

Life **Romances**

DISILLUSIONED BRIDE



15c DEC.

**I COULDN'T
WAIT FOR
MARRIAGE**

**DOPE!
DRINK!**

ILLICIT LOVE!

THE SHOCKING STORY
OF A TEEN-AGE GANG

**A DOCTOR
TALKS ABOUT
SUICIDE**



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Life Romances

DECEMBER, 1952

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DISCOVERED...

BY OVER 850,000 PEOPLE

AN EASY WAY TO LEARN MUSIC!

Thousands Now Play Who
Never Thought They Could!

"I NEVER DREAMED I WOULD
EVER PLAY. BEFORE I TOOK
YOUR COURSE, I
DIDN'T KNOW
ONE NOTE!"

From a letter
written to us by Mrs.
Dulles R. Kirk, Lodge-
pole, Nebraska



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KNOW ONE
NOTE! Three
months later I
started to play
for dances. Have
been invited to many
parties and made
people happy with
my music."—Miss Rosie Montemurro, Vancouver, B. C., Canada.



"I bet some
friends that I could
learn to play the
piano quickly. They
didn't believe me—
because I am slow
learning. Imagine
their surprise last
night when I played
for them. One said, 'Why, Louise,
it sounds like you've been playing
for years!'—Louise Gomez,
Oakland, Cal.



"How easy it is
to learn to read
notes and play an
instrument this
'teach yourself' way!
You did so much
for me that I've en-
rolled my two
daughters."—Law-
rence Welk, famous orchestra
leader.

Even if you don't know one note from another NOW—you can easily learn to play piano, guitar, accordion, or any instrument you choose. No boring exercises to do—no "talent" needed. And this simple method **HOLDS** your interest and your enthusiasm—because you progress so rapidly! **FREE BOOK** tells about it.

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Why deny yourself this joy?

So MANY people needlessly deprive themselves—all their lives—of the pleasures of playing! They imagine that learning requires some mysterious "musical talent" and long hours of practicing scales. That's not true any more—and it's a pity more people don't realize it!

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Port Washington, N. Y.

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FOR BETTER
HEALTH

THE DOCTOR'S SLANT ON CONSTIPATION

An important article to help you better understand a functional disturbance
that at some time afflicts all of us . . . together with a simple cure . . .

BY MAXINE BLOCK "DOCTOR," explained a young woman, talking frankly to her family doctor, "my mother and sisters constantly upbraid me for not coming to see you. They tell me I must be very sick, and shortening my life because I have a bowel movement every three days or so."

"Does it cause you any distress—headache, lack of appetite, nausea, constant tiredness?" asked the doctor.

Doctors have found that constipation occurs often to those who must rush to work, to eat, to play, and never allow themselves the time to establish a proper health routine.

"None whatever. I feel fine and I'm never conscious of my digestion."

After an examination which proved her to be in perfect physical health, the physician assured her that there was nothing organically wrong with her; that her system was healthy despite its apparent sluggish behavior.

There are, say experts, too many people in an acute state of "bowel consciousness" who drive themselves almost crazy with fear over the "terrible consequences" of constipation. Yet doctors say that no one ever died because he did not have a daily evacuation!

Last year the colon-conscious American public parted with some 100 million dollars for laxatives, because of a widespread fear that digestive waste is unclean; that if it remains in the colon longer than one day it will be absorbed into the blood stream and so poison us. Our grandfathers were taught (unfortunately by doctors) that this was so, but current medical opinion denies it. There is nothing dangerous in having bowel activity every other day. Auto-intoxication is merely a stupid myth, though many thousands of people believe it. In fact, says Dr. Noah D. Fabricant, "careful study of the habits of thousands of healthy individuals has established that many normal people have a bowel movement every two, three, or more days without the slightest ill effects."

It's estimated by doctors that the problem of constipation (perhaps the commonest ailment that afflicts mankind) concerns seventy out of every hundred people in the country. Almost everyone suffers from it now and then; while some are victims of constipation most of their lives. One specialist has stated that ninety per cent of all women above the age of twenty-five are constipated. For habitual constipation is a condition of modern civilization. Among its many causes are the poor habits of incorrect diet, insufficient intake of fluids, nervousness, lack of activity, fatigue, psychic factors, addiction to cathartics and enemas, overwork, lack of regular hours for eating and sleeping, and, most of all, the habit of disregarding the call of Nature.

Constipation is not, say doctors, a disease. In many cases it is merely a habit that can be corrected. They have found that many chronically constipated persons are cured merely by establishing a ten or fifteen minute daily bathroom routine after (Continued on page 60)



NEW! MAGIC PANEL FEATURE SLIMS LIKE MAGIC!

LOOK SLIMMER, MORE YOUTHFUL

REDUCE

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- LIKE MAGIC IT BRINGS IN WAIST
- MAKES SPREADING HIPINES CONFORM TO FIRM BEAUTY
- SMOOTHS AND SLIMS THIGHS
- MAKES YOUR CLOTHES FIT BEAUTIFULLY

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- Color 1st color choice 2nd color choice
- Size Panty Girdle Girdle
- Name
- Address
- City Zone State
- Please PRINT carefully. BE SURE TO GIVE YOUR SIZE

I COULDN'T WAIT FOR MARRIAGE

These are the confessions of a girl who wouldn't wait for marriage . . . and the tragic results of her efforts to keep her pre-marital affair secret!





IT WAS Link's mother on the phone, her voice soft and warm as always, saying: "Happy anniversary, Isabel." But it sent a chill through me and for a minute I just stood there, wondering—Anniversary of WHAT? And then I remembered. Of course. She thinks, like everyone else does, that this is our wedding anniversary. Or did she? Did my husband's mother really know the truth?

I thanked her, told her we were well, that Jimmy was just finishing his bowl of cereal. I held him up so he could say Hello to his Mo-Mo. But I knew my voice was uncertain and must sound scared. After I had hung up I sat trembling by the phone.

Wasn't there a touch of sarcasm in her voice? She knows. But how could she know unless Link has told her? We had to lie about the date of our marriage, or face disgrace, gossip. This day, March tenth was not really our wedding anniversary. We had not been married until June. That was the date on our wedding certificate that I kept carefully hidden in a locked trunk.


Nobody had ever guessed. Not even my parents. But I remembered that Dora had told me once that Link had always told her everything.

"He may try to hide something, but eventually, it comes out, I have had to be father and mother to him. I even had to tell him about the birds and the bees, you know." Her brown eyes had crinkled. "But I've tried not to make a sissy out of him. He's a grand kid, and if I do say it myself, not a bit spoiled."

I couldn't help liking Dora and I wanted her to like me. And until guilt had made me sensitive and fearful, I had liked her, so much. But lying doesn't come easy to me, and the knowledge that Link and I had lied . . . that we had something guilty to hide, had gradually driven a wedge between Dora and me. More and more I got the feeling that she knew we had lied, and that she was holding it against me. It made me begin to think she was an enemy. She was too polite to say so, but I felt that she considered me not good enough for Link. That she felt I had

"We'll be careful and sensible and not come here again." I told Link determinedly. And Link said, "You're wonderful, Isabel, darling, and I love you."

"I Couldn't Wait for Marriage!" Continued.



If Link's mother knew why he married me, she'd believe I'd tricked him into it. She might even be wondering if I was the right kind of mother for Jim, her grandchild.

A typical story of modern youth . . . impatient
for love . . . impatient for marriage . . . im-
patient to grow up . . . and, tragically, not ready
and too immature for the responsibilities into which
their unguarded emotions had placed them . . .

trapped him into marriage a year before he graduated from engineering school. That because I had been weak where Link was concerned, I could bear watching.

I couldn't stand anyone knowing, least of all Link's mother. She seemed to me so above reproach, how could she ever understand that a girl like myself, carefully reared, with a horror of doing anything questionable, had in a weak moment, forgotten everything but the spell of Link's love.

You've heard about whirlwind courtships. Our's was faster than that! Yes, I did my share of the courting. We had met in the classroom when both of us were seniors at the University. I'd planned to teach, but that was forgotten when Link asked me to marry him as soon as he graduated. He didn't want a working wife, he told me. His mother had worked ever since his father died, and it had hurt him to see her coming home so tired and pale, night after night.

"Of course mom's an exception. She never let it make her cranky or bitter. But if dad had been alive, she wouldn't have had much time for him. I want to be the big moment in your life," Link told me, on one of those warm nights when we had driven out to our favorite picnic spot. "You won't have to work. I'll make a living for you. I'll be sure I can, before I marry you. That's why we have to wait until I'm settled, have a job and a toe-hold on the future."

He was so earnest and sweet and . . . right. I loved everything about him, from his jutting sandy eyebrows, and the gray, serious eyes beneath them, to the tips of his long, sensitive hands that were so warm and magnetic.

"But lots of students marry, Link. I don't want to wait," I whispered. "Not another whole summer, fall, winter, spring. Darling, do we have to wait?"

"If you talk like that, and look at me like that, I won't be able to wait," Link said, putting his hands deep in his pockets, and smiling a little tight smile. It was my moment and I took it. I put my arms around him and drew him close, there in the grass scented darkness, with the stars bending down to hear us.

"I should have taken you home," he moaned afterward. "I'm to blame. It was all my fault."

"You'd have had to knock me cold to do it," I told him shakily. "Oh, Link, you can see, can't you? We're just not the kind of people who can have a long engagement. We love each other too much."

"If we love each other enough, we want our marriage to be the best ever," Link said slowly. "Mom is putting me through school, Isabel," Link kissed me softly. "Your parents are financing you. If we got married now, before I graduate, I mean, mom would have to . . ."

"I know. Link. I know," I said, remorseful and

ashamed for what I had let happen and had wanted to happen. "It's all right, dearest. We'll wait. This won't happen again. It mustn't. We'll be careful and sensible and not come out here again. Take me home now, darling. I won't be selfish any more. I'm grown up now."

"You're wonderful," Link told me. "And I love you. You know I love you, don't you, Isabel?"

Yes, I knew he loved me. But he had at least one foot on the ground. Now I must keep one foot on the ground too, and not spoil the lovely thing between us by letting it happen again. I knew it wouldn't be easy. But it was the only way.

I didn't tell Link until I was sure about the baby. Not until the day after school was out. Then, instead of saying good bye for the vacation months, I told him we would have to be married.

"Oh, Isabel, you should have told me sooner," he sighed. "Three months . . . people will know, they'll be counting on their fingers, talking about you. Isabel—maybe, if we slipped away, got married in another state, and then told mom, and your parents, that we'd been secretly married since March tenth, we'd get away with it! It was March tenth, dearest. Remember?" he said quietly.

I did remember. I'd looked at the calendar often enough.

"All right, Link. We can pretend we've lost or mislaid the wedding certificate. Nobody will ask to see it anyhow, will they?"

"It will take some good lying. We'll have to figure everything out pretty cleverly. But it's got to work."

It wasn't the way we wanted it, that furtive, lonely wedding in a strange county seat, by a county judge with sleepy eyes that I felt could see right through me. But it was legal, and Link's kiss was sweet and tender. When I cried, later, in the car, he held me wordlessly until I was calm, and assured me that everything would be all right.

"I'll write mom, and tell her I want to stay in school this summer, and I'll get a part-time job. That way I'll get through sooner," he said. "You write to your parents, too, and I'll add a note. I wish I could meet them, but that will come later."

It wasn't easy to write those lies to my parents. I knew they'd be terribly disappointed at not having me home that summer. But I had written so much about Link, I knew they wouldn't be too surprised. Only a little hurt that I had not told them until now, that I was married.

Even our wedding night was not the lovely thing it should have been, because we had to start it by deceiving the ones who loved us both.

Nobody ever questioned us, (Continued on page 62)

County Moves To Curb Border Teen-Age Flow

Supervisors Presented With Plan To Limit Unescorted Traveling

County supervisors moved yesterday to check the flow of unescorted teen-agers across the international border.

Outlined recently by local immigration and naturalization officers and a group of civic leaders, the plan was presented to supervisors yesterday by Dist. Atty. Don Keller, who said he believes curbing the travel of teen-agers to and from Mexico will strike a blow at the narcotics traffic.

MEETING DUE

Supervisors instructed T. M. Hegglund, chief administrative officer, to arrange a meeting of the board with county department heads who would be involved in the plan. Hegglund said they probably will meet the middle of next week.

The proposed plan has these points:

1—Mexican immigration authorities would turn back about three-fourths of unescorted teen-agers at the border.

2—U. S. Immigration officers would take the names, addresses and license number of teen-agers crossing into the United States during the week.

REGISTRY SET

3—ON week ends, county authorities would interview and register all unescorted teen-agers because immigration officials are to busy.

Keller's letter recommended the "co-ordination and implementation" of the plan by Mexican, Immigration Service and County officials.

David W. Bird, chairman of

the board of supervisors, said "the board thinks we should make every effort to stop unescorted teen-agers' travel to Mexico. If it takes extra help, I believe we will authorize it."

Hegglund said department heads who will meet with the board are the sheriff, district attorney, chief probation officer, and health director.

"We will discuss the merits of the proposed program," he said. "If the consensus is that it would be a deterrent, we will determine what departments should handle the check point at what periods."

He said the conference also will discuss whether the program could be handled with existing personnel or whether extra help would be needed.

Congress Aid Asked In Narcotics Problem

The State Legislature should send a resolution to Congress next month asking for help in stopping the narcotic traffic of teen-agers between San Diego and Tijuana, Assemblyman Ralph Brown (D-Mo.) said in Sacramento yesterday.

Congress also should be asked to consider a law regulating the sending of unlimited amounts of sleeping pills through the mail, Brown told a meeting of the Assembly Judiciary Committee, of which he is chairman.

Brown said the Mexican border problem is a real one and that there have been plenty of cases of teen-agers bootlegging narcotics into the country as well as becoming addicts.

DOPE!

The parents of the youths involved in this soul-searching case refused to believe that their children were the wild, abandoned creatures headlined in papers from coast to coast . . . But they were . . .

AS WE zoomed along the road south of San Diego toward the Mexican border and the town of Tia Juana just across the border, I pressed closer to Donnie, trying to let the thrill of his arms around me dispel the fear of Vido's high-speed driving around the turns. I sensed danger, but told myself that after all, I was the only one of Donnie's whole crowd who thought it wasn't right for us to come down across the border at this hour of the night. But still I found that not even Donnie's arms, his nearness, and the sweet whispered words close against my cheek and hair, could make me feel entirely safe and at ease.

After all, if liquor stores and bars refused to sell liquor to teen-agers, there must be a good reason for it. And the fact that we could simply drive across the border and drink there, didn't change the situation.

Donnie's lips found my cheek, my hair, my lips. The wonderful thrill of his kiss drove every other thought from my mind for the moment.

"Baby," he said, "baby, you're the sweetest thing I've ever known—the prettiest chick in high school! No exception! And I'm nuts about you."

The crowd was half-drunk and getting restless but I was happy just sitting there with Donnie, listening to his say, "Baby, you're the sweetest thing I've ever known—real class, baby."

Customs Official Cites Loss in Opium Case

Official told in floor of the truck and
yesterday how re was about 23
vehicle when

DRINK! ILLICIT LOVE!

THE SHOCKING STORY OF A TEEN-AGE GANG

Avery was thrilled when Donnie invited her to join his fun-loving gang . . . But all too soon—and tragically, too late—she found there was no escape from the trap these kids had set for her . . . to become a victim of dope with all its attendant evils. . .



Would she ever be the same again after that night with Donnie and his dope-crazed gang . . . would any decent boy ever date her?

"Donnie," my lips said, "Oh, Donnie!" It was hard for me to say things I felt. But it was wonderful to be sixteen—almost seventeen—and in love for the very first time. Especially with someone exciting and handsome and wonderful as Donnie Raymond. Sometimes I wanted to tell him how I'd watched him and been so crazy about him ever since I started in the big high school in San Diego. But he was a grade ahead of me and never noticed me at first. So I simply watched from afar, letting him fill my dreams, just out of reach. I used to listen a little angrily when a lot of the kids talked about how "wild" Donnie was. I knew that a lot of the girls who talked about him were just as crazy about him as I was, and the fact that he didn't give them a tumble made them resentful. But I had watched him too long. I knew he wasn't really wild or bad. I was sure of it. He was—just a rebel. Things had been tough for him. Surely it was simply that he was always around when things happened, so he was blamed for them. His crowd did have a "wild" reputation, but I was sure he wasn't like the others.

It had only been a month ago that Donnie apparently first had noticed me. A miraculous, wonderful month! I relived it now as we sped south. I was a Junior and even as I began to realize delightedly that I had grown out of my early teen-aged long-legged, scrawny—indeed I was pretty now—it had happened. It seemed like ages ago, but it was only a month since my dream-guy had walked up in back of me on the cafeteria line and said, "Hi, pretty Chick, why don't you ever give a guy a tumble? I sit right near you in study hall but you walk around with your nose in the air and never even look my way."

I remember I had stared wide-eyed, too shocked to find the words to protest. He had just grinned and chucked me under the chin, and said, "Now we're old friends, how about going to the dance with me in the gym Saturday night?" After two years of longing to have him notice me, it had happened just like that.

I had answered breathlessly, knowing I was being a little too eager, but not even caring if he knew how crazy I was about him, "Oh, yes, Donnie. I'd love to go with you."

And my heart had echoed—I'd love to go with you anywhere, everywhere, all the rest of my life. And from that week-end on, I had become "Donnie's girl." We hadn't had a lot of dates, actually. A couple of school dances, movies, rides to the country on Sunday afternoons, the amusement park at Mission Beach, Frank Guthrie's auto races one Saturday night at Balboa Stadium.

Tonight was the first time I'd gone out on a party with his gang, the so-called "wild crowd" of the school. I knew a thrilling wonderful tender Donnie who wasn't really wild. He had explained away all the things I'd heard against him. And I believed him. As I had thought before when I had only dreamed about him, he was just a rebel. A kind of 1952 Robin Hood.

He looked down at me now, and I got that shivery feeling of excitement I always got. Every time my heart whispered his name or I looked at him, I got scared, thinking how crazy I was about him. What would I do if he ever walked away from me and never came back?

"We're going to have a ball tonight, baby," he was saying, "a real ball! If you've never been down here, it's time!"

"But, Donnie," I said. "It's so late and it's . . ."

He bent down to kiss me again. "Don't be a square, baby," he said softly. "You're my girl, aren't you? You don't want Donnie to think you're not hep?"

WAS filled with fear, the terrible fear of losing Donnie, now that I had known what it was like to be held in his arms! And we came around the turn and the lights of the border offices came into view, I said in final desperation, "But Marge and the others, they're not following us! And I shouldn't go unless Marge . . ."

"They were right behind us all the way out of town," he soothed. "It's just that Vido made this little bus hum and lost them on the highway. They'll be along. Never mind about Ricky not making a Tia Juana session!"

Vido looked over his shoulder with a proud grin, temporarily releasing his girl, Eva, as we came up into a short line of cars. "Hit ninety-five part of the way down! She's really running!"

I couldn't fight off the sense of impending danger. But after all, my girl-friend Marge—with whom I was spending the night because my folks were out of town—was in the other car following us somewhere on the highway. And she was level-headed. I usually was, too, but I knew that the crazy adoration I had for Donnie was something that made me reckless.

The party tonight had been at Donnie's house. His mother and father were divorced and Donnie lived with his mother. I gathered she was out just about every night with some guy or another. Donnie spoke of them in slightly sneering tones. I'd met his mother only once. She was a kind of flashily dressed blonde with hard eyes, liquor heavy on her breath, and not much interest in Donnie or what he did. But he thought she was great.

That night he had told me to bring Marge along for Ricky, and we had gathered in Donnie's house. We danced and talked, and there were drinks. I'd heard that the crowd drank and smoked, but I'd never seen Donnie drink before, and he'd never offered me any until tonight. They had phoned a liquor store and ordered a bottle of vodka in his mother's name.

The delivery boy didn't suspect anything, and it was all sort of daring and exciting. But I knew it was wrong. The kids had mixed the vodka with ginger ale, and I'd taken only one sip of Donnie's at his insistence, and almost choked! I'd never had a drink before, and I decided I didn't like it much, so I settled for ginger ale. But as Donnie drank more, he kept insisting I try some more too.

(Continued on page 46)

"Donnie," I pleaded, "please don't act like this!" "Let's get this straight," he said almost cruelly. "If you want to travel with me—don't complain about everything!"



YOUR
LIFE



that impulse to

“END IT ALL”

WHAT'S behind the hundred thousand suicides that occur in this country every year? Broken love affairs, loss of job, loneliness? An eminent psychiatrist tells how to know symptoms that can help *you* save a life . . .

By **DR. STEVEN DALTON** **A** TWENTY-

YEAR-OLD

college girl, home on vacation, is found dead in her room, an empty bottle of sleeping pills at her side. A young Society woman, veteran of the Wacs and active in Red Cross and other community affairs, leaps into the river from a high bridge and is dead when fished out. A mother of three small children turns on the gas one night while the family is asleep; two of the children and the mother are dead when help arrives. A chorus girl in a show tries to kill herself by hanging backstage, is discovered and cut down in time by a stage manager, but breaks loose from him later and jumps out of a 5th floor window to her death. These are some of the cases which were reported, during one single week, by one single large newspaper in the Eastern part of this country.

