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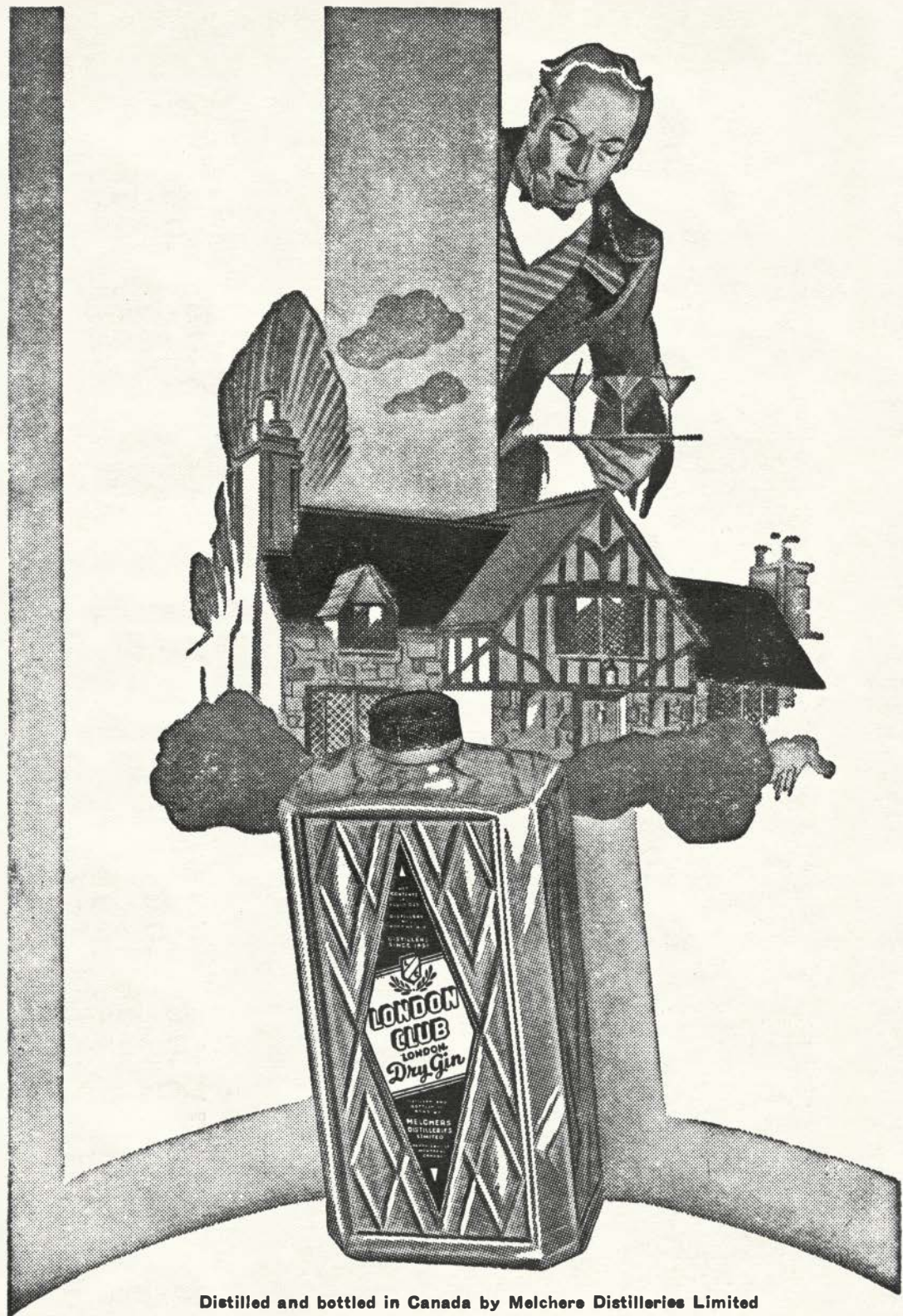
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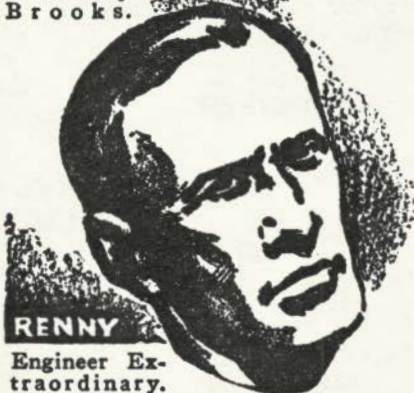
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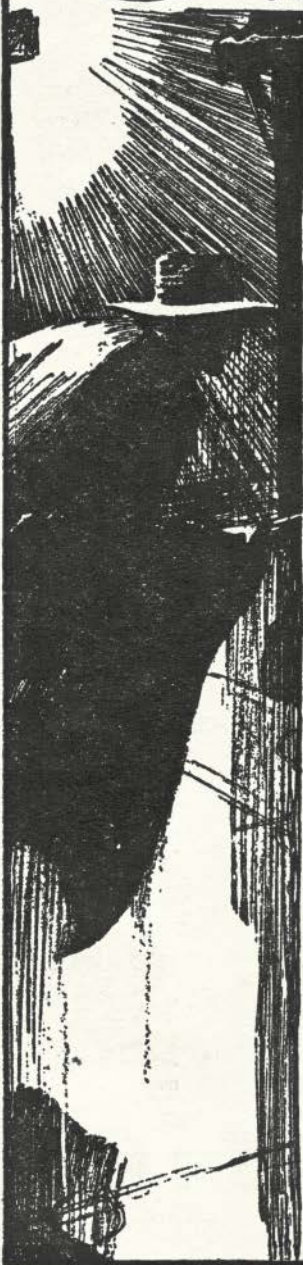
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— ACTS LIKE A FLASH —

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Man of the Moment

By Ethel Le Compte

INNES interrupted her father's impassioned tirade to explain impatiently: "But Stirling loves his wife, too. So, you see, I am not taking him away from her, nor breaking up their home."

"Loves his wife, too," Coe Yates repeated, as if trying to make himself understand the impossible. "You mean you're willing to share him? Willing to be his——" He choked on the word, and his leashed rage broke loose at the thought.

He sprang from the chair, his strong face flushed, his fine eyes blazing. He stared down at his willful, bewildering, adored and utterly lovely daughter as if she were a stranger, and not a very pleasing one.

Yet, for nineteen years he had loved her devotedly; she had been the very core of his life.

Those golden-brown eyes, that soft red mouth, now so hard and defiant, had told him a thousand

times that she returned his love. Child, girl and woman, she had come to him with her problems. Always, he had helped her solve them. This time he could not.

He had been shocked beyond measure when Innes had admitted that she and Stirling Swayne, thirty-odd, and married to pretty Alice Putnam for ten years, loved each other. He had reasoned with her patiently. Her last statement, staggering but calmly uttered, was too much.

Under his silent gaze, the slim figure in its sheath of ivory satin, stirred uneasily on the divan. The defiance on the piquant face changed to something akin to fear. Coe had never been angry with her, but she had seen him in a rage three times.

There had been a groom who had misused a mare; a friend who had shot an injured hunting dog in full sight of the pack; there had been Herman King who had stolen the love of Hancey, Innes's mother.

The girl had seen her father beat these three with his bare fists. After the beating, they had ceased to exist for him. Hancey, too, had ceased to exist for him when she could have been won back.

Innes was more afraid of his coldness than his anger. Yet, being his daughter and her own high-strung, gallant self, she grinned cheekily, shrugged and reached for a cigarette with: "Stop being the heavy father, Coe."

Then the cyclone did break loose and suddenly Innes found herself across her father's knees.

Three times, his hard brown hand struck her. The slender, satin-clad body hunched up convulsively, but no cry came from the compressed

lips. Fury such as she had never known had Innes in its grip.

Released, she gained her feet. Her small fists beat against Coe's jaw, jarring his sagging head back. The rage had been wiped from his face, leaving it gray and expressionless. He did not defend himself against her onslaught, and she stopped, horror-stricken.

Then two awed voices spoke as one. "I struck you!" they gasped.

Innes felt her anger melt away, but she had no desire to make a forgiving, or even a placating, overture. Silence reigned in the luxurious drawing-room which had not witnessed so violent a scene since Coe Yates all but killed his wife's lover.

Innes on the divan, Coe in his chair, did not glance at each other.

Tufts opened a door and announced himself with his deprecating cough.

Before he could speak, his employer said: "Tell cook to hold dinner back a half hour."

The butler started to say something, but was ordered out peremptorily.

Another uncomfortable silence followed. Coe broke it to say: "I was a fool to think a man capable of rearing a girl properly. I want your promise not to see Swayne again. There are plenty of young unmarried men around—fine chaps. Red Raines, for instance."

"Redmond Raines is married to that old factory of his when he isn't golfing." Innes's voice betrayed derision.

"Peeved because he doesn't run after you, eh?"

"Wrong. I prefer my men tall, dark, handsome and rangy."



"Also married and wastrel. What a little idiot you are, Innes."

"Not idiot enough to fall in love with a stocky redhead, with a misplaced sense of humor and a neck that only a horse collar would fit."

"Sixteen and a half fits perfectly, my dear Innes!"

Father and daughter jumped. They turned to see Redmond Raines standing just inside the door, smiling crookedly.

"Lo, Coe," he went on. "I had the idea that you had invited me here for the week-end, or am I all mixed up? Tufts came in to announce me, and was all but booted out, he reported. I risked the same by crashing in. Nice to hear oneself flattered, Miss Yates."

He bowed mockingly to Innes, a twinkle in his blue eyes. Then he asked Coe, who had jumped up, embarrassed: "How tall are you, Coe?"

"Exactly five feet ten. Red, I'm asham——"

"I'm only an inch shorter, yet I do look stocky," Redmond observed, eying their reflections in a long mirror. "Even if I dyed my hair black, I'd still have my bull neck and misplaced sense of humor. Just to show you how misplaced it really is——"

For the second time that evening, Innes found herself lifted bodily. This time the hand was even stronger, but it was gentle. The fingers spread fanlike, supporting her at the waist in a horizontal position except that her head and legs sagged.

Redmond's arm, held straight out, rose slowly, steadily, and as steadily lowered her to her feet again.

Recovering from her angry amazement, Innes laughed and clapped her hands. "Bravo, Hercules," she cried. "Are you a professional?"

"Amateur, but the equal of any pro," bragged Redmond.

Coe demanded with a grin: "How'd you get that way and why?"

"Tell you at the eighteenth hole to-morrow. Don't want to bore Innes."

"Thank you." Innes retired to her room to rearrange her hair and renew her make-up.

As the three lingered at the table after dinner, she favored Redmond with a gamin grin and drawled: "I wouldn't be bored by the saga of your life."

"I'd be bored telling it." He offered her a plate of nuts which he had been cracking between his fingers. "Pick your favorites," he invited.

Coolly, Innes took the whole plate, barricading it with wine glasses.

"Scandalous the way you drug your kid up, Coe," criticized his guest.

"You are telling me!" Coe, who had been taciturn all during dinner, plunged into the story of his daughter's infatuation for Stirling Swayne.

Innes closed her eyes, her thoughts dwelling on the man her father was denouncing, the man she had loved since childhood.

Innes had been nine, Swayne already in his twenties when her mother went away with Herman King. "String," as she called him, had shared with her father the task of comforting the heartbroken child. He had promised to marry her when she was sixteen if she would stop crying.

Less than a year later, he had married Alice Putnam. Alice was so pretty and sweet that Innes loved her and forgave Stirling. At boarding and finishing school, she



had many beaux and completely forgot Stirling.

Last Christmas, while Innes was home, they had met again and fallen madly in love. Stirling had visited New York after she returned there. There had been many stolen hours together.

Three days ago, Innes had come home for the Easter holidays. She had spent nearly all yesterday with Stirling.

Wealthy by inheritance, he was a

"I was a fool to think a man capable of rearing a girl properly," said Innes's father. "I want your promise not to see Swayne again. There are plenty of young unmarried men around."

playboy, and could lavish his time as well as his affection on the girl of the moment. Innes knew his

reputation for fickleness, but she was so sure of his love for her that she was smilingly tolerant when her friends warned her.

Stirling had told her, immediately after declaring that she was the love of his life, that he still loved Alice, and always would. Amazingly, Innes had been tolerant of that, too. When she wanted him all to herself, she would simply take him, she assured her arrogant little self.

After lunch at Pleasant Inn yesterday, they had driven out to Stirling's shanty on the shore of the bay. The exterior of the house was disarmingly dilapidated. Inside one found luxury plus. There was a servant—discreet, expressionless.

Innes knew that other girls had been entertained here, but what of it? There would be no others now that she, Innes Yates, deigned to bestow her favors on Stirling.

They had danced to radio music and celebrated Innes's first visit by opening champagne. They had dreamed in each other's arms before the fire, lip to lip, heart to heart.

Without warning, Stirling's caressing fingers had grown bold. His kisses grew demanding. He cried out that he loved her, wanted her.

"Little love," he murmured, his lips on her pulsing throat, "you are—you will be all mine."

Startled out of her delicious languor, Innes tried to free herself, only to have his embrace tighten.

"Let me go, or I'll kill you," she warned him, raging.

He laughed, but she fought loose. She struck with blows that hurt and sobered him. He caught her hands, but she was as strong as he in her fury. "Peace!" he cried, half in anger, half in amusement.

"Take me home at once," she commanded.

"If you will kiss and forgive me, I will," he capitulated.

They clung to each other in a frenzy of fear that they might lose this wonderful love. She promised to come back two days later.

To-day, Innes had given a bridge luncheon to her friends. She had thought of nothing but Stirling and the following day when she would be with him.

She was thinking of him now. Into her thoughts sifted some of her father's denunciations as he talked to Redmond.

Innes cut into the talk. "Coe," she accused with maddening indifference, "you are boring Mr. Hercules with gossip about me, when he is dying to tell us the story of his success as a strong man."

Obviously embarrassed by his host's confidence, Redmond smiled, "My tale is tame and pallid beside yours," he said modestly.

"Nevertheless, do tell us," insisted Innes.

"I am the only child of rich but honest parents," Redmond began pompously. "They named me Redmond, which because I had a carrot top, lent itself to rowdy variations. I was a weak, skinny kid—now don't look so skeptical—and always the loser in every fight. I tired of that stuff, I trained with dad's head stableman, an ex-pug, one Gus Smith. That is how I came to be what I am to-day. You saw me strut my stuff!"

"Felt it," corrected Innes with a yawn. "It was nothing that Coe or any other man could not do." She rose, and led the way back to the drawing-room. "I'm going to read in bed. Good night," she said

"Sing for us first," Coe suggested "Jessica Dragonette can do it so much better. Good night."

"No doubt about that," agreed Redmond, turning the radio dial.

Innes glared at him balefully. "I'll ride alone to-morrow morning, dad," she announced, and left the room.

Born to saddle leather, Innes could ride anything short of a bronco outlaw. In her present mood—she was as indignant with Coe when she awakened as when she had gone to sleep—she chose Smoky, the worst-tempered horse in the stable.

Tall, slim, pliant, in well-worn riding clothes, she cantered briskly along the narrow dirt road between the tall pines. Soon she forgot her irritation and thought of Stirling.

He had never ridden much. Now he was too lazy to ride at all. Still, one could never hope for everything in a man, she sighed.

Smoky was in one of his rare gentle moods, but when he heard hoofbeats behind him, saw two horsemen overtake and pass him, he stepped back into character. Innes was glad he did, for the two riders were her father and his guest.

As Smoky tore after them, she was forced to admit that Redmond could ride. Foolishly, she resented his being Coe's companion during this hour which was always hers when she was home. She headed Smoky between Coe's horse and Redmond's.

The road was too narrow for three abreast. None of the three would fall back; none could gain on the others and take the lead. Innes was delighted. She felt the surge of Smoky's muscles, and knew that he was about to show his stable-mates what a good horse could do.

But before he got into his stride, Redmond's arm reached out and

caught her around the waist, forcing her to shake her feet loose from the stirrups and relinquish the reins.

The man's strength alone would have lifted her to his saddle safely, but Innes lent her own skill to the stunt, making the thing perfect. Smoky shot ahead riderless.

Innes, who by all the rules should have been furious, was delighted.

"Wasn't that something?" she exulted. "Why, Mr. Hercules, I'm beginning to like you. You did that like a professional pick-up man in a rodeo. Let's try it again when we get Smoky."

Redmond laughed and confessed: "I did it to make you angry."

They found Smoky contentedly nibbling the young leaves of an oak.

"Now what?" she demanded, after mounting him, her eyes sparkling, her cheeks scarlet.

"No more stunts," decreed Coe. "I like my child alive and whole."

"Race you two home," cried his child. "Let's go-o!"

Redmond took the challenge, and lost to her by three lengths. He demanded revenge at dawn on Sunday. She answered: "Maybe."

In high spirits they joined Coe at the breakfast table. During the meal, she and Coe tacitly made up, although she had not promised to give up Stirling.

"You two for golf?" she asked as she rose.

"That was the plan," Coe answered, "but if you and Red want to go——"

"I'm leaving now, dad. Be back Sunday some time. 'By."

"Not so fast, kid. Where're you going, with whom and why?"

"Cora invited me for this afternoon, dinner and night." She smiled at Redmond, who was looking frankly disappointed. "Saturday is

amateur night at the local picture house. It's a riot. Our crowd drops in there before we go over to the country club to dance."

"Coe and I are dining and dancing there, too," Redmond said.

Coe looked surprised, but promptly took the cue. "We can bring you home, then you can ride with Red to-morrow morning," he offered.

"Save a few dances for me, Innes?" Redmond asked.

"And have you do an adagio, twirling me around your head? No!" She kissed her father lightly. "I'll save some dances for you. 'By."

She had told him only part of her plan. It was with Stirling that she was lurching and spending the afternoon.

At noon, he drove up in his convertible coupé, his handsome face eager, his dark eyes burning. "Are we really eloping?" he asked.

"No. I have my evening clothes in the suitcase." She climbed in, stowing her case in the rumble seat. As they sped away, she said: "Dad blew up last night. Some one told him about us, String."

The lips under the clipped black mustache curled. "Probably Alice. She threatened to do just that after I saw you last time."

"Then we'd best call it quits," Innes told him, to test him.

"We will not! We'll simply have to be careful."

"Sneak, you mean. I'd hate that. It didn't seem sneaky when Alice knew. I told dad that you loved Alice, too. That made him angrier." Not even String must know about the spanking, she decided.

"You small sap!" Stirling chuckled. He took her hand and kept it prisoner on the steering wheel. "You're so different, little Innes—

so honest and refreshing! Gosh, how I love you!"

"And how I love you, String," she said softly. "You are—— Be careful! You missed that truck by an inch. Here, let me drive."

"I'll drive!" He stepped on the gas, and the car shot ahead. Innes sat tight, her heart in her mouth. She was glad when they finally arrived at Pleasant Inn.

After they had eaten, they got up to dance. "I can't give you up, Nes," Stirling told her huskily.

"Nor I you, String."

His arms tightened about her. "Let's dance at the shanty," he murmured.

Arrived there, after a wild ride, they built a fire to take the chill out of the place. Stirling, despite all he had drunk, was his most charming self. Yet, for some reason she could not quite define, Innes was not as utterly enthralled with him as she had been in the past.

Suddenly, in the midst of dancing, she demanded: "Lift me, String."

He raised her about two feet, then set her down, puffing.

"You crazy kid," he panted. "What's the idea?"

"Knew you were out of condition. You've a spare tire here, String." She jabbed him hard at the waistline.

"Ouch! Coe brought you up as if you were a boy," he criticized.

"Last night he bewailed the way he had reared me because I didn't know any better than to run around with you," Innes offered thoughtfully.

"I'll take you in hand now, shall I?" He caught her to him and kissed her ardently on her parted lips. "Love me, Nes?" he whispered.

Thrilled by his kiss, she answered: "Oh, yes, String." Then "How about chopping out the drink and

getting into shape? Ride with me and——”

“I hear enough criticism from Alice. Shan't take it from you, Nes.”

Innes let the matter drop, but remained aloof, thoughtful.

“What's got into you?” Stirling demanded sullenly.

“Nothing,” she shrugged. “Sorry, but I'm due at Cora's for dinner.”

He did not urge her to remain, drove her to Cora's house, and left her with a growled word. Recklessly he raced away.

While she chatted with Cora, Ned and their guests over cocktails and during dinner, Innes worried about Stirling.

It was with relief that she saw him breeze into the house just as the party was leaving for the picture house. But when he ignored the others and came directly to her with an abrupt: “Come on!” she grew angry.

Every one was looking at them. Ned took Stirling's arm. “Are you crazy?” he demanded angrily. “Go home and sober up.”

Stirling shook himself. “Sorry,” he apologized. He went over to Cora. “Forgive me and let me join the party,” he begged. “I'll behave.”

Cora hesitated. “All right. Leave Innes alone, though.”

At the theater, where Ned had reserved a block of seats, Stirling forgot his promise and forced Innes to sit next to him.

In the dark, her face burned. She had overheard a remark or two during the drive over. She knew she was being talked about now.

She saw nothing of the newsreel, had no idea what the first offerings of the amateurs were about, but suddenly snapped to attention when

she heard the name of Redmond Raines bawled out by the manager.

There on the stage stood Redmond, clad only in brief white trunks. He was smiling, utterly pleased with himself. He held a weight in each hand. Two boys were rolling in huge iron dumbbells and a bar-bell with extra disks.

“Surprise—last minute entry—novelty act!” These words from the manager's introduction sifted through Innes's bewilderment.

The audience applauded and cheered even before Redmond went to work.

“I've seen him at the country club,” one of Cora's party remarked.

“I've felt his muscles,” giggled another. “What a man!”

The act went forward smoothly—the usual routine of any strong man. But Redmond was not the stereotyped professional performer. He was pleased with his performance, and grinned appreciation for the applause.

Disk after disk was added to the bar-bell until all were used up. He did a “two-arm jerk” successfully. He dipped under the weights and brought them to his chest, squatted, stood up and held the bar-bell high with all the disks.

Wild cheers, whistles and thunderous applause rewarded him.

Innes had watched with utter absorption, feeling proud of the performer.

Suddenly, the imp of mischief whispered in her ear. She refused to listen to the fantastic suggestion at first, but it was a grand idea.

Impulsively, she stood up, scrambled over Stirling's knees, and ran down the aisle. Directly below Redmond she spoke:

“Reached your limit, Mr. Hercules?”

Redmond grinned. “For the time



Innes, self-possessed as she was, began to wilt under the gaze of the audience and the bantering hurled at her by her own crowd. She was sorry she had challenged Redmond to lift her together with the weights.

being. I keep practicing, you know."

"Then you couldn't lift me and those other weights at once?"

For answer, Redmond leaned over and lifted her onto the stage.

"My assistant, ladies and gentlemen," he announced. "We have never attempted this trick in public before, so crave your kind indulgence."

Innes, self-possessed as she was,

began to wilt under the gaze of the audience and the bantering hurled at her by her own crowd. She pretended to be absorbed in watching Redmond shift the weights on the bar-bell.

"You weigh about a hundred thirty," he sang out with a wicked grin.

"A hundred ten," corrected Innes indignantly, as the crowd roared.

"Too bad," he sighed. "I'll maintain the balance by holding the bar off center," he explained aloud. "When the young lady adds her small weight, I'll shift my grip. Watch carefully, good people. Now, up!"

Silence fell on the audience.

From her seat, Innes had seen that it was an effort for Redmond to lift the heavily loaded bar-bell, but a close-up of his face and straining muscles frightened her.

"I'll get off," she whispered. "Oh, Red, I am sorry. I didn't mean to make a fool of you, honestly, but I thought——"

"Hang on, you!" he ordered. Then he held the bar-bell and Innes aloft. The crowd went wild.

Innes had never felt so exultant in her life as when she stood again on the stage beside Redmond after his perfect exhibition.

"That was great!" she told him, and ran into the wings.

When he joined her, he asked: "Well, do I get a dance to-night?"

"You get 'em all if you want," she promised recklessly.

"Wait here until I dress. Here, sit on this box."

A small army of young admirers were lugging the weights out to Redmond's car. When he appeared dressed for the evening, he paid them off and shooed them away, pretending he didn't care for their adulation.

"How did you wangle a place in the show?" Innes demanded.

"Bribed a yodler to let me take his place. The manager was only too glad to let me have the spot. Did it for your benefit, of course."

"Show-off," jeered Innes, over a lump in her throat. "Let's go."

The manager came bustling up to Redmond. "You'll get first prize sure," he beamed. "Please line up with the others and march back."

"Shucks, I did it for a lark. Give it to some one else."

"The crowd 'u'd be sore. You gotta stay, Mr. Raines."

Innes slipped back to her seat to be greeted joyously by her delirious friends. Stirling growled: "Let's scram," and took her arm.

"After your strong man gets his prize, we'll take him along with us," said Cora. "You're a perfect team, Innes precious."

Stirling swore and gripped Innes's arm tighter, but he stayed.

Redmond did win first prize. Cora calmly took his arm as he came down the aisle. In the lobby, she signaled Innes to take her place. Stirling swore some more, but relinquished her.

The theater manager was as quick a worker as Redmond. He had telephoned the local newspaper. As Innes and Redmond stepped into the latter's car, a cameraman snapped them and their guard of small boys.

"How d'y'like being a celebrity's girl?" asked Redmond, grinning.

"Simply swell," laughed Innes. "I am your girl? You are a celebrity?"

"Yes and yes," he assured her and sped away.

Despite the lightness of the conversation, Innes felt a little thrill, and was disappointed when Redmond did not follow up either jokingly or seriously, but delivered her

directly at the country club door.

She had the first dance with him, and found that he danced as well as Stirling at his best. She saw Stirling standing in the stag line glowering. She wondered if he would cut in, and if he did, what Redmond would do.

But to-night, things were reversed. The girls cut in and fought for a chance to dance with "Red, oh-what-a-man!" as they dubbed him.

He appeared to be as jubilant over his popularity as he had been over his hit with the theater audience and the small boys.

Innes felt rather annoyed with him. She would not enter the silly contest the other girls were staging to dance with him.

She danced with Ned and others, then Stirling appeared and claimed her.

"What a wasted evening," he growled. "Let's scam, Nes."

"Can't, with Coe watching me. He just arrived. He's going to cut in."

Coe favored Stirling with a frown as he took his daughter in his arms. "I'm taking you home, Innes," he said angrily. "Always with that waster!"

Innes curbed her temper. "If you had shown up earlier, you'd not say that," she snapped. "That carrot-top strong man of yours has had his red head turned and—— But why didn't you go to the theater to see him act?"

"Alice came and entreated me to take you away. She is foolish enough to love that cad. Also, she doesn't want him to spoil your life, too."

Innes shivered with a strange quick chill. She did not speak.

Coe led her off the floor into a small room and eyed her anxiously.

"You're pale, ill-looking," he cried in a panic. "Innes, that man cannot mean so much to you!" He held her cold hands in his warm ones.

"Let me think," Innes murmured, sinking into a chair.

It had been so wonderful loving Stirling. She let herself think back over their rapturous hours together. Never could she tear him from her heart. Perhaps Alice loved him like this, too. She had gone through so much with him. Innes wondered if her own love for him could endure so much.

She doubted it. She had felt angry with him several times, and disgusted with his drinking, his neglect of his fine physique.

Through the half-open door, she could look into the ballroom. As her eyes found Stirling, her heart leaped. He was so fascinatingly handsome. As if drawn by her eyes, he came toward the door, and into the room.

A light shone full on his face. He appeared to be unaware that any one was looking at him, for his face was not dressed up with its famous smile. Instead, it was distorted by a vicious sneer. Innes stared at this cruel, dissolute face in horrified amazement. Stirling raised his head. She glimpsed the same cruelty in his eyes as they met hers.

Instantly, a smile transformed his face and he was the Stirling she knew and loved. He came toward her, only to stop short at sight of Coe. Once more his face changed. Anger possessed it. But it was weak anger, tinged with fear. Without a word, he turned and walked out of the room.

Out of a strained silence, Innes said: "Tell Alice I promise not to see him. Please leave me alone now, daddy. I—I'm so ashamed."

"Innes, darling——" Coe Yates

stopped, stood yearning over her. "I'll be back for you. Pull yourself together and be my grand kid again."

As soon as he had gone, Innes slipped through the side door and got her wrap from the attendant. "Please tell my father I'm waiting in his car," she requested, and hurried away.

"Innes!" It was Redmond's voice, joyous at having found her. "I've been searching everywhere. You're ill? Oh, my dear——"

"Just tired," Innes interrupted. She stopped and looked at him closely. No one could call him handsome, yet there was charm to his face because of its sincerity and joy of living.

Just now the twinkle was missing from his blue eyes, and the pleasant mouth was unnaturally grave. Innes knew his concern was for her.

"I'm all right," she assured him. "Is our ride at dawn a date?"

His face lit up. "You bet. But, Innes, I'm taking you home."

"All right, but go tell dad. He's probably looking for me now."

Redmond helped her into his car, then rushed away. Innes snuggled down in her warm wrap and waited.

She did not speak when he got in and started the car. Neither did he. The car swung around the drive and shot out into the highway.

Innes sat up, realizing in terror who was driving the car. It was Stirling! She cried out and demanded that he stop. He only laughed and pushed her roughly away. Innes turned and strained up to look out of the back window, hoping to see Coe's car following. The road was empty. Then a car turned from the club drive. Fervently she prayed it was Coe's.

Once more she tried to reason with the madman at the wheel.

"You wanted me," he burst out. "You're going to have me forever."

"Forever won't be long if you keep this up," cried Innes, rage overcoming her fear. She leaned forward and reached for the key.

He struck her hand away and stepped on the gas. A moment later the car hit a soft spot in the road, reeled, shrieked, then hurtled through the air, turning as it went.

There came a jarring crash, then quiet and darkness. Feeling as if every bone in her body had been broken, Innes lay huddled in a corner. Cautiously she stirred and felt herself. She seemed all right.

"String," she cried. "String!"

Only a groan answered her. Her groping hand found his face, then traveled along his body. He was grotesquely doubled up, but apparently not badly smashed. Twisting, squirming, she got to her feet to find that the car was on its side, with the right-hand window directly above her.

She was able to open the door and climb out. Trembling in every limb, she sat on the overturned car in the inky darkness. She heard the rush and roar of a car passing and her fright increased, for the sound came from high above. She caught a flash of headlights overhead.

Then she knew. Their car had shot over the edge of the road and they were down in the chasm above the river. By some miracle the car had landed on one of the ledges instead of rolling down into the water.

She was able to see dim outlines now. Painfully, cautiously, she made her way over the car to the cliff. With effort she scrambled up, only to find that she could go no farther than the sustaining wall that had been built when the road had been constructed.

Only ten or twelve feet above her was the highway, but it might as well have been that many hundred feet above her. Each time a car passed, she screamed for help, then collapsed in tears when it rushed on unheeding.

Things blurred after a while. She lay flat for fear of falling, and fell into a sort of tortured sleep. Some one calling her name aroused her. She sat up. "String!" she shrieked.

"Innes!" The voice came from above, and it was Redmond's.

"Here!" she cried, and saw headlights shine out overhead.

"You hurt?" came Redmond's agonized query.

"No. Oh, lift me out of here quickly." She stood up and reached.

She saw a head and shoulders in the glare of the headlights, then a flashlight was turned down on her.

"Keep close to the wall," Redmond ordered tensely. "I'll hold onto a wheel with my feet. You grip my hands. It's the only way. Now!"

Between his finger tips and hers yawned a distance of two feet.

Innes cried out in dismay, but he called back: "Hold the wall just another second. I'll shift my foothold."

Hardly breathing, she waited for unnumbered ages, then saw him edge out again. This time he dangled his belt down to her.

"My hands are too hurt to hold it," she sobbed.

"You don't have to hold it, dear," he told her quietly. "Slip your two hands through the loop. I slid one end through the buckle. Understand?"

With her last atom of strength she reached for the belt and slipped her hands through the loop to the

wrists. She felt a pull. Agony shot through her and she knew no more.

A rush of cool air in her face aroused her. Innes opened her eyes. Redmond was beside her, driving like one possessed. "Hello," she said weakly.

"Innes!" He slowed down, and the arm that encircled her tightened.

"That," she babbled, "was a good trick, too, Mr. Hercules."

"May I never have to do it again," he breathed. "I bet my hair turned white. Like it that way better?" His voice was thick, unsteady.

"I like it red. I found that out hours ago. Where're we going?"

"Hospital. You seem to be in one piece, but——"

"Stirling!" she burst out, suddenly remembering.

"Another car stopped just as I hauled you up. He'll be taken care of. I can't forgive myself for leaving the key in my car. I ran out just in time to see that maniac race away. It took me ages to find a car with a key in it. I kept to the highway, figuring he'd do that for speed. When I saw the fence above the gulch broken, I nearly died. If you had been killed——" He drew a sharp breath. "It came to me after I found out that you were down there, that the reason I'd been playing around with my weights all these years was so that I might have strength to do what I did to-night, Innes."

"As I said, it was a good trick, Mr. Herc—— Oh, Red, what a fool I have been," she interrupted herself to cry. "How you must despise me!"

"How I love you!" he corrected. "I've so much to tell you, darling, and I don't dare stop. I'll have you at the hospital in five minutes."



With her last atom of strength Innes reached for the belt and slipped her hands through the loop to the wrists. She felt a pull. Agony shot through her and she knew no more.

"I'm not really hurt, just bruised and achy all over. If I get to the hospital in ten minutes, it will be soon enough." She laughed shakily.

"And, Red, I do want to know if I love you. I can't be sure until—until you kiss me."

He had the car parked off the road

before she had finished speaking.

"I kissed you when you were unconscious," he confessed.

"Why, Mr. Hercules," she rebuked. "I knew that something nice had happened to me, but still I am not sure if I love you." She was laughing and crying at the same time.

"Darling," he whispered, "make sure!"

Warm, melting, tender, she yielded her lips to his kiss. Her eyes, wet with tears, closed with ecstasy at the contact.

"I—— Yes, Red, I do love you," she exulted.

"Real, honest, forever-and-ever love, sweetheart?" he asked anxiously.

"Yes, all of that. You said you played around with your weights so that you'd be able to rescue me to-night. I guess I played around with

love in the same way, so that I'd love you as I do."

"Then we'll be happy and secure in our love, darling."

Their lips met in a long kiss.

"Hold me tighter," she whispered.

"Remember you're a hospital case," he said huskily. "And I am Mr. Hercules, who doesn't know his own strength. But when you are Mrs. Herc, Heaven help you. Is that my misplaced sense of humor again?"

"I even like that now," Innes told him. "And this, too." Her arms hugged his neck. "I'll buy you a diamond horse collar for it."

"I've always wanted just that, and I've always wanted you."

He forgot his caution for a moment and crushed her to his heart, kissing her responsive lips again and again.



I'LL REMEMBER

ALWAYS I'll remember
 The hillroad we walked down,
 Through the falling snow at dusk
 To the white-roofed town.
 Always I'll remember,
 Pines tinsel'd to their tips.
 The flowery cool fragrance
 Of your scarlet lips—
 How did I dare to kiss them?—
 And then—oh, sweet surprise!
 Love's steadfast blue stars, night had lost,
 And I found in your eyes
 Behind their snow-fringed lashes.
 Always in December
 As snow falls on a hill at dusk,
 Dearest, I'll remember.

ETHEL ROMIG FULLER.



Honolulu-bound

By Dick Moreland

WITH a mellow roar of her whistle, her great engines pulsing, the de luxe liner, *S. S. Gemini*, backed slowly away from the pier, swung out into San Francisco harbor, and headed through the Golden Gate, Honolulu-bound. In a shower bath, in a luxurious cabin on A deck, Wanda Hall crouched breathlessly, listening to the unfamiliar noises of the great ship's departure. Wanda had no

ticket, no money with which to purchase one, and nothing but a grim determination to get to Honolulu, where a job as dancing teacher in a young ladies' boarding school awaited her.

Wanda was young, slender, and golden. The years she had spent in arduous practice at dance studios showed in the slim-muscled lines of her lovely body. She had been dancing at the Little Club in San

Francisco, clad only in a jeweled girdle, a narrow silver brassière, and a skirt of transparent tulle, disclosing, rather than hiding, her white-and-gold loveliness. And she had made a success of her night-club dancing. The patrons showed their adoration of her by the thunderous applause that invariably followed her number.

The trouble was, Wanda hadn't adored the patrons; the whole atmosphere of night-club life disgusted her. And so, when the offer to teach dancing in the girls' school in Honolulu had come along, she had been delighted. But, unfortunately, there was the question of a ticket, which the principal of the girls' school had thoughtlessly forgotten to inclose with the contract. And Wanda's small savings had but recently gone to provide medical care for a girl friend who needed it.

It had taken courage. It had not been easy for Wanda Hall to smuggle her suitcase aboard the ship just before the hour of sailing, to pretend that she was a visitor come to bid good-by to some friend. But she had done it. She had wandered about the great ship until she found a deserted cabin, hidden her suitcase under the bed, hidden her own charming person behind the curtains in the shower bath, and waited, praying fervently that her presence would not be discovered until the ship was well at sea. She hoped to remain hidden for the entire four and a half days of the express liner's run to Hawaii. In her suitcase were meager food supplies to last until the trip ended. It was a daring thing to do, but Wanda was a daring girl.

Her father had been killed in the War, and her mother had been a famous dancer who had, even when times were hard, found funds to keep

Wanda in the best dancing schools, Wanda meant to capitalize on her training. A year or so of practice at the school in Honolulu, a year or so of training, and she would return with her art perfected, her savings account reestablished, and attempt to break in at the studios in Hollywood.

She could feel the roll of the great ship as it plowed through the Golden Gate and nosed out into the broad, blue Pacific. As she stood there, undecided, there was a faint sound at the door of the cabin. Wanda's heart began to pound and one slender hand went to her throat in startled dismay.

She waited, her heart thumping, heard the door bang open, and resolute footsteps cross the cabin. Wanda peered around the edge of the shower curtain and through the crack in the door could see a young man, tall and dark-haired, his skin tanned to the color of an old cavalry boot. His eyes were surprisingly blue—a merry, twinkling blue. Although the corners of his mouth lifted in a pleasant smile, Wanda noted that his chin was square and firm, and that hard, muscular lines ran up his jaws. He was, Wanda guessed, about thirty—the lean, sunburned thirty of the wealthy polo-playing young man whose easy poise had been acquired at the best schools and colleges.

A cheerful whistling began in the cabin. Wanda peeped again, and what she saw made a quick flush flood the ivory of her cheeks. The young man had moved his baggage on to the bed, thrown open the bags, and was rapidly undressing.

Wanda, horrified but fascinated, watched him fling off his coat, unbutton his shirt, and toss it into the corner. His shoes clanked on the floor and, still whistling gayly, he

began to remove his trousers. Wanda snapped the shower curtain shut and backed against the wall, where she waited, torn between a desire to scream and an almost uncontrollable urge to giggle.

The whistling broke off abruptly. Wanda heard the scrape of slippers on the tiled floor of the bathroom. A brown hand appeared on the edge of the curtain.

"Wait a minute," cried Wanda breathlessly. "This shower is occupied."

She heard the young man gasp. "Well, I'll be——"

Wanda took a quick look. He was decorously enveloped in a huge, woolly bathrobe. She slid the curtain aside and stepped out. His eyes opened wide. "Hello," he said. "What are you doing in my shower?"

A moment's study of the man before her convinced Wanda that it would be better to tell the truth. She gave him her sweetest smile and explained hurriedly. "I had to get to Honolulu. No money. No ticket. So I'm a stowaway. I thought this cabin was empty."

"I see," he answered gravely. "So you chose my shower bath as a hide-away." He motioned vaguely toward the cabin. "A bathroom is hardly the place for discussion."

Making a valiant effort to fight back the flush of embarrassment which glowed warmly on her cheeks, Wanda went into the cabin and dropped into a chair. The young man seated himself opposite her, tucking the bathrobe comfortably about his ankles.

"You are," he said softly, "an exceedingly pretty stowaway. Where have I seen you before? I'm Barton Carter, of Honolulu and New York."

"My name," the girl told him, "is Wanda Hall. I'm a dancer."

A flash of recognition passed

swiftly over Carter's face. "The Little Club!" he cried. "I saw you dance there the other night. I didn't recognize you with your clothes on." He grinned at her in a way Wanda didn't like. It was a wolfish grin.

Carter lounged back on the divan and reached for a cigarette. His eyes were hooded, and his mouth had become a thin, ironic line. "An amusing situation," he said coolly. "Young bachelor finds lovely dancer hiding in his room. She wants to go to Honolulu, but has no ticket. If he reports her presence to the captain she will be sent back to San Francisco."

"They can't send me back," cried Wanda breathlessly, "until the ship gets to Honolulu."

