

STREET & SMITH'S **LOVE STORY**★

EVERY WEEK

MAGAZINE

MAY 2, 1931

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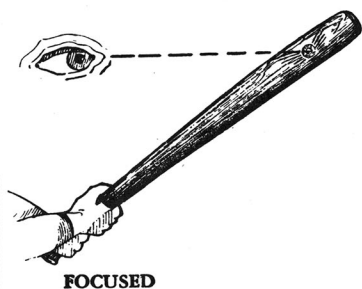
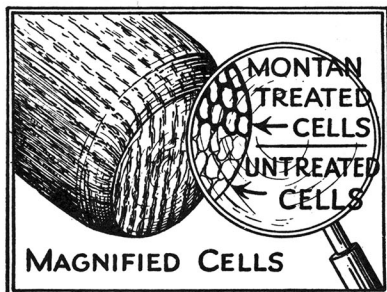


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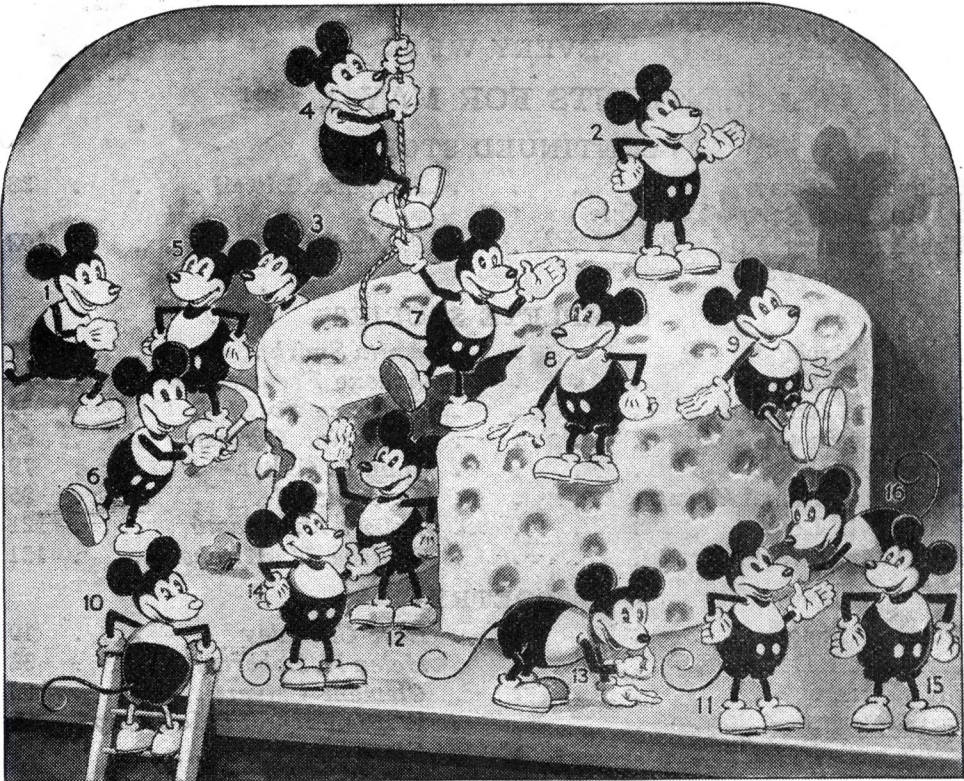
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W. C. DILBERG, Publicity Director, Room 394, 502 N. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.



STREET & SMITH'S LOVE STORY MAGAZINE

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Vol. LXXX

EVERY WEEK

Number 6

CONTENTS FOR MAY 2, 1931

CONTINUED STORIES

Delayed Ecstasy	<i>Margaret Littell</i>	33
In Two Parts—Part One		
The Laughing Husband	<i>S. Andrew Wood</i>	102
In Four Parts—Part Two		

COMPLETE STORIES

Dream Marriage	<i>Anita Smith</i>	1
Tinseled Values	<i>Athene Farnsworth</i>	20
Substitute Redheads	<i>Florence Ford</i>	54
The Face in the Fog	<i>Katherine Gorman</i>	66
Marion's Job	<i>John L. Carter</i>	79
The Conventional Thing	<i>Jane Littell</i>	85
Dare-devil Love	<i>Robert M. Ducoté</i>	121
Forgotten Sweethearts	<i>Lilliace M. Mitchell</i>	131

POETRY

Evening Song	<i>Bert Cooksley</i>	19
Dawn And Dusk	<i>Helen K. Roberts</i>	32
Love Time	<i>Clement Calvert</i>	53
Pastel	<i>William Harold McCreary</i>	78
Pride	<i>Gloria Berthall</i>	130
Love's Debt	<i>Florence McChesney</i>	139

DEPARTMENTS

Your Stars And You	<i>Kai</i>	140
The Friendliest Corner	<i>Mary Morris</i>	147
The Friend In Need	<i>Laura Alston Brown</i>	151

"Barge Of Dreams," by Knight Jesse, in next week's issue.

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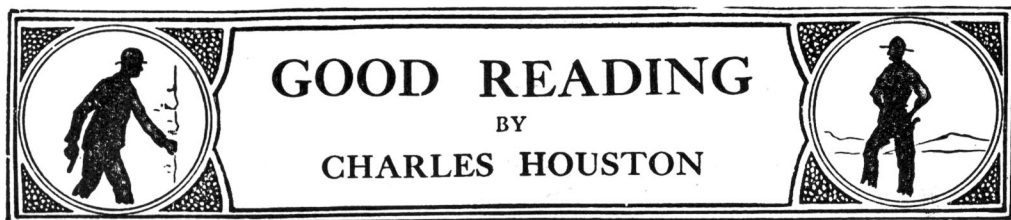
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GOOD READING

BY

CHARLES HOUSTON

When spring comes up from the Southland again and all America awakes to her vernal glories, Youth is lord and master of us all. Now the heart dances and the eyes are gladdened and winter's dreariness is forgotten. Now come the young things of the world to reign over us and to remind us that love is best and most wonderful.

At such a time the makers of fiction which uses love for its central theme come into their own. For your real story of springtime is the story of the love of a man for a maid, and nowhere is the story being told with such charm and verve as in America this spring. For here we have a host of masters of the craft of story-telling who can put down black on white the innermost emotions of those in the thrall of the little blind god.

The best of these writers have a habit of bringing their bright wares to a great publishing house that stands on the edge of old Greenwich Village in New York City. This is Chelsea House, one of the oldest and best established publishing houses in the country.

For your delight at this time of the awakening of the imagination and the quickening of the spirit, Chelsea House culls out those love stories which are written in the gay, headlong tempo of the times. Here are brief glances at the most recent Chelsea House offerings, which you will find at your nearest dealer. If he doesn't carry a full line of Chelsea House books, love stories, adventure stories, stories of the West, write to Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y., for a list of these handsomely bound novels, which have never before appeared between book covers and which sell for the low price of seventy-five cents.

THE DARK GARDEN, by Mary Frances Doner. Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y. Price 75 cents.

"Look, Dick—see—the dance you loved. 'Souvenir'—remember? Moonlight—and stars—and you sitting on the funny old fence while I danced in the meadows."

She was calling to the heart of the man who lay as if "pausing on the threshold that separates this life from the next—inert, weary of living, waiting for death." She was calling him back from a dark garden to the recollection of the "first, fine careless

raptures" when they entered upon what he thought was nothing more than a mild summer flirtation, but that she knew was the beginning of a life-long romance.

With what appeal does Mary Frances Doner present her characters, so that when you are done you have lived along with them through one thrilling situation after another! The climax of this gripping narrative is one long-to-be-remembered.

HOLLYWOOD MADNESS, by Jane Littell. Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y. Price 75 cents.

What is behind the scenes of the real Hollywood? What is the truth about this fantastic mecca of so many hopeful pilgrims? What is it that they worship there?

Well, first and foremost, as little Chala Kane was to discover, Hollywood is on its collective knees before the great god Success. And the worshipers of Success for Success's sake are as often as not, cold and calculating and cruel. Even love is sacrificed before the leering god. And when one on the road to Success falls in love with a nonentity in the hard world of the moving picture, what then?

These are some of the questions asked and answered in this distinguished novel of Jane Littell's. For all who have wanted somehow to get behind the Hollywood scenes, for those who may care nothing about the men and women of the movies, but still love a good love story, "Hollywood Madness" is a book in a thousand. It belongs very decidedly in your library.

FATE'S STEPCHILD, by Philip Fair. Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y. Price 75 cents.

"The words were like little particles of ice dripping against stone." They came straight from the broken heart of a girl who cried, "I hate you" at the man who held her in his arms a moment before.

"Fate's Stepchild" begins with a rush. Elissa, walking down the street of a little Ohio town, is saved from an accident by a man whom she feels dimly she must know and whose face haunts her in her dreary rounds of breadwinning.

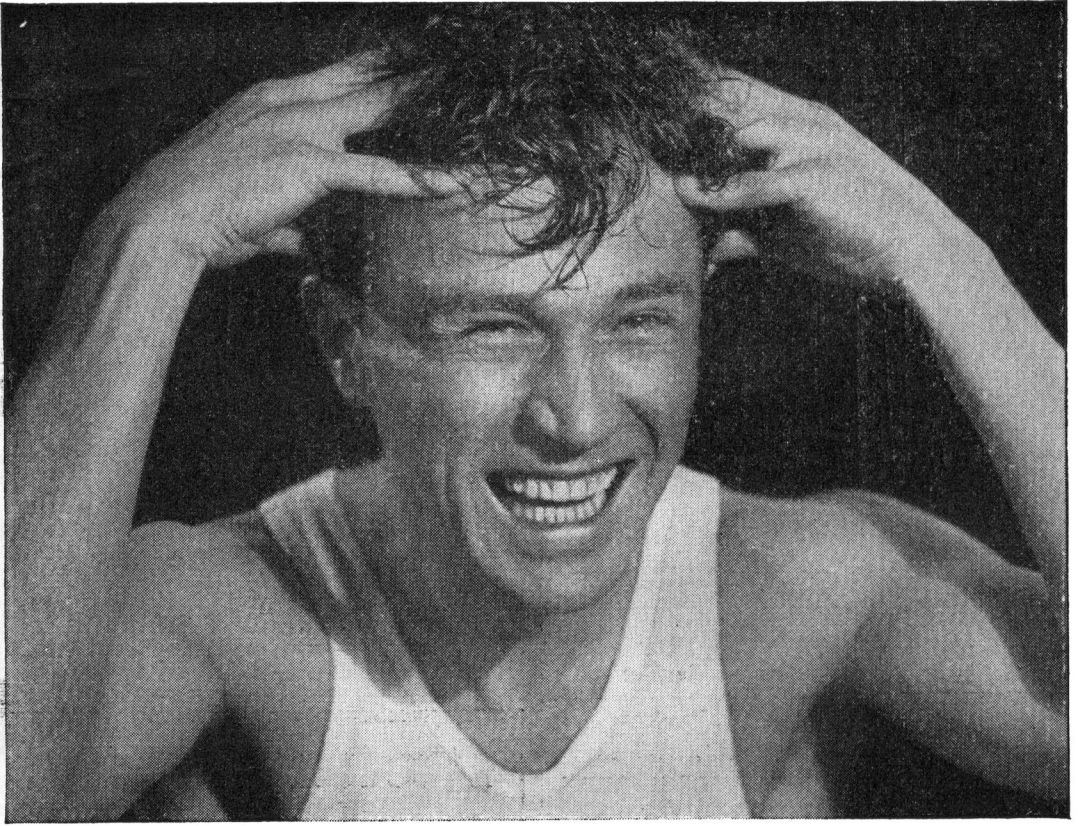
And then one day, after the years of scrimping and struggling and saving, there comes the sudden announcement that she is heiress to a fortune, and it seemed to settle all her problems.

But in reality the big problems of life were just beginning for this girl. For there reappeared on the scene the man who had saved her from death and with whom she was passionately in love. Reappeared, only to tell her that he could not marry her—that he was not free to marry.

One situation follows another in breathless pace. You watch the play of circumstance around the beautiful person of Elissa. With her you go into the dark places of the soul and with her come at length into the sunlight of a new day.

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Splashers vs. Lollers

A bit of quiet research among the bathers of America has revealed two rival camps of behavior—

The handsome gentleman who heads the first group believes that bathing should be in the active mood. At 7:00 a. m. he becomes unseen but *heard*. From the bathroom come the echoes of hearty splashes and noises that sound like a floor polishing machine. (Our hero is stirring up a fancy Ivory frosting with a stiff-bearded bath brush!)

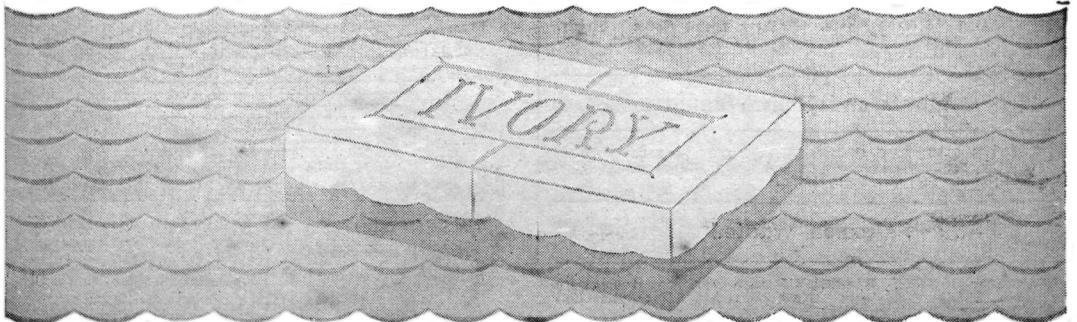
The spokeswoman for group 2 shudders at the thought of such athletic goings-on! She insists that bathing should be a restful interlude

in water as warm as a rippleless sea. And Ivory will float like a lily pad in this bland pool of content . . .

Frankly, the debate of *splashers vs. lollers* is too delicate a matter for us to pass upon. So we merely remind you that both leading schools of bathing have nominated Ivory! Ivory dares the splashers to duck it . . . and it drifts into a loller's hands. Its whole-hearted foam rinses away as lightly as dandelion fluff in a breeze. And it leaves both the skin and temper as smooth as velvet. There's no debate among bath-loving Americans on the merits of Ivory—they all *agree* that it is fine, pure soap!

. . . kind to everything it touches · 99⁴⁴/₁₀₀ % Pure · “It floats”

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LS-1F



Dream Marriage

By Anita Smith

SAY, Molly, I saw your boy friend having lunch with another girl yesterday! Do you stand for that sort of thing?"

Molly Bryan, working steadily, did not even glance up. She thoroughly despised Ralph Clayton, even if his father was cashier of the bank and practically her employer, due to the fact that the president, old Mr. Ashe, was getting frailer every day and turned more

and more of the business over to John Clayton.

"Aren't you going to answer me?" Ralph persisted. He was an only child, thoroughly spoiled and used to having his own way. He had a very good opinion of himself and it annoyed him that his father's pretty black-haired stenographer had never paid him the slightest attention. "Do you permit Stannard to go out with other girls?"

Molly's violet eyes were cool and disdainful.

"I guess that comes under the head of my business, Ralph," she replied coldly.

He flushed.

"Gee, I thought you'd be sore as hops."

Molly's soft red lips curled. "That's why you told me, wasn't it?"

"Partly," he acknowledged sulkily. "And then I—— Well, you'll never give any one else a date"—he had tried hard to persuade her to let him take her out since he had come into the bank when he had got put out of college six months before—"and I thought you ought to know Hugh Stannard isn't the good little boy you think he is."

Molly knew all about how Hugh happened to be having lunch with another girl, but she didn't intend to tell Ralph so. Hugh had told her as soon as he came in the day before. Middleton was not a very large city, and there was only one public eating place that was convenient to the bank where they all worked. This was a small café directly across the street. Occasionally Molly went there with Hugh, but usually she walked the four blocks to the small cottage where she boarded with old Miss Amanda Snow, who kept the girl more for company than anything else.

The day before she had gone home to lunch and Hugh had crossed over to Bingham's alone. The place was crowded and he had about given up hope of securing a seat when a girl who was sitting near the door noticed his predicament and told the waitress that she did not mind sharing her table. They exchanged a few commonplace remarks, but she had paid her own check and had left before Hugh did. And that was all there had been to it.

Hugh hadn't even learned the girl's name or mentioned his. He hadn't really noticed her enough to describe her beyond a vague, "She was a bru-

nette, I think. I'm sure she had black eyes, and she wore a tight red hat, one of these—er—knitted silk things." He had meant a beret, and Molly had grinned.

Hugh never paid any attention to girls, except herself. Dear Hugh! He said he had seen Molly and never needed to look farther because he'd known the minute he saw her he had found the one and only woman for him. And here was Ralph Clayton trying to make her jealous and suspicious of Hugh!

"You're wasting your time, Ralph, trying to stir up trouble between Hugh and me," she said serenely. "And now you'd better run along. I'm busy, and you ought to be if you are ever going to amount to anything around here."

His handsome face darkened.

"Oh, I know you think I don't earn my salt," he cried angrily.

She did think so. John Clayton had used his influence to get his son a place in the bank and he had even recently given the boy a raise in salary. But Ralph was lazy and interested in nothing but having a good time. If any other employee wasted time as he did, he'd be fired at once.

Molly thought it a shame to give him an increase when Hugh, who worked like a slave and was really a valuable man to the bank, had gone without one for two years. Molly sighed. Both she and Hugh knew that John Clayton didn't favor Hugh.

Next to John Clayton himself, Hugh had the most responsible position in the bank. He was head teller. He had started in when he was only sixteen as a messenger and advanced to his present position by sheer hard work. He had had no influential father to pull strings for him. He was an orphan, like Molly, and he had got his business training at night school.

But old Mr. Ashe liked him. Molly sometimes thought that was why John Clayton had it in for Hugh. He re-

sented the fact that in the president's opinion Hugh was bound straight for the top. Molly sighed again. Every day she regretted that the bank was being left more and more to John Clayton's management. She was sure that was why Hugh had seemed of late to stand still. And they needed that increase in salary he had failed to get this year. With it they had meant to get married.

Sudden tears stung her eyes. And it wasn't as if Hugh hadn't earned it. He had. No one worked harder or was more faithful. No wonder she resented Ralph Clayton who was lazy and absurdly ignorant when it came to banking and who had got the raise which his father, for sheer spite, had refused Hugh.

She had a feeling that, if he dared, John Clayton would discharge Hugh and give his position to Ralph.

"I guess you think if my father wasn't my boss, I'd have been thrown out on my ear long ago," Ralph continued aggrievedly.

Molly wished he'd go and let her alone. He got on her nerves, always pestering her with his attentions, especially when she had shown him that she had no use for him. That was why he kept after her probably.

The Claytons were well to do. A lot of society girls in town ran after Ralph and would have been delighted to marry him. He could not understand why Molly, who, after all, was only a stenographer, persisted in snubbing him.

"I think you're very tiresome," she said wearily.

"Just because I don't keep my nose to the grindstone day and night as Hugh Stannard does, you think I'm a wet blanket," cried Ralph angrily. "But he isn't setting the world on fire, believe me! He doesn't even make enough to support you."

That was true, unfortunately. And until Hugh received the salary he de-

served, Molly had to go on working. She swallowed a lump in her throat. She and Hugh had waited two years already for the little home they both longed for, just a modest little place where they could be together always.

Between them they had saved almost enough for what furniture they needed. Neither of them had ever had a real home, and it had been a terrible disappointment when John Clayton had arbitrarily refused the first of the year to do anything about Hugh's salary.

Molly thought Hugh looked unusually tired and depressed when he came over that evening. It was a sultry night, and they sat on the little vine-shaded front porch, but it wasn't even cool there where there was usually a breeze if anywhere.

"Tired, Hugh dear?" asked Molly.

"Yes, sort of," he admitted. "It was so hot to-day. I bet you're worn out, too."

She sighed. "I am, a little."

He glanced at her quickly.

"Has Ralph been annoying you again?"

She made a little grimace.

"He didn't make the day any easier," she confessed.

Hugh's long, nervous hands clenched.

"If only I could take you out of that place!" he cried. "It drives me mad to see you wasting your life there. I—I want so to—to take care of you, honey, to give you a home."

"I know, dear." She slipped her arm about him. "But we are young, we can wait, we—we'll have our little home yet."

He crushed her to him and kissed her pale lips.

"You're so sweet and brave, Molly," he cried huskily. "Any other girl but you would have grown tired of waiting for a fellow like me. I—I—wouldn't blame you if you found somebody else who is doing better, getting ahead faster, I mean."

"Hugh!" Molly knew then he must be more than usually discouraged; she had never heard him speak quite so dejectedly. "No one could do better than you do!"

He laughed bitterly. "When I don't even earn enough to marry you."

"But it isn't your fault!" she protested.

"Just the same," he said doggedly, "you deserve a better man than I am, some one who can give you nice things and a—a home and everything I won't be able to give you in years. I—I—wouldn't blame you, Molly, if you threw me over for—for Ralph Clayton. He's crazy about you and he could do so much for you that I can't."

"Hugh!" Molly was almost angry. "You know I hate Ralph Clayton. I wouldn't marry him if I were starving. You are never to say that again, never!"

Hugh's tired mouth twitched.

"Please forgive me, honey. I—I'm as nervous as a cat to-night."

She had observed that for herself.

"Did anything go wrong to-day?"

He shook his head.

"No, nothing especially. It's just that feeling I've got all the time that Clayton's watching me every minute, just itching to trip me up somewhere. It's getting on my nerves."

"And no wonder!" she cried indignantly.

She leaned nearer, and for a moment he rested his weary head against her cheek.

"You're always such a comfort, Molly," he said unsteadily. "I was desperate when I came over to-night. I work like sin, and I deserved that raise! And—and it makes me sick when I think that for lack of it, you have to suffer. We've waited for it long enough. I—it—no wonder men go out and rob banks and murder people!"

Molly laughed.

"We'll have our happiness yet, Hugh, without robbing banks," she said.



He paused under the awning to open his umbrella and Molly's first instinct was to call to him. But then she saw he was not alone.

Molly was almost as discouraged as Hugh, but she finally sent him home cheered and heartened because she loved him and she couldn't bear to see him so unhappy. But in her heart she was afraid. She even thought of going to old Mr. Ashe and telling him the whole thing, yet she didn't quite dare go over Clayton's head. He would be furious and in the long run her interference might only make things harder for Hugh. So, although she was as tired of waiting as he, she decided there was nothing else for them to do.

John Clayton couldn't go on indefinitely refusing Hugh an increase so long as Hugh did his work faithfully. He would have to advance him eventually, for it was Mr. Ashe's theory that if an employee is worth keeping, he's worth advancing.



Hugh was still busy in his cage when Molly left the following afternoon, too busy to do anything more than just look up and smile wearily as she passed and again, with a catch in her heart, she noticed how white and tired he looked.

But she knew it wasn't the work or the long hours or even the responsibility that was telling on Hugh. He had worked long and hard all his life. It was the feeling that he had been unjustly treated which was eating at his heart, that and the fact that John Clayton's pale eyes were always searching for an excuse to find Hugh at error.

Molly had just finished her supper when Miss Amanda discovered that she

had no bread for breakfast. They were more like mother and daughter than landlady and boarder, and Molly quickly offered to run down to the bakery before it closed. A storm was gathering, but she thought she could get back before it started. However, just as she came out to start home, the storm broke with a flurry of wind and lightning. There was nothing to do but wait in the shelter of the doorway till the storm was over.

As she stood there watching people scurrying down the street,

she saw Hugh come out of the restaurant across the street. He paused under the awning to open his umbrella and Molly's first instinct was to call to him. But then she saw he was not alone. A tall, slim girl in a close-fitting dark-red hat was with him and they went off together under Hugh's umbrella.

While it gave her a queer little feeling like a stab, to see Hugh walk off like that with another girl, Molly was too sensible not to understand exactly what had happened. Hugh had run across the girl in the restaurant, caught as Molly herself was by the sudden shower, and, remembering her courtesy to him, Hugh had returned the favor

by offering to share his umbrella. Probably the girl in the red hat lived in his neighborhood and was going his way.

Hugh roomed downtown in a street that had once been one of the town's finest, but had now degenerated into cheap lodging houses. Molly had never seen the girl with Hugh before. Very likely she was a newcomer in Middleton. Even at a distance Molly had seen she was a striking-looking brunette, and smartly dressed in a fashionable beige ensemble and linen pumps and short yellow gloves.

There was something about her which reminded Molly of the theatrical companies which played Middleton during the winter. But none of the local theaters were open for road shows before October, so that couldn't be the case. Still the girl did have a stagy look.

"The boy friend seems to be getting the habit," sneered a voice at Molly's elbow. "There he goes with that same girl he had out to lunch."

Molly would rather have seen any one at that moment than Ralph Clayton. She could have howled with sheer exasperation when she realized that he must have come out of the bank next door and been standing there while she watched Hugh disappear down the street. She felt sure he had seen from her face that she was a little upset, and she was furious with herself and with him, too.

"Hugh couldn't be rude enough not to offer to share his umbrella in a storm like this," she said coldly. "No one wants to hang around an hour or so downtown waiting for the rain to stop."

"In that case," he suggested eagerly, "you can't refuse to let me run you home in my car. It's right here at the curb."

Molly hesitated. She would rather have waited till midnight for the storm to abate than accept a favor from Ralph. He grinned maliciously.

"If it's O. K. for Hugh to help

maidens in distress, it will certainly be all right for you to ride home with me."

She saw he thought he had her trapped, and, as a matter of fact, he had. She couldn't very well refuse.

"All right," she said ungraciously, "come on."

Ralph had an expensive, low-slung roadster. They shot smoothly away from the curb, but in the next block they slowed down, and not until they were even with Hugh did Molly realize Ralph's purpose.

"Oh, Stannard!" he called spitefully, blaring his horn to attract Hugh's attention.

Then he shot away again, but not before Hugh had had time to recognize Molly.

"You had no right to do that," she cried indignantly.

"I just thought I'd let him see he isn't the only one who can do a little two-timing!" he sneered.

"Hugh isn't two-timing me!" cried Molly hotly.

"Oh, no!" drawled Ralph. "But I wonder who the new girl friend is. He sure knows how to pick them!" He glanced boldly at his companion.

But Molly refused to be baited further.

"Here we are! Thanks for the lift!"

Ralph had stopped the car at her door, but he wasn't to be disposed of so easily.

"Let's ride out into the country, Molly, the storm's about over," he pleaded. "It'll be cool and nice after the train. We might stop for something to eat and dance a while."

Molly's lip curled.

"Won't you ever learn you can't take me out?"

His handsome, sulky face darkened.

"Hugh coming over?"

"Of course, he does every night."

"But he never takes you out."

That was true, but Molly knew why. Hugh was saving every penny he could toward the home they had planned.

"Gosh, I'd get tired just sitting around every night, never having any fun. Gee, Molly, I could show you a grand time! I—I'd spend more money on you in a night than Hugh does in two months."

"Sorry, I'm not interested."

"But, Molly, I—I'm crazy about you!" he blurted out, goaded by her indifference. "If—if you'll marry me, I—I—dad'll give us a nice house out near the country club, mother'll put you in society, you can have your own car, and—and a maid, and—and everything. Won't you, Molly?"

"Sorry," she said again, "but you know I'm going to marry Hugh!"

"Say!" His face darkened with jealous wrath. "You'll drop by the way-side if you wait for that guy."

"Oh, maybe not," she said, "anyway"—her voice hardened—"I'm going to wait."

"Suppose he doesn't show up to-night?" he sneered.

"He'll be here," Molly replied and, turning, went into the house.

But she was mistaken. Hugh didn't come.

Molly waited on the veranda till eleven, though Hugh had never been later than nine, even if he had to work late. Never had he failed to come without at least telephoning to explain his absence. But that night he didn't even call.

At last she went to bed, but she couldn't sleep. She rolled and tossed for hours, and it was nearly dawn before she really dozed. But not even to herself would she admit that Hugh had failed to keep his appointment with her because of that other girl. She was convinced there was some other explanation. She even thought wildly that perhaps he had had an accident, was in the hospital.

She hurried to work. If anything had happened to Hugh, they would be sure to know at the bank. And the minute she entered the door, she knew

something was wrong. Every one looked at her so curiously, and then had sudden business elsewhere as if they didn't want to talk to her, and Hugh was not in his cage!

Molly hung up her hat and sat down at her desk. She was shaking all over. What on earth was the matter? Where was Hugh? Usually he was the first man at work. She realized that every one was watching her, even though they glanced away quickly if they happened to catch her eye. And then Ralph Clayton came out of his father's office, grinning from ear to ear, and came to her desk.

"Well, you must have had a long wait if you sat up for Hugh Stannard last night, Molly!"

There was so much gloating and unconcealed triumph in his eyes that Molly's heart constricted with fear.

"What do you mean? Where's Hugh?" Molly asked quickly.

He laughed. "Haven't you heard?"

She shook her head. Something terrible had happened to Hugh, she knew. Nothing else could explain Ralph Clayton's elation.

"He's in jail! I'm on my way down there now to bail him out."

Molly started to her feet.

"I don't believe you! It isn't true!"

Ralph Clayton shrugged his shoulders.

"You don't have to believe me. You can call up the station house and ask the chief. He'll tell you that your precious Hugh was brought down last night and spent the night in a nice little cell. Sweet business for a young man who's always posed as such a saint." He laughed. "You thought it was so awful because I got kicked out of college for taking a girl riding after hours. Well, I've never spent the night in jail like your Hugh. It takes these goody-goody boys to pull the real rough stuff, and you thought he was such a fine guy!"

"I think so yet!" she said firmly.

"Oh, do you?" he sneered. "But you don't know why he was arrested?"

"I'm sure whatever it was," she cried fiercely, "it's all a mistake and Hugh's innocent! He never did anything dishonorable in his life!"

"No? Well, maybe you think it's the proper stuff for a rising young banker to be playing bootlegger on the side."

"Hugh hasn't been doing that!"

"Oh, hasn't he? I'm afraid the boy friend has been putting it over on you, Molly."

"I don't believe you!" she cried again.

"Well, it's in the morning papers, maybe you'll believe them!"

He flicked a sheet before her and Hugh's clear eyes gazed back at her from the paper. Under his picture was the caption:

TELLER OF UNION NATIONAL BANK ARRESTED ON
LIQUOR CHARGE

Molly couldn't read the rest of the text. It blurred under her stricken eyes and she could only crumple the paper in her shaking hands.

"You know that girl Hugh's been chasing around with lately?" Ralph continued. "It seems her name's Mazie Dean or, at least, that's what she calls herself. Well, ever since she got into town a couple of weeks ago, somebody's been selling a lot of Canadian whisky around here. Yesterday somebody tipped the police off that this Dean woman had come down from Montreal with a load of the stuff. And last night, just as she and Hugh walked up to the house where she has been rooming, they arrested her."

"They didn't find a thing on her or in her room, but because Hugh was with her, they searched him, too. And he had a half-pint bottle in his pocket. That made the police suspicious. They went over to his room and found a case of the stuff hid under his bed. He

swore he knew nothing about the whole thing; but, then, he would.

"They arrested him, but they had to let the girl go because they didn't have enough evidence to hold her. But she must have brought the stuff in, and Hugh took it off her hands to sell. Everybody knows he's been pretty sore because he doesn't make much money here at the bank, and I guess he figured he could sell liquor on the side and pick up a lot of easy money. He could have, too, if the police hadn't tripped him up. Now it's going to cost him all he's got to keep out of the hands of the Federal authorities."

"Federal authorities?" Molly echoed faintly.

"Sure, all that's saved him is the fact he's always had a good reputation and this is his first offense. He's lucky to get off with only a five-hundred-dollar fine. That's where I'm going now. He sent dad a note and a check on his savings account. Fortunately he had that much. I'm on my way now to get him out. What a smart thing he did! He's disgraced himself and, of course, after this he'll lose his job. Nobody," he added virtuously, "could expect dad to keep him on in the bank after this mess. Well, I better be going. He's probably pretty sick of the place by now. See you later."

He breezed out, leaving poor Molly stricken and mute, too dazed to do anything but sit back in her chair and stare blankly before her. Hugh arrested! Hugh dishonored! And his reputation ruined, his job gone, and his savings! But Hugh couldn't be guilty! He couldn't have done the thing of which he was accused. He couldn't have been desperate enough to stoop to such as this.

Then she remembered what he had said: "It's no wonder men go out and rob banks," and her heart sank sickeningly. But only for a minute did her faith falter. And then it leaped up

stronger and fiercer than ever. No matter what he had said or how black things looked against him, nothing could make Molly believe that Hugh was guilty. It was all some ghastly mistake of which her beloved was the innocent victim!

Old Timsley, the bookkeeper, approached her desk timidly.

terrible feeling of helplessness. These people had worked side by side with Hugh for years. They had been his friends, and yet now not one of them was ready to champion his innocence or even give him the benefit of the doubt.

"I hope you're right, Molly," old Timsley said sadly, "but there's no get-



"Molly, now the boy friend's given you the gate," murmured Ralph, "how about stepping out with me?"

"We're all mighty sorry, Molly. I was awfully fond of Hugh. I'd never have believed he'd do anything like this."

She felt the other employees behind him. She realized that the old man was really the spokesman for them all.

"He didn't do it!" she cried fiercely. "You all know Hugh as well as I do and you know he could never do such a thing!"

But in their eyes she read only pity. They didn't believe her. A great bitterness welled over her, along with a

ting around the fact that he had that liquor and he had been running around with that girl. A lot of folks saw them over at Bingham's together."

Trust a small town to keep an eagle eye on every one!

"But he wasn't running around with her!" declared Molly desperately. "He only happened to sit at her table because the restaurant was crowded and he walked home with her last night because it was raining and he had an umbrella."

Old Timsley shook his head.

"I'm afraid Hugh's deceived you, Molly, just as he's deceived us all."

He walked away and the others sighed and went back to their work. Molly saw that they had all of them accepted the idea of Hugh's guilt and only felt sorry for her because she clung stubbornly to her faith in him. She wanted to get up and tell them they were all stupid and cowardly to forget Hugh's long, blameless record and turn against him in a day. But she realized it would do no good. They would only think she was silly to go on defending a man who had been chasing around with another girl!

Molly was still at her desk when Ralph returned with Hugh, whose face was haggard and grim and set in a hard mask. Molly, her hand flying to her heart, called to him softly, but he did not glance her way as he walked into the private office where old Mr. Ashe was waiting with Ralph's father.

Molly had seen the bank president come in and he had looked sad and worried. Hugh had always been a protégé of his.

The interview was not long. Hugh came out in less than ten minutes, and, although Molly called to him again and even rose and started toward him, he walked rapidly out of the bank without a glance for any one. Ralph Clayton, who had followed him out of the conference room, laughed softly.

"There goes the town's model boy and he's not coming back."

"Did Mr. Ashe fire him?" faltered Molly.

Somehow she had believed that the old gentleman would not be like the rest, that he would know as she did that Hugh simply couldn't be guilty of such a thing.

"He didn't have to fire him," chuckled Ralph. "Hugh saved him the trouble. He resigned."

"And did Mr. Ashe accept his resignation?"

"Sure, he had a sneaky feeling there'd been a mistake and Hugh was innocent, so he asked him outright, but Hugh didn't deny it. He just said he was leaving."

Molly's heart sank. If Hugh were innocent, if this was all a mistake, he would have said so, would have tried to make a fight to clear his name. To resign only seemed an admission of his guilt. For a moment again her loyalty wavered. But stronger than all the appearances against him was her instinctive faith in the man she loved.

Molly did not for one minute believe that Hugh had been friendly with the Dean girl or bought the liquor from her, no matter if it was found in his possession. And if Hugh had refused to defend himself, it was because he was so stupefied by the calamity which had overtaken him, he couldn't collect his thoughts enough even to protest his innocence. Molly was so confused herself, she was incapable of coherent thinking. The rest of the morning passed in a sort of daze. She did her usual tasks mechanically, hardly conscious of what she was doing, conscious really of nothing but that Hugh was wholly innocent and she must see him at once.

She fully expected him to be waiting for her when she came out at noon. But he wasn't. She hurried home when it occurred to her he might have gone there because it would be painful for him to hang around the bank until she appeared. But he wasn't there nor had he sent any message. Molly wondered if he could possibly think that she, too, had turned against him like the others. Finally she telephoned his rooming house.

"No, he ain't here," the landlady said crossly. "I asked him to move out just as soon as he come home this morning. This is a respectable place. I ain't keeping nobody that has the police ransacking their rooms and carrying them off

to jail. I give him thirty minutes to pack up and get out, and he got."

Molly felt stifled with anger. For years Hugh had been a model of propriety, the ideal roomer, but all that counted for nothing now.

"Where—where did he go?" she faltered.

"I don't know, and I don't care," snapped the woman, and hung up.

Suddenly desperate, Molly telephoned every place she could think of where Hugh might possibly be. But she could not find him. At last she dragged herself back to work. Surely Hugh would call her that afternoon or be waiting for her when she started home. He must know she was wild to see him. After work, she tried to locate him again and failed. And, for the second time, she waited on the front veranda for Hugh till nearly midnight. But he did not come and she cried herself to sleep.

And yet even then she did not blame him. She believed he was avoiding her because he was so humiliated that he couldn't face her. And she was only sorry he had so little faith in her loyalty. She could imagine how desperate he was feeling, and she longed to put her arms around him and tell him that no matter if the whole world had turned against him, he still had her. She wanted to ask him to marry her at once, even though he hadn't a job. She longed to stand shoulder to shoulder with him and help him face all the scandal and disgrace. Now, if ever, he needed her. And she was ready, eager to share his trouble.

In the morning she had a letter from Hugh. It was short to the point of rudeness. He regretted having made such a fool of himself. He had tried to take a short cut to fortune because he was so miserably tired of earning less than a good ditch digger. But he had messed that up just as he had everything else. He was going away for good, would be gone by the time she had his letter. She was free and must

forget him. He had never been good enough for her. She had been wasting herself on him anyway, so, no doubt, it was all for the best.

There was not one word of love, and no regrets expressed. And he tacitly admitted his guilt. He said he had been trying to take a short cut to fortune. Molly's faithful heart felt squeezed dry. He had released her from their engagement, he had gone away without seeing her to say good-by, and he didn't say where he was going.

Molly began to tremble violently. He couldn't have done anything so cruel as that; why, if she didn't know where he was, she couldn't tell him she didn't want to be free, she might even never see him again. Never see Hugh again! She felt the solid earth sliding from under her feet. Life without Hugh! It was intolerable, it couldn't be true that Hugh had left her like that. But it was true.

"Well, our good boy's left town, I hear," Ralph Clayton took deliberate occasion to tell her. "He checked out on the nine-o'clock express last night for the city." Molly's last hope collapsed. "And Miss Mazie Dean departed on the same train."

"I don't believe you," said Molly.

However, she had to believe him before the day was over. A number of people had seen Hugh and the Dean girl get on the same train. It was common gossip. Molly felt that everybody was whispering behind her back, and knew they were pitying her. She tried to be brave, but the tears were so close to the surface she could hardly keep them back. And the sympathy of her fellow employees only made it worse.

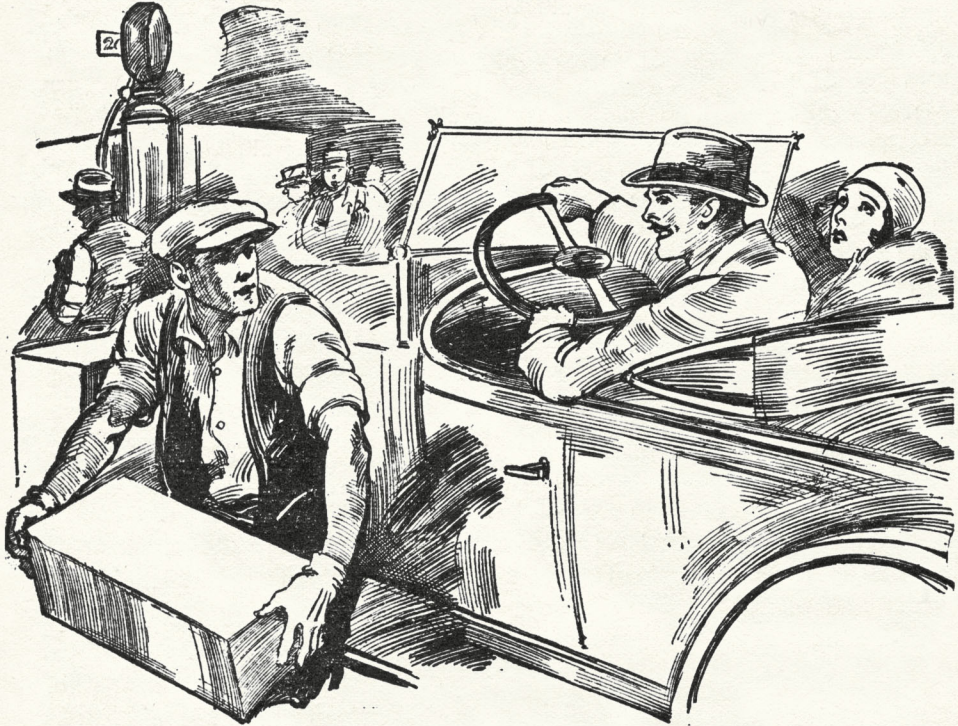
"Don't you feel so bad," said old Timsley awkwardly. "You're lucky you found out what sort he is before you married him. Just forget him, Molly. He's no good."

"You're wrong," said Molly, but her voice trembled.

How could she defy them all and declare Hugh innocent when he hadn't left her a leg to stand on? If he had only come to her and told her he was innocent, she would have defied the whole world for his sake, but he had gone away with the woman who had caused

wept herself ill, "how did that liquor come into his possession?"

Having cried out her heart, Molly was calmer than she had been since she first heard the news. Her naturally sharp wits began to function and she gave Miss Amanda a queer look.



Molly's heart cried out wildly. Hugh toiling like this on the docks, dirty and haggard and unshaven!

all the trouble. He hadn't denied his guilt or tried to see Molly. He had run away like a coward. Only the guilty flee. And yet—she saw again Hugh's earnest face and, somehow, although he had trampled her faith in the dust, something wild and fierce rose rebelliously from the wreckage of all her dreams. She knew Hugh! He couldn't be bad! It wasn't in him! She would always believe in him.

"But if he isn't guilty," said old Miss Amanda that night when she had become really alarmed because Molly had

"That's exactly what I am going to find out," she said.

"Oh, Molly, now the boy friend's given you the gate," murmured Ralph Clayton the following night, "how about stepping out with me? I'd like to take you to dinner somewhere and to dance. I'm due for a little celebration. You know I got a raise and promotion today."

Molly knew all right. Now that Hugh was gone, John Clayton hadn't wasted any time in giving his son Hugh's place.

"How about it, Molly, is it O. K. for to-night?"

There was a strange, satirical smile on the girl's face, as she replied.

"I'd love to, Ralph."

He lost his head a little over having at last won his point.

"Gee, that's swell, Molly! I'm sure glad you've decided to be sensible and forget Hugh Stannard."

"Our engagement is broken," said Molly.

They went to a road house for dinner and danced afterward. Ralph was in the wildest of spirits, but Molly wouldn't let him kiss her when he took her home and he became sullen. She suspected he had taken a drink or two when he had made an excuse a couple of times to leave their table.

"Say," he complained, "I'm your boy friend now. Come on, baby, just one little kiss. And won't you say you'll marry me, Molly?"

But she evaded his arms.

"Give—give me time, Ralph," she pleaded.

And because he never doubted that in the end he'd win her, he readily agreed.

After that, Molly was swamped with invitations. Ralph made his mother ask her to dinner and he bought a diamond ring to tempt her. But Molly refused to accept it.

"I don't want to be engaged yet," she pleaded. "Later—I—please be patient."

He was really in love with her so, although he grumbled, he consented to wait, but insisted that she go out with him every night. The whole town was interested and showed it.

"You see, Molly," said old Mr. Timsley, "it all happens for the best. You felt mighty bad about Hugh, but look how well everything's turned out. Here you are, going to marry Ralph Clayton, and you'll be rich and in society, and a thousand times better off than if you had taken Hugh."

Molly's lip curled.

"Do you think so?"

"Of course, everybody thinks so."

Molly only shrugged her shoulders carelessly.

"I'm so glad you've got over Hugh," said old Miss Amanda. "I was real worried about you at first, but now you're having such a fine time with Ralph, and what a lovely home you'll have as his wife, Molly, and a servant and your own car."

"So Ralph says," replied Molly dryly.

"Miss Bryan"—John Clayton came up to Molly's desk a day later, wearing a rather worried look—"I've misplaced a canceled check somewhere. One of my own personal checks, and it should be in my desk with my statement. You haven't seen it, have you?"

"Why, no, Mr. Clayton, I haven't."

He frowned.

"I meant to destroy it, but I didn't think I had. However, maybe I did and forgot about it."

"You must have, Mr. Clayton. No one ever touches anything in your desk."

"Yes, I know," he said testily; then with the unctuous smile Molly hated, went on: "When are you going to put that boy of mine out of his misery and promise to marry him, Molly?"

She blushed. "I—er—I don't know."

"Well, make it soon, Molly. We've always wanted a daughter, Mrs. Clayton and I, and"—he sighed—"we're selfish enough to know you're exactly the wife to make the boy settle down. He—he's been a little wild, I admit, but a fine girl like you will be a perfect balance wheel."

"Thank you, Mr. Clayton."

"Ralph," Molly asked that night, "what was the date of that wild party you pulled which got you expelled from college?"

Ralph was disconcerted.

"March 13th," he replied sulkily. "But what do you want to know that for?"

"Oh, just because."

The next morning Molly asked for the day off. She rarely requested a holiday, so John Clayton quickly granted her request, especially when she said she wanted to run up to the city to do shopping. To her discomfiture, Ralph Clayton insisted on driving her up and he wouldn't take no for an answer.

"I won't get in your way," he promised. "I'll leave you alone all day to buy all the rags you want and then we can meet for dinner and drive home together."

She finally gave in, but she made Ralph let her out in the heart of the shopping district alone and she didn't promise to meet him before six that evening.

Ralph might have wondered at the queer places to which Molly's shopping carried her, first to a big newspaper office downtown where she purchased a six-month-old copy of the paper which she carried off to study, then to a large theatrical agency where she waited till past noon for an interview with the man who placed the largest number of local bookings, and then to a cheap vaudeville show on the outskirts of town where she sat through three hours of an indifferent program, and lastly around to the stage entrance of the theater itself.

She was late for her appointment with Ralph, but, for once, he wasn't angry. He insisted on driving down past the lake front, although it was out of their way; and, although usually he



cared little for scenery, he stopped the car near the docks where some men in grimy overalls were unloading a freighter. Molly didn't understand until suddenly Ralph honked the horn and one of the workmen who was passing turned to look at them.

It was Hugh!

Molly's heart cried out wildly. Hugh toiling like this on the docks, dirty and haggard and unshaven! He recognized her at once and a wild, hungry fire filled his eyes. But the next instant Ralph attracted his attention and Hugh drew back, his face a hard, white mask.

"Oh, Stannard!" Ralph cried mockingly and started his machine.



Hugh Stannard came slowly into the room, accompanied by a policeman.

"Wait, wait, I must speak to Hugh!" cried Molly. She was out of the car, calling his name, "Hugh, Hugh!"

But he walked rapidly away.

"Molly, don't be a fool! Can't you see he doesn't want to talk to you?" cried Ralph impatiently.

Molly came back, her head hanging. Of course, Hugh thought she was going to marry Ralph. Every one thought so.

"What makes you so glum?" demanded Ralph on the way home.

"I—I think I've taken cold," faltered Molly. "I ache all over."

"What you need is a good stiff drink," said Ralph. But I suppose you'd be sore if I offered you one."

"No, I wouldn't, not—this time."

"Well, you are getting sensible. Here, take a shot out of this bottle and see if you don't feel better."

Molly did feel better almost at once; which was queer, for she didn't swallow more than a drop of the stuff. Ralph felt so much encouraged by her sudden outburst of gayety that he seized the opportunity to beg her once more to marry him.

"Come on, Molly, give a guy a break," he pleaded. "You've kept me dangling for days now."

It was too dark for him to see Molly's expression.

"I won't keep you dangling much longer, Ralph," she promised sweetly.

"Really?"

"I'll give you my answer not later than Wednesday."

"Gosh, that'll be swell!" he exulted.

As a matter of fact it was about ten o'clock Wednesday morning that the chief of police, a big, red-headed, hawk-faced man, named Burns, called at the bank and asked for an interview with old Mr. Ashe. John Clayton was more than a little perturbed by the occurrence and came over to Molly's desk.

"What's Chief Burns here to see Mr. Ashe about? He should have come to me. I handle all the bank's affairs nowadays."

"He didn't state his business," said Molly. "He just asked to see Mr. Ashe."

At that moment the buzzer on her desk sounded. She went into the president's office, where old Mr. Ashe was closeted with the chief. In a few minutes she returned.

"Mr. Ashe wants to see you and Ralph," she said quietly.

John Clayton started.

"What for?"

"He didn't say."

The Claytons looked uneasy when they followed her into the bank president's private office.

"Sit down, gentlemen," said Chief Burns; "you, too, Miss Bryan." He smiled. "We may need a stenographic report of this conference."

"What's up, chief?" asked the elder Clayton. "And is there any use bothering Mr. Ashe with whatever business you have here? He isn't very well, and I usually relieve him of most of the business connected with the bank."

He smiled benignantly at the old bank president, but for once the kindly face of his venerable employer did not reflect John Clayton's smile. In fact, Jonathan Ashe's fine countenance was set and stern.

"I'm handling this myself," he said so coldly that both the Claytons immediately lost color.

At that moment some one knocked.

"It's the young man we're expecting, I feel sure," said Chief Burns. "Come in."

Hugh Stannard came slowly into the room, accompanied by a policeman. John Clayton relaxed.

