

April
25 Cents

La Paree



NIMBLE FINGERS

By M. GASTON LEON

Peter Deiden

La Paree

STORIES

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TETE-A-TETE

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

Dear Editor:

I am a reader of *La Paree*.

I am 24 years of age—Blue eyes, fair complexion. I would like to hear from readers everywhere who are interested in stories and letters.

I have been married once—my husband died one month after we were married. I feel sort of lonely.

Please, editor, print this letter so all your readers will see it and write to me.

I am a registered nurse and even though I am only 24 years of age—I have been around quite a lot. Tell all of your readers to write to me—yes, every single one of your readers. I will have an answer for every one of them—even if I should receive one thousand letters each week—Please, editor print this in your very next issue.

I always read *La Paree* because it's a great little book and I never miss an issue.

Sincerely,
Mrs. M. Peter

810 Eye St., N.W. Washington, D. C.

Dear Editor:

I am a reader of *La Paree* and enjoy it very much.

I want to hear from readers everywhere. Will answer all letters. I am 5 ft. 8 in. tall, weigh 135 pounds and am 23 years of age. I have traveled quite a bit and will swap experiences with anyone.

Oh, yes, I have blue eyes and brown hair.

Sincerely,
Albert Kruska

Riviera, Texas

Dear Editor:

I have been reading *La Paree* for some time and it is my favorite magazine.

I am a student of forestry, 6 ft. 1 tall, weigh 192 lbs., and am 23 years old. My hobbies are wrestling and collecting match-folders.

Greetings to all pen pals and I would like to join your group. I will trade letters and snapshots.

Well, here's hoping I hear from a lot of you.

John Pierre
President, South Hall, Missoula, Montana

Dear Editor:

I am writing you in hope of making a few "Pen Pals", I would like to hear from the readers of your magazine and I will exchange snapshots. I often get very homesick and very lonely out here, and I do wish to have a few pals. Please help me out. My age is twenty-six.

Yours truly,
Wesley Ewing
Cameronians, S.R., Barrackpore, Eengal Province, India

Dear Editor:

In last month's issue I think the best story was "Punch and Judy" by Philippe di Mario. The ending had a real good "punch" to it and Judy certainly was a beauty! Stories like that make a hit with me all the time and I wish we could have more of them. Or maybe it was because the author was Mr. Di Mario, he has been a favorite of mine for a long time.

"Paulette Poses" by Robert Leslie Bellem was also good. Just from—

A Fan

Dear Editor:

I have just finished reading my first issue of *La Paree*, and oh! boy, it is the

(Please turn to page 58)

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NIMBLE FINGERS

By

M. GASTON LEON

WHEN Victor, the Count de Chalusse, opened the front door of his house on the Rue de Courcelles, he caught a flash of slender ankles and trim legs disappearing up the spiral staircase. The Count cocked an eye in their direction. He was interested because years had elapsed since his Jeanne's legs and ankles had been like those.

Victor preened himself in front of a convenient mirror. He arranged his cravat. He smoothed his thinning hair. He looked at his lean face and smiled. He was still a handsome dog—there was no doubting that. Careful living, careful drinking, careful love affairs had left him well preserved. Not only that, but he was still clever, still the smart, shrewd man of the world.

"Women!" he murmured to himself and went up the stairs.

His Jeanne came out of a front room. Time had not dealt so kindly with the Countess. She was a bit the worse for wear. Her skin was wrinkled, her hair slightly gray when Leo, the coiffeur specialist didn't show up with his bag of tricks.

Victor kissed her perfunctorily. "We have visitors?"

Jeanne shook her head. "Why, no. What gave you that idea?"

The Count blinked. "I thought I saw a young lady running up the stairs as I came in."

His wife made a careless gesture. "Oh, that. She is my dressmaker, *Mademoiselle* Valorsay. All week she has been working on my new gown—the one I am to wear at the *Trois Arts Bal*."

Victor raised an eyebrow. "Indeed? I think I should like to see that dress."

"The dress or the girl?"

He laughed, pinching her cheek. "*Pouf!* What do I want with girls—a man of my age? Particularly when I have you, my little homing pigeon. Absurd! Let me see the gown because with it, my dear, you shall wear a gift of mine. I wouldn't be surprised if I bought you a string of diamonds or something."

THE COUNTESS LET him peck a kiss at her cheek. She led the way into the sewing room. As they entered, Victor felt his pulses leap. The little dressmaker sat crosslegged on the floor. Victor adored girls who sat crosslegged on the floor. He stood perfectly still, looking at the vision of rounded legs, pretty knees, stockings that ended where marble thighs began.

Mademoiselle Valorsay's puckered red lips were full of pins. Her sbinny hair was a blue-black. A vein of ruddy flame ran through it like a bronze motif. She had widely spaced, dark eyes and tiny ears, luscious and shell-like. More, she had a lovely full bosom that was a round, interesting swell in the front of her cheap little dress.

"This, Argelle, is my husband, the Count," Jeanne announced. "Make a curtsy."

The girl promptly got up. She gave Victor a graceful little bow, trying to smile through the pins.

"The dress," he observed, "is a thing of rare beauty." As he spoke he looked at the girl. "So soft and perishable. So sleek, so well finished. So—so intriguing."

"I am glad you like it," Jeanne murmured. "Now we will go away and let *Mademoiselle* Valorsay work without interruption."

"Is it nearly completed?"

"Tomorrow," Argelle told him, "it will be done."

Victor found excuses to linger in the first floor study. From there he had a good view of the entrance foyer and front door. At five o'clock he saw Argelle coming down the stairs. He waited a minute or two and then said to one of the servants: "You will tell *Madame* the Countess I have stepped out to purchase a cigar. Mention also that I may drop in at my club."

AT THE CORNER of the Place de la Bourse he caught up with the girl. He touched her arm and she turned, her eyes brightening with recognition.

"*Mon dieu!* How fast you walk, my little peacock," Victor panted. "Twice I thought you would outdistance me."

The girl looked him over. "You wanted me for something?"

He fell into step beside her.

"Merely to compliment you on your cleverness with the needle. Such nimble fingers! My wife's dress is exquisite."

"*Merci, monsieur.*"

"Such capabilities should be rewarded," the Count declared. "That is why I ran after you. I feel I should take you out to supper, buy you champagne, impress my gratitude upon you. You would like that? You will come, *oui?*"

mies, materials but he didn't. Except for a couple of valises, the rooms boasted only sparse furniture.

"What a charming place!" he cried, when



Swiftly, as if she suspected he might turn, the evening gown went over her head.

She glanced at her shabby dress. "But first I will have to change my clothes. They would never let me in a nice place with this frock." She looked up at him. "I live just a step. The *Rue de Helder*, number six. If you would come up with me and wait—"

"A pleasure!" Victor said.

Her two rooms were in an obscure, old *pension*, on the top floor. Victor expected to see an accumulation of dressmaker's dum-

she unlocked the door and led him in! "Cosy and comfortable. A bit of the old Paris, my chickadee. Here D'Artigan may have resided. I can almost hear his sword striking sparks from an enemy's steel!"

ARGELLE LAUGHED QUIETLY. "*Monsieur* reminds me of a poet."

"With your eyes to inspire me," Victor replied boldly, "I could write a masterpiece. Here, let us sit down and rest from our walk before you dress. Try my knee. I am sure it is yielding. Many have told me my lap is as comfortable as an easy chair."

She shook her dark head. "*Monsieur*, it is funny. I never make a practice of sitting on any lap except that of my Pascal."

"Pascal?"

"Pascal Chupin, my boy friend. We are in love. Quite often I sit on his lap. He caresses me. It is thrilling. He makes my heart go *beat-beat-beat!*"

Victor made a gesture. "I could make it go *bump-bump-bump!* Perhaps you'd better let me demonstrate."

But she shook her head again and opened the wardrobe. One dress hung there. It was an evening frock. With it went a pair of new brocaded slippers, a little wrap, silvery hosiery. She laid her treasures on the bed and looked doubtfully at her visitor.

"*Monsieur* will either close his eyes or turn his back. It will only take a moment or two—"

"*Monsieur* will turn his back."

Victor promptly moved the chair in the opposite direction.

Swiftly, as if she expected he might turn, the evening gown went over her head, blotting out her charms with the effect of the sun being smeared by abrupt clouds.

"Now you may look, *monsieur*."

Breathing hard, Victor pushed the chair back to its former position. "Marvelous!" he applauded. "But such modesty."

They both laughed and she let him drape the wrap over her sloping shoulders. Five minutes later they were in a taxi and twenty minutes after that in a discreet cafe where Victor was sure he would encounter none of his or his wife's friends.

He telephoned home later and said he was delayed at the club with a business matter. Then he took Argelle to the Moulin Rochecote. The revue there was daring and pulse-quickening. Every act was tintured with piquancy. All the girls wore were breast plates and glittering loin cloths.

Victor watched his little companion narrowly. He wanted to see how she reacted to the

orgy of flesh. Was she as innocent as she led him to believe? If she had a boy friend she couldn't be totally unsophisticated. Yet, he knew enough about women to understand any false move on his part would ruin the glamorous, gorgeous plans he had mentally conjured for the future. He had to proceed warily and to that end, when the show was over, he took her up Montmartre where the champagne was not chilled enough, but where he could talk without noisy interruption.

HE EMPLOYED ALL of his experience in building himself up. He flattered her artfully, using just enough admiration to make her eyes shine and her red lips quiver. Always deftly, he managed to work the subject back to the matter of love. And, continually, he had the waiter bring more of the small bottles of champagne.

"Tell me about Pascal, your lover. What is his business?"

Argelle shrugged. "He is what you call a 'floater'." She smiled. "That is one who buys and sells—anything. You get it for next to nothing and sell it at a good profit. He wanders all over Paris. *Tiens!* He is sweet, my Pascal."

Victor winced. He recovered his urbanity, patted her hand and looked at his watch.

"After midnight. My poor dove. You must be tired, after using your nimble fingers all day in the service of sewing. Come, let me take you home."

She nodded. "I am a little tired."

A taxi took them back to the Rue de Helder. The street was black as the inside of a pocket. Once more Victor thought of the Paris of other days. Romantic alleys, Villon, musketeers and fair damsels who ached for love.

Argelle lighted a lamp and removed her wrap.

"Curious, how wide awake I am," he told her. "Will it be necessary for me to leave immediately?"

"Your wife—"

"Asleep hours ago! My dear Jeanne. Comes ten o'clock and how heavy her eyes become. How stealthily her head nods forward. She is deep in dreams by now."

"I should be that way, too. Close your eyes, *monsieur*. I am about to take off my one and only."

A SPACE AND THEN she appeared before him in a Japanese kimono. It was pink, with black storks and flowers. She had taken off the brassiere, but the thin robe easily outlined her full, mature bosom. With a sigh Argelle

He took Argelle to the Moulin Rochecote where the show was daring.



climbed up on the bed, stretched out on it, pillowing her head in the crook of one arm.

"What now, *monsieur*?"

Victor feasted his eyes on her. "Just let me sit and look at you. You had a good time tonight, *ma petite geranium*?"

"Heavenly. That champagne—I can feel it humming in my head." She impulsively touched his knee with her slim hand. "Ten thousand thanks."

"It was nothing at all," he told her carelessly. "I plan many more such nights, *cherie*. What is it the Americans say—we will have much fun, you and I!"

Argelle turned over on her back. All at once her pose became one of utter loveliness. It might have been unconscious on her part

but the sweet mounds of her delicious bosom, the careless drape of her limbs and the manner in which the kimono fell slightly away from her were more than the Count could withstand.

She looked up at him with lazy, provocative eyes. A sensuous little smile began to curve her red lips. Victor swallowed hastily. His veteran heart began to clamor insistently. She was irresistible in that attitude, beguiling and compelling. He picked up one of her hands and kissed the palm, tenderly, lingeringly.

"Nimble fingers!" he whispered. "Run them through my hair, draw them down my cheek—once."

SHE DID AS HE asked. Victor leaned and was about to turn the lamp out.

"*Monsieur*, why do that? You said you liked to look at me—"

"I would rather kiss you!" he cried hungrily. "Those velvet lips, moist with honey! Oh, little Argelle, you have done something to my heart!"

He tried to get his arms around her. She evaded him skilfully, holding him off, firmly.

"No, *monsieur*! Behave yourself! Do not come so close to me! What will the neighbors say and think? Besides, I am a good girl! Nothing like this has ever occurred before! It is that terrible champagne! It has made me forget everything! I should never have put this kimono on! I should never have let you stay!"

"Argelle! My darling Argelle!" he wailed despairingly.

He caught and held her. His lips blazed to hers. The kiss was incomparable, magnificent. Such a kiss Victor had never known since his youth. It blended magic and madness into a libretto of genuine, thrilling ecstasy. And, miraculously, it made Argelle sigh deeply.

It also made some man in the adjoining apartment cry out but not with ecstasy:

"*Sacre nom du nom!*" he roared, thumping on the wall. "Quiet in there! Another word and I will break the door down and crack a few skulls! How am I to arise at six if I get no sleep?"

Argelle pushed the Count away. "Go, go!" she pleaded. "I know that man! He is a monster! He will do everything he says! There will be a scandal—"

"How can I leave you!" Victor breathed brokenly.

Her hands tightened over his. "Come back at seven tomorrow evening. Come tomorrow!"

Trembling oddly, he got his hat, dabbed a farewell kiss on her satin cheek and stumbled out of the room.

HIS JEANNE WAS provoked. Suspicious, Victor decided, because of the abrupt way he had departed the previous afternoon. But he knew the remedy. On his way home from his banking house on the Avenue de Commarin he stopped at the exclusive jewelry establishment of M. Vantrasson. And there, after much time and thought, he selected a necklace for Jeanne to wear with the new gown at the *Trois Arts Bal*.

It was a beautiful thing. A square cut diamond, an emerald, another diamond, a ruby. The chain glinted and glittered when M. Vantrasson laid it lovingly in a hand buffed leather case.

Victor gave him a check for a formidable

amount, put the case in his overcoat pocket and took a taxi home. His mind worked fast. He had to be at the Rue de Helder at seven o'clock. He decided not to give his gift to Jeanne before he returned from Argelle's. So, if the Countess was provoked and disturbed, the necklace would act as a peace offering.

"*Dieu!* I am a clever rogue!" he told himself.

When he reached the house he hung coat and hat in the foyer closet, rubbed his hands and went to his own quarters. No use to hunt up Argelle and make Jeanne's humor worse. Much better to wait until the pretty little dress-maker left before looking up his wife, giving her a good excuse for being away at the dinner hour.

The time dragged. Finally, from the window, after the front door slammed distantly, Victor saw Argelle cross the street and start for her own place. Beaming, he went to his wife's room, kissed her enthusiastically and patted her arm.

"My little cabbage is exquisite tonight. With what deep regret I must tell her I cannot dine with her."

"Why not?"

"Because," Victor explained glibly, "I've a business conference with the important *Monsieur* Zugat. It concerns many francs, my little wild rose. You can see the necessity of dining with him. However, cheer up. Tomorrow I may have something beautiful for you to wear with your new gown."

"These dinners—every night," Jeanne complained. "You haven't dined out for years."

"I realize that. Business, tiny bison, business, not so simple and—"

"Not so pure," the Countess finished for him.

IT WAS WHEN he was crossing the Place de Bourse that Victor, buffeted by the evening crowds, made a horrible discovery. The jewel case was gone—his pocket empty!

With a sinking heart he stopped, looked around at the throng. No use to even summon a gendarme. Some experienced pickpocket had expertly robbed him. He should have known better—than to carry valuables in a thickly populated neighborhood of the kind. Now he was in difficulty. He had promised Jeanne something and he couldn't deliver. But why not? All he had to do was see M. Vantrasson in the morning and get another.

He shrugged the matter aside. Something a good deal more important confronted him. His charming Argelle! The seven o'clock appointment! Her soft, sweet lips. Her twining



*"What now, monsieur?"
she asked appealingly.*

arms and the feel of her bosom denting his shirtfront!

