Her tone was as cold as his. "I suppose there is no other way possible?"

"I'm afraid not. Will you join me outside in five minutes?"

She nodded and, as he reached the door, he hesitated and turned back.

"Of course, you understand," he said, and for the first time since she had known him there was a real touch of embarrassment in his manner, "that as soon as it can possibly be arranged, I shall end this arrangement. But, meanwhile, of course, we shall have to make the best of it. I don't want any one to get an inkling of the real state of things."

She nodded, and the next instant she was alone.

She stood looking at the spot where he had been, and her hands clenched, her cheeks grew scarlet.

Why should he have thought it necessary to remind her again of his determination to be free of this marriage as soon as possible? Surely, he did not think that she was likely to make any claim on him, that she had any desire to remain under his roof a minute longer than was necessary.

If only she could refuse to do as he wished! But it was too late now.

As long as she lived, Janice never forgot that strange wedding ceremony.

The great four-poster bed with candles burning on either side of it, in tall candelabrams; the frail figure of old Piers Greville propped up on pillows that were no whiter than his face, on which the hand of death

had already laid its unmistakable touch; the white-capped nurse standing beside the doctor on the far side of the bed, both anxiously watching their patient; the tall minister like a ghostly shadow in the gloom—all seemed like part of some strange and frightening dream.

In spite of his illness, the old man roused himself sufficiently to insist that there should be flowers in the room, and they had been banked behind the table at which the minister stood.

There were tall white lilies and carnations from the greenhouses, and always the scent of those flowers brought back to Janice the memory of this night, and the memory of the sudden fear which clutched her as the clergyman opened his book.

That fear was the only real thing which existed for her while the low droning voice filled the room.

She couldn't have told what it was that she was really afraid of. It only seemed to her that something warned her that the future held great unhappiness for her.

The ceremony was as brief as it could be made, and when Roger Greville took her hand to slip the ring upon her finger, he found that it was cold and nerveless in his hold.

Then it was over.

"Till death do us part——"

Ominous words in this room in which the shadow of death was drawing nearer and nearer.

She tried to remember that it was another's death that would part them, that would free her. She wasn't really tied to the man beside her for life but it was difficult to remember anything with that slender gold band feeling as though it were burning her hand.

Roger Greville drew her toward the bed and his father made a faint sign for them to bend down to him.

There was a smile in his eyes as they rested on them and then, as his glance rested on Janice, he murmured:

"You have made me—very happy, my dear. A lovely—bride. Let me see you kiss her, my boy."

Janice felt the arms of the man who was now her husband about her shoulders, then he clasped her close, and for one moment his lips touched hers, and it was as though every pulse in her body leaped to life beneath their pressure.

She felt blinded, deafened by the force of an emotion which it was impossible to understand and, as he released her, Roger Greville was curiously pale—aware of madly throbbing pulses and of the touch of soft lips beneath his own.

But there was no time to think then.

His dearest wish accomplished, the sick man had fallen back, and the nurse and doctor were both bending over him.

As Roger Greville joined them, Janice made her escape.

Piers Greville died that night. In spite of everything, Janice's grief for him was very genuine, and somehow the knowledge that his father's death was a great blow to the man she had married softened her feelings toward Roger Greville.

If he had given her a chance, they might have come to a better understanding of each other, but he did not seem to want sympathy.

He shut himself away and she was obliged to realize that he was shunning her deliberately. When they met, although his manner was courteous, it was the courtesy which one extends to a stranger.

Janice's heart hardened again.

What she was very far from understanding was that his conscious-

ness of her as a human being was the one thing which made a barrier between them.

He didn't want to remember it. When he had suggested that she should save his pride by taking the place of the girl who had jilted him, he had meant the thing never to develop beyond a business proposition.

He was paying her, as he would have paid a secretary. She was here to play her part, no more.

But soon he had found himself becoming aware of her, noticing how lovely she was, with a loveliness which resembled and yet was very different from the loveliness of Gina Mornington, and he had shut himself away from her.

Then Fate had played its last trump card and he had found himself forced to forge a tie between them which he already knew in his heart was going to be more difficult to cut than he had imagined.

Try as he would, he could not forget the time he had kissed her.

Throughout all the upheaval which followed his father's death, when he was in consultation with lawyers, bankers and all those others with which his new position as his father's heir brought him in contact, he found himself haunted by the memory of that kiss; and though he avoided her, he could not lose the consciousness that the girl with whom he had made a marriage of convenience was here in his house.

While he was engaged in business, Janice found herself forced to see people who called after the funeral to offer their condolences and their good wishes for her marriage.

Sitting in the oak-paneled, book-lined library—the room she loved best in the house—with the open French windows leading onto the terrace beyond, Janice leaned back

in her chair, the book she had been trying to read neglected in her lap.

She knew that Roger Greville was out, for she had seen him riding across the park which stretched beyond the gardens.

She was roused by the opening of the door, and the butler announced:

"Mr. Sefton Arlen has called, madam. He asked for Mr. Roger and when I said he was out, he inquired for you."

Janice hesitated.

Then she remembered she had heard Sefton Arlen's name mentioned by several people, and always with a touch of disapproval. She had gathered that he was rich and spent a great deal of time abroad, and though it had never interested her before, she felt a sudden curiosity to know why the neighborhood disapproved of him.

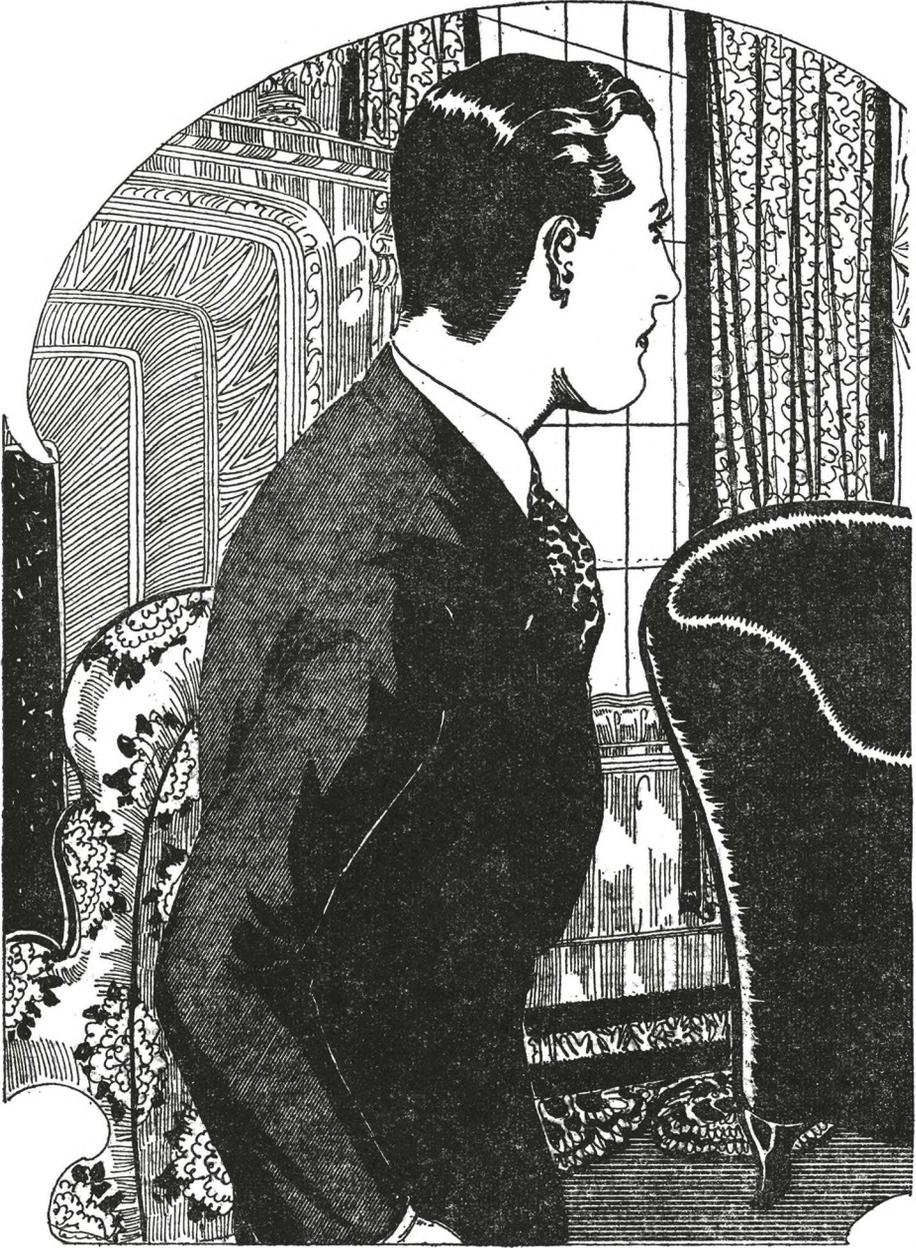
"Show him in," she ordered.

She was facing the door as it opened again, an unconsciously lovely figure in her printed gown of amber, which she was able to wear, since her father-in-law had forbidden any one to wear mourning for him.

Sefton Arlen was rather above medium height, good-looking, and perfectly groomed. The sort of man whom women find oddly attractive.

"How do you do?" he said. "I only got back last night and I felt I really must come over and say how sorry I was to hear about old Mr. Greville. Also to offer my congratulations to Roger on his marriage."

"That is very nice of you." She gave him her hand, and he retained it longer than was necessary, looking straight into her eyes with such unmistakable admiration in his own that she felt the color rising in her cheeks. She motioned him to a chair.



*Arlen was in the midst of telling Janice an amusing story when, unnoticed by either of them, Roger entered the room. For a moment, he stood watching the girl he had married, as she laughed gayly at her guest's words.*

Tea was brought in, and she poured it, accepting the cigarette he offered her, and time flew by as he lounged in the chair opposite her, telling her quite frankly that people disapproved of him.



He was in the midst of telling her an amusing story when, unnoticed by either of them, a shadow darkened the open window.

For a moment, Roger Greville

stood watching the lovely face of the girl he had married, as she laughed gayly at her guest's words.

It was Sefton Arlen who saw him first.

"Hello, Roger," he exclaimed. "How are you? I came to pay a conventional call and I had forgotten there was such a thing as time. I really must apologize." He turned back to Janice.

"Why apologize?" she asked. "I've enjoyed your visit tremendously."

She threw a half-defiant glance at her husband, who had moved across to ring for some fresh tea. Somehow, she sensed his disapproval and it annoyed her.

Sefton Arlen took his leave.

"Don't forget, Mrs. Greville," he begged as they shook hands, "that you've promised to come to luncheon on Thursday. You'll come, too, Roger, I hope—there'll be a crowd of people."

"I'm afraid I've an appointment on Thursday, thank you," was the cool reply.

As the visitor went away, there was silence until fresh tea arrived.

As he took his cup from Janice, the man she had married observed:

"By the way, I'd rather you didn't cultivate the Arlen Towers set."

She raised her brows, annoyed by his tone.

"You talk as though I were remaining here forever. I've been meaning to ask you—when do you think I can go away?"

"We'll go into all that quite soon," he told her. "It is rather a difficult question. Meanwhile, I should like you to remember that you bear my name."

Putting down his cup he went out of the room.

In the light from the moon, Roger Greville paced the path between the flower beds facing the west wing of the house.

Every time he turned back to face the windows, his eyes rested on the light which shone through the half-drawn curtains of one on the first floor, the window which he knew belonged to the girl he had married.

She was behind it, and the rest of the house was sleeping. Why should that knowledge haunt his mind? Why did it make him so furious to remember her evident liking for Sefton Arlen?

Since he had found them together that afternoon, his heart had burned with resentment. Yet, he told himself that Janice meant nothing to him.

Throwing away the end of his cigar, he paused and stood looking up at the window.

The light behind seemed to be drawing him like a magnet, whispering to him of red lips which he had the right to claim.

In her bedroom, Janice sat by the dressing table, a negligee over her nightgown. Getting up, she unfastened the jeweled buckle of her pale-green negligee, and crossed toward the bed. Then, suddenly, she paused, looking toward the door, one hand going to her heart as she saw the handle turn.

Slowly the door swung open, and a low cry escaped her as Roger Greville, the man she had married, entered and closed it behind him.

"How dare you come into my room?" she demanded, fear filling her heart.

"Don't be foolish, Janice. After all, who has a greater right here than your husband?"

There was a light in his blue eyes as they met hers which made her shrink back, her heart throbbing.

"What do you mean?" she asked, the words a mere whisper.



# Roses For Love

By June Jennifer

**W**HAT?" Anne stood perfectly still in the doorway, her hands suddenly clenched at her sides, her face as white as the lace-edged pillow beneath her aunt's head.

"You heard what I said! I want you to stop and tell young Mathe-

son I want to see him immediately." Aunt Minerva's black eyes gleamed ominously.

Anne shivered. "But Mr. Mason has——"

The black eyes grew cold. "Are you trying to tell me my business? I want Matheson. Go get him."

Instead Anne Warner went slowly to her room and sank down upon the edge of the satin-covered bed, her slim figure trembling. She couldn't go to Jim Matheson's office; it would kill her.

She had been dreading meeting Jim accidentally even since he dropped her so abruptly and commenced pursuing Iris Lawrence, the beautiful blond divorcee who had recently arrived in town. It hurt even to think of Jim Matheson and the memory of his firm lips on hers, his strong arms around her slim waist.

His gray eyes had looked so true. His voice when he told her he adored her had sounded so sure, so deep and steady. It had seemed such a miracle that they had met, for Aunt Minerva was an invalid, and demanded Anne's constant companionship, giving her hardly any opportunity to associate with young people of her own age.

But Aunt Minerva had quarreled with Frank Mason, her own attorney and sent for the struggling young lawyer in the Dreyfus Building. Anne and Jim had simply looked into each other's eyes and Anne had suddenly known the reason for this strange business of being alive. Had known that it meant—love.

Jim's love. Aunt Minerva, realizing her mistake too late, had raved, but Anne, walking in a celestial daze, living only for the moments when she could be with the man she loved, neither knew nor cared. No other man had ever made love to her, and now she was glad. She had so much more to offer Jim. Her heart, her love, her very soul.

And Jim, after one look at the dazzling Iris, had simply thrown her gift back in her face. Without any attempt at explanation he had

stopped coming to see her, stopped writing her letters and sending her flowers. Had thrust her coldly, brutally, out of his heart.

And now Aunt Minerva expected her to walk into his office quite as if nothing had happened and tell him she wanted to see him. Anne would rather have died, but even as she sat there, her face buried in her hands, she knew that she would have to go. If she was crossed, Aunt Minerva grew very, very ill, and overworked Norah, the only nurse she would have, would have to pay.

As Anne stepped into Jim Matheson's modest office she did not look like a despairing young girl who had recently been choking back sobs and bathing a tear-stained face. Her silken, blue-black hair, growing back from a curly peak on her forehead contrasted with her deep-blue eyes that looked wistfully out from behind lashes so long that they cast mysterious fringed shadows upon her petallike cheeks. Her mouth, beautifully shaped and bright coral in color, straightened into a firm line. Whatever happened, Jim Matheson must not guess what she was suffering.

Jim, however, was not in his office. As she waited a sound came through a partly opened door in the rear of the room and Anne, remembering that he had told her small apartments went with the offices, moved silently in that direction. She wanted to call out casually, but could not speak. Her tongue felt thick and clumsy.

Her eyes caught a blur of bright color, a sparkle of flame from a small fireplace. Jim, with masculine awkwardness, was arranging a great sheaf of yellow and pale-purple irises in a quaint pottery vase, his sandy head bent above them, his lean, good-looking face shadowed.

He looked up suddenly and saw her. "Anne!" he exclaimed, dropping one of the lovely flowers and crushing it beneath his feet as he started toward her. "What are you doing here?"

Anne wondered about that herself. What *was* she doing here? For a moment she could not seem to remember. Her wistful eyes just devoured him, the dearness, the nearness of him. Why, he looked just the same—just as honest and tender and true.

Anger suddenly leaped like a flame within her, whipping up her courage, stilling the blood that had commenced to beat so hotly in her throbbing heart. She stepped back a little, her head held high, a curt, scornful smile on her coral lips.

Briefly she stated her errand, keeping her voice crisp and business-like, keeping her eyes on a spot directly above and beyond Jim's shoulder. Jim's brow clouded sullenly.

"I can't come; I'm busy," he stated. "What does she think I am?—a puppy that can be sent away and whistled back at will? Let her get Frank Mason to attend to her business. I'm not interested in it."

"I know just how you feel," Anne said. "I'll tell her what you said." Aunt Minerva would be very unpleasant about it, but she wasn't thinking of that now. She was thinking only of getting away.

"Good-by, Jim," she flung back over her suddenly shaking shoulders.

Then, suddenly, she was in his arms and he was kissing her, holding her head against his shoulder, while his eyes burned into hers devouringly. "Anne! Anne!" he whispered hoarsely. "You shouldn't have come here. You—you tempt me beyond my endurance."

For a moment she stared at him, her eyes questioning, her cheeks devoid of color. Did he think she had come here just to see him, to try and win him back? Did he think her presence here was just a trick, that she came upon some manufactured errand? She wrenched herself from his encircling arms. Her eyes blazed.

"You are right, I should not have come. No matter what Aunt Minerva wanted——"

"I'll come and see her, Anne. I'll be right over. Anne——"

She did not hear any more as she dashed from the place and out into the hall. Jim had kissed her! Because he thought she came, wanting to be kissed. After the way he had treated her! He thought she could not live without him, could not keep away from him. Waves of humiliation swept over her.

As she waited by the elevator, the car came up and discharged a single passenger—Iris Lawrence. Tall and willowy with pale-gold hair and violet eyes, the girl who had taken Jim from her sailed past without seeing her. She went into Jim's office.

Anne stepped into the elevator, conscious of nothing but the chaotic turmoil of her own thoughts. Iris had gone into Jim's office. He was expecting her. The fire on the hearth, the flowers on the table were for her. No doubt she often lunched with Jim in his apartment.

Anne did the marketing; it was one of her duties, but to-day she scarcely knew what she was buying. She wandered from stall to stall like a lost child, a mist of tears before her eyes.

Suddenly she stepped from the curb and only a hand that darted out and grasped her arm kept her from moving directly into the path of a lumbering truck.

"Is Tuesday your day for suicide?" an amused, suave voice demanded.

Anne stared dazedly. The man was tall and nonchalant, black of eyes and hair, handsome, well tailored. After a moment she remembered his name. Grayson Whitaker. He had come to town shortly after Iris had arrived, and it was reported that he was paying her constant attention. A rival of Jim's. She thanked him mechanically, her blue eyes following the course of the noisy truck. If she had been crushed beneath it all this pain and turmoil, all this fever of existence would have been over.

"I think I had better take you wherever you are going," Grayson said. "My car is just around the corner. Let me take your shopping bags."

Meekly, Anne handed them over, noticing quite without humor how a cauliflower, protruding from the top of one of the bags, contrasted with his dark suit. She allowed him to help her into his huge dark roadster, sinking back weakly against the thick cushions. It did not occur to her to decline the man's invitation; she only wanted to get home as quickly as possible. She was grateful that he did not try to make her talk.

A smart blue roadster was parked before the door of the big stone house where she and Aunt Minerva lived. As she gathered up her shopping bags and thanked her companion for the lift, the front door opened and two figures came out. Anne stood perfectly still. Jim and Iris Lawrence. Jim had brought the blond divorcee here.

"My car was in the garage for repairs so Mrs. Lawrence brought me over," Jim explained, his face a trifle

flushed. It seemed to Anne that his gray eyes avoided hers.

"And your aunt saw me and insisted I should come in," Iris's silvery voice added. "Isn't she priceless—such a quaint character! Oh, hello, Gray! Imagine seeing you here!"

Grayson Whitaker smiled rather strangely. "A truck threatened to jump right up on the sidewalk and pursue Miss Warner," he remarked. "It upset her quite a bit. But she's all right now."

"Quite!" Anne's voice was cool, her small head held high. From her bed in the window of a room that commanded a view of the front entrance, she knew that her aunt was watching her and that she would not have time to slip away to her room for a moment alone. And she needed that moment, desperately.

The sharp black eyes of Aunt Minerva focused upon her. "Who was that man?" she demanded curtly. "What were you doing riding with him?"

Wearily Anne explained, hoping fervently that that was the end of the matter. But it wasn't. The next day Grayson Whitaker sent her a large box of roses, and a brief note asking if he might call. Aunt Minerva, acutely conscious of everything that went on in the big house, insisted upon seeing both flowers and message.

She touched the satin petals carefully.

"Now, there's a man worth while," she declared, sensing Anne's complete indifference. "Those flowers cost money. Not like those wretched little bunches of baby roses that beggarly lawyer used to bring you! I'll wager he doesn't dare present any such weeds to that young divorcee. Oh, no—he's in love with her!"



*At first Anne's startled eyes refused to focus upon the scene before her—Iris and Grayson together, their arms around each other, their lips pressed together in a long kiss.*

The girl's pale face flushed until the throb of blood was like a piercing pain. She had loved Jim's modest gifts of baby roses, loved them so much that she had obtained a thriving vine and planted it in the wide window box just outside her window. In the early morning she could see the first pale pink of the opening buds. She wanted to tear

out the vine, to cast it away, but somehow she could not quite bring herself to do it.

Neither could she tell her aunt that Jim's flowers were more beautiful in her eyes than Grayson Whitaker's expensive ones. She listlessly declined his invitations until, in exasperation, Aunt Minerva demanded that she go out with him. Grayson,

with his sleek dark head, his eyes as dark and gleaming as her own, bent over and kissed her withered hand when he called, and won her heart with his suave tongue and ingratiating smile. But to Anne, there was something about his almost slavish deference that did not ring true.

He sensed it. "Why do you button up your mind against me?" he asked her one evening, in the car. "When you look at me you pull down the shades in your eyes and shut me out. Little Anne, don't you know—can't you guess—that I love you? That I'm mad about you?"

She cast a sidelong glance at his profile. He was handsome, much handsomer than Jim Matheson and there was, she admitted, a certain breath-taking fascination about him. At times, something in his deep black eyes seemed to compel and charm her, drawing her out of herself in spite of her resistance, or indifference. Then she wondered how it would seem to be held in his arms, to have him kiss her. Her blood stirred a little at the thought, but her heart remained as Jim Matheson had left it, cold and forsaken.

"I don't love you, Grayson," she told him.

He leaned toward her. "But I could make you care for me. Won't you let me try?" His black eyes glistened and then softened, and seemed to turn into deep, mysterious pools as she lifted her eyes and let him gaze into them. A little tremor went through her as she felt his charm, the fascination of his nearness.

She did not love him; she would never love any man again. But she was young and life must go on, and perhaps being married to Grayson would not be so bad. Deprived of

the whole loaf of love you could at least have the golden crust of a lesser relationship. Perhaps she was mistaken about the tall, dark man by her side. That warning little clock that ticked within her when she thought of him or was near him might exist only in her imagination. She had been mistaken about one man. She might be wrong about another.

"All right, Grayson," she said. "Make me care, if you can."

He took his hand from the steering wheel and lifted her fingers to his lips. "You have made me the happiest man on earth," he said. "You'll never be sorry you gave me the chance to win you. I wish we could skip this stupid affair to-night and just ride on and on in the moonlight." His sigh echoed softly as his dark eyes caressed her.

The "stupid affair" was a brilliant dance at the leading hotel, where the ballroom, extending along one side of the patio, opened out upon a sheltered garden, exotic with tropical plants and flowers. Anne, in pale-green chiffon velvet with a bodice of exquisite silver lace, wore Grayson's white orchids.

Iris, in primrose satin, danced with Jim as long as her popularity would allow her to be in any one pair of masculine arms. Beside her Anne felt small and childish and slightly absurd, like a youngster dressed up for a party. She was astonished to find herself passed from partner to partner with amazing rapidity.

Grayson cut back as often as he could but, during one interval when she saw him dancing with the blond divorcee, Anne observed Jim making his way toward her and knew sheer panic as he asked her to dance.

"I'm tired," she told him, striving to keep her voice from trembling.

"I'd rather not dance just now."

Jim's gray eyes lingered on her. "All the better," he said. "We'll sit this one out. I want to talk with you. Shall we go outside?"

Anne hesitated. She did not want to go outside with Jim. "I'm too warm now."

"I'll get your wrap." His jaw was set in a stubborn line and Anne, her heart fluttering madly, knew that it was useless to try to swerve him from his purpose. As useless as to try and still the fevered pulse of her blood. She waited while he went for her wrap.

"What do you want to talk to me about?" she asked when they were seated in the scented dusk of the patio. In his presence she was conscious of the old, breathless weakness that allowed him, when first they met, to draw her so quickly into his arms. She hated herself for it, but it was there, a part of her being that could not be denied.

Jim scowled. "I want to talk to you about this Whitaker fellow you've been running around with. Of course, you don't know his reputation, but it won't do, Anne. It won't do! I'm telling you for your own good that——" He broke off before the blazing wrath in her eyes.

"You brought me here to knock Mr. Whitaker? And what do you think gives you the right to give me advice, Jim Matheson? What is it to you?"

His eyes were helpless for a moment. "Anything that concerns you is important to me, Anne," he said finally. "You see——"

Her laughter rang out almost hysterically. "I see," she choked. "Dog in the manger! You don't want me yourself, but you don't want any other man to have me. Oh, be still! You made love to me; you kissed me and held me in your

arms and swore that you worshiped me, and then you dropped me like—like something loathsome."

His face was white, his lips working strangely. "Anne, you don't understand and I can't explain! But this fellow—you can't throw yourself away on him. He's worthless, notorious, not fit to touch you."

He looked so white, so actually ill, that she was shocked out of her anger for a moment. His gray eyes met hers miserably, pleading with her. For a moment it seemed to her as if he must still care. But common sense came to her rescue. It was only his masculine vanity that was wounded because she had turned to another. Men were like that. No matter how they treated you they expected you to go on caring, and it was a shock to them when they discovered there could be another man.

"Please go away," she said in a voice that sounded strange and flat in her own ears. "I am going to marry Grayson Whitaker."

He started. "Anne—you can't!"

"I can and I will! Oh—go away. You bore me!"

Her eyes dimmed so suddenly that she did not see Jim when he left her. A terrible, fatal sense of finality was upon her. She had told Jim a lie, a horrid, hateful lie and now, to save her pride, she must make it the truth. She would have to tell Grayson she would marry him.

How long she crouched there in that shadowed corner Anne did not know, but when she opened her eyes they at first refused to focus upon the scene before her. Near, so near that she could almost have touched them, Iris and Grayson were standing, their arms around each other, their lips pressed together in a long kiss.

It seemed to Anne that she sat there endlessly, her chilled body a part of the cold marble bench, her startled, wide eyes glued to the two figures before her, a sense of utter misery weighing her down. Just a few hours before, Grayson Whitaker had proposed to her, told her he loved her. Now she saw him with Iris in his arms, saw them break apart and move away, murmuring words she could not hear.

Jim Matheson and Grayson Whitaker. Both claimed to care for her, and both made love to Iris Lawrence. She felt suddenly humiliated, cheapened. Was there some lack in her that made it impossible for her to have a love that was all her own? Or did all women have to share their men with women like Iris Lawrence?

During the ride home with Grayson she was very still, repulsing his advances with quiet dignity. At the door she turned and told him, "I do not care to see you again."

When a week passed without a call from Grayson, Aunt Minerva questioned her fretfully. "I like Whitaker," she said. "You will call him up and tell him you were only joking. You *do* want to see him, understand?"

Anne shook her head. "I don't want to see him, Aunt Minerva," she said.

Aunt Minerva stormed, but Anne was firm. She went up to her room and stood staring at the rose vine blooming in the window box, the tiny buds all blurred a misty pink. She didn't care what Aunt Minerva said. She was not going out with Grayson or any other man!

She saw a car pulling up to the curb and Frank Mason, looking flurried, hurry into the house, brief case in hand. Anne waited for the

summons that she knew would come. Five minutes later she was in her aunt's room.

Aunt Minerva, propped up in bed, her fingers clutching a legal document, glared at the girl from her nest of pillows.

"You'll not get a red cent of my money unless you stop your stubbornness," she snapped. "Read that. It cuts you off entirely! I've sent for Grayson Whitaker. If you consent to marry him you can destroy this, otherwise——" She flung the document across the silken coverlet.

Wearily, Anne picked it up and carried it into the library, thrusting it into the drawer of the desk. She had no desire to read it. Her aunt had changed her will too many times for her to be much interested. To-morrow she might change her mind again.

She left the house in order to avoid Grayson, but he was not to be evaded so easily. On her return she found him on the wide, old-fashioned porch awaiting her. The late-afternoon sun gleaming upon his sleek, black hair he came forward, slender hands outstretched.

"I had to see you," he told her earnestly. "I've been miserable without you. Anne, how can you be so cruel, so heartless? You refuse to see me—you are tearing my heart in two."

The girl laughed contemptuously. "But you no doubt keep your arms and lips well occupied with Iris Lawrence," she stated bluntly. "Why not devote all your time to her? She's very beautiful."

He smiled. "Ah, you are jealous, my darling, and that is a compliment. Don't you know that women like Iris only amuse men? She dared me to kiss her and—well, I

did. What is a playful kiss between old friends? I have known her for a long time, you know."

His sophisticated manner made Anne feel like an immature school-girl. She felt herself flushing. "I wouldn't want the man I was engaged to kissing other people."

He came a step nearer, seized her hands. "If I were engaged to you I would not touch the lips of an angel straight from heaven! Anne, forgive me, give me another chance! I did not realize what an idealistic, sensitive little thing you were. Iris is less than nothing to me. Why, she is engaged to that young lawyer, Jim Matheson."

Anne turned cold. Jim and Iris were engaged! Her hands shook suddenly in Grayson's steady grasp. What did it matter to her if Jim was going to marry Iris? He was nothing to her, nothing at all. He could marry Norah for all she cared.

"You're cold," Grayson said tenderly, drawing her closer. "Anne, please say you will marry me. You're an innocent little thing, you do not understand men. But I promise you this—if you consent to marry me I will be as true as the stars in deed and thought. I'll take you to Iris and she will tell you we are nothing but dear friends."

The girl stiffened. Let Iris think that she was jealous? Never! And Jim—she had told Jim she was engaged to Grayson. Perhaps he was wondering about that, thinking perhaps she had been untruthful because she was still in love with him. Or perhaps he thought she had taken his advice and broken with Grayson.

"All right, Grayson," she said breathlessly. "I—I'll be engaged to you. But please don't tell Iris I saw you two. It was silly of me to care, I guess."

He kissed her. "It was sweet!" He held her tenderly in his arms. "Dearest, Iris is giving a party Wednesday night. Will you go with me and show the world what we mean to each other? Iris is your friend and she will, since your aunt is an invalid, announce our engagement. Why, you sweet child, Iris has been interested in you right along. She says you are just the little wife I need."

With a secret sigh, Anne let him put the glittering ring upon her finger. It was too large, too shining, too ornate. Sometimes she felt it was too heavy for her small finger—and her heart. But Aunt Minerva's sparkling black eyes approved of it.

"Nothing cheap about that man," she cried. "*He's* no fortune hunter. I want to see you married soon. Anne, did you destroy that will?"

The girl shook her head absently. She had forgotten the will—there had been so many of them. She was dressed for Iris's party in a gown of light-blue taffeta, shot with silver, a simple but expensive creation that clung daintily to her figure and ended in a small, slit train that showed her silver sandals as she walked.

As she bent to kiss her aunt good night the gardenias Grayson had sent fell to the bed. "So careless!" Aunt Minerva chided fretfully. "When I remember the way you used to cherish those cheap roses that fortune-hunting lawyer sent."

Anne straightened suddenly, her small face pale. "What do you mean—fortune-hunting lawyer?" she choked. "Jim wasn't—"

"Of course he was! When he thought I was going to leave you my money he hung around like a honey bee, but when I changed my will so that if you married him you'd be



cut off, he dropped you like a hot ember!"

The girl, with a muttered excuse, clutched the gardenias and fled from the room, her blue eyes dim with tears. So that was why Jim had dropped her and started pursuing Iris. It was rumored that the divorcee received handsome alimony. Jim did not want a penniless bride. So that was it!

Something small and pink tapped against the windowpane. Anne, looking down at the crushed gardenias, obeyed a sudden impulse. Moving to the window box, her slim

*Anne felt that she despised Jim, that she never wanted to speak to him again. Yet in less than an hour she was begging him to take her home. Silently, Jim helped her into his car.*

Jim she did not care, that she cherished no secret sentiment for the exquisite flowers.

Jim, however, was not at Iris's

fingers tore a handful of the baby roses from the vine. Her large eyes flashed, her cheeks were hot.

A touch of pink went well with blue. She would wear the flowers that were a symbol of Jim's love on the night when her betrothal to another man was announced. It would show

when she arrived. He came in late, just before the engagement was announced and stood for a moment in the doorway, looking across the room at her. Anne's eyes met his defiantly when the announcement was made. She saw his glance drop to the spray of baby roses on her shoulder and it seemed to her that his face turned white.

She was suddenly, fiercely glad. If it hurt him it was only what he deserved. Perhaps he cared, a little. But not enough to take her without her aunt's money. If he only knew how she despised him! If she could help it she would never speak to him again.

Yet in less than an hour she was speaking to him, begging him to take her home. Iris and Grayson had disappeared, and there was a telephone message from Norah urging her to come home at once. Wrapping her coat of silver lamé about her, Jim helped her into his car.

They were both tense and silent as they raced through the night, disregarding all speed regulations, but Aunt Minerva was dead before they reached the gray stone house. Anne gazed at Jim with haunted, anguished eyes. "She seemed the same or I would not have gone. What shall I do? I have no one now."

"You have Whitaker," Jim said coldly. "I would suggest that you send for him; his place is by your side."

Anne sank into a chair. It did not seem possible that Aunt Minerva was dead, her sharp tongue stilled, her bright eyes closed forever. Dazedly she let Norah lead her away but, glancing back over her shoulder, she saw Jim's tall form stoop to pick up something he crushed against his lips.

Iris came with Grayson and the two of them took charge of everything, insisting that Norah put Anne to bed. But after she was between the silken sheets she had a sudden clear vision of Jim stooping to pick up something from the floor. What had it been?—she wondered.

She sat up in bed suddenly and reached for the dress she had worn, staring at it breathlessly. Excitedly she crawled out of bed and crept silently down the stairs, her bare feet making no sound. She had to know what Jim had pressed against his lips.

Voices murmured in the library as she knelt on the floor counting scattered rosebuds. There had been seven small, pink buds. Now there were five. Jim had stooped just here. She buried her hot face in her hands. Jim cared—a little.

But she was engaged to Grayson. Desolation and despair swept over her as she moved leadenly toward the library door, intending to pass it. But the high sound of voices within halted her.

"Just my damned luck," Grayson was saying. "It leaves everything to charity, and that nurse. I thought you said Anne was to inherit."

"The will I was called in to witness did leave her everything. This is a later one. Couldn't we take it away, destroy it? Who's that?"

Anne heard the door opposite the library open and saw Norah, who had evidently been listening, advance across the room, her hand held out for the will, her face grim and accusing. The couple stammered out the excuse that they had been searching in the drawer for matches. Anne heard that much before she crept away, the long draperies falling silently in place behind her.

Grayson Whitaker was a fortune hunter also! A few days after the funeral, Anne gave him back his ring. And, after he discovered that she had no intention of trying to break the will, he accepted it. The next evening Iris rushed in to see her.

"You're a fool to let the will stand," she berated. "You could easily have it set aside. Every one knew she was of unsound mind. You must be crazy yourself, upsetting every one's plans." Her lovely features grew shrewish.

Anne's blue eyes stared. "What do you mean by that?"

The divorcee bit her rouged lip, laughing a moment later, recklessly. "Grayson and I are good friends," she stated shamelessly. "In fact, he is the man who caused my husband to divorce me. I wouldn't marry him—he'd make a wretched husband, but naturally I would share in any good fortune that came to him." Calmly she powdered her perfect nose.

"Now I'll have to marry Jim Matheson," she went on brazenly. "He hasn't got much money now, but he can get some. A lawyer always can if he isn't too scrupulous. I'll cure him of that tendency."

Anne's eyes suddenly blazed. "You shan't marry Jim! I'll tell him——"

Iris shrugged her shoulders. "You can't tell a man anything. Jim thinks I'm an angel! If he didn't, I'd just go to his apartment, get into some unconventional attire and—well, arrange to have some people drop in. I think I will do that anyway; it's quicker than waiting for a proposal. Yes, I think I will." A slow, secret smile curved her lips.

Anne heard no more, was not conscious even when Iris left. Her heart was beating strangely. Jim

and Iris were not engaged; he had not proposed. But Iris intended to force Jim to marry her. Suddenly Anne raced across the room and began to undress hastily.

The door of Jim's office was unlocked. In his apartment, unconscious of the door that softly opened behind him, Jim knelt before the fireplace, holding a scorched document in his hands. Anne, bending over him, saw that it was the will of Aunt Minerva.

"Jim, what are you doing?" she demanded in amazement.

He started, stared upward, and groaned, handing her the paper. "I couldn't do it," he stated dully. "I started to burn it—but I couldn't! Not even if it promised happiness to me! All those years you were her constant companion, putting up with all her idiosyncrasies—and then to have nothing! No, I couldn't do it. This will she drew up the evening she died, when Mason was out of town, leaves everything to you. She was afraid she would go before that other will was destroyed, you see."