An increasing number of young women today end their lives by means of self-inflicted violence. They are single and married, widowed, separated and divorced; rich and poor; intelligent and slow-witted; employed and jobless; pretty and ungainly; they live in big cities, in towns large and small, and in villages; they are lonely and friendless, or well-liked members of their crowd; a few are delinquents, misfits, addicted to alcohol or drugs, sexually promiscuous, but most are sober young women with normal interests; they may be career girls, housewives, or just girls living at home; most are physically healthy; almost all are reported to be members of the white race. In fact, there is little to choose from as far as the statistics are concerned; and no one category probably furnishes a much greater number than any other.

Sociologists, psychiatrists, statisticians and students of ancient customs have long puzzled over the problem of suicide, including that of women. Among some races and peoples of our world it has always been a fairly



If only this girl had sought competent advice, a tragedy could have been avoided . . . a life saved . . .

common occurrence, while in others self-destruction has largely been confined to the male members of the group. For the unprecedented upswing in the suicide rate of young women in our time, in our country, in the midst of an economic boom, no explanation has been set forth to date which seems entirely satisfactory.

The finger of blame has been pointed at the increasing divorce rate, the rising employment of girls in competitive business positions, and the mounting loneliness and unhappiness of many of our young city-dwelling women; but all these are belied to a great extent by the number of suicides among girls, who are none of these things. Others have blamed the easy availability of sleeping pills, the lowering of inhibitions through the widespread use of alcoholic (Continued on page 58)

When I kissed him it was heaven again—for a while. Then too soon, he was gone and the boredom, the loneliness, set in.



DISILLUSIONED

BRIDE

Nancy didn't give Phil a chance to miss his wife . . . this was the opportunity she'd waited for . . . and Nancy had the "weapons" to make the man she wanted—love her!

PHIL had promised me this surprise—this news about his first job upon graduating from our town's little college. But now, when I actually heard the news, I didn't know what to say. My heart sank. "But, Phil," I stammered. "A forestry job, way up in the Northwest! I admit it sounds glamorous, but it seems so far off and lonesome for us. Away from this town, my family and friends."

Phil's excited grin faded, his face fell. "But Alice," he protested, "you knew I was taking a forestry course, preparing myself for a Ranger's job."

I sighed. I had known that, all right. But I guess I never actually thought ahead to anything like this coming of it. Never thought ahead much to any future, except marrying Phil of course. The present had been so perfect.

Even before I met Phil, my day-to-day life was simply crammed with nice things happening to me. I had two wonderful loving parents and a comfortable home in a lively southern California town—to begin with. Then, when I was well into high school, I'd taken frank stock of my assets and decided that nice things would probably keep on happening. After all, I'd been blessed with deep blue eyes, and hair like wheat in the sun; a slim but rounded figure just made to show off my pretty clothes. And sure enough, I made many friends, I finished school and got an interesting job as a radio studio receptionist. I was popular with the boys—Quent Parsons especially. I didn't love Quent. I didn't let myself love him, because he certainly wasn't one to admit his feelings. Tall and dark, smoothly dressed, with a spine-tingling voice, he was an announcer at the

station. He'd be terrific when television came to our town. Anyway, Quent could just about have his pick of the gals, and I knew I was lucky that he had picked me. He never more than kissed me because I wouldn't let him. I just wasn't sure about Quent.

I was never even close to being sure—or wanting to be really—about anyone until I met Phil Montgomery. It was one of those minor miracles. A girl friend had taken sick and asked me to sub for her on a date out at the college's Christmas dance. "You'll probably fall for Phil," she'd sighed, "but that's okay. He's never going to fall for me anyway."

I'll never know if I fell for him, or was simply swept off my feet by the way he fell for me. Heaven knows I was instantly attracted. Who wouldn't be by a big easy-going guy like that with fullback shoulders and a Gary Cooper grin. He had strength and sureness about him, that made me feel I could turn over my life to him and never worry another minute. But what really stopped me was his instant response to me. We hadn't danced five steps before he was saying, "You're the prettiest girl I've ever known, Alice, and the best dancer. I wonder what that band would charge to keep on playing forever?"

And we hadn't had three more dates before he was telling me he loved me. "None of this fencing-around for me," Phil grinned. "I'm a gone goose, and that's that. I'm crazy about you!"

He hadn't even gone to his home in Nevada for Christmas vacation, but had stayed in town to wage an all-out campaign for my love. Before the holidays were over he'd had his answer. I don't know what it was—

or

just my being so ready to accept all the wonderful things that happened to me. Or maybe that intoxicating feeling of new power, of being somebody far above mere popularity. I was deeply loved, without caution or reservation. Phil actually wanted to marry and take care of me the rest of his life.

So my answer was Yes—with my parents' enthusiastic approval too; they liked Phil a lot, everybody did. We'd planned to marry as soon as he graduated. He had a swell job lined up, he said, but he was keeping it as a surprise. Meanwhile there was simply the delight and wonder of going together, having a barrel of fun, plenty of dancing and picnics and swimming. . . . And there were tumultuous moments, too, when he kissed me. If ever I had the tiniest doubt about my feelings for Phil, all I had to do was let him wrap me in those strong arms and kiss me. His kisses held everything: hunger and fire, promise and tenderness. . . . Life was too sweet for me to think much beyond a glorious honeymoon.

Then suddenly he was graduating, the wedding was at hand, and the honeymoon. And the big news was that we were to live in the Northwest forest region. There'd be very few people, and we'd be off from the gay civilization I knew, while Phil worked as a Forest Ranger.

It stunned me—there on my porch, where Phil told me his surprise. For the first time I almost wondered if our marriage was right. As if sensing my confusion, Phil took me in his arms, his lips brushed my ear as he murmured, "Honey, don't think of it as a lonely place. It's a perfect retreat for newlyweds. What a honeymoon we'll have driving up there! Beautiful scenery, magic nights under that clear white moon."

I wavered and turned my lips to meet his.

"And honey," he persisted, "don't you see? I wouldn't dare take that job without you. I couldn't stand it. But with you there . . ." he grinned and kissed me again, and I couldn't help myself. I gave in with all of me. With the heart that loved him and wanted to be loved like that. With lips that hungered for his kisses.

So one day there we were in the great Northwest. It was heavenly at first, of course—a gorgeous honeymoon trip up into those remote, majestic Washington forests; being completely alone to love lingeringly, leisurely, completely. Even when we reached Phil's forestry station, I was still in a hazy glow that kept me from seeing what lay ahead for me.

True, it wasn't much of a settlement. The rangers and their families lived in a cluster of log cabins near a village. All about us was the great, lonely mountain-side timberland, like a wall shutting us off from the world. But I forgot that there had been other things in life I had wanted, outside of Phil's arms. I forgot that routine would set in, that he would have duties keeping him away for days, and nights.

Phil had a few days before he started work, so we had a chance to settle in our cabin. It was a clean, cozy place, secure against wind and rain, with a huge fireplace. It responded beautifully to little touches I added: pictures, curtains, slipcovers for the furniture. We met the other rangers, all pleasant, friendly men with seemingly happy wives and healthy children. Right next door lived young Mart Darrin, a cheerful red-headed ranger, and his striking pale-blond sister,

Nancy. We'd be great friends, I thought when I met her.

And of course married love was still so excitingly new to me. . . .

But the morning finally came when Phil must go off on duty. He was big and lean and handsome in his ranger outfit, but a little barb of pain crept into my heart just the same. "You won't even be home for lunch?" I asked wistfully.

He grinned and hugged me tight. "Honey, you won't see me for two days. Longer if any trouble comes up. Mart and I are working the tower together, so why don't you and Nancy get acquainted."

I sighed and kissed him goodbye and, with suddenly heavy heart, watched him drive off with Mart in a jeep—up to man the tall lookout tower several miles inside the forest. I tidied up the cabin, then walked into the village for groceries and some magazines to help kill the time. Phil's car was at the cabin, but I wanted to stretch my legs. When I met Nancy in the village and we walked back together, I discovered that we weren't going to be such great friends after all.

ON that walk back, we crossed the bridge over a swift stream that rushed down off the mountain slope. Just as we reached it, Nancy said with that sudden candor of some women, "Frankly, I was disappointed when Phil introduced you as Mrs. Montgomery. For a moment there, I hoped you were a sister, too." I could have pushed her off that bridge. Because though she'd said it with a fetching smile, I knew darned well what she meant. There'd been plenty of interest in her greenish eyes when she looked at Phil, and now it was in her husky voice, between the words she spoke.

I laughed and said very casually, "Oh, there've been lots of disappointed gals who felt the same way toward me, but I don't mind a bit." But I was actually serving notice that he was mine for keeps, hands off. She got it all right, and a strained feeling came between us.

There were two long days and nights and then Phil was back—others going off to take his and Mart's place. It was as if the loneliness had never been. "Miss me, honey?" he asked.

"Not a bit," I retorted, but my kisses told him the truth. It was heaven again . . . for a while. Then once more he was gone. This time there was trouble up in the timberland. It was a small but vicious fire that brought planes roaring over us, and extra fire fighters fanning out through the flaming trees. They got it under control, but Phil was gone six days and nights. Not only did I toss and turn in that lonely bed every night, plagued by worry; but the days, too, were interminable. Nancy and I simply couldn't hit it off. The other wives were busy with their children and domestic problems. Mrs. Winton, who occupied another nearby cabin, had been friendly; but she was middle-aged, had four children and was expecting another.

I was sick with loneliness and doubts when Phil finally came back. And then he was so begrimed and weary that he could only take (Continued on page 70)

Twenty times I might have given up but one thought kept me going—I love you Phil! And I never want to leave you again.

Danger makes friends of the
strangest people . . . two girls,
mortal enemies, pitched head-
long into the flames together to
save the man they both loved!



Farmer's Wife

Too tired to be the kind of wife a virile farmer needed . . . Too tired to fight Josie with the potent weapon this vivacious, lusty rival used—Sex Appeal . . . Thus Ellen stood helplessly by as Josie became virtual mistress in her own home . . . and mistress of her husband's heart . . .

JOSIE LANE flipped around the kitchen, picking up the dishes, stacking the cups from the table. Josie had "hired out" to help on the farm until I was well and strong again. It had been two months since I lost the baby, but I couldn't seem to regain my strength. Frank had insisted on having Josie, though Mother Andrews, who lived with us, thought it a bunch of foolishness.

Josie was maybe a year younger than I. A little more than a year ago I'd been like Josie, full of energy, bustling to get the work out of the way so Frank and I could go to town on a Saturday night such as this, or to the dance. Tonight I felt too weary to move.

I watched her idly, almost jealous of her vitality, her freshness—until I noticed Frank watching her too. Suddenly I became aware of her lithe body moving under the snug gingham dress, her smooth knees revealed each time the hem of her skirt lifted above them as she reached into the cupboard. Her cute, firm figure showed to its best advantage when her arm reached upward.

I looked at Mother Andrews, sitting across from me, but she was eating, oblivious to anything going on around her.

"Hope someone's going to town tonight," Josie said over her shoulder. "I'd hate to miss a Saturday night in town."

"We've nothing to go for tonight," I said quickly. "You can catch a ride in with the Perkinses."

Frank got up and went over to the water bucket, took a long drink out of the dipper and drawled, "I guess I'll be going in. We're fresh out of feed for the hogs."

Josie flashed him a grateful look. "Gee, that's swell. Seth Perkins will be going before I could get the work done." She reached for the teakettle. The hot steam

from the spout poured into the dishpan, hiding her face.

"You should come along, Ellen," Frank said. "Do you good."

I looked at the box of chirping chicks behind the stove to be bedded down, the milk to be separated, the mending on the sewing machine, and a fury against Frank sent prickly chills through me and burned my face. Couldn't he see how much there was to be done? My fury extended to Josie, who could quit work after eight hours, ignoring the dozens of things yet to be done. She could boldly ask to be taken to town, knowing full well it would be Frank who would take her. Or was it prearranged? My mind flew over the last few weeks, picking out little things, like his stopping work to carry in the milk buckets for her, their laughter when she got up to get an early breakfast for him.

Frank, Frank, how far away from me you have grown in less than two years—or is it two centuries? He seemed like a stranger standing there, smiling at me—a tall, stroug stranger, his shirt open at the neck, sleeves rolled to the elbows revealing muscular arms.

I wouldn't answer his smile. I pulled my lips together and closed my eyes in a tight frown. "And who would do the rest of the work while I was gone?" I asked.

The smile faded from his face and a shut-out look crept across his eyes like the closing of a curtain. He picked up the dish towel and began wiping the dishes for Josie.

A hundred times that night I wished I had gone to town with them. A hundred times I peeked out of the window for a sight of lights coming up the lane. The chicks were bedded, the mending lay in my lap. Mother Andrews was reading under the big lamp on the other



Before we were married I'd only visited the farm once. We'd ridden in on the hayload, I'd helped his mother get supper. It was fun.

Farmer's Wife

continued

Work, cook, scrub, sew . . . endless hours of slavery . . .
and yet that wasn't enough . . . Frank wanted
love, too . . . How long would her husband stand for her
marital failures?

side of the table. "Do you see anything out of the way about Josie, Mother Andrews?" I asked.

"Out of the way?" Mother Andrews adjusted her reading glasses and looked over them at me. "Can't say as I do. She's a perky kid, but a worker. My, can't she sling the work though!"

"Yes, she seems able to get out a lot of work," I said, "I guess that makes her all right."

"Yep, sure does." Mother Andrews pulled herself from her chair. "My arthritis is botherin' tonight. Guess I'd better go up to bed. When I was a girl Josie's age I could sure mow the work down too, I'll tell you!"

The work! The work! All I ever seemed to hear was the WORK. All I could think of was work. Where had the good times gone that Frank and I used to have? Were they buried somewhere under the work? Was our love buried there too—the love we seemed to find no time for—the love I was always too weary for?

I had never dreamed there was so much to do on a farm. Raised in town as I had been, sheltered from family finances, I had no idea of what the work of a farm entailed. And Frank hadn't told me.

Frank had been too busy making love to me. We'd had such good times! Our courtship had been one whirl of dances and picnics and joyrides. But it had been short—Frank had only taken me to the farm once. That day the summer harvest was in and the hay was stacked high in the barn. I had ridden in on the hay load, had helped his mother and his sister Mattie get dinner for the haying hands, had rid-

den the horse as it plodded back and forth under the second story haymow door. It had all been fun.

When Frank's mother asked me, looking over her streaming glasses, "Do you think you can get dinner for hay-hands and threshers, Ellen?" I'd answered gaily, "Of course I can. I think it's fun!" She had looked at me wiping the sweat from her face with her apron, and turned back to the cupboard without a word.

Frank's sister Mattie turned around, "You don't look husky enough to be a farmer's wife, that's for sure!"

"I am husky though. I weigh a hundred and fifteen now and I played on the (Continued on page 66)



A hundred times that night I wished I had gone to town with my husband and the hired girl. A hundred times I peeked out for the sight of the car returning home.



Betty tried to tell herself, as she tore up Howard's picture, that she was glad she had found out what he was really like before she'd made the final mistake of marrying him.

BETTY H. cried her heart out on her bed. She was dazed, unable to believe she could have been so bad a judge of character. How could she have known Howard was so bitter and ruthless in his heart, when for weeks she had been falling in love with a man she imagined was sensitive and understanding? Betty could not bring herself to believe even now, that this terrible evening had ever happened, that her beautiful dress was torn.

"Oh, for crying out loud!" he had sneered. "You're not going to pull an innocent act on me, are you? Look, baby, life is too short for that little-girl stuff. I love you, and you love me, and this is 1952. All I need now is for you to tell me that you're saving it for your husband! Let's not be corny, Betty."

She would never see him again, she told herself chokingly. His attitude had been insulting enough, but he had even tried to manhandle her! Betty tried to tell herself that she was glad she had found out what Howard was really like, before she made the mistake of marrying him. It worried Betty somewhat that Pete, the boy she had loved before Howard, had made some ugly passes, too. She asked herself as she tore up the picture of Howard she had cherished: Were all men alike? Was that all they really cared about?

What Betty didn't know was that at the same time she lay in her bed weeping into her pillow, Howard was staring glumly at the darkened ceiling of his room. What a fool he had been! Instead of scoffing at Betty, he felt deep respect for her and disgust for himself. He tried to figure out what had made him act that way toward a girl he really cared for.

He had begun to get "fresh" simply because he felt that every girl expected a boy to make advances; and that she secretly despised him, or felt displeased, if he didn't. It made him feel "manly" to know that he had

Are you cynical about MEN?

BY DANE KERRY

Does the average man really want a girl to "give in"? . . . Most girls will be amazed to learn what his real thoughts are. . .

expressed his sentiments for her, showing her that he was as masculine as the next fellow. But then, his feelings had gotten out of hand.

And now, Howard reflected bitterly, he'd lost her. He felt that he couldn't lose face and go back to her with apologies—admitting, in effect, that he had been unscrupulous. He would just have to let her go on thinking that she had really lost him by refusing to be "modern." And so two people in love, who might otherwise have married, went their separate ways. And Betty thereafter became cynical about men who dated her.

Scenes like that are re-enacted thousands of times every week, all over the country. To make them more ironic, in a great many cases the boy involved is actually inexperienced—seeking to give an impression that he is a "man-about-town." Because of this masculine play-acting, many girls grow to believe that all males are wolves.

What few women realize is that the average man's true feelings about women and sex are basically those of his first childhood reactions. A man may present a veneer of sophistication to both men and women, in which he strongly intimates that his only interest in dating girls is to seduce them. He may even talk himself into thinking that this is all he believes in or wants. But deep in his heart, his memory of great personal happiness is more apt to date back to holding hands with Ann next door, when he was twelve.

Every man in his heart idealizes women, as he did when he was a small boy. He tends to divide women sharply into two groups—the "good" and the "bad." His manner toward all women may be sarcastic, and his "line" may seem to dwell on sex, but a smart young woman will discount this pretense and swagger. Proof of the pudding is that when it comes to marriage, between 65% and 75% of men expect—and insist—that the girls they marry be chaste. Much of the sexual behavior of the single male is deliberately intended as a test. If a girl succumbs, she is "cheap."

Don't be cynical about men. For one thing, if you show that you are, it suggests to your date that you're the kind of girl men always make passes at. (And so he will, too, of course—and he'll add to your cynicism!) Don't be shocked when they proposition you, either. Take such male strutting in your stride. Simply let your date know with a smile that you're the kind of girl that he hopes, deep down in his heart, you really are!

BORED WITH MY MARRIAGE

HOW does a wife go about telling her husband she's eloping with a rival, when her husband never suspected his wife's duplicity . . .

OH, BUT it was wonderful! Like a refreshing oasis in that dreary desert I had to call my life. Relaxing there in that deep chair, listening to Jack Durnam play the piano, I could forget boredom and routine. What an adventure life could be with Jack! Only one thing was in my way. One person, that is. Fred Billings, my husband. . . .

Jack finished playing and swung around on the piano bench. "Like it, Mona?"

"It's terrific, Jack," I said. "It's sure to mean another big hit for you."


He smiled. "I hope so. I can use another best-seller."

I sighed and closed my eyes a moment, thinking what being able to write romantic songs like that meant. Fame, fortune and, most enticing to me, getting away from a stuffy suburb like this. You could live right in New York City if you wanted, travel to Hollywood, swanky resorts, even abroad. Escape. The escape I longed for till it hurt sometimes!

When I opened my eyes again, Jack had come over; he drew me gently to my feet, put his arms around me—and all the thrill was gone. This was always the hardest part to take—his kissing me. Jack was such a homely little man, painfully thin, with a balding head too large for his narrow shoulders. He was at least thirty-seven, a good twelve years older than I was. He was so shy and fumbling about his kisses, too.

I always remembered how (Continued on page 54)



A black and white photograph of a man with dark, wavy hair, wearing a herringbone-patterned blazer over a white shirt and a dark tie. He is holding a handgun in his right hand and looking towards the left. A woman's hand is visible on the left side of the frame, reaching towards him. In the upper right corner, there is a white speech bubble with a black border containing text.

**"Don't be afraid, Mona," he barked.
"I won't hurt you . . . won't hurt Fred.
Just gonna use this on myself."**

my movie star lover

They met on a quiz show—the dime-store salesgirl and the famous movie star...but no good fairy waved her magic wand on the night the great screen lover revealed his intentions...

IT WAS a full second before stage fright struck me. Malcolm's words remained with me and the meaning pressure of his hand on my arm sustained me, as the friendly announcer led me from the waiting room out onto the stage.

"Don't let it throw you, Mindy! I'll be right out there with you as soon as they'll let me. We'll put it over, together!"

