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STREET & SMITH'S LOVE STORY ★

EVERY WEEK **MAGAZINE** DEC. 12, 1931
ON THE AIR **ILLUSTRATED**

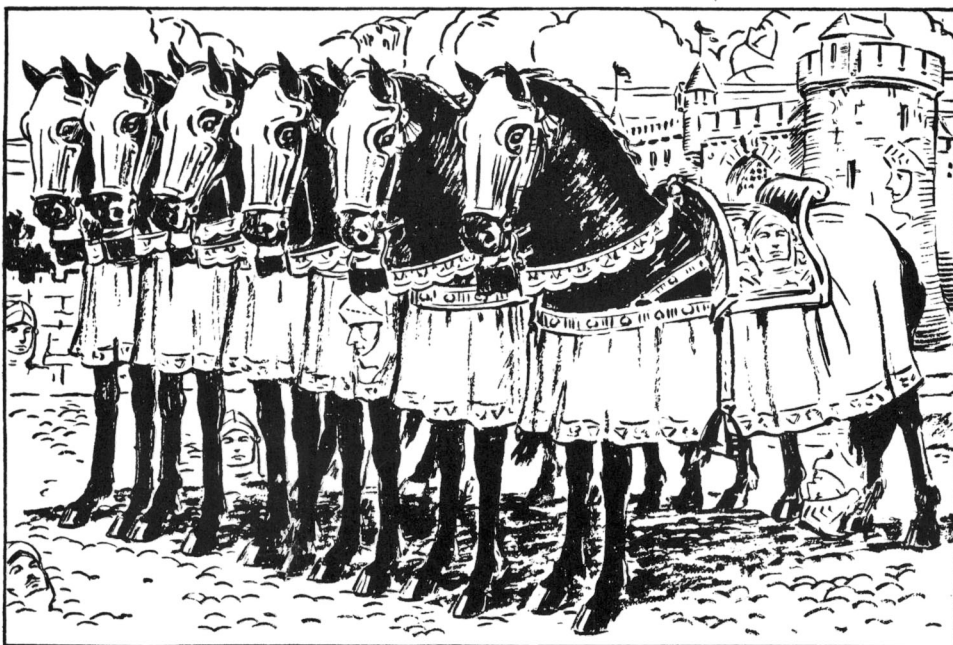


EVERY
THURSDAY
NIGHT



*Honest
—the
Host*

MODEST



Win \$2,500 or Buick 8 Sedan and \$1,000 in Cash

Can You Find the King's Men?

The King's Horses stood in the Court Yard of the great Castle. But where are the King's Men? **Can you find them?** The faces of the King's Men are shown in odd places about the picture. Some are upside down, others look sideways, some look straight at you. **Mark on the picture as many faces as you can find and mail to me at once.** Sharpeyes will find them. Can you?

We are giving \$7,500 in more than 100 prizes in a sensational new plan to advertise our business. Also **thousands of dollars in cash rewards.** In a former campaign, Mr. Dennis Beemer, Utica, Mich. won \$4,740. Miss Helen Schick won \$2,565. Many others won big prizes. In our new campaign someone wins latest model Buick Sedan delivered by nearest dealer and \$1,000 cash (or \$2,500 total if all cash is preferred)—why not you?

\$1,000 Extra Just for Promptness

We want this advertising campaign started at once. Therefore, \$1,000 extra cash will be given the first prize winner for being prompt. Send your answer today—take no chance of losing the \$1,000 extra promptness prize.

Mail Coupon Today

The money to pay all prizes is already in a big Chicago Bank waiting for the winners. If you answer now, and take an active part, you are sure to get a cash reward.

You may win a new Buick 8 Sedan delivered by your own dealer and \$1,000 cash (or \$2,500 if you prefer all cash). Duplicate prizes given if there are final ties. You are under no obligation if you answer. **It doesn't require a penny of your money to win.** No matter where you live in the U. S., if you want to win a big prize send your answer today and you will qualify for the opportunity. Someone will win! **Find the King's Men.**

No Better Time Than NOW to Mail the Coupon

Farmer Wins \$3,500

Mr. C. H. Essig, a farmer, RR3, Argos, Ind. wrote: "Received your \$3,500 prize check. 3,500 thanks for it! This is the most money I ever had in my life. It is indeed a fortune to win."



Mr. Essig on his farm

Housewife Won \$4,705

Mrs. Kate Needham of Portland, Oregon, wrote: "Oh! I thank you so much for the \$4,705 I won. It must be a wonderful feeling to know that you have made anyone as happy as I am. I will never forget the your Company."



Minn. Man Won \$2,560

Mr. M. D. Reidman, of Eveleth, Minn. wrote: "Many thanks for the \$2,560 I won. I have a family and I am going to buy a farm and be my own boss." Hundreds of men, women, boys and girls have been rewarded in our past advertising campaigns.



Clip & Mail Today

Alan Dale, Mgr., Dept. 42

427 W. Randolph St., Chicago, Ill.

I have marked the faces in the \$2,500.00 prize picture. I am anxious to win a prize. Please tell me how I stand.

Name

Address

Town State

WHAT DOES 1932 HOLD FOR YOU?



1931 was an unusual year—and most of us are glad it is gone! Our minds are fixed on brighter days.

But don't deceive yourself! *A change in conditions will not necessarily mean a change for you.* Prosperity is still an individual challenge!

In this period of economic transition, success is not more difficult—it's more exacting! It doesn't come—you go after it through careful *training!*

You can blame the year, curse your luck, wonder what's wrong—one year is like another if *you* do not make them different! Don't you know hundreds of men who never knew a "good" year?

1932 is new! You can make it the most profitable year of your life. You can lay the groundwork for a career which will furnish more satisfaction and more money. Indeed, 1932 is a golden opportunity for you!

How can you do it? That's easy! Acquire more *training*—do your job *better*, prepare yourself for the *next* job. But doing it is *not* so easy. It takes courage, sacrifice and hard work. Quitters should continue wasting their spare time! Thousands of *fighters*, to get the training they need, are enrolling for International Correspondence Schools Courses. They are going to make 1932 a good year for themselves. So can you! This coupon is a beginning. Mark and mail it—today!

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STREET & SMITH'S LOVE STORY MAGAZINE

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Vol. LXXXVI

EVERY WEEK

Number 2

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Beginning next week—"Desire," a new serial by Selma Baxter. A story of love and passion under desert skies.

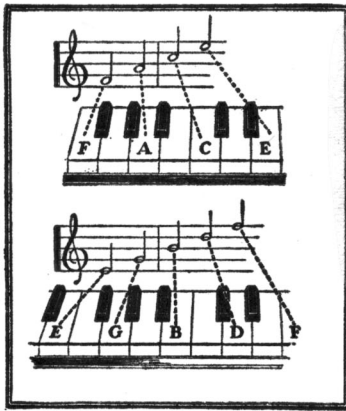
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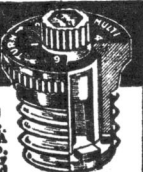
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After

By
Bert
Cooksley

STILL will the wild thrush whistle her sonnets
Over the valley road; the wind will still
Rustle through the meadow's daisy bonnets
And the tall eucalyptus on their hill.

Still will the rising moon call out the fox,
And galleon stars sail down their midnight stream,
And in old gardens lavender and phlox
Will still robe summer's twilight in a dream.

Still will the old ones shrine their yesteryear,
And youth go trysting with warm lips to spend,
And trail-worn voyagers at last draw near
The open heart and hearthplace of a friend.

And you and I, grown old in life and laughter,
Still we'll travel on together—after!





Honey, The Hostess

CHAPTER I.

By

Vivian Grey



A Serial—Part I.

DIANA EARLE'S slim white hands were arrested in their smoothing of her lustrous dark hair. She stared into the mirror in front of her, her dark eyes wide, her lips parting over her white teeth in mute, startled protest at the reflection she saw there.

Then she turned suddenly.

"Philomene!" The one shocked word came in a low tone as if mindful of the thinness of the door that separated the two girls from the hall

with its procession of other not too prosperous roomers.

But Philomene, younger than Diana and as blond as Diana was dark, shrugged her shapely young shoulders under their décolletage and moved

her slim body so that the skirts that fluttered around her ankles swished softly.

"Philomene, you can't!" There was panic in Diana's colorful young voice and fright stared out of her eyes at her sister. "You can't! I won't have it! I won't, Philomene!"



There was a sharp intake of breath from the group of girls gathered around. The atmosphere was tense with their fear of the tiger woman Theda became when she was enraged.

The younger Philomene smiled slowly, and went on with the fastening of a shoulder bouquet. Then, in a cool, clear voice, as unlike Diana's as ice water gurgling from a fount is unlike rare old wine, she spoke:

"You might as well ask a Roman candle not to go boom, Di," she said. "I'm all prettied up and everything, if you know what I mean. It isn't my wearing your dress that you mind, is it?"

She looked down over the shimmering ivory satin that clung with such delicately lovely revelation to her softly rounded young form.

"Oh, no, it isn't that, Phil. You know it isn't!" Diana cried in her

deep rich voice that made one think of sun shining through a stained-glass window. "I'd—why, I'd give you anything I had that you wanted. It's just—well, I'd wanted to save you if I could from what I've had to stand!"

The words seemed to be dragged from her, as if just the memory that they brought was a thing to shudder away from, a thing that haunted her dreams and stalked miserably through her waking hours.

And then she began to talk, a bit fast, nervously, in her desire to impress her real intent upon the younger girl:

"You see, Phil it's—well, you just

can't imagine what it's like until you've tried it. Dancing every night with different men—just any man who has the price of a ticket—until you begin to wonder that there can be so many men in the world who want to dance with girls they don't know. Dancing with heavy arms around you that weigh you down!"

"I know," Philomene replied, "but it's life. And I want to live."

Diana looked at her in horror.

"But not that way, Philomene! Wait a while longer. Maybe something will happen——"

But Philomene's young, impetuous voice broke in, high with impatience:

"Wait! And for what! What, I ask you am I waiting for? To grow old and ugly and unwanted before any man's had a real good look at me! And I won't do that! I won't, Di!" The wild note left her voice and it lowered to a breathless pleading tone.

"I've waited a whole year now, Di," she continued. "A year since—since dad left us and you've kept holding me back, telling me to wait—oh, I know you've meant it for my good! You've been trying to be kind to me but you're smothering me! Just school and then this room—just that every day and every day. And no clothes! Nothing!"

"Well, I may as well tell you now as any other time, I haven't been to school for a week and I don't intend to go any more!"

The words came from her fiercely, she seemed to be hurling them at Diana, and Diana flinched as they struck her.

"You haven't been to school?" Diana asked in shocked surprise.

"No, and I'm not going any more! What's the use?" Her hands went out in a futile gesture. "What's the use of hanging onto the old things?"

I can't do the things the other girls do any more! I can't dress as they do! I'm just—well, if I can't be one thing then I'm going to be another and be it hard! I'm going to live, Di, and you can't stop me! I'll dance with them! Their heavy arms won't bother me! I'm sick of staying here every night! I want to get out where people can see me and—and——"

"And admire you," Diana finished for her. "Wasn't that what you were going to say? I know how you feel, Phil, but I'd want it to be different kind of men who admired you. If you could only know—see their hands and their eyes as they hand you their dance tickets." Diana shuddered. Then with a new burst of feeling:

"Phil, you can't! I won't let you do it! Take off that dress and get into your other things! You can't go out to-night! You can't, I tell you!"

Diana made a movement toward the younger girl. Philomene dodged and stood, defiant, just out of her reach.

"I'm going, I tell you! I'm going and I'm going to see something of life! I'm going to earn money and get some clothes! I'm going to be like other girls!"

"Philomene——"

But the younger girl had slipped out of the door and Diana, in the bare little room with its faded paper and garish oak furniture, stood for a breathless stunned moment staring at the door that had slammed between her and Philomene and listening to the quick steps going down the stairs and then melting into the silence of the house.

It was the silence that finally frightened her, startled her into action.

She rushed down the stairs and out into the evening to stand star-

ing madly up and down the street, first in one direction and then the other. But Philomene, on her flying feet, had vanished.

Diana pressed her hand tightly to her lips to keep them from uttering, involuntarily, the cry that started from her frightened heart.

Philomene with her young carelessness of consequences out on the streets in that mad mood alone! Philomene, with her untouched young beauty!

The thought alone frightened Diana.

Yet, it was eight o'clock, and she was due at Poppyland—due there in her evening gown, with her tired body and aching feet to sell snatches of romance at a dime a dance to hungry-handed, eager-eyed men who seemed to forget that ten cents didn't pay for both the body and soul of a girl.

Diana wearily walked back up the stairs. It wouldn't do any good to try to find Philomene. There were a thousand ways that she might have gone in a big city like New York and anyway, she had to keep her job so that there would be a roof over their heads and food for their mouths.

Back in the dingy room she sat down on the edge of the bed and took off her comfortable walking shoes and slipped her feet into a pair of bright-green slippers.

They were new. They'd brighten up the black lace dress she was wearing. The chaperon had given her to understand the evening before that men who paid only a dime a dance liked their partners to be gay of manner and dress as well.

The green slippers gave a dash to the black outfit. She looked at them critically and then took them off, slipped them into a paper bag and put on her walking shoes again.

In her race for freedom Philomene had snatched the black velvet wrap that Diana had gotten out, so with a little shrug Diana drew a light coat over her dress and started out.

She walked. It wasn't far from her room in a shabby West Twenty-fifth Street house to Poppyland on West Twenty-third Street. And it gave her a little time to think. If she was late she'd get a calling down but she did not care.

She found herself looking at the faces of girls she passed, scanning them for that eager, searching look that had been in Philomene's eyes for several weeks.

It had frightened her when she had first seen it. It had been to her like the writing on the wall. She had known then that what had just happened must happen some time.

She had been fighting a hopeless battle from the very start, a losing one.

As she looked back on their life as it had been a year and a half before, when their father was alive, it seemed like a dream. The whole thing seemed like some strange unreality—her finding him that morning after the terrific stock crash, sitting in his favorite chair in the library, that terrible look in his eyes and that terrible stillness about the place.

It had been days before she could make it seem real that he was gone, that he'd never speak again, that he'd never come in after his day's work in the city, never again drive one of the high-powered cars in the garage or ride one of the fine horses in the stable, and that even for herself and Philomene all of that had ended. Everything had been swept away.

She smiled, misty-eyed over the note he'd left—a pitiful scrawl in which he seemed to find some com-

fort in the thought that she would be left with Herbert.

And then Diana's eyes hardened a bit. Herbert!

They'd been engaged. She had turned to him blindly, mute with grief and shock and he——

That hour was etched in her memory with a flame-tipped pencil. As her hands had reached out blindly for him in her hour of trial he had seemed to recede into the background, to slip out of her reach and become merely an unimpressed on-looker.

Her heart had seemed to freeze as he talked to her in an almost impersonal voice—his family—never been touched with scandal—perhaps after all—— He hadn't had quite the courage to ask for release, but Diana had made it easier for him.

"I know," she had said. "I wouldn't feel quite like going on with things now anyhow. I think I'd better go away for a while—a change will be good."

She had even managed a little smile as she had said it.

And oddly enough, as she looked back over it, she wasn't sorry. She remembered even in that tragic moment, as she had stood watching Herbert Larsen walk out of her life, that she had sensed a feeling of weight being lifted from her.

After it was all over and she had begun to adjust herself to her new poverty and the work at Poppyland—the only job that she had found herself fitted for—she began to understand that feeling of lightness that came as Herbert turned his back on her.

She hadn't really loved him—that had been it. She had mistaken the glamour of his gallantry, the thrill of his courtship for love.

It had taken tragedy to test them both and awaken them to the fact

that they were trying to satisfy themselves with half loaves. Diana knew that if Herbert had really loved her his family would have made no difference. He would have thrown family traditions to the wind and swept her off of her feet with the ardor of his wooing at her time of need.

But he, too, had mistaken some lesser thing for love. And then Diana wondered a moment if he had ever been capable of love—of the kind of love that she wanted of the man she married, a great overpowering emotion that would carry one away on the crest of its current.

That would be love! Her face lighted at the thought and for the moment she lost sight of Philomene and the tempest that had taken her rushing pell-mell out of the house to find life.

Such a love—but Diana paused on the thought. She wondered a bit fearfully if she could wait for such a love, if the high courage that she had set out with would stay with her until that rare and beautiful thing came to her.

She was already tired, desperately tired, and sometimes when she came back to her room at night she felt ready to compromise with life, to take the second best that some one of the men she danced with offered.

It was hard, desperately hard—this being the romance in a dozen different men's lives every night, and for ten cents a dance!

She hadn't thought of it that way in the beginning. Dancing on that first night when she applied, timidly, frightenedly for the job, had been a glad and glorious thing, a thing of romance and beauty and grace!

There had been in her eyes that night as she looked at Mrs. Waddell, the chaperon, something more than just timidity and need—there

had been a fleetingly delicate smile that had been reminiscent of the Diana of the old days of plenty, even luxury, as she got ready for a dancing date.

"First of all," Mrs. Waddell had said, looking her over from head to foot with a sort of grudging approval, "you must be a lady. That is the first thing we demand of our



"I'm going, I tell you! I'm going and I'm going to see something of life! I'm going to earn money and get some clothes! I'm going to be like other girls!"

girls. And after that—well, you know how the boys are when they're spending money for an evening's entertainment. They want something for it. Not too much," she hastened to add cautiously. "Not too much, you know, but just sort of make 'em feel they're not quite a stranger to you!"

And Diana had turned, as the older, rather severe-looking woman had left her, to face a row of snickering girls, her own countenance serious with her effort to digest the oddly conflicting suggestions that had been given her.

"Hope you don't take that bitter old pill seriously," one of the girls said, approaching her and touching her arm with a friendly hand. "The only thing her line is good for is to feed it to the goldfishes in the bowl in the parlor!"

"Yeah, kiddie, you have to learn to roll your own here. If you can't, you just naturally get trampled to death! This is one of them little moments in life where every guy is on his own and the more dames he can strangle and call it dancing the better time he has!"

"Take it slow and easy, girly, in the beginning," said the first girl, in whose rather hardened face Diana thought she found something kind. "You have to have your own line for keeping them in their place but still coming with their dime dance tickets. My advice to a girl in this racket is keep her hand out all the time—take anything she can get and promise everything, but don't ever give anything!"

And Diana looked up into Stell's eyes, her own wide with wonder. That was a new philosophy. She had always believed that one gave as one took.

But, as the days slipped by, even though she had never quite been

able to apply it, she had come to understand Stell's counsel.

And she smiled a little as the girls began to call her "Honey" from that night on—honey because she seemed to have taken the advice of the chaperon seriously and was a lady even at times when she might have fared better if she hadn't been.

CHAPTER II.

"Hi, Honey, you're two matches late and if you'd have gotten such a sparring partner as I did, you'd ought to be oozing thanks even if it isn't Thanksgiving!"

Stell looked up from the feet she had been rubbing as Diana appeared in the door of the dressing room. Stell had rather kept Diana under her wing from the start.

Diana sat down beside her and thrust her slim feet into the bright green slippers.

She held them out for inspection after the change had been made.

A little scream came from near by. "Green! For the love of Mike!" came in a shrill voice from a hostess whose super-slim figure was swathed in a sheath of seductive orchid satin. "Green! Can't I ever get away from it!"

"Shut up!" hissed her companion. "Put another record on or turn off the music. Can I help it that I've only got one shimmy clean and that one's green? Can I, I'm asking you?"

"You'd better come with your dress on over your skin then!" the first girl said, while Diana, who seemed to have started the rumpus with her brilliantly green shoes stared in amazement. "Didn't I tell you not to wear that green shimmy to-night, the night them swell guys promised to come back? Didn't I? You might 'a' known you'd queer

the whole works with wearing that green shimmy!"

"Aw—razzberries! How'd they know I was going to wear a green shimmy? They're just standing us up in the good old-fashioned way! You might 'a' known a couple of swell guys like that wouldn't fall for a couple of taxies!"

"Standing us up! It's that green shimmy you're wearing! Didn't I tell you that I never had no luck with my dates until I stopped ankling it around here in green underwear! The last time I got stood up I went home and tore the stuff into ribbons! Green don't mix with a dancing girl's life—take it from me who's tried it plenty!"

It was evident that there was a great deal more she could have said on the subject of men who failed to show up on the evenings that one wore green, but the orchestra outside started another number and the hostess in orchid was one of those girls who lost no opportunities.

"What's the matter, baby?" Stell asked of the other girl. "Have a date that didn't show up?"

"Yeah, two swell boys that was here last night and said they'd come to-night and they haven't and she thinks I hoodooed the date wearing a green shimmy."

Stell laughed.

"Gee, if I had a dime for all the guys that have said they would come back—and didn't!" It came from her reminiscently and a little bit humorously. "It ain't the green—it's just an old Spanish custom!"

Diana stared at the green pumps in a sort of startled fascination. They were new, it was the first night that she had worn them, and Philomene had chosen that night for her rebellion.

Diana knew it was coming sooner or later—that rebellion. But that it

should have come on the night she chose to initiate the green pumps!

And then that silly quarrel revealing that dancing girls do, some of them, have a superstition against green!

"Never mind, Honey. Green's no curse. I never wear it because it makes me look yellow as saffron, and look at the breaks I get! Why, no decent man would hand 'em to his mother-in-law!" Stell had seemed to sense Diana's thought.

And then Mrs. Waddell bustled into the room:

"Girls! Girls! Not that it makes any difference to me, but I should think you'd want to be on the floor earning what money you can!"

"Yeah? You're awfully interested in our future, aren't you?" Stell asked as she rose lazily and walked with Diana out toward the place where the hostesses stood and smiled their invitations.

Diana shrank a little as she moved toward the girls, their backs toward her, swaying with the rhythm of the music, and she knew what their faces looked like—eager invitations that had "a dime a dance" written pitifully on them; some of them still so young and new at the game that the words were only faintly discernible, but others whose faces were marked deeply and cruelly with the words.

Diana stood only a moment in the swaying row. Then:

"How about a whirl, baby?" A hand touched her arm and she looked up into a strange face. "Guess you're dancing, ain't you?"

"If you have a ticket," she said, shuddering a little at the thought that all that stood between her and the touch of any man's hands was a ten-cent dance ticket.

She felt an arm encircle her and they moved over the floor in time

with the music. At least the man could dance. Sometimes she wasn't that fortunate.

"Yeah?" The man looked down at her questioningly.

Diana had started and his arm, encircling her, felt it. She was looking over his shoulder, unmindful of him, toward a figure ahead of her, a slim figure in ivory satin with bright red pumps.

She looked at the man dancing with the girl in ivory. She recognized him as a man she had danced with and instinctively shrank from and her heart started uncomfortably. They turned then, the couple ahead of her, and Philomene's bright face laughed into hers over the shoulder of her partner.

So she had come there just as she had said she would. And there was nothing Diana could do about it then. She couldn't make a scene—the management might put them both out then. Anyway Philomene was intent on rebellion.

In a way Diana understood. Philomene at seventeen couldn't see life as she, Diana, could at twenty.

Three years made such a difference in a girl's point of view.

And anyway, going on as a day pupil to the private school uptown, where Diana had graduated and had hoped to have Philomene finish must have been hard when she couldn't join any of the things the girls did and couldn't be dressed as they dressed any more.

Diana rushed away from her partner as soon as the music stopped only to be interrupted by Mrs. Waddell halfway across the floor.

"Diana!"—in sharp reproof. "Is that the way a lady leaves a gentleman after a dance!"

"No," Diana replied, scarcely glancing at the older woman as her eyes roved over the floor. "But

some men make you forget that you can be a lady!"

"Diana!" Grasping the girl's arm as she would have slipped past. "You know one of the first things we demand is that our girls treat the gentlemen who come here as gentlemen! Now to make up for this, please walk across the floor like a lady and remember to wait and leave your next partner lingeringly, as you would if he was a friend of yours. These lonely men can't help it that they're strangers here, and you're here to make them feel at home!"

"They feel at home all right," murmured Diana under her breath as she walked away with the proper restraint.

"Yeah," it was Stell beside her who had caught the last of the chaperon's conversation and Diana's undertone reply. "All the time, Honey—you said it! They feel at home and away from home until sometimes I'd like to handcuff 'em!"

Diana glanced at her with a smile but her eyes sought the "advertising" rail and then roved away again as they failed to find the figure they searched for.

She went into the dressing room hoping that Philomene had gone in there, but only the familiar faces of the other hostesses looked back at her from the few chairs.

"Say, boy! But wasn't that last one I had a swell one, and what a line he had! Talked like he'd lived on Park Avenue all his life. Said he'd see me again, but you know how it is, they never do! Not the ones you could like. Say, I'd give up my chance at heaven for a guy like that!"

"What do you know about heaven, Mazie, anyway?" a girl asked.

"What do I know about heaven?"

she mused, dreamy-eyed, with her head on one side. "Well, my idea of heaven would be a place where some swell guy would dance and make love to you all the while and bring you orchids and swell perfume and take you out for swell eats afterward."

The crowd laughed and then Diana heard Stell say in a matter-of-fact voice:

"And my idea of heaven would be a place where there weren't any men that thought they knew how to dance. Say"—she gripped Diana's arm as they went out onto the floor again—"see that little fat guy over there? The one with the misplaced eyebrow? Yeah? Well, when he dies I hope he's turned into one of those dancing figures on a phonograph record! That'd be getting even with him—just dance, dance, dance, with no place to sit down and no chance of stopping. He's shoved so many tickets into my hands to-night that I could kill him!"

And the music started again and a ticket was thrust into Diana's hand and she found herself moving automatically out among the dancers, a strange arm around her, another strange face close to hers.

She scarcely looked at the man she danced with, so intent was she on finding that slimly rounded figure in ivory satin.

She scanned each couple as they passed, but Philomene was not to be seen.

"Gee, baby, it ain't so hot as all that—warm night, I admit, but not that bad."

Diana looked at the man she was dancing with, realizing suddenly that he had been talking.

"I—I don't understand," she said.

"No? Well, I'm a wow at putting things into words that folks can understand. I meant, baby, that even

if it is warm I don't need no refrigerating plant dancing around with me. I'd stayed home and had Tony bring me in a dime's worth of ice if it'd been that bad. Been cheaper than this paying ten cents for a whirl around the room."

Diana tried to laugh.

"Have I been chilling you?" she asked, good-naturedly.

"Chilling me? That ain't the word for it! And you look as if a man would need asbestos armor when he danced with you. You're sure one of them babies that looks hot and keeps cool—cold, if you're asking me! Or maybe you don't like my style?"

Once more Diana laughed and there was a real warmth in it. He wasn't such a bad sort after all, at least he didn't seem to feel that his ten cents had given him a quitclaim deed.

"I think your style is perfect!" she said, and was a little bit glad that she had granted him that much when she saw how it went to his head.

His chin went up a bit and there was a light of new courage in his eyes that covered something pathetic that she had seen there when she first looked at him. It had been worth it—that effort to be nice to him.

And after that came a man with a sympathetic line, who had just a trace of the attitude of slummer. Diana hated them most. They were always a little bit elderly and almost prosperous and in their sly way tried to take liberties that the young men who frankly wanted to date her for after the dance didn't.

"Must be hard for a little girl like you to dance here all night." It was the usual beginning, in that tone that attempted a sort of fatherly interest.



Diana looked up, her young face a trace bitter. "You're not going to pull the same old stuff that they all do, are you?" she asked.

"I love it," was Diana's stock, enthusiastic answer for such men.

It took the wind out of her partner's sails a bit and left him groping

for words, since his usual line had been made useless.

And Diana always took that moment to smile impishly up at them.

"But you don't look like the kind of a girl one expects to find in a place like this," the man said, puffing a little at the gait that she led him.

"You've heard that old one about

looks sometimes being deceiving?" Diana asked sweetly. "Well, this is one instance when that holds true."

And so finding himself and his sympathetic impulses completely blocked he devoted himself to wordlessly keeping up with Diana's pace. She liked to give them a run for their money, as she called it, when they tried to patronize her.

Once a little bit later she caught sight of Philomene just as a dance was beginning and the same youth had come back to her, a ticket in his hand and a triumphant smile on his face.

"Philomene!" Diana started to say, touching the younger girl's shoulder.

Philomene looked up at her for a startled moment, slipped away from her hand and said in a low but perfectly clear voice:

"Don't you dare say anything to me! I'll make a scene if you do and then you'll lose your job, too!"

Not waiting for an answer she turned toward the youth who stood, arms outstretched, slipped into them, and was whirled away while Diana stared.

She took the dance ticket that one of her old customers handed her and allowed herself to be led into the rhythm of the number, but her replies to the chatter of her partner were vague.

She had the panicky feeling that she had reached a crisis with Philomene; she had thought all along that she could shield her from the world as she, herself, had come to know it within the past year. But it had been foolish to think that.

She might have known—if she'd only looked into Philomene's eyes—that Philomene would have to live her own life, that no half measures would do for her. Diana had seen that in the one moment that Phil

had stared defiantly at her, while she took the dance ticket, just before she fell into motion with the suave youth who waited for her.

There was no use of saying anything more that evening—at least not at Poppyland. If she humiliated Philomene then she knew that her cause was forever lost. It would be better to wait and talk it over with her in their room.

And so Diana danced on, forcing herself to smile when her partners wisecracked, edging skillfully away when their love-making became too offensive and watching an ivory-satin-clad figure move lightly over the floor, dance after dance, with the same man.

A little ironical grin twisted the corners of her mouth when finally, after it seemed that a century of dances had passed and a million men gyrated in it, the orchestra broke into the strains of "Home Sweet Home."

She looked out over the floor.

A hundred and twenty-five hostesses—that was what the ad said—and not one of them who looked as if she knew the meaning of home.

"Home Sweet Home"—a shabby little hall room somewhere with faded paper or splotched paint on the walls, a chair that creaked under even a fragile weight and a white iron bed, a window that looked out on smoke-stained walls or dirty back yards and a landlady whose heart had long since become unfamiliar with the word "pity."

That was what is meant to the hostesses, the dime-a-dance girls—Diana could see it in their faces and wondered with a little feeling of fright if it was written so plainly in her own.

In the dressing room she searched for Philomene and found her.

"You're coming home with me?"

"Yes," replied the young girl as she adjusted her hat.

They walked quietly across town, the short distance to their room. It was a strained sort of quietness that somehow hurt Diana. It was terrible—when there were only the two of them left—to have that strange, tense feeling between them.

Philomene waited until she got into the room that they shared and the door had closed behind them before she spoke.

"Yes, I came home with you to-night, but that doesn't mean I'm always going to do it!" She waited for the effect of it and then when Diana said nothing: "It doesn't mean that I'm going to do it to-morrow night!"

Diana turned sharply.

"You're not going there to-morrow night, Phil!" she protested. "Wasn't one night enough? Haven't you had enough of it, Phil?"

"Enough? Why, I'm just beginning! I loved it! I could have kept on the rest of the night!" And then with a little more feeling: "I don't see why you should make such a fuss over it! It's great mingling with all those people! Dressing up in the glad rags and stepping out like a Park Avenue dame! What's the use of our trying to be high hat now? And, anyway, some of those boys are all right, even if they haven't got Park Avenue accents and do use double negatives once in a while!"

"Oh, I know a lot of them are honest and good, Phil, but the trouble is picking them out when you're just dancing with them for such a short time!"

"Honest and good!" Phil exclaimed scornfully. "Those two words never gave anybody a good time!"

"I know, but——"

"Oh, it's all right, Di, for you to talk like that," Philomene broke in,

her voice shaken with impatient feeling. "It all depends on how you look at it. If you're willing to just stand at the show window all your life and look on, why then what we've been doing is good enough. But I'm not! I want some of the things I see there! I want them and I'm going to have them! If they aren't first quality, why then I'll take seconds. Even seconds are better than living in the midst of it all and never really knowing what it's all about!"

"I know, Philomene." Diana tried to speak gently and patiently when her sister finally stopped out of sheer lack of breath. "But I've had such plans for you. My own dreams were all knocked into a cocked hat and I made up my mind yours wouldn't be. I wanted you to really live, Phil, really live with the better things."

"But they were *your* dreams for me, not mine!"

"But that young man you danced with so much——" Diana hesitated.

"Well, what about him? Oh, I know Mike isn't in the social register, but he's got a car and he's got money to spend, and he's willing to spend it doing the things I want to do and he's all right!"

"If I could only be sure of that!"

"Well, I am, even if you're not!"

"If you must do this thing, Phil, follow me into a dance hall, a ten-cent dance place, at least go slowly, watch your step." It came from Diana in a desperate tone.

"Life's too short to go slowly," Philomene replied as she crept between the sheets and turned her face to the wall.

"That's because you're young," Diana said, a tender note in her voice.

"And I'm only going to be young once!" she exclaimed sharply. Diana's tenderness was utterly lost.

And then darkness and silence enveloped the little room and veiled some of its ugliness.

They went together to Poppyland the next evening. There was no use of Diana's rebelling against Philomene's going. She might better give in gracefully and at least try to keep Philomene's friendship.

The young man Philomene had called "Mike" was there almost at the beginning of the first number. Diana cringed when she saw the expression in his eyes as they rested on Philomene's young loveliness; there was something searing about it, something that frightened her.

"Gee!" It was Stell, sitting beside Diana, changing her shoes between dances. "But ain't the world full of love-making men! They get in your hair!"

"Yeah, and if one of them thought you was taking it seriously they'd run a mile!"—from another hostess.

"Ain't it the truth!" Stell grunted impersonally, shoving a weary foot into a gaudy pump.

It was the same weary round of dancing to croon songs and blue songs and dancing with men who hummed snatches of them and called you "baby" and "kiddie" and "girlie" and held you tightly and stepped on your toes and asked you:

"How about a little bite after the place closes?" with an insinuating smile as though "a little bite" might cover a multitude of suggestions.

And Diana's answer was always the same:

"I always go straight home from here," with a smile. "I'm one of those girls who needs her beauty sleep!"

"Not if I'm seeing straight, you don't!" came from a particularly persistent youth. "You could miss 'em all the rest of your life and still put it all over the rest of these frails."

Diana laughed.

"Thanks for the kind words, sir!"

Diana murmured lightly.

"Meaning you'll go, baby?"

"No," still smiling and shaking her head.

"Aw, come on! Be a sport! Feed your old-fashioned ideas to the canary and let me show you what a guy means when he says he'd like to take a lady out! Come on!"

"You make it awfully tempting, but still I'm sticking to the same answer!"

"Gee, girlie, don't you know how to say 'yes'?"

"Well, I guess that's just one thing I've never learned to do. Sorry!"

"I'm a straight guy—I am," the man persisted, his rather pugnacious face almost droll in his seriousness. "I treat a lady right—no funny tricks, if that's what you're thinking of."

"I believe you, and I wasn't thinking of that." Diana was glad that she could still smile over some of their quaint ways. "But not this time."

He picked up the thought eagerly. "But maybe some other time?"

He left her with a "See you again, kid!" and Diana watched him walk away, thinking the while that he'd probably make a good, steady husband for some girl. That was what his pugnacious face and work-marked hands looked like—a man who would set up a sturdy little home somewhere and keep it in the ordinary comforts with the very brawn and muscle of his hands.

And then the music started again and a dance ticket was thrust into her hands and an arm encircled her.

Diana looked up a little bit startled at the technic of her new partner and then stared wondering if she dared believe her eyes.

"Go ahead, say it!" The tall

blond man laughed down at her. "It's been so long since I've heard it and my name always sounded like music on your lovely lips! Say it, Diana!"

"Waldemar! But—but how do you happen to be here?"

"Because you are."

"How did you know?"

"Remember the waiter at the restaurant uptown that we used to go to a lot—you and Herbert and sometimes I—when I was lucky? He told me he'd seen you here. Must be he saw the loneliness in my eyes. Why did you do it, Diana? Run away from me, I mean without giving me the ghost of a clue to finding you?"

Diana's eyes saddened, and she closed them for a moment. She felt Waldemar Larsen's arm tighten a little and there was something protective about the gesture that would have turned the mist in her eyes to frank tears if she hadn't struggled so desperately against it.

It was too black an hour to think of—the one when her father left her with that terrible, tangled mass of affairs and of which there was nothing left, not even a friend, when everything was finally straightened out. Or at least it had seemed there wasn't a friend at the time.

After the way Herbert had slipped out of her life she hadn't dared trust any of her other friends—she had denied herself to them, the few who did try to see her—and had left the big smart apartment on Park Avenue immediately, with no forwarding address.

And Waldemar—tall, light-haired, gray-eyed aristocrat who had taken

her out a few times—exotic, orchid-decorated occasions they had been—him least of all had she expected to want to keep her friendship when she had to leave the distinguished setting of her father's wealth for ordinary labor.

"Why, Diana?" He held her tenderly close and for the moment, Diana forgot the moving mass of humanity around her, the blare of the drums and saxophone and the sound of uncultivated voices.

"Because—well——" She wondered where all the poise that her years of social training had given her had suddenly vanished to. She felt like a little girl, taken completely off her guard. "Because—I thought you'd rather not know—every one would rather not know."

She said it finally the thing that she had hoped her pride would keep her from saying.

"But why did you ask me that!"

She followed it up with the quick, almost angry question. "It wasn't fair of you! It was cruel!"

She hated him in that moment, for it seemed that he had come and questioned her merely to gloat over her and perhaps patronize her as some of the other men who came there did.

The music stopped. Diana started to leave Larsen but he caught her hand.

"I think there's a place over here where we can sit down," he said and led her toward the tables in a secluded corner.

He drew out a chair for her. It was the first time that had been done for her in weeks and Diana realized then how most men failed in the



little niceties in their contacts with women.

The little courtesy almost started the tears again though she silently called herself a fool for being so "soft."

Larsen sat down beside her.

"I can't stay here with you, you know," she said as he seemed to settle down to talk to her, forgetful of everything else, "unless you order something. It's one of the rules of the place."

Larsen didn't smile and Diana was grateful for that. He motioned to a waiter and ordered.

"I asked you that question, Diana," he said very earnestly at length, "because I wanted you to give me the chance to tell you that nothing that could happen to you would make me want to lose touch with you or"—he hesitated and when he spoke again his voice held an added note of something that was almost tremulous tenderness—"could change my feeling for you."

Diana's dark eyes seemed not comprehending as they looked at Larsen.

"I know," he said gently, "you don't understand. The only reason I'd never said anything about this before was because you seemed to be so attached to—Herbert." He paused over the name and uttered it as if it was an unpleasant duty. "As an older brother of his I didn't want to seem to be competing with him—it didn't seem quite the decent thing to do and then, I didn't want to unsettle your mind if you both cared—though perhaps I'm taking too much upon myself to even think that I could have. Anyhow now, with the field clear and I've found you again, what are you going to say to me, Diana—that you might love me some time? That I have a little chance with you?"

LS-2B

There was something unreal about the situation, something that Diana couldn't make seem like anything more than a strange dream. Handsome Waldemar Larsen, Herbert's dashing older brother, the man that half the girls in her own set had secretly adored, seeking her out and talking to her about love in a cheap, noisy dance hall!

It was too fantastic to be real!

Herbert who had sworn to love her, had when he learned of her misfortune deserted her. And then Waldemar, who had only taken her out for dinner a few times, had followed her into an ordinary dance hall to talk to her of love! There was something unbelievable about it, too incongruous!

The music had stopped while she sat there thinking and then began again.

Diana started from her chair involuntarily.

"Oh, I've got to be out there. We can't sit out more than one dance."

"Let's dance it then?" Larsen was on his feet, tall, distinguished in that oddly assorted crowd.

"Have you a ticket?" Diana asked.

"I'm sorry I haven't. I'll get some!"

He moved toward the ticket booth and Diana was immediately claimed. She watched his head and shoulders over the shoulder of her partner as they moved away. She could have said she had the dance, but it was against the rules; one was supposed to dance with the first man who presented a ticket. There was no waiting for favored partners.

She could have broken the rule just once, but she was glad that she hadn't. This dancing with one of the ordinary patrons would bring her back to earth again.

"I hoped you'd wait for me." Larsen appeared at her side when the



music stopped before her partner left her. "I suppose, though, that's another rule of the place. Diana, this must be hard for you—dancing all evening. I wish——"

Diana looked up, her young face a trace bitter. "You're not going to pull the same old stuff that they all do, are you?" she asked, her voice

echoing the bitterness that lay in her eyes for a moment. "'A nice little girl like you shouldn't have to work so hard,' and all that?"

And for the moment she felt akin to Stell and all the other older, hard-faced, hard-voiced hostesses.

"Diana!" Larsen's voice broke into her thought. "I was only going



Phil's cool, crystal-clear voice cut through the thick atmosphere of the place like a sharp knife. "I'm willing to share anything in the world but a man!"

to tell you that I'd do anything to take you away from such hard work."

The music started and he handed her a ticket.

"I suppose I must do this, dance with you and tire you more or sit over there crowded in with other people at the tables and try to talk through all of this rabble." His arm encircled her again with that gently tender motion and Diana felt her heart lift in spite of her effort to pretend that he was only another dance partner.

"I know that I can't expect you to love me, to even pretend that you do, Diana," Larsen was talking again, seemingly forgetful of the crowd that surged around them." And I've always felt that I wanted the girl I married to be madly in love with me, to love me as much as a woman can love—besides that, I couldn't imagine you marrying any man without loving him intensely. I wouldn't want to think of you in any other way, Diana—it would hurt me so." He hesitated long before continuing. "Will you try to understand me if I make a suggestion?"

"What were you going to suggest?" Diana asked in a very low tone. Something in the atmosphere frightened her, she felt as if she was trembling on the brink of a chasm.

"That you let me take you away from here"—and as he felt her start he held her closer and spoke a trace more gently—"let me take you away from here and give you a year of life such as you've been accustomed to—during that time you'll either have learned to love me or know that you never can, and you can have prepared in some way for going on alone. Or perhaps you'll have found some one else, though Heaven grant that you don't. My wish, Diana, is that you be happy—

so either way that it broke for me, I'd feel that it had been a good investment."

"You want me to be happy?" The words came from her with a strange trembling harshness.

"More than anything else I know of, Diana."

"You want me to be happy and then you suggest such a thing as that!" There were tears in her eyes and tears in her voice—tears of hurt anger. "You want me to be happy and then you suggest something what would damn the rest of my days! A quaint way you have of trying to spread sunshine!"

"Diana, you've misunderstood me!" His voice was a shocked protest.

They had stopped dancing and drawn to a corner of the hall, forced to it by the very strength of their emotions. Diana stood looking up at the tall, handsome blond giant, her dark eyes flashing fire.

