

STREET & SMITH'S LOVE STORY ★

EVERY WEEK

MAGAZINE

OCT. 3, 1931

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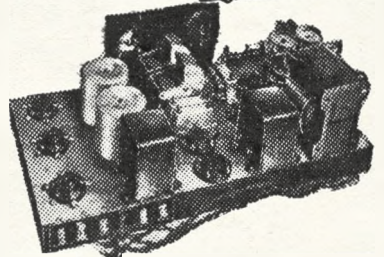
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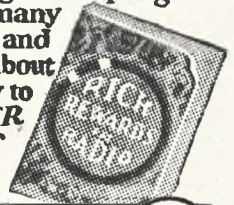


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EVERY WEEK

Number 4

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Beginning in next week's issue, "Delayed Desire," a new serial by Ruth Harley, illustrated by Constance Benson Bailey.

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LS-1D



The Magic Of Dreams

By Barbara Dunmar

SYLVIA ERCOTT sat, elbows propped on the desk before her, palms supporting her chin as she gazed down into the handsome face which looked back at her from the illustrated paper lying open before her.

Underneath the half-page photograph was printed:

The latest portrait of Mr. Dane Sinclair, one of the most brilliant analytical chemists in the country. Mr. Sinclair, who is just thirty, is the head of the firm of Sinclair, Staton & Co. It is whispered that he has just perfected the process for a new aniline dye, which will go near to revolutionizing the industry.

LS-1D

A little sigh escaped Sylvia, although as she abruptly folded the paper and thrust it into a drawer, she told herself she was a fool. Why did she waste her thoughts on a man who never looked twice at her, and who was never likely to do so?—she wondered.

For the last six months she had been Dane Sinclair's secretary, and almost from the first moment she had seen him, her heart had passed out of her keeping. She knew that apart from the fact that she was a very efficient secretary, Dane Sinclair found her utterly uninteresting.

He was a worshiper of beauty, and for a man who loved beauty, she did not hold any attraction.

Deliberately taking out a hand mirror from her drawer, she studied her reflection. She had irregular features and light-brown hair, dull and lifeless.

No, she told herself brutally, her best friend could not possibly have described her as anything save plain. Her eyes were her only good feature.

As she thrust the mirror out of sight, she gave a little laugh. Perhaps it was just as well that Dane Sinclair so seldom glanced in her direction.

There were not many other girls in the plant, for Sinclair, Staton & Co. employed mostly men, and Sylvia had been engaged in a hurry by the manager of the firm when Dane Sinclair's last secretary had met with an accident.

The manager had warned her that the position might only be a temporary one, but Sylvia had been kept and there seemed no sign of her having to leave. Sometimes she wondered what she would do if she were to get fired, how she would feel when each new day came and she knew that it would bring no sight of the man whom she secretly adored.

What folly—she thought bitterly. Yet she knew that she could not help herself. She could not conquer her love for a man who was totally indifferent to her.

She started from her reverie as the bell from Sinclair's office rang beside her desk. With the dull color staining her cheeks she picked up her notebook and pencil, and crossing her small office, knocked at his door.

As she entered in answer to his, "Come in," her employer was seated at his big desk, facing her. He glanced up with a rather curt "Good morning," and then returned his

gaze to his task of sorting his morning mail.

Apart from mere good looks, he had a strong, rather cynical face—the face of a man who is a born fighter and to whom life has left few illusions. He had had a hard fight before success came to him, and even though he was still quite a young man, his early struggle had left its mark upon him, and now he was inclined to be ruthless. Up to the present women had played a very small part in his life; his work meant too much to him to allow any outside distractions to interfere with it.

"Please take a few letters, Miss Ercott," he said, and as Sylvia opened her notebook, he began to dictate.

She was unaware that two or three times he raised his head to glance at her, a little crease between his brows, though once she did raise her eyes and encountered his.

Sylvia had beautiful eyes, long and perfectly shaped, and the green-blue of an aquamarine. It was the first time Dane Sinclair had ever noticed them and they gave him a shock, for just at that moment he had been thinking: "Why doesn't the girl try to do something to improve herself—but I suppose it would be a hopeless task!"

"Perhaps you will be good enough to get those letters out at once?" he requested, rather more curtly than usual. "Please bring them to me in Mr. Rogers's office."

Sylvia rose at once and went back to her small office.

As the door closed, Dane Sinclair looked frowningly after her, with amazed annoyance, realizing that his pulses were beating a little faster than usual. For once a girl's eyes had sent a strange thrill through him.

Lovely eyes they were, but how utterly wasted in such a plain girl! More out of temper than he had been for a long time, he went down to the manager's office.

Sylvia sat before her typewriter, her fingers flying over the keys.

As soon as she had finished the letters she took them down to Mr. Rogers's office, as she had been requested to do, and as she went in, Dane Sinclair broke off his conversation.

"Thank you, Miss Ercott. If you will leave them, I'll sign them and have them sent up to you again."

Outside she paused, stooping to fasten her slipper, which had come undone, and suddenly her employer's irritated voice came floating out to her.

"How did you ever come to engage that girl, Rogers? Of course, she is very efficient, but, good heavens, it gives me a headache to look at her. Plain girls should be drowned at birth! I must say——"

But Sylvia heard no more. With a little involuntary movement she pressed her hands over her ears and fled.

Back in her own office she sank into a chair, covering her face.

"Plain girls should be drowned at birth!"

Suddenly it seemed as though all the love with which her heart had been filled for Dane Sinclair turned to hatred.

No man had any right to be so cruel, so callous. "Oh!" she thought, her hands clenching. "If only I could make him pay. Some day I will—I swear I will!"

Had Dane Sinclair dreamed that his secretary had heard his frank criticism of her appearance, he would have been upset, for he would not

deliberately have hurt any girl's feelings.

It was he himself who brought back the letters he had signed to her office. If he had looked at her he would have noticed how pale she was, might even have read the resentment in those suddenly discovered attractive eyes of hers, but following his usual custom, he did not look at her.

"By the way, Miss Ercott," he said abruptly. "I shall be away from the office for a few days. Have you finished typing that formula I gave you to do?"

"Yes."

She opened a drawer as she spoke and took out some papers.

He paused to glance through them.

"Thanks. That is excellent. You are quite certain that no one but yourself has seen this?"

With a satisfied little nod he went away. Sylvia knew the typewritten matter she had just handed him was the formula for his new dye. A secret worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. She had been thrilled and flattered to think that he trusted her with the typing of it, but now she no longer cared.

She hated him, she almost wished that she might never see him again. She told herself that she could not bear to go on like this—to remain in an office with a man to whom she knew she was repulsive, was impossible. She would resign Saturday and begin to look for another position at once.

When she left the office that evening, she felt restless and unhappy. She was not a girl who made friends easily, leading a solitary life, and tonight she felt that she could not face the loneliness of her rooms. She decided that she would go to the talkies.

The picture she saw only emphasized the attraction of beauty, and yet she was clear-sighted enough to realize that the star without her lovely clothes and luxurious surroundings would be just an ordinary sort of girl whom very few men would look at twice.

Sylvia was tired by the time she got back to the house where she roomed, and letting herself into the house with her key, climbed slowly upstairs.

As she turned on the light, she caught sight of a square white envelope propped against the clock. Picking it up she turned it over, and her breath caught, for printed on the back of it was the name of a well-known advertising firm.

With trembling fingers she tore it open. Fastened to the letter was a slip of green paper, but she hardly glanced at it before she eagerly scanned the few typewritten lines.

MISS SYLVIA ERCOTT.

DEAR MADAM: We are happy to inform you that you have received first prize in our advertising slogan contest. We are inclosing our check for two thousand dollars.

With congratulations* and best wishes,
we are, Very truly yours,
NEW LINE ADVERTISING COMPANY.

Two thousand dollars! She had won two thousand dollars! Sinking down into a chair she gazed at the check, hardly able to believe her eyes.

And then in a flash came the question: Could it buy beauty?

To-morrow she would find out.

It was three o'clock the following afternoon when Sylvia passed through the glass doors which gave access to the premises of Madame Lorraine's well-known beauty establishment.

She had telephoned for an appointment, and after a good deal of

difficulty had managed to obtain one for that day.

Then she had gone down to the office and informed Mr. Rogers that circumstances made it imperative for her to leave at once. The manager had protested at her leaving on such short notice, but remembering his chief's remarks regarding her, he had not made as much fuss as he would have done in other circumstances, and so Sylvia, thankful that Dane Sinclair was away, had gone into her office and hastily collected her belongings.

Among the collection of papers and other things she took from her desk was the paper she had been looking at the previous day, containing the picture portrait of the man who until now had been her employer—the man whom she still told herself she hated. She was on the point of destroying it, and then remembering that she could not leave the pieces lying about the office, she put it with her other things.

She had left the office with the determination in her heart that if ever she and Dane Sinclair met again, it would be under very different circumstances.

As she passed up the stairs leading to Madame Lorraine's salons, she wondered if she were beginning a new life, and if so, what it held for her.

As Sylvia waited she caught sight of herself in a long mirror, and the impulse assailed her to turn and run. She had never taken much interest in her clothes because she had never been able to afford the sort she wanted, but now she realized how dreadful her coat was, how unbecoming her hat.

At that moment a tall slender girl came forward.

"What can I do for you?" she asked courteously.

"I have an appointment with Madame Lorraine," Sylvia stammered. "Miss Ercott——"

"Oh, yes. Will you come this way!" was the polite response.

But somehow as she followed that slim back Sylvia was certain there had been a gleam of laughter in the other girl's eyes—and suddenly into her mind leaped the sound of a man's voice saying: "Plain girls ought to be drowned at birth." She set her lips as she passed through the door which the girl opened.

The room which Sylvia entered was very different from the one which she had just left. There was a black carpet on the floor and the walls were dead white and quite bare, so that as the room was lighted from the top by an enormous skylight, the effect of light was almost dazzling. There was no furniture save two straight-backed armchairs and a big desk. Behind the desk sat a slender dark girl, whose perfect brunet complexion was the last word in flawless art. She wore a plain black satin dress.

She did not rise, and as she looked at her client, a slight smile on her carmined lips, Sylvia felt an instinctive mistrust of her. But she smothered the feeling, irritated at herself. After all, what did it matter whether she liked this girl or not? She had come to her because she had heard that she was the cleverest beauty specialist in New York.

"Miss Ercott?" said Madame Lorraine. "You wished to consult me? Please sit down."

Sylvia sat down, aware that the light from the window above was pouring down upon her.

"Yes," she answered a little breathlessly, and then summoning all her courage: "Look at me, madame! Can you make me beautiful?"

There was silence. Julia Lorraine stared at her, her dark eyes searching, merciless. Then with a sharp: "Take off your hat!" she rose and, coming around the desk, stood in front of Sylvia.

On a long, slender platinum chain which hung about her neck she wore a tiny magnifying glass which she raised and examined Sylvia through as though she were some interesting specimen in a museum. She turned her face to the light, studying every feature with frowning concentration, then she examined her hair.

"Your hair is terrible at present," she said with ruthless frankness, "but at least it has red lights in it."

"It was red when I was a child," Sylvia told her.

"Good. Then we can restore the color, and washes and massage will do the rest. Of course," continued the beauty specialist, "your skin is in an awful condition. Nevertheless, it has a good texture, and I never met the bad complexion yet that could get the better of me. Your mouth is big, but it is a beautiful shape and your teeth are good. Your eyes are lovely, and that irregular nose is going to add charm to your face. Yes, Miss Ercott, I can make you beautiful if you will put yourself entirely in my hands—even go to the people I advise for your clothes. But—pardon my frankness for this establishment is run on strictly business lines—can you afford my services?"

Sylvia flushed.

"That depends on what you are going to charge."

"Let me see!" The other considered, then named her fee.

Sylvia rose. There was no hesitation in her manner, for though the fee was more than she had expected, she felt that it would be worth it.

"Very well," she said.

If she could be made beautiful, then she would find some way of meeting the man who had scorned her, and in some way she would make him pay!

"I have never in all my life seen a more wonderful transformation." Julia Lorraine sitting behind her

desk, surveyed the girl who stood on the other side of it smiling confidently down at her. A slender girl in an exquisitely black-cloth ensemble and with a white crêpe-de-Chine blouse and a string of aquamarines the exact blue-green of her eyes, about her neck, a girl whose soft waves of burnished hair just



He held out his hand to her. "Come, Miss Eastcote, let us dance this!" he said.

peeped from beneath her smart, close-fitting hat of black felt.

"You are really pleased?" asked Sylvia, for it was she. "You think that I do you justice?"

"Do you know"—the other bent toward her—"I would willingly pay you back the money I took from you and treble the amount, if you would allow me to publish a photograph of you as you were and as you are now—and say that it was I who brought about the change."

Sylvia laughingly shook her head, although her eyes were shadowed.

"Not for untold wealth. I want to forget the fright who came to you and requested to be made beautiful—so much so that I am going to change my name and I shall be known in future as Sylvia Eastcote."

"And why, I wonder," said Julia softly, "have you done all this?"

During those six weeks they had become quite friendly, but somehow Sylvia had never quite lost that first distrust of the beauty specialist and she did not intend to confide in her.

"I told you," she smiled, "when I won the prize money that I was determined that if it were possible, it should buy me what I wanted all my life—beauty."

"I often wondered," Julia's narrowed dark eyes were on her face, "if there was some man involved in the case!"

"My dear," Sylvia fenced, though to her annoyance she felt the color surging into her cheeks, "what man would have looked at the sight I was?"

Before the other could make any further comment the door opened and one of the girls announced: "Mr. Beresford is waiting, madame."

"Show him in." Julia turned to Sylvia. "Don't go. It is only my cousin Gerald—you have met him before."

As Gerald Beresford entered a moment later, his handsome dark eyes, which were so like Julia Lorraine's, lighted up at the sight of Sylvia. It was still new to her to see that look of admiration in a man's eyes, and it gave her a little thrill of pleasure.

"This is splendid, Miss Ercott!" he exclaimed. "Do come and lunch with us!"

"Sylvia is going to be Miss Eastcote in the future," his cousin informed him, and as he looked at Sylvia, she nodded confirmation.

"Yes, I'm tired of my name," she observed carelessly, "so why should I not change it?"

"I should not think you would have the slightest difficulty in doing that," he said, and as Sylvia realized his meaning, she colored.

They both laughed, but there had been an underlying seriousness in his glance, and she wondered a little apprehensively if it could be possible that this man whom she had met only two weeks before, could be falling in love with her. Though she found him a pleasant acquaintance, she felt no interest in him otherwise.

Julia Lorraine had gone into her dressing room to get ready. She came back now.

"Gerald," she said, "can't you persuade Sylvia to change her mind and sail with us at the end of the week? She has never been abroad, and I have promised her that I will give her a good time. Besides, she is such a perfect advertisement for my preparations—look at that skin."

"My dear," he said with decision. "You will never persuade me that skin was not as perfect before it ever knew your creams."

The two girls exchanged a laughing glance.

"Do come, Miss Eastcote," he continued. "It really will be fun, and

while Julia is busy seeing clients I'll look after you."

Sylvia hesitated. Julia Lorraine had a branch of her business in Nice, and always went over to take personal charge for some weeks at this time of the year. Several times she had broached the subject of Sylvia accompanying her, but the girl had refused because she felt that by remaining in New York she had more chance of meeting Dane Sinclair. But this morning she had read a paragraph in the paper announcing that he had gone abroad for a short time.

"Perhaps I will change my mind," she said on a sudden impulse. "But if I do, I shall not stay more than two weeks."

But as she made the decision, she little dreamed how momentous it was destined to be.

Three weeks later Sylvia was unpacking her trunk in her bedroom at the Hotel Towers, Nice.

Everything that had happened since she decided to accompany Julia Lorraine seemed to have held a fresh thrill for her. The crossing of the ocean—she, who had never been out of New York before! The day they had spent in Paris, when under her companion's guidance she had bought more lovely clothes. Then the journey to this exquisite, exotic Paradise by the blue Mediterranean.

She hung up her dresses one after the other, humming a gay little snatch of song. Of course, she told herself, she ought not to have come, and she could not possibly afford to stay longer than ten days. Two thousand dollars does not last very long when it is spent as Sylvia had been spending. She only had a few hundred left now, but with a new recklessness she told herself that she

did not care. She would have ten glorious days—ten days of gayety and admiration, and then—well, then it was time enough to think of what would happen.

After all, if she had to get work she could obtain a good position. Pretty girls did not have to go begging, she thought cynically.

As she removed the last garment from her trunk, she saw a flat brown envelope lying in the bottom of it, and for a moment she stared at it, puzzled. Then she remembered. It was the envelope of things she had taken from her desk in the office the day she left. She had never looked through them, and coming across the envelope while she was packing, had thrown it into the trunk.

She glanced at her wrist watch. There was half an hour before she need begin to dress for dinner. After a slight hesitation she stooped and lifting out the envelope, opened it.

What a lot of rubbish! The first thing she found was the paper with Dane Sinclair's photograph in it. As she looked down at the stern, handsome face, she felt her heart beating violently.

Oh, how she hated that man! How she prayed that her opportunity of getting even with him might come soon! And yet, how hopeless it seemed. How was she going to get the chance of meeting him?

She flung the paper angrily into a corner of the room, but her hands were trembling as hastily she went through the small pile of typewritten papers which she picked up next—old statements, carbons of business letters of her own. Then a little cry escaped her—for among all these was a paper which had no business to be there. Glancing hurriedly through it, she recognized it as one of the carbons of the dye formula

which she had typed for Dane Sinclair!

She could not think how it got among her own papers, and her first impulse was to destroy it, for it was a dangerous thing to leave about. Then, on an unexplainable impulse, she folded it carefully and put it into her bag.

No, she would not destroy it. She would keep it carefully with her wherever she went—and then when she returned to New York she would take it to Sinclair—it would be her excuse for getting in touch with him again.

Hastily tearing up the rest of the papers and throwing them into the wastepaper basket, she began to get ready for dinner.

It was almost an hour later when she entered the Palm Court where Julia Lorraine and Gerald Beresford were waiting for her, and she knew with a quickened, elated beating of her heart that people were looking at her in the way in which people do look at a lovely and very attractive girl.

In her gown of gold lamé she was beautiful, with pearls about her throat, and the lights turning her hair to molten copper.

There was no mistaking the look in Gerald Beresford's eyes as he moved forward to meet her, and with that reckless mood still upon her she flashed a smile up at him. Then suddenly the laughter died on her lips and her eyes widened as she caught sight of a man who had just entered.

His height would have made him remarkable anywhere, and he wore his evening clothes as can only a well-bred American.

Julia Lorraine, looking at Sylvia in surprise, followed her eyes, and under her make-up the color drained from her face.

"What is the matter, Sylvia?" she asked, and her voice sounded strange.

"Nothing." Sylvia colored. "I just recognized a man I—used to know."

"So I gathered," said Lorraine. "Where did you meet Dane Sinclair?"

Sylvia's head went up with a jerk, and as she met the other's glance, she realized with a shock that it was full of hardly veiled hostility.

With the knowledge that Julia Lorraine and Dane Sinclair were not strangers to each other, Sylvia suddenly felt that the other girl was the last person in the world she wished to know about her own former acquaintance with him, and without a moment's hesitation she answered:

"Dane Sinclair? Isn't that the great scientist?"

The other looked at her suspiciously—but at that moment Dane Sinclair passed close by them, and turning his head, saw the beauty specialist.

He bowed to her a little stiffly, and for a second Sylvia thought he was going to pass on, but Julia held out her hand, so that he was obliged to turn back and take it.

"This is a surprise!" he said, and Sylvia was somewhat certain that it was not a very pleasant one as far as he was concerned, though there was no doubting that the girl was pleased.

As their hands fell apart she looked up at him with an expression which was almost like pleading in her eyes, but the smiling glance he bent upon her was cold and impersonal.

"You know my cousin, I think!" she said, indicating Gerald Beresford with a gesture.

He bowed again, this time with unmistakable coldness, and Julia

Lorraine's glance became sharp as she continued:

"Sylvia, may I introduce Mr. Sinclair—Miss Eastcote, Dane."

As he turned toward her, Sylvia caught her breath. Of course, there was not the slightest chance of his recognizing her, and yet for the moment she felt nervous. She told herself it was that which caused the wild beating of her heart, but even while she was telling herself that she hated this man more than she had ever thought it possible to hate anybody, she gave him one of her most charming smiles, and felt a thrill of what she believed to be satisfaction as she met the unmistakable admiration in his eyes.

Watching them as a cat watches a mouse, Julia Lorraine drew in an inaudible breath. She must have been mistaken; these two did not know each other. Then she remembered. A couple of months ago Sylvia had looked very different from what she did now. Her suspicions were awake again.

Always in her heart she had felt sure that the reason for the other girl's fierce desire to become beautiful and attractive must be some man. What if Dane Sinclair was that man? Her intuition was sharpened by jealousy, for the thought of any other girl attracting Dane drove her frantic.

Two years ago she had been engaged to Dane Sinclair. They had met one winter in Switzerland, and from the first she had made up her mind to win him for her husband.

She had a strange, alluring fascination of her own, and for the first time Dane Sinclair believed that he had found love, and a girl capable of sharing his work and his ideals.

It was only when they returned to New York that he discovered his mistake. Julia was madly jealous

of his work, and always making scenes when she thought it received more attention than she did. One day in a fit of rage she returned his ring, breaking off the engagement. She had expected that dramatic gesture to bring him to her feet, but to her horror he accepted the situation calmly, writing and telling her that he was glad she had discovered what a mistake their engagement had been.

Desperately she tried to remedy matters, but without avail. Dane Sinclair knew that a girl of her type could only bring them both intense unhappiness. She had cured him irrevocably of his infatuation for her, and so she found out that it was useless for her to try to make up the quarrel.

She still loved him in her wild, undisciplined, utterly selfish way, and always she had lived in dread of hearing that he was going to marry some one else. She knew that she would stop at nothing to prevent another girl winning him.

"Are you here alone?" Julia asked.

"Yes," he replied. "I am here on business."

She laughed lightly, though there was an underlying note of bitterness in the sound.

"You are about the only man I ever heard of who came to Nice on business." Then she added swiftly: "But since you are alone, do join us for dinner."

He hesitated, casting about in his mind for an excuse which would not make his refusal seem too discourteous.

Julia Lorraine glanced toward Sylvia and Gerald who were talking together.

"Do come," she urged, lowering her voice. "It isn't much fun making a third."

Dane frowned. After all it would

look ungracious to refuse and then go and sit all by himself at a table.

"Thanks very much," he said rather formally. "I shall be delighted."

A few moments later they were all seated at a table in the large dining room.

Dane Sinclair could be a delightful companion, and he chose to exert himself to-night, but all the time he was wondering how far the affair between Sylvia Eastcote and Gerald Beresford had gone. The girl must be mad, he thought, to encourage such an insufferable cad! He had



"I've always loved you, Dane—it is killing me, having to live without you. Only take me back—I will be your slave—anything—"

always disliked and distrusted Beresford.

Throughout the meal he covertly watched Sylvia. There was something about her which intrigued him. It was not that she was so beautiful. He had known a dozen girls who conformed more closely to the classical standards of beauty, but she had something about her, an allure, a charm which drew him even against his inclination.

She continued to ignore him and direct most of her conversation to Gerald Beresford, but Sylvia was fully aware that he was watching her, and once she raised her eyes and met his.

Sinclair felt a sudden thrilling in all his pulses. Where had he seen eyes like that before?—he asked himself.

He suddenly leaned across the table.

"Do you know, Miss Eastcote, I cannot help wondering where we have met before," he said.

Sylvia's breath caught. She knew that Julia Lorraine was watching her, and with a great effort she kept her voice steady.

"We never have met before, Mr. Sinclair. I should certainly have remembered you if we had," she told him.

"And it hardly seems possible that I should forget," he answered. "I must have seen your photograph somewhere."

Sylvia shook her head laughingly.

"Not likely. I am anything but a celebrity." Then almost deliberately she turned and resumed her conversation with Gerald Beresford.

After dinner was over they went back to the Palm Court where an orchestra was playing and dancing was in full swing.

In duty bound Dane Sinclair asked Julia Lorraine to dance with

him, but Sylvia, saying she was tired, refused Gerald Beresford's request.

They were sitting together when one of the bell boys came to say that he was wanted on the phone—a call from Paris—and he reluctantly left Sylvia to answer it.

As Dane Sinclair was bringing his partner back to her seat, Julia met some friends who had just arrived, and paused to speak to them.

Dane moved on alone, and looking up with a start, Sylvia saw him standing in front of her. The orchestra had just started to play again, and he held out his hand to her.

"Come, Miss Eastcote, let us dance this!" he said.

There was something compelling about him, and to her surprise Sylvia found herself rising. The next moment his arm was about her and they were dancing to the lilting strains of a slow waltz.

He danced divinely, and with his arm about her, Sylvia felt the blood running through her veins like fire. This, she told herself again, was the man she hated, the man on whom she meant to be revenged!

Yet his nearness took her back to those days in his office—the days which now seemed as though they were a thousand years away. It must have been another girl who had worshiped Dane Sinclair, whose heart had leaped so wildly at the mere sound of his footstep. And yet she could still feel that old passionate thrill of longing. It seemed impossible as she glanced up into his handsome clear-cut face that she had ever thought she hated him.

Then suddenly as though they had been spoken close beside her, the words echoed in her ears: "Plain girls ought to be drowned at birth." She saw a girl standing outside an

office door, her hand pressed to her heart which felt as though it had been pierced with a knife.

Involuntarily she stiffened, missing a step.

"What is it?" he asked.

She colored.

"Nothing—except that I am very tired. Do you mind if we don't dance any more?"

Without a word he led her back to her seat. Julia Lorraine had returned to the table and sat sipping a cup of black coffee. She had been watching them as they danced, her eyes narrowed, burning jealousy in her heart.

Had they met before? The question tortured her. If only she could find out!

On the plea that he had an appointment, Dane Sinclair excused himself, but it was only an excuse. Hatless as he was, he went out into the hotel grounds, and lighting a cigar, he paced up and down.

It was an exquisite night, a night of stars and the perfume of flowers, with the whispering sound of the sea like music in the near distance.

A sigh escaped him. He felt restless and lonely. He was haunted by a pair of eyes the color of aquamarines—or the sea on a day when it is more green than blue. Where had he encountered a pair of eyes like that before, and why should this girl whom he had only met an hour since, have such power to disturb him? For there was no avoiding the fact that he was disturbed.

He started as some one spoke his name, and turning, he saw Julia Lorraine standing looking at him closely.

"I came out for a breath of fresh air," she said with an uncertain little laugh, "and—I thought it was you."

Inwardly annoyed at being disturbed he turned to pace the path

beside her, tossing away the end of his cigar.

"Do you know, Dane," she said in a low, unsteady voice, "it's just wonderful to see you again! Why do you never come near me in town?"

"I am a very busy man," he answered lightly. "Besides——"

"Why should you?" she finished for him. "I see. But isn't there ever to be a chance of our even being friends?"

Suddenly she stopped dead, laying a hand on his arm.

"Dane," she pleaded, "have you forgotten so completely? Is there no chance of forgiveness for me? Oh, if you only knew how I have suffered!"

"Please don't let us go over all that again," he begged. "My dear girl, what is the use of trying to revive the past?"

"But don't you understand?" His nearness and the knowledge of his indifference almost drove her mad. "I've always loved you, Dane—it is killing me, having to live without you. Only take me back—I will be your slave—anything——"

"Julia, for Heaven's sake!" As she would have flung herself into his arms he pushed her gently but firmly away from him. "You are not yourself," he told her. "To-morrow you will have forgotten all this—as I shall have done. Let me take you back to the hotel."

But with an inarticulate sound she ran away from him, and looking after her hesitatingly for a moment, he decided that it was better to leave her alone.

And Julia leaning against the low wall and looking over it toward the sea, clenched her hands until the nails bit into her palm.

For the second time she had humbled herself to Dane Sinclair and he had scorned her—but she told her-

self that she would be even with him some day.

Sylvia tossed restlessly on her pillows, telling herself persistently that she hated Dane Sinclair, while memories surged upon her, memories that had taunted her the whole night.

She rose early, feeling as though the room were stifling her, and having bathed and dressed left the hotel and began to walk briskly along the road by the sea, leaving Nice behind her.

She had gone a mile when she became aware of a man swinging along in front of her, and with a strange thrill recognized the tall, broad-shouldered figure as the man who was occupying so much space in her mind.

For a moment she hesitated, half tempted to turn back. Then, with a defiant little smile, she walked on.

She overtook and was in the act of passing him without glancing in his direction, when he turned his head and gave an exclamation of mingled pleasure and surprise.

"Miss Eastcote! This is an unexpected pleasure! You are out very early." But he did not add that he had been thinking of her only a moment before.

She smiled up at him enchantingly.

"Ah, Mr. Sinclair! What a glorious morning."

"Exquisite!"

His eyes were on her face, and in spite of herself she felt the color rising under the admiration she read in that look.

They walked on together. She knew that her companion was studying her, but she was sure there was no fear of his recognizing her. She wanted to laugh when she thought of how she had always wanted to attract his interest, and

how amazed he would be if he guessed her identity.

As they passed through the hotel grounds on the way back, they encountered Gerald Beresford, and seeing them together, a look of anger flashed into his eyes.

"Good heavens, Sylvia!" he exclaimed. "I wondered what had happened to you. I've been searching the place."

As Sylvia paused, Sinclair raised his hat and walked on. He did not know why the other man's familiar manner toward her should make him so angry, but it did!

Gerald Beresford looked after him, filled with jealousy, but he knew better than to show it.

He turned to Sylvia with a laugh. "You'll get into trouble, my dear, if you go poaching in that quarter," he warned.

"What do you mean?" she asked sharply.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Let us sit down for a minute before we go in."

As she seated herself on the seat he indicated, he followed, selecting a cigarette from his case and carefully tapping it on the back of his hand.

"Didn't you know," he asked, "that Julia and Dane Sinclair were once engaged? They had a row and she broke it off, but I don't think there is the slightest doubt but that it will be patched up again!"

Sylvia caught her breath involuntarily. The man watched her closely.

"Frankly, I should be sorry if that is so, because I personally hate him," he said.

"So do I hate him!"

The words were spoken before she could prevent them, and she would have given the world to recall them.

He caught her hand.

"You have known him before?" he

demanded. "I thought as much. Well, our mutual dislike of him ought to be one more bond to draw us together."

The state of nerves and misery in which she was, made Sylvia respond to his sympathy as she would never have done at any other time. At least she knew that she meant something to this man. He had never looked at her with scorn, she told herself, forgetting that he had never seen her when she was plain and uninteresting! A sudden, wild longing to confide in him rushed over her—and hardly realizing what she did, she found herself telling him everything. She did not tell him of her secret love for Dane Sinclair, although he was clever enough to read between the lines, and guessed almost more than she knew herself, but she told him how she had suffered because of her lack of beauty.

"Great Scott!" He gave a little incredulous laugh at the finish. "I don't believe you ever were unattractive, but if you were, only a fool could have failed to see below the surface. I should have seen."

He was the last man in the world who would have been likely to do any such thing, but he believed he was speaking the truth.

"Of course," she said hurriedly, "I don't want him to know who I am. But, oh, how I would love to get even with him!"

There was a moment's pause. Then glancing hurriedly around to see that there was no one within hearing, he bent toward her.

"You were his private secretary," he reminded her. "Surely you must know some secret of his which would injure him if it got out! Why not strike at him that way?"

"No—no—I couldn't do that!"

But even as she spoke the thought of the paper lying hidden in her bag

flashed into her mind. She started at his next words, for it was almost as though he must have read her thoughts.

"For instance," he told her, "I happen to know that he has discovered a wonderful new dye. He is here to negotiate the sale of it with a man who is meeting him here for the purpose. I also happen to know that there is a certain firm that would pay any money for the secret of that dye. If you knew that——"

"I wouldn't sell it for the wealth of the world!" she retorted fiercely. "If I fight, at least I fight with clean hands."

"If I were you," he said, "I wouldn't care how I fought, so long as I got even. But let us forget Dane Sinclair, Sylvia, and speak of ourselves. Dearest, I have to go to Paris early to-morrow. Before I go, I must tell you what I think you must know already. I love you. I want you. Sylvia, won't you love me a little? Won't you promise to marry me?"

He had risen, drawing her to her feet, and suddenly he swept her into his arms.

"My beautiful!" he whispered, his eyes on hers. "You can't turn me down."

He caught her closer, and bending would have kissed her lips, but she turned her head quickly and his mouth only brushed her cheek.

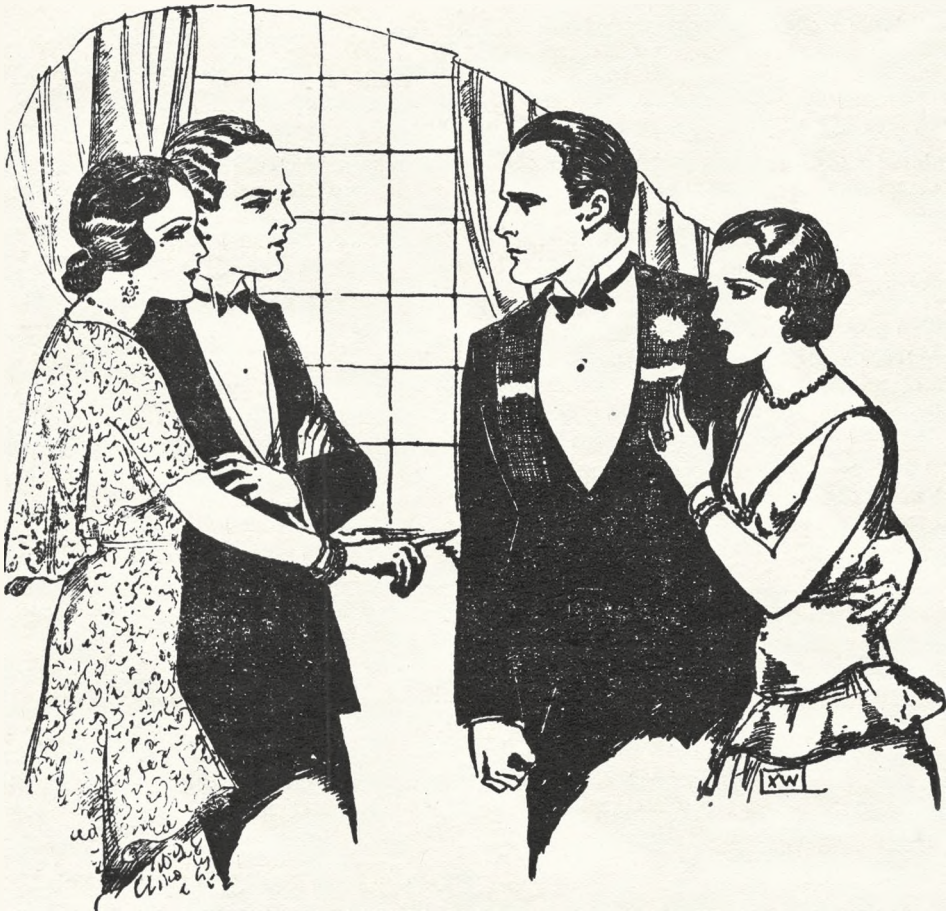
"Please," she begged, "please let me go! Gerald, I do not want to marry any one!"

"But, darling," he pleaded, "can't you learn to love me?"

"I don't think I am capable of that sort of love," she answered.

He laughed unsteadily.

"Have you ever looked at yourself in the glass? You were made for love." And then before she could speak, he went on: "Listen,



"I believe," Julia said, "that you are engaged to marry that girl. Well, I wish to warn you that she is a thief and an adventuress."

Sylvia. Let me ask you again when I come back from Paris? Try to think kindly of me while I am away, and if you can bring yourself to say 'yes,' I shall ask very little of you."

Instinctively he knew that this was the way to woo her, and he meant to win her, no matter what the cost.

"Very well," she agreed a little hesitatingly, but as they strolled back to the hotel together a few moments later she little dreamed that the business which called him to Paris was with that very firm which was so anxious to obtain the secret

of Dane Sinclair's new dye, and that he himself would have given anything for the paper in her bag.

Sylvia stood by her bedroom window, looking out over the moonlit gardens. The night was oppressive and the thought of going to bed held no attraction. She felt too wide awake to sleep.

On a sudden impulse she moved back into the room. She would go for a stroll along the silver-drenched paths before going to bed.

Wrapping a cloak about her she left the room and went down in the

elevator, passing swiftly through the hotel lobby, which was deserted, and made her way into the moonlit gardens.

In a few more days her vacation would be up, but she knew that there was no need for her to go unless she wished to, for on the night before Gerald Beresford left, he had taken Julia Lorraine and herself to the casino, and she had had an unusual run of luck—winning over two thousand five hundred dollars.

Remembering it now, she could still feel the thrilling excitement of gathering in the money. When she rose to leave her bag was packed with bills, and he had suggested when they arrived back at the hotel that as he thought it was dangerous for a girl to have all that loose money about her, he should take it and give her his check. She had accepted and deposited the check the following day, so that she was decidedly well off. But in spite of that, she felt that the best thing to do would be for her to return to New York.

She could not understand herself. Everything she had ever desired seemed to be coming her way, and yet she was not content.

She sank down upon a seat, looking desolately before her. Had any girl in the world ever been so utterly lonely?—she wondered.

Suddenly, with a little hopeless gesture, she covered her face with her hands and burst into tears, and intent on her grief, which came from a heartache she could not understand, she had no idea that any one was approaching.

It was an exquisite night, with a moon almost at full, shining down like a great silver globe from the sky, and the alluring scent of roses and stephanotis in the air—a night made for love rather than tears.

LS—2D

It was of love that the man who came walking slowly along the deserted path, a cigar between his teeth, was thinking, and turning the bend, he stopped suddenly, seeing the girl on the seat, her head bent in such utter abandonment of grief.

The next moment, flinging his cigar away he had reached her side, and was bending over her tenderly.

"Sylvia—my dear—my dear, what is it?" he asked.

As she raised her head she was drawn up into a pair of arms which closed about her, holding her with passionate tenderness, while Dane Sinclair's voice murmured again and again:

"Little sweetheart, what is it? What is it?"

Like the tears of a child, Sylvia's stopped as suddenly as they had begun. Amazed and incredulous, she raised her eyes, and in the moonlight met his, softened from their customary sternness by a tenderness such as she had never dreamed of, and as they looked into hers a flame leaped behind that tenderness, a flame which seemed to set a light to all her veins until she felt the blood running through them, like fire.

With Dane's kiss upon her lips, Sylvia knew the secret of her own heart—knew that what she in her blindness had taken for hatred was love? She had loved this man from the beginning, and she would love him until she died. With his arms about her and his lips on hers, nothing else mattered in all the world.

"Darling!" he whispered. "Sylvia, my own—the only girl in all the world that I have ever loved! Won't you tell me that you love me a little?"

Even then jealousy would not be stilled, and before she replied she had to ask:

"And what about Julia Lorraine? You were engaged to her."

"Do you think that I would have let her break the engagement if I had loved her?" he asked, with an arrogance which thrilled her. "Do you think I would let the girl I loved escape me, that I am going to let you escape?"

"But I don't want to escape," she said breathlessly, and in that confession and the passionate flame of her mouth beneath his own, he learned all he wanted to know.

For a long time they clung together, the scent of the stephanotis all about them, the sea crooning its love song beyond the garden walls, and the wise old moon looking down upon them.

At last he drew her down beside him onto the seat.

"When are you going to marry me?" he demanded.

She gave a little tremulous laugh.

"I don't know. As soon as you like."

Her head was resting against his shoulder, but suddenly she started upright.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Nothing." She listened, glancing around. "I thought I heard some one coming."

"There isn't any one, darling."

He drew her closer again, but as their lips met there was a little nervous tremor marring the happiness in her heart, and her voice was uncertain when she spoke again.

"Dane, there is something you must know. I wonder if it will make any difference?"

"Nothing in the world could make any difference," he answered.

"You know——" she hesitated, "we have met before."

"I was certain of it!" he exclaimed. "There is not another girl in the world with eyes like yours."

He bent to kiss them as he spoke, and she was glad to be able to close them, as she made her revelation.

"It isn't very wonderful that you did not recognize me. You see, I looked so different before, and I was called by another name. I changed it because I wanted to be a different girl altogether. Dane, I used to be Sylvia Ercott—your secretary."

He stared at her incredulously.

"But, darling——" And then: "Fool that I am, I ought to have known! Heavens, Sylvia—did I love you all the time?"

"No." There was a tiny trace of bitterness still in her voice. "You despised me."

"Sweetheart—I didn't," he protested. "You were the best secretary I ever had, and you went off so suddenly. Besides—I'll confess now—the only glimpse I ever had of Miss Ercott's eyes disturbed me so much that I was thoroughly annoyed. Now, tell me all the rest."

But she could not find the courage to do that. She told him only of her longing to be beautiful, and the chance that the prize money had given her. She could not tell him of her desire for vengeance; it sounded too mean, too petty. Perhaps some day she would have the courage to tell him, but she felt it would spoil the first wonder of their love to do so now.

But one thing she did remember to tell him.

"Do you know, Dane," she said, "that I found a copy of that formula I typed for you among some of my papers?"

"What did you do with it?" he asked quickly. "Did you destroy it?"

She shook her head.

"I've been trying to make up my mind to give it back to you, but now——"

"Darling, where is it?" he broke in.

"I always carry it in my bag," she explained. "Shall I get it? I've left my bag in my room."

"No—nothing can happen to it," he answered. "But please burn it to-night. I don't want any old copies of it hanging around, because I happen to suspect that some one is after the secret."

"Yes, I know——" She broke off, realizing that it was a foolish admission, and she could not tell him what Gerald Beresford had said to her in confidence. That is," she added hastily, "I am sure that it is most valuable."

When at last they parted for the night and Sylvia went to her room, she was so filled with her new-found happiness that she forgot all about the formula until she was ready for bed. Then hastily pulling out the drawer where she knew she had put her bag that afternoon, she took it out.

As she opened it and searched for the folded paper, a little gasping cry escaped her. She turned the contents of the bag out onto the bed searching, but without avail. Then she went to the drawer itself, her other bags—but with no success.

The paper had disappeared!

Julia Lorraine was in her private office at the Nice branch of her beauty establishment late the following afternoon, when one of her girls came to inform her that Mr. Beresford had arrived. A moment later she was shaking hands with him as the door closed leaving them alone.

"You left a message for me at the hotel," he said. "How did you know I was coming back?"

"Because I telephoned to Paris last night and they told me you

were on your way," she replied. "Also because I have some news for you. Dane Sinclair and Sylvia are engaged."

"It isn't true!" He turned deathly pale.

"Yes, it is perfectly true—at present," she assured him, but though her tone was cool, there was a dangerous light in her dark eyes.

He caught his breath and dropped into a near-by chair.

"Do you think you are the only person who feels like that?" she asked sharply.

"But she hated him!" he exclaimed. "She told me so. She must mean to throw him over. She is doing this deliberately."

"She adores him and always has," was the acid retort. "I always suspected that there was a man behind all her desire to become beautiful, and Dane was the man. I know that beyond any doubt now. I tell you she loves him! I know!"

He sprang to his feet, clenching his hands.

"By heavens, I'll——"

She caught his arm.

"There should be no secret between us, Gerald. You are as interested in parting these two as I am, and if you listen to me, it should not be very difficult. Look here"—she opened the blue leather bag which lay on her desk as she spoke and taking a paper out of it, unfolded it and held it toward him.

He took it glancing down at it with knitted brows, then back at her eagerly:

"Good heavens! What is this?" he exclaimed.

She looked toward the door, lowering her voice.

"It is the secret of Dane Sinclair's new dye. I happened to overhear Sylvia telling him that she had it, and I took it from her room while

she was out last night. I have a plan, Gerald. Listen!"

How could she tell Dane of her loss? The question haunted Sylvia through the hours of a sleepless night, but when daylight came, it brought no courage.

She might have lost or destroyed the paper, although she was sure she had not done either. If it fell into the hands of any ordinary person, they would not understand it. In any case, she told herself she must have this one day of happiness. She had promised to go motoring with Dane. They were to start early and be out together the whole day. She decided that when they returned it would be time enough for confession.

The day was a grand success, and she forgot all her troubles in the perfect companionship, the knowledge of Dane's love, and it was only as they neared the hotel in the evening that depression descended upon her again. What would he say to her?

As they entered the lobby and paused at the desk to get their keys, the reception clerk handed Dane a note.

He glanced at it, and with a look of surprise tore it open. Sylvia had reached the elevator when he caught up with her.

"Darling," he said, "Julia wants us both to come up to her private sitting room as soon as we get back! I don't know what she wants, but I suppose we had better go."

Sylvia nodded, but as they went up in the elevator there was a feeling of impending disaster upon her which she could neither fathom nor shake off.

As they reached Julia's sitting room the man she loved knocked on the door, and as Julia called, "Come in," they both entered. It was then

that Sylvia realized with a start that Julia was not alone. Gerald Beresford rose, and, turning, faced her.

"Ah, Dane," Julia greeted him, and sensing the vindictiveness in her low voice, Sylvia felt her heart miss a beat. "I am glad that you have come and that you have brought Sylvia Ercott with you."

"What is it?" he asked rather curtly. "Why do you wish to see us both?"

"I believe," Julia answered, "that you are engaged to marry that girl. Well, I wish to warn you that she is a thief and an adventuress."

"Be silent!" Dane's eyes flashed. "How dare you? If you think I am likely to believe your jealous lies, you had better save your breath."

Julia's lips turned white beneath their carmine, but her gaze did not waver.

"Think what you like," she said, "but I am determined to save you. Ask her if she has the copy of the formula for your dye. Can she produce it?"

"Sylvia!"

Dane turned to her, and in that moment Sylvia saw the bitter folly of having kept silence, she knew beyond all doubt who had stolen that paper—though how Julia had ever found out it was in her bag remained a mystery.

"Dane," she faltered. "I was going to tell you. It was not in my bag when I looked last night."

Julia interrupted with a harsh laugh.

"It was gone from your bag long before last night. Dane, she sold your secret to Gerald Beresford for two thousand five hundred dollars. See, here is the check which was paid for it," and as she spoke, Julia took a slip of paper from Beresford's hand and thrust it toward Dane Sinclair.

He took it, glancing at it and then

at the girl he loved. One bitter cry had escaped her—a cry which might easily have been mistaken for one of guilt—as might the stricken whiteness of her face.