"Oh, yes, they can," Carter told her smoothly. "The *Gemini* passes the *Mariposa* at sea to-morrow afternoon. They can transfer you from one ship to the other. It's quite an amusing picture. All the passengers gather along the rail and get a good laugh at the poor stowaway."

"They wouldn't do that to a girl," flamed Wanda.

"They certainly would," Carter assured her. "Captain Johnson hates stowaways like poison."

"There's a job waiting for me in Honolulu," wailed Wanda. "I simply must be there before Miss First's school opens on the fifteenth."

Carter nodded understandingly. "It could be arranged," he said softly. "We might occupy this cabin together. You are really very charming, Wanda, my dear. It would be an amusing and romantic interlude."

Color flamed in Wanda's cheeks, and her eyes blazed wrathfully. "And I thought you were going to be nice," she cried.

He came across and sank down beside her, putting one arm around her rigidly held shoulders. "Now,

now," he said soothingly, "don't get so excited. I thought we might be friends. You wanted to get to Honolulu and I'm trying to help you. But, of course, if you'd rather be transferred to the *Mariposa* and taken back to San Francisco——"

Fighting back the tears, her chin held high, Wanda shrugged off his restraining arm and bounced to her feet. From under the bed she yanked her suitcase. She picked up her hat and coat, then turned and faced him. "Call the captain," she said through stiff lips. "I'm not afraid."

"So that's the way it is!" He eyed her curiously. "Rather be sent back than be nice to me?"

"Yes, that's the way it is," said Wanda coldly.

He looked at her curiously for a moment, smiled, shrugged, and moved across to the telephone. "Ring Cabin 131, please," he said to the operator. "Hello? Aunt Jane? This is Barton, in Cabin 40. Will you come up for a moment, darling? Got a surprise for you." He dropped the instrument back into its cradle, and motioned the girl to a chair. "Sit down, Wanda," he said.

Mrs. Jane Alexander was a tall, bony, gray-haired old lady, who had been born in the Islands of a missionary family and had spent most of her life trying to live it down. Barton Carter happened to be her favorite nephew. So, when she arrived at his cabin and found him clad in a bathrobe and accompanied by a lovely girl, young and golden, she pretended to be neither shocked nor surprised.

"My dear boy," she said warmly, "when I heard you were on the boat I was delighted. And is this the surprise you have for me?" She

smiled brightly at Wanda. "A very lovely surprise indeed. Where on earth did you find her? Most of your girls are so stuffy. This one is really charming."

"In the shower," Barton explained. "She's a stowaway, Aunt Jane. By the way, Miss Hall, this is Mrs. Alexander, the most liberal and broad-minded aunt in the Hawaiian Islands."

"How exciting!" Mrs. Alexander gave the girl a friendly smile. "And how romantic that you should choose Barton's cabin. He's very rich and very spoiled, of course. I must warn you against him."

"You don't have to warn me," Wanda told her quietly. "He's already——"

"What are we going to do with her?" Barton cut in hurriedly. "You know the rules about stowaways, Aunt Jane. Wanda is really much too nice to be lowered over the side of the ship in a basket."

"So that's it!" Mrs. Alexander gazed with twinkling eyes at Barton and the girl. "You want me to smuggle her into my cabin, I suppose, and hide her until we get to Honolulu. Trying to make a criminal out of me, are you?"

"What else is there to do?" argued Carter. "She can't stay here naturally."

"Naturally," agreed Mrs. Alexander. Wanda turned her head to hide the mounting color in her cheeks. A moment ago she had thoroughly hated Barton Carter; a moment ago she had been resigned to her fate. Now everything had changed. He had called his aunt into the situation and was urging her to help a stowaway. It was all very confusing, and Wanda wasn't yet quite sure just what she should say.

"There's only one thing to do," Mrs. Alexander announced. "You



"So that's the way it is!" He eyed her curiously. "You'd rather have me report your presence to the captain and be sent back to San Francisco as a stowaway than be nice to me?"

must share my cabin with me, my dear. I'll see the purser and arrange for your ticket. You can pay me back after you get to Honolulu."

After that, events moved swiftly. Wanda changed, in Mrs. Alexander's

cabin, to a black satin dinner dress, a simple, clinging gown which emphasized the gold in her hair and the long slender lines of her figure. A bugle blew, and Mrs. Alexander took her below for dinner. Bartin Carter had secured a small table shaded

with rosy lights, and was waiting for them, sleek, freshly shaved and showered, with dinner coat and crisp linen emphasizing the athletic-looking brown of his face.

"You're lovely," he managed to whisper in her ear as he held her chair. Mrs. Alexander wagged her finger at him reprovingly. "None of your blarney, Barton. I'm a stern chaperon."

Dinner was not to be uninterrupted for long. Presently, a tall ship's officer in a stiffly starched white uniform, appeared at Mrs. Alexander's elbow. He was, apparently, an old friend and was introduced to Wanda as second officer, Jack Keating.

"She's the well-known dancer, you know, Jack," Mrs. Alexander explained casually. "Expects to spend a season in the Islands."

"Of course, of course," acknowledged Keating. "I thought I'd seen her somewhere before. On the stage, perhaps, or in pictures. You must dance for us at the ship's concert, Miss Hall."

"Oh, I couldn't do that," evaded Wanda. "I have no costume or——"

Keating laughed easily. "I know how you artists are—very modest. I'll have your name put on the program, anyway."

After dinner there was dancing. For Wanda, it was all a beautiful dream—the great ship rushing smoothly through the night, the lights, the orchestra playing softly, pretty girls in bright-colored dresses, eager young men who wanted to dance with her. Wanda could hardly believe that it was all true. She would wake up in a moment to find herself back in her boarding house in San Francisco, or in Barton Carter's shower.

The music stopped, and before her dancing partner could suggest a turn

on deck, Carter and Keating appeared out of the crowd and took possession of her. Both men wore serious expressions. Barton took her arm and led her into the bar, found a leather booth and motioned her to sit down.

"What's wrong?" she asked immediately, sensing trouble of some kind. She looked from Carter to Keating. Both men avoided her eyes.

"The Old Man has found out you're on the ship," Keating told her soberly. "He won't let Mrs. Alexander pay for your passage. Says there's been entirely too many stowaways lately, and it's about time something was done to stop it."

"You mean——" Wanda gazed steadily at Carter.

He nodded miserably. "I'm sorry, Wanda, but Captain Johnson has ordered you transferred to the *Mariposa* when we meet her at sea to-morrow."

Mrs. Alexander appeared, was told the most recent development and joined the conference. "I'll go and see the captain myself," she announced indignantly. "Perhaps I can make him change his mind."

"I'm not complaining," Wanda put in quietly. "I took a chance and lost. You've all been very kind, but this is something I've got to work out myself."

"Plucky girl!" Carter patted her hand.

A boy from the radio room appeared and handed Keating a message. He read it and grinned. "The *Mariposa* had a bit of trouble, and is delayed for twenty-four hours," he announced.

"Cheer up," cried Mrs. Alexander gayly. "Nothing terrible has happened yet. We are all young, happy, and full of health. We're on a boat headed for Honolulu, where there is



"Darling," he said softly, "don't you know what I'm trying to say? I love you, Wanda. I have from the beginning, and I always will. Say that you love me, too."

life, romance, and music. Let's be gay while we can. To-morrow night Wanda must dance at the ship's concert. When the captain sees her floating about as lightly as a moonbeam his hard old heart will soften. You wait and see. I have a feeling

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that everything is going to come out marvelously."

Wanda was young and was in the pink of physical condition. She slept soundly that night in spite of the troubles hanging over her head.

The morning was bright and sunny, and the ship rolled lazily through a brilliant-blue tropical sea. Wanda dressed and went on deck to find Carter and Mrs. Alexander waiting for her. Mrs. Alexander was not as cheerful as the night before. "I talked to him," she announced. "Told me to mind my own business and let him run the ship."

"Anyway," said Carter, his mouth stubborn, "I'm not going to let you get on the *Mariposa* alone. I'll transfer with you and help you fight this thing out."

Mrs. Alexander gazed at her nephew curiously. "That gives me an idea. I think I know how we can keep Wanda with us until we get to Honolulu. No, no, don't ask me. I'll disclose my plan to-night, after the concert."

That day was one of the most perfect in Wanda's life. She and Barton Carter played deck tennis, swam in the huge pool, rested in the bright sun on deck, chatted gayly and recklessly about nothing. Wanda felt that she might as well enjoy herself while she could. To her amazement, she realized that she no longer felt the slightest resentment against Carter for his actions of the day before. She had no intention, however, of permitting him to accompany her back to San Francisco. This was to be their last day together. To-morrow they would part and she would never see him again. What happened to her mattered little. She didn't seem to care much, one way or the other now. To-day was hers, and she meant to make the most of it.

As Wanda prepared to take her turn on the concert program that night, she realized that her brief holiday would soon be over.

She dreaded the moment when it

would be necessary to tell Barton Carter that she did not want him to return to San Francisco with her. It seemed incredible when she recalled how short a time she had known Barton. She felt as though she had known him for ages. The thought of parting with him tugged at her heart, but she forced a smile to her lips and waited for the opening bars of her number.

The music crashed, and she spun slowly out onto the stage. The audience, she saw, was a brilliant one—well-dressed, cheerful, and in a receptive mood. Well, she would give them the best she had.

A hush settled over the crowd as Wanda flung herself into the routine of the dance. Overhead spotlights followed her slim young form, amber floods beat down on her golden head. Around and around she went, each move a picture, one graceful pose melting into the next. Wanda had the gift. She could dance. The audience sensed it and sat breathlessly as she finished in a sweeping glide across the stage to stop, balanced on rigid toes, in the final gracious bow to the crowd. The curtain glided softly down.

She could hear the thunder of applause beating against the curtain, and felt that quiet satisfaction of the artist who knows she has performed well. She hoped Barton would understand. She had danced for him rather than for the audience. As if her thoughts had conjured him into reality, he appeared in the wings accompanied by a thickset, red-faced old man who seemed to be bulging out of the gold-braided uniform he wore. The captain, Wanda guessed.

"Captain Johnson wants to congratulate you"—Barton came forward, both hands outstretched. "He says yours was the best number on the program, in fact, the most beau-

tiful dance done on the *Gemini* since she was launched."

"That's right, young lady," boomed Captain Johnson, and held out a hand. "Mighty pretty dance."

"Thank you, sir." As she smiled at him, Wanda realized that the captain was not aware that she was the stowaway who was to be sent back to San Francisco the following day.

"The ship," Captain Johnson was telling her, "is yours. Make yourself at home, young lady."

"A broad statement, captain," chuckled Barton, his eyes twinkling. "She might take you up on it some time. Suppose she wanted to travel with you as a guest of the company? What would you do about that?"

The captain's booming laugh echoed through the wings. "Any girl who can dance like that is always welcome on my ship," he announced. "I'm an old man and I've traveled all over the world, and I've seen many a dancer in my time, but her performance to-night gave me more pleasure than I've had for many a year." He patted Wanda's shoulder clumsily. "If you're ever in trouble or need a friend, you come to me," he said gruffly. "Well, I got to be on the bridge now."

He left them, and Barton grinned after him like a small boy. "What a surprise he's going to get in the morning!" he chuckled. To Wanda he said: "Get your coat and let's go on deck. It's a grand night. Feels like Honolulu already."

Barton found a bench on the boat deck where they could sit and watch the wake of the ship, twin lanes of foamy white wandering back over the dark surface of the sea. A gentle wind hummed overhead. The great liner lifted and rolled with soothing rhythm; the bright stars rocked and swayed overhead in time with the motion of the ship.

For a long time Carter sat silent, a cigarette glowing faintly in the dark. Then he took Wanda's hand in his own, and began in a quiet voice: "I can't believe that it was only yesterday we met, that I went into the shower and found it occupied. I'll never forget how you looked, Wanda darling. Sort of shy and afraid and bewildered. I think you were even blushing."

"Well, I don't usually meet young men in showers," she answered.

"What does it matter how people meet?" asked Barton. "To-night I feel that you and I are alone on this ship."

"I feel it, too," Wanda admitted. "Just the two of us alone with the sea and the stars. I want to shut my eyes and stop life right now."

"Wanda, darling." Barton put his arm around her and held her close, her head on his shoulder. She nestled against him, trembling at the feel of his arm about her. His cigarette went over the rail in an arc of fire. He put one hand under her chin and tilted her head back. "Darling," he said softly, "don't you know what I'm trying to say? I love you, Wanda. I have from the beginning, and I always will."

She opened her eyes and looked up at his lean young face. "And I," she admitted so softly, that he had to lean closer to hear, "I love you, Barton."

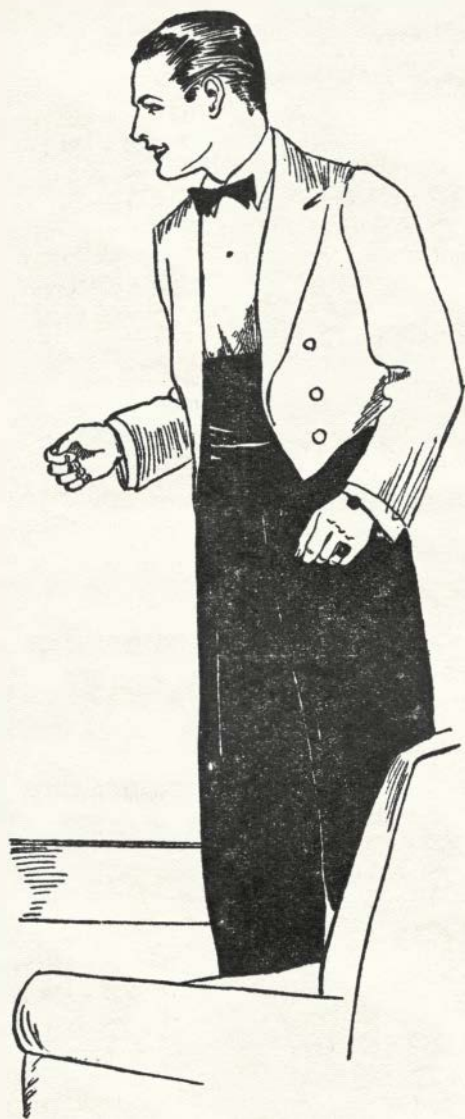
And then his lips were on hers, warm and eager. His arms were about her, crushing her close. For a moment she clung to him, glorying in his lean hardness, his masterful masculinity. Then, breathless, she pushed him away. "I didn't want you to do that," she protested. "I didn't mean to tell you how I felt. I can't let you go back to San Francisco with me. It wouldn't be fair to either of us. I'm nobody, and



Wanda's fresh young lips brushed the captain's grizzled face warmly. "See here," said Barton with mock severity, "next time you kiss a man, you ask my permission—unless it happens to be me!"

you're somebody very important in the Islands. We must say good-by to-night, Barton, forever. No, no, don't try to kiss me again. I couldn't stand it if you did."

"You really love me?" he asked in an awed voice. "I don't deserve it. I'm not worthy of your love. I've led a useless, ambitionless life, drifting about from one thing to an-



other. But now I'm going to amount to something, for you. Tell me again, Wanda. Say that you love me. Nothing else matters."

"I do, I do," she cried, and before she could protest, she was in his arms again. This time she did not resist. What did it matter? In the morning she would be gone. Never again would she meet anybody like Barton. Why not enjoy the mo-

ment to the fullest? It was all hopeless, of course, but surrender was so sweet that she clung to him childishly.

After a while he sighed, and still holding her close, began to talk softly. "It's real, all right. We might as well face it, Wanda, and make some plans. We belong to each other and that's all there is to it. You're the loveliest, most adorable creature in the world, and I'm going to treasure you the rest of my life. We'll——"

Wanda felt his arms tighten fiercely about her. She heard him gasp in triumph. "Wanda, darling," he cried excitedly. "I've got it. Captain Johnson won't send you back on the *Mariposa*. He wouldn't dare."

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"We'll be married as soon as we get to Honolulu"—giving her a bear-like hug. "I've got a bungalow on a private beach on the other side of the island where we'll go for our honeymoon. Nobody within miles of us—just ourselves and an old Japanese cook who's been in the family for years. We'll lie on the beach in the hot sun; we'll swim at night in the moonlight; and, darling, I'll smother you in leis—the sweet, heady fragrance of tropical flowers hung around your neck, darling. You'll love Hawaii, Wanda sweet."

"But we've known each other for such a short time," protested Wanda. "Are you sure—— I mean, what will your aunt say?"

"Aunt Jane will be delirious with joy, darling," Barton assured her.

"But you've forgotten," said Wanda in a small voice, "that I'm a stowaway. I'm going to be sent back to San Francisco in the morning."

"Wait a minute," cut in Barton eagerly. "Didn't the captain say

that if you were ever in trouble to come to him? That's the answer, Wanda."

They found Mrs. Alexander in the corner of the bar, sipping champagne. Barton led Wanda proudly up to her. "Aunt Jane," he began, "Wanda has consented to marry me, as soon as we get off the boat in Honolulu."

Mrs. Alexander put down the fragile wine glass and beamed at the young couple. "So you've finally come to your senses, Barton! I thought you'd get around to it before the evening was over."

"We're going to see the captain, now," Barton told her. "Wanda has a favor to ask—a very important favor."

"Good luck, my dears," smiled Mrs. Alexander. "Let me know what he says."

Captain Johnson was in his cabin when Wanda knocked timidly on the door. A gruff voice bade her enter. Holding tightly to Barton's hand, she pushed the door and went in.

"So it's you, is it?" Captain Johnson's collar was open, and he was smoking a short, black pipe. He grinned good-naturedly at his visitors and motioned them to chairs. "Come to ask me a favor already, I'll bet," he growled. "Well, out with it. I'm a man of my word. What do you want?"

"I want to go to Honolulu," began Wanda meekly.

"What, what?" spluttered the captain. "Of course you're going to Honolulu. Ship can't go anywhere else. What are you talking about? Are you trying to play a joke on an old man?"

"It's no joke," said Wanda softly. "I've got an offer of a good position in Honolulu. Barton is willing to employ me for life."

"You're going to marry him?"

Captain Johnson chuckled. "I suspected it. Watched many a romance bloom at sea. When I saw the way he looked at you, I knew something like this was going to happen."

"But you don't understand," faltered Wanda. "I—I'm the stow-away."

"You what?" Captain Johnson bounced out of his chair, puffing furiously at his pipe. "A nice girl like you a stowaway? I never heard of such a thing. What do you mean by coming to me like this? I'm a ship's officer and my duty is clear. I've already radioed the *Mariposa*. Now you've got me into a devil of a position. Got yourself into a mess, too, but you picked a pretty good man for a husband. Well, well, guess there's only one thing I can do. Got to think up a wedding present of some kind for you."

He cocked his head on one side and squinted one eye, blowing out a great cloud of smoke. "Tell you what I'll do. Finish the trip as my guest. How's that for a solution? The captain can have a guest on board his own ship if he wants to."

"Oh, you darling," exclaimed Wanda. "I could kiss you for that."

"Harumph!" Captain Johnson barked fiercely. "My dear young lady, that's just what I was hoping for."

Wanda's fresh young lips brushed his grizzled face warmly. Her eyes were two radiant stars as she turned to Barton.

"Next time you kiss a man, Mrs. Carter," the young man said with mock severity, "you ask my permission—unless it happens to be me!"

Then she was in his arms again, and regardless of the captain's presence, their lips met for a breathlessly sweet moment.



Men Don't Gossip

By Vida T. Adams

APRIL, trapped among the decorative, fresh-cut spruce trees banked on the curve of her aunt Emylie's mahogany stairway, listened and shivered.

She tried to tell herself that her ears were deceiving her. Men didn't gossip like that! They wouldn't tear a girl to tatters—not on the night of her *début*!

But the confidential voice continued, soaring up to her clearly.

"It's the truth," the voice in-

sisted. "For the girl's sake, they've soft-pedaled the newspapers, but April's flat! Not a cartwheel in the old pocketbook! Her father took the count in Wall Street and passed on, and this aunt Emylie's trying to carry out his wishes. You know, marry the girl to some rich fool who can keep her in the style to which she is accustomed."

Jim Barnet's voice! April had met Jim and his sister, Jill, when she was visiting with her aunt at

Bar Harbor. Jill had fallen hard for Lymert Palmer and Jim tried to help her snare him. But Lymert, from the first, had steered his clear-eyed way around the snares to his objective and that objective had been April.

Was Jim talking to Lymert now? April shuddered at the possibility.

"I should have told Lymert sooner about the mess of dad's estate," she agonized. But she'd kept putting it off. Not that she suspected her lack of money would mean anything to Lymert. Having so much himself, she believed her own loss of financial standing would make no difference to him. But she dreaded the thought of mentioning such a practical thing as money to him. Instinctively, she felt that it would mar the sheer beauty of her romance.

But now a frantic urgency seized her. She must find Lymert immediately, tell him first, before the gossip spread to him.

From the alcove below, his unmistakable vibrant baritone came to her ears. "Thanks, Jim," he said.

"I wouldn't tell you at all," hastened Jim's voice, "but I hate to see a pal hooked."

White-lipped, April fled three more steps out of earshot. She stopped, trembling, her hands suddenly moist. Oh, why had she put off telling Lymert herself? Now he'd think she'd tried to deceive him. He'd despise her. He had an unusually gentle nature, but with it went a quiet firmness of will, unobtrusive, but unyielding in all questions of principle. He hated trickery or falseness of any kind. He wouldn't mind her loss of money, but he'd mind her not telling him.

What Jim had said was true. Of her father's estate, only mining stock remained. The girl's lawyer

had explained to her that, with gold prices climbing, the mines might be reopened, but the stock at present was worthless.

Penniless, April had found it hard to keep her chin up at first. Trained to a world of unlimited spending money, she had struggled, bewildered, to find herself. Her father's last wishes hadn't helped any. He had insisted that she have her *début*. April felt that she should be looking for a job. She spoke to Aunt Emylie about it after her father was gone.

"Leila Fair's aunt runs a resort in California. She's always needing hostesses. I could write to her."

Aunt Emylie snorted. "I wouldn't think of it. I promised your father I'd see you through your *début* and I'm not one to go back on my word!"

So sponsored by her aunt, April had spent a season in a whirlwind of bridge luncheons, theater parties and teas. She had danced her way through a dozen pairs of slippers at Bar Harbor and Newport. She had worn out a trunkful of Parisian sports models yachting, playing tennis and horseback riding. Her slim, young body emerged a lovely golden tan after long hours spent on exclusive Florida beaches. Through it all April was unhappy, restless. She kept thinking, "What a squandering of time and wasted effort!"

Then, at an exclusive moonlight beach supper, she met Lymert Palmer. At once, life became good. Looking into Lymert's strikingly clear blue eyes, she could not name the feeling of exaltation that swept her. Realization that he, too, felt the golden web of fascination weaving between them increased her feeling of treading stars.

Throughout the remaining days of her season, there was the magic spell

of his presence. When the time came for them all to return to New York, April felt the crystallization of his interest.

"I've been slow," he confessed, "but I'll be seeing you in New York. I know just the spot where my father and mother became engaged."

April knew then that she should tell him about her father's estate, but she could only cling to his hand a little tighter. His father's romance had been one long, lovely idyl and Lymert wanted to follow in his footsteps, even to the place of engagement. Before such idealism, how could she drag in money matters?

At home, Aunt Emylie, hailing the budding romance as the glorious climax to her campaign for her niece, began her preparations for the coming-out ball. She spent thousands of dollars to transform her New York residence into a winter forest scene, with lights spraying the snow-laden trees and cunningly hidden tables for a tête-à-tête. She hired two of the leading orchestras of the city. Every known delicacy was served in the icicle-hung grotto into which the dining room had been transformed.

"Lymert can be proud," she told April. "No débutante in New York ever enjoyed such a lavish coming-out ball."

But April, forcing her trembling legs to return her now to the floor, suddenly felt the utter futility of it all. Her anxious eyes scanned the bobbing heads below her. There was such a crowd! How could she ever find Lymert?

She saw Jim Barnet making a dash for her, but could not dodge him.

"I'm looking for Lymert," she told him, as he whirled her into the densest floor space.

"Why don't you give my sister, Jill, a chance? She knew him before you did. Went abroad on the same boat. Besides, his family's proud. Probably wouldn't take kindly to a penniless girl."

She yanked herself from his arms. "And they say men don't gossip!" she hurled at him. Through the crowd she darted, only to be pulled again into the dance by another dash from the stag line. From one partner to another she went, but all the while her long-lashed, dark eyes searched for a pair of broad shoulders and a shock of wavy hair the color of a newly

minted penny. But she didn't see them anywhere.

From across the room, the agitated face of her aunt caught her eye, bringing her sharply to.

Forcibly, she pulled herself from her partner's arms. "You'll excuse me. Something's wrong. My aunt is beckoning to me."

Through the crowd she wove, her heart heavy with an increasing forboding of trouble.

"Honey, where've you been?" Aunt Emylie's hands gripped the girl's arm. "Lymert was looking all over for you. He's had a message from Paris. His mother's dreadfully sick. They cabled for him to come at once. He said to say good-by and you'd hear from him."

April's hand flew to her throat. "Gone! He was here fifteen minutes ago! Couldn't he wait?"

Her aunt shook her head.

"His boat sailed at midnight. He



looked dreadfully white! Poor boy!"

"But he could have written me a note." Motionless, April stood, her face puckered, her slender hands knotted into fists. "It's a trick to let me down easy," she breathed. "I overheard Jim tell him I'd lost my money. Lymert ran away. He'd be embarrassed presenting his family with a penniless fiancé. Oh, I told you this début was a mistake. Giving me the appearance of social position, when I should, instead, be out looking for a job."

She stood like marble, her eyes dark coals in a pallid face. Aunt Emylie, her own features a mirror of consternation as such an awful climax to her campaign dawned upon her, whirled the girl about.

"April, go to your room for a half hour! You must get control of yourself. All these people here! You know how gossip spreads!"

Before the mirror in her boudoir, April stared back at the white-faced stranger reflected there. Slowly she began to unfasten the rhinestone clasps at the shoulders of her tulle gown.

She didn't know when the feeling of flight took hold of her. It must have been when she was kicking off the silver slippers. They seemed to mock and challenge her wretchedness. Penniless, she shouldn't be wearing useless silver slippers. Nor should she have entertained hopes of winning Lymert. He was a star, she a small earth grub. The sooner she got to the task of grubbing out her living, the easier to bear would be the racking pain in her heart.

Slow fingers became frantic ones. She got into a plain travel dress and packed a bag, folding in the sensible clothes that a girl about to earn her living should wear. Then she

hurriedly wrote a brief note to Aunt Emylie.

Going to California. Expect to get job as hostess. Don't try to trace me, write, or forward mail. Will write when I've got a new grip on things and the past is forgotten.

As the train sped on its way to the coast, April thought of the note with satisfaction. Aunt Emylie would respect her wishes. She wouldn't care to bother much further with a niece who had so humiliated her by disappearing in the middle of her coming-out party.

But it was a long trip to California—excruciating hours when she worked to steel her mind against the memory of Lymert's broad shoulders, of his rich baritone going hoarse and throaty in their more intimate moments. By closing her eyes she could see the flash of his quick smile, the adoring manner in which he leaned across the table, or danced with her.

She told herself that she was going where nobody would recognize her. She'd make friends on merit only, start life anew. She had no qualms about her business qualifications. Social experience had given her the poise a hostess needed. In her Junior League work, she had learned typing and office routine.

Nor did her confidence in herself weaken when, having arrived at her journey's end, she found the resort of Leila's aunt to be big and imposing, set high upon a hill overlooking the river, with a phalanx of cottages and tents to the river beaches.

It was raining. The wind howled about the eaves of the resort. Backed by tall redwoods, the place resembled an impressive citadel. But April, trim in her magenta-colored raincoat and béret, charged undaunted up the wide veranda stairs.



"Lymert's gone to Paris!" Motionless, April stood there. "I don't believe his mother is sick. It's a trick to let me down easy. I overheard Jim tell him I'd lost my money. Lymert ran away."

She pressed the bell and stood waiting. Through the huge glass doors she could see an enormous fireplace, the flames leaping hos-

pitably over a redwood log. There were chairs, wonderfully homy-looking in the flickering light.

"Well," said a voice behind her,

"does the place pass inspection?"

April withdrew her scrutinizing eyes from the glass panels. Despite her every effort to stop it, a slow flush reddened her face to the color of a ripe tomato. She was conscious of the man's tall, lanky body, of his hair, auburn in color, of sensitive lips, and glasses over pale-blue eyes. The man was opening the door. She stood tongue-tied.

"Won't you come in?" he asked, faintly sarcastic.

Hastily, April stepped past him into the room. "I'm a friend of Leila Fair's. I'm looking for Leila's aunt, Mrs. Fair." Instinctively, she stretched out her chilled hands to the warmth of the crackling flames.

The man stepped over to a door and opened it. "Mrs. Fair! Visitor!"

Presently, Leila's aunt came out, astonishment in her widened brown eyes.

"Why, April Mauer! What are you doing here in the dead of winter? I thought you were home, enjoying a début!"

April's cheeks reddened even more furiously. She wanted to be unknown, work and live by merit only. Here was Leila's aunt spilling everything!

"I came out for a change of scene," she blurted, "and Leila said you were always needing hostesses!"

"But not in the heart of winter, honey." Mrs. Fair continued to look her astonishment. "Why didn't you write?" She paused, noting the girl's stricken, flushed face. Her experienced eyes twinkled with understanding. It was, of course, a broken love affair. No girl in her senses would make such a cross-country trek otherwise. She put her arm about the girl's slender shoulders.

"But let me introduce you to Bert Michael! His family were pioneers in this part of the country, and he's

working by means of an irrigation project to regain the family standing. Bert, April is the chum of my niece in New York."

Bert stood, feet apart, filling his pipe with tobacco. "Débutante, eh? Bored with dancing and dining! So you want a job. I suppose you can't type?"

"I can not only type, but I can write shorthand!" flared April.

His eyes dwelt coolly on the rich tailoring of her costume, the quiet costliness of her accessories.

"You must be George Mauer's daughter—the aluminum magnate, they called him——"

"He died over a year ago," interposed Mrs. Fair hastily.

Bert's eyes took on a peculiar gleam. He had a large nose with a drooping tip. It seemed to droop and draw even more cautiously inward.

"If you really can and want to work," he said slowly, "I need a secretary badly."

"A trial's all I ask," answered April.

Bert's eyes traveled again over her petite figure.

"We'll start to-morrow morning."

April could scarcely keep the joy that flooded her from registering with too much embarrassment on her face. Her first job, landed as easily as that! Why, it wasn't hard, this facing the world! All she had to do was to keep her chin up and work for the breaks. She smiled, not realizing that the full battery of her elated eyes, coupled with two elusive dimples in her velvety cheeks, were something to stagger a man.

Nor did she attach any significance to the fact next morning that the moment she appeared downstairs, there sat Bert, waiting to show her the day's routine. In carefully creased knickers and white

turtle-neck sweater that made him look appealingly younger, he escorted her down to his office, a snug cabin facing the highway.

"Here," he explained, "is the telephone to answer, supplies to check, callers to receive." He pointed out a typewriter, showed her where she'd find paper and carbon.

"My water conservation project swings into action as soon as the river begins to fall. Preliminaries have to be completed now, farmers signed up, surveys made."

When at last the day's work was done, April's fingers were cramped with fatigue. Her back ached from the long, unfamiliar session of typing. But the occupation of her mind had crowded out memories of Lymert.

It was only after dinner when, relaxed before the fire, she caught her ears waiting for the old, familiar ring of the telephone heralding the rich bur of his voice. Throwing a coat over her shoulders, she wandered restlessly out to the veranda.

The night was clear—a shivering, glittering world after the storm of the day before. The girl leaned against the veranda rail, drinking in the sharp, fresh air.

"Like to walk down to the river?" It was Bert who had followed her out.

Without looking at him April murmured, "Yes." Her voice was tense and unsteady. On a stormy night like this, at a party in New York, she had stood with Lymert at the patio wall of a penthouse and stared out over the drenched, glittering city. She remembered the gleam of Lymert's coppery head above the black of his tuxedo, the protective feel of his arm about her shoulders.

She stumbled along beside Bert down to the river. He took her arm.

Lymert never pinched like that. Lymert had a way of cupping his hand under her elbow—a warm, steady guiding. With an effort, she forced herself to concentrate on the river.

Gleaming in the moonlight, the icy, blue-green flood stormed past at her feet, white-capped where it sprayed against rocks, more menacing in the dark onrush of deeper water.

"I had no idea winter made things go primitive like this," she said, creeping instinctively closer to Bert.

His arm closed about her shoulders. He drew her tight to his side so that she could feel his muscles hard and taut against her.

"You know, I'm head over heels about you," he blurted.

Her start, her instinctive tug away from him told him he was precipitate, but his hold of her did not relax.

"Don't pull away. Take it easy. Let things take their course," he told her.

"But I've had enough of love. I want to forget," she cried, sickened by this new turn of events.

"Don't you know that the way to mend a broken heart is to start a new romance?" asked Bert.

"Why start what might not be finished?" she wanted to know, thinking of her own broken love dreams.

He clasped her shoulders, whirled her about so that she faced him. "Let the risk be mine," he said quietly. "Meantime, we'll work alongside each other and get better acquainted."

"Fair enough." April forced a light laugh. She was past caring what happened to her. Anything was better than the horrible empty ache that persisted at the bottom of her heart.



"April," Bert whispered, "I'm crazy about you! I don't want to rush you, but I wonder if you've changed any toward me."

April threw herself into her work, tabulated long lists of names, typed dozens of letters and columns of figures. The days were long, and the nights heavy with fatigue. Through them, like an ever-thickening ribbon ran the thread of Bert's interest in her. He brought wild flowers for her desk, helped her with folding let-

ters at the end of the day, and in the coldest weather, compounded hot drinks over the top of the oil stove.

Late one bleak afternoon, Bert paused at the side of her desk.

"How'd a horseback ride to Armstrong Woods suit you?"

April saw that he wore riding



breeches and leggings. She thought of her exquisite, imported riding outfit left with Aunt Emylie in the East. She'd worn it last when she rode with Lymert in Central Park.

"I suppose you're going to plead no clothes," he laughed, reading her thoughts. He produced his white, turtle-necked sweater. "I persuaded Mrs. Fair to give me her slacks. Put them on in the dressing room. I'll wait."

April had no further excuse. Through the somber winter afternoon, they followed the trail that lay parallel with the highway to the woods. In the tomblike stillness of the giant redwood forest, Bert stopped the horses, and dismounting, reached up his arms and pulled her from her horse. He kept his arms around her.

"April," he whispered, "I'm crazy about you! I don't want to rush

you, but I wonder if you've changed any toward me."

She stood quivering in his arms. By shutting her eyes, she could imagine they were Lymert's arms. But Lymert was bigger, more virile. He'd had a sweet way of holding her penned in his arms, giving her the feeling of freedom, yet of being utterly possessed. Suddenly, it seemed to her as if she could not endure the flooding memories for another moment.

Whirling, she yielded to the pressure of Bert's arms and deliberately shut her ears to the rising voice of reason, to the protests of her heart. Oh, surely if she played at love hard enough, she could convince herself finally that this last love was the most real! Bert needed her in his work and surely there was nothing so satisfying as to be needed.

She raised her lips to Bert's. But there was none of the complete abandon with which she had surrendered to Lymert's caresses. The world didn't whirl about her thundering ears. Under the shower of Bert's kisses, she felt calm, like a person in a play. There wasn't even the hard pumping of her blood.

But Bert seemed not to notice. His eyes gleamed with a peculiar fanatical light. Through the somber winter evening, they followed the trail back to the resort. He surveyed the farm land about them.

"I have fully three-fifths of these farmers signed up now, but we need money to start work on the reservoir. You and I together— We needn't tell your relatives we are engaged until we are married. And that could be soon—you out here alone. There is no need for us to wait."

April laughed shakily. "You sound jumbled, darling. As if you

had me mixed up with the farmers and your irrigation project."

His swift flush startled her. Uneasily, she wondered why he made her no answer, but rode in silence the rest of the way home. Only when he lifted her from her horse, did he unbend.

"I can't help worrying some," he apologized. "It might be hard for a society girl like you to understand, but it costs plenty to put over a project like mine. But when it's finished, I'll have acres of good farm land, this resort'll have high water, good swimming, and I'll be somebody. My grandfather founded this town, and I'll make his name respected again in these parts."

Arm about her, he propelled her up the veranda steps. "Mistress of this resort! How'd you enjoy that? Of course, you'll want to remodel the place, modernize it."

"But I thought Mrs. Fair owned it!"

"She does now, but it used to be my family home. I thought we could buy it after we were married and live there. You seemed to like it. I thought—"

April felt a rush of warmth for him. It touched her that he wanted to found his new home where his father first had sunk the family roots. She squeezed his hand.

"Let's tell Mrs. Fair we're engaged!" she urged. "I feel hazy, like in a dream. If I tell some one, it'll seem more real."

He was so silent that she looked up. She saw his face was pale, almost drawn in the flickering light from the fireplace.

"Let's keep it dark until afterward, as I said before," he pleaded. "I'm superstitious. Afraid something'll go wrong. Imagine the lovely April Mauer engaged to me!"

"What's that?"

Mrs. Fair stood in the doorway, and April, straight and boyish in her slacks and too-large turtle-necked sweater, laughed aloud.

"You overheard, so you might as well get the whole story. Bert and I are engaged," she announced.

Staring into Mrs. Fair's widened eyes, she felt suddenly cold. Wildly, she thought if she laughed enough, she could down that icy feeling. She could keep the dead ashes in her heart stirred up to a convincing warmth for Bert.

"Why—why, I never dreamed —" Mrs. Fair was kissing April. "Why, my dear!"

The kiss was cold, too. Suddenly, April was panic-stricken. Mrs. Fair was standing there, giving a perfect imitation of a well-bred person shocked. Probably she thought this affair with Bert was a rebound. Well, she'd show her it was the real thing. Quickly, April snuggled up to Bert.

"Bert has all the answers to anything any one wants to ask," she smiled.

But Mrs. Fair seemingly had no questions to ask. She brought out brandied peaches and fruit cake, and served them an impromptu engagement-party dinner.

Afterward, although it had started to mist again April and Bert went into town to the show.

It was only a small country theater, but it was to April a safe haven from Mrs. Fair's questioning eyes.

Seated in the darkness, with Bert's shoulder chummily touching hers, the girl could not quench the feeling of unreality. Bert was holding her hand, but his eyes were glued on the picture unfolding on the screen. At the theater with Lymert, they had been so engrossed in each other, that neither had known afterward what the picture was about. Chok-

ing back an involuntary sob, April concentrated on the screen.

But the ghostly memory of Lymert persisted during the trek home through the mist of the winter night. Everything seemed to conspire to increase her agony of mind—the smell of damp leaves in the air, the black of the night, the light turned low in the living room. Lymert's voice had been husky on rainy nights. The clean smell of the damp tweed of his overcoat rose uncannily to her nostrils. She had felt so safe with him, no matter how stormy the night.

"You're sniffing," cried Bert. "You're catching a cold." Over her protests, he made her a hot lemonade. "I'm sorry," he said as he handed it to her, "that you found it necessary to tell Mrs. Fair of our engagement. It rushes things."

"But she overheard, anyway. I don't see that it makes much difference, anyhow!" April was laughing again, a sound like high, shrill bells.

"Let's not quarrel," said Bert hastily, turning her toward the stairs. "You run on up to your room. I must have you fit for tomorrow. All that surveying data to copy!"

But even in the broad daylight of morning, April had the feeling of walking in an irritating dream. Bert sat at his desk, cleaning his eyeglasses.

"At noon we go to the county courthouse to file our intentions," he announced.

"But it's raining. And why the hurry?"

Bert tried on his glasses. "We told Mrs. Fair. Might as well finish it up." He rose, came over and kissed her lightly. "Why wait?"

April tore off her typewriter cover. Why, indeed, should they

wait? Lymert was in Paris, probably going about with other girls. A great hatred of him welled in her heart. That he should hurt her so—ringing her heart dry, leaving her only a shell to offer this other man!

It was a blur, that ride through the sleeting rain to the courthouse.

"If it weren't for that three-day law, we could be married to-day," said Bert.

Married! For a moment, a blind, unreasoning panic gripped April, but summoning every atom of will, she forced herself to see the sunny side. She recalled Lymert's slowness.

"I'll be seeing you in New York," he had said. "I know just the spot where my father and mother became engaged." At the time, she had thought his sentiment beautiful. Now she knew it for what it was. Bert was different. There were no cobwebs in his romance.

Back at the office, Bert put the license in his desk. "Two more days and you'll be Mrs. Bert Michael," he exclaimed. "Then we'll get down to actual business with our project. There'll be nothing in the way."

"I seem to be part and parcel with your work," she laughed.

He kissed the rueful lines between her eyes, cupping her face in his hands. "Wouldn't any one be mixed up, engaged to April Mauer?" he asked. "But now to work. Everything must be caught up to allow time for some sort of honeymoon, sweet."