"Oh, I understand, Stannard's in trouble again, and you want our testimony as to his past record," he said comfortably.

"You're getting to be a regular cops' pet, Hugh," sneered Ralph. "What you arrested for this time?"

"On the contrary, Hugh Stannard is not under arrest," Chief Burns put in quietly. "We sent a policeman to bring him here because we wanted to be sure of his presence."

"Sit down, my boy," said old Mr. Ashe gently.

Hugh sank dazedly into a chair.

"I don't know why you've dragged me here," he said dully. "I can't imagine what I could have done now to deserve this humiliation."

At the sound of his voice, completely broken by shame and suffering, Molly

almost cried out, but he didn't look at her.

"We haven't brought you here to humiliate you, my poor boy," said old Jonathan Ashe, "but to right a great wrong that has been done you, one for which I blame myself, because had I been carrying my own responsibilities, you could never have been framed by the man I trusted who has deceived me so grossly and all but succeeded in ruining the life of a boy I loved like my own son."

"What's that?" John Clayton started to his feet. "Are you insinuating I framed Hugh Stannard?"

"Sit down, Clayton." Chief Burns's voice lashed like a whip, and John Clayton cringed and dropped back into his seat. "We aren't insinuating anything. We know you framed Hugh Stannard because you wanted his place for your son and we've got the proof, thanks to this brave young lady who never lost faith in the boy she loves."

He smiled at Molly and the Claytons turned to glare at her, but she was conscious only of Hugh who was gazing at her with the eyes of a drowning man who at last sees help coming.

"Miss Bryan," continued Chief Burns, "never believed Hugh Stannard was guilty and she set out to prove it. She had caught a glimpse of Mazie Dean and she believed she was a show-girl. Molly played up to you, Ralph Clayton, only to get the goods on you, and she got it. She suspected the whole thing was a frame-up engineered by you and your father. She found out the date you got into that scrape at college and she went to the city and looked up your little escapade in a paper that had come out March 14th.

"She had a hunch that Mazie Dean was the girl you were with and she still believed so even when she found out that the girl's name you were mixed up with was Peggy Moore and not Mazie Dean. Miss Molly then went to a book-



"My boy"—old Mr. Ashe had risen—"can you ever forgive me for letting those two scoundrels make me believe you guilty?"

ing agent and discovered that this Moore girl was playing in a cheap vaudeville house in the suburbs. She went out there and waited for her turn. Molly recognized her at once as Mazie Dean and went around to the stage door and got her address from the doorman. On the way home that night she tricked you into offering her a drink and saw you were carrying one of the bottles that Mazie Dean, alias Peggy Moore, had brought in from Canada.

"Hugh Stannard had nothing to do with this Mazie Dean. It was all a game—thought of and planned by you and this here woman. You and your father gave Mazie Dean the money to buy that

liquor in Canada and bring it in here, and you paid her handsomely for her trouble. You two planted that box of liquor in Hugh's room that afternoon, and she slipped that bottle into his pocket when she was walking home with him that night. Stannard told the truth when he said he knew nothing about the whole thing. He didn't. No one did but you, Ralph, your father, and Mazie Dean."

"You can't prove it! You can't prove a thing!" shrilled John Clayton.

"Oh, yes, we can," smiled Chief Burns. "We've got your canceled check drawn in favor of Peggy Moore for a thousand dollars. Miss Molly was

smart enough to get it for us. And if that isn't enough, we're holding Peggy Moore at police headquarters and she's confessed everything. Her testimony is enough to send all three of you up for conspiracy, provided Hugh Stannard wants to prosecute."

With a low moan, John Clayton collapsed, and Ralph began to whimper like a whipped cur.

Hugh regarded them contemptuously.

"I've no desire to have any more worry," he said slowly. "All I hope is that I never see either of them again."

"I feel exactly the same," old Mr. Ashe put in. He eyed John and Ralph Clayton sternly. "I shall be very glad to accept your resignations at once!"

For a minute John Clayton seemed disposed to fight for the position of honor and trust he had held so long but had betrayed so vilely. However, Chief Burns clanked a pair of handcuffs together meaningly, and Clayton stumbled from the room, a thoroughly beaten man.

"My boy"—old Mr. Ashe had risen and was smiling tremulously at Hugh—"can you ever forgive me for letting those two scoundrels make me believe you guilty when in my heart I knew all along you were incapable of anything dishonorable?"

Hugh, standing straight and tall, his shoulders freed from the burden of shame that had almost broken him, gripped the old gentleman's hands.

"You were always my best friend," he said brokenly, "except Molly."

Mr. Ashe smiled.

"Of course, you'll have John Clayton's job and his salary, if that's any amends," he said gently.

Hugh and Molly gasped. They hadn't dared hope for such a promotion as that for years.

"And at my death," the old banker went on, "you'll take my place and carry on. I always meant you to, only John Clayton was ahead of you in the line.

After him you were to be the next president. Now," he smiled crookedly, "you'll only have to wait till I pass on."

"I hope that will be a long, long time, sir," said Hugh sincerely. He had always loved the old man who had been as near a father as he'd ever known.

"Come, chief, I'll be getting along with you." Old Mr. Ashe's eyes twinkled. "These young people have a lot to say to each other, I fancy. And, after all, this is now Hugh's private office, and"—he smiled—"I've a notice I want to get in the afternoon papers. This whole town's going to know that Hugh is back."

He and Chief Burns went out, arm in arm, and closed the door behind them.

"Molly, Molly!"

Hugh held out his arms and they clung together, kissing each other wildly, hungrily.

"Hugh, why did you go away without seeing me? You knew I loved you—that I would want to see you."

"I know, honey, but I thought that you would be ashamed of me. And I had nothing to bring you. I had lost my good name, my money was gone—everything was gone. I thought that if I got out of the way you would forget me and later you would marry Ralph, who would be able to give you all the good things in life that you deserve."

"But I would rather marry you and starve or live in a tent," she murmured softly.

"Then marry me now—to-day—right away! We needn't wait, we—we're going to have more money than I ever dreamed of having. I—why, I can buy you a house now, Molly, and lots of clothes, and—and a car—and everything," he finished excitedly.

Molly gazed at him with loving eyes. "But all that I want is you and your love, Hugh. I don't want riches."

He drew her closer to him. "My own precious darling! Don't you know that every bit of love in my heart is for

you? Don't you know that I think of you the first thing in the morning and the last thing at night? That you are my whole life, without you I have no desire to live. Oh, dearest, I adore you!"

He bent and kissed her soft lips and Molly knew that every word he said was true.

The afternoon papers carried a complete story of Hugh's innocence and the announcement of his coming marriage to Molly.

Molly's eyes glistened as she read the glowing account of Hugh's life in the small town.

"There—I guess that will show them what fools they all were," she said when she had finished it.

Hugh smiled tenderly and took her in his arms. "I don't care what they think—it's what you think, precious."

"Why, silly—you know what I think. That you are the best, the most wonderful man in the world, and I love you!"

"And I love you, best beloved," he murmured, his face buried in the sweet softness of her hair. "My own Molly—the only one who always kept faith with me."

And as he bent to kiss her lips, Molly saw that there were tears in his eyes, and she vowed that never again would Hugh have another unhappy moment. And the kiss that she gave him contained all the sweetness and promise of happiness in the world.



— EVENING SONG

SUNSET dusts her purple mist
 On weathered roof and willow bough—
 Oh, wild and lovely lips I've kissed,
 Who hears your golden laughter now?
 Who comes at twilight to your side
 And speaks a dream of love to you,
 And spins his tales of moon and tide
 And islands in the far-off blue?

Stars wake like flowers down the sky
 And cool winds stir the garden place—
 Oh, dear and wayward heart that I
 Once knew was heaven's holy face,
 Where is the road I cannot see,
 The trail I seek in every quest
 Which will return my heart to me
 Within the haven of your breast?

BERT COOKSLEY.



SCREENED by the shadows of a towering hibiscus hedge, a slender girl wandered slowly toward the beckoning lights of Honolulu's famous beach hotel. The multicolored swaying lanterns, the music and laughter drew her on, though her feet seemed reluctant to carry her to the very threshold of romance and gaiety. She realized that there they must stop. She could not go on alone.

Darrel Moore wondered if she must always remain the way she was to-night—alone, on the outside looking in.

Had she been less engrossed, she

Tinseled Values

By
Athene Farnsworth

might have discovered the tall man in white flannels, watching her from a dark balcony of the hotel.

The lovely little figure, etched in silver against the gloom of the night, seemed almost ethereal, with her midnight hair massed in soft waves about the smooth

ivory of a face from which two great dark eyes gazed wistfully.

Lonely and rebellious, Darrel lingered, watching the colorful pageant.

Suddenly her heart contracted, and

she shrank farther into the shadows as a couple paused in the doorway to gaze out into the fragrant night.

Rita Powers, tall and willowy in a gown of glittering sequins, looked more dashing and sophisticated than ever, but her mocking laugh drifting out into the darkness made Darrel shiver.

She recognized the man with Rita—Ned Bassett, the young polo player, whose visit was the talk of Honolulu. Tall, dark, slender, and wealthy, he seemed a veritable storybook hero.

Now more than ever Darrel resented that blond beauty with him, that selfish little snob who had been on the same boat coming over from San Francisco.

In San Francisco Darrel had had her own little apartment. Having been left an orphan, however, soon after she finished school, she had been too busy making a success of her work to have much time for cultivating love and all the little arts and graces that accompanied it.

Now, at twenty-two, realizing what she was missing and longing to sample its sweets, Darrel had decided to spend all her savings on one gorgeous adventure in Hawaii. Surely in that magic land she would find some of the thrills for which her heart yearned.

But Rita Powers, with wealth and wide experience to overcome every obstacle, had spoiled all Darrel's chance for fun on the boat. Probably jealous of Darrel's loveliness, she had used every wile at her command to belittle her possible rival's clothes and personality. Too proud and too unsophisticated to retaliate, Darrel had withdrawn completely within herself, hurt and puzzled.

She had then pinned her hopes on Honolulu, but each day she awakened with hope and went to sleep with a growing ache of disappointment, the throbbing witchery of tropic nights only serving to intensify her loneliness. If she had just met one person to take her under his wing—but she had been too

shy to make advances and no one had bothered to seek her out.

To-morrow her time would be up. She would take another ocean voyage—but her heart leaped at the thought that Ned Bassett would be on that boat. If she could only meet him!

Darrel felt that she would have given her soul just to dance once with Ned Bassett, or receive one caressing glance such as he was bestowing on Rita.

Money, position, background meant everything!

"I want to be rich more than anything in the world!" Darrel heard herself whisper.

She brushed the tears out of her eyes, caught her wrap closely around her, and wandered back along the beach, entirely unaware that her little silent drama had been watched with more than ordinary interest by a young man on his balcony.

They were playing her favorite waltz. Soft voices sang as swift brown fingers coaxed unforgettable melody from their steel guitars.

Like brilliant-tinted shadows, the dancers glided under the swaying fairy lanterns on the hotel veranda. Amid the laughter of the dancers, the love waltz was now haunting, now mocking.

It seemed to Darrel that each phrase evoked a melancholy echo in her heart. How she longed to dance, to be a part of that gay spectacle of youth and romance, with its pretty clothes, its attention, its love.

Why shouldn't she dance? Not a soul was in sight. The music, the moon, the fragrance of the tropic night were in her blood. She began to sway, her feet tapping out the languorous rhythm on the hard-packed, gleaming sand.

She flung off her cape, delighting in an intoxicating sense of excitement as the blossom-scented breeze caressed her shoulders and fluttered the chiffon petals of her gown like iridescent gossamer wings.

With a last minor complaint, the music stopped. As she leaned against a palm tree to get her breath, she was startled by a whisper at her side.

"You lovely dancing sprite! Are you real or only a silvery wisp of moon magic?"

Strong fingers touched her shoulder, moved along her arm and covered her hand.

"You—you saw me?" she exclaimed in dismay.

"Thanking my lucky stars—yes. You were entrancing."

The warm color flooded Darrel's face as she met the eyes smiling down into hers.

"Drew Cameron, at your service," he bowed; then his white-flannel-clad arm reached out for her, drawing her close.

"There's that dream waltz again," he pleaded. "Will it break the spell if I ask to share it?"

Darrel's heart pounded. "But——" she started to protest.

"Please, no 'buts' on a night like this," he whispered.

She relaxed in his arms. Hadn't she begged for a taste of romance, a thrill? And dancing on the moon-washed sands of a fairy island in the close embrace of a man she could pretend was Ned Bassett was thrilling.

The music ceased, and voices warned them that people were approaching. Still he held her close, his lips perilously near.

Reality intruded. Darrel finally found her voice. "Goodness, I had no idea it was so late!" She tried to slip out of his embrace.

Reluctantly he released her. "What a nuisance people are!" His fingers sought hers again. "It's too early to go inside. Please, moon nymph——"

Darrel laughed. "My name is Darrel—Darrel Moore. I won't feel so ethereal if you call me that. And to prove that I'm flesh and blood, my cottage is right here on the beach where

we'll get some supper if you are hungry."

She marveled at her own temerity; never before had she invited a young man to her home, least of all a perfect stranger.

"Darrel Moore—that's a nice name," he approved. "Have you ever known a man who wasn't hungry?" They reached her porch and he held open the door.

"I haven't known many men." She could have bitten out her tongue the minute she made that admission.

It was not so much what she had said, but the hint of yearning in her tone that made Drew Cameron pause for an instant to give her averted little face a penetrating glance. But he turned her remark off as a joke.

"More power to yours truly, Darrel Moore. I had a feeling this was my lucky night."

In the lighted room they faced each other, both a little curious.

Darrel's scrutiny disclosed a slim, but perfectly built man of about twenty-seven, with unruly auburn hair and gray eyes in whose depths lurked a mischievous twinkle.

"Do I stack up O. K.?" he chuckled.

Darrel blushed. "Oh, yes." She had to admit the charm of his personality. Then with sudden daring: "Do I?"

"Do you? Precious infant, have you broken your mirror?"

Darrel glowed, but suddenly overcome by shyness, she hurried toward the kitchen. "You'll have to entertain yourself while I rifle the larder."

When she returned with chilled avocado salad, toasted rolls, and a spicy fruit cocktail of Hawaiian pineapple and bananas, she found him reading a ten-day-old Honolulu paper.

He looked up with a smile. "I found this propped under your lamp."

Darrel blushed. It was a big spread picture of Ned Bassett in polo clothes.

Seated at the table, he questioned her about it. "Are you, like all these other

girls, taken in by that tabloid stuff and dazzled by a fortune?" He watched her curiously.

Darrel remembered her feelings earlier in the evening. "I want to be rich more than anything in the world!" she had told herself, and when she thought of Ned Bassett, she still felt that way.

"Not just as you put it," she denied, "and I don't suppose you'd understand—but it would be wonderful to be rich," she insisted, her eyes downcast.

His eyes narrowed. "Would you marry for money?"

Darrel wished he wouldn't be so curious. What did this strange young man have to do with it anyway? But she answered him.

"No, not for that alone. But what girl, especially one who has had to work hard for some of the nice things of life, would not be tempted if the man were handsome and charming, too?" She met his calculating eyes defiantly.

"You're honest, anyway, little Darrel," he approved. "But I think you don't know yourself. I think love would mean more to you than all the money in the world."

Darrel laughed with a slight edge of bitterness in her tone. "Yes, Mr. Cameron? But I'd like to have a chance to prove such a choice." Then her mood changed. "Oh, please, Mr. Cameron, don't think me a mercenary little wretch. I'm not, really, but I do admire Mr. Bassett——"

"Oh, so you've met him?" he interrupted.

"No, but I've seen him at the hotel—and on the beach."

"But you'd like to meet him?" he persisted.

Darrel's heart missed a beat. Would she? Oh, what wouldn't she give for that chance?

She nodded, eyes downcast again. "But do you think he'd like me?"

Drew Cameron's eyes were brooding for a moment and he muttered under his breath: "Entirely too much, I'm afraid." Then in a louder tone: "I don't think he could help himself, little girl." His hand closed over hers on the table. "You've given me a perfect even-

ing, and now I think I know a way to do something nice for you. Your baggage labels: 'S. S. Oahu,' inform me that you're catching the boat tomorrow. How would you like to sit next to Ned Bassett three times every day for five days?"

Darrel's eyes glowed. If she had that chance—well, that time she'd see to it that she was her own charming self, and she knew she

could make an impression.

Drew laughed. "No need to ask, is there? All right. I'll fix it, and I'll be on that boat, too. But you mustn't forget me entirely."

"As if I could!" she chided.

"I hope that's true." He searched her eyes for further assurance. "I may be an idiot for risking it——" He shrugged his shoulders. "But now I must be going. Until to-morrow; sweet dreams of a glamorous voyage, little Darrel."

He kissed her fingers with a gentleness that made her quiver with a sudden, strangely sweet emotion. Then he disappeared into the night.

IN this issue you will find a serial by Margaret Littell and a short story by Jane Littell. After the editor had taken these stories she discovered the two girls were cousins who had not seen each other for years and who found each other again through *Love Story Magazine*. Isn't this a remarkable coincidence?

"Glamorous voyage," Darrel whispered, her fingers against her cheek. "Oh, it's sure to be that." Ned Bassett would be on board, and she was to meet him.

But even as she treasured that happy thought, a pair of questioning gray eyes and wind-ruffled auburn hair intruded. She decided that Drew Cameron would make a darling big brother.

She looked for Drew vainly at the boat the next day. She noted with a quickening pulse Ned Bassett's arrival, but at sight of Rita Powers, following close on his heels, her heart sank. Was this to be only a repetition of misery, after all? She leaned against the rail, solemn-faced.

A gorgeous flower lei was slipped over her head. Drew Cameron, immaculate in a white uniform, saluted.

"Oh, you're an officer!" Darrel looked her surprise.

"Sorry to disappoint you. I'm only a radio officer's assistant, but I have a better job in San Francisco," he teased.

"What's wrong with this job?" Darrel chided, trying to obliterate the thought that had instantly leaped into her mind: "I probably make more money than he does." She was ashamed of herself. What difference could his salary make to her?

"You'd have liked me to be chief officer, at least. I know you girls; you all fall for gold braid and buttons."

"Sh-sh," she silenced him. "You're too handsome to be safe, now." And it was true. The look in his eyes made her turn hurriedly back to the rail, a queer delicious tremor leaving her breathless.

"You entrancing little imp," he whispered, bending over her. "I'll get even for that dig."

"*Bon voyage! Aloha!*" people were calling from pier and boat. The Hawaiian band was playing. Tears sprang to Darrel's eyes as she thought of leaving that lovely land.

"Don't take it so hard, little girl. You're coming back. Every one does." His hand covered hers on the rail.

The last warning whistle, streamers of serpentine, anchor lifting, the band playing sadly and dreamily, and the *S. S. Oahu* drifted out into the bay. Figures on the dock grew fainter and fainter; there was a last flutter of handkerchiefs.

Darrel's glance turned back to the passengers on board who were to be her shipmates for nearly a week.

Ned Bassett's eyes were on her. Her heart gave a wild leap. He was almost close enough to touch her, and he had been watching. But just at that moment, Rita Powers came up.

"Ned, where have you been?" She slipped her arm through his.

"Just looking at something very lovely," he commented, but his dark eyes smiled meaningly into Darrel's.

Drew was watching, and as Rita enticed Ned away, he chuckled.

"Don't let that girl bluff you, child. Your innings are coming. And what did I tell you about his liking you, once he got a good look."

But his eyes were serious when a little later he excused himself, telling her he had work to do.

"Look your loveliest for dinner, precious," he cautioned as he left her.

That evening Darrel dressed with scrupulous care in a simple but exquisite gown of apple-blossom chiffon with green moiré slippers.

At the door of the dining salon, the steward, after asking her name, escorted her to the center of the luxurious room, and to her amazement, seated her on the right of the captain himself.

And on her right was Ned Bassett. Darrel's heart thumped with excitement as the men rose to greet her, and the captain made the introductions.

She heard Ned whisper:

"This is luck. I don't know anything nicer that could have happened to me."

But she knew instantly who was responsible. Drew Cameron must be on good terms with the pursuer.

What a dear, she thought. He had changed the whole color of existence for her. Her eyes found him at a table reserved for some of the lesser officers, but he rewarded her telepathic message of thanks with such a wicked grin that she blushed and hurriedly turned her attention to the menu.

Then she saw Rita Powers at a table with five somewhat stodgy-looking people. If ever Darrel had wanted revenge, she had it in the one venomous look that girl vouchsafed her.

All evening Darrel glowed with happiness. Only when other men claimed dances, did Bassett leave her side. He complained of her popularity, thrilling her with his possessive air.

Fate, at last, was smiling on her. Could she really win him? As Mrs. Ned Bassett, all sordid financial struggle would be past, and life would move on dancing feet.

They were standing at the rail, watching the phosphorescent trail of foam in the wake of the boat. Ned leaned closer.

"The proverbial penny."

Darrel smiled into his eyes. "How extravagant! I'll double that," she teased.

"Need you ask?" His tone held a challenge. "I was wondering at the incredible length of black lashes—whether I had been mistaken about a dimple lurking in the corner of a most intriguing mouth—a throat that——"

"Sh!" Darrel placed a finger over his lips. "The idea, talking so about one girl when you're with another!" she protested, trying to cover her agitation.

"Oh, ye-es?" he mocked, and caught her fingers against his lips.

Just at that moment, Drew came down the deck. He lifted a disapproving eyebrow at Darrel, but did not stop.

Ned frowned. "You know that fellow?" he inquired.

"Why, yes," she admitted. "He's an awfully nice man."

"No, doubt," Ned commented, "but one usually doesn't make friends with the crew, my dear."

For a moment, Darrel felt anger surge up within her. She hated snobbishness. She was all ready to flare up in quick defense, but Ned seemed to have forgotten all about the incident and was leaning toward her again, admiration in his eyes.

"You're the loveliest thing that ever happened to me, Darrel Moore," he whispered.

She decided that that was no time to irritate such a charming man with defense of another of his sex. He probably hadn't meant a thing. So she smiled back.

"Be careful, Mr. Bassett, or I might begin to believe half the nice things you say to me. You've been lovely to me tonight. You can't imagine how thrilling it is to play Cinderella to such a perfect Prince Charming."

He laughed. "Thanks for the compliment, but it seems to me that the tale is a bit twisted when the prince is already pretty certain whom the glass slipper fits." He leaned closer.

Darrel caught her breath. Could she believe that her dreams were coming true?

He had taken her arm and was piloting her forward along the deck toward the shadows under the bridge.

"I'm afraid some one will come along and try to take you off," he explained. "This is my favorite nook on the ship, anyway."

Darrel's heart was pounding as he slipped his arm about her, but as he drew her close and would have kissed her, she evaded him.

"You quite take my breath away, Mr. Bassett," she teased. "Why, you've only just met me."

Darrel longed for his caress, but she wanted everything to be perfect. Kisses



*"Are you real or only a silvery wisp of moon magic?"
Strong fingers touched her shoulder, moved along her arm
and covered her hand.*

to her were precious things, gifts of love, and she wanted to be sure that Ned really cared before she squandered her wealth of affection on him.

She didn't realize that this was a strategic move on her part, that her keeping him at arm's length only made her the more desirable in his eyes. He had recognized the genuine loveliness of the girl, and her appeal was finding weak spots in his armor of sophistication. He became more and more determined to win her.

"You're too tantalizing, little Darrel. It isn't time that inspires love—but I hate to think that already one evening is about to end."

The days sped by on winged feet, each more joyful and exciting than the last. There were deck sports, swimming in the big canvas pool, bridge, dancing, delightful companionship. Darrel wore all her pretty clothes with the knowledge that now they would receive all the admiring notice any girl could wish.

And Ned Bassett's interest was increasing by leaps and bounds. Darrel felt that it was only a matter of hours and an opportunity until he would propose. She hadn't let him kiss her yet. She wanted that first kiss to be utterly blissful and to mean that it sealed their future together.

Rita Powers had sulked at first, but realizing that Darrel

held the trumps on that trip, she tried to make up to her. And not having a scrap of pettiness in her nature, Darrel welcomed the other girl's overtures.

One tiny cloud marred perfection: Drew Cameron puzzled her. Of course, he had work to do, but she missed him and wished that he had seemed more interested in how she was getting along.

One evening when she was left alone for a moment, she caught a glimpse of him smoking alone at the far end of the deck. She slipped up to him and linked her arm in his.

"I've come for a dance, young man. You've neglected me frightfully," she pouted.

"Neglected you!" Drew laughed shortly, but without further comment, threw his cigarette overboard and caught her in his arms.

Guiding her out into the shadows, he danced with her in perfect rhythm as he had on that first memorable evening. Heart beating against heart, his cheek against the perfumed silk of her hair, his arm holding her close, he danced as if he were afraid fate was trying to snatch her from him.

Darrel's pulses raced. She felt supremely happy.

As the music stopped, he bent over her, resting his cheek against hers for a fleeting moment. "Darrel, you do care—a little?" he pleaded.

"Oh, Drew, how can you ask such a question? Even if you hadn't been responsible for making me the happiest girl in the world—" Acting on an irresistible impulse, she reached up and ran her fingers through his crisp waving hair.

She saw his fingers clench, but he did not try to draw her into his arms again.

"You've given me a few moments of heaven—and I want more. Only three evenings, and then—who knows? But run along, my dear; if you don't you may be sorry."

She couldn't imagine why she would be sorry, but seeing Ned Bassett looking for her, she obeyed Drew, turning back to throw him a kiss.

Darrel found herself counting the hours in the day until she could slip away for a brief meeting with Drew. Yet, try as she would, she had been unable to tease or tempt him out of a big-brother attitude since those few moments of their first stolen dance. And time was flying by in a hectic whirl.

Ned had hinted repeatedly that he had something very serious to say to her. He was inclined to get almost savage in jealous moments when she was with some one else, or tried to

evade his more and more insistent efforts to make ardent love to her.

But a small doubt about Ned had begun to creep in and spoil Darrel's paradise. Once or twice when she had finished dances with other men, and they had sauntered along the deck toward the shelter under the bridge, she had heard bantering voices—Ned's and Rita's—and she had felt certain Ned had kissed the girl.

He professed a mad infatuation for Darrel, yet he kissed another girl. Darrel was hurt. After they were engaged, would it be the same?

Darrel thrust the thought from her. No! He wouldn't!

The last evening of the voyage was to be celebrated with a masquerade ball. Darrel had squandered a whole week's salary on a gorgeous Chinese gold brocaded suit, which she had seen in a shop in Honolulu. But when she glimpsed herself in the mirror that night she had no regrets. And later, when she appeared in the dining salon, she was doubly repaid by the sensation her costume caused.

Ned's eyes were eloquent. "You're utterly devastating! How can I wait to get you in my arms and see if you're real?" he whispered.

"Be quiet, Ned, for goodness' sake. I'll spill my soup," she laughed.

"All right, darling, but remember, ours is the first waltz."

She could not have put Ned off any longer, even if she had wanted to. At the close of his second dance with her, they sauntered out to a sheltered nook on deck, and for a moment watched the waves break in rhythmic, foam-capped swirls.

Her hand trembled and her heart pounded as he leaned toward her.

"Darrel, you can't escape me now. You've wrapped me around those luscious little fingers of yours for the past five days, but to-night—" His arms encircled her; his face came close.

Darrel was startled. Ned's breath told her that he had been drinking. Oh, how could he? She tried to draw away.

His embrace only tightened. "No, you don't, lovely," he laughed harshly. "Ned Bassett isn't accustomed to going on indefinitely without getting the things he wants. What's the matter with you, sweetheart? Why, I'm so mad about you, I even want to marry you. You've gone to my head so much that I don't care even if you are just somebody's little steno. Kiss me!" His hands were rough as they tried to force her chin up.

Darrel could scarcely believe her senses. An involuntary shiver passed through her. This man, her idol, Ned Bassett was positively revolting.

His voice went on, now a little gentler, less arrogant, painting word pictures of what being married to him might mean for her. She would have gorgeous clothes, travel, imported cars, luxurious living.

Darrel was sick at heart. He was asking her to marry him; could it be possible that the little beggar maid was actually considering refusing the king? But she was. His pictures of a glamorous life with him fell utterly flat. Suddenly she hated him for an arrogant snob! She would rather scrub for a living than marry him, she told herself as she struggled to free herself.

Her conversation with Drew came back in a flash. She had told herself she wanted to be rich more than anything else in the world. Drew had known her better. "I think love would mean more to you than all the money in the world!"

Oh, where was Drew? She wanted to fly to him and tell him he was right. "Oh, you little fool!" Darrel called herself under her breath, finally shaking off Ned's embrace.

She faced him, her eyes flashing. "I'm sorry, Mr. Bassett, but the little steno finds she doesn't love the wealthy

and notorious Ned Bassett, and marriage, no matter how luxurious the surroundings, would be ashes without love. Please go now. I'm sorry if I have hurt—your pride."

"You're refusing me?" His tone was incredulous. "Why, you little fool——"

"Yes, you're perfectly right," she admitted, "but not for the reason you think. Please go."

Ned was furious at her. "There's some one else?"

"Yes," Darrel admitted.

Ned laughed scornfully. "That deck hand, I suppose. Well, I hope you'll enjoy scrubbing your own kitchenette." He turned on his heel and was gone.

"Well, of all the——" Drew came around the corner. "The reigning belle alone in the dark!" He turned her about, holding her face toward a beam of light. "Darrel, precious—you're not crying?" He drew her into his arms. "I thought by now Bassett would have proposed, and you'd be in seventh heaven."

"He did, and I'm not!" she wailed.

"You didn't turn him down, did you?" Drew was incredulous. "I thought you craved wealth, travel, luxury——"

"I did, but not at the price of love—and the wrong man."

His arms tightened. "Do you know the right one?"

"Yes," she answered almost inaudibly, hiding her face against his shoulder.

"You couldn't love me—just a poor ship's officer, when——" He paused, then went on, still unbelieving: "Why, you had a chance at a million—had it in the palm of your little hand! It's incredible."

"Oh, be still. You knew me better than I did myself. You knew love would be the only thing that counted."

For a long moment, he crushed her to him. "Did he kiss you?" he inquired, suddenly jealous.

"No. I couldn't get a thrill out of kissing some one I didn't love. Could

you?" She lifted a naïve, tear-wet face to his.

"No, adorable, I couldn't." He gazed down into her starry eyes. The lids began to flutter under the intensity of his glance. Slowly, reverently, he bent and kissed each soft, black-fringed crescent; then unable to resist longer, his lips crushed hers hungrily.

"Sweetheart," he whispered, "that must mean I have a chance!"

Darrel gave a silvery little laugh, her heart singing. "Something like that," she teased.

He caught her to him again, kissing her eyes, her hair, her lips, her throat, even her straight little nose, as if he could never get enough.

Finally, he whispered in her ear: "How about a party to-morrow night in my apartment—you to be guest of honor? I want my friends to see how lucky I am."

"Will they, though?" She stopped his answer with a kiss. "Now I'll have to go. We land at dawn, and it's so late."

He looked down at her tenderly.

"All right, sweet."

At her cabin door he kissed her once more. "Until to-morrow!"

After landing, Darrel spent the day shopping. She must look her loveliest for Drew and his friends.

Ready for the party, she surveyed herself in the mirror, an exquisite little figure in cobwebby silver lace, silver slippers with rhinestone heels, and a trailing scarf of rainbow tints. "You look nice, Darrel, old dear," she nodded to the reflection, "but you'd better make the most of this extravagance. It may be your last. A poor man's wife will have to be economical."

She looked about her tiny apartment. Perhaps if she kept her position, they would be able to afford an extra room. It was strange that Drew hadn't mentioned their marriage. He must be sav-

ing his proposal for to-night, she decided.

Her bell rang. A liveried chauffeur bowed to her when she opened the door.

"The car for you, Miss Moore. Mr. Drew was detained, but he felt sure you'd understand."

Darrel had no idea where she was going, and she was amazed when the car drew up at an imposing residence on Pacific Avenue. The chauffeur opened the door for her and ushered her into a brilliantly lighted hallway, where a maid in a frilly apron and cap immediately led the way toward a broad staircase.

Darrel thought she must be dreaming. The spacious rooms, beautifully furnished, opened out on both sides of her. Brilliantly gowned women and men in evening clothes were laughing and chatting.

To increase the puzzle of it all, as she hesitated for a moment on the stairs, she saw Ned Bassett and Rita Powers with frozen smiles on their faces.

The maid helped Darrel off with her wrap in a dainty orchid-and-silver bedroom, and went out. Darrel was alone in the room, but she heard the chatter of voices in the hall. What did it mean?

Drew opened the door and closed it softly behind him. "Darrel, how utterly exquisite you look! Oh, I'm so proud of you!" He drew her into his arms. "Darling!"

"But, Drew," she questioned, "what does——"

"Be patient, dear girl," he laughed. "I have a surprise for you later, but they're waiting for us downstairs." He slipped his arm through hers, drawing her out into the hall and down the steps, where she became the cynosure for admiring eyes.

Darrel's head whirled as she acknowledged countless introductions. Many distinguished men and women greeted Drew with an affectionate "My boy!"

and "Your dad will be delighted!" The name of Roberts kept popping up in every conversation.

Like a thoroughbred meeting a test, she kept her head high, answering smile with smile and greeting with greeting.

Captain Thomas of the S. S. *Oahu* was making his way toward them.

Drew's fingers tightened on her arm.

"Well, Roberts, my boy"—the captain's eyes were twinkling as he slapped Drew on the back after greeting Darrel—"congratulations are certainly in order. Happiness, luck, and all that for both of you. If you'd let that bouncer you insisted on seating at my table—but then, the minute I saw Miss Darrel I knew the stuff she was made of. And by the way, if you ever want another job on your own boats, give me first chance, will you?" He smiled at Darrel, then turned back to Drew. "The minute your father gets back from Europe, I'll tell him that D. C.

Roberts, Jr., is a chip off the old block."

Darrel couldn't believe her ears. "Roberts!" She felt she must be playing a rôle of clown in some mad farce. "Roberts—Drew Cameron Roberts, Jr.!" Drew, a son of the millionaire shipping magnate!

He caught her cold fingers in his, but his voice sounded strange and far away to her overwrought senses.

Hours—or was it minutes?—later, she was able to slip away from the gay crowd, even from Drew. She reached the bedroom and caught up her wrap.



They were dancing downstairs to haunting Hawaiian music.

A sob caught in her throat. She was running away. She'd move to another apartment; he'd never be able to find her and make a fool of her again.

The door opened and closed.

"And just where did you think you were going, Darrel?" Drew's hands were removing her wrap.

She faced him, anger blazing in her dark eyes. "Any place away from here, Drew Cameron—Roberts! You'll have to find some one else to make a spec-

He caught her in his arms. She struggled to free herself, but he held her captive.

"Laugh—what at? The loveliest,



She became the cynosure for admiring eyes. • Darrel's head whirled as she acknowledged countless introductions.

tacle of. Oh, how could you? How could you wish to humiliate me so?" Her words tumbled out in wild confusion.

"The joke is on me, all right. No wonder you were careful not to mention marriage last night! Every one will have a good laugh about the presumptuous little working girl trying to play Cinderella!"

sweetest, truest little girl in the world? And as for mentioning marriage—surely that was all settled in our first kiss!"

He took something out of his pocket and raised the slender third finger of her left hand to his lips. Then something cold encircled it. Darrel looked down at a gorgeous emerald-cut diamond, flashing and sparkling as if laughing at her.

Darrel went limp in his arms. He held her close, whispering against her ear:

"This little game wasn't a trick on you, darling girl. It started long before our night at Waikiki. I wanted to learn dad's business—and mine—from the ground up, wanted to make good with the men on our boats entirely on my own, so I just dropped my last name for a little while.

"And when you came into the picture—darling, after hearing what you said that night about wanting to be rich, even though I knew in your heart you didn't mean a word of it—do you wonder that I wanted to see if I could make good with you just as myself, make you love the man without any embellishment?

"I'll admit that at times I was scared stiff. I longed to step into the running on a par with Ned Bassett, but knowing him and knowing you I realized that he'd slip up somewhere in five days' time. But if I had lost you, after that

glimpse of paradise—" His arms tightened about her as though he could not let her go even for a moment.

"Thank Heaven I didn't lose you—and if you could choose a poor radio operator after a chance at a million—oh, don't you see, sweetheart, what it means to me to realize that you loved me for myself?" He lifted her face to meet his ardent eyes.

"Remember what I said about going back to Honolulu? Shall we go there on our honeymoon? We're going back to the guests now to announce our engagement. The newspapermen are waiting to take your picture. Oh, say yes, dearest girl!"

"Ye-es."

"Mrs. Drew Cameron Roberts, Jr.!" he cried exultantly.

As he kissed her tear-wet lashes, Darrel's arms slipped up around his neck.

"Who says dreams don't come true?" she whispered, and then she found heaven as her lips responded to his.



DAWN AND DUSK

I LOVE you when the birds awake
 At dawn with thrilling song.
 I love you when night spreads her wings
 Of dusk in shadows long.
 I love you when the sunset paints
 The sky with afterglow,
 And the first trembling star appears
 Where the pines stand in a row.
 I love you when your lips are crushed
 Like jasmine petals, sweet, on mine.
 I love you when our hearts in rhythm
 Respond unto love's call divine.
 I love you when you're near and answer
 Softly to my call,
 But when you're far away I yearn
 And love you most of all.

HELEN K. ROBERTS.

LS-2F



Delayed Ecstasy

By Margaret Littell

A Two-part Story—Part I.

CHAPTER I.

AT last! I've found you—alone!" The smooth voice came from the doorway with all the startling suddenness of an explosion in the luxurious little anteroom where other sounds penetrated only vaguely.

The girl at the window whirled as the heavy curtains fell together with a soft swish and pushed out the momentary sounds of music and revelry from the retreat she had sought.

Joan Winters gazed round-eyed at the man who had followed her.

LS—3F.

"Why—Count Seratt!" she murmured with a quick breath.

"Could you not say Peter?" the voice came again. It was smooth as the glistening black hair that matched the heavy, yet alert, eyes. It was sophisticated as the evening clothes that set off to such distinct advantage the tall slenderness of his military bearing. It was cultured as the rest of his mannerisms that bespoke a lifetime among the great ones of Europe.

"Well then—Peter," Joan said slowly. A smile trembled suddenly on

her soft full lips. There was a hint of young laughter in her voice as she spoke the unaccustomed name. "Peter—how funny to be calling you that!"

He crossed the space between them in two strides and seized one of the small white hands that nestled among the cloudy ruffles of pink tulle that tried but failed to conceal the bewitching lines of her luscious young beauty.

"Joan!" His head came down over her hand in a bow learned at royal courts. But his lips fastened to her palm a long moment before he looked up again. "Joan, are you laughing at me? Surely to you Americans the informality of first names cannot be so strange."

Joan moved back a restless step or two.

"No, it's not that. I wasn't laughing at you, but at myself. You see, six months ago I never dreamed of meeting a real count, much less calling him by his first name. I'm only a very ordinary, everyday American girl."

Count Seratt held up a long, slim hand in protest.

"Impossible! How could any one be ordinary or everyday as you call it—with hair like yours? Pale golden ringlets, Joan. And how can dark violet eyes, or a skin like gardenia petals be ordinary?" He broke off and looked down at her, the dark slumbering fire in his eyes gleaming out at her as though it would soon envelop her in its heat. Once more his sleek head bent down and she felt his lips burning the tender skin of her forearm.

"Peter—please!" The words were a command and a gentle rebuke. But they fell on deaf ears.

"Don't pull away, Joan," Count Seratt breathed. "You know why I do this, don't you? You read the message in my eyes at dinner, surely. Was it not for that—to hear what is in my heart—that you left the others and came here to wait for me?"

Joan's eyes widened. "You think I came in here to wait for you!" She turned swiftly and stared out the window that opened over the beautiful gardens of the hotel. But she wasn't seeing anything but the great purple dome of heaven with points of gold scattered over it.

"Then why did you come, if not to wait till I joined you?" came the whisper in her ear. She could feel his breathing on her hair, but his hands were firm on her arm and she had to remain there.

"I—you might not understand—but I'll tell you. I want to tell you. Every evening at this time, no matter where I am, I slip away and look up at the sky. You see"—her voice trembled for an instant, then went bravely on—"it was at night that awful accident happened to—my parents—their automobile, you know—and it seems I can get a little nearer to them when there's nothing between us but the stars—" she broke off and stood, her eyes uplifted, like a brightly shining slim candle, and for a moment the man at her side released his hold on her arm as though it were too sacred to touch.

"I heard about the tragedy," he said after a pause, "from Jerome Henry. Every one was curious to know why he suddenly stopped his lavish entertainments for six months—and now, every one is enchanted with the reason—meaning you, Joan."

Joan's eyes flickered in pain. "Oh, Cousin Jerome's been wonderful to me! I'd never seen him, because he's spent his life puttering around his old laboratory some place in England, but he entertained mother and dad the last time they were in Europe. He had just given up his active work and come over here to Paris and taken this gorgeous suite. It couldn't have been more than seven or eight months ago, because I was in boarding school while my parents were away. I never saw them afterward.

They landed, and were driving up the Hudson to see me, when it happened." She shuddered. "And then—afterward, when I didn't know what it all meant or what I should do, he sent for me to live with him, the old darling! But there, I must stop telling you all my troubles."

But Count Peter Seratt showed interest in the pitiful little tale.

"Jerome Henry is not your grandfather, then?" he asked.

The golden head shook negatively. "Oh, no, he's only a cousin of my grandfather's. But he's as marvelous to me as though he were my own father. He gives me a gorgeous room in his suite, and a maid to take care of me. Can you imagine that? And then he gave up his own life to be quiet with me until a proper time for mourning was over. Although I'll always mourn—here." Her hands pressed her heart as though to lessen the hopeless ache that only time would heal. "To-night is the first time I would let him entertain for me. And you ought to hear what he's planning for the rest of the winter!"

Youth had returned to her eyes. They glowed with joy as though lights had suddenly been turned on behind them.

"You'll be the belle of Paris, Joan," Count Peter said softly. "There will be countless men asking for your hand. You are the most beautiful girl I have ever seen anywhere. They tell me there are countless beauties in your country, but none of them could begin to compare with you. Joan, before any one else has a chance, hear me. I love you, I am pleading for your hand. See, my knees are bent before you!"

And before Joan could utter a word, the aristocrat went down on one knee in a courtly gesture full of grace.

"How well you do it—oh, I mean—please get up!" Joan was in a confusion of surprise and laughter and a little bit of fear. She and Peter were so alone. The music outside seemed to

shut off the rest of the revelers. And the sight of the count slipping onto his knee to propose, instead of seeming romantic, was so like the play she had been in at school last year, when she had had to practice that very gesture time and again to get it perfect.

Count Peter was looking at her, staring in bewilderment. Probably he had expected her to say different words. He stood up stiffly.

"I did not expect to amuse you," he said sullenly.

Joan was instantly filled with compunction. Involuntarily she stepped forward and laid an impulsive hand on his sleeve. "Please forgive me," she begged. "I didn't mean to hurt you, only you surprised me so. You see, it's the first time a man ever—well, proposed to me and I guess I didn't know how to act. I never knew they really got down on their knees. I thought that was just in Shakespeare's plays—oh, the way I'm talking!"

She stood looking up at him like an adorable child who has offended and wants to be forgiven, and something in the wide gleam of her eyes went straight to the heart of the nobleman who confronted her. At that moment he seemed to forget all the myriad thoughts that had prompted him to bring their short friendship to a swift climax this evening. It was the girl he wanted, Joan with all her enchanting, amazing loveliness.

Like a flash his arms came up from where they had fallen at his side. They went around the slim body in the mist of pink tulle. They drew her close to the faultless black evening clothes, and now there was nothing studied in the gesture.

"Joan—you adorable infant—I love you! Till this instant I never knew exactly how much, but the fact of your naïve surprise at my proposal shows me how truly innocent and unspoiled you are," he said. "Say you'll do me

the honor of becoming my wife! Let us marry at once, while Jerome Henry is alive and well——"

Joan pulled away uneasily and looked up at his impassive face—strangely impassive, even in love-making.

"Why do you say that?" she insisted. "Why shouldn't Jerome be alive and well for a long time?"

"Because he's past eighty, my dear. And his health is failing rapidly, even though he disguises the fact with his lavish entertaining and his constant seeking after new pleasures," Count Seratt replied softly. "He's a true sport. Jerome Henry. He's going to the end like the gallant old gentleman he is—with a smile and a blaring of trumpets to take the place of the usual tears."

Joan shook her head as though pleading with Count Seratt to take back what he had just said. "Oh, no; please don't say that. It can't be true." Yet she was remembering something that had happened a few hours before, just before the guests had arrived. Jerome Henry had fallen weakly into a chair in the great salon and she had run to him to find him pressing his hand sharply against his heart. But he had laughed away her anxiety by the explanation that he was subject to indigestion.

"Oh, let's not talk about marriage, please. I must give my whole attention to Cousin Jerome," she went on, trying to extract her hand from his grasp. "If he should die—what would I do! But it can't be true!"

Count Seratt bent over her, holding her hand to keep her near him until it hurt with real pain. "That's why you must marry me at once, Joan. I will take care of you when that time comes, and it's bound to come quite soon, I fear." He pulled her to him again, and his arm held her like live steel. "When will you give me my answer?"

The girl hesitated, her eyes dilated with two conflicting emotions—sudden anxiety for Jerome Henry and some-

thing else she did not quite understand. The face above her was drawing nearer. The black eyes had a compelling hold on hers that refused to let go. A strange panic arose in her heart and she struggled in his arms.

"Oh, please, I'm not ready to give you an answer. I don't know if I love you or not, and, anyway, there's Cousin Jerome to be considered. I want to give him—every bit of my thoughts—I'd do anything for him."

But Count Seratt, apparently, had lost interest in Jerome Henry. Joan's coral lips were too much for his peace of mind. Like a swooping eagle he bent swiftly, missing Joan's lips by a fraction because she suddenly jerked her head to the side.

She endured his kiss on her cheek, her body tense in his arms. And when he drew back to kiss her again, she seized the moment to disengage herself from him.

Joan was trembling. Count Seratt saw displeasure in her lovely face, and feared to offend her. After all, he thought, what could a young unsophisticated girl know of love? Better humor her until she belonged to him.

"You are nervous, and tired, Joan," he said soothingly. "I'll go now, but in two days I'll come for my answer." And he turned on his heel with military precision and went through the heavy curtains out to that salon beyond where Jerome Henry was entertaining all the smart cosmopolitans of Paris in Joan's honor.

The little room was quiet, save for the breathing of the girl who drooped like a fragile flower at the window. Her hand was slowly rubbing the spot on her face where Count Seratt's lips had pressed.

Suddenly a small door at the side opened, and she almost jumped in startled surprise. Her hand went up to her hair to eradicate any evidence of Count Peter's embraces and at the same time a

thought raced through her mind that if she actually loved this man she would have been proud for any one to find it out.

A man came into the room, a tall elderly man with blue eyes and a thick shock of white hair. His eyes rested

on Joan, and became filled with emotion as he looked at her.

"Why, here you are, little girl!" he exclaimed, and his voice still had youth in it after eighty years of laughter. "I missed you."

"Cousin Jerome!" Joan said. She



"Joan, before any one else has a chance, hear me. I love you, I am pleading for your hand." And before Joan could utter a word, the aristocrat went down on one knee.

went quickly to his side and placed her hand on his arm. "I've something to tell you."

"Then come into the study, dear," he said, drawing her into the adjoining room and closing the door. "Where do you want to sit while you tell me—in that big desk chair with the leather cushions or in the lovely little Louis Philippe beside the safe?" He could always take the seriousness away from anything, could Jerome Henry.

"I don't want to sit. I'm too excited," Joan told him. She sat on the edge of the ornate desk and twined her fingers in his. "Count Peter Seratt proposed to me. In that little room."

"What's that!" Jerome Henry's jaw dropped in surprise. "Well, he didn't lose a minute, did he? Let's see, he's seen you about four times. One of those Americans in the jazz orchestra out there would call him a fast worker."

Joan could see there was something else beneath the surface gayety with which he answered her confidence.

"But do you like him, Cousin Jerome?" she insisted. "He's coming back in two days for his answer. I didn't want to become engaged so soon. I'd rather just go on with you, having a gorgeous time and meeting people."

"And there are plenty of people who'd rather have you do just that, child," Jerome Henry admitted. "I'd never in the world want to influence you, dear. But if you aren't sure you love this man, don't take him. You're too young to grab the first man who proposes, even if he is a count, unless you can't live without him."

His words were uttered with a gentle flow of joviality, but his eyes had become the color of steel. They rested much of the time on his adored young ward as she told him the first problem that had confronted her since the tragedy of her parents' death had brought her to his care. But occasionally his eyes moved restlessly from one door

to another, as though an idea had just suggested something to him.

"I'm not sure I love him at all, Cousin Jerome," Joan's soft voice went on. "So I'll take your advice. I'll make him wait till I do or I don't. And now, do you know I haven't danced with you once this evening! Let's go out and let every one see how well we can dance together!"

Jerome Henry laughed happily. "You little darling! As though an old man could dance at eighty! And as though those men out there would give me a chance! No, my dear, I've lived this long by giving up too strenuous things, and dancing is one of them—but wait! Don't go out for a minute!"

He went over to the Louis Philippe antique chair and set it gently aside. His old hand raised one corner of the rich tapestry that covered the wall and Joan saw he was opening the little safe concealed behind it. Not interested, she gazed out through the window again, and was only half aware of Jerome's taking something white from the safe and placing it in his pocket. A muffled click, followed by the dropping of the tapestry against the wall told her he was ready to leave his study.

Immediately upon their entrance into the salon that was now serving as a ballroom, two or three young men stepped swiftly up to them.

"You're sure you won't dance with me, Cousin Jerome?" Joan asked the old man at her side.

"No, I'm past that," he laughed delightedly. "You can give these gentlemen the honor I decline so ungratefully."

His old eyes followed her as she glided away in the arms of a titled young Englishman, and it was only after she had been lost in the crush of guests that a spasm of pain crossed his face.

Hours later, the guests departed when dawn was streaking the sky. Jerome

Henry and Joan stood side by side and received the lavish compliments the guests heaped on the glowing girl whose fresh young beauty and unspoiled ways stood out so strikingly among the suave sophistication of the wealthy and socially prominent Parisians who were always eager to accept Jerome's invitations.

When the last one had left, and after the orchestra had gathered up its various instruments and departed with the huge check Jerome had given in payment for a lavish entertainment, the old man turned to Joan.

"Well, the first party's over," he laughed gently. "I've launched my little Yankee on Parisian society, and she's a great success."

"Oh, it was wonderful!" Joan cried happily. "You're so good to me, Cousin Jerome. I thought I'd never be happy again, and here you're doing everything to show me how wrong I was."

"And I'm not through yet, dear. I've only begun. There'll be a big party for you here every week all winter, and Madame de Fallon said she was sending out invitations for something or other, and that nice young Spaniard asked my permission to take you to the opera and—oh, I can't remember everything that I did hear to-night."

"The main thing is that you've taken the city by storm. These people are used to girls who are haughty and spoiled and greedy for the first title that comes their way. And you see how welcome you are, like a breath of spring because you've been raised simply and without the harmful effects of too much money."

Joan laughed. "Too much money! We didn't have any at all, Cousin Jerome. Daddy's firm paid his expenses to Europe, and he took all he had in his savings to put me in boarding school until they got back." Once again the flicker of pain burned in her deep wide eyes.

Jerome patted her shoulder. "Now, don't you worry about that, little girl. Your father was too young to have accumulated much. You're all I have in the world. You're the only person who would care if I lived or died. You're the only one I could depend on to carry out a wish, if I asked you to. And you're the only one in the world I want to take what I have—when I'm through with it."

"Oh, don't talk like that!" Joan begged. "I don't want any money. I'd rather have you." She stood on tiptoe and brushed her sweet young lips across his elderly brow. "Good night, Cousin Jerome. To-morrow we're going shopping for a little dog, you know. Oh, I can hardly wait!"

She danced off through the great room to the door that led into her own sumptuous apartment, and a sleepy maid rose to greet her. Here was no imperious young mistress who ordered her servant about in peevish tones, but a healthy young girl who sent the maid off to bed as though she were a close chum, and got into bed herself after carefully hanging her lovely white evening gown on a silk-covered hanger.

"That shows I'm just everyday after all," she thought with a laugh as she drew the soft sheets around her. "I don't know what to do with a maid when I have one. I suppose Peter would be thoroughly disgusted because I'm not much of an aristocrat." But Peter and his likes or dislikes did not seem so important. In fact she could not recall the look of ardor on his face. All she could remember distinctly was the easy way he had gone down on his knees—as though he expected that to impress her because she was so very young and unsophisticated.

Lying on the soft pillows, her golden hair spread out like the fronds of a fern, and her little nose healthily breathing in the cold air that drifted in through the open windows, Joan had a sudden mo-



**"Nanette! Stop talking! You're only trying to hide something.
What is it?" Joan demanded.**

ment of heartache. It did not concern those dear parents whose lives had gone out so tragically a few months before. Now it seemed a vague, yet very real longing was crying out for something, she didn't know what.

She suddenly knew what it was. After all her girlish dreams of a sweetheart, she had one—almost a prince as far as title went, and he was dark and handsome, too, but his lips had repelled her. She had struggled to get

away before they could touch hers. His arms had failed to awaken any delight in her.

Perhaps another girl in the same position might have regarded Peter's title and his looks and his position in society as enough without worrying about love. Or perhaps she might have decided love wasn't as wonderful as some people insisted. But Joan had the priceless memory of her parents' love. She knew the joy of their faces when they had kissed, and she was waiting for a man who would bring that same joy to her.

"At least there's no hurry," she murmured sleepily to the little painted cupid on the foot of her bed. "I'm only eighteen and a quarter. If I can't fall in love with a count, at least I can get a good sleep, which I probably couldn't if I loved him."

With a laugh she nestled lower among the feathery covers and waves of healthy young sleep came to engulf her. The sounds became fainter and more vague—like faint footsteps in the passage outside her door, like muffled noises in the study whose wall was next to the bedroom where she lay drifting into slumber. A small crash seemed to bore into her subconsciousness for just a moment, but it could only be a taxi door slamming below on the deserted street.

Joan slept.

And at once it was noon, with the sunlight falling across her face and the apartment just coming to life. People were walking outside her door, and though Jerome had given orders that she was not to be disturbed until she awoke of her own will, there was such a lot of noise out there. Voices calling excitedly, then some one hushing the cries.

The door opened and Nanette entered with the breakfast tray. Joan sat up quickly and looked at her. The maid never brought it like this until her mistress had pressed the bell.

"What is it, Nanette?" Joan asked,

on the alert at once. "Be careful, you're spilling the chocolate. Why, your hands are trembling like anything!"

"Oh, pardon—I am so sorry, Mees Joan—there! See the rolls are beautiful this morning! And the chocolate, it is 'delicious,'" the maid rattled on nervously, going through the motions with shaking hands.

"Nanette! Stop talking! You're only trying to hide something. What is it?" Joan demanded. Then a sudden thought struck her and her eyes widened. "It's not—Cousin Jerome—is it?"

Nanette hesitated, seemingly afraid to meet her mistress's eyes. But Joan's hand went out and grasped the uniformed arm and gave it a tug.

"Yes, Mees Joan, Monsieur Henry is ill this morning."

Joan had thrust aside the tray and was scrambling for her velvet robe and mules.

"Then that was what I thought I heard last night—just as I went asleep!" she burst out. "Oh, why didn't I get up and see what it meant."

"But it was not until this morning that he—became ill!" Nanette insisted, trying to hold the girl back. "The noises"—she shuddered a moment—"were the robbers again! Some one got in and tried the safe in Monsieur Henry's study. He heard them and caught them, but there was a fight—and they escaped."

"And Cousin Jerome was hurt!" Joan cried. "Oh, I'll never forgive myself for going off to sleep!"

She flung open the door and darted out through the great salon like a bright bird in her turquoise negligee. She did not see the young man who was on the point of leaving the foyer of the apartment because the servant refused to let him see Jerome and who stopped short to stare after her.

Joan stopped at the door of Jerome's room an instant, her heart hammering in her throat. What if he had been

hurt, or killed? But he must be alive! Steeling herself against what she would see, she opened the door silently and went across the thick rug to the bedside where a nurse was standing.

Jerome Henry was lying, white and still, on the pillows. His eyes were closed in a way that struck terror to the girl who had hastened to him. Something in the movement of the air, or an indefinable wave of perfume that always clung to her clothes, seemed suddenly to waken him.

His blue eyes opened and looked up, and a gentle smile came over the thin features.

"Joan—good morning!" His voice was surprisingly strong, and Joan was reassured at once.

"Cousin Jerome!" she said softly, taking his hand in hers and smiling down at him. "Oh, why did you let the robbers hurt you? Why didn't you let them go ahead and take what they wanted? I don't want you to be sick or hurt."

"Say, child, just because I'm eighty and have a heart doesn't mean I'm an old lady, does it?" he laughed, so strongly that Joan felt Nanette had exaggerated his condition. "I couldn't stay and watch some sneak thief walk off with everything in the suite, could I?"

"But you got hurt," Joan insisted, her mouth trembling. "Oh, I hope not badly——"

"Joan, dear, stop sniffing over me," Jerome ordered. "If I got hurt it was my own fault. But I'm not as bad as my servants would have me think. I don't need a nurse any more than you do. The fellow got me, and I fell, but it was a grand fight. I hadn't had one since I was a fifteen-year-old boy in America—haven't had so much fun in ages."

Joan had the young spirit which cannot understand death or tragedy. And Jerome's words sent her happy heart

singing again, because she wanted it to be as he said.

"Then you're going to be all right?" she asked anxiously. "You're sure?"

"Why, of course, child. If this nurse would go away and let me get up, I'd go with you to buy the dog," he said. "But that doesn't seem possible this morning."

"I won't get the dog," Joan asserted. "I'm going to stay here and take care of you."

"No, you won't!" Jerome laughed again at her loyalty. "You're to go out and get him. I ordered an especially fine one and you're to take your choice between a Pekingese and some other fancy animal they have there. Go now, dear. I'll be anxious to see what you get. I'll get well faster with a little puppy to play with."

Thoroughly reassured, Joan went back to her room and ate her breakfast. Then Nanette helped her dress for the street, and when she was ready, the maid put on a dull blue cap and cape and went with her. Joan had protested against this attention six months before, because in America she had always gone on errands or to school alone like any other girl. But in Paris, Jerome insisted on Nanette seeing her safely wherever she went when he was not with her, and Joan gave in to his careful thought for her.

CHAPTER II.

The two girls sat in the long limousine with J. H. on the doors and rode to the outskirts of Paris where a dog breeder had kennels. According to the thoughtful way Jerome had of doing things, especially where they concerned the young girl he had come to adore, Joan found the pet dealer waiting for her, with half a dozen excellent dogs from which one was to be selected.

"Mamselle may choose two if she desires," the smiling Frenchman said.

"Monsieur Henry paid me so liberally. He is almost the only gentleman in Paris who pays at once. No merchant ever need send that one a bill. He wants you to have the finest dog of the lot, but these are all fine, and I give you a pair if you like!"

"Oh, I think one is all I can manage in the apartment," Joan laughed. "Let's see—every one of the dogs is the dearest little thing. I don't know which I like best."

She untied her scarf from her throat as she opened her coat. As she leaned over to play with the dogs, one of them, a frisky little Pekingese, dashed up and snatched her scarf from her hand and ran away with it. Joan followed, laughing, and the minute she touched the scarf, the well-mannered dog let go his hold on it.

"Well, did you see that, Nanette!" she cried in delight. "He just wanted to make friends. Say, I believe he wants me to take him!"

"He is a fine specimen, mamselle," the man intervened. "Healthy and beautiful, too."

"Look at his little red tongue!" Joan cried. "It looks so cute the way he looks at you with his mouth open, as though thinking up some new trick to play on you!"

"He'll be full of tricks, mamselle," Nanette agreed. But it was plain she liked him best.

Joan went about the room, looking at the other puppies, and the small Peke frisked after her.

"It's no use," she laughed. "I've just got to take him. What's his name?"

"Ming Lee Su——"

Joan held up her hand with a laugh. "Ming's enough to remember, and it's long enough for a tiny little thing like he is. Come, Ming!" She stooped and held out her hands, and with a bound Ming was sitting on her palms and breathing softly against her cheek.

It was a very happy trio that rushed

back into Paris in the big car—Joan, Ming and Nanette. The maid seemed to like him as well as his young mistress, and so did Jerome Henry, when they finally arrived at the hotel with Ming behaving beautifully on his first trip in an elevator.

The little dog's antics made the old man laugh and forget the worry that the attempted robbery of the previous night had roused in his overworked brain. During the afternoon he seemed to improve so much that the nurse allowed him to sit up in bed, with Ming running across the satin cover to amuse him.

"I dare say there'll be no more burglars breaking into the place with a big brute like this around," Jerome laughed.

"I must teach him to bark at strangers," Joan said. "Then he can rouse us if any one should try to get in."

"That might be a hard job," Jerome said. "You see how friendly he's been with all the servants. All he seems to want is something to take in his mouth and run away with."

The next afternoon Jerome had sat up so long that the nurse insisted on a nap to keep from taxing his heart. And he promised to sleep on condition that Joan take Ming out for an airing, so the pup would be ready to play with the old man later on.

Once again Joan went in the limousine to the Bois de Boulogne. Nanette had a bad cold, and Joan insisted on her sitting in the car to wait while she walked a little way with Ming.

Nanette was feeling so miserable that she obeyed, otherwise what happened might never have come to pass.

"We'll only be a short time," Joan promised.

She walked away under the trees, leading or rather following Ming by his lead. The tiny dog danced ahead joyously, darting from side to side so that Joan's slim body swayed gracefully in her smart blue coat with a huge



As his hand brushed hers, a strange thrill flashed through Joan so that her face was a lovely pink when he straightened up again.

fur collar framing her utterly lovely face.

A passing gentleman reminded her, with his foreign features, of Count Peter Seratt and the girl remembered that that admirer would appear sometime during the day for his answer. Now

Joan knew what that was to be. She knew for a certainty that she did not and could never love him, and the knowledge seemed to set her free as air.

She knew now that the one thing she wanted to make life perfect was love,

and she was ready for it. Perhaps at some of the parties which her new friends were so busily arranging for her, she would meet the man she could love.

The thought filled her with happy excitement. Anything might happen in Paris, anything. She determined to enter into the gayety of her new life, because now there was nothing to keep her back. Everything was wonderful. Jerome was getting well, the thief hadn't taken anything from the safe, the morning mail had showered her with lavish invitations, and perhaps before very long she would be in love with some one who would love her for always and always.

A burst of joy raced through her so that she wanted to run with sheer gladness. Stooping down, she unfastened Ming's lead from the harness.

"Now, run," she laughed at him. If he didn't return when she called him that would be a good excuse for her to run too.

She walked blithely along through the beauty of the Bois, and the admiring eyes that turned as she passed forgot the beauty of the day when they looked at her.

But Joan was unconscious of anything but the young exuberance inside her. Her eyes followed the uncertain course Ming's unguided feet were taking.

Suddenly she saw him dash across the ground and over to a bench where a man sat, his back turned, his hat held loosely in his hand. A swift apprehension caught at Joan. Would Ming do as usual, snatch anything that dangled and make off with it?

"Ming!" she cried. "Come here, Ming!"

But Ming either did not hear, or didn't want to hear, for he ran true to his own form. Like a flash of black lightning he bounded up to the bench and in another instant he was bounding

away, the strange man's hat in his mouth.

Instantly Joan was running after him on swift, slender legs. The man was running, too. Together they chased the faithless Ming across the ground, behind several benches, and finally they rounded him into a corner.

Joan reached down and now, as always, the Pekingese gave up his quarry politely. She turned and handed it to the owner, and found herself looking into the deep brown eyes of the best-looking young man she had ever seen.

Instantly a warm flush spread over her soft cheeks.

"Oh—I'm sorry—my little dog was so mischievous," she managed to say. She stood there like a slim beautiful child in comparison with his lithe tallness.

"I'm not," came the immediate answer. "Not a bit."

"Why, you sound like an American!" Joan exclaimed, looking up at him.

His strong mouth broke into a smile that showed the flash of white teeth.

"Of course I do," he said. "Because I am. And you sound a little that way yourself. If I weren't almost sure I'd seen you some place since I came to Paris, I'd think you had just stepped off a boat from the States."

"But I am American, too," Joan told him. "I've lived here six months, but I want to go back as soon as my guardian will take me. I'm sure, though, that you have never seen me, because I've not been anywhere since I came."

The young man stepped up eagerly. "Now, please don't think that was part of a line, because really I think I have seen you. But any way, the important thing is that your dog did his best to introduce us, and I'm going to finish it. I'm Jack Lorrimer, from New York."

Under his wavy brown hair, his eyes were like those of a small boy's and Joan threw convention to the winds.

"I'm Joan Winters. I used to live in one of the suburbs until—" she caught her breath in time. "Well, now I'm living in Paris and wondering how soon I'm going to meet some Americans—or at least I was."

"Well, you don't have to go on wondering. You know, I was indulging in the same thing, thinking how unlucky I was to be over here on what seems to be a false chase, a fool's errand, or what have you," Jack went on, his eyes resting admiringly on her. "But this is my lucky day. Here—let me do that."

He took Ming's leash from Joan's fingers and fastened it to the bright new harness. And as his hand brushed hers, a strange thrill flashed through Joan so that her face was a lovely pink when he straightened up again.

"I—I think we'd better go now," she said in a vague confusion. Surely she was no longer a mere child, to fall madly in love at a mere glance. All her good judgment urged her to get away from this place before she fell completely under its strange spell. "The chauffeur has been waiting a long time—"

"Oh, I say! You're not going to leave the minute we meet!" Jack burst out. "I thought maybe we could have tea together or something. I was all set to get acquainted. You don't have to go, really, do you?"

Joan hesitated. Plainly, he was the sort of person Jerome would strongly approve of. And as for herself, every instinct seemed to urge her to stay and look into his eyes and perhaps feel the touch of his hand again.

Suddenly she saw at a distance a figure in blue coming along the path toward them. Nanette!

"No," Joan said. "Really, I must go now, although I wish I could stay and have tea with you."

Impulsively, Jack's hand came out and grasped hers, sending little thrills shooting up her arm.

"Then you'll come back again, promise! Let's meet right here to-morrow at this same time, won't you please, Joan?"

Joan could not pull her hand away. She stood, gazing up into his eyes, her heart pounding so that surely he must hear it.

"Yes," she breathed, "I promise, Jack."

Gently she withdrew her fingers from his big warm hand and he stood looking after her as she hurried away.

Joan scarcely knew what she said to Nanette on the swift drive back to the hotel. All she was conscious of was the tingling thrill in her body that the clasp of Jack's hand had left. All she thought of was his eyes that had poured over her like a caress, and his tall, strong body in perfectly tailored clothes and his thick, brown hair that made her go weak at the very thought.

Surely she couldn't have fallen in love in those few minutes! But already she was looking forward to the next day when she should see him again, and her heart plunged as she thought of that.

They went into the apartment, Joan, Nanette and little Ming, and the instant the door opened to admit them, the nurse came running across the huge salon.

"Oh, mamselle, quick! Monsieur Henry—he is dying!"

Joan stared at the woman for one instant, the strange words dashing over her like ice water. Then she darted swiftly over the thick rug, past the little group of frightened servants at the door, and into Jerome Henry's large room.

He was lying on his pillow, his face drawn with agony. At first Joan thought he was dead, and she threw herself on her knees at his side in an agony of weeping. But there was a movement of the old hands, and looking up through her swift tears she saw

the blue eyes looking at her, only now they were a glazed gray color.

"Joan—child——" he gasped so softly that the girl had to bend over him to hear. "Dear little—girl—I'm dying, you know."

"Oh, Cousin Jerome," she sobbed. "I can't bear to have you go! Isn't it all a mistake, or——"

"Hush, dear, I knew it was—coming. Now, bend close—listen—there is something I must—say."

Weeping, Joan bent nearer and held the long, thin hand in her soft, young palms. She watched the barely moving lips, and heard the astounding things they uttered.

"Joan—I've carried out my lifelong plans—I've spent every cent while I—lived. Now there's nothing left except—maybe enough to take you back to America—when everything's—settled."

He stopped and writhed in agony, choking back the death that clutched inside his throat.

"Cousin Jerome—oh, I don't want anything," Joan wept, her tears washing his thin hand and cheek.

His hand was fumbling for something under the coverlet. In great pain he found it, and handed it to the girl with an effort that seemed to take his last bit of fading strength.

He tried to raise himself up, and from his lips there came a hoarse whisper.

"Guard it as you do—your honor—with absolute secrecy until——" He stopped, and Joan knew an awful fear that he had gone. But the whisper came again, like a voice that was already dead. "Until you place it—in the hands of—Josiah Cheston—and hurry—hurry——"

He fell back on the pillows, and Joan did not need to hear the verdict of the nurse or the hastily summoned physician to know that he was dead; gone from her forever.

Sobbing hysterically, she crept across to her own room and shut the door, and it was then she realized she was holding what Jerome had committed to her care. It was a small leather case, thin and flat.

She was about to place it in a drawer, when she remembered the dying words of the old man, and instead, she slipped it down the neck of her dress until it

nestled against the warm skin over her heart.

The days that followed were never quite clear to her afterward. She went through the demands upon her young inexperience in a daze that was broken only by periods of grief. She had come to love Jerome and if the world that had once known him went on with their gayety and pleasures as he had

wanted them to do, at least there was one heart that mourned his death with real sorrow.

Joan found in his desk exact directions for disposing of everything. She arranged for a quiet burial and sold all the expensive furniture to the hotel owner. Alone and bewildered, she paid all the servants and let them go. Ming she gave to Nanette who was overwhelmed with sorrow at parting with her adored young mistress.

There were several trunks of beautiful clothes that Jerome had bought for Joan, and these she had taken to the steamer that was to bear her to America. She would have taken the cheapest passage, but Jerome's written directions



specified that she go first class, and the lonely girl carried out his directions to the letter.

On the steamer she kept to herself, thinking over Jerome's last days, and always feeling the leather case safe against her heart. It was only the urging of the kindly stewardess that made her go up on deck for exercise, and it was on one of these excursions that she had an unavoidable meeting with the elderly couple who occupied the stateroom next to hers.

Professor and Mrs. Carey were friendly, middle-aged people, voice teachers from New York, returning from a long awaited trip to Europe. They took Joan straight to their hearts, and protected her against being bothered by the other passengers. They took her between them for walks around the deck, and afterward Mrs. Carey would accompany the girl to her room and tuck her in her bed.

"You're being so good to me," Joan said one day as Mrs. Carey was hanging up in the closet the dress she had just taken off.

"We love you, dear," the woman said simply. "We never had any girl of our own, and it just seems you're like a daughter, almost. I wish there were something I could do for you. Your cousin wouldn't want you to be as sad as you are, I know."

Joan smiled wanly at the kind face bent over her, and suddenly she sat up.

"There's something you can do for me," she said. "You can help me find a job in New York."

"A job!" Mrs. Carey gasped. "Why, child!"

"Yes, I mean it," Joan went on rapidly. "These are the last luxurious days I'll ever have. In my bag there is less than fifty dollars. I thought perhaps I might help Professor Carey with his voice students. You see, there's one thing I can do and that is play the piano."

Mrs. Carey patted the excited little face. "There, there, dear, we'll see. Perhaps you might accompany the pupils when they have lessons."

She hurried out of the stateroom with a promise to be right back, and Joan rested among the soft cushions, feeling the indistinct motion of the vessel, hearing the vague drone of its motors. Now that she had enlisted the help of the Careys, a weight was off her mind. They could be counted on to help her get employment, and she didn't have to think of that. She could think, instead, of a pair of deep brown eyes, and her heart could fall sickeningly at the thought of that day in the Bois. She could see him coming back the next day, and waiting, and wondering. And she had never come, and he would never know. Joan pressed her face against the soft linen and wept for her love that was lost as soon it was found.

On the day before landing, Joan spent the morning convincing the kind stewardess that she didn't feel like attending the masquerade that night. She had no costume, for one thing. Well, the woman had a lovely one that one of the passengers on the last trip had given her, an Elizabethan costume that that queen herself would have been proud to wear. But Joan had avoided the passengers during the trip, and she knew it would be foolish to attend a gay party where she knew no one.

Mrs. Carey came in during this talk, and she added her argument to that of the stewardess.

"I have good news, my dear," she chirped in her sweet voice. "My husband thinks he can make a place for you in our music school. Now, Joan, we will pay you thirty dollars a week, and let you live with us, if you will accompany our best students. We love you, and want you with us."

"Oh, Mrs. Carey!" Joan threw impulsive arms about the woman's neck

and gave her a glad young hug. "You're an angel, making me so happy. I wish I could do something for you."

"You can," Mrs. Carey laughed. "You can go to that party to-night and dance with the other young people, and get some color into those pretty cheeks."

"All right, I will," Joan burst out. "Just to please you, though."

The dance was in full swing before Joan let herself out of her cabin and went to the huge ballroom where all the gay spirits on board were making merry. She knew she had been dressed as carefully as any one could be, for the stewardess and Mrs. Carey had spent an hour on her, getting her make-up just right, piling the golden curls high on her proud little head, fastening her soft alluring curves into the tight bodice.

There had been a moment when Mrs. Carey had left to get her a brooch and the stewardess had had her back turned. Then, like a flash Joan had taken the leather case from the place where it always nestled next to her heart and had slipped it into the full puff of her sleeve. The tight part below would keep it from falling out, whereas the neck line of her bodice was so daringly low that Joan couldn't keep a corner of the case from showing.

As she entered the ballroom she had a feeling of security. The thing Jerome Henry had intrusted to her was safer far than when she wore modern clothing, and that now was the main reason for her existence. If it was the last thing in life for her, she would deliver that safely to Josiah Cheston, whoever and wherever he was. She had decided to wait till she got to New York before making inquiries, so to-night she could be young and gay again.

But a heavy weight seemed in her heart. This gay party was the place for happy lovers. The thought tore through her and made her grieve for Jack's deep eyes, his gay dancing eyes, his eyes that had promised even love.

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The orchestra was sobbing out a burst of primitive wails that tugged at the romance in Joan's nature. She stood poised on the threshold of the colorful ballroom, her hair a blaze of gold above, her black mask, her neck and shoulders rising like curving pearls out of her gorgeous costume.

Only an instant she stood there, looking through the slits of her domino, and then some one was stepping up to her and bowing low, and encircling her slim body, drawing her onto the floor. They drifted and glided to the music, and the man talked in a low voice. But Joan paid no attention to him, even though he was unmistakably foreign and distinguished. He might have been a prince, but he had no interest for her, and she was glad when a dashing pirate cut in and danced off with her.

They danced divinely together without talking, and then the foreign gentleman cut in. Now it seemed a game between the two, only Joan did not enjoy her popularity that was attracting attention from everybody. Suddenly she felt uneasy with the smooth, suave foreigner. She was sick of the dance and she wanted to get away from all the gayety.

"Take me out," she breathed to the pirate the next time he cut in. "I'm tired of all this, please, if you don't mind."

Without a word the pirate led her to one of the doors, and before the girl realized where they were going he was opening the door onto a portion of the deck away from any chance strollers.

The wind was gentle, and cold too. The pirate took a steamer rug that had been left in a deck chair and wrapped it around Joan, and then he stood away, very distant and polite, yet strangely eager too.

"Let's unmask," he said in a voice that sounded deep and vaguely unnatural, as though he were intentionally disguising it.



"Yes, let's," Joan said. "I'm going right down to my cabin." She reached up and removed her domino as the pirate unmasked, and suddenly they stood staring in open-mouthed amazement at each other.

"Joan! So it was you all the time!"

Mad excitement tore through the girl's slim body and for a moment the breath left her.

"Jack—it can't be," she gasped. Her slim hand went out as though to brush

away the shadow of a dream, and she found it seized eagerly in a big clasp that was warm and familiar.

Jack had stepped close so that she could see the shining brown of his eyes in the semidarkness of the sheltered deck.

"Joan, you didn't come back," he said, and his voice sent breathless delight through her. "You never came after that day. I waited every afternoon, and I watched every face, and



"Darling!" he breathed. "Joan, I love you! Do you understand? I love you, darling. I feel as though I'd always loved you."

then I was ordered home. It was the hardest thing in the world for me to leave Paris, Joan. I thought if I waited long enough——"

"Oh, Jack—I knew you would go back for me, and it was terrible not to be able to go and tell you what had

happened," Joan interrupted softly. "My guardian—died that very day, and I had to settle up everything as soon as possible and return to the States."

The warm hands tightened on hers and his head bent lower until their eyes were almost on a level. "You poor

little thing, having to face that all alone," he murmured, looking at her with a gaze that seemed a caress to the lonely girl. It seemed to warm her, to catch her up into a safe haven.

"Say, it's great to find you, Joan! I can't believe my luck. You see, there was something about Queen Elizabeth that reminded me of you and I couldn't help cutting in so much. I knew it couldn't be you, and yet there was always the hope—well, my hunch was right. I've found you at last."

They stood on the half-darkened deck, the strains of the far-away orchestra sweeping them closer together, beating in time with their hearts.

Unnoticed, the borrowed rug slipped from Joan's softly gleaming shoulders. Her madly beating heart, her body seemed to strain forward.

For a moment they stood there, while the whole universe waited. The very air about them seemed to tremble with quivering anticipation.

Suddenly, with a low cry Jack gathered her into his arms with such gentleness and yet such masterful possession that Joan was powerless not to yield. His lips came down on hers in a long kiss that was an eternity of terrifying sweetness, causing them both to tremble in ecstasy.

"Darling!" he breathed. "Joan, I love you! Do you understand? I love you, darling. I feel as though I'd always loved you."

His lips touched hers again and again. Her arms crept about his neck and clung. Underneath the black starless sky they stood together, their hearts beating as one in the wilderness that goes with the ocean. It seemed their lips had drawn them together across the water, and they were powerless to resist the love that overwhelmed them, that had sprung into being on that first lovely afternoon in the Bois.

"Jack, dear," Joan said shyly, from the depths of his big arms, "I'm afraid

it's getting awfully late. I don't hear the orchestra any more. I'll have to go."

But Jack only held her the closer. "Sweet girl, how can I let you go this time, after waiting so long and then finding you just by accident?" He stopped and flashed a radiant smile at her. "I have it, dearest! Let's sit in these chairs till morning comes, and then get the captain to marry us! Will you, darling?"

"You funny boy!" Joan laughed softly, touching his thick hair with her finger tips. "Of course we couldn't do that. Besides, we're getting into New York to-morrow. Had you forgotten?"

"Yes, to tell the truth, I'd forgotten everything but you," he admitted with a low laugh. Then, more seriously, he added, "But, darling, I mean that about getting married. I want you to marry me the moment we get to New York."

A little warning memory made the soft smile fade from Joan's face.

"Oh, Jack, I'm afraid I can't marry you quite so soon," she parried.

"Why, darling? Don't you want to marry me at all?" he insisted, holding her off at arm's length and gazing at her imploringly.

"Yes, oh, Jack, I do!" she said earnestly. "But first I have something very important to attend to before I do another thing—even before I can think about marrying you, dear."

Jack's arms drew her tight against him and his lips came down warm and passionate on hers.

"Darling little Joan," he breathed. "Your loyalty to your trust, whatever it is, makes me love you all the more. But since you say you can't marry me until you finish that, then I want you to hurry and get it done. Then we will get married, won't we?"

The golden head nodded against the dark one as Joan's lips met Jack's in a kiss of delirious rapture.

An hour later Joan stood looking at herself in the narrow mirror of her cabin. Her eyes were deep violet, shining with love. Her cheeks above the warm ivory of her perfect shoulders were blazing with mad joy. Her whole being was wrapped in a hazy dream, filled with the promise of gorgeous ecstasy to come so very soon.

"Lucky-girl!" she whispered to her image in the glass. "You lucky, lucky girl!"

Slowly and with a dreamy smile hovering over her lovely lips, she removed

the heavy fastenings of her elaborate costume. Down slipped the bodice, revealing the slender allurements of her young body. Out came the slim luscious roundness of her white arms from the tight sleeves.

Suddenly the smile was gone from her face. A look of horror spread over her features. A desperate fear burst inside her brain as her hands tore at the heavy silk she held.

The full puff of the upper sleeve had been slit open from behind, the leather case was gone!

TO BE CONCLUDED.

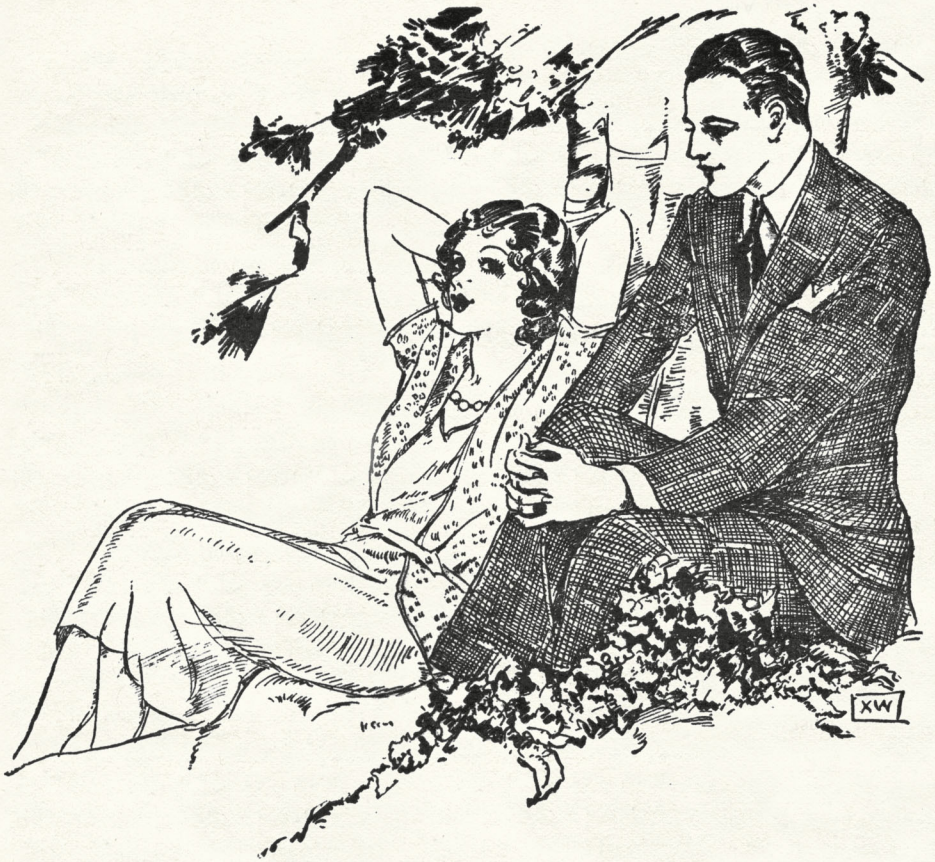


LOVE TIME

IT is the love time of the thrush,
 The robin and the oriole,
 When in joy's soft, unlanguage'd hush
 Heart speaks to heart and soul to soul,
 And hands steal out to meet their kind
 In fervent clasps foretelling bliss,
 While arms round throat and bosom wind,
 And love knows union in a kiss.

It is the love time of my heart
 That seeks in you faith's changeless gold;
 I stretch my vacant arms apart,
 And draw you to their shielding fold.
 I kiss your hair, your eyes, your lips,
 As moonlit hours steal away,
 Till dawn across the mountain slips
 To bring another happy day.

CLEMENT CALVERT.



Substitute Redheads

By Florence Ford

PLEASE, Loris, be a sport and do it.

Can't you see how important it is?" The voice of the tall red-haired girl was pleading, and she glanced anxiously at the small redhead on the bed.

Deloris Parke stretched her slim young form in its striped pajamas. She was really much too sleepy to think about anything. "I can see that you're out of luck," she yawned, "but I can't see why I should give up two perfectly good dates in order to entertain your middle-aged relative."

"Peg, can you beat it!" Despairingly Lorraine Traill turned to the pretty

brunette who sat near them. "She hasn't even been listening! Loris, I told you that if he were just a relative I wouldn't care—but he's my guardian!"

"And if she isn't here to meet him he might stop her allowance," Peg added earnestly. The trio had chummed together all through their three years at the State University, but to-night Peg and Lorraine had joined forces against Loris.

The girl on the bed smiled sleepily. "Oh, but you wouldn't really want me to do that! He must be at least fifty, and I have two perfectly good dates."

She wished they would go away and leave her alone; she was dreadfully tired.

"But you may have to break only one," Lorraine insisted. "He'll probably rush right off to New York."

"You can afford to be optimistic—they aren't your dates," Loris told her. "Why don't you ask some of the girls who haven't any? This isn't a popularity contest."

"Because it has to be a redhead! He saw me when I was twelve, and my hair was absolute carrots. That's one thing he wouldn't be likely to forget. Oh, what am I going to do?"

"Oh, dear," thought Loris, "I wish they'd stop it!" Aloud she said: "Then get another redhead. We aren't the only ones at the university. You could ask Madge Roberts and Kitty Vail——"

Lorraine sighed wearily. "Madge and I don't speak. As for Kitty, her hair is much too dark, and I don't trust her at all."

"You might buy a red wig. Peg could wear it."

The dark-haired girl looked up a bit anxiously. "I'd look awful in red hair. My skin's much too brown."

"Maybe his eyes are failing."

"Nonsense!" said Lorraine shortly. "We can't count on anything like that. You're the only one who can do it."

Loris rolled over and buried her bright head in the pillow. She was beginning to be irritated. Even if they were her best friends they had no right to insist on her doing a silly thing like that. "I wish you night owls would clear out and let me sleep," she said crossly. "I have an eight-thirty class even if you haven't," and she pulled up the covers, and thrust her gayly striped legs beneath them.

"If we could only make her realize how important it is!" Lorraine wailed. "It may very easily change my whole life. If I can't come, Fred will probably ask Frances Smith for the week-

end, and she's simply crazy about him. She might cut me out."

In muffled tones Loris said: "I hate to see two girls squabbling over a man. I wouldn't want one if I had to get him that way."

"It's about the only way you can get a nice one," observed Peg gloomily, "but it certainly is a shame that Fred won't have a chance to see Lorraine in that new black dress."

"It would knock him cold," said Lorraine, and her voice began to quiver, "and now—oh, I don't know what I'll do!" The wail ended in a sob, and she took out her handkerchief and dabbed at her eyes helplessly.

Loris sat up and looked at her, frankly astonished. "Why, Lorraine, I didn't know you cared that much about Fred!" Wide awake now, she actually began to think about the matter. She was very fond of Lorraine, and if the other girl were really unhappy something would have to be done about it. After all, what were two dates? She would have many more before the year was over. "All right," she said, "I'll help you out. What do I have to do?"

"Oh, Loris!" Lorraine was tearful in her gratitude. "How perfectly darling of you! Now everything will work out——"

"Yes, but what do I have to do?"

"Oh, just be nice to the old thing. His name is Randall J. Proctor, and he was daddy's partner, and he looks after some kind of mines down in South America."

"And he hasn't seen you?"

"Not for ten years. I was a little string bean with freckles and red hair, and for all he knows I might have grown up into almost anything. I've been living with Aunt Mary, so all he's done is send me checks. And now he's here on a business trip."

"And he's going right back?" asked Loris anxiously.

"His letter said he had business in

New York, and then he has to catch a certain boat."

"What sort of person was he?"

Lorraine shrugged. "Oh, I don't know—sort of big and fat. I can't remember much, except that he gave me some books and I never read them."

"Well," said Loris, "that certainly is a lot for me to go on."

"It's all you need. He doesn't know a thing about me, so tell him anything. But try to make it nice—something that will appeal to him. He's probably old-fashioned and sentimental. You do not have to mention the cigarettes or the time I was almost kicked out of school. And you'd better wear something dark and simple, and no make-up."

"And make a fuss over him," added Peg, "so that he'll think you're awfully glad he came."

Loris frowned. It didn't look like a very interesting week-end, and she had rather expected to enjoy herself. Sadly she said: "Tommy was going to take me to the Green Mill Friday night. What a change this will be!"

"Never mind," said Lorraine consolingly. "I'll give you those gold earrings you like so much and two pairs of silk stockings to square it. And if I marry Fred you can be my maid of honor. How's that?"

At eight o'clock on Friday night, Loris stood in her room in the sorority house, looking at her reflection in the mirror. She wore a plain black dress and no jewelry, and her complexion was noticeably in its natural state.

"Tell me," she demanded of Peg, "do I look sweet and unsophisticated? I never had any idea how hard it was to look that way."

Peg stared thoughtfully. "I don't know—black does things to you. Maybe you'd better borrow a navy-blue dress."

"I tried, and there isn't one in the house that's small enough. What else could I do?"

"You might part your hair in the middle."

But Loris shook her head. "Nothing doing," she said firmly. "It would simply ruin my finger wave. No, I'm afraid Mr. Randall J. Proctor will have to take me just as I am and like it."

"Well," said Peg, "I wish you luck. Do you mind lending me your crystal choker to-night? You won't be using it." And she walked down the hall carrying it in her hand.

Another girl, wearing practically nothing, poked her head in the door. "Loris, since you're pinch-hitting to-night, you won't mind if I wear your evening wrap, will you? It just matches my new dress."

Loris groaned. "Oh, no—take everything. Anybody need a date? I have one of those I'm not using too."

"That's all right," said the other girl, going off with the wrap over her arm. "Alice has him already. He called up this afternoon."

Loris took a last peep at herself, and rubbed her nose to make it shinier. As one of the freshmen entered she inquired: "What's the matter? Is he here now?"

"Well," said the freshman dubiously, "there's a man here to see Lorraine, and you said anybody——"

"All right," said Loris, "I'll go," and she ran hastily down the stairs.

The hall and living room were filled with men, waiting for the other girls who lived at the house. The victrola was playing noisily and two couples were dodging about among the chairs, trying to dance. Loris pushed through them and went out to a small room at the back of the house. By previous arrangement that was to be kept clear all evening so that Lorraine's guardian might be quietly entertained. Just outside the door, she stopped for a moment, smoothed her rebellious hair, and tried to look sweet and girlish. Then she entered.

A tall, handsome young man rose

from his chair and stood looking at her curiously. Loris gasped. "Oh," she said weakly, "there must be some mistake. I was looking for Mr. Proctor."

"I am Randall Proctor."

"But—but——"

"I'm looking for Miss Lorraine Traill," he told her.

"I'm Lorraine Traill," she answered.

He gripped her hand firmly. "Then here we are," he said in a pleasant voice.

Loris sat down abruptly. "But I—I didn't know you were so young. I thought you were old enough to be my father. I saw you when I was twelve years old, and you were fat——"

The man stared at her. "Is it possible that you don't know my father died four years ago? He was the one you met. I've never seen you before."

"Oh," murmured Loris faintly. How like the scatterbrained Lorraine to have forgotten that important fact!

"You see," he was explaining, "I have the same name, and after dad died I took charge of the mines, and so of course, I handled your affairs and sent your checks. But it's awfully funny that you didn't know about it."

"I—I guess I forgot," said Loris lamely. Inwardly she was furious; she hated to feel like a fool before this attractive man. "I'm awfully sorry," she added.

"That's all right. A guardian in South America probably seemed more or less like a myth. Well, what shall we do now?"

"Do?" echoed Loris.

"Why, yes. We can't sit around in this chicken coop and talk all evening. Aren't there places where we can dance?"

Loris remembered the impression Lorraine had wanted to make and opened her mouth to refuse, but almost at once she changed her mind. If Lorraine could really have seen her guardian she surely would not have wanted Loris to do such a foolish thing. Loris

had to amuse him, and he was obviously not the sort who would find it amusing to sit around all evening. Then, too, he was one of the most attractive men she had ever seen, and at thought of going out with him she felt a quick thrill of pleasure. So she decided to use her own judgment. "You'll have to wait," she told him, "while I change my dress."

When she had once more reached her room, she looked in the mirror and began to laugh. In that dull dark dress, that shiny nose and colorless face, there was little to please a young man, if she knew young men. Once more she decided to use her own judgment.

Ten minutes later she came downstairs wearing a sheer black chiffon dress, with pearls about her neck and in her ears, and a tiny black hat pulled down over the waves of her red hair. Her cheeks were pink and her mouth scarlet, and about her there floated a mist of delicious perfume. She was indeed a picture to delight any man.

Randall J. Proctor surveyed her with obvious approval. "Now that's much better," he told her promptly. "What were you trying to do before—impress your aged guardian?"

Loris smiled up at him. "Something like that," she confessed.

He laughed softly, "I never realized that a girl would dare to go out with such an entirely undressed face."

They went to a night club, where the lights were dim and the music dreamy and heartbreaking. When they danced, Loris realized that she had never met a man whose step suited hers so perfectly. Moving about the floor, they seemed to belong together, and her heart sang happily.

When they grew tired of dancing they began to talk, and the girl listened spellbound while he told her about his life in South America. Then they discussed other things, and found that they had many likes and dislikes in common.

And as the evening went on she began to feel that for the first time in her twenty years she had met a man who could really mean something to her. She tried hard to be calm, but she was conscious of growing excitement, and she realized that the interest was far from being entirely on her side. All through those hours together she could feel that rising tide of emotion. Was it really possible that people still fell in love at first sight?

On Saturday he rented a car and they drove far out of town to eat supper at a little inn on the river bank. The place was deserted, and they ate their meal with a sense of delicious intimacy. When it was all over they could scarcely bear to say good night, and Loris realized that now they were caught in a current from which there was no escape. But then neither of them wanted to escape!

On Sunday they had a picnic dinner. Sitting beneath the trees with Ran beside her, Loris felt sure that she could never be so happy again. It was enough just to be near him.

But greater happiness was waiting, as she realized when Ran told her that he loved her. "Darling," he said, "it seems ridiculously soon to tell you, but I care far too much to keep it to myself. And somehow I keep hoping that you feel a little the same way."

Loris's cheeks were scarlet. "Perhaps I do," she said softly. "I—I don't know what to say," and her voice quivered.

"Just say that you love me—that's simple enough."

"I do love you, Ran. It does seem silly to fall in love so quickly, but I can't help it." And as his arms caught her closely and his lips met hers, she knew that she had not made a mistake. She did love him.

Lorraine returned at eight o'clock Monday night, and went directly to Loris's room. Flinging her arms about

the other girl's neck, she said eagerly: "I've done it!"

"Done what?" asked Loris absently. She was thinking about Ran.

"Why, landed Fred, of course. The black dress did it. Look!" Unbuttoning her coat, she displayed a jeweled fraternity pin. "I'm going to have a ring next month."

"Oh," said Loris, "I'm awfully glad. Congratulations!" And then she turned back to her mirror and adjusted an earring.

For the first time Lorraine actually looked at the other girl, and her eyes widened. She saw a new dress, a fresh finger wave, and a perfection of make-up which could mean but one thing on Monday night. "You have a new man," she said accusingly.

Loris smiled faintly. "No, I'm still entertaining your guardian."

Lorraine was aghast. "Hasn't he gone yet?"

"No," said Loris. "I think he'll be here all week." Color rose in her cheeks as she thought about it. Life was so wonderful now.

"But he had to make a boat."

"He decided to take the next one."

"But—but I don't understand."

"You will," Peg told her as she entered. "Randall J. Proctor is just twenty-six years old, and the handsomest thing I've seen in years. Fred or no Fred, when you see him you're going to be mighty sorry you turned him over to little Loris."

"Your date's downstairs, Loris," said a freshman, sticking in her head. "Oh, hello, Lorraine. When you see what you handed to Loris you're going to be kicking yourself the rest of the term."

"But what became of the fat one?" demanded Lorraine excitedly.

"He died," said Loris, "and this is his son. Good-by," and she danced out of the room.

About three hours later Loris and



*Loris gasped. "Oh," she said weakly, "there must be some mistake.
I was looking for Mr. Proctor."*

Ran sat at a small table, looking at each other. About them were many other small tables with rose-shaded lights and happy couples, also looking at each other. The music was soft and full of tenderness.

Loris was very lovely that night. She wore a green dress which clung to her slim figure, and a green hat to match. The lights caught the soft glow of her red hair, and made her eyes seem larger and her skin whiter by contrast. Before her on the table was a plate of food which she could only play with,

for she had no appetite, but she could see that Ran was unable to eat, too. How could either of them be hungry when they had just found each other? How wonderful that love should have come to them both so quickly!

"Lorrie darling," he murmured, reaching for her hand, "I'm wild about you. But I guess you know that, don't you?"

She nodded and felt the color rising in her cheeks.

"Some people would say I was a fool, missing my boat that way, but it's been

so much more than worth it. I should have gone Sunday, but we've had three wonderful days, and now we'll have many more. And to think that I might have missed knowing you!"

Loris drew a deep breath. "It seems too glorious to be true. Will it upset things very badly if you don't get back?"

He shook his head. "Not much, darling. I tried to arrange everything so that I could stay as long as I had to."

"As you had to?" she repeated wonderingly.

"Yes. I realized that I might have to stay two or three months. I didn't know how long it would take to make you see things my way."

The girl stared at him in astonishment. "I don't understand what you mean."

He laughed. "I had to make you see that you must marry me."

For a long moment Loris sat silent, her fingers twisting about the stem of the glass. At last she said very slowly: "You mean you thought of marrying me—even before you knew me?"

Briefly he studied her face; then he said deliberately: "I've known you for years, dear, ever since you came to the university. I know all about you. I can tell you what clubs you've belonged to and what class offices you've held, and how you won a beauty contest and went to any number of parties——"

"But how?" cried the girl. "How could you possibly know all that?"

He smiled rather queerly. "I'll tell you. About a year after dad died, when I had gotten things straightened out, I began to feel very curious about you. It isn't exactly the usual thing for a man twenty-three years old to be the guardian of a girl of seventeen. Of course I was only managing your affairs and sending checks, but I really was your guardian—dad had fixed it up. There weren't many women around where I was, so I began to long for a

really nice girl, like the ones I had known in college. Dad had told me you were a cute red-headed kid and I always liked red hair, so I used to dream about you and try to imagine what you looked like——"

Loris caught her breath sharply. Her face had turned very white.

Ran continued: "About a year later I heard that you had entered the university, so I subscribed to your college paper——"

"Oh, you didn't!"

"I certainly did. I never heard of a red-haired girl who was quiet or retiring, and so I hoped there might be something about you in it."

"And was there?"

He nodded. "Right on the front page they had a story about how you turned the tables on some sophomores who were treating you rough. I forget what it was, but it sounded like an awfully cute trick. And in the next one I found your name in a list of sorority pledges, and in a bunch of girls who had gone to a big dance at another college, so I knew you must be the real thing."

"Oh!" said Loris faintly. She was beginning to be frightened by the revelation.

"I went on taking the paper," he continued, "and I followed you right through those three years of college. I've been proud of you, too. From what I could tell you seemed to be one of the prettiest, smartest little girls in the whole university. They put you on committees and made you a class officer, and you won that beauty contest and——"

Loris clasped her hands together very tightly. "And then?" she asked in a queer voice.

"The more I heard about you the crazier I was to see what you really looked like, but I just couldn't seem to get away from the mines. So I thought about you, and dreamed about you, and

waited for the day when I could find you and try to win your love. But things didn't change, and at last I told myself that if I didn't hurry it would be too late, for a girl as lovely as you might very easily be engaged already. So I just dropped everything and came."

Loris sat silent, staring at nothing, and her heart was now as heavy as lead. It was Lorraine Traill Ran wanted, not herself. It was Lorraine, who had done practically what she pleased and made history at the university, Lorraine who had won a beauty contest and left many broken hearts behind her. Loris herself was just an ordinary student, prettier than the average perhaps, for she had always had admirers, but not at all remarkable. It was not in her to do the gay, crazy things that Lorraine did, or to win so much attention. She had always been content just to study, and to have a little fun, and admire her more brilliant friend. But it was the brilliant friend with whom Ran had fallen in love way down in South America. It was unlikely that he would have noticed Loris at all, if she had not been temporarily thrust into the other girl's shoes. She managed to stifle a sob. "I hope you weren't disappointed," she said very weakly.

"Darling, you know I wasn't!" His eyes gazed tenderly into hers, and unexpectedly the tears began to sting against her lids. He would never look at her like that after he found out.

Should she tell him? She imagined that tender look changing to one of scorn and disappointment. No, she could never endure that. She would have to write a letter, and then simply fade out of his life. Oh, what a change from the happy expectations of an hour before! Loris shivered with distress.

"Well," said Ran, "haven't you anything to say about it? Doesn't it mean anything to you that I wanted you even before I saw your face?"

With an effort she managed to speak. "It—it's very nice," she said in a stifled voice, "but let's go home now, shall we? I'm terribly tired."

As they drove home in the taxi she felt his arms about her and tried to return his kisses, but it was all agony, for she knew that it would be the last time. And it seemed that her heart must break if she had to give him up. If only she had never met him, had never substituted for Lorraine! She had been happy enough before, but now it seemed that she could never smile again.

"Darling, I love you so much," he told her as they said good night. "It seems too wonderful to be true that you're actually going back to South America with me."

She broke away from him at last and ran into the house.

Lorraine was in bed reading when she heard Loris open her door across the hall. At once she slipped into a dressing gown and ran hastily into the other room. It was quite dark.

"Loris!" she said sharply. "Loris!"

There was no answer, so she turned on the light.

Loris lay face down across the bed, her green dress rumpled, her shoulders shaking with sobs. Lorraine paused, a bit frightened, for she had never seen the other girl cry before. No one had ever seen Loris cry. And they were such long, dreadful sobs. At last she laid a hand on her shoulder. "What's the matter—can I do anything?" she asked awkwardly.

Loris did not lift her head. "Please leave me alone," she said faintly. "Please turn out the light and shut the door."

Still rather frightened, Lorraine did exactly as she was told.

Lorraine had an eight-thirty class the next morning, and so Loris stayed in bed until she was sure that the other

girl had gone. After she had taken a shower and dressed, she sat down to write a letter.

It was very hard to do. She knew that she loved Randall Proctor more than she had ever loved any one—more than she would be able to love any one again, and now she must say good-by forever. For three days it had seemed that all her dreams had come true, but it had only been a mistake. Ran did not love her for herself; he loved her because he thought she was Lorraine Traill! Three days was far too short a time for any man to fall in love, and she should have known it. He had been all over the world and done everything, so how could he possibly have lost his head in such a little while? Such things happened only to foolish, romantic girls like herself. Had it not been for Lorraine's glamorous achievements Ran would never have so much as noticed her. Once more she found the tears welling into her eyes.

Well, she had to write that letter. It was impossible to keep her secret any longer now that Lorraine was back. And then she would leave college, Loris told herself, for she knew she could never bear to face him after he learned the truth. To see the tenderness fade out of his eyes, to see him look at her in scorn would be absolutely unendurable. And so she began to write the fatal letter to him.

"Ran dear," she began, and then threw the sheet away and started over again. There was no use calling him that; such things were all finished. Without any heading her pen scratched across the fresh sheet.

I'm not Lorraine Traill at all. I took her place because she had to be out of town and needed a red-haired substitute. I didn't mean to deceive you or make you fall in love with me, and I'm terribly sorry if I've hurt you. But now that I know you were in love with Lorraine before you even saw her, there's nothing I can do but go away. Please try to forgive me.

She signed her name and then dropped her head on the table to cry quietly for a few minutes.

When she had pulled herself together a little, she packed her clothes in her suitcase, then put on a coat and pulled a beret down over her thick red hair. Running down the stairs, she entered the kitchen. "Please," she said to the cook, "give me a cup of strong black coffee."

When she had drunk the coffee in big gulps, she asked for another cup and tried to eat a piece of toast with it. But food choked her, and so she went in search of a freshman. Those unfortunates had to do all the odd jobs around the sorority house, and she gave her letter to the first one she could find. "I want you to take this over to the hotel to-day between classes and tell the bell hop to give it to Mr. Proctor. It's very important, so be sure he gets it."

The freshman stared at the suitcase. "Why, Loris, are you going away?"

"Just going home, Ruth." Something about her expression forbade further questioning.

"But you're coming back, aren't you?" Ruth asked anxiously. All the girls at the house loved Loris.

"Oh, I'll probably be gone just a few days. Good-by, and don't forget that letter."

Among other things Loris owned a very shabby car. She found it parked in the back yard among some bushes. The house had a double garage, but two of the girls owned new cars, and these were usually kept in it. During the night there had been a great deal of rain, and so Loris's car looked rather discouraged and had a puddle on its top. She found a broom somewhere and swept the water off. Then she swung her suitcase into the back seat, and tried to start the engine.

But that was another matter. The car had evidently decided that it deserved a rest. Loris played with it for

half an hour, during which time she got quite greasy but accomplished very little else.

At last she became desperate. Would the thing never start? She had to get out of here, and there was not enough of her allowance left for railroad fare or even for garage service. The new green dress she had bought for Ran had used it all up.

Presently another freshman came out and offered to help. "I've seen cars stuck like that after a rain. They put gasoline in a cup and poured it into something to start them."

"What do they pour it into?"

"Oh, heavens, I don't know. Some kind of a thingamajig."

"You're a big help," said Loris in exasperation. "Perhaps we could push it."

They pushed, but neither of them were very big. "Go in and get Ruth to help us," said Loris at last. "She was in the dining room eating breakfast a little while ago."

"Oh, no," answered the freshman. "Ruth's gone. She has a ten thirty, and she had to take a letter somewhere before class."

"Before class!" cried Loris wildly, and looked at her wrist watch. Why, it was after ten already! Ran might even now be on his way to tell her what he thought of her. She simply couldn't face him; she had to get away. "Oh," she said desperately, "how am I going to get this thing started?"

"Wait a minute," said the freshman. "I'll go out and see if I can't find a man somewhere."

She returned very soon with her catch in tow. "Hello, Loris," said the new arrival. "Are you having trouble?"

Loris was almost in tears. "Please help me, Tommy. I have to get this thing started."

He rolled up his sleeves. "Honey, you just wipe that grease off your face and leave it all to your Uncle Tom."

Ten minutes later all three of them were driving down the street in the car. Tommy and the freshman had hopped in as a matter of course, and now to pay them for their trouble Loris had to drive them to their classes. Helplessly she wondered whether she would ever really be able to get away. Every time they passed a tall man she trembled and stepped on the gas, fearing that it might be Ran.

By that time he must certainly know the truth, and she could not bear the thought of seeing him again. If only she could get away, she would still have their beautiful three days to remember, unmarred by quarrels and disillusionment. And that would be something.

At last she dropped the other two at the university, and was free to drive where she wished. Once out of town she gave a sigh of relief and stepped on the accelerator. It was a beautiful day, but Loris was in no mood to appreciate anything of the sort. Now that the suspense was over she found her eyes once more full of tears, found that uncontrollable sobs were shaking her shoulders. What could life possibly hold for her in the future?

And then without any warning she heard a car honking madly behind her. At first she thought that the driver wanted to pass her, and moved over to the side of the road. But as she glanced into her mirror, she suddenly saw a familiar face behind that other steering wheel. It was Ran. For a moment she was so startled that she almost ran the car in the ditch. But as she recovered herself she had but one thought—to get away from him! He must not have a chance to talk to her.

Desperately she pressed her foot down on the gas, and the little car leaped forward. And then the wild ride began. Around corners, up and down hills, over crossroads, they raced crazily. And, lest he catch up with her and block her way, she cut him off

whenever he seemed likely to try to pass. Fortunately there was not much traffic in the other direction, but even at that they had several narrow escapes.

And still he followed. "Oh," thought Loris, "how he must hate me! If he didn't he'd never go to so much trouble. Will he never get discouraged and go back?"

As the race continued she began to lose her head and drive even more crazily. "What if something does happen?" she told herself. "I have nothing to live for anyway." And though she could see his face in the mirror she

paid no attention to his frantic signals to stop.

At last something did happen. They reached a sharp curve, and without slowing down Loris whirled her wheel recklessly, without noticing a big patch of mud in the middle of the road. As the car struck it she suddenly skidded wildly and crashed into a telephone pole.

Loris was not hurt, but for a moment she sat there completely dazed and not quite sure what had happened to her. Then, seeing that Ran had gotten out of his car and was hurrying toward her, in desperation she struggled out of the wreckage and tried to escape him.



As the evening went on she began to feel that for the first time in her twenty years she had met a man who could really mean something to her.

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But he caught her before she had gone very far. "What were you trying to do—kill yourself?" His face was drawn and white.

In spite of herself she collapsed in his arms. "I—I wanted to get away."

"I saw that," he told her rather grimly. "What was the idea, anyway?"

"Didn't you get my letter?"

"Of course I got it. And after I had read it I tore downstairs and chased the girl that brought it six blocks to the university to find out where you had gone."

"But why didn't you let me go?" she wailed miserably. "That would have been the best way. I couldn't face you and explain how I had cheated and fooled you. Why did you have to humiliate me like this?"

He looked bewildered. "I'm not trying to humiliate you. I wouldn't think of such a thing. Why, I love you and I thought you were going to marry me."

Loris stared at him. "But, Ran, didn't you read that letter? I'm not Lorraine Traill—I'm not any of the things you're in love with. I didn't win a beauty contest. I'm just an ordinary girl who's never done anything remarkable——"

"Except be yourself," he said gently. "Tell me, dearest, did you really think I fell in love with you because of all that?"

"What else could I think?"

"You might think I loved you for yourself. That would be much nearer the truth."

"You—you love me for myself?" she gasped incredulously.

"Of course, you precious little dumb-bell. I fell madly in love with you the first time I looked at you, and from that moment on I completely forgot about Lorraine."

"Then why," Loris demanded, "did you tell me all that stuff about her?"

He laughed while his arm tightened about her. "I was trying to find out who you really were."

She was overcome with astonishment. "But didn't you think I was Lorraine?"

He shook his head. "Not for a minute. I've had a picture of Lorraine for two years. It was in the college paper when she won the beauty contest. I knew you were some one else the minute you came into the room."

"Then why did you pretend——"

"Because I wanted to see more of you. I was afraid that if I showed I knew the truth you'd walk off and leave me."

"As if I would!" murmured Loris rapturously. She was so happy in Ran's arms that she scarcely knew what to do. Ran was hers after all; he always would be.

And then suddenly she remembered something. "What became of Lorraine's picture? Have you still got it?" In spite of herself, she felt a tiny twinge of jealousy.

"I tore it up the first night I met you."

"Oh," breathed Loris, "then you aren't really sorry that I'm not a wonderful person like Lorraine?"

"You couldn't be more wonderful than you are, darling. You're all I ever hoped to find in a girl and a great deal more."

"Oh!" said Loris again.

He clasped her more tightly in his arms, and pressed his lips to hers. "You sweet darling! To think that you could ever imagine I didn't love you for yourself!"

Overcome with joy, she yielded to his kisses. "I'll never think such a thing again," she answered, and as he held her breath-takingly close, Loris knew that she would always have the things she wanted most in the world—Ran and his wonderful love.

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The Face in the Fog

By Katherine Gorman

THE fog was a thick wall, shrouding everything in a mysterious dimness from which the street lamps loomed like sinister eyes. A fine rain was beginning to fall, and Keith Abbott cursed the dinner at the club that had kept him downtown late when driving was so perilous.

He looked up at the row of buildings on his left. Like everything else, they were cloaked in gray. He knew that he was in the neighborhood of the offices of his brother, who was a jewel importer, but in the fog Keith could not be certain of the exact building. It had a new attraction for him to-night, however, for somewhere within those grimy walls rested at that very moment

the most notorious emerald in the world, the ill-fated stone called the Kismet, which was as large as a walnut, and had an evil reputation that was world-wide. Keith remembered hearing his brother Arthur talking about it, and recalled his remark that he would be relieved when the stone was safely off his hands.

Inching along over the slippery street, Keith was grateful that it was all but deserted of traffic. Then, suddenly, something loomed ahead out of the fog.

With a muffled imprecation he applied the brakes and found himself slithering helplessly on the oily concrete. A sharp impact, and he realized that he had skidded into the curb. He

drew a breath of relief that no damage had been done, and was just about to shove in the gears when he caught the sound of running footsteps, the sharp staccato of high heels. Suddenly a girl's face, pale as a white moon, appeared out of the mist. She saw him, and ran toward him just as the bark of a pistol shattered the ghostly gray silence.

The girl staggered, and her stormy eyes were wide holes in the fog out of which she stared at Keith for an endless moment. In that moment he had reached a decision, and characteristically acted upon it. He leaned over and wrenched open the door on the side of the car opposite his.

"Get in," he cried, his voice a command.

There was another shot, sharp, biting. She swayed as though she would have fallen, and he leaped out in time to catch her in his arms as she went limp. Somehow she got inside the car before she collapsed in a small heap beside him.

His heart turned over. "They've shot you! The dogs! The cowardly brutes! Who are they?"

The long curled lashes, so black against her white cheeks, fluttered; her lips moved. "Drive on," she whispered. "Don't stop!" She sank down in the seat, and he saw that consciousness had left her.

Keith, almost as white as the girl, saw two shadows running toward him out of the fog, then a third. There was a blaze of blue, and another shot cut the silence.

"Stop thief!" the third of the shadows shouted menacingly. "Stop or I'll shoot!"

Keith, with one swift movement, thrust in the gears, blessed the swift pick-up of his expensive motor, and felt the grateful rush of his car from the curb. With a roar, he was racing into the gray wall of mist.

He did not stop to look back, but was conscious of tumult, of a quickly accumulating crowd, shouted orders, confusion. He made a turn to the right, another to the left, again to the right, and discovered himself in a well-lighted thoroughfare where traffic was fairly thick. He breathed a sigh of relief and grinned. In the traffic it should be easy to elude pursuit, and he was sure the fog had effectively shrouded his license number.

He was safe. And a girl he had never set eyes on before crouched beside him!

His well-shaped mouth sobered, and he stole a moment to glance down at her. She lay like a child asleep, a perfect combination of pink and blue and white. Her hair, disheveled under a blue hat, was like moonlight, soft, golden; her lips were a faint, elusive rose, and her eyes—how well he remembered her eyes!—had been as round and clear and blue as sapphires.

As he looked, he noticed a thin trickle of red moving slowly down her cheek. His breath caught in his throat. That shot had reached her, after all! What he had hoped against hope was but a fainting attack, was, instead, something more serious.

What on earth should he do now—stop with her at the nearest hospital? But her injury would need to be explained; gunshot wounds must be reported to the police. And the police must not be in on it, he decided. He had recognized that third shadow in the fog as an officer.

Keith bit his lips in frantic indecision. No, a hospital was out of the question. So, for the same reason, was any ordinary physician, for he would most certainly report the case to the nearest police station at once. And the girl beside Keith had run from the law.

As he speculated anxiously, the girl stirred, moaning, and he realized that

he must make a decision at once. Suddenly he snapped his fingers in elation. He had just remembered Doctor Gregory, a lifelong friend, but with whom, due to the latter's isolation on a tiny island off the coast, where he maintained a private sanitarium, Keith had gotten out of touch. Now Doctor Gregory must help him!

He looked swiftly at the clock on the dashboard. If he could only make the island before the last ferry! He pressed his foot on the gas as hard as he dared, praying that once he was on the open road outside the city the heavy fog would lift.

When he finally pulled up before a building shrouded in darkness, the muted roar of the sea was close. All about was the heavy quiet of great spaces. There was not another house in sight. He leaped quickly out of the car and tapped on a window on the ground floor. In a moment a tousle-haired man in pajamas appeared at the window.

"For Heaven's sake!" he grumbled. Then, sleepily: "Oh, it's you, Abbott! What criminal hour to route out a man! And," he added, becoming more widely awake every second, "what's the idea of serenading me like this?"

"Hush," whispered Keith. "Come out here. And don't wake the whole place." He was gone, running off in the darkness toward his parked car.

The man in pajamas said no more. In a moment his figure loomed white in the shadows. He whistled when he saw the car with the girl lying as though asleep in the front seat.

"Hm-m-m," he muttered. "An elopement, old man? I thought you didn't like girls."

"Don't be an idiot!" snapped Keith. "The girl is wounded—hurt."

"Oh!" said the other, and all levity dropped from him like a fallen coat. "Here," he said curtly, "raise her like this—your arm here—that's the ticket."

Keith, obeying, cautioned: "And for Heaven's sake don't rouse the place! I want this kept—well, under your hat. You understand—Doctor Gregory!" He accented the title.

The other grunted. "When you call me by my official title," he grumbled, "I know you've got something under your hat besides that curly hair."

Without another word he raised the unconscious girl, and they started toward the shadowy building.

Inside, there was the odor of disinfectant that speaks so eloquently of a hospital, and over the front door a small sign confirmed it:

GREGORY PRIVATE HOSPITAL.

They said no word until they were inside a large room with bare floors gleaming in the light that Gregory snapped on.

"Here," he ordered shortly. "Put her here."

They laid the girl on a long, white-shrouded table under a powerful light. She wore a dark tailored suit, and from the pocket something dropped with a loud clatter to the floor. It startled the two men, so that they jumped. Looking down, they saw a revolver.

Gregory gazed down at the girl for a moment. Her round young cheeks were white under the glare, her inky lashes like silk fringes.

"Hm-m-m," he grunted. "A cute little trinket for a girl to tote around!"

Without further ado, he took off her hat, and was at once the physician, while Keith looked on with apprehensive eyes.

She lay so still, so white, so helpless. Could she be dead? His heart paused for a breathless second, then began to race madly, for the girl had opened her eyes and was looking at him.

He caught her hand in a warm grip, relief flooding him. "You're all right," he whispered. "You've nothing to worry about now."

There was the faintest quiver of her lips. "Oh," she murmured, "you're the man in the car."

He nodded, intensely glad at her return to consciousness. "Yes," he told her. "You're perfectly safe here with—with me."

Her lashes fluttered shut. "I'm sure I am," she whispered, and then he saw that consciousness had again flown.

Gregory busied himself now with scissors, clipping off her hair on the right side. "For the love of mud," he snapped at the fidgeting Keith, "you've got to act as nurse for me, or else get out. Quit fox trotting around like a nervous hen, and hand me that tray from the sterilizer."

Keith gritted his teeth and obeyed. He conquered his shaking nerves as best he could, handing gleaming instruments to the other man, taking them away again, holding the golden head of the girl on the table in his two trembling hands, and finally breathing a great sigh of relief when Gregory stood off, surveying her bandaged face under the blaze of light.

"Will she—live?" Keith managed at last, when the doctor did not speak.

Gregory nodded. "Yes. She'll live. It was little more than a surface wound. If there's no fever, she can be up in the morning. It looks as though"—his keen eyes were on Keith's face—"a bullet plowed its way across her scalp."

Keith gulped; then: "What rotten guessers you doctors are! If another physician saw it, he'd swear it was concussion from a blunt something striking the frontal bone, or a fracture from a fall out a window. You never agree."

Gregory grinned wryly. "We're agreed on one thing—you want this kept confidential. Well, it's all right with me." He held out his hand, and Keith gripped it hard.

In the morning the girl opened her eyes to find herself in a sun-gilded room

that faced the sea. A look of bewilderment flooded her face, and she sat up. A mirror across the room reflected her, very white, very golden, and very lovely, sitting in a narrow hospital bed with her head wrapped in a bandage. It reflected something else—a tall, sun-burned young man who stood smiling on her from the doorway.

She transferred her gaze from the reflection to the actuality. "I've seen you before," she said almost gayly, and patted the chair next the bed as Keith came into the room, bearing a breakfast tray.

"In the movies," he grinned, setting his burden down on the chair. "I'm the perfect butler who's always waltzing around with a tray. As a side line I sell bonds."

She gave him ingenuously smiling face a long, speculative glance. Then: "I wonder if I might persuade my butler to take coffee with me."

"You're not supposed to talk," he warned her. "Doctor Gregory—an old crony of mine—insists on things like that."

She leaned back against the pillow and closed her eyes, and a faint sigh stirred her. Eyes still closed, she murmured: "You've been so marvelous. I wonder what you're going to do now."

Keith poured steaming, aromatic coffee into a cup, and stirred sugar in it. His expression told a lot more than his words. "I'm going to sit right here and watch you drink your coffee."

She looked up quickly, and was just in time to catch the glance he cast on her. Her face went warmly red, and then suddenly both were smiling, all constraint gone like mist before the sunlight.

Before either could speak, Gregory appeared in the doorway. He looked sharply at the girl against the pillows, and without making any comment went over and took her pulse, while Keith watched with anxious eyes.



He leaned over and wrenched open the door on the side of the car opposite his. "Get in," he cried, his voice a command.

"Fine," was Gregory's laconic comment. "You may sit up this afternoon."

"Thank you," she said, very low. Then, with a catch in her musical voice, she added: "You've both been so kind, so wonderful to me. I—I——"

She seemed about to break down, and Keith leaned forward quickly, worriedly. "I won't have any more of this kindness business, really. And if you excite yourself, you'll run a temperature, and Gregory will keep you in his clutches for the rest of your natural life. I know him and I warn you!"

She looked up at Gregory and at Keith, and her pale face went red again. She laughed, a faint flutter of sheer music that Keith told himself was reward enough for anything and everything he had done or could ever do for her.

At his own threat that Gregory would keep her there for the rest of her natural life, a warm thrill went through Keith. To have this strange, lovely girl, to hear her voice, the sheer delight of her low laughter, to see that truant color come and go—that, he told himself, would be happiness such as he had

never known, joy without end. His life would be complete if she were his.

Something of his thoughts was revealed in his expression, for Gregory frowned and with a short nod went out again. But Keith did not care for the whims of his friend; all he wished was to sit there and watch the lovely vision smiling at him from the pillow, see the sunlight playing on her shining hair, watch the heavens that were reflected in her eyes.

"What is your name?" she smiled when they were alone.

"Keith Abbott," he told her. "And yours?" was on the tip of his tongue when he bit it back. She saw it, too, for she smiled as she said:

"Helene." Then, after a short pause: "Helene Heath."

He thought that her glance on him was sharp, questioning, but the name meant nothing to him; he had never heard it before. Besides, what did names matter? It was joy just to feel her smile on him, to know that she was alive and safe.

That evening Gregory permitted her to walk about, and she took dinner with Keith and the physician in Gregory's private dining room. She still wore the plain tailored suit, of course, but above it her skin was smooth as cream, and her eyes like deep pools of azure. There were mournful lines about her lips, however, and Keith, walking with her the short distance to the beach, teased her about it.

She had put her hand in the crook of his elbow, and he looked down at her in the moonlight. The surf crested and boiled at their feet, a deep-throated roar, but above, the moon was as warmly golden as her hair, and as shining.

"This is a peculiar place," she said, indicating the great spaces and quiet about them.

He nodded. "It's a tight little island off the coast. Maine is rimmed with

them, you know. Gregory built his sanitarium here for the quiet and seclusion." He paused a short second; then, quietly: "There's only one way to enter or leave it—a ferry run by a little old fellow who locks up everything at twelve, and then"—he grinned—"here we are, safe and sound when he arrives again in the morning to unlock us, as it were."

She looked up quickly. "There is no other way?"

"To leave the island? Not one!" he assured her.

She was silent for a long moment, then: "It's so lovely here I think I'd never want to leave it!"

He thrilled to the tone of her voice. As for him—well, he told himself, he might be the biggest sap in the universe, but he had never felt happier, never more content in all his life.

Going in, they encountered Gregory, indulging in a last cigar before retiring. He was politeness itself, but beneath his courteous mask considerable constraint was evident, and both Helene and Keith were glad when they might in courtesy leave.

Gregory, in passing, jostled her elbow, and she gasped as a white object fell to the floor.

"Your handkerchief," Gregory said politely, and stooped to pick it up.

"Thank you," she stammered. But she was shaking from head to foot.

"Oh!" It was a gasp from Gregory, and then all three were gazing at the floor where the cloth had parted, and in its folds lay a gleaming, glittering thing of green, an uncut emerald as large as a walnut.

There was a breathless pause, during which the sound of the surf was thunderous.

It was Keith who was the first to recover himself. His face was ghastly. He stooped and gathered up the gem in the handkerchief in which she had tied it.

"Your—handkerchief," he said haltingly, and held it out to her.

She took it, her blue eyes fastened in an agonized plea on his white face. Yet, conscious of the other man's hard gaze, she could only stammer:

"Th—thank you. I—I shall go to my room now, if you will permit me."

Gregory bowed with an ironic grimace. At the foot of the stairs, she offered a low, grateful "Good night" to Keith.

"Thank you again—for everything," she whispered, and held out her hand.

A chill struck him. He stared at her appealingly.

"You say that as though—as though ——" He stopped, obviously throwing off a disquieting sense of losing her. How could she go? There was no way to escape from the island, now that it was after midnight.

He watched her enter her room, forcing himself to be reasonable.

Inside her door, she stood leaning against it. From below she could plainly hear the physician's voice, and then Keith's.

"Here—I'll pour you a bracer, old man," said Gregory grimly. "You look as though you need it!"

Then, before Keith could speak, he burst out:

"Your lady of spotless virtue! An unset emerald big enough to knock your eye out tied up in a handkerchief! A mysterious, lovely lady who carries a revolver instead of lipstick, and who has a suspicious gunshot wound!"

Keith burst out on a passionate protest. "But there's an explanation! I know it! I'm sure of it! She—Helene ——" He stopped, for Gregory had cut in viciously:

"You're in love with her, Keith. A blind man could see it. Any one could see it—but yourself," he growled like an angry bear. "You're in love at last, old man, and with whom? A thief, a pretty little crook who robbed your own

brother! For that stone can be nothing else than the Kismet!"

Helene leaned heavily against the door, her face as white as the bandage that crowned her bright hair. Keith's passionate denial came to her:

"It's a lie! I don't believe it! I'll never believe it. There's some explanation which she'll give when she's ready."

"Explanation!" Gregory's laugh was far from humorous. "I've no doubt she could tell a pretty enough story. But who would believe it? No one! No one, that is," he added grimly, "but a man in love—who is always more or less of a fool!"

Up in his room a few minutes later, Keith lay, his mind in a tumult. The moonlight traced a silvery pattern of fire escape on his floor, and directly above his head he could hear Helene's footsteps as she moved about. The events of the past twenty-four hours moved in ghostly waves through his brain, as he remembered her white face in the fog, that terrible cry: "Stop thief!", the revolver shots, and now the unset emerald tied up in her handkerchief. Gregory was right. It could be no other than the Kismet, which should have been safe and secure, locked in the safe in his brother's office. And the last but most terrible proof of all was Helene's presence before the very building that housed the stone!

Unrest took hold of him as he lay there. He felt that he could not be still, but must move about, do something, anything, but lie there when sleep would not come.

He sat up when suddenly the moonlight pattern on the floor altered. He leaped about just in time to see a shadowy form move past his window. His blood ran cold with terror for Helene. He flew to the window, but all he could see in the moonlight was the running figure fast disappearing in the shrubbery.

In a moment he was dressed, and was

outside. He raced after that figure that was no longer to be seen. No one might get off the island; the ferryman was gone. There was no way to escape except death. He cursed under his breath, for his trail led directly to the dock.

In a moment he crashed through the protecting shrubbery and saw his quarry. His heart stood still, for it was Helen, and she was just starting the little motor on the launch that Gregory sometimes used in his trips to the mainland, and which Keith had completely forgotten.

She looked up, startled to see him.

"Oh, why did you come?" she cried, in a low, despairing protest.

His answer was to step into the launch and take her into his arms, his lips closing off her protest. He knew then that Gregory had been right—he was in love with a girl he had met only twenty-four hours before.

"Why?" His voice was a heady murmur against her lips. "This is why, and this and this!" He kissed her over and over again. "I don't know what all this mystery is, Helene, but I don't care. I'm never going to let you get away again. I've searched too long—all my life, it seems, for you. And now to let you escape from me—" His laugh was a challenge and a defiance at fate. "I'll follow you wherever you go—always! You'll never get away again!"

She lay in his arms, her eyes closed, his kisses burning on her upturned face, her arms clinging to him as though for very life itself. But at last she broke away.

"But you don't know what you're saying," she cried desolately. "Doctor Gregory—"

He held her closer, stopping her words with his kisses. "I don't care what you are; life for me doesn't mean a thing without you."

"You are mad," she wept, "mad!"

"Yes. About you."

She lay despairingly in his arms, her heart thudding in time with his heart.

"If you love me," she said at last, "you'll let me go. You'll——"

"Never!" he told her vehemently. "We'll go together."

She went on as though she had not heard: "You'll help me get to the mainland. I must get back to the city—I must!"

There was such despair in her face that he stared at her, his soul sick with pity for her. "Let me go with you," he pleaded forcefully.

Her reply was a mournful half acquiescence: "If you knew—maybe you wouldn't want to see me again!"

"Promise me that I may go with you." He ignored her desperate words. "Let me hear you say it!"

"I promise," she sighed deeply, "and now—if we can get this motor started——"

"In a moment," he promised swiftly, and bent to the task. He was almost immediately rewarded by the cheerful *put-put* of the motor, and she breathed deeply in relief. The launch leaped forward over the moonlit water.

They reached the other side without speaking a word. He picked her up in his arms and carried her up the bank that led from the water.

"You're shivering," he said tenderly. "There's an all-night roadside stand not far from here. I'll have them make you a hot drink. I'll ask about hiring a car to go to the city."

She nodded gratefully, but did not speak. The roadside stand he remembered seeing earlier was open, its lights making a cheery glow in the darkness as they went toward it.

Helene stood outside in the shadows as he went in to speak to the proprietor. Yes, the man would serve them coffee if they would wait.

Keith went back to where he had left Helene. She was gone!

He returned to the proprietor, his



His heart stood still, for it was Helene, and she was just starting the little motor on the launch which he had completely forgotten.

heart smothering him with its beating. Had he noticed the young lady?

Yes, the man had noticed her. He looked curiously at Keith's pale face. The lady had gone toward the railroad station.

Keith, stupefied, started as a shrill whistle shattered the night. He looked mutely at the man.

"The last train to the city, the milk train," the other offered.

Keith, standing there helplessly, watched the smoke from the train that

was bearing Helene from him dissipate in the sky. Helene was gone. He had found love, only to lose it.

He was dimly aware that the puzzled gaze of the other man was on him, and he sought to rouse himself, to shake off the despair that gripped him. His eyes fell on a pile of newspapers that lay upon the stand. The man, following his glance, offered genially:

"They're this morning's papers," he explained. "They come up here by train, and are always late."

But Keith had not even heard him, for across the front page were the booming headlines:

DARING ROBBERY OF KISMET EMERALD. IMPORTER DYING FROM SHOT FIRED BY GIRL BANDIT. ARREST EXPECTED TO-NIGHT.

His dazed mind scarcely took it all in. Only one thing was clear to him: Helene had flown right into the trap the police would have set for her.

Her words that had seemed so inexplicable to him came back to drive him frantic. "If you knew—maybe you wouldn't want to see me again!"

Thief—murderess—sought by the police! His hands clenched, and he smote them down on the stand before the startled proprietor. No matter what she was, he didn't care. He would search for her to the uttermost limits of the earth, and he would find her. Explanation? There was one, he was sure, some fact not known to himself or to the police, some circumstances she would not tell, but thief and murderess he would not believe her.

He turned to the goggle-eyed man. "Where can I hire a car—now—at once?"

"There's an all-night garage a mile down the road," the man offered dubiously. "Maybe——"

But Keith was already running down the road in the direction indicated.

The man who drove him into the city was certain he had a madman for passenger. The only time Keith spoke was when he pleaded tensely for more speed.

"You've got to get me to the railroad station in time to meet that train," he ordered.

At last the lights on the road became closer, the houses more clustered together. Keith mopped his forehead. They were in the city.

The car stopped with a jerk. They were at the railroad station, and the

chauffeur ran to ask when the milk train was expected. He came back, grinning. They were in time. The train Helene had taken was due in five minutes.

Keith paced the platform, his mind in a turmoil. Perhaps she had alighted at some way station. He gave a short, bitter laugh in the cold gray light of early morning. Perhaps he had missed her!

The whistle of a train interrupted his gloomy thoughts, and he looked up. Down the track a black object was bearing toward him, coughing clouds of smoke. He ran alongside as the train slowed.

There was only one passenger—Helene. She saw him as quickly as he saw her, and ran to him.

"Oh, it was cruel of me, cruel," she whispered against his cheek. "But I did it for the best; you must believe me. But"—she forced a wan smile—"now that you're here we'll see it through together."

A tall form in the shadow drew his attention, and he paled. "A policeman," he whispered. "Here, this way! That bandage will be a dead give-away."

They darted to the cab that still waited, and she spoke to the driver.

Keith leaned forward anxiously. "What are you going to do?" he pro-tested.

She smiled at him in the semidarkness of the cab. "I'm going to your brother."

Keith's heart turned over with fear for her. "But—but——"

She shook her head in a weary gesture. "I'll confess everything to him, throw myself on his mercy. And then——" She paused and spread her hands, palms upward, in an eloquent gesture of resignation.

He took her two hands in his. They were icy. "But the emerald," he pleaded.

She leaned back and closed her eyes in utter weariness of spirit. "I took it

from the safe. I was just coming away when the watchman saw me—and then I saw you in the fog.”

“Why did you run away from me to-night?” he begged miserably.

Her blue eyes went to his face in mute appeal for understanding. “I heard all Doctor Gregory said to you to-night after I dropped the emerald. I didn’t want to tangle you up in the miserable mess I’ve made of—of everything. I wanted to get away so that you could—forget me.”

But her face was as white as his own as she said it, and he read the despair in her eyes and knew that she was remembering that rapturous embrace in the moonlight. He caught her close to his heart, and she lay limply against him.

“Forget, Helene? Tell me the truth—do you want me to do that—ever? You kissed me back there in the moonlight—was that kiss only a gesture of gratitude? Is that all you meant?”

But in the sudden passion of her despairing eyes he knew what she could no longer deny—for good or ill, love had come to them in the fog.

Her confession was a whisper against his lips: “No—I don’t mean it, Keith. I should have died if you hadn’t found me!”

Before he could reply, the cab stopped with a jerk. He saw that they had paused before a brownstone house, dark except for one lighted window on the second floor. His lips grew tight. In that room of the lighted window his brother lay. In that room Helene’s and his own happiness was to be decided. His grip was warm on her icy hand.

“Here we are, Helene—my brother’s home.”

She said nothing, but her fingers trembled under his as the servant admitted them and led them up a flight of carpeted stairs. A sliver of light beckoned them, and Keith softly opened the door of his brother’s room. A nurse

came forward quickly, protestingly. Mr. Abbott was resting. No, he was in no danger; the papers always exaggerated. They might speak with him in the morning.

Arthur Abbott’s voice from the bed interrupted her. “Come in, Keith.” He peered sharply at Helene. “I’m not nearly so sick as those scare headlines have me.”

Helene went closer within the radius of lamplight. “I—I——” she was faltering; then wordlessly she laid a package on the counterpane, and the Kismet emerald lay glimmering and reflecting every ray of light.

Arthur Abbott looked keenly up at the girl who faced him.

“You—you stole it? You are the girl bandit the newspapers were ranting about?”

She nodded mutely. “Yes—I took it out of the safe.” Her voice was a dim quaver.

His eyes did not miss the swift clasp of her hand in Keith’s. He took a deep breath and suddenly smiled.

“You are a most charming—er—liar, my dear!” he observed easily.

“Arthur!” cried Keith, as Helene swayed against him. The man in the bed smiled more widely.

“That’s what I said,” he confirmed. “I saw the whole thing. I was working late in the office when suddenly I heard some one coming. I hid behind the filing cabinet just as this charming—er—excuse me—lady—came in, took the Kismet—I’ll be glad when it’s out of my hands, anyway—and was just about to leave when two men burst in. Before I could move, that dunder-headed night watchman blundered in, and—well, you know the rest. Everybody started shooting. I was one of those unlucky enough to get struck, as was Miss Heath.”

Keith was staring, uncomprehending, from his brother to Helene, who, white-faced, faltered at last:

"So my brother confessed!"

Abbott nodded. "Yes. That was why I was working late," he admitted dryly. "The moment you entered I recognized you from your resemblance to him. I also suspected the trick you intended playing—to steal the Kismet yourself to prevent its being stolen! That, my dear Keith," he chuckled,

"would protect her brother John, who works in my office, from the gang of good-for-nothings he had gotten in with, and would at the same time frustrate the robbery."

Helene's hands were clasped tightly together. "Oh, I was frantic with fear for Johnny when he told me that gang intended using him as a cloak to steal



He held her closer, stopping her words with kisses. "I don't care what you are; life for me doesn't mean a thing without you."

the Kismet. I knew if I told the police, Johnny would suffer. I could think of nothing else to do but what I did, intending to return the stone to you in the morning. I wormed the combination of the safe out of Johnny, and—and you know the rest.”

Abbott smiled kindly at her. “The rest is a happy ending, my dear. Your brother has promised me to give up this gang, and to make the promise secure I’m sending him to our branch in Amsterdam. As for the two thieves, they are where they belong—in jail.”

Helene, half fainting with relief, was swept with a great wave of color. “Then you do understand Johnny’s part in this, his foolish part, his innocent part, though the police would never have believed it! You do understand——”

“I understand,” observed Abbott dryly, “that you were willing to take

the blame yourself to shield that likeable young scamp!” He chuckled. “But breeding told. He confessed everything to me not an hour before you arrived.”

“Oh, I’m glad, glad!” Her whisper was a thankful prayer.

Keith was seeing the light at last. He took her hands tightly in his. The bravery of her, the foolish, loving heart of her! His glance told her his thoughts so eloquently that her cheeks were glowing.

“That,” remarked Abbott from the pillow, “is a loyal girl for you—a girl in a million!”

Helene, her eyes luminous with a radiant joy, smiled into Keith’s adoring eyes.

“Loyalty!” she repeated tremulously. “It has taken Keith to show me what real loyalty can be!”



PASTEL

I SEARCHED for you at the day’s end;
At the day’s end I found you,
And your dark beauty seemed to blend
Into the dusk around you.

I touched your hand; I spoke no word;
I saw your soft eyes gazing
Into the west where evening stirred,
And one white star was blazing.

Across the valley distant bells
Chimed out their ancient glory,
And in our hearts the song that tells
Once more an old, old story.

WILLIAM HAROLD MCCREARY.



WORKING for

George Knott, the head of the accounting department of the Waldo Co., Marion Graves was perfectly happy. Marion was just twenty, and, endowed as she was with lovely curly dark-chestnut hair and eyes like brown pansies, it is not surprising that some of the girls in the office resented the fact that not only was Marion by far the prettiest of the lot, but she was also much the cleverest.

Business men are always suspicious of "looks" in a girl. What they want is efficient workers, and Mr. Waldo, when George Knott had insisted on Marion Graves being made his assistant, had

Marion's Job

By

John L. Carter

perhaps excusably protested against the promotion, calling Marion a "brainless doll." But Knott had insisted, and the "brainless doll" had proved herself to be invaluable.

Marion was happy, and George's appreciation was very precious. He used to marvel that

she so willingly stayed to work overtime whenever he had a rush of work on. But she couldn't very well explain that it was no hardship for her to remain behind to work with him. She couldn't tell him she actually enjoyed staying.

But their time together was not always spent in the office. They played tennis together in the evening; and she

often went out with him on Saturday afternoon in his car.

Still, Marion was not quite happy. Never by word or look had George given her any sign that he was interested in her except just as a companion, and Marion was afraid it might all lead to nothing. She didn't want a broken heart, and yet, already she loved him unbearably.

Then came the day when George was hurt in an auto accident. A big truck had shot out of a side street and smashed into his small roadster. An ambulance had been called and he was taken to the hospital, badly injured.

That Saturday Mr. Waldo had asked her if she would carry on in George's place until he came back. It might be weeks, and it might be months before he was well again, Mr. Waldo said. Marion jumped at the chance, if only so as to keep George's place for him.

Month followed month and still George did not fully recover. Again and again the firm considered the idea of appointing a new head for the accounting department, but as everything was going along quite well they postponed making a definite change.

The situation was not particularly comfortable for Marion. Almost to a man the heads of the other departments, including Mr. Waldo himself, disliked the idea of a woman being in charge, and they were grudging in recognition of her efforts, and constantly warned her against trying to "run the whole show" herself. Very rarely did she receive a word of appreciation for the hard work she put in with never a thought of anything but helping George. But she couldn't help but resent that, although she was doing George's work in addition to her own, she was receiving only the same salary as she had when she was simply his assistant. Still, she would have done all that, and more, for George. As far as he was concerned, she was doing it for love.

Four months went by, and although she had written three times, she had never had so much as one line from George. And gradually she came to the conclusion that she had meant nothing at all to him.

Then, one Saturday morning she was sent for by Mr. Waldo and informed that George was returning. She was assured, however, that she would still be kept on.

When Marion got out of the large private office she found herself trembling with resentment. She was still to be kept on, indeed! How nice! Was that all the thanks they had for her?

What added to her bitterness was that the girls in her department seemed to know as much about it as any one—she realized that Mr. Waldo's secretary had told them the news—and several of them went out of their way to express their pleasure to know that she was soon to lose her job as their boss.

"I've a good mind to resign!" she thought bitterly, and her eyes flashed. "I wonder how they would get on without me!" She realized that George would be entirely at sea for weeks to come. The accounting department was something alive, its conditions changing from day to day. Without her help George Knott would be utterly helpless.

She nodded thoughtfully. To resign suddenly would be a fine revenge! And then her brow clouded moodily. After all, why shouldn't she resign? The firm hadn't expressed a single word of thanks or gratitude for all she had done, all the hours she had slaved, never asking a cent for overtime. And what about George Knott? Obviously, she was nothing to him! He couldn't even reply to her three letters! So why should she remain on, just to help him?

She thought of the numerous schemes which she had inaugurated for greater efficiency, saving the firm money and material. And not a word of thanks! It was as though they resented her be-

ing clever—as though that cleverness were some sort of reflection on themselves—these poor dear men! And now she was to be flung back, to mix with the herd of inefficient flappers who were not in the least interested in their work, but worked because they had to, or because they wanted spending money or to get away from home. Marion had worked for the sheer joy of bettering herself. It was her passion to be as good as any woman, or as any man for that matter!

Oh, she knew quite well what the management's trouble was. They had resented this determination of hers to make good. At times her schemes had proved better than theirs, and they resented any mere woman demonstrating that she was equal to a man in mentality, at times, indeed, superior regarding that very important quality—initiative. Oh, she knew how they felt. As she had left Mr. Waldo's office she had got many a look from the general office workers of sheer pleasure at the knowledge that she was to be deposed.

Finally her mind was made up. The day that George Knott came back she would resign.

She went back to Mr. Waldo's office.

"Excuse me, Mr. Waldo, but have you just heard that Mr. Knott was coming back," she queried, "or have you known for some time?"

"Oh, we've known for a month or so," replied Waldo slowly. His tone and manner suggested that it was no business of hers, in any case.

"I thought as much!" exclaimed Marion. "Then my feeling of responsibility is gone. I wish to tell you that I intend to leave your employ the day Mr. Knott returns."

"Oh, but that's impossible!" protested Waldo. "He can't pick up the strings in twenty-four hours; besides, we can demand a week's notice."

Marion shrugged her slim shoulders scornfully.

"I can leave any moment I like," she retorted. "If you were going to fire me you would not give me any notice of it."

Waldo stared at her. His small mean eyes took in the fact that she meant what she said.

"I see—you've got another job you want to go to?" he suggested.

"I shall get work all right," she replied confidently. "It's not that. Suppose we say I'm resigning as a protest against your meanness in not letting me know before?"

Waldo stared at her. Suddenly he realized that her sudden resignation meant much more than that. It was her protest against his grudging unwillingness, all along, to give her due and proper acknowledgment for what she had done.

"Perhaps the firm ought to make you a little presentation?" he suggested.

"You're a little late!" she flashed scornfully.

"Or an increase in salary?" he said, becoming rather annoyed.

"I'm not out for your favors, Mr. Waldo," she said. "No, my mind's made up. I leave the day Mr. Knott returns!"

When George Knott entered the office Marion felt a strange throb of pity. He looked so weak and thin. She noticed that the first thing he did was to sink into a chair. Certainly he didn't look fit for work.

"Hello, Marion," he said, shaking hands with her.

She winced as she felt how thin his hand was.

"Hello, George," she said. "I hope you're feeling better?"

"I shall be all right soon," he said, though without much conviction. "Still, it's something to be able to come back to the old place. I've got you to thank for that. What's more, you will be a great help in breaking me in again."

Marion took a great breath. Her heart thumped horribly.

"But I'm leaving to-day," she managed to say.

"Oh, you can't mean that!" he protested, rising.

"But I do," she insisted, defiantly.

"Why, what's the matter?" he asked, bewildered.

"There's plenty the matter," she cried. "I promised to carry on until you came back; but there it ends. You don't know how the boss has done his utmost to make things difficult for me! Talk about fairness! You know, he can't bear to have a girl make good at a man's job!"

"So you're leaving!" he cried, in despair. Then he shook his head miserably. "But, Marion, how can I carry on without you? You know what a tough job this is."

But Marion remained firm. "The firm assured me again and again, that you left everything in apple-pie order, and that the department practically runs itself! I'm going to let them find it out now, George!"

George said nothing in reply, but sank into a chair and buried his face in his hands.

Marion watched him and frowned rebelliously. This wasn't fair! How could she leave, if George took it so hard? No, it wasn't fair, at all! She wanted revenge on the firm. She wanted to triumph. But, how could she resign if George was like this? Then her brow darkened and her eye gloomed rebelliously. What right had George Knott to demand it of her? He was nothing to her! Why hadn't he answered any of her letters? What consideration could he expect from her?

She rose and went to the door.

"Well, come along, George, let's go right through the department," she said in a firm tone. "Remember, you'll be on your own to-morrow," she warned him.

With a sigh George Knott rose from his chair and followed her. She first took him into the outer office where some forty girls were checking the time cards, working adding and computing machines, typewriters, and so on. It was a babel of noise.

"It's good to be back," murmured George as they went around. Then, as she showed him the new developments, the numerous fresh ideas she had evolved, he was full of admiration for her. But all the time she could see that he was growing more and more anxious and bewildered. At last they returned to her office once more.

"Well, what do you think of it all, George?" she asked eagerly.

George lifted his tired eyes to hers and shook his head helplessly.

"It's you they ought to make head of the department," he admitted. "It's marvelous, the ideas you've developed! And what does Waldo say to it all?"

"Mr. Waldo and the rest of the staff appear to be a special dispensation of Providence inaugurated to keep Miss Marion Graves from getting the big head!" said Marion dryly.

"I suppose they've raised your salary pretty considerably?" he asked.

"Not a cent!" she assured him. "And the head of every department in the place has made it his business to oppose and withstand to the last every single idea I try to introduce."

"It's a scandal!" cried George, indignantly.

"It is indeed, George," she said. "And that's why I'm leaving."

"But think of me," he pleaded.

Marion shook her head.

"I'm sorry, George," she said bitterly. "We have got to think each for ourselves, these days. No, I'm leaving. All I promised was to carry on until you came back, and I did that for you, not them."

A little color came back into George Knott's face. He looked as though he

were going to say something, but then he stopped.

Once again, just before closing time, George pleaded with her to stay.

"Mr. Waldo has accepted my resignation," she pointed out. "And, anyhow, you'll be all right. The other girls will be able to help you, if you run against any difficulties. After all, they've been working in the department all the time."

And with that she hurried off and left him alone.

But that was not the end of the matter. Just before Marion went to bed that night George's mother called to see her. Marion had given up calling on George's mother long ago. She had wanted to forget George and her hopeless love for him.

"You must bear with me," she began, "but you must help George out a little longer, if only for my sake. The whole accounting department is so strange to him—different processes, and so on. He'd never manage unless you helped him. You must stay, my dear."

Marion looked at Mrs. Knott's anxious face and was tempted. But she hardened her heart. If she did stay to help George, she would lose her heart



Marion stared at him, her heart beating quickly. "George!" she cried, in eager delight. "You—you loved me all the time!"

to him again. And she couldn't stand that.

"I'm sorry," she said. "But I am afraid that I cannot change my decision."

"Oh, but I am sure you will," pleaded the old lady. "George is still far from well, and the worry and anxiety would pull him down completely."

Marion was about to protest, but Mrs. Knott hurried on.

"I know all about the cruel way you've been treated by the firm, but, after all, is that any reason why you should be cruel to George? Oh, please, remember he is my son!"

Marion felt sorry for her. And, after all, was it fair to George to involve him in the punishment which she wished to mete out to the firm! But, still, her pride rebelled at the thought of extending her help to George, since it would be also helping the firm. But, perhaps, after all, pride was a poor thing, and did not bring much satisfaction.

"Oh, very well, then," she said. "If George can arrange it, I'll go back—for two weeks only, mind you!"

And she hurried her out before she could be overwhelmed with thanks and gratitude.

The two weeks went by like a flash. It was the happiest period of Marion's life. George leaned on her for everything.

Then, on the Friday, just before she was going to leave, George called her into the office which had been hers for so many months past.

"Close the door, please, Marion," he said, rather jerkily. His face was pale and he was very nervous.

She did so, wondering what he was about to say.

"I've just been talking to the boss and he wants you to stay," he said. "He's willing to give you a big increase in salary."

Marion shook her head firmly.

"But suppose I want you to stay?" he pleaded. "Suppose I tell you it's life to me to have you here?"

Marion felt the color flood into her cheeks. What was George saying?

He took her hand and held it tight.

"Marion dear, I never told you, but the surgeon in the hospital told me that I would never get better," he said. "He said I ought never to work another day in all my life. Don't you see, that is why I never answered your three letters."

Marion stared at him, her heart beating quickly.

"George! But, why?" she cried. "Why couldn't you have told me?"

"Because I knew you loved me, dear," he said. "And I loved you. But I didn't want to be a burden to you. That's why I never answered your letters."

"George!" she cried, in eager delight. "You—you loved me all the time!"

"I love you still," he said, and took her in his arms.

"Oh, how grand!" cried Marion, her arms stealing around his neck. "On these terms I'd be willing to stay here forever and ever!" she added as he kissed her.





The Conventional Thing

By Jane Littell

KAY CORINTH stopped her frantic pacing and stared down at the gray-enamel telephone on the table. It wouldn't do a bit of good to telephone again. The instant Alan was located, she would be informed. All of southern California was being searched for him. Alan Cogswell, ace director of Five Arts Films, couldn't disappear without causing a tremendous furor in the world where he was so important.

In all the years they had been married, he had never done a thing like this. He had been gone two nights and a day. No one had seen him. No one had heard from him.

Had his car gone over a cliff? Was he lying injured and helpless—or dead?

Kay Corinth covered her eyes with her slender white hands and shuddered

away from the picture her mind created. Alan, who adored her! Alan, who was all of life to her! Oh, she couldn't go on without him! He was the core and center around which her life revolved. He was her life!

At that exact instant, two miles away across the Hollywood hills, Alan Cogswell was stirring to a sort of benumbed half consciousness. He felt numb, dead—all except that tiny spot somewhere in his mind that was glowing faintly like the last ember in a dying fire. But somehow that live spot in his brain seemed to be spreading. With an odd sort of detached interest he felt life and consciousness flowing back—as if a bellows were fanning the faint spark into flame.

The next thing he was conscious of

was a great light beating against his closed eyelids. A baby spot, focused on his face. He could feel the heat. He could see the light through his closed eyelids. Had he passed out on the set? Had there been an accident? Pretty soon he would have strength enough to open his eyes and see.

And then came the dull boom of a flashlight. Alan's trained ears recognized that sound! And his nostrils the smell of flashlight powder. There must have been an accident. And newspaper cameramen taking flashlights.

Whatever it was, he must throw off this dull lethargy. Kay would hear of it—whatever it was. He must get to Kay and reassure her.

"There, Tasha," said a satisfied masculine voice. "I guess that cinches it. He'll pay and pay plenty for that plate."

More of Alan's senses seemed to come alive after that. A strange perfume assailed his nostrils, and he wrinkled his face in distaste. Then small, cold fingers seemed to close around his wrist and move his arm, and he realized that his arm had been across a small, breathing body, for that small, breathing body moved away, and he missed the warmth of it.

He was dreaming, probably.

"Kay," he murmured, his numbed hand searching the spot beside him. It was warm, but empty.

"Kay!" he repeated, struggling to open his eyes.

He was staring into a baby spot. He squinted against its glare and half covered his eyes with a hand that it was an agony of effort to move. And between his fingers he looked out to see a perfectly strange room. A room of gaudy furnishings, of rose-draped lights and gold lace cushions and a vast number of long-legged, simpering French dolls. He had never seen the place before.

It must be a set on the lot.

But it wasn't a set. There was a single newspaper camera set up over

there. Two baby spots rigged up as they are never rigged on a set. There was a burly individual he had never seen before, watching him warily from behind the camera, and an equally strange blond girl in a torn pink negligee huddled on the foot of the couch, big, watchful, half-terrified eyes peering at him from above the hands that half covered her face.

"Hey! What is this?" Alan demanded weakly.

"That's what I want to know," said the burly individual from behind the camera. "I come to call on my girl friend, the girl I'm engaged to marry, and I find the two of you dead drunk."

Only then did Alan become conscious of his lack of attire. He was barefooted, and had on a thin silk dressing gown!

Framed! He knew it instantly. He'd have known it anyway, even if he hadn't heard the man say he'd pay plenty for that plate. So it was blackmail, eh? The most dangerous business in the world—short of murder. But how had it happened to him? Alan Cogswell didn't associate with the sort of people who indulged in blackmail.

The small girl, huddled on the foot of the couch in her torn pink negligee, her small hands over her face, was sobbing now.

"Who are you—girl?" Alan demanded.

"I'm the girl you—you've got to marry now," she wailed.

"I've—what?" he barked, struggling to sit up. Oh, what a head! The effort of changing position almost cracked it in two.

"After what you've done to Tasha, you certainly have got to marry her," blustered the burly one. "Look at the place! It tells its own story, doesn't it?"

Alan glanced around him. His clothes, a girl's business dress and coat, were scattered all over the place.

Fronde of the ostrich from her pink negligee covered everything, like a light pink snow. And the negligee itself was torn.

"Nicely planted," said Alan, his mouth grim and his eyes narrowed. "But I am married, you know."

"That's what makes it so awful!" wailed the girl.

"Ye-ah?" drawled Alan furiously. "An awful waste of your time and effort. For I can't marry you and I won't pay. And that's that."

"Oh, yes, you will," drawled the burly one coolly. "You'll get a divorce, and you'll marry Tasha, and you'll give her a break in your pictures and you'll like it."

"Now I'll tell you what I'm going to do," gritted Alan furiously. "I'll put my clothes on, and I'll walk out of here, if I can walk after the knock-out drops you've slipped me, and if you two ever try to start anything, I'll turn you over to the police instantly. And I'll take the plate you've got in that camera. I'll fix you wise guys."

"Go call Sam Schmitz, Tasha," ordered the burly one.

"Yes, do," urged Alan. "I'd like a witness to this."

Sam Schmitz was the pudgy little president of Five Arts Film Company—Alan's employer and his good friend. Sam Schmitz wouldn't have any scandal in his organization. He would know how to handle this.

Tasha and the burly man were counting on that, too. Sam Schmitz would make Alan pay. Sam Schmitz would do anything to avoid a scandal that involved his ace director and his most popular star.

"Tell him to come alone, if he doesn't want a scandal," ordered the man.

But Sam Schmitz was at that moment with the frantic Kay Corinth and newspapermen were waiting on her doorstep for any news she might receive of her husband.

When the message reached Sam Schmitz, Kay Corinth was bending so close to the telephone in tormented anxiety that she heard it, too.

"You'd better come to this number on Laurel Canyon Road and get your Alan Cogswell," said the girl's voice. "And you better come alone if you don't want a scandal."

"Is he hurt? Is he ill?" demanded the producer. And the girl laughed coolly.

"Oh, no," she said lightly. "No sicker than any man ought to be after a two-day drunk."

"But Alan doesn't drink!" cried Kay. "One highball, maybe, but never any more. Not Alan—oh, come on! It may be something else! He may have had ptomaine poisoning or something. Fish poisons him sometimes—oh, let's hurry!"

"But, Kay, they told me to come alone," worried the little producer.

"Do you think I'd sit here."

Kay was snatching up a wrap as she spoke. She was dashing out the door, through the waiting newspapermen, to the producer's limousine.

"Hurry! Hurry!" she urged frenziedly.

The three in the cottage on Laurel Canyon Road waited in deadlocked silence.

"I'll take my clothes," Alan had said, when Tasha came back from the telephone.

"You will not," said the man. "Your boss is going to see you just exactly as you are."

And Alan, after one or two feeble efforts to get up and stagger across the room after them, subsided. He was weak and sick. The slightest effort made great black spots swim before his eyes. The burly one pushed him back onto the bed with one hand.

And so Kay Corinth found her husband.

"Alan!" she cried, from the doorway.

"Alan darling! What happened to you? Oh! How did you get—here?"

"Here" was such an obviously feminine place. It reeked of rendezvous and secret tryst. It had a creeping, clinging, clutching, malignant feel about it.

"I don't know how I got here, Kay," he said. "The last thing I remember is having a midnight snack at Henry's last night——"

"Last night!" Kay interrupted. "But where were you yesterday and the night before?"

"Have I been gone two nights?" he asked, amazed.

"Yes, and I've been frantic with worry!" cried Kay, dropping to her knees beside him. "Oh, darling, where have you been? How could you torture me like this?" she wailed.

"He's been right here, Miss Corinth," said the blond girl. "And what he did to me was plenty!"

"Wha-what——" gasped Kay.

"It's blackmail, Kay," said Alan. "I had a sandwich and coffee—oh, I say! I kicked to the waitress that the coffee was terrible—— By jove! You're the waitress! You doped that coffee."

"That won't get you anywhere," said the girl. "Sure I'm that waitress. You've been deviling me for weeks to go out with you, and night before last I went. And you brought me home and that's that."

"Oh, Alan!" wailed Kay. "Is she the blond waitress you told me ought to be in pictures? The one you were going to use in the new picture?"

"Kay, there isn't a word of truth in it!" begged Alan. "It's a plant, I tell you. Blackmail."

"I'm not asking for a thing but justice!" flashed the blond girl. "You brought me home and—and you promised to get a divorce and marry me. Now you're trying to get out of it."

And then her hardness disappeared, the small hands covered the baby face—and she was sobbing. On her knees at

Kay's feet, one arm flung about Kay's knees, she was sobbing.

"Oh, make him do right by me, Miss Corinth!"

"You'd better go out to the car and let me handle this, Kay," said Sam Schmitz.

"I will not!" flashed Kay. "If there's any truth in it, I want to know it! If there isn't, we'll all fight it together."

"Look at the place, Miss Corinth."

And then another flashlight boomed. It was the newspapermen, taking their pictures through the open doorway. Sam Schmitz made a rush for them, but he was too late. A car was already sliding down the hill. Tasha and the burly one looked at each other in consternation. They couldn't collect hush money for keeping a thing out of the papers when the papers had it already. Now they had to make their story stick or face blackmail charges.

Things might not have been so easy for them if the newspapers had not made such a big story out of it. The pictures the reporters had taken were featured on the front page and the headlines did the rest:

ALAN COGSWELL'S LOVE NEST FOUND—
DIRECTOR'S DOUBLE LIFE UNCOVERED.

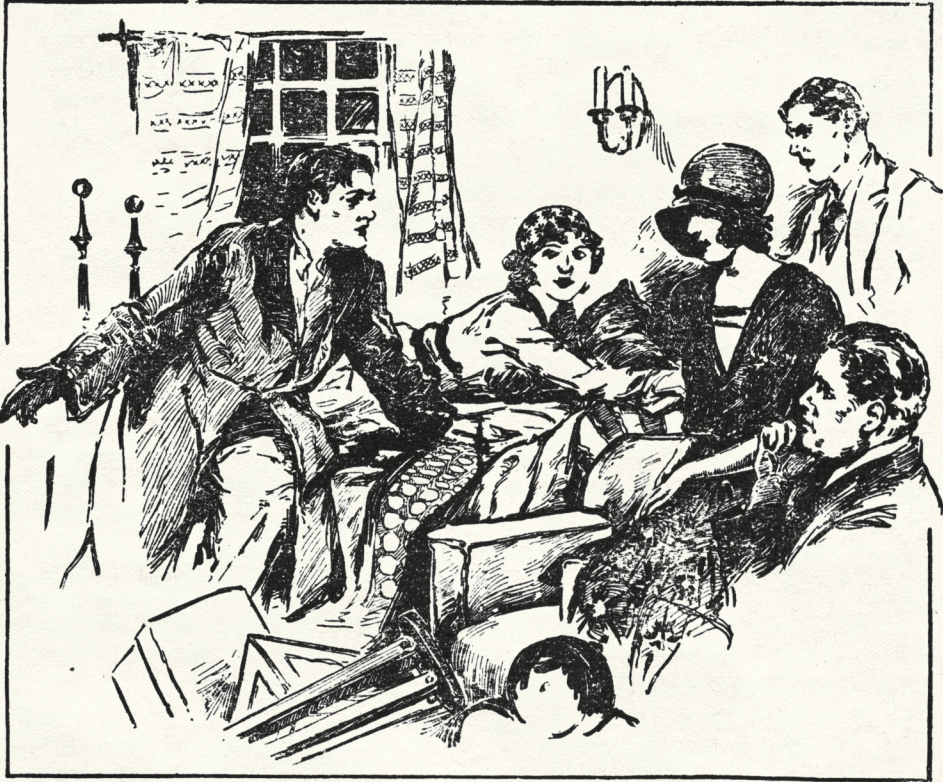
Those were the shrieking headlines that greeted Hollywood at the breakfast table the next morning. It was the pitiless sort of scandal that no marriage can stand. There was nothing for Kay to do, but what she did do. Sam Schmitz and Alan and all the rest of Hollywood soon showed her that.

She went into seclusion in a hotel. She filed suit for divorce, and she suffered. She suffered most because there was no way she could tell whether there was any truth in the blond girl's claims or not. Surely, Alan wouldn't do a thing like that! Oh, not Alan! Why, Alan loved her.

And he had told her she would simply have to divorce him. Not a soul in the

whole country would have any respect for her if she didn't. With all the world hanging breathless on the doings of Hollywood—Hollywood has to do what the world expects. Outwardly, anyway. So Kay filed the divorce action against the man she loved.

partment supplied her with black wigs to work in. And the picture public never knew that the new little black-haired girl in Alan Cogswell's pictures was the same little blonde who had broken up his home and broken his wife's heart.



"I don't know how I got here, Kay," he said. "The last thing I remember is having a midnight snack at Henry's last night."

And Tasha stuck to her demands.

Alan would marry her and give her the social and professional prestige of his name, or he would face a suit for the most unpleasant offense a man can commit. The newspaper stories were all the evidence she needed to back up her charges. Meanwhile, she wanted a cash settlement and featured parts in Alan's pictures.

She got them. Sam Schmitz ordered a new name for her and the costume de-

But Hollywood knew, and Hollywood gave Alan and his blonde the cold shoulder and made the mistake of pitying Kay. And pity is the last thing a proud person can stand.

Tasha got everything she asked for so easily that she soon made another demand. She insisted upon being taken about and introduced as Alan's future wife. Alan and Sam Schmitz almost did battle over that.

"I won't do it," Alan insisted. "A

man can stand only so much humiliation. I tell you, Mr. Schmitz, I won't stand much more. I can always blow my brains out, and if I'm forced to that extreme, believe me, I'll leave letters behind that will clear this mess up."

"Alan! Alan!" protested the producer. "Just play along. Give the blackmailers enough rope and they'll hang themselves. I promise you everything will come out O. K."

"But, Kay!"

The older man sighed patiently.

"You and Kay have got to stay away from each other until this is settled. It is better that Kay doesn't know the truth. She'd defy the whole world, and it can't be done, Alan. You let me handle it."

"To think that bunch of crooks can get away with breaking up my home, driving my wife away from me, disgracing me," gritted Alan Cogswell between clenched teeth. "It's enough to drive a man mad! Me! Who never looked at another woman! And you're asking me to flaunt that baby-faced crook in Kay's face!"

"Wouldn't you do almost anything to expose them?"

"Yes! Of course!"

"Well, then, listen to me."

Kay Corinth, head held high and pride aflame, with an interlocutory decree of divorce tucked away in her desk, found that Hollywood was going to be an entirely different place to Kay Corinth, divorcee, than it had been to Kay Corinth, wife of the great director, Alan Cogswell.

But for all her determination to carry the thing off in as aloof and impersonal a manner as possible, she hadn't been able to force herself to make any public appearances. She hadn't been near the studio. She hadn't seen Alan nor heard from him.

She had been locked in her hotel suite, trying to find some way through

the morass of heartbreak, shame, disillusionment, chaos, fear.

She couldn't believe that Alan would do a thing like this to her, and yet both he and Sam Schmitz had been adamant on the question of divorce.

"It's the only way to save your face, Kay," Alan had told her. "That awful newspaper notoriety doesn't leave you any other way out. I swear to you, Kay, there isn't a word of truth in the girl's claims—it's blackmail, pure and simple—but you've got to resent it. You'd lose your public instantly, if you didn't. For the sake of your career, you've got to divorce me."

"I'll retire——" began the bewildered Kay.

"We couldn't live it down that way, honey," Alan broke in gently. "Believe me, Kay—or believe Mr. Schmitz if you won't believe me—there's only one way out."

"Oh, if you want a divorce—that's different!" Kay had flashed at him out of the depths of her hurt bewilderment.

And she had gone flying out of the room, out of the house, to the refuge of cold hotel rooms, leaving it to her maid to collect and bring her possessions.

Finally, into her seclusion had come a telephone message from Sam Schmitz.

"I'm farming you out to Magnificent for one picture, until things cool off a bit, Kay. I don't think it would do for you and Alan to work together just yet. And I wish you would go out a bit. You've got to face Hollywood some time."

And only a little while before the divorce, Alan had refused Magnificent's offer for her, in favor of a renewal with Five Arts, because he said he couldn't make pictures without her. And now she was farmed out to Magnificent, and Hal Dane was to be her new director.

Kay Corinth walked the floor, her eyes hot and dry, hurt and resentful, wringing her hands in her helplessness,

because Alan had put her so completely out of his life.

But she finally managed to clamp a mask of bland acquiescence on her lovely face, and let her world think she was decidedly pleased with the new arrangement. What else was there to do?—she asked herself.

But the golden California sunshine lost its brightness, and the business of living became a very monotonous thing indeed. Then it was that she realized how much she had been counting upon working with Alan. It had never occurred to her that the divorce would make any difference in their business arrangements. She thought she would be with Alan at the studio every day—and surely, in those days together, she would find a way through this tangle. She would learn whether Alan had wanted the divorce or whether he had forced it upon her as the only expedient. But how could she ever find out if she never saw Alan? Never heard from him. She could only wait and hold herself continually on the alert in readiness for the meeting that was bound to occur some time.

And she had to face Hollywood sooner or later. When a girl has been married as long as Kay Corinth was married to Alan Cogswell, she hasn't any list of escorts to draw upon, and Hollywood is the last place in the world where a discarded wife can appear alone. So she accepted Hal Dane's companionship gratefully. And she danced, and laughed, and flirted a little with Hal Dane—in public. She had to! Hollywood was watching for some break in her armor of proud indifference. And Alan was going places with the little blond girl!

That was the worst hurt of all. That seemed to put the stamp of truth on the girl's story. And it broke Kay's heart all over again. Had Alan really been carrying on a clandestine affair, all the time he had been so devoted to his

wife? Kay simply couldn't force herself to believe that.

Worst of all was the awful strain of waiting for the first encounter. Kay never knew when Alan and Tasha would walk into the room where she was. She was always tensely expecting it. Always desperately prepared for it.

When at last it happened, she could have gone down on her knees with a prayer of gratitude, for the way Alan carried it off. He came straight to her and asked her to dance, and against his shoulder she murmured intensely:

"Oh, thank you for this, Alan! I've been so afraid something would happen to make this first meeting an ungraceful one."

"I can't imagine you not meeting a situation gracefully," Alan smiled down at her, and Kay had all she could do to keep from putting her face down on his shoulder and crying it all out right then and there. "No reason why divorced people shouldn't be friends, is there?"

And when she couldn't answer that for the choke in her throat, he went on:

"You're overdoing the gay, glad stuff, old girl. Those blue shadows under your eyes aren't painted."

Instead of resenting that, her heart that had leaped so joyfully when he stopped at her table, did a queer series of acrobatics. He still cared enough to notice how she looked, anyway, she thought, fiercely glad. But she managed to say only, with a little movement of the lovely shoulders:

"But I'm having such fun!"

Pride again!

Alan only held her a little away from him that he might examine her expression, and said nothing more. But his eyes had been inscrutable, and his mouth a grim line.

And then, rumor said that Alan was going to marry the little blonde. Actually marry her, when the year was up and the divorce would be final. And

Kay Corinth thought she would die. So it was all true then! It hadn't been blackmail at all. Alan had been having an affair with her. "Oh, Alan! Alan! I'll never believe it unless you tell me so with your own lips!" she cried aloud to an empty room.

Kay heard it first at a dance at Coconut Grove. A couple crowded against her and Hal on the packed floor were discussing it, and Kay's knees suddenly turned to water. She clung to Hal like a drowning person to a raft.

"Air!" she gasped. "I'm—stifling."

Hal guided her through the crowd to the door, got her outside, then picked her up in his arms and carried her to a secluded bench. He sat down, still cuddling her in his arms as one cuddles a tired child, and she stayed there, limp, helpless, drained of all hope, all volition. Alan was going to marry the little blonde. That meant the end of the world to Kay.

"You're a game little trouser, Kay," Hal told her softly, as if it were necessary to drop words into the bottomless void of her silent despair. "But you can't go on like this. You can't really care for that burly brute, after all he has done."

"He isn't a brute!" she defended Alan, but Hal went on as if she hadn't spoken.

"It is your pride that hurts, Kay. Not your heart. And I know the best way in the world to save your pride."

"Do you?" asked Kay hopelessly. It was heavenly to be able to be absolutely natural and honest with Hal. Heavenly to come out from behind that barrier of proud indifference that was so difficult to maintain. "How? Put me on the bench, please. I'd rather sit up."

"Let me announce our engagement," said Hal.

The last words in the world she expected. Hal was her friend, her director. Never once had she thought of him otherwise.

"Let you——" began the astonished girl, as if she couldn't believe her own ears.

"Let me announce our engagement—now—to-night," Hal repeated.

"But—what for?" she managed to gasp.

"At the moment for your protection," said Hal. "I adore you, Kay."

"Please!" she begged wearily.

"Oh, I know," he said easily. "I'm just telling you that to explain the rest. To show you that you can trust me. I won't harp on it. I know how it is with you better than you know yourself. You think you are still in love with Alan and you're not. You are merely furious because he made a public spectacle of himself with that blonde, and because he put you in a position where your world could gossip and pity you."

Kay could only stare at him and shake her head.

"You have the habit of being Mrs. Alan Cogswell so strongly fixed that you don't realize that that's all it is. Just a habit. You are accustomed to being thought for, taken care of, pampered, petted, cherished. And you miss it. Am I right?"

"You're right about that last, anyway," said the girl thoughtfully. "I'm so awfully lonely."

"Well, then," Hal went on briskly, carefully keeping his tone impersonal, friendly, businesslike. "Let me take Alan's place in your life—so far as a fiancé can replace a husband—and think for you, pamper you, cherish you. I won't make love to you. And the engagement will stand only as long as you want it to. The moment you say the word, it is ended. I can ease things for you at the studio, and outside the studio I'll be the devoted escort, the errand boy, the excuse for staying at home and sitting by the fire, and I won't even be there if you don't want me. And Hollywood will stop saying 'poor Kay.'"

"Are they still saying 'poor Kay'?"

she demanded, with hot intensity, her pride flaming to the heavens.

"Aren't they still saying it to you?" he challenged her.

They were! If they weren't saying it, they were implying it. Nicking at her proud reserve with impertinent, personal questions. Prodding, prodding, their eyes avid with curiosity. The pack, turning on the wounded one, ready to slay.

"The blonde in her black wigs isn't getting the parts you would have had, but she is working under Alan," said Hal gently, but insistently, as if he would force her to face the situation. "And if Alan is going to marry her, she'll get everything you had—in the studio and out of it. Wouldn't it be some satisfaction to have your engagement announced, even if it is this sort of an engagement, before she replaces you as completely as that?"

Kay tried to think clearly; tried to submerge the primitive hatred that surged up within her every time she let herself realize what that scheming little blonde had robbed her of; tried to submerge that hot pride; that justifiable jealousy; that seething rage that such an inferior person had been able to replace her so completely. She tried to face facts as if all this were happening to some one else. If she could only hate Alan as she hated that blond girl, it would have been so much easier to go on living. But she couldn't. She could only go on loving him, hopelessly, helplessly.

And Alan was going to marry the blonde!

Discarded wife! Discarded star! The words ticked like a clock that wouldn't be stopped, in her mind. Hal was awfully sweet to offer this. It would help to have her world know that some one cared. It might take some of the malicious triumph out of the blond girl's hard blue eyes. Too bad she couldn't love Hal. It would be heavenly

to have some one think for her again, plan for her, defend her.

"Yes, it would," she admitted at last. "You are very sweet to me, Hal," she went on softly. "I like you and am grateful to you, but you must know that I'll never love anybody but Alan. I'm made that way. And the fiancé status is only for public display. In private we're——"

"In private," he caught up her words, "we are director and star, or a couple of good friends, or a princess and her page. Whatever you say. I only want you to be happy, my dear."

"Thank you, Hal," she said gratefully. "You are right. I can't go on like this. I'm tired to death and part of the fatigue comes from trying to be brave."

"Oh, there you are, Kay!" came a gay, excited, brittle voice. "I was looking for you. What do you think I heard? Alan is giving a big party Saturday night to announce his engagement to your blond successor! I'm dying to know if he asked you! You seem to be pretty good friends for divorce mates."

Kay swallowed hard, hurriedly, and fought down the threatening dizziness, as she managed to answer as if it didn't matter to her at all. How could people gloat so, when your heart was being torn to shreds?

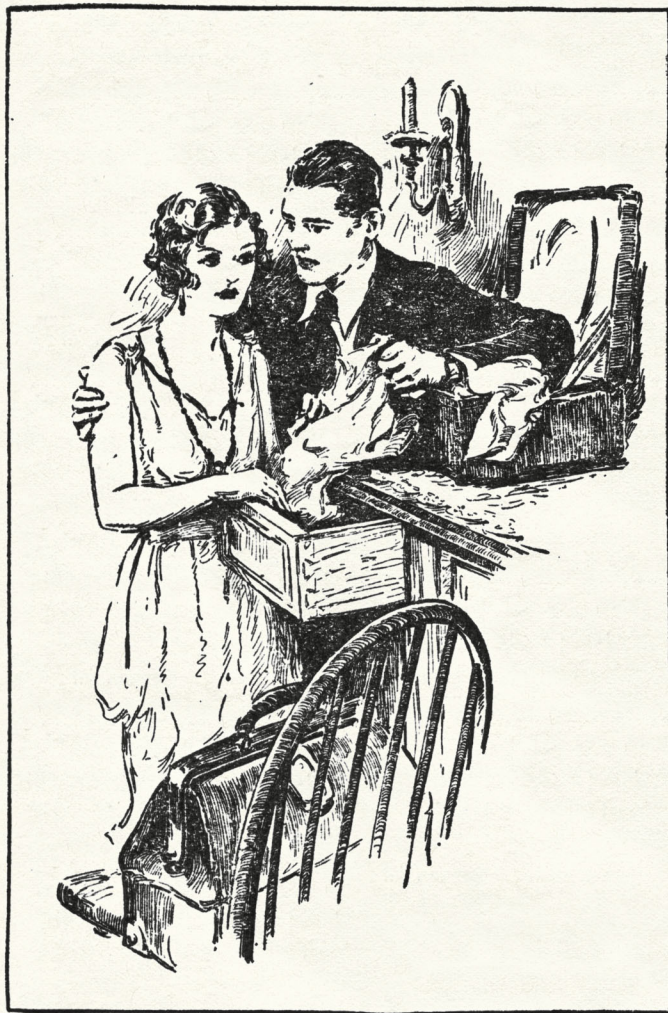
"Why not?" she managed lightly, clutching Hal's hand hard as she spoke. "If the ex-husbands and ex-wives weren't on friendly terms in this town, there wouldn't be much social life, would there?"

"I must say you are very gallant about it," said the brittle voice so ruefully that Kay actually laughed.

How disappointed they were when they couldn't make you writhe!

"Why not?" Kay heard her own voice going on. "Hal and I are announcing our engagement to-night."

There was a moment of stunned silence, and then a little feminine squeal



"I swear to you, Kay, there isn't a word of truth in the girl's claims—it's blackmail—but you've got to resent it. For the sake of your career, you've got to divorce me."

of delight, and Hal holding her hand tight all the time.

"You are! Oh, I thought there was something behind your being farmed out to Magnificent! I had a hunch that the blond waitress wasn't all there was behind your divorce! Tell me about it."

"You mean to say you don't know?" Kay made herself play up lightly. "I thought you never missed a shred of Hollywood gossip."

But when the chattering one had sped away to spread her news, Kay dropped back against Hal, sobbing as if she could never stop. Hal let her sob against his shoulder, one arm about her, one hand patting, as one consoles a grieving child. He loved Kay Corinth; loved her enough to help her and wait and hope.

"Oh, Hal!" she said gaspingly, at last. "I've done it! And Alan will hear it and I just can't bear it!"

Kay knew by the look in Alan's eyes when at last she re-entered the gay supper room on Hal's arm, that the chattering one had already sped to Alan with her news. And in Alan's eyes was a hurt, incredulous, shocked look that almost made Kay cry out to him then and there that it wasn't

true, that she never could love any one but him, never would.

"Is it true?" Alan was saying to her, his eyes intense, his voice thin with pain, his tanned face oddly pinched. "You and Hal?"

Alan—taking it that way! Oh, then he must still care! But if he cared, why did he go on flaunting that blonde at her? Why didn't he end that, at least?

Oh, why had she listened to Hal? With her own words she had closed the only road that led back to Alan. Now Alan would think she didn't care. And she did—desperately, heartbreakingly, endlessly!

And then, like a stab of conscience or a sword thrust of intuition, came a thought. Wasn't the best way to make any man want a thing to make him think it was out of his reach? Of course! Any man! Even Alan. At least it would be a test. If he made the slightest gesture in her direction, after this, wouldn't it mean that he still loved her, wanted her back?

And so the actress that was Kay Corinth managed to smile at her ex-husband.

"Yes, it is true," she said. "I seem to have the habit of being married to my director."

The words didn't come easily, but they came. And Alan drew a deep breath that lifted his chest quite perceptibly. As if he were fortifying himself.

"I congratulate you both," he managed. "Kay is everything wonderful, Hal. And you, Hal, you'll know how to take care of her."

There was a plea in his voice. Kay prayed that it meant what it seemed to mean.

"I certainly will, Alan," said Hal, in a tone that was underlaid with something throbbingly intense, as the hands of the two men met.

There was a moment's sharp, painful silence, then Kay broke it.

"I hear you are throwing a big party Saturday night, Alan," said Kay, with a smile that was strained in spite of her efforts. "Ask us, won't you? It will be food for more gossip."

Any place where Alan was, even if she had to steel herself to hear the announcement of his engagement to that blonde; any place where Alan was—was heaven!

"I'm not throwing a big party," said Alan, surprise in his expression. "Just a few of the fellows in for poker. You're going out a lot more, aren't you, Kay?" he added, as if he couldn't stop the words.

"Yes," said Kay, her eyes on his. "Quite a lot more."

"Don't let her overdo it, Hal," said Alan, a plea in his eyes.

"I'll take care of her," Hal replied, tucking Kay's hand under his arm possessively.

"Thanks," breathed Alan, as if he couldn't stop that word, either.

Kay and Hal went home then, without making any public announcement. Hollywood would know. The brittle-voiced one would be at her telephone half the night; while Kay Corinth cried herself to sleep and Hal Dane walked the floor of his hilltop bungalow and ached with his helplessness to ease her hurts; and Alan Cogswell spent the night doing battle with Sam Schmitz.

"She can't marry him till the end of the year, Alan," insisted the little producer. "Wait. Give the crooks a chance to fight among themselves. Wait till Tasha begins to hold out on them. Time is all we need, Alan. Just time."

"If I deserved any of this," groaned Alan.

It was exactly the same thought that was beating at Kay Corinth's tortured brain. All that night she was racked and torn by the awful fear that she had been tricked by Hollywood gossip. If she had heard of that unannounced engagement once, she had heard it a hundred times. Hollywood is like that. Start a totally unfounded rumor any place in Hollywood, drive as fast as a motor will take you in any direction, and the first person you meet when you stop will tell you the gist of that rumor, as strictly authenticated, bona-fide news. Kay knew that, and she was frantic with fear that she had been tricked by gossip.

Had she permitted her engagement to Hal to be announced in all the newspapers, spread all over the face of the earth by fan magazines, as a gesture of silly pride, when it was the one thing in the world that would block the way to ever belonging to Alan again?

A thousand times she railed at herself for filing that divorce suit. What did public opinion matter so long as she had Alan? What did her career matter? What did friends matter, so long as she had Alan? And how was she going to get him back?

Was she big enough, brave enough, to go to Alan and beg him to take her back, no matter what their world said? Was she big enough to overlook his flaunting the blonde in her face these past weeks? Had she courage enough to ask him why he had gone about with that blonde, when he told her that that two-day absence of his was not his doing? When he told her that the whole thing was a blackmail stunt?

Could she go on living, if she didn't know the truth of the whole thing? She could not! Oh, he must still care! The things he said when she admitted her engagement to Hal, and his face, his eyes, his voice when he said them, all told her that he still cared. What if he hadn't admitted it in words?

To-morrow she would go to Alan. She would ask him to be completely honest and frank with her. She would tell him that she loved him and trusted him completely and wanted to belong to him again. And maybe they could clear up this mess.

She had an early call the next morning, but the instant the day's work was over she would go to him.

Kay Corinth fell asleep, happier than she had been in months, because pride was dead. Love had killed it. But she didn't go to Alan the next evening.

When she came rushing into her hotel rooms, intent on bath and dinner and looking her prettiest where she went to

see Alan, she found an unexpected visitor.

There in her sitting room, as much at home as if it were his own, was—of all people!—the burly man who had been behind the camera in that Laurel Canyon Road cottage that awful night!

"Don't scream!" he ordered sharply, as her mouth flew open at the sight of him. "You'll be glad you didn't."

"What—what do you want?" she managed.

The man laughed—a soft little laugh that was lined with cruelty.

"Money, of course," he told her. "What else?"

He didn't look like a robber as he sat sprawled out in an easy-chair. Nor did he act like one.

"A—holdup?" she gasped.

"N-no," said the man, pursing his lips a little mockingly. "Not exactly."

"What then!" she demanded, her courage returning slowly when he made no move to get out of the big chair.

"Just a little assessment for protection," he told her with a mocking smile.

"What do you mean?" she managed.

"Wouldn't it be worth about a thousand berries to you not to have any more scandal?" he asked her. "You ought to know by now that it is cheaper to pay for protection than to get defiant."

"This has some connection with that affair in Laurel Canyon?"

"Well, maybe," said the man. "If your husband had kicked through with a chunk of dough, there wouldn't have been any scandal that time."

"You mean, it really was blackmail?" she demanded.

"You really mean you don't know?" he mocked at her.

"Of course I don't know!" she told him sharply. "Mr. Cogswell is still going places with that blonde."

"And you don't like it?" he giped at her.

She refused to answer that.

"Look here, Miss Corinth, when you pay for protection, you get protection. Get me?"

"No," said Kay, watching him speculatively, and marveling that she wasn't more frightened.

"You slip me a thousand berries, and I'm your friend. See? If there's anybody annoying you—well, I'll fix that. See?"

"What do you mean?" she gasped. There was so much menace in his tone.

"Well, how'd you like to have the blond gal bumped off?"

"Oh, merciful heavens, no!" cried Kay, horrified.

"Well, what would you like to have for your thousand berries?" asked the man.

Kay stared at him, scarcely able to believe that this was happening. Stared, and thought frantically.

"I'll tell you what I'd like to have," she said tensely. "A written confession from that blond girl that the whole affair was a frame-up for the purpose of blackmail. If it is true that it was."

"They sure been stringing you along if you don't know that, lady," said the man. "Well, gimme the thousand. I'll get you the confession. It may take a day or two, but I'll get it."

"I don't keep any such sum as that around in cash," she told him.

"Well, get it when the bank opens in the morning," he said carelessly, getting to his feet. "I'll see you some time during the day and you can slip it to me. But don't try no tricks, lady. It wouldn't be healthy. Get me?"

It was unbelievable! And, still, the thing uppermost in Kay's mind at that moment was curiosity.

"What happened between you and your blond girl that you are willing to—to do this to her?" asked Kay.

"She double-crossed me, the slinking little rat!" snarled the man. "Says she's going to marry Cogswell, and I can whistle for my share of the loot. Why,

she won't even split her salary check with me! Tie that if you can! And I put her where she is to-day!"

"But if I give you this money," said Kay shrewdly, "how many more demands are you going to make on me? Will you be continually coming back for more? You won't get it."

"Lady, I want two things. One of 'em is to get square with that little double-crosser, and the other is enough dough to get out of this town. There ain't a livin' here for one in my line. These four-flushers just ain't got the dough to cough up. You gimme the thousand, and you c'n kiss me good-by. And you'll get your confession. That's a swell way to pay off the blonde. Gee! Swell!"

"You won't hurt her?" asked Kay anxiously. "I wouldn't want to be a party to that!"

"Oh, I may have to get a little rough, but she likes that. She thinks a man doesn't love her unless he slams her around once in a while. And, listen, lady. Don't squalk about this. You'll be gettin' value received for your thousand. This ain't no blackmail stunt. Huh-huh! This is legitimate business. Right?"

"I hope it's all right," worried Kay.

"I don't want no marked bills, and I don't want no dicks hanging around. You gotta trust me, lady, if you want that confession. And no tricks."

"No tricks," she promised.

He stuck out a hamlike hand to seal the bargain, but Kay shrank away in fright.

"I'm afraid to go that close to you," she quavered.

"Needn't be, lady. I'm your best friend. Well, so long. Don't look for me. I'll find you to-morrow."

And he walked out into the hotel corridor as if he had nothing in the world to fear.

Kay stood staring at the door that had closed behind him for long moments

before she moved, trying to realize what had happened. Then she threw her hands above her head in a gesture of triumph and delight, and danced round and round that big room. It had been blackmail! It had been! Then Alan must still love her in spite of his appearances with the blond girl! Maybe that was part of their price, too! Oh, everything **was** going to be all right! As soon as she had that confession in her hands, she'd go straight to Alan and Sam Schmitz! And she wouldn't say a word to anybody until she got it.

But suppose she didn't get that confession. That thought stopped her mad dance. Well, what if she didn't? She knew, for a certainty, now, that it had been a blackmail stunt. What was that saying, something about when crooks fall out—

She couldn't remember. It didn't matter. What mattered was that she had bought a piece of priceless information for a thousand dollars. She hoped with every atom of her being that she would get the confession. She would publish it, and it would clear Alan's name. But even if she didn't, the information she had gained was worth the money.

And then she wondered where her maid was. She called, and thought she heard a muffled answer. She went through the rooms and heard a sharp knocking on the door of the maid's bath. She unlocked it, and a frightened girl stumbled out.

"You all right, Miss Corinth?" she gasped.

"I'm all right. How about you?"

"I answered the door—I thought it was you—and he locked me in the bathroom and said he'd kill me if I made a sound."

"Never mind," said Kay. "He'll be back. He won't hurt you. Let him in when he comes."

And when Hal called, she wouldn't see him. She couldn't trust herself with

her new secret. Anyway, if she told Hal, he might object to her giving the man the money. And she owed it to him, whether he brought her that confession or not.

She sat before her dressing table a long time, marveling at the change happiness can make in one's face. Even the maid noticed it, for she said:

"You look marvelous, Miss Corinth. And I don't see how you can after such a fright."

Kay couldn't resist telephoning Sam Schmitz.

"When are you going to call me back to Five Arts?" she wanted to know. "We've finished the picture. Finished to-day."

"Do you want to come?" he asked.

"Of course! Why not? I'd rather work with Alan than any director in the world," she cried joyously.

"Well, come out and see me to-morrow."

Going out to Five Arts meant seeing Alan. Dear, clever, patient, persecuted Alan. And what a gift she'd put in his hands in a day or so. And she wouldn't say a single word until she had that confession in her hands.

Kay Corinth stopped at the bank the next morning and drew out a thousand dollars in twenty-dollar bills. Brand-new ones, without a mark on them. She wanted to show her faith in the burly man. Maybe if she played absolutely fair with him, he actually would get her that confession. Somehow it didn't seem quite so probable in the daylight. But she hung onto hope with a grim determination that ought to bring anything to pass.

But where would the burly one get in touch with her? He probably knew she was working at Magnificent, so she turned the nose of her roadster in that direction. She would go to the Magnificent lot, go to her dressing room and wait a while.

But that wasn't necessary. On the

wide boulevard that runs through Ca-huenga Pass, a car pulled up along beside hers and matched its speed to hers exactly. It paced her so long that she finally looked to see who was driving and met a grinning face.

"Got it?" asked the visitor of the night before.

"Yes," said Kay.

"Toss it over."

And Kay, driving with one hand, fished in her purse with the other.



"You are very sweet to me, Hal," she said softly. "I like you and am grateful to you, but you must know that I'll never love anybody but Alan. I'm made that way."

"O. K.," said the man. "Be seein' you again soon."

And his car speeded up and disappeared in traffic. Kay suddenly realized that she didn't need to go to Magnificent, after all, found a place to turn around, and then was speeding back to Five Arts. And speeding was the word. She was going to see Alan! Alan! Never had traffic been so thick. Never had there been so many stops. Kay was fuming with impatience before she turned in at the big gate of the Five Arts lot.

She wanted to run straight to Alan's office, but she managed not to, and then she met him on the walk outside the administration building. The sight of him almost broke her heart. He was thinner, he was haggard, his great shoulders drooped.

"Alan!"

She had to fight back the tears at the change the sound of her voice brought. He lifted his bowed head with a glad look, and came to her, both hands outstretched. She gave him hers, and her sweetest smile.

"My dear! My dear!" he said to her in an oddly strangled voice. "How marvelous you look! Radiant."

Almost accusingly, he said it.

"Why not?" she asked gayly. "I'm coming back to Five Arts—and you."

"Does it mean that much to you?" Alan asked, his face twisting with the stress of his emotion, and his eyes suspiciously misted.

"Shouldn't it?" she challenged him softly.

"Oh, my dear! Working with you again——"

"Alan!" she broke in, aghast. "Don't you want me back?"

"Of course I do, Kay. It will be heaven to have you in the studio, to see you, to be near you, and torture to know that you belong to Hal."

"Isn't good supposed to overcome all evil?" she flashed at him delightedly, and

sped away, wise woman that she was, leaving Alan Cogswell staring after her hungrily, and wondering what on earth she meant.

He took a quick step or two after her, and then his shoulders sagged, and he turned away. Nothing gives a woman that radiant, shining look but love. And she was going to marry Hal Dane.

Alan stood it for three days. Three days of watching Kay come and go on the lot, with always a gay greeting for him. And then one evening, when the light in her dressing-room bungalow told him she was there, and when Kay was beginning to think he never would come to her, he couldn't stand it any longer.

"Kay darling," he began with a wistful appeal that tore at her heart. "I've got to know. Is it because you love Hal so much that you are so shiningly happy? Is it?"

"Why have you got to know?" she asked him softly.

"Because I love you so, Kay," he almost groaned. "I can't bear to think that we'll never be together again. And if you love Hal, I've got to get used to it. Got to find some way to bear it."

"Have you loved me all these months?" she begged softly.

"Every minute! Every second! I've known every sort of torment without you."

"But what about the blond girl?" asked Kay.

"Oh, darling! Surely you understood that! I told you that was a blackmail stunt. Sam Schmitz said if we played their game long enough, they'd give themselves away."

"They did, darling," said Kay, unable to withhold her glorious information any longer; unable to keep her arms from the one place in the world they ached to be; unable to deny those arms of her husband.

"I'll have indisputable proof of it for you very soon now."

But aching, lonely arms, at peace at last, hungry lips within kissing distance of equally hungry lips, made words of secondary consideration. The contact of hands, of lips, of arms was so much more important.

"Darling! Darling! Darling!" cried Kay, a long time later. "I'm so happy!"

Words tumbled over words in her eagerness as she told him the story of the pseudo engagement. The story of her visitor of a few days ago. The story of the thousand dollars paid for information and the promise of a written confession. All mixed up with kisses, and tears of happiness and the joy of warm arms again.

"I'm sorry for Hal," said Alan soberly. "He loves you, too. Who wouldn't?"

And when he had been properly rewarded for that, Kay said:

"I'm sorry for the blond girl. Her partner in crime doesn't look too gentle."

They were sitting, arms about each other, on the divan there, when a knock came on the door. Kay's maid answered it and brought her a fat, grimy envelope, bearing Mexican stamps.

"Alan! This must be the confession!" she cried joyously, trembling fingers tearing at it.

The first thing that fell out was an atrocious photograph, post-card size, of Tasha and the burly one. On the back of it was written in a painstaking scrawl:

Me and my bride. She ain't such a bad egg after all. I had a little trouble getting what I promised you, but here it is. I made her swear to it before a notary. And with that hanging over her head, I guess she won't double-cross me no more. Yours truly.

It wasn't signed, but it didn't need to be.

Heads together, Alan and Kay stared at the photograph, bride and groom, Mexican style. And they laughed until they cried out of sheer happiness, out of relief, out of the exuberance of their new joy of life.

And then they went, hand in hand, to Sam Schmitz with their story.

"See?" he gloated to Alan. "Didn't I tell you they'd hang themselves if we gave them enough rope? And look at this. Why, the fools even sent us photographs of themselves! What the police will do about that is plenty."

"Oh, let them go," said Alan carelessly. "We've got the confession and I've got Kay and they're married. Give them a break. Maybe they'll go straight after this. I'm so happy I'd be magnanimous with my worst enemy to-day."

But Sam Schmitz only smiled and took charge of that photograph and the confession. Kay Corinth and Alan Cogswell were too busy seeing a lawyer and having the divorce proceedings quashed to bother with little things like blackmailers' confessions. They wanted to get away for a second honeymoon before the new picture started.

And they did.

And Hal Dane loaned them his new camp up in the mountains, at Bear Lake, for that honeymoon. The camp he had recently bought and furnished, hoping it would serve as a honeymoon spot for Kay with an entirely different bridegroom. But he didn't tell them that. He was much too good a loser to do that. And Kay and Alan were far too much absorbed in each other and their newly regained happiness to notice it.





The Laughing Husband

By S. Andrew Wood

A Serial—Part II.

CHAPTER III.

DAWN WEDDERBURN turned over the leaves of the dainty calendar upon her dressing table one by one.

The days had flown swiftly. With the last remaining leaves fluttering through her fingers, she felt like a miser counting all that was left of her fortune.

She passed slowly from the little blue-and-silver room, and down the wide staircase of White Pigeons.

Terry, her husband, had gone over to see his father. She smiled pitifully. Very bravely, she faced the realization that she was no more to him than she had been on the day of their marriage. Of late, he had been almost morose and a little ironical about women. He had even attempted to avoid her, and the dread that from indifference he would change to dislike had haunted her, again. Each morning Dawn searched the newspapers with a shrinking glance for some

reference to the forthcoming divorce case between John Harkaway and his wife. But she had seen nothing. Nor had Terry spoken any word of Pansy.

How could a woman make a man love her—a man such as Terry? The question beat in Dawn's pulse by day, in her prayers at night, but there came no answer. Sometimes the strength of her own love frightened her.

Ben Compton's big limousine stood waiting before the front door. As Dawn reached the hall, he came forward with his loud, hearty laugh, and enveloped her in his arms. She clung to him with something in her starved soul crying out for a moment.

"Terry not in, eh?" Ben Compton said, frowning with his shaggy eyebrows as he released her. "I came to see him on business. Hope he's not neglecting you, Rosy. I've come with a chance that'll put the fortunes of his blue-blooded family on their feet again, if that old stiff-necked father of his will only be sensible. How long'll he be, eh?"

Dawn's father stamped a little contemptuously about the big room. He stopped abruptly and, thrusting his finger beneath Dawn's chin, tilted her face.

"You're happy?" he demanded, brusquely.

Dawn flushed faintly.

"Quite happy, dear," she answered. She had a quick picture of Ben Compton barking threats at a cold and polite Terry, because he had not carried out his part of that business proposition, their marriage.

Ben Compton grunted. He wor-
shipped his daughter with all the

strength and purpose that had helped him to make her the wealthiest girl in the country. Ever since his only son had died, five years before, she had been the only warm thing left in his life.

"You look sad," he said, curtly. "Well, about this good luck for the Wedderburn family. That house of theirs and the property around it stand on one of the richest coal fields around here, and they don't know it. It's been suspected for a long time. But a man who owns factories and iron foundries

—a man pretty nearly as well-off as I am, has proved it. This Morrice Steele, for that's his name, has bought all the mining rights of the land up to within half a mile of Wedderburn's house. He wants to buy the house, too, and he'll give big money for it! It's the chance of a lifetime for your poker-backed father-in-law, Rosy, and for his son to get money of his

own without living on his wife!"

Ben Compton nodded. He did not see Dawn shrink at his last words. Nor, did he hear, as Dawn did, with a quick beat of her heart, the door of the room open. Her father made a sweeping gesture.

"This Morrice Steele wants to buy the house, lock, stock and barrel. It's not that he wants the old shack that the Wedderburns have lived in for centuries and all that sentimental stuff. I reckon he'll make firewood of that. But he wants the land for coal and——"

"He'll get neither, Mr. Compton!" Terry's heavy voice suddenly interrupted him.

He moved into the room slowly, and

THE STORY SO FAR:

TERRY WEDDERBURN, society playboy, marries Dawn Compton, daughter of a manufacturer, to save his family from ruin. Pansy Harkaway's husband is divorcing her, naming Terry as correspondent. Pansy comes to Dawn and asks her to give Terry up, saying that he does not love her. Dawn promises that if, within two months, she cannot make Terry love her, she will set him free.

stood with his back to the fire, looking at Ben Compton and his daughter with a sullen enmity in his gaze that froze Dawn. His boots were muddy, as though he had walked in the mud on his way back from Wedderburn Manor. His good-looking face was set and hard as he stared at Ben Compton.