"Misunderstood you! You're just like all of the others—suggesting things to me now that you wouldn't dare suggest to one of the girls still in your own set. Do you think that just because a girl has to work she's on the bargain counter? Do you think that earning her own living destroys a girl's ideals and makes her willing to trade everything for a few luxuries? Oh, I hate you for this, Waldemar Larsen! And the thing that makes it hurt most"—her voice had broken and softened to a tremulous, pain-tipped thing—"is that it should be you who should do this!"

"Diana——" But the name was all he could say. He dared not trust his voice with further words.

He wanted to take her hands, to take her in his arms, to hold her close until the very strength of his emotion forced her to believe that his motive had not been what she

had mistaken it for, but he couldn't. He could only stand in the midst of all those people, with a noise-mad orchestra blaring away in back of him and try to beg her with wholly inadequate words to understand him.

"Diana," he started to speak again, "you mustn't——"

"Don't speak to me!" she said. "I could have stood it from any one else but you! I—I——"

And then she rushed away from him toward the refuge of the dressing room. He couldn't follow her there.

There was a group of hostesses in the little, smoke-blue room. Kitty Belair, who had been away for a vacation, was talking:

"Oh, boy, the swell places we went to!" came in her husky voice. "Dance? Say we danced every night!"

A shrill laugh rose from the other girls.

"That's good!" one of the girls said. "Kitty goes on a vacation and spends it dancing! Like the taxi driver that goes touring for a rest!"

And Diana found herself joining the laugh with a voice that was frighteningly high, hysterical.

Stell coming in at the moment looked at her sharply.

"What's eating you?" she asked, searching the girl's face. "That sounded to me like a heartache goin' to the masquerade ball all dressed up like a great big laugh."

"Oh, Stell!" There was a high note of hysteria in the words as they came on the crest of that hollow, haunting laughter. "Life's such a funny thing, isn't it?"

Stell stared at her a moment. Another dance was starting outside and Diana heard the soft swishing of feet. There was something ghostly about it.

"Well, some folks can see the joke and some can't. Those that can are lucky." It came dryly from Stell. She was watching Diana closely.

"Yes—yes! Those that can are lucky!"

Stell, unmindful of the calling dance music gripped Diana's shoulders and held her so that she could look straight into her eyes.

"What's wrong with you?" she asked. "I don't know much about you, you came in here like a breath from the Ritz and you've taken it on the chin like a good sport and never peeped a word, but if there's something now that anybody can help you with or a pain that spilling it will ease up, why I'm here to listen. Anything I can do——"

But whatever Stell would have gone on and said was cut short by the sharp voice of Mrs. Waddell:

"Girls! Girls! Why aren't you out on the floor? Out there this minute! That's what you're here for!"

"For the love of Mike," Stell turned impatiently to the older woman, "haven't you got any heart in you at all?"

"Stell!"—in prim reproof. "Out on the floor before I report you to the management! And you, too, Diana!"

Diana looked at the woman as if she might have answered and then seemed to think better of it. She started toward the door to the ballroom. She might as well dance. What difference did it make? What difference did anything make anyhow?

But though she tried to force herself to believe that nothing did matter she knew that something did—a great deal. She knew, with a sudden frightening and blinding force that Waldemar Larsen mattered a great deal.

She was glad that Mrs. Waddell

had come along and with her abrupt order had stayed any confession that she might have made to Stell, that might have come from her trembling, aching heart. She might have, in a mad moment, told Stell what had happened—that the only man in the world had put a humiliating valuation on her.

It was better that no one knew. And so she walked out into the ball-room too numbed to even look up when a hand touched her and a ticket was thrust before her eyes.

"Diana, I've waited for you." It was Waldemar.

"Why?" she asked wearily. "Haven't you done enough?"

She saw him flinch, saw his face whiten and felt his arm move convulsively and when he spoke his voice was low with emotion:

"I seem fated to say the wrong thing. You haven't understood me, Diana. You haven't——"

"Understood you!" she broke in bitterly. "Oh, you needn't put it into any plainer words than you have! I'm a ten-cent-a-dance girl, but I can still understand plain English even when it's spoken with a Park Avenue accent!"

"Diana!" he exclaimed in gentle reproof that made her for the moment want to show him all of the tenderness of her heart. But she steeled herself. She shut her eyes and her ears to the evidences of his sincerity that she might have found about him and danced on, automatically, because he had given her a little square of pasteboard that entitled him to a certain amount of her time.

"Diana, will you let me take you home?" he asked when finally the music stopped and they stood for a moment, jostled by the crowd.

"I—I can't go until this place closes," she said, off her guard, and

so saying the thing that she really wanted to in spite of her hurt. There had been something about his arm around her, something about his nearness, something about the very tone in which he talked to her that made her feel that a few moments with him were worth almost any price that she might be asked to pay for them.

What difference what he thought of her, so long as she could be near him!

It had come to her like that—suddenly and overwhelmingly—that she loved him, that it had been him all along that she loved and not Herbert, she realized as she looked back over it that it had been at his presence, at the touch of his hand, the sound of his voice that her heart had sung to the high heavens—not Herbert's!

As she stood, emotion surging at flood tide, she felt like going into his arms, telling him to take her at his own valuation, that nothing mattered but that she had him.

It seemed to her for the moment that the world was well lost for love—so big, so overpowering was her love.

And then she heard Waldemar speaking:

"I'll wait until the place closes. I'd wait an eternity for you, Diana."

She stiffened suddenly.

"No, don't," she replied, forcing a coldness to her voice. "I—I'd rather you did not. I'd rather go home alone."

She mustn't give in, she was telling herself suddenly, panic-stricken over that momentary weakness. He'd misunderstand. He'd think it was just for the things he could do for her, he'd never understand that it was love alone, that if she didn't love him she'd rather go on dancing her youth away in that stuffy place

with men who handed her bits of pasteboard for which they had paid ten cents.

"Do you really mean that?"

"Yes."

"You don't want me to wait for you? You really don't, Diana?"

"No! Don't wait! Don't make me dance with you any more. I can't stand it!" She was eager to send him away from her lest she break down and betray her real feeling.

Larsen looked at her intently for a moment.

"Do you really dislike me that much, Diana?" he asked finally.

"I—I think I hate you!" The words were a strangled little cry on her lips. "Please—please go away!"

"Diana"—his voice weighted with a sort of aching tenderness—"why are you being so cruel? You're saying one thing with your lips and your eyes and the tone of your voice are telling me something else. I thought I knew you, but I'm beginning to wonder. Diana dear, let me wait for you and take you home. I have my car outside. We can drive a bit in the cool air and talk. You'll think differently when you get out of this crowded place. No one could think sanely here. I don't wonder that you're going all haywire because—well, just because I want to help you. Let me wait for you."

Diana looked at him. His frank gray eyes met her dark ones with open sincerity. She put out her hands—a pathetically appealing little gesture that seemed for the moment to be giving him everything.

And then, just as he would have taken them, she drew them back sharply and stared away. Philomene had just passed in the arms of the man she called Mike.

There had been something so sinister in the possessiveness with which the man held and looked down at

Phil's sweet young beauty that Diana shivered. She forgot herself, her own love, the handsome man standing near her and watched Phil with a sort of fascination until her lovely blond head was out of sight.

Then:

"No! No!" she cried in a panic-stricken, breathless voice, "don't wait for me! Please don't! I'd—I'd rather you didn't."

She had the feeling that she must be free to do what little she could to protect Philomene. And Walmemar mustn't know that—he mustn't know that Phil was playing with fire, he mustn't be able to carry that back to her old set.

Larsen looked at her intently as if trying vainly to understand her. A moment before she had seemed on the verge of softening, of giving him the chance he begged for, and then suddenly she had changed again.

"Please, please go! Don't stand there staring at me like that! Can't you see that I want you to leave me?" There was an odd hysterical note in her voice. "I—I—"

Larsen turned and followed the direction of her gaze, wondering if something had happened that had upset her, but all he could see was a mass of people moving, each with his own idea of rhythm, to the measure of the music. He couldn't see, didn't know of, the slim little figure in ivory satin that slipped lightly over the floor in the sinister arms of a man called Mike.

Finally he spoke:

"I'll go." He waited long and then went on: "But I'm coming back. I'm going to be here, Diana, when you want me. I think you will some time. I can't believe that love such as mine can be entirely one-sided. I'll go now, because I haven't the right to intrude on your life any longer, but I'll come back again and

again until your eyes as well as your lips tell me that it's useless."

He moved away through the crowd and left her standing alone. Her hand went out in an involuntary gesture of appeal, his name lay on her lips, mute and suffering.

And then the music started and Diana became a dancing doll again.

CHAPTER III.

It was almost midnight when Diana next saw Phil and Mike sitting at one of the little tables, Mike bending toward Phil possessively, while they sipped their drinks.

In defiance of the rules she walked toward them, pulled out a chair and sat down at their table.

Philomene looked up, her eyes coldly questioning.

"Hello, playmates!" Diana said casually. "There's room here for another—you know the old line?" Smiling archly at Mike.

"I know another old line, too, about three being a crowd," said Philomene pointedly.

Diana smiled at her.

"You're too young, sweet child, to know all those old gags!" And then, one slim hand reaching across the table to Mike, she asked: "You don't mind my being here, do you, Mike?"

Mike smiled, and a pleased flush mounted to his hair. His hand started out toward Diana's, when Phil's cool, crystal-clear voice cut through the thick atmosphere of the place like a sharp knife.

"I'm willing to share anything in the world but a man!"

Mike's hand drew back sharply. He looked at Diana and assumed a rather bored attitude.

"Lay off, kid, lay off!" he said. "You had your chance with me once and you didn't grab it. Well, now I

find my tastes running to younger frills—see?"

Philomene's lips parted in the ghost of a smile as she looked at Diana and seemed to be waiting for her to rise and go.

"Well?" she asked finally.

"Well, you want me to go, don't you?"

"Bright girl, Di, you got the idea the first time!" came pertly from Philomene. "I'll be seeing you!"

There was nothing to do but go, but Diana shivered a little as she moved away. It hurt to hear Philomene falling so easily into the jargon of the place.

Another dance was beginning. Another piece of pasteboard was thrust into her hand. Another strange arm encircled her. Another unfamiliar voice mouthed the same old line. Diana had heard it a thousand times, and her answers were automatic.

She was desperately tired when the place closed. Tired with a tiredness that came from more than just dancing. It was a sort of soul weariness.

And yet she forced herself to hurry a way from her last partner, rush across the intervening space, to the dressing room, where, as she supposed she would, she found Philomene hurrying into street slippers and hat.

Her hat on and adjusted to the exact angle that seemed to please her, Philomene stepped to the mirror, dusted her young face with powder and touched up her lips with brilliant color.

"You needn't look at me like that," she said as she caught Diana's eyes on her.

"Like what? Anyhow, I don't see why you need to make up so carefully just to walk home with me."

Phil laughed shortly.

"For once in your life, baby, you've guessed wrong. I'm not going home with you!" She had turned and was looking defiantly at Diana.

"What do you mean—not coming home with me?"

"Just that. I said it and you heard it, and that's all there is to it."

"Phil—why, you're kidding!"

"No, I'm not. Mike's got his car here and I'm taking a breath of air in it!" She was moving toward the door.

"Philomene, you're not!" came in panicky protest from Diana. "Not to-night, Philomene!"

"To-night's the night!"

Philomene called back as she hurried out of the room and out of the building to the street below where, at the curb, near a shiny new car, Mike stood waiting, that smile on his face that had so often made Diana shudder.

She kept abreast of the hurrying Philomene who turned sharply as she reached the car, the door of which Mike had opened.

"Good night, Di!" she said sharply, and slipped into the car and would have slammed the door behind her but for the quick movement of the older girl that took her in immediately behind the white-clad figure of Philomene.

"You're not saying good night to me!" Diana exclaimed. "If you're going jaunting, I'm going with you!"

Philomene gasped in surprise. She was glimpsing a new Diana.

Mike, who had come around to the driver's side, stood a moment staring at his unexpected cargo.

"You needn't look at me like that," Diana said sharply. "I'm going with you. Wherever you're go-

ing to take my sister—you can take me!"

"Boloney and you know it, Di—no matter how much you spice it! Mike, you are going to drive to a certain palatial residence on West Twenty-fifth Street where two sisters by the name of Earle live and park one of them there and then continue the night's mission of joy with the other."

Mike got in and took the wheel.

"Whatever you say goes, baby," he said as he put the car into gear and pulled away from the curb.

"You're one little bimbo that knows how to take orders, Mike."

"Gee! Who wouldn't when a swell dame like you gives 'em!"

"This is the place," from Philomene as the car slowed in front of the shabby house in which she and Diana shared a shabbier room.

She looked at Diana who made no attempt to get out of the car.

"Come on, Di, be a sport," Philomene coaxed. "You know we'd take you along and be glad to if you'd let Mike get you a fellow. But you won't. You wouldn't even try to have a good time, you'd crab the party, so let us get on our way before the dawn finds us with a wasted night on our hands."

"Phil, it's too late for you to start out," Diana pleaded. "You're dead tired from dancing all evening—you can't stand to burn the candle at both ends." And then, appealing to Mike: "Don't you see what I mean—that she's too young to dance all evening and then go partying?"

Mike shrugged his shoulders.



"Well, as I see it, you're only young once!" he said.

"And how!"—from Philomene. "I'm going to be flamingly youthful if I have anything to say about it! Get out, Di, and stop impeding my progress along the primrose path of youth or we'll hop that taxi!" Raising her voice on the last word as a cruiser passed them.

The taxi stopped, backed expertly alongside of the machine and with movements so startlingly quick that the whole thing was done before she had fairly recovered her breath, Philomene and Mike were out of the car and into the taxi, rolling away and leaving Diana alone.

Diana stared panic-stricken after the taxi. She thought she heard Phil's light laugh echo on the soft night air as the cab started toward Eighth Avenue and then she was suddenly conscious of the fact that she was chilly.

Slowly, thoughtfully, she got out of the car. She had the feeling that there should be something she could do but knew, as she faced the situation, that there was nothing.

Nothing but to wait until Philomene returned. Wait through the remaining hours of darkness.

That was what she had sent Waldemar away for. That was how much she had accomplished with it. Fool that she was! And he might never come back! The thought struck terror to her heart.

She had sent him away for what seemed to her, in the shadows of that cold dawn, two silly childish reasons—first because his proposal had not measured up to what she had always been taught to expect of men and, second, because she had hoped to save Philomene from soiling and, perhaps, degrading contacts.

Walking up the stairs in the dim light of the silent shabby hall, Diana

smiled ironically at those reasons, at the utter futility of them. Foolish to still demand the standards of her old life. Of course Waldemar would regard her differently in her poverty and need than he had when she was surrounded by her father's wealth, however insecure that had been.

And as for Philomene! She had taken the bit in her teeth. And wiser and more experienced persons than she had failed when youth did that.

Diana sighed wearily as she opened the door of her lonely room and prepared for sleep.

Of course she wouldn't sleep—not with Philomene out somewhere in the city with that man she knew only as Mike.

It was dawn when finally Diana heard Philomene's soft tap on the door and rose hastily, shivering at the chill of the room, to let her in.

"Oh, Philomene!" The words came from her; a gasp of relief at seeing the younger girl safe and sound again.

"You haven't waited up for me?" Something contrite in the whispered words, contrite and yet not quite regretful, not submissive.

"Of course I couldn't sleep."

"I'm sorry, Di—really I am!" Her arms were around Diana. "Oh, no!" Reading the misunderstanding on her sister's face. "Not that! I don't mean that I'm sorry I went, I've had a swell time and I'd do it all over again! But I'm sorry I hurt you. I hated to do that. But don't you see that I just can't let life slip by without snatching some of the pastry off the tray? I've been satisfied with the crumbs long enough—now I want some of the real feast! I know I'm greedy! But I can't help it. I don't want to muss with you, but why can't you see it my way? We've had a bad break—things hap-

pening the way they did, but I don't see why that should rob us of everything."

"I know," Diana said as she watched Phil slip easily out of her clothing, "but somehow I can't make it seem right to give up the ideas and ideals that we've always had."

"But trying to hang onto them now is like eating caviar sandwiches with a tin fork! The way we've been going on we just haven't been anything! We haven't been able to have the things of the old life and we haven't taken the things poor girls can enjoy. We've been silly, Di!"

"I don't know that I could ever love Mike, but he's—well, to just live always without any romance, without any man ever telling you you're the most beautiful thing in the world and the most desirable, I can't! If I can't hear it with a Park Avenue accent then I'll take it as I can get it!"

"I've got to, Di! I wasn't built the way you are. I want all of the time and everything that's coming to a woman!"

"Don't, Phil!" Diana begged, with a feeling of helplessness at the young passion in her sister's voice. "You frighten me when you talk that way."

"But it's only life, Di, and life shouldn't frighten you. I think every girl has a right to expect everything from life that she wants, and I think she's a fool if she doesn't get it."

"Not exactly, Phil," Diana said, still in that pleading voice. "You know there's a price tag attached to everything. And"—with a little ironical grin twisting her soft young lips—"the strange part of it is that the poorer a girl is the bigger the price that she's asked."

Phil didn't answer immediately. She slipped into her pajama jacket. Then:

"Well, if that's the code, what good will it do us—just you and me—to buck it?" she asked in a very small voice.

"Philomene!" And Diana seemed to be shuddering away from something.

"I know, Di," came from the younger girl, "but you have to play the game the way it's dealt."

And Philomene slipped between the sheets and pulled the long cord that put out the light that had shed its dim radiance in the room, so revealing its pitiable bareness.

There was silence for a long time in the dim room. Not, however, the silence of sleeping, or relaxed minds, rather that tense electric silence pregnant with a thousand unanswerable questions. It was Diana who finally spoke:

"No, you don't," she said, in a queer stifled voice. "You don't have to play the game the way it's dealt. You can ask for a new deal! You can force a new deal! And you can make your own rules and stick to them!"

And Diana knew that was what she'd have to do. No use of trying to fool herself. Rich or poor—it made no difference. And so after all, she thought, perhaps it was better that she had sent Waldemar Larsen away.

She was awake long before Philomene was. She was dressing at the hideous oak dresser when a sparkling circlet of jewels, lying near Philomene's gloves and handkerchief, attracted her attention.

She picked up the bracelet, a delicate lovely thing that looked as if it must be genuine emeralds and platinum, so fine was the workmanship. She turned and looked at Philomene's face against the pillow.

The thought crossed Diana's mind

that she was too lovely to be touched by anything coarse and terrible, too exquisitely lovely to be made liable to soiling accusations.

And yet that bracelet—if it meant nothing more it meant that Mike must have touched her fair skin in putting it on her arm.

For Diana knew instinctively that it must have come from Mike. There would be no other way for Philomene to have gotten it. All of their jewels had gone to pay the debts that came in the wake of their father's ruination—anyway, Philomene had never had a bracelet like that.

She was still examining the lovely thing when Philomene opened her eyes, yawned lazily and then asked:

"Isn't that gorgeous?"

"It's very lovely," Diana said slowly. "But where did you get it?"

"Now where do you suppose? Such things don't drop from the heavens into little girls' laps! Why, from Mike, of course! And you certainly can't criticize his taste. Have you ever seen anything more genteel and refined?"

"No, I haven't," Diana's answer came slowly, thoughtfully. "That's just what I was wondering about. Somehow it doesn't look like Mike at all. It isn't the sort of thing I'd expect him to pick out—and it looks real—genuine, I mean."

"Real! Do you think he'd hand me anything that wasn't! Mike's no piker! And I'm no piker's baby, I'd have you know, sister mine!"

"But—but—— Why, Phil, if it's real it cost loads of money!"

"Of course it did! And why shouldn't it? Aren't I worth it?"

"Of course you are, but where does he get his money to spend?"

"Ask me another!"

"Don't you see, dear, that——" Diana stopped speaking. She stood

staring at the jeweled bauble, scarcely daring to acknowledge even to herself the thought that kept persistently pressing against her mind.

Philomene laughed lightly and flipped her small, beautifully white feet out of bed.

"I should worry how he gets the money. As long as he has it—that's all that matters to me!"

Diana said nothing, just looked at the younger girl.

"And don't look at me like that! You make me feel as if I'd stolen the thing!" She was up, had slipped the jeweled circlet over her hand and stood with it held up to the light, the emeralds reflecting it in a thousand brilliantly green points.

Their daylight hours—the few that were left after their late breakfast—were busy ones. There were always stockings and underthings to wash and to mend, dresses required constant attention under the wear and tear of night dancing.

As Diana sat down with needle and thread and began drawing together with a skillful hand the fine lace of a black dress, she thought gratefully of the still rather-well-stocked wardrobe that she had—most of which had known far different nights of dancing.

Her dresses were the marvel, the admiration and sometimes the envy of the other hostesses. They were showing the strain of their hard wear however. Soon she'd have to begin making her small weekly earnings stretch to cover the price of a new gown or two.

Diana wore beige that night, beige lace that fluttered softly around her ankles above her smart black moire pumps. She had a knack for dressing and knew well the value of smart slippers.

Philomene walked with her to the dance hall.

"You know, when I look at you, as you are to-night," said the younger girl, "I mean, so aloof, so removed from the hackneyed world the rest of us live in, I can understand your not understanding me. I think you could live without the things most women need. Flaming youth is just a phrase to you, isn't it? You're so cool, so aloof."

"I—I don't know," Diana's answer came in a very low tone. She was thinking of when she had danced with Waldemar Larsen, of how she had trembled at the touch of his hand, thrilled at his nearness.

Aloof? When she had felt like the veriest piece of inflammable driftwood at the mercy of a storm of emotions!

Aloof!

She started a little at the first voice that spoke to her when the music began.

"Don't tell me that you weren't expecting me?"

She looked up into Larsen's eyes. She knew then that she hadn't really expected him but that she would have been miserable if he had not appeared.

Larsen took the first three of her dances. They talked little and he said nothing about the previous evening.

There was a new, intangible, but quite definite change in the atmosphere of the dressing room when she went there for a moment's rest between numbers.

There was a peculiar, hard brittle quality in the atmosphere, a something that Diana couldn't help sensing and recognizing as a sort of animosity.

"How come you've tagged the big blond giant?" There was a nasty edge in Theda Thayer's voice. Theda was the self-appointed vamp of the ballroom.

Diana merely glanced her way and didn't trouble to answer.

"Say, I'm talking to you!" Theda said, her voice a trace vicious. "Ladies answer when they're spoken to!"

"Aw, can it, Theda!" from Stell. "Honey could give you spades and aces and then catch up with you and show you how to eat peas with your fork, if it's being a lady you're talking about!"

"Shut up, you! Where do you come in on this? I'm talking to the original honey jar of Poppyland—there ain't a cuss in an evening, girls!—but I want to know what she's doing copping off the handsomest man that's shown up around here in a month of blue Sundays! Tell me that!"

"He's a friend of mine, if that helps you any," Diana said, her tone disdainfully cool.

"A friend of yours—so that's the gag! A friend of yours! Well, suppose you make him a friend of mine, too? I'll take an introduction to that boy any day in the week."

Diana stared in amazement. She knew that Theda was a sort of queen bee of the hostesses, but never before had she tried to interfere with Diana.

"No one's aching to give you an introduction to him," Diana said coldly.

"No? They aren't? Well, you want to! Hear that? When I make up my mind I'd just as soon meet a man, why I'd just as soon meet him, and I'm not saying that for nothing!"

"You won't meet him through me." There was an air of poised finality about Diana's words.

Theda approached her and looked at her with hard, unpleasant eyes:

"'Fraid of me, are you? Well, I'll give you reason to be."

"Lay off, Theda, lay off!" Stell put in. "Haven't you got any eyes in your head? That guy ain't your class. Why, he wouldn't know what you were talking about!"

Theda turned sharply on Stell:

"Silence the mouth organ, kid! Silence it or I'll cut you loose from everything you ever owned!"

There was a sharp intake of breath from the group of girls gathered around. The atmosphere was tense with their fear of the tiger woman Theda became when she was enraged.

Stell laughed easily.

"A barking dog never bites, girls," she said. "That's a good thing to remember."

And then the music of another number started and the crowd melted away.

Diana was glad that it was Walde-mar's hand that held the ticket that she took as she reached the hostess inclosure.

"Oh, you!" came from her in a little gasp.

"Yes," looking down at her quickly his face lighting, "and it sounded as if you were glad! Were you, Diana?"

"I—I—why, of course! I'm always glad when I get a good dancer instead of a bad one!"

"I didn't mean quite that." Some of the eagerness was gone from his voice and his face. "I meant, were you glad to see me? Just a little glad, Diana?"

She looked up at him, something timid in her lovely dark eyes. "And if I said I was?" she asked.

"I think I'd be almost too happy."

They danced for a while in silence. It was Larsen who spoke finally:

"You haven't finished the thought we were on." He waited for her reply but when none came, when she only smiled up at him: "Are you

afraid to commit yourself, Diana, beautiful? I'm not asking you to make any promises now. I don't know that I'd even want any because there couldn't be, yet, the sort of thing I'd want back of a promise the woman who is to love me would make—now. I'd want you to know before you promised me anything, Diana, that I always would be the one man in the world you would want, could love with your whole heart and soul.

"That's a luxury I've always promised myself," he went on, seemingly forgetful of the moving mass around them, of the buzz of voices and the swish of feet against the blare of the orchestra. "I've had everything else—everything money can buy has been mine all my life. That is something money can't buy, and I want it. I want the luxury of that, of a love so completely mine that I am enough.

"That's why I don't want your answer now, Diana. I'm not asking for it. I'm not asking you to say anything more than that you'll let me make things easier for you, take you away from this work that is too hard for you, give you some of the things you've been accustomed to so that you can decide."

He stopped speaking and Diana, whose heart had been aching with a sort of tender happiness felt a sudden chill. He'd gone all over it again and he'd not asked her to marry him. He'd even closed the way for her to say the things that she might have, that she had always cared for him and not Herbert.

She turned away, the struggle of her emotions, going on within her, making her face a chill mask.

Larsen looked down at her a moment before he spoke:

"I'm sorry, Diana. You won't understand me. You're refusing to

and that's what's breaking my heart. I'd be willing to wait for you—as long as you asked. I hoped you'd understand."

And once more after he was gone she wished in a mad panic that she had shamelessly thrown herself at him, that she had told him, from the depths of her eager heart that he need not wait, that there need be no waiting.

Philomene went out with Mike again when the dance hall closed and so Diana walked home alone, her brain busy with torturing thoughts.

A thousand questions, maddening doubts assailed her until finally in a sort of numbed, feelingless bitterness she came to the conclusion

again that she was glad she had not betrayed her real feelings to Walde-mar Larsen; his proposal had been an offense, back of the fragile, unreal explanation that he had given her was a decidedly unworthy purpose.

She laughed bitterly, and the drab walls of her drab room echoed the sound hollowly. He wanted to wait until he was sure she really loved him; he didn't want to hurry her decision! Fine ideal talk but not the way of men! Men took what they wanted with greedy, eager hands.

They didn't wait for the fulfilling of some ideal—not men! She had learned that with bitter thoroughness during her days at Poppyland.

TO BE CONTINUED.

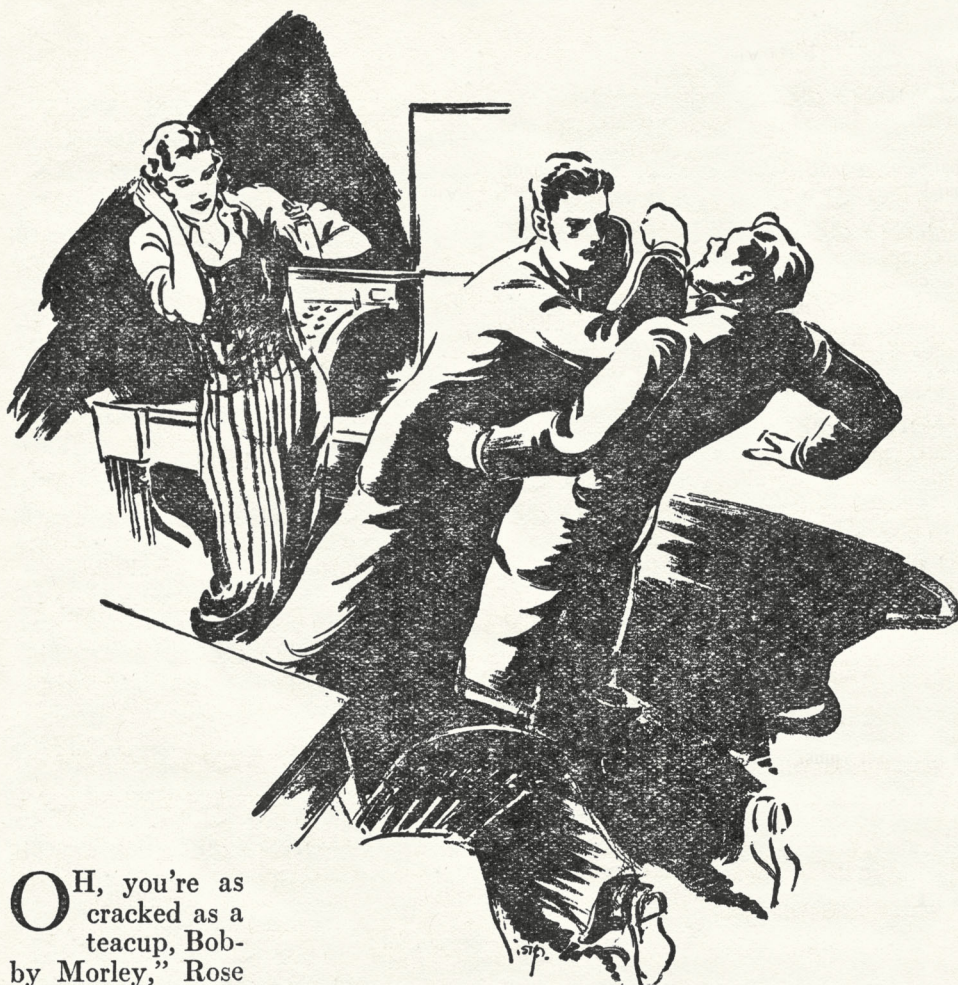


YOUR MOODS

WHEN you frown, there is no sun, lass,
Moon and stars are dead,
And the winds are shedding tears, lass,
For their gladness fled.

When you smile, there are no clouds, lass,
Drifting through the sky,
And the winds are singing songs, lass,
As they wander by.

EDGAR DANIEL KRAMER.



OH, you're as cracked as a teacup, Bobby Morley," Rose asserted. "Who ever heard of a girl's doing such a thing!"

Thora, too, eyed the offender coldly. "I won't be able to look a soul in the face," she said.

Bobby—christened Roberta—gazed at her two sisters defiantly.

"Well, I'm sick and tired of our owing everybody in town. You can talk about not being able to look a person in the face. How about the way things are now?"

Wanted— A Man!

By
Dorothy Ainsworth

Rose shrugged. "Every one knows that father didn't leave us anything when he died."

"Meaning you expect the merchants of Freeton to support us indefinitely," Bobby interpreted. "Well, that's out of the picture. The papers are signed, and I am now the

owner of a filling station that I intend to operate myself."

"Where did you get the money?" Rose demanded.

"Keith drove me over to Libertyville, and Mr. Merritt in the bank there loaned me the money on a note Keith indorsed."

"I should have thought it would have been cheaper for Keith to marry you," Thora said spitefully. "The upkeep would be considerably less than on a filling station!"

"Your error," Bobby replied. Very deftly, she shaped meat balls between the palms of her hands.

"Hamburger!" groaned Rose, standing in the doorway between the kitchen and dining room. "That's the third time you've fed us that this week!"

"Well, the oftener you get your boy friends to patronize my filling station, the oftener we'll eat steak," Bobby told her cheerfully.

"You can see me asking Ralph Parker to drive around and get a tank of gas from my little sister, can't you?" Thora inquired furiously. "It just isn't being done!"

"Discard your bustle, darling!" advised Bobby. "This is 1931, you know!"

She did the dishes alone that night. It was Rose's turn to wash them, and Thora's to dry, but they were going to a dance in Libertyville with the Parker twins, Ralph and Royal. Bobby was going too, but much later, after Keith had closed his store.

She watched her sisters leave, her soft little mouth set in a straight line. The silk underwear Rose was wearing, her flowered chiffon dress, the perfume Thora had used so lavishly were all unpaid for. And there was the bill for the hot-water heater, the new porch swing Rose had insisted they must buy, the bill they owed Kogan, the butcher. Bobby wondered uneasily how much was charged against them at Bartlett's general store. Keith had

assumed the responsibility there after the death of his father, the owner. Nothing was ever said about the size of their bill, but to her it assumed nightmarish proportions.

Then, there was the filling station. It hadn't cost a great deal because it wasn't much of a building, but it made the biggest block in the pyramid of obligations that faced her. Bobby sighed unhappily.

Simultaneously with their father's sudden death eleven months before, all income had stopped. There had been a will dividing his possessions equally among the three girls, but it was found that there was not much to divide. If it could have been done, the sisters would have sold the house, but there was not even a prospect of a sale.

Freeton, where they lived, was the post-office address for the large summer resorts at near-by lakes, but on its own merits, it was only a sleepy little town that catnapped seven months of the year in order to stay wide awake for the five that constituted the tourist season.

And it was on the tourist season that Bobby was depending. The filling station she had purchased faced a highway that unrolled like a gigantic ribbon through four States, and dignified the town of Freeton by showing it a pin prick of a place on the road map.

It was nine fifteen when Keith Bartlett called for Bobby in his shabby old car. He was a big fellow, long in the legs and broad in the shoulders. His face was young and eager, lighted by eyes amazingly blue, and topped with brown hair that glistened from vigorous brushing.

Scooping up her coat from a chair in the hallway, Bobby ran to meet him.

"You're late!" she accused. "I'd begun to think you'd ditched me for a blonde!"

Keith grinned. "Not a chance. Old Mrs. Fennit came in just before closing time."

"Wanting to be shown everything in the store, as usual," Bobby supplemented. "And big-hearted you trotted out the entire stock, I suppose!"

"Well, after all, that's what I have a store for," he pointed out reasonably. "She's an old tartar, but she's a good customer."

"Being a good customer means paying one's bills, doesn't it?" Bobby asked slowly, turning her face away from him. "Well—maybe some day I'll be on that list, too."

"Say, what's the matter with you?" Keith demanded, cupping her chin in one big hand. "To hear you talk, you'd think you were just one jump ahead of the sheriff."

"Don't!" said Bobby. "Don't joke about it, please! You know—every one in this tiny place knows—what we owe. Oh, Keith, I've just got to make a success of that filling station!"

The old car roared noisily.

"Sure you will," young Bartlett shouted reassuringly.

Bobby slid down in the seat until her head rested against the back of it.

"Maybe some rich man will fall for my fatal charms this summer. You know it's always happening in books."

"He'd better not," Keith replied. "You're my girl!"

"Why am I?" Bobby wheedled. "Why have you bothered to be nice to me for two whole years?"

"Well," said Keith judicially, "I like brown hair—particularly when it's short and curly. I like brown eyes. I like—well, I like you on gen-

eral principles. I think you're swell!"

"Honestly?" Bobby twisted in the seat until her face was very close to his.

"Yep!" affirmed young Bartlett, looking straight ahead.

Bobby smothered a sigh, and drew her small self into a dignified, upright position.

"Let's not go to the dance," she said. "Let's just drive instead."

"O. K. with me."

The new owner of the filling station stamped her foot. It wasn't a very big foot, and besides, the engine was making so much noise that Keith did not hear her.

"You make me so mad!" Bobby said furiously. "Why do you always have to give in to me? Why don't you go to the dance to-night—and make me like it? You're spoiling me; that's what you're doing!"

"I like to spoil you!" Keith told her.

"But it isn't good for me," she insisted. "People shouldn't have their own way all of the time!"

"I guess it would take a lot of pampering to spoil you."

"Nonsense!" said Bobby. "What I need is some one to dictate to me ever so often! I'd love to dance if you want to."

But they did not go to Libertyville. Instead, they drove for an hour, the soft, scented air touching their faces lightly.

Later, sitting in the new porch swing, with Keith's blue coat sleeve brushing her bare arm, Bobby played the now old game of wondering how it would seem to have him draw her roughly into his arms, to kiss her until she was breathless. Long before, she had decided that was what she wanted more than anything else in the world. She

knew Rose and Thora never would believe her if she told them that Keith had never tried to kiss her. She didn't want to believe it herself.

But to-night, when their immediate world was drenched in moonlight, and the air was heavy with the fragrance of climbing roses, to-night when she wanted Keith's kisses so badly, surely it would be different.

Once she would have sworn that he made a move as though to possess himself of one of her hands that she left conveniently near him, but after that, it seemed to Bobby that he made rather a point of keeping his hands clasped about his knee as he sat with his long legs crossed. Despairingly, she took him into the house and fed him lemonade and some molasses cookies she had baked that day.

"Might as well fill up on them," Keith said. "They'll probably be the last ones you'll be making for some time. I sure am crazy about molasses cookies. And we can't go fishing any more or have picnics, and that means I'll have to do without deviled eggs. I wish I had thought of that before I signed the note for the filling station!"

Bobby pursed her lips provocatively.

"It's payable on demand," she pointed out. "All you have to do is to conspire with Mr. Merritt at the bank, and come dashing up here on two wheels demanding payment. And wouldn't I love to see you do that—or demand anything else, so far as that goes!"

"Not much danger," he grinned.

"No," said Bobby wearily. "I guess there isn't."

After he had gone she set the alarm clock for six the next morning, and undressed slowly. She

heard Rose and Thora when they came home from the dance; she heard the hum of cars on the highway. They would be going past the filling station—her filling station!

She supposed she should be glad that she had this opportunity of paying off the family debts, but her heart wasn't glad. She wondered if she would be Keith's girl only until such a time as he saw some one he liked better, some one who could wear crisp organdie dresses instead of overalls, some one fresh and dainty, instead of grease-soiled and tired. Surely, if Keith had cared at all he wouldn't have permitted her to carry through her plan.

For a week Bobby worked with the man from whom she had bought the filling station—seven back-breaking days, during which time she learned to work the gas pumps, to unscrew stubborn radiator caps, and drain crank cases.

She dressed in blue-and-white-striped denim overalls that revealed a V of soft white throat. Hatless, her brown curls blew in becoming disarray. Generally there was a smudge of grease on cheek or chin, but Bobby was so pretty that she wore it almost as a beauty patch.

Business was brisk, regardless of the fact that the tourist season was only beginning. Every car owner in Freeton roused himself long enough to invest in a tankful of gas. And wives accompanying their husbands gazed with thin-lipped disapproval at Bobby's lithe figure and pert, flushed face.

Keith was her best customer.

"You must drain the gas out of the tank," she accused. "It just isn't possible for one car to eat up so much."

"You act as a tonic on its appetite," he teased. "The old bus is so full of pep these days I have to put

on the brakes when I'm going uphill!"

"Just put that in writing," said Bobby briskly, polishing the windshield. "It will make a lovely testimonial. Beginning next week I'm closing up shop at ten o'clock every night. You might take me out for a ride so I'll be convinced."

Keith fidgeted with the windshield wiper.

"I won't be here next week," he told her. "I've got to go to Chicago."

"Chicago!" Bobby said blankly.

"It's something I can't talk about—yet," he said awkwardly.

"You went to college there, didn't you?" Bobby inquired, sudden fear pinching her heart. "I—I suppose you have lots of friends in Chicago."

That really didn't call for an an-



It was Rose's turn to wash the dishes, and Thora's to dry, but they were going to a dance with the Parker twins. Bobby watched her sisters leave, her soft little mouth set in a straight line.

swer, but the fear pinched harder when Keith made none. Instead he said: "I guess I need two quarts of oil."

"You got two yesterday," she reminded him. "On your way, little boy. You're blocking traffic!"

She had been too young for Keith to notice her when he went away to college; she was only twenty now. Bobby didn't know much about the four years he had spent there. But his college was a coeducational school; there must have been girls whom Keith had liked awfully well.

He sent her a post card from Chicago and one letter, both so impersonal that almost any one could have written them. It was because of that that Bobby felt justified in making a date with Dan Carter for the first night Keith would be home.

When a girl went with one boy for two years in as small a place as Freeton, she might as well be in quarantine so far as other masculine attention was concerned. But Dan Carter was a stranger. Bobby's sister, Rose, had flirted with him at a dance, and then become panicky when he had come to call the same night the Parker twins did. She shunted him to Bobby as soon as she could, an arrangement that apparently was most satisfactory to young Mr. Carter.

He was older than Keith, Bobby guessed, with shoulders as broad as the other's, but heavier. She shook herself mentally for always using Keith as a yardstick. Dan had cold gray eyes and a jutting chin. He called Bobby "sister."

"I don't like to be called 'sister,'" she told him severely.

"All right—sister." His smile was irresistible. "How about taking a little ride?"

"I'd love to! Besides, it's good for my business," she added.

"What do you mean, business?"

"I own and operate a filling station here," Bobby explained with pardonable pride. "That's why I've only just gotten home. I work every night until ten o'clock."

"Guess I've been passing up a good thing," Dan commented. "I've been fueling my bus in Libertyville or Claymont."

His car was a roadster, black or dark blue—Bobby couldn't tell which—and it sported an Illinois license. Illinois—Chicago—she didn't want to be reminded that there was such a place! Resolutely, she turned her eyes away from the plate. She gave a little sigh of contentment as she sank into the luxuriously cushioned seat. Fascinated, she watched the speedometer climb—sixty—seventy.

They were passing Keith's store now, and it seemed to her that the darkened windows stared at her like reproachful eyes.

"Pretty good-sized place for a hick town," Dan remarked, indicating Bartlett's store with a jerk of his head. "What kind of lay-out have they got?"

"It's a general store," Bobby explained. "They carry everything from groceries to—well, shoes and hardware."

"Take in much money?"

"They do a bigger business than any store in Libertyville or Claymont," she said loyally.

"Funny thing, their not being a bank in this burg," Dan commented.

"We use the one at Libertyville," Bobby said a bit stiffly. "It's open Saturday nights until nine o'clock. Keith always goes over then."

"Keith?" Dan repeated.

Bobby could feel herself blushing in the dark.

"Keith Bartlett, the owner of the store we were just speaking of," she

explained. "Are—are you staying at one of the lakes?"

Dan made a vague motion toward the west. "I found a shack over there that was for rent, and I'm handy with the frying pan."

"Going to be here long?"

"That, sister," said Dan, "will depend on a lot of things."

They drove until Bobby said regretfully that they must be getting back, but before they returned to the Morley house she had promised to drive with him on Sunday night. Deliberately, she chose that time because Keith would be back.