Instinctively he understood last night's flaming kiss had stirred her. He began to tremble as he hurried on.

When he reached the Rue de Helder he was breathing hard and fast. He climbed the now familiar stairs. All of his gusty panting was not entirely due to the steep ascension. At last he was before her door, knocking eagerly and impatiently. There was no answer and when he looked up he saw the transom was

dark. Victor swallowed hard and made a discovery.

The door was not only unlocked but slightly ajar.

He pushed it open and walked into opaque darkness. He called her name. There was no answer. With shaking fingers he lighted the lamp. His gaze darted to the bed, but she wasn't there, curled up like a kitten in a basket, the Japanese kimono bulging open and her eyes pools of dark witchery.

(Please turn to page 62)

WILD GOOSE CHASE

By

MITZI MASON

AT THE last moment, four hours before the scheduled sailing of the *Champlain*, Melody's Aunt Abigail fell heir to a severe attack of rheumatism.

Melody was packing the last of the trio of new evening gowns with careful solicitude when she received the news. "Aunt Abigail won't be able to take you to Paris, Melody," her mother said. "She's sick with rheumatic fever."

The red satin gown slipped from Melody's inert fingers. "You mean—you mean we're not sailing?" She propounded the question as though it were monstrously unbelievable.

"I'm afraid not, Melody. It's unfortunate that Aunt Abigail has suddenly taken ill. It's nobody's fault, really."

Melody stood there, staring at her mother. For a moment, she was unable to believe that fate had played this ghastly trick on her. Every wakeful moment of the last month had been lived in blissful expectation of this European trip. Even with Aunt Abigail along as a chaperone, Melody felt certain she would be able to enjoy a few stolen hours of gayety. And now, all her dreams were drifting away, melting into nothing, like the blue smoke of a cigarette. She ran the palms of her hands over the sweet curves of her hips in a nervous, pent-up gesture. Her young breasts, unbrassiered, rose and fell tumultuously beneath the pink silk slip.

"No!" she cried, her voice faintly hysterical, tremulous. "You can't rob me of the trip! I can go alone!"

Mrs. Torrance shook her head. "I don't think you can, Melody. Your father would never permit it."

Melody's hazel eyes flashed. "Why not? I'm sick and tired of being treated like a child. You don't seem to realize that I'm twenty-one!" Tears welled in her eyes. Her body trembled. She threw herself down on the bed, buried her face in the pillow.

MRS. TORRANCE HEAVED a troubled sigh. She started towards her prostrate daughter, changed her mind, tiptoed out of the room.

The moment she was gone, Melody sat up, wiped the tears from her cheeks. Her eye

was attracted to the flaming evening gown she had dropped when her mother first brought the shocking news of Aunt Abigail's illness. It lay in a heap on the floor, shapeless and formless, seeming to represent a complete collapse of every expectation she had harbored.

Melody rose, picked the gown up, held it to herself. The satin was smooth and pleasant against her bare skin. "They can't do it!" she said aloud. "I won't let them do it!"

Starting from scratch, Melody began working herself up into a fit of hysteria. At 5:30, when her father returned from the office, she was doing a good job of simulating a raving maniac. Mrs. Torrance viewed the performance with growing apprehension, begged her husband to think of some solution to the problem. Melody heard the discussion between them from a vantage point on the second floor landing. She ran downstairs, burst into the living room, her chestnut hair flying and her eyes red-rimmed from an enforced flow of tears.

"I'll kill myself unless you let me go," she screamed. "I'll kill myself!"

Mrs. Torrance almost fainted. Even Melody's father was somewhat affected by her wild-eyed appearance. He glanced at his watch. The boat sailed within the hour.

"All right," he said. "You can go, Melody. Get ready."

Melody flung her arms about his neck, kissed him, raced up to her room. Mrs. Torrance's hands fluttered in her capacious lap.

"You're not letting her go alone, Peter, are you?" she questioned.

Mr. Torrance stepped to the telephone. "As far as she knows, she'll be going alone." He lifted the receiver, called a number. At that very moment, Melody picked up the receiver of the extension in her room in order to say good-bye to her friends. She heard her father's voice on the wire, heard the response at the other end. She listened carefully. A smile curled her red lips.

STANDING AT THE rail of the promenade deck of the *Champlain*, Melody watched the hazy skyline of New York fade into the distance. Three weeks in Europe! It seemed like

a passport to heaven. She was going to dance, no matter how much the piper asked in payment. Aunt Abigail's rheumatism was a blessing in disguise. Now, for once in her carefully guarded existence, she planned to throw off all shackles and let her conscience be her guide.



"What right have you to disturb me at this hour of the night?" she asked angrily.

When she could no longer see the lights of the city, and the air became chilly, Melody went down to her cabin, dressed for dinner. She chose the most daring of her frocks. A gold lame creation designed to accentuate every curve and convolution of the feminine figure. As far as Melody was concerned, the gown served to merely gild the lily. Nothing could improve on her high, firm breasts, or the luxurious lyre of her hips, or the tapering swell of her thighs.

Before donning the gown, Melody studied her reflection in the full length mirror backing the closet door. Her hair was the color of burnished copper under artificial light. Her lips were full, almost sensual, always voluptuously damp.

"You shouldn't have too much competition in Paris, Miss Torrance," she said addressing the half nude image in the glass.

In the adjoining cabin, originally reserved for Melody's Aunt Abigail, Jack Norwalk went down on his knees and glued his right

eye to the keyhole of the door separating the two rooms. His range of vision permitted him only a partial view of Melody, but what he saw convinced him that what he did not see was probably just as perfect. He watched her slip the lame gown over her head and wriggle into it. Well, that was that!

HE ROSE, BRUSHED off the knees of his tuxedo trousers. From all indications, this rather curious assignment wasn't going to be too

hard to take. He had been called upon to do some strange things as an operative of the American Detective Agency, but tailing a pretty girl all over Europe to see that she didn't get into trouble was the strangest one of the lot. The orders were not to reveal his identity. Too bad this had to be handled on the q.t.

Dressed for the evening, Melody left her cabin, went directly to the purser's office. She experienced a warm glow of pleasure as passenger's and ship's officers alike followed her with their eyes. The same thing occurred in the dining room. Men gaped at her when she slipped her wrap from her bare shoulders. Before the evening was over, a dozen assorted males had somehow managed to introduce themselves to her. Even the first mate claimed her for a dance in the ballroom.

At midnight, when she returned to her cabin, she was thrilled with the progress she had made. She stood before the mirror, her eyes gleaming like twin stars. "It is heaven, Melody, pure, unadulterated heaven," she said.

It was far from heaven for Jack Norwalk, the American Detective Agency's ace human bloodhound. Forced to remain in the background while others flocked about the stunning girl like bees around a honey pot, he champed at the bit. And, to make matters worse, he had succeeded in striking up an acquaintance with a cuddlesome blonde, only to have to drop her when Melody left the ballroom.

In his cabin, Jack went down on his knees once again, fastened his eye to the keyhole. Maybe the girl wouldn't need much watching. Certainly, if she had any idea about playing around, she would not have returned to her cabin alone. He was ruminating on this thought when the door swung open and he fell forward on his face.

THERE CAN BE nothing so ungraceful as a man sprawled out, arms and legs askew. Melody's tinkling laugh greeted Jack as he regained his equilibrium—but not his composure.

"Would you call that a stealthy, Sherlock Holmes entrance, Mr. Norwalk?" she queried.

Jack blubbered, blurted, but said nothing. He was amazed to discover that she knew who he was.

"Now that we've been introduced, and you've—er—fallen for me, Mr. Norwalk, let's stop playing cops and robbers."

Jack realized there was no sense trying to kid her. "How—how did you know I was watching you?"

"A little birdie told me—a sea gull. Whose idea was this, Aunt Abigail's, or my father's?"

"I don't know. I got orders to watch you and see that you don't get into trouble."

"And you're going to carry out the orders?" Melody squared her shoulders, drew a deep breath. The twin globes of her bosom swelled and drew their lame covering taut.

Like a magnet attracts steel filings, Jack's eyes were drawn to the jutting hillocks. "That's right," he mumbled.

Melody crossed the room, placed her hands on his shoulders, gazed into his eyes. "Aren't you being a silly boy? You can't hope to be a witness to everything I do. Sending you along to watch me was a crackbrained idea, don't you think? Why not forget it and enjoy the trip?"

JACK LOOKED DOWN. The blood in his veins was beginning to bubble like newly opened champagne. Melody's fingers crept over his shoulders, gently touched his neck. A thrill that started at the point of contact raced along every nerve path of his body.

"You know it's silly," Melody said softly. "We could have a swell time together if only —" She swayed towards him.

Jack's breath caught in his throat. He could feel the warmth of her body through the unstarched bosom of his dinner shirt. It would have been the easiest thing in the world for him to slip his arms around her waist; to bring his mouth down on her moist, ruby-red lips—the easiest thing in the world and the pleasantest. Instead, he backed away.

When he spoke, his voice was husky. "My job is to watch you."

Melody's eyes flashed. "All right, Mr. Smart Alec. You can watch me. There's only one thing I've got to say. You're going to be led a merry chase. And now, good night."

Jack winced. "Now listen, Miss Torrance, don't take it out on me. I'm tailing you because that's what I'm paid to do. If it were up to me—"

"Good night," Melody said icily. She slammed the door behind him.

For a long time after she slipped into bed, Melody lay awake, planning a campaign. Unless she managed to rid herself of this nemesis before she reached Paris, there was no telling to what extent it might interfere with the holiday she had promised herself. Even the chaperonage of Aunt Abigail would have been better than this.

SHE DECIDED TO BRING matters to a head the following evening. Pierre Chablin, the son of a wealthy vineyard owner, was on board. He had been among the first to in-



*"Help! Help!" she cried.
For a moment Jack was
petrified!*

roduce himself the previous night. He was young, not too unattractive, and more than eager to pay Melody every attention possible. With malice aforethought, she responded ardently. Again at midnight, she left the ballroom but this time, Pierre Chablin accompanied her.

Jack Norwalk followed them out on deck, hid in the shadow of a lifeboat. The young Frenchman's arms snaked around Melody's waist.

Melody turned, faced the young Frenchman. The right strap of her gown had fallen to her round upper arm. Chablin whispered something to her. She smiled and nodded. Arm in arm, they walked across the deck.

In his cabin, Jack knelt down, looked through the keyhole. What he saw was merely confirmation of what he had thought. Melody reclined in the Frenchman's arms, her parted

lips against his mouth, her hands twined at the back of his head.

Jack stepped out of the cabin, knocked at the door of the adjoining one. There was no answer. Jack knocked again. Presently he heard the turning of the key in the lock.

The door swung open. Melody, breathing heavily, faced him.

"What right have you to disturb me at this time of the night?"

JACK SLIPPED BY HER into the room. Pierre Chablin looked up at him.

"Scram-ay-woo," Jack rasped, jerking a thumb towards the door. "Get out!"

"Don't you move, Pierre," Melody cried. "Stay right where you are."

"Get out!" Jack repeated, advancing to the man.

The young Frenchman rose. "*Pardonnez-moi, monsieur—*"

Jack didn't wait for him to finish. One hand grabbed at the nape of his neck, the other at the seat of his trousers. He was out in the corridor before he knew what had happened.

"I'll call the captain," Melody shrieked.

Jack returned to the cabin, slammed the door behind him. "You'll call nobody! Maybe you don't know it, but I make a report on everything that happens. You'd better watch your step."

Melody was speechless in her fury. She stood there, her fists clenched and her nails digging into her palms. In spite of the height and intensity of her anger, she made a beautiful picture.

Jack tore his eyes from the entrancing sight. "Good night," he said.

The news that Pierre Chablin had been unceremoniously ejected from Melody's cabin traveled about the ship like wildfire. The man who had done the ejecting was quickly pointed out. From that moment on, the male contingent on board gave Melody a wide berth inasmuch as they respected her protector's broad shoulders and athletic carriage.

MELODY REMAINED IN HER cabin for the balance of the trip. For a while, she thought of returning on the next boat rather than suffer the indignity of being consantly shadowed, but this, she decided, would be an admission of defeat. There was certainly some way to circumvent the human leech her father had attached to her.

Although she failed to see Jack Norwalk when the *Champlain* docked and she boarded the boat train for Paris, some sixth sense told her he was not far distant. When the train arrived in Paris, however, she spotted him on the platform, eyeing her like a hound dog eyes a rabbit.

Melody burned up. Enough was enough. She strode over to him, her eyes shooting sparks. "Haven't you caused me sufficient annoyance?" she demanded. "Haven't you done everything in your power to make this trip miserable? Why don't you act like a man and cable your employers that you refuse to stoop to anything so low as following a woman and watching every move she makes?"

Jack gulped. He wasn't the only one on the platform who heard Melody. Porters and passengers alike were staring with amused smiles.

"You're making a fool of yourself," he mumbled.

"I don't care! I'll make a fool of you before I'm through!" She turned, stalked off.

Reservations had been made for her at the *Hotel Fontaine*. With the faint hope that she might elude him, Melody instructed the driver of her cab to go to the *Hotel Chantainbleu*. When she reached there, Jack was right behind her in another taxi.

Melody sank back in her cab seat. "The *Hotel Fontaine*," she said weakly.

IN HER ROOM, MELODY undressed, took a cold shower. It failed to cool her off. Something had to be done—and quickly. She paced the room, cudgeling her brain for a way out of what was practically a trap. The annoying part of it all was that she knew, from intercepting her father's phone call, what was afoot. Why hadn't she scotched it right there and then, instead of depending upon her ability to slip away from her appointed guardian?

Of course, there was one way of getting rid of Jack Norwalk. It wasn't a very decent way, but since everything else had failed, Melody decided to try it. She rummaged through her bags, found her most entrancing dance set—black chiffon panties and a black net brassiere—put it on. The effect was startling. Creamy-white skin against dead black; the softness of her round breasts showing through the brassiere cups. She slipped into a negligee, called the hotel operator, asked to be connected with Mr. Norwalk.

"I'd like to see you," she said softly, once his voice sounded over the wire. "In my room."

He seemed a little dubious. "What for?"

"I—I have something to tell you."

Melody had dampened her handkerchief and was dabbing it to her eyes when he stepped into the room.

"I—I just wanted to tell you that I'm going back home," she whimpered.

HE CAME OVER TO THE chair. "I'm sorry, baby, but you can't blame me. After all, it was my job and I did it."

Melody shot to her feet, ripped away the negligee. She screamed violently, mussed her hair up. She reached out for an ash tray on an end table, hurled it through the window. It shattered the glass.

"Help! Help!" she cried.

For a moment Jack was petrified. Then he lunged at her, snapped an arm about her

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BABY FACE



"You say monsieur will not hire me for the chorus of his new show?" she asked disappointedly.

By RENE BARAD

PAULETTE DUVERNE possessed the evanescent, incomparable charm of a goddess. Her sweetly nubile body was as lovely as a summer breeze; her heart-shaped face held the pure beauty of a woodland flower. There was an elfin, wistful quality about her—plus, of course, a certain warm flesh-and-blood reality that made men yearn to crush her in their arms and make love to her.

That was the trouble. Paulette didn't permit men to make love to her. She didn't even allow them to kiss her. Which, perhaps, was why her stage career had not progressed very well. She had long since discovered that theatrical success was usually predicated on more than mere acting ability. Show producers generally demanded something beyond

histrionic ability; they wanted a bit of love in the bargain. And Paulette Duverne didn't like that sort of bargaining!

Right now there were two big, unshed tears glistening in her hazel eyes and a faint tremble at the curve of her kissable lower lip as she stepped out of the shower. Deliciously nude, and dripping little rivulets of water, she commenced toweling herself with unnecessary vigor in an effort to hide her keen disappointment at not getting the job she had hoped for. Her black hair was fluffed over her creamy shoulders in an anthracite cascade, and her firm little breasts bobbed saucily with each flick of the towel.