They plunged into the afternoon's dictation. Two hours later, the telephone rang.

"It's Mawson!" cried Bert, when he had hung up. "He's held off signing up until now. I'd better get over to his place before he changes his mind." He swung into his over-

coat. "I'll call for the mail on the way back. You type out the letters and I'll sign them later."

April was left alone in the office. Busy at first, she didn't notice the passing of time, until the lengthening afternoon shadows darkened her work. She rose, switched on the light and looked at her wrist watch. Five o'clock! But probably Mawson was detaining Bert.

The noise of her old-fashioned typewriter broke the silence with an irritating, staccato sharpness. Outside it began to rain once more. April got up again and shoved a fresh redwood log into the stove. Her back was to the door, but instinct warned her. She whirled around.

Lymert stood in the doorway.

How big he was—more broad-shouldered, more virile than ever! He held his hat in his hand. His hair glowed like a newly minted penny. His eyes, black with excitement, sought her out. He held out his arms.

April flew to him. She did not stop to think. She forgot everything except that he was there and love for him was not dead. It was swiftly a living, leaping flame of fire over which she had no control.

Her arms crept up about his neck. In wild abandon, her lips clung to his. She was laughing and crying at the same time. Close to his heart he held her, until the wild paroxysms had subsided. But she couldn't talk. She could only stare, her eyes misty, her lips trembling.

"Darling," he murmured at last, "how could you misjudge me so and run away, not answer my cablegrams or letters?"

"Misjudge you!" Then she recalled everything. "Jill's brother told you I had no money. I over-



She whirled around suddenly and saw Lymert standing in the doorway. He held out his arms. April flew to him. She did not stop to think. She forgot everything except that he was there and love for him was not dead.

heard and rushed down to explain. But you ran away to Paris and left a message with Aunt Emylie that your mother was sick!"

"My mother died even before I arrived in Paris," he said.

Slowly, as realization of her awful misjudgment of him came to her,

April's face whitened. It was true then. His mother had been dreadfully sick. She hung her head.

"I came back as soon as I could," Lymert explained. "Found all my letters at your aunt's, unopened and unforwarded by request. Your aunt showed me a letter from Mrs. Fair saying that she believed this Bert to whom you had engaged yourself, was a fortune hunter. I had my lawyer send him a letter, informing him of your poverty. It was spreading gossip, I know, but I had to have a quick weapon, knowing our happiness was at stake. I came by plane."

"A fortune hunter? But he knows already that I have no money!"

"Did you tell him so?"

"No," April admitted. She recalled then his repeated references to her being April Mauer of the New York Mauers, his paying her no salary as yet. Undoubtedly, he believed that she was working to forget her broken romance. She remembered his rushing the marriage, wanting no one told, afraid some relative would intervene perhaps, and his mixing her up with his work, so that even when they became engaged, his work had been uppermost in his mind. And he'd wanted to buy the resort after the wedding, with the money she was supposed to have. She knew that now. She'd been blind, too heartsick to judge this new romance wisely. She'd been stupid and gullible.

Lymert got her coat and hat from the rack in the corner. "I remember you wore this hat to the races with me," he observed. "Bright Hope won, and you got two dollars for place. A good hat to be married in. We'll stop off at Reno for the ceremony."

She stood like a child while he bundled her into her coat. "Sounds

like a proposal, and it isn't New York or your father's special place."

"It's my own special place," said Lymert. "Trying to follow in my father's footsteps, I almost wrecked both our lives. I should have known every one has to blaze his own love trail." He held her off, his eager eyes taking in every beloved feature. "And you don't have to face Bert again. Mrs. Fair told me about his project. I slipped him a second letter with a check. He's probably still standing in the post office, a letter in each hand, torn between anger at you for almost duping him, and joy at getting the money."

Lymert's arms slipped about her in the old sweet way, giving her the feeling of freedom, yet of being utterly possessed. "We're honeymooning at your mine. I might as well tell you that with gold prices climbing, it looks very much as if you might again enjoy a private income."

"With you backing the mine, I probably shall," whispered April. "Oh, you must believe that I did want to tell you how poor I was. But everything was so perfect, I kept putting off the bad news——"

"But I knew of your penniless state when I first met you," said Lymert. "Don't you know that the harder you work to suppress material for gossip, the sooner it leaks out? Every one in Wall Street knew it. You were silly to let it annoy you. Now look here, darling, you must promise me now that if anything ever troubles you again, you'll tell me about it, not run away!"

And April, her face snuggled in the sweet, damp tweed of his overcoat collar, promised, while the sheer ecstasy of again being in the arms of the only man she had ever loved poured over her bruised heart like a healing ointment.



The Marriage Of Melissa

By Phyllis Gordon Demarest

CHAPTER V.

WITHIN three days after that impetuous, reckless decision of Melissa's the project was in full swing. Forceful, vigorous as she knew him to be, Carmichael proved himself a man of action. He lost no time.

Nor did he evince much outward surprise at her sudden resolve. Indeed, Melissa wondered if life was capable of surprising Ned Carmichael. He seemed so much keener, sharper of wit than anything he could ever come in contact with—

a veritable bulwark of astuteness. He had never questioned her concerning her inner motives, emotions. He did not question her now. She was grateful for that.

When he suggested she leave Gorman's, she did so immediately. Her rent was paid, she still had a narrow hundred in

A SERIAL—Part III.

the bank. That would carry her through.

It seemed to Melissa that a high wall had erected itself about her heart, sheathing her hurt behind it. She was going on, despite Jay, despite Deborah and the wild, inex-

plicable thing they had done. Incredibly, that inherent streak of courage inside her seemed to bloom more strongly than ever, defiant in the face of frustration. But where was she going? To what end, what goal? It scarcely mattered. It was enough to have emerged victorious over stagnation.

Within a week Carmichael had completed rental arrangements on a Fifth Avenue shop in the Fifties. When Melissa saw the place, its hugeness and locality, misgiving shook her. Ought they not to begin on a lesser scale? But Carmichael laughed aside her fears. He knew nothing of lesser scales. With him it must be the best or nothing. It had always been like that.

And soon the most exclusive of interior decorators were at work night and day, turning the shop into a magic palace where milady's dreams of loveliness might be realized at their fullest extent.

Then at luncheon one day Carmichael introduced her to Nance Elton.

"Miss Elton," he explained carelessly, "happens to be a very old friend of mine, Lissa. She is going to act in the capacity of business manager for the shop. Naturally,

THE STORY SO FAR: The family of Melissa Darnell, society girl, loses its money and she goes to work in a gown shop. Wealthy Jay Moore asks her to marry him. Although in love with him, she refuses, telling him that she must be sure he really loves her and that his proposal is not merely a gallant act. Ned Carmichael, wealthy playboy, but with no background, becomes interested in Melissa and finally she accepts his invitations. Jay buys an evening gown from the shop and sends it to Melissa, saying that it is a birthday gift. Melissa refuses to accept it. They quarrel. Lonely, she accepts Ned's invitations. She goes to his apartment for dinner, wearing the dress which Jay had bought for her, but which she had borrowed from the shop. Ned wants to open a gown shop for her but she refuses his offer. In his apartment, she spills perfume down the front of the gown. Knowing she hasn't the money to buy the gown she is frantic. Ned pays for it. Jay comes to the apartment, intending to beg her to marry him. He sees the gown. Melissa explains but he does not believe her. The next morning she reads that he has married a friend of hers. Heartbroken, she accepts Ned's offer to back a gown shop for her.

you will need some one with Nance's expert business experience to advise you."

Melissa looked at Nance Elton, at her long, capable hands, the plain, clever face, and instantly the cloud of worry lifted from her shoulders. Despite the older woman's austere exterior, she felt the warmer thread of friendship beneath seeming to draw them together. Here, Melissa felt in the sudden exchange of smiles, was a person of character, understanding.

"Do you mind if I call you Nance?" she asked shyly on the first day they made the rounds of the wholesale establishments.

Nance's laugh was rich, exuberant.

"Of course not! I intended to call you Lissa, anyway. You're very young, aren't you?"

"Twenty-one. It doesn't seem young any more."

"I was thinking of Ned."

Faint color spilled into Melissa's cheeks. "We're friends."

"But you're in love with him?"

"I?" Melissa laughed, wholeheartedly. "No. Why should I be?"

"Most women are," Nance remarked cryptically.

Amazing the way the name of Ned Carmichael flung wide even the most

select doors to them. It became the open sesame to enchantment wherever murmured. Gowns—gowns—gowns, streams of them. Melissa's head spun.

"Ned," she wailed, "you're spending a fortune! Really, it's absurd! It isn't worth it—after all, it's just a gamble; a crazy one, at that!"

"Is it?" Carmichael shrugged easily. "I like gambling. When I was a little boy I could always throw the farthest pennies. I haven't lost the knack yet."

His undaunted enthusiasm for the venture left her not a little astonished. For the first time since she had known him that hard shell of sophistication, of worldly boredom, appeared in danger of cracking.

"You're like a kid with a new kite," she told him severely. And in the same instant a singular restlessness pervaded her being, while she wondered whether it was actually the shop which was his toy or she herself. But the next moment she had tossed the idea aside with scorn.

Never had Carmichael's laugh seemed more attractive and carefree.

"It's going high, that kite, Lissa! Watch it! We'll give New York something to talk about."

But New York was already talking. And not exactly in the manner expected. It was Lonnie Terrence who pointed this out to her. He called for her one afternoon, took her driving.

He was never anything but a grave young man. Yet to-day his sobriety contrasted keenly with the golden brilliance of the autumn day.

"Lissa, look here; it isn't any of my business, but you're not really going through with this insane idea of a gown shop? Don't you realize that with Ned Carmichael backing you people will——"

She heard her own laugh, brittle, uncaring. "Will what? Talk? An excellent incentive to business, Lonnie."

"You're not really like this," he said unhappily. "I think I ought to warn you. Carmichael has the reputation of being a dangerous man."

"So I've been told before. Well, perhaps I'm a dangerous woman."

"You're nothing of the kind. You're just a silly, hurt creature who foolishly imagines it's worth while ruining her whole future just because——"

"Just because her best girl friend happened to run off and marry the man she was in love with," Melissa cut in evenly. She stared straight ahead, her green hat shading her eyes. "By the way, I hear the bridal couple are honeymooning in Havana."

"Don't!" Only then did she notice the sudden whitening of his lips.

"I'm sorry," she said swiftly. "I know how awful it must be for you, Lonnie."

"For you, too."

Melissa was silent. Her own heart was so faint at the moment that she could gather no word of comfort to give him.

"I—I guess love is a game, all right," she said at last dimly. "Only sometimes you play too long at it and lose."

When he took her home Lonnie made one final, earnest effort.

"Lissa, please listen to me! You don't realize what you're doing. Nothing but trouble can come from any alliance with Ned Carmichael."

She shook her head, smiled gently. "Thanks, Lonnie. But I've started something, and I mean to finish it. You can't stop me."

Neither was she moved a few days later when her mother came in a



Lonnie made one final, earnest effort. "Lissa, please listen to me! You don't realize what you're doing. Ned Carmichael has the reputation of being a dangerous man. Nothing but trouble can come from any alliance with him."

flurried rush from Valeston, shocked, perturbed.

"And do you know where I read about it?" Mrs. Darnell was pac-

ing the living room of Melissa's apartment in seething excitement.

"In the gossip columns, of all things!"

"I like gossip columns." Melissa smiled, indulgent, cool. "I read them myself."

"Lissa, have you lost all sense of values? Have you forgotten you're a Darnell? And this awful man, Carmody, whatever his name is—why, it's an outrage!"

Melissa wound bare arms about long, lovely legs. She spoke quietly.

"I've forgotten everything else, mother, but the unholy desire to be more than mediocre in life. If the world is narrow enough and stupid enough to consider such an ambition outrageous——" Her words trailed off in a shrug. "I snap my fingers at the world!"

"The world," Mrs. Darnell said on a parting, exasperated shot, "has a habit of snapping back. Be careful, Lissa!"

But in the end she was forced to return to Valeston knowing that her mission had proved hopeless.

"Think, Lissa," Nance Elton said to her rapturously, "there are going to be women in Paris, in Cairo, even, who will wear your name on the label of their gowns! Doesn't it all thrill you? Why, one of these days you may be the most talked-of *couturière* in the whole world!"

"Perhaps," Melissa said, and she smiled strangely. Patou, Chanel, Darnell. Well, why not?

Then young Doyle telephoned one day from school.

"Say, sis, what the devil's all this talk about some guy opening up a dress store for you? Of course, I know anything you put your hand to is all right, but still it does seem kind of phony!"

"It is all right, Doyle. Strictly a business proposition," she soothed. "If ever I need any help, I'll remember I have a great big lump of a nineteen-year-old brother to protect me, and holler like mad!"

"Well"—grumbling but reconciled—"can't say I like the idea much. But I guess you know what you're up to. Anyway, people better not do any talking about you when I'm around."

Melissa set the receiver down, humming. She hummed quite a lot these days. A fierce, exultant little song of triumph. She had lost Jay, partly through her own fault, partly because another woman had taken advantage of a dangerous moment. But there was one thing she could still do. She could show them—yes, Jay, Deborah, all her fair-weather friends—a new Lissa Darnell. A brilliant, successful, dazzling Lissa Darnell, beside whom that old dashing self of hers would appear a mere shadow, a dim specter of sophistication.

Patou, Chanel, Darnell—why not?

The evening before the official opening of the shop to the public, Carmichael had arranged a private, formal affair for the selected few. Brazenly, Melissa had invited every one she had ever known. For days newspapers had blazed forth announcements of the grand opening.

And now the momentous evening had arrived. Now, now, Melissa told herself, it was beginning. Carmichael had kept his promise. He had carried out everything lavishly, extravagantly. Behind the drawn shades of the elaborate Fifth Avenue establishment of Lissa Darnell, gowns, flowers in flaming array of color shot forth their warm fragrance. Caterers were on hand, an orchestra with rich, swaying violins. Afterward there would be a manikin parade. New York was to see gowns the dazzling, unique quality of which only Paris could equal.

In the dressing room, behind thick

damask drapes, Melissa stood, a slender, trembling figure before the mirror.

Her gown was Carmichael's choice. A low-cut silver sheath, daringly original. Her only ornamentation was a band of stars wound through the shining, honey-colored hair. Beneath them her face gleamed, alabaster-pale, her mouth a full, startling flame. Yet only her eyes seemed truly alive. They were alive with a thousand doubts and fears—points of awed light darted through their green shadows.

When Carmichael came to her, his immaculate black and white seeming to accentuate the striking, unusual charm of his appearance, Melissa flung out cold hands to him.

"Ned, I—I'm scared! Frightened to death!"

"Stage fright, eh?" He was eying her appreciatively, his dark gaze bright. "Child, you're shaking!"

"I can't help it!" Almost, she was tempted to laugh at herself. "I've never felt so ill in my life."

Carmichael smiled slightly. He moved nearer, set his strong, brown hands against her bare shoulders. His tone was amused, drawling.

"Lissa, love, stop standing there looking so utterly scared and lovely. I'm half tempted to make love to you. And you wouldn't like that. Or would you?"

She had no words for the next glimmering moment of uncertainty. He was too close to her, she felt all the fundamental power of the man, like a secret, unresting river of fire running through him. It seemed to overwhelm her senses, petrify her thought with its intrinsic force.

Then abruptly, as she stood there motionless, he had his arms about her, bent his head. She had a dim impression of a streak of bluish light

across his dark hair, then all was surging, emotional blackness.

She knew that Carmichael was kissing her, that his lips had claimed hers, at first, oh, so gently, then with slow, underlying passion and driving energy. Yet she could not move. Once again, as on that night in the car, she experienced that strange, whirling sensation of color, a high, unearthly mystery of feeling.

She put her hands against the hard strength of his shoulders, pushed him from her. Stepping back, she was aware of a pulsating aliveness inside her, a pitched raciness permeating her blood.

She laughed unsteadily. "Careful, Ned! My—my dress!" Was that what he meant, really? Of course not. If it had been any other night but to-night, she would have struck that dark, insolent face, sought satisfaction against his audacity by pressing long nails deep into his flesh.

Carmichael stood looking at her, his eyes keen, narrowed slits above the high cheek bones. His smile came, a mocking flash of white teeth.

"Of course, my dear Lissa. I'd forgotten for the moment this was supposed to be strictly business between us."

When he had gone, his laugh still lingered upon the air like a sharp drift of cold wind.

Melissa leaned against the mirror, feeling that coldness infuse itself into her heart. Lashes almost together, she stared at the still-moving drapes. For the first time all those unheeded warnings rose up in a malevolent, wraithlike cloud to torment her.

An hour later she had forgotten that brief flicker of foreboding. The spacious magnificence of the shop—*her shop*—was crowded to overflow-

ing. Their friends, Ned's and hers, had turned out in full force, prompted, if by nothing else, she imagined, at least curiosity. She moved among them, an enticing silver vision of grace, chatting, friendly. Within her a high tower of triumph had reared itself. Already success was whirring bright wings against her ears.

Afterward, in the spotlight of the small stage, girls trailed across, displaying the lovely models. And Melissa, standing beside the quiet figure of Ned Carmichael, her whole body tensed, listened dimly to the whispered comments, the enraptured applause. In the soft glow everything seemed curious, wrapped in a gauze of wonderment.

Was this real?

Was this really the beginning of Lissa Darnell, gowns? It seemed incredible the great distance she had traversed since those difficult racking days at Gorman's. Jake Gorman was here to-night. He had come, obviously expecting to be patronizing, supercilious. He had remained to congratulate her, to bow awed over her slight fingers.

Within Melissa ran a mercurial exultation, a champagne river shimmering its way through her veins.

Suddenly she was aware of Carmichael beside her. His whisper:

"Told you you had that certain flare, my love!"

They were so close in the gay, packed room the broadcloth of his shoulder was a rough hurt against her own. She turned her head, and

in the golden dimness his face swung above hers, clean-cut, electric.

"Ned, I—I can scarcely believe it yet! Scarcely dare——" Her laugh was low, tingling. "Anyway, at least I'll be able to pay you back that wretched two hundred dollars I owe you!"

He was staring down at her, and the half light gave an almost Oriental tinge to his features. His lips moved back from his strong, even teeth. His grin had an enigmatic edge to it.

"Haven't you forgotten something, Lissa?"

She could not draw her eyes away. They just seemed fascinated by that dark, alien face.

"I don't think so. Forgotten what?"

"Accumulated interest." The grin

did not waver. But he turned then, gave himself over to a polite, rapt contemplation of the scene.

There was nothing Melissa could find to say. An appalling emptiness and fear was stalking a grim path across her glory.

Then the lights streamed on. The fashion show was finished. She had no need of the crowd flocking instantly around her to tell her it had met with glowing success. Tribute, acclaim, beat a victorious tattoo upon the very air about her.

Yet through it all, behind the fixed brilliance of her smile, ticked the ominous relentless memory of prophecy.

Then abruptly her heart stood still, and even the ticking ceased, drowned out in a sharper, more peri-



lous rush. The crowd had parted and a meticulously groomed figure in ivory velvet was standing before her. The familiar flash of the black sloe eyes, the vivid crimson of the mouth like a crushed poppy—Deborah Winters. But of course not—Deborah Moore now. That tiny, mistaken thought; that, and that alone, gave Melissa the swift, unaccountable ability to smile.

Then she was holding out both her hands, her chin lifted to a bright angle of defiance.

"But, darling Deborah!" she exclaimed quickly. "I didn't know you were back! How lovely of you to come!"

Deborah's eyes stared deep into hers for one piercing second. Then she drew her hands from Melissa's warm grasp, and her laugh came, high-pitched, self-conscious.

"I had to come—for the sake of old times, you know, Lissa. Our—our boat docked yesterday. Your things are delightful! I want to put in an order for at least a dozen gowns and—"

Melissa's interruption came airily, she felt as if that smile had glued itself to her lips.

"Oh, Miss Elton takes care of all that. I'll send her to you, when I find her. But how silly of me!" The smile clung even tighter now. It seemed the very prop of her salvation. "Silly not to wish you happiness, I mean. I do hope you'll be more than happy, my dear. Is Jay here? Excuse me, then. I must congratulate him, too."

She moved away, serenity, poise itself. Yet it seemed a miracle that the hot, wild behavior of her heart should have escaped Deborah, or any one else in the room, for that matter.

Then she saw him. He was standing a little apart from the others, a

cocktail held aimlessly in his hand. Even at a distance he seemed foreign to her, a stranger who had set himself away from her in a strange sphere. He did not even look like the same Jay. There was a faint, indefinable droop to his slim shoulders, his eyes looked as if they were tired of being gay. Suddenly, the torrents of her hurt gushed up and flooded out the blinding radiance about her. It was such a little light, after all, compared with the splendid, irrepressible effulgence of her love for Jay.

Melissa stood before him now. Deliberately she held out her hand. The touch of his fingers in the silence sent a cascade of ecstasy and pain coursing through her.

"I've just seen Deborah. It was kind of you both to come." Was the smile still there? She did not know, did not care. She heard her own voice, faint: "Jay, please, my hand—"

He had been staring down at her, but now at her reminder he released his hold swiftly. Yet his eyes did not change. They were the eyes of a drowning man who regards with maddening proximity the precious, unapproachable vision of life.

"Sorry, Lissa." His tone was short, stifled. "Only I'd forgotten you could look like that. With your eyes the color of stormy seas. And your mouth—your lovely, warm, generous mouth—"

"I—I came to congratulate you, Jay. Sincerely, I wish you all the happiness there is." But of what use to pit the small strength of desperate, pitiful phrases against a rushing tide? And it was all there, all that grand, limitless depth of emotion between them. Her heart was floundering in it. Jay's, too. She knew it. Felt the reflection of their oneness.

He lowered his gaze, as if he no longer dared look at her.

"Strange, inconceivable, mad, your wishing me happiness with some one else, Lissa. Didn't you know there wasn't any happiness without you?"

"Please, Jay, please!" But she was thinking: If I hadn't seen him again I wouldn't have known how smooth and full of light his hair is, the blueness of his eyes, the sensitive lift of his mouth. I wouldn't have known how the feel of him fills the room, fills me.

"No, let me finish. I looked for happiness out there, beneath the Havana moon. I only found you."

Her whisper came. "It's over for us, Jay."

He shook his head. "Love is never over, Lissa. Love is a rock, real love. Everything that seems to happen to it is merely so much water passing over the rock." He was so close now that his breath caressed her cheek. "Do you know how long and empty these weeks have been? But you couldn't know. And this is all that counts. Wanting each other and admitting it, and breathing the same air together and knowing how good living is because we're together."

She stepped back swiftly, color draining from her face.

"That might have been, Jay. But not now. Oh, I don't blame you for marrying Deborah. I've realized over and over again the thousand and one things that drove you to it. You—you'll forget in your marriage, and I'll forget in my work." Forlorn, stupid hope.

His eyes sought hers. "Lissa, why did you let Carmichael do this for you? Don't you realize how people must talk?"

She returned his gaze quietly. "There's nothing to talk about, Jay.

I can stand it. After all, why not? I've stood everything else."

A stinging pause. "That was cruel, Lissa. Yet you have the right. I didn't hold up very well under your test, did I?"

"Perhaps," she said faintly, "perhaps love is too fragile to be submitted to such things. You see, it goes to pieces in your hands, Jay"

"Lissa!" It was a cry from the heart of him now. "What are we doing? Deborah and myself—you and Ned Carmichael——"

She put her hand on his arm. "Steady, Jay!"

But her touch fired him. Suddenly he was speaking on a low rush.

"It can't last, this marriage. Surely you can see that! We were insane at the time, both of us. Deborah had quarreled with Lonnie, I with you. I tell you we were crazy with heartbreak! Lissa, if Deborah is willing to give me my freedom, if she——"

"Hush, Jay!" She pulled away from him, white, stricken. "You mustn't ask me such things! You know you mustn't!"

She turned from the agony of his face, turned blindly, losing herself in the crowd.

It must have been much later that Lonnie Terrence came to her.

"You've seen them?" he asked.

Melissa nodded, fearful of speech. "I spoke to Deborah," Lonnie said, miserable, lifeless. "I begged her now, now before it's too late, not to ruin all our lives. But it didn't mean anything, Lissa." He shook his head wearily. "She's proud. Too proud. She'll never admit defeat in this marriage of hers and Jay's. Well, they're married. They'll stay married. You'll have a grand career, Lissa. And I—I'll write a marvelous book, I suppose. Only we'll all be living in different



"Love is never over, Lissa," said Jay. "Do you know how long and empty these weeks have been without you? And this is all that counts. Wanting each other and admitting it and being together."

worlds, and thinking how useless life is!"

Useless, useless. The word was still tolling an empty bell in her

mind when at last the evening was over.

She sat beside Carmichael in the brooding silence of the big car and even the spectacular glory of the



Genevieve (Genevieve) Bailey

evening's triumph seemed lost, dwarfed in the overwhelming misery of that meeting with Jay. Seeing them leave together, he and Deborah, knowing they were going to their own home, had stabbed her

tinted balloon of success. Together, yes, it was being together that counted so.

"I spoke to you, Lissa." Carmichael's voice, unwontedly sharp, penetrated the thick veil.

She started. "I'm sorry, Ned. What was it you said?"

"I asked you if you'd mind coming up to my apartment for a while. I thought perhaps we'd have supper together to—well, to celebrate."

"Celebrate?" Was that her own laugh, queer, metallic? She shook the wrap back from her warm throat. "No. No, I don't mind, Ned."

Why should she mind? She had been lucky to elude the deluge even thus far. Now it must be faced.

CHAPTER VI.

Supper in the softly lit apartment was served with Carmichael's usual manner of perfection. Yet Melissa's food lay untouched on her plate. Eating was a torturing pretense. She was almost glad when the servant came in, cleared the things away, and they were alone.

She stood at the long window, staring out at all the midnight beauty of the world beneath. Below, the park was a laced fairyland of twinkling lights, as if all the stars of heaven lay reflected there in a velvet pool of indigo. Yet inside Melissa was no echoing lift in answer.

"I suppose," she said tonelessly, without turning around, "I suppose you know people are talking about us, Ned?"

The shining windowpane caught the flare of his match as he bent slowly, lit himself a cigarette. Without seeing it, she was aware of the sardonic twist of his mouth.

"Conventions worrying you? Well, we can stop all that easily enough. We can get married, Lissa."

She turned on her heel, looked at him. He was leaning against the grand piano, indulging in preoccu-

ped study of his nails. She could not help but feel that he was conscious of his attitude, of the lithe, animal grace. His mouth was a thin, amused line. His lids lowered, half closed, had a heavy alien slant.

She was not quite able to keep that bitter tinge from her tone.

"Married? Make an honest woman out of Lissa Darnell, gowns, you mean?" Her laugh was low, edged. "You know, you're the second man in my life who offered to marry me out of pity. Frankly, you know yourself you're not the type for marriage, Ned."

"Or the type women marry, eh?" He put both elbows on the piano now, stood there smiling at her, indolence personified. "Frankly, too, Lissa, you're in love with Jay Moore, aren't you?"

She did not flinch. "I think that's my affair."

"I saw you talking with him tonight," Carmichael said, "I never knew you could look at a man like that." He put up a slender hand, covered a yawn. "What a fool he was to marry Deborah Winters."

• Melissa walked a few steps into the room, looked at him very straightly.

"I've been in love with Jay most of my life. Is that what you wanted? Well, you have it! And now, shall we return to more pressing matters? To us? What about us, Ned?"

"Nothing about us, my dear. I'm not the type to marry. Doesn't that rather settle everything?"

Missella spoke slowly, as one driven. "I'm afraid it doesn't, quite. You see, I haven't forgotten my debt to you—how very much more I owe you than I can ever repay. And I haven't forgotten your accumulated interest."

His glance was light, casual.

"Suppose we just let that ride?"

Her shoulders gave a tiny, involuntary shiver. "And wait till it becomes compound?"

"My dear, technicalities bore me."

"But they must be faced." She stood there very wan, very proud. "We can't go on like this, Ned. The debt is all on my side. You've been very good. I appreciate your goodness. But I'm not a child. I know that men like yourself, men of the world, must naturally——" She trailed off, turned her face from him, painfully conscious of her flow of color.

"Demand their pound of flesh?" Carmichael's voice was soft behind her.

Melissa did not move. "Isn't that the expected thing?"

"Oh, of course. Quite"—still that odd softness of tone.

"Well"—she saw the faint whitening of her knuckles about the neck of a vase—"Darnells pay their debts, Ned. I mean, it's all right if——"

"Do they?" Carmichael's voice was keen again now, more natural. There was a small swinging pause. Then, unexpectedly: "All right. You know where my room is. You'll find a satin gown hanging in the closet. It's from your own shop, too."

Melissa spun around. Despite herself, she felt the startled widening of her gaze. Surely he had not believed all the rash things she had said? Surely he must realize they had been torn from her more in the nature of a grand gesture than——

But Carmichael was looking at her, very stern, very erect, both arms folded over his chest. In the hazy light his eyes were carved narrow slits, his face resembled a mask more than ever. His mouth was a grimly shadowed line, without len-

ency, without compassion. In that moment he was completely the unrelenting despot she had always felt him to be.

In that instant, too, she knew there was no retrenchment for her. Pride was a gaunt specter refusing to allow her to retract her own words. She could not humble herself before him. Could not beg, plead. At least she could deny his arrogance that satisfaction.

A long time she stared at him without speaking. Then she moved slowly past him into the bedroom, closed the door.

This was his room. The thought brought a slight quickening to her stifled heart. A man's room. Solid in its austere brick color and ivory, heavy with the tobacco and heather scent of his belongings.

A long way off the whirring sounds of the outside came to her. Yet, curiously, they lacked reality. All the importance of the moment was here, locked into this room. She did not know how long she stood there. But suddenly, with a great shudder, she threw her shoulders back, walked across to the closet.

Her clothes slipped from her ice-cold body. She tossed them aside in a shimmering heap. Everywhere her loveliness glanced out at her from mirrors. And she saw herself, the splendid length of thigh, the marble sculpture of form, a young Diana.

She stood before one of the mirrors at last, loosening the honey-gleaming waves of her hair. Suddenly she caught up the snowy drift of negligee, flung it about her.

Outside, she could hear the smooth, guarded movements. Soon he would come. Soon the handle would turn slowly, gently.

It was turning. Instantly her hand reached out trembling,

switched off the lights. Only the small ivory bed lamp burned in the room now, and Melissa turned the cold, bright flame of her face to the window.

She heard him come in. Heard the door shut behind him. She knew he was standing close, though she dared not look. All at once she felt the vise of his fingers on her shoulders, felt him swing her around into the hard circle of his embrace.

Her lips became aware of the pressure of his mouth. He kissed her not gently, but with the spirit of possession. Misery blotted out hope, sensation. There was no time, no life. Only the fire of Ned Carmichael's mouth, drowning itself in the secret foundation of her tears.

Giddiness overwhelmed her. It seemed as if all the breath in her were being crushed out against the firmness of his body. Then, abruptly, he released her. And in the pulsating silence she saw that he was wearing a black silken robe, and his eyes were shadowed with derision.

"You're crying," he said then.

"I'm not!" She shook her head with sudden vigor.

"Yes, you are." Carmichael's voice was razor-edged. "You're crying inside, Lissa, for Jay Moore. Why pretend on my account? Well——" Swiftly he untied the black robe, flung it aside. To her amazement, she saw that he was still fully garbed beneath. He stood there, grim-lipped, scornful. "The comedy is finished. You can go home now, Lissa."

Her eyes widened imperceptibly. She stared, uncomprehending.

"But, Ned, I—you said——"

"Never mind." He laughed brusquely, strode to the door. Hand on the knob, he turned, shrugging. "What sort of books have you been

reading lately? I only wanted to see if you really meant it. Well, consider the thought father to the deed."

When he had gone she crept, shamefaced, into the silver sheath of a gown. Back in the living room, Carmichael was waiting for her. He did not say anything, but he looked at her, and guiltily she was aware of the starred gladness in her eyes, felt the swift color stain her cheeks. Impulsively she stepped up to him.

"Ned, I want to——"

"Shall we go?" He picked up her wrap, held it for her. "The car is waiting downstairs."

In silence he took her home. There were a thousand and one things Melissa longed to fill the silence with. But she was too tired, too bewildered. Besides, she knew he would not appreciate them. Suddenly all his experience seemed to yawn like a chasm between them. He had gone so far, so far on the road of life. She could never hope to catch up with him.

But at her door she turned to him, and her tongue loosed itself shyly. The words came in a mysterious rush.

"Ned, I'm sorry! I almost wish I were really in love with you!"

"Do you?" He laughed, and for an instant his hand gripped hers. "Good night, Lissa Darnell, gowns!"

CHAPTER VII.

In the days that followed there was little time for profitless remembering. Melissa found herself kept busy in an unceasing turmoil at the store. Despite the expert supervision of Nance Elton, it was Melissa who must be on hand to greet the customers, for at first they were mostly her own acquaintances.



Then gradually she knew that the fame of her distinctive models was spreading—spreading like a flame, beyond her wildest imaginings.

Carmichael gave her free rein with the shop. If he made suggestions they were usually practical, and she accepted them gladly.

She came to know, even to understand in a degree, his small idiosyn-

Then he had her in his arms and her lips became aware of the pressure of his mouth. He kissed her not gently, but with the spirit of possession. Abruptly, he released her. "You're crying inside, for Jay Moore," he said.

crasies. But there were moments when she wondered whether she would ever really come to know the man himself. That disillusionment, that great contempt for the world

in general—that there was far more to the real Carmichael than the outward shell, Melissa's instinct had told her long ago. Yet he was still a mystery, still impenetrable. Carefully he shielded his deepest emotions from the common gaze by a wall of bitterness and nonchalant disdain.

She wondered if that day would ever come when the wall would crumble, and she would see him as he was.

Financially she had been more than able to repay him. But the knowledge of that other stronger debt remained persistently disturbing in her mind. She could not forget that it was he who had brought her from the deathly valley of despair and heartbreak into the broad swing of living again.

Was Carmichael content with mere gratitude unexpressed in deed? It would seem so. For never in any form or fashion did he humiliate her by referring to that unforgettable night when she had offered herself to him, and he had laughed the gesture aside.

Curiously, her position in society seemed more assured than ever. People who had scattered like frightened mice at the crashing of fortune, sought her out diligently these days. She was popular, in demand at dinners, parties. And aristocratic eyebrows showed no surprise when Carmichael escorted her.

Of Jay, of Deborah, Melissa heard nothing. Assiduously she avoided those places they were most likely to patronize. But there were times when Jay's name was mentioned and she would feel herself start, grow pale; feel, too, the light, indulgent sarcasm of Ned Carmichael's gaze upon her.

And at such times she would grow unreasonably angry. Tell herself

she was an unforgivable, romantic fool. For the trumpets of young ardor still called, and she still answered. If only, Melissa thought, if only she knew how to silence them in her heart forever! Or would they go on, growing fainter perhaps through the years, yet never quite dying, mournful echoes of an unfinished symphony.

Then one day, without warning, Jay walked into the shop, and the trumpets blared unexpectedly, burst in a deafening glory about her.

The shop was crowded. But Melissa saw his face, and silently she motioned to him to follow her into her private office. Alone with him, in that breathless instant of uncertainty, even the furnishings seemed changed, electrified by his presence.

"Yes, Jay?" She waited, feeling the color drained from her lips and heart, her fingers clinging for support to the desk edge.

"Lissa, I must talk to you—now, immediately!" He seemed excited, more like the old Jay, laughing, gayly debonair.

She felt herself caught up by the bright force of him. There was nothing in her strong enough to resist it. In the end she went with him to a quiet restaurant. It seemed a little mad, facing him once again across the white tablecloth as of yore.

Melissa spoke, unnerved. "Jay, we shouldn't—"

But he caught her hand, and the touch of his fingers sent thought and common sense flying before the wind.

"Oh, yes, we should! Lissa, dearest Lissa——" His laugh, filled with the old abandoned joyousness, shattered the tension. "News—news! Extras! Thousands of 'em! Lissa, I love you, love you. Do you think

I'm crazy? Well, I am! Crazy with happiness. Listen to me, sweet. Deborah left for Reno this morning. Lissa, love, laugh! Can't you understand? She's going to marry Lonnie Terrence after all! I'm going to be free!"

"Darling, oh, darling!" Melissa said, and could not say anything further out of the indescribable effervescence coursing through her. Then she thought instantly: I'm going to cry—oh, how hateful!

"It's bad manners, crying into your soup," Jay was chiding gayly.

"I'm not crying," Melissa choked. "I—I'm blowing my nose. Besides, I don't care. Oh, Jay! I want to be the most bad-mannered person in the world! I want to shout and jump and——"

There wasn't any sense between them after that. It was all buoyant enthusiasm and nonsense. Nonsense—that was what they needed, wasn't it? It seemed as though they could never get enough of it to stanch the wounds of pain and separation.

And now, Melissa thought exultant, all their frustration and unhappiness were dim specters which could haunt only the past. For the future there was fulfillment and a splendid river of bliss to carry them onward. Their future, molded with their own eager young hands—Then she remembered, and, remembering, stiffened a little involuntarily.

"Jay"—fear kept her voice low—"dear one, listen to me. I must say this. About Ned—I mean, I suppose you've been hearing——"

But his fingers shot out quickly, closed over her lips. He shook his head and his blue eyes bored into her frightened ones tenderly.

"Darling," he said gently, "darling, darling Lissa, I'm stone deaf. Nobody could tell me anything

about you ever. You see, I love you."

Later Jay kissed her. And for Melissa everything else slipped ghostly into the unimportant. She only knew that this was the beautiful—the beautiful made solid, secure at last, wrested from eternity.

But she had to tell Carmichael. She told him that night, having dinner with him. She had begged this one evening from Jay, and he had nodded, understanding.

"You see," she finished quietly, "it means giving up the shop, of course. Ned, I hate letting you down like this after all you've done. You do believe that, don't you? But we've started the golden ball of success rolling—Nance Elton will carry things on perfectly for you."

"Perfectly," he agreed. His lids were lowered over his eyes and he toyed perfunctorily with the silver. As was his wont he expressed no surprise, his outward lacquer remained undisturbed. "Marching orders, eh, Lissa?"

"Don't put it that way." She spoke gently, wondering what could be the real currents of thought going on beneath that sleek exterior. "I'll never stop being grateful to you as long as I live, Ned."

"You're not afraid?" he asked soberly, still not raising his glance.

"Afraid? Of what?"

"Moore let you down once, you know."

Her smile was stanch. "Not really. There were extenuating circumstances. He never stopped loving me, if that's what you mean."

"And you never stopped loving him. I see. Well, I suppose this was bound to be the answer, wasn't it?"

She did not know why, but an impulse of pity and regret beset her.



Everything inside Melissa went faint as she saw Doyle bring forth a revolver, brandish it in the air with all the insanity of abandoned fury. "Doyle!" she screamed. "Give me that gun—give it to me, I say!"

Suddenly she was oddly sorry for this incredible man. Because all his power and stringent force of character and will could never, she knew,

bring him true contentment or happiness. And in that instant he seemed to her a lonely creature, set apart.

"Ned," she said, impetuous, "why don't you find some nice girl and marry her?"

He looked up swiftly, laughed. "Because I've never known a nice girl who'd have me," he said.

"When I first knew you," Melissa said, thoughtful, "I couldn't make up my mind whether you were scoundrel or saint, and now I think you're a little of both."

"I don't know about the saintly part. I only know," he added quietly and with more honesty than she had ever known him to indulge in, "that whatever good there was in me, you somehow or other managed to draw out, Lissa."

But in parting Melissa said a strange thing. She did not know what prompted it, unless it be a desire to leave him with a last kindness.

"Ned," she said slowly, "I almost wish things might have been different."

He looked down at her gravely. "That's a rash wish, my dear. No. It's better for you this way. I'm glad." He held out his hand smiling. Then was swiftly gone.

Alone in her apartment, Melissa slipped out of her clothes, hung them absently away. In the mirror she saw the reflection of her slim pajama-clad figure and fleetingly it struck her that the high torrents of bliss had found a reflection in the gray-green of her eyes, the vivid softness of her lips. When Jay phoned to say good night, his whispered "God bless you, sweetest," rang its poem of ecstasy for breathless minutes afterward.

She lay in bed, too dream-wakened for sleep. Such beautiful dreams, rising one upon the other in towering vistas through the darkness. Soon she would be Jay's, and he would be hers forever.

On a sudden the peremptory ringing of the outside doorbell swept aside the mesh of fancy. Melissa sat up and her startled fingers sought the bed lamp. As she paused in the living room to fling a kimono hastily about her, the urgent ring again split the silence. Who on earth would intrude at this ungodly hour?

Her heart was pounding uncontrollably as she reached the door, threw it wide. And suddenly it raced upward, lay imprisoned in her throat.