Dan was among her customers the next morning.

"That's what I like, sister—service with a smile. Make it six gallons of gas and a couple of quarts of oil. I'll take care of the radiator myself."

Bobby scurried about busily.

"Ought to be raking in the money here pretty soon. Good location," Dan remarked.

"It had better be good," said Bobby grimly. "I'm not doing this for my health!"

Her long lashes made little fans on her pink cheeks as she glanced down at the money holder that was fastened to her belt. Expertly, she extracted pennies and quarters for change.

"Keep it," said Dan. The motor purred softly as he started it.

"I—I'd rather not," Bobby stammered. "Really, I'd rather not."

"It's a case of what I want—not what you want, sister," he called as the car swooped down the driveway.

She gazed after him with a mixture of wrath and amusement. Sister indeed, after she had told him not to call her that! And tipping her when she hadn't wanted to accept

it! She wished that Keith would show a little of that spirit.

That was Thursday, and Keith wouldn't be back until Sunday. Bobby wondered if he would care when he found that she had made a date for that night. She hoped he would; she hoped it would hurt him as his going to Chicago had hurt her. He hadn't explained; neither would she. She'd just casually announce that she was going out with somebody else.

Bobby did not see Dan again that week. He was combining business with pleasure, he said; there were some men he had to get in touch with. She thought his work was auditing for businesses too small to employ a bookkeeper regularly.

She wouldn't have believed that any one could be as tired as she was at night. Her arms ached from carrying water to thirsty radiators, and her back felt as if it were unhinged at every vertebra from filling greedy gas tanks.

Bobby was glad that there were other cars crowding behind Keith's when he drove into the filling station on Sunday. Her hands shook so that she fumbled the change for the customer ahead of him.

"Hey, Bobby!" he greeted her, swinging his long legs over the side of the car without the formality of opening the door. "I've sure got a lot to tell you!"

"Well, start effervescing," she said airily.

A car behind Keith's tooted impatiently. "But you'll have to make it snappy," she added.

"Fill up the tank, and I'll tell you to-night. Be about right if I call for you a little before ten?"

Bobby kept her eyes on the gas hose.

"I'm dated for to-night."

Keith walked about his car, and

kicked the tires to see if they had enough air.

"That makes it a little different, doesn't it?" he said slowly. "Well, I'll be seeing you."

Of course, it was because she was so tired that she cried that night as she dressed to go out with Dan. Any girl in Freeton, or Libertyville, too, for that matter, would be tickled to death to have a chance to ride in Dan's gorgeous car, she told herself fiercely. She'd wear the yellow dress, the one Keith liked so well! But it was her old green linen she slipped into, and Bobby didn't even bother to take a last look in the mirror before she went downstairs to meet Dan.

Things weren't the same between Bobby and Keith after that. Bobby felt that the fabric of their friendship had been torn, and that by clutching at the fragments, the pattern of the happy days that had gone before became distorted and blurred.

Conscientiously, he bought gas from her; that was good business on his part, in view of the note, she thought. And when she wasn't too tired, they drove nights after she closed the filling station—nights, that is, when she wasn't with Dan.

Keith made no further reference to his Chicago trip, and Bobby was too proud to ask. They talked mostly about the epidemic of robberies that had laid hold on near-by towns.

She learned that the name of the girl in Chicago was Alicia. There had been a letter addressed to an Alicia Gilton, stamped for mailing, in the pocket of the old raincoat Keith had thrown about her shoulders one night when she got out of his car.

It was a fat letter. Alone in her room, Bobby had propped it up on

her dressing table, and stared at it with burning eyes. Freeton had no newspaper, but one of these days the Libertyville weekly would probably be printing an announcement of his engagement—his and Alicia's. And he would be marrying her and bringing her to Freeton to live. Forever and ever Bobby would have to see them together.

She covered her face with shaking fingers. And what would become of her? If she made a success of this filling station, she could start another and another. But a chain of filling stations wasn't what she wanted.

She knew she should start putting him out of her life. "I'll begin next week," she told herself, but week after week she continued to ride beside him in the shabby old car.

The tourist season was on. Old touring cars, smart roadsters, and swanky limousines passed in review before the little filling station. They were not always passing, either, because the large tin can in which Bobby kept her money grew gratifyingly heavy. Keith deposited its contents every Saturday night when he drove over to Libertyville with his.

To safeguard Bobby against possible loss by fire or robbery between deposits, Keith made her a hiding place for the can beneath the floor of the filling station, in the ground itself.

It was inevitable, of course, that Keith should meet Dan, and it was evident from the start that there would be no love lost between them. The first scrimmage was won by young Bartlett when Dan announced that he would drive over to Libertyville with Bobby's weekly deposit.

"No, thanks," said Keith curtly,

and the manner in which his jaw stiffened secretly delighted Bobby.

"It's O. K. with you if I do, isn't it, sister?" Dan inquired. Deliberately, he started to climb out of his car.

"I'll thank you to keep entirely out of Miss Morley's affairs," Keith all but snatched the can of money from her hand.

"Keith!" Bobby's eyes were like cold distant stars. "Indorsing that note didn't give you property rights, you know!"

But young Bartlett simply swung into his car, set the can on the floor, slammed the door, and almost stripped the gears before he made the highway.

"I'll apologize for him," Bobby said, smiling winningly up into Dan's eyes as she leaned her elbows on the lowered window of his car.

"I can't use an apology, but I can use this!" His lips pressed hotly against hers. Furiously, she jerked free of him.

"Don't ever try that again!" she said.

"No?" He reached out and pulled her toward him, kissing her a second time.

"I hate you!" blazed Bobby, scrubbing her mouth with the back of her hand. "Go away!"

It was an hour later, just as she was shutting up shop, that a last-minute customer told her Keith had been held up and knocked unconscious on his way to the Libertyville bank.

Bobby never knew whether she put five or ten gallons of gas in the car. Her fingers were so numb that she fumbled with the radiator cap, and splashed water all over the hood. Why hadn't she allowed Dan to go with the money?—she kept asking herself. Dan didn't mean a thing in her life, but Keith did!

"Pretty tough on young Bartlett," the man said. "It's bad enough getting knocked on the head without losing your money too. It's been pretty hard sledding for the youngster, with his father leaving things the way he did when he died. Guess Keith needs every penny these days."

But Bobby wasn't listening. As soon as she made change she ran into the tiny office and began ringing the party-line telephone—two long, one short: Bartlett's number.

Keith answered, and Bobby gave a little sob of relief.

"Some one said—you were hurt," she began.

"Only a swell bump on the head, the size of an ostrich egg," he said. "What gives me a real pain is the fact that he got away with the money. But don't worry about yours—I'm responsible for it."

"Don't be silly," Bobby told him sharply. "I didn't call about the money, anyway. I called to see how you were."

"Nice of you." His voice sounded queer, she thought. "But I'm all right. I'll be over the first thing tomorrow morning to patch the roof of your office as I'd planned. We're likely to get rain any time now."

There didn't seem to be anything else to say after that, so she hung up slowly. And Keith, laden with a bunch of shingles and a can of nails, made light of the hold-up the next day.

On Monday, Dan came as usual for gas, bringing the largest box of candy Bobby had ever seen.

"A peace offering," he said with a broad smile. "Understand, I said a peace offering, not an apology. I'll kiss you again, when you get over being mad about the last one."

Having found that announcing that there were no kisses to be had



"Oh, Bobby darling, whatever happened to us this summer? Why, you're my girl! You'll always be my girl, won't you?"

merely created a demand, Bobby decided to keep discreetly silent on the subject.

Business was so brisk during that week that she had little time for chats with either Keith or Dan, and she was too tired at night to go driving with either of them. The tin can grew so heavy that Keith had to change the silver to paper money. Bobby should have been happy about it; she had been able to pay off all outstanding debts except the note. But there was a

dreadful lost look in her eyes. She couldn't always sleep nights because her thoughts were a merry-go-round of memories.

On Friday when Dan's car whisked down the driveway from the filling station to the main road she noted dully that it bore a Wisconsin license plate. She stared after it so long that a waiting customer patiently repeated: "Five gallons, please."

Bobby meant to think about it that night, but she was kidnaped by

sleep the minute her head touched the pillow, and the next day when Dan stopped, there were two cars pressing behind him.

"After what happened last week I guess you'll be glad to let me bank for you to-night," he said. "You might pass along the word to Bartlett."

Bobby started to protest, but Dan had gone.

At noon there was a lull in business that she welcomed, but she had just bitten into a limp lettuce sandwich when a car stopped in the driveway. Despite the heat, the elderly driver walked briskly toward the little office where she was sitting. Bobby met him in the doorway. He was in his shirt sleeves, and there was a star pinned to his suspenders.

"I'm Beyers, sheriff of Mott County," he said without preamble. "Been makin' the rounds of the fillin' stations and leavin' these circulars. They're descriptions of men wanted. If any of them happen along for gas, notice which way they head for when they leave, and then telephone the closest town. If they're goin' east, call the constable at Libertyville, and if it's west, you can get me at Claymont."

Bobby nodded wearily, and drew a deep breath.

"I hope they pass me up. Are—are any of them dangerous?"

"All these birds," explained the sheriff, "are kid-glove crooks. Don't go in for murder, if that's what you mean."

"Nice day, ain't it?" he added, as he climbed into his car, but Bobby did not answer him, for staring up at her from the topmost circular was the picture of Dan Carter.

Beneath it, she read:

Dan Forester, alias Art Timms, alias Toddy Brent, wanted for robbery. Gray

eyes, black hair, six feet two in height, weight one hundred and ninety-five pounds. Five hundred dollars reward.

Dan Carter a thief! The eyes in the picture stared boldly into hers as though to ask: "What are you going to do about it?"

Abruptly, Bobby sat down on a wooden box. Just what was she going to do?—she asked herself. To have called back the sheriff and told him would have been like betraying a friend, Bobby decided, because she had come to think of Dan as that. But Dan was a thief—and he had kissed her! She rubbed her lips with the back of her hand.

And that night when Dan drove up, she was still uncertain as to what she should do.

"You're as hard to see as a bank president," he greeted her. "I've been driving back and forth for fifteen minutes, waiting for the grand rush to be over. That bank closes at nine, doesn't it?"

"Dan," Bobby heard herself say suddenly, "why did your car have a Wisconsin license on it the other day?"

His eyes grew hard and searching. He laughed harshly.

"Now I'll ask you one," he said. "Got a kiss for me, sister?"

"No!" flashed Bobby, and as he reached for her she ran into the little office. With frightened eyes she watched him climb out of his car and follow her, saw him switch off the outer lights so passing cars would think the station closed. She struck at him as his hand touched her shoulder; it caught him squarely on the cheek. Roughly he seized her in his arms. She tried to scream, but his lips against hers prevented it. Again and again he kissed her.

"You thief!" she threw at him when he finally released her. "I know all about you, Dan Forester,

alias Art Timms, alias Toddy Brent!"

"Interesting," he said. "Then you know I'm crazy about you—that you're heading for the East with me."

"I'd as soon travel with a snake!" Bobby said passionately.

Dan shrugged. "Well, I just thought you might enjoy spending some of your own money. Hand it over!"

Bobby wet dry lips. "You mean—you'd take it—after our being friends?"

He laughed sardonically. "This is business!"

"I haven't got the money," she lied. "Keith came for it early."

Dan's eyes became gray swords that stabbed her. The palms of her hands were wet with fear.

"You're the man who slugged him last Saturday night!" she whispered. "You're the one who's been——"

The telephone rang one long, one short, and another long—her number. For possibly a minute his eyes held hers.

"I'll answer," Dan said shortly.

The conversation was brief. "All right," was his only remark. Deliberately, he hung up the receiver.

"That," he said, "was my good friend, Bartlett. He wanted me to tell you that he'll be right over for the money."

Bobby's hand flew to her throat with a frightened gesture.

"Trying to kid me, were you?" Dan inquired, walking toward her. "Well, hand over the money, and make it snappy, sister!"

Bobby thought desperately. She wondered if a scream could be heard out on the highway. One was forming in her throat when Dan made a menacing motion toward a pocket sagging with the weight of a gun.

"Hurry! No stalling!" he directed.

"In—in the tin can behind those wooden cases—on the floor."

He sent the boxes crashing, and with his foot scattered a small pile of shingles. Stooping, he scooped up the can.

"It's full of nails!" he exclaimed sharply.

"Just on the top—to fool people," Bobby said nervously. "The money is—farther down."

He tilted the can, and dumped its contents into the palm of his hand. He saw bright, new shingle nails; nothing else. Before the look in his eyes Bobby retreated to the far wall.

"Keith!" she screamed. "Keith!"

There was the roar of a car, the grinding of brakes hastily applied, and then young Bartlett was in the tiny office. With a rush, Dan was on him, and Keith, caught off his guard, was swung half around. Bobby cried out when Dan's fist shot out for Keith's jaw.

It was a primitive fight and a short one. It ended suddenly when Keith landed a slashing right-handed punch on the point of Dan's chin. Fascinated, Bobby watched his knees sag and then crumple.

"Tie him up!" she cried. "I wasn't going to collect the reward, but I've changed my mind."

And when Keith only stared at her in bewilderment, Bobby stamped her foot.

"He's wanted by the police! He's the man who slugged you last week—the one who has been holding up every one around here. Tie him up!"

Keith promptly sat on Dan. "There's a rope in the back of my car," he said. "Get it while I watch him!"

Between them they bound his

arms and ankles. Dan tugged impotently as he struggled back to consciousness.

When the last knot had been tied, Keith caught Bobby in his arms and kissed her. He kissed her right eye, the smudge of grease beneath the left one, her pert nose, her willing lips. They were breath-taking, demanding kisses.

"Oh, Bobby darling, whatever happened to us this summer? Why, you're my girl! You'll always be my girl, won't you?"

She began to cry, great tearing sobs. "Don't say things like that. I—I can't bear it!"

The eagerness died out of his young face. "You mean it really is over between us?" His lips were grim.

Then Bobby laughed hysterically. "There never has been anything. There never could be with—Alicia!"

"Alicia!" Keith repeated. "The only Alicia I know is Miss Gilton, Mark Smith's secretary, and she's old enough to be my mother. Just what are you talking about, darling?"

Her thoughts were a confused jumble. "But your trip to Chicago—that letter to Miss Gilton I found in your raincoat pocket——"

"Listen," interrupted Keith, gripping her hands hard. "I've been in a tight place for money. Mr. Merritt at the bank couldn't let me have all I needed—not with what dad borrowed there before he died. I'm putting in a lumberyard, you see. There's going to be a lot of building done over at Heron Lake next year.

"Well, I thought of trying Mark Smith," he continued. "He was at college with me, and he could light cigarettes with dollar bills if he cared to. It was to see him that I went to Chicago—the whole propo-

sition hinged on his decision, and I didn't want to tell you until I knew for sure that he would come across with the necessary money. If I failed—well, it just meant that I wouldn't have anything to offer you for years, darling girl. Then when everything looked rosy, I came back and found you dated with Carter!"

"Oh, you poor, blind, stupid darling," murmured Bobby, her cheek against Keith's. "He's only a man wanted by the police—you're the man wanted by me! It was because you wouldn't tell me why you were going to Chicago that I went out with him at all. And how I've hated that Alicia Gilton! You haven't told me yet why you had to write to her."

"That's an easy one," Keith said. "Mark Smith is a golf hound. Miss Gilton is the real brains of his office, and I had to send her my blue-print plans for an estimate. But don't let's talk about her; let's talk about us! Are you going to marry me, Bobby darling?"

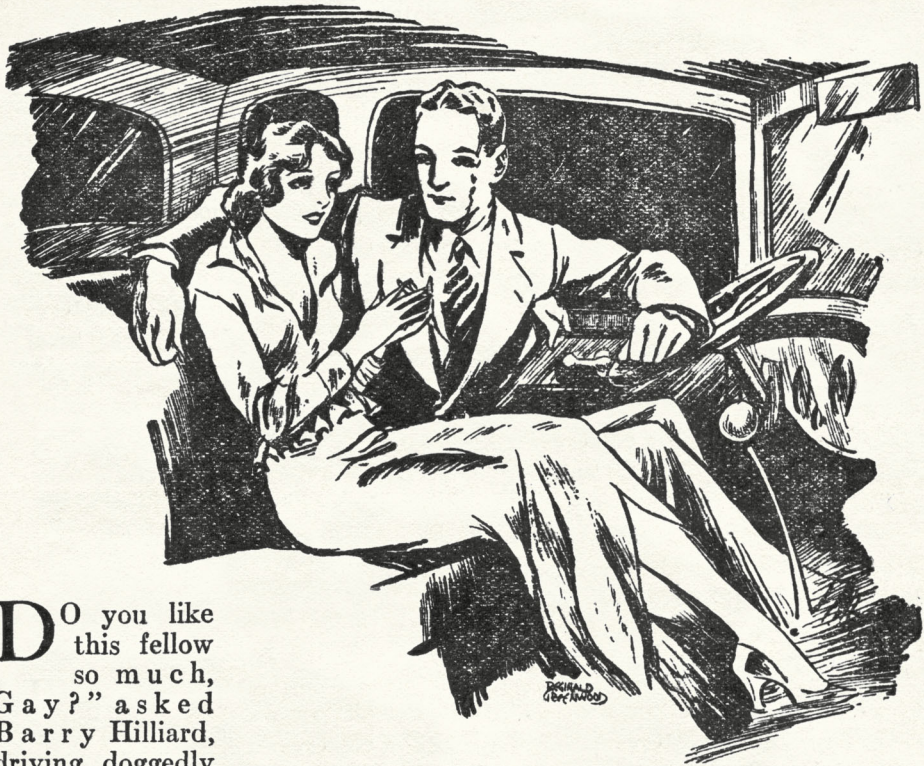
"Of course she is, you sap," Dan mocked from the floor. "Sorry I can't plug my ears! Well, the best I can do for you in the way of a wedding present is the big money that's out for me."

But Bobby had forgotten that three make a crowd. "The filling station?" she protested faintly.

"Confound the filling station!" said Keith violently. "I never did want you to run it. But your wishes have always been mine. Now the thing and its owner are going into the hands of a receiver. And as the receiver, I want to know how much stock you have on hand, Miss Morley."

"Oil?" Bobby questioned, entering into the game.

"Kisses!" corrected Keith, starting to take inventory.



DO you like this fellow so much, Gay?" asked Barry Hilliard, driving doggedly through the downpour of mountain rain.

"I'm crazy about him!" Gay wasn't looking at Barry, so she didn't see how his mouth twisted with pain as she said that.

"And is he crazy about you?" Barry asked, and just then they skidded perilously.

Gay caught onto Barry's arm to save herself from falling, and felt his muscles grow tense under her touch. Barry brought the car back to the center of the road, and Gay gave Barry's arm a little pat before she released her grasp. He was such a dear big-brother sort of person.

"Is Nicky Barrows in love with you?" Barry demanded insistently.

Fascination

By

Knight Jessee

"I can answer your first question, but not your last," said Gay with a laugh which she tried to make flippant, but which turned out to be sad. "He's crazy about me, all right. But

I'm not so sure that he's in love with me."

"Are you going to get married?" The car was barely crawling along the winding mountain road which led down to the valley, curving perilously all the way.

"You have no right to ask that." Gay set her lips in a firm little line so they wouldn't quiver.

"When you were eight, I mended your doll," said Barry, keeping his eyes strictly on the road. "The

doll's name was Coralee, and both her arms came off and she broke her nose."

"That's so," said Gay. "I remember."

"And when you were twelve, a car ran over Spot, and I set his leg when you brought him over to me. You were crying that day."

"You've always been mending things for me, haven't you, Barry?" Thinking of the past, she was totally oblivious of the agony in his blue eyes.

"When you were fifteen, I talked your Aunt Hannah into letting you go to your first dance."

"And you made her buy me my first long party dress. What a long time ago that seems!"

"Three years," answered Barry. "But what I'm getting at is that you've always told me everything. Why won't you tell me about this Nicky fellow?"

Gay hesitated. There was a little catch in her breath when she replied. "I see what you mean. But it's hard to talk about Nicky. It's like discussing religion, or—or the stars, or the glory of the sunset, or the magic of the moonlight." She was silent for a moment, thinking of last night when Nicky had held her close in his strong arms, while he whispered sweet love words against her hair. Nicky's kisses were like heady wine. They frightened yet thrilled her as nothing ever had before. They set a thousand little pulses throbbing in her throat. They made her heart go mad.

Barry gripped the steering wheel with tense fingers. "They say—Of course I don't know except by hearsay, but I've heard that Nicky's a bit——" He hesitated.

"Wild?" Gay finished for him. "I don't believe a word of it. All that talk's just jealous lies, because

Nicky's so rich, and has such a wonderful car, and is so good-looking, and—— Well, of course some silly girls would be foolish enough to fall in love with him, even if he didn't encourage them at all!"

"I see," said Barry grimly. "How does your Aunt Hannah like him?"

Gay shrugged. "Oh, you know what she's like! She can't abide him. Aunt Hannah's so awfully strict, a regular old Puritan!"

"She's brought you up, and scrimped to give you things," said Barry mildly. "She's been pretty fine to you all these years, so maybe she thinks she has a right to say a few words about your friends."

Gay sighed. "I do hate to deceive her," she said.

Barry bit down hard on his lower lip. "Are you deceiving her?" he asked in an off-hand tone.

"Yes. I hate to do it. But I meet Nicky every night down by the rustic bridge. And then we take his car and ride for miles until we come to the most wonderful spot, a place just made for lovers."

"What do you tell your aunt?" Barry's eyes were smoldering now, the color of the sea when a storm approaches.

"Please don't be cross, Barry darling, but—I tell her I've been out with you!"

"Thanks for the implied compliment." His tone wasn't so casual as he had intended it.

"Oh, you're safe, Barry. Auntie adores you. You can do no wrong. And besides, you're so old!"

"Methuselah salutes you, and with his tottering form bowed in salute, begs to remind you that twenty-six isn't such an antiquated age. By the way, how old is Nicky Barrows?"

"Nicky's just an interesting age—thirty." Gay had a way of almost

singing Nicky's name every time she pronounced it.

"Any man who's not married at thirty is either such a sad matrimonial bet that he can't find a girl who'll have him, or else he's such a cautious creature that he pulls the old chestnut about 'coming from a long line of bachelors' every time a girl gets the least bit serious," said Barry, biting down viciously on his words.

"You've only got four years leeway, Mr. Hilliard," Gay put in innocently. "Which sort of bachelor are you going to be?"

"Neither. I'm going to get married!" snapped Barry.

"Oh!" Somehow the idea of Barry's getting married seemed strange and not very pleasant.

"Can you keep a very important secret?" asked Gay slowly, wondering what sort of girl Barry would marry.

"Try me!" Barry was attending strictly to his driving.

"Nicky and I are going to elope—to-night! Aren't you surprised?" Her voice was not so assured as she would have liked it to be. She sounded like a frightened child.

Barry was silent so long that she stole a little side glance at his set face. "I thought I heard Nicky telling that cute little yellow-haired waitress down at the inn that he wasn't the marrying kind," said Barry sternly, when several minutes had gone by.

Gay's face flamed red. "We—we're going to be modern. We're going to have a trial marriage. You know, go away together, then after six months have—have the actual ceremony. Then we'll be sure. And it will be so much better than—than not being sure."

"Oh, yeah?" said Barry roughly. "I'll bet this isn't your idea, Gay,"

he added quickly. "You've told me a million times that you wanted a church wedding, with Mary Hayes as your bridesmaid, and—and me as your best man, and a reception afterward, with a wedding cake and everything. Why, this way you won't even have a chance to wear a wedding gown! And what about your grandmother's wedding veil that you've been saving all these years?"

"All that will come after six months," said Gay uncertainly.

"But suppose it turns out wrong? Then where will you be?"

"Oh, but it won't!" Gay was serene about that. "We're so crazy about each other that we'll be perfectly happy."

Barry lighted a cigarette with one hand. He puffed hard for a few moments.

"You don't approve, do you, Barry?" said Gay in a small voice. "But that's just because you don't know Nicky as I do. Why, he's everything to me! He's my knight in shining armor. He's my sun and moon and stars, with the whole of the sky thrown in for good measure! He's everything that's good and fine and true!"

Barry brought the car to a slithering stop. "Something's caught onto the rear tire," he explained briefly. "Have to get out and fix it."

"Oh, Barry, you'll get all wet!" wailed Gay. "Here; let me turn up your collar." As she did so, her slim little fingers brushed his cheek. Barry winced as though her touch had been fire.

"Nobody'll be coming along here, so we can park in the middle of the road for a few seconds."

He clambered out, and Gay could hear him fussing at the back of the car. She paid little attention. Her thoughts were all for Nicky. All

day long she went about in a sort of dream, with a vision of Nicky's bold, dark eyes smiling at her, and the feel of Nicky's compelling lips on hers in tantalizing kisses that seemed always to call for more. Darling Nicky! To-night they were going away. In six happy, glorious months she would be his bride.

Barry got back into the car. "Terrible day!" he growled, shaking off the raindrops. He started the car again.

"Seems funny to have summer rains in California," said Gay. "This is the first summer I've ever been in the high Sierras, though. Wasn't it wonderful that we could come up here? I love the mountains."

Everything seemed glorious to her. She was in love, and that colored the whole world.

"Your Aunt Hannah seems to know the country around here pretty well," suggested Barry. "She knew about this little-used dirt road that leads to the old Sparks cabin. No one else even heard of it or the fact that gooseberries grow abundantly around there."

"Aunt Hannah used to come up here years ago," answered Gay slowly. "She and mother, when they were girls. Then mother eloped with father, and because Aunt Hannah didn't like father very well, she stopped coming to Pinehurst. You see, it was Pinehurst that mother eloped from. Isn't that romantic? Just the way I'm going to elope."

Barry shifted gears with a great deal of noise. "Your mother's marriage turned out well, did it?"

Gay frowned. "I don't know. I think father deserted mother when I was a baby. But Aunt Hannah will never talk about that. Anyway, I don't remember either of them. Mother died when I was a few years old."

"My mother was always sort of a second mother to you, wasn't she. She'll miss you."

Gay opened her eyes wide. "Why should she? I'll be running in a lot, the same as always. Why do you say such a funny thing, Barry? I just couldn't stand not seeing your mother."

"Afraid you'll have to." Barry wiped the windshield. "Mother's a peach, but she's like your Aunt Hannah in spots. She's got old-fashioned ideas. And when you strike one of her prejudices, she just naturally turns to ice."

"You mean Nicky?" said Gay.

Just then the car began to cough. It gasped and jerked and gurgled and died. Barry put his foot on the starter. Nothing happened.

"What's the matter, Barry?"

"Good heavens, Gay, we're in a fix now! We're out of gas. I was sure we had almost a tankful. I can't understand it." He sighed. "Well, it's my own fault for not making sure before we started out. I'll just have to tramp the twenty miles back up the mountain."

"Can't we coast a little farther down?" asked Gay anxiously.

"Yes, but what will that get us? Your aunt said there was nothing but the Sparks cottage at the bottom, and that's been deserted so many years that no one even knows it's there. There's no chance for getting gas, nothing but gooseberries. Nope, it's up to me to tramp back."

Thunder reverberated through the mountains, an awesome sound. Then lightning illuminated the forest for one brief instant before the thunder again held sway. "Oh," cried Gay. She threw her arms about Barry's neck and clung to him. "Don't you dare go away and leave me!"

Lightning struck one of the giant trees somewhere in the depths of the forest on the mountainside. There was a horrible cracking sound.

"Let the car coast down, Barry!" sobbed Gay. "Oh, I'm so scared!"

With Gay still clinging tightly to him, Barry guided the car carefully down the remaining stretch of mountain road. They came out on a little clearing where a dilapidated log cabin stood. All around were aspen trees, a young forest of them, with their myriad leaves aquiver. Silver and green, in the rain the trees looked like quivering ghosts of agitated souls.

The car grated to a stop. "Want to chance the cabin?" asked Barry doubtfully. "It looks as if nobody had lived there for a million years."

Somewhere in the forest there was another terrifying crash.

"Yes," gasped Gay. "Anywhere, just so it's indoors!"

Barry got out and held out his arms. "I'll carry you," he said briefly.

Gay remembered how he used to carry her about when she was a little girl. Now it seemed as easy for him to lift her as it had then. She had never realized how big and strong Barry was. She looked down at the ground and saw that it was a long way off. She had always liked tall men. Nicky was rather short.

They reached the dubious shelter of the sagging porch, while the heavens flashed and seemed to split wide open and the rain came down in torrents. There was a queer singing in the topmost branches of the towering pines, as if the trees were sending a message of sorrow to one another.

"There's a nail in the door to hold it fast, but I'll get that out in a second," said Barry. "Stand close to the house so you won't get any wetter."

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He pried the door with a dripping stick. Presently the door gave way with a disheartening creak, and they went hesitatingly into the dim depths of the cabin.

A musty odor assailed Gay's nostrils. She kept tight hold of Barry's sleeve. "Kind of spooky, isn't it?" she whispered.

He nodded. There was one window in the room where they stood. The panes of glass were covered with cobwebs and the dirt of years, but Gay could see that the place was furnished with a round center table, four stiff, uncomfortable, tumble-down chairs, and a little cabinet filled with trinkets.

"Let's investigate," said Barry, with a jauntiness that Gay felt was assumed. "Maybe there's a kitchen with some dry wood so we could get a little less wet."

But instead, the room just off the living room was a bedroom. There was a bed with one leg broken, but the bed still had some musty old patchwork quilts on it. There was a bureau, obviously homemade, and a rocker. But the thing that caught Gay's eye was a child's high chair. In the high chair sat a doll, dirty and dusty, but with bright-yellow painted hair, a bright-red mouth, vividly carmine cheeks, and a debonair smile.

Gay backed out of the room. "I feel as if I were intruding," she said, unconsciously sinking her voice to a whisper.

Barry nodded. "Wonder what happened to these folks?" he asked, his tone matching hers. "Seems as if they'd just stepped out or something."

The kitchen was next to the bedroom. There was a rusty little old stove, a cupboard with one door hanging forlornly, a pile of wood, and a rusty ax.



"I won't listen for one instant to anything mean about the man I love!" She flung back her head and stared furiously at Barry.

"Hurrah!" cried Barry. He lifted off the lid on the top of the stove, and at his touch, the stove promptly sagged, one leg giving way. "Hurrah" is reserved," amended Barry.

"Why not put a stick under that side of the stove?" suggested Gay.

"Wonderful!" Barry grinned at her. "Almost what I could have thought up all by myself."

She stuck out her tongue at him. "I'll be helpful some more. You need some paper to start a fire. Now don't you?"

"Surest thing." Barry looked around. "There's an old book over on the corner of that table. How about that?"

"I sort of hate to take that," Gay answered slowly. As she turned the pages of the old book, little ~~rose~~ of dust rose. "It's a diary," she said in surprise. "Lovely writing, like copperplate, it's so regular and fine—a woman's writing I imagine. We can't use that."

Barry had been rummaging. "Here's a news paper." He glanced at the date. "1903—quite a while ago, eighteen years."

"Just as old as I am!" Gay shivered. "Hurry with that fire. I'm soaking wet."

In a surprisingly short time, Barry had the fire blazing. Gay dusted off a couple of chairs Barry brought in from the front room, and they sat companionably by the fire and listened to the storm howling outside. It didn't seem so menacing now that they were indoors. The crackle of the fire was comforting.

"Let's do something awful," suggested Gay. "Let's read that diary! My curiosity is aroused. Let's see what it says." Surreptitiously she glanced at her wrist watch. It was

just noon. It had taken them two hours to make the trip down to the cabin in the rain. It would take Nicky about an hour at the reckless rate he drove. He would telephone her house about two. Aunt Hannah permitted telephone calls as long as she was in earshot of all that went on. Aunt Hannah would tell him where Gay and Barry were, and confess that she was a little worried about them. Nicky would come as a relief party of one. There would be ample time to get home and catch the stage down to Sonora at eight. They weren't eloping in Nicky's car, because every one knew it too well. It was a special job, bright-blue with nickel trimming.

"Read the diary if you like," Barry said impatiently. "That's what you said, wasn't it? You look as if you were a million miles away in your thoughts."

Gay blushed. "Maybe I was," she admitted.

"Thinking about Nicky Barrows, I expect," Barry remarked somberly. "I suppose it wouldn't do a bit of good for me to try to tell you that the man's a cad, that he made such violent love to that little waitress up at the inn that she tried to commit suicide a week ago, when she found out about you."

"No, it wouldn't!" Gay got to her feet. Her cheeks were blazing, her brown eyes flashing. "I've listened to plenty of talk like that already, and it's all lies, I tell you. That girl at the inn, for instance! Nicky told me all about her. She had an awful case on him, just because he was polite to her, and he never encouraged her at all. People just pick on Nicky because they're jealous of him. I won't listen for one instant to anything mean about the man I love!"

She flung back her head and stared furiously at Barry. He re-

fused to be perturbed. He leaned forward and gave the fire a poke. "Better come here and get good and dry, because it's going to get hot as soon as this rain stops, and then we'll let the fire go out."

Gay relaxed. "Oh, all right," she said ungraciously, and came back to her place by the rusty little stove.

"How about the diary or whatever it is?" said Barry mildly.

Gay dusted off some of the pages and opened one of them at random. She read aloud:

"Dear diary, what could I do without you to relieve my mind and provide an out-pouring for my soul? He has been gone for five days this time, and I am terrified alone here in the forest. Baby looks a little feverish, too. That frightens me. We're so far from human habitation, so far from a doctor. What if she should get sick? What if she should die? Then I should never be able to forgive myself, for it would be all my fault for marrying a man who selfishly thinks only of himself and never of me. My sister tried to tell me that he wasn't the right sort of man for me to marry. She told me of the other woman who had a claim on him, but I foolishly thought everything was idle, jealous talk. How well I know now that it was true!"

Gay swallowed. Hastily she flipped over several pages and began to read again.

"He has gone on one of his mysterious trips again. He is with her—that other woman. I know that. But what can I do? When I tax him with it, he laughs and tells me I am a jealous fool. Perhaps I am, but a woman always knows when a man is lying to her, if only she will let her heart speak to her. I knew when I married him that he wasn't worthy, but the glamour of his love-making blinded me. I wanted to believe that he was fine, and wonderful, and true, because I loved the way his kisses bruised my lips and the manner in which his strong arms crushed me close to him."

Gay closed the book with a snap. "It isn't right to read any more of this," she said in a muffled tone.

"It's too much like spying." To her surprise she found that her eyes were misty.

"Yes. You're right," answered Barry gruffly. "She was writing with her heart's blood. I'd like to have wrung that chap's neck, wouldn't you? That husband of hers, I mean."

Gay nodded. She went over to the window and brushed away some of the dirt with a piece of newspaper. "I think the storm's letting up," she said over her shoulder.

"I'll be glad to get out," replied Barry moodily. "This place sort of gets me. It seems peopled with ghosts, if you gather what I mean."

"Unhappy ghosts!" agreed Gay with a little shiver. "Barry, don't you think we ought to burn this book? It seems terrible to have people reading it." Her voice trailed away.

Barry shook his blond head. "We don't know. Maybe she'll come back some day and want it."

"I have a feeling she died." Gay turned impatiently from the window.

"Anyhow, the book isn't ours to burn," said Barry.

"All right then. I'll take it into the front room and put it in that old cabinet there. It'll be a bit harder for some one else to find."

Gay wished that Barry would offer to come, too, but he didn't stir from his place by the fire. She forced herself to walk jauntily into the living room. She went to the cabinet and opened the little wooden drawer at the bottom. A seashell, beautifully colored, a dance program yellowed with age, a baby's rattle, and an empty perfume bottle, were on the top. As Gay slid the book into the drawer, something turned over. Gay stared at a picture, then sat down abruptly on the floor, dusty

as it was. Her legs wouldn't support her any longer. With trembling fingers she picked up the picture and looked at it. "Gabrielle Lawlor, 1912" was written across the bottom of the picture. And under that: "To Jim with my love."

The room went around and around. The walls tilted crazily, and the floor went in waves. It was her mother's picture, the same picture Aunt Hannah had on her bureau at home! Gabrielle Lawlor had been her mother's maiden name.

She must have made some startled outcry, for Barry came in hurriedly from the kitchen. "Did you say something?" he asked. "I thought I heard you call."

For a moment Gay could only shake her head. Sobs were tearing at her throat. She held out the picture. "My—my mother lived here! See—the writing on the picture and in the diary is the same. Just think, Barry, I never before saw my own mother's handwriting!"

Tears were rolling down her cheeks now. Barry took the picture in reverent fingers.

"You didn't know, did you, Barry?" Gay asked pitifully.

He said: "Good heavens, no, Gay. Of course not."

"Aunt Hannah knew, though. How dared she be so cruel!" stormed Gay through her tears. Barry was silent. "She deliberately sent us to this place that no one knew anything about, on the pretext of getting gooseberries for pies, and all the time she knew that my mother and I—fath—" She broke off in the middle of the sentence.

"I wonder if you'd mind if I went out in the car with this for a while?" She held up the diary. "I want to read it. It's my right to read it."

"Of course." Barry's tone was very gentle. He bent and kissed

Gay on the forehead as an elder brother would. Then he fished a clean handkerchief out of his pocket and wiped her eyes. "The rain's let up," he said in a matter-of-fact way which hid the force of his real feelings. "You can walk across to the car without getting wet, but your feet will get all muddy. Hadn't you better let me carry you?"

With the simplicity of a child, Gay held up her arms. Once more Barry stooped and lifted her. He strode out to the car with her, walking like a king. Only, his eyes were sorrowful.

It was two hours before Gay finished reading the diary. Sometimes she had to stop and dry her eyes. Sometimes she cried so hard that her throat ached. But at last she finished the sad story of the girl who had loved a worthless man, and had paid with her life. The worst of it was that in every description of her father, Gay could see Nicky Barrows. She tried to make herself stop imagining him in the rôle of villain, tried to recall the ecstasy of his caresses and the wonder of his kisses, but she couldn't. All she could remember were the times he had made her unhappy, and the expression on the face of that little yellow-haired waitress at the inn every time she looked at Nicky.

Barry came out finally. He looked haggard and worn as though he, too, had been through a crisis. "I want to tell you something, Gay," he began.

But Gay was looking at her watch. "Good heavens, it's almost three thirty," she said. "Aunt Hannah and Nicky will be here almost any time now. Do you suppose there's any place where I can wash my face so Nicky won't see I've been crying? Nicky likes me best when I'm gay. He doesn't care for tears."

"There's a pan out in the back that's caught rain water. You can wash your face in that and use my handkerchief for a towel," answered Barry shortly. "I'll bring the pan of water into the cabin so you can make yourself pretty—for Nicky!" His voice sounded queer and cross. Gay could not remember having heard Barry sound cross before in all the years she had known him. She wondered a trifle.

As she washed her face and smoothed her hair, her mind was a confused jumble. Her mother, her father—they were just names to her after all. She had been only a year old when her father was killed in an automobile accident. The diary told that her father had been out riding with the other woman. Her mother had been ill from neglect and worry. She had been afraid she was going to die alone in the cabin, leaving her tiny baby daughter. But Providence had sent her sister Hannah in time. The diary had stopped abruptly with the coming of Hannah. But Gay could fill in the rest.

Nicky was a darling. She was crazy about him. He couldn't be like her father! He thrilled her. He was so masterful, so wonderful, so unlike big, patient, adorable Barry. Barry was good-looking, of course; no man with hair like maize and eyes like the blue of the sea could help being good-looking. But he wasn't breath-taking like Nicky. Barry was just a big brother, while Nicky was her sweetheart. Some day he would be her husband. Strangely, that thought didn't bring its customary thrill to Gay, only a sort of dread.

She went into the other room so quietly that Barry was not aware of her approach. He was standing by the child's high chair, carefully wiping the dust from the face of the doll with the debonaire smile.

She tiptoed out again. Somehow she did not want him to know that she had seen.

Later she and Barry found a little rippling stream near the house, and they spread out the lunch they had brought with them on its banks. After they had eaten, Barry picked wild flowers for her and made a crown of them for her dark head. She exclaimed over the beautiful ferns that lined the sides of the little brook, went into ecstasies over the sight of the tall brakes that grew under the huge pines. Tiny, frisky chipmunks darted from branch to ground, and then up the tree again.

Finally Gay said: "Why, my watch must have stopped. It looks awfully late. What time is it, Barry?"

He squinted at the dial of his watch. "Six o'clock, Gay." His voice sounded odd.

"Six!" Her tone was appalled. "Oh, surely it can't be! Why, where are Nicky and Aunt Hannah? I felt sure some one would come to look for us."

Barry made no reply. They walked back toward the house. It was dusk, a lonesome, eerie sort of dusk, with the tall mountains looming high on every side, the fragrance of the pines in the air, and the everlasting rustle of the quaking aspen trees, more ghostlike than ever in the gathering darkness.

Gay came close to Barry and slipped her hand into his with the confiding gesture of a child who is afraid to be alone. And then she made a discovery. Barry was trembling! Somehow the trembling communicated itself to her, until it reached her heart and made her heart thud like mad.

In silence they came to the house, and now the touch of Barry's fingers on hers was strangely disturbing. It

was the same sort of sensation she had when Nicky gave her one of his throbbing, tumultuous kisses. Queer to feel that way just about holding Barry's hand!

"I've been a fool," said Barry suddenly. "I tried to do something that wasn't right, just because I loved you so much. But I can't do it. I can't——"

"Loved me so much?" repeated Gay in a tiny voice. "You don't mean——"

"I mean this!" Roughly Barry swept her to him, held her so tightly that she felt the beating of his heart shake her whole being. Then he kissed her, not the brotherly sort of kiss he had always given her, but a mad, wild, passionate kiss, that demanded and got response from her own quivering lips. He kissed her again, lingeringly. Then he almost thrust her from him and went into the cabin.

Gay ran a trembling hand over her treacherous lips that she had thought belonged to Nicky, but which throbbed a mad pæan of love in response to Barry Hilliard's kiss.

"I love Nicky!" she whispered to the quaking aspens. "Barry had no right to kiss me like that!" But her knees were trembling, and her lips kept on feeling Barry's kiss like a burning flame of passion.

She decided she would go into the cabin and tell Barry scornfully that he had no right to kiss her like that.

"Barry Hilliard," she began as she came into the kitchen, "I want to tell you——" Her voice faded away. She caught onto the side of the door for support. "Oh," she gasped. "Oh, Barry!" Dawning horror was in her eyes.

Barry lay in a grotesque heap on the floor. His head was against the iron stove and there was a trickle of blood running down his white face.

