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OCTOBER, 1937

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BEDTIME STORIES, a monthly magazine, is published by the D. M. Publishing Co., Inc., Dover, Del.

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Let's Write!



NOTICE:—No letter will be published unless the writer gives permission to print his or her full name and address.—The Editor.

Dear Editor:

Please put my letter in your next issue. I have been reading Bedtime Stories for a long time. I would like to hear from all readers.

I would like to exchange photos, too. Write soon.

Yours truly,
Joseph Donovan Jr.

54 South St., Goshen, N. Y.

Dear Editor:

I am a young man 21 years of age 5 ft. 11 in. tall, have black hair, brown eyes.

I would like very much to exchange letters with some readers my age or older.

I just read the June issue of "Bedtime Stories" and they are getting better all the time.

I will answer every letter I receive.

Yours truly.

Mike Murphy

319 North Harley, Drumright, Oklahoma

Dear Editor:

I would like to hear from both boys and girls about the age of 20 to 24. I have black curly hair, grey eyes, am 5 ft. 2 in. tall. Won't somebody come on and write.

Sincerely,

Maxine Jessen

1318 W. 8th St., Grand Island, Ind.

Dear Editor:

As a regular reader of "Bedtime Stories" magazine, I'd like to say my words of thanks

to the editor, etc., for a fine little magazine, one I really enjoy, as I guess a lot of others do.

If this gets into the department in the magazine, I'd like to hear from some of the other readers, male and female. We might see what the other sees and what he or she thinks of it all. If you'd like to, I'll swap snapshots with all comers.

I'm male, free, white, and twenty-five. An amateur artist and amateur photographer (very). Let's hear from one and all.

Sincerely,

Daniel Lee

295 Bay St., San Francisco, Cal.

Dear Editor:

I am a lucky fellow to know of your column. I am very lonesome and would love to hear from some readers. I am 26 years old, 5 ft. 8 in. tall, have black wavy hair and a nice personality. I would like very much to correspond with anyone. I am the athletic type and a very successful boxer.

Yours truly,

Frank Rinaldi

502 W. 28th. St., New York City

Dear Editor:

I read your magazine every month and appreciate it very much. A fine book!

I am 5 ft. 2 in. tall, dark hair and green eyes. I like sports and all good times. Would answer faithfully any letters written to me.

Sincerely,

Miss E. A. Tase

150 N. York St., Cassapolis, Mich.

SNAPPY CHUCKLES!



"Let's Be Informal!"

Ву

Tom Kane

STEVE WHITE turned the check this way and that in his thin, artistic hands. Mulling over the situation, he read the letter again.

"Dear Steve:" it ran:

"I am enclosing herewith my check for five hundred dollars. Please accept it as the first—and I hope only—option on the yet unfinished play HEARTBREAK.

"I shall resent it to my dying day if you return it as you have the others.

"Let me know when I can see the 'script.

Yours.

Ephus Drake."

His mouth was a straight line and his eyes were expressionless. Then he put check and letter back into the envelope and slipped it into his pocket. He stood up and went foreward.

Clumsily he untied the spliced and patched painter which made the vintage motor boat fast to the dock, and as her bow pushed off, he returned hurriedly to the stern.

For some unfathomable reason the ancient engine fired at the first twist of the crank, and with a final glance at his heaped-up provisions, Steve slipped in the clutch and headed for the open sea.

He looked aloft. Heavy clouds obscured the blue of the September morning, and no sooner had he passed through the entrance to the harbor than his none-too-seaworthy craft commenced to pitch and toss in the most alarming fashion. Steve clung to the spokes of the wheel and prayed that his engine would last the nine or so miles to the lighthouse which was his temporary home.

He was no sailor and he was no engineer and the passage through the rough water was not exactly a vacation. He shipped sea after sea, and it was not very long before his boots were slipping and slithering about in five inches of swirling water. The wind rose and the sea accompanied it; but the spluttering engine did not miss, and about an hour later, Steve chugged into the lee side of the obsolete lighthouse. And then the fun started.

It was some little time before he was able to

make the boat fast fore and aft; but he succeeded at last and cut the engine switch. He pocketed the key and began to toss his bundles and packages up onto the dock. This accomplished, he climbed out himself and with a terrific sigh of relief, stretched his arms. He looked down into the boat and his eyes almost started from his head. A heap of tarpaulin up in the bows seemed suddenly possessed of movement. Steve watched it fascinated. Then a head emerged from the pile. The head of a pretty girl.

"Good grief," said the pretty girl, "you're the lousiest sailor I've ever sailed with. Did you have to keep her broadside to the swell the entire way?"

"What're you doing here?" Steve demanded.

The girl crawled from the tarpaulin and stood up. She was dressed in slacks and a tightly belted polo coat. Dark little curls clustered about a jaunty beret and there was salt on her long and lustrous lashes. She was slim, young and lovely.

Steve took all this in; but he repeated, "What're you doing here?"

The girl stuffed her hands into the pockets of her polo coat. Cocking her cute head to one side, she smiled and replied, "I'm a fugitive."

Steve started. "From justice?" His eyes were getting wild.

"No, darling. From love."

Steve squatted down on the rock and glared at her. "I'm going to take you right back again," he announced.

The girl's silvery laugh could be heard above the pounding of the waves. "Don't be silly," she said. "This old tub'd never make it. Certainly not with you at the helm."

STEVE GLANCED AT the gathering, threatening clouds. Grudgingly, he admitted to himself that she had spoken the truth.

"But you can't stay here," he said a bit lamely. "You see, I'm all alone and it—well, it wouldn't look right."

"They say seaguils're almost totally blind," the girl informed him.

"You don't understand what I'm driving at," Steve said with growing annoyance.

The girl stepped lightly over the badly coiled ropes and onto the rungs of the iron ladder which was embedded in the side of the rock. With the agility of an athlete, she swung herself up beside him. Steve straightened and faced her. The top of her curly head came to his chin. She stood very close, her hands again in the pockets of her coat. Her dark, mischievous eyes flashed and she had a lovely little mouth. The top of

the coat was open and Steve noticed for the first time that the linen blouse she was wearing fitted as though there were quite a bit of something for it to cover. Steve could not help liking that aspect of the situation.

"Wait until you hear my story," the girl told him. "You'll feel so sorry for me you'll hand the whole blessed lighthouse over to me." She eyed him confidently.

"It'ud better be a good one," Steve said grimly. "It's a corker."



A large drop of rain fell. Then several of its mates. In a few seconds it was quite a party. "What's your name?" Steve demanded.

"Ruth."

"Ruth what?"

"Let's be informal. What's yours?"

"Steve. Help me with these packages before they get wet."

"Get wet?" Ruth laughed. "You shipped so many seas I'll be surprised if they aren't soaked through."

By the time they got the last of the packages into the living room of the lighthouse, the rain was coming down in torrents. It was almost impossible to see the sea, and the whole world seemed to be sheets of scything rain.

STEVE BUILT A FIRE and he and Ruth sat on either side of it. She had removed the coat and the beret, and Steve grudgingly admitted that she was the most attractive girl he had ever seen. The neckline of the linen blouse was very low and every time she stooped—which she managed to do very often—Steve was treated to a hint of what lay beneath it. Her bosom was large but it seemed to be very firm and it was certainly perched high on her chest. Steve found that his mouth was getting a little dry, and he was convinced that Ruth was wearing practically nothing under the clinging, almost skintight slacks.

Her arms were bare almost to the shoulders and she had crisp and lovely hair. Steve came to the conclusion that he was in for a pretty tough time of it.

In as matter-of-fact a tone as he could manage, he said,

"Let's have the yarn and don't forget to make it a good one."

Ruth shrugged her shapely shoulders and the most wondrous agitation took place beneath the confines of the linen blouse.

"There's really not much to tell," she said.

"Just Albert. Albert is in love with me. I've known him for years. I don't love him and I don't want to marry him."

"Not much of a problem there," Steve said.

"But you see I have a kind heart," Ruth pointed out. "When Albert comes to me with tears in his weak eyes and solemnly informs me that he's going to do away with himself unless I marry him, I weaken. I mean, I can't help it. I decided to run away. You just happened to be the victim."

"And what happens when they find out where you are?"

Again Ruth shrugged her shoulders. "We'll cross that bridge when we come to it. Now... what d'you do?"

"I write plays."

"Goody-goody! Look—before we go any farther, may I sit on your lap?" She eyed him wistfully and Steve burst out laughing.

"Sure," he said cordially.

Ruth got up and crossed to him. She stood in front of him and the firelight flickered on her lovely little face. Her large bosom rose and fell and Steve could see the entire outline of it through the closely fitting linen. She certainly was good looking.

"I don't want you to get the idea that I usually do this sort of thing," Ruth said resentfully. "I don't suppose you'll believe me and I don't blame you. I'm doing this because I like you. I hopped into your boat because I liked you. I'm screwey like that."

SHE LOWERED HERSELF into his lap and leaned against him. Her bare arms brushed against him and her hair was against his cheek. He could smell the perfume of her and the neckline of the blouse gaped prodigiously.

Ruth shuddered as she caught his eye. Then she flushed.

"I should resent your looking at me that way," she said softly. "But somehow I don't."

She lay back against him and closed her eyes. Steve did not know what to make of it. He had a vague idea that he might be dreaming and then Ruth stirred a little, and he knew that *that* was no dream.

"Tell me all about your plays," Ruth said. "All about them. I'm really interested."

After weeks of solitude, Steve was only too willing to talk. What difference did it make whether or not she understood or appreciated what he told her? She was an audience and Steve suddenly realized that that was what he most needed.

"I've just finished a play called 'Heartbreak'," Steve said. "And a man in New York named Ephus Drake wants to produce it. He's already sent me three checks as the option and I've sent them all back. I got another this afternoon in my mail."

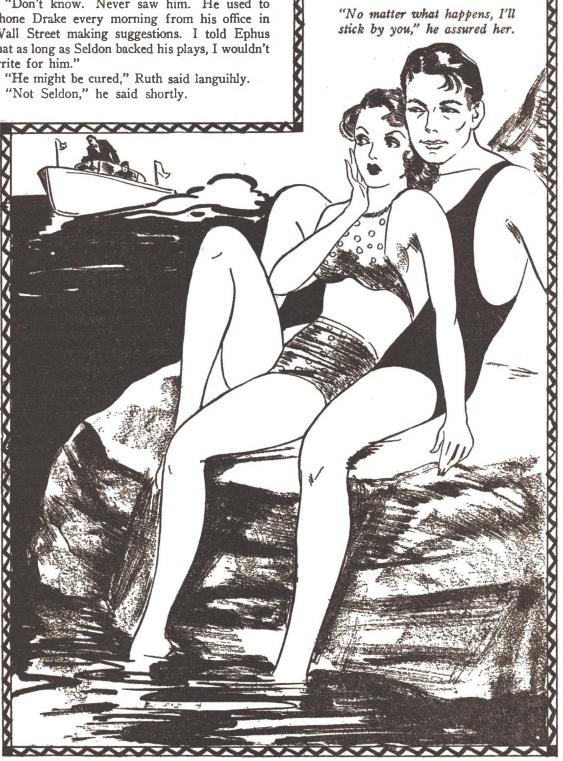
Ruth opened her eyes. "Why did you do that?" she asked. "I thought it was the ambition of all authors to have their plays produced."

"So it is. But not by the Ephus Drakes of this world. Ephus himself is all right, it's his backer I can't stand. The last show of mine Drake produced with this other fellow's money was almost ruined by him and his stupid suggestions. He seemed to think that because he owned a piece of the show that the whole works were his."

"What sort of a fellow is he?"

"Don't know. Never saw him. He used to phone Drake every morning from his office in Wall Street making suggestions. I told Ephus that as long as Seldon backed his plays, I wouldn't write for him."

RUTH STIRRED IN HIS ARMS. She smiled. It was getting dark, and the circular room was illuminated only by the flickering blue and green



flames of the burning driftwood.

"This is too, too swell," Ruth said. "It may be silly, but I'm having a marvelous time."

Steve grinned down at her. Suddenly his arms were about her and he was holding her close against him. Ruth sighed and her bare arms went about his neck. Her lips sought and found his and Steve was kissed as he had never been kissed before.

They clung to each other there in the circular room. It did not seem to enter either head that the situation was a very strange one to say the least. They behaved as though they had known each other since the beginning of time and as if it was quite natural for them to be there, alone with the firelight.

"Stevie, darling, I don't want to speak too soon . . . but I think it's that old devil love."

Steve could feel the crushed outline of her bosom against him and his mouth was dry. The flesh of her naked arms felt cool and soft beneath the touch of his hands, and the tightly fitting slacks did nothing to hide the roundness and the firmness of her strong young thighs. Their hearts were racing and Steve suddenly got to his feet.

"Dinner," he said hoarsely. "Yes. I'll help you."

STEVE WAS ALONE in his bedroom, standing by the window. The rain had stopped and the sky had cleared. A brilliant moon turned to silver and the breaking crests of the waves still thundered against the rock. He heard the creaking of his door. He turned. Ruth stood in the entrance.

"I came to show you how I look in a pair of your pajamas," she said, and her voice was tight and almost inaudible.

"You should've stayed where you were."

"I know I should. But I didn't."

THE FOLLOWING DAY was clear and bright and it was almost over before either Ruth or Steve realized it.

They were lying side by side on the warm rock after a swim when Steve noticed a motorboat making for them. He sat up and Ruth joined him.

"We're found," she said. Her hand reached for his and clutched it,

"What're we going to do?" Steve demanded.
"We'll have to wait and see what sort of mood they're in."

"Who's 'they'?"

"Dad and Albert," she answered quietly.

"Oh, Ruthie, I'm afraid this is going to be one hell of a mess. But no matter what happens . . . I'll stick by you."

Ruth's grip on his hand tightened and there were tears in her eyes. "I know you will," she said softly.

They sat there and watched while the boat drew nearer. When it had slackened speed and was making for the landing stage, Steve got to his feet. "Let's face it," he said.

"Okay, chum—I'm with you. But there's goig to be some heavy explaining to do I'm here to tell you."

The professional boatman made fast skillfully and two men started up the little iron ladder. One was grey, fierce and fat; and the other thin, pale and wan. They arrived on the rock and the fat man took charge of the situation. His face purple, he looked first at Ruth and then at Steve.

"Well," he demanded, "what've you got to say for yourself?"

"Me?" asked Steve doubtfully.

"Yes, sir . . . you!"

"Well," Steve began hesitantly, "yesterday I went ashore for mail and provisions and . . . "

"Kidnaped my daughter!" bellowed the fat man.

"Nothing of the kind," Ruth snapped. "I was a stowaway. I crawled into his boat when he wasn't there and hid under some tarpaulin."

"I don't believe it." Ruth's father studied Steve as though he were a specimen of some doubtful mineral. "I know that type of young man. A born libertine."

"Dad," Ruth pleaded; "you don't know what you're talking about. Please let me explain."

The fat man shouldered her out of the way. Walking up to Steve he shook his fist under his nose.

"Know what I'm going to do with you, young man? No? Then I'll tell you! I'm going to sue you for violation of the Mann Act and that's something. This lighthouse is in different territorial waters to the port at which you absconded with my daughter."

STEVE AND RUTH exchanged glances. Steve was thoroughly bewildered. Ruth tried two or three times to speak before she could finally get out the words. Choked, blushing and shaking, she said,

(Please turn to page 63)

The Irish In Her!



PEG O'TOOLE walked down Broadway, her high spiked heels clicking like a machine gun upon the concrete. Sparks rose in her wake, sparks shot out of the deep blue depths of her angry young eyes and any fool could tell by the tense jutting fullness of her voluptuous breasts that Miss O'Toole was mad clean through. The rounded point of her chin was tilted at an angle of one hundred and seventy-five degrees, her fists were clenched formidably at her sides and beneath one rigid trembling arm was a small painting in a gold encrusted frame.

"That black-hearted auctioneer!" Miss O'Toole thought viciously. "That black hearted oaf. I'll fix him! I'll cut him to small pieces. I'll wring

his neck! I'll close both of his sneering eyes for him and that I will!"

The auctioneer, one John Thomas of the Rickard Galleries, had spoiled her day for her. And not only that, he had probably spoiled her indoor sport! For today, as on every other Wednesday afternoon when she could manage to wheedle her boss into letting her off early, she had gone to the Galleries. There she sat in her favorite seat in the very first row and had a perfectly swell time at no cost at all.

Auctions were an obsession with her. She didn't buy anything. Not ever. She couldn't at

the Rickard Galleries on twenty-five dollars a week. She just went for the thrill and the excitement and the delusion of riches that it gave her to boldly offer "Five Dollars" I for a silver service weighing half a ton which had graced the table of some now bankrupt millionaire or "Two Dollars" I for a Persian rug that had once covered half an acre of drawing room!

Naturally she never expected to get those things, nor did she want them. All she did was to start the ball rolling and then sit back all wiggly inside while the real bidders fought for their prize. The more spirited the bidding became the more fascinating was the game to Peg. Her violet-blue eyes would sparkle and dart from this bidder to that, mentally goading them on. When each piece was finally knocked down she would sigh pleasurably, jot down on her catalogue the price it had gone for and then wait, alert, for the next objet d'art to be put on the block.

"That black-hearted auctioneer!" she spat out again in her thoughts. "I'll fix him!"

PEG DIDNT UNDERSTAND him at all. Why had her modest little bids annoyed him? Didn't the flag outside say "Everyone Welcome"! Was there any law to stop her from going in and enjoying herself and bidding? When she had first started going to the Galleries the auctioneer had stood behind his desk liking her with his eyes and his smile and his gaze that had roamed all over her, lingering on very interesting territory. Peg hadn't minded. Men were always staring at the low V of her blouse and the tall splits in her skirts and the way her pouting bosom swung this way and that when she walked.

Indeed, she had only to crook her little finger at a dozen men to have them scrouging around at her small feet. But she didn't want a dozen men! She didn't want any man—not even Mike Hennesey, a Metropolitan police sergeant. And she certainly wasn't interested in John Thomas who wasn't her type at all.

And she practically told him so. After a whole long exciting afternoon at the Galleries when she had started bidding with "One Dollar" or "Two Dollars" and quite often at "Fifty Cents"! John Thomas had come to her before she had left. She had been busy marking the prices that had gone up into the thousands on her catalogue. She had been bending over the catalogue on her lap, her V neck gapping widely enough to afford him a view of soft white flesh. Hearing a discreet little cough in front

of her she had looked up and there had stood the tall, dark auctioneer with his eyes, glittering and eager, on that V.

He had said, "What about a date tonight, Miss O'Toole?"

"I've got a date," she had said. It was true. She had a date with Sergeant Mike Hennesey every Wednesday night. A jealous evil tempered crazy man if there ever was one with a Darling on his lips one minute and a damn—you—to—hell the next. But he was Irish, like herself, and that was too much. Powerfully lean of body, bronzed of face and with eyes that were Lakes of Killarney, dark-lashed and mocking, life with Mike Hennesey would be one brawl after another.