I still hadn't been able to take in the incredible, the unbelievable wonder of this miracle that had happened. Malcolm Griffith was one of the best-known movie stars! I'd fairly drooled over him and never missed one of his pictures, even though I had to wait until they'd finished at the big places and were being shown in our little neighborhood theater. I'd been introduced to him and he was going to be my team mate during this broadcast! He'd whispered to me, with intimate meaning, "I'll never beef about my bad luck again! I was sore at being sent here, and now look! I've found you! Ever been in pictures? Bit parts?" he persisted as I shook my head, dislodging a curl that had to be brushed back with fingers that trembled with delicious excitement. "Then surely you've been an extra? No? And those talent scouts say they get around!" he'd ended in disgust.

He was tall and breath-takingly handsome. He was faultlessly dressed. And there I was, wearing the bargain basement outfit and the pumps I'd dyed myself to match. He hadn't seemed to notice how I was dressed; I'd never have believed such a famous person could be so kind without seeming to be condescending. He acted as if he liked me! Me, Miranda Stearns! He called me Mindy, after I'd told him that was the way my friends shortened my name.

"Malcolm, you wait here in the wings until I give you the cue," the program director ordered, breaking up our twosome and leading me away. "Okay, Miss Stearns, now don't be nervous."

"Don't let it throw you, Mindy," Malcolm had said. I thought that Mr. Wilkes had given Malcolm a queer look when Malcolm told me that, but I was glad for the words, because I certainly needed all the encour-

agement I could get. I stepped out onto the stage and blinked under all the dazzling lights. The studio looked vast, and it was packed with spectators. There were many microphones, placed at different levels, and a desk behind which sat a large well-dressed man who rose to shake my hand in kindly greeting. I couldn't keep my eyes from watching the moving platforms where cameramen sat, headsets strapped to the right sides of their heads, while other men moved them into the desired spot. It was all so new and frightening, that if I hadn't wanted to be one of the lucky winners, I'm positive I'd have bolted off that stage.

But the announcer, who'd been introduced as Paul Mitchell, was reading my letter—the letter that was responsible for my being on the DO UNTO OTHERS program. I felt the tenseness in the audience as they listened to the poignant words. My mother didn't know I'd dared to send the letter in. Nobody knew, except Rod. Not even the girl who worked with me at the five-and-ten who'd told me about the program. Her folks had a television set and she was always raving about the splendid entertainment.

"You mean," I'd asked her incredulously, "that all you have to do is write in your story, and if they find it good enough they invite you to appear on the program? And they give away those nice things, for free?"

"Sure," she'd said, laughing at me a little. "Washing machines, radios, deep-freezes, musical instruments, television sets, and once they give someone a full course at a dramatic school." I'd jotted down the name of the program and written a letter. You can imagine how astonished I was when I was summoned to appear.

It was my story he was reading, only nobody could read between the lines. It was about a mother and daughter who'd been left almost penniless when the father had been killed by a hit-and-run driver. The girl had left school and gone to work at sixteen. The mother worked in a laundry as long as her health permitted, but she'd been stricken with arthritis and was scarcely able to move from her bed. She'd never get any better, because there was no money to send

Malcolm was just wonderful. I needn't have worried about a thing. He answered almost before the questions were asked.



My Movie Star Lover

continued



How silly of Rod to warn her against Hollywood's most exciting lover

He looked up as I appeared in the doorway, and the message that sprang to his eyes was for me alone. "Hi! You see I found you finally, Mindy!" he said.



... Rod was just jealous—and uncouth!

her to special hospitals. She had to be alone during the days, because the daughter worked. She was left in the hands of whatever kindly tenants of the building could spare her some time.

"And so, folks, here she is, Miss Miranda Stearns, who hopes with all her heart to win a television set so that her beloved mother may pass her days more cheerfully. I'm sure you'll all be plugging for her, won't you? And now . . ." he paused dramatically as he motioned a hand toward the wings, "we have a wonderful surprise for all of you! Our contestant's teammate of the evening is—Malcolm Griffith! Out of the greatness of his heart, Mr. Griffith is sparing some of his time so that he, too, may DO UNTO OTHERS! He's . . ."

He might just as well have stopped talking, because his words were drowned in a storm of enthusiastic applause. It was deafening, really. Malcolm had stepped to my side and taken my hand in one of his own, as he waved the other at the audience. The pressure of his clasp, the feeling that he was here beside me, that he'd stepped down from his high place and come into my life . . . well, you'd have to go through such a hopeless time as I had in order to understand what it meant to my starved soul. Adoration crept in, and a tender gratitude toward someone who was as far above me as the stars in the heavens.

I scarcely heard the words, "They have chosen astronomy as their topic and Malcolm should be right at home with that subject, being a star himself."

There was a burst of appreciative laughter and hand clapping. I hid my dismay as the announcement registered. Malcolm must have chosen it, because I certainly didn't know anything about it. Stars were stars; they shone on clear nights and some were huge while others were tiny. I loved their brilliance, especially when Rod and I strolled along, stealing a few moments before I'd have to go back up those three flights of stairs to the cheap little apartment which was the best I could afford.

I needn't have worried about a thing, because nobody paid any attention to me, not with Malcolm Griffith standing beside me! He knew the names of the planets and the time of their appearance in the heavens. He had the answers out almost before the question had been put to us. I guess we were supposed to talk it over between us before deciding upon an answer, but he must have felt that I'd be little help, so he just squeezed my fingers and gave the correct answer. I felt that the audience was pulling for us in their anxiety for our success. I sensed their tenseness as they waited for each response from my teammate.

"Sagittarius is right! A small northern constellation sometimes known as the Arrow! Congratulations to this lucky couple!"

They exploded! (Continued on page 34)



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People were clapping and yelling and the Emcee was shaking hands with us. Everybody was acting as pleased as if they'd won themselves. It took a while before I could grasp the amazing truth, and then I almost broke down and cried in front of them all. Malcolm took me in his arms and kissed me and that brought forth a fresh round of applause. Then he led me back to the wings, forgetting to release his hold about my waist. Perhaps it was just as well, because I don't believe I could have stood alone until I'd had time to come out of my daze. So many unbelievable things had happened, in such a short space of time. I'd won the television set for Mom, and I'd met Malcolm. I'd never forget him! I'd never believed that a man as great as he, could be so unexpectedly kind and sympathetic.

"Mindy," he was whispering urgently, "give me your address before you go. Remember, I have an interest in this deal, and I'll have to come and see that the company carries out its bargain."

I found my voice; I could speak. Not too clearly, of course, and not too evenly yet. "Oh, Malcolm!" Then I blushed, placing my palm over my lips in confusion at my audacity. "Oh, I'm sorry, I forgot!"

"Keep right on forgetting, if it means you'll think of me as Malcolm, honey. Because I'll be thinking of you sweet little Mindy! And now, to that address, because I'm coming to see you!"

HE wouldn't though, I knew that as well as I knew my own name. No doubt he meant it, at the moment, but it was because he was still acting his generous role of the evening. He'd been about me by the time he left the studio. But I'd never forget him. Something had happened to me and life would never be the same again. I found my purse and coat and walked out into the night, still not sure that my feet were touching solid earth.

"Well, golly gee! You made it!"

It was a shock to find Rod waiting for me, although it shouldn't have been. Rod Evans had always been waiting, during our grade school days together, and my two years in Junior High. He'd been my steady, the boy who'd had to leave school, too, and find work out at Aircraft Motors. He'd grown tall during the last few years, and much too thin for his height. He had dark, rather brooding eyes, and a shock of black hair that always seemed to need the attention of a barber. Rod Evans was the boy I'd been planning to marry as soon as I could bring myself to allow him to take over the care of my invalid mother.

"Did you hear me yelling, Mindy?" He had my arm and was almost pulling me away from the building. "And that's crowd ever go wild! Honest to gosh, I never knew strangers could care so much as that! You'd have thought they were winning a TV set for themselves! Now you're happy, huh?"

He hadn't wanted me to even answer that letter. "Let it ride, Mindy," he'd said. "You're due for a awful snafu and then you'll only get worse afterward. That stuff's all a fix." Now he'd see how wrong he'd been, I thought.

As we walked along, for the first time that I could remember, I thought Rod looked unkempt! His coat wasn't

a good fit, his trousers needed pressing, too. The hand that cupped my elbow probably wasn't too clean, because it was hard to keep the grime from getting deep under his nails. I just couldn't keep from comparing him with Malcolm. Malcolm's hands had been perfect, tanned and smooth, with the nails neatly manicured. His hair had been cut to the right length and I was sure it was never allowed to get any longer. His sport coat had been of the finest wool. And his voice had been so suave and cultured, while Rod always spoke in a rough husky tone and slurred his words shockingly. Rod was uncouth, and I'd never realized it until that evening!

"You're awful quiet," he said, after a while.

"I haven't got used to it yet, I guess. It's been the most wonderful evening I ever had, Roddy. All those people were so nice and kind, and the men in charge treated me as if I were someone important."

"And that character kissing you!" he said gruffly. "Brother, did he put on an act! He had all the women drooling over him. You'd think he was some god who had stepped down to earth!"

I was so mad I could hardly speak. "Well, I certainly am surprised at you, Rod! You ought to be ashamed of yourself! He's a grand guy, they don't come any finer! If it hadn't been for him, I'd have flopped! He helped me get over my nervousness."

"Yeah, so I noticed!" His tone was surly and I released my arm and stepped away. "Mauling you around, right there on that stage! And you making eyes at him, ready to roll over and beg, like a puppy he was training." I shrugged impatiently. "Oh, skip it! Let me go down there and have let him give you that and flop, do you? That deal was a fix, and of course he'd have all the answers on the tip of his tongue. I'll say this for him: he's a good actor. He put it over with a bang."

Rod wasn't the boy I'd fancied myself in love with, now. I'd taken him for granted; believed he was someone I could be happy to spend all the rest of my life with. Oh, I'd been blind!

I SAID, slowly, "Rod, I'm certainly having my eyes opened tonight. You've never shown me this side of your nature before. You're mean and suspicious and jealous."

"Me? Jealous? What pill? Don't give me that!" He laughed, a harsh discordant bark. "One thing you don't know is that the guy didn't do himself any harm in appearing on that program tonight. He's been slipping, ever since he was nabbed in that raid on a cottage up in the Hollywood hills with teen-age girls. They were smoking marijuana. The studio cut him out of that because they couldn't afford the publicity while he had a new picture due for release. That's all that saved his hide, believe me! Honey, don't go off your rocker for that jerk! Sure, I know he piled on the glamor, tonight. You were excited and everything. But use your head, baby! Guys like that don't have but one use for a girl like you and I guess you know what that is."

I spoke, after we'd walked in silence for almost a whole block. "Rod, it was all a mistake, I'm afraid. I thought I was in love with you, but now I know I wasn't. I'm sorry if it hurts you, but

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Hollywood House of Charm, Dept. 201-B
7070 Hollywood Blvd. Hollywood 28, Calif.

it's a good thing we found it out before this went any further. I just don't love you. I don't believe I ever did! It was just that you were always around and the kids all took it for granted. Mom did, too.

He grabbed my arm so hard there was a bruise there the next day. "Mindy, you don't know what you're saying! I made you mad, and you're getting back at me by saying things that can't be true! You do love me, only, I yakked too much about that guy, and you had your eyes filled with stardust. I'm sorry. Think he's a little good if you want to, but don't tell me it's all off between us."

I was walking faster and he increased his pace to keep up. We came to our mean neighborhood and made our way through the gossiping women sitting on the doorsteps. I ran up the three flights, hoping to get away from Rod.

When I paused to catch my breath before going in to face Mom, I found that Rod hadn't followed me all the way up. Well, I thought, concealing a bit of chagrin, that's that! Rod wouldn't be bothering me again!

"Mom!" I called, rushing in to where she and Mrs. Monk, a neighbor who lived down the hall, were playing rummy over a piece of beaverboard. Rod had brought her for just that purpose, "wait till you hear!"

She and Mrs. Monk were as excited as I was. "And you kept it to yourself because you were afraid you'd lose! Mindy, I'm so proud of you, dear! Oh, I wish I could have been watching it!"

I hugged her hard, tears in my eyes. "Now you can watch them all, Mom! You'll never be lonely, nor want for company, with that. You'll see and hear everything, right here from your bed."

"Rod didn't come in with you?" she asked, cutting in on my gushings about Malcolm and how grand he was. She thought of Rod as a son, and I know that he ate kidney lunches sometimes so he could stop at a corner flower stand and bring her a bunch of posies. He was so good to her. But I mustn't think of Rod, again. He belonged to the days before I'd met the bed. And after that, well, he just wouldn't do!

I TOLD her Rod had to get up early so he hadn't come in. Mrs. Monk left and I got into Mom ready for bed and then went to my box of a room where I slept on a couch. A fine home I had, indeed.

"I wish he'd come . . . and I hope he doesn't," I thought, and didn't need to call him by name. I didn't sleep much, because I lived over and over every moment of that grand evening. I'd been a part of another and more entrancing world. But I'd been given memories that would remain with me as long as I lived.

Two days later the TV set was installed. I knew the minute I saw the mob hanging around the front of the apartment building that it had happened. People were milling around, some getting as far as the narrow hallways and up on the steep stairs. I had a time getting through and into Mom's bedroom. I'd known that she was going to like it, but I hadn't been prepared for such a change in her. Her eyes were widened, and sparkling, and if she could have moved around, I'm sure she would have met me at the door. She'd always be in pain, but pain was forgotten now.

"Mindy! See, it's here! And look at the program, did you ever see anything cuter than that?"

I had no need to answer her, because her attention had gone back to the screen. It was a children's talent program, with kids not more than five or six dancing and singing. Mrs. Monk was there, and the Lennon sisters from the second floor down, and as many more as could crowd in. I hoped they'd remember to go home and get their suppers, although I was doubtful. I drew back, unnoticed, and changed to an old dress in the bathroom before preparing food for Mom. I fixed it on a tray, although usually I helped her out to the table, because we thought it was better for her to move around a bit during the day and I never had time in the mornings.

"Food coming up!" I called gaily, holding the tray high and stepping carefully between the overbearing feet of our audience. "I'll spoil you just this once, Mom, but after this you'll have to eat like the common people!"

SHE caught at my hand, endangering the tray which I had to set down hastily. "Mindy, it's so wonderful! You don't know, dear. When I think how you managed it, and how thoughtful and brave it was of you . . ."

"Sure, sure," I told her, laughing. "Now don't you go getting too excited, or I'll turn it off and you won't be able to watch one more program tonight!"

"You can't!" she retorted, being spunky and far brighter than I'd seen her for a long while. "Because, look!"

She showed me what lay in her lap and it wasn't much larger than the palm of my hand when I picked it up. I'd never expected they'd send her a remote control switch, but there it was! She could tune in on any channel she wished and make the sound louder or softer as she desired. I guess I hadn't realized how out of things she'd felt, until I'd dressed while she manipulated it, much to the delight of our neighbors. I think she was showing off a little bit, too, and I felt a pang in my heart as I understood. They'd all been kind to her, looking in on her during the day. But now it was she who was the giver. It was like a shot in the arm to her pride.

"Ed came in, about an hour ago," she told me during a commercial. "He said he just stopped to see how I was. He was in a hurry and couldn't wait for you. There! That little tyke can't be more than six and hear her sing!"

That's the way it was, after that. Mom could do without me except for things like bringing her clean clothing and getting her meals. I didn't have to round up somebody to sit with her, so I could get out in the evenings for a walk. Or sometimes Rod and I had gone for a ride in his old clunker, but not often, because he had to use it to get back and forth to work and it was liable to fall apart any day. Rod didn't come, though. But I guess everybody else did, the way our rooms were filled. I don't suppose there was an hour in the day that Mom didn't have someone with her. She glowed under it all. And the women paid in little unexpected services, like clearing up the few dishes, if I had to leave without doing them. Or sometimes they'd carry away a pair of curtains and return them next day, neatly laundered. That TV had brought an entire change to our lives.

ILL HAVE SOUP . . . ROAST VEAL WITH STRINGBEANS, ASPARAGUS AND POTATO . . . LETTUCE, TOMATO AND CUCUMBER SALAD . . . BREAD AND BUTTER . . . CUSTARD AND COFFEE

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How in the world can anyone reduce - yet enjoy 3 delicious meals a day at the same time? No exercise. No drugs or pills. No massage . . .



Loses 30 Pounds in Three Months - Friends Surprised to See Her So Slim

"The New Way to Eat and Get Slim" is the most wonderful book I have ever read . . . I didn't have the nerve to try the 10-Day Miracle Diet. But one day I decided to try it, and to my amazement I started losing weight the first week. On June 11th I weighed 150 pounds. Three months later I weighed 120. I lost 30 pounds and I feel 100% better . . .

"I can wear a size 12 dress before I used to wear a 30 . . . All my friends are surprised to see me so slim."
Miss W. R. Berkman, Calif.



IT MAY seem strange, but the woman in the picture above is **REDUCING!** This will surprise most people because they still have the old-fashioned idea that you can't lose weight unless you go on a diet that wouldn't satisfy a bird.

This woman is simply following the pleasant, sensible, scientific way to reduce. Soon her bulges will smooth out and disappear as if by magic. She will enjoy the admiring glances that a slim figure always attracts. And this slenderness miracle can be accomplished for the overweight quickly and safely—whether you are a man or woman, young or old. And best of all—

WITHOUT denying yourself 3 delicious meals every day, including a tasty breakfast.

WITHOUT the drudgery of exercise! (You can be lazy as you please.)

WITHOUT drugs, pills, or compounds! (They can definitely hurt your health and appearance.)

WITHOUT steam baths or massage! (So often they don't work—and they are usually terribly expensive.)

How then? By simply knowing certain up-to-date scientific facts about food-selection!

It's Simple - Once You Know This Fact!

"Oh, of course," you may reply, "it's just a matter of calories." But ISN'T? Suppose you had to choose between a large glass of orange juice and half a sirloin steak? You would probably reach for the orange juice. Actually, the steak would give you 15 times as many ENERGY-stimulating calories. Yet the total number of calories in each is roughly the same!

So you see, it ISN'T just a matter of calories. It's the KIND of calories that makes the big difference.

Calories. Yes - But Which KIND?

Some foods are high in fat calories. Others are high in energy-stimulating calories. Science has discovered that if you eat the first kind of foods, your body burns LESS ENERGY and stores MORE FAT. But if you eat the second kind your body burns MORE ENERGY and stores LESS FAT.

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Since no two persons are exactly alike, it is impossible to predict the exact number of pounds you will lose on the "10-DAY MIRACLE DIET" given in this book. But the average overweight person may expect to lose 5 pounds in 10 days—and some may lose as much as 10 pounds in 10 days—even though the diet provides as much daily food as the average American diet.

Then the book gives you a diet for losing 10 pounds a month; and a "stay-slim" diet, so when you reach slurring slenderness, you can stay there. You don't have to stick to each day's menu either. Substitution Tables give you dozens of other meats and foods you may eat instead. These diets give you a slimmer figure, and also (for scientific reasons) greater health and beauty! Skin becomes smoother, clearer . . . your hair softer, more lustrous . . . you have more pep, "ginger," zest for living.

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"I am a registered nurse. Yours is not only the most sensible but the most effective reducing plan I've ever seen."
—Mrs. J. K. Detroit, Mich.

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"Lost 3 inches around waist, 3 around hips, 2 around legs."
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"Tried all kinds of diets and pills. Nothing helped me like your wonderful book. Lost 10 lbs. Feel better than I have in years."
—Mrs. F. K. Tell City, Ind.

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"Most sensible way to lose weight and enjoy life at the same time. Lost 10 lbs. in 10 days. The 10-Day Miracle Diet is a Miracle."
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"Lost 12 lbs. Never felt better. The many friends have complimented me on my new self. Ever since I started on the inspiration and has lost 41 pounds."
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TRULOVE, 58 Walker St., Dept. 102-WC, New York 13

It brought still another change, too. One I'd hoped for, dared to pray for even while I knew it couldn't happen. I heard his voice as I reached home somewhat later than usual one day because I'd had to stop for groceries. The set was turned low, and Malcolm was talking. My heart gave a spasmodic jump and I thought swiftly, "I'm glad I wore this dress today instead of that old one. I must have known something wonderful was going to happen! He's come . . . just as he said he would!"

I'm not sure how many others were there: five or six, I guess. They weren't looking at the screen, either. All eyes were turned on him, but he was completely at ease among them. He looked up as I appeared in the doorway, and the message that sprang to his eyes was for me alone. My own secret was bared, for him to jeer at, if he would.

"Hi! You see I found you finally, Mindy!" tried to get around sooner, but there's some tiresome retakes to get out of the way. I see the set's a winding. Your mother's been telling me how much she enjoys it."

"Oh, y-yes," I stammered, unsure of myself, now that he had come. He looked even more splendid than I remembered him, perhaps because of the contrast with our poor surroundings. He was my love!

"I thought I might persuade you to come out and have a bite of dinner with me. I just left the studio and haven't stopped for anything. Do you think you could manage, Mrs. Stearns?" he asked her in such a genial tone I'm sure she'd have said she could jump over the moon if it would please him.

BEFORE either she or I could reply, Mrs. Sinclair spoke eagerly, "You run along, Mindy. I've got my dinner in the oven and I'll fix a plate for your mother and bring it up and eat with her. The kids can look after things, for once. Especially as they've been promoting you to watch The Lone Ranger afterwards!"