Young Doyle stood there. A strange Doyle, alien to her gaze, with no trace of boyishness. Only a set, grim look etched across the strained parchment of his face, and bleak, dark shadows beneath the unnatural glassy quality of his eyes.

And as he stood there swaying, uncertain on his feet, Melissa would have flung out her hands, smiled her welcome. But instinctively the strangeness in his attitude and gaze froze the gestures in their tracks. She could only feel herself staring, and even her voice held a quivering unsteadiness as she cried out:

"Doyle! Why—why are you here? And why do you look at me so queerly? You—you've been drinking!"

He laughed, lurched past her into the room. In the center of the floor he swung around, faced her as she leaned with her back against the closed door, watching him.

"Right, first guess!" He took out a cigarette, and she saw how his hand shook lighting it, how he inhaled deeply, savagely. "Sure, I've been drinking! I had a bottle with me all the way driving down—it kept me from thinking too much. Drink? Why not? So would you, if you'd just been kicked out of school for smashing a fellow because

he talked about your sister——”

Clarity pierced through the nightmare. Mechanically she moved toward him.

“Doyle, you’ve been listening to lies! Lies!” Her hands went out to him, entreating. “Listen to me! Believe in me—I swear to you——”

He shook his head, cut her off roughly. “Maybe they are lies! But it’s that rotter of a Carmichael who’s let you in for this! He’s the one to suffer for it!”

Both hands flew to her whirling head. “Be quiet, Doyle! You’re all wrong. Ned Carmichael isn’t a rotter. He’s never been anything but kind and decent to me! Besides, I’ve something to tell you. It’ll prove how wrong you are. If only you’ll let me explain——”

“Explain nothing!” Doyle threw back his young head, and his laugh was wild, unheeding, the laugh of a madman. “It’s Carmichael who’s going to do the explaining—if he ever gets a chance!”

He put his hand into his pocket. And everything inside Melissa went faint, sick, as she saw him bring forth a revolver, brandish it in the air with all the insanity of abandoned fury.

“Doyle!” she screamed, terrified. “Give me that gun—give it to me, I say!”

Again that crazy laugh crashing through her horror. “Not on your life! I’m going to give it to Mr. Ned Carmichael, the dirty——”

She stepped in his path as he turned, but he flung her aside roughly. Melissa felt herself stumbling backward in a heady spin, until only the hard impact of the wall against her saved her from falling.

“Doyle!” she cried out, shrill. “Doyle, come back!”

The door slamming behind the rigid young figure was her only answer.

For an instant she stood petrified. Then she was after him like a streak, but only the deserted hallway met her gaze. Back into the apartment she flew, dazed, shuddering, her fingers reaching for the telephone, her choked voice calling a number. Ned’s number. If she could warn him!

The busy signal met her ears. She could have screamed aloud her frenzy. Then she was across the room, tearing a polo coat from the closet, throwing it around her trembling, pajama-clad body.

She ran the three flights of stairs to the ground floor, sped through the lobby. She wasn’t thinking; her limbs seemed strange things moving of their own volition. At the curb she paused.

A taxi, thank heavens! Melissa never knew how she stumbled into it, gave the address through white lips. She heard her own voice as in a haze:

“Fast—fast, please! Drive for your life!”

She leaned forward on the cab seat, oblivious to the passing streets, the moving lights and faces. Her being was conscious of nothing but mad, tumultuous terror. A thousand horrors danced their ghastly pageant across her mind, a thousand fears gripped her in their power. Fears for Doyle, for Ned Carmichael.

And through it all the wailing, aching prayer of her heart:

“Oh, please, please don’t let anything happen now—not now! It can’t, it mustn’t. Oh, dear God, not now!”

TO BE CONCLUDED.



Their Golden Moment

By Ives Tudor

THE letter from rich old Miss Odlin, in Beldale, offering Marya a position as her companion, came at an opportune time. The bonding firm employing her had shut down six months before. Being alone in the city, and without money, it was necessary that she accept whatever work she could get.

Upon her arrival Marya found that her home town hadn't changed much in the three years she had been away. It was the same small

town she remembered—wide avenues of stately shade trees, picket fences riotous with vines guarding lovely old homes set back in gardens abloom with flowers.

A feeling of peace stole over her as she went up the familiar red brick walk between neat low hedges that led to Clara Odlin's graystone house. She followed plump Libby Taake, the houskeeper, up the stairs and into her employer's room.

"Here you are," Miss Odlin com-

mented, looking like a tiny white-haired doll propped up by tightly stuffed pillows in the four-poster bed.

"And glad to be here." Marya sighed contentedly.

Miss Odlin nodded. "I knew it was a mistake for you to leave Beldale after your mother died. You should have married that rascal nephew of mine and settled down here among your friends. Come close and let me get a good look at you."

Marya moved near enough the bed so that the thin hands could reach out and touch her. Sharp blue eyes took in the plain blue suit she wore, the matching velvet *béret* set jauntily on her golden hair, in lovely contrast to her black-lashed brown eyes.

"Have you been ill?" Marya asked solicitously.

"No, only bedridden as the result of a fall." The blue eyes shifted, came back to rest anxiously on Marya's face. "It's marvelous how Walter has taken hold at the factory since my accident."

Marya cried out in consternation: "You mean Walter is back from abroad, Miss Odlin?"

She felt that she had been tricked into coming here. Had she known that Walter Odlin was in Beldale she wouldn't have considered the position. He had been in love with her three years before, had wanted to marry her. She had refused him because she wouldn't marry a man who gambled and was altogether unreliable. Besides, she didn't love him.

"But there isn't much I can do about it now, considering that my last dollar went for railroad fare to bring me here," she thought to herself as she sighed resignedly.

Miss Odlin watched her covertly.

"Walter is very dear to me, Marya. He will be a rich man when I die."

Walter was the adopted son of Peter Odlin, the old lady's only brother. Peter and his wife had been killed in an accident twenty years before, leaving the boy in Miss Odlin's loving care.

Marya instantly thought of Dave Marsden, the only child of Clara Odlin's dead sister. She didn't know where Dave was now. But surely Clara Odlin wouldn't cut him off without a cent to punish him for whatever it was that had estranged the two sisters before he was born. There was a story connecting Dave's father with Clara Odlin, only Marya couldn't remember it now, because whatever it was had happened so many years ago.

"You must consider this your home, child," Miss Odlin went on cheerfully. "You will read to me occasionally, write letters, things like that. I sleep for two hours every afternoon. That time will be your own. And any evening you want. Run along now. It's time for my nap."

The dismissal carried no hint of sting. Marya went to her room, bathed and changed into a cool print dress that brought out the rose-petal loveliness of her skin.

Humming contentedly, she made a leisurely tour of the house. On her way outside to inspect the garden, she came face to face with a young man in the hallway.

He stopped dead still to stare at her, breathing awedly: "Marya Erle! Am I only dreaming you?"

An exquisite something stirred in her heart as she instantly recognized this tall, broad-shouldered young man with curly brown hair and honest blue eyes. It was all of twelve years since their last meeting, but

she would never forget Dave Marsden.

They had been childhood playmates, inseparable companions during their early school years. Then, following his mother's death, Mr. Marsden had taken Dave and moved away from Beldale.

"Why, Dave!" she cried joyfully. "I'm ever so glad to see you."

His brown fingers closed firmly over her small hand. The touch was electric, sending quivering thrills through her. She found it hard to meet the blue eyes filled with admiration for her.

"You've done a swell job of growing up, Marya," he said. "You're the prettiest girl this side of heaven."

"Flatterer!" She laughed, suddenly shy.

He grinned, blue eyes twinkling merrily. He asked: "What are you doing here?"

She told him. He explained without prompting: "My reason for coming here is a long story. Wait for me and I'll tell it to you."

He started toward the stairs. She guessed his intention and made swift protest. "You can't go up now, Dave."

"Why not?" he tossed back, keeping his stride. "She sent for me."

Marya raced to pass him on the stairs, blocking the way. She shook her golden head vigorously. "It's my duty to see that Miss Odlin isn't disturbed," she said primly.

Dave laughed indulgently. Strong brown hands cupped beneath her elbows, he lifted her easily, setting her gently down on the step below him.

"Wish me luck, Marya"—softly.

His voice was a song quivering through her. Her heart sent a prayer after him.

Ten minutes later he was back, blue eyes icy disks of rage. Anger

showed the squareness of his jaw, the determined set of his lips. It took a full minute of staring at her before his expression softened.

"I've been ordered out of the house," he fumed. "And that isn't the half of it. Come outside with me, Marya."

She followed him down into the garden, sweet with sunshine and the spicy richness of cinnamon pinks, alive with the caroling of birds. They found a secluded corner and sat down on the rustic bench.

Dave looked at her. She glanced quickly away. The consciousness of his stare flooded her cheeks with scarlet.

"Marya, dear," he said softly, "I have the oddest feeling that all my life has been lived for just this moment."

She tried to say lightly: "That's a trite beginning, Dave."

But white hands lifted and did things to her hair, hiding her face from him. She fought to gain a grip on her wild, far-fetched thoughts, to drown them in the well of cold reason.

Of course, she only imagined that adoring look in his eyes. Dave couldn't be romantically attracted to her on the instant of their meeting after so many years. As adults they were strangers. Yet he wasn't the kind to play at love. Then she realized that she didn't know the least thing about the grown-up Dave. Perhaps—the thought was a knife thrust in her heart—this was his usual manner of approaching every pretty face that took his fancy.

"Lovely little Marya!" Dave's voice broke into her thoughts.

She supported light laughter with a flippant reply that found no echo in her heart.

"You're a smooth worker, Dave.

Only don't forget that I've lived in the big city and probably know all the answers."

He cried out in hurt protest: "How can you talk that way!" He bent nearer and his voice was husky as he went on. "In all the years I've been away there's been no one but you, Marya. You've lurked in my heart like a guardian angel, barring the way to any one else."

"I'll admit you're a good talker, if that's any satisfaction," she replied, hoping he didn't hear the furious pounding of her heart.

He gripped her shoulders, forcing her gaze. He pleaded: "Don't spoil this golden moment with stupid banalities."

She wanted to believe him, but didn't relish the thought of yielding to his ardor now and later appearing foolish in her own eyes. Before she could express something of her thoughts, he said gently:

"Let's begin over again and you tell me something of what you've been doing these last few years."

Marya was grateful for the suggestion, because things were moving too fast to suit her. Her story was soon told. Dave, in his turn, confessed to unhappy years of wandering about the world with a grief-stricken father.

"Dad never got over mother's death. He died two years ago. Then I came back to Beldale to look over some property he left me. I decided to remain, and started in the contracting business for myself. When I won the Stewart Building bid four months ago, I knew the world was mine. But we struck sand at foundation level, and can't possibly finish on schedule. To be penalized now when I haven't sufficient capital to meet the emergency, means losing everything." He finished on a hope-

less note: "Unless a new contract bobs up right away."

Marya asked: "Did you come here to-day to ask your aunt for help?"

"I did not!"—fiercely. "I asked her once, but not for charity, mind you. Grandfather Odlin left forty thousand dollars to be divided between Walter and me when we reach the age of thirty. That's a wait of nearly five years for me. I asked her to advance me ten thousand dollars now and I'd waive the rest to Walter. She refused, and enjoyed doing it."

Marya's eyes widened. He went on to explain:

"Aunt Clara hates me because of dad. They were engaged to be married, you know, when mother returned home from school in the East. She and dad fell in love, and eloped. Grandfather Odlin never forgave them, and left his entire fortune to Aunt Clara."

Marya recalled the old story now. Curiosity made her persist: "Why did you come here to-day?"

He stiffened, looking straight at her, lips compressed in a thin line.

"Aunt Clara sent for me, accused me of being a thief. The last time I was here she and Walter were looking through some old jewelry. I admired an emerald ring. Yesterday she discovered the ring was missing. She accuses me of taking it to raise part of the money I need."

"How awful, Dave! What will you do?"

He leaned nearer, giving her a quizzical look. "Do you advise me to return it?"

She stared back at him in amazement. "How can you, when you haven't got it?" she demanded, never for an instant thinking otherwise.

"You darling, to believe in me!"

Libby Taake suddenly bobbed up in front of them with a summons

for Marya from Miss Odlin. Marya went back to the house in a dream, and up the stairs. So much had happened to her in that short space since she had tripped down them, fancy free. For Marya was honest enough to admit to herself that she loved Dave Marsden with a tenderness that would endure forever.

The instant she entered her employer's room, Miss Odlin said disapprovingly: "I won't have you entertaining Dave Marsden in my garden. Promise me not to have anything further to do with him."

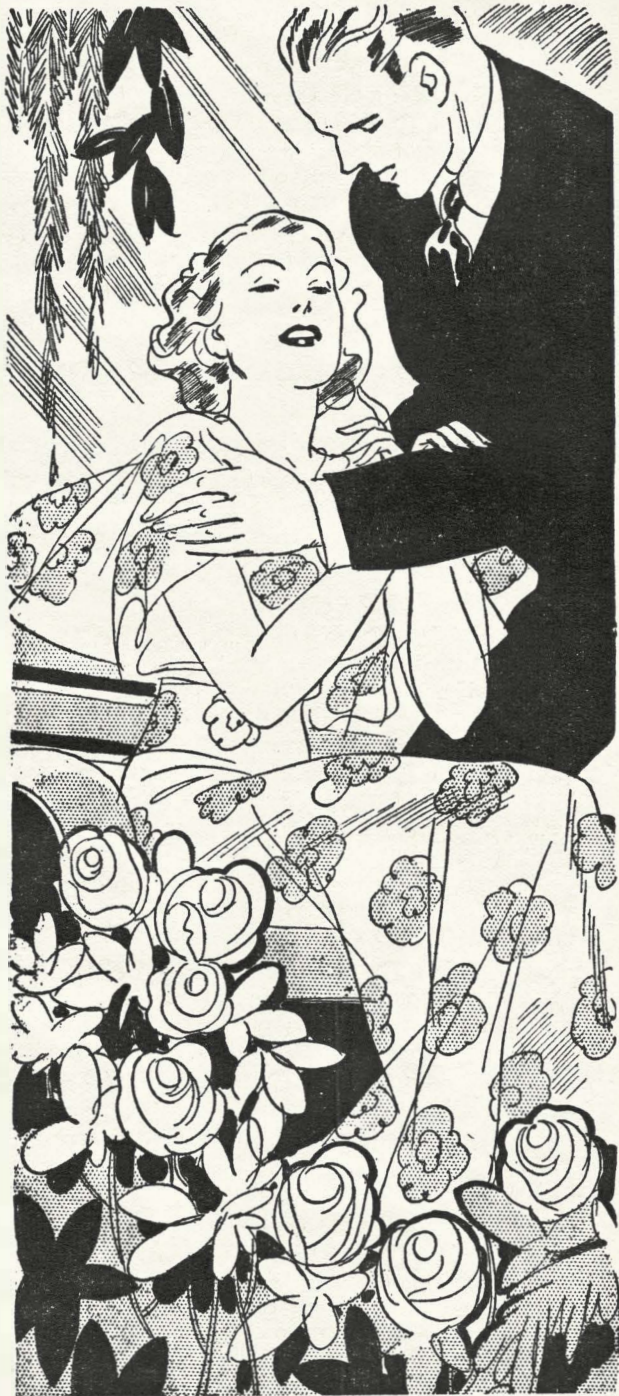
Marya retorted stiffly: "I won't make any such silly promise."

Harsh laughter jarred from the old woman's lips.

"Like father, like son," she jeered. "Dave has the same power to win and break hearts that his father possessed. Some day you'll admit I'm right about him."

"I don't care a thing about his father," Marya countered stubbornly. "Dave is fine and decent."

Clara Odlin's thin body jerked rigid. A shaking forefinger emphasized the accusation. "Dave is a thief!"



He bent nearer and his voice was husky as he said: "In all the years I've been away there's been no one but you, Marya. You've lurked in my heart like a guardian angel, barring the way to any one else."

Marya's golden head snapped back in challenge. Her brown eyes were liquid pools of anger. The corners of her lovely mouth pressed in, showing an unsuspected dimple in her cheek.

"He didn't steal your ring! You've misplaced it. You're a cruel, revengeful woman to hate Dave because of something his father did to you. Now I'll pack my things and leave."

Clara Odlin wilted back among the pillows, looking withered and pitifully old. "Don't leave me, child. I need you."

The lonely cry filled Marya with compassion. She ran forward and dropped to her knees beside the bed, gathering the woman into a warm embrace.

"I won't," she promised. "Only I can't stop seeing Dave."

A low, throbbing cry behind her brought Marya to her feet and face to face with Walter Odlin, looking more blondly handsome than ever.

"My dearest!" he cried.

His hot palms caressed her shoulders, slid down her arms to clasp her hands in a painful grip. His gray eyes roved over her face, and came to rest hungrily on her scarlet lips.

"Marya, are you really here at last?"

"In the flesh," she replied saucily. She swung the conversation away from thin ice by suggesting: "If Miss Odlin doesn't mind, let's take a run over to the country club for a while. I'm anxious to see some of the old crowd." She laughed ruefully. "They may not be anxious to see me, now that I have to work for my living."

Miss Odlin said generously: "Run along, children. Don't hurry back."

Marya elected to walk the short half mile to the club. The instant they were outside, Walter asked:

"Why didn't you answer my letters?"

"I thought it best not to," she replied with simple honesty. They walked through the gate and down a lane shaded by whispering silver poplars. Walter said:

"I've been working hard these last months, Marya. I've kept my promise not to gamble again."

She exclaimed generously: "That's splendid!"

"Praise is a poor reward when you can't give yourself with it," he said hollowly.

"There's the matter of your own self-respect, to say nothing of your aunt's faith in you," she reminded him sagely.

His arm shot out, pulling her close against him. She jerked free. His harsh laughter drew her surprised gaze.

"You weren't so squeamish with Dave this afternoon."

Her look was contemptuously haughty. "I might have known it was you who told Miss Odlin about us."

"I came rushing home the instant she phoned me you were here, and found you mooning in the garden with Dave." He finished viciously: "If he weren't related to Aunt Clara we'd put him behind bars, where he belongs. The thief!"

She whirled to face him, her cheeks red badges of anger. "Don't dare say that about Dave!" she cried hotly.

He shrugged, but persisted on the subject of Dave. "It's amazing how men like Marsden fool the women. I warn you, he's out to marry the Pelham millions, if he can."

She said disinterestedly: "So Rissa is back from abroad."

"Yes, and I'll bet that Dave knew she was visiting Carol Hunter to-day when he was making love to you."

Carol is ill. Her bedroom window overlooks our garden. If he can make Rissa jealous——”

“Oh, hush!” she cried irritably. She added effectively: “If you’re going to make it disagreeable for me, Walter, I won’t stay.”

“I won’t,” he promised. A threat hid behind his next remark: “Only, I haven’t lost you yet.”

They reached the veranda of the country club. Marya’s doubts as to her welcome back into the fold were immediately put to rest. She was surrounded by a friendly group, everybody laughing and talking and asking excited questions at once.

All except Sayde Norton. She stood to one side, dark head flung high, sullen black eyes watching Marya. Sayde had been in love with Walter for years, and so resented Marya’s return.

Somebody called brightly: “Here come Dave and Rissa.”

Marya turned and watched Dave and Rissa slowly approach the clubhouse, arm in arm. With a pang of envy, she realized that Rissa was more beautiful than ever. Her lovely red hair lay in loose waves close to her small head. Her gray-green eyes had a devastating way of looking up at a man.

She glanced up, saw Marya and ran forward to embrace her. “Dave told me you were back, darling. It’s grand seeing you again!”

“Is it?” Sayde flung in spitefully. “I happened to be visiting Carol and if you had come too, as you said you would, you would have seen Dave and Marya in the Odlin garden. Considering that you love the man, Rissa, this is a friendly tip.”

Walter advised curtly: “Don’t be a cat, Sayde.”

His remark set the spark to Sayde’s hair-trigger temper. Her eyes narrowed to thin slits. She

threatened: “Don’t you dare talk to me like that! I might decide to tell some one about certain notes Jake Spidell holds.”

“Shut up!” he flung at her.

“I won’t!” Sayde retaliated, coming close to him. “You can’t play with me simply because Marya is back. I’ll tell plenty, if you try it. I happen to know that your aunt will disinherit you if you’re caught gambling again.”

He thrust her roughly away, his face mottled with anger. The next instant he grinned sheepishly at the others.

“I don’t know where the girl gets such crazy ideas.”

Marya knew from past experience to what lengths Sayde’s anger could carry her. She said placatingly: “Let’s not act like children.”

“You keep out of this,” Sayde hissed. “And keep away from Walter. Everybody knows you came back here hoping to marry him.”

“See here”—Dave flung himself into the breach, blue eyes wrathful —“I won’t let you talk that way to Marya.”

Marya thrilled to his defense before them all. Sayde laughed. Rissa cleverly swung the conversation to the subject of the club dance, but two weeks away.

“Will Barney be here in time for it?” Dave asked, playing up to her.

Sayde complained petulantly: “You never told us you were expecting any one, Rissa.”

“Didn’t I, darling? Dad and I met him abroad. His name is Barney Cavanaugh.”

Walter asked excitedly: “Not the famous aviator? Will he be here for long, Rissa?”

“I don’t know. Dad is thinking of building a new airport and aviation school.” Her voice quavered

oddy. "Barney might take charge of it."

Marya decided suddenly: "Well, for a working girl I'm having too much leisure. See you soon, everybody. Coming, Walter?"

Then Dave was beside her, staring down into her flushed face. "Let me take you home, Marya." She looked interrogatingly toward Rissa and he hastened to add: "Rissa is having dinner here with the Tylers."

Walter growled: "My aunt needs Marya at home."

"Oh, no, she doesn't," Marya protested innocently. "She told me not to hurry back."

"In that case," Dave said, flashing the scowling Walter a triumphant look, "Marya will have dinner with me. I'll see that she gets home safely."

They drove far out into the country and had a delicious dinner at a popular roadside inn. The return trip was made beneath a huge yellow moon hung low in the sky. Marya though she had never known so silent a night. The very world seemed waiting for something.

Dave swung the car off the main road and stopped under a tree near the river. Across its quicksilver pathway, Marya glimpsed the lights of a farmhouse. A dog barked, then was silent. Night noises rose about them like vague whisperings.

Dave turned and swept her into his arms. His hot young mouth found her waiting lips in kisses that filled her with quivering ecstasy.

"Darling!" he cried. "I'm so crazy about you I can't think of anything else."

Small hands pressed against his shoulders, holding him away, while solemn brown eyes searched his face. "Are you sure there isn't any one else?"

His answer was a question. "Could I hold you in my arms like this, kiss you like this, if there had ever been any one else?"

She thrilled to the strength of him. His warm lips lingered on hers; her arms lifted and tightened about his neck, and soft red lips returned his kisses.

Two days later Barney Cavanaugh arrived. All Beldale made him welcome in grand style. Marya met and liked him instantly. He was big and dark and not too handsome, but with a way about him that won feminine hearts.

All the girls in the crowd lost their hearts to him. He cheerfully autographed albums and dance programs, but it ended there. He escorted only Rissa

about, and Beldale couldn't altogether decide whether from preference or out of mere politeness to his host's daughter.

Coinciding with Barney's arrival Dave broke three consecutive appointments with Marya, giving business as his excuse. The first time it happened she believed him implicitly. The other times, while driving around with Walter, he called her attention to Dave's green roadster parked in the Pelham driveway.

"Poor child!" he sympathized, his voice sounding as though laughter lurked behind it. "I told you that Dave was only using you to make Rissa jealous. Now that he's afraid



Barney will beat his time, you're being left alone."

"Don't be ridiculous." She tried to laugh, but her heart was heavy.

It wasn't until the night of Rissa's dinner party that her faith in Dave was entirely shattered. The dinner was a gay affair, and there was dancing afterward.

Dave was dancing with Marya, sweet in ruffled pink organdie. Out of the corner of her eye she saw Rissa in the doorway, beckoning to him. Dave excused himself, mumbling something about Mr. Pelham wanting to see him. She watched him go, tears in her eyes, and an unbearable ache in her heart for his deceit.

After a while she stole outside, crossed the flagged terrace and made her way over smooth lawn, lured on by the magic murmur of a tinkling fountain. She paused beside the marble bowl, loving the coolness of the misty spray against her hot cheeks. A murmur of voices coming from the other side decided her to move on.

Suddenly she jerked rigid, ears straining, all the blood surging away from her heart. She had recognized Rissa's voice and Dave's reply.

"Dave, are you very sure, dear?" Rissa was asking in a strained tone. "I can't bear to go on hoping unless you are."

"Dear little girl, who else in all the world could it be, if not your very self?"

"Oh, Dave, you darling to say that!"

The lilting cry struck against Marya's heart with the force of iron weights. She stood rooted to the spot, hands clenched, eyes staring into the darkness, visualizing Rissa in Dave's arms, her own slim ones about his neck. And their lips clinging in passionate kisses!

LS-6E

The sky and grass and fountain melted together and revolved crazily about her. She was lost in a world that was too big and lonely and terrifying without Dave to share it.

A touch on her shoulder spun her about to face Walter. He caught her cold hand and led her away to where his car was parked. She didn't cry. Her agony was too deep for tears. Nor did it matter to her now that Walter had witnessed her humiliation.

They had barely reached home when the doorbell rang sharply. Marya shrank back into the shadows of the hallway.

"I rather think our caller is Dave," Walter said roughly.

"Tell him," she forced through stiff lips, "that I never want to see him again as long as I live."

The next instant she was tearing up the stairs and into her room. She slammed the door, then leaned against it, sobbing her heart out.

But Dave refused to be dismissed so easily. He walked boldly into Miss Odlin's garden the next morning. Marya, as white as the lawn dress she wore, was snipping yellow roses from a heavy-laden bush. She saw him and winged feet carried her into the house before he could catch up with her.

Libby brought her the message that he was waiting outside. She sent back word that she was too busy to see any one. And in the days that followed his every attempt to see her proved futile.

She began going about more with Walter. But her white face and eyes heavy from loss of sleep proved that she couldn't forget Dave.

The night of the club dance Marya dressed with unusual care. Her second generous pay check from Miss Odlin had joined the first. The result was a gown that looked like

jade enamel poured over her slim form.

Before it was time to start, Miss Odlin sent for her. She was sitting up in bed, cheeks pink with excitement. She beckoned Marya near, then thrust a velvet jeweler's box into her hands, the lid snapped back. Against a nest of cream-colored satin lay a string of perfectly matched pearls. The Odlin pearls! They were traditional in Beldale, known to be worth a fortune.

"How gorgeous!" Marya breathed.

"Walter urged me to take them out of the vault for you to wear to-night. No, no"—as she saw refusal in Marya's brown eyes—"don't misunderstand, child. I want you to wear them just as a favor to me."

The temptation proved irresistible. Against her warm flesh, the pearls took on a rich lustre, as though they had awaited this moment to find new life.

The dance was in full swing when they arrived. Marya felt herself the target for many pairs of eyes. Walter whispered as they danced:

"You're the most beautiful thing in all the world, Marya. You were made for love and luxury. I can give you both, my darling."

Sayde came hurrying toward them, planting herself directly in front of them. Her mouth was a quivering scarlet bow in the white mask of her face. She shivered in her satin gown as though from cold.

"Those pearls!" she cried. "Are they an engagement gift?" Her voice rose shrilly, attracting the attention of those near by.

No telling how far the scene might have gone if a partner hadn't arrived to claim Marya for the dance. He talked on and on. She laughed and answered him, never wholly conscious of what either of them said. Her searching eyes found Barney

and Rissa among the dancers, the latter lovely in a gown of peacock-blue chiffon.

The music stopped. She saw Dave approaching. His face looked white and drawn; his blue eyes gleamed strangely. Marya tried to escape, but the milling crowd hemmed her in until it was too late.

Dave was beside her now. The world whirled crazily about her when he spoke. She managed to keep a frozen smile on her lips, but the wild beating of her heart drowned out all sound of his voice.

Then she was dancing away in his arms, while violins and saxophones throbbed in time to the aching pound of her heart. They reached the doors leading into the garden. He whirled her through before she could guess his intention.

Music and moonlight filled the air. Soft breezes caressed her hot cheeks. Standing in the oblong of light from the open doorway, golden head high, she looked like a lovely flower—a wind-tossed flower, because she swayed with intense emotion.

Dave pulled her into the shadows and into his arms. She struggled to escape. He released her.

"Marya, aren't you fair enough to tell me what I've done to deserve this treatment?"

Sharp nails stabbed her soft palms. She saw him through a blur of tears. Laughter was a crazy sound dripping from her lips.

"We played a nice little game, didn't we, Dave?" Shaking fingers touched the pearls at her throat. She loathed the gesture and its implication. "I hope yours was as successful as mine."

"What has turned you against me, Marya?"

"I see your game wasn't successful," she replied with a calmness that

amazed her, "else you wouldn't be trying to carry on this farce with me."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

His talent for acting surprised her. How could he stand there looking innocently bewildered, when she knew him for what he was? A liar and cheat, capable of using a woman's love to gain him what he wanted.

"Don't pretend with me, Dave. The night of Rissa's dinner party Walter and I heard you making love to her in the garden."

"Darling, you didn't hear anything of the kind." He sounded relieved. "I can explain all that, if you'll give me a chance."

She taunted him, biting back the tears: "Why should I? I've gained everything I wanted from our silly affair. Aren't these gorgeous pearls proof of it?"

He took a quick step toward her, gripping her arm in fingers that hurt. She loved the pain because Dave inflicted it. A savage desire for him to hurt her for the awful lies she had told him, swept through her.

"Do those pearls mean that you're engaged to Walter Odlin? You love me, Marya. I've held you in my arms; you've given me your kisses."

She lied brazenly: "Are you fool enough to think you're the first man I've ever kissed? I despise you for what you are. A thief who stole from a trusting old woman, safe in the knowledge that she wouldn't betray her own flesh and blood. Why, I must be mad to trust myself near you, wearing these pearls!"

All this and more her lying lips said. And all the time something was slowly dying within her, something so beautiful that when it was gone her heart would be a withered thing forever.

Trembling, he listened to her. His voice, when he spoke, was a harsh, rasping sound, like wind through dry grass.

"So Sayde was right about you," he snarled. "There are ugly names for girls like you."

Icy finger tips pressed back the scream that rose in her throat. She stood frozen while the lash of his contempt cut her heart to ribbons and her soul drowned in unshed tears.

She swayed dizzily as his voice beat against her in mounting fury. Then she was in his arms. His kisses were bruising her lips, bringing terror and shame because Dave could do this awful thing to her. Then he released her, pushing her away so violently that she staggered.

Hours later, it seemed, Walter found her there. He took her home, asking no questions on the way.

In silence, she handed him back the pearls when they were inside the library, watching while he put them in the wall safe before she went up to her room.

Staring into the darkness, her pillow wet with tears, Marya lost all track of time. Hours might have passed, or ages. Suddenly a small sound jerked her to rigid attention. She glanced at the clock. It was four o'clock. The sound was repeated, sounding louder to her straining ears. Terror of the unknown gripped her, but passed immediately. She remembered the pearls. Maybe a thief had followed them home, was in the library now.

She jumped out of bed, trembling all over. Could the thief be Dave? Heart hammering, she slipped into dressing gown and slippers, and crept down the stairs.

Reaching the library door, she was startled by a scene that forever branded itself on her memory. The



Marya went into Dave's arms and clung to him. "Dave, can you forgive me for those horrible lies? I was so jealous of Rissa." Dave held her closer and his lips closed down on hers in a long, rapturous kiss.

light from the library table lamp, dimmed low, showed Dave holding the velvet box containing the pearls, fingering them.

"Dave!" Her sharp cry of horror drew his immediate attention. "What are you doing here? Oh, my darling, put them back! Go away! I'll never let them drag the truth out of me!"

It was then that she saw Walter pressed against the far side of the wall, in the shadows. Terror for Dave made her frantic.

"I'll swear I stole them," she cried wildly. "I won't let you hurt Dave. Please, Walter, let him go and I promise I'll marry you to-morrow, if you still want me."

"Marya, darling," Dave said tenderly, "you've proven that it's me you love. Be quiet, dear. We don't want any one else to know about this."

Then he was pouring the story into her incredulous ears. Something about Walter signing gambling notes held by Jake Spidell. Pressed for the money, Walter had given Jake the emerald ring, belonging to Miss Odlin, for security. Seeing a chance to make a big haul, Jake had threatened to expose Walter unless the Od-

lin pearls were turned over to him.

"Walter induced Aunt Clara to take the pearls from the bank vault under pretext of having you wear them for the effect they might have in winning you over to him. In some way, Sayde learned of his plan to turn them over to Jake. Jealous, she went to the police with the story. Then, frantic with instant remorse she came to me, begging me to save Walter. I reached Jake's place ahead of him and waited outside to prevent him from walking into the trap the detectives had laid. You caught us in the act of returning the pearls to the safe."

"Poor Miss Odlin," Marya murmured.

"She must never learn of Walter's trickery," Dave said soberly. He looked down at skinned knuckles and smiled wryly. "You see, I reached Jake's place in time to induce him to part with certain I O U's

and the emerald ring before the detectives arrived."

Marya whirled to deliver a scathing denunciation at Walter. But he had crept from the room.

Marya went into Dave's arms and clung to him. "Dave, can you forgive me for telling those horrible lies? I was so jealous of Rissa."

"Adorable silly! That night in the garden you heard me assuring her that Barney was in love with her. She's crazy about him. That's why Mr. Pelham brought him here and induced him to take charge of his new aviation school. By the way, I'm to be the architect for the buildings. And Mr. Pelham had chosen my property for the site. Now, young woman, I'll twit you with marrying me for my money."

Marya smiled up into his eyes, and as their lips met in a long, rapturous kiss, she knew that their golden moments had just begun.

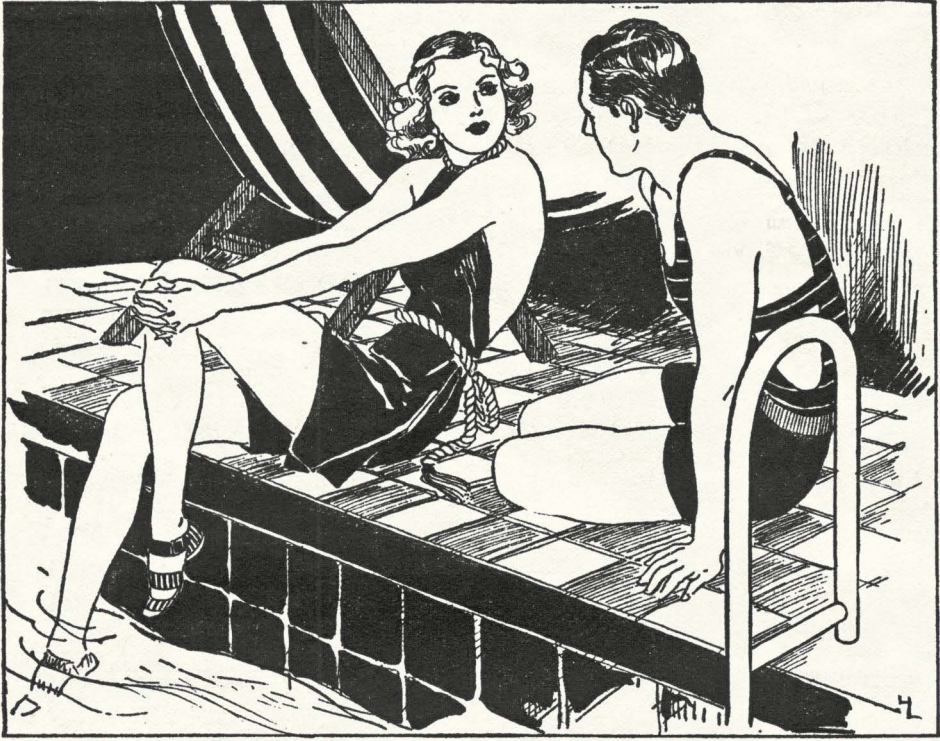


MIRACLE

STRANGE it may seem that just a hint
 Of color in the city throng—
 Some bit of brown, or orange tint,
 Glimpsed in the crowd that swings along
 The busy street, soon lost to view,
 Will set me dreaming, dear, of you.

Or that the soft tones of a voice,
 Heard as I go my lonely way,
 Should somehow cause me to rejoice,
 And set me longing for the day
 When dreams will be a thing apart,
 As close I hold you to my heart.

ARTHUR WILLIAM BEEBE.



Object—Marriage

By Peggy Gaddis

I LOVE you!" said Jerry almost grimly. "I adore you! You're the loveliest thing I ever saw in all my life and I'm completely mad about you, but I wouldn't marry you if you were the last girl in the world!"

Toni gasped, and her mouth formed a round "o" of astonishment as she stared at him.

"What—what did you say?" she stammered after a slightly dazed moment.

"You heard me! I said that I loved you madly, passionately, wildly, but that I wouldn't marry you if you were the last girl in the world!" repeated Jerry.

Toni bristled like an indignant puppy.

"And who asked you to marry me?" she demanded haughtily.

"You did!" Jerry accused her, and added hastily, "Oh, not in so many words of course. But it was in every tone of your voice when you

spoke to me last night, in your eyes when you looked at me, in the way you danced with me. It was in every little thing you did—far more eloquent than words could have been.”

“Well!” Toni exploded, outraged and all but speechless as she glared at him.

Jerry made a gesture of weariness as he drew his legs up and encircled them with his arms. They sat on the edge of the swimming pool that was a silken shimmer beneath a cloudless blue spring sky and a warm golden sun.

“I’ve been making love to you in just the same way, too, of course!” he said, obviously with no thought of smoothing her ruffled feelings, or even of realizing that there were ruffled feelings. “I came here to spend a week’s vacation at your country place, thinking of nothing beyond getting fit and ready for my new job out West. Of course, I counted myself extremely lucky to have even a secondhand bid to such a place of luxury and beauty and all that. I had no idea at all what my hostess looked like. Ten minutes after I set eyes on you I knew that I was in love with you, crazily in love with you, in all the ways a man can be in love with a girl who is sweet and lovely and gay and completely adorable! And since yesterday I’ve known that you were in love with me! But there’s nothing we can do about it!”

Toni, a delicious vision in a jade-green bathing suit, the sunlight glinting on tousled silver-blond hair shaken loose about her tanned shoulders, studied him for a mo-

ment, a sudden laugh in her green eyes.

“Of course, Jerry,” she said sweetly, after a long moment, “I’m only a girl and not supposed to be very bright. Still, it seems to me that if a man and a girl are so crazily in love, the most sensible thing for them would be to get married. Wouldn’t you think so?”

“I’ve just said that I wouldn’t marry you if you were the last girl in the world. Had you forgotten?” Jerry returned crisply.

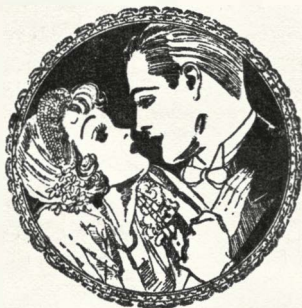
Toni’s slender young figure snapped erect and her eyes were as green as her jade-green suit as she snapped furiously.

“And if I’m not being too inquisitive, may I ask why?”

Jerry made a gesture with his hand so that the smoke of his cigarette trailed lazily through the air. The gesture took in the graciously charming white house, the acres of close-clipped green turf dotted here and there with fine old trees, the formal gardens that sloped away from the house at the left down toward the shimmering sound and the yellow beach, the veritable forest of stables, kennels, garages—all the visible signs of the great fortune of which, absurdly enough, this young thing beside him was mistress.

“Because, of course, silly, you are all this—Miss Antoinette Dufrayne, multimillionaire heiress and what not—while I am Jerry Laurence who earns two hundred a month and expends as an engineer and who is about to leave for a new job—”

Toni cut in sharply, incredulously, “Jerry Laurence, are you trying to tell me that you are breaking my



heart and refusing to marry me, just because of money?"

"It's just because you've always had it that it seems unimportant to you!" Jerry reminded her grimly. "I'm not a fortune hunter. I'd be miserable living on your money."

"Then we'll live on yours," said Toni brightly.

"On two hundred a month? Don't be silly!" Jerry was openly scornful.

"Then you don't really love me!" accused Toni stormily.

"I wish to Heaven I didn't. I wish I'd never seen you!" groaned Jerry.

"Jerry Laurence, how dare you say that?" she gasped, outraged.

"Because it's true! If I'd never set eyes on you, I'd still be able to start on my new job feeling as though I were sitting on top of the world. But now I feel like the devil, knowing that you're in the world and I can't have you!"

Toni leaned toward him, jade-green eyes warm and tender.

"But, darling, you can have me! I give you me! Here, like this, because I love you so much!" she said, her voice vibrant, trembling a little in the exquisite sweetness of surrender.