He would, he had told her, beat her up every Saturday night if she needed it. Indeed, he had told her, also that Mike Hennesey wouldn't want a wife unless he could beat her up now and again and then make up with wild kisses and eager arms and crazy love that only a true Irishman knows how to make.

Mike couldn't get enough fighting on the force. He had to bring it in and mix it up with his love making, getting as much thrill out of one as the other!

He therefore, was out as far as she was seriously concerned, no matter how much her heart pounded when he took her in his arms, no matter how much she liked his mouth on her own and his fingers sliding roughly all over her. Let him have his date every Wednesday night and be damned!

"So you've got a date tonight, eh?" John Thomas had repeated.

"Yes tonight and every night," Peg had snapped back.

"Oh yeah?"

JOHN THOMAS HAD soured on her right then and there. Mike, for instance would have bickered and loved it. He might even have slapped her and called her a sassy wench. But this guy had just soured, all on the inside. Today at the auction he had glared at her every time she had opened a bid, he had muttered beneath his breath something about a nuisance. But Peg didn't mind. She had gone on bidding and getting excited and then it had happened.

A tall blond young man had come in and had sat down beside her. He was money—from the crown of his snap brim felt to his expensive brogues. He was handsome and young and easy going. No fighter, this man—none of Mike Hennesey's rough and tough stuff. She had felt him looking at her, his eyes moving slowly and

discreetly across the clear-cut lines of her profile, the swollen mounds of her breasts and her long shapely leg that was crossed over one knee and dangled with a shine of silk.

She had liked him looking at her because he was a swell or something very important. He was different. She had never been that close to such a grand gentleman before in her life. She hardly saw John Thomas when he reached queer little feeling that the blond young man beside her wouldn't approve of her one, two and five dollar bids. Suddenly, she wanted to impress him. Her heart leapt in her breast, her eyes danced, her red mouth flew open. She'd bid twenty-five dollars. She wouldn't get it, of course. Nothing at the Rickard Galleries ever went for a penny under a hundred bucks!

"Twenty-five dollars!" she had yelled out and had laughed a little to herself when she had seen John Thomas' eyes bulge. Then she saw him grin evilly, heard him quickly clear his throat and before anyone else had a chance to bid he had



down behind his desk and pulled up a painting. It was a smallish thing in a gold encrusted frame. With great eloquence he extolled its pedigree but Peg wasn't listening. She was thinking about the blond young man.

She was wondering if anything was going to come of him sitting so close to her and all. Lots of thrilling, delicious things could come of it. She was a pretty warm number if properly inspired, she had to admit to herself.

John Thomas yelled out, "What am I bid!" Peg heard. And at the same time she had a said, so rapidly that it sounded like one word run together:

"Twenty-five-dollars-I'm-offered — Going once — twice — three — times!" Bang. "Sold to the young woman in white for twenty-five dollars. Here you are, Miss O'Toole!"

Peg had sat there stiff and stunned. She had bought it! Then in a swift reaction she was furious. John Thomas, revengefully, had tricked her. And to make matters even worse, Mike Hennesey came into the auction house at that very moment. He stood there behind the crowd,

his blue eyes bright with mockery and joy-oftrouble as he contemplated the predicament she was in.

She had wanted to yell out, "I won't buy it! I won't, you black-hearted devil, you! And that you are, all right!" But there sat the formal blond young man looking at her, wondering. She just couldn't let him see her get bounced out on her fanny. She had paid the twenty-five bucks, leaving in her purse exactly thirty-five cents. And pay day a full week away!

WITH THE SHARP EDGE of the painting cutting unmercifully into her jutting breasts she had swept with dignity and she hoped, with beauty, out of the auction house. The first time she had ever left before the place closed its doors. Mike had caught her arm as she had tried to dart out into the street. Mike had said, grinning, "And so you bought a picture, lassie? Fixin' up our love-nest, maybe? And I can see you're so happy over it you're about to go into a jig."

"There's no wit like Irish wit, is there, Mike Hennesey," Peg had said with a withering glance.

And now she was on the street as mad as a hornet, her purchase clutched furiously against her. Her heels went on clicking ominously. It was not until she reached the plate glass window of her favorite hat store that she stopped and looked in and wistfully longed for the five fivebuck hats in it that her twenty-five dollars could have bought! And it was not until she was about to move on, with a prodigious sigh, that she saw the tall, blond man of the auction house behind her. Her heart pounded harder than ever then, her eyes widened and a flame shot all through her.

Very excitedly she watched his reflection come up near her and stand there. "I mustn't be too easy," she thought wisely, "I mustn't appear interested. He's the cool crisp type who'd go for a hard-to-get-dame!"

She started off then, her heels still clicking. But there was a lightness in her step now that hadn't been there before.

As Peg reached her apartment house she slowed down. She might as well meet the guy half way. He had followed her thirty blocks or more already. She purposely turned her ankle then, she very carefully let her twenty-five dollar painting fall to the concrete and threaten to wheel out into the street. The blond young man went into instant action. He retrieved the painting and caught her as she teetered, he did everything all at once, most gracefully—the perfect gentleman.

Peg looked up into his blue eyes. For one

second she thought of Mike Hennesey. "Peg, you'd flirt with a lamp post if there was nothing better around and that you would!" Mike had said.

She said, quite demurely, "Thank you so much."

"Not at all," said the young man in a Park Avenue voice.

Peg started tucking the painting under her arm again. But the young man would have nothing of it. "Please, may I carry that for you?"

IN HER APARTMENT Peg fluttered around and made sandwiches and brewed some tea with rum and lemons. A good old Irish liquid. Mike loved it. But Donald Carter sipped it unenthusiastically. Peg knew why. He was the caviar and cocktail type. Well, the next time he came if he didn't come until after her next pay day, she'd manage caviar and cocktails. She'd show him that she knew the better way of entertaining, that she could maintain any home no matter how grand.

Finally they were on the sofa, close to each other. It was the same sofa where she and Mike always sat in each other's arms. But there the resemblance ended. Donald Carter liked to talk. Mike liked to bicker and kiss and tousle her up. Mike was always saying, "If there are any girls prettier than you, Peg O'Toole, they'll be born in Ireland and it'll be a grand event!" Donald Carter said, "You're very lovely, you know. I don't know that I've ever seen a girl prettier than you."

"Oh, you have!" said Peg, hoping to touch off a quarrelsome spark.

"Well, perhaps," said Donald.

"Oh," said Peg wistfully. "I was hoping you'd say that you hadn't. Just for the sake of argument."

"Only fools argue," said the young man.

Peg clasped her hands to her jutting breasts and contemplated him in mock wonder. "Of course you're spoofing me. Everyone does!"

"I don't," said Donald.

"You don't?" said Peg, her eyes wide. "You mean to tell me that if I said that painting I had bought was beautiful that you'd say so, too? That you're a man without opinions of your own? That you agree with all the world simply because you're too lazy to argue?"

Donald Carter threw back his blond head and laughed. Then he began looking at Peg, closely, his eyes blue and sort of smoldering on her curves and pouts. Almost unconsciously Peg slipped out of her white silk jacket.

She knew that the V of her blouse sloped across her breasts and showed a lot of her smooth shoulders; she knew that without a brassiere—and she was without one now—that her bosom was lovely and firm and utterly alluring; she knew also that when she crossed her long shapely leg that a bit of thigh showed and the ecru lace on her white silk panties. She knew, most of all, that if Donald Carter had blood in his veins and not tomato juice that he would be unable to resist her.

"Let's not fight," she whispered. "I'm licked?"

But he was able to resist her. He very calmly lit a cigarette and slouched back on the sofa and began blowing smoke rings toward the ceiling. "Perhaps," thought Peg a little sickly, "the Park Avenue type of man takes his time!"

Donald said, "I don't think you wanted that painting very much this afternoon, did you, Miss O'Toole?"

"No," said Peg. "It's an ugly thing."

"I'll take it off your hands for you. I'll even pay you fifty dollars."

"Would you?" said Peg. And then the Irish imp came up in her. For the sake of argument, for teasing, for hoping to start a gay bantering quarrel, she added, "But I wouldn't sell. Not for less than fifteen hundred dollars!"

"All right," said the man. "I'll take it."

"Do you mean," said Peg, eyeing him closely, that you would pay fifteen hundred dollars rather than cause an argument!" He nodded.

"Well, I won't sell at all," blazed Peg. "Not

at all, do you hear?" And she sat back then, her big breasts rising and falling, her eyes dancing, the breath short in her throat. "That," she thought, "will stir him up! That'll get under his skin."

"So you won't sell," said the man, calmly.

Peg's spirits dropped. Here she had had a chance to sell that little squirt of a painting for fifteen hundred dollars and she had fluked it for the sake of a quarrel and a fight. Why, she was no better than Mike—why, she was like Mike! And with something almost like dawning and complete realization she discovered that she loved Mike. Why, if that was Mike sitting there so close to her they'd be fighting and kissing and having a grand time.

"So," the man beside her was repeating, calmly, "you're not going to sell?"

She looked at him indignantly. "Me? Well, indeed I'm not!" Mr. Carter was on his feet.

He was staring down at her, his eyes blazing, his face suddenly flushed. For one split second Peg thought that perhaps he had a little Irish blood in him after all, that she was in for a nice jolly brawl! She instantly added fire to the smoldering embers. She jumped up, her big breasts swaying this way and that. Without warning her right hand flashed as she slapped Donald Carter full in the face. "That for you, you masher!" she said.

Donald Carter still stood there, quite still, his face white except for the red stain where Peg's hand had fallen.

"You little spit-fire," he said. And then before Peg could slap him again and send him sprawling through the door, Donald Carter dove in his pocket and brought forth a hand with a pearl studded something in it. He touched off a spring, and there, to Peg's horror, was a knife! A glittering, sinister, ominous knife. If it had been a brick or some good old clean Irish weapon Peg would have given a yell like a banshee and plunged headlong into the row. But a knife. A knife was a slippery, treacherous thing. It didn't belong to the Irish. It belonged to sneaks and cut-throats—and Donald Carter! He was pointing it at her now. He was saying, deadly cold:

"I'll relieve you of that painting, Miss O'Toole. But before I do, trot along into your boudoir."

"So that's your racket!" said Peg quaveringly.
"Trot along into your boudoir," repeated the man, coming closer, the knife very near Peg's throat, "and bring back a sheet. I don't want to kill you—I only want to gag you and tie you up!"

"Oh-h," said Peg and started to trot.

Out of the tail of her eye she saw Donald Carter busy with the painting. The knife slid around the edge of the gold frame, the canvas slid out and the man rolled it into a scroll. Peg thought, "Fool! Sending me for a sheet. He'll laugh on the other side of his handsome face when I come back with a revolver." But the moment Peg put her fingers on her dresser drawer something that was like a platinum flash sailed through the air. It landed between her sprawled fingers—it wavered there. Peg's eyes bulged at the fine blade of that knife and how near it had come to her hand.

"You devil!" she spat out. And then her Irish temper was up. She went blind with rage, with fury, with hatred. What a sap she had been—what a silly little jackass! She reached for the knife but before she could get her hands on it, Donald Carter was beside her. He was laughing

now like a madman. He had the knife in his own hands.

"Tried to trick me, eh?" he was saying. "Perhaps you don't know how clever I am with a knife!" And he began showing Peg. She felt the point of the blade touch her white dress, her skirt, the straps on her under slip. She heard the soft material slit, split and with something almost like horror again she saw herself in the mirror—saw her dress fall to the floor, her petticoat with it and her own trembling white body standing there in the center of the room clad only in a white scantie.

Donald Carter chuckled. "Are you convinced

that I throw a mean knife?"

"Yes-s-s-s," said Peg. "Take the painting

and-d-d-d go-o-o-o!"

"Perhaps I don't want to, now. Perhaps I've changed my mind," said the man, his eyes moving over her and actually seeing her for the first time. "Perhaps . . . "

"Perhaps what!" said a third voice. And Peg spun instantly around to see Mike Hennesey standing there with a little snub-nosed revolver in his hand, his broad handsome face flushed, his eyes sparkling. Mike went straight to the man. He relieved him of his knife, he frisked him carefully. And then Mike put away his gat. But Peg knew that Mike wasn't through with the man. Mike was a fighter and he wasn't going to miss this chance!

With almost an artistic deliberation Mike's giant fingers went into a fist, giving plenty of warning. Donald Carter backed away, his eyes frightened. With a knife Carter was a honey but in a free-for-all, he was a louse. Mike stalked him. And then Peg, with her heart thundering in her ears and her eyes almost popping out on her cheeks, saw Mike in action for the first time. It was wonderful. It was glorious. The daughter of the famous old prizefighter had all she could do to keep out of it.

Finally, Donald Carter was out like a light on the floor and Mike was running his hands through his dark hair, his Lakes of Killarney eyes dancing. "That," said Mike, "is that. If he comes to in less than two hours, I'm slipping. I ought to turn in my badge!"

And then Mike the fighter turned all tenderness, as only the Irish can. He looked at Peg, his eyes loving her, caressing her. He said, "Come here, Peg O'Toole!" She came. "Now put your arms around me," he ordered." She hesitated. "Put your arms around me!" barked Mike. "Come on before I smack you down!" Slowly,

very shyly, Peg put her arms around Mike Hennesey. "Now look at me!" She looked up and there was more tenderness in his eyes, more love—and something else, too—something very close and intimate and thrilling. Gosh, how had she ever been unsure of her love for Mike!

"Do you love me?" said Mike. "Are you mad with love for me?"

When she did not answer Mike shook her. Peg could feel her arms trembling and her legs shaking.

"Speak up, brat!" he commended relentlessly. "Because if you don't I'm going to beat you. I think I'll beat you if you do!"

"Says who?" snapped Peg, coming alive, thrilling all over.

"Says me!" barked Mike.

Her eyes blazed at him. "Why whatever gave you the idea that I was mad with love for you! Why, Mike Hennesey, if you were the last man in the world, if . . . "

Mike had her by the hair then. He was pulling her curls viciously, he was getting ready to box her ears and Peg was loving it. "Oh, Mike," she cried. "Oh, Mike darling! Darling!"

They would have gone into each other's arms then. A lot of things might have happened but there was a slight noise on the floor. There was a grunt. Mike, suddenly all copper, turned instantly. "By the love of the four leaf clover, I am slipping! That black-hearted devil is coming to." Whereupon Mike bent over him and scooped him up in his powerful arms and shoved him into a closet. He shut the door, locked it! Then he dusted his big hands as if getting rid of bad rubbish. "That," said Mike with a grin, "will hold Slippery Jones in case he does come to, which I doubt!"

"Slippery Jones!" gasped Peg.

"Yeah," said Mike. "That's one of his names, His latest. He's a member of a gang that stole several valuable paintings from a private home in Boston. They dirtied them up and disguised them in cheap old frames. Then one of the gang got yellow and he double-crossed the others by disposing of the whole lot to a second hand dealer who had no idea of their value. We traced them from him to the Rickard Galleries here and other galleries all over the country. That's what I was doing there this afternoon, Peg. I wasn't spyin' on you, lassie. I was waitin' to see who would buy that painting because I had a hunch the gang would try to regain possession of it and smuggle it out of the country with the rest of their loot. They sell them abroad, see. That's their racket.

"That auctioneer had no idea how valuable that picture was. He just thought he was selling you a gold brick to discourage your two dollar bids or, maybe, he had another reason! Say-y-y, maybe he did have another reason!"

"Skip it!" said Peg, coldly. "Go on with your story, Mike."

"Have you been flirtin' again, Peg O'Toole?"

"After this afternoon's experience I'm flirting with lamp posts only, big guy! Go on with your story!"

"Well, I saw slippery in the Gallery. I thought I recognized him but I wasn't sure until I saw him treking after you and you knowing it and being so coy and all! I ought to bash your face in, Peg O'Toole! You struttin' down the Avenue and swingin' your hips and peepin' coylike in windows at Slippery. And then pullin' that old gag about stumblin' and droppin' that paintin'! He wasn't after you, Peg O'Toole. He was after that paintin'."

"You're tellin' me?" snapped Peg. "I told you I had learned my lesson!"

"But that's what you said, you Irish imp, the last time. When I got sore over you flirtin' with that music teacher!"

Peg's eyes were blazing. "Picking on a poor little music teacher. Why don't you pick on some one your own size!"

"Who for instance?" cried Mike, angrily.

"I'm a match for you, Mike Hennesey, and you know it!"

Mike roared. "Stick up your dukes!"

"You darling! Oh, Mike, you old precious!" gasped Peggy clinging to him, running her fingers through his hair. Mike swung her up into his arms then, he carried her bodily to the sofa, as if she weighed no more than a feather. Peg fought wildly, scratching, biting, kicking her tiny feet up and down with excitement. It was going to be fun to be mastered by Mike. It was going to be more fun than ever. He had never quite mastered her before. She had never been quite sure before that she wanted to be mastered by Mike. But now she was. She was eager and trembling and gasping with her sureness and her love.

"Oh, Mike, Mike!" she whispered into his mouth, thrilling to his hands that were sweeping all over her. "Let's not fight. I'm licked. I'm sayin' uncle!"

"You're sayin' uncle! Peg O'Toole, you're a quitter!"

(Please turn to page 64)



"BUT YOU SAID YOU HAD INSOMNIA!"

Mother: "And, daughter, you were discreet when you went to that roadhouse with young Caddish last night?"

Saucy Sally: "Hell, yes. we got a private room and locked the door!"

MR. GAYBOYE: "WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST THAT WE TAKE UP TO MY PENTHOUSE BE-SIDES THIS GIN?"

MISS WARMLY: "A MAR-RIAGE LICENSE!"

Father: "I think I'll go downstairs and send Mary's young man home."

Mother: Now, Elmer, remember the way we used to court."

Father: "Now I know damned well I'd better go down and send him home!"

Gigolo: "How are you going to account for all the money you've spent on me while your husband was in Europe this past summer?"

Mrs. Richman: "Oh, I'll just tell him it was for the hired hands."



"But, dear, the doctor said we must build up your resistance!"

Pleasure Comes First!

By

Arthur Wallace

FOR THE first time since he had been summoned back from college to take over the direction of the successful Fowler Pottery Company, Ted Fowler made use of the private entrance to his executive sanctum sanctorum. The premises occupied by the Fowler Pottery Company had formerly been leased by a firm of bucket shop brokers who required a secret means of exit in order to escape the ire of outraged and cheated clients.

Ted slammed the door behind him, hung his hat on a clothes tree hook, slid into the chair at his desk. He punched his forefinger down on a signal button, kept it there for a long moment. The dark scowl on his face resembled a Halloween mask being worn for the occasion. It didn't harmonize with his clean-cut handsomeness.

The door leading to the general offices opened and Mary Lord, his secretary entered. She was tall, delightfully slender and carried her goldentopped head high as though she were rightfully proud of its stunning perfection.

"I didn't see you come in," she said.