Malcolm's ready smile was enchanting. "There! See how easy it is! You run along and get gussed up and I'll get in on the rest of this act. Might see something I could copy!" he added impulsively.

My fingers were all thumbs as I brush my hair and applied make-up as I slipped my best dress, a dotted swiss, over my curls. It was simply made and tight fitting, with a full skirt and tiny white buttons on the front of the basque-like blouse. I had one good pair of nylons and my pumps weren't too bad. Malcolm's eyes told me I looked all right as I went back to the bedroom.

"Have a good time, you lucky people," he said as we left. "Night, Mom! I'll see you some more."

Nobody could have been any happier than I was as we went down those awful stairs. Malcolm had come . . . I was going out with him . . . he'd been nice to our neighbors. He'd called my mother Mom and had said he'd see her some more! How lucky can you be? I wondered in silent humility.

The swank convertible, all gleaming chrome and red leather with an amazing number of gadgets on the instrument board, was parked about halfway down the block. He said, helping me in and leaning over the door after he'd closed it, bringing his face near to mine, "I forgot to tell you that you're just as sweet as I remem-

bered you, Mindy." I simply glowed at this tribute.

Well, it was wonderful, every second of that marvelous evening. The dinner in a nice restaurant where the haughty hostess forgot to signal that she recognized my escort. The cocktail that sent fire through my body. The grand dinner, which I could scarcely eat because I was so excited. And my companion himself . . . so real and dangerously alluring. He told me some amusing incidents that had happened during the filming of the picture he'd just completed. He nodded frequently to other couples who entered and passed on the way to their own tables. "Hi, Jimmy." "How's tricks, Betty?" "You owe me ten bucks on that bet, Stewart!" I just sat there watching him speak so intimately to other famous people. I couldn't believe I was a part, a small part, of the whole amazing gathering of circumstances. I felt like I was trying myself to see whether I'd find I'd been dreaming. But it was no dream. Or, yes, it was a dream that, amazingly, had come true!

AFTERWARD, we went for a drive far down the coast, while other cars whizzed past and the sea breeze whipped the hair against my face. Somehow I never remembered just when it had happened—I was reclining in the curve of my companion's right arm. He drove just as efficiently with one arm, and I quickly throttled the thought that perhaps it was a habit.

It was quiet there, after he'd pulled into a deserted spot that was so near the ocean, we watched the waves pile against the breakwater and then recede in a cloud of foam. As he clasped both arms about me and brought me against him, I shivered with the sheer ecstasy of it, wishing this might never end.

"I swore I wouldn't do it, Mindy," he almost groaned the words. "I tried my best to keep away. I did everything I could to put you out of my mind! But something made me come to your house today! You're so little and sweet and you're not on the make, like the others are! Mindy, I'm not good for you, truly I'm not! I'm bad medicine. Make me take you home and then tell me never to come back! I'm warning you, you'd better! Mindy . . . little love!"

That first passionate kiss . . . how can I describe it? It lifted me up, out of a drab, humdrum existence, into something as bright and shining as heaven could ever be. It sealed my heart as his own, and I wished so fervently that I had more to bring him than just my simple self. He was giving me so much and I had so little. I wasn't really beautiful; I had no culture, no great brain. I'd have so much to learn before I could become worthy of being his wife. Rod had never kissed me like this. I remembered as my soft lips gave way beneath the pressure of his demanding ones. But then, I remembered that Rod was bread and margarine, and grimy from the machine he ran, and his nails. Rod was a rough voice, and a guy who expected a girl to hold up her end of the money struggle that could go on endlessly. But Malcolm was romantic enchantment; a life that flowed along in even grooves, heaven to be had for the taking.

"See what I mean?" Malcolm asked, releasing me abruptly, his voice shaking with emotion. "Now, who

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knows best, you or I? I'm leaving it to you, Mindy!

My confidence was so supreme as I snuggled against him. "How could I send you away, darling, when I've loved you from the first moment I met you? Down at that studio, remember?" I asked shyly. "I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw you and then you spoke... and you were being so kind and everything! If it hadn't been for you, Mom wouldn't have her television set. If it hadn't been for you... I'd have gone on believing myself in love with Rodney Evans and so missed the most exciting thing that can come to any girl. I finished, emboldened by this strange new happiness. "Love me, because I couldn't bear to live without you now! How can you possibly care for a girl like me?"

HIS kiss brought promise, reassurance. And so I lived in the wonderful dream, expecting to wake up each day and find a grim reality that held no story-book lover. The dream continued; life was a series of ecstatic adventures. Long drives, stopping at little bars for a drink that never bothered me more. Dinner at swanky restaurants in fancy places, with my lover leaning across the table, paying a lot more attention to me than he did to his food. He brought Mom such lovely gifts—great ribbioned boxes of candy, or fruits, pots of flowering plants that bloomed on her window sill, and even an elaborate bed jacket to wear around her shoulders at night when she sat up for the late programs. She always thanked him nicely, and seemed to like him. But sometimes I caught her watching him thoughtfully and then she'd look from him to me and I'd feel uneasy, somehow.

"Mom," I spoke impulsively, after one such incident, and we were alone in the still of the night. "You don't mind, about Malcolm? If you're thinking," my cheeks flushed painfully but I went on, frankly, "that anything's not on the level, you don't need to! He's just as nice when we're alone as he is when we're here with you. You can trust him, Mom! I do!"

She said, slowly, thoughtfully. "I know you can trust you, dear. Only you're so young and inexperienced. He's been around lots longer than you have. You're only nineteen and he must be thirty, at least. And he belongs to a different world altogether."

"But he can take me with him into it, can't he?" I demanded passionately. "Oh, Mom, don't you see? I can learn all the things he'd want his wife to be! He never lets us feel that he's above us and you know it! See how he is with the folks he finds here whenever he comes. He's always nice and friendly. He even kidded with Ada Carr, who's queer in the head. He calls them by name, and just yesterday he brought along that big carton of crack-jerks and told them he was going into the vending business. That they could help themselves and he'd collect later. They like him!"

I distinctly heard her sigh. "I know, Mindy, I like him, too. Only," she shook her head slowly, "it just doesn't ring true, somehow. Perhaps we're all being blinded by stardust without knowing it. And Rod... he never comes until after you've gone out. He was like my own boy and I can't help but believe that you and he were meant for each other."

"That's out, Mom!" I stated definitely. "I admit I thought so too, but not any longer! Malcolm! Mom, just couldn't! Now let's get you ready for bed, dearest. You look done in. We can't let that television get you down, you know."

I never told her about the time I found Rod waiting when I came home from the store. It had been a hard day, with unpacking some new spring stock and getting it sorted to be taken up stairs. Then Malcolm had kept me out later than usual the evening before. We'd driven far up the coast and had dinner, and on the way back we had parked on a point and I guess we must have sat there for hours. He wasn't coming on this particular night, though.

"One of the gang's throwing a binge and wouldn't let me crawl out of it," he'd explained, a frown of annoyance marring his perfect brows. "Sweet, I don't know what you've done to me, but every hour away from you is just sheer wasted time!"

I THRILLED to such assurances, because I was exactly the way I felt about him, when Rod had popped out to face me and I saw that he hadn't stopped to change from his work clothes and that his shaggy hair needed trimming, I was certainly in no mood for being friendly.

"Mindy," he spoke earnestly, and I noticed that his eyes were unhappy and he had lines in his young face. "Look, I sounded off a lot that night. I'm sorry as heck, you know. Looks like the guy's okay, the way he's got everybody hepped up about him. Only how's about you and me? Can't we pick up where we left off? I can't get along without you, darling!"

His voice sounded more grating than ever, perhaps because I'd become accustomed to hearing Malcolm's smooth tones. Again I compared the immense difference between the two. Malcolm was so assured, so much a man of the world. He could have had any girl he desired, yet he had chosen me. And Rod, uncouth and rough and not too careful of his appearance even on a date. He'd never know how to make love as Malcolm did; his kisses were real enough, but they lacked the fire that set my senses aflame.

"You'll have to, I'm afraid," I told him coldly, trying to brush past. He blocked my path. "I'm sorry, but it's all off, Rod! I guess I led you on, making you believe it was the real thing, but that was before I'd learned what love really is."

"And Griffith's taught you that, I suppose?" he sneered.

I lifted my chin defiantly. "He certainly has! Oh, you'd never be able to understand, not in a thousand years!" He let his arm fall away, not barring my way any longer. He said, soberly, "Maybe I do, however. Maybe I understand a lot more than you. But you go right ahead and learn the hard way!"

I was so angry I went up the stairs without knowing whether I met anyone or not. I never told Mom about that meeting with Rod. He came to see her, at least twice a week, but only when he knew I wouldn't be there. Several times I found a bunch of daisies in the vase on the sill, while Malcolm's expensive bouquets had been taken out to the kitchen. The home TV shows continued, day after day and night after night. I was

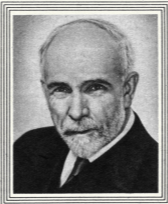
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so grateful for the chance that had brought this phenomenal medium into her life.

"If it hadn't been for Malcolm's help," I thought, loving him more each time I remembered what he had done.

I had watched that same program. Do I HATE OTHERS, and I rejoiced when the contestants won their coveted prize. Malcolm had even brought me a TV magazine that carried the story of that program and an article dealing with the night we had been on it. There were our pictures, and I laughed myself silly because mine was such a horror. He looked nice, but he'd always photographed perfectly, while I was certainly not photogenic.

"You can't tell," he told me when I said this. "Another time they might give you a better camera angle. I imagine they concentrated more on me."

IF HE didn't care, then neither did I. I cut out the article and put it away in my scrapbook. His picture, carefully cut away from my own, was carried in the zipper compartment of my bag, where I could take it out, once in a while, and adore each line of that handsome face. I was still unable to believe that Malcolm cared for me. I'd had to learn that his ways were entirely different from Rod's. Rod had kissed me, roughly and thoroughly, and again. But he'd always been very careful not to go too far. Malcolm had no such qualms. Often I was so shocked I almost cried.

"He never tries to go any farther," I'd remind that other inner self. "I'm safe with him. He loves me so much he wouldn't want it any other way. Only I wish he'd wait—until we could be married."

"You're mine!" he'd whisper, over and over again. "You belong to me, Mindy! You know that, don't you?" and he'd give me a little shake, for emphasis.

"I belong to you, Malcolm darling," I'd reply trustingly.

Sometimes there'd be days when he failed to come. There wasn't any way that he could call me, because nobody in the building had a telephone, and I wasn't allowed to receive personal calls at the stock room. But he always had a logical explanation when he came the next time. Some friend had been driving up to San Francisco and had practically kidnapped him to take him along. Or another, who owned a private plane, had hopped down to Mexico to take in some horse racing or gambling, and there hadn't been any way Malcolm could get out of going. There were so many parties, so many long week-ends that started on Fridays and never broke up until the following Tuesday or Wednesday. He'd have circles under his eyes and at times be almost irritable with me, as he was on the night he came with those stairs after an absence of over a week. I didn't pretend to be able to keep up with the things Malcolm Griffith was called upon to do. He'd come to me whenever he could arrange it. I had to be content with that.

"He called merrily, from the doorway. "Remember me? The guy that peddles peanuts? Here you are."

THE usual number of entranced spectators was crowded into our flat. They lost all interest in the screen the minute he appeared. He tossed sacks of peanuts about, and hands reached out to catch them as they flew

this way and that. Everybody was laughing and Mom's face looked brighter than it had for days. Had she missed him, or had she been worried on my account? I couldn't stop to figure that out, not with my dearest one before me, blithe and charming and dearest even to me.

"Malcolm!" I cried softly, stepping over feet and reaching him and finding my hands instantly imprisoned, as the huge bag that had contained the smaller cellophane bags of nuts was dropped to the floor. Somebody picked it up and ran, passing the nuts around. I suppose the program went on to its end. I knew only that he was there, that I'd been missing him more than I'd known. "Come," he urged softly, the words for my ears alone. "Come out where I can have you all to myself."

That was the best evening of all. His kisses had never been more passionate, more thrilling nor more demanding. His arms had never held me tighter. The stars were up there in the sky, I suppose, but I had eyes and thoughts for only the one seated beside me.

"Malcolm," he murmured, each word a caress.

"Oh," I snuggled even closer, although that didn't seem possible, "so much! Darling, I wish we needn't ever be separated again!"

"Now that," he said softly, lifting my face to his right, into an unimpeded heaven, "might be arranged very easily! Think you've got for that, my precious?"

I could only nod my head, too happy for words. At last it was going to come true, this happiness that had seemed so far out of reach that it seemed ridiculous to me even to picture it myself. Malcolm and I married . . . belonging to one another! I drew a deep sigh of delighted anticipation as I thought of all the wonderful things that would come true for Malcolm and mother if we were Malcolm's wife. I don't know what it was that took me from my absorption, but suddenly I sat up and asked, bewildered, "But, darling, why are we coming here?"

"Because," he replied in a firm tone, "it's the only place I know of where we can be sure of absolute privacy."

IT HAD another, and more portentous name. Perhaps he hadn't heard it, but I had. Rod had told me, the few times we tried those mountain roads at night. And a girl who worked for a few weeks in the stock room had told me, the few times we were alone. "Take it from one who knows, Mindy, and never let a guy park you up at Rape Point! It's real name is Seaview, but not any longer. There's a gang of roughnecks who're on the prowl and if they catch a couple partying there, they hold up the guy and attack the girl." She nodded at my consternation. "It's a fact! It happened to me, only the guy I was with is honest enough not to hold it against me. He's going to marry me, next week. And he'd better!" she'd added with grim meaning.

I tried to imagine the feeling of apprehension and assure myself that Malcolm wouldn't take me anywhere that wasn't safe. Perhaps the cops had cleaned up that gang. The motor was still and I was grabbed tight in Malcolm's arms while his lips sought mine, found them and clung there, bruising the tender flesh. He'd never shown such violence before and suddenly I

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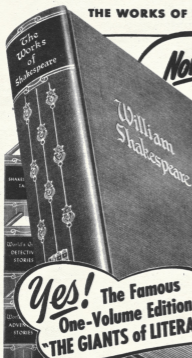
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wished that I had paid more attention to where he was taking me and spoken in time to prevent it. It was so isolated. The lights of the city, far below, sparkled like a sea of diamonds spread over a black velvet cushion. Over to our left I could hear the drone of traffic that followed the rim of the canyon. I wished we hadn't come. Suddenly I was aware that if I didn't stop Malcolm immediately—I might not be able to later—he'd never been like this before. I pulled away and said, sharply, "Malcolm . . . don't."

He muttered, hoarsely, and I felt him quiver. "What do you suppose, you little dope? Haven't I gone along with the gag long enough? Don't you think we can be frank, now? After all, Minky," and his tone was faintly sarcastic, "you must know what I'm after? I've given you plenty of time. I never played a girl as long as this, before. Darling Minky, don't be afraid of me . . . Let yourself go."

It couldn't be true! It couldn't be happening to me! Malcolm wouldn't be asking this . . . not the Malcolm I'd placed on a pedestal and worshipped. My hands were strong and held his wrist. I said, "I never thought you'd ask this until after we were married. I thought . . ."

"What'd you say?" he asked, shocked, unbelieving. "Who ever said anything about being married? Minky, be your age! Have I ever said one word about marrying you?"

YOU'LL learn the hard way. Who had said that to me? Rod. . . in a past that seemed centuries before! When I'd so innocently, so naively, believed that if a man loved a girl, he took her only in marriage! Malcolm held my hand. "you're mine . . . you belong to me."

How dumb can you get? I wondered in self-scorn.

"Malcolm," I spoke earnestly, because so much depended on making him understand. I had to get out of this . . . be taken home, to Mom—to safety! "You've got it all wrong. Because, you see, I'd never do what you're asking! Call me old-fashioned or whatever you will, but I couldn't! So please, let's go back down."

He was shaking his head, and his short laugh was bitterly sardonic. "And I thought I knew all the angles! I was sure I'd hit on the right approach . . . play up to you . . . be full of romance and crummy characters back there."

His words fell on unbelieving ears. Why, he'd been playing a game, all the time, just to seduce me!

"Take me back, or as far as the bus line," I began. And then I heard the car rattle to a stop and Malcolm groaned in quick realization. "What possessed me to come to this spot, anyway? I can't afford to be caught like this . . . The publicity!"

He wasn't thinking of what this menace might mean to me; thinking only of his own precious self! Footsteps came hard and purposeful over the hard-trodden earth and a curt voice commanded, "All right, in there!" It all happened so quickly, almost before I could take it in. Malcolm's hasty protest, "Look, Mac, give me a break! You can have my wallet . . . and you're welcome to the girl!"

His voice wasn't smooth, pleasantly modulated, any more. It was craven and hoarse with fear. And that other voice . . . it had a harsh familiarity,

I realized in blessed relief. It was Rod speaking, cold contempt making his voice sound even harsher. "What a louse you turned out to be! Just for that I'm going to give you the belting you deserve! Come on out of there!"

The car door opened violently. The sound of ripping cloth and Malcolm's weak protests were drowned in the sound of Rod's contact. Rod must have a lot to explain, I thought in malicious satisfaction—black eyes and everything. Sock him, Rod! Rod was doing that, all right, and after a while Malcolm was down on the ground and not even trying to rise. Rod said, "Get up and fight like a man, why don't you?" When Malcolm stayed where he was, Rod rushed one hand against the other, as though he'd got a bad job neatly done. He said, "Next time you bring a girl to this spot, pick up someone who knows the score, Griffith!"

Then he turned to where I stood, waiting meekly. "All right, dope! Let's get going!"

I WASN'T putting up any argument, I believe me! Rod didn't try to help me into the car. He practiced none of Malcolm's courteous attentions and maybe you think I wasn't proud of him for that! I slid into the old car, as he trod on the starter. It raised a hideous uproar before taking hold. It bumped and rattled and shook in every joint as we started the downward road. The exhaust gave out horrible fumes that defied the clean mountain air and the noise startled the hidden night things in the dried grasses. Rod's beautiful, beautiful car! And what had ever made me think Rod's voice was uncouth? His beautiful, beautiful, beautiful voice! I'd forgotten how musical it was!

"H-how did you know?" I ventured timidly, as we reached the turn.

"I've always known. I've always been near, because I was sure the jerk would slip up eventually."

Then, all at once, the car clunked out. Rod swore, not being at all careful of his manners nor his language. He got out and lifted the hood and tinkered with gadgets and I could hear him swearing like a trower every minute. I giggled, because that was better than bursting into tears, Darling Rod, with his funny voice and his rough way! He was the nicest guy in the world and I'd be the happiest girl as soon as he got around to forgiving me for being such a sap.

Mom looked up as we entered. It was awfully late and the folks had all gone home to bed. She took her eyes from the picture long enough to inquire, placidly, "What happened to Malcolm?"

Rod glanced hastily at his right fist and hid the bruised knuckles from sight. "He had another engagement, I believe. I'm afraid he's going to be so busy he won't have time to come and see you again, Mom."

"Oh?" she asked, unconcerned, but I'm sure her eyes were dancing. "But you'll come home, Rod?"

"I'll be here," he announced in a grim tone, "from now on!"

Mom looked back at the screen where the film was coming to its dramatic conclusion. I looked at Rod and he looked at me. I don't know which of us made the first move. But I was in his arms and lifting my lips for his kiss, while a great gladness filled my heart. Rod and I would be together, for always.

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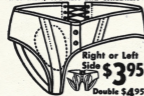
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Then the liquor had run out and they found out it was too late to order more. Everybody started getting restless. I was completely happy just being there with Donnie, dancing with him, sitting, holding hands and listening to the music, and watching this crowd who mostly were strange to me. Most of all, I liked having Donnie turn to me and brush my cheek with his lips and whisper, "Baby, you're the sweetest thing I've ever known—real class, baby."

THEN Ricky had suggested a couple of bars where we might be able to talk them into selling drinks. But even though Marge and I stayed out in the car, they wouldn't sell them to the boys. And when we stopped at a liquor store, we heard the proprietor blast at Ricky as we stood outside.

"Listen, son," he said, "I won't call the authorities this time. But there's a new law that makes it illegal for under-age kids even to ask to buy! I'm just warning you!"

All the kids were muttering and complaining except Marge who leaned over and whispered to me, "I'm glad. They've had enough anyway!"

But Donnie was angrier than anyone. "These crazy laws!" he growled. "Just because we're a couple of years younger than the law says, we can't buy drinks here in the states. But we can drive a few miles south across the border and get all the booze we want!"

"All the booze and everything else!" Ricky announced, snapping his fingers. "And that's the great idea! Let's go down to Tia Juana! It'll be jumping down there!"

I simply stared. Go down across the border at midnight? It was crazy! I expected Donnie to brush it aside. I didn't care much for Ricky. I didn't think he was a good influence on Donnie.

"Tia Juana!" I looked at Don uncertainly, not wanting to cross him or make him angry. I knew how sullen he got sometimes if he were crossed. "But it's so late! And isn't it kind of rough on Saturday nights? I don't think Mom would..."
 "Your mom's out of town, remember?" he said. "You told me so. You're staying with Marge, so who's going to know." Ricky leaned close to Donnie a moment with a half furtive expression on his face, to whisper something. Donnie's expression changed too. He was excited and eager, but a little afraid, too. I heard Donnie say breathlessly, "Honest to gosh!" Ricky nodded.

Marge looked at me. I said, "What do you think?"

"I don't know," she said doubtfully. "What do you think? If you want to go, I'll go, but..."
 "What do you think? I'm whispering. What did Ricky say to you?" He put his arm around me in his old possessive way that sent the shivery wonderful feeling all through me. His handsome, slim young face with the dark brows and wide-set dark eyes,

DOPE! DRINK! ILLICIT LOVE!

(Continued from page 15)

grinned at me. He laughed slowly. "Nothing for little girls to know, baby. Never mind now." Then he leaned close and kissed my ear, murmuring, "Baby, you're the greatest—only the greatest." I closed my eyes, wanting to keep all the sweet excitement inside me, to let me escape. But my apprehension had persisted, and I wasn't sure why. "Donnie, I'm not sure. I don't know whether Marge and I ought to go along."

He released me abruptly. "For gosh sakes, are you a baby or something?" I was cold before his disapproving anger. Then he relented a moment, pulling me close again. "I picked you at school, baby, because I thought you were a real gal—my kind of gal. I thought you were going to be my girl for good! Come on, baby, don't be a wet blanket. I dare you to show me you're grown up and the kind of gal I thought you were."

I WAS afraid of Donnie's sudden moods. He could be tender and loving one moment, and the next thing you knew, anger could cloud his eyes, and his temper would flare. It didn't take much to change his volatile moods.

"Oh, Donnie, I don't know," I began. Then, needing his approval, needing his tenderness, I argued with myself. What harm could there be? Donnie had said we could dance, have some Mexican food, have a few cocktails. After all I didn't have to drink if I didn't want to. One couldn't hurt me, anyway. Donnie drank some, and a lot of the others did, and they didn't seem to be hurt much by it. The rest of the gang wanted to go, and Donnie wanted me to go along!

I wanted so much to belong, to be Donnie's girl! So terribly much! I knew I didn't have much choice. I had to go along with what Donnie wanted, or I would lose him. I couldn't face that. I made myself smile reassuringly, hiding my misgivings. "Sure, Donnie," I had said. "All right, we'll go." And I had put my hand in Donnie's for the reassurance of his nearness. I wasn't disappointed. He squeezed my hand tightly and put a kiss on the tip of my nose.

"That's my girl!" he whispered. "You're everything, baby, just everything. What a pretty thing you are, with that soft hair and that silky skin of yours. And, baby what a build! You slay me. I'm nuts about you. You know that!"

So we had started down the highway, taking two cars so we'd have more room. We were in Vido's car, in the back seat, and Marge and Ricky and two other boys were in Ricky's car. Now as we approached the border, I looked back again, wondering why Ricky's car hadn't caught up with us as we waited there for the cars to move across.

A couple of sleepy Mexican border guards looked apathetically into the windows and waved us across without a word. Donnie squeezed my hand as

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"Things you never knew till now," Vido tossed over his shoulder, laughing with a funny lunge to his laugh. And his girl joined in. She was a strange, dark-eyed, silent girl I didn't know very well. She seemed to be a lot older than Marge and I, though I knew she was about our age. I tried to enter into their carefree mood, but it was only pretense.

As we walked into the little bar on the main street where we had planned to meet the others, I was reassured. The place was full of noisy, laughing people, all seemingly having a good time, singing, dancing to the soft insinuating beat of the Mexican music that throbbled through the little room. We sat at the bar. Donnie ordered two "tequila sunrises."

"These are good, baby," he said. "If you've never had one, you'll like them. And they're not too strong, even for you."

He was right. I sipped mine, and it tasted like a sweet pink lemonade with a varnishy overtone. But I drank it slowly, unsure of my reaction to it. Donnie drank his quickly and had two more. His eyes grew brighter, his voice louder, his ways more arrogant and arrogant to the point of Mexican music, and he held me close. I felt the thrill of having his tall strong young body near me as we moved around the floor together. I felt dreamy and wonderful. He whispered close to my cheek, "Baby, we're for good!" And I was happy I had come along.

We were just coming off the floor and Donnie was loudly demanding of Vido to know where Ricky was.

"He's in the 'know' down here," Donnie proclaimed. "He can get us all the kicks we want," I wanted to ask who he wanted. This was what we had come for—drinks, dancing, and perhaps some Mexican food. And we had it. But I wondered too, where Ricky and Marge were. Just then Ricky and the other two boys walked in.

I'd only had one drink and half of another, but Donnie had had five or six. Ricky looked sullen and angry, glared at me as I asked, startled, "But where's Marge!"

"Your stupid square girl friend," he said disgustedly. "She's the end. She had to go by her house to get her coat. I was just a few minutes. She was in there a long time, and we heard her folks talking kind of loud. Then she came out and said they wouldn't let her go. She said she'd leave the door unlocked for you if they went to bed before you got back. Fine thing! I was around for a few minutes, but you shoved off on me, and I wind up with no date."

"Oh, Donnie," I said, "I shouldn't have come without her. Maybe I'd better go back."

He looked at me suddenly cold. "Go ahead," he said. "Go right out on the street and hitch-hike your way back. If you're going to be like that, I wish you hadn't come either!" He turned and started to walk out the door. I simply couldn't imagine him acting this way. I ran after him, afraid.

"Donnie, please don't act like that." He turned almost fiercely. "How do you want me to act? If you can't go along with me, go your own way. That's all. Don't blow hot and cold all the time. What am I, a monster?"

"No, Donnie. It's just that . . ."

"Let's get this straight," he said almost cruelly. "If you want to travel with me, you come along and don't yell and complain and criticize everything I want to do. Understand? His eyes looked kind of crazy, unseeing."

"Yes, Donnie, oh yes," I held back the tears. I couldn't be a baby. But all of a sudden I was terribly afraid of something and I didn't even know what it was. I only knew I had to go along for now, at least. Monster? No. Don't look at me like a monster. But all of a sudden I wasn't sure he knew what he was doing. I knew he'd had too much to drink. And I knew he was capable of walking away from me and leaving me in that raucous, strange bordertown with no transportation, and no money.

WE TURNED back toward the crowd. They were finishing their drinks. Ricky drank a couple fast. He glared at me sullenly. "Come on, gang, let's go. I want pick up some dames and some weed." He looked at the boys who had come without girls. "You with me?" They nodded eager agreement.

"Girls?" I said to Donnie, not meaning for Ricky to hear. "Do they know any here?" But, Ricky heard me.

He laughed at me, not a nice laugh. His expression was sneering and patronizing. "Little Miss Innocence of 1952! Whatta you know? Yes, baby, a lot of them are easy to know if you have a little money." I looked at Donnie, appalled. But he didn't seem shocked nor did the other kids. They were laughing at me. Donnie was half amused, half annoyed.

"She'll learn," he told Ricky.

"You just bet she will," Ricky said. Then he winked. "That's not all. Stick with Ricky, and he'll show you life as she is lived south of the border." I wanted to ask him and the other two how frightening look in Ricky's eyes, the half-shamed, eager look in Donnie's. And the strange looks on the faces of the others who suddenly had become strangers to me. "Weed," Ricky had said. I'd heard that before. Marijuana. The papers had carried a lot about it recently, and the dangers of it. I didn't want any part of it. But I was more afraid to be left alone in this town at midnight. I didn't even know how to find the police station, and I couldn't speak the language. At that moment, Donnie and his crowd had been talking about the evils. So I kept silent and went along with them. But I wished I hadn't come.

We moved along through crowds, past the open shops with their leather goods and baskets, Mexican silver jewelry and perfumes.

"Don't once. But I saw the warning look on his face and I didn't say any more."

Ricky was saying, "We'll find Chato. He'll probably be at the Blue Pig."

"Who's Chato?" Donnie asked.

"A great guy. He's got a lot of dough. He's got the best kind of a good time." Ricky laughed softly. He looked at me speculatively. "He'd really go for that square chick of yours, Donnie. She's not my type, but I'll bet Chato would go all out. He likes redheads, especially stuff like this." I turned terrified at Ricky.

Donnie said, "Okay, lay off," but he wasn't angry.

We turned off the main brightly lighted boulevard with its tawdry decorations and garish neon. It was as if some dark evil had closed around

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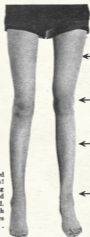
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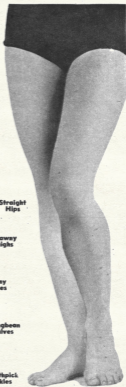
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us. We made our way down a shadowy unparved street toward a dimly lighted bar half a block away. As we went in my eyes accustomed themselves to the dinginess, but I could not become adjusted to the fear that paralyzed my thoughts. I knew I had to escape! But how?

EVEN as we moved into the Blue Pig, my terror concentrated itself suddenly on a man who was seated alone in the gloom at a far table. A man whose voice rumbled, "Ricardito! Mi amigo! Welcome, welcome!" He was gross, ugly, brutal—and the embodiment of evil. His small pig eyes looked out from the folds of unlovely flesh that bulged on his cheeks. And I shuddered as he turned to look at me. I felt as if he were touching me. I felt as if I were standing there without protection from the mind and gaze of this creature.

Ricky hailed him affably, introducing the gang around. As he said my name, the big man echoed it—"Avery." The way his lips moved gave me a cold shudder of revulsion.

"Avery. A very pretty one, no?" He turned back to Ricky. "So you come for a night of fun?" Ricky nodded.

"We're ready, Amigo! The whole gang is. Maybe a few sticks first!" The big man arose with an effort. We followed him through a curtained door into a back room. A couple of Mexicans were drinking, helping themselves at a small bar. Chato signalled one. "Muta," he ordered. "Para todos."

Ricky said, "He's getting tea for all of us." I knew he meant marijuana. I pulled Donnie's arm fearfully, desperate. But he already was heading toward the bar for a drink as Chato waved an invitation. I followed. "Donnie," I whispered. "We don't want to get mixed up in something like this—no dope! Please!"

He turned on me furious. "Listen," he said in a low voice. "You want me to turn you over to Ricky to give to that pig?" I stared at him in horror. He couldn't be saying this! Not my beautiful, brave, Beloved rebel who stood against the world. All of a sudden I was seeing the real Donnie. He wasn't the rebellious Robin Hood who was always in trouble through no fault of his own, as I had always assured myself. Now I knew that many of the accusations made against him, that I had first felt were unfair, were true.

I saw him honestly, his handsome face loose with drink, sagged a little, his chin was weak in a way I never noticed. His eyes were weary and blurred. Dissipation. I knew in that moment the boy I had been crazy about was someone my imagination had constructed.

I had to get away. No matter what lay outside in those strange streets, it would be better than to stay here. Unobtrusively I moved toward the curtain that shut off the barroom. I was nearly there when I heard Ricky say angrily, "Where's your red head Donnie?" There was a crash of glass, muttered oaths, and running footsteps.

I ran out the door into the night, praying for someone, anyone. But in secret terror I knew I had lost my real chance to escape once we turned off the bright boulevard down this dark street. They caught me before I had gone 50 feet. Donnie grabbed me, twisted my arm cruelly. He snarled,

"Where do you get off running out on me? I'll show you!" I tried to twist away. Then, by a miracle, I saw the form of a man in uniform. A Mexican policeman! I was safe—safe! Donnie released me momentarily. I ran toward the man sobbing in relief, crying out to him.

"Help me," I cried. "Help. I have to get home—back across the border." He looked at us, questioning mildly, and smiling vaguely as he shrugged curiously. I saw he had been drinking. "Señorita," he said thickly, "no understand."

"Please," I tried to explain, moving closer to him away from the others who closed in now. I prayed for a way to explain, to gesture, to make him understand. "Make these people let me go. I want to go home—home—San Diego." He smiled pleasantly again, looking beyond me to the others.

Ricky started speaking in Spanish. He laughed easily. "Borrachita se va la seniorita, nuestra amiga—drunk." "La Borrachita?" The policeman laughed understandingly. "Si, si, si! Borrachita me voy tambien ahora!" He laughed loudly, thumping his ample stomach. "Me drunk too."

RICKY chattered away some more, and the policeman laughed again and pushed me back into the arms that reached out for me. I knew by the tone of Ricky's voice he was explaining everything away. I was simply drunk, that was all, drunk and hysterical. And then Ricky took out a dollar bill and handed it to the policeman.

"Para una mas," he said. The policeman thanked him and moved on down the street. I tried to get my shaking to himself. Ricky turned to me then as Donnie still held my arm twisted behind me. He brought up an open palm, slapped me hard across the mouth. I winced, moaned in shocked pain. "You're going to get a lot worse if you don't settle down. Now, let's go."

It is difficult to describe the next hours. I cannot clearly remember the time spent in one place or another. I only know it will take a lifetime to put completely out of my mind the degradation of the experience of that night. At first I sat numbly, refusing to participate as Donnie, Ricky and some of the others smoked the "reefer" cigarettes. Soberly, they shared a white powder they sniffed. (It was cocaine, I later learned.) A couple even used a needle to shoot other drugs into their arms. Donnie grew half crazy about the white powder.

After a while we all got into the big car. Chato had provided and drove through the night with a dinged hood with a red arrow that pointed inside: "To cocktail bar and entertainment." I soon learned the emphasis here was on the entertainment. The women Ricky had mentioned earlier.

The psychiatrist with the juvenile bureau here in San Diego, who has tried to help out, or trying to cure, a terrible psychological shock I suffered that night, told me that much of the experience did not really penetrate my consciousness, because much was simply beyond my understanding.

I do remember at first, resigning myself to the realization there was no use crying out, or trying to escape. My only chance was to keep my head was to be as quiet as possible and keep out of the way. I tried to stop thinking about the worst thing I feared. That was the constant, avid, watchful gaze of Chato!



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BORED WITH MY MARRIAGE

(Continued from page 27)

it had been when Fred and I were really close. The swiftly mounting fire in us both when we kissed; the laughter and spontaneity; the freshly awakened thrill, as if every moment together were brand new, yet so sure and deep. We had belonged together. Big blond Fred and lithe dark me—so opposite on the surface, so alike in our hearts and emotions. There was still an instinctive remnant of that love in me. Enough to make me doubt I could ever really love again. But I couldn't push Jack away. Not when he could mean a glorious change for me—a glittering new life that seemed irresistible. Without love, maybe, but with a million compensations! So I fought down the urge to slip out of his embrace. I let my mouth meet his, I even tightened my arms around him, I pretended as best I could, and it was enough.

Jack let me go and caught his breath. "I'm crazy about you, Mona!" He nervously lit a cigarette. "Look, Mona," he said hesitantly, "the song's all wrapped up. I've got to fly down to the big town tomorrow morning—see my publisher, talk to some boys about plugging it. The Hardings are coming home to take their apartment over again, so I won't be back."

"Oh. I felt a little flutter of worry inside me."
"So," he said, "I want you to go with me. Mona." His pale eyes begged me through his thick horn rim glasses. "We'll get you a divorce. Go to Reno, Mexico, anywhere. We'll make a swell trip out of it."

I surprised myself. I thought I'd throw myself in his arms with a happy, Yes, Jack. Yes!—when he finally asked this. But it sort of stunned me. It was so sudden, so final-sounding. Divorce! Separated from Fred forever! I touched my throat an instant, felt its fast pulsing. "Why, I just don't know, Jack," I stammered. "I've got to think."

"Sure," he said tensely. "Think. Think of the fun we'll have! The new places you'll see, new friends you'll make. Important, glamorous people!"

I shook my head vaguely. I just didn't know what to answer on such short notice—even though I had been expecting it. Jack urged me some more, painting word pictures right out of Wonderland. But it wasn't that easy. I did have to think. Finally he sighed, "Well, you know what I want, Mona. I only hope you know what you want, son. Can I call you tonight? All you have to do then is say yes. I'll meet you at the airport in the morning. We'll be off together on the whirl of a lifetime!"

I nodded. "You can call me, all right. This is Fred's night to bowl with his bank team."

"Bowling night for the bankers," Jack said dryly. "Real exciting, hmm?" We smiled at each other, and suddenly I was almost positive I'd answer yes that night. I let him kiss me goodbye. Then I left his apartment and started the five-block walk home

through the gathering dusk. I knew I should hurry; Fred would be home by now, wondering where I was, eager to eat dinner and set off for bowling. But I walked slowly, trying to think it all out.

Discounting the fact that I still loved Fred, deep inside me, I wouldn't be leaving a thing behind that really mattered. Five years Fred and I had been married, living in this Boston suburb. Five years that had gradually dragged me down from a pinnacle of honeymoon happiness into a dull rut. I know no other way to put it; my life was simply dull.

Even going to Saturday night parties was a routine. I'd grown to dread. We saw the same ordinary people, month in and month out. The same group of chattering wives sat in one corner—without anything new to chatter about; I'd stopped listening. The husbands sat in another corner talking politics, business, baseball. There was always a girl who got tipsy on one beer and made a play for other husbands; always a fellow who put on women's hats. And every day, all day, another drab routine—make the beds, tidy the house, go to the supermarket to examine the produce and price the meats—home to cook, to wash dishes. The same neighbors dropped in for coffee with the same problems and complaints, till I thought I'd go out of my mind with boredom. Fred, too, who'd once had so many exciting ambitions—was now just another bank teller with nothing to talk about.

LIFE had simply passed me by. The high spot of my day was listening to radio stories—living vicariously for a few minutes, by losing myself in the adventures and emotions of fictional heroines. Fred and I were simply going through the motions of marriage—as I felt myself draw further and further away from him. I scarcely even listened when he talked about the bank. I'd tried to withdraw from my neighbors, too—not answering their knocks at my door. I knew it was partly envy—envying them, their children, forbidden me by my doctor four years ago.

Then very suddenly there'd been a bright new turn. Jack Durnam had come to our suburb. Everybody talked about the popular New York song writer, who was taking over the Harding's apartment while they were on a summer cruise. He'd be practically inaccessible, everybody said, because he simply wanted a quiet place to work while he turned out a new ballad. But he had been at the Hardings' farewell party, and I'd met him.

I'd been pretty silly. I thought, blurring out, "Oh, Mr. Durnam, I've always wondered how a composer put a song together!" But he'd been nice about it. He'd looked at me rather shyly but obviously attracted, and said he'd be glad to have me come around and watch him work any day at all. And I couldn't help it, I did go to see him. Not that he attracted me, but that

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aura of glamour around him was irresistible. I'd gone a second time, and again, and very suddenly we were close to becoming involved. For Jack was not only attracted, he was flattered. In his own world, he said, where glamor was a stock in trade, he wasn't exactly chased by the girls. He knew he was homely and to have somebody like me interested in him was wonderful. He didn't know that what really appealed to me was his fascinating life.

Finally he had tried to kiss me, awkwardly, shyly but with unmistakable love. After several refusals, I'd let him. He said he didn't give a hang if I was somebody's wife. I only knew he was crazy about me. And I'd listened. I'd known that eventually he would beg me to run off with him. And now it had happened. It was my only way out of this miserable rut. My chance to really live! All I had to do was to say Yes! into the phone.

But before that I must think what to tell Fred, how to make him see that was best for us both. Certainly our routine marriage wasn't making him happy either. So often I could see bewilderment, even hurt, in his eyes when I was bored or restless. When I turned my lips away from his kisses, when I paid no attention to his chatter at dinner about the bank, he moped. With me out of his life, he could find someone better suited to his way of life. Not that facing him and telling him would be easy. I'd never forget our honeymoon, our first happy year. If only things could have been different, I thought wistfully, as I turned up our flagstone walk.

AS I'd expected, Fred was already home. But he didn't act concerned with where I'd been. His greeting was a brief, "Hello, Mona." He seemed preoccupied and troubled. He was pacing the living room, chewing on his pipe stem, running his fingers agitatedly through his rumpled hair.

My heart sank. The mood he was in would probably make it doubly hard to tell him what I must. I started for the kitchen, but Fred called after me: "Don't bother with me, Mona. I grabbed a sandwich. I've got to go."

"Oh, your bowling." I paused and moistened my lips nervously. "Fred, there's something I must tell you first." "See you later, honey." He started for the door.

"Fred!" I cried. "Certainly you can let that bowling wait a little while!" "Bowling?" He looked startled as if hearing me for the first time. "Who's bowling tonight? I've got to go find Sam Turner. You know that. I'm going to try one last time to talk him into coming clean about that deal."

I shook my head puzzledly. Sam Turner was another teller at the bank, but I hadn't the slightest idea what Fred was talking about.

Fred frowned. "That's right," he said acidly, "you're the sweet wife who never pays one darned bit of attention to anything. I say, for a couple of nights now I've been telling you about Sam taking money from the bank. Not much, just enough to help him out on that brain tumor operation on his boy. He gambled to pay it back, lost, and now he's on a terrible spot. I told him that his best bet would be to confess to the bank right now and plead for mercy. I think he'd get a fair deal. But Sam's just crazy. He left early today. I'm afraid of what he might do."

I listened with open mouth, shocked.

"What a shame," I said dismally. "Poor Sam, with two children—"
"Yeah, Fred said flatly. "So now I'm taking off to find him, help him if I can!" He was gone before I could even begin to tell him about Jack. I hated to tell Jack I'd go with him without talking to Fred first.

It wasn't ten minutes later that there was a knock at the door. Our neighbors, Sarah and Tom Williams, were standing there with their five-year-old daughter, Sally. "I hate to ask this, Mona," Sarah said anxiously, "but could you possibly look after Sally for about an hour? Tom and I have just got to go see my sister and talk to her. You know how close she is to leaving her husband over his affair." I nodded my head, not knowing at all. Sarah must have told me about the trouble, but my ears had been closed to everybody, my mind always elsewhere. I knew why she "hated" to ask me—the way I'd avoided children because I was miserable over not having any of my own. But of course I said, "I'd be glad to." They thanked me effusively and went off.

Sally, a cute little thing, ate some sandwiches with me. Then she begged me to let her take her evening bath here—shyly producing a little boat and some rubber fish she'd brought along. "I just love to play in the tub," she pleaded, "and I won't mess the bathroom a bit. Cross my heart!"

I LAUGHED, happy to have occupied for a while so I could think about Jack—maybe start in on my packing. I'd take a few things, send for the rest later. Jack, of course, could buy everything I needed. I left Sally splashing in the tub like a bare brown sea anemone, and downstairs. But again there was loud, frantic knocking. Perturbed, even a little afraid, I opened the door slowly—and then tried to slam it again. Sam Turner was already pushing through, shutting the door, pressing back against it, the ugly gun in his hand, pointing straight at my stomach, where the fear was a cold, writhing knot!

"Fred!" he cried. "Where's Fred?" It wasn't Sam's voice at all, but something harsh and wild. His face was flushed above his ripped-open collar, his eyes were a crazed animal's eyes. My knees were ready to give way any moment. I could hardly speak for the terror in my pounding heart. "Sam!" I begged. "Please, Sam, don't!"

"No, no, Mona," he croaked. "Don't be afraid. I won't hurt you. Won't hurt Fred. Just want him to watch me use this gun on myself, you hear? All the time he keeps telling me to give myself up, give myself up. Oh, sure! I'll show you what I do when I'm all washed up!"

"He's gone, Sam!"

"You're lying!"

"No, Sam, Oh, Sam!" There was fear in me still, but a different kind now. The dread of violence and of seeing this man end his life. This good, kind man who'd been a decent husband, a fine father—going astray only because he was desperate over his sick child. "Sam!" I reached toward him. "You mustn't!"

I jerked away. "Okay, so Fred's not here. So you can watch, you can tell him."
"Sam!" But even as I cried out, that subconscious which sometimes transmits its message a little late was speaking to me, reminding me that a moment ago I'd heard another cry

from upstairs! Sally—calling for me. "Sam, come with me! Sally!"

Dashing wildly up the stairs, I heard Sam pounding behind. We found Sally submerged in the tub, a trickle of blood from a cut near her head—obviously she'd slipped, hit her head on a faucet and fallen into the water. Frantically I caught her up and was carrying her into the bedroom, but Sam took over. "I know what to do," he said firmly.

I don't know how much time elapsed. So much happened: calling the hospital, then running back up-stairs to find Sam giving Sally artificial respiration steadily and silently. I went down again when the ambulance came, followed the young doctor upstairs and was relieved to hear him say, "She's breathing now. She'll be all right. We'll take her along, though, and see to that cut." Sally was carried out, murmuring "Daddy, Mommy..." I went to the phone to locate Sarah and Tom.

Finally I just leaned wearily against a wall and stared at Sam. The gun was in his hand again, but he seemed calmer. There might be a chance, "Sam, you can't do it now!" I begged. "You did a great thing tonight. You saved a life. You're too big to take the cowardly way out!"

He didn't answer. I moved closer. "Sam, think of this near-tragedy tonight. How those parents would have felt, how that child needs its parents now, and needed us before. What a tragedy in your family, if you—" I broke off in a sob, thinking it just wasn't any use. For he was raising his gun.

He put it in his inside coat pocket. "Bless you, Mona," he said brokenly yet smiling. He went out.

I WAS a little hysterical, I guess. I laughed when Fred came. "Enough that door only minutes later. 'Another one!'" I cried and then had to sit on the sofa before I fell down. Instantly Fred was down beside me, an arm around me, anxious eyes searching mine. "Mona, honey! What's wrong?"

"Nothing," I sighed. "Not now. But oh, Fred, what a night it's been!" And I told him everything. But not quite everything. I realized when the phone began ringing. Jack! When Fred started to answer, I stopped him. "Wait," I murmured and then stared at the phone without really seeing it. Jack and my chance to live! But maybe I'd really had a chance to live all the time, even in this suburb among seemingly ordinary little people. I couldn't bring a life into the world, but I could help save one, all right! From what I'd learned tonight, even in Fred's supposedly humdrum job and my own day-to-day existence, there was drama. There were problems, emotions, life-or-death crises to put the imitations to shame! There was all that and, if I stayed, love too.

Fred was chuckling. "When a woman won't answer the phone she must be worn out. And you sure have a right to be, honey!"

"Worn out?" I looked at him, I smiled. "I've never felt so alive in my life. And if I don't answer the phone, darling," I said as I crept into his arms, "it's because nobody is going to interfere with the end of a very exciting evening!"

I kissed him then as I had never kissed Jack—as I hadn't even kissed Fred in a long, long time. The phone stopped ringing at last, I guess.

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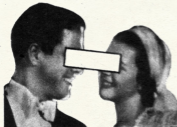
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THAT "IMPULSE" TO END IT ALL

(Continued from page 17)

beverages by women, the ample reporting of suicides in the daily newspapers, and the high pressure of modern living in general. Years of disunity in religion, which only now slowly beginning to return, has been accused; as has been the lack of spiritual values in our lives.

All of these may play their part, but when a young woman who seemed healthy and contented to those who knew her, suddenly snuffs out the candle of life, philosophy and sociology hold little comfort for the grieved survivors who grope for an answer to their bewildered "WHY DID SHE DO IT?"

Why do people take their lives? Most women face feelings of defeat, hopelessness and guilt at some time during their lives, but only a few will be so overwhelmed by them as to "end it all." It has been argued that the natural will to live is so strong in all of us that it takes serious mental derangement, at least a temporary one, to enable a person to destroy himself, no matter how hopeless the situation, or how grave the misfortune. Thus often the final, tragic act of suicide is the crowning effort of lingering, unrecognized mental or emotional imbalance. Take despondency, or melancholia, for instance and consider the case of Eva R.

Eva, 24 years old, lost her job as a salesgirl in a specialty store and was unable to find a new position. She had some savings, but her parents who lived in a small town far away, would have been unable to help her out once the savings were gone. Her roommate who noticed how much she took her misfortune to heart and how much she worried about the future, promised to help out financially if the need should arise. So did some of her girl friends, and they all tried to cheer Eva up—to little avail. Then her boyfriend suddenly stopped calling, and this seemed the last straw. The girl took to brooding, her attitude seemed increasingly hopeless, and shortly thereafter she killed herself by hanging in the basement of her rooming house. In a far-away note she blamed her sorry circumstances and the rebuffs she had received from her employer, the prospective employers and her boyfriend.

Inquiries were later made which changed the picture completely: the store had been forced to discharge her, because she seemed unable to concentrate on any task, made many serious mistakes, and often could not get herself to talk to customers. The employment agencies she had visited reported that they had been reluctant to recommend her because she seemed so completely disinterested in everything. Her boyfriend, who had been deeply shocked by her death, said that Eva herself had seemed to want to discontinue their friendship, and he had not wanted to force himself on her while she had been "so worried about her job situation." Her roommate, on closer questioning, remem-

bered that Eva had been acting in an unusual manner even before she had lost her position. In short, there turned up ample evidence that the girl had been suffering from a depressed mental state for some time.

EVEN for the most experienced physician it is not always easy to tell a simple, but prolonged case of "the blues" apart from a serious mental depression. People get over the blues without serious consequences, but melancholy is a real illness and requires expert care in addition to precautions against a suicide attempt. Feelings of pessimism, loss of interest in daily activities, restlessness, and difficulties in thinking, should warn relatives and friends that something serious may be afoot. Surprisingly some people suffering from a real depression do not seem dejected at all, but often display a sort of forced cheerfulness which may deceive others into thinking that there is nothing much wrong.

Suicide is a fairly frequent complication of this illness, and these people need a doctor, and a good one, for their own protection. They may have been thinking about killing themselves for weeks, or even months, and no one was aware of it. Even if such a girl—or man—drops a remark about wanting to end it all, she is not taken seriously. There is still a widespread, but erroneous belief that people who really intend to kill themselves do not publicize their intentions in advance, but simply go ahead and do it. One woman physician, some years ago, took the case histories of a large number of people who had just made a serious attempt on their lives. She found that approximately 40% of them had made some sort of remark about suicide before attempting it.

In most cases the real reason for self-extinction is unknown even to the suicide herself. What passes for despair or a sense of futility may be but the symptoms of a serious underlying mental disorder. Suicide because of grief, worry over money matters, domestic difficulties, or unrequited love, is in reality often motivated by an unconscious desire to shock or chagrin those who will be most hurt and feel most guilty because of the tragic act. Many types of suicide have been compared to a child's cutting off his nose to spite his father. Sometimes the shock of sudden disaster, with its attendant breakdown of reasoning power, is so great that a true suicidal panic arises. An example is the case of the German nurse which happened many years ago.

This young surgical nurse was assisting in the operating room while an operation on the neck of a child was being performed. Through her oversight the surgeon was handed a syringe containing cocaine rather than novocaine, and the child died rapidly from the consequences of the fatal injection. When the nurse saw what she

had done and heard the wails of despair of the mother in the waiting room outside, she killed herself instantly with an injection of the same strong solution.

In another case, which happened not very long ago, a mother took her own life shortly after her two small children had perished in their upstairs bedroom during a fire.

Such panic states are actually serious medical emergencies, and the victims require care and constant supervision until the physician is satisfied that they have calmed down sufficiently, and entered into the stage of normal grief. In jails, precinct stations houses and police lock-ups everywhere, rookie guards and officers to-day are carefully instructed to take precautions against suicide in prisoners, men and women alike, who have just been involved in a violent death.

BUT even less spectacular circumstances than sudden death have been known to cause self-destructive panic. Unmarried girls who have just been told that they were pregnant; young housewives who found out that they were suffering from an illness which they believed incurable; victims of merciless black-mail faced with a further demand for money which they could not possibly meet, and countless of other hapless, dazed human beings have sought death as a way out of their dilemmas.

There are certain safeguards within the personality which keep even some of the most desperate and despondent people from going all the way in their disgust with living. Fear, or rather a healthy type of cowardice, is one of them. It may be the fear of what will face them in the unknown hereafter, a fear of suffering pain while dying, or simply art apprehension that the attempt might fail and leave them permanently crippled in some way. Religious beliefs often succeed in inhibiting a serious would-be suicide.

The desire not to offend the customs and mores of the people among whom they are living may play a part in it, as a young parent the worry that their children will have to spend the rest of their lives burdened with the knowledge that there was a case of suicide in the family history is sometimes a powerful restraining factor. "I wish I were dead, but I just wouldn't do a thing like that to my family," is a remark which doctors often hear.

Fortunately, not everyone who has suicidal thoughts has to resort to inhibitions of such elementary nature to keep from dying. It is necessary to make a distinction between serious suicide intentions and a fleeting preoccupation with death wishes. Such vague impulses are very common although in well-balanced people they are short-lived and usually forgotten within a few minutes or hours at the most. Yet some people are deeply shocked when such a thought enters their mind for the first time.

"I didn't know I had such thoughts in me," one young woman sobbed to the physician after her frightened husband had made an emergency appointment at a psychiatric clinic. An examination showed very quickly that there was neither serious despondency nor any other emotional aberration, which may have led to a suicide attempt, and the woman and her husband left reassured. Because of her deeply religious upbringing, she had always considered suicide abhorrent.

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1. First off, have a medical examination to find out if the cause is organic, such as hemorrhoids, benign growths such as fibroid tumors, fissures, tipped uterus, gallbladder disease, thyroid deficiency. Clearing up these conditions will help.

2. If no organic cause exists, remember that failure to respond promptly to the call of Nature weakens and finally destroys the colon's sensitivity. When traveling or on vacation, pay particular attention to your bowel schedule. Set aside time after breakfast for this schedule, and allow nothing to interfere with it.

3. Eat a good breakfast for it stimulates the whole intestinal tract. Drink a glass of water, either hot or cold, immediately upon arising. Flooding the system with too much water during the day disturbs the water balance in the body. Doctors recommend between one and one and a half quarts of fluids per day, which should include tea, coffee, milk, soup and fruit juices.

4. Most of us eat too much concentrated, refined food, which is absorbed by the small intestine and not enough bulk reaches the colon to cause muscle contraction. During World War II medical experiments were made on groups of soldiers, serving compact concentrated food to one group, and the same diet including roughage to another. As expected those without roughage in the diet became constipated. But if you are of the nervous type with spastic constipation, too much roughage will aggravate the condition. In that case obtain a smooth diet list from your physician.

5. Strenuous exercise is of little value for laborers, farmers and even athletes are beset by constipation. But walking, setting up exercises, such games as tennis and golf are good, because they tone up all the muscles.

6. Doctors prescribe laxatives for acute illness and for such conditions as flu, colds and other infections; fatigue; digestive upsets; sudden changes of environment. Aged and ill persons, whose general body vigor is at low ebb are permitted use of laxatives.

7. If constipation is accompanied by headache, biliousness and a sense of fatigue, doctors feel the best treatment is a small enema or a simple suppository—not cathartics. Why upset the system with a cathartic at the top of the digestive tube and throughout its twenty-seven feet of intestine, when the "stoppage" is in the last few inches of colon? For that reason they suggest enemas or suppositories for retaining the colon. But they warn that sometimes suppositories may inflame the lining of the rectum. And while many physicians recommend mineral oil since it is not an irritant like most cathartics is a lubricant, other doctors warn that vitamins A and D may be leached out by regular use of it.

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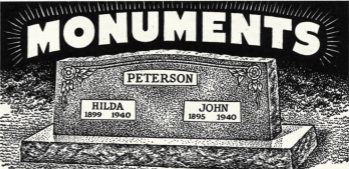
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"I COULDN'T WAIT FOR MARRIAGE!"

(Continued from page 11)

at home or at school. We got a little apartment, and Link got a job working night shift in a packing plant. I wanted to work too, but Link absolutely would not hear of it.

Mother and dad sent me a check... the money they had saved for my last year in school. Link's mother wrote me a lovely letter, and said she would see us when she came down for a convention in July. It was almost too easy. And I put the wedding certificate away in the bottom of my trunk, ripping the lining up, slipping it under, pasting it down again.

Because we truly loved each other, the only shadow on our perfect happiness was the fact that we had told those necessary lies. Link was such a grand husband, and I felt wonderful, better than I had ever felt in my life. When Link's mother came to see us, I liked her at once, and I could see that she liked me. Or I thought she did. I could tell that she and Link were very close.

From her I learned about Link's childhood. She had even brought snapshots of him in all stages of growth, and I loved them. Of course, she knew I was pregnant, and she seemed glad. I felt better after she had been there and gone home, but I was a little homesick for my own mother. Link had told me I was to go home when my time came to have the baby, because I would need my mother there. He'd get time off to take me, and stay with me too.

EVERYTHING worked out according to plan. Our baby was a boy, dark like me, and sturdily built like Link. Mother and dad took Link to their hearts. I had known my baby home and have mother fuss over me. Link, of course, had to go back to his work.

"I suppose you had a good reason for having a secret marriage," mother told me, wistfully. "But I had everything all planned. I even had my wedding veil cleaned and ready for you to wear. But young people nowadays, I don't know. They don't put the importance on weddings we used to."

Daddy said he was so scared he didn't remember his wedding anyhow. He thought Link would probably have been the same, and dad wanted to make him a present of the money he saved on the wedding. My parents and Link's mother gave us a check for a hundred dollars, but that was the last money Link said he would accept from either of them. He planned to keep on working, even if it took him longer to finish school.

Five weeks later, Link came for us and took us home, little Jimmy and me. I was a married woman, a mother, the happiest person in the world. If only...

I tried to reassure myself that since our lying had saved everyone pain and shame, it must have been right.

Two years later, Link graduated, and had an offer of a job in his home

town. I think his mother pulled some strings, because she wanted us near her. But it was all right. The worst was over, and Link's working hours better. No more lonely nights, waiting for Link to come home and fall into bed, too tired to even study.

We rented a sweet little house and bought just the furniture we had to have, a little at a time. Link's mother came to see us often, but not too often, always with a small gift for little Jim, who adored her and called her Mommo. I think mother was a little jealous, but she didn't let on.

I don't know when I first got the idea that Dora knew our marriage had been a furtive hurry up thing we were ashamed of. Maybe it was on the day that she told me Link had never had any secrets from her. The day Jim was two years old.

Well, I thought, he has one secret from you. One that you'll never know. Or had he told her? Did that long, thoughtful look Dora gave me as I bent swiftly to kiss the top of my baby's head, mean what I feared? Was she really jealous of me? After all, Link was all she had, and our marriage had disturbed her plans for him.

"I hope Link is able to keep up with his job with the company without feeling the strain," she said once. "I wish he could have had a good long rest before he started in. He hasn't had a vacation in so long," she sighed.

"I know. It was hard. But he wouldn't let me work," I replied.

"Of course not. Link wouldn't," she retorted. "He was against career women even as a child. He used to tell me that when he started earning money, I was going to stay home and do nothing but bake cookies for him."

BUT I came along and spoiled that. I thought. She didn't say it, of course, but the implication was there. But my guilty conscience raised its head. If she knew why Link had married me, she'd have every reason to think that I'd tricked him into it. She might even be wondering if I was the right kind of mother for her grandchild, who was the apple of her eye!

But she didn't know, couldn't—unless Link had told her! But Link wouldn't. I came first with him now.

Once I had begun to think about it, I began watching for proof. Of course, I asked Link whether he had told his mother. He looked hurt, too hurt, I thought.

"Oh, Isabel, you surely don't think I'd tell mom, after all the trouble we went to trying to keep her from knowing," he'd answered.

"I didn't think you had, darling. But after she told me you always told her everything, I wondered," I said. "And there was no real excuse for her bragging like that. It was just as though she were trying to let me know, without saying so, that we couldn't have any secrets from her."

"Mom doesn't brag," Link said a little stiffly. "And I did tell her every-

thing. But I never had anything to hide before."

"I see," I said, a little chill running up my spine. "Now you have something to hide. And it's my fault that there is a rift between you and your mother. That's what you're trying to say, isn't it?"

We stared at each other, appalled, because it was really the first time we had used bitter tones to one another. "Look, Isabel," Link said at last. "What happened was my fault as much as yours. It's your secret, as well as mine. I don't give away secrets."

"I'm sorry Link. Oh, darling, it's just that I feel so guilty and I'm all ways afraid somebody will find out. Forgive me."

We kissed, clinging frantically together. But after he had gone to work, the black doubts crept in. Link had proven himself a good liar, as good as I was. How could I be sure he was not lying to me, that in a weak moment he had not unburdened himself to his mother.

Dora and I had begun to be very good friends. Now I felt myself drawing away from her, watching her, reading a hidden meaning into every word she spoke. Like that time she told me about a girl in her office who had to stop work to get married.

"But she is frank about it and she loves the boy, and we all admired her more for giving her reason for quitting, when she could just have walked out without waiting to train another girl to take her place," she told me. "We're giving them a shower, too. I wish you could have had a shower, Isabel. It's such a lovely part of a wedding, something a girl always likes to remember."

She did know. She was prodding me, trying to make me miserable. She blamed me for tying Link down.

I was growing to hate her, to dread her visits. To find it hard to talk to her, to return her warm, open smile. And she was sensitive enough to feel it. She did not come so often. Instead, when she wanted to see Link she would have lunch with him down town. What they talked about I could only guess. But my guesses were always sinister and filled with one meaning. She was trying to get Link back.

I WAS in a particularly low frame of mind one week end when Link had to go out of town on business for his boss. Usually Dora came to spend the night with me when Link had to be away. This time she had not even called. I missed her. If only things could have been right, I'd have loved her cheerful company. Jimmy missed her too. He kept looking out of the window for her car to turn in the driveway, and asking for his Mo-mo.

When the phone rang, early Saturday evening, I also knew it would be Dora. Instead it was Mike Reynolds, my old boy friend from home, who had been my sweetheart all through high school. He wanted to see me, he said. Would my husband and I have dinner with him that night?

It was a voice from home, and made me feel good to know Mike still remembered me. I knew I was the one he really wanted to see. On an impulse I told him Link was out of town, but I'd love to have dinner with him. I called my baby sitter and met him at a restaurant an hour later.

I knew I was prettier than I had ever been. I liked the way Mike's eyes

lit up when he saw me, the way he held my hand longer than he needed to. It made me forget that my husband had married me because he had to. By that time, I'd even begun to doubt Link's love, so great had my burden of guilt become.

"Gee, it's good to see you again, Izzy," Mike told me. "You broke my heart when you got married. I've never found any other girl." He grinned to keep his words from sounding too maudlin.

We had a large table to ourselves. We had ordered martinis and were leaning toward each other and laughing when, to my horror, I saw Dora enter the restaurant. She looked lovely and poised, and a little lonely, as she stood looking around for a table. Then she saw us. I saw her face grow still, her lips set in a straight worried line. Then she smiled at me and waved, and came straight to our table.

"Held, dear," she said, just as though she were apologizing for being a little late. "My, you look lovely. How is Jimmy?"

Stammering a little, I introduced Mike to her, making too much of my explanation that he was a friend from home. Mike pulled out a chair for her, and she sat down, perfectly at ease, smiling. She stayed with us, too, until dinner was over, and then we went to my home. I was furious and sullen by this time, feeling completely in the wrong. And it didn't help when Dora said, after Mike had said goodnight and gone.

"I hope you don't hate me too much, Isabel. I know you young people don't think. But Link is an old fashioned husband. He's jealous, too. Not that I think he has any cause to be, of course. I did this for your sake, Isabel. You don't want to give him any reason to worry about you, do you, dear?" Any further doubt, she might as well have said. A girl who has given herself too easily to a man is always open to doubt . . . that was what she was thinking and telling me. She stayed for the night.

And of course she would tell Link. Hadn't she been just waiting for something like this to use as a wedge between us? I didn't sleep that night. Once I heard Dora get up and go into Jimmy's room when he stirred in his sleep, and jealousy burned through me. He was only dreaming, but she thought he wanted a drink, or something. Now, she would say I'd neglected Jimmy. Higher and higher went the walls of resentment as I was building in my mind against Dora.

I DIDN'T get up the next morning until after she had gone to work. I didn't want to face her. Let her think I was afraid to. I wasn't. I fully intended to tell Link about Mike as soon as he came home. I just didn't want to have to pretend that I liked her, or that I thought she liked me.

Link came home that night, and I told him.

"Well, honey, of course I don't mind. And now I'll tell you something. I had dinner with a blonde," he grinned at me. And we laughed. But it wasn't funny. Not even after he explained that the blonde was sixty, and head of one of the departments with which he had done some business, and her boy friend, also sixty, was with them.

He really didn't care, I thought bleakly, all through the next week when he acted perfectly normal and happy, he didn't even ask me what

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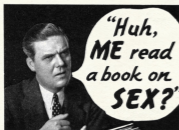
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I had done all day. Link didn't love me. If he had, he'd be jealous, wouldn't he? He knew Mike and I had gone steady for several years. I'd told him that at the start, and that there was nothing on my part, only on his. If a man loved his wife, he'd be jealous. Dora had said he was a jealous type. I felt sick and lost because it seemed to me our marriage was running true to type, for a marriage that was a hurry-up affair, a hush-hush thing with a date on a wedding certificate that didn't check with the date of our wedding anniversary.

Then, ignoring the fact that I'd not called Dora, or remembered her birthday for the first time since our marriage, Dora called me that morning and wished me a happy anniversary!

It was an accident that I had lunch with Mike again that week. I had gone down to shop, and stopped for a bite at the same nearby restaurant, and Mike was there, sitting alone, just as though he had been waiting for me. Not five tables away, Dora sat, reading a paper, and sipping coffee. She didn't seem to see me, or Mike, as he half rose, grinned happily, and motioned for me to join him. Dearest, by the smile I gave Mike, causing the flush to rise to his cheeks.

"Gosh, Izzy, when you look at me like that, I wish all the lights would go out," he said softly. "I was just wishing I had company. Isn't that your mother-in-law sitting over there? I couldn't be sure, or I'd have spoken to her."

"It is, and don't worry, she'll be over," I told him. "She guards my reputation like a hawk's its young."

But this time Dora did not join us. But didn't even seem to see us. But midway through her meal, she rose and went toward the telephone booth. To call Link, of course. To tell him to come, and see for himself.

Well, let him come. I'd put him to a real test. If he came, and dragged me away, I'd know he was jealous, and that he loved me.

But Link didn't come. And Mike and I parted, very properly at the door, after I had given him messages for mother and dad. He was leaving town that day.

My guilty conscience . . . would it give me rest? How had I ever dreamed our marriage could succeed, beginning as it had. How could I act normal and happy, knowing that it was in danger, and that I seemed driven by some devil to do more and more shameful things to test it?

I was so sure Dora had told Link that I didn't mention my lunch with Mike that night, but waited for him to say something about it. Wasn't he unusually silent, preoccupied? Had he been looking at me when I suddenly turned to find him carefully studying the ads in the paper? Why didn't he say something, anything, if only that he had talked to Dora that day, or seen her?

Would I never mentioned it, neither would I? Nor would I give him the satisfaction of knowing Mike had left town.

TIME dragged on. A feeling of waiting for something to happen filled the air. Outwardly Link and I were just the same. Once or twice he asked me if I'd seen Dora lately. If there was anything wrong between us. I gave him a noncommittal answer. So it

must have been Dora who told him of the ill feeling between us.

"I'm sorry you and mom can't hit it off better," he told me one morning before he left for work. "Let's have her for dinner tonight. How about it, honey?"

"Not tonight, Link," I replied. "I have to clean house today and I'm always in a foul mood when I'm tired. Why don't you take her out to dinner yourself?"

"Come to think of it, I have to be out of town again tonight," Link remembered suddenly. "Until late, anyhow. Have her come over and stay with you, why don't you?"

"Maybe I will, darling," I smiled sweetly and he kissed me good-bye. "Tell the blonde hello," I added.

"I'll do that," he said heartily, and left chucking.

I HONESTLY didn't remember that Mike had told me he would be in town that week end. I was surprised when he called me up about eight, and asked if it wasn't about time we had another date. I knew I'd led him to think I wouldn't mind it. I was driven by that devil of perverseness that seemed to be after me all the time lately. Maybe I wanted to prove to myself that even if Link didn't care for me any more, there was somebody who did. I missed Link terribly, we seemed to be drifting helplessly apart, I felt that I'd go crazy if I had to go to bed alone, and lie awake all night. So I hesitated only a moment.

"All right, Mike," I said. "I do want to hear about home."

I couldn't get the baby sitter on such short notice. To ask Dora to come and sit with Jimmy was unthinkable. So I took him over to a neighbor who sometimes came in and watched him four years old. I'd tell Mike that night, I decided, exactly what the score was. That I didn't love him, never could, and didn't intend to have any more dates with him. That I'd just been trying to see if I could make Link jealous. He'd understand that.

That was just about the flattest date I ever had. Mike like a little tight, all keyed up for a big evening, I guessed. When I put him in his place, he started to sulk. When I tried to fix things up a little, he got exuberant again. He held me too close when we danced. He finally asked me to elope with him, and I told him wearily to take me home.

He was still arguing with me, too loudly, about eloping with me when we stepped up on the front porch. I was wending off his good night kiss when the door opened and there stood Dora.

I looked at her, my cheeks still on Mike's arms which were half around me.

"So now you're spying on me," I said coldly.

"No, Isabel, I didn't know where you were, or that you were out. But Link called me . . . he couldn't get you. I thought you might be sleeping so soundly you didn't hear the phone, so I came over. He's hurt, Isabel. In a hospital. He came to stay with Jimmy last night. He's not in his bed."

Neither of us noticed when Mike slipped away. I started to cry. Link was hurt! That was all I could think of. I made her understand Jimmy was all right, at a neighbor's, and Dora said quickly.

"Then I'll go with you, dear. You're

too upset to drive. My car is parked in the alley."

SHE was being kind, too kind and matter of fact. And triumphant! I wasn't fooled. I knew this was the end. As I sank into the car beside her, the words fell from my lips in an almost incoherent torrent.

"I suppose you'll tell him this, too, like you did the other time you saw us together," I sobbed. "You won't believe it when I tell you he means nothing to me. That I did it because..."

"I never told Link anything, Isabel," Dora said gently. "Why do you hate me so?"

"Because, you're sly, and deceitful, and want to take Link away from me, and get Jimmy," I couldn't seem to stop. "You know we had to get married, that we lied about the date, about everything. You said he always told you everything."

"So that's it. Oh, Isabel, I'm so glad you told me," her voice was filled with tears. "No, I never guessed. He never told me. I just knew that there was something between us that was making you unhappy. Now you have it off your chest, at last. Now we can be friends. Now we can live as a mother and daughter should."

"You mean, you can forget about it?" I faltered.

"Such things happen," Dora said, "when people are in love, and there is a barrier to their marriage that seems unsurmountable. Of course, I would rather it hadn't happened, just as you would rather it hadn't happened the way it did. But you've suffered enough, dear, both of you. You love each other, and you saved Jimmy from being talked about, as well as yourselves. I understand why you did it. You're too honest by nature, or else you would have been able to lie without suffering from guilt feelings. But it's over now, and the best thing to do is just forget it. Here we are at the hospital."

Link, who had wrecked his car and was badly shaken up, but not badly injured, was waiting for us as we went in. He smiled as we came toward him, our arms unconsciously around each other.

"Gosh, this looks good," he said. "Both my girls coming for me. I wish I'd thought of this sooner."

I collapsed in his arms, weak with relief, as Dora stood smiling, her eyes bright with tears. When he drew her close with one arm, and kissed her, too, I was happier than I had ever thought I could be. Seeing Link kiss his mother, I knew it had not been easy for him, but he hadn't let it get him down. Now we could all be close, the three of us, because there was no longer any need to lie. Link's mother knew.

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FARMER'S WIFE

(Continued from page 24)

basketball team back in high school!" "Lot's o' difference between playing a game and husking corn all day," Mattie said. Mattie looked like she could plant a field of corn without messing a hair. She was a big, stout woman, clean and energetic. But nothing that day would warn me—nothing would daunt me, for only the night before Frank had asked me to marry him.

We had been dancing and he had led me outside. The moon was just coming up over the rise of the hill beyond the big barn where the dance was held.

"Look at the moon, Frank!" I cried. "Yeah! Poking his head in where he's not been asked! I'm not sure I want a third party to hear what I'm going to say." He pulled me into the shadow of a big maple tree. "I've been thinking for a long time—you're the girl for me, Ellen."

"I've never denied it," I told him, laughing shakily.

"I want you to marry me." He almost blurred the words, but his face, where the moon touched it through the trees, was serious, and there was a soft tone in his voice.

I started to answer him but he said quickly, "Before you give me your answer, Ellen, I want you to know we'd have to live on the home place with mother for a while. She's got no one else. In time we could buy Mattie's share or get us a place of our own." His arm went around my waist and he pulled me closer to look into my face intently. "You're not used to the farm, Ellen. Do you think you could stand it—the work, I mean? It's a lot different than living in town?"

"Of course I could!" I told him. "But is that all you've got to say, darling?"

"I love you, Ellen. I love you more than anything in all the world." His arms went around me, the muscles rippling across my shoulder, drawing me close, and his lips took mine in a long, long kiss that seemed to make the world stand still. "Will you marry me, darling?"

"Of course I will!" I put my arms around his neck and returned his kisses. "I love you so much, Frank. I'll do my very best to make you a good wife!"

We were married that spring and the first months were the happiest ones I can remember. I would take time each afternoon to join Frank in the field, or go with him to one of the pastures if he had an errand there. Sometimes the work suffered but it didn't worry me. I took time to brighten up the cheerless farm house, particularly the kitchen where most of the living was done. One day Mother Andrews came in while I was hanging some new ivy. "Like it?" I asked her, standing off to admire it.

"It's pretty, Ellen, but don't you think there are more important things than prettyn' up the place?"

"Like what, Mother Andrews?" I asked, surprised.

"Like raising chickens and selling eggs. There's a lot of money to be made in chickens. You should see how well Mattie does with her egg money." She laid down the garden gloves she had been wearing. "Frank's trying to get ahead, Ellen, and you could help him a lot. A farmer needs a wife who'll work along side of him and take hold."

Her words were a shock to me. I stood perfectly still, staring at her. "You don't think I'm a good wife to Frank," I said finally.

"I'd not say that. Not at all. I know you mean well, but like taking off in the afternoon to run and be with Frank. There just ain't time for that—no! if you're doin' the job right."

"Oh!" I could feel the tears pushing against my eyelids. "I do want to be a good wife to Frank, Mother Andrews. Maybe you could help me."

Mother Andrews put her arm around me. "It's just that you was raised in town, honey. You don't realize how much there-as to be done on the farm."

THAT night, lying in the crook of Frank's arm, I said, "Frank, I want to get some chickens—small ones to raise. Or maybe an incubator."

I knew Frank was looking at me in the darkness. "Chickens!" he said. "What made you think of this?"

"I want to be a good wife to you, Frank. I guess I haven't done much toward it, yet."

"You suit me, darling. What man ever had as sweet and pretty wife?" He ran his hand through my long hair. Frank was very proud of my blonde hair.

"But I want to be more than an ornamental wife, Frank. I want to be a help to you." I pulled at the lobe of his ear and ran my hand down over his cheek. "A real help."

"You do help me. Whatever put the idea in your head you didn't?"

"It would help you more if I raised chickens, wouldn't it now?" I persisted. "Wouldn't it help us to get ahead faster?"

"I suppose so," he admitted. "But I don't want you worrying your pretty head about anything."

"Then that settles it. I want to get the chickens right away." I crept closer to him. "I want a place of our own. I'll help, Frank. I know I can."

"Okay, if that's what you want, honey," he said, his arms tightening along my back, "that's what you shall have." We lay there in the darkness like two conspirators, planning the future, lying close, our voices low. In Frank's arms the undertaking seemed easy—it would bind us together even closer.

Yet in the cold light of day it didn't seem quite so simple. I had to get up very early, and there was always something to be done for the chickens, feeding, cleaning, sorting. There was always something new to learn about them—yet I had determined to help Frank. I tried other ways to help too.

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in his arms, but I turned away, a shiver of tiredness going through me as I thought of the five hours until I must be up and working. I felt Frank's arms stiffen. I thought of Josie, of the swing of her hips, the flirt of her head. This was no time to turn from Frank's arms. I locked my hands behind his neck and put my face against his, but his arms remained stiff and he didn't respond.

"You're always tired," he said, unclasping my hands and drawing away from me.

"Please, Frank, I'm not too tired."

But he got up and without looking back left the room. I heard the outside door slam.

I was more weary than usual the next day from lack of sleep, and had to force every step I took. Mother Andrews had to go to Mattie's for the day, so there was an unusual amount to be done and right in the middle of the afternoon, I looked out in the barnyard and saw Josie talking to Frank. He was leaning against the wagon, his hat pushed back as if he had nothing else to do all day. Josie was pointing toward the barn. Frank looked where she pointed and scratched his head, the dark hair tumbling over his forehead. He said something to her and they went in the barn together.

I stood at the window above the sink washing dishes, not knowing what I washed. Finally as the minutes passed, my hands gripped the edge of the pan and the water cooled under them. I waited only minutes, but every minute was an hour of torture. At last, unable to stand it any longer, I ran out of the house, wiping my hands on my apron as I ran. I flew across the barn lot, shooing chickens and geese in every direction. As I neared the barn, I heard Josie laugh and Frank's deeper chuckle. I went more slowly, and at the door of the barn, I almost ran into them. Josie was looking up at Frank and there was amusement in his eyes—and I couldn't be sure what else. I was breathless as I met them.

Frank stopped dead in his tracks, the smile fading out of his eyes. Josie's mouth remained partly open as it ended on the word she was saying. We looked at each other for a speechless moment.

"What are you doing out here with work to be done inside?" I asked her and my voice sounded high and sharp.

"I'm gathering eggs," she said.

"Gathering eggs this time of day!" I made no effort to hide the suspicion that was thick in my voice. Then for the first time I noticed the apron she was holding in front of her. She opened it, revealing a dozen eggs. "It's Bid-dy's nest, the one you've been looking for," she said. "I saw her go up in the haymow."

"You could have told Frank tonight. It doesn't take two to look for them," I told her.

Josie tossed her head. "Excuse me!" she said, emphasis on the first word. "I thought you'd be pleased."

It put the burden of blame squarely on me, of course. I felt the color rush into my face. Frank's eyes were on me, his disapproval plain. "I'll look after the chickens," I said tartly, "while you do your work inside."

Josie shrugged her shoulders and started toward the house. I followed her without another look at Frank. I felt like a fool, but I wasn't going to let them know it. I held my head high, but I had a sinking feeling inside me

that something was wrong—desperately wrong.

That evening after supper, as soon as the work was done, Josie went out on the back stoop. She hadn't said a word to anyone at dinner and her silence had been thick all the rest of the afternoon. Frank went out to do the chores and when he finished, instead of coming in, he sat down out there with her. I could hear their low voices and then laughter.

"Quite a chat you had with Josie," I said crisply when he came in.

"Someone has to be decent to her. Poor kid, she feels terrible about the way you acted this afternoon." He set the bucket down and went into the bedroom without another word. He was asleep when I went to bed.

On Friday while we were at supper, Josie had a telephone call. She turned around from the phone. "What time will we be going to the Farmer's Picnic Monday?"

"Picnic?" I said vaguely.

"Sure, the annual picnic," Mother Andrews said. "You remember it from last year."

"Oh." The sudden mention of it brought back such memories of happiness that my voice choked. "Monday's the day I have to can the sweet corn," I said quickly. "I don't see how we could possibly go this year."

"But everyone goes to the picnic," Josie said.

"Mother'll want to go," Frank said quietly, "and I'll have to go. I'm to help on the committee."

"Then I suppose I'll have to can the corn alone. Unless we want to lose our whole crop."

"Can't you do it tomorrow?" Frank asked, frowning at me.

"It won't be ready tomorrow."

"Then Sunday?"

"I'll help you Sunday," Mother Andrews said. Josie didn't offer.

"I can't Sunday," I explained, "it takes me all day with the other work, after church, and besides I'd like a little rest one day of the week."

"Do as you like," Frank said tight-lipped. "Tell whoever it is, we'll be there about ten o'clock," he told Josie.

THAT night Josie worked on a new dress. It was a clever cotton thing she had made. I looked at it enviously. It had been so long since I'd dressed up and gone anywhere. Not since before the baby—a long time before. It hurt me to think of the baby, and I tried not to as much as possible. If we had had the baby maybe things wouldn't be like they were between Frank and me.

Josie tried the dress on, and I saw her look at Frank to see how he liked it. I turned away from the look of admiration he gave her.

Sunday the corn wasn't ready. It had rained Saturday, a thunder storm, and the ears weren't quite right, so there was no need to worry about whether I would have to can it on Monday or not. There wasn't any choice. Somehow this seemed a good omen, for I felt that if I had to stay home, Frank would stay too, but Monday he got up and began the chores early. When they were done he came in and said, "Are you still going to can the corn today? If you insist, I'll pick it now."

"Why of course, Frank."

"Okay." He picked up the bushel basket and started for the garden.

"Frank—" He stopped. "Are you going to let me do it all alone?"

"I guess I am. You know I promised—"

"Who'd you promise? Josie?" I flung the words at him.

Mother Andrews' voice called from the stairway. "Ellen, Ellen."

Frank started to say something, then clamped his mouth tight shut and turning, kicked the door open.

I stood irresolutely a moment, biting my lip. Mother called again. I went to the foot of the stairs. "I'm afraid I can't go today, Ellen. I've got an arthritis attack in my hands today. Real bad. I think if I stay quiet I'll be better. You tell Frank, will you?" She started toward her bedroom. "I sure hate to miss the picnic."

I STOOD holding onto the stairpost.

If Mother Andrews didn't go, that would mean Josie and Frank would be alone. The picnic would last late. I began to tremble. Josie came through on the way upstairs wearing her new dress. Her mouth was pulled cornerward. She'd heard Mother Andrews. I watched her go upstairs, slim ankles in sheer stockings.

I went toward the kitchen, my heart bumping against my heels. I began to shuck the first basket of corn, peeling off the husks, picking out the silk. The ears piled up almost to the kitchen window, on the table top. Frank came out dressed in his good suit. He looked handsome, his shirt open at the neck, swinging his strong throat. "Well, better shove off," he said. I thought he was going to come over and kiss me, but Josie breezed in just then, a perky little hat set on her head, her cheeks flushed. Frank shied away and went out of the door without kissing me.

I started to cut the corn off the cob, watching Josie out of the corner of my eye. "Don't work too hard," she said as she went out. "I'm getting tired. We made me want to throw the ear of corn at her. Instead I sliced my finger with the knife, which didn't help my frame of mind."

I tried not to watch Frank help her in the car, but couldn't help myself. He handled her like fresh eggs. He shut the door on her side and went around the car to get in. As he settled himself in the seat Josie scooted over closer to him. That did it. I threw the corn cob I was cutting in the basket, and ran to the door. Was I going to stand there and watch her steal my husband right in front of my very eyes? I almost tore the screen door off getting it open. "Frank, Frank! Wait!" I called. He didn't hear. He was bending over her, fixing something she held in her hand.

"Frank, Frank," I screamed, running out onto the well court. He looked up, annoyed I thought. It didn't matter. "Wait, Frank. Don't go yet. Wait till I come."

He nodded, understanding. I dashed back into the house and into our bedroom. I caught up the brush and began brushing my hair. I brushed quickly but didn't stop until the waves fell into place and the short hair curled around my face. I ran into the kitchen and got a bowl of the steaming water I had heated for the corn. I put on the silk underthings I had worn on my wedding day and searched the closet for the blue dress Frank had liked last summer—the one I wore to the picnic last year. I put my Sunday shoes on over the thinnest pair of hose I possessed. I caught up a light jacket as I ran out of the house to the car.

Frank was surprised, I could see

that, but I didn't think he looked displeased. Josie's expression was harder to read. I stood beside the car until Frank got out. He opened the door to the front seat in the car. "That's a nice dress," he said. Josie flounced out of the seat on the side under the wheel while he was looking at me, and climbed in the back. Her eyes were squinted almost shut and her lips were a puckered line. Very little was said on the way to the picnic. Once Frank said, as we were starting, "How about the corn?"

"To heck with the corn!" I told him. "A slow grin spread over his mouth."

That day was almost like living last year's picnic over again. Frank and I ate popcorn, and ice cream like the couple of kids we were then. To see us no one would have guessed I had become a work-wearied farm wife who couldn't pry herself away from the bank book.

Josie said sulkily she'd go on with her friends and we didn't urge her to stay. We didn't see her again until evening when we started home. As we bounded along in the old car, Frank's hand reached for mine. I felt Josie stiffen in the seat beside me. "I won't be able to stay past this week," she said. "I promised Joe Steffin today I'd come there to work."

"I guess we can manage Josie," I said. "Frank's hand squeezed mine."

When we arrived home, Josie jumped out of the car and went in. We walked slowly. "It was like old times," Frank said, his arm about me. "What happened to us, Ellen?"

"I tried to be a good wife, but I failed. Maybe I wasn't cut out to be a farm wife." We were coming through the door into the dark kitchen. My foot struck something, tripping me. It was the basket of corn. "I don't like work when it interferes with everything," my voice broke on a sob. I felt caught again as if the kitchen were accusing me. "I'll never be the kind of wife your mother was—or able to work like your sister Mattie."

"I hope not!" Frank's arms steadied me, drew me close. "We don't have to work like that, honey. Even if it takes a little longer to get a bank balance like the one they think spells security . . . what do we care? Gosh, we're young! Sure, we'll work—but let's enjoy life too! Good gavy, Ellen. I was so sick of nothing but work, that you seemed like a sunbeam right out of heaven. Then all of a sudden you were buried in work. You never laughed anymore—you seemed to forget me."

"Oh, Frank!" I cried, clinging to him. "I'll never be that kind of wife again—not if the work piles to the ceiling and all the corn in the field goes to waste! I'm too afraid of losing you!"

"Losing me!" Frank's voice was unnaturally hearty, then he laughed softly. "Not a chance. My wife just came home." His lips found mine in the darkness. And I was so glad to creep into his arms. I didn't mention the fact that not once that day had he gone near the committee he was supposed to help.

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**DISILLUSIONED
BRIDE**

(Continued from page 21)

a quick bath, and practically, fall asleep over supper.

AND that one long stretch, coming so soon after our arrival, was probably the beginning of the end. As fall blustered in, then the damp, bone-penetrating winter, I began to feel betrayed. Even Phil's rapturous moments with me didn't quite make up for the boredom in between, any more. What a dreary life, I thought. Isolation, where the mail was the high point of the day—and the inspection rounds of Phil's chief were supposed to be exciting. Nancy, the one girl I might have been friends with, was a natural enemy. She always wore provocative dresses when we played cards with her and Mart, and she waited on Phil, making an obvious play for him.

I missed my home and family, my friends and the fun we'd had. I got letters from an old girl friend back home and felt like tearing them up unread. She always raved about the latest dances and shows and parties. "Quent," she wrote, "misses you, but I guess he's having a swell time just the same. All the girls are crazier than ever about him, and those good times he knows how to show a girl."

Even Phil, whose whole life was his job and his love for me, began to notice something was wrong. "What's happening to you, honey?" he asked worriedly one night. "Have you stopped loving me?"

"Stop loving you, darling?" I cried, throwing my arms around him. "Never!" And in the suddenly warm, exciting dark I tried to prove it. But such moments were fewer and fewer. I knew he could see what I could see in the mirror: the bleakness in my once bright eyes, the loss of weight, my fidgety hands. I was miserable. This life wasn't giving me anything!

I guess Phil also noticed the wistful way I talked about the past. Maybe he wondered about the careful way I avoided mentioning Quent. Because Quent—the carefree fun and entertainment he stood for anyway—was on my mind all the time. Catch Quent wanting a pokey life like this! But little by little Phil stopped mentioning anything that he noticed. He began to brood and to be remote, himself. Sometimes he would come off duty and there would be only a casual kiss between us.

There was one flare-up of excitement, though. If only Phil had been there, what a difference it might have made! But he was off in that tower when the emergency hit. It was midnight. I was still up, staring into a roaring fireplace yet shivering with loneliness. Suddenly Mrs. Winton burst in wringing her hands and crying, "Alice! It's my youngest! He's got a terrible stomach ache. My husband's down the valley seeing the chief, and the phone lines are down. I can't leave the kids."

Throwing an overcoat around me, I ran next door to find her child writhing in agony.

"Maybe this?" Mrs. Winton said holding out a bottle of laxative. But I had already pressed my fingers lightly into the little abdomen, and as they probed to the right the child cried out and twitched violently. "I'm afraid it's appendicitis," I said, knowing from personal experience! "Don't give him anything. Keep him quiet as you can. I'll try to reach the doctor."

It was a horrible night, pitch dark, the rain was flung wildly by angry winds till my face felt lashed by needles. I jumped into Phil's car and started for the village. It was only a mile; but I forgot the mountain stream, swollen by early spring thawing. When my headlights picked up the broken bridge, I jammed on the brakes barely in time.

IN MY anxiety I forgot another, round-about route. I was obsessed with getting straight on to that village! Only one side of the bridge was down. The other railing and shreds of planks still spanned the stream. Carefully, I ventured on, on those splintered planks, which barely topped the foaming rapids. Suddenly one gave way, then another. I was plunged waist-deep in icy water. I gasped and cried out, and I prayed! And I can thank God that somewhere in my athletic girlhood I had developed strong hands. I hung onto that railing and—another miracle—held fast. Swinging along hand over hand I pushed my nearly numb body on through the angry stream to that other bank.

The doctor drove me back with him, the round-about way, and after ordering me to bed, put the child in ice packs till he could be moved down the valley next day, to the hospital.

But I wasn't tired. In a few minutes I was even warm again. I was tremendously keyed-up, emotionally on edge, needing Phil, wanting Phil. But he wasn't there. By the time he came back, two days later, the crisis had passed. That emotional craving of mine had died down to the same near-extinguished amber. Everybody made a fuss over me for what I'd done. Phil especially: "You were wonderful, honey!" But I don't know—it just didn't matter now. The psychological moment had come, and gone. Phil had come back to me too late.

When I finally couldn't stand it any longer, I guess he understood. Oh, we said the right things that time. I said when Phil drove me to the station. I said "It's just a visit home, Phil. You know. The folks miss me."

"Sure, sure, Alice," he said brightly. "It's been quite a winter here. You sure earned a trip. You'll be happy enough to come back to a nice cool summer here in the time Jane morning."

"Of course, darling!" I clung to him at the train and kissed him. But pretense was there for us both to feel. If this wasn't the end, it was the brink. In the train I couldn't bear to look out the window for a last wave goodbye. I'd loved him so intensely once. We'd known such glorious nights of close-

ness and rapture. They were over, I didn't want to think about them.

"But ahead lay everything I'd dreamed about through these lonely months: home, the folks, old friends, fellows like Quent. My heart seemed to race ahead of the train to meet them. And my heart had quite a blow coming, too. . .

OH, IT was thrilling to be home at first: to stroll our charming streets, drop into movies and soda fountains and dress shops at will. Even now was happy to see me again, too. Until I'd be known to meet them through with Phil and that dreary world he'd taken me to. My parents were shocked. Mother, in her mild way, said, "But Alice, dear, the first year is always the hardest. I'm sure if you gave marriage a real chance. . ."

But big, heavy Dad minced no words: "I'm ashamed of you, Alice! You married that boy for better or worse, and you were lucky to get him! What kind of a woman are you?" I fled the house, hands over my burning ears.

Maybe I expected to find understanding outside the house. But even old friends, those I'd always considered so gay and carefree about life, were provoked with me, too. They called me weak, a quitter. They were growing up, they said, and it was time I did too. This, after expecting to be welcomed back with open arms, urged to stay! Only Quent was eager for me to stay, and I soon found out why.

We'd had one date—dancing—with the evening devoted to my candid comments on life in the timberland. Quent had listened with a smile in his handsome dark eyes. A sympathetic smile, I thought. This next time we were driving aimlessly out of town. Quent pulled off the road and switched off the headlights. He took me in his arms. It felt most comforting than anything else, and I guess I did respond. I'd never worried about Quent. He was always fun, never demanding. But suddenly he was different. When I started to break out of the kiss, his lips moved from my lips to my throat. There was a hunger in him I'd never known before! I felt my heart lurch in fear. "Quent," I said, trying to laugh, "hold it up, will you?"

He caught me roughly back to him, his mouth closed over mine again, one hand caressed my thigh, dry throat. "Quent!" I said wildly. "What is this? You were never like this before!"

He laughed heavily. "You're different yourself, baby. I married you for the loose." When I kept struggling, his fingers dug into my flesh. "Look, baby, when a married gal trots off from her hubby, comes home eager to run around with another guy, she's asking for it."

"Oh, stop it!" I cried and flung away from him. "Don't touch me again, Quent!"

He was silent for a fearful moment. "Gladly," he sneered and started the car. He didn't talk all the way home.

I was hurt and bitter about this homecoming as I lay wide awake that night, in the bed I'd longed to return to! But I could be grateful to Quent for one thing: that point he'd made about a married gal. If only I hadn't been so reluctant about that parting from Phil—had made it a definite split, with very certain plans for divorce—it would be different. I wouldn't prey for any misguided male. And there was only one thing to do: go

back and have it out with Phil. He'd never give up the work he loved. It was exciting to him. I'd have my reason for demanding immediate divorce.

That's why another week found me back in the heart of the timberland, still smarting from my let-down at home, but hopeful about the next return, when I'd be a free woman, ready to live as I wanted. I hadn't written Phil when I'd be there. I hired a man to drive me up the valley from the station. For one weak moment, as we wound along, I closed my eyes and drank in the heady fragrance of green forests in a setting of clean, crisp air.

FINALLY I reached our cabin and it was empty—except for two suitcases packed and waiting by the door. Phil's. As I stood wondering where he was going, Mrs. Winton filled the doorway, her round face creased with a welcoming smile. I blurted, "Those bags—where is he going, Mrs. Winton?"

"Phil?" she said. "Why, it's a year he's been here, Alice. His vacation is due. He's going to San Francisco when he gets back from the tower."

"A vacation," I said slowly. "Why it never even occurred."

"It was going to be his surprise," she said rather tartly, "if you hadn't left."

"Oh, please," I began, but she was started now. "Alice, you did me a fine turn once, you deserve some unpleasant but good advice. You never gave Phil and this ranger life a fair chance. You never looked at it as a way of life, but only something beating you down from day to day. All we other wives had to learn. It's a man's job, but he needs a wife to ease the loneliness, be waiting when he comes off duty. Especially when there's been heavy work or danger."

Flushing hotly, I broke in, "You think my life was easy?"

"No!" she snapped, "and neither is a man's work. But there's always the vacation. When it's the wife's turn to go places, have fun, freshen up for the working months ahead. But if you don't love Phil enough to become part of his life, you don't belong here anyway. He'd be better off without the burden of a whining wife. Even though he's missed you like crazy, even though inside you there's courage."

I was going to retort that I'd come back only to make that break from Phil, but I held it back. "So he was going off on his vacation alone," I said.

Mrs. Winton shrugged. "Oh, maybe not alone," she said meaningly.

"Where's Nancy?" I asked.

Mrs. Winton shrugged again. Suddenly apprehensive, I ran around behind the cabin and found Phil's car. I started driving toward the tower. Why, I wasn't sure; except that things weren't working out as I'd expected.

High up I stopped the car and walked from the road to the tower. Nobody up there could know I was coming. As I reached the bottom of the tower I paused, thinking I smelled smoke. It gave me a flutter of fear. This was a dry summer, the forests were like tinder. Then I climbed on up to the lookout platform at the top of the tower and suddenly I forgot the fire. In my heart there was nothing but a swift, searing stab of pain. For Nancy was there, all right—in Phil's arms.

Worst of all, when I gasped and they broke apart from that kiss, Phil didn't even seem upset. "Well," I said acidly, "Welcome home."

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"Look, dear," Nancy said coolly, "I
maneuvered this kiss."

"The kisses!" I flung back. "You think
that's what really hurts? My own hus-
band not even caring that I'm back,
that I caught him. . . ."

But Phil had turned abruptly away
to peer off across the tree tops. "I look
at that," he said worriedly, "Don't
need the binoculars. It's not far."

WE both followed his pointing arm.
I had smelled smoke! A wisp of it
was rising from a stretch of forest just
beyond a clearing and small mountain
lake in front of the tower. "Mart is out
in the forest," Phil said. "I'll have to go
find him—help him take care of that
blaze. It's localized and we won't radio
it in, but we've got to take care of it." Just
like that he was gone, before we could
exchange one important word! For a
stunned instant I stared after him,
then turned back on that mock-
ingly smiling Nancy.

"You!" I said. "Of all the cheap
stunts. The minute I'm gone!"
She didn't flinch, she laughed at me!
"Oh, come now, Alice. You don't
really want Phil. You never had to
fight to get him. How can you really
love anything you don't earn or work
for, or fight for? Even Phil got fed
up darling, when you couldn't take
this life he offered and worked hard
to give you."

"You're crazy!" I flung back at her.
"Phil needs a woman!"

She laughed again. "And darling
he's getting one. Me. A gal who's
worked to get him, who'll fight to take
him away from you. And I will, thanks
to you running away."

I stared at her, half my mind
stunned by this bold attack, the other
part still on that fire. I moved to the
railing and looked anxiously over to
the thickening smoke. "Oh, don't wor-
ry," Nancy said behind me. "The
wind's pushing the fire right into that
corner between the lake and the fire-
break. It can't spread."

I whirled on her. "Maybe not!" I
cried. "But Phil's in there. Your own
brother, too." Too scared now to just
stand and wait, I shoved past her to
climb down the tower. Nancy was
behind me all the way down—and
again I faced across the clearing,
around the tip of the lake to the
edge of that smoking area. There we
stopped and peered into the thick for-
est, where heavy smoke twisted
and whirled, wondering where to
enter to even try to find the men!

A frantic cry came from somewhere
in the middle of all that, and it struck
terror to my heart. A big oak tree
upside down and I was grateful for Nancy's
arm around me, our enmity forgotten
for a moment anyway. But I was still
half crazy! I was helpless and my hus-
band was in there.

Nancy gasped and I turned to see
Mart stagger out of the forest, his face
blackened by smoke, arms groping
for a hand to his knees. He had
enough strength left to cough out,
"Phil is fifty yards straight in—foot
caught." Then he toppled over.

For one wild moment I was going
to take Nancy in with me. But two girls
could never manage. "Bring Mart to
me. I wait." So he can come help!

Nancy nodded, then grabbed my
arm. "Cried!" She raced to the lake's
edge, and brought back her handker-
chief dripping with water. I plunged
into the forest, into the swirling mass
of smoke that hid everything—that
life-saving wet handkerchief pressed

to my face, filtering the smoke, keep-
ing me alive though I seemed to be
gaspng my very lungs out!

Twenty times I might have given
up—groping along that way, lurching
painfully into trees, knowing the
handkerchief couldn't keep me going
forever. But one thought kept me go-
ing: that he had not been hurt. I saved
my heart: I love you, Phil! I never
want to leave you again. Never want
any other life except with you!

FINALLY, when I knew I surely had
F stumbled five times fifty yards, I
tipped over on my unconscious body.
Phil's foot was on a thick log, and
with a roar Mart had slashed away at
Phil's heavy leather boot, but Phil
could never be freed; unless his foot
could be twisted to a different angle,
so I could jerk it from that death trap.
Gritting my teeth I grasped his foot
and turned it with all my might.

The tearing, craning sound of mus-
cle and bone sickening. It turned my
stomach and brought worse tears to
my eyes than the smoke. The pain
also shocked Phil into semi-conscious-
ness. He recognized me. His black-
ened lips smiled feebly, he muttered,
"Get out, honey—save yourself."

I could waste no precious breath
arguing. My own lungs seemed full of
smoke and fire. I got hold of him
under his armpits, I dragged him, his
twisted foot coming free. His weight
was too much for me. Five painful
yards I managed; ten; fifteen—fell to
my knees, moaning with anguish and
terror and prayer, too. I staggered up
again, lifting Phil with strength I
never knew I had. But it wasn't
enough. I was sinking fast, when sud-
denly Phil was lighter. Nancy had
worked on Mart and brought him out
of it. He was helping me lift and drag
and drag . . . until all at once we
penetrated the curtain of smoke,
struggling into the clearing by the
lake bank. My knees again gup-
ping in the wonderful clean air, and
uttering a prayer of thanks.

For a long time the four of us just
lay there, recovering our breath and
strength, tasting life again.

Nancy, too, was spent from the
frantic respiration she'd given Mart.
But she and her brother were first on
their feet. "We'll get the jeep," Mart
said, "and come back for you. Phil will
need attention right away."

I held a hand up to catch Nancy's.
"Thanks," was all I could say. She
smiled ruefully. "You really fought
for him this time, Alice. You deserve
him." We were friends at last.

I looked after them as they walked
toward the road where the jeep was
parked. Then on my stomach I sidled
close to Phil. He was on his back,
gritting his teeth in pain, but staring
up at the blue sky, as if he could never
see enough of it. I looked at that
twisted ankle. "I've spoiled your vaca-
tion," I said mortally.

Phil turned his head to look at me—
just as he'd looked at the sun. "Sure,"
he said softly, "so I could live to vaca-
tion again someday." He caught my
hand. "You're wonderful, honey."

And just before our lips met he
grinned, painfully yet happily. "We'll
take a vacation, someday, honey. A
swell one, I promise."

But what I thought, did that matter
now? What I had here, now . . . with
this man I'd fought for and won
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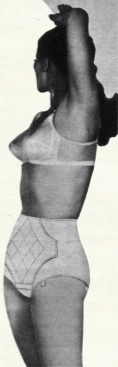
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TAKE OFF EXCESS WEIGHT!

Don't Stay **FAT**—You Can **LOSE POUNDS** and **INCHES** SAFELY Without Risking HEALTH

TRY THE SPOT REDUCER 10 DAYS FREE IN YOUR OWN HOME!

Mail this coupon with only \$1 for your Spot Reducer on approval. Pay postman \$8.95 plus delivery—or send \$9.95 (full price) and we ship postage prepaid. Use it for ten days in your own home. Then if not delighted return Spot Reducer for full purchase price refund. Don't delay! You have nothing to lose—except ugly, embarrassing, undesirable pounds of **FAT**. MAIL COUPON NOW

ALSO USE IT FOR ACHEs AND PAINs



CAN'T SLEEP:

Relax with electric Spot Reducer. See how soothing its gentle massage can be. Helps you sleep when massage can be of benefit.



MUSCULAR ACHEs:

A handy helper for transient relief of discomforts that can be aided by gentle, relaxing massage.

LOSE WEIGHT OR NO CHARGE

USED BY EXPERTS

Thousands have lost weight this way—in hips, abdomen, legs, arms, necks, buttocks, etc. The same method used by stage, screen and radio personalities and leading reducing salons. The Spot Reducer can be used in your spare time, in the privacy of your own room.

ORDER IT TODAY!

SENT ON APPROVAL—MAIL COUPON NOW!

SPOT REDUCER CO., Dept. B-102
318 Market St., Newark, New Jersey

Please send me the Standard Model SPOT REDUCER for 10 days trial period. I enclose \$1.00, upon arrival I will pay postage only \$8.95 plus postage and handling. If not delighted may return SPOT REDUCER within 10 days for prompt refund of full purchase price.

I enclose \$12.95. Send Deluxe Model, postage pre-paid.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

SAVE POSTAGE—check here if you enclose \$12.95 for Deluxe Model. We pay all postage and handling charges. Some money back guarantee applies.

I enclose \$9.95. Send Standard Model.

LOSE WEIGHT OR NO CHARGE

MAIL THIS 10 DAY FREE TRIAL COUPON NOW!