Jerry got to his feet with a movement that all but thrust her away from him. His hands curled away from contact with her, as though he dared not trust himself. Toni scrambled, unaided, to her feet but Jerry moved away from her, his face set.

"It wouldn't work out, Toni. We're worlds apart, you and I, and love can't bridge that much space. I know, dearest, and I'm not going to mess things up for you. I love you too much for that," he said harshly, and before she could stammer a protest he was gone.

Toni watched him go. Then she turned and slid down in the lush green grass that bordered the swimming pool, her face hidden against her crossed arms. Of course, it was unthinkable that Jerry should get away with his assertion that he wouldn't marry her! He must marry her! They were in love and that was all that mattered. All this talk about her money mustn't be allowed to stand between them. But even as the thought crossed her mind, she knew that it did stand between them. Jerry was far too proud ever to be known as "Mr. Antoinette Dufayne," as the newspapers would surely hail him—too proud to have the world believe that he had married her merely because she was rich.

He loved her. She adored him. They might have been so ecstatically happy! But just because she was rich— Suddenly, she scrambled to her feet and stood drawn to her full height, her face tear-stained, her eyes blazing, her fists clenched at her sides.

"He can't get away with it!" she told herself grimly. "He can't make love to me, admit that he loves me, and then run out on me! I won't let him!"

There was a dance that night at the Martyn place, thirty miles away—a "small, informal" party to which two hundred people had been invited and which no less than five hundred would attend. Toni, of course, and her house guests had been among the first invited. Shortly after dinner, they all met on the terrace to climb into cars and be whisked away toward the lower tip of the island. Toni did a bit of expert but entirely unobtrusive maneuvering, so that when the last car had rolled away and only her



Toni looked at Jerry and her heart lifted, giving her courage to go through with her plan. "We're a little late. What say we take a short cut?" she suggested with elaborate carelessness as she sat behind the wheel of her car.

roadster remained, she and Jerry were alone on the terrace steps.

Jerry looked at her oddly, but she knew that he was as glad as she was to have this drive together,

alone. Her heart lifted a little, giving her courage to go through with the thing she had planned.

"We're a little late. What say we take a short cut?" she suggested

with elaborate carelessness as they drove down the graveled drive and into the highway.

"Why not?" agreed Jerry, lighting a cigarette for her and one for himself.

And so Toni turned the car from the highway along a leafy, narrow dirt road that wound along a bluff above the river. It was a road not meant for automobile travel and as they jogged and lurched along, the expensive roadster crying out in every joint and bolt, Jerry stared down at Toni curiously and remarked politely,

"A short cut, I believe you said?"

"A short cut!" snapped Toni, and had the wheel almost wrenched from her hand by a particularly stiff jolt as the car's front wheel went down into a hole.

Jerry's bewilderment deepened as they went on. They had been traveling for perhaps three quarters of an hour, and all about them the woods seemed to become more and more dense, while the narrow dirt road had become little more than a path. But before he could say anything, the motor coughed protestingly once or twice, sputtered, and stopped dead.

Toni gave a smothered exclamation of annoyance that she hoped sounded convincing and leaned forward, jiggling various gadgets on the instrument board and making the starter buzz again and again, entirely without any effect except to shatter the night stillness of the woods.

"I'd say, offhand, that we're out of gas!" suggested Jerry dryly, as his finger touched the gasoline gauge whose needle pointed accusingly to "Empty."

Toni protested, insisting that she had ordered gas put into the car.

But Jerry only looked at her hard and swung the door open.

"I hope you won't be alarmed. I'm quite sure these woods are entirely safe, and I'll get back as soon as I can!" he assured her formally.

Toni whirled upon him, wide-eyed. "But where are you going?"

"After gas, of course! We can't sit here all night, and who knows when any one will pass this way? Come to think of it, this road looks as though it went nowhere in particular and I can't believe it has been traveled very much."

Toni clutched him wildly.

"I won't stay here alone. I'm terrified!" she gasped, and quite honestly, for the woods seemed to crowd darkly about her, filled with all kinds of terrors.

"Then you can walk with me,"

Jerry told her crisply.

"In these?" protested Toni, holding out a small foot shod in spike-heeled, silver-strapped sandals. It was obviously impossible for her to walk fifty feet on this rough, deeply rutted dirt road in such slippers.

Jerry thrust his fingers through his hair in a characteristic gesture of bafflement and snapped, "Then maybe you can suggest something! I don't fancy sitting here the rest of my life waiting for gasoline to pour down on us from heaven!"

Toni then ventured unsteadily, "There's a small fishing lodge just ahead—the shack where we come for week-ends now and then. There might be some gas there!"

Jerry looked down at her, suspicion in his eyes. His words were clipped as he answered, "Then we might as well investigate. Will you wait here or walk that far with me?"

"I'll walk with you!" said Toni meekly.

It was farther than she had thought. When she had planned the

gasoline supply for this adventure, she had been a little too optimistic. The car had stopped almost half a mile away from the shack, instead of within sight of it. By the time they arrived, one of Toni's spike heels was broken and her feet were throbbing painfully.

The shack was really a commodious log bungalow, set well above the river, commanding a magnificent view by day but on a moonless night, looking dark, forbidding and forlorn. Directly in front of it was a lily pond, where last summer Toni had experimented with the culture of tropical lilies and had abandoned the idea though not the pool. At the side of the pool there was a tall field-stone pot in which grew a jumbled mass of flowers that showed up startlingly clear in the round white beam of light from the flashlight Jerry had taken from the car. Toni reached in a crevice beneath this pot and took out a key with which she unlocked the door of the shack. A moment later, she had lighted several shaded lamps, and the living room of the bungalow sprang into being—comfortable, cheerfully gay, with chintz and bright-colored prints on the wall and hooked rugs on the floor.

Jerry stood leaning against the door, watching Toni with an odd look as she brought the room to life before him. When she turned to him, bright-eyed and eager, Jerry was scowling at her blackly.

"You didn't, by any chance, plan all this, did you, Toni?" he demanded so unexpectedly, that Toni caught her breath and grew pale even while she gasped in a voice that was, even to herself, completely unconvincing.

"Why, Jerry, what on earth do you mean?"

"Just this!" said Jerry sharply.

"I believe you deliberately planned this whole thing—running out of gas here so near the shack. We're to spend the night here, because there isn't anything else we can do, and in the morning, to spare your reputation, we're to announce our engagement! That's the scenario, isn't it?"

Toni looked up at him, wide-eyed and breathless, the warm bright color flooding her face.

"I—I——" she stammered, and then suddenly she blurted, "Would you mind so terribly, Jerry—marrying me, I mean?"

"Look here, Toni! Try to get this through your sweet thick head!" he said savagely. "I'm in love with you, yes! But—well, dog-gone it, if you were an eighteen-dollar-a-week stenographer or I was an eighteen-thousand-dollar-a-month playboy, we could be married and get away with it. But the way things are now, the cards are stacked against us from the start! How many such marriages have ever worked out? Not one in a thousand! I love you too much to drag you through such a mess. And so, now that you are quite comfortable here, I'm off to find some gas!"

And before she could move to stop him, he had turned and swung out of the door, down the steps and along the path, carrying the flashlight with him. She cried out his name, but the round white beam of light that marked his going did not hesitate. She ran across the room, out of the door and into a darkness made even blacker and more impenetrable by the fact that she had just left a brilliantly lighted room. Her eyes intent on that bobbing light that was taking Jerry away from her, she ran down the steps, along the path, and tripped headlong over the field-stone barricade

about the lily pool. She cried Jerry's name once, and then her body struck the cold water of the pool and she went down, down, until the breath died in her throat.

Her outflung hands struck the bottom of the pool. She rose, and as her head came above the water she heard Jerry's voice calling to her. He was kneeling beside the pool, reaching for her. The spring night was faintly chill with a rising wind that cut through her thin, sodden garments. She was shaking with shock and chill, but dimly through her discomfort, she heard Jerry's voice, frantic, beseeching, and she pretended to be unconscious.

He carried her into the house and put her into a chair. She was, of course, dripping wet and shivering as much from excitement as from chill. Jerry ran into one of the bedrooms and she heard him opening drawers, jerking open doors, but when he came back it was with a blanket instead of dry clothes. But then, she remembered, there were no clothes at the shack since it hadn't been used that year.

Toni gasped as Jerry began to strip her wet garments from her, but he ignored her protests. Swiftly, he bundled her into the dry blanket, tucked her up comfortably on the couch and knelt to build a fire. There was dry wood, kindling, papers in the wood box, and in a few moments a blazing fire was roaring up the chimney.

As soon as he was sure of this, Jerry hurried out into the kitchen and she heard the rattle of pans, the scratching of a match as the oil stove was lighted, and a little later, he came back to her with a cup of steaming coffee, strong and black.

He sat down beside her on the couch, raised her with an arm about

her shoulders and held the coffee to her lips. Toni, burningly conscious that the blanket was her only garb, tried modestly to hold it about her pretty shoulders as she sipped the coffee.

Jerry looked down at her anxiously when she had finished the coffee.

"Are you all right now, darling?" he asked.

"Of course. Oh, Jerry, I've been an awful fool! I didn't deserve to have you fish me out. I—I should have just splashed around in there and——" But Jerry cut her short, his arms holding her close.

"Darling, don't! I—I thought you were drowning!" he told her unsteadily.

Neither of them had heard the sound of approaching voices and footsteps that came along the stone path and up the steps. The door burst open, and four young people stood there staring at Toni, huddled close in a blanket in Jerry's arms. Jerry and Toni stared stupidly for a moment before they became conscious of the unconventionality of their appearance.

Sam Pruitt, who had led the other three young people, said casually—much too casually, "Oh, there you are! We were a little worried about you! Sanna Martyn telephoned your place to know why you hadn't arrived and the butler said that he was afraid you might have run out of gas. So we were delegated to come back and hunt for you. We remembered the shack was near. Thought it possible you might have tried to get here to telephone, and when we found your car down the road—well, we came on to see if we could be of service! Er—we'll be barging along though, now!"

Jerry explained quickly, "We did run out of gas. Toni thought there

might be some here, so we came on. Then Toni had an accident. She fell in the lily pond."

Sam barely restrained a snicker, and derision was bright in the eyes of the two girls and the other boy at this explanation, which even Toni had to admit sounded feeble.

"Oh, sure—sure!" said Sam politely—so politely, that Jerry's face burned with fury though there was really nothing he could do about the situation. "Well, we'll put some gas in Toni's car and tell Sanna Martyn that you're unavoidably detained. If you care to show up later

—well, that will be all right, too!"

And before either Toni or Jerry could think of anything to say, the four young people had filed out solemnly, and the door closed behind them. But as they went down the walk, a burst of derisive laughter floated back to the two inside who stared at the closed door for a moment, and then at each other.

Jerry's face was grim. "Well, I hope you are satisfied," he bit out. "You are thoroughly compromised now, and the only thing I can do is marry you!"

There was something in the way



And then suddenly, Jerry was on his knees beside her, his arms about her. "Toni darling, I love you!" he told her, his voice not quite steady.

he said it that made Toni savage with hurt and anger. She sat up on the couch and swung her feet off. But just in time she remembered that the blanket was her only covering and didn't stand up, after all.

"Oh, no, you won't! I wouldn't marry you——" she began haughtily.

But Jerry cut in savagely, as though he hated her,

"Keep quiet! You'll marry me and like it! Do you hear?"

Toni stared up at him, shrinking from him, fear flickering for just a moment in her eyes. And then suddenly, Jerry was on his knees beside her, his arms about her, his face touched with a smile that was as tender as a kiss.

"You're an imp, Toni, and you ought to be spanked. You've made a complete fool of me, though maybe I helped you a little!" he told her, his voice not quite steady. "We'll be deliriously happy for a while, and then if the money makes trouble for us—well, at least we'll have a lot of happiness to remember! Toni darling, I love you!"

Toni's chin was quivering, and

Jerry cupped it in the palm of his hand. Gently, he kissed away the two tears that rolled slowly down her cheeks.

"Toni, sweet, you're crying. Darling, I'm a brute——"

"I—I'm not c-crying," Toni denied hotly. "I—I'm j-just happy, th-that's all!"

Then Jerry had her in his arms, cradling her as though she were a child, tracing a line of kisses from the crown of her bright head down to the soft young lips, lingering there.

"Jerry," she murmured later, her lips brushing his ear, "take back what you said about money making trouble for us."

"I take it back, sweet," he said obediently. Then, tenderly, "As though such a trivial thing as money could possibly hurt our love!"

She hurled her arms around his neck impetuously, and hugged him.

"Oh, Jerry, darling!" she crowed. "I knew I'd win!"

He grinned at her triumph, and his kiss upon her lips was a happy acknowledgment of his defeat.



SEA IDYLL

THE night, the wind, and the water,
Were breathing a song of the South;
Hundreds and hundreds of stars overhead
And your lips seeking my mouth.

The ship was steadily plowing,
And churning the water to foam;
You brushed my hair with your fingers;
But my heart called to one at home.

ANNE ROBINSON.



A Man Of Her Own

By June Jennifer

MADGE PORTER smiled mischievously over her shoulder as she pulled on a saucy green hat that made her look more like a fifteen-year-old schoolgirl than the matron that she was. "Of course you are coming with us, Judy," she said.

"Stop teasing our Judy!" Henry Porter's tall figure loomed in the dressing-room doorway. "You know she has a date with the luckiest young man in seven counties. And speaking of young men, Judy, here's a letter they handed me at the desk this morning. I forgot to give it to

you. From Tommy Withers, I guess, forwarded from home."

Judy, a small girl with curly golden-brown hair, big blue eyes and a crimson mouth like a half-opened flower, tucked the letter hastily into her purse, a monogrammed affair of fine beige leather that matched her knitted costume. Her face was flushed and her eyes starry, as she hastened from the room.

Phil Dewey, tall, straight, dark and handsome, met her in the lobby of the hotel, his laughing black eyes blazing admiration as he hurried her out to the expensive blue car at the curb.

"You look like a million to-night," he whispered as he helped her into the roadster. "Let's cut the picnic, shall we? Somehow, a plumbers' picnic doesn't seem like a romantic adventure."

Judy laughed softly, excitedly. She did not care where she went, so long as Phil went with her. She knew that her employer and his wife, who had brought her down to the Wholesale Plumbers' Convention at Lake Barbour to take notes of the meetings, would not mind if she skipped the farewell festivity.

"O. K., then," Phil said, crushing her fingers in his own. "We'll go farther up the lake to a little beach where there isn't a hot dog in miles. It's a night too sweet to waste."

Judy's heart beat thunderously as he led her away from the parked roadster and out upon a stretch of silvery sand where they could sit against a great pine log and look at the golden ripples on the lake. She had met Phil ten days before, almost at the beginning of the convention, and when she first looked into his dark, sparkling eyes she knew that she had fallen in love with him.

She believed he loved her, too, although he had never spoken the

words she longed with all her heart to hear. If only he would propose to-night ask her to marry him at once and never go back to Clintonia at all!

The thought of Clintonia lay like a black cloud over the bright rainbow of her dreams, because if Eileen ever saw Philip Dewey— Her eyes closed in sudden pain with the memory of what had happened before. Lloyd Macon, Peter Long, Tommy Withers—one by one her red-headed cousin had taken them for her own, and when they no longer thrilled or amused her, cast them carelessly aside. Now Tommy Withers, star salesman for the Porter Plumbing Co., wanted Judy to be engaged to him again, after all that had happened.

Phil bent forward to look deeply into Judy's shadowed eyes.

"You're as silent as a little white tombstone," he said. "Don't you like it here?"

She contrived a laugh, hoping to hush the noisy clamor of her pulsing heart. "Is it nice to compare me to a tombstone? Am I pulling such a long face as that, or is it that I am just as expressionless?"

Phil drew a sharp breath. "Don't, Judy," he pleaded. "This is our last night together. Let's not waste it with wisecracks. When I think that to-morrow you will be gone, I want to rush out there and jump into the lake!"

"Then don't let me go," she cried silently, her blue eyes steeped with pleading as she lifted them to his own. "Keep me here forever."

"Don't look at me like that," Phil burst out. Then suddenly, he swept her into his arms, dislodging the purse she had perched on her knees and scattering its contents on the silver-white sand.

"I love you, Judy, I love you," he

cried, covering her small sweet mouth with kisses. "I'm so crazy about you that I don't know what I'm doing half the time."

She clung to him, everything but ecstasy forgotten as she felt his arms, strong and firm around her, the fever of his lips on hers. He did love her! She had felt it all the time. In a moment or two he would ask her to marry him, and they would go somewhere and be married right away.

But Phil did not say the words she wanted so desperately to hear. Some of the golden brightness went out of the moonlight, some of the breathless sweetness faded from the pine-scented night. When a launch, loaded with members of the plumbers' picnic party, came gayly up the lake, the two drew apart and began to gather her scattered belongings.

Judy's eyes were filled with tears as she tucked them back into her purse. Phil, too, seemed changed and moody, remaining silent and aloof as he drove her back to the hotel. Swiftly he drew her into his arms, kissed her, and was gone.

She thought that he might appear the next morning, but there was only a dozen pink roses for her and a little note, "Forgive me for last night, Judy." Nothing more. With a smile that hurt, she carried the roses to the train with her, scattering the bits of the torn note along the way.

When Judy reached her aunt's apartment in Clintonia, she wanted only to retreat to her own room where she could throw herself across the bed and cry. But even that refuge was denied her. Eileen had company—a trio of sorority sisters who had been visiting during Judy's absence.

"You'll just have to stay with one of the girls until they are gone," the

beautiful auburn-haired girl told her. "Chickie Stevens said that the girl living with her went away to get married, so she is alone. Where did you get those absurd wilted roses? Some bucolic beau, I suppose."

Judy carried the roses with her to Chickie's gay cubby-hole of an apartment, but they would not revive although she clipped their stems and watered them with hopeless tears. Phil hadn't come to say good-by and had even failed to mention a desire to see her ever again. Perhaps she was just another visiting girl to him, some one to flirt with, make love to, and forget.

Valiantly Judy, too, tried to forget. Eileen's company lingered on, and then some relatives came from the West. By the time they had gone Chickie and Judy had decided to make their living together a permanent arrangement. Chickie, a small dark girl, three years older than Judy, sensed that the other girl was unhappy and mothered her without asking harassing questions. She invited Tommy Withers up for a fried-chicken dinner the first evening after he came back to town.

Tommy was big and blond, and once Judy had thought that she loved him. She had worn his ring and been happy while Eileen was away on a month's trip, but her cousin's return had spelled the end of that brief romance. Men just could not seem to help falling for Eileen's auburn-and-white loveliness, her green eyes and her charm.

"It was just infatuation, Judy," Tommy said that evening after the chicken dinner, as he helped Judy dry the dishes. "I think you ought to give me another chance, Judy. I'd make you a good husband, now."

Judy looked at him sadly. "Until Eileen took a notion to crook her

finger again. No, Tommy, I don't believe I shall ever marry. I just don't seem to be the kind of girl to have a man of her own." Her voice shook slightly.

"You're the sweetest, prettiest girl in the world," Tommy said.

Judy's curly brown head shook. If only she could forget that another voice had said those same words! She wanted to forget Phil Dewey, but night after night she dreamed that he was kissing her, holding her close to his heart. She dreamed, and morning brought reality and tears.

One morning, opening the door of the private office to summon the office boy, Judy's heart almost stopped as she saw a tall, familiar figure apparently arguing with the girl at the desk nearest the door of the outer office. She leaned heavily against the wall and choked back a convulsive sob.

"Phil!" she whispered. "It can't be Phil!"

She closed the door softly, so that no one should see the happy tears that suddenly went streaming down her face. In a moment Phil would come to her. She could not go rushing wildly across the office and fling herself into his arms as she longed to do. She powdered her nose and waited.

Phil did not come but

Freddy, the office boy, did. He announced, "A guy tried to get in and see you but they bounced him out. No personal calls in office hours, the boss says. And was that particular guy's face red! He gave me a buck to get this message to you."

Judy seized the note eagerly. "See you to-night at eight, Judy," was written in Phil's sprawling handwriting. Just that, but it was



Suddenly Judy's eyes widened incredulously. She felt something like a stiletto stab at her heart. At a table was her cousin Eileen, her lips tantalizingly lifted to the man at her side. And the man was Phil Dewey, Judy's Phil!



enough. Phil had followed her, was coming to see her!

At noon, she rushed out and bought a dusty-pink gown of sheer foamlike wool. Phil might want to take her out, and she wanted him to be proud of her. For the rest of the day, the girl's heart sang and soared and fluttered.

Now that everything was all right again she could tell Chickie all about it. Listening as she polished her nails, the older girl nodded. She had long been a friend of Judy's and knew all about Eileen and her man-snatching habits.

"It's just as well it happened this way, honey," Chickie told her. "Now that you are not living with your aunt and cousin, that red-headed heart grabber can't interfere this time. Anyway, I don't see how any man in his senses could possibly prefer her to you. You look lovely enough to eat in that dress. It's the latest thing."

"I hope Phil likes it," Judy said shyly, stealing a peep at herself in the glass. She was lovely to look at with her masses of golden-brown hair, fair skin and starry blue eyes. And the smart new gown fitted the graceful lines of her figure as though it had been made for her. She hummed as she waited for Phil.

Eight o'clock came, then nine and ten, but Phil did not come. He did not come the next day either, nor the next. Nor was there any message from him. Judy, her face pinched and white, went around like one in a wretched dream. She read all the accidents listed in the papers and even telephoned the hospitals, but no one of Phil's name or description was there.

"I suppose he was just in town for the evening and found something more entertaining to pass the time

away," Judy told Chickie with a twisted smile as she hung the dusty-pink wool in the back of the closet.

"Forget him. He isn't worth a thought," Chickie said. "What you ought to do is to let Tommy take you out. Go somewhere very gay. I'll get Vincent and we'll make a foursome. Tommy's not a bad sort and he's certainly giving you a rush."

Judy consented finally, and for the occasion put on the new wool gown listlessly. She had bought it so happily, hoping to appear lovely in Phil's ardent dark eyes. She might as well wear it; it was just an ordinary dress now.

Tommy was in high spirits. Judy had, he felt, softened toward him at last. Perhaps she had decided to forgive him for his wretched infatuation with her red-headed cousin, and he might even persuade her to marry him.

They went to the Nippon, one of the swankier night clubs with a Japanese atmosphere and then on to the Silver Moon, a night haunt that was smarter still. The place was crowded; there was scarcely room on the floor to dance and the tables were pushed closely together around the wall.

"I want to dance with you," Tommy told Judy plaintively. "It is the only chance I have to have you in my arms again."

They were moving, literally an inch at a time, when Judy's blue eyes widened incredulously beneath the sheltering arcs of her long, curling lashes. She felt something like a stiletto stab at her heart underneath the sheer bodice of dusty-pink wool.

Across from them, drinking champagne at a table partly secluded by the palms, were her cousin Eileen and Phil Dewey! Eileen, all in her

favorite, effective white, was laughing, her lips tantalizingly lifted to the dark figure by her side. While the other girl watched, her white fingers lifted and strayed to Phil's shoulder, pulling him toward her.

"Let's get out of here," Judy whispered sharply. "It's so crowded and close. I think I am going to be ill."

That was as good an excuse as any to get rid of Tommy. Chickie, dismissing Vincent Browning also, followed Judy to the bedroom and dropped down beside her as she sat, staring blankly at the wall.

"I saw her, Judy," she began. "And I couldn't help seeing your face. That couldn't be Phil?"

Clenching her hands to keep from sobbing, Judy nodded. "That's the one thing I did not think of," she said. "I don't see how he met her. I simply can't understand."

"I think I do"—quietly. "I have been wonderin' if you gave him your new address, here with me. But, of course, you didn't. You didn't have a chance. He must have gotten your address from the office that day or from the directory and gone to your aunt's place instead, and—and Eileen gobbled him up." Her face hardened. "Some one ought to shoot that woman. All she lives for is to make trouble."

For Judy, there was some comfort in the thought that Phil must have, at least, tried to see her. If only she had not been so stupid as to forget about the change in address! She could have hurried over to her aunt's apartment that night, met him there.

But she shook her head wearily. It wouldn't have done any good. Once Eileen saw a man and wanted him she reached for him and took him, just as she had taken Lloyd,

Peter and Tommy. She liked men and she loved conquest. The fact that another girl had prior claims only gave zest to the game.

Judy went over to her aunt's apartment the next evening, hating herself for her weakness even while she knew she had to go. She might see Phil there. The longing to see and speak to him was more than she could bear.

Her aunt, a small birdlike woman who was always making fluttering motions, greeted her with something like reserve. She resented the fact, Judy knew, that she was sharing an apartment with Chickie and had practically commanded her to return. Judy's board money paid almost all the rent, and she obligingly helped with the housework besides.

"I hope you have come to your senses," she said stiffly. "I don't think it is right for a young girl with relatives to be living with another girl. It creates a wrong impression. Eileen and I have been doing our best to conceal the real situation, but I do not know how long we can keep up the deception."

"Deception?" Judy stared at her blankly, sinking down in a chair beside the table where the dust was misted in spots. The whole room showed the effects of careless housekeeping. Aunt Jennie followed her appraising glance with a plaintive sigh.

"I'm not very well; my neuritis is bothering me lately," she explained. "And poor Eileen is out at all hours with her new young man. He's a darling, and I really think the girl is serious this time. Men have rushed her so and she is too young to really know the meaning of it all."

Judy felt a hard, painful ball in her throat and put up a trembling

hand to push it down. "New young man?"

"Philip Dewey. He has a position with Morse & Morrison, the importers, but his grandmother is very wealthy and it is reported that he is to be her heir. Wait, I'll show you his picture."

She drew a book of snapshots toward her and flipped open the pages. There were snapshots of Eileen and Phil in Phil's car, Eileen and Phil in the park and on the steps of the apartment house. There was one of Phil alone, and Judy stared at it, struggling to control her emotion.

When her aunt pattered away to answer the phone, the girl impulsively slipped the snapshot out of the album and dropped it into her purse. Her face was burning as the older woman returned.

"That was Eileen," she said. "She went to tea at the Ellises' this afternoon and Phil met her there. They're crazy about some new night club and are going there again tonight. Oh, must you go?"

Tommy was there when Judy returned, his blue eyes anxious. "Feeling better to-night?" he asked, taking her hand. "Want to go out somewhere? We could find a quieter place than either the Nippon or the Silver Moon."

Because she did not care and did not want to think, Judy allowed him to take her out. If they kept to the quieter, less fashionable places they would not run into Phil and Eileen. And yet if they did encounter them, she might talk to the man she loved, might even dance with him. Oh, to feel his arms around her again!

She rebuked herself sharply. Phil was Eileen's man now, and even if he did dance with her he would be thinking of the other girl, comparing the two. How slight and

colorless she must appear beside the dazzling, white-skinned, green-eyed beauty of her auburn-haired cousin, Judy thought. In addition to her physical loveliness, Eileen had some secret quality of personality that rendered the opposite sex helpless.

It was a dreary evening even for Tommy who sensed her lack of interest and listlessness. "I don't know what is the matter with you," he said as he unlocked the door of the apartment for her. "You act like a mid-Victorian lady going into a decline. You're working too hard. Marry me and take a rest."

Poor Tommy! He did not know that the sickness she was suffering from would be heightened by idleness. She closed the door gently behind him, and taking out the snapshot of Phil she had hidden, stared at it with tear-filled eyes, her hand against her heart.

She did not hear the door softly open, did not know that Tommy had come back, hesitating as she kissed the picture and suddenly burying her head in her arms, burst into hopeless sobs. But he stood for a moment, his face white, staring at her before he closed the door.

The next day, Eileen called for Judy at the office to take her to lunch, a gesture she made only when she wanted assistance of some kind. Over sandwiches and coffee, Eileen's movements contrived to conspicuously display a shining diamond ring on her engagement finger.

"Isn't it ducky?" she gushed. "Darling, I'm so happy. I've met the right man at last. All the others pale into insignificance before him. He's gorgeous. Why, I bumped right into Tommy Withers the other day and stared at him without even knowing him. That's the way I am."



Judy stared at the ring Tommy held out. She crossed to him slowly and held out her hand. She might just as well marry Tommy, she supposed. At least, his blond good looks would not remind her of the dark masculinity of Phil.

Judy nibbled her sandwich and did not answer. She'd heard her cousin rave about men before. Her latest moment was always the

largest, most significant of them all. She realized that the green eyes were watching her closely.

"And speaking of Tommy—I hear

you've been running around with him a lot. That's encouraging. He'll make you a good husband. We might even arrange for a double wedding—Phil and I, and you and Tommy."

"I'm not engaged to Tommy." Judy's voice was husky.

"Hasn't he proposed yet? I must give that young man a talking to. At any rate, you must come over some evening and get really acquainted with Phil. He tells me he ran around with you a little to give you a thrill down at Lake Barbour, but you cannot possibly have known in such a short time what a honey he is. Do come over!"

"Perhaps, some evening." Judy's face was expressionless. If Eileen wanted her to come she must be very certain of Phil.

"And I want you for my maid of honor, of course," the other girl continued. "You can't get out of that unless you elope with Tommy or some one before the wedding. Phil and I have been planning the duckiest gown for you—clear green to match my eyes. We think it will be wonderfully effective."

Judy said nothing. Eileen knew that she looked hideous in any shade of green. And she had told Phil once that it was the only color she disliked. Now they were conniving to make a fright of her at their wedding. Eileen saw her start of resentment and smiled.

"A double wedding would be best and then we could both wear white," she said.

When Tommy came that night he seemed reserved and had a far-away expression in his eyes. While he was there the telephone rang. Judy listened, her eyes huge, her face suddenly white. It was Eileen.

"I think Phil and I will come

over," she said in a low, laughing voice. "If Tommy's there we can go out somewhere together. I'll bet Tommy is there, isn't he?"

Judy's hand shook. "Yes, Tommy is here but we are going out right away. Some other time."

She turned feverishly to the blond young man who was sitting morosely at the table. "Take me out somewhere quick, Tommy. I want to go somewhere and dance."

"I don't want to dance to-night," Tommy grumbled. "Besides, you are not dressed. I want to just sit and talk. I'm a home-loving man and I love you, Judy. I can't keep coming around like this if you haven't any intention of becoming my wife. You did love me once, Judy."

"Not as I love Phil," she wanted to say, but she could not waste the time. It would be just like Eileen to bring Phil over, anyway, knowing from her agitated voice that she was fibbing about going out. And she could not see Phil now, knowing that he was engaged to her cousin and that he had only taken her out in Lake Barbour to give her a thrill.

Tommy settled himself comfortably in his chair, leisurely lighting a cigarette and thrusting it into his mouth, his blond head tilted to one side. She wanted to rush at him bodily, jerk him and beat at him with her fists to get him started. But rushing into her room instead, she dressed in the first garment she snatched up, a yellow satin evening gown.

Tommy surveyed her calmly through a haze of smoke. "I might take a girl who was engaged to me out to dance," he told her soberly. "But no more dances for a girl who will not wear her ring."

She stared at the glittering circlet he had taken from his pocket. It

was the one she once had worn, the one she had returned to him in sorrow and disgust. She crossed to him slowly and held out her hand. If wearing it was a condition of being taken out to-night she would let him put it on her finger. She would do anything to escape a visit from Phil and her cousin.

Tommy kissed her, holding her close, and she tried to respond. After all, she might just as well marry Tommy Withers, she supposed. At least, his blond good looks would not always be reminding her of the dark masculinity of Philip Dewey.

He did not ask her if she loved him but held her close while they danced, whispering and sometimes kissing the pink tip of her ear. It was a sort of dreary nightmare, that evening of dancing, drinking cocktails and listening to music that sounded dead and tinny in her ears.

It was an evening climaxed by the ghastly adventure of running into Phil and Eileen at some spot she could never afterward clearly remember. It was just another place, and then there was Phil's dark face staring at her out of the fog of moving dancers. Eileen smiled and waved and, afterward, dragged her companion over to their table.

"I wanted Phil to see what a sweet ring you have," she said, kissing her cousin. "It is smaller than mine, of course, but it is darling. Don't you think so, Phil? She and Tommy have been that way about each other so long. Let me see. It was eighteen months ago in December that you became engaged, wasn't it?"

"Yes," Tommy replied grimly, his face sullen. "And six months later that——"

Eileen interrupted with a laugh. "That you went on the road," she

supplied sweetly. "That is why they have not been married before. Tommy's an ace salesman but salesmen are away a lot. Eh, Tommy?"

Tommy grunted something. It sounded ungracious but somehow the sound warmed Judy. Phil would see that there was some one Eileen could not manipulate with her wiles—some one who liked blue eyes better than green ones and curly brown hair more than red.

She and Tommy did not say much as they rode home together. He kissed her tenderly and held her at arm's length while he searched her face when they came to the door. "Look here," he demanded. "Are you in love with that man? Was it his picture you were crying over the other night?"

Judy jumped. "I—— Why, I ——" A crimson flush covered her cheeks and then faded, leaving them so pale that her eyes looked like sapphires against the white, taut skin.

"The truth, Judy. I want to know the truth."

"I did care for him," she said bravely. "But it's over now. I'll try to love you again, Tommy, and I'll make you a good wife. I can. Love is a fever, anyway, isn't it? Something not quite healthy. It is better to start marriage with mutual affection and common sense. There's less chance of getting hurt then."

"I ought to say I don't want you without your love," he told her gruffly. "But I can't. I want you on any terms. I realize that the way I acted over Eileen killed something of what you felt for me, but I swear I'll make it come back! Just marry me. Give me a chance."

"All right, Tommy. I'll marry you whenever you say. Only I'd like to keep on with my job so that I'll have something to keep me busy



Phil's arms were around her, his lips on hers. She could hear his heart thundering, drowning out the thumping of her own.

when you are away." Something to keep her from dreaming and thinking of Phil, to keep her from hating him so. It was strange how you could love a man and hate him all at the same time.

On Saturday night Tommy came to her. "You said you would marry me at any time and I am holding you to your word," he said. "We're eloping to-night. Pack what clothes

you want to take along and make it snappy."

Judy stared at him, all color gone from her face. It was one thing to promise to marry Tommy Withers some time in the indefinite future, but to go away with him right now, to-night! Yet she had promised, and it might be the best way, after all. She went into her bedroom and began taking various garments out of the closet.

"We'll have to go across the State line to be married," Tommy told her as they drove, about midnight, up the brightly lighted parkway of a huge, roadside inn. "We'll have supper first and you can freshen up a bit. You look a trifle pale and tired."

Pale and tired! She would always be pale and tired. Nothing would ever lift her from this deadly inertia again. It seemed scarcely credible that in a few hours she would be Tommy's wife.

They ate in silence, and then Tommy helped her on with her coat, kissing her in the secluded corner of the room.

"Go out and get in the car, dear," he said gently. "I have to settle the check."

She did not notice until she was almost in the car that there was a dark shadow there. She started back, but it was too late. A firm, iron grasp was on her wrist. She tried to scream as two strong arms drew her close and two dark eyes blazed suddenly into her own.

"Phil!" she faltered. "Phil!" But it couldn't be Phil. What would Phil be doing here in Tommy's roadster?

"Judy, my little Judy!"

It was Phil! Phil's arms were around her, his lips on hers, his shoulder supporting her head. She could hear his heart thundering, drowning out the thumping of her own. Valiantly, she fought against surrender. She was Tommy's girl now, almost his wife. She could not yield to the flood of desire that Phil's caresses awakened. She sobbed out Tommy's name.

"He's swell!" Phil exclaimed enthusiastically, holding down her hands. "He came to me, told me about this elopement and gave me a chance to horn in. He told me you

were in love with some other man, although he didn't mention any names."

Still she struggled. "That's silly. I'm not in love with any one at all. And what would Eileen say if she knew you were here?"

Phil clutched her shoulders in a grasp that hurt. "I'm a blind fool," he said. "I didn't see through that cousin of yours until Tommy opened my eyes. I thought when she burst out with that ring that she was engaged to some absent fellow and I was just pinch-hitting for him."

Judy stared. "You aren't in love with her?"

"With that pair of green eyes and that hank of red hair, when I had held you in my arms? Are you crazy, Judy? I thought she was amusing, but love—well, love is another thing. The kind of love I feel for you comes only once in a lifetime. I thought you knew."

Judy began to cry. "But you didn't ask me to marry you that night. You didn't say anything about seeing me ever again."

"I couldn't," Phil explained. "My eccentric grandmother had just disinherited me for running around with a secretary. She prophesied that I would starve to death, that I'd never be able to get a job. She has a terrible tongue, that grandmother of mine. She made me feel two inches high with an inferiority complex a mile wide. I had to get out and rustle a job to prove I wasn't the weakling she termed me, before I could ask you to marry me. I had no right even to kiss you but I couldn't help that.

"I went to Clintonia and finally got a job. I knew where you worked and I remembered your address from the letter I picked up that night from the sand. The moment I was assured of work I barged around

to see you but they wouldn't let me in, and I had to start on my job in the afternoon.

"I called at the address I had at eight o'clock. Your cousin was alone. She told me that you had gone out with another man. I was hurt and angry, but the next night I went back, determined to have it out with you. Again you were gone—out with the same fellow, Eileen said.

"She asked me to go out with a crowd of her friends in a way I couldn't very well refuse without being rude. After that, she called me up and asked me to come over. I did, hoping to catch a glimpse of you. Finally she told me that you had moved in with another girl to avoid me, and then that you were engaged."

Judy pushed him back and sat up very straight. "I didn't think that she would lie! She never had to before. She told me that you and she were engaged and showed me the ring."

"She bought it herself or it was a

holdover from some other engagement. But you were wearing Tommy's ring. Only he knew that it didn't mean anything. He pumped your friend Chickie and found out all he could. Then he came to me. He hated me—I could see that—but I guess he loved you more. Judy, you should, I guess, go on with your elopement with him."

But all the time he was drawing her back into his arms, his dark eyes shining down into hers as she lifted a tremulously happy mouth for a kiss. "Perhaps I should," she said with a whimsical quirk to her lips. "But I think I'd rather elope with you, if you don't mind. Phil, this isn't a dream?"

"Nothing," he whispered, crushing her to him, "could be more real or more wonderful. Nothing now can keep you from being all mine. One more kiss, Judy, and then, on our way!"

After a long while, the car moved swiftly out into the parkway, headed for reality and paradise, with Judy's man now and forever her very own.





Touching The Clouds

By Jennifer Ames

A SERIAL—Part VI.

CHAPTER XII.

SUE looked intently at the man sitting next to her. "Please be sensible, Ted," she begged. "Of course I'm not going to marry you the end of the week. Don't be so ridiculous."

"Well," he said, "the end of the following week, then. I'm not going to wait any longer than that for you, young lady. Don't start getting coy notions into your head. I'll give you enough money to buy a

swell trousseau. I've never been stingy where girls were concerned. You'll find me a pretty decent fellow, Sue, once we're married."

It was all so unbelievable she didn't know how to argue with him.

"I'm not going to marry you, Ted," she said firmly. "Not next week, the week after, or any time." There was decision in her voice. She jerked up her small fair head as she spoke.

"Nonsense, Sue." He was smiling at her. "You'll change your

mind soon. I admit I must have taken you by surprise. Didn't know I was madly in love with you, did you? I don't blame you for being a bit stand-offish considering how I've treated you these past days. Your pride was hurt—that's it, isn't it? But you'll soon forget about that. We'll have a grand time together. And if you like we'll drop the subject of marriage for a day or two. Wait until you get to know me better. "You will like me all right." He grinned, and added: "There's not a girl I've ever gone out with who has not been crazy about me."

During the remainder of the drive he paid her blatant compliments, although he didn't return to the subject of marriage. That, at least, Sue was thankful for. And she wished he would hurry, get her to the house and start back on his way to New York. But he didn't seem in the least disposed to hurry. He talked of one thing and another, bragged about his many successes with women, hinted that more than one girl with money would give her eyes to marry him, and told her incidents of his past life. At least those incidents which reflected well on him.

Sue interrupted his monologue presently to ask if they weren't getting near the house.

He nodded.

"Just down this hill," he said and stopped abruptly. At the very mention of that hill his face had whitened and he looked quickly away from her. He didn't want to think of that hill any more. He couldn't understand now what had made him imagine that he could do

such a terrible thing as Sheila had planned. He just couldn't have been strictly sane at the time, he decided.

He drove as fast as possible down the hill, round the bend in the road, to the isolated spot where the house stood. With the late-afternoon shadows now crowding about it, it had a slightly eerie look, Sue felt. Remembering that if Ted couldn't get Sheila and her mother down in time she might have to spend the night here alone, she shivered.