Ted's lips thinned. "No, but I saw you at the Ritz last night." His eyes blazed. "You told me you had to visit an aunt in Hempstead! You told me you couldn't possibly get out of it! You lied to me!"

Mary approached the desk, leaned forward. The blue cotton dress she was wearing had a full, gathered bodice. Minus the restraining services of a brassiere, her soft, round breasts swung out voluptuously.

"This is not a sound-proof room, Mr. Fowler," she said quietly. "I've told you that time and again. Unless you're interested in having the file clerks and stenographers know that you have an impossibly violent temper I should suggest modulating your voice."

Ted shot to his feet. "You can't treat me like this! I'm paying you seventy-five dollars a week and that's more money than you could earn anywhere else in a month!"

"Do you think you're overpaying me, Mr. Fowler?"

"Stop that 'Mr. Fowler' business! I don't like it!" Ted circled the desk, gripped her rounded

arms. "Why must you do this to me, Mary?" he pleaded. "Why did you tell me you were visiting your aunt when you were actually out with another man?"

She leaned back, supporting herself against the edge of the desk. The position tightened the front of her dress, limned the unfettered hills of her young, taut-peaked breasts. There was a hint of a smile on her lips; a faintly sardonical smile.

"Simply because your ego and your jealousy are both monumental," she replied. "Sometimes I don't understand you. The mere fact that you pay me a weekly salary doesn't give you a lien on my life, does it? You know my feelings in the matter. I'm not your office wife nor any other kind of a wife. I'm a free agent. I can do and go as I please. You were at the Ritz last night—with a woman. Why couldn't I be there—with a man?"

Ted tried to slip his arm about her waist but she moved away. "You know who was in my party!" he shouted. "You know very well that Miss Englander is the pottery buyer for the Langley Stores. You know—"

"I know only one thing, Ted. You've become impossible. So impossible that I've decided to do something drastic. The scene you created at the Ritz last night was the last straw. I don't like to tell you this, but I'm quitting."

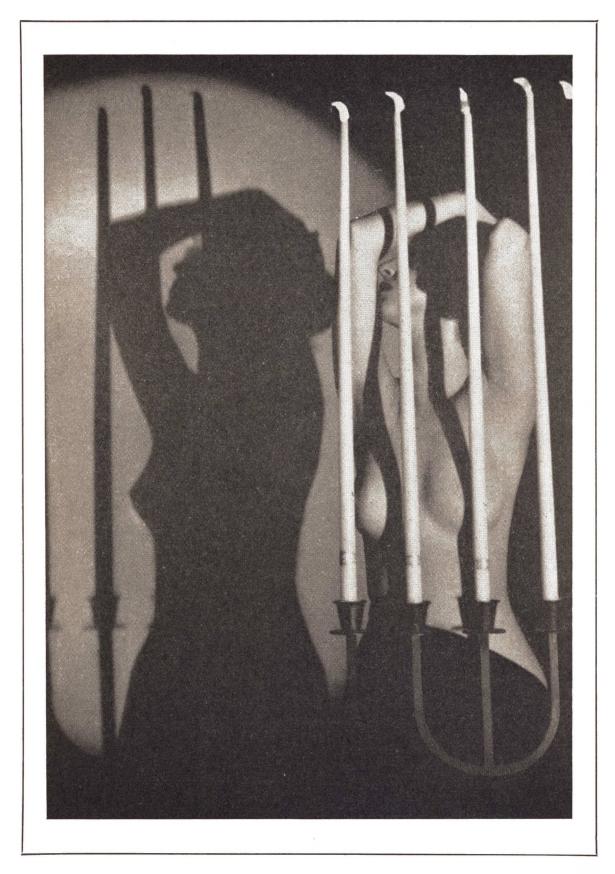
THE COLOR DRAINED from Ted Fowler's cheeks. He stared at her, his eyes bulging. "Quitting?" he echoed, the intonation of his voice indicating complete disbelief. "Mary, you don't mean that! You can't mean it."

"I do, Ted. I've saved up a little money and I can buy an interest in the Royal Pottery Company."

Ted's eyes almost popped from his head. "You mean—you mean you'd *compete* with me?"

"Well, it wouldn't exactly be competition, Ted. Royal is just a tiny outfit compared with Fowler."

This time his arm succeeded in circling her waist. He jerked her close against him. "Mary, you can't! I tell you you can't do it! Give up your job, but give it up to marry me! I've been waiting





for months and months." He tried to kiss her but she turned her lips away. His mouth jammed against her cheek.

"Please, Ted," she said quietly. "Let me go."
"No, I won't!" His fingers fumbled at the loose
bodice of her dress and his quivering lips planted
kiss after kiss on her warm, silken throat.

Mary wriggled loose. He had opened some of the hooks of the bodice. The upper softness of her milky-white bosom showed above the V-cut neckline. She fastened the hooks.

"You've been taking entirely too much for granted, Ted," she said. "It's about time you woke up. I think my leaving will be the best thing in the world for both of us. You know, you can't mix business and pleasure."

Ted didn't know how to take it. He was still dazed, puzzled. "Then—then you're serious?"

"Absolutely serious. I'd like to leave as soon as possible. The Royal people are waiting for my answer."

Ted passed the palm of his hand over his forehead. "Does this—does this mean I'm not going to see you again?"

"Why should it?" her eyes smiled. "Call me up and we'll have lunch some day."

He nodded absently, leaned over the desk, pressed one of the call buttons. The head book-keeper responded. Ted's voice was dull and without pitch.

"Miss Lord is leaving her position," he said. "See that she receives two, no three weeks salary."

"Two weeks is customary, Mr. Fowler," Mary said.

Ted looked at her. She was standing erect, her shoulders squared, her lovely breasts jutting challengingly.

"All right," he mumbled. "Make it two weeks." When the bookkeeper had gone, Mary sidled up to Ted. She placed her hands on his shoulders. "I know this is going to work out better than the old arrangement, Ted. We'll be able to see each other in a different light."

All he could do was nod—and that, vacantly.

Two WEEKS WENT by before Ted managed, after repeated calls, to maneuver Mary into a date. They were weeks during which he moved in a perpetual fog. The girl the agency had sent over to take Mary's place made matters worse. She seemed determined on supplying amorous as well as secretarial services. She was a hot-eyed brunette with a loose, curvy figure who habitually wore black satin dresses and leaned forward at every opportunity, to better display her large,

white breasts. More than once, Ted had inadvertently seen downy white thigh above the rolled stocking top of her crossed legs.

But the campaign of enticement meant nothing to him. His every thought was of Mary. He had none to waste on the voluptuous brunette.

The date with Mary was for dinner at what had once been their favorite rendezvous, a small Italian restaurant on Mulberry Street. Ted arrived early, ordered a specially prepared menu and the best wines in the restaurant cellar. He kept his eye on the door and his heart leaped when he saw Mary enter. She was all smiles as she crossed to the booth, held out her slim, graceful hand in greeting.

"I'm a little late," she apologized. "Something came up at the office. How are you, Ted?"

For a full moment, he did nothing but gaze at her. If anything, she was more beautiful than ever, or was it his imagination? A daring, oddly shaped hat perched cockily on her golden hair. A smartly tailored suit was handsomely fitted to her stunning figure.

"Hello, Mary," Ted responded weakly. There was an unmistakable catch in his voice.

Mary seated herself at the table. "You sound as though you'd lost your pet dog. What's the matter? Business falling off?"

Ted's eyes licked at the V of white throat made visible by the cut of her blouse. "No, business is all right. How—how are you doing?"

She beamed. "Marvelously, Ted. You know, I'm sole owner of the firm now. I bought my partner out. It's the Royal Pottery Co., Mary Lord, president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer. Yesterday, I sold forty-four dozen of our best dinner sets to the Wagner Department Store."

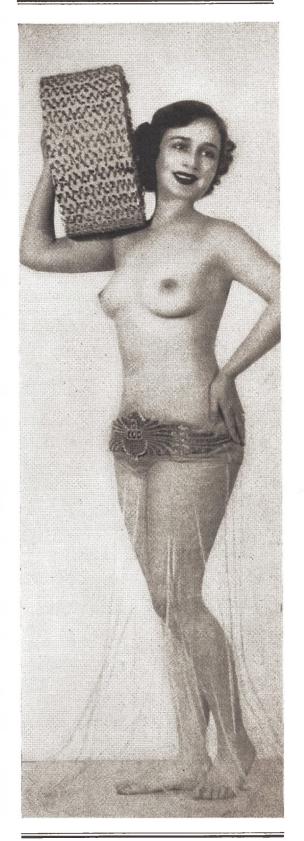
Ted leaned forward. "Let's not talk about business, Mary. Let's talk about—"

Her eyes twinkled. "Oh yes, let's talk about that stunning new secretary you have. I heard all about her from one of the salesmen. Did you pick her out personally?"

Ted scowled. "Please, Mary."

"But she *is* ravishing. The salesman said so. A brunette with big round eyes and one of those come-and-get-it figures. I think you showed very good taste, Ted. A man in your position should have a very attractive secretary."

Ted reached out, grasped her hands. "Mary! I didn't come here to discuss my secretary or talk about pottery. I came here to see you, to ask you to forget all this foolishness. I've been miserable in the last two weeks. I can't eat and I can't sleep."



She withdrew tier hands, sat up in her chair. Her high young breasts swelled under the front of her blouse. "Don't be a silly child, Ted. I like being a big business woman. It's a new thrill. I'm convinced now that you were paying me entirely too much money for the services I rendered anyway."

The food arrived and put a temporary end to conversation. But later, when they were driving uptown in Ted's car, he suddenly swung off the avenue, headed for the park.

"Where are we going?" Mary questioned.

Ted answered by driving the car into an almost deserted parking space, shutting off lights and ignition. "Now look, Mary," he said turning to her. "This can't go on much longer." Impulsively, he swept her into his embrace, tried to reach her lips with his mouth. She turned her head to one side, avoided the caress.

"Control yourself, Ted. After all, you're not a callow college sophomore. I think you'd better take me home."

His voice was almost hysterical. "Mary, why must you treat me this way? Why? Why? You know I'm mad about you!"

She laughed softly, tauntingly. "You'll get over it. In another week or two, you'll be making violent love to your beautiful brunette secretary."

"Don't talk like that," Ted cried.

Mary shrugged. "But you will. You're not different from any other man. If you were, you would have hired a homely secretary instead of a gorgeous one."

Ted was about to deny that he had personally chosen the full-breasted brunette but a thought flashed through his mind and sealed his lips. There was more than one way of killing a cat.

"All right," he grumbled. "I'll take you home." In front of the apartment house where she resided, Mary patted Ted's hand. "I'll be seeing you again soon," she said.

He could see her face in the warm yellow glow of the dashboard light. Her lips were moist and slightly parted. Only the sheer exercise of will power kept him from swooping her into his arms, from pressing his mouth against that warm, carmine bloom.

"That's nice," he retorted.

Mary's eyelids fluttered. She seemed surprised, taken aback. She reached for the door handle. "Call me soon, Ted," she said. "Good night."

IN THE MIDST of dictating a letter to his new secretary the following morning, Ted stopped short, smiled at her. "I've been meaning to ask

you, Miss Carlisle, whether you're satisfied with your position here."

The girl inhaled deeply, brought added fulness to her round, mature bosom.

Her white teeth flashed behind scarlet lips. "I'm mad about it, Mr. Fowler," she replied, her voice low and sensuously throbbing. She placed one hand on a silk sheathed knee, fingered the dimpled roundness of it. "I don't know when I've enjoyed working for anyone as I enjoy working for you." Her eyes swam in a voluptuous moistness.

Ted fiddled with some papers on his desk. "I—I'm happy to hear that, Miss Carlisle."

She leaned forward eagerly. The bodice of her dress bellied out like a windblown sail. Ted glanced at the aperture, saw full, creamy swells divided by a mysterious shadowed valley. For all the girl's physical blatancy, she was attractive in a heady, intoxicating fashion.

"You know," she murmured, "some employers pay absolutely no attention to a girl. You're different. You make me feel as though I were a human being and not a stick of wood."

Ted went on with his dictating. The following day, he let fall a few other innocently personal remarks. Flo Carlisle responded to them warmly. Once, when she was standing next to him pointing out some figures in a sales report, she leaned over and the curve of one soft, full breast touched his shoulder. It was an intentional contact. Again during a period of dictation, she crossed her plumply contoured legs, managed to ease the hem of her skirt high enough above the tops of her stockings so that inches of white thigh were visible.

"Do you uh—live alone, Miss Carlisle?" Ted queried.

She was all excited, all quivering expectation. "Yes, Mr. Fowler." Her eyelids fluttered coyly. "All alone."

Two NIGHTS LATER, Ted invited her out to dinner. He ostensibly made no secret of it as far as the rest of the office force was concerned. Mary's story that a salesman had informed her about his new secretary, he was certain was a subterfuge. Someone in the office had given her the information. Ted wanted that same someone to carry this story back, too.

He chose the Ritz in the hope that he would be seen with the orchidaceous brunette. The more tale bearers there were, the better the tale.

Flo Carlisle was in seventh heaven. It had taken her three months to bring her previous employer to the point where he summoned up

enough courage to ask her to iunch, and here, in less than three weeks, handsome Ted Fowler was dining with her at the Ritz. Her heart beat tumultuously under the soft cushion of her breast at the thought of what this evening might bring.

When the orchestra went into a dreamy foxtrot, she looked at him longingly. "I adore dancing," she said. "Don't you, Mr. Fowler?"

There was nothing Ted could do but nod and rise. On the floor, she melted into his arms, every inch of her curved softness pressed against him.

"This is lovely," she murmured.

Ted had intended keeping this completely im-

Ted caught a whiff of the strong perfume rising from the valley between her breasts. Under ordinary circumstances, he might not have opened the cab door but these circumstances were far from ordinary.

MISS CARLISLE WAS a few minutes late the next morning. She entered Ted's office without being summoned, approached the desk, her ungirdled hips swaying. "I couldn't sleep last night, Mr. Fowler," she panted. "It was all so wonderful, all so thrilling. My heart was so full of—so full of loveliness."



personal but soon found himself running into danger. The girl was taking too much for granted. The weaving of her mature hips and the insistent boring of her breasts into his chest indicated she had ideas.

They left the Ritz immediately after dinner. Ted would have liked to have sent her home alone in a cab but his better instincts rebelled. After all, she wasn't to blame. She didn't know she was being used as a guinea pig. When the taxi arrived at her brownstone rooming house, Ted reached for the door-handle. She came close to him, her fingers curled about his arm. "I don't know how to thank you for this, Mr. Fowler," she breathed. "It's been the most wonderful evening of my life."

Ted cleared his throat. He was beginning to feel as though he had bitten off more than he could chew. "I want those Larkin reports typed today, Miss Carlisle," he said hurriedly. "Start on them immediately, please."

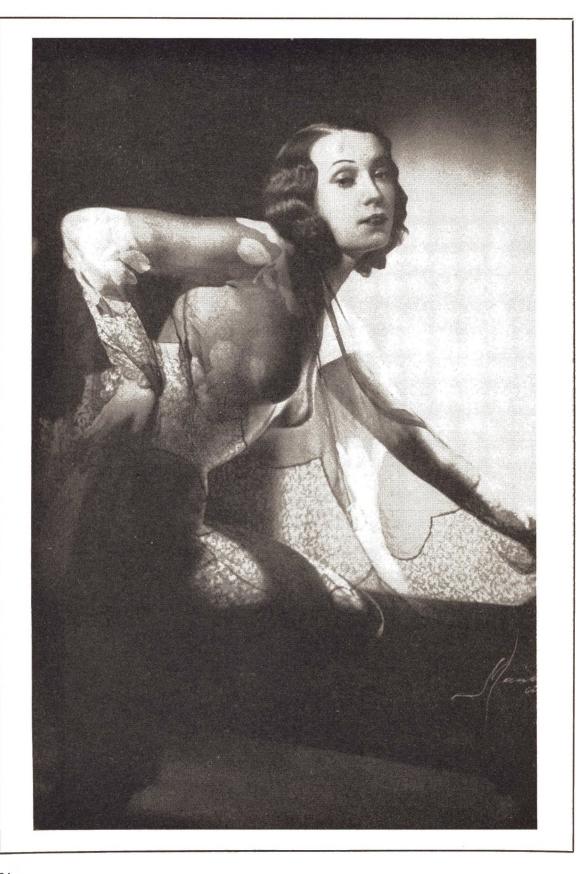
Her smile dripped with affection. "Yes, Mr. Fowler," she thrilled.

Late in the afternoon. Ted called Mary. He fully expected to be told that she was either busy or not in. It surprised him to hear her voice bright and cheery over the wire.

"Congratulations, Ted."

He affected innocence. "Congratulations? What for?"

"I understand you've made strides with your beautiful secretary. You see, I was right. You



men are all alike," she said huskily.

Ted was slightly taken aback. "How about lunch tomorrow?" he asked.

"Lunch?" She hesitated. "Well, I don't know. Do you think it's smart to have irons in two fires?"

Ted frowned at the mouthpiece. "Don't be a fool, Mary. One o'clock at Longley's."

This time, he was a few minutes late.

"I hope this doesn't cause any trouble," she said.

"What sort of trouble?"

"Oh, you know, jealous secretary and all that sort of thing."

Ted leaned back, smiled smugly. "You learn things quickly, don't you? I suppose a salesman gave you this information?"

"No, a little bird."

"Knowing little bird," Ted commented.

Ted looked at her intently. "Aren't you a little bit too curious about what I do, Mary—now that you've severed relations?"

Her eyebrows arched. "Curious? No, just interested. Ted, you old darling, you don't think I'm jealous, do you?"

He fenced. "Well, I don't know."

She laughed. "Don't be silly. If you're playing around with this secretary of yours to make me green-eyed, it's a waste of time." She glanced at her watch. "You'd better order for us. I have an appointment at the office. Business is booming."

THE LUNCH was a glum session for Ted. Flo Carlisle had finished the Larkin reports by the time he returned to the office. She brought them in, placed them on his desk.

"Is there anything else, Mr. Fowler?" she cooed.

Ted shook his head. "No."

She leaned over the desk. "Has anything happened, Mr. Fowler? You don't look right." She circled the desk, faced him as he sat in his chair. Her large breasts were rising and falling rhythmically. "I can cheer you up if you'll let me, Mr. Fowler."

Suddenly, without warning, she sat down in his lap, twined her plump arms about his neck. Her lips, warm and moist, pressed sensually on his mouth.

For a moment, Ted was too dazed, too startled to even move. He felt the pressure of her thighs, the curves of her bosom. She drew her lips away.

"I'm mad about you," she gasped breathlessly. Her voice broke the spell. Ted shoved her off his lap, shot to his feet. "You're fired!" he shouted. "Get your pay and get out!"

Her eyes were like hot coals. "But—but—but after last night—"

"Get out!" He pushed a button on his desk as Flo Carlisle moved towards the door. "Miss Carlisle has been discharged," Ted snapped. "Pay her off."

The bookkeeper nodded as the voluptuous brunette stepped from the office. "There's something else I wanted to see you about, Mr. Fowler," he said. "During the last week, we've lost three accounts to the Royal Pottery Company."

Ted stiffened. An idea was shooting through his mind with the speed of an arrow. "Come back and see me after you've taken care of Miss Carlisle," he said.

The conference with the bookkeeper lasted an hour. When it was finished, Ted was smiling again. He called his florist. "Send a dozen American Beauties to Miss Mary Lord at the Royal Pottery Company," he ordered.

A WEEK WENT BY. Ted made no effort to call Mary. He had adopted a course of watchful waiting. Another week, during which Ted sat at his phone expecting a call he was waiting for to come in momentarily. It did, late Friday afternoon. Mary's voice was hysterically tense over the wire.

"Ted, I must see you," she gasped. "At once!"
She was pale and drawn when she came into the office. She slipped into the chair she knew so well. "I guess I'm licked, Ted," she said dully. "I received a tremendous order from a firm out west about two weeks ago. I shipped and a few days later, the firm went into bankruptcy. The order amounted to about \$20,000.00 and I can't collect a dime on it. I'm ruined." Tears rolled down her cheeks.

Ted lifted her from the chair, held her in his arms. "I'm sorry, darling, but you mustn't let it bother you. You were perfectly right when you told me that business and pleasure don't mix. But you weren't right when you decided that business comes first. Pleasure comes first! For the last time, I hope, I'm asking you to marry me. You provide the pleasure and I'll provide the business."

Mary's arms crept up, twined about his neck. "Yes, Ted," she panted, giving him her warm, quivering lips.

In the outer office, the bookkeeper was wondering what to do with \$20,000.00 dollars worth of Royal Pottery Co. china now piled up in the Fowler Pottery Co. storeroom. He didn't know it, but as far as Ted was concerned, he could break every piece without fear of censure.

Treasure In Undies

By R obert Leslie Bellem

As SHE leaned anxiously over the roulette table in Tony Cafoni's swanky gambling dive, Lynne Leeland felt something pop. At once, the restraining pressure upon her glorious breasts grew slack. With a gasp and a blush, she realized that the hooks of her brassiere had come unfastened.

She straightened up, hastily. Considering the daring lowness of her evening gown's slashed decolletage, she realized that her delicious charms would be fully revealed if she continued to lean over the layout. Waiting only to see that her last hundred dollar chip had been lost on the turn of the wheel, she scuttled for the ladies' room to make repairs upon her bandeau.

The powder room was unoccupied when she entered it. She went to the mirrored dressing table and slid the shoulder straps of her gown down over her smooth arms. She pulled off the brassiere to examine it.

Thus unclad to her slim waist, Lynne Leeland was something to rave about. Wavy chestnut hair framed the delicate charm of her face. Violet eyes contrasted to crimson, inviting lips. Superb white shoulders lilted into the twin ecstasies that were her bold, thrusting breasts. Her tummy was flat, dimpled and intriguing. Her back was a symphony of milkiness. In short, Lynne was like a mythical goddess turned human. She had it, them and those. She was beautiful. She was seductive. She was—

She was startled when the powder room door burst open. An amazed cry leaped to her lips. Her eyes flashed angrily as a man charged in and slammed the portals behind him.

Lynne recognized him as Tony Cafoni, proprietor of the gambling joint; a sleek, dark chap with narrow eyes and perfect tailoring. He owned the establishment—but he certainly had no right to be in the ladies' room!

"How dare you!" Lynne whispered. She suddenly remembered her own complete lack of covering from the waist north. Her hands immediately shielded her breasts from his gaze. A swift movement and she managed to shrug her gown's shoulder straps back into normal position, so that her charms were at least covered by clinging silk. However, she still felt the embarrassing need of her discarded brassiere. She knew that the adhering satin of her bodice afforded Cafoni too intimate an idea of her contours. . . .

Meanwhile, from beyond the door she thought she heard faint cries and more than a little commotion. She wondered what the trouble could be. Whereupon Tony Cafoni, moving toward her, explained everything.

"Sorry to butt in on you, baby," he clipped out. A glitter in his eyes said that he wasn't sorry at all. "I didn't mean to scare you—although I'll admit I got a bang out of grabbing a gander at your whatchacallems—"

Lynne flushed indignantly. "Get out of here—at once!"

"Wait a minute, kiddo. Lemme explain. The joint's being held up. Some masked bozo is out in the front room putting the heat on everybody."

"A—a robbery?" Lynne felt herself going pale. "Yeah. That's why I ducked in here. It was the first place that was handy." His hands delved into his pockets and came out with two fistsful of banknotes. "Look. Here's fifteen or twenty grand, sweetness. I grabbed it and lammed when the trouble started. Take it. It's yours."

"Mine-? I don't understand."

"Sure you do. It's this way. You're a good customer here. You been losin' plenty of shekels to me these past few weeks. Well, I'm giving it back to you, see? I'd sooner let you have it than hand it over to that hijacker. G'wan, take the dough. I don't want anything for it—except a kiss."

As HE SPOKE, he grabbed Lynne and hauled her into his embrace. He fastened his mouth repugnantly upon her lips. His hands pawed at her body.

She fought free of him and slapped him across the cheek. "Don't you dare!" she stormed.

"Okay, Gorgeous. Have it your way," he grinned. He forced the banknotes into her hands, turned and stalked out of the room.

Left alone, Lynne still blazed with indignation



the arm and started backing toward the exit, drawing her with him. The next thing she knew,

he had snatched her out into the night; was forc-

Flattening the bills, she thrust them into her snug abbreviated girdle. . . .

ing her toward a parked coupe. "Inside!" he snapped.

Thoroughly dazed, she found herself in the car with him. He was driving hell-for-leather through the darkness, back toward town. With a deft movement he pocketed his gun and whisked away his mask.

A tiny flurry scampered through Lynne's veins when she saw his revealed features, his rugged and masculine profile. He was handsome as all get-out!

She found her voice. "So you're a kidnaper as well as a robber!"

"Not exactly," he retorted whimsically. He braked to a stop in front of a looming mansion. "Do me the honor to come into my home, won't you? I'd like to have a little chat with you."

Her eyes widened. He had said that this splendiferous house was his home. What sort of burglar would live in an establishment like this? It didn't quite make sense.

Curiously, she entered the mansion with him. He conducted her into a comfortable library; faced her with a pleasant smile. "Of course you're wondering why I brought you here?"

"Naturally." She couldn't help feeling a tiny thrill at the way his appreciative gaze traversed her curves, with a decided stop-over at the region of her magnificent breasts. He really couldn't be blamed for staring so intently at those lovely hills of feminine enticement. After all, Lynne had discarded her brassiere, it must be remembered; and her clinging gown gave very little concealment. . . .

The young man smiled once more. "I'm Nappy Norton."

Lynne gasped. "Nappy Norton—? Not the Nappy Norton—!"

"The same. Heir to a million, and known as the playboy of the western world."

"But-but why on earth-"

"Why did I hold up Cafoni's joint? Because he's nicked me for at least forty or fifty thousand dollars in the past month; and I just learned that his roulette wheel is as crooked as a corkscrew with arthritis. I wanted to teach him a lesson—and at the same time get back the money he stole from me. Besides, when it leaks out that his place was held up, he'll lose patronage. People will be afraid to go back there. Hence, he'll have fewer suckers to pluck; understand?"

LYNNE NODDED. A vagrant dimple played in her delightful cheek. "Yes. I think I understand—perfectly."

Nappy Norton grew suddenly grave. "Very

well. If you understand, then suppose you hand over the money Cafoni gave you to keep for him!"

She stiffened. "What do you mean?"

"Don't kid me. You're probably one of Tony's molls. You were in the ladies' room and so was he. When he went in, he had money in his pockets. When he came out, he was clean as a pin. Not a dime on him. Therefore—he must have turned the cash over to you. And you wouldn't have taken it unless you were his woman. That's why I forced you to come home with me. I knew you had the cash on you somewhere. And now—fork it over!"

Lynne turned a lovely crimson. For some strange, impelling reason she didn't want Nappy Norton to think of her as Cafoni's girl friend. She didn't quite understand why she should feel that way; but she desperately wanted Nappy to understand that she was clean, straight, innocent.

It suddenly dawned on her that she mustn't allow Nappy to discover that she had Cafoni's money. That would make him believe the worst of her; cause him to conclude that his suspicions were true. With tremulous lips, she whispered: "You—you're quite wrong! I was merely a visitor at Cafoni's place. I lost money to him, too. But—but he doesn't mean anything to me—"

Norton approached her, searching her eyes with a probing glance. "I wish I could believe that," he muttered.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean you're the most lovely girl I ever encountered. I could fall for you in a big way—if I thought you weren't Cafoni's moll."

A ripple of pleasure stabbed into Lynne's heart. She loved the way Nappy was hungrily staring at her, drinking in the symmetry of her contours. His glance was almost like a caress. . . .

"I'm not Cafoni's moll!" she whispered.

"You're telling the truth?"

"Yes. . . . "

"I'm going to find out!" he said suddenly.

"H-how?"

"By doing . . . this!" he answered. He grabbed her and crushed her in a masculine embrace that crushed and flattened her breasts; that squeezed the breath out of her in a gasping moan. He clamped his lips on hers. His hands strayed over her back; wandered along the satin smoothness of her arms.

Something happened in in wasn't a brassiere catch this time, because she wasn't wearing one. No; it was more like the bursting of a hidden, secret

dam in her heart. A dam which permitted thrilling sensations to rip into her veins and set her blood steaming. . . .

She locked her arms about his neck and strained herself against him. "Oh-h-h-h-" she panted. He smiled down at her. "I'm glad."

"G-glad for what?"

The library door smashed open. Somebody came bouncing into the room. It was Tony Cafoni -with a gun in his hand!

Tony cast a dour grin at Lynne. "Hi, sweetheart. I seen this lug put the snatch on you in his car, an' I grabbed a squint at his license tag. Then I knew who he was, an' I followed him here. Looks as if I just about got here in time. Well, let's go. You still got that dough with you?"

Lynne gasped, tried to speak. She saw Nappy Norton staring in her direction, with an expression of disillusionment. "So you fooled me after



wouldn't respond that way to me when I . . . kissed you."

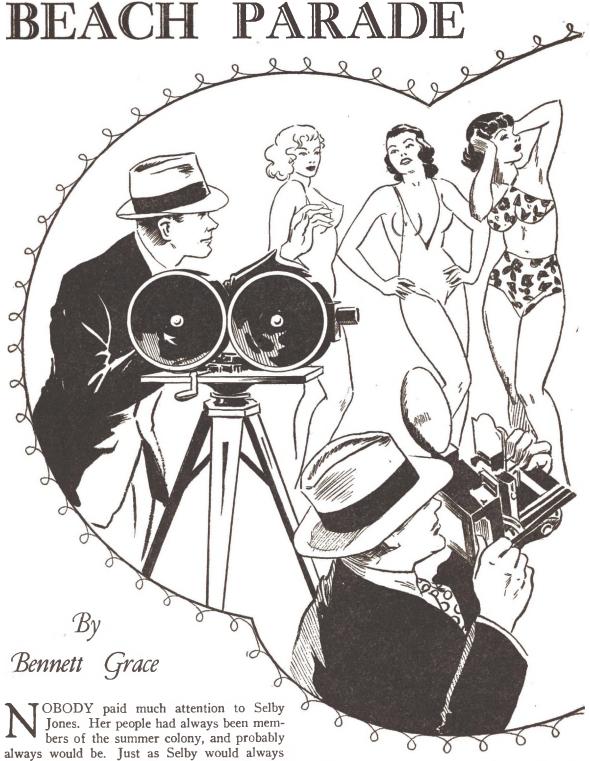
She flushed. "Th-then you believe me?"

"Yes. And something tells me you care for me as much as I care for you!"

An eager acquiescence leaped to her parted lips. But before she could whisper her love, things happened.

Cafoni's woman—and you had his money with you all the time!"

Cafoni sneered: "Sure she did. So what?" (Please turn to page 62)



"And so they've asked me to act as judge," Don was saying to her. They were stretched out on the white sand, and in the distance a particularly fleecy cloud hung over the unbelievable blue of the sea. "All this twaddle about beauty

definite, but final.

be Selby Jones. Or maybe she'd be Selby At-

terson in a couple of years. For it was a well known fact that Don Atterson and Selby had

what is known as an "understanding". Nothing



contests—bah. It's those damned vacationists. Who ever started the vogue for this place, anyway."

He scowled fiercely, and Selby refrained from reminding him that his own realty company had begun the fad by putting up small cottages and renting them by the week instead of the season. Within two years the sleepy litle summer town had become a swarming metropolis with a rapidly changing population. No longer did the summer group take pride in the ownership of their own homes. Those strange people with two precious weeks of vacation, as well as those stranger people who only had week-ends, rented the cottages at a modest price and proceeded to turn the place into a hot-cha sort of resort. And now they were organizing a beauty contest.

Selby considered this latest innovation gravely. Don, she saw, was upset, but his annoyance

was modified by the implied flattery of asking him to be one of the judges.

"You're not going to enter, of course," he continued. And she had had no intention of entering, but his calm assumption had caused her very feminine mind to work in reverse.

"Why not?" she demanded. And she might well ask that question, for Selby was built with that lithe muscular slenderness which is not devoid of curves, and simply shouts to the entire world that here is a woman blessed by the gods. "After all, I suppose practically everybody will be in it. And with you as one of the judges..."

Don glared at her. "Don't be absurd," he advised angrily. "Who ever heard of entering a beauty contest—a beauty contest!"

Selby rose to her feet. She stretched deliciously. "Don't you think I'm qualified?" she asked mildly, and his eyes took in the slender roundness of her scantily clad form. Her skin, burned a dull bronze, showed up in sharp contrast against the white bathing suit. From the delicious curve of the shoulders, down past the up-turned charm of the young breasts, past the slim waistline, past the flare of the hips and the columnar perfection of the thighs—right down to the brilliantly painted toenails, she was a picture to consider—to ponder upon—to admire—to go quite gaga about.

"Are you qualified? Baby—you don't know the half of it!" The young man who uttered this enthusiastic bit of advice was grinning at them. "And I'm just the boy to see about it. I'm taking the applications." He whipped out a pad from his pocket. "Name?"

"Selby Jones. Age nineteen. I'll give you details of measurements later."

"Don't," he told her, "let me guess. Okay, honey. Report at the Casino tomorrow at ten. Some of the newsreel boys are going to take pictures. And wear that bathing suit."

"But I have another I like better," she protested. "A suit which is really much prettier."

"Wear that one," he insisted. "It will photograph like nothing at all." He waved them a gay salute, and strode away.

"Presumptuous young pup," Don growled. "Always breezing up to people. He's the social director. The social director!"

"I like him," Selby remarked. "There's an air about him . . . "

"A third rate air," Don growled. "Jimmy Wells. Now who ever heard of a name like Jimmy Wells!"

"We have—you and I—just now."

Conversation languished a bit after that. Selby was really interested in the tall, striking young man with a name like Jimmy Wells. There was a certain swing to his shoulders, a certain set to his head. His eyes, like distant skies, had been quite grave, despite the flashing smile. And there was something about that smile—something about the sensitive curve of the lips—Selby refused to permit her thoughts to go any further.

BUT THE FOLLOWING morning at ten, she had nothing to say to those wayward thoughts. Arriving at the Casino, she was greeted by Jimmy Wells.

"Glad to see you took my advice," he told her, taking in the bathing suit. There was some impersonal element in his glance which irritated her.

"Am I all right?" she asked anxiously.

"You'll do." For a moment his eyes lit up, and then he patted her on the shoulder. "And how you'll do. This reel will break nationally—and before you know it we'll have a little land boom here."

So that's where his interests were! Using her to bring about, of all things—a land boom.

There were many girls in all stages of dress and undress, and all shades of sunburn, and Selby noticed that Jimmy's attitude was the same to all of them. It irritated her slightly, for she could see there was not one with the exact perfection which her own scanty suit revealed. Of course, the little black haired one over in the corner—and he paid little or no attention to that girl—approximated the same charms, and even added a certain gamin note of her own. Selby drifted over to stand by her side. The girl turned and smiled.

"I hate these damned contests," the girl grinned. "I'm Sonny Lester, you know."

The name didn't mean a thing to Selby. But she grinned back and said, "Why do you enter them, if you don't like them."

Sonny's eyes rested for a split second upon the tall form of Jimmy. "You guess," she suggested, and Selby nodded understandingly.

There were cables and camera crews and a weary, boring session of walking, turning and smiling blankly for a group of men who looked like ex-gangsters.

"Hey, you, sister! The one with the you-know-whats...a little more what it takes." One of the men was pointing to her, and she turned a puzzled glance at Jimmy.

"Like this," the camera man essayed a hipwiggling saunter across the platform. Its mimicry was so accurate that Selby flushed, but when Jimmy said "Try it," she did.

She could hear the soft buzz as the camera turned over, and a burst of sudden applause from the girls told her the mincing little walk had gone over with a bang.

SHE FOUND HERSELF some thirty minutes later perched on one of the high benches at the Casino. By her side was the social director, and he was munching on a hot dog.

"Better have some more mustard," he suggested. "And baby, did you go over big. If the judges are half as wise as the camera men you'll walk off with the prize."

"That's right—what is the prize?" she asked.
"A complete beach outfit—courtesy of Daniels and Company—and . . . "

"What," it was the girl named Sonny who sauntered up to them and grinned at Jimmy, "no nice big kiss from papa? His kisses are something to write home about, sister," she explained to Selby.

Selby took an extra large bite of hot dog, so she wouldn't have to reply, but that evening while she was dressing for dinner the girl's words returned to her, and she found herself wondering exactly how Sonny knew so much.

"Don't be silly," she told her reflection severely. Clothed only in a tiny pair of white chiffon panties which were matched by an inadequate bra, she was lovely to behold. Unhampered by the clinging jersey of the suit, the twin mounds stood juttingly like hemispheres. They strained mightily against the slim strips of chiffon which clung to the warm perfection of the flesh. "He's only a social director," she told herself angrily, but could not rid herself of the longing to feel his arms around her and his lips crushing her own tender mouth.

She slipped into the bright orange sheath which covered her voluptuous curves the way a bright cloud enshrouds a slim birch.

"I hope you've given up this beauty contest nonsense," Don greeted her. He looked very handsome in the white dinner clothes which he always affected, but even that bronze masculine charm did not compare with her interest in the unpopular social director. "Of course, I realize it's quite a thing for the beach itself . . ." he continued, pursing his lips, "and I am sure the young ladies entered will be charmed with the beach outfit . . ."

The voice ran on and on, and Selby scarcely heard him. That was the trouble with Don. One

never had to really listen, because he always said the same things.

He brought the car to a sudden stop. "I want to talk to you," he announced suddenly.

She turned astonished eyes upon him. "You've been talking to me right along," she reminded him mildly. "I mean—for years and years—you've been talking to me."

"But this is important," his arm was around her now, and his lips, close to her ear, were warm. "Very important," he repeated.

Selby's heart was beating wildly. She had known him for so long that this preamble seemed a trifle ridiculous. It was embarassing, and therefore angered her beyond words. She shrugged her shoulders, as though to shrug away his insistence, but he was not to be silenced.

Her lithe body seemed to be gathered in a ribcrushing embrace, as her lips were smothered against the determined kisses of the man. She struggled against him, and muttered, "Have you gone completely crazy?"

But his mouth did not leave her crimson lips, nor did his grasp loosen.

With a mighty wrench, she tore herself out of his arms, and flung herself out of the car. "You—you—" she was sobbing now. Don was such a fool. No build-up—no subtlety—if this was his idea of a proposal. "If you think I'd marry you—YOU—" she left the sentence unfinished.

"Who said anything about marriage," he wanted to know.

She stared at him blankly for a moment, and then the full import of his words struck her. All fear left in the sheer rage which possessed her. She climbed back in the car, and her face was deathly pale. Against the strange white planes of the face, the crimson mouth flashed like a trembling scar. . . .

"Did I hear you say—who said anything about —marriage—" she was breathless with fury.

He tried to snake his arm around her waist, and she let him have it. It was, what the sports writers call, a haymaker. It's start was unthinking but sincere, and it landed right on the point of the chin. Selby knew nothing about boxing, nor did she know that that is a peculiarly vulerable spot. But she realized the results practically immediately, for with a little groan, Don slumped over the wheel, and his complete limpness seemed like nothing short of death itself.

For a moment Selby stared at the figure of the man, her eyes wide with horror. She stretched out a hand and placed it on his shoulder. She shook him—but nothing happened.

Then, carefully, as she had seen people do in the movies, she took her handkerchief and wiped off all surfaces where there could possibly be any finger marks. Wrapping her hand in one of the ruffles of her gown, she grasped the handle of the door and climbed out of the car.

The slim golden slippers were scarcely built for the roughness of the road, any more than the flimsy little cloak was warm enough to give the fleeing Selby protection against the briskness of the late summer night. Many cars whizzed by, but no one would stop for the speeding figure of the girl.

"Hey there," at last a roadster slowed up. "Well, I'll be darned. If it isn't the little gal of the luscious curves. Hop in, sister. Just walking for your health—or having a little boy friend trouble."

JIMMY WELLS FACE was as astounded as his voice was casual. She crawled in the car gratefully and sank back upon the cushions. Now that the excitement was over, the reaction was setting in and she felt exhausted to the point of coma.

They drove in silence, the boy neither asking questions nor troubling her with observations. Her lashes were long and dark against the white curve of her cheek, even as the flimsy chiffon lay in rumpled folds against the curve of one tip-tilted breast.

He put his arm around her shoulder and drew her over to him, guiding her head until it rested upon his shoulder. "Comfortable?" he asked.

She nodded. She wanted to tell him the whole miserable story, but when it came to putting it into words her courage failed. And so she let him drive through the perfumed night, trying to pretend, for a few blessed moments, that she would always be as safe and secure as this.

"We can't drive forever," she thought to herself—and realized she had spoken when he said, "Why not."

Nevertheless he brought the car to a halt, and his arms around her were gentle. His lips against her hair was softly coaxing.

"Do you want to tell me about it?" he asked her gravely. "Or would you rather I took you home—or—"

She lifted her lips and brushed them softly against his astonished mouth. "You're sweet," she told him. "Just let me stay . . . for a moment . . . "

"For a moment!" His voice was an exalted

cry His lips curved into a pleased smile. "For a moment . . . !"

He glued his lips against hers as though he would never let her go, and all the things she had thought about his kisses were mere understatements. At last, however, she pulled herself away.

"I-I've just-killed Don Atterson." She blurted out.

He blinked, then muttered, "Congratulations."
"I'm not joking. He's back there—in the car—all slumped over."

In silence, Jimmy turned the roadster around, and his foot pressed down upon the accelerator. His young face was set, and between his lips he was muttering, "We'll get you out of this. Don't worry. Maybe he's not dead—maybe—Hell, with your figure, no jury would send you up. . . . "

Selby shivered. All this talk of jury—and death—and the mechanics of a trial.

THEY CAME TO A HALT alongside of the other car. Seated on the running board was Don, his head resting wearily on one arm. And by his side, making cooing little noises, was Sonny Lester.

"He's not dead!" Selby was so relieved that she scarcely wondered how and why Sonny was by his side. "I mean—he's all right!" she was clinging to Jimmy's arm, and her eyes were wide with sheer relief.

"Sure—you just knocked him on the head. Can't hurt him—that way:" Jimmy's lips were set in a tight little line, and his eyes were glaring at Sonny furiously.

"What the hell's the big idea?" he was saying, and the sheer fury in his voice was such that even Selby cringed.

But the other girl seemed not to be disturbed by it. "Why not?" she demanded, hotly. "Don't you think I'm as good—as some other people." Her glance rested on the slim figure of Selby. "Think I can't—"

"Shut up," Jimmy told her angrily. "And climb in that roadster."

Sonny stood up angrily. "Say, if you think—" He grasped her by the arm and gave her a little shove. "I said climb in that roadster . . . "

Wordlessly Sonny climbed in, and wordlessly Selby watched her. "You too, Sel," Jimmy propelled her towards the car.

"I'll stay here," she said in a flat little voice. "You'll do what?"

"I said—I'll stay here." She hoped he would leave her quickly, for she felt she would burst

into tears at any moment, and she simply could not stand to have him pretend to comfort her.

He ran his tongue around his lips, as though to convince himself that this was actually the girl he had held in his arms only a few short moments ago.

"You mean—you're going to stay with that mug?"

Instead of replying, she climbed into the sedan, and motioned to Don to take the place beside her. She shifted gears viciously, and they stormed past the loitering roadster.

SHE DROVE HOME in silence, and it wasn't until she was in the privacy of the large, chintz draped boudoir that she permitted the disappointment to overwhelm her.

When he discovered that she, Selby, had been driving with Don, he had accepted the statement casually—but when he found out that Sonny was

with him his anger knew no bounds. It could, of course, mean only one thing. That Sonny meant more to him than she did. That Sonny's well being, and happiness meant everything.

Remembering his kisses, the sensation of his arms, holding her closely, she could not understand his rapid change of affections.

After a night of turning and tossing, alternating between rage and bitter disappointment, she arose to scramble into the favorite white bathing suit. It was the day of the beauty contest, but instead of turning toward the casino where the judges were assembling the reviewing seats and the girls were standing in excited little groups, Selby turned towards the beach.

If that's all Jimmy Wells thought of her, she wouldn't even bothe rto appead. The surf battered her slender body, and after a little while she stretched out under the soft shade of a beach umbrella. From the distance she could hear the



hammering of the carpenters building the improvised platform where the girls were to parade.

She closed her eyes wearily. Don had made no attempt to get in touch with her, of course. Nor would he. He would accept the minor honor granted him as judge of the contest, and never, never see her again. She was just as glad. Don was inclined to be rather stupid.

And Jimmy—she tried to stifle a sob as she thought of Jimmy. It would be Jimmy and Sonny, of course. They would go away. Their only interest in this place was for a jolly summer. For the first time, she felt an unreasonable rage against the transient cottagers which swarmed over the little resort.

SHE MUST HAVE SLEPT, for the sun was so low that its bright rays crept under the umbrella and touched her eyes. She could hear cheers and yells, evidently for the winner. It would be Sonny—Sonny with her round, snug little body and her round, bright little eyes—

Selby gave a tiny little groan and her slim hands pressed the luscious breasts as though to still the pounding of her heart.

"Selby, why aren't you—at the Casino." It was Jimmy's voice—and he sank down on the warm sand by her side. "I wondered what in the name of peace had happened—then figured that Don menace unsold you. He's up there now, all surrounded by bathing beauties. Go ahead up and untangle him—I want some sleep."

He rolled over and closed his eyes. "The beach is big enough," Selby told him frigidly, "without crowding me. Go someplace else and sleep. And Don, or anything which concerns him, is no business of mine."

"What are you trying to do? Take me for a buggy ride? You don't have to be nice any more, the contest is over." He did not bother to open his eyes, and therefore he did not see the blank look of amazement on her face.

"No? I suppose you told Sonny the same thing."

Jimmy Wells sat up suddenly. "Sonny?" he asked. "Hell, Sonny is a professional beauty contest winner. She and I have been working this gag for years. I gather up leases for the

following season—we stage a beach parade. Get a lot of publicity—and all the gals are so cow-ish in these places that Sonny comes along and cops the prize. That insures us against hard feelings the next season. Only this year we figured you'd throw a monkey wrench in the works, and walk off with all the publicity. You gave us a couple of bad hours, honey. But it's okay now."

He leaned over, letting his arm drift—not quite casually—around her waist. "See?" he demanded.

She tried to wriggle out of his embrace. "No, I don't," she protested "That's no reason why you should have acted as you did—last night?" "Oh—that. Well, didn't you enjoy it—too?"

HER FACE FLAMED as she realized he had misunderstood her. "I mean getting so angry when you saw Sonny and Don?"

His face darkened. For all her wriggling, she was still held captive within the circle of his arm, only now that circle tightened, and she was close to him—close enough to feel the sturdy warmth of him through the filmy mesh of her suit. "We have one unbustable rule. Sonny is never to make up to one of the judges. Bad business. Before you know it, gossip starts—and then there's trouble. I'll wring her neck if she ever does it again. . . ."

There was a little silence, and then he turned to her. "But why did you stay with Don? I thought after—well, in my language a gal doesn't kiss—like that—unless—"

"I thought—it was you and Sonny—" Selby's voice was low, and her face was buried in his shoulder. She did not move her head, not even when she felt his other arm encircle her slimness. She raised her lips, the better to meet his kisses—and tried not to feel thoroughly ashamed of herself and her silly jealousy.

"I promise you," Jimmy was saying, "Sonny won't ever worry you again—no matter how many beauty contests—"

"Only I'll be the professional winner in this family in the future," Selby told him. "If that's the only way to get taken home by you at three o'clock in the morning—I'll—"

The cheers from the grandstand drifted towards them, but they were otherwise engaged.



PRIZES FOR PHOTOS

LL the world loves a lover and every magazine reader loves a contest! Here's one that'll keep you on your tip-toes. We're looking for good photographs and we're willing to pay for them. Surely you have a picture that you think rates with any of the ones we've printed in BEDTIME STORIES. Why not send it in to the Art Editor, and if he agrees with you, who knows? You may be the lucky winner of ten dollars, which is our first prize!

You don't have to be a professional photographer to enter this contest. Interesting poses, striking lighting effects, unusual models—any reader is welcome to send in a picture that he thinks will be of interest to our other readers.

Come on, fellows, don't keep that favorite picture of your best girl in hiding! Send it in—if you think she's tops, perhaps we will too!

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First Prize \$10.00 IN CASH

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TWO SNAPPY NOVELS

EASY VIRTUE

By

ROBERT CARTER

DANCE TEAM

By

GLADYS SLOAN

A tragic end to one love affair sent Dora to New York where her beauty and "Easy Virtue" led to adventure! Camilla made dancing her career, to forget her love for her sister's husband
... and found success!

Be a lucky winner! Send your best photograph to the Art Editor, BEDTIME STORIES, D. M. Publishing Co., Dover, Del.

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Completely Candid!

$\mathcal{B}y$

Mitzi Mason

ARLA FOX opened her pretty eyes, stretched languorously. The bright morning sun was streaming into the room. It fell across her bare shoulders and throat, brought enervating warmth. Carla pushed the covers down, kicked her feet out of them. She slid her pajama top up under her chin, relaxed dreamily while the bright rays of the sun caressed her bare, pink-tipped breasts.

Only one thought passed through her untroubled mind. She was thinking how nice it would be to stay in bed all day, completely at ease, the sun beating down on her nude body. The business of getting up, showering, brushing your teeth and having breakfast was a nuisance. People didn't spend enough time in bed—resting.

Carla yawned, arched her hips in a lithe, feline gesture. There was only one drawback to staying in bed. In an hour or so, the sun wouldn't be streaming into the room.

Carla slipped out of bed, stepped to the window. The view was not typical of other New York apartments. Walter Fox, her father, had seen to it that no Manhattan turrets obscured the skyline from his penthouse suite. In order to achieve this end, he had caused to be erected a twenty-five story building that towered far and above the other apartment residences in the neighborhood.

Carla looked out on the landscaped terrace alive with spring blossoms in a riot of color. She drew a deep breath of relatively clean, upper strata air. Her breasts swelled beneath clinging crepe de chine. It was a glorious day. Carla envisioned stretching out on a green meadow beside a bubbling brook. Some place far from civilization where she could divest herself of all her clothing and soak in the warmth of the sun.

It was an idle, impossible dream, she knew. The next best thing was the terrace.

Carla showered, donned shorts and a printed cotton bandeau. Breakfast consisted of coffee and toast. The sun had reached mid sky when she stepped out on the terrace. Walter Fox's land-scape gardeners had done a clever job on the apartment house roof. To all intents and purposes, it was a country garden. Save for the muffled hum

of the city below, one might have imagined himself far from the maddening crowd.

Carla spread a blanket on the square plot of grass, stretched out. It wasn't as soft as her bed but the thrilling heat of the sun on her bare flesh made up for the little lack of comfort. She closed her eyes, drifted into a state of complete repose. A lone bee, probably borne in from the wide open spaces on an ill wind, buzzed around the honeysuckle vines. All that was missing was the bubbling brook. Carla thought facetiously of having the shower turned on. She ran the tips of her fingers over the softness of her own skin. She rolled over on her side, reached behind her, unhooked the bandeau. Her breasts, free of confinement, pointed towards the blue sky. Carla cupped their cone-shaped firmness. She had always been proud of her bosom. It required no artificial aids to help it maintain its tip-tilted rigidity.

SHE OPENED HER eyes, squinted down the valley between her twin charms. It was deep and mother-of-pearl smooth. Carla closed her eyes again, stretched her arms out, permitted the blazing sun to caress her breasts.

The heat and complete relaxation must have made her doze off. She awakened to the drone of an aeroplane motor. She could see the small ship moving across the sky far above the terrace. She wondered how far beneath him the pilot could see. A perverse vanity kept her from covering her breasts. The plane passed over the house.

Suddenly, it banked, turned, dove like a hawk. In a moment, it swooped over Carla, not a hundred feet separating the terrace from its landing gear. The roar of the motor was so frightening that Carla lay there stiffened. She saw a young man leaning out of the rear seat of the plane. He seemed to be holding binoculars to his eyes.

Carla sat up, covered her breasts with her cupped hands. The plane banked again, came back. This time it flew even lower. Carla jerked the blanket off the grass, wrapped it around her shoulders, ran into the house.

She was burning with rage when she reached her bedroom. She made a mental note to tell her father about the incident. She remembered hear-



again, swooping over the terrace. Something white dropped from it, fell into the tulip bed. Carla rang for her maid, sent her out to get whatever had plummeted from the plane.

It was a pair of pliers with a note tied around it. Carla's fingers trembled as she smoothed out the grease-stained paper. Her cheeks flushed as she read the penciled scrawl. It said: "Come out, come out, wherever you are."

Another roar and the plane shot by again. Carla's indignation got the better of her sense of humor. She reached for the phone. "Police Department," she snapped.

note attached to the pair of pliers. Nothing about the nude sun bath she had been taking.

"It may have been one of those city lounge lizard friends of yours," Walter Fox suggested. "Most of them have planes, don't they?"

"None of them do."

"Well. I don't understand why he kept flying back and forth."

Carla changed the subject. She had once heard her father rail against the immorality of nudism.

Carla was up early the next morning. She decided to drive into the country and find a secluded substitution for the terrace. There were two letters awaiting her at the breakfast table; one from a couturiere announcing new Parisian models and the other addressed in an unfamiliar masculine hand. Carla slit the evelope of the second one, read the contents.

My dear Miss Fox:

Inasmuch as you saw fit to report me to the police, thereby causing me a lot of unnecessary trial and tribulation, I have decided to retaliate in kind.

The aerial photographs of your form divine which I snapped while passing over your terrace yesterday are, to say the least, charmingly revealing. I intend printing quite a batch of them and distributing them to your friends as well as mine. However, since there are three poses, I think you should be permitted to choose the one you feel your friends would appreciate.

Shall I expect you this evening at about eight at the above address?

Jerry Nolan.

Carla read the amazing letter again. Her cheeks were burning and her heart was pounding beneath the swell of her breast. It was all too fantastic to be true and yet, not beyond the realm of possibility. Evidently, what she had thought were binoculars, was a candid camera.

What to do? Tell her father? No, that would be suicide. Ignore the letter? That would be worse than suicide. All thoughts of driving into the country fled from Carla's mind. She felt weak at the pit of her stomach. Who was this Jerry Nolan? The name sounded vaguely familiar. Leaving her breakfast untouched, she rushed into the library, thumbed through the society blue book. There were a dozen Nolans but no Jerry or no Jerome. Frantic, Carla called Enid Rich. Enid knew everybody who was anybody in town.

Enid's cultivated southern drawl came over the wire. "Jerry Nolan? He's a young writer, darling. Tall, dark and handsome. He comes from a wealthy Atlanta family. Not really bluebloods but nice people. Where did you meet him?"

Carla's lips thinned. "I haven't met him—yet.

I'm going to meet him."

"Oh, you'll like him a lot, Carla. He's full of fun. Not much of a ladies' man though. I think he fishes or hunts or plays polo, or some silly thing like that. You know, the outdoor type." Enid giggled. "Well, good luck anyway, darling."

Carla returned the receiver to the hook. "Not much of a ladies' man," she repeated bitterly. "Not much!"

CARLA LEFT THE Fox penthouse at seven. She had thought the matter over pro and con, decided it was best to see Mr. Jerry Nolan and appeal to his better nature—providing he had one. On the dot of eight, she nervously rang the bell at the door of his apartment. A tiny, slanteyed Jap answered.

"Mr. N-N-Nolan, please," Carla stuttered. The Jap smiled urbanely, ushered Carla in.

She found herself alone in a modern, streamlined drawing room. The walls were all mirrors. Her reflection stared back at her from four directions. The room was severely decorated, masculine in its very essence. At least, Carla thought, if Mr. Jerry Nolan wasn't a gentleman, he had a gentleman's good taste.

She was looking at a chromium framed water color hanging above a glass brick fireplace when

a voice behind her startled her.

"Miss Fox, I believe."

Carla spun around. For a moment, she was taken off guard. The tall, broad shouldered young man in the black velvet lounging jacket came forward smilingly.

"I rather expected you."

He extended his hand but Carla made no move to take it. All the righteous indignation she had planned was dissipated by his easy assurance. Curiously, she was annoyed to discover that Enid Rich's description didn't do him justice. He was too handsome.

He ignored her blatant rebuke. "I'm sorry we had to meet in this way, Miss Fox," he said pleasantly. "I had heard intriguing things about you but not for a moment did I imagine that our introduction would come, as it were, from a blue sky."

Carla felt the heat creeping into her cheeks. She knew he was looking her over from head to toe and it made her uncomfortable. She tried to control the quickened rhythm of her breathing but the very conscious effort increased it. Her breasts rose and fell beneath the bodice of her printed sheer frock. Even the rosebud pinnacles worked against her assuming rigidity.

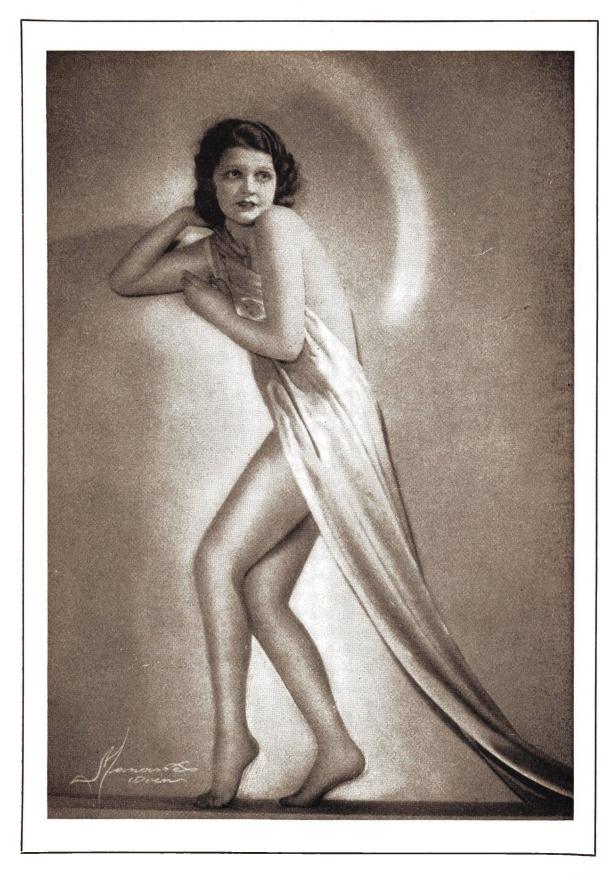
"I-I came to appeal to your-"

Jerry Nolan's eyes crinkled. "To my better nature, isn't that it?"

Again Carla was thrown off balance. She would like to tear his eyes out and yet, on the other hand, they were nice brown eyes. She would like to rake her fingernails across his cheeks and yet, they were smooth, suntanned cheeks.

He motioned to a divan. "You're not used to standing, Miss Fox. Won't you be seated?"

Carla sat down automatically. She started to



cross her knees, changed her mind. As it was, the hem of her dress, following the latest dictates of fashion was high enough to reveal the full swell of her chiffon-sheathed calves. She hunched her shoulders so that the taut, jutting firmness of her breasts would not be too evident.

Jerry Nolan broke the strained silence. "Do you think it was very nice of you to call the police?"

Carla's eyes flashed. "Do you think it was very nice of you to swoop down and take pictures of me in the—in the—"

"In the nude," he supplied smilingly.

Carla's cheeks turned crimson. "I think you're the most horrid man I know!" she gasped.

He shook his head. "No you don't. You're just trying to talk it into yourself."

Carla forgot to keep her shoulders hunched. She straightened, squared them. Her breasts jiggled entrancingly under the sheer silk of her frock. "No gentleman would have done what you did! I demand that you give me those pictures!"

His eyes dropped from her face to the quivering cones of her breasts. "Unfortunately, Miss Fox, the air is free. I don't know of any law against taking pictures from a plane."

Carla tightened up inside. "But there is a law against libelling people!" she panted. "There is a law against slandering people! If you dare to show anybody those pictures, my father will have you thrown into jail."

Jerry Nolan's eyebrows arched. "Libel? Slander? You do yourself a great injustice. I assure you, there is nothing libellous about the photographs. In fact, I've never seen such beautiful examples of the art. Every feature is clearly defined. The first one, taken when your arms were outstretched, is divine."

Carla felt as though she were about to go up in flames. Her face was burning and she knew it was crimson. Then, suddenly, out of a clear sky, her eyes flooded with tears.

"You-you-" The rest was lost in sobbing.

Jerry Nolan crossed quickly to the divan, sat down beside her. His arm crept about her waist. "Please don't cry," he said softly. "I'm sorry if I've upset you."

A brilliant thought flashed through Carla's mind. It stemmed from his embracing arm. She dabbed at her damp eyes with a handkerchief, sniffled, leaned against him.

"You—you don't know what it means to me," she whimpered. "My—my father will disown me if he hears about these pictures." She turned towards him, placed her hands on his shoulders.

"Please give them to me, Jerry. I'll really do anything to get them."

Jerry Nolan's eyes tightened. "Anything?"

Carla knew what his intonation meant. She knew that his fingers were moving closer to the outer swell of an unbrassiered breast. This had happened before when other men had tried to sample her charms. But now, her reaction was different. Jerry Nolan's embrace was pleasant, his nearness exciting.

"Yes, anything," she whispered.

He released her suddenly, rose. "No, I'm sorry, but I can't make that sort of a bargain."

Carla stared at him unbelievingly. What manner of man was this? He was turning her down. His unwillingness made her the hunter instead of the hunted.

She left the couch, walked over to him, slipped her arms about his neck. A deep breath swelled her breasts against his chest. "I'm sorry I said you were horrid, Jerry." Her voice was tremulous. "I didn't mean it." Her hips weaved sensuously. "You know, I haven't been able to eat a bite since I received you letter this morning. Suppose you take me out to supper? We can talk it over." Her eyes were alive with teasing promise. "I'm sure we can settle everything amicably."

CARLA SUGGESTED THE Sunset Room of the Hotel Carter, not without reason. It was an intimate, dimly lit supper room and besides, it had an orchestra playing soft, muted dance melodies.

Carla took every advantage of the situation. When she was in Jerry's arms on the polished dance floor she glued her body to his, made certain he could feel the pouting swell of her breasts against his chest. At intervals she would lean back and look up at him, her eyes glowing with sensuous promise; her moist lips slightly parted. It was all part of the game of enchantment—and Carla played it like a veteran.

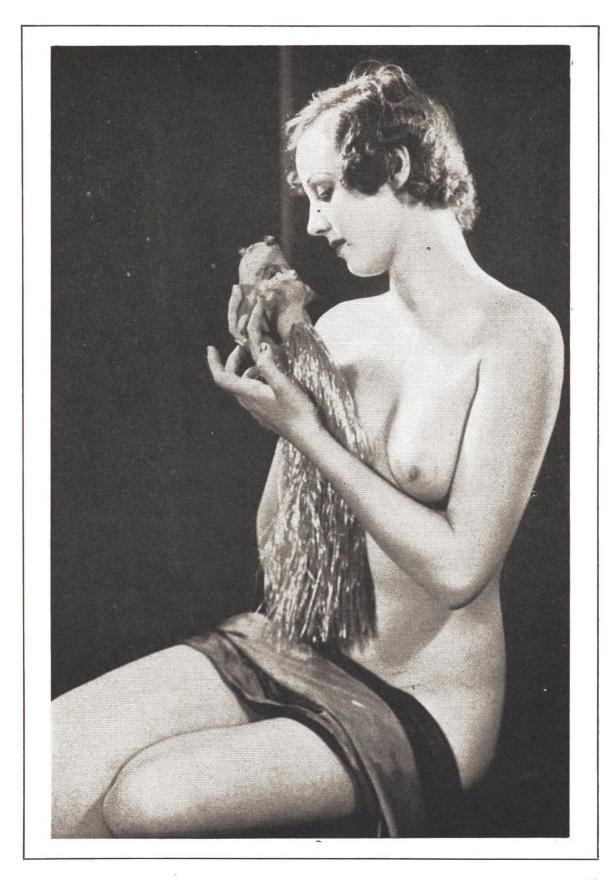
By midnight she knew she had him eating out of her hand. They left the *Sunset Room*. "It's still early," Carla said blithely. "We can go back to your apartment."

In the taxi, she cuddled in Jerry's arms, twined her own about his neck. "I'm glad this all happened, Jerry, dear," she murmured.

He caressed her gently, moving his hand over lush, sensitive curves in a soft, rotating motion that almost drove Carla crazy. She raised her lips to his, kissed him long and lingeringly.

Jerry's Jap admitted them to his apartment, vanished silently and quickly. In the modern

(Please turn to page 61)







"Confound it, Miss Hotchkiss! Let's drop everything and call it a day!"

American Methods

By Gregory Hawthorne

OMMY DALE sat alone at a table in a fashionable restaurant just off Oxford Circus in the city of London.

Tommy felt fine. Three cocktails, an excellent meal and a bottle of dry wine, and now through the smoke of his cigarette, he found himself looking at one of the most attractive girls he had ever seen.

She, too, was alone. She looked as if she might be a little above average height, and her soft, severely parted hair was blonde without the aid of the drug store. She was in evening clothes and her bare arms and shoulders gleamed dully in the soft, indirect light. The gown was cut very, very low and Tommy found himself envying the waiter who bent so solicitiously over her.

Tommy vaguely went about the business of evolving a plan whereby he could meet this girl. He had only been in London a few months, knew hardly anybody, and was still like most Americans, convinced that the English were a cold, stiff and occasionally rude lot. Nevertheless, Tommy wanted to meet the girl with the blonde hair and the beautiful shoulders and white, seductive arms.

He lighted another cigarette and flipped through his mental file of "methods". So engrossed was he he did not notice the waiter until the man had coughed delicately for the third time.

"Oh," Tommy said. "Yes?"

"Miss Stewart would like to know if you would care to have coffee and liquors with her, sir," the man said.

"I should," Tommy answered immediately. "And who is Miss Stewart?"

"The lady with the blonde hair in the white satin evening gown from whom you have not taken your eyes since entering the fish course, sir."

"Ah," said Tommy. "She must be possessed of second sight."

"That, sir," said the waiter, "would not surprise me. Miss Stewart is quite a remarkable young lady. And your name, sir?"

"Thomas Dale."

"If you will be so kind as to follow me."

Tommy ground out the remains of his cigarette

and got to his feet. He was a beefy young man, heavy about the shoulders and scant about the hips. He wore his evening clothes well, and his straight, black hair set off the tan of his good looking face.

He found himself looking down at the girl with the blonde hair and lovely upper neck. They smiled at each other.

"Mr. Thomas Dale," murmured the waiter. "Miss Mary Stewart."

"Charmed." They both said it at once and their smiles broadened. "Please sit down," Mary said. Tommy did so. He glanced up at the waiter and was about to say something, when Mary raised her hand. "This is my party," she said. "After all, I did the picking up. Cognac and demi-tasse," she said.

"Well," said Tonnny. "You know, I was sitting over there trying to think up some way to approach you without getting my face slapped."

Mary Laughed, showing white, even teeth. "I know," she said. "It was quite amusing watching your mind working. You're American, aren't you?"

"Yes. I came over for the Coronation."

"That was over some time ago."

"True—very true. But you see George VI wasn't the only man to be crowned. They honored me, too. When I came to I was broke."

"But how've you lived since then?"

"I had a little left in my hotel. Not enough for my passage back to the States. I've lived on that. When I've paid my bill here, I shall be quite flat."

"We might be able to get together," Mary said. "I have a very large flat. There's an extra room or so if you're interested, and I might be able to find a job for you."

Tommy gazed at her with frank suspicion. Her blue eyes were clear and untroubled, and since she was leaning a little across the table, he was afforded a much better view than even the waiter had received, and he discovered that he liked it a lot. It must have been obvious that Tommy was gazing at her almost revealed charms, and since she did nothing to prevent him

doing so, the only obvious conclusion was that she liked it too, as much as he.

"Why?" Tonnny asked.

Mary shrugged her bare and white shoulders. "Because I like your looks," she told him. "I'm the kind of girl that goes after what she likes. That's why I went after you. Ever heard of the Stewart Six?"

"Yes. A neat little car. A bit under-powered; but very neat."

together on the narrow seat, they eyed each other in the gloom. Mary's white teeth showed in a brilliant smile. Her evening wrap was draped loosely over her shoulders, and Tommy could see the jutting outline of her bosom. Her perfume filled the cab, and he could feel the warmth of her thigh through the folds of her gown.

"And they say the days of adventure are past," Mary said.

Tommy returned her smile. "I'm taking an



"They have to be under-powered on account of the horse-power tax. I make 'em."

"You don't say?" Tommy could scarcely believe his ears.

"My father started the business thirty years ago, died last year and I'm running the works. I'm twenty-four."

"Quite a gal, eh?" Tommy grinned at her with frank and generous admiration.

"I am." Mary told him complacently: "but in the bouldoir rather than in the machine shop. Shall we go?"

Tommy ran his fingers through his stiff hair. "I don't know what to say," he said.

Mary eyed him appraisingly. "I hope it won't take you too long to find your tongue," she said.

The long English twilight had not yet faded when they emerged from the restaurant and hailed a cab. They got in and Mary gave an address which was not familiar to Tommy. Jammed close

awful chance," he told her. "For all I know, you may be a confidence woman, although what you expect to get out of me is doubtful."

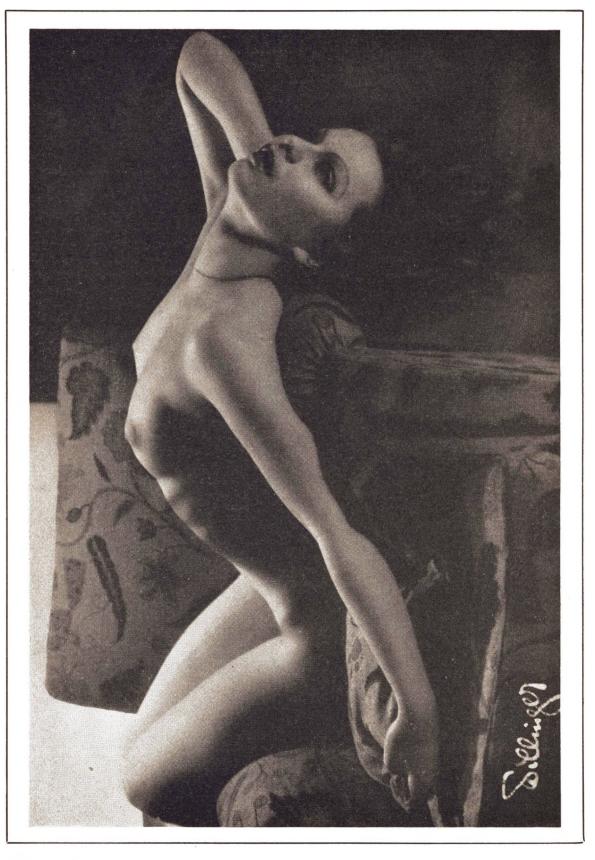
"And for all I know you might be an American gangster."

Tonnny's heart was racing when he took her in his arms. She came to him willingly, the wrap slipped off her shoulders, and her soft and naked arms stole about his neck. She molded her lightly clad bosom against him and she brushed his lips with hers.

"You're hurting me a little," she said. "Make it a lot."

Tommy crushed her to him, his lips found hers and they strained against each other. Sharp fingernails caressed the back of Tommy's neck as he bruised and kneaded the soft, full flesh of Mary's upper arm.

She broke away from him, panting feverishly. "We're here." she said. "What a man!"



"Did someone tell me once upon a time that English women were cold?" Tommy wiped the beads of perspiration from his forehead and opened the door of the cab. They alighted in a quiet sombre square. Tommy paid the cabman and followed Mary across the sidewalk. He noticed that she did not bother with a girdle and his heart sang happily inside him. This was a girl!

In the large living room of her flat, Mary tossed aside her wrap and dropped to an overstuffed couch. Tommy started to join her when she rais-

ed her hand.

She smiled. "Not yet, Tommy," she said, using his name for the first time. "First, we must get to business. Have you ever worked for a living?"

Tommy lowered himself to the arm of a chair. "I'm a salsman," he said. "I can sell anything. I use American methods."

"Hum. Listen, Tommy and listen carefully. We have put on the market a small edition of the Stewart Six, and we can't sell them. We've advertised and still they don't seem to catch on. We thought when we designed them they would appeal to the sporty, bright young people. We can't sell them."

"Have you tried the testimonial idea?" Tommy asked.

"You mean 'By Special Appointment ' that sort of thing? No, because we can't. The most popular of the bright young people today is Liz Osborn, and she won't have anything to do with us. She's engaged to be married to Sir Roger Davis."

"Liz Osborn," Tommy said thoughtfully. "What a foul name for a girl. Don't see how she can be popular."

"They gave her that name on purpose," Mary explained. "The other bright young people. She's so pretty they thought they had to do something."

"What sort of a girl is she?"

"Fast. Faster than anything we could ever turn out. At the present moment she's on her best behavior, hibernating on a houseboat just above Sudbury."

"Which is where."

"On the Thames."

"Why has she gone out of circulation?" Tommy wanted to know.

"Because she wants to marry Sir Roger who returns to England from abroad in a day or so and she did not want there to be the slightest hint of scandal. Sir Roger is a little stuffy. But very rich."

"If I could sell Liz one of your Stewart Six Specials it would mean something, eh?"

"It would be sensational," Mary assured him modestly.

"Would I have a permanent job?"

Mary rose to her feet. "I wouldn't be a bit surprised," she said: "but I can tell you more definitely a little later."

She went out of the room and Tommy lighted a cigarette. He felt perfectly at home and as though he had known Mary all his life. He felt happy, cheerful, and in a strange state of keen anticipation. The sound of slippers clacking on a hardwood floor turned him about. Mary came back into the room.

She was dressed in pajamas. Heavy, dark blue satin pajamas. Her blonde hair, unpinned and loose, clung about her shoulders, and her white arms were bare to the shoulders. She walked up to Tommy and gazed into his eyes.

"I don't know how you feel about it," she said: "but with me—it's love with a capital 'L'."

His arms went about her and a thrill shot through him when he realized what lay beneath the satin. Her rounded bosom was crushed flat against his chest and his fingers caressed shining hair. Mary was trembling and once again her pointed fingernails were running along the back of his neck.

She raised her face and her red lips were parted. Tommy kissed her; long and lingeringly, then he swept her off her feet and held her close.

"Is the job going to be permanent?" he whispered.

"I think so, Tommy."

Carrying her as lightly as though she were a baby, Tommy started from the room. Heels clacked on a hardwood floor, followed by the slamming of a door.

"So THAT'S A PUNT, eh?" Tommy surveyed the craft with misgiving.

"Yus, guv'nor," said the boatman cheerfully, "that's a punt."

"How d'you play it?"

"You can either sit down and paddle it," the boatman told him, "or you can stand on the little deck aft and pole. That's what most people do."

"We shall pole," Tommy announced.

"'Op in," the boatman invited him. Tommy stepped into the long, narrow, flat-bottomed boat and picked up the long, heavy pole. Balancing uncertainly, he nodded to the boatman and was shoved out into the river.

He managed somehow. It was not easy, swinging the pole from one side to the other and a lot of the Thames was spilled up his sleeve: but eventually he found himself opposite the houseboat which he had been told was being occupied by Liz Osborn. On the top deck, which was the roof, he noticed, as he passed a girl taking a sunbath. Tommy would not have sworn to it: but it seemed to him she was wearing practically nothing at all.

His heart missed a beat and he poled vigorously, tugged and let go, the punt slid from under him and he found himself clinging to a waving pole out in the middle of the stream.

A scream of laughter greeted him. Tommy glanced round. The girl was standing up and Tommy almost lost his precarious hold on his refuge.

The pole broke in half and Tommy found himself floundering about in the water. He spat water and shook the hair from his eyes then deliberately made for the houseboat.

He reached the landing stage and she was there to meet him. A terrycloth bathrobe was belted loosely about her middle and her flaming red hair blazed brazenly in the sunlight. She helped him out of the water.

"Just in time for lunch," she said. "How d'you do?"

"Can I take these clothes off and hang them somewhere?"

"I think that can be arranged." Liz eyed him boldly. "Did anyone ever tell you you had a figure like Max Baer?"

"Uk-huh. Let me get out of these things."

It was late that same evening, and Tommy and Liz sat together in a swing on the upper deck. She was in lounging pajamas and he was in his own dry but wrinkled clothes. The sky was blue and star-studded.

Liz said, "I wonder if you're thinking the same thoughts as I am?"

"I don't know. I was thinking how nice it would be to put my arms about you and kiss you."

"Then you were!"

Tommy laughed and, his heart beating very fast, he dropped his arm to her shoulders. Liz snuggled close and her red head dropped to his chest. Tommy ran the fingers of his other hand through the gleaming curls and Liz sighed.

"How I hate hibernating," she murmured. "But it had to be. I'm going to lead Roger one hell of a dance when I finally marry him—poor man."

She twisted expertly in his lap, and her bare arms went about his neck. Starlight flickered in her wicked eyes and her full, red lips were parted over her perfect teeth. Tommy could see the outline of her just-about covered bosom and the pajamas clung to the majesty of her thighs in the most seductive manner.

"Kiss me, Tommy."

Tommy did so and her arms tightened. Liz knew more about kissing than any five women alive and when she finally let him go he was weak and breathless. Her eyes were glittering and the pajamas had slipped off one shoulder. The white flesh gleamed and tossed back the light of the stars, and Tommy could see the agitation taking place beneath the tight fitting satin.

"What Roger doesn't know won't hurt him," Liz said cruelly. "And he's too stuffy for words."

Tommy said nothing. He thought ruefully of Mary and consoled himself with the thought that there was nothing definite between them. For all he knew to the contrary, she might be back in the restaurant off Oxford Circus, making herself pleasant to some other lonely man. It was a comforting thought, anyway.

"Let's do some more," Liz said.

They kissed some more. The top of the pajamas was slipping alarmingly and Liz did nothing whatsoever to help matters. She lay inert in Tommy's arms, her eyes closed and her lips parted over her little white teeth.

Tommy made a slight movement and Liz sighed. The swing creaked beneath the weight of them, and only the stars heard her as she whispered,

"Darling . . . darling . . . darling!"

"But you must go," Liz insisted. "It's late and I expect my fiance at any moment."

"I can't go," Tommy told her doggedly. "I came down here to sell you a car. Because you egged me on, I spent the time making love to you. I can't go until I've sold you the car."

Liz's eyes clouded suspiciously. "What make of car?" Tommy told her and she smiled. "I see the whole thing now," she said. "You were just taking advantage of me."

"I swear I wasn't. I came here to sell you a car and I was all set to do it legitimately. But it was more fun making love to you."

"You mean that?" Liz's face brightened.

"I most emphatically do."

"Then you must go now."

"Not until I've sold you a Stewart Six Special," Tommy said stubbornly.

Liz eyed him coldly then she laughed gaily. "You win," she said. "Hand the contract over."

Tommy drove swiftly back to London. To the night about him he announced.

"I think I'm going to like this man's country!"

Miss Trimform: "How do you keep men from peeping through the key-hole?"

Miss Wellreared: "That's easy. I leave my door open."

DIZZY DAISY SAYS AN OLD MAID IS ONE WHO HAS GIVEN UP ALL HOPES OF GIV-ING IN!



Dowager: "I do wish, Mary Ann, that you would stop wearing those extremely short skirts when serving dinner."

Maid: "It was the butler's orders, Ma'am. The cook burned the roast and the butler said if I dressed like this your husband wouldn't notice what he was eating."

(0)

DEAR EDITOR:

BETCHA DON'T KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A BIGAMIST AND A BACHELOR?

—HAJIR PANTZOFF

A BIGAMIST IS A GUY WHO MAKES THE SAME MISTAKE TWICE. A BACHELOR IS A GUY WHO DOESN'T MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE ONCE.

SLICK: "THE GIRLS ARE AL-WAYS PESTERING ME FOR FREE PASSES."

SLICKER: "ARE YOU IN THE THEATRICAL BUSINESS?"

SLICK: "NO, I'M A GIGOLO!"

Fonda Love: "Now that we're going to be married, darling, I'd like to find out how you would like twin beds?"

Miss Cayenne: "As close together as possible!"

He: "Kiss me again-you look like a million to me."

She: "I suppose you are one of those fellows who try to make a fortune all in one night."

He: "Yes, and when I make the fortune, I expect to retire."

"I'll call you, sweetheart," said our heroine as she displayed four jacks in a game of strip poker.

"Okey, Baby, I'll see you," said our hero as he laid down four aces.



What he is pulling down where he works doesn't worry many a wife nearly as much as what she is afraid he is pulling off with his stenographer.

REFORMING



BILL TOMLISON had one of those great big throbbing headaches, about the size of a zeppelin. Knowing he had only himself, Della and Mathilde Dale to thank for it did him a lot of good!—about as much good as the aspirin he had been wolfing since five a.m. There was no question about it, thought Bill wallowing around miserably on his bed, Della was a booze hound. She drank when she was alone, she drank when she was not alone and she absolutely guzzled at cocktail parties.

Last night they had been at the Marshall's cocktail party. He had said, squeezing her slim

white hand furtively, "Now, no drinks for you, sap. Remember that."

With a little jerk she had pulled her hand out of his. "Are you going to start that all over again, Bill?" she had asked wearily. "Are you going to remind me that this is Elmville and not New York and that if I keep on the way I'm going I won't make a fit wife for you."

"You aren't yourself when you drink, Della. You're not my girl. You're someone strange—and I want my girl."

"That's a laugh," Della had said quickly, her young breasts pouting out on her frame.

DELLA

By Phyllis Hoerner



They were cutting across a vacant lot then, a short way to the Marshall's house. The moon had been bright and clear in the velvety sky. He had looked at Della hard. Her shimmering closely flowing green dress outlined the enormous twin juts of her bosom.

She was very beautiful and he loved her terribly. So he stopped and took her shoulders firmly in his hands.

A smile had tilted up the corners of her mouth. "Bill, precious," she had said, softly, "do you hate my drinking so much?"

He had nodded, drawing her closer, feeling his

knees growing weak beneath him as the sweet perfume of her body driftd up his nostrils, as the high peaks of her breasts touched his chest.

"Then I shan't touch a drop. Not tonight. Not ever again. How's that?"

"Della! Do you mean that?"

Della's arms had curled softly about his shoulders. Her soft young body had swayed closer. It was more than he could endure—Della in such an abandoned, deliciously sweet mood!—and do nothing about it. His heart had pounded, little beads of perspiration had broken out on his temples. With something almost like a groan in his

throat he had crushed Della to him, had propelled her backwards to a low shadowy umbrella tree. Under its leafy enclosure he had found her quivering responsive mouth, had pressed his own lips hungrily on it. His fingers had swept over the warm softness of her bare back, down her smooth white arms, the palms of his hands cupping the curves of her hips and holding her close to him. He had never known such happiness, such ecstasy. And even as they had slid to the ground, every vein in his body a throbbing hungry flame, he had seen the future moving brightly before his mental eyes. Della, his wife—a beautiful, exquisite creature—a woman any man would be proud to call his own.

THEY HAD BEEN late for the cocktail party, of course. Della had had to go home and exchange the torn mussed up green chiffon that matched her eyes for a red satin frock that challenged the bright fires of her hair. He hadn't approved of the red dress. In New York it would have been okay. But a dress without any back at all, with splits that went straight up the right and left sides of the skirt and exposed tapering legs, white thighs and the cream edging of panties was too daring for a little hamlet like Elmville.

The Marshalls had gasped when Della had swept into their long gracious living room. Several strange young men, including Timothy Wells, the tall blond New York artist who was visiting the Marshalls and for whom the cocktail party was being given, had promptly put down their cocktail glasses and had made for Della like hungry bees for the first flower of spring. Right away Timothy had asked her what she'd have to drink and she had said, with a little laugh, that she was on the wagon. "Bill," she had said, softly, "doesn't like me to drink."

"And who," said the New Yorker, "is Bill?"

Della hadn't had a chance to answer. The other young men had crowded around her, clinging to her elbow, gazing down into her exquisite young face, smiling into her green eyes. He had felt his face alight with admiration and amusement and pride. Della was going to keep her word. With all those guys making for her and tempting her, she was going to keep her word. His heart had almost burst with joy.

But his happiness had been short lived. In a sort of daze he had watched Della walk to the bar on the arm of Timothy Wells. He had watched her take a drink very quickly, then another drink and a moment later he heard that same old hysterical laughter, saw those white hands clutching at the red straps on her satin dress as if they

were too tight, as if she wanted to break them and let the quivering mounds beneath have air and freedom.

That had been the beginning. He had gone straight to Della, had caught her elbow. "Lay off," he said, softly. "You promised, you know."

Della had been furious. "Bill, you're a crazy fool," she had said at the top of her voice, "I haven't had anything to drink. I haven't even had one drink! Scram, see. Get the hell away from me."

He had gone back to Mathilde Dale with his heart in his throat and his hands trembling. Still in a daze he had watched Della and Timothy dancing almost every dance and going off together outside. Della was in an affectionate mood. He knew exactly what was going on outside whenever those two darted out there. It nearly killed him but he couldn't do anything about it.

"We," said Mathilde Dale bitterly, "seem to be in the same canoe."

HE HAD LOOKED AT her then. For the first time. Her eyes were slumbrously dark, as black as his own. Where he was over six feet Mathilde Dale was scarcely five. Yet what there was of her was about perfect. A pretty face, sloping white shoulders, graceful arms and an outward thrusting bosom that threatened to break through the white satin that strained over the jutting peaks.

"What do you mean—in the same canoe," he had asked.

"You love her and I—I love him." There had been tears in her eyes then. She didn't try to blink them away. She just stood there with her eyes very dark and very dilated with them.

"Hey, don't be like that," he had said. He had reached out awkwardly, had given her a pat in the region of her fifth rib. She had rallied.

"Let's get tight," she had said. "I never drink but I think I'd like to tonight. They are, you know."

Truer words had never been spoken, it had seemed to him. He hadn't said anything. He had gone straight to the bar, had taken three full quart shakers of cocktails and had put them on a tray. Then he had come back to Mathilde, had motioned his head toward the door and had smiled as she had followed him out into the garden under a sweetly perfumed magnolia. They had sat on the ground. At first he had gone a little sick with memories of an umbrella tree, of what had happened under that umbrella tree not three hours ago. But the moment he had downed one cocktail he had begun to feel a little better. Mathilde's

cocktail had helped her, too. They had laughed

a great deal.

Mathilde set her cocktail glass on the table and had put her arms around his shoulders. She kissed him. It was a long, quivering, close kiss. Bill, who hadn't kissed anyone but Della in two years got an unexpected kick out of her big breasts boring into his chest and kissing her and feeling the wild beating of her heart.

"Gosh, you are nice, Mathilde. I like you."

One glittering shoulder strap had fallen down the length of her arm. He had seen white flesh that had dazzled his eyes, round white hills with the promise of a deep soft valley between them. He had sat there swallowing hard, wanting to touch that flesh with his fingers, wanting to take her in his arms again and go on with that kiss that had begun so quickly, that had so strangely uprooted his emotions. Because he was afraid he might do something he would be sorry for he quickly grabbed the cocktail shaker and poured himself a drink—one, two, three, four.

"Bill . . . " Mathilde's voice had been soft, close. With his heart thumping again he had felt her mouth, warm and stirring, on his ear. He had felt her arms creeping around his shoulders again, her legs pressing against his. She had gone on, even more softly, "They probably are, you know. Why shouldn't we?"

Why not. There was no reason why not. He had taken her in his arms.

Wallowing around in the bed, Bill couldn't remember the rest of the evening very clearly. Afterwards, when Mathilde draped sleepily on his arm they had walked about the garden. There was, he had known, a darkened bench by the lily pond, completely shaded by a drooping weeping willow. He had headed for it only to find it was occupied. To his surprise, he had recognized Della's red dress. So had Mathilde. "You see," Mathilde had said bitterly. "I told you so." Gasps had come from that bench. Gasps and sighs and little ecstatic cries. Della in a mellow affectionate mood. Della and Timothy Wells.

Somehow Bill got out of bed, dressed and went to work. It was hard to concentrate on briefs when he knew that all was over between Della and him. Della had broken her promise and even if she hadn't there was Timothy Wells. Della had never before, drunk or sober, gone so hard for any guy.

He was thinking about Della miserably when his office door opened and Della came in. She was wearing a little flowered print, summery and cool.

She came straight up to his desk and perched

herself on one corner of it, crossing her shapely young legs. Bill swallowed hard and stared at those legs, restraining a wild impulse to reach out and caress their silken loveliness.

"Bill—oh, Bill, I don't know how to tell you—and I must," she began. "I'm so terribly sorry about last night—about my promise and all. But—oh, Bill, I can't bear to hurt you this way—not for worlds. But Tim and I "

Bill didn't say anything.

"We were made for each other, Bill. I think I knew it the minute I saw him last night. He doesn't care about my drinking. He says I'm cute when I'm tight and he's . . . oh, he's a lamb when he's tight, Bill. We had a heavenly time and we !" Della broke off then, color coming into her soft cheeks. "Well, we found out that we just simply couldn't live without each other, Bill. We decided that I was to tell you and he's going to tell Mathilde Dale. She is the girl Tim was engaged to before last night—before we discovered that we were made for each other."

"Please don't worry about me," he said, evenly. "I hope you and Wells make a go of it, Della. But if you don't, you can always come back to me. I mean that." He did mean it. He meant every word of it. He was almost bursting with his hurt and his sincerity and his emotions.

"Darling!" said Della jumping down off of the desk and rushing around to Bill. She flung her arms about his shoulders and kissed his mouth hard. For one second Bill's hands went up, touching the bare flesh of her arms, tingling to the smallness of her waist and the ample curves of her hips. He forgot in that moment that Della was jilting him. With her mouth on his he forgot everything but that he wanted her. His arms strengthened around her. Della slipped softly to his lap, her big breasts boring against his chest. But it lasted only a second. Della jumped quickly to her feet, her green eyes burning, her large breasts swinging this way and that with the movement.

"Bill," she said, smiling, "habit is an awful thing. I almost forgot."

"Me, too," said Bill, terribly shaken.
"I'd better be going," she said, softly.

"Huh?" said Bill. "Oh, sure." And his dark eyes clung to the jut of her bosom, the low V, the whole glorious, delicious beauty of her body

that would no longer be his to love.

"Bye, Bill," she whispered against his lips. And then she was gone. Bill, more numb than ever, went back to his desk. In all his twenty-eight years he had never felt so numb.

AND THEN HE remembered Mathilde Dale. By now Tim would have told her. She would be suffering as he was suffering, this strange numbness. He reached for the telephone and called her up.

She said, "Oh, hello, Bill. I wonder if your head feels as large as mine. I never drink, you know, and last night certainly did things to me."

Bill said, "Listen, Mathilde, I'm sorry. About

you and Tim, I mean."

"The heck with Tim," said Mathilde. "How about coming over and taking me to dinner tonight. I hear there's a neat little place just outside of town called *The Iron Gate*."

"Gosh," said Bill, "you're taking this like a

man and I'm taking it "

"Like a man, too," said Mathilde but Bill thought he heard a little sob in her voice. He wasn't sure. And he was less sure when he pulled up in front of the Marshalls and Mathilde came running down to the car and hopped in by his side with a gay word of greeting and her lovely little face wreathed in smiles.

The Iron Gate was a swell place. Elmville should have been proud of it but Elmville was ashamed of it. The citizens of Elmville were always writing editorials to the paper about The Iron Gate and the girls there who danced practically in the nude and the green curtained stalls where abominable food and "liquor were served. Mathilde, peeping out from under the floppy brim of her white hat, smiled across the table at Bill. "Let's," she said, "come here often. Every night. Until I go back to New York, of course."

"How long will that be," asked Bill.

"Two weeks," said Mathilde, her big breasts rising and falling as she spoke. "I came here on a vacation—with Tim. It's turned into a sort of permanent vacation—from Tim." She didn't sob. She said it plainly, clearly, without any tears in her eyes or her voice.

"I don't like to think of your going away," said Bill, soberly. "Fellow sufferers, you know.

Misery likes company."

"Forget it," said Mathilde. "Things happen. We get over them."

"Will you get over Tim?"

Mathilde didn't answer. The orchestra struck up then with a popular song and Mathilde pulled back the green curtains and gazed out at the little wooden square that was a dance floor. "Five whole pieces in the orchestra," she said lightly. "Let's dance."

With Mathilde in his arms he discovered that she had the warmest, softest little body in the world. He held her close. Her big breasts mashed flat against him, and he could feel her knees brushing against his in rhythm to the music and his lead. Why was his heart hammering so queerly, why was his head dizzy and his arms trembling? He stopped in the middle of the floor and grabbed both of Mathilde's arms by the elbows and hurried her back into the stall. With hands that still trembled he pulled the green curtains across. Bill's mouth found her red one, he clamped down on it clung to it. His hands swept all over her, the shoulders, the soft waist, the firm hard hips.

Mathilde's heart was hammering, too. He could feel it next to him. Her shaking knees against his and the shortness of her breath on his cheeks,

also.

"I know," gasped Mathilde. "That's the way I feel, too. It—oh, Bill, it's absolutely crazy that last night we could have been engaged to two

other people and tonight . . . "

Bill put a ten dollar bill on his plate and grabbed Mathilde's hand. Like a mad man her rushed her out of The Iron Gate and into his car. Down the road about a mile, he swung into a little lane. Then he turned off the ignition and swept Mathilde into his arms. His lips found hers again in a never-ending kiss, his fingers found the little silver ball of the zipper at her slim throat and there was a soft enchanting noise like the buzzing of a bee. As Mathilde went limp and quivering under his ardor, completely responsive, Bill kept thinking through this throbbing daze of happiness . . . "—and she's sober! I could never know with Della whether it was me or the liquor that made her so loving!"

THE NEXT WEEK was the swellest week he'd ever put in, Bill thought. He hated being away from Mathilde even for an hour. But she had said, "We'll need money, Bill. It takes money to make a go of marriage. You can have me when your work is done!"

He had had her. Glorious evenings in his car. He had come in from one of those parkings on the shadowy lane, his blood tingling and his eyes glowing with happiness, only to find Della curled up on the sofa in the bay-window of his study.

"Oh-h, Bill," cried Della the moment he stepped through the door.

Bill almost swallowed his tongue. It was shock enough to see Della in his study but it was almost more than he could believe to find her there with nothing on but an infinitesimal brassiere and a wispy pair of panties. He couldn't say anything. He just stood and looked, his dark head a little to one side, his eyes wide.

Della grinned. "You think I'm awful, being like this, don't you, Bill? But you were always so conservative. Not liking my drinking. I took off my dress because it's so damned hot tonight." Then her face paled and she began wringing her hands.

"Bill," she went on, a little catch in her voice. "I'm so glad to see you."

And with that she leapt across the room, flung her white arms about Bill's shoulders and kissed his mouth thoroughly. Bill smelled scotch on her breath. A week ago Della's mouth, even heavy with liquor, would have thrilled him down to his toes. But now . . . ! He took her arms from his shoulder, gave her a little push and backed away.

"But listen, Bill . . . " said Della "I've come back to you. To you, Bill."

"Timothy wouldn't like this, Della."

"Timothy!" snorted Della. "That drunken bum. Don't you ever mention his name to me again. Not ever!"

"But hey, I mean—what goes on. What's Tim done!"

"Plenty," said Della. "But don't let's spoil our reunion by talk of Timothy Wells. Bill. Kiss me. Love me!"

Bill stood his ground. He didn't want Della. He wanted Mathilde.

"You know you said you'd be waiting for me, Bill. You told me that. And Bill—here I am!"

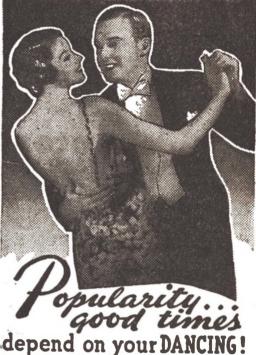
Bill swallowed with difficulty. "Now look here, Della," said Bill, "I've got to know what happened to you and Tim. I mean-before I-I can act like myself. Before "

With an angry thrust of her red head she threw herself down on the sofa, her big breasts swaying about on her small body. She lit a cigarette and began puffing smoke toward the ceiling. "Well, if you must know," she said, coldly, "last night when Tim was kissing me he called me Mathilde. Not only once but four times. This morning when I told him I never wanted to see him again, he said he was drunk and didn't know what he was saying. But I had had only one cocktail and I knew what he was saying. Kissing me and whispering another girl's name in my ear!"

Della crushed out her cigarette then. She got up from the sofa and crossed the room to Bill who was still by the door. "Kiss me, Bill," she said, "Show me you're glad I'm back."

Even a rabbit cornered will put up a fight. Gently but firmly he pressed his palms against her chest and shoved her away. But Della wasn't to be shoved. She had just enough scotch in her to make her full of moxie. She clung to Bill, swaying close to him, straining upward for his

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lips. Bill groaned. He kept shoving her away only to find her clinging, warm and close next to him. After all, he was a man. There was a limit to his endurance. He gave up the battle and swung Della up in his arms and crossed the room to the sofa.

Della finally lay sound asleep on the sofa and Bill tipped up the stairs and went into his library and telephoned Mathilde. To his surprise Mathilde's voice was not drowsy. It was wide awake and angry. He told her about Della, and Mathilde sighed wearily. "Tim was waiting here for me when I got in," said Mathilde. "He's passed out now. I had to get him drunk to—well, to get his mind off of other things."

"What are we going to do?" said Bill, sadly. "We've got 'em back on our hands and we don't want them, do we?"

"I don't," said Mathilde.

"That goes for me, too," said Bill. And then, "Say-y, I have it. I know what we'll do. Hold everything. I'll be right over!"

IN LESS THAN TEN minutes Bill Tomlison was hurrying up the Marshall's flagstone walk. He was not alone. Across his powerful young arms was a fluffy sort of bundle . . . all pink and white and gracefully lovely. For Bill, with a grim chin and determined eyes, was carrying Della. Della who was sleeping peacefully with the cupid's-bow of her red mouth open. She had not awakened even when Bill had put her dress on her. If she had she might have heard Bill mumble to himself, "Well, this is the test supreme! If I can do this and feel nothing then I wonder what ever made me think I was in love with her!"

Mathilde met Bill at the door. Her eyes widened and her mouth became a surprised red O. "What on earth, Bill Tomlison!"

"Where's Timothy?"

"Dead to the world on the floor in the drawing room," said Mathilde.

Bill brushed past Mathilde. He went to the drawing room, holding Della carefully. In the center of the floor where Tim lay snoring loudly Bill bent over and gently laid Della beside him. Della stirred a little. Her fingers began to twitch, to fumble. She touched Tim. In the moonlight Mathilde and Bill, sanding in the shadows of the hall, saw Della open her green eyes, saw her slide a little over on the floor and snuggle up closely to Tim. Tim stirred too. Mathilde whispered, "He wasn't as tight as I thought he was!"

"Bill," said Della. "Bill-wake up!"

Bill colored to the roots of his dark head as he heard those words and felt Mathilde's accusing eyes on his profile. But in the next instant when Tim's eyes opened and he said, "Mathilde. Mathilde," it was Bill's turn to eye Mathilde. They both laughed, then, softly, carefully so that the couple in the drawing room would not hear.

In the next instant Della was sitting upright and Tim, too. Tim bawled out, "Hey, you

called me Bill, you little wench!"

"And you called me Mathilde!" snapped Della. They were almost sober now, but dazed and confused. "But I thought you were Mathilde," said Tim.

"And I thought you were Bill. I thought I was with Bill at Bill's house. I could swear I was with Bill. I did go there. I remember very clearly going there. I"

"Well, if you went there, how did you get

here?"

"I-I-I don't know," said Della, dazedly. "I -gosh, I can't remember. Maybe I didn't go there. Maybe "

"And maybe I wasn't with Mathilde tonight. I had scotch . . . "

"And I had scotch!"

TIM WAS ON HIS feet. A little shakily but able to keep his balance. He walked unsteadily across the room to the cellarette. He picked up two quart bottles of scotch and went to the window with them and very carefully threw them out. Glass shattered on the flagstones below. There was an ominous slosh of liquor. Della, too, was on her feet. A little steadier than Tim. She went to the cellarette and fished out the last two bottles of gin. At the window by Tim's side she threw out the bottles. There was another crash of glass, another ominous slosh of liquor.

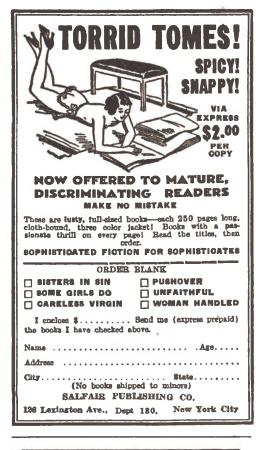
"I've heard of pink elephants," said Tim, "but when a guy doesn't know where he's being kissed or by whom then it's time to swear off."

"And that," said Della, "goes for me. I'm off the stuff."

Her hands went to his blond head and drew it down to her face. Very slowly, quite deliberately she kissed his lips. "Funny," she said, "Bill's been trying to reform me for two years and here you do it without even trying!"

"Mathilde's been trying to reform me for a year," said Tim, evenly. "Wouldn't she be surprised if she knew I'd sworn off."

Della was thinking hard now. Bill knew it by the straightness of her mouth and the high tilt of her red head. She kissed Tim again. It was a long kiss—a long, hard close one. Bill and Mathilde watching felt their hearts contract in their breasts, felt their own blood stirring warmly.



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Finally, they heard Della say on a little gasp, "Let's get married tonight, Tim. Now. This minute!" And Tim, drawing her close, pulled her down into a big club chair on his lap. He answered softly, "Tonight, yes. But not this minute, darling. I can think of better things to do this minute!"

Because Tim and Della were lost to sight in the depths of the chair and there was no longer anything interesting to see or to hear, Mathilde caught Bill's hand and led him out into the night.

"Did you have any hunches that you and I might fall into each other's arms if we got together tonight?" laughed Mathilde, softly, moving close to him. And then when she saw Bill hesitate, glance cautiously toward the windows. she said even more softly, "It's okay, darling. The Marshalls are across town playing bridge tonight!"



AFTERWARDS MATHILDE, her eyes all lovely with sleep said, "I think it's swell, us getting married tonight. Let's do, Bill. But not in this torn dress of mine. I'll run in and change."

Mathilde ran and Bill hovered around the front windows waiting, excited, impatient. Then all at once he heard a commotion in the drawing room. He tipped up on his toes and stared in the low French windows. Della and Tim had found a decanter of scotch in the cellarette which they had overlooked. They were sitting in the center of the drawing room floor, the ceiling lights on brilliantly above them. They were pouring drinks and guzzling them as quickly as they did. Tim was saying, "Della, ol' girl, you don' unnerstan. Got to drink toast. You gotta drink toast, too. To us. And to Mathilde whose gotta broken heart on account of me jiltin' her for you. All your fault, Della. You took me away from her and now she's somewhere out in the lonely night."

"Gotta drink to ol' Bill, too," said Della. "Mos' wonnerful man I'll ever know. He's out in the lonely night, too. Poor ol' Bill. He loves me, so awful much he loves me."

Bill grinned. He was still grinning when Mathilde in a fresh little white silk came up beside him and stood there looking in the window.

Bill and Mathilde were out in the lonely night

but the moment they turned and smiled into each other's arms and hurried across the smooth clipped lawn to Bill's parked roadster the night stopped being lonely. Indeed, it became the most glorious night in their lives. Their wedding night!

Completely Candid!

(Continued from page 42)

drawing room, Carla dropped down on a soft cushioned divan, motioned to Jerry.

Jerry came down beside her, embraced her. "Haven't you even thought about the pictures?" he queried. "That's what you came for, you know."

Carla's hot breath fanned his cheek. She touched the tips of her fingers to his lips. "We can talk about that later, darling." She substituted her mouth for her finger tips.

Jerry's fingers fumbled with the bodice buttons, finally managed to loosen a few of them. But it was too slow for Carla. Her blood was boiling in her veins and the pulses pounded in her temples. She rose, shrugged the frock off her shoulders, stepped out of it as it fell in a soft heap to the floor.

Jerry looked up at her, his eyes bulging. Shadows made the tight-skinned globes appear larger and more voluptuous. The light of a floor lamp behind her partly penetrated the thin chiffon of her panties, revealed almost everything they were supposed to conceal.

"This is better!" she panted, coming into Jerry's arms again, every muscle in her body quivering.

Two IN THE morning. Carla looked up at the ceiling, her eyes half-closed. "I think we'll keep the pictures, Jerry, for remembrance sake.

Jerry drew her close to him. "Carla, I don't want you to think I'm a rat, but there aren't any pictures! I forgot to put film in the camera! This was all a scheme to get you over here."

"No pictures?" Carla gasped.

Jerry gulped. "N-no. Please don't be mad,

Carla." His voice pleaded eloquently.

"Mad?" Carla squeezed him until she was breathless. "I'm mad because there aren't any pictures! I've always wanted to see how I photographed."

Jerry kissed her cheek. "I'll take care of that.

I'll get some film tomorrow."

"Will they be candid shots, darling?" Carla whispered.

"Completely candid!"

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Treasure In Undies

(Continued from page 29)

"So this!" Norton growled. And he hurled himself at the narrow-eyed gambler.

Cafoni didn't fire. He just slugged the muzzle of his automatic across Norton's temple. The millionaire went down in a heap.

Wailing, Lynne darted for the door in a mad attempt to escape. But Cafoni was too agile for her. He sprang at her and caught her. "Oh, no you don't!" he rasped. "I slipped that dough to you so I could get it back later. I lied when I said you could keep it to pay back what you'd lost in my joint. You were the only chance I had to get the cash out of my place; and now I want it back. See?"

"No-no-"

"Oh, you wanna argue, huh? Okay. Lemme show you a couple of wrestlin' tricks." Before she knew what was happening, he tripped her and pushed her with one movement of his hands and legs. She flew backward, landing on a divan in a flurry of skirts. The hem of her dress rode up past her knees, revealing her bare thighs.

Cafoni caught a glimpse of something green protruding from the lower edge of her girdle. It was a bank-note that had slipped down from her hip. "So that's where you stashed the lettuce, eh?" he laughed. "Well, I think I'll get it back with my own hands. I'll getta wallop outa that, no foolin'. An' while I'm at it, I think I'll grab me a little lovin' on the side. I been keepin' my peepers on you ever since you started buckin' my roulette wheel a few weeks ago. You never gave me a tumble, but I made up my mind I was gonna grab you off, sooner or later. An' now's my chance!"

He pinned her down and started kissing her. Wham!

A vase crashed down on Cafoni's cranium. Lynne stared. She saw that Nappy Norton had regained his feet; had grabbed up an ornamental jardiniere, which he had smashed to smithereens over the gambler's head. Cafoni slumped to the floor—and stayed there. He was dead to the world.

Nappy Norton drew Lynne from the divan. Her dress was torn to tatters. The bodice was ripped open to the waist, permitting her gorgeous breasts almost full exposure.

"My dearest!" Norton breathed. "I wasn't unconscious at any time. I overheard everything Cafoni said to you. C-can you ever forgive me for believing you to be. . . Cafoni's sweetheart?"

She looked into his eyes. "Do you really want me to forgive you?"

"Yes. With all my heart!" "Why?"

"Because I'm mad about you. I adore you. I love you."

That was all the answer she needed. She nestled against him, forgetful that her dress was almost completely torn from her seductive form. "I—I love you, too," she whispered. "And if you'll turn your head, I—I'll give you the money Cafoni forced on me."

"I won't turn my head! And money isn't what I want. . . !" he answered.

P. S.: Tony Cafoni went to jail for being a crook. And Lynne went to Europe with Nappy Norton—on a honeymoon!

"Let's Be Informal!"

(Continued from page 8)

"Why don't you marry me, Steve?" Steve's brow cleared. "By gosh, I will!"

The fat man raised his hand. "Not so fast, young man-not so fast. What about the little question of money?" He leered into Steve's face.

Steve was nonplused; then he brightened. "That's very simple," he said. He rummaged in his pockets; bringing out the Drake letter and the check. "A fountain pen," he demanded.

Albert produced one. He had to do something. Steve endorsed the check and flashed it in the fat man's face.

"That's just the beginning," he said triumphantly. "I wasn't going to do it; but to prevent your going through with your lousy plan . . . there you are."

The fat man seemed mollified. He took the check. "To make sure that you're on the level," he said, "although I don't know what you're talking about . . . I'll pay this into the bank myself."

Steve took Ruth by the arm. "Just as you wish," he said stiffly. "Now, if you don't mind . . . ?"

The fat man glanced at his watch. "If you and Ruth're not on the main land at my hotel by sundown," he warned, "I'll come out here again with the state police."

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Hand in hand Ruth and Steve watched the boat as it disappeared into the afternoon haze. Then Ruth suddenly burst into tears. Steve tried to comfort her but she pushed him away.

"Don't," she wailed. "You won't want to, anyway, after you hear what I've done to you. I'm Ephus Drake's daughter. This whole thing is a frame-up. That fat man was Lincoln Seldon, Dad's backer. All they wanted was the endorsed check. That ties them to you for the next play."

She broke from him and ran into the lighthouse. Stunned, Steve looked after her. Then he grinned and followed her. He found her in a heap on the couch. She was still sobbing brokenly, and her bosom was almost heaving itself out of her blouse. Steve sat down and put his arms about her.

"Darling what difference does it make? I love you and it doesn't make any difference to me what you do, have done or will do."

Ruth raised a tear stained face. "On the upbeat, Stevie? If I'd known I was going to fall in love with you, I'd never've done it."

"On the up-beat, Ruthie," Steve said gently. "What's a little filthy lucre between you and me?" "What's anything between you and me?"

"Righto! Steve, let's be informal," she laughed.

The Irish In Her!

(Continued from page 15)

"Uncle," sighed Peg, straining for his mouth. "Meaning, Peg?"

"Mike Hennesey, you thick-headed Irishman, you lowly so-and-so! Can't you see that I love you. Oh, Mike!"

"Be gorra!" gasped Mike, "if my sweet little hell-cat isn't sayin' uncle and meanin' it! Oh, Peg darlin'!"

And back in the bedroom there were low moans. Donald Carter-Slippery Jones!-was coming to, slowly, patiently, waveringly. But no one heard. No one cared. Certainly not Mike and Peg-not now. Later they would remember and Mike would say, hugging Peg close, "Lassie, this is a nice day's work we've done. That guy means a commission for me and that painting means a reward for you! There won't be any reason for you not marryin' me, you Irish imp!"

And for the first time in Mike's life-and perhaps for the last-Peg O'Toole wouldn't argue!



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The next afternoon I dropped over to see Mary-told her how lonely and depressed I felt. To cheer me up Mary down at the piano and played waltzes, jazz bits, sonatas. When bits, sonatas. When she had finished, I sighed enviously.

"Thanks, Mary, it was wonderful. What wouldn't I give to play like that! But it's too late now! I should have had a

teacher when I was in school—like you!"

like you!"

Mary smiled and said: "Ann, I never had a teacher in my life, In fact, not so long ago I couldn't play a note."
"Impossible." I exclaimed. "How did you do it?"
Then she told me about a wonderful new short-cut method of learning music that had been perfected by the U. S. School of Music. You learn real music from the start. When I left Mary it was with new hope. If she could learn to play this way, so could I. That very night I wrote for the Free Book and Demonstration Lesson.

I never dreamed that learning to play the piano could be so simple—even easier than Mary had pictured it. And as the lessons continued, they seemed to get easier. Although I never had any "talent" I was playing my favorites—almost before I knew it.

Then came the big night at Margaret Jones' party. What a moment that was when our that was when our hostess, apparently troubled, exclaimed: "Isn't it a shame that Mary Nelson can't be here to play the plano."

I spoke up. "I'll try to fill Mary's place—if you're not too critical."

Everyone seemed sur-

Everyone seemed sur-prised. "Why, I didn't know she played!" someone behind whis-

pered.

As I struck the first As I struck the first rippling chords of Nevin's lovely "Narcis-sus," a hush fell over the room. I could hardly believe it, but—I was holding the party spellWhen I finished you should have heard them applaud! Everyone insisted I play more! Only too glad, I played pece alter piece. Before the evening was over, I had been invited to three more parties. And it wasn't long until I met Tom who shortly afterward asked me to become his wife.

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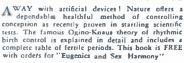
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