

STREET & SMITH'S **LOVE STORY**★

EVERY WEEK

MAGAZINE

MAY 9, 1931

ILLUSTRATED

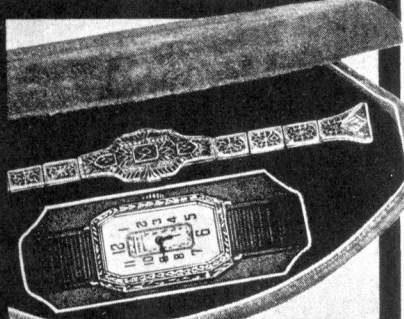
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**GENUINE DIAMONDS
STANDARD WATCHES**
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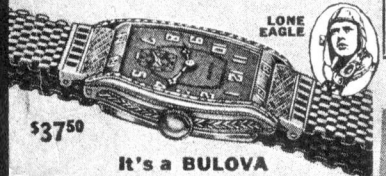
EL 41 . . . The new Deauville Combination. Beautifully engraved rectangular case. Accurate, dependable 15-jewel movement. Pierced flexible link bracelet with beautiful center design, set with 3 Emeralds or Sapphires and silk grosgrain ribbon band—elegant gift case. Only \$2.35 a month.



**Diamond
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Watch**

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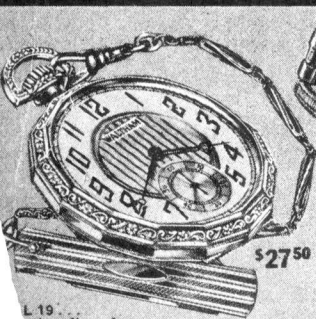
EL 8 . . . Diamond Wrist Watch. 2 genuine diamonds and 8 emeralds or sapphires set in engraved 14K Solid White Gold Case. Guaranteed 15-jewel movement. Pierced flexible "Wristocrat" bracelet with sapphires or emeralds to match. Only \$3.65 a month.



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EL 19 . . . Nationally advertised, tested and regulated 15-jewel Waltham movement; 20-year warranted, engraved White Gold filled, 12 size, thin model, decorative case. White gold filled knife, fine Waltham chain. All complete in fine gift case. Only \$2.65 a month.



WALTHAM

\$22

EL 42 . . . Nationally Advertised Waltham or Elgin; guaranteed accurate and dependable. Handsomely engraved lifetime case. Very latest style "Hollywood" bracelet, with extension opening. Only \$2.10 a month.

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EL 39 . . . "America's Sweetheart." Ultra modern, 18K Solid White Gold engagement ring; finest quality dazzling genuine blue-white diamond in center, 6 matched genuine diamonds on "step-sides." Only \$4.75 a mo.



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FREE
To Adults**

Completely illustrated new catalog of genuine diamonds. Bulova, Elgin, Waltham, Hamilton, Howard Illinois watches; fine jewelry and silverware at special prices. Write now to get your Free Copy.



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Balance 10 MONTHS TO PAY

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EL 12 . . . Dazzling cluster of seven (7) expertly matched genuine blue-white diamonds; hand pierced 18K Solid White Gold, lady's ring. Looks like a \$750 solitaire. Only \$4.75 a month.

\$50

EL 46 . . . Charming, new lace design, 18K Solid White Gold dinner ring, set with 3 perfectly matched genuine blue-white diamonds, 2 French blue sapphires on sides. Only \$4.90 a month.



\$25.75

EL 18 . . . Wedding ring of beautifully hand engraved 18K Solid White Gold set with 7 expertly matched, genuine blue-white diamonds. Only \$2.43 a month.

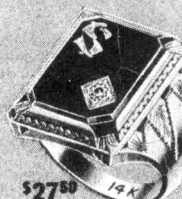
\$50

EL 7 . . . Gentlemen's massive ring, 14K solid green gold with the latest style 18K solid white gold top; fiery, genuine, blue-white diamond. Only \$4.90 a month.



\$25

EL 34 . . . Richly hand engraved 18K Solid White Gold solitaire mounting; fiery, genuine blue-white diamond. Only \$2.40 a month.



\$27.50

EL 22 . . . Gentlemen's massive, hand engraved ring of 14K Solid White Gold. Imported Black Onyx with a genuine fiery diamond or any carved initial or standard emblem desired. Only \$2.65 a month.



\$25

EL 44 . . . Very chic—beautiful hand pierced floral design ring of 18K Solid White Gold, set with genuine Aquamarine or any birthstone; 2 genuine diamonds on sides. Only \$2.40 a month.

ESTABLISHED 1895

**ROYAL
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**ADDRESS DEPT. 52-S
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National Salesmen's Training Assn.
Dept. E-583, N. S. T. A. Bldg.
Chicago, Ill.

Without cost or obligation
you may send me your free
book, "The Key to Master
Salesmanship."

Name

Address

City State

Age Occupation

They Laughed When I Mailed This Coupon

*..But It Brought Me The Book That Showed Me
How to Make \$10,000 a Year!*

AS I walked up to the mail box, Joe nudged Ed and winked broadly for my benefit.

"Sh!" he hissed in a loud stage-whisper. "This is going to be the big turning point in Frank Parker's life! He's writing for a book that tells how to get into salesmanship. Pretty soon he'll be earning so much that he'll make the rest of us look like pikers!"

Ed snickered.

"Won't it be grand!" he grinned. "Now he can quit punching time-clocks and eating 40-cent lunches." He raised his voice. "Drop me a postal sometime when you get out into big business and start making \$10,000 a year, will you, Frank?"

They both laughed uproariously. And probably it did seem like a joke to them that a \$30 a week clerk would have the nerve to think he could get anywhere or make real money without some special "gift" or "pull."

But they laughed too soon. Just yesterday I sat down and wrote to Ed who is still at the shop, dragging along at the same old job. "Dear Ed"—I wrote. "You asked me to send you a card when I 'got into big business and started making \$10,000 a year.' Well, here's your card. Yesterday I was promoted to the job of assistant Sales Manager of the Western Metal Works, at a salary that goes with it. I'll loan you my copy of that book on salesmanship you used to think was such a joke."

Only a book! Just seven ounces of paper and printers' ink—but it contains one of the most vivid and inspiring messages that any ambitious man can read. It reveals the real truth about the art of selling, explains the science of selling in simple terms, and tells exactly how the great sales records of nationally-known star salesmen are achieved. And not only that—it outlines a simple plan that will enable almost any man to master scientific salesmanship without spending a moment on the road—without losing a day or a dollar from his present position.

A Few Weeks—Then Bigger Pay

Reason it out for yourself. Salesmanship offers bigger returns and delivers them quicker than any other line of work under the sun. But many people have subscribed to the foolish notion that a man has to be "born" with some sort of "gift" for salesmanship.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. Just like any other profession, salesmanship is governed by certain fundamental rules and laws—laws which you can master as easily as you learned the alphabet.

Right now an unusual demand for salesmen is being reported. City and traveling sales positions are open in nearly every line all over the country. Last year requests for over 50,000 trained men were received. This employment service is free to both employers and employees, and thousands have secured excellent positions this way.

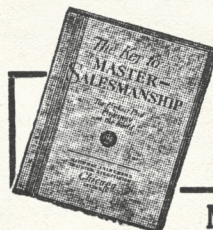
Free to Every Man

See for yourself why "The Key to Master Salesmanship" has been the deciding factor in the careers of so many men who are now making \$10,000 a year. See how Mark Barichievich of San Francisco, Calif., for example, jumped from \$8 a week as dish-washer to \$150 as salesman. Find out how F. B. Englehardt of Chattanooga doubled his pay and commenced earning \$7,000. Learn for yourself the REAL truth about the art of selling! If we were asking \$2 or \$3 a copy you might hesitate. But the book is now FREE. And you do not risk one penny nor incur the slightest obligation. And since it may alter your entire future, it certainly is worth your time to fill out and clip the coupon at the top of this page. Why not do it now!

National Salesmen's Training Association

Dept. E-583

N. S. T. A. Bldg. Chicago, Ill.



**Where Shall
We Send Your
Copy FREE?**

Mail Coupon Above Today



STREET & SMITH'S LOVE STORY MAGAZINE

Title Registered U. S. Patent Office



Yearly Subscription, \$6.00 Six Months, \$3.00 Single Copies, 15 Cents

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Vol. LXXXI

EVERY WEEK

Number 1

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E. Almaz Stout's latest serial, "The Stroke Of Eight," begins in next week's issue. A thrilling story of love and mystery.

Publication issued every week by Street & Smith Publications, Inc., 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y. Ormond G. Smith, President; George C. Smith, Vice President and Treasurer; George C. Smith, Jr., Vice President; Ormond V. Gould, Secretary. Copyright, 1931, by Street & Smith Publications, Inc., New York. Copyright, 1931, by Street & Smith Publications, Inc., Great Britain. Entered as Second-class Matter, April 21, 1921, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. Canadian Subscription, \$7.50. Foreign, \$8.50.

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To facilitate handling, the author should inclose a self-addressed envelope with the requisite postage attached.

STREET & SMITH PUBLICATIONS, INC., 79 7th AVE., NEW YORK, N. Y.

What Will You Be Doing One Year From Today?

Three hundred and sixty-five days from now—what?

Will you still be struggling along in the same old job at the same old salary—worried about the future—never quite able to make both ends meet—standing still while other men go ahead?

One year from today will you still be putting off your start toward success—thrilled with ambition one moment and then cold the next—delaying, waiting, fiddling away the precious hours that will never come again?

Don't do it, man—don't do it. There is no greater tragedy in the world than that of a man who stays in the rut all his life,

when with just a little effort he could bring large success within his grasp.

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Common sense will tell you that it is far better to send in this Success Coupon today than to wait another precious year and then wish you had!

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- ☐ Telephone Work
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Then it performs an invaluable service for its army of readers by selecting for them every month just those pictures which are really worth viewing. The reviews in Picture Play are up to the minute, intelligent, authentic.

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Now all this wealth of entertainment, information, and sheer downright fun of reading will be yours for

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We take this occasion to greet the many old friends who have been with us since the beginning seventeen years ago and to welcome to our pages the host of new friends to whom this announcement may come as a surprise.

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Address.....

Town..... State.....

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By Mary Frances Doner

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75c

75c



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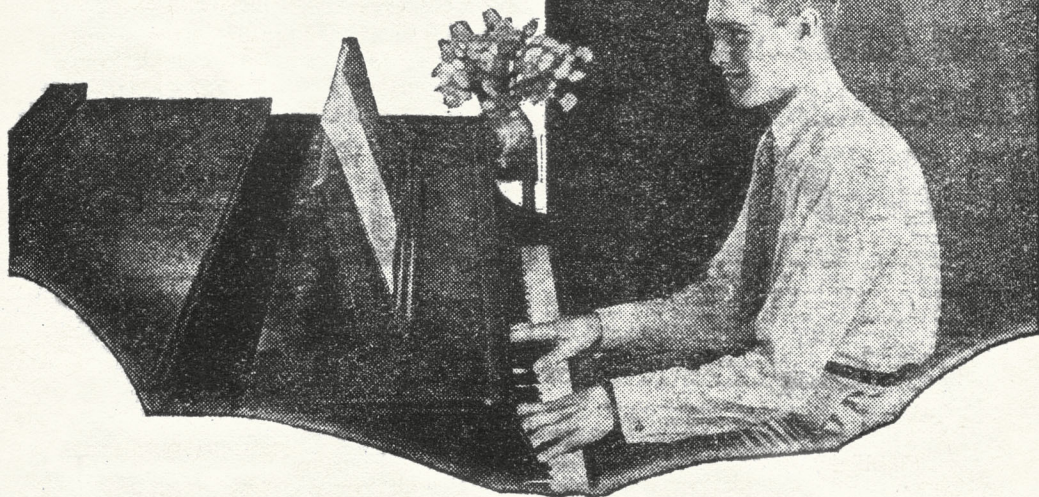
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**\$3,000
in 3 Months**
"I made \$8,000 in 3 months
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nut business!"
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and inflammation—and brings you new,
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\$88 in one Week**

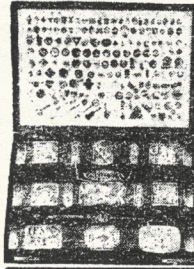
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This volume abounds in truthful illustrations and pictures of scientific interest that one seldom, if ever, finds outside of the highly technical medical books which laymen fail to understand. Every picture is true to life.

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544 Pages of startling Secrets

The 544 pages of personal secrets revealed in this astounding work were not put together and assembled by the authors with any thought of spreading obscenity—no, on the other hand, the authors' sincerest belief that modern eugenics is a present-day necessity—his heart-felt wish to carry the message before young and old so they may know the

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Diseases of children

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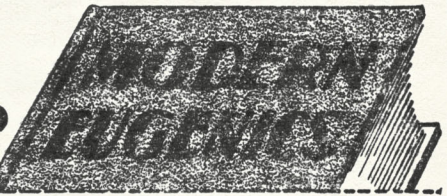
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Your opportunities are limited by your knowledge. Your very future—your fate and destiny are guided through the power of your own actions—Modern Eugenics arms you with sex knowledge so as to be your guiding star for future health and happiness so you will know—

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Cough and Wheeze Soon Left. Trouble Didn't Return.

Sufferers from asthma or bronchial cough will be glad to read this letter from Mrs. L. B. Millstead, 811 Euclid Ave., Kansas City, Mo.:

"I suffered 18 years with asthma. Finally I was so weak and my breathing was so bad I couldn't walk across the room. I started taking Nacor in November, 1928. At once I began to improve, my weight increased, the cough and asthma stopped and I was able to do my housework again. The benefit was lasting, and I can still say (September, 1929) I have no sign of asthma."

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\$15 a Day



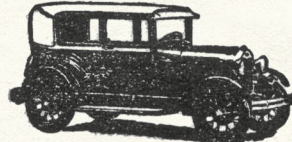
DON'T waste your time with a low-pay job. Make the money you're worth. Mail the coupon and I'll show you the way. I'll give you a chance to make \$10 to \$15 in a day. I'll show you how you can have money to pay your debts . . . to buy new clothes, new furniture . . . to have the things your friends and neighbors enjoy.

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I'll show you how Sol. Korenblit, of New York, made \$110 in a single week working for me. Jos. Peduto, Pennsylvania, gives me only a few hours of his spare time, yet often makes \$25 to \$30 a day. Mrs. Eva McCutchen, of Oklahoma, quit a \$10-a-week office job and cleared \$26.55 the very first day. Of course some of my people make more than others. But these big earnings of a few of my Representatives show the wonderful opportunities that are awaiting you. And today I offer you an even greater proposition than I gave these people. I'll give you a chance to make your time pay you big money—what you yourself say you're worth.

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"I know you think I am the most ungrateful woman in the world for not writing you before this and letting you know how I am getting along after taking your wonderful Steriltone. It has worked wonders with me as my dreams will soon come true and I will be a mother next month. I have had such a wonderful time getting everything ready and there has not been very much room for anything else. I am under our doctor's care and he says he can't see why I should not have a very easy time as my health is in the best of order... Steriltone is wonderful for those who want a baby in their home. My husband and I can hardly wait for the time to come."—Mrs. Wm. E. T., Ill.

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Get your copy today. It tells you where Radio's good jobs are, what they pay, tells you about my course, what others who have taken it are doing and making. Find out what Radio offers you, without the slightest obligation. ACT NOW.

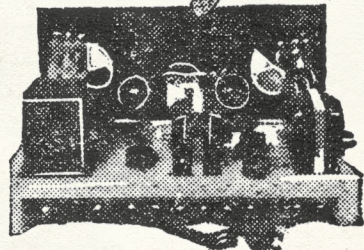
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You can build over 100 circuits with these outfits. You build and experiment with the circuits used in Crosley, Atwater-Kent, Eveready, Majestic, Zenith, and other popular sets. You learn how these sets work, why they work, how to make them work. This makes learning at home easy, fascinating, practical.

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Dancing Partner

By VIVIAN GREY

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"Dancing Partner" might be a fairy story, glamorous, fantastic, unreal, did it not give the sense to the reader that Lolita, glove clerk by day and taxi dancer by night, was the very sort of girl that he might well meet around the next corner.

Lolita, looking up into the handsome eyes of aristocratic Phil Nearing, fell suddenly and hopelessly in love with the owner of those eyes, and from then on her life became complicated. There were those who would bar the gate to her entrance to that world of wealth and fashion through which Phil Nearing walked so confidently. Out of a clear sky the false accusation of theft was made against her. She felt desolate, an outcast, and the cruelty of the world cut deep. And then just as suddenly there came a turn in events that brought the gold of sunshine into the blackness that covered Lolita's soul.

Vivian Grey, shrewd, sympathetic observer of youth, wise interpreter of the modern, you have done it again in this altogether fascinating novel.

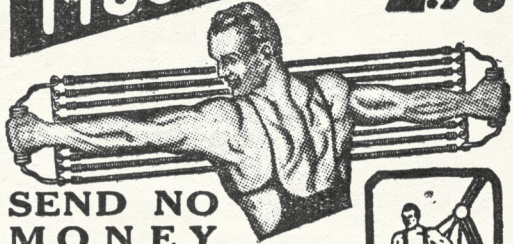
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MAUPASSANT-HUGO-BALZAC-DUMAS
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Captivate and Thrill You with Sexy
Emotional Heart Throbbing Tales of Love



In order to have her revenge on him, "she had him seized, bound, and gagged by four hired ruffians,"—read what this husband did. What would you do if you were the husband? Read what this husband did.

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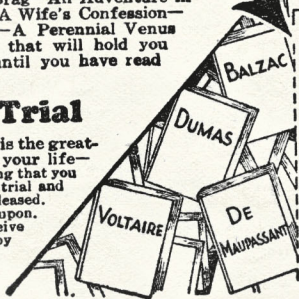
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Barge Of Dreams

By Knight Jessee

THE rain came down in a slanting sheet of water. Streamlets dripped from the corners of the cabin and ran across the deck. Sarna sighed. Days like this made her lonely and blue.

Jan Olsen, her father's helper, came up the short gangway with the litheness of a cat, despite his huge bulk.

"Sarna!" his big voice boomed above the sound of the storm. "Where are you, Sarna?"

"Here—away aft," she answered unwillingly. She had been unable to reach a decision about Jan. He had asked her to marry him—and he was so sweet to her that she hated to refuse. She wished he had stayed away a little while longer, so she could have had more time to think. She was sitting on a coil of rope, her knees hunched even with her chin. Jan strode over and stood looking down at her loveliness.

"I've got something for you, Sarna!" he cried. "Come on down into the

cabin. Hurry! You'll surely go wild over this."

Slowly Sarna left her place by the stern of the barge and followed him down into the stuffiness of the tiny cabin. Jan threw aside his dripping oilskins, and shook himself with the air of a big mastiff who had been out in the wet. He was an enormous fellow, six feet and over, and weighed over two hundred pounds, with not an ounce of superfluous fat on his body. His hair was like spun flax and his eyes were so blue that they sometimes seemed like bits of the sea, transplanted. His Nordic ancestry was strong in him and the call of the sea had been too vital to be ignored. Although two generations of Olsens had lived and died in the Bay Ridge section of Brooklyn before Jan came along.

With the air of a conjurer, Jan put two fashion magazines on the table. Sarna seized them eagerly.

"And here's a love magazine, too," he added.

"And the powder and lipstick?" she asked, her eyes alight; her lips half-parted.

Jan fished around in his pocket. "I did the best I could." He pushed two tiny packages into her hands. "I felt like a fool, too, let me tell you! The clerk says to me: 'For yourself, sir?' I'd a killed her if she hadn't been a girl!"

Sarna giggled. "And the dress? Jan, did you get me a dress?"

He went back to the oilskins and took out a cardboard box that he had carried inside the slicker so that it would remain dry. With a shriek of joy, Sarna tore off the cover and held up a white chiffon dress. Her hands trembled with joy and he could see the pulse flutter in her throat. "Oh!" she cried, holding the dress close to her slender body. "Oh, Jan! It's beautiful. It's heavenly!"

She darted over to him and stood on tiptoe, so her lips brushed his chin in a kiss that was like the soft caress of the wind, it was over so soon.

Jan's big hand stole to his chin. He put his fingers over the place her soft lips had touched so carelessly. His blue eyes looked at her hungrily, but she had forgotten his very existence in the delightful ecstasy of owning so lovely a dress.

"How about——?" he was beginning, when his quick ears caught a sound other than the sighing of the wind and the dismal downpour of the rain. "Here comes your dad! Better put that stuff out of sight!"

With a single motion, Sarna scooped up magazines, dress and cosmetics, and running to the door of her little room, jerked it wide. Under her bunk was a long drawer. She shoved her treasures into that and came hurrying out again, just as Captain Sanderson strode in the tiny cabin.

Sarna and her father looked alike. They both had the same straight black hair and piercing black eyes. But Sarna's expression was sweet and wistful, while the captain's was cold and stern. Sarna's skin was tanned, but soft of texture, while Captain Sanderson's face was like parchment, bronzed by many years' exposure to wind and sun and rain.

"Got the tug ready?" he snapped in a stern voice.

"Didn't you see it alongside?" Jan jerked his head to the right.

"Good! I've bought it—no more renting. No more cruising across the river and back. No more going as far as Sandy Hook and back. No more trips to pick up Long Island produce—and back. No siree!"

Sarna stared at her father. Never had she seen him so excited. Jan stared, too. "But the cargo, sir? And where do we go?"

Captain Sanderson's eyes flashed. "Since when have I had to tell my business to a squarehead on a barge!"

Sarna shrank back. She hated to see her father's fury vent itself on Jan. And she despised Jan for never losing his temper in return. Now Jan shrugged his big shoulders. "If I steer the barge, you'll have to tell me where we are going. That's all."

Captain Sanderson's excitement persisted. "We go to New Orleans. That's where."

"New Orleans!" Sarna and Jan spoke in concert.

Captain Sanderson nodded. "Just that. Or maybe——" He caught himself in the middle of the sentence. "Yes. New Orleans."

"It's pretty far to take a barge. An empty barge," said Jan in a matter-of-fact tone.

"How do you know the barge is going to be empty, squarehead?" thundered the captain. "I'm having coal loaded on right now. You'd hear it, if

you weren't deaf as well as dumb! And you'd better be lending a hand." His tone was ominous. Jan slouched out of the cabin.

The captain turned to his daughter. "You haven't been ashore?"

She shook her head. "Of course not. I've never been ashore in all my life—except when you have taken me." She looked down, lest he see the resentment smoldering in her dark eyes.

"It's better so. Your mother would have amounted to more if she hadn't got to going ashore and——"

"I wish you'd stop talking so mean about my mother!" Sarna broke in, facing him with sudden fury. "That's all I hear, all day long, year in and year out. How awful my mother was, because she ran off with another man and left you. No wonder she did! Living on a dingy old freight barge all her days. A young and pretty girl like her. I don't blame her a bit."

Captain Sanderson caught her arm and twisted it cruelly. "Never let me hear any such talk from you again! Your mother ran off and left you, too. Remember that. And I'm going to keep you from following in her footsteps if I have to kill you. Understand?" He almost flung Sarna from him.

Frightened of her father as she always was, Sarna managed to gasp out; "But I want to be like other girls, father! I want to go to school and wear pretty clothes."

Captain Sanderson's bellow of rage filled the little cabin. "Go to school! What could you be learning in schools that I haven't taught you? Spelling, reading, arithmetic. What else is there to know? And I've taught you to cook and keep house, which is more than any of those foolish girls on shore have learned. All they know how to do is flirt and paint their faces!"

Sarna took her courage in both hands. "But I'm grown up, father! I can't stay on the barge forever."

"You're a child!" snapped Captain Sanderson. Then he turned and left her, slamming the door behind him.

Sarna crept to the sanctuary of her tiny cabin and opened her treasure drawer. Way at the bottom was a faded picture of a beautiful, smiling girl with eyes like stars and a mouth made for kisses. It was Sarna's mother, the girl who had run away from the barge, abandoning her stern husband and her baby girl.

Sarna kissed the picture and talked to the sympathetic picture face. "Oh, I want to be like other girls, mother dear!" she sobbed. "I wouldn't know a single thing about the world outside this barge—if it weren't for the magazines Jan brings me and the things he tells me. Oh, mother, I wish you were here. You could tell me what to do about Jan. He wants me to marry him, so I can get away from this barge and out in the real world. I'll be eighteen in twenty-four days from now. Jan wants me to marry him then. But I don't know whether to or not. I want to love and be loved. I want——" Her voice trailed away into silence. She wasn't quite sure what she did want.

She put the picture carefully away, then drew out the white chiffon dress. Quickly she slipped out of her jersey dress and into the chiffon one. She stood on her bunk so she could see the bottom of the dress in the tiny mirror.

It was a lovely dress—a heavenly dress! Gratitude toward Jan flamed in her heart. Jan had been so good to her always! Ever since he had come aboard the barge when Sarna was ten. Dear, kind, patient Jan.

With a sigh of regret, Sarna got back into her tan jersey and the chiffon creation was tenderly laid away in the treasure drawer.

After putting on her slicker Sarna came back on deck. The heavy rainfall was changing to a heavy fog and Sarna hated fog. She was afraid of it. Aw-

ful things seemed to lurk in the murk of a fog, ready to jump out at one. She peered through the mist at the ghostlike spires of Manhattan. Only once had she been to that island of beautiful clothes and women. Once—out of a lifetime! True her father took her to Brooklyn occasionally, and she had been to Providence several times, but he distrusted Manhattan.

Sarna thought about the lovely women pictured in the magazines Jan brought her. She tried to imagine how the tall buildings looked—seen close. The magazines told about sumptuous hotels and moving-picture places that rivaled the palaces of kings in splendor. Sarna had never been to a movie, nor had she ever seen a play. Jan tried to tell her about some of the things, but his tongue was halting when it came to descriptions, and the pictures he made were not very clear.

The last bit of coal settled down with a rattling sound. The men scrambled off the barge, Captain Sanderson got into the tug and Jan cast off. They were on their way—to New Orleans!

New Orleans! Sarna had been trying to remember where she had heard that name before. Now she knew. New Orleans was where Sarna's mother had abandoned her! Sarna's heart beat madly. How strange for her father to be returning there. What could be calling him back?

Slowly they swept along the sooty, foggy river, past tiny craft of all sorts—past huge ocean liners bound for the ends of the earth. Sarna's lips parted in a smile. New Orleans! She liked the sound of the name. Maybe in New Orleans she would find the answer to her dreams.

Off Sandy Hook, late that night, Sarna imagined she heard a faint cry, coming from the whiteness of that vast expanse of sea. The fog was so dense that all vessels were lying by, waiting

for the murky curtain to lift. Whistles sounded warningly, with a monotonous regularity that was an assault to the ears. Even Sarna, nurtured in this sort of life as she was, could not sleep. The barge was anchored close to shore and the steamers were out some distance. But still their clamor beat upon Sarna's ears. Each ship seemed to be screeching a scared warning to the others.

Sarna got up at length and dressed. She could hear the heavy breathing of her father and Jan in their respective cabins. Neither of them was afflicted with nerves!

Again came that cry, sounding above the more distant noise of the ships' whistles. It sounded like the cry of a man!

Sarna ran up the three steep steps which led to the deck. The cold fog wrapped about her menacingly and she peered about uncertainly, trying to pierce the veil beyond. Again came the cry. She seized one of the myriad lanterns which were hung all about on the barge, doing their best to dispell the menace of the fog, and leaned far over the edge of the barge and looked down into the water.

"Mind throwing me a rope?" came a man's voice out of the mist as unconcernedly as if he were asking for a glass of water.

Sarna caught her breath, and for a moment was too stunned to move. Then she flew to do his bidding. She made fast the rope to the rail and tossed the other end to the man in the water below. He grasped it instantly and Sarna pulled with all her strength.

Presently, his head appeared by the rail and Sarna tugged him onto the deck of the barge. He lay quite still for a moment, as though exhausted, then he moved and muttered: "Thanks, awfully!"

Sarna knelt beside him, putting her lantern down so that it shone across his face. He was very good-looking and

had dark hair that clung sleekly to his wet head. His eyes were a queer gray with stubby black lashes that made them appear much darker than they actually were. He wore a white silk shirt and white flannel trousers and on his feet were thin, rubber-soled shoes.

"Where—where did you come from?" gasped Sarna.

"Must I tell?" He drew long, gasping breaths and sat up, shaking the water out of his ears. "Is it obligatory upon being ship-wrecked, to tell whence one comest?"

"Were you shipwrecked?" Sarna's eyes grew big and round.

He considered for a long moment. "Yes—and no!" he finally said, stagger-

ing to his feet. "No, because the ship is out there somewhere, perfectly hale and hearty and hitting on all eight—or whatever it is a ship hits on. Yes, because I was shipwrecked, because I jumped overboard."

"Jumped overboard?" echoed Sarna. "In all this fog? Why, you might have been killed!"

"I took that chance." His voice sounded grim. "But anything sounded better than going where I was bound for."

He was silent for so long a time that Sarna asked timidly, "Where were you bound for?"

"A visit to Satan!" he answered. "And I'm not joking. I mean that—quite literally."

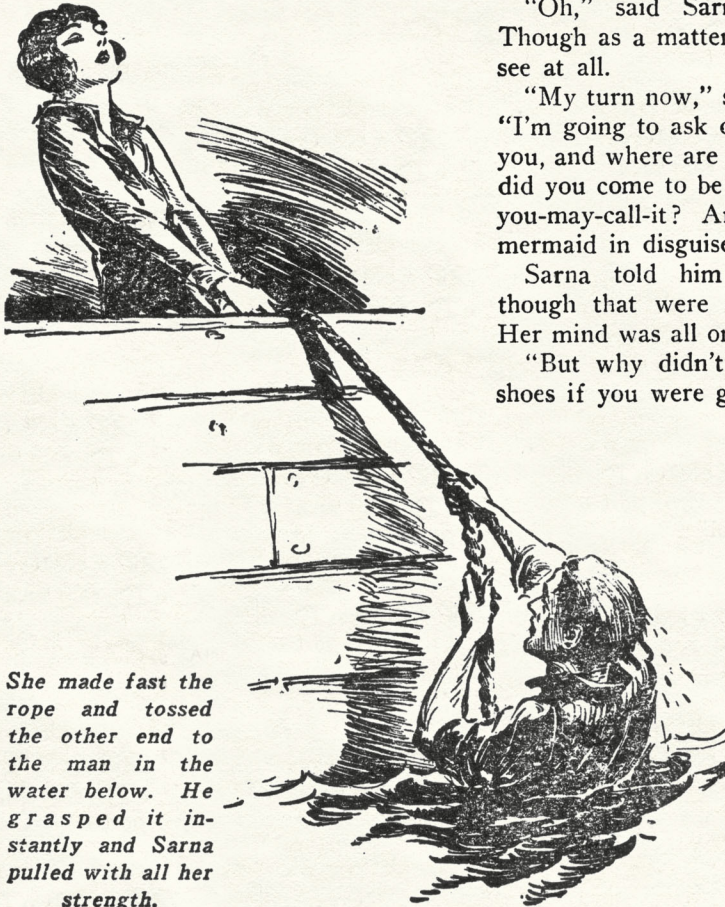
"Oh," said Sarna. "Oh, I see." Though as a matter of fact, she didn't see at all.

"My turn now," said the young man. "I'm going to ask questions. Who are you, and where are you going, and how did you come to be on this—this what-you-may-call-it? Are you, perchance, a mermaid in disguise?"

Sarna told him about herself as though that were of no consequence. Her mind was all on him.

"But why didn't you take off your shoes if you were going to jump overboard?" she persisted.

He leaned against the rail and laughed. "I thought I might go calling—and a pretty sight I'd been, arriving without any shoes! You'd have thrown me right back in again with the fishes, Miss Sarna Sander-son."



She made fast the rope and tossed the other end to the man in the water below. He grasped it instantly and Sarna pulled with all her strength.

Sarna's heart began to thud. His voice was cultured and deep. He had a manner of clipping his words in a way that Sarna found was very charming. And the way he said her name! "I—I wouldn't have thrown you back in," she murmured shyly.

"No? My mistake then." He was as nonchalant about that as about everything else. There was a little silence. The fog drifted around them like smoke and the hoarse shrieks of the whistles sounded loudly in their ears.

"Where's your father?" he asked.

"Asleep." She looked cautiously toward the cabin as she spoke. It would never do to have her father come prowling out to find her in earnest conversation with a strange young man—at six bells!

"Nice, happy-go-lucky chap, your father?"

Sarna hesitated. "He—he's pretty strict."

"Hm-m-m!" The young man sighed. "Well, I've got to get away and you've got to help me! You're my rescuer, so you're responsible for me. Gosh, I'd almost forgotten. It's customary to marry anybody who rescues you, isn't it?"

"I—I don't know." Sarna's voice was more faint than ever.

"Are you married to any one else?"

"Oh, no!" Her heart was beginning to turn somersaults.

"Then we'll have to look that point up in the etiquette book. I'll bet you'll find that it says it's positively the only correct thing for you to do—marry me!"

Sarna wondered if he were going mad. Never had she heard any one talk so.

"But we'll waive that right now. The question before the house is: have you got an extra room where I can bunk?"

"Yes, but——"

"Fine. How do I get there?" he cut in.

"But——"

He caught her hand in his. "It's important that I get away without any one knowing where I've disappeared. Won't you trust me? If you'll let me lie low until to-morrow noon, everything will be all right. Will you do that?"

Sarna trembled. "Yes," she said.

"You're a dear!" Impulsively he stooped and kissed her, quite casually. It was much as he would have patted a younger child on the head. But his kiss changed the whole world for Sarna. Her lips came alive and her whole body quivered.

"Don't—don't make any noise," she whispered, unsteadily.

The young man followed her on tip-toe. She showed him where the cabin was and he disappeared, shutting the door cautiously behind him. She stood quite still and listened. Jan and her father slept on, unconscious of what was happening on the *Sarna Lee*.

At five o'clock the sun came out, chasing the fog away, and the ocean greyhounds went on their way toward the ends of the earth. The *Sarna Lee* lazily proceeded along, hugging the coast. And in the cabin that Pete Tomaso used to have, slept a good-looking man with gray eyes and a clean-cut chin. A supercargo that Captain Sanderson was unaware of; a stripling that Jan could have broken in two with his bare hands. And yet—Sarna had learned love from him in less than half an hour! Or—was it love?

About two the next afternoon, the supercargo strolled up to Captain Sanderson. He wore his wrinkled shirt and flannel trousers with an air of distinction. His hair was quite smooth and he looked as if he must have found a razor somewhere about.

"Hello!" he said carelessly. "Are you the skipper of his barge?"

Captain Sanderson jumped. "What the——"

"Don't swear. There are ladies present!" rebuked the young man.

Captain Sanderson gasped like a fish. They had stopped at a little port to take on water and he had come across from the tug to talk to Jan.

Jan's jaw set in a firm line and his blue eyes flashed. "Where did you come from?" he demanded crisply.

The young man was grining. "Do you know—I'm wondering that very thing. Now where did I come from? I'd think you'd shanghaied me—only I haven't got a dark brown taste in my mouth and there's no bump on my head. In stories, the shanghaied one either has a bump or a dark-brown taste—or both. Never neither!"

Sarna was watching the stranger with adoring, frightened eyes. He was one of those fascinating beings from the outside world. He was one of the marvelous men who talked and dressed and acted like some one in the stories Jan brought her.

"You come from New York?" asked Jan in his quiet way.

"Yes—New York. You can call me Terry. Every one does."

The captain growled something in his throat. He was too furious to speak.

Terry affected not to notice. "I like your boat. I think I'll ship along with you for a while."

"Get off!" said Jan. "Get off!"

Sarna's eyes opened wide. She had never before seen Jan angry and the sight terrified her.

Captain Sanderson turned on Jan. "Since when have you been giving the orders on this barge!" He wheeled toward Terry. "You don't know where we're bound for!" he said.

"And I don't care!" Terry shrugged. "All I want is to be on my way. I have money to pay. If you don't mind bills that are a bit wet." He drew out a thick roll and peeled off a couple of twenty-dollar bills. "Will this do as advance payment?"

Captain Sanderson's eyes dwelt lingeringly on the money. "Fall overboard?" he questioned crisply.

Sarna almost forgot to breathe. Would he tell about meeting her?

"Yes, I fell overboard. A crowd of us were out in a yacht. Fog came up and we were stuck. I got to fooling. Balancing on the rail and so on. We'd all had a bit too much to drink." You know how it is, yourself, sir. Well, I happened to swim for your boat and crawled down into the first empty cabin I found and went to sleep."

He was hurrying over details. Sarna wondered which story was true. This, or the one he had told her the night before.

Jan strode over and stood beside him, almost dwarfing Terry. "I think you are just a tramp," he said firmly. "I think it is much better you get off—right now."

"I can't carry passengers. I have no license to carry passengers." All the time he spoke, Captain Sanderson kept looking at Terry's money.

"That young lady over there!" Terry seemed to discover Sarna for the first time. "Isn't she a passenger?"

"My daughter. And she's signed on as cook."

"Then sign me on as flagpole sitter, or a deck washer, or a potato peeler! I'll give you two hundred dollars for my passage. That's nearly all I happen to have with me."

"We had to let Pete Tomaso go," Captain Sanderson seemingly was thinking aloud. "You could take his place. But you'd have to work, even if you did pay fare."

Jan's eyes blazed. "You're crazy!" he said flatly to the captain. "You're making the biggest mistake of your life. Can't you see that? Why——"

"Go below!" bellowed the captain. "I'll hear no more talk from you on my ship. Go below, I say!"

For an instant, Jan looked as though

he meant to disobey. Then he shut his lips tight, and with a final glance at Sarna, went below.

Terry raised his eyebrows slightly. Sarna blushed for Jan. Why did he act like such a coward—when she knew he was so brave!

"Jan!" bellowed the captain.

"Yes." Jan evidently hadn't gone far. He looked eagerly at the captain. "Shall I put him off?" he asked, looking at Terry.

"No. Fit him out with some of your clothes."

Jan looked down at Terry. "They won't fit him," he said flatly, and turned to go.

"But one can always reef in one's sails!" laughed Terry, and followed Jan below.

Captain Sanderson went over to Sarna. "I need money," he said. "For that reason, I am taking this fellow with us. But you must keep away from him. Do you understand? Those are my orders. You must have nothing to do with him? Don't even talk to him. Understand?"

"Yes, father," answered Sarna docilely enough. But in her heart smoldered the first sparks of mutiny.

Two weeks had gone by. The *Sarna Lee* was rounding the coast of Florida. "You've been to Miami, too?" Sarna was saying enviously. "Terry, you've been just everywhere, haven't you! Tell me again about the lovely ladies on the beach and the big hotels, and——"

Terry shaded his eyes with his up-flung arm. He was lying full length on the dingy deck of the *Sarna Lee*. The sun was low in the heavens and there was a cool breeze which tempered the heat of the late afternoon. Terry's face was bronzed and he looked the picture of contentment as he lolled at Sarna's feet.

"Not one of the ladies anywhere is one half as beautiful as you, Sarna

darling!" he said lazily, catching her hand in his.

Sarna thrilled and her hand trembled in his. "Really? You—you think I'm pretty?" She waited breathlessly for his reply.

"I think you're gorgeous," he returned—a bit too glibly. Suddenly he dropped her hand. "Here comes Jan!" he muttered under his breath. "We're never alone an instant that he doesn't come sneaking around. If he weren't so darned big, I'd like to punch him in the nose!" The next instant he was smiling at Jan. "Well?" he said.

"The captain'll be along in a minute," Jan said, glaring at Terry. "You'd better get away from Sarna before he comes."

"And I suppose you're going to tell him that Sarna and I were—er—chatting?" inquired Terry.

"No." Jan shut his lips over the one word. He looked longingly at Sarna, all his heart in his glance, but she was oblivious to everything. Her shining eyes were bent adoringly on Terry's sleek head and saw nothing else. Jan hesitated. Suddenly he said: "Be careful—you!" to Terry. Then he went toward the tug, without a backward glance.

"Awful wet blanket—that guy!" said Terry disgustedly, the minute Jan was well out of earshot. "He's a dumb bunny."

"Oh, Jan's a dear!" Sarna's loyalty was aroused at once. Somehow, when Terry spoke disparagingly of Jan, she didn't like him at all. "You don't know him as I do. That's all."

"I see enough of him at meal times." Terry yawned and sat up. "He eats with his knife. What a man!"

"But he doesn't really!" argue Sarna. "He eats just as well as you do. But he found out how—how finicky you are at the table and he does that just to see you squirm."

"Let's not waste time talking about

him." Terry got to his feet and dragged Sarna to hers. "Let's talk about—us."

"Us?" repeated Sarna shakily.

Terry put his forefinger under her chin and raised her face so he looked into her eyes. "You've got me!" he said unsteadily. "I didn't think any one could ever rope and tie Terry Gerould. But you've done it. You little witch!" He caught her close and touched his lips to hers. She shrank back, but he kept on kissing her, paying no attention to her protests. The world began to spin about, and it seemed as though there were a dozen fiery suns sinking into the sea. That was what Terry's kiss did to Sarna.

"You're a little witch!" he repeated jerkily, when he released her. "You've got me hypnotized." Something slipped out of his pocket and fell to the deck. Without thinking, Sarna stooped and picked it up, before Terry was aware. It was a small photograph of a gorgeous girl with wavy blond hair. Across the picture was written in a sprawling hand:

To my dearest Terry, with all my love.
RUTH.

Terry snatched it out of her hand. "Where did you get that?" His voice wasn't loving and sweet as it usually was. Instead, it was almost a snarl.

Sarna put her shaking hand to her trembling lips. "I—it fell out of your pocket," she said. Her eyes were clouded with tears. Her heart thumped painfully.

"A fool girl that was crazy about me." Terry took the picture and tore it across twice. Then he tossed the pieces into the sea. "There!" he cried, and took Sarna in his arms again and kissed her until she lay limp in his embrace.

Suddenly Terry was whirled about, and some one's steellike arms were about Sarna's shoulders. "I'd like to kill you!" Jan was saying. "If I ever see

you as much as put a finger on this girl again, I *will* kill you!"

Terry stepped back a couple of paces. "Steady there, old man," he said. "I—I—you don't understand. I was just asking Miss Sarna to be my wife."

"Was he?" Jan looked down into Sarna's face. He was holding her gently as if she were some fragile flower intrusted to his care. Sarna clung to Jan. She felt strangely content and at peace with the world. She didn't understand it at all. In all the years she had known Jan, he had never once taken her in his arms. She relaxed against his shoulder, and looked at Terry and her heart began to thunder tumultuously again. "Did he ask you to marry him?" repeated Jan, shutting his lips firmly together over the last word.

Terry nodded meaningly at Sarna—just the tiniest inclination of his head. But she knew what he meant. "Yes," she gasped.

Big Jan trembled. Gently he put her from him. "And what did you say?" he asked, staring over her head at the glory of the prismic sinking sun.

"She said she would do me the honor of becoming my wife!" said Terry. "So now if the morality squad is quite satisfied, I wonder if you'd mind toddling along, big boy. You're decidedly in the way, you know."

Jan looked at Sarna. His face looked stricken and his eyes were dark with pain. "I—hope you'll be—very happy," he said slowly. Then he turned about and stumbled away.

"You—you shouldn't have told such a fib," faltered Sarna.

"But it wasn't a fib, sweet!" Terry was debonair as usual. "I'm asking you to marry me, now, and you're saying you will."

"But—but—" Sarna couldn't marshal her chaotic thoughts. "I'm not sure I—" she began.

"Of course you are! Certainly my



*"I've been lying awake thinking about you and—and that Terry.
Are—are you sure you love him?"*

rival couldn't be that squarehead who hasn't the brains of a log—and who eats with a knife!" Terry threw back his head and laughed. "And you've told me that you know no other chaps—so— It's all settled. We'll elope and I'll show you all those marvelous hotels and foreign countries, I've been telling you about. And I'll buy you beautiful clothes and make you look exactly like the ladies in the fashion magazines. The ones you admire so much. It'll be fun!"

"Oh!" Sarna clasped her hands. She was seeing in her mind's eye all the things he had described so graphically to her.

"Then it's all settled," smiled Terry. "You meet me on deck to-night after every one's turned in. I heard your father say that we're anchoring here until morning. We'll slip off the barge and go hunt up a minister. Then we'll be off to see the world together—you and I!" He kissed her again. "Don't forget, sweet!"

Before she could reply, he hurried away. She stared after him, her mind still in a whirl. Terry wanted her to marry him. He loved her! He would take her into the world she had dreamed about for so long. And she liked him! Why, she admired Terry! Only——

"Sarna!" She started.

"Yes, father."

"I've something I must say. Something that is not easy." He glanced away. "I have sent Jan over on the tug and Terry is in his cabin." He stopped.

Sarna wasn't half listening. Jan! She would have to leave Jan if she married Terry. Never to see Jan again. Never to have him patiently teach her to tie a sailor's knot in a bit of rope. Never to sit at his feet and listen to his fascinating tales of Norse mythology.

"Sarna! Are you listening to me?" Her father's voice seemingly came from a long way off. With an effort she brought her mind back to the present.

"Yes," she murmured confusedly. "Yes, of course."

"A week before we started on this trip, I—I had word of your mother."

"My mother!" Sarna's head came up with a jerk.

"Yes." He looked away. "Some one who knew her, wrote. It seems—that is—the person wrote that—your mother is in need. Ill and destitute, the letter said."

Sarna gasped.

"I have never forgiven her. Yet I could not let her starve. That is why we are making this trip. I must take money to her. And we have so little."

"Why didn't you send her the money you used to buy the tug?" Sarna asked jerkily. Her mind was whirling excitedly.

"I had to find her. No address was given in the letter, save that she was in New Orleans and would come down to the docks every day to await my ar-

rival." He took out his pipe and filled it. His hand shook. "I don't like your seeing her, but there seems to be no way out!" he flung over his shoulder as he walked away.

Sarna's breath caught in her throat. After all these years she was going to see her mother! Tears filled her eyes. Suddenly she remembered Terry. She couldn't run off with him now—she must stay and see her mother. She breathed a sigh of relief that her problem had been settled for her. Of course Terry would understand. He was the understanding sort.

"You're refusing to marry me, then? Is that it?" Sarna and Terry were whispering on the lee side of the barge. Below, Jan and her father slept. Terry's face was close to hers, and a shaft of moonlight showed her that anger was in his glance. She was suddenly afraid of the expression in his eyes.

"But I must see my mother," she persisted stubbornly.

"I don't get that at all. Didn't she run off and desert you? What do you owe her? Don't be like that, honey!" He jerked at her arm, and his fingers were like iron.

"Jan says maybe father was mistaken or something. About her running off with another man, I mean. Jan says my mother must have been nice, because——" Her voice faltered. Jan had said that her mother must have been sweet and good and fine, because she had bequeathed those qualities to Sarna. But Sarna couldn't very well repeat that.

"Jan! Always Jan. Good heavens, can't you forget that hulk? I'll be thinking you're in love with him!" Terry put his lips to hers in a kiss that ordinarily would have set Sarna's blood to pounding in her veins. But strangely enough, this time, Sarna's lips lay cold under his ardor. She wrenched back out of his embrace.

"Maybe—maybe I've made a mis-

take," she said slowly. "I—you rushed me into this. I've got to have time to think."

"Backing out on me, are you?" He caught her arm with a grasp that hurt. "You can't do that. I won't let you. I've never been crazier about a girl than I am about you. You—you've got me. That's all. I won't let you go."

Sarna began to be frightened. "I, I——" she began.

Terry's eyes narrowed. "Idiot! Don't you know who I am? I'm a revenue officer. I came on board to investigate your father's barge. I'd had word he was running rum. Well, he is! Underneath that coal is liquor. Cases of it. I can put him in jail for years. I can send you and Jan along with him. Or I can marry you and forget the whole business. Now which is it to be?"

Sarna's fingers bit into the palm of her hand. "You mean—that father is—is——"

"A bootlegger," he finished for her. "Sure. Were you so dumb you didn't know that? Well, I've got him right where I want him. Unless you decide to marry me, of course. I wonder how he'd like a nice, long stretch in jail? And Jan along with him! They could both have a good rest."

Sarna was horribly frightened. Her thoughts darted about like frightened mice. "I—I—you seem to be so different to-night," she faltered. "You—you aren't a bit like—like you've been. I feel as though you were a—a stranger."

Terry laughed, and she looked about in terror for fear some one would wake and find her on deck with him. "Maybe I've been having a bit of the rum from one of the cases," he said. "Why not? But that's neither here nor there. Come on, Sarna, let's get going."

"No. I——" She cast about wildly in her mind for something to save her. Suddenly she knew that what she had mistaken for love, had merely been fas-

cination. The glamour of the unknown. She didn't love Terry, and now she was afraid of him. But she couldn't let her father go to jail.

Suddenly Terry stiffened. "Some one's coming!" he whispered in her ear. "Not a word about my being here. Remember what I can do to your father." He slipped around back of the cabin, and he wasn't a minute too soon, for Jan suddenly appeared on deck.

"Sarna!" he called softly. "Sarna, are you here? I thought I heard some one."

Sarna moistened her dry lips. "Here, Jan. I—I couldn't sleep, so I came up on deck for a moment. The—the moon is lovely, isn't it?"

He came close. He was a long time answering. "I couldn't sleep to-night, either," he said. "I've been lying awake thinking about you and—and that Terry. Are—are you sure you love him? Marriage is a serious business, you know, Sarna. You—you should be very sure before you go ahead."

Sarna looked toward the corner of the cabin where she knew Terry was hiding. "I—I'm sure," she whispered.

"I asked you to marry me, Sarna. But I never laid a hand on you to influence you one way or the other. But now I'm not so sure." Jan's hands were sliding down her arms, holding her close. He bent forward and kissed her, and it was as though Sarna's life had been a miserable, incomplete thing before that kiss. But after, she was happy and content. It was the kiss of a sweetheart and a friend all in one.

"I've loved you always, dear," he was saying. "I've waited and waited for you to grow up, so you could learn to love me. And now you have grown up. And that—that snake has stolen you away from me!" Jan's voice shook with fury. "Oh, Sarna darling, I couldn't let you go without a fight. I adore you. I love you more than he could ever

think of loving you. Isn't there any hope for me at all?"

Sarna clasped her hands together to stop their trembling. Now she knew what love really was. It wasn't something dazzling and glittery and light, like the feeling she had had for Terry. No, it was deep and mysterious as the sea. And constant. And true. She loved Jan. She had always loved him. She had grown up, loving him. Only she hadn't known until now—now that it was too late. For Terry was a revenue officer, and would put her father in jail. She drew a deep breath and then plunged ahead.

"I'm sorry, Jan," she said quite clearly. "I like you a lot, and you've been—wonderful to me, all these years. But love is—is something that—that is either there, or it isn't. Love is—is as swift as summer lightning, Jan. I—I don't love you."

There! The lie was said. Her hand stole to her heart as if to still the ache that filled it.

He was silent a long time. "I see," he said at length. "Well, don't grieve over it, Sarna dear." He took her cold little hand in his. "I'll see you to your cabin, dear."

Gladly she went with him. Once inside her own room, she locked the door. For to-night at least, she need not decide. But what could she do? What could she do? She turned and tossed for hours and finally cried herself to sleep.

Terry managed a word with her before breakfast, as she was walking miserably along the deck. "You got rid of our sap in fine order last night!" he grinned, patting her shoulder. "And I've been thinking things over. It might be a good plan to stay on the barge until we reach New Orleans after all. We don't know what will happen and I've come to the conclusion New Orleans might be better at that." He was seemingly thinking aloud. "If you'll

give me your word that you'll marry me then everything will be O. K."

Sarna steadied herself against the rail before she spoke. "I love Jan. I don't love you," she said. "I didn't know until last night, when he kissed me. It—it was different." She looked at him pleadingly. "You wouldn't want to marry me, if I didn't love you, would you?"

"Love?" Terry's ready laugh rippled out. "We have a different definition of love, you and I, little Sarna. I'll teach you to love me all right, once we're married. And you will marry me. Because you're not the sort who would see your dad go to jail when you could keep him out. Now would you?"

"No." Sarna sighed. "I—I'll marry you when we reach New Orleans. I—I give you my word."

The next time Jan went ashore, he brought Sarna a pair of tiny white satin slippers with spike heels and some cobwebby silk stockings. That was his wedding gift, he told her, before he thrust them into her arms and hurried away. Sarna cried over the slippers with their dainty jeweled buckles. She put them away with all the other things Jan had given her. Nothing mattered now.

She grew thinner and thinner as the days slowly wore away. She crept about the barge, a little white shadow of the joyous girl she had been. Jan looked at her with hungry eyes. Even her father noticed the change and asked her what was wrong. But she shook her head. She could not tell him of the misery that filled her heart.

Half sick, she waited while the barge crept on its slow way through the warm gulf waters. Fear coiled like a snake in her heart. Fear for her father; fear of Terry for herself. Never again could Terry seem the carefree lad he had first seemed to her. Not after that night when he had shown his true colors. How could she marry Terry when her whole heart belonged to some one else

—she wondered! Yet she had given her word. Terry hadn't told of her father's rum running and he wouldn't if she kept her word to him.

Great trees spread wide, curving branches almost to the water. Moss hung like gray-green curtains from the trees. The muddy water of the Mississippi crept by the barge—or so it appeared to Sarna, standing at the bow of the boat. She watched the pilot, showing them the way. She looked at the swamps and the dense vegetation, and slowly wiped the perspiration out of her eyes. They were almost to New Orleans.

"Your father's going ashore immediately when we tie up alongside the dock." Terry had a way of coming up close and speaking almost into her very ear. It frightened her. Now she turned to face him. "I heard him telling Jan that he's going to look for your mother, and he won't be saying good-by to you, for fear you'll ask to go along. So then will be our chance to get married."

"But my mother!" Sarna caught at any straw of delay.

"We'll come back just as soon as we're married. Only, you see, your father can't compel you to go back on the barge—once you're married to me. You'll be free."

A month before, Sarna's eyes would have lighted with joy. All she had yearned for then, was to get away from the barge and see the world. Now she knew the meaning of love. She would never be happy away from Jan.

"Yes, yes. Of course," she answered confusedly.

"You aren't backing out on your promise, are you?" demanded Terry. His mouth was smiling, but his eyes weren't. For days Sarna had been avoiding being alone with him, but now, the time had come when she couldn't avoid him any longer. He would be—

her husband. She shrank from the thought.

"A promise is sacred with me," she answered. She freed her hand and leaned back against a big coil of rope to steady herself. The awful finality of her own words made her feel suddenly faint.

"Then suppose you run in and get dolled up a bit, so we can slip off the barge as soon as your father leaves."

Sarna wetted her dry lips. "All right," she answered slowly. She took a long time to dress. First she bathed and brushed her hair till it shone. Then she put on the sheer stockings and the white slippers and the lovely chiffon dress. She wondered what the sparkling things were on the bodice of the dress. Suddenly she realized that they were her tears. The tears she was shedding for Jan and his love and his kindness throughout the years. Jan, dear, dependable, stalwart Jan!

The barge grated to a stop. The tug ceased its asthmatic puffing. Soft, slurring voices came to Sarna's ears in a confused babel of sound. New Orleans! The *Sarna Lee* had completed her long voyage and was being made fast to the dock.

"See to Sarna, will you, Jan?" That was her father. "I've got to get to shore immediately."

"I'll take good care of her, sir!" Jan bellowed in return.

Sarna drew a deep breath. She took a clean handkerchief from its case, and powdered her face again. She twitched down a fold in her skirt, and gave one last brush to her sleek hair. For a moment more, she stared at her lovely reflection with scared eyes, then she opened the door of her cabin, and went out.

Jan saw her when she climbed to the deck, going at a snail's pace. He sprang to meet her. "You look grand!" he said inadequately. "Oh, Sarna!" He was trembling and in his eyes was an

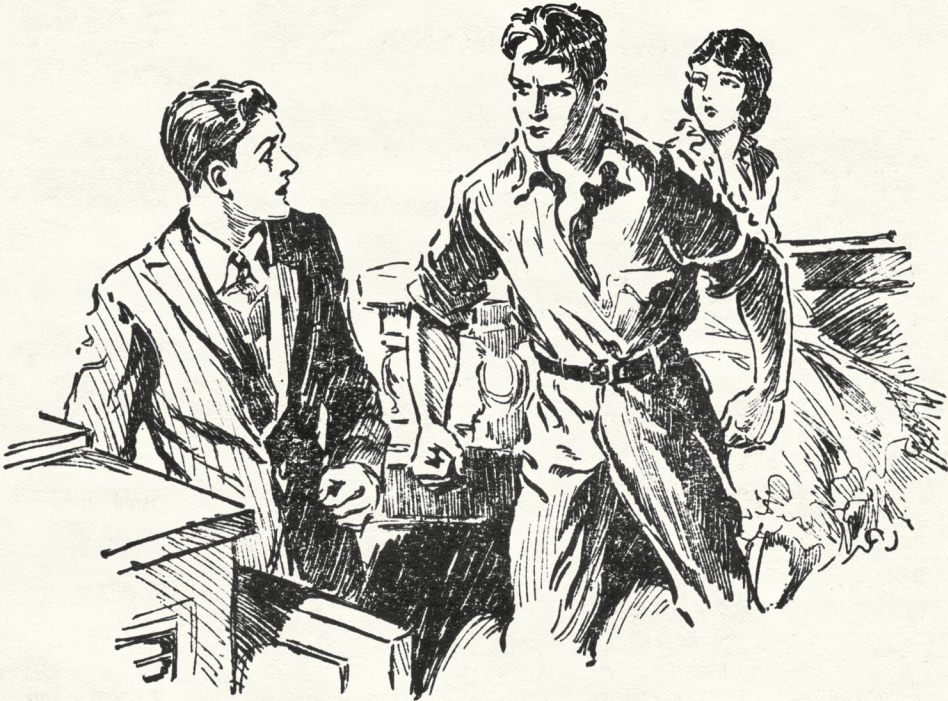
expression that made Sarna sway toward him.

"I'm going to be married," she gasped. "Married to Terry—right now."

Jan took her in his arms. "If you say that you love him, I'll step aside and let you go," he said. "But you've got to look me in the eyes as you say it!"

"Father's—rum running!" she whispered. "Terry's a Federal agent. He'll put you both in jail if I don't marry him."

"What?" Jan's roar brought Terry sauntering out of the cabin. "Him—a prohi! My gosh!" He turned to Terry. "So that's the stall you tried



He advanced threateningly toward Terry. "You dare to try and make her marry you. Just try?"

He cupped his big hand under her chin and lifted her face so he could look deep down into her eyes. "Do you love Terry?" he questioned swiftly.

Sarna's eyes filled with tears. Her mouth trembled, and she tried to answer him, but she couldn't.

"Then you don't love him!" Jan clasped her close and she clung to him. "If you don't love him, why are you marrying him? That's what I want to know!" He put his lips against the sweet softness of her hair.

to pull with Sarna? Well, I know a few things about you, Mr. Terry! You're no more a Federal agent than I am. And if you were, do you think we'd care? We have a cargo of coal—and nothing else! Do you think for one moment that a strait-laced Scotchman like Sanderson would stoop to rum running? Not on your life."

"Come along, Sarna," said Terry. "Like all young moderns, I'm broad-minded, but I do object to seeing my future wife being embraced by some

one who eats with his knife. It annoys me."

"You lied to me!" Sarna's body was rigid.

"Of course. Why not? I fell for you hard, you little witch. And don't forget that you gave me your solemn promise that you'd marry me! That still goes."

"Like fun it does!" Jan set Sarna on a coil of rope, then he advanced threateningly toward Terry. "You dare to try and make her marry you. Just try! I've kept still because I thought she loved you, and I thought maybe you meant to reform. But I've been reading in the newspapers about a slick-fingered crook who grabbed Mrs. Fitz-Badden's diamond necklace, and jumped from the deck of the S. S. *Moriana* with it. He escaped in the fog and they could find no trace of him."

"Oh!" moaned Sarna, staring at Terry with horrified eyes. Terry shrugged and pursed his mouth.

"That's what comes of educating you common people so you can read!" he sneered. Neatly he swung over the side of the barge and began running across the docks, dodging behind boxes and bales of freight as he went.

"Ought we to let him go?" gasped Sarna. "He's a thief!"

Jan held out his arms. "Let somebody else catch him, honey!" he cried joyously.

"I'm busy!" His lips sought Sarna's.

"I adore you!" murmured Sarna. "I have all along. Only I didn't realize. Oh, Jan, I'm so happy!"

"I wonder how your dad will take this." Jan sighed. "I'm fond of him. And he's so against love and marriage and all that. I——"

He stopped in the middle of the sentence. Captain Sanderson was coming aboard the barge, and with him was the loveliest creature Sarna had ever seen. As the person came closer, Sarna saw that she had gray eyes, dreamy under the filmy shadow of her drooping horse-hair hat. Her mouth was sweet; her features almost perfect in their beauty.

Sarna gasped. Surely she must be dreaming. For the lovely lady was like that other lovely lady Sarna knew so well. She was Sarna's picture come to life! Her own mother!

While Sarna and she gazed deep into each other's eyes, Jan turned to Captain Sanderson. "Sarna's mother?" he questioned, just above his breath.

"My wife!" said Captain Sanderson proudly.

But Sarna paid no attention to him, for the lovely lady was holding wide her arms—and Sarna was creeping into their shelter. "Sarna, my baby!" she murmured in a husky whisper. Sarna began to cry, but this time her tears were happy ones.

Captain Sanderson blew his nose. "I've been a fool, Sarna. A stiff-necked old fool. I've given you a lonely girlhood, deprived of your mother, just because of my nonsense. She didn't

elope with any one. That was just my jealous imagination. She went away, because I was so harsh and—and mean, just to teach me a lesson. And then I



took you away and she couldn't find us—either of us, until just lately."

The lovely lady somehow brought Captain Sanderson into the circle of her arms, too. And the three clung, sobbing and laughing together.

"But I thought you said mother needed money, father," put in Sarna, looking at her mother's lovely clothes.

"That was just an excuse to find you, Sarna darling! I knew that his kind heart would make him come to me, if he thought I needed him!" Her mother held out her hand to Captain Sanderson. He carried her fingers to his lips with the gallant gesture of a gentleman of the old school. Sarna hardly dared breathe for fear she might wake and find this all some marvelous dream. It seemed too good to be true.

Presently she slipped out of the magic circle and sought Jan who was whistling a gay little tune and throwing bits of stick into the water. Her father and mother didn't notice her going, so wonderfully happy were they in their reunion.

Jan cuddled her in his arms. "Great world, isn't it, dear?" he asked, as he kissed her eyelids and her warm ruby-red lips.

"Marvelous!" She reached on tiptoe to kiss him. "Just simply heavenly. Isn't this barge lovely?" She surveyed its dingy decks with loving eyes. "A regular love-barge! My barge of dreams!"

"You bet!" said Jan. But his kiss told her more than meager words could ever convey.



NIGHT OF STARS

YOU are as lovely as the curved new moon
Which shines upon us in this quiet place,
Silvering the waters of the long lagoon
And shedding a mystic radiance on your face.

You are as steadfast as the polar star,
As belted with beauty as Orion is,
And though you have shone upon me from afar,
I have dared dream such happiness as this.

Give me your hands! How tender and how small
To hold all that I am, or hope to be,
But I knew my love was given beyond recall
From that first evening when you smiled on me.

The star you praise all other stars above,
Is Venus, our star to-night, the star of love.

ELEANOR ZIMMERMAN.



A Business Girl's Romance

By
Gertrude Schalk

OH, mother, Amy's back!" Jane Maxfield dashed into the living room, waving aloft an engraved sheet of white note paper. "She just got in yesterday, and she's inviting the old gang down to Meadowbrook for a perfectly marvelous house party, and—she wants me, and she's asked Alice and Betty, and——"

Mrs. Maxfield lifted protesting hands. Smilingly, she shook her head at the decidedly un-businesslike conduct of her successful young Jane.

"My dear," she murmured when Jane's excited voice finally died away for lack of breath, "what would your firm think of you if they could see you now?"

Jane grinned reluctantly and sank into a chair, only to jump up again nervously to roam about the room, taking a quick dance step now and then as if the floor were too prosaic to walk on.

"Oh, mums darling, it's such a heavenly treat to see Amy again after all these years!" She hugged herself rapturously. "Good old Amy!" She dropped down on the floor beside her mother, tucked her dark head against the comforting warmth of the older woman's knees, and went on dreamily: "I wonder how she likes being Mrs. Locklare. It's funny to think of Amy's being married. I wonder"—for an instant something very like envy touched her delicate oval face, shone for a brief instant in her wide gray eyes—"if things hadn't happened, would I have been married, too?"

For long moments mother and daughter were silent, both thinking back to those days before the great disaster had thrown them into a turmoil, taken away husband and father and wealth in one fell swoop. In those days Jane Maxfield was called the most fêted deb in years, and her jewels and gowns had been the envy of every single girl in her set.

Yes, that was the Jane Maxfield of those days—eighteen and arrogant, and popular, beautiful and useless.

What a difference now. Like a second person within herself, Jane stood back and surveyed the change that four years had made in her.

She was young and beautiful, but no longer arrogant, bored, useless. Hard work had taken everything away, except her youth and beauty. Four years before, Jane Maxfield, the humble little nobody, had eased her way into the firm of Bradford & Crosby, brokers, as minor clerk. With the aid of night classes in business practice and a determination to rise, Jane had worked to the top so rapidly that now she was

assistant manager of the Weston branch of the firm.

To those who had known only the gay side of Jane, this new Jane's success in business was phenomenal. But to those who knew the possibilities and qualities linked together in that straight young form of hers, Jane's rise was to be expected.

Mrs. Maxfield was proud of her daughter, but she did regret Jane's severing of old ties. She hated to see her going on from day to day without the countless little social affairs that had once made up both their lives. Jane's particular gang, composed of Weston's wealthiest youngsters, had all rallied around loyally when the big crash had come, refusing at first to accept her withdrawal from the magic circle.

But Jane had been adamant. At first with only the thought of hiding from their sympathy and pity, she had kept away from them. Then after work had dug itself into her mind, she had been too busy to bother.

Now after four years she was thinking with joyous expectation of the coming visit with Amy, her closest friend. Amy had been in Europe at the time of Mr. Maxfield's death, but her cable offering assistance had come as soon as the news had reached her. Stanchly Jane had cabled back:

Everything fine. No help needed.

And from then on, during the years when Amy married in England and stayed on and on, none of the letters that passed between them had ever mentioned anything like difficulties. Amy took it for granted that Mr. Maxfield had left them reasonably well off, and Jane never bothered to set her straight.

And now for the first time in ages, Amy was back and ready to open Meadowbrook, her parents' old home in the country, for one of her famous house parties.

Jane glowed with excitement. It was

just as if she had been locked up in a closet for four long years, and now the jailer was ready to open the door. To see the gang again, Betty, Alice, Marie! It would even be good to see Lydia again. Lydia had always coveted Jane's hold over the gang.

Lydia's jewels and gowns and parties had always been just a bit below the richness of Jane's. Lydia's golden beauty couldn't dim the fascinating charm of Jane's interesting pallor; Lydia's golden hair shone brazenly bold beside the dusky midnight sheen of Jane's straight, long tresses.

There was something about Jane.

She could have been married time and time again, both during her coming-out year and the years that followed. Being a working girl hadn't hidden her beauty from the masculine portion of the world. Men still fell enraptured over the naturally red lips and wide, gray eyes fringed with long lashes.

But unfortunately for her admirers, Jane was already in love.

It was a deep, dark secret that she kept locked away in her heart. Only when she was alone in her room with the door locked, did Jane take out her love and revel in it.

Now with her head tucked against her mother's knee, sitting quietly in the soothing stillness of the cozy living room, Jane dared to dream, and all because of one short line in Amy's letter.

It read:

And Clifton Bradford may run down.

That was all. But it was enough to send the warm blood rushing through Jane's healthily pale cheeks, to make her eyes shine like rain-washed agates, to make the little pulse at the base of her throat hammer eagerly.

Clifton Bradford, junior partner of Bradford & Crosby! Clifton Bradford, whom she had never seen, but whom she loved with an intensity that shook her very soul!

Sometimes when she took out the private little book with its collection of newspaper clippings and pictures that were all she had of this tall, slim, golden young man, Jane wanted to shake herself. It seemed so utterly silly to love a man she had never seen, to love him so that even a very poor newspaper picture had the power to thrill her, to make her quiver and grow warm inside.

For two years Jane had loved him. For two years she had collected pictures of him—Clifton Bradford on his polo pony or lolling on the sands of Florida or arriving on one of the great transatlantic liners. Those and a dozen more made up her collection, and from each of them the man's clear light eyes seemed to look right through her. His eyes might be blue or gray or even green. His handsome head was topped with shaggy light hair that never would stay put, and somehow Jane knew that wide curved mouth of his was made for laughter—and kisses! Warm, laughing lips moving against her own, whispering softly such sweet words—

Jane sighed, and suddenly the dream was broken.

Mrs. Maxfield began to talk about clothes.

"You'll need at least three new dresses, dear," she said. "You can afford them, you know."

And Jane, with just the shred of dreams still hanging in the background of her misty gray eyes, nodded.

"New dresses—one must be long and white and cobwebby." In her mind's eyes Jane could see herself floating down Amy's beautiful wide staircase to meet Clifton Bradford. Clad in the long, filmy gown, her hair would be done in a loose knot, low on her slim, white neck; her lips would be glowing red.

"If only he'll like me a little!" she whispered to her dreams.

The next day Jane Maxfield, assistant manager of Bradford & Crosby, took

leave of absence for the first time in four years. With firm fingers she locked her desk. Then calmly, with no sign of her inward excitement, Jane went shopping.

And the results of that day's shopping were piled carefully two days later into the rumble seat of her small roadster for the drive to Meadowbrook. Mrs. Maxfield stood aside and watched her daughter happily stacking boxes and bags into the car.

"My, you look as if you were going away for a month or two," she remarked wistfully. Sometimes Mrs. Maxfield missed her own gay parties.

Jane laughed gayly as she tucked the last bag into place.

"Oh, darling, it's such a relief to be chasing off somewhere with scads of frilly clothes! I've worn business dresses for so long—not that I don't like them," she added quickly. "Only it's nice once in a while to take a vacation from them. I'm going to be just the frilliest, fluffiest know-nothing—"

Then she was gone, gliding swiftly down the street toward the open road and the country.

Driving through the last dim golden light of the end of the day, Jane gave her thoughts over to the coming visit. After four years she would step back into the picture as if nothing had ever happened. She would slip back into the gang, be just as silly, as giddy as she had been before she went to work. And perhaps she would meet the man she loved!

It was like riding on clouds to think of him. It was as if the little car became a thing of mist and clouds that lifted her high above the road and carried her along lightly. She was so happy with the mere thought of him that it made her heart hurt.

And then in a ridiculously short time she was at Meadowbrook, driving up the well-remembered winding driveway to the broad steps.

Of course Amy would be waiting for her, hovering about like a watchful old lady, one eye on the road, the other on her guests indoors. Jane ran into her arms with just a bit of a sob. It was so good to see her again.

Then they both began to talk at once about England, about the gang, about Amy's husband, who was a perfect darling, about everything, except Jane and Jane's business.

"And, my dear"—Amy led her into the house and up the stairs to her room—"just imagine, that perfectly adorable man, Clifton Bradford, is actually here! When half the women in America are fighting for him, and all the girls and their mothers in England have their eye on him, I land him for my party!"

Jane's heart gave a great leap upward; her feet faltered on the step.

"You mean he's here?" With lips suddenly dry, she faced Amy. "He's here—in this house—now?"

"Actually!" Amy laughed. "And I've set my heart on capturing him for you. Though that little cat of a Lydia—I don't know why I invited her."

"In this house!" Jane didn't hear any more than Amy's "Actually!" It was too marvelous to think that after two years of loving from afar, she was really under the same roof with him now.

She was still half dazed with mingled feelings when Amy finally left her to dress for dinner. Mechanically, Jane went about the dainty rites attendant on making a beautiful girl more beautiful. Amy's own maid looked out for her efficiently, leaving Jane's thoughts to wander as they willed. And wander they did—to a certain young man with tousled light hair.

When the maid finally dropped the white dress over her head, Jane came to for a moment, just long enough to gaze starry-eyed at her reflection there in the long glass. She was slim, tall, glowing, with lips just a bit tremulous,



Amy's maid looked out for her, leaving Jane's thoughts to wander as they willed. And wander they did—to a certain young man with tousled light hair.

with eyes just a bit heady and alluring, with shoulders gleaming like polished marble.

She put a touch of perfume behind her ears, on her hair. Her hair, parted evenly in the middle, framed her face with soft rich darkness. Jane's hands

trembled just the least bit as she patted a fold of the gown into place.

"Oh, please let him like me a little!" she whispered.

And then it was time to go down to dinner. Conscious of her beauty, humble in it, loving it because Clifton might

be attracted, Jane moved down the hall to the stairway.

At the head of the stairs a small balcony jutted out over the ballroom below. It was a favorite seclusion for couples, the door hidden by heavy portières, the small sofa cozily placed so that any one sitting there could see the revelers below and yet not be seen himself.

Just for a moment Jane parted the curtains and stepped onto the balcony. She was trying to recapture the emotions of the girl who used to stand there, looking coolly down on the dancers, arrogant head tilted. But those four years made it hard to go back. The gap could not be bridged so easily. The Jane of to-day felt so different—so humble, so warm of heart.

Voices drifted up from the door below. The door leading into the ballroom from the hall was just below Jane. Without a thought of curiosity, Jane bent over the railing, ready to drop a gay hello to whoever was approaching.

And then suddenly her breath caught in her throat, stifling her, sending queer thrills down her spine.

Clifton Bradford sauntered into the ballroom to stand in plain sight!

At first all Jane could see was his head, smoothed down now into a semblance of order by much hard brushing, then his face, square-jawed, with its laughing mouth; then his whole slim length, clad in well-fitting evening clothes.

Jane found herself clutching the railing with tense fingers. She held her breath until it hurt. At last, after two long years, she had seen him!

She sighed softly, and only then did she realize that he wasn't alone. Amy was beside him, and they were talking and laughing together.

"This is the ballroom," she was saying.

"Perfectly great place," Clifton said, looking about appreciatively. "I only

hope you have plenty of good dancers for me to prance about with. I haven't stepped on any one's feet for ages," he grinned boyishly.

"My dear boy, there are loads of girls here," Amy twinkled at him. "I invited at least half a dozen extras when you said you'd be here."

"Half a dozen! That ought to keep me busy," he laughed heartily.

"It will," Amy assured him. "Though really, I've picked out just the girl for you—my best friend."

Clifton seemed to shy away.

"Ah-hah, getting to be a matchmaker already!" He shook his finger at her. "But you can't rope me in, young lady—not with any of these new women."

Amy was puzzled. "What on earth do you mean by that?" she demanded.

"I mean the modern young woman who goes in strenuously for all sports and business." Clifton emphasized his words with a wagging finger. "These girls who go into business for fun—*grrrrrr*!" He actually growled!

Then Amy laughed. "Well, that's a riot! But you needn't worry about any of the gang—especially Jane. None of them knows how to lift a finger without help. Not one of them is ambitious enough even to think about working, and as for going into business, I don't believe they'd know what you meant if you spelled out the word for them!"

"That's just the kind of girl I want to meet," Clifton nodded. "Honestly, I'm fed up with these clever women. Everywhere I go I meet 'em—store owners, managers, builders, bricklayers, everything under the sun, but womanly women! I like a woman who'll let the man be the big bug in the family—like you." He smiled down into Amy's pretty face.

"I admit I'm dumb," she said gayly. "But my darling husband likes it."

"There! Just what I say." They began to move out of the room. "A man appreciates a woman like you."

They were gone. Jane straightened up with a queer little sigh, almost a moan of pain. Unconsciously she had been bending over, lips parted, drinking in every word, unaware that she had been eavesdropping. And suddenly the light had gone out of everything. He didn't want to meet a business woman! He wanted to meet the all-feminine know-nothings, who didn't know a bond from a coupon, who'd cuddle against a man's shoulder and purr, the kind of girl she had been four years before!

Poor Amy had fibbed without knowing it when she had told him that her Jane was a simple-minded idiot, or words to that effect. Jane's lips twisted in a wry smile. Looking back at her dumbness of those past years she had to smile. She had had a gorgeous time, but even for the sake of a gorgeous time would she go back and be the same useless person again?

Even to win the love of Clifton Bradford?

Her heart told her that she could never love any one else, yet Jane shook her head slowly. Her new independence, her quick-moving brain, the knowledge at her finger tips—they were all priceless. But her heart cried out at the unfairness of Clifton. If he could meet her without knowing she was a business girl, wouldn't her natural sweetness convince him that just because a girl worked it didn't necessarily mean that she was a cold, hard stone image?

Suddenly Jane's eyes brightened. Amy didn't know she worked. Most of the gang did, but it had been so long since she had started in, they probably wouldn't remember enough to talk about it.

Her eyes sparkled. If it was only a question of their talking about it, that wouldn't matter. The gang had never been noted for its brilliant conversation. They lived from one party to another. Their talk was usually no more than the gossip of the last dance or dinner.

If Amy didn't mention the past, and the gang didn't, Jane had a chance!

Turning abruptly, Jane parted the curtains and stepped into the hall. Then she stopped with surprise. A girl was tiptoeing down the hall not more than a few feet from the door of the balcony, a girl who might have been listening.

"Lydia!" Unconsciously, Jane spoke her name, and, with a startled jerk, the girl turned. For just a moment, Jane wondered at the queer expression on Lydia's face. Then, with a squeal, the blond girl ran forward to envelop Jane in a hug.

"Oh, Jane darling!" she gushed. "It's just great seeing you again. The great big business woman herself!"

She stood off and stared at Jane, noting each detail of her costume. And Jane had the impression that she was looking for flaws. But, seeing none, Lydia grudgingly nodded approval.

"Hm-m-m, not so bad for a poor working girl," she laughed sharply.

Jane bit her lip. Lydia would harp on that working-girl stuff. Trust her to play it up just when Jane wanted it kept quiet!

"Listen, Lydia, cut that out, will you?" Jane lowered her voice. "Be a good scout and just forget I'm one of those things."

Jane wasn't aware of the note of pleading that crept into her voice. But Lydia heard it, and her eyes narrowed. She had heard everything Clifton said and suddenly, putting two and two together, Lydia knew that Jane was interested in Clifton Bradford, whom she herself had tried to win time and time again, unsuccessfully.

But Jane didn't know all that. All she knew was sudden satisfaction when Lydia said with seeming frankness:

"Why, sure, old thing, the working-girl stunt is off."

A few minutes later Jane came slowly down the stairs to where the rest of the house party was assembled. Just as she

had dreamed, Clifton Bradford stood in the hall, his handsome head thrown back, laughing at some sally of Amy's.

And in the act he paused. He had caught sight of Jane, slim and white, descending the stairs, one slender hand barely touching the banister, one tiny white slipper peeping out from under the cloudy mass of delicate dress material.

Motionless, speechless, he watched her approach. He appeared dazed by the sudden beautiful apparition that moved so serenely toward him.

Jane saw him start confusedly when Amy hailed her, saw him jerk his head nervously, fumble with his lapel. She saw all that without seeming to look, a trick girls have. And her heart thumped so that she prayed he wouldn't hear it!

It was an effort to move quietly, slowly toward Amy, while he stood there dumbly awe-stricken, watching her with enchanted eyes. Suddenly Jane knew that delicious terror that tells one to flee from such delight as love's eyes and lips. She wanted to turn and run back to her room and hide her glowing face. But somehow she went on to stand at last beside Amy, the dainty white gown fluttering a bit with her uneven breaths.

"Ah, darling, here you are!" Amy appeared not to notice anything out of the ordinary. "And here's the little boy whose scalp I want you to annex."

Jane lifted her demure eyes to his. "His eyes are blue!" was her first thought. "Deep blue like the skies of southern Italy on a warm summer day!" Jane caught her breath in a little sigh. She had hoped they'd be blue.

Magically her heart subsided until it beat along very sedately. Perhaps it was the patent bewilderment shining so clearly in Clifton's eyes that calmed her, or perhaps it was just her sudden feeling of power.

And then Amy giggled.

"Has the cat stolen two tongues?"

Clifton started, flushed deeply under his coat of tan.

"Sorry," he muttered boyishly. "My manners have suddenly deserted me."

He bowed over Jane's hand. And Jane, feeling the quiver that ran through his fingers, blushed, too, and lowered her lashes. There was a queer light-headed feeling stealing over her, a feeling of indescribable sweetness that was new and fascinating. And it was all because of a certain look in Clifton's eyes, a certain quiver in his finger tips.

"How do you do?" she said softly.

He was breathing deeply as though he had been running. Jane could almost feel his warm breath on her cheeks.

"Beautiful!" he murmured, and then:

"Oh, Cliff darling!" It was Lydia forcing her eager shoulders between them, cooing delightedly up into the man's instantly annoyed face. "When did you arrive? Why didn't you let me know you were coming? I'd have brought you down in my car. Are you taking me in to dinner?"

There was nothing for Jane to do but walk gracefully away. And she did, with a feeling of triumph. She was aware of the anxious gaze that followed her slow progress across the hall, aware of two blue eyes that forgot to stop looking at her even though Lydia's golden head tried its best to obscure Jane's retreating figure.

Going into dinner later, Jane was conscious of Clifton's eager gaze seeking hers. She kept her eyes demurely down, though with a sort of instinctive knowledge that only made her more interesting.

She chuckled to herself, thinking back four years. How the Jane of those days would have rushed Clifton! That younger Jane would never have let Lydia take him away so calmly. That Jane would have grabbed his other arm and hung on, too. But this Jane hung back, realizing that nothing lures men so much as indifference, reluctance.

Dinner was a leisurely affair which Jane enjoyed to the utmost.

Clifton was seated directly opposite her, with Lydia on his left. And every time Jane raised her head she found his eyes fixed on hers. And every time Clifton looked at Jane, Lydia's eyes grew stormier, and her overreddened lips tightened ever so little.

Jane didn't notice Lydia. She was too busy enjoying the sensation of being courted by Clifton's eyes. For that was just what he was doing. Those blue eyes were flashing signals every time she looked up.

It was thrilling—soul-satisfyingly thrilling, until suddenly Lydia spoke, her shrill voice clearly heard all over the room.

"Oh, Cliff darling, do tell me why you hate business women so. You know, those masculine women you spoke of." She flashed a swift veiled glance of triumph at Jane.

Clifton started and laughed, looking down at Lydia, coolly amused.

"For Pete's sake, what made you think of my pet hate?" he asked.

Across the table Jane was deathly still, her lips cold. In a flash that warm feeling of triumph, of power had gone, leaving her cold and forlorn, indescribably frightened.

Lydia was giggling now, her shoulder against Clifton's.

"Oh, I don't know. I think I was just wondering if you'd still love me if I went into business," she said impudently, pressing closer.

Everybody laughed loudly and jeered at her good-naturedly as Clifton firmly put her away from him with decisive hands.

He laughed shortly, his eyes seeking Jane's swiftly with an apology shining through the annoyance. His eyes said: "I'm sorry this happened. Of course you know this is all a silly joke. As it I could ever care for any one but you!"

That was what his ardent eyes said, while his lips told another tale.

"These modern girls annoy me. They're so officious, so clever!"

Jane heard only the beginning and that through a filmy haze. It was as if her ears were stuffed with cotton. She wasn't aware of the curious amused glances cast at her by the members of the gang who remembered her position in the business world. All she saw was two blue eyes across the table.

Some one farther down the table was challenging Clifton's statement.

"What about your firm? We understand that you have several women connected with it."

Clifton frowned, his eyes cold.

"I know," he said shortly. "There are a few young women in the various branch offices, but I have never allowed one to get into the main office."

"But how did they get into the branches if you dislike them so?" the questioner went on persistently.

"They got in through the other directors," Clifton answered dryly. "Unfortunately I am only one of the firm. Understand, I don't say that these women don't do their work well. They do. And they may be all right, but I don't want to meet 'em!"

Jane's fingers were icy. Her breath came unevenly from between parched lips. Across those few feet of linen-covered table he faced her and drove each word like a hot arrow into her brain.

"I like a real woman, a womanly woman," he went on, his voice softening unconsciously, his eyes seeking the still white face across the table from him. "I like a woman who is content to stay in her own home and let the man do the work."

He was so emphatic, so bitter! A tiny hammer began to beat against Jane's heart.

From her end of the table, Amy was taking it all in. Then abruptly she spoke up, sighing in mock weariness.



Jane found herself clutching the railing with tense fingers. She held her breath until it hurt. At last, after two long years, she had seen him!

"My dear boy"—she raised her brows at Clifton—"you are so hopelessly old-fashioned. Where on earth did you get such weird ideas?"

"From my dad." Clifton squared his jaw doggedly. "And my dad was usually right!"

"Maybe he was," Amy giggled. "We won't quarrel about it. Personally I

don't think much of the forward creatures myself."

She couldn't realize what she was doing to Jane.

"These modern girls are so wearying," she went on. "Going in for such violent things as flying! And actual work, hard work! I much prefer girls like us who toil not."

"So do I," Lydia chimed in sweetly. "Honestly, I wouldn't know what to do with a job."

Some of the guests were beginning to look rather uneasily at Jane. They wondered what it was all about. Finally taking it as a fine bit of teasing on Amy's part, they, too, joined in and put in a word or two about the business girl, under the impression that Jane was being kidded.

And to Jane it was a horrible, stuffy nightmare with minutes that seemed hours long. To think Amy could hurt her so, could side with Lydia and Clifton against her! She forgot that Amy didn't know she worked.

Every minute it got worse. A leaden lump throbbed and burned where Jane's heart had been. Each breath was sheer torture. Each moment she expected to hear Lydia say: "Ask Jane; she's a business girl!" But Lydia didn't. She just sat back and grinned maliciously.

And just as it seemed it would never end, Clifton leaned forward and spoke directly to her.

"What have you to say, Miss—Miss ——" Then, laughingly, his eyes growing suddenly tender, he looked down the table to Amy. "Do you know, Amy, you forgot to give me this young lady's name?"

"Heavens, what a calamity!" Amy laughed. "That's my Jane—Jane Maxfield."

"Jane Maxfield!" Was it Jane's imagination, or did he actually start a bit? It was over in a moment. He went on talking. "You haven't had a word to say, Miss Maxfield. What do you think about the modern woman?"

Jane quivered, swallowed hard. Everything was topsy-turvy in her mind. Desperately she strove for calmness. If only she could lash out and inflict wounds on him, on his complacency, on his masculine ego!

But she was saved from answering. For Lydia clapped her hands suddenly,

crying out in her most sugary voice, and turning toward Clifton:

"Just listen to that music on the radio!" She began to tug at Clifton's arm. "Come on, Clifton; let's dance."

Clifton sighed with annoyance. But he couldn't be rude, so he stood up reluctantly and danced off with the blond girl. But over Lydia's head, his eyes sought Jane's.

Left alone for a minute, Jane closed her eyes wearily. She felt utterly worn out. If only she could slip away without being seen!

So this was the beginning of the marvelous house party she had looked forward to—this horrible teasing with every one against her, and Lydia playing with her like a cat!

And now suddenly many things were explained to Jane, things that she had often wondered about—for instance, the hard time she had had getting promoted to her present position. There had been no reason for a holdup in her promotion, but once or twice the retiring manager had hinted at a snag in the main office that might prevent her getting it.

That snag had been Clifton, whose old-fashioned ideas handed down from a hard-shelled father, had been instilled too deeply to be eradicated in a hurry. That also accounted for his never visiting the Weston office. He preferred not to see a woman working in one of his offices!

Jane's heart was sore. "It hurt her dreadfully to think that the man she loved was so biased, so unfair."

Tears were very near the surface when finally she managed to slip away unobserved. She went quietly through the living room to the garden. She ran into the moonlight, fleeing along the cool paths with their fragrant perfume and the smell of newly turned earth, warm tears running down her cheeks.

She had been so confident that they two would be attracted once they met, so sure that her love would inspire love

in return. Well, she had been right that far. They had been attracted. She'd have been blind if she hadn't seen the interest in his eyes.

But she couldn't bear his attitude toward business women, his unfair denunciation of them. The arrogant masculine mind didn't want a girl usurping its throne, even if she knew more than he did!

Far down at the end of the garden, Jane found a secluded bench where she could sit and cry silently without fear of discovery. And as she cried, slow anger grew in her heart, anger that burned more brightly as her thoughts kept pace with it, anger against Clifton for being so narrow-minded and crude.

Oh, if she could only do something, show him up, make him a laughingstock as he had made her! She wiped her eyes, then powdered her nose carefully, trying to formulate some plan.

"Ah, here you are!" A masculine voice spoke over her shoulder, a voice, heard that night for the first time, which still had the power to thrill her breath-takingly. "I've been looking all over for you," went on Clifton Bradford. "Why did you run away?"

He sat down beside her, and Jane drew back a little. Fate had sent the enemy into her hands. What should she do with him?

And then out of a clear sky came the great idea that would give her a chance to retaliate.

Settling back on the bench, Jane half turned so that she faced him. In the moonlight she looked fragile, almost ethereal. The man caught his breath sharply.

"It's too lovely a night to stay cooped up indoors," she said softly. "Isn't the moon gorgeous?"

"It is," he agreed, without taking his eyes from her face. "It's—it's wonderful!"

"It's a night for romance, for sweet-hearts," Jane went on dreamily.

"Romance!" he breathed eagerly. "For people like—us!" Daringly he said the last, and waited.

For a long moment Jane was quiet. Then, demurely, she lifted her eyes.

"For us?" she murmured. It was so easy to act the part, even if her heart wasn't in it. She fluttered her lashes at him.

And then suddenly the game was taken out of her hands. The man stretched out his arms. In a moment she was gathered close to his heart while his eyes burned down into hers, while his lips hovered close and yet did not touch hers.

"Stop playing with me," he said tensely. "You know and I know that to-night something happened between us—something sacred, sweet, as wonderful as life itself. You can't deny it. And between us there is no need of subterfuge."

Jane couldn't move. Even if she had wanted to she couldn't have stirred a finger. She was powerless to do anything but stare wide-eyed into his pale face, fascinated by the curious gleam in his eyes, bound to him by his strong arms.

"Oh, my dear!" His voice broke suddenly, boyishly tender. "I love you so! The moment I saw you I knew why I had never loved any one else in all my life. I knew why I had been born. I knew why everything in the world is beautiful—because you walk the earth."

Jane trembled. Something warm, unhidden, golden swept through her. Something wildly sweet brought the swift tears to her eyes.

Clifton's hushed voice fell softly on her ear. His lips were so near, just above her own.

Wordless, she closed her eyes, felt the warmth of his firm lips seeking hers, felt the world whirling madly through endless miles of starlit space. Warm lips touched her cheek reverently, her chin, the soft hollow of her throat; then her lips again, harder, with ardent force.

"My sweet!" His voice was close to her ear, trembling a little.

And then Jane was aware that she had been clinging to him. Her arms had crept up about his neck, and her lips had answered his, kiss for kiss.

Horrified at her own actions, Jane jumped to her feet, throwing off the suddenly slackened arms of Clifton. She looked down at him wide-eyed, looked at the tender blue of his eyes and knew she was lost. She couldn't go on with her plan!

"Jane"—he, too, stood up, moved to take her into his arms—"what is the matter?"

Jane moved back from him, her eyes dark with a still purpose.

"Listen," she said quietly. "I want to tell you something."

He waited motionless, only his eyes alive, questioning.

"You think I love you," she began tensely, "but I don't." She had to say it quickly, for even then she knew she lied. "I was only fooling you, leading you on!" Her voice threatened to break childishly, but she kept on. "I'm Jane Maxfield of the Weston branch office. I'm one of your pet hates, one of those detestable business women you love to rant about!" She was almost sobbing. "I just wanted to prove to you that you could be landed by one of them; I wanted you to see that one of them could be just as feminine and lovable as any of those dumb-bells back there! I don't love you at all. I just pretended so that later on I could show you up to the gang, parade you around. Oh, I hate you!"

He hadn't said a word; he just stood there stiffly, his face strained. At her last word he started and his jaw tightened. For one moment they faced each other silently; then without another word Jane turned and ran.

She went back through the garden to the house, to slip unseen into a side door, up the back stairs to her room to

pack her bag. Blindly she tore off the white dress that she had put on so carefully a few hours before.

Then, finally, she was ready to leave Meadowbrook. She couldn't stay another moment under the same roof with him.

Forlornly Jane went to the garage, where her little roadster was parked. Thankfully Jane stepped into the roomy place; no one had seen her leave the house. She'd be able to get away without a word of explanation.

With one foot in her car, she halted, listening. Some one was running across the garden, calling her in a light feminine voice.

"Jane, Jane—where are you?"

It was Amy. Jane hesitated. Should she hail Amy, or wait until she had gone and then slip quietly away? Then she shrugged. She owed her hostess some explanation.

"Here I am, Amy," she called, moving out into the moonlight.

Suddenly Amy was there, shaking her gently, chattering breathlessly.

"You little idiot! Why didn't you tell me you were a working girl? Of all the dumb things to do, sitting there, letting us tease and tease! Honestly, I could spank you!"

Jane felt the absurd tears coming back again. Angriely she shook her head. She was acting like a cry-baby! Jane Maxfield, assistant manager of Bradford & Crosby, a grown-up business woman!

"And I sat there letting that dumb Clifton rave on and on and on!" Amy sputtered.

And for no reason at all, Jane heard herself defending Clifton:

"It wasn't his fault," she cried, just as if she hadn't been hating him desperately a few minutes earlier. "Lydia egged him on."

"Don't I know it!" Amy wailed disgustedly. "And I was too dumb to catch on. That little blond fiend! And

I certainly hope you didn't take my advice and fall for him."

"I didn't—I don't like him," Jane said hastily—too hastily.

"I'm glad of that," Amy sighed with relief. "When he told me that he liked you even if you were a business woman——"

Jane dug her fingers into Amy's soft arm.

"What did you say—what do you mean?" she demanded.

"Why, ouch! For goodness' sakes, take your nails out of my arm!" Amy

grinned slyly. "I just said that when Clifton discovered just after dinner that a certain Jane Maxfield who worked for his firm and a very charming person whom he had suddenly fallen in love with, were one and the same person, he suddenly lost all his hate for modern business women."

Jane leaned heavily against her friend, suddenly weak.

"You mean he knew when he came out to find me?" she whispered.

"Certainly." Amy patted her shoulder comfortingly. "But I told him he



"If I had lost you," he murmured, "I would have died, I think."

needn't look you up. You probably hated him now after all he said."

Jane stiffened, her eyes flashed dangerously.

"What do you mean? How did you know what I liked or not?" she demanded heatedly.

"Well, I knew you didn't like him after what he said." Amy sauntered away. "I told him you hated him."

"I don't!" Jane drew herself up angrily. "You had a nerve to say that. I don't hate him. I—I——"

She faltered and stopped. Amy looked back over her shoulder, and laughed heartily.

"Tell it to Cliff," she called back before she disappeared into the house.

And then Jane heard some one behind her. She turned swiftly to face a man. Tall, golden-haired, in a camel's hair coat, a bag at his feet, Clifton Bradford stood, regarding her silently.

"Oh," she gasped. "You—you're leaving?"

"I was," he said gravely. "But now I don't know. I may stay."

Jane found she couldn't keep her eyes on his. She had to drop her lashes. If she kept on looking at him, she wouldn't be responsible.

"Jane!" Suddenly he was close beside her, and her hands were somehow in his. "Why did you say you hated

me? Was it because of my senseless tirade to-night at dinner?"

"Because—because——" Jane tried hard to speak, but the words wouldn't come. Instead she just lifted her arms and put them about his neck, which was just what he wanted for an answer.

"My dear," he whispered, holding her close, "if you knew how you hurt me in the garden!"

"But you hurt me, too," Jane said softly against his cheek.

"And I'm sorry, sorrier than words can tell." He held her so that he could see her eyes. "Honestly, darling, I was just hipped on that question of girls working. It was just a habit, talking against them. Just because dad used to rant and rave——"

He drew her closer, gently touched her lips with his.

"If I had lost you," he murmured, caressing her dusky hair, "I would have died, I think."

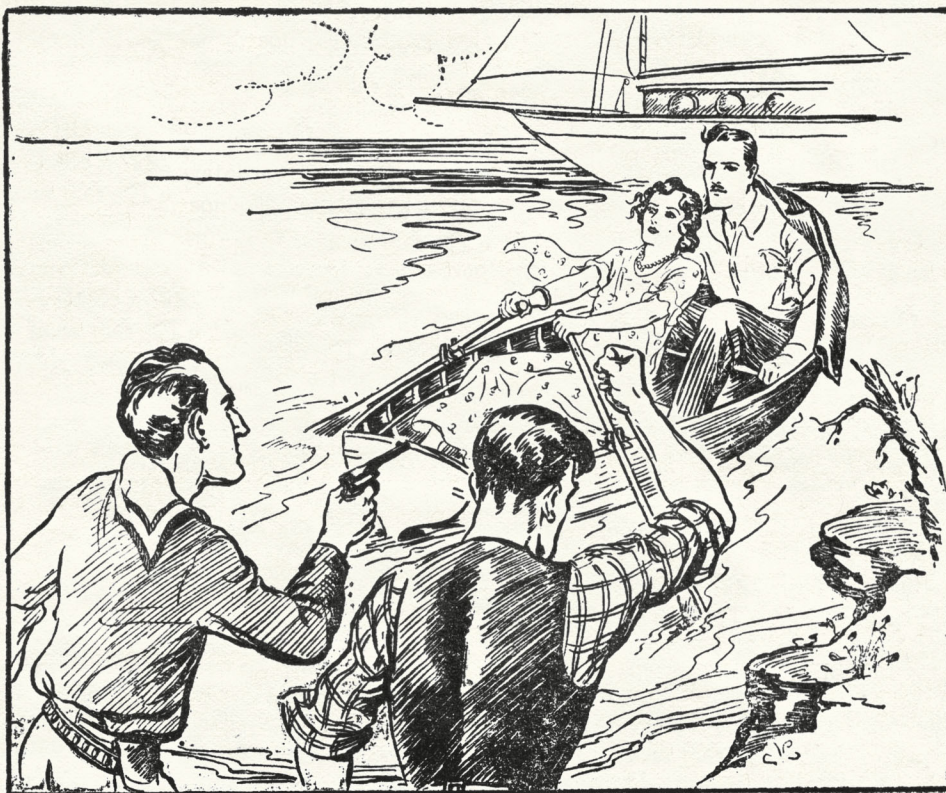
"So would I," Jane whispered.

"Then you do love me?" Eagerly he peered into her eyes.

"Just ask me!" Against his lips she murmured it, and then——

The moon went conveniently behind a cloud, leaving the garden to the girl and the man, leaving the whole enchanted world dim and silent while they kissed.





Ports Of Happiness

By Eric Howard

JOHN RUTGERS slowly and carefully played out the anchor chain, making fast his small one-man yacht in the blue harbor of the island.

On the shore a few hundred feet away there were no signs of life. Dwarf pines grew thickly from the sand beach up the abrupt slope to the top of the ridge. A tiny boathouse in a sad state of repair was the only building in view. From it a wharf ran out into the deeper water, little more than a broken row of rotting piles.

The small bay, incredibly blue, fringed with the dark-green pines, pro-

vided a snug harbor for small boats. In all his sailing in those waters John Rutgers had never chanced upon it before.

Nor was it chance that brought him there now. He went into the little cabin with its two bunks, gasoline stove, and built-in table, on which his unwashed breakfast dishes remained, to gather together a few possessions before going ashore.

He scarcely knew what lay ahead of him behind that thick growth of pine. Somewhere upon the ridge in a little clearing there was a house. He could

find that without difficulty, no doubt. A trail probably led through the woods to the house.

From a shelf he took an automatic pistol, examined it carefully, and placed it in his pocket. He added a supply of ammunition. Into a small knapsack he put some food, and then filled a little canteen with fresh water.

"No telling how long I'll be there, or what I'll find," he remarked to himself. "And I'll get hungry, of course. I always am."

As if in proof of that statement, he sat down and began to eat an apple, at the same time spreading out before him the single page of a letter. Thoughtfully, he read it for the tenth time, and nodded to himself. He was committed to action. That last reading of the letter, like the others, brought a glow to his eyes and a warmth to his heart. It wasn't the words alone that stirred him; everything about the letter—the handwriting, the signature, and the hastily drawn map on the back of it—interested him.

He turned it over to study the map again. There was no mistake about it. He had found the bay without difficulty. This was the island designated. It was here that she was in danger!

Once again he read the letter:

DEAR MR. RUTGERS: I'm afraid you will think I'm mad, but I'm writing in great haste and in sheer desperation. There is no one else to whom I can appeal. Although we have never met, I feel that I know you well from Tommy's glowing description of you, from all that you were to him. If Tommy were alive—but I must hurry!

I think I can trust the man who promises to mail this letter. I am being held prisoner on Goff Island, which I inherited from my father. Tommy always wanted you to visit here. I returned recently after a long absence, and discovered the island in possession of criminal enemies. I am their prisoner. The map I draw on the reverse side will show you how to get here. And I am imploring you to try to rescue me. There is no one else I can ask.

Sincerely,

SUE GREGORY.

On receiving the letter the day before by ordinary mail, John Rutgers had instantly decided upon a course of action. Tommy's sister needed his aid. That was enough for him to know. Vivid memories of Tommy rushed through his mind—their first meeting at a training camp following their enlistment, their warm friendship, long days on board ship, France, Paris on leave, the front lines, the trenches, themselves two musketeers, standing side by side, fighting, and then—his own awakening in a field hospital, and the nurse who told him gently that Tommy would not awaken.

How often Tommy had spoken of Sue, his sister, and of the island home where they had spent the summers of their childhood! After Tommy's death, John had written to Sue and she had replied, but they had never met.

Now, so long a time afterward, she was begging him, as Tommy's friend, to help her.

Her hastily written letter told him so little about her enemies, that he decided he must tackle them alone. The police, he knew, were slow to act in any case without complete and detailed information and a formal complaint. Besides, Goff Island was so situated that a question of police jurisdiction was involved. Part of it lay within one county, part in another. He was not sure of the location of the house. Federal authorities could not be expected to act, either, without a fuller account of the facts.

He must go alone and attend to Sue's enemies himself. That was his natural impulse, anyway, and he had considered other alternatives only because he did not wish to imperil Sue through his own customary rashness.

He took the precaution, however, before his departure, of confiding part of his plan to two friends. If he did not return within forty-eight hours, they would know where he could be found.

With a final glance about the cabin

to make sure that he had everything he needed, he got into his dinghy and rowed ashore. Making the small boat fast beneath the dilapidated boathouse, where it was partly concealed, he turned and looked about for the beginning of a trail.

He found it easily enough, although it had been hidden from the water. The trail ascended steeply through the trees to the ridge that formed the backbone of the island. Up there on that high ridge surrounded by a cleared space of a few acres, was the house and stable.

From time to time he paused on the trail to look back over the blue bay. The vistas through the dark-green of the trees were enchanting. As Tommy had often said, this island was a little bit of paradise, a tiny gem in the blue Pacific.

"From now on I'd better go slow," thought John, advancing. "Whoever Sue's enemies are, they seem rather powerful and desperate fellows—or they wouldn't be holding her here. My first job is to look them over and see what's what."

He intended to keep well-hidden until he could study the house and its present inhabitants. It might even be the part of wisdom to spend the night in the woods, observing what went on. He was prepared to do that. Audacious and reckless as he had often been, he cautioned himself against any action that might make things more difficult for Sue.

With his plan carefully in mind, he gained the ridge and reached the edge of the clearing. From there, standing in the shadow of the trees, he could see the house. It was a long, rambling building of logs and plaster, with a veranda extending across the front which commanded a view of the sea.

He stood for a moment, watching the building. Smoke rose from a chimney, but there was no other evidence of its being occupied. Presently, however, a

man appeared on the veranda, placed a pair of binoculars to his eyes, and gazed out to sea. After a few moments he turned and entered the house.

John was so intent upon watching the place that he did not hear a footstep on the leaves close to him.

A tense, whispered question was his first intimation of being observed.

"Are you John Rutgers?" asked a girl.

He turned and faced her, eagerly expectant. He nodded. But after that first glance of scrutiny, John confessed to a vast disappointment. This girl, pretty and attractive as she was, was not at all like the Sue Gregory he had imagined.

"Are you Sue?" he asked.

"Yes," she whispered. "Oh, I'm so glad you've come! Let's get away—before we're seen. If I don't go back to the house soon, they'll look for me and find us both. The only reason they let me out is because they know I've no means of leaving the island. Their boats are locked."

She was smiling gratefully, and there was a certain insistence in her voice. That was natural enough, thought John. But for a moment he paused, looking at her more closely. She was undeniably pretty in a rather bold and obvious way. She wore a little more make-up than he had imagined Sue would use; her hair was done in a flagrantly artificial manner, and her clothes were somewhat too extreme in cut and color.

"We must hurry!" she said. "Please!"

"Of course," he nodded. "Let's go."

"I knew I could rely on you!" she said softly, as they started down the trail.

He glanced at her again, a trifle perplexed. There was a quality in her voice that he had not expected—cigarette throat, he explained it to himself. He saw her raise her hand to her hair in a self-conscious gesture, and made

two observations—that her hair had been treated with some stuff that gave it a metallic glitter, and that her nails were positively red with some kind of polish.

"Good heavens!" murmured John inwardly.

Silent, wondering what in the world had caused the Sue Gregory he had imagined he knew to go in for such an extreme get-up, he took her arm on the steepest parts of the trail.

When they had almost reached the old boathouse, he said: "This is awfully tame, isn't it? When I got your letter, I looked forward to some kind of fight. I thought I'd have to storm the castle and slay your enemies. Now all we have to do is sail away."

"You can thank your stars there wasn't a fight!" said the girl. "They're killers. It was brave of you to come to rescue some one you don't even know. I shouldn't have asked you, but I was simply desperate. I——"

"That's all right," said John. "But what's the idea, anyway? Why were they holding you? And who are they?"

"I'll tell you all that when we get away. Let's hurry, please. We aren't safe yet by any means."

"You have no idea how I hate to have my expectations of a fight go wrong," he observed, smiling. "If you don't mind, after I've gotten you away and you've told me who and what they are, I think I'll come back and have a go at them."

"Oh, no!" she cried. "You mustn't do that!"

He helped her into the dinghy, and took the oars. He was tremendously disappointed, not only in the complete ease with which he had managed her rescue, but also in the girl herself. He confessed ruefully to himself that he had anticipated meeting Sue Gregory with an unusual acceleration of his heartbeat. For a long time now Sue had been a sort of unconscious ideal of

his. Never having seen her, knowing her only from what Tommy had said and from a few letters, he had thought of her as a girl who was different from all other girls. But, he discovered, she was a very common type. Well, he'd get her away from this danger, whatever it was, and then he'd forget her. Of course, since she was Tommy's sister, he owed her loyalty and friendship.

"Say, what a nice little boat!" she was saying, as he helped her aboard the yacht. "I like boats, don't you?"

"Yes," said John dryly. What a silly thing that was for her to say! Of course she liked boats, having been brought up on them! And she knew quite well that he did, too. Why say anything so obvious?

Silently, he made her comfortable in a deck chair and went to the wheel. Suddenly he struck his head with his fist and muttered to himself: "Idiot!"

Walking back to the girl, he smiled down at her. "Come into the cabin a moment, please," he said.

He cleared a space on the small table by pushing the dishes out of the way, and then placed pencil and paper before her.

"Our old chief over in France told Tom and me never to take the most obvious fact for granted. I had almost forgotten that advice. Please write Tom's middle name, the date of his birth, and your mother's maiden name."

The girl looked up at him. "Don't you think I'm Sue Gregory?"

"I want to be quite sure," he said softly, still smiling.

"Why, it's absurd!" she protested. "I——"

"Of course it is," he nodded. "But, you see, I want to be sure I'm rescuing the right girl. Just write what I——"

She bent over the paper for a moment, pencil in hand, as if deep in thought. Then suddenly she flung down the pencil and glared at him.

"You've got me beat," she said. "I don't know."

"Then you're not Sue Gregory?"

"No, I'm not. And my advice to you, Mr. John Rutgers, is to get away from here as fast as this little tub will take you."

"Thanks," he nodded. "First, though, I'd like to know a few things. Is Sue up in that house? Who's keeping here there—and why?"

The girl laughed scornfully at him. "As if I'd tell you anything!"

John Rutgers was usually quite a mild-mannered and gentle person; he himself admitted that he was too lazy to be anything but good-natured. But there was another side to his character, which circumstances sometimes called out. It displayed itself now.

He shut the door of the cabin and bolted it. Then he faced the girl again.

"You'll tell me these things," he said in his deceptively gentle voice, "if I have to choke them out of you!"



*"You'll tell me these things," he said in his deceptively gentle voice,
"if I have to choke them out of you!"*

He smiled as he spoke. The girl tossed her head, and her eyes measured him.

"Much as I hate to do this," said John apologetically, approaching her, "it seems quite necessary."

Then with a very swift movement and still smiling, he placed his hands on her throat. The girl's brazen scorn instantly left her.

"I'll tell you!" she cried. "I'll tell you! I think you would—choke me!"

"You're quite unusually perceptive," granted John. "Talk!"

"She's up there in the house—in an upstairs room on the north side. They don't let her out. They won't—until after this thing's settled."

"What thing?"

"This island business," said the girl. "They——" She hesitated.

"Tell me the truth," said John, "if you ever want to leave this boat. I mean that."

"They want to buy the island. Quite a while ago she gave somebody her power of attorney to sell it for her. He's going to sell it. It's worth more than he's getting. She doesn't want it sold now. She knows this fellow's cheating her. He's in with us. They're holding her until the deal can be closed; that's all. We need the island."

"What for?"

"What do you suppose?" she asked. "It's got a swell concealed harbor, and a lot of places where stuff could be stored, hasn't it?"

"I see. How long will they hold her? When will this deal be settled?"

"The day after to-morrow, I heard them say. I don't know."

"But they're fools!" cried John. "She'll have legal redress. Her agent can't——"

"What a chance!" scoffed the girl. "There'll be no evidence that she was held here. Her agent's a man of standing. No, the deal will be put through. She can't help it, and you can't help

her. I've told you the truth—now you let me go or they'll get you."

John laughed. "A few more questions first," he said. "How many of your gang are up there?"

"Eight men," she said.

"Any other women?"

"No, just Sue. I sort of looked after her. Say, how did you know I wasn't Sue, when you've never seen her?"

John smiled at her. "It wouldn't be polite to tell you," he observed.

"What's your name?"

"Belle Bailey."

"And you're——"

"I'm Bull Bailey's wife, if you want to know. And you'd better let me go, or Bull——"

"Never mind the estimable Bull," suggested John. "I want you to do me a favor. Write a note to him. Here, I'll tell you what to say."

He placed the pencil in her hand and dictated a brief note.

At first she refused to write, but as John glanced at her menacingly, she scribbled hastily.

"You're digging your own grave!" she assured him, as he took the note. "Bull will finish you. As soon as he finds out——"

"No doubt," John agreed. "Now, Mrs. Bailey, much as I regret the necessity, I shall have to ask you to make yourself at home here until I return. The cabin is quite comfortable. You'll find food and water here and a few books. You don't like books? That's too bad. I'm sorry I have no victrola. I'll have to leave you to entertain yourself here in the cabin. There are cigarettes in that box there. Help yourself to anything you see."

"You going to lock me in here?" she demanded.

"Certainly. What else can I do with you?"

"You—you let me out! You don't dare! It's a crime! I'll——"

"My dear young woman," John

smiled, "when I associate with criminals I'm always the worst of the lot. By the way, how did you find out Sue had written to me?"

"We suspected the guy who mailed the letter. Bull made him spill it. And then he made her tell your name."

"A little gentle torture, eh? If your husband has injured Sue, you're almost a widow."

The girl laughed boldly, but there was an expression of fear in her eyes. This man, who spoke so quietly, who smiled so easily, might be more dangerous than "Bull." There was no bluster about him, but when his hands had closed over her throat, she knew that he intended to choke her.

"You going up there—against eight of them—alone?" she asked.

"Of course—against eighty, if necessary. Armed with this note, I'll have no trouble."

"Aren't you the little boy scout, though?" she sneered.

"Exactly!" he agreed. "Out to do my daily good deed."

He slipped the knapsack and canteen from his shoulder, felt for his automatic, and placed the note she had written in an inside pocket. Then with a smile of farewell, he walked out of the cabin, closed and locked the door, despite her loud protests, and again took his place in the dinghy.

In a very short time he stood again at the edge of the clearing, looking at the house. Then with a shrug he advanced directly upon it, knowing that he was watched, and walked boldly up to the heavy oak door. He knocked.

Presently the door was opened an inch.

"Tell Bull I've got a message from Belle," he said.

The door closed again, and he waited, calmly looking out to sea.

"Come in," said some one.

He turned and walked into the house. As soon as he stepped inside the door,

he was seized by two men. Another man—large, heavy, thick-shouldered—sat at a long table in the center of the room.

"What's the idea?" asked John.

"Get his gun, if he's got one," directed the man at the table.

John's automatic was promptly removed and placed on the table.

"Now sit down," said Bull, "and give us the message from Belle."

"You're a nice friendly lot," grumbled John. "That gun's my buddy. What do you mean, taking it that way?"

"Playin' safe," growled Bull. "Let's hear what Belle says."

"I've got a note from her," offered John. "Give me my gun and I'll give you the note."

"If it's on the square," said Bull, "and you're O. K., I'll give it back after I've read the note."

"Fair enough," John agreed.

Bull spread the sheet of paper before him and read slowly, moving his lips to form the words.

"It's from Belle, all right," he whispered. "She's fooled that Rutgers sap. He's taking her away on his yacht. Belle's good, isn't she? She'll string him along till this is over. Then—but, say, there's a revenue cutter playing around here, she says. They may know something and try to land. We've got to be on the lookout. Let 'em! If they come up here, we're just living here, quiet. Blinky, you and Dave lay low in the barn. The rest of you stay outside and wait. If anybody comes, act innocent even if you can't look it. We won't fight unless we have to." He turned to John. "What's your name? Belle says you're O. K., and I guess she's right."

"I'm Jack Dunn," John announced, "from the Windy City. Belle knows I'm all right. If you can use another man in this racket, I need the money."

Bull stared at him for a long moment. John met his eyes frankly.

"O. K.!" nodded Bull. "We'll cut you in. Go on, you guys! Keep an eye out. Jack, you stay with me. You can have your gun. And if you're not square, Heaven help you!"

Rutgers calmly replaced his automatic, nodded, and reached for a pack of cards. While the other men filed out of the house, and Bull studied him, he shuffled the cards and began a game of solitaire.

"He'll do!" said Bull to himself. "He knows a thing or two."

Lying on a narrow bed in an upstairs room of her own house, locked in, Sue Gregory wasted no thought on herself. She was thinking of John Rutgers. What had she let him in for? She had written him in a moment of desperation, when he seemed the only person in the world who could help her. She had intrusted her letter to a weak old man who had once worked for her father on the island, but who was now Bull Bailey's tool. No doubt the old man had intended to help her, but somehow he had been suspected and forced to tell what he had done.

Then unable to endure the torture with which Bull threatened her and actually began, Sue told them about John. If only she had been brave enough to endure that torture! But she hadn't been; she had been weak and cowardly; she had given John away. Now they were ready for him. If he came alone to the island, they would capture him; there was no telling what they might do to him.

She was utterly helpless, terribly weak. And her fears for John added to her suffering. Why hadn't she let them rob her? Why had she tried to fight? And most of all, why had she brought John into it?

Now she was willing to give up, if only she could save John. Perhaps it was not yet too late to make terms with Bull. She got up from the bed and

staggered to the door. She beat upon it with clenched fists. She must talk to Bull. If she agreed to let him buy the island at his own terms without any further attempt to fight him, perhaps she could yet save John.

After some minutes Bull called up to her.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"I want to talk to you. Please!"

"All right, all right! Don't make so much noise or we'll have to muffle you. I'll be up in a minute." He turned back to John, who was unconcernedly playing solitaire. "Say, we've got a girl up there. She's a bit off, and we're holding her for a while."

"Yeah?" asked John, studying his cards. "Going to collect a ransom?"

"That's it," nodded Bull. "She wants to talk now. I'm going up to keep her quiet. You—you'd better come along. I want to keep an eye on you for a while."

"I've got the Chinaman almost licked," observed John. "Wait a minute."

He continued his game, pausing before he turned up the last card. Then, with a sigh, he finished it. He got up, smiling.

"All right, Bull. I'll go with you. Don't blame you a bit. Always keep an eye on a new man."

"Yeah," said Bull, letting John precede him up the stairs.

Sue heard them coming. Bull inserted a key in the door and opened it. Sue stood within, swaying a little. She was quite pale, very slender. Her large blue eyes were shadowed. She wore a simple dark-blue dress. She looked up, startled, at the new man with Bull.

John trembled and tried to control his nerves. Here was the Sue he had pictured to himself, had long cherished as an ideal. Weary and weak as she was, she was very lovely. Her eyes were like Tommy's—loyal, brave, honest.

She held her head with calm dignity, faced Bull without fear.

"What do you want now?" demanded Bull.

"I'm willing—willing to do anything you say," offered the girl, "if only you'll agree not to injure Mr. Rutgers. You can have the island, do as you like—I won't try to fight you now or later, if only you'll let him alone. Promise me that you will."

Bull said nothing for a moment. John turned away to hide the expression in his eyes.

"I had no right to ask him to help me," the girl went on. "I—I scarcely know him. He was my brother's friend, and I was desperate. But you mustn't hurt him—you've got to let him alone—he has nothing to do with this. It isn't his affair at all!"

"Kind of worried about him, ain't you?" asked Bull. "He must be your sweetheart."

The girl blushed. "We've never met, as I told you," she said. "If he tries to help me, it will be because of his friendship for my brother. Oh, I'll agree to anything you say—if you'll promise——"

"Fine!" said Bull. "Now you're getting sensible. All right. You agree to let the deal go through, and not to cause trouble later—you couldn't, anyway—and we'll see that your friend Rutgers isn't hurt. I don't think he'll try to help you, anyway. Why should he? But he won't get hurt if you behave yourself."

"Oh, thank you!" she said, leaning against the wall.

"You must think a lot of that guy," sneered Bull. "You sure were willing to fight until you figured he was in danger."

John stood behind Bull, a little to the right, facing the girl. He smiled at her and shook his head. His lips silently formed the words: "I am John Rutgers," very clearly.

"Oh!" gasped the girl, blushing again.

John smiled and nodded. Bull turned and slapped him on the back.

"Can you beat it?" he demanded. "She's in love with a man she never saw! Rutgers is safe enough, sister. Belle's taking care of him!" He laughed heartily.

John winked and smiled.

"You just be good and quiet," Bull said to her, "and everything will be all right. No more fight, and you won't get hurt. Rutgers won't either. I'll have to keep you locked up a while longer, but it won't be long now. Come on, Jack."

"Say, why don't you bring her downstairs?" John demanded. "She's pretty. I'd like to talk to her."

Bull laughed loudly.

"Yeah? We don't want her in sight if anybody comes."

"That's right," agreed John. "I forgot that." Turning to the girl, he added: "I'm glad I met you. Maybe we'll meet again. You want to forget that Rutgers fellow—it looks as if he'd fallen for Belle." He winked broadly, and smiled.

"Come on!" said Bull.

The door was locked again, and Sue stood against it. Her heart beat rapidly; a glow came to her cheeks and eyes. That was John Rutgers! She knew it, despite the way he talked and Bull's comradely acceptance of him. There was something in his eyes—an expression of gentleness combined with reckless courage—that no member of Bull's gang could have had. He had come to rescue her! He had come alone. Somehow he had tricked Bull and the others into believing him a fellow criminal. But he was John Rutgers, and he was here!

Her own courage revived, to be dissipated again by a new fear. What could he do alone against them all? What if they should learn that he had



She got up from the bed and staggered to the door. She beat upon it with clenched fists. She must talk to Bull.

tricked them? Oh, what had she gotten him into?

He had heard her plead with Bull for his safety. He must know how she felt about him. If she had only been brave enough to endure the torture, not to have given him away! But she would weep no more, she decided. If there was still a chance for them, she would be ready to help him if she could. His calm, his ease of manner reassured her. She remembered things Tommy had told her: "If old John can't get out of a tight fix, there's no way out!" and "I'd rather have John beside me than

a whole army, if it came to a showdown."

She sat down on the edge of the bed and waited, waited and prayed. The prayers were for his safety. She had forgotten her own danger in thinking of him. A flood of crimson stained her cheeks.

"I do love him," she whispered to herself. "I've—always loved him!"

John's impulse, as he again shuffled the cards, was to attack at once. Had he alone been involved, a prisoner of the gang, he would probably have tried

to fight his way out. But he had to consider Sue. Since seeing her, hearing her plead for him, he was stirred as he had been by the receipt of her letter. She was all that he had imagined her—more! She was perfect.

He waited patiently, playing his game with outward calm, while he turned over in his mind a dozen possibilities, rejecting them one after another because they would involve Sue in danger. Bull was a blusterer and probably a coward, but with the support of his men he could be vicious and brutal. It would not do to slip up in any way. Once he acted, it must be swift and decisive and successful.

While John played and thought, Bull talked a little, explaining his plans. He had to have the island. It was especially well situated for base headquarters. Owning it, he could use it as a storage place for liquor taken from ships at sea, which could later be taken to the mainland and sold. Because of the location of the island and the formation of the harbor, they would not be detected, unless actually caught by a revenue cutter unloading a cargo from a Mexican ship. He had this chance to buy the island cheap. The girl's agent was a friend of his; they were getting it for almost nothing. And she had no come-back; she couldn't prove anything. It was all legal and fool-proof.

"So we're not holding her for ransom," said Bull. "We're just waiting till this thing's settled and the deeds are recorded. Then we'll let her go."

"I see," nodded John, playing a king. "Pretty slick, Bull. You've got a chance to make this a big thing."

"You bet!" the other agreed. "And I'm cuttin' you in, Jack. I like your style. You're cool. But remember this—and never forget it—I'm the boss!"

"Sure!" said John. "I was never cut out for a general, but I make a mighty good lieutenant."

"We'll get along," nodded Bull.

From the outside at that moment of amicable agreement there came a confusion of sounds. Among others, there was a woman's voice—loud, angry, belligerent.

"Belle!" cried Bull, leaping to his feet.

John slammed down his cards and jumped up. The time for action had come; he could hesitate no longer. Bull was going to the door. Belle was on the veranda.

John's automatic leaped into his hand.

"Stop where you are, Bull!" he commanded.

Bull turned, surprised, and saw that he was covered. His hands shot above his head.

"Who are you?"

"I'm Rutgers," John smiled. "I guess I should have tied Belle, but I hate to treat a woman that way. Over there!" he ordered.

He ran to the door, securely bolted it, and then swung back to Bull.

"Upstairs!" he said.

Already Belle and the others were pounding on the door, calling to Bull, demanding admittance. But Bull, his face pale, his eyes narrowed, was walking upstairs to the door of Sue's room.

"Unlock it!" snapped John. "And no fumbling!"

In a moment the door was opened. Sue uttered an exclamation of relief.

"Step out in the hall, Sue," said John. "I've got to do something I don't like."

He advanced on Bull, who cowered against the wall, his hands still raised.

"Don't shoot!" he pleaded. "Don't!"

With a swift movement John hit him on the head with the gun. Bull slumped to the floor. John flung him on the bed, moved to the door, closed and locked it behind him.

"Is there a rear stairway?" he asked.

Sue nodded.

"Show me."

Arm in arm, they walked down the

hall to a narrow stairway at the rear. At the foot of the stairs they paused, and John looked out in time to see two men running from the barn to the front of the house.

"Blinky and Dave," he observed. "The coast's clear. Let's dash for the trail."

The incessant pounding on the door went on. Probably all of the gang were on the veranda, John thought. They'd have to chance that.

"Come on!" he said.

"There's an old trail," gasped Sue, "steeper—shorter—overgrown."

"Let's take it!" said John.

She led the way, running lightly, with John attempting to protect her from possible attack. He saw her plunge into a thick growth of brush. At the edge of the clearing he paused for a moment to look back. A shot rang out, and he felt a stinging pain in his shoulder. His left arm fell limp at his side and blood stained his coat sleeve.

He staggered back into the brush.

"John!" called Sue. "John, come on!"

"I'm coming," he assured her, and staggered down the steep incline through the thick brush.

"You're wounded!" she cried. As he seemed about to fall, she slipped her arm around his waist, trying to support him.

"They'll follow," he said weakly. "Run, Sue! Run for my boat! Get away! Leave me here—I can still shoot. Run!"

She shook her head, tears coming to her eyes.

"No! There's a cave just a little way down, John. If we can make that, they'll never find us. Come on! Try to walk."

"You run for it!" he argued. "I'll be all right. See, my right hand's sound. I can shoot."

"I won't leave you! Please try to come."

As she spoke she led him forward, supporting him against her shoulder. Still arguing and protesting, he struggled to shake off the faintness that seemed to overcome him.

He didn't know quite how he got there, but in a very short time he was in a dark, cool cave, moist with ferns and damp from a tiny spring. It was as dark as night and deliciously cool. A cool hand was on his brow; then some one was bending over him, removing his coat, tearing away his shirt.

He sat upright. Their pursuers, floundering through the thick brush, were making an outcry.

"Sh!" said Sue. "Lie down. Don't move. They'll never find this place. I'll bandage your arm, John."

He was still gripping his automatic, but now it fell from his fingers. Somehow Sue managed to get his coat off and rip his shirt from his wounded shoulder. Moistening his handkerchief in the slowly dripping spring, she bathed the wound, then bandaged it. Her cool hands pressed his brow, and he rested, half asleep, half dreaming.

After a while the cries of the others drifted away. They were seeking them elsewhere, perhaps on some other part of the island. For the present the two were safe.

How long a time passed neither Sue nor John knew. But suddenly he sat upright, looked about in perplexity, and saw Sue.

"Sue!" he whispered. "I just about lost consciousness, didn't I? That shot must have paralyzed me. I'm all right now."

He glanced down at his bandaged shoulder, and smiled gratefully at the girl.

"Where are they?" he asked, his voice low and weak.

"They've gone—I don't know where. They'll probably be guarding your boat, watching for us there."

"That's right. But we've got to

chance it. We've got to get off the island."

"Please don't think of it!" she begged him. "We're safe here. This cave is completely hidden. They——"

"But if we don't get back to town, they'll rob you, put this deal through, and——"

"Never mind the island," said Sue. "Let them have it. I don't want—oh, you mustn't take such a chance again! They'll kill you. I should never have asked you to help me. I hate myself for involving you in this. If anything should happen to you, I——"

John put his good right arm around her shoulders. Sobbing, the girl leaned against him.

"There, there, Sue!" he murmured. "I'm tremendously glad I came. Don't be afraid. We'll get away somehow. And we'll save your island."

She looked up at him, attempting to smile, and her lips trembled.

"The island doesn't matter, John. Nothing like that matters. It's——"

She was utterly irresistible. His arm tightened around her, drew her close. He bent down and kissed her lips. Her arms slipped around his neck, and with a sigh of content she responded to his kiss.

"Sue dear," he said, after a long, thrilling silence, "you're wonderfully brave and sweet. I wouldn't for the world, put you in danger, but—I hate to let them beat us. I think we have more than a chance. I think we can get away. Shall we try?"

"If you think we can, I guess we can," she said. "But if you're hurt I'll never forgive myself."

"With a nurse like you," he said cheerfully, "it's a pleasure to be hurt. But we'll be more careful this time. Where does this old trail come out?"

"On the beach about a hundred yards above the other."

"Good! It's nearer the boat then. They'll be guarding the other trail.

Probably only one or two men will be there. The others will be scouring the island. We can manage it. Let's go, Sue!"

Her own courage had revived. "Yes," she agreed, and slipped her hand trustfully in his for a moment.

Outside the cave they stood side by side, listening. Then suddenly he drew her to him and kissed her soft, eager lips.

"We'll make it, darling!" he assured her. "We can't help but make it! We have love on our side!"

They advanced slowly, carefully, as noiselessly as possible through the growth of brush. On a ledge of rock above the beach they paused and peered down at the harbor. His small yacht rode at anchor, as calmly as it had ever done. The dinghy was tied to the old wharf directly below them. One man sat on the beach, facing the trail, awaiting them. Across his knees was a sawed-off shotgun.

"One man," whispered John. "If we could make it quietly enough, we could reach the dinghy before he saw us. I don't know. He expects us to come down that other trail. But he might hear us. If he should, that shotgun's an ugly thing."

"I could shoot him from here," he added after a moment, "but I hate to do it. No, I can't do that! Sue, I'm going to bluff him. It's a long chance, but I've got to take it. You wait here. Don't move until it's all clear. Then we'll make for the yacht. Now——"

"Don't take a chance!" she begged.

"Sue darling, we can't lose! Be brave! It's now or never!"

She trembled, but she nodded. "If I could only help!" she said.

"You have helped! You are helping! You just about saved my life back there. When I call you, come down to the beach. Then—the boat. Now!"

He turned and looked at the man on guard, who was sitting quietly, staring



"Stop where you are, Bull!" he commanded. Bull turned, surprised, and saw that he was covered. His hands shot above his head.

at the trail, with the gun unconcernedly across his knees.

"Drop that gun!" shouted John.

The man leaped to his feet, whirled about, the weapon clutched in his hand.

"Drop it!" repeated John.

Perplexed, unable to discover where the voice came from, the gangster still held his weapon. John fired, and the shot shattered the barrel. Then he leaped down from the ledge and appeared in plain view on the beach.

The guard fell to his knees in the sand, seized the broken shotgun and fired. At the same instant John shot again.

Sue, watching with trembling heart, saw both men fall. Without waiting for his word, she hurried down to John, flung herself beside him, and seized his shoulders.

"I'm all right, dear," he smiled up at her. "But my right arm's full of buck-shot now. He's out, though. That

helps. Make for the boat. You'll have to row!"

He struggled to his feet, wincing from the pain in his arms, and plunged across the sand to the dinghy. Sue had snatched his automatic from the sand. Now she loosed the boat, seized the oars, and rowed swiftly to the yacht. She helped John over the side, where he slumped against the rail; then she ran to the stern.

"Auxiliary gas engine," John called to her. "It's an easy starter. Can you give it a whirl? Wait—I'll try to do it with my foot."

"Sit still!" called Sue. "I can run it."

The engines started, the propeller whirled, and the little craft pointed its nose out of the bay.

Shouts and curses came from the shore as the other men of Bull's gang, plunging down the trail in answer to the shots, appeared in sight. Bullets hummed over the yacht.

Snatching the automatic from where she had dropped it on the deck, Sue ducked behind the rail and answered their fire. John watched her, marveling. He saw the clear line of her delicate profile, as gentle as a child's, but he saw it as he had seen Tommy's—brave, indomitable in a crisis. The men on the beach ran for cover before her marksmanship.

She lashed the wheel and came to John's side. The yacht gained speed. In a moment now it would be out of the small bay, into the sea, with plain sailing back to port. All was clear ahead.

Sue sat down beside John, staring at his second wounded arm.

"Does it hurt terribly?" she asked.

"When I can look at you it doesn't hurt at all!" he told her.

Tears came to her eyes. "I think you're wonderful," she said, placing her hands on his cheeks, looking into his eyes. "Oh, John!"

"The armless wonder!" he laughed. "And just now, when I need my arms so much, when I'm yearning to put them around you and to hold you forever—they're no good!"

"Mine are still good," she smiled gently, slipping them around him, drawing him close to her. He kissed her rapturously.

"I don't need arms or anything—but you!" he whispered, gazing at her adoringly. "I love you so!"

Later, as she ran back to the wheel to correct the course, he called out: "Will you look at what Belle did to that cabin door? What a fool I was! I locked her up in there and left her the ax to play with! She must have gotten wet swimming to shore. I hope she catches pneumonia!"

"She won't," laughed Sue. "She's a hardy perennial."

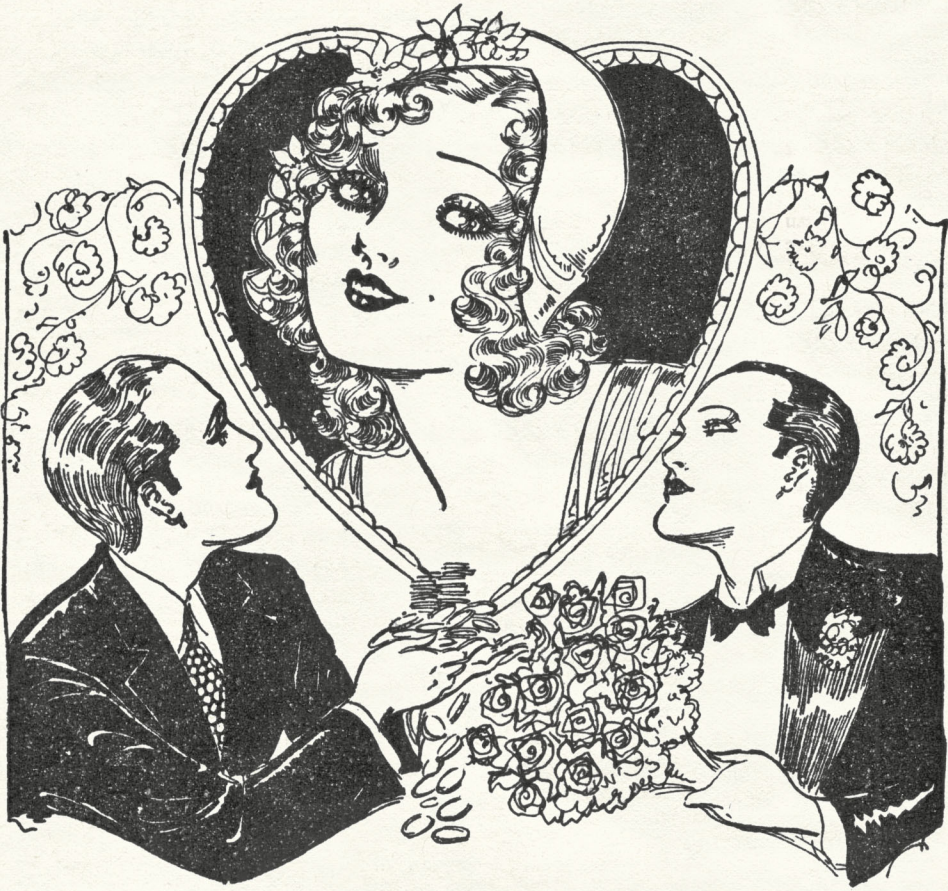
"And to think that for some minutes I actually believed that she was you! Can you ever forgive me, dearest? Please say that you do."

"It's difficult," admitted Sue, "but I think I can manage it."

"Drop the wheel, skipper. What do we care where we sail? We'll make a port of happiness, anyway. And your patient wants to kiss you, you darling!"

"My patient is a bit delirious," said Sue, as she came over to him and lifted her lips to his. "But then," she whispered happily, caught in the deep magnetism of his gaze, "so am I!"





The Laughing Husband

By S. Andrew Wood

A Serial—Part III.

CHAPTER VI.

IT was Terry Wedderburn who stood in the dusk-filled street. He leaned against the lamp-post for a moment, fighting the appalling weakness that made the world swing cruelly about his vision. His face was white, and his cheeks sunken. The lines about his eyes were no longer lines of laughter. In his shabby clothes, his athletic figure looked spare and emaciated.

"You might have known that she would be here with him!" he muttered to himself.

He tried to laugh, but the sound turned to a broken cough. He gazed hungrily after the disappearing red light of the big car. A workman, passing on his way to the factory, asked him, with rough sympathy, if he were sick.

Terry shook his head. But he lied. He had been ill when he had walked

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from White Pigeons along the frosty road until nightfall, three weeks before. He had fallen by the roadside and been taken to a cottage. In the cottage, he had left his own tweed clothes which a Fifth Avenue tailor had made, and crawled out in the early hours wearing an old suit belonging to the young mechanic who owned the cottage. He had been sick in bed for a week in the bleak rooms he had rented in one of the smoky side-streets of Woodton.

The factory town had suited Terry to hide in. In New York, the old life of his careless, worthless days would have gnawed at him. Rich men and pretty women and the glitter of the past would have tempted him to accept all the hands which would have been stretched out to Terry Wedderburn and he might have become a parasite again. He had drifted to Woodton, and its grimness matched the hard courage of his changed soul.

His knowledge of engines had stood him in good stead, and he had found a job as a mechanic in the noisy sheds of the great engineering works where a giant airplane engine was being built. Twice he had fainted from fatigue at his bench, but his young strength was slowly returning.

"You fool!" Terry said, fiercely. "You had her once and did not keep her. Who was it said that God punishes

both fools and wicked men, but the fools first? Steele will cherish her as you never did. He's the kind of man who will put her on a pedestal and worship her."

Terry choked with hopeless hatred. He walked savagely along the badly lighted street and stumbled into his lonely rooms. There he sat in the big chair before the open fireplace, quivering. The day had been full of discoveries. Only that day had he found out that Morrice Steele was managing director of the big company for which he was working.

"I ought to get out of it to-night, on my way to anywhere," he muttered.

But he couldn't. He knew it as he got into bed. He knew it when the booming whistles awakened him in the darkness of breaking dawn. He knew that for a sight of the girl who was his wife yet did not belong to him he would remain in his toiling slavery at the big factory.

Yet Terry Wedderburn saw neither Dawn nor Morrice Steele until one morning, a week later.

He was walking along a narrow cutting which led from the furnaces of the factory to the slag heaps at the edge of the canal. It was a dangerous short-cut to take, for a narrow track of rails ran along the cutting, and the slag-trolleys came flying down it with no more warning than the roar of their wheels.

THE STORY SO FAR:

TERRY WEDDERBURN, a society playboy, marries Dawn Compton, daughter of a manufacturer, to save his family from ruin. Pansy Parkway's husband is divorcing her, naming Terry as correspondent. Dawn realizes that Terry does not love her, and has decided to leave him when there is an accident and Pansy's husband is killed and Terry seriously hurt. While delirious, he calls for Pansy. Dawn leaves and goes to New York, where she secures a position in another town, her new boss being Morrice Steele, whom Terry hates. Terry, when he gets better, realizes that he loves Dawn, and, finding her gone, sets out to make his own living. He is standing on a street corner in the same town where Dawn is working when he sees her in a car with Steele.

As Terry turned the bend of the cutting he saw the figure of a man ahead of him, plodding thoughtfully, head down, between the narrow rails.

"Steele!"

Terry Wedderburn stopped dead. A cold passion seized him treacherously and unexpectedly. He began to move swiftly toward the man ahead, full of some blind emotion of rage that he did not recognize.

The roar of an oncoming trolley sounded behind them. The big mass came hurtling around the bend and Terry leaped lightly aside. But the man in front of him, deep in thought, did not hear it. There was five seconds between death and Morrice Steele.

Terry sprang. The two of them stumbled together against the side of the cutting as the slag-laden trolley lumbered past. Morrice Steele was on his feet first. He laughed a little shakenly.

"Thanks, my man!" he said. "You saved my life, I think——"

He stopped.

"Wedderburn!" he exclaimed quickly. "You?"

Terry nodded, cold-eyed and tense. His unseeing rage had vanished.

"I didn't mean—to save you," he said, slowly. "It happened before I knew it. I was always impulsive. It has been my ruin."

The two men faced each other. To Morrice Steele the encounter was almost grotesque. This gaunt and grim young man in blue overalls was not the old debonair Terry Wedderburn. Something had happened to him. He had gone downhill fast. Yet the pitiless part of Morrice Steele's nature which had made him an industrial giant while a young man came uppermost. He saw but the worthless man who had lived off Dawn while he had been in love with another woman. Morrice Steele's jaw set.

"Come to my office," Steele said heavily. "I want to talk to you."

He led the way through the big scrapyard and across to the executive buildings. Terry followed him in silence. Neither of them spoke until the door of Steele's private office closed behind them.

"I'll stand," Terry said.

Steele nodded, with a little muscle standing out at his hard-shut mouth.

"Your wife is here with me," he said coldly. "She ran away from you because you were concerned with another woman in a divorce case. I don't pretend to know the morals of you and your class—the class you once belonged to." Steele's glance swept Terry's working clothes with ironic and pitying amusement. "But in the world of decent men a man who lives off a fine, straight girl without knowing how to appreciate her, gets what he deserves. She left you."

"And went to you," Terry whispered. He was standing with his hands clenched. Otherwise to an observer he looked like any other workman listening to the cold words of his employer.

"To me!"

Terry did not see the other man stiffen as at some new and blinding light. Suddenly Morrice Steele understood. This young fool who had fallen so dramatically into the mud, and was now a working mechanic thought that Dawn had come to him of her own accord! A great temptation shook Steele's soul.

He turned and looked unseeingly out of the window, in a tumult of hungry yearning, such as he had never before known in his masterful life. He held the woman he loved in his hand. Each day he saw her, her bright head and tender, clear profile as she worked gravely on his affairs. If he won her from this worthless youngster he would cherish and worship her, and give her the happiness she was made to have.

He faced Terry.

"Listen here Wedderburn!" he said,

tensely. "You've made a mess of her life and your own. You threw away such a chance as the Creator only gives a man once in a lifetime. You are one of five thousand other workingmen at this place of mine. To you that must be a living death. You've just saved my life. I'll drive a bargain with you. I will give you ten thousand a year and you shall not work a stroke for it, if you will promise that you will never again molest Dawn. I want your answer now!"

Terry Wedderburn stood very still.

"You want to buy her from me?"

He spoke the words harshly, yet with no passion. All the passion had left him. Steele's words seemed to hold up a looking-glass in which he saw himself as the world and Dawn saw him. He was a vagabond husband.

"I am thinking of the other woman, too," Steele replied steadily. "The law of to-day grants easy facilities for divorce in such cases as yours, Wedderburn."

Terry smiled twistedly. Pansy! He had forgotten her. She, too, had thought she could buy him. He felt a moment's rueful pity for the brown, fairylike widow of John Harkaway. What would be her feelings when she found him a grimed and oily workman, living in a dirty street?

"You are kind, you cur!"

All the pent-up savagery of his feelings came in a miserable wave. He would have sprung at Morrice Steele, but at that moment the head of a girl passed outside across the window. The faces of both men changed.

"She is coming here," Morrice Steele said.

A spasm shook Terry. Suddenly he knew that he could not face Dawn; she who had probably agreed to the proposal which Steele had just made him. Morrice Steele was watching him closely, hiding a fear which he barely realized himself.

"Let me out!" Terry cried.

Steele threw open an inner door. Beyond it was another door of glazed glass that looked out upon the yard.

Terry Wedderburn's shadow had vanished from the glass when Dawn entered the room. She was flushed with the color the wind had whipped into her cheeks and from beneath her small hat her hair fell like soft light in the murky shine that streamed from outside.

"The car broke down!" she said, with a little breathless laugh that caught at Steele's heart. "I got to Templeton's Foundry with that agreement you sent me with, just as the board of directors were rising. I think they thought that a car which carried a woman on such important business was sure to give way. I ran on foot the last half-mile."

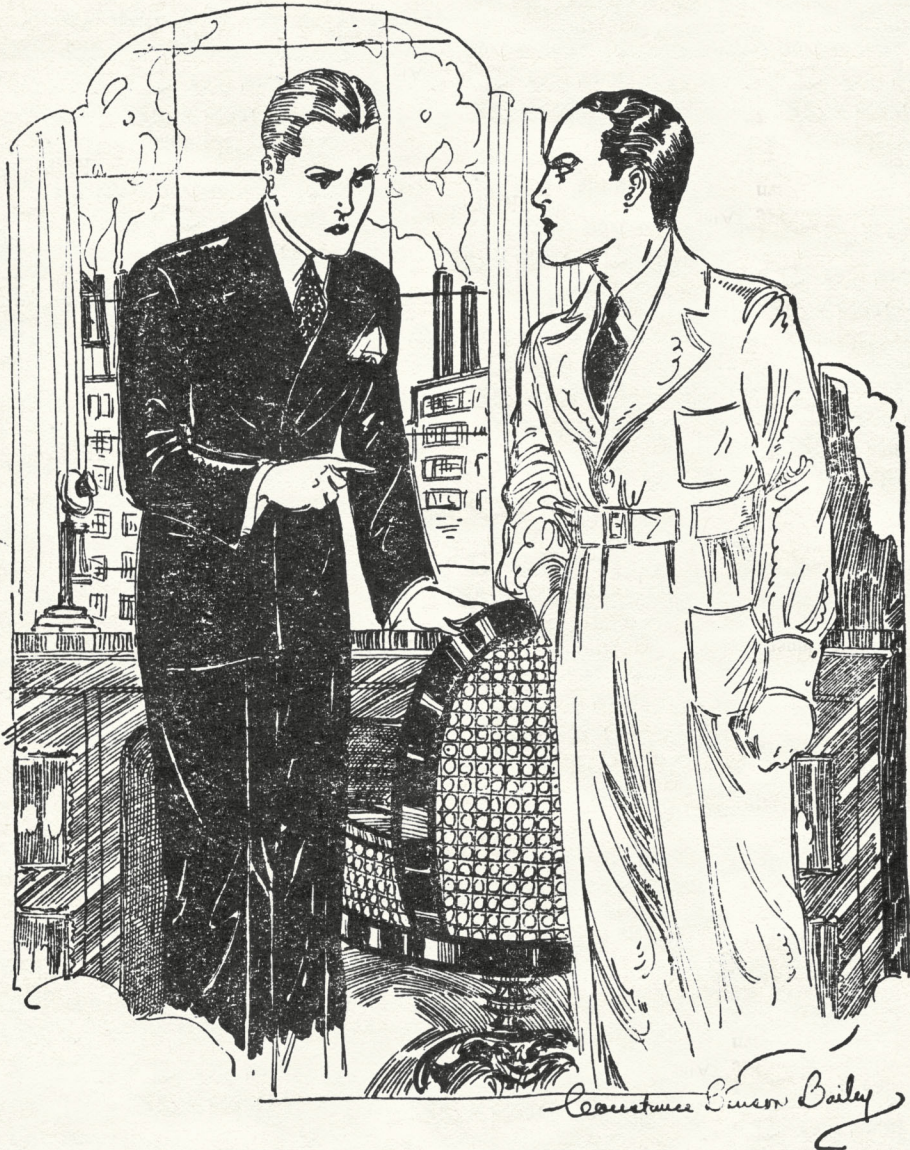
"And thus gained me fifty thousand or so," Steele said, with his grave smile. "Thanks, Miss Denstone."

He was still flushed a little on his high cheek-bones and his hazel eyes were luminous. He watched her as she sat down, demure, businesslike and womanly all at once. His encounter with Terry had left his emotions in a tumult, the strength of which he dared not guess at. In every desire for wealth and power, Morrice Steele had reached out his hand, without waiting, and it had come to his fingers.

"Dawn!" he said.

Her Christian name left his lips almost inaudibly. At the sound of it Dawn looked up. She sat very still, with some sense of catastrophe, at the realization that Morrice Steele stood close behind her, looking down at her.

"Something has happened," Morrice Steele went on, "that makes me talk like—like I am going to. I want you to sit still and listen. I'm going to say the kind of thing that no man ought to say to a woman who is married to another man. But I knew when I pulled you from that falling stone on the hillside behind White Pigeons that it had



"Listen, Wedderburn!" he said, tensely. "You've made a mess of her life and your own. I will give you ten thousand a year if you will promise that you will never again molest Dawn."

to happen. They say that steel is my nature as well as my name. Yet I was in love with a photograph long before I found its original. I am standing where I could reach out and take you. But I would not touch you with a finger until you gave me permission."

Dawn gathered her strength. Like a pitfall that opened at her feet on ground that she had thought utterly firm, Morrice Steele's words came.

"Don't!" she said, dryly. "Oh, please don't."

"Listen to me!" Steele cried almost

harshly. "I am saying all this madness because I do not believe that you will ever let me touch you. If you did, I think I should be frightened. I have never loved a woman before, perhaps that is why I love the wrong woman now—in the eyes of the world. I want to worship you, Dawn. I want to give you the happiness which belongs to you, to make you forget all the misery you found with Wedderburn."

"Misery!"

Dawn had got to her feet. She had swung around against the desk with a strained and tremulous laugh.

"Oh, I did not tell you that!" she exclaimed. "I never said it was misery. I think it was the happiest time in my life. I ought to have told you. I loved him and married him for love. I meant to make him love me but I failed. I ran away from him because I loved him, because I wanted him so much that I could not keep him against his will."

Dawn's eyes were shining like gray stars. Her face was alight with something that awed Morrice Steele, while it stabbed his heart with black jealousy.

"You love him!" Steele repeated.

The blow shook him to the depths of his being. The dust of a thousand wild hopes fell about Morrice Steele in that moment.

"He is not worthy of your love!" He spoke clumsily, bitterly. "He is worthy of no woman. I believe he would be false to the woman who took him from you."

"Oh, be quiet!" said Dawn. She shivered. Morrice Steele had voiced her own dread and hope, so deeply hidden that she scarcely knew it was there. What if Terry tired of Pansy, what if it were true that he could be faithful to no woman. She remembered a momentary glimpse of the man at the street corner as she and Steele had driven into Woodton. Had it been Terry?

Dawn held out her hand.

"I am not frightened of you," she said. "I could never be frightened of you. I have always liked you too much. I know that if you are in—in love with me, it is the kind of love that no woman need ever be ashamed of. You have been very good to me. But you must never speak like that again. Promise!"

Steele looked down at the pale face, with its wistful yet resolute little mouth. He felt like a man flung out of Paradise who beats at the gilded gates to get in again.

"I'll not promise," he answered. "I can't."

His glance consumed Dawn, all the primitive strength of his nature in rebellion, whispering, urging that, when Terry Wedderburn passed out of her life, she might listen to him.

Morrice Steele, with no other word, left the room.

CHAPTER VII.

The taxi rattled out into the garish brightness and, hooting cheerfully, dived down the labyrinth of narrow streets that led southward.

Upon impulse, Steele had caught the afternoon train from Woodton to New York. The strong, level current of his nature had suddenly turned to a flood tide, and he craved the gayety of the great city, in which to forget himself for a brief while.

"Where to, sir?"

The taxi driver's grinning, good-natured face peering around into the cab, reminded him that he had no destination. Upon impulse he gave an address in the downtown section of New York.

Steele smiled faintly. He watched the passing crowds with a cynical amusement that was new to him, picturing them all swept by such wayward passions as had caught him. The picture of Dawn's face rose, but he banished it because of the hunger that it brought.

The taxi threaded gingerly along a dark street where children played vociferously, and stopped outside a dirty brick building. In one of the upper rooms a cretonne curtain shone brilliantly, and the sound of laughter and music came in bursts.

"Topsy has a party on!" Steele muttered whimsically. "Heaven shield my recklessness!"

He mounted the dark stairs, and knocked at a door that shook with the noise within. It was jerked open by a girl who came forth, flushed and wide-eyed with laughter.

A cry of delight left her lips.

"It's Morrice, the master of men!" she gasped. "Oh, glory be for sending you!"

She was tall and slender in the green outfit she wore, with short bobbed hair the color and texture of spun silk. In the upward slant of her dark eyebrows and the purse of her red lips, there was something impish and yet serious. At the sight of Steele, the rose color in her cheeks had deepened. In spite of her flippant greeting, the light that came into her tawny young eyes might have been read by any woman.

"Come in!" she said, clutching him by the arm. "I've a little party on—painters, scribblers and out-of-work chorus beauties—male and female. They're a happy-go-lucky crew and as poor as crows, except myself. We'll keep it a secret that you're a millionaire, or they'll walk out."

Morrice Steele, with a half-impulse to flee, found himself in a pandemonium of color and noise and laughing people. He looked around with an inward groan upon the bearded young men in flowing ties and shabby clothes, and the bizarre young women who lolled upon the small, green-painted tables, and smoked cigarettes in amber holders. There was one short-haired girl who stared at him through a monocle and another who smoked a long pipe, and a little fat man

in baggy trousers who was describing the dress of a new Russian dancer in a high, fluting voice.

"What do you think of 'em?" Topsy Lamond asked. They sat together on a couch, while Steele drank coffee. The music crashed in the other room. The apartment of Topsy Lamond, who was an heiress in her own right, was opened to the entire neighborhood of the section of town where it was her capricious fancy to live.

"Charming!" answered Steele, clumsily.

The girl flung a half-rebellious glance at him. She tossed her silky short hair and leaning her bare arms on the table cupped her chin in her hands to stare at Steele.

"You great big story teller!" she said softly. "You think that they are all fools, male and female, and that I am as bad as any of them with my painted lips and silly earrings. I know you have noticed both. You think they are all here because they know I am rich. But you are wrong, Morrice dear! They think I am nearly as poor as themselves, that I am a real, nice bohemian, and if you give me away I shall kill you! What has made you restless and brought you here out of your factory? Have you fallen in love at last?"

Topsy's lips curved in a gentle, mocking smile. Yet her eyes were wistful for a moment, and at the stain which came into Steele's cheek, her hand clenched tensely.

"I have touched the spot!" she breathed. She bent quickly to pick up the crushed ball of handkerchief which she had dropped. Her face was whiter when she laughed across at Morrice Steele again, and there was something shaken and unreal in her laugh that the man did not hear.

"I wonder what kind of a girl has won your love, Morrice?" she said, slowly. "I think I know. Tell me if I am right. She is young—as young as

I—perhaps younger. She is sweet and demure. She knows nothing about men, except that she worships you, and when you are married she will only come to see Miss Topsy Lamond once—never again. She is utterly innocent, and when you are married——”

“She is already married,” Morrice Steele interrupted, in a hard voice.

He looked up abruptly. Topsy’s eyes wide and pitying—herself or the man, the girl scarcely knew—changed swiftly. A man stood by their table, tall, loose-limbed and handsome with a shock of glossy hair and a heavy face.

“This is Val Drury,” Topsy Lamond said. “My new pal.”

She rose with the flippant dimples in her cheek again. There was a shade of defiance in the look she flung at Steele.

“Watch us!” she said.

There was something of the panther in the look of Val Drury—a dissipated panther, Steele thought. He watched the two of them in the whirl of dancers as the girl swayed closely in the man’s arms, and the man held her in a careless, brutal clasp, smiling down into her upturned face.

Then a girl in a flimsy dress came floating up to Steele, bowed low, and asked him gravely for the pleasure of a dance. The intoxication of light and music to which he had long been a stranger, crept upon him, and he danced until past midnight.

The sky was just turning a faint gray when the last couple left the old house.

Topsy Lamond shivered slightly in her white shawl. She tilted her pale shadow of a face up to the man by her side.

“Good night, Val!” she said.

Val Drury held her hand. There was something eager, even a little wolfish, in his gaunt eyes as he looked down at her.

“How much longer am I to wait?” he asked. “If you’re playing me against that solemn fool who was here to-

night, Topsy, I warn you to be careful.”

The girl shrank and was thrilled. The primitive passion of Val Drury, unsuccessful artist, was the only thrill of the adventurous Bohemian life she was leading. He supposed her to be as poor as the rest of the women he knew, yet wanted to marry her.

“Not long, perhaps—now!” Topsy whispered. She fled upstairs and the slam of the door echoed through the silent house.

Val Drury lighted a cigarette deliberately as he stood on the street corner. The matchlight showed the faint smile that played around the corners of his mouth. A few streets later, he turned into a dark doorway where a night club which was quite unknown to the police had its being. There was no need for Mr. Val Drury to go to bed early. He did not mean to work the next day, or indeed ever again. Where was the need if one was going to marry a girl who, as he had happened to find out, was very wealthy?

At that moment, Topsy’s apartment was in darkness and silence. The warm odor of smoke and wine was settling slowly above the disordered raffle of the big room.

Topsy Lamond’s sobs came muffled from the couch where she had thrown herself. Her slim shoulders shook a little and her fingers dug deep into the cushions. A little toy balloon drifted on some vagrant draught and settled on her tousled head.

The fantastic room seemed to laugh at her softly and mockingly out of the darkness.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was a week afterward that Terry Wedderburn returned to his home in Pringle Street, Woodton, later than usual.

He had left the factory at the usual time, coming through its big gates with



"You think that they are all fools, male and female, and that I am as bad as any of them with my painted lips and silly earrings."

a thousand other grimy men. But the thought of his ugly rooms sent him out along the road outside the town, to tramp in the red of a frosty sunset until the glittering lamps of the town called him back.

He was just unlocking the door when a woman's voice called his name.

"Terry!"

He knew before he looked up that it was Pansy Harkaway. Before he knew it, he had laughed aloud at her



standing there in her expensive fur coat and dainty snake-skin slippers in the dark shadows of Pringle Street. She had, he noticed, discarded her mourning.

"Come in, Pansy!" he said.

The door closed behind them. Terry turned on the lights and drew the shades down. He turned slowly around in the cheaply decorated interior of the outrageous little parlor where Pansy stood. He saw then that there were tears in

Pansy's eyes. He took them for tears of pity for himself.

"It has been horrible!" the girl whispered. "Oh, Terry, you are cruel! It has all been a nightmare. I have searched for you everywhere. I got the police to help me. I had to. They traced you here but lost you and I had to look for you myself in this awful town. Terry dear, what I was afraid of has happened. Everybody knows that Jack was going to divorce me. I

am an—an outcast. People are saying horrible things about you. They say that you have been faithless to Dawn and faithless to—to me. I can't face it by myself, Terry. I shall go mad or else kill myself!"

Pansy stopped, quivering. She looked at the grim face of the man before her, then around the shabby room in which they stood.

Her head drooped. She looked like a rain-driven flower.

"Terry, dear, I am going to humble myself," she said unsteadily. "Please—marry me!"

Terry leaned back against the table. In the next house a cheap radio had been turned on. He heard it above the little sobs that Pansy Harkaway gave.

"Marry you!" he repeated slowly. "I wonder if you remember that I am still married to Dawn?"

The words sounded clumsy and brutal to his own ears. He had realized that Pansy had spoken as though the wild suspicions that had led Harkaway to drive his horse at him and thus kill himself, had been true. He watched the girl's face with a glance that was cold and a little relentless. To any one who had been able to look into that musty room, the picture of the gaunt young man in the soiled clothes standing so grimly before the richly clad woman, would have been the strangest in all Woodton that night.

Pansy lifted her face and moved a little closer to him.

"She has left you!" she said. Terry did not draw back as her hand touched the lapel of his coat. "She does not want you. The law would be willing to set you free to-morrow. It would be only kind to her to let it do so. Terry, I am all alone. I am rich. I can give you all that you have been accustomed to. I can take you out of these horrible surroundings now, to-night. Oh, Terry, do you want me to ask you to elope with me?"

Her tumult of speech ended in a breathless laugh. A slow panic was creeping upon Pansy Harkaway. Something had thrown Terry into the street and taken away his careless laughter. She was conscious of a frightened desire to put him into the clothes of his own class again, to take him from that hideously poor house, lest her passionate caprice for him should die down.

At her words Terry's jaw tightened. "That is the second kind offer which has been made to buy me from my bondage," he said. "I am not like the usual prodigal who falls from grace. My friends seem to be driving a number of fatted calves to me in my distress."

"I don't understand, Terry!" Pansy faltered.

Terry scarcely heard her. With the gust of self-humiliation and misery that shook him, a wave of weakness passed over his body. The effects of the accident were still upon him, and the fatigue of his work in the big factory had left him exhausted. The wound in his head throbbed suddenly, making the room reel before his eyes.

"You are ill, dear!" Pansy said, swiftly.

She caught Terry as he lurched, and helped him to the couch, her arms about him.

"All right!" Terry smiled weakly. "It's nothing——"

He stopped. His eyes were upraised and riveted to the doorway of the room. Framed against the darkness of the woodwork, a girl stood.

"Dawn!" Terry Wedderburn whispered.

He stumbled to his feet, freeing himself from Pansy. He stood, staring almost stupidly, with all the hunger of his soul rising like a tide about him. As he held out his arms, he saw Dawn shrink, her lips wide apart; a little brooch that fastened her dress gleamed and dimmed with her quick breathing. Then, like a vision, she was gone.

Terry sprang blindly after her. He heard the door close, and fumbled wildly at the knob. When at last he flung open the door, the street was empty and silent but for the mocking radio next door.

He stood in the darkness. Slowly he went back to the little parlor.

"It was a well-planned little tableau, Pansy," he murmured. "The timing was wonderful. I believe we were in each other's arms. She must have seen us perfectly. You are a little artist and I congratulate you."

There was terrible irony in his voice. His eyes were the blue of a glacier, his face bereft of any color and unnaturally calm. Pansy Harkaway watched him with a slow-growing terror that she sought in vain to crush.

His voice came again.

"It was kind of you to come here to-night. It is seldom that a rich and pretty widow honors a workingman like myself with such a proposal as you have made me. Yet I think I ought to tell you that it is Dawn I love. Even when I married her I loved her, though I never realized it. She has gone to Morrice Steele, who will take greater care of her than I did. But I still love her. The little scene she has just witnessed will help her to free herself. So if you will live with me as the wife of an honest workingman, I shall be glad to marry you."

Terry ended with grave irony. Cold anger made him merciless. Pansy Harkaway listened to him in frozen horror.

"You are mad!" she cried.

She cast a frightened glance around the room. She had not arranged that scene. Sometimes she had dreamed, in her scheming, that she might bring about such a stage setting. Now that it had happened she was filled with dread and a strange doubt of herself. Where was the laughing and gay-hearted Terry she had known?

"Come back, Terry! Oh, you are horribly—different!"

Pansy spoke the words to her own tottering passion. She had loved the light-hearted, young man about town, but she was beginning to hate this gaunt, soiled young workingman.

"I am never coming back," Terry answered her. "I have nothing to come back to."

"I am going!" Pansy said.

She knew for the first time that Terry saw clearly into her shallow soul. Because of that the candle-flame of hatred which was growing within her sprang a little higher.

Terry opened the door.

"Good night, Mrs. Harkaway," he said. "Forgive me my humble abode and my uncouthness and everything."

Pansy Harkaway looked up at his granite face with hard, frightened eyes. Her small, white teeth showed in the dark between her lips for a moment.

"I shall forgive you nothing!" she cried, and ran out into the dimly lighted street.

Dawn Wedderburn paused in the quiet street. She lifted her hand for a moment to her throat.

"You should have known!" she murmured. "Oh, you ought never to have gone!"

She gave a small and weary laugh. What madness had driven her to creep down to Terry's that night she scarcely knew. There was gossip that a "strange young man" had recently taken rooms in a house owned by the garrulous landlady of the big house, where Dawn had rented a small apartment.

He had called himself "Jim Brown." But Dawn's heart had leaped with knowledge at the woman's description.

The dull ache of loneliness became intolerable. What was Terry doing in Woodton as an ordinary workman, and where was Pansy? She crushed the hope that leaped within her. Yet she



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could not fight down the hungry desire to see him if only for a moment.

Dawn closed her eyes, standing still in the middle of the street. She had seen him; walked into his place, and seen him white and ill-looking, in Pansy Harkaway's arms.

"I could not help it," she whispered, piteously.

Dawn felt tired and weak. The house where she lived, was at the end of the street which was steep. A big car with flaring headlights came toward her.

It stopped abruptly with a harsh grinding of brakes. She was passing into the darkness beyond the dazzling headlights, when some one suddenly seized her arm.

"Don't struggle, Rosy!" a voice strangely husky, yet familiar, said.

Before she knew it, she was lifted off her feet. For a moment fear seized Dawn and she fought. Then unceremoniously she was thrust into the car, which started swiftly and smoothly on its way.

"Rosy, my dear!"

A light was turned on in the car and with a startled cry she looked at the little man at her side. It was her father, Ben Compton!

"I couldn't help it, Rosy," he said, his voice hoarse with emotion. "I had to come and look for you though you told me not to in that letter you sent me. I'm an old man and old folks are greedy about the ones they love. There's queer stories about you and Terry being told at home. What's happened, Rosy? Was he cruel to you?"

Dawn shook her head.

"No!" she breathed. She saw the eager, doglike love in her father's face, and something that was new and fresh. He looked haggard and beaten, though he tried to hide it. She had never thought of him as being old until that moment.

"No," Dawn repeated. "We found that our marriage was a mistake. So we parted. Dad dear, don't worry. I can look after myself. Girls can, nowadays. When marriage becomes irksome people end it now. I thought it better to try to fight the world like any other woman, to forget that I was the heiress of a wealthy man and would some day be very rich. I wanted to forget I was Ben Compton's daughter. I wanted to earn my own living."

Dawn tried to smile. It was because she was Ben Compton's daughter that Terry had married her. If she had been any other girl that parting in the autumn mists would have been the last she would have seen of him.

All at once, she was aware that her father was trembling. He had caught

her gently with both his bony hands, as though to steady himself.

"Some day, Rosy, you'll maybe have to forget it!" he said. He seemed to be groping for words. "For something's happened!"

Dawn sat still. The car was creaking softly over the hard stones of the town street. In the passing rays of the street lamps Ben Compton's eyes shone fiercely.

"They've got past the old watch dog, Rosy!" he said. "In his old age he's got blind—blind! That's me, Ben Compton, who used to be able to see out of his ears, folks said. It's a long story, though it's all took place quickly. There was a syndicate made up of the biggest men in the country. Then one day there came along an old fool who thought he'd be a new Napoleon. He'd forgotten young blood."

Ben Compton gave a laugh that was like a gasp of pain.

"He bought all the shares he could lay hands on in this company. He put every penny he had into it. He bought it out. And then he found out there was another corporation ready to eat up his at a gulp and then walk in."

The old man sat with his bent shoulders drooping.

"Ruin, Rosy!" he said, softly. "I've wondered all my life what it felt like. And now I shall know—soon! Forgive me, my dear!"

It was like a cry from a wounded and bewildered man.

"You silly old dear!" Dawn whispered tremulously, her warm lips on her father's rough cheek.

Her eyes were bright. But she felt very calm, though she knew that if Ben Compton were ruined, he had received a blow that would kill him as surely as the stroke of a blade.

"Who is the head of this—this other corporation?" she asked.

Dawn did not know why she held her breath after the question. When the

name came it was as though she had known all along.

"That young man—Morrice Steele." There was awe even in the tired bitterness of Ben Compton's voice. "I never knew until lately. Maybe he never knew I was at the head. But if he had, he wouldn't have held his hand. Nor would I when I was his age. There's no mercy with men like Morrice Steele and me. We neither ask nor give it. If Morrice Steele showed mercy to me now it would cost him near to a million and the little tin god's throne that's the dream of men like him and me. He's shown no mercy to your husband's people, the Wedderburns. He's sinking coal shafts outside their gates already. He'll have the house any day now. He's a hard man."

The ghost of a grim smile touched Compton's lips as he finished.

Dawn felt a sudden wave of weakness go over her. The night had been a riot of emotion which was now almost too strong for her. Morrice Steele!

Her father, dazed by the catastrophe that was upon him, did not suspect that she was in Woodton working as Steele's secretary. How well she knew about the forming of his new corporation! She shivered at the thought that her own hand had written some of the letters which had helped to destroy her father.

"He could save you from ruin, if he wished, dad—Morrice Steele!" Dawn said. "And still remain rich and powerful."

The blood rushed to her face then ebbed back to her heart, leaving Dawn Wedderburn very pale and still. What was it that Morrice Steele had said that day John Harkaway had been killed?

"You could come to me and ask for anything. Never forget that!"

"Yes!" said Ben Compton, softly, as though to himself. "He could save me, if he'd throw away a million. But men don't do that without getting something

in return. And I've nothing to give him."

"Stop the car, dad!" Dawn cried, breathlessly and imperiously. "I can't go home with you now, dear. I must stay a little longer in Woodton. Then I will come. Perhaps something will happen. I think it will. But you must let me stay here. I have enough money and am quite—quite happy. Before long I will let you know something about Terry and myself."

Dawn spoke into the speaking tube. The car stopped just outside the town.

"Good-by, dear!" she breathed. "And don't worry. Something will happen so that Morrice Steele will not ruin you."

She pressed her lips to his worn face. Already, the approaching blow seemed to have drained the vitality from Ben Compton and he clung to her with a bewildered look.

"Don't leave me, Rosy! Not now! I'm shaky, dear. Something's broke inside."

He sought to hold her and for one instant her resolution faltered. Yet the more pitiful he seemed, the more surely she must leave him for the purpose that had formed within her.

"I must, dear!" She caressed his rough hand. "For a little while. Oh, don't you see that I must try and save you before it is too late?"

She stood on the wind-swept road beside the car. She saw the faintness of Ben Compton's old ironical smile.

"Save me! You can't, Rosy, my little girl. Not you nor any other woman, nor man neither, except Steele. And he'll give mercy no more than I'll ask for it. Something for nothing, Rosy! Men like Morrice Steele—and—me—don't know that kind of dealing."

"I am going, dad!" Dawn said. "You must be brave until you hear from me. You will be brave until then?"

She was frightened—frightened of what grief and shattered pride might do

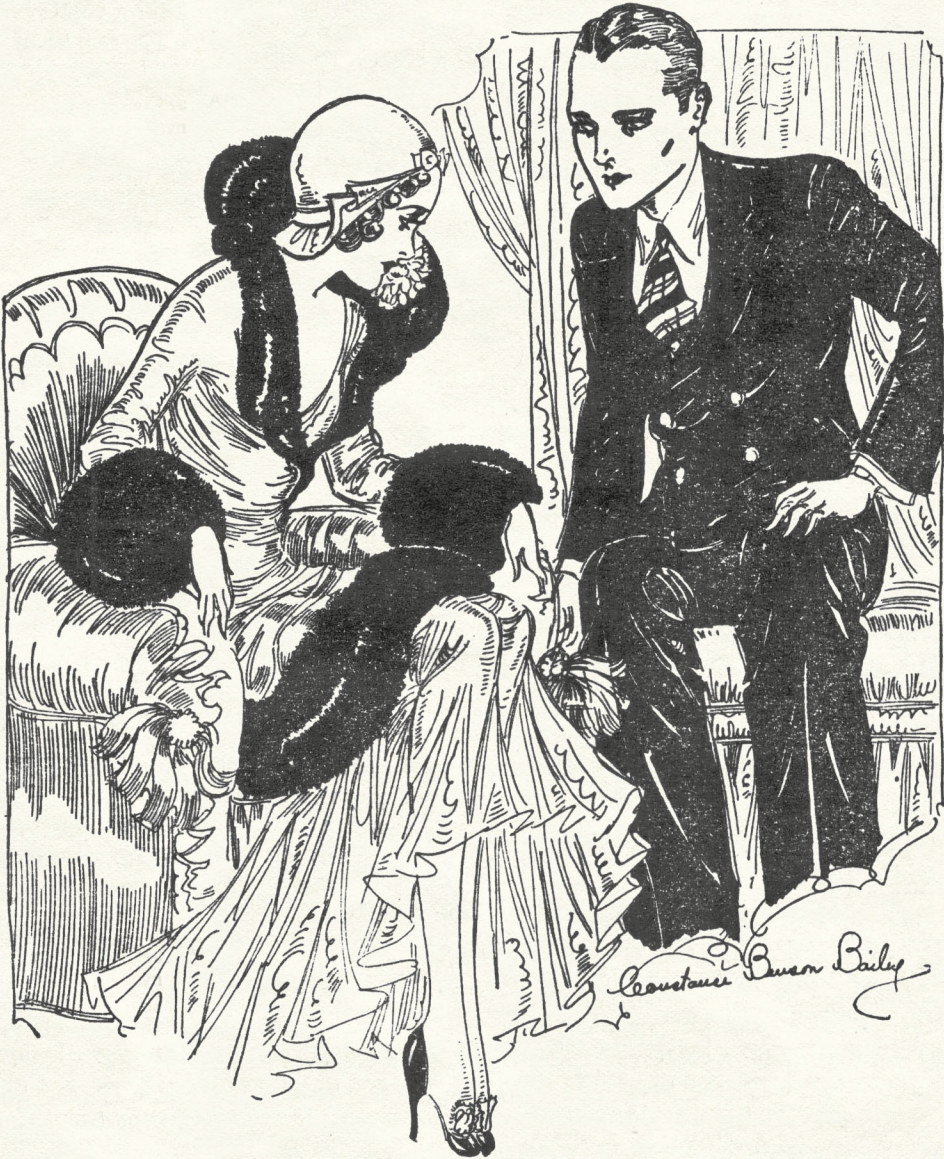
to Ben Compton's reason. She crushed her fear bravely.

She freed herself gently. Then she was half-running down the dark road.

Her eyes were luminous, but her face was pale as she hurried toward the faint shadows of the town, where it lay in the valley below. The house which

Morrice Steele had taken stood on the hillside beneath the road which she traveled.

Dawn leaned against a tree and looked down. Then she turned to look at the huddled streets of Woodton, strung with glimmering lamps about the valley. It was as though her glance tried to find



*"I am going to tell you the only payment I can offer," Dawn continued.
"It is—myself."*

that hidden house where Terry Wedderburn was with Pansy Harkaway.

"Terry dear!" she whispered pitifully. "I must! And you don't care!"

Very slowly she began to descend the road which led to Morrice Steele's house.

Dawn's footsteps faltered and stopped before the heavy door of Morrice Steele's house.

She stood beneath the overhanging portico, drawing the collar of her coat closer about her throat. Her eyes felt hot and lustrous, but the rest of her body was very cold.

"I have a right to do what I wish with myself! It will not hurt Terry since he doesn't care!"

The sweeping thought gave her strength. She lifted the knocker and waited with erect little head and stiff, slim body.

A healthy-looking housekeeper opened the door. Dawn saw that she was dressed as though for a journey. At the sight of the girl she hesitated, her broad, motherly face puckering.

"Miss Denstone!" she said, doubtfully. "Why, yes, the master's in, but I'm just going to Ockley Hill to see my sister, who is very sick. Mr. Steele said he could look after himself to-night so he'll be alone."

The woman ended with an embarrassed cough. In the lighted hall a big figure blotted out the brightness.

Morrice Steele spoke. Dawn caught the vibrant gladness in his voice.

"Come in!" he said. He left both her real and false names unspoken. To Morrice Steele, in the tumult that had swept his big and stormy soul utterly out of its depth, the sight of Dawn at that hour shook him with wild hopes and fears.

"I haven't seen you for nearly a week," he said.

He did not say that he had kept purposely away from his office because he was afraid of himself. Since his visit

to Topsy Lamond in New York he had been traveling around on business, trying to lull his fever with the anodyne of hard work, and failing miserably.

"Something has happened to you!" Morrice Steele said, slowly.

They stood together in his big, simply furnished study. The footsteps of Mrs. Wyper, the housekeeper, had crunched past the window, and they were left alone in the house.

"You are trembling!" Steele said, speaking again, almost harshly. "Sit down and tell me why you have come."

He did not touch her though Dawn had held out her hand to him. The masterful note of his voice made her sink mechanically into the big armchair. Now that she had crossed the threshold of her resolution she felt suddenly very calm and coldly desperate.

"I have just seen my father," she told him. "He came here to look for me. He told me what I never knew—that he was the Iron Manufacturing Corporation. He is on the verge of ruin which means that he will soon be dead, because he could not live as a ruined man. He believes that there is only one man who could save him. That is you."

Morrice Steele stood looking down at her.

"So he sent you to me," he said.

"He did not." Dawn's head went up proudly, yet a little wearily. "He does not even remember that I know you. I came myself. I came to remind you of a promise you once made me. Women never forget a promise. I came to ask you to let the Iron Manufacturing Corporation slip from your hands so that my father will not be utterly broken. Am I not a madwoman?"

She lifted her dry, hard eyes, brimming with wistful and bitter laughter. At her words Steele made no movement. He seemed to wait for her to go on. She knew that she must finish.

"I am going to tell you the only

payment I can offer," Dawn continued. "It is—myself."

"Yourself!"

Steele whispered the word. All the dams and floodgates he had tried to build within himself seemed to tumble down. His hazel eyes were lighting slowly, but he continued to stand, watching the fair, drooping head and pale steady face before him.

"I told you that I loved Terry. It is still true—though I know there is another woman, for I have just seen her with him. I imagine the gods must have been working overtime to-night. I am quite sure, now, that I shall never get him back. I think I haven't been sure of that till to-night. But I am now. I think the only time that I shall ever hear from him again will be when he wants me to—to divorce him. Oh, people will say it is a sordid case, when they see it in the papers. They will talk about the degeneration of the idle rich—Terry Wedderburn and Mrs. Harkaway, Ben Compton's daughter and the great Morrice Steele!"

A gulp of laughter caught in Dawn's throat. The sound of it made Morrice Steele wince.

"You have come to me to save your father," he said slowly. "It is another—bargain?"

"If you will agree to it," Dawn whispered. She was searching his face with a passionate scrutiny in which there was dread. What if he would make no bargain? She had heard that to men like Morrice Steele their ambition was a golden god, and women and love but things of tinsel. She had forgotten her own self utterly in the fever of sacrifice that was upon her. Two pictures filled her soul, incongruously different, the laughing careless face of Terry Wedderburn, and the beaten and bowed head of Ben Compton.

"A business deal!"

The words dropped heavily from Morrice Steele. He had moved nearer

to Dawn and looked big and remorseless, yet almost brutally hungry.

"When I gave you that promise, I never said I should ask any payment," he said, slowly.

"I know that you want payment," Dawn replied. "I do not think in all your life you have ever given away any great thing without exacting payment—fair and just perhaps. But you always wanted payment."

Steele's hands clenched. Like an arrow the true words that this clear-souled and sheltered girl spoke went home. He had always taken payment for everything. That was why he was Morrice Steele, whom men hated and feared.

Suddenly he stood close to Dawn.

"I want to take you and hold you!" he said, with a quick and potent wave of passion that seemed to weaken him. "I want to take the wonderful gift that God has sent to me, without asking the why or wherefore. I want to take it and cherish it and give it all that it asks and nothing more. Not in payment, but because I want to give. You've come here to make the payment that women have been willing to make as long as there has been history, for some one they loved. My dear!"

Dawn looked up. She saw that Steele's face was hard and ugly with suppressed pain, yet his hazel eyes were infinitely tender and wounded. Suddenly he caught both her shoulders.

"I play the rôle of villain badly!" he said, with a twisted smile. "I've got to learn how to do it."

He turned abruptly from her. Within him temptation was rioting in a pitiless storm. She was in love with her vagabond husband and yet would sacrifice herself for her father. What if he took her, trusting in time to give her some shred of the passion that shook himself? He could make her forget Terry Wedderburn sooner or later. Could he? She was not the type that forget soon.

"I can't let you do it, Dawn!" Steele said, huskily.

She swayed to her feet, utterly colorless. He knew that by holding out his hands he could have taken her into his arms, and she would have given herself to him.

"Then you will save my father?" she asked, steadily.

Morrice Steele stood big and angular, with his hands hanging by his sides. His face looked worn and haggard.

"Your father is safe," he answered almost roughly. "I will do nothing about the Iron Manufacturing Corporation until I decide whether——"

"Whether?" Dawn's hot lips scarcely moved.

"Whether to take payment," Steele finished.

He was standing at the open door and the cool night wind was blowing into the room. An absurd film swam before Dawn's eyes, so that, as she passed out, she almost stumbled against him. Steele caught her arm and guided her down the starlit dusk of the path.

The gate clicked softly behind her and she was standing alone.

Very slowly Dawn Wedderburn moved down the road toward the distant town.

TO BE CONCLUDED.



INQUISITIVE MOON

WHEN stars like blossoms
 Appear in skies above
 And night winds murmur
 Melodies of love,
 I find sweet oblivion
 From care within your arms,
 Against your heart I rest
 Safe from all alarms.
 The pale, white moon,
 Like a lady from the sea,
 Glides from a cloud,
 Looks at you and me.
 I raise my hand
 To shut out the moon's face;
 Moonbeams shine through
 My fingers like lace.
 You kiss each finger,
 Smiling tenderly.
 Ardently your lips
 Find mine in love's ecstasy.

HELEN K. ROBERTS.



HELEN came out of an office building on Main Street in Houston, Texas, and stood huddled against the wall for a moment, away from the swirling current of humanity that swept past her. It was like that every evening from five to six: She was glad, she thought, that she didn't have to struggle for a seat or a strap on the overcrowded street cars. Her room was only six blocks away on McKinney Avenue. She caught a long breath and stepped into the current flowing past her.

People jostled her. She was tired. It had been a hard day in the office.

The traffic light was against her at the next corner. A young man clad in dust-stained overalls stood beside her as she paused on the curb. She could read his story as easily as though it were written

Redhead

By

Irma Mullens

on a sign on his chest. He was one of the great army of unemployed. Down on his luck, he would call it.

A tiny wave of sympathy for him ran over her. She couldn't help feeling that way about these men out

of jobs. He had probably come into the city on a freight train. That would account for the dust-stained overalls. His eyes, sweeping around, met her appraising gaze. She turned her head quickly.

"I wonder if you could help me." He was speaking to her. "I——"

The light changed, and whatever he had intended to say was lost in the dash across the street. He was still beside her when she stepped up on the curb at the farther side of the street. He was

rather a nice-looking young man despite the dusty overalls. She glanced around at him again. His face was red, but he managed a grin. He was probably hungry, she reasoned. A restaurant loomed beside her. Her pity for him won. She swung into the restaurant and touched his arm lightly as she passed. He followed her through the door.

"You're hungry, aren't you?" She paused just inside the door and looked up into his face.

"Why—why——" The redness of his face deepened.

"It's quite all right," she assured him. "I know what it is to be out of a job. I've been in that condition myself."

"But I'm afraid that—I——"

"The first thing, of course, is a good hot meal," she told him brightly. "There's nothing that can get your spirit down lower than an empty stomach." She pulled off her coat to hang it on a rack beside a table.

A second later he was grinning across a white tablecloth at her. His dark hair swept back from his forehead in curly waves. His teeth were white, even, and well cared for. His gray eyes had little glints of fire in them, and his skin was tanned a healthy brown. Altogether, he was a very good-looking young man, she decided.

"Really, I shouldn't——" His voice trailed off as she cut in:

"The roast duck with oyster dressing here is excellent."

"What I started to say was——"

"You'll want coffee, of course."

"Are there any more like you in Houston?" he asked.

She shook her head.

"No, I'm the original dumb-bell. Mary, my roommate, says it would be impossible for any one else to be as dumb as I am."

"I didn't mean like that, though I'm sure it's just a case of envy with your friend Mary." His eyes were frankly admiring. "Why, listen, you make all

the girls in the current 'Follies' look like the washed-out chorus of a second-rate show!"

A wave of color swept up into her face.

"You needn't be trying to pay for your supper with pretty speeches," she told him. "I'm expecting my money back when you get a job."

His face turned a brick-red hue. One hand went instinctively toward his pocket, and then he seemed to remember that he had no money. The hand came back to rest on the table.

"I'm stating facts, not handing out a line," he told her. With the forefinger of one hand he emphasized each sentence. "In the first place, about half of our feminine population is living on lettuce, dill pickles, and soda crackers, trying to attain a figure like yours. Then there's that glorious red hair. It's not auburn or golden; it's frankly red, and how! The person who could match its shade with a dye would make a millionaire look like a pauper in less than a year. Aiding and abetting the hair and the figure is a natural complexion that costs the women of America millions each year to imitate, and a pair of deep-blue eyes that I suspect are not entirely inexperienced in making masculine hearts function erratically!"

Helen managed a smile as she leaned over the table. He was certainly turning out to be an irresponsible young man. She had picked him up because he was hungry, and now she suspected that he was trying to make her.

"You must think I'm as dumb as Mary said I was, if you expect me to fall for a line like that." She toyed with a fork on the table. "You needn't worry over what I said about paying for this." Her smile flashed out suddenly. "I'm a Girl Scout," she confided. Her hand indicated the roast duck the waiter was placing before them. "This is my good deed for to-day."

She hadn't realized before that she, too, was hungry. She had ordered for herself mainly to save him the unnecessary embarrassment of eating alone. Obviously, he was not the kind of young man who made begging a profession; it was due to the unemployment situation that prevailed over the whole country. There was something pathetic about it to her. Here was a young man unable to find work, who was obviously intelligent, of fair education, able-bodied, and anxious for a job. She was sure of the latter. He wasn't of the hobo or tramp type. He was adventurous, perhaps, but always perfectly willing to pay his way.

There were, of course, thousands like him all over the country, men who had lost their jobs and were unable to find others. Something really ought to be done about it. Just what should be done Helen was not sure, but she knew it should be done quickly.

"Thanks a lot," the young man told her when they stood outside the restaurant door. "If you'll give me your address, I'll pay the money back to you just as soon as I go to work." He fished a card and a fountain pen from the pocket of his overalls, and stood waiting for her answer.

She stared at the pen silently. It was a rather expensive one, ornamented with gold, not the sort of pen a young man who was broke and looking for a job would be expected to carry around with him.

"My mother gave it to me." He had noticed her interest in the pen. "That's why I still have it," he explained.

"Oh!" Her eyes moved away from the pen. "Send it to Helen Anthony, Post Office Box 891," she told him. It was the mail address of the company she worked for. Any mail addressed to her in care of their box would reach her.

"And your street address?" he went on.

"Is that necessary? You can mail the money to me."

"I prefer to bring it to you personally."

She hesitated. After all, he was a strange young man.

"I can trace you from the box number," he suggested.

She considered that. It was true. She had forgotten for the instant that he was an altogether irrepressible young man.

"The street address is No. 4412 Main Street," she said with a smile. It was the number of the building in which she worked, and was the business address of probably a couple of hundred girls as much as it was hers.

"Thank you." The pen scratched once more.

"Here's a dollar." She opened her bag and held out a bill to him. "I—I think you can find a room and bed for that to-night." The color was rushing up into her face again.

He waved the money aside.

"I'll find a place to sleep without that," he assured her. "There are lots of places to sleep for a fellow like me. Haystacks, box cars——"

Her laugh interrupted.

"Haystacks in Houston? I hardly think you'll find them!"

"Anyway, there are the box cars," he retorted. "Always plenty of them sitting around in the railroad yards."

She put the bill back in her bag and turned away. Before she had taken half a dozen steps, she was glancing back over her shoulder at him. He was striding up the street with as much assurance as though he had just been elected president of the bank which loomed down upon them from across the street. The world would never be able to keep a young man like that down for long.

She forgot she was tired as she walked on to the room she shared with Mary Hughes. Mary was there when she arrived, and wanted to know why

she was late. Helen told her that she had eaten on the way, but neglected to mention the young man. Mary would think she was getting to the point where she needed a guardian, if she learned that Helen had given a strange young man his supper.

"Got a date for to-night?" Mary wanted to know.

Helen shook her head.

"Derek wants to bring along a friend for you."

Helen slipped out of her dress and into a bath robe. Mary was always wanting her to go out with some of Derek's friends. They never turned out exactly right for her. A lot of them wanted to kiss her the first time she went out with them. Others assured her that they could never be happy without her. All of them assumed that she wanted to get married. She didn't. She was doing very well for herself. Her salary was thirty-five dollars a week in the office where she worked, and the hours were not long.

"Well, are you going?" Mary demanded.

"No, I think not," Helen replied. "Derek's friends bore me."

"Indeed?" Mary raised a pair of plucked eyebrows. "Perhaps you're looking for bigger game."

"I'm not looking for any game at all."

"You may change your mind when I tell you this man is a big cotton king. He's probably worth half a million!"

"When I fall for a man it will be because I love him and not because he's got money! There are two kinds of men I don't care about knowing. One is the adventurous type that's looking for a new thrill, and the other is a man with a lot of money. Both of them always expect things of a girl."

"Honey, all men are adventurers where women are concerned."

Helen went on into the bathroom and turned the water on in the tub. When she came out twenty minutes later, Mary

was dressed to go out. Helen found a magazine and a comfortable chair, and sat down to read.

Mary paused at the door before she left.

"Darling, I think you're wrong this time," she told Helen. "George Madison is nice, besides having half a million. I've got an idea he'd fall for you harder than the stock market tumbled last winter."

Helen glanced up slowly from the magazine.

"If and when I ever marry, it won't be a rich man. They never forget a girl had nothing before she married them."

Helen was quite sure of her philosophy. She knew exactly what she wanted of marriage if it ever came to her—a bungalow in the suburbs with plenty of flowers around it, a spotless kitchen with shiny pots and pans, dainty little aprons to wear in that kitchen, and last but not least, a man who worked for his living and yet had plenty of time to lavish all the love in the world on her.

The next afternoon when she came out of the building, a rather well-dressed young man was standing beside the entrance. She turned her head quickly when he smiled at her. The young man quickly fell into step beside her.

"You really need a memory course for faces," he remarked. "You stand a good chance to lose money if you go around feeding hungry men, and then can't remember their faces when you see them again."

She glanced around at him quickly. He was the young man of the day before. He looked very different without the overalls.

"Oh!" She was annoyed at herself for blushing. Why should she be embarrassed because she hadn't remembered him? He was nothing to her. Her eyes took in the excellent material of his suit and the well-tailored air



"I wonder if you could help me." He was speaking to her.

about him. "You found a job rather quickly, didn't you?" she asked him in surprise.

"Yes, and I talked my boss into giving me an advance on my salary," he explained. "I want to pay you for my dinner last evening." He pulled a wallet from his pocket. They were before the same small restaurant where they had eaten the night before. He glanced inside and smiled. "The roast duck with oyster dressing is excellent in there," he suggested.

She paused in indecision.

"Won't you please have dinner with me?" he begged.

"I'm afraid you're a spendthrift," she smiled at him. "The very first day you get a job you want to begin spending your money on girls."

"Not girls!" he objected. "On one girl, and such a girl!"

The color in her face deepened. There was something about him that left her a bit flustered. She forced her eyes to meet his.

"Can you really afford it?" she wanted to know.

"Listen—the only thing I can't afford is to have you refuse." His hand sought her arm to guide her into the restaurant. "Can't you understand it's

certain to help my courage and self-confidence to know I'm dining with the prettiest girl in Houston?"

"I really shouldn't let you," she objected, as he piloted her into the place.

Then he was helping her off with her coat and hanging it on the rack. The waiter hovered over them. Helen remembered that she didn't even know the young man's name. Her aunt, who owned the apartment house where she and Mary roomed, would be highly shocked if she suspected that Helen was having dinner with a young man she had picked up on the street.

"And what, may I ask, is the job that seems to have produced such sudden and satisfactory results?" Helen asked.

He took a cardcase from his pocket, and placed a bit of white pasteboard on the table before her. She read:

HOUSTON AUTO SALES COMPANY
Represented by
DANIEL A. McDONALD

He grinned across the table at her.

"That's splendid!" She put the card back on the table. "You were lucky, weren't you?"

"Beyond a doubt," he agreed.

"Jobs are so few, and there are so many men looking for them," she said.

"I wasn't referring to the job," he told her quickly. "I've never failed to find a job. But a girl like you!" His eyes lighted up. "That's something different."

They went from their dinner to a show. After that, Dan dropped by a garage and drove an expensive-looking roadster out. It was, she knew, the car furnished him by the company he worked for. They rode out to the end of Main Street and back.

A week went swiftly by. Dan seemed to be one of those young men who believed in making the most of opportunities. His job never interfered with his waiting for her each evening when she came down from work. Her conscience

troubled her a little over the amount of money he insisted on spending on her. There were boxes of candy and flowers galore, the best shows in town, dancing at the most expensive night clubs. His attitude toward money could hardly be reconciled with that of a young man who had been penniless and hungry a week before.

He explained it by saying that he was selling a lot of cars, and that his commissions were high.

They drove to Galveston one Sunday. He had gotten out to change a punctured tire. She was trying to help. His hand closed over hers as she was placing the jack. Their eyes met for a brief instant, clung together. Irresistibly, like steel to magnet, the flow of emotion that seemed to possess them both drew them together. Their lips met.

At last Helen was aware of people passing in cars and staring at them curiously. She struggled free of his arms. He still held her hand. She was weak and breathless.

"Honey, I love you!" he whispered, and there was something in his voice that told her that he, too, was shaken.

They changed the tire and drove on. He kept talking of a trip to California.

"We can't be married right away." She smiled at him. He was so obviously in love with her. "There are several reasons, Dan. Of course, we could rent a furnished apartment, but I don't want to live like that. I want a home—not an expensive one, but a place where we won't have to ask the landlady when we want to cook a meal on the gas stove."

He was silent for several moments after that. She nestled close to him as he slipped one arm around her. It was an hour that she found herself wishing could last forever. The car purred smoothly, like the perfect piece of machinery it was. He spent more money on her in Galveston. Nothing but the

most expensive places would do for them.

It was nearing eleven that night when they finally drove back to Houston. Mary was waiting. Helen knew Mary was up as she climbed the stairs to their room. Mary had been peeping through the curtains when Dan kissed her good night. Helen hadn't cared. As far as she was concerned, all the world could know she loved Dan.

Mary was just slipping out of her dress as Helen opened the door.

"You're a fine four-flusher!" Mary remarked as Helen sank down into a chair to slip off her shoes.

"Why?"

"I saw you down there a moment ago."

Helen nodded brightly.

"I've fallen at last," she admitted. She carried her shoes to the closet and caught a negligee from a hook. "It's funny. I didn't know for sure I was in love with him till this morning."

"Yes? It's easy to fall in love with a man like that. I can understand now how George Madison with his half a million didn't look so good to you."

Helen laughed.

"Isn't Dan a darling?" she asked. "He's worth more than all the money in the world."

"Sure he's a darling," Mary agreed. "Any one whose old man has ten million is a darling!"

Helen swung around slowly from the closet door.

"What do you mean?" she demanded.

"Dan earns every cent he's got. Why, I even bought his supper for him the first night I met him. He—he——" She paused. She couldn't tell Mary that Dan had been begging when she saw him the first time. "He was hungry and didn't have a cent!"

"Say, that's a hot one for the press! Elias McDonald's son hungry and fed by a working girl! Only, don't give it too much publicity, honey, or they won't

believe you." Mary leaned back in her chair and laughed.

"What are you trying to say?" Helen had hold of Mary's shoulders and was shaking her. "Dan's poor, I tell you! Very poor."

"Then I'd like to be just as poor as he is!" Mary got up and went over to where the Sunday paper was scattered on the floor. "I'm not blaming you, honey," she went on as she hunted through the rotogravure section. "Ten million aren't to be treated lightly. My advice is, to watch your step, keep him crazy about you, and don't let him forget you're ready to marry him any moment." Mary came back to her with the paper opened at a certain page.

Helen stared silently at the photograph of Dan before her eyes. The little caption below it read:

Automobile manufacturer's son working in local agency, learning retail selling end. Mr. Sam Adams, dealer, says that Dan McDonald is proving himself a real salesman, too!

Slowly Helen dropped the paper back on the floor. So that was why he had found a job so readily! And he had probably driven down from the factory, which would account for the dust-stained overalls. She smiled grimly at the idea of her notion that he was hungry and her insistence on buying him something to eat. It was, as Mary had said, hot press stuff.

Her thoughts ran on, dwelling on this incident and that since she had known him till the moment she had found herself in his arms. Vaguely, she knew there had been something wrong with his declaration of love, and she kept searching her memory for what it was. Marriage! She sat up a little straighter in her chair as she remembered that he had forgotten to ask her to marry him. She had been just a playgirl for Dan, some one to help pass away the hours of his exile from home!

Her eyes were wide and staring when



Her conscience troubled her a little over the amount of money he insisted on spending on her.

she rose to undress. She would never let any one know how much it hurt.

"You certainly kept it dark," Mary told her. "My advice is hurry up with the wedding if he's asked you to marry him!"

"But he didn't!" Helen stepped over to the light switch. "Are you ready?" she asked.

"You mean——" Mary sat up in bed.

"No, I don't mean anything!" It was hard for Helen to keep all the heat out of her voice. Mary could be trying at times.

Long after Mary was asleep, Helen was still watching the cars flit by on the street below. Of the two kinds of men she had told herself she would never fall in love with she had to choose one who combined the qualities of both. A wealthy adventurer! Dan was like that. He would always be seeking new fields of feminine pulchritude to conquer. Of course, he hadn't asked her to marry him. She was just another girl in a life more or less filled with them.

She went to sleep at last to dream that Dan was trying to flirt with every pretty girl on the streets.

In the old, gray light of the next morning while she stared down at the street below, she lay on the bed and tried to plan a future in which men would have no part. It wasn't going to be easy to forget Dan. Being a practical young person and not inclined to illogical reasoning, Helen recognized that Dan had done something to her which could not be brushed away like a bit of dust from her shoes or dress. Cutting him out of her life would hurt. It would take quite some time to heal the wound.

The day dragged along. Things went wrong in the office, and at five o'clock Helen felt that nothing in the world could possibly matter again. To avoid Dan she left by a side entrance. After going to her room by a roundabout route, she found that he had been keeping the phone busy for ten minutes, demanding that he be allowed to talk to her.

"For Heaven's sake, child," her aunt reproved her, "talk to that young man before the phone runs me crazy!"

"I don't want to talk to him," Helen replied, midway on the stairs.

"Miss Anthony doesn't want to talk to you, and will you please stop calling?" she heard her aunt telling Dan as she went on up the stairs to her room. Yet, twenty minutes later her aunt was knocking on her door, and saying: "Helen, that young man is parked down in the living room, and refuses to leave until he sees you! I've tried to get rid of him, but he won't move an inch. You'll simply have to come down and see him for a moment."

Helen stared wearily at her reflection in the dressing-table mirror. She had nearly forgotten that Dan was an irrepressible young man. She picked up a powder puff, ran it over her face, and went down to see him.

"Honey!" He was up instantly and took two quick steps toward her. "What's wrong? Have you suddenly

discovered I'm a dud?" He grinned at her.

She stared at him silently. She had forgotten there would have to be some kind of explanation to him. His grin froze on his face.

"What is it, honey?" he demanded. "You're looking at me as though I were a bomb some Red had left in the room! I knew when you didn't keep our date for lunch that there was a cylinder missing in the motor somewhere."

"We're through," she told him steadily. "It must have been quite a joke to you when you let me pay for your dinner that evening!"

"Now, listen: I knew you had me wrong, but I started falling for you right that moment. If I'd told you the truth then, you'd have promptly forgotten me. I understood that. So I let you go on thinking what you were thinking. It gave me a chance to see you again." He took a step toward her. "Please be fair, Helen! I didn't tell you anything that wasn't true. When I asked you to help me, I was trying to find my way to the sales agency."

The ill humor she had been struggling with all day spilled out like water bursting over a dam.

"Yes, it was all my fault, of course!" she told him hotly. "I saw you and picked you up on the street just to start a flirtation!"

"Please let's not quarrel, honey! I love you!" His gray eyes met hers evenly as he came toward her. His arms sought her. She stepped back, eluding him.

It was true, she thought. He did love her in his way. At that moment he wanted her terribly, just as he might want any other plaything. The next week he would be wanting some other girl, some one new!

"Doesn't that end it?" she demanded with a mechanical, twisted smile. "I've admitted I picked you up to amuse myself. I find that you bore me now. You

can understand that, can't you?" Her eyes were cold and hard as she stared at him.

He caught his hat from a table.

"Yes, I guess if that's the way you feel, it just about does put everything on the junk pile!" He strode toward the door. "Good evening to you, Miss Anthony!"

Unconsciously, after he had brushed by her into the hall, she took two quick steps after him, but in that same instant the hall door slammed and he was gone.

Two weeks passed, and the pain did not lessen.

One evening when Helen came in from work, Mary remarked:

"Dan called this evening. I think you're the dumbest thing in the twentieth century. Dan is young, rich, good-looking, and wild about you, and you're goofy over him, yet you won't have anything to do with him!"

"He's not wild about me, and I'm not goofy over him!"

"Wrong on both counts, darling! I happen to know you well enough to understand how very much in love with him you are. And I'd bet my last cent he's thinking his life will be ruined without you. Of course, he's mistaken. There are a million other girls who'd be glad to help him forget you, and one of them probably will, but right now he thinks the future's a total loss because he can't have you!"

"Yes, he wants me, but not as badly as you think." Not enough to ask her to marry him, Helen thought as she went into the bathroom and locked the door by way of ending the conversation.

But Mary was waiting when she came out after her bath.

"Then stop moping around and come out with me." Mary took up the conversation where they had left it. "Derek's got a friend who's a hot number. He'll help you forget young Dan McDonald."

Helen hesitated. It wasn't helping any to stay at home thinking of Dan.

"I'll phone Derek to bring Gregory along for you." Mary rushed out the door and down to the phone.

Helen did not offer to stop her.

Gregory Hale's car was small but speedy, Helen discovered on the way uptown after Mary had introduced her to Gregory. Gregory, she decided, was one of those young men who thought rather well of themselves. He tried to kiss her while they were waiting for a traffic light.

As they entered a brilliantly lighted night club, Helen's eyes discovered Dan seated not more than a dozen feet from the table to which a waiter led them. Dan half rose from his chair when he saw her, then dropped back down and seemed to concentrate his attention on the drink before him.

Gregory began to drink rather heavily. Helen refused, and Mary sipped only a slight taste of the stuff. The party became gay as Derek and Gregory continued their drinking. A little feeling of recklessness stole over Helen. What did anything matter?

Gregory didn't seem to be getting very drunk, in spite of the amazing amount of the liquor he was consuming. Helen danced several times with him. He kept trying to make love to her.

Once she glanced up to find Dan standing beside her.

"I wonder if you'd dance with me," he asked.

She shook her head. He leaned closer to her to speak in a low tone.

"Come on away from this gang, Helen. They're not your kind. I can see that this party is going to get rough. That guy you came in with will be as drunk as bootleg liquor can make him in another half hour."

Her eyes blazed as she lifted them to his, and then let her gaze sweep out to the dance floor where Gregory was dancing with Mary.



"I can always take care of myself," she told him. "I picked you up on the street, you know, and managed to get away with it just the same!"

He winced as if she had struck him. "But that was different——"

"Thanks for your interest!" She turned her head away. "I don't need protection, and you can run along!"

"I'm not going to run along!" His voice was grim. "I'm going to stick around and see what happens!" He stalked back to his table and sat down as Mary and Gregory came off the dance floor.

A quick wave of color flooded her face as her anger mounted. Two or three times during the next half hour

"Are you quite sure you want to marry me, Dan?" she whispered between kisses.

she let her eyes wander to him in stolen glances. She sat there at his table, watching her steadily. She sprang up at last.

"Let's get out of here," she told Gregory.

"O. K. with me, baby." He led the way to the cloakroom.

If she had been angry before, she was furious as Dan stood before the hat-check girl, getting his things as they got theirs. A steady beam of light pursued Gregory's car through the maze of city traffic, and followed them out along the main road. Gregory's foot kept pressing harder on the accelerator, but the car behind seemed to maintain the pace without effort. It would, she

knew. There was nothing on the road that could leave Dan's car behind.

Gregory swung out through the park beyond Rice Institute. Dan followed through the park and back again.

"Seems as though some one were following us," Gregory remarked, and she knew he was becoming annoyed with the car behind.

An instant later, Gregory had swung over to the curb and parked. Dan's car also halted at the curb a couple of car lengths behind them. Gregory sprang out. Dan met him halfway between the cars.

"Fine evening," Dan said casually.

"What's the idea of following us around?" Gregory demanded.

Their voices carried perfectly to Helen's ears.

"How do you know I'm following you?" Dan asked softly.

"I've half a mind to knock you down!" Gregory's voice was becoming heated.

Helen got out of the car, took a couple of steps toward them.

"I'm not trying to keep you from carrying out your threat of assault," Dan observed, "but it's only fair to warn you I was the best boxer in my college, and also full back on the football team. It's going to take more than just a little tap to put me down!" Dan grinned back at him rather insolently.

"Are you going to stop following me?" Gregory demanded.

"Any man who drinks as much as you did and then goes out with a lady needs to be followed!" Dan told him.

"Say—look here!"

"Yes, I know, you're carrying it pretty well, but you've had too much not to be drunk." Dan's voice was still cool and even.

The fury that had been mounting higher and higher in Helen all evening took possession of her at last. She ran between them to face Dan.

"You—you impossible bully!" she cried. "I'm going to call the police!"

"Sure!" he agreed. "That'll solve the problem. They'll find the flask in your friend's pocket and take him to the police station. That will leave me to take you home."

"Let me handle this, baby!" Gregory brushed her aside in order to strike at Dan.

What followed was almost too short-lived to be called a scuffle. Then Dan was holding both of Gregory's wrists as he might have held those of a small boy. When he spoke Dan's voice carried a

note of steel.

"Go get in your car and drive on," he advised Gregory. "I'll take the young lady home."

And Gregory went. His car roared down the street an instant later.

Helen's eyes roamed over the grassy lawn. She longed fervently for something, anything to hit Dan with.

"I—I could kill you!" she whispered hoarsely.

"And I love you!" He took a step toward her. "I can't understand you. Perhaps I'll never understand you, but I love you! I can't figure it out. You



seemed to be in love with me, too, and then you were off me as if I were some contagious disease. What happened? Did some friends pass the word to you that I'm a bigamist? It's a lie. The nearest I've ever come to being a married man was two weeks ago when I started for a marriage license, hoping you'd help me fill it out!"

She was still thoroughly angry. Even if he did love her and wanted to marry her he had acted inexcusably all through the evening. For the space of perhaps thirty seconds they stood there and stared into each other's faces, while her red-headed temper struggled with her

love for him. The red hair lost at last. She walked straight into his eager, outstretched arms.

"I—I don't know what's the matter with me, Dan!" she whispered between kisses. "I—I guess it's my red hair!" And a short time later, after another long kiss, she asked: "Are you quite sure you want to marry me, Dan—red hair, tantrums, and all?"

"Sure that I want to marry you?" Dan gazed down into her face for a second while his arms tightened about her. "And how!" he whispered huskily before he closed her lips with his own in a long, rapturous kiss.



ALWAYS YOU

THROUGHOUT the long and seeming endless nights,
The slow beat of the clock upon the stair
Seems like the measured beating of my heart,
Calling, searching for you everywhere.

Your pictured face smiles in the lamplight's glow,
As long I sit and gaze upon its charms,
But, dear, I want you so—the girl I know—
To cradle close within my yearning arms.

And so I now come to you in love's name
To say I love you, dear—you know I do—
Asking the right to make your life a way
Of sunny happiness each glad day through.

Trust me, sweetheart. Come, place your hand in mine,
For love is like an open sesame,
And I would teach you all that true love means,
Through years, through life—yes, through eternity!

H. H. FARISS.



Only The Good

By Gwen Tolliver

GILDA JERROLD read the advertisement in the paper for the third time.

Will Geraldine Morrow, who disappeared five years ago, or any one who can give information concerning her, communicate at once with Messrs. Straker & Combe, lawyers. Description of missing girl: Height, five feet four inches; red-gold hair, amber-colored eyes, birthmark on shoulder shaped like a strawberry. Age, twenty-four.

Gilda laid down the newspaper, her heart throbbing with excitement. It

was not the fact that a girl was missing that held her eager attention, but the extraordinary resemblance between the missing girl and herself.

Red-gold hair, amber-colored eyes, birthmark on shoulder shaped like a strawberry!

It might have been a description of herself. She had that curious strawberry mark on her right shoulder.

The advertisement, originally appearing in a morning paper, had been reprinted by the *Evening Wire*, together

LS-5A

with a photograph of the wanted girl. As Gilda gazed at the picture of Geraldine Morrow she had an uncanny feeling that it was her own portrait at which she was looking.

The likeness was so startling as to be almost incredible, and it was that which put into her mind the temptation with which she was struggling.

Why should she not see the lawyers herself and find out what they wanted?

There could be no harm in that. She would not say that she was the girl for whom they advertised, but if they were deceived into taking her for Geraldine Morrow that would not be her fault.

That this was tampering with her conscience she knew. She was also aware that what she was proposing to do was dangerous, but she was too desperate to care. It was a choice between despair and hope, and she knew even while she struggled with the temptation that her mind was made up.

Two years before, when she was twenty-one, she had come to New York, against the wishes of the aunt with whom she lived, to try to earn her living.

Gilda had obtained work for a time in a hat factory, but after the factory had closed down she had not been able to get another job. Now she was down to her last dollar, she owed three weeks' rent, and was faced with being not only destitute, but homeless as well.

She dared not go back to her aunt, even if she had the money for her fare, which she had not. Her landlady had made it plain only the night before that if she did not pay her back rent she would be turned out.

She must either find work or—what did happen to girls in her position?

Gilda shuddered, and hastily swallowing the last drop of her coffee rose to go. Sheer exhaustion after tramping from place to place in search of work had forced her to spend some of her last dollar on a cup of coffee, and it was in

a newspaper that had been left on the table that she had read the announcement that had startled her.

Ten minutes later she was sitting in the reception room of the offices of Messrs. Straker & Combe, with an outward assurance that she was far from feeling.

Suddenly, as she sat there, her brain seemed to clear, and she realized what an appalling thing it was that she was doing. She felt she must have been mad even to think of it, and told herself she had better go away at once before any one came.

She rose abruptly, and it was at that moment that the door opened and an elderly man entered. She had not yet stated her business to anybody, and thinking that he was merely a client she was about to brush past him when he stopped her, staring at her with bright, keen eyes behind horn-rimmed spectacles.

"You are Geraldine Morrow!" he said.

Gilda started with surprise and nervousness. The amazing resemblance between herself and the missing girl had not been her imagination, for this man saw it, too. She noticed now that he had no hat and carried a bunch of papers under his arm. Evidently he was a member of the firm.

"I—I——" she began to stammer incoherently.

He cut her short.

"I am very busy now," he said briskly. "An important client is waiting for me. You are to go at once to the address on this paper and ask for Mrs. Bentham. Have you money for your fare?"

His shrewd eyes swiftly appraised the girl's shabbiness.

"No. I mean I'm not—I can't——" She was struggling between a desire to tell him that she was not Geraldine Morrow and the temptation to let him go on believing that she was.

"Then take this." He drew a five-dollar bill from his wallet and handed it to her. "There is a good train from Hoboken at three fifteen. You will have time to catch it, and Mrs. Bentham will tell you everything."

Gilda only just made the train. Perhaps if she had had more time to think she would not have made it at all, but somehow she found herself seated in the train with still no clear idea in her head what she meant to do.

The lawyer's instant recognition of her had been encouraging, suggesting that other people, too, would be ready to suppose that she was Geraldine Morrow.

But did she want them to?

Had she, who had always been scrupulously honest and hated deception of any kind, really made up her mind to take a place that was not hers by right, even if it were possible to do so?

The thought was horrifying, but swift on it came the recollection of her desperate situation.

Surely nothing could be worse than the destitution that faced her?

She was beginning to feel a kind of numbed helplessness, as if she were drifting on a tide that she had neither the strength nor the will to resist.

It was fate, she told herself. Fate had flung her into that unknown tide, and she must go with it and let it sweep her where it would. She was tired of struggling and misery.

Gilda looked for the first time around the coach in which she was traveling. It was nearly empty, the only other passenger being a man who sat in the seat opposite her. He was young, broad-shouldered and handsome in a clean-cut, open-air sort of way. His face was tanned by sun and wind, his eyes gray and clear and set beneath heavy dark brows.

Gilda met his gaze turned full upon her, and realizing suddenly that she had been staring at him, she flushed and

turned away, occupying herself with gazing out the window.

Her window was open, and the day, though fine, was distinctly chilly, with a boisterous wind that made her wish her coat was thicker. Perhaps if she were not so hungry she would feel warmer. She tried to remember when last she had had a good meal, and the effort made her feel hungrier and colder than ever. She shivered and drew her coat closer around her.

The man noticed the gesture.

"You seem cold," he remarked in a deep, pleasant voice. "Would you like your window shut?"

Gilda started nervously when he spoke. She was feeling so nervous to-day that the slightest thing seemed to startle her.

"If you don't mind," she answered, and got up so that he could get to the window. At that moment a strong gust of wind blew in the window, lifting the hat the man had laid on the seat beside him carrying it out of the window.

Gilda made frantic efforts to grab it, forgetting that she was clutching her bag in her hand. A moment later hat and bag lay in the ditch by the track, and the train was racing on at forty miles an hour.

"Oh, that's too bad! You've lost your bag!" The man spoke with concern. "I'm so sorry."

Gilda stared at him, incapable of speech. The horror of what had happened appalled her. Her bag was gone, and shabby though it was, it was the only one she possessed. Worse than that was the thought that it contained every cent she had, not only the remains of her last dollar, but the change from the five-dollar bill the lawyer had given her.

What was she to do? She could not repay the money, and if it were found that she had taken it on false pretenses they might demand that she should do so. The loss brought home to her

swiftly and clearly the fact that she had no right to have taken the money at all, or to have let the lawyer believe even for a moment that she was the girl he wanted.

She had committed a crime—she might be put in prison for it!

She grew white, and the man noticed her pallor and the dawning fear in her eyes with alarm. He noticed, too, for the first time how lovely she was, with a loveliness that not even shabby clothes and the thinness of her face could disguise. He thought that she must have been ill to look so thin and pale.

"Don't look so distressed. Was there much money in your bag?" he asked.

She answered as steadily as she could.

"No, not much. Only a few dollars."

The words were intended to be careless, but he read in them more than she realized. He knew with unerring conviction that those few dollars represented to the girl a loss that she could ill afford.

"Please don't distress yourself," he urged again. "It was my fault entirely. You were trying to save my hat, so you must allow me to make up your loss to you. Was there anything else of value in the bag?"

"Yes." She had another throb of fear as the memory came to her. "There was my ticket——"

"Are you going far?"

"To Wellbridge."

He smiled for the first time.

"Then that is easily arranged," he told her. "I am going to Wellbridge. You must take my ticket. Also you must accept the price of your bag and whatever was in it. I insist."

By the time the train stopped at Wellbridge Gilda had learned that his name was Peter Langham, and knew that she was sorry to say good-by. A chauffeur met him on the platform, and she watched him drive away in a big car.

Then she almost forgot him as she remembered her own purpose in being

there. A porter informed her that Five Oaks, the address the lawyer had given her, was only ten minutes' walk from the station.

It proved to be a large house behind high walls, and a rather grim-looking maid who opened the door said that Mrs. Bentham was at home. The woman looked grimmer than ever when Gilda refused to give her name, but she showed her into a room where the girl waited for a few minutes for the owner of the house to appear.

Mrs. Bentham came at last, a middle-aged woman, fashionably dressed and with hair that was bright golden, obviously dyed, and a hard mouth that was a too glaring scarlet. She gave a shrewd, half-suspicious glance at the girl, and then cried in a voice of amazement:

"Geraldine!"

Gilda's heart beat with excitement. She realized that the next few minutes would decide her fate. Fear of betrayal held her mute, and she could only gaze agitatedly into the hard, perturbed face of the woman before her.

"Where have you been? What have you been doing? Why did you disappear?"

Mrs. Bentham, now that she had recovered from her amazement, fired these questions at her in a metallic, unpleasant voice.

Gilda took a firm hold of herself.

"I lost my memory after a car accident," she faltered, seizing upon the first likely idea that came into her head.

The woman's keen eyes noticed the shabby clothes, the pale thin face.

"I was afraid you were dead," she said. "Five years is a long time, and I had given up hope. You don't look as if you have had a good time. You want dressing and feeding. How did you find out who you were?"

Although Gilda's heart was still beating more quickly than usual, she was feeling much more reassured than when



"Impostor!" she cried. "You thought you were clever, but the mark should have been on the other shoulder. I'll have you punished for this!"

she had entered the room. Evidently her likeness to the missing girl was imposing upon this woman.

"It must have been the sight of my face in the paper," she replied with amazing calm. "The name was familiar—it was like a key unlocking memory,

then when the birthmark was mentioned I suddenly knew."

With a little laugh that she meant to be careless and with which she tried to mask her nervousness and dislike of the lies she was telling, she drew down her dress from her shoulder and displayed

the small mark that was shaped like a strawberry.

The effect was amazing, but not in the way Gilda had expected. To her consternation the other sprang at her and shook her violently, her face so pale with rage that the rouge stood out in fantastic red patches, and her eyes glistened like two baleful lights.

"Impostor!" she cried. "You thought you were clever, but the mark should have been on the other shoulder. I'll have you punished for this!"

She pushed the terrified girl from her and moved toward the telephone. But before she could take off the receiver Gilda had reached her.

"What—what are you going to do?" Her teeth were chattering so that she could hardly speak.

"Call for the police!" was the terse reply.

"Oh, don't!" the girl implored. "I can't think what made me do it. I was down and out. Please don't!"

Mrs. Bentham hesitated, and a cunning smile came to her lips. The girl before her was certainly astonishingly like the missing girl and might serve her purpose.

Gilda saw what she took for signs of relenting, and redoubled her pleading.

"Do forgive me," she entreated. "I haven't harmed you."

The other pretended to think before she spoke.

"It was a cruel disappointment to me, and you don't deserve any leniency," she said more calmly. "But I'll not send for the police on one condition."

"What is it? I will do anything if you will only let me go!"

A smile played on Mrs. Bentham's scarlet lips. "If you don't want to be prosecuted you must remain where you are," she said.

"I don't understand."

Mrs. Bentham met the startled eyes of the girl with the hard glitter of her own.

"You came here anxious to take the place of Geraldine Morrow and now you shall do it to please me. You will also swear that you will never tell any one who you really are."

Gilda grasped the back of a chair to steady herself.

"But why——" she began.

The other cut her short, placing one hand on the telephone.

"I will give you one minute in which to decide whether you will live in this house with me as my niece, Geraldine Morrow, or let me call the police station," she said menacingly.

An exclamation of fear parted the girl's lips.

"I will stay here," she cried, her fear overcoming all other considerations.

The next few days increased the mystery in which Gilda felt herself enveloped. The reason why she should be there at all perplexed her continually.

Why should Mrs. Bentham want her to pose as her niece?—she asked herself.

In any other circumstances the luxury with which she was surrounded, and the beautiful clothes that her pretended aunt had bought her would have enraptured her.

Every time she opened her wardrobe there was a bewildering flash of color, the shimmer of soft fabrics, of shining silks, of delicate voiles. While in the chest of drawers of gray satinwood lay the most entrancing lingerie that she had ever seen.

Yet in spite of the atmosphere of luxury, and the possession of exquisite clothes, she was miserable. Even the old days of work and want seemed preferable to that gilded prison.

Mrs. Bentham was kind to her, but she could not rid herself of her dislike and distrust of the elder woman divining the hardness that lay behind her painted smile, and the cunning in the small bright eyes.

Gilda had been at Five Oaks a week

when she suddenly decided to go for a walk by herself. It was the first time she had found an opportunity of doing so, for her outings had been confined to strolls around the garden, or long rides with Mrs. Bentham. But to-day at lunch there had been no mention of a drive and after the meal was finished the elder woman had retired to her room to rest.

Reveling in her freedom Gilda began to cross a field that led into a wood. She had nearly reached it before she became aware of a bull standing under some trees and furiously flicking its tail.

She was terrified even at cows, and the sight of the bull made her shake with terror. Hoping against hope that the animal had not caught sight of her she turned and began to walk quickly back toward a high stone wall, gradually increasing her pace to a run.

When she had gone halfway she heard the trampling of hoofs, and glancing around in horror she saw that the bull was racing after her.

Breathless she reached the wall and stumbled over it just in time to avoid the horns of the infuriated animal. In her agitation she staggered blindly into the road and the driver of a car had to swerve sharply to avoid her.

A second afterward she found herself gazing up into Peter Langham's clear gray eyes.

The man's face lit up with pleasure as he recognized the girl he had met in the train, and who had so often been in his thoughts since.

"That was a close shave," he said. "You seemed to spring from nowhere."

Gilda tried to recover her breath, to compose her disheveled appearance, feeling suddenly foolish now that the danger was over.

"I was chased by a bull," she stammered.

He glanced to where she pointed with trembling finger and saw the animal careering back across the field.

"I'm not surprised that you didn't see my car coming," he said, laughing into her flushed face against which the red-gold hair was blowing like a flame. "Would you like to come for a drive?"

She hesitated for a second, a vision of Mrs. Bentham flitting across her mind. But Peter Langham had already opened the door and was smiling so invitingly that she threw prudence to the winds.

During the drive Gilda liked him better than she had at their first encounter in the train. When they came to a particularly lovely spot he would slow down and talk to her. And although they chatted of trivial things she knew that he was longing to lead her on to speak of herself.

Sometimes she wondered, as she caught his admiring glances, if he noticed the change in her, if he were mentally contrasting her in her expensive dress with the shabbily-dressed girl of the train who had been so upset at the loss of the old brown bag that contained all the money she had in the world.

Upon the homeward ride, not wishing him to know where she lived, she asked him to put her down at the post office, pretending that she wanted to buy some stamps and it was with real regret that she watched him drive away.

No sooner had she entered the house than Mrs. Bentham hurried into the hall to meet her.

"Where have you been?" she demanded.

"You did not say anything about going out to-day so I went for a walk," Gilda replied carelessly, suddenly deciding not to mention Peter Langham or their drive.

The small brown eyes passed over the girl's slim figure, shrewdly noticing the flushed happiness of her face, the lights dancing between the long fringed lids.

"You ought to have asked my permission," she said harshly. "I forbid you ever to go out again without doing so."

Gilda murmured an acquiescence and went to her room. She was too filled with happy memories to care much just then about anything else. She threw down her hat and sat upon the bed, surrendering herself to the remembrance of eyes that had laughed into hers, of a deep voice that had seemed to throb with hidden meaning.

Peter. She murmured his name as if it were a caress. Would she ever see him again?—she wondered.

As soon as Gilda saw Mrs. Bentham the following morning she was aware that her supposed aunt was full of excitement. It quivered in her rouged face, danced in her sharp eyes, trembled in her voice.

"We are going to have a visitor," she announced with an air of triumph. "Prince Alexis! He will arrive some time this evening and may dine with us," she added.

The idea of meeting a prince startled Gilda.

"I shall be too timid to say a word," she said.

A smile crossed the other's painted lips.

"I shall expect you to say a great many. As soon as we have finished breakfast I will tell you what you are to do."

Gilda seemed to detect a menace in the other's tone and all through the meal she was filled with trepidation. She felt glad when Mrs. Bentham rose and led the way into the drawing-room, carefully closing the door behind them.

She was nervous when she entered that room, but she was cold with fear and horror when she left it an hour afterward.

Wild schemes of escape rushed into her brain, ideas that even as she formed them she knew she would never be left alone to carry out. For the rest of the day Mrs. Bentham kept her under the strictest surveillance and when it was

time to dress for dinner insisted upon helping her.

It was she who selected the gown Gilda was to wear, choosing tissue of gold to deepen the color of her hair, to brighten the amber light of her eyes. On her shoulder she put crimson roses to match her mouth. And when she had finished she expressed herself satisfied.

"You've never looked more lovely," she said appreciatively. Then her voice became metallic, her gaze threatening. "Remember!" she warned as they turned to go downstairs. "If you disobey one of my instructions it will mean jail for you."

Gilda never forgot the agony of suspense that followed.

Dinner was set for the expected guest, but he did not come. Every sound made her heart throb. As the meal drew to a close and still there was no sign of the prince, hope began to take the place of fear.

But the hope was short lived. The maid was bringing in the coffee when she heard the sound of a car on the drive. Mrs. Bentham started to her feet, pronouncing one tormenting word.

"Remember!"

The next thing of which Gilda was aware was a tall distinguished figure in faultless evening clothes standing in the doorway. She felt Mrs. Bentham's hand upon her arm and rose mechanically from her seat. Shaking in every limb Gilda advanced toward him, her arms outstretched, a cry upon her pale lips.

"Alexis! My husband!"

The man strode forward to meet the slim form that was trembling like a golden light. He grasped the cold hands, amazement in his brown eyes.

"Geraldine!" he exclaimed. "After all these years of silence! It doesn't seem as if it could be possible."

He dropped her hands and stood looking at her, his face white and dismayed, twitching with emotion.

His thoughts went back to the day five

years before when he had first met the girl whose beauty had bewitched him into marrying her, only for her to disappear mysteriously a short time afterward. He had long thought of her as dead as was his brief infatuation for her, and then had come that letter from her aunt telling him that she was alive. He was suddenly confronted with the folly of his youth and all that it now meant to him.

Mrs. Bentham broke the silence that seemed charged with electricity.

"As soon as my niece recovered her memory after that frightful motor smash, her first thought was of you," she said in an admirably modulated voice. "Night and day your name has been upon her lips. Sit down and have coffee?"

They sat in the embrasure of a window, and Gilda noticed that Mrs. Bentham placed herself so that she could watch her all the time. The prince sat between them, the subdued light falling upon his handsome face with its somewhat weak mouth, and the distress and perplexity that agitated him. He was evidently feeling the situation acutely and Gilda felt sorry for him.

"Five years make great changes," he said presently, speaking with an effort. "There seemed no chance of my ever becoming the reigning Prince of Saronia."

There was hesitation in the man's voice with its faint trace of a foreign accent, and he glanced about him vaguely. It was so difficult to say what he must with Gilda's eyes upon him and that haunted look in their amber depths.

Mrs. Bentham came to his assistance.

"We never know what gifts fate holds for us," she said. "But the greatest of all are love and sympathy, and Geraldine will not fail you in either."

The prince drew himself together. There was something dignified in the lift of his head. "A prince's first thoughts must be his duty to his peo-

ple," he returned swiftly. "His personal wishes must be second to theirs."

The woman's shrewd brown eyes flashed upon him.

"I don't quite understand what you mean," she said.

"I must speak plainly then, however painful it may be. Five years ago I was free to marry whom I liked. If I had foreseen the future I should have had to act quite differently. My people will not accept a foreigner."

Mrs. Bentham gave a shrill laugh.

"I don't see how they can help it now," she said quickly. "It cannot be your intention to deny the past. It would break Geraldine's heart."

The girl listened, throbbing with humiliation, for the conversation that followed showed her why this woman had made her pose as her niece. Geraldine Morrow had induced the prince to marry her when there had seemed no chance of his succeeding to the throne of Saronia. Now Mrs. Bentham wanted to pretend that Gilda was the girl who had so strangely disappeared so that her aunt could reap all the advantage she could out of the prince's folly of five years before.

Gilda's soul rose in revolt at the deception. She half rose from her seat. Words of protest and denial raced to her lips. But before she could say a word she caught Mrs. Bentham's eyes fixed upon her, menacing and commanding, heard her metallic voice.

"Geraldine, why are you so silent? Are you afraid to let your love plead for you and your future?"

The prince had risen. He stood looking down at the golden figure, feeling again for the first time as his eyes rested upon the pale, quivering face, framed in the golden hair, met the torture in the long fringed golden eyes, a faint stirring of that old infatuation that had led him into such fatal complications.

"I am more sorry than I can say," he said, his voice not quite steady. "But a

prince cannot follow his own inclinations. Don't you think you could learn to forget?"

Gilda lifted her gaze to his and beyond him she saw Mrs. Bentham who also had risen, saw with fear the twist of the cruel, scarlet mouth, the warning in that shrewd, hard glance.

"No," she murmured, and there was a real sob in her voice. "I can never forget."

"She will die if you desert her," Mrs. Bentham broke in. "You must take her back to Saronia with you."

The prince's

face was white and set. He drew his hand across his brow distressfully.

"I must think what is to be done," he said. "You shall know to-morrow."

He bowed and walked to the door. A few seconds afterward they heard his car gliding down the drive.

What would be the end of it all? Gilda's heart was filled with dread as



"No," she murmured, and there was a sob in her voice. "I can never forget."

the next morning she stood listlessly arranging flowers in the drawing-room. Mrs. Bentham was out, but Gilda knew that she would be prevented from leaving if she attempted to do so. She heard the door open and a maid announce:

"A gentleman to see you, miss."

Her heart leaped into her mouth. Her first thought was that it would be the prince. Fearfully her eyes went to the door, and then their expression turned into a swift joy.

Peter Langham stood there, his glance flashing back the joy he received from hers. Then suddenly his face changed.

"What are you doing in this house?" he inquired sharply.

She grasped the back of a chair nervously, feeling something quickly extinguish in her.

"I am Mrs. Bentham's niece," she faltered.

His mouth tensed and he seized her wrists in a clasp that hurt.

"Why did you give me a false name?" he demanded. "Were you ashamed to tell me that you are Geraldine Morrow?"

The contempt in his voice stung her, roused her to a half-hearted defiance.

"Why should I be ashamed?" she challenged.

He eyed her for a moment steadily before he spoke.

"You can answer that question better than I can," he returned calmly. "I am not here to discuss your conduct, but the disastrous effect of it on another. I have been sent by Prince Alexis to make you an offer."

He tried not to see how golden her blue dress made her eyes and hair.

"Prince Alexis, believing his first wife to be dead, is engaged to marry a princess whom his people love," he went on dispassionately. "He is prepared to pay you ten thousand dollars if you will agree to the annulment of his marriage with you."

Gilda's hands clenched upon the back of the chair she was holding. Added to her shame that he should know about the prince was a fierce resentment that he should think that she was to be disposed of easily by the mention of money.

"And if I refuse?" she said.

His gaze swept her scornfully.

"You would be very unwise," he retorted. "Surely you must see for yourself that for the prince to claim as his wife a girl of your type and reputation would be to lose his throne."

Fiercer anger shook her.

"What do you mean by a girl of my type and reputation?" she asked.

A slow smile crossed his lips.

"I mean a girl who knows how to play upon the weakness of men," he said cruelly, remembering how nearly she had bewitched him. "It is well known that Geraldine Morrow takes her pleasures as lightly as she breaks men's hearts."

Gilda turned white with fury. In her pain she forgot that she was playing a part, that it was as the girl she was supposed to be that he was judging her.

"Go back to the man who sent you and tell him that I refuse his offer, and despise the man who brought it to me," she cried passionately. "Tell him that I am not to be bought and sold as if I were a piece of furniture."

Peter Langham lifted his hand in protest, and a dark flush dyed his cheeks. He would have spoken but the girl cut him short vehemently.

"I refuse to hear any more. You have insulted me much too deeply. Please go at once and leave me alone."

She pointed to the door and he turned and went.

When Mrs. Bentham came in, her shrewd gaze saw at once that something had taken place in her absence to account for Gilda's flaming cheeks and the shining wildness of her eyes.

"Has some one been here?" she inquired.

She was amazed at the passion with which the girl turned upon her.

"I will not go on any longer with this deception," she cried. "The prince sent a man to offer me ten thousand dollars to annul my supposed marriage to him. I was sick with shame——"

Mrs. Bentham interrupted with a scornful laugh.

"I should think so. A paltry ten thousand dollars! He shall not get out of it as easily as that."

The girl's heart seemed suddenly to stop beating. She looked at the other woman in amazement. Her heavily rouged face was full of excitement, and she was rubbing her hands gleefully.

"What do you mean?" she gasped.

"He shall pay at least fifty thousand dollars for his freedom, and if we work together skillfully we can make him do it."

Gilda felt a cold dread shiver of apprehension go through her.

"No—no," she protested. "I refuse to go any further."

"You forget that you are not in a position to thwart any plans I may choose to make," the other warned her.

"I will not be forced into blackmail," Gilda persisted. "I have fulfilled my bargain. I have posed as your niece and I shall do no more."

Mrs. Bentham's face grew dark, her mouth cruel.

"Why do you think I wanted you to pose as my niece unless it were for some advantage to myself?" she cried.

"I placed you in the midst of luxury and bought you beautiful clothes because I meant to get it all back from the man who married you——"

"But it was not I whom he married," the girl broke in passionately. "You seem to forget that. If you goad me too far, I shall tell the truth."

Mrs. Bentham gave a harsh laugh.

"So you dare to threaten me, do you? Do you think that your word would be taken against mine in court? Perhaps a

visit from the police will convince you of your error."

Gilda's heart sank as the old terror gripped her. She saw herself in horror thrust into jail and unable to clear herself; leaving it at last destitute, and with the taint and shame of it dogging her everywhere; dragging her down and down until she shuddered to think what the end of it would be.

What became of starving, homeless girls with the fatal gift of beauty?—she wondered.

"Oh, you are cruel, cruel!" she wailed.

Mrs. Bentham was quick to see the change in her and was well pleased.

"Not unless you force me to do it," she said less harshly. "If you help me get fifty thousand dollars out of the prince I am prepared to make a new bargain with you."

The girl's tortured eyes looked up in mute inquiry.

"I will allow you to disappear afterward."

In the darkness that was engulfing her Gilda seemed to see a faint light tremble.

"You mean that I could go away?"

Mrs. Bentham nodded, suddenly seeing herself not only possessed of wealth but at the same time free of a girl that might become troublesome. Besides, after she had obtained the money she would have no further use for the girl.

"Yes. When the prince pays I will give you your freedom. You shall have enough money to keep you until you have found work again. Is it a bargain?"

Gilda's pale lips moved in assent and Mrs. Bentham smiled genially.

"Then I will write to the prince at once," she announced. "He will not dare to refuse my demands."

In a few minutes the letter was written and sent.

The days which followed were ones

of unrest and misery and mental torture for Gilda.

When three weeks went by with no answer from the prince, Mrs. Bentham became impatient.

"I have given him long enough to reply," she said irritably, after the postman had failed to bring her the desired letter. "If he thinks he can ignore me he is much mistaken. I shall now play my trump card."

"What do you mean to do?" Gilda inquired, wondering what new torment fate could have in store for her.

"We must go to Saronia and see his fiancée. I shall make arrangements for us to start at once."

Gilda looked up in alarm.

"You mean that I must go with you?"

Mrs. Bentham nodded.

"Of course. The sight of you will have more effect than a thousand threats from me."

Gilda said no more, knowing how useless any protestations would be. A sort of apathy had fallen upon her since her last encounter with Peter Langham, a tame submission to fate. She knew that she was powerless in the hands of this unscrupulous woman and that whatever was the end of the disastrous circumstances in which she had placed herself she must go blindly on until she came to it.

She submitted to the arrangements that Mrs. Bentham made for the journey, and as listlessly followed her from train to boat, and from the boat to the train that would take them on the last stage of their journey to the Saronian capital.

As they were passing through the train on their way to the compartment that had been reserved for them, Gilda received her first awakening shock.

Stumbling over a bag that she had not noticed she was thrown against a window at which a man sat reading a newspaper. One glance showed her who he was. It was Peter Langham.

She expected him to look up from his paper as she darkened his vision and to see and recognize her. But with a throb of thankfulness she saw that he did not move, and she hurried on after Mrs. Bentham to her own compartment.

But the knowledge that he was on the train, bound in all probability for the same place as herself, brought back the old misery and shame in overwhelming force. He would be sure to hear of the demands that had been made to the prince, and he would despise her more than ever, believing her to be responsible for them.

The train stopped for a few minutes at a station while a man came in and scrutinized their passports, and then rumbled on again. Mrs. Bentham informed her in a voice that betrayed excitement that they had passed the Saronion frontier.

But Gilda made no reply. She was so miserable that she felt not the faintest interest in what took place around her. Peter Langham despised her and nothing else mattered.

Suddenly there was a crashing sound like the heavy clanking of chains bursting asunder, and she was thrown forcibly to the ground to the accompaniment of the hoarse shouts of men, and the shrill screams of women.

The impact must have stunned her, for when she was again conscious of anything she found herself standing by the side of the track in a chaos of wreckage, with no idea of how she had got there. Men were stumbling past her carrying in their arms silent forms with limply hanging arms, some swathed in rough bandages. Men were shouting and running about excitedly. Children wailed and women were calling out names in distraction.

Gilda looked about her wildly, wondering what to do when she heard a quick step behind her. Before she could turn around something was thrown over her head, she was lifted from her feet

and everything once more became a blank.

When Gilda regained consciousness it was to find herself inside a powerful car which was moving rapidly. As she glanced at the man who was driving he turned his face, and with a sharp cry she met Peter Langham's cold gray eyes.

There was a moment's tense silence and then she gripped his arm.

"Why am I here? Where is Mrs. Bentham?" she asked in alarm.

He answered the latter part of her sentence.

"I expect she has continued her journey by car as it will take some time to clear the line after the collision."

Her hand went to her heart in fear.

"She may have been killed," she cried excitedly.

"There was no loss of life. You need not worry about her," he replied calmly.

"But why am I with you—" she began, but he stopped her curtly.

"I can't talk now. I must give all my attention to the car. The roads are dangerous."

She sank back against the cushions, too weary to ask any more questions even if he would have replied to them.

When he had driven some time he stopped the car at the entrance to a forest. Although the sun was shining a strong wind had arisen.

"We'll stop here for a while for rest and food," he said. "The trees will shelter us from this wind that comes from the mountains."

She followed him into the dimness of the trees and when they came to a clearing they sat down and he produced a thermos bottle and a box of sandwiches.

For several minutes they ate and drank in a silence that was only broken by the swaying, rustling trees that made a sound like the pattering of heavy rain. The hot coffee and food revived her and with her growing strength came back fear and curiosity.

Why had Peter Langham thrown that covering over her head and carried her off? She lifted inquiring eyes to his inscrutable face.

"Why have you done this?" she challenged. "You had no right to take me away. I must find my—my aunt—at once."

"I kidnaped you because Prince Alexis once did me a great service," he said calmly. "And in return I am determined to free him from a wife who can only bring disaster to Saronia. You have refused to accept a reasonable offer from him for his freedom and I am going to keep you with me so that the prince can divorce you."

Gilda turned pale. Into her mind flashed the memory of Mrs. Bentham, and her threats of exposure.

"You shan't do this," she cried. "I will not stay with you. You are a coward to take advantage of the train accident. It was mean—despicable."

"I know. But for desperate ills a desperate remedy is necessary," he returned coolly. "But you shall lose nothing by it if you are wise. The prince will pay you fifteen thousand dollars after the divorce if you will pledge yourself to keep silence. If not, you will get nothing."

The shame that shook her made her reckless.

"You seem to think that money is everything to me," she retorted. "But you shall find that it means nothing."

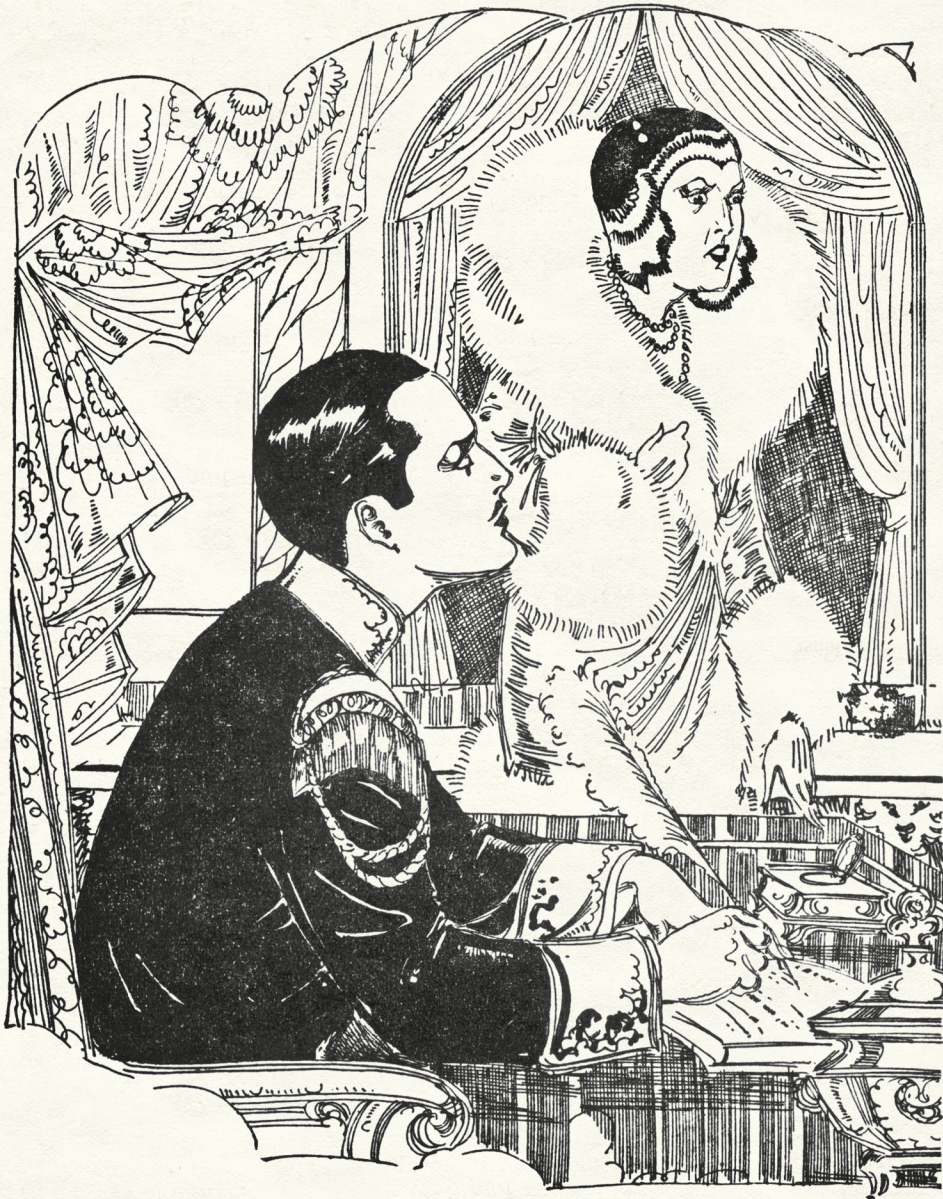
"Then according to all accounts you have greatly changed," he said contemptuously. "You don't expect me to believe your marriage with the prince was a love marriage on your part?"

She gave a brief laugh.

"Why not?" she mocked.

"A girl who is in love with a man does not induce him to marry her against his will," he said. "The prince is very rich—"

"Stop!" she cried. "You shall not insult me any longer. Not all the prince's



wealth could buy him his freedom if it means remaining another hour alone with you."

She turned as if she would run from him into the depths of the forest, but he grasped her wrist firmly.

"I am your master now for a few days," he said tersely. "But you need not fear me. Lips that can be bought

for gold do not attract me. For the prince's sake you will have to endure my company, that is all. It will be fifteen thousand very easily earned."

Still grasping her hand so that she could not escape him, Peter Langham spoke again.

"We will continue our journey," he said quietly. "We have quite a distance



As she drew nearer to them Gilda's heart gave a bound. The man sitting at the table was the prince himself, and the woman standing was Mrs. Bentham—the woman she feared.

to go before we reach the inn and the wind is rising."

But he had no idea of the force of the wind until they had left the shelter of the trees. Only his firm grasp of her

kept Gilda from being blown off her feet. Suddenly a cry parted his lips.

"Look out!"

Before she was even aware of her danger he had snatched her from a fall-

ing tree that smashed headlong to the ground, narrowly missing her.

He held her tightly, fiercely, forgetting everything in that moment but that she was safe, that she had need of him, that she was consummately lovely.

His arms unconsciously tightened around her and he felt something stronger than his will calling to him. With a passionate impulse he yielded to that magical temptation. He bent his own lips to hers, feeling the quivering sweetness of her leap to him with answering passion and the return of kiss for kiss.

Then with a cry he set her free, horrified at what he had done.

"I was mad," he muttered hoarsely. "Forgive me. I did not know what I was doing."

But Gilda was still quivering with the ecstasy of awakened passion.

She laid her hand upon his arm.

"Peter," she said softly. "Peter, why are you ashamed—afraid?"

He put out his own hands to thrust her away from him.

"You made me forget honor, everything, in that moment," he confessed. "I could only see you and your loveliness, only feel the magnet of your mouth drawing me to it, steeping my senses in forgetfulness."

She gave a soft laugh.

"It was love," she murmured. "Love is like a sun to which everything turns for warmth and life."

He had to fight a well-nigh intolerable desire to grasp her again in his arms and kiss once more those passionate lips.

"You do not know what you are saying," he said tensely. "You are not free to speak of love. I was weak."

She touched his arm again and he felt the warmth of her fingers through his coat.

"No, no," she said swiftly. "It was not weakness. You know that it was not. You love me."

He gave a start. Even in the noise of the trees roaring in the wind he could hear the beating of his heart.

"Why do you want to torment me?" he said, all the more harshly because of the pain that tore at him. "Have you not done enough harm in your life?"

She remembered then who she was supposed to be. But she thrust the knowledge from her fiercely. She had seen the star of happiness in her dark sky and she would not let anything blind her to it.

"I swear to you that I am innocent of any wrongdoing. One day you shall know all the truth, I promise you. This much you shall know now. I have never really been the prince's wife."

He was like a man in a dream. He could see only faintly the glimmer of her face. Then something seemed suddenly to snap in him and he seized her again in his arms and kissed her.

"I believe you," he said between his kisses. "I believe you. Tell me that you love me. It is all I want to know."

"I love you." Gilda repeated the words many times with lingering sweetness. "And I have never loved before."

He held her so that he could see her eyes.

"I want time to race on," he said with a happy laugh. "My dear one, as soon as the prince is divorced we will be married. Every hour now will be like a step taking me nearer to paradise."

The shades of evening were falling when they reached the inn for which they were making, and Gilda decided to go straight to bed. For some time she lay tossing restlessly, unable to sleep because of the hopes and fears that disturbed her. When she did fall asleep it was to dream that she was running toward a flame, but before she could reach it Mrs. Bentham thrust herself between her and the light.

She woke with a cry of despair upon her lips to find that it was day and time for her to get up.

When she went downstairs into the sitting room she found Peter Langham waiting for her and the breakfast table laid beside a window that looked out upon distant mountains.

The innkeeper's wife who served them was an Englishwoman married to a Saronian, and as she placed the coffee before them Gilda noticed that she gazed at her with interest that for some reason vaguely disquieted her and made her think of her dream. When the woman brought in an omelette she caught the girl's eyes and smiled.

"I cannot help looking at you," she said almost apologetically. "You remind me of the beautiful English girl who died here five years ago. We see a lot of people of different nationalities here because this inn is used by all travelers driving from the capital to the frontier, but I have never forgotten the impression she made upon me."

Gilda felt something tighten around her heart, and lifted her cup to her lips to hide her emotion.

"It is not the first time I have been told that I resemble some one else," she managed to say.

"You are the living image of her," the woman went on garrulously. "The same figure and red-gold hair, and she, too, had eyes as golden as daffodils. It wouldn't even surprise me to hear that you have a birthmark on your left shoulder shaped like a strawberry."

The fork in Gilda's hand clattered to the floor. She knew that Peter Langham was watching her.

"Do you remember her name?" she heard him say.

The woman shook her head.

"It was a mystery. Nobody knew her name or where she came from. But there was an initial 'G' on her baggage."

"Are you sure that she died?" Peter Langham's voice was not quite steady as he asked the question.

There was surprise in the woman's eyes.

"Quite sure. It was when I was preparing her for her last journey to the grave that I saw the mark I have told you about. She lies in the cemetery two miles from here."

"It is not a very cheerful story," he said tonelessly.

"No," the woman agreed. "I should not have mentioned it if the young lady had not brought it all back to me so vividly."

She went away, and Gilda never forgot the silence that followed. She did not dare to look at the man she loved. She could hear his heavy breathing and knew that his hands were clenched upon the table. It seemed an eternity before he spoke.

"You are an impostor!" he said at last.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"Your manner shows me that you know what I mean." His voice was hoarse with anger and pain. "You are not Geraldine Morrow. What the woman has said accounts for her mysterious disappearance. She died here five years ago. You have fooled me as you have fooled so many men—as you hoped to fool the prince."

Gilda turned to him in passionate protest.

"That is not true," she exclaimed vehemently. She paused for a moment, nerving herself for the desperate lie. "I am Geraldine Morrow. Why should you think that I am not? Every one has a double."

In spite of her declaration he noticed the nervous trembling that shook her.

He pushed back his chair with violence and strode up to her, pulling her dress from her left shoulder in an excess of rage. But no mark disfigured the skin that had the soft glow of ivory. His face hardened, his eyes had the glint of steel.

"You have doubly deceived me," he said. "The whole thing is a plot to blackmail the prince."

She threw out her hands in supplication.

"You promised to believe in me," she said, and in her throat was a sob. "I would trust you against the world."

He caught his breath. He remembered those exquisite moments when she had lain in his arms, glamorous and passionate beneath his kisses. Her loveliness and his desire had blinded his reason, her witchery had held his will in shackles. But now he saw her as an adventuress, who would stop at nothing to fill her hands with gold. He felt like a man who has awakened from a magic spell.

"You are a wonderful actress," he said scornfully. "I was quite deceived by you. I was even tricked into believing that you loved me. But I shall be your dupe no longer."

Her eyes held the mute suffering of a wounded animal.

"You think that I was only acting," she said slowly. "That I could let you hold me as you did, take your kisses and return them, and not mean anything. The shame of it hurts—hurts."

Again memory smote him with sharp pain and made him cruel. He was mad, he told himself furiously, to suffer at that tremor in her voice, at those anguished eyes.

"A girl like you does not suffer," he retorted brutally, "or feel shame. You are too hard."

She gave a painful cry that cut him short, and clasped her hands upon her heart.

"I cannot bear your insults. At least spare me those."

"You have taken my heart as if it were a toy and played with it," he said bitterly. "Why should I consider you or show you any mercy?"

She was going to plead, but pride came to her aid, and she threw back her head with a short, desperate laugh.

"Do what you like. I do not care," she retorted in calm defiance.

"I shall take you to the prince," he said briefly. "You shall answer to him for what you have done."

In silence she was driven through forests and along blinding roads to the palace. But she was too numbed with misery to notice anything. She could only lie inert in the corner of the car, feeling that she was on her way to the tragic end of her adventure.

The slowing down of the car and the sharp challenge of a sentry aroused her, and she saw that they were standing before a large gate which slowly opened to admit them.

She was helped from the car and with Peter Langham conducted to a room in which they waited while another door was opened for them.

The room they now entered was large and lofty, glittering with scarlet and gold and the shimmer of mirrors, and there were two people in it, a man in a resplendent uniform seated at an ormolu table and a woman in dark green standing beside it.

As she drew nearer to them Gilda's heart gave a bound. The man sitting at the table with a check book opened before him, was the prince himself, and the woman standing at his elbow was Mrs. Bentham—the woman she feared.

The prince rose as they approached. He said a few words of greeting to Peter and then his gaze went in surprise to the girl and from her to the woman whose face had gone ghastly beneath her rouge.

"What does this mean?" he demanded sternly. "You promised that I should not see your niece again."

Before Mrs. Bentham could reply Peter Langham seized the check that lay on the table.

"You will not see her again," he cried. "Geraldine Morrow died five years ago."

The prince stared in bewilderment at the other man, then turned to the slight figure that was cowering beside him.

"Then who is this girl?" he cried.

"She is here to tell you that," Peter Langham replied calmly.

Mrs. Bentham turned to Gilda, quivering with rage.

"So you have betrayed me," she shrieked in fury. "You shall suffer for this."

The girl shrank back in terror from the menace in the woman's eyes.

"Save me, save me from her," she cried imploringly. "I know I did wrong but I never meant to go as far as she forced me."

In a few minutes she had told her story, stammering at first, flushed with shame, but gathering strength as she went on and leaving out nothing.

"It was such a temptation," she ended, and there were tears in her voice now. "I was hungry, and there were only a few pennies between me and starvation. I sinned, but I have been punished."

When she had finished speaking the prince addressed Mrs. Bentham, pointing in cold command to the seat from which he had risen.

"I believe the girl," he said. "The absence of a birthmark on her left shoulder would be sufficient proof of your dastardly plot to blackmail me and to use this unfortunate girl for your purpose. Sit down in that seat and write out a full confession of your guilt or I shall have you arrested."

What happened afterward was not quite clear to Gilda. Mrs. Bentham,

writing her confession, the evil glint of her eyes as she walked past her to the door, the kindly words of the prince before she herself left with Peter Langham, seemed part of a dream. Even when she was again seated in the car everything seemed unreal. Suddenly the car stopped.

"Gilda, I was very cruel to you," said the man she loved. "Whatever else I doubted I ought never to have doubted your love of me, killed it with distrust."

"Peter," she said softly. "It is because my love of you was so very real that it lives."

His eyes leaped to hers and what he saw in their depths sent joy racing through his veins.

"Gilda," he cried. "You mean that you still love me."

She did not speak, but drew a little closer to him and with a glad cry he gathered her in his arms.

"Oh, my dear," he said hoarsely. "You make me feel very humble. Can you ever forgive me?"

She gave a happy laugh.

"Love only remembers the good," she murmured softly. "It forgets all the unhappy things. Our love remembers a wind-blown forest and kisses."

His arms tightened around her and once again their lips found all the ecstasy of the past racing to meet the present, and with it mingled their dreams of the future and its promised happiness.





Fugitive Diamonds

By Ruth B. Fowler

THE strange actions of the good-looking young man puzzled Caralee Strand as she sat on the hard, uncomfortable bench in the San Antonio station, waiting for the arrival of the *Sunset Limited* from New Orleans. It was nearly two o'clock in the morning, and Caralee should have been getting her beauty sleep. But business is business, and her firm had intrusted her with a special mission. There was no help for it; Caralee had to take that particular train.

Her interested but slightly sleepy brown eyes watched the young man as for the third time he paced hurriedly

across the waiting room, and peered cautiously through the doors into the night. His movements seemed to be caused by fear, or apprehension, or anxiety; Caralee couldn't tell which. He was tall and lithe, and his well-tailored gray suit became his fair skin and blue eyes. Caralee wondered why he seemed so restless. Perhaps he was waiting for some one who was late.

It was still fifteen minutes before the train was due. Caralee stifled a little yawn with a daintily gloved hand, and idly turned the pages of the magazine she held in her lap. Suddenly she became aware of some one standing be-

fore her. She looked up into the face of the mysterious young man. His blue eyes were staring fixedly at the diamond pin she wore at her throat. His lean, tanned face held an expression of rapt admiration.

Caralee covered the sparkling pin with a nervous hand. Perhaps the safety catch had become unfastened. But, no, it had not. Her action in grasping the pin brought a flicker to the admiring blue eyes. The young man seemed to realize that he had been guilty of rudeness, for he bowed slightly and walked away.

What an odd person he was, thought Caralee, as she watched his athletic figure stride down the aisle between the benches. Then she gave a little cry of dismay as he stubbed his foot against a protruding suitcase, and with a resounding *plop*, fell face forward on the floor.

A black leather case bounded from an inside pocket of his gray coat, struck the floor with a soft rasp of leather on stone, and flew open. A cascade of unset diamonds, sparkling, scintillating, and beautiful, gushed from the pliable leather case and rolled in brilliant confusion over the floor.

Fascinated, Caralee watched as the young man sprang up and leaped after the escaping treasure. On hands and knees, with seeming disregard for the possible damage to his trousers, he scooped up the glinting diamonds with quick, supple fingers, while his blue eyes, genuinely afraid now, swept nervous glances about the waiting room. That part of the room, however, was almost deserted. Only Caralee had witnessed the accident, Caralee and a plainly dressed man who slouched half-asleep on the far end of the bench.

The eyelids of the nondescript man on the end of the bench were half-closed, and his face was expressionless, wooden. But Caralee saw that his cold gray eyes were keenly alert. Instantly, Caralee

appraised him as a detective. A wave of repulsion swept over her as she saw the blue-eyed young man hastily replace the diamonds in the leather case, and stuff it into his inside breast pocket, glancing about furtively as he did so.

He must be a thief, she thought. A diamond thief! No wonder he was apprehensive, with a detective so close on his trail. A tremor of fear shook her as she vividly recalled the expression of intense admiration she had surprised on his face when he had stared so rudely at her diamond pin. But she was safe now, with a detective close at hand. Her spine tingled with excitement as the man on the end of the bench arose. Perhaps he would make an arrest right here. Perhaps there would be shooting.

At that moment, a portly Negro, wearing a dark-blue uniform, entered the waiting room and announced: "All aboard! *Sunset Limited* for El Paso, Toosan, Phoenix, and California. All aboard!"

Caralee snatched up her suitcase and black hatbox, and hurried to the train. The young man with the pocketful of diamonds strode along close behind her, but the detective remained in the waiting room.

Unaccountably, Caralee felt a wave of relief. As the car porter helped her into the Pullman, she realized that she was glad the young man was escaping. She knew it was wrong for her sympathies to be with him; she knew she should rejoice in the capture of an evil-doer. But he was so young and handsome, and it would be terrible if he were to be cooped up in jail for years and years. Perhaps he wasn't so much to blame, after all. He might have been led astray by bad companions.

Caralee flicked on the lights in her compartment. There was still time for him to reform, she thought, and then she flushed guiltily as she realized that she was picturing herself in the rôle of reformer. As she undressed she won-

dered why the detective had let him escape. But it would be difficult to prove the ownership of unset diamonds, and the detective probably didn't have enough evidence to prove his case.

Before retiring, Caralee tucked her diamond pin under the mattress of her berth. With a grimace of distaste she shoved the ever-present cuspidor beneath the seat. From her bag she took a shiny, pearl-handled revolver and placed it under her pillow. It might be possible to reform him, but, in the meantime, she would take no chances. Behind the securely locked steel door of her drawing room, she felt safe.

As she lay in her berth, Caralee reflected on her mission. She was the private secretary of the senior partner of a San Antonio law firm, and was on her way to take the deposition of a client in an El Paso sanitarium. Time was an important element, and the winning of a lawsuit involving many thousands of dollars hinged upon the client's statement and Caralee's accuracy in transcribing technical engineering terms and phrases. Caralee was proud of her trust.

The *clickety-click* of the wheels over the rail joints soon lulled her to drowsiness. As she reached up to click off the light at the head of her berth, she wondered sleepily if the young man's conscience hurt him. It must be terrible to be a thief, always fearful of capture and imprisonment. Caralee wished she could do something for him, set his feet on honest paths again.

She awakened the following morning to find the train speeding through a country covered thickly with lacy mesquite trees. Through the fine copper screen in her window she caught occasional glimpses of the muddy Rio Grande River, winding its tortuous way between its sandy banks. Far to the south arose the distance-blued Burro Mountains in Mexico. A little thrill of excitement tingled Caralee's blood.

On the other side of the Rio Grande there were, she knew, smugglers and bandits and desperadoes who still plied their lawless trades.

She was hungry, so she dressed quickly, powdered her piquant face, touched up her sweetly curved lips, and tucked her brown curls into place. As she was about to leave her compartment, she remembered her diamond pin under the mattress. She gave a little gasp and returned to get it. She sighed with relief as she retrieved it, and packed the sparkling stone safely in her suitcase. The gleaming new revolver she tucked in her bag again.

Around her neck she hung a necklace of Mexican topazes which harmonized with her brown eyes and dark-beige traveling suit. Then, after locking her compartment door from the outside, she hurried through the rushing train, feeling like a sailor on a swaying deck, to the dining car.

After writing her order on the little pad laid down on the snowy linen tablecloth by the dining steward, Caralee sat gazing pensively through the broad windows at the distant mountains. She wondered what her diamond thief was doing. From the corner of her eye she saw the steward seating a man opposite her. Ordinarily, stewards were more circumspect in seating diners, and did not put unattached young men and women at the same table. But travel had made people hungry that morning, and the car was crowded. There was no other vacant place available.

Caralee glanced quickly at her breakfast companion, and suddenly drew in her breath sharply. Her brown eyes dilated, and her curved lips straightened into a hard, white, uncompromising line. It was the young man with the diamonds.

He recognized her, too. He smiled and bowed formally. Caralee noticed that his keen blue eyes sought out the spot at her throat where she had in-

discreetly worn the diamond pin the night before. He started and paled. "Say," he blurted, his resonant voice low and guarded, "you haven't lost your pin, have you?"

Caralee's thoughts were jumbled. Should she say, "Yes," and thus throw him off the trail, or should she answer, "No," and be in constant danger from him? If she replied, "Yes," he would expect her to raise a hue and cry about it.

Her slender hands, concealed below the damask-covered table, patted her bag reassuringly. "No," she replied, using her most reproving, icy tone. That tone usually put inquisitive young men in their proper place. But it didn't seem to affect this handsome thief that way.

He sighed, as if in relief. "I thought for a minute you had," he said.

Caralee stared coldly at him, and then turned to look out of the window.

He colored faintly. "Please don't think I'm being forward," he pleaded. "You see, I'm a great lover of diamonds. I'm unusually fond of such perfect stones as you have in that pin," he added.

Caralee thought rapidly. Perhaps it would be a good idea to let this young man know that she had seen his diamonds roll across the floor of the station at San Antonio. It would be a warning that she was not unaware of his profession.

She turned from her survey of the passing landscape and looked steadily into his blue eyes. "You must be," she said with meaning emphasis. "I saw you chase after several this morning in the station."

Instantly, his expression changed. The engaging frankness disappeared, and the furtive look returned. "Sh," he cautioned. "Please don't say that so loud. And don't tell any one, will you?"

Caralee fought back the sympathy that welled in her tender heart as that

haunting look crept into his face. "I'm sure it's none of my business," she said primly.

"Please don't misunderstand," he begged. "No one must know that I have these diamonds."

Caralee shot a withering glance at him. "I think I understand—perfectly," she answered.

"I'm so glad." He sighed with relief. "May I give you my card?" he asked as he dug into a vest pocket. His searching fingers came out empty. "Confound it, I haven't got any," he said. "However, we really don't need such a proper introduction. Being interested in diamonds sort of forms a bond between us, doesn't it?"

A bond with a thief! She thought her ears had deceived her. And he could be so nice, too. If only he were honest she could learn to like him very much, Caralee realized. At the thought she flushed. As the waiter approached, she again turned to stare through the window, finding in the monotonous scenery a relief for her mixed emotions.

While the waiter arranged her breakfast dishes, the young man quickly scribbled his own order on the little pad. Caralee kept her eyes on the table as she turned to sample the sliced oranges placed before her.

"I'm Kenneth Wane—Ken for short," the young man offered, and then waited inquiringly.

"Oh," said Caralee a bit breathlessly as she looked up and found his eyes smiling into her own. "I'm Caralee Strand."

Why had she told him her name? Silly goose! But he was so good-looking and had such a disarming smile. Still, she mustn't let this go any further.

"That's a lovely name," he said. "It just suits you."

Caralee tried to look severe, but she succeeded only in smiling. And when Caralee smiled, a tiny dimple appeared in each soft, velvety cheek.

"Are you going to El Paso?" he inquired.

Caralee poured cream in her coffee and nodded.

"Good! Perhaps you'll let me bring you some magazines to read. We don't reach there until this evening, and you'll need something to help pass the time."

There seemed to be no stopping Kenneth Wane. Caralee buttered her toast in silence while she wondered how she could put him in his place. His place! She quivered in fright as she remembered that his proper place was in jail. "Thanks," she answered coldly, "but I have some magazines."

"How about a book?" he offered.

"I've read a book," Caralee dimpled. Then she frowned to show him that the smile was not intended for him. The waiter approached with Ken's breakfast, while Caralee busied herself with her own. It was too bad that he was a thief, she thought for the hundredth time. He seemed to like her, and Caralee realized that she liked him. Grimly she set her teeth. She mustn't think such thoughts. He seemed to like her for herself, but reason told her that he liked her diamond better.

Both were silent while Caralee hurried through her breakfast. She was about to arise from the table when he leaned forward with a pleading expression in his clear blue eyes. "Won't you relent just a little bit, Miss Strand?" he asked. His face brightened. "How about bringing you a nice box of chocolates?"

"Oh, no," she answered. "Not so soon after breakfast."

As she stood up, Caralee left a dime for the waiter on the little silver tray.

He arose and stood by the side of his chair, grinning as if he took the refusal for encouragement. "All right," he replied. "I'll say it with flowers—if there are any on the train."

Caralee laughed at his persistence, a little rippling laugh of genuine amuse-

ment. "You won't find me," she warned as she turned to go.

He sat down to finish his breakfast. "You can't get away from me so easily," he flung after her. "I'll search every car on the train!"

Back in her compartment, Caralee locked the door. The berth had been made up by the porter while she had been at breakfast, and she sat down on the green plush cushions to read. But while her eyes followed the printed words, her mind was elsewhere. Kenneth—that is, Mr. Wane—was so amusing. He would make an interesting companion with whom to while away the tedium of the trip.

But the picture of his furtiveness in the railroad station could not be erased, nor could the expression in his eyes at the breakfast table as he had cautioned, begged her to keep quiet about the diamonds. "No one must know that I have those diamonds," he had said.

The compartment was hot and stuffy with the door closed, and the tiny electric fan buzzing in a corner of the ceiling fought the heat unsuccessfully. In desperation, Caralee left the compartment, locked the door, and hurried back to the observation platform for a breath of fresh air.

The train was just roaring over the high bridge across the Pecos River when Caralee sat down in one of the vacant chairs. The country was growing rougher and even wilder now. The only hint of civilization lay in the gleaming twin rails that curved away behind the train.

As her eyes took in the beauty of the scene, some one sat down in the chair beside her.

"I've been looking everywhere for you, Miss Strand."

Caralee looked around. "Oh," she said without encouragement. "It's you again."

He smiled winningly. "It's Ken."

She tried to freeze him with a look,



Caralee watched tremblingly. The bandit approached warily, keeping his gun trained on them.

but he thawed it out before it reached him.

"You know," he told her, "I've been in every car in the train hunting for you. You must have a compartment. And I couldn't very well be breaking into compartments."

"I wouldn't put it past you," returned Caralee sarcastically.

"I got the most magnificent roses for you," he went on, unheeding. "Got them from the train butch. When I couldn't find you I had the porter put them on ice. I'll go and get them."

"Don't bother," said Caralee, keeping her eyes on the scenery.

"Bother! It's a pleasure. These roses are beautiful and fragrant and sweet—just like you." He hurried away, letting the screen door slam.

As soon as he was out of sight, Caralee quickly retired to her compartment. It was better to put up with the heat than to fall in love with this attractive thief.

At lunch time, Caralee determined to have her luncheon served in her compartment. But that would be cowardly. She certainly wouldn't let herself be run into hiding by him. While she told herself that she didn't want to see Kenneth Wane at all, she stood before the

long mirror fastened to the back of the compartment door and took particular pains with her powder puff and lipstick. Then, assuming a nonchalant air, she strolled forward toward the dining car.

Caralee felt her heart give a queer little leap as she caught sight of him standing in the swaying vestibule. In his hand he held a huge bunch of American Beauty roses that were slightly the worse for wear.

He smiled ingratiatingly. "I knew you'd be here if I just waited long enough. Do I look so much like poison ivy to you—Caralee?"

She gasped a little at his use of her name. Then she assumed a bored, woman-of-the-world air. "Not at all," she answered calmly. "You don't remind me of anything."

"Fine," returned the unconquerable Kenneth. "Maybe if I do a few hand-springs or knock over a porter or two, I can make an impression on that blank spot occupied by me in your mind."

"My mind isn't occupied with you at all," returned Caralee coolly. But in her heart she knew that the statement was not true. She couldn't get him out of her mind.

"Oh, well," Kenneth sighed, "here are the roses for you, anyway. Maybe when you smell them you'll think of me."

"Do you think you're as sweet as all that?" asked Caralee ironically. But she laughed, and Kenneth grasped at the straw immediately.

"Won't you have lunch with me?" he asked. "I didn't bite you at breakfast," he reminded her with a grin.

Caralee looked him over with a judicial eye. "Knowing as much about you as I do, I really shouldn't," she said.

He stared at her a moment while the smile faded from his eyes and left them cold, like blue steel. Then he laughed. "What sin has found me out? Come on, let's eat."

Unresisting, Caralee allowed him to guide her to a table.

After the waiter had picked up, examined, and walked off with their order, Caralee faced him across the table and asked: "What do you do for a living?"

He glanced around furtively while that same sly, watchful look appeared on his tanned face. He leaned over the table and whispered cautiously: "Diamonds."

Caralee had not imagined that he would be so frank about it. Yet she felt herself admiring him for having the courage to tell her.

"This isn't a safe place to talk about it," his whisper continued.

"No," replied Caralee, her soft voice flat and lifeless. "I suppose it isn't."

She listened to his light talk during the luncheon, but somehow she was unable to catch his spirit of gayety. This delightfully charming boy—a diamond thief who admitted it! Caralee's heart was heavy with sorrow, and as soon as she could she left him and returned to her compartment.

During the early part of the afternoon she sat and stared out at the rugged landscape. The train was traversing the Big Bend section of Texas where mountain after red mountain rolled away into the distance. Some were lofty and pine-clad, others were capped with layers of rock, like the icing on a red cake.

Caralee wiped the tears from her brooding eyes. Why should she pick out an utterly impossible person, of all people, to break her heart over? She sighed.

There was a sharp rapping sound on the steel door, and Caralee turned about, startled. She arose, thinking that the conductor or porter wished to see her, stepped across the little compartment, and slipped the catch from the door. As she turned the door handle and opened the door she saw Kenneth's grinning face. Angry with herself for having let her mind trick her, she started to close the door, but Kenneth leaned his

broad shoulder against it, and she found herself unable to match his strength.

At that moment, the wheels of the car clattered over a switch, the Pullman lurched, and Caralee found herself flung back from the door. She staggered across the compartment and tumbled into the seat by the window, while her mind thought with lightning rapidity: "He's come to rob me of my diamond!"

Kenneth was sitting on the floor, a look of surprise in his blue eyes, when the door slammed shut with a loud clang. In his hand he held a box of candy, the side of which had been crushed in his fall.

"I've found you at last," he said triumphantly.

Caralee realized that she was alone with the diamond thief. He might rob her and get away before the porter could respond to her ring. On the green plush of the seat lay her bag which contained her only protection, the revolver. She snatched the bag from the seat, opened it, and whipped out the little revolver.

"Hands up!" she gritted, and pointed the weapon at him.

Kenneth sat for a moment as if stunned. The color drained from his face, while his eyes hardened and probed the determined line of Caralee's firm lips.

"Hands up! Quick!" she repeated, her voice steely and grating.

Slowly Kenneth Wane lifted his arms and arose to his feet. "Caralee!" he cried. It was almost a sob.

Puzzled by his tone, Caralee stared at him. As her glance wavered, a swift change spread over him. He leaped at her while his quick hand lashed out and snatched the gun from her fingers. Caralee might have pulled the trigger, but she didn't—she couldn't. She knew that, thief or not, she loved him.

"So," he said roughly, his voice chill, "you played the game this way! Well,

you can't rob me, little girl! Those diamonds stay right with little Kenneth until I reach El Paso."

His words struck fire in Caralee's reeling mind. "Rob you!" she cried. "Why—you—you thief." Her voice ended on a high, sobbing note.

"Don't stall," he answered thickly. "I know your game. But because you're so pretty and soft-looking, and because I could have loved you, I won't turn you over to the police."

"Oh, you cad!" cried Caralee. "How dare you! I'll never give you my diamond—never."

"Your diamond!" He seemed dazed. "What are you talking about?"

There came the shrill screech of suddenly applied air brakes, and Caralee was hurled unceremoniously into Kenneth's arms. Together they were thrown against the hard steel partition of the compartment, while the train ground to a wrenching stop.

"What is it?" gasped Caralee, white-faced.

His voice was grim. "A wreck, I guess," he answered.

From outside of the train there sounded the sharp bellow of revolvers and the hoarse shouts of men.

"It's a hold-up!" cried Caralee, and clung convulsively to him.

"My diamonds!" gasped Kenneth. "Where can I hide them?" Desperately, his frantic blue eyes sought a place of concealment in the compartment. "I've been afraid of this," he explained. "Some one was on my trail at San Antonio."

"Oh, Kenneth!" Caralee wailed. "Why did you do it?"

He paid no attention to her except to drag her clutching arms from his shoulders. "I'll hide them under the seat cushion."

Caralee's mind was chaotic, but in the welter of confusion one thought stood out as brilliantly as the diamonds he carried. She loved this man. He

was a thief, but perhaps her love could change him. If the train robbers got the diamonds, the stones would be gone forever, and he could never make restitution. But if they didn't, if she could win his love as he had half told her she could, she might later persuade him to return the diamonds to their rightful owners. She might make him turn over a new leaf.

Swiftly, Caralee unfastened the clasp of her topaz necklace. Then, deliberately, she broke the string and poured the glittering brown beads into her palm. She turned to Kenneth, who was cramming his black leather diamond wallet under the seat cushion.

"They'll find them there, Kenneth. Give them to me. Quick!"

In her hurry, she almost snatched the case from his hands. She opened it and tumbled the collection of diamonds on the seat cushion. In the thin white tissue paper which had protected the diamonds she poured her handful of Mexican topazes.

"They're not worth very much," she gasped an explanation as her deft fingers wrapped up the beads and stuffed the packet into his wallet.

"Here," she commanded as she thrust the leather case at him. "Stick it back into your pocket."

Her nimble fingers scooped up the diamonds, and she glanced swiftly about the little compartment. Her eyes rested upon the unused cuspidor protruding from underneath the seat. Instantly, she sprang across the room and dumped the scintillating stones, worth thousands of dollars, into the ignoble cuspidor.

"If I only had some tobacco juice!" she cried.

Outside the door, she heard a smooth, suave voice filled with deadly menace. "'Ands up! Queekly, you gringos!"

Kenneth ripped the crackling glassine wrapper from the box of candy which had been lying neglected on the floor. He tore off the lid, grabbed several

chocolates, crammed them into his mouth, and started to work his jaws furiously. In a moment he spat the candy, a thick, brown mass, into the cuspidor. The diamonds were thoroughly hidden.

Caralee suddenly remembered the lock on the door. Too late! Already it was being opened from the outside. Two hard black eyes peered over the top of a red bandanna handkerchief as the bandit's head, capped by a huge sombrero, was thrust within the compartment. In his hands a big revolver pointed steadily at the pair as they stood in a corner, Kenneth's arm thrown protectingly around the girl.

"Steek them up," ordered the bandit's not unmusical voice. "Ah, señora, one thousan' pardons. But I mus' 'ave those diamonds, no? The deescription, eet fits perfect your 'usban'."

Caralee watched tremblingly. The bandit approached warily, keeping his gun trained on them, and felt within Kenneth's breast pocket. His searching fingers clutched the soft, leather wallet, and drew it out triumphantly.

"Ah," he hissed with an intake of breath.

Kenneth groaned. "How did you know I had them?" he asked, his voice calm and steady.

Sardonic humor gleamed in the bright, black eyes. "Señor," he smiled, "one mus' not play marbles weeth diamonds in those railroad stations, is eet not?" He turned to Caralee. "Eet is too bad that I no 'ave the time to beg the beautiful señora to accompany me. I mus' be satisfy weeth the diamonds."

Kenneth's angry blue eyes glared murderously at the bandit. "Leave her out of it!" he grated.

The bandit shoved the wallet under his blue shirt and gave Kenneth a menacing glance. "Keep the 'ands 'igh," he warned with a snarl. Then he leered at Caralee. "*Buenas noche, chiquita,*" he said farewell in his own tongue, and

backed through the doorway. He drew the door closed behind him, and Kenneth sprang to snap the lock.

They stood and stared at one another a moment, and then the train started. Tears coursed down Caralee's velvety cheeks.

"Darling"—Kenneth's strong arms caught her—"don't cry. I—I love you, dear." He kissed each tear-dampened eyelid.

"Oh, Ken!" choked Caralee.

"Caralee dear," he asked as his lips brushed her cheek, "why did you sacrifice your necklace for my diamonds?"

She turned her crimson face up and looked deeply and steadily into his eyes. "Because," she said, "I thought—if you loved me—you might return the diamonds you had stolen."

"Stolen!" Kenneth's eyes were amazed. "Why, my dear, I didn't steal them. They belong to the firm I have been with for years."

Caralee gasped.

"Didn't you know?" he continued. "I'm a diamond salesman with Lathrop & Woodward of Los Angeles."

"Diamond salesman! Oh, Kenneth!" She uttered a little cry of joy. "Oh, darling, I thought——"

Kenneth laughed triumphantly. "You thought I wanted to rob you, and I thought you were trying to rob me." His voice was low and caressing as he held her close in his arms. "You did rob me," he whispered. "Of my heart!" His head bent down to meet her eager, upturned lips.

After breathless moments, Caralee, eyes shining brightly, heart pounding madly, drew away. "Oh, Kenneth," she mourned. "I did hate to lose my necklace."

"Never mind, honey," he consoled, and he kissed her tenderly. "Marry me, and you'll wear diamonds!"

Caralee laid her head against Ken's broad shoulder, and nodded happily as the train rushed on its way to El Paso.

+ + +

PLEA

OH, if you love me make of it no game,
No hidden sweet stored on a secret shelf;
The rose has little need to hide her flame,
The nightingale no need to still herself.

Life's April is too brief, too short its May
For making love a veiled and subtle one;
Let it have freedom in its spring, and say
Its name with pride, and hold it to the sun!

The heart which sings for such a little while
Knows far too much of lonely wandering—
Make love no part of this which does not smile,
No part of this which cannot laugh and sing.

Let love come forth all eager with the song
I've dreamed too often, waited for too long!

BERT COOKSLEY.



Delayed Ecstasy

By Margaret Littell

A Two-part Story

CHAPTER III.

JOAN swayed dizzily, her brain reeling with horror. The precious leather case intrusted to her by the dying words of her cousin, Jerome Henry, was gone in spite of the extreme caution she had used to secrete it.

Some one, unknown to her, slit open the sleeve of the masquerade costume and taken it. Some one who knew what it contained and was willing to cross the Atlantic or to go to any lengths to obtain it. Who was the guilty person?

Joan's heart fell with dismay as she thought of all the people she had brushed up against at the dance. Any one of them could so easily have done what had been done without her even

knowing it till she had gone to her cabin and made the discovery too late. Every one had been masked, yet it would have made small difference if they had not been so disguised, for the bewildered girl knew there was no one who was her enemy, and she had not met enough people in her few days of mingling with Parisian society to be actually known except by sight. No one could possibly know she carried a small object that could only have been of value to the old man who gave it to her keeping and possibly the person to whom she was taking it. Not even Nanette had caught a glimpse of it.

The thought of Nanette brought other thoughts racing to her brain.

Those attempted robberies at the apartment—could they have been because of what the little leather case contained?—she asked herself.

Suddenly Joan remembered the last time she had seen Jerome open the safe in his study. That night of the reception he had given for her! He had taken something from the concealed safe and transferred it to his pocket, and although Joan had turned away her eyes because she was not curious, she had caught a flash of something white out of the corner of her eye. It all came back clearly now. Jerome must have feared a theft of whatever it was. He had put it on his own person, probably had put it into the leather case that very night after the guests had gone. Then later some one had broken into the apartment again and he had fought them off. They hadn't gotten what they were after, but the shock of the encounter had been too much for the gallant old man's heart and had cost his life. And the precious case had been intrusted to Joan!

A shudder tore through her violently. She had failed, just at the point of reaching America where she was to find Josiah Cheston! How foolish she had been, putting her precious charge into the puff of that sleeve! How utterly mad she had been even to attend the dance!

Instantly her heart rebelled at the thought. If she had not been drawn to the masquerade, she would not have met Jack. Probably she would never have seen him again. She would never have known the mad sweetness of his kisses on her mouth. She would never have thrilled at the rapture of his arms about her.

A dark little thought flared up, and as swiftly she thrust it out of her mind. No, no! That could never be! Jack hadn't taken the case, he hadn't! It must have been gone before she went up on deck with him. No one with eyes

so clear and young could harbor black dishonesty in his heart. He hadn't followed her deliberately. It had been an accident, a miracle, that had thrown them together. There had been no purpose in his arms about her but love, surely.

Suddenly Joan's thoughts centered on another, the tall distinguished foreigner who had been so very attentive. He had danced with her repeatedly and now she recalled that once he had guided her into a shadowy corner behind some palms, although she had insisted on leaving at once for the brilliantly lighted portion of the ballroom. They hadn't been alone thirty seconds, and surely she would have noticed it if he had taken the opportunity of their seclusion to extract the case from a slit he had made in her sleeve!

She strained her thoughts and memory, but there was nothing to indicate when he had done so. Bewildered, Joan rejected the foreigner as the thief.

Who then could it have been? The only other person who had actually had hands on her was the stewardess, and, of course, Mrs. Carey. But the latter had centered her entire attention on Joan's coiffure, while the stewardess had hooked her into the gown.

For a moment Joan tried to persuade herself the stewardess had taken the case. Perhaps she had been curious, or perhaps she was in the employ of the thief who had failed in the attempted safe robberies back in Paris.

Then Joan had to brush all that aside. Now she remembered that it was after the stewardess had finished dressing her and had gone away, and while Mrs. Carey had gone into her own cabin for a pin that she had placed the case in the puff of the sleeve where she thought it would be so safe.

Utterly bewildered, Joan slipped into a cobwebby nightgown of shell-pink crêpe, turned off the two lights that flanked the dressing table and crept into

bed. She drew the covers close about her chin and lay shivering.

But sleep refused to come to her wakened brain where alarm had roused every atom of alertness. The case, she must find it! Some one had taken it and she must decide who that person had been. She must get it at once and deliver it to a man named Josiah Cheston and nothing must deter her.

A succession of faces seemed to appear before her staring eyes. The stewardess, the mysterious foreigner who had unmasked at her second dance with him, Jack, all those disguised merry-makers at the masquerade. One of them had the leather case.

Her reason told her the stewardess could not be guilty. Her heart flamed up the assertion that Jack was blameless. And while any of the people at the dance might have done it, her suspicions kept returning always to the foreigner—perhaps because she remembered those repeated attempts at robbing Jerome Henry's safe. Whoever had tried that, might have sent an agent along with her for the purpose of robbing her.

How sinister that was! Lying quietly, hearing the waves tossing and running far below her porthole, Joan's heart contracted with terror of this unseen shadow that seemed to have followed her.

Like a frightened child she half rose, and groped for her robe. She would go to the Careys' cabin and tell them what had happened. They would help her find the thief, and protect her until she had seen Josiah Cheston. Motherly Mrs. Carey, with her nice gray hair and blue eyes and comfortable laugh, charming Mr. Carey with his slender middle-aged tallness, his dreamer's face, his gentleness—they loved her as a daughter, they wanted her to come to them for anything.

Then something seemed to hold her back from leaving the bed. Through

the dark little room she seemed to hear a rattling whisper.

"Guard it as you do your honor—with absolute secrecy!"

Joan fell back among her pillows and lay staring at the darkness. That meant she would have to see it through alone, without help or advice from any one.

A lonely fear stole over her. To have to shut Jack out of her secret at the very moment she most needed him was too awful. If only she could confide in him! Even the strong warmth of his arms about her, or words of assurance from his possessive lips would fill her with new courage to face what lay before her.

Morning came at last, and Joan rose early after a sleepless night. She knew what she must do and she was prepared swiftly to carry it out.

Dressed for landing, she summoned the stewardess and gave her five of her precious dollars and asked her to finish packing everything. Then Joan went out on deck.

The sight that met her eyes sent the quick blood racing through her young veins. America! The sky line of New York rising like a dream city out of the ocean mist, with the bright sun touching the myriad points of tall buildings to rosy-gold! It was enough to stir happiness into Joan's impetuous heart. As it was, it seemed to fill her with courage and determination.

And then the urgent need of her duty came uppermost in her mind. Walking swiftly, she sought the purser's office and found him there, preparing for a busy few hours before landing.

"Good morning," he greeted her brightly. "And what can I do for you? I suppose you want a million dollars or a string of pearls or something you've intrusted to my care."

Joan shook her head and refused to see the admiration in his eyes as they took in her trim figure, clad in smart Parisian clothes.

"No. I want to know where I can find a gentleman I danced with last night," she said quickly. "A foreigner, tall and probably titled."

The officer smiled. "That sounds interesting, but it doesn't help us much, considering there are three titled Europeans on board, and at least three dozen or more men answering to that description. What's his name?"

"I don't know," Joan answered. "But I've got to find him. I'd know him if I saw him."

"I'm sorry I can't help you," the purser bent over his work. "You might patrol the deck and watch one of the gangplanks, because every one will be getting off at about eleven, I should say."

Disappointed, Joan turned to leave. "Thank you," she remembered to say.

"Not at all," came the reply. "Only next time, make the man give you his card and telephone number if you want to pursue a shipboard acquaintance."

Cheeks blazing with color, Joan hurried outside. So that was what he thought! But what else could he think? Not that it mattered, though, in the face of the fact that it was going to be almost impossible to find the tall dark foreigner now.

People were beginning to come out on deck. New faces appeared that she had missed because she had kept so closely to her cabin. Into each one she looked closely, failing to find the person she sought.

A steward offered her a tray of bouillon and sandwiches and she accepted a cup of the hot liquid. After drinking it she continued her patrol of the decks, not realizing how the time was passing.

In going down a companionway some one came out of a passage, some one in gray tweeds who grasped her boldly.

"Joan! I've been hunting for you everywhere. Good morning, dearest!"

"Oh, Jack!" Joan breathed, looking into his shining eyes, seeing the healthy

cleanness of his ruddy cheeks, the perfect grooming of his clothes. What a picture of manhood he was!

"Why, sweetheart, you look pale," Jack said, holding her arm very tight. "What's the matter? You're not ill, are you?"

A great weakness swept through the girl's fragile body. An overwhelming desire urged her to tell Jack everything and let him take the awful burden from her mind. He was so big and strong and able to protect her, and he loved her! Stark love was leaping at this very moment from his deep eager eyes. She knew he was barely resisting the temptation to gather her close and kiss her before all these people that were crowding the deck.

"I'm all right," she managed to say. But the terror stayed in her great violet eyes, and there were vague shadows beneath them that made the strong man at her side doubly anxious to protect her.

"Darling, do you know what day this is?" he whispered, bending over her. "It's our wedding day! And isn't it perfect? Warm as spring. The weather man must have ordered it as a wedding present——"

"But Jack!" Joan interrupted quickly. "Have you forgotten? I have something terribly important to do before we can be married."

"I know, sweet thing. Do you suppose I've forgotten one word that you ever said to me?" His voice sent pin points of joy through her that not even her desperate anxiety could quell. "If you won't let me do it for you, whatever it is, at least I'm going to take you to an exclusive college club where my sister belongs. You see I don't even like to leave you in a hotel alone, darling. I'll go to the University Club and leave my things, and then I'll be right back and take you where you have to go. That oughtn't to require more than a couple of hours. Then we can visit the

Little Church Around The Corner. How's that for planning?"

"Oh, Jack!" Joan breathed. "Jack!"

For a moment all fear left her. She gazed up into Jack's adoring eyes and forgot everything but their love.

Jack stepped around so that his great body shielded her from the sight of the crowded deck, and before she could realize what was in his mind, he bent and pressed a wonderful, quivering kiss on her mouth.

"Where shall we go on our honeymoon, darling?" he asked eagerly yet softly. "I'll take you anywhere you want, you know."

"I don't know where I really want to go," Joan whispered.

"Then suppose we make tracks for a place I know, a wonderful place where there's a beach, and the ocean and a golden moon."

Again he bent and kissed her, and Joan pulled away in sweet confusion, her face suffused with blushes. Her heart leaped in mad joy in spite of the sinister fear that lurked there. To have Jack, wonderful, adoring Jack, always with her, to take care of her, to surround her with his passionate love—it was almost too miraculous to be true! She knew at that moment that at last the dreams of her life had come true.

"Jack, you may take me wherever you want," she murmured, dropping her eyes before the ardent flame in his. "Do you know, darling, I'd almost give anything if I didn't have a conscience."

"Why, sweetheart! That's one of the charming things about you," he said. "It proves how womanly you are, just the girl in all the world I want for my adorable wife. Why do you wish that?"

"Because—well, I don't really wish that, but the duty I must perform is going to hold up our wedding just that long. Oh, Jack"—suddenly she clung weakly to his arm. "You don't suppose anything could happen—to keep us apart?"

For a dark fear seemed suddenly to have laid a cold hand on her spirits like a sinister foreboding of evil.

She stood braced against the stiff breeze that whipped her coat tightly around the slender spiral of her body and blew her bright hair into flat ringlets against her cheeks.

A great tenderness swept over Jack as he looked down at her littleness that was so lovely and appealing. He wanted to lift her in his arms and hold her there forever. She seemed a little frightened, and was obviously excited.

"Come, dear, it's almost the moment of docking," he encouraged her with an adoring smile. "Let's lean over the rail and watch. It's great fun."

He placed his big hand under her arm and led her across the deck. But the girl's eyes were not on the business of landing a big ship at a New York dock. Her eyes were desperately searching the swarm of faces about her.

The excitement of landing brought her only the full realization that the foreigner had vanished completely. It had been so ridiculously easy for him. She hadn't even known his name to enable the purser to locate him for her. And he might so easily have disembarked from another gangplank.

With Jack at her side, eagerly directing the men with their baggage, seeing it got into the proper places in the customs, Joan found it hard to meet his boyish glee for the stark anxiety in her heart. With the frank knowledge that she had absolutely lost track of the foreigner who most certainly had taken the leather case, she must decide on a plan of action.

The Careys came up, smiling their approval on the young man their favorite had chosen, and Joan introduced them.

Professor Carey drew her aside while his wife was talking to Jack.

"I hope this doesn't mean that we won't have you at the music school this

winter, my dear," he jested. "That young man has a serious look in his eye."

Joan managed to laugh. "At least you and Mrs. Carey will be the first to know if I do change my plans," she promised. "I'm coming to you as soon as I can."

The professor beamed. "We have a warm spot in our hearts for you, Joan," he told her. "Warmer than you will ever know. You've meant so much to us. Well, if we don't get started through the customs, we'll be here all night."

It was necessary for Jack to leave Joan in the section marked W while he attended to his own baggage in his own section.

"I'll see you right away, dear," he promised. "Sure you're all right? I'm going to try getting some one to attend to my stuff so I can be with you. Good-by for a few minutes, sweetheart. I won't be long."

She stood watching him thread his way among the crowded customs and a thrill of pride swept over her as she noted the strength of his body that was evident in every step. His well-cut clothes, his manly stride bespoke a powerful masculinity that made her weak with a strange new happiness. He was hers! She loved him. Soon he would be—her husband!



Joan swayed dizzily, her brain reeling with horror. The precious leather case intrusted to her was gone in spite of the extreme caution she had used to secrete it.

Now she knew what she was going to do. She would find Josiah Cheston at once, and report to him the loss of the little leather case. Then he could do anything in his power to locate it, if it was of that much importance. Joan had not the faintest idea if Josiah Cheston was in New York or Timbuctu. She had merely followed the only directions Jerome had left for her. Thus far, two momentous things had happened

—her meeting with Jack, and the loss of her trust. And her life with Jack would have to wait until the other was restored.

Standing there, waiting for the officer to come to her, she saw two men approaching. They looked keenly into each face grouped under W. And the moment they saw her, the better dressed one stepped up politely and tipped his hat.

"Excuse me, but are you Miss Joan Winters?" he asked.

Joan was suddenly breathless. "Yes, I am," she answered.

The man's hat came off. He was an average person, clean, civil.

"We are from Mr. Josiah Cheston," he said. "I am his private secretary and one of Mr. Cheston's clerks is with me. We were sent to meet you and take you to Mr. Cheston."

Joan's heart leaped with gladness. Then Cousin Jerome had looked after her better than she suspected. At least that much of her problem was solved for her.

"Oh, I'm so glad you came!" she exclaimed. "I hadn't an idea where to find him. But my things haven't been inspected yet, so you'll have to wait."

The man waved his hand. The fingers were short and stubby, but clean and manicured. He looked that way all over, as though he had been manicured to disguise his mediocre characteristics. Probably he had been a poor clerk and had risen in Josiah Cheston's employ to a position of some worth.

"You don't need to bother with that, Miss Winters. Mr. Cheston has some influence down here, and the man I brought is going to stay until the customs officers go over your things. Then he will bring them to you. If you are ready, we will go at once."

Joan hesitated. Jack would return in a few moments for her. He would insist on going along, and that would mean betraying Cousin Jerome's wish

that her mission be kept an absolute secret.

"Yes," she breathed. "I'm ready. Let us go quickly."

If she could only get the meeting with Josiah Cheston over quickly, she could call Jack up at the University Club that much sooner.

Excitement sent her along swiftly at the side of the man. He had said his name was Joseph Brooks. He led her quickly to a dark-blue limousine and after she was settled inside, he rode with the chauffeur.

Twenty minutes later they drove up before a smart hotel that was unfamiliar to the unsophisticated girl. Joseph appeared at the door and said they would go inside to meet some one before going on to the Cheston estate on Long Island.

It was a kind-faced woman in a neat uniform who joined them in the hotel. Joseph introduced her as Mrs. Todd.

"I'm the Chestons' old nurse," the woman said to Joan. "Although the family's all grown up and gone away now but Mr. and Mrs. Cheston. But they got me to take care of you while you're here."

"That's so very kind!" Joan murmured. Inside she was thinking how little she really deserved all this when she had lost the thing that had brought her to the midst of this kind of a family. "I really don't need so much attention," she added.

"Just wait till you see the Chestons," Mrs. Todd said. "They know how to treat a young girl. They're the best people in New York. Now before we start out again, I think you should have a bite to eat. Some milk and a sandwich."

And before Joan could remonstrate the woman had ordered some food brought to a secluded corner of the lobby and Joan ate delicious chicken sandwiches and had a pot of chocolate while the two servants of Josiah Ches-

ton stood at a respectful distance and talked together in low tones.

Riding out of the city a little later, with Mrs. Todd sitting beside her in the luxurious car and Joseph in his place on the front seat, an overwhelming sense of guilt smote Joan. After all this thoughtfulness for her safety and comfort, what had she to offer? Nothing but the news that she had lost the leather case and hadn't an idea where it had gone.

She was beginning to realize that there was something of real importance contained therein, when so much attention was accorded to the bearer. Riding along, Joan knew a longing wish that Jack could be with her. It would be perfect to have him at her side, to enjoy the luxury she was going to meet at the Chestons'. But she knew that a king's palace could not detain her a moment longer than was necessary to tell Josiah Cheston her disappointing message. After that she would lose not a moment in getting back to Jack.

She thought of him returning to her section in the customs and not finding her, and a swift compunction filled her. Yet it would have been impossible to take him along to Josiah Cheston. That would have been breaking the letter of her mission, and Joan had sworn to keep it secret. Thinking about Jack detracted a little from the joy of turning in after more than an hour's ride between two massive pillars that guarded the private drive of a beautiful estate on Long Island Sound.

The car swept around a double curve and stopped with a silent rush before an imposing entrance. Joseph opened the door and helped Joan out, and the breeze touched her cheeks with soft warm fingers. How warm the day was! It was unusual for this time of the year. Even the water looked mild enough to swim in, and Joan's heart bounded with young gladness at the mysterious promise of spring in the air.

A butler opened the door and Joan walked in ahead of Joseph and Mrs. Todd. Inside, her eyes widened at the undreamed-of luxury and beauty.

"You will want to refresh yourself before I take you to Mr. Cheston," Mrs. Todd said comfortably, bustling along through the hall. "Come, dear. I'll take you to your room first."

Joan followed her up the wide stairway, past a great window where light the color of rich jewels fell on her as she walked, then soon she was shown a guest room fit for a princess.

"You will have this room during your visit," Mrs. Todd told her, taking the girl's wrap and hanging it in a deep closet.

"What adorable little windows!" Joan cried. "They're so little and so many of them!"

"They open right out on the water, too," Mrs. Todd added. "Mr. Cheston had them built high like that, because he didn't want any guests of his to go sleepwalking and fall out."

Joan laughed. "Well, he needn't worry about me. And anyhow, I won't be sleeping here. I'm only going to be here long enough to tell him something, and then I must go right back into the city."

"Well, you and Mr. Cheston can settle about that," Mrs. Todd said, coming out of the adjoining bathroom. "What concerns me is why the maid didn't leave any hand towels. I'll be right back, dear."

She went out and closed the door and Joan removed her smart hat. There were silver and crystal on the dressing table, but she opened her own tiny dressing case and took out her own things. These were replaced the moment her hair was in perfect order, her nose powdered, her lips brightened slightly with a touch of rouge. Her hat was placed on her head once more, her bag reclosed and ready to leave.

She went into the bathroom, curious

to see what color its decoration would be to go with this beautiful room, and the first thing her eyes lighted upon was the long crystal towel rack. There were at least a half dozen tiny linen towels there, and Joan washed her hands at the bowl, using a new cake of delicately scented soap.

She took up one of the hand towels thoughtfully. Funny, how Mrs. Todd had overlooked these. She had gone out after more of them, and she had been gone at least twenty minutes. Perhaps she was absent-minded.

Joan hurried across the bedroom. Perhaps she might see her in the hallway, and tell her she was ready to see Mr. Cheston.

She turned the doorknob and pushed, and then stood staring at the unyielding panel. The door would not open, although the knob turned easily. That meant the door must be locked from the outside! It couldn't be true, surely.

Joan tried again. She knocked sharply and called. But there was no answer, nothing but silence save for the faint sound of water under the windows.

A thrill of horror swept over the girl. There could be no doubt about it. She was a prisoner. She had walked into a trap as neatly and blindly as a child, unless Josiah Cheston was some sort of monster with a crazed brain who had ordered this kind of a reception.

What could it mean? He was the only person in New York who could possibly be aware of her coming, and that only in case Jerome Henry had feared approaching death and had sent him word to be on the watch for the leather case. Who was Josiah Cheston anyhow? Why was she being locked up in a room to wait for him?

A dozen terrifying answers rushed to her brain. Surely Cousin Jerome hadn't been aware of the nature of the man he had sent her to, for there could be no casual explanation for this!

Oh, if only she hadn't slipped away from Jack! If only she had confided in him, then she would never have been in this horrid situation. And what awful thing was about to happen to her?

Outside in the hallway her alert ears suddenly caught a sound. Some one was approaching, was stopping outside her door.

Joan hastily snatched her coat from the closet and pulled it on. Then holding her purse tightly under one arm and her traveling bag in the other, she stood ready to run.

But the door opened and shut again so swiftly that there had not been a chance to slip out. And the person who entered sent new terror to her heart.

It was Joseph who stood before her. Only now he had erased the humble obedient expression from his heavy face. He looked straight into her eyes and his features twisted into a smile that filled Joan's brain with horror.

"Open that door!" Joan commanded breathlessly. "At once!"

"Sure," the man grinned. "I'm going to open it."

"Then why don't you do it?" Joan demanded.

"I'm waiting till you hand over a certain small case that you brought from Paris," he said slowly. "As soon as you do, I won't keep you another moment. In fact, I'll be glad to get rid of you."

Joan caught her breath sharply. "Who are you?" she cried. "Surely you can't be Josiah Cheston!"

The man laughed gruffly. "Not much. But I'll be just as lucky as if I was when you give me that leather case, or maybe it ain't leather."

"But why did you bring me here if you aren't Josiah Cheston?" Joan persisted. "Why did you lie to me? And how did you know I was coming on that ship?"

Joseph frowned. "What's this—a question box? Listen, lady, don't fool yourself with none of them storybook

ideas. I didn't get you here because of your famous beauty or none of that stuff. I don't know Josiah Cheston personally and I don't want to know him. I knew you was on that boat because I make it my business to know lots of things. And it ain't you I want. It's that case. Hand it over!"

He put out his hand, stubby, the broken nails manicured—so she would not be suspicious, she knew now—and advanced menacingly toward her.

Joan stepped back, her body trembling with fright.

"I haven't got it!" she said, scarcely aloud.

"What's that! Now look here," the man roared angrily. "Don't try that stuff. I know you had it when you left Paris. You kept it on you on the trip over. You never mixed with the passengers. Of course you have it. Don't keep me waiting, lady. I'm liable to get rough."

"But it's true!" Joan's teeth were chattering with cold fear. "I haven't got it. It was stolen last night."

With a swift motion the man darted forward and grasped her wrist. He gave it a sharp twist that pained cruelly.

"Listen. That ain't true. You've got it on you somewhere and I'm going to have it. I'm risking my neck using this here house while the owner and the servants are away. The caretaker and his wife is both tied and gagged, but I don't know how long it'll be before some fool finds them. So you see I ain't looking up in no etiquette book about the fashionable way to search you." He gave her slim wrist another cruel twist. "Come across now."

"Oh, stop!" Joan screamed. "I tell you I haven't got it! I had it until last night."

"Here, Joe, turn her over to me!"

The words came from the door. It had been opened silently, and Joan's desperate eyes saw that the woman called Mrs. Todd had entered. Now

she also had left off her servility. Her plain face was desperate like the man's. Her eyes were cold and cruel.

Her hand reached out and fastened on Joan's other wrist, taking away the bag and flinging it on the floor.

"There, you take that outside and go through it," she ordered. "The kid's touchy, and I don't want no screamin' because you're here when I undress her. Get out!"

With a leer, Joe picked up the bag and retreated. Joan made a desperate effort to tear from the woman's grasp when the door was open, but Mrs. Todd's hands were powerful.

Without more words she disregarded the girl's pleading. She tore off the coat, and with a pair of scissors which she produced from her own clothing she slit the lining, the collar and cuffs, the hem.

"Not there," she commented shortly, and pulled off Joan's dress.

She went through the hem and the trimming of this, and finding nothing, she completed her search through the filmy lingerie Joan wore.

"You see!" the girl sobbed. "I haven't got it. Now, you will let me go at once."

The woman laughed harshly. "Not yet a while, dearie. I see you're tellin' the truth about not havin' it, and I'll believe you when you tell me where it is. You don't need to say it's in your trunks, for Slim just telephoned that he had searched them at the customs, pretendin' to help the officer inspectin'. You had the leather case, and now you haven't it. I'm waitin' to hear where it is, then we'll all be goin'."

Joan was crying as she hastily drew on her clothes.

"I tell you, the case was stolen last night," she sobbed wretchedly. "I don't know who took it, and I don't know where it is."

The woman rose from the chair where she had been sitting.



She stood watching him thread his way among the crowded customs and a thrill of pride swept over her. Soon he would be—her husband!

"Well, maybe you'll recollect where you put it if we leave you alone for a while. I'm kind-hearted, and besides it ain't safe for us to leave this time of day, with so much traffic and all. We're goin' to stay till morning, and we'll give you till seven o'clock to remember. And

then"—she paused, and Joan shuddered at the cruel glint in her eyes—"if your memory is still bad, Joe is good at thinking up ways to torture people who ain't willin' to coöperate. Good night, dearie."

This time Joan was too weak from

fright to attempt escape when the door opened. Besides, she knew it would be futile to try that, with Joe outside and the powerful-fingered "Mrs. Todd" ready to drag her back.

She drew on her dress with stiff fingers and sat down weakly onto the bed. Her tears had dried on her face, her brain was reeling with terror and her heart was beating madly.

There was no doubt any longer concerning her fate. Somehow these crooks had learned of her coming, somehow they knew of the existence of the leather case. Now she realized there could be but one answer to that. Whoever had attempted robbing Jerome's safe must have known of her coming to America. He, or they, could have notified confederates in New York to seize her by any means in order to obtain the case.

Joan began to pace the room. The day was fading, and a cold chill seemed to creep about her. There was no heat, probably because the caretaker was still bound and gagged. Oh, if only some one would discover that!

Presently her tortured brain began putting things together. That foreigner at the dance—had he taken it after all? She had thought he might be an agent of that sinister person in Paris who had tried to rob Jerome Henry's safe. If that were true, that meant these people here were his confederates.

A ghastly thought struck her. Could that mean that the foreigner had not stolen the case after all? That, failing, he had arranged to trap her after she left the liner? Then that left only one other possible person who could have slit open her sleeve.

Joan threw herself down on the bed and burst into a torrent of wretched sobs. No, it couldn't be true, no matter how strongly things pointed that way! Jack wasn't guilty! He couldn't have known anything about it, or if he had he would have only protected her. He

loved her. And she loved him, madly, wildly.

Dark thoughts swarmed up in her feverish brain. Now she remembered something he had said about having seen her once before that meeting in the Bois. Could that mean he had visited the apartment where she had spent her time exclusively while she was in mourning for her parents without her knowing of his presence? Her room had been just next the study where the safe was located, where the leather case had been secreted.

With a little cry Joan sprang to her feet. No, she would not allow her brain to finish the thought! Jack had never been to Cousin Jerome's apartment. He had never attempted robbery there or anywhere.

The room grew dark. Joan drew a chair to the windows and peered out. This was not the season for boats on the Sound, and the room was on the side of the house away from the road. It was impossible to even see the lights of any traffic. If she should scream for help not a soul would hear her outside and come to her rescue.

The moon came up and trickled yellow light over her wan face and bent body. It showed clearly how impossible it would be to escape by the windows. They were small and square, quite high up on the wall. Below the sills on the outside it was a sheer drop to the water below. Mrs. Todd and Joseph had certainly chosen the right room to imprison her until they were ready to let her go, Joan thought to herself.

After a while Joan lay down on the bed. But instead of sleep, only more terrifying thoughts came to her. She knew it would be useless to pretend any excuse, or to invent a mythological place where the leather case might be. These crooks were thorough enough to keep in touch with the man called "Slim." They would not let her go until he had proved her story authentic. But she

had no story for them other than the one she had already told.

The black squares of windows were turning to gray before Joan finally decided what to do. It seemed impossible, yet it was her only chance. Anything was worth trying, because her fate in either case would be the same.

She moved about the room so silently that any possible listener outside could not have heard. There was the desperate flicker of hope in her eyes as they watched dawn spread over the part of sky visible through the high windows. There was determination in the set of her small chin as she made ready for the only chance she had of escape. She must get out of that place!

Her small overnight bag held the garment she had worn the day before on shipboard and which she had packed there in case the weather should turn cold. It was a knitted dress of warm rose wool, and as she took it out there tumbled from the folds a square silk handkerchief of rose and soft green.

Swiftly Joan removed the silk dress she had worn since leaving the boat and in its place she drew on the rose woolen. Next she tied the bright square around her head, and fastened it in a snug knot.

She stepped silently onto the chair she had pulled up to the window and opened the sash.

The sun was just touching the waters of the Sound with gorgeous colors, another warm day of late winter when all the world is glad with coming spring. The sudden burst of beauty after the terrific hours she had spent in a horror of fear sent a new thrill of hope through Joan's tense body. She thought of Jack's eyes that flashed with the joy of young love and her heart leaped, then it sank with a sickening thud.

Suppose the water below would be shallow! The thought made her shiver with dread. Or suppose some one from the house saw her! Joan knew that

either of her captors would rather shoot than let her get away.

CHAPTER IV.

With a whispered prayer on her lips, Joan jumped. Miraculously the water was deep enough for the dive, and its coldness stung her fiercely as she struck. Then she put all the energy of her being into cutting through the icy depths.

Her hands became numb almost immediately, but she fought her way with a desperate determination. Soon she was beyond the house, but her ears were strained for some sound that would tell of alarm from her captors, some warning that her daring had been in vain.

Swimming rapidly, the exercise presently warmed her sufficiently to endure the coldness without that first spasm of suffering. Her youthful training in athletics stood her in good stead now. She swam without cutting the water, with long, sure strokes that carried her far beyond the reach of even a gun at the house where she had been imprisoned.

Presently she could not see any part of the building. On and on she swam, trying to ignore the shock of the wintry water on her system, until after three quarters of an hour she knew she could endure it no longer.

Her hands were almost useless as she left the water. She managed somehow to pull herself up an embankment, her feet half frozen and feeling like clumps of wood as she crept through a field. The hard stubble were stabs of pain as she trudged along. Her wet clothing clung to her shivering body and seemed to absorb all the coldness from the air.

It seemed a century before she reached the road. Then it was smooth walking, with her feet losing their numbness and beginning to flame with searing pain. Her hands, too, burned from the reaction. Without any warm

clothing but the wool dress, she knew how it would feel to perish with cold, even on a pleasant winter day. Would her clothes never dry?

She started to run, breathlessly, painfully, her throat burning with sobs.

The road veered sharply, and as she stumbled around it she beheld a sight that at that moment was more beautiful than anything in the world—a gasoline filling station with a vacant taxi standing by. The driver was inside the tiny office, talking with the proprietor, but he saw Joan stumble inside the car and he came running, his breath like white steam in tiny puffs.

"Where to, lady?" he asked, sticking his head in through the front window. At sight of her bedraggled clothing his freckled face went into a caricature of astonishment. "Gee, what happened, miss? You didn't fall into the Sound, did you?"

Joan was shivering violently. Her brain seemed to have gone numb with the exception of one small part that urged her to hurry. She scarcely even heard the driver's amazed question.

"How much—to New York?" she gasped.

"I'll take you in for—let's see——" He screwed his eyes in the process of thought. "I'll make it seven and a half. All right?"

Joan nodded dumbly, her teeth locked from painful shivering. The driver paused curiously as he got into his seat. Then a kindly expression came over his features.

"I'll turn the heat on for you, miss," he offered.

"And shut that window up there—please," Joan begged.

She huddled over the radiator in the bottom of the car and for the first few miles her only thought was to get warm. Presently her young vitality began to ebb back again, and she curled into a corner of the seat and lay there weakly.

Now she remembered she had not

eaten anything since the sandwiches and chocolate she had had at the hotel the day before. Her body was aching for food. Now she knew how hungry she was she felt too weak to stand.

She managed to lean forward by holding onto the auxiliary seat and tapped on the window. The driver turned swiftly and stared expectantly.

"Stop somewhere and let me get a bite to eat," she called.

He was pointing and gesturing, and she saw he was calling her attention to a roadside booth far back in the trees.

Opening the window an inch she heard his voice.

"I'll bring you a hot dog, miss, if that's all right?"

"Yes—anything!" Joan breathed. She fumbled in the handkerchief tied to her wrist, where she had secured her money before escaping the house.

But the taxi driver waved a huge red hand.

"Don't bother, miss. We can settle when we get into town," he called as he dashed off through the trees.

In a few moments he was back again, offering her a paper bag containing a long-roll sandwich oozing with mustard and heat.

Joan accepted it eagerly and sank gratefully into her snug corner to eat. The drive was resumed and a warm feeling of security stole over her. She was alone in the dawn, riding over deserted roads in a taxi with a raw-boned, frankly curious youth. Yet she was not afraid. Somehow his back had a straight honest look up there on the front seat. He had accepted her queer appearance with the evident assumption that a taxi driver runs into almost anything.

Joan's mouth broke into the first smile in hours. Of all strange things he was probably at this minute imagining about her, nothing could be half so strange as what had actually occurred. And what was still to come—

she stirred uneasily with a vague tremor of dread.

She reasoned that the best thing would be to go straight to the Careys. They would take care of her until she succeeded in finding Josiah Cheston. Then there was waiting for her a good position as pianist at the music school, unless she gave in to Jack's pleading.

A flood of happiness swept through her at the thought of him, probably hunting for her all night. Would he be angry that she had gone away so furtively without seeing him? Or, worse still, would he refuse to believe her about being trapped so innocently? All these questions tore at her heart and she was unable to find an answer.

In spite of her anxiety Joan was powerless against an insidious cloud of sleep that crept up on her. She had not slept for two nights, and the exertion of swimming in the icy water had sapped her last bit of strength.

The next thing she knew, she was being nudged in the arm and a vaguely remembered voice was saying:

"Here we are, miss. This is right, ain't it?"

Alert on the instant, Joan sat up blinking at the building where they had stopped. Yes, there it was—The Randolph Carey School of Music.

Rapidly she untied the still sodden lump of money at her wrist and counted out eight of her precious dollars which the driver accepted.

"Do you want me to wait?" he asked with a hint of kindly interest.

"No, thank you," Joan said tremulously as she stepped out onto the pavement. "I'm with friends now."

She knew he stood and watched while she climbed the steps and pressed the bell. And then everything was swept from her mind by the opening of the door.

A uniformed maid answered her ring. And with the opening of the door, Joan ran inside to escape the cold

that seemed to penetrate to her very bones.

"Oh, I'm nearly frozen!" she gasped, shivering in the grateful warmth of a large reception hall while the astonished servant eyed her. "Tell Mrs. Carey that I'm here. Joan Winters——"

She broke off, seeing the maid had not moved, and followed her gaze to the stairway.

A glad joy filled her at what she saw. Mrs. Carey, smartly dressed in street clothes, was descending the stairs!

With a little cry Joan ran forward. The light from a window on the landing was a bit dazzling to her tired eyes, but she could have wept with joy at the very sound of dear Mrs. Carey's footsteps.

"Oh, Mrs. Carey! I never was so glad to see anybody in my whole life and——"

She stopped suddenly, realizing that there had been no answer from that figure on the stairs. Now her eyes accustomed to the light could see the older woman's face. There was no smile there, nothing but cold recognition and a distinct drawing away.

"You'll have to excuse me, Miss Winters," Mrs. Carey said with strange unfriendliness. "I have some errands to do this morning, and I'm unable to ask you to stay."

Joan stared in astonishment, her breath taken away by the freezing actions of the woman who had befriended her on shipboard.

"But I was to come here," she managed to murmur. "Professor Carey promised me a position, you know. And you said you wanted me to stay with you—that's why I came."

Mrs. Carey bristled. Her eyes sent freezing darts of injured anger to the girl. "That is quite true," she said coldly, not looking at Joan. "My husband did offer you a position. And I did want you here, but that was before you ran off so unaccountably in the cus-

toms with a strange man. We thought everything about you was what you pretended, especially when young Mr. Lorrimer was so attentive."

"But I wasn't pretending!" Joan burst in. "I had something important

to do before I came to you, and Jack understood it."

Mrs. Carey held up her hand. "You're wrong, my dear," she said with a haughty smile, so different from her warm motherliness of the last week.



He gave her slim wrist another cruel twist. "Oh, stop!" Joan screamed. "I tell you I haven't got it! I had it until last night."

"Neither he nor we could ever understand such unconventional actions on the part of a well-bred young girl. I'm afraid you have had your chance, and lost, with all three of us."

Joan gasped. "Then you mean——"
"That my husband and I will have no place here for you. And I doubt if you ever see Mr. Lorrimer again. When he called up and we told him you had not appeared, he seemed so disappointed in you."

A rush of unjust anger swept over Joan. "But you can't send me away!" she exclaimed. "Surely our friendship must have meant something, and besides I have been through some bad hours. I had to jump from a window and swim for my life"—her voice broke with the mingled emotions of terror and disappointment that were too strong for her overwrought nerves. "I don't know where to go," she sobbed. "I have so little money, and my clothes are still wet—and I haven't even a—hat."

There was a sigh of exasperation from the woman on the stairway.

"Well, I suppose I'll have to do something for you," she said unwillingly. "I'll let you stay long enough to get something to eat, and my maid can dry and press your dress. But remember, we are through with you. You cannot presume on our acquaintance any longer, understand?"

Mutely Joan nodded. If it had not been for her dire need she would not have stayed under the Careys' roof another instant. But necessity forced her to follow the woman who had once pretended such a maternal feeling for her.

Going up the steps she reflected on women like Mrs. Carey. Respectable women were the first to believe evil about young girls. They were the most cruel in their blame and denunciation.

There was a small writing room at the head of the stairway and here Mrs. Carey told Joan to wait. She brought her a bath robe and said she could slip

into that, and she watched Joan with eagle eyes while the girl took off her misshapen dress. This was the second time in two days she had undressed before a middle-aged woman, and strangely the respectable, offended eyes of Mrs. Carey were no kinder than the narrowed ones of Mrs. Todd.

"Stay where you are," Mrs. Carey instructed coldly. "The maid will have this ready for you very shortly. You will find something to eat downstairs on your way out."

She picked up the rose dress with two fingers as though afraid of contamination, and she went out, closing the door with a curt little slam.

Sitting there close to the radiator, holding the large robe close about her slender body, Joan made up her mind once more to go to Josiah Cheston. After that she would call up Jack, after she had finished her trust given her by Jerome Henry. Then she could be frank and honest with him. She could explain why she went off secretly with the man in the customs. With Josiah Cheston aware of the loss of the case, she and Jack could take up life together, if he still loved her, if he would only believe her!

Suddenly Joan realized she had been staring at something on the wall, a queer framed diagram seemingly without any meaning. She got up and went over to it, without any especial desire to fathom it out.

Evidently it was a family tree. On the top branch were the neatly penned words—Julia Nelson, married to Randolph Carey February 20, 1899. That meant it was the tracing of Mrs. Carey's family connections, and Joan was about to turn away without interest when her eye caught a familiar name somewhere on the branches of the diagram.

The name was lost immediately, and she began searching eagerly for it, knowing she had certainly been mistaken. It couldn't be possible! Now

her eyes were eager as her finger followed each section of Mrs. Carey's family. Suddenly she gasped in surprise.

There it was. Julia Nelson Carey, descended from Mary Smith Nelson whose sister Amy had married Jerome Henry on September 1, 1874. That meant—Joan's bewildered brain worked recklessly in excitement—Mrs. Carey was related to Jerome Henry through his marriage to her aunt! How very, very queer! She herself was related to him, but by blood. He was the brother of her grandfather, which meant that she was no relation to Mrs. Carey.

Joan's mind seemed racing in circles with this new angle to things. Could Mrs. Carey be aware of the relationship? But of course that was impossible. She had never mentioned Jerome to any one. Mrs. Carey was simply an ordinary, average woman. If she had been related by blood to the aristocratic Jerome Henry, she could never have been capable of turning a cold shoulder on a friend as she had done.

Slowly Joan went back to her chair and sat down, thinking intently. Suddenly every sense was on the alert. Some one was walking through the hall. The door was opening.

The maid came in with the dress neatly pressed.

"It was shrunk something terrible, so I tried to stretch it," she said, staring curiously at Joan. "I guess it's long enough now."

"Thank you so very much!" Joan said, jumping to her feet, and taking the dress from the girl.

As the servant left the room, Mrs. Carey came in and walked over to the window. Her attitude plainly said that she was taking no chances of her unwelcome guest running off with anything in the room.

"You'll have to hurry," she announced without looking at Joan.

"You're keeping me back from some very important engagements."

Joan threw off the bath robe, but her fingers delayed in their task of drawing on the knitted dress. Something in the back of her mind was working. It seemed she had found a problem that she must solve. Something in the relation of Jerome Henry to Mrs. Carey.

Trying to fathom the mystery that seemed to have laid hold on her brain, she dressed slowly so that the woman over by the window grew impatient. She stood nervously, clutching her bag tightly under her arm, smoothing the wrinkles out of her dark suede gloves, drawing them onto her fingers.

A noise in the doorway caused Joan to whirl swiftly. There in the half-open doorway stood Professor Carey watching her.

"Come on!" he urged, without any greeting. "Is it going to take you all day to find we don't want you here?"

Suddenly from below there came the sound of a bell, and Professor Carey vanished from the doorway as if by magic. That meant he was expecting somebody and was anxious to meet him at the door. Probably the girl they had secured to take Joan's place in the school.

Unhappy, bewildered and puzzled, Joan picked up the silk square and tied it over her hair in the jaunty fashion she had worn on deck. But now she did not feel jaunty any longer. There was a mysterious problem to be solved, and if she didn't do it at once, the chance would be forever lost to her. But what was it? What was this vague presentiment that seemed to hold her, to keep her lingering on as long as possible?

The answer came of a sudden like a blinding flash of lightning. It came in a moment when Mrs. Carey was off guard, interested in something she had just seen in the street below.

Joan never knew what it was that made her do it—perhaps a streak of in-

stinct that showed her the truth like a dazzling light. In a swift instant she darted across to the window and snatched Mrs. Carey's bag from her arm.

Fast as light she tore open the catch and something seemed to leap out at her startled eyes. The leather case! It lay on top of the bag's contents, and her quick gestures made it pop out into her hands!

Without breathing Joan turned and fled. She heard the angry startled cry from the woman in pursuit and she sped faster.

Downstairs she raced, down the long stairway like the dreams she had had. She must avoid those two men down there in the hallway. They must not hold her back now. Oh, if she could only get by them, out through the vestibule, there would be a taxi! She could escape with the thing that had brought her on a mission from another continent. She had the leather case safe in her possession again.

There was a cry from below, a familiar voice raised in surprise at her sudden appearance.

"Joan! They said you weren't here!" It was Jack standing there, his mouth open in amazement, his eyes on fire with swift joy. He leaped forward and almost collided with her hasty flight.

"Jack!" she breathed. "Hurry! Run!"

From above came the sound of running feet.

"Stop her! She's stolen something!" Mrs. Carey screamed, flinging herself down the stairs. "Randolph, catch her before she gets away. Oh!"

A scream followed the opening of the front door. It had all happened so quickly that it might have been a nightmare. Yet Jack had seen the triumph and the fear and something else on Joan's face. He had recognized the desperate look in her eyes, and he had heard her faint words.

Like a young eagle he turned and fled with her, catching her arm in his strong hand as they raced down the stone steps.

"Here, this is my car," he roared. "Get in!"

He lifted her in without bothering with the door and, leaping into his own seat under the wheel, he sent the car racing down the street, engine roaring.

Joan turned, and saw they had already put two blocks between them and the Carey School of Music. She saw, too, that a taxi was just leaving the steps back there. The Careys were in pursuit!

"Oh, they're coming!" she breathed, clinging unconsciously to Jack's arm and keeping the leather case tight in her hand. "In a taxi."

"Don't let that worry you," Jack's voice boomed above the motor. "Oh, darling, where did you go to yesterday? You had me running around New York stark crazy. I went to the Carey's a dozen times and they said they hadn't seen you!"

Joan was breathing deeply, trying to get back her breath. The cold wind whipped the ties of her headgear against her face and billowed under her skirt, but she was unconscious of that.

"Hurry, Jack," she gasped. "Oh, they didn't know where I was until just now."

"Then where were you?" he demanded. "You disappeared at the customs right from under my eyes."

"I'll tell you all that later," Joan said, pleading with her eyes to hurry, hurry. "Oh, Jack, I think everything's going to be all right now."

Jack laughed, and the sound sent shivering delight through the tense body of the girl at his side. His hand left the wheel an instant and covered hers with a warm, strong clasp.

"Sure it's going to be all right, darling! I've found you and I'll never let you get out of my sight again," he said eagerly. "As soon as we shake

that taxi back there, I'm going to stop the car and kiss you right in front of all New York."

Breathlessly Joan laughed, a rippling bubbling laugh that came from her very soul. She had won at last, or almost won! She was with Jack and he had faith in her. The Careys had lied about her. He loved her, and she was safe with him. Nothing more could harm her.

And she had found the leather case again! It had been Mrs. Caarey who had stolen it the night of the masquerade. Strange, the thought had never occurred to suspect her, and yet it wasn't so strange after all. She had been so motherly and kind, so anxious to keep worry from the lonely girl. She had seemed so intent on her having a good time that last night on board. Perhaps she had figured it out that the only possible way to secure the leather case was to have a legitimate chance to help her in dressing.

But why had she wanted it? How could she possibly have known of its existence? And what was in it of value to her, and to those crooks who had trapped her after landing?

If Mrs. Carey was a relative of Jerome Henry, that would answer the questions regarding her. She must have known somehow of something valuable he possessed. She must have gone to Europe purposely to get it, and learning of his death, she must have got information of Joan's sailing. Yes, that was it! It hadn't been an accident that such a warm friendship had sprung up on board.

Joan thought of something Professor Carey had said the day before when they were leaving the boat. "You mean more to us than you will ever guess," he had said. He knew then what she didn't know, that they had the leather case. It was valuable enough to mean a great deal to whoever got it.

But those people, Joseph and Mrs. Todd and Slim, how had they known?

They could not possibly have been in league with Mrs. Carey. They had been ready to torture her to get the case!

At least Jack hadn't had a thing to do with it! All that sinister mystery left him clear and clean. Darling Jack!

Joan turned and looked at him and caught his eyes devouring her in a look of ardent adoration. She answered his swift smile while the blood leaped in her body.

"Did you hear what I said, sweet thing?" he cried against the rushing wind. "I said I was going to kiss you right in broad daylight in about a minute. Maybe they'll arrest us! That'd be great. They could take us to the magistrate, and he'd marry us that much quicker! I wonder if those birds are still following? I can't wait to get arrested for kissing you."

He jammed on the brakes in time to avoid the quick halting of the car ahead, and Joan saw the traffic was blocked. They were near a corner, with the cross-town traffic holding back their possible progress.

Jack turned to see if he could find the taxi in which the Careys were pursuing them.

Of a sudden Joan knew a terrible fear that somehow the desperate animal into which Mrs. Carey had turned would still spring on her and wrest the case from her hands. Now that it was safe, nothing must keep her from delivering it safely into the hands of Josiah Cheston!

Cars began filling in the space around them. Perhaps the taxi would drive up alongside! The Careys could demand their arrest. They could prove Joan had snatched the case from Mrs. Carey's bag.

Suddenly, noiselessly, Joan opened the car door. Fearfully she looked back into the maze of traffic, and it seemed every face behind each windshield belonged to a Carey.

She saw Jack, his broad back turned

as his eyes searched, and her heart seemed to pull her back to him. But only for an instant.

Now her feet were running. They carried her breathlessly to the corner where the traffic was on the point of stopping. A taxi cruised up and stopped at the curb and in another second Joan was sinking into the leather seat, gliding swiftly forward in the cross-town traffic.

Her heart was bursting, and yet she knew she had done the only possible thing, if she was to save the leather case for Josiah Cheston.

"Where to, lady?" the taxi man looked through the open window and asked.

In desperation, Joan sat forward.

"I'm trying to find a man named Josiah Cheston," she burst out. "I don't suppose you could help me."

A loud roar of laughter met her words.

"Say, what do you take me for, a back number or something?" came the uncouth voice of assaulted pride. "Everybody in New York knows who Josiah Cheston is. How could I miss him, with half my fares asking to be driven to his big chemical plant and the other half wanting to go to his big office building?"

He turned a corner so quickly that Joan was half thrown from her seat. Righting herself, she leaned forward, clutching the case in her hands.

"Take me there, and hurry, please!" she cried in a tiny voice. Her heart was beating furiously. "Are we nearly there?"

"Right here, miss." The man started ringing up the fare. "Sixty cents."

Madly Joan tore a dollar from her handkerchief and thrust it into his hand. "Where do I go?" she begged frantically.

"Right ahead, ma'am. That there big door is the entrance. Take an elevator."

But Joan had already run into the lobby of the structure marked, "Cheston Building." She spoke Josiah Cheston's name to the starter and was at once shown into a ready elevator.

She hardly breathed during that swift rush upward. And she was conscious of a painful beating in her throat as she left the car and hurried into those double doors marked, "Josiah Cheston, Manufacturer of Chemical Products." But the words meant nothing to her excited brain but that she had at last found Josiah Cheston, and she had the precious case safe to deliver to him.

Vaguely she saw a young man rise from a desk and lead her into one room after another. Then she saw an old man rise from a deep chair and come toward her, his hand outstretched.

"You are Joan Winters!" he said in warm greeting. "No one has ever been more welcome than you, my child!"

He took her small cold hand in his and stood looking at her.

"You're Josiah Cheston, I know it!" Joan breathed. "Oh, to think I've actually gotten here at last, after all I've been through. Do you know why I've come?"

Josiah Cheston laughed. "Well, rather! I've been waiting for you for a month, ever since I had a letter from your guardian, Jerome Henry. It was written the day before he died. He knew then that he only had a few hours to live, and he informed me he would send me something I had begged for years to get. And I wasn't the only other one who wanted it. Do you know what it was, Miss Winters?"

"No," Joan answered simply. "All I knew was that he gave me a small leather case to deliver to you, and I had to guard it with secrecy."

Mr. Cheston stepped nearer.

"Where is it?" he asked.

Without hesitation Joan held out the case, and he took it in hands that shook from excitement.

"Yes, this is it! The chemical formula for poison gas that he perfected a few years ago in his lab in England!" Josiah Cheston ran his eyes over the paper that was the single contents of the leather case. Then he turned to the waiting girl. "My child, you have brought me the thing that several countries have been seeking. Now, I am in a position to manufacture it for our own government, and also to——"

Excited, Joan burst in. "Then that's why the apartment was entered in Paris so many times! They were after the formula!"

"Certainly!" Mr. Cheston agreed. "And no doubt you have had a dubious time bringing it. That's why I sent my nephew over after it. He failed to get in touch with Jerome before he died, or you wouldn't have had the annoyance of the trip. Never mind, it's just as well for you that you were the one to deliver the case. My nephew has a fortune of his own, and all he wanted was the excitement of the trip. While you, well, I imagine the reward for safe delivery will be rather welcome, considering what I know of Jerome's will. You're a plucky girl, Joan, and you deserve every cent of it."

"I don't know what you mean," Joan exclaimed. "I'm happier than you could ever know just to be able to carry out poor Cousin Jerome's wishes. I don't want any reward."

"Doubtless that's true," Josiah Cheston smiled. "You look like that sort. But there's a hundred thousand dollars coming to you nevertheless. I have it waiting there in the safe. And when I take it out to give you, I'm going to put the secret formula in where no one can find it, excepting myself of course, and perhaps that young nephew of mine. He's to take over all my work some day."

He had his back turned, fumbling with the safe door. Joan heard his words as though in a mumble without

really listening, for the burst of excitement in her brain.

One hundred thousand dollars! Hers for delivering the leather case. She couldn't believe it! So Cousin Jerome had provided for her after all! And better this way, because she would have done something to really earn it. Of a sudden, her veins were racing with glad joy! It was too perfect!

Something made her turn her head, a sound perhaps, of a furtively opened door.

Suddenly she stood paralyzed at what she saw.

Joseph Brooks was creeping over the floor and even as Joan screamed he leaped on the old man standing before the safe.

They went down, Josiah Cheston underneath.

"Give that here!" Joseph snarled. "Quick, or I'll shoot."

Joan sprang on him with the ferocity of a young tigress. She tore at his arm that encircled the old man's neck, she beat on the bulletlike head with every atom of strength she possessed.

But Joseph only shook her off as though she were a toy dog. He went on wrestling with his prey, and Joan knew a horrible fear that he would kill before he would be thwarted again.

Staggering with horror at the sight of Mr. Cheston in the grip of the man who had abducted her, she hesitated for one terrified second. Then she ran like a flash out through the door where the thief had entered.

She found herself directly in the hall, and she darted swiftly to the elevators. Frantically she put her finger on the button and pressed, feverishly counting the seconds until some one could come to her aid. She did not dare alarm the secretaries in the office, for fear Joseph would shoot.

Her heart leaped at the light rising behind the frosted doors. The elevator boy was answering her summons! He

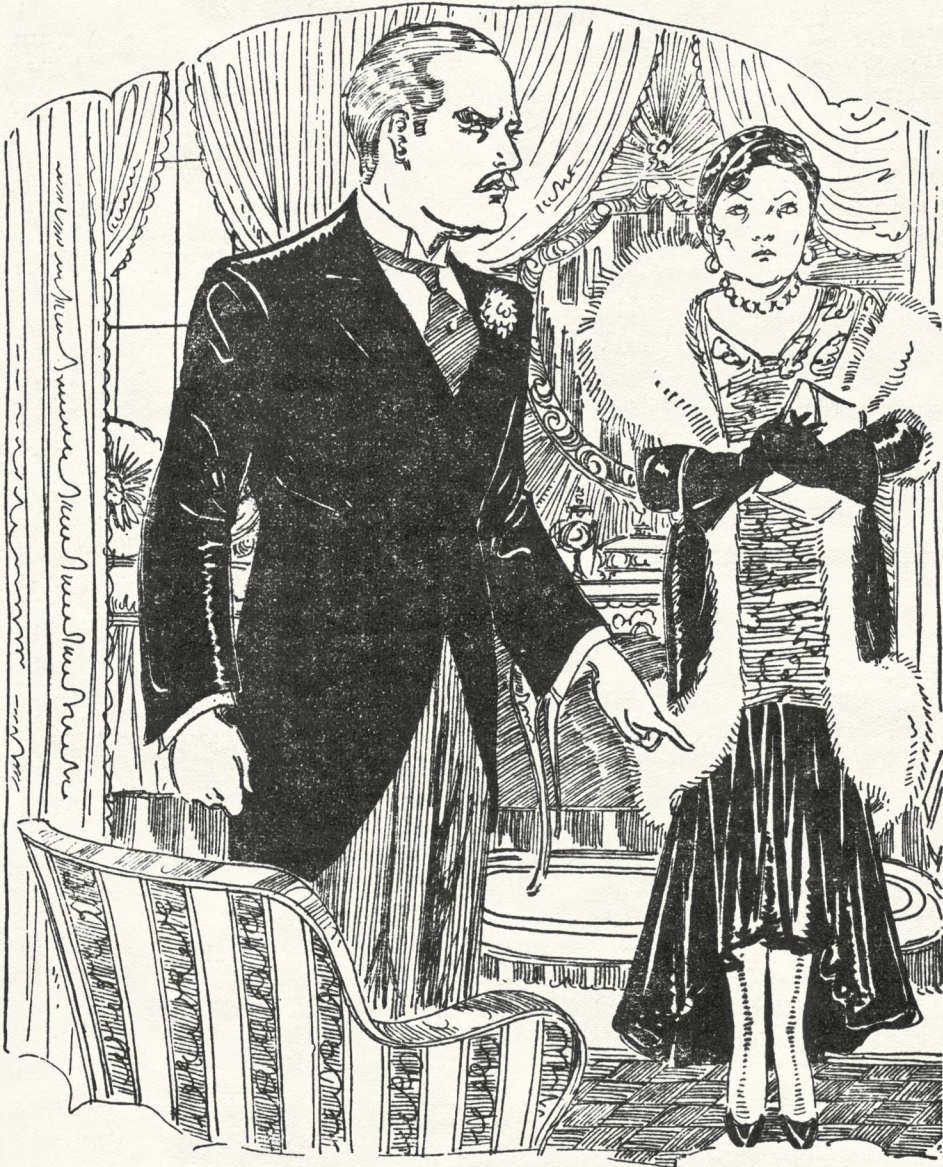
would help her beat off Josiah Cheston's assailant!

The door opened and out dashed a young man as though he had known beforehand of Joan's need. He turned in his flight down the hall to look at her, yet before Joan saw his face she knew it was Jack.

"Well, of all strange things!" he whistled, running back to her. "I find you in the most unexpected places——"

"Oh, hurry, Jack!" she gasped. "Run—in that door!"

Stupefied, Jack obeyed. Joan dashed after him, only to stand weakly by the door while he made short work of the



"Come on!" he urged, without any greeting. "Is it going to take you all day to find we don't want you here?"

man who had attacked Josiah Cheston. Even as she watched breathlessly, she saw Jack lift the man bodily, arms thrashing about futilely in the grip of the younger man's great strength. She saw the trick Jack used in thwarting Joseph's brute charge and she heard the sharp whistle that summoned Mr. Cheston's secretary.

"Here, take down what the man says," Jack ordered in staccato tones, holding his prisoner deftly.

Joan had run over to Josiah Cheston and helped him up into his chair. He insisted stoutly that he had not been hurt at all.

"But the formula is safe," he whispered to the girl who bent over him, brushing off his coat, straightening his tie. "I had just closed the safe when he sprang on me."

Over at the desk Jack was wringing a confession from Joseph. Already the man had admitted he had been in the



employ of some one who wanted the formula.

"I'll bet it wasn't any one in this country, was it?" Jack persisted. "You're a foreigner yourself."

The man turned sullen eyes on his captor, and Joan shuddered at the remembered cruelty of them. He looked at her, and a black wave of hatred seemed to pass over his heavy features. But he evidently realized the foolishness of mentioning the experience he had had with trying to force the case from her, for he kept quiet. The hands that held him so securely could make life miserable for any one who had annoyed the beautiful girl who had been so clever and daringly brave. And Joseph had learned his lesson.

Suddenly something flared up in Joan's brain, the instinct of a keen feminine brain. She left Josiah Cheston's side and darted over to stand near Jack. Her great purple eyes flashed accusingly at the cowering Joseph.

"I believe you were hired by Count Seratt to trap me!" she burst out excitedly.

Her words acted like a dash of ice water on Joseph's sullen countenance. His head came up in surprise, his eyes widened into a stare. Then he remembered that he would pay with his life for any slip he made. He lapsed once again into his furtive silence, pretending not to have heard, making no answer.

"It's true! I know it," Joan went on, catching at Jack's free hand in her impulsive way. "I knew all along he couldn't be in love with me, but I didn't understand it. Now, I think I do. No wonder he wanted to marry me while Cousin Jerome was alive! And he must have sent along that man to watch me, the one who danced with me so often that night."

"What are you talking about?" Jack asked, without losing his hold on Joseph. "Who was this count? What did he have to do with you?"

Joan laughed breathlessly. "That's something that happened before I met you. I'll tell it to you some time when conversation lags."

A commotion in an outer office preceded the entrance of the police who had been summoned by the telephone girl. And presently Joseph was being escorted out of Joan's life by the arm of the law.

Joan found herself looking up into Jack's eyes, then suddenly she remembered the old man behind them. She turned and smiled at him as he sat in a deep chair, quizzically eying them.

"Oh, I forgot! Mr. Cheston, this is Jack Lorrimer who—who—" She stopped in confusion, her cheeks flushing a deep pink that brought the luster into her violet eyes. "I mean, he helped me escape from the Careys, who actually took the case from me on the boat—Why, what's the matter?"

For Jack and Mr. Cheston were laughing at each other as though they had a joke in common. It was the elder man who first noticed the puzzled amazement on the girl's face, and he held out his hand to her, drawing her to his side.

"Joan—you'll let me call you that, I suppose? This young man is the nephew I've been telling you about," he said, his eyes twinkling. "I sent him after the formula, but you beat him to it all around, see?"

"Oh!" Joan uttered a little gasp. "Then—then you knew about it all the time! I could have told you, and you could have kept me safe from Joseph." She shuddered at the memory.

"Yes, I suppose so." Jack stepped swiftly to her side and looked down at her with adoration in his eyes. "But if you had told me, you would have gone against your cousin's wish, Joan."

He made a half motion toward her, and stopped. But Josiah Cheston saw it, too.

"Well," he said, drawing himself to

his feet. "I've wasted enough time already. I've got to get to work. Now where is that lazy secretary of mine?"

He gathered up a sheaf of papers indiscriminatingly from his desk and hurriedly left the room, carefully closing the door behind him.

In that instant Jack closed his arms about her, drawing her tight against his heart.

"Joan, to think of all you've been through! And all alone, when I might have done it for you!" he moaned, his arms trembling with emotion. "If only I might have taken all the dangers away from you! If only I could have brought the little leather case back to Uncle Josiah!"

He gazed down into her oval face, love burning high in his eyes.

"Selfish!" Joan laughed, snuggling closer in his arms. "You would have got the reward then!"

"What's that, you little rascal! I'll kiss you for that!" His lips came crushing down on hers, sending pinpoints of tingling thrills over her. He kissed her again and again, until their hearts were hammering against each other. "Darling, I want to tell you something. After you're my wife, I won't let you use a cent of that money. I have enough from my father's estate to take care of you like the little princess you are."

"But, Jack dear, I don't want to use up your money," Joan protested. "I've

really earned this, and I want to keep it, although I think I will give part of it to Mrs. Carey. She was a sort of relation to Cousin Jerome, you know, and I feel sorry for the poor thing, growing old, and poor enough to steal in order to get money."

Jack held her off at arm's length and looked at her strangely.

"Joan!" he gasped. "I remember now! The way you looked just now, so pityingly, so terribly sweet and unselfish! I saw you at Jerome's place in Paris early one morning. I had called to see him and he had been taken ill. I was just leaving, when you ran out of a room without seeing me. You were in something blue that floated around you like a cloud and made you look like a sweet angel."

"Just think how near we came to meeting then!" Joan marveled, safe at last in her sweetheart's arms. "And just think of the ecstasy it would have been!"

Jack laughed, low and thrillingly. His arms tightened around her and his lips hovered above hers, passionate, sweet, demanding.

"Joan, sweetheart!" His words were a cry of love that brought her heart and soul leaping to meet his. "Nothing can separate us again, ever. Give me your lips, you lovely little darling! Let me taste their sweetness!"

And the ecstasy that had been waiting for them was delayed no longer.

THE END.





ONE cold wet evening, Mr. Miggs was just shutting up his little secondhand furniture store, when a young man strolled in. Mr. Miggs received him with a welcoming smile.

"Why, Mr. Westropp," he said, "I haven't seen you for quite a while. Sit down."

Teddy Westropp looked at him solemnly and shook his head.

"You wouldn't be so pleased if you knew what I'd come to see you about," he remarked. He sat down in an old armchair that stood in the store. "I still owe you for that secondhand set of golf clubs I bought from you a month ago, don't I? I can't pay you."

"Well, Mr. Westropp!" returned Mr. Miggs with a benignant smile, fingering his long mustache. "Don't let that worry you. There's plenty of time.

Hard Work For Teddy

By Rose La Plante

I'm not grumbling yet."

"I know you're very patient," replied Teddy, "but, Miggs, old man—if you'll excuse a little affectionate familiarity—everything's gone wrong. My uncle—you know I lived with him, and that he brought me up and all that—has

disowned me. I've been thrown out, Miggs. You see me before you with the clothes I stand in, thirty-six dollars by way of capital, and that's all. I'm like one of those fairy-tale heroes, turned out to seek my fortune."

Mr. Miggs was astonished.

"That sounds bad," he said slowly. "That is, if you're not stringing me."

"I was never more serious in my life!" replied Teddy ruefully. "Uncle flew into one of his rages, and out I went into the street. I mustn't go back. That's the end of uncle. And I really hadn't done anything to make him as mad as all that."

Mr. Miggs smiled the knowing, slightly incredulous smile of a man of the world.

"Come now, Mr. Westropp," he remonstrated, "you can't ask me to believe that! You must have done something to get into trouble so suddenly. I know your uncle's a good sport and very well to do, if a trifle—eccentric and hot-tempered."

"Yes, that's true enough," agreed Teddy, "but it was this way, Miggs—I must tell some one, and besides, I want you to help me. You see, uncle suddenly and violently took it into his head that I ought to marry and settle down. All right; I meekly submitted to the idea. What's more, uncle kindly picked out the girl for me, some one he knew; that's what put the idea into his head—a nice girl, too—pretty, brains, money, everything. Once more I submit to my fate with a good grace. I woo."

"You do what?" asked Mr. Miggs, puzzled.

"I woo the girl," explained Teddy patiently, "run after her, shower her with attention, make advances to her with a view to holy matrimony."

"I see. You do what we called courting in the old days," Mr. Miggs nodded. "And then?"

"And when I proposed to her this afternoon," continued Teddy sadly, "she refused me point-blank, almost with a thud. When I subsequently took the news home to uncle this evening he flew into a towering rage with me—not with her, understand!—and swore that since I wasn't acceptable to himself or to her or to any other mortal soul, he was through with me. So good-by uncle, also good-by to my allowance."

There was silence in the store for a moment or two.

"That's a queer story," said Mr. Miggs at length. "I guess this was an unlucky day for you, Mr. Westropp. Refused by your girl and turned out of house and home! And what are you going to do now, if I may ask?"

"I'm afraid it means work, Miggs," replied Teddy with a deep and heartfelt sigh. "I must earn my own living."

Mr. Miggs looked steadily at the young man.

"How?" he asked with emphasis.

"That's just the point," replied Teddy. "I've had a good education, but I've got no profession, no vocation. That's one of the reasons why Vera Hallet turned me down; she said I was worse than useless, and she wasn't going to marry an idler, a remittance man, a fellow who lived on an allowance from his uncle. She called me an extraordinary number of bad names, Miggs; she's got a wonderful command of language. She was eloquent." He sighed again. "Can you think of anything I can do? If so, tell me, for goodness' sake, and then I want you to find me a cheap boarding house; I must have somewhere to sleep to-night."

Mr. Miggs considered the matter for quite a long time, and then, rousing himself, he began briskly shutting up his store.

"You sit there while I close up," he said to Teddy, "and then we'll have a little chat about it. I'll take you around to Mrs. Brett, who has some nice rooms to rent cheap. And don't get down-hearted; the situation isn't so desperate."

Mr. Sowerby, an envious and disgruntled neighbor of Mr. Miggs, was walking past the store a day or two later when he saw something that made him stop and stare. He drew hard on his little clay pipe.

"Well," he muttered to himself, "that

Miggs is getting pretty high-hat, isn't he? So he has a clerk now! He's got to have some one to do the dusting for him, I suppose. That won't last long. He's getting a swelled head! Pride goes before a fall."

And while he was still staring at the unusual spectacle of a young man moving about inside Mr. Miggs's store, the voice of its worthy proprietor sounded behind him.

"Seen my new man, Sowerby?" asked Mr. Miggs genially.

Mr. Sowerby turned and glowered disagreeably upon him.

"I shouldn't have thought you needed a clerk," he said sourly.

Mr. Miggs looked thoughtful, and rattled the money in his trouser pockets.

"You'd hardly call him a clerk," he remarked. "You might almost say as he was—well, apprenticed to me, learning the business, working his way. And I must say he's doing well, though he's not been at it long."

With that he went on his way, leaving Mr. Sowerby almost speechless with envy. Any sign of the prosperity or good fortune of others always made Mr. Sowerby feel very bitter.

Mr. Miggs, after a sharp glance around, went slowly down the almost deserted street, with his hands clasped behind his back and his head, covered with his battered derby, bowed on his chest. He was sunk in thought, apparently absorbed in business cares and schemes. A tall, well-dressed, elderly man addressed him, and had to speak twice before Mr. Miggs woke with a start from his profound reverie.

"I beg your pardon," he said, rousing himself. "I didn't hear you speak. I was thinking."

"Are you the owner of that store?" asked the man, pointing with his cane in the direction of Mr. Miggs's place of business.

"I am," replied Mr. Miggs. "I may say that I am the head of the firm—

Miggs & Co., secondhand furniture and antiques, furniture sets purchased, bicycles repaired, and skates ground at short notice. What can I do for you, sir?"

"You can tell me," replied the other, "what that young fellow is doing in your store. I walked hastily past it and noticed him there. I have my own reasons for not wishing to be seen by him."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Miggs with polite surprise. "Well, that's a young man by the name of Westropp, who has entered my employ, and is now learning the business with a view to entering into partnership with me. He's a smart young fellow," added Mr. Miggs, glancing back appreciatively toward the store, "and one who'll make his mark in the secondhand furniture world; you may take my word for it."

"Smart?" repeated the older man, frowning incredulously. "I never expected to hear any one say that about him, and I'm his uncle and only surviving relative."

"Ah! So you're Mr. Westropp, are you?" exclaimed Mr. Miggs, with a dramatic start of surprise. "To think you've discovered your nephew already! He was hoping to disappear for a time, and only let you know where he was when he'd made good."

"Made good in a junk shop!" exclaimed Mr. Westropp. He didn't seem favorably impressed. "I don't suppose I'd have found him for a long time, if I hadn't gotten a clew to his whereabouts from an anonymous letter I received this morning."

Mr. Miggs didn't quite understand.

"What kind of a letter did you say?" he asked mildly.

"An unsigned letter," Mr. Westropp explained, "in a disguised handwriting, telling me that my nephew was employed in your store."

Mr. Miggs looked surprised.

"Really? I wonder who could have

sent it!" He ruminated a moment, and then, pulling out his old silver watch, he added: "Perhaps you'll excuse me now. I have a business appointment."

Mr. Westropp asked him one last question.

"And how are my nephew's health and spirits?" he inquired.

"He's both healthy and happy," replied Mr. Miggs, "having thrown himself heart and soul into his new career. Good morning, Mr. Westropp."

And he hustled off.

After gazing long and mournfully at the store which held the beloved nephew whom he had banished in a moment of anger, Mr. Westropp turned on his heel to go away. As he did so he came face to face with a dark, fiery-eyed girl, whose prettiness didn't seem to be much impaired by the fact that she was in a rage.

"This is all your fault," she greeted Mr. Westropp, pointing dramatically in the direction of the secondhand store.

"Not altogether, Miss Hallet," he replied, "though I certainly did throw him out. But that was because you had refused him; I was quite unreasonably angry with him for his lack of success."

"And I rejected him," returned Vera Hallet angrily, "chiefly because I happened to know that it was you who put the idea of marrying me into his head, as though I was to have a husband chosen for me! But you shouldn't have disowned him; I might—er—we might—er—"

"And there he is dusting that horrible old rubbish, and there's a pushcart in that alley over there. I shouldn't be a bit surprised to see him come out and load up an old armchair or a chest of drawers on it, and wheel it away through the public streets, and that would break my heart!" cried Vera, stamping her foot passionately.

"And he's a slave to that dreadful man with the long mustache and the derby! Teddy's under his iron heel;

he's his victim, he's being overworked in a cheap old secondhand store! I'll begin crying right here in the middle of the street in a moment!" she concluded with a break in her voice.

"But, my dear girl," said Mr. Westropp perplexedly, "if you feel like that about him, why did you refuse him?"

"Oh, of course, a man would ask that!" cried Vera. "I'm going there to speak to him now, and you can come or not, just as you like!"

With that she walked quickly down the street to the store, and burst into it, with Mr. Westropp at her heels.

Teddy, dusting the stock with a large feather duster, was utterly surprised when he recognized them.

"Hello!" he ejaculated; then he began to smile. "Come to buy anything? What can I show you to-day? What are you both looking so upset about?"

"I'm upset at seeing you in your present degraded condition," said Vera. Mr. Westropp was behind her, gloomily surveying the store.

Teddy looked quite bewildered.

"Degraded position?" he repeated wonderingly. "I don't quite understand you, I'm afraid. It's a perfectly respectable business, and takes some understanding, too. I may get to be a partner soon. I'm just working my way now. How did you both find out where I was? I didn't want you to know till I was getting ahead. We're going to call the business Miggs, Westropp & Co."

"Oh, you are, are you?" cried Vera. "I absolutely forbid you even to dream of anything of the kind! Some one sent me an anonymous letter to say you were in this terrible place in the clutches of that awful man I saw going away from here."

"An anonymous letter? Who on earth could have sent it?" cried Teddy angrily. "Why can't people mind their own business? And listen, Vera, don't be down on old Miggs; he's my best



*"Look here!" his uncle burst out.
"You come home with me at once
and be sensible! You're going to
marry Vera."*

friend. He suggested himself that I should learn the business and go into it with him; he found me a boarding house, clean and reasonable—a hall bedroom over a grocery. It's a little noisy in the evening because they keep open so late, but you get accustomed to it."

That was too much for Vera. She sat down in the old armchair and began to cry.

"A hall bedroom!" she sobbed, with her face in her hands.

"My nephew," groaned Mr. Westropp, "living over a grocery!"

Teddy looked from one to the other of them in genuine amazement.

"I don't see what's so very appalling about it," he said. "I was rather pleased with myself—becoming one of the world's workers, you know, paying my own way, making good, after a fashion. Yesterday I sold two china vases and a pair of andirons right off the bat, and Miggs said I got a good price for them. Besides, it's interesting, and the grocer's wife looks after me as if I were her son!" He paused a moment, and then went on: "I must say I'm surprised at you both taking so much interest and being so wrought up about it. I can't understand it, after you refused me, Vera, and you disowned me, uncle."

There was a hint of reproach in his last words.

"Look here!" his uncle burst out. "You come home with me at once and be sensible! You're going to marry Vera and stop making a spectacle of yourself in this ridiculous place, and we'll let bygones be bygones, and go on as before."

Vera looked up with hope in her eyes, but Teddy seemed doubtful.

"It's very kind of you, uncle, I'm sure," he replied, "but there's old Miggs to be consulted, you know. I can't just go off without a word and leave him in the lurch. And besides——"

He stopped.

"And besides what?" demanded his uncle.

"Well, I'm interested in the business, if you want the truth," answered Teddy. "I've never had anything to do before, and somehow it's fascinating. You stand here and you never know who's coming in next to buy something or what they'll like. And then there's Mr. Miggs out looking to see what he can pick up cheap in the way of stock, and soon you see him breeze in with a load of stuff he got Heaven knows where.

"Yesterday he picked up a marble Venus and a set of Shakespeare for five dollars, and we marked the Venus at seven fifty and the books ten—big hopes, but still we might get it. He does all the buying—I'm not equal to that yet, but he's going to let me try my hand at it soon," concluded Teddy, with an ambitious gleam in his eye.

Vera looked at him sadly for a moment, and then she rose and went out of the store without another word. At a motion from her Mr. Westropp gloomily followed her.

"We've made a mess of it between us," she said, as soon as they were outside. "He'd never done any work before, didn't know what it was like, and was afraid it would hurt. Now it agrees with him and he likes it. He probably

sits up late with old whiskers after the store's closed, planning business deals." She took Mr. Westropp's arm. "Something drastic will have to be done about it. You see, if he were to propose to me again I'd say yes, and then perhaps he'd insist on my living over the store and dusting old furniture all day. And I couldn't bear it!"

Mrs. Brett, the wife of the grocer with whom Teddy boarded, was sitting one evening in the grocery, surrounded by large stacks of potatoes, cabbages, onions, and tomatoes. Light flooded the scene. Mrs. Brett was stout, and sat down as often as she could, when, just as at that moment, there weren't any customers.

Suddenly there appeared before her a dark, pale-faced girl, who had come in with a step so light and swift that Mrs. Brett hadn't heard her.

"Oh, excuse me," said the girl, apparently in a state of great nervousness and anxiety, "but—er—I only wanted to ask you whether you needed a clerk in your store."

Mrs. Brett gaped at the girl.

"Why," she replied slowly, "I don't know that I do need any one. Did you want to recommend some one?"

"No," was the reply, "it was for myself. I—I thought I might do something to help in the store—I wouldn't ask much money."

Mrs. Brett stared harder than ever at this unusual applicant, but after she had stared for a minute or two a light seemed to break upon her.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "I know now. You're the young lady whose picture's on my boarder's mantelpiece."

"I imagine I am," said Vera. "He's working in that old furniture store, and so I'm going to work in a store, too. We'll see how he likes it, when he knows I'm working twelve hours a day handing out potatoes and things!"

Mrs. Brett might have made something different of the situation if she

had been left to deal with it alone, but at that moment Teddy entered the grocery store, whistling gayly. When he saw Vera he stopped short.

"Hello, Vera," he said, staring. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm looking for a job," replied Vera fiercely. "If you're going to dust old furniture I'll weigh potatoes and onions all day and half the night till I drop down dead from work and worry—and it'll be all your fault!"

Fortunately it was a slack time in Mrs. Brett's shop, and Teddy had time to stare frowningly at Vera for quite a while before he made up his mind what to do. Then he turned to Mrs. Brett.

"Is there any one in your parlor behind the store?" he asked.

Mrs. Brett shook her head.

"Then we can go in there and have a few words in private, can't we?" he continued.

Mrs. Brett nodded, and Teddy disappeared with Vera into the little room.

Mrs. Brett remained staring into space, still much surprised.

"Potatoes? Onions?" she murmured. "That girl work in a grocery store? I don't believe she's ever touched a potato, except with a knife and fork!"

Mr. Miggs, once more single-handed, was sitting in his little store a few days later, thinking over past events.

"Of course," he murmured, "it was all a joke, my taking him into the business, though he took it seriously enough. But I knew his uncle and the girl would be after him, as soon as they found out he was dusting furniture and loading chairs and chests of drawers on a truck. And they've paid me enough. But somehow I miss him, and he was getting on fine. And they do say he insists on doing something—on having some sort of business of his own now." He broke off suddenly. "Well, here they are again!"

He had caught sight of Vera and Teddy coming toward the store. When they entered it, he greeted them as old friends.

"I've come in to say," began Vera, "that you must absolutely come to our wedding. I won't take any excuses, so it's no good trying to think of one."

Mr. Miggs accepted the invitation with his usual smiling dignity, while he watched Teddy, who was looking around the store.

"How's business, partner?" he asked Mr. Miggs.

"Not so bad," returned Mr. Miggs, "though I must say I miss your help."

"Hm-m-m! I imagine you do," replied Teddy. "And if it hadn't been for some interfering fool writing those anonymous letters to Vera and my uncle, telling them what had become of me, I might be here still."

"Oh, yes, those 'nonymous letters!" repeated Mr. Miggs.

He leaned his hand on the back of a chair, and looked at Teddy with his head bent sidewise, surprise and perplexity on his face.

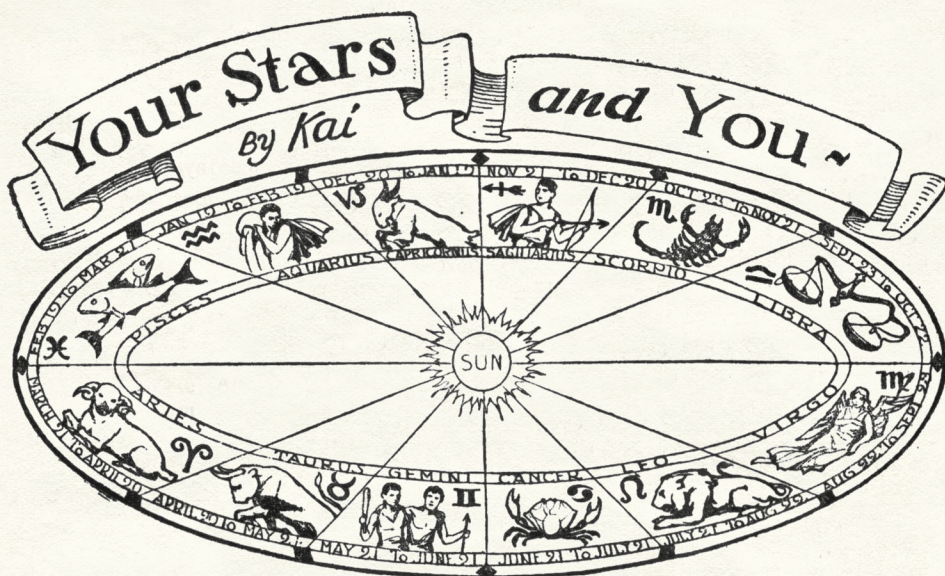
"Now," he went on, "just what is a 'nonymous letter? Mr Westropp told me, but I didn't quite understand him."

Teddy told him again, but neither Teddy nor Vera ever knew that Mr. Miggs, determined to do his best for them both, had sent the "'nonymous" letters himself!

Even if they had known, it wouldn't have mattered very much to them when Teddy took Vera into his arms after the wedding and told her again of his love.

"I made my way for you," he whispered. "I'll always be working for you, dear. Oh, sweetheart, you're everything on earth to me!"

And Vera, deep in the magic circle of his arms, could only raise her lips for his kiss, could only give herself up to the ecstasy of that kiss as his lips met hers.



YOUR WEEK.

Your week is one of strife and upheaval, mostly in the emotional department of your lives and in your personal reactions to influences around you. As the regular customers of this department know, it is a question of your stars—your planetary influences. The trend of the week accentuates an inclination toward the side of life that is ruled by emotions rather than by intellect and reason; but the stability is there—ready to tap—if you want to use it. It is good for us to indulge ourselves occasionally; it is human to want release from the pressure of circumstances, and this is a week when you may delve into the side of life that is pleasant and which produces harmonious relations. However, I urge you to keep as steady as possible and follow an even level. Nothing is so important in this year of readjustment as keeping your self-control. It is so difficult to be wise at all times, but we must realize we are in the halfway period and must act accordingly. It is a time when control is most necessary if you are interested in your future. It is a week for business for most of you, and when you look under the "Sign Guide" for the keynote to your next seven days, you will resolve, I am sure, to make the most of the days. Understand, you are the sculptor who molds the clay which will determine the creative finish. I urge you to disregard your æsthetic feelings in relation to issues of

paramount importance. That does not mean you are not to enjoy yourself, but that you must blend the natural impulses and inclinations with a consideration of the result you hope will be final. This is a week when pent-up souls will wish to wander into paths that have been denied to them in recent months, and if you experience release from your problems and not go too far off the loose end, you will have had a balanced and progressive week.

DAY BY DAY.

Hours mentioned are Eastern standard time.

**Saturday,
May
9th.**

h

An important day, filled with activity and developments. There is instability, extravagance, tendency toward disputes and arguments, overgenerosity, emotional expansiveness and deception. Be cautious in all your dealings with people, and do not take a step for the future that will have an important bearing on your life. Your feelings are not to be trusted to-day and to-morrow, and you should avoid trying to solve any problems that arise. The most stable period of the day is in the late afternoon until six thirty p. m.

**Sunday,
May
10th.**

☿

From a superficial standpoint, this is an unsatisfactory day. Not a day for dealing with the opposite sex or emphasizing love affairs. Stay calm; keep your equilibrium; believe no rumors; maintain your composure; have confidence in your friends and those around you; avoid quarreling. The best thing you can do to-day and during this week is to live your lives as conservatively as possible.

**Monday,
May
11th.**

☾

Active, erratic, nervous, and unstable. In following your routine to-day, keep the general influences in mind, as stated in "Your Week." There is a set of influences working to-day that will bring matters of importance to your attention, and, excluding the emotional uncertainty, you can work to your advantage. The evening hours are adaptable to social contact and pleasant enjoyment.

**Tuesday,
May
12th.**

♂

There is an energetic trend to-day and more stability than there has been for the past several days. Deal with elderly people; adjust matters of long standing; attend to real-estate dealings and legal matters. Handle to-day's problems with careful planning and use your head. Maintain a conservative policy and avoid excitement, especially in the evening. The morning hours are favorable.

**Wednesday,
May
13th.**

♄

A nervous and excitable day. Look for the unexpected and think twice before speaking. Matters of importance will claim your attention, especially in connection with contracts, writings, and business details.

**Thursday,
May
14th.**

♅

Your activities to-day will carry over in their effect during the next few weeks. Therefore, you should act wisely and use good judgment all along the line. You can use the day for progress and advancement, but you must

think carefully before making a move. The planets are in a position to assist you, and you should be certain that you have taken the details and the ultimate goal into consideration in solving important issues. It is a favorable day generally, but none of the influences just now that occur from day to day are as important as the fundamental groundwork you are laying.

**Friday,
May
15th.**

♀

Avoid any emotional relationship with the opposite sex to-day; do not settle problems that concern associations and partners; keep your feet on the ground and use your very best analytical judgment in making decisions that affect your future. Again I stress the fact that each and every one of us is experiencing important phases of our existence, and you must let your head rule instead of your heart. Do not indulge yourself and promote the feeling you are in a bad spot and there is no relief. You are mistaken. Life moves rapidly, and each day brings its own developments. We are in a progressive age, and one must be alert and cognizant of the events of the time. Life is short, and the years pass quickly as we grow older. We are here for a definite purpose, and during 1931 each of us is taking inventory of himself. Do not feel you are facing a blank wall; you are not. It is the survival of the fittest, and don't forget it. The person who gives up the fight is the loser. I urge you to look to the future and know that your constructive actions will bring satisfactory results. The events of a day are important only in their relationship to the general scheme of your existence.

IF YOU WERE BORN BETWEEN—

March 21st and April 20th

(Aries ♈)

—protect your financial interests: make no

LS-9A

move at this time; avoid hasty judgment; make stability your keynote for the week. Caution in connection with all your affairs should be maintained for you born between April 6th and 9th and April 12th and 16th. Expect the removals of partners and unexpected emotional problems if born between April 5th and 15th. There will be an improved set of circumstances for you who have birthdays around March 25th, and this latter group has experienced the worst side of the planetary influences.

April 20th and May 21st
(Taurus ♉)

—you are in line for progress and beneficial changes. For you who have birthdays this week there will be developments that have an important bearing on the future. New business and plans may be followed for the people who celebrate their birthdays around April 25th. You may proceed with confidence and expect returns to your advantage if your birthday occurs between May 13th and 16th.

May 21st and June 21st
(Gemini ♊)

—everything looks promising and hopeful for your future. Those of you who may take advantage of this week in a business, personal, and material way are you who have birthdays between June 7th and 11th. Use caution and your best analytical judgment in handling your affairs if your birthday is around May 25th.

June 21st and July 21st
(Cancer ♋)

—you must not expect too much from your existence these days. There are financial and personal problems to be met, and this week will bring a fresh series of events to add to your worries. There is nothing much you can do, except to be patient and wait for the better days that are coming. The Cancerians affected unpleasantly are those born between July 8th and 12th and between July 15th and 19th. You may expect an improved state of affairs and a better mental reaction if your birthday falls around June 25th.

July 21st and August 22nd
(Leo ♌)

—you are in a mixed period, and while you have much coming to you in the future, do not be too hasty in expecting

quick results. There will be unexpected developments in your affairs this week if you were born between August 9th and 13th, and you may follow your program with confidence. It is also a good time to make your plans and feel hopeful for results in the next six months if you were born around July 27th or 28th.

August 22nd and September 23rd
(Virgo ♍)

—you are under the best of influences and may expect excellent conditions. Those affected during the next seven days by the favorable ray of the planets were born between September 7th and 12th and between September 15th and 19th. Expand your activities and use each day to advantage if your birthday occurs around August 27th.

September 23rd and October 22nd
(Libra ♎)

—it is still the same old story for most of you—delays, personal complications, trouble in your home and with your partners, financial difficulties. Handle everything as calmly as possible, and live each day at a time, without doing damage to yourself and to others. The folks born between October 10th and 18th will have to watch their step this week. You have left many of your problems behind you if you have a birthday around September 27th.

October 22nd and November 21st
(Scorpio ♏)

—it is a neutral period for most of you. There are developments on the way, but you will have to wait for them and try not to force results. You do not have any great problems confronting you this week, except a serious consideration of old conditions. Watch your temper, do not live too intensely, and avoid extravagance if your birthday occurs between November 8th and 12th. This latter group will have an unexpected financial problem to meet this week, but it isn't as serious as you will wish to think. An emotional and happy time if you were born around October 27th.

November 21st and December 20th
(Sagittarius ♐)

—you have been progressing and are due for better conditions in the late summer and this fall, but should not let temporary conditions cause you too much concern.

Do not be too anxious for results, and utilize every opportunity that comes to you this week, if you were born between December 7th and 12th. Make plans for the future and prepare for new conditions of a better nature if you were born between December 14th and 18th.

December 20th and January 19th
(Capricorn ♐)

—be patient with the details and complications in your life just now. You should not be too discouraged over conditions, but you should go slowly at this time and not try to push your efforts too heavily. The folks who are going to find it a difficult week were born between January 6th and 10th and between January 12th and 16th.

January 19th and February 19th
(Aquarius ♒)

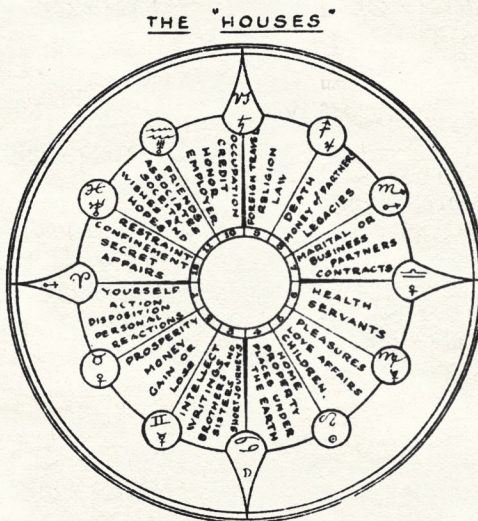
—it is an active time for you and an important week. There is a constructive set of influences working in your favor, and you should be sure your movements are made with forethought. This is an active week for all of you, but you will have to keep your emotions under control.

February 19th and March 21st
(Pisces ♓)

—you are under better influences and may expect improvement in your affairs. Do not hesitate to make progress in every direction this week if you were born between March 7th and 11th. Do not follow a will-o'-the-wisp and use impractical ideas if your birthday occurs between February 22nd and 25th. You may clear up old affairs and put yourself on solid ground for future accomplishment if you were born between March 13th and 16th.

The above illustration is a chart-picture showing the divisions as they relate to the various departments of your life. This is the basis for an astrological delineation of your individual horoscope. When the full data for yourself is given, the planets are placed in the chart according to the time of your birth, and the result is a map of the heavens for the moment you were born. The planetary positions in relation to the divisions of the chart is the keynote to your personality, individuality, intelligence, et cetera. The sections of a chart are called "houses," and the planets in a house form the groundwork for the reading of your horoscope. This explanation will in-

dicating to most of you why it is so necessary to have complete data in order to answer your specific questions accurately and intelligently. I shall be glad to answer



any of your questions, whether they are from students or from interested readers, that concern technical astrological points.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
★ THE STAR QUESTION BOX ★
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

You should know, Mrs. M. L. C., born April 20, 1901, twelve one a. m., after living these thirty years, that no one stands still. Either we go forward or backward, and while 1931 may seem like a year of suspended effort to many of us, it is a period in our progress when we continue moving, but are slowing up our pace enough to take stock of what life is all about and what part we play individually in the scheme of things. Your life seems to you to be at cross-purposes just now, I am sure. You are under the ray of the cross-opposition planets until the early part of 1932, with intervals of release during 1931 in May, August and December. Use the knowledge you are acquiring for planning the next ten years of your life. Every woman goes through upheaval and retrospection regarding her existence between the ages of twenty-eight and thirty, and she discards the impedimenta in her

life and assumes a new viewpoint for the ensuing years. Do not face your future with a feeling of frustration and hopeless effort. You will be glad to have had these few years here at this stage of your life, and you will count them as valuable when taking stock of yourself during the years ahead. Thank you for your kind remarks and your interest. I hope you continue to follow my work in this magazine, and as long as you are interested in astrology I feel you will acquire instructive facts through this medium of my expression, in which I am endeavoring to incorporate as much technical information as possible.

Your question about singing, Miss L. M., born March 5, 1915, nine forty-five p. m., in the Middle West, is most interesting. Your chart shows you have a potential voice, and yet it shows a long and difficult road to success. You will be under planetary influences for the next fifteen years, that will bring struggle and obstacles in any artistic profession, throat difficulties, discouragement, and little public recognition. You are persistent and courageous and are in line for a public career, but if you are confronted with the necessity of earning your living, I would not advise you to expect financial remuneration from your singing, in a spectacular sense. One of the things you must never forget is that your life will follow conservative lines, and now, when you are young and preparing for the future, you will have to plan your program of personal activity so that it excludes many of the ordinary pleasures of life. It you start training your voice, do not attempt too rapid progress. Take your studies seriously and in small doses; choose a teacher advanced in years; follow the advice you are given about yourself—I say this because of your tendency to resent criticism—and if you become discouraged, put the feeling aside as unimportant in the knowledge of what you know the future holds eventually. You are going to follow a public career, and your own intuition will be an important factor in the achievement of your hopes.

Yes, Mrs. H. E. G., born December 25, 1896, three to four p. m., in Missouri, you are right. It is Saturn that has been "dogging your footsteps" and has caused so many complications. You are nearly removed from Saturn's influence; the worst is over, and after 1931 you have little to worry about, and you may expect better conditions.

Miss H. M., born July 29, 1905, in Canada, at nine a. m.: The bookshop venture for yourself and your friend born June 4, 1890, is O. K. Your charts are a good business combination, and both of you are well fitted for this line of work. You will be successful. Best wishes to you and a hope that you will keep me informed of your progress.

Ann, born October 9, 1909: Your planetary positions are under heavy affliction this year, and you will find the going beset with obstacles. With a daughter two years old to support, and under present business conditions, I think your wisest move is to return to your husband and take the business course you mention in your letter. It is foolish to take the step you have without being better equipped for supporting yourself. You have torn down the building without having the proper foundation for erecting one in its place.

You see, Miss McM., born October 21, 1910, at seven p. m., in Canada, I did not throw your letter in the waste-paper basket, as you thought I would, and I read every word about you and your family with great interest. Your mother has certainly had a tough break in life, but that is the way it goes sometimes. I think you are a peach to try and coöperate with the situation the way you are doing. Keep up the good work and follow up your ideas on the tennis lessons. It is a good bet for you, and you are going to be O. K.

Mrs. C. B. S., born March 26, 1873, you will have to give me more details concerning your physical trouble before I can answer your question. From your data I am inclined to believe most of your trouble is the result of nerves. You have been under the influences of the erratic Uranus, and you will not feel the ray of this erratic planet so intensely as the year 1931 advances. Uranus brings sudden developments, and often the condition is removed as suddenly as it comes to you. You should write me again and be more explicit. I would like to help you.

If you follow this department consistently, Mrs. G. M., born April 13, 1893, in England—husband born July 15, 1892, in Canada—you will have no difficulty learning that you and your husband are in the cross-opposition groupings of the planets for 1931 and 1932. There has been a great deal of information given here concerning

such conditions in the lives of you who were born under Aries and Cancer, and I believe you will find the description of your influences in my remarks in this magazine, especially in the section devoted to general information about the twelve signs of the zodiac. I suggest you make note of all references made herein about general conditions as they are applicable to your specific case.

Yes, Mrs. B. E. S., born October 10, 1905, in Philadelphia, at midnight, you were born with the Sun in Libra and you are a Libran. This is not an auspicious time in your life to make the trip to the coast or for you to engage in business. Your influences are improved after 1931. Sorry to have to tell you this, but any changes you would make now are most inadvisable.

Miss C. M. R., born May 4, 1913, at ten p. m., in New York: You should follow general business lines, and a connection with real estate or with an investment or financial institution would be congenial and profitable. You have much to look forward to in the future, and you should be glad you are so level-headed and practical.

J. A. W., born October 29, 1914, at nine p. m.: You wish to know if you will get a job this spring? I believe you will have had your answer to this before you read these lines. Hope you have taken advantage of the opportunities that have come your way. I like your ambition and hope you will follow the constructive side of Scorpio rather than the emotions that lead you to travel with the dust creatures. You are your own worst enemy, and you know the right thing to do but do not always do it.

You do have a problem, Mrs. L. P. Z., born October 12, 1890, five to six p. m.; husband born February 2, 1886. I have been in your little town in Ohio, and I know how you feel when you say you have always had money and no one will believe you when you tell them you do not have it now. You are due for further worries during 1931 concerning your husband's financial affairs, but the set of conditions there in your city is something which you shall have to handle cautiously and intelligently. I would suggest that your husband seek the advice of his banker or lawyer. It is not a good time for a

move, although his influences are better than yours. Do not worry too much about your affairs. Mr. Z. will come through all right, and you are so much better off than many folks. There is no real reason for discouragement; it is a period of waiting and readjustment. If he has an opportunity to go elsewhere and it is necessary for you to remain at home, urge him to take it.

I should like to oblige you, Mr. R. A. G., born June 2, 1869, at two p. m., in Nova Scotia, and answer your question specifically, but you have spoken only of a "change," without explaining any of the contributing circumstances. You should have told me whether it is a change in residence, location, employment, or any of the other departments of your life that might be involved. You are a Gemini man, and this sign gives you an abundance of skepticism and suspicion. All I can tell you is that your general influences are favorable, and any move you make has a chance for results, depending on the way you handle your affairs and the shrewdness with which you plan for the future.

I am very sorry, J. B. J., born May 5, 1907, but I am unable to answer your question because of insufficient data. I shall be glad to hear from you again if you wish to repeat your question and inclose more detailed information. Without intending to hurt the feelings of some of you sensitive people, I would like to say that out of ninety-seven letters I have read from you folks this morning, only seven of them are impossible to answer for one reason or another. Not a bad percentage! Two of the letters I was unable to read because of the handwriting. I tried but couldn't make the grade. Please follow the rules of this department when you write to me.

The following readers have asked questions but have failed to send in the data of the other person concerned:

Anxious Widow, born March 27, 1895; D. A., born July 28, 1909, in Newark; Woman, born December 15, 1913, in Philadelphia; Mrs. M. E. H., born February 3, 1900, in Canada.

Miss J. O., of Michigan, born December 28, 1909: Your questions have not been answered because I cannot give a complete horoscope reading through the magazine. Each reader is allowed to ask one specific question.

That is a funny question, young lady—Miss K. B. M., born March 25, 1909, at eight a. m. Of course you are going to amount to something! You are just as ambitious as you can be, but you will have to keep this ambition before you always; finish the thing you start and do not let your tendency to lean on some one else ruin your future. Decide what you want to do and do it. You have a good chart—which means the planets will assist you when you use that keen intelligence of yours in following your program of activity. When you make your decision and settle this doubt within yourself, let me know. Write again, will you?

Mrs. T. A. W., of Wisconsin, born February 3, 1898: I must know where you contemplate moving before I can answer you.

Miss E. M. S., born June 16, 1905, Newfoundland, between two and three a. m. Take the nursing training. You are following the

wrong line of work now. You will never be happy in work that does not carry your personal respect and which does not live up to your ideals for yourself.

Mrs. A. M., born in Germany, January 7, 1863. Must have birth data of man before I can answer your question.

Miss H. M. F., born March 24, 1905: You are in line for a change, and this distasteful condition surrounding your mode of living will be removed within the next seven months. Take steps to fulfill your hopes, and follow the business program you mention in your letter. You shouldn't be keeping house for any one. Your sweetheart will not come back into your life, and you should be glad that he will not.

The questions asked by Mrs. E. J. L., born July 7, 1897, at seven a. m., and Mrs. B. S., born in St. Louis, January 7, 1884, are too vague. Write again and make your questions clearer.

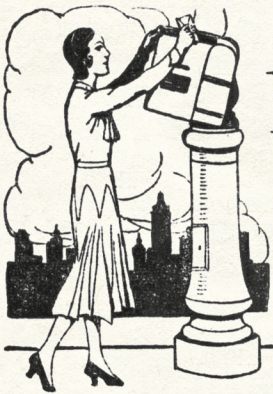
Editor's Note: Questions for this department are answered only through *Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine*. Each reader is allowed to ask one question. Be sure to give the following data in your letter: date, month, year, and place of birth, the hour of the day or night, if possible, and sex. Address your letters to KAI, care of this magazine.



MAGIC

SOMEHOW within your hair was twined
 A sun-shaft from the sky,
 Somehow your eyes had caught the light
 Of star-shine drifting by;
 Your lips were roses o' the dawn,
 You smiled—and love was born,
 And through the night's bleak shadows thrilled
 The heart-song of the morn.

A. LESLIE.



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.

+ + +

EIGHTY-FIVE years old! Born way back in 1846, when automobiles and the Civil War were never even thought of, when four or five stories made a tall building, and eight or nine yards of cashmere a flapper's dress, Patriarch has seen the progress of American civilization. During his lifetime four wars have been won, four generations have flourished, life has been made over. With a long line of historic figures behind him, a wealth of culture, a heart full of friendliness, Patriarch is one Pal in a thousand.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm eighty-five years old, but I'm not too old to want friends. I am a man of a famous American family that has played its part in history, and I have witnessed many changes in the life of the country. For years I was a traveling salesman, and am now living in Florence, Massachusetts. Young and old, send your letters to a lonely old man. PATRIARCH.

Waiting for the battle wagons to glide up New York Bay.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Won't some one write to a sailor's lonely sweetheart? I'm just

seventeen years old, with brown wavy hair and blue eyes. My sailor boy is off on a cruise, and I'm terribly lonesome waiting for him. Write to me, girls. SAILOR SUE.

Under a dark cloud.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of fifteen who has just lost a loving mother. Daddy and I are living alone now, and it's so lonely. Won't some of you girls who have lost mothers, as well as all others who need sympathy and cheer, write to me?

So LONELY.

In countries of old, barbaric beauty.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a lonely British soldier way out in India, but by the time this reaches you I will be on my way to Shanghai. I'm twenty-two years of age, five feet nine inches tall, unmarried, and fond of writing. I'll make a good Pal to any one who'll write. J. C.

Near the movie battleground of beauty and talent.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl four feet ten inches tall, and have given up all hope of growing taller, as I am nineteen years old. I love sports and movies, and can tell lots about southern California, including its

stars. More for those who write, so, girls, get busy with your pen. JUST TINY.

and still have lots of fun in me. Girls, let's be friends. MISS WOODSIDE.

Out for the best life has to offer.

Ready to give and take.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Would some woman who enjoys reading, travel, and outdoor life and is fond of animals write to me, especially if she is in a foreign country? I'm a married woman living on a ranch in Oregon, and love clean pleasures and good, sensible people. AMERICAN.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a blond boy of nineteen, five feet seven inches tall, all muscle. I'm a wrestler, fond of every sport, have seen my share of the country, and have some interesting stories to tell. Boys, I'm waiting. GLEN.

Talk art with an artist.

Looking back to the little red school-house.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a man of thirty-eight, broadcasting for Pals over the short wave in code, so, all you amateur wireless operators, tune in. I'm interested in painting, and use all the mediums, but like dry point and crayon best. Would like to exchange ideas with any one interested in still life and marine painting, but Pals of all interests are welcome to write.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'd love to have Pals, and would especially like to hear from any girls who lived in Warren, Ohio, twenty years ago. I moved from there to the West, and now would like to get acquainted again with my first childhood friends. I'm twenty-nine, married, have two children, and would be grateful for all letters.

BRASS POUNDER.

MARGIE OF OREGON.

You may see her in a Western picture some day.

Hemmed in by mountain scenery.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of eighteen, five feet four inches tall, topped with a head of dark-brown hair. I'd like to have Pals everywhere, for I live in a gap between two mountains, and never get anywhere. Please, girls, hurry and write.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a little country butter-and-egg girl, sixteen years old, with dark hair and eyes and a fair complexion. I can cook and am fond of outdoor work, but I adore horseback riding, and ever since I was a little tot have wished to be a cow-girl in the movies. Girls, step up before the camera. KENTUCKY RIDER.

FLAME.

He hikes to adventure.

Young and bereaved.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a six-foot stick of humanity, twenty years old, a student of music, living in New York State. I do a lot of hiking, and if any of you boys want to hear the trials and tribulations of a hitch hiker, just write to me. Folks, I'm longing for a real Pal. WANDERING AL.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Won't some one please write to me? I'm a young widow of twenty-one, and have been in a tuberculosis sanitarium in Chicago for a year. Please, every one, take pity on me. T. B. HELEN.

A boarding-house bachelor.

She'll appreciate all you give her.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a boy of twenty, six feet tall, work in a West Virginia city, and live in a boarding house. I took two years of law at college, but have never been able to finish. I want to hear from worthwhile Pals, especially those who are in college or have finished a course in law.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm an invalid, can't walk or even stand up, and have been in a wheel chair for seven years. I'm a girl of twenty, quite stout, with gray eyes and dark-brown wavy hair, and I can write interesting letters. MINNESOTA GRAY EYES.

D. D.

A little Irish storekeeper.

Down in the State of pines and peaches.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I live on Long Island, take care of a little store my mother has, and find my days very lonesome. I'm a girl of Irish descent, twenty-five years old,

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a sixteen-year-old high-school girl, living way down in Georgia. I'm half-blond and half-brunet, interested in

everything that comes my way. Who'll be my friend?
LEMMMA.

Sincere in heart and mind.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I want a real Pal, one who understands life and can discuss a variety of subjects. Girls, give me your idea and definition of friendship. A small but wise brunette, just twenty-one, will answer.

DARK-EYED JEAN.

Shrouded in mystery.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: This is Station IRMA sending out a call for letters, notes, or postcards, printed, scribbled, in longhand, shorthand, or anything else, just so long I can read it. I'm a woman a long way from home, and work too irregularly to make friends. Make up my description for yourself. Girls, I'm waiting for your answer.

A MISSISSIPPI TEXAN.

An interesting bachelor, alive to ideas.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a man of thirty, living in St. Louis, and after my travels find myself without friends. I've been all over the United States and parts of Europe, love to read and write, and would like to exchange ideas with all you boys.

KID GUNN.

See working conditions in Massachusetts.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of twenty and work in a Massachusetts office. I like sports, have several hobbies, and would love to talk them over with Pals. Who'll tell me about hers?
ETTA.

No footlights can faze her.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm just a blue-eyed blonde, five feet tall, almost eighteen. I've been in the movies and on the stage ever since I was a little girl. Come on, girls, let me tell you about my thrilling experiences.

JUST EVELYN.

Face to face with nation-wide panic.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young man of twenty, six feet tall, and am in search of real Pals. For the past three years I have worked for a Wall Street brokerage firm in New York City, and can tell interesting stories of the stock-market crash of 1929. What about it, buddies?
WALT.

All about skiing and the Canadian game of badminton.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a merry girl of Toronto, eighteen years old, with green eyes and auburn hair. I enjoy Canada's winter and summer sports, and want to hear from all girls who find life interesting.

HOPE.

Facing a life's crisis.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Have you a place for a girl of twenty, who is convalescing from an operation and will have to remain in bed for three months? Unless the cast is successfully removed from my leg, I may never walk again. I once did a lot of traveling, and even though I'm lonesome, I promise cheerful letters.

LITTLE SALLIE.

Happiest in a science laboratory.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Who wants a reliable Pal? I'm an eighteen-year-old boy, live in Chicago, and have traveled quite a bit in the United States. I'm interested in all sciences, especially zoölogy, and like indoor and outdoor sports. I want to hear from Pals of all ages, and can guarantee interesting letters.

HADLEY.

Accomplished in her line.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of seventeen, with brown eyes and brown curly hair, greatly interested in sports, dancing, and music—music in particular, as I play the piano and violin. Won't you find me some real Pen Pals?

BARNEY OF MAINE.

What college life really is.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a blonde, twenty-one years old, a student at one of the larger girls' colleges. I'd like to hear from girls interested in swimming, golf, and dancing. I can tell entertaining stories of college life, and in answering I'll be promptness itself.

A BOSTON BLONDE.

Hear about Piccadilly and Bond Street clothes!

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I've just come out of the hospital, and have a world of time on my hands. I'm a brunette of eighteen, fond of swimming and tennis. I have been across the water, and can tell all about merry old England. I'm hoping you girls will want to hear.

POOR SICK ARLENE.

The Friend In Need

Department

CONDUCTED BY

Laura Alston Brown



HAS a man who refuses to be a father the right to remain a husband?

Every woman has the right to the fulfillment of her destiny as a woman, to motherhood and to children. Has a man who refuses that the right to a wife?

Annette has discovered too late that her husband will not accept the responsibilities of a family. His neglect of her at a crucial time led to the death of their child. Must she remain tied to this man for the rest of her life because he concealed his true character in courtship? Must she remain the wife of a man who, to all intents and purposes, murdered her baby? Let's have your opinions, readers!

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I lost my mother when I was less than a year old, and I have never even seen a picture of her. I was raised in a home where they were very good, but they can't bestow the same affection on children that a mother does. My father, sisters, and brothers all seem like strangers to me now.

Although I am the youngest of nine, I can count the number of kisses I've received from my family. All my life I've longed for love and affection and some one to cuddle. Even a dog or cat would have done. But, raised in a "home" until I was sixteen, I couldn't have even that.

It's always been a source of great wonder to me where my affectionate nature comes from. I find no indication of it in any one else in our family. Since I was sixteen I've shifted for myself. I got quite a few shocks when I came up against the world, for the home was somewhat on the convent order, and I knew nothing.

I am now married, and although my hus-

band shows in many ways that he loves me, he isn't affectionate. Also, he has an abominable temper and hates "brats," as he calls children.

Although I did not love my husband, I married him because I wanted love, a home, and kiddies, for I'm a born mother. My heart aches when I see other mothers with their babies. We lost a baby who came before his time, and it almost killed me. We were separated until about a month before the baby was born, because my husband didn't want it. The doctor says that my mental and nervous state caused baby's death. I cannot have another, and although I beg and plead, my husband will not adopt one.

I don't like to whine, Mrs. Brown; I hate whiners, but I have no mother and, as I said before, my sisters are strangers to me. So I appeal to you.

My husband has struck me on very slight provocation, and he calls me awful names when he's in a temper. Do you really think it's worth while for me to stick it out? We've been married four years, and I can't say that we've made a success of it.

I am twenty-three, dark, small, and can pass in a crowd. I love sports, but I haven't been able to go swimming and hiking since my marriage. It's against orders, you see. I am forbidden to dance.

I have taken an interest in baseball, movies, and the races, his favorite sports; but he won't in mine.

I know this is a long, rambling letter, but I'm so moody at times. I get so melancholy trying to figure things out for myself.

Please, please, tell me what to do. Shall I carry on, or should we end it?

ANNETTE.

What happiness can there be in store for two young people of such dissimilar tastes and ideas? These two have many, many years before them. Must they all be spent in bitter loneliness of spirit

because a young, unguided girl made a mistake in judgment?

Won't you help Annette, readers? I want you to give her your honest opinion.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I'm going to ask you for some advice, and I do hope you won't think I'm silly:

I'm eighteen years old and have coal-black hair, brown eyes, and olive skin.

My father has always had plenty of money, and mother has seen to it that I have had everything I needed. I'm a graduate of St. Mary's Academy, and am called a talented musician.

Now, the problem is: I'm in love, or think I am. My folks have always let me do as I pleased. Although I don't smoke or drink, I'm just as popular as any girl in our set. I met *him* last July, and we have kept steady company ever since. At Christmas we became engaged, and there wasn't a happier girl in the United States.

He lost his job and has not found work since January 1st. He is a promising young man, but it just seems that he can't get on.

The 26th of January he left for Miami, Florida. His brother is stationed there. He is hoping to succeed before June 14th, as that is our wedding date.

Now that's only four months, and I am waiting very impatiently until that date. If at that time he hasn't succeeded should I continue with my plans and marry him or put it off until he does? I do love him so much. Thanking you, I am

ROSALIE.

Yes, Rosalie, if four months do not seem long enough for your boy friend to make good, and if by June he hasn't found a satisfactory position, why not stretch the wedding date a little—six months or longer? It won't do any harm, especially as it seems to be such a strong case of real love.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: We are two girls, twenty-two and twenty-three years old. One is a stenographer and one a nurse. We own a roadster, have a nice apartment, dress nicely, and have almost everything to make us happy. And, most of all, we are highly respected in this community.

But, Mrs. Brown, here is the trouble: We are very popular with girls and with boys, too; that is, for a while. Hardly a week goes by that we do not have a date with

some boys; often they ask our girl friends for an introduction to us. The first evening is all well and good; but as soon as they find out we think more of our health than to ruin it with cigarettes and liquor, and we refuse to pet, they call no more.

The only man who calls regularly on me is a fifty-one-year-old lawyer whom I nursed through a case of diphtheria. He is forever offering me a nice home. Ann's boss sends her candy and books all the time; but he, too, is a middle-aged man.

Mrs. Brown, do you see what we mean? The only ones who want our company are men far older than ourselves, whom we do respect but never could love.

The boys our own age say: "When it's time for a cottage, you'll do. But why throw youth away on some old standards set up by our grandmothers?"

Mrs. Brown, we don't want husbands whom every girl in town has kissed. Why does a man expect a girl to be clean and good, while they are all rotten? Did you ever hear of a girl going wrong without some slick-haired sheik being the cause of it?

We are both so-called successes in life, yet not happy because we have failed to find love, the one thing every girl wants and longs for. Where is a woman's place, if not in the home?

If you ask us, it's the men who have been the cause of all this "modern-youth" rotten stuff which we all hear so much about nowadays.

DISGUSTED PAIS.

Why should you stick to old standards set up by your grandmothers? Perhaps because they have lasted from grandmother's day, and great-great-great-grandmother's day, to the present. The test of time is no mean proof of lasting worth.

There are young men in the world wise enough to know that, too. You'll find them if you don't give up hope.

Are you sure that it isn't something entirely different from the avowed reason which accounts for your inability to attract young men? Perhaps in your concentration on dignity and refinement you've lost the gayety and sparkle of youth. You may have lost the freshness, the youngness, you need to attract the men.

The young men probably sense some lack, and not having enough discern-

ment to see what it really is, they settle on the most obvious thing they can find, your adherence to a high standard. Just as a baby who is fed on an unbalanced diet cries for candy, although he is really starving for spinach.

Look yourselves over and find out if you aren't letting a certain smug satisfaction creep into your social manner, if you're not passing up entirely wholesome fun in a mistaken idea that it would detract from your dignity. Learn to like nonsense, to be gay, keen, above all *young*. Then you'll find that the boys don't give a snap of their fingers whether or not you smoke and drink.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: May I enter? I have a few words I'd like to say to Betty.

My, my, Betty, how foolish you are! For Heaven's sake, child, send Harry away. You must realize now your place is with Clif. Not because he's your husband, but because he's your baby's father and you haven't any right to take the child away. Your husband will be as much interested in that child as you will be.

Don't you think he wants to see the cute little things the baby does every day and hear the cute things he says and watch him toddle along? If I were Clif, and you really wanted to go, I'd sure take my baby. And then, I'll bet, you'd sing a different tune.

Three years ago I thought I'd never be happy again. I'm twenty-one now. When I was sixteen I fell in love with a fellow five years older. He was killed a week before the date set for our wedding.

Oh, I thought I'd never get over it! I kept his letters, pictures, and every little thing he gave me. I cried for nearly three years afterward. I never went any place. I felt I just could not go to a show and see the love-making.

Then I started failing in health. My mother begged me to throw away all of Roy's things, to go out and have a good time. Well, I did, and then I got into trouble. I had to marry a man I really hated. He had a good job and loved me, but I just couldn't love him, and I told him of Roy. He was very kind to me and gave me everything I wanted. He let me have my own way in everything.

When our baby came I wanted it to be named after my first love. This was the only thing my husband ever denied me. "Marg," he said, "I've given you everything

and tried to be kind; but I think a father has a right to name his own son. You can name him, if you want to, but not after that man." So I called him Jimmy, Jr.

Now, here comes the nice part. To-day I have a lovely son, a very good and loving husband, and, best of all, when my baby came a little feeling of love came for his daddy. I can say I love my husband to-day, and I am happy.

So if you send Harry away, I think a little love will come for Clif when your baby comes. You'll feel like a different woman after you've had a child.

JIMMY'S MOTHER.

Happiness comes from learning to make the best of what one has and forgetting the impossible. The poorest of us can be as happy as a king, if only we learn this lesson. Jimmy's Mother has learned it, and the rest of life will be clear sailing for her.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Will you kindly publish this letter?

Now then, listen, you narrow-minded fools I wonder if Mrs. Brown gets as much of a kick out of your letters as I do, and, about myself, I've seen every State in the Union, have been in seven foreign countries, and had a sweetheart—as you call them—in every port. So I'm pretty well experienced for a lad of scarcely twenty-one. And what's more, I've been married a year.

Now, you fool men who think you are too good for a girl who drinks, et cetera, get this: Who started them if it wasn't the men? Why did you do it? Don't tell me it was to find a decent girl, because nine out of ten did it to please you because they loved you, not because it was smart.

And after they are good sports you go around and gossip about them. For such guys as you, hanging is too good.

And, girls, you don't need to think you are so smart, either. What business have you got to run wild? No girl has to throw all sense to the winds. Most of you think you are in love. Ha-ha! Were you ever in love? No, you weren't. I'll tell you why. True love is self-sacrificing; it gives all and a lot more. When you are really in love you don't have time to think of fighting. You're content just to be with each other. Do I know? You bet I do. I'm married and I'm still in love with my wife. I don't have time to think of fighting. I've got a goal to reach, and that is the only fighting I do.

Now, don't think I never had troubles. I've had lots of them, and no one to go to but strangers.

Be real men and women, you boys and girls; be clean and broad-minded. No one wants a man or a woman who does not have self-respect. And don't forget you can go from castles in Spain to hell's greatest temptations and still keep your good name. I've done it, and I'm not superhuman. I'm not praising myself; in fact, I'm kicking myself for not being a man from the start.

And another word, Wolf; I'm not much like He-man. I'm fairly good-looking and weigh about two hundred and five pounds. I've boxed twenty-three professional bouts at different times, and have lost but one. Also, I have brown curly hair and stand almost six feet tall. So there, Wolf, laugh that off.

NOT A FOOL, BUT EXPERIENCED.

Readers, you'll not let this one go by? Can a person go "from castles in Spain to the greatest temptations" and still keep his good name and self-respect? Let's get together on this.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: When I read the letter of Chickie and Bobbie I was filled with disgust. They seem to be proud of themselves, but if I acted like that I'd be ashamed to show my face.

I am soon going to be seventeen years old, and I am a senior in high school. Now that these four years are past, I'm really sorry, for I've just now come to appreciate school and all it means to me.

I belong to quite a few clubs in school, am on the basket-ball and hockey team. I play tennis and swim and dance, which I love most of all. I go to about two dances a week at my dad's lodge and church.

Between sports, dancing, and my school I manage to get along without boys, although I have a few dates a week. And when I do go out we either go to dances, shows or parties, whatever happens to come along.

I don't drink or smoke or pet. Maybe you think I'm a goody-goody girl. I'm not. I'm always full of pep, and have many friends who wonder what makes me popular, because you couldn't call me pretty. I dress neatly and in style, have brown eyes and wavy brown hair. But whenever we go anywhere I always try to exert myself a little and keep everybody laughing. When a fellow wants a kiss, I just tease and tease until he laughs so hard he forgets about it.

Of course, there's one certain boy. I have known him for over a year, and I've never

gone out with him, although I see him at my dad's lodge whenever I go to a dance. He dances a lot with me, and I know he likes me, but why doesn't he ask me to go out? I care very much for him, but nobody knows it. I guess I'll just have to wait until he asks me, but in the meantime I'm having a good time.

I certainly enjoy your department.

TERRY.

Terry dear, only time and the boy friend—and don't depend on the B. F. to tell you—can tell you just why he never asks you out. Perhaps he likes you, but doesn't like you well enough to take you out. Perhaps he likes you and is bashful. If you're so keen about him, why not drop a gentle hint the next time you see him, and mention some place you'd like to go. It may sprout a thought or two in his mind. It's worth a try, I think.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I wonder if you could help me. Of course, it's the same old story. I'm in love. But he is a dear and loves me, too. We have been engaged for several months, but we can't be married because he says he feels that he could not support me the way he would want to.

I have a good job now, and have nice clothes, and I keep house for my father, who is all I have. Consequently, I have more than the average girl, and my fiancé doesn't feel that he'd be justified in taking me away from the good things I have now, even though I am willing. You see, he doesn't believe in a wife working.

Isn't there some way I can show him that I would be willing to do without a lot of unnecessary things just to have him? I love him with all my heart, and I know he loves me as much; but he thinks he is showing that love by not wanting me to sacrifice my nice clothes and home for him.

I want your advice, too, readers. Isn't there some solution to this?

HAPPY BUT WAITING.

In one way, it is thoughtful of your fiancé to want you to have all the nice things that you now have. But being supplied aplenty with material comforts is not enough to be happy, if one is in love. Would his dignity *really* be lowered so much if you, too, were to bring

home a pay check? Just what is his idea of supporting a wife the way he would want to support her? It seems to be a matter of weighing his love and need of you between his pride in letting his wife work or for some reason he is not ready to marry and doesn't like to admit that fact. Of course, if it's a question of waiting six months or a year, that's not so bad. But if this waiting idea is to stretch out indefinitely, that's neither here nor there. If he loves you as much as he says he does—and I'm not trying to plant a doubt in your mind, dear—then, as long as you do not mind working, he would want to marry you as quickly as he possibly could. Talk it over with him; ask him if his pride is greater than love. He should keep in mind your feeling for him, not only your material comforts.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am so worried I thought probably you could help me. I am eighteen years old and dearly in love with a young man. I know he loves me, too, but my folks forbid me to see him, and they won't even let me go out with any other boy.

Can you tell me what to do? I am so terribly unhappy. It seems I can't live without seeing him, and I don't like to go on seeing him behind their backs. I've pleaded with dad, but it is of no use. They don't even like me to have any girl friends. I'm so lonesome.

BROWNIE.

You poor child, your parents are certainly unfair and unreasonable. You have a perfect right to make and have friends at your age. Why not ask them just what their particular objection is to your having friends and going out with boys and girls. Don't they want you to some day marry the man you love and be happy? If they object to your going out, perhaps they would let you entertain friends at your home.

It is honest and sweet of you not to wish to see this young man if they object so strongly. Could there be any reason you may not know of that they object so? Of course you are lonesome, Brownie. Isn't there a church society,

perhaps some young folks' club, or the Y. W. that you could join?

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am twenty-one years old and have been married since I was sixteen. I dearly love my husband, but can he love me when he behaves as he does?

We have a darling little girl four years old who thinks the world of him, and he acts as though he loved her, too. But this is my trouble: I know he is going to see some one else. He is always telling me how attractive I am, and praises me in many ways; but if he meant it, how could he be deceiving me in this way? I got after him about going to see this woman, who, I know, is not all she should be; but he lied and said he did not go there. I know better. I don't believe he loves her—it is just the good time he is looking for. Every time he goes, I know he has been drinking. I wouldn't kick, Mrs. Brown, if I carried on the same way; but I love my child too much to step out of my place, and it seems to me that he should feel the same way.

About six months ago he started to do the same thing. He was going around with a man who was not living with his wife. He used to be out nearly every night in the week; and every Saturday and Sunday he wouldn't come home until five in the morning. I knew he was going with some other woman, and started to leave him; but he begged and pleaded so hard that I stayed for the sake of the child. He promised he would never leave me alone again. But his promises did not mean a thing. He has lied to me so much that I can't believe a thing he says. I don't want to leave him, but how can I stand this kind of life? When I say anything about going away, he says I'm not going anywhere. He says a man can't go out for a minute but what he is with a woman, and I know that he doesn't go there every time he leaves the house.

He tells me to go out where I want to, and he won't say anything; but who wants to go alone to a show or anywhere else? If it were not for my baby, I would end it all. I know this sounds foolish, but what can I do? He's jealous of me and admits it, and I am jealous of him, too; but when a woman is put in the place I am in, how can she feel any other way?

WORRIED AND BLUE.

Now, now, Worried and Blue, don't lose your courage, dear. We all must admit that life isn't a bed of roses, and marriage often is certainly one tough

proposition. I think you've been brave and fine in not stepping out yourself, and although the old saying that virtue is its own reward is almost threadbare, it still holds true. Some men need a little rope to tangle up their good resolutions before they come to their senses. Your husband loves you, that's plain, but his fancy wanders, and patience and tolerance are about the only remedies I can suggest. As you love him and don't wish to leave him, continue being patient. Make yourself as attractive as you can. Haven't you any women friends with whom you could go out now and then? Once in a while, it may not be a bad idea to hand him his hat and coat and appear to be a little anxious to have him gone. He may then

become suspicious and decide to stick around, or else take you with him. This may prove to be just the "cure" he needs. Men are apt to be more attentive and considerate of wives of whom they are not dead sure.

Sad Girl: Perhaps your people will allow you to see your friends at your own home if they won't let you go out. Then you could have him over with the others, and I'm sure you could find out from his manner. One Who Loves Deeply: If you can't marry for two years, you're behaving very unwisely in spending so much time entirely alone together. Unhappy Anne: If he prefers cheap girls, he's not for you.

Mrs. Brown will be glad to solve in these pages problems on which you desire advice. Your letters will be regarded confidentially and signatures will be withheld.

Although Mrs. Brown receives more letters than she can possibly print in the department, she answers all the others by mail. So, lay your problem before her with the knowledge that it will have her full attention.

Address Mrs. Laura Alston Brown, Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

Statement of the Ownership, Management, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine, published weekly, at New York, N. Y., for April 1, 1931.

State of New York, County of New York (ss.)

Before me, a Notary Public, in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared George C. Smith, Jr., who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is Vice President of the Street & Smith Publications, Inc., publishers of Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: *Publishers*, Street & Smith Publications, Inc., 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; *editor*, Daisy S. Bacon, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; *managing editors*, Street & Smith Publications, Inc., 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; *business managers*, Street & Smith Publications, Inc., 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

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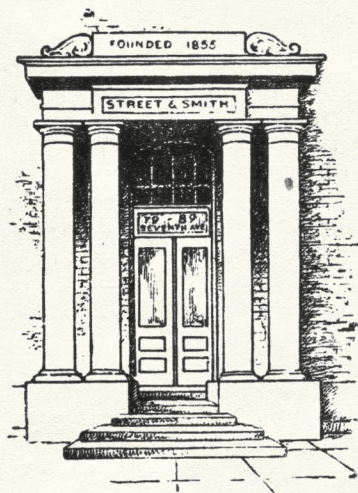
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Of Street & Smith Publications, Inc., publishers.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 1st day of April, 1931. De Witt C. Van Valkenburgh, Notary Public No. 12, New York County. (My commission expires March 30, 1932.)



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Kissing Permit 10c
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Two very novel metal badges, nickel plated, that you can wear, giving you fun out of all proportion to their trifling cost. 10c, each badge, 3 for 25c, or 75c per doz. postpaid anywhere.

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GREAT CURIOSITY
Smallest Bible in the World. Size of a postage stamp. 200 Pages. Said to bring good luck to the owner. A genuine work of art. Must be seen to be appreciated. Make good money selling them to friends, church acquaintances, etc. PRICE 15c each, 3 for 40c, 12 for \$1.35, 100 for \$7.50. Also obtainable in Leather Binding, with gold edges. Price 50c each, 3 for \$1.25, \$4.50 per doz. Magnifying Glass for use with Midget Bible 15c.

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With a bunch of these bills, it is easy for each person of limited means to appear prosperous by flashing a roll of these bills at the time and peeling off a genuine bill or two from the outside of the roll, the effect created will be found to be all that can be desired. Prices, postpaid: 40 Bills 20c, 120 for 50c, or \$3.50 thousand postpaid.

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More fun than fighting with your wife. Look just like ordinary matches. As the victim tries to light one he gets quite a surprise. Price 10c per box, 3 boxes for 25c, 12 for 75c.



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Lots of harmless fun and amusement wearing these rings. Made in platinum finish (to resemble platinum), with wording on enameloid, no illustration. Only 25c Postpaid.

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a little instrument, fits in the mouth out of sight, used with above for Bird Calls, etc. Anyone can use it.

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125 CARD TRICKS

Containing all the tricks and deceptions with cards ever invented, including the latest Tricks of the most celebrated Conjurers, Magicians and Freddigators popularly explained, simplified and adapted for home amusement and social entertainments. The whole so explained that anyone can, with a little practice, perform the most difficult feat, to his own satisfaction and to the wonder and admiration of his friends. There is also added a Complete Exposure of all the Card Tricks made use of by Professional Card Players and Gamblers. Shows how "Skin" Gamblers cheat and win money from their infernal "pin fling" and other tricks. These features make it the best work ever published on Card Tricks. PRICE 25c. POSTPAID

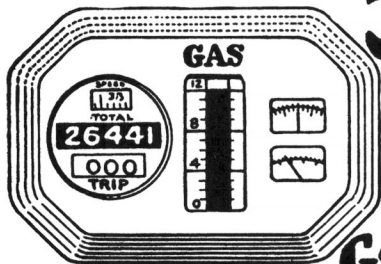
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Apparatus and Directions for a Number of Mysterious Tricks. Enough for an Entire Evening's Entertainment. ... \$1.00

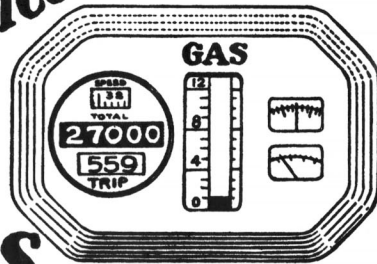
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on
11



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Mark H. Estes writes: "I was making 17 miles to the gallon on my Pontiac Coupe. Today, with the Whirlwind, I am making 35 5-10 miles to the gallon. Am I glad I put it on? I'll say so!"

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Arthur Grant: "I have an Oakland touring car that has been giving me 15 miles to the gallon average, but I can see a great difference with the Whirlwind, as it climbs the big hills on high and gives me better than 23 miles to the gallon of gas, which is better than 50% saving in gas."

W. A. Scott: "I had my Whirlwind for three years. Winter and summer it gives the same perfect service, instant starting, smoother running, and what I have saved in gasoline these last few years has brought other luxuries which I could not have afforded previously."

Car owners all over the world are saving money every day with the Whirlwind, besides having better operating motors. Think what this means on your own car. Figure up your savings—enough for a radio—a bank account—added pleasures. Why let the Oil Companies profit by your waste? Find out about this amazing little device that will pay for itself every few weeks in gas saving alone.

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In just a few minutes the Whirlwind can be installed on any make of car, truck or tractor. It's actually less work than changing your oil or putting water in the battery. No drilling, tapping or changes of any kind necessary. It is guaranteed to work perfectly on any make of car, truck or tractor, large or small, new model or old model. The more you drive the more you will save.

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