The house was surrounded by a white fence. Ted and she passed through a gate, one hinge of which had been blown off by the wind, up a stone pathway to the front door. There was a small garden in front that would have been attrac-

THE STORY SO FAR: Sue Carston, salesgirl, in love with Bert Waller, prize fighter, loses her job because of a complaint made by Larry Fenchurch, society man and brilliant lawyer. During a fight, Waller kills a man. He tells Sue she must get a good lawyer for him. Desperate, Sue goes to Fenchurch. He takes the case. He also gets her a position as companion to the mother of Sheila Richmond, who expects to marry Larry. At the Richmond home Sue meets Mrs. Burton the woman who brought her up, and who tells Sue that she (Mrs. Burton) can tell her who she really is. Later, Mrs. Burton tells Ted Williams, the Richmond chauffeur, that Sue should rightfully have the money that the Richmonds are living on; that she is really Sue Richmond; the present Mrs. Richmond being Sue's father's second wife. Larry makes love to Sue, who tells him she is going to marry Bert. Ted tells Sheila that he knows who Sue really is. Sheila and her mother decide that Sue must be got rid of. Sheila tells Ted that he is to drive Sue down to their country home, on the way faking an auto accident in which Sue will be killed. They start out, but Ted loses his nerve and decides instead that he will marry Sue, thereby getting all the money. He tells Sue that they are going to be married and she wonders if he has suddenly gone mad.

tive had it been taken care of. Now the grass was long, weeds cluttered the flower beds, and the hedges and bushes were sadly in need of trimming.

"Funny they haven't had some one look after the garden, even if they don't come down here often," she commented.

He grimaced. "She's a mean one, that Sheila Richmond. Never think she and her mother had all the money they have, would you?" He chuckled and added: "Well, maybe they won't have it for long!"

She glanced up in surprise.

"What do you mean, Ted?"

"Oh, nothing," he replied with an elaborate casualness. "Just a little joke of mine."

But it occurred to Sue that his was a very odd remark. The old woman, Mrs. Burton, had hinted, too, that she had something on the Richmonds. Was it possible that Ted knew what Mrs. Burton did? And if this were true might it not account for the casual manner in which Ted treated his young mistress?

"You don't know anything unusual about the Richmonds, do you, Ted?" she asked as he produced a key from his pocket to open the front door.

He paused with the key in the lock.

"Maybe I do, and maybe I don't," he answered guardedly. "And maybe if I do know anything I'll tell it to you on the day we're married, Sue." With that he turned the lock, pushed open the door and preceded her inside.

It was not an unattractive house inside, but it was dark and very damp. Still that was only natural considering that it had been shut up for so long. The floor was thick with dust and all the furniture was shrouded in slip covers.

"Not exactly a cheerful place," he commented. "I'll light a fire, Sue. Maybe it will be more cheerful then."

"I'd better see what groceries are needed and get in touch with the woman who cleans up," she remarked practically.

"Oh, wait a bit," he urged. "What's the hurry? There isn't a chance in a lifetime of my getting those two women down here tonight."

"No, I guess there isn't," she murmured. But although she had little love for either of the Richmonds she wished that there were. This damp, dark place gave her an unpleasant, creepy feeling.

Ted went out into the kitchen and with the aid of some sticks, coal and a newspaper he found there managed to get a small fire going. The crackling wood and the bright spurts of flame infused a little cheer into the room and dispelled some of the gloom.

It was almost dark now. Sue lighted the oil lamp and drew the chintz curtains. Ted stood over the fire alternately holding out his hands to the warm blaze and rubbing them together.

"That's better, eh?" he remarked with a grin. "We should have quite a nice little evening here together."

Sue had been taking the slip covers off the chairs and couches. She paused now and looked at him in surprise.

"What are you talking about, Ted?" she demanded. "You know you have to go back and get Mrs. and Miss Richmond. They're expecting you."

"If they're expecting me this will be a good one on them!" he laughed. "I've no intention of going back and getting those two women to-night."

She stared at him aghast.

He rubbed his hands together again. He seemed to be enjoying the situation hugely.

"I've far better plans," he went on, and winked across at her. "We'll have a swell evening here together, Sue. When there's a girl as pretty as you around, do you think I'm going to rush back and get that stuck-up Sheila and her mother? Not on your life! I'm going to stay here, sit in that armchair and smoke while you go out into the kitchen, open a few cans and get supper. We'll have it with one of those bottles of wine I just saw in the kitchen cupboard. And afterward, Sue, we'll change this gloomy old place into a little love nest. You'll sit here by the fire on my lap and I'll tell you how sweet you are and how crazy I am about you. And then maybe when we've talked enough I'll turn that lamp low and carry you upstairs."

"You must be mad, Ted, to suggest such a thing!" she gasped in horror.

But he only laughed and crossing over to her he caught one of her wrists.

"Not mad any longer, Sue. But I've been mad not to have thought of this before. A fortune and a pretty girl in the bargain, eh? I've good news for you, Sue. Marvelous news on the day you marry me."

She tried to wrench her wrist out of his grip.

"But I'm not going to marry you," she whispered fiercely. "I told you that this afternoon. Nothing would ever induce me to marry you!"

"You don't know what you're talking about," he said roughly. "As I told you before, many a girl would be glad to marry me, and you'll be willing enough to, even anxious to,

Sue, after to-night." He chuckled with grim satisfaction.

"I'd rather die than spend the night here with you," she cried sharply. "You must be out of your mind to think I'd do such a thing!"

But he only laughed again and caught her arms as he said:

"Come off your high horse, my dear. A bit afraid, eh? Well, you'll get over that. You'll like it, all right, once you're in my arms and I'm kissing you—kissing you as I'm going to kiss you now."

With a swift movement he jerked her close to him. She tried to struggle but her struggles were of no avail against his strength.

"Like a soft fluttering bird in my arms, eh?" he mocked her. "A bright golden bird of paradise, my dear. But I'll soon clip your wings once we're married. Raise your face, Sue. Give me your lips."

Holding her still closer he jerked up her chin with his strong cruel fingers. He pressed his lips down upon hers.

"Let me go," she breathed as she struggled against him. "Let me go!"

But he went on kissing her. Finally with a tremendous wrench she freed herself. She fled from him across to the mantelshelf and stood there trembling, her breath coming and going in short, horrified gasps. He came slowly toward her.

"You can't escape me like that, my dear," he said.

She gazed around like a trapped animal. In desperation she seized a huge glass jar which stood on the mantelshelf, and raised it above her head.

"If you come near me, Ted Williams," she breathed, "I'll throw this!"

"Throw it," he said and laughed. "You haven't the strength to hurt

me. I like a woman who can fight, Sue. Go on, throw it at me, if you want to." His voice dared her to do it, while his mocking glance told her that he didn't believe for a moment that she would.

He was close to her now. In another moment he would have her in his arms again. She gripped the vase with straining fingers. She closed her eyes and then with all the force in her small slim body she struck.

The heavy glass vase crashed over his head and broke. With a queer moan he swayed for a second; then he dropped to the floor. He lay there without moving. She stared down at him. She had no notion whether it was minutes or hours.

"Ted," she whispered. "Ted!"

She didn't dare to bend down to touch him. She tried twice, but her hand shook so she had to withdraw it. When finally she did force herself to feel his heart she found it was still beating. He was breathing, too. Her blow had merely stunned him.

What should she do? She was afraid to stay here any longer, afraid of what he might do to her when he came to. She sensed that strong streak of cruelty in him. What an awful revenge he might wreck upon her once he recovered consciousness!

Acting on a blind impulse she turned and ran from the room. She picked up her hat and coat and ran out of the house, slamming the front door after her. It was almost dark now. The moon was as thin as a silver sickle but the stars were bright and sent a white translucent light through the night.

She ran in the opposite direction to the one which they had come. She ran along the lonely road, not knowing where she was going, know-

ing only that she was escaping from the horror of that terrible house, Ted's unconscious figure by the fireplace and the dreadful memory of his kisses.

Sheila broke a long silence by turning toward Larry and saying archly:

"I can't say you're very communicative. Are you usually so silent when you drive a young girl out into the country?"

Her voice startled him out of his thoughts—thoughts of Sue and what he would say to her when he saw her. He hadn't realized that he hadn't spoken to Sheila for the past half hour. He hadn't wanted to bring her down with him, but from the way she had put it he hadn't been able to refuse without appearing rude. After all, it was her house and Sue at the moment was in her employ.

"I'm sorry, Sheila," he muttered. "I was thinking of something."

"Not thinking of Sue Carston, I hope?"

He didn't reply. His silence alarmed her. Had her jealousy prompted her to say too much?—she wondered. And did it matter how romantic he felt toward Sue considering that at this very moment Sheila believed her to be dead? She moved closer to him, touched his arm, and said in a soft apologetic voice:

"I'm sorry I said that about Sue, Larry. But—well, I can't help being a little jealous of your interest in her. I know it's ridiculous. I know she doesn't—couldn't mean anything to you seriously. I know it's mostly my own stupid imagination, but when one is"—she hesitated before she brought out the words very softly—"in love one does get absurd ideas."

He turned his head sharply toward her. He said hoarsely:

"Sheila, you're not suggesting you're in love with me?"

She moved still closer to him. Her grip on his arm tightened.

"Of course, darling," she murmured. "Haven't you known for months that I was?"

A hot color rose to his forehead. He did not know what to say.

"Sheila, I had no idea," he finally gasped.

"Didn't you, Larry?" She laughed softly. "How beautifully un-conceited of you! And they say all men are conceited. Are you shocked at me for being so forward? Well, I



don't care, Larry. I'm going to be candid and tell you that I love you —love you terribly."

He felt more uncomfortable still. He didn't know how to answer her. "Sheila, my dear, I wish you



Sue gripped the vase and with all the force in her body she struck Ted over the head. With a queer moan Ted swayed; then dropped to the floor. He lay there without moving. "Ted," she whispered. "Ted!"

hadn't told me that," he said brokenly. "I—I hardly know what to say. You see I—I don't love you, though I like you, of course. Won't you please forget what you have said and let us be friends?"

She bit her lower lip slowly. Her face was hot and flushed, her eyes angry and dangerous. No woman likes to be spurned, especially a woman as vain and conceited as Sheila Richmond. She felt he had insulted her and at that moment she almost hated him. And yet she didn't dare blaze out at him as she would have liked to have done. If she did she might lose him altogether.

"Larry, is there any one else?" she asked.

He nodded. His hands gripped the steering wheel tighter.

"Yes," he said. "Sue."

She bit back the angry exclamation. There was no point in raging against Sue. Sue, whom she confidently hoped was now dead. He would find that out when they reached the house. Maybe then he would turn to her for comfort. She knew that one of the easiest ways to catch a man was on the rebound, or after a great grief.

He added in the pause: "I'm sorry, Sheila."

She forced herself to answer evenly.

"That's all right, Larry. I'll—I'll try to understand."

His smile as he turned toward her was warmly grateful.

"That's nice of you, Sheila."

They continued the drive in silence. As they drew nearer the house Sheila could scarcely control her excitement. Surely there would be a crowd around, inquiring about the accident? The police would be there, too, getting all the details. When they told her the news she

would be aghast, horrified. She might even pretend to faint. A faint, she decided, would be most convincing. It might also get a little of Larry's sympathy for herself.

When they reached the hill she glanced eagerly down it, hoping to see some signs of the accident, but there were none. Still maybe that wasn't surprising. If the car had gone down into the water, as she fondly anticipated, there would be no evidence of any accident. Nevertheless, she felt slightly worried. What would she do if something had gone wrong with her plan? It was a thought she didn't care to contemplate. Her excitement was at fever heat as they turned the bend in the road and the house came in sight.

She gave a small gasp of genuine horror as she saw it. There were no crowds, no sign of the police. Her heart went cold within her. Something must have gone wrong. That fool Ted must have bungled it! Or maybe at the last moment he had lost his nerve.

Her red lips twisted scornfully. She had no sympathy for any one who lost his nerve. She would see to it that he got none of the money, anyhow. All the same that didn't greatly console her. For if Sue were alive she had lost Larry forever.

It was quite dark when they drew up at the front gate. The place had a deserted air. She felt even more bewildered, for if there had been no accident what had happened to Sue and Ted? She decided she had better go in alone.

"Do you mind taking the car around to the garage first?" she said to Larry. "I'm afraid it's about five minutes' distance from here. Right along that road. I'll go in and tell Sue that you're here."

Larry hesitated. He would like to have run in and seen Sue at once.

He could scarcely bear to wait. But, after all, it was Sheila's house, and her request that he should take the car around to the garage was a very reasonable one.

"All right, Sheila," he said.

She took a key out of her bag and handed it to him.

"Here's the garage key."

When he was out of sight she turned the handle of the door and walked into the house. The hall was in darkness, but from the far end she saw a faint flicker of light coming from the sitting room.

She went swiftly toward it, but a moment after she had stepped across the threshold she stopped still and stood staring at the prostrate figure of Ted Williams with wide, incredulous eyes.

What had happened? She saw the broken vase. She saw, too, a handkerchief which Sue had dropped as she ran from the room. Sheila bent down and examined it, gingerly replacing it just where she had found it. There was no doubt but that it was Sue's. There was her name on it. S. Carston. It was not difficult to visualize just what had happened! Obviously Ted had tried to double-cross her. He had had no intention of doing away with Sue. Instead he had brought her down here and tried to make love to her. Probably, Sheila surmised rightly, his idea had been to marry Sue and then start blackmailing her, Sheila. But was he dead? She bent over him and knew at once that he wasn't. He was merely stunned. She straightened slowly and stared down at him, and as she stood there another plan came to Sheila, a plan far more satisfactory and final than any she had thought of yet.

Supposing Ted had been dead and the evidence all pointed to the fact

that Sue had killed him? Wouldn't that rid her of the two people in the world she feared and hated most? This man, who knew her secret and who at any moment might prove dangerous to her, and Sue Carston, who was not only the rightful owner of her fortune but her rival with the man she loved.

Did Sue know she hadn't killed him? Sheila decided that she probably thought she had. Otherwise, why had she fled? Her lips tightened. A fierce, almost mad light shone out of her large brown eyes. She knew now just what she intended doing, and far from frightening her the thought filled her with a strange, fierce exaltation. She hated this man, anyhow. He had threatened her, mocked her, he had even dared to kiss her. And she had had to submit to his caresses because he knew her secret!

She moved swiftly and decisively. She crossed to the fireplace and picked up the poker. With all her strength she crashed it fiercely down upon his head just where Sue had struck with the vase. He moved once. He groaned and then he lay still. Ted Williams was dead. A sound that was almost a laugh escaped Sheila's lips. She went swiftly to the kitchen carrying the poker. Hastily she washed all the bloodstains from it and as she wiped it she was careful to remove all traces of her own finger prints. Wrapped in a cloth she carried it back into the sitting room and put it down where she had found it.

Then suddenly she screamed. Loud, piercing screams. She turned from the sitting room, ran down the hall and out the front door. She ran down the path and along the road in the direction from which Larry was coming. She continued to scream until she was actually face to face

with him. He shook her by the shoulders.

"What is it, Sheila?" he demanded hoarsely. "What's wrong?"

"It's Ted Williams!" she cried hysterically. "He's been murdered in the sitting room. I found him when I went in. And oh, Larry, the awful part of it is that Sue killed him. Her handkerchief's on the floor and now she's gone. Oh, Larry, Larry, how terrible to think that Sue murdered Ted!"

Larry stared at her in incredulous amazement.

"You're mad, Sheila," he jerked out hoarsely. "You don't know what you're saying."

"Oh, yes, I do," she cried sharply. "I know what I'm saying all right. I tell you I've seen it, Larry. I've seen it with my own eyes. Ted lying dead on the floor, a broken vase beside him. She must have killed him with that. And her handkerchief is there. Oh, Larry, isn't it dreadful? What must we do?"

His face had gone not white but gray. His lips were drawn in a tight line. He seemed for the moment to be fighting to control himself.

"Let's go back," he said harshly at last. "I want to see for myself if what you say is true."

They went together into the house. Sheila pretended an awful shudder as they crossed the threshold.

"Oh, Larry," she moaned. "I feel faint and sick. It gave me such a shock—such a terrible shock. To see him lying dead like that. I—I've never seen any one dead before. Oh, Larry——"

"Shut up, Sheila," he commanded harshly. "This is no time to give way to your emotions. We have to see if anything can be done."

As he spoke he pushed open the

sitting-room door which Sheila had left ajar, and walked inside. He started when he saw Ted's body. It wasn't a pleasant sight. He bent and felt his heart.

"He's dead, all right," he said hoarsely. "But he hasn't been dead long. I don't know much about it, but I should say not more than fifteen or twenty minutes. Sue"—he brought out the name with difficulty—"must be still in the house."

"She isn't," Sheila said. "I've looked. She must have run away after—after she did it. I can't say that I blame her. It isn't pleasant to stay in the house with—a man you've killed!"

"I don't believe she did do it," he exclaimed sharply. "After all, there's no earthly proof that she did."

"Oh, but there is," she said quickly. "There's her handkerchief, Larry. And she was sent down with him to clean up the house. Besides, where is she? She—she wouldn't have run away if she hadn't killed him. I—I suppose he was trying to make love to her and that's why she did it."

Larry nodded slowly. Though he hated with his whole soul to admit this supposition, he had to. He thought he could visualize the scene and his heart cried out with pity and love for Sue. This man had attacked her. She had screamed for help, but who was to hear her in this lonely place? In desperation she had struck him with the vase. Probably she hadn't known what she was doing, least of all had she imagined that her blow would kill him.

"What are we going to do?" he groaned.

Sheila was watching him curiously. There was a bright almost mad look in her eyes.



—Constance Demora Baring—
"It's Ted Williams!" Sheila cried hysterically. "He's been murdered. I found him when I went in. And oh, Larry, the awful part of it is that Sue killed him."

"We'll have to call the police and tell them the truth," she said.
He swung toward her fiercely.

"But you're not going to tell them that Sue killed him!"
She shrugged slightly. "I'm

afraid I shall have to, Larry. What else can I say? All the evidence points to the fact that she did kill him."

There was a pause. In it he paced about the room, his head bent, his hands thrust into his pockets. It was a ghastly situation, the most ghastly situation he could possibly have conceived. It was like a nightmare, but as he paced up and down the room he had only one thought, one idea. Somehow, he must save Sue. He had to save her. He raised his head with a jerk and looked at Sheila.

"You're not to tell the police that Sue was down here with that man," he ordered sharply.

She forced a smile. "But I must, mustn't I? Of course I don't want to, Larry, but I must, nevertheless. I must tell them, too, about finding Sue's handkerchief beside—beside the body."

"There is no need to tell them that," he said harshly. "We—we can burn the handkerchief. And why should they know that Sue was here? You could tell them that you sent Ted down alone to clean up the place. Some tramp might have come in intent on robbery and killed him. After all, you don't know but that it didn't happen that way. There is even no reason why we shouldn't believe it."

"I wish I could believe it, Larry," she said with a tight smile. "But it's a little difficult to believe, isn't it? And one can't withhold the truth from the police——"

"Of course one can," he shouted angrily. "One can do anything one wants to when Sue's—when Sue's very life may be at stake. I implore you, Sheila, not to breathe a word about her being down here. I implore you to say that your chauffeur came down here alone this evening!"

"But the servants in New York? They'll know," she demurred.

"They can be bribed," he told her. "It's been done before. I know it isn't the right thing to do, but I'd do anything on earth to keep Sue out of this!"

She looked at him curiously through narrow slits of eyes. She said slowly:

"Would you do anything to keep Sue out of this, Larry? Anything at all?"

He nodded. He said heavily:

"I would, Sheila. Anything at all."

There was a slight pause and then she said slowly, still gazing at him with that curious expression in her eyes:

"Very well, then listen to me—I'll say what you want me to say on one condition. I'll say anything you want me to so long as—so long as you'll swear to marry me afterward, Larry!"

He stared at her, at first uncomprehendingly. He couldn't believe he had heard right. She repeated:

"You must marry me, Larry, if you want me to keep quiet about Sue's being here." Her voice was low, but there was a fierce ring of determination in it.

"You ask me to marry you, Sheila, as the price of your silence?" he cried hoarsely. "You can't know what you are saying! Why should you want to marry me? You know I—I don't love you. I never shall love you!"

Her lips were cruel, her eyes angry.

"Yes, I want you to marry me, Larry, despite that. You see I flatter myself that I can make you love me in time. Any woman can make a man love her in time if she's clever enough. I want you, I want to be your wife. It's the one thing in the

whole world I do want. Either I tell the police all I know about Sue—and the evidence is such that I don't see how she can escape being convicted of murder—or else you marry me.”

He turned abruptly away from her and crossed over to the window. He stared out into the blackness with unseeing eyes. The night had been still before, but now as he stared out a forked flash of lightning lighted the sky; far away he heard the distant rumble of thunder. He knew by Sheila's tone of voice, by her whole attitude that she was serious in her demand. She was determined either to make him marry her or to have Sue named as a murderess. And he couldn't have that! Whatever happened that was the one thing that must be avoided!

Even if Sue wasn't ultimately convicted of murder he knew well, too well, of the long horror of a murder trial. He had taken part in so many, trying to defend some poor devil, trapped like a rat, often by purely circumstantial evidence! And here in this room every evidence pointed to the fact that Sue had killed Ted! He might get her off, but could she stand the strain of the trial? Could any one as frail and sensitive as Sue stand it? He had to save her from it, even though it meant marrying this other girl whom he now loathed and despised.

The lightning reappeared, more brilliant this time, like red and gold fireworks in the black heavens. The thunder rumbled again, nearer.

A long shudder went through him. It was awful to be here in this lonely house with the dead body of a man, and a woman like Sheila. To-night something about her frightened him. He sensed the definite streak of evil in her, an evil which bordered on madness. In the old days, he

thought, she might easily have been burnt as a witch. And this was the woman he had to marry! He had to marry her for Sue's sake!

He turned toward her. He shrugged wearily.

“Very well, Sheila. I will marry you so long as you do everything in your power to help me keep Sue out of this. But I warn you I never shall love you.”

“I don't believe that,” she cried. “And anyhow, I want to marry you, Larry, regardless of the terms. I love you so much—too much. You have always known that, haven't you?” There was a fierce note of exultation in her voice.

“Very well,” he said curtly. “It's agreed, and now we'd better go for the police. On the way, I'll try to figure out some satisfactory explanation as to how the murder happened. But mind you, there's got to be no mention of Sue. If you so much as breathe her name I'll—far from marrying you—I think I could almost murder you.” He laughed harshly, unnaturally. His own self-control was almost breaking under the strain of everything that had happened that night. “Come along,” he said brusquely, “we'd better be starting.”

“But, Larry,” she protested, “look outside. It's pouring. We'll get soaked through.”

“It doesn't matter,” he said. “Far better to get soaked through than stay a moment longer in this cursed place!”

CHAPTER XIII.

After she had escaped from the house, Sue ran on blindly through the night. She had no idea in what direction she was going. She didn't care. Her one idea was to escape from that odious man, from his em-



"I want you, Larry. I want to be your wife. Either I tell the police all I know about Sue—and the evidence is such that I don't see how she can escape being convicted of murder—or else you marry me."

braces which made her shudder to her very soul. She imagined that Ted would recover consciousness at any moment. Then, likely as not,

he would start out in pursuit of her.

Reaching a small side road she turned down it. She felt safer here from pursuit than on the main road.

She ran on and on without realizing that she was practically exhausted. Now and then the calmness of the night was pierced by brilliant flashes of lightning, by the rumble of distant thunder. Even when the rain came, she didn't stop running. She was drenched through, her thin clothes clinging tightly to her slim body.

Presently she saw a building which looked like an old disused barn. She made her way into it and sank down into some hay. What a blessing it was to rest, what a marvelous blessing! She hadn't thought she would sleep, but within a few moments she was fast asleep from utter exhaustion.

Farmer Turner's son, young Robert, came into the kitchen where his mother was cooking the breakfast the next morning and said:

"See here, ma, there's a young girl asleep in the barn and I can't wake her up."

His mother, a kindly, portly woman who had been leaning over the large coal range, turned toward him.

"A young girl asleep in the barn, you say, Robert? That doesn't sound sensible. How did she get there?"

"Must have come in from the storm last night," he said, "and took shelter there. Real pretty, too."

"Did you tell your father?" his mother inquired.

The youth shook his head. "No, dad's over in the far field."

"Go and tell him," his mother advised. "I can't leave this breakfast or I'd come myself. Poor girl, if she was out in that storm last night I pity her. Better bring her in when you've managed to wake her. I'll give her some breakfast."

Young Robert went off on the er-

rand. He found his father, and the two men went in search of Sue.

Farmer Turner bent over Sue. He felt her forehead, her hands.

"Why, my boy," he said, "she has a fever. We'd better carry her into the house."

When Sue was brought into the farmhouse Mrs. Turner took one look at her and put her to bed at once. They called the doctor who confirmed Mr. Turner's diagnosis. She was running a high temperature and part of the time she was delirious. But through all her delirium she never once mentioned her own name nor gave them any clew to her identity. The only name they heard her call distinctly was the name, "Larry." She called for him unceasingly.

"I wonder who he is?" Mrs. Turner muttered to her husband. "I wish we could get in touch with him somehow. The poor girl never stops calling for him. She must be terribly in love with him."

Her husband nodded. "Yes. Queer how no one has come to claim her, isn't it? You'd think her friends and relatives would be making an awful fuss this very moment."

It was three days later when Sue finally recovered complete consciousness. She opened her eyes and stared around her in amazement. What was she doing in this low-ceilinged bedroom? She knew she had never seen it before, and who was this elderly woman in the oversized gingham dress who was doing something at the far end of the room? She tried to raise herself and found that she had scarcely the strength to lift her head off the pillow.

"Where am I?" she asked weakly.

The woman swung around toward her.

"Oh, you're yourself again, are

you, my dear?" she said. "Mrs. Turner's my name. And you're in our farm. We found you lying delirious in the barn the day after the storm. So we brought you in and have been looking after you since."

"It's awfully kind of you," Sue murmured. "I—I don't know how to thank you."

"That's all right," the woman said. "We don't want any thanks. We did our best to help you as I suppose you would have done your best to have helped one of us under the circumstances. That's the only way life can go along right, to my way of thinking. Every one helping the other to the best of their ability. If we all did that there wouldn't be no need for any other moral talk, it seems to me."

"All the same it was kind of you," Sue insisted. She added presently: "I will be getting up and going now that I'm better."

"You'll do nothing of the sort," Mrs. Turner said indignantly. "The doctor said you mustn't get up for another four or five days, maybe longer. But of course we'll get in touch with any of your friends for you. What's your name, dear?"

"Sue," she answered. "Sue Carston."

"Sue. A pretty name," the older woman said. "I had a sister Sue. I always liked her name much better than mine which is Lily. Now, dear, lie back and try not to talk. The doctor said you weren't to talk much until you'd got your strength

back." She added illogically: "Do you come from New York?"

Sue nodded. "Yes, I—I lost my way the night of the storm."

"A dreadful storm it was, too, and no mistake," Mrs. Turner said as she went on with her work dusting the room. "All sorts of queer things happened that night. I'm not a superstitious woman, but it seemed to me the sort of night when evil walks abroad. There was a murder not five miles from here, down in that lonely white house near the shore."

Sue stared at her. "A murder?" she gasped. Her face had been white before, but it was whiter still now, and her amber eyes were opened so wide that they seemed to usurp the rest of her face.

"Yes, my dear, a murder," Mrs. Turner repeated with relish. "A young man, a chauffeur to some rich family who own the place, was murdered. He was found lying dead when the young lady who was his mistress arrived that night."

Sue could only repeat in a whisper:

"Murdered, murdered. You mean he—he is dead?"

"Of course. I told you he was dead, my dear," Mrs. Turner said with a note of exasperation. "There"—she straightened herself and looked at Sue. "What is the matter, my dear? Perhaps I shouldn't have told you about the murder in your weak state."

Sue didn't reply. She couldn't have spoken. She was speechless



with horror. She felt physically sick with it. Could it be true what that woman had told her, that Ted Williams was actually dead? He was dead and she—had she killed him? It didn't seem credible. She had been sure that he was merely stunned. Murdered! It was too fantastic, too awful. The word itself was like a great black weight pressing down upon her, seeming to crush the very breath out of her. Murdered! Was she then a murderer? She couldn't believe it. Dear God, let her not believe it! But the plain fact was there. Ted Williams was dead and who else but she could have killed him?

A series of long and awful shudders went through her. She couldn't control them. If she had killed him what was she to do? Should she give herself up to the police? She supposed she would have to. And yet— The prospect was too ghastly. With her vivid imagination she saw herself being tried for Ted's murder, being sent to the chair for it perhaps! She hadn't meant to kill him, but who would believe her? Did they know it was she who had struck him? And if they did know why hadn't they come to arrest her already?

She heard her own voice, strange and far-away sounding, remark:

"Do they know who—who killed the dead chauffeur?"

"They do not, my dear. Likewise they're not certain about it. The police seem to think the chauffeur may have surprised a burglar and he may have killed him. Sounds the most feasible explanation to me, I must say."

After the older woman had gone down to the kitchen to set about preparing the supper Sue lay with her eyes closed. On the surface she was calm and motionless, but her

brain was in a turmoil. What should she do? Should she allow them to go on thinking that the murder had been committed by some tramp or burglar, or should she tell them that she had been there?

She wished she knew what to do. The agony of indecision was dreadful. If only she had some one to advise her! Some one to whom she could confide everything! But to whom could she turn? She thought for some time before she would admit the name that had been all the time at the back of her mind. Larry Fenchurch. Wasn't he the only real friend she had in the world? And as a lawyer wasn't he the best person to advise her? She would write and ask him to come to see her. She knew he would come. It was, after all, the common-sense thing to do. So she told herself, trying to shut her eyes to the fact that her craving to see him again had nothing to do with common sense. It was a wild, uncontrollable longing, a longing that made her go cold one moment, turning hot the next. To see him again, just for a few minutes, even if it were only to talk about this awful murder. That would be something—so much, so much.

"Larry, my dear," she whispered. "You'll help me, won't you? I know you'll help me."

Her eyes were wet with tears when Mrs. Turner reappeared with the supper tray. She tried to hide the fact from Mrs. Turner but the old woman noticed it.

"Tears, that will never do, my dear," she said. "You'll get yourself in an awful state if you start crying. What about letting me get in touch with some of your friends? Or isn't there any one you'd like to write to?"

Sue nodded slowly. "Yes," she said. "If you'll give me a pen and

paper there is some one I would like to write to, Mrs. Turner."

"That's fine," the older woman said. "You write the letter, my dear, and I'll see that my boy mails it to-night."

Sue's letter was brought to Larry by his manservant the following morning. He didn't recognize her handwriting at once. Odd that though he loved her more than he could ever hope to love any one they had never written to each other.

He slit the envelope open and stared down in surprise at the faint handwriting, but when his eyes lighted upon the signature, "Sue," his face paled, his hands clenched tightly about the paper. He bent over it and read the few lines avidly, eagerly.

He had been in an agony of torment these past few days wondering what could have happened to Sue. He could only surmise that, terrified by what she had unwittingly done, she had hidden somewhere. He had prayed that she would remain in hiding until the inquest was over and all danger of her being associated with that dread happening was past!

He had seen Sheila's servants and persuaded them, with the aid of a heavy bribe, that they knew nothing at all about what had happened to Sue. They had been willing enough to support his story since Sue had been very popular and Ted quite the reverse.

He had bought Sheila's silence, too. But what a price he was to pay for it! It would be a debt he would have to go on paying all his life. He would gladly have given away every cent he possessed to escape the horror of his coming marriage. To be forced to live in the same house with a woman whom he

loathed and despised as much as he did Sheila Richmond! The thought of it haunted him day and night.

Slowly, he read Sue's letter.

DEAR LARRY: Could you possibly spare the time to come down and see me? I've been very ill. I'm still too ill to get up and come and see you, and I want to ask your advice about something. I shall be terribly grateful if you will come to me.

SUE.

Would he come to her! He knew that nothing in this world would have kept him away from her. He knew he would have fought his way through raging fires, scaled impregnable mountains to go to her.

He sprang out of bed, rang for his manservant.

"Phone for my car at once," he ordered. "And you might telephone the office and find out if there's anything important on my calendar for to-day."

The car was waiting. Jenkins, his secretary, sent back a message that the only fixture was an interview with Bert Waller whose trial was scheduled to take place in a few days.

"I can see him to-morrow afternoon," Larry said curtly. "Tell Jenkins to change the appointment for me."

Less than fifteen minutes later he was on his way to the farmhouse where Sue was. It was a lovely late-summer day. The countryside through which he passed had never looked more glorious. But Larry saw nothing but the road ahead of him. Thought of nothing but the prospect of seeing Sue.

He stepped hard on the accelerator, mad with impatience to get to her. She had been ill, was still ill. Poor child, it wasn't to be wondered at after the horror she must have been through! Perhaps she didn't even realize what she had



done. She might have struck out at Ted blindly and fled. If only he could persuade her that she had done this, or better still, that she had never struck Ted at all!

The farmhouse at last. A long, low and attractive building with whitewashed walls and a tiled roof. There was a flower garden in front and attractive barns in the rear of the building.

He sprang out of his car, strode

Larry stared down in surprise at the faint handwriting, but when his eyes lighted upon the signature, "Sue," his face paled. He read the few lines avidly, eagerly.

up the pathway to the front door. Mrs. Turner had heard the car stop and was at the front door almost before he had time to touch the knocker.

Clarence Brown

"Oh, I'm so glad to see you, sir," she said. "You've come to see Sue, haven't you? I hope you'll cheer her up, sir. She's been so depressed since she regained consciousness."

Larry forced a smile. "I'll do my best, Mrs.—" He looked at the woman inquiringly.

"Turner, my name is," she told him. "Mrs. Turner. The poor girl's been terribly ill and the doctor says she's not to get up for another week or ten days. I suppose she told you that we found her lying unconscious in our barn the day after the storm?"

He shook his head. "No, she didn't tell me that."

"Maybe she felt too weak to write it," Mrs. Turner said as she led him inside. "I don't know how she came to be there and I've never asked her because the doctor says she's to be kept quiet and talk as little as possible."

"It was kind of you to take her in, Mrs. Turner," Larry said quietly. "I'll see that you don't suffer for it."

"Oh, that's all right, sir," the good lady smiled. "Somehow, she went straight to my heart the moment I saw her. If she left now I'd miss her."

"Perhaps you'd be good enough to go upstairs and tell her I am here," Larry suggested. He saw that the woman would like to have questioned him further about Sue and he

didn't want to be questioned about her.

"Very well, sir. And I do hope as how your visit will cheer her."

Sue, too, had heard the car, but she hadn't dared allow herself to believe that it would be Larry. It seemed impossible that he could have come to her so quickly. Quite impossible, she kept telling herself. And yet, her heart was thumping unevenly, her throat felt so tight that she could scarcely swallow. If it should be he! Dear God, if it should be he! She clasped her thin trembling hands tightly together. She must calm herself. She heard voices below, but she couldn't distinguish whose they were. She lived through centuries in those moments of waiting.

Finally, Mrs. Turner appeared in the doorway, her fat face beaming.

"There's a gentleman down below to see you," she said. "Such a nice-looking young man. He drove down from New York. Shall I bring him up now, my dear?"

Sue managed to control her voice with an effort.

"Yes," she whispered. "Please bring him up, Mrs. Turner."

There was a singing elation in her head, in her heart. She closed her eyes and whispered to herself, "Larry has come. I knew he would come. Larry has come to me!"

TO BE CONTINUED.





Leap Year Dance

By Emma Upton Vaughn

CLARK HARTLEY hung up the receiver with a bang.

"Maybe you think it's fun to be the only marriageable man in the town!" he fumed. "That is the fourth dinner invitation I've received this morning! Excuse me, Jordan, now where is the property whose title you want me to look up?"

LS-9E

The spring census of Clay City, a town near a large city, had recorded four thousand inhabitants. Yet the summer had found only one really eligible unmarried man between the ages of twenty-one and thirty in the whole town. That one was Clark Hartley. But of belles there were plenty. So young Hartley was much in demand.

But then he would have been popular even among many rivals. His tall, well-carried figure, wavy brown hair and engaging smile would have won him a warm welcome anywhere.

"Going to the leap year dance at the country club?" Jordan asked, after the business matter had been settled.

"I suppose I'll have to," Hartley groaned.

"There, there, old man, buck up. Don't be a rain crow! There'll be some young married couples there, the wife and I among them. We'll see that you don't get roped in before you know where you are!" Jordan consoled, his eyes twinkling at the gloomy expression on Clark's face.

"Honestly, Clark," he added, "which is it going to be—Vera Wright or Jennie Colton?"

Clark Hartley had climbed up from a hard, orphaned boyhood to his present niche in the town's elect. He had been so absorbed in the struggle that romance had had little place in his life. But occasionally he had been attentive to both girls when some social function had demanded the courtesy.

"Hanged if I know," he answered. "Sometimes I think it's Miss Wright and sometimes Miss Colton. And there are times when I think it is neither."

"Oh, well," Jordan teased, "maybe they will both give you the gate, and settle it that way!"

"Possible enough," Hartley conceded good-naturedly.

But for Vera Wright the matter was not so casual—Vera, with her slim young figure, red-gold hair, and great black eyes, softened by a tangle of long, dark lashes. She had worshiped Clark Hartley ever

since his first slight attention to her. Just now she was absorbed in the gown she planned to wear at the leap year dance. She prayed that Clark would think her lovely in it.

Jennie Colton was of a different type, both in appearance and character. She had jet-black hair, china-blue eyes, and a tall, somewhat full figure. She had made up her mind to become Mrs. Clark Hartley, not from love of Clark, but because she shrewdly estimated his ability, and coveted the position his wife would occupy. She resolved to balk at nothing to win him.

Both the girls had been brought up in luxury by parents who were among the town's richest citizens. Though still well-to-do, they felt the leveling effects of present economic conditions. Jennie Colton took a part-time job at the local express office to obtain the luxuries to which she was accustomed, and Vera would have followed her example but for the fact that she was her widowed father's home-maker, and could not be spared.

"What are you going to wear to the leap year dance, Vera?" Anna Gordon, Vera's best friend, asked.

"I sent to the city for a midnight-blue gown," Vera replied, "but I am scared to death it won't come in time."

"Midnight-blue? That's pretty dark, isn't it?"

"Yes, I suppose it is, but it lights up well at night. It's cut very low, and I'll wear bright accessories with it. I chose that color because I have enough printed silk of the same shade to make a jacket. Then I'll be able to wear it to teas and cocktail parties. I like to economize for dad's sake, you know."

That same afternoon, Anna Gordon happened to have business at

the express office. Jennie Colton was alone behind the counter. After her own errand was looked after, Anna thought of Vera.

"Has Vera's package come from the city, Jennie?" she asked.

"I haven't noticed anything for her," Jennie answered. "What was she expecting?"

"She sent to the city for a new blue dress, and she's worried that it won't come in time for the dance. She says she won't go if she has to wear her old white satin."

A curious light came into Jennie's pale-blue eyes, but she spoke sympathetically.

"Then I hope it will come, but there's mighty little time left. The party is Friday and this is Tuesday," she said.

Anna Gordon was scarcely around the corner when the express truck drove up. Among the packages brought in was one marked "Miss Vera Wright." Jennie seized it and hurried into a rear room with it.

"I guess Miss Vera will wear her old dress to the dance or stay at home!" she triumphed, as she slid the package under a pile of excelsior in a corner of the room. "If she isn't there, I can beat any one else's time with Clark Hartley!" She had hardly finished sorting out the other packages, when Vera herself came in.

"Oh, Jennie," she cried, "have you a package for me? I saw the truck from way down the street. I do hope my dress has come."

"So do I, dear." Jennie's voice dripped honey. "Anna was just telling me about it. I didn't see it, but I'll look again." She went carefully over the day's parcels.

"Now, isn't that just too bad?" Jennie cooed. "But perhaps it will come to-morrow. If it doesn't, you can wear something else. You look good in anything."

"Oh, no, I don't. I won't go if I have to fix up some old thing! I should hate to miss this dance. It's going to be lots of fun to see a girl stag line. And it will give the boys a chance to see how a girl feels when no one cuts in and her partner has to keep dragging her around when she knows he is dying to get rid of her!"

"That never happens to me," Jennie said haughtily.

"No, but I have seen it happen to other girls whose partners are doing a duty dance, and I've been so sorry for them!" As she turned away, Vera caught a glimpse of a faintly mocking smile on Jennie's face.

"What makes Jennie Colton act so queer?" she thought, as she walked home. "I really believe she wants me to miss the party! Well, I'm going to be at the office to-morrow when the truck drives up." But this resolve did not prevent her from worrying.

"I've depended so much on this dance to win Clark Hartley's admiration, and maybe something more!" she mourned, as she lay awake in bed. "And it's the last of the season! I may not have a chance to see him again for ages! Oh, Clark, can't you feel that I love you?" The silk pajama sleeves slipped back from her rounded arm as she clasped her hands about her head in silent entreaty.

The next day was Wednesday, and Vera was at the express office when the truck drove up. Jennie Colton was sweetly sympathetic. As they looked over the parcels, more than once she voiced regret that Vera's was not among them. As the last parcel was laid aside, tears of vexation trembled on Vera's long lashes. Only two more days before the dance!