Anne felt her knees fold weakly under her and groped blindly for a chair, the will held loosely in her hands. "I don't understand. Aunt Minerva said you were a fortune hunter, yet you wanted to destroy the will that left me her money. why?"

Jim buried his face in his hands for a moment. "I told you I knew Grayson Whitaker," he said in a low, shamed tone. "I knew what he was to Iris Lawrence. I believed that if you had no money he wouldn't marry you, and you—you might turn to me."

"Jim, you find you do love me, after all?" Her eyes were like stars.

"I've always loved you, sweet.



*"I think I'll go to Jim's apartment, get into some unconventional attire and—well, arrange to have some people drop in. It's quicker than waiting for a proposal."*

But your aunt said if you married me she would disinherit you, and I wanted you to have some reward for all these years of taking care of her. I wanted you to have the things I couldn't give you. So I pretended to be interested in Iris Lawrence. Anne!"

He leaped forward, gasping—but it was too late. The will had left Anne's hands and was in the grate, crackling flame.

"Anne! You don't know what you've done! You'll be penniless!"

She held out her hands to him, smiling unsteadily through sudden tears.

"A beggar, asking for your love. But rich if you give it to me—rich beyond dreams. I stayed with Aunt Minerva, Jim, because I pitied her, because she was so poor in spirit, because she had

no one else who loved her even a little—not because of the money. As a matter of fact, I don't think there will be so much anyway. Her investments have shrunk. Many of her securities are entirely worthless now."

He caught her hands and cradled them against his heart, then swept her into his arms. "Anne, you angel! Marry me, let me take care of you

always. But—but Anne—you're not dressed!"

His eyes fell to where her coat had fallen back, revealing that she wore only pink sleeping pajamas beneath the spray of roses over her throbbing heart. Anne laughed softly, shamelessly as she confessed.

"I telephoned some people to come, too," she added triumphantly.

Jim caught her hastily up and ran with her toward the office door. When he reached his car, he said:

"By the time they get here we shall be on our way to get married. Which shall it be?—Yuma or Nevada?"

"Both—either," Anne laughed happily. "Anywhere, just so it's with you, Jim darling."



### SKATING

ALTHOUGH the withered earth is heaped with snow;  
 Although the trembling trees stand stark and bare,  
 As, cringing to the cruel winds that blow,  
 They fling their anguish through the icy air,  
 Our laughter echoes to the silver moon,  
 That leans above us mystically white,  
 Where myriads of gleaming stars are strewn  
 Upon the velvet bosom of the night,  
 For, hand-in-hand, as blithesomely as birds,  
 That fare the summer skies and gayly sing,  
 In ecstasy too deep for futile words,  
 Thrilled by our skates that musically ring,  
 We lean together in a world of bliss,  
 As our mouths meet and mingle in a kiss.

EDGAR DANIEL KRAMER.



# Southern Girl

By Aline Morley Ballard

**L**EXIE was dancing with Jerry when the new man came into the country club. Lexie in ruffled taffeta was all the stories that had ever been written about the South, all the pictures that had ever been painted. She might have posed for Sargent: "Portrait of a Southern Lady." "A Lady of the Old South."

Jerry was New York, more specifically Park Avenue.

Jerry had been dancing with Lexie as often as he could cut back in, but less often than he would have liked. Every man in the club, young and old, wanted to flirt with the delectable little Southerner visiting Eileen Drake. Competition should have made victory sweeter, but by

midnight Jerry surprised in himself an impulse to side-step, to thrust off predatory hands ruthlessly.

He found himself wishing, too, that the orchestra were less blatant, the crowd less boisterous. She was so little and helpless. It was a long time since Jerry had wanted to take care of a girl; he had thought he liked them self-sufficient, with a smart, dashing hardness. Lexie was all softness. The violet dusk of Southern evenings lingered shadowy in her eyes, the quick-falling night in the soft darkness of her hair. Newly poetical, he told her this.

And there in the crowded ball-room, she made him a slow, deep curtsy. "Ah like to dance with you. You talk so pretty."

"You're going to like it still better. Already you like me better than the others, don't you?" Jerry asked.

Lexie dipped away from him, eyes mischievous. "The others? But they talk pretty, too."

It was easier than she had expected, ridiculously easy. A breathless catch in her voice, her best Southern accent. "You're so steady to dance with, so strong," she coquetted with each in turn. The old, old tactics of Southern belles; that kind of thing must be in the blood, she did it so naturally.

Southern magic, Eileen called it, teasing her before dinner. "What do you do? Lots of us have eyes just as big, lashes in just as good control."

She was new, of course—that helped. And clever enough to be different. Not self-sufficient or sporting like Eileen and her friends, but little and useless and lazy.

One after another snatched her. It was an art to make the man you were leaving think you hated to go and at the same time convey to the

newcomer that you were thrilled to welcome him. She managed that, as well, and in between, over the different shoulders, her eyes sought the side lines.

The stranger was still there, talking to Eileen. Lexie could see his head, hair reddish-brown and rough. From here his face seemed mostly nose and jaw; he wasn't good-looking particularly, but beside him the others became insignificant and too polished. Like smooth vistas of lawn. The new man had corners.

Jerry came back nonchalantly, as if he had just discovered her. He was smoother than any of them, and a little tired with having seen and done everything, but she liked him. His name was Paige—Jerome Paige. At dinner she had gathered that to be a Paige meant to have more money than you could spend, and she wondered wistfully what it would be like to have any money at all to spend.

At dinner she had thought perhaps he would be the one, but now— Her eyes veered away. Eileen was beckoning.

At last. Her heart gave an excited beat in time with the music, but she raised her eyes slowly, regretfully to Jerry. "Please, Ah have to go. Eileen wants me," she confided in her soft, blurred speech. It sounded as if she couldn't bear the thought.

He smiled easily. "Of course, but remember you're riding back to Eileen's with me."

"Is that your duty?" Lexie asked, this time in all seriousness, for she wasn't sure whether taking her home went with being her dinner partner.

Jerry took the question for coquetry; he was good at that sort of thing himself. "Duty and beauty

rhyme, my sweet. And didn't I beg your hostess to give you to me?"

It had been more a command: "I'm taking Lexie in to-night, Eileen."

Had Lexie known him better she would have seen that his eyes wore an eagerness alien to their usual careless amusement. As it was, she thought his voice too sure, and she had then and now a naughty desire to puncture that sureness. She mustn't do that. She laid a soft hand on his arm. "You-all are so domineering, you No'th'ners."

Her voice trailed off. They were in the alcove. "I've been telling Keith about you," Eileen greeted her. "You two ought to get along beautifully."

And then she said the thing that left Lexie really helpless; the dream that had started so gay and bright-colored a burst bubble in her trembling hands. She didn't see Eileen go, didn't hear Jerry excuse himself.

"What did she say?" she stammered to the man left with her.

He repeated pleasantly and with heartbreaking distinctness: "Eileen? Oh, she said we should get along beautifully, since we both go in for farming."

It was true, then. Out of all the men, this one whom she most wanted to know had to be poor. She hadn't even realized they had farms in the North. It left her baffled and confused, and a little angry. For the moment all her carefully built-up pretenses failed her, and she could only stare at him stupidly.

Why should she bother to flirt with him? She hadn't come North to find herself a farmer. There were plenty of those at home, young men from poverty-stricken plantations like her own, watching ancient

homes fall into decay, hoping against hope to find money somewhere.

Sometimes they had to give up and sell out—sell to some "damnyankee." Sometimes they married money. That was what she intended to do. She was going to manage it on this visit. It would be her only chance.

But there was to-morrow—and to-morrow. Ten long, gay days, ten glamorous evenings. And meanwhile, this Keith Duncan, this farmer, seemed to belong to Eileen's crowd. He was, besides, one more man to add to her train. Lexie could think of any number of reasons why she must be nice to him, none of them the one that sent her with him out of the noisy, too hot ballroom into the cool stillness of the gardens.

He took her hand and put it on his arm as they went down the pathway. Drops of water gleamed like spilled mercury on the greenery. She thought dreamily of the parched grass at home, the lawns that had once been lovelier than these and were now a tangle of weeds because there was no money to hire Negroes to take care of them.

The man's voice broke the spell. "And we're going to, aren't we?"

"Going to?" Lexie repeated doubtfully.

"Get along beautifully. Like each other a lot."

"Are we?" she murmured helplessly.

"You know we are. Don't flirt with me." The red head bent toward her, the slow voice held a suggestion of sternness.

"I wasn't flirting," she said simply.

There seemed to be nothing to say after that. They walked on in silence, and presently found a bench

and sat on it and were still silent. Lexie could feel the charm of the man as she had felt it when he first came into the club, more powerful here away from the music and the crowd, until at last, in an effort to break the enchantment, she blurted out the one thing she had meant not to say: "So—you're a farmer."

"And a business man."

He laughed, but she knew it was no joke. You had to be pretty slick at business to run a farm.

"And a No'th'ner," he finished, mimicking her. "At least half." His voice was suddenly serious. "Would you marry a Northerner, Lexie? A 'damnyankee'—if you loved him enough?"

Love! She wanted to hurl the word at him, to cry out that love couldn't count; at least, not come first. But before her lips could frame any answer, he said, "I was wondering, because I'm going to ask you."

He mustn't. She cried, "Oh—no!"

"Little Miss Loyalty." He smiled. "I understand how you feel, of course. At any rate, I think I do. You wouldn't want to leave your South." His voice was dreamy.

Lexie knew what he was thinking. They all had the same picture. Southern belle, they called her. She lived on a plantation. They thought that meant a great white house, darkies to wait on her. They thought she was a spoiled darling.

If they could see the reality! The country club, the man vanished and she was back at home, the morning it was decided she should come North.

She was transplanting seedlings when her father came into the garden. He had a book in one hand, the letter in the other. "Oh, here you are, my dear," he said in the

indulgent tone one uses to a person who insists on pursuing some silly hobby. "They want us to come the fifteenth."

Lexie stood up, wiping her hands on already grubby overalls. "They—who? Come where, darling?"

"Didn't I tell you? The Drakes."

Poor dad, he never remembered anything beyond the pages of his beloved books. He was peering at the letter now. "The fifteenth, it says. I shall write, explaining that I can't leave. But you must go."

She made out at last that this Northerner had suddenly remembered their existence or perhaps some debt he owed her father, and had invited them to visit his family.

"Jim Drake and his wife came here on their honeymoon," her father said, his face sad now with memories.

Lexie hastened to interrupt. "But, father, I can't go. I haven't any clothes."

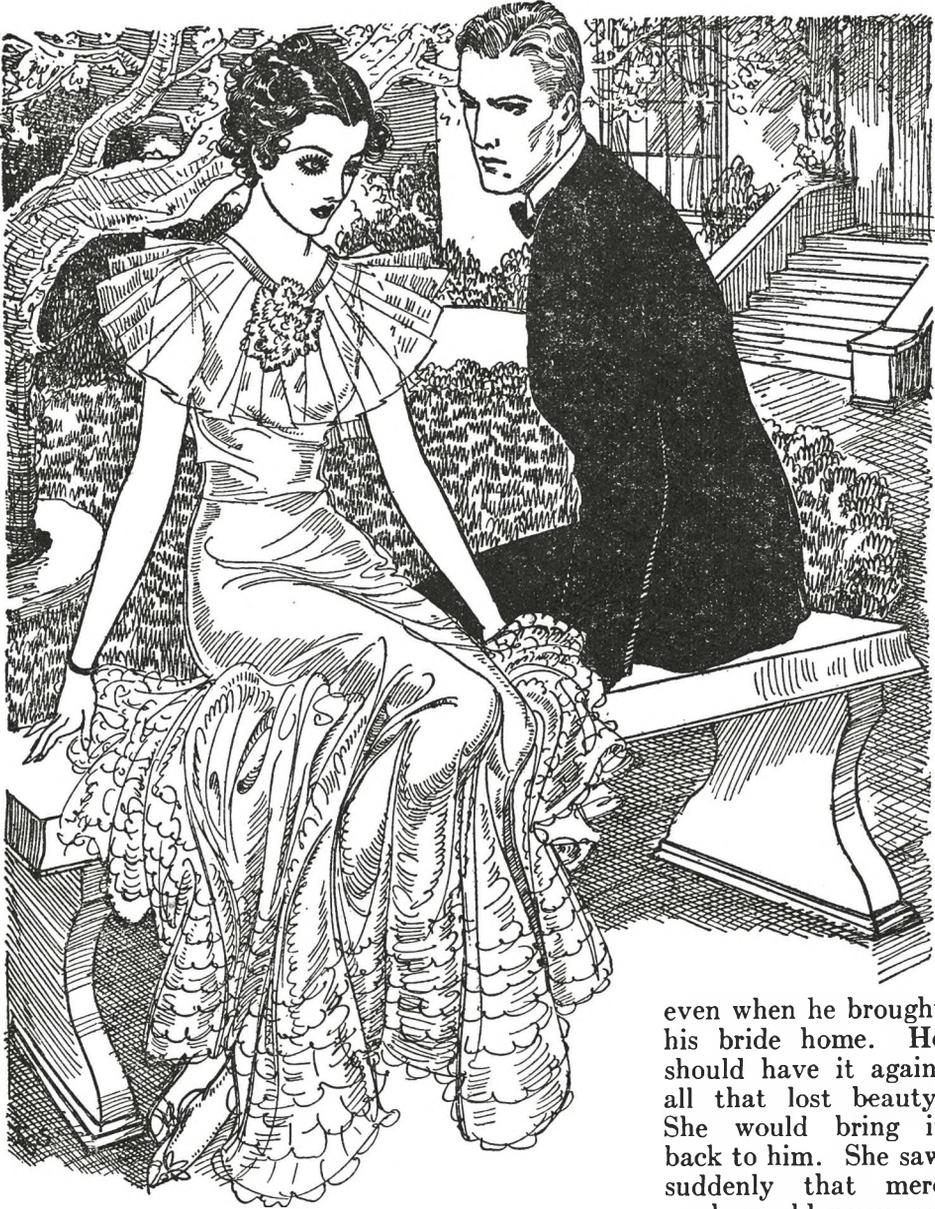
"Clothes," he repeated dreamily. "You've got your riding things. But I suppose you should buy some dresses."

"There isn't any money to buy anything," she said a trifle impatiently. It was hard sometimes, father refusing to see how things were.

He looked surprised, and then his face took on a sternness she had never seen it wear. "I want you to go, my dear. You shall have your mother's clothes."

Lexie couldn't refuse after that—when he would open trunks that had been locked as long as she could remember, would give her gowns that had belonged to the mother she had never seen. Her breath caught in her throat, and a great pity for his loneliness filled her. It was then she decided.

Her gaze swept across to their poor old house, unpainted, its shut-



*"Would you marry a Northerner, Lexie? If you loved him?" Love! She wanted to hurl the word at him, to cry out that love couldn't count. It was money she wanted.*

ters sagging. And beyond, as far as she could see, to fields half barren. Her father remembered the plantation, rich and splendid. As it had been when he was a boy;

but milk and eggs sold for money to buy seed and tools. They traveled in a circle. They would never be any better off than now. And Jake and Mandy, who helped

even when he brought his bride home. He should have it again, all that lost beauty. She would bring it back to him. She saw suddenly that mere work would never accomplish anything. The land raised enough to feed them, the cows and chickens,

her, were old; new and younger Negroes would want pay. There was only one way out.

"I'll go," she said.

The dresses were surprisingly like the styles of to-day—those gowns her mother had worn as a girl—even her untrained eyes could see that. Miss Abigail in the village did wonders with them. Miss Abigail, too, had lived once on a plantation, but now she was old—an old maid forced to eke out an existence by doing sewing. Lexie shivered. It wasn't entirely for her father, this decision to marry money. She was tired of being poor, of never meeting any men, of wearing overalls.

Her hands clenched; taffeta crackled between her fingers, and she stared down wonderingly at the cool ruffles. Almost, she had expected to see blue denim.

Keith was looking at the dress, too. It was the loveliest and the oldest of all the gowns, its skirt made of hundreds of tiny frills. A slow curtsy and she turned into a powder puff. The touch of quaintness the girls took for daring design. "Adrian did that gown. I saw a photo of it in *Fashion*," one of them cried. "You lucky girl!"

Lexie wondered what they would say if she told them that years and years ago these flounces had dipped and swayed on the arm of his honor, the governor of the State of Virginia, and felt sure they would like it less than believing as they did.

Ancient finery had its disadvantages; her wardrobe consisted only of fluffy things. She must pretend not to like sports. Luckily that was consistent with the rôle she was playing, the pampered darling she was supposed to be.

"You're so lovely," Keith murmured out of the silence. There was

a tremor born of the night and their closeness in his voice. He caught her hands and held them against his cheek.

Lexie had a wild impulse to pour out the whole story, a feeling that she didn't want to pretend with him. But his next words destroyed it. "All my life I've pictured your South and girls like you."

He was the same as the others, fascinated by glamour. He wouldn't like her if he knew. She snatched her hands away. "I must go in," she said hastily.

He made no move, only smiled at her. "Frightened?"

Lexie stood up then, and he sprang to his feet and put his hands on her shoulders. "You're going to learn to like me. I can wait."

The slow serenity of his voice, his fingers, brown and hard and tender, set all her flesh to quivering, and she backed out of his grasp, turned, and fled through the gardens into the ballroom.

For the small remainder of the dancing she avoided him, plunged more completely into the gayety. Her success almost frightened her, though it was what she wanted. To make them all fall in love with her, to keep them dangling until she was ready to choose.

Wisdom as instinctive as her coquetry whispered that it would be good for Jerome to be made to dangle.

Eileen intimated the same thing. Coming in to see if her guest was comfortable for the night, she perched on the side of the bed. "If he doesn't look out, our wary bachelor is going to be caught in his own traps."

Lexie sat up, hugging her knees, and laughed. "Tarred with his own brush. But I do like him, Eileen." Her eyes were big and serious.

"Of course you do, you flirt. You like them all. You know, I'm awfully glad dad remembered he had some Southern friends."

"It's mighty nice of you to bother," Lexie murmured.

Eileen laughed lightly. "Maybe I wouldn't be so nice if I weren't sure of Pete."

"No one could take a man away from you," Lexie said earnestly.

Eileen leaned impulsively over. "You're sweet. But I'm not so sure. I never saw so many men fall."

"I never saw so many men before!" Lexie exclaimed.

"You weren't bored, then?"

"Oh, no!"

That might pass for politeness, but it was completely, tragically true. Bored, when this was her first real ball? Maybe she'd tell Eileen before she went home. And, of course, she'd have to tell the man she married.

She lay, after Eileen had gone, trying to imagine what it would be like to have money to buy things. She'd fix her room up like this one with rose brocade and taupe velvet, a lamp by the bed, and a tasseled cord to pull to bring a servant. She stretched recklessly and gave a little kick with her toes. At home, if you made a sudden move, a sheet was likely to split its whole length.

But at home everything was old and falling to pieces. She'd change that, when she married Jerome. She thought drowsily that it would be Jerome.

But when she drifted off to sleep, it was Keith's face she saw, Keith's slow voice she heard: "I can wait."

Keith intended to keep that promise, evidently, for in the days that followed he was friendly but impersonal. "Having begun at the

end, we'll go back and start in at the beginning," his manner said.

A crowd appeared each morning, always more men than girls. It seemed queer to Lexie to think of days as something to be filled with pleasure. She wondered if they never grew tired. There were so many things to be done: Squash, tennis, and golf; swimming and riding, and at night dances. They worked as hard having a good time as she did on the farm, only she supposed they didn't realize it was work.

She pretended to make fun of them. "So much energy," she would drawl. "You-all go along. Ah want to stay heah."

And useless and appealing in one of her soft dresses, she would arrange herself on the terrace with a book. The book never got read, for always there was a waiting line of men to sit by her.

They called her "Lazy" and "Beautiful," and even "Richie," which seemed the most incongruous of all. She learned all their nicknames, too, and special ways of making love. Then, gradually, without her quite knowing how it was accomplished, the crowd gave way to Jerome and Keith. The others still paid court, but in some subtle way gave precedence to those two. It came to be the accepted thing that the real rivalry lay between them.

Lexie herself, though she had known from the beginning which one she must choose, gave no sign. She was kind and elusive in turn, coquetted as carelessly with Jerry as with the others. And sometimes with Keith, though less often with him.

She felt most at ease with Keith. Perhaps because he belonged to the land. And when she found herself

tempted to give more and more of her time to him, she yielded with the old excuse that competition was good for Jerry.

She might have gone on thus, indefinitely, not looking ahead at all, lulled in a kind of false security, with only the memory of a moment in a garden, a memory that had never been real and was now fading, if it hadn't been for the polo game.

They were watching, Jerry and Lexie, Eileen and Pete, with half a dozen other couples. Keith was playing. No one saw exactly how it happened, except that the two ponies clashed. When the dust blew away, one was riderless. It was Keith who lay on the ground.

Lexie heard a woman scream, then heard no more, felt nothing. It was as if another girl sat in the box beside Jerry; the real Lexie was out there in the field on her knees, in the dust. Then Keith stood up, brushing himself, and sound returned. The blood crashed through her veins. She was on her feet ahead of the others, hurrying to him.

Her face lifted helplessly. "Keith, are you all right?" There was a breathless catch in her voice; her hand touched his arm, his shoulder.

He bent close to her swiftly. "Quite all right, darling."

The others were on them immediately, but not soon enough. Her eyes had given her away. In that brief, revealing instant she had told him she loved him, had admitted it to herself.

Lexie arranged it so that Eileen and Pete rode with them that

night when they went to Jerry's party. She mustn't be alone with Keith. She mustn't be alone with Jerry, either. She had meant to let him propose to her to-night, in his own home. It would have been all right not to love him as long as she didn't love any one else. But now she couldn't accept him.

She wished the evening were over. To-morrow she would go home. She wouldn't be able to do any of the things she had planned. Perhaps her father wouldn't mind; he had his books and his memories.

She, too, would have memories, but such small ones compared to his. Hers would be of the thing she had never had. It would be harder now to work, to wear rough clothes, to spend her evenings reading.

"So quiet, little one," Jerry interrupted her thoughts. "Don't you like my party?"

Lexie answered half to herself: "I was thinking how soon I'd be away from all this."

His hands seemed to hold her closer. "Sorry?"

"Of course." She made her voice carefully matter-of-fact. There must be no more coquetry, and in some way she must save his self-esteem.

She thought if she could just make him think she was homesick or that she didn't like the city— Suddenly, planning what to say, she realized that it was true. She wasn't comfortable here.

At Eileen's she had been less conscious of not belonging, for the Drake home was at least make-believe country. But this— Her gaze wandered



around the brilliantly lighted rooms and through the windows, where, as far as the eye could see, more lights blazed. Even the flowers and shrubs growing elegantly on the roof garden wore an artificial air. Laughter and talk, too, seemed newly brittle.

If she had seen his penthouse first, she would have known sooner she could not marry Jerry. It went deeper than the house, of course, and yet the house typified everything—all the differences in their ideals, their way of thinking, their whole beings. A plant that belonged to the open fields would never grow under glass.

Lexie found herself looking at him critically. And noticed for the first time shadows under his dark eyes, a touch of softness to the figure that at first had seemed perfect. In ten—in five years Jerry would be plump. And a trifle bald. His sleek hair was already slipping back to leave inverted "Vs" above his eyes. She hated herself for noticing this, when he had been so nice.

She was conscious, too, that her silence troubled him, but all her finesse had deserted her. "I feel strange," she said finally. "It's so high. I don't think I'd like living away from the ground."

She knew the minute the words were out that she shouldn't have said that.

"So that's it," he said. "Suppose we pick all this up and set it down in the country?" His voice was light as ever, but his eyes were serious.

Lexie made a frantic reach for gayety. "You haven't any country up North," she teased. "You should see ours."

"I'm hoping to. May I come, Lexie?"

"You wouldn't like it, Jerry," she countered. "And I belong there."

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It had taken this to show her how truly she did belong there. A great wave of homesickness swept over her, and she smiled pitifully at him.

She saw a surprised look come into his face. Had he been so sure she would accept him?—she wondered. "But you won't turn me away if I do come?" he persisted.

"No," she said soberly. "But don't come, Jerry."

He looked puzzled and, she was glad to see, more chagrined than hurt. Almost instantly he covered his discomfiture with a laugh. "Talk about Southern hospitality!"

Jerry was not a man to risk refusal. He said "no" more directly, but in a hundred small ways he showed her that she had only to give him a sign and he would lay his aerial kingdom at her feet. Everything they said seemed to carry them into dangerous ground, but always she managed to slip away. Time after time the system of cutting in saved her. That, and her reputation for coquetry. They expected her to be elusive. Even Keith.

"I love your shyness," he told her. "And you—it's like a dream come true."

His arms held her with new tenderness; his expression, his whole bearing was surer and more happy. "What makes you so wise?" he teased. "Who taught you to run away from men instead of after them?"

Lexie swept him her slow curtsy, her dark head almost touching his knees. "My mammy, sir," she said.

Her lips smiled. The dark drift of lashes lay against her cheek—and Keith did not know that her eyes were filled with tears.

To run away—that was what she must do. That was what she did.

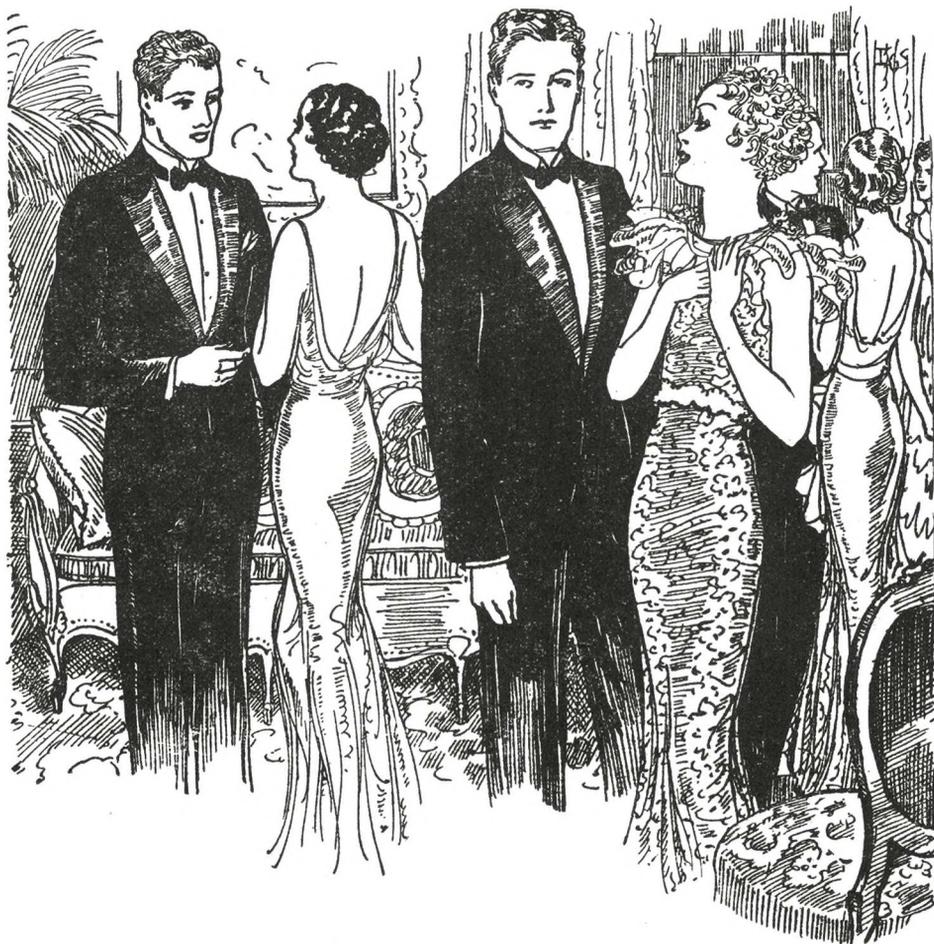


*She saw a surprised look come into his face at her refusal. Had he been so sure she would accept him?—she wondered. She was glad to see, however, that he was more chagrined than hurt.*

Perhaps it was cowardly, but it seemed to Lexie the kinder way.

It was almost dark when her train pulled into the little station. It had

been morning when she left and almost two weeks had passed, but the same Negroes lounged on the platform, and the agent sat outside the



door, his chair tipped at the same lazy angle.

The station wagon took her home, over dusty roads, through the grove of long-leaf pines. Everywhere she looked was decay and poverty, but peace.

Lexie stood for a moment on the broad, sagging porch, her hand smoothing the wood of the ancient pillars. The magnolias were in bloom, the dusk heavy with their fragrance, the air drowsy. Home. The Southerner's love of the land—love bred through generations of

people living close to the soil—surged through her, and suddenly she laughed aloud. Penthouse! Lexie Richmond in a penthouse!

She could never live in a city. Neither could she see Jerry here.

Keith she could see. It came to her more strongly than ever that Keith's ruggedness, his slow strength would fit perfectly into this life. But Keith had his own farm, his own work.

She knew that, and yet she could not get away from the feeling that he belonged here. The next day,

working in her garden, catching up on all the odd jobs that had accumulated during her absence, she felt him close beside her. It was like a dream that remains in the morning to follow you through the day. The sensation was so vivid that she was not even surprised when he rode through the pasture gate.

He was bare-headed, his hair tousled, redder than she had realized. He had on shabby riding breeches, but that, too, seemed as it should be. The feeling of having seen him here before strengthened, and Lexie wondered surreptitiously if she had that magic sixth sense the Negroes were always talking about.

She set the calf on its wobbly legs and stood up—she didn't even mind this Keith seeing her in overalls—but she found to her surprise that the calf was not the only one who was shaky.

Keith smiled and, putting his arms around her as if to still her trembling, bent and kissed her. That first kiss was the most natural thing in the world. Only when she drew away, startled, he caught her closer to him, straining her face to his, kissing her eyes, her lips. "Lexie, darling. Don't tease me any more. I love you. I've always loved you. Always I've waited and dreamed of some one like you. You are mine, aren't you?"

She had still an instinct to draw away from him, but her senses played her false. Suddenly she was clinging to him, her lips answering his demanding ones. If he had kissed her sooner, like this—Close in his arms, love turned into a hungry, demanding force.

Hand in hand, still in a kind of daze, they wandered presently back toward the house. And came, somehow, face to face with her father.

Startled and a little confused, Lexie mumbled: "Father, this is Keith. Keith Duncan."

Her father closed his book, keeping one finger between the pages, and held out his other hand, as casually as if to an old friend.

Keith took the proffered hand and said serenely: "Good morning, sir. I came this time to ask you to let me marry your daughter."

"Oh—no!" cried Lexie.

Keith laughed. "That's a habit of hers, saying 'no.' I suspect she means 'yes.'"

Lexie saw that her father was smiling, too. "I'm sure she does. I take it you had no trouble finding her."

"What are you two talking about?" Lexie demanded. "Had you met Keith before, father?" She looked from one to the other.

"I had that pleasure, my dear, one morning after you left for the North." His eyes twinkling mischievously belied the formal speech. It struck Lexie she had never seen him look so carefree. But she was still mysified. Both men were laughing outright now. "This young man was down looking over his property," her father said. "Doesn't she know you, Keith?"

Keith put his arm around Lexie. When she looked again, her father was disappearing around the corner of the house. "I came to call," Keith said. "You see, I'd caught enticing glimpses of you working in your garden and riding across the fields. So, when your father told me you'd gone to visit the Drakes, I hustled after. I knew Pete and Eileen, all that crowd, at least well enough to edge in."

It was still not clear to Lexie. "But father said— You mean you live—your farm is near here?"



*"Lexie darling. Don't tease me any more. I love you. I've always loved you. Always I've waited and dreamed of some one like you. You are mine, aren't you?"*

"Next door."

"You bought the old Colby place?" Her voice was incredulous.

"Inherited it, sweet. From my maternal grandfather. I told you I was only half Northerner."

She hadn't paid any attention at the time, but that accounted for his slower speech, for her feeling that

he belonged, for everything she loved in him. Not everything, either. There was also a certain swift vigor, an air of well-being that belong to the North.

She looked at him closely.

"Are you rich, Keith?" she asked.

He nodded. "Quite."

"Then I'll marry you," she said

as seriously as if the subject were still matter for debate.

"I'll say you will. You would have, anyway, young lady," he told her.

Lexie knew now that was true. Even if he had been penniless, she would have married him. Just so they could stay here, close to the land she loved, they both loved. But it was better this way. They would rebuild, would tear down fences and make one great plantation, would have hundreds of darkies and money to pay them.

A new thought sent her a little away from him, a shamed flush creeping into her cheeks. "Then you knew all along that I was bluffing, that I was really penniless?"

"Bluffing?" he repeated wonderingly. "No. I'd seen you here, of course, and I suspected you didn't have much money. But I never thought of you as poor."

"Well, we are," Lexie told him. "So are all my friends. Why, it never even occurred to me any one living on a farm could have money. That's why I ran away."

"Is that why? I never once thought of that. I was so sure you were a bit of a coquette. I thought you took it for granted I'd follow."

"Maybe I did." She laughed a low, breathless laugh. "Maybe my

Southern instinct told me you would follow me."

"If you knew what this means to me!" He hesitated. "You do know, of course, how Grandfather Colby felt when mother married. She could never come back. Perhaps she talked more about the South because of that. She gave me a picture of glamour and chivalry."

"Of lovely ladies. Useless and spoiled and lazy." Lexie mimicked his tone. "Then you saw me in overalls tending cows."

He agreed seriously. "And the real was more entrancing than the dream. But you were a lady of the old South that evening at the country club. I knew then you'd never leave all this. I was so sure, I wasn't even afraid of Jerry and the things he had to offer, city things."

"Poof!" Lexie blew Jerry away with a swift gesture of one small brown hand, and then remorsefully she said: "But he was sweet. You should have been afraid."

"But I knew you were falling in love with me that first night," Keith asserted brazenly.

Lexie looked startled. "You did? How?"

"Oh, that," he said, drawing her tenderly close. "Maybe that was Southern instinct, too."

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# Kisses For Sale

By Electa Anne Loring

**D**ON'T be an utter idiot, Fay! Harte Lorrimer is richer than heaven!" Normadyne put her hands on her slim hips and glared at Fay. "He's got so much money he can't even count it. Do you think he's going to miss one teeny, weeny diamond bracelet?"

"I can't keep a diamond bracelet,

Normadyne!" Fay's tone was sharp. "He'd expect—payment."

"Well, what if he does? By your own admission you've been dippy about the man for the past two years. Then why not go ahead and have an affair with him? I don't get you at all, Fay."

Fay beckoned to the tiny girl

dressed in the white satin uniform of a page. "Take this box out to Mr. Harte Lorrimer," she said. "You know who he is, don't you?"

"I'll say I do!" returned the precocious youngster, striding away. "Boy, I could go for a good-looking chap like him, myself!"

"There you are!" said Normadyne. "Out of the mouths of babes!"

Fay was paying no attention. She was wearing sea-green undies, brief and alluring. Over them went a green negligee of the same shade. Fay anxiously smoothed out a wrinkle on the sleeve. She had found this job as model only after a long, tiring search and she was terrified lest she lose her place for some fault.

She needn't have worried. Her figure was exquisitely rounded. Her hair, black, shining, worn long, was brought down sleekly on either side of her heart-shaped face. Her eyes were large and darkly gray.

"It's a crime to be as good-looking as you, and not cash in on your charms," said Normadyne disgustedly. "What's the matter with you, anyhow? Why don't you give Harte Lorrimer a break? If that's the way working as a stenographer makes a girl, I'm glad I got my start in the chorus!"

"He was nice when he came to the office," cried Fay. "He used to come in quite often. And I talked to him, and took his messages. Once he brought me a rose! I fell in love with him. I'm not ashamed of that. I didn't know he was so rich. I didn't know he was the sort of man who—who haunted stores where professional models paraded in French creations." Her voice broke. "He hasn't even the excuse of coming in with a lady, the way most of these men do. He comes all

alone, day after day! He's—he's broken my ideal of him!" She was on the verge of tears.

"Great, jumping catfish!" exclaimed Normadyne in a tone of awe. She stooped to tighten the garters banding her extra-sheer stockings. "Once he brought a single, measly rose and you loved it! Now he sends a diamond bracelet and you start to cry. You must be dippy!"

"Ready, girls?" Miss Snell's voice came like the crack of a whip from the doorway. "Walk twice down the center platform, then circle around and return."

"Don't we go down and let the customers inspect more closely?" Normadyne asked innocently. At the same time, she winked at Fay.

"Certainly not!" Miss Snell's tone was horrified. "In François's the girls never leave the platform when they are wearing negligees."

"I got the old girl's goat with that one," whispered Normadyne delightedly, as she and Fay walked up the steps which led to the stage.

"Aren't you afraid of losing your job?" whispered Fay fearfully, in return.

"Why should I be? There are plenty more jobs for a girl with a figure like mine. Besides, I'm thinking of quitting anyhow. Jack made some money in a deal last week."

Music played softly. The black-velvet drapes were parted. Normadyne in buttercup-yellow, Fay in sea-green, walked out on the platform. Normadyne went through her paces first. François's never put more than two girls on the stage at a time. And each girl modeled alone while the other struck a stage-like pose.

Despite herself, Fay looked eagerly toward the corner where Harte Lorrimer sat alone. He was

there, his eyes intent on Normadyne. Fay's heart twinged horribly. For one wild second, she wished she had been able to submerge her New England conscience when she came to New York. If she hadn't been a silly fool, she would have accepted Harte's lovely gift, and been glad to pay him in any coin he wished. But somehow, she never had been able to kill that conscience!