"Mr. Steele had just been to Wedderburn Manor," he said. "And put his proposal before my father and myself. He made us a—*a* handsome offer for the estate. He told us frankly that within two years there would be a coal shaft in the park, a railroad through the woods, and a mining town about a mile from the house. It meant the utter ruin of what the Wedderburns have spent their blood and money for generations to preserve. It meant filth where now everything is beautiful. Look at it, man, through that window." A dark stain of color had crept over Terry's face. "It meant the death of my father, and the extinction of our family for good. So we showed Mr. Morrice Steele out of the house."

"Fools!" cried Ben Compton with a snap of anger. "Why, the mines will be up to your front door in any case! You'll see the chimneys smoking and hear the cages rattling as you sit at dinner, whatever happens. He's bought the land up to your entrance gates!"

Terry gave an ugly laugh that held hidden pain.

"Unless something happens to Mr. Morrice Steele's plans," Terry said, fiercely. "You and your kind! You would turn every little thing that is ancient and beautiful into mills to grind you more money, even though you are already choking with it."

He stopped, with a white and startled look at Dawn. A deep, humiliated light filled his blue eyes. He bowed his head.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "Yours, Dawn, and—yours, Mr. Compton. I forgot that you gave the house back to us."

A bitter laugh from Ben Compton made Dawn shiver. She touched him timidly. Something in her clear face made her father, who had gathered himself like a little ruffled terrier, control himself. He turned abruptly on his heel and left the room.

"Terry!" Dawn said.

She moved near, all her being aquiver, all her body trembling with hunger and loneliness. How well she understood! How well, though she was Ben Compton's daughter, she knew the pride of the Wedderburns as though it had been her own! It was part of all that she worshiped in this big, clean-limbed young man who thought she had married him for his name and social position. If only he would look down into her eyes, he would see her wild and hungry soul there, unless he was blind, unless, already, Pansy Harkaway had won.

"Terry dear, I understand!" she whispered. "Oh, I do, I do! It would be hateful to have all this spoiled. I know it as well as you do!"

Some tremor in her voice, the low vehemence of her words, made Terry Wedderburn turn his hard face.

"You!" he said, gently. "I believe you do understand. You are a little brick, Dawn. I would kill this man Steele before I would let him have the place!"

He stood with clenched hands, a new and formidable Terry, that made her thrill. Dawn was so near to him that by putting up her arms, she could have clasped them around his neck. Her fingers crept up tremblingly to his shoulder.

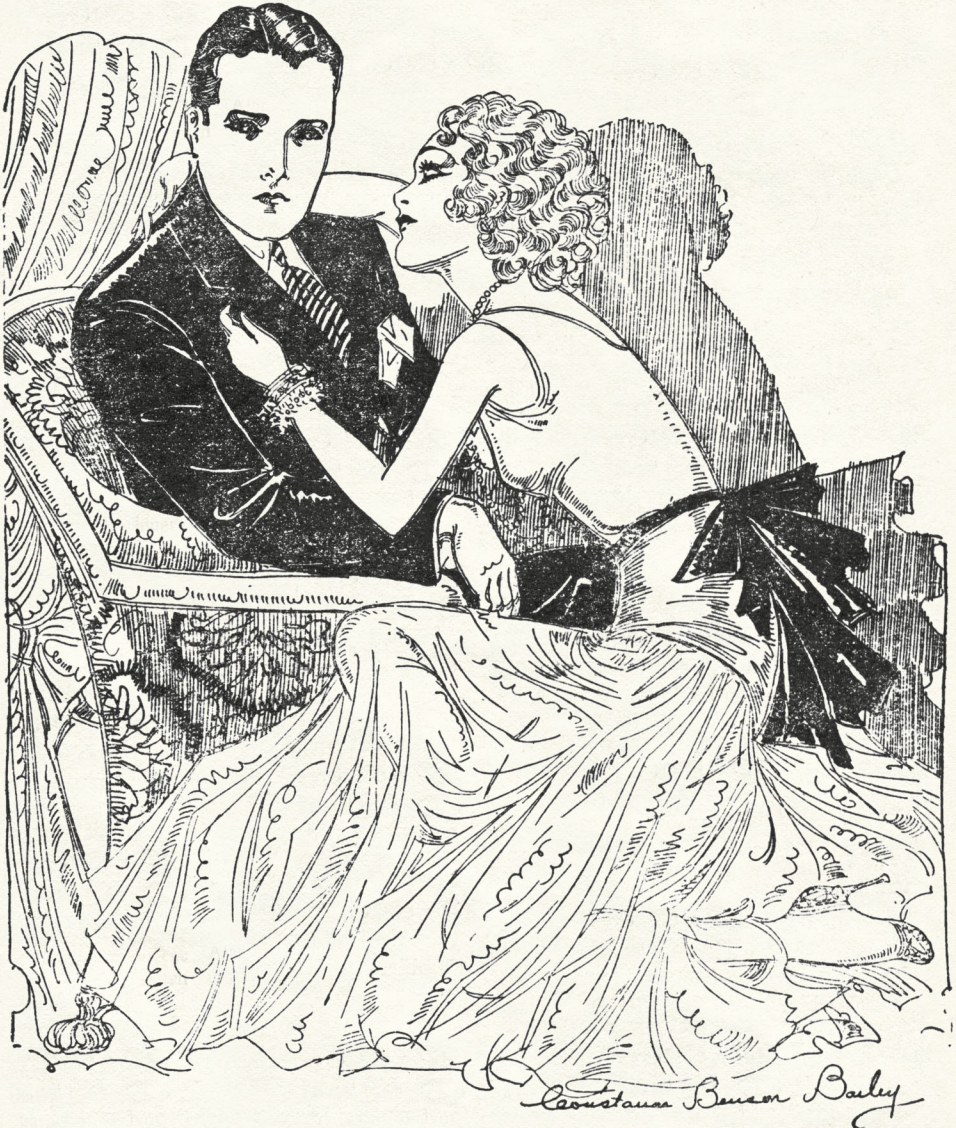
He caught her wrists, clumsily yet gently, and lowered them. Abruptly, at some thought Dawn could not guess, his manner changed.

"We are becoming too sentimental," he said, with playful carelessness. "It's not done in the circles where we move now, dawn girl—not by husband and

wife. Your father would think I am not teaching you your lessons properly if he saw us holding hands. And we must both keep to our bargain, you to provide the money and I the manners."

He bent down and touched her lips with his own. Something within Terry Wedderburn wrenched him—he knew not what—as he passed out of the room.

It came from the disgust and suspicion of all women which had grown slowly in him since the meeting with Pansy Harkaway in his apartment. Even with his wife, this girl whom he believed had married him because her father wished it, he must be careful, lest she should make a fool of him. Yet, before he knew it, a keen pain shot through him.



"Terry, dear, I understand!" she whispered. "Oh, I do, I do! It would be hateful to have all this spoiled. I know it as well as you do!"

Dawn Wedderburn was standing very still by the window. She felt like one of the rain-beaten flowers that lay flat in the garden outside.

"He will never know and will never care!" she whispered, numbly. "Pansy has won!"

"Pansy has won!" Dawn whispered again. The careless touch of Terry's lips burned upon her own as though his light kiss had held the passion she had dreamed of so often. She stood silently and pressed her cool fingers against her hot lips.

In that instant, hope slipped completely from Dawn Wedderburn for the first time. She had crushed the mental picture of Pansy Harkaway until then, but now it came flooding back upon her. There must be another woman—Pansy.

The cold bleakness of the outside day called to her. Ben Compton in contemptuous anger, had driven away without farewell. The air of White Pigeons suddenly stifled Dawn.

She was climbing swiftly through the dying sunset light, half an hour later, up the steep stretch of hill and wood which stretched behind White Pigeons. The wind, keen as it was, whipped no color to her cheeks, and her eyes were wide and aching as she looked down into the fair, warm-tinted valley which held the Wedderburn family home.

Dawn crept out upon a ragged spur of rock that jutted from the hillside, and stared at the wide sweep of country which ran out into the evening mist. A single distant light began to glimmer from far away. It was the library of Wedderburn Manor where George Wedderburn sat in his lonely pride. What manner of man was this Morrice Steele who, rich and powerful as he was, yet wanted to turn that old and mellow parkland into a heap of dust and smoke and dirty people?

"He belongs to my class!" Dawn whispered with the first smile of bitter-

ness curving her sweet face. "The money class that Terry hates—yet married into!"

She shivered and turned upon the unsafe edge of stone where she stood. It moved slightly, dislodging a trickle of soil and gravel. Startled, Dawn tried to leap clear.

What happened next, she scarcely remembered. The rock seemed to slide from under her feet and she clutched desperately at a small overhanging tree. She missed it, and with a frightened exclamation found herself moving in a mass of loosened soil, down the slope.

"Hang on!" a man's voice suddenly called.

She was caught and held suspended for a mere instant. Then, before she knew it, she was standing upon firm ground, shaken and trembling. By her side stood the biggest man she had ever seen in her life.

"Thank you!" Dawn said, with a little tremulous laugh. "It almost served me right!"

She looked up at the broad-shouldered, tweed-clad stranger who had saved her. He was young, with a tanned, grave face set with a sweeping, hawklike nose and a slightly-turned mouth which gave him a look of quaint, strong ugliness that she liked.

"I knew it would go when you moved, Mrs. Wedderburn," he said. "So I waited behind you until it started."

He smiled with eyes the color of a hazel nut. Instinctively, Dawn knew that he was a man who seldom smiled. She did not know that it was the tinted picture of her own face and straying brown hair and startled eyes that made the man think of her as belonging to the gray, pink-tinged winter's day and the russet valley below them.

"You saved me from being seriously hurt, I think," Dawn said. "And you know my name——"

"Mine is Morrice Steele," her companion interrupted.

Dawn made a little stifled sound.

"Morrice Steele!"

This big, rough-cut young man whom the gods had made like a knight of old, was the man whom Terry hated! Dawn had heard of him. She remembered something akin to awe which had crept into Ben Compton's voice as he spoke of him; bridge-builder, ironmaster and maker of towns. Yet he was no older than Terry.

"I have heard of you," she said softly. "My father is Ben Compton."

Steele and she were walking together down the steep and stony path. He limped slightly and the warm pity of her young heart was joined to the liking she felt for him. She caught her breath helplessly. Even in that she was traitor to Terry.

"I have heard of you, too," Morrice Steele replied, simply. "Long ago."

"Long ago?" Dawn flushed faintly, though she hardly knew why.

The man looked down at her clear profile almost furtively. Yet one knew that, with his strength and power, furtiveness was foreign to Morrice Steele.

"It was in Mexico," he said. "When I was copper mining. A boy was there from home and as he and I were the only Americans for a hundred miles, we were friends. We lived together and then he became ill. He told me, then, about his sister, who was called Rose Dawn, and showed me her photograph. He gave it to me just before—he died. He made me promise that if ever I met you I would tell you, but not his father."

"They quarreled," Dawn explained. Her eyes were blurred for an instant. Then she held out her hand.

"Thank you for telling me," she said. "And for looking after him. Oh, I know he was wild, but not bad. Was he?"

"Not bad," Steele murmured. "No! He would have made good had he had the chance. The chance is everything."

He looked down almost hungrily with that in his glance which baffled Dawn. They stood at the bottom of the steep path above White Pigeons, and, at that moment the figure of a man vaulted lightly over a near-by gate and came toward them.

It was Terry Wedderburn.

Dawn did not see him until he was almost upon Steele and herself. Then, looking up, she met his cold eyes and flushed face. His narrow glance swept Morrice Steele slowly. Dawn made a half step toward him. But, with a brusque bow, he passed, speaking no word.

"I must go!" Dawn whispered. "Good-by!"

She was half running down the path, blind with misery.

Morrice Steele watched her until the mist of bare trees hid her. Some deep change had passed over him at her going; some mask he had worn, dropped, and left his face lined and tired. He laughed with a sound that had no mirth.

"You fool!" he whispered. "She's married! You might have known!"

He took a small photograph from his wallet, and struck a match. Morrice Steele had been so busy making his own way that no woman had entered his life. Yet he had always kept that picture of the girl whose real self had suddenly crossed his path and left all his strong soul shaken by some dream and desire that he did not understand.

The match dropped to the damp ground. Almost coldly he crushed the picture back into its case.

Morrice Steele looked over the rolling acres that stretched below him. Its hidden wealth, right up to the gates of the Wedderburn home, was all his. The mills and works that lay beyond the edge of the distant smoke veil were his. Riches and dominion had begun to tire him. Yet at a beckon of his finger, they still came to him.

There was no dream and desire he

had not gained by dreaming and desiring with sufficient strength.

CHAPTER IV.

The Beltane Valley Hunt streamed out of Reynard's yard, and scattered, in a cluster of clean-limbed horses, healthy-looking men and women along the Wedderburn land, where the hounds were yelping furiously. The fox had given a gallant run for half a dozen hot miles, after breaking covert in a spinney behind White Pigeons and was still fresh and plucky.

Dawn Wedderburn watched it all with a feverish brilliance in her eyes, and a color in her cheeks that was neither the biting wind nor the excitement of the chase. Terry, her husband, on his mud-splashed roan was riding like a young Greek ahead of her. A huge bony chestnut carried Morrice Steele. John Harkaway had also turned up quite unexpectedly, at the meet.

Somehow, though she did not know why, his sudden appearance frightened Dawn. Perhaps it was because she knew that Pansy, too, must have come with her husband—for outwardly they were not yet parted—and that day the wild bargain which she had driven with Pansy Harkaway, two months before, expired.

Dawn lifted her face to the wind as it roared past her ears. Terry had never mentioned Morrice Steele's name again. But his half-cynical carelessness had increased, and his visits to town were more frequent. By accident, Dawn had met Steele several times, and she knew that he had weighed-up Terry, the cynical husband, and herself, the neglected wife. Yet she could not bring herself to hate Steele. He was a great man, she realized.

Her horse soared over a high, jagged fence, and stumbled as she took the ground. Dawn dismounted quickly. The animal had strained a tendon and was limping badly.

She looked up to find Morrice Steele by her side.

"Please do not stop," Dawn said swiftly. "I will walk home myself. You will miss the kill."

Steele caught the injured horse's bridle. There was something masterful in the movement and in the look that he cast at Dawn. All his life Morrice Steele had been a law unto himself. Therefore he had not crushed down the dangerous and passionate interest which he felt for this gray-eyed girl whose photograph he held unknown to her.

"I don't want to see the kill," he answered. "I will come with you. There is no chance of your husband seeing you with me, Mrs. Wedderburn. Therefore you will not fall into disgrace for trafficking with the enemy."

He laughed. Dawn barely heard him. She stood still, trembling a little, and strained her eyes after the riders. Something seemed to break within her as she saw that Terry had dropped out of sight. The quick, numb thought struck her that if she was to hold to the bargain she had made she would never see him again. It was as though he had been a dream and she awakened suddenly to find that he had never existed, yet had left a heartache that would be with her forever.

A sudden, wild rebellion rose within her. He did not love her. Yet he was married to her—her husband. How many women let their husbands go because their love had died or never lived? Yet she was not like other women. She knew that clearly. To her love was everything and marriage without it was a sin. Her drawn face drooped as she realized how certain she had been of winning Terry's love. She had not known then that there was another woman.

She looked up at Morrice Steele. They had reached a narrow path and stood with their two horses against the stone wall.

"Please do not think me unkind," Dawn said. "But I would rather be alone."

Morrice Steele looked at her silently for a moment.

"So you, too, hate me—as much as your husband and his family do?" he finally said, in his deep voice. "You also look upon me as the man who is going to despoil the countryside of all its beauty and hide the Wedderburn family home with smoke? Have you ever thought of asking me not to do it, Mrs. Wedderburn?"

There was a faint flame in his eyes. The volcanic energy which had made Steele a leader of men made his self-control all the less. He saw the startled color pour into Dawn's face, and caught his breath. It seemed to him that a picture he had held in his memory for years came to glowing life, and changed his own destiny in one and the same moment.

"It matters very little to me," Dawn said, slowly. "Some day, perhaps, I shall ask you—perhaps not. Oh, please let me walk home alone! It is not that I dislike you, Mr. Steele. I know—I guess—how good you were to my brother, and Terry's hatreds are not mine. He has his traditions. I am like you. I have none. Good-by, Mr. Steele."

She held out her hand with a smile into which she forced steadiness. Morrice Steele bent over it. He seemed to loom above her, big and protective, yet perilous for a moment.

"You could come to me and ask me for anything," he said, brusquely. "Never forget that."

He swung himself into his saddle, and the big horse he rode struck sparks from its hoofs as it clattered up the path and leaped the low wall.

Dawn turned at the sound of her name spoken by a woman's voice.

It was Pansy Harkaway. She came around the bend of the stone wall, with

a little smile, inscrutable and half mocking, on her lips.

"I was watching the hunt and waiting for you, Dawn," she said. "I have been looking for you. I suppose you were looking for me. But you seemed busy at the moment with that big he-man—the well-known Morrice Steele."

She looked flowerlike, fragile and eager. The wistfulness in her violet eyes all but hid their hardness. She was like a determined child that was yet frightened of what she meant to do.

"You have not forgotten our bargain, I know! Oh, I know many things. I know that Terry has not fallen in love with you. I know that he is no different than he was two months ago. He has told me so, for I have seen him, Dawn. I tried to avoid him, but he always found me. He has seen my husband, too, and I think they have reached some sort of an agreement. Jack is fond of me, in his grandfatherly way, and was anxious to make sure that Terry would marry me. If he is certain of that, I think the case will go off without any—any fuss."

Pansy Harkaway lied blindly. She had not meant to. With a girl like Dawn, lies were not necessary. But, judging by her own soul, she feared that Dawn, in some way, might have tricked her.

She spoke again, watching Dawn with an almost passionate scrutiny.

"I wonder if you know that Morrice Steele is in love with you?" Pansy said, slowly.

"Morrice Steele!" Dawn whispered.

Pansy nodded.

"I saw it plainly—just now. I caught sight of both of you before you knew I was near. I don't think he has ever looked at a woman as he looked at you, Dawn. It would be strange if both our marriages, which were ghastly mistakes, turned out happily after all—with somebody else."

"Don't!" Dawn cried. She shrank



"I will come with you. There is no chance of your husband seeing you with me."

from Pansy, her world and her ideas of men and women reeling. She wanted to fight primitively this hard, glittering girl who spoke what to her were horrible things, with the soft lips of a child. In the tumult of her soul at that moment,

Morrice Steele was only a shadow in the background and she almost shared Terry's hatred of him.

She gathered all her strength, and spoke.

"I made my bargain," she said. "If

Terry wants you, you can have him. I am going away to-day."

She looked away from the triumph which, she knew, filled Pansy's eyes. Through the numb mist that had fallen about her being she became slowly aware that a man was galloping recklessly down the path in which they stood. It was Mr. Moffat, a friend of Terry's. As he drew near to the two women, he reined.

"Mrs. Wedderburn!" he exclaimed. "Don't stay here. Something terrible has happened!"

The man's usually ruddy face was colorless. At his words, the blood ebbed back into Dawn's heart and left her very still and cold. She heard her own voice speak as though it belonged to somebody else.

"To Terry?" she asked, swaying a little. "You had better tell us—me."

The man's face twisted with unspoken pity. His hand trembled on his rein as he held his nervous horse. He looked only at Dawn, because Pansy was unknown to him.

"I didn't think I'd run into you like this," he confessed. "I'm going for the doctor. It was a bad accident, and happened before any one knew it. They went over the fence together, the two of them, John Harkaway and Terry. Harkaway had been keeping queerly close to Terry all morning. It looked to me as though he drove right at the boy and they came down together in a terrible crash."

Pansy Harkaway raised a white and frightened face. She tried to speak but could not.

The man wiped his damp forehead, and turned his horse.

"I've got to go," he added. "I can't stay. There's one of them we may be able to save. But the other's past any human help."

The young wife of John Harkaway found her voice, then. It came shrill and shaken.

"Can't you see you are torturing us?" she cried wildly. "You haven't told us yet who it is—who is—killed!"

Pansy Harkaway clasped her hands together. To Mr. Moffat her eyes appeared as bright as stars.

"Tell us which is killed—Terry—Mr. Wedderburn or John Harkaway!" she cried.

"It's Mr. Harkaway"—the man's face held a dawning suspicion of who Pansy was, but he blundered on. "He broke his neck and must have been killed instantly. He was mad to drive at Terry like he did, poor soul! Terry's badly hurt and is unconscious. But the doctor'll pull him around. They're bringing them both down here. You'd better go home, Mrs. Wedderburn," he added, turning to Dawn.

She spoke, as the man leaned over his horse.

"Where did it happen?" she breathed, in a swift question.

The answer was flung back as Moffat's animal started forward.

"Green's Hollow!"

Dawn whispered a quick caress into the ear of her horse. The mare, lame as she was, moved gallantly across the field. Pansy Harkaway was forgotten by Dawn. Terry, unconscious and helpless, belonged to her, regardless of whom the living Terry belonged to. She must go to him.

Dawn's heart throbbed with a pain that was nearly joy. Green Hollow lay over the brow of the hill, and she could already see the group of men and horses. At the sight of her, one of the figures detached itself from the group, and as he drew near she saw that it was Morrice Steele.

"I have heard," she said breathlessly. "I want Terry!"

She smiled to show her coolness, in terror lest they should keep her away from him. For one instant she was conscious of Steele's intent glance. Then he stepped back and pointed. She fell

on her knees beside the still form where it lay on the cold ground.

"Terry, dear!" she murmured, so low that she only heard the words.

The blood on his face did not frighten her, nor did the deadly pallor and the bluish lids of his closed eyes. Her hand felt his heart beat and that was sufficient. In some way, she felt that he had been given back to her just as he was about to be snatched away.

"The doctor!" somebody said.

Dawn rose to her feet, swaying a little, and smiled at the young doctor who came hurrying over the turf.

"He is alive!" she said, unsteadily.

She laughed at Morrice Steele and then was grave again, lest they should think her hysterical. The doctor's words came to her, and the keen young face was watching her curiously.

"It is severe concussion. There are no other injuries. I will take him home in my car. You will come with me, Mrs. Wedderburn?"

"Yes, oh, yes!" Dawn whispered. Her eyes were hot with unshed tears of gratitude to her Fate—to God—to whoever had given her that reprieve, slender as it might be.

She sat with Terry's head in her lap as the car started. It was Morrice Steele who closed the door; whose eyes, holding some expression of pain and pity that she could not read, last met hers. For one instant Dawn remembered Pansy's words about him. Then Pansy and her dead husband and the rest of the world faded away.

CHAPTER V.

The shaded light burned dimly. Outside White Pigeons the night wind gathered in a tired sigh, and died down again. A clock in the silent hall below chimed eleven strokes.

The silent-footed nurse moved softly to the bed where Dawn sat and bent down toward her.

"You will be tired, Mrs. Wedderburn," she said, gently. "Will you not go to bed for an hour or two?"

Dawn shook her head and smiled.

"Do I look tired?" she whispered.

Her eyes were limpid pools of gray, and a soft stain of color had stolen into her face. The nurse, accustomed to grief and dread at the bedside of her patients, was puzzled. There was something like happiness in the poise of this slim girl who had sat by the side of her unconscious husband for many hours without moving.

"He may be delirious when he recovers consciousness," the nurse said. "The doctor said that may be at any time."

"I will let you know then," Dawn answered.

She did not look up when the nurse, with the faintest little shrug of her young shoulders, left the room. George Wedderburn had been there, and so had Terry's sisters. Ben Compton had tiptoed in, looked at Terry with a kind of rough shame and gone out again. Pansy would not come. John Harkaway, though dead, still held her.

"My dear!" Dawn whispered, to the tousled head and colorless face on the pillow. "What if some miracle happened and when you awoke you wanted me?"

The thought thrilled her with a wild hope that she sought in vain to crush. It seemed to her that Terry's eyelids flickered. A flush was creeping beneath the whiteness of his skin. Dawn held her breath, and watched.

"Pansy!"

The blue eyes opened wide, and the head tossed on the pillow for an instant. The muttered name reached Dawn's ears like a stab. She half rose, then sat down again.

"Harkaway, you fool! Keep away, man, if you don't want us both to be killed! You jealous madman, you never knew how to treat the girl. You are

more to blame than she is——” Then the words ended in a low cry.

Dawn shivered at the wild sound. Terry had half risen upon his pillow and dropped back again, exhausted. The fever was coming swiftly and suddenly as the doctor had hinted. She ought to call the nurse and telephone for the doctor. But she could not move from the dying wreck of the hopes with which she had fooled herself. She was listening, straining to hear her own name in the muttered fragments of words that came from the pale lips.

“Poor little Dawn! It was all a bargain, wasn’t it, and we’ve both kept it. You’re in society, I’ve heaps of money and dad’s got the house back. What more can one want, dawn girl?”

The old careless, cynical laugh came from Terry Wedderburn’s dry lips, so distorted and harsh that Dawn wanted to close her ears.

She stood looking down at him. She wanted to cry out, to say something, if only a good-by. But she could find no words.

The feverish sounds took shape again.

“Is Harkaway killed? What will Pansy say? I want to see her. It makes all the difference—I want Pansy! Do you hear? I must have Pansy, now!”

The words mounted high in their vehemence. The nurse had heard them and come into the room swiftly.

“He is wandering!” Dawn said, mechanically.

She turned blindly and found herself in the wide corridor above the staircase, with the echo of Terry’s careless laugh coming from behind the closed door.

The telephone was in the hall. She called up the house where she knew John Harkaway and his wife had been staying. Her own warm, quick breath bedewed her lips from the receiver as she waited.

Pansy’s voice answered, at last, languid and broken.

LS—8F

Dawn closed her eyes.

“Terry wants you!” she said.

The big hall, with its ticking clock was very silent. The dark drive as she fled down it seemed to be full of hounding shadows. The little station where she waited for the last train, was wet and dreary.

The world stretched out cold hands from the darkness, to take her from her shattered dreams to its hard reality.

Out of a sea of pain and phantom figures, Terry Wedderburn returned slowly to consciousness.

For three days he had wandered in the shadowland of fever and delirium. On the fourth morning, he awoke from a deep and dreamless sleep to find himself lying coolly and quietly between the white sheets with the approving face of the young doctor bending over him.

“Welcome back, Wedderburn!” The young practitioner chuckled with the professional gravity which he was slowly acquiring, and vanished out of his blurred vision.

Terry closed his eyes again. He was trying to think. Something within him was empty and aching—something in his soul. He opened his eyes with a sudden knowledge of what his hunger was. His glance met the nurse’s, then traveled around the room.

“My wife!” he whispered.

The nurse nodded, and some quick change took place in her expression that baffled him.

“Presently!” she said. “After you have slept again—perhaps.”

He could not summon his old debonair strength to demand Dawn. Yet he wanted her as he had never wanted anything before—her true gray eyes, her cool hands, her soft voice. The fierceness of his desire startled him. A queer thought crossed his mind.

“I’m not Terry Wedderburn. I’m somebody else. That is why she is not here. Terry Wedderburn is left behind



"Terry, dear!" she murmured, so low that she only heard the words. In some way, she felt that he had been given back to her just as he was about to be snatched away.

in that strange shadow-country where he was wandering. I'm different."

He felt soft fingers on his wrist, but they were not Dawn's. Looking up he saw it was one of his sisters, and behind her stood his father.

"Where is Dawn?" he asked.

The same baffling change took place in their faces, and he shut them out by closing his eyes again. His lips curved with weak bitterness at himself. How could he expect the bride of a marriage



of convenience to be hanging over his sick bed? He winced. Some outer crust sloughed from Terry Wedderburn. A great revelation flashed across him.

"I loved her all the time!" he whispered.

His heart leaped fiercely, with a great joy that hurt him. The fragrance of that autumn day when he had first

found her in the mists of dawn came back in a sweet, keen memory. In that moment he had loved the dawn girl with a love that would have made him search for her if he had not, by a miracle found and married her. Yet he had been blind until the light had come upon his soul.

"Blind!" Terry whispered. "Forgive me for being blind!"

He must have slept again, deep, long

and dreamless. For it was daylight and the sun was pouring in through the windows of the big room where he lay. He felt strong and well, and pulsing with a great happiness, of which he scarcely knew the cause until he saw the figure of a girl which stood against the dark velvet curtains of the doorway.

"Dawn!" he said.

It was Pansy Harkaway. Her hat with its widow's veil lay upon the small table. She was bareheaded, with her hair shining in the sunlight, and her violet eyes soft and luminous.

"It is I, Terry," she said. "I have been here a long time."

She sat down with a timid, half-frightened breath. Terry lay quietly watching her. In that moment, he knew that Dawn was not in the house.

"I want Dawn!" he said, in a hard whisper. "You'd better tell me if I can't have her."

"She has gone, Terry," Pansy Harkaway said, slowly. "She went away while you were unconscious. No one dared to tell you. They left it to me."

Terry Wedderburn half started up. His pale face was distorted with something like fury. The hunger within him had destroyed all his cool carelessness.

"You sent her away!" he said, fiercely. "You told her some wild lie about this divorce of yours. I warned you, Pansy that if you tried——" The words choked in his throat and the spasm of rage died as quickly as it had come. The girl's lips were quivering as she leaned close.

"I didn't, Terry!" she cried. "Oh, you are cruel! She went away of her own accord. She went because she wanted to go. If you don't believe me look at this letter which I found in her desk. Oh, yes, I looked there when I knew she had gone, though I had no right. But I was looking for letters of mine that she had. This must have come while you were ill."

She laid an opened envelope on the coverlet. Terry drew forth the letter slowly, though some conflicting impulse made him want to fling it away. It was a curt note, almost cryptic in its shortness.

I shall wait for you. Whether you come soon or late I shall always be ready.

M. S.

"It is from Morrice Steele," Pansy said.

She watched Terry Wedderburn's face furtively and passionately as he looked at the postmark on the envelope and the strong, square writing. Suddenly she drew the letter gently away, bending so near that her warm face, flushed to the tint of a rose petal, almost touched his.

"Terry, you don't care!" she breathed. "You did not marry her for love and she never loved you. What does it matter? Women who marry like that always meet another man. I know, because I did. Dawn had been friendly with Morrice Steele for a long time. He belonged to her class. She understood him as she never could understand you. Oh, perhaps you think I am bad to come here and talk like this, but when one has made a horrible mistake and suffered for it and been released suddenly by a wonderful chance——"

Pansy stopped and hid her face in her hands. So spoiled and primitive was she that she had almost forgotten the cunning that must be hers if she was to take advantage of the luck that the gods had given her, and win Terry. She wanted to tell him that she was a rich woman, because John Harkaway had been killed before he could change his will; that all Dawn had given him she could give. But some instinct held her silent.

She rose to her feet. Terry's eyes, glacier-blue, watched her in silence. The terrifying thought, that after all, he loved Dawn, swept across Pansy.

"I will go," she said, wistfully. "I had to tell you. Nobody else would."

She had gone. Terry Wedderburn was left alone in the sunny silence of the room.

He laughed, and the hollow sound of pain startled himself. Pitilessly clear, he saw his own picture for the first time; a parasite and a philanderer with life, who had married a girl and let her slip away forever because his grip upon her had been too limp and careless. Too late, he knew that he had loved her.

"Always!" Terry whispered. "Curse Steele!"

A terrible hatred of Morrice Steele seized him. Then it died away in mocking contempt for himself again.

"Poor little dawn girl! She sold herself to a worthless fool. Yet I might have won her if I had not been blind until—too late."

A spasm shook Terry's frame. Even if that moment of stunning self-sight, the thought that Dawn had loved him never crossed his sick, bruised being.

He began slowly to dress himself. The dull fire that burned within him gave him strength. He listened, stealthily, for the return of the nurse. Once, white and weak, he staggered, but a glass of brandy steadied his reeling brain. One thought only possessed him. He must leave White Pigeons and everything that belonged to Dawn, he must drop the old life like a cloak behind him. Penniless and worthless, he must go out, unknown, into that world of men which he had always looked at with such cynical amusement.

He found an old tweed suit and a discarded overcoat. Very quietly, he crept to the door and out to the drive, where a strong wind met him with a rough and chilly greeting.

He was moving swiftly down the drive, keeping in the shadow of the shrubbery lest some watchful eye from the house should see him, when a hoarse voice called him.

It was Ben Compton, his face pinched and fierce.

"Where is my daughter, Wedderburn?" He caught the younger man's shoulder with a gesture of primitive rage that made Terry sway. "Where have you sent her, you cold young scoundrel? If she's left you through ill-treatment, I'll ruin the brood of you and send you into the street to work for your living like an honest man. Where are you going?"

Terry laughed.

"To work for a living like an honest man!" he replied steadily.

With no further word, he flung off Ben Compton's arm and went on his way.

Dawn Wedderburn had been in New York almost three weeks. It was there she had gone instinctively, that night she had fled from White Pigeons. She had hoped in the great city the sharp agony of her heartache might die down to some numb pain that she could bear.

Yet, as she sat on the couch, in the dingy little room she had rented, she felt a little shiver of loneliness and pain that momentarily shook her courage.

"You little freak!" she said, breaking into an unsteady laugh and standing against the smoke-stained mantel-mirror.

She looked gravely at her reflection. She had pulled her honey-colored hair tightly back and fastened it in a heavy, screwed-up knot. She had bought a pair of rimless glasses that would have hidden the beauty of her gray eyes but for the long, dark lashes which had baffled the business men who had interviewed her. Her dress was prim and plain, and the landlady of the house knew her as "Miss Denstone."

Dawn felt guilty and almost criminal. But, two days after her disappearance all the picture papers had held her photograph, large-sized, with pictures of White Pigeons and Terry Wedderburn,

and Ben Compton, the millionaire, and, for a few days, there had been much excitement concerning the mysterious disappearance of young Mrs. Terence Wedderburn, whose husband had been seriously hurt in the same tragic hunting accident which had ended in the death of John Harkaway.

Dawn glanced at the clock. At noon she was to go to the office of the Northern Engineers Corporation whose advertisement for a secretary she had answered. She read again the short note which made the appointment, conscious of a thrill of sick anxiety and excitement. In the past she had often wondered what it was like to be poor. She knew now, for the money she had realized on the sale of a diamond ring which had been her only ornament, was almost gone.

"All the better!" Dawn whispered. "It means that Dawn Compton and Dawn Wedderburn are both dead!"

She smiled bravely and stepped out into the city sunlight.

The offices of the big company were in a dirty, dark street that seemed to swallow her plainly dressed figure contemptuously. She found herself in an austere waiting room, trembling a little, and then, before she realized it, she was in an office of shining desks and scattered papers looking into the gimlet eyes of a gray-haired elderly man, who threw cold questions at her and treated her as though she had been the dictaphone which stood by his side.

"You say nothing about your experience, Miss—er—Denstone," he said, curtly. "We liked your letter. But there are a hundred and thirty other applicants—all with previous experience."

He waited, frowning a little.

"I was secretary to Mr. Ben Compton for a while," Dawn faltered.

She knew it was a wildly foolish answer for her to make. Yet she felt suddenly desperate at the thought of that

chance to work and forget slipping out of her hands. It was true, too. One of Ben Compton's dreams had been that some day his daughter would be the best business woman in the country. Dawn had spent a year in her father's huge office.

"You have references from Mr. Compton?"

A kindle of interest and of reverence was in the high-dried voice at the sound of Ben Compton's name. A sudden panic seized Dawn; dismay at the pitfall she had dug for herself. Then she was aware that the door behind her had opened, and that the man before her had risen.

She turned and looked into the face of Morrice Steele.

Dawn's first instinct was to rise from her chair and move past Morrice Steele before he saw her. Even as the thought crossed her mind, she knew it was impossible. Steele had dismissed the manager with a nod. He stood big and almost uncouth against the light of the window, with something hard and granitelike in his young strength.

"Mrs. Wedderburn!" he said, gravely. Something broke within Dawn.

"You ought not to have known me!" she cried, unsteadily. "You had no right! I am not Dawn Wedderburn. I am that girl I called myself—Celia Denstone!"

"And I am Morrice Steele, managing director of this company," Steele answered. "As such I have a right to interview the young lady who wishes to become my secretary, I think you will agree. I did not know it was you until I looked now. But it is a good disguise."

His hazel eyes smiled, as though a warm flame had lighted within their coldness. At his words, Dawn flushed faintly. She had caught the prim umbrella she carried and moved now toward the door. As she did so, Morrice Steele stopped her with a gesture.

"So you think I would give you away?" he questioned, a note of bitterness in his deep voice.

He stood looking down at her, filled with a fierce pity and tenderness. In one moment, it swept across him, strik-

ing down all the barriers of his strength. In that dry and formal business place he built the dreams and desires of wealth and power which had begun to pall upon him. Now, by some miracle of chance, the dream and desire which he had crushed, had come into his life again. He accepted the toss of his destiny eagerly.

Dawn stopped. The roar of traffic came muffled from



"I did not know it was you until I looked now. But it is a good disguise." He stood looking down at her, filled with a fierce pity and tenderness.

outside. It seemed like the voice of some mocking monster of loneliness calling her back. Suddenly she clung to the quiet room, and the friendship of this big, ugly man who had known her when Terry had not belonged to her dead past.

"You would not give me away if I told you the truth," she said, her gray eyes steady and bright. "And I will. I have run away from my husband. Terry and I tried to—to like each other for two months. It was not our fault, because it was a marriage of convenience, one of those foolish things that happen nowadays, since the war. There was another girl whom he had known before he married me. He was in love with her, but she was not free. I did not find out until afterward. Then she suddenly became free and I found out without any doubt that he wanted her. I am quite modern enough not to remain married if I find it has been a—mistake. So I came away. I want to remain hidden. I do not want them to look for me—my people. I mean. Not—not Terry. He wouldn't."

She paused. She had spoken in cool and level tones. Dawn Wedderburn was learning how to veil her bruised soul.

Morrice Steele bowed his head. His hand, hanging by his side, clenched a little. Then he spoke unemotionally.

"I would like you to be my secretary, Miss Denstone," he said. "Your qualifications are better than any other applicant for the position. If you take the job it will mean that you will live in Woodton, because that is where the main office of the concern is and that is where I spend most of my time when I am not traveling. I am going back this afternoon and you can go with me if you can be ready then. I will give you a salary of fifty dollars to start, if that is satisfactory to you," he added.

"That is all right," Dawn said.

She held out her hand and Steele took it gravely, with no sign of the storm that shook him at the touch of her fingers. For the first time in his life Morrice Steele, master of men, to whom women had been nothing, dared not look into his own soul. He only knew that love for this fragile, gray-eyed girl had kindled in him like a fire. He, who had always kept himself so clean and austere, was in love with a married woman.

Five hours later, the managing director of Northern Engineers Corporation and his new secretary stepped out upon the station platform of Woodton.

Steele's big car awaited them. It was evening and the factory chimneys of Woodton lay like clustered fingers against the red of the sunset. Dawn tasted the smoke-tang in the cold wind, and thought of her father. But he was a hundred miles away. Here, in this grim, hard town, she would be more utterly hidden than she had been in New York.

Morrice Steele looked down at her as the car started. She had put aside her pitiful little disguise, and was the sweetly grave girl whose photograph he had carried since her dying brother had given it to him, years before.

"You are cold!" Steele said, wrapping the rugs about her.

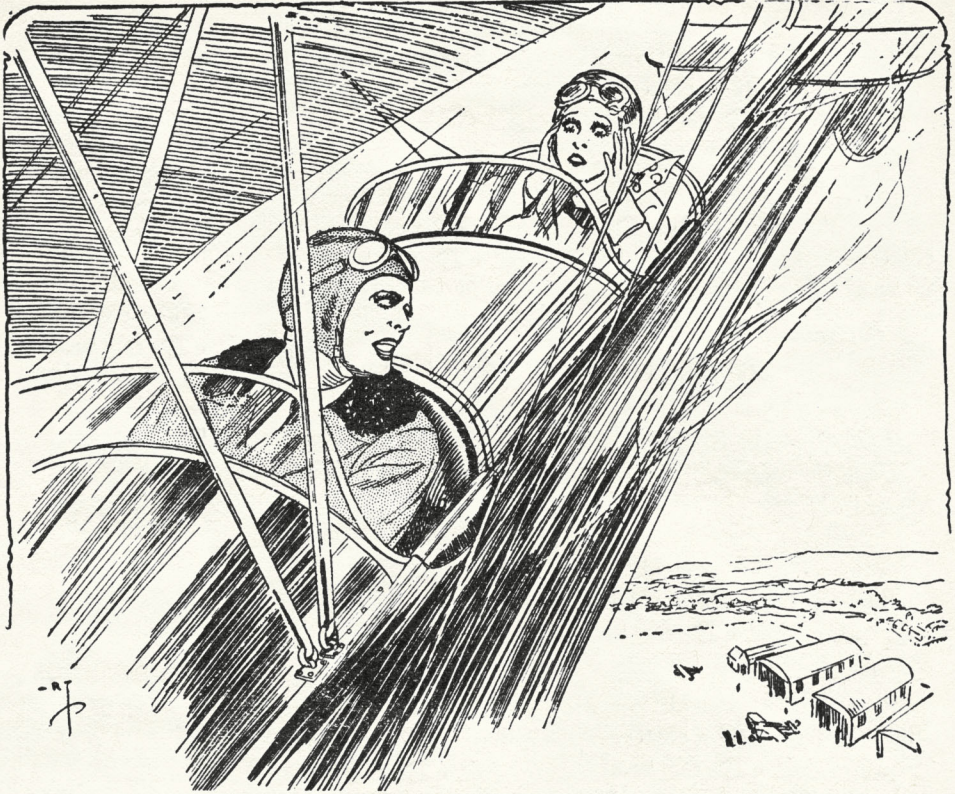
They were jolting slowly along the cobble-paved street, in which the lamps were beginning to gleam one by one. The pavements were almost deserted. But a man, roughly and commonly dressed, paused beneath a street lamp, and stared at the smooth, steel-blue car as it slid past him.

A startled cry rose to Dawn's lips.

"I am dreaming!" she whispered. In the dusk her lips were scarlet shadows in her pale face.

The roughly dressed man who had stood upon the curb, and gazed straight at her, was her husband, Terry Wedderburn, unless she was mad!

TO BE CONTINUED.



Dare-devil Love

By Robert M. Ducoté

AS she nosed the big monoplane up for altitude, Verdie Warren was inwardly boiling. Jack Farley's arrogant attitude toward her had nettled her considerably. She knew his type—an idler with a rich father. He had turned to aviation when parties, gin, and fast cars had lost their interest for him. He was full of the notion that anybody who had to work for a living was a menial created for his selfish pleasure. Snob!

A sudden desire to humiliate him swept through her. She leaned over and shouted. Jack turned, and she indicated that he was to operate the dual controls in the forward cockpit. Malicious mis-

chief glinting in her blue eyes, Verdie jostled the stick methodically to and fro, causing the plane to act like a loping horse. She could tell by the erratic movements of Jack's head that he was striving desperately to keep the machine on an even keel.

Finally, he turned and shot a look of frank helplessness at the girl. Verdie observed with considerable satisfaction that he was somewhat pale about his lips.

"You haven't seen a thing yet, smarty!" she thought.

She concealed her inner delight at his discomfiture, however, behind an encouraging smile. The ship resumed its

progress on an even keel. But its good behavior was not destined to last long, for Verdie was still smarting from the way her passenger had acted and spoken.

"You! Why, you're just a kid!" He had almost sneered the words when she had told him her father wasn't feeling well enough to give him a lesson that day and had asked her to take his place.

Jack's insolent glance had taken in her trim figure, soldierlike in leather puttees, khaki breeches, and leather coat. It finally came to rest on her face. The insolence left his eyes as they lingered there. Verdie's fair, satiny skin, small mouth with deep, tender curves, big, expressive blue eyes, and smartly bobbed golden hair were alluring assets upon which scarcely any young man could gaze with indifference.

Meanwhile, Verdie had just as coolly inspected him. She was not in the mood to approve of his slim height, ruffled tawny hair, and audacious blue eyes.

"Well, and why not!" she snapped. "Do I look as if I had a broken arm or were ready for the old ladies' home? It may interest you to know that I learned my nursery rhymes in a cockpit, and that I'm a licensed pilot. And I can promise you one thing—I won't pilot a plane the way you drove that red roadster in here. Seventy, if you were moving at all! If you try to pilot a ship like that, you're sure to crack up."

"You can't blame me for being somewhat staggered at the idea of a slip of a girl like you handling that big ship," Jack explained, his tone a bit more civil.

"Oh, if you're afraid, we can easily postpone the lesson until dad's feeling better."

The manner in which Verdie flipped her cigarette to the ground was eloquently expressive of disgust.

"Afraid!" Jack blurted. "Try me and see. Come on; let's go!"

Her lips grimly tight, Verdie had climbed into the rear cockpit. Jack had slipped on goggles and helmet, vaulted

into the forward cockpit, and strapped himself in securely. A mechanic, who had been hovering alertly near by, twirled the propeller. There was a deafening roar which soon settled down to a vibrant drone. As soon as the motor had warmed up sufficiently, Verdie took off.

The normal behavior of the ship, after she had caused it to act like a loping horse, was short-lived. Soon she was pressing alternately on the foot pedals. The plane began to snake a weaving course through the air. The back of Jack's neck grew redder. He shot a thoroughly alarmed look back at his instructor. Verdie shook her head reprovingly, and an instant later brought the craft to an even keel once more. But her still-outraged feelings demanded that her supercilious pupil be brought to a state of abject limpness.

She zoomed to a higher altitude and came down in a mad tail spin. Jack, she observed with delight, had released the controls and was clutching the sides of the cockpit for dear life. Satisfied, she straightened, and prepared to land.

To her surprise, however, she discovered that the controls would not respond. She pulled at the stick until she was out of breath, but it resisted her efforts with the force of an iron grip. Jack turned around with a mocking, if ghastly, grin, and Verdie understood. With his superior strength, he was manipulating his set of the dual controls independently of her guidance!

"And now I'm going to show you how to land!" was all she heard.

Verdie waved her hand in fervid objection, but Jack only grinned all the wider. Through his goggles, she saw a wild, reckless light in his eyes.

"We'll crack up, you fool, if you don't release those controls!" she shouted frantically, using her hands as a megaphone.

Jack's reply was a mockingly cheery shake of his head.

Verdie tugged once more at the controls, but his hold on them was unshakable. Then, fearing that further interference would confuse him and make a catastrophe the more certain, she released the stick and sagged back, trembling from head to foot, awaiting what was to come. Five flying hours to his credit, and he was attempting a landing! Only with incredible luck could he make it.

Jack piloted the plane in a wide circle over the field, then nosed down. Verdie knew he was going entirely too fast. He should have throttled down to about forty, and he was making over fifty. The brown earth of the field and the gray blur of the hangars flew up toward her with terrifying rapidity, as she looked with horrified eyes over the edge of the cockpit.

She gave one more wild, futile tug at the stick; then she shut her eyes. Instead of the tail skid and the two wheels touching the ground at the same time as they should have done in a proper landing, the plane hurtled against the ground at a sharp angle. The running gear crumpled like pieces of straw. The nose dug into the ground, making splinters of the propeller. For a moment, it seemed as if it would turn turtle; instead it settled on its side, mangling one wing.

During the brief instant before the crash, Verdie went through a nightmare of horror. She shrieked as she felt something strike her head with crushing force. A sharp, searing pain shot through her; then she knew no more.

When she once more opened her eyes, she knew she was in a hospital. The white walls, the women in white uniforms, the odor of drugs, all were unmistakable. She called a nurse who was arranging bottles on a table.

"Am I badly hurt?" she inquired.

"Not fatally," the nurse replied cheerfully. "You suffered a rather bad knock on the head, but I think you'll come

around all right." She smoothed the bandage on Verdie's forehead with swift, efficient fingers.

"Jack Farley?"

"Broken collar bone and leg," the nurse informed her, not so cheerfully that time. "But it's possible internal injuries the doctors are afraid of."

Verdie moaned and her fingers twisted spasmodically under the sheet. Suppose he should die! Why had she goaded him into utter recklessness! What a fool she had been!

"Dad?" was Verdie's next concern.

"He's here now. I'll tell him you're ready to see him," the nurse said, smiling, and left the room.

Tears were streaming down Verdie's cheeks as she told her father how much she was to blame for what had happened. But he, seasoned aviator that he was, and wise in the ways of headstrong youth as well, made light of it. It was all in the game, he said, patting her hand affectionately. Both she and Jack Farley had played the fools, of course, but there wasn't any use in crying over spilled milk.

Verdie had a good deal of time to think during the days that followed. Now that she was deprived of the thrill of flying, she could only live over the days when it had afforded her such delight. In telling Jack that she had learned her nursery rhymes in a cockpit, she had stretched the truth a bit. But she had taken her first flight when she was only nine years old.

Her father, who had been an ace with the A. E. F., had developed such a passion for aviation that he had gone into it along commercial lines at the end of the War. A year later, her mother's death had made father and daughter closer pals than ever.

There had been years of delightfully irresponsible wanderings all over the country, when they had given exhibitions at fairs and civic events, and had taken up passengers, in fact, their small

monoplane had been used in every way possible to make a livelihood for them.

Verdie had flown at every opportunity that had offered. Naturally, it wasn't long before she was piloting a plane herself. She had taken to it as naturally as a duck to water. And, as she had grown older, her love for flying had increased. Finally, she and her father had accepted an attractive offer from the Manfers Air Field people to act as instructors.

Verdie derived a great deal of pleasure from those memories, but whenever she recalled her last flight and its horrible end, she found herself trembling with a chill of dread. At first it merely annoyed her.

"My nerves are still on edge; that's all," she told herself. "By the time I'm out of this dreary place, I'll be as steady as a rock."

But, as time went by, the horror induced by the recollection of the smash grew in intensity. She even experienced nightmares from which she would awaken shaken and spent. At last, her eyes dull and bewildered, she told her father about it.

"Don't let the thing grow on you, honey," he counseled gently. "It was a pretty hard jolt on your nerves, and that bump on the head didn't help any. It's the feeling of seeing yourself trapped by that young fool's dare-deviltry that makes it stick in your mind. Try hard not to think of it at all."

Verdie did her best to follow her father's advice, but that night her nightmare was more horrible than ever.

The following day, a gayly beribboned box was brought in to her. Inside were gorgeous, dewy red roses from Jack. A note was hidden in their fragrant depths.

Dear Little Fellow Sufferer: Nothing I could say would excuse the fool stunt I pulled off. I'm so glad to learn you'll be out soon. I'm doing nicely, but I guess it will be some time before I leave. Just keep one of the

busses tuned up for me. I'm going right at it again—safe and sane this time.

Again—I'm terribly, terribly sorry!

JACK.

Verdie buried her ever so slightly up-tilted little nose deep in the heart of the roses, and then read the note several times. The last time she smiled happily.

Of course, they had both acted like stubborn kids. But she had been wrong in scaring him. He had expected a straight flying lesson. And rocking the boat when some one who doesn't know how to swim is aboard is always dangerous. She really couldn't find it in her heart to blame Jack for retaliating.

After some hesitation, she sent him a warm, impulsive note, thanking him for the flowers and taking all the blame for the mishap on herself. Jack frequently sent her books or flowers during the remainder of her stay in the hospital.

At last there came a day when she found herself beside her father at the flying field. Close by, mechanics were tinkering with her favorite plane, thoroughly airworthy now, due to expert repairing.

"Feel well enough to go up to-day, honey? I guess you're just aching to put the old bus through her paces, aren't you?" Verdie's father slipped his arm about her shoulders and shook her with rough playfulness.

Verdie looked fondly up into his kindly, weather-beaten face. Nodding, she tightened the belt of her coat and went toward the plane.

"Good luck, kid," her father encouraged. "Don't try any stunts."

Verdie waved her hand cheerily at him as she climbed into the rear cockpit. She tested the motor, tinkered tentatively with the choke and the controls. One of the mechanics waited patiently to knock the blocks from before the wheels.

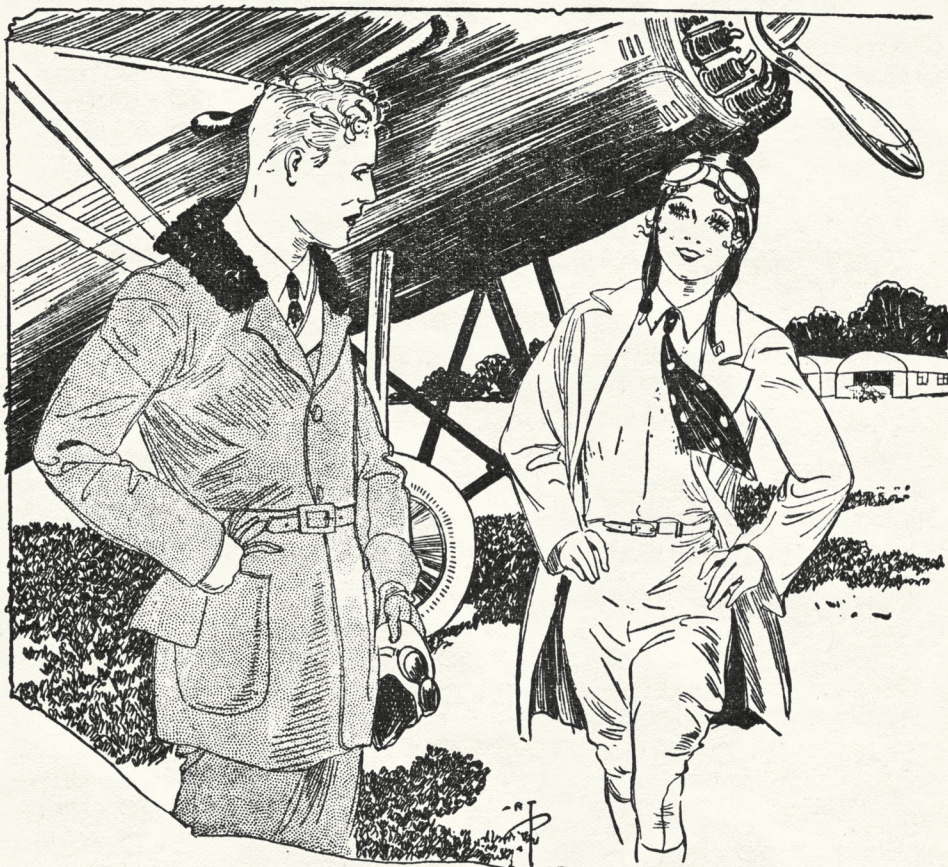
Then, suddenly, something she had been fighting desperately to vanquish gripped her with fingers of steel. Trembling from head to foot, she passed her

hand before her eyes as if to blot out a ghastly scene.

She was going through it all again, in the same plane, the same cockpit. It was hurtling toward the ground while she cringed, horror-stricken, trapped.

to pieces. I guess—oh, Heaven, help me, I guess I'm yellow!"

"Of course not, honey!" he said soothingly. "You're not ready to go up yet; that's all. Now come on home and go to bed. All you need is rest."



Verdie was getting more of a thrill from being with him than she had ever gotten from any air hazard.

Nearer and nearer the field and hangars seemed to leap up toward her, threatening certain doom; then her shriek, the stab of pain.

Unable to control herself, she clambered frenziedly out of the cockpit, leaped to the ground, and flung herself into her amazed father's arms.

"I can't, dad!" she moaned. "I started thinking about that crash, and I went

As he led her, sobbing, toward his car, however, his eyes were shadowed with grave anxiety.

When Jack Farley left the hospital some time later, he lost no time in going to the flying field, "just to look at those other lucky birds doing their stuff," as he expressed it. He found Verdie standing before one of the hangars, looking up with a sort of pitiful wist-

fulness at the airplanes soaring above her.

"Hello!" he greeted. "I can't imagine you being earthbound this fine morning."

"Oh, Jack, I'm so glad you're able to get about again!" Verdie cried joyously. Then a shadow settled across her features. "I haven't been up yet. Something's wrong with my nerves since we cracked up."

Jack's eyes became soft with quick sympathy. "That's too bad!" he sympathized. "You'll be all right after a while, though. It was the awful shock, I guess. When I think of what a fool I was that day, I feel like jumping into the river."

"I was the one who started the whole thing," Verdie insisted generously.

"But you weren't risking our necks, and I was," Jack insisted.

"Oh, well, let's forget it," Verdie said. "It's all over with, and that's that."

Jack regarded her admiringly for a moment. "I hear that 'Warring Wings,' showing at the Liberty, is packed full of thrills," he said. "Best movie of flyers ever made. Would you like to go to-night?"

Verdie looked up at him in surprise. She was fully aware that he would fit in much more appropriately at some exclusive society function, handsome and debonair in evening clothes, than with her at a movie theater.

But a fierce hunger, deep in her heart, clamored for its voice to be heard. Heretofore, there had been sufficient thrill in her companionship with her dad and in flying to fill her life. While other girls had been flirting, she had been deeply engrossed in the breathless excitement of learning a new dare-devil stunt.

Now, as she looked up into this man's eager face, she felt that perhaps, after all, she had missed something utterly blissful. How wonderful it would be to

spend a whole evening sitting beside him, talking to him, watching that warm glow in his eyes!

"Why, certainly, I'll be glad to go," she said.

That was the beginning of the end. After that she was with Jack frequently, generally at the places of amusement his set did not patronize. There was a soft cadence in his voice when he spoke to her; there was something in his eyes which, had it been put into words, would have been tenderly fervent; there was something in his touch that suggested a caress. Verdie was getting more of a thrill from being with him than she had ever gotten from any air hazard.

As soon as he became strong enough, Jack resumed his flying lessons. It nearly broke Verdie's heart because she wasn't the one to take him up. The memory of her awful smash still gripped her soul in talons of horror. More than once she approached a plane, gritting her teeth, determined to take off, only to turn away trembling. Coward! Oh, how could Jack feel anything but contempt for her once he knew what was really the trouble!

On the morning of Jack's first solo flight, he came to the air field in a big maroon sedan. An extremely blondined girl, with sensuous lips rouged poinsettia-red, was seated beside him. On the rear seat sprawled a lank, olive-skinned youth wearing plus fours of a vivid pattern, his hair as slick as polished black stone. Beside him lolled a pretty brunet girl with bold eyes.

Observing their arrival from a spot just inside one of the hangars, Verdie felt as if everything about her had become gray and bleak. These were the people with whom Jack belonged, people of his world.

The little group left the sedan and boisterously approached a plane that was being warmed up. As they drew closer, she could hear most of what was being said.

"Well, folks, pray for me," Jack said flippantly, as he stood ready to get aboard the plane. "And remember, Tots, my favorite flower is the cabbage."

"I'll do better than that," the blonded girl said, lazily blowing a spiral of blue cigarette smoke skyward. "I'll give you something that will make you want to save your precious neck so as to fulfill an engagement you have with me, the kind that requires a minister and a plain platinum ring—except for the orange blossoms."

She went up to Jack with her sinuous walk, and slipped her arms about his neck. Her scarlet lips rested against his for a fleeting instant.

Verdie sank back against the hangar wall as if a white-hot blast had seared her. Dazedly, she heard the shrill cry of the vivid brunette to the effect that if Jack had been engaged to her instead of Tots, she would see to it that he wouldn't be risking his fool neck.

Well, Verdie thought bitterly, she might have known it. Any man as attractive as Jack was certain to be engaged to a girl of his own social world. What a little fool she had been! Into what futile dreams her love had led her!

Choking back a sob, she stumbled toward the rear entrance of the hangar. She wanted to be alone in her room at the apartment, where she could sob out her heart in solitude.

"That young dare-devil, Jack Farley, has his mind set on a parachute jump now," her father said one night several weeks later. "I told him he'd better wait until he had more flying hours to his credit, but he wouldn't listen to me. Guess I'll have to let him do it."

"When?" Verdie faltered.

"Oh, to-morrow, most likely. He's as impatient as a race horse at the starting line," her father said worriedly.

Verdie's heart contracted with a sharp twinge of foreboding. She had not

spoken to Jack since the day of his solo flight, but nevertheless she was poignantly aware of his existence. He had telephoned several times, and on every occasion Verdie had made it plain that she didn't care to be with him. When he had accused her of being angry with him for some reason he couldn't fathom, she had laughed evasively. If she knew he was to be at the air field at a certain hour, she stayed away; if he happened to arrive there while she was present, she stole home.

And all the while, twin tragedies were pecking away at her heart like woodpeckers boring into a dead tree—a hopeless love and the realization that she was yellow.

On the morning when Jack was to attempt his parachute jump, the three companions who had witnessed his solo flight, as well as quite a number of others, accompanied him. Agonizedly, Verdie watched then from the concealment of a hangar.

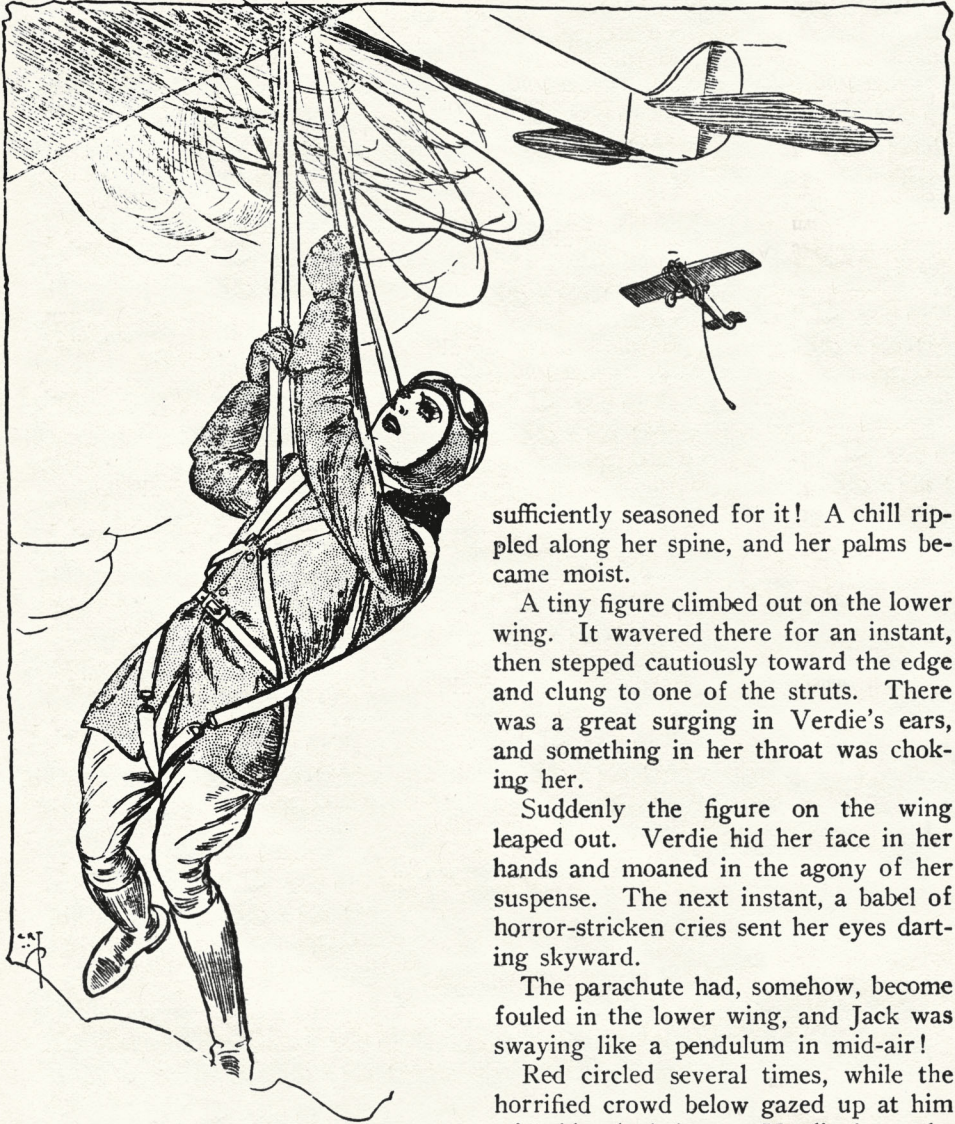
After what seemed an eternity, the plane went up with Jack, his parachute on his back, in the forward cockpit. The pilot was a happy-go-lucky young fellow who was familiarly and affectionately known to every one about the air field as "Red." Verdie wondered why her father hadn't gone up himself for such a ticklish job.

Pete Warren appeared at the hangar entrance, and Verdie hastened out to him.

"Why didn't you take him up, dad?" she asked.

"I told him from the first I wouldn't have anything to do with it, because I thought he was crazy to try it so soon," Warren explained, glancing uneasily up at the circling plane. "Ordinarily Red would have been fully equal to the job, but now I'm really sorry I didn't go up myself. I'm afraid that bunch of swells slipped Red a few drinks. The kid isn't used to it."

He glanced up at the plane once more,



Jack was up there dangling in the air, while terrible, hungry fingers of death were clutching at him to drag him down.

shrugged his shoulders helplessly, and went on.

Verdie's heartbeat quickened as she watched the biplane circle higher and higher for altitude, a trifle jerkily, she thought. Red tipsy and Jack attempting a parachute jump long before he was

sufficiently seasoned for it! A chill rippled along her spine, and her palms became moist.

A tiny figure climbed out on the lower wing. It wavered there for an instant, then stepped cautiously toward the edge and clung to one of the struts. There was a great surging in Verdie's ears, and something in her throat was choking her.

Suddenly the figure on the wing leaped out. Verdie hid her face in her hands and moaned in the agony of her suspense. The next instant, a babel of horror-stricken cries sent her eyes darting skyward.

The parachute had, somehow, become fouled in the lower wing, and Jack was swaying like a pendulum in mid-air!

Red circled several times, while the horrified crowd below gazed up at him with blanched faces. Verdie knew he was at a loss what to do. To attempt a landing would prove fatal to Jack. On the other hand, there was the possibility that the parachute might at any moment become disentangled, but fail to open. If this should happen, Jack would drop to a ghastly end.

Although Verdie was as motionless as a statue, her mind was working like lightning. Oh, wasn't there something—anything—she could do? Her fingers

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grew cold; her heart thumped like a trip hammer.

And then she remembered having seen a long coil of rope lying in a corner of the hangar. In a flash, a plan of action was born in her mind. It might fail, but anything was better than waiting inactive for the impending tragedy to take place.

Securing the rope, she raced to a near-by plane that was being warmed up, flung the rope inside, and clambered with desperate haste into the rear cockpit. The motor roared. Verdie took off with a great rush, like the beating of the wings of some huge bird of deliverance.

It was only as she was zooming for altitude that she realized that she was actually at the controls of a plane, piloting. For an instant, the old terror loomed up blackly before her; then she laughed shrilly, wildly. She must carry on! Jack was up there dangling in the air, while terrible, hungry fingers of death were clutching at him to drag him down. That was all that could matter just then.

Within a few minutes, she had gained a position a short distance above Red's machine. Having tied one end of the rope securely to her plane, she made a loop at the other end. Then she dropped it over the side. She breathed fervid thanks for the practice she had had in refueling in the air when an aviator had attempted an endurance flight at one of the air fields where she had been stationed for a while. What she was now attempting promised to be very much on the same order.

Matching her speed with Red's, she lessened her altitude. Slowly, with Red leaning out and guiding it, the rope went down until Jack could seize it and pull it toward him through the parachute cords. He hastened to slip the loop under his armpits.

Bit by bit, straining her mind and muscles to the utmost to keep her ship in ex-

actly the proper position in relation to Red's, Verdie increased her altitude. Jack's figure rose foot by foot, the parachute cords dangling below him. At last he was near enough for Red's desperately reaching hands to seize him and draw him up on a wing. The looped end of the rope swung free.

Verdie banked sharply, a pæan of joy welling up within her. She straightened out and headed east. Oh, it was glorious to feel the throb of the motor, the instant response of stick and throttle and floor pedals, to know that the specter of fear that had held her shackled was gone forever! From sheer elation, she looped, then streaked eastward once more.

She wouldn't return, she decided, until the air field had become cleared of the excited crowd. To have witnessed the reunion of Jack and that blondined girl would have been too agonizing.

Two hours later she made a perfect three-point landing at the now deserted air field and climbed out of the cockpit. She felt utterly let down, inexpressibly weary. There was only one thing left now—she could fly.

Two men appeared in the doorway of the nearest hangar. One of them rushed toward her with palpitant eagerness. It was Jack.

"Verdie!" he cried huskily.

He slipped his arms about her and kissed her. For a mere instant, Verdie soared higher than any plane could ever take her, infinitely high, where clouds were pink and everything was akin to paradise. Then she remembered.

"Don't let your gratitude make you forget the girl you're going to marry," she said bitterly, pushing him away.

"I guess you mean Tots," Jack said, refusing to release her hands. "Why, darling, she had no more intention of marrying me than I had of marrying her. She has a new playboy fiancé every week. Besides, I'm going in for aviation seriously—regular eight-hour-

day stuff. And Tots wants a loafer for a husband."

"She kissed you!" Verdie accused tremulously, but a few grains of star dust had found their way into her eyes.

"Tot's kisses!" Jack scoffed. "Why, nobody pays any attention to them. They're so—general."

The star dust was making wondrously alluring jewels of Verdie's eyes.

"I thought you hated me when you refused to see me any more," Jack went on softly. "I thought you hated me because I was to blame for your losing your nerve. That's why I didn't care very much how that parachute jump turned out. But when you came up and

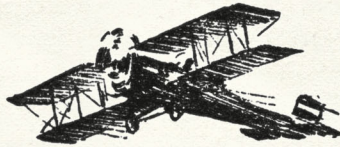
pulled me out of that mess—Verdie darling, look at me! You do care a little!"

Her eyes were scintillating pools of glad surrender. Jack held her close and kissed her adoringly.

"Promise not to try any more stunts!" Verdie pleaded as she nestled deep in the magic circle of his arms.

"Absolutely!" Jack vowed. "Aside from the daily grind, just a plain buggy ride on Sundays, perhaps, to give the Pomeranian an airing. That's all, dearest."

Gratefully, throbbing with happiness, Verdie gave him her lips again—and again!



PRIDE

HOW can I help but be so proud of you?

Watching your dark head glinting in the sun,
Hearing your laughter at the things we do—
The dear and silly things love's always done.

Waiting to meet you, pushing through the crowd,
To hear your greeting and to feel your touch,
To feel above all else the high and proud
Leap of a heart that loves you overmuch.

Or, when it's evening in our little park
And stars break like the blossoms on a vine,
To walk beside you in the emerald dark
And know that I am yours, that you are mine.

There are so many ways of being proud
Of one who holds the very heart of you,
Sometimes it's hard to not cry out aloud
"How can I help but love him as I do!"

GLORIA BERTHALL.



Forgotten Sweethearts

By Lilliance M. Mitchell

RITA MARTEL had never been engaged to be married.

To most girls, twenty-four years old, this fact would occasion nothing more than a twinge of interest. Rita's mother, however, had been married at seventeen. Because of her very late marriage, the five aunts always pitied Rita's mother. They had all married at sixteen. Some of their pity even overflowed to Rita, and as her birthdays approached and passed they shook their heads over her commiseratingly. Rita had been born and bred to the idea of early marriage or old-maidship.

Sometimes Rita thought about marriage in the abstract. It was unpleasant, more or less, to be pitied as if she couldn't get her man. If only the five aunts—yes, and her mother, too—would have come out with the fact in so many words that she could refute definitely

it would have been easier to bear. But the aunts only smiled gently, and shook their heads over her when they thought her eyes were not on them.

Now as she sat reading the newspaper, her mind had forgotten for the moment her old-maid state. Her eager eyes had scanned all those parts of the paper which held for her some special interest. With languid eyes she read more slowly, her eyes lighted on the name Cleveland, Ohio.

She had once visited a school chum who lived in a suburb of Cleveland. Another time she had had a breakdown with her car under a viaduct in Cleveland. Although she knew scarcely a dozen Cleveland names, she always scanned Cleveland items in the paper with great interest. And now she read:

The body of a handsome young clubman was brought ashore by high waves yesterday.

It lay for three hours unidentified before a friend recognized the features as those of Harley Masteron, well-known golf enthusiast, holder of motor-boat records for speed, and popular young clubman of Cleveland.

Rita read the rest of the item idly. The name was unfamiliar to her.

Then she sat erect as if galvanically shocked. And in fact, she was. An idea had been switched on somewhere within her brain like a radio which is much too loud. The newspaper dropped from her fingers which had become nerveless in direct proportion to the keen snapping of that idea in her brain. She found herself rising to her feet, stalking about the room as she thought. There was no flaw in it, she decided. The item stated that Harley Masteron was the last of his family.

"Yes—yes?" she said in irritation to the telephone which rang insistently and disturbed her thoughts. "Oh, Aunt Fanny? Well, no, Aunt Fanny. I really don't feel up to it to-day. You see, I—did you read about Harley Masteron in the paper? I—I—you see, we were engaged, Aunt Fanny—you know, that time I went to Cleveland? Yes, then. But his father was against early marriages, and the will left everything to Harley if he remained single until he was thirty-two——" A sob crept into her voice.

For a moment Rita almost believed her own fantastic tale, so veracious were her tones and her words. Those amateur theatricals, she decided suddenly, had not been a waste of time. She wished that she had had a few more moments to rehearse just exactly the tale she intended to use in shutting up forever the pity of her five aunts.

"My darling!" breathed Aunt Fanny softly. "And none of us ever knew or guessed! I'll be right over, dear child. Are you going to Cleveland for the funeral? But of course you are!" she went right on without pause. "My poor darling child! There used to be

a train out of here at five o'clock or thereabouts. But never mind that. I'll look it up and see about your tickets."

"But, Aunt Fanny, I'm not going. I—I—I don't feel able to. I'm really all broken up."

"I can imagine your feelings, dear," her aunt murmured. "I can just imagine my state of mind if anything had happened to poor, dear George before we were married. Why, even now I don't know what I'd do if anything happened to George, especially since Jerry's gone to Seattle."

Jerry was the furnace man who served the eight families in the block of houses, semidetached, where Aunt Fanny and Uncle George lived.

Rita grinned at herself in the mirror opposite the telephone. If anything happened to George—now that Jerry was gone—Aunt Fanny would have to be the furnace stoker and general handy woman about the house. And Aunt Fanny was undeniably fat.

Rita admired herself in the mirror. The excitement of her great idea and Aunt Fanny's thrilled interest in the idea had reddened Rita's cheeks and apparently electrified her hair which seemed to stand out from her head slightly as if recently waved.

"I wonder if Joe knew him," continued Aunt Fanny. "Joe was with that motor-sales company there in Cleveland, you know. He could go for you—to represent you at the funeral."

"To rep-represent me?" echoed Rita, feeling that the floor which had always been solid beneath her feet was now slipping sidewise and downward in some hitherto unguessed motion. "Aunt Fanny! Did you say to represent me?"

"Why, certainly," said Aunt Fanny briskly. "I don't know what the Ohio laws are, but you may possibly have some legal rights in the estate and all of that. Are there any close relatives, Rita?"

Rita mumbled a reply to which her

aunt responded irritably: "I can't hear a thing you're saying, Rita, not a thing. Some one must have the wire open. Now you just take things easy, my dear, and I'll get Joe on the wire and have him tend to everything—tickets and all. Good-by."

"I don't want Joe to——" began Rita wildly. Nothing but silence hovered over the other end of the telephone. With feverish haste she moved the receiver hook up and down until the operator answered stiffly.

"Get me that number again—oh, quickly!" implored Rita.

The operator's reply was cool, and in another moment nothing but the busy signal could be heard.

Rita was torn between the desire to run to Aunt Fanny's house and the opposing desire to remain right here at the telephone, where at almost any moment she might get through a call to her aunt. It passed through her mind that she might telephone Joe at the office to pay no attention if Aunt Fanny called him, but with almost wild impulse she found herself once more calling her aunt's number. Would the operator, because the instrument had been clicked so many times, give her a busy signal?

"Yes?" suddenly came her aunt's cool tones. "Oh, Rita. Yes, I got Joe on the wire right away, and luckily he was just on his way to the bank. Now don't give it another thought, dear. Joe will do the right thing about all of it."

Rita was not listening to her aunt now. She was again wiggling the receiver hook up and down, calling Joe's number the moment the operator answered.

"Mr. Joseph Cameron?" repeated the information clerk. "Who is calling?"

"Run, run!" implored Rita, knowing well that the information clerk never ran anywhere with her beautifully waved head and her long, slender hands. "Don't let him leave the office—he's just going. Oh, hurry!"

There was a brief pause while the clerk did something mysterious, and then her voice murmured gently: "Sorry, but he has already left the offices, madam. Is there any message?"

Rita moaned softly. The bank, the city ticket offices, and the railroad station were all called unsuccessfully. Then she returned to the living room to stare angrily at the newspaper containing the Cleveland item. Aunt Fanny was known to be the most efficient member of the family. What in the name of Heaven, wondered Rita, had possessed her to tell such a tale to Aunt Fanny, and especially with the hope of smoothing out things?

Aunt Fanny always took any conversational ball and turned it this way and that to peer at it and paw at it until it at last assumed the cubical shape of which she had suspected it from the very start. Now Rita thought of calling Aunt Fanny to tell her that the thing had just been a joke, a lie—anything! But the front door buzzer was sounding, and a moment later Rita heard her mother talking to her Aunt Nellie.

"What?" squeaked Rita's mother. "You don't mean to say—Rita? Well! No, honestly, I didn't! Really, Nell, that's the truth. Rita!"

But before Rita could go into the hall the buzzer again sounded, and that time Aunt Fanny's voice sounded stridently through the apartment.

"Surprised, you say, Nellie? Well! I wasn't—not a bit. Not—one—bit! I knew that no girl of our family would ever turn out to be an old maid. All of us married early—earlier than Rita, to be frank. And Rita—well, why should Rita be overlooked by some good young man? Answer me that, if you will!"

Rita hurried into the hall to state definitely that it had all been a joke on Aunt Fanny, but now her Cousin Sallie's voice said tremulously:

"Marriage is so wonderful!" Sallie's words were scarcely more than a

breath. Sallie was a soft little blond thing whose engagement had been announced before she was out of high school.

At the time of her marriage, Joe had said curtly if unpleasantly and belatedly that it had been a case of gentlemen preferring bonds as much as gentlemen preferring blondes, because Sallie had money in her own name with a monthly income. But Rita knew that the masculine portions of any family were likely to underrate the feminine portions, especially when a joke, even if ancient, lurked in the offing.

By lunch time three of the aunts had appeared, nimbly asking Rita questions and not waiting for replies. Every one was delighted. Every one told this and that item of her own engagement days. Just before lunch was announced Uncle George and Cousin Joe came in.

"Joe," Rita said hoarsely, "I don't want you to go to Cleveland or—or get tickets for me—or anything. But you had no intention of—interfering anyhow, had you?" she asked hopefully.

Joe eyed her briefly, sitting on the arm of a chair beside her. "What was the idea," he asked succinctly, without troubling to respond to her question, "of telling them that this bird's dad was—er—had—passed on?"

"It said right in the paper that he was the last of his family," she countered hastily. Then her eyes fell before his.

"The paper?" he repeated. "What has the paper got to do with it? Papers make mistakes, you know. There's something more to this whole business than you've told, Rita. Now I want to know what it is. Is Jig stalling, trying to get out of his promise?"

"J-j-jig?" she echoed faintly, wondering if he were crazy.

"Good heavens!" he snorted. "You surely know that Harley Masterson's nickname is Jig?" Joe's voice was loud now. "At least, that's what we always called him in college."

"He—you—you went to college together?" Rita said dumbly.

"But he didn't live at our house," said Joe swiftly. "He was Chi Psi, you know. He was always grubbing about with garage mechanics and taking down his roadster—say, I suppose he's told you about that roadster of his! Old McCarthy, the traffic cop, chased him at eighty, but he couldn't touch the roadster. It sure was good! And Jig always declared he hadn't had the accelerator clear down to the floor at that. Now that I know about this engagement I remember the way Jig looked at you—say, didn't you read about the Coldwell-Iken merger last week?"

"I never even glance at the financial pages of the paper," admitted Rita.

"Well," Joe said dryly, "this was a first-page article, Rita! It——"

Rita rose wearily. "Oh, what of it? What do I care about this merger, Joe? What's it to me?"

"Nothing at all," he said sarcastically. "Ah, a mere nothing, as one might say in common parlance, except that Jig's dad owns more than fifty-one per cent of the stock. He's worth a cool forty million if he's worth a dime. In fact, Jig's dad is the Coldwell part of the merger, owning the Coldwell——"

"Luncheon is served," remarked the maid at the door.

"Tell mother we'll both be there presently and not to wait, Estelle," said Rita miserably. "Don't go, Joe. I've got to get this thing straight."

"Make it snappy," suggested Joe. "If you must know the truth of it. I'm hungry."

"I—this thing has gone far enough, Joe. I'm not engaged—not to this—er—Harley Masterson or any one else. It was all a joke—on Aunt Fanny, Joe."

"On Aunt Fanny," he said musingly, a little smile at the corners of his mouth. "Oh, Aunt Fanny. That's bad."

"Bad?" she countered. "What do you mean—bad?"

"Sallie's husband is running an item in the evening paper about your engagement to the dead Harley with your picture and his and a mourning wreath around everything."

"Heavens! Joe!" she murmured reproachfully. "Joe!"

"Well, why blame me? How was I to know you'd taken to joking about drowned folks? Why do you eye me like that, I want to know? Who started this thing, anyway—you or me? I'm going to eat."

"Why, I don't even know him!" she said slowly.

"Well, can you tie it!" remarked Joe uneasily, walking toward the dining room.

Of all of the family, Rita alone ate sparingly. She had contemplated going out, but decided to drop the bomb right now at the table before any more damage might be done. The family gave various reasons for her scanty meal: she was in love, she was trying to keep her slimness, the death of her fiancé was oppressive to her. Rita found no chance to say anything.

Except for Joe, no one knew the real reason for Rita's light meal. Joe was evidently determined not to get any further into the situation. He applied himself to the chicken patties vigorously. They had been stretched by the addition of cracker crumbs and rice until the chicken was only a flavor. Rita at last opened her mouth, determined to speak. Her mother, however, had taken the floor, and glad of a moment's respite from the unpleasant announcement she had to make, Rita sat back in her chair.

"Yes," her mother was saying, "some girls do marry early and all of that. But a girl like Rita knows that she doesn't have to snatch at the first chance which presents itself, fearing that she'll never get another chance," she continued with rapierlike keenness which undoubtedly thrust home in Aunt Fanny's case. "When Rita did decide to marry, she

chose a man accustomed to the better things of life, a college man of wealth and charm, from all I hear."

It was Mrs. Martel's first vindication, and Rita hated to take away the triumph of the moment. Aunt Fanny had always rubbed it in so unmercifully. Aunt Fanny now applied herself silently to her luncheon; Uncle George had not been a college man. On the contrary he always boasted to any and all who would listen that he was a self-made man, that he had not started on a shoe string, as the story went, because he had no shoes. At twelve he had been a bare-foot orphan. And as for charm—well, the best thing about Uncle George was his silence. At the word "charm" he now reared his head to say:

"Charm? I never took much stock in charms and superstitions. All nonsense, I say. Hard work and a bank account—that's what gets a fellow ahead, I say. Did this young fellow have a bank account in his own name, Rita?"

"Sh!" said Aunt Fanny. "He's—dead, you know."

And after her mother's tiny triumph, Rita wondered how she could prick this too-solid bubble without appearing entirely ridiculous. While she was still wondering, the men arose without more than a murmured excuse, and Rita fled down into the street in search of an evening paper.

It sickened her when she saw it back in the apartment. Would this family of Harley Masterson—apparently he did have a family—arise and denounce her as an impostor? There was but one hope. In Cleveland they might never see this Middle West paper that told tales of Indians and pork packers and immigrants. It was but a slight solace. Yet, she knew the way Eastern people thought of Chicago. Cleveland people might subscribe to a New York paper, but they wouldn't be apt to look as far west as Chicago. And even an exchange item would be tiny, she hoped.

not fancy-free. The wind from the lake was cold in spite of her warm coat. Her legs ached as she walked up and down Sheridan Road. She wanted to go home, wanted to lie down on her bed and rest. Her head ached. But at home—there would be questions and telephone calls. She spent a horrible two hours at a picture show with sickening love parts. Then she wearily dragged herself home.

"Why——" began her mother.

"I'm ill, mother," said Rita wearily. She felt that she simply could not stand another thing to-night. "I don't want any dinner. I don't want any tray sent to me, and I don't want to answer the telephone. I—I——" The words stuck in her throat.

She knew that she should tell her mother the whole thing. The next day was Thursday, and her mother would play bridge and gossip all afternoon. She must tell her mother before the bridge.

When Rita rose the next morning, however, her mother had already left the house to go shopping. She was having lunch with a friend somewhere downtown, and then going on directly to the bridge. The maids would both be gone in the afternoon. Rita wandered about the apartment miserably.

It was early afternoon when the telephone rang insistently. She unhooked the receiver and then listened.

"Hello—hello!" A bell clanged, announcing that the man calling her had had his nickel swallowed in some pay station. She answered the call, although she could hear but little. She gathered that he wanted to see her and would hasten out to her.

The moment the connection had been broken she wished she had said she would not be at home, wished she had asked him his name, what he wanted. Maybe it had been a newspaper reporter, although he would probably call from the paper offices. Why hadn't she kept

asking his name until she had understood? Was she losing her mind?—she asked herself.

When she answered the door buzzer a little later and saw his brief case, she felt relieved. He was only a salesman, and he would be easy to get rid of.

"I don't wish to buy a thing," she told him. "Not a thing. There's no point in wasting both your time and mine. I wouldn't buy a gold dollar for ten cents so——"

"No?" he asked courteously. "No? Well, perhaps you'll let me talk to you for a few moments anyway. You really owe me that much—after I've come all this distance."

How handsome he was, she thought. In that instant he had passed her, and without waiting for her to speak, divested himself of gloves and coat. He dropped them negligently upon the needlepoint chair in the hall, before advancing into the living room with his brief case.

She followed him angrily. "Well, what——" she began

"You were engaged to——" he cut in swiftly.

"Ah!" Her breath came unevenly. "You—you are a lawyer!"

The brief case was now explained in her mind.

His eyebrows rose in surprise. "You flatter me," he murmured. "I have never been accused of being anything so—er—useful. You were—er—expecting a lawyer?"

"No, no. I've done nothing—really wrong. I was never engaged to Jig. I—I never even knew him!" The words were let out in a sudden spasm, like something which has been too-long bottled within and bursts.

She stared at him. Why in the name of everything sensible had she said those words to this man, of whose very name she was ignorant, of whose mission she knew nothing? But they were said, and in reply he looked at her quizzically.

"I never even saw him," she said weakly.

"Oh, yes, you did. You danced with him—he fixed your carburetor once in Ashtabula right there under the South Main Street subway—don't you remember that?"

"No, no," she said a little crossly. "I called up a garage and they had no mechanic to send out then. I remember perfectly about it because before I called another place I went back to the car to look at it myself, and a mechanic came along and stopped to help me. He knew his job, too—not like most garage men," she ended with the bitterness of a woman who had had experience with them.

"Thank you," he said modestly, rising. "And now if the time has come for me to press a chaste kiss upon your fair brow—and it is fair," he said, "permit me——"

Rita leaped to her feet. Was he mad? Was she mad? Was this all a nightmare from which she would awaken to find herself out of bed on the hard floor? If this man were mad and she was alone in the apartment, every one being gone, she had reason to be frightened.

"I—I——" she said hastily, trying to gain time.

"I am Jig," he told her. "I wasn't drowned at all. I wasn't even near the water. The kind friend who identified me and my strong viking features was, I regret to say, filled with that which is sometimes made when the moon shines. He was drunk, in other words. And the drowned man turned out to be a pile driver who had fallen down on his job—er—that is, had fallen down on the surface of the lake and—slept. How about running our pictures to-morrow and omitting the rue wreath this time?"

Her face flamed. "I must have been crazy to say such a thing," she said slowly. "If I had had a moment to think—but you're a cad to rub it in!" she flared.

"But I'm not rubbing it in," he told her. "I'm asking you to marry me."

"Then you're a chivalrous fool," she said quietly, "to try to save my face and——"

"Save the surface and you save all," he assured her. "I am neither a cad nor a fool. We shall put it all on a business basis—for a starter, anyway. You were sick and tired, I take it, of being called an old maid by your family long before you reached the proper age, and this seemed a way out with the—er—responsibilities—shall we say?—of marriage."

She nodded, not meeting his eyes.

"And yet you accepted none of the proposals you had? I knew of three that Joe told me about. He was very proud of you—and doesn't that speak well indeed from a male relative?" He was opening the brief case now and taking out a picture that she had given Joe for his room at college. "This I—er—stole," he told her modestly. "You see these," he went on, as he spread out one newspaper clipping after another of her—a picture of Rita on horseback, an item announcing her election to the presidency of her college alumnae association. "Joe told me a lot about you. When you came down to the prom we danced twice, and I—fell. I knew then that some day we'd know each other; but you were such a kid. I fell and fell hard, but I thought I'd give you a little time to see other fellows. Oh, you'll think me conceited and all of that, being so sure—but I was, anyhow. I kept in touch with Joe to make sure you didn't get foolish over any other fellow. Poor old Joe, he must have thought I was crazy, running after him the way I did. Well, I just waited," he said. "But I didn't know what I was waiting for."

Her eyes blazed at him. She heard steps from behind, and realized that she had forgotten to close the front door.

"Hello, Jig!" It was Joe's voice. "I

thought you didn't know Jig!" he said reproachfully to Rita.

Her eyes went from her cousin to Jig and back again. As if to defend her, Jig had stepped forward, one arm loosely across her shoulders.

"Well?" said Joe. "Thought you were drowned, old man."

"That," said Rita, biting her lips nervously, "was just a joke."

"Sallie's husband'll get it from his paper, and that's a joke to you, too, I suppose!" snapped Joe with cousinly candor. "You make me sick!" It was his parting shot as he left the room.

Ordinarily Rita would have winced at Joe's words, but as she looked at Jig she saw that he was laughing. She found herself laughing, too, her eyes studying this handsome Jig whose name must in some subconscious fashion have fashioned itself in her mind. She sighed.

Marriage? Now she knew why she had fought shy of it all of these years. She had been waiting—waiting for Jig!

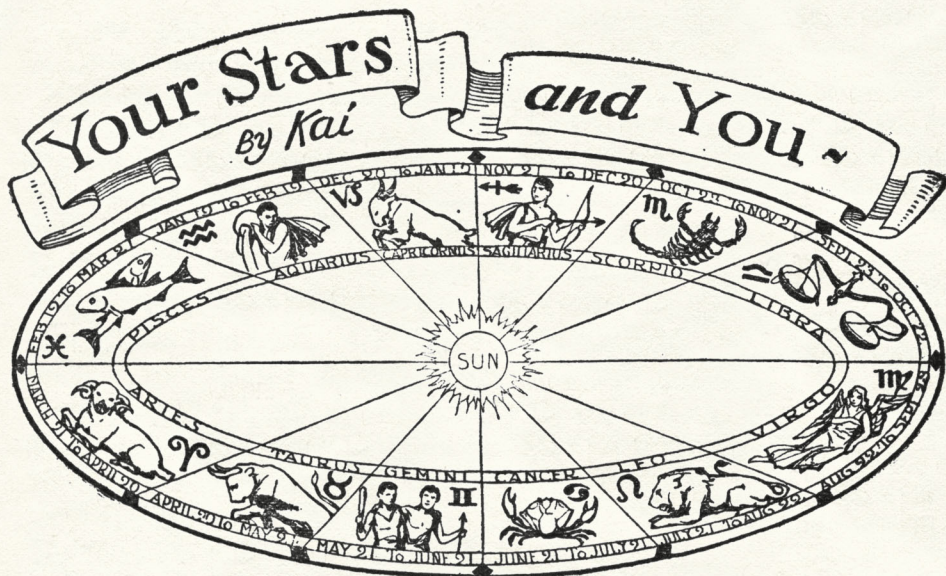
"Darling!" He gazed down at her for a moment; then suddenly she was in his arms, held breathlessly close to him. "I love you, love you with all my heart and soul!" he murmured. "I know this is sudden, and yet—oh, Rita, you must realize that it was meant to be!"

"I do—oh, I do," she whispered, and then said no more as his lips met hers.

It was a wild, fervent kiss. All Rita could do was give herself up to its magic. All she could do was murmur: "Yes, Jig, I do love you," when he begged for her answer.

For deep in his arms she was thrillingly happy, and her heart beat faster with the thought that her long-forgotten sweetheart could never be forgotten now!





YOUR WEEK.

There are two good days this week for starting new ventures and beginning anything of importance. You folks who are under favorable influences should utilize Monday, around the noon hour, and Friday, between eleven and twelve o'clock in the morning, for pushing your affairs. Even you people for whom life holds complications just now will find these two days advantageous in clearing away the

DAY BY DAY.

Eastern standard time.

Saturday,
May
2nd.

h

A lively day, and you will have to be mentally alert to avoid unpleasant incidents, accidents, and upsets. Do not expect your plans to proceed smoothly, and be ready to use precaution in all your dealings with your fellow men. There is much enjoyment to be gotten out of the day if you do not live in-
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ght hour. It

is a favorable day for sensible dealings in your love affairs and contacts with the opposite sex. If you plan your actions for the coming week and consider the condition of your finances, avoid any reaction that is not based on sound facts and material considerations.

**Monday,
May
4th.**



This is a very favorable day, filled with action and results. It is a favorable day for real estate, handling trust funds, rearranging your affairs, consideration of your personal reactions to life in general; good for writers, advertising, insurance, and matters relating to law. Around one o'clock in the afternoon is very active and is a favorable time for action connected with your plans and daily routine.

**Tuesday,
May
5th.**



The early morning hours to-day are unstable, nervous, and confusing. Delay anything of importance until later in the morning. The early afternoon hours are good, and the time around six o'clock in the evening is ideal for social contact and for dealing with the opposite sex. Attend lectures, enjoy clever conversation, and mingle with people in the evening. The last part of the day is excellent for writing, creative ideas, plans, and business discussions.

**Wednesday,
May
6th.**



To-day is a little off color. Do not transact matters relating to finance to-day; and be prepared for the unexpected. The day as a whole is favorable for activity if there is a job to be done, and the evening hours after eight o'clock are favorable for social contact and for dealing with the opposite sex. The hours improve near midnight, and after that time you may participate in important discussions.

**Thursday,
May
7th.**



A mixed day, and you should be very cautious in all matters. The morning is not very favorable for any activity except for routine and for things in line of duty. Do not expect your love affairs to proceed smoothly to-day, and do not be disappointed if your hopes fail to materialize. Be careful of quarrels and hasty judgment at five o'clock in the afternoon.

**Friday,
May
8th.**



This is a favorable day for the general public and a time when you may take care of the little details you have been postponing for the past few days or weeks. Plan to make the morning hours count. Around noon is a favorable time for starting action in connection with your affairs, if your personal influences are not adverse. The evening hours should be spent quietly, and if you retire before midnight you might save yourself a bushel of trouble. The midnight hour is quarrelsome and inflammable.

IF YOU WERE BORN BETWEEN—

**March 21st and April 20th
(Aries ♈)**

—you will have to watch your step for the next few weeks and let your head rule instead of your heart. Life holds some bumps in the road for you just now, and you had better slow up on your speed and be ready to apply the brakes. This applies particularly to you folks born the first sixteen days in April. You will be restricted, beset with unexpected complications and unforeseen developments, and you should use foresight and discretion in living your daily existence. Do not be too hasty in making changes and readjustments, and be very sure you have something ready to put in the place of the condition in your life you choose to eliminate. The tension will be lessened somewhat for you Aries people born between March 29th and April 9th, and there will be periods of activity and happiness for you, in spite of underlying conditions. Those of you born between April 1st and 6th will want to strike out and adjust all

the conflicting situations, and you may do this if you keep your impulsive streak under control and act with forethought.

April 20th and May 21st

(Taurus ♉)

—you are just about the most favored of the zodiacal children for the next week. There will be activity, stability in your lives and a generally opportune time. Traveling is indicated for you who were born between April 24th and 29th, and an emotional, inspirational reaction to the life that flows around you. Most of the activity for you Taureans will be centered in the lives of you who have a birthday in the area of May 8th, and you folks should make every effort to derive benefit from each day. There will be opportunities and changes for the better, and the only thing you have to worry about is letting the cap off that explosive temper of yours. If everything has been all wrong for you folks born between May 12th and 17th, cheer up! There will be a strengthening of your will power that will lead you to adjust all your affairs satisfactorily. I would suggest you lay the foundation now for opportunities that will come to you in the near future.

May 21st and June 21st

(Gemini ♊)

—you are being given plenty of scope for your energies and ambition. The folks born in the latter part of the sign do not have as much activity right now as those born around the second week in June, but later in the summer you will find your lives full and interesting. If your birthday falls between June 5th and 9th there is opportunity to make money, an adjustment in your financial affairs; new opportunities, emotional interests, and favorable influences for dealing with the opposite sex. Expect a nebulous, vague frame of mind if your birthday falls around May 25th; be careful of deception and bad judgment. Life is confusing and uncertain for you during this period, and you should avoid important decisions.

June 21st and July 21st

(Cancer ♋)

—your difficult conditions of the past few months are being relieved to some extent. You Cancerians have several weak spots in 1931, but the next seven days are better for you, and you should take advantage of this period to straighten out your affairs.

The folks born between July 14th and 18th must expect everything to be slow for them, but the pressure will be lifted later. If you were born between July 7th and 11th, you may look for improvement and activity and may operate at this time with a greater sense of freedom.

July 21st and August 22nd

(Leo ♌)

—you are on the way to an interesting and eventful summer and may look to the future with hope. There will be things happening for you, and the folks who may take advantage of the next seven days are those born between August 7th and 11th. Do not be annoyed at the upsetting incidents that beset your path; keep a clear head; walk away from fighting and quarrels; if you get involved legally, fight it out and look to the future; keep your temper. You Leo people like to organize your life and plan for the future, and you may do so safely at this time. Very emotional time for folks born around July 27th.

August 22nd and September 23rd

(Virgo ♍)

—you are in line for favorable developments. Plan for the future and lay the foundation for material advancement if your birthday occurs between September 15th and 19th. If you have a birthday between September 8th and 12th, get the most from each day and push your affairs. Do not be too hasty about believing all you hear and forming idealistic opinions about the people you meet if you were born around August 27th.

September 23rd and October 22nd

(Libra ♎)

—the majority of you are having partnership difficulties. Do not be too quick to tear down the thing you have built up and banish old associations unless you are very sure of what you are doing; your frame of mind at this time is not the best for making constructive decisions. These remarks apply particularly to you born between October 8th and 11th, or any one who has important planetary positions in the sign Libra. Expect restrictions and impatience with old conditions if your birthday is between October 15th and 19th. The pressure will be lifted this week for you folks who have birthdays around September 27th and between October 4th and 7th, but you should not overexpand until the end of 1931.

October 22nd and November 21st
(Scorpio ♏)

—the past few weeks have been favorable for you, but the good influences ease off somewhat during the coming week. It is still a good period if you were born around October 27th and between November 14th and 17th. This last-mentioned group are in a position to handle affairs of long standing that have been irksome and limiting; it is a favorable time to straighten out your affairs and build a foundation for the future. Do not cater to your weaker characteristics and the destructive side of Scorpio if your birthday occurs the first ten days in November; keep your temper and control your emotions.

November 21st and December 20th
(Sagittarius ♐)

—most of you are in line for progress, new ideas, plans, and travel. Seek new business, new conditions; manipulate changes and readjustments unless you were born around November 26th. Your judgment and your nervous system are not in good working order if your birthday occurs during the latter part of November. Expand and proceed with confidence if you have a birthday between December 7th and 11th, and prepare your foundation for future accomplishment if born between December 14th and 17th.

December 20th and January 19th
(Capricorn ♑)

—your program should be restricted, and you must be patient with conditions. Nineteen-thirty-one is not a good year for you in handling your affairs, and you should follow routine. Use the improved periods for yourself that will be specified in this department, and sift your values so that you may be in a position later to follow the right line of endeavor. This is not a favorable time for you to make changes, and the foregoing remarks apply particularly to you born between January 6th and 9th and between January 12th and 16th. The next seven days are lighter and more favorable for you who have birthdays around December 26th.

January 19th and February 19th
(Aquarius ♒)

—this is a neutral period for the majority of you people born under this sign. The folks who are in line for the most activity

during the coming week are those who were born between February 1st and 8th. You will have to handle your affairs cautiously, but may take advantage of new conditions and opportunities. Expect upheavals and sudden changes, but keep your emotions and activity under control and proceed constructively.

February 19th and March 21st
(Pisces ♓)

—you are in line for progress and advancement, and your trend is upward in relation to personal affairs. The folks who should take advantage of the next seven days were born between March 4th and 10th. Great improvement in business and in your financial status.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
★ **THE STAR QUESTION BOX** ★
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Mrs. J. P., born September 10, 1909; husband born November 18, 1897: Your general influences are very favorable during the next few weeks, and I am sure you will have found conditions more to your liking by the time you read this. You were in a temporary low spot at the time you wrote me, and the future for you and your husband looks bright. It would be advisable to return to California, as far as I can judge from the general positions of your chart without your time of birth.

Do not allow yourself to give in to this feeling of discouragement, F. A. D., born February 6, 1907; husband born August 29, 1904. As you will note from the "Sign Guide," you are under splendid influences now, and you should use your head in handling the business affairs of yourself and your husband. Without the definite hour of your birth I am unable to advise you specifically, but your general positions are such that you may expand your activity and derive satisfactory results. I suggest you complete your course in the beauty-culture line; do not sell your poultry business; stick by your husband and convince him your judgment is better right now because of your more favorable influences. Do not allow yourself to succumb to pessimism—it will hamper your activity.

You can call good planetary positions "good luck," if you care to, Miss F. M. G.,

born June 16, 1893, twelve twenty p. m., in England. It is true, of course, that you have better conditions in your life at certain times than there are generally, and this is caused by the strength of good planetary influences at specific periods, based on the positions of your individual planets at the moment you were born. You do not have very much to worry about in the future of any serious consequence, but I do not think you will take your trip to England. You have marked influences for the desire for change in June of 1931, but you would not be traveling under the most beneficial aspects, and this would lessen your enjoyment. If you take the journey, be prepared for delays and upsetting incidents.

Yes, Mrs. M. F., born September 4, 1900, Maryland, between two and three in the morning, you may follow your ambition to be a writer. Suggest you start with short stories and save the novel idea until you have more time to write the kind that would reach your standard of effort. You have some influences throughout 1931, during the summer and fall that will delay you in following your idea, but do not become discouraged. Nineteen-thirty-two is much better for you, and the next seven or eight months are ideal for building the right foundation.

If you have been following this department, Mrs. M. R. H., born July 3, 1895; husband born October 12, 1893, you know your date and your husband's date are included in the cross-opposition group, and the main trouble in your life is the unsettled condition of your married life. Is there any reason why you should leave Mr. H. just because you want to go to work and support your two children? If you want to follow your former occupation, the change might ease your present living conditions and adjust the difficulty in your married life. There will be periods in 1931 when matters will be improved, but you cannot expect a permanent adjustment until after 1931. Try to handle your situation and keep peaceful—your husband does not like quarreling.

Sorry you failed to receive an answer to the other letter you wrote me, M. D., born November 18, 1899, six a. m., in Canada. You do not say whether or not you have read this department every week, but frequently the answers appear some weeks after receipt of your letters. At any rate,

here is an answer to your recent letter, and I hope it may clear up your uncertainty within yourself. As you may have read in these columns before, Saturn is not a pleasant planet to have hanging around, and you have been under this influence since 1927. During these three years you have probably been thwarted in reaching your goal and restricted in your activity. You are entirely relieved of Saturn now, and will not have the effect of this planet in this same manner that you have had it for the past several years again for thirty years. Now, isn't that encouraging. By this time you should have overcome many of the obstacles that have stood in your path, and you should put the past behind you and go merrily on your way into the future. You did not say so in your letter, but I know you had trouble with the men in your life during this period of depression, with your health, and with your income. Do not expect the men back in your life that went out during that period, with any degree of happiness. It would be better if you made new contacts entirely. Look to the future financially and rebuild your health. You have two splendid years ahead of you, and you must not pass up one single opportunity. Good luck to you, and write me again.

It is fine of you to follow this department so religiously, E. S. B., born December 31, 1891, eleven forty-five p. m. Sorry you find the principles of astrology, as explained through these columns, confusing. My subject is so extensive it is possible to cover only a small territory each week in writing this department, and the best way to acquire varied knowledge about astrology as I give it here is to read the department each week and correlate the facts into a tangible understanding. Many of the readers keep a scrapbook of "Your Stars and You," especially the students of astrology. I think you would enjoy knowing more about the planets, the zodiac, and its relation to life and mundane affairs, and the answer to this is to obtain a textbook and proceed with the subject with an inquiring mind. Answering your question about your nervousness, you have been under the influence of the planets Saturn and Uranus, and through planetary action you have wavered in your control. You are almost past this deflated period, and with self-control and a fresh start you are going to find yourself in an improved condition within the next seven months. Concentration and study of something that in-

terests you is a good antidote for your condition. If you decide to study astrology, write me again, and if I can help let me know.

Do not be too hasty in making a move at this time, Mrs. L. G. N., born April 2, 1886; husband born July 17, 1882, in Canada. Nineteen thirty-one is a testing period for you and your husband, and you will not change the fundamental conditions by removing your residence. You should wait for improved conditions.

Mrs. A. B. C., born four p. m., in Ohio, July 9, 1899: It would be better for you to delay any action on resuming your teaching activities during 1931. You are not under good influences, and no matter how you attempted to clear yourself, you are going to run into complications. I assume it is necessary to sign a contract for the 1931-1932 term, but it would be much better for you if you waited for the February, 1932, semester. Your influences in October and December, 1931, are the climax of this condition in your life. This waiting is not going to be pleasant; but, I assure you, the final results will be far more acceptable to you.

I cannot give you the information you desire about having children, Mrs. M. C., born March 8, 1906, without more complete data about the time of your birth and the time of your husband's birth. Sorry!

You will have to expect financial difficulties this year, M. M., born October 18, 1885. Your influences are very poor, and it is a year of retrenchment and conservation for you in the financial quarter. Sorry to have to give you the bad news, but you asked for an opinion on your financial possibilities and here it is. I note you write me from Kentucky—my home State, in which I first saw the light of day.

The reason you have such "bad luck"—as you choose to call it—in the first four months of the year, Mr. D. H., born January 9, 1914, between eleven and eleven thirty p. m., in West Virginia, is because the planets in your chart are not under favorable aspects during those months. As I have said so many times before, there is no such thing as luck. If you know your life and your activity is restricted during those four months, you should anticipate this pressure and prepare for emergencies. It is not a favorable time for you to change

jobs. Your planets are under heavy influences, and it is the worst time for you to make any move and expect spectacular results in your favor. The latter part of May, 1931, will bring relief from the strain; but during July, October, and December you will have to follow routine and be patient with conditions. Nineteen-thirty-two is better for you, and after this depressing period is over you will find your life on the upward trend.

You have adaptability for writing, Mrs. E. J. H., born May 29th, 1890, at eleven p. m., in Colorado, and you will have opportunities to submit some of your verse for publication during the next few months. Wish you had sent me a sample of your work. Frequently, a talent shows in a chart, but how far you have developed that talent is something I cannot judge unless you submit evidence. Your influences for the year are favorable generally. Why not send me some of your verse? I shall enjoy reading it.

L. K., born November 3, 1909, between two and three a. m., in Mississippi: A nice letter from you, Mr. K.; a paradoxical letter. Yes, I know you are putting up a tough fight, but the fighting you have done is nothing compared to what you have in store during 1931. This is a year when you will be put to the great test. Believe me, if you weather this emotional storm in 1931, you will not have anything to worry about in the future. You were born under the sign Scorpio, and your Moon is in the sign Cancer. Both these signs are very emotional and hold every possibility of inclining one to go off the deep end. It might be a good idea for you to read about the qualities of Scorpio in some of our astrological textbooks. You will read that Scorpio can drag himself in the dust and crawl with the lowest of the dust creatures. You will read, also, that he can soar into the heights with the wings of an eagle. That is your battle—to keep your eyes turned upward to the higher things that are all-absorbing to you and never waver for a second. Do not be discouraged if you do not win your first battles; you will have many fights with yourself to try to overcome your sordid inclinations, but you are the type that would never be satisfied with pitch. You are going to win this battle—I know it. There will be times when you will be put through fire, but you are going to come through. Let me hear from you again.

You do not know how puffed up I am, C. J., over your letter. Thanks very much for the congratulations, good wishes, and kind remarks. You are certainly giving me a long-term assignment by hoping I'll write for the public until 1950, and I hope, if I do, you will be writing me complimentary letters. I note you were born November 4, 1911, at three p. m., in Illinois, and that you are looking for a change. Yes, you are going to have a change in 1931, and it will be for the better. Your planetary influences are promoting the restlessness you are feeling, and you are going to have an opportunity to enter into another field of activity, and you may take the offer with confidence. The year ahead is good, and your future looks bright. If there is a recession in your affairs from time to time, do not become impatient, because any reaction is temporary, and you have a chart that shows you will be able to pull through any difficulty that comes your way. You do not have much to worry about in the next five months, and you can make this a banner year in your life if you will just use that keen brain of yours. It is fine to know you like the "If You Were Born Between—" and the "Day By Day." If you customers do not send in your comments about the features and

contents of this department, how am I to know how you feel about it?

Miss W. Y., born June 4, 1914, in Pennsylvania: Sorry, but I cannot answer your letter about a stage career without your time of birth.

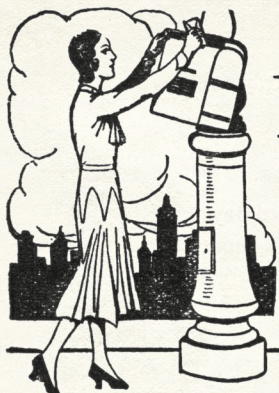
This answer will not reach you before you contemplated making the move to another city; it would be much better for you to stay in Detroit, Mrs. M. H., born September 2, 1903, at four a. m., in Scotland, and work out your influences for a confused state of affairs in your home life by having your husband in another city. His influences are not favorable for the year, and sometimes it is better to voluntarily undergo undesirable conditions rather than be forced to conform to restrictions. You are under the influence of the nervous planet Neptune, and you should keep as calm and as steady as possible.

Miss V. L. R., born October 1, 1911, in Colorado, I cannot answer your question without your boy friend's birth data.

Mrs. F. J., born February 3, 1910, in Alabama, I cannot answer your question without your husband's birth data.

Editor's Note: Questions for this department are answered only through *Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine*. Each reader is allowed to ask one question. Be sure to give the following data in your letter: date, month, year, and place of birth, the hour of the day or night, if possible, and sex. Address your letters to KAI, care of this magazine.





The Friendliest Corner

By MARY MORRIS



Miss Morris will help you to
make friends



Miss Mary Morris, who conducts this department, will see to it that you will be able to make friends with other readers, though thousands of miles may separate you. It must be understood that Miss Morris will undertake to exchange letters only between men and men, boys and boys, women and women, girls and girls. Please sign your name and address when writing. Be sure to inclose forwarding postage when sending letters through The Friendliest Corner, so that mail can be forwarded.

Address Miss Mary Morris, Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

+ + +

A FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD preacher! Esther, the Evangelist, has a great vision. She has swayed crowds, known the tense emotions of revivals, has felt and lived her religion deeply. In this modern day she carries on, true to her teachings and ideals. She'll be a Pal who can guide young and old, because she holds reverence and understanding in her heart.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of fifteen, with blue eyes and auburn hair, living in Pennsylvania. I'm fond of missionary work, like to read my Bible, and go to church. I preached twice last year in the Pentecostal Church, and would like to hear from missionaries, but will be a true friend to all.

ESTHER, THE EVANGELIST.

Step into the family circle.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: We want our mail box filled! We are a quartet in perfect harmony, living in Connecticut. Come on, every one; we all want assignments!

THE HAPPY FAMILY.

A stage career on the horizon.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Can you find room for a really lonesome boy of seventeen? I

have blue eyes and light-brown hair, and am almost six feet tall. I'm interested in drawing and female impersonating, and am fond of dancing. Who'll write to me?

LONESOME ACTOR.

'The colorful places of our world.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a New York girl of French descent, speak English, French, and German, and am interested in interior decorating. I've traveled to the South seas, Bermuda, France, and England, and I'm waiting to tell my Pals about these thrilling countries.

HIGH-SCHOOL TRAVELER.

Tapping her message over the miles.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Is there room in your department for another girl? I'm a telegraph operator, brown-eyed and auburn-haired, ready to be friends with the whole country. I like my work, and will tell about it. Who's waiting to hear?

VIRGINIA BLUEEEL.

After the darkness, she sees the world with clear eyes.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a little Scotch girl of eighteen, looking for Pals everywhere. I was blind until I was fifteen, then went under an operation, and came out of it fine. Girls, please write to

WIDE-EYED BOBBIE.

The thrill of a morning canter!

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm so lonely for somebody to write to, and I have a type-writer just aching to start pounding. I'm another blonde with gray-green eyes, sixteen years old, living in Seattle. My pet sport is horseback riding, and I'm ready to discuss horses with any girl who writes.

BRONCHO ELLEN.

In step with this generation.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a grandmother, forty-five years old, with three children and one grandchild. I live in Connecticut, am young and up to date, and hope every one will write to me.

GRANDMOTHER ANN.

Who'll let the sunshine into her sick room?

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of twenty-one, living in Alabama, unable to get out much because of poor health. I'm fond of music and dancing, love travel and all the outdoor sports in which I can't engage. I'd like to hear from girls of Scandinavian descent, but all others are welcome, too.

NETTEA.

He knows the excitement of high-strung Latin countries.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I want a Pen Pal who will some day become my chum. I'm a boy of twenty-seven, with brown eyes and light-brown hair, now living in Buffalo. I spent three years in Spain and two and one half years in Santo Domingo. Who wants to hear about my adventures?

SOMBRERO.

Watch her make a lemon pie!

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm just a plump nineteen-year-old girl, with brown curly hair and blue eyes, in love with life and everything in life. My main accomplishment is cooking, but I can sing and play the banjo as well. I'd love to hear from girls near Norfolk, but any one who writes will be welcomed with open arms.

BLUE BILLIE.

He'll bring the wild West to your doorstep.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I hail from a cattle country of range and mountains, and have spent my life punching cattle. I'll be glad

to tell about our Sunday bronc rides, cattle branding, and everything that goes on on a ranch. I'm a man five feet four inches tall, love the study of nature, and am ready to show you Western friendship.

MR. ARIZONA.

She sticks to the old-fashioned comfort of the hearth.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a married woman of thirty-nine, with one little boy of six, and I'd like to hear from women who will write steadily and stick through thick and thin. I'm old-fashioned, a great home lover, and enjoy reading, movies, and clean sports and amusements. My husband works at night; who'll let me write to her in the lonely hours while he's away?

NORTON FROM MICHIGAN.

An interesting stranger in a strange land.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a little West Indian girl, nineteen years old, with brown hair and eyes, living here in New Jersey. I'm fond of movies and tennis, and would love to have friends. Won't you American girls take an interest in me?

VALMASADA.

Hear the truth about Greek-letter societies.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a nineteen-year-old girl, a senior in high school, anxious to see the world and then settle down to a journalistic career. I'm president of a sorority, love to dance and play bridge, and have followed two famous dance marathons here in Chicago. Girls, let's start writing.

CORKIE OF CHI.

A bachelor early in life.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Who'll write to a lonesome old "bach" who has plenty of old friends but is looking for new ones? I'm twenty-two, interested in everything, so, boys, send your letter and you'll get your answer pronto!

STEWART.

See America through a stranger's eyes.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a German girl, have been in this country seven years, and am most interested in America. I speak and write German and English, and wonder if any of you Pals would write to me.

ONE FROM CHICAGO.

A little bronzed life-saver.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl, seventeen years old, and just moved to Connecticut, where I am living with my sister. I'm a junior life-saver, very fond of swimming and dancing, so lonesome I don't know what to do. Girls, write to
TOMBOY BILLIE.

He's interested in life about him.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May a young fellow in Texas join your Corner? I'd like to correspond with young men interested in books, art, and things in general. I can write volumes about this wonderful old city of San Antonio, which is quite foreign in atmosphere. I'm recovering from an illness, and have worlds of time on my hands. R. E. C.

Alone in a vast country.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a German war bride, alone in America, with all my relatives eight thousand miles away. I was born and raised in Germany, received a first-class education, and am fond of reading, music, and nature. My friendship is of the lasting kind, so, girls, please write to me. MRS. A. S.

She'll teach you how to beautify your home.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a brunette of twenty-three, fond of sports, travel, and anything new. At present I'm studying to be an interior decorator, and hope to be launched on my career in a few years. You girls who ride horseback, swim, fly, or anything, let me hear from you.
PEPPER.

Keeping the home fires burning in the great Southwest.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: An S O S from New Mexico! I'm a married woman of twenty-one, and get lonesome when my husband is away working. I love to cook and keep house, and hope to talk over home-making with lots of Pals.
JOHN'S WIFE.

She'll bring back your high-school days.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Who'd like a high-school girl for a Pal? I'm seventeen, live in a small town in northern New Jersey, and am fond of hockey, skating, and basket ball. Come on, girls; write to me.
NEW JERSEY JUNE.

A trouper interested in history.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a boy of twenty-four, over six feet tall. I've traveled through the United States and Canada, having been on the stage for three years. I am now living in one of the oldest cities, settled in 1623, and would like to tell Pals about it, as well as the things I know of stage life and art.
MODERN.

An Oriental note in the Rockies.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May I join your Corner? I'm a Canadian-born Japanese boy, seventeen years old, with dark-brown eyes and black hair, and I'm lonesome out here in the Far West. Young and old, won't you write to me?
TOMIKO.

A bird's-eye view of the city of presidents.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a married girl of twenty-one, and get lonesome in the long hours when my husband is away from work. I'll be glad to tell Pals about our capital city, Washington, where I live.
COLUMBIA.

The life of a twin.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: We are twins, very anxious to have Pen Pals. We've traveled a bit, and participate in all sports, including golf. Won't you Pals take pity on a lonely boy and girl?
BOBBY AND BARBARA.

A man with a family.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a widower, thirty-three years old, with two children, and live in Pennsylvania. Won't some one take pity on me? You men will find me a faithful Pal.
ALFRED.

Another girl who loves pretty clothes.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a fun-loving Canadian girl, twenty-two, with black hair and brown eyes. I'm fond of music and sports, and am greatly interested in new fashions. I can tell about the Canadian resort, Banff, and hope to exchange opinions with my Pals.
MARY LOU.

A wielder of trays and platters.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young married woman of twenty, with straight black hair and blue eyes, a waitress in a café, not lone-

some for friends, but lonesome for Pen Pals. Girls, don't forget

WAITRESS OF ILLINOIS.

For men with the wanderlust.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a sailor, itching to spin yarns of distant ports and strange people. I've sailed from New York to Yokohama and from Singapore to Seattle, and am a Californian, nineteen years old, with brown hair, eyes, and complexion, thanks to a tropic sun. Sailors and landlubbers, write to

BARNACLE BILL.

Face to face with your favorite stars.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young girl of fifteen, living in Chicago. When I visited Hollywood I watched them making pictures, and saw Lilian Roth, Jack Oakie, Buddy Rogers, Greta Garbo, and others. Girls, write to me, and I'll tell about them.

BLOND JOAN.

Compare weights and measures with one who watches the scales.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I have been a widow for several years, and I'm lonely at times. I'm thirty-six years old, not so dreadfully fat, but certainly not thin. Pals, let's get acquainted with one another.

NEW YORK WIDOW.

He knows the thrill of seeing his name in print.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young New York author way down South, getting material for my next book. I need letters from boys who appreciate the unusual and beautiful things in life—real Pals who understand—and I'm hoping I get them.

A LONESOME AUTHOR.

Her work showed her life in the raw.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm anxious to hear from nurses, either graduate or student, as I have been in training and have friends in training now. I'm a girl living at present in Wisconsin, and I sure hope letters will find their way to me.

EX-NURSE.

Life to a schoolgirl in the Philippines.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a Spanish girl living in Manila, and I'd love to have Pen Pals in the States. I'm seventeen years old, brown-eyed, and dark-haired, a lover of

sports and the movies. In June I'll be a senior in high school. Girls, send your letters across the Pacific to

DOLORES OF MANILA.

Too busy to be anything but modern.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of eighteen, a show-card writer during the day, a pianist in a theater orchestra at night. I'm interested in everything modern maidens find alluring. Who's interested in me?

GEORGIA GIRL.

From the Paris of North America.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a Cuban girl, living in Havana, hoping to correspond with Pals in the United States. I'm eighteen years old, with black hair and eyes, and expect to go to New York some day. This is a great winter resort, with flowers blooming all year round, and I'll be glad to tell you girls about it.

HAVANA GIRL.

A young man of talent and purpose.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a six-footer, twenty-three years old, with brown wavy hair and brown eyes. I have traveled here and abroad, and am engaged in an artistic career. I'd like some really interesting Pals, fond of music, art, philosophy, and culture in general. Boys, let's get friendly.

GERARD.

As up to date as Michigan Boulevard.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Who'll help a modern chap acquire real Pen Pals? I'm a college student in Chicago, nineteen years old, with dark, mischievous eyes and patent-leather hair, interested in everything in this modern age. Won't any one, anywhere, write to me?

PATENT-LEATHER KID.

A guardian of disease.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of Spanish and Irish descent, twenty-three years old, with jet-black hair, black eyes, and a few freckles across my nose. I'm a public-health nurse, and live alone with my Eskimo Spitz puppy. Who'll be my friend?

GYPSY OF TENNESSEE.

With magic in her fingers.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm looking for Pals everywhere. I'm a girl of twenty, five feet tall, with black hair and blue eyes. I play the piano in an orchestra, and promise interesting letters to every one. BLACK KEYS.

The Friend In Need

Department

CONDUCTED BY

Laura Alston Brown



HOW much shall we tell our daughters? Have we the right to leave them in ignorance of the actualities of life, a prey to the first handsome cad who is wily enough to appeal to the idealistic romanticism of youth?

Knowledge of evil and its consequences is the first step in protecting virtue. Let us not confuse ignorance with innocence.

Do you think that any intelligent girl who knew what was the object of the strangely obliging unknown who offered her a ride in his car would risk her life for a moment's dubious pleasure? Do you think that any girl who understood the true purpose of courtship and the highly inflammable character of human emotions would deliberately endanger her whole life's happiness by indulging in these petting parties which are only innocent to the ignorant?

Would any girl who knew the horrors which lie at the end of that road embark on one of those delightfully appealing journeys with a fascinating stranger who claims to have loved her at sight; but who, for some vague reason, prefers to run off and marry later instead of courting her in the orthodox fashion?

You mothers who shrink from the task of imprinting such knowledge on the virgin purity of a daughter's mind, think of your obligations. Would you let a blind baby run the streets unwatched? Would you let an unwarned

child approach a man-eating tiger? Of course not. Then why let your daughters face life unwarned and unarmed?

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I wonder if our mothers know how great a crime they commit by keeping us in ignorance of the traps that are set for girls. My mother is a very good woman, highly regarded in our town, one of the most prominent workers among the poor. But she nearly did me a greater wrong than the cruelest woman could hope to do her bitterest enemy.

Can you imagine a girl of sixteen absolutely ignorant of the simplest facts of life? A girl of sixteen still supposed to be satisfied with the fairy story about a stork or a cabbage leaf? I was like that at sixteen, Mrs. Brown; my mother saw to it.

She censored everything I was to read, and, of course, I was never allowed even to look at the posters outside that temple of the devil, the movie palace. Mother was among the leaders in the movement which had the biology and nature-study courses removed from the school courses, because they might put ideas into innocent heads. She never even let me keep a pet dog or cat for fear it would disturb my beautiful ignorance.

Of course, I'd have learned things from the other girls; but mother must have remembered enough of her girlhood to know that. I was taken to school just in time for the bell to ring every day, and some one was always waiting to bring me home. I could visit other girls, but only if mother came along. And I could only have visitors under her watchful eye. I had no sisters or brothers to talk things over with, either.

I suppose she loved me and thought she was doing the right thing. But I was the most pitifully ignorant creature in the world, and it nearly brought me to ruin.

One day in spring, our teacher was unexpectedly called home early, and since it was

so near time for dismissal, they decided not to keep us. It was my first chance alone—mother hadn't come for me yet—and I took it although I knew I'd be punished for it when I got home.

I was so happy with my freedom; the whole world looked gay and good to me. It was easy enough for a handsome stranger to pick me up. He invited me to ride in his car, and since I didn't even know this wasn't the usual thing for girls to do, I gladly stepped in.

He was the first man I had ever talked to, Mrs. Brown. I was never allowed to talk even to the boys I grew up with. And when he began to caress me and to tell me how much he loved me, I didn't know enough to detect the false note in his endearments. I fell wildly in love with him; I was willing to do anything he asked.

He persuaded me to elope with him. Little fool that I was, I didn't even think it strange when he gave me the money to go away by myself and an address in another city to go to. He had some cock-and-bull story about having to drive the car in, and I was too eager to believe him to wonder why I couldn't ride with him. Of course, I know now he was simply playing safe. There is a law which such gentlemen have to reckon with.

His caution was all that saved me. I suppose he didn't realize quite how ignorant I was, or that I would tell my affairs to any stranger who showed enough interest to listen. Mrs. Brown, even to-day I sometimes wake up screaming, my whole body bathed in a cold sweat at the thought of what I might be now if Heaven hadn't directed my confidences to the kind-looking lady who sat next to me on the train. I shall always bless that woman, or rather angel, for she had not only the intelligence to realize what my handsome stranger was and what his interest in me was, but also a conscience which led her to abandon her own affairs for the moment and see me safely home again.

She didn't rest until she saw me in my mother's hands and until she was sure they were more enlightened hands than they had been. I don't know exactly what she said when I was sent from the room, but I know that my mother was a changed woman from that day.

She told me herself, with tears in her eyes, exactly what I had been saved from. She never kept anything back from that day on. I was encouraged to make friends, to see them freely, and to talk everything that puzzled me over with mother.

Mother never allowed herself the luxury, after that, of saying, "I don't know what the younger generation is coming to!" She used to talk the practices of the wild youngsters over with me, show me how foolish they were, and then show me better ways of having fun. I don't suppose it was easy for her to make herself over again, but when she saw her mistake she left no stone unturned to make up for it.

The woman who brought me back is now mother's best friend. They work together in organizations for the dissemination of knowledge among the very young, and their parents, too. I'm twenty-five and married myself now, and if I ever have a daughter she shall know from the very day she begins to wonder and ask questions exactly what the world is like. I shan't take any chances on having a girl of mine fall into the trap. There may not be any one so fine, so humane, so conscientious, on the train she takes.

ALMOST CAUGHT.

Unfortunately, most ignorant youngsters don't get off so easily. It's pitiful to sit through a hearing in the juvenile courts, to realize how few of the youthful delinquents are innately vicious, to see how many are betrayed by those whose part it is to safeguard them, by the very measures which were used to shield them.

Knowledge is the best shield—complete, frank knowledge. If we point out the pitfalls, giving them a knowledge of the snares and traps unscrupulous men may set, show these innocents the consequences of wrongdoing, the actual physical dangers they run into, there will be less juvenile delinquency, fewer brands in the burning.

No mother hesitates to warn a baby against taking candy from strangers or going for a walk with a kind lady or man whom the child doesn't know. Why do we leave our older babies in ignorance of the foul intentions behind the stranger's smile? Aren't they entitled to a warning as well as the younger child?

Not all mothers are so narrow or so prudish. I have a letter here from one who sees clearly and acts intelligently.

I hope this kind of mother will soon be the rule, not the exception. Read this letter and write me your opinion.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am very fortunate in having a splendid husband, a nice home, and one sweet little girl, eight years old. When I read some of the letters you receive from girls of fifteen and sixteen who get into a mix-up with a married man and imagine themselves desperately in love at that age, who go around drinking, smoking, and petting, it makes me feel afraid for my own girl's future.

How terrible it must be for the mothers of these girls. I know it unfair to blame the mothers entirely; but don't you think, Mrs. Brown, that they are somewhat at fault? Isn't there some way to make girls understand the pitfalls of life, and so learn to avoid them? If they get the knowledge in a correct and understanding way, wouldn't it help them to steer clear of such mishaps?

I think that if parents would allow their children to have plenty of friends of both sexes, good, clean boys and girls—and there are still plenty of them—let them entertain their friends in their homes, they would be less inclined to pair off, and thus go astray. When boys and girls reach a certain age it is only natural for them to desire the company of the opposite sex, and if they are denied that company in the home, then, as surely as night follows day, they will seek it elsewhere. And, in my opinion, that is where the danger lies.

What do you think of it, Mrs. Brown? I would like to have your opinion, you give such splendid advice to the people who write to you.

A THOUGHTFUL MOTHER.

Your daughter is very fortunate, my dear, to have so thoughtful and intelligent a mother. I don't think she'll ever follow in the footsteps of these pitiful little fifteen and sixteen-year-old "other women."

If you pursue your avowed intention of being completely frank with her, you'll always have her confidence. It is only the child whose mother's manner makes her feel there is something shameful about the most beautiful and natural side of human nature who hesitates to tell her mother of those experiences concerning which she most needs guidance.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I believe that I am the most curious person in the world. My problem is not a love affair. It is not that I don't get along with my parents and family, for our family has always gotten along just perfectly.

It isn't that I crave clothes my parents aren't able to afford. For, although I admire a lovely dress or a new pair of shoes, I have never in my life begged for things that mother said I could not have.

It's just this, Mrs. Brown: What other girls enjoy, I don't; what they think is funny I think silly. Their idea of a good time is altogether different from mine.

They are all near my age, but they act so young and silly. I'm only eighteen, Mrs. Brown, but I suppose that I act much older. I don't care for a lot of chatter; I'm not very interested in boys. They seem to be silly. I don't enjoy going out with them.

I don't have many friends of either sex. They don't like me because I don't like to do the things that they do, and because I am very plain-spoken. In fact, too plain.

I have only one pal to whom I'd tell anything. Several other friends I like real well. But the rest speak to me, then turn their noses up.

I don't care for parties much, but often I go simply to keep from being entirely excluded from the bunch. I prefer to stay at home with my people and maybe read a good book. I just love to go out with my brothers.

I often want to go away off somewhere and meet new people; people who are older than I, and older than my present circle of friends. I've never been anywhere outside this city that I can remember. So you see, Mrs. Brown, I want to taste of something that I'm not even certain exists.

My idea of a good time is to be alone and free to read or do whatever one wants, and maybe, in the afternoon, to have some one take you out who wouldn't look for a kiss. Although I'm not against petting, for those who like it, I personally don't care for it.

I believe in working for things that you want. I've worked since I was twelve years old, so you see I've been quite independent all my life. I enjoy making my own money and getting what I want.

But still, Mrs. Brown, I feel lonesome most all the time. Sometimes I cry. Sometimes I think that I'm selfish and pity myself too much.

Now, Mrs. Brown, what do you think is the matter with me? What makes me want to cry so much, especially when I read Love

Story or see a good motion picture? Can you tell me?

SALMAGUNDI.

The only trouble with despising human beings and their companionship is that you're likely to find yourself very lonely. You've found that out already, Salmagundi, haven't you?

People are the same the whole world over, child; and if you don't like them in your home town, you won't like them anywhere else. There's no magic about geography which turns commonplace, everyday people into gods and goddesses. Beyond the blue horizon you'll find exactly the same sort of thing that exists at home; and if you want to be happy, you can learn to like it just as easily at home as anywhere else.

There's a time and a place for everything; a time for books and a time for friends. Why give one up for the other? Life isn't that short. You're too busy looking ahead to find the priceless treasures of the moment. The present will never recur, child, while the future is sure to come, no matter what you do or don't do. So enjoy to-day, enjoy the gay, effervescent youth which is running through your veins. Tomorrow's pleasures will come in their own good time; you can't possibly miss them.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Some time ago I read Just Now and Thens' letter, and Banjo's answer aroused all the resentment in me.

I am a young girl very much on the same type as the girls who signed themselves Just Now and Thens. Banjo claims that he hasn't anything against us because we drink, smoke, and neck. He says that he likes to go out with us and play around with us; but when it comes to settling down he picks some baby-faced, innocent-acting clinging vine who is dependent on him for everything. It flatters him to have some weak-minded, frail female following him wherever he goes.

As for me, I have a sweetie who puts me on a pedestal. What does he care if I go out and party around, as long as I am with him? He trusts me implicitly, and I trust him in like manner. As far as being everybody's pal is concerned, I am sure that my sweetie would rather have me that way than

the kind who sits on a davenport all night, won't accept a drink or smoke, and criticizes every one and everything.

Maybe I'm jumping to conclusions, but the majority of girls I have met who "don't indulge" in this or that are regular sticks at a party. And you will usually find, boys, that these babies are the worst kind. They try to make out they are just too good for words; but when it comes right down to it, they are no better than the rest of us.

It seems to me Banjo has the idea that being the life of the party means being everybody's girl. I am sure most girls will agree with me that this isn't necessarily so. The parties that I am in the habit of going to are just gatherings where every one can have a good time, sing and dance, have a few drinks and smokes; but no petting.

The reason Just Now and Thens haven't any sweeties is because the right ones haven't come along yet. If I were a boy, that's just the type I would choose to go with, broad-minded girls. One could have a good time with them, and yet they would be the kind who would be true through thick and thin.

Most girls are envious of the one who can be the life of the party. Just because a girl can be gay, it is no sign she will go out with any one who has a little money. If you would go out with us just to play around, Banjo, how much better are you than we?

Well, boy, don't consider this a bawling out or anything like that—not much. One opinion is just as good as another. I am for you, Just Now and Thens. How about it, Mrs. Brown?

PLAYMATE.

You're right, of course; just because a girl can be gay, it's no reason to suppose she'll go out with absolutely any one who can pay the way. But, my dear, just because a girl smokes and drinks, it's no sign that she can be gay. She may have a mind that is as dull as ditch water, and may be just as poor company as the sticks you describe. And, conversely, just because a girl doesn't drink or smoke or pet, it's no sign that she isn't the best sort of pal to run around with—witty, jolly, kind, and resourceful. Have you ever thought of that, boys?

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Can you help me? The trouble is I'm insane with jealousy.

Johnny and I are hopelessly in love with each other. He comes over to see me four

times a week. If I want to go any place, I call him; and if it's possible, he takes me.

He gives me anything I ask for, and is as good and devoted as any one could be. And still I'm jealous.

It isn't only one person; it's every one. On Saturday nights he goes out with a crowd of boys. Sunday night, when he comes over, I always ask him where he was, whom he was with, what he did, and what time he got in. Terrible, isn't it? But somehow I can't help it.

And then when he has answered all these questions I tell him I don't believe him. I know he's telling the truth, but some evil spirit seems goading me on. I hate it, but somehow I can't seem to help it.

He's never done anything to make me distrust him. He's always been more truthful than I have. He's never gone out with another girl, except after I told him I was through with him.

I asked him to quit drinking, and from then until the time I started to drink he never touched a drop of liquor. When I started drinking, of course, that automatically released him from his promise. He took me over to meet his mother, and when she liked me, Johnny asked me to quit drinking and smoking so she wouldn't have anything against me. I quit drinking, and I'm trying to quit smoking. I think it's only right, after all he's done for me.

I went out with boys for the first eight months after we were engaged, and he forgave me. But when he speaks to a girl I fly into a rage and tell him I hate him. I don't of course; I love him.

Please, Mrs. Brown, tell me what to do. His love can't stand much more of that.

JOHNNY'S GIRL.

Oh, dear me! When will we mortals learn that there is no royal road to self-control. It's hard, plugging, dogged persistence which does the work, and there are no shortcuts.

No one can put a clamp on your tongue. Only you can stop the words you know are unfair and bitter. Remember, it's far better not to speak at all, if necessary, than to say the words which always leave a scar.

Are you going to admit that you are so jellylike you can't control what you're saying? You don't sound like so weak a person. That's an admission of subnormal intelligence, you know.

Probably, what you really mean is that you don't want to take the trouble to control yourself; if some one will do it for you, all well and good. But if not, you haven't the ambition to buckle down and do it yourself.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I'm not in trouble. I just want to give the boys another dose of the medicine Flapper Jackie handed them once. And if they choke a little over it, I won't grieve myself to death.

If you smile at one, he thinks you are flirting with him. And if you don't, he labels you a flat tire. If you let him kiss you, he wishes you were more reserved. But if you don't, he seeks consolation somewhere else.

If you flatter him, he thinks you're silly—and he's probably not so wrong. But if you don't, he's sure you don't understand and appreciate him.

If you talk of love and romance, he jumps to the conclusion that you are aching to marry him.

If you are a good girl, he'll wonder why you are not human. If you are otherwise, he is disgusted. If you smoke, he doesn't want you to. If you don't, he thinks you are a poor scout. If you drink, he thinks you are hard. If you don't, he will get a girl who will. If you go out with other men, he thinks you are fickle. If you don't, he thinks nobody wants you.

I am only seventeen years old, but I've seen enough of boys to know the poor things don't know what they want.

NOBODY'S BABY.

Quite a sweeping indictment. Are you sure you're talking of the same boy?

DEAR MRS. BROWN: For over a year, now, I have been going steady with a young man of twenty. He supports his mother and a younger brother. After we became engaged, a girl he used to run around with came to me and asked me to release him.

She told me a lot of things that I already knew, and also said that he would be happier married to her. In reply I said that evidently he didn't think so, or he would have said so.

After a lapse of four days, while I was preparing for my wedding, I received a telegram saying that perhaps I would be interested in reading some love letters that he had written to his former girl friend. I showed him the message, and he told me to read the letters and burn them.

This girl claimed that he is to blame for getting her in trouble, and she also blames three other men. Of course, I gave Roy the benefit of the doubt.

Yesterday I found out that the young lady had been taken to the insane asylum.

Notice, you young married women, if I hadn't had faith and trusted, what a mess I could have made of three lives. I am only seventeen, but I have lived four years in the past four days. I did right, didn't I?

EVE.

Good for you, Eve. That was showing intelligence. Why should any one put more faith in the unsupported word of a stranger than in that of a beloved and well-known fiancé?

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have been very much interested in the arguments running in your corner about the girl who marries at fifteen or sixteen years of age, has one or two children, and then becomes dissatisfied with her lot. The reason it interests me so much is because I am one of these very young wives. I'll tell you about it, just to show you that all cases are not the same.

My home was one of the unhappiest places for a young girl to be brought up. Dad had the habit of drinking too much, and mother nagged. I graduated from grammar school at the age of eleven and went to work, passing myself off as sixteen. So, you see, I looked much older than I really was.

At the age of fourteen I met the man who is now my husband. I didn't love him; I was too young to know what that meant. But he loved me, and, thinking I was five years older than I was, he didn't hesitate to tell me.

I kept company with him for one solid year, my home becoming more unbearable all the time. My folks took every cent I earned and kicked because I did not earn more. I become very bitter, and when he asked me to marry him I consented, thinking, "That is one way out."

Six months later mother found out we were married. She then told him that I was just sixteen, and he didn't know what to think. She said she was going to have our marriage annulled; but I was going to be a mother, and that changed her mind.

Well, to make a long story short, four years have passed. I am just twenty years old, and I have the responsibilities of a six-room home, two lovely girls, and an adoring husband, whom I love. Was I lucky?

He teaches two evenings a week. On

these evenings I can go wherever I want to. On two evenings he goes to stag parties or boxing matches, another two we spend at home together, and on the remaining one we go to a moving-picture show. So, you see, our week is well planned out.

HAPPY EVER AFTER.

Of course you're lucky, child; but what a chance you took! I don't think you'll want your two little girls to take such risks when they grow up.

Here's an account of two other lucky girls.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I would like to tell Lucky the experience I went through, and see then what she thinks about young love. My chum and I, when in high school, kept company with a couple of nice boys who worked for a living but got good pay. We could easily have been married any time, but both of us girls finished high.

Edith and her beau had kept company since childhood and planned definitely for marriage. Each pay day she and the boy even shopped for things for her hope chest. Everybody used to warn her not to be too sure, but she went right on planning.

I, on the other hand, thought things over more seriously. The boy I went with seemed too content; he never tried to get ahead in work or anything else. So on my graduation day we separated company.

I went to work, as my dad had just died, and Edith was called west by the death of a near relative.

Well, she met another young man. Somehow, her sweetheart here at home found out, or guessed, and, in spite of all warning, followed her to find out if she cared for another. It was the real thing with the boy; but she found it wasn't with her, in spite of all those years. I refrain from telling you what happened to the boy.

Now my old beau is married and happy, I suppose; but still at the job he had when a kid, twenty years ago.

I'm married, too, and although we have had a great disappointment in our lives—no children—we are still happy and glad we're alive.

Am I sorry I didn't marry young? Indeed I'm not. I was twenty-five when I took the plunge.

As for Edith—well, if her boy friend was weak-minded enough to do what he did, he deserved all he got. And she, too, is happy. We were married the same month.

Now what do you say, Lucky? Don't

you think you ought to try some other, if for nothing more than to test both your fidelity and your boy friend's?

EDITH'S CHUM.

Take a leaf from some one else's experience, Lucky. You can't lose anything by playing safe.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I would like your opinion on a subject that my employer and I have discussed in our leisure moments.

I am fully aware of the fact that I am rather young to be presenting my sentiments in regard to love, since I will not be seventeen until next month; but my mind is just a little older for my years than the ordinary girl's, chiefly because I have been an orphan since I was four.

Because of my parentless state, my employer, a very wonderful man, has taken a fatherly interest in me, and from time to time he imparts splendid bits of information and advice about life in general. For this I am extremely grateful, but I disagree with him on one subject.

He declares most emphatically that love comes after, and not before, marriage. He states that a young girl can just as easily school her heart to fall in love with a well-to-do man as with a poor fellow or one in very moderate circumstances.

It is his belief that even if a girl feels that she loves the poor fellow, when she receives the opportunity to marry the well-to-do personage, she could very easily stifle that affection and steer her love over to the gentleman who could shower a fine home, pretty clothes, and other luxuries upon her.

Love in itself, he holds, is ninety per cent desire and ten per cent love of ease.

He also declares that should the girl, even assuming that she is at least twenty-one and the possessor of enough common sense to be indubitably certain about the state of her heart, should she marry the poor fellow whom she is confident she loves, after marriage, when she would find herself tied down to a home that is forever demanding laborious cleaning, to babies who exact every minute of her spare time, plus many of her sleeping hours, and finally a husband who walks in at night attired in soiled working clothes, a husband who may even be lacking in an elementary education—when she would find herself bound to these circumstances day after day, love would "fly out the window," and all that would remain would be an unceasing regret for what was and a hopeless desire for what might have been.

On the other hand, he firmly states, if the girl would be sensible and stifle this nonsensical tommyrot that she calls her love for the inferior fellow, and marry the monied gentleman, after marriage she could without difficulty learn to love the man who showers affection and luxuries on her.

In other words, she would really be *living* with the rich man, and simply *existing* with the other.

My point is entirely different. It is my theory that God planned a mate for each and every one of us, and that when we are certain that we have found our mate we should be ready and willing to marry him, regardless of the fact that he may be penniless.

Of course, I am well aware that it is sensible to look into the future; but when your heart and soul is in a man, aren't you happy working for and with him, Mrs. Brown? Don't you agree that real happiness and stronger love comes after a man and woman have been "through the mill" together? Doesn't trouble and hardship strengthen love after marriage? And isn't it possible that great love may exist before marriage?

Perhaps I am all wrong. If so, I am prepared to be shown the right. Perhaps the love that I feel I could give to a man, no matter what his station in life, that all-powerful, all-sacrificing love I read about, is a myth.

If this be so, and you really sanction my employer's standards, then I shall be amply convinced that my convictions have been the idealistic fancies of a child, and that romance is a fantastic illusion originated by fiction writers.

Until I receive your corroboration and explanation, though, I shall retain my idea of love and deny that it is an exaggerated fantasy entertained in the undeveloped minds of inexperienced young girls. But, judging from the usual character of your discourses, I confess, I expect your ideas to coincide with my own.

INQUIRING.

Neither of you is entirely right, child, and neither completely wrong. That's generally the case when people take opposite sides of a large question, for most truths are many-sided, not to be settled by uncompromising rule of thumb.

One woman, for example, may be quite happy with a man she merely respects and admires; she may even be

incapable of the "all-powerful, all-sacrificing love you read about." There are some women who would find life quite unbearable without comforts and even luxuries, women to whom nothing could make up for poverty or discomfort.

On the other hand, there is her sister who welcomes adversity as an opportunity to work for love, who can do without softness and comfort, who enjoys nothing more than a good fight shoulder to shoulder with the one man.

Which of these is right? Both. There are as many truths about love as there are individuals in the world.

But don't let your employer teach you to look down on the physical side of love. God made us, body as well as soul. It seems blasphemous to be ashamed of His handiwork. The beauty of love lies in its completeness, the rounded satisfaction of heart, mind, and body. No part of love, true love, is less beautiful than the whole when each receives its proper emphasis. It is only when we cheapen the gestures of love by using them merely for the thrill that they become a tawdry, shameful thing.

Here's a letter from another skeptic, less sincere, I'm afraid, than your employer.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I've read a good deal in your department about girls confessing they are ardently in love with either their own husbands, their boy friends, or somebody else's husband. Now, what I want to know is, what is this soul-stirring thing called "love"? Can any one tell me? Does any one truly know? Or is it imaginary? I'm inclined to believe it is.

I can truly say I have never experienced anything like it; that is, from other folks' descriptions.

Mrs. Brown will be glad to solve in these pages problems on which you desire advice. Your letters will be regarded confidentially and signatures will be withheld.

Although Mrs. Brown receives more letters than she can possibly print in the department, she answers all the others by mail. So, lay your problem before her with the knowledge that it will have her full attention.

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Is it just a fever that burns itself out in the course of time?

Please, will some one enlighten me? Personally, I'm inclined to believe there is no such thing! UNBELIEVER.

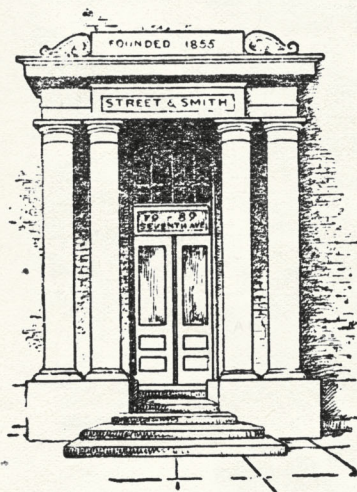
Well, Unbeliever, I've never been on the beach when a tidal wave came along, yet I'm willing to believe there are such things. I've never taken any arsenic, either; but I'm willing to accept some one else's word for it that it would kill me. I've never flown in an airplane, never seen the bottom of the sea from a submarine; but I know that people do fly and they do walk the ocean's bed.

I'm probably a very gullible sort of person, but it has never seemed conclusive proof to me that a thing does not exist simply because it hasn't fallen within my direct experience. I'm willing to think this world is bigger than any individual in it.

+ + +

Just Low: The only way I know to accomplish it is to make it plain that he can't have you without that. His diamonds are worthless as proof of his love if he won't do this for you. Jackie and Jerry: If you see them at your own home several times, they ought to get over their bashfulness with you. Unwanted Daughter: Go to the Civic Protective Association, 17 Lincoln Street. I'm sure they can help you straighten things out.

I want to thank Cured, Little Pal, Boots, Lonesome and Blue, Mary E. D., A Redeemed Traitor, Scotland, Sis of Maine, True-blue, Dearie's Wife, Just Waiting, Experience, Joyce, and My Husband's Kewpie for their letters. I hope you'll all write again some day.



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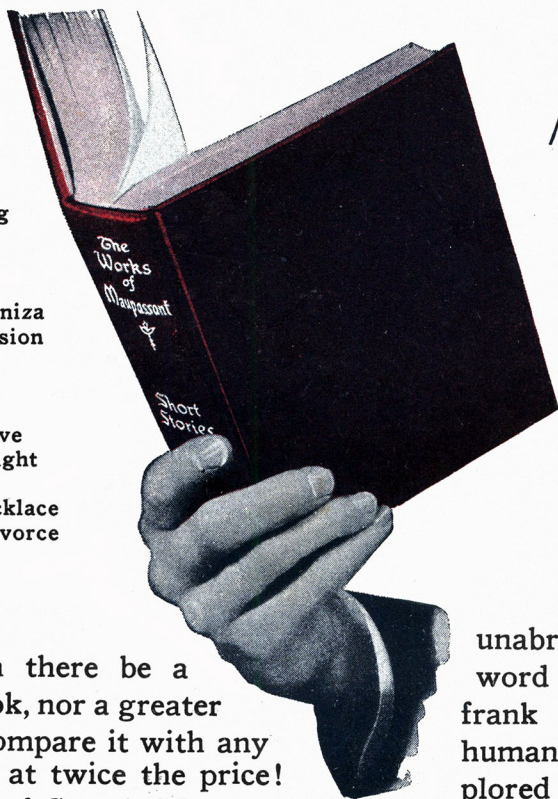
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