Instantly Gay saw what had happened. He had come into the kitchen, stepped on the rotting board. It had crumpled and he had fallen, striking his head, on the corner of the stove.

Gay went over to him, laid a shaking hand on his shoulder. "Barry," she whispered. "Barry darling!" But Barry did not answer.

Roughly Barry swept her to him, held her so tightly that she felt the beating of his heart shake her whole being. Then he kissed her.



He looked horribly white. Gay beat her hands together in an agony of indecision. What should she do? She sat down on the floor and cuddled his head on her lap, wiped the blood from his still face with her handkerchief, felt of his pulse, but her own heart was throbbing so in her ears that she couldn't tell whether or not she heard the beat of his. She laid his head gently on the floor and ran outside. With a pan of water in her hands she started back. Most of the water spilled, but

she got some to him. The water made no difference. He did not stir.

Maybe Barry was dead—her Barry! Suddenly she realized that

she had always thought of him as hers. He had shared all her joys and sorrows all her life long. He had been her rock of refuge when things went wrong. He had been ready to celebrate with her when she felt happy.

Nicky? For the moment she had forgotten Nicky.

Barry's eyes fluttered. He looked at her in a dazed sort of way. "Warm rain," he murmured. "Funny!"

Gay saw he meant her tears. "I thought you were dead!" she sobbed.

Barry groaned and sat up, putting a hand to his head. "Nope. Not quite dead," he said. "You can't kill me. But I've sure got one bird of a bump on my head. Ouch!" He hobbled to his feet, with Gay supporting him. "Turned my ankle. Jiminy!" He sank into a chair.

Gay knelt at his feet, despite his protests, and managed to get his shoe off. His ankle was badly swollen. The cabin was so dark she could hardly see.

"Think there's a candle in the closet!" gasped Barry.

Gay found it and Barry gave her a match. Then she lighted the fire again, put the pan of water on to heat, and then bandaged Barry's ankle tightly.

All of a sudden Barry chuckled. Gay looked up in surprise. "What is it?" she asked.

"That old adage about the way of the transgressor isn't so far off," he said. "I'm just getting what's coming to me; that's all."

Gay thought he was out of his head, and her eyes widened in terror.

But Barry was saying: "I'm going to tell you everything, Gay. I don't think I would have gone through with it anyway. But—" He was silent. The flickering candle made such a small circle of light in the encroaching darkness that Gay couldn't see the expression on his face. She stooped over and took off the lid of the stove. She was suddenly afraid of the inky blackness that was creeping over everything.

"What do you mean, Barry?" she asked quietly.

"Yesterday afternoon late I went

over to your house. Your Aunt Hannah seemed surprised to see me. She said you had told her you were going out with me."

"Oh!" said Gay.

"Your Aunt Hannah confided that she was afraid of Nicky Barrows and his effect on an unsophisticated girl like you." Gay raised her head angrily, but Barry went on steadily: "She said she was sure you didn't really love Barrows, but that you were infatuated with him with the same sort of infatuation your mother had felt for your father. Your Aunt Hannah had a wild plan to save you. She told me about it, and I agreed. This is what it has led to!"

"What was the plan?" asked Gay in a cold tone.

Barry laughed apologetically. "It's a good thing you wouldn't hit a cripple, for you're going to be good and mad. Your aunt suggested that we go to the Sparks cabin. Of course I didn't know that your father and mother had been here; that was as much a surprise to me as it was to you. I was to let the gasoline leak out of the tank, so we'd have to stay in the cabin all night, and then your aunt was to come the next morning, full of righteous fury and laden with a marriage license and a clergyman, and insist that I marry you. Do you see? Then we would have been married, and you would have been saved from Nicky Barrows. Silly scheme, wasn't it? I must have been mad to listen to such a foolish idea. But I cared so much that I would have snatched at any straw to save you."

The candle burned higher, casting weird dancing shadows on the wall. For an instant Gay seemed to see the face of her pretty girl mother. "How do you know I want to be saved from Nicky?" Gay said almost crossly.

"I realize now that you love him. I hope that my fears have been groundless and that you'll be very happy." How formal and far-away Barry's voice sounded! Gay bit her lip. She had to think very hard about how much she loved Nicky in order to keep from going over to Barry and putting her face against his.

"So Aunt Hannah won't be coming to-night?" she said in an even tone.

"Not unless she changes her mind." Barry laboriously got to his feet and limped over to the cupboard, taking the candle with him. He found several more tiny ends of candle, and lighted those. He, too, seemed to dread the darkness.

"I'm going into the living room," said Gay. "I'm going to look over some of my—mother's things." Her voice stumbled a trifle over the unaccustomed word.

"I suppose you don't want me." His voice stated a fact rather than asked a question, so Gay did not answer. She took one of the candle stubs, and went into the front room. She knelt before the cabinet that was the one link she had with the mother she had never known. Slowly she looked over everything, and all the time her mind was fighting with a problem that would not be solved. She loved Nicky, of course. But what was this feeling she had for Barry that was a thousand times stronger? That couldn't be love, too!

From somewhere on the mountain-side came a desolate cry, like that of a soul in torment. Gay started up, a scream on her lips. Barry came hobbling in. "Don't be frightened, dear," he said. "That's just a coyote howling. Fearful sound, isn't it?"

Barry had called her "dear" and her heart had abruptly begun to

thud, just as her heart had done when Nicky had made love to her.

"Barry," she began breathlessly, "have you ever been in love with anybody else?"

The tiny candle lighted only the space around the cabinet. Barry was just a big blur in the darkness. Big, steady, dependable Barry, who could be thrilling as well as dependable!

"Sure I've been in love," he said calmly. "Lots of times—terribly in love, so much in love that I thought if I didn't win the lady, there was nothing but the river left for me. But each time I got over it."

"Then how do you know, Barry, when the real thing comes along?" Her upturned face, with the candle-light glinting on it, was very serious. Barry had been in love lots of times, and he had never told her. There were lots of things she didn't know about Barry's life. That thought tore strangely at her heart. After all, Barry was a stranger.

"It's nothing you can put your finger on, Gay. You just know. You're certain. And the real thing is as different from the imitation as a genuine antique is from a fake."

"Is—do you feel as if——" She was trying to ask him if his love for her was real or only an imitation, but somehow she could not find the words. It had become terribly important to her to find out if Barry truly loved her.

But just then Barry said: "Listen! Isn't that a car? Good for your aunt! She's decided not to go through with our crazy plan and she's come after us."

"Oh!" Slowly Gay got to her feet.

They went to the door together. A car was coming down the winding road at a tremendous pace. They could see the blazing searchlight at one side of the car, lighting the road.

"It's Nicky!" faltered Gay.

Barry was silent.

The car came hurtling down the mountain road. It came darting across the meadow and stopped almost at the very cabin door, with a squealing of brakes which set a thousand echoes reverberating. Nicky got out. "Hello," he said in the drawling voice that had quite captivated Gay. Now it sounded silly and affected to her ears.

"Hello," she said weakly.

"Good evening!" put in Barry grimly.

Nicky laughed. It wasn't a nice laugh. He came up the two sagging steps which led to the porch. He faced them. Gay was glad she couldn't see Nicky's eyes. She never could withstand the hypnotism of Nicky's glance. And she was going to tell Nicky to go. She knew that. The diary, her mother, Barry—these were potent weapons against the charm that was Nicky Barrows.

Nicky laughed again. "Two-timed by a village queen, as I live!" he chuckled. "Here I was proceeding so carefully that your own mother couldn't have objected, and all the time, you were love-nesting with a blond Romeo!"

It was then that Barry hit him. Nicky swayed, then caught his balance. He came at Barry like a battering-ram, head down, arms like flails. Gay screamed something about Barry's sprained ankle. Neither heard her. They fought silently, grimly, ominously in the darkness.

Gay turned and ran into the house. She came dashing back with two candles held aloft. What she saw caused her to scream aloud. Nicky was deliberately kicking Barry's swollen ankle. "Stop that!" she cried and came toward Nicky like a furious whirlwind. Nicky

didn't stop. He went on hitting Barry mercilessly, while Barry swayed with pain and tried vainly to reach Nicky.

Gay stuck the candle against Nicky's hand. But even as she did so, Barry hit out with a blow which caught Nicky on the chin, and toppled him to the ground, unconscious.

Barry caught Gay close. He laughed aloud triumphantly. "Why, you were fighting for me against him!" he cried.

"Come on," said Barry. "We'll take his car and go back to your house; then we'll send somebody back after him." He had to lean very heavily on Gay to reach the car, and Gay knew he was in dreadful pain.

"Just a moment," said Gay when he was seated. "I have to go back to the cabin for something." Before he could protest, she ran back as fast as she could. Nicky Barrows was sitting on the top step holding his head and groaning, with a candle burning merrily beside him.

"We'll be back for you, Nicky," said Gay blithely as she ran past him. Strangely enough, she felt as if Nicky were an absolute stranger, some one she had never seen before. His spell was gone. It had been fascination as unlike the real thing as a swamp is unlike a river.

How she loved Barry! All her life her love for Barry had been growing, just as a plant grows, watered by spring rains and encouraged by the warmth of the sun. She hadn't realized that this secure, comfortable feeling could flame into wild tumult. But it could, for it was real love.

She went into the bedroom and took the pink-cheeked, yellow-haired doll with the debonair smile into her arms. Then she went dashing back to Barry.

Nicky tried to catch her to him as she passed, but she brushed him aside as if he had been some annoying insect, and went running straight to Barry.

He kissed her thrillingly. He touched her face with hands that trembled. He outlined her quivering lips with a gentle finger tip, kissed her softly at first, and then breath-takingly. Gay nestled in his arms. "I love you," she whispered. "I love only you!" After that, he kissed her until she went limp in his arms. Then they started up the mountain-side, with Gay's heart roaring almost as loudly as the engine.

"What did you go back for?" asked Barry, when they were almost home. He was breathing rather fast with pain, but he was managing to sit erect, and keep a steely arm tight around Gay's shoulders just the same.

"Something very important," smiled Gay.

"What?" he asked curiously, as they stopped in front of her house.

"I'll tell you on our wedding day," smiled Gay.

"No. Now!" he insisted.

Gay shyly showed him the carmine-cheeked doll. "Because it showed me how I'd really loved you ever since I played with dolls."

After that, Barry held her as though he had no intention of letting her go for even a moment. "Game ankle or not," he told her, "we're going to get married to-morrow. You can wear your pretty dress and the lovely veil and telephone for Mary Hayes to come up. But the wedding is going to take place to-morrow! I'm not going to risk losing you again."

"Wednesday's a wonderful day for a wedding," whispered Gay, and then for a long time she said no more, for Barry was holding her in his arms, and she was thrillingly aware of his kisses.



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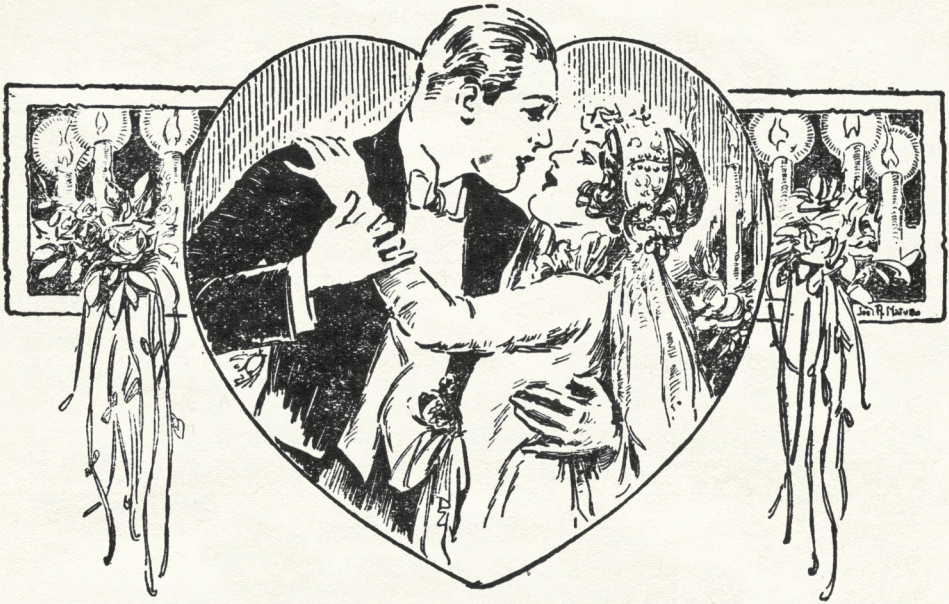
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A Shadow in the Sky

By Anita Smith

AND this is the day I expected to make my début, with orchids and a French gown and my first real pearls!" thought Helen Adair with a rueful smile.

Not all girls whose earth had caved in so completely as Helen's in three brief disastrous months could have smiled. Reared in comparative luxury, the motherless daughter of a generally admired and respected man, and his adored companion besides, Helen Adair had been called home the week before she was to be graduated from finishing school to face life's two greatest calamities—death and disgrace. Roger Adair, her father, to the whole community's astonishment and regret, had put a bullet through his brain in the offices of the Zenith Insurance Co. He had

been general manager of the local agency. An auditing of the books had showed that he was thirty thousand dollars short in his accounts.

Despite his previously unblemished reputation, there seemed no doubt that he had gambled with company funds, only to be wiped out when the market crashed. Rather than face exposure he had killed himself, although it was unlike him to have taken the easiest way out and left the brunt of everything to the child he adored.

Even now Helen scarcely knew how she had lived through that ghastly time. The loss of her beloved father had been heartbreaking enough without the fact that he died in dishonor. Against the advice of his close personal friend and busi-

ness associate, Howe Alison, whom Roger Adair's will had named executor of his estate, Helen had paid back every dollar her father had defaulted, although it left her penniless. Unfortunately, while Roger Adair had had large insurance policies, they carried a suicide clause which made them void under the circumstances of his death.

Bare and unattractive as this hall bedroom in a cheap boarding house to which Helen had moved the night before was, she was fortunate to be able to afford it. Everything else, her jewelry, the cars, and the fine Adair home on the edge of town, had been sold to pay her father's deficit. That was why on the day she had expected to start the gayest social season of her life, Helen was dressing in the plainest dress she possessed to go downtown to work.

"But you're not to feel sorry for yourself," she told her reflection in the cracked mirror above the shabby pine dresser. "You're lucky to have a job to go to. Bless Howe for being such a darling!"

Howe Alison had stood by her admirably. Helen was sure she could never have threaded the dark maze of her overwhelming misfortunes if it had not been for his constant help and encouragement. And when he found she was determined to go to work, he had unearthed a position for her. It was in the Zenith's office, of course, for on her father's death, Howe had succeeded him as general manager.

Inexperienced as she was, Helen had been grateful to secure any position. The salary was less than she had been used to having for spending money, but she meant to live on it, even if not in the style to which she was accustomed.

She held her dark head high, and her brown eyes were steady when

she came down to the dreary dining room for breakfast. She could not help finding the dingy linen and pallid coffee unappetizing. At home there had always been gleaming silver and glassware and hothouse flowers. But she forced herself to eat, and tried to avoid the curious stares of her fellow boarders.

"She's the daughter of that big insurance man who had killed himself last August to keep out of the penitentiary," she heard some one far down the table whisper, and her cheeks burned.

"This must be quite a come-down from that house they used to have with the five servants," whispered another.

"But you've got to hand it to her. They couldn't have forced her to pay. She made her father's losses good of her own accord, and it was mighty honorable of her."

It took all Helen's courage to enter the offices where Roger Adair had met tragedy. He had come to the Zenith Co. less than three years before at a greatly increased salary, and most of that time Helen had been away at school. She did not know any of the employees, and she wondered what their attitude toward her would be. After all, her father had robbed the firm. She was the daughter of a thief.

With her hand on the doorknob, Helen hesitated for a minute, unable to nerve herself to the ordeal, a slim lovely girl, with a sensitive oval face and a delicate profile. But she was determined to hold high the banner of her pride which she had rescued from where her father had left it trailing in the dust. Her clear dark eyes challenged the curious gaze of the busy outer office when she entered.

"Miss Adair?" A languid and almost gaudily good-looking blonde

regarded her from a desk near the door marked "General Manager—Private."

Later Helen learned that the blonde was Cornelia Barton, Howe Alison's private secretary and the uncrowned queen of the other stenographers and clerks in the main office. But at the time Helen was aware only that there was something hostile in the woman's bold blue eyes and full, curling red lips.

"Mr. Alison left word that you were to come straight to his office. He's waiting for you."

It was like Howe to realize how difficult all this was, Helen thought. He had tried to spare her from the first. He was a true friend. But she did not want him to show her any favors over the rest of his employees. She meant to stand on her own feet.

"I'm here to go to work," she reminded him, "and I don't mean to accept a penny I haven't earned."

He had jumped up to give her a chair and was hovering about her solicitously as usual, a big, well-built man of forty, darkly good-looking, charmingly mannered, and always beautifully groomed. He smiled ruefully at her protest.

"It's so absurd to think of your wasting your youth and beauty in an office," he said as he had so often said before. "Helen dear, can't you make up your mind to marry me and let me take care of you? You were never cut out for this sort of thing."

"I'm sorry, Howe. I'd love to marry you, but I can't. You know how fond I am of you, how I value your friendship, but that isn't enough. You deserve more than gratitude from your wife, and I don't love you, Howe, the way I mean to love my husband."

He winced. "Marry me and I'll make you love me!"

But she shook her head.

"We've been over all this before, and it only hurts us both. You promised, Howe, you'd avoid the subject when I came here to work."

"I know," he said penitently. "I'm sorry, but you go to my head so, Helen. I'm mad about you, and when I think of your doing without the things I could give you, it drives me wild. Oh, my dear, if only you'd trust yourself to me!" He broke off abruptly.

Cornelia Barton stood on the threshold.

"Did you ring, Mr. Alison?"

"No!" The angry color washed into Howe Alison's already florid face. For a minute his black eyes clashed with his secretary's. Then suddenly he shrugged his shoulders. "But since you are here, you can do something. Show Miss Adair her desk and instruct her in the work she's going to do."

"Certainly."

As she followed, Helen was again conscious of something antagonistic in the other woman's bearing. Cornelia Barton did not trouble to make the situation easier. In a curt, almost insolent manner she outlined Helen's part in the office machinery, not a complicated rôle, but a rather difficult one for a girl who had had no previous acquaintance with business. That first morning as Helen struggled confusedly with the correspondence which kept piling up on her desk, she had a feeling that Cornelia Barton was observing her fumbling efforts with malicious amusement.

"Have you finished, Miss Adair?" She paused at Helen's desk on her way out to lunch.

Helen shook her head.

"I'm afraid I've hardly begun to get the hang of it," she confessed.

Cornelia's smile was almost a sneer.

"I often wonder what society girls learn at their expensive schools."

Helen flushed.

"Nothing very useful, I'm afraid."

She was tired and discouraged. She had been under a long strain. Every one else in the office had gone to lunch. Helen could not quite choke back the hot tears that welled up in her weary eyes, as she turned again to the bewildering jumble of papers she was supposed to sort and file.

"You're Miss Adair, aren't you?"

She had thought herself quite alone. She started. A young man had entered from the corridor along which she understood there were other private offices for the salesmen, adjusters, and auditors. He was a tall, rather boyish-looking young fellow, with frank blue eyes, a clean-cut fair head, and a winning smile. Helen, furiously ashamed of her telltale tears, tried desperately to wink them back.

"Yes, I'm Helen Adair."

"My name's Curt Dodd." He hesitated, flushed, then went on doggedly: "And I was awfully fond of your father."

Helen colored painfully.

"Were you?" she stammered.

He nodded.

"He was wonderfully good to me, never lost a chance to give me a boost. Nobody ever went to so much trouble for me. If I ever get anywhere, I'll owe it to the pains he took to give me a start."

Helen found the words strangely comforting.

"Thank you." Her lips quivered.

He regarded her shrewdly.

"Has old Corny been making things disagreeable for you?—Miss Barton, I mean. She sort of rules the roost here among the women employees, and she can be a cat when she chooses."

"It isn't her fault. I've been too stupid to catch onto her instructions."

"I wouldn't bet on that," he said. "Corny has her reasons for making things hard for you." He bit his lip, as if he hadn't meant to say so much and sat down across the desk from Helen. "Maybe I can help you get the drift of things around here. But you haven't had any lunch, have you?"

She shook her head.

"Neither have I," he grinned, and reached for the telephone. "I'll order some sandwiches and milk sent up here so we'll have almost the whole hour to straighten these things out."

"It's awfully kind of you to give me your lunch time."

He smiled. "There isn't much I wouldn't do for your father's daughter."

At that minute the door to Howe Alison's private office opened and he came into the room.

"Sorry I kept you waiting, Helen," he apologized, "but I told Miss Barton to tell you I might be a little late. However, since you're going out with the boss," he grinned, "you needn't hurry back. We'll lunch at the Hamiter."

Helen flushed.

"I didn't know you expected to take me to lunch, Howe, and Mr. Dodd was good enough to offer to help me clear my desk while the others are gone. He's ordered us something to eat up here, so I'm not going out."

Howe Alison scowled.

"Didn't Corny tell you I said you were to wait for me?" Helen shook her head and his frown was transferred to Curt. "And why is it necessary for Mr. Dodd to help you? It's Miss Barton's business to break in new employees."



"I'm sorry, Howe. I'd love to marry you, but I can't. You deserve more than gratitude from your wife, and I don't love you, Howe, the way I mean to love my husband."

"I guess I'm just more than usually stupid," Helen explained. "She did her best, I'm sure."

"Humph"—Alison frowned again, and shot Curt a distinctly unpleasant glance from his dark, cold eyes.

LS-5B

"If you've any extra time to put in," he told the young man sharply, "you might very well employ it at your own job. I haven't been any too well pleased lately with the way you've been doing your work."

Painful color flooded Curt Dodd's clear cheeks.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Alison."

Howe Alison turned to Helen.

"You're not to wear yourself out at this thing, Helen, as I've told you before. It doesn't really matter whether or not you ever get that desk cleared."

"It matters to me," she said quietly.

"And you won't go out to lunch with me?"

When she shook her head, he went off in an obvious temper. Helen smiled ruefully at Curt.

"Howe thinks I'm silly to take this job so seriously. He's willing to pay me a salary to do nothing but pretend to work for it, only of course I couldn't accept that."

Curt Dodd's blue eyes narrowed suddenly.

"I'll help you all I can," he promised.

And he did. He took up one thing at a time, and went into such patient detail that Helen found the whole scheme opening out magically before her. By the time their sandwiches and milk arrived, she was beginning to make sense out of the jumble. In her relief she waxed almost gay. Somehow Curt had comforted her enormously. His admiration for her father, whom the world now scorned, eased her feeling of hurt. She felt more light-hearted than she had for months.

"You don't know how you've helped me," she told him, her eyes very soft.

He flushed.

"It's been wonderful to be allowed to help you," he said so eagerly that she colored.

And then the others began to straggle back from lunch, and Curt went to his own office. Cornelia Barton, casting a glance at Helen,

looked chagrined when she saw the girl working with more confidence.

"Things getting clearer?" she asked.

"Oh, much," replied Helen serenely, and did not miss the flicker in Cornelia's angry eyes. Nor did she fail to note that on Alison's return he summoned his secretary, and later sent her out of his office with flaming cheeks. Undoubtedly he had given her a sharp reproof for failing to arrange his luncheon engagement with Helen. And Helen did not need the venomous glance in her direction to know that she was rapidly growing more unpopular with the yellow-haired dictator of the outer office.

"The boss must have called old Corny down pretty sharply for something," muttered Allie West, the typist at the desk next to Helen's. "She looks mad enough to eat nails. Now the rest of us will catch it."

Miss Barton made things as disagreeable as she could the rest of the afternoon. She had a sharp tongue from which the whole force suffered before closing time. Helen wondered why Howe kept such a person. Of course she was efficient, but she drove the other girls mercilessly until they showed the strain.

It was just three weeks later when Howe opened his office door abruptly.

"Get Dodd in here. I want to see him," he told his secretary.

She buzzed a bell and Howe waited in the doorway till Curt Dodd, looking rather anxious, appeared.

"You want me, sir?"

Alison frowned.

"Why haven't you worked up that Medill case from the data I gave you yesterday?"

Curt looked bewildered.

"I've had no data on the Medill case. This is the first time I've heard I was supposed to work it up."

Alison glanced sharply at Cornelia Barton.

"Did you put that Medill correspondence on Dodd's desk yesterday morning along with my memorandum and his orders?"

"Certainly, Mr. Alison."

Dodd flushed.

"I don't see how I could have overlooked it."

Howe Alison gave a short, disgruntled laugh. "It won't be the first important thing you've overlooked lately!"

Curt turned scarlet.

Cornelia Barton came in at the corridor door.

"Here's the file." She held a folder of papers. "It was right where I put it yesterday—on Mr. Dodd's desk in the basket where he's supposed to keep matters for rush attention."

Curt started violently.

"But I do give rush attention to everything in that basket! I cleared it only this morning."

"You evidently didn't clear it very thoroughly. This Medill case should have gone in to headquarters tonight. Hand me the file, Miss Barton. I'll do it myself. I no longer seem able to trust anything of much importance to Mr. Dodd."

He slammed his door behind him, and Curt Dodd, with a drawn white look about his mouth, went back to his own office.

"It's a shame!" exploded Allie West in undertones to Helen. "There isn't a harder-working, more conscientious boy in the world than Curt, and the boss rides him all the time. If he had to lecture Curt, why did he do it here for everybody to hear? He could at least have called him into his private office."

Helen agreed with her that an audience to witness Curt's humiliation hadn't been strictly necessary. But sorry as she felt for him, she tried to be fair to Howe. Curt evidently had been careless about a matter of considerable importance, for the rush data had been on his desk and he had overlooked it. She worried considerably about the matter. From the first she had been attracted to Curt. They came down in the elevator together that afternoon, and she was glad when she learned that he lived near her boarding house.

"Do you mind if I walk along with you?" he asked humbly.

"Of course not. I'd love to have you."

He was rather silent, and she guessed that he was still feeling the sting of Alison's curt rebuke that afternoon. At lunch he had been boyishly light-hearted, but though he made an effort to seem the same now, he failed.

"I'm afraid the boss has pretty well lost patience with me," he sighed. "I can't blame him. It isn't the first time I've slipped up in exactly the same way. But I don't understand it even now. I did clear that basket, and yet somehow I must have overlooked the Medill data."

There was a discouraged droop to his shoulders.

"It's getting my goat," he confessed. "You know, while your father was here I got ahead by leaps and bounds. Why, I even had visions of being made assistant manager, and I know your father thought I had a brilliant future. But lately—well, if things keep going wrong as they have for the past three months, I'll be lucky if I keep my job." He laughed shortly. "So much for my fine hopes! And what makes it all

the worse is that I've worked even harder than ever recently, only I seem to be forever stubbing my toe the way I did to-day."

"I'm awfully sorry."

He flashed her a rueful smile.

"I'm an awful heel to be boring you with my troubles."

"You aren't boring me. Aren't we friends?"

He colored. "I'd surely like to be."

"And so should I."

"I'm afraid, however, your fiancé won't approve. You may have noticed he isn't very fond of me."

"Howe and I aren't engaged."

He looked startled.

"Aren't you? But I understood that——"

She shook her head.

"I don't know how I'd have gotten along these past three months without him—he's been so kind and thoughtful—but I'm not in love with him."

"That's great!" he cried, then stopped. "That is, of course, I mean——" he floundered with embarrassment. "Forgive me if I seemed presumptuous."

She smiled. She didn't think him the least presumptuous. To her he appeared awfully nice in a frank, straightforward way. She liked him immensely, and every time he looked at her, his ingenuous blue eyes glowed with a light the meaning of which she could not mistake. But she did not resent it. On the contrary, it warmed her desolate heart.

But Howe Alison, when she saw him that night, had no good to say of Curt.

"Your father made him a sort of protégé," he remarked with a frown, "and it seems to have gone to his head. I've had to call him down sharply half a dozen times lately for negligence and carelessness. The

next time he falls down on the job I'll have to report him to the head office, and that will mean dismissal."

Helen was troubled. During the next few weeks she saw a lot of Curt, and the more she saw of him, the more worried she became. Howe Alison had been determined to continue showering Helen with attention even after she went to work in his office, but that she would not permit. She refused to go to lunch with him every day. For one thing, he usually took longer than the hour she was allowed, and then, too, although she did not admit it even to herself, she preferred the cafeteria across the street where most of the employees ate.

Usually Curt brought his tray to her table. She looked forward to their little daily chat, and if he did not have to work late, he walked home with her. Occasionally he came over to her boarding house in the evenings, and they went to a movie. They had a great deal in common. Her father had been his idol, too. An orphan to whom no one else had ever given a helping hand, Curt Dodd had admired and respected Roger Adair beyond all men, and was as bewildered as Helen at the sad end to which her father had come.

"Nobody could have made me believe he'd take a penny that didn't belong to him," he said more than once. "He was almost fanatically honorable."

"I know." Helen's voice quivered.

"Only the fact that his suicide was a confession of guilt——" He bit his lip. "Please forgive me."

She smiled. "You can say anything to me about my father because you loved him."

And Curt loved her, too. Helen knew it. He was of a singularly open

nature, and his every glance betrayed him. He could not speak her name without making it a caress. He colored if his hand touched hers accidentally. And as for Helen, it remained for Howe Alison to open her eyes to how much she had learned to care for Curt.

In spite of her sad tumble in the world, many of her old friends had steadfastly refused to drop her. Because of her recent bereavement she was not going to any really elaborate social functions, but she could not always refuse invitations to small dinners and bridges. Howe himself insisted that she accept, mostly because he was always asked as her escort.

Her old crowd thought it simply ridiculous that Helen should insist on working for her living when she could marry Howe and live in the style in which she had been brought up. They were all his champions and allies, and he had by no means given up hope. In fact, Helen discovered that he had expected her to weaken when she had had a taste of poverty. But he had underestimated her strength.

She did miss her lovely home, the servants, the old ease and pleasures. But she was even further from buying them back by marrying a man she didn't love than she had been the first time she had refused Howe Alison. For now she had met Curt. She did not, however, realize that he was Howe's rival till Howe himself pointed it out.

"Your living in that dingy boarding house and wearing yourself out at a desk is too absurd," he fumed one evening, when he was taking her to May Luton's for dinner. "You're so beautiful, Helen, and you were cut out to have Parisian gowns, and diamonds, and a lovely home. Oh, my dear, I'd shower all those things

on you to-morrow if only you'd let me!"

"I'm sorry, Howe. I can't."

He was still irritable when they reached the party. May's jesting remarks added fuel to the flame.

"Here comes the poor working girl!" she called gayly. "Honestly, Howe, I bet she's vamped every man in your office so you can't get any work done. I know there's a good-looking blond boy who walks home with her every night. I've seen them several times. He never took his eyes off her, and she—well, she didn't even see me, though I'm supposed to be her best friend. Who is your shiek, Helen? I liked his style myself."

Helen, feeling Howe's narrowed eyes upon her, flushed.

"I suppose you mean Curt Dodd." She glanced at Howe defiantly, prepared for his scowl.

"So you've been playing around with Dodd," he accused her on the way home.

"We're friends."

"That boy's no good, Helen," he said contemptuously. "He's riding for a fall. Your father spoiled him till he's grown insufferably lazy and irresponsible."

Helen was astonished at her own anger. "He isn't!" she cried furiously. "You haven't a man in your office who works as hard or is as faithful! I don't know why you have it in for him, but I don't believe he deserves the treatment you give him."

Alison's face darkened.

"So he's been knocking me to you behind my back, trying to alibi himself by pretending I'm unfair to him!"

"He's never once complained of you to me, but I can see for myself that you have it in for him."

The moment she had said it, she

knew she had gone too far. Howe was livid with anger.

"As a matter of fact, I've let him get by with too much. I should have reported him long ago, and I will the next time he slips up. Whining to you! The yellow cad!"

"He isn't yellow! He's fine and straight!"

He stared at her. "I believe you're in love with the pup." His voice was suddenly drained of anger but all the more ominous in its bleak coldness.

She flushed, and her heart gave a mad lurch. In love with Curt! She recalled his clean-cut boyish face with the candid eyes and wistful



"You saved me, Helen!"
Curt caught her hand, and
his eloquent eyes told her
how he adored her.

smile, and her pulses leaped. It was true. She did love Curt! She hadn't realized before why she liked to talk to him, why they always had so much to say to each other, why it was such deep pleasure to walk along beside him, his arm at her elbow when they crossed streets, his eager eyes caressing her.

Of course she loved Curt! She had loved him almost from the first. And he cared for her; she was sure of that. Now that she had Curt she was no longer so terribly alone. She felt happier than she had since the day she had received the telegram announcing her father's death. Her heart that had been so bruised and empty filled again, and warmth flowed back into life.

Her dark eyes met Howe Alison's steadily.

"I do love him," she said quietly.

He muttered under his breath, something she did not quite catch. But it made her uneasy. For since entering his office she had revised her opinion of Howe Alison. Kind as he had been to her, she had learned that he had a mean streak she had never suspected before. He was irritable and overbearing with all his employees but Cornelia Barton; he never quite lost his temper with her. More than once Helen had seen him pull himself up with an effort when he had been on the point of losing his wrath on the secretary. Something in the woman's gaze seemed to be able to bridle his tongue.

"Things surely have changed here since your father went," sighed Allie West the next day. "He was kindness itself and we all adored him. I think he got better work out of us than that old crab Alison does." She paused and glanced apprehensively at Helen. "Oh, I'm sorry. I forgot you're engaged to the boss."

"But I'm not!" Helen wondered how the whole office had gotten such a false impression.

Undoubtedly they had all been a little afraid to talk freely before her. Once convinced that she was not engaged to Alison and had no idea of betraying them to him, they let a good many cats out of the bag, among other things the fact that he had it in for all of them because they had been devoted to Helen's father.

"He's getting rid of us old employees just as fast as he can find any excuse," explained Allie. "By the time the year's up, he'll have cleaned the office of everybody who was fond of your father."

"But why?"

Allie regarded her darkly.

"It might pay you to figure that out." She turned away, as if she had said more than she had intended.

But Helen couldn't understand why Alison was determined to be rid of her father's faithful employees, nor could she discover why he, who would brook nothing from any one else, tolerated downright insolence from Corny Barton. The fact that the woman dared be unpleasant to Helen at every opportunity was proof enough that she had no fear of her employer.

"Corny's got something on him," Allie acknowledged reluctantly. Allie had an invalid mother dependent on her, and was evidently afraid to express herself too openly about the man who could discharge her at a moment's notice. "There's no other explanation of why he puts up with her impudence. She's always been crazy about him, but he never used to pay much attention to her in your father's time. Now—well, I happen to know that she's boasted she'll marry him some day."

Helen could scarcely believe that Howe Alison meant to marry Cor-

nelia Barton, but the more she saw of them together, the more she became convinced that the woman did have some kind of strong hold over him.

"Of course, Corny was your father's secretary," explained Allie with a queer glance at Helen, "but, believe me, she was as meek as a lamb then. She's gotten all this hoity-toity stuff since."

Helen had a feeling Allie was trying to give her a hint, but it was another one to which Helen did not have the key. She puzzled over it and many other things that struck her as increasingly queer about the business.

And on the day after she had admitted her love for Curt, he rode for the fall Howe Alison had been prophesying.

The circumstances were much the same as on the previous occasion when Curt had earned a rebuke. It concerned an important matter to which Curt was supposed to have given urgent attention and hadn't. No wonder he looked stricken when the general manager called him strictly to account! As before, Howe Alison elected to stage the unpleasant scene for everybody in the main office to hear.

"But this is the first I've heard of the case, Mr. Alison," Curt protested, his voice a little unsteady. "If you sent me the Carmack papers and a note to work them up for your immediate attention, I never saw them."

"I put the folder on Mr. Dodd's desk early yesterday morning as you instructed me to, Mr. Alison," Corny Barton put in crisply. "He had been called to the telephone, and I left them in plain sight with a note marked 'Rush.' He couldn't have failed to see them unless"—she gave Curt a disdainful glance—"he was

stargazing as usual, and let them get shoved out of the way."

Curt whitened.

"I'm ready to swear that when I left this office last night, my desk was cleared! If the Carmack data had been there I couldn't have missed it."

"Are you insinuating that I'm lying?" flared the secretary.

"I'm only saying those papers were not on my desk when I left last night."

"Maybe they're not there now?"

"I don't believe they are. I haven't been down long this morning, but I've certainly gone over everything that came in since yesterday and I've not seen them."

Howe Alison made a contemptuous gesture.

"You'd better have your eyesight tested, Dodd. You seem to have developed a genius for overlooking stuff lately. Wait here; I'll look myself and see if I can do any better."

Tense and white, but with a drawn look about his mouth, Curt did as he was ordered—stood motionless till Alison returned with a sheaf of documents which he held out belligerently for all to see.

"No more than I expected!" he snapped. "They were there all the time, crowded down behind some blanks in a drawer you evidently use mostly for odds and ends. Really, Dodd, such carelessness is inexcusable. In spite of my warnings you've persisted in slipshod business methods which I can no longer condone. An employee who cannot be trusted to give me his best is an employee I can't use. Do you understand?"

"You mean I'm fired?"

Alison shrugged his shoulders.

"I've no other recourse. I think it only fair to advise you not to give my name as reference when you seek other employment, because, of

course, I can't conscientiously recommend a man who is as irresponsible as you've proved yourself to be."

Curt went deathly white. It was ruin for him, death to all his hopes. Dismissed by the Zenith in disgrace, refused even a recommendation, how could he secure a good position? And he had worked so hard. It meant going back years, starting in at some other career and working up again with the added handicap of once having failed. His boyish face looked suddenly older and very weary.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Alison." He would have turned away dejectedly if a clear, indignant voice had not startled them all.

"Curt did not overlook those papers, Howe!"

It was Helen. She had risen and approached the others, her cheeks scarlet, her dark eyes flashing.

"Curt never saw those papers because they weren't put on his desk yesterday as Miss Barton claims! They weren't even in his possession when I came to work this morning. I don't know how they got jammed down in that drawer later, but I do know that not more than an hour ago that folder was in my files, because I saw it myself. Soon afterward I watched Miss Barton take something out of the 'C' cabinet. I'd bet anything it was the Carmack data, which she hid in Curt's drawer for reasons of her own, where she knew he wouldn't happen on it before you took him to task. It's perfectly clear she framed him, as I suspect now she's done before!"

There was an audible gasp through the whole office. Corny Barton went livid.

"Why, you little sneak! How dare you?" she cried furiously.

"Corny!" Howe Alison's voice was sharp.

The woman glared at him.

"Are you going to stand for her insulting me?"

He gave her a significant glance.

"There seems to have been some mistake," he said smoothly. "I apologize, Dodd, for having misjudged you. You may go back to work. I want to see you in my private office, Miss Barton."

When the door closed behind them, the outer office buzzed. Everybody crowded about to congratulate Curt and praise Helen.

"Nobody else has dared give old Corny what she deserves!" Allie cried.

"You saved me, Helen!" Curt caught her hand, and his eloquent eyes told her how he adored her.

She smiled at him. "I knew you weren't careless or slipshod, and I couldn't figure any one else who would be mean enough to cause you trouble. That's why I watched Corny and was able to catch her at it. But now that Howe knows, our worries are over. For, of course, after this he'll have to fire her."

But she was wrong. Cornelia Barton came out of the private office looking as much mistress of the situation as ever. When Helen, unable to believe that the woman would be kept on when her double dealing had been exposed, questioned Howe, he wriggled uncomfortably but admitted he had no idea of discharging her.

"You see," sneered Corny Barton when Helen returned, dismayed by her interview with Alison, "the boss prefers blondes."

Back at her desk, Helen was very thoughtful. She no longer doubted that the secretary had some powerful hold over Alison, but what could it be? Why did Howe tolerate her insolence? Why had she framed Curt? And why did both Cornelia

and Howe seem determined to rid the office of every one of the old employees who had been so faithful to Helen's father? Something clicked in her brain. Could it be that her father had been betrayed? Helen tried to sweep the thought from her mind. Howe had been her father's devoted friend.

She walked home with Curt, who was so grateful for the way she had vindicated him that he wanted to talk of nothing else. Certainly he did not get the significance of her questions, although he admitted absently that Corny had handled all of Roger Adair's speculations on the market. When the company auditors investigated, it was learned that he had never dealt directly with his brokers. Corny had telephoned all orders. Until her testimony came out, no one had suspected Adair of gambling with the insurance funds.

"Good heavens, I left my bag on top of my desk!" exclaimed Helen when they were nearly halfway home. "How stupid of me! But I was so excited, I walked right off without it."

"I'll run back after it," volunteered Curt, who had reached the stage where it was heaven to do anything for Helen.

"We'll both go, that is"—she smiled at him roguishly—"if you'd like to have me along."

"You know I would! Oh, Helen," he said suddenly, "you know I love you!"

Her hand trembled on his arm.

"And I love you," she whispered.

"Helen!"

"You can't kiss me right here in the street!" she protested.

But he kissed her once in the shade of an awning, and the caress was heartbreakingly sweet. They were both flushed and breathless when they entered the apparently

deserted offices. Helen made straight for her desk while Curt waited near the door. Both heard Cornelia Barton's high voice distinctly because the door of the general manager's private room was slightly ajar.

"I admit I was careless to leave that Carmack data where the Adair girl could see it, but I thought she was a stupid society bud who'd never tumble even if she did see it. And you had no business to bawl me out in front of everybody, when I was just carrying out your orders. After this you can frame Curt Dodd yourself if you want him framed. I'm through with your dirty work, Howe Alison!"

Helen clutched Curt's arm. White and startled, they stared at each other.

"You're mighty sure of yourself!" sneered Alison.

"You bet I'm sure where you're concerned. I've got you, and you know it."

"Oh, yes?"

"You cross me and see where you land. But you won't ever tell on little Corny, Howe. You're not anxious to have me tell the Zenith that Roger Adair never gambled on the market in his life, that it was your orders I gave the brokers, you who stole thirty thousand dollars from the company!"

"But don't forget you swore in court Adair was the thief and so became my accomplice! I'm not much afraid of your giving me away, because you'd go to jail right along with me!"

The woman laughed.

"To jail, maybe, but not to the electric chair!"

"What do you mean?" rasped the man.

"I mean I've got more on you than you dream, Howe Alison. I've just been biding my time till I was ready

to call a show-down. You're going to marry me."

"Don't be ridiculous!"

"You'll marry me or I'll see that you're sent up for murder."

"Murder!"