How would she feel if Harte began paying court to Normadyne? Jack would be thrown over like a shot, by Normadyne if she thought there was a chance of interesting Harte Lorrimer.

Harte was so good-looking, and so young and charming!

Angrily, Fay told herself again that no man who was worth his salt, would haunt a dress shop. He came to stare at the models. That was all. It was a good thing Fay's firm had folded up, so she had to seek other work. Otherwise, she would have gone on adoring Harte, forever and ever.

Now she knew about him, she could be sensible and put him out of her mind. She could concentrate on making herself fall in love with Jimmy Bland.

Jimmy was from her home town. He had a job as clerk in a men's furnishing store. Some day, he hoped to be floor manager.

Normadyne came back to her place, and Fay walked out.

As she moved gracefully along, she thought what a far cry this was from being secretary at Baird & Barnes. When she did secretarial

work, she wore glasses. She hadn't been able to afford expensive clothes, nor lotions for her skin, nor professional manicures. None of the things that were second nature to her now. But she had been happier. Because she had her dreams. Dreams which centered around Harte Lorrimer.

Slowly, gracefully, Fay slipped out of the negligee and handed the bit of silken froth to the page who stood ready to receive it. It took courage for Fay to stand under the warm, white spotlight with arms extended, turning about so every one could see every angle of the brief, alluring undies.

She took up the negligee again and put it on, then followed Normadyne from the stage.

"Gee, I'm glad to-day's over," grinned Normadyne, flexing her tired legs. "If I see another high heel as long as I live, I'll throw a fit. You're sure lucky you've got such swell feet!"

Fay was getting into her street clothes speedily. A plain white step-in, a dainty white silk slip, a tan dress and tan slippers.

Normadyne regarded the tan coat and hat with amazed eyes. "What under heaven makes you pick tan, Fay? I can't figure how you manage to get such unbecoming colors. You look like a little brown wren in that outfit."

"I only wear it to work, and it's good material," said Fay defensively.

Normadyne shrugged. "I don't know why I waste my breath on you! You're hopeless. If you see



Jack waiting outside, tell him I'll be along soon." Then she went on with her leisurely dressing.

When Fay came out into the street she found to her horror that it was raining. One of those abrupt midsummer affairs that descend without warning. For a moment she debated about going back. But she didn't want to meet Harte Lorrimer. She resolutely hurried along.

Jack, Normadyne's boy friend, was waiting sulkily in his big car. Jack was fat and had small, black eyes. Fay shouted Normadyne's message without slackening her pace. Then she hurried along the street, making for the subway. As she went, she wondered how Normadyne could endure Jack's caresses.

Thunder cracked ominously. The rain began to descend in torrents. Fay put her head down, to avoid having the rain beat against her face. She dashed along to the curb. A car, rounding the corner, splashed her from head to foot.

"Oh!" cried Fay. She stared after the car angrily.

Unaccountably, the car stopped. More surprisingly, it backed up. A man's voice said: "I'm so sorry, Fay dear. Get in, quick. You'll be drowned!"

It was Harte Lorrimer!

Fay's heart beat faster. Her pulses seemed to thud in her ears.

"Thank you," she said primly. "I'm quite all right." She brushed by the car and stepped off the curb. In her agitation, she didn't notice she was stepping directly into a mud puddle. She gave a little, startled exclamation and drew back. Her shoe remained stuck in the mud!

Fay stared at the shoe with big, horrified eyes. The rain kept on thudding down warmly, steamily.

Harte Lorrimer got out. "I ought to play Sir Walter Raleigh and throw you my coat to walk across the street on, but somehow, that always struck me as a particularly inane thing to do. I consider this much more effective!"

Before she guessed his intention, he caught her up in his arms and carried her to the car. His grasp was firm and thrilling. Fay's breath caught in her throat. Unconsciously, her arms went around his neck. Neither of them spoke.

He put her down on the soft cushions. Then, for the first time, Fay came back to realities. "My wet coat will ruin this beautiful upholstery!" she gasped.

"Then I'll get new upholstery," he smiled at her.

The chauffeur started off.

Fay shrugged out of her sodden coat and flung it on the floor of the car. She had struggled hard against letting Harte see her. Now fate had taken a hand. And she found she was glad!

"Why do you persist in treating me as if I had an advanced case of leprosy?" Harte asked abruptly, paralleling her thought so neatly that Fay gasped. "After all, we've known each other for two years! When you were an office deity, you weren't so high and mighty. What made you change toward me?"

Fay curled the wet toes of her right, unslipped foot. "You were a business man when I saw you. A prominent lawyer. Three months later, you don't seem to do anything except haunt a silly, expensive dress shop!"

"Oh!" He nodded his head sagely. "So that's it! Well, listen, little Fay. The prominent lawyer worked too hard, so the doctor ordered him to play, for six months. This is part of that idle six months.

As for the dress shop—well, a friend told me about that. And since I'm buying a trousseau for the girl I'm going to marry——” He finished the sentence with a shrug.

Fay's heart seemed to stop beating. He was going to be married! The world seemed to come to an end with that sentence. She faltered something that she meant for congratulations. But she felt so bleak and forsaken that her voice died in her throat.

“And now that I've told you what makes Harte Lorrimer tick, suppose you tell me why you've treated me so shabbily, Fay darling.”

Darling! He was engaged to some one else, yet he called her “darling” in a caressing way that sent thrills up and down her spine.

“I—I—it sounds silly, but I'm not like the rest of the girls who take apartments and—and diamond bracelets from men,” jerked out Fay. “Not that I think it's wrong, or anything. But somehow I—I just can't. Normadyne says it's my Puritan conscience. Maybe she's right. Anyhow, I—just can't.”

He looked at her curiously. Instead of replying directly, he said: “What made you take off the glasses? When I first saw you at François's I couldn't be certain it was you. The glasses took away a lot of the glamour. I'm glad you've discarded them.”

“I—I found out that I didn't need them any more,” Fay said. Her lips quivered. When Harte spoke, his voice made her feel as if she were being wrapped in a warm, soft blanket. She closed her eyes, the better to listen. She swayed against him, unconsciously.

Instantly, his arms went around her, drawing her still closer. “Sup-

pose you come up to my apartment and get into some dry clothes, and have dinner with me?”

Fay felt comfortable and thrilled and warm. She drew a deep breath. “All right,” she almost whispered.

They stopped in front of an exclusive apartment house on Park Avenue. Despite the obvious displeasure of the haughty doorman Harte carried Fay into the foyer, her muddy stockinged foot dangling. The firm touch of his hands gave Fay a sharp sensation, half pleasure, half pain, that made the breath catch in her throat.

They went up in the elevator and came to the penthouse, romantically perched atop the building. A suave butler opened the door. A trim maid led Fay to a gorgeous bedroom.

The maid laid beautiful clothes out on the bed. Fay was so excited, she gave them no more than a passing glance at first. Then, when she looked more intently, she gasped. The green negligee lay there. The same negligee she had modeled so lately. And the sea-green undies. Harte had bought them! For his fiancée, of course. Her heart twisted cruelly.

Slowly she got out of her damp, mud-spattered clothes and slipped into the sea-green undies and lustrous silken negligee. She was trembling horribly.

But Harte seemed quite unperurbed when she came back into the living room. Fay felt a trifle piqued when he didn't even look at her.

He led her out on the terrace.

The rain had stopped. A fresh breeze was blowing, cooling the damp heat of the city. “I've ordered everything that girls usually like,” said Harte enthusiastically. He pulled out her chair at the cozy table for two. Fay sat down. She



*Harte carried Fay in his arms. The firm touch of his hands gave her a sharp sensation, half pleasure, half pain, that made the breath catch in her throat.*

felt like a princess in a story. Fay, the stenographer, and Fay, the model, had disappeared. In their place was a new person. A girl who was well aware of her beauty and allure. Her eyes met his.

She smiled at Harte, hoping none

of the chaos which shook her heart, showed in her face.

The butler glided in on soft feet, bringing cocktail glasses and delicious appetizers. Harte raised his glass high. He looked deep into Fay's eyes. "To the most beautiful

girl in the world," he said ardently.

Fay set down her glass, untouched. His eyes were very disturbing. A thrill went through her. She fought against the encroaching sensation of surrender. She tried to think that his toast was intended for his bride-to-be. She remembered that he had bought these beautiful clothes for his fiancée.

"My dear!" he was whispering. "My very own dear! I think the very first time I went into that office and glimpsed your lovely face, I loved you. It must have been love. For ever since, I haven't been able to get you out of my mind, out of my thoughts. Out of my—life!"

Fay sat still, powerless to move, though his arms were stealing about her, his lips coming close to hers. She had a moment of panic, then their lips met and clung. At last she knew the true ecstasy of love. This was no passing sensation. This was real, true, abiding. He was kissing her again and again. She seemed to be spinning through space. "My dear!" he repeated.

Fay closed her eyes. She seemed to be a live bit of burning coal, fanned to flame by Harte's ardor.

"You shall have everything in the world, little sea-green nymph," he whispered, after a while. "Voyages of glamorous adventure. Clothes to enhance your beauty. Cars. Jewels, fashioned just for you. As this was." He slipped the diamond bracelet out of its box and snapped the circlet on her arm. The platinum felt very cold as it hugged her flesh. A chill went straight to her heart, frightening her.

But the next instant, she had forgotten everything in the mad fervor of Harte's demanding kisses.

Fay woke early. She sat up in bed, hugging her knees. She looked

down at her arm. Flashing jewels glinted in the first rays of morning sun. The diamond bracelet!

Fay gasped. Abruptly, she remembered.

She trembled, even as she recalled the magic of Harte's love-making. That fervent love-making that meant everything to her. And nothing but a passing diversion to him. For he was engaged. He was going to marry some one else.

Fay thought about Harte's consideration for her. He had taken her home, quite early. He, too, seemed afraid of the passion which had them both in its grip. "To-morrow!" he whispered when he left her at her door. "To-morrow, my sweet!"

With a stifling catch of the breath, Fay unclasped the bracelet and flung it from her. A bought woman! That was what the acceptance of that bracelet meant. A creature whose kisses were for sale!

Feverishly, she began to dress. She went to the closet and fumbled about for the familiar tan outfit. It didn't seem to be there. Instead, her hand encountered a lovely pearl-gray silk suit. She remembered modeling the ensemble the first of the week. And adoring it. She gasped.

Other things were there. Priceless creations. All of them were the clothes she had modeled. Her breath caught in her throat.

She put on the gray ensemble and went in search of the landlady. Mrs. Flarrity yawned. "They come last night while you was out. The girl come in and hung 'em all. She took all your old clothes. Said she was workin' under orders." Mrs. Flarrity eyed the gorgeous creation Fay was wearing. "I suppose you won't be livin' here much longer," she insinuated.

"Of course I will!" snapped Fay. She slammed out of the house and started to walk aimlessly along.

She would send back the clothes, of course. Or perhaps it might be better to summon a taxi and take them back?

For a second, she stopped, dead still. There she was, making excuses to go back. Would it be like that always? Would she never be free from the tyranny of love? Would she return, time and again, until she was just Harte's mistress? She shuddered.

Harte hadn't even pretended to love her. He had just promised her beautiful possessions.

Her throat ached with sobs.

"Jimmy!" she cried aloud, a sudden thought striking her.

If she married Jimmy, maybe she might be able to put Harte Lorrimer out of her mind, and heart, and soul. At least, if she were Jimmy's wife, that would give her strength not to see Harte.

She began to walk at top speed toward Jimmy's dingy rooms. She knew he lived on Sixth Avenue.

She was going away from Harte. Leaving him forever. Shutting him out of her heart. She longed terribly for the touch of Harte's caressing hands. For his mad kisses that stirred her so strangely. But she could not accept a cheap substitute for love.

This was the only way she could be set free.

Jimmy loved her. Jimmy was safe and dependable. Over and over he had told her how much he cared. She was aware that she did not return his love. But she was fond of him. She respected him. He wasn't the sort that would give a girl a diamond bracelet. She almost laughed aloud, hysterically, when she imagined Jimmy even be-

ing able to make the first down payment.

She hoped that being fond of Jimmy would be enough. Love wasn't a calm, reasoning affair of the mind. No. Love was a blind, irrational tide which engulfed you, before you were aware.

So went her thoughts, over and over, milling chaotically. Yet she had no idea of swerving from her purpose. She walked steadily toward the address which seemed burned with coals of fire on her brain.

The entrance to Jimmy's apartment was sandwiched between a restaurant and a penny arcade. A crowd of roughly dressed men were grouped about a "help-wanted" sign which fronted the doorway she wanted to enter. Fay walked past, two or three times, before she gained courage to push through the jostling group of men.

There was a steep, straight flight of stairs. She climbed it, drew a deep breath, and pressed Jimmy's bell.

"Who the heck is there? Come in, can't you? And stop ringing that darn bell. It goes through my head like a knife!"

Somewhat daunted, Fay timidly pushed open the door.

Jimmy was standing there, his shirt half on. His eyes widened at sight of her. "Fay!" he gasped, pulling the shirt completely on. "What in the world are you doing here?"

Fay summoned a smile to her stiff lips. "I—I—" she began. Then she stopped.

She looked around. The place was so dark she could hardly see, but she was aware of disorder. Jimmy's collar, with the straggling necktie, was on the center of the table, next to a thick cup containing the



drege of coffee. Two dingy glasses were stained with liquor. Cigarette stubs were everywhere. The elevated crashed by, shaking the room and making conversation momentarily impossible.

"Well?" Jimmy said, when the "L" had gone by.

"I've been thinking, Jimmy," she said quaveringly. "If—if that little apartment you were telling me about, out in Flushing, is still vacant, we—we might take it!"

*"You shall have everything in the world," he whispered. "Voyages, cars, jewels!" But the next instant, she had forgotten everything in the mad fervor of Harte's demanding kisses.*

He caught both her hands in his. "You mean that?" His eyes looked eager. Frighteningly eager. Predatory.

"Yes," said Fay resolutely. She closed her eyes when he

he caught her close and kissed her. But she couldn't keep from flinching a little when his lips closed down on hers. His lips were so cruelly passionate.

Fay tried to kiss him in return. She told herself that she was doing the right thing. That this was the only way she could be freed from the tyranny of her passion for Harte Lorrimer.

Jimmy kissed her again and again. He held her close. Too close. "Pete left last night for Chicago. We had a sort of farewell party. That's why I was so late getting up this morning. It will be pretty swell to have you waking me up mornings, Fay!"

"Pretty swell!" gasped Fay through clenched teeth.

"That place out in Flushing is gone." Jimmy's arms tightened. "But now that Pete has left, I'm alone here. So how about moving in?"

It was a moment before Fay could summon her voice. The "L" roared by again. Fay discovered that her head was aching fearfully. She snatched at the first thing that came into her mind.

"But I thought Pete's job was only for three months! Maybe we ought to find a new place. So we wouldn't have to move."

Jimmy kissed her again, amorously. "Oh, you know how those things go, baby," he murmured. "Usually three months is long enough. If we still want to keep on together by that time, we can look for a new place to live then. But what's the use of looking ahead? Now is enough for me! Gee, I wish I didn't have to go to work this morning, kid! I'd sure show you some loving."

Fay's tired mind was whirling. "You—you don't mean——" The elevated roared by. She had to start again. "I don't think we could get married to-day, could we?" she said diffidently.

His arms dropped. He stepped away. "What is all this, anyhow?"

he demanded suspiciously. "I never asked you to marry me. Never. I don't go in for wedding bells. I asked you——"

Fay began to laugh hysterically. "Twice!" she cried. "Twice! What a joke on me! What a funny, funny joke!"

She wondered if dying felt like this.

"Don't be like that, Fay," she heard him say impatiently. His voice seemed to come from a long way off. "You're a smart girl. You've been around. Don't try to kid me you don't know what——"

Fay turned and made her way blindly out of the apartment. She stumbled down the steep flight of steps, conscious of Jimmy's excited voice, shrieking for her to wait. She went, like a person in a dream, straight toward François's shop.

To her surprise, Normadyne was in the dressing room. Usually, the girls didn't model until afternoon, unless something special came up. Normadyne's eyes grew big. "My sainted aunt. You've got on the Galland ensemble! Two hundred smackers! Where the heck were you, by the way? I telephoned a dozen times to-day, trying to locate you. Snell would have fired you, sure, if you hadn't shown up."

"What do we model this morning?" asked Fay. She hoped her voice didn't sound as queer and hoarse as it seemed to her own ears. She felt as if everything was a horrid dream, from which she would presently wake.

Normadyne looked sidewise at her. "Harte Lorrimer ordered a wedding gown. He asked for you, especially, to model it."

Fay's heart went cold. "Harte Lorrimer?" she gasped.

Normadyne put her arms around Fay. "Never mind, kid. It's all in

the game. You got to do this. It's part of your job."

Numbly, Fay got out of her clothes. Numbly she donned the lustrous white underwear. "What's

the girl's name?" she asked after a while, when things stopped whirling about so.

"Don't know. Some 'Social Register' dame, I suppose." Normadyne's eyes were sympathetic. She had on a pale-pink dress perfect for a bridesmaid.

Fay slipped the bridal gown over her head. The maid adjusted the short, filmy veil and thrust a bouquet of artificial flowers into her shaking hands. She looked at her reflection in the mirror, and saw only tragic, stricken eyes. She was



*Suddenly Fay saw Harte staring up at her and everything went black and began to swirl about crazily. She gave a little muffled, heart-broken cry, and crumpled in a heap.*

totally unaware that never had she been more beautiful.

The curtains parted. Fay walked out on the platform. Her knees threatened to buckle under her at every step. Suddenly she saw Harte staring up at her, his eyes alight.

Everything went black and began to swirl about crazily. Fay clutched at the velvet curtains, but her fingers found nothing. She gave a little muffled, heartbroken cry, and crumpled in a heap on the platform. Her bouquet rolled over and came to rest almost at Harte's feet.

Miss Snell snorted angrily and darted forward. But she was too slow. Harte was there first. He cradled Fay's slight figure in his arms and kissed her pallid lips over and over, crooning endearments.

Slowly, Fay's eyes fluttered open. She looked up into Harte's face. "I—I ran away from you," she whispered. "But I can't run any more. I—I love you too much."

Two big tears rolled down her pallid cheeks. Harte kissed them away. "Darling, we'll never be separated again. Never!" he cried passionately. Abruptly he asked: "Do you like the dress? Is it all right?" His voice sounded eager.

Fay bit down hard on her lower lip. How could he be so cruel?

He was talking on, in the same eager tone. "I've had my yacht put in condition. We'll sail away, to-

morrow. To the blue Caribbean! Would you like that, my sweet?"

Fay tried to smile. "Of course," she said bravely. "But your—" Her voice died in her throat. She couldn't say the word "wife."

He didn't notice her hesitation. He picked her up and held her close. Boyishly he said: "I bought you every single dress you've modeled in the last few weeks. You see, I banked on the fact that some day you'd come to love me, as I adored you! I told you I was buying those dresses for my fiancée's trousseau. And I was!"

"Wh-what?" quavered Fay.

"I hate to have you take off this lovely bridal attire, sweet. Couldn't you just remove the veil, and slip on a wrap to go to the marriage-license bureau?" He let his lips brush hers softly, provocatively.

"The marriage license bureau?" echoed Fay in a thin whisper.

He kissed her again, lingeringly. "Of course, silly! We have to get a license before we can be married, don't we?"

"Of—of course we do," cried Fay joyously.

Harte never knew why she began to laugh and cry, all at once. All he knew was that her arms crept up around his neck and she was offering her lips to him. He crushed her close, and the wonder and ecstasy of their love filled their hearts.





# Forever His

By Dorothy Banker

**I** WISH," said Florence Roger, stretching herself wearily across the slim bed in the nurses' home room she shared with Connie Bentley, "that I would never, never see another operating room. I wish that I had studied beauty culture or typewriting, and that I had never seen or heard of Doctor Gordon Kent. He's the most selfish, dominating, conceited brute that ever took an M. D."

"Here," said Connie. "Go to sleep and forget that there is a man named Doctor Kent and that there

is such a thing as an operation. The way the staff and he run you to death is a crime—just because you're good in surgery. The trouble is you're too good. Now, if you were ordinarily efficient, like me and——"

Florence exerted herself to throw a pillow at her roommate and muss Connie's smooth black hair.

"Now, if I were only beautiful like you, I wouldn't have to stay in this hospital. I'd get myself engaged to some nice young man like Dannie, and——"

"You're twice as beautiful as I am," Connie broke in, combing her hair again and carefully pressing the waves into place. "If you'd just think so, you'd be a wow. But you've got an inferiority complex. It's just as easy to be charming as it is to be good in surgery."

Just then the doorbell rang. Connie picked up her wrap and said: "Don't lie awake thinking about the operations you had today, or the ones that are coming up to-morrow. Just go to sleep and dream sweet dreams, and whatever you do, don't dream about Gordon Kent. Remember, he's a doctor, and doctors aren't human."

Hours later Florence went to sleep, and then she dreamed that Gordon Kent was choking her with his slim, strong fingers and that she couldn't get away from him or from his eyes that bored unmercifully into hers. When she finally awoke she could feel the fingers and see his eyes, and it took her a long minute to decide it was just a dream and that she wasn't really choking.

She got up and read a book until morning, keeping her eyes glued on the page, although she didn't know exactly what she was reading.

She was tired when she went on duty, but she came through two operations somehow, as stiffly starched and as competent as usual. But when Doctor Kent brought in an emergency case and called for her she looked into his eyes and thought about the dream, and her knees suddenly turned to water and everything went black before her. She shook herself determinedly and told herself that she was a fool, and managed to get almost through the whole thing very nicely.

But at the end she was so tired that she closed her eyes for just a second. In that second Doctor

Kent's voice said low, but harshly, "Miss Roger, please." She realized then that she had slipped up a fraction of a second in handing him his instrument, and she gave it to him quickly.

After the patient had been taken to his room and Doctor Kent was out of his operating gown and looking very dignified in his gray business suit, ready to start back to his office, she went over to him and said: "I'm sorry, Doctor Kent. I didn't mean to delay you, but I was a little tired. Too many operations——"

"Oh, that's all right," he said courteously. In his eyes, however, she read that it wasn't all right, that she might have cost him the life of a patient by that fraction of a second's delay. "I'll not keep you so busy for a few days, Miss Roger. I'm going to take a short vacation. I find that I'm rather tired myself."

Florence went back to her room and threw herself across the bed. She clenched her hands beside her tense body and sobbed: "Oh, I hate him! Hate him! I'm just a piece of furniture to him. He's so conceited and self-sufficient and so terribly clever, and he knows it. It wouldn't be so bad if he were ever wrong. Oh, I wish that I would never have to see him again! I wish that I could go away from this hospital and never see another doctor again as long as I live."

She was still crying when Connie came in.

"Why, Flo, what's the matter?" asked Connie. "Did something go wrong?"

"No; it's just that I'm tired. I'm so tired I think I'll go crazy."

"What you need is a vacation, and I'm going to see that you get one. I'll ask Miss Russell. She'll understand."

"No; I'll ask her myself. I'm sure she'll let me go. Doctor Kent is going to be away for several days, too."

Later that day, Florence was packing her suitcase. "I'm going to take some money out of my savings account and have a real vacation," she said to Connie. "I'm going to take the boat to Seattle and forget everything. I'm going to splurge and go in style and have a cabin all to myself so that I won't have to talk to a single soul, and I'm going to have my meals in my cabin if I don't feel like going down to the dining room."

"It's the best thing in the world for you," said Connie.

So, a few hours later, Florence stood on the inclosed promenade deck of the boat and watched Dannie and Connie, who had come to see her off, on the pier below. As the boat began to move she decided to go out to the open deck.

There was a crowd going through the passageway, and a large woman pushed Florence, throwing her against a broad gray shoulder.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," said Florence softly to the shoulder.

Its owner looked at her, and it was Doctor Gordon Kent.

"Oh!" Florence started to back away.

Doctor Kent stared at her. Confusing thoughts clamored in her brain. He would think that she had followed him, had known he was coming on this boat and had planned it so that he would have to be nice to her the three days to Seattle.

"Miss Roger," said Doctor Kent in quite a human voice. "I wasn't expecting to see you here."

"I beg your pardon." Florence took refuge in the first idea that popped into her head. "I don't be-

lieve that we are acquainted—socially."

With her eyes straight ahead, lest she turn to look at the expression on his face, she hurried down to her room.

She locked the door and threw herself across the bunk, and tried very hard not to cry. She said sternly to herself, "Your nerves are all shot to pieces," and knew that it wasn't her nerves.

"Oh, I hate him! Why in the world couldn't he have picked another boat or another place to go or another time to leave?"

She tried to make herself feel the old resentment toward him—of the way he commanded her around, of the way he looked at her and aloofly treated her and all the other nurses in the hospital, and, so far as she knew, all the women outside of the hospital. She trembled when she thought of him, and knew that she must have her meals in her room all the way to Seattle, and that she must take the train home and perhaps find a position in another hospital.

She had dinner in her cabin, then read the book that Dannie and Connie had given her; but again she was simply reading words that didn't make sense. Later, she could hear the ship's orchestra playing, and she wanted more than anything to go up and watch the dancing. She wondered whether Doctor Kent was up there, and with whom he was dancing.

But she mustn't go outside her cabin.

She wanted desperately to go up on deck and watch the ocean roll by, and the splash of the waves under the moon, and feel the sting of the salty air wet against her face and hair.

But she couldn't.

"I'm going to take some money out of my savings account and have a real vacation," said Florence, as she shut her suitcase. "I'm going to take a boat to Seattle and forget everything."



Doctor Kent might be sitting in a chair or striding up and down the deck, and see her and think that he would have to be polite.

After sitting in her room for

hours, she decided she might as well go to bed. She put on the new green silk kimono she had bought because green is most becoming with red hair, as if anybody that really



mattered would see her in it. She stepped into the green mules that went with it. Sticking out from under the kimono and touching the green mules were the lace-trimmed silk pajamas she had bought that afternoon.

She opened the door of the cabin to go to the dressing room, and then stopped short and closed the door very hurriedly. Doctor Kent was opening the door of the cabin

opposite, only a few feet away. He had on a heavy silk dressing gown, and his dark hair was ruffled, as if he might have been striding along the deck and forgotten to comb it afterward.

Breathlessly, Florence dropped back upon the bunk, hoping that he had not seen her. This was terrible. Why, she wouldn't be able to step outside except in the dead of night.

Before she had time to catch her breath there was a light tap on the door, and a voice said: "Florence Roger, please open the door and come out here and talk to me. I've been looking for you all evening."

Florence didn't answer.

"Florence Roger," said Doctor Kent, a little more loudly, "did you hear me? If you don't answer, I shall shout so loudly that the whole boat will hear."

"I don't want to see you," said Florence, her voice quivering in spite of herself. "I came on this vacation to get away from doctors and hospitals. Then you have to pop up and annoy me."

"I won't annoy you. I won't even mention the hospital. I came away to forget about everything, too. Why, I didn't even tell them I'm a doctor."

"Oh," said Florence, trying to decide what to do. He sounded really quite human, and she wanted desperately to get out of this stuffy little room and go up on deck. "Well, in that case, I'll get dressed and come out for a minute or two."

When she opened the door she had on a heavy tweed suit and a perky little felt hat that hid practically all her hair on one side and showed all of it on the other. He was waiting in front of his door, his hands dug deep in his overcoat pockets.

He looked at his watch. "Five minutes is entirely too long a time to have kept me waiting," he said as they made their way up on deck.

Florence threw back her head and strode rapidly along the deck, feeling very small and rather inconsequential beside his bigness. They were alone, and the laughter and music from the lounge seemed far away. Down at the end of the deck, in the shadows, Florence stopped and leaned against the rail to watch the moonlit water.

"Oh, I love it," she said. "I've always wanted to take a boat trip, and I never have. Not even to Catalina. I never had the money when I had the time, and now that I've had the money I've never had the time."

"That's the way it goes," said Gordon Kent. "I've never taken a real boat trip, either. Oh, I've taken little speed-boat jaunts and gone out deep-sea fishing, but nothing like this. You see, I never had very much money, either. Worked my way through medical college by prize fighting for very little money, and giving blood transfusions when they didn't catch me at it." He stopped abruptly then and laughed, and sounded very nice and young and not at all conceited. "But I mustn't talk about it. I promised to forget all that."

For just a minute Florence's imagination presented to her a clear picture of a young medical student turned prize fighter for a few dollars, or giving a pint of blood so that he'd have enough money to keep on with his studies.

She wanted to reach her hand out to his and say: "There, there, little boy. You'll make good some day."

Then she remembered that he had made good, that he couldn't work

fast enough to satisfy the people who wanted him to take their problems into his hands, and that by now he must have almost enough money to buy one of these boats, if he wanted it.

So she said hurriedly, "Let's walk some more."

They walked around the deck once, twice, three times, stopping at the middle of the foredeck to feel the boat roll, and laughing a great deal about it. The orchestra stopped playing then, and every one went to bed or to the bar, but Florence and Gordon kept on walking around the deck.

At last Florence stopped, breathless and laughing. "I guess I've walked enough for one evening." She took off her felt hat and ran her hand along her hair. It was damp and had silvery drops of spray on it.

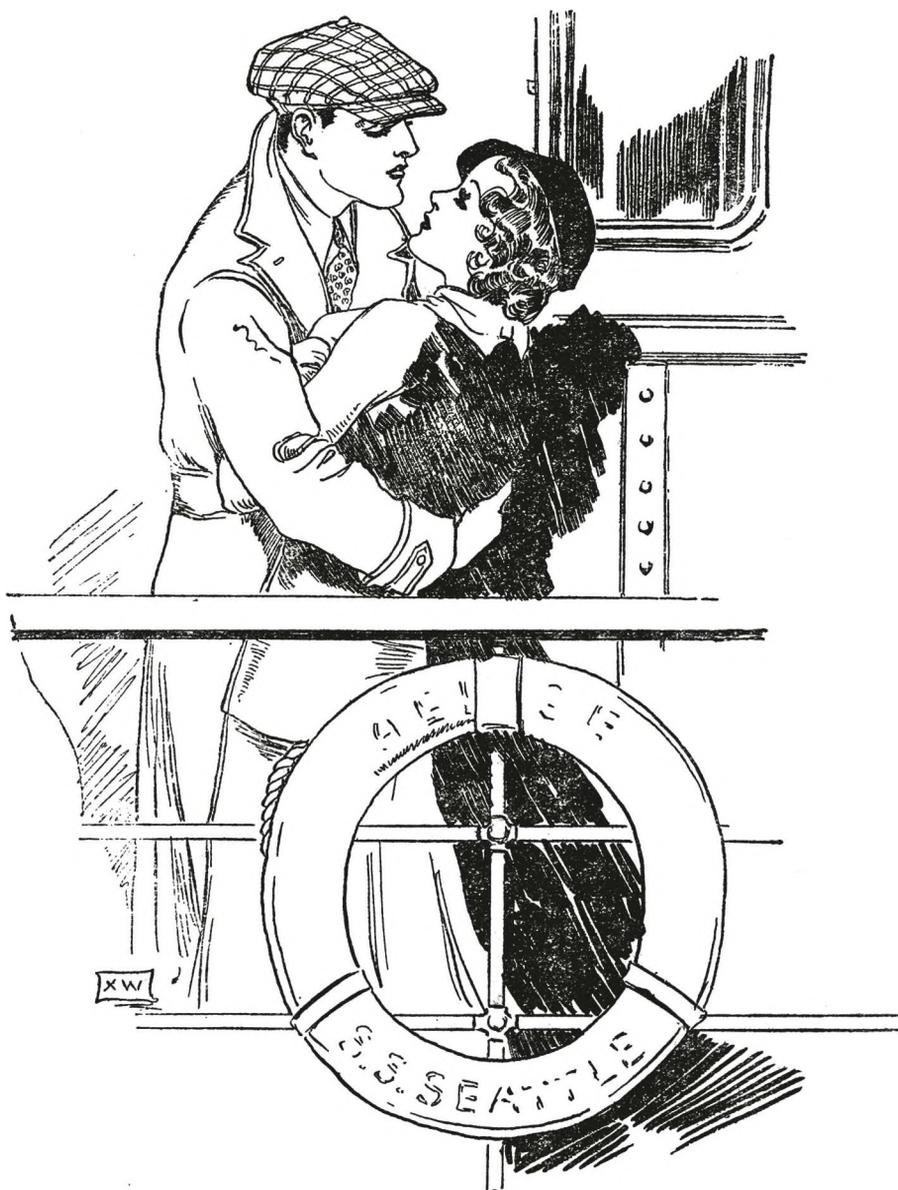
"My hair is simply a mess," she said, and pushed it carelessly into place.

"It's lovely," said Gordon softly. "It shines like gold with silver drops against it."

"You're a poet." Florence felt that she must laugh, or she would cry. She had never felt so gay or so happy.

She looked up at Gordon, and then she was in his arms, held close against his heavy overcoat. His slim, strong fingers were against her throat, but they weren't choking her. They were touching it lightly, and then they moved to her face and finally up to her hair. Swiftly his lips were against her hair, and then against her lips, possessive and tender and not hard as she had always thought they would be.

For just a minute Florence felt herself return his kiss, and then she thought suddenly, "He thinks this is just another shipboard romance,



*For just a minute Florence felt herself return his kiss, and then she drew herself quickly from out of his arms and said: "I'm sorry, Doctor Kent, but I'm really very particular about who kisses me and why."*

that you're just another foolish girl who'll let him kiss her and then forget about her."

She drew herself quickly from out of his arms and said: "I'm sorry, Doctor Kent, but I'm not that kind

of girl. I'm really very particular about who kisses me and why."

She turned and ran back to her cabin.

When they arrived in San Francisco the next morning she wasn't

on deck to see the Golden Gate. About an hour after the boat docked she went ashore for lunch and came back long before the hour of sailing. She must not see him again.

That evening she didn't step out of her room without first looking to see that the way was clear. She didn't hear a thing from the stateroom across the corridor. Maybe he had gone ashore in San Francisco and not come back! She took no chances, though, and the next day she stayed in her room all the time.

Late in the evening she decided that she simply must go up on deck. She would find a quiet, dark corner somewhere and sit there, so that he would not find her in case he was looking for her. The next morning they would get into Seattle very early, and she'd find a job of some kind, any kind, and never have to see him again.

"For I love him, and I must hate him," she said fiercely. "Oh, why can't I remember him like he was in the hospital, instead of thinking about him like he was on the boat?"

There were only a few lights burning on deck. She pulled a chair against the rail and sat low in it so that nobody would see her. She sat there for some time, looking out over the ocean and thinking it was too bad he wasn't there to see how beautiful it was.

Just then she saw him striding toward her, coming very fast, and she shrank back so that he wouldn't see her. He didn't stop and went on around the deck. Florence decided that she must go below at once. She'd had enough air. She didn't move, though. Just waited to watch him pass by again. He didn't come. She stirred a little from her cramped position, and seeing that the coast was clear, she

decided to get up and stretch. Then there was Doctor Kent, coming from the opposition direction.

Florence sat down hurriedly. But he had seen her. He had probably seen her all the time and had known that she was watching for him. She started to get up and run, but he was there, blocking the way.

"Good evening, Florence," he said, and put his hands firmly on her shoulders. He didn't make any attempt to draw her close to him, just looked at her. She felt that this time his eyes were going through her to her very heart, but they didn't hurt. They set something inside her to singing blissfully.

She made a little startled sound, and he said: "You can't run away from me to-night and fling words at me about the kind of person you are. I know the kind of person you are—the very kind that I want for my wife. I've known it all along, I think, from the very first day you stepped into that operating room. I was afraid of you and didn't know what to say to you. But now I know. I love you, love you, love you. And when are you going to tell me that you love me and will marry me?"

Florence tried to struggle away from him, tried to say, "But I don't know that I love you."

He drew her, triumphantly, closer into the circle of his arms. "Oh, but you do. You told me so the other evening, in every word you said, in the way you ran away. But I had to leave you alone so you could think it out a little, leave you alone when I was dying to pound down the door and drag you out. You do love me, don't you, sweet?"

This time Florence didn't try to deny it. She just nestled closer in his arms, and with a contented sigh raised her lips for his rapturous kiss.



# White Magic

By Ethel Le Compte

I'VE asked Horton Harvey to drop around this evening, El."

Reluctantly, Eleta shook herself out of her thoughts and managed a smile for her handsome father.

"Like you to stick around." Charles Ellis was carefully casual.

"Dad, you know how I feel about meeting people just now."

"That doesn't apply to an old friend like Horton, surely."

"But I haven't seen Horton for four years. He saw us off when you took me to France to school, I remember."

"You've been back more than a year, but you've had no time——" Charles checked himself. "You used to think the world of Horton."

"He was another father to me. Even listened to my poetry."

"Father!" snorted Charles. "He's only ten years older than you. Not thirty, and one of the biggest contractors we have. *He* had no pull, asked for no financial assistance. I'm proud to be architect on any job he is awarded. Wonder why he has never married," he mused.

But Eleta, curled up on the divan before the fire, was pretending to read, and did not answer.

Charles Ellis gazed at his lovely blond daughter with troubled eyes. He would have given all he possessed to be able to banish the sadness from her velvety brown eyes, to bring the flashing smile back to her lips, the lilt to her voice.

Suddenly, he flung aside his paper. "Bechnell isn't worth all this suffering," he burst out savagely. "He's made your life miserable long enough. You've broken your engagement to him, now forget him."

"Miserable, yes, dad, but it was heaven for the first few months, and I can't stop loving him. Please, Charles, don't worry about me."

Eleta closed her eyes wearily, and remembered back——

She had met Thor Bechnell soon after her return from France. It had been love at first sight with him. Love had come slower to her, but when it did come, it was all-consuming.

This blond, blue-eyed giant with the voice of a spellbinder was her first love. Eleta had always been a tomboy. Even at the French school, they hadn't been able to change her much. Because Thor treated her as if she were a woman of the world, she strove to live up

to his ideas, and soon blossomed into a charming, glamorous creature. A shining radiance overlay her tender loveliness those first rapturous months when she thought Thor was hers alone.

Thor gave her a ring almost at once, but told her wistfully that he was not able to support a girl who had everything, on the salary of a law clerk, added to the small inheritance left by his father.

Eleta declared that she was willing to share his little.

Thor had answered: "The thing to do, is for me to share your plenty. I mean," he went on when he saw her startled expression, "your father might have lent me the money to open a law office for myself when I asked him. He knows it's for your happiness as well as mine."

"He's a self-made man, and believes in each man making good on his own——"

"He hates me, and you know it," Thor cut in violently.

"It is losing me, he hates. I'm all he has, you know. Thor, you and I could live on the money you squander when we go out."

"Exist, you mean. I'm not giving up my good times."

"Then you prefer good times to marrying me."

"Silly, sweet!" He took her in his arms, and ended the discussion as he ended every serious talk—by kissing her breathless, and murmuring passionate vows.

Yes, as Eleta had told her father, it had been heaven for a while.

Even now, nearly four months later, she winced when she recalled the first taste of the mockery he was to make of their love.

One evening in September, Thor had telephoned that he was in bed with a bad cold, so Eleta and Charles had one of their old-time

parties together. At the night club to which they had gone after the theater, they saw Thor. He was apparently quite well, and was with a vivacious redhead. They were utterly absorbed in each other.

"Shall we go, kid?" Charles asked, murder in his eye.

"Go? Why?" Eleta managed a gallant smile, though she was as white as paper. "I—oh, yes, let's go!"

"Finish your champagne, young Ellis. Chin up! Powder dry!"

In her gold lamé gown and ermine wrap, Eleta had threaded her way through the tables, a slim princess with a broken heart well hidden.

She had gone to pieces in the car, then pulled herself together as they reached home.

Clarke, her maid, said, as she took Eleta's wrap: "Mr. Bechnell phoned at eight, Miss Ellis. He has a lady cousin he wanted you to meet."

Eleta experienced relief so great that it was almost pain.

When they were alone, she exulted: "You see, Charles!"

"Probably saw you and phoned this alibi, promising Clarke a bribe."

Eleta preferred to believe Thor's story.

But a week later, she received a second shock.

Charles interrupted their twosome one evening. "I saw you with a very stunning girl last night, Thor," he said. "Another cousin?"

Thor, obviously startled, managed to answer quickly: "She was a rich client from out of town. Mr. Haley asked me to show her around a bit."

"But you did not tell Eleta of it, did you?" Charles persisted.

"No. High time I did," Thor replied easily. "Eleta, the wife of a

lawyer—I shall be one of the best some day—must be like a doctor's wife. She must be understanding, never jealous. I know you will be like that."

After that, Thor had used the rich client alibi often. Eleta did not know he was deceiving her until she saw him with a girl who was a model for her own modiste, and whom he had noticed when he met Eleta there.

Thor, when she questioned him, did not deny that he had lied.

"I like pretty, peppy kids like that," he said, "but these little affairs mean nothing, I swear, darling. I love you, and only you, Eleta. You are above petty jealousy, aren't you, angel?"

Though actually sick with jealousy, Eleta whispered: "Yes, Thor."

Even now, her love for him did not die, but it became torment as well as rapture. He became increasingly deceiving. She endured it as long as possibly. A week ago, she had returned his ring.

She was wondering, as she sat with her father before the fire this winter evening, if she could go on living.

Then the expected guest was announced.

Horton Harvey was a tall, broad man with a swinging stride and ruddy skin. Eleta had forgotten how handsome he was. Handsomer even than Thor, and as dark of hair and eyes as Thor was fair.

"You're a young lady now, I see," he teased, a slow smile curving his wide mouth. "Eighteen?" He sat down beside her.

"Nearly twenty. You look the same as you did five years ago. Dad almost bit my head off when I said you were like a second father to me."

"The idea! I don't relish that rôle at all."

"Big brother?"

"Better, but not good enough. Need a boy friend?"

Innocently he had turned the knife in her wound. She caught her breath sharply. "I can use a true friend," she told him gravely.

"I've always considered myself that. I've missed seeing you." He chuckled. "Missed our old battles, verbal and physical."

Eleta suddenly realized how completely Thor had monopolized her thoughts. Even when he had called off a date, she had not cared to go out with any other man. What a fool she had been!

Her eyes dropped to the hand which Thor's ring had adorned. She had returned the ring with a brief note. Since then she had not seen him, though he had called and telephoned time and again, and had showered her with letters and flowers. The letters had brought tears, and made her wonder how long she could hold out against him.

Charles was offering her a cocktail. She took it mechanically.

"Horton tells me he's going to his place in the Adirondacks soon," Charles said. "We've had some good times there, eh, El?"

"How about coming out with me?" Horton invited eagerly.

"Tickled to death!" accepted Charles, his eyes on Eleta.

She nodded. She was thinking: "If I go where Thor can't find me—keep away from him a while—I might stop loving him."

"I'll have to work evenings if I'm to play hookey," Charles said. "When can you be ready, El?"

"Any time. Just have to buy some woollies and warm pajamas. Horton, dine with us to-morrow.

We can settle everything then. Good night now."

She kissed her father and fled to the haven of her room. Tears were close. They must not know how drastic was the remedy she was taking to cure herself of her love for Thor.

Next day, she felt less miserable than she had for a long while. Rather pepped up by the thought of the trip, she busied herself with preparations. Horton dined with them, and they decided to start in two days, and stay three weeks. Horton would drive them.

"How about painting the town red to-morrow night?" he asked.

"I'll be busy," Charles answered. "Maybe Eleta would like it."

"Get tickets for a musical comedy," Eleta said. "I want to laugh."

Horton was the ideal theater companion. He talked little, and then tersely. Thor loved to talk. On the other hand, Horton did not dance. Dancing was one of the things Thor did superbly.

Next evening, as they were leaving, Eleta said: "We're going to the Paradise Club after the theater, Charles. Won't you join us there?"

But Charles pleaded work.

At the night club Eleta said: "I enjoyed the show so much, Horton."

"But it spoils your party because I don't dance, doesn't it?"

"Not at all. You're such a nice, restful person, I——"

"But I don't want to be nice and restful," protested Horton. "I want to be an exciting pulse-hopper, as the tab columnists say."

"Horton, I am more than grateful to you for being exactly what you are. My friendship with you is helping me over a very bad time. Charles must have told you about—Thor Bechnell."



"Yes. May I say I think you did the wise thing?"

"I hope I——" Eleta's eyes were fixed on a man coming toward her. "Thor," she breathed. "Thor!"

"Yes. Thor, the discarded," Thor said bitterly, as he came up to them. Horton stood up. Thor eyed him insolently, then his eyes went to Eleta's blanched face. "So this is why you threw me over! Well, I refuse to be thrown over. You're mine. In fact, I'm taking you with me right now. Any objections, fellow?"

Horton looked anything but a nice, restful person now. He said

*"So this is why you threw me over!" Thor cried when he saw Eleta with Horton. "Well, I refuse to be thrown over." He sprang at Horton, but Horton was ready. Two smashing blows were exchanged before they were separated.*

sharply: "Miss Ellis is with me. You are annoying her. Please go."

Thor sprang at him, but Horton was ready. Two smashing blows were exchanged before a flying wedge of waiters separated them.

Scarlet with humiliation, Eleta hurried from the place.

Horton joined her in the foyer almost at once.

"I'm terribly sorry, Horton," she told him, near hysteria.

"Not your fault, my dear."

In the car, Horton said: "Bechnell is following in a taxi. Just what do you want me to do after I leave you at your home?"

"Please don't fight, no matter what."

"Do you still love Bechnell, or is that none of my business?"

"I still love him." Eleta's voice was low, tense.

"I see," he said slowly. "How about the trip? Is it off?"

"Oh, no. The reason I want to go is to get away from the temptation to take Thor back," Eleta confessed.

"I see," Horton said again.

"Oh. I didn't mean to let you know that. You don't have to take me if you don't want to. I want to go. I shall be less miserable there than anywhere. I—oh, how utterly selfish you must think me."

"I understand, dear. I've been through it. The girl I was to marry jilted me for a richer man. I suffered so long that I thought it would be for all my life. Then, suddenly, I was free. It didn't fade away. Just went all at once. I was so completely free, that I did what I had never dared do. I went to see her."

"And?" Eleta prompted breathlessly, leaning closer.

"There wasn't a glimmer of the old passion left."

Eleta drew a deep breath. "I've wondered how it would be to be free. The pain is more than I can endure at times, and yet—oh, would it be just a ghastly nothing?" She lay back, her eyes closed. In a whisper she said: "It would be like dying."

"No, it would be utter relief. You might, in time, find another love to fill the void. I—have," he finished softly.

"What did you say, Horton? I'm afraid I wasn't listening."

"Never mind, dear. It's of no importance just yet."

As they got out of the car, he remarked: "No sign of Bechnell."

Charles fairly bristled when he heard of the encounter with Thor.

"Glad we're getting away to-morrow," he said. "There's no way he can find out where we're going. No one but my secretary knows."

"Cook and the two maids know," Eleta said.

Charles frowned. "I'll order them, Clarke especially, not to tell him."

Horton said: "Thank you for a lovely evening, Eleta. Get a good sleep. I shall be here at eight sharp."

But Eleta was long in falling asleep on her tear-drenched pillow.

Thor's flowers and a note were there when she awakened. The note read:

DARLING: Forgive my crazy exhibition, but I was mad with jealousy. A desperate man is waiting for your call. All my love forever,  
THOR.

And he had derided jealousy! She dropped back onto her pillow. The tumult within was unbearable, but she did not weep. She fought down her desire to answer Thor's passionate appeal, but it left her weak. She lay there until the last minute, then rushed to bathe and dress.

Clarke, helping her, said: "You will miss me, Miss Ellis. Don't you want me to come after all? Cook can stay here."

"Thanks, no," Eleta answered. "I can manage. Cook and Ella have their arrangements made to visit their people. Mr. Bechnell, by the way, is not to know of our destination. I can depend on you, I am sure."

"Mr. Ellis gave those orders, miss," Clarke answered shortly.

Once out of the city, speeding through a heavy fall of snow, Eleta felt a surprising rise of spirits. Im-

pulsively, she cried: "Your invitation was an inspiration, Horton!"

"Exactly what I think," he told her, his face brightening.

While Charles dozed in the rear seat, wedged in with bags and fur coats, skates and snowshoes, the two in front argued amicably, carefully avoiding mention of the previous night.

Eleta got Horton to talk of himself. Older now, she was interested in the story of this self-made man, and, as in everything else, compared it with Thor's story.

It was of his early struggles he told her, not of the later, successful years. Thor always spoke of the future, of what he could do if Eleta's father would help him financially. Thor was a talker; Horton a doer. He created his own opportunities.

Listening to him, looking at his striking profile, she thought that if she had not met Thor, she might have loved Horton.

The highways were fairly clear of snow, and they reached Glens Falls for dinner. In the hotel room there, Eleta cried herself to sleep as she had every night since she had broken with Thor.

Yet, the next day, under a sky brilliantly blue, Eleta cried as they sped on: "I love it! Charles, I'm sixteen again and happy!"

At Lake Clear Junction they were met by Horton's caretaker, a distant cousin. Mike Turner's weathered face lighted up when he saw Eleta.

"A young lady now, eh? Benny gave me a telegram for you, Mr. Ellis. Horton, I brought the snowmobile. You leave this car here in town, eh?"

"O. K. How's Katie?" asked Horton.

"Fine. She's waiting with dinner. Let's go."

LS-6C

Charles burst out: "I've got to get back to New York. That darned hospital gang have changed their minds again. Gee, kids, I'm sorry."

An hour later, Charles was on a New York bound train.

"Poor dad," Eleta sighed. "But he was a dear, not to spoil my fun. Up here, I know I shall forget."

Horton dropped his hand from the wheel to press hers.

They reached their destination at sunset. Horton's cabin sprawled on the shores of the lake like a great brown bear under drifted snow.

Eleta forgot herself in the beauty of the scene. Beyond the frozen lake, an army of trees stood stark against the glory of the sunset.

As the snowmobile stopped, something that looked like an exploded hair mattress hurled itself upon the occupants, barking joyously.

"Whisky," Mike introduced the dog. "Offspring of old Vichy."

"But larger, louder and funnier," laughed Eleta. "Wait until I get into my pants, dog."

She beat Horton to the door where stood the beaming Katie, and was roundly kissed. "I was afeared," said Katie, "you'd be a hoity-toity leddy."

"How silly of you, Mrs. Mike Turner. Hm-m-m, that dinner smells good."

Then she was in the huge keeping-room once more. Her eyes shining, she took Horton's hand, and together they walked across the brightly-colored rugs and bearskins to the great fireplace. The flames shot up the chimney with a roar.

"They are saying 'Welcome back, Eleta,'" Horton told her happily.

They made a tour of the room. Eleta touched lovingly the shining copper bowls, the polished log walls. Sniffed at the dried sweet grass.

"All exactly the same," she sighed with deep satisfaction.

In her bedroom, one of the small cubicles built off the keeping-room, and boasting a narrow bunk, closet, and mirror, she tidied herself quickly.

Dinner was served at a table near the fireplace. When most of the pork, potatoes, yellow turnips and apple pie had been consumed, Katie beamed and said:

"Not one o' them afeared-o'-me-figure young leddies!"

"I shall have to exercise strenuously if I eat like this," laughed Eleta. "Mike, your wine is good, but it's made me sleepy. I'm for bed."

In her woolen bath robe, Eleta tramped from her room to the stove for her kettle of hot water, and then to the cubicle that served as a bathroom, as unconcerned as she had been at fifteen. Katie tucked her in between soft blankets, and she fell asleep almost instantly.

"I didn't cry last night," she rejoiced when she awakened, and sprang out of bed to spend her first day in the magic outdoors with Horton.

A day of rediscovering old haunts, old skill at sports. A plow attached to the snowmobile cleared part of the lake for skating. Eleta, in her yellow costume, looked like a darting sunbeam as she raced Horton. After midday dinner they went tobogganing, Whisky chasing them madly.

Resolutely, Eleta pushed Thor out of her mind.

That evening, stretched on a white bearskin before the fireplace with Horton squatting beside her popping corn, she sighed and said softly: "Thanks for the wonderful medicine, Horton. I slept ten hours last night."

"And when you are awake?" He shook the popcorn onto the buttered plate.

"I don't let myself think. Horton, you are a——"

"—nice, quiet, restful person," he finished for her.

Eleta sprang up and pushed a handful of popcorn into his mouth. In the tussle that ensued, she was pinned down onto the rug and held there until she paid the usual forfeit. This time, Eleta instinctively responded to Horton's kiss as she had learned to do since she had known Thor. Horton's lips lingered as they felt hers press them, and his arms went about her slender body.

Eleta strained away. Instantly, he released her. They sat up.

Whisky, salvaging the scattered popcorn, caused an opportune distraction, and Horton chased him down the long room, upsetting Mike dozing in a tipped chair, and Katie in her rocker.

Before the tangle was straightened out, Eleta had gained her room.

"You stick to being sixteen," she admonished her rosy reflection. "Horton's too swell to be hurt by you, but—hm-m-m, he does know how to kiss."

Again no tears when she went to bed, but almost instant slumber.

The following morning she was not altogether sorry to find that Horton had gone hunting with Mike. She wanted to think things out alone.

A blizzard started, and she had to come indoors before she had done any real thinking. And you couldn't think while you helped Katie with the bread and listened to her stories.

After dinner, she retired to her room, but fell asleep. She heard the hunters return, but did not



*In the tussle that ensued, she was pinned down onto the rug and held there until she paid the usual forfeit. This time, Eleta instinctively responded to Horton's kiss.*

come out. She read until it was nearly supper time, then, acting on impulse, she got out the one evening gown she had brought to wear if they stayed over at a hotel.

It was of shaded velvet, in tones ranging from brown, through orange, to yellow, and accented with a ruche of brown tulle. She brushed her hair until it was a golden halo about her vividly lovely face.

She found that Horton had "dressed up," too. He looked young and picturesque in brown corduroy slacks, red sash, and white shirt.

Katie's eyes popped. "So it's to be a party," she said. "Champagne, cocktails, most like, and dancing. Let's get dressed up, Mike."

"Just Mike's good wine," laughed Horton. "And no one ever bothered to teach me how to dance." When they were alone, he said: "You're not grown up after all, Eleta, although I thought you were last night. You're a small girl masquerading in a lady's gown. Heavens, you're a beautiful child. Down, Whisky, she's all dressed up and will muss easily."

"No, she won't," Eleta denied, and leaned back against him. Then moved away as Katie and Mike appeared. Katie with a red ribbon around her head. Mike in his Sunday suit.

Chicken stew and dumplings. Pumpkin pie and Mike's best wine.

Toasts to the absent Charles. Katie jiggling to Mike's fiddling. Horton clapping time and grinning like a boy. Eleta suddenly restless.

"Clear the floor," she ordered, jumping up and turning on the radio. "I'm going to teach you to step, Horton."

They circled the floor to the heady music of the radio orchestra. But the lesson was not a success. To her utter dismay, Eleta found herself remembering Thor's dancing, yearning for him terribly. She glanced up at Horton, her eyes dewy with tears, and saw him stop smiling.

Their arms fell away from each other. Horton replaced the rugs.

Katie, sensing something wrong, stepped into the breach nobly.

"Old pastimes go best up here, lovey," she said to Eleta, and brought over to the settle by the fire a large box filled with snapshots.

Eleta sat down beside her. Horton dropped to the rug at her feet Mike hunched opposite. Each picture went from hand to hand, to be commented on and laughed over.

"That stringy kid, me!" cried Eleta. "Horton, *you* haven't changed."

Later, when Katie and Mike had gone to bed, Eleta asked softly: "You have no pictures of—her? I'd like to see what she was like."

"I destroyed everything—pictures, letters. I think."

Eleta thought of the box filled with Thor's letters, and of his picture on her dresser at home. Thoughtfully, she bade Horton good night.

She took off her velvet gown, and climbed into woolly pajamas. As she slipped out to the bathroom, she saw that Horton had fixed the fire for the night and gone to bed. Face

scrubbed and glowing, she stretched herself on the bear rug and pillowed her golden head on its white one. She stared at the fire, wondering why she was doomed to love when love meant agony. Hot tears slid down her cheeks. Sobs tore through the ache in her throat. If only she had a mother to hold her close and comfort her, advise her.

"Eleta," Horton's voice said softly, so softly that she didn't even turn quickly. "What is it, small one?" He knelt down and she found that a man's arms could be as tender and comforting as a mother's. That a man's arms could give, without demanding return.

Horton gathered her close, gently wiped her face, and brushed the golden hair back from her eyes. "So small," he said, "and so troubled. Craving the impossible—faithfulness from a weak philanderer. Loving him even though he has proven himself unworthy."

Wonderingly, she said: "You do understand. I want Thor and his love terribly, and yet, not Thor as he really is. I am in love with an idealized Thor. If I take Thor back, I shall not be happy. Oh, Horton, it is such agony, this loving." She clutched at his caressing hand. "Horton, why wasn't I older? Why didn't I wait for you? But I forgot. There was that other girl, so you could not have loved me that way."

"There would have been no other girl, if you had loved me," he said gently. "I have always loved you. I know that now."

She lay back in the hollow of his shoulder, her eyelashes wet from her recent tears, but she smiled as she murmured: "Shoulders are hollowed like this so that weary heads may rest. I must write a poem about that." She sighed. "You

know, I never wrote love sonnets to Thor," she added, half jesting.

"I have those you wrote to me. You were a sweet child. You used to say we were both creators—poems and houses."

"I was a little prig," Eleta said. Then, after a gap of thought: "Horton, it is nice to be here with you." Her lips found his in a grateful kiss. "You're a darling," she said, and kissed him again.

"I am also human," Horton reminded her sharply. Then, huskily, he asked: "Try loving me and see if it doesn't oust the other?"

Another gap of thought. "It would be nicer to love you than to love Thor, but it would not be that kind of love. The kind of love I have for Thor is a tearing, physical thing, that torments your days—a dear torment—and makes you lie awake nights even when you're happiest. It is pain that is ecstasy. A confusion of the senses. A rush. A roar."

Out of a prolonged silence, Horton said: "Love should not be only that. Our love—yours and mine—could be a wonderful and lasting thing. There's a real foundation to build upon. Romance, glamour, passion would not be lacking, for we should take them all in our stride. Eleta, love me! In our love there will be nothing missing, nothing!" he told her with fervent conviction.

Breathlessly, she had listened, but, because she could not give him the answer he wanted, she gave him none. Yet she found it sweet to drift on a sea of emotion that was unruffled by wild passion.

The logs on the fire burned through, fell with soft thuds. Flames and sparks shot up. The wind howled outside and the snow fell in great drifts, but inside all was safe

and warm. Even the pain in her heart had been driven away by the tenderness of this man in whose arms she lay.

Eleta felt herself slipping into something bordering on nothingness. Heard her voice, dreamy and far away, say: "I do love you."

Then his lips were on hers. They were growing hard, demanding, alarming. That jerked her back from the borderland of sleep. She stiffened back in his embrace and cried in sudden panic: "Not like that!"

He held her to his pounding heart with arms of steel for a long breath, then released her and lifted his head with a strangled cry.

She sighed, smiled, snuggled back against him and glided into a dreamless slumber. She did not waken fully even when he tucked her in her bunk and again kissed her lips with tender passion.

When Eleta awakened, she lay looking through the open doorway at the fire. Would Horton consider her his now?—she wondered. It would be cruel to back out, if he did. But it would be crueler to marry him when she did not love him.

She tumbled out of her warm nest, and scampered to the bathroom to wash herself wide awake.

"Have breakfast before y'dress, lovey," said Katie. "Mike's clearing snow. Horton's gone to the junction. It's stopped snowing."

"He might have invited me to go along."

"He got a telegram when you were asleep," Katie explained.

Eleta took her place at the table. "Oh, he left a note." She read. "Charles wired as follows, 'Arrived O. K. Impossible return but don't curtail your stay. Clarke confessed

informing Bechnell your whereabouts. Fond love. Charles.'"

"Don't look so cut-up." soothed Katie, bringing a plate of flapjacks and a pot of coffee. "Your dad'll come later. Come now, lovey, eat your breakfast, and smile."

To please Katie, Eleta did both, but she was feeling low. Everything was wrong. Charles was not coming. Thor might be. Horton had gone without a good-by, and his note contained not even one word for her.

She had to get outside. In corduroys and boots, she helped Mike dig paths. That gave her an appetite, at least. After a hearty mid-day meal, she went out again. She tried to harness Whisky to a small toboggan, but the dog thought the idea a washout. The siren of the snowmobile ended the tussle. Whisky escaped, barking loudly.

Eleta, with snow from head to foot, cheeks red as apples, eyes bright, raced after him. There were two men in the car!

"Charles!" she whooped. Then: "Why, it's Thor!"

Her heart leaped madly as she hurled herself at him. He did not kiss her, but held her at arm's length, looking so utterly bewildered that she had to laugh.

"I thought you were a boy," he reproved gravely.

"I'm a tomboy again," Eleta told him. "But what a funny greeting after coming all this way to see me. Just why *did* you come?"

"To take you back to civilization," he said. "Mr. Harvey saw fit to intercept my message to you."

Horton put in evenly: "I

thought it would save you worry, Eleta, if I had Mr. Bechnell here before you knew he had started. Had I not met him at the junction, he could not have made it out here in his car."

"Then I am in your debt, Harvey," said Thor with forced heartiness.

Eleta was leading the way into the cabin. She and Thor stood by the great fireplace taking off their outdoor clothes.

The latter gazed around the huge room with a slightly amused expression on his face. He lifted his eyebrows when he noticed the bunks in the cubicles opening from it.

"Funny background for my lovely lady," he sneered.

"I love it here, and I don't remember saying I am yours again."

"Why, sweet, the very way you ran to me and shouted my

name was enough to tell the world you had taken me back," laughed Thor.

"Yes, I did run to you, shout your name and feel a thrill," she admitted, "but immediately the thrill died. It left me empty."

"It won't take me long to fill your heart again, sweet. Fill it with love. Odd your father left you here alone with his friend. Was he trying to force an issue?"

Eleta gasped. Her eyes went to Horton, at the far end of the room. He had heard. The mackinaw he had taken off dropped from his hand, as he strode toward the fire, his face betraying his anger. She said sharply to Thor: "You don't realize what you're saying. Horton is my friend as well as dad's, and



has been ever since I was a child."

She did not bother to point out that Katie and Mike were there. Thor's insinuation was too silly. Dropping wearily onto the settle, her eyes shifted from the grim face of the tall, dark man to the equally grim face of the tall fair one. Horton was keeping his temper, but by an obvious effort. Thor was aware that he had said the wrong thing. Ignoring Horton's presence, he dropped on his knees.

"Eleta, I came all this way to beg you to take me back," he said in his most dulcet tone. "I can't live without your love. Nothing matters to me but you. I swear that I will be true to you always." He put his arms around her. "Sweet, we can marry whenever you say, for I'm to be made a junior partner soon."

Eleta heard him through, her eyes on his face. But she was thinking of her own reactions, her own emotions, more than of what he was saying. As she had told him, there had been one leap of her heart when she saw him, then—nothing. She raised puzzled eyes to Horton, but he was staring into the fire. He had said he loved her, and yet he had brought Thor to her. She laughed then, shrilly.

"It's funny," she gasped. "Your going after Thor. You must have been anxious to get rid of me. We'd better go, Thor."

Horton's head went up. She saw his face lit by the leaping flames. The look of abysmal misery on it jerked her out of her hysteria. He was trying desperately to mask his anguish. He shut his eyes, but his mouth remained twisted.

Eleta stood up, pushing Thor aside. Straight to Horton she went. He opened his eyes, and looked into hers. Neither spoke. Glances locked, they stood there. Her eyes

were asking him to answer something for both of them, something she could not answer for herself, even yet.

She felt that her heart had stopped, that all life about her was suspended as she waited.

Light seemed to break over Horton's face, dimmed out again, then blazed high. He did not smile, but the grimness had gone. His eyes answered her question as she wanted it to be answered. He straightened, his head lifted.

"Horton?" She said it softly, but there was a lilt in her voice.

"Eleta!" Just that, but it was enough. His smile was only a flash. He did not touch her. But she was content.

It was as if a white light had tunneled through the fog of her brain. As if a suffusingly sweet, clarion-clear call had sounded in her heart. She was filled with serene happiness. Her lips curved into a tender smile.

Thor's voice—she had forgotten he existed—said sharply: "Well, let's get going."

She turned to him. "I'm not going."

"Are you mad?" he snapped.

"Just come to my senses. Mike will drive you in the snowmobile."

"But, sweet, our love——"

"My love—infatuation, rather, is dead. It's a relief to be free of it, for you never could keep your vows. You lied to me, deceived me from the first. You telephoned my maid, promising her a bribe if she would lie to me, that first night I caught you. You found out from her where I was that night you humiliated me at the Paradise. You got here by the same underhand method. Thank Heaven we did not marry, for now I know what real ——" She stopped. Her love for

Horton was too sacred to be told to this man of many loves.

"Good-by, Thor," she said, and went quickly to her room.

She took off her boots and damp corduroys, rubbed her feet with a rough towel and creamed her face. While her deft hands applied a light make-up and brushed her hair, her heart was singing a wild, sweet song. She slipped into a bright-yellow

wool crêpe dress, one that Horton had said he liked, and waited.

Presently he came to her, and carried her out to the fire.

Cradled in his arms, she knew happiness far beyond anything she had even imagined. It went deep, was not just a veneer that covered fear, uncertainty and anguish.

At last, Horton spoke. He held her so that he could see her face



*Slowly, he said: "It's beyond belief that you could love me. I never dared hope that such happiness would come to me."*

and asked: "You are sure, Eleta, quite sure?"

"So very sure, darling," she answered, her heart in her eyes.

Slowly, he said: "It's beyond belief. I never dared hope that such happiness would come to me."

"To us, Horton." Quickly, breathlessly, she poured out her heart to him, making a lovely sonnet of it.

Her voice died away, then whispered: "I was blind, and you gave me eyes that I might see."

He smiled tenderly.

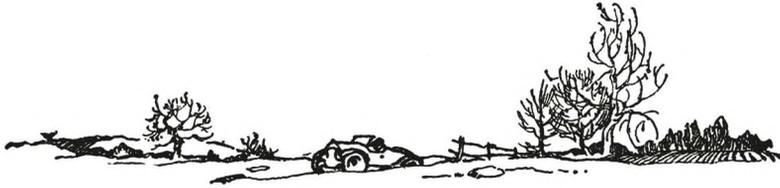
"And love, my beloved. I am giving you all of it. I love you with every fiber of my being." He found her lips.

Now she did not draw away from the passion and demand in his kiss. Her lips answered his with all the throbbing ecstasy of her love.

Time flew by unheeded as they sat before the blazing fire. Then Eleta stirred gently in his arms as he asked: "How would you like to be married up here, dearest?"

"Why, it would be wonderful—in the place I love best in all the world," she murmured dreamily, relaxing against him again.

Outside, in the hushed silence, the snow was falling in a magic blanket of white. It seemed to symbolize the peace, serenity and beauty of the love that was theirs, for all the days to come.



### DOUBT

PERHAPS, perhaps somewhere there is a tune  
 Gay as yourself when laughing, and in lands  
 Where nightingales pay tithe to Prince June,  
 There may be blossoms fragrant as your hands.

It might be that the ancients knew a cloth  
 The texture of your skin, and up the stair  
 Of midnight may have strolled some lovely moth  
 Enchanted by a star bright as your hair.

It might be there is thistledown adrift  
 From cup to flower cup with your strange grace,  
 And earth, perhaps, has known one dawn to lift  
 Veils from a sky the ivory of your face—

But I doubt any word of this is true:  
 One sun and moon, one night and day, one you.

BERT COOKSLEY.



# Meet The Best Man

By Barbara Lamb

**I**F only Dick had given her some sort of warning, just an inkling of an idea about the man's startling looks, she might have been able to withstand the shock.

But Dick in his laconic way had said only:

"Roomed with me at college for three years. Nice chap. Nice-looking. Used to be nuts about my kid sister, or she was about him."

Now Alicia stood on the windy station platform beside Dick, her icy hand resting in the hand of

Dick's best man, her cheeks whipped to a sudden scarlet that might have been the wind's doing, but wasn't. And try as she did to take her eyes from his oddly attractive face, she couldn't. She simply stared at him, helpless in the electrifying current that leaped from the contact of their clasped hands.

Try as she did, frantically, to think of something to say, only inanities presented themselves to her befuddled mind.

"Dick didn't tell me," she said at

last, as brightly as she could, "that his best man was a movie-football-star combination, a menace to nice young girls."

The expression on the face of Peter, the best man, remained unchanged at her feeble attempt at wit. But he answered in kind.

"And he didn't warn me," he said gravely, "that his bride is probably the best-looking girl in the State. All he said was that you had nice eyes and played a good game of golf. Is romance dead in your soul, old man?"

Dick started. He grinned somewhat sheepishly, then reddened.

"I never was much good at slinging words," he laughed. "Where's Lila?"

Lila, Dick's sister, was the girl who had either been nuts about Peter or about whom Peter had been nuts. Alicia remembered her picture—small, regular features, not very exciting. But when Peter, having extricated her from a pile of baggage dragged her to them, Alicia's heart sank unaccountably.

In the flesh Lila was more than exciting. Her exquisite coloring—blue-black hair and creamy skin, and blue eyes with thick, dark lashes, gave her a flair that few men would be inclined to resist.

She kissed Alicia warmly, stood off and admired her, hugged her brother and told him he was luckier than he deserved and then, with an air of easy intimacy that might have meant everything or nothing, proceeded to direct Peter in stowing away her baggage, and finally seated herself in the back of the car beside him. As was perfectly proper. Then they started off.

Alicia's mind careened dizzily as the car climbed the snowy hills to the big house where, just a week

from to-day, she and Dick were to be married.

"I never was much good at slinging words." No, he wasn't much good at words. Sometimes even his kisses fumbled, landed ignominiously on her ear, or bumped into her tilted nose. Poor Dick.

"What am I doing?" Alicia asked herself severely. "I'm pitying Dick! I love him. He's going to be my husband. That man has upset me."

She looked up guiltily and caught that man's intense brown gaze in the mirror. He looked away quickly, and began an animated conversation with Lila. Alicia tried to join in the chatter, tried to draw Dick into it.

But Dick was rather absent. And she was unable to toss off bright remarks at Lila's amazing rate. It was no use.

Catastrophe was just ahead, around a not very distant bend in the road. It hung above her, Alicia sensed, glittered like a sword in the warm, magnetic depths of Peter's brown eyes. Its presence clouded the bright winter skies, shadowed the snowy hills that promised skis and snowshoes.

The others were entirely unaware of her inner consternation. Alicia hugged it to her own heart.

"This can't be anything important," she thought as she determined to conquer her mounting tide of exaltation. "I'm in love with Dick. He's a dear. He'll make a perfect husband. But Peter is right. Romance isn't in him."

Dinner that evening should have been gay. But Lila, sheathed in sea-green satin that did queer things to her eyes, was the unfailing focus for Peter's eyes. He didn't even dance with Alicia. She was miserable, and yet thankful he didn't.

By the next day the entire bridal party had assembled, filling the

house with young laughter, and swirling gowns, and satin mules, and dinner jackets, and fragrant pipes. The bridesmaids took possession of the south wing of the house. Lila was lovelier than any of them, even prettier than Fran, Alicia's sister, whose curly head and wide eyes usually attracted a swarm of admirers.

Alicia lay awake in the dark, hot cheeks burning with shame at her wayward thoughts, her brain tormented by the knowledge that she was trying now to escape Dick's kisses, to avoid being left alone with him, that she hated his sister because Peter was thoroughly smitten by her.

"Maybe," she consoled herself half-heartedly, "all brides are like this, lose their nerve, get fidgety and uncertain."

But she had never been uncertain about Dick till Peter stepped off the train, till the touch of his hand released the current that pricked ceaselessly at her each time she saw him, spoke to him, even now as she lay in the dark thinking of him.

If Peter noticed her at all, he gave no sign of it. Probably he'd said his pretty speech because he felt obliged to say something complimentary. And he was obviously in love with Lila.

He wouldn't be fool enough to fall in love with the bride, to think she'd drop Dick at the eleventh hour and—and do what? Run off with him like a little coward?

Two nights before the wedding Peter danced with her for the first time. As his arms went lightly about her Alicia closed her eyes to keep from revealing the tormenting secret she knew she would be unable to hide.

Peter held her rather stiffly.

Then the orchestra swung into a waltz. Alicia found herself held closely against his taut, lithe body the way she wanted him to hold her. They were welded by the irresistible slow rhythm into a single unit of music and heartbeats.

In a shadowy corner Peter suddenly stopped and stared down at her with something like horror. Alicia's knees trembled; something inside her swelled till her body was too small to hold it.

"What is it?" she mumbled.

"I was afraid of this," Peter said in a hard, cold voice. "I tried to avoid you, not to dance with you, to keep my mind off you. We're in for it, you know."

Alicia was silent. Then it wasn't Lila! She raised her head slowly, no longer ashamed to face him now that she knew he loved her.

"You mean that?" she whispered.

"I wish I didn't," he said bitterly. "There's going to be a treasure hunt later to-night. Manage to get into the car I'll be driving. We've got to talk this thing out. It's the sensible thing to do."

Alicia nodded. Then some one came up and swept her off. Sensible? What was sensible about it? It was a horrid dream. But a dream from which she had no desire to wake. Waking would mean facing the "Wedding March," the blur of Dick's face down that long aisle, Dick waiting for her, loving her. Dear, kind, trusting Dick.

She found Fran in time to rearrange the treasure-hunting cars. Fran gave her a queer glance when she announced that she was going in the old roadster with Peter.

"Where'll I go?" she asked. "I was supposed to be with him."

"You go with Dick, angel child." Alicia tried to be light and casual.

Fran nodded, though she didn't



*"I was afraid of this," Peter said in a hard, cold voice. "I tried to avoid you, not to dance with you, to keep my mind off you. But I can't help it. I love you."*

seem pleased. But she was fond of Dick. It would be all right. Dick wouldn't notice.

They made a stab at gathering a few of the objects cryptically designated by their slip of paper. Then

Peter pulled up the car on a snowy bluff from which they could see the village asleep in the cold moonlight.

Peter gave her a cigarette. They smoked in silence.

"Look here, Alicia," he burst out abruptly, "I may be crazy, raving mad, but I'm—I don't know what's got into me. I must be in love with you."

Alicia was engulfed by panic. She shouldn't have come. She should have laughed this off before it was too late, before she hurt Dick too horribly to contemplate.

"Yes?" she said.

Peter started. She saw the pain and bewilderment on his face.

"Aren't you—I thought—oh, I see. I've made an utter fool of myself. I had a wild notion that you were—— Never mind. Let's go back and forget what I've said."

Alicia decided to be silent, to let him turn back to the house, to Dick and his kisses that were now mere gestures to be endured when necessary. She was firm in her intention, but her lips obeyed their own impulse.

"I don't want to forget."

Peter waited for no more. With a sound that was almost a sob of relief he reached out and drew her so close that it was impossible, even if she had wanted to, to escape his kiss.

"I knew it, I knew it," he repeated when the brief, guilty storm of emotion had spent itself. "I knew you loved me. I felt it the minute I looked at you. You can't marry poor Dick."

Jolted out of the haven where no logical consideration could touch her, Alicia tried to disguise a sob as a sigh. Two tears shimmered down her cheeks.

"Poor Dick," she repeated. "That's what I've been thinking

since the moment you stepped off the train. I wish he'd never asked you to be his best man. I could have gone along serenely thinking I loved him. I would have been happy with him."

"No," Peter said, "you couldn't have. Sooner or later we'd have met. It would have been even more ghastly if you were already married. Now, at least, we have a chance."

"What chance?" Alicia asked dully. "I can't hurt him so. I couldn't tell him the truth."

"Darling, you must." Peter was as miserable as she. "I feel like a rat. But we can't help it. And it's the only thing to do."

Alicia shook her head. The tears fell in bright warm drops, shone in two silvered streaks on her cheeks. Peter drew her tenderly into the shelter of his arms, pillowed her head on his shoulder, stroked her hair with light, gentle fingers.

"I'm a beast," he whispered when she had regained some of her self-control, "to do this to Dick. But you won't be able to make him happy. We can't let things go on as though we'd never met, as though we didn't need each other."

Alicia wrenched herself out of his embrace. In his arms no thought was possible; nothing was impossible or wrong. But out of them she was aware of the world about them, the pressure of decency and convention. Still, that seemed very distant now from the silent snow-covered bluff, the smoky ghost of the village down there in the peaceful shadows. She held her aching head.

"He needs me, too," she said at last. "I don't know what to do, Peter. I'll try to think. I'll sleep on it."

If any one noticed her pallor, no one said anything. But when Alicia

was in bed, glad to be alone to wrestle with her problem, her door opened stealthily.

"It's Fran," came a whisper. "Is anything wrong?"

Alicia huddled down under the blankets. It would be a temptation to talk it over with her. But Fran was still a baby. Her ideas mustn't be smudged; her ideals must be left untouched.

"No, dear," she said. "Why?"

"I thought you looked funny. I'm worried."

Alicia wanted to laugh and cry at once. Dear little Fran worrying about her. Then perhaps Dick had noticed, too. She wept softly, tried to stifle the sound in her pillow, but Fran came running to comfort her.

"It's really nothing," Alicia gasped.

When she looked up she was shocked at Fran's gravity. She seemed older, grown up somehow, to have bridged the gap of three years so that she understood her sister's grief. Alicia stared.

"You should be so happy now," Fran said slowly, "with your wedding only two days off, Ally. What is it? Tell me. I'd die before I'd let anything hurt you. You know that. Have I done anything?"

"Of course not, infant," Alicia answered more composedly. "Go to bed."

But morning brought no peace, no glimmer of hope, no firm decision. Downstairs for an early solitary breakfast, Alicia found Dick.

He was pale, and his face was a little lined. His feeble smile hurt. He must have noticed something.

"You're not looking so well," he

said glumly as she poured coffee for him. "Anything troubling you?"

Alicia smiled.

"Too much partying," she said lightly. "This has been a hectic week. Our honeymoon will have to be part rest cure."

He smiled wanly. With increasing fear she noticed that he hardly met her eyes. She didn't dare reciprocate his solicitude. If she asked him what had painted those shadows under his eyes she would have to listen to the answer—that he suspected she was no longer in love with him.

It was a silent, somber breakfast for a couple who were to be blissfully happy in another day. Alicia was relieved when the others trooped noisily downstairs full of plans for a skiing party that afternoon.

Out on the windswept hillside Dick was soon far in the distance, and the others were forgotten. Peter was at her side.

"I didn't decide," she said, "till this morning. Dick looks dreadful. I wanted to cry when I looked at him. Peter, I can't tell him I don't love him; toss him aside the day before our wedding."

Peter paled.

"But what about you?" he jerked out the words. "Married to a man you don't love, pretending you do. It's—you can't, darling. I won't let you.

You're mine. Every hour we're letting slip by is carrying us farther apart."

Alicia leaned wearily against him.

"I can't think any more," she moaned. "Let's go back. We've lost the others."

They entered a strangely quiet





"He knew we loved each other, Peter," she said. "He tried to kill himself—for us, for me. I'll never be able to leave him now. Please go away, darling, and don't ever try to see me again."

house. The unreal hush impressed both of them as they stamped into the hall.

"They're not back yet," Alicia said.

Footsteps, careful and hushed, sounded and Alicia's mother came out of the library. She was smiling

queerly. When she reached Alicia her smile broke into bits, and she fell into her daughter's arms.

"My poor darling," she sobbed quietly, "try not to cry when you see him. Be brave, dear. The doctor says he'll be all right in a few months. And with a careful opera-

tion he'll have the use of both his legs, perhaps won't even need crutches."

Alicia walked stiffly into the library, hardly conscious of Peter at her side. As she neared the couch the doctor beckoned to her to approach. She sank to her knees beside Dick's white face.

His lips moved silently. She read her name in the slow, painful movements. When remorse and dry-eyed desperation had left her limp, she rose and went to the doctor.

"What happened?" she asked.

Dick had gone over the bluff, he told her, down the thinly covered icy slope that was guarded by a large sign reading "Danger."

A thousand sharp, pitiless knives turned in her heart. He had tried to kill himself so she would be free.

"He knew, Peter," she said distinctly. "He tried to kill himself—for us, for me. I'll never be able to leave him now. Please go away, darling, and don't ever try to see me again."

She didn't see him leave the room. She was beside the silent form on the couch, hiding her face in the snowy jacket.

When, hours later, they moved Dick to his room, Alicia clung to his side.

But when Fran stole into the room Alicia relaxed her vigil to stretch her cramped limbs.

"There's hot tea in your room," Fran whispered. "I'll stay with him."

Alicia bent to kiss her sister's face, almost as bloodless as her own.

"You're an angel, Fran," she said. "Don't worry so. He'll pull through."

Fran drew away from her. The child always tried to hide her emotions. Alicia left Dick in her care and crossed the hall to her own room. A few minutes later she started toward Dick's room. As she opened the door softly she heard voices. Was he conscious? Must she face him now with her lies? No, Fran was speaking.

"But that was so foolish," she was scolding gently. "What good would that have done? I know you're unhappy. So am I, but——"

Dick's voice was anguished.

"I wish I had been killed," he said. "She's never been anything but wonderful to me—and to you. That's what makes it so hard. I can't let her down. She loves me and I've got to stick by her. I've got to pretend, try to make her happy, while you sit by."

Alicia stopped only for a coat. She fled down the stairs, hurled herself into the first car she saw in the driveway, and drove like a mad-woman toward the station. She reached it as the train chugged under the shed. On the lonely, windy platform she saw the tall figure whose first appearance here had quickened the rhythm of her heart, her life.

"Wait, Peter," she called. "I'm coming with you."





# Three on a Honeymoon

By Vivian Grey

A SERIAL—Part V.

## CHAPTER XI.

**T**HE sight of the two cars there, side by side, struck Nihla as amusing and sounded an almost hysterical note in her consciousness. She was so tired, and then to have to talk to both Holt and Henry, to explain, to placate. It was too much! And so, turning, she hurried toward the back door.

Thank Heaven, Mandy was there, crisp and fresh in clean apron and

uniform. She was like a strong, safe harbor in a troubled sea.

"Mandy!" Nihla almost fell in the door, the almost superstrength that had been sustaining her leaving her as the urgent need for it disappeared with the presence of a trusted friend.

"Miss Nihla!" Mandy turned, her black face lined with anxiety. "Miss Nihla!" And somehow caution, instinctive with her race, kept her voice to little more than a whisper.

"I sure been worried about you!"

"Oh, Mandy, don't let them know I'm here! I can't—I just can't face either of them now!"

"And sure you won't, honey!" Mandy whispered back. "You'll go right up the back way. Mandy'll take you and you'll go to bed and sleep after Mandy brings you some food! You sure did have me worried, honey! You sure did!" She almost carried the slim form of the girl up the stairs and to her own room.

"Mandy, you won't let them come up—you won't?" Nihla implored as her trembling fingers fumbled with fastenings the colored woman had to undo.

"Over my dead body they'll come, honey, and not before! You sure can trust me to keep them two hounds from bothering you! Been sitting down there glaring at each other—one of them since last night and the other been there for 'bout an hour. Yes, honey, Mr. Henry Allen he come last night for dinner and he most go wild when you not come! He sure did! But he done eat his dinner. And then he sit here all night."

"And couldn't you go to bed, Mandy?"—sleepily as, after a swift warm tub, she was settling between the soft, fragrant sheets.

"What? Me stay up for the likes of him?" Mandy laughed softly. "Not me, honey! I knows men too well for that! No, I went to bed and slept, I did! And when I came down this morning, he was still sitting there. And did he fume! 'Fraid to make a loud fuss 'bout it for fear the town might know and there'd be scandal. But, my, he did make plenty fuss here! I got him a good breakfast then this morning."

Nihla grinned sleepily.

"You would, Mandy!" she said. "You know the way to placate most men."

"And it sure does work most of the time, honey! Mr. Henry Allen, he make a good breakfast. But the other he wouldn't have nothing to do with food. Just glared and paced, and paced and glared!"

And Mandy vanished then, locking the door of the room after her. And shortly returned with a glass of warm milk.

Nihla drank it and almost before the colored woman left the room again was back on her pillows and asleep.

She was too utterly weary even for dreams. With the closing of her eyes the dark, soft curtain of sleep dropped gently and excluded everything from her consciousness.

Her face was calmly untroubled, even though its pallor was extreme and there were deep shadows under her eyes.

It was dusk when Nihla awakened. She opened her eyes to a softly shaded room and a delicious sense of rest and comfort.

And then she was conscious of the faint, freshly sweet scent of violets. Violets?—she wondered. Now, what could smell like violets there? They hadn't one on the place. That was one thing she could take up her time with, too—her time and Henry's money! Having a gorgeous bed of violets even though it meant bringing a ton of black soil from somewhere to mix with the sand of the place!

Violets on the breakfast table in the morning! Nothing could be lovelier.

But what could it be that smelled like violets there now?

She sat up in bed. Whiskers rose,

yawningly, from the covers, a look of reproach in her soft dark eyes that her mistress had so twisted the hours of sleep and waking.

She sat with her dark, curly head cocked on one side, eyeing Nihla, her adoration tinged with curiosity, and something else that the girl didn't quite understand. A low rumble, half growl and half merely dog conversation came from the furred throat.

And then Nihla started, her figure tensing to a slightly more erect position. She stared through the curtained dusk as if trying to assure herself that her eyes were not betraying her.

And then the figure rose from the wing chair at the other side of the spacious bedroom and moved toward the bed.

"Yes, I'm here"—in the clipped-off words of Rupert Holt.

Nihla stared at him for a silent instant.

"I'll have to fire Mandy for this," she said, and then with a funny little laugh, as if remembering her penniless state that behove no firing, or hiring: "As if I could!"

"Don't blame Mandy," was the quick rejoinder. "I had to nearly annihilate her to get this key. Threats or bribes were unavailing. And that pup of yours I had to lock with myself in your farthest servants' cottage until she stopped her barking and yelping and allowed me to establish a certain sort of armed friendship with her so that we could both be here without waking you. She doesn't trust me yet, though I've fed her chicken and chocolate bonbons! If I made a false move she'd be at my throat! How do you win such loyalty?"

Nihla stared a moment in silence, having dropped back to the shelter of the covers.

"Why are you here?" she asked finally.

"Because I love you"—just as simply came the reply.

Nihla turned away, her eyes rebellious.

"And I suppose that's why you've done all the rest."

It was Holt then who didn't reply immediately. He seemed to flinch a little at her words and pain changed his expression slightly.

"Won't you try to forgive that?"—in a low, pleading tone.

Nihla turned wearily away from the burning gaze of his eyes. It was too intense, seemed to search her very soul and that was something that she wanted to mask to him.

"Please go away."

Holt considered.

"When may I come back?"

"I don't know," she murmured in a very small voice.

Holt settled back in his chair again.

"I won't go until you have told me when I may come back and see you. I must talk to you, Nihla."

"Suppose I do, just to get rid of you, say you may come back at a certain time? I could refuse you admittance then or not be here."

"If you promise to see me I know that you'll see me."

To that Nihla made no answer. It was true. She'd probably see him if he came and asked even if she hadn't promised. Time would weaken her; time and the constant urge of her heart against her reason.

"You've been so cruel," she said finally, looking away from him again. "I'm almost afraid of you."

"But I can be more tender than I have been cruel, Nihla!"—swiftly on his feet, so swiftly that it brought Whiskers to her feet in defense of her mistress, a low note of warning echoing from her furred

throat. "Let me try to erase the memory of all this! Let me devote my life and everything I have to that! You have no one, Nihla, who would give a deeper and more tender and considerate devotion to making you happy!"

"If I could only believe you," she murmured, almost as if speaking to herself while her slim white fingers toyed with the soft satin coverlet. "I'd like to. I feel as if I needed some one like that, but I'm afraid. I wish"—her lovely eyes lifting gravely to meet his—"that you'd go now. I want to be alone. If you want to see me again, come back to-morrow morning around eleven. If, in the meantime, you decide differently, then just don't come. You needn't phone," she finished quietly, without even a trace of emotion, while it seemed to her that her heart was rioting.

She couldn't have said more if she would have.

"Nihla!" he exclaimed in husky protest. "How can you even think that I might not want to see you? Might change my mind?"

"Well," she replied, with something that tried to be a smile but was infinitely sad in its pitiful attempt, "after all I am talked about. I'm being cut. Men don't generally seek the companionship of such girls—honorably."

"Nihla! If I've done that to you —" But her words interrupted his stricken protest:

"You haven't. You haven't done anything to me. No one has. No one could. We make our own lives. I made mine. And now"—her voice on the verge of breaking—"if you want to be kind to me please go! I must be alone!"

"All right," he said gently, as his eyes lingered on her lovely face as if loath to leave it, "but I'll be

back. Meantime"—bending slightly toward her as if to impress the urgency of his plea—"Nihla, promise me you won't do anything. You won't—" She caught his meaning and saved him finishing the sentence.

"I won't"—with a little laugh. "I won't take poison or anything like that. I'm too curious. I rather want to see it through."

His face lighted.

"Good! I'll see you to-morrow. And meantime I'll be counting the hours!"

Then he was gone and she was alone in her room save for the tiny black dog sitting looking at her inquiringly, her short tail approving enthusiastically of Holt's departure and suggesting with equal enthusiasm the appropriateness of the hour for a walk.

Nihla was starting to dress when Mandy appeared with a tray. Nihla knew from her expression that she had many things to say so waited.

"Well, Mandy?"

"Well, Miss Nihla, ma'am, I sure would marry that man was I in your place! I sure would! I sure do like a man what am boss and he's one what is! The way he lock me in the living room and keep me there and say when I tell him I have things in the oven what needs seeing to, let 'em burn! Let 'em burn! I'm going to see your mistress even if the whole place burns down! What a man, Miss Nihla, honey, what a man he am! And so I finally had to give him the key to your room or the whole kitchen range would have been spoiled! And then after I give it to him he lock me down there to keep me from interrupting!"

Nihla, who had been going on with her dressing, turned to look at



*Nihla opened her eyes, then started, her figure tensing to an erect position. She stared through the dusk as if trying to assure herself that her eyes were not betraying her. "Yes, I'm here," said Rupert Holt.*

the colored woman and smiled, perhaps a little grimly, but smiled.

"Mandy, I'm not so sure it was all concern for the kitchen range."

"Well, anyway, Miss Nihla, honey, no woman ever ought to turn a man like that down! Every woman wants a boss when she marry



*Lawrence Benson Daily*

and you sure would have one in that man, you wouldn't dast say anything. Why, honey, you wouldn't even have to think for yourself!"

"And you think that's paradise?"

"I know it is, for a woman, especially a woman likes of you who

ain't never done nothing all her life but have a good time. Why, Miss Nihla, honey, that just the sort of man you need. He'd take care of you. You wouldn't never need to worry as long as you was married to him."

And Nihla wondered. Holt was certainly impetuously masterful. That quality had swept them into a horrible situation. But it could be just as wonderful a shield and protector to her, too.

"And then he didn't eat, Miss Nihla. I like a man what can think of a woman once in a while before his stomach, anyway!"

Nihla laughed softly.

"Mandy, you're impossible."

Mandy's black face shone. Her mistress was smiling and happy again and so she, too, could be happy once more.

"And Mister Henry Allen he try to bribe me, he hand out a bill—a yellow one—and ask me call him minute you wake up. But"—lifting her head a little higher—"I tell him I working for you and take no money from some one else for to tell things on you. And then he done went away and said he'd call up. And has he called! He's done called every half hour and I've said you ain't wake up yet. He called just before I come up here."

"I'll talk to him the next time he calls, Mandy."

"All right, Miss Nihla"—with audible regret. "But you mark my words you ain't going to be happy with no man what ain't boss. You don't want to be having to decide what you do all your life. You need some one, honey, what knows what's good for you and what you ought to have!"

"All right, Mandy!" Nihla exclaimed, laughing gently, "but I'll talk to Henry next time he calls!"

And then she answered the plea of Wiskers's giddy little curl of tail and pleading dark eyes and went out to the lawn.

It was cool and lovely—that quiet purple hour just before dark, when flowers are their sweetest and birds'

songs have hushed to a gentle lullaby, and everything seems softened and beautified, even the cares of the day.

Nihla, walking over the soft grass with Whiskers moving like an adoring shadow at her heels, seemed to forget a great deal that had been hard in the past days and was thinking, compassionately, of that other Nihla—poor, tragic girl!

If she'd only had courage to go on things would have righted themselves somehow. They always did. But life had buffeted her so bitterly. And she must have been very lonely. She had lovers. But lovers are so seldom friends. And humans need friends so much.

Nihla pitied that other girl who had first borne her name. There was not the least shadow of resentment in the feeling with which she regarded her. Nihla understood all too well the terrific pressure of circumstances.

She had walked only a little way along the river when she heard Mandy coming after her.

"It's Mr. Henry Allen on the telephone, Miss Nihla, ma'am!" she said.

Nihla turned and went back to the house.

She wasn't prepared for the agitation she heard in Henry's voice. Her own life had been such a hectic thing that one more or one less exciting incident meant very little. She could have quite forgotten the incident of Rupert Holt and those hours she was kept in the beach cottage if it weren't that Rupert Holt himself was impressed indelibly on her consciousness.

She wondered vaguely if, in the days that were to come with Henry, she would ever be able to completely forget Rupert Holt and some of the moments they had known. The while she was listening to Henry's

alarmed voice asking her what had happened. Nihla wondered as she listened if there was a trace of anger in the tone.

"It's hardly a thing to discuss over the telephone, Henry," she said, "but if you want to come out I'll tell you all about it."

"I'll start right now!"

"Fine! Come and have that delayed dinner with me!" She was marveling at the lightness of her own voice. But things were unraveling; the tangle that her life had temporarily gotten into was undoing without too much difficulty and soon her way would stretch ahead, smooth and untroubled, made so by Henry's money, his protection and his name.

Everything would be settled then. There would be no more cause for those vague uneasy glancings into the future. And there would be no more adventure.

With Holt, with his quick flashes of emotion, with sometimes, even his swift injustice, there would be high adventure and gay chance!

For a moment it lured her. Her eyes brightened.

But Henry was coming for dinner and then everything would be settled between them. Anyway, Holt had found it easy to lose faith in her, easy to blame her. Surely that couldn't be love, even though it was goaded by old emotions that had fed upon themselves until they broke bounds.

She was a little bit glad to see Henry, when his chauffeur opened the door of the expensive car and he stepped out. He brought with him such a solid, safe sense of security.

It would be nice to live that way—nice especially after the past year.

And so she was smiling sweetly at Henry as she led him to the din-

ing room, forestalling his nervous, impatient queries with gay little gestures.

"Were you really so worried about me? That was sweet of you! It's nice to know some one cares a lot!"

"I do, Nihla! You don't have to be told that?" came rather ferociously from the man. "But there are things I want you to tell me."

She was showing him his chair, almost seating him. It was all so different from when she was with Rupert Holt! The thought flashed through her mind. Then she was the one who received the superlative attention and consideration. Henry was just a different type. He had lived in a family where women waited on the men. His mother had probably stood beside his place at the table and served him, heaped his plate and watched adoringly while he ate.

That was the old order. Henry belonged to it. Rupert was of the new.

"There are things, Nihla," Henry was talking again in that sputtery, indignant way, "that I want to hear you deny. Things that——"

But Nihla picked up the one word and stared across the table at him.

"Deny?" she asked.

"Yes, I'll tell you. Oh——" Mandy had entered the room with food and Henry was stalling until she would be gone again, but Nihla would have none of it.

"Go on," she insisted. "I don't mind Mandy knowing anything you might have to say. She's busy anyway."

"But I thought——"

"I haven't anything to conceal, Henry. Mandy knows all there is already. Please go on"—as if eager to have over with and disposed of, any charge he might make.

And then Mandy was tactfully

out of the room, her services done with swift silence.

"Well, you see, Nihla, this man Holt has been spreading stories. Of course, I know they're not true. I really wouldn't have to ask you but I just wanted to hear your denial and explanation. After all, it did seem funny when you weren't here to keep our dinner date and when you didn't come in that evening, but it would take more than Holt's say-so to make me believe the tales he'd have spread."

Nihla knew then that the ghastly plan which Holt had told her of had been carried out and the gossip had already gotten as far as Henry Allen.

But instead of breaking, something within her seemed to chill and freeze. She felt as if a chasm miles deep was opening between her and Allen, a thing that could never be bridged.

"Of course I know you, Nihla," Allen was going on nervously, filling in time when she didn't reply immediately. "I know you are above reproach, that you're the kind of woman I'd want to marry, and that Holt was probably jealous when he started those stories. I know they're not true——"

It was then that Nihla interrupted and rather sharply:

"But they are true, Henry," she said in a cold, firm voice. "They are true. I haven't any denials to give you. And I haven't any explanations to make. And I'm probably not the kind of woman you could marry."

Henry stared at her, wondering if he'd heard right. Nihla understood the dazed expression in his eyes.

"Yes, you understood me, Henry. I have no explanations to make to you, no denials. And I release you quite completely."

"But, Nihla! Why—why, you can't do this! What do you expect to do? You're being hasty! You don't realize what you're saying! Mind, I haven't blamed you yet!"

"Oh, yes, I know what I'm saying, Henry!" She was actually smiling as she talked, a queer crystalline sort of smile that it would have hurt any one who cared for her to see on her lovely young face. "I know exactly what I'm saying and I'm releasing you quite definitely. I think it's the first really sane thing I've done in a great while. But finish your dinner by all means!"—as he started from his seat. "This doesn't mean that we can't be the best of friends just the same—that is, if you're willing to be friendly with a woman people whisper about!" There was still that smile in her eyes.

Allen went back to his interest in Mandy's good food and talked the while:

"You don't know what you're saying, Nihla. There isn't anything so bad that it can't be mended and I'm sure this isn't either. You can't have thought out what it would mean if you and I broke off, changed our plans! What would you do? A girl like you—never used to working or doing anything?"

Nihla laughed softly.

"There have been lots of other women who have found they could do things when they had to. I'm no more stupid than the average, I hope!"

"Stupid? Why, you're not stupid at all! It's just that you haven't ever been used to doing things for yourself, much less working for anybody else!"

He finished his dinner finally and they went to the living room still on that note. It suddenly began to get on Nihla's nerves. She felt



*"You see, Nihla, Holt has been spreading stories. Of course, I know they're not true. But I just wanted to hear your denial and explanation. After all, it did seem funny your staying out all night."*

stified with Henry's conversation, his useless protestations after having let his questions at the table reveal the shallowness of his faith.

"Please!" she said suddenly, the word almost a hysterical cry on her lips. "I can't listen to you any more to-night! I've told you that

in return for my right to refuse to explain or deny I give you your freedom! What more can you ask? And now will you please go? Please?"

"Nihla, you're not yourself to-night!" Henry protested. "If you send me away, suppose I shouldn't come back at your call?"

She almost laughed at his childishness.

"There'll never be a call! Please! I can't stand any more of this to-night. I was glad to know that you were coming. I had thought of you as the one friend I could count on. But now——" She paused, bewildered for a moment by her own fury.

"I am that!" Allen hastened to assure her. "I am that, Nihla! You're supersensitive! I hadn't meant to disbelieve you or anything of that sort. You've misunderstood me!"

"Perhaps, Henry. But, at least, my eyes have been opened. I don't blame you. I—why, really, I'm grateful to you! It'll all be so much better this way. I'll be so much happier doing things for myself than I would be cheating you out of the sort of wife you'll find some day, some one who really could love you. I'm grateful to you. And now, please go! I've got to rest."

She was trembling as if the room, with its bright fire on the hearth, was cold.

Allen stared at her a moment.

"You're not yourself. You do need rest. I'll go, but I'll be back to see you to-morrow."

Nihla was scarcely conscious of his saying "Good night," so eager was she to shut the doors of her house on everything but her own thought.

Her house! His house—with just a trace of bitterness in the humor.

She turned back to the room, her attention attracted then by a famil-

iar sound on the glass of the French window. She opened it with elaborate ceremony.

"Come in, Miss Whiskers! Come in!" she exclaimed in a voice that trembled slightly and was husky as the little animal walked gravely in, and then stood looking up into her mistress's face, sensing, with that swift sure instinct given to four-footed companions, that all was not well with Nihla.

She pressed close against Nihla's feet as the latter dropped wearily into a deep chair, as if to grant the comfort of her warm, devoted little self to the mistress whose difficulties were beyond her ken.

"It's all right, Miss Whiskers," Nihla whispered through the tears that misted her vision. "There are still the two of us!"

It wasn't that she cared, really, about breaking with Allen. It was just the disappointment of discovering how frail all human friendships and ties were. And then it was the pain that throbbed in her being at every vague memory of Rupert Holt and it seemed there were a thousand things continually reminding her of him. The whole house seemed to smell of his violets—the violets he had put there beside her bed to wait until she wakened that morning.

Her aloneness seemed to press in upon her with terrific force. She knew vaguely that there was need for action, too. For with things as they were with Henry she couldn't stay in the house. She would have to make plans to leave.

It would be easy! There would just be her clothes and Whiskers, who would trot faithfully by her side no matter where she went and share her lot, glad to be near her no matter what the circumstances.

There were things she should

think of but for the evening she would relax and rest.

So her fingers idly turned the dial of the radio, and Richard Crooks's lovely voice came into that silent room in the hauntingly beautiful strains of the Lullaby from Jocelyn. Calm and sweet, it was like balm to the weary, hurt soul of the listening girl. She lay back in her chair listening and looking out through the French windows at a calm, night-blue sky set with crisp, cool silver stars.

The lovely, golden flow of Crooks's voice changed to that song Nihla had always thought of as peculiarly his—"Just to Linger in Your Arms." There was something heart-breakingly beautiful about it as it came to her on the air waves; something that stirred her, thrilled and trembled in her heart and brought a mist to her eyes.

The beauty of it all held her entranced. The troubles of her world seemed millions of miles away. There was only herself and the little dog, pressing close against her feet in sleep, and the lovely star-spangled sky, and the voice in achingly beautiful song.

## CHAPTER XII.

It seemed to Nihla that she must have been there for eons when she realized that Mandy was fussing around in the room. That was unusual for Mandy at that hour. She stared at the colored woman a moment before understanding.

"Oh, Mandy," she said then in a sympathetic voice, "you needn't stay up. You needn't worry about me! I'm all right."

"But I just couldn't be easy, Miss Nihla, honey, with you sitting here alone so quietlike when I knew you ought been in your bed long ago.

The way these men keep a person disturbed!"

Nihla laughed a little and was glad that she could still laugh. And then on a thought that came to her like a sharp, swift pain:

"Mandy, are there still violets in my room?" And as the woman said there were: "Please throw them out!"

Mandy started to do her bidding, but Nihla's voice once more came in command:

"Oh, no, don't, Mandy! Please don't!"

She couldn't! Not Holt's violets! He had touched them. That made them different from any other violets in the world.

Mandy turned back, and Nihla was sure that she saw in the colored woman's face a look of satisfaction. Holt had, at least, won a place in Mandy's respect and esteem!

"But I think you better be getting up to your bed, honey," Mandy said with the privilege that affection gave her.

Nihla smiled at her.

"Thanks, Mandy. I'll go right up."

She was scarcely on her feet when the dog was, too, and was following her soberly up the stairs and to her lovely room. There she curled up on the foot of the bed to watch her mistress until lights out, when, with a little sigh of content, she nestled to sleep.

Nihla, however, was longer in closing her eyes and consciousness to the world. But her sleep, when it did come, was deep and dreamless so weary was she physically and emotionally.

Bright daylight etched the Austrian pines against a turquoise sky set here and there with the white fleece of a soft cloud when Nihla opened her eyes again.

Whiskers was sitting gravely watching her, considerably waiting with her usual riotous greeting for the first flicker of an eyelash that would indicate her mistress's waking. It would have been much against her affectionate regard for her mistress to make a noisy and boisterous move as long as her lids remained closed, but once they lifted there was no limit to the toe biting, nipping, and bouncing orgy a gay and privileged little tail-wagger might indulge in.

Nihla's laughter was a signal for increased fury of antic. Whiskers stood taut and listened for an exciting moment to the thrilling sound and then went more madly than ever at her rioting. She seemed actually to laugh with the hilarity of the moment.

The romp over, Nihla dressed. There was a bright young gayety about her movements. It was Whiskers, largely, who had lent her that. Without the frisking effervescence of the little furred personality at the start of her day she might have found it more difficult to throw off the dark moods that threatened her.

It wasn't easy to face the uncertainty ahead of her; but it would be easier to encounter with laughter in one's being than with shadows.

Nihla was toying with a light breakfast when the telephone buzzed and Nihla was informed by the grinning Mandy that it was "Mr. Henry Allen, Miss Nihla, ma'am!"

Nihla glanced at the clock. It was ten thirty. Rupert Holt was due at eleven. And he would be prompt. So, yes, she said in reply to Henry, he might come up and right away.

That suited the sudden mad plan that had come into her mind. She

went back to the breakfast table with a slow, funny smile twisting the corners of her vivid mouth.

It seemed strange to her as she sat there at the table, laid with its lovely old silver and delicate china, that life should be going on about her just as it always had, when so soon everything was to change for her, and she would no longer have all the gracious accompaniments of life that had always been hers.

They would pass on into the hands of some stranger. Things that had been hers and her family's.

And yet life was going on just the same about her. Mandy was out in the kitchen, humming in that weird, throaty voice as she baked apple cobbler for lunch; Nihla could smell its spicy fragrance.

And the little boy peddling magazines came to the door, just as usual. He stood for a moment, waiting for Nihla to engage him in conversation. He loved to talk, but always waited for her to start the conversation. He explained then that really his name was Richard, but the kids at school had called him "Sam," and he'd really liked Sam best anyway, so he'd just changed to Sam.

It was all very grave and grown up and then his bare feet padded over the porch, Whiskers sniffing them in delicate curiosity as she always did bare feet and Nihla went back to her chair and her cup of black coffee.

There was a car in the yard. It had eased in with considerate silence. Nihla knew it was Holt's. Her heart started suffocatingly for a moment and she knew an instant of anger at herself for that quick and involuntary emotional response. She must get over that!

She forced herself to walk quietly into the living room and to sit there,

even though she gripped the arms of her chair to keep herself sitting there, staying there with an appearance of careless ease, unconcern, until Mandy showed Holt in.

"Nihla!" He came swiftly across the room, taking both her hands in his as he drew her to her feet and then swept her into his arms with a swift, not to be denied, surge of emotion. "It's good to see you again!" He searched her face. "And to find you lovelier than ever, you're so femininely beautiful! I'd never have forgiven myself if what has happened, what I've done, had made you hard. You're so sweetly beautiful as you are!"

"Please." Nihla forced herself to start half-hearted protest and then heard the motor of another car as it swung into the circle of the drive near the house.

Henry! And she didn't know whether she was glad or not for the interruption. It would spare her forcing her strength to a point of resistance—when she wanted so much the very thing she would have to resist! His arms in that moment were like balm to her weary, aching heart!

And then Henry was walking prosaically into that room which a moment before had been so charged with the stuff of which romance is made that Nihla felt all the safeguards which she had put up were being swept away on a swift current of emotion.

Holt's eyes caught hers for just a moment and there was questioning accusation in them, as if he thought she had planned Henry's being there to prevent him from having the opportunity he sought.

Well, she had! She had needed that protection. Protection really against herself—for left alone with the charm of his voice, the strength

of his love-making, she would have been persuaded.

"Well, Nihla!" It was Henry, and then he became aware of the presence of the other man and it was he then who looked at Nihla accusingly.

"Yes," she said finally, her chin uptilted just a little, her eyes very bright and her voice not quite steady with something that might have been laughter, but it might, too, have been tears. "I let you both come at the same time because I wanted to say practically the same thing to each of you."

Neither man spoke, stared at her, waiting for her next word.

"You see," she heard herself going on and somehow it wasn't as easy as she had thought it would be during that moment at the breakfast table while she planned it, "you've both found reason to lose faith in me and I'm not blaming either of you. I've probably been wrong all along, wrong"—she was looking at Henry then—"in letting you master all my difficulties for me, give me the right to live on here as I always have lived. And then, of course"—she was trying to meet Holt's eyes but finding it very difficult—"it was utter madness to accept, or I'll be more honest, invite your friendship."

She paused only a moment, but that was long enough for Holt to break in:

"Nihla, you're being needlessly brutal with yourself. I'm sure neither of us demand this of you!" His words were clipped off as they always were under stress of emotion.

She forced a faint smile to her face. It was hard to hear his voice and ignore its call to her heart!

"I know," she said in a voice held low in her effort to suppress emo-

tion, "but I want to. It's only fair. I've precipitated this unpleasant triangle and I shouldn't have. I should have looked ahead. It's no excuse that my former life never gave me cause to learn to anticipate consequences ahead. I'd been in the habit of taking what the gods presented and that was just that. But I've done this. It's all my fault and we can all say that we can go away and forget it, but things don't happen that way in life. Everything leaves its scar." She was finding it difficult to go on holding to that even, calm tone. "And so I had no right to do this—take up your time, Henry, with unkind make-believe, for that's all it ever could have been, and——"

But Henry's voice interrupted:

"Why, Nihla, you needn't do this! I've come to the place where I'm ready to forget everything——" It was Nihla's voice then that interrupted, sharp with the effort she had been making to suppress her emotion.

"That's just it, just what I've started to tell you! I've let you both come here so I could tell you both at the same time and have it over with—that you're both released from any responsibility you may ever have felt toward me—any at all! I'm just asking, Henry, to be allowed to impose on your kindness for one more day. It will take me until to-morrow morning to be ready to leave here and then it'll be over! You'll be free again!"

"But, Nihla, you can't leave here!" It was Henry's voice in sincere protest. "Why, what'll you do? Stay on! I'm not asking you to marry me if you don't want to. I guess, anyway, I was crazy to expect you to marry an old man like me. But I'm not asking that any more! The house is yours!" And

when she continued to shake her head negatively: "But what are you going to do, my dear? You're not fitted to earn your living!"

Nihla smiled, a funny, twisted ghost of a smile.

"I suppose that's been said by some man to every woman who has started out to make her living since the world began. Well, I'll find something I can do. Not here, of course. But there's Tampa. Ever so many girls are hostesses there in apartment houses. I could do that."

"Yes, but has it ever occurred to you that every real-estate office in Tampa has a waiting list a mile long for jobs like that? A list of the names of girls and women who've held those jobs, are hardened to them and know how to handle them."

Nihla shrugged and turned from him.

"There'll be something," she said and then met Holt's eyes as if to speak to him.

He had been standing silent, tense, while she talked with Henry, but the instant her attention came to him he started to speak, not waiting to hear what she would have said.

"I agree absolutely with Mr. Allen," he said in the familiar clipped-off tones that started her heart madly and forced her gaze down from his lest her eyes reveal too much of what her emotions were. "We've been two fools, more or less, who've done our best to make a mess of things for you. We've blundered into the most expert ways of hurting you and starting gossip. Allen probably hasn't been as guilty as I because in giving you this house and the income to keep it going he was actually giving you the wherewithal of existence, but my hands are completely



*Nihla was a little bit glad that things had happened as they had. She couldn't possibly have been happy with Henry. She'd be happier working out her own destiny.*

guilty." He laid a package on the table and then after a moment went on speaking:

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"That's little enough to do for you. It really isn't doing anything except returning your possessions."

"The jewels?" The word came involuntarily from her on a note of excitement.

"Yes. They're yours. You came by them honestly and rightfully. Besides, if I had inherited them, there would be no one I should be so proud to know had them as you. I want you to keep them"—more urgently as a gesture of hers would have returned them—"as a sort of pledge that I feel that if I spend my life at it I'll never be able to make up to you for what I've so blunderingly done."

"But I couldn't keep them!" The protest came sharply. "Please don't leave them there!"

"They're yours. You must keep them."

Nihla stared at the men a moment. All three of them were on their feet. There seemed to be nothing more to be said and so:

"And now"—in a voice that was very near breaking from strain—"will you please go—both of you? I'm so tired."

The men looked at each other a moment. It was the first direct attention that either had given to the other since entering. There seemed to be agreement in their eyes.

"At least"—it was Holt's voice—"you'll tell us when you are leaving?"

"Yes! To-morrow morning!"

And then Nihla was alone. She dropped into a chair, her face shaded by her hand, listened while two cars made their way from the drive.

It was a strange way for a romance to end!

Whiskers walked quietly out the shadows toward her, as if sensing Nihla's need for companionship and looked with intent question into her mistress's face.

"And that's that, Miss Whiskers!" There was a funny little

break in her voice. There was no use pretending any more. There was no one around to see except Whiskers and Mandy, and they were so close that they didn't count in that way.

And so Nihla sat at the table and pretended to eat the apple cobbler.

It was when Mandy came in with the tea that Nihla looked up to say:

"Please, Mandy, pack my things this afternoon. Put the best ones in a trunk that will be stored for a while, and the others in two suit-cases."

"You-all going away, Miss Nihla, ma'am?" Mandy asked, in a voice that tried to be casual.

"Yes, Mandy, in the morning."

"I going with you?"

"No. I'm sorry, Mandy, but I won't be able to take any one with me."

"I-won't ask no wages, Miss Nihla honey."

"Mandy"—trying to laugh as she spoke—"I won't even be able to feed any one but myself and Whiskers!"

Mandy hesitated.

"I got some money saved, Miss Nihla. If I go, I could pay."

"Why, Mandy!"—her voice tremulous. "That's awfully sweet of you! I'd have known you'd do a thing like that. You've always been so good—but why should you for me? I couldn't think of it! You'll need your money."

"I won't, Miss Nihla. Then you take it, even if you going alone."

"No, Mandy. It's awfully sweet and fine to know that I have such a friend, but I can't take your money—not yet anyhow. I'll tell you what I will do. I'll promise to write you and borrow some if I need it."

The concern on Mandy's face lifted somewhat at that.

"You sure will do that, Miss Nihla?"

"Sure!"

Nihla watched her sturdy figure leaving the dining room. There was something comforting about knowing that she had such a friend. Mandy had stood so kindly by while every one else had seemed to desert. Mandy was gone only a moment when she returned to tell Nihla there was a telephone call for her.

"It's some woman," explained Mandy. "Wouldn't give her name. Say she just want to talk to you. Shall I tell her you's sleeping, Miss Nihla, ma'am?" It was a suggestion more than a question.

Nihla considered a moment. She wondered what new thing she would have to face in that call. It would be much easier to escape any issue by letting Mandy do as she suggested. But she had never been accustomed to such subterfuge, and so:

"No, Mandy, thanks. I'll talk"—as she moved toward the telephone.

"Yes?"—into the instrument in a calm voice. And then more brightly as she recognized the voice of the mother of one of the girls she had called on that horribly lonely day when she had so wanted companionship: "Oh, yes! It's so sweet of you to call!"

Then Nihla listened and the very blood in her veins seemed to congeal as she caught the other woman's words:

"You see, I know what's been happening," the woman went on; "how you've been dropped and all and it seemed to me that it was the duty of one of us older women to tell you about it, that is talk to you about it, because as a motherless girl you may not see things just as—well"—floundering for words as Nihla kept to her frozen silence—

"as you should, you know. Now of course we realize, Nihla, that you haven't had any guiding hand and that it has been pretty hard for you, and when Mr. Allen started—well, managing things for you, it didn't seem so bad because of course we supposed you were going to marry him. But now, with things happening as they are, we mothers just have to protect our own girls—you know how it is, and—well, I knew about your calling up the other day and asking Johnnie over, and——"

Just there Nihla seemed to come to life and broke in in a voice that was cold and ruthless:

"I know," she said in tones that she scarcely recognized as her own, "you want to be sure that I won't call Johnnie again, that she won't have to be contaminated by even speaking to me! Don't worry! I'll never give Johnnie reason for having to speak to me again!" She jammed the instrument back to its stand, not waiting to understand what the hurried, half-hearted protest was that Johnnie's mother was stammering over.

Nihla turned away from the telephone, her head high, her eyes bright—too bright. Bright with anger, not tears. Something had been roused in her by that foolish telephone conversation—a strong fighting spirit that removed her further than ever from breaking over the situation.

She would get by. And she was glad after all to have all the pretenders among her supposed friends weeded out. She could almost laugh at Johnnie's mother. As though she would call the girl again!

The rest of the day dragged painfully. Nihla moved restlessly about the house. Once or twice she looked in on Mandy packing.

"Sure you'll have it all done by six?" she asked, and moved away when Mandy assured her.

It was a little past four when a messenger boy came to the door and handed Nihla a large, heavy envelope.

She opened it and found in it a deed to the house. She stared at it, wondering if she could be imagining things, but the note that Henry wrote assured her that she had read aright.

The lovely house on the Caloosahatchee once more belonged to a Carmack.

But that couldn't make any difference in her plans. And she was a little bit glad, anyway, that things had happened as they had. She couldn't possibly have been happy with Henry. She'd be happier working out her own destiny.

She didn't know exactly what to do with the deed. Of course, she couldn't keep it. That would be too much of a gift to accept; that would be like the old, thoughtless Nihla who had made herself a subject of gossip without realizing it.

And neither could she return it to Henry immediately. That would be too unkind. She would put it in the wall safe in the room that had always been hers.

She ate a frugal and very simple dinner that night and then sat alone in the living room afterward. There was a wind outside that stirred the palm fronds to their familiar staccato music and the tall Australian pines to their soft, sighing accompaniment. A speed boat raced up the river, and behind it chased a smaller craft with a kicker.

And overhead the sky was that soft night-blue, set with cool, crisp silver stars.

There was an aching loveliness about it to the girl sitting in the

unlighted room facing the French doors that opened on the river.

Mandy lingered a little about saying good night, as if there was something else that she would have said.

But Nihla smiled brightly at her as if she had no need for sympathy. Somehow, she didn't want the kind colored woman to say anything with a personal touch; it would have been too much for the armor which she had put up.

Nihla waited quite a while after Mandy had gone; it might have been a full hour, it was so lovely there, almost too lovely to leave.

And then she rose quietly and went up to her room, Whiskers at her heels. She slipped into a trim black dress and a smooth, slick coat that went with it. She drew a smart, brimmed hat on over her soft hair and then turned to the two bags, packed, closed, and ready for their journey.

In a way it was foolish to leave like that—at night, slip out like a criminal, but it was easier than saying good-by to every one. And then, too, avoided any possible chance of another meeting with either Allen or Holt.

There was a trace of regret in her eyes as she turned to survey the room that had known so much of her life.

She spoke to the dog that had been waiting word from her. Together they went down the stairs and out into the quiet darkness of the yard.

It was rather mad to start out in the dark but she had driven to Tampa so often that she knew the road almost with her eyes closed and then nothing ever happened to her anyway!

She was sorry to have to take the car that really belonged to Henry, but she would only borrow

it. After she had gotten settled in Tampa she could return it some way.

She put the bags in the back of the car and then opened the door for the dog to jump in the front.

Nihla started the motor with as little noise as possible and turned slowly into the curve of the drive.

As she came out of the curve and into the long straightaway of Royal Palms, she stepped on the accelerator and picked up speed.

Suddenly her lights outlined something ahead in the road, some barrier right across the drive, leaving no room to get around it by any possible way.

The outline of the barrier soon became apparent as a car.

Petters! And what a place to have selected! And so to disturb them to moving, Nihla pushed on noisily at full tilt, knowing her car was well in control. But the parked car didn't move.

It wasn't until, with an exclamation of disgust and impatience, Nihla pulled to a stop just as her bumper touched the running board of the other car that she realized the car blocking her way was a familiar one.

A figure was getting out of it and coming toward her. She sat as if turned to stone.

"Well! I thought you were never coming!"—in a voice that started her heart madly.

"Why did you do this?" she asked in a weary and quite beaten tone.

"Because I knew you weren't going to wait until to-morrow morning to go away and because I couldn't let you go."

"But I'm going! Please let me pass."

"No." His voice was as firm as it was gentle. "I can't let you, Nihla, because in this case I think

I know best. If necessary, I'll abduct you again, but this time for the happiness of both of us. Nihla"—and his voice pleaded—"I love you. You love me. Let's not make the mistake the other Nihla made. You have our happiness now in the hollow of your small hands. Don't throw it away! Don't destroy it! Nihla, give me the right to live my life trying to make you happy. You can forgive me, can't you?"

"Oh"—her voice was tremulous with something that sounded strangely like happiness—"there isn't anything, really, to forgive. I can understand what happened. Any one could."

"Nihla!" His voice was husky with the weight of emotion it bore.

And then on impulse his arms swept her to him, lifted her slim figure, held her against his heart for a mad moment while their lips met, and then carried her to his car to put her down on the wide, luxurious seat.

He slipped under the wheel to sit beside her and drew her into the circle of his arms again.

"Nihla, I love you," he said in husky tenderness.

He started slightly then.

"What was that?" he asked.

"What?" Nihla asked from the safe depths of his embrace while he was looking across her.

"The little scamp! It's Whiskers! Her cold, damp nose on my hand!" And he scratched the tiny head that leaned against Nihla as she spoke:

"Yes, didn't you notice? She was in the car with me and jumped out and came along!" Her voice was full and rich with joy.

"She's one faithful little pup! You should have called her 'Job'!"

"You mean Joba!"

"Yes!" Quoting: "Though he



*"Nihla, I love you. You love me. You have our happiness now in the hollow of your hands. Don't throw it away! Don't destroy it! Forgive me, can't you?"*

slay me, yet will I trust him.'"

"Go on with the rest of it," she commanded, happiness still lilting richly in her voice. "Because she's frightfully independent and does exactly as she pleases most of the time in spite of being loyal and devoted!"

"'But I will maintain mine own ways before him,'" Holt finished. "And I could imagine that applying to you, too, Nihla! You will probably be frightfully willful and when I ask to kiss the tip of this right ear"—matching action to words—"you'll turn the left one!"

She laughed up at him for an enchanted moment.

"And that will be grand!" he finished.

They sat for a few moments in the moon-lighted silence of that lovely night, and then drawing her closer, his voice glowing with passionate tenderness:

"And you haven't told me yet where you want to go on your wedding journey, most beautiful!"

Nihla turned a wistful face to him.

"I was just thinking," she said, "of poor Henry and how lonely he must be."

"Don't"—kissing her promptly. "Your marrying him, most gorgeous, would have been awful. Neither of you would have been happy, and Henry least of all. He's probably at this minute sitting in front of his fireplace, in slippers and lounge clothes, half asleep, and in perfect and complete comfort." He paused for only a moment: "And now where did you say you wanted to go on your honeymoon?"

She lifted her hands high above her head. He caught them and kissed each delicate finger tip.

"Anywhere you want to take me!"

"Fine!"—starting the motor of his car.

"Oh, please!"—knowing of old his impulsive movements. "My baggage is in my car!"

"I'll get it!" he exclaimed, suiting action to the words.

"And I haven't a good thing along with me! Not a single gorgeous gown, not even any semi-precious! Please just let me peak in to see if there's anything fit to go along with you in!"

"You're perfect in anything!" But she was turning and fussing with the baggage and he switched on a light so that she might see.

A little exclamation came from her.

"Mandy's a dear and a darling! She did just the opposite of what I told her! All my good things are here!"

Holt chuckled.

"That girl has a rare gift of reading human nature. When we're through honeymooning we must have her with us!"

"No, we'll leave her there where she belongs in the house on the Caloosahatchee and go there winters for the treat of her cooking!"

"Great!"—as they started toward the main road.

Whiskers, who had been sitting up at attention, settled down to sleep on the seat beside Nihla as the motor settled to a steady pace that carried it through the night.

"This is madness!" Nihla's voice was lilting with happiness. "Madness! Three on a honeymoon!"

"Such sweet madness! Three on a honeymoon!" he echoed as he drove through the night.



# Just You

By Frances Street

FAY EVANS studied the picture of Edythe Shane, the glamorous, blond movie actress, then looked at her own image in the mirror. Yes, they did look enough alike to be twin sisters, she decided. But what a gulf of difference stretched between them! She, a typist—Edythe, popular, glorified and rich, having a thousand men probably in love with her!

Fay sighed as she rolled her hair into a shining knot at the nape of her neck like Edythe's, and thought of Barry Wakeman and his photographs. She had clipped them from newspapers and pasted them carefully in a scrapbook. Barry as a college athlete, Barry swinging a polo mallet, and Barry laughing at

her from a surf board! She knew each feature by heart—his dark, merry eyes, his fine, straight nose, and firm lips so humorously tender. For all the strength in his lean young face, there was more than a hint of recklessness. Fay put the scrapbook away with another sigh.

How could a girl, supporting her mother in a three-room apartment, ever meet Barry Wakeman, living on Long Island and a member of smart North Shore society? Never, except by some miracle!

Fay was employed by a seed and farm implement company, so she could not be spared for her vacations in the summer. Now, after Christmas, she was permitted her vacation. Snow lay on the ground, and ice

froze the pond near the farm where she intended to go for two weeks. She had bought a snow suit of scarlet and blue from the Hollywood shop, because Edythe Shane wore costumes like it for ski jumping. But as she faced the mirror, she lost sight of her delicate, heart-shaped face and wide blue eyes. Instead, she imagined the lonely days of a vacation on a snow-whitened farm, and shuddered.

Looking over the pictures of Barry, before she hid them, had torn her heart. She felt as if she were leaving him for good. She knew she could never know him, but until to-day, she hadn't known how much she cared. She had always hoped that the miracle would happen. Wealthy men came into the store where she worked to buy things for their estates, but never Barry. The thought of the cold, bleak farm made her heart contract with a pang of utter loneliness.

If only some one would be waiting for her at the other end—some one who cared! Of what use were her smart clothes? There were often a few guests in the vicinity of the farm who enjoyed winter sports, but never any one like Barry. Of course, there was only one Barry in the world, but as Fay felt now, almost any nice, young man would have banished her miserable depression.

She needed the rest, so she'd just have to pretend that something exciting was going to happen, Fay philosophized, as she finished packing and went to bed.

In the morning, Fay taxied to the railroad station with a lump in her throat. She was early, so sat listlessly looking around at the throng. She was looking smart and attractive in a bright-blue sport coat with a huge beaver collar and a hat to

match. But Fay was quite oblivious of the admiring glances cast at her by a few unattached males. She left her suitcase with a porter and went toward the ticket window. And then she got the shock of her life! Standing only a few feet away, was Barry!

Her hands grew cold, and her knees shook. Then the warm blood pulsed through her body until it surged to her ears and beat in her temples riotously.

Fay stood rooted to the spot. He was talking to two young men and a girl with red hair. She was lithely beautiful, and gazing at him with glittering eyes through narrowed lids, she had an air of utter assurance.

Fay felt as if she were in a dream. The deep timbre of Barry's voice was like the low notes of an organ. She had always known that his laugh would have that mellow chuckle, that his teeth would be perfect, and he would seem to have just stepped out from under a cold shower. Just the sight of him, tall, vigorous and broad-shouldered in his English overcoat, affected her like the sweep of clean, mountain air.

It was evident Barry was going away, and his friends had come to see him off. Fay felt suddenly as if nothing in the world mattered, where she was going, who she was, or what ever happened to her again. She was seeing Barry Wakeman, hearing his voice, and remembering everything she had ever read about him. If Barry looked up and saw her, she thought, she would collapse from sheer happiness.

She heard him remark that his train would leave in a few minutes and he had to buy his ticket. As he strode across the station past her, Fay felt her pulses leap. She hur-

ried after him, her feet winged and light, as if she were being carried on a cloud. She halted behind Barry in a daze as he stopped before the ticket window and asked for a ticket to Lake Placid. His sleeve rubbed her coat, she could smell his clean man-scent of soap and tobacco, and before she realized what she was doing, Fay found herself asking in a small voice for a ticket to Lake Placid, too. She moved from the window in a trance.

There was just time to rush on the train, find her parlor car seat and breathe a sigh of relief when she saw him get on alone, before the train began to move. He was sitting right opposite her. She hadn't lost sight of him for an instant, but it took more courage than Fay had at that minute to look toward him.

She sat with her hands tight in her lap, to steady the trembling excitement tingling through her. "Barry, please see me and think I'm pretty," she prayed silently.

After the conductor punched their tickets, Fay removed her coat and wondered if Barry had noticed her. She tried to swing her chair about to face the window but had difficulty with it. She got up, and Barry looked over. Fay's heart thumped wildly. He jumped up and approached her, smiling. "May I help you?" His resonant voice thrilled her.

"Please, my chair——" She couldn't make her voice behave.

"How do you want it, facing the window, or?"—he gazed at her intently—"with your back to the sun?"

"It doesn't matter, but I think the view is interesting." Fay knew her cheeks were burning and her eyes bright.

"My side is better. Perhaps you'd like to exchange seats with

me. May I move your belongings for you?" He picked up her coat and helped her across the swaying car. At his touch, every nerve quivered with rapture.

She felt like a princess as he made her comfortable. Yet, there was a peculiar question behind the admiration in his dark eyes that caught Fay's attention. He reached for a screen magazine. "You see I'm a movie fan. Would you like to look at this while I get a porter to fix your chair?"

Fay thanked him and opened the *Hollywood Weekly* as he swung down the aisle. She wondered about the expression in Barry's eyes as she turned the pages absent-mindedly. Then she saw staring up at her, the replica of her own face. It was the latest photograph of Edythe Shane. Her soft, golden hair was drawn over her ears in a knot like Fay's. Her face was the same perfect oval, her mouth full and warm, and her eyes wide and wondering behind the heavy fringe of dark lashes. In a margin sketch, Edythe was shown wearing a blue and scarlet snow suit.

If only she were Edythe Shane, going to Lake Placid with Barry. With her, he would forget the red-haired girl with the hard, glittering eyes who had come to see him off.

Then he was beside her, laughing. "Oh, I say, you've found my favorite actress. I—I——" he stammered. "Please don't think I'm rude, but I recognized you, Miss Shane, as soon as you boarded the car."

Fay started violently as she met Barry's embarrassed eyes. She wanted to laugh hysterically. Then a cold wave of disappointment made her clench her icy hands in her lap. She would have to tell him he was mistaken. "But I'm not——"

He interrupted hastily. "Not

anxious to be recognized, you were going to say?" he suggested.

Fay nodded. She couldn't tell him yet.

"Oh, but I won't tell any one, Miss Shane. You must get bored to death with admirers. But may I tell you just once how beautiful you are, how much I admire you and then"—he bent over her, his voice, a soft murmur—"then, can't we be friends?"

The expression on Barry's face was almost worshipful. Fay couldn't move. She felt some magic spell would be broken if she spoke. His burning eyes filled with turbulent yearnings. Edythe Shane would never know; this precious opportunity might never be hers again. He was waiting eagerly for her answer.

"Yes, Mr. Wakeman—you see I know you from your pictures, too—if you wish, we will be friends." She gave her voice the same soft intonations of Edythe's, using the same swift sweep of her lashes that made the actress so fascinating.

Barry bent lower.

"I've often thought of things I wanted to tell you, but now I feel like a tongue-tied schoolboy. I didn't know you could be so beautiful." His awed admiration made Fay lower her eyes in confusion. She felt an instant of guilty shame that she had deceived him; then her veins filled with madness and nothing mattered but being with him.

"Oh do you really mean it?" She knew it sounded young and eager, but she must hear him say it again.

If Edythe's tricks of the screen could hold him, she, Fay, would be the actress as long as her playtime lasted. She looked at him with a shy smile.

He dropped into the seat beside her. "You know I do," he answered

tensely. "I think you're the most exquisite woman I have ever seen, as elusive as a dryad, as flaming as a jewel, as—" he broke off, and his laugh was a caress. "You make me feel poetic."

"And you, Barry Wakeman, make me feel as if I wanted to climb mountains and be healthy and strong. I've never been to Lake Placid. Winter sports must be gloriously stimulating."

"Anything would be, with you. I don't mean to be too personal, but are you traveling in your own name or incognito?" His steady eyes never left her face. Fay felt that fate was in league with her.

"For the present I am Fay Evans. No one shall know but you, Barry, that I'm any one but a poor working girl on her vacation."

"A secret between us. I can't believe you're real and not a dream. Fay! What a perfect name you've chosen." His vibrant voice was intimate and compelling. "Shall we pretend we've met on a star when the world was made, and you've come to me on a cloud, to-day?"

Fay tingled deliciously down to her toes as she laughed. "How delightful. Barry, I believe your imagination equals mine."

Fay wished the train would lose a wheel or become stalled to delay them, but she had to be content with Barry seeing her to the small hotel she selected, and a promise to dine with him that evening.

Day followed day, flawless, perfect, with Barry spending every minute with her. Fay was able to sleep only because she knew it would shorten the hours until she could see Barry again. She knew they attracted attention, heard people whisper after them that her escort was the wealthy Barry Wakeman.

It was only when the clerk in her hotel began favoring her with little attentions, that Fay became troubled. A knowing expression in the man's eyes as he addressed her as Miss Evans and smiled, gave her a sinking feeling of fright. Suppose Barry had dropped a hint that she was the famous Edythe Shane? How could she ever explain?

Her mad infatuation for the much photographed Barry was now a violent, suffocating love for a very vital man. Did he see her and desire her as a woman, or only admire her as the glamorous actress of his imagination? The question tormented her. Twice he had kissed her, but there was something restrained in his lips; they denied the flicker of passion that burned deep in his eyes. Surely he loved her, just a little. The gay, merry crowd that surrounded them every day held no interest for him. He could have had a dozen girls, but he preferred her. Or was it the actress that she pretended to be? Fay began to hate the rôle she had planned for herself, but she was caught in the web of a sham that had become part of her—a tinsel shadow that mocked her.

A ball was to be given in one of the large hotels Saturday night to which Barry invited her. She was eager to be in his arms. If she could only make him say once, "I love you, Fay," she would throw herself on his mercy and confess her masquerade. Until he whispered those magic words, she couldn't risk tearing the rosy veil of illusion, through which his eyes viewed her.

It was Friday, the day before the big dance. They were to spend the morning coasting, and Fay had just put down her coffee cup when Barry stepped into the dining room. Fay felt the usual leap of her pulses when she saw his tall, straight figure.

He gripped her hands and pulled her to her feet. "Fay, sweetest, every time I see you, you look more beautiful. To think that you, Edythe Shane, should be giving your entire time to me." He drew her arm under his as they went out into the dazzling sunlight. "I want to shout your identity from the housetops, I'm so proud to know you, but I've only dared whisper a hint of it to one or two guests at my hotel," he chuckled.

"Barry!" Fay stood still. "You didn't, really?"

"Oh, I said they'd be surprised if they knew who you were. Sheila Drake is coming to-day for the dance with her brother. Let me tell her?" He looked at her coaxingly.

Sheila Drake! Intuition told Fay that she was the girl with the glittering eyes. "Oh, no Barry!"

"Why, dear, you're pale. You look frightened. I can't understand you."

"Understand me?" She laughed harshly. "You don't even know me—not the me who matters. You don't care—you don't see that, after all, I'm a woman." She almost added, "who loves you," but caught herself in time.

"I didn't know you were the hysterical type. But actresses are supposed to be temperamental. I presume having scenes is in character." She heard a faint, bitter scorn in his voice that was new.

"Quite. But if society people like you and Sheila Drake find actresses so interesting, you oughtn't to be critical." It was horrible, quarreling with him—like tearing open a healing wound. But she knew the coming of Sheila was a menace. Her whole false happiness was threatened and only sharp stabbing words would prevent her from sobbing out the truth.



*Fay heard Sheila talking: "Of course, she's a sham, Barry. What fools men are. Edythe Shane, the actress, is doing a picture in Hollywood. This girl is a gold digger after your money. I'm going to expose her."*

"You know you're more than interesting; you're fascinating. I feel like a puppy trailing a queen when I'm with you, and people look at

us and whisper that you're the magnetic Edythe Shane."

"And I suppose you resent the fact that for once, the rich Barry

Wakeman isn't the center of attention?" Then she bit her tongue. How could she speak so to him, when her very heart felt bloodless with the fear of losing him?

"Fay—Fay!" he called after her, as she ran out of the hotel over the snow, choking back the sobs that were strangling her.

Then she forced herself to laugh, the same brittle tinkle Edythe used when she spurned the villain. Barry came abreast of her. She had gone too far, said too much. His face was hard, condemning.

"Oh, Barry, I was joking," she laughed shakily. "I was only acting. But I—I have letters to write. Maybe, this afternoon——"

"I have to meet Sheila," he told her promptly. "I want her to know you. But Fay"—his brow was wrinkled in bewilderment—"I don't like your present mood. If you intend to be agreeable and sensible, I'll stop for you after lunch." He wasn't her Barry now, but some one strange and dictatorial—a man who gave orders and was obeyed. Fay trembled.

"Yes, Barry, I'll be good." Oh, she must have him a little longer, even if she had to be humble and meek, go on her knees to him. "Barry, Barry, want me," her blue eyes spoke eloquently, as she raised them to his face.

His face softened. "You're sweet, Fay. So dainty and frail, you don't look as if you had the strength to climb to the pinnacle of fame you have reached. You look more woman than actress."

"I'm all woman, Barry," she cried in a swift, broken gasp as she gave him her hands. She felt a volcanic surge of fire blazing through her as he raised her fingers and kissed them.

"If only you were just a woman," he murmured under his breath. He turned away with compressed lips.

What had risen between them? Fay's mind was a torturing question mark. Barry acted as if he were holding her at arm's length. Was it Sheila?

When Fay met her at the station with Barry, she recognized at once the girl with the glittering, green-gray eyes and thin, cold lips. She looked at Fay disdainfully as they were introduced. Fay inwardly quaked. Here was a woman who would show no pity. Her glorious playtime was over. Fay's only hope was the coming dance. Barry must tell her he loved her, or Sheila would try to destroy their friendship.

"Where have I seen you before, Miss Evans? You look familiar."

Fay quailed before the girl's questioning glance. Barry pressed her arm.

"Oh, blondes are not so very different. Blue eyes, yellow hair!" Fay turned it off lightly.

Tom Drake, who resembled his sister, bowed gallantly. "Not like you, Miss Evans," he said meaningly.

That evening they all dined together, and Fay was on guard every minute. She hadn't a moment alone with Barry, but she looked anxiously at Sheila's left hand and sighed in relief to see it was bare of an engagement ring. Then she and Barry were merely friends.

Saturday was given over to outdoor sports. Sheila excelled in everything she did. She made Fay feel helplessly shy at her lack of skill. Tom held her on the sled as Barry skied with his sister. As they were going back to dine and dress, Tom whispered to Fay, "You can't fool me, Miss Evans. Barry dropped

a hint and I got it like that!"—snapping his fingers.

Her heart stood still. The waning sun was blotted for an instant as she closed her eyes. So Barry had told, and it was all over. "What do you mean?" she faltered.

"Why, Sheila said you were a cute little playmate and asked Barry where he'd found you; he looked uncomfortable and paid you some rather nice compliments and Sheila high-hatted you. Then Barry told her that if she knew who you were, she would be surprised and duly impressed." He laughed. "I tumbled right away. You see I go to the movies, too." He squeezed her arm. "You're Edythe Shane. Barry didn't deny it when I asked him in private. I like actresses, too, and since Sheila has a crush on Barry, why not let me be nice to you?"

"Oh, please, I—I'm not Miss Shane, but Fay Evans. Really, Mr. Drake." She was numb with fright.

"Of course, I understand, for the people here, but among ourselves the secret is out." His bold eyes made Fay want to retreat into a corner and hide. What gloating mockery would laugh from them when he found that he was mistaken!

"Oh, I'm not, really." She had lied and been believed, now when she spoke the truth, she was doubted. "Please believe me," she begged.

"Well, if you say so, princess, have it your way. But you can't keep it up. In exchange for my silence, I want six, long, dreamy dances with you, or I'll tell every one who you are. Why let Barry have all the glory of knowing you?" he persisted.

"But Barry's not looking for glory. We're friends, Mr. Drake," Fay replied stonily.

Later, as Fay dressed for the great event of the season, she scarcely saw her lovely image in the mirror. She was so torn with bewilderment, that she hardly knew whether she was herself or the famous screen beauty. In her white satin gown, bought in a bargain basement because it was soiled, and now restored to freshness by dry cleaning, she was as exquisite as an ivory figurine. Her flawless back was exposed to her waist, and up under her chin was a brilliant bow of blue sequins, giving her curved, slender figure a dash of smartness. Her hair shone like fine-spun gold as the lights played over it, and her eyes were the dazzling blue of sapphire. But she felt nothing but misery and defeat. All her dreams would end in a walking nightmare if Barry did not tell her he loved her to-night. She saw herself exposed as a fraud; she could visualize the fine scorn in Barry's eyes, and a tremor shook her at the thought.

Sheila looked at her critically and Tom meaningly, when they met. But Barry's eyes were tender, and his hand warm and firm as he helped her into the car. She felt still and quiet inside, hushed and grateful, as Barry kept tight hold of her hand and whispered that she was a moon-beam come to life.

As people looked at her curiously, Fay felt as if they were going to point at her and demand her real identity. She slipped into Barry's arms to dance as into a refuge. A delicious peace stole over her, then shuddering delight, as his cheek touched her soft hair and he whispered in her ear what she had longed to hear. "Fay, sweet, I love you. I love you. I can't live without you." She grew limp as he crushed her to him. She felt his heart pounding, heard it leap above the

sound of throbbing music, and every pulse in her body responded.

"Oh, Barry, I love you, too," she began, but her reply was lost in a choking gasp of joy as she pressed her cheek against his shoulder.

Then Barry disappeared as Tom tapped him and took his place, and she was whirled out on the floor.

She was deaf to Tom's silly nonsense. Barry had told her he loved her! Barry, her Barry loved her! Why did this fool have to cut in? Then her heart soared. Nothing mattered now!

Tom led her to a seat as she begged him to get her some water. "I'll get you something stronger than that—champagne to-night, Edythe," he whispered.

"Yes, anything!" She watched him hurry away with relief. She was sitting behind a big palm, straining her eyes for Barry.

Then she heard Sheila talking: "Of course, she's a sham. What fools men are. Tom fell for her, too. Edythe Shane is on the coast, doing a picture in Hollywood. She's a gold digger after your money, Barry. I'm going to expose her to-night."

"Sheila!" Barry's voice was aghast with horrified indignation. "Nearly every one here recognizes her as Edythe Shane."

"Yes, because you made them think so. A cheap, little flirt fascinates the wealthy Barry Wakeman, by impersonating a slender blonde with big blue eyes and a coquettish smile," she went on in disgust. "Well, I telephoned Hollywood, and they told me the truth. I asked them to confirm it by telegram, which will arrive to-night, and then——"

Fay waited to hear no more. She stumbled blindly to the coat room. Through scalding tears she found

her wrap and sped downstairs. It was all over!

She had known it could never last! She had made Barry ridiculous and he would hate her. Oh, if she had only told him before he had whispered those dear words which he would never say again! Edythe Shane, the actress, had won his love, not Fay Evans, the woman.

She pushed through the crowd in the hall and went out the front door. As it slammed after her, she tottered weakly for a minute and dashed her tears away. She didn't know it was possible to feel so utterly, so desperately alone. Behind her were lights, gayety, people having a good time. Here, before her, stretched icy darkness, desolation. And then she felt herself roughly seized, a man's hand covering her mouth!

She was lifted off the porch and carried, struggling, out to the drive where another man grabbed her and pushed her into a car. Between them they tied her hands and feet, and slapped adhesive tape over her mouth. They were muscular, swarthy men with ugly, sneering faces.

"Now, that rich boy friend of yours will have to pay plenty, if he wants you. If not, Edythe Shane has lots of dough, herself," the first man snarled, as he got in beside her while the other started the car.

Fay shook her head violently.

The man laughed coarsely. "You mean the boy friend won't pay for your freedom?"

Fay raised her fettered hands and tried to reach the tape over her mouth. "No, you don't," the man warned, poking her with a gun. "No screamin' now. When the money is paid, you can yell all you want to." He grinned evilly.

The car swung over the snow-crusted roads with terrifying speed.

Fay looked back through the rear window. "Nobody ain't goin' to follow you," the man sneered. "We picked the night of the dance, 'cause in the crowd you won't be missed so soon. If you hadn't come out, Pete and me was goin' to send word we had somethin' to say to you in private, but we was lucky; you just fell into my arms."

Fay motioned to her mouth. If they would let her speak, she would tell them she was not the actress, hadn't a cent, and no one would care what became of her, except her mother, who was penniless. Oh, she must make them understand! She shook her head and kept motioning to her lips.

"She wants to speak, Pete. What'll I do?" her capturer asked. The driver half turned.

"All right, you got a gun. Take off the tape and if she tries to yell, drill her with lead, see?"

Fay looked back again. Did she see the headlights of a car?

The man roughly tore off the sticky strips.

"You've made a mistake. I'm not Edythe Shane. I'm only a working girl on a vacation," she cried, her lips stiff and sore.

"Oh, yeah?" he scoffed.

It was a car she noticed frantically, and gaining on them.

"Oh, please, nobody will pay anything for me."

"How about that high and mighty millionaire you been runnin' round with? Ain't he nuts about you?"

"Oh, no, he——" She choked. "Honestly, I'm Fay Evans."

The car kept steadily after them.

"Say, Pete, do you think she's speakin' the truth?"

The driver growled that she was lying.

"Send some one back to the hotel. They'll tell you Edythe Shane is in

Hollywood; I only look like her." Sheila might have the telegram by now—that fatal message that had frightened her into this horrible danger. They reached a rough bit of road. Fay saw that the other car was making rapid progress. Her heart was hammering.

She swayed against the man with the gun and screamed as its cold steel jabbed into her ribs. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to make a sound," Fay wailed piteously.

The car skidded across the icy road, and the men swore. Fay sat rigid, looking back furtively through the window at the headlights coming nearer. The following car disappeared as they swerved, then came into view again, this time so much nearer that she gasped. Pete saw it, too, and cursed as he worked at the wheel. Their car wouldn't straighten out. The car behind was only a few feet away. Then it stopped; a man hurried himself out and ran toward them. Pete was still struggling with the wheel as the car skidded back and forth, while the other man's hand was over Fay's mouth. Something leaped on the roof, and she heard Barry's voice: "Are you all right, Fay?"

She tried to shriek. The dirty hand almost crushed her lips. She tried to bite it. Pete reached for his gun, but the car lurched toward the ditch; he had to give up the attempt and stick to the steering wheel. Barry rapped on the rear window. His voice came clear and commanding. "I've got you covered with a gun. Straighten out this car. And, Fay, take the gun from the man beside you. He can't hurt you; I have him covered."

As he finished speaking, he dropped to the running board. "Now, Fay, we'll get you out into my car." The car spun around



*When Fay opened her eyes again, Barry was carrying her to his car. "Barry, I'm Fay Evans—truly I am," she said. "I didn't mean to deceive you. I don't want to be any one but myself."*

again, as Barry reached in past the swinging door and threw himself on the man with the gun; he grabbed his fist, forcing it upward, just as he pulled the trigger, and the gun exploded. "Drop it!" Barry ordered grimly, twisting the fellow's wrist.

Fay shrank into the corner of the careening, smoke-filled car. She felt

that she was going to faint. The reek of gunpowder, the fright of thinking Barry had been shot, drained her of her last courage. Barry was here. She was safe, he would take care of her. As the car came to a stop, her eyes closed.

When she opened them, Barry was carrying her to his car.

"Barry, I'm Fay Evans—truly I am," she spoke thickly, drowsily. She couldn't lift her head from his shoulder.

"Of course you are, darling—my Fay." He held her close.

"I'm nice and warm now, Barry, not cold and frightened any more." The words ran together as if she were talking in her sleep.

Barry wrapped her cozily in his coat. "Do you feel all right?"

Of course she was all right! Wasn't she with Barry? Then her head cleared.

"Oh!"—with a moan she remembered. Those dreadful men, Sheila, the telegram, Barry. She toppled over against him as he lifted her to the seat of his car, and began to sob: "I didn't mean to deceive you. I don't want to be any one but myself."

"And I don't want you to be any one but yourself, Fay, darling." Barry kissed her tenderly, and whispered the word "love" again and again in her ear.

"Then it doesn't matter, Barry?" she gasped.

"Darling, listen. The reason I didn't tell you I loved you and ask you to marry me the first day I knew you, was because— You guess, dear." He was holding her face in his hands and looking into her eyes.

"You tell me, Barry!" She would never tire of his deep, vibrant voice, now thick with emotion.

"I knew I loved you, but I was afraid of your career. I was jealous of sharing you with any one. I hated the thought of your public. I wanted you, the woman, not the actress. And now I have you. You have never been any one but just

you, to me." He rained kisses on her face, and Fay clung to him in ecstasy.

"Oh, Barry, if I had only known! When I heard Sheila say she was waiting to hear from Hollywood, I nearly died. I ran away, and those men grabbed me and put me in their car. They thought I was the actress and were going to hold me for ransom."

His clasp on her tightened. "One of the porters saw you through the car window, dear, recognized you and told me. I followed, as you know. The skidding car made it easy for me. I knew if the man took his hands off the wheel, the car would turn over. I have them bound with ropes. I let the air out of their tires and the gas from the tank, so they can't go far before I report them to the police. But, darling, that's all over. Let's pretend we've met on a star, and——" He stopped to kiss her upturned face.

"And, Barry, you've come to me on a cloud straight from heaven." She let all the passion in her heart flood her eyes and flame in her lips, as she kissed him.

"Never try to be any one else, sweetheart. Be just you! You see, it's just you I love!"

Oh, yes, she knew now. Fine, honest, courageous Barry wanted the glorious reality of love, not a sham with tinsel allure.

"You're so sweet and beautiful, little wife-to-be," he murmured. "Oh, Fay, I love you, adore you!" And into the strong manliness of his face sprang that hint of power, telling the girl in his arms, that Barry would always be where she needed him.



# In His Arms

By Joseph Creamer

**S**ARCEY'S was a restaurant in Forty-seventh Street. It had a long, narrow bar—the first thing you noticed on entering—and numerous palms that stood ageless, and were just a little too green to be convincing. Back of the bar there was a lounge and orchestra dais, and farther back a yard, if you bothered to go that far.

At a table in a corner of the lounge, Andy Walker sat gazing into the eyes of Chell Deane. It was not an altogether difficult task when the girl had eyes like Chell's, gray

and limpid, the kind that held you and left you, finally, with a feeling that something was missing deep down inside you.

Andy's long fingers were striking the glistening top of the table rhythmically. Those long fingers were the artistic kind that attracted people at once. As a matter of fact, they wrote songs, gay, little hot-cha things, which you sing and dance to, and forget in a day.

At the moment, Andy was telling Chell about his latest song, "The Moon's in My Hands."

"It's a hit, honey," Andy enthused. "Gosh, Chell, you never heard anything like it, honestly."

Somehow, Chell didn't respond in the way she usually did. That responsive jerk of eagerness, the heartening gleam in her eyes, the sweet smile about her lips were lacking to-day. Somewhere deep within Andy, a fire died out, and he shifted his eyes guiltily to the small mural on the wall.

Chell fingered her glass for a moment, then spoke slowly:

"They're all hits, aren't they, Andy?" she asked meaningly, without looking at him. She twined slender fingers around the stem of her glass, watched the elusive rainbow hues play on it, and avoided Andy's eyes.

"Why—why sure, honey——" Then Andy stopped short. "You mean——" he asked in a small voice.

"I mean," interrupted Chell, "that it's queer to be writing hits and having no one do anything about them."

"Money again, Chell?" Andy probed.

"It seems that'll always come up," Chell agreed. "You know, Andy"—she bit her lip before continuing and unconsciously pulled at a small, distracting wisp of chestnut-colored hair that peeped from beneath her turban—"I'd hate to marry a plugger whose plugging got him nowhere, and live on fries, coffee and hard rolls for the rest of my life."

Their eyes met for a moment, then separated. The contact left them both a bit shaken.

"But, Chell, I didn't say I couldn't sell this," Andy protested weakly.

"Morrie did, didn't he?"

"He did and he didn't."

Chell raised her hands in a futile gesture.

"Ye gods, the same old story!"

With sudden decision, she leaned across the table. Again she avoided Andy's eyes; she didn't dare look into them. She sat there meditatively, poking one slim finger at the small, damp ring her clam-juice cocktail had left in its wake. She really didn't want to say what she was going to say, but she had to.

"Andy"—she began in a voice that was tense and edged with weariness, "I've always liked you." Andy winced. "But don't you think it's a little silly—this making believe that we can go on like this, when we know we can't?"

"We love each other, don't we?" Andy demanded. But immediately after he spoke, he realized how feeble that line of argument was.

"We can't live on love alone," Chell replied.

Near them, the dinner music stopped with a loud blare.

"Oh, Andy, can't you see?" Chell's voice was a vehement plea. Her hand stole across the brief expanse of table until it clasped his. She continued passionately: "Why should we allow ourselves to be entangled just now, just when everything, everything we're hoping and longing for is so terribly far away?"

But Andy couldn't answer; he stared steadily at the wall.

He was experiencing the sensation of having all life drain out of him, until he felt utterly bloodless and cold. Was Chell warning him that unless something happened at once, she and he were quits? Impossible! Chell was as necessary to him as his right arm! He had to make good—sell "The Moon's in My Hands!" He smiled ruefully to himself, unconscious for the moment that Chell's hand was no longer resting

on his, that the orchestra once more had begun playing. Sell it! Why, Morrie wouldn't even see him at first, let alone give him an opportunity. And when he finally did get next to Morrie, he turned Andy down cold, barely looking at the music.

"Ya gotta have the—well—the kinda stuff Berlin's got, see—the kinda stuff that gets 'em! Well, ya gotta have it, Walker, an' it ain't in dis one."

Then Morrie had gone on to describe just what Andy didn't have, which was exactly what Andy insisted he did have in "The Moon's in My Hands." But Morrie had ended the discussion with a decisive "No."

A minute had probably passed. Suddenly, Andy realized that Chell had turned slightly; that some one was standing near their table.

Bill Holden stood there, his round, red face smiling as he swooped down and captured Chell's hand in one of his own massive ones.

Andy disliked Holden for no particular reason. Perhaps it was the fact that he had a way of holding Chell's hand a little too closely, looking into her eyes a little too intensely. But that was the way Holden held everything he had or wanted—a little too closely.

His father had a difficult time holding down the lids of the Holden coffers, but Bill gradually pried them loose. The old man hadn't held on quite strongly enough. A wry smile crept about

the corners of Andy's lips. Perhaps he hadn't held on quite strongly enough to Chell.

He nodded mechanically in answer to Holden's bantering salutation, but instinctively rose from the table with a gesture of repulsion as Holden seated himself. Then, quietly, he sat down again, staring at Holden and Chell across from him.

"Baby like wine?" Holden asked, leering at Chell and ignoring Andy entirely.

Chell didn't answer for a moment. She was looking at Andy. Then the defensive hardness that had entered her eyes a few moments before swam up and filled them again. With sudden vivacity, she turned to Holden.

"Oh, yes, I'll have some," she said.

"Waiter!" Holden bawled.

Even as she accepted his invitation, Chell accused herself of being cruel to Andy. But that flare of anger within her hadn't subsided. Andy needed to be awakened and brought back to earth! He had allowed Morrie and everybody else to walk on him. It was about time he stopped his cheerful whistling whenever he met with failure, and began plugging away. It was about time, too, that he thought of her!

Andy sat quietly, his eyes fixed nonchalantly on the table. With difficulty, he managed to keep his face composed and disinterested. He didn't care a hang with whom Chell drank, or what she





*Suddenly Bill Holden stood at their table. Andy disliked Holden because he had a way of holding Chell's hand a little too closely, looking into her eyes a little too intensely.*

did, he told himself fiercely. But—  
Andy suddenly stood up—he'd better  
leave before he took a sock at

that fellow, or before he obeyed an  
impulse to grab Chell and drag her  
away by force.

"S'long, kid," Holden said.

Andy ignored him.

"I'll see you to-morrow, honey," he turned to Chell, leaning across the table, daring for a moment to look into her eyes.

He saw her lips form the word "Yes," hesitate, then become set and stubborn. She spoke resolutely:

"No, Andy, not to-morrow. At least, you'd better give me a ring first!"

"O. K., honey, just as you say."

Walking toward the door, he saw Chell's face in the glass. It was white and strained. Haunted and worried, her eyes seemed to bore into his back. Andy walked straight ahead to the door and strode out into the night.

He walked aimlessly along Broadway, not knowing or caring in what direction he was going. He just kept walking, prodded along by the restless, ever-moving crowds and the ceaseless flow of traffic. He knew that if he stopped this activity, he would probably turn back and do some ridiculous thing that would make Chell detest him. And that certainly wouldn't help repair the damage he had already done!

Ordinarily he would have passed the Club Lido without a second glance, but to-night, he turned in and sat down at one of the small, red tables beneath the balcony. Here, at least, there was laughter, music, gayety!

Then he saw Morrie.

Morrie was at a table directly opposite him. For a stout man who was usually so sententious, dogmatic and cold in that small cubicle of his above the tide and tumult of Times Square, he was making a perfect fool of himself, Andy thought.

He was smirking into the face of a gay little thing across the table from him. Her face seemed buried

under thick layers of scarlet rouge and mauve eyelid paste. Andy thought of Chell, her meticulous grooming, her unrouged, deep-pink lips, and skin the color of ripe apricots. Chell—"The Moon's in My Hands——" Then, suddenly, the two thoughts collided as one! Andy's face looked inspired.

It wouldn't be a bad idea—no, not a bad idea at all—to have Frank Shay, the Lido orchestra leader, play his song! Morrie might have turned it down, but Morrie hadn't heard it played. He had barked out that it was too rotten to read, let alone play.

Andy stood up with determination, threaded his way to the orchestra members, and pounced upon Frank Shay.

Shay was Andy's special friend. Mutual favors were continually passing between them. Shay would play any of Andy's numbers on occasions, and Andy would write a musical skit for Frank now and then.

To-night, Andy asked Frank to substitute some number with his own, "The Moon's in My Hands!" Frank readily agreed, having seen and praised the composition a few days back. Andy returned to his table to wait. There was nothing else he could do. He tried desperately not to think of Chell as he sat there.

But the more he strove to forget Chell, the more tenaciously she clung to his thoughts. The vision of her hand lying in Bill Holden's kept haunting him. He clenched his own fists in sudden anger. He had thought that she understood just how things stood between them; that she was content to wait just a little while longer. Well, he didn't know her, or what she felt after all, he told himself fiercely. Curiously

enough, when she had broached the subject of their constant delay in marriage because of his inability to sell a song, he had felt no emotion. A deadening, lethargic feeling had enveloped him. Now the vision of Holden clasping the hand of Chell appeared in vivid form before his imagination.

Quite suddenly, without any forethought, Andy stood up and dashed out into the street. He hurried toward Sarcey's, obsessed by one thought, that of Chell's slender hand inclosed in Holden's.

Racing down Forty-seventh Street, he came to an abrupt halt. There was Chell moving toward the curb with Holden. She seemed to hang back protesting, when Holden signaled a taxi, but Holden grasped her arm possessively.

Without any preamble, Andy stepped forward, grasped the other arm and tugged.

"Listen here," he demanded, "where are you going?"

It was Holden who answered—a trifle thickly.

"Lo, kid! Wanna come 'long? Gonna have shwell time."

Andy, ignoring him, tugged at Chell's arm again.

"Oh, Andy!" she cried.

She suddenly seemed very helpless and alone, standing there in the glow of the entrance arc, Andy thought. He wanted to stoop down, grasp her and cuddle her to him. But Holden clutched his collar even as the thought danced through his mind.

"Lissen here, kid, you can't——"

"Oh, can't I?" Andy asked.

Before Chell could utter a sound of alarm he had lunged. There was a brittle crack of knuckles on bone and Holden toppled backward against the open door of the cab that had just drawn to the curb.

"Where to?" asked the driver, staring in bewilderment at Holden's feet dangling from the door.

"Anywhere—away from here," answered Andy, jamming a bill into his hand, then stooping and thrusting Holden's feet into the cab.

Chell's luminous round eyes stared from Andy to the fast disappearing tail-light of the cab. Andy waited for her to break the silence, but she didn't. She just stood there looking at him tenderly, loving and imploring him with shining eyes.

Andy grasped Chell abruptly by the arms in a firm grip. "Look here," he told her sternly, shaking her a bit, "if you and I are going to get along together, you're going to do what I want. Do you understand?"

"What you want?" she echoed submissively. "Andy, you never acted this way before. I don't know whether I like it or not."

"Decide!" he barked.

"Decide what?"

"Decide to like it," he said curtly.

And without further words, he led her masterfully along Forty-seventh Street toward the Club Lido. She followed him obediently, afraid to rebel, too amazed to ask questions.

When Andy entered, tagging Chell with him, Frank was already playing his song.

At the table, Andy watched Chell's profile covertly; then again as she stared at the glass of water before her. Very much subdued, slightly dazed for the moment, she didn't dare speak or look into his eyes.

The moon's in my hands  
You're in my arms  
—and I'm ha-an-ny

The soft cadence of the rhythm stole to them. Presently other



The driver was staring in bewilderment at Holden's feet dangling from the door. "Go anywhere—away from here," cried Andy, jamming a bill into the driver's hand, then thrusting Holden's feet into the cab.

voices entered; a soprano with a high trill and a tenor blending with the mellow bass.

Then a shadow laid itself quietly on the tablecloth. It was Morrie. His face was set, a bit grim. He

had dropped his fridity and was the same old Morrie again.

"Hello, Walker," he greeted Andy gruffly.

"Hello, Morrie."

"Your song, eh?"

"You should know."

"I—— Listen, Walker——" he sputtered.

"I read it to you this morning," Andy reminded him, his heart beating with malicious glee as he twisted the knife in the wound.

"Listen here, young fella, I know a hit when I see it."

"Hear it, you mean," Andy corrected.

"Have it your own way, Walker. But whether I hear it or see it doesn't matter, see? I'm just tellin' you it's a hit and I want you down at my office at ten to-morrow. Understand?"

"What's that?" Andy asked in startled tones.

"Come down at ten, tomorrow," Morrie repeated, and turned away, leaving Andy to stare after him in speechless astonishment.

He felt a slight pressure on his shoulder, as if a small hand was resting there.

"Andy!" A low, sweet voice whispered.

It was Chell.

He didn't answer, or even turn to her. He kept staring ahead, seeing nothing but a small turban hat and a wisp of chestnut-colored hair.

Turning slowly, he saw that her eyes were glistening, that she was trembling and leaning toward him; then she edged her way toward his chair from her side of the table.

"I'm waiting, Andy."

"Waiting for what?" huskily.

Chell didn't answer—that is, she didn't get a chance to answer. Andy moved so swiftly that it seemed just one motion as he stepped forward and swept her into his arms.

He held her close and hard against him. Then she pushed him away abruptly. Endeavoring frantically to summon a frown between her dancing eyes, she drew herself up with mock severity.

"Sir," she said, "remember that we can't live on love, alone!"

"Would you be willing to risk it, sweet?"

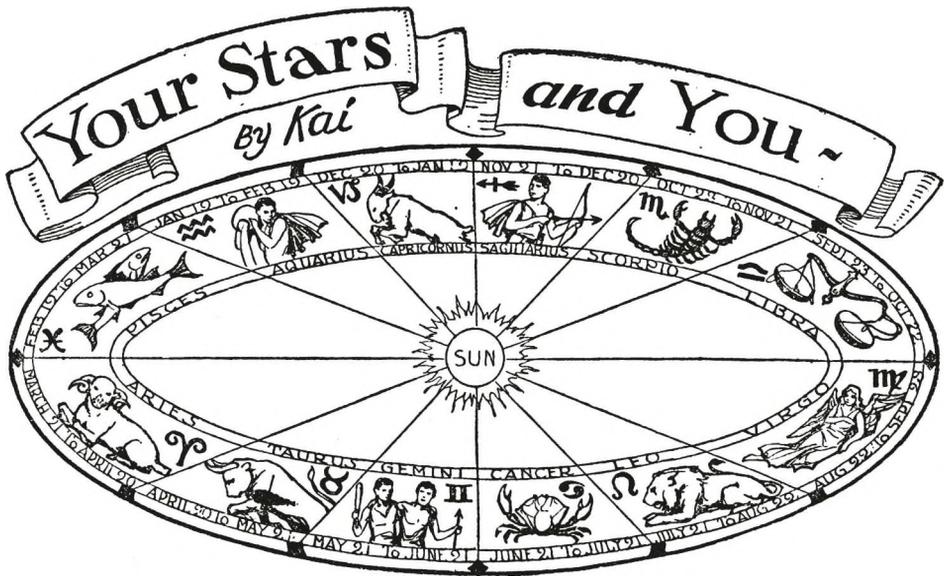
"Sir, I put myself in your hands!"

Her voice was tremulous, and she swayed forward as Andy dragged her to him and held her, oblivious to the stares and amused smiles of people near them.

"Would my arms do, darling? 'The Moon's in My Hands' already!" he whispered.

Chell raised her sparkling eyes to his. For a moment they looked full at each other. That contact was like old, flavored wine—intoxicating! She replied by nestling happily in his arms.





### YOUR WEEK

Here is an extremely emotional week. Those concerned with affairs of the heart will be able to note considerable progress and most relations with the opposite sex will be harmonious. There are some periods which are turbulent and the tendency to quarrel will be difficult to control. Those engaged in any type of work incorporating inspiration, intuition, and creative ability will find the coöperation of the planets very beneficial. There is an undercurrent of zest and stimulation which will be helpful and if affairs are handled with balance there is no reason why these seven days cannot be charged to the credit side of your personal ledger.

### DAY BY DAY

Hours mentioned are Eastern standard time

**Saturday, March 9th** ♃  
 This is an emotional and irritating day but you can expect to be busy until 2:00 p. m. this afternoon with petty details. Too, there will be meaningless discussions and one should be careful of criticism brought down upon oneself because of one's actions. The late-evening hours are the best period of the day and social and recreational activities are in order from 5:00 p. m. until through the midnight hour.

**Sunday, March 10th**



Fatigue and lethargy will characterize the morning hours until 10:30 a. m. and there will be delays and irritation. The later periods are more favorable and the day and evening can be utilized constructively and satisfactorily, depending upon personal inclination.

**Monday, March 11th**



This will be a busy day but a very emotional one and sentiment should be discarded when practical consideration of commercial activities is involved. The morning hours will be pleasant and harmonious, especially in dealings with women. Financial problems will present themselves during the afternoon and it is probable that most of us will spend more money than we can afford to-day. The best period is after 8:30 p. m., at which time any mental work should be handled. The hours near midnight are very active.

**Tuesday, March 12th**



This is an excellent day for business. New and original methods and ideas will present themselves in the morning until the noon hour and it would be well to utilize mental capacity to the limit. This

afternoon and early evening will be serious, practical and restrained. So, formulate your plans this morning and tabulate your ideas and put them into effect in the later hours. Clear up old matters and finish details. After 8:00 p. m. plan to enjoy yourself moderately and establish yourself harmoniously with your fellow man.

Wednesday, Sharp retorts and petty annoyances will influence the trend until 9:00 a. m. The hours will become lighter in tone after that, but you will not be able to accomplish all you had planned because of emotional upheaval. There is a strong force playing upon the feelings until 7:30 p. m. and the afternoon can be devoted to social functions. The evening hours are quiet and restrained.

Thursday, The morning hours are forceful, energetic, and turbulent. Accomplish whatever you have planned and stay on the job, but do not be too opinionated and expect opposition from others. You will accomplish very little by losing your control and temper. The luncheon period will be very pleasant and financial decisions should be made between noon and 1:30 p. m. This early period is especially favorable for those doing artistic, inspirational, and creative work, advertising, selling, insurance, banking, and similar branches of endeavor. The evening hours are uncertain and slightly negative, with the tendency to be erratic and quarrelsome around midnight.

Friday, This is a pleasant day and carries the trend of the preceding days. You will not be able to handle unfinished matters as efficiently as you would like, but relations with others will be fairly harmonious. The evening hours are good for recreational activities.

IF YOU WERE BORN BETWEEN  
March 21st and April 20th  
(Aries ♈)

—Aries people born between March 21st and 26th will have a pleasant week and social activities are in order. Readjust your material life by being willing to undertake responsibility and advance yourself. If born between April 13th and 20th, you will not have a serene time at the present but there will be much activity and energy. Your mind will be active and you will enjoy many phases of your existence.

April 20th and May 21st  
(Taurus ♉)

—Taurus people born between April 20th and 26th will find it necessary to accept responsibility and deal with older people at this time. Do not be careless about money and be willing to make sacrifices personally. Your conditions may not be entirely acceptable to you, but they are much better than they were formerly. If born between May 15th and 21st, you will have to make changes and there will be petty worries about business matters which will destroy the serenity of your days. However, you are relieved of some of the pressure you have endured and there will not be as many delays as formerly.

May 21st and June 21st  
(Gemini ♊)

—Gemini people born between May 21st and 28th will have to accept added duties and responsibilities and there will be delays and restrictions in business from the heads of the firm which will be irksome. There should be favorable social conditions this week, if you are allowed to indulge yourself. If born between June 14th and 21st, you will have added energy at this time and good mental response. Accept responsibility, do not indulge yourself too much and make your mind work for you. Stay close to your job and do not allow these favorable conditions to escape you.

June 21st and July 21st  
(Cancer ♋)

—Cancer people born between June 21st and 28th will feel the pressure of the planets at this time, but even though you do not like added responsibility and will have to get down to business, you will find that you have been wise later in the year. Use common sense, intuition, and allow no opportunity to escape you. If born between July 14th and 21st, you will have changes

in business and in policy; will have to undertake responsibility and will have upheaval in your home and with associates. The basic conditions are not unfavorable, however, and later benefits materialize.

#### July 21st and August 22nd

(Leo ♌)

—Leo people born between July 21st and 28th will have a pleasant week socially and will be able to adjust misunderstandings. Financial affairs will be a source of worry but these old difficulties cannot be adjusted satisfactorily at this time. If born between August 14th and 22nd, you will not be satisfied with present conditions and petty conditions will disrupt your existence. It will require balance and patience to cope with present conditions and you should not be too opinionated or prejudiced.

#### August 22nd and September 23rd

(Virgo ♍)

—Virgo people born between August 22nd and 29th will have a pleasant time this week. The week is not especially important commercially, but routine effort will bring results and you should adhere to your schedule. It is a very emotional week for the above group. If born between September 14th and 23rd, you will be upset mentally and there will be changes which will be irritating. You must find an outlet for your emotions and not give too much of your time to play. The underlying conditions are better for this latter group than they have been for some time in the past, and it would be a shame to waste good opportunities which are likely to guarantee your future.

#### September 23rd and October 22nd

(Libra ♎)

—Librans born between September 23rd and 29th will be relieved of some of the pressure in their lives at this time and they can enjoy themselves socially. You will be upset emotionally and your job will demand more attention than usual, but there will be opportunity for recreation. If born between October 14th and 22nd, you will be upset mentally but there will be an increase in energy. Try not to lose your poise or be annoyed by superficial conditions. Use your talent for the written and spoken word.

#### October 22nd and November 21st

(Scorpio ♏)

—Scorpio people born between October 22nd and 29th have had good conditions

for some time in the past, even though there may be an interlude at the present time when you are meeting with delays. However, everything you do now will bring benefit in the future if you are practical and continue with your program. Conditions socially for the current week are favorable. If born between November 14th and 21st, you will be worried over petty things this week and you will have to control your speech and writings. The underlying planetary conditions are favorable if you allow your mind to rule.

#### November 21st and December 20th

(Sagittarius ♐)

—Sagittarians born between November 21st and 27th will have difficulties in the home at this time and there will be domestic restrictions which will be irksome. The social conditions at this time are opportune and favorable, however, and if you can adjust your personal affairs you should be able to enjoy yourself. If born between December 12th and 20th, you will be very busy and your mind will be responsive. Your judgment is good and your days will be filled with activity. Be careful in your dealings with your friends and make valuable contacts. Changes are in order, but do not be hasty.

#### December 20th and January 19th

(Capricorn ♑)

—Capricornians born between December 20th and 28th will have a more pleasant and balanced life in the future and some of the pressure of many months in the past has been relieved. The current week holds emotional upheaval but there will be periods of enjoyment and social relaxation. If born between January 12th and 19th, you will not have a serene existence and there will be changes. Home conditions will be turbulent and no sudden moves should be made; it is better to wait. Your affairs are improving.

#### January 19th and February 19th

(Aquarius ♒)

—Aquarians born between January 19th and 26th will have no improvement in their financial affairs at this time and they will have to stay close to their jobs. Working conditions will be irksome and you will have to assume responsibility. Socially, the week is favorable. If born between February 12th and 19th, you will be able to handle the written and spoken word efficiently and if engaged in literary work you will find your efforts productive. Be patient and

postpone nothing if you can help it. Be careful with money and do not spend more than you can afford.

February 19th and March 21st  
(Pisces ♋)

—Pisceans born between February 19th and 27th will feel expansive and optimistic but there will be added responsibilities and obligations. Do not tolerate delays of your own making and be sure that you are aware of opportunities which will not only improve your present status, but which will also be helpful to you in the future. If born between March 14th and 21st, you are operating with favorable influences and minor annoyances should be ignored. Make changes and realize that the current period is the best you have had in a long time. Do not be afraid to take chances and advantage of all opportunities. Be willing to accept responsibility.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
★ THE STAR QUESTION BOX ★  
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Mr. E. H., born June 13, 1911, Iowa 4:00 a. m.: I am wondering just what has prevented your marriage to the young lady. Your chart seems to indicate interference from relatives. I am surprised that you were unable to bring your plans to a culmination last fall, as all the planetary indications were in that direction. There is a great deal of harmony between the two charts and I see no reason why you do not marry by the fall of this year. If your economic conditions permit and the young lady is willing, I certainly would not allow any outside interference.

M. L. A., born November 29, 1913, Canada, 2:00 p. m.: In comparing your chart with that of the September person, it seems to me that there is basis here only for friendship. I cannot see how you would be happy if you form a permanent partnership and I do not advise it. Also, there are no strong indications for marriage in either one of the charts and I do not believe you will marry until around your twenty-fifth year.

V. S., born June 1, 1914, New York, 5:00 a. m.: There will be an opportunity for you to marry in the fall months of 1936. Your chart indicates many attractions and the possibility of more than one marriage,

but I believe your influences in 1936 will bring you real emotion and deep feeling. Thank you for your kind wishes.

Miss E. L. N., born June 25, 1910, Massachusetts, midnight: I do not like the combination of your chart with that of the July person. You will meet some one else who will attract you more than this young man and there will be an opportunity for you to marry late this summer or in the early fall months.

F. A., born March 4, 1912, New York, 2:00 p. m.: In view of the fact that you will begin to be more serious-minded than formerly, and that your chart indicates that you would like older people, there is a strong possibility that you will have an opportunity to marry this fall. However, even though you will have a serious emotional affair and will be feeling cautious about making a decision, I am inclined to think that you will meet the man late this year and be affected deeply, and that marriage will come later, probably within a year or so.

A. S., born December 28, 1911, Illinois, 1:00 p. m.: This is an excellent time for you to go into business if you are resigned to the fact that affairs will proceed slowly at first. Your circumstances have been under pressure and unsatisfactory for the past six years and they are rapidly improving. The years, 1935 and 1936 are foundation years and it would be well to establish yourself. Conditions will improve in 1937 and you will find 1938 a money-making year. I see no reason why you should not feel encouraged over the possibilities.

A. I. W., born March 17, 1878, about 2:30 a. m., Kentucky: You are a sensitive person and you may have imagined some of the conditions surrounding your friends. Perhaps you have been too critical and they realize that you have not been exerting your full personality in the most charming way. You are going to have to be less retiring and under no circumstances should you allow your morbid ideas to be inflicted upon others. This year brings you a serious outlook and you are going to have difficulty in overcoming this morbid streak more than ever. However, you have the help of our most expansive planet (Jupiter) and you can improve your outlook upon life if you wish to do so. Be willing to give of yourself rather than taking from the personality and temperament of others.

L. L. R., born July 27, 1900, Virginia, 10:30 p. m.: Indeed, I can give you some encouragement and I want to tell you that I feel very optimistic about your writing. I can see that you and your husband are very ambitious and can realize the handicaps you have had for the past seven years. Do not give up your home if there is any possible way to hold it. Some people believe that it is superstitious to talk about seven-year cycles but it isn't. In astrology we have our twenty-eight-year periods (you can see how this works out with the phases of the moon and its twenty-eight-day cycle), and there is no question that there are changes every seven years. You have three children and I am sure you will remember the critical seventh and fourteen ages. You can depend upon conditions changing. Both your charts are improving and 1936 and 1937 are definitely good. Thanks for your kind letter. Keep plugging and be hopeful.

C. K., born November 27, 1915, Colorado, 6:00 p. m.: You were wise to give

up your training to be a nurse. I do not believe you would have liked the work at all. Your chart indicates musical talent and it shows the ability to compose. I advise you to try to get work on a newspaper or publication, preferably in the distribution or circulation end. You would like the work and you could continue with your piano lessons at the same time. You are a restless individual and it is hard for you to confine your attention to any one thing, hence my suggestion that you have two lines of work. You will have to make a choice and stick to your decision if you expect to reach any measure of success. I really advise any type of work which is mental or literary. Nothing else will satisfy you.

Miss M. F., born December 3, 1913, New York, time not stated: I would like to help you, but can rely only upon my charts and you did not send me your hour of birth. I realize that it is very embarrassing to blush and this is usually caused from sensitiveness. You will overcome this



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probably as you become older and I would not worry about it too much. Perhaps your friends know that you blush easily and they are trying to tease you. The best remedy I know for the present, is not to think about yourself too much and not be on the defensive. You will find this tendency disappearing later, I am sure.

Miss A. F., born January 3, 1918, time and place not stated: Your information is too indefinite for me to give you a specific answer, but I wanted to send you a word of encouragement. Your general influences are getting better and if you are persistent and keep on with your efforts, I believe you will be successful. All you January people will have improved circumstances in the future, leading to a more prosperous time in 1937 and 1938.

Miss M. D. P., born December 23, 1909, Connecticut, 6:30 a. m.: There does not seem to be much possibility of your marrying this year. Your influences for business or a career advancement look much more promising. However, I believe you are going to have a love affair. Nevertheless, I do not advise marriage at this time and

suggest that you wait until after your thirtieth birthday before taking the matrimonial step.

#### WHY QUESTIONS ARE NOT ANSWERED

*Kai does not send answers by mail.*

MR. W. H. S., April 5, 1880: You did not send me the lady's birth data.

LONELY, October 20, 1906: It is impossible for me to answer you until I have more definite information about your life and the things that are bothering you.

F. F. M., December 9, 1901: I am not a fortune teller, nor do I give complete horoscope readings.

MRS. M. L. K., October 27, 1916: I do not give complete horoscope readings. If you will write again, asking one specific question, I will try to help you.

MISS I. L., April 5, 1913, Montreal: Sorry, but I cannot answer you without the birth data of the young man concerned.

**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.

#### GOLDEN HOUR

WE did not know if the table  
 Were rosewood, or planks of white pine;  
 If the goblets we raised and we emptied  
 Held water, or pale amber wine.

Nor what we chose from the menu,  
 Since it was our hearts we fed—  
 If honeydew melons, or only  
 The crust from a loaf of black bread.

We but knew we hungered; we thirsted;  
 That we broke a long fast, side by side,  
 And that when we had finished and parted,  
 We had been, for an hour, satisfied.

ETHEL ROMIG FULLER.



# 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.

**H**ERE'S an invitation that I think most of you will find irresistible. Boys, how would you like to hear from an Englishman living in London, England? Well, here is your chance. Jolly Jim would especially like to have some American Pen Pals. You will find him sympathetic, friendly, interesting, and an ideal companion. Write to him, Pals!

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I would be very glad to correspond with some American Pen Pals with whom I could compare notes. I am a young man of twenty-two, living in London, England, greatly interested in sports and politics. There is unlimited scope for interesting comparisons between our two great countries, their customs, habits, et cetera, and nothing would give me greater pleasure than exchanging letters with Pen Pals who really appreciate true friendship. I am expecting to hear from all you fellows real soon. JOLLY JIM.

He can tell you about life in a large hospital.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am an ardent reader of Love Story, and hope that you will help me find a few Pen Pals. I'm a young man of twenty-four, and for the past three years I have been working in a large hospital. I am five feet ten inches tall, with blond hair and blue eyes. I have lots of free time, and would really like to hear from young men everywhere. Who'll be my first Pen Pal? You'll find me a steady correspondent, boys.

LANSING ROBB.

Waltham will trade stamps.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a young man thirty years of age, friendly, sociable, and an enthusiastic stamp collector. I would like to hear from Pen Pals all over the world, especially those who desire to trade stamps. I promise to answer all letters.

WALTHAM.

Who wants a Chicago Pen Pal?

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Have you room in your Corner for a red-headed Chicago girl of seventeen? I really enjoy writing let-

ters, and promise prompt replies filled with all sorts of interesting news. I would like to hear from girls of my own age or older, and will hopefully wait for lots of letters. Please write, all of you. DOUBLEYOU.

She fills her life with happy interests.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a very happily married young woman of twenty, and have an adorable little girl almost two years of age. However, I love to write letters, and would like to hear from Pals far and near, single or married. I can crochet, sew, play the piano, enjoy dancing, hiking, and hunting. Girls, won't you please try me? EDNA.

York Dolores is calling for younger Pen Pals.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Won't you please help me find a few Pen Pals between fourteen and sixteen years of age? I am a lively young girl with red hair, blue eyes, and a fair complexion. I enjoy sports, especially dancing, tennis, and swimming. I want to hear from Pals everywhere, particularly those living in New York, New Jersey, and California. Pals, I'm waiting!

YORK DOLORES.

Mascot has a surprise for the first three Pals!

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a girl of nineteen living in the sunniest part of California. I have a happy disposition, enjoy making friends, dancing, horseback riding, and movies. I will gladly exchange snapshots and picture post cards. A surprise awaits the first three Pals who write to me.

MASCOT.

She wants Pals from Connecticut, Canada and the West Coast.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a girl of twenty-one, with black, wavy hair, hazel eyes, and fair skin. My hobbies are dancing, skating, baseball, football, and movies. I would especially like to correspond with girls living in Stamford, Connecticut, Canada, and on the West coast, although every one is welcome. I'm hoping to get lots of Pen Pals through this plea.

JERSEY FRAN.

Girls, stop and read her plea.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Hi, everybody! Girls, won't you stop for a moment and

read my plea? I am a girl of seventeen searching for true friends. I would like to hear from Pals from all over the world. So get out your pens, pencils, and paper, girls, and write to me. I will answer all letters and exchange snapshots. Please don't disappoint me! VELMA OF IOWA.

Pudggy is modern, jolly, and full of fun.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Although I am modern, jolly, full of fun, and happily married, I am often very lonely and would like to have a few real Pals to correspond with. I enjoy sports, reading, dancing, sewing, and collect picture post cards and stamps. I will answer all letters received, and exchange snapshots. Girls, won't some of you please write? I love listening to every one's troubles. PUDGGY.

This Dakota girl is training to be a nurse.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Please help me get some Pen Pals! I am a lonely nineteen-year-old girl training to be a nurse. I have brown hair, brown eyes, a sunny disposition, and am considered generous and good-natured. I enjoy sports, reading, music, and listening to the radio. Won't some of you Pals please drop me a line? I sincerely promise to answer all letters.

DAKOTA.

Reym longs for understanding Pals.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a genial young bachelor living on an Indiana farm with an invalid mother. I try hard to make her days pleasant, but there are times when I am very lonely and long for a few understanding Pen Pals. My hobbies are oil painting and landscape gardening. During the summer I take care of our orchard, garden, and the chickens. Boys, won't some of you get in touch with me? I will certainly appreciate your letters. REYM.

Here's a Pal who needs your cheer, girls.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am an accident victim, and have been in the hospital a month. I expect to be here for several weeks longer, but I'm trying not to feel too discouraged. Letters from Pals everywhere will certainly help me to cheer up. I enjoy swimming, hiking, and usually I am a very active girl. I'd like to correspond with

girls between eighteen and twenty-five years of age.

POOR ME.

Exchange school news with this Pal.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Can you help me find a few true-blue Pen Pals? I am a girl of sixteen, with brown hair and gray eyes. I like all sports, reading and writing poetry, am a junior in high school, and would like to hear from girls who are interested in exchanging news about school activities. Girls, write to me. I'm very lonesome.

SCHOOL FAN.

He's interested in good music and literature.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a constant reader of your Corner, and would like to have a few Pen Pals. I'm a young fellow of twenty-four, greatly interested in good music, literature, and have made a study of art. I'm fond of travel, and have been all over this great country of ours. I can tell you Pals some very interesting stories about my travels. As I have plenty of spare time to write, I promise to answer all letters promptly.

LAMONT.

Jo and Tee know all about country life.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: We are two lonely young girls looking for Pen Pals. We are considered attractive, well-liked, and friendly. We are very fond of music, dancing, and sports. We live on a farm in Alabama, and can tell you Pals all about country life. Get busy, girls, and let us hear from you. We have oodles of things to talk about. Let's go! JO AND TEE.

Always True is a lonely girl.

DEAR MISS MORRIS:

May I please have my say?  
I get more lonely every day.  
I'm as blue as blue can be.  
Because no letters come for me.  
When the mail man walks by  
And leaves no letters, it makes me cry.  
Oh, dear readers, I'm so blue;  
I want Pen Pals who'll be true!  
I'm a lonely girl, you see.  
So, dear Pals, please write to me.

ALWAYS TRUE.

Berta enjoys doing jig-saw puzzles.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a young married woman of twenty-two, considered

very friendly and sympathetic. I want to hear from single and married Pals everywhere, especially those around my age. I will exchange snapshots, photographs, and promise long, interesting letters. I enjoy reading, writing, and jig-saw puzzles. Come on, girls, do your stuff.

BERTA.

Marcella has been to France twice.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May I join your Friendliest Corner? I'm a girl sixteen years of age, enjoy sports, dancing, and love to write letters. I can play the piano, violin, and banjo. I have been to France twice, and can tell you lots of interesting things about my trips. Ever since the boy I was engaged to broke with me, I have been lonely. Won't some of you Pals between fourteen and eighteen years of age please write to me? I will exchange snapshots, and promise to answer all letters.

MARCELLA.

Boys, Baird should interest all of you.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young man twenty-five years of age, live in Texas, enjoy dancing, reading, and the theater. I can play the piano, and have played in dance orchestras. I have also traveled some, and am sure all you fellows will find my letters interesting. I will exchange snapshots. Let's get acquainted, boys!

BAIRD.

Pals, Evallen needs your friendly letters.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a very lonely girl of eighteen in need of cheer. I have been sick for a month, and have to stay in bed for at least another two months. I would love to hear from girls everywhere, regardless of age, or whether they are single or married. I am alone almost all day, and have lots of time to write letters. I am interested in sewing, cooking, tennis, and dancing. Please, girls, don't fail me! I live in Pennsylvania.

EVALLEN.

She likes mystery stories.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Won't you please print my plea for Pen Pals? I'm a girl of fifteen, a brunette, and feel lots older than I am. Perhaps because I happen to be rather tall. I'm interested in baseball, tennis, dress designing, cooking, enjoy dancing, and love to read mystery stories. But above all these things I like writing let-

ters best. I would especially like to correspond with girls living in Canada and the West.

MYSTERY LOVER.

Lonely Ralph wants to hear from Chicago Pals.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a young man thirty years of age, employed as secretary in a railroad office. I would very much like to hear from Pals between twenty-five and thirty-eight years of age, and especially those living in Chicago. I am interested in the theater, enjoy music, sports, and will exchange snapshots. I might add that I am considered a woman hater. I'll answer all letters promptly.

LONELY RALPH.

A sincere Pal for every one.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young New York State girl fond of sports, dancing, reading, and writing long letters. I have golden hair, blue eyes, and a friendly disposition. I am really very lonesome, and would like to correspond with girls everywhere, regardless of age. Young and old, single and married, won't you all please write?

HAGAMAN PAL.

Red-headed Lu likes plenty of fun.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Won't you please do your best to help a girl of sixteen get some Pen Pals? I have reddish-blond hair, brown eyes, am very good-natured, and like plenty of fun. I enjoy all the things girls of my age are interested in, am quite fond of pets. I am not exactly lonely, but I've never had a Pen Pal, and it would be thrilling to hear from girls far and near.

RED-HEADED LU.

She'll send a snapshot with her first letter.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm another young married woman of twenty-two looking for a few true-blue Pals. I am five feet one inch tall, have curly auburn hair, and gray-green eyes. I would like to hear from single and married Pen Pals, and will send a snapshot with my first letter. I have lots of free time on my hands, and would rather write to Pals everywhere than do anything else.

ATLANTA.

A lonely Illinois Pal.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Won't some one please write to a lonely Illinois man of

twenty-nine? I am considered good-looking, but am inclined to be quiet and somewhat reserved. I don't make friends easily, although I manage to keep the friends I have. I'm interested in the finer things of life. I would especially like to hear from young men around my age who live in or near Chicago, although every one is welcome.

ILLINOIS CHUCK.

You can't be blue when Laughing Eyes is around.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a lonesome girl of seventeen with laughing eyes and a cheerful smile. No one is ever blue when I'm around. However, though I have many friends, I won't feel contented until I have some Pen Pals, too. So come on, girls, and drop me a line. I am sure you won't be disappointed.

LAUGHING EYES.

Here's another Pal with a sunny disposition.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I hope you will help me find a few Pen Pals. I am not lonesome, but I love to make friends, and enjoy writing letters. I am a girl sixteen years of age, good-natured, have a sunny disposition, adore dancing, and my friends consider me a good sport. Girls, won't you please give me a chance to get acquainted with you?

BAMBY.

If you like Hawaiian music, write to Wanamie.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Here's one more S O S for Pen Pals. I'm a girl of eighteen, with brown eyes, brown hair, and a yen for writing letters. I would especially like to hear from girls who enjoy Hawaiian music. I am fond of sports, reading good books, and I'll exchange snapshots. I hope that lots of you Pals will give me a chance to be friends with you.

WANAMIE.

Fergan hails from Canada.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Won't you please print my plea in your Friendliest Corner? I'm a young man eighteen years of age, live in Canada, am six feet tall, and very strong. I would like to correspond with Pals around my age. I have some very interesting experiences to tell about, boys, and when I make a promise to answer all letters, you can depend upon it. I will also exchange snapshots. I'll tell you more in my first letter.

FERGAN.

Let Mej tell you all about New York.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Would any one care to correspond with a twenty-one-year-old Brooklyn girl who is full of fun? I have brown hair, blue eyes, love to make friends, and enjoy writing letters. I'll tell you all about myself, girls, if you'll give me a chance to write to you. I promise prompt replies. Let's get going! MEJ.

All you younger Pals, write to Just Gert.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am only thirteen years old, but would love to have some Pen Pals. I'm a good natured, peppy girl, enjoy horseback riding, and have quite a collection of all sorts of scrapbooks. Girls, won't you write and tell me about your interests? I am five feet five inches tall, with black hair and green eyes. I am looking forward to hearing from young girls from all over the country.

JUST GERT.

Start on the road to cheerful correspondence.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of eighteen, but would like to hear from girls older than myself. I enjoy dancing, singing, and writing letters. I am interested in travel, although I haven't traveled much. I'm good-natured, sociable, cheerful, like outdoor sports, and plenty of fun. Pals, I'll answer every letter received.

DAVENPORT PAL.

Boys, add Ludner's name to your friendship list.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I haven't many friends, and hope you can help me find some Pen Pals. I'm a boy of eighteen, five feet six inches tall, with brown eyes and dark, curly hair. I would like to get acquainted with boys between seventeen and twenty years of age, regardless of where they live. Come on, fellows; write to a lonesome New Hampshire Pal.

LUDNER.

She promises to answer all letters.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Will any one write to a lonely deaf-mute girl of twenty-four? I would welcome letters from every one, and especially from Pals living in Hawaii, Florida, Mexico, Hollywood, and Detroit, Michigan. I promise to answer every letter I receive.

DORA OF ESSEX.

Elyn is studying singing and tap dancing.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Please, won't you make room for me in your Corner? I'm a girl of seventeen, interested in all sports, but my two great interests are tap dancing and singing. At present I am studying both, and would like to hear from girls who like to dance and sing. I promise speedy replies to all letters, and will exchange snapshots and photographs with any one. Girls, how about sending me a line?

ELYN.

She wants to hear from real farmerettes.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young girl who loves farm life, and would enjoy corresponding with girls who live on farms. I like sports, particularly hiking and horseback riding. I have never lived on a farm myself, but would like that sort of life. I collect snapshots and pictures of movie stars. Girls, won't you please write to

WOULD-BE FARMERETTE.

Hoosier John is a young man of experience.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young man of twenty, five feet ten inches tall, have had lots of experience in the theater, politics, and life in general. My chief hobbies are writing letters, collecting post cards, stamps, newspaper clippings, dancing, football, and swimming. I'll exchange some of my clippings and post cards with any Pal who's interested. I have a souvenir from the World's Fair waiting for you, fellows.

HOOSIER JOHN.

She likes ice and roller skating.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Will some one please write to a lonely twenty-year-old Massachusetts girl? My favorite sports are ice and roller skating, and I also greatly enjoy swimming, boating, tennis, and riding. I would like nothing better than to receive lots of friendly letters, and promise prompt, interesting replies. Girls, please don't pass me by. I am not working at present, and really need true Pals.

AMMARYLLIS.

Massachusetts Pals wanted here.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Won't you please print my plea in your Corner? I am a friendly young married woman, enjoy reading, movies, dancing, driving, and other sports. I would particularly like to correspond with Massachusetts Pals, although

every one is welcome. I will answer all letters promptly. Hurry, Pals, for I'll be waiting!

LAURETTA.

These two Pals live on a silver fox ranch.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Hello, everybody! We are two colored girls in our teens, fairly good-looking, fond of sports, dancing, and would love to hear from girls everywhere. We live in Nova Scotia on a silver fox ranch, half a mile from town. We are peppy and good-natured, and will gladly exchange snapshots. Come on, girls, give us a break.

NORMA AND BERNICE.

### A Hawaiian Pen Pal.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I would very much like to hear from Pals all over the world. I am a young man of thirty, living in Hawaii, and am a great lover of sports. My hobbies are writing letters, collecting souvenirs, post cards, and snapshots. Come on, Pals, I'm waiting.

SAM KONG.

### She finds small-town life lonely.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May a lonely married woman in her thirties hope to hear from a few Pen Pals? Until a few years ago, when I moved to a small Pennsylvania town, I lived in New York City. I can't tell you, Pals, how much I would appreciate your letters, and promise faithfully to answer every one. Please write, some one.

ENDEE.

They have large mail boxes in Kentucky.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Here's a lonely Dixie girl begging for Pen Pals. I am eighteen years of age, a brunette, like all sports, and hope to hear from girls all over

the world. We have large mail boxes here in Kentucky, and mine seems to be always empty. Come on, all you ink slingers, and write to

PEARL OF KENTUCKY.

Three Alabama Pals who'll appreciate your letters.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: How about all you girls everywhere writing to three lonely Alabama girls? We are eighteen, sixteen, and fifteen years of age. We live on a real plantation in eastern Alabama, are interested in sports, and would love to hear from girls in the West, especially California and Wyoming. We guarantee answers to all.

SULA, ANABEL, AND JO.

All the way from the Philippine Islands.

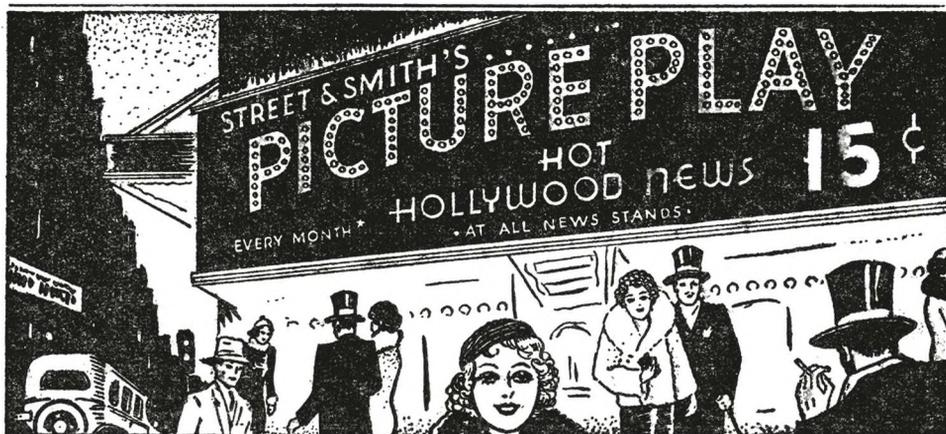
DEAR MISS MORRIS: Is there any chance that some of the Pals who read your Corner would care to correspond with a high-school boy of not quite seventeen, who lives in the Philippine Islands? I am tall, swim a great deal, enjoy music, can play the ukulele, and like to collect stamps. I'm also fond of reading. Boys, I can tell you all about the Islands, and I am sure you would find my letters interesting.

CAPANTAWAN PAL.

This Pal is an accomplished singer.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am an American girl of seventeen, can play the harmonica, piano, guitar, sing, and tap dance. I have sung over the air, although I am still a junior in high school. I have dark, wavy hair, dark eyes, am peppy and full of fun. I live in Ohio, and will make my letters as interesting as possible. Won't you Pals give me a chance?

DANCING FAY.



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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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**M**OST of us know what we are doing when we go in for marriage. But there seem to be amazingly few people who are ready to willingly pay the price of their mistakes. We may close our eyes to the character and disposition of the one we love, and we may not want to think of the difficulties that cannot be avoided. But if we tried to be more courageous when we found marriage filled with disillusionment and disappointments, and did the best we could instead of going back on our bargains, we would probably find life a great deal more bearable. The determination to stand by will often help more than any other one thing to save a marriage.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I don't suppose that my case is very unusual, but I am hoping that you can help me straighten things out. About a year ago I met a man with whom I fell madly in love. I am sure that he loves me, and hope that before long things will turn out favorably and I will be able to go to him.

The trouble is that I am married, and the mother of three children. The oldest is seven years old. I was eighteen when I married. I knew my husband had some

traits of character that I didn't care for. But because I was young and not very wise, I married him anyway.

The first year of our marriage was happy enough. But after that I often met men who appealed to me more than my husband did. I did care for him, in a way, and because there was no other way out I continued to live with him.

My husband is serious, and has a somewhat sour disposition. He is seldom cheerful and friendly, and during the past three years he has always found fault with me and everything I have done. It has made me lose almost all my affection for him.

Instead of being happy, my marriage was filled with as many difficulties and heartaches as other marriages I'd heard about. I was certainly disappointed.

Since I have met this man I am both happy and miserable. I know that if I were to leave, my husband would not let me have even one of the children. Do you think I should stay on for their sake?

The man I love lives in another city. He has a fairly good job, and tells me that he would be willing to support one of my children, but not all. He wants me to go away with him until I have my divorce.

My husband is suspicious and jealous. I suppose that in his own way he loves me. But that thought doesn't thrill me as it should. I can't tell you how tired I am of the way things are, and sometimes I think I would risk anything to get away from it all. My love for the children has held me back so far.

You see, my husband has no folks, and if I were to leave he would have to get some one to come in and take care of the children. On the other hand, this continual grind of doing the same things over and over again gets more unbearable every day.

There is no one else I can go to with all this, Mrs. Brown; and I hope that you can help me decide. I've tried to ask a friend of mine, who is also unhappily married, what she would do, and she said she would leave and not hesitate to live her own life.

DISCONTENTED MAE.

One of the things that would benefit many of us would be to accept marriage philosophically. In other words, we might try to be good sports; take it on the chin with a smile, especially if the happiness of others is involved.

A mother of three children has a job which she should have enough backbone not to shirk. Perhaps life and marriage are not all you expected. But even at eighteen, girls are not blindfolded and led into matrimony without having some idea as to the type of men they have chosen to marry.

Have you considered trying to make your home life more enjoyable? If your husband has been made to feel that other men are more preferable, he naturally cannot be expected to be all smiles and good cheer. He is probably miserable and unhappy beneath that "serious and somewhat sour disposition," as you call it. When a mother really loves her children as devotedly as you say you love yours, then there can be only one answer as to whether she should leave or stay.

I am sure you are perfectly aware of what you would be doing if you went away with this other man before you could marry him, and what influence your decision would have upon your children later on.

Although we cannot completely

shut our eyes to the fact that some marriages eventually reach a sad ending, I would sincerely advise you to give yourself at least a year to think things over.

Perhaps if you gave up this man for the time being, and tried to settle matters in another way, you might succeed. Some very surprising things have been accomplished with a little effort.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: My problem is a little out of the ordinary, and I would be most grateful for your advice, and the opinion of any reader who would care to give me his or her idea on the subject.

I am a young married woman of twenty-five. My husband is thirty years old. We have been married for four years, and know that there will never be any children.

My husband is a sales manager for an automobile concern. He is very well liked, makes friends easily, and gets around quite a lot. Of course, I don't stay home all the time, either. I belong to two clubs, do a little charity work for our church, and try to fill in the rest of my spare time as best I can.

I must admit that my husband and I were quite happy for the first two years of our life together. But about two years ago he seemed to change. I couldn't tell just how, but I knew it in my heart. A wife always knows.

However, I said nothing. I continued as before, never mentioned his long absences, or how lonesome I was when he had to be out of town for a week at a time.

But a month ago I received quite a shock. My husband frankly told me that he had met a woman in another town, they became attached to each other for a time, and the result of the affair was a child. A little boy. The tragic part of it all is that the child's mother doesn't want the baby, and my husband doesn't want her. I offered to give him a divorce, but he wouldn't listen.

He suggested that I take the baby. I have been heartbroken ever since, and still cannot make up my mind whether to do as my husband asks, or leave him. I know I should feel terribly alone, as I love him dearly, and always will. I know also that deep in his heart he loves me, too.

Do you think I should forgive him, and take the baby into our home? My husband regrets his misstep, but he won't let me

divorce him. He begs me to forgive him. Should I? Readers, what would you do?

PUZZLED HELEN.

This is indeed a heartbreaking problem. Your husband is asking a good deal of you, but no matter what any one may say, the final decision will be up to you, dear.

If your husband is the real man he seems to be, in spite of his misstep, and wants to continue to share his life with you, don't you think it might be advisable to forgive him? As for taking the child into your home, I can well understand your hesitancy. It would be most generous on your part to do so, if you feel that such a decision will not embitter you in the future, and that you will not hold it against the child.

On the other hand, you can, if you like, override your husband's arguments against divorce, go your own way in spite of the longing in your heart to remain his wife. But why wreck two lives? Many men play with fire, but the moment the play is against them, they are glad to get home and lean upon their wives' sympathetic understanding.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I used to be a very good-natured and well-liked young man. I had a cheerful disposition, many friends, and nothing could make me mad. And when I fell in love with a very pretty girl, I thought I was the happiest man in the world.

We have been married two years, have one child, and although my wife and I still love each other, I find it impossible to make her stop nagging. Nothing seems to please her, and the minute I get home from work she starts nagging about one thing or another.

We have been lucky enough to save a little, and are planning to buy a small home in the suburbs, but I am very much afraid that all our plans will never materialize, if my wife isn't made to realize that sooner or later she will be responsible for breaking up our marriage. I know I can't stand much more.

As I said before, I used to be very good-

natured. Now I have a violent temper, although I usually manage to restrain myself. But my wife seems to have no thought for me. She argues for hours about unimportant matters.

Can you or some of your readers tell me what a man can do to cure his wife of the nagging habit? Half the time I don't know what she is driving at. I am crazy about her, and try to do everything for her happiness, but I am afraid of the future.

I try not to give her cause for arguments. I work steady, give her my entire pay envelope, and am always ready to do anything she asks me. Now what more can any wife want? Do you think there is any solution to such an unhappy problem?

ELMER.

Offhand, it is rather hard to say exactly what the trouble is. If you really absent yourself from a verbal battle, then there can't be any. However, there usually are two sides to every argument. Are you sure that you are entirely blameless?

There are types of women who have to have the last word regardless how unimportant the argument may be. Such a failing usually dates back to a badly managed childhood. And until the person in question learns some self-control, there is apt to be considerable unhappiness in what might otherwise be a happy marriage.

I would also advise you to try to forget that temper of yours, if you can. Make a point of ignoring your wife's nagging, and don't brood about it. Try to awaken her sense of humor and show her that no matter what she may say, you refuse to get upset about it.

Try also to regain your former cheerful disposition, and have a heart-to-heart talk with your wife when there are no storms brewing. Surely there must be some calm moments. If she loves you, she will try to get out of the habit of arguing and complaining. Then everything will be all right again.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: About four years ago, when I was seventeen, I was a very popular girl, and had many friends. In our crowd there was a boy of twenty-four whom I treated like the others, and didn't get serious in spite of the fact that he was always telling me how much he liked me. He also wanted me to see him when the others were not around.

Finally I started dating him, and before I knew it I was in love. At least, I thought it was love. I was so crazy about this boy I did anything he asked me. I know now that a girl is a fool to go too far.

Afterward I found out that he had started dating another girl without telling me. I knew this girl quite well. Every time I asked him about her, he said that she was running after him.

Although he never mentioned marriage, I took it for granted that he meant to marry me. However, I never said a word about it. Then I thought that he might say I was running after him, and I became somewhat cooler toward him.

This gave him the idea that I no longer cared for him, and whenever we went to a dance, he would dance with other girls more than with me, telling me that I seemed to enjoy myself better with other boys. I am one of those people who do not show their feelings easily, and very often others misunderstand me.

My friends told me not to mind him, and that this particular girl was crazy about every boy who took her out. But this boy came to see me less often, and I felt very bad.

Here's my real problem: About four months ago I met another boy. He was very nice, good-looking, and always behaved like a perfect gentleman. That is, until I knew him better.

He started coming to see me almost every night. He was friendly and sympathetic, and I thought the world of him. One night he asked me what I was worrying about. He had noticed that I was always sad, and didn't enjoy myself like the other girls.

So I told him my story. He said he was glad I was truthful, and that he loved me. However, he couldn't understand how I could have done what I did, and every chance he had he would tell me that he thought I still cared for this other boy.

He somehow didn't believe that I liked him a lot. I wanted to tell him how much I cared, and that I wasn't really a bad girl, but I'm not good at showing my feelings. I am sure he misunderstood me. One night

after a dance he begged me to be good to him, and when I refused, he said it proved that I didn't care for him.

I told him that just because I was foolish once, it didn't mean that I intended to go on traveling on the wrong side of the road. We quarreled, and I haven't spoken to him since. I am sure that I'm in love with him, but I also know that I can't repeat my former mistake. Do you think he really cared for me?

I am so in love with this boy, I never even think about the other one. Won't you please help me untangle this problem? I'll appreciate anything you have to say.

NITA.

Some boys may say that they love and admire a girl for being truthful about herself, but they are seldom big enough to padlock the past and throw the key away.

Try not to feel so sad about breaking up with this boy. You did the right thing, of course, and his actions showed that he neither appreciated your frankness, nor loved you as much as he wanted you to think. He isn't worth crying over.

It will take a little time for you to get over this unhappy experience. But keep your chin up. No one is obliged to travel on the wrong side of the road.

Make new friends, go out more, and try to stop brooding. This need not spoil your future unless you let it. And, remember, dear, when a boy really loves a girl and has marriage in mind, he doesn't ask her to listen to improper proposals.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have been married three years. We have one child, and my wife is devoted to me. Once in a while we have an argument, but nothing really serious. I try to treat her right, but business has been bad, and whenever I don't feel very bright and show that I am worried my wife is dissatisfied with me.

My wife and her sisters have always been on very good terms. My sister-in-law is married, and has three children. She often comes to see us. Several months ago I realized that I was in love with her, although I still love my wife.

In order not to get into this deeper, I purposely would argue with my sister-in-law to make her stay away, but it was of no use. I think she knows how I feel about her, although no words to that effect have ever passed between us.

My wife is one of the best women in the world, and I really love her, but this other feeling for my sister-in-law has begun to worry me so much that I know I must do something about it. I would certainly hate to break up my home, and yet I don't like the idea of giving up all thought of my sister-in-law.

I suppose this sounds very mixed up, but I need your advice and would appreciate it very much.

W. W.

I'm afraid that you are due for a disappointment if you expect to have your cake and eat it, too. You cannot love two women at the same time, and since you are so sure that you love your wife, what you feel for your sister-in-law can be only infatuation.

Going on in this way is very likely to wreck your marriage, cause your wife great unhappiness and lose you something that is now within your grasp—your wife's trust and love. It is not unusual for a married man to fancy himself "in love" with another woman; but the main thing is to keep both feet on the ground and do nothing that might spoil two marriages.

Why not use your common sense, instead of your emotions, to reason with? Give your will power a chance to help you get her out of your mind. If you will sit tight and really try to make your wife and child happy, you can forget your own emotions long enough to get back your mental and emotional equilibrium.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am a clerk in a small-town department store. The boy I am engaged to is a farmer, and every one expects us to get married some day, but I don't know what to think.

I am twenty years old, and my fiancé is twenty-three. We belong to the same

church, and every one says we are a perfect couple. We have been going together for four years.

Terry has been working the farm for his parents. His father isn't in good health, and his mother expects Terry to stay around all the time. His mother doesn't object to our getting married, but she expects us to come to live with them.

Terry agrees with me that we couldn't do that, but so far we haven't told her what we think because we don't know how she will take it. His mother is rather hard to get along with, and although we are fairly good friends now, I know it wouldn't last if I lived in her home.

My fiancé and I would love to buy a farm of our own, but we haven't enough money for that. We would like to get married this year, and have thought of working as tenants on a farm. Do you think that such an arrangement might work out? Terry's parents could easily get some one to work for them.

We hate to wait, not knowing how things will work out. Do you think we should take a chance and marry anyway?

TERRY'S PAL.

Uncertain finances have postponed the hopes of many an ambitious couple, although that doesn't happen in every instance. The idea of working on a farm as tenants until you two can afford to buy a farm of your own sounds practicable. However, you both can afford to wait a year or so, and by that time matters may straighten out more to your advantage.

You are quite right in thinking that young people should begin married life in a home of their own. In-law complications are particularly discouraging in so many cases, because there is no other apparent solution than to share the parents' home. Waiting patiently until circumstances improve is about the best solution that offers itself.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am an attractive girl of twenty-four, single, have managed to save a few dollars, and have a fairly good job. I am living in my own little apartment.

My main trouble is that I have never been able to make friends with girls. Ever since I can remember girls have double-crossed me. I have three sisters who never bothered about me. They would do favors for each other, but never for me.

When I was in school it was the same. The girls turned their noses up at me, and the women teachers usually picked on me. However, I've always had plenty of boy friends. Maybe every one who reads this will consider me catty, but I can honestly say that I have no use for girls.

Even though I'm a woman myself, I fail to see any reason why one girl should ever stick up for another, since girls are always ready to put one over on some other woman. I have a few pet grievances which might illustrate my point.

When I first started to work I met a girl who was living in a hall bedroom. I felt sorry for her, as she said she had no family or relatives, and asked her to share my two-room apartment. She didn't hesitate to use my personal possessions, was too friendly with my boy friends, and always expected the best of everything. That ended that friendship.

About a year ago I fell in love with a very nice young man. He always met me after work, and one night a girl friend managed it so that I had to introduce her. Well, she at once set her cap for him, and he fell for her. They met on the sly, and all the time she pretended to be a friend.

I decided right then and there that I was through with women as friends. I should have known better than to trust any girl, when my own sisters treated me badly. I have no girl friends now, and I'm not sure that I want any. I'm somewhat skeptical about men, too. But at least they are not catty.

It's really a shame that girls are not capable of sincere friendships. Men usually stick together, but girls find it impossible. Maybe you will say that I'm a cat myself, and that I am jealous, but I don't suppose you will take the trouble to print a letter like this one. STORMY WEATHER.

Well, my dear, to remember an old saying, life is what you make it. If you want sincere friendship, you have to give out friendship. It is an admitted fact that we sometimes get stung for our efforts, but all people are not alike.

Going around with a chip on your shoulder, carelessly airing your sus-

picious and ideas of the fair sex, is apt to pay back in like coin. The fact that you have had unhappy experiences with two selfish girls naturally caused you some heart-ache. But is it fair to condemn all girls? Think it over, dear. And, in the meantime, perhaps some of our readers will want to convince you that such a thing as real friendship between women does exist. How about it, family?

DEAR MRS. BROWN: May a mere man enter your department? The girls who write in to say that they are in love with married men have no idea what real love is. Maybe it sounds strange for a man to warn girls to leave married men alone. But I've often felt plenty mad at the way some men try to "make" a girl.

This doesn't mean that I'm altogether on your side, girls, because you have done plenty of damage making eyes at men regardless of whether they already had wives or not.

The trouble with most girls is that they never seem to care what the man is like, as long as he is ready to be agreeable. It's the girls' own fault if they are taken in. But most girls are very poor sports; they can't "take it" when it comes to bearing up under disappointments, especially if they find out that some man managed to fool them.

Why girls raise such a fuss about the boys wanting to kiss them good night is a mystery to me. In the first place, most girls expect that good-night kiss. If a man doesn't even try, then the girl thinks that she hasn't made a hit. She may try to lead him on, and then the whole thing is spoiled.

When a fellow takes a girl riding, nine times out of ten she snuggles up close, lifts tempting lips, et cetera. Only a wooden man would refuse to kiss. If girls didn't issue invitations, wordless ones, we boys wouldn't be accepting any.

If I'm wrong, girls, just correct me. But I've always found that girls have very little courage when it comes to speaking their minds frankly. A FREE MAN.

And all this from a young man who believes he is wise and experienced in the ways of human nature! What do you think, family? Are girls the poor sports A Free

Man believes them to be? Take this young man's dare, girls, and point out the weak spots in his argument.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am a divorcee, but am quite young, having married when I was fifteen. I didn't know what love was when I married; I wanted to have the freedom and privileges of older girls. However, my parents approved of the marriage.

For the past year and a half I have been desperately in love with a man who, unfortunately, has a wife and one child. Since our acquaintance I have been out with other men, but although he knew, we continued to be friendly until we knew only too well that we were deeply in love.

I suppose you will give me the same kind of advice I've already read in your department in a case like mine. But I have no one else to tell my troubles to.

This man has told me that he cares for me more deeply than he has ever cared for his wife. He is known to be a nice man, but he has never tried to hide the fact that he likes to flirt, and his friends always make remarks about that. Since we have been seeing each other he hasn't even looked at another girl.

His wife says that I wouldn't go out with her husband if he couldn't afford to take me places. But she is wrong, for only love can make a woman put up with the disappointments I put up with every day for his sake. I am considered very good-looking, and have few friends because I have given up everything, even my reputation for this man.

He never fails to tell me how much he loves me, although in spite of anything I can say, he still continues to live with his wife. There is another man who says he loves me. Herb knows about this other man, but he wants me to marry him—some day, when he has his freedom.

This other fellow is really fine, and I know that he would make a very good husband. What do you think, Mrs. Brown? Should I continue trying to win the man I love, or marry the man who loves me?

DIVORCEE.

A love venture in which all common sense and judgment are thrown to the winds can lead only to the day when both the man and woman concerned are faced with the unalterable fact that conventions can-

not be evaded where security and peace of mind must be taken into consideration.

It is always a sad story when a woman loses her reputation, friends, and home, and persists in blindly stumbling toward disappointment and regrets that are sure to follow such pursuit as yours, Divorcee.

The very fact that this man is known to be a flirt should have been a warning to you from the start. Besides, men who really fall in love at least make some definite attempt to remedy the situation. Pretty stories cannot be depended upon.

My suggestion is that you give up the man you think you are in love with. And, instead of considering marriage with a man you do not love, give yourself a chance to make another start in life. It is never too late to make your life worth while.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: A year ago I fell in love with a young man who was working near where I live. I am nineteen, and he is twenty-three. We fell in love almost at first sight.

After dating him for a few months his cousin found a better job for him in another town. He promised faithfully to write, and we both promised to be true to each other.

We corresponded regularly, and last Christmas he came to see me, although he had to travel almost a whole day each way. He was very devoted and affectionate, and I never dreamed that when he went back it was the end of everything.

He didn't break off right away. He wrote a few letters, but they were not as loving and affectionate as his other letters had been. Gradually he stopped writing altogether. I couldn't understand it, and I don't think I ever will. I know I did nothing to in any way hurt him.

Maybe I had better say right here that due to illness when a child, I am slightly lame, although that didn't prevent me from having good times in high school. Do you think this was the reason? But he knew all about it from the start, and said that nothing mattered except our love.

I have written to him several times and asked him to let me know why he broke

with me this way, and said that it makes it hard for me not to know how he feels about me. Because if he doesn't care, I would try to forget and interest myself in some other boy. I also said that I still cared.

Do you think I did the wrong thing in writing to him when he didn't answer my letters, and telling him how I felt about him? I just had to let him know that if he ever made up his mind to come back he would probably find me waiting.

I have been out with different fellows, but I can't seem to think of any one except this boy. I always think that he will come back one of these days. Do you think I'd be happier if I really gave him up?

I've often wondered if my being lame will prevent me from ever getting married. I mean, I am not sure that any boy could really care for a girl who is a little lame. It seems that every time I want something badly, it always slips away from me.

GERALDINE.

I doubt very much if any of us get exactly what we want in this world. It is better not to expect too much, then our disappointments are likely to prove less heartbreaking.

It is really a pity that any girl should break her heart over a man who apparently didn't take her seriously enough to play fair. That boy friend of yours could not have really cared for you, dear.

Of course, there is the possibility that he didn't know how to go about telling you that he had changed. But he might at least have tried to be more thoughtful of your feelings.

Try not to shut yourself away from other friendships with boys who would really appreciate you. In regard to being self-conscious about your limp, remember this: Other people do not think about it half as much as you do. They may notice it at first, but then forget it.

And, believe me, dear, there are countless girls with varied handicaps who are happily married. No doubt some of them will write in

order to assure you that this is indeed true. How about it, family?

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Why do things have to go wrong after nine years of marriage, when the husband and wife really should settle down to bringing up their children? I am so heartsick and discouraged that in spite of my love for my three children I feel no desire to live through further struggle.

I'm only thirty-one, still very young-looking, and people I meet can hardly believe that I've been married nine years and am the mother of three children.

Until two years ago my husband, who is thirty-six, seemed to be a devoted husband and father. Even now, after all that he has done, I still believe that he loves the children. However, for more than a year he has been interested in a woman who works in the same place he does.

I knew there was some other woman, but not until two months ago did I find out who she was. He spends most of his salary buying her things and taking her out.

My brother took me and the children over to this woman's home. She claimed she did not know that my husband was a married man and a father, but I doubt it. In a place of business most people are likely to know whether a man is married or single.

My husband was terribly angry that I went to see this woman, and we quarreled about it. Then he packed up and left. At first he sent me some money, but after three weeks he stopped.

I suppose I am a fool, but I still care for my husband. He says he will never come back, although I've told him that I would try to forget, and will forgive him for the children's sake. However, the only thing he seems to want to do is to see the children now and then.

I have always been a good housekeeper, can cook well, and tried to do my best in order to make life at home pleasant for him. I can't understand why he should have turned away from everything the way he did, and found the company of other women so much more to his taste. What do you think I should do? I've called him up, and sent him special-delivery letters telling him I must have money if the children are to eat and have a home, but he pays no attention to me. Mrs. J. C. K.

It is indeed hard to understand why any man should suddenly

change from a good husband and father to an irresponsible, thoughtless individual who seems devoid of all sense of decency and fair play. A man ought to have more pride and a higher opinion, not only of himself, but of his family. He might also remember that the real joy of living is not to be found in risky episodes that bring only sorrow to those who really love him.

Since your husband refuses to accept your forgiveness and return to his duties as father and husband, perhaps stronger measures than pleading will make him realize that he cannot leave you and the children in want. Sometimes begging doesn't accomplish as much as when a man is shown that he cannot do as he likes in all things.

My suggestion is that you see a lawyer, and give your husband to understand that you will stand for no more nonsense, and that it is up to him to do the right thing by you and the children.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am sure that you can help me. I'm a young man of twenty-two, and the girl I love is two years my senior. We have been keeping steady company for a year, but my mother is trying to make me break up with Mae. She says that Mae is too old for me.

When I first started going with her, everything seemed to be all right. I mean, my mother didn't object, and my friends liked her. But a few months ago I received several anonymous letters telling me that my girl friend was not a nice girl, that she was dating married men, and that she was only making a fool of me.

Now, I know Mae, and I love her, and I am sure that she is all right. I paid no attention to these letters, and still think she is one of the finest girls in the world.

Recently, however, my mother received one of those letters, and she believes everything this letter says. She now wants me to break with Mae, and I am so disgusted with the whole thing that I don't know what to do.

Two months ago Mae and I became engaged, and we are planning to get married

next spring. I don't dare tell my mother about our engagement, because she would just about make life unbearable for me.

Every one who knows Mae, and, in fact, the whole town in which we live, thinks about her as I do. Every one keeps telling me that I couldn't pick a better girl. It's really a shame that my folks should treat her this way, because she really likes them; she doesn't know how they feel about her.

Mae never goes out without me. She has a very fine mother and father, but whoever wrote those letters seems to think that Mae isn't the kind of girl a fellow ought to marry. Mrs. Brown, won't you help me? Only yesterday, when my mother was nagging, I threatened to leave home, and maybe I will.

WEBSTER.

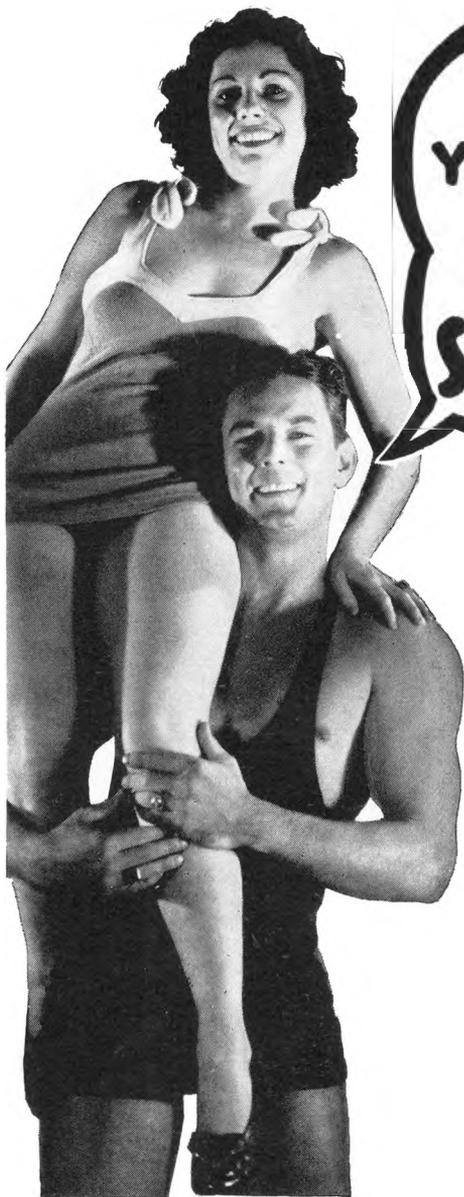
Running away from a problem does not solve it, my boy. What a pity that any one should try to spoil another's happiness! It's hard to say who may be playing this trick on you, but it certainly must be some one who is probably jealous and doesn't want you to marry Mae.

Although every mother is rather anxious when her son's thoughts turn to marriage, it isn't fair on your mother's part to condemn a girl without going more deeply into the matter.

However, it may not be as wise as you think to keep your engagement secret. It will only serve to make the situation more irritable. Place your cards on the table, my boy, and take your parents into your confidence. You are of age, and free to follow the dictates of your heart.

Perhaps if your mother is convinced that your faith in Mae is unshaken, and that nothing can make you change your mind, she will become more reasonable.

If you really and truly love this girl, then your heart holds the answer as to what you should do. Since Mae has not given you just reason to suspect that such charges against her character are true, why not go on with your plans?



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