“It isn’t true!” she gasped. She covered her face with her hands.

“Of course it is true!” declared Julia. “Why should my cousin give her a check for two thousand five hundred dollars if it is not? Certainly she had promised to become his wife—her engagement to you was part of her campaign of revenge. She came to me nearly two months ago. She told me there was a man she wanted to make pay—a man had said that plain girls ought to be drowned at birth. That man was you. She hated you, she would stop at nothing in order to revenge herself upon you. She was a vindictive little adventuress, and that is what she is now.”

Stunned by these lies—realizing the diabolical cleverness with which her confidence to Gerald Beresford had been twisted, and how his check had been used against her, Sylvia could find no words to defend herself.

Through a mist she looked up and saw the stern, set whiteness of the face of the man she loved. Then, as he moved toward her, she flung up her arm as though to ward him off and fell in a faint at his feet.

When Sylvia came to herself, she was lying on the bed in her own room and a maid was bending over her.

“You are better now,” said the woman. “Drink this and lie still, and you will be all right.”

Sylvia obediently drank the brandy which was held to her lips, and as she sank back on her pillows the memory of what had happened came surging back to her. She

closed her eyes—the thought of Dane’s accusing face filling her with terror.

“Please go now,” she begged the maid. “I shall be quite all right.”

As soon as she was alone she got to her feet, and stood swaying for a moment before she dragged herself to the door and locked it.

There was only room for one thought in her head. She must get away at once! She could not face Dane again—could not bear to see the love and tenderness in his eyes, replaced by scorn and accusation. How could he have condemned her without even giving her the chance to defend herself? For she was certain he had done so, otherwise she would not be left alone.

She began to pack feverishly. There was time for her to catch the Paris express, and though she felt almost exhausted, she managed to pack. Having changed into a traveling costume, she rang for some one to strap her trunks.

More than an hour had passed, and yet there was no sign of Dane. There could be no doubt that he believed in her guilt, and wished to have no more to do with her. So much was his love worth, she told herself bitterly. Nothing would have induced her to believe anything against him.

And yet she saw how terrible was the evidence. She had no witnesses save Julia Lorraine who could say why Gerald Beresford had given her that check.

As she passed through the hall to the waiting taxi, she looked neither to the left nor right. She did not know whether the man she loved saw her departure or not.

She caught the train with very few minutes to spare, and as long as she lived she never forgot that journey, with its discomforts of night

traveling in a crowded first-class compartment, and always the heart-ache which reminded her that everything was finished. For one day she had glimpsed Paradise and then the gates had been slammed in her face.

When she reached Paris she was in no mood to rest. It seemed to her as though an avenging demon were driving her on—driving her farther and farther from the man she loved—and she went straight on to Havre, having wired for her passage home.

It was a gray morning when the big steamer set out on the trip across the Atlantic. Dark clouds were scudding above before a freshening wind. Most of the passengers had gone below, but Sylvia remained on deck, her hands clasping the rail, looking back toward the vanishing coastline of France.

A man had risen from a deck chair behind her to come and stand next to her, and she turned her head. Then her breath caught and she stood staring at him.

One of his hands covered hers, still clutching the ship's rail.

"Did you really think I should let you go so easily?" Dane Sinclair asked. "What did I tell you, Sylvia?"

"But——" she stammered. "But I don't understand! I thought you believed——"

"Don't you think you might have given me the chance to say something?" he asked. "Surely you did not think I would condemn you on the word of these two people?"

"Then you didn't believe——"

"Darling," he answered, "at first I did not know what to think. I remembered that you had seemed to know that some one was after my secret—and, well, when I saw that check and remembered how friendly you had been with Beresford, for a few minutes I was terribly jealous,

and perhaps you know how jealousy distorts the mind. But then the impossibility of it dawned upon me. For one thing I could not believe that you would have sold my secret even if you had given it away. And then I knew your love had been no lie. Your lips, your eyes had told me that. So I bluffed Julia and Beresford.

"I told them that I was going to have Beresford arrested for buying stolen information. That put him in a hole, and he turned on Julia and said just enough to let me see that the whole plan was hers. I have a great friend in Nice, one of the heads of the police. I telephoned him and asked him to come along and bring two officers. Getting him alone, I explained my plan. I do believe Julia was so mad with jealousy that she would have gone through with anything to keep us apart, even though it meant her own ruin, but Beresford is a coward and was terrified at the thought of arrest. He confessed everything, and after several hours of cross-examination we made Julia admit that he spoke the truth. And so that is that, sweetest."

"But how did you get here?"

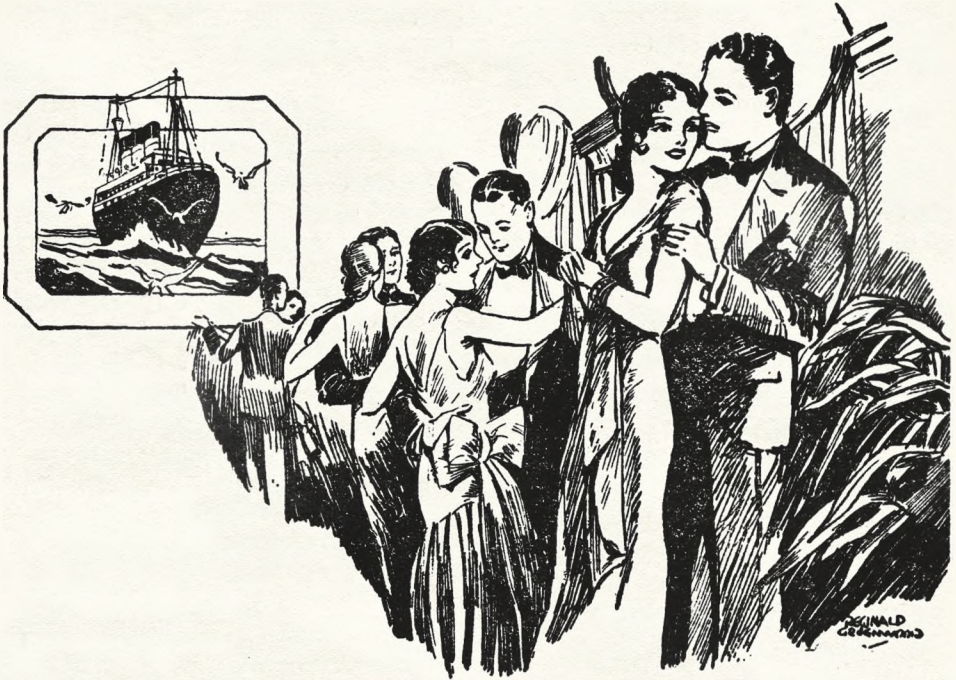
"While all this was going on I thought you would be in your room. Imagine my horror when I discovered you had left the hotel and booked passage for New York. I was too late to board your train, but I flew to Paris. There, by making careful inquiries, I discovered that you had gone straight to Havre. And—now!"

Their eyes met, and as Sylvia swayed toward him Dane caught her in his arms.

"My foolish darling!" he whispered. "I tell you, Sylvia, you'll never escape me now."

And she replied:

"I don't want to."



Leeanna Signs A Contract

By Katherine Greer

LEEANNA wriggled her right foot back and forth under cover of her steamer rug, and opened her eyes just a tiny bit to make sure that the long figure of Norman Penfield was still stretched out on the deck chair beside her. If by any chance he had gone in, she would take a turn or two around the deck to exercise her cramped muscles. The inactivity was driving her frantic. If her plan didn't accomplish something soon, she would have to give it up.

He was still sitting there, apparently engrossed in the "History of Hawaii." He must be a slow reader, Leeanna decided, for after having had his nose in that same book for two days, he was no more than half-way through.

She closed her eyes again, and resigned herself to the discomforts of her position.

Leeanna Leigh was a determined and persevering young person. If she succeeded in the end, no physical inconveniences were too great

to be undergone, no hours too long and boring. This was certainly not the way she had expected to spend any of the six days on shipboard between Honolulu and San Francisco. But then, she had not expected to travel on the same ship with Norman Penfield, the great director of the L. R. G. Studios. The fortunate discovery of his presence just before the *Sonia* sailed from Honolulu had changed everything for her.

Harry Bates, a reporter Leeanna knew, had whispered the news in her ear, as he put a lei of gardenias around her neck. "See that tall, good-looking chap standing over there alone, and without any leis?" he had asked. "I just found out that he's Norman Penfield, the movie director. He's been here two weeks, and nobody's known anything about it. Came for a complete rest and didn't want his identity revealed. Just uses the initials, 'J. N.' Now that he's sailing, he gave me a story to come out in the paper tomorrow. He doesn't want it known around the boat, but I just thought I'd whisper it in your ear, if you'd promise not to repeat it. I thought as long as you're trying to crash the gates of Hollywood, it might help you to try to get acquainted with a big director before you land."

"Thanks a lot," Leeanna had answered, as she had gazed with interest at Norman Penfield. "You're a good scout, Harry, to tell me, and I'll promise to keep it dark. He looks rather unapproachable, I'll admit, but maybe I can manage somehow to make my presence known to him—and appreciated."

"You can do it if anybody can!" Harry assured her admiringly. "But it will be a hard job. They say he hates women because of a blasted romance or something of the sort,

and never has anything to do with them outside of business hours. He's thoroughly cold-blooded and heartless in his dealings with them."

Just then a group of Leeanna's friends had surrounded her, and there had been no more time for private conversation.

As the *Sonia* had slipped slowly and stealthily from the pier out into the harbor, Leeanna had stood quietly beside the rail and waved, had watched the diving boys as their agile, brown bodies shot from the topmost corners of the ship into the calm water. But her mind had been busy with preparations for her landing in California rather than with thoughts of the departure from Honolulu.

Against the wishes of her parents, but with the admiring and encouraging approval of her friends, Leeanna had decided to join the ranks of the thousands of girls who were seeking fame and fortune in the motion-picture studios. She knew she had the sort of looks which photographed well, knew she could sing and act and dance. But she knew also that she was not alone in these accomplishments, and she realized that she might have to face many bitter disappointments along the road. However, she believed that in the end, success would come to her, and with the courage and optimism of youth, she had set out from her Honolulu home.

The fact that an important director was traveling on the ship with her was her first lucky break. Leeanna intended to make the most of it.

After a veiled study of Norman Penfield, as the *Sonia* glided past the familiar landmarks of the beach and rounded the point of Diamond Head, Leeanna had decided that the usual methods of getting acquainted on

shipboard probably wouldn't work. Without doubt, Mr. Penfield would have a table by himself in the dining room, or worse still, take all his meals in his cabin. He wouldn't bother to take part in any of the deck sports, and he certainly wasn't likely to appear at any of the dances. So there was only one thing left for Leeanna to do. She would have to secure for herself the deck chair next to his.

A bribe to the deck steward had accomplished it. And here she was, sitting next to him on the third day out. So far, the man in the next deck chair had made no sign that he was even aware of her existence. No wonder Leeanna was becoming very tired of just sitting!

When she had established herself in the desired deck chair that first day, Leeanna had told herself that the tactics used with the ordinary susceptible young man would not be effective with Norman Penfield. She could not drop her handkerchief or book, and immediately enter into conversation with him. He would probably reply with polite frigidity, and promptly have his chair changed. The only way she could hope to be successful was to appear self-sufficient, thoroughly disinterested in his presence, and wait for him to make the first move.

She had found that the easiest way—in fact, the only way—to keep from showing any interest in her neighbor was to sit with her eyes closed, feigning sleep. She hoped that if she appeared to sleep long enough and persistently enough he might become concerned about the state of her health, at least.

And now, her right foot was asleep, too, and she had a cramp in her left arm.

"Good heavens, girl, aren't you ever going to get enough sleep," a

rumbling, deep voice exploded beside her. A book was slammed shut.

Leeanna sat up straight in genuine amazement. She was discovering that when something long expected actually happens, it may be more of a shock than something entirely unlooked for. She opened her eyes wide, and stared at the man beside her, as though hardly believing that the sound could have come from him.

"I beg your pardon," he said quickly. He half rose in his chair, and if Leeanna had not known who he was, she would have thought that he was embarrassed. "I was intolerably rude."

"No, not so bad as all that," Leeanna assured him, with one of her most ravishing smiles. He was about to leave, and if he left now, she told herself, he would never come back. "I don't blame you for being disgusted with me. I've been sleeping a lot, haven't I?" she asked innocently. "I'm the one who should apologize for being so rude, so unsociable."

"Oh, I didn't expect you to be sociable," he replied. "There's no obligation to talk, if you'd rather sleep. Only——"

"Only you thought I was rather overdoing sleep," Leeanna supplied laughingly. "Well, if it's any satisfaction to you, I think I've had about enough—now. I was awfully tired when I came on board." She felt an explanation necessary. "A ship's the best place for relaxation and rest, isn't it?"

"Most girls your age don't seem to consider it so," he said. "The way they dash around seeking new excitement every minute is enough to drive a fellow crazy."

"You mean it does drive a fellow crazy? You sound very ancient," she teased.

"I am," he said seriously. "Not in years perhaps, but I'm rather fed up."

She settled back in her chair again, as though to end the conversation.

"But I'd like to talk to you, to take you around, if you don't mind," he persisted. Leeanna liked his voice. It was low and resonant, yet there was something boyish, half timid about it.

Without changing her position, she turned her head toward him. "I'm quite comfortable here for the present," she answered. "What do you want to talk about?"

"I suppose we should begin by talking about the water and the sharks and the flying fish—but I'd really rather waive the preliminaries and talk about you," he suggested boldly. His tone was honest rather than flirtatious. Again Leeanna doubted her hearing. After all, was it going to be as easy as all this?

She had expected to be rather afraid of this important personage, who was reported to be cruel and stern and heartless. Instead, she was suddenly finding him very human, very young, boyish and attractive. He was saying the same things to her that the boys back in Hawaii had said to her, and he seemed to be even more sincere about it than they. Surely no one with blue eyes and a smile as nice as his could be so very terrible.

"You know, I really feel as though I'd known you a long time," he was saying. "I've spent so many hours watching you as you slept. I've even had the nerve to read the name on your chair. Leeanna Leigh—I like it. Mine is Penfield. A few of my friends call me Penny—in case you feel inclined."

"I like that, too," she said softly. Of course, she was acting her part,

but the lines were coming very easily and naturally.

During the next few days, Leeanna actually had to remind herself of the outcome of these six days at sea. She kept forgetting that this attractive, fascinating man with whom she was spending three quarters of her time was the great L. R. G. director, who was destined to open the alluring world of the studios to her. She persisted in thinking of him as a devoted and adoring admirer, some one who might even want to marry her, when she knew perfectly well that they weren't in the same world. She was just a pretty young girl who had caught his momentary fancy by her pretended indifference to him. He was just spending a few hours on shipboard in her company, because he didn't want to mix with the rest of the passengers, lest his identity become known.

In spite of his apparent pleasure in her society, Leeanna was convinced as the time passed that his interest in her was merely superficial, because he made no mention of continuing the friendship when they landed. She had told him that she was going to visit in Los Angeles, and he did not comment or question. He did not tell her of his business or mention the motion-picture industry in any but the most casual way. Somehow, this lack of trust in her rather hurt her feelings, although she told herself that an assumed ignorance in his identity fitted in with her plans.

"Do we have to dance?" Norman Penfield demanded, as he and Leeanna were jostled against another couple in a corner of the crowded ballroom, the next to the last night out. "It's as hot as a furnace in here. Maybe there's a new moon rising out of the waves."



"Let's look at it over our left shoulders and make a wish," Leeanna suggested, as eager as he was to escape.

"You and not the lady in the moon can grant my wish," he said, with sudden intensity. And Leeanna wondered if now was the time to tell him the same thing—that he alone could grant her wish. No; not yet. She didn't want to think about the future. The night was too glorious to

He released her instantly from his embrace, and held her at arm's length. "So that's the game, is it?" He glared at her. "You've known all along who I am! You were leading me on for a purpose!"

spoil. The present was entirely too sweet.

He led her out to a secluded corner near the stern of the ship. They didn't even make a pretense of looking for the lady in the moon, but

just leaned over the wet, salty rail with the spray in their faces, and watched the phosphorus on the soapy foam, churned up by the propeller.

Back in the ballroom, Leeanna had wished that the director, Norman Penfield, would give her a chance in the movies. Now, out here on the misty deck, she wished that the man, "Penny," would kiss her.

And from his actions, he must have read her thoughts. Without a word he drew her away from the rail, and took her in his arms, and found her lips with his.

Leeanna responded eagerly to his kiss. She forgot everything in the thrill and joy of that moment.

"Sweet thing," he murmured huskily. "You're adorable!"

She waited breathlessly for him to go on, but he didn't. She had thought that she had just wanted him to kiss her. But now as she lay quietly in his arms, she knew that she wanted much more than that. She wanted him to say: "I love you! Will you marry me?"

Instead, he released her gently but definitely, and turned back to the inspection of the foaming waves.

Leeanna turned, too, and gazed off at the far horizon. She felt sick and weak inside. "Little fool!" she told herself. That wasn't the first time a man had kissed her just because her charm and the glamour of the surroundings seemed to demand it. And she had recognized and accepted such a kiss for what it was, and had not expected or wanted more. But this was different. Norman Penfield was different. She didn't want that sort of kiss from him. She wanted him to love her as she knew now she loved him.

"I think I'll go to bed," she said casually to hide her real feelings. "I

seem to be sleepy—for a change!" She attempted a laugh, not very successfully.

The next morning they were settled companionably in their deck chairs as usual. Both seemed determined to act as though nothing unusual had happened the night before. And perhaps it hadn't seemed unusual to Penny; perhaps he had actually forgotten about it, Leeanna thought ruefully.

It really was a very ordinary and natural occurrence, especially on a ship. Men took it for granted that girls expected a little love-making in the moonlight, and felt duty bound to play up. Even in last night's instance, Penny might have really divined her thoughts, and just kissed her because he had known she was waiting. Well, he needn't be so accommodating the next time—if there were a next time.

Yes, she planned calculatingly, as she sat beside him in the glaring morning sunlight, there had to be a next time. If that was the way he felt about her, she would make him kiss her again, make him pay for it with a promise of a rôle in a picture. During the last few days her ambition to become an actress had been receding into the background, but now it came to the front again with renewed force. How could she have slipped from her main purpose in life, even for a moment, to fall in love with a man who had no heart? She would show him that she could be just as selfish, as cold-blooded, as mercenary as the sirens in the pictures he directed.

"What shall we do to make the most of this last day at sea?" he was saying with remote calmness. "I refuse to permit you to sleep through it, or even let you sit there and dream off into space! I want you to talk and smile and——"

"Anything your royal highness desires," mocked Leeanna. "I am yours to command!"

"Yes, you are!" laughed Penny. "Like all other women who make men their slaves!" So he was cynical about women she mused, as Harry Bates had said; distrustful and hard.

"Then let's do all the things we haven't done all week, play all the games, and walk the deck, and dance to-night." She pulled herself out of her chair as she spoke, smiling down at him. She must remember to act to-day, to say all the things she thought he wanted her to say, to do all the things he wanted her to do. She would be gay, and beautiful, and charming, and alluring, so that to-night he would kiss her again in the moonlight, and promise her a chance in a picture when she came to Hollywood. If he could be interested in a woman only in a business way, then she would be businesslike. She would not stop until she had signed a contract.

Leeanna found the day very long and hard, because she didn't feel the least bit gay and charming or even businesslike. She felt weepy and forlorn, lonely and blue. The much-desired fame and fortune had suddenly become cold and hollow, not worth working for, trifling in comparison with a tall, square-shouldered, blue-eyed man who didn't want her.

Leeanna dressed with particular care for the captain's dinner. She wore a clinging, trailing gown of creamy velvet, which perfectly offset her dark hair and eyes and her transparent olive skin. Penny's admiring eyes, when he came to escort her to the dining room, told her that her efforts were highly successful. She was a little disappointed that he did not express his admiration in

words, but that would come later, she assured herself.

Leeanna was much in demand on the dance floor that night. All but one of her partners tried to lead her out into the moonlight, but she remained persistently in the ballroom.

Penny did not dance with any one else. When an eager young man cut in on them, he submitted gracefully and wandered out on deck for a smoke. In a few minutes he would return, stand on the sidelines for a moment, following Leeanna with his eyes, and then take her away from her partner. But he didn't suggest, as he had done on previous nights, that they get away from the crowd. Along toward midnight, fearing that he wasn't going to suggest the customary walk on deck, she took the matter into her own hands.

"I'm tired to death," she complained. "Let's get a breath of fresh air."

"As you say," he agreed politely, but there was no eagerness in his tone.

"Our last night," she murmured softly, when they were once more looking down on the phosphorus on the waves. "Last nights are rather sad, I think. One expects them to be different, and they're usually disappointing."

"You were expecting something from this one, I take it?" he inquired in a low tone.

"Oh, no; I was just generalizing," she assured him. His tone made her a little afraid of what she had set out to do. She wished she had stayed in the ballroom. But it was too late now.

"Is this, by any chance, one of the things you were expecting?" he demanded hoarsely, crushing her against him and kissing her roughly.

She tried to draw away, but he

only drew her closer, and pressed his ardent lips on hers.

She lay in his arms, hating herself. She knew now what he thought of her. There was no question about it.

"Yes, you are very beautiful, very fascinating, very alluring." He bent down to her, as though answering an unspoken question.

"Beautiful and alluring enough to get a part in one of your pictures?" she asked softly.

He released her instantly from his embrace, and held her at arm's length with his hands gripping her shoulders. "So that's the game, is it?" He glared at her. "You've known all along who I am! You were leading me on for a purpose!" His voice had become very hard and cynical, his eyes like points of cold steel. "It's been done before, I suppose, but not to me. I've made sure of that. But I was off my guard. I actually thought you liked me."

"I—I do," whispered Leeanna brokenly. "I've—liked you much more than you can know."

"Yes, you must have!" Norman Penfield laughed harshly. "But you're clever; I'll admit that. You let me do the pursuing. You're a good actress. You deserve a part. And you shall have it. See my assistant on Wednesday. I'll leave orders for him to put you in. Good night."

His hands dropped to his sides, and he turned from her.

"But I don't want a part now!" she cried miserably. "I don't want anything like this! I didn't intend for it to end like this."

"No, I suppose not," he put in sarcastically. "You thought I'd be pleased to be featured in your little play, to welcome you to Hollywood with open arms. You thought I'd admire your cleverness. Well, I do."

"Oh, I'm not clever—I'm stupid, horribly blind and stupid! I don't blame you for hating me. You can't hate me any more than I hate myself! I'll never come to Hollywood, even if I starve!"

"Anyway, I'll instruct my assistant in case you change your mind," he said gruffly, and strode away from her down the deck.

Oh, what a mess she had made of everything! If only she'd never heard of Norman Penfield, the director! If she had just happened to meet Penny, the nice boy who had the deck chair next to hers, she would have been just herself, and maybe he would have liked her better. He had liked her until to-night, but not enough. Oh, if he had only liked her more, all this would never have happened. If he had only fallen in love with her, as she had with him, she would have given up all thought of acting. She had not expected him to be so angry, so bitter. Why should he blame her so furiously for leading him on, for tricking him, when he had been doing the same thing—flirting with her, leading her on, making her fall in love with him? But of course, he didn't know that.

She tossed sleepless in the narrow berth in her stateroom until dawn. The sailors were beginning to wash the open deck outside her door. She might as well get up and finish her packing, Leeanna decided; she couldn't sleep.

But she must have dozed off for an instant, for she dreamed she heard a familiar, deep voice close to her ear.

"Cold, eh? And a heavy sea," were the words. Startled, she sat up in bed, but there was no one else in her cabin. She supposed Penny's voice would be ringing in her ears everywhere she went. She couldn't

forget. She jumped up, and opened the door of her stateroom.

A burly sailor with a mop was busy just outside. He must have been talking with some one. A tall figure in a long overcoat was disappearing up forward.

Leeanna dressed quickly in her plain tailored traveling suit, and threw a rough tweed coat over it. She felt impelled to go outside. They should be within sight of land soon, some of the outlying islands. She liked to watch the sunrise on the water.

She hurried forward to the bow of the ship. She crossed the broad expanse of open deck, where there were huge iron mooring bits, heavy coils of rope, and canvas-covered hatches. The wind was so strong it almost swept her off her feet.

She felt no surprise when she came face to face with Norman Penfield, as he strode toward her. She realized that she had been expecting to find him there, that the voice she had heard hadn't been a dream. She was sure now that Penny had been walking outside her door and had spoken to the sailor. She had seen him as he disappeared in the distance.

He stared down at her as though he had seen a ghost. "You!" he murmured. What——"

"I didn't feel sleepy," she began. "I thought we might be within sight of land. I wanted to see——". She stopped suddenly. His loose top-coat had blown open, exposing an expanse of stiff white shirt front and the satin lapels of his dinner coat. Leeanna gasped in amazement. Penny was still in his evening clothes! He hadn't gone to bed at all! "Why——" It was her turn to express surprise.

"I didn't feel sleepy," he repeated her excuse.

"You mean you've been walking the deck all night?" She looked at him incredulously.

"Oh, I stopped a while ago for a cup of coffee," he evaded dully. "The air out here is wonderful, and the exercise is good for me."

"You look terrible," she blurted out frankly, observing his tired eyes and haggard expression. "Why did you stay up all night? Did it have anything to do with what happened out here after the dance?" she persisted fearlessly, with quick determination. The situation couldn't be worse than it was now. She couldn't be unhappier. Obviously, he was miserable, too. Could a scene with a girl who meant nothing to him make a man pace the deck all night? Perhaps she might feel better if she told him the whole truth. Out here in the misty gray dawn she had no pride left.

"I apologize for my actions last night," he said huskily. "I was an insufferable cad."

"But you still feel the same way toward me?" she whispered looking at him anxiously.

"You know how I feel toward you," he muttered, his chin buried in his coat collar.

"Yes, I do—too well," Leeanna sighed. The sudden spark of hope which the sight of him in evening clothes had kindled, flickered out as quickly as it had come. "And I hoped and prayed that it would be different. We'll never see each other again after this morning, and you may not think quite so badly of me, if I tell you that I set out to play a trick on you, but gave it up when I fell in love with you."

"Gave it up when——" Penny repeated uncomprehendingly.

"When I fell in love with you. Please let me make it quite clear, now that I've started," begged Lee-



"I love you, darling, do you hear? I loved you, adored you in bashful silence for two days before I even had the nerve to speak to you. Marry me the moment we land!"

anna, "and then I won't bother you again."

"Go on."

"I admit I secured the deck chair next to yours in order to become acquainted with you, but I hadn't intended to use any of the methods

which you think I used. I had intended merely to talk to you until I made some sort of favorable impression, then tell you frankly that I knew who you were and that I was aspiring to break into the movies, and ask for a little friendly

LS-2D

help, if you saw fit to give it. That was the plot—surely nothing very bad or deceitful about that, was there?”

She paused a moment and looked up at him hopefully, but he made no comment.

“For a day or two things worked out as I had planned,” she continued. “Then I forgot that you were Norman Penfield, the L. R. G. director, forgot that you were reputed to be a hard-hearted man of the world, who had no use for women outside of business hours. I believed that your love-making was real, that your kisses weren’t just kisses, and I fell in love with you. Oh, I know I was young and innocent and foolish to do it, but I did!” She hurried on, while she still had the courage: “Then when I found you didn’t care, I went on with my plan, changed it to suit the situation. It seemed the only thing left for me to do.”

She started to walk away from him, but he caught her arm and held her back.

“You mean you thought when I held you in my arms and kissed you that first time that I was just flirting with you, that it didn’t mean anything to me?” he asked.

“What else could I think?”

“Oh, what a blundering fool I am!” he groaned. “I knew I’d make clumsy love, if I ever tried it! I’ve told others how to do it so many times, but I’ve never had any practice myself. I’ve stayed away from girls because I was afraid of them, but I didn’t think I could be as hopeless as this! I thought at least I could make the girl I loved understand that I cared for her. The other night as we stood by the rail and looked at the water, I hadn’t intended to kiss you, but you were so irresistible I couldn’t help it.

Right then I wanted to ask you to marry me, to pour my love in your ear, but you seemed so—so fragile, so remote that I was afraid of losing you if I hurried you too much. I thought I’d better wait until I saw you on land. I was afraid you might be just flirting with me. Then, last night I was sure of it when——”

“When I practically forced you to kiss me again,” she finished for him.

“And you weren’t just flirting with me, just using me—is that what you mean?” He was very close to her now, looking deep into her eyes.

“I was loving you more every moment,” she murmured tremulously.

“Leeanna, angel—sweetheart!”

Her head was pressed against his white shirt front, until he tilted her chin back so that their lips met in a long, blissfully satisfactory kiss. “I love you, darling, do you hear? I loved you, adored you in bashful silence for two days before I even had the nerve to speak to you. Marry me the moment we land!”

“You’re sure you really mean it?” Leeanna suddenly became doubtful again. “You aren’t just feeling sorry for me, just being chivalrous because I threw myself at your head? You don’t have to marry me just because I brazenly tell you I’m in love with you. I’ll go away and never bother you again.”

“Go away!” laughed Penny. “If you do, I’ll be hot on your trail. There’s no escape now, young lady! You’re under contract for life! Of course I want to marry you. Of course I’m madly in love with you. What else but a broken heart would keep me out here pacing the deck all night?” he demanded conclusively.

“I suppose that does prove it,” Leeanna agreed happily. “If I hadn’t found you out here like this in your evening clothes I wouldn’t

have spoken as I have. I wouldn't have had the courage. But I thought when I saw you that if last night had upset you as much as this, had made you walk the deck——" Her voice trailed off into space.

But there seemed no further need for words. Leeanna and Penny clung very close together, oblivious of the salt spray in their faces, oblivious of the strong wind which was lashing their coats, oblivious of everything but the ecstasy sweeping through them.

"Look!" he said at last, pointing to the vague outlines of mountains ahead of them. "California soil!" The direction of his extended arm moved southward. "And down there the studios, the land of your desire!"

"Not any more," Leeanna said softly.

"You can't mean that you'd give up your cherished ambition just for me?" he asked incredulously. "You'd be a success. I'm sure of it—even without my help."

"You want to make me a star?" she asked.

"I want to make you my wife first of all," he evaded, but she read his thoughts.

"Then that's what I want—first, last, and always," she answered fervently. "The only contract I intend to sign is the marriage contract. Nothing else is important to me now but you!"

"Dearest!" he murmured rapturously, his lips on hers. And again: "Dearest!"



LOVE'S HEAVEN

A JOY without a wish
 You'll ever be to me—
 The lasting proof of faith and truth,
 And joy and constancy.
 The pathway has been long,
 The miles between us wide;
 But fate at last has crowned the past,
 And brought you to my side.

Throughout each golden day,
 Across each silver night,
 You are the dream whose vistas gleam
 With passion's rainbow light.
 Upon your breast I'll find
 The years a jeweled span,
 And cleave with you the melting blue
 Of love's empyrean.

CLEMENT CALVERT.



Ladies Must Eat!

By Lydia Tracy

A Two-part Story—Part I.

CHAPTER I.

EXCEPT for the hysterical gasps and whimperings of strained agony that filtered through the closed bedroom door, the house called Seacrest, queen of the handsome estates that made up the aristocratic colony of Manchester-by-the-Sound, was as quiet as a house of death.

The servants, although still ignorant of the catastrophe that had befallen Seacrest, moved about on velvet feet and talked only in whispers. Even the gardener's helpers manicuring the lawns and giving the shrubs and flower beds their daily

beauty treatment far from the house, went silently about their work and cast occasional furtive glances toward the hundred windows of the pillared mansion.

Standing uncertainly behind the betraying bedroom door that she had just closed behind her, Gwendolyn Carter frowned at it with a look of pitying impatience.

"Poor Lilian!" she murmured to herself. "Poor dumb darling! Gee, what a wallop to have to hand her; like sticking a red-hot nail through a butterfly, and that's what you get for a mother that's a throwback to the early Victorian, just pretty little tricks and no brains! But what else

was there to do? Nothing at all! And the worst is yet to come! Oh, gee!"

An immaculately uniformed maid filtered up the great curved stairway and stopped in a pose of perfect training before the girl.

"Pardon me, Miss Gwendolyn, Mr. Warren is calling," she said, almost as if she were announcing the undertaker.

Gwendolyn started, her pale cheeks flushing treacherously.

"Mr. Warren? O. K., Katherine," she said with elaborate carelessness. "I'll go down. And you hang around up here in the hall, will you? Anna's in there with mother and her fit, but they might put in an S O S any minute for ammonia or champagne or a headache powder, you know. Or mother might want to send for me in a rush, and I don't want her left all alone."

"Yes, Miss Gwendolyn. I'll be here."

Gwendolyn started impetuously for the head of the stairs, but when halfway down she composed herself and slowed up. When she entered the big living room below she was as casual as she could make herself.

"'Lo, Brad," she smiled at the handsome but troubled-looking young man who met her. "Back from the big town? Thanks most awfully for what you've done."

"Thanks for what I've done!" he repeated, holding her offered hand in a clasp that struck her as being none too demonstrative. "You can say that, Gwen?" He shook his head. "You don't know—I can't say how it hurt to have to tell you."

"Well," said Gwen with a faint twitch of the lipsticked rose leaf that was her mouth, "I'm not saying that a good time was had by all, even here at Seacrest, when the bad news arrived and was passed

around, darling. It felt something like being out in a sandstorm made out of bricks. But they say there's a silver lining to every cloud. Think there's anything to it?" she asked with a sly glance at him only half concealed by her long lashes.

"Gosh, you've got sand, I'll say!" gulped Brad Warren uncomfortably. "Can't say I get your point of view, though, Gwen. But—but I admire you for it—for your courage."

"Admire me! What rot! Who wants—well, I mean that at least I get a good kick out of it, as the man said when he found he'd used wood alcohol by mistake. But maybe with the right kind of first-aid treatment——" She trailed off, looking dreamily out of the window.

Brad only coughed and said nothing.

"Anyway, it's a new and interesting situation, don't you think?" offered Gwen almost insistently.

"It's all of that," he admitted with a wondering look at her.

"And one that holds out a whole flock of new and interesting possibilities?" she smiled invitingly.

"It's horrible! Unbelievable!" exclaimed Brad hoarsely, staring at the floor. "I—I wish I could do something about it, something to help you, Gwen!"

Gwen stiffened her muscles and drew a deep breath.

"I wish you could," she said steadily. "You might try, Brad."

He turned away and stared out of the window, while Gwen's eyes widened and her cheeks filled with color that died away to whiteness.

"How's your mother taking it?" he asked in a low voice.

"Lilian? How do you think!" the girl demanded. "You know her."

"I'll have to see her, I suppose," said Brad unsteadily. "I—there are some questions I'll have to ask her

before we—that is, before you and I——”

“Yes?” whispered Gwen, restraining any sign of eagerness.

“Well,” Brad explained with some embarrassment, “as you say, Gwen, I know her, and I’m afraid that it’ll be you and I who’ll have to go into details and straighten things out, won’t it?”

“Oh! After all, it’s up to Lilian,” said Gwen coldly. “I’m not of age, you know, that is, legally. I think you’ll have to see Lilian herself just as soon as she’s able, Mr. Warren.”

“Gwen!”

“Now what’s the matter! Oh, the formality? Excuse it, please. I sort of got the idea that it was the proper thing at a business conference. This is a business conference with my lawyer, isn’t it? Am I wrong?”

“That’s a—that’s a cold-blooded way to take it,” he gasped in astonishment. “Gwen, what have I——”

“You haven’t done a thing, Brad,” Gwen smiled sweetly. “Not a thing,” she emphasized, “except to very kindly try and help me out of a hole. I’m more than grateful, even if I don’t seem to show it. Probably I’m just too hard boiled.”

“Nothing to be grateful for,” said the man tonelessly. “It’s a hole I can’t help you out of, unfortunately.”

“No, but you’ve shown me where I stand, at least. About the hole I’m in and a few other things! Thanks! Afraid I hadn’t quite realized my new position in the world.”

Brad Warren stared at her, crimsoning slowly.

“What do you mean by that?”

“Being a poor little *Cinderella*,” laughed Gwen mockingly. “Do you know, old top, it never occurred to me before, but that storybook prince of hers, who used to get my little heart so worked up, was noth-

ing but a fishy, frozen wise guy after all! He gets all the credit for the heavy romance, when it was her fairy godmother who dolled *Cinderella* up. Would his highness have fallen for her if he’d seen her in the ashes instead? I’ll say he wouldn’t!”

“He did, afterward, didn’t he?”

Brad answered with a feeble smile in an effort to join naturally in the girl’s cynical version of the fable.

“Because he’d already made his play for her,” glittered Gwen. “He’d already committed himself.”

Brad Warren shrugged his shoulders.

“He was a prince and presumably had plenty of money of his own,” he said stiffly. “So he, at least, could hardly be put down as a fortune hunter.”

“Oh, I see,” said Gwen, suddenly all soft summer sunshine again. “Although the couple of princes I’ve had the pleasure, darling, would have made prize bloodhounds if a million dollars was a wolf; and they never had a nickel of their own. Maybe they were just born that way and couldn’t help it.”

“Gwen.” He changed the subject nervously. “Don’t you want me to tell you——”

“About how the lightning struck and all the horrible details, darling? Gee, haven’t I got to live in the ruins all the rest of my life? Forget it! What I’m interested in is that fool *Cinderella* problem. Let’s solve it.”

“Gwen!” He tried to stop her, but in vain.

“All I’m wondering about is, Brad darling, what chance *Cinderella* would have had if things had been the other way around. I mean, if she’d been rich and royal to start with, and he hadn’t.”

“I’m afraid there wouldn’t have been any story,” said Brad with difficulty.

"Don't be so dumb, handsome. Of course, there's a story! What I mean is, if she had been left on her uppers, for instance, and his Victorian, nonfortune-hunting nibs had found her in the kitchen, like he did. Because, of course, she'd have to cook for somebody, wouldn't she? And it might as well be anybody."

Brad swallowed what appeared to be a painfully large lump in his throat, looking as if he'd rather be anywhere than at Seacrest.

"I can't pretend to misunderstand you, Gwen," he stammered hoarsely. "But—but——"

Never had Gwendolyn Carter realized that one second of time could hold a million years' worth of pain and disillusionment and contempt. But she took her cue at once, though the world seemed to sink from under her as she stood apparently as calm and unmoved as if she were considering a choice of trains on a timetable.

"Well, for Pete's sake, darling why all the sudden steam just because I asked about a curtain for my last act? I've been thinking about maybe doing a cute little play called 'The Modern Cinderella,' and I thought—but how stupid of me! Just because you've been such a perfect dear by helping out in other ways, handsome, I forgot for the moment that you've never had one drop of romantic blood in your veins. But a lawyer wouldn't, I suppose! Never mind, I'll ask Hanson Courtleigh!"

Brad Warren, realizing that he had doubly betrayed himself, stood as dumb as a beet and the full color of one, while Gwen's golden voice, alloyed with a faint note of amusement that showed she had penetrated his clumsy evasions, stung and shamed him. But at that name he started.

"Hanson Courtleigh!" he choked, with a furious and hopeless gesture. "Don't make me laugh!"

"Nothing to laugh at, under the circumstances," purred Gwen, fixing him with unsmiling eyes. "Maybe you don't know Hanson as well as you think you do, darling. Hanson must be in his thirties, but he's just filled with romance. Believe me, that sweet old honey boy can spill more mush and slush in a minute than he has money in the bank; and that's saying a mouthful! You just ought to listen to his line when he gets going," she chuckled. "Bet you anything you like, Brad, that Hanson says the prince ought to grab *Cinderella* out of the ashes and marry her right off the bat without even dusting her off! Bet you double that's just what he'd do himself!"

Brad turned a ghastly sort of white and picked up his hat.

"I—I've got to be going, I guess," he said in a grating voice.

"Well, if you must, darling," returned Gwen sweetly. "I'm grateful almost to death for what you've done, Brad! I suppose you'll want to see Lilian soon as you can, won't you? To-morrow? I'll straighten her out and have her ready for you, handsome. And, by the way, if you should happen to run across Hanson Courtleigh, tell him about my plan, will you, and ask him——"

Gwen stopped talking, for there was nobody left to talk to. Brad had suddenly stalked out of the room, and was already at the front door.

With tight, proud lips and agonized eyes, Gwen watched him as he disappeared around a curve in the driveway. Then she turned on her heel, marched up the stairs and past the maid, Katherine, still on guard in the upper hallway, and sought

refuge in her own chamber, locking the door behind her.

By the next day Gwendolyn Carter was herself again, supreme over her emotions, sparkling with her customary nonchalance to the last inch of her imported costume.

On the day after that, Gwen ordered her car and drove away from

Seacrest as casually as if she were really going to Connie Hovemeyer's for overnight, as she had hinted.

But her program was interfered with at the gate by a near collision with Connie Hovemeyer herself. Gwen jammed on the brakes and considered her best friend with a frown. Then she made over again the last piece of her mind.



"I forgot for the moment that you've never had one drop of romantic blood in your veins. But a lawyer wouldn't, I suppose!"

"I'm taking myself for a ride," she announced calmly. "Jump out of that buggy and climb in with me. I might as well tell you something."

Connie obeyed without hesitation. People usually did when Gwen Carter suggested anything.

"What you got to spill, darling?" she gurgled.

"Listen," said Gwen at last, after a long, swift spurt had brought them to the post road. And for a minute she talked plain and bitter English.

Connie Hovemeyer simply could not believe her ears, and said so.

"No joke at all, darling," stated Gwen grimly. "Is the wolf at the door? He's already in the kitchen, I'm telling you!"

Connie stared again, blinking foolishly.

"Maybe I'm dumb, Gwen. Would you mind telling what you are talking about?"

"Money, you poor fish!" exclaimed Gwen with exasperation. "Ever hear of it? What you put to bed in the bank! What you buy things with when you don't have them charged!"

"Why, I thought you were just rotten with it, darling! Gee, you poor kid!" Connie began to fumble in her gold-mesh bag. "Here you are. I stuck dad for a hundred this morning, and I guess I got maybe ten or twenty left. Will that hold you till you can get some more?"

"Thanks, old thing," grinned Gwen cynically, "but if I could get some more money I wouldn't be broke, would I?"

"But won't your mother give you any more?" asked the other girl in blank astonishment. Gosh, Gwen, you don't mean you've had a row and got in bad with her about anything, do you? You should worry! She'll forget all about it by to-mor-

row morning. She's the sweetest thing! Why, I can even bring dad around in that time, no matter how badly he strips his gears!"

Gwen stepped on the gas as she would have stepped on a poisonous spider, and the ten-thousand-dollar roadster jumped as if she'd stuck a pin into it.

"Don't be stupid, stupid!" she exclaimed impatiently. "Me have a run-in with Lilian? Even a wild cat couldn't start anything with her, and you know it! Far as money goes, Lilian would hand me a check for a thousand any minute—all I'd have to do would be to ask her for it!"

"Well, then, for Pete's sake—well, then!"

"One on me, I guess," said Gwen, shaking her head hopelessly and slowing down to ten miles an hour. "You are dumb! I'd have bet anybody could split even solid ivory with an ax, but I see it isn't so, darling. Listen, will you? What's the good of a check for a thousand if it isn't worth a thin dime? Do you get that? There isn't any money any more!"

Connie got it.

"There isn't any money?" she repeated, horror-stricken. "You mean there isn't any money?"

"That's what! All gone up the spout, or wherever good money goes to when it flies."

"Gwen!" shrieked Miss Hovemeyer. "Will you stop this flivver so I can hear myself think?"

"Too many wheels going around at once?" chuckled the heiress to nothing mockingly. But she obediently stopped the car, drawing up to the side of the empty post road.

"Now tell me what you're talking about so I can understand it!"

"In words of one syllable, then, darling, the Carter family, consisting of one Lilian Carter, widow, and

her daughter, Gwendolyn Marie, of whom you may have heard, is broke! Or will be just as soon as the dust settles. Do you get me now?"

"I can't understand it," blinked Connie helplessly. "Why, you—you had millions! How can you lose millions of dollars? You can't spend it!"

"Search me! All I know is that whatever it was, it's gone, Lilian has apparently been spending way beyond our income ever since dad died, the poor dear idiot. You know—Palm Beach, Europe, Paris for our clothes every year, a house here and a house there. It seems money isn't going as far as it used to."

"Well, for crying out loud!" gasped Connie, flabbergasted.

"Yes, and without any cold cream or even a hankie at hand," laughed Gwen shortly. "But that isn't all! Would you believe it, the beloved idiot seemed to have found out that her pace was too swift, and so she planned to restore the family fortunes by buying a whole darned oil field in Texas. And never a word to me!"

"An oil field!" said Connie with a start. "Oil! Why, oil's the richest thing there is, isn't it?"

"That was Lilian's idea, evidently," said her daughter. "Only there wasn't any oil. It was a sucker game."

"Gwen!"

Connie stared palely, stricken dumb by the catastrophe.

"Gwen," she whispered finally, "what about Brad?"

"Bradford Warren?" said Gwen with a wince and a frown. "What about Brad Warren? Don't make me laugh!"

"Gee," ventured Connie tremulously, "is that off?"

"What do you mean, off!" snapped Gwen. "It never was on!"

Connie gurgled.

"But—why, the poor fish never gets within cooing distance of you nowadays without crossing his eyes and going just plain gaga!"

"Bah and a couple of bahs!" flushed Gwen. "They all do it, or most of them. Even birds that are married or engaged, when the ball and chain is looking the other way. Why wouldn't they?"

Even the loyal Connie forgot her sympathy for the moment.

"Don't ask me, darling," she purred. "I've never understood it myself."

Gwen regarded her gloomily.

"Keep your shirt on, old thing. All I meant was that no matter how easy I may be to look at, they always saw the pretty picture in a solid gold, diamond-studded frame. Well," she laughed harshly, "not any more, so you'll never have to worry again, kid."

Connie was instantly contrite.

"Gwen, darling! I didn't mean to be a cat. You know I didn't! It's just that I can't believe it! I can't take it in! You—to be poor!"

"That's the way it hits me, too," said Gwen dully.

"Listen, darling," Connie soothed her. "I'm sure you're wrong about Brad Warren. Gee, I know the symptoms, don't I?" she asked tenderly of the brilliant ring on her own left hand. "That boy's dead in love with you, or I'm a canned tomato! Everybody knows it, and we—they—well, everybody says so."

"They do, do they?" retorted Gwen, flushing hotly. "How come, then, Brad himself has never mentioned that little thing? He's got a tongue, hasn't he?"