"You killed Roger Adair! You shot him because he'd discovered you had robbed the company and was going to expose you! You killed him right there in that desk chair, and put the gun in his hand to make every one think it was suicide. But it wasn't. It was murder!"

"You're crazy! You can't prove it!"

"Can't I? That's where you're wrong. I have absolute proof in my possession—Roger Adair's own voice accusing you of his murder!"

"Impossible!"

"The morning you shot him, he was dictating a letter into the dictaphone to the Zenith headquarters in which he told all he had discovered about you, and recommended that you be arrested immediately and Curt Dodd be given your place as assistant manager. He was still dictating into the machine when you entered. He saw that you meant to kill him. He pleaded for his life, and the machine which he had not disconnected recorded his words, the shot that killed him, and his death cry: 'Howe Alison, you have murdered me!'"

There was a gasp from Alison.

"Fortunately no one but me in this office ever takes dictation from the dictaphone. I found the disk in the machine and played it off. That's how I know what I know, and that's why you'll marry me, Howe Alison. I've got that record, and it will send you to the chair any day I choose."

"Where is it?" he demanded tensely.

"Here, safe in my bag!"

But Corny Barton had gone too

far. She had forgotten that Howe Alison had murdered once, and was now desperate. There was a muffled scream from the woman and a crash as a chair overturned.

"Give me that bag or I'll choke you to death!" snarled Alison.

"You brute!"

"Ah, so this is what was to send me to the chair! Well, here it goes to the floor in a million pieces, you fool!"

But Howe Alison's hand, which had lifted to shatter the damning evidence against him, halted in mid-air.

"Stand perfectly still or I'll shoot!"

In the doorway stood Curt Dodd, his face a grim mask, a shiny object leveled straight at Howe Alison's heart.

"Get the bag, Helen," Curt directed quietly.

Helen, her heart hammering wildly, advanced into the room. Howe Alison glared at her like a wild animal at bay. She knew that that steely object in Curt's hand was not a gun, but only the office punch. Alison did not know, however, and because at heart he was a coward and a bully, Curt's magnificent bluff worked. The disk in her possession, Helen turned back.

"Call the police," snapped Curt. She obeyed, in a panic of fear that at any minute Howe Alison would discover the truth.

But not till the officers had arrived and handcuffed him did he realize that he had been overpowered by no more powerful weapons than Curt's steady eye and voice. Glowering with rage, he was taken away along with Corny, who under the unexpected disaster wilted to a sniveling, groveling creature, begging for mercy.

Alone, Helen stared adoringly at Curt.

"You've cleared dad's name and avenged his death!" she cried.

"Thank Heaven I could!" he whispered.

They clung together, and gazed into a future freed of every cloud. For with Howe Alison's arrest, Curt would step into the position Howe vacated, a position he was young to fill. But, then, didn't he have Helen to make good for?

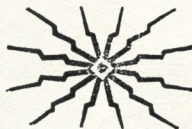
Howe Alison was sent to the penitentiary for life and Corny for ten years as his accomplice. With them removed, the office force rejoiced for

Curt had always been popular with his fellow employees. The whole force came to his wedding at Helen's special request, and what a beautiful bride she was in white satin and pearls and orange blossoms!

"Happy, dearest?" whispered Curt when the sweet old words that made them man and wife had at last been said.

Her luminous dark eyes smiled up at him with all the ardor of her heart.

"There's not a shadow in the sky, beloved!"



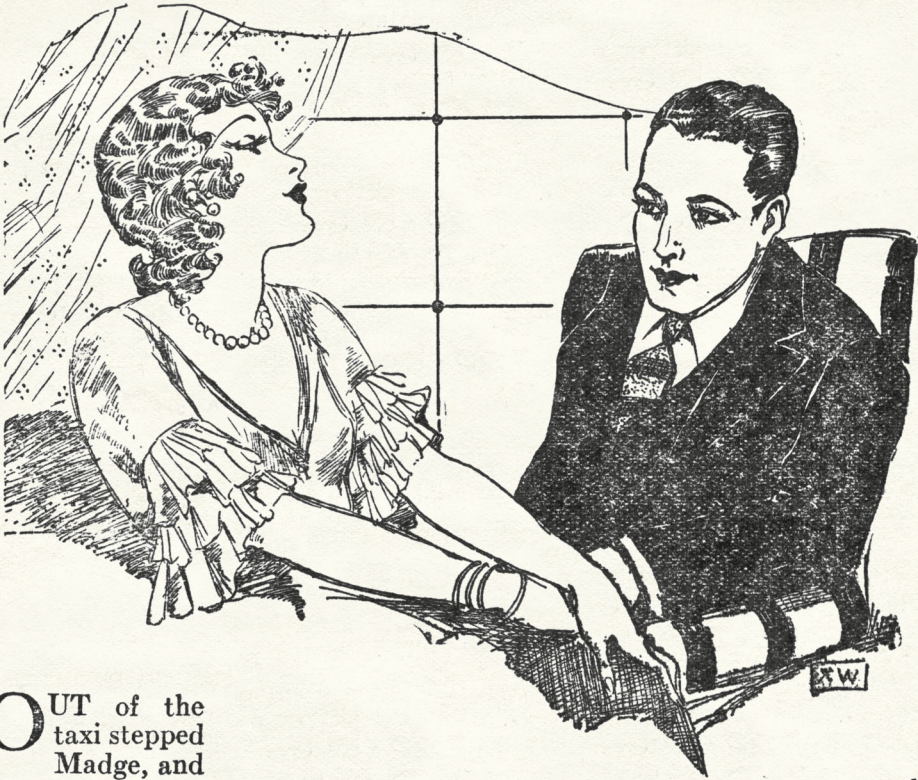
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OUT of the taxi stepped Madge, and she looked uncertainly at the dark building rearing there before her. She turned to the driver.

"Are you sure this is the place?" she asked.

"This is the Brunswick, all right. It isn't very cheerful without lights, is it? You got a key?"

"Yes," Madge nodded. "But somehow I hadn't thought it would be like this, even with no one in it. Even out here in the street it's dark."

"That's nothing," the driver reassured her. "We don't have criminals in Wingate the way they do in the city. Nothing to be afraid of here. Well, good night, and thank

you very much, madam."

As the car drew away, the street seemed darker and more deserted than it had before. Madge felt that all manner of evil things might be lurking in that big black

mass of a building. She turned on impulse to call the taxi man again, but the red tail light of his car was already swinging around the corner.

Well, she had to go through with it. Somehow this wasn't at all the way she had pictured it. Even the Brunswick was all wrong. The hotels she had known were always tall, stately buildings, with uniformed doormen waiting outside. This was just an overgrown house. She

Lost Faith

By

Marie Hoyt

could distinguish the big sign "Brunswick" over the front porch, but aside from that there was nothing to show that the building was a hotel. Madge wished heartily that when her uncle had died, he had willed her the money she had expected instead of this white elephant. In the darkness and the solitude of the place, she almost wished he had not willed her anything.

She shuddered slightly. There was no use standing there. It would not help the matter any to delay. She realized that she should have stayed down in the center of the town at some other hotel for the first night, and come up to the Brunswick in the morning. But the fighting spirit which had been a heritage of the Winters family asserted itself. She hated to admit defeat. Taking a deep breath, she started up the walk.

As she crossed the big veranda, her steps reverberated hollowly, but she set her lips more grimly and felt in her bag for the key. It seemed as if the grating of the key as she fumbled for the lock could have been heard for miles. And then the big door swung open slowly with a protesting squeal. Inside, everything was pitch black. Madge had been told that the light switch was on the right of the front door, and she felt along the wall in search of it. She could not find it at once, and the dark was unbearable. In her apprehensive state of mind, it seemed to her that she was surrounded by dark shapes, that hands were reaching out toward her menacingly.

She fumbled again in her bag for a little flashlight she carried. She had not wanted to use it, since a flashlight always tells others where you are, and seems so inadequate to

cope with danger. Yet anything was better than that awful blackness.

She found her flashlight and snapped it on. Immediately she saw the light switch and reached for it. But halfway there her hand stopped, and her whole being seemed to freeze with fright. Distinctly she had heard a noise in the back of the hall. Terrified, she swung her pitiful little ray of light in that direction, just in time to see a dark figure duck out of sight.

That was too much for Madge's overwrought nerves. With a stifled scream she fled. Not for all the money in the world would she have entered that door again alone that night. She slammed the front door behind her, then ran down the steps, sobbing hysterically, almost into the arms of a passer-by. To Madge he seemed to be heaven-sent. His very bigness was reassuring.

"Oh—oh, please help me!" she cried. "There's—there's somebody in there! I saw him."

Madge took an instant liking to the stranger. He did not waste time asking questions or telling her that she must have been mistaken. He grasped the flashlight and started for the front door. Rather than be left alone out on the sidewalk, Madge followed him.

Once inside, the young man went at the thing systematically. First he switched on the hall light, and then turned to Madge.

"Where did you see him?" he demanded.

"Down at the end of the hall," Madge told him. "He disappeared behind that corner."

The young man moved forward, and Madge, after an instant's hesitation, followed him. It wasn't bravery on her part; she very much feared that she was through being

brave for that evening. She was merely determined not to let this one friendly human being out of her sight.

At the end of the hall they found a closet, and the young man went directly to it. He threw open the door and flashed the light into all the corners. Then he turned away.

"Nothing at all there. I——" he began.

Just at that instant they heard a noise in the closet from above. It was only a rustle, but the young man snapped around instantly and pointed the flashlight upward. Then for the first time they noticed a shelf. On that shelf there was something which loomed up black.

"Come down off that shelf," he said grimly, "and don't start anything or I'll knock you right through the wall!"

Nothing happened.

Frightened as she was, Madge couldn't help but admire the coolness of her defender. She knew very well that he had no revolver. However, the threat had the desired effect. The black bundle on the shelf lurched, and a sharp-eyed, pleasant little face looked down at them.

"Please, sir, don't shoot," the intruder pleaded. "I didn't do anything. I'll go back. I'll go back without a fight."

"Why," Madge said, curiously surprised and relieved, "it's only a little boy!"

For the first time the young man relaxed a little.

"Come on down," he said, a remarkably likable grin on his face, "and tell us why you frightened this young lady half to death."

Obediently the boy rolled over on his stomach, swung across the edge of the shelf, and dropped to the closet floor. The young man looked

at him, and then across at Madge. She noticed for the first time that he was wonderfully good-looking.

"Is this young fellow a friend of yours?" he asked.

Madge shook her head.

"Well, then, young man, I'm afraid you'll have to give an account of yourself." He smiled down at the boy, and the boy smiled back a little uncertainly.

"I didn't think anybody lived here," he said. "I thought it was a vacant house, so I've been staying here almost a week. Honest, I haven't done a bit of damage. Everything's just the way I found it."

"But where did you come from? I've lived here for a long while, and I've never seen you before."

The boy hung his head.

"I'm from the Hamilton Orphanage," he said. "I ran away to be an aviator, but somehow when I got away I didn't know just how to go about it. And I didn't want to go back. So I crawled in here through a cellar window that was broken, and I've been staying here ever since. I'll go back now, though, just as I told you."

"But what have you had to eat?" Madge demanded, horrified.

"Well, I went out at night some. And there's a dump in back of the grocery store where there were usually stale crackers, and once a whole loaf of stale bread."

"And that's all you've eaten?" Madge demanded. She swept forward and gathered the pathetic little figure into her arms. "Why, you should have gone back. But tonight we'll get you a big steak. How would you like that?"

"And onions on top of it," the young man supplemented, "with a big baked potato split open and a lump of butter the size of an egg

melting in it. And maybe some string beans and a lot of ice cream to finish off with and fill up the chinks."

The boy's face lighted in a way that made Madge choke. He must have been terribly hungry.

"Honest?" he breathed. "You're not kidding, are you?"

The young man's face was strangely soft as he looked down at Madge and the boy.

"Honest Injun," he said huskily. "We're going to get you a meal right now. Miss Winters—I know you must be Miss Winters because you had the key to the hotel here—you can't stay here to-night. It would be foolish. You and the boy had better come down to the American Hotel. I'm the manager, and I can give you fine rooms. Then in the morning you can come back up here."

Madge gave him a grateful smile.

"I wouldn't stay here for all the money in the world," she said quickly. "It's—well, it's too spooky. I'd be glad to go to the American. That's what I should have done in the first place."

As they walked to the door, the boy kept very close to Madge. It was as if he had found a friend and protector. She noticed it, and it pleased and moved her.

At the American, Madge met Mrs. Cronin, the owner, and was welcomed effusively.

"So you're Miss Winters!" she said. "I'm so glad you decided to use our little hotel for the night. We'll do everything in our power to make you comfortable."

Madge was not very favorably impressed with the woman. She had a feeling that, though the words were friendly, the eyes were not. Mrs. Cronin called the young man "Bud," and seemed to have a pro-

prietary interest in him. Why this should have upset Madge, she did not know, but it did nevertheless. She turned to the boy.

"All ready for that steak?" she smiled. He nodded eagerly. "You haven't told me your name yet," she went on. "It might come in handy when I asked you if you wanted more potatoes."

"I'm Jack Moody," he told her. "The boys at the school call me Jack. I like that name."

"So do I, Jack," Bud said, coming over to them. "An aviator ought to have a he-man's name. I remember when I was a boy, we ran away to be pirates a couple of times. The styles change, I guess."

"Did you really?" Madge asked him, laughing. Somehow she felt very friendly toward this man who had helped her so efficiently and unquestionably.

"Sure I did," he grinned. "Three of us. I guess all boys do at some time or other. It was either a case of being a pirate or joining a circus, and we couldn't decide which."

"I thought for a while I wanted to be a baseball player like Babe Ruth," Jack said very seriously, "but I guess I'd rather be an aviator like Lindbergh."

Bud caught Madge's eye, and the eyelid drooped a little. It somehow was very pleasant to enjoy Jack's earnestness with Bud. Madge liked it.

"I guess boys don't change much at heart," he said. "What do you say to a little nourishment, Jack?"

Jack could eat; there was no doubt about that. Madge had never seen any one who ate so ravenously, and who seemed to enjoy it so much.

"Did you see his eyes when they brought in that ice cream?" Bud asked her quietly, when they were once more in the lobby. "It was

worth anything. The poor little kid must have been close to starvation. He's mighty likable, too."

Madge was inclined to agree with that. Jack Moody had won his way into her heart the moment she had seen him. As she and Bud sat talking in the lobby, Jack's curly head nodded, straightened, and then nodded again, until at last he fell asleep in his chair.

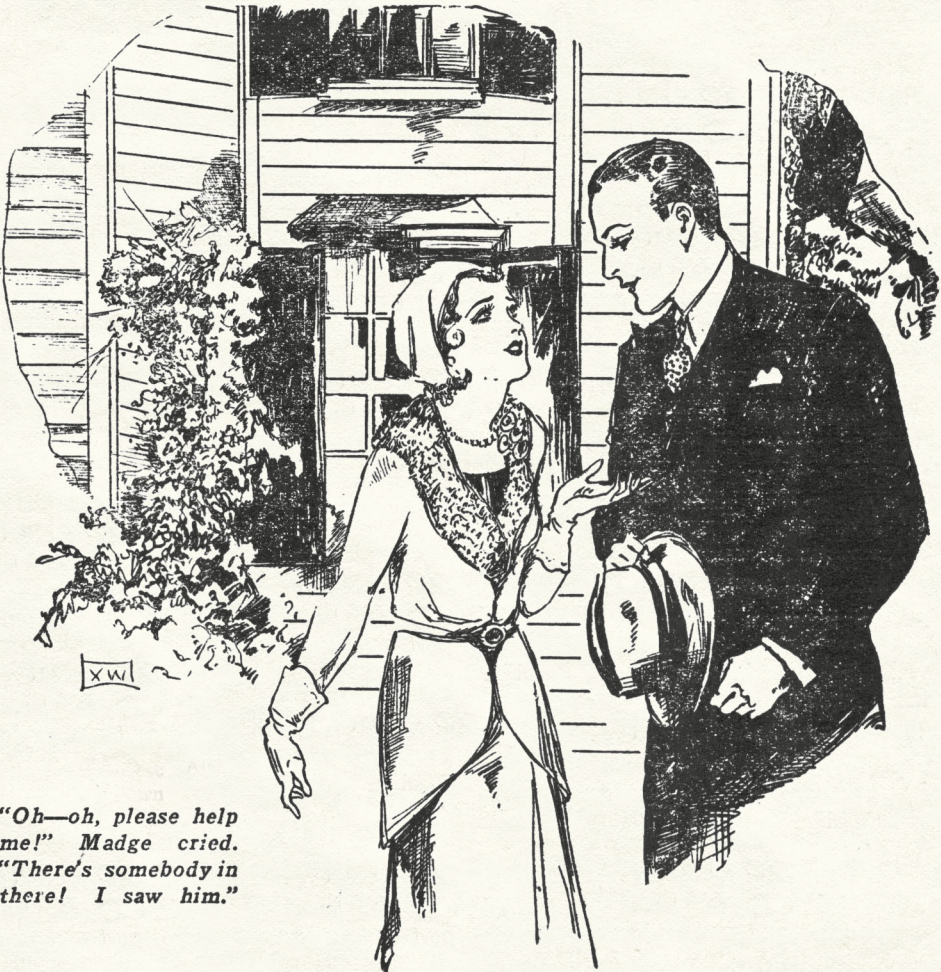
"He sure is a cute kid," Bud whispered, and gathered him up in his arms. He took the little sleeping bundle up into his own room, and put him to bed on a cot.

In the morning Jack and Bud were already in the lobby when Madge came downstairs. Jack ran over to meet her.

"Say, Miss Winters," he said. "I've been carrying bags, and one man gave me a dime—a whole dime! And I helped spread a tablecloth and do lots of things."

"That's right," Bud said, coming up. "He's a great little bell hop. How did you sleep last night?"

"Fine," Madge told him, and the smile she flashed him was sunny and wholly at peace with the world. It was a glorious day, and the smile



"Oh—oh, please help me!" Madge cried. "There's somebody in there! I saw him."

was in keeping with the weather. "Somehow with the sun shining so brightly this morning, my timidity of last night seems frightfully silly. I should have stayed at the Brunswick."

"No, you shouldn't," Bud vetoed instantly. "Something might have happened to you. I wouldn't have had anything happen for the world."

He said that earnestly, and a second after it was out, he seemed to realize that it was not exactly his place to show so much concern in Madge's welfare. He blushed very red, like a schoolboy, and seemed to hate himself for blushing. He was so altogether lovable in his embarrassment that Madge experienced a thrill she had never known before. It was a thrill which went through her entire being with delightful little shivers, and was wholly new and startling.

"Listen, Miss Winters," he said quickly, evidently eager to change the subject, "Jack and I were talking this morning. He has a proposition he wants to make to you. But he's afraid, so I promised I'd sort of break the ice for him."

Madge looked at Jack, and found his eyes on his shoes.

"He knows you'll need help up at the Brunswick, and he wonders if you couldn't use him."

"I wouldn't want any pay," Jack broke in eagerly, his big eyes excited and pleading. "And I could do all sorts of things. I wouldn't have to go back to Hamilton then. They aren't nice to us there. You're the only person who ever hugged me and was good to me. I'd work so hard if you'd only let me stay with you. I know you wouldn't be sorry."

He paused, his big eyes still pleading. Madge looked from him to Bud.

"I never thought of such a thing," she said slowly. "What's your reaction to it, Bud?"

"I don't know," he shrugged. "It's your business, of course. But he's such a nice kid, and such a regular boy. Oh, well," he shrugged again and grinned, "it's nothing to me. You're the one who's going to run the hotel. Only I'd like to see him have a home with you," he finished.

Madge thought swiftly. To begin with, she had taken an instant liking to Jack. Then, too, she could think of any number of jobs around a country hotel which a boy could perform as well as a grown-up. She planned to hire help that day, anyway. But greater even than any of those considerations was one which Madge found somehow intangible. For some unknown reason she wanted to do anything Bud wanted her to do. Why she should feel that way she did not know, but the fact that Bud thought that she should give Jack a home made it instantly the thing she herself wanted to do. It was very silly reasoning for a girl who had all her life prided herself on her independence. Yet Madge didn't mind it in the least.

"Well," she said slowly, "the idea's sudden, but perhaps it would work. I'd be willing to try it for a week or two, Jack—that is, providing the Hamilton authorities would let me have you. Then, if the two weeks turned out well, we could make it permanent."

"Oh, will you?" Jack shouted incredulously. He jumped forward, threw both arms around her, and gave her a bear hug. Then with a shout that sounded like: "Whoops!" he jumped for Bud, who swung him around and around by the arms.

"Say," Jack said, and his voice was so happy that it made Madge

happy, too, "it will be a home, a real home! I've never had a home."

So it was that when Madge took possession of her legacy, the Hotel Brunswick, and started the hard task of reopening it for business, she had a willing slave in Jack Moody. And it was surprising how many steps he saved her. He seemed to have a genius for discovering little details that had to be attended to, and for performing his tasks well. Madge interviewed cooks and maids that day, and finally hired her quota. It was a busy day, and she was dead tired at the end of it.

Bud came up in the evening, ostensibly to see Jack, but he stayed long after that tired young gentleman had gone upstairs to bed. Bud and Madge talked for a long time. Never in her life had she met a man who interested and thrilled her so much. She found herself, for no particular reason, telling her plans.

"You see," she said, "the Brunswick hasn't been paying for a long time, and I think I know the reasons. At least it's my only chance to get something out of what my uncle left me."

"I hope you're right," he said seriously. "But the Brunswick is almost too far from the center of the town to get the traveling salesmen. And in a small hotel, they're the big item."

"I realize that," Madge nodded, "and I've got to counteract it. I think I can do it by catering to tourist trade. We're right at the junction of two through routes; that means a lot of tourists. And if I cater to them, there's no reason why I shouldn't get more out here than you would down in the center of the town where it's much noisier."

"I can see how that might be," Bud nodded. "Your uncle didn't cater very much to tourists."

"That's where he made his mistake in this location," Madge said earnestly. "You see, there's a gold mine in tourist trade. And another thing, in a small hotel the meals bring in more than the rooms. You can make more on your dining room than you can with the rest of the hotel if you go at it right. But you have to lose money for a year or so to do it. You have to get a reputation for serving more and finer food for a given price than any other hotel in your neighborhood. Then when people are out riding, they'll drive there for dinner and back home in the evening. That's especially true on Sundays."

"And I know no amount of advertising will get you a reputation like that. It has to be word-of-mouth advertising from customers who think they discovered you, and want to tell their friends. I've been to places like that, and I know. I have a lot of ideas for making my table distinctive, and I intend to stuff every person who comes here. It will be better in the end than serving small portions. Then I'll advertise over at the State University. There's no place there where fine food is served, and ten miles is nothing when you have a car. I think I can get a lot of trade from students who are entertaining their parents or friends."

"I believe you have the right idea," Bud told Madge, and he seemed really excited about it. "I wish you every possible success with it. I don't see why you shouldn't succeed. Anyway, I'll be rooting for you."

Madge knew that, whether or not she succeeded, the fact that Bud was rooting for her would make her do her best. She began to fear that she was actually falling in love, yet she couldn't truthfully call the experi-

ence unpleasant, not when the man was some one so absolutely fascinating as Bud.

At the end of the first two weeks, Madge had surmounted a veritable mountain of work. And things were beginning to go better. She took a great deal of pains in the preparation of her food, and saw to it that absolutely no one left the table hungry. She toiled mightily to make the rooms attractive, and in two weeks succeeded better than her uncle had in all the time he had owned the Brunswick. She began systematically to carry out the plans she had outlined to Bud that first evening. Taken all in all, affairs seemed very encouraging.

As for Jack, he was supremely happy and terribly anxious to please. He did cheerfully everything Madge asked him to do, and when his assigned tasks were finished, he was always surprising her by performing extra work. He was as devoted to her as a dog to its master. She did not wonder at his fidelity. If, as he had said, she was the only one who had ever been good to him, it was only natural.

Second in Jack's affections stood Bud. Bud came up nearly every evening to see him, and stayed to talk with Madge, and it was doubtful if the boy enjoyed his part of those evenings any better than Madge enjoyed her hours alone with Bud. Bud bought a baseball glove for his youthful admirer, and thereafter the *plunk* of ball against leather could be heard out in the side yard until it was too dark to see.

"I'm teaching him to field grounders," he told Madge. "The poor little kid never had a chance to play any baseball, but he's picking it up fast. He'll be good before I finish with him."

"It's awfully nice of you to fuss with him so much," Madge said seriously, "and he thinks there's nobody quite like you. He confided to me the other day that maybe he'd give up the idea of being an aviator, and be a hotel manager like Uncle Bud."

Bud laughed.

"What I've done is nothing," he said. "It's no more than I should do. You took him under your wing because I advised you to. I'm sort of a foster father to the kid for that reason. Besides, I like him. You just can't help it. Next winter I'm going to get him some boxing gloves."

After Jack had reluctantly left them for a night of sleep, Madge and Bud would sit downstairs and listen to the radio, sometimes play cards, and on occasions when she was not too tired, go to a movie. By the end of the week the thrilly feeling came whenever she saw him, and she could no longer hide from herself the fact that she was in love with him. She found herself living for his nightly visits, always dressing carefully for them, and planning her work so that she would have the time free. She found herself watching him constantly when she was with him, and wishing she could run her hands through his hair. In short, she found herself thinking all manner of silly, loving things, hoping devoutly that she could make him care for her.

"Well, how's the hotel business?" he asked one night.

Madge told him of her progress. She liked to tell him everything, because she loved him.

"So really, I've accomplished a lot," she finished.

"I'll tell the world you have," he assured her. "Say, do you carry employers' liability insurance?"

"No," Madge told him. "I haven't been able to afford it. There are so many expenses I hadn't counted on."

Later she remembered that question, and it troubled her. She knew she shouldn't take chances. The result was that when the afternoon bridge club came the next day and paid her for their luncheon, she took the money and arranged for the insurance. That evening she intended to tell Bud what she had done, but somehow in the excitement of seeing him, she forgot it. Madge had decided long since that her mind did not function at its best when he was around. She wondered if people in love always had that trouble, and decided that they probably did. Later she forgot the matter when other things began to happen.

Her first rude jolt came when the State University *Daily* sent her a copy of their paper to show that they had run her advertisement. On the very same page there was an even larger advertisement of the American Hotel mentioning a dinner of exactly the same kind and at the same price.

Naturally Madge was upset at first, not that the American didn't have a right to advertise whatever sort of dinner they chose. She was upset because Bud was the only person in whom she had confided her plans. And Bud was manager of the American.

She almost mentioned it to him that night, but once she was there with him, her doubts vanished. He was so perfectly wonderful and she loved him so desperately that she couldn't conceive of his taking an unfair advantage. It was probably mere coincidence that he had advertised at the same time she had, or if not that, perhaps he had not thought he was doing anything un-

ethical. At any rate, she could not hold it against him.

"Madge," he said before he left, "you're perfectly wonderful. I don't see how any one person can be so clever and so pretty all at the same time."

He laughed when he said it, but there was enough earnestness in his voice to raise Madge to the seventh heaven of delight. It was absurd to think that Bud would take advantage of their friendship.

Yet the next day something else came to her attention. In their first talk together, Madge had mentioned to him that in order to make up for the lack of tourist trade during the winter months, she intended to get as many of the high-school teachers as she could to live with her at regular rates. She was sure she could make them an offer which they would find attractive, and their money would run the Brunswick until summertime when the real profit was to be made. All that she had told Bud. And then, in speaking to some of the teachers, she discovered that the American had been before her, and had made practically the same proposition she herself had intended to make.

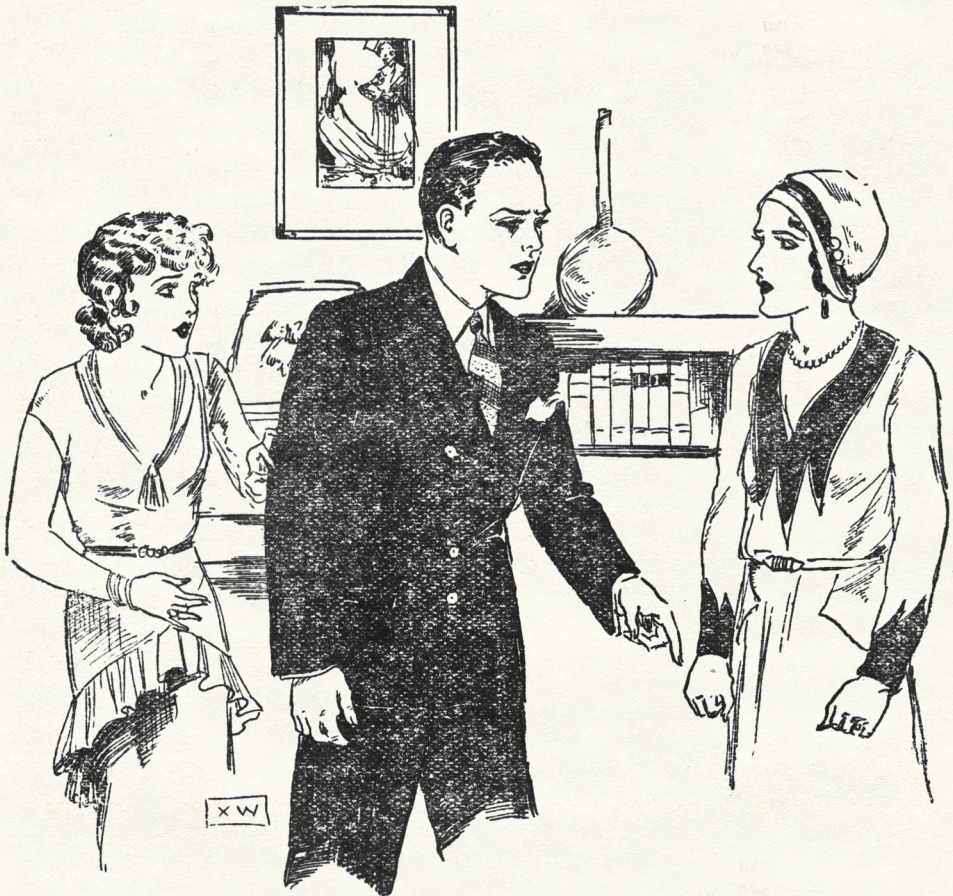
Madge was not angry when she learned about it. She was hurt, cruelly hurt. The business of the advertisement might have been an accident, but when this second thing came up, she knew well enough that it had not been accidental. Still, she could not feel angry toward Bud. She was incapable of entertaining any such emotion where he was concerned.

That night she started to mention the matter to him several times, but each time she found herself unable to. After all, she loved him with all her heart. In doubting him, she would be unfaithful to that love.

And he was so good-natured, so lovable, and so altogether fascinating that it was impossible to conceive of his being unfair.

The next afternoon the accident happened. The cook, who had gone

"An accident like that is an awful thing," Bud said that night. "I went up to see her this morning, and she's getting along well. But she can make things unpleasant for you if she wants to."



Mrs. Cronin came in, her eyes defiant. "I hate you and always will!" she said. "Bud would have loved me if you hadn't come around!"

down into the cellar after a scuttful of coal, slipped on the stairs and fell half their length. Jack and several of the others managed to carry her up to the kitchen, and fifteen minutes later she was in the hospital having a broken arm set. The following day Madge was told that suit was to be brought against her.

That set Madge to thinking. Bud still believed the Brunswick did not carry employers' liability, and he could very easily have instigated the cook's idea of suing. Madge was positive her cook would not have thought of it alone. If any person wanted to put the Brunswick out of business, that would be the

best possible way. And after the other things which had happened, it was at least possible that Bud was behind the question of the suit.

"No, she can't, Bud," Madge said sweetly. "After I spoke to you about employers' liability, I changed my mind and took some out. That means that the cook will be recompensed for her accident without my having to bear any of the expense. I'm—I'm grateful to you for making me think of it."

"Great," Bud said, his face lighting up. "That's a load off my mind. I was afraid you were going to get into a lot of trouble over this, but now everything will be perfect."

And again Madge could not suspect. His congratulations had been so sincere, and his deep-blue eyes had caressed her so sweetly that she could harbor no suspicion. He was overwhelmingly wonderful, and she loved him with all her heart.

The insurance company settled the cook's case quickly and carefully, and things again went on at the Brunswick as they had before. Business was getting constantly better, and Madge was greatly encouraged. She had several people from the university. Two of them told her that as they had tried the American first and had not been served a particularly good meal, they would patronize the Brunswick from then on.

As for Jack, he was actually putting on weight. He hardly looked like the same wistful, unhappy little boy who had hidden from them on the closet shelf, scared to death that first night. Jack and Bud were the greatest pals imaginable, and the fact seemed to draw Bud and Madge closer together. Once all three of them went fishing, ate a picnic lunch at noon, and got home at four in the afternoon. Jack had

caught the largest fish, a thirteen-inch brown trout, and a prouder young man never lived. If Madge had experienced qualms about keeping him and bearing the extra expense of his food and clothes, they were lost immediately. After looking into his eyes that afternoon she realized that she could never under any circumstances send him away.

Then one night when Jack went down into the cellar where he and Bud kept a box of night crawlers for bait, he discovered the cellar door open, and a fire raging in a corner among some crates. He yelled for help and then very promptly rushed in and scattered the crates. That meant that the fire was spread over a greater territory, but the ceiling was not in such immediate danger. It would take a great deal to set the floor on fire. Then he grabbed a pail, filled it with water, and put out two crates. He was filling a second pail when help came. By the time the village volunteer fire department arrived on the scene, there was no more fire for them to fight, thanks to Jack's presence of mind. Water dumped from pails on that blazing pile of crates would have done no good, but water on separate crates soon extinguished them.

"How did this start?" the chief asked Madge.

"I don't know," she admitted helplessly. "We never have any fire in this end of the house. Jack says the outside door was open."

The chief shook his head grimly. Later he dug into the ruined boxes and found unmistakable signs that they were kerosene-soaked. One other thing was found, but the chief did not see it. Jack brought it to Madge. It was a three-cornered piece of leather, such as might have come from a leather sports coat.

"Where did you find this, Jack?" she asked him.

"It was on a nail that sticks out of the door jamb. Whoever started this fire left in such a hurry that he tore his coat on that nail."

Jack was dreadfully excited, just as any boy would have been. He wanted to be a second *Sherlock Holmes*.

"I'm going to find out who it was, Miss Winters."

Madge laughed at his eagerness, but she kept the piece of leather. Jack's theory wasn't wholly improbable.

There was a great deal of excitement occasioned in the town by the fire. It died down a bit after the second or third day, and it was on the fourth day that Bud came to go fishing with Jack. When he stepped into the lobby, Madge noticed that he was wearing a leather coat. Suddenly she started violently. It seemed as if somebody had suddenly dealt her a terrific blow. There was a three-cornered piece torn out of one sleeve of Bob's coat!

Madge was icily calm. Later she wondered how, under the stress of that awful moment, she could have been so calm.

"Is—is that your jacket?" she asked quietly.

He looked at her, surprised.

"Of course it is, Madge," he said.

Without a word she turned and walked into the dining room. There were tears in her eyes, and she did not want to show them. She had to think.

Madge suffered torment that afternoon. At first she cried as she had never cried before. She cried until her face was swollen and red, and her voice was husky and uncertain. For no longer could she disbelieve. She had blinded herself to Bud's unfairness and dishonesty the

other three times, but this was too much.

He had committed the crime of arson, and worse in Madge's eyes, the unpardonable crime of making her fall in love with an unworthy person. She still found herself wondering how Bud, with his wonderful ways, could have done such a thing. But the fact remained. She had to face it.

Of one thing, however, she was sure. She could not, no matter what he did, turn him over to the authorities. She loved him far too much for that. She still loved him in spite of what he had done, but she would never see him again. She didn't trust herself to see him again. Reason told her that she should despise such a person, yet she was afraid that love would trick her. She made her decision and waited to carry it through.

That night when Bud came up, Madge met him at once. Her face and eyes were hard, even though she had trouble in keeping them so.

"Bud," she said in a curiously toneless, hopeless voice, "I found out. Please don't come to this hotel again to see either Jack or me. If you do I shall consider that you are trespassing and treat you accordingly. Please don't speak to me again, ever. I can't hate you, Bud, but I consider you the lowest thing in the world."

She turned on her heel and walked from the room. And all night, indelibly stamped on her brain, was the memory of Bud's incredulous, tortured face as she left him.

The next week was the most horrible nightmare Madge had ever known. Bud was in her thoughts constantly. His sweet smile came to torture her in her dreams, even when she could succeed in blotting

out the image with work during part of the day. She cried a great deal, and her eyes were constantly red.

By the middle of the week she knew that she wanted Bud no matter what he had done, but somehow she made herself refuse to see him. It wasn't easy. He tried in every conceivable way to see her, and Madge just as steadfastly avoided him. On the fourth day, she knew that she would have to tell some one or go insane. She could not brood on it in silence any longer. So when Jack came to her and asked why she had been crying, she took him aside and told him. She told him everything, and afterward felt better.

"We both loved him, Jack," she said, tears rolling down her cheeks, "but he wasn't worthy of it. He shattered our faith in him. It's horrible."

Jack evidently agreed with her, for he, too, cried, even though he steadfastly claimed that he was too grown-up to cry.

That evening Madge was sitting in the radio room, trying to read. She was not having a great deal of success with it, but she was trying doggedly. Anything was better than thinking about Bud. Suddenly she heard the sound of running feet in the hall, and Jack burst into the room.

"Aunt Madge," he fairly shouted, "he didn't do it. Honest, he didn't! I went down and asked him. He didn't do it!"

For just a second Madge's heart leaped wildly. Then she realized that Bud would naturally deny everything.

"But, honey, we have the proof," she protested. "And you shouldn't have gone to him and told him. It was a confidence, Jack."

Jack nodded contritely.

"I know it," he said, "but I thought maybe it would help you. You've been so miserable. I hoped I could make things all right again, and pay you a little for everything you've done to make me happy. And, Aunt Madge, he didn't do it. He knows who did and everything. He's out in the outer room now. Please see him. I worked so hard to make things come out right. Please don't spoil it all now."

More to please him than for any other reason, Madge finally went into the parlor. Bud stood there, his eyes serious, waiting. Madge knew instantly that he had been as hard hit as she had. He was terribly pale.

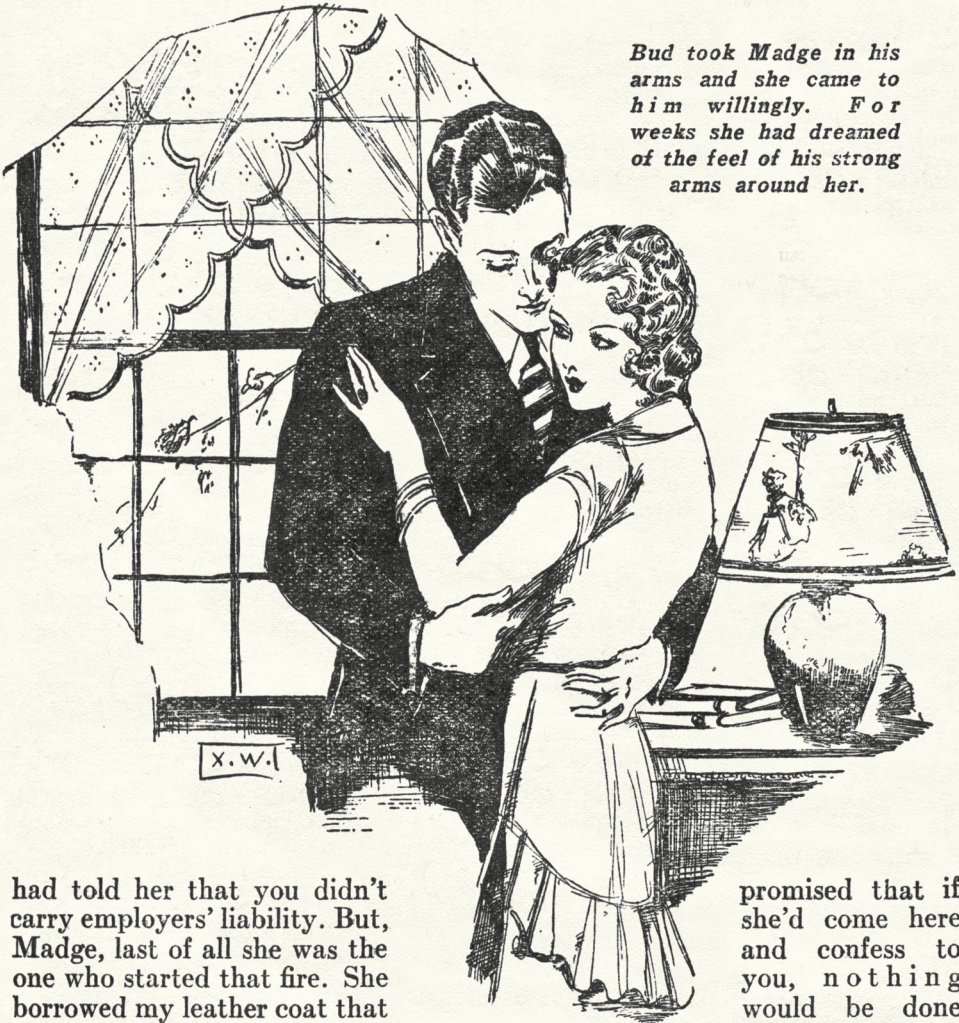
"Well?" she snapped.

He started forward, but Madge turned as if to leave. He stopped short.

"Madge dear," he said, "I wish you had told me what was wrong instead of taking it for granted that I knew. The minute Jack told me, I began to see light. I was innocent, Madge. More than anything else I wanted you to succeed."

"It looks as if you did," Madge said coldly. She didn't dare act any other way. If she encouraged him, she knew she would find herself in his arms.

"But I did," he protested softly. "I thought your plan was wonderfully clever, and so when Mrs. Cronin asked how you expected to make a go of things, I told her. She had always been honest with me, and I knew she was fond of me. Afterward I thought no more about it. She was the one who tried to take the teachers away from you, and had the advertisement run in the *State University Daily*. I guess she even patterned her menus after yours. And she was the one who incited your cook to sue, because I



Bud took Madge in his arms and she came to him willingly. For weeks she had dreamed of the feel of his strong arms around her.

had told her that you didn't carry employers' liability. But, Madge, last of all she was the one who started that fire. She borrowed my leather coat that night, and when she returned it, it was torn. She said she tore it on a branch when she was out walking. That's how I knew she was the one."

Madge's heart wanted to sing. It seemed to her as if she had never in her life been so happy. Yet she told herself that she must not seem too eager to believe.