"Come anyway, Vera," Jennie urged. "I'll lend you my pink pearl clips and earrings, and you can wear pink roses for a corsage."

"No, thank you, Jennie. You are kind, but there is too much red in my hair for me to wear pink," Vera replied. As she turned away, she again glimpsed that taunting smile.

"I wouldn't put it past Jennie to be holding out the package on purpose!" she mused on her way home. "Advising me to wear pink! I certainly am going to that dance now! But I can't ask dad for money to go to the city to get a gown when he has just given me the price of the blue one. I'll try to fix up something."

Thursday morning Vera sat in her room, the old white satin in her lap. The material was of excellent quality, but the cut was hopelessly outdated. She sighed and picked up a magazine. She leafed the pages, hoping to find a hint in some of the illustrations. Presently, she came to a picture of a girl holding up a lovely rose-colored evening gown. It had been dyed.

"Just the thing!" Vera exulted. "The white satin will take pale-green beautifully. And I'll get some of that white chiffon with the gold-threaded green bars on it that I saw downtown, and make triple ruffles all around the arms, and inserts of it to widen the lower skirt. I'll wear white gardenias." By afternoon she was so pleased with the result of her planning

that she did not take time to go to the express office.

"If the dress does come, it can wait till after the dance," she thought.

By Friday noon the gown was finished. It was a lovely thing. Vera hung it in the closet with a sigh of satisfaction and went off to take a beauty nap. She dreamed of being held close in Clark Hartley's arms and hearing him whisper as they circled the dance floor:

"You are the loveliest girl here, and that's the prettiest dress I've ever seen." As she woke, she murmured a little prayer, "Dear Heaven, make the dream come true!"

"I am going to make up my mind to-night and end this chasing," Clark Hartley vowed, as he shoved aside half a dozen letters, asking for the "pleasure of escorting you to the leap year dance."

Courteously, he had declined all requests for his company, including Jennie's, with the explanation that he had accepted an invitation already.

"I am going to leave myself free to choose!" he had resolved. Jennie did not invite any other man. She, too, wanted to be free to accept any attention she might get from Hartley. Vera had asked no one at all. The only man she wanted was Clark Hartley. If he paid no attention to her at the dance, she didn't care what sort of time she had.



The beautiful ball room of the country club presented a strange spectacle that night. Instead of the stag line of monotonous white shirt

fronts there was a long line of girls, some pretty, some only made so by their evening gowns, but as a whole presenting an attractive display.



The dress was a lovely thing. Vera imagined herself being held close in Clark's arms and hearing his whisper as they danced: "You are the loveliest girl here, and that's the prettiest dress I've ever seen."

When Hartley entered the room alone, the faces of some of the girls whose invitations he had refused, showed indignation. But Jennie Colton, in a brilliant scarlet gown that contrasted with her midnight hair and deepened the blue of her eyes, rushed to him and claimed him. They circled the room, but as they passed the stag line, a girl sprang forward and tapped Jennie's shoulder, and with a "May I?" carried Hartley off. After that, he was scarcely allowed to circle the room twice with the same partner.

"You old fraud!" Jennie accused, when she had recaptured Clark. "Where is the girl whom you said was going to bring you?"

"Went back on me at the last moment," Hartley prevaricated. "Head-ache, you know." Jennie did not believe him, but she turned her vexation in another direction.

"Look at Vera Wright," she said. "Clever, isn't she? She has dyed her old white satin and made a new evening gown of it!"

Hartley turned to look at Vera. Crisp white ruffles with their glittering threads standing up above her rounded shoulders, red-gold hair reflecting the lights from its waves, and black eyes shining, she was dancing with a youth evidently much attracted to her. Hartley sensed the spite in Jennie's remark, and his mind was suddenly made up.

"Dyed or not, it is a lovely dress, and a lovely girl wears it!"

Vera and her partner were just ahead of them. As they passed the stag line a girl took Vera's partner from her, and she stepped into the line. When Hartley and Jennie neared her, Hartley caught her eye and sent her a beseeching look.

"For pity's sake, come and get me!" it begged.

Vera caught his meaning. Jennie gave her a look that would have annihilated her if possible, as she took Clark away from the dark-haired girl.

Passing the line, they came to an open outside door. With a quick sweep, Clark guided Vera through it and down some steps to where a clump of tall shrubs afforded seclusion.

Hartley drew Vera gently toward him, so that she faced him directly. Moonrays lighted the telltale young face turned up to his. As he looked deep into her soft, black eyes, a great revelation dawned upon him. He forgot his businesslike decision to marry this girl in order to escape pursuit by so many others. All he knew was that he loved her. Why hadn't he know it before?

"Vera"—his voice trembled—"Vera, you're the loveliest creature here—no, in the whole world. Vera, sweet, I love you. I've just discovered it!"

Her lips trembled so that they could form no words, but the radiant mistiness of her eyes told him what he wanted to know. She loved him!

Then he was crushing her in his arms, his lips on hers.

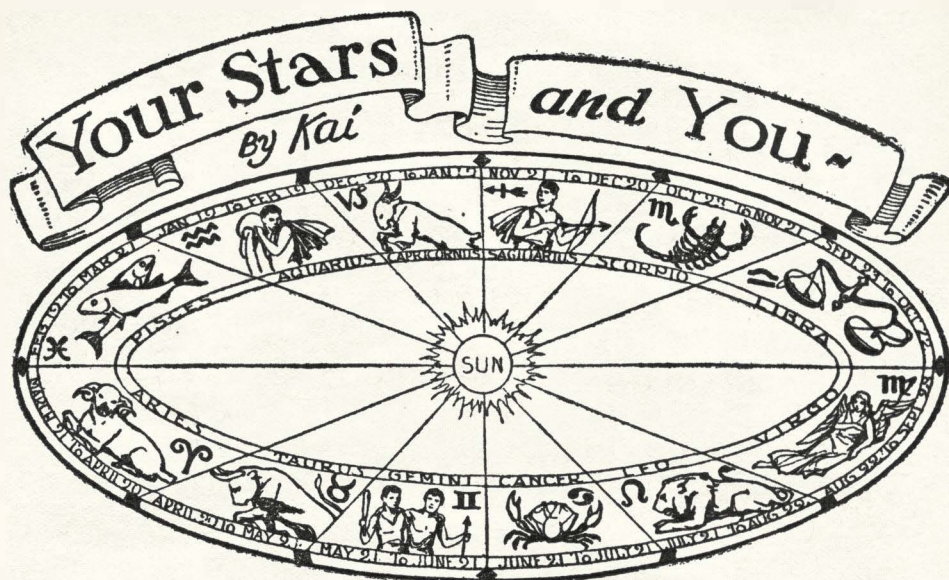
"Vera," he whispered; "marry me to-morrow. Please, darling," and waited eagerly for her answer.

"Clark, dearest," she breathed, "I should ask you to marry me. It's leap year, you know. Will you marry me to-morrow?"

He kissed her tenderly. "Sweetest, we've asked each other. Now let's marry each other."

Her soft lips on his were her only reply.





YOUR WEEK

This is a week during which it is just as well that you mark time in matters of love and marriage, unless your plans have already been made prior to this time. There are some good days during the week for advancing your interest in such matters, which you can find by reading the daily resumé of planetary influences, but in the main you will experience hard going and meet with obstacles and disappointment in regard to love and marriage. Those whose coöperation you need, will be opposed to your honeymooning at this time. Employment matters for you or your sweetheart will be such as to require attention and not permit a vacation for marriage purposes. Some unexpected thing will probably happen with regard to your finances or those of your sweetheart, diverting money saved for wedding purposes into other channels and it will be a monetary demand which can scarcely be ignored. Environmental conditions may be of such a nature as to restrict your liberty of action for the time being. Your peace of mind will be better if you do not try to break your environmental chains at this time. Unless your plans have already been made, you had better go slow in courtship this week and defer marriage or consummate it quietly without interfering with the daily affairs of life. A journey on water for those near it is probable. You should attend to business during the week, keeping your mind alert to protect your financial interests. Employment matters will be benefited

through the good will of friends and also through your own mental keenness. Friends will lighten the burden of your environmental restrictions during the week.

DAY BY DAY

Hours mentioned are Eastern standard time

Saturday,
February
22nd

h

The influences to-day are largely good but your judgment will be slightly off balance with respect to money matters. You should, therefore, avoid going security for others and should refrain from incurring unnecessary expenditures. Under this influence you may be asked to sign up for things which will give you embarrassment later on, so put off agents, solicitors, and others desiring to separate you from your money with little or nothing down for payment. If necessary to sign papers, have them examined by a lawyer, if possible, before doing so. Your mind will be aspiring to-day and desirous of accumulating knowledge which you can put to account to improve your material condition. To-day is a good time to budget your income and face the problem of living within it, and you should do this even

though something unexpected may happen to benefit you in a financial way. New friendships will be formed, one of which may affect your future to a considerable degree. Some changes may occur and possibly a removal may take place, but do not sign any long-time leases. You will have more energy than usual but use it with discretion. You will also be more sympathetic; but try to use judgment along with your sympathy if asked to get somebody out of a jam or you may get into one yourself. You will be socially popular to-day. Do not let it turn your head as social contacts made to-day will either be of benefit or a detriment to you, depending on your reaction. Keep a true sense of values and you will profit from them.

Sunday,
February
23rd



This is a very evil day and you should make no removals nor commence anything of importance. Do not make changes as they will be for the worse. New acquaintances made should be put on probation and proved before being accepted as friends. Your judgment will not be good and you are apt to give offense to others, if you are not careful, by an eccentricity of action which is ordinarily entirely foreign to you. Watch your social activities carefully or they may be misinterpreted and unkind things said about you. Avoid dealings with elderly persons. During the early-morning hours protect yourself from colds. Avoid domestic disputes. Between 9:45 a. m. and 10:15 a. m., you may meet with an annoying experience pertaining to your employment; possibly some underhanded work of a secret enemy may come to light. Between 11:30 a. m. and 12:15 p. m., you are likely to have your feelings hurt. Restrain affectionate demonstrations at this time

and scrutinize carefully any new acquaintances you may make. Between 12:15 p. m. and 1:00 p. m., if not careful, you may precipitate something which will result in material changes which you can ill afford to make at this time. Keep a tight rein on your mind and do not become sarcastic or show irritability. Do not act hastily. From 3:00 p. m. to 3:30 p. m., you are apt to become rash and strong-headed. Avoid quarrels and disputes. From 6:15 p. m. to 7:00 p. m., you are apt to be reckless in the spending of money. Avoid social engagements. Mark time with regard to domestic affairs. Do not make marriage plans or try to consummate those already made. From 8:30 p. m. to 9:00 p. m., you should guard your speech well and be careful of what you write. Between 9:30 p. m. and 10:15 p. m., something unexpected or strange may happen which will probably affect your love affairs and may affect your finances.

Monday,
February
24th



This is a day when the influences will be very transitory, going from one to another with a speed that may bewilder you if you are not prepared to meet the rapid changes. From 11:30 a. m. to 12:00 noon, you should restrain your temper and not become offended by the actions of friends. The rest of the day things will be pretty much in your favor. Between noon and 12:45 p. m., some changes may take place which will directly or indirectly affect you beneficially in a financial way. You may find yourself attracted toward one of the opposite sex whom you may for the first time meet or in whom you may suddenly discover theretofore unrecognized qualities which appeal to you. Your affections will be stirred from 1:15 p. m. to 2:00 p. m., and opportuni-

ties which may be presented at this time should be taken advantage of, both with relation to financial matters and to love. This is a good time to promote your interests socially and make new contacts. From about 4:00 p. m. to 4:45 p. m., you will be inclined to daydream; but do not neglect your work to do so. Around 4:45 p. m., you may have an excellent opportunity to promote your love interests and establish domestic harmony. Also marriage plans should progress favorably if initiated at this time, and plans already made should be advanced or carried to completion at this time. Financial matters should be beneficially affected also. The evening hours are good for mental pursuits, for study, and for planning details of your future, if you have decided upon a definite course.

**Tuesday,
February
25th**

♂

The early-morning hours will be good for planning matters which have a bearing upon your marriage. If already married, it is a good time to iron out difficulties which you may have encountered or which are in prospect, either with respect to your association with your marriage partner or a reconciliation of divergent viewpoints on matters which might prove a source of contention between you later on. Around 2:00 p. m., you will be inclined to impulsiveness and may act without due forethought. Guard against doing so. You may form unique attachments but should keep them on a friendship basis or they will bring you trouble. Between 6:00 p. m. and 7:00 p. m. you should mark time in social and domestic matters and should refrain from making changes during this hour. Around 7:00 p. m., you will come under excellent influences with respect to marriage and finances, and should take advantage of opportuni-

ties which may present themselves at this time. It is a good time to apply for a position with lawyers and also with companies specializing in travel and transportation.

**Wednesday,
February
26th**

♀

During the early-morning hours your mind will be active in a romantic way; then will become more serious. Around 1:00 p. m., an unforeseen change may occur in your affairs. It is not well to form sudden attachments at this time and you should be careful in your associations with the opposite sex. From 2:30 p. m. to 3:00 p. m., you will feel somewhat more energetic and determined to shape your course in the way you desire it to go; from 6:00 p. m. to 7:00 p. m. you should mark time with respect to matters of the heart, though association with intellectual people will be beneficial at this time. Be careful about monetary expenditures and business dealings from 7:30 p. m. to 8:15 p. m. Around 9:00 p. m., the influences are good for domestic affairs and the furtherance of marriage plans. Toward midnight the affections will be steadied.

**Thursday,
February
27th**

♃

Avoid domestic disputes during the very early-morning hours and keep your speech restrained. Around 5:00 a. m. your mind will be sobered. Between 9:30 a. m. and 10:15 a. m., avoid dealings with lawyers and mark time with respect to money matters. From 10:30 a. m. to 11:15 a. m. there will be more harmony in your domestic relations; also in regard to your employment; some happening may occur that will beneficially affect your finances. Also environmental restrictions will seem less onerous. It is a good time to tune in on those currents which will carry you into a world of delight, where material necessities cannot enchain the activities of

your spirit nor shackle your thoughts. For an hour, perhaps, you will feel above material domination. Between 1:30 p. m. and 2:15 p. m., you will again face the material in possible hampering of your marriage plans, through the necessity perhaps of working at uncongenial tasks, that you may eat. But your thoughts will still be free and if you do not lose your nerve, you will be able to seize future opportunities to free yourself of physical restrictions. From 4:15 p. m. throughout the rest of the day, restrain your impulses or your energy may be diverted in the wrong direction. It is a day of mixed influences, in which rival forces will keep you unsettled; but by the use of your will, you can acquire strength to meet and solve future problems as they arise.

Friday,
February
28th

♀

The early-morning hours are good for planning, particularly with respect to financial matters, marriage, and honeymooning. Your mind will be clearer than usual and plans made by you at this time will have an excellent chance of being carried into effect because of the soundness of their inception. New ideas for making money and attaining financial independence may occur to you at this time, and during the remainder of the day you should ponder over them so far as your work or other duties permit, and perhaps by 8:00 p. m. you may have confirmed your earlier-hour views and definitely decided upon your course of procedure. If so, and there is anything which you can do in the evening hours to further your plans, especially in the removing of barriers to your marriage, if you are eligible, or to domestic accord, if married, between 8:15 p. m. and 9:30 p. m. would be a good time to do it.

**IF YOU WERE BORN BETWEEN
March 21st and April 20th
(Aries ♈)**

—You Aries people who were born between March 21st and 28th will have a very good week in most matters, if you don't spoil it by being hot-headed and too impulsive. Avoid misunderstandings with friends. Be careful in handling sharp instruments or around heat, as there is danger of cuts and burns this week. The feelings may also be wounded, but unintentionally in most instances. Money matters may receive an unexpected impetus for you and your financial condition should prove less restrictive. Love affairs are well influenced and you will be less hampered in your actions. Travel is probable, either honeymooning or pleasure journeying, though the latter may be simply an excursion or a week-end trip spent with friends. You will be at your best mentally; it is a good time for association with intellectual people. Marriage plans made at this time should come to fruition without much difficulty, if well thought out. If born between March 29th and April 5th, your mind will be particularly efficiently working in social matters and in planning travel trips or change of established environment. It is a good period for courtship and tends toward its satisfactory culmination in marriage. If born between April 6th and 12th, employment matters will be somewhat unsettled but you will probably gain more than you will lose by any change forced upon you. This is an excellent time for marriage and the advancement of marriage plans; also for dealings with lawyers and employment by them. If born between April 13th and 20th, things will be about normal; though you may feel some inward intangible disturbance with respect to domestic and heart affairs and may experience some uneasiness over money matters.

**April 20th and May 21st
(Taurus ♉)**

—You Taureans who were born between April 20th and 28th will have a mixed week. The unexpected may happen in money matters and you may be called upon to bear some unlooked-for expenses or meet some exigency of a disconcerting nature. Affairs of the heart may not be as smoothly running as you would like, due in part to the meddling of friends who are not familiar with your problems. You may have to dispense with a honeymoon vacation if married at this time, though it will not to any great extent disturb your hap-

piness. You will have more energy than usual and if you use judgment with it your gains during the week will outweigh your losses. If born between April 29th and May 6th, you will be slightly disturbed mentally, chiefly because of courtship difficulties; but the obstacles will give way to clear thinking and determined action, and the very things which at first seem to restrain your liberty of action in such matters will prove an ultimate blessing. If born between May 7th and 13th, employment matters will go smoothly and be pleasantly attractive though perhaps not too remunerative. However, romance should cross your path in the line of employment duties and if you care to avail yourself of the opening, you will have an excellent opportunity to gain through marriage as a result thereof. If born between May 14th and 21st, matters will be about normal, but more harmony will be felt in the home circle, in love affairs, in matters of finance, and in business dealings with others.

May 21st and June 21st
(Gemini ♊)

—You Geminians born between May 21st and 29th will find this an excellent week for most matters. Love affairs should progress favorably; finances should prove more satisfactory; mentally you should be at peace; and physically you should be filled with vitality. Some unexpected benefits should come to you. It is not a good week, however, to force matters as all that will be necessary is for you to take advantage of the opportunities which naturally present themselves to you. If born between May 30th and June 6th, you will be keen-minded and your love affairs will progress favorably, due largely to your own initiative and guiding hand. It is not an opportune time, however, to try to force marriage as material obstacles will temporarily intrude and offset your efforts. If born between June 7th and 13th, you should be very conservative with respect to money matters and careful in matters of employment. It is not a good time for marriage matters so mark time in this regard. If born between June 14th and 21st, things will be about normal for you, but there will be more harmony in domestic affairs, love matters, and your mind will be more at ease concerning finances.

June 21st and July 23rd
(Cancer ♋)

—You Cancerians who were born between June 21st and 29th will find this a very

good week for most matters, but you should restrain your demonstrativeness and be careful that your surplus energy does not expend itself aimlessly. Direct your energy into constructive channels or restrain yourself. Affairs of the heart will progress favorably and you will have a good mental grasp of conditions which may arise. It is an excellent time for consummating marriage and for occupational matters, and domestic affairs are benefited under this week's influences. Unexpected good fortune should come to you with respect to money matters. If eligible, you may make up your mind suddenly to marry and an elopement may be in store for you. If married, increased harmony will come to you if you exercise self-control and temperance in marital matters. If born between June 30th and July 7th, you will be able to shape your love affairs to your liking if you go about it rightly. Calm judgment will come to you in the contemplation of marriage and plans made at this time are apt to be well thought out, with consideration being given for material interests and other factors which will be conducive to a more congenial and lasting matrimonial venture. If born between July 8th and 15th, employment will be more pleasant for you and possibly more remunerative; some progress should be made in marriage matters. Travel may also occupy your attention. If born between July 16th and 23rd, matters will be about normal.

July 23rd and August 23rd
(Leo ♌)

—You Leo people, born between July 23rd and 31st, will find this a week of annoyances and obstacles. You should take matters as they come, facing the issues without flinching. Fortunately you will have a superabundance of energy. Keep your tongue curbed as you will say things that will get you in bad if not careful. Do not quarrel over love but mark time in affairs of the heart or you may cause a breach which it will be hard to thereafter close. Finances may prove haywire, so conserve your resources in order to meet unexpected drains upon them. If born between August 1st and 8th, mark time with respect to love affairs and be careful of your speech. Be careful of telling secrets at this time. If born between August 9th and 15th, employment matters will be more pleasant and plans for marriage or its consummation should occupy your attention. It is a good time for travel or making arrangements for it. Financial success may come to you at this time. If born between

August 16th and 23rd, things will be about normal, with some slight increase of domestic harmony and monetary freedom from worry. Love affairs will also run smoother.

August 23rd and September 23rd
(Virgo ♍)

—You Virgo people born between August 23rd and 31st will find strange opportunities presented to you for making money and your financial condition may take a sudden turn for the better this week. You will have more energy than usual, and your mind will function more smoothly. There will be some improvement in affairs of the heart, but marriage plans will take a backset because of conflicting emotions within yourself concerning them. Mark time with respect to employment. If born between September 1st and 8th, you will not only be undecided yourself as to your desires concerning marriage but secret forces will work quietly to prevent marriage for you. Consequently, you should not try to make matrimonial progress this week. Your mind will be in good shape to meet any problems which you may have to face. If born between September 9th and 15th, you should be extremely careful in financial matters or you may get yourself into an embarrassing position with reference to money matters. Your employment may be irritating to you but it is not a good time to make changes. If born between September 16th and 23rd, employment matters will run smoothly and domestic harmony will be more pronounced.

September 23rd and October 23rd
(Libra ♎)

—You Librans born between September 23rd and 30th should direct your energy into the proper channels this week or it may bring about annoyance. Avoid disputations with others and try to remain at peace with yourself. The influences during the week are mostly good. Some slight benefits should come to you respecting money matters. Socially you will be in great favor and intellectually you will be outstanding. Your circle of acquaintances will enlarge. Out of it will arise opportunities leading to marriage but do not throw them away by ill-advised action on your part. If born between October 1st and 8th, environment may somewhat curtail your liberty of action, but it will be a very successful week so far as your love interests are concerned and your mind will be functioning with a clearness which should enable you to establish yourself on

a firm basis in matters of the heart leading to marriage. If born between October 9th and 16th, more pleasure will come to you from your work. It is a good time to plan marriage or perfect marriage plans. The influences are good for traveling and dealing with lawyers. If born between October 17th and 23rd, things will be about as usual, though inwardly you may be somewhat dissatisfied concerning home surroundings and domestic affairs generally.

October 23rd and November 22nd
(Scorpio ♏)

—You Scorpio people born between October 23rd and 31st should mark time this week in love matters. Guard your thoughts and speech well or you may cause an estrangement between yourself and a valued friend. You will be reckless in money matters. Try to guard against this; and also guard against recklessness in your association with the opposite sex. If you are careful and self-controlled, you will gain from the week's experience and may find favor in the eyes of one who has observed your conduct and admired your character as revealed by the situations which you have had to meet during the week. If born between November 1st and 7th, you should mark time in love, speech, and thought but should entrench yourself in occupational matters and by your careful actions render harmless the shafts of designing enemies. Under the problems which you will have to meet this week, you will develop increased self-control. If born between November 8th and 15th, you will have a pleasant week in matters connected with employment and your marriage plans will be advanced. If born between November 16th and 22nd, increased harmony will be noticeable in home life and domestic affairs, also in affairs of the heart; otherwise matters will be about normal for you.

November 22nd and December 22nd
(Sagittarius ♐)

—You Sagittarians born between November 22nd and 29th are under very good influences this week if you can adjust your internal feelings to take advantage of them. You will be keen-minded and if you turn your mental alertness to a practical use, you can advance materially your love interests. Increased vitality will flow through you but should remain under your directional control at all times. The unexpected may happen in financial matters, the results being largely according to your previous wise actions or otherwise. If born between November 30th and December 7th,

you should beware of secret plotting against your marriage interests; if constraint develops between you and your loved one, insist on a good talk and clear away the misunderstanding. You'll stand higher than ever in his regard if you do not permit yourself and him to be victimized by a designing rival. You will be a match mentally for any antagonist this week so make the most of your opportunities. If born between December 8th and 14th, you may meet with some annoyance in your employment but in marriage matters you will be under very good influences and should take advantage of them. If married, there will be an increase of domestic harmony. If born between December 15th and 22nd, things will be about normal.

December 22nd and January 20th

(Capricorn ♄)

—You Capricornians born between December 22nd and 29th will find this a very fortunate week if you can control your actions. Avoid being headstrong and do not quarrel with your friends or any one else. Your love affairs may be advanced with discretion and you will be able to plan so as to accomplish results in love and marriage. Your health and vitality will be impressive. Benefits in a monetary way are likely and environments that restrict you may suddenly give way to more freedom. If born between December 30th and January 6th, your mind will be clear and active and your love affairs will progress favorably. You will be cautious in occupational matters and may receive some benefits with respect thereto. If born between January 7th and 13th, employment matters are benefited, becoming more pleasant, though possibly not bringing more money. However, success in marriage matters may also result in financial benefits. If born between January 14th and 20th, things will be about normal, though you may feel uneasy with respect to domestic affairs. You will not be able to assign any reason for your uneasiness.

January 20th and February 19th

(Aquarius ♒)

—You Aquarians born between January 20th and 28th will be very attractive and lovable this week, both mentally and physically, and the magnetism of your personality will make many conquests, whether you are aware of it or not. You will have more than the usual amount of energy. Do not deplete it or it will lower your magnetic attraction. Avoid eccentric attach-

ments this week and beware of hasty marriage as it will probably result in repentance at leisure. Your most substantial conquest may be least suspected by you, so use your wits and if there is somebody you want who is eligible to marry, go after him but make him think that he is the one who is taking the initiative. If born between January 29th and February 5th, you will be attractive and lovable this week and mentally capable of holding your own with the best of them. Occupational matters will be slightly benefited. If born between February 6th and 12th, you should push your marriage plans; also it is a good time to travel and to deal with lawyers. If born between February 13th and 19th, matters will be about normal.

February 19th and March 21st

(Pisces ♃)

—You Pisceans born between February 19th and 27th will find this one of the best weeks you have had. You will renew your fighting spirit and will be more energetic. Love affairs will go smoothly if properly guided by you, and your mind will be working efficiently so you will be able to do so if you do not get careless on the job. Unexpected benefits in a financial way may come to you, or things may happen which will result in benefits later. It is a week wherein you can practically write your own ticket. Don't let the grass grow under your feet. If born between February 28th and March 6th, you should mark time during the week. Be careful that you do not fall and break bones and do not go near large bodies of water. If born between March 7th and 13th, be careful that you do not stir up trouble in connection with your employment. Do not ask for a raise but let well enough alone until the influences are better. Your judgment will be poor in business matters, so do not embark upon strange enterprises at this time, nor permit others to talk you into financing them or parting with your money for unnecessary purposes. If born between March 14th and 21st, there will be an increase of harmony in the home and in matters of love, otherwise things will be about normal.



PISCES

If you were born between February 19th and March 21st you are a native of Pisces.

Pisces natives are placid like undisturbed water and as adaptable to circumstances

you can really be attractive to men generally, you must make up your mind as to what you want to do. Your emotions so far have been chaotic. You want to attract men, yet you drive them from you, although you really do not mean to do so. I would suggest that you study yourself, determine what you want to do, and then force yourself to a course of action which will bring results. This will take some months of rigid schooling on your part. Pay great attention to your personal appearance and to the appearance of your handiwork, because sometimes one is judged by what one does. Try to be a listener so far as possible when talking to a man who interests you and do not mask your real feelings. If you love a man, don't try to make him think that you hate him. There are too many desirable women in the world for a man to pursue one who spurns his advances. Best wishes for your success and write me after a while how you succeed in remodeling yourself to become attractive.

Miss R. B., born April 5, 1917, hour unknown, place of birth not given: The problem for you will soon be which of the marriage proposals to accept. During 1936, 1937, 1938, and 1939 you will have opportunities to marry and if you don't marry during those years, it will be because you do not care to do so. If you pass by 1939, you may strike a barren period in which proposals will be scarce.

Miss R. T. M., born May 17, 1918, 2:00 p. m., New York: I will say one thing for you, that you are honest about what you want, "wealth and love." I notice that you put wealth before love and that you state you have at present a chance to marry for money but you also want love. I think, my dear, that you have an entirely wrong viewpoint in this matter. If you love a man and he is the right kind of a man, no matter how poor he may be when you marry him, together you can acquire the luxuries which you say you desire. But if you marry one who has wealth, you may find that wealth takes wings and you will be married to an old man who no longer has his wealth. I am serious when I tell you that, in your case, wealth, if you marry for it, will take wings and you will be worse off than you are now, single and making your own living. My advice to you is to find some young man who is capable and willing to work and who has good judgment—which will get better as he grows older—and marry him, helping him to make the money necessary to sup-

ply your luxury wants; as you will be very much disappointed if you marry with the idea that you are going to be a lady of leisure with nothing to do but spend a man's money. Men with money, if they have judgment good enough to hang onto it, usually are very careful of the type of woman they marry, though often they may play around with no intention of marrying.

Mrs. S. S., son born June 12, 1915, 2:00 p. m., Illinois: I am glad that you have written me regarding your son's career. I think that he has very good talent and I believe that he will make a mark in the music world. He will be a musician out of the common run with a strange quality to his music which will make it outstanding and easily distinguishable from that of the average player. If he will work hard and develop his ability, I feel quite sure that he can make a success in the field of music.

H. F., male, born December 13, 1918, Friday, 4:00 a. m., New York: It is hard to say from looking at the stars just which position you will occupy in the government service. However, you have the ability to advance and on merit should be able to rise within the limitations governing promotions. Much would depend on circumstances. If you were qualified and war broke out, you might receive recognition earlier than if we continued at peace with the rest of the world. The best I can do for you is to say that you have the ability to become proficient in this line of work if you care to apply yourself to it. It will take much study and you should not be discouraged if promotion does not come as soon as you might think it should.

Miss V. B., born August 13, 1911, 3:00 p. m., Pennsylvania: Your horoscope is so constituted that when you are having success in one regard, you are usually having hard sledding of it in some other respect; and if you wait for enough success in life to be able to marry, probably the influences that will be conducive to marriage will not be in operation at that time. There is not much likelihood of your marrying in the immediate future. During 1937 there will be an unexpected opportunity for a hasty marriage which you may or may not care to take; 1938 should be successful for you in some respects and possibly benefit your finances. But your feelings toward marriage will probably at that time be unsettled as other factors may be present indicating further delay. The best year for you in the near future is 1939. If not mar-

ried by then, you will have your emotions stirred in so many different ways that you will crowd into this one year the experiences of many years. Most of the influences operating during 1939 are good and I am of the opinion that so many opportunities for marriage and other desirable things will come your way that it will tax your ingenuity to decide just what you should do. When that time comes, marry the man that you cannot live without, if you have to choose between that and some other benefit.

M. E. M., born May 22, 1916, 12:00 o'clock, noon, Monday, Pennsylvania: You do not state whether you are male or female, but I assume you are a girl. Marriage for you is something which you must actively plan for and not wait for proposals to come your way without any invitation on your part. It is all right to let the man think that he has done the proposing, but you should lead up to it. If you do not engineer marriage for yourself, you may pass by many opportunities of marriage to some one who is desirable. At the present time and during the remainder of this year you are under very good influences, and if you plan properly and use your accomplishments you will very probably be married during 1936. If you pass by this year, it will be several years before you will have as good opportunity as you have this year.

Miss E. M. M., born March 4, 1921, Iowa: You are rather young, my dear, to be thinking about marriage at this time, yet it seems to be quite a serious matter with you; and it is just possible that you will be married during 1936. If you get past that without marrying, you will probably fall in love in 1938, with prospects of marriage during that year or more likely during 1940. I don't think you need to worry about how soon you are going to get married, as it seems to me to be a question of how long you can stay single. But whether you marry real young or not quite so young, you have my best wishes for your happiness.

Dot, born June 2, 1891, at 11:00 a. m., Pennsylvania: You will find disappointment during 1936 working in connection with coal mining. Try getting work as bookkeeper and typist with a hardware company.

R. R. J., female, born 6:00 p. m., Friday, November 27, 1914, New Jersey: You will have a love affair in the near future. There is a possible elopement for you in

1936. If still single in 1937, you will have opportunity for marriage. You will probably gain a position during 1936.

Miss B. F., born September 5, 1919, 7:00 p. m., Friday, Delaware: You will fall in love during 1937 but will probably go out with boys before that time.

Miss J. D. T., born April 7, 1910, 4:00 p. m., Wisconsin: You will probably meet your future husband during the last half of 1936 or the fore part of 1937. Your chances for happiness are good, if you will guard your speech and avoid arguments.

Miss L. Z., born December 26, 1919, 12:30 a. m., Michigan: The next several years will bring influences conducive to your marriage and opportunities will be presented in each of them, if you care to accept.

Miss V. M. B., born August 30, 1916, 11:00 p. m., North Dakota: You say you were born Monday evening, but August 30, 1916, fell on Wednesday. You may marry unexpectedly during 1936 and if not married by 1937, will also have opportunity during that year to marry. If you use even partial discretion in selecting a marriage partner, you will probably make a fortunate marriage. However, use the best judgment possible and make sure.

Miss R. M., born Friday, June 9, 1911, about 3:00 p. m., North Dakota: Things haven't been breaking so well for you recently, but a change is coming soon and I do not believe it will be long before you will obtain a position. The next three years will be very good in many respects and you will probably hold several positions during that time, progressively better, if you keep alert and prepared to take them when the opportunity presents itself.

Miss D. M. M., born New Jersey, September 30, 1919, about 7:45 a. m.: You will learn to dance, if you go about it rightly, and that you will be a very fine dancer, who will be in great demand. Yours is a peculiar make-up, however, as there is a conflict in your nature between two forms of artistry. You have been trying to learn to dance as most girls dance; but it is not your style. You will dance much better if you will coordinate your muscles to the weirdly subtle music that appeals to your inner self rather than to the jazz that stirs only the lower elements of your being. You are at soul the artist and nothing less than art will appeal to

you. So learn to dance by sublime music in your home, learning the execution of each step by yourself, in a scientific manner, and practice with your phonograph until your body moves responsively and in perfect balance to the music. How to learn the scientific way of putting steps together is your problem. Not all dance teachers ground pupils in fundamentals. Until you can dance routines for minutes without repeating the same routine twice, you have not really learned how to dance; and until you analyze each movement that goes into ballroom dancing, repeating it until you do it automatically, you will not master nor retain many routines. When you have learned to dance by yourself, you will soon learn to dance with a partner. If you can get a dance teacher who stresses fundamentals rather than routines, a few lessons will work wonders with you. In any event, I suggest that you go to the public library and get books on dancing, studying the subject and the maner of executing steps and practicing until you move with dance rhythm even in your walking. You will come under influences during the latter part of 1936, and the first half of 1937 which will spur you on to learn to dance. Don't be a quitter; learn how and you'll widen your circle of friends.

Miss B. J., born March 2, 1907, Illinois, Saturday afternoon: You will probably be married during 1936 or 1937 at the latest and the prospects are that you will be very happy.

H. K. A., female, born June 23, 1905, 6:30 a. m., South Carolina: I was very sorry to hear of the loss of your husband.

Fortunately, nature lets memory dim somewhat as the months glide by and I feel that you will again emerge from the clouds of sorrow and find happiness again, most likely in 1938 and 1939.

Miss E. D. L., born November 11, 1920, 3:00 a. m.: It looks to me that you will go steady with one boy friend during 1936 and shift to another one during 1937, and that these two boys will absorb most of your time. It also looks to me as though your school work is going to suffer.

Miss D. S. D., born October 23, 1916, at 10:20 p. m., Pennsylvania: A sudden change of employment during 1936 looks probable. You will probably fall in love during 1936. If not married by 1937, you may contract a sudden marriage.

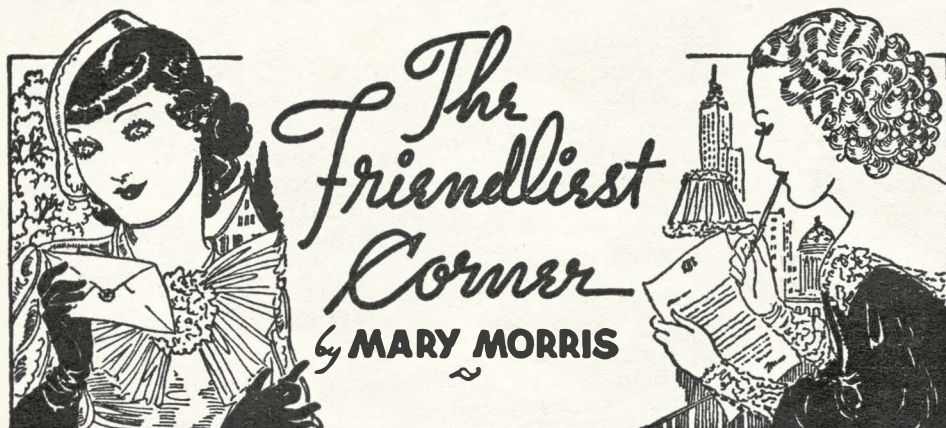
Miss J. G. T., born February 1, 1912, in Pennsylvania at 3:00 a. m.: During 1936 it will probably be love at first sight for you and a hasty marriage, which should prove successful if you use good judgment in your domestic relations.

Miss H. M. M., born October 3, 1917, between 4:00 and 5:00 a. m.: I think you had better stay away from New York. You will always have the urge to make sudden changes and in nearly every instance they will prove disastrous to you.

K. P., female, born April 6, 1918, Saturday, 11:30 p. m.: You will have opportunity to marry during 1936 and also in 1937. It is pretty much in your own hands as to when you will marry during those two years.

Editor's Note: Questions for this department are answered only through Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine. Each reader is allowed to ask one question. Be sure to give the following data in your letter: date, month, year, and place of birth, the hour of the day or night, if possible, and sex. Address your letters to KAI, care of this magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.





Miss Mary Morris, who conducts this department, will see to it that you will be able to make friends with other readers, though thousands of miles may separate you. It must be understood that Miss Morris will undertake to exchange letters only between men and men, boys and boys, women and women, girls and girls. All reasonable care will be exercised in the introduction of correspondents. If any unsatisfactory letters are received by our readers, the publishers would appreciate their being sent to them. Please sign your name and address when writing. Be sure to inclose forwarding postage when sending letters through The Friendliest Corner, so that mail can be forwarded.

Address Miss Mary Morris, Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

THERE are few people who have as abundant opportunity to study people and life as a nurse. Make friends with Oleta, girls, and all your dull moments will be at an end. You will find her friendly and interesting, and an ideal correspondent. She is just the kind of steady and sincere Pen Pal you are looking for!

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Does any one want to correspond with a young Vermont nurse? I like writing letters and have plenty of free time. I enjoy all outdoor sports, reading, music, dancing, and making friends. I am sure that I can make my replies interesting, as my life has been filled with all kinds of lively experiences. Please, girls everywhere, write to me. I promise faithfully to answer every letter received.

OLETA.

Boys, let this Pal tell you about his profession.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Here's another S O S for Pen Pals. I'm a young man in

my twenties, have been a professional boxer, traveled in the United States, Canada, and also in Mexico. I like to write letters, and I'm sure I could make mine interesting. I have plenty of spare time, and promise prompt replies. How about it, fellows?

THE BOXER.

A dancer fond of skiing.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Who'll write to a lonely little girl living in Maine? I like all winter sports, especially skiing, but my real hobby is dancing. I have danced in practically every theater in near-by towns, and hope to do something big some day. I am sixteen, and anxious to hear from girls who live in Western States and foreign countries. Girls, please sling some ink my way; I'm sure you won't regret it.

DANCING TOES.

Married Pals, write to this lonely young mother.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young married woman of twenty-one, and the mother of two babies. My husband works long hours, and as I am otherwise alone all the time I get terribly lonely. Writing letters

is my special hobby, and I would certainly appreciate hearing from young married Pals everywhere. Won't some one please write and cheer me up? I'm sure we can be good friends.

MARYLAND MICKEY.

Boyd has had many interesting experiences.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Please print my plea in your Friendliest Corner. I'm a young man of twenty, enjoy all sports, dancing, singing, have traveled a good deal, and would like to tell you Pals about my many interesting experiences. I want to hear from fellows between eighteen and thirty years of age, will exchange pictures, and promise prompt replies. I'll also send post cards to those who collect them.

BOYD.

She'll cheer you up if you're blue.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Are there any Pen Pals, single and married, who would care to correspond with a young married woman of seventeen? I have an eight-months-old baby, live in a small town in Michigan, and get very lonely. I'm fond of dancing, movies, reading, and love to write long letters. Come on, girls, and tell me about yourselves. If you're blue, I'll try to cheer you up. I'm good-natured and cheerful.