Strive as she would, she could quite conceal the quaver in her voice as she addressed the red-haired and voluptuous Jacqueline Jan-

viere, who shared the tiny apartment with her. "Then you say *Monsieur* Raoul will not cast me in the chorus of his new production, Jacqueline?"

THE FLAME-TRESSED OLDER girl shrugged. "Non. Not as things stand at present. *Monsieur* Rantoul says you are too innocent looking to appear in his worldly chorus. And I am rather inclined to agree with him," Jacqueline added sagely as she surveyed Paulette's girlish, slender figure.

Paulette flushed, which accentuated her innocent appearance even more. She looked at her unclothed, arrow-straight body in a long mirror; then she directed a comparing glance at Jacqueline, who had disrobed and was awaiting her turn at the shower bath.

There was no mistaking the difference that marked the two apartment companions. Whereas Paulette was like a shy, dark-eyed violet, Jacqueline was like a scarlet orchid. The red-haired girl reeked sex appeal. Her figure was lush and mature; her knowing eyes held depths of forbidden wisdom and experience. . . .

Little Paulette sighed as she contrasted her own lissome slimness to Jacqueline's full-flowered maturity. "Mais—but I was counting on getting a job in *Monsieur* Rantoul's new show!" she pouted prettily. "I thought you were well enough acquainted with him to arrange it for me, Jacqueline!"

Jacqueline grinned wickedly. "Indeed I am well acquainted with Raoul Rantoul! In fact, I was on a party with him only last night, and . . . m-m-m-m!" Then she added: "However, even though he said he had no place for you in his cast, I think I may still pull the fat out of the fire for you—if you are willing to go through with a certain plan I have in mind!"

HOPE LEAPED INTO Paulette's eyes. "A plan?"

"Oui. You see, Raoul Rantoul is having another party at his apartment tonight. And I managed to procure an invitation for you. Now, if you will follow my instructions, I think we can convince Raoul that you are not as simple as he believes."

"Why—wh-what on earth do you m-mean?" Paulette faltered. "Of course I am— How—"

"Wait *un moment*," Jacqueline spoke from under the shower, soaping her generous bosom meanwhile. "It so happens that Henri Dessaix, an old flame of mine, will be at Raoul Rantoul's party tonight. So I have asked this Henri Dessaix to pay particular

attention to you. In other words, make ardent love to you—especially when Raoul's eyes happen to be aimed in your direction. Now, when Henri makes love to you, you are to respond eagerly. You are to pretend that you enjoy such play, and by so doing, you will convince Raoul Rantoul that you . . . er . . . know your way around. *Comprenez?*"

Paulette blushed furiously from the roots of her hair to the tips of her tiny toes. "You—you want me to allow this Henri Dessaix to . . . kiss me and . . . embrace me?"

"*Mais oui*. However, it will only be play-acting, just for the benefit of Raoul, who will be looking on. And when Raoul perceives that you are . . . er . . . a good sport, he will probably cast you in his chorus."

As she spoke, the red haired Jacqueline darted a surreptitious and calculating glance at the younger girl; a glance that was freighted with a certain amount of jealous envy. Secretly, Jacqueline begrudged Paulette her youth and innocence. Moreover, she was jealous of Paulette for another reason as well.

ONLY THE NIGHT BEFORE, Jacqueline had been with Raoul Rantoul. During the course of the evening, she had hinted delicately of marriage.

Raoul, who was thirty and handsome and wealthy, had smiled and said: "Don't be foolish, Jacqueline, *cherie*. You are a pleasant companion and a nice playmate. But when I marry, it will be to a nice innocent DuVerne, whom I have met only once, but whose sweet charm fascinates me."

Jacqueline had experienced a pang of jealousy. "Have you fallen for that baby-faced little simpleton?" she had demanded heavily.

"I have not exactly fallen. But it would require just a very slight push," Raoul had answered whimsically.

All of which explained why Jacqueline was now scheming. She was determined to let Raoul see that Paulette was not so sweet and innocent as he supposed. Once he discovered himself misled, he would lose all his interest in the younger brunette girl. Then, perhaps, Jacqueline would have a better chance to land him for herself.

But of all these dark thoughts, Jacqueline gave no hint as she came out of the shower and began to dry herself. She forced a cunning smile to her lips as she faced Paulette. "Well, *cherie*, what about it? Will you go with me to Raoul's party tonight?"

Paulette hesitated. Then she faltered: "Well, if you really think I should. . . ."

"*Bon!*" Jacqueline applauded. "And now

it is high time for us to start getting ready."

Nervously, the younger girl asked: "Wh-what frock should I wear?"

Jacqueline laughed heartily. "It will not make the slightest difference, *petit-chou*. This is to be a Japanese kimono party. You will not have your dress on very long."

"Wh-why—what do you mean?"

"Wait and see!" Jacqueline said mysteriously. "But I suggest you do not wear too much lingerie. Leave off the slip. . . ."

LATER THAT EVENING, Paulette and Jacqueline arrived at Raoul Rantoul's apartment. Raoul himself admitted them; and the moment she saw him, little Paulette experienced

"You may . . . kiss me. . . ." she finally whispered.



a strange, fluttery sensation in the region of her firm left breast. Her heart seemed about to burst out from beneath that budding mound of sweet feminine flesh.

And small wonder. Raoul was virile and handsome; and the smile he gave Paulette was both admiring and yearning. They had met only one time before; but Raoul was already more than half in love with her. And as for Paulette herself, she blushed at the queer tingles that assailed her when she was near him. . . .

As he took her wrap, she felt the impact of his gaze upon her liling body. Having accepted Jacqueline's advice, she was wearing no slip under the clinging silk dress; and she

knew that Raoul's eyes were ardently admiring the gentle, swelling domes of her bosom. It was odd, but she felt no resentment as he stared at her.

Within the main room of the apartment there was much laughter, both masculine and feminine. The popping of champagne corks and the clink of glasses added to the general sounds of revelry and gaiety. Suddenly, Paulette began to have certain misgivings. She wondered whether she had been wise in coming here tonight.

True, she desperately wanted a job in Raoul Rantoul's new show. But on the other hand, she was not quite sure that she wanted Raoul to think of her as . . . sophisticated. Which, of course was precisely what he *would*

think if she carried out Jacqueline's plan and permitted Henri Dessaix to make love to her.

HOWEVER, BEFORE SHE HAD a chance to think twice about the matter, Jacqueline grabbed her by the arm and guided her into a small room at the side of the hall. Here an obsequious maid met them. And the next thing she knew, Paulette was being helped out of her dress!

"*Mais non!*" she started to protest. "I do not desire to disrobe—!"

Jacqueline Janvierre was already out of her own frock, without any assistance. However, she immediately donned a sleazy Japanese kimono over her lacy underthings and this partially concealed her blatant charms. Then she cast a smile at Paulette.

"Come, come, little innocent! Get out of your frock!" she commanded. "I told you this was to be a kimono party. All the guests will be wearing these things. You cannot do otherwise."

Reluctantly, then, Paulette exchanged her dress for a thin kimono similar to the one Jacqueline was wearing. But as she drew it about herself, she glanced in the mirror—and turned crimson all over. "*Mon Dieu!*" she faltered. "I—I should have worn a slip! Why—you can almost see through this silk!"

"You haven't very much to see!" Jacqueline snapped irritably, revealing a flash of her envy for Paulette's small, firm curves. "Come along!" And grabbing the younger girl's arm, she led her into the main room, where the party was going full blast.

The moment they appeared, two men sprang forward. One was Raoul Rantoul himself. The other was a narrow-eyed, pasty-faced individual who was immediately introduced as Henri Dessaix. The moment Paulette saw this Dessaix person, she shuddered inwardly. So this was the man who was supposed to make love to her! Ugh . . .!

THEN, FOR A BRIEF instant, it looked as if the whole scheme might go awry. Raoul Rantoul possessed himself of Paulette's hand. His eyes caressed her whole body through the thin silk kimono, adoringly and admiringly. "You look sweet enough to eat!" he murmured, holding her fingers over-long. "You are so innocent in comparison to these other girls—and to think you should wish to be a chorus dancer in my show! Absurd! You were made only to be loved and kissed and caressed. . . ."

Paulette tingled all over. Then, ruefully, she saw the picture change. Jacqueline grabbed

Raoul's arm. "Come on, *mon coeur*. Take me to the champagne! I am thirsty!" And she dragged him away.

That left Paulette with the narrow-eyed Henri Dessaix. And this Dessaix wasted no time. "I am going to enjoy this interlude with you, *charie!*" he grinned. "I shall teach you what real love is before the night is done!"

Paulette tried to draw away from him, but his arm slid around her pliant waist and he pulled her over to a corner. For the first time, Paulette had a chance to examine her surroundings; and they shocked her.

In the first place, the huge room was lighted by just one single rose-shaded lamp. In the second place, the floor was piled thick with silken cushions. And in every nook and cranny, the cushions were occupied by amorously-engaged couples who seemed oblivious to the rest of the people in the room. . . .

Lips were pressed to lips fervidly. Kimonos were drawn partially open to reveal many a feminine shoulder, and there were muffled sighs and whisperings. . . .

PAULETTE FELT Henri Dessaix pulling her down into a cushioned corner. Then his lips came to her unwilling mouth. "Give me a kiss!" he demanded.

"*Non—please—*"

"Don't be like that. After all, what are you here for? Look, Raoul Rantoul is glancing in our direction. You wish a job in his new show, do you not?"

Paulette lowered her eyes miserably. "*Oui, mais . . . yes, but . . .*"

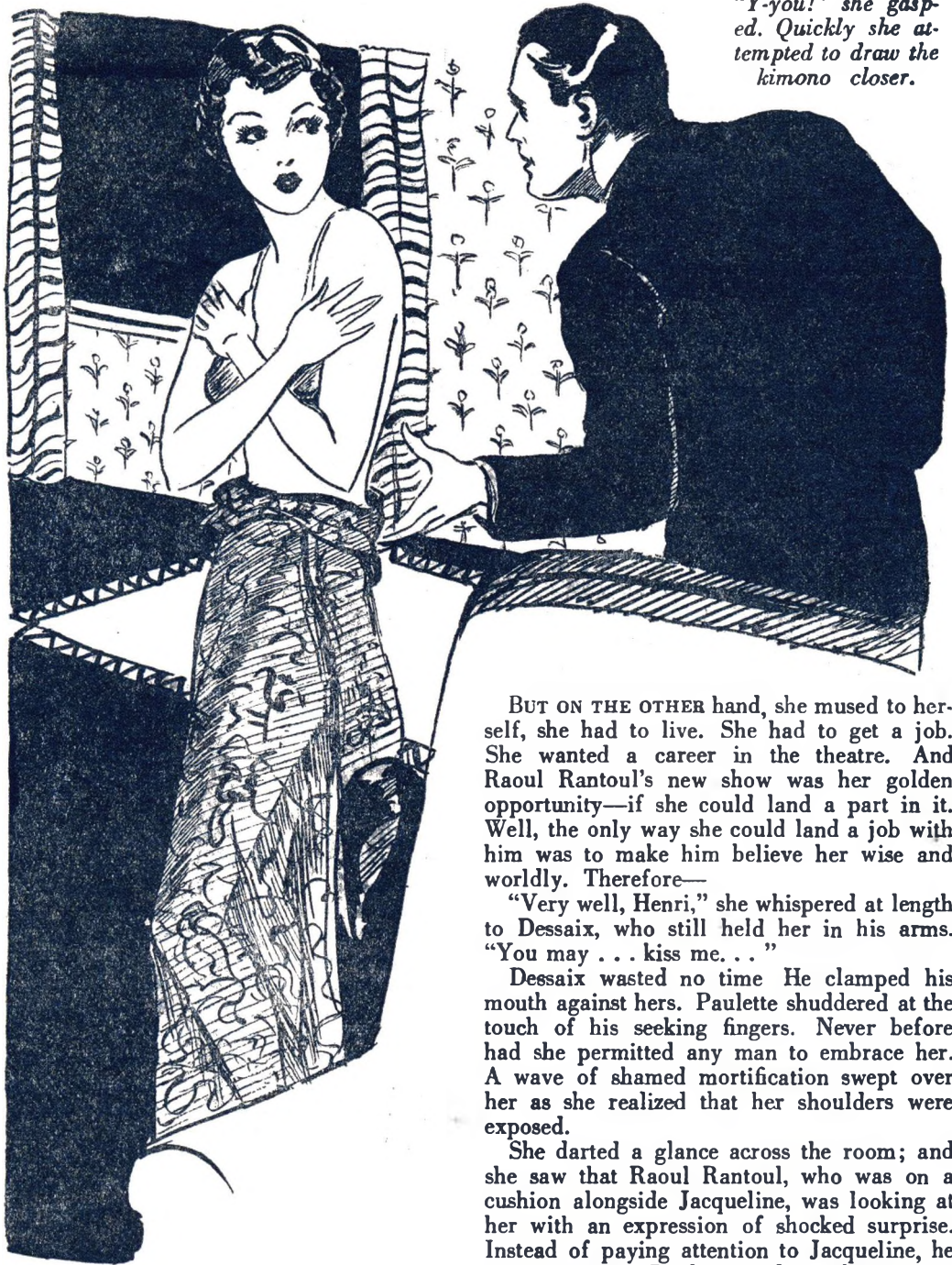
"Then you must convince him that you are not too innocent," Dessaix argued convincingly. "You must permit me to pretend to make love to you. And after a while . . ."

"Oh, please!" Paulette cringed. "There will be no after a while!"

Dessaix laughed. "Don't be a goose. We must do our best to convince Raoul that you are game for anything. *Comprenez-vous?*"

Paulette considered this. She also considered her suddenly-found reluctance to appear worldly in Raoul Rantoul's eyes. Why did she feel this way? After all, she meant nothing to Raoul. She had met him only once before, and she was quite sure he entertained no thoughts of love for her. In fact, he probably entertained no thoughts about her at all—except as a possible prospect for his show.

His show! That was all that mattered! There could never be any romance between her and Raoul. That was absurd. He had



"Y-you!" she gasped. Quickly she attempted to draw the kimono closer.

BUT ON THE OTHER hand, she mused to herself, she had to live. She had to get a job. She wanted a career in the theatre. And Raoul Rantoul's new show was her golden opportunity—if she could land a part in it. Well, the only way she could land a job with him was to make him believe her wise and worldly. Therefore—

"Very well, Henri," she whispered at length to Dessaix, who still held her in his arms. "You may . . . kiss me. . ."

Dessaix wasted no time. He clamped his mouth against hers. Paulette shuddered at the touch of his seeking fingers. Never before had she permitted any man to embrace her. A wave of shamed mortification swept over her as she realized that her shoulders were exposed.

She darted a glance across the room; and she saw that Raoul Rantoul, who was on a cushion alongside Jacqueline, was looking at her with an expression of shocked surprise. Instead of paying attention to Jacqueline, he was staring at Paulette and watching every move of Henri Dessaix.

a world of girls to pick from; blondes, brunettes, red-heads and all the shades between. At his constant beck and call were young girls, older girls, willing girls and bolder girls. A man like that would have no second glance for a meek little mouse like Paulette.

But at length Jacqueline grew weary of his inattention. She moved closer to him, and it was noticeable that the red-haired girl's kimono was gradually sliding off her shoulder. Whether he wanted to or not, Raoul had to devote a little of his time to Jacqueline. He

forced himself to kiss her, because she demanded it.

AND MEANWHILE, OVER in that other corner, Paulette DuVerne was having her hands full with Henri Dessaix. Or rather, Henri Dessaix had his hands full of Paulette. He was growing bolder by the minute; and his ardor was palpably not play-acting! He meant every kiss, every caress!

At last he sprang to his feet and hauled Paulette after him. "Raoul is watching us again!" he whispered meaningly. "Let us leave."

Paulette was suddenly afraid of him. "No. I—I don't want to."