"And what proof have you for all that?" she said. His eyes looked at her, hurt, yet he answered quickly:

"I brought Mrs. Cronin here with me. She's in the other parlor. I

promised that if she'd come here and confess to you, nothing would be done about it. If she refused, I'd have her arrested. I guess she liked me pretty well, and she hated to see me falling in love with you. I suppose women are like that. Anyway, she was afraid you'd harm her business, too."

He went to the door and called Mrs. Cronin. She came in, her eyes defiant.

"I did it," she said instantly, "and I only wish your place had burned to the ground. I hate you and always will! Bud would have loved me if you hadn't come around! Do you think I'd be here for a second

if he hadn't threatened to send me up? I hope——"

"Never mind, Mrs. Cronin. I thank you," Bud said. "You may go now. You're safe as long as you leave us alone."

For a second Mrs. Cronin looked as if she intended to remain and say more. But a glance at Bud changed her mind. When she was gone, Bud came toward Madge.

"Madge dear," he said, "will you marry me? I love you so terribly much, and I went through such torture when I thought I had lost you. Please say you will. I haven't any flair for talking. I guess I'm doing a punk job of this. But please marry me, darling."

He took her in his arms, and she came to him willingly. For weeks she had dreamed of the feel of his strong arms around her.

"Oh, Bud," she said, "I'll marry you to-morrow, if you say so. And, Bud, deep in my heart I loved you and wanted you even when I thought you had done such terrible things to me. I lost faith in you—and yet I could never quite lose it. I was afraid to see you for fear I'd surrender to you in spite of it all."

He laughed happily.

"I wish I'd known it," he said. "Sweetheart, I can't believe that you love me. Tell me again!"

She told him again, and then he told her many, many times. And they kissed each other with burning kisses that miraculously wiped from Madge's mind those nightmare days she had lived through in misery. It seemed as if she had been in his arms always.

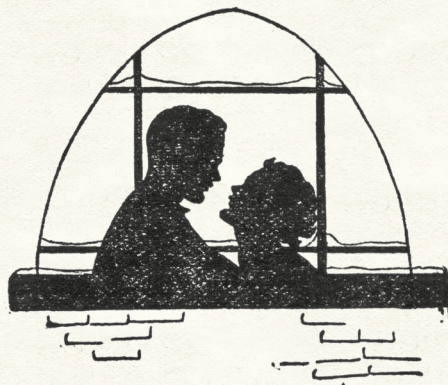
Suddenly they heard a little gasp behind them and saw Jack standing there.

"Jack," Bud said, "Madge and I are going to be married. Do you—do you approve?"

"Honest?" Jack shouted, and then jumped forward and grabbed them both. "I'll say I approve. Say, this is like old times again."

"You know, Madge," Bud said after a moment, "we owe a lot to Jack. He's going to stay with us always—until he gets to be such a famous aviator he has to travel around making speeches."

And the three happiest people in Wingate laughed joyfully together, and knew in their hearts that their days of sorrow were over at last.





CHAPTER III.

CAROL stared at the girl before her, astonished and perturbed. Plainly betraying color flooded her cheeks.

"Who—who are you?" she stammered.

"Oh, I don't cut any ice." The other giggled again. "It's you, darling. I don't want to buy anything. I'm just looking, for a friend, like they say in stores. Ta-ta."

And she swirled up and out, leaving a cloud of scent behind her.

Carol sat motionless, panic-stricken. Who was that very queer person? The episode spelled something, some interference with her plans, undoubtedly. What?

The answer walked in the very next morning on the feet of Weldon Frane. Fortunately, Bill Hadleigh was again in court.

Fifty-fifty

By

Lydia Tracy

Part II.

Weldon smiled grimly and mockingly as he laid his hat on Carol's little desk and eased his immaculate trousers into a chair.

"Well, Miss Wilson," he said. "Gone back to the law business? It ought to teach you that you can't get away with that

sort of thing, my dear young lady."

Carol was scarlet with anger and confusion and anxiety.

"What do you mean, Weldon? And why are you here? You might realize that if I left Sinclair Castle and went back to work I must have had pretty good reasons for it!"

"It doesn't take much imagination, sweetheart," he answered mockingly. "Did you really think you could get away with it?"

"Get away with what? I don't understand."

"Well, in the first place," drawled Weldon, plainly playing with her, "with stealing my sweet little promised bride away from me and burying her in the big town under an assumed name."

"It's not an assumed name," blazed Carol. "At least, it's my own name, the name I was born to!"

"Which made you all the easier to find, foolish baby mine. It would have been smarter for you to pick an entirely new name."

"I see! That cheap girl who was in here yesterday, who seemed to know me—was she your informer? She looked as if she might be your style, Weldon," said Carol contemptuously.

"Never mind the style," he frowned. "But you're really clever, aren't you, Carol? Yes, she's been looking round through cheap law offices for a Miss Wilson ever since I first found out that you had tried and failed to get into decent ones. Too easy!"

Carol crimsoned with anger at the insult to Bill Hadleigh, but she held her peace. Weldon leaned forward a little.

"I guess you know what I'm after," he said menacingly. "Hand it over, darling!"

"Hand what over? I don't know what you're talking about!" she cried in surprise.

Weldon set his teeth as he glanced around the little office. He pointed to the closed safe.

"In there, is it? Then dig it out pronto!"

"Tell me what you're talking about if you expect an answer," retorted Carol freezingly. "I'm not a mind reader."

He glared at her.

"Don't try to hand me any of that stuff, Carol! I want the will you discovered and walked away with!

Think I don't know what was the only thing that would make you sneak away and hide yourself from me? I'm not a complete fool, you know."

"Will?" said Carol, genuinely amazed. "What will! The only will I know anything about is Uncle Peter's will that Mr. Bender read to us the day after his death!"

"The second will!" he spat at her. "The one he made just before his death, disinheriting me and undoubtedly turning the whole estate over to you, or you'd never have taken the trouble to steal it."

"Weldon, you're crazy," asserted Carol calmly. "If there was such a will I know nothing about it. I've never seen it. How do you know about it?"

"Because I've pumped those two old fools down at the Castle," he told her grimly, "and because they practically admitted it. Said they couldn't find it, but when I learned that you had beaten it secretly for New York I knew, of course, that you had found it, and it was easy enough to figure what was in it for you! A knowledge of part of it—my being disinherited—I had already been favored with by the old fool who told me that he was going to. The rest of it, figured on your action, was simple, my dear. But not so simple as you are! Now pass it over! I'm waiting!"

"For you to destroy it, I suppose," laughed Carol icily. "But you forget, darling, that if a later will is destroyed the old one holds good, and the old one splits the estate fifty-fifty between us—on condition that we marry! And can you see me doing that now, Weldon? Well, really!"

"I'll take care of that part," he gritted. "If you're so anxious for the whole thing I guess you'd be glad

enough to get half, even at the expense of marrying me!"

"Don't you fool yourself," warned the girl, her eyes snapping. "I wouldn't marry you——"

She stopped in a sudden panic of conscience.

"Your promise to the dead?" inquired Weldon with a nasty smile. "And you always keep your promises, you know, a point of honor!"

"I shouldn't have to keep it if you—you did something criminal," the girl said thickly. "Uncle Peter wouldn't want me to."

Weldon raised a pair of mocking eyebrows.

"I do something criminal? Aren't you a little premature? It's you who've done something criminal by stealing it from wherever it was! As you know," he smiled oilily, "it should have been turned over to Mr. Bender."

"I haven't got it, I tell you!" cried Carol passionately. "And I never saw it? I don't even know that it exists, although it ought to! I came here to New York to—to try and find out if there were any other heirs."

"Well?" he demanded sharply.

"I've found nobody," she said brokenly. "I'm afraid there isn't anybody."

"Of course not! Didn't I tell you so? And you knew it, anyway. You never hid yourself away for any such purpose as that, Carol! Don't you hand me any of that bull," he said fiercely. "Come, give me the will, or——"

Weldon jumped to his feet and leaned suddenly across the desk, seizing Carol by the arm.

"Stop it!" she gasped. "You're hurting me, you brute!"

Weldon smiled in her face.

"Will you get that will? Won't do you any good to scream, darling.

I happen to know, thanks to Irene, that this is the only occupied office on this side, and that your cheap lawyer friend is in court."

Carol looked at him in terror and dismay, bending to ease the agonizing pressure on her arm. Suddenly a step resounded along the corridor outside. Instantly Weldon let her go and she sank into a chair, while he picked up his hat and stood casually beside the desk.

"If that's your boss," he whispered fiercely, "you keep your mouth shut! Unless you want him roped into this mess and his practice ruined!"

Bill Hadleigh opened the door and stopped in surprise on the threshold, looking inquiringly at the pair.

"Mr. Hadleigh?" smiled Weldon easily.

"This—this is Mr. Frane," broke in Carol hurriedly, too confused to do anything but take Weldon's threat for valid. "He's—an old friend of mine."

Bill slowly turned to Weldon Frane with a frown growing on his face.

"Glad to meet you," bowed Weldon carelessly. "Well, Carol, I must be going. See you again some time," he said with a swift and threatening glance at the girl as he passed out of the door.

"Who was that?" demanded Bill after a long look at Carol.

"I told you," she smiled faintly. "His name is Frane. He's even a— a sort of a relation."

"I don't like his looks and I don't like his manner," said Bill abruptly. "I don't want him near you, Carol!"

Carol looked helplessly at him, not knowing what to say.

And suddenly the dam of Bill Hadleigh's long self-restraint broke completely. He seized and crushed Carol in his arms, kissing her passionately again and again, ignorant

of both the pain and the bliss he was causing her, mindful only of his own.

"Oh, Carol! Darling, beautiful, unhappy little Carol! I can't stand it any longer! I love you beyond all measure, beyond all control! Carol,

burning kisses on her mouth. "Sweet! Sweet!" she thought dizzily. Oh, why not? Why couldn't she just let everything go—money, heirs, everything connected with dead Peter Sinclair and his fortune, everything



Weldon jumped to his feet and leaned suddenly across the desk, seizing Carol by the arm.

darling, let me help you! I know you're in some trouble, dearest, and I don't care what it is! It doesn't matter if I can help you, and I can help you, my darling, by having you, by marrying you to protect and guard you! Oh, Carol, let me!"

Carol closed her eyes as he lifted her unresisting face and pressed his

connected with Weldon Frane, and just give herself up to Bill Hadleigh and to love! Why not?

From her lips he heard a faint, soft murmur—they began to return even his kisses, and he felt her relax in his arms.

"Carol!" he exclaimed as if the name were at once a pæan of tri-

umph and a prayer. "Carol! You do! You will! Oh, Carol!"

At last Bill drew back his head and looked down into her lovely, flushed face.

"We'll be married to-morrow, my darling," he promised her. "But I—if you imagine you're going to be Mrs. William E. Hadleigh, beautiful and dear, you're fooling yourself. The real name is something else again, and I suppose you ought to be married to the right one. Does it matter?"

She moved her little head from side to side, still against him, in unconcerned negation.

"I'd better explain before you commit yourself, sweetheart," said Bill with an embarrassed chuckle. "So that you won't get the idea that you're being asked to marry a fugitive from justice or the like. I assure you I come from poor but honest parents and can claim those qualifications myself, especially the first one. But the fact is that my father, who died when I was two, went to California as a young man just out of college and started his young life all over again under another name. For no reason discreditable to him, rather the opposite. Some miserable family row with one of those hard-boiled fathers, melodrama style, who cast their innocent children out upon the world. He took the name of Hadleigh, which was my mother's, merely to avoid further persecution, but I'm afraid he never took it legally. So I suppose, according to law and fact, I'm William Edward Sinclair. Edward after my father. That was the name."

If a stick of dynamite had exploded in Bill's arms he couldn't have been more astounded at what happened next. Carol burst out of them like a bomb, and stood staring

at him, her eyes enormous in a face of chalk.

"You!" she cried wildly. "You! It's impossible! You!"

"Carol!" gasped her absolutely stupefied lover. "Carol! What is it? What's the matter?"

Through Carol's mind, five minutes before gratefully attuned to a renunciation of Weldon Frane and all the Sinclair millions, began to blow a staggering backdraft of ideas, a current of perceptions and reflections that blew like a whirlwind.

This was Bill Sinclair, the son of Edward, the grandson of Peter! The missing heir to the Sinclair millions, the only true heir, long sought for by his grandfather! Undoubtedly the inheritor under the second, the missing will, of the existence of which she had instinctively no further doubt! This man, her sweetheart, the living Sinclair, was the inevitable Nemesis of Weldon Frane!

And at the thought of Weldon Frane a dreadful panic swept over her. Weldon Frane had found her in Bill's office, Weldon Frane had seen Bill himself, and believing that she had discovered and run away with the will, must suspect something, perhaps, even of Bill!

Carol opened her mouth to speak, and then closed it again. If she should tell Bill who he was, about the wills, or either of them, about herself and Weldon Frane, he would as certainly take some immediate personal action, if only against Weldon, as the sun was certain to rise in the morning! And as for Weldon, she wouldn't put anything past him! Not even murder! He was as dangerous already as a tiger deprived of its prey. He had just proved it to herself!

No, she thought wildly and rapidly, if she had that will, if it could be brought to New York and

locked up safely, she might persuade Bill to hold his horses and let fate take its course with regard to Weldon Frane. For she had not now the least doubt but that the new will of old Peter Sinclair provided, not for herself, but for a Sinclair! Weldon Frane was an idiot to think of her as his rival in the matter. Just as he had been an idiot to dream that she could have found the will and walked away with it!

So he hadn't found it, and it must still be where old Peter had hidden it in the hours before his death—at Sinclair Castle, in his very death chamber. Because he had never left that room alive again! She would find it even if she had to tear the walls of the room to pieces.

All this time, during the period of perhaps ten seconds while this mad multitude of thoughts had been flitting through her brain like a swift and myriad flock of birds, Bill had been staring at her in dumb amazement. With a cry of great joy Carol flung herself upon him.

"I've got to be mysterious still, darling," she cried, "but only for twenty-four hours or less, instead of for days more! Don't ask me! Trust me! I love you! I love you! Isn't that enough?"

"Enough?" he babbled. "It's more than heaven, beautiful and dear! But can't you tell me——"

Carol pressed a sweet, soft palm against his lips, and then removed it to kiss them madly and joyously.

"Well, I seem to fit somewhere in this, but where?" asked Bill feebly. "Haven't I a right——"

"Not yet," she chattered. "But, oh! do you fit, darling! Just wait and see! You fit all along the line, Bill, but nowhere so perfectly as in my heart! Just wait! To-morrow—oh, good heavens!" she gasped. "I've got to fly! The trains——"

LS-7B

Carol threw her arms convulsively around his neck and kissed him again in a wild intoxication of happiness, and then fled out of the office door like a blown feather. Bill Hadleigh-Sinclair slumped weak-kneed into her chair. His brain was whirling but his heart was swelling and overflowing with ecstasy like a fiery and effusive volcano.

CHAPTER IV.

It was midnight before the three of them—Carol, Beebe, and Hannah Kidder, the housekeeper—gave up the long and futile search. Every inch of the great chamber, every stick of furniture, every corner of every closet, every book and every bit of clothing that had been at hand to the master of Sinclair Castle on that eventful night had been ransacked. Even the carpet had been torn up. Not a pin could have remained concealed. It was with a heavy heart that Carol finally called a halt.

She sent the two weary old servants to their beds at last, and went to her own old chamber, just down the hall from that which had belonged to old Pete Sinclair.

As she was forlornly unpacking her overnight case in order to prepare for bed herself, Carol heard an unused pocket rustle. The shirred outside of it seemed peculiarly stiff. Unbuttoning it and inserting a startled and curious hand, Carol was amazed to draw forth two long envelopes, one sealed and one left open. She stared at them.

On the front of the sealed envelope was written in the well-remembered crabbed hand of age: "My last and final will and testament." The annotation was signed "P. S." and was dated underneath the initials with



Day was barely breaking when Carol suddenly awoke. Some sound had startled her ears, but her eyes at first told her nothing. Then they widened in sheer panic.

the date of the day before old Peter Sinclair's death! The other envelope, the open one, was labeled "Concerning Weldon Frane. My reasons for his disinheritance."

At first Carol could believe neither her eyes nor her senses. Why, she had taken this overnight case with her to New York when she had left Sinclair Castle that other time, and had had it with her right along! Then how could these envelopes have possibly got into it?

And then it came to her, slowly, that old Peter Sinclair had openly

threatened Weldon Frane with disinheritance, that he had accomplished his purpose at once and only shortly before he died, and that he himself, distrusting Weldon and fearing that he would be unable to commit the document to the hands of Bender, had stolen into Carol's room and slipped the two envelopes into a hiding place which he would have considered absolutely secure from Weldon's possible prying, and where Carol could be counted on to find them easily!

Only she hadn't, merely because

she rarely used the pocket of the case! It was a miracle!

Carol thought of summoning both Bebe and Hannah Kidder from their beds in order to inform them of the miracle, but, remembering how tired they had been, decided to wait till morning. She refrained from opening the sealed envelope that contained the will. That would be for a lawyer to do, for either Bill or Mr. Bender. But the open one, marked for herself, she investigated.

It contained just one document—the marriage certificate of one Irene Vare. And the marriage was described as taking place at Wharton, an obscure town in Connecticut, and the name of Irene Vare's husband was Weldon Frane! That girl of the other day—it was she! For Weldon himself had referred to her as "Irene"!

Carol felt sick. So he had been married—what was the date?—a year before! And he had dared to expect to marry her! She looked at the certificate again to make sure that this monstrous thing was true, and saw along its edge a penciled notation in old Peter's writing:

Bought for ten thousand dollars from Mrs. Weldon Frane for the sake of the family honor. The only evidence, since the marriage was not registered. May she keep her mouth shut according to promise!

And even this was dated, just one day before the date of the missing will!

For an hour Carol's eyes gazed, and her mind wrought, and her heart pounded hotly over the disclosure, even more than over her discovery of the will. And then Nature took her toll and the girl fell asleep from the mere exhaustion of excitement.

Day was barely breaking when Carol suddenly awoke. Some sound

had startled her ears, but her eyes at first told her nothing. Then they widened in sheer panic. For above her, standing beside her bed and leering down at her, stood Weldon Frane! And in his hand he held the sealed envelope containing the will, which Carol had left on the dresser. The other, by some chance, she had tucked beneath her pillow before she went to bed.

"So you told the truth after all, poor fool," he sneered at her. "I've been having you watched, Carol, and when I learned that you'd taken the train up here last evening I followed in a car. I missed the train, but it's just as well, apparently, since otherwise you might not have found the will. Tore the old pirate's room pretty near to pieces, didn't you? Come, get up!"

"What are you going to do?" said Carol faintly.

"Do?" chuckled Weldon. "What would you expect, my dear? I've a beautiful plan for us. There's a boat just down at the river and you and I are going to row across to the other side, where I can pick up a train on the west side and prove an alibi. You, unfortunately, are going to fall overboard about the middle of the Hudson. An accident. You know far too much, Carol."

Carol trembled violently, but managed to loosen her tongue.

"I'll scream," she quavered. "Beebe and Hannah——"

Weldon laughed aloud.

"Do you think that I don't realize they must know of this lucky discovery, too, darling? Am I dumb? No, sweetheart, Beebe and Hannah are apt to sleep just as long as you are. I've opened both their doors a little into the kitchen hallway and I've turned on the gas in the kitchen stove. All over! They'll be shaking hands with St. Peter even be-

fore you do, I'm afraid, darling. So scream ahead!"

"Murderer!" Carol cried at him.

"Millionaire! Respected citizen!" he retorted. "There'll be no chance of *that* discovery! Come, get up! There's still a fog and I don't want it to get too light, you see!" He jerked at the bed clothes.

"Then go away and let me dress," she said in a strangled voice. "Or at least turn your back! Be decent for once in your life, Weldon Frane!"

He hesitated a moment, and then moved away to the end of the room.

"Well, a girl in a pink silk nightie might look suspicious even at a distance," he conceded, "though there'll be nobody within miles to see.

Hurry up, now! Three minutes is all you get!"

Hopeless almost to the point of not caring what happened, Carol hustled into her clothes, principally for the sake of not being shamed before death by such a monstrosity of manhood. And for some bizarre reason, or purely automatically, she reached under her pillow and tucked into her stocking at the last moment the proof of his shameless marriage.

Weldon Frane barely missed see-

ing the act as he advanced to the bedside and lifted her roughly by the arm.

"March, my darling," he leered at her. "It's full time for your morning swim!"

Too dazed with terror even to struggle, Carol let herself be dragged



along, down the stairs, through the great hall, out into the open and down the driveway of Sinclair Castle toward the lonely highway that skirted the river. The fog was still thick and seemed to filter into her brain so that she could think but dimly. By that partial insensibility death was to be made easier for her.

Carol tried to fix her mind on the man she loved, but Bill seemed very far away. She thought vaguely that she would never see him again, that

he would never enter upon the Sinclair inheritance. Both facts seemed of equal and inconsiderable importance.

She was roused from her merciful stupor by a sudden halt and a pain-

a rush, and she suddenly opened her mouth and screamed with all her strength. Before Weldon could turn his fury on her, the fog burst into a blaze in front of them and a big car

ground to a smoking standstill within three yards of them, its headlights at such short distance fully illuminating them.

"Bill!" cried Carol wildly. "Bill!"

And with a shout of astonishment and rage Bill tumbled out of the car almost under their noses. He was followed by a woman's figure—a girl! The girl who had so disconcertingly entered the office a few days before and accosted Carol! Irene!

Weldon leaped backward, dragging

Carol with him, and in a flash had the two newcomers covered with an automatic.

"Stop where you are!" he commanded mockingly, "or you'll both die now instead of five minutes later, I tell you!" It was plain to see that he was in dead earnest.

Bill, seeing not only death but the total obliteration of any chance to protect or save Carol, unless he could gain a minute, stopped short, tense in every muscle.



With a shout of astonishment and rage Bill tumbled out of the car. He was followed by a woman's figure—a girl!

ful gripping of her arm. Weldon was staring into the fog along the line of the road, apparently uncertain as to whether to complete the crossing or to sneak back into the ambush of the driveway.

"What's that!" he snarled. "What fool is driving down this road at this time in the morning!"

And Carol could hear a car roaring down the invisible road, its horn blaring loud warning. Life and the desire of life came back to her with

"Oh, don't move!" wailed Carol. "He'll kill you, darling!"

But Irene thrust herself forward, her eyes blazing fire at Weldon.

"You wouldn't dare!" she hissed. "Think I haven't got you figured, you poor fish? If anything happens to me, it's already put in writing that it was you who did it! Shoot your wife, would you?"

"You my wife!" sneered Weldon. "A cheap lie! How could you prove it if you lived—which you're not going to? Happened in on this little party, did you? Well, that's just your bad luck, both of you!"

"Can't prove it, can't I?" screamed Irene, stung to desperation. Well, if it's so it's just because I sold the certificate to the old man for ten thousand, so's you could get out of that scrape! I'll get it back from him!"

"Afraid not," smiled Weldon. "He's dead and you'll be dead and I'll find it and destroy it. So that you——"

And then Carol did something absolutely irrational and unaccountable. Whipping her free hand beneath her skirt she snatched out a paper and held it out to Irene.

"Here's the proof," she said weakly.

The other girl snatched it and Weldon's surprise caused him to relax his vigilance with the automatic for the fraction of a moment. But that fraction of a moment was enough. Bill leaped at him like an uncoiled spring, knocking the gun from Weldon's hand while at the same time he struck him a terrific blow on the point of the jaw. Weldon Frane slumped to the ground like a wet rag, completely out.

Bill took one look at him, then seized Carol in his arms in a passion of love and protection, while the competent Irene reached out like a

snake for the fallen weapon and stood over her unconscious and conscienceless husband like a guardian demon.

"No! No!" cried Carol brokenly, pushing Bill away. "The house! The kitchen! He turned on the gas, and they'll die, Beebe and Hannah! They'll die!"

Bill stared, grasped her meaning, and was off on the run. Five minutes later he was back.

"It hadn't caught them—they're safe," he gasped. "Oh, Carol!"

Irene interrupted them.

"He hasn't killed anybody? Then let me take him away, will you? I got my marriage lines and I got the gun, and that ten thousand! Believe me, this bird'll never start anything else! He's headed for Mexico, though he don't know it! Would you?" she asked Carol almost wistfully.

Carol covered her face with her hands.

"Let him go, then," she said faintly. "Only, first—there, in his pocket, that paper, Bill."

Bill stooped and took it out, looking at Carol wonderingly.

"Get into the car and go," choked Carol, looking at Irene. "Go! Go! Go! Bill, darling, take me back—home!"

An hour later, on the broad piazza of Sinclair Castle, and after the quivering and almost delirious pair of old servants had left them to themselves, Bill at last loosened his tight hold of Carol.

"This property mine," he said in an awe-struck voice. "Or partly mine! And you, Carol, you! It's almost too much for me."

"Oh, it's all yours, my darling, my dear!" she cried happily at him. "All yours, just as I am all yours, forever and forever."

Bill smiled gently at her.

"You're absolutely right about yourself, sweetest and dearest lady of my heart," he told her. "But this fortune—you didn't read my grandfather's final will, did you, darling? He had his good points, after all. Take a good look at it."

Carol took the document that had nearly cost their lives and their happiness and read it. It was very brief. Then she looked up at Bill with wide and wondering eyes.

"Fifty-fifty!" she exclaimed. "To you and to me! Oh, Bill!"

"And fifty-fifty it shall be about everything, always," he assured her with grave tenderness. "Especially about love, my own."

"You'll have to go some to match me fifty-fifty on that, Bill, darling," said Carol.

"It will be easy, Carol of love in my heart! Are you ready? Here comes the car, darling, and I propose to start a fifty-fifty marriage just as soon as we can get to a place where we can put it over. What do you say, dear?"

"Let's go!" said Carol.

THE END.



UNFORGOTTEN

WHENEVER the moon is new
 And the grass is wet with dew,
 When the sleepy birds are calling
 My heart remembers you.
 Remembers your grace and beauty,
 Your eyes with love aglow,
 Your hands like smooth, pale flowers
 Whose soft touch thrilled me so,
 Your voice, melodious, tender,
 Whispering of love's bliss
 And the ecstasy divine
 Of your unforgotten kiss.

HELEN K. ROBERTS.



Afraid Of Love

By Mona Morrow



RITA was thrilled with the idea of going to Palm Beach, but not for the same reason that the rest of the other models were thrilled.

"It's the chance of a lifetime," said beautiful red-headed Jane Benson. "If I don't come back with a millionaire, I'll feel my life's been wasted."

Rita smiled cynically. All those girls thought of was marrying or annexing millionaires, as if it were something that brought great happiness, something worth striving for.

In Rita Trumbull's opinion, marrying a millionaire was a calamity. On the whole, million-

iares were faithless. Their scandals were spread over the newspapers.

She had seen a few of them in the Fifth Avenue shop where she worked. Even while they pretended to admire the gowns their wives bought, they were flirting with the models. Jane could have the millionaires. Rita would rather have poor Bruce Liggett.

And because Bruce was in Palm Beach working for an aviation concern, Rita was glad to go down there. It would be nice to see him every day. They had known each other since childhood. And though his work took him to different parts of the country, whenever he returned to New York they resumed their friendship.

Bruce was ambitious. Bruce had a goal in life, and he would work and strive until he reached that goal. That was the type of man she admired, not the one who had been left a fortune and did nothing but spend it.

The eight models chosen by Mr. Roberti were comfortably established in one of the hotels in Palm Beach. Mr. Roberti's idea was to give a fashion show in every hotel in an attempt to win customers for his New York establishment and for the Palm Beach branch.

"There must be a billion dollars out there waiting to look at us," Jane said excitedly. "Larry Stapleton's out there, too. And if you don't think I'm going to make a play for him, you're crazy."

Once more the cynical smile appeared on Rita's face. Larry Stapleton, the playboy of two continents! Rita didn't know him, but she had read enough about him and seen his picture often enough in the rotogravure sections of the Sunday papers. There was no scandal attached to his name, but since he was always seen with a different girl, she assumed that he was the most fickle person in the world. He probably changed girls just as often as he changed his clothes.

Jane could have him. He would undoubtedly wash his hands of her in a day. She'd rather have Bruce. In Bruce's estimation, a girl was something for a man to look up to.

The fashion show was held outdoors. The girls posed on a hastily constructed platform, while the guests sat around small iron tables sipping drinks. Each girl made several changes.

"Did you see Larry?" Jane asked, as she slipped into another dress in the dressing room.

"No, I didn't look for him," Rita answered.

"He's at the fourth table from the end with a baby-faced blonde," Jane informed her. "And make believe I didn't catch his eye already! It just burned the blonde up."

Rita got into a clinging white satin evening gown. She looked exquisitely pretty with her dark lustrous hair smoothly parted and her deep-brown eyes shining clearly and intelligently.

Rita was twenty, lovely to look upon. She had a pink-tinted skin, a fine, patrician nose, and provocative lips that made one think of moonlight and honeysuckle.

The hush that fell upon the guests when she stepped out in that white satin gown was a worthy tribute to her beauty. Rita let her eyes wander over the crowd, and for the fraction of a second they rested on Larry Stapleton.

She felt his eyes burning into hers and quickly turned her head. She had to admit to herself, however, that he was very handsome. Surprisingly, he looked clean and healthy, too. She had imagined he kept all sorts of terrible hours.

He appeared to be much younger than his twenty-six years. He had a fine shock of sandy hair, slate-gray eyes, pleasant, even features, and a firm jaw.

"He might have amounted to something," Rita thought, "if he'd been born poor. I suppose he's the most conceited person on earth."

When the show was over the girls returned to the hotel. Jane, who roomed with Rita, kept up an incessant chatter in which the word "millionaires" and the name "Larry" predominated. Jane had not met him yet, but he was already "Larry" to her. Coolly, she informed Rita that she was dolling up now to make a play for him. "If I can't put that blonde in the has-beens," she declared, "I'm the world's biggest flop."

Much later, Rita left her room. She intended to take a walk before dinner. When she had phoned Bruce in the morning, he had told her that he would not be able to see her before nine o'clock, so she had quite a bit of time on her hands.

As she stepped out of the elevator and started to walk across the lobby, she saw Larry Stapleton rise from a deep armchair. With a smile on his handsome face, he walked deliberately toward her.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "Didn't I see you in the fashion show this afternoon?"

Rita saw nothing flattering in being sought out that way. She saw nothing romantic in being accosted by the young millionaire. On the contrary, because she was already prejudiced, she considered it a bit of insolence.

Well, she'd show him that meant very little in her young life. If he expected a nice, warm smile of welcome, he was doomed to disappointment.

"If your eyesight is good," Rita said, "and if you weren't asleep, then I suppose you did."

Larry was at a loss. He didn't know whether to smile or frown.

"I'm Larry Stapleton," he said, and paused.

Was he waiting for the full import of his famous name to sink in?—

Rita wondered. Did he expect her to become flustered, meek and gentle as a lamb?

"Well, what am I supposed to do?" she asked coldly. "Drop to my knees and touch my forehead to the ground three times?"

Larry looked hurt. "I haven't murdered your father and mother or burned down your home, have I?" he asked.

Rita realized that she had been very crude, and that he did not deserve the bitter answers she had given him. He was a stranger to her. She did not know him and he had never done her any harm. Why should she be so sarcastic?

"I'm sorry," she said. "That remark was uncalled for."

"You're forgiven!" He brightened up. "I'd like to show you the town, if I may. Then we could have dinner together."

"Thanks. I'm not interested."

A refusal was something new to Larry, and he did not know how to take it. "I suppose I must have poisoned your aunt," he said, "or else there must be a smallpox sign on me."

Rita was a bit irritated by his persistence. "Suppose we end this conversation," she suggested. "Just because you asked me is no reason why I should go with you. Try one of the other girls. You may be more fortunate."

"But I'm not interested in the other girls," he persisted. "As far as I'm concerned, there's only one girl in Palm Beach now. And you're that one girl. I wish you'd let me take you to dinner. If I do a single thing to offend you, you can leave me flat. But I promise I'll be on my best behavior. Please!"

He sounded sincere, but Rita had heard enough about him. He had a new girl every day. To him a new

face meant a new fancy. For a moment she almost fell under the sway of his magnetic personality. There was something distinctly likable about him, a certain charm, a certain boyishness that made him very ingratiating. But she steeled herself against him. It was silly even to think of Larry when she had Bruce.

"I'm sorry," she said. "Please let me pass."

He stepped aside, somewhat bewildered. And to hide his confusion and disappointment, he walked over to the cigar stand.

Rita advanced just four steps when she beheld Bruce in the lobby. Her whole face brightened up at the sight of him. He must have been there for some time. He must have noticed her with Larry. But he showed no displeasure. He knew her, she thought, and he must have attached no particular importance to seeing her conversing with Larry for a few moments.

"Hello, Bruce."

"Hello, Rita. I managed to get off earlier than I expected, so I came right over. Tell me—do you know Larry Stapleton?"

"No," she answered, "but I could if I wanted to."

"I wish you did. Larry has a barrel of money and if I could interest him in my invention, I'd be sitting on top of the world. Couldn't you possibly introduce me to him?"

"Perhaps," she answered, although she had very little faith. She felt that she had driven Larry away forever. He wasn't accustomed to being snubbed, and he probably wouldn't even look at her a second time. He'd get some one else to play with.

"It would mean an awful lot to me," Bruce added. "I wish you'd try, Rita."

She felt a bit peeved that Bruce didn't ask a single question about herself, and made no comment on her appearance. It was all of six months since he had seen her last. Still, she found it in her heart to forgive him. He was very ambitious. He was very anxious to get ahead. What if he did think of his work ahead of her at that moment? Wasn't she his inspiration? Wasn't all his ambition for her? Wouldn't she be the one to reap the benefit of his success?

She felt proud to walk with him. He was tall, strong, and good-looking. She liked his dark hair and that dreamy, far-away look in his dark eyes.

They went to an inexpensive restaurant. That made her think of Larry. Larry would have taken her to the most expensive restaurant in town. But she didn't care. She'd rather be the one girl in Bruce's life than one of many in Larry's.

When she came down to the lobby the next evening, Rita was very much surprised to find Bruce and Larry absorbed in conversation. It seemed strange to see the two together, since only the night before, Bruce had asked her to try to introduce him to Larry. Now to all outward appearances the men sat together and conversed as if they had known each other for quite a while. It rather puzzled Rita.

They both rose when she approached.

"Rita," Bruce said, "I want you to meet Larry Stapleton—Rita Trumbull."

The circumstances of that meeting were far different from those of the day before. Rita forced a smile to her lips and acknowledged the introduction.

"I'd like to apologize for yester-

day," Larry said. "I never thought of finding some one who knew you so I could be introduced. But this morning I met an aviator who knew Bruce. Now we're properly introduced and everything."

Rita was a bit flattered that Larry should go to that much trouble to meet her. He must have seen her talking to Bruce in the lobby last night and then made it his business to meet Bruce. It was surprising that he should bother when she showed quite plainly that she wasn't interested in him. There were so many other girls who would have been glad of his attentions, such as Jane Benson, whose advances he had ignored the night before.

"I've explained my invention to Larry," Bruce said with an easy familiarity, "and he's very much interested in it. I think we'll probably get together on it."

"Suppose we drop the shop talk for a while," Larry suggested. "I'll order dinner for three and we can eat on the roof garden outside my penthouse. My hotel's just a little way from here. I think you'll enjoy it. It's very cool up there."

Larry's penthouse with its Spanish garden, was one of the prettiest things Rita had ever seen. The soft, dim lights gave it a very romantic atmosphere.

Larry had ordered a delicious meal, and they did full justice to it. His eyes were on Rita all the time, and she found it a bit embarrassing. Bruce, however, didn't mind it. Rita supposed that Bruce knew she wasn't trying to carry on a flirtation.

Every now and again Bruce interrupted the conversation with some new thought about his invention. Larry promised him that he would look into it more thoroughly in the morning, and if it was worthy, he would surely finance it.

They sat around for a little while after dinner; then Bruce suddenly jumped to his feet. "Great Scott!" he cried out. "I completely forgot about that appointment I had. I'll have to leave you folks for about an hour. I've got to see a man a few blocks from here."

Before Rita realized what was happening, Bruce was gone and she was left alone with Larry. For some reason which she could not understand at the moment, she did not relish her position. Larry's eyes had been doing strange things to her during dinner. She was beginning to find him very fascinating.

He came over and sat down beside her in the swinging hammock.

"I hope he takes a long time coming back," Larry said. "It's so nice to have you up here."

She turned to him with startled eyes.

"Please," he said, "can't we be friends?"

"Would you know how to be a friend?" she countered.

"Yes, I would, if you'd only give me the chance. Tell me what to do and your word will be law."

"Then sit down in that chair over there," she said.

There was a hurt look in his eyes as he got up grudgingly from the swing and took the chair a few feet away from her.

"Now we can talk," she said. "And let's try to make the conversation as impersonal as possible."

"You're awfully cruel," he said. "Why do you dislike me so much?"

"I don't dislike you," she answered.

"Yet you send me away as if I would contaminate you if I sat beside you."

"You talk like a schoolboy. Perhaps it will do you good not to have your own way all the time."

She was dazzlingly pretty as she gave him a taunting smile. Her beauty was driving him mad. He had known many pretty girls, but after a few hours he had found them uninteresting and charmless. The thing which had attracted him always seemed to vanish into thin air. It was n't fickleness that made him go from one girl to another. It was the fact that no girl was capable of holding his interest for any length of time.

But in Rita he felt that he had discovered the one girl for him. His impatience to know her had caused him to speak to her without the formality of an introduction. And when she had snubbed him, far from making him lose interest in her, it only whetted his desire to know her.

All through the meal he had been looking at her with admiring eyes. Each moment spent with her strengthened his decision that she was the one girl for him. And he meant to win her.

But she seemed cold and distant. Each remark that she made rankled him. Her beauty tantalized him.



Rita's heart leaped at his declaration of love. A queer feeling swept through her when she saw the strange lights in his eyes. She was in a panic.

It seemed like a cruel punishment to be compelled to sit away from her, when every part of him longed for the nearness and sweetness of her.

Suddenly he rose from his chair, walked over, and faced her. In a jumble of words he expressed his thoughts as they had rushed through his mind while he had been sitting facing her and longing for her.

Rita's heart leaped at his declaration of love. A queer feeling swept through her when she saw the strange lights in his eyes. She was in a panic. Oh, why had Bruce left her alone with Larry?

She rose from the swing. She didn't want to listen any more. He grasped her arms to hold her back. The feel of her soft white skin went to his head like wine. It robbed him of his senses.

He crushed her in his arms and kissed her soft, velvet lips hungrily and passionately.

Then he released her. His hand went to his forehead, as if trying to realize what he had done. On his face there was a penitent look.

"I'm sorry I did that," he muttered.

It took Rita a full moment before she gained control of herself. She stared at him, trembling, her lips slightly parted.

"You should be sorry," she said. "I thought little enough of you when I first saw you, but I think still less of you now. I don't suppose there's any such thing as honor in your make-up. If there were you wouldn't have taken advantage of Bruce's absence. You wouldn't have made advances to a girl you knew was engaged."

"Engaged?" he repeated incredulously. "To whom?"

"To Bruce," she answered. "I'm not wearing a ring, but we're practically engaged. We've been going together for many years."

"I didn't know that," he said. "Why didn't he tell me? I asked him, because I noticed the warm

greeting you gave him in the lobby yesterday, but he told me that you were only friends—nothing more. Please believe me. I'm telling the truth. I'm not as bad as you're trying to picture me."

"It's hard to believe that. However, I'm going now."

He made no attempt to stop her, but his eyes followed her to the door.

She went down in the elevator and into the lobby. She saw Bruce sitting in a chair under a palm, reading a paper. She couldn't understand it. What was he doing here when he had an appointment a few blocks away? If the appointment was over, why hadn't he come up to the penthouse and joined them, instead of sitting here so leisurely?

A frightful thought entered her mind. Could it be possible that Bruce had never had an appointment? Could it be possible that he had gone so that they could be left alone?

She walked over and confronted him with the questions.

"Yes," he admitted.

"But why did you do it?" she demanded.

"Why, there was no harm in it, Rita," he said. "I could see from the way he went to the trouble to make my acquaintance that he liked you. And I thought that if I left you alone and you put in a few good words about the invention, he'd surely finance it."

Rita smiled ironically. "So you were using me to further your plans?"

"That's a crude way of putting it, Rita. I felt sure that you'd be glad to help me. All you had to do was say a few persuasive words."

"Well, he made love to me after you left," Rita said, and watched his face to notice the reaction.

Bruce showed no signs of anger. On the contrary, he thought it rather amusing. "I suppose you kidded him along," he said. "I suppose you played the game the way he did."

"I didn't. I was stunned. Then he kissed me forcibly."

Bruce laughed. "A sort of cave man," he remarked.

Rita couldn't understand why he took it so calmly.

"I don't see anything to laugh about," she said. "I should imagine you'd be very angry having him do that behind your back."

"What's the matter with you, Rita? Would you want me to challenge him to a duel because he kissed you? Don't be so old-fashioned. What's a kiss anyhow? He didn't do you any harm. And you did me a lot of good. I'll bet he'll be all ripe to finance the invention to-morrow. Just kid him along with the idea that you like him until I get his name on the dotted line."

Inwardly Rita was boiling mad. This was a horrid revelation. Now she believed Larry's protest that Bruce had not told him that they were practically engaged. And it opened her eyes to Bruce, the man she had thought she was in love with. He suddenly became very small and despicable in her eyes. She wondered how she ever could have loved him.

The thing which Rita had admired most in him—his ambition—now turned out to be the thing that killed her love for him. She realized that his ambition was greater than his love. She realized that for the sake of ambition, he was willing to sacrifice every one and everything.

The position he had put her in by deliberately leaving her alone with Larry had been very degrading. He couldn't have much affection for her

if he was content to have her submit to Larry's love making. And he couldn't have much love for her if he wanted her to pretend that she did love Larry so that his plans would go through.

Her face did not betray her thoughts. With a pretended innocence: "Shall I let him kiss me again?" she asked.

"Yes," Bruce answered without hesitation. "Just play the game until I have everything signed up. Come! I'll take you back to your hotel now."

"You needn't bother," she said. "I'll find my way back alone. And you'd better get some one else to play the game with Larry. We're through being friends, Bruce. Good night."

She turned on her heel and ran out of the lobby. He ran after her, but she had jumped into a cab and slammed the door.