CLEMENS PAL.

She collects stamps and songs.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Hi, Pen Pals everywhere! How about writing a few letters to a New York State girl? I'm in my teens, peppy and jolly, love to make friends, write letters, and want to hear from every one, regardless of age. My hobby is collecting stamps and songs, and I promise to answer all letters faithfully no matter where you live. Who'll take me for a Pen Pal?

CLARIBEL.

Girls, you'll find much in common with this lively Pal.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May I enter your Corner? I'm a peppy girl of seventeen, enjoy swimming, dancing, hiking, and most of all, writing letters. I want to correspond with girls everywhere, and will gladly exchange snapshots. Pals, won't you drop me a few lines? I'm sure we can find much in common. I'll be waiting anxiously to hear from every one of you.

INDIANA TOPSY.

Elston will soon go to California.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young man of twenty-one, at present living in Philadelphia, but plan to move soon to California. I want to hear from young men everywhere, and especially from California. My hobby is amateur photography, and I also like to write letters. Come on, boys, and give me a chance. I'll tell you more about myself later.

ELSTON.

Western Rose promises gay letters.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Who'll write to a Western girl of nearly seventeen? I want to correspond with Pen Pals of any age. I am fond of outdoor sports, and you will be sure of some gay letters if you don't pass me by. I can also tell you about small-town and country life, and promise to answer all letters the same day I receive them. I'm known as

WESTERN ROSE.

You can count on this Pal's friendship.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Have you room in your Corner for a cheerful, sincere girl of seventeen? I'm considered good-looking, enjoy sports, especially basket ball, baseball, skating, swimming, and riding a bicycle. I am not working, and have plenty of free time to devote to writing letters. Please, girls, you can count on my friendship!

CAROLINA BELLE.

Coru would love to hear from every one.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a Canadian-Greek girl in my early twenties, with brown hair and eyes, and considered fairly good-looking. I am the only Greek girl in our town, do not go out much, but enjoy my friendships with English girls. I want to hear from Pen Pals everywhere, especially Greek girls. I'll exchange snapshots.

CORU.

This Pen Pal does not care for girls.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May another lonely young fellow enter your Corner? I am in my twenties, have recently moved from a small town to a farm miles away from any town, and would certainly appreciate having a few Pals to correspond with. I do not care for girls, but enjoy music, reading, dancing, and will gladly

exchange snapshots with any one who writes to me. Boys, I'll be waiting to hear from you.
W. H. J.

She wants to hear from high-school seniors.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Have you room in your Corner for a lonely high-school senior? I'm a girl of seventeen, fond of swimming, tennis, and other outdoor sports. I will exchange snapshots with Pen Pals everywhere, and promise prompt and lively replies to all letters that find their way to my box. Girls from far and near, please let me hear from you. I'll be a true friend.
CARRIE LEE.

Ariel is ambitious.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I want to hear from Pals everywhere; from those who are busy, and those who stay at home. I'm a lonesome girl of nearly twenty, ambitious, considered good-looking, enjoy drama, music, and writing long letters. Girls, please give me a chance to show you what a good friend I can be. I'll answer all letters.
ARIEL.

She wants to hear from married Pals.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: This is a call for Pen Pals from all over the country. I'm a young married woman of twenty, like cooking, reading, sewing, keeping house, and am the happy mother of two small children. I hope all you married Pals will not fail to write to me. I have time to write, and promise cheerful, friendly letters to all. Who'll be my first Pen Pal?
HAPPY MRS. T.

This Pal is easy to get along with.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a Canadian man, a florist by profession, very congenial and full of fun, enjoy outdoor sports, and like to write. I am easy to get along with, and promise to answer all letters received. How about it, fellows? I'm sure there are many things about Canada that would interest you. So here's hoping!
ZACK.

Lonely Lorry hails from Chicago.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Here's a plea from a lonely high-school girl who loves to make friends. I live in Chicago, have black hair, brown eyes, and adore dancing. I also enjoy all outdoor sports. Girls, won't you please write to me? I'll answer all letters,

exchange snapshots, and will be a true friend.
LONELY LORRY.

Let California Fay tell you about the West.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Can you find room for my letter? I'm a sixteen-year-old California girl with light hair, blue eyes, enjoy all outdoor sports, dancing, and can tell you quite a bit about the West. I am very lonely, and would love to correspond with girls everywhere. Come on, Pals, and give me a chance.
CALIFORNIA FAY.

She promises interesting letters.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I would certainly enjoy hearing from single and married Pals from all over the world. I'm a young married woman, have traveled, and promise to write interesting letters. I'll gladly exchange snapshots, and will be a true friend. Won't some one please drop me a line?
DETROIT CHARLOTTE.

He's lonely, after the fun and gaiety of the city.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Heres' an S O S from a young fellow of twenty-two. I am used to gay city life, and find a desert city in California a very lonely place. I'll be glad to hear from Pals from all over, so here's hoping that some of you fellows will hurry and write to me. How about it? I'll be waiting.
ARCE.

A call for Pals from England.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young girl of twenty, not quite five feet tall, with brown, curly hair and green eyes. I'm fond of sports, love to read, write letters, and hope to go to England some day. I would especially like to correspond with Pals who live in England, but every one is welcome. Please, girls, don't pass me by.
ETTA F.

This Pal is interested in needlework.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May I join your Corner? I'm a young married woman in my twenties, have brown hair and eyes, a cheerful disposition, like to read, write letters, and am very interested in all kinds of needlework. My husband and I are separated, and I am often lonesome. Won't some of you single and married Pals please write to me? I'll answer all letters received.
MRS. K. H.

Smiling Señorita loves books and music.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Please print my plea for Pen Pals. I'm a peppy girl of seventeen, a regular bookworm, and adore music. I am fond of traveling, enjoy all sports, especially swimming, and want to correspond with girls near my age who live in or near California and New York, although every one is welcome. Girls, let's keep the postman busy.

SMILING SENORITA.

El K. can give you the low-down on Hollywood, boys.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a congenial young man in my twenties, a musician, live in California, and want to hear from Pen Pals everywhere, and especially musicians. I live near Hollywood, and can tell you about the movie stars. I am not very busy at present, and have plenty of time to answer all letters. If you want a real Pal, fellows, just drop me a line.

EL K.

Let her tell you about the latest fashions in millinery.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Here's another eighteen-year-old girl anxious to find some Pen Pals. I am Jewish, live in Brooklyn, New York, am a milliner, and want to hear from girls from all over the country. I'll tell you about the latest fashions in millinery, girls, so be sure to write to me. I enjoy dancing, making friends, and am interested in everything and every one.

HELENE G.

She's full of pep and fun.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Here is a call from another lonely girl of seventeen. I'm peppy and full of fun, fond of outdoor sports, making friends, and would especially like to correspond with Western Pals, but promise to answer all letters received and will gladly exchange snapshots. I'm sure you won't regret writing to me. **MARTELLEN.**

Married Pals, get busy and write to Monticello Mrs.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I live in a small town in New York State, and would love to hear from married Pals between twenty and thirty years of age. I'm a young married woman of twenty-six, have one child, and as my husband is away most of the time I am lonesome and have little to do. I enjoy writing long, chummy letters, and

will exchange snapshots and picture post cards with any one. **MONTICELLO MRS.**

Totowa Pal is ready to answer all letters.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Please help me get in touch with girls who like to write letters as much as I do. I'm a girl of fourteen, enjoy dancing, singing, and basket ball. I'm peppy and good-natured, and promise prompt replies. Come on, Pals, and let's get acquainted.

TOTOWA PAL.

He's interested in psychology and philosophy.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm just another lonely young man of twenty-four hoping to find some congenial Pen Pals. I'm especially interested in psychology and philosophy, enjoy the theater, and one of my hobbies is collecting pictures. I am considered broad-minded, like to meet people and make friends, and am sure I could make my letters interesting.

KNOXVILLE MAC.

Indiana Blondie likes pretty clothes.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a peppy teenage girl, go to high school, have many friends, but no Pen Pals. I want to hear from girls everywhere. I enjoy movies, dancing, basket-ball games, and other sports. I also like pretty clothes. Won't you girls please give me a chance to be your friend? I'll answer all letters promptly.

INDIANA BLONDIE.

Girls, write to this happy sixteen-year-old.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: This is station H A P P Y broadcasting. I'm a peppy, lively girl of sixteen, fond of sports, dancing, movies, and good times in general. I want to hear from girls from all over the country, regardless of age, and promise to answer all letters promptly. Pals, get your pens and pencils and write to me at once.

MINNESOTA DYNAMITE.

Who'll be her first Pen Pal?

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Can you find room in your Corner for my plea? I'm a young wife and mother, and have plenty of free time on my hands. I want to hear from single and married Pals, and especially those who live up North. I'll tell you all about myself, and about Florida, in my

very first letter. Pals, won't you take a chance on me?
FLORIDA MABEL.

Peace Dale Jim plays on a football team.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Please help me find some Pen Pals. I'm a young fellow nearly sixteen, like outdoor sports, and play on a football team. I want to hear from fellows near my age, but will answer all letters received. How about it, boys? I'll be waiting.
PEACE DALE JIM.

Girls, exchange stamps with this Pal.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a lively girl of twenty, an orphan, have black hair, blue eyes, like to cook, sew, embroider, keep house, make friends, and write long letters. I collect post cards and stamps, and will exchange stamps with any one who is interested in this hobby. Girls, won't you write to me? I promise prompt replies.
NEW LONDON ELLEN.

Her pet hobby is collecting post cards.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: This is a plea for Pen Pals from a colored girl of seventeen. I am considered attractive, and would like to correspond with girls between sixteen and nineteen years of age. I am fond of dancing, tennis, and other sports, but my hobby is collecting picture post cards. I'll exchange snapshots and promise to answer all letters. So please, Pals, write to me.
VERNON BETTY.

She hopes to find some steady Pals.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a lonely girl in my early twenties, and have plenty of time to write letters. I want to hear from Pen Pals everywhere, especially those between twenty and thirty years of age. I like outdoor sports, music, reading, fancy work, and hope to find a few steady Pen Pals. I live in West Virginia.
WANDA MARIE.

PICTURE PLAY
MAGAZINE
UNREELS
PRIVATE
LIVES of
PUBLIC
IDOLS!

MONTHLY

15¢
AT ALL NEWS STANDS

A STREET & SMITH PUBLICATION

Jersey Lily is waiting to hear from you.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Are there any Pals who would like to correspond with a New Jersey girl of eighteen? I'm a high-school graduate, not working at present, so have plenty of free time to answer all letters. I am fond of sports, dancing, and will gladly exchange snapshots with all who write.

JERSEY LILY.

Illinois Bobbie writes songs.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a steady reader of your Corner, and hope you will find room for my plea. I'm a girl in my early twenties, love to receive and write letters, and will try to make my replies interesting. I will send a photograph to any one who answers my plea. My work is writing songs, and I have composed over fifty in the past six months. Girls, let's be friends.

ILLINOIS BOBBIE.

This Pal wants to exchange cowboy songs.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I have many friends and am not exactly lonely, but I think it would be thrilling to hear from Pen Pals everywhere. I'm a lively girl of nearly seventeen, love to write letters, and will exchange cowboy songs with any one who answers my plea. Come on, Pen Pals, and let's get together.

MARINETTA.

Boys, here's a Pal from the West.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am an Oklahoma boy, still in my teens, interested in aviation, boxing, and amateur radio. I'm of Irish descent, have a sense of humor, and can tell you lots of interesting things about Oklahoma Indians and oil wells. I enjoy movies, swimming, and am working in a drug store. Let's get together, boys!

SHERLOCK.

Canadian Jo knows the thrill of radio broadcasting.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Here's another S O S for Pen Pals. I'm a young Scotch girl living in Canada, fond of sports, have sung over the radio, and won a prize for tap dancing. I enjoy writing letters, and promise to answer all letters received. Girls, please answer my plea.

CANADIAN JO.

A college freshman.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm very anxious to hear from Pals from far and near, so won't you please print my plea in your Corner? I'm a girl of seventeen, a college freshman, and feel sure that I can make my letters interesting. I'm good-natured, friendly, and have lots of things to talk about. Pals, won't you try me?

ALBANY BETH.

Boys, here is a Pal you will all like.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Here is a plea for Pals from a young man of twenty-six, a college graduate, fond of playing the piano, traveling, writing long letters, and making friends. I would prefer to hear from Western Pals, but every one is welcome. I'll answer all letters, boys, so don't hesitate to write to me.

PAUL L.

These two Pals are anxious to hear from every one.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: We are two peppy Canadian girls of eighteen who would love to hear from girls from all over the world. We are fond of dancing, swimming, skating, and other outdoor sports. Hurry, girls, and write. We'll gladly exchange snapshots, and promise prompt replies. We have plenty of time to write long letters.

GRETA AND BERNIE.

He collects autographs of famous people.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young man interested in journalism, have won several prizes in swimming contests, like to collect autographs of famous people, and enjoy dancing and outdoor sports. I would very much like to correspond with Pen Pals everywhere, and will answer all letters received.

OHIO MAC.

Girls, exchange snapshots with Zee.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Have you room in your Corner for one more lonely girl who really wants Pen Pals? I am twenty-two years of age, enjoy music, tennis, and other outdoor sports. I will gladly exchange snapshots with every one, and promise to make my replies as interesting as I can. Please, girls, don't disappoint me!

ZEE.



THE FRIEND IN NEED

Department Conducted by

Laura Alston Brown

Well-known Authority on Love and Marriage

Mrs. Brown will be glad to solve in these pages problems on which you desire advice. Your letters will be regarded confidentially and signatures will be withheld.

Although Mrs. Brown receives more letters than she can possibly print in the department, she answers all the others by mail. So, lay your problem before her with the knowledge that it will have her full attention.

Address Mrs. Laura Alston Brown, Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

MANY boys and girls in their teens believe that love is all that matters; that all their chances of happiness are lost forever if they cannot have the love of a certain person. But their affection often proves to be only a fondness that disappears of its own accord when the deeper interests of life take hold.

It is natural, of course, for a girl of seventeen to dream of romance and the kind of a man she wants to marry; and although it is also natural for a teen-age boy to seek romance and the ideal girl, nine times out of ten he is not ready to assume the responsibilities of marriage.

Much heartache would be avoided if these young people would not take each other too seriously, but would try to enjoy the carefreeness of youth that is rightfully theirs. Read with me the following letter and see if you do not agree.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am a girl of seventeen, and for about a year and a half I went with a boy of nineteen. When we first started dating he seemed to be madly in love with me, and I was crazy about him.

He used to pay no attention to other girls, and although he did not have much spending money he never went anywhere without me. While I am not really fickle, I used to flirt a little with other boys sometimes in order to make Ed jealous.

My girl friends used to say that I had better watch out or I would lose him, but I only laughed at them because I thought Ed loved me so much he could never give me up. We even planned to get married as soon as he could find a job. That was last summer; he graduated from high school last June.

About two months ago, however, he started acting cold and didn't seem to want to date me. Naturally, I asked him what was the matter, and he told me that he didn't love me any more. He offered to date me once in a while, but that was all.

Then I realized that I loved him, and that I had treated him very mean. I tried in every way I knew to be nice to him, but he started dating another girl, and has been out with her almost every evening.

Maybe I should have been satisfied seeing him once in a while, but instead of that I started running after him. Whenever we meet now he speaks to me, but makes no effort to date me.

I have tried going out with other boys, but, as they say, true love never dies, and I think mine was true. I love him as much now as I ever did. I know I can never be happy with any one else.

He is still dating this other girl. I go out with another boy once in a while. This boy seems to be very much in love with me,

but I don't care for him. Maybe I am taking this too much to heart, but how can a girl go on, knowing the boy she loves will never come back?

My mother tells me I'll get over it, but I know I'll never forget Ed.

HEARTBROKEN JANECE.

Although you feel heartbroken now, in time you will get over this disappointment. Your mother is right in that. This boy could not have loved you very deeply, or he would not have given you up. Of course, we must admit there is a limit to human patience. But even though you tried to make him jealous by flirting a little with other boys, if he had been more than fond of you he would have overlooked it.

Try not to take this whole affair so seriously, my dear. Make new friends, take part in neighborhood social activities, if you can, and enjoy your youth. You really have lots of time for the serious things of life.

As for the second boy who is in love with you, do not mislead him because you find his attentions flattering. Tell him you like him merely as a friend. If he wants to date you knowing you do not return his affection, well and good. But have other boy friends as well. A girl of seventeen need not give up hope of finding happiness.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Three years ago, when I was seventeen, I married a man of thirty. We have been separated for two and a half years because my husband was so mean to me I couldn't stand it.

He never let me out of the house, and when any of my friends came to see me he insulted them. He even quarreled with my people when they came, and hardly ever let me go to see them, although they live in the same city.

One night I went to a show with a girl friend, and later she and her husband insisted that I go for a ride with them. I got home at eleven o'clock, and my husband was waiting for me. He cursed at me and beat me up, so I packed my things and left.

I have been staying with my parents since then. Shortly after I left my husband I met a wonderful young man near my own age, and we fell deeply in love with each other. He was very good to me, and acted as if he couldn't do enough for me.

About two months ago we let our emotions rule us, and now I am going to become a mother. He wants me to get a divorce so that I can marry him. In our State I can get a divorce in six months. But my husband refuses to give me my freedom. He doesn't know about the baby and wants me to go back to him. But if I went back I know I could never be happy with him. I hate him.

I love this man with all my heart. I'm afraid to tell my parents about the baby because they would probably tell me to leave home. They like my friend and hope that I'll marry him some day. He said that if we can't get married I should go away with him. Do you think I ought to do that?

Please try to help me out. I know I have been foolish, but it is too late to do anything about it now. G. T. B.

Some strong measure must be taken now if you are to straighten out the situation. The best way would be to persuade your husband to let you get a divorce, and then marry the other man. You were not happy with your husband before; and now there is the added complication of the child. Perhaps your husband would be willing to free you if he knew about the coming baby.

I would advise you to see a lawyer and make every effort to get your freedom, as you will then be able to marry your baby's father. Going back to your husband would be pointless, considering the existing circumstances.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am a girl of eighteen, and have been going with a young man who is rather stubborn and domineering. He has been married before, and at times he seems very cynical.

He does not like the friends I have known since high-school days, and is always criticizing them. Of course, when he wants to he can be very sweet. Sometimes I wonder why I continue going with him.

During the past few months he has gotten into the habit of borrowing money from me whenever he is broke. I have tried asking him to return it, but that only makes him mad. I don't know what to do about the money he owes me; and on the other hand, I can't refuse him when he asks me for a loan because he is not working and I know he has no one else to help him.

He tells me he loves me, but has broken lots of dates with me. Several times, however, when I went to our local movie, I found him there with some of his boy friends. Do you think a man who acts this way really cares for a girl who has been as good to him as I have?

My friends tell me I'm crazy to put up with him when I can go with other boys. But even though I have thought of breaking with him, I somehow can't do it. He's the type of man you have to like even if you don't want to. Do you think I should give him up? PUZZLED MITZIE.

Well, my dear, you might as well make up your mind to face the fact that your friend seems to have more regard for your dollars than he has for you. It is a good thing there are few such men in the world.

I would earnestly advise you not to depend on any promises he might make. In fact, it would probably be to your advantage to break with him and refuse to listen to his pleas, in case he falls back on the charm of his personality to coax you to make up with him.

Any man who deliberately takes a girl's money without a thought of ever returning it, is certainly below par as a gentleman and deserves to be dropped without much hesitation. You can be sure, Mitzie, that if your friend loved you he would try to stand on his own feet and not accept one cent from you, even if you offered to help him.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: For the past four years I have been going with a very nice young man of twenty-six. I am twenty-one. I've been crazy about him ever since we first met, and I don't think he has dated more than one or two other girls in all these years.

He comes to see me regularly every Thursday and Sunday. He tells me he loves me, but has never once mentioned marriage. Now, you know, after four years a girl wants to know where she stands with a man.

He never forgets to send me inexpensive gifts and cards on birthdays and holidays. I gave up all the boys I once knew during the past two years, but I don't regret it because I am very happy when we are together. He takes me anywhere I want to go, and on the nights I don't see him I have other things to keep me busy and don't care about dating other boys.

But how can I make him propose? I am getting discouraged, and yet if I started going with other fellows I know he would be terribly hurt. My parents like him; in fact, they seem to expect us to announce our engagement any day.

My friend is a public accountant, and makes enough to support a wife. His parents do not really need his help, as they have a business of their own.

Please tell me what to do, Mrs. Brown. Or do you think it's hopeless? I'll appreciate your advice.

ANXIOUS.

If there are no serious obstacles to prevent a man from proposing marriage to a girl with whom he has been going steady for four years, and he does *not* propose, then most likely he is not in love with her, and so far as marriage is concerned she is wasting her time.

Of course, I cannot say definitely that your friend will never ask you to marry him. But judging from his attitude, it does not seem as if he were very deeply in love. No doubt he finds you a charming, agreeable companion, and it flatters his vanity to always find you waiting for him.

You were wrong to give up all your other friends when you first realized how much you liked this young man. Masculine interest thrives on competition, and it is never wise for a girl to drop all her other beaux because one boy in particular appeals to her, unless, of course, he offers her an engagement ring.

Change your tactics, my dear. Go out with other men if you want to avoid wasting the best years of your life and waking up some day to the fact that this man never felt anything but friendship for you, despite the fact that he has told you he loved you. Some men seem to think a girl expects to be told that.

If he really loves you, he will not want to lose you to some one else, and will waste no more time in making his intentions clear.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Please help me straighten out my problem. Two years ago I ran away from home and married a man ten years my senior. I am nineteen. I loved him, and still do, but he started drinking, so I left him. I took our little boy with me.

Since then I have met and fallen in love with another man. He is very much in love with me, too. He is older than my husband, and married, although he and his wife are not happy. They have no children.

My friend wants to provide a home for me and my child. He suggests that I get a divorce, and then he will get one, and we can be married and have a family; he's crazy about children.

But two months ago my husband found out where I was—since I left him I have been staying with my married sister—and has begged me to forgive him and make up. He promised never to touch liquor again, and I think he would keep his promise, but I am undecided whether to go back to him or not.

My brother-in-law met my husband and talked with him, and said that my husband seems to have turned over a new leaf as far as drinking is concerned.

I feel that I love this other man more than my husband. Maybe you will say it is only infatuation. But I've had all these months to find out how I really feel about him, and I think it is love.

My husband is crazy about the baby, and writes such loving letters that I feel I also love him. Can a woman love two men at the same time? What shall I do? I couldn't bear it if my husband started drinking again and didn't keep his promises.

FLORIDA WIFE.

The sensible thing to do would be to go back to your husband if

he promises to stop drinking and treat you with more consideration. And as you are a mother, your child should be your first consideration. Once you and your husband reach a better understanding, there should be peace and contentment between you, and happiness, too.

As for the other man, try to keep in mind the fact that in most cases men who are not true to their wives and step so readily into another woman's life, be she married or single, are not to be trusted or depended upon. If this man really meant to marry you, he would take steps to get his own freedom first, and would not urge you to forget conventions. You would do well to put him out of your mind.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I wonder if you've ever had a problem like mine. I'm a girl of nineteen, considered good-looking and popular.

My sister, who is seventeen, is also pretty, and we could have lots of good times together except for the fact that ever since she had scarlet fever three years ago she has had a weak heart.

But to go on with my story. We live in the suburbs of a large Western city. About six months ago a new doctor moved into our neighborhood. And when our own doctor was out of town, mother had this new doctor come over when my sister needed him.

I was introduced to him, and couldn't help noticing that he looked as though he liked me. Of course, it might have been just a fancy on my part.

Later, however, I caught a bad cold and he came to prescribe for me. He is quite young, about thirty-five, and very good-looking. He wasn't married at the time, but some people said that he was engaged to a girl who lived near by. In fact, they said that was the reason why he left the city to open an office here. But I didn't pay any attention to gossip.

One day when I was better but still had to be looked after, I went to his office, and somehow while we were talking I found myself in his arms. I was surprised, and he promised it would never happen again. I don't know whether I was disappointed or not.

After that I had to get a prescription for my sister, and he was very curt with me, as though he were afraid that he might weaken again. But another time he told me that he loved me, although he admitted that he was already engaged to be married.

Well, he did marry the girl. At first I felt as if my heart would break. Of course, no one knew about this, and my people couldn't understand why I was so blue all the time.

Since then, this doctor has been very nice whenever we met, and introduced me to his wife. He wanted to kiss me once, but I wouldn't let him. Of course, although I am still crazy about him I realize that the whole thing is hopeless because he is married now. What I wanted to know was, do you think he cares for me, or ever did? Please tell me what you think.

IN LOVE.

To be frank, he might have been attracted to you, and for the moment thought he loved you, but as his later actions proved, it was not love he felt for you at all. So just forget all about him.

I think it would help you to forget if you tried to avoid him or being alone with him at any time. You should also have some boy friends near your own age with whom you can be friendly, whether they actually interest you or not. In time you will surely learn to enjoy going out with them. Why waste time mooning about a man who can mean nothing to you, my dear?

We hate to be robbed of our rainbows and told that what we think is romance is not romance at all. But there is no point in fooling ourselves.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Do you think it is worth while for a girl to try to win back a boy, after he has broken off with her and is now dating another girl steady?

Lew and I were not exactly engaged, but we went steady for almost two years. We always had good times together, and my folks liked him a lot. I have also met his family and many of his relatives, and

they seemed to think I was just the right girl for him.

Then he met another girl and began to act cool and distant, broke dates with me, and finally we quarreled and broke up. At that time I was hurt and angry, and felt as if I didn't care if I never saw him again.

But when I got over the hurt I realized how much I cared for him, and thought I would do almost anything to win him back. Do you think I ought to, and that he would make up with me?

Since he started going with this girl he has also been out with other girls I know, and whenever we meet somewhere he always looks the other way. I don't see why he shouldn't want to be friendly.

Do you think I should make an attempt to talk to him the next time we meet, or should I continue to ignore him? I'm a little stubborn myself, and if he doesn't want to speak to me, I can look the other way, too. I don't want to make a fool of myself, Mrs. Brown, but I miss Lew so much.

DEE OF OKLAHOMA.

Sometimes it is particularly hard to face the truth, Dee; but judging from your letter, it would seem that Lew's affection for you has suffered a change that is not encouraging. If it had been just a lovers' quarrel, you two would have made up long ago, and his love for you would not have cooled so quickly.

Make up your mind not to think about him all the time and interest yourself in some one else. It might not be easy at first, but it is no use making yourself miserable and wondering how you can win him back.

Now try to snap out of your blues. There are many worth-while young men to be found, so there is no reason why you should not let one of them help you forget a boy who really did not appreciate you.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Some time ago I read a letter in your department written by a young wife who said she did not love her husband any more, but couldn't leave him on account of their child. He didn't know she no longer cared for him.

She said her husband just sat around night after night, and she couldn't find anything to talk about because she didn't love

him. May I say a few words to her?

My dear, why don't you get a game of some kind, and ask your husband to play it with you? Or get cards and play a game of rummy if he likes that better. Before you know it, the evening will have passed pleasantly for both of you, and you will be able to forget, if only for a little while, that he is not exactly your ideal.

Keep busy doing something, and try to forget your own feelings. It isn't fair to hurt him when he loves you so dearly. Make friends, and ask his friends to come in some evenings. Later, when your baby is older, perhaps you can leave him with some one who will take good care of him, and you can find work in order to help your husband keep things going.

If you try to help your husband, you will be helping yourself more than you think. If you want him to be more like your ideal, show him how, and don't always think about his shortcomings. Most women find after marriage that their husbands do not measure up to their expectations. But, after all, none of us are perfect.

You are young, have an adoring husband and your own little baby. Why spend your time merely wishing? The fine manners which, you say, your husband lacks, should not be an obstacle to happiness. He can learn if you gently show him how you would like him to act.

If you could know the heartache of losing some one you loved dearly, you would be happy from morning till night, counting your blessings. You have love, but you don't seem to realize it. It's a pity that so many of us do not fully appreciate what we have.

SYMPATHETIC.

I hope that our family of readers will read your letter, my dear, and try to profit by your suggestions. Thoughtfulness and consideration for those who love us always pay satisfactory dividends.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: When I was fourteen years old I met a sailor of sixteen, and we both liked each other from the very first. My people wouldn't hear of my having boy friends at that time, so I used to sneak out to meet him; but after six months they allowed him to come to the house.

He came to see me every chance he had, and my people approved of him and didn't want me to go out with any one else. That kept up for three years, and when I was seventeen we eloped and got married. We

had to lie about our ages, and I didn't know what love or marriage meant, but I thought it would be romantic and lots of fun.

We have been married several years, and have three children, but I can't say that I have ever really loved my husband; he always seemed like a big brother to me.

Last summer he took the children with him to visit his people in another State, and I stayed with my folks. One night a girl friend asked me to go to a dance with her, and thinking it would be a lark, I went.

I met a young man there who seemed to be as attracted to me as I was to him. He was very nice and danced with me nearly all the time, but when he asked me to let him take me home, I refused. He wanted to come to see me the next evening, but I said "no." Then he said, "Well, I'll be waiting on a certain corner, anyway."

I suppose it was silly, but it seemed natural for me to go to meet him. After several dates he told me that of all the girls he had ever met I was the first one he ever loved, and I'm sure he meant it. He asked me to tell him something about myself, and I felt it would only be fair to tell him that I was married and the mother of three children.

He cried like a baby, and so did I, and we decided never to see one another again. But later on I received a letter from him saying that he tried so hard to forget me, but couldn't.

I know it was wrong to go out with him again, but we were so in love. He always acted like a gentleman. When my husband came home, I told him. I know it sounds as if I had no consideration for him; but I had to tell him. I asked him for a divorce, and he agreed. But from then on he changed, began to treat me badly and called me names, even in front of friends.

I didn't quarrel with him. Later he started to beat me. I felt very blue; I knew it wasn't right for me to meet this other man. I knew also that the children had to be considered. I love them dearly. Then my husband and I decided to let the whole thing drop, but now I am not allowed to go out unless he is with me.

Maybe you will think that the man I'm in love with is a cad, but it's mostly my fault. He still loves me and wants me to marry him if I ever get a divorce. He even wants to take care of my children. But I can't really take them away from their own father.

I've tried to convince myself that I am not in love, but I think of him all the time. I've sort of grown up with my husband and will never be able to love him more than as a sister. He knows it. He used to say that some day I would find some one and fall in love, and it's happened.

I hope you won't tell me that it's just a case of a married woman looking for romance. I know this man really loves me, and that I will always feel toward him as I now do.

Since all this has happened I've been worrying so much that I've lost weight and am miserable all the time. I'm only twenty-four now, and hate to think that I will never be really happy. LETTIE.

There are some things beyond human command, and love is one of them. It comes unbidden, and departs of its own accord. However, marriage and motherhood bring certain responsibilities and duties which a woman is in honor bound to carry out.

In your case, most of your unhappiness can be attributed to the fact that you married without knowing, as you say, what love and marriage meant. But now that you have three youngsters depending on you, the obvious thing to do would be to make a strong effort to be a good mother and carry on.

Of course, no woman should allow herself to be beaten. Give your husband to understand that you will not tolerate such treatment. As a wife, you also have certain rights where your personal freedom is concerned, and it is up to you to stand up for yourself. After all, you are not a prisoner. Why shouldn't you have friends and go out when you please?

Put this man out of your life, my dear, and try to fill your days with added interests. Join a club, if you can, and try not to think of your own feelings all the time. Perhaps if you and your husband can become good friends again, and he realizes

after a time that you are playing fair with him, he will trust you again and try to make you happy.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I hope you will not think my letter silly, because my problem is worrying me day and night.

Sally and I became friendly a year ago. We used to go everywhere together, shared our secrets and worries, double dated, and if she didn't like my boy friend I would give him up; and it was the other way around, too. We went fifty-fifty on nearly everything.

Some people considered my girl friend foolish and said she was starting out on the wrong foot. Before I began chumming with her she once ran away from home and was considered "wild." But because her family had money and she was so young it was overlooked.

She has an older sister who tries to attend to the whole family's affairs. She has never liked me and disapproved of my going with Sally. She said I wasn't good enough to be friends with her sister.

I've always tried to be a nice girl. I don't smoke or drink, and Sally did both before I met her. I'm not saying I reformed her; she just quit because I didn't. People who knew me often remarked that I was too good for Sally. I'm telling you all this to give you an idea of the situation.

Four months ago Sally and I started going with two boys who were friends, and she ended up by marrying one of them. I am still going with the other boy. After Sally was married I often went up to her apartment and cooked for them, and we had lots of fun fixing up the place.

I missed Sally so much that I even quit school so I could spend my days at her house. After she was married about six weeks, I went to see her one day, and she seemed very glad that I came over. She told me that her sister was there, and insisted that I come in.

But I wouldn't, so we stayed out front and talked for about an hour. I know this must have made her sister mad, but I didn't care. Her sister had never been nice to me.

The next day was Sunday, and Sally and her husband were supposed to call for me, and then for my boy friend, and we were supposed to go for a drive in their car. But instead of stopping for me, they passed my house and, Mrs. Brown, I haven't seen or heard from Sally since.

That was about a month ago. Last week I wrote asking for an explanation, but re-

ceived no reply. I went back to school, because I am going to graduate this year; it seemed a shame not to. I pass Sally's house every day, but I never meet her.

I feel so blue all the time, and am always thinking about what happened. I don't understand how she can treat me this way. She has been such a good pal, and I know she would have done anything for me.

I've tried not to think of her, and have made an effort to be friendly with other girls, but she still comes first. Should I write again, or call on her personally and find out what's the matter?

If this problem concerned a boy, I would simply let him go. But Sally was the best pal any girl could wish for, and I hate to give her up. She is seventeen, and I am nineteen.

MARY C.

Some disappointments are harder to bear than others, and it is never pleasant to lose a friend of whom we are fond. But we cannot foretell how some friendships will turn out, and might just as well accept such a happening philosophically.

You must consider the fact that marriage changes circumstances, and Sally would naturally want to spend her time with her husband. This, of course, does not excuse her attitude toward you. If you have done nothing you know of to offend her, and have already made a move to find out what is wrong and received no response, there is nothing you can do except to leave matters as they are.

Concentrate on other friendships, Mary. There are other girls whom you can like and chum with as you did with Sally.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I've read your department for several years, and it's a comfort to know that no one is alone with his troubles. Drew Carter's comments attracted my attention, and I hope that you will find room for my letter. Perhaps it will help him to think better of girls in general.

When I was sixteen years old I became engaged to a boy of eighteen. We would have been ideally happy except for one thing; I had to sneak out to meet him.

He had a good job, and we expected to marry as soon as I was through school. The year I graduated he went to Florida and was away for a month. He didn't tell me he was going, and didn't write. One of our best friends told me that my fiancé had asked him to look after me while he was away.

Somehow, during that month, I became fond of this boy, and when my fiancé came back he was very jealous and accused me of some things that hurt me terribly. So I gave him back his ring. I had given him my class ring, but he said he would never return it, and he didn't. I went to a near-by city to work and saw very little of him.

Shortly after that I met a young man who was very nice, and my parents thought well of him. In six months we became engaged and planned to get married within a year. I still had this other boy on my mind; the one I was once engaged to. I didn't let it bother me, though.

A week before our wedding my fiancé eloped with a girl he had known since childhood. I was actually dazed, and when a widower I knew, who had four children, proposed to me I consented to marry him.

I haven't an ideal lover for a husband, but he is so good to me, and I am fond of him. His children are lovely, and I also have a baby of my own. We have been married three years, and he has taken good care of me. And although I'm not madly in love with my husband, I have tried to make him happy.

The two boys I was once engaged to are not true to their wives. I know that; they have often tried to date me since my marriage. Of course, I wouldn't have anything to do with them.

I was not an un-kissed bride, but I have tried to be a good wife and mother. My husband knows about both boys, but he says I was too young to realize the seriousness of life. I am twenty years old now, and fairly happy. I know I could never cheat on my husband in any way.

So you see, Drew Carter, that not all women are out for all they can get without giving in return. I hope you will find your ideal girl. In fact, I know you can, if you don't give up looking.

CONTENTED NANCY.

Your story bears out the fact that life is what we make it. And if we make a list of our blessings, and a list of our grievances, we usually find that our blessings outnumber

the grievances. Marriage cannot fail if both partners are unselfish and each has the happiness of the other in mind, even if love is sometimes one-sided. My best wishes for your happiness, Nancy.

And as for Drew Carter, perhaps your letter will help him realize that there are a great many girls who are generous and true-blue.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Will you please give me some advice? I'm a girl of nineteen, a college sophomore, and act older than many girls of my age. I have been around a lot to dances, clubs, and other places ever since I was sixteen.

Last summer I started going steady with a young fellow who means everything to me. Since school started he has been out here twice to see me. He writes every day, regardless of what time he gets home. You see, he attends night school in order to further his education.

He does not date other girls, but is sensible and does not expect me to stay in all the time. I date for dances and anything special, but generally turn down all other fellows.

Bill has a job but is not making very much; not enough to support a wife. And he hasn't enough saved to furnish a home. He is twenty, and of a different religion. He wants to give me a diamond engagement ring soon, but I don't know if I should accept it. I really want the ring, and I'm simply crazy about him, but everything looks so hopeless.

I know my people would not favor a mixed marriage, and I wouldn't want him to give up his religion. Besides, I would like to finish college before I really think of marriage.

If we became engaged now I'd have to talk it over with my family, and I suppose I would find out where I stand. My mother does not approve of girls getting married too young, but I know that she would not actually stand in the way of my happiness. I have even considered quitting college and going to a business school, so that I could get a job.

I might as well admit that I don't know how to run a house, cook, or manage on a budget. Until this year I have never

done anything for myself. Now I take care of my room and clothes.

Of course, I'm sure I could learn to manage a home of my own; I know most girls do. But I imagine I would not be able to do it right from the start, and if Bill and I got married now I would probably need more money than he makes.

What do you think about my problem? Should I become engaged to Bill, or let things ride until I finish college? Every one tells me that long engagements are not advisable.

DONNIE.

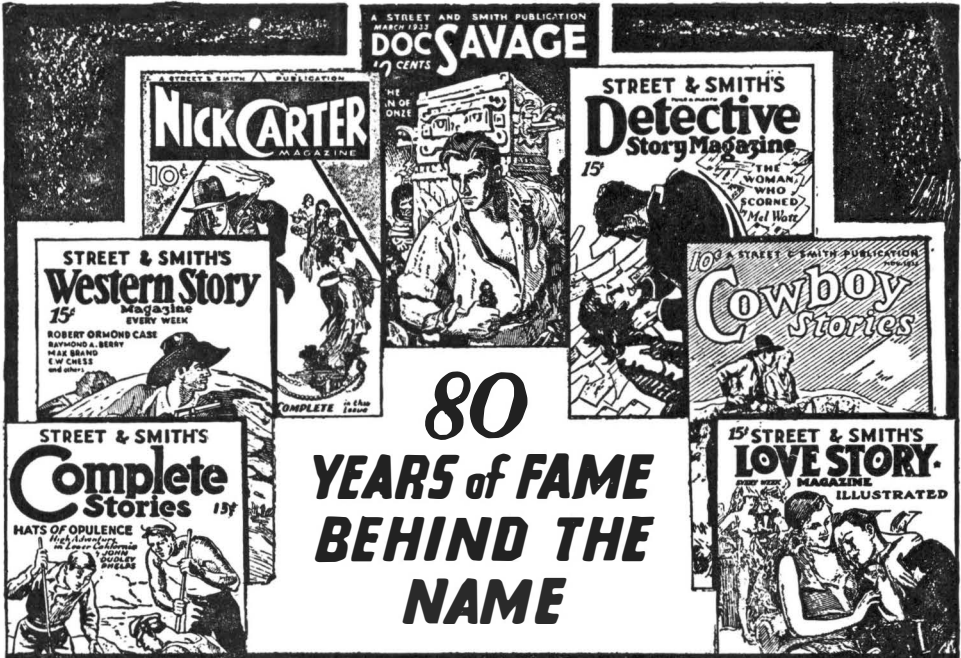
Overlong engagements are likely to prove disappointing. When two young people have to wait three or four years before they can be married, it is best for them not to cut themselves off from other friendships. Besides, when there are doubts of any kind, it is best to wait. Marriage brings many readjustments, and unless a girl and a man are very sure of themselves and each other, it is better not to hurry things.

Differences in religion, of course, should always be definitely settled before marriage. In many cases much unhappiness has been traced to the fact that the marriage was a mixed one. And family opposition on this subject has also been known to create very much dissension and confusion.

- I hope I do not sound too pessimistic, Donnie. But I would suggest that you do not become engaged until your mind is free from doubt. Meanwhile, both you and Bill might have other friends.

Katy, White Deer, Texas: Won't you send me your name and address, or let me know where I may get in touch with you by letter? I will be very glad to do all I can to help you.





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