"But you must. It's part of the act. Come along. I give you my word that I shall not even kiss you when we are alone together—unless with your permission!"

That reassured her a little. She certainly would not give him leave to corner her when they were alone.

She and Henri Dessaix went to a far door and slipped into the hallway. They reached a tiny, unlighted room and entered. It was very dark inside. Paulette shivered involuntarily. Even though nothing was going to happen, she disliked the idea of remaining in such close quarters with Dessaix for even a little while. . . .

He whispered into her ear. "Wait here *un moment*, chérie. I am going to get some brandy for you."

"*Mais*—but I do not wish any brandy."

"You should have at least one drink. Then perhaps you won't be so cold to me. . . ." He went out, leaving her alone in the solid darkness.

STRANGELY, WHEN HE returned, he did not offer her a drink. "Could you not find the brandy, Henri?" Paulette whispered.

"No. We do not need it to add fire to our love!" came the answering whisper. And then, before she knew it, Paulette was engulfed in a pair of strong arms—

She struggled desperately to free herself. Her kimono somehow began to rip, and she realized that it was slipping down a little. She felt his lips seeking, finding her mouth. She fought at him. But he was too strong, too virile and she was too weak against him.

At last she found her voice. "Let me go, Henri Dessaix!" she panted.

"And why should I? After all, you came into this room with me!" His arms held her close to him, gently.

"How dare you insinuate that I came in

here with you willingly!" she stormed as she battled him. "You know very well what the agreement was. Jacqueline Janvierre persuaded you to pretend to make love to me, so that Raoul Rantoul would no longer think me a simpleton—so that he would give me a job in his new show! And now you are . . ."

She stopped in mid-sentence. For some strange reason he had released her; stepped back from her. In the darkness, she could hear his sharp, indrawn breath. Then, abruptly, he found the light switch and flicked it.

In the sudden glare Paulette blinked. Then she stared and—almost collapsed!

THE MAN WAS NOT Henri Dessaix! *It was Raoul Rantoul!*

"Y-you—!" she gasped. Hurriedly she drew the kimono tightly around her so that she was covered completely. "You!" she cried again.

He nodded quizzically. "*Oui*. It is I. When Henri Dessaix went out a minute ago for brandy, I locked him in the pantry and then came back in his stead. You see, I had seen him kissing you. Then I saw him pull you from the living room and bring you back here. I was filled with a sudden jealous rage. I followed—and managed to impersonate him in the darkness."

"*Mais pourquoi*—but why?" Paulette faltered miserably.

"Because, *chérie*, I was insanely jealous of him—and in a frenzy of rage at you! You see, from the first time we met, I have been in love with you! I realized how different you were from all the other girls I knew; all those I encounter in the theatre. Your sweetness, your purity, attracted me. I was hoping to become better acquainted with you; perhaps some day persuade you to marry me. Then, tonight, when you came here to my party and went into Henri Dessaix's arms, I was shocked, disillusioned. You were not the innocent girl I had thought you to be. And I determined to have *revanche*. I made up my mind to come in here, take Dessaix's place, and—make love to you. . . ."

"*Helas!*" Paulette whimpered. "And now you know me for what I am—a scheming, designing creature who merely wanted a job in your show—"

HE TOOK A HESITANT step toward her. "I know that you are a charming, foolish little innocent girl. I can see the truth now. Jacqueline Janvierre has been trying to rope me in. She knew that I liked you. So she arranged this whole thing to blacken your

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NIGHT LIFE

By
NANETTE COLEMAN



A NNETTE awoke, stretching slim arms luxuriously above her tousled red gold head. Her blue eyes, wide beneath their thick fringe of lashes, stared wonderingly about the big moonlit bedroom. Annette was astounded, angry, that she should awake at this unearthly hour before dawn. Why, *tiens* she had gone to bed but a few hours ago—*Sacre*, this was an unheard of thing! Insomnia had never before troubled her slim, healthy young body.

Then, all of a sudden, she drew the silken sheet about creamy, naked shoulders, biting her lips to suppress a scream. She knew now what it was that had awakened her. Some-

"You are truly the most beautiful girl in Paree,"
he murmured.

one was in the living room of her apartment. A burglar, perhaps. An *Apache* killer who had come to steal her pearls or the diamond anklet that fat *Senor Mendez*, the South American coffee king, had given her.

She lay still, heart thumping with fear, the sheet clutched in tense fingers. Softly the footfalls of the unseen marauder approached her bedroom door. *Voila*, she would pretend sleep, thought Annette, with a shiver of terror. That was the only way. Far better

to lose the valuable pearls and the anklet than to have a bullet through that exquisite breast of hers. With a tiny thrill of terrified excitement, she lay tense beneath the sheet. *Oui*, *Paree* was a wild and wicked place. A poor girl was not safe from men even in her own cozy bed.

The door opened quietly. A man stepped into the room. A tall, lithe man, dressed, the moonlight revealed, in conventional black and white evening garb. He stood quietly for a moment, as though to get his bearings, then moved with a graceful, cat-like tread towards the bed. Annette, lying very still, glanced at him surreptitiously from beneath her lashes. He was very broad shouldered and graceful as to movement. By the faint glow from the window she saw that the upper half of his face was covered by a mask.

WHAT TO DO, THOUGHT the petite *Folies* dancer, wildly? Screams, she knew, would avail exactly nothing. The penthouse apartment she occupied alone was perched on top of an old Montmartre studio building, and the *concierge* far below was stone deaf. *Non*, she ruminated wisely, she must use her famous feminine wiles to get rid of this undesirable as soon as possible, and save the jewels in that box in the wall safe. Wiles, she remembered, with tolerant amusement, had gotten her out of closer shaves than this one. They had also added considerably to that costly collection of gems in the jewel box.

She shrank, startled, against the soft mattress as the bold bandit dropped to his knees beside the bed. One slim, bejeweled hand stuffed the sheet against her rosy lips to stifle screams of terror.

And yet, quite as suddenly as it had come, the girl's terror vanished. In its place came a warm, tingly feeling. This burglar, bad as he was, had certain manifest attractions that appealed to women. Annette relaxed, her breathing grew more quiet.

The man's hand, resting on the silken covers, slid down and caressed the satin warmth of a shoulder. A tiny sigh escaped Annette. She grew tense. Was the man coming to steal her heart, not her collection of jewels? She had always craved a sweetheart. A real romantic one. Not the bald headed, large paunched Mr. Rosenblum, the clothing merchant, who had given her the matched pearls, or the stout, elderly *Senor Mendez* of the handsome diamond anklet. Or even hawk-nosed *Francois*, of the antique shop, who had given her the gold toilette set. *Helas, non!*

None of these. She wanted to meet a young, handsome man who would woo her ardently.

ANNETTE RELAXED STILL further, hardly breathing. The man, with one gentle arm, drew her near in a firm embrace. *Nom du Nom*, thought Annette, if all burglars were like this one, she would become an *Apache's* girl and live in a garret.

"*Ma petite fleur*," his voice was low, well modulated, "you must forgive me for being so bold. I had to come here tonight. Some irresistible force drove me to it. *Certainement!* I have been mad about you for weeks. You are truly the most beautiful girl in *Paree*, *ma belle bebe*. Now you may turn me over to the *gendarmes*—do what you like—but nothing, not even a prison term, can erase this exquisite memory of tonight with you."

"*Ciel!*" spoke Annette, a tremor in her voice. "I will not turn you over to the *gendarmes, Monsieur*. Perhaps, *ne-c'est pas*, I too can understand a little of this feeling that dares even the *bastille* to express itself. I have never been really in love, although I have had many infatuations. Men, the kind I have met at the *Folies Bergere*, are prosperous, *Monsieur*, but most of the time they are fat and old and not at all handsome."

"*Mais oui*," said the thrilling male voice, "you are in love now, *ma ange*. I see it in the husky sweetness of your voice . . . the trembling of your exquisite figure. Love will make you bloom with renewed beauty, *ma coeur*, like water freshens the parched rose."

THIS WAS ALL MADNESS, thought the excited Annette to herself. Sheer madness. Even so, she didn't want to return to dull, prosaic sanity. *Oui*, he was right. This was love. Love come to her on swift wings in the person of a handsome, unknown man whom she had never seen before. And, strange to say, she had always dreamed that it would come to her like this, swiftly, romantically.

"How," she asked curiously, "did you happen to know where I lived, *Monsieur*? There are very few in *Paree* who know this apartment is mine. I would rather have it so. Apart from my dancing, the rest of my life belongs just to me. *N'est-ce pas?*"

"I followed you, *ma petite*," spoke the low musical voice, "from the great party tonight, where you were the guest of honor. I had seen you many times but tonight the desire to follow you here could not be controlled. So, I risked the *bastille* just for this one fleeting delicious hour with you, *ma bebe*."

Annette smiled, unconsciously snuggling

against the strong arm that caressed her. *Senor Mendez* had been host to the party, an expensive, elaborate affair in which diamond and platinum favors had been placed at the women's plates, and champagne had flowed incessantly. A stupid party that had bored Annette because all of the men were old and fat, like *Senor Mendez*, with clutching, greedy hands, predatory eyes.

She searched her memory, trying to place this tall young man. No, try as she might, she could not remember ever having met him. Surely he was not among the guests. None of them had been young and handsome. They were bald and gray and paunchy in the wrong places. One of the waiters who had served the drinks and food, perhaps. She could not recollect. *Tiens*, it did not matter! When one at last met the man one loved, his station in life and means of livelihood were not important.

ANNETTE SMILED, THINKING of those gilt edged stocks and bonds tucked so carefully away in her name. They would do very nicely to purchase a small *chateau* up in Normandy or a pink walled *villa* somewhere along southern sands.

She ran her hands, curiously, over the visitor's face, stroked his sleek, polished hair.

"Perhaps *Monsieur* would care for an *aperitif*, non?"

"If *la belle Mademoiselle* will tell me where the liquor is kept, I will be pleased to prepare one."

"In the kitchenette. Go through the living room, *Monsieur*."

When he had gone Annette sprang out of bed, snapped on the light, ran a comb through her riotous red gold curls and touched up her face before the dressing table. Then, after due consideration, she slipped into her newest and most fetching pair of vivid blue satin pajamas.

When the young man entered, bearing a tray with bottles and glasses, she stared at him, frankly, curiously. He was really much handsomer than she had imagined he would be. In fact he was beyond doubt the finest looking and most *distingue* young man Annette had ever seen, and the *petite danseuse* was no novice in judging masculine pulchritude. His evening clothes were immaculate, expensive, and becoming to his tall, lean graceful figure. Under the soft radiance of the lamps his hair, above the mask, shone with a blue-black lustre.

"Won't you," she laughed, "take off that silly mask, *mon gallant*? It is no longer necessary. You have committed no robbery, and not even one tiny crime has taken place. There

"I love you also, *monsieur*," whispered the girl shyly.



can be no secrets between us from now on, non?"

HE LAUGHED, SHOWING gleaming, perfect teeth. With a quick, graceful gesture he pulled the covering from his face. Annette looked into his narrowed laughing dark eyes, her blue ones brilliant with emotion.

"*Le Monsieur est tres handsome,*" she admitted.

"*Merci.* And you, *Mademoiselle* Annette Deveau, are the most beautiful woman in *la belle France.*"

They went into the living room where a log still smoldered upon the wide hearth. On the big soft sofa he again drew her into his arms, bent his lips to hers. Annette had, in her brief span, been kissed by many men but this, she realized, was the first kiss that had ever counted. It thrilled her to her small, pink toes. Happiness filled her completely as his arms embraced her.

They drank champagne from tall crystal glasses, the heady warmth of the wine intensifying the flow of emotion through their veins. The young man bent his head and kissed the warm sweet lips that were raised to meet his. The girl laughed, pressing his dark head tightly against her.

"*Ma petite ange, je vous adore!* I love you. Every inch of you. My blood is on fire."

"I love you also, *Monsieur,*" whispered the girl shyly. "You are so sincere. I knew that some time the great *affaire d'amour* would come to me. *Mon Dieu,* at last the great moment of love has arrived, *mon cher.*"

SEVERAL HOURS LATER, Annette sprang up from the sofa. Going to the windows she pushed back the curtains, threw them open to the freshness of the new day. Then she went into the blue and white kitchenette, made coffee and toast, fried bacon and eggs. The young man appeared with a bath towel flung about his broad shoulders. "May I help, *cherie?* I am quite at home in a kitchen."

She giggled. *Oui,* he must be a waiter. Her guess had no doubt been correct. Or, perhaps, he was a valet for one of the rich men who had been at the party the night before. "Everything is now ready, *Monsieur.* Please sit down while it is hot."

He took a chair across the table from her in the tiny dinette. Ardently his dark eyes surveyed her scarcely concealed charms beneath the clinging silk pajamas. "Annette, *ma charmante,* you are very attractive in that costume."

She laughed. "It is this way that I generally

lounge about the house. I do not like much clothing. It seems to hinder my dancing."

They were having their third cup of her sparkling coffee when the door bell pealed.

"*Fou!* Let them ring," she said. "We do not care to be disturbed by some tradesman at this early hour." Again the bell pealed sharply through the apartment. This time the impatient caller, tired of no response, stalked into the living room. Annette stared, an angry little flush on her smooth cheeks. *Senor Mendez!* She was not particularly surprised to see the ardent, aging Lothario at this outlandish hour, for he had often called upon her at sundry inconvenient times, but today it was different. The *Senor,* as far as she was concerned, was a forgotten man. She could struggle along without his diamond anklets and fur coats quite nicely in the future.

"AH, MADEMOISELLE Annette," spoke the corpulent Don Juan, "I know it is early for a call, but I could not sleep. I could not eat my breakfast for thinking of the too beautiful *Mademoiselle* Deveau. That priceless little pearl I have found in France. I love you, *Mademoiselle* Annette. Madly—"

Suddenly his ardent eyes left the face of the girl and, for the first time, perceived the tall young man with the bath towel about his neck. *Senor Mendez'* passionate tirade stopped short. His prominent eyes dilated with something that looked suspiciously like fright. He made a violent motion that reminded Annette somewhat of a befuddled turkey gobbler trying to swallow some difficult particle of food. "Carlos!" shrieked the astounded *Senor,* "how did you get here? Why—"

"Hello, dad," spoke the young man calmly. "I've been here for quite a little while with my fiancée, *Mademoiselle* Deveau. She has done me the great honor of promising to be my wife. And, since you say, and rightly, that she is the most beautiful girl in all France, I am sure you will be more than delighted to have her as your daughter-in-law."

The perspiring *Senor* inserted a fat finger into his collar, as though that article of clothing had suddenly got several sizes too small. He stared in bewilderment first at his son and then at Annette.

"Why," he stammered, "why, surely, Carlos, my boy. You have made a very fine choice. Now of course you are intelligent enough to understand, and will tell your mother so upon your return to our Brazilian plantation, that my great and only interest in *Mademoiselle* Deveau has merely been one pertaining to art.

(Please turn to page 61)



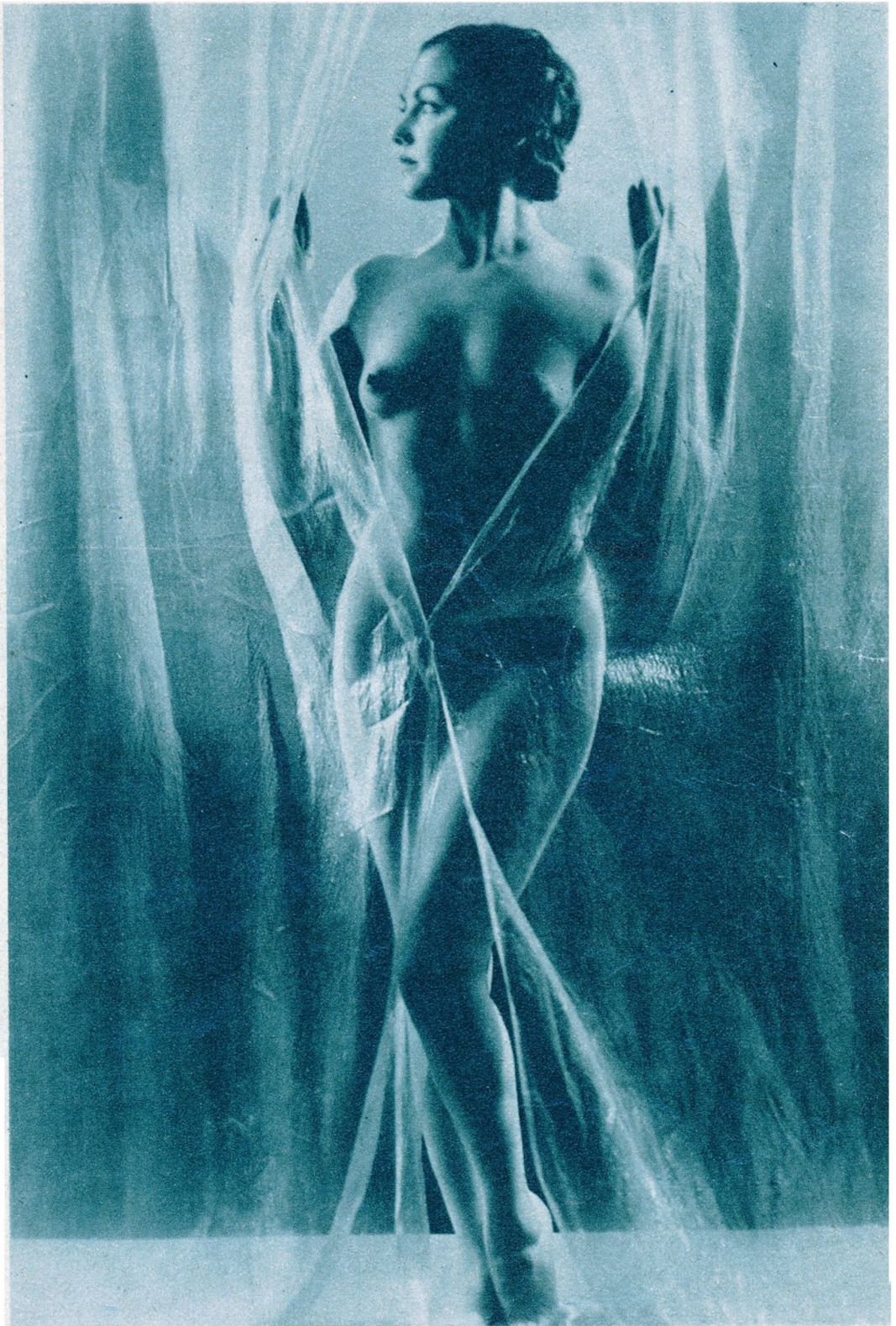






























When The Cat's Away . . .

By

ORMOND TREGO

MAX, one of the waiters at the Cafe of the Blue Dove, carried the frosty absinthe out to the sidewalk section of the establishment. He placed the drink in front of his friend Daburon, the painter.

"There you are, Jacques. Go ahead—poison yourself. I will stand and watch."

The artist dripped the almost colorless liquid over the shaved ice.

"Max," he sighed, "I fear my wife is no longer true to me. *Sapristi!* Just because I spend all my time painting landscapes at Bougivil, she collects sweethearts in my absence."

Max, tall, slender and the handsomest waiter in Paris, nodded sympathetically.

"These women!"

Daburon finished dripping and stirred for a change. "But someday I shall even matters!" he promised. "I am coming home unexpectedly—with a gun in my pocket. If my wife is alone, all well and good. If not—"

Max smiled. "Not so well and good—for the gentleman."

"*Exactement!*" Daburon finished. "When I return from the country you must come and see my sketches. I will give you my address. I live at—"

Before he could finish there was an interruption. The manager of the cafe bustled out.

"You, Max! Have you nothing to do except stand there and talk? Inside—quick. Two customers want *bock!*"

When Max was free again Daburon had vanished.

At his table Max saw a girl. She had her feet on the rungs of the chair. She was a small girl and, a glance told him, exceptionally pretty. Her face was a creamy oval. Her eyes were a summer sky blue. Her mouth was tempting, as a forbidden cherry patch and her hair a welter of golden curls.

SHE RAISED A finger for Max. When he approached he noticed her eyes were red as if from weeping.

"*Oui, mademoiselle?*"

"Cognac," she requested in a stifled voice. "And hurry."

Max noticed how neatly her hips overflowed the wooden chair seat. He prided himself

as a connoisseur of hips. He paused for a momentary view before he went into the bar.

"The good cognac," he said to the bar man. "Not the watered stuff. This is for a ravishing young lady with golden hair."

The other passed the bottle.

"They are all ravishing," he observed in a sepulchral tone, "until their husbands pop in unexpectedly."

When Max took the bottle and a glass on his tray to the table the girl had propped her chin up on the back of her interlaced fingers. She stared absently across the Rue Provence. Max set glass and bottle down, helping himself meanwhile to a surreptitious glance at the front of her loose blouse. He saw just enough to want to see more.

"Eighty year old cognac, *mademoiselle,*" he said softly.

She looked up at him, as if aware of his presence for the first time. She smiled faintly.

"Oh, yes, the cognac. *Merci.*"

Max draped his napkin over his arm, gave a twitch to his white coat and retired to a spot under the awning. From there he had a vantage point where he could study the swelling hips, the bent forward torso, the nape of the swan neck that supported her imperious little head.

Her ruby fingernails flashed in the sun. She seemed to sparkle all over, hair, complexion and lips. Max felt amorous. Beautiful women affected him like music. He didn't know many, but he was sure the great romance of his life was waiting just around the corner. The only trouble was that he couldn't find the right street.

THE GIRL LEISURELY finished her drink, laid coins down to pay for it, powdered her nose vigorously and lighted a cigarette. She loitered another minute or two, getting up suddenly, moving out into the sunny street. Max, watching like a hawk, felt his pulses leap. The girl had forgotten her bag. It was on the chair next to the one she had occupied. His first impulse was to snatch it up and run after her with it. Then, his better judgment checked him.

Making sure he was not observed, Max slip-

ped the bag under his white coat. A few minutes later he stowed it carefully away in his basement locker.

When it was time for lunch and Max went off duty he got the bag and opened it. The delicate breath of perfume crept out. He waded through an accumulation of copper hair pins, a Maury lipstick, the stubs of theatre tickets, loose tobacco that had sifted from her enamel case, a hair net, the playbill of the *Folies Bergere* until he chanced across the thing he sought. This was a card and on it was engraved the name of Marie Commarin. Under it was an address, 20 Avenue St. Vincent.

There was also some money wadded carelessly together, but Max hardly saw that. His gaze feasted itself on the card. Marie Commarin. Yes, the name was like her. Marie of the berry lips, the lustrous hair and the summer sky eyes! He breathed a little harder, the perfume cloying the air. Was this, he asked himself, the knock of opportunity that would open the door of the romance he had eternally quested?

It was after five when Max was through with the day shift. He exchanged the white jacket for a blue serge coat. He put on a gay cravat, fitted an Alpine hat to his dark hair, fished out the walking stick from the locker and with the bag under his arm, let himself out the employees' exit.

He knew Paris like a tourist's guide. The Avenue St. Vincent was north of the Arc de Triomphe. An eminently respectable neighborhood. Max set off for it on foot. It was the hour he loved. Just before twilight Paris took on a magic hue. The city became Orientalized, seeming to go on tiptoe before its tempo quickened to the beat of nocturnal pleasure.

SAUNTERING ALONG, HE looked the girls over. Smart, beautifully gowned women. Little mannequins in borrowed plumage. Hard-faced work girls, gay cocottes, sly-eyed gaminés and of course, the bold demi-mondaines, those drones in the hive of industry.

Presently he reached the Avenue St. Vincent. He scanned the numbers as he went along. The houses were all more or less alike with their limestone facades, mansard roofs and glimmering windows. Some, in the modern manner, had been converted into one and two room apartments. Such a place was number 20.

Max peered up at it. His heart beat more quickly. None of the girls he had observed on his walk was half so pretty as this little Marie. Was it possible the big moment of his

life awaited him? Was he at last to find his heart pierced by the stealthy darts of *Monsieur Cupid*?

Drawing a breath he went up the steps and into the building. A series of bells in the vestibule told him that the one he wanted resided on the third floor. There was no *concierge* to question him. Like a schoolboy on a holiday Max ran lightly up the steps and two minutes later was knocking on the correct door.

"Entrez, s'il vous plait."

Max needed no second invitation. The door was unlatched. He opened it and walked into a charming room. A basket of coal glowed on the hearth. The walls were hung with tapestries. Portieres, rich and shimmering, separated the living room from the bedroom beyond. The rug was of Chinese origin, patterned with the fruit and flower design. And the familiar aroma of the perfume in the bag greeted him.

"Yes, *m'sieur*. You wish something?"

Again Max found himself drinking in the girl of the table under the cafe's awning. She had slipped on a quilted Russian robe with a wide sash for a belt. Her hair seemed to absorb the electric lamplight. Her eyes sparkled like blue stars and her mouth was a red, beckoning beacon.

Max made his best bow. He held up the bag. "I found this, *mademoiselle*. I—"

"My bag! How nice! And you brought it back safely to me!"

SHE TOOK IT eagerly, looked at him with parted lips and slipped a small hand confidently into his.

"I am glad to have been of service," Max murmured awkwardly.

Her gaze roamed over him quickly. "A thousand thanks. *Monsieur*, I would like to reward you in some way. If you could suggest—"

"But I can!" Max interrupted. "I ask no greater reward than to have dinner with you. Rather, you to have dinner with me."

She studied him intently. "I think that would be nice. But the meal cannot last longer than the hour of eight. At that time I must be at the theatre. You see, that is my business. I am one of the girls in the waterfall scene at the *Folies Bergere*."

For the dinner, Max, who knew his restaurants, selected Gevrol's on the Boulevard Montparnasse. It was a place for epicures. No music, no dancing, but orderly quiet and the finest cuisine. In an hour he would spend the accumulated tips of three days. But what was

money compared with Marie. She was an actress. He might have known that. She had so much charm and grace, was so glorious to look at, so wonderful in every way.

He tried to bring the conversation to touch on matters other than light inconsequential topics. He tried to draw her out, to make her understand he was enchanted. He didn't know whether he was getting anywhere or not. Her smile was baffling and her eyes enigmatic. Anyway, she ate everything placed before her with great relish and allowed him to put her

and crackling through his veins. He could only nod, listen to what she suggested, and then kiss her hand before she hurried out of the cab and into the theatre.

Max went around front and bought himself a ticket. The house was crowded. The revue was one of the most popular the *Folies Bergere* had put on. Liltng music, gorgeous girls, unsurpassed comedy and scenes of exquisite and delicate loveliness. Max was hardly conscious of the performance itself. All he had on his mind was Marie.

After the intermission the famous waterfall



"Your eyes are enough," Max murmured. "They intoxicate me."

in a taxi and take her to the stage door of her playhouse.

"May I see you again?" Max breathed anxiously, when the cab began to stop.

"Do you want to?"

"More than anything in the world."

She squeezed his fingers. Impulsively, she said: "You are a nice boy. You have been thoughtful and considerate. Of course, you may come and see me again."

"When, Marie?"

THE CAB HAD stopped at the curb. She pursed her lips, thinking.

"Tonight—after the performance. Will that be satisfactory?"

The thrill that swept through Max was like molten fire consuming dry tinder. It made his throat parched and sent his blood snapping

scene unfolded. It was a forest blaze. Silver water gushed from a craggy promontory high up in the wings. The lights were amber and blue. Into this sylvan scene three white bodied nymphs scampered like startled does. With gay laughter they plunged into the torrent while the lights changed color.

Leaning forward, Max's hands tightened so the nails dug into his palms. He knew Marie's figure was perfect but hardly as marvelous as it was when revealed through the rain of the waterfall. Uplung breasts, a flat torso, the gorgeous hips and lovely legs. Placed together her various charms made a symphony of rapturous delight.

The scene was only a flash. Hardly a round of seconds elapsed before the stage went black and it was over except for thunderous applause and the brassy blare of the orchestra.

MAX FOUND HE was perspiring. The thing had been too much for his strained nerves. He mopped his brow with a fresh linen handkerchief and impatiently he waited until the revue reached its climactic moments. Eventually, in a scene where the Drums of All Nations beat a lusty tattoo while the chorus paraded in colorful costumes, the final curtain lowered and the show was over.

Max hurried around to the stage door. He waited twenty minutes before Marie emerged.

"So you didn't forget, my Max?"

"Forget?" he echoed. "This meeting is the only thing I have thought of since you left me!"

Her pouting mouth smiled at him. "Funny boy! *Pauvre enfant*, that's what you are!" She breathed the night air deeply. "Let us walk. The night is like crystal. The moon, the stars. We do not see enough of them."

Max welcomed the suggestion and took her arm. If he could save taxi fare so much the better. In thirty minutes they were back on the Avenue St. Vincent. She gave him her key and he opened the lower door and then the door to the third floor apartment.

The fire had burned to coals. Their ruddy reflection stained the carpet. She threw off her wraps, took his hat and walking stick and put them in the bedroom.

"We must have a little drink together, *monsieur*. To further celebrate our friendship. What would you like?"

"Your eyes are enough. They intoxicate me!" Max murmured.

She laughed, went out and came back with a bottle of wine. It was a novelty for Max to have anyone wait on him. The wine was good, old and mellow. It helped keep his blood racing through his veins.

He moved over and sat beside her on a small two-seated Regency sofa. They listened to the radio. The clock chimed softly on the mantel. Max knew he couldn't leave, couldn't go with so much unsaid and undone. He thought of all the things he might say, what he might do. At last, almost desperately, he decided to find out, once and for all, his status.

HE BEGAN BY caressing her hands. She did not object. His hand went up her arm, crossed her shoulders and sank around her waist. She was delectably soft, uncorseted and warm to his touch. He drew her a little to him, gazing down at her with infatuated eyes. At length he dared to rest his lips against the crown of her gold head.

Marie finished her wine and got rid of her

glass. With a pensive sigh she relaxed against him. Her head dropped to his shoulder.

"You are nice," she whispered.

He began to grow aware that his attentions had begun to interest her somewhat. Her air of lassitude vanished. She began to urge herself closer to him and her fingers tightened more completely over his. Through the dress she wore he could feel the warmth of her.

"Isn't it hot in here? That fire—" She freed herself and stood. "You won't mind if I put on something lighter?"

"No," Max said throatily.

While she was gone his mind swarmed with glamorous thoughts. Romance! Love! Dreams and star-dust wonder! Fortune was kind, luck was good. Marie, little and indescribably lovely! All his! All his!

She came back wearing the Russian robe with the broad sash. Again she melted into his arms. A moment later Max made an interesting discovery. To really be cool and comfortable she had removed more than the dress.

HE HAD NEVER suspected damask satin could be so wondrous or that lips could fling open the secret door of a storehouse hiding all the joys of imagination and reality. He kissed her with fervor, with savage rejoicing and unrestrained pleasure.

"I love you!" Max cried, again and again.

Wonderful hours spun a web of minutes and the night faded. It was sometime after the dawn that Marie's hand gripped his arm.

"Listen!" she commanded.

Max strained his ears. Loud in the early morning quiet she heard a key turning in the door of the living room.

"Someone—entering."

The blue eyes widened fearfully. "My husband! Quick! You must leave! If he finds you here he will kill you! He has a ferocious temper! He has made threats! That rear door there—the fire-escape!"

Max went into action swiftly. "Go to meet him. Keep him engaged until—"

"Come back soon!" she breathed.

The door in the other room opened. Marie, lighting a cigarette, spoke languidly.

"Dear Albert, *mon cher homme!*" There was a feigned note of welcome in her even tone. "Fancy you coming in at such an hour!"

Max curiously looked through the portieres. The man who had entered was tall, broad shouldered, bearded. Max had never seen him before and, he decided, never wanted to see him again.

Quickly and cautiously he soundlessly open-

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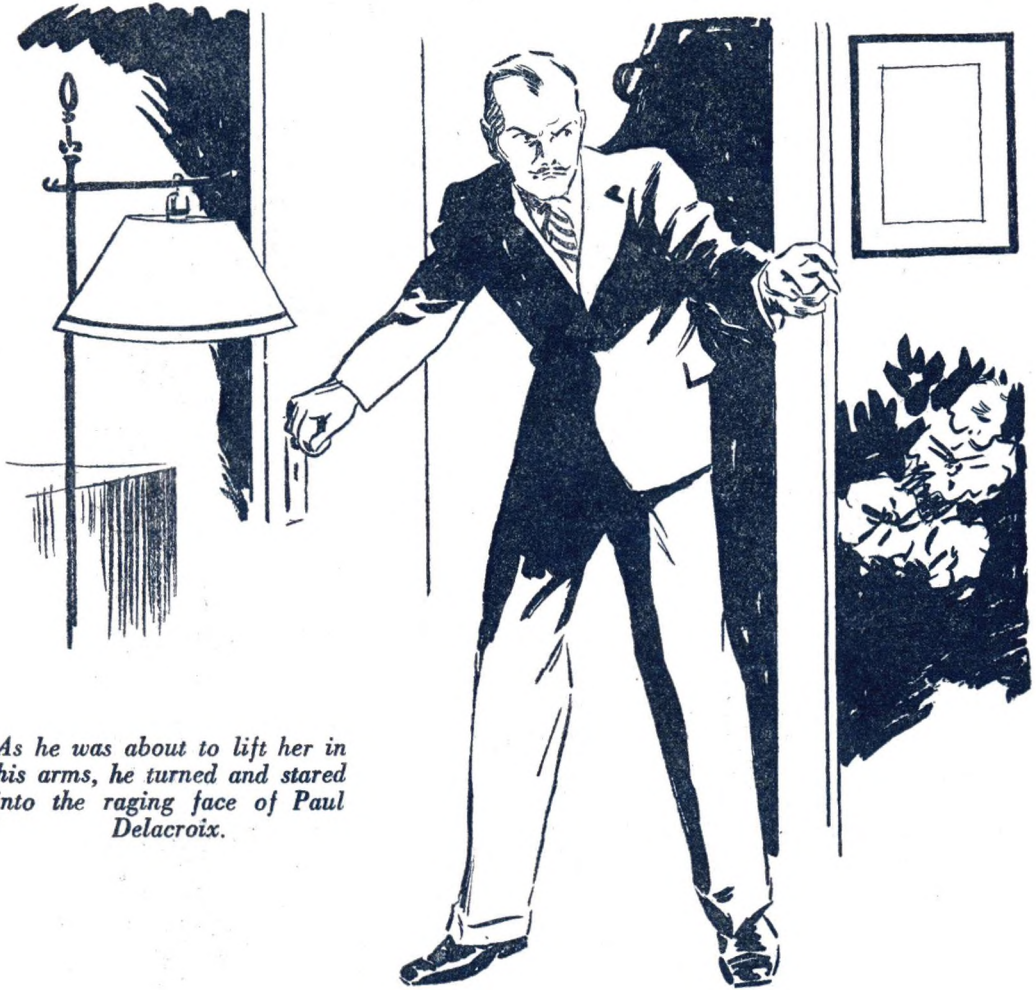
"Gosh! I forgot to wear something up here!"

Charming People!

1st Chorine: "I saw you with that old viper, that old snake-in-the-grass last night!"

2nd Chorine: "Don't you talk that way about my new boa!"

INFORMATION,



As he was about to lift her in his arms, he turned and stared into the raging face of Paul Delacroix.

DENNIS REID knew as much about Paris as he knew about Sanskrit—which was nothing. To make matters worse, he had a horror of the regimentation imposed upon tourists by guide books. He had come to Paris for its convivialities, not its sights. He was disinterested in being escorted to the spot where Marshal Joffre issued the command that turned the tide of the war. He possessed no intellectual curiosity and no artistic thirst. Paris, city of champagne and *cocottes*, beckoned as a source of gaiety rather than culture.

The desk clerk at the *Hotel Napoleon* where he had engaged a room evidently misunderstood the primary purpose of Dennis' visit. He proceeded to outline a tour that would take the American to every crumbling ruin and

every French landmark within fifty miles of the city.

Dennis shook his head. "*Non, non!*" He tried to think of the French word for "fun". "*Gaiete*," he blurted. "*Vive la gaiete!*" He made indicative motions of drinking champagne and embracing an imaginary *bebe*.

The desk clerk beamed, nodded like an automaton. "*Oui, monsieur. Je comprends.*" In a patois of anglicized French, the clerk explained where that sort of information could best be secured. The city of Paris, he said, maintained an information bureau on the *Rue Printemps*. "*Monsieur* would be best advised to consult the directors of the bureau."

Dennis left the hotel, walked to the address on the *Rue Printemps* given him by the clerk.

PLEASE

By JOYCE CARROLL



He found a store with the insignia *NOUVELLE—INFORMATION* across the front. A sign which read *Ici On Parle Anglais* hung in the window.

DENNIS ENTERED THE store, stopped short before he had taken three steps. There, standing behind a counter, smiling in greeting was the most beautiful girl his eyes had ever been privileged to look upon. She had hair the color of clover honey and eyes that were an artist's blend of purple and blue. Her lips were carmine red, the lower one blessed with a voluptuous bee-stung pout. Unfortunately, the counter obscured the lower half of her figure, but judging from what Dennis saw from the waist up, the rest could not have been anything but perfection. A small bosom stretched the tight knit of a cashmere sweater. The twin charms comprising it, were, to all appearances, unbrassiered.

"*Bon jour, monsieur,*" the red lips said. "Can I help you?"

Dennis approached the counter. He had never been known to suffer acute attacks of nervousness in the presence of the more charming sex, but for some strange reason, his knees were shaking and his hands were warm and moist. The closer he got to the honey-haired beauty, the more he realized the false-

ness of the adage that distance lends enchantment. He got a whiff of intoxicating perfume, inhaled it deeply. It had the effect of five glasses of champagne.

"You wish perhaps some information, *monsieur*?" the girl questioned. Dennis regained some small measure of composure. He nodded. "Yes, I'd like some information. What's your name?"

Her eyes twinkled. "Renee Chauvoix, *monsieur*."

"Dennis Reid is mine."

She smiled. "I am happy to meet you, *Monsieur* Reid. I trust you will enjoy your stay in Paris, *n'est-ce pas*?"

DENNIS RESTED HIS arms on the counter. "I was wondering about that, but I'm not any more."

"If I can give you any information, *monsieur*, I shall be more than happy."

Dennis leaned forward. "You can, gorgeous one. You can inform me when we're going out together."

Spots of color burned in her cheeks. "But—*monsieur*—"

Dennis reached out, took her hands. "How about tonight? You'll be my guide and I'll be your escort. The sky is the limit."

"But *monsieur*, I—I cannot."

"That's ridiculous. You don't work at night, do you?"

"*Non*, but—"

"Then it's a date. Where shall I call for you?"

The smile was gone from Renee's lips. She was nervous and ill at ease. Her eyelids fluttered. "Please, *monsieur*," she whispered. "I tell you *zat* I cannot."

Dennis was too preoccupied with the matter at hand to notice the dour face of the young Frenchman who sat at a desk in the rear of the room. But Renee's confusion was directly traceable to the Frenchman's presence. It was he who had secured for her the position in the information bureau, he who regarded himself as her fiancé.

"I beg of you, *monsieur*," she gasped. "You must not insist."

DENNIS KNEW SOMETHING was wrong. After all, he was not a lop-eared ogre. He decided to use trickery where cajolery had failed. He released her hands. "All right," he said softly, "but you haven't seen the last of me."

From a vantage point across the *Rue Printemps*, Dennis kept an eagle eye on the store that housed the information bureau.

Sooner or later, he reasoned, the place

would close and Renee would return to her abode. He meant to follow her and plead his case in private, or at least discover what objection she had to making his stay in Paris a memorable one.

His patience was rewarded. She emerged from the store just as darkness was settling over the city, turned left on the *Rue Printemps*, walked towards the *Place Vendome*. Dennis followed at a respectful distance, caught up with her just before she entered the hallway of a not too pretentious *pension*.

She turned startled eyes to him. "You should not have done *zis*, *monsieur*."

Dennis smiled. "We do a lot of things we shouldn't do. Usually, they're the most pleasant things to do."

Renee's lips quivered. "But—but something terrible may happen, *monsieur*."

Dennis waxed gallant. "The most terrible thing that could happen would be a pleasure if it happened in your company. Now either you go out with me tonight, or you give me a damned good reason for not going out with me tonight. I'm a stranger to your city and the least you can do is see that I'm entertained."

A HINT OF A smile creased her lips. "You are very—how you call it—persistent, *non, monsieur*?"

"Insistent is the word."

She shrugged. "How can I say no?"

"You can't."

Dennis took her arm. "You'll probably want to dress. Shall I come up with you?"

Renee's eyes widened. "*Non, non, monsieur!* I—I will meet you some place."

Dennis' brow wrinkled. "You're not married, are you?"

"Married?" she echoed. "*Non, non.*"

"Then why the objection to my coming up?"

She hesitated, gulped. "It—it is because *ze concierge* does not approve of men coming to *ze rooms*." She smiled. "I will meet you any place you say."

Dennis named the *Hotel Napoleon*. He did not place much stock in her excuse. There was something behind all this unusual modesty; something he would have to explore and discover at a later date.

"The Napoleon at eight," he said. "You'll be there, won't you?"

Renee nodded. "*Oui, monsieur.*"

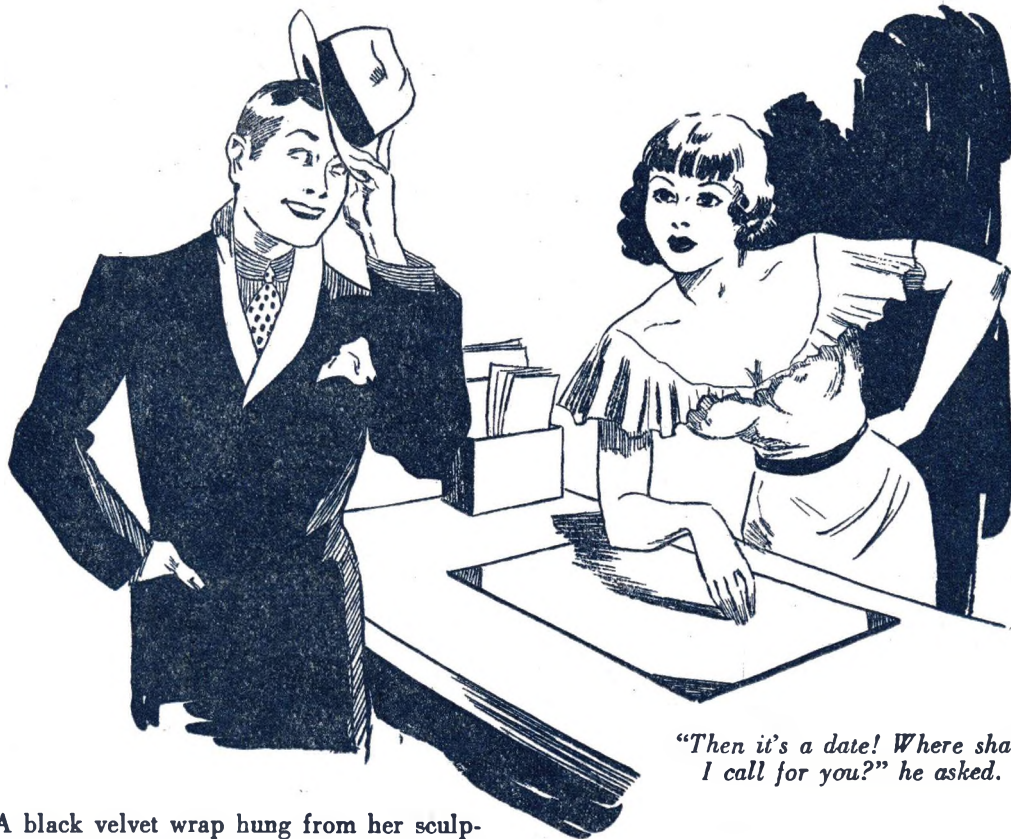
DENNIS, IN WHITE tie and tails, was in the lobby of the hotel at 7:30. He watched the clock and the door, alternately, and as the time

drew near for Renee to put in an appearance, he became increasingly nervous. At five minutes after eight, he was convinced she wasn't coming. At ten after eight, he was ready to engage a taxi and drive to her *pension*. Just as he emerged from the hotel, a cab drew up to the canopy and Renee stepped out. For a moment, Dennis failed to recognize her. If she had been gorgeous behind the counter at the Information Bureau, she was stunning now.

IN THE DARKENED privacy of the taxi, Dennis moved as close to her as he considered wise at the moment. "On the contrary, this is my first trip. I assure you if I had been here before, we would have met before. I suppose every American who enters the Information Bureau asks you for a date."

She laughed softly. "Zey ask, *monsieur*, but zat is as far as zey get."

"Then I'm to consider myself lucky?"



"Then it's a date! Where shall I call for you?" he asked.

A black velvet wrap hung from her sculptured shoulders. It was open down the front, revealing a white satin evening gown, which by its very simplicity, accentuated the perfection of her figure.

She smiled up at Dennis. "You did not expect me, *non?*"

Dennis sighed. "Frankly, I didn't. I was just about to run down to your place."

She stiffened perceptibly and her eyes flashed. It was only a momentary reaction, but Dennis caught it. Then, her lips smiled again. "Well, I am here," she said.

Dennis helped her into the cab. "*Le Chat Noir*," he instructed the driver.

"You seem to be acquainted with Paris," Renee commented. "You have been here before, *n'est-ce pas?*"

The glare of a street light fell across her face. Dennis saw the bloom on her cheeks, the sparkling iridescence of her eyes. He moved still closer. "I think you're the most beautiful girl I have ever seen," he whispered.

Again she laughed. "All Americans are alike, *n'est-ce pas?*"

Dennis managed to slip his arm around her waist. "You mean they all tell you that?"

"*Oui, monsieur*, ze young and ze old. To Americans, all girls are beautiful, *non?* In your country, do you not say if she wears ze skirt, she is—what you call it—O.K.?"

"Yes and no. Some skirts cover a multitude of sins. Others cover things that should never be covered. Yours is that kind."

"*Je ne comprends pas, monsieur.*"

Dennis tightened his arm about her waist. He could feel the warmth of her against him. "I mean that anyone as lovely as you should not hide her charm under a bushel basket."

HE TILTED HER head back, kissed her suddenly. It was his bad fortune that the cab pulled up before the famous Parisian night club and put an end to what might have been a pleasant session of *amour*.

Renee made no mention of the kiss while they dined and danced. The orchestra, an aggregation of French classicists playing American swing music, provided uncertain rhythms, but with Renee in his arms, Dennis could have danced to a funeral march. The silken softness of her hair against his lips and the warmth of her bare back against his palm made him oblivious to everything else around him. At the table, when she leaned forward, the neckline of her gown came away from her throat, offering an unimpeded view of the creamy-white skin only partly hidden by her bodice.

Dennis saw to it that Renee's glass was constantly filled and refilled with champagne, fully aware of its warming influence.

At midnight, they left *Le Chat Noir* in a cab. Dennis wasted no time. He embraced her, placed his lips in the soft hollow of her throat. "There must be some other place, name it. The sky's the limit."

She quivered in his arms. "I think you had better take me home." Her voice was low, throbbing.

Dennis bent her back, slipped one hand under her velvet wrap. The satin gown seemed to be her only covering. Beneath it, he could feel the firm, sweeping curves of her figure.

"You don't want to go home yet," he said. "The night is young."

His fingers played along the soft roundness of her bare arm. He could feel her warm breath against his cheek. His mouth sought and found her lips, drinking the honeyed nectar of them.

Renee tensed, dug her fingers into his big shoulders. The fingers of Dennis' right hand slid up, toyed for a moment with the thin shoulder strap of her gown. The next moment Renee tore herself free.

"*C'est fou! C'est fou!*" she panted. "Please take me home."

Dennis was no novice with women. He believed in the time-worn adage that haste makes waste. For some strange reason, this gorgeous female refused to permit herself the ecstasies of *amour*. "All right," he said. "I'll take you home."

At the *pension*, he helped her out of the

cab, escorted her to the door. "The *concierge* is probably asleep now," he said. "Wouldn't you like to invite me up to your room, Renee?" he said.

Again her eyes flickered strangely, became bright with inexplicable terror.

"Non," she gasped. "Ze—ze *concierge* is never asleep." She stepped through the doorway. "*Bon soir, monsieur,*" she whispered.

She was gone before Dennis could realize that he had been robbed of at least a farewell caress. He returned to the cab, solemnly instructed the driver to take him to his hotel. Eugene Sue had written the *Mysteries of Paris*, but this was one mystery left for him to solve.

AT NOON THE following day, Dennis stepped into the Information Bureau on the *Rue Printemps*. Renee was behind the counter but the moment she saw him enter, she turned, walked quickly to the rear and disappeared through a door.

"Renee!" Dennis called.

The young Frenchman working at his desk looked up, scowled. He rose, faced Dennis across the counter. "My name, *monsieur*, is Paul Delacroix. I am director of ze bureau. Can I assist you?"

Dennis knew antagonism when he saw it. Putting two and two together gave him something approximating four. Renee's sudden flight and the glower on this young Frenchman's face had some connection. Dennis took soundings.

"I should like to see *Mademoiselle Chauvoix*," he said.

Monsieur Delacroix's lips thined. "*Mademoiselle Chauvoix* is engaged," he said. "If zere is any information I can give you, I shall be glad to oblige."

Dennis smiled pleasantly. "Yes, you can inform me when *Mademoiselle Chauvoix* will be free."

"Not today!"

"Tomorrow?"

"Not tomorrow!"

The Frenchman's increasing annoyance was amusing to Dennis. If he had been at all clever, he would have masked his feelings. As it was, his face was an open book in which Dennis could read his intensely Gallic affection for Renee.

He nodded. "*Merci, monsieur,*" he said.

AT NINE THAT night, Dennis rang the *concierge's* bell at Renee's *pension*. In a few moments, a short, pot-bellied Frenchman opened the door. Laboriously, Dennis explained that he was an old friend of Renee's and wished to

surprise her. He slipped a folded fifty franc note into the *concierge's* hand. The man smiled, nodded in understanding, led the way through a dimly-lit hall and up a flight of steps. After indicating a door, he departed the way he had come.

Dennis removed his gloves, knocked on the door. "*Entrez,*" a voice he recognized as Renee's called out. He turned the knob, opened the door, stepped across the threshold. Renee was standing at a full length mirror with her back towards him.

"I will be ready in a moment, *cheri,*" she said.

Dennis closed the door, dropped his hat and gloves on a chair. "As far as I'm concerned, darling, you're ready right now."

She spun around, her face blank with amazement.

"You," she gasped.

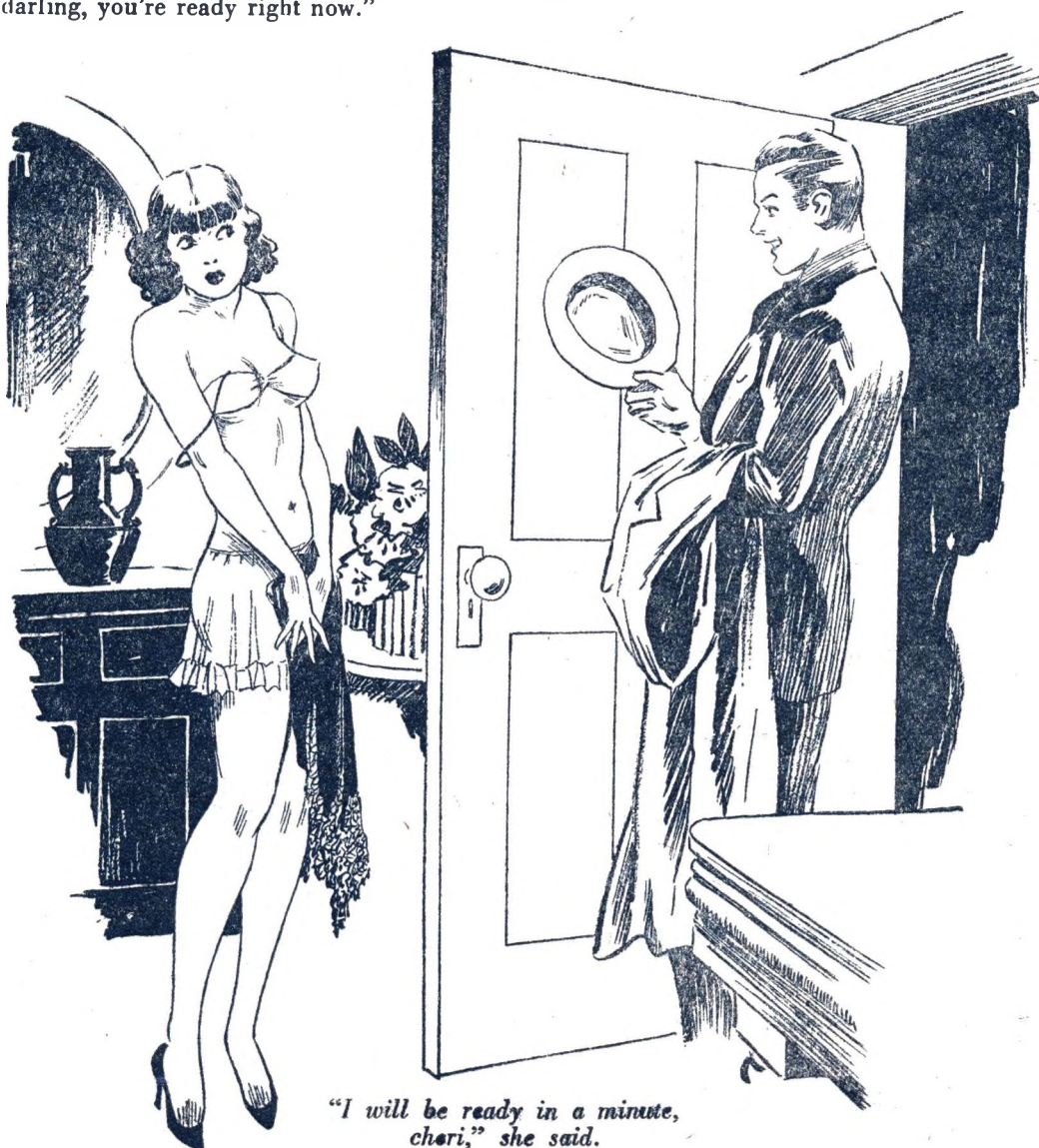
Dennis bowed low. "In person, my beautiful one." He stepped forward. "I never expected to find you."

Renee backed up against the wall. "You must go," she cried.

Dennis' eyes swept up and down her gorgeous figure. Terror had heightened the color in her cheeks, brightened her eyes. Her bosom rose and fell with her labored breathing.

"Please, *monsieur,*" she pleaded. "Please go. I beg of you."

Dennis shook his head. "Nothing doing! If this is going to be a battle for you, may the best man win!"



"I will be ready in a minute, *cheri,*" she said.

Renee moved from her position against the wall, but not fast enough. Dennis swept her into his arms, rained kisses on her throat, her shoulders, her lips. She squirmed in his embrace, but was powerless to resist his grip.

It was the first time Dennis had ever played the caveman but he rather enjoyed it. Anything that was worth having was worth fighting for. Gradually, he felt Renee weakening.

As he was about to lift her in his arms he heard a noise behind him. He turned, stared into the pale, raging face of Paul Delacroix. Dennis, fully expecting the angry Frenchman to lunge at him, clenched his fists in readiness, but no such thing happened. Delacroix drew himself up, reached into his pocket.

"My card, *monsieur*," he announced stiffly. "My seconds will see you in ze morning." He spun around on his heel, goose-stepped out of the room.

Dennis fingered the bit of pasteboard in his hand. For a moment, the full meaning of the impetuous Frenchman's gesture failed to dawn on him. When he realized what the card did mean, he grinned, turned to Renee. Her eyes were wide and moist and she was shivering as though with the cold. "You see," she panted. "Did I not warn you? Now—now you will have to fight ze duel."

DENNIS THREW HIS head back, laughed. "It's wonderful! I've always wanted to fight a duel."

Renee was horrified. "But—but Paul will kill you! He is ze best pistol shot in Paris."

"Then we'll fight with swords."

"He is an expert swordsman."

Dennis sat down beside her, slipped his arm about her waist. "I'm not the least bit worried about it, darling."

Tears were rolling down Renee's cheeks. "But—but it is my fault zat you are in zis trouble."

Dennis drew her close. "If you recall, I told you trouble would be a pleasure if it was concerned with you. Don't worry about the duel. There are more important things to be taken care of now. This is one."

He tilted her head back, brought his mouth to rest on her chilled lips. Warmth flowed back into them. It was a long kiss and when Dennis drew his mouth away, Renee was breathless.

"You—you would fight ze duel for me?" she queried.

"Ten duels."

She twined her arms around his neck, lovingly, adoringly. . . .

IT WAS DAWN when Dennis returned to the hotel. Sheer, physical exhaustion brought easy slumber. He was awakened by a pounding at the door. In his robe, he admitted two silk-hatted emissaries of the insulted *Monsieur Delacroix*.

"You have your choice of weapons, *monsieur*," one of them said. Dennis shrugged. "It really doesn't matter to me; pistols, rapiers or ripe tomatoes."

The Frenchman exchanged surprised glances. "Ze tomato, we do not know what she is, *monsieur*," the spokesman responded.

"Then make it pistols."

They both bowed. "*Oui, monsieur*. Pistols at dawn tomorrow in ze *Trianon Woods* at Versailles." They bowed their way out. Dennis went back to sleep.

He was awakened at noon by Renee, told her the arrangements. She pleaded with him not to fight the duel, reiterating over and over again that Paul Delacroix was an expert shot. Dennis, literally and figuratively stuck to his guns. He took advantage of Renee's concern to continue where he had left off the night before.

THE TRIANON WOODS presented a strange sight as the first rays of the sun came over the horizon the following morning. Dennis had engaged the taxi driver who brought him from Paris to act as his second. *Monsieur Delacroix* stood at one end of the small clearing, his arms folded majestically over his chest, staring off into space. His two seconds and the slightly befuddled cab driver were examining the brace of pistols. Everything appeared in order. One of Delacroix's seconds stepped forward, explained the rules of the duel. The antagonists were to start back to back, step twenty paces, turn and fire.

The moment Dennis felt the cold steel of the dueling pistol in his palm, icy chills began to run up and down his spine. It was all well and good to think of the romantic aspects of the thing but there was little romance in a bullet through the heart. However, it was too late to back out now.

He walked to the center of the clearing, faced towards the east. He could feel *Monsieur Delacroix's* shoulder blades against his own.

"*Allez!*" one of the seconds barked.

Dennis started forward, counting the steps; one—two—three—four—five—six—seven—

His knees were shaking when he reached sixteen. Cold sweat poured out on his forehead. Seventeen—eighteen—nineteen—

(Please turn to page 59)

JUST PICTURE IT!

By ARTURO DOLMAN

IT WAS Zizi who first proposed it. They would go out on the streets that night and have fun. Just for one night. There was to be some grand celebration, Zizi wasn't at all sure as to what it was, the celebration of the Armistice anniversary, perhaps, and that would be the logical night. Paris goes a little mad on such occasions.

Julie, the other girl who worked in the flower shop in the *Rue Alvatraz*, was somewhat dubious about the whole thing. There might be danger, she pointed out. They might become mixed up with dangerous characters. Even though both she and Zizi had fallen out

*"You are too timid, Julie," Zizi scoffed.
"Think of the fun we will have!"*



with their respective fiancés, suppose they really had to surrender themselves to a couple of the wolves that prowl the *Latin Quartier*. It might ruin their futures.

"Pish, you are too timid, Julie," Zizi scoffed. "The fun, think of how much we will have! *Allons*, this adventure, let us seek it! Alphonse, he had no business accusing me of something I didn't do! I want revenge! *Tres bien*, if you do not come, I shall go alone!"

And, of course, Julie, being somewhat the less dominant of the two, gave in and consented to go.

On the night of their adventure, they strolled around in the milling, scintillant night life of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, one of the liveliest, most hectic spots to be found anywhere in the world at night. Amorous couples embraced or kissed openly at tables or as they shuttled back and forth in the gay, care-free throng.

Presently they seated themselves at one of the tables before the *Cafe de L'Amour Secret* and ordered a couple of cognacs. Within five minutes, two extraordinarily good looking young men seated themselves at their table, eyeing them with bold admiration.

Zizi winked at Julie. Things were getting in-

teresting, it implied, and, *ciel*, what a break to meet such handsome men! Quite obviously with the intention of doing so, she dropped her silver vanity case to the sidewalk.

ONE OF THE young men pounced upon it and returned it with a gracious bow. After that, it was the most natural thing for all four to drift into lively conversation.

The tall, sandy haired Lothario, who was deliberate in his speech and movements—Ted Porter by name—sidled his chair up closer

Amorous couples embraced and kissed at the tables.



to Julie as though he had not hesitated in choosing her. The other one—who gave his name as Bill Sandford—of medium height, vivacious and wise-cracking in disposition, blessed with the coal-black hair and dark, eloquent eyes of palpably Latin descent, snuggled his chair closer to Zizi's.

Now Zizi was a slender, effervescent bit of blonde dynamite. Her big blue eyes could be as innocent as a babe's at times, although she wasn't quite that innocuous. And there was something devastatingly seductive about certain rounded sections of her cute figure.

She looked up at Bill with a little red devil dancing in her eyes and her shoulder pressed lightly against his arm. Bill took the hint with alacrity. His arm went hungrily about her yielding waist and his lips swooped down to taste of the delight hers promised. Zizi's arms slid up around his neck to bring him closer.

"You and your friend, you are Americans, *n'est-ce pas?*" she asked.

"Just came over from the States yesterday to open an engagement at one of the cabarets," Bill grinned. "My friend and I and two other golden-voiced warblers form the quartette called the Harmony Four. We start tomorrow night. Tonight we're just strolling around looking for fun—but I didn't dream we'd come across two peaches like you and your little brunette friend."

They looked over at Ted and Julie. Apparently, there wasn't anything slow about their technique, either. If Julie wasn't in Ted's lap, she was mighty close to being.

"Let's get a taxi and cruise around! Everybody's doing it, but I think I like my loving to be a bit more private!" Bill suggested, downing another cognac.

"To make love in a taxi, that will be *parfait!* *Allons*, Julie and I, we shall sit in your laps!" Zizi approved heartily.

BILL AND TED were not very much aware of anything that transpired outside the taxi. Lights flashed by, the streaming throng on the *troittons* was but a blurred colorful ribbon.

But they were acutely aware of the dainty, fragrant feminine toys they were holding pressed close to their heaving chests. There was the soft swish of silk as hands caressed soft flesh. Kisses smacked lingeringly and soft murmurs filled the half-darkness of the taxi.

"To meet when you have never seen each other before and to make the love, that is exciting, thrilling! One could never get tired of love that way!" Zizi crooned against Bill's neck, making his heart palpitate wildly.

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man?" Bill asked detachedly, like the man of the world he thought he was.

"Oh, *non, non*, every man, he is different. Some take the flattery, some the indifference, some you can open your arms to them and it will not make them too vain. A woman must know men well if she is to play this game of love me tonight and forget me tomorrow," Zizi prattled on glibly.

From Julie's dark corner of the taxi she heard a smothered giggle. Julie had heard and was enjoying the line Zizi was giving Billy.

"Say, a taxi's all right, but not too much so! Don't you *femmes* have an apartment, a little perfumed love-nest of some sort, where this foursome could become two twosomes?" Ted piped up aggrievedly.

"Oh, *mais, certainement!* We shall all go to my apartment! *Vraiment*, a taxi is a very poor place to make the love!" Zizi cried, after a moment's hesitation.

THIS TIME SHE heard a smothered gasp of amazement from Julie's corner. Zizi smiled in the darkness. Poor little Julie, she always took everything for cash! She should have understood that after playing with these two Americans a little she would give them the laugh and send them on, frustrated, still burning to get better acquainted.

"Only champagne will be suitable to celebrate this glorious occasion," Bill said exuberantly once they were in Zizi's apartment. "Zizi, you ravishing little blonde witch, telephone the nearest place to send us three or four quarts."

Zizi winked at Julie and smilingly complied.

In a few minutes, the champagne, nestling in an ice-filled silver bucket, stood on the living room table before them. Ted expertly popped a cork and they quaffed the bubbling amber fluid with slow appreciation. Glass followed glass, with pauses, of course, for kisses and embraces.

Zizi perched audaciously on Bill's knees, kicked off her dainty little silver slippers toward the ceiling. She might have been aware of it and then again she might not—possibly it would not have mattered even if she had—but the skirt of her glove-tight silver cloth dress had climbed up to a point slightly above her knees.

Bill ogled at those dimpled, perfect knees for a while, until she was moved to fling her arms about his neck and kiss him again and again. Bill knew his stuff.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the divan, Ted and Julie were having their own particular kind of party. Somehow or other, one

shoulder strap of Julie's extremely scanty orchid dress had slipped down. What had been revealed of the shoulder before had been perfect, enticing, skin you'd love to kiss. At least, Ted had that impulse—and he obeyed it. His lips pressed against creamy skin that exuded a maddeningly elusive fragrance of some sort. Ted didn't know it, hut it was that of really expensive bath salts.

ONCE OR TWICE Julie thought of Paul, her erstwhile fiance, with some measure of regret and guilt. But Paul had no business accusing her, as Alphonse accused Zizi, of keeping a clandestine date with two other men. As a matter of fact, they had not really been guilty. The two fiances had been terribly abusive and the names they had called the two girls had simply been too much to tolerate and forgive. So Julie felt perfectly justified in being in her present situation. And that was just the way Zizi felt, too, when her thoughts strayed to Alphonse two or three times. Jealous, unreasonable beast! She would show him!

Now, champagne is easy to drink, very pleasant to the taste and all, but it carries a treacherous kick like an army mule. Neither of the girls had had much experience with it, so of a sudden, they were giggling rather in-anely.

"The forms, are they not divine?" Zizi giggled, going a trifle unsteadily toward a table in one corner and returning with a small framed snapshot of herself and Julie in bathing suits of flimsy material.

"Divine and then some!" Bill admired.

Zizi threw the photograph into the air and fell, laughing hysterically, into Bill's arms.

"She's a little tight," Bill said. "I'm going to let her rest in the next room for a while."

He lifted Zizi in his arms and strode out of the room.

It wasn't until perhaps a half an hour later that Ted and Julie noticed that they had not returned. Then they discovered that the door was locked on the inside.

"It's just like Bill to pick out the most comfortable quarters!" he grinned.

Then he turned his attention solely to the pleasant task of transforming Julie's giggles into long, rapturous sighs with his ardent kisses.

NEXT DAY ZIZI came back to the flower store in a wild state of excitement after having had her lunch. She had met Alphonse and Paul.

"They are furious!" Zizi told Julie. "Nom de Dieu, I thought that Alphonse would strike me. They are through with us! They know

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everything about last night! Because they nearly killed Ted and Bill, they lost their jobs in the orchestra of the cabaret where Ted and Bill sing! How little I dreamed they were singing at that place!"

"But, *ciel*, how did they find out about last night?" Julie wondered.

"You remember, I missed that snapshot," Zizi elucidated. "*Eh, bien*, those two imbeciles, Ted and Bill stole it last night. And while they were practicing today, with Alphonse and Paul, they went about showing the picture and boasting of the good time they had had with these two *femmes* last night! They deserved all the beating they got—and more!"

"Bah!" almost snorted Julie.

Tete-A-Tete

(Continued from page 2)

best one in town. I am lame and I do not have any pals and I am out of a job. I'd like to have some Pen Pals write to me, girls and boys, and cheer me up.

I am 28, weigh 170.

John Goodwin

1122 E. Wilt St., Philadelphia, Pa.

Dear Editor:

Some of the nicest pen friends I have been able to make are from answering the letters of foreign readers. It is always very interesting to hear about the lives of people in far-off countries. I wish all the letters in "Tete-A-Tete" could be from foreign lands; they are the only ones I answer in your very interesting feature.

Gertrude Finn

Albany, N. Y.

Dear Editor:

May an old and loyal reader offer a word of praise. I have been reading "La Paree" ever since it was published, never missed an issue and am therefore more or less qualified to form an opinion. And that is that "La Paree" has certainly improved with the years, and each copy seems to be better and snappier than the last. Here's one person who hopes it never gets off the newsstand. Yours for a long life to "La Paree".

Bernard Lester

Los Angeles, California

Information, Please

(Continued from page 52)

A hoarse bellow broke the silence, then a scream and a warning shout. A gigantic, red bull burst out of the woods, charged at the men in the clearing. Dennis ducked the creature's curved horns. The bull wheeled, thundered at Delacroix. He tossed his pistol into the air, took flight with his seconds and the cab driver on his heels.

DENNIS LOST SIGHT of them as they vanished in the dense forest.

The interruption of the duel would have been amusing if it had not been for the mad beating of his heart and the chills that raced over him.

He sat down on the stump of a tree to catch his breath. All the warning he had of the bull's return was a crashing through the underbrush. He dropped his pistol, ran for the protection of the woods. The bellowing animal followed, its heels thundering on the ground. Some two hundred yards from the clearing, Dennis caught the low overhanging branch of a tree, swung himself aloft. For a few minutes, the bull pawed at the trunk, then galloped off.

Dennis waited until he was certain he had seen the last of the animal before returning to the clearing. *Monsieur* Delacroix, his seconds and the cab driver had ventured back. The duellists again took their positions.

When he reached the twentieth pace, Dennis spun around, but before he could raise his pistol, there was a sound of a shot and a wisp of smoke puffed from the muzzle of *Monsieur* Delacroix's weapon. Dennis waited to feel the impact of the bullet, but none came. The expert had missed!

Monsieur Delacroix came forward swiftly, bowed from the hips. Without a word, he turned, motioned to his seconds and departed to where a carriage was waiting on the road.

The taxi driver's eyes were bulging. "You did not shoot, *monsieur!*" he cried.

"Shoot?"

"*Oui, monsieur.* It is a miracle zat *Monsieur* Delacroix did not hit you. He is ze best pistol shot in Paris. He has never—"

Something flashed through Dennis' mind, showed in the brightening of his eyes. "Get me back to Paris as fast as you can," he panted.

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HE WAS BREATHLESS when he ran up the steps of Renee's *pension* and without bothering to knock, dashed into the room. It was still only an hour after dawn, but she was fully dressed. She threw herself into his arms, clung to him.

"You are alive," she cried. "How is it possible?"

Dennis tilted her chin up, looked into her lovely eyes. "I guess everything is possible in Paris. Even arranging for a bull to break up a duelling party. After the bull chased us all away, what did you do to the pistols?"

Renee's eyes dropped. "I—I changed ze bullets for ze blank ones."

"Why?"

"Because—because—"

The rest of the answer was unspoken. It came in the soft pressure of her lips against his mouth. Dennis needed no other information.



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When The Cat's Away . . .

(Continued from page 44)

ed the indicated door, let himself out of the apartment and descended the iron fire-escape.

Three hours later Max in his white coat went on duty at the Cafe of the Blue Dove. It was a bright, sunshiny morning and business was good. Max hurried around, serving drinks

with all his customary skill. At eleven o'clock the manager told him there was an unserved customer at one of the sidewalk tables.

Max went to the table, halted and stared. Slouched in a chair, looking the picture of dejection, was a tall, broad shouldered and bearded man. It was Albert, whom he had glimpsed through the portieres before he had left Marie's apartment!

Max went closer. "Your order, *monsieur*?"

Albert shook himself and looked up. "A whiskey, and hurry!"

Max brought a bottle and the proper glass. Albert tossed off a trio of drinks before he cheered up a trifle.

"Talk to me," he said to Max. "Have a drink with me. I'm in a fix. *Diable!* As the Americans say, my luck is lousy!"

"Too bad," Max murmured sympathetically. "If talking will help you any I will be glad to listen, *monsieur*. A woman?"

The other nodded. "Naturally. And such a woman! She performs at the *Folies Bergere*. She is as beautiful as the sun and I adore her. This morning I called early to see her and—"

He paused. Max, hanging on every word he said, prodded him gently.

"Continue, *monsieur*."

Albert shrugged. "I am lucky to be here, I can tell you. She was hardly in my arms for more than a minute when her stupid, paint-smearing husband blundered in on us. He had a gun and he fired at me twice! I went out the door like a frightened rabbit, *m'sieur*. A scared lapin! At that I have the last laugh."

"How so?" Max inquired.

The other stroked his beard.

"*Monsieur* Daburon—the husband and artist—missed me with both shots! Was that not luck?"

Max smiled faintly.

"*Oui, monsieur*. Sometimes," he added softly, "I am lucky, too."

Night Life

(Continued from page 24)

My son," pleadingly, "you know both your mother and I have always been devoted patrons of the theatre."

Stepping close to the secretly amused young couple *Senor Mendez* placed a fatherly kiss upon the cheek of each of them. "And you must dine with me tonight, my children. I will have a betrothal present, a check, ready for you."

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THEY THANKED HIM, watched him hastily depart, then melted into each other's arms.

"I did not know," Annette looked at Carlos, "that he had a son. Where have you been keeping yourself, *mon homme?*"

Carlos laughed as he lighted a cigarette. "I have been amusing myself, but not in Dad's way. I have just completed an engineering course at the *Universite*. I have been offered a splendid position by our government, so will need every scrap of knowledge I have. *Mais, oui*, when I saw you a long time ago at one of Dad's parties I knew I would never go back to Brazil without you, *ma cherie*."

"But I never saw you, Carlos. . . . He never told me—"

"I always kept in the background, *cherie*. You see, I am not particularly fond of night life unless," again his lips bent passionately to hers, "I can spend it with you."

Annette giggled, snuggling closer. "I'm willing to give up all night life, too, Carlos, to spend my life with you! *C'est bien!*"

Nimble Fingers

(Continued from page 9)

TURNING, VICTOR SAW something on the old bureau that made him hurry to it with a thick, inarticulate exclamation. A note addressed to him was held firmly in place by the jaws of a hand buffed leather jewel case. The same case, he saw at once, that had been in his overcoat pocket when he had hung it in the foyer closet!

The letter said simply:

Monsieur:—I am sorry to have to do this to you. But it is necessary. Dress-making is so arduous, jewel collecting so easy. Do not look for me. I am leaving Paris.

A crushed, disillusioned Victor returned home, the divine fires banked. As he went in he saw Jeanne in the dining room, the candlelight illumining her as the butler served dinner.

"*Monsieur* Zugat telephoned and broke the appointment," Victor told her wearily. "That soup smells good. I will have some."

He sat down, sighed and shook out his napkin.

"Bring soup for *Monsieur le Count*," his wife ordered.

"And another thing," Victor said haggardly. "Your gift will have to wait until tomorrow. I've had no time to purchase it."

Jeanne smiled. "No matter. That has been attended to. Shortly after you left *Mademoiselle* Valorsay returned here with her sweetheart. His name is Pascal. She introduced me to him and I struck a bargain with him."

Victor stared. "What kind of a bargain?"

His wife laughed quietly. "For this! *Monsieur* Pascal is a jewel broker. Occasionally he picks up things he can sell cheaper than the stores. I bought it at once and paid him cash. Isn't it entrancing?"

Unsteadily Victor let the chain slide into his hand. It was a beautiful necklace.

A square cut diamond, an emerald, another diamond, a ruby!

"Lovely!" he agreed, then added: "*Diable!* Where is that soup?"

Baby Face

(Continued from page 20)

character in my eyes. But now—I realize that you were only enacting a role. I was correct about you in the first place. You really are innocent, pure. And—I am in love with you! I want you to be my wife!"

Paulette's eyes widened. "Y-you really—mean that?"

"I'll prove it!" he panted. And he took her in his arms. After that, she forgot that there was a party in progress in the front room. She forgot everything—except the happiness of the moment; the joy of Raoul's kisses, his devotion. A joy that promised to go on forever. . . .

Wild Goose Chase

(Continued from page 14)

waist, tried to stifle her shrieks with the palm of his hand.

The house detective and a bellboy found them that way. Melody jerked out of Jack's arms. "I want him arrested!" she cried. "He tried to assault me!"

The detective pulled a gun. Jack started to explain, knew he was licked. He marched out of the room with his hands up.

Melody danced merrily when the detective and his prisoner had gone. No matter what happened, she would have one night of free-

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dom. She dressed hurriedly, left the hotel. Standing on the Boulevard she watched the lights of the Eiffel Tower twinkling. Now where? All of Paris was at her disposal. Where to go? What to do? She got into a cab.

"Take me to a night club," she said.

TEN MINUTES LATER THE cab pulled up before a basement rendezvous. Melody shuddered when she looked down into the interior of the hot spot. A shifty-eyed Apache lounged in the entrance, a cigarette dangling from the corner of his mouth. He looked her over with relish.

Melody's heart sank. Now that she was on her own she was afraid. All the terrible things she had heard about Paris came back to her, frightened her. Maybe the Apache would carry her off to some dank dungeon! She slammed the cab door shut.

"D-Drive me b-back to the hotel," she stutered.

On the way, she thought of Jack in prison. She had gained her freedom, but what good was it?

"To the prison!" she instructed.

The attendant at the prison spent a long time puzzling over Melody's French and a longer time looking up the records. Yes, a *Monsieur* Norwalk, an American, had been released after the payment of a fine.

Melody drove to the hotel. The clerk at the desk informed her that *Monsieur* Norwalk had cabled to the United States and then left immediately to catch the boat train for Havre in order to catch the midnight sailing of the *Ile de France*.

THE GREAT FRENCH LINER was out of the Havre harbor, heading towards the open sea when Melody slipped into Jack Norwalk's stateroom.

He stared at her, blinked. "What are you doing here?"

Melody closed the door, smiled at him sheepishly. "I just couldn't see you having a wild goose chase. I'm sorry for what I did. After you were gone I realized I missed you." Without preamble she swayed into his arms, locked her own about his neck. "Kiss me, Jackie!"

"You can't stay in here!" he gasped.

Melody wriggled against him. "I can if the Captain performs a little ceremony, can't I?"

"Yet, but—"

Melody placed her lips close to his mouth. "This is no time for 'but's' . . ."

Jack agreed that she was right this time!

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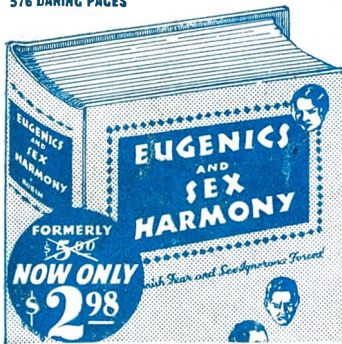
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