Jane wasn't in yet when Rita got back to their room, and she was glad. She was in no mood for conversation. As she lay in bed, the events of the evening marched through her mind. Two things impressed themselves upon her most. One was that she felt no sorrow and no depression over the fact that she had broken off with Bruce. And the other was that even though she hated Larry at the moment, his kiss had thrilled her as no kiss had ever thrilled her before.

Bruce came to see her the next day. His eyes were red with anger.

"Did you slap Larry's face when he kissed you yesterday?" he demanded.

"No, I didn't."

"Well, you did something. I was as welcome as poison when I went over to see him this morning. He didn't want to hear about the invention and he said he'd never be inter-

ested in it. You made a fine mess of it. There was the chance of a lifetime and you spoiled it for me."

"I'm sorry. You should have told me what your plan was, and I would never have gone to the penthouse. In the future, try to sell your invention on its merits, and not through the influence of a woman. We have nothing more to say to each other, Bruce. You'll go your way and I'll go mine."

He saw that she was in earnest. He knew that no amount of pleading could ever win him back in her good graces. She was going out of his life forever, and nothing would ever bring her back.

Coming home from a fashion show in one of the hotels, Rita came face to face with Larry in the street. Her heart leaped at the sight of him. He looked straight at her, but made no move. He was watching her for some faint indication of just what he should do.

Rita felt the same way. She didn't know whether to greet him or to pass him by. She stopped, and that encouraged him to smile.

"I saw Bruce to-day," she said. "He told me that you had washed your hands of his invention. Was it because of me?"

"No," he answered. "It was because of him. I don't admire his way of doing business. It was unjust to you and unjust to me. I suppose I shouldn't say that since you're in love with him."

"I'm not. I couldn't be after last night."

His face brightened. "May I come to see you to-night?"

"No," she answered quickly. "I have another engagement."

She was sorry she had told him that she had broken off with Bruce. It might make him think that she was angling for him. In fact, her stopping him on the street and talking to him might make him think that she wasn't so angry about last night, that she would like to be friends with him. Rita wondered what had prompted her to stop him.

"Can I see you to-morrow night?" he asked.

"No, I'm sorry. I expect to be busy every night this week."

Rita was actually afraid to go out with him. Even now as he stood before her, there was something in his eyes that did strange things to her, sent a curious tingling up and down her spine.

She was afraid because he was too likable, too fascinating, and she might fall in love with him. That would be a calamity, she felt. He would soon tire of her as he did of all other girls, and then where would

she be? It was much better not to see him any more, she thought.

But that, she found, was impossible. For even though she refused to go out with him, she saw him every day. Wherever the fashion show took place, there was Larry sitting way up front, where she couldn't help but see him. He was always alone, too—never with a girl.

"I think you're crazy," Jane said to Rita one day. "If Larry trailed after me the way he trails after you. I sure wouldn't act like the north pole. It wouldn't kill you to be nice to him. He's just dying to spend money on you, and you won't let him. I suppose you're still in love with that aviator who doesn't come around any more."

Rita made no answer. If Jane



had only known the truth, she would have been more surprised. Rita's heart was crying for Larry. She was in love with him. But she was afraid. He was fickle. He could never love her as she loved him. He was a playboy. And she would never be a playgirl.

It was the next afternoon, just before she was about to go to a fashion show, that Rita received a telegram from home. She tore it open hastily and read:

COME HOME AT ONCE STOP FATHER
IS VERY ILL

It was signed by her mother.

She showed Jane the telegram and told her to tell Mr. Roberti. Then Rita telephoned down to the porter to make reservations on the first train to New York. As fast as she possibly could she started to pack her things.

Jane left. There was nothing she could do beyond expressing her sympathy.

The train dragged along. It seemed as if it would never reach New York. A thousand dread



"I think you're crazy," Jane said to Rita one day. "If Larry trailed after me the way he trails after you, I sure wouldn't act like the north pole."

thoughts rushed through Rita's mind. She prayed and hoped that she would not be too late.

She was the first to jump off the train. She rushed through the station, got into a taxi, and gave the driver her address.

Finding the door of their apartment locked, she rang the neighbor's bell. She was told that her mother had gone to the hospital. She asked which one, and the neighbor gave her the name of a very expensive private hospital on Central Park West.

In the taxi to the hospital Rita wondered how her father could afford to go to that hospital. And when she got there, she was even more surprised. He had a suite of three rooms with two nurses to attend him.

He was asleep when she came in. From the drawn and haggard look on his face, she knew that he was very ill. But her mother seemed quite optimistic.

"We had two specialists here yesterday," her mother said. "I believe they're the greatest in the country. One of them got a thousand dollars for the visit. There was an improvement in father as soon as he prescribed for him. And he has great hopes that father will be well."

"I'm awfully glad," Rita said thankfully. "I suppose you've gone into debt to pay for all this, but don't worry, mother. I'm glad you did it. I'll help pay it back."

Her mother looked at her in amazement. "Why, don't you know? Your friend paid for all this."

"My friend? Who was that?" asked Rita, very much surprised.

"Why, Larry—Mr. Stapleton. He flew up from Florida. He was here just a few hours after I sent you the telegram. Oh, why didn't you write

us about him? He was wonderful. I was nervous and upset. I didn't know what to do, so he took charge. He arranged for these rooms. He got the specialists. There didn't seem to be anything he wouldn't do for father. He's the nicest and the dearest young man I've ever met," said Mrs. Trumbull.

Rita could hardly believe her own ears. It didn't seem possible that a playboy could do anything like that. But how had he known that her father was sick? Oh, Jane must have told him! She must have met him going to the fashion show.

"Where is he now?" Rita asked.

"He's tending father's cigar stand in the Cobert Building."

"What!" Rita cried out in amazement.

"You see, even while he was deathly sick, father was worried that the cigar stand would have to be shut. So Larry promised him he'd run it, and that relieved father."

It seemed incredible to Rita. Larry was a whole lot finer than she had given him credit for. He had done all that for her. She knew it in her heart. And she had been so mean and rude to him. She felt ashamed of herself.

At six o'clock Larry came to the hospital. Even though he had been nerving himself for that moment, a deep crimson flush spread over his face. His eyes clung to hers for a breathless moment.

On her face was a smile of gratitude. She held out both hands to him. He took them gently and tenderly.

"Thanks an awful lot, Larry," she said. "I don't know how I'll ever be able to repay you."

"By trying to believe in me," he said.

"And what would you want me to believe, Larry?"

"That I really love you."

"I believe you now, Larry."

"And you?" he asked. "Don't you care for me a little?"

"I do care, Larry. I love you. I've loved you for a long time. But I was afraid that I'd only be a one-day-girl for you."

"No, sweetheart," he assured her. "You're the girl I want for the rest of my life. When your dad gets well, will you marry me?" he asked, holding her close.

"If you'll promise that you'll always love me," she answered, as she raised her lips to receive his kiss.



PULSE OF MY HEART

UPON the altar of the sapphire hills
The rising moon its golden splendor spills,
And brings the rapture of our trysting hour,
Where white acacia blooms their perfumes shower.
Your eager kisses fall upon my mouth
Like silver rain on fields in summer's drouth.
I burn with joy and drink the nectar up
As dewdrops from a flaming poppy's cup.
Your arms embrace me as the passion vine
The trellis that its flowering tendrils twine,
As, moon-enchanted, drift the hours along,
And night winds breathe our ecstasy in song.
The night is brief when we are heart to heart,
The day is long when we must wait apart;
But severance brings unions that renew,
Pulse of my heart, the bliss I find with you!

FRANKLIN PIERCE CARRIGAN.



HER hands, lying so still in Nonny's lap, were like small cold flowers. Nonny's sweet pointed little face was wiped clean of all life and gayety and joy, as if some one had passed an eraser over it. Alan's words were the eraser that would forever wipe away hope and youth and gladness.

"You do agree with me, Nonny, don't you?"

"Why—er—yes, Alan, of course."

"I knew you would; you're such a sensible girl. We shouldn't have gotten engaged so young. That was the trouble. But we were such kids!"

Nonny had been sixteen, and Alan nineteen. Yes, they had been kids when they had first become engaged three years before. It had been sweet the way it happened, sitting on that old bench behind the

White Heliotrope

By
Barbara West

white heliotrope with the moon shining, just as it should be in a love story. From somewhere a famous radio voice had floated to them in a love song. Alan, shy and awkward and boyish, had thrown a frightened arm about the girl by his side and drawn her to him.

"That's the way I love you," he had whispered, husky-voiced, half-ashamed. "How is it with you, Nonny?"

And Nonny had clung to him, unable to speak, unable to think, borne on a great shining wave of love that carried her higher than the moon. Then somehow Alan, inexperienced but greatly longing, had found her lips, sweet as the honey in the heliotrope, and they had kissed, those breathless children.

"Nonny, you'll—you'll be my girl? You'll always be my girl?"

"Of course I will, Alan. I—I love you, too!"

The golden voice had sung to them, in their ears and in their hearts; and the golden voice had stayed with them for three years, always improving its melodies, and till "Dodo" came to Santa Barbara to silence their song.

For days now Nonny had suspected that Alan cared for Dodo. Dodo was so lovely, so extraordinarily pretty, and she had such a way with her.

That little hammock of hers! She slung it so daringly close to the sidewalk. Whenever Alan came to see Nonny there was Dodo in a summery dress or gay wide pajamas, resting among cushions in the little hammock, sometimes surrounded by boys, sometimes quite alone. She was most dangerous when she was alone, for then she had wooed Alan away from Nonny, with Nonny helpless to interfere.

"You'll always be good friends with me, won't you, Nonny?"

"Why—yes, Alan—if you want me to."

"You—you're sure you aren't hurt or anything like that?"

"Of course not. Why should I be?"

"Protect your pride, Nonny," a voice was cautioning her. "Put on your dark glasses—don't let him know how you suffer!"

"As you say, half the trouble in the world comes from—from being old-fashioned and—and silly about engagements," she went on.

"But, Nonny, you sound so—I mean——" His good-looking face was twisted with some swift emotion. Alan, with his long-fringed Irish eyes and reckless grin, wasn't accustomed to saying things that sounded that way. Yet he was saying them, forcing them through his

white lips. How much he must love that girl, Dodo, to go through with it, Nonny marveled.

Her pride! If there was a remnant left it must be saved at all costs. She must make her stand clearer. After Alan had gone, she could weep. Till then, she must carry on. How did she manage that small chilly laugh?

"Why, Alan, how ridiculous you are! Of course I'm not hurt. I've been on the verge of breaking the engagement a dozen times, only—like you—I was afraid of hurting some one. Of course when you began going with Dodo, I should have realized I needn't be so careful."

They were sitting on the top step of the veranda with a new sickle moon pointing at them in a wondering sort of way, and the tall stocks and spiky heliotrope below them, sweet as young desire. Nonny could see Alan considering her words, weighing them and balancing them, and she knew that he must be surprised. For since that first night three years before, Nonny's heart had been a joyous gift, Alan's for the asking.

"Leaving Dodo out of it—you should have told me," he said in a slow measured sort of way.

"I suppose I should. But—well, we've just outgrown each other. Let's put it that way. It's nice to be sensible about it like this, and we can always be friends."

She stood up, and so did he. She gave him her hand, friendly, sweet, smiling to eyes that could not see below the dark glasses love furnishes for such occasions. She said good night to Alan, and sent him away—for the last time.

When he had gone, lingering a little, trying to think of some last suitable thing to say, something that would lift the curse off the ugliness

of a broken engagement, Nonny slipped her locked fingers across her mouth, and stood very still under the pointing, wondering moon.

There was the old bench among the larkspur and heliotrope, where a girl might hide for a while, where a girl might break her heart in private.

Nonny was torn by a raging cyclone that seemed to be slowly, surely destroying her. Sobs rose in torturing gusts. She was tearless, but her eyes burned like live coals: her throat was a white-hot agony.

All about her in the garden little mocking voices whispered love words that had been on Alan's lips when he swept Nonny into his arms, when he smothered her with fiery young ardor. "Sweetheart—honey-lips—lovely eyes—precious little thing"—words Alan would have hated any one to overhear, but which he had adored coining for Nonny. She could feel his hard young arms about her, his sweet firm lips against hers.

The tears came in a rush, scalding, exhausting her, giving no relief. She flung herself on the cold grass beneath that pitying moon and wept despairingly.

From an upper window she could hear her mother singing snatches of a little song, intermittently running the sewing machine. Nonny's mother was getting ready to visit Cousin Vida Morse in Monterey. For weeks she had been looking forward to the visit, the little mother who had worked so hard to keep Nonny well and happy that now it took all young Doctor Dave Morton's skill to keep her out of an invalid chair.

Now, the instant she looked at Nonny's storm-ridden little face, she would know what had happened, and that would be the end of all her

glad preparation. Nonny knew that her mother would never go to Monterey if her only child's engagement was broken.

It had been said that nothing dulls grief like a new problem to be solved. Nonny suddenly sat up and listened to that happy little song and the hum of the machine, wondering, planning.

Presently she knew what she must do. Surely Alan could be engaged to her for three more days. He need not pretend the old feeling or anything like that, but he would be willing to telephone occasionally, she knew, so that her mother could get away on her much anticipated vacation. Dave Morton said it was imperative.

A small anger against Alan shook her. Why hadn't Alan himself thought of it? Her mother had always been so kind to him, so hospitable and friendly.

Nonny wiped her eyes, composed herself, though the aftermath of little sobs still ruffled her breath. She went in to the telephone, gritted her teeth, and called Alan's number.

Presently his mother's voice told her he was not in. "Is that you, Nonny? Why, I thought he was with you." Nonny made a hurried excuse, then gave herself a private scolding. Of course—she should have thought of that—he would be with Dodo now. It was torture to have to call Dodo's house, but she must try to get Alan before it was too late.

Nonny gave Dodo's number. There was a pause. Then suddenly there happened one of those peculiar things that occur once to almost every one who telephones. She broke in on another connection.

At first she moved the receiver back and forth; but the operator never noticed. At last Nonny

caught a word that held her—a word spoken in a man's voice.

"Do listen, Dodo; you know I've felt this way a long time. You said you'd give me an answer to-day."

And Dodo: "Hardy, you're a persistent youngster. Since you will converse when I have a visitor listening in—are you sure I said I'd break down to-day?"

Hardy Workman, son of one of the richest men in Santa Barbara! Nonny was eavesdropping without realizing it.

"Your technique's perfect, honey," Hardy continued. "You've got me so green-eyed over Alan Dunn I could pour tobasco on him and eat him. But now that you've made me suffer in style, come across with the little three-letter word meaning 'sure.' If you don't—it's the last you'll ever see of me. My trunks are packed—the family yacht rides at anchor!"

"Hardy, you do sound so brutally rich and enticing. Of course it never occurred to you that I might love you for yourself alone!"

"I've given up all hope of that, Dodo. I'll be satisfied if you'll marry me for my filthy coin."

"Hardy, come over here at once and learn something about a woman's heart. I'm ready to break down."

Then Hardy's voice, tremulous: "Dodo sweetheart, do you really mean it?"

Nonny snapped down the receiver. She fled to her room and stared wide-eyed, amazed, through the shadows beyond the window.

Alan had lost Dodo; she was going to marry Hardy Workman. Why, no one had ever even thought of such a thing! Hardy usually traveled with a set of millionaires. Dodo would be rich; she would be Mrs. Hardy Workman, Jr. Poor

Alan—was he the visitor "listening in?"

In that moment Nonny's heart felt an almost motherly love for Alan. She wanted to comfort him, to kiss his hurt eyes, to hold his head against her heart. She wanted to agree with him that Dodo was a schemer. But almost at once the tenderness of her mood passed. Alan had hurt her cruelly. Now let him suffer as she had suffered. Let him give Dodo up to Hardy Workman. Let him listen in, while Hardy got his answer.

Revenge is small satisfaction to some people. Nonny could not sleep that night. In the morning she held cold compresses to reddened eyes, dabbed rouge on pale cheeks. At breakfast she kept up a running chatter that deceived her mother. After a swift little hug and butterfly kiss, she dashed off to the lawyer's office where she worked as stenographer.

Fortunately it was a busy day. Occasionally Nonny glanced from the window to the bay where the Workman yacht dipped and curtsied. Somewhere Alan was working, too, showing prospects over houses and apartments. And he was suffering, from time to time perhaps glancing at the slender loveliness of that yacht which placed its possessor in another world. Poor Alan!

That night, after dinner with her mother, who had much to say about the visit she would soon make, and about certain plans that included a daughter happily married to Alan, Nonny escaped to her room.

She heard her mother call out presently: "Darling, Cousin Mary's here, and we're going to a movie. Alan'll be along soon." And then Nonny was alone, free to break her heart all over again.

She opened the cedar chest that

held all her trousseau treasures. She softly touched the contents. There was such a lot of linen—fine towels and sheets and pillow cases, lavender, pale-pink, green, blue, and daffodil. The girls had told her not to embroider them with Alan's initial. "You shouldn't, Nonny. No one does, because you never know."

"But I do know!" Nonny had proudly returned. "And why not have the right initial?"

She unpacked the things tenderly, tragically, like a mother unpacking a dead child's clothes. Here was the table linen, with delicate colored borders; the filet she had worked while Alan read to her. She would never put it on a cunning painted table for herself and Alan, with some sweet peas or pansies for the centerpiece.

Nonny buried her face in a fine table runner and wept.

The bell rang. She thought at first she wouldn't answer it. But it rang persistently, and at last she could stand it no longer. A wet cloth to cool her forehead, a dab of powder, and she answered the door.

There stood Alan.

She had never realized how handsome he was, tall and finely made, with those Irish eyes, that dark smooth head, and the strong chin. He was looking at her now with such an odd expression.

"Nonny, have you been crying?"

"No," said Nonny with a brave effort to keep her chin from trembling. "Why should I?"

He looked away, then faced her with the ghost of a smile. "May I come in?"

She didn't say he could, but he came in anyway. In the little living room they settled down, from force of habit, on the wide old sofa, much farther apart than usual. Nonny was thinking: "If he's trying to get

me back now that he's lost Dodo, I can't bear it! But surely he wouldn't!"

Yet it really seemed that that was what Alan had in mind. Perhaps he needed comfort; perhaps he realized what his life would be without Nonny to play with, and to confide his troubles to. His hand suddenly slid along the sofa and closed over hers.

"Nonny," he whispered huskily, "Nonny darling! Mother said you called last night."

The touch of that hand always did magic things to her, but not that time. She caught it away.

"Why did you do that?" he asked quietly.

"Do you mean to say," she choked, "that you're trying to make up with me after jilting me? Do you mean——"

"Nonny," he interrupted, "don't say such silly things, such horrible things! How dare you say I jilted you?"

That left her speechless. He continued.

"I swore I'd keep away to-day. I tried to, but I couldn't. I—oh, Nonny, I love you so—no matter how things are I want you. Don't turn me down!"

Yes, he loved her now because he couldn't have Dodo.

"If I'd imagined things a thousand years, Alan, I'd never have imagined you were the sort of man you are. I can't understand how you fooled me, made me believe you were fine and loving and true." Tears choked her, but her scorn blazed through them. "No, I'll never forgive you—I'll never take you back and love you again—because I hate you—I despise you!" Her voice broke. "You took all my love, and at the first temptation that came along you threw me over!

Now, because some one else treated you the way you treated me, you try to crawl back. How can you, Alan?"

The bell rang again. She wiped her eyes fiercely, and went to answer it. Alan, his fingers locked around one knee, was staring at a

spot on the carpet. He reached out and caught her arm.

"Kid, I don't get you. What's it all about? You sound kind of jealous, but I don't make any sense out of it."

Indignantly she left him, hurrying to the door. Her knees nearly



"I think I'm crazy ever to have believed you were flirting with Dave Morton. You—why, you love me, precious!"

gave way; she nearly cried out with the shock when she saw who stood outside.

"Dodo—you!"

Dodo was a lovely-looking girl with hair as bright as juniper leaves. But there was something different, something frantic about her now.

"Nonny," she gasped, greedy little hands reaching out, clutching, "is it—is it true?"

"Is what true? What do you mean?"

"Please, Nonny, don't be angry at me for rushing in like this. I've just got to ask you a question—I must know. Have you broken with Alan?"

Nonny felt dizzy, as if some unseen support had given way. She couldn't answer. She could just stare.

"Tell me," Dodo pleaded. "Do tell me—it's true, isn't it? Alan's mother told some one who told me that Alan had come home last night with his engagement broken. I heard it just a few moments ago."

Nonny found her tongue. "Aren't you engaged to Hardy Workman, Dodo?"

Dodo broke down, burst into a long wailing sob. She didn't seem to care what she said. "Yes, but that was before I knew you'd set Alan free. Tell me—you have, haven't you?"

"We're not engaged any more. But didn't he tell you about it?"

"Why, I haven't seen him for four days! Do you think I'd have gotten engaged to any one else if I'd thought there was a chance? But tell me where I can find him, Nonny. Where would he be?"

It was Nonny's turn to catch Dodo and look into her beautiful selfish eyes. "Do you love Alan very much, Dodo?"

"Of course I do, and he loves me, only he wouldn't give in because of you. I told him the truth about you, but he wouldn't listen. Alan's sort of simple that way. Is he——"

"Yes, he's here," said Nonny, so suddenly that Dodo gasped. "I'll send him out to you."

"Now?"

"Now."

Nonny went back to the living room and found Alan on his feet. All too obviously he had overheard every word. The look he threw Nonny was the strangest she had ever seen.

"I—I'll go out to her," he agreed. "Nonny dear!"

But she spared him his confusion by running into the kitchen. Just once she heard Dodo's voice, thrilled, joyous: "Alan darling!" Then Nonny pressed her hands over her ears.

What would happen now? Even if Alan hadn't already spoken to Dodo he would go to her now. She must really love him to be willing to give up a man like Hardy Workman. Yes, Dodo was lovely, so tempting and glorious. No man could resist her.

Nonny's hands were like ice; she felt as if her whole being were turning to ice. It was so dreadfully quiet out there on the veranda.

Ten minutes passed—fifteen. Nonny thought she must be losing her mind. How could a girl endure this slow agony? At last she crept to the hall. There was no sound at all, no blend of voices.

For some reason it was worse to lose Alan now than if he had never returned, even though she knew how contemptible he was. She flew to the door and looked out. There was no one on the veranda. Dodo and Alan had disappeared.

Nonny's hands went out in a flut-

tering, helpless gesture. She hid her face in them and leaned against the door for a minute; then she ran down to the garden bench behind the white heliotrope.

She didn't cry; she was past tears. She just crumpled beside the flowers, and they spread their fragrant curtain before her. Shuddering, moaning, trying to pray, to get command of herself, she waited there, waited for nothing.

"I love him! I love him! I don't care what he is! Dear Heaven, help me to go on living!"

And just at that moment Fate played its cruellest prank. Somewhere in San Francisco a great singer was asked to broadcast the song that had made her famous. Somewhere in Santa Barbara a neighbor of Nonny's tuned in, and into Nonny's garden crept the melody of the love song she and Alan had heard the night they had become engaged.

A dog chased a cat unsuccessfully through the garden; a cuckoo piped from the tree; the pointed moon rose and looked sorrowfully down upon a heart in anguish. Then:

"Oh—oh!" cried Nonny; some one had touched her hand. She looked up in amazement and saw Alan stooping over her.

"I couldn't find you in the house. I wondered if you'd—be here." He knelt beside her and gathered her close.

She was so beaten, so glad to have him near her again, that she relaxed, let him draw her head against his shoulder.

"But you love Dodo, Alan!"

"I don't, sweet lips; I think you're crazy ever to have thought it. And I think I'm crazier still ever to have believed you were flirting with Dave Morton. You—why, you love me, precious!"

Dave Morton, her mother's nice young doctor, who was ever so kind but as impersonal as one of his instruments! Nonny gasped.

"Did Dodo tell you that about Dave Morton?"

"Some one told me you went driving with him every day."

"Why, we do sometimes, mother and I, but, Alan——"

"I know, dear; I know everything you might say. You don't love him and you do love me. I deserve all I got for acting like a fool. I tried to give you rope to hang yourself, and——"

"Oh, Alan, how dreadful! You and I of all people, putting on horrid dark glasses to hide our hurt pride and trying to see each other through them! But what have you done with Dodo?"

"I took her home," said Alan briefly. "Nonny, you're cold, you're frozen. Can you forgive me?"

Her quick broken cry was smothered beneath his lips. He held her so close she seemed to melt in his arms. The warmth of him thawed her. His kisses drew her heart to her lips.

"We're going to be married tomorrow," he whispered.

"Alan, are you mad?"

"No. I'm just taking no more chances—dark glasses or rosy ones. 'Marry in haste and you'll have less to repent'—that's my new motto. We'll be married before your mother goes to Monterey, and then we're off for a week's trip."

"Alan, you are mad!"

He laughed huskily against her lips. "I hope I always stay that way."

The love song ended on a golden note that throbbed through the heart of the garden.

"Our song, Alan."

"Darling, every love song is ours!"



A DRIVING torrent of rain greeted Margo Deane as she opened the door that morning. Long, slanting spikes of rain swished angrily through the trees that lined Locust Street, and fell on the sidewalk in large angry drops.

There was a hole in the heel of her rubber, and she stopped for a moment on the porch and waited. But seeing no signs of the storm's abating, she raised the big black "family umbrella," as she and Bud called it, and started. She paused at the curb as a procession of auto-

Sometime

By

Helen St. Bernard

mobiles passed, her umbrella lowered against the storm. "Lillah is back," she was saying to herself. "Lillah is back, and that means Bud will be heart-broken again."

Big balloon tires revolved slowly to a stop just beyond the rim of her umbrella, and a hearty voice called: "Let me take you wherever you're going."

Margo raised her umbrella and peeked out. A shiny scarlet roadster was standing at the curb, the door swinging half open. The young man at the wheel was smiling.

"Oh!" he said, and gave her a nice, friendly look. "Why get wet when I can take you where you want to go?"

Margo got in. It didn't occur to her to do otherwise after he had smiled at her in that friendly fashion. As he leaned over to close the she glanced at him. She had never seen him before.

"I didn't know it ever rained as hard as this anywhere," he laughed. "I'm going to the post office, but I can take you anywhere."

He was looking at her as the car paused at the red light at the corner of Locust and Main Streets. For a brief second, Margo's hand went to the tendrils of yellow hair that clung to her cheek, and with her finger she poked them back beneath her close-fitting little felt hat.

"I hope it will stop raining," he said cheerily as the car swung around the corner and headed for the business section of Main Street. "I want to play golf this morning, but the course is a young lake right now. I just drove past it."

"I'm sure it will stop," she ventured. She noticed the worn tip of her glove, and doubled that offending finger into her palm. Then she added with a giggle: "Sometime."

He grinned down at her, a crinkly, happy grin, with a flash of white teeth. "Sometime," he agreed. "I like to drive in the rain, don't you? I like the feel of it. When I'm alone, I put on a raincoat and open up all the windows of the car and just head into it. That's why I chose leather upholstery rather than mohair. Water doesn't hurt it."

The business section seemed to spring out to meet them.

"If you're going to the post office," Margo informed him, "it's right across the street."

"I'll take you where you're going

first. There's no hurry about the post office," He smiled again.

"I get out at the next corner—the bank building."

"And then where?"

"Where? To a desk on the fourth floor, where I'll pound a typewriter until five o'clock, and then I'll be doing just the opposite of what I am doing now. I'll be walking up Main Street and turning on Locust."

How easy it was to laugh and talk with him!

"Five o'clock?"

"I'm not a golfer, you see," she laughed. "I'm a stenographer. Here we are. I'd have been soaked if you hadn't come along. Thanks very much."

"If it's raining at five——" His hand was on the door, and again he was giving her that friendly look.

"It won't be," Margo assured him, and slipped out of the car, raising the great cotton umbrella as she did so. She ran across the sidewalk, and laughed a good-by over her shoulder as she dove into the friendly entrance of the bank building out of the storm. But going up in the elevator, she was back on the old subject. "Lillah's back home," she was thinking. "Lillah Moore who has had everything, and yet she broke Bud's heart."

At eleven it was still raining. Margo had made three mistakes in one letter. At twelve when she fared forth for lunch, the rain had turned to a thin, cold shower from leaden, low-hanging clouds, and she laughed over her soup in the tea room. But at two the window of the office, overlooking Carlisle's Main Street, was no longer rain-splashed, and at three a patch of blue showed through the clouds. Margo Deane sighed a tumultuous sigh and turned to her work.

At five, she propped a tiny mirror

from her bag in the carriage of her typewriter, powdered her nose with a diminutive puff, and ran a comb through the curly hair that seemed to spring back in close ringlets about her face. She drew her little black felt hat over her head, closed one eye to view the effect, and then dropped the mirror back into her bag.

"Just making believe," she accused herself as she rolled her umbrella and hung it over her arm. Then she pulled her coat tightly about her and prepared to go.

"Time to go home," she was thinking, "and joke with Bud, and make him forget that Lillah is back home after six months in Europe."

The late-afternoon sun was making a feeble effort to shine through the clouds upon a rain-washed earth when Margo finally emerged into the street.

And then: "Hello there!"

The scarlet roadster was at the curb and the young man was standing beside the open door, his long legs incased in tweed knickers. "I'm waiting for you."

"But it isn't raining."

"Why, so it isn't!" He was laughing that crinkly happy laugh again. "It did stop—sometime."

He took the umbrella from her and helped her into the car. Then he was running around the front, sliding into the seat beside her, his foot against the starter.

"Where?"

"Home, please."

"Oh, but it's only five minutes after five," he remonstrated, and the scarlet roadster purred its way straight past the intersection of Main and Locust Streets, and headed in the direction of the country club.

"But Bud comes home at six, and I must have supper ready."

"Bud!" Simultaneously with the exclamation the car slowed down to a near stop as he raised his foot abruptly from the accelerator.

"Yes—Bud," Margo said, very demurely.

The car rolled to a stop beside the curb, and the driver was lighting a cigarette. Then he said nonchalantly:

"I'm sorry. We'll go right back. It would never do to keep Bud's supper waiting." He turned the car in the center of Main Street, narrowly missing the opposite curb, and headed back toward Locust Street.

Margo sat low in the seat, her face half hidden in the deep collar of her coat. There was a warm, tingling feeling about her heart as she glanced sideways at her companion. His eyes were staring straight ahead through the plume of gray cigarette smoke. Then she sat up straighter, as the big Moore car turned the corner of Locust and Main, Lillah at the wheel, a radiant picture in green-and-white. She waved her hand as she passed, and Margo turned to watch the big car disappear. Yes, Lillah Moore was home again.

The scarlet roadster stopped in front of the Deane home. He did not attempt to remonstrate with her when she started to get out of the car.

"Thanks again."

"Don't mention it," he said gruffly.

That time it was Margo who hesitated, her foot on the running board.

"But I want to mention it," she told him saucily. "You see, Bud is terribly particular about having his dinner ready when he gets home, and being a dutiful sister, I never keep him waiting."

She turned away in the direction of the porch, but with one long stride he was beside her. "You're a little imp; that's what you are! I

knew it this morning when you said it would stop raining—sometime. When am I going to see you gain? My name's Don Laidlaw, and I'm going to be in Carlisle only for the week."

His hat was in his hand, and the wind ruffled his brown hair. "When am I going to see you again?" he asked again.

From the top step, Margo smiled back at him. "Sometime."

There was a lavender envelope protruding from the mail box, and she took it out. He was still standing on the bottom step, smiling up at her. Margo wanted to linger, to look back at him and see him smile, but she opened the door. "Good-by."

"Sometime," he called as she closed the door behind her, "means to-morrow."

She heard the hum of the scarlet roadster as it moved away from the curb. Then she was pulling her little felt hat off her head, slipping out of her blue tweed dress into a gingham smock. In the kitchen, she lighted the oven, filled the teakettle and set it over the blaze, then dropped down at the kitchen table to read her letter. She laid it out flat and rested her elbows on the table, her fingers lost in the mop of short, curly hair that glistened like copper in the tardy ray of yellow sunlight that filtered through the window.

Lillah Moore had written:

DEAR MARGO: Of course you've heard that I'm home, and had a wonderful time in Europe. And to celebrate the event, mother is giving a party on Thursday night. We have a house guest; you've heard me speak of Don Laidlaw. He went to Harvard the year I was at Radcliffe. Mother is giving the party to welcome me back to the little old town, and to introduce the old town to Don. I want you and Bud to come. I'll be so glad to see you both again.

LILLAH.

Don Laidlaw! The teakettle was boiling now, but still Margo sat there. Bud's supper was forgotten. It was for this Don Laidlaw that Lillah had broken her engagement to Bud last fall, just before her departure for six months in Europe. That engagement had been the culmination of years of companionship through childhood, a love that had meant everything in the world to Bud Deane, had almost held him breathless with its magic. And then suddenly Lillah Moore had laughed at him. Casually, she had told him that it was only a school affair, and that she was in love with some one else.

Bud had come to Margo that night, his big eyes misted with pain. Before the evening was over, he had dropped his brown head on Margo's shoulder, and they had held each other close. And that night he had shown her a folded paper that he carried in his pocket, a marriage license for John Deane, Jr., and Lillah Moore.

"There's some one else," he had said, his voice choked, muffled. "His name is Laidlaw—Don Laidlaw."

Since that night, six months before, there had been just Bud for Margo—Bud, that dear brother who had taken advantage of his three years' seniority to tease her, pull her hair, help her with her lessons, teach her to skate and swim and drive his old car, and into whose arms she had gone when father and mother had been taken from them in terrifying suddenness, leaving them alone.

But it was Margo who had assumed the seniority now. Carefully she watched over him, kept his socks fixed, his shirts washed and ironed, his trousers pressed. That long folded paper in Bud's pocket had become frayed and worn. They had gone to football games and to the

movies together. On Saturday afternoons they both cleaned the old-fashioned house in which they continued to live, left them jointly by their parents. It had been just Bud for Margo. She tried to take a small place in the great void left in his young heart when Lillah had laughed and then gone away to Europe.

A month later he resigned the position in the Moore Manufacturing Company that Lillah's father had given him after his graduation from high school, and in which he had worked faithfully and hard, meriting one promotion after another. Margo did not ask the reason. She knew. Mr. Moore told Bud that he could have his old position back whenever he wanted.

Bud sold his car. He obtained a position in the railroad office, and hated it. But it was not discussed. Neither was Lillah Moore, who had killed the life and love in his big brown eyes. Frequent mention of her wanderings in Europe, an announcement of her imminent return, was made in the Carlisle paper. And now Lillah was back with Don Laidlaw, the man she had told Bud she loved—Don Laidlaw, with that crinkly, happy smile!

Margo arose wearily from the table and started to prepare dinner. Soon she heard the front door slam and Bud come down the hall.

"Little bit late to-night, Bud, but we'll eat in fifteen minutes."

"Any hot water so I can shave before supper, Margo?"

He wiped a smudge of flour from her chin, and then gave her a quick, brotherly kiss.

"Ugh! You'd better get shaved! Never try to kiss a girl before you shave, Bud! Of course, with your sister it's different, but another girl might not be so broad-minded."

Bud picked up the teakettle and turned abruptly toward the bathroom. As the door closed behind him, she said to herself: "I would say that! Just as though Bud would ever kiss any girl now but me!"

The lavender note crackled in her pocket.

"The highway of love for the Deanes is a rocky one. Bud, broken-hearted over a girl like Lillah Moore, and Margo breathing long sighs about a prince with a scarlet chariot and a crinkly smile, who is going to marry Lillah Moore."

Bud was humming in the bathroom now, indicating that the intricacies of shaving were over. When he emerged, his hair sleekly combed, his face shining and smooth, dinner was on the table and Margo was pouring the coffee.

They ate in silence for a time, then Margo finally said:

"Bud!"

He looked up from buttering a biscuit.

"Lillah's home."

"I know it," he said quietly. "I saw her on the street yesterday."

"They're having a party Thursday night."

"Well, it will be a nifty one, no doubt. These biscuits are great."

"We're invited, Bud."

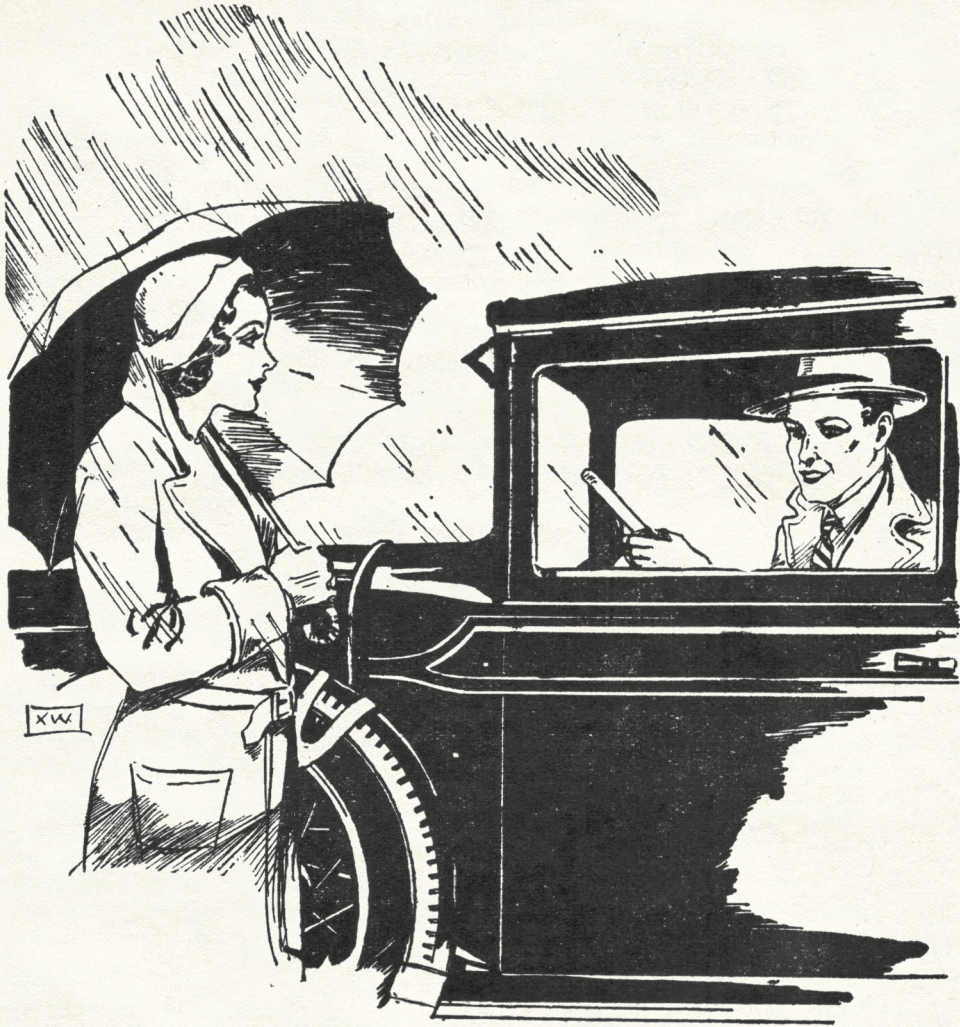
He looked up quickly, his brows drawn inquiringly. Margo gave him Lillah's note.

"Do we go, Buddie?" She asked as he finished reading it.

"Why not?" Bud smiled at her across the rim of his coffee cup, but it was a brave, twisted smile. "It would look funny if we didn't, after having gone to school and chummed around with Lil all these years."

"It's to welcome Lillah back," she reminded him slowly, "and to introduce Mr. Laidlaw to Carlisle."

"All the more reason we should



The young man at the wheel was smiling. "Why get wet when I can take you where you want to go?" he said.

go. The Deane family is part of Carlisle, isn't it? I suppose it will call for a tux. The Moore parties all do, lately. But here's one guest who'll be wearing a tweed business suit, gray, double-breasted, all for twenty-four dollars and fifty cents, including an extra pair of pants. How about your wardrobe, Margo?"

Margo giggled. "I'll really have a hard time deciding between my sapphire-blue velvet, or my ivory

moiré, or the jade-and-silver chiffon."

"Jade chiffon," Bud said quickly. "You look great in green. I'll give you the money ahead of time for a birthday present. Get it to-morrow! Do you hear?"

"I hear, but heed not, idiot! I am not going to buy a dress for an evening at the Moores'. I'll wear my yellow satin. Let's get the dishes done and go to a movie. I want to

see the new show at the Palace, and we'll spend to-morrow night getting ready for the party."

There was no scarlet roadster waiting the next morning when Margo emerged into the street and started for the office. She had known there wouldn't be, because she was starting half an hour early. She didn't want to see Don Laidlaw. Don Laidlaw had helped break Bud's heart, too, because Lillah loved him and he loved her. And no stranger could come to Carlisle and think she was waiting to be picked up in a scarlet roadster. Why, Don didn't even know her name.

While she was taking Mr. Kelly's dictation that morning, a commotion in the doorway announced a caller.

"Hello, Pat Kelly!"

At the words, Margo's pencil jerked away from her notebook, and she half turned in her chair. The visitor's back was turned, both hands tight in Mr. Kelly's, his hair glossily smooth above the collar of his woolly sweater. He again wore knickers.

"I've been in town a couple of days and intended to drop in before this and inspect your sacred sanctum, but between golf and dinner dances and my duty to my host and hostess, I haven't had a minute."

He turned and his voice trailed off into an: "Oh!"

Margo gathered up her notebook and pencils, and prepared to leave.

"Miss Deane, this is Mr. Laidlaw, an old college friend, even though he was a green freshman when I was a dignified senior."

The visitor extended his hand.

"I'm very glad to know," he said in a loud voice, and then he grinned and added in a whisper, "your name." Mr. Kelly was drawing up a chair for him.

In the outer office, Margo looked out of the window at Main Street, stretching countryward, lined for two blocks with small trim stores, the city library on one corner, the Methodist Church on the other, and then verging gradually into the residential district. Far in the distance was the red roof of the rambling Carlisle Country Club; over to the right, the manufacturing plant of Joseph H. Moore, its chimneys belching forth black smoke against the sky. Not far from the country club was the splendid big porticoed house which was the show place of Carlisle—the home of the Moores.

Margo's eyes slowly retraced their way down Main Street to the opposite curb in front of the tea room, where a long, low, scarlet roadster was parked, surrounded by small curious boys. She turned wearily toward her desk and propped her notebook against the telephone.

The two men came out of Mr. Kelly's office and stood, talking. Don Laidlaw's hand rested on Margo's desk, a large onyx seal ring on his little finger.

"So long, Don. Glad you dropped in. Come again! We'll finish that dictation now, Miss Deane."