Connie stared at her a second and then squealed, catching the busted heiress in a wild, impetuous hug.

"You do care! Oh, how gorgeous, darling! And you'll grab him off

right away, then, and you won't have to cook or sweep or go to work at nine o'clock or eat mush or whatever it is poor people have to do, will you! He'll sure ask you now, honey! Don't you see, Brad was just afraid to tell you he loved you because you were so disgustingly rich, Gwen darling? Brad's that way! He's shy!"

Gwen wormed herself loose from the excited embrace.

"Believe me," she said bitterly, "he's the first pair of pants that ever refused to sit up and beg when he was hungry, then! At least, in all the experience of my young life! No, you're all wet, Connie! And if you want to know it"—she flamed with sore and sudden fierceness—"I've actually held myself out to him on a platter more than once! And if you ever breathe that, Connie Hovemeyer, or even remember it, I—I'll kill you!"

"Cross my heart and hope to die, I won't!" the thrilled and awed Connie assured her piously. "Never! But, darling, don't you see it's just like I was saying? It's because it was a—a golden platter! But now when Brad knows what's happened, darling, he'll break his neck to tell you."

"Oh, will he? He's already known it two days!"

"Two days?" choked Connie. "And nobody else has even heard a whisper, not even me?" she demanded reproachfully. "Not even me!"

"Two days? Three it is," said Gwen in a cold and even voice. "When this thing broke I asked Brad Warren to get the dope for me and let me know if it was just a bad dream. He's a lawyer, and the only one I knew, and—and I knew only too well that he was able to keep his mouth shut," she added

bitterly. "Well, Brad went in to town and snooped around and came back and told me that there was no dream to it. That I was wide awake and then some, unluckily!"

"And he didn't—he didn't say anything—else?" faltered Connie.

"Huh? He as much as turned me down flat!"

"He gives me a pain in the neck!" exclaimed Connie passionately. "Why, the nasty, mean fish! But you should worry, darling! Why don't you pay him back by marrying Hanson Courtleigh, then? Hanson's always been perfectly mad about you, and he's got millions, Gwen! You wouldn't have to more than crook your finger, and you know it!"

"Maybe not," said Gwen coldly. "But I won't marry for money. I'm Victorian that way. Funny, but it's a fact."

"Well, dearest," sighed Connie, "It's your funeral, I s'pose, if it isn't going to be your marriage. But what are you going to do?"

"Look over your shoulder and see if anybody's coming."

Connie was astonished, but obeyed automatically.

"No," she gasped. "Why?"

"Because," said Gwen grimly, "I'm probably only about one jump ahead of the sheriff or whoever it is grabs everything but your shirt in a case like this, and I want to keep this buggy. I may need it."

"What?" quavered Connie. "What you going to do with it? Gwen! Are you thinking of—of being one of those society bootleggers?"

"I don't know. I might. Why not? But just now I'm thinking of beating it out of Westchester as far as I can get, and I haven't the price of a ticket to Hoboken!"

Connie goggled at her.

"I've got to earn my living, haven't I? Somebody's got to, or I don't eat. I'm going to drop you at White Plains, darling, and you can ride back in the train. Tell Brad he's got to fix it about the car so they won't pinch me for stealing my own property, though Heaven knows whether Lilian paid for it!"

"Gwen!" shrieked Connie. "You're going away? What's your mother going to do?"

Gwen's face hardened visibly at the thought.

"I've done all I can for her. Dad left me twenty-five thousand or so to buy a trosseau with or something, and I've made that and my blessing over to her. Oh, don't worry about Lilian, she'll get looked after! I'm going to look after myself from now on!"

"But how?" cried Connie. "For Heaven's sake, darling, what can you do? You don't know how to do a darn thing!"

"I've got the car," considered Gwen thoughtfully, "and a few clothes in the rumble, and my face and my figure, and a snappy line and a wonderful technique, and—and I know how to open and shut my eyes and make cunning sounds with my mouth like nobody's business. I guess that's about all."

Connie had a rush of brains to the head.

"Yes, but what does that get you now, darling? It was plenty assets when you were Gwendolyn Marie Carter of New York, Paris, and Palm Beach, with a pedestal of ten million bones to stand on, and it would be just meat for a chorus girl or one of those night-club hostesses, but——"

"You said a loud-speakerful, Connie," frowned Gwen thoughtfully. "Maybe that's the answer."

"What's the answer? To what, darling?"

"To nothing! Let's get going."

Gwen shoved in her clutch and stepped on the gas so hard that the roadster jumped like a deer. Fifteen minutes later Connie Hove-meyer was dumped on the sidewalk in front of the White Plains station.

"Don't tell anybody anything!" commanded Gwen from behind the wheel. "Tell Brad—no, don't!"

And she was off in a whirl of dust.

CHAPTER II.

Alf Steinwitz gave Gwen a second long once-over. Then he grinned.

"I admit you got class to you, baby. Where'd you say you come from?"

"I didn't say," smiled Gwen with a devastating smile. "Does it matter as long as I keep going?"

"No. What's your moniker, sweetie?"

"Plain Jane Smith," she said demurely.

"That's a lie, and what a label!" he said sharply. "You'll have to put on a new handle if you work here in the Silver Hour. This is a classy joint."

"Hot dog!" exclaimed the girl. "Then you're giving me the job?"

"Baby, you're hired," grinned Mr. Steinwitz. "If you can spill the sugar an' cream over the customers like you done it over me, it would be a shame to waste it. You got brains, too. Pin a nice jazzy name on yourself."

"Virginia Dare," she offered.

"Comes in bottles," chuckled Mr. Steinwitz. "Pumped full of bubbles, it makes genuine imported fizz at twenty-five per. But it fits. You got the sparkle, so let it go at that. You got the right kind of clothes, meaning not too much of 'em?"

"Right from Paris," she assured him, "and they might have come over in a compact, almost."

"O. K., baby," he nodded. "You know your onions, an' I guess you know clothes, with your looks. You got style. It's fifty a week and commissions."

"Commissions?" inquired Gwen.

"Don't play dumb! Ten per cent on every bottle on your table after the first one."

"I get you."

"It's a great game," smiled Mr. Steinwitz cynically, "but you'd ought to be able to play it with your eyes shut, baby. Be ritzy, but don't ritz 'em too much. An' be a lady. You got to be brazen, you know, but like you was all plated over with gold or platinum. Let 'em go as far as they like so long as they stop before they get there. Remember it always that the Silver Hour is tofy and caters only to the highest class of New York society."

Gwen stiffened and paled a little.

"I never thought of that!"

Mr. Steinwitz was no fool.

"Now I know I got something," he said heartily. "But listen, kid, don't go and get worried, now. Think swell Park Avenue comes here? Nay, nay. The soup and fish an' silk an' diamonds that keeps this joint going is all out-of-town stuff. Butter-an'-egg men from Philly an' points west. Maybe now and then a Wall Street broker or promoter who's called the turn on the market or roped in a herd of suckers. Like a guy named Timmins who was head of a big California oil company that lay down an' died, stony broke."

"Broke?" asked Gwen stupidly. "And he comes here?"

"To drown his sorrows, I guess," said Mr. Steinwitz dryly. "I said it was the company that was broke, not him."

"Oh-h," said the girl slowly.

"You be here at eleven sharp, all dolled up," said her new employer, "an' I'll make you acquainted. Better go an' get some shut-eye, little girl. You'll be on till four a. m."

Good advice, thought Gwen, and she took it. The four suitcases that she had brought with her had enabled her to get by without paying rent in advance for the modest room she had taken in a West Forty-fourth Street lodging house. Her landlady, watching her transfer the long line of glad rags to the closet, all on satin-covered and scented hangers, hadn't had the nerve to ask for immediate cash.

Gwen had garaged her car on the same terms. An imported, ten-thousand-dollar roadster was received with respect and with credit in the most convenient sense of the word. As a matter of fact, Gwen's eyebrows would have gone up an impressive and effective inch if she had been asked to pay in advance. Despite her all too trustworthy realization of the lightning that had struck her, she still emanated an unconscious atmosphere of millions.

It had been her unmistakable manner as well as her looks and her line that had landed her a job as hostess at the Silver Hour, the first night club she had attacked. Alf Steinwitz had a vacancy, and he knew a good thing when he saw it.

So, as Virginia Dare, Gwen lay down for a few hours of sleep before she was to enter on the new life, thanks to that little dumb-bell of a Connie Hovemeyer, she chuckled to herself. If Connie hadn't happened to make that crack about Gwen's physical and snappy-minded graces being of practical use only to such impossible fish as chorus girls and night-club entertainers, Gwen would never have thought of

it, although she had had a strong and dismal conviction that she couldn't sell ribbons or kitchenware or tap a typewriter to any decent and moral employer's satisfaction. And ladies must eat!

Promptly at eleven that night "Virginia Dare" appeared before Mr. Alf Steinwitz in the luxuriously and intimately furnished office of the night club.

"Some little baby doll!" he smiled as he rubbed his hands together. "I didn't make no mistake at all! Tell 'em Alf Steinwitz don't know how to pick 'em! Bet you my life you vamp 'em to a fare-you-well, not, Virginia?"

"I'll do my little darnedest," said Gwen modestly.

"All right, we ankle over to the dressing room an' meet the girls," suggested Mr. Steinwitz. "See do they act like they smelled poison."

Two minutes later Virginia Dare was being purred over by Betty Blue, Angela de Witt, Ruby Trenor and Ann Blunt, whose reception of the new playmate was all the shrewd Mr. Steinwitz could have asked.

"Kissed you like they wished there was arsenic on their lipsticks," he chuckled as he led her out onto the bright and noisy floor and handed her to a table.

"Do I eat?" asked Virginia Dare hopefully and hungrily.

"Wait, I bring you a fine meal ticket," he promised. "A buyer from Chicago, whose expense account is never nobody's business. Mr. Fleming his name is."

Gwen benefited by a dinner that would have done credit to the best hotel in town before prohibition. She danced. She flirted. She attracted patrons by the dozen, took her pick of them, and kept them all at bay. It was easy and it was exciting. She got back to her peace-

ful lodging before dawn, so tired that she slept for twelve solid hours, and had only half a dozen more to wait before she could eat again. Her landlady, learning with admiration how and where she was employed, paid tribute with tea and toast.

At the end of the week Virginia Dare was astounded at being handed a hundred and sixty-eight dollars by Mr. Steinwitz.

"More than even Betty Blue has made," he informed her. "Some baby you are, Virginia! It makes 'em thirsty just to look at you, an' compliments I could pass on to you by the bushel. I write you a contract."

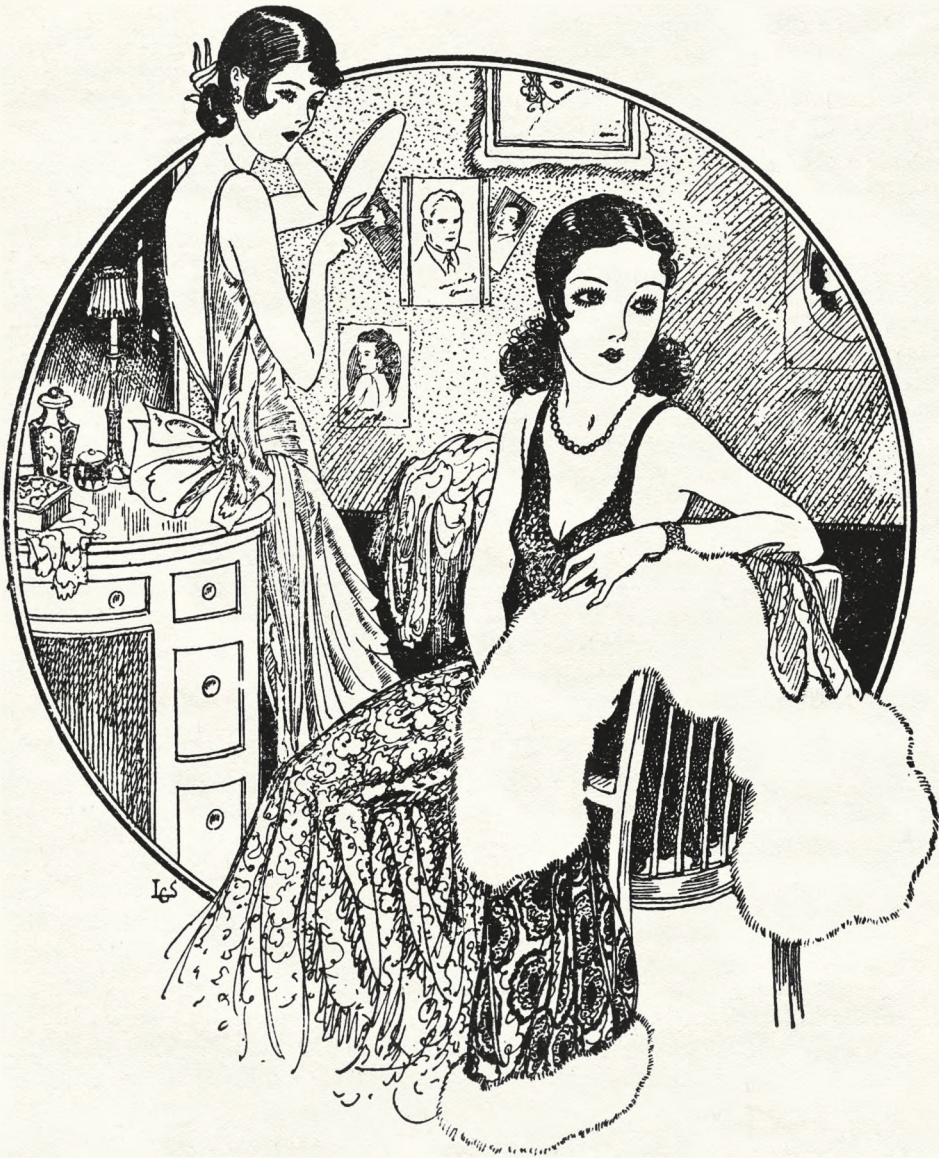
Gwen hesitated. To play for pay in this garden of folly while she could do so without detection and embarrassment was one thing. To tie herself up by an agreement that would hold her whether she wanted to stay or not was something else again. Alf Steinwitz was disturbed.

"If it's the money," he said reluctantly, "I make it more, baby. I give you sixty straight. With commissions you make soon a good couple hundred a week. You fit here like a dollar in the pocket. You got a reputation already."

"It isn't the money," laughed Gwen. "It's—oh, a lot of things that might come up, almost any time. Besides, though I may be making a hit with the public and even with you, Mr. Steinwitz"—and she gave him a look he could have stirred with a spoon—"it isn't everybody that loves me, and it's getting on my nerves. It hurts my feelings."

"Mr. Steinwitz!" snorted the possessor of the name. "Call me Alf, baby, like all the rest of the mob. Ain't we known each other long enough?"

"Alf," said Gwen obediently.



Bradford Warren left a very bitter ache in Gwen's heart. Maybe he had a secret wife somewhere in the background. Men did such things, Gwen reflected painfully and scornfully.

"Don't look at me with your eyes like that, though," smirked the pleased Mr. Steinwitz. "Save it for the customers, baby. Me, I got a wife! And don't talk about handing me no run-out powders, neither. I know what you mean, an' don't you

make you no never-mind about those other cats. Foolishness! Ain't I watched 'em workin' their claws an' spitting silent whenever they see you cop the cream of them that comes here? But ain't they just women? You can't change human

nature, baby; no use trying. That Betty Blue, she should look out, though, that she don't get handed her walking papers," frowned Alf Steinwitz. "All good little pals together like foxes in a hen yard is it the rule here. We can get it troubles enough with outsiders like prohibitioners an' cops an' greedy double-crossing bootleggers, without starting nothing for ourselves. Yes, I guess I speak to her."

"Oh, please don't, darling," said Gwen with a honied tongue. "You don't think I'm afraid of her, do you? I can handle her, all right, and anybody! And I never said a single word about her, anyhow."

"Not you," agreed Mr. Steinwitz, "but I got eyes and ears of my own. Better you keep open those big baby blue ones you got, however. She's mean in the disposition, an' when that high-class spender Timmins comes in again——"

"That the oil man you spoke of a week ago?" asked Gwen sharply.

"That's him. He cleaned up in California, an' was the papers full of him? But they got nothing on him, baby. He's a king. Betty Blue figures she owns him."

"Listen, Alf," said Gwen calmly; "I'm no buttinski, and I'm not looking for trouble. I won't even make a pass at that Mr. Timmins. Just the same, oil interests me, and if he should pick this little rosebud instead of another one, and Betty Blue or any other frail starts to tangle, I'll—well, we'll leave it to Mr. Timmins."

"Fair enough," conceded Mr. Steinwitz. "Would a customer order champagne, should I try to sell him a glass of beer?"

Despite Mr. Steinwitz's professed impartiality, he was vaguely disturbed when he suddenly saw Mr.

E. Montgomery Timmins appear at the inner entrance of the Silver Hour the next night. The Santa Claus of night-club hostesses stood haughtily expectant on the threshold, waiting for William, the head waiter, to hurry forward and escort him to his usual reserved table on the floor. But it was Alf Steinwitz himself who greeted him with all joy and obsequiousness.

"Mr. Timmins it is again! For a whole week you have given us the go-by, Mr. Timmins, and almost I was thinking of closing up the club! I see is Betty Blue not engaged, and I tell her right away."

Mr. Timmins nodded as he started for his accustomed place, his eyes wandering over the sparkling after-theater crowd that filled the room. Suddenly he stopped and pointed a finger at a girl daringly dressed in a gown seemingly composed of a flock of rose petals, starred with hundreds of tiny pearls. She was just seating herself with an air of an empress, at a table all alone.

"Who's that fairy, Steinwitz? One of yours, eh? Something new, isn't she?"

Although from the corner of his eye Mr. Steinwitz could see Betty Blue sailing voluptuously in their direction along the edge of the whirlpool of dancers, he decided to let things take their own course. There was nothing else to do without offending E. Montgomery Timmins.

"She might be the queen of France or Spain or any of them places," explained Mr. Steinwitz. "Some class she is, that baby, Mr. Timmins! Yes, sir, she's only been here a week, but already is she the queen of the club! Virginia Dare is the name. Shall I——"

"Take me over," commanded Mr. Timmins.

Betty Blue stopped short only twenty feet away, her eyes blazing and her pointed, tinted finger nails cutting into her little pink palms as she watched this cold-blooded defection of her customary meal ticket, who never even gave a look around for her.

"Miss Dare, lemme introduce Mr. E. Montgomery Timmins," smirked Alf Steinwitz. "I guess you've heard of him, all right." He winked. "The big oil operator."

Gwen registered charmed beatitude like a starved kitten suddenly faced with a quart of cream.

"The man you said had made the Silver Hour just by coming here, Mr. Steinwitz? Certainly I've heard of Mr. Timmins," purred Gwen throatily with a dazzling smile. "Who hasn't? Won't you sit down?" she invited him.

Mr. Timmins sat down, and Alf Steinwitz went away, each filled with gratification.

"Say, Miss Dare," said Mr. Timmins gallantly, regarding Gwen with even greater appreciation than before, "it's you who are goin' to make this place the swellest joint in town, not me. I can see where Alf is bound to save half his electric-light bill!"

Gwen looked as sweetly dumb as she was able.

"Because you shine like ten carats from Tiffany's," explained Mr. Timmins. "Honest, just as soon as I came in the door I couldn't see anything else. You ought to be pinched for violating the headlight law, baby!"

"Oh, you mean I'm easy to look at?" asked Gwen with utter demureness. "I'm so glad you like me. Some people don't."

"Yes, I can imagine that, too," smiled Mr. Timmins. "I'll bet that among some of the sisters here

you're about as popular as tea at a tea party."

"How did you guess it?" she asked in surprise.

"Just by getting an eyeful of Betty Blue across the room."

Gwen took a very brief one herself.

"Why, the poor kid! She looks as if she were going to cry! Why, she's looking at you, Mr. Timmins! Am I butting——"

"Cry my eye," said Mr. Timmins heartlessly. "She looks as if she was going to bust wide open, and it's you she's looking at, baby."

Gwen made a movement as if to get up from the table.

"I'm so sorry! I didn't know I was hijacking, Mr. Timmins——"

Mr. Timmins laid a heavy but perfectly groomed and diamond-lit hand on hers.

"Stay right where you are, little one. I got a right to pick my own chicken, haven't I?"

"Certainly," subsided Gwen meekly.

"Well, then, let's eat," said Mr. Timmins, beckoning a hovering waiter.

By the end of the evening, or, rather, by the break of dawn, Mr. E. Montgomery Timmins was in chains. Gwen had danced him and flattered him and fascinated him into a state of doglike subjection.

For three nights running Gwen walked hypothetically around him like a cooper around a barrel, driving down and nailing on hoop after hoop of enthrallment until the hard-boiled oil operator was tied up as tight as a mortgage to a bank. She had him eating out of her hand at last, and she knew it.

Alf Steinwitz looked on with admiration, and Betty Blue with fire and flame.

What she could do with the cap-

tive Mr. Timmins, what information she could extract from him, and how she could make use either of him or his information, Gwen didn't exactly know. But she had a shrewd idea that he could tell her things, and that he might actually be of some value in enabling her to make a stab at getting back a portion of the fortune Lilian had paid out for oilless oil stock.

Quite apart from her vague hope of success, Gwen couldn't help feeling a little set up by her achievement in reducing a ten-minute egg like E. Montgomery Timmins to a condition of such absolute mush in the brief period of three days. At least three weeks' work accomplished in some seventy-two hours! Practiced and skillful as she was, confident of her charms and her technique as she always had been, Gwen wouldn't have bet a nickel that she could have had any man who wasn't just plain idiot stripping his gears and blowing off his radiator cap so soon after she had begun to work on him. Quick work, she modestly marveled to herself. Quick work, even if it was bound to be a sure thing in the end.

For her one failure—the case of Bradford Warren—hadn't really undermined her assurance, even though it had left a very bitter ache behind it in Gwen's heart. There had been some quite incomprehensible and invincible reason for that failure. Maybe the poor fish had a secret wife somewhere in the background. Or even two of 'em. Men did such things, Gwen reflected painfully and scornfully. Well, nothing to do but forget it!

Just the same, the dark and miserable memory helped to make her utterly unscrupulous and relentless in her attitude toward the unsuspecting Mr. Timmins.

LS-4D

One reason for Mr. Timmins's infatuated subordination had been his early awareness that this classy little Virginia Dare was no ordinary type of night-club entertainer. He, too, had been secretly contemplating the possibility of a closer alliance with such superior charm and beauty, and it had only been an occasional warning note, a monitory highbrow touch to Gwen's recklessly modernistic manner and behavior that had prevented him from coming out quite bluntly with his growing desires.

"How come you're working your head and your legs off in a joint like this, Virginia?" he asked her at the next midnight meeting. "A little lady like you should be taking it easy and letting some one else run the hundred and fifty a month."

"Ladies must eat," suggested Gwen, "and how eat easier than by dining on suckers, big boy? Also, it might occur to you that there's safety in numbers."

"Well, I'm the sucker then, am I? All right, I'm satisfied. Keep right on eating off me, baby, and no kick coming. It's worth it. Only, I'd do more than that for you if you'd give me a chance."

"And for why, darling?" smiled Gwen, narrowing her eyes.

"Because I've got a real yen on you, sugar plum. Hadn't you noticed it?"

"Well, to tell the truth, I had an idea that I'd felt something trying to sneak up on my heartbeat," tinkled Gwen. "But just think of the hard-boiled E. Montgomery Timmins leaning heavy on romance! And for little me! What a laugh!"

"No laugh at all," said Mr. Timmins, reddening. "What's so funny about it?"

"But I hear you've got nothing but oil in your veins, old darling. You eat it, think it, and sell it."

"Oil burns, doesn't it?" asked Mr. Timmins darkly. "But as far as that goes, I got no more oil in my veins than—than I got oil in the ground! I sell oil stocks, baby, not oil!"

don't have to spend so much, see? Maybe one or two dry wells a few hundred feet down so people can hear 'em clank, then a few fake rigs an' set-ups, an' all the rest is easy. High-pressure advertising an' fancy



"Oh, I thought all the money was in oil," said Gwen innocently.

"No gold digger was ever as dumb as that," chuckled Mr. Timmins fondly. "You're all right, kid! Listen, there's ten times the money in oil stocks that there is in oil. You

stock certificates. Does the money roll in? And how!"

"As easy as that?" said Gwen with a tiny tremor in her voice.

"Easier. I cleaned three quarters of a million out of a dry field in California this last winter an' spring.



In front of the table occupied by Gwen and Mr. Timmins she stopped, poised as airily as a flying bird, a figure of alluring daintiness. But her eyes struck at Gwen like lightning shafts of steel.

Believe me," grinned Mr. Timmins, "if they'd let me, I could set up a few fake rigs in Central Park an' buy the town out six months after-

ward. So you see, you won't starve if you come to papa. And you won't have to work any, either."

"Gee!" breathed Gwen in simu-

lated awe and admiration. "Now we're getting somewhere! Do you—do they do it in other States, too? In Texas, for instance?"

Mr. Timmins leaned forward. That "getting somewhere" stuff began to sound good to him.

"Texas, baby?" he grinned. "Why, say! Out of the Bondville field where the only oil was banana oil——"

And the lights went out all over the Silver Hour. Fortunately for Gwen, because she had suddenly turned as pale as death and had wilted in her chair. The Bondville Oil Field! That was the name of the project that had completed Lili-an's ruin and her own! Bondville!

"What the heck is the matter now!" Mr. Timmins was growling in the dark. "Steinwitz! I say, Steinwitz!"

"It's all right, ladeez and gentlemen," came Alf's voice out of the black void. "It will come the spotlight in a second. Miss Betty Blue, she is going to give a little exhibition on her fæet. They was just a little too quick out with those other lights—ah!"

A long, bright finger suddenly descended from the high balcony, illuminating the center of the floor between the tables. And in its ray, Betty Blue was already whirling like a wild dervish, the few beads and ribbons that composed her entire costume fluttering and flinging out from her slender, spinning body. The whiteness of her was tinged by all the colors of the rainbow, one after another, as the spotlight changed its hue and followed her glistening movements about the narrow space. Her ivory limbs flashed as she pranced around the area like a fawn, with mocking gestures at the laughing and cheering diners scarcely visible outside the bright

and moving circle of the bright spotlight.

In front of the table occupied by Gwen and Mr. Timmins she stopped for a second, poised as airily as a flying bird, a figure of alluring daintiness. But her eyes struck at Gwen like lightning shafts of steel. Then she was gone, snatching up a wide garment and disappearing draped between the tables.

"A flea that swapped clothes with her would freeze stiff in winter," chuckled E. Montgomery Timmins, "but that baby can certainly fling herself around!"

"Pouf!" said Gwen scornfully, angry at the evident insult offered by the other girl. "I could make a monkey of her even in these glad rags!"

"You could, at that!" agreed Mr. Timmins enthusiastically. "You got the best educated feet I ever hopped around with! Show 'em something, baby! Hey, Steinwitz! Put the spot back for Virginia Dare!"

"Shut up, you dumb-bell," whispered Gwen fiercely. "I don't want to——"

But Alf Steinwitz was already announcing, and the floor and wall lights were slowly going out.

"And now, ladeez and gentlemen, we will have the pleasure—Miss Virginia Dare is going to show us something! Y'all know how she is a feather on the feet just like she is easy on the eyes."

"Contest! Contest!" echoed from the tables amid the merry pounding of bottles and glasses.

"Well, you've done it, and I hope you choke," sighed Gwen in an undertone to her companion. "I can't dance in these high heels, and I flatly refuse to ruin my stockings, so here they go!"

She slipped both pairs of articles hastily off under the table and glided

out into the waiting spotlight. There she turned into a flower and a pinwheel and a horizontal cobweb, her long, plaited dinner gown fanning out as if to support her upper body on a sea of mist, while her slim, white legs twinkled in a dizzy

maze of graceful shapes, to sway and sweep her over the floor like floating thistledown. Then, exhilarated by the intoxication of motion, and kindled by the flame of resentment that still burned in her, Gwen boldly went her already beaten rival one



*"Virginia, you're a wow! Listen, you want to go on the stage?
I'll put you there!"*

better by flinging out straight and here and there one set of little pink toes while pointing on the other.

And as, bent far forward, she was looking back along the line of her extended limb, she thought she saw a face dim at the ringside, but a face she knew even though she was seeing it upside down. Gwen's heart stopped, and she straightened up with difficulty, this time facing her own table and Mr. Timmins.

Gwen walked back to her seat to a wild riot of applause, and when the spotlight died and the other lights came on again, she was bent over, putting on her slippers and stockings. Nor, when she had finished, did she even then dare look up and across the still empty dancing space.

For she believed she had seen the astounded and shocked face of Bradford Warren.

Mr. Timmins was patting her warmly on the shoulder.

"Hot dog, baby! Me, I'm proud of you, and if Alf Steinwitz knows his business he'll give you a couple hundred a week just for that little show or we'll cut you loose right away! Virginia, you're a wow! Listen, kid, you want to go on the stage? I'll put you there!"

Gwen glared at him, still breathless. She was already bitterly regretting that she had made that exhibition of herself, bitterly repenting ever having entered the night club or hired herself out to Alf Steinwitz, bitterly hating E. Montgomery Timmins. If she could have escaped without further exposing herself, she would have risen at once and hurried to the dressing room. But where she was, she was partly concealed by the bulky form of Mr. Timmins, and in a minute the dance floor would fill up and afford her another barrier.

Then a woman across the vacant space screamed and rose from her table. People stood up everywhere to see what it was all about.

"My bracelet!" sounded in shrill hysterics. "My diamond bracelet! It's gone! It's been stolen!"

Presently Alf Steinwitz stood in the middle of the tiny dance floor, having managed to hush the turmoil for a moment. His hands were lifted.

"Ladeez and gentlemen," he singsonged. "A lady here on this side has lost a diamond bracelet, value she says a thousand dollars. Lying on the corner of the table it was while there was going on the dancing of Miss Virginia Dare, she says, because it was after Betty Blue had stopped and there was the lights on again she laid it down. All the waiters was away, because they was against the walls not to spoil the view until the dancing it was all over. Has anybody seen a diamond bracelet, value a thousand dollars? Please, ladeez and gentlemen."

There were many murmurs that died away to silence. Nobody confessed to having seen a diamond bracelet. Then a small figure, still wrapped in a dark silk dressing gown, wormed its way into the open beside Alf Steinwitz.

"If that diamond thing disappeared while Virginia Dare was dancing," shrilled Betty Blue, "what's the matter with taking a peek into her bag over on her table? She's the only one that had a chance at it, isn't she? And she hasn't had a chance to leave the room."

Gwen was rigid with fury, and the face of Mr. Timmins, now towering beside her, was black with much the same emotion. But the crowd filled the floor and began to swarm around their table.

"Steinwitz," snarled Mr. Timmins

harshly, "you going to let that cheap little rat get away with that sort of stuff? You throw her out on her neck, or take it from me, you better close this joint up! You're finished!"

"No!" croaked Gwen, her eyes blazing. "Not yet! Dump out the bag and show her that I haven't got it, first."

She snatched at the slinky golden mesh with her hands, snapped its wide mouth open, and poured its contents out onto the tablecloth.

In the middle of the heap, surrounded by scattered bills and small change, a compact, a pair of rolled-up gloves and a dozen other odds and ends, lay a sparkling diamond bracelet!

TO BE CONCLUDED.



TO ONE ESTRANGED

I WOULD know your arms again,
Know your lips on mine,
And walk with you the quiet lane
Where autumn flowers still twine.
I would pluck the flowers there
And garland them for you,
And tell you that I think you fair,
As I was wont to do.

But you—have you forgotten, dear,
Beauty that was ours?
Love that walked so gayly here,
Where summer laid her flowers?
Joy once swept the silent night
With laughter of the stars—
And shall we yield all our delight
For bitter-burning scars?

Be to me what you have been—
A light, a song, a world;
A beauty in my heart, serene,
A sun through darkness hurled.
Be to me the love I knew—
The tenderness and flame
That swept my heart with love of you
And bruised it with your name!

FLORENCE McCHESNEY.



Mary Comes Home

By Mona Morrow

MARY put her foot on the brake and brought the car to a halt. Turning the switch, she directed the rays of the nickel-plated searchlight that stood on the running board until they fell on the signpost beside the road.

HILLSBURY 5 M.
JUDSON 15 M. ..

"Wish I were going home," Mary said to herself, "instead of back to New York to look for another job."

Five years before, she had left Judson, a thin, unattractive girl of sixteen with dark eyes that seemed much too large for her small face.

She was in love with Clive Hous-

ton, whose parents were the wealthiest people in town, and acknowledged the leaders of the social set. Clive was a very handsome and well-dressed young man who walked about with a superior air. So far as he was concerned, Mary didn't even exist. She lived on the wrong side of the town, her folks were poor, and she had no social standing.

He ignored her entirely, and yet she worshiped him from afar. In her eyes he was the most wonderful boy who ever lived. Once she even slapped Tommie Baxter's face when he teased her about Clive. Tommie was always hanging around her and sending her little love poems, but she didn't want Tommie.

When her parents died, she left Judson and went to New York. She had a very fine voice, and she hoped to get work there singing over the radio.

Each night as she carefully brushed her black hair, she prayed for beauty as many girls had prayed before her. In her heart there was a secret ambition. She wanted to be beautiful, fascinating, and famous. She wanted to go on the stage and become a great star.

Then she would return to Judson in triumph. She would be so irresistible that Clive would fall in love with her. She would marry him and live happily ever after.

The years crept on. It may have been the prayers or it may have been natural evolution. The thin child grew into a beautifully formed young girl. Her face filled out and her features changed. The dark eyes that had seemed much too large for her small face were undeniably fascinating now. Wherever Mary went, both men and women turned to stare at her.

At nineteen Mary was a marvelously pretty girl. She was taken on the moment she applied for a position on the stage. She joined a vaudeville act with four other girls. The act lasted only three months and then it closed.

She drifted from one act to another with stardom miles and miles away. She worked hard. She did her best, but she didn't get the breaks.

The last act closed in Worcester, Massachusetts. The star of the act decided to take a trip to Havana by airplane, and asked Mary if she would care to drive his roadster into New York. Besides saving the railroad fare, it would be a pleasant experience, Mary thought. So she agreed.

Reading the name of her home town on the signpost made her a bit sad now. If only this shiny nickel-plated roadster were her own, if only she were a famous star now, how happy she would be to drive into Judson! But under the present circumstances, she would pass by the town. Fame had not touched her yet. She was just a singer and dancer, with no special billing. Other girls with less talent and less beauty had reached the top, but she remained on the bottom rungs of the ladder.

About two miles from the signpost, her headlights suddenly picked up the form of a man standing in the road and waving to her to stop.

The first thought that came into her mind was that he was a bandit. It was quite late now, probably ten o'clock. She wasn't going to take any chances stopping on the deserted road. To turn back was impossible. The road was narrow, and by the time she turned he would catch her. He might be armed, too.

There was only one thing to do: step on the gas and drive right through. He'd get out of the way fast enough. She turned on the switch of the searchlight. She flashed the rays on his face to blind him for the moment and rush right by.

But as the rays struck his face, she uttered a gasp. Instead of speeding by, she slowed down the car.

"Speak of angels," she said to herself, "and they're bound to appear."

The man who stood in the road in evening clothes was Clive Houston!

"What's the trouble, big boy?" Mary asked, as she stopped the car beside him.

"My car broke down," he said, pointing to an automobile at the

side of the road. "I've been trying to fix it for hours, and I can't. Would you mind giving me a lift to Judson, if you're going down that way?"

As she swung open the door of the roadster, Mary's heart thumped like mad.

"Hop in," she said.

Those five years had treated Clive very kindly. The boyishness had gone from his face, and he looked exceedingly handsome in a manly sort of way. His sandy hair was a bit darker, and his gray eyes were grayer. He had taken on some weight, but it was evenly distributed, making him look strong and powerful.

"This is very kind of you," he said. "Every one else passed me by as if I were a highwayman. It's rather surprising that a girl should take a chance and stop."

She hesitated. Should she tell him that she hadn't been taking any chances, that she recognized him?

"I'm a great judge of character," she said with a mischievous smile. "When I flashed the searchlight, I saw that you had an honest face. Besides, only in storybooks do the highwaymen wear evening clothes."

"Thanks for your confidence," he said. "I'm on my way to a country-club dance in Judson. I'll probably get a bawling out from my girl for being late. I shouldn't have gone on that errand."

Mary felt a sharp pang in her heart. So he had a girl! It was silly of her to imagine that he would remain unattached while she was climbing the ladder to fame. He wasn't waiting for her. Even now as he sat beside her, he did not recognize her. She was a total stranger to him. And in the five years that she had been away, he probably had never given her a thought.

Soon they reached the town of Hillsbury.

"Would you mind stopping here for a moment?" he asked. "I'd like to run into a drug store and call up my girl. She must be worried to death, and I'd like to tell her that I'm on my way over."

"All right," Mary said, as she drew the car up in front of a drug store.

He hopped out before the car stopped, and rushed into the store.

"I guess I'm a couple of years late already," Mary said to herself. "I wonder whom he's in love with."

A sigh escaped from her lips. The sight of him had caused all her pulses to quicken. If at one time she had thought him the most wonderful boy, now she thought him the most wonderful man. He was still her ideal, the man she loved and hoped to win some day.

When he came out, she noticed a surly expression on his face.

"Was the reception worse than you expected?" she asked.

"Yes, much worse. She's gone. Got some one else to take her to the dance."

"She's a fool," Mary said unthinkingly. "How could she have gone to the dance? Maybe something had happened to you. How could she enjoy herself not knowing where you were?"

His lips were tight as he stepped into the car.

"Well, I'll drive you home," Mary said.

For a long time he sat thinking. Then he turned his head and studied the girl beside him. There was no doubt that she was amazingly pretty, and her stopping to pick him up proved that she had courage and spunk. But it was ridiculous to think that she would fall in with the plan that had suddenly flashed into

his mind. However, there was nothing to be lost by asking.

"My name is Clive Houston," he said. "What's yours?"

She hesitated a fraction of a second. "Loretta Melvin," she answered, giving him her stage name.

"May I ask where you're bound for?"

"New York."

"Must you get there to-night?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Well, it may sound foolish. You'll probably say no, but I'll take a chance and ask you. I noticed that you've got your suitcase in the rumble seat. I guess you've got an evening gown there. Would you care to stop off in Judson and go to the dance with me?"

Mary took her eyes off the road for a second. "Say that again," she said.

"I asked if you'd care to stop off in Judson and go to the dance with me. We've got a fine hotel there where you could stay."

"I see. You want to get even with your girl by taking me."

"Well, it isn't the nicest kind of invitation. I didn't have much hope that you'd accept it. But if you're in no hurry to get to New York, I think you'd have a nice time at the dance."

"Wait a minute, big boy. Let me think."

"Try to think yes," he said.

He suddenly became very enthusiastic over the idea. It would be a fine way of repaying Blanche Cogert in her own coin. This girl was far prettier than Blanche. It would make Blanche jealous, and she would regret what she had done.

Mary didn't like the idea of being used as a substitute, but her heart rushed like mad at the prospect of going to a dance with Clive. And at the country club, too!

As a little girl she had always looked longingly at that impressive building where the nicest people in town congregated, and she had always hoped that some day she would walk into that place with her hand tucked in Clive's arm. Here was a chance to make that dream come true, even though it was a left-handed invitation.

"The idea appeals to me," she said. "I think I will stop off in Judson.

"You can wire your folks," he said.

"I don't have to. No one's expecting me. I'm all alone."

He directed her to the hotel and she engaged a room.

"Wait for me in the lobby," she said. "I won't be long—just ten or fifteen minutes."

When she came down, his eyes brightened. Those who were sitting in the lobby reading, dropped their newspapers to stare at her. She recognized some of the men, but not one of them recognized her. They would have laughed if any one had told them that this gorgeous, dark-haired, dark-eyed girl was the unattractive Mary Russell who had left town five years before.

"I wish you'd drive," Mary said, when they reached the roadster parked in front of the hotel.

"Thanks," he said.

The fun was at its height when they reached the country club. Their entrance into the ballroom was perfect. It was during an intermission, and all the young people were standing around in groups. Mary took Clive's arm and walked in proudly and confidently.

A number of young men excused themselves from their groups and headed straight for Clive. The girls who were thereby left alone looked at Mary with unfriendly eyes. In-

stinctively they knew that she was going to be the hit of the dance that night.

Mary had never had such a wonderful time in all her life. When she danced, the men kept cutting in on her, and when she wasn't dancing they surrounded her. She knew a great many of the young men, but not one of them seemed to know who she really was.

Clive, intent upon revenge, introduced her to Blanche Cogert, a pretty blue-eyed blonde.

"Loretta is a very dear friend of mine," he said. "Fortunately she happened to be stopping off in town, and I coaxed her to come here with me when I learned that your patience in waiting had been exhausted. She seems to be very popular."

"Well," Blanche said, "such popularity must be deserved."

"Meaning what?" Mary asked.

"Oh, nothing."

"Come, dear," Clive said, as he took Mary's arm. "Let me get you a glass of punch."

Not very far from the table where the punch was served, Mary saw Tommie Baxter. She felt her heart jump when his golden-brown eyes looked straight into hers with a searching intentness. Tommie was not in evening dress, but he looked very handsome, she thought, in his loose-fitting tweed suit. His thick crop of brown hair looked as if he had just run his fingers through it.

The others could be deceived, but the eyes of love are all-knowing. Even though he could not explain her presence here with Clive, even though time had wrought a wonderful change in her, deep down in his heart he knew that the girl who was masquerading as Loretta Melvin was the little Mary Russell he had always been in love with.



He waited his opportunity, and as she strolled toward the dressing room, he stopped her.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Melvin," he said. "I'm Tommie Baxter from the *Judson Post*. I was sent down here to write up this dance, and since you seem to be the queen, I'd like to get a little information about you." He looked around to make sure he wouldn't be over-



Mary had never had such a wonderful time in all her life. When she danced, the men kept cutting in on her, and when she wasn't dancing they surrounded her.

heard. "Don't you think Mary's a wonderful name?" he asked.

Two crimson spots stained her cheeks. She stepped closer to him. "Please, Tommie," she whispered, "don't give me away."

"Where are you stopping?"

She told him.

"I'll drop in to see you to-morrow," he said.

Noticing Clive coming toward them, he added quickly in a voice that could be overheard: "Thank you, Miss Melvin. If you're inter-

ested, you can read an account of the dance in to-morrow's *Post*."

"You didn't tell him how you happened to be here, did you?" Clive asked when Tommie had left.

"Of course not," she answered. "That's our secret."

"I'm glad you didn't talk," he said. "I don't like that fellow. He's just a reporter who sticks his nose in every one's business. He's not the type of person I'd want you to meet—no family, no background."

Clive was just as much a snob as ever, and Mary felt a bit sorry. She had hoped that the years had made him more tolerant and democratic. However, he was so handsome and so aristocratic-looking that she couldn't find it in her heart to be angry with him. He represented the world she aspired to, and consequently she overlooked his remark. Still, she felt ashamed of herself for not defending Tommie. He was an old friend of hers who had always been loyal. She was fond of him, too, but at the moment ambition ruled her head and her heart.

When the dance broke up, Clive drove Mary to the hotel in the roadster. She got her key from the desk clerk and turned around to face Clive. Was this to be the end?—she wondered.

But Clive was looking at her with caressing eyes. "Let's sit down here for a few moments," he suggested.

In a far corner of the lobby they sat down on the red velure sofa.

"Could I induce you to stay in Judson for a few days?" Clive asked.

"To make that girl more jealous?" Mary asked.

"No. Blanche doesn't really mean anything to me. We're just good friends. She has a very high opinion of herself, and I thought your coming to the dance would take her

down a peg or two. You did put her in the shade."

"She probably hates me now," Mary said.

"But I don't," he declared frankly. "I think you're awfully sweet. Perhaps if you stayed here for a few days you might learn to like me a little."

"Perhaps I do already," Mary ventured.

He took hold of her hand and squeezed it affectionately. "Do you really? I had so little chance to be with you at the dance. The boys were always cutting in on us. But if you stayed, we'd be able to go out alone. There are lots of places we could go to. We could have some wonderful times together."

"But you don't know who I am," Mary protested. "We met under strange circumstances."

"Which makes it all the more interesting," he assured her. "You don't know who I am either. It'll be fun learning about each other. I hate to have you go. You're different from the rest. You're everything that's sweet and charming and full of life."

Mary's heart thrilled to his words. "I'll have to stay now," she said, "and I hope you won't be disillusioned."

"No fear of that," he said, as his eyes burned into hers. "I only hope you won't be disappointed in me."

With a fervent handclasp he said good night, promising to call her up the next day. His admiring eyes followed her into the elevator until the closing of the door shut her from his sight.

He went home in a happy frame of mind. The evening had turned out to be a very thrilling one. He had never had such a pretty and popular partner before. All the men had envied him.

The fact that she had gone with him and the fact that she had consented to remain in Judson for a few days proved to him that she liked him, that she found him very attractive. And it raised his already large share of conceit.

Judging by the expensive roadster she drove and the pretty clothes she wore, he assumed that she was a wealthy girl—an heiress, probably, who was touring the country. Her manners, her poise, and her charm led him to believe she was one of his own kind. A warm glow swept over him as he thought of her beautiful face. He would be proud to go anywhere with her.

Alone in her room, Mary looked into the mirror and hugged herself. She was very happy. Fate had arranged her return to Judson in a manner which was even better than a triumphant return as a great star.

"He likes me," she kept repeating to herself. "He's in love with me."

At ten o'clock the next morning her phone rang. Clive made an appointment to take her to lunch. A little later the phone rang again. It was Tommie Baxter, and he wanted to know if he could come to the hotel to see her. Mary hesitated. She wanted to see Tommie, and at the same time she was afraid to see him. Why she was afraid, she did not know.

"I'm coming right over," Tommie decided for her.

There was an easy grace about Tommie, nothing pompous, nothing stiff, just natural and human. He had an infectious grin that Mary could not resist.

When she came into the lobby, he bowed low in Oriental fashion, and led her to a more secluded alcove. "My respects to the queen of the ball," he said. "Now tell me the reason for Loretta Melvin."

She found it hard to relate the adventure to Tommie. There was something in his eyes that went right through her. When she was a thin, unattractive girl, he had been in love with her. And now that she was a radiant creature, his eyes just danced with love for her. Not for a single second did they leave her face. They rested there and feasted themselves.

But when she came to the part relating the conversation in the lobby before Clive had left her last night, sadness crept into Tommie's eyes.

"I guess you've never gotten over the crush you had on him, have you?" Tommie asked.

"No. I've always thought of him."

"And the big house on the hill," Tommie added, "with the big iron gate, where they had a butler in silk breeches, where all the plutocrats came to play cards and eat and dance. Is that what you want, Mary?"

"Yes." Her eyes tried to peer into the future.

He turned his head aside. There was no use telling her now that he still loved her, that he had never forgotten her. He had nothing to offer her besides his dreams and his sixty-dollar-a-week salary. He ran a radio column in the *Judson Post* and did reporting, too. Some day he hoped to get on a big city paper and make a name for himself, but he had no idea when that some day would be.

"He doesn't know who you really are, does he?" Tommie asked.

"No. I wonder if I'm doing right by not telling him. It doesn't seem honest. Do you think I ought to tell him now, Tommie, or should I wait until he falls in love with me?"

Tommie knew Clive very well. On

numerous occasions, he had observed his snobbishness, his clannishness, and his mean respect for wealth and position. He knew very well that if Mary told him she was the little girl who had lived on the wrong side of the town, he would wipe his hands of her immediately. Then she might come back to Tommie.

But because he loved her and because he could not give her the things which he believed would make her happy, Tommie could not advise her wrongly. He could not win her by misleading her. If her heart was set on money and position, she would never be happy with him.

"Don't tell him," Tommie advised. "In fact I think you should never tell him. Trump up some story. Give yourself a good background. Make yourself every bit as fine as you think he is. No one in town has recognized you, and you can always depend upon my silence."

"But if he loves me, he'll forgive me," she said with her great faith in the miracle of love.

"I suppose he will," Tommie said, "but I'd advise you to wait a long time before you tell him."

Clive came to take her to lunch. He chose the best restaurant in town, and very proudly he introduced her to the friends they met there. His eyes caressed her as he sat opposite her at the table for two.

"Do you play golf?" he asked.

"No," she answered. "I don't know one club from the other."

"Good. Then I'll teach you how. We'll take a ride out to the club."

The caddies walked ahead and they followed. It seemed wonderful to Mary to be out in the afternoon walking on the greens under the sunshine. It was so much nicer than sitting in a stuffy dressing room

waiting for her cue. This was the life she longed for, the life of ease and pleasure.

Clive was very patient with her. He enjoyed teaching her the game. It gave him occasion to put his arms around her and put his hands over hers when he instructed her how to hold the clubs.

He brought her back to the hotel in time to change for dinner. In his car they rode to a neighboring town, dined, and went to the theater.

When they returned, he sat in the lobby of the hotel with her.

"Did you have a nice time?" he asked.

"Wonderful!"

"Shall we play golf again to-morrow?"

"I'd love to, but wouldn't that be taking you from your work?"

"I always have my work," he said, "but I may not always have you."

"I wonder if you mean what you say."

"I do!" He clasped her hands fervently. "I think you're adorable. I've never known a girl like you. You're irresistible; that's what you are. And I'm falling in love with you."

"On two days' acquaintance?"

"What difference does time make? The two days might just as well have been two years. You're sweet; you're lovely. You're everything a girl should be."

Mary rose from the sofa.

"I think I'd better go up to my room," she said. "The desk clerk is straining his eyes trying to read your lips."

He went to the elevator with her.

"Good night, dear," he said. "I've told you what I thought, but you haven't said a single word about me, yet."

"I think you're very nice," she

said, giving him a smile that warmed his heart.

Up in her room, Mary's heart sang as she slipped into her silk pajamas. The world seemed bright and rosy. Clive was falling in love with her. Of course she could have told him

that she was falling in love with him, too, but instinct told her that she must not declare herself too soon. She would wait a few days. It must not seem to Clive that she had been easy to win.

After they played golf the next



"I think you're adorable. I've never known a girl like you. You're irresistible; that's what you are. And I'm falling in love with you."

day, he brought her back to the hotel to change for dinner. Mary went up to her room, and Clive turned to leave the hotel.

A sleek, well-fed man in the middle thirties rose from an armchair in the lobby and stepped in front of Clive.

"Hello, Mr. Houston," he greeted him.

"Oh, hello, Mr. Wallace. When did you get into town?"

"This morning."

Mr. Wallace was a traveling salesman who sold wire to the electrical concern owned by Clive's father. He was of the jolly sort that affected bright neckties and large diamond rings.

"I see you're more fascinating than I am," Mr. Wallace said, as he closed one eye significantly.

"What do you mean?" Clive asked.

"Well, I just noticed the girl you said good-by to."

"She's a friend of mine," Clive said coolly.

"Yes? Where is she playing?"

"Playing?"

"Yes, what theater?"

"I think you're mistaken, Mr. Wallace."

"No, I'm not. Isn't her name Loretta Melvin?"

"Yes."

"Well, I've seen her in vaudeville a dozen times. When I traveled through New England, she seemed to be in every show I went to."

Clive's brows narrowed. "Are you sure?"

"Positive. I ran across her in a hotel one day and I tried to make a date with her, but she froze me cold. I guess you're the type she likes."

Clive was silent for a moment. The fact that Mr. Wallace had just come to town and not only recog-

nized Loretta but also knew her name convinced him that the man was telling the truth. Her wonderful dancing at the country club also added conviction to the statement that she was on the stage.

"Do me a favor, Mr. Wallace," Clive said, "and don't mention that to any one else."

"All right," the man agreed. "I'm deaf, dumb, blind, and speechless."

Clive walked home slowly. The fact that he had been courting a vaudeville performer was a great blow to his pride. The snobbishness and the clannishness gained mastery over his feelings. They blinded him to the sweetness, the loveliness, and the charm of Mary. They blinded him to all the fine points of her character. They blinded him to the respect and admiration she had won from all his friends.

She suddenly became a common person in his eyes, a presumptuous person who had dared work herself into his good graces, be entertained by him and be introduced to his friends.

Even though he remembered now that she had told him very little about herself, always changing the subject when he asked about her people and her background, and even though he remembered now that she had not lied to him by pretending some wonderful origin, still his snobbish heart could not forgive her.

That she conducted herself better than the girls in his crowd he refused to admit to himself. And that she might have a genuine feeling for him, he also refused to admit. She was of the stage and he was of the social elect of Judson. He was furious because he had fallen in love with her. He resolved to wipe her out of his heart quickly.

At seven o'clock he called for her. He had promised to take her to dinner, and he intended to keep his promise, but not in the way she had expected.

The disarming smile on his face deceived her. She could not guess what was going on in the back of his head. She was light-hearted and gay as she took her place in the car beside him.

They rode far out until they reached a road house. Mary followed him inside, and the head waiter ushered them to a table. As Mary looked around at the occupants of the different tables, and as she looked at the manner in which the couples were dancing on the floor, a feeling of distaste swept over her.

"Couldn't we go to some other place, Clive?" she asked.

"Why?" he asked, pretending surprise. "This is a nice place. They have a jolly crowd here."

Not caring to insist on leaving, Mary remained silent. The waiter came over to take their order.

"Will you have something to drink?" Clive asked.

"No, thank you. I never drink," Mary answered.

He smiled. She was still playing the part, he thought.

A little later he rose from the chair. "Let's dance," he said.

Mary didn't want to go out on that floor, but when Clive took her arm, she went along meekly. The moment he took her in his arms she sensed a change in him. He had never held her that way before. He had always been polite and respectful. She tried to overlook it, feeling that the surroundings were causing him to act that way. And in a gentle manner, she showed him that she didn't approve of his dancing.

When the music stopped they returned to their table.

"I'm very tired," Mary said. "I'd rather not dance any more, Clive."

"Whatever you say," he answered with a pleasing smile.

Mary couldn't get out of that place quick enough. She was glad when the waiter brought the check.

"Shall we go to another place?" Clive asked.

"No, let's go home."

The fresh air was a welcome relief after that stifling place. The trees and the green grass looked ever so much cleaner and finer. Clive took the wheel and started to drive.

After a few miles he put his arm around her shoulder. If it hadn't been for what had happened in the road house, Mary would have welcomed it. She wanted Clive to like her, but now she found his touch unbearable. There was no tenderness in the gesture. It was rough and possessive.

"Please," she said, as she shrank from him, "you'll make us crash into a telegraph pole."

He removed his arm and grasped the wheel. For a long time he was silent. Then, about a mile from Judson, he drew the car to a stop at the side of the road.

"Well, here we are," he said.

Mary looked at him with frightened eyes. "You've not been yourself to-night," she said. "What's the matter?"

Without a word of warning he seized her in his arms, pressed his lips to hers in a kiss that made Mary's blood run cold. Everything that was fine in her revolted. With all her strength she pushed him from her.

"What in the world has gotten into you?" she demanded angrily. "I feel like slapping your face."

"You're putting on fine airs for a

vaudeville performer, aren't you?" he said bitterly. "A traveling salesman recognized you in the lobby."

"Oh! So that's why you've been behaving this way all evening!"

"Oh, no. I was just trying to act like one of your usual companions."

No longer could she control her pent-up emotions. Deliberately she struck him a stinging blow across the face. Then she flung open the door of the car and jumped out.

He touched his hand to his cheek and scowled. Then he started the car and drove off, little worrying what would become of her.

When he reached town he was again in control of himself. He decided to go into the moving-picture theater near the hotel.

As he parked his car and stepped out, Tommie Baxter was standing on the sidewalk.

Tommie was very much surprised to see Clive without Mary. He knew that they had gone out together. He had watched them, as he had the night before. Clive's coming back alone at that hour didn't seem right to Tommie.

He walked up to Clive and stopped him. "Where's Miss Melvin?" he asked.

"She's walking home," Clive said, thinking it a capital joke.

"Walking home?" Tommie repeated.

"Yes, about a mile up the road. Say, I'll tell you a funny one. Do you know who she is? She's a vaudeville performer. And can you imagine her getting insulted because I kissed her? Why, that's what——"

But Clive never finished that sentence. Tommie's fist shot out, and Clive was sent sprawling to the ground. It happened so swiftly and suddenly that people just stared in a amazement. Tommie didn't wait for Clive to get up, although he wished he could give him a real thrashing. He was worried about Mary walking alone on the road.

Tommie didn't walk. He ran up the road that led into town.

With tears in her eyes Mary trudged along. All her dreams and hopes were shattered. The adventure which she thought would end so happily had turned into a hideous nightmare.

She wondered now how she could have ever thought herself in love with Clive. And the whole thing became very clear to her. She hadn't



Softly her arms stole around his neck, and Mary sighed as a strange and beautiful peace swept over her.

wanted Clive; she had wanted the life of ease and luxury he represented.

Clive was a class-conscious cad. Those who did not belong in his class were nothing in his estimation. She realized that even if she had won him, she would never have been happy with him.

Deep down in her heart something cried out to be freed, something she had tried to stifle, something she had fought against, because of her ambition to marry wealth.

It was her love for Tommie, the boy who had always loved her; the boy who had sent her beautiful poetry when she was a thin, unattractive girl; the boy in whose eyes she had seen the light of love when he spoke to her in the hotel; the boy who had advised her how to win Clive when he wanted her himself.

And that boy she had thrown over for the worthless Clive, the man who thought that because she was on the stage she deserved no respect. She was sorry now, but it was too late. Suddenly she heard a voice calling: "Mary! Mary!"

Her heart leaped. It was Tommie. "Here I am!" she cried out in the darkness.

He ran to her, but he didn't have the courage to take her in his arms. In an excited voice he told her about meeting Clive and coming out to find her.

He took her arm gently and tenderly as they walked along. Finally he plucked up courage to speak of what was uppermost in his heart.

"Mary," he said, "something wonderful happened to me to-day. You know that radio column I write with a little poetry at the head. Well, I've got an offer from a paper in Boston to write the column for them. They're giving me a hundred dollars a week. It isn't very much money, but I think two people could live on it.

"I've always loved you, Mary. The stage is a hard game. Why don't you marry me?"

It seemed to Mary as if her heart were crying. "I can't, Tommie. You'll always feel that I took you because I couldn't have Clive."

"No, I won't. I don't think you ever loved him."

"I didn't. Please believe me, Tommie. I only learned it a little while ago. It was you I always loved. But I had set my heart on marrying money and living in a big house."

He stopped, turned her around, and looked deep into her eyes.

"Then you'll marry me, Mary?" he cried.

"If you'll believe that I love you, Tommie."

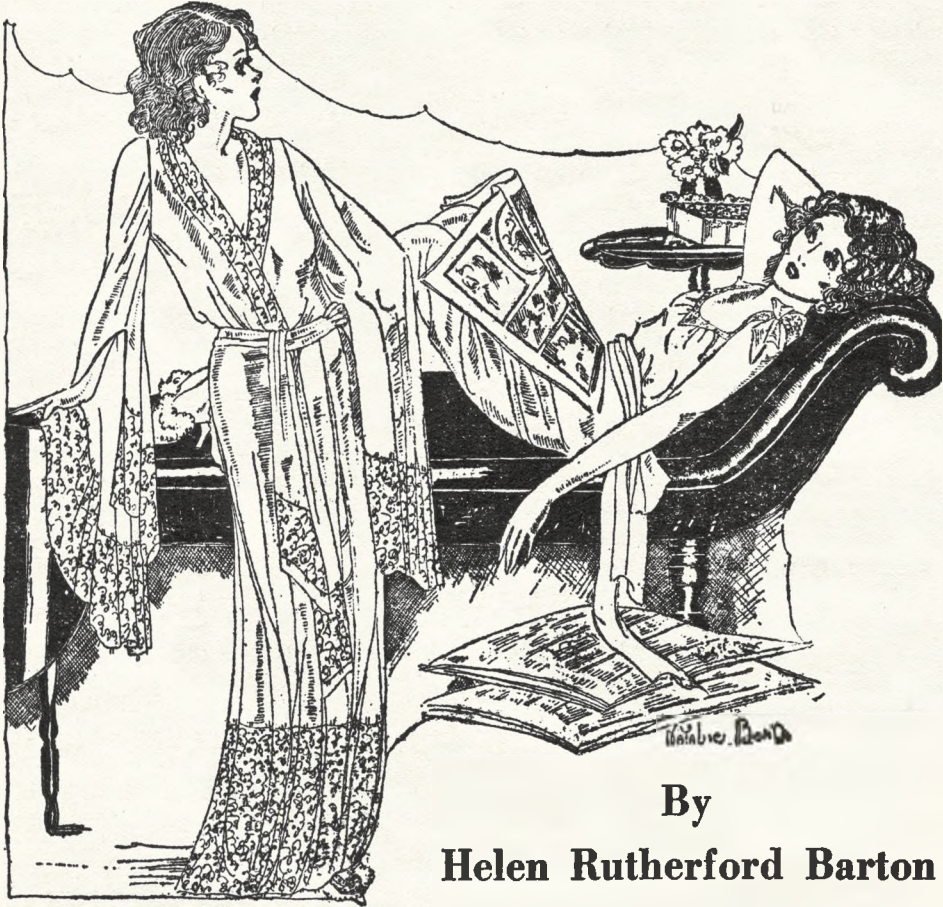
"I do—really I do."

He took her in his arms and kissed her.

Mary felt the thrill of his kiss surge through her, and with it came the full and wonderful knowledge of her love for Tommie. Softly her arms stole around his neck, her lips lifted once more to his, and Mary sighed as a strange and beautiful peace swept over her.



The Bright Thread



By

Helen Rutherford Barton

NATALIE frowned over the order sheets in her hand, and then walked briskly over to the inspection counter, where great bolts of bright woolens were being inspected and stamped.

"Have you stamped that Norwood order yet, Carla?" she asked. When the girl shook her head negatively, Natalie sighed. It wasn't so much fun being head of the shipping department at an age when most girls were thrilling over new men, new dresses, and new parties.

But then Natalie Langdon wasn't working in the Bradford Woolen Mills for the fun of it. She drew sixty-five dollars every Saturday noon for her salary, and fifty-five of that had to go to pay expenses. Natalie had kept her young sister in school, and had paid their bills for food and fuel and clothing ever since the death of her father four years previous.

"I'll have to look it up," she said absently, studying the order sheet as she went down the corridor to-

ward the roaring clatter that was the loom room.

The noise was deafening, and Nat walked quickly past the looms until she came to the three at the far end of the room. Pausing, she looked up from her order sheet, and suddenly was interested in the work occupying the weaver. He was tying a bright thread that seemed to be elusively silken and slippery, and the weaver's knot did not seem to hold.

Smilingly, he turned from contemplating the operation. For the hundredth time, Nat Langdon's heart skipped a beat as the tall, good-looking Englishman stood beaming down at her, his pleasant mouth quirked ever so slightly with a friendly smile. His gray eyes, however, were sober as he said shyly: "Funny that the prettiest thread in this weave should be the most difficult. It won't tie without a struggle, and it breaks if you look at it!"

"I won't!" laughed Nat, and he appeared puzzled; then he caught the joke and laughed quickly:

"If," he said gallantly, "you'd look at it, I'm sure it would behave better. Set it a shining example. You, Miss Langdon, are the bright spot in our daily life, you know."

And for no reason at all, Nat blushed—furiously and riotously—until the color even reached up into her ruddy bright-brown hair. She liked Peter Thorndyke better than any man who worked at the Bradford mills, but he was so painfully shy and reserved, so aloof that she never dared manifest any of her eager admiration. Nat believed that Peter, being English-born and bred, did not understand American girls and their ways.

He was so splendid and fine though. Last fall, when he and his friend, Larry Nixon, who was also

English, had first come to work at the mills, and the gang had all hazed them most unmercifully, they had taken it all in such good fun, and had been such good sports. They had laughed ruefully over the pranks, and were genially good-natured over the jokes played on them, until the crowd decided that it was no fun hazing men who took it all so pleasantly. Somehow it wasn't so amusing to sew up a weaver's coveralls from heels to cuffs when all he did was patiently rip out all the threads, smiling good-humoredly over it as he might at a mischievous child. It wasn't such fun when the gang knew that it cost him thirty minutes of precious time off his daily output—it was a piecework job. And turning on the emergency fire sprinkler on a new worker as he drank a glass of water at the cooler lacked zest, too, when he chased his tormentors the length of the corridor only to squeeze their shoulders gently when he caught them and whisper: "But I couldn't duck kids like you! You'd catch your death of cold!"

Now tall, slim, quiet-eyed Peter Thorndyke gazed down at Nat's confusion. Shifting from one foot to the other, he was about to say something when she recovered her poise.

"And that," she laughed, shaking the order sheet at him, "when I've just brought some grief to you! They're telegraphing for that order, Mr. Thorndyke. Do you suppose we could get it into the mail by night?"

"I'll work until seven on it, if your inspector will do the rest."

"The inspector has a heavy date," Nat said lightly, "but I'll stay and inspect it and ship it myself tonight." She turned to go, just as he stooped to retie the offending bright thread that had broken again.

At seven, Nat finished her shipment except for the last bolt of goods, and walking through the deserted mill, entered the big room where only one loom clacked. Peter looked up from retying the bright thread for the hundredth time, and smiled at Nat. His fair hair clung to his shapely head in damp, faintly curling waves, and his face looked drawn and tired.

"I'll bet," Natalie scolded him, "you haven't had any dinner!"

"You win," he said genially. "I can't eat until I go home and get into different clothes. You understand?"

"Oh, yes," Natalie agreed eagerly, "only I didn't know any one else felt like that here. Most of the girls go out and eat and never worry about anything else."

"My mother," he said quickly, "was like you," and as she glanced up questioningly, he continued: "Oh, she was years older, of course, but she had the same ideas about things." For a moment, as he patiently retied the broken bright thread again, Nat studied his face. It was such a fine face, she thought; so sensitive and keen, so boyish yet reservedly aloof.

Nat stood talking with Peter until the last few feet of cloth was finished. Then when she would have carried it to the inspection table to look for flaws in pattern or weave, Peter smilingly picked up the big load of soft fabric and carried it over to the long counter for her. "Show me how," he said, "and I'll begin on this end for you."

And Nat could not refuse. It was the friendly gesture of one workman to another, and Natalie knew that he'd appreciate it as much if she were to do something for him. As the minutes flew by, Peter and Natalie slipped the bright, shining soft

material through their fingers, pausing occasionally to pencil a blurred place in the pattern with a colored pencil that matched the color of the dye, but talking eagerly all the while. They discovered a mutual dislike for restaurant food, for talkies with too many theme songs, for too much make-up, and for high-brow poetry. Both confessed to a love for flowers, a liking for long tramps, and for wandering in the fog on a rainy night for the sake of adventure.

And when the big bolt of cloth was stamped "Inspected" and was duly incased in its gay Bradford Woolens wrapper and fitted into the place left for it in the big packing case, Peter leaned his elbows on the box. Tracing the bright pattern in the cloth, visible below the wrapper, he said musingly: "Isn't it odd? The nicest things about life are often the hardest—like this pattern. That gold thread made it vivid and colorful, gave it personality, yet it was the hardest pattern I ever did! And the hardest things to acquire in life are usually the finest!"

"Why, Peter!" Natalie exclaimed softly. "You talk like a philosopher!" Then suddenly conscious that she had addressed him by his first name, Natalie blushed furiously. To cover her confusion, she bent to pick up rope and labels for completing the shipment.

"One has to be a philosopher nowadays, Natalie," he said gently, and Nat's heart beat a little faster. He had noticed, and that was his way of telling her that he wanted to be friends! He had called her Natalie.

That night Natalie went home on winged feet, and her heart sang as she performed the task about her home. Janey, her little sister, was busily studying French verbs, and Carla, who roomed with the Lang-

don girls, was getting ready for her big date. Carla was falling deeper and deeper in love with Peter's dark-haired, likable friend, Larry Nixon, and Natalie was as glad for her friend's happiness as Carla herself was.

Somehow Natalie didn't mind doing Carla's share of the housework that evening. Wasn't Peter's grave, sweet smile flashing across her memory with the giddy knowledge that he had broken his reserve enough to call her "Natalie" instead of his former dignified "Miss Langdon?" Many were the barbed shafts that had winged by Peter's wavy blond head because of that very reserve. The camaraderie, the good-fellowship that made two people "Harry" and "Jane," or "Wally" and "Betty" to each other was unknown to the quieter of the two English boys. The girls summed it up by saying that he was stuck-up, high-hat, putting on airs for a working boy. And even though they admitted that he was a good sport, they nevertheless could not penetrate his shy, English reserve; and, one by one, they had stopped trying.

All, that was, but Natalie. And Natalie thought deep down in her secret heart that Peter Thorndyke wasn't a bit stuck-up, but just painfully shy, standing alone amid a mob of noisy, friendly people of whom he knew nothing. Try as he might, she believed he could not overcome this crushing self-consciousness. Finally she had decided that it was his way—perhaps the way of all boys and girls over across the big pond.

Now she polished glasses until they gleamed, dried blue plates and cups and saucers and swiftly put them away in the dish closet, busily tidied up the kitchen, her heart singing the pæan over and over again.

"I'm falling in love—oh, lucky me, I'm falling in love! And I don't mind in the least! I'm glad—deliriously, gloriously glad that I'm falling in love with Peter and that he likes me, too!" Color glowed in Nat's creamy face, as though splashed there lavishly with an artist's brush.

For a week—for ten days—for almost two weeks, Natalie lived in her golden glow of happiness, seeing Peter every day, walking slowly homeward with him through the quiet streets of the little town, talking and laughing, drawn to him as he was drawn to her—more every minute. Then Darrel Sutton came back from his trip to the coast, and discord began.

Darrel ran the town's newspaper, and since the death of Natalie's father had been looking out for the two Langdon girls. Darrel liked Natalie Langdon better than he had ever liked any girl in his life, but because he was fifteen years older than she, he had waited, not telling her his feelings, content to let her grow up and enjoy life as best she could for a time, as all the other youngsters were doing. Love could wait, Darrel thought. He was in no hurry. And if Natalie had her little fling first, then she'd be all the more willing to settle down when he told her of his love and asked her to marry him. That Natalie knew nothing of his love, that she thought of him merely as a kindly, overthoughtful friend to Janey and herself did not trouble him. Like so many men in love, he saw but one side to the case—his own side. And beyond that he could not see. He saw clearly enough, however, when he returned home and discovered that people were talking about the way lovely young Natalie Langdon was going around so much with that

austere, aloof young Englishman staying down at Prouty's.

Darrel snapped out of his fog of illusion and began to look about him. And he discovered that it was true. Natalie was going around with Peter Thorndyke, and what was more important, she was in love with him, too. Anybody could tell at a glance what that misty, starry look in a girl's eyes meant. That very night Darrel went around to Natalie's house to talk to her.

"See here, Nat," he said soberly, "you aren't going to go and fall in love, are you, just when we'd stopped worrying about you and decided that you were past the age of folly?"

"Why is love folly?" demanded Nat quickly, "and why shouldn't I fall in love? Other girls do, and they marry and make homes of their own. Why is it unusual for me to want the same happiness for myself? And besides, Peter Thorndyke is head and shoulders above any other boy in this town!"

"Perhaps," Darrel agreed gravely, "but after all, he comes from another country, Nat, and you know very little about him—only what he's told you!"

"He's told me the truth!" flamed Natalie. "And you're being unfair and mean about him! You're just jealous; that's all!"

"How do you know that he's told the truth, Nat?" asked Darrel quietly. "How do you know that he hasn't made up a beautiful tissue of lies to fool you with? Men have been known to before this."

"Oh, you're just like all the rest," despaired Natalie forlornly, "and I'd counted on you, of all people, to understand."

"I can't understand letting you rush ahead with a romance that might bring you only heartache and

despair, Natalie," Darrel argued. "You know how much you mean to me, and I want to see you happy. I don't honestly think that you could be happy with a man of whom you know so little. His background might be impossible, his people worse. And his family, for all you know, might have a decided insanity taint or something. Would you be willing to marry a man with that sort of cloud hanging over him? Or his leaning might be toward stealing, or marrying more than the legal number of wives with only a change of locale to back him up. Had you thought of this?"

Natalie's eyes blazed at him, and her face was chalk-white as she stared unbelievably at the man she had believed to be friend and counselor.

"You're crazy, Darrel; you're out of your mind! Why, those things could no more be true of Peter than they could be of—of you! Peter is wonderful; he's—he's a saint."

"But, Natalie," Darrel pleaded soberly, "couldn't you fall in love with a boy in your own town—in your own crowd? Is this Peter Thorndyke the only man in the world to love?"

"I—I'm afraid he is for me, Darrel." Natalie's voice was husky. Darrel, realizing the futility of continuing the argument, rose to go. It was no time to voice his own love for the girl; it would be far better to wait until her first ardor would wear thin.

And Natalie would have dismissed Darrel's whole argument as unworthy and forgotten it entirely, if something had not happened to complicate matters. Peter showed Natalie an expensive-looking wrist watch, and explained that his sister had sent it on from England for his birthday the following week. And

he showed her a snapshot of the sister.

Studying the lovely, pictured face, Natalie was at a loss to understand how brother and sister could look so unlike. The girl in the photograph was dark and vivid, colorful and merry. Her hair was riotously curly, her eyes sparkling, her soft sweet lips full and laughing, with dimples in either corner. She seemed to radiate gay friendliness, and Nat was suddenly struck with the strange shy reserve that characterized Peter more than anything else. His eyes were grave, his mouth sober, his hair always brushed and sleek with only the faintest suggestion of a wave to it, and he smiled so rarely that she always remembered it long afterward. His face was lean, with a rugged, stern jaw and chin line, and his nose straight and thin, with full, aristocratic nostrils. The girl's face, on the other hand, was oval with an almost childish roundness to it, and her nose tipped up after the fashion of people with optimistic, merry natures.

"She doesn't look much like you," Natalie said slowly, and Peter smiled his slow, rare smile.

"Oh, no; people always remarked upon it. Sylvia is so beautiful!"

Natalie felt a quick stab of jealousy. Four tiny words to arouse such unhappiness! His tone had been one of deep, reverent worship; whoever this Sylvia was, Peter certainly adored her.

All that afternoon, Natalie wrestled guiltily with that betraying "whoever" of her first jealous thought. Hating herself for disloyalty, her mind kept straying back to the beautiful pictured girl. Was she really Peter's sister, or was Darrel right? Was it true that boys did not leave the happy scenes of their childhood to seek a new life in a

new world without some necessity back of their voluntary exile? Was this girl the answer to the riddle? Had Peter loved her over in England and had to give her up? Worse yet, was she a girl he had loved and not given up? Perhaps Peter had been unfortunate enough to learn to love a girl who was already married! And perhaps she still loved him, even though she was tied to another, and wrote to him, sending him expensive presents—presents bought with another man's money!

By nightfall there were dark circles of weariness and worry under Natalie's bright-brown eyes, and her lovely soft lips drooped with anxiety. If only she knew! If only she could be sure!

The next day was Sunday, and Natalie was so sober and quiet that Peter decided that she wasn't feeling well, and so did not ask her to go to church with him as had been his custom. Natalie, worrying about the girl who had sent him the birthday gift, decided that he had been so wrapped up in thoughts of the other girl in far away England that he had forgotten to ask her, and she sank even deeper in her misery.

Then Carla, busy with the roto-gravure section of the Sunday paper, excitedly pointed out the picture of a laughing, lovely girl. Eagerly she read the caption:

English Society Beauty Wins Cup. Lady McClellon rides her colt, Ventura, home to smashing victory over field of fifty-one entries. Above, Lady McClellon with Ventura, the winning colt.

Carla paused thoughtfully.

"That's Peter Thorndyke's sister Sylvia, or I'm a Chinaman," she exclaimed. "Did he show you that picture he had of her, Nat?"

Natalie studied the picture, and realized slowly that it was the same

laughing, merry-eyed girl of the photograph. She was recalling Darrel Sutton's, "You know very little about him—only what he's told you!" with bitter, aching misery.

"Can you beat that?" Carla rushed on. "A titled society woman's brother, working as a mill hand! Well, I may be dumb, but I'm not that dumb! I'll bet she's no more his sister than I am! I'll bet—" For a moment Carla was silent, thinking deeply. "I'll bet he loved her, and she married that titled guy and jilted Peter! I'm going to ask Larry!"

"Please don't ask Larry anything about Peter, Carla," pleaded Natalie. "It really doesn't matter what he has been, what he was; it's what he is that concerns me. And he's on my own level now, holding down a job that's no better than mine. Let's forget the rest."

But Carla, after the fashion of too loyal friends the world over, was not content to do Natalie's bidding. Believing herself to be working for Natalie's best interest, she inquired of Larry the real status of Peter Thorndyke, little dreaming that Larry saw through her subtle, wily, seemingly innocent questions and promptly passed on the inquiries to his friend. Larry loved Carla, but he was Peter's friend before everything.

They had shared their last few dimes together in a strange land, far from relatives, friends, or help of any sort, and together, they had overcome obstacles, downed homesickness and fear and discouragement. And Larry would always remember, even as Peter did, that this friendship of theirs rose above everything else.

Now Larry looked across their small room on the second floor of Prouty's boarding house, and criti-

cally inspecting a finger nail, said: "Do you think she doesn't trust you, Peter?"

"I—I didn't think so, Larry," answered Peter gravely. "I thought that I'd found a really understanding person at last—I mean, besides yourself of course. You know how things were at home. The governor always wanted me to do things his way, and sis was even more social than he, and after mother went—well, I had to clear out. Of course I expected him to disinherit me; I didn't mind that. I know this trade pretty well from growing up in the mills the governor owns back home. And I'm content with this sort of life. It's real and honest; there's no sham, no gushing insincerities. Everything is solid and dependable. I—I thought Natalie was like that, too. I thought she believed and trusted in me."

"Well, but perhaps she does," protested Larry thoughtfully. "Perhaps this is just some of Carla's sleuthing. Nat's never questioned you, has she?"

"No—except that she said that Syl didn't look much like me. That's all. But then, every one says that." Peter moved restlessly over to the window and stood staring down at the clothes lines in the dreary Prouty back yard.

Larry got up, and turned to the window where Peter stood. "It doesn't matter, old chap, nothing matters so much as that," he said soberly. "Buck up!"

"You don't understand, Larry," Peter said quietly. "This just happens to matter more than anything else in all my life has! I—I love her, Larry; I want to marry her."

"But I say, old man," Larry protested bewilderedly, "you mean you'd marry without any property or anything but your salary here?"



She liked Peter better than any man who worked at the Bradford mills, but he was so painfully shy and reserved that she never dared manifest any of her eager admiration.

"She'd live in a shack with me, Larry, if she really cared," Peter told him quietly, "and I've got to know if she cares enough before I tell her about dad, and take her back to that kind of life!"

Larry whistled a low, appreciative note, and sat down on the arm of the shabby reading chair. Then he

got up and paced slowly up and down the narrow space the room afforded. "I say, old chap," he exclaimed suddenly, "how would this little idea of mine be? Listen to this!"

He talked for a few moments in the very brisk American manner he had acquired from associating with

swift-speaking people for over two years. "Think it would do it?"

"We can try," Peter agreed quietly, "and thanks, Larry. You're a brick."

"Nonsense!" rejoined Larry un-comfortably. "Haven't we stood side by side through everything? Besides, it's like that with Carla and me, so I can understand."

"Congratulations, Larry! I'm sure you'll be happy."

On Monday morning the loom room was a chaos of deafening din. Peter and Larry stood side by side, operating their looms and watching the shuttling threads for breaks, stooping to tie and retie the threads that made the pattern. They growled good-humoredly over the irritating difficulty the bright threads presented.

"This stuff we're using up," Peter said, standing close to Larry that he might make him hear above the clatter, "is like happiness. You chase it down, think you've anchored it, and then as soon as you turn your back, you discover that the bright thread has broken again!"

"It's not the fault of the weave," Larry explained. "It's just that this is a particularly poor shipment of floss."

"Check!" called Peter, stooping to tie another offending thread.

Peter finished his loom, picked up the basket of bright cloth, and dropped it down on the inspection counter. Then he walked over to Natalie's cubby-hole of an office, and stood filling the doorway with his tall, lean height, courteously waiting for Darrel Sutton to finish his conversation with Natalie before making known his presence.

"I'd like to go well enough, Darrel," Nat said soberly, her back turned to Peter, "but I guess I'm going stale. I just don't get any

thrill out of dances and dinners any more. Ask me another time, and I'll try to work up a party mood."

"You don't have to be gay, Nat," Darrel pleaded. "You're wonderful company in any mood. And I know how tired you must be, working all summer with no vacation."

"Not this time, please, Darrel. I just don't feel up to it. Please understand!"

"All right, Nat, and I guess I understand more than you think," Darrel said quickly, a faintly sullen line to his usually firm mouth. "I hope you get over this nonsense pretty quick, and get back to your old sensible self."

"Oh, go away and leave me alone, can't you, Darrel?" she said irritably. "What right have you to pester me so? I don't butt into your business!"

"What right?" Darrel said slowly. "The right that comes from loving you and wanting you for my wife, Nat. I thought you knew that."

"I don't know anything about love," declared Natalie passionately, "and I don't want to!"

"Are you afraid of it, Nat?" asked Darrel curiously, and Natalie's eyes widened as she stared up at him.

"Afraid? I don't know, Darrel. Please won't you go? I'll have to work overtime to make up. And you're wasting your own time as well."

"My time could never be wasted if by spending it, I could keep you from heartbreak and misery, Nat! After all, you have only his word to go by, and there are people who find it mighty easy to juggle truth with words!"

Peter tiptoed quietly away, his heart heavy with the realization that Darrel Sutton was proving a more than efficient rival, and that he could do nothing about it, since he had

heard of it in a manner bordering on eavesdropping.

"She's got to love me for myself alone, though," he told himself stubbornly.

He stepped under the great steel shafting to return to his loom. Suddenly a belt whipped off, and with fiendish accuracy reached out to strike him a sickening blow on the back of his head. He went down without uttering a sound, nor even knowing what had hit him.

Nat didn't know about the accident in the loom room until closing time. When Carla told her the terrifying facts, Natalie's face blanched and her eyes became wide pools of midnight darkness.

"Tell me everything!" she implored.

"That belt on the main shaft," Carla explained quickly, "the one that's been condemned half a dozen times for slipping, came off, and Peter just happened to be near, that's all. He hasn't come to yet, the hospital said when the boss telephoned, and they say it's concussion of the brain. Darrel Sutton is waiting in the office for you; he wants to take you to the hospital. He has to get the story for the morning paper, and he thought you'd like him to take you over."

With a brief: "Thanks, Carla," muttered through stiff, set lips, Natalie got her hat and coat and hurried to meet Darrel. If Peter should die—and with this miserable estrangement hanging between them, too! Her heart almost stopped beating, as she walked ahead of Darrel up the stone steps of the hospital.

"This is Miss Langdon," Darrel told the girl at the information desk. "May we see Mr. Thorndyke?"

"I'll ask Doctor Jermyn," the girl murmured, and a moment later the

house surgeon came out. "Miss Langdon?" he asked gravely, and as Nat nodded, he went on: "We aren't letting any one see Mr. Thorndyke yet; his condition is quite serious, but if—are you, by any chance, the Sylvia of his ravings? It might help quiet him——"

It seemed to Nat that she was falling endless miles through black space. From a great distance she heard:

"Too bad. It was the shock. It's warm in here. I'm sorry I blundered. I thought of course that she was the right one. I understand."

Then some one was giving her a drink of water a moment later. Darrel, supporting her arm and holding his other arm about her shoulders, led her down the steps to his waiting car. He helped her in, got into the driver's seat, and sat looking at her pityingly.

"See here, Nat," he said gently, "this is like an aching tooth—it'll hurt some at first, but it's better to have it over with. Now don't you honestly think it's a little bit absurd to think that a titled member of English nobility should have a brother working as factory hand in a woolen mill? Don't you really think that this chap is just some one who worked for this titled lady and drifted into a romance with her, coming over here to escape complications? You see—if it were you, he wouldn't be calling for Sylvia in his ravings. Men rarely call for their sisters when they're in love."

Each gently spoken word was a hammer driven against the raw, aching spot in her heart until Nat could have screamed at him to stop, to do anything but talk about this sorrow that was crushing her into numb insensibility.

"We have cabled Lady McClenon of Mr. Thorndyke's injury," he

went on, "and if she comes over, you'll find out for yourself all about this matter. I'd far rather you heard it from her than from myself because—it's so easy to misunderstand the offers of real friends."

Nat was crying quietly, and Darrel started the car and drove her home, secure in his belief that it was now only a matter of time before Mr. Peter Thorndyke would be quite out of his picture. Darrel figured things by precedent, and was unwilling to recognize exceptions until they were poked under his nose, labeled and filed. It was beyond his comprehension that a son of a titled house should work as a factory hand; young English lords simply didn't; that was all. They roamed the seven seas, and drifted into adventure, but never did they take up industry in an honest way and make anything of it. So he rested secure in his belief that there was a deep mystery in Peter's life, and that it was about to be exposed and the lie made public.

And since Natalie wanted to be left alone, he went on to his apartment perfectly content to wait until the breaks came his way. He had been playing a waiting game before, until this fellow had butted in and made it necessary for him to change his tactics. Now he could return to the original system, secure in the belief that his rival was shelved temporarily, at least.

The ensuing week was a ghastly nightmare to Natalie, and afterward, she wondered dumbly how she ever lived through it. Her mind was a chaotic turmoil of emotions and thoughts that were constantly contradicting one another, and at night when she no longer had work to absorb her and lull the misery in her brain, it seemed as if she were going quite mad. Yet, through it all, like

the bright thread in the cloth pattern, ran the knowledge that she loved Peter, that no matter what he did or what she learned about him, she would go on loving him. "Am I so shameless," she lashed herself scornfully, "that I can go on loving a man who loves another woman, a man whose unconscious thought, even in delirium, is for her?" And then humbly, beaten, almost broken, and terrified at what she felt in her heart, she prayed: "Dear God, teach me to hate him, help me to stop loving him—only save me from loving him when I know he loves some one else, or I'll go mad!"

But even her prayer failed to help. The sixth day dragged to a close. Natalie heard whispers, listened stony-eyed as Carla told her that Lady McClennon was expected that night. She was flying from New York as soon as her boat docked.

"This," Natalie thought dimly, "will end it all. Now where there's no need even to hope any more. For of course every one will know now that he was just fooling, that he really loves her, and was just amusing himself with me."

But deep in her heart, Natalie didn't believe that entirely; there was still the memory of Peter's rare, warm smile, and the adoration she had seen in his gray eyes as he gazed down at her raptly. She remembered the tender, affectionate things he had said, the plans they had made. They were dreams, all of them, tinsel and glitter and sham, beautiful, touching words, painting pictures that could never be. Soon the dust would cover Peter's words and her dreams when this beautiful titled English girl came to stamp them with her dainty spike-heeled shoes. The past would lap greedily at the present and swallow it, leaving a tidal ebb to suck in the fu-

ture and leave nothing but a few brave memories.

Larry looked at her queerly, yet said nothing, with that strangely aloof reserve of his that was as forbidding as it was reproofing. Carla silently went about her way, and said nothing after Nat's frantic outburst the night when Darrel had brought her back from the hospital.

"Oh, Carla, forget it! Never speak to me again about him!" she had stormed. "I—I hate him!" They did not mention Peter's name again, although they looked their nameless sorrow and reproof, as though she had done something wrong! Carla and Larry looked at her as though it were a crime to love a man who already belonged to another, even though she was innocent of it all. They were pitying her for being fool enough to pin her dreams and ideals to a man who was already involved in a love affair, and not free to win her affection.

"Oh—I hate them," she sobbed brokenly, burying her face in her damp pillow, as though to shut out the mocking tenderness of the wistful moon. "I hate them all! I wish I could hate him, too! I wish I could stop loving him, when I loathe myself for it all!"

Two hours before the plane bringing Lady McClennon to Bayport was due to arrive, Peter Thorndyke opened his eyes for the first time since his accident. Almost the first words he spoke after: "How long have I been here?" to the nurse were: "Has anybody been here?"

"Mr. Nixon comes three times a day, Mr. Thorndyke," the nurse said, and her heart rose at the stabbed look in his gray eyes.

"Nobody else?" he asked swiftly.

She shook her head. "Nobody but your boss and the people who work with you."

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His face lighted up briefly at that. "Who?" he asked, and the nurse began to guess the impulse back of his inquiries.

"We've kept a list," she explained.

"Please get it!"

"Later," she said smilingly. "You must rest now, Mr. Thorndyke."

"I can't rest until you read me that list," he told her gravely.

She went and got it and read through the names, once more feeling a heart-wrenching stab of pity at the quiet sadness that settled over his face. "Some girl," she decided quickly, little guessing that it should have been: "The girl—the only girl!" instead.

"Thank you," he said quietly, when she had finished.

"Was there some one," she asked diffidently, "who should be on the list, Mr. Thorndyke?"

He shook his head slowly. "No, thank you, Miss Burns. It was my mistake," and he closed his eyes deliberately, as though to end the interrogation. Sighing, she went out to her desk in the hall.

It was Darrel Sutton who thought to advertise the arrival of nobility's descent upon Bayport with headlines. Not until the paper had been out and selling all day did Larry chance to pick up the sheet bearing the headlines:

TITLED MEMBER OF ENGLISH NOBILITY
VISITS BAYPORT

LADY MC CLENNON FLIES FROM NEW
YORK TO BE WITH INJURED
FRIEND.

Not once in all the columns devoted to Lady McClennon did Larry find reference to the fact that Sylvia was Peter's sister. He whistled thoughtfully and sat in deep thought

for a while. "Queer," he muttered. "I wonder what it all means?"

But Larry did nothing more than stuff the paper into his pocket as he started for the hospital to see Peter. "I wish," he thought gloomily, "that Langdon girl hadn't been huffy with Pete. It's going to be tough telling him that she hasn't been sitting there beside him waiting for him to come back! Poor old Pete!"

But Larry did nothing more than think about it; his was the understanding heart that could not brook interference. He could not bring himself to touch in Peter's private affairs without first receiving his orders to do so.

Then the big plane landed at the Bayport airport. Darrel, on hand at the hospital to get the story of the visiting celebrities, was mildly astonished to see not one but two strangers coming up the stone steps with expressions of tense anxiety on their faces. "Thorndyke's brother, most likely," he decided, as he went forward to request an interview. He was soon disillusioned.

"My wife," the man said firmly when they were in the hall, "is too upset to be interviewed now. If you'll excuse us!" He turned to grasp his wife's arm, and with his back squarely turned to Darrel, questioned Doctor Jermyn:

"My brother-in-law? I trust we may see him at once?"

The three moved down the corridor, unaware that Darrel was staring after them with an expression of dumfounded amazement on his usually urbane face. "Can you tie that?" he muttered.

"Yes, can you?" the girl at the information desk said tartly. "A man brings his wife all the way across an ocean to see her injured brother, and then the press stands around and worries because they don't fall on his

neck and weep! You news hounds give me a pain!"

"This," said Darrel lightly, "is a fine place for pains!" He went quickly out of the hospital, a plan formulating in his mind whereby he might keep Nat from learning the truth until he could think up another line of attack.

But Natalie was already beyond his influence, for she had come to the end of her endurance that bleak seventh day. She had asked for and gotten her long-promised vacation, had packed her suitcase and left to visit an aunt in another State, leaving Janey to visit with a beloved school friend during her absence.

Darrel stood for a long undecided moment on the deserted porch of the Langdon house. When no answer came to his ring, he decided that the girls must be out for the evening. He went back to his car, and sat for a long time formulating his next plan of action. It was necessary to see Nat at once, and before she learned about Lady McClennon's actually being Peter's sister. Once she knew, he would be defeated. And since he didn't have the faintest idea where Nat or Janey could be, Darrel decided to wait until they came home. In the meantime, he would think out his plans.

And so while Sylvia was gravely talking away the years of separation with her brother, and Darrel waited outside the Langdon house for the appearance of Nat, Carla and Larry had one of their long talks.

"Darrel Sutton loves Nat," Carla told Larry simply, "and he's not so young, either. It's hard for a man his age to give up anything he's set his mind to, Larry. And—I think he's told Nat something to poison her against Peter. At least, I know she's eating her heart out over him. Yet she won't go near him!"

"Do you think Sylvia had anything to do with it?"

"I'm sure of it," Carla declared emphatically, "because it all dates back to that time Peter showed her the watch Sylvia sent him for his birthday. And that splurge in today's paper clinched it. Nat read it all through and then just decided to go away. Of course she's had time off coming to her for months, but I'm sure she wouldn't have asked for it now, unless something made her want to get away from town a while to think things out alone. I'm sure she thinks Sylvia is Peter's sweetheart!"

"But—but, great Scott, Carla," Larry burst out, "her husband is with her! Louis wouldn't dream of letting Sylvia travel two miles alone! He thinks her a helpless baby! Why——" Larry's eyes narrowed as he recalled the article in the paper which made no mention of Sylvia's relationship to Peter. Suddenly it all added up. "I see," he said softly. His mind was working like chain lightning, though his tongue was silent as he thought.

"Know where she went?" he asked quietly after a while.

Carla nodded quickly. "To Fairfield to visit her aunt. Why?"

"We're going to Fairfield," Larry announced.

Carla was silent. She knew that whatever Larry did would be right, for he never jumped to conclusions nor interfered without a well-thought-out plan backing his movements.

"Natalie," Larry said four hours later, "do you think Sylvia McClenon is Peter's sister?"

Nat's face went even whiter as she looked steadily into Larry's dark, questioning eyes.

"I don't know," she said simply, "and—I don't care."

"Right about the first, but dead wrong about the second. Sylvia's husband is with her, Nat, and she's Peter's own sister all right, for I knew them well when I was little. Peter just ran away from society and too much money; that's all. And," he finished simply, "I think it's high time you called to see how he's getting on! He need never know about this misunderstanding if you hurry!"

For a long moment Nat stared up at Larry, and then gave a stifled gasp. "I'll be right back!" She flew to collect her things.

She reappeared in a few moments, ready to return to Bayport and Peter.

"You can't see him until morning," the nurse said firmly, but Larry took her aside and whispered briefly. The nurse was about to consult the head nurse about this unheard-of request when Peter's door opened and Sylvia came out.

"Larry!" she said warmly. "How have you been? It's so good to see you again!" As Larry wrung her hand, she went on: "And this must be Natalie—nobody else could quite fill the description so perfectly. My little sister-to-be!" She put a firm arm about Nat's shoulders.

Suddenly Natalie's eyes misted over and she felt foolishly like crying.

"You must go in and see him—he's worrying himself ill wondering where you've been," Lady McClenon said.

Nat was pushed gently through the door. Her eyes fastened hungrily on the dearly beloved face lying against the white pillows. He looked so ill and white and frail—her Peter!

"Oh, my dear," she whispered brokenly, falling on her knees beside his bed, "forgive me—I've been so

blind! So foolish and stupid and blind!"

"There, Nat, old girl—you mustn't get all worked up. Why, what's all the shooting about anyhow? Wouldn't they let you in before?"

But Natalie couldn't tell him then; it must all wait until he was stronger. They sat with hands tightly locked and looked at each other happily, everything else forgotten in the joy of being reunited.

"Do you know," Peter said soberly, "this has seemed like a long time? It's hard to realize that the ages I seemed to live through while I was—er—out, you know, were really just six days! Has it seemed long to you, dear?"

Nat's heart overflowed at that simple, natural little "dear."

"Years," she said fervently. "Oh, let's not think of it, Peter! It's enough that we—we——"

"That the bright thread kept our happiness in the pattern," he said softly, "even though it did require frequent knotting!"

"Something like that, Peter," she said, leaning over to lay her face against his cheek. She thrilled as his arms went about her. "Darling old sweet! Love you like everything, sweetheart!"

And of course the nurse would have to come in just as he was kiss-

ing her. But then nurses are used to love scenes, or at least they should be. Larry, looking in over the nurse's shoulder, grinned happily, and took Carla's arm and propelled her gently toward the door. "No place for us," he said, laughing. "we'll wait out in the car for Natalie!"

When they were waiting in the parked car, Larry went on thoughtfully. "It's a funny thing, Carla, but you know that cloth we made a few weeks ago with the pretty pattern and the bright thread that kept breaking? Ever stop to think that life is like a pattern, and that happiness—love—is the thread that breaks easiest, even while it's the most beautiful part of the whole thing?"

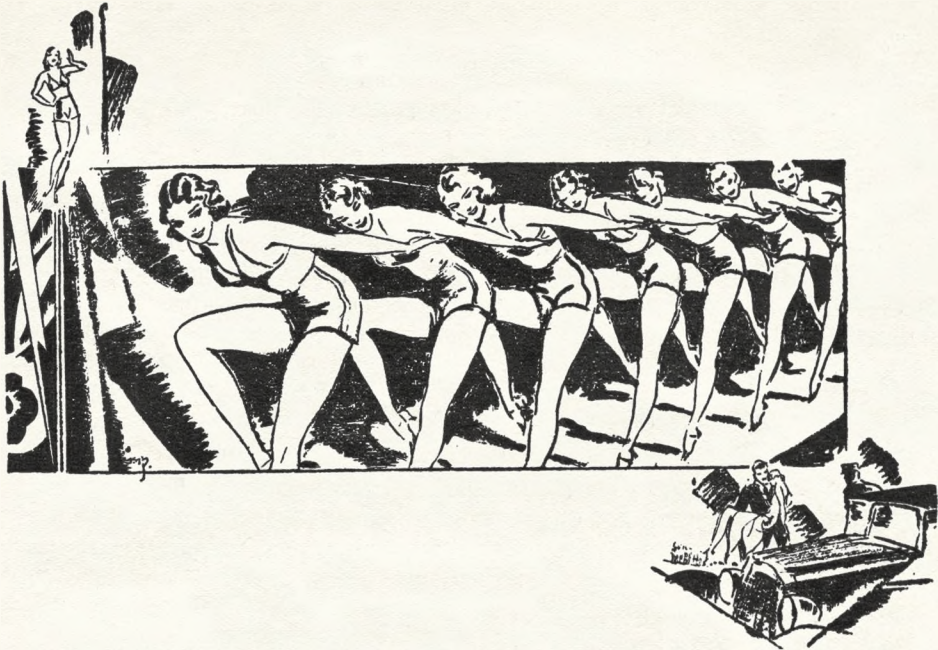
"Philosopher!" Carla said softly, rubbing her cheek against his shoulder.

"Sweetheart!" Larry squeezed her hand and wished that hospitals needn't be located in the heart of a busy section.

"Glad it all came out all right?" Carla asked.

He kissed her fleetingly as Nat came through the hospital door, with a starry-eyed look of dreamy abstraction on her happy face. "Nothing," he said softly, "could be more wonderful, unless it was—our own happiness, dear!"





Gerry of the Chorus

By Gertrude Schalk

THE fifteen-minute call had just sounded when Gerry, breathless from running up Broadway, dashed into the dingy back entrance of the theater and fairly flew up the iron steps that led to her dressing room. There was the usual hum of conversation in the long, brightly lighted room that served a round dozen members of the chorus of "Naughty Marie."

Gerry was half undressed by the time she got inside the door, and in another two minutes she was wrapping a towel over her long black hair and smearing cold cream on the ivory pallor of her face. "Goldie," her neighbor, turned from the mirror to look at her quizzically.

"Well, kid, once more by the skin of your pearly teeth you made it," she commented dryly. "Waiting for that man of yours, I suppose."

Gerry's warm red lips drooped momentarily.

"Yes," she said quietly. The shadowy look of worry that had become almost habitual during the past two weeks, dimmed her gray eyes. "I can't imagine what's happened to Donny. He's never stayed away from—from me so long."

Goldie watched her in the mirror, her heavily mascaraed lashes shading compassionate blue eyes.

"Kid," she said suddenly, putting her hand comfortingly on Gerry's rounded knee, "I wish you wouldn't worry so about that guy. He's not worth it."

Gerry stiffened. "Please, Goldie," she said quietly, biting her lip to still its sudden quiver.

"Oh, I know," Goldie went on spiritedly. "He's young, he's impulsive, he's dear, he's this and that!

I know all that, but just the same, that Donald Barker isn't good enough for you. Just because he found you when you were lonesome in this big town and treated you well—anyway, I don't believe you really love him!"

Gerry dexterously wiped away the cream, trying not to hear Goldie's insistent voice. Goldie's words raised too many puzzling questions in her mind.

"He doesn't even keep a job long enough to get a full week's pay," Goldie protested impatiently. "And you keep hanging on, like a dumb-bell!"

"He needs me," Gerry defended herself, blinking hard to keep back a runaway tear. "After all, he hasn't any one to turn to and neither have I. We're just two strays."

"Boloney," Goldie interrupted rudely. "You'd better herd alone than be guardian to a guy like him. Honest, I wouldn't kid you, Gerry, but that Donny is due for a fall one of these days, and I hate to think of your being in on it."

Gerry tried to harden her mind against Goldie's persistent voice, but somehow the words and their import trickled through. For two weeks now she had shyed away from thinking too much of Donny. Once it had come out into the open in her mind: was Donny worth all the worry he caused her? But she had quickly shut that question away. For after all, she had no one else to love and Donny was alone, too.

Gerry braced herself to defend him.

"I'm afraid you're prejudiced, Goldie," she said stiffly. "Donny just hasn't found himself yet."

"Oh, yeah?" Goldie sniffed. "Guess you're right there. Only he'll never find himself if he hangs out with Domingo and his gang.

You know little Stevie, the boy attorney, has his eye on Domingo, and it won't be long before the whole gang will be taking a long, long ride. And Donny will be in the first load; Domingo will see to that."

Gerry grew cold all over. That wasn't the first time Goldie had hinted that Donny had been seen hanging out with Domingo's bunch. That thought pierced Gerry's heart as nothing else could have done. Every one on Broadway knew that Domingo and his gang were scheduled for a ride up the river some day, just as soon as Stephen Andrews, the new district attorney, got evidence on them. So far, Domingo had managed to cover up the traces of his various crimes, but one of these days he'd slip and then it would be the end for him.

Most of the lesser lights in the rum-running gangs about town had been nabbed by Stephen Andrews, and with them out of the way, the whole broad White Way knew he had turned his attention to Domingo, one of the acknowledged kings of the trade. Gerry knew that as well as any one else on the street. And she knew, too, that if Goldie was right, if she really had seen Donny talking to members of the gang, he was in greater danger than he knew.

Gerry put on make-up with trembling fingers, her mind tormented with doubt and fear. Donny was impulsive and weak. He'd make an excellent tool for a clever man like Domingo. He was just the type to be left holding the bag when the cops walked in.

For the hundredth time Gerry wondered where he was and why he hadn't been to see her. Usually if he couldn't call for her at her boarding house, he'd meet her after the show and take her home. But for

two weeks now, Gerry had seen nothing of him. Suppose Goldie was right? Suppose Donny was mixed up with Domingo? Gerry shuddered away from the thought, and hurried into her costume for the first act.

Later, running down the steps to the dim stage, she searched the shadowy depths back stage with hopeful eyes. Sometimes Donny slipped in and waited for a word with her before the show. But to-night there was no thin, eager boy waiting in the wings.

Gerry went through the first act mechanically, barely seeing the blurred expanse of faces in the audience. Toward the close of the act, however, a man entered the left-hand box, and immediately Gerry became aware of him.

That, in itself, was odd, for Gerry seldom noticed the box holders. Even though the first box was almost on the stage itself, she had never bothered to look closely at its occupants. But to-night it was different.

She had become aware of him first because his eyes had followed her about so. Without looking at him, she had known he was watching her alone out of the half a hundred pretty girls on the broad stage. And somehow the thought made her feel warm inside.

Then, when the routine led her close to the left-hand box, Gerry looked up and met his eyes. She experienced a distinct sense of shock. He had a thin, interesting face, tanned, making a perfect frame of white teeth and brilliant black eyes. The man leaned forward, frankly smiling at her. It wasn't a rude smile nor a flirtatious one. It was just a friendly, admiring sort of grin that said plainly: "I like you."

And against her will, Gerry smiled back. She hadn't meant to, but somehow it just happened. For one second out of the swift minutes, they gazed deep into each other's eyes and smiled.

Then the curtain dropped slowly, and Gerry was left to join the usual scramble of girls going back to the dressing rooms, her heart thumping queerly. It was odd, she thought, how a strange man's smile could do things to a girl's heart.

Slowly she entered her dressing room, sat before her section of the long make-up table, and stared dreamily into the mirror. Unconsciously she touched her flushed cheeks with cool hands, pressed pink finger tips against warm lips. Never before in all her nineteen years had she felt so strange inside. She hadn't felt so strange even when Donny had told her he cared.

The pleasant warmth left Gerry as suddenly as it had come. Donny! She had forgotten him completely!

The sparkle left her eyes, and her lips drooped just the least bit.

"What's the matter now, kid?" Goldie had been watching her shrewdly, not missing a single change of expression. "At first I thought the crown prince had come back, but now——"

Gerry started guiltily and bent her head over the table.

"Oh, dear!" Goldie put on more make-up. "I was hoping strongly that you'd seen somebody else you kind of liked."

Gerry didn't answer. She couldn't trust her voice. For, strangely enough, remembering the slim, eager-eyed man in the left-hand box made her want to cry. It was as if she had lost something nice that had been almost in her grasp. That was a queer feeling to have for a stranger, but there it was.

She hurried into her second-act costume and left the dressing room. She didn't want to talk to any one just then. As she came down the stairs, she saw Pete, the doorman, coming up.

"Message for me, Pete?" she asked hopefully, hardly knowing what she hoped for.

Pete looked up quickly. "Yeah, somebody wants to see you in the office," he said.

"Who?" Her heart beating irregularly, Gerry hurried down the remaining stairs.

"A man." Pete cocked his head on one side quizzically. "And I think it's that high-hat district attorney. Leastways he looks like the pictures I've seen of him."

Gerry's heart sank. She didn't know whom she had been hoping for, but somehow she was disappointed. Not for worlds would she have admitted that she had hoped it would be the man in the left-hand box!

"All right, Pete," she said quietly.

On her way to the office down the dim hall, Gerry wondered what Stephen Andrews wanted with her. At the thought of Donny, something rose frighteningly in her throat. And in the midst of that thought there came a puzzled feeling. What sort of person was she to worry one minute about Donny, her acknowledged sweetheart, and the next to feel disappointment because a strange man hadn't come back stage to meet her?

Gerry shook her head angrily, trying to fling off the bewildering emotions. She couldn't understand herself at all.

And then she reached the office and stood in the open doorway, looking at the tall, slender man who lounged easily on the side of the battered desk. Unconsciously her hand

went swiftly to her heart; her eyes widened until they looked enormous in her oval, delicate face.

It was the man from the left-hand box!

"This is Miss Hope?" He came forward quickly, a charming smile touching his lips. "I am Stephen Andrews."

For a moment everything whirled in Gerry's head. The interesting stranger and Stephen Andrews, the district attorney, were one and the same person. The breath caught in her throat, and a tiny pulse beat in her left temple, delicately stirring her silken hair.

"I'm sorry to trouble you," he went on almost shyly, giving her time to recover, "but I really had to."

"Yes?" Gerry managed the one word through suddenly dry lips. She felt strangely electric, as if a spark might set her a-tingle.

"Won't you sit down?" He pulled out a chair and then stood back from her, staring. She was beautiful there in the dingy office, clad in a rosy flowing gown that contrasted with her dark coloring and made her vividly alive.

The man seemed to forget what he wanted to say, and just looked at her as if he could never see enough. Then when Gerry abruptly lifted her gray eyes, he flushed like a boy.

"I—I'm sorry if I've been rude," he stammered a bit. "Only, you see, you are beautiful and—this is my first visit with one of the charming members of the famous Frolics."

Despite herself, Gerry smiled. She couldn't help it. Just seeing him, drew her lips apart and lighted tiny lamps in her eyes.

For the first time she really looked at him, saw the clever face that was so very different from the

published pictures of him, the unruly dark hair, the brilliant eyes that probed and searched and then kindled gently and were tender.

"I haven't much time," she said in confusion, hardly aware of her words.

"Of course," he said quickly. "It was stupid of me to waste so much

time. But really, for a moment I was speechless." Again he smiled that charming smile that did such queer things to Gerry's heart. And then he was suddenly serious. "It's rather a delicate subject," he went on apologetically, "but I think you'll understand. It concerns a young man named Donald Barker, whom I



"Now listen, Barker. I don't want to have any trouble with you; understand? I'm doing you a good turn by warning you that I know everything."

understand is a very good friend of yours."

Gerry knew then that Donny was in trouble, or if not in trouble, on the way to being there. She held her breath, waiting for Stephen Andrews to go on.

"He is a friend of yours, isn't he?" Stephen asked, and somehow his voice was wistful.

Gerry nodded. "Yes." It was hard to speak clearly. "What has he—done?"

"Nothing, yet," the district attorney said quickly. "Don't be alarmed. I just wanted to talk to you to see if, through you, we couldn't get the boy to keep away from a certain gang. As you know, I'm trying hard to clean up this town." For a moment his brilliant eyes were hard. "There are many undesirable citizens who need a thorough washing, and I'm trying to give it to them. The thing I wish to avoid, however, is the taking in of innocent persons."

He took a quick step across the floor, and then strode back again.

Gerry watched him in fascinated silence. He was so vital and magnetic.

"Now about this Barker boy." He stopped in front of her. "I've had him looked up. He's just one of a number of weak—pardon me—impulsive youths who've been dragged into the net with real criminals. During the past week we've managed to get most of these boys out of trouble. But we can't get around this Donald Barker. He"—Stephen Andrews looked sharply at Gerry—"he seems to have a mind of his own in certain quarters, despite his apparent weakness."

Gerry felt the hot blood stain her cheeks. She knew she should be angry with this man for denouncing Donny to her face. Yet how could

she, when he spoke the truth? Finally, even to herself, Gerry had to admit that the excuse of weakness covered only certain points about Donny, his own will being one which remained uncovered. Whatever he wanted to do, he did, and that was all there was to it.

She felt impelled to speak.

"I don't think Donny's naturally vicious," she defended him. "If he's done anything wrong, he was led into it."

"I know." The man averted his head, and that wistful look grew in his eyes. He was thinking how wonderful it must be to have a girl like Gerry Hope standing back of you, defending you against every one because she loved you.

"I know Donny's inclined to rush into things before he looks at them closely," Gerry went on softly. "But I'm sure if he knew the—the gang you speak of, was wrong, he wouldn't bother with them."

The man looked at her steadily, and Gerry's gaze faltered.

"I'm sure of that," he said quietly. "But as an added precaution, will you tell him for me—"

"Tell me yourself," a cool voice interrupted from the door.

Gerry whirled to her feet to face Donny. A very debonair Donny leaned carelessly in the doorway, his hands deep in his coat pockets.

"Donny! Where have you been?" she whispered.

But he ignored her. His entire attention was directed on the district attorney, who had straightened up coolly and was half smiling at the newcomer.

"What was that message you wanted me to have?" Donny asked again. "Why not deliver it in person?"

"I shall be delighted to." Stephen Andrews bowed.

They seemed to have forgotten Gerry entirely. She stood back watching the two men, both young, but so different. One was tall, composed, a power in the community; the other pallid from too much indoor living, but good-looking in a rather insolent fashion.

Gerry shivered. Somehow Donny had changed since she had seen him last, changed from an impulsive, lovable boy into a shifty-eyed stranger. Or perhaps it was herself who had changed! Maybe it wasn't Donny at all.

The district attorney was measuring Donny shrewdly, his eyes narrowed. And Donny wasn't enjoying the sharp scrutiny, for he flushed dully and frowned.

"Well?" he demanded truculently.

"Just this, Barker." Stephen Andrews spoke clearly, coldly. "For your own sake, keep away from Domingo. Understand?"

Donny straightened in the doorway, his eyes gleaming.

"Who says so?" he half sneered.

"I say so!" Steadily the other man gazed at him.

For moments their glances locked, and suddenly Gerry sensed a conflict of wills. There was a tenseness in the air all out of proportion to the affair. It was as if something were brewing.

Donny dug his hands deeper in his pockets, wet his lips swiftly. Then his eyes faltered away from Andrews.

"What've you got to do with me?" he mumbled rudely. "Just because you have a measly little position downtown you can't come ordering folks around."

"Now listen, Barker." Andrews came closer, and with the very force of his personality made Donny meet his gaze. "I don't want to have any trouble with you; understand? I'm

doing you a good turn by warning you that I know everything!" He stressed the last words meaningly.

And Gerry, to whom it was all a bewildering mass of words, saw Donny suddenly cringe and whiten.

"You know?" he whispered huskily.

"I knew almost as soon as you got your orders," went on the other man grimly. "Now I'd advise you to get out quickly. Get me?"

Donny nodded mutely, and without a word to Gerry, turned and slunk out of the door. But as he turned, his eyes flickered a message to her which she did not understand.

And then, from down the dim hall, came the far-away sound of the overture to the second act. She'd have to get back to the stage.

With Donny's going, the tension lifted. Stephen Andrews turned to her with a smile and held out his hand.

"I'm sorry to have disturbed you"—he held her hand tightly—"but I had no idea of meeting Barker face to face. He's been rather elusive lately."

"I know; I haven't seen him." Gerry caught her words, but it was too late.

"I know that, too." The man looked down at her almost tenderly. "Tell me—I realize I have no right to ask, but—do you care awfully about him?"

It was as if time itself stopped. The muted sound of music sifted through to them. All about them was the subdued stamp of moving feet; the sickly glare of unshaded electric bulbs shone over their heads. And yet, for a moment the little ugly office was enchanted. It was covered with a misty veil of beauty that obscured its harshness. Gerry felt its magic pressing on her

heart, opening her eyes wide to its glory.

It was like nothing she had ever felt before, this strange, quivering emotion that flooded her when this man's eyes probed deeply into hers. His hands held hers in a warm clasp, yet otherwise he didn't touch her. But his eyes!

They caressed her, loved her, kissed her.

Gerry's lips parted. Just for a brief second she swayed near, and then, rudely breaking the moment into shining bits, came the nasal voice of Pete, the doorman.

"Curtain, Miss Hope."

Gerry gasped and swayed. And then abruptly she was safely away from the man, half running out of the door without turning her head. She knew he came to the doorway to watch her flight. She could feel his eyes against the back of her head. But she dared not turn. If she had, what might have happened?

Breathing hard, she took her place in the ensemble on the stage beside Goldie. With trembling hands she straightened her costume, fixed her hair. Goldie looked at her sideways, a puzzled frown between her eyes.

"Girl," she said at last, "you sure are one puzzle to me. I can't understand you at all. One minute you're down in the mouth, the next up in the clouds. And then for in between——"

"Curtain!" rasped the stage manager, and with the rising tide of music, Goldie was forced to stop talking.

Gerry was glad, for to save her life she couldn't have talked then. She was still too upset even to think clearly. All she knew was that something exciting had happened to her, something gay and glad and wonderful. Yet mixed with that

was the thought of Donny, a new Donny who was a stranger to her.

Mechanically, she went through her part, avoiding glances at the left-hand box, trying to keep her eyes straight ahead. But somehow they would stray, no matter how hard she tried.

There he was, bending forward as he had before, his eyes fixed on her steadily, a tiny, tender smile that said things wreathing his lips. It made the rose color sweep in waves over Gerry's face and neck, and even down over her creamy shoulders. Once during the first song, she had to stroll quite close to his box, and it was just like walking into his arms.

Almost defiantly, she raised her eyes to his. She'd show him she wasn't a bit upset over him! But at the first glance, a delicious weakness swept over her, making her knees tremble. It must have shown in her face, for Stephen Andrews almost walked out of his box onto the stage. He bent over the railing so far that every one noticed it and laughed.

Gerry turned hurriedly to go back to her first position, near the back of the stage. Now the lights were softening to a romantic dimness that left many small, dark corners in the wings. The leading man was singing softly.

It was while she was moving back to take her position with the group, that Gerry noticed the moving shadow in one of the blind spots in the wings. It was where two pieces of scenery came together, and any one in the angle of them could not be seen either from the wings or from the audience. And in that angle Gerry saw a man.

At first she thought it was one of the stage hands who had gotten caught there when the curtain went

up and didn't dare slip out. But when she got nearer, Gerry saw that the man was Donny.

Donny! What was he doing there on the stage? Gerry had thought he had left the theater after the scene in the office. But there he was, crouching between the scenery, his hat pulled over his eyes.

A queer chill chased the happy warmth from her veins. A feeling of dread fear eased into her heart. It was as if something tragic hovered over the stage.

Standing a few feet from his place of concealment, Gerry half turned, trying to catch his eye. But Donny had no glances for her or any one else on the stage. His gaze was set above Gerry's head, was fixed on a man in the left-hand box, whose brilliant dark eyes were eagerly watching a girl in a rosy gown.

When it became apparent that Donny was actually watching Stephen Andrews, Gerry turned stiffly back to the audience, her frightened eyes seeking his. There was something strange here, something she couldn't understand. But she knew, with a vivid inward knowledge, that she must warn the district attorney. Of what she must warn him, she didn't know, but she must warn him.

Through the soft dimness, her eyes sought his with their message. Would he see it and be able to understand?

Into her wide gray eyes, Gerry poured all the fear that lurked in her troubled heart. With trembling lips she shaped soundless words that warned of unknown danger.

And somehow Stephen understood. He drew back wonderingly. At first all he knew was that something had happened to change Gerry Hope from a tremulous, smil-

ing girl into a pallid, wide-eyed woman. In the few steps that she had taken away from him across the stage, something had happened. But what?

With narrowed gaze, Stephen sought some disturbance in the audience or in the wings. Everything appeared peaceful. He leaned back and called softly through the velvet curtain at the rear of the box.

"Mason!" A man poked his head quickly through the slit.

"Yes, sir?"

"Did the others pick up Barker's trail yet?"

"Don't know, sir. They haven't reported," the man mumbled.

The district attorney frowned. Had Barker left the theater after all, or was he even then back stage? Stephen Andrews's eyes narrowed grimly and his lips tightened. The young fool!

Back on the stage, Gerry had drawn nearer to Donny. She knew Goldie was muttering out of the corner of her mouth, asking her if she had gone crazy. Gerry knew that Mac, the stage manager, was glaring and raving in the wings because she was breaking the grouping by getting out of place. But she didn't care. There was something desperately wrong, and she meant to find out what it was.

She had seen Stephen draw back and glance quickly over the audience and the stage. She had seen him turn his head to talk to some one she couldn't see.

Then Gerry moved. As unobtrusively as if it were a part of the routine, she slipped into the angle of the scenes with Donny.

"Donny, what are you doing here?" she whispered, coming close to him in the dimness.

Donny seemed to awake from a trance. His gaze dropped from dis-

tance and sought her face, while a black frown grew deeper between his eyes.

"You little fool!" he ground out from between clenched teeth. "What did you come in here for?"

Gerry gasped. "Why, Donny, you—you're not yourself!"

"Shut up, you dumb-bell!" He gripped her wrist. "Listen, get back on the stage just as fast as you left it. Get me? And stay there!"

He pushed her roughly, drawing his right hand from his pocket to aid him. And it was then Gerry saw why he had kept his hand hidden. Donny had a gun in that right hand. It was a queer long-nosed gun. The thought flashed into her mind suddenly—it was a gun equipped with a silencer!

He pushed her again, but from some hidden resource Gerry gained strength to resist. Following that first thought had come a flood of others. She knew now why Donny had come to the theater, why he had stayed back stage. He was there to put Stephen Andrews on the spot!

The young dis-

trict attorney had been marked ever since he had taken office and started cleaning out dives and putting the gangsters where they belonged. Her Donny was the one who had been ordered to do the job!



Dropping the gun, he seized Gerry by the shoulders and started to shake her roughly. "I could kill you, you fool!" Gerry sagged limply in his hands, half fainting with fright.

And suddenly, new purpose, backed with a blinding ray of light, filled Gerry. She knew then that if anything happened to Stephen Andrews, life would hold no more meaning for her.

Donny meant nothing to her now. He was just a petty criminal who was on the verge of becoming a murderer, some one to be apprehended, some one to be turned over to the police if possible.

He was still trying to push her onto the stage, but Gerry was resisting madly. The scenery about them quivered slightly. It wouldn't take much to send that particular piece crashing about their heads. That would bring disaster to the show and maybe to the audience. For if they ever saw a man struggling with a girl back there, some one would be sure to scream and start a panic.

"You won't go, will you?" Donny was almost beside himself with anger. With sudden access of strength he held Gerry off. "All right!"

Taking careful aim, he peered at the motionless figure of the district attorney in the left-hand box. Gerry was almost paralyzed with terror.

"I'll get him!" Donny muttered, and pulled the trigger.

Just at that moment Gerry dragged down his arm, not much, but enough to upset his balance so that the bullet went wild and buried itself in the side of the box just above Stephen Andrews's head.

"You fool—you fool!" Donny almost sobbed, when he realized that he hadn't hit Stephen. Dropping the gun, he seized Gerry by the shoulders and started to shake her roughly. "I could kill you, you fool!"

Gerry sagged limply in his hands, half fainting with fright. And then miraculously the curtain fell on the

first scene, and Mac, the stage manager, came rushing across the stage, his face tense with fury.

"You dumb-bell!" he rasped, reaching forward to pick Gerry out of the angle of scenery. And then he stopped, blinking in surprise. For Donny had stepped out, a strangely composed Donny with a strained white face.

"Who are you?" Mac demanded angrily. "What are you doing here on the stage? Who gave you the right——"

"I can explain everything," Donny said quickly, without a glance at Gerry who had fallen against the scenery, weak and tremulous.

"You've got to do some tall explaining," growled Mac suspiciously. A stage hand or two sauntered up, and several of the girls crowded about wonderingly.

For a minute Donny looked at them, narrow-eyed, and then suddenly he smiled.

"I'm a newspaperman," he said coolly, "and I had a tip-off to-night that some one in this theater was going to get the district attorney." Mac's mouth dropped open. "I happened to know this girl!"—Donny nodded at Gerry—"so I used her as an excuse to get in."

"Well?" Mac thrust his head forward. Gerry was stirring a little, coming out of the spell of faintness. With a hurried glance at her, Donny went on:

"Well, when I got here and started looking around, this is what I found." Swiftly he bent over and picked up the gun, and as he picked it up he moved forward a few steps until he was free of the scenery. "I saw this girl trying to shoot the D. A. who sat in the left-hand box!"

There was a stunned silence. Mac opened and closed his mouth like a

fish out of water. And all the while Donny was slowly inching back toward the wings.

"Oh, come now," Mac said finally. "You don't expect us to believe that yarn. Gerry Hope has been with us too long. We know her."

He moved toward Gerry curiously. Every one stared at the girl. Then Donny moved.

With a triumphant cry, he fled to the wings, and turned there to face the bewildered group. In his hand, threatening them, was the gun.

"Now, you dumb-bells, just you move an inch!" he snarled, retreating toward the outer corridor. "Just one little peep out of you, and you get a slug in a place that'll do the most good."

No one moved. No one dared to raise a finger, for there was grim purpose in Donny's face, tinged with a sort of madness. In utter silence they stood like puppets, watching him make his escape.

And then, when it seemed he was safely on his way to freedom, a dim shadow that emerged from the outer corridor began to creep up to meet the retreating man. Mac drew in his breath sharply. One of the girls closed her eyes.

In a moment it was all over. With one swift movement, the creeping shadow had circled the would-be murderer with steellike arms, lifting Donny's gun hand first. In a second, Donny was reduced to a groveling heap on the floor. Stephen Andrews quietly picked up the fallen gun and handed it to a breathless detective who had rushed in.

"Take him away," he said coolly, and the detective hustled the white-faced Donny from the corridor.

Mac had recovered some of his usual aplomb. With a roar, he dis-

missed the loitering girls, and yelled for the next scene.

"Where is Miss Hope?" Stephen came up to him hurriedly. "She must be here somewhere; she isn't in the dressing room."

Then Mac remembered. "Forgot all about her," he admitted, running back on the stage. "She fell out back of some scenery."

But Stephen was there before him when they reached the little dim angle of scenery. With tender arms, he lifted Gerry and bore her out into the night. Mac protested, of course, but what could he do when a determined man like Stephen Andrews wanted to do a thing?

"But it'll upset my whole show," he wailed, running after Stephen.

"Might as well be now as later," Stephen said softly, looking down at Gerry's white face. "If I have my way, she won't be with you long, anyway."

The stage door slammed shut in Mac's face. Stephen carried Gerry to where his car waited. He lifted her into the cozy back seat, and then gave terse instructions to the chauffeur.

To Gerry, everything that followed Donny's attempt to kill Stephen Andrews up until the moment when she opened her eyes in the dim luxuriousness of a speeding car, was a hazy, vague memory of terror and fear. Dimly aware of strong arms lifting her, she had relaxed against Stephen's broad shoulders. Then suddenly there was the cool sweep of the night air on her cheeks, and the delicious feeling of gentle hands touching her hair.

For long moments she lay there, dreamily enjoying the peace and comfort of the moment. And then suddenly, she opened her eyes.

Stephen was holding her against him, his cheek resting on her hair.



"Darling!" Stephen kissed her again. "I've loved you since the world began. Time means nothing to love like ours."

Gerry couldn't see his face, but she knew it was Stephen. In all the world there could be no other man who thrilled her so, whose arms and hands could hold her so tenderly, so lovingly.

Slowly she lifted her face until she could look into his eyes.

"You—you're feeling better?" Suddenly embarrassed, Stephen

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drew slightly away. He had been thinking that Gerry was still unconscious.

Gerry smiled dreamily, resting her head on his shoulder.

"So much better," she murmured softly.

But, somehow, fear had taken possession of Stephen. What if Gerry still cared for Barker?—he

thought despairingly. What if she hated him for having Donny arrested? No one ever knew what a woman would do or think where a man she cared for was concerned. So Stephen drew back into his corner of the car, and folded his arms tightly in front of him and stared straight ahead.

"Perhaps I ought to tell you that your friend, Barker, has been—taken in," he said quietly. "I hated to do it, but after all, he did attempt to take a life."

Gerry shrank into her corner, wondering suddenly what had made Stephen move away from her.

"I can't understand why Donny should ever do such a thing," she said, with the feeling of tears rising in her throat. She felt that she should say something about her former sweetheart. "He was such a nice boy."

Stephen sighed deeply. "Yes, but when they get in with the wrong crowd, they go quickly."

Silence followed, strained, intense. Gerry looked out of the window with unseeing eyes. Stephen cast unhappy glances at her from time to time, wondering what he should say now.

And then, suddenly, the car swerved to avoid hitting another machine, and Gerry was flung violently against Stephen. With a little cry he opened his arms, and then:

"Oh, my dear, I love you so," he whispered in her ear, burying his lips in the sweet mass of her hair. "Do you hate me for what I did to Barker?"

And Gerry, who was beginning to feel deliciously gay again, sighed happily and nestled deeper into his arms.

"I love you, Stephen," she said softly. "I knew that when I real-

ized that Donny had been sent to get you. He had, hadn't he?"

"Yes." Stephen's voice was husky. "Domingo got him under his thumb so that Barker either had to get me or be put on the spot himself. That's the way Domingo and his kind work. But thanks to you, sweetest, he didn't succeed in getting me."

"Oh, I was so afraid you couldn't read the message in my eyes!" Gerry shivered, remembering those few terrified seconds when she had tried so hard to send a warning to Stephen across the footlights. "I didn't dare cry out for fear of starting a panic in the audience."

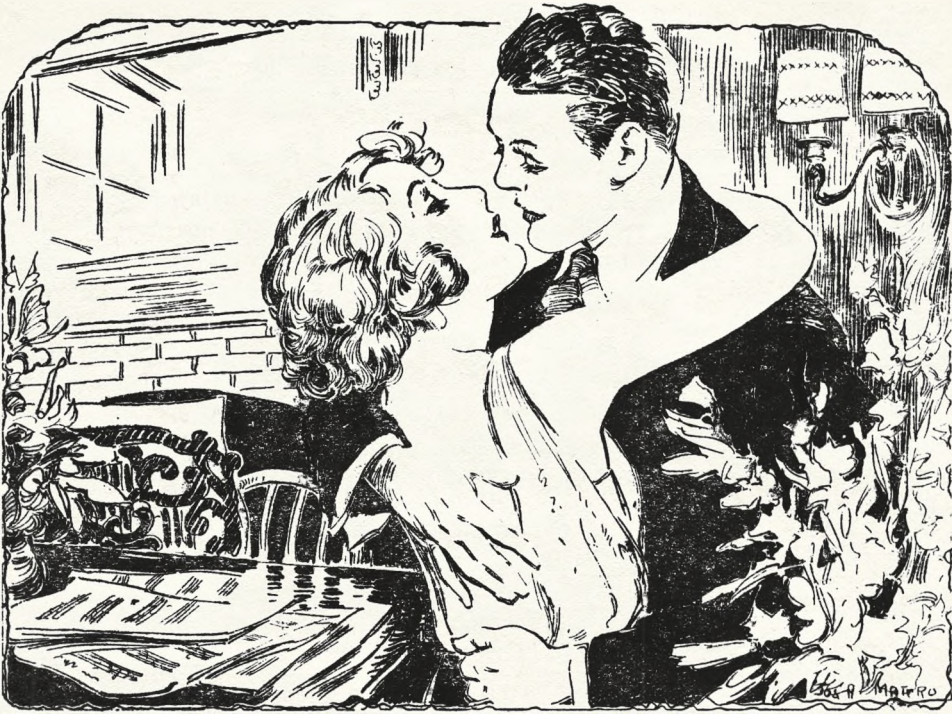
"You darling!" Stephen held her closer. "You see, in my job I'm used to reading faces and even hands. The tiniest twitch of a muscle conveys a message to me. So when I saw your face change, with terror just shining out in your eyes, I knew something had happened. Then when one of my men told me he wasn't sure that Barker's trail had been picked up, I put one and two together and made half a dozen. I didn't know for sure that Barker was behind that scenery, but I wasn't taking any chances, so I hurried back stage after the curtain."

Gerry sighed softly, and then Stephen tilted her face to his, bent reverent lips to hers. In the dimness Gerry's arms slid up about his neck.

"Are you very sure you—love me?" she whispered, moments later. "You've really seen me only once, you know."

"Darling!" Stephen kissed her again. "I've loved you since the world began. Time means nothing to love like ours."

And Gerry, sighing happily, felt the echo of truth in her own heart.



A Man's World

By Genevieve Harris

NEITHER of them knew just how it happened. As they stepped into the hall of her little apartment, Gregory took Beth in his arms and kissed her. It was a sudden, thrilling kiss. To Beth it seemed that the universe stood still for a moment, as if time paused while they clung blindly, two who had found each other after lonely years.

Then Gregory released her and turned away.

"I'm sorry," he said in a queer, muffled voice. "I shouldn't have done that! I forgot that Jack's coming home to-morrow."

As if Jack could matter now!

But Gregory stood looking at her with pain-filled eyes.

"Jack and I have been friends all our lives," he was saying. "We were pals as kids and in college and through the years since. He saved my life once. We've been even closer than brothers. Can't you understand, Beth? And we made a solemn promise that no one, nothing, above all, no girl, should ever come between us."

"Oh!"

Hurt beyond words, Beth was trying to comprehend what had happened. She was hearing that she was just a girl, that girl they had vowed should not separate them. It

was like being lifted into heaven only to be dropped down into the depths. So that was the way Gregory thought of her—not as herself, but as something belonging to Jack, which he had no right to touch.

"But I'm not engaged to Jack," she managed to say.

"Jack loves you," Gregory went on sternly. "He wants to marry you. He told me that. While he's been away this summer, he's been happy knowing that you and I have kept each other from being lonely. He trusted us."

Was he accusing her of disloyalty? Did he think she had invited that kiss? Pride forced a smile to Beth's trembling lips.

"You're being too solemn, Gregory, over a good-night kiss. We haven't been—unfaithful to Jack. Besides, that was good-by."

She almost pushed him into the corridor, closing the door softly behind him.

"I don't want to see either of them again," she told herself bitterly. Then she walked into the little living room, and threw herself face downward on the sofa.

Beth had met Gregory through Jack. She had met Jack a year before, when she had first come to the city from the little town of Fairview, where relatives of Jack lived. They had written him to look her up. Beth had liked Jack at once, and she had appreciated his gay companionship during that lonely year. With his blue eyes, curly blond hair, and his manner, half-teasing, half-deferential, he was a most entertaining playmate. She was aware of the undercurrent of devotion he gave her. He had not asked her to marry him, but that was because she had evaded the direct question, not sure of her own feelings.

Gregory, Jack's best friend, had occasionally joined them at dinner, at the theater, on various little excursions. He was a tall, dark, rather aloof person who seemed to smile with amused affection upon their gayety. It was only after she had known him for several months that she realized how large a place he was winning in her thoughts. Jack was just a pleasant companion, but it was Gregory whose life she wanted to share. It was Gregory to whom her whole heart was turning.

Then when Jack had gone away, up into Canada to make a survey for his construction company, she and Gregory had seen each other frequently, and Beth had known beyond the shadow of a doubt that she loved Gregory. She had sensed, too, in the way women will, that Gregory felt the same way toward her. So things had stood, until to-night.

And now, after Gregory's lips had touched hers for the first time, the bright dream had been shattered.

"I forgot that Jack's coming home to-morrow," he had told her. Jack, in all innocence, had become her enemy.

"It's Jack he's worrying over, Jack he cares about," Beth sobbed, her wet cheek pressed against her arm, crying as a little girl cries. "He loves me, but he doesn't think that love is important or has any right in comparison with his friendship for Jack."

It was thus that Beth's roommate, Rita, found her when she let herself in with her key.

Rita pressed the button, flooding the room with the overhead light.

"Why, honey, what's the matter?"

Beth sat up, wiping her flushed little face with her crumpled ball of a handkerchief. "Nothing!" she said. "Everything!"

Rita Waring, a dark, vivid girl, pretty in a gypsy fashion, had worked in the same office with Beth when they first met. The girls had become friends, and Rita had invited Beth to share the little apartment she had taken. Since then Rita, who possessed a small, independent income, had given up her secretarial position to devote all her time and energy to her dancing. She was keenly ambitious for a stage career and recently had had several engagements, dancing in night clubs and occasionally in the ballet of a motion-picture theater.

She was something of a heart-breaker and knew many men, but she had a cynical attitude toward love, the result perhaps of an unhappy childhood with parents who had since been divorced. Beth did not agree with Rita's heartless views, but she often found the girl's ideas stimulating. To-night especially she felt the need of borrowing some of Rita's cold, clear logic.

"It's a queer world, isn't it?" she said, as Rita, hat and coat tossed carelessly aside, curled up in the big armchair. "It's a man's world. Love's just a kind of game with men, and they mustn't cheat each other!"

"Well, what is love, if not a kind of a game," Rita demanded, as her hand sought the cigarettes in the Chinese box on the little table. Rita had often declared that she would let no man stand in the way of her driving ambition for a career of her own. "And, incidentally, what's turned you into a philosopher at twelve o'clock at night, when good little secretaries should be in bed?" she wanted to know, glancing shrewdly at Beth.

"Just something Gregory said and did," Beth told her. "It was something which showed me that men don't think of women as individuals,

with thoughts and feelings of their own. We're just playthings to them, which they can hand one another."

"Would it help to tell me all about it?" Rita said sympathetically. Rita could be very kind and sweet when she chose.

"You know how much I've been seeing of Gregory while Jack's been away," Beth began. "Perhaps you've guessed that I've grown to care a lot for him. But now it seems that he was just watching over me for Jack's sake," she went on bitterly. "He was looking after his friend's property, to see that there was no poaching."

"Don't tell me Gregory did a little poaching himself!"

"That's exactly the way he feels about it! He kissed me to-night, then was ashamed of his kiss. He acted as if we'd done something disgraceful. It hurts terribly to give your love and have it thrown back to you, as if it were some sort of —trash!" Beth stood up, her eyes blazing with anger.

"Steady, girl, steady!" Rita counseled.

But Beth continued angrily: "I wonder if Gregory would take my part if it were Jack who had found some one else to love. It would be a sweet revenge if Jack should come back from the North Woods to say he had fallen in love with a little Indian girl up there." Beth's face lighted with mischief at the thought. "Then Gregory would turn to me remorsefully. And I'd say: 'I loved you once but that love, which you didn't want then, is quite gone now.'"

Rita, studying the end of her cigarette, was thoughtful.

"You know, Beth, you aren't being quite fair to Gregory. Don't you see that there's something fine in a

friendship like his and Jack's? Gregory isn't blaming you for falling in love with some one else. He only feels that because he's Jack's friend, he shouldn't be the one to separate you. Men stick together like that. Maybe that's why it's a man's world, as you say. Now let's go to bed. You'll feel different in the morning. When you see Jack again, perhaps you'll find that he's still the one, after all."

The next morning before either of the girls were awake, the telephone gave its shrill summons. Rita stumbled drowsily to answer it.

"Oh, hello, Jack," Beth, just awakened, heard her say. "How's the man of the great open spaces? It's good to hear your voice." Was there a new note of friendliness in her tone? Rita had never paid any special attention to Jack.

"Yes, Beth's here," she went on. "Do you want to talk to her?" As if Rita did not know for whom Jack was calling!

"Oh, hello, wanderer!" Beth took the phone. In spite of everything, she was glad to hear Jack's cheerful voice. "Of course you may come up this evening! I'll be ready and waiting. I'd love to have dinner with you, and hear all about the trip. Good-by!"

To Rita she said: "I must be nice to Jack and not let him guess what's happened. I can't have him blame Gregory. Oh, Rita, I don't want to hurt Gregory ever, in any way. That's how much I love him!"

That evening Jack came, bronzed and alert after his summer in the North.

"It's good to see you again," Beth told him. She was really very fond of him, she thought. Then he kissed her, and she realized how little either his return or his kiss meant to her.

"It's great to see you again, honey," he said. "I was thinking, up there among the pines, that the next time I went away—and that may be very soon—I want to take you with me.

"Did you miss me?" he asked, while she was putting on her hat and coat. "Did old Greg do as I told him to and come in to say 'Hello' now and then? He's a queer fish, sort of afraid of girls, but I think he likes you. I dropped in at his office this noon to ask him to lunch with me, but he was too busy. He looked rather fagged out, I thought. I'd hate an office job like his, even if he is getting to be a famous architect. But he's a great chap, a rare, true friend."

Beth's heart grew heavy at the thought of Gregory's looking fagged out. Perhaps he was suffering as much as she. But it was his own fault, she thought, hardening her heart against him.

Her efforts to forget him, to be gay and interested in Jack's affairs, were not very successful. "I'm a little tired, Jack," she said when they had finished dinner. "I'd rather go back to the apartment and just talk than stay out to dance or go to a show. You don't mind, do you?"

"That suits me," he told her. "I want to have you all to myself."

But to their surprise Rita was home, Rita who seldom spent an evening there. Wearing a pair of scarlet lounging pajamas which emphasized her dark beauty, she was curled up on the sofa, apparently absorbed in the latest mystery novel.

"Oh, hello," she said. "I didn't expect you back or I'd have dressed more formally. I'm not dancing this week. Oh, I've gone professional since you last saw me, Jack! But this week I'm resting, as we say in show business."

Rita had a certain coquettish manner with men she wished to attract. Beth recognized it now, and realized that Rita had never before used this manner with either Jack or

Gregory. In fact, Rita had almost ignored Beth's suitors.

To-night, however, Rita made herself one of the party, and Beth soon realized that Jack was direct-



"Oh, hello," she said. "I didn't expect you back or I'd have dressed more formally." Rita had a certain coquettish manner with men she wished to attract.

ing most of his remarks to her. Somehow Beth didn't mind. Her spirits were low as she thought of Gregory and remembered other evenings. But when she recalled the last one, her mind was filled with a bitterness which was like hatred.

Jack did not stay late. After he had gone, both girls were silent for a little while. Then Rita said: "Cheer up, honey. Don't take your love affairs so seriously. No man is worth the trouble." She put her arms affectionately about Beth's shoulders. "I hope I wasn't in the way to-night," she said solicitously.

"You weren't," Beth assured her. "You helped. I didn't feel like talking."

The next time Jack called, he included Rita in his invitation. "I thought we three might see a show together," he said. "I tried to get Gregory to make a fourth, but he's tied up this evening with some conference or other."

The third time Jack came, Beth pleaded a headache.

"You and Rita run along together," she urged them. "I don't want to spoil your evening. I guess I've strained my eyes or something. I seldom have a headache."

But after they'd gone and Beth was alone in the apartment, she felt overwhelmingly lonely. She had a mad impulse to telephone Gregory, just to hear his voice again. But she fought back the temptation. He had sent no word to her after that fateful evening.

Jack and Rita returned early, a little conscience-stricken at having left her alone.

"Guess who joined us at dinner to-night!" Rita exclaimed when they came in. "Nobody less than your friend Gregory! He seemed surprised to see me. Doubtless he thought he'd meet you."

After Jack had gone, Beth questioned Rita eagerly.

"How did he look? What did he say? Oh, Rita, if I'd only been there!"

"He looked solemn as an owl, as he usually does. Oh, Beth, what do you see in him anyway?" It was the eternal mystery of love: "What does she see in him; what does he see in her?" Rita's question went unanswered.

The next day at the office a telephone call sent Beth's heart into her throat as she recognized Gregory's voice.

"Will you have lunch with me?" he asked. "I've something to talk over with you."

"At our old place, Gregory?"

"At the old place, same time."

It was their first meeting since the night Beth had closed the door behind him after he had hurt her so cruelly. But the first little sense of embarrassment she felt as he came forward to meet her gave way almost at once to the old feeling of their right to be together. Somehow they seemed to belong to each other.

Gregory, however, seemed a little constrained. His eyes avoided hers. After their order had been given and the waiter had left them, he turned to her.

"I met Rita with Jack last evening," he said.

"I know. Rita told me."

"I suppose you arranged that. You no longer care about Jack, and you know that Rita won't take him seriously. But he may be dazzled by her."

Beth's eyes filled with angry tears. "Well, what if he is?" she burst out. "Isn't he old enough to take care of himself? Must you always be looking out for him, thinking of him?" Then, as pride went down

before the force of her love for the man before her: "Why can't we be sensible, Gregory? Why can't we tell Jack the truth, that we care for each other? Or don't you care at all, Greg? Didn't it mean a thing to you, that precious time we had together?"

"Of course it did, Beth." His face looked pale and drawn. "That's why all this has hurt so. I want you so much that I'm finding it terribly hard to be fair to Jack. Of course I want him to find another girl, and leave you to me. But it must be some one as honest as you, and not a little coquette who'll only play with him. You know that no man could come between Rita and her career. She told me just last night about this new engagement she has as solo dancer in a new revue. She won't give Jack a thought then. She's just flirting with him, and you put her up to it!"

"Gregory, you're being quite unreasonable! Oh, I've wanted so much to see you, and now you're only making things harder." She pushed aside the food the waiter had put before her.

"I'm not at all hungry," she said, standing up. "I'm going back to the office. No, don't come with me! This is good-by—for always, Gregory! And now you can warn Jack about Rita! I suppose that's part of your code of friendship!"

The long afternoon at the office somehow came to an end. Utterly weary in mind and body, Beth reached the apartment. Rita was not there. She was glad to be alone, yet afraid of the thoughts which tormented her. If only she had not cared so much! If only she, like Rita, had a career to shield her from the wounds of love!

Too tired to think of eating, she went into the little bedroom and lay

down. Perhaps she could fall asleep.

How long she lay there in a sort of numb misery she did not know. At last the telephone aroused her.

Gregory's excited voice reached her.

"I must see you," he said. "I have something to tell you."

"I don't care to hear it." Her own voice sounded tired and flat. "I don't want to see you."

"I'm coming over anyway," he said. She heard the click as he hung up the receiver.

She dressed, excited and curious in spite of herself.

The doorbell rang frantically in an impossibly short time.

"He must have come by airplane," Beth thought. She pushed the button which opened the lower door, then left her own ajar. Then she went back to finish dressing.

"Beth! Beth! Where are you?" It was Rita calling.

Beth rushed to meet her. "Why—what?" Jack was close at her heels.

"We're married," they told her, speaking together.

"Jack has to leave for South America at once. I'm going with him," Rita added. "Help me pack, honey!"

"Rita! Give up your dancing, your new engagement?"

"What's an engagement when you can have a husband?" Rita was laughing, yet almost crying. "I'm so excited," she explained.

"I never guessed you really cared," Beth whispered, as the girls went into the bedroom while Jack waited outside in the living room.

"I was always crazy about Jack, from the first moment I saw him," Rita confessed, opening bureau drawers. "But I couldn't do anything about it while I thought he

belonged to you. I guess women can play at this friendship game, too," she said. Then she added generously: "I probably couldn't have had him, if you hadn't stepped aside."

"I believe you could have won him at any time," Beth said thoughtfully. "But you never tried, because you were my friend. And, Rita, I didn't realize what friendship meant!"

Some one was talking to Jack. Gregory had come into the apartment. He was wringing Jack's hand when Beth came into the living room.

"Congratulations! Best wishes," he was saying.

And then, in a whirlwind, somehow Rita had gathered her most essential belongings and she and Jack were leaving.

"Keep the rest of my things until I send for them," she said. She kissed Beth and held her close for

a moment. "It's a man's world," she whispered, "but sometimes we women have to manage it!"

They were gone, and Beth and Gregory were alone.

"Can you ever forgive me, dear, for being a double-dyed idiot?" he pleaded.

"Oh, Gregory, forgive me, too, for not understanding! You see, I've just learned something about friendship."

Then Beth, who had thought she would never again know the rapture of that first kiss, was finding a deeper happiness in the second.

"And now," she said, "you won't have to worry about Jack."

"No, we'll let Rita do that. What did he see in her, to prefer her to you?"

"She's wondering what I see in you! It's a queer world, Gregory darling."

"It's a perfect world," he said. "It's heaven!"



AT PARTING

I ASK you to give me now the night
We met and the miracle of that white
Shadowy wild plum we stood under
And the sudden flash in your eyes of wonder.

And give me the things we loved together,
Early jonquils and windy weather,
The smell of summer and moonlight cool
About our feet in a silver pool.

These let me keep and your bright words
That beat in my mind like wild, strange birds.
I shall need all these when we part
Since I must let you keep my heart.

SARAH LITSEY.



Pearls For Tears

By Vivian Grey

Serial—Part V.

CHAPTER XI.

MARIE!" a girl's voice called loudly, then added in a whisper: "She's not come up!"

"And that's her dress!" some one else exclaimed.

Marie's soft tulle dress was floating on the surface of the water like a pale ghost.

Panic held the little group. They were suddenly sobered by the appearance of tragedy. Pushing and

shoving at each other they clambered out of the pool, quite unconscious of their dripping clothing.

Girls ran up and down the edge crying in queer hysterical voices. Men were struggling to tear off their already sopping jackets, cursing wildly, and plunging into the water searching for her.

And then a high, clear laugh pierced the night air.

Upon a little jutting rock at the other end of the pool was a wraith-

like figure silhouetted against the night, slim arms uplifted, slimly curving body delicately outlined against the night.

"She's—she's dead! Dead!" a feminine voice shrieked as the group stood transfixed looking at the figure on the rock. "Dead! That's her spirit!"

"Shut up, Lou!" a rough masculine voice called. "You're drunk! We'll see if it's a ghost!"

And the man ran toward the jutting rock and lifted Marie's wet, thinly clad, and laughter-convulsed figure in his arms.

"You little fool! Don't you know that you had the girls hysterical, thinking you were drowned!" The man, sobered by danger, was roughened by it.

"Stop!" screamed Marie struggling in his arms. "I won't be talked to that way!" And the open palm of her small hand came smartly in contact with the man's face.

"You little wild cat!" the man muttered furiously, and then as Marie's nails clawed at his face while she shrieked maddeningly, he threw her back into the water.

"There! Drown, you little fool!"

As if with one accord all of the men in the party were back in the water, each grabbing for Marie.

The one who finally caught her and lifted her thinly clad body and carried her out led a wildly singing procession.

But the hilarious crowd had gone only a few steps when a sharp, tense voice broke through their maudlin gayety.

"Stop that! Stop that, you gang of hoodlums!" It was a masculine voice tense with authority. "Stop your yelling and give her to me! Give her to me, do you hear?"

The man who carried Marie stopped walking, stopped singing

and as if unable to resist the authority of the voice that spoke to him and the eyes that looked sharply through the night at him, allowed the other man to take Marie from him.

Marie began to kick wildly, to rebel madly.

"Put me down! I won't have you touch me!"

But the arms that held her only claimed her more fiercely.

"You have nothing to say about it! When a girl begins to make a perfect fool of herself then it's time some one else took a hand in the matter. I won't let you make a show of yourself for a gang of giggle-water guzzlers!"

"You won't let me! You haven't anything to say about it!"

Marie was finally on her feet, standing straight and slim and lovely in the fragile garments that she had worn under her dress, but her wrist was still gripped in a harsh hold that hurt.

The others, sensing a sudden drama, had fallen back into a little knot at the side of the pool.

"Come on! You're going home!" There was rough authority in Christopher's voice. "I think I've been granted the privilege of going to your door with you—now!" he added with cruel sarcasm, while he still held Marie's wrist so that she could not move away from him.

"Let me go! I hate you!" Concentrated fury in her voice. "I won't have you touching me! Why did you come here? What right have you?"

"I have the right of your husband!" And the words seemed to be ground from between clenched teeth. "You're still my wife, you know! And I won't have you furnishing amusement for a gang of drunks! You're going into the house

and I'm going to send that mob home!"

Marie gasped.

"You wouldn't dare! They're my guests! You have nothing to do with them!"

"As your husband I should say that I have plenty to do with them! I'm going to exercise my rights now, as your husband! My authority!"

He had fumbled a little over the last word. He had felt Marie start as he had spoken of his "rights" and he wanted to make sure that she understood that he meant only his right to demand that she conduct herself well.

"Let me go!" Marie cried again. "I want to go back to my guests! They'll think we're mad!"

"Let them think anything they want to! Their opinion doesn't matter to me! But I do care what the woman who has the right to bear my name does. I do care how she carries on!"

"I've never used it!" Marie felt as if the words would choke her.

Something about them seemed to silence Chris for the moment, too. They stood staring at each other through the soft night light.

Then, from Chris:

"Wait here. Don't dare move! I'll go and give that mob the air!" He looked at her a moment. "Or I'd better take you with me. You're not safe to-night—you're dynamite!"

And, still holding her wrist, he forced her to walk back toward the pool with him. There his deep voice echoed on the night air:

"The party's over, you pack of giggle-water guzzlers! The air for you! Scram! Show us that you know what you were given feet for!"

"Stop! They're my guests!" Marie said in an undertone, while she wondered why she didn't shout

to the crowd to stay, that Christopher Grainger had nothing to say about her parties.

But the group took Chris at his word, jestingly, wise-cracking as they always did.

"Why, Chrissy," from one of the girls as they walked toward their cars. "Why the sudden turn to saintliness? I've seen you do a little guzzling yourself!"

"Yeah! Chris turned high-brow! Can you beat that!"

Christopher, who had started back toward the house with Marie, turned savagely.

"Stop it! Another crack from any of you and I'll annihilate the lot of you. Now get into your cars and roll!"

Something about the fury of his tone silenced the crowd. They climbed into their cars wordlessly and one after the other drove out of sight.

Chris stood watching them. As the last car disappeared in the soft-gray light of coming dawn, Chris turned to Marie.

"Well, that's that."

Marie flamed.

"You had no right to do such a thing! They were my guests! I asked them here! And what I do has nothing to do with you!"

Chris didn't answer, but merely stood looking at her, and Marie wondered if there was something hurt in his dark eyes or if it was just a trick of the coming light that made him look so.

"As long as you're my wife you'll carry yourself as my wife should!" he replied hoarsely.

"Your wife!" Marie exclaimed sneeringly. "I'm not your wife—really! When I came to you you wouldn't have me because you didn't need my money, you had Elsie's! Well, you can't talk of rights now!



"Come on! You're going home!" There was rough authority in Christopher's voice. "You're still my wife, you know! And I won't have you furnishing amusement for a gang of drunks!"

You're—you're nothing to me! And I'm glad! Glad to have found you out, to know that it was only my

money you wanted. I hate you, Chris Grainger! I hate you!"

Her eyes were too blinded by tears



to see what the youth's face was like, to see the pain.

Neither of them spoke for a moment. Then:

"Come on!" Gruffly from the man. "You're going in! Decent people are at home and in bed at this hour!"

"Since when have you decided that! What right have you to talk of decency?"

"Some one has to to a girl like you! You're going wild! You don't

care who you make your companion! Look at yourself! You have almost nothing on! And you've been running out with Tony van Zant! No woman can talk to him and still stay decent."

"How dare you talk of decency to me! You! I've seen you drunk, with a girl who——"

"That's different!" he interrupted madly. "Men can do things that girls can't! We look to you to give

us some reason for being decent! We expect to have to look up to you—we want to! If girls could only know how men feel about them, the ideals they have about them, they wouldn't splatter themselves so with mud and call it fun!

"You think you're playing! You think you're having a good time, but you're doing things you can't forget! Things that will burn deeper and more shamefully into your brain with every year that you live!

"You're—you don't know what you are doing! You're going crazy! You're making yourself a laughing-stock——"

"Stop! Stop!" The words came from Marie in a shriek. "You can't talk to me that way!"

"I'll talk to you any way I please! When a girl acts as you've been acting she forfeits all right to any man's respect! You girls run around in wild shamelessness, and then you expect us to marry you, cherish you, call you our wives, care for you! Women are going mad with freedom!" The last words came from him with such viciousness that Marie shrank back.

"And all of this while I suppose you've been helping to hold them on their old-fashioned pedestal!" she put in bitterly.

Chris turned on her.

"No, I haven't! No man does that! But we hope always to find one woman who stays there of her own accord! We're always looking for the one woman who can say 'No' often and firmly enough!"

"A yes-man looking for a no-woman!" she exclaimed with a sarcasm that was the more bitter because of the ache that was in her heart.

"Exactly! And that's what I thought you were until I saw you making yourself so cheap!"

"Don't make me hate you any more than I already do!" The words came from her wildly.

But Chris didn't reply. He strode on, pulling her along, not looking at her.

At the porch he paused and looked down at her. Marie felt a tremor go through her body. There seemed to be something almost tender in his face in that moment. She felt an answering tenderness flood her own being, a yearning toward him.

And then:

"I suppose I won't be ordered off here now." It was less a question than it was a sardonic statement of fact. The hard metallic tone of his voice cut straight to Marie's heart.

She felt herself chill and stiffen again. She seemed to draw away from him even though he still gripped her arm.

"I'll wait until you've opened the door and gone in," she heard Christopher say roughly.

She stood for a moment, motionless, and then wrenched around so that she faced him and looked up at him, her face white, her eyes closed as if she found it hard to face him so.

But Christopher Grainger turned away and looked out into the night.

A little sound like a sob came from Marie. She turned quickly, wrenched the door open and stumbled in.

Christopher let go of her and she slammed the door behind her and stood leaning against it, her head thrown back, tears forcing themselves from under her closed lids.

There was a heavy aching at her heart, a pain that would not be stilled.

Marie opened her eyes finally, becoming conscious of another presence near, and looked into her

father's face—marked with concern, compassion and pity.

"Who brought you in?" he asked tenderly at length.

Marie didn't answer immediately. She felt as if she could not bring her lips to forming the name and when finally it did cross them it was with a scorching sensation:

"Chris."

"Chris!" her father repeated in a light tone. "That's good. But why —" But there Le Grande stopped. The suffering in Marie's face silenced his words. He sensed that every word he uttered was piercing her heart like a dagger.

He passed over her appearance as if there was nothing unusual about it. It was enough to have her in his house again, safe and unhurt. He had ceased to make any criticism of her conduct. He realized that in wildness she was trying to smother the pain of her heart.

He could not help her so, he felt, the least he could do was to be patient with her, to stand by, to be there when she needed him.

And so, silently, Marie, in her frail, scanty garments walked across the hall and upstairs to her room.

CHAPTER XII.

When Marie awoke she had the feeling of coming to a strange place. Everything seemed to have been changed.

And she realized then that it was not until she had heard Christopher Grainger's voice in that wild tirade against her that she had believed that things were at an end between them.

She had been hoping, subconsciously, all of the time that something would happen to bridge the gap between them and put them back on their old basis.

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But her heart had frozen under the cruel lashing of Grainger's anger and she had come to believe that they could never again go back to the ways of happiness that they had known for so brief a time.

No man could say the things to a woman that Chris had said to her and still have any love left for her.

And so, pallid, more solemn than usual, she went down for luncheon with her father.

They didn't try to talk. Marie couldn't. And Le Grande seemed to sense it.

Finally, however, as they lingered at the table after finishing the meal Marie found courage for words:

"You said you could have my marriage annulled." It came in a scarcely audible voice.

Le Grande looked up in surprise.

"Of course I can. I'll do anything you want," he replied, but in a tone that signified a doubt of her really wanting that.

"Then please have it done as soon as possible."

Le Grande toyed with his spoon. He cleared his throat noisily as if there were things he would have said, but all he did say was: "All right."

Marie looked down at her hand. The pearl still gleamed there. She had been unable to take it off the night before when she retired.

Always before, even though she had put it back on the next day, she had taken it off at night. But that night, after the bitter quarrel with Chris, she had not been able to take it off.

She couldn't touch it. It seemed to be burned onto her finger—held there by a strange, invisible bond that she was powerless to break.

Somehow, she finished, or pretended to finish, her luncheon and then rose and left her father to walk

out over the lawn. She knew that his eyes followed her, with that look of mute appeal and remorse that had come to them of late and that had hurt her so when she met it.

She knew that in leaving him immediately she was trying to get away from that. She couldn't quite endure it. She felt a little bit guilty of having put it there.

Aimlessly Marie walked on.

It wasn't until she came to the pool that she knew that she had wanted to go there, that she had had a subconscious purpose in her aimless wandering.

There on the surface of the lovely pool, floating like a wraith, was the dress that she had worn the night before.

She flushed at the sight of it. It had seemed then like a gay and glorious prank, that slowly letting the water float her tulle dress up while her slim figure moved down and gradually out of it and then, in only her fragile undies, swimming under the surface to come up at the other end of the pool laughing at the maudlin alarm and concern of the others. But suddenly, in the light of a new day, it seemed silly, almost childish.

She picked up a stick that had been left at the edge of the pool and reached out and pulled her dress in toward her. She felt suddenly that she couldn't have endured any of the help's seeing it there and surmising things.

There were ties, too—men's ties—and a ripped collar floating on the surface.

All of them she managed to pull in toward her and then wringing them out, walked back toward the house with the wet fabric wadded into as small a bundle as possible.

She went around the back way and dropped the things she carried

into a refuse container and then hurried away from it. She wanted nothing to remind her of that night; nothing to keep alive the memory of the scathing scorn with which Chris Grainger had regarded her.

Not that she intended to let him think it had made any difference in her. She would go on living her life just as she had, but she would see to it in the future that he never had an opportunity to touch her, to be near her.

That was the thing that had shaken her. But after the annulment—and her father would attend to that speedily, he had merely been waiting for the word from her giving him permission to do so—Chris would no longer have any right to come on their property, no excuse for trying to even speak to her.

Her heart started dizzily at that thought. There was something almost frightening about it.

And so, to still her heart and drown out the alarm of it, Marie plunged even more madly than ever into a whirl of social life that was more than gay.

Old Le Grande watched her pityingly, understandingly, but his own heart grew more and more tense with concern for her. He wondered as he saw one giddy prank followed by one more giddy where the thing was to end.

His heart lifted a little bit one morning at the sight of a letter for Marie with a foreign postmark. There was a crest on the flap of the envelope. He recognized it—Prince la Vani's.

Perhaps Marie would reconsider. Perhaps the prince had been able to say something in that letter that might touch Marie with desire to see him again.

Or better still, perhaps she had written him and his letter was a re-

ply. Perhaps he was coming over and might be the steady influence Marie needed.

He watched Marie's face anxiously as she picked up the envelope when she came to breakfast, watched her open it and read the inclosed letter, but the change that he had hoped for failed to appear in her lovely countenance.

"Letter from some one of the friends you made abroad?" Le Grande asked finally, feeling that he must hear her say something about it.

Marie knew that he had recognized the crest. She looked across at him and pitied him for the light of hope in his eyes. She knew that he still felt there was a vague possibility that she might marry a title and though her heart ached at disappointing him she knew that she must.

"Prince la Vani," she said simply in a very small voice.

But later, rereading the letter as she sat on a garden bench alone, she was touched with the pathos of it. She knew then that the prince had been sincere, however swift his wooing had been.

He had looked for her that night. He had been terribly alarmed, he said, and then had managed through the help to discover that Marie was back with her father, and safe.

And then he had waited from day to day, hoping for some word from her, reading of her passage for New York and then watching her activities in the New York papers and hoping always that finally she would relent and some word would come from her.

Marie finally turned from the letter with misty eyes. It hadn't been quite fair of her to let him think things that could never be. She had known all along that her love had

been given and she could not even pretend a second love.

It hurt to look back on the moment that she had rested in his arms and know that while La Vani had been giving a fine, sincere thing, she had been giving the poorest sort of sham.

She felt as if it was a spot on her very soul and shuddered away from it. Never again, she thought, would she be guilty of such a thing. She would play at love only with men who offered the same sordid, frayed, threadbare sort of emotion that she did.

It was on that thought that she turned back to her wild parties that seemed to grow wilder with each that followed the other.

One night, as the sound of maudlin revelry echoed more loudly than usual through the huge house, Le Grande looked into the room to see Marie sitting on the piano singing in mad abandon, her slim hands gesturing, and on one of them, as it moved, he saw the gleam of a pearl.

Le Grande stared a moment. Marie was still wearing Christopher Grainger's ring. He paused on that thought, scarcely realizing that the maudlin youngsters were hailing him with crazily gay cries and gestures.

He went back to his room and sat down, staring out into the soft shadows of dawn, that one thought revolving in his mind—Marie was still wearing Christopher Grainger's ring.

The gray light of a new day was laying long, grotesque shadows on the grass when Marie finally closed the door after the last of her guests and turned back to the room in which they had been so gay.

There was a weariness about her figure, something so real that it seemed to envelope her like a cloak as soon as she found herself alone.



He watched Marie's face anxiously as she picked up the envelope, watched her open it and read the inclosed letter, but the change that he had hoped for failed to appear in her lovely countenance.

Her slim little figure drooped pathetically as she stood for a moment staring at the disordered room. Glasses, some with amber liquid still gleaming in them, stood about on

chairs and tables. Men's ties were strewn on the floor. A waistcoat hung over the back of a chair—that was Jimmy Dean's, discarded when he did a mad hula-hula. A pair of

pale-green linen slippers lay heels up on the floor just as they had been kicked off. They were Maizie Burke's—Maizie of the wild red hair and pale-green pajamas.

Marie remembered having seen Maizie kick her pumps off as Larry Smith picked her up in his arms and carried her out of the door.

But Marie didn't even smile over the memory. She sat down in a big chair and, elbow on its arm, covered her eyes with a slim white hand.

She was utterly weary and yet she didn't want to go to her room and sleep. She wanted to stay there where at least the ghosts of the party still frolicked, where a maudlin litter held her mind to trivial things. Marie was afraid to be alone with herself.

Morning air, coming in at an open window, chilled her. She shivered and then at a slight sound near by tensed and sat staring straight ahead of her.

She felt another presence but dared not move. And then a voice spoke to her:

"I've been waiting until that mad mob left here to come in."

Marie started. She was on her feet but swaying dizzily and all but cursing herself for it.

"What brings you here, Chris Grainger?" she asked in a low voice that was weighted with concentrated fury. "Why have you come here?"

"To put a stop to these parties of yours! Your maudlin jazz has been ringing to the high heavens all evening, and I won't have it!"

"What right have you to tell me what I may or may not do?" Marie demanded, her voice shrill.

"It doesn't make any difference! Any one has a right to make a woman stop when she starts on the sort of a path to destruction that you have!"

"What I do has nothing to do with you! And I'm going to see to it that you never come back into this house again!"

"Nothing can keep me away! No law in the land will keep me away from my wife!" Grainger's voice, too, had risen on a note of impassioned anger.

Marie's vividly red lips opened to answer, but before a sound came from them she was conscious of still another presence and turned toward the hall door to face her father.

Chris, too, turned to him at the same moment. Words came hot and quick from his lips:

"Why don't you stop this?" he demanded of Le Grande. "You're her father! You could do something about it! This house belongs to you. Don't you see what she's doing? Don't you understand that she's making herself cheap? If she were my daughter—I'd—I'd rather see her dead than making herself cheap before that crowd of jazz-thrill hunters!"

He stopped breathless.

Old Le Grande's voice came cool and calm. "Why don't you do something? Husbands usually have more influence than fathers. Why not try your luck, young man?"

Chris stared in astonishment at the reply. It was Marie's voice that came in sharp retort:

"He isn't my husband!" She fairly hurled the words at her father. And then turned to Chris: "You aren't! You haven't any claim to me! Not any! Daddy's having that farce that you and I went through annulled!" The word seemed to writhe on her lips as she hesitated a moment. There was an odd tremor in her voice when finally she went on:

"And—and I'm going to marry—some one else! I'm going to marry a

man I met abroad—a prince. I'm cabling for him to come now!"

Chris started. "You can't do that! You're my wife! No one can annul our marriage—not without my consent! I won't have it!"

"You have nothing to do with it! You've given up your right to say anything about what I do! And I won't have you coming in here yelling at me!"

"I'll come here as often as I want to, as often as I hear you carrying on with your friends like a bunch of wild Indians!"

"I'll give orders that you're not to be let in! I don't want to see you."

"Give all of the orders you want to." Some of the anger was dying out of Christopher's voice. "I'll come in here as often as I think I should to keep you from doing things you shouldn't and I'll come just as I did to-night—in the window without asking any one. I'd been waiting out there in the shrubbery for your guests to leave so that I could come in and talk to you, Marie."

"Thank you for that consideration at least—waiting until my guests had gone!" With scathing sarcasm.

Le Grande, who had been standing silently by, disappeared without speaking, leaving the two younger people to their argument.

"Well," Marie said, when Chris didn't reply, "isn't it about time that you go now? I'm getting sleepy." There was a deathly chill in her voice.

Chris stared at her a moment, at the fragile, drooping, tired little figure that she made, a sort of longing in his dark eyes, something protective in them. Then:

"Yes, I'll go."

He turned and walked toward the door and Marie stood watching him,

feeling as if the very heart of her was going with him. She crushed her hand tight against her lips to keep from crying out and calling him back.

She knew a breathless, spent feeling when he had disappeared, and the sound of his steps had died into the silence of the night. The conflict of that moment had cost her more than all of the mad gayety of the evening party.

The house seemed strangely still and suddenly empty, and the disordered room became a thing to shudder away from. She turned quickly and hurried from it and up to her own room.

There were still lights in the great green house. She could see them gleaming faintly through the trees. Chris evidently was not finding it easy to sleep either.

Marie awakened to the full light of a new day. She dressed slowly. There wasn't anything to hurry for. It was to be just another day to live through until the hours of darkness with a reckless party came and brought a respite from the things that tortured her.

She walked down the stairs slowly, listlessly, and then at the bottom stopped in surprise at the figure that rose from a little bench and came to meet her.

"Marie!" It was Christopher's voice, the voice of the old Christopher, all tenderness and kindness, and Marie felt a sudden welling in her heart and consciously fought against it.

"Marie," Chris was saying again, "I had to come over this morning. I've been awake all night just waiting for this time—the hour when I could see you. Marie, sweet, let's forget all of this foolishness—we've both been wrong—and go back to

the old days again, the days when we didn't quarrel. I'm sorry I was so rude last night."

But something perverse in Marie came to the surface. While she trembled with joy at Christopher's having come to her, with the knowledge that she meant that much to him, she wanted wildly to hurt him, to say something cruel to him that would send him away shaken and wounded and wretched.

She drew herself up, the little gesture of dignity covering a heart that was quivering with a breathless sort of pain. She moved as if to pass him without speaking.

"Marie!" Her name came from Chris in a sort of shock. "Marie, you can't mean that you won't forgive me!" It was as if he found it impossible to believe what he saw. "Marie, I take the blame for everything that has happened between us! Forgive me, dear, and let's start all over again!

"I've always loved you! I've never wanted any other woman—never since that night at the dance when I first saw you. Let's go back, dear, to that night when we were married and recapture the sweetness of that hour! I love you as much as I did then, and I need you. And you—Marie"—his voice taking on a sort of awed tone—"you must still love me, you can't have cared so much as I know you did when you let me hold you close in my arms, and have forgotten.

"You can't forget things like that! Love like that comes only once, Marie, and we've found it, you and I. Oh, let's make the most of it! Marie! Marie!" And he moved toward her as if he would have claimed her.

"No!" She backed away, finding words at last, but saying just the opposite of what she wanted to. "No!

Don't touch me! Don't!" And all the while her body ached for his arms.

"Marie!" he cried, as if he couldn't believe what he heard.

"I mean it! I mean it terribly! Don't touch me! I couldn't endure it!"

Chris stood for a moment as if startled, and then impelled by some mighty force that rioted him, he crossed to her, took her in strong arms and held her against her protest.

"Couldn't endure it! You know that isn't true! I can see it in your eyes! I can feel it in the trembling of your body and in the quivering of your lips—under mine!" Kissing her fiercely over her little broken cry of protest. "Endure it! You can't tell me, Marie, that you haven't missed this just as much as I have!" And then on a suddenly tender note:

"Oh, darling, I've missed you so! I've tried to find other things, other people but the girls—their kisses have been like dry dust, have left me cold and longing more achingly than ever for you! For your arms, dear! For the sweet slim tenderness of you close against my heart! For your lips under mine—quivering, thrilling; for your voice in the love-weighted tones that it knows so well.

"Marie, sweet, say that you love me! Say that it's all right between us again and that we're going back to the old ways. Oh, you must care still! You aren't the kind of a girl who could have let me hold you as I have and not have meant it for all eternity. Marie, sweet, you're my wife." The last came in a breathless awed voice. "My wife, darling! And I want you, Marie! I want you for the wife that you are!"

Marie, who had become passive in his arms as he held her, went suddenly mad.

"No! I'm not your wife! I never will be! I hate you!" She fought wildly against the arms that held her. "Let me go! I hate you! Oh, I hate you!"

"Marie, don't—you break my heart!"

"Break your heart!" She caught the words and flung them back at him bitterly. "What right have you to talk of hearts? You—when you only wanted me when I might have been of use to you! What do you want now? What is it that you think you can gain through me? Don't try to tell me it's love! You and love! Why, there isn't any such thing! There is no such thing! Love!"

And breaking from him her lips parted on a wild laugh that seemed to cut straight to Grainger's heart like the thrust of a knife. He winced at the sound.

"Marie, don't laugh like that! It isn't like you!"

"Not like me! You've got a lot to learn about me yet!"

"Don't!" He moved as if to reclaim her, but she slipped from his grasp and stood behind a chair, leaning slightly toward him.

"Why do you stay here?" she demanded in a voice that was not steady. "Why don't you go and leave me alone? I don't want to see you any more! I never want to see you again!"

"I won't go, Marie," Chris replied calmly. "I won't go and leave you in this mad mood. You've misunderstood me, dear. I'm going to stay with you until you at least try to understand."

"You won't leave me? Then I'll have to leave you! I can't stand the sight of you any longer!"

And she ran for the stairway, leaving Chris standing astounded, listening to her upward passage.

Suddenly galvanized into action, he started after her and reached the door of her room just as she closed it and turned the key in the lock.

"Marie," he pleaded from the outside. "Come out. Let me see you, dear. Let me hold you in my arms and talk to you."

"No! Go away! I never want to see you again!"

"Marie!" Pleadingly.

"Go away!"

And though he waited and pleaded, Marie was adamant. She stayed behind her locked door and finally made no answer to Christopher's pleading.

He stood waiting for a space more outside of the closed door, and then:

"I'm going, Marie. You needn't stay closed up in there any longer. But I'll be back."

Marie, in the quiet of her room, heard his steps along the hall and then going down the stairs, and clung to the rail of her bed to keep from rushing after him.

She wondered what perversity held her there when she wanted so much to go to his arms, to call him back and tell him that nothing mattered except that they were together.

She knew then that no one could ever take his place in her life, and that her pride was doing a cruel thing to her, but she clung to it tenaciously.

She wondered a little as her aloneness grew upon her what she would do with the rest of her life, what interest she could find; she had the strange feeling of sitting at a window to a world that she no longer was interested in entering.

And yet she knew she must go on. She must in some way. She couldn't let her father down—not after the way he had lived his life for her.

And so, just to give herself courage, she dressed in the newest and most daring gown she had—when finally that afternoon she decided to appear at a tea dance—and availed herself of the modern girl's newest indulgence—evening dress at four o'clock in the afternoon.

As she swept down through the hall, the draperies of her pale-green gown floating after her like delicate mist, she paused a moment at a little table on which was a telephone, and then, on a pad beside the instrument, wrote a message.

She turned to the houseman.

"Send it—please," she said.

And so the message to Prince la Vani asking him to take the first boat over was sent, and Marie, all faint perfume and misty green, drove to the country club to meet the crowd and begin another evening of revelry.

Dawn was stretching pale-gray fingers through the trees that sheltered the big yellow house as a car of singing young people rolled to a stop at the porch.

"Too-le-oo, old thing!"

"By, sweet child! Don't stumble upstairs!"

And Le Grande, waiting upstairs, sleepless and worried, wondered how Marie's fragile body supported her jazz-mad spirit during the long, restless hours.

He couldn't see through the shadows of the night, as he looked down anxiously from his window, how her gayety dropped from her like a shroud as she stepped on the porch and turned from waving a last goodbye to the crowd in the car.

She felt as she walked into the house that ghosts were following her. She shivered involuntarily.

On the hall table, where a few hours before she had left a message calling another man to her side, was

a delicate, old-fashioned nosegay. It bore the name of one of New York's most exclusive florists, and Christopher Grainger's card.

With a little cry, Marie picked up the flowers and crushed them for a moment against her face, and then hurried with them to her room. It was so like the old Chris that she had known—that tender, delicate little nosegay. She felt as if her heart was breaking with pain.

Her hands trembled as she carried the flowers, and she waved her maid, who would have taken them from her, aside. She felt as if other hands would profane them; there was something so beautifully symbolic about them.

She hurried out of her clothing, urging her maid to haste.

"Hurry—hurry," she said.

"Shall I put the flowers in water, Miss Marie?" the girl asked as she stood for a moment prior to leaving Marie for the night.

"No—no, I'll take care of them myself, thanks." Marie stood waiting to be alone in her room.

And then, picking up the bouquet, she turned out the light and slipped between the fragrant sheets of her bed, the nosegay still in her hand, to be laid on the pillow where the delicate flower petals all but touched her tear-stained face.

Her sobs, soft muffled things, broke the silence of the room for a space, and then, from sheer exhaustion, she slept.

CHAPTER XIII.

The flowers were still on her pillow when she awakened—faded from the night's vigil, but to Marie, still inexpressibly lovely.

She stood for a moment, the flowers in her hand, and looked out of the window toward the Grainger



***"Don't try to tell me it's love! Why, there isn't any such thing!"
And breaking from him her lips parted on a wild laugh that seemed to cut
straight to Grainger's heart.***

house. The sun, shining down on its roof, glorified and made it a suddenly lovely thing to Marie. In-

voluntarily her hand went to her mouth and then blew a kiss toward the great green pile.

There was something very wistful about her face as she turned back to her dressing.

And once more, when she reached the lower hall, Chris was there. Marie started at the sight of him and stiffened, drew her young body up with a little gesture of pride.

"Marie, I've come again to-day," Chris started to say in a very humble voice. "I've come on my knees, dear—come to ask you to take me back, to forgive all of the past, sweet, and come to my arms again."

And Marie, so lately come from the room in which all night long she had lain close to the flowers that had come from his hands, stiffened with the old pride; wondering the while why her voice held that harsh note, why she wasn't able to say the soft, gentle things that had been in her heart.

"Please, I don't want to see you!" she heard herself saying. "I never want to speak to you again!" And even while the words came from her vividly red young lips her heart ached.

She hadn't wanted to say exactly that. She didn't want to hurt him, not when he looked at her with such pleading in his eyes. And yet some queer thing in her drove her to being cruel to him.

"Marie"—hesitantly—"I brought you those flowers last night. I thought you'd be here. I'd been in the city in the afternoon and saw them and they looked like—like you as you used to be."

"You thought I'd be here!" she echoed sneeringly. "Well, I'll tell you now so you'll never make that mistake again that when night comes, I'm out to drape it with scarlet curtains! And flowers!" She laughed on a wild, high note. "He brings me a little old-fashioned nosegay! Ha! Bring me a bottle of

giggle water, bring me gin, apple—they're more my speed! An old-fashioned nosegay!"

And then, as if possessed with the devil at the sight of his wounded eyes, she went on:

"Those flowers"—bending toward him a little. "Want to see how much I think of them? Want to?" And she rushed upstairs to her room and then was back at the banister on the second floor. She stood for a moment with the little bunch of flowers in her hand and then hurled it down toward the startled youth waiting below.

Chris stared at them a moment and then lifted them in hands that were oddly tender.

"You didn't even care enough to put them in water, so they could live!" he cried protestingly.

While Marie above, watched him, still remembering the scent of them as they lay on her pillow all night, so close to her face.

Chris stared at the flowers for only a moment more and then dropped them as if they burned his hands. He looked up at the girl, something tense in his young face, and then started up the stairs, two at a time.

With a little cry Marie stood for an instant watching him and then fled along the hall toward her own door. But she reached it only a moment before Chris did, and too late to lock it. His hand on the knob turned it, wrenched it open and then his arms closed around Marie, holding her tight against his heart.

"I've been gentle with you long enough! I'm going to use force now! That's what you need, you little vixen!"

His arms holding her so tightly that she could not resist, his lips crushed down on hers with bruising strength again and again. He

kissed her harshly, cruelly, until finally he stopped, exhausted himself, and stared down into her face for an instant.

Then he pushed her from him.

"No! That isn't the way I want you! I don't want you that way. I want you with your own consent, with more than just consent. Some things aren't meant to be taken!"

He turned and flung blindly from the room, and Marie looked around at the intimacy of it. He had been her husband for over a year, and that was the first time he had ever been in her room—just one wild moment.

She heard the lower door close after him and knew that he had left the house.

And then she crept downstairs and picked up the little bouquet of flowers that still lay on the floor in the hall. She took them back and put them in a vase of water on her dressing table.

Crushed and bruised as they were, they seemed symbolic to her, and later that afternoon when she went back to look at them and found them fresh again, their heads that had been drooping lifted beautifully, she stood transfixed.

They had come back to full loveliness after all of the neglect and abuse they had suffered. Marie paused on that thought. There was something almost miraculous about it.

That evening when the crowd came Marie asked them to go on without her.

The freshness of the flowers upstairs had done something to her. They had come back to their original beauty; the thought fascinated her and left her with no desire for gayety.

"What's the big idea, baby?" Tony asked as he stood looking

down at her with his too intimate eyes. Eyes, Marie thought, that seemed to soil with just their very gaze and they had looked at her so often during the past few weeks.

And then she thought of the flowers on her dressing table and said:

"No idea, Tony, I'm afraid. Just a notion."

"But you've always been the last gasp, Marie child!" one of the girls called. "When the rest of us have been sleeping on our feet you've been still singing!"

"I know, but to-night, somehow I don't feel gay and what's the use of lugging a wet smack along?"

"Wet smack?" Tony repeated. "Sweet child, at your wettest you'd still be the life of the party and then some! Come on, festoon my chariot with your golden beauty!"

"Come on, Marie honey! We're out for a new place to-night—snappiest along the river so they say—the bug's spectacles and all that when it comes to peppy places to park for an evening!"

But Marie smiled and waved them on.

When they went, it was with puzzled faces and calling little threats about girls who stayed home and mooned evenings.

But Marie was smiling faintly when she went back to the living room with its peace and quiet. She was thinking of the freshness of the flowers upstairs. And she was thinking, too, of Elsie. The memory of the day when Elsie had come to her with that soul-moving revelation came back vividly. Too vividly.

She couldn't have gone out that night and joined the gayety of the others—not with the memory of Elsie so close to her; not with the thought of fresh fragrant flowers there in her room.

Le Grande came in later. He strolled through the living room, unconscious of Marie's presence, and Marie was oddly hurt by the broken look about him as he moved about thinking himself unseen.

She stirred, making a slight noise purposely.

Le Grande started and then stared into the shadows.

"Marie! Why, I thought you'd gone out."

"No, daddy! I'm home to-night for a change."

"It's so good to have you here." There was a note of emotion in his voice. "It's been lonely sometimes—these evenings get pretty long."

"I know." She was standing close to him and reached out to touch his hand.

They went out to the terrace and sat there, seeming to regain much of the old spirit of comaraderie that had marked their years together.

They sat looking down the little path that led toward the Grainger place, and Marie wondered if there had been a subconscious motive in her selecting that place. She wondered as her eyes kept following the path along which she had once so happily walked, if she had come there purposely.

But the evening wore on and no figure appeared out of the night shadows, and Marie felt a little bit weary when finally she said good night to her father and went to her own room.

The flowers on her dressing table were still fresh. She bent and touched her lips to them gently, a feeling of tenderness rushing over her, overwhelming her.

She had been walking the next day and came back to the house in the afternoon, a lonely little figure, to find Chris standing on the porch,

a yellow envelope in his hands. He offered it to her.

"But you needn't reply to it," he said quietly. "I've already done that—as your husband."

Marie stared at him uncomprehendingly for a moment, took the envelope, opened it and read the inclosure. She looked up at Chris then.

"What did you say?" she asked, a nervous edge in her voice. "What did you reply?"

"As your husband, I told him not to come."

"As my husband! But you're not my husband! You hadn't any right to cable him not to come! I had cabled the prince to come. I'm going to marry him. I—how dare you come into my house and open my messages!"

"I dare, Marie, because I'm your husband!"

"But you're not! You've never been my husband! Daddy's had that all annulled! You're—nothing to me!" The words came with difficulty.

"I am something to you, Marie. I always will be. I will be until you die. You can't love and then forget. You're not that kind of a girl."

"I have forgotten! I never could care for any one like you! Oh, you do such terrible things! You've made me hate you now! Get out of my sight! I can't endure looking at you!"

"All right," Chris said quietly. "I'll go! But I ought to take you by force, to make you do the things I want! You need that! You've had your own way all your life and now you need a—a master!" His voice was rough with emotion as he went on:

"But I can't. I don't want that sort of thing. I want you, Marie, with your own consent. Until you

can come to me that way——” He seemed unable to finish. Emotion choked the words. He turned and hurried away and Marie’s words followed him:

“I’ll never come to you—never! Willingly or unwillingly!”

And she turned bitterly away, the opened telegram in her hand crushed to a small tight ball.

He had dared to open something addressed to her! He had dared to reply to it without her knowing! Angry tears glistened in her eyes.

But as the day wore on she was a little bit glad to know that the prince was not coming; that the message must have reached him in time to prevent him from sailing.

It would have been too terrible to have let him make that long trip, to have let him come to her with his eyes shining with eagerness, and then to have had to take the light out of them by refusal again.

Because Marie knew that just as she had rushed away from him that night in his own home, just so would she have to deny him again.

She would deny him and then what? There was a peculiar emptiness after that. Then what?

And suddenly the words of that strange girl that she had found with Chris that night that she had rushed there so madly came back to her—she wouldn’t let another girl, she wouldn’t let anything step between her and the man she loved.

And Elsie—Elsie had said that, too; that if Chris had ever loved her, nothing would have taken him from her.

And she, Marie—she was standing by letting her whole world be emptied of everything she wanted, and doing nothing to keep it. She was letting Chris walk out of her life, pushing him out, with hands that still loved him!

And after he was gone—really gone—what?

She grew panicky at the thought. Life stretched before her, an empty thing.

But her pride! What would that ever mean to her! She couldn’t live with that! It was the most empty, the most shallow, the most false of all emotions.

It had never meant happiness to her. It never could!

The soft light of evening was shadowing the landscape as Marie hurried across the porch and down toward the path that her feet had so often and so gayly sped over.

Her steps broke into a light run as she neared the fence, slipped under it and then rushed on toward the lovely old boxwood.

At the door of the great green house she paused. It was dark and strangely quiet. She tapped lightly and when no answer came stepped into the hall and called softly.

Still no answer. A vague fear possessed her, there was such a strange quiet about the place.

She walked on through the living rooms and found no one. She went to the foot of the stairs and stood there for a moment hesitating and then started up.

After all Chris was her husband. She had a right in his house. And then, with a chilling sensation came the thought that he was no longer her husband. Surely by this time her father had had her marriage annulled. They no longer belonged to each other legally.

Something about that thought terrified Marie. It hurried her steps up the wide staircase and sent her rushing along the hall toward the room that she knew Chris used as a study and library.

She paused at the door. His figure was stretched out on the couch



His arms claimed her hungrily, drew her into their circle and held her crushed close against his heart so that she could feel its mad beating.

with such complete relaxation that it frightened her. She tried to speak and found herself unable to. Her voice refused to do her bidding. She stood transfixed.

And then, as if somehow sensing through even his slumbers, a presence in the room, Chris moved. He sat up and then stared at Marie.

His hand moved as if to brush a vision from before his eyes and then Marie, sensing his confusion, hurried to him.

"Chris! Oh, Chris, it's really I! I'm here with you, Chris. I've come to you, darling, offering my love, myself—everything! Yours, Chris, I'm yours!"

The youth's hands went out in a pathetically bewildered gesture, as if he found it impossible to believe his eyes.

And Marie, with a suddenly new understanding, went to him, took his hands in hers, knelt before him.

"Chris"—her voice was marvelously gentle—"don't you understand, Chris-man? I've come to you, dear, to be yours, to love you, to be near you always. Chris, darling, don't you understand? I love you, dear!"

And her voice was weighted with tenderness, thrillingly soft and lovely with overtones of emotion.

Christopher Grainger's eyes lighted.

"Marie!" The word came from him huskily, shakily. "Marie, is it really you? Oh, tell me I'm not still dreaming, sweet! Tell me it's really you, dear!"

"I'm real, Chris! Oh, I'm so real! See, darling, don't you feel my arms?" As she twined her arms around him, loosing his hands to encircle her. "Don't you see, dear, that I'm real, can't you feel it?" And her lips, all vivid tenderness touched his in a light kiss.

"Marie!" As if vitalized suddenly. "Oh, Marie how I've waited for this!"

And his arms claimed her hungrily, drew her into their circle and held her crushed close against his heart so that she could feel its mad beating.

"I've come to stay with you," Marie whispered, in a shaken voice close against his cheek.

"Marie!"

And they clung to each other while a strong, sweet flood of emotion overwhelmed them.

When finally Chris dared trust his voice with words it was a low, husky, shaken thing:

"I've waited so long for this, Marie, sweet," he said. "I'd begun to think this day would never come and yet it seemed impossible that I could love you so much and you not care."

"Not care!" she echoed tenderly, releasing herself ever so slightly from his hold so that she could look up into his face. "Don't you remember that the night we were married I told you I'd love you forever and ever—no matter what happened? Had you forgotten that?"

"It was such a swift, sweet dream-like thing, Marie, and so many things have happened since. I've cursed myself for a fool for ever thinking I could find anything in any other woman that would make me forget, that would ease the pain of not having you."

"And I'd give everything I possess to erase the touch of other men's hands and lips."

"Marie!" He lifted her and held her in his arms, his voice dropped to a husky whisper: "Marie, you're mine now? Mine, darling, to have all the rest of my life?"

"Yours, darling, for all eternity." The trembling of her own voice matched his.

"Marie!"

"Chris!" She started from his arms, a little note of terror in her voice. "But we're not married now! Our marriage has been annulled! We can't stay here now! We've got to get married all over again!"

"Marie!" In broken protest. "I can't let you get away from me again. I can't spend another hour away from you! Oh, you must be mine, darling!"

"Chris, dear! Chris-man-mine! I am yours. No marriage ceremony could make me any more yours than I am now! I've been yours always

—even under all of the wildness it's you I've wanted, you and the quiet of your love. Your arms, your lips, your tenderness! If you could only know how I've longed for the nearness of you, your hand over mine, your head, Chris, dear, against my heart!"

The words came with a rush of feeling, an excess of tenderness that thrilled and throbbed in her voice.

They clung to each other in silent ecstasy, their hearts beating madly until, finally, they found themselves able to think and talk of things that were beyond the pale of the miracle of their love.

"And you'll be content to live here, darling?" Chris asked. "Here in this ugly old pile that I love?"

"And I'll make it a blessed home to you, darling."

Chris drew her closer.

"We'll have the money now. I have it."

"And I'll turn the mortgage that I hold over to you, only, Chris, dear, I'd rather not use Elsie's money. We'll have mine now. Can't you give Elsie's money to something or somebody?"

But Chris shook his head.

"She willed it to me so that I must keep it, darling. I haven't used a penny of it, but sometime, who knows, we may find a wonderful use to put it to."

One of those sweet silences overtook them again. It was Christopher's voice that broke it finally:

"And now, sweet, let's go and get married all over again. Let's go to your father first."

And so like two happy children they walked back through the fields and across the lawns to the big yellow house.

Le Grande was sitting on the steps smoking his pipe. He rose as the younger people came toward him

and his eyes lighted with a happiness that had not been in them for months. Marie's heart warmed at the sight of it.

She went to him and with a wistful little smile curving her lips put her hand over his.

"We're going to be married all over again, daddy," she said, a faint color toning her cheeks.

Chris, tall and splendid beside her, seemed to draw himself up to his full height, to thrill with conscious pride.

"I'm glad we've all come to our senses," said Le Grande, offering his hand to the younger man. "But there isn't any need of another marriage ceremony."

"But, daddy, I thought——" Marie began.

"I know. You thought I was having your marriage annulled. But one night during one of your wild jamborees I happened to look in on you and saw that you still had this young man's ring on your finger. I made up my mind then that an annulment was entirely superfluous and so—go your way happily and with my blessing. Only don't let that way be too far from mine." And then his hand gripped Christopher's a little harder and he looked intently into the younger man's eyes.

"Don't take her too much away from me," he said in a voice that was not quite steady. "She's all I have. I've lived my life for her happiness and though I can share her love, I can't quite give her up."

"She'll be your daughter always," Chris said, his own voice not quite steady. And from Marie:

"Daddy, you're not losing a daughter. You're gaining a son!"

Le Grande gripped their hands for a moment and then putting them together so that his own were released, he turned and went into the house

as if realizing that a moment had come that Chris and Marie wished to share with no one.

They turned to each other, their faces rapt, their hands clinging.

"I love you, dear!" Marie whispered.

"And I love you. I'll love you all my life!" Chris murmured.

He bent and kissed her with a sort of reverent gentleness that brought a mist to Marie's eyes.

"Look!" She was holding up the hand on which the lovely pearl glowed from its exquisite old setting. "I've always worn it—that has meant something to me all along, darling!"

"Yes, sweet, it's meant pearls for happiness." And once more he took Marie in his arms.

"Pearls for happiness," breathed Marie contentedly from the circle of his arms.

THE END.



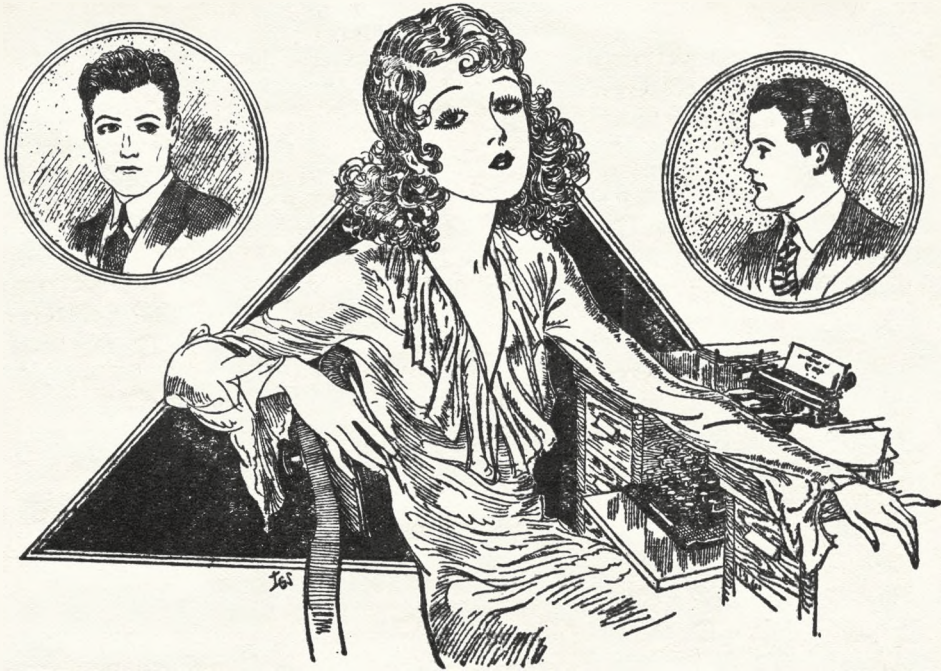
BY MOONLIGHT

THERE was the soft-drawn sigh of her breath,
 And there was her voice like a brooklet in play,
 And languorous breezes more silent than death
 Drifted away.

There were the moonbeams that swooned in her hair,
 And there was the fragrance of sweet mignonette;
 A heaven of stars made a canopy there—
 How can I forget?

In silvery light matching luster of gold,
 Her heart in her eyes that was mine but to see,
 She lifted her lips—ah, the story is told—
 She gave them to me!

BERT MURRAY FLEIGMAN.



A Better Job For Jill

By Edna M. Gill

THE big office was quiet. There was only the sound of one girl pounding the typewriter keys; all the other stenographers had left a few minutes before. Tom Reynolds, the assistant manager, walked quietly over to Jill.

"May I wait for you, Jill?" he asked eagerly.

Jill brushed back her soft hair, and looked up. She was tired of working but knew she had a great deal more to do.

"No, you'd better not, Tom," she said. "I have a lot of work to do."

"Couldn't I help?" persisted Tom. "It's a shame! Mr. Simpson's working you too hard."

Her tired face relaxed, and she smiled softly up at Tom.

"You're a dear!" she exclaimed. "But you know Mr. Simpson won't let any one else do the work, and I wouldn't want you to wait so long for me."

He slowly left the office as the manager's door opened.

"He's a slave driver where Jill's concerned," Tom muttered fiercely to himself. No one would have been more surprised than Tom had he known what was happening, for he had never dreamed of the real reason why Jill was kept late so much.

The moment the office was empty Nigel Simpson crossed to Jill. For a

moment he watched her fingers, stared at her soft, curling, coppery hair, at her appealing little face; then he smiled. He was a good ten years older than she was, but what was ten years? And she was so attractive, quite the loveliest girl he had ever seen.

"Jill," he said suddenly, "I'm in love with you—as much in love as it's possible for a man to be!"

Jill looked up, startled. This was a thing utterly unforeseen.

"Oh, I'm sorry," said Jill sympathetically. "But I'm not in love with you at all."

Opposition always made a thing more desirable to Nigel.

"Don't decide hastily, Jill. If you married me you'd have a house up in Westchester, a good time, and a little roadster. I'd let my wife have her own way. Now, Jill, be sensible."

But Jill wasn't even tempted. She would marry only the man she loved and she had not found him yet.

"I'm sorry, but I can't!" she said.

He noted the flush on her cheeks, and the way her lashes curled, and the desire to have her for his own grew within him.

"Is there some one else?" he rapped out jealously.

The color flamed in her face.

"You have no right to ask that, but since you have asked—no!" she replied with dignity.

"I'm not so sure it is no," he said. "Perhaps you are in love, and he does not return it. Well, all men don't favor the idea of marriage. Take Tom Reynolds for instance; he told me once that marriage was a bit too much for him because it meant sharing everything he earned. All men aren't cut out for sacrifice, Jill. I love you enough for anything, and I won't accept your answer now. You must think it over."

He went back into his office, and for a moment tears filled Jill's soft gray eyes. She had to refuse, but it wasn't pleasant, and it wouldn't do a bit of good thinking it over, for she knew quite certainly that she could never love him.

She put on her hat and coat and hurried out of the office. She went so swiftly that she and Tom failed to see each other. He turned at the corner, glanced up at the office window to see if the light was still on, and began pacing up and down again.

Jill was very miserable as she hurried home; she realized that if she persisted in saying no she would have to get a new job. It would be too embarrassing, working for a man one had refused to marry. It was too bad, for she had been so happy there.

And suddenly she asked herself why she had been happy! Mr. Simpson had told her that Tom had complained that marriage meant sharing everything he earned. He had spoken meaningly. Did he think Tom cared for her, but wouldn't ask her to marry him because of money?

"What's money?" asked Jill scornfully as she prepared her own simple dinner. But again that thought which Mr. Simpson had suggested came to trouble her. What if Tom were deliberately hesitating to tell her he cared because he didn't want to share? She had not thought about Tom so much before.

As she put her chop on to fry she asked herself that question again. Then she pulled out a little snapshot of Tom that she had taken a few weeks ago at the beach. It was a good picture of him. He had such a pleasant ingratiating smile. And he was a dear! Oh, he wasn't selfish as Nigel Simpson had said!

After dinner she got out the beautiful green-and-gold beret she was making for herself, and then suddenly she dropped it in her lap, for desolately she realized why she had been making it—because of Tom! Just because of Tom! But why because of Tom? What did it matter to her whether Tom liked what she wore or not? Suddenly the answer came to her: she was in love. Nigel Simpson was right; she loved Tom!

The next day she didn't see Tom at the office. It was strange, for Tom usually got there first. He was very steady and reliable.

About the middle of the morning Nigel Simpson told her that Tom had gone to Philadelphia on business. Jill's heart almost stopped beating. He might at least have let her know, she thought.

A week passed, and she heard nothing from Tom, and then Nigel Simpson began to make love to her more determinedly.

Two weeks, then a month passed by, and still she had no word from Tom. Then one day Nigel Simpson told her casually that Tom Reynolds was doing very well in Philadelphia, and what was more, he had written to say that he intended getting married to the daughter of the manager there, and would like to be transferred.

Jill turned white when she heard the news. Nigel Simpson saw the stricken look in her eyes, and for a moment felt something almost like compassion. Then a hard, determined look came into his eyes, and he left the room.

He came back a moment later. Before Jill knew what was happening, she was in his arms, and he was kissing her lips.

She pushed him away furiously. The next instant he drew back as

her small firm hand slapped his cheek.

That was the end. Jill left the office that day minus a job. And in the days that followed she realized how hard it was to get another one. She guessed that Simpson managed to ruin every chance she had when her prospective employers applied to him for references.

Then an employment agency sent her to a woman who wanted a companion at a starvation wage. Jill took the position when it was offered to her; she couldn't bear having nothing to do any longer. It gave her too much time to brood. Her new employer was an old maid who seemed to have a grudge against all men. She trusted no one.

Part of Jill's new work was to take Miss Wilkinson's dogs out for walks. Jill adored animals, but the dogs were as disagreeable and suspicious as their mistress.

"I don't want you to run around with young men, and you've got to be in by nine every night," Miss Wilkinson insisted. Jill did not resent it. There were no young men for her to go out with now.

Every day she took the dogs over to Central Park. She was too sensible to let her heartache embitter her outlook on life. She reveled in the trees, the grass, the lake, the gay little sparrows hopping about looking for crumbs. Life's beauty was not lost to her because she had lost love.

At first Jill found Miss Wilkinson very unpleasant, but after a while she began to feel a vague pity for her. Soon the eccentricities and tantrums of her employer only amused Jill. She even tolerated the dogs, excusing their ill humor on the grounds of old age.

Life in Miss Wilkinson's cold, vast house absorbed her. Her employer



"Nigel told me the news. He was very triumphant about it. But I love you, too, and you must admit that you never let me dream you cared a snap for Nigel Simpson!"

demanded all of her time and Jill was glad for it helped her to forget Tom and all the bitter thoughts that flooded into her heart at the mere thought of him.

One day she came upon Nigel Simpson in Central Park. He laughed when he saw the dogs.

"Why don't you stop this silly struggle, Jill?" he asked. "I'd give you everything if you were mine. Wouldn't you rather be married to me than be maid to a pack of snarling dogs?"

Jill lifted her beautiful shadowed eyes. She glanced into Nigel Simpson's face and a quick wave of repulsion ran through her.

"No—and my answer will always be no!"

His face had a sneering look as he walked away. And then Jill was sobbing, heedless of the people staring at her.

A wire-haired terrier suddenly darted across the grass. He frisked about Miss Wilkinson's dogs as if begging them to play with him.

They snapped at him, barked, strained savagely on their leashes until he edged a few feet away. Jill jumped up, trying to quiet the dogs, but with one great leap they had broken from her. They ran only a few feet to the inquiring little terrier, but the force of it threw Jill against the bench.

A firm voice called the terrier, a firm grip caught the dogs, and then a strong hand caught Jill's arm and supported her.

"I'm sorry," said a man's rueful voice. "It's all because of Teddy's friendliness. I've just had him a few days, and he doesn't obey me very well yet."

Jill blinked hard. That voice—the dear, familiar note in it! It could belong to only one man—Tom!

And now he saw her face.

"Jill! Good heavens—Jill!" he cried excitedly.

She forced a smile.

"So you've deserted Philadelphia for a few days!"

"Yes, I got back to New York yesterday." He was quite self-controlled now.

"I hoped you liked it there," Jill remarked conversationally. "Well, I must give the dogs their airing. Will you hold your dog until we're out of sight?"

"No, I won't!" Tom burst out suddenly. "There's one thing I have to say to you—the least you might have done was tell me yourself that you were going to marry Nigel Simpson!"

Jill stared at him in astonishment.

"When he left the office that night I was waiting for you," Tom went on, "and he told me the news. He was very triumphant about it. But I love you, too, and you must admit that you never let me dream you cared a snap for Nigel Simpson!"

"Was that why you went to Philadelphia?" asked Jill.

"He suggested it," snapped Tom, "but I jumped at the chance. I'm not a stone image. I've got some feelings."

"But you liked Philadelphia; you were going to marry a girl there and settle down," Jill accused, but a tender little smile was on her lips.

"If Simpson told you that, he was drawing entirely on his imagination," Tom replied stiffly.

Jill lifted her shining eyes.

"If Nigel Simpson said I was going to marry him he was drawing on his imagination, too!"

"You mean he made that up, that none of it was true?" he cried.

"I mean just that!" said Jill.

"Jill—is there any hope for me?"

She nodded. Strangely enough, words refused to come.

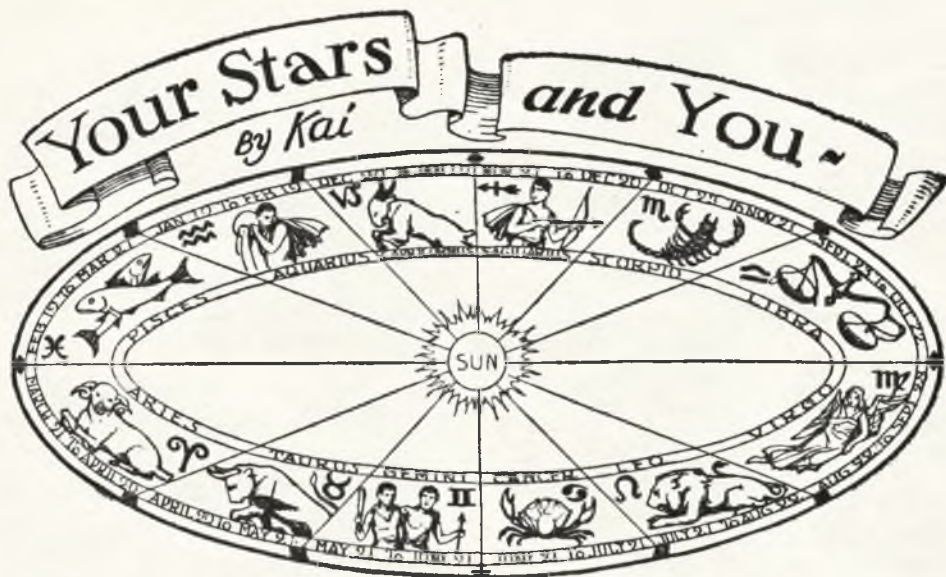
"Oh, darling!" He kissed her, and Jill thrilled to his caress. "And—oh, Jill, honey, my uncle wants me to go into business with him, so I don't have to put up with Simpson any longer. Jill dear, everything will be perfect if I have you!"

"So this is how you do your duty!" said a sharp, acid voice. "I come to the park to see if you're looking after my darling dogs, and I find you kissing a man!"

"You will leave at once!" went on Miss Wilkinson furiously. "I'll take my poor neglected dogs home myself! You needn't ask me for any references for I won't give you one."

"Oh, thank you so much!" said Tom, heaving a deep sigh, his arm protectively around Jill. "It's great that she's fired. I was afraid that I'd have to wait a week or two. You see, some one's offering her a better position. She's going to be married at once, aren't you, Jill?"

And Jill, her eyes glowing up into his, said happily: "Oh, yes, Tom!"



YOUR WEEK

This is a week of situations, readjustments, news ideas, improved financial status and fresh ideas about personal and general conditions. The tendency is to have an expansive, friendly feeling toward the world and toward those closely associated with your existence. A new routine is in order and it will be necessary for certain individuals to experience some bitterness and make themselves part of a controversy before better conditions will prevail. Unusual experiences and exciting conditions are written in the heavens for the week, bringing interesting sidelights and newness of thought and action. None of us mind making sacrifices if such personal offering produces order out of chaos. Testing of ideas, of character, of personal philosophy, of fundamental control and stability is a part of life's make-up. Each of us is responsible for a contribution to ourself, to our associates, and to universal peace and understanding. Try to use the influences this week for personal advancement which will make you a valuable unit. The key-notes for the week are absence of discord and practical adjustment.

DAY BY DAY

Hours mentioned are Eastern standard time

Saturday, October 3rd. ♃
 To-day is argumentative, unsettled and changeable because of emotional disturbances. It would be better for you to postpone important negotiations until a more fa-

vorable time and avoid making decisions unless you are certain your judgment is based upon cold logic.

Sunday, October 4th. ☺

The morning hours are very disruptive and unsatisfactory. Watch out for the emotional corners. It is easier for me to choose the brief favorable hours to-day than to promise you a happy day. The good period is between 4:00 p. m. and 5:45 p. m. The early evening hours are pleasant superficially but carry an undertone of pessimism and introspection. Do not try to pierce the surface to-day; get as much quiet and relaxation as possible; emotional upheavals late in the evening will produce spent nerves and impaired health.

Monday, October 5th. ☾

Do not allow sentimentality to influence your basic ideas to-day so that you may be influenced easily. The day is neutral superficially but there is an undertone of emotionalism and consideration of the personal which is unsafe as a foundation for activity.

Tuesday, October 6th. ♂

The morning hours are the best part of the day and are suitable for business. The afternoon and evening must

be dealt with unemotionally and a sense of duty and conformity is the best keynote for the day. There is a favorable period from 10:00 p. m. until midnight, but the general trend of the day is upsetting to the nervous system.

Wednesday, October 7th. ♃
Here is a powerful day that is not entirely unfavorable but which carries high pressure and intensity. If you wish to make your hours satisfactory, self-control is your best bet. Follow your plans and routine with as much poise as you can command.

Thursday, October 8th. ♃
Another emotional and unsettled day, filled with nervous intensity. The hours are very active and aggressive; the most favorable time for business is between nine and eleven in the morning and between four and four thirty in the afternoon. The best part of the day is after 10:00 p. m.

Friday, October 9th. ♀
You should use to-day for accomplishing all the things you have had to postpone in the past, especially during the earlier days of this week. Most of us will operate at high speed to-day but the influences are highly favorable and you should go the limit in exerting intelligent energy.

IF YOU WERE BORN BETWEEN

March 21st and April 20th

(Aries ♈)

—this is a very important week for you. You may do much toward completing a final readjustment in your life. Control your enthusiasms, make the necessary changes which will enable you to follow a smoother program of living and try to refrain from acting purely on impulse. This applies particularly to the people born between April 5th and 12th. This last-mentioned group will be able to handle many annoying complications during the coming week due to the favorable influence of Jupiter in their lives. Do not expect satisfactory conditions in connection with your

love affairs or with your contacts with your fellow man during the next seven days if born between April 7th and 15th; if born between March 22nd and 30th, control your temper and avoid discussions which will lead to heated arguments.

April 20th and May 21st.

(Taurus ♉)

—this is an intense week for the Taureans born May 6th and 13th, but the influences for you are favorable and stable fundamentally and this is a good time to make changes if you make your judgments coldly and logically. If the specific group mentioned above experience complications at this time which bring out health and material conditions which appear to be unfavorable, rest assured there is a reason for this and you will be greatly improved after the complexity has been cleared away. The planets are pleasantly favorable for you if born between April 25th and 30th and between May 18th and 22nd.

May 21st and June 21st

(Gemini ♊)

—most of the Geminians may feel free to step out and get results during the current week, except those born between May 25th and 31st. You folks who were born between June 5th and 12th have the planetary influences working for your interests and advancement and you should use this period for changes, removals, capitalization upon your abilities and your opportunities for progress. Avoid worry, arguments, and actions which will entangle your powers of good judgment if born between June 18th and 22nd. The influences are favorable for travel, writings, contracts, and keen mental efforts if born around May 22nd. The folks born between May 25th and 31st must be careful of their judgment and should follow sound principles of living at this time; you are under deceptive and suspicious conditions and should live accordingly.

June 21st and July 21st

(Cancer ♋)

—the Cancerians born between July 7th and 13th must avoid worrying, as much as possible, about situations that predominate at this period of their lives which are the result of highly emotionalized living. Avoid matrimonial consideration and wait for a better time to adjust unsatisfactory conditions in connection with your domes-

tic life and your business affairs. If born between June 27th and July 2nd, use your intuition and reorganize your program so as to include a more hopeful and constructive mental and material aspect.

July 21st and August 22nd
(Leo ♌)

—this is the time of times for you Leo folks, especially those of you who have birthdays between August 6th and 14th, to put your shoulders to the wheel and push in a straight direction. Unless some of you in this last-mentioned group have birth charts which deny success at this time, those with the above birth dates will find everything coming their way that they make the effort to get. Those of you with birth dates during the last week in July will find this a happy and satisfactory period.

August 22nd and September 23rd
(Virgo ♍)

—this is an expansive period for the Virgo people born between September 6th and 13th, but the satisfaction will appear in the personal life more than in a material way, although with effort and concentration you may capitalize upon your abilities during the current week. The planet Neptune is stirring your emotions and your mental keenness if born between August 29th and September 3rd. Try to avoid acting purely from an emotional standpoint and protect yourself against deception and intrigue. Also, use caution in connection with your living from the standpoint of food and nervous stimulation so that you may safeguard your health.

September 23rd and October 22nd
(Libra ♎)

—you Librans born between October 7th and 14th are going to have help from the planets during the next few weeks to assist you in adjusting the complexity of your situation. The limited and discouraging conditions are still present and there is necessity for you to rearrange your conception about life, but you have a release of the pressure at this time which will make the condition easier to solve. This is also a favorable period for the Librans born between September 28th and October 3rd and this group are in a position now where they may look to the future with expectation; use your natural fairness and mental qualities for advancement.

October 22nd and November 21st
(Scorpio ♏)

—you Scorpio people born between November 7th and 13th have an underlying stability to your lives, but you must take care of your health and recognize the soundness of your condition rather than give yourself over to emotional upheavals and annoyance at the angles which will present themselves for the purpose of clearing away old conditions. This is an inspirational, constructive, and pleasant week for you if born between October 27th and November 2nd.

November 21st and December 20th
(Sagittarius ♐)

—the planets Jupiter, Uranus, and Saturn are exerting a powerful influence for excellent conditions in the lives of the Sagittarians born between December 5th and 14th. You may handle contracts, new positions, changes of residence, travel, legal matters, loans and any feature of your life which will bring you returns on enterprising effort. If your birthday is between November 27th and December 3rd, you must control your nervous energy, be careful of intriguing situations, avoid actions which will bring about poor health conditions or unwise business dealings.

December 20th and January 19th
(Capricorn ♑)

—as soon as the Capricornians who were born between January 5th and 14th realize many of their problems are the result of acquisitiveness, coldness, and a morbid outlook upon the life, the sooner they will be able to clear away the limiting aspect of their situations; this is a time of self-analysis, personal responsibility and readjustments. Those born between December 27th and January 3rd may look forward to the future with hope; it has been necessary for you to make an inward adjustment, too, and you will now be in line for progress and happier conditions.

January 19th and February 19th
(Aquarius ♒)

—the Aquarians born between February 3rd and 10th are under sound aspects from the planets which will assist you in making the necessary changes in order that you may capitalize upon your talents and your opportunities; avoid judgments and actions based on the emotions, take care of your health and conserve your financial surplus. Mars will disrupt your routine

this week if born the first week in February, but the irritation is temporary.

February 19th and March 21st
(Pisces ♋)

—this is an active, aggressive week for the Pisceans born during the first week in March (favorable for travel and enterprise). The Pisces people who were born between March 5th and 13th are under favorable planetary influences and should use this period for all details which will add to personal happiness and material advancement. Maintain poise and balance your judgments if born between February 24th and March 2nd.

CHATTING WITH KAI

Most of us agree with the old saying "A word to the wise is sufficient." The regular customers of this department have been advised since January of this year that we are experiencing important living during 1931. During the present time there are many things each of us should not do and many channels of thought we should avoid. October will be an important month; changes are in order—for the better; agitation is prominent because old ideas, methods, and antiquated procedure must be discarded before a new program may be inaugurated. The changes in thought and in environment will be manifested also, in our personal lives and if it is necessary for you to revolutionize your routine, do so gracefully. Remember agitation and mental uncertainty is necessary before fresh decisions are made which will be for the eventual good. Try to consider all problems impersonally and as intelligently as possible. If you use your best judgment, act with kindly impulses, refuse to believe the worst of your fellowman, you cannot be very wrong. You may not be able to understand the channels through which constructive action is being accomplished but faith in yourself and in those you contact will be a valuable adjunct in waiting for materialization of your desires.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
★ THE STAR QUESTION BOX ★
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Miss B. C., born October 6th, 1902, New York, about 12:30 noon. You are in the same position as so many folks are at

this time—having to do everything you dislike doing and being prevented from doing anything you wish to do. The past three years have been unhappy for you because of a necessary adjustment to life you had to make. There is further irritation in November and December of this year, but there are good planetary influences working meanwhile and January and February, 1932, and throughout the spring months of next year will bring you greater contentment and renewal of hope because of new and improved circumstances in your life. Forget the past, use your natural talents, try to do your job as patiently as possible during the remainder of this year and prepare yourself to take advantage of the new conditions and the opportunities which will come your way next year. You are one of the people who could not expect fulfillment of hopes until after the thirtieth year, if that is any consolation to you for all your unhappiness.

Hello, Robert, born February 15, 1915, New Jersey, 12:00 a. m., congratulations upon choosing the right profession to follow. I certainly think you will be doing the thing that is exactly right if you study and train yourself for the profession of aviation, especially in the mechanical line. Do not try to make too rapid progress because of your natural enthusiasm. You have a born instinct for aviation but you have a reckless spirit too and should take everything in small doses. Lots of success to you!

Thank you so much, Mr. I. G., born March 7, 1913, 4:45 p. m., New Jersey, for your fine letter and that page of good wishes. I have compared your date with that of the young woman whose date you give and the combination is very good, although you must not be in too great a hurry to make her your wife. I feel that your different religious beliefs may cause you trouble, especially during the latter part of 1932 and during 1933. You are right about your highly developed emotional quality and unless you understand and control your sensitivity and strong physical make-up, there is trouble ahead. Do not be too hasty in attempting to understand life all at once. There is plenty of time and while you have common sense, you need to acquire more balance in handling life forces. Any phase of scientific work or banking would be suitable work for you and, if you can, you should study and work for a scholastic degree in science.

E. R. L., born April 26, 1901, California, 12:20 p. m. I am really undecided whether your birth year is 1901 or 1907, but I am interpreting your figures as 1901. If this is correct there is further trouble ahead for you in your love affair with the February man. The years 1932 and 1933 are restrictive for both of you in emotional quarters, although a definite attraction is shown between your two charts. However, the lack of harmony between you is obvious and I doubt whether or not there would ever be a complete lack of friction between you. My advice would be to try and find some one else as a marriage partner.

I did not mean to ignore you, Miss Jewel, born February 16, 1910, Poland, between eight and nine o'clock in the morning, but now that you are getting an answer perhaps you will forgive my delay in getting to you. Snap out of that morbid feeling you have hanging to your shoulders, young lady. You are far too young for that and your entire life is before you. Of course you are going to marry and your life will change. Just because part of your life has been disappointing is no cause for believing your entire future holds nothing but misery. Your past life has been hard, I know, but your attitude is all wrong. As soon as you change your outlook upon life you will automatically become happier. If you wait until near your thirtieth year to marry, you will find partnership much more satisfactory. In the meantime, have faith in yourself and look forward to the future with expectation. A hopeless feeling and crape hanging has never produced results as far as I have been able to discover.

Peggy Ann, born July 24, 1916, 8:30 a. m. In studying your chart, I suggest that you take two years of high-school work and combine your last two years of study with commercial training. It is always an asset to have a complete high school training in the business world and especially in secretarial work, but you will make a good business person and if you cannot manage the two courses separately, it would be advisable to use your last two years in school to fit yourself for commercial work.

Mrs. C. G., born June 24, 1904, New York, 8:20 a. m.; husband born July 15, 1896, Italy. The turmoil in your married life is of a temporary nature and 1932 will end this disagreeable state of affairs. Try

to be patient because you have really experienced the greater part of the strain. There is a strong bond shown between your two charts and a few months from now there will be a complete readjustment in your affairs for the better.

Mrs. G. H., born January 20, 1901, about 10:30, Iowa. Your data is incomplete but you are one of my regular customers and I can see from the general positions in your chart that your marital conditions are not so good at the present time. I am sorry to tell you that there will be a further necessary adjustment for you to make in 1932, although your husband's financial situation will improve in the spring of 1932. There are inharmonious indications between your two charts but I do wish you would try to adapt yourself to conditions, because I think you can do so. The early spring months next year are going to be hard on you personally but much of the trouble will be your fault, so try to take life philosophically at that time or you will have a complete separation from your husband.

Miss F. S., born December 23, 1914, 3:00 a. m. A business course would be more suitable for your success than a beauty course.

Miss R. McG., born August 11, 1903, 1:00 a. m., Illinois. I cannot give you the name of an astrologer through these columns but if you will write to the editor of this magazine she may be able to refer you to several sources where you may make inquiry. I do not like the combination of your date with that of the young man you send. I would suggest that you break off this affair before it is too late. You have aspects for marriage during the late fall and in the spring months of 1932, but I feel you should make a different choice.

Mr. G. A. R., born April 19, 1897, 10:00 a. m., Pennsylvania. You have important changes coming into your life until after the summer of 1933 and you should not contemplate making decisions about marriage until after that time. Be sure to find a girl who will be willing to agree to your ideas about having children. If you do this, I believe you have a very good chance for happiness.

Miss M. B. L., born January 14, 1911, Louisiana, 9:00 p. m. No, no, my dear young lady, marriage is the last thing you

should be thinking of this year, or even next year. Don't do it!

Mrs. M. G. S., born August 2, 1873, 4:00 a. m., Germany. If you have not already had an opportunity to sell your land, there will be definite offers made to you within the next two months.

Yes, Nell, born September 26, 1911, between five and ten p. m., in Kentucky, you will go far in the world of business. Stenography is the correct step for you to take. You have an excellent chart for detail work with splendid ability to analyze and apply this attribute in a practiced, material way. You will be released from a restrictive and upsetting planetary condition in January, 1932. This period mentioned is the correct time for you to make plans and readjust your life so that you may capitalize upon the spring months of 1932. The fall and winter of next year will give you splendid opportunity for expansion in all departments of your life. You tell me you are more interested in your business success than in matrimony. The year 1932 will be one of accomplishment in business and about this time next year, you will probably change your mind about marriage. The future holds promise for you and you are going to be a very foolish girl if you fail to take advantage of the opportunities which will come your way after January, 1932.

Miss Irma B., born April 25, 1909, five p. m., New York. I would like to tell you just how much I know about you because you have the exact birth date of a friend of mine who was born in the Ozark Mountains. You have had a different environment and different educational advantages than my friend but you have the same love of beauty, of the earth and of growing things. You are going to have an opportunity to indulge yourself in this love of the beautiful in September, 1932. About three years from now you will have to resist the impulse to marry because a marriage at that time will not last over a period of a year. You should live in the country and if you can make the change this fall you should do so. Try to bear with the discordant note of the life that flows around you. Write to me often.

Miss L. S., born May 22, 1899, North Dakota, between 10:00 a. m. and 4 p. m. You wrote me a jolly letter and I enjoyed

your interesting five or six pages very much. You have a peculiar angle in your life and I bet you are interesting, but, for Heaven's sake, control that fidgety, nervous temperament of yours if you want to save yourself from being a nervous wreck. This April 12th man you write me about is a better friend for you than a sweetheart and I think you are lucky to have escaped the ties of matrimony. This affair was a sudden infatuation which should carry no permanent angle in connection with it. There is nothing wrong with this man; there is nothing wrong with you, circumstances were against you. This emotional tangent was a result of planetary influences. Ask any astrologer what has happened in the lives of Aries people—your friend is an Aries man. He has had the planet Saturn in square relationship to his Sun and to add insult to injury, Jupiter and Uranus have been stirring him up and producing all kinds of complications. Your April friend is bewildered, is trying to make a readjustment and doesn't know what it is all about. Give him time to reach an understanding, but you two people could never live together harmoniously. Your own chart indicates that you will forget this affair shortly. The tie-up between your son, born November 10, 1929, and the April 12th man is very bad and there would always be a natural antipathy between these two people. You are in the same position as many others and you should attempt to rebuild your life along new, constructive lines rather than taking up valuable time trying to solve the workings of fate. Use your quick, kaleidoscopic mind to more advantage for yourself. This love affair has not been a matter of life and death with you as it would have been with some one who is inclined to probe the depths. Here's hoping for your happiness and your adjustment to life.

Mrs. C. S. C., born March 22, 1875, near Boston. Your flattery is interesting; your egotism is superb; your subtlety is discernable. I am sorry to have been able to read between the lines in your letter because I do not like what I see. You say you are a firm believer in astrology. Do not allow your anger at me, through my ability to read your chart, to destroy your faith in the science of astrology. This department is conducted with understanding and sincerity and I appreciate it when you say you have confidence in me. I know I am not telling you what you want to hear. You would like to have me say

that you should leave your husband and lead a successful existence without him, or, you want me to tell you he is not going to live very long. When you wrote me you had an ulterior motive—I shall be tolerant enough to say that it was unconscious—but I have ethical scruples in answering my customers. I am sorry to write you in this vein and I sympathize with the mental uncertainty you have undergone during the past three years but, my dear lady; you have missed the point entirely. Come down to earth and make your valuations honestly. If you are not too mad at me, I would like to hear from you again. You said if I answered you, you would "write me a nice note." I am looking forward to hearing from you again and when you write to me, sign your name instead of your initials.

D. S., born August 5th, 1914, 9:30 a. m., Kentucky. No matter what occupation you engage in, you will be an efficient person and will be successful because of your judgment and desire to forge ahead. The present month and throughout October is a time of change for you and the results will be very much to your liking. You are not under influences which are free from planetary affliction until the spring months of 1932 but you have opportunities at the present time which will bring you into favorable developments during the summer of next year. You will make a definite decision within the next four weeks and you should pursue your purpose regardless of minor details which may sidetrack you temporarily. If you wish to prepare yourself for a profession and want to spend the next few months studying, forget aviation and concentrate on being a commercial artist. Of course, Dot, you can always fit yourself for stenography as long as this particular branch of business appeals to you so much, and if you are unable to pursue the artistic course until next year, postpone this idea until you are free to make advancement along that line. In the meantime be as happy as possible

and do everything you can to prepare yourself for a successful future. Good luck to you, and send in that other letter with the question you mention in this communication, just as soon as you like. I am always glad to hear from you.

ANSWERS TO STUDENTS

Mrs. C. G., born October 25, 1883, 6 a. m., Missouri. I appreciate the length of your letter and the confidence you have in me by discussing your problems so frankly. It is gratifying to know that you agree with so many of the students who write in about the appropriateness of my answers to the readers. One takes astrology more seriously the longer one studies. It is my sincere hope that these columns are of value to you students and I am grateful for your conscientious approval. Your knowledge of astrology should be helpful in handling the difficult problems in your home and in connection with your finances. The planet Jupiter entered the sign Leo on July 17th and since that time you should have noticed some improvement in the situation. The underlying financial difficulty prevails because of the square of Jupiter to your Sun, but you may expect help from a quarter—both spiritual and material—which appeared impossible at the time you wrote me. Jupiter will also improve your attitude toward your problem. The great sympathy between your chart and that of your daughter is shown, and the contact of the planet Mars in your daughter's chart with that of the planet Saturn in your husband's chart shows a lack of sympathy and understanding between them. You are a fixed, opinionated person; your husband is an impatient man with strong, critical faculties; your daughter is a fixed, nervous, stubborn girl and needs guidance without parental indulgence. Try not to feel sorry for yourself; a more understanding attitude will help to smooth the rough spots of your existence. If I could help you in your study of astrology, I hope you will feel free to write me often and at length.

Editor's Note: Questions for this department are answered only through *Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine*. Each reader is allowed to ask one question. Be sure to give the following data in your letter: date, month, year, and place of birth, the hour of the day or night, if possible, and sex. Address your letters to KAI, care of this magazine.





The Friendliest Corner

By MARY MORRIS

Miss Morris will help you to
make friends



Miss Mary Morris, who conducts this department, will see to it that you will be able to make friends with other readers, though thousands of miles may separate you. It must be understood that Miss Morris will undertake to exchange letters only between men and men, boys and boys, women and women, girls and girls. Please sign your name and address when writing. Be sure to inclose forwarding postage when sending letters through The Friendliest Corner, so that mail can be forwarded.

Address Miss Mary Morris, Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

FROM the picturesque peace of Constantinople to the flamboyant gayety of an American night club! Persis has come a long way. This girl of the East reaches out for the thrilling things of life, and finds them. She's thrilling, herself, with her restless, daring nature, never content with the everyday things of life we quietly endure, never submitting to humdrum things we want to escape. Girls, write to Persis, and you'll be writing to one who knows the secret of excitement, who'll give it to you in every letter she writes! This is a chance no adventure-loving Pal should miss.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a Turkish girl, born in Constantinople, have green eyes, black hair, and an exciting nature. I've tried everything from selling doughnuts at nineteen cents a dozen to night-club dancing. I'm studying astrology, but my pet hobbies are painting, reading, and hunting friends and adventure. I'm never in the same State very long, but I hope to have lots of friends just the same.

PERSIS.

A hard life for a young fun-loving girl.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of seventeen, have dark-brown hair and eyes, and at present am taking the tuberculosis rest cure in a sanitarium. I'd love to hear from everybody. Come on, girls, get the rust off your pens and write to me.

SICK GIRL.

A stay-by-the-fire offers real friendship.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a Brooklyn girl, and can't seem to make friends easily. I'm twenty, and like dancing, rowing, horseback riding, and automobiles. I stay at home and don't go in for expensive entertainment, as my dad isn't working now, but enjoy the radio and playing cards. Girls, write to me. You won't be disappointed.

SHIRLEY.

See New York with a New York widow.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a widow twenty-five years old, living in New York. I'm especially fond of dancing, although I'm not yet expert at it, and I like all sports. Pals, give me a chance.

OTHELIA.

She'll make her friendship last.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm just another lonely girl seeking real friends. I'm dark-haired, dark-eyed, and without beauty. I'd like to hear from the West, but whether you're from North, South, East or West, please write.

DILL.

Here's sympathy for every lonesome Pal.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Won't you please get me some Pals? I'm a young Canadian boy, like all sports and interested in listening to other people's troubles. I'd like to hear from some lonely cowboy, soldier, or sailor, and hope you'll all accept my friendship.

ADVENTURER TERRY.

Girls, send your letters across the seas.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'd be so pleased if you'd include me in your Corner. I'm an Australian girl, twenty-four years old, fond of swimming, dancing, talkies, tennis, and writing. I have correspondents here in Australia, but want some in America. Girls, won't you be my friends?

FAR-OFF MARJORIE.

From Paris to Pikes Peak!

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of nineteen, with hazel eyes and light-brown hair, and I want Pals. Girls, won't you write to a lonesome French girl of Denver? My hobbies are movies and dancing, and I promise a real letter to every one who writes.

FRENCH BERTIE.

Chase away those small-town blues.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm here in a lonesome little town, don't know any one, and haven't a thing to do. I love to write, and have a lot of time for it. I'm a married girl, and will answer every letter that's sent to me.

OREGON MARY.

Girls, won't you brighten her shut-in youth?

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Who'll write to a girl who's in a sanitarium? I'm sixteen, have gray eyes and brown hair, and I'm five feet three and a half inches tall. I've

been in a sanitarium for quite a while, and would like to hear from girls everywhere.

BOBBIE OF WESTFIELD.

See America through an Oriental's eyes.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a twenty-year-old Chinese boy, attending American high school in San Francisco. I left my home in Canton, China, and came to America in 1917. I'm still fond of the Chinese language, and enjoy going to school. I'd like to hear from boys everywhere.

HAY CHEW.

The Corner's youngest stage dancer asks her share of attention.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a little ten-year-old girl, with brown curly hair, brown velvet eyes, and a short nose. I'm interested in swimming, horseback riding, and dancing, and have danced several times on the stage. I'd like hundreds of Pals. Girls, will I get them?

GINGER JEAN.

Hear the thrilling experiences of a nurse.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm just another lonely girl of twenty, a nurse in a private hospital. I have black hair, gray eyes, and am five feet three inches tall. Violin and piano playing as well as dancing are my off-duty pastimes. I meet lots of different people, but would love to meet more through your department.

OKLAHOMA NURSE.

A would-be author who's going to learn how.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a seventeen-year-old girl, who wants loads of letters. I'm especially interested in would-be authors and college girls, as I'm going to enter college soon to study journalism. Won't every one interested in college, writing, or my home State, Texas, write?

EAGER.

Talk things over with a very young mother.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young wife of eighteen years, and have two darling children. I like swimming, camping, and all sports, and I have black hair, brown

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eyes, and a sunny disposition. I'd like to hear from other young mothers and wives, but will surely answer all of you.

SANTA CRUZ MADELINE.

Boys, talk over modern life with a conservative philosopher.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a twenty-seven-year-old boy, living in Toronto with friends, a linotypist in a printing office. I love all kinds of good fun, but am not attracted at all to wild parties. You pals interested in fishing, hiking, tennis, and swimming, write to a lonesome boy who'll tell you interesting things.

TORONTO MANNY.

She'll tell you how to look your best.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'd like to hear from everybody who has an aim in life, or who's interested in music, books, radio, and movies. I'm a girl of seventeen, with light hair and green eyes, and I'm an operator in my mother's beauty shop. I can do anything from a manicure to a permanent, but you'll find me especially speedy at answering letters.

BEAUTY PARLOR DOT.

A Pal well on the way to a stage career.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a fourteen-year-old girl, a freshman in high school. I'm tall, with dark curly hair and blue eyes, and I'm taking up toe dancing. I've danced on the stage for half a year, and would love to tell all you girls about it.

ON HER TOES.

Cure a Quaker City girl's shyness.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl eighteen years old, living in Philadelphia. As I'm very shy, I rarely meet new people. I'd love to make friends through the Corner, and assure all of you that your letters will be very much appreciated. Girls, won't you write?

RAINBOW.

Boys, join this soldier's army of Pals.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a boy twenty-one years of age, with gray eyes and light-brown hair. I'm interested in horsemanship, and am a field artillery man in the United States army. I'm especially inter-

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ested in hearing from the West, as I'm stationed in California, but every one's letter will be welcomed.

JIMMIE OF MONTEREY.

Below the Mason-Dixon Line, with a Southerner's friendliness.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young married woman, twenty-seven years old, and have a little girl of four. My husband works away from home, and I'd like to receive letters to keep me company. I've traveled quite a little and am sure I could write some interesting letters.

A BALTIMORE GIRL.

Tell her your mood; she'll respond!

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a healthy, blue-eyed fourteen-year-old blonde of Polish descent, and I can speak and write either Polish or English. I can be jolly, sympathetic, noisy, mischievous, or quiet as the occasion demands. When alone I daydream or play the piano, but my hobby is making friends. Who'll be the first?

BREEZY JANE.

Twelve years old, with a personality.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of twelve winters, living in New York, and I'm very anxious to have Pals. My favorite pastimes are swimming, writing letters, dancing, and the movies. I have a hot temper and lots of faults, but I'll be right there with friendship. Please, everybody, have pity and write to me.

BROWNIE OF THE BRONX.

Hear about the Loop, Lakeshore Drive, Chicago's mighty skyscrapers.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Who wants to hear from the Windy City girl? I have brown hair, blue eyes, and I'm nineteen. I'd be delighted to hear from the ranching States. Books, tennis, and singing are my hobbies. Girls, let's get going.

HELENE OF WINDY CITY.

A big heart for animals and friends.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Who'll take pity on a lonesome married woman of twenty-five? I'm crazy about pets, especially dogs, so all you dog lovers get busy and write.

I'd also like to discuss housekeeping and exchange recipes; in fact, I'll write about anything to anybody—there's no age limit.

MODERN WIFE.

Write to a business girl, interested in her career.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm an auburn-haired, blue-eyed girl of twenty, secretary to the "big boss," which means that I'm cooped up in an office all day. However, it really isn't so bad, as I'm interested in my work. I'm fond of sports, and want friends all over the country. Girls, write to a hard-working

DALLASITE.

High-school girls, here's a plea for you.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a lonely blond Chicago girl of fifteen, a sophomore in high school, just starting to struggle with the Spanish language. Please, everybody, come to my rescue whether you know anything of Spanish or not.

SOPHOMORE SUE.

Add a Canadian Rocky girl to your collection of friends.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Please, everybody, write to a girl of eighteen who'd like to write to every corner of the globe and receive lots of letters in return. Let's start souvenir collecting and see who can hear from the largest number of countries and States! Oh, yes, Provinces, too, as I'm a stanch little Canadian. A. B. C. GIRL.

Tune in on the Poppy State.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm one more member of California's young crowd who's pinning for Pen Pals. I'm a boy not quite through high school, but I can tell many interesting things about California and its natives. Won't you Pals take pity on a lonesome boy and send me some letters? SAN PEDRO BOB.

She knows the fascination of big business.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: A stenographer from the Berkshires sends out an S O S for Pals. I'm a girl of twenty-one with blue eyes and light bobbed hair, and enjoy all sports and am fond of mystery stories. I

work in a collection agency, and have a great many funny experiences. Who wants to hear of them?

BERKSHIRE BUSINESS GIRL.

Find out what goes on behind the scenes.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a wild girl of seventeen, full of fun. I have many experiences to tell about, as I work in a theater. Girls, why not write to me and find out just how wild I am? I'd love to hear from every one.

THEATER GIRL.

Write, and you'll get the job.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Girls wanted: young or old, rich or poor, far or near; girls who love to chase after thrills and write letters. What do you say, Pals; will you apply for the position?

SYLVETTE.

One girl who needs your friendship.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a crippled girl of eighteen, and have not walked for ten years. I find it very lonely, even though I do live in a big city. I'd like to have Pals everywhere, young, old, big, little. Please, every one, write to me.

ALL-ALONE CONNIE.

Here's interest enough for any Pal!

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a fun-loving, lazy Minnesota girl of sixteen, who'd like to have Pals. I'm interested in anything you are, but as I love mysteries I won't tell you what I look like till you write. I'm fond of music, dancing, sports, and hot dogs. Write to me! HO-HUM.

They've walked the vagabond road to adventure.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: We're two young men, nineteen years old, looking for friends. We've hitch-hiked twelve hundred miles and have come in contact with strange people. Perhaps the things we have to tell would interest lonely Pals. Come on, you walking fans; let's hear from you.

CHUCK AND LOLLY.

A Southern girl hears the call of the stage.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a lonesome Southern girl who wants a Pal. Could you find me one who's interested in dramatics, music, or anything? I'll be so grateful to any one who'll write.

CAROLINA CORNELIA.

Hear about college out on the plains.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Girls wanted: here in Texas! Won't some of you girls write and cheer me up? I'm a seventeen-year-old girl, a sophomore in college, fond of dancing, music, reading, and sports. I speak a little Spanish, but will give friendship in any language.

LONELY LOLA.

A Pal for tango enthusiasts.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: A Maryland girl is anxious to make new friends, especially those from Boston. I'm twenty-four, an amateur Spanish dancer, fond of sports, and a square shooter. Every one from everywhere write to me, and you'll never regret your decision. I'm waiting for letters.

MARQUITA.

Talk over the latest world flight with an aviation fan.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young man twenty-two years old, very lonely, and therefore would appreciate having Pen Pals. I'm tall, with brown hair and eyes, and I'm interested in radio, music, aviation. Won't some one please write to me?

HAZLETON HORACE.

She'll show you the funny side of life.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of twenty, at present unable to do things I like—swim and play golf—as I recently underwent an operation. I have a sense of humor, and am anxious for all girls to write. Won't you be my friends, Pals?

A ROCHESTERIAN.

See theater life from a box seat.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a twenty-three-year-old girl, with brown curly hair and brown eyes, a lover of pets and good times. I work in a theater in a large city, and can tell many interesting facts. Won't you girls be my friends? V. OF WISCONSIN.

Write to a girl of America's Great Lakes.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Here's a girl who wants Pals! I'm seventeen, and was raised in the city that's called "The Hub of the Lake Region." I hope all of you will write. I want to give you my sincere friendship.

HIGH SPIRITS.

A Show-me State demonstrator of friendship.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm just a young fellow hoping to meet more folks. I ride horses, am a good musician, and do almost everything the other fellow will. I have blue eyes, brown hair, and am tall. Boys, why not write to me, too?

MISSOURI BILLY.

Two friends to turn to in trouble.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a married woman, thirty-one years old, lonesome because two of my five children died two years ago. My husband and I always try to give help to our friends when they come to us for advice. We'd like to be real friends to all you Pals, just as we are to the people in the town we live in. Pals, won't you give us a chance?

AN OLD-FASHIONED COUPLE.

Pals, brighten a sick girl's life with letters.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May another lonesome girl come in? I'm five feet five inches tall, with brown hair, blue eyes, and an olive complexion. I've been in a hospital, taking the tuberculosis cure, for a year and three months, and I'd surely appreciate contact with the outside world through Pals.

INGRED.

The Friend In Need

Department

CONDUCTED BY

Laura Alston Brown



SHOULD marriage compel a girl to open some small, secret recess and bring to the surface a past mistake which had perhaps best remain buried?

Would it be playing unfair to conceal such a mistake just because men only may keep their past secret?

Read this letter:

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have followed your department for a long time, and this eternal question as to whether a girl should tell or not about a past mistake interests me greatly. No doubt there are many girls who are in that predicament right at this moment. I'm interested because I'm a girl who has a past, and I told.

But let me start at the beginning. After the usual preliminary preparations, I went to a small college in another town and stayed with a maiden aunt who lived there. I was seventeen and eager for romance with a big R. I dreamed the usual dreams of the day when I would meet the one man for me who would woo me with all tender consideration and chivalry.

After I attended college for six months, I met a relative of one of the girls I chummed with. He was about thirty-five, and fascinated me completely.

I don't suppose it is necessary to go into detail as to what happened. All I can say is that now, at thirty, I look back and see a sweet, silly, sentimental, and romantic child who believed that the sweetly whispered words meant everlasting love.

This infatuation lasted exactly one month. Then he left town and never answered any of the letters I wrote him. I was broken-hearted, and, as my aunt and I were good friends, I told her what happened. She was, naturally, greatly shocked. But she was a brick and understood hu-

man nature and weakness. I continued college for another year, and then I could no longer stand it, so I went home.

I didn't have to, but, to help me forget, I wanted to get a job, and one of my father's friends made room for me in his office. There I met my boss's nephew, Dick. We fell in love. But I was constantly tortured by my conscience, and when Dick asked me to marry him, I foolishly told him, just to live up to the idea that a girl should tell.

Dick was shocked and horrified; he felt sorry for me, but his attentions cooled off so quickly that by the end of the third week I was convinced that any girl who was fool enough to mention any past mistake in her life to the man who proposed marriage, was an idiot and deserved to be disappointed. Had I never told him, we probably would have been married without a mishap.

So life went on, and I met the man who is now my husband. Did I tell him? Certainly not! And after five years of happy married life we love each other, and he is most considerate of me at all times. But I'm sure that, had I told him my story, we would never have married.

Most men are narrow and small and very conventional. It's all right to have a peppy girl friend, and it doesn't worry them whether she has a past or not; but when it comes to marrying a girl who has made a mistake, they back out. I suppose there are men who do forgive and appreciate a girl who tells them the truth about herself; but I have yet to meet one, and, in my estimation, they exist only in story-books.

LOTTA SENSE.

Is Lotta right, folks? Do men ever understand? Can they see things uncolored by their own jealousies? We leave it to you.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Probably my troubles are only molehills, but they seem just too much for me to bear. Sometimes I think that I'll just end it all, because life doesn't seem worth living; but I suppose I'm a coward, because I can't end my life so young.

I'm seventeen and am in love with a boy who is twenty-four. I have been dating him for six months, about five evenings a week, sometimes more. Every one in town knows that he is in love with me and regards me as Dan's girl.

He is wonderful to me, but every night it is the same old story; he asks privileges a nice girl wouldn't give. I tell him that, if he asks me things like that, it shows he doesn't love me. He said, only last night, that, if he didn't love me so much, he wouldn't ask such things.

He goes out with other girls once in a while. I get mad, and he tells me that I'm the cause of his going out. He said that if I would only agree with him, he would never look at another girl. He says that, of course, he had rather it would be me; but, if I still hold out, he has to go with some one.

We are going to be married when he gets a good job. He says that he will never marry me until he can give me everything I should have. Oh, I'd be willing to beg just to be with him. He doesn't realize how much I love him. He says I'm just getting him crazy about me for the thrill and that I don't love him at all.

What must I do? I can't give him up, and the job looks so far away. I have worried so much in the last four months, I can't eat or sleep. I've got to do something quick!

I know Dan really loves me, because he started calling me for dates when I was only fourteen. Lots of people told me how crazy he was about me and how he wanted to go with me; but he was older than I and had a name of being wild, so I never gave him a date.

He asks the impossible, Mrs. Brown, and when I told him that we didn't have the right, he said: "Cookie, if you love me as you say, and - love you, we've every right in the world. Love is all that matters." But is it?
COOKIE.

No, love is not all that matters, child. There are other fine principles that must be observed, or else this entire world and every one in it would be going to extremes.

Once a girl gives in, dear, she is prey to a man. There may be dire consequences which will shadow her entire life and bring nothing but grief, even though at first she may get away without paying for her pleasure.

And a boy who really loves a girl would not behave as that boy friend of yours does, nor try to persuade you. What you ought to do is to give him the air. He's handing you the old blarney about not ever looking at another girl if you will listen to him. Don't do it. Get yourself another boy friend and tell this one to persuade some one else.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have read a good deal in your department about girls, fourteen and fifteen years old, thinking that they were deeply in love with some one and later finding out the man was a husband and father already.

When I was fifteen years old I thought I was in love with a certain boy, and went with him quite often, knowing that he had been married, but he said he was separated from his wife. When he asked me to marry him, I told myself that I had better wait until I was older, because girls of that age sometimes get into trouble making too quick decisions. I told him I was entirely too young to think of marriage, and that if he cared for me enough to marry me he would wait until I was of age. He promised faithfully that he would wait, but two months later I found out that he was living with his first wife.

I told him what I had found out and that it would be best for us not to see each other any more.

I am seventeen now, a senior in high school, and I can see how much more my education is doing for me than getting married would have done.

I am going with a very nice young man steady now, and think a lot of him as a friend; but we have never even thought of marriage.
LOLA.

That's right, Lola; when a girl marries too young she is apt to make a mistake. By the time her marriage is three years old she is bored, perhaps has outgrown what she

thought was love for her husband, and she is unhappy and restless and has missed out on her childhood joys and the companionship of youngsters of her own age.

So it is best to wait until a girl can decide matters from a more mature viewpoint, isn't it?

MY DEAR MRS. BROWN: I hope you can help me out of my difficulty.

I have been married three and one half years. I'm twenty-four years old, and have two children.

My husband earns pretty good money, but we have nothing. I'm ashamed to have my friends come to my home. He handles the money, and he doesn't know how to manage as I could. He never has a regular pay day, and draws money whenever he wants it.

Mrs. Brown, I am losing my love for my husband. He never wants to take me even to a show; he says he'd rather go with the boys. I am home all the time, and I always have been popular and going somewhere, and it's awfully hard on me.

My husband is never home in the evenings, due to his work, although he wouldn't have to stay away so much, and thinks I should never complain about this. I can't very well go anywhere with both the youngsters, and never have any money to hire some one to watch them.

I have tried so hard to be like he wants me, but I really feel like a stranger when he is home.

I have a good education and he hasn't.

I went with a nice boy steady for one and a half years; then we quarreled. I met my husband and only went with him one month when we were married. I can't forget this other man, Mrs. Brown; he has my real love. I have tried so hard to forget him; but, because of lack of interest on the part of my husband. I can't. If he would take me places and be a companion, I could be different by force of will; but I can't otherwise. The only solace I have is in my two dear little children. My little girl is two and one half, and my son is ten and one half months.

My husband drank badly when we were first married, but has quit now, because I threatened to leave if he didn't.

MITZI.

Of course every married woman should have a little recreation and

not stagnate altogether. You say your husband gave up drinking because you threatened to leave him. Perhaps, if you had a frank talk with him and explained that his attitude and actions are slowly but surely pushing your marriage on the rocks, he may listen.

It is the wife's place to run the home, and the husband's to work and provide for his family. That is one of the duties which marriage brings. But it seems that many husbands haven't the faintest idea just what their responsibilities are, and they selfishly treat a wife like a two-year-old.

Talk it over; tell him to give you an allowance to cover household expenditures. Go visit with a woman friend now and then; have some of your friends call, even though your home is not palatial. Perhaps, if you did that, he would wake up and try to make your home more attractive. A man has his pride, too, you know.

As for this other man, use your will power just the same and forget him. You only make yourself more miserable by thinking about him.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am a constant reader of Love Story Magazine, and I enjoy reading your corner very much. You give such splendid advice, I feel sure you can help me, or am I helpless?

I am just twenty, not beautiful, but I dress well and have many friends and a few admirers; but they do not interest me. About three years ago I met and fell madly in love with the most wonderful man in the world. The first time I spoke to him it seemed as though I'd known him all my life. We went together steady and got along splendidly.

He was everything one could wish for in a man—good, respectable, and such a boy, always ready with a smile for every one. My family liked him, and we were so happy; but it was short-lived, that happiness. One day we disagreed and had an argument.

We said no more about it, and we drove

home; he was silent most of the way. When I asked him why he was so quiet he laughed and said he was sorry. After that night I didn't see him for two weeks. When I called his home on the phone I was told he wasn't home. Then one evening I met him at a dance. He was with two other men, and they had all been drinking.

Mrs. Brown, I didn't believe anybody could change as he did in those two weeks. He was sitting alone, and I just couldn't stay away from him, I loved him so, and he was so sick and unhappy. I didn't need any one to tell me. When I spoke to him he just laughed and tried to be like his old self, and told me he was going out to get more drink. My heart was breaking, because I knew he wanted me to get a false impression of him and I didn't know why. I don't know what I said or did. I only know he left me and went to a speak-easy.

I was dazed. He had told me he loved me and talked of the time we would be married, and yet he deliberately hurt me in front of my friends. It just seemed as though my laughing, wonderful Dan could not be this same man, so critical, so hard, so cold to me.

I lay awake for nights, after that, trying to see where I had failed. My pride wouldn't let me go to him, and I soon found he was again himself and doing fine without me.

For one whole year I could not go out with any other fellow or bear to hear his name spoken. I failed in health, and mother sent me away for a vacation. She knew, but said nothing to me about it. I have recovered, but not entirely. Every boy I go with I compare with Dan, and they all fall short somewhere. So I have given up hope of ever finding a man I can care for. Friends say I expect too much of a man, but I always think they have never met Dan, so do not know or understand how I feel.

My sister, who is just a few years older than I, tells me I'm crazy and that if I would go around with her crowd I would soon forget. But, Mrs. Brown, I've tried so many times, and when I get out I'm so blue and sick I just can't be good company, and it always ends up in my crying myself to sleep.

After three years I dream of him and wake up with his name on my lips. Mrs. Brown, what am I going to do? I just can't forget. Sometimes I don't care whether I live or not. There's not much

to live for. I've got to forget or find some way out. HEARTBROKEN.

I know just how you feel, dear, but aren't you a very foolish girl just to sit around and mope? Of course you can't forget him if you persist in keeping him in your mind all the time. You will have to use a little will power. And don't expect to find a perfect man. He wasn't perfect, this boy, only he hit your fancy in the right way, and now you don't even make an honest effort to find out if some other boy would be equally as nice or nicer.

Your sister has the right idea. You *should* be going out and trying to interest yourself in other boys. He wasn't the only one. And I believe you're taking this entire affair much too seriously. Now be a good girl and do yourself a favor. Stop mourning and face life, and before long you'll be smiling and agreeing that this is a grand old world, after all, and people aren't so very bad. There are hundreds of people worse off than you are; people who are blind, crippled, seriously ill, but who eagerly hang onto life. Why not try to help the less fortunate? Make the world a better place by your kindness, and forget your troubles in helping others to forget theirs.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have been a reader of your column for just a short time; but I can see that you give good advice to the puzzled, and you can count me as a steady reader from now on.

When I was fourteen I met a wonderful fellow and proceeded to fall in love with him. We went together for about four weeks; then he had to leave here. You see, he is a sailor. We did not correspond during the following year. In the meantime, I met other boys, and I didn't have time to think of my sailor friend quite so much.

Last March my sailor friend came back, and we went out together again for a while. The last night he was here he asked

me if I would marry him when he left the service.

We have been corresponding ever since then. Recently his ship came here, but he was not on it, and his friends told me that he was going steady with a girl in his home town and probably intended to marry her. I said nothing of his promise to me, thinking it was best not to. Then I wrote to him and asked him if it was true about the other girl, but I have heard nothing from him since.

Should I try to forget him, or should I fight for him? I am past sixteen now, and he is twenty. I would greatly appreciate your advice.

WINNIE.

My dear child, in the first place, you are too young to be thinking seriously of any boy, much less of marriage. Forget this sailor friend of yours, and make other friends, both boys and girls, in your own vicinity. He was not serious with you, dear.

Isn't there some young folks' association you could join? Go out with girl friends, and don't depend on boys only to show you a good time.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have read your department in the Love Story Magazine for some time, and I believe you can help me. I am in no serious trouble, but I just want some advice.

I have been going with this girl for about a year, and we love each other truly; but at times we quarrel, and I always give in, just because I love her and don't want to be on bad terms with her. I really don't mind that, but I don't think it is helping her. In fact, it seems to be making her a little narrow-minded. We have never had a serious quarrel but once, and we were split up for almost a month then. That time she called and asked me to come down to her house, which I reluctantly did.

She is getting so that she is better now in most things. Neither of us drinks or smokes. We rarely pet with any one, just with each other. I never do, and she has just two or three times. She has two close girl friends she thinks a great deal of, and sometimes she goes with them when she feels a little hurt, even when she has a date with me. I have thought of going with

other girls at times like that, and have done so once or twice.

Now, Mrs. Brown, here is the problem: We are both sixteen years old. Is that too young to love and know that you are really in love? I sometimes wonder if we are just blind. Do you think that I should put down my foot and make her do what I know is right, as long as it causes no hard feelings from her parents? Please advise me as to what you would do if you were in my place.

BLINK.

Yes, sir, sixteen is far too young to know what real, lasting love is all about. Both you and your little girl friend have lots of time to think of wedding bells and such, and both of you should go out with other friends.

When you do have a quarrel, I think you are foolish to give in when she is in the wrong. In the first place, why quarrel if you can possibly avoid misunderstandings? Both of you are passing through a stage of puppy love, so don't mistake it for the real thing.

When you reach the dignified age of twenty, you will probably be in love with some one else, even though now you may be swearing eternal constancy to each other. Be good friends, but go easy on this sweetheart business.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am a weekly reader of Love Story, and I always enjoy your department.

You have given wonderful advice to so many people that I decided to seek your advice for my problem. If any one ever needed advice, I do. Please try to understand my position in this entanglement.

I am a woman twenty years of age, and have been married for one year. I am married to a man whom I do not love. I knew I didn't love him before I married him, but I just couldn't bring myself to tell him because I knew he loves me in his way. But what a way!

He came from a family of four children, all boys. They always had their own way in everything. They haven't any manners at all.

Whenever we have company, my husband always tries to show off a great deal, and it is most embarrassing. I have tried

to talk to him, I even begged and coaxed him to stop being silly; but he just gets angry and won't listen to me. Whatever feeling I have had for him is fast leaving me, and I seem to hate him more every day. It is terrible to live like this, and I don't believe I shall be able to stand it much longer.

Now, Mrs. Brown, I am going to tell you something you may not approve of, but it is the truth.

I am in love with another man, although he was married when I met him, and that was five years ago. He has two children; I haven't any. He loves me, too. Please don't tell me it is infatuation, because I know I love him. I have tried to forget him, but it seems impossible.

I am the only child in my family, and I love my parents; but they just do not understand my trouble. They believe that, now I have made my bed, I must lie in it. My mother told me that, if I left my husband, the shame of it would kill her. I don't think she loves me very much, or she would think of my happiness.

I am working hard, and am worrying a good deal. I do all my own work and my mother's, too. She gets angry when I am not at her house almost all day, and my husband is angry because I don't stay home more.

What should I do about the man I love? Am I not entitled to any happiness? I will do whatever you say, because I have no one else to turn to for advice. LUCILLE.

Of course, it is unfortunate that you should be married to a man whom you do not love; but isn't it a little bit too late to cry about it now? If you knew you didn't really love him before you married him, why did you marry him? It isn't quite fair to do that and now be ready to throw it all up. No doubt he loves you now, and he would be very unhappy without you.

I agree with your mother that, having made your bed, you ought to be game enough to lie in it. However, I don't agree about this helping-out business. Can't your mother do her own work? Your place is in your own home, and I can't quite blame your husband for kicking about your being away a great deal

of the time. Of course, you might help your mother sometimes; but your job is to run your own home and let your mother run hers.

As for the man you are in love with, you wouldn't really want to help him do the wrong thing, would you? Perhaps you can't forget him in a hurry, but you can forget if you give yourself a chance. Try to love your husband; pick the good points in his nature. Point out to him the error of showing off at any time, for that only makes him lose a little prestige in the eyes of sensible people. Talk to him when he is in good humor, don't nag or quarrel; I'm sure it will help.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: This is my first letter to you; but, after reading Elise's letter, I just couldn't help but write and congratulate her for the stand that she takes.

I don't think a girl should drink, even just to be sociable, because when a girl drinks, smokes, et cetera, the boys get the impression that she will pet and throw a necking party any old time.

I am a marine and have traveled a great deal, and it seems I have met millions of girls. Many times I would have given almost anything to be in the company of the sort of girl she seems to be.

I come from a fairly well-to-do Southern family, and did not join the marines because it was a case of sink or swim. I am glad there are girls left who have high ideals. A MARINE.

I think you're due for still further surprises, my boy. There are actually very many girls who possess high ideals and live up to them. Some of these girls may appear to be sweet little flappers, others are a bit more poised; but a girl need not look like an 1886 version of an old maid to be good and unspoiled.

Get to know some of these nice girls—it's not hard to find them—and you'll agree with me.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am seventeen, have been married, but will soon be free

again, and I am in love with a married man of twenty-five. He is separated from his wife. I love him very much, and at times I believe he loves me, too, but he won't tell me so. He often says it wouldn't do to tell me how much he cares.

We each have a little boy. His boy is four and mine is a year and a half. I am crazy about his little boy, too, although I have only seen his photograph.

Mrs. Brown, please tell me what to do, but don't tell me to go away or forget him or to stop seeing him. I have tried all that, and it doesn't work. Isn't there any way out without giving him up? He takes me out, and when we are together he has eyes only for me. SWEET THING.

If he were free, there would be a way out without your giving him up. But, as long as he is not, you are only fooling yourself and causing your own heartaches by considering this infatuation as love. Of course, it may be love, but I have my doubts about it.

You may have tried to forget him, dear, but the trouble is you haven't tried hard enough. Why not quit seeing each other for a while; that will help more than you might believe. And as long as you do see him you won't be able to forget him. He is married, and can offer you nothing except a few moments of forbidden enjoyment. Why not play fair—if you love him—and do the honorable thing? Later, if he is free some day, then, perhaps, you can get together again.

In the meantime, make other friends and try to be interested in them.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I suppose you hear many a hard-luck story, but I hope you will listen to mine, too.

I don't remember my own father, and my mother married again when I was six years old. My childhood was quite happy until I grew older. Then my stepfather didn't treat us well at all. He beat us and quarreled all the time. At fourteen I married a man I didn't care for at all, just to get away from it all. But my husband was very brutal and beat me, too.

One year after that my mother was free again, and my sister married, and my brother, also.

I was in a bad condition, lost weight, and went around with a black eye. Finally some friends of mine persuaded me to leave him, and I went home to my mother. She was married again to a man we all loved. Mother fairly worshiped him, but a short time after that he died. We were all heartbroken. Mother had a little money left to her, so we all settled in a small cottage.

After running around for a year, I met a boy and fell in love with him. We went around for six months, and when I was free we were married. But four months after that he told me he wanted his freedom and didn't care to stay married to me. Of course, I didn't agree with him. Well, he started running around, and we drifted apart. We just couldn't get along, and to make me hate him and let him go he used to tell me he didn't love me, I was a poor cook and didn't know how to keep house, and that he was sorry he ever married me.

Finally he left and went to his parents. He left me without a cent, so I took the only job that I could find, as hostess in a night club. His folks persuaded him to come back, and he did. We got along fine for a week, and then the same thing happened over again. He still goes out nights and spends the money we need for other things, and he won't work.

Do you think it is because he is young, twenty-one, that he is this way? I shall soon be eighteen. I know we are just kids, but we've seen life, and he has worked and supported his folks since he was fifteen. I love him very much, and feel I'll do something desperate if things don't work out for our happiness. Sometimes I think he loves me, and sometimes it doesn't look that way at all. I'd do anything for him. I suppose I should leave him, but I just can't, I love him so much.

Do you think there's any hope for something better? HEARTSICK.

There's always hope, honey. You are right; both you and your husband are just kids, and that is where most of your trouble lies. You are both young and still lack the understanding that should exist between you, even though you two have had a slice of life already.

Be patient, dear. Be as friendly

and sociable as you can. Don't nag or scold or plead or beg. If he wants to go out, let him. He'll come back. I think he loves you, but he is young and feels somewhat tied by this marriage.

Can't you find some other kind of work than hostess in a night club? Try, and I think you'd be better satisfied. And, since you love him so much, don't give up hope or do anything foolish. I feel that, if you stay together a while longer, things will somehow work out for you.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I just read A Good Forgive's letter to Kentucky Cardinal. It touched my heart so much; I wish I could only meet a man like you, Good Forgive. Do they really exist?

I believe every girl who has a past should tell a man before she marries. I think she would be a terrible cheat if she didn't. There are a lot of men who can't forgive, though.

I'm going with a wonderful boy, have been going with him ten months. We had only gone together about a month and a half when I told him about my past. It seemed my mind could have no peace until I told him. He was sweet to me—sweeter than any one has ever been—but he can't forgive and forget. He says the boys he knows would always laugh at him if he married me.

I can't really blame him, Mrs. Brown, for I'd like to know that my husband could come to me clean, too. He hasn't been a bad boy, but he's had a few small affairs.

He says he might be happier if I hadn't told him, but he wouldn't take a million dollars for my not telling him. I asked him if he thought a girl should tell, and he said he wouldn't advise one to tell or not to tell.

It seems, Mrs. Brown, that there's nothing in the future for me, but I'm not sorry I told him. Maybe some day he'll learn that "To err is human; to forgive, divine."

Girls, just a word to you. Save yourselves until you meet Mr. Right, for when you really love, all these things hurt terribly. Another thing, if a man loves you truly, he isn't going to want you to do wrong. Am I right, Mrs. Brown? I believe I am.

Girls, you don't know what it is to suf-

fer until you love and have a dark past behind you. I envy good girls. They should be crowned. I could have been one, and so could some of you.

Forgive me for such a long letter, dear Mrs. Brown; but I felt I had to write to you. Your department is a wonderful help to me, and I enjoy reading it. RUTH.

That's right, Ruth; when a boy loves, really loves, he would never intimate he wants the girl of his heart to do something that would always remain a regret.

However, one mistake shouldn't throw your entire life into a colored ball which would always remain before your eyes. I think the sooner you forget your past, the bigger a favor you will render yourself. And, since you have found that telling about your past is a mistake, why mention it some day when you will meet a man who will ask you to marry him?

Just now, "going" with this boy who doesn't love you enough to forgive is rather a foolish thing to do. If he hasn't the courage to face facts and accept you in good faith, why continue to go around with him and make your life more difficult?

Forget him and make other friends, dear; don't let this "down" you. You've a life to live, and, of course, there is still much happiness that you can have if you will only get busy and go after it.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am a discouraged wife of nineteen. I met my husband when I was fifteen, and he was twenty-four. He had been married before and is the father of an eight-year-old boy, an illegitimate child. My parents disapproved very much of my going with him, but I was so young and inexperienced, and I thought I loved him. I found out too late it was just infatuation and far from real love.

I would have found it easier to bear if he had treated me as well as he had promised so many times he would do. Had I been older, I wouldn't have swallowed everything so easily. He was older, more

experienced, and knew just how to go about feeding me many falsehoods.

After we'd stayed with his people until we couldn't stay longer, we went to live in our own place. But he has such a hateful disposition no one can get along with him. He is one of those men who never appreciate anything a wife, or any one else, does for him. My friends think it is terrible that I should be married to him, and, as he had led such a wild life before we were married, they still look down on him. Sometimes I feel they don't want to be friendly with me on his account, although I guess I just imagine it.

I have always been a good girl, and I can't understand why life should be so cruel to me. I hope my experience is a warning to all those young girls who think they are in love at fifteen or sixteen and want to get married before they are able to size up the man.

My husband is forever nagging at me and is mean in everything. He won't work steady, and it is all we can do to keep from going hungry. Do you think if he had been half a man he would have robbed a cradle, so to say, and ruined my young life? I feel so bitter sometimes. If he'd only quit nagging and treat me decently, I could stand it.

What shall I do? Shall I leave? We have no children, and that is one thing I am glad about. In a way, I should hate to leave. My mother tells me to come and stay with her until he changes. Do you think he may change if he is left alone?

DISCOURAGED MAE.

You poor child, you have all my sympathy. But why in the world did your parents permit you to marry at the tender age of fifteen? Yes, I think it wouldn't hurt if you did take a vacation.

But, before you do go, have a frank talk with your husband. Tell him that, although you may be a child in years, you are his wife, and he has no right to treat you like an imbecile. You have your rights, you know. Talk to him in a friendly manner, and don't try to argue or fuss. Tell him the days for slaves are over, and that it is high time he woke up and treated you as a wife should be treated.

If he cares for you at all, he will sit up and take notice. It is never too late to hope that some change may occur.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am nineteen years of age, and I have been going with a fellow who is twenty-one.

I am madly in love with him, and I am sure that he loves me, too; but every time he starts to say anything of the kind to me I stop him. You may think I am very foolish to do this when I say I love him; but, you see, the whole trouble is that he is engaged, and has been for two years.

He tried to get the girl to break the engagement, but she refused, saying that he was engaged to her and she would not break the engagement. He will not ask her the second time, and if he has to go through with it, it will only ruin both our lives, as I will never go with any one else, and I know that he does not care as much for her as he does for me.

My mother or dad know nothing of his engagement; because, if they did, they would forbid my seeing him, and forbid him to come to the house. If they did this, I know that I'd meet him secretly and go out with him anyway.

Every time I am away from him I tell my friends that I am not going to see him any more, but the minute I see him I forget all about it and make a date with him.

It seems that, when I see him, everything is as gay as can be; but, if I do not see him, I feel so melancholy that every one around me comments upon it.

I wonder if you could help me solve my problem and tell me what I am to do?

MARION.

Dear Marion, "never" is a long, long time. And, although at nineteen you may be very positive that you will never be interested in another boy, I should like to hear your point of view about a year from now.

Since this boy is engaged to one girl, he isn't playing fair by going with you, too. And if he wanted to break with the other girl because he didn't care for her and couldn't marry her under a false impression, he would see to it that the break

happened. As long as it doesn't, I don't think he is serious about you. So why not quit thinking that he cares for you.

You've got a very strong crush on this boy. Go out with other boys, stop going with him, and I am sure that in a short while you will feel differently about the entire matter.

If you don't believe me, try it.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am a fool! I realize it; you will, too, when you finish reading this, and I want you to tell a girl who lacks about thirty inches of spine how to say, "No," and make people realize she means "No" when they know she has said, "Yes." Will you try?

I am five feet seven inches tall, so I can't very well describe myself as considered cute; but most people think I'm a darn good sport, and I'm kidded about being the blond peril and man menace, on account of the line of chatter, and I've always been called clever. One boy has told several of my friends that, if I were smaller and good-looking, the other gals wouldn't have a chance. And no one seems to realize that I'm capable of real love. I'm a sweet kid, got a lot of sense, I never make scenes, carry my liquor well, and I'm not narrow-minded. Sounds O. K.; but, Mrs. Brown, I'm not the girl I used to be and wish I still were. I'm fed up on parties, and still I party.

Meeting new boys, I often play Miss Angel and get treated accordingly till they find out. I'm considered by some boys, whom I've never dated, as "hot stuff," on account of the fact that I do drink quite a bit and neck a lot on parties they've heard about. The boys I've partied with for years just whoop if I tell them I've reformed, and it's, "Babe, you need a drink." So I drink, dance, and am a happy-go-lucky with the rest. And no one dreams that I'm really bored to death.

No foolin'; I'm sure a girl can love more than one boy at a time. I do. I'm in love with a boy named Johnnie, who is a big frat man, popular with the very best people, and yet he dates chicken pickers and factory girls, et cetera, who have the reputation of being promiscuous. He takes them everywhere. He wanted a girl to party with, so I, like a fool, got tight and even stayed all night with him.

Now he can't even see me. Yet I only did what he asked, which isn't what he really wanted. Also, I'm in love with another boy who says he loves me, but doesn't take me anywhere because he's broke. He used to talk of marriage. He doesn't now! Guess I've disillusioned him, too.

Then there's another boy whom I date more than either of these other two, and we drink! I don't love him. I might if I thought he loved me; but I give him more privileges than any one, just because we're drinking and he is a lot of fun. He really loves me as much as his whisky-been-wine-women-and-song soul is capable of loving any one; but he really thinks he's a wee bit better than most people. My parents think he is, too. He's seven years older than I am; I'm twenty. He doesn't intend to marry me, and if I even mention any other boy, he tells me not to fall in love and ruin my life. As though I could, now. It's my fault, though. I should tell him I never want to see him again, but I really enjoy his company.

A girl friend of mine went through the mill, and now has found a boy she thinks is different; but he pesters me to death to party with him. He thinks she's an angel. Do you suppose I'll ever find any one to think I'm an angel? I'm not really considered tough; just a little wild. No one, except the three boys I mentioned, really knows I'm not untouched. Every one of them swears I'm merely a good sport. Yet I know, and I'd give anything to be the girl I was three years ago.

This sounds as if I were only about thirteen years old and imagining things, but I'm in my third year of college and belong to a fair-rating sorority. My friends at the house all think I'm a swell lot of fun, and I do love lots of dates with nice boys, only they all drink. I do not smoke or talk foul ever. That's why I'm well liked by older people.

But I want to have a home and babies and stop being a little blond peril, the party girl, the happy-go-lucky kid. I stopped dating for two months last winter, and these catty little sorority sisters of mine started a scandal about Johnnie and me. If one dates, she's putting out something; if one stays home, there's a reason.

I'm not going back to school next year, can't afford it. I'm still asking how to make them know that "No" means "No."

MARLENE.

My dear, dear child, if a girl wants to stay good, she certainly

can, and no one will convince me that she can't.

So it is up to you, and it doesn't depend on learning how to say, "No," and then impressing the boys properly that you mean business and are no longer going in for partying. There's only one way to say, "No," and that is to say, "No," and not change that "No" to a "Yes."

You might quit associating with these three boys. That will help. When you are out of college, get yourself a job, take it seriously, make friends with other people, and drop the old wild gang. That will help still more. And if your sorority sisters circulate a story as to why you've quit the gang, why let them worry you, as long as you are living up to the finer instincts?

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I would like your advice on my problems.

I am a Southern girl spending some time in the West. I am in love with a boy from home; we are the same age. We were keeping company when we were seventeen, and are twenty-one now. Somehow, we drifted apart. It seems that when he cared a lot for me I was fickle and didn't seem to realize how much I did care for him until I lost him.

You see, Mrs. Brown, I'm not sure yet if I have really lost him, so this is why I'm asking your advice.

You see, we would go out now and then, and I would ask him to write me. I was living in a large city, and he was living in a country town. Well, he would always promise to write. At first he sent me "specials," and then his letters became fewer, until finally he stopped writing. The only reason he would give me was he was busy, so I didn't press him.

This last Christmas Eve I met him at a dance. He never asked me for a dance, and I was hurt. Christmas night he came to my house and expected me to be home; but I had a date, and I can truthfully say I was glad. He is an independent sort, and, also, always expected me to be waiting home for him whenever he felt like taking me out; but, as I am a lover of dancing, I always accepted invitations from other boys.

I am an acrobatic toe dancer, and he not only asked me to give up all my boy friends, but also my dancing. I refused to give up both; we had an argument and broke our friendship.

I hear from a friend down home that he is very seldom seen with another girl. I cannot get him out of my mind. I sent him a card when I came up here—that was six months ago—and I've never heard from him.

Now, Mrs. Brown, I've done everything in my power to put things as they were, but it is all in vain, and I blame no one but myself for what has happened.

This boy is very fine and comes from a good family. In fact, he is a cousin of my brother-in-law. He is in business with his dad and believes in working his way through. I suppose that is why I fell so hard for him.

I go out with boys up here and am trying to forget him, but it just seems impossible.

HELENA D.

I think you did the right thing, my dear, in refusing to give up all your friends and your dancing, just because this boy wanted you to without a good reason. And because he makes such small effort to regain your friendship, it shows he could not have loved you very much in the first place.

If you loved some one very much, and he had any sort of talent, you would be proud of it and never dream of asking him to give it up simply because it brought him in contact with others. Boys are apt to be rather selfish, and the moment they do not feel sure of themselves they become jealous and ask the girl to give up every other friend.

I am sure that, if you keep on making new friends, you will forget this boy. And if you do happen to meet again some day, be friendly, but don't let him dictate to you.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have been reading your column for three years, and I'm certainly burning up now.

Listen, A Man—what a laugh! You don't even deserve a name. If you were any

kind of a man you wouldn't slam a flapper. Just because you were dumb enough to get a selfish wife, it doesn't say all flappers are built that way.

I am a flapper from head to toes, and I'm proud of it. I don't drink or pet, but I have a wonderful time, and every one respects me. If it weren't for men like you, this world would be a wonderful place.

I can also cook and keep house as well as your stay-at-home girl. I notice that when you go out you usually pick a flapper to flap around with. Why? Because she can be a real good sport. After you marry your old-fashioned girl, whom do you want to go out with—your wife? No; the flapper.

You're so narrow-minded your ears touch. Why not give them more room? Your He-man from Ohio pal is just as bad as you, and you certainly don't have my sympathy.

A real flapper wouldn't even be caught talking to you. Also, the flappers of to-day aren't vain or brainless. The flapper of to-day is capable of taking care of herself. She doesn't have to depend on a mere man.

A BLUE-EYED FLAPPER.

There you are, A Man. I do hope you will have a different opinion of the flapper of to-day.

And here's another little flapper anxious to give you a piece of her mind.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am a devoted reader of your column, but I have never written to you before and probably would not have done so now if I hadn't read A Man's letter.

Mr. Man, you are very much mistaken in your idea of a flapper. I can plainly see where you got your idea, too. Just because you married a brainless butterfly, don't judge all flappers by her.

I am what one may call a flapper. I am single and twenty years of age. I go to parties, dances, picnics, and such, and when I do, I have a good time. Although my crowd and I are considered wild by the cranks of the town, we are all good girls. As for being man crazy, do you know that the least of my thoughts are men? Why, they won't let us alone.

Let me tell you, Mr. Man, I have had chances to get married and refused them. Why? For just the reason that I didn't want the thing to happen to me that happened to your wife. She didn't love you,

and needed something to take her mind off you.

When I marry the man I love I won't need parties and dances. Working for him, cooking for him, and loving him will be all that I will need to make me happy. Though they never show it, that is the thought in every flapper's mind. Any of the folks here wouldn't have thought it possible that I had written this letter, and they never will know; but I had to tell A Man that he was very much mistaken.

A WILD FLAPPER.

And that's that! Any comeback on that, A Man?

DEAR MRS. BROWN: This is my first letter to you; but, since you bring up so many interesting problems, I have one, too. This is about women. Not exactly about any particular woman, but women in general. I mean, women who are not married and are looking for a husband.

I'm thirty-four, not bad-looking, have a good job and a car and a fair income, not mentioning a little money in the bank. The town I live in is a fair-sized one, and I appear to be one of those men whom women run after. Not the young flappers, but women who are either widows or have been divorced.

Now, I haven't any grudge against them. I like feminine society as much as any man; but, for Heaven's sake, why do these females have to make it so plain that they are chasing a man? Why can't they be more subtle in this hunting game?

A man gets pretty well fed up when, upon meeting some woman, she at once begins to gush and play the clinging vine, and actually implies she is in the market for another husband and that I am very desirable.

My problem consists of this: I'm in love, or I think I am, with a woman of thirty. She has one child four years old and is casting her eye about for a husband. Now, what I am not sure of is this: Does she really love me, or am I liked just for my ability to make a dependable meal ticket.

A TIRED BUSINESS MAN.

I'm flattered to think that you consider me as one of those people who claim they can look into a little crystal ball and see your entire future. How can I tell just how your girl friend feels? You'll have

to find out for yourself, judge from the little things that often have such a loud voice in deciding matters, and also use your own logical deductions.

Keep right on being friends with her, and let time show you whether or not she loves you. If you really love her, and she loves you, you'll know it, and you won't lean on any outside help to be convinced, either.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: My trouble seems to lie in the fact that, although I am not overpopular with the girls, I certainly seem to be quite popular with the boys. I am twenty years old and rather good-looking, but I don't think there is anything unusual about me.

At my "tender" age I am disgusted with men, for, although it is my policy not to go steady more than two months at a time, I can honestly say I have never gone out with any boy more than three times before he proposed marriage to me.

I do not believe in marriage, and I absolutely detest children, or rather the thought of any of my own, although I do like them as long as they call some other poor fool "mother." But not for me.

I have tried to discourage proposals in every way, even to playing the part of the well-known flat tire; but it won't work. If I am "flat," they like it and come back the next evening for more, and if I am a regular guy, they don't care if they never get home.

Can you find a way for me to have a good time and not have to be refusing a proposal every night?

I have a collection of ten engagement rings, and as one of my so-called suitors was too optimistic, I also have a license and the wedding ring, unused.

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.

My friends just can't seem to get it into their heads that I don't want to get married, and my mother has threatened all sorts of things if I don't make up my mind and stick to one boy, preferably to the one who has the most money and regardless of the fact that he is forty-two years old, a War veteran, and suffering from shell shock.

I have managed to marry off most of my girl friends to some of the boys I know, and I still have a flock left. I hope you can find a way out of this, as I am thinking of leaving home. Would you advise that?
LILLIAN.

No, dear, I wouldn't advise you to leave home. You seem to have been blessed with a superfluous abundance of the mysterious *it*, and draw the boys to you as a flame draws the moth. Some girls would give their eyeteeth to be in your shoes. Of course, the forty-two-year-old suitor is out of the question.

If boys are so unnecessary to your daily life, and the thought of marriage is disagreeable, then why not quit having boy friends for a while? That might solve your problem very easily.

So you don't believe in marriage! You're riding for a fall, honey, and when you fall I wish I could be there. I have a strong hunch that some day you'll change your mind to a surprising point, and your idea about marriage, children, and the entire love scheme will be very, very different.



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The Lucky Strike
Dance Orchestra,
every Tuesday,
Thursday and Saturday
evening over
N. B. C. net-
work.

"It's toasted"

Including the use of Ultra Violet Rays
Sunshine Mellows — Heat Purifies

Your Throat Protection — against irritation — against cough