Margo gathered up her notebook and pencils, slipping past them as they said good-by. Don said heartily: "It's mighty good to see you, Kelly. The little old town seems to agree with you. Wonder if it would do the same thing for me if I accepted Mr. Moore's offer of that position."

Margo smiled knowingly. With the Moore prestige, Carlisle could do much for him.

At five o'clock the scarlet roadster was again at the curb.

"Miss Deane, I believe," he laughed. "And how about an hour's drive before you get Bud's supper?"

It was nice to be sitting beside him, although as he slammed the door and pressed his foot to the starter, she wondered why it was so easy to climb into the car at his bidding. She closed her eyes as the wind slapped her in the face and tumbled the hair that lay against her cheeks from beneath her hat.

"Like it?" he asked, as they sped past the country club with its vast sweep of green, dotted here and there with gayly dressed players, intent on their games.

"Very much."

"What are you doing to-night?" he asked her. "Want to go riding again? I'm going to be busy until about nine thirty."

"I'm very busy to-night. You see, I'm going to a party to-morrow night."

"So am I, and I'd give anything to get out of it."

"Well, the one I'm going to is going to be a lovely party. And to-night I'm going to let down the hem of my three-year-old party dress, and press it, and wash my hair."

"Wash your hair! It looked like washed gold to-day with the sun shining on it."

"And I'll press Bud's gray-and-blue tie," Margo went on. "Bud is invited to the party, too. And besides that, I've the dinner dishes to do."

He laughed. "The people I'm visiting are attending that lecture to-night in the high-school auditorium, and I've begged off. We'll go riding around nine thirty to-night, Margo."

He drew the car to a stop at a wayside station. "Let's have a drink."

"I want root beer and a hot dog!" Instantly, Margo regretted her decision. Lillah Moore would never order hot dogs.

"Make it two," he called out to the attendant. "It's great to hear a girl order a hot dog!"

Laughing over the foaming mugs of cold root beer, daubing mustard generously between the halves of rolls encircling still sizzling frankfurters, they were two gay companions. They drove back to Carlisle just as the sun was setting, its scarlet aurora in the sky forming a background for the great black smokestacks of the Moore Manufacturing Company.

"What color is the dress you're going to wear to your party to-morrow night?" he asked suddenly.

"Yellow."

"I'd like to see you in a yellow dress," he said slowly, as they turned onto Locust Street and drove beneath the green overhanging elms.

"Really?" she challenged saucily. "I'd like to see you in a uniform with a scarlet-and-gold waistcoat and black trousers, with a gold braid down the side and a funny cocked hat with plumes on it."

"I'll make application to the Carlisle band at once for the position of drum major, if drum majors are what you prefer."

"No," Margo told him slowly. "I was thinking of a picture I saw of a prince." She stopped short. Then she laughed. "Well, here we are at the Deane domicile, badly in need of paint and shingles, but a nice old place."

"Good-night, girl of the yellow gown."

He was holding the door open for her, leaning toward her, smiling. The fresh outdoor smell of his clothes came to her, reminding her of Bud. And with that reminder, Margo knew that she could hurt Lillah, just as Lillah had hurt Bud. The look in Don's eyes gazing into hers told her so.

"Good-night, prince of the red coat and cocked hat," she replied gayly. "You might toot your horn three times when you come by at about nine thirty."

After dinner, she washed her hair, and sat before the gas oven while it dried, meanwhile taking innumerable stitches in the yellow dress. Promptly at nine thirty the horn tooted outside. A round moon smiled down through the overhanging branches of the elms, and a broad shaft of moonlight fell across the scarlet car at the curb, as Margo went out to meet him.

There were no words spoken as they sped over the white-ribboned road that skirted the meandering stream known as Broad River, along whose banks Lillah Moore and Bud and Margo had played as children.

"Like it?" he whispered.

"I'd like to go on and on and never stop."

The cool night wind caressed her face as they drove through the moonlight, and the clock on the dashboard spun off the minutes rapidly. The lights of a little town flashed ahead in the distance, and then as suddenly were behind them.

"Oh, we must go back," Margo said finally. "It's late, and I have to go to work to-morrow."

"But you said you wanted to go on and on, and never stop."

"Not now." There was a little catch in her voice. She looked up at him. He was not wearing a hat, and his hair was tossed by the wind.

"Sometime?" He whispered the word, leaning toward her.

"Sometime—maybe."

"Want to drive?" he asked as the car came to a stop preparatory to turning around.

"I'd love it!"

Her slim foot pressing down on the accelerator, they whirled out of

the little village and again into the moonlight-bathed countryside. He was sitting close to her, his arm resting on the back of the seat, and Margo laughed into the wind. Then as he started to sing, his arm tightened about her shoulders. The words of the gay, popular dance tune were ardent, adoring, and Don sang them to her as if he meant them.

She could hurt Lillah Moore as Lillah had hurt Bud, but how she would hurt herself, too! Lillah Moore had everything, but Don was Margo's to-night!

As they came into Carlisle and passed the Moore home, he did not look at it. He was looking at Margo, his face close to hers. The clock in the Methodist Church was striking twelve as they drew up before her house.

"Good night," he whispered. His hand held hers. He leaned closer. "I'm going to see you——"

"Sometime!" Margo said flipantly. She dared not be otherwise just then. Her heart was racing as the white moonlight sifted down through the old elms, illuminating his handsome young face bending close to her own.

"Soon, please."

"Social engagements claim us both to-morrow night," she reminded him.

"Tell me where your party is, and I'll sneak away about eleven thirty and pick you up. I'd like to see you in that yellow dress."

She shook her head. "That isn't included in the book of social etiquette. You stay at your party, I'll stay at mine."

He was drawing her nearer, and for a brief instant she turned to him. Then she slipped out of the circle of his arm and sped up the walk.

"Good night!"

"Girl of the yellow gown!"

"Prince of the scarlet coat!"

The scarlet car did not roar away into the night until she had closed the door behind her and was standing in the dark hallway, her hands clasped tightly together, sharp little sobs rising in her throat.

He was waiting at the curb the next morning and she went to him, unquestioning. They drove to the bank-building entrance in that blessed silence that often ensues between two people who are happy and content in each other's companionship.

That night before the party she stood on tiptoe and straightened Bud's tie.

"Now remember, Bud Deane, I'm your girl to-night, and you must stick to me—tight!"

"Try and get rid of me! And say, Margo, how about sneaking off a little early? I'm not keen about staying for the last dance, are you?"

"Just give me the wink, and I'll be ready. You look like my favorite moving-picture hero, Bud; really you do."

"I'm going to call the Carlisle taxi. With all the rest driving up in swell cars, you're not going to that party any other way. You're a mighty cute kid, Margo. It's a wonder to me some of the fellows around town haven't nabbed you off long before this."

Margo, busy with her powder puff, smiled into the mirror. Bud did not know that Harry Conover, the son of Carlisle's mayor, had asked her to every dance and every football game to which she had gone with Bud. He didn't know that Carl Lane and Sam Baxter had tried hard to go out with her, and she had refused every invitation. He didn't know about the scarlet roadster.

The Moore home was aglow with light. On the broad sweep of lawn that fronted on the country-club

golf course, a dancing floor had been built, banked with palms. There was gay and sparkling dance music, laughter and happy young voices, the bright dresses of the girls against the more somber colors worn by the men. Seeing Bud's tweed shoulders straighten, Margo slipped her hand through his arm and held it tight.

Mr. Moore, pompous and red-faced, was standing on the porch as they came up the steps. For a moment his hand lay on Bud's shoulder.

"Hello, Margo. Hel-lo, Bud! Glad to see you again. Lillah's just inside in the hall. Say, Bud, that job's waiting for you any time you want to come back. I fired Lasky the other day. Think it over."

Again Bud's shoulders straightened as they turned toward the doorway that led into the long living room. Under a sparkling chandelier, Lillah Moore, tall, slender, and laughing, stood with her mother, surrounded by a group of young people. Bud and Margo hesitated, for Lillah was laughing up into Don Laidlaw's eyes. How handsome Don was, with his shining dark hair, white teeth, and broad shoulders!

Lillah was coming toward them, her hands outstretched.

"Margo—and Bud Deane! How glad I am to see you again! Bud, you're taller than ever!"

"Hello, Lil-lah."

Bud had almost said: "Lil," the old name. He extended a hard brown hand. "It's great to see you again."

"This is Celia Lane—Margo and Bud Deane—and Liza Lynn and Johnny Carruthers. Bud, this is Don Laidlaw. I needn't introduce Don and Margo, for they've already met. Margo knows Don."

Margo felt her cheeks burning. Don Laidlaw had taken her hand in

his and was holding it tight. But she didn't look up at him. She was looking at Bud and Lillah. Lillah was standing close to his shoulder, whispering to him.

"My turn now," said Don Laidlaw in a low voice. "Look at me, Margo."

Bud's face was dyed crimson, and his hands were deep in his pockets, a habit with him when ill at ease. They shouldn't have come. All the girls wore expensive-looking evening dresses; the men wore tuxedos. She looked down at her yellow dress, and then her hands went to her hair as she looked up at Don Laidlaw.

"Going to dance with me?"

She wanted to whisper: "No!" but the words would not come to her lips.

"I have the first and fourth with Lillah, the second with Mrs. Moore, and the third, fifth, eighth, and eleventh with the girl of the yellow gown."

"Oh, no! We mustn't."

"And the eleventh will be the supper dance, and while all the rest are eating, we're going driving in the moonlight, you and I."

She must not go out in that white moonlight with him again, Margo told herself. The music was starting, a lilting, swinging web of melody, and the guests were moving to-

ward the porch. Lillah's white hand lay on Bud's arm.

"The third, Buddie, and the sixth?" She had called him "Bud-die," the old name!



As they danced, he sang the song he had sung to her last night on the open road.

At the beginning of the third dance Don came toward Margo as she stood with Bud at the far end of the porch. And Bud moved off toward Lillah. The orchestra swept



into the opening bars of a fox trot. "By request," he laughed as his arms went about her, and as they danced, he sang the song he had sung to her last night on the open road.

Over his shoulder, Margo saw Bud with Lillah in his arms, their heads close together, Bud's eyes so tender and kind, smiling down into Lillah's upturned face. Margo's heart contracted within her. Why had they come to open that wound afresh?

"The fifth dance is mine, you know," Don reminded her as the music stopped. She nodded, looking for Bud and Lillah. They were walking toward the far end of the porch, Lillah's hand through his arm as it had been in the old days.

"Let's walk," Don suggested as they finished the fifth dance. "I had the next with Amy May, but she's gone riding with Hanover, and they

won't be back. No, not that way," he said, as Margo turned to follow Bud and Lillah. "Let's go out in the garden."

"I'm going back home Saturday," he said slowly as they walked down the garden path. "Mr. Moore's offered me a job, and I must decide before then. He's promised me all his legal work and charge of a department, and in addition I can have my own office and hang out my shingle."

"Oh!" Mr. Moore had given Bud a position, too, back in those days when he and Lillah were engaged.

To see Don on Carlisle's streets, to see him with Lillah Moore, married to her! Margo rebelled at the very idea.

"Let's go back. The music is starting."

"You haven't said you'd like to have me stay in Carlisle, Margo."

He must not stay in Carlisle, she told herself. Don and Lillah must go away, and leave her and Bud to forget. But it would be hard to forget.

"Shall we go back? I want to find Bud."

"Let Bud alone. He and Lillah are having a good time talking over the old days. Lil's told me a lot about Bud."

The old days! Margo started for the house, and he followed her. They went down the long porch to

the nook obscured by closely tangled vines, where she had seen Lillah and Bud disappear after the last dance. Hearing voices, she paused.

"Lil!" came Bud's low, tense voice. And out of the darkness, Lillah's voice, stifled: "Bud dear!"

Margo laughed suddenly, a forced laugh, brittle and high. Bud and Lillah walked out of the shadows.

"I'm ready to go home if you are, Bud," Margo said quietly. "You know you said you wanted to leave early."

"Why all the rush?" Bud's voice was almost sharp. "I've three more dances promised."

There was only one more thing Margo could do. She must bring Lillah back to Don Laidlaw.

She laughed up into Don's face. "Well, Lillah has stolen my brother, and Bud has stolen your girl, so you'll have to entertain me."

He put his hand on her arm as they walked away, leaving Bud and Lillah alone.

"That won't be hard," he said. "Going riding with me?"

"Sometime."

They finished the dance, her head close against his shoulder, her lips smiling up at him, as Lillah's lips had smiled at Bud, her eyes vainly trying to find Bud and Lillah in the crowd. They were nowhere to be seen.

"I didn't think much of Carlisle until that rainy morning," Don was whispering, "and then the sun commenced to shine right through the rain."

After they left the dance floor, out in the shelter of the vines where Bud and Lillah had stood a few minutes before, Don Laidlaw took Margo in his arms. For one brief moment, she lay there unresisting, her eyes closed, his breath hot on her cheek. Then she pushed him away.

A silver shaft of light fell across his face as he looked down at her, his arms reaching for her again.

"No, no!" She turned and ran down the side porch, down to the terrace and through the garden.

"Margo!" His voice came to her as she crouched behind some shrubbery. He must not see her for if he took her into his arms again, she would sob out her love for him. He passed, still calling out her name. Then he was gone, lost in the maze of cars that stood in the driveway.

Along the path from the rear of the house came Bud and Lillah, walking rapidly, a long dark coat thrown over Lillah's shoulders.

"Bud!" Margo realized that her voice was only a hoarse whisper.

Lillah's light laugh came back through the night air, suddenly stifled as Bud's head bent down to hers. Then they, too, were lost in the maze of cars in the driveway.

The girl in the yellow dress stood silent for a moment, hidden behind the rosebushes, dry sobs tearing at her throat. She knew now that she had made Lillah jealous, had hurt her as she had hurt Bud, and now that wound would be opened again, for once more Lillah would laugh at him. Margo and Bud would have to give up the one great love of their young lives. In that one brief second back there on the porch when she had lain in Don's arms, his lips against hers, Margo had realized that the one great love had come to her. She knew it, just as Bud had known there would never be another love for him but Lillah's.

She heard the roar of a motor. The doors of the garage were opened, and slowly the big Moore car backed out into the driveway, Lillah at the wheel, Bud beside her. Paralyzed with foreboding, Margo watched for a moment, then ran toward them.

They must not ride away together; it would only bring added sorrow to Bud in the end.

"Bud!"

The car was turning around. Bud did not hear. He was bending close to Lillah, his arm along the back of the seat, as Don Laidlaw had sat last night with his arm behind Margo. Lillah was jealous, and planned to hurt Don through Bud, but she would hurt Bud, too. Margo decided desperately that that must not be.

And then she saw the low scarlet roadster parked near by. She would follow Bud and Lillah, explain the other girl's motives to him. Margo got into the driver's seat, then gasped, for slumped beside her, his hands clasped behind his head, a bar of moonlight across his fine face, was the owner of that scarlet roadster.

"Oh!"

"I knew you'd come, Margo," he said quietly. "I was waiting for you."

"We must follow Bud and Lillah!" she cried.

"But, Margo——"

"Oh, please! You don't understand."

The tail light of the Moore car was disappearing through the big stone entrance.

She switched on the ignition. "We're going to follow them!" The car shot out through the stone entrance and into the highway, the red tail light of the Moore car just ahead.

"I don't get the idea," Don Laidlaw said. "You're hitting fifty-five right now. Better slow up."

But the car went faster. The moon was a great pale orbit against a star-spangled sky above the highway. Ahead, the tail light of the Moore car disappeared over a rise in the road.

"I don't understand," said Don Laidlaw again.

"No, you don't understand, but I do, and it's all my fault," Margo sobbed. "Bud must not be hurt again."

His arm slipped about her shoulders, and his voice, infinitely gentle, came to her.

"Margo, listen!"

"No, don't touch me! It's all your fault and mine; she's doing it to get even. Don't touch me—I hate you!"

"All right." Don straightened and folded his arms, staring straight ahead. "But you'd better stop at that gas station down the road. There can't be much left in the tank."

"We're not going to stop!" Margo told him fiercely.

They flashed past the gas station, where the attendant drowsed in his tiptilted chair in the doorway. When they reached the village the Moore car turned a street corner, and stopped in front of a white house on a side street. Margo brought the car to a stop and ran toward them, calling Bud's name.

Bud, helping Lillah out of the car, turned quickly.

"Margo—what under the sun!"

Margo faced Lillah Moore, her hands clenched at her sides. "You can't hurt him again, Lillah. You can have your Don Laidlaw, but you must stop playing with Bud!" She hung on Bud's arm, sobbing.

"Margo!" Bud's voice was sharp. "Stop that crying. What's the matter with you?"

"Lillah's doing it to get even, Bud—can't you see? She loves Don, and just because Don's been paying me a little attention, she's using you to make him jealous. Bud, let's go away where we'll never see them again!"

"Margo, listen!"

"Let's go home, Bud. I hate him, I hate him, and it's all my fault!"

Bud turned to Lillah. "Can you make her stop, Lil? I can't. Explain to her."

When Lillah put her white hand on Margo's arm, Margo drew away quickly.

"Margo, I'm not hurting Bud again. I love him."

"You don't love him. If you'd loved him, you'd never have done what you did last year. You love Don." She turned to look at Don Laidlaw, who stood behind Bud, his face white and set under the street light. "You love Don, and you're just playing with Bud because you're afraid I'll take Don away from you."

"Margo!" There was a lilting, happy note in Lillah's voice. "I love Bud, and we're going to be married. My going to Europe was all due to a misunderstanding."

"There, Margo!" Bud's hand reached out for Lillah's. "That's why Lillah and I slipped away from the party—to be married. Aren't you glad? You know how I love her."

"And you and Don are just in time, Margo," laughed Lillah. "When Bud showed me the license he got last fall just before I went away, we decided to use it at once, so we'd never be separated again. We love each other too much to wait any longer."

Margo followed Bud and Lillah up the walk to the porch, Don tall and quiet beside her. Standing beside Don in the little square parlor as the ceremony started, Margo watched Bud's dear happy face looking down at the slender lovely girl beside him, her hand in his; watched Lillah as she raised her lips for her husband's first kiss; watched Bud as he bent his head over her and whispered something unintelligible.

"We're going to announce it to the party," Bud laughed after the ceremony. He and Lillah drove off, leaving Margo alone with Don Laidlaw. She looked down at her bedraggled yellow dress and shivered. For the first time she realized she was cold and lonely and weary. Don took off his coat and slipped it about her shoulders. Margo felt a pang of pity; Don loved Lillah as Margo loved Don, and now Lillah was lost to him forever.

"I'm sorry for you," Margo murmured, "but you see, Bud and Lillah have always been in love."

He held the car door open and she slid into the seat. Then they were off, his young face tense over the wheel as they left the little village behind. No word came from those straight lips. He was deeply hurt, Margo told herself. Lillah had hurt him as she had hurt Bud last fall.

The car was slowing down, and he pressed his foot harder against the accelerator. Finally the roadster rolled to a stop beneath a tree.

"Gas!" he said briefly after an inspection of the tank. "All gone."

"Oh, and that's my fault, too! We should have stopped, but you see, I didn't want to lose Bud and Lillah. It seemed so terribly important then."

He stood in the center of the road, silhouetted against the sky as a car approached, its lights shining like two golden tunnels through the darkness. It stopped, and briefly Don explained their predicament. The driver promised to send gas back from the station down the highway. Then Don sat beside her again, his arms folded on the wheel, waiting. Margo felt the desperate need of breaking his silence.

"I'm sorry for you," she repeated, "but Lillah must have loved Bud, or she wouldn't have married him."

He turned squarely in the seat and faced her.

"I've known Lillah cared for Bud. She's always cared for him. She didn't care a snap about me. It was just a college romance; that's all."

His young face was white and hurt as he turned away again.

"And I've never cared about Lillah," he said after a moment, "except as a mighty good friend since that romance was over. Lillah knew it."

"Oh!" Margo's breath caught in her throat. "And then you didn't mind her marrying Bud?"

"Mind? Why should I? She's happy and certainly he is! If I had cared for Lillah, would I have taken you riding, waited for you?"

"Oh!" breathed Margo, and then was silent again.

"I hope you're satisfied," he said after that silence. "You did succeed in making a fool of me."

"Oh, please, don't!"

"I thought you cared for me. It was a surprise to hear that you hated me."

"Oh, but I don't!"

For one brief instant, Margo hesitated. Then she put her arms around his neck, drew his head to her.

"I—I don't hate you, Don. Surely you know that you're the man I care for."

His arms were about her and he was whispering:

"You do care, Margo? You really do?"

"Oh, so very much, Don, that I can't tell you!"

The moon was sinking behind the elms, but it was still light enough for her to see the radiance in Don's dark eyes.

"And you're going to marry me, Margo?"

"Sometime," she whispered.

"And sometime means soon!" His kiss promised happiness, tenderness, love.

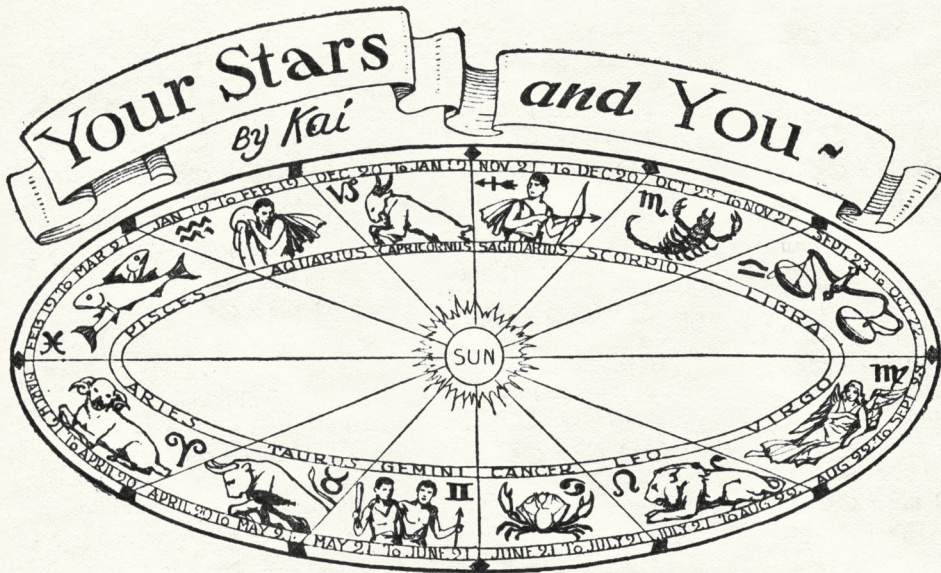


BESIDE THE FOUNTAIN

I SAW a warm flush steal across your cheek
Because I touched your hand.
That quiver in your voice when you would speak
Is music to me, and I understand
Why you are silent now lest you should say
Some little word to turn this moment away.

Sweet, these are foolish tremors! In my eyes,
Dared you but search them, you could not but see
A flame to match the one which you disguise
In your own heart, pretending needlessly
That we are casual friends. Let drop the mask,
And I will be to you all love could ask!

ELEANOR HALBROOK ZIMMERMAN.



YOUR WEEK

The week is one of vital consideration of general conditions and personal welfare. These seven days should be used for thinking about important problems and the solving of them. The first few days are confusing and agitating, but the general trend is significant, and the unevenness which will prevail is essential for realizing just where one stands in order that the latter days of the week may be profitable to you. There are things to be done. There are desires to be fulfilled. There is a definite scheme to be observed and, above all, individualism to be recognized which does not interfere with the program being followed by yourself and others. The tone of the week is lively and aggressive, and it would be very easy to fall into a self-pitying rut which disregards others and which acts like a wet blanket upon ambition. If you have a condition which is unsatisfactory, look the facts in the face and do something about it. Summing up your personal qualifications should be the answer to the big question mark encompassing your existence.

DAY BY DAY

Hours mentioned are Eastern standard time

Saturday, December 12th
 ♄ Here is a nice, friendly day, but a little nervous and upsetting where personal affairs are concerned. Your activity to-day will carry over into

Sunday, and when you are planning the hours it might be well to allow to-day's actions to influence your program for to-morrow. The most favorable periods are from eleven a. m. until one p. m. and between six thirty p. m. and nine p. m.

Sunday, December 13th



The trend to-day is upsetting and disruptive in our personal lives, and the best thing to do is to realize facts before you take steps in any direction. The best periods are in the morning until one p. m. and after eleven p. m.

Monday, December 14th



This is an ambitious day in the business and commercial world. Use concentration and be careful if you enter into agreements by law or by contract. Best business period is in the morning until one thirty p. m. The remainder of the day is emotional and unsatisfactory for dealing with those who are intimately concerned with your life, especially between six p. m. and nine p. m. The influences are much better for understanding and an expansive treatment of life after ten o'clock in the evening.

**Tuesday,
December
15th**

♂

The influences to-day incline the public and private mind to manipulation, solving difficulties, and—for you who are interested in such things—radio, motors, engines, communications, and writings. This is a very aggressive and active day and exhausting because of a full routine. You may expect the pace to be fast and upsetting because of inability to make quick judgment, due to the acceleration of living. Be careful in making decisions, in speaking without forethought, of accident while traveling. Make your keynote one of advancement and progress. Control is very important throughout the entire day.

**Wednesday,
December
16th**

♀

Results to-day depend upon your own efforts. You may expect a more balanced and calmer routine. Avoid the opposite sex and concentrate upon enterprise and business efforts. Morning hours are constructive, stable, and favorable. The influences are not good between four and six in the afternoon, and the evening is neutral.

**Thursday,
December
17th**

♂

The morning is irritating, annoying, and unfavorable for selling, contracts, and any effort which will tax your nervous system. Be most careful in all activity until one p. m. After that there is a better trend to the hours, but I do not consider the general results of the day satisfactory or pleasant, unless formula and method is followed.

**Friday,
December
18th**

♀

The importance of the week generally will be brought to the attention to-day. This is not a favorable day for individual consideration, but we have had experiences before such as will be undergone during these important hours. It would be better to avoid anything of great importance to-day which is dependent upon the efforts of others. Unsatisfactory peri-

ods generally are during the morning hours and after ten thirty p. m. The most favorable time is from noon until four p. m.

IF YOU WERE BORN BETWEEN—

March 21st and April 20th

(Aries ♈)

—changes, restricted finances, opportunities which you cannot take advantage of fully, and trouble in the emotional department—especially with families and those closely connected with your life—is the message of the stars for the Aries people this week. Keep your enthusiasm within bounds and make decisions which affect the future months only after due consideration. Worry, aggressiveness, loss of temper and an indication for accident are shown for you with birthdays between March 22nd and 30th; this is only temporary, and after the current week there will be a calmer tone to your affairs.

April 20th and May 21st

(Taurus ♉)

—changes, travel, excitability, and new developments of a favorable nature are indicated now and in the near future for the Taureans with birthdays between May 3rd and 15th; the current week is pleasant, artistic, and satisfactory emotionally. There are good influences working at this time, also, for you with birthdays between April 21st and 30th, and you can make proper decisions for the future, sign contracts, and enjoy yourself.

May 21st and June 21st

(Gemini ♊)

—travel, materialization of plans made in the past, and opportunities for effort which will produce favorable results later are indicated for the Geminians with birthdays between June 4th and 15th, especially if you were born near June 11th. There is confusion and uncertainty for you with birthdays between May 28th and June 3rd; be careful!

June 21st and July 21st

(Cancer ♋)

—changes, emotional upheaval, mental disruption, and disintegration of plans made in the past are a liability for you Cancerians with birthdays between July 5th and 16th; the current period is very upsetting, and you will have to use very good judgment in handling the details of your pres-

ent existence; be patient with present conditions. Much of the fault for this state of affairs is your own fault; place the blame where it rightly belongs, and do not be too sensitive in dealing with those about you. These latter remarks apply particularly to you with birthdays around July 11th. The current week is confusing, unsettled, and nervous for you with birthdays between June 26th and July 2nd; control the emotions and you will find the week much more satisfactory.

July 21st and August 22nd

(Leo ♌)

—if you have a birthday between August 5th and 16th, and particularly around August 12th, you must think over the details of your life very carefully, make the changes necessary for your development and monetary gain in the future, and lay careful plans which you expect to be fulfilled next spring and summer. The folks with birthdays between the first two weeks in August have a week of hard work ahead of them. There are favorable influences working for you who were born between July 28th and August 3rd, but this will probably work itself out in living well and in an idealized conception of those about you.

August 22nd and September 23rd

(Virgo ♍)

—the Virgo people who were born near September 15th are under favorable planetary conditions, and any steps which are necessary for you to improve your state of mind, which will build up a constructive future for you and those closely connected with your life, should be taken with confidence. The influences ahead are favorable for you, and the current week is very pleasant. This period is not so favorable for those born near September 1st or during the last week in August. The influences are mixed for you, but the main keynote will be delay in connection with your emotional desires and some uncertainty and worry about the future. The current week is favorable for travel and social activities for those with birthdays between August 24th and September 2nd.

September 23rd and October 22nd

(Libra ♎)

—the Librans with birthdays near October 15th are under highly emotional influences and are probably experiencing difficulties with partners and those connected with your emotions. There are changes

ahead of you, and you must make the most of the present situation. Those of you born near October 8th are having changes and upheavals at the present time, and if you have to make a decision which is a personal sacrifice, make this choice gracefully so that you do not hurt yourself or those affected by this change of routine. Those of you with birthdays during the last week in September are under nervous and uncomfortable influences this week, and you will be foolish to take the events of the present period seriously; they do not have a definite bearing upon your future life.

October 22nd and November 21st

(Scorpio ♏)

—those of you born during the last week in October have an active and exhilarating week ahead, with decisions to make, commercial dealings to handle, travel, and consideration of the emotional side of life. The folks born during the middle of the month, especially near November 18th or 19th, have constructive developments taking place, some indecision about emotional affairs, but a pleasant week ahead which will entail expense and a great deal of social activity.

November 21st and December 20th

(Sagittarius ♐)

—those of you born between November 28th and December 4th are not finding everything particularly to your liking at this time. Try to refrain from worrying too much about present circumstances, and if you have to make vital decisions, consult and discuss the circumstances with those closely related to your life in whom you have confidence; your judgment is not as balanced as usual. Avoid speculative dealings at this time if you were born between December 5th and 16th, but be sure to capitalize upon your opportunities in order that you may make the next six months productive and valuable in a financial way. There are favorable influences ahead of you within the next six months, and you should do your part and not expect the planetary conditions to work out everything without effort in your direction.

December 20th and January 19th

(Capricorn ♑)

—the current week is emotionally upsetting, disruptive, inflammable, and productive of sudden changes for you Capricornians with birthdays between December 23rd and January 2nd. You are not un-

der strong unfavorable influences, but many of the events of the current week are transitory. For you folks who have birthdays between January 5th and 14th, the existing circumstances of your life are restricted and unhappy; but there is nothing much you can do about it, and you may as well wait for the full development of your ideas and plans, and in the meantime live as conservative an existence as possible. Carry on and wait for the right opportunity.

January 19th and February 19th
(Aquarius ♒)

—favorable changes and new ideas are in store for you folks born near February 4th, with favorable publicity and travel thrown in for good measure. If you were born near February 12th, take care of your health and do not be too concerned over the complications in your emotional affairs. The current week is pleasant for you who have birthdays between January 21st and February 1st.

February 19th and March 21st
(Pisces ♓)

—the planetary positions are still favorably inclined toward you Pisceans with birthdays between March 3rd and 10th, but you will have to make the exertion and plan for future results if you wish to fulfill the promise of present conditions. Do not just go through the days and expect everything to come your way without making the proper effort. Indecision will not bring results. Watch your step this week if born near February 25th.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
★ THE STAR QUESTION BOX ★
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Miss J. P., born April 12, 1909, twelve a. m.: I am not really keen about either of the birth dates you sent in—March 9, 1908, and September 11, 1902—as far as the combination of planets is related to your own birth date. As a matter of fact, Miss J. P., I do not promise you permanency in connection with a marriage made before 1933. I liked your letter very much, and if you have another question which does not relate to marriage, I should be very pleased to have you write me again.

Mrs. J. F., born September 23, 1880, two a. m., Czechoslovakia: Go ahead and

make the business move, if you have the opportunity. Your planetary positions are not as favorable as I would like them to be, but you have very good conditions in the fall of 1932 and again in 1933. I think you will find conditions improved in a new location. Answering your question about a general horoscope: The price of these personal readings vary, but the cost is between ten dollars and forty dollars, depending upon the astrologer you have give you the interpretation of your birth chart. If you will write to the Astrological Guild, they will be glad to recommend several people to you. For the extent of work you desire, I should say the cost will be about ten or fifteen dollars. People rarely understand that the astrologer's work is comparable to the lawyer's and the doctor's services. We do not get paid for the time we spend or the length of the brief we give—we charge for what we know.

Miss J. C. S., born August 25, 1907, around nine thirty p. m., Sweden: Do not marry during the next nine months. Your health will improve, but you must take good care of yourself until the late summer of 1932. Do not worry; you will have your chance to make good, and by 1933 you will wonder why you ever let yourself become worked up into the state of emotional strain you are now experiencing. You are an intelligent girl, and the latter part of your life is much better than the first part. So get hold of yourself and stop acting so foolishly.

Marion, born February 5, 1904, five thirty p. m., Scotland: It is not advisable for you to have children during the next two and one half years. However, if you wish to adopt a baby girl, that is O. K. Before you make your choice of an adoption, if you will send me the birth dates of those children you are considering, I shall be glad to give you my opinion upon the combination of planets with the charts of yourself and your husband. Remember, the time of birth is very important!

Mrs. L. G., born nine a. m., October 30, 1891, Vermont: I think you are viewing the past much too seriously. Your ideas of a laundry business are excellent, and I should like to see you keep this venture in mind. Your immediate influences for the future are mixed. You will have some restriction and plenty of hard work, but you have a chance to put yourself across in the line you are contemplating. You ask me a question which you probably

know amuses me. You should know very well that I would say: "There is no line of least resistance toward financial independence." One does not get anything he does not work and plan for, and you know that as well as I do. Steer clear of matrimony for the next couple of years, Mrs. G. Thanks for your letter.

Miss C. M., born May 22, 1914: I cannot give you the information you request about marriage without your time of birth.

B. A. T., born October 13, 1893, hour unknown: After April, 1932, you will have a respite from the uncomfortable health and financial strain. This interlude will prevail until the fall months, and 1933 is much better in every particular. You have really been through the worst of your restrictive influences, and you must now build upward from the rock-bottom foundation which has been created.

Miss R. L., born July 8, 1915: Your father will probably be able to handle his real-estate transaction in the fall months of 1932 more successfully than at any time previous to that period. The year 1933 is a very good year for him. I cannot give you your "astrological reading," but if you will write me again and state a specific question, I shall be glad to answer you.

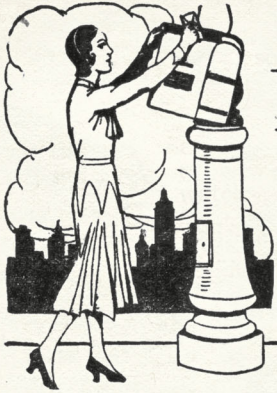
Mrs. L. A. F., born June 19, 1883, hour unknown: The general positions of your chart indicate you will engage in active business throughout the spring and summer of 1932. The thing for you to do is to get the idea firmly planted in your mind, make your plans, and, in spite of any

obstacles that get in the way, drive your course straight ahead. This may mean leaving your husband behind, but that decision is up to you. I would suggest that you continue with your plans for the dress shop, and at the same time be very patient with Mr. F.; he is not under favorable influences from the planets at this time. Your chart is well adapted to the dress-shop business you are contemplating, and if you use your talents for manipulation, you will be able to obtain the money you need. You have my wishes for success and materialization of your hopes.

Mrs. C. D., born April 14, 1892, hour unknown: Thank you for your detailed letter. According to your chart, you are on the right track in following a musical career. I think it is splendid of you to be so ambitious for your two boys, and, while I think your program of study may bring trouble in your domestic life, you will have to take the bitter with the sweet and carry on. Look at the other side of the matter: Suppose you just sat at home and did nothing to further your ambitious hopes for the boys? It must be much nicer for them to have their mother interested in and following a musical career, and informed about the one subject which interests them most, than it would be not to have the encouragement and help from some one in the home circle. You are in a changing period of your life, and decisions will be necessary and of vital importance. Keep a clear head and follow the schedule for yourself. Deliberate consideration of your problems will carry you over the rough spots. Try to bend your routine and mental attitude to conditions as they arise, and you will come through O. K.

Editor's Note: Questions for this department are answered only through Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine. Each reader is allowed to ask one question. Be sure to give the following data in your letter: date, month, year, and place of birth, the hour of the day or night, if possible, and sex. Address your letters to KAI, care of this magazine.





The Friendliest Corner

By MARY MORRIS

Miss Morris will help you to make friends



Miss Mary Morris, who conducts this department, will see to it that you will be able to make friends with other readers, though thousands of miles may separate you. It must be understood that Miss Morris will undertake to exchange letters only between men and men, boys and boys, women and women, girls and girls. Please sign your name and address when writing. Be sure to inclose forwarding postage when sending letters through The Friendliest Corner, so that mail can be forwarded.

Address Miss Mary Morris, Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

A NURSE knows life. Day after day she sees the drama of life and death, acts in the crises of other people's lives. Florence Nightingale, Jr., can tell wonderful things of her years on the sea, on the stage, in hospitals. She's learned the lesson of kindness, friendship, has lived life to the full. Step up and claim her as your friend, girls; you'll find her warm-hearted, sympathetic, interesting, an ideal companion for all of you.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a professional nurse, now working in Washington, D. C. I've traveled the sea for two and one half years from Boston to Miami, and have been on the stage for six years. I'm thirty-nine years old, love the movies, reading, and everything that is good, have lots of friends, but want a lot more. I'll fit in with young and old, and promise loyalty.

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE, JR.

A dramatic boy from a dramatic State.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a boy nineteen years old, with dark wavy hair and brown eyes. I'm greatly interested in

LS-10B

dramatics, swimming, and horseback riding—anything exciting—and I'd like to hear from boys who are looking for a Pal.

LUCKY LOURIE.

Who shares her love for the gracious South?

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a widow, thirty-seven years old, and lost my husband about a year ago. I'm the mother of a girl sixteen and a boy thirteen. We lived in Baltimore, which I will always love; but after my husband's death I was forced to come to Massachusetts to live with my parents and obtain work. It's lonesome. Won't you women help me with your letters?

EDWINA.

Let her make life brighter for you.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Please, won't some one write to a little redhead who likes to dance and swim, and whose smile is always ready to cheer a lonesome Pal? I'm nineteen years old, just bubbling over with enthusiasm in my desire to make Pals.

SUNNY DOT.

She knows the brilliance of army parades and officers' balls.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of eighteen, have black curly hair and blue eyes,

and am fond of reading, driving, and dancing. My father is an army officer, so I have traveled and met interesting people. I'm now living in Panama, and hope you girls will want to hear about what I've seen.

AN ARMY CHILD.

Who'll convert a Chicago man hater?

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a Chicago girl, twenty-eight years old, with brown hair and hazel eyes. I love flowers, birds, and beautiful things, and would like to hear from girls who understand such things and will write about them. I've traveled, find Chicago lonesome, and am a man hater. Won't you girls write to a little cripple, four feet nine and a half inches tall?

FEMINIST.

Write to a boy whose specialty is writing.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a New Jersey boy of sixteen, a junior in high school, and after school I work in the office of a weekly paper, writing sports. I've enjoyed this work very much, and hope to continue writing. I have all the time to answer letters, and hope to correspond with young men interested in aviation, newspaper writing, and photography.

SPORTS EDITOR.

A business girl finds life fast-moving in a big city.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl twenty years old, who has already seen quite a bit of life and is willing to tell about it. I live in a big city and hold onto a position, but I still have time to write. I'm interested in dancing, sports, bridge, and books; but I'm willing to write about anything that interests my Pals.

SAPPHIRE.

He'll make "friendship" the biggest word in your vocabulary.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I hope I can establish a long list of friends, regardless of age or ideas. I'm a young man with high ideals and a good understanding of human nature. I'm interested in everything worth while, work and enjoy it; but have lots of time to write. Give me a break, fellows.

CAROLINA BOB.

Football history is made in her own family.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm nineteen years old, a girl with brown wavy hair and blue eyes. I love music and dancing and, of course, football, since my brother is an All-American football player at college. I finished high school two years ago, and have been playing around until I land a job. Girls, write to a new Texas Pal.

NOMA.

She knows stage life. Don't you want to hear about it?

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a blue-eyed blond girl, full of pep. I know lots about the theatrical world. I'd love to hear from girls between seventeen and twenty-one. Come on, Pals; show a city girl your friendliness.

BLUE-EYED BROOKLYNITE.

Send a letter to the City of Brotherly Love.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young chap twenty-eight years old, with plenty of time on my hands. I'm interested in books, drama, and the movies. I've traveled extensively and can tell of my many experiences. I'd like to hear from boys near Philadelphia, but will give a hearty welcome to all.

A QUAKER CITY LAD.

Here's a real home woman in a modern age.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm looking for true-blue Pals. I'm a jolly widow of thirty-five, but get lonely in the evenings and would like to write letters. My hobby is housework and looking after my children. Who's going to write to me?

WEST VIRGINIA KATE.

Don't you ever long for a good listener? Here's one waiting for you.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Every one, young or old, married or single, please be a Pen Pal to me! I'm a married woman, so lonesome in a big city, having lived all my life in the wilds of South Dakota. Pals, let's talk things over. I'm interested in what every one has to say, especially girls living in the good old Sunshine State.

CITY DOT.

She'll swell your post-card collection in no time.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm nineteen, a girl with dark-brown hair and eyes. I love to drive a car, and travel around quite a bit. I'd love to have post cards from all over and to send post cards from wherever I go, too. Why don't you write, girls?

JERSEY DRIVER.

Boys, team up with a real fighter.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a boy, eighteen years old, six feet two, and weigh two hundred and two pounds. I'm a prize fighter, have fought two hundred and seventeen bouts and lost only one, scoring one hundred and fifty-six knock-outs. I'm lonesome in a strange country town. Boys, let's get acquainted.

CHAMP.

Won't you convince her that friendship's worth while?

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Is there any such thing as a true friend in this world? I've just been terribly hurt by a girl for whom I did everything. I'm a married woman living in California, and I'm looking for a friend who won't turn her back on me the minute trouble arises.

WANT-TO-BE FRIEND.

Here's modern pep, all ready to go.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a blue-eyed blonde, asking for oodles of Pals. I'm a music dealer's daughter, and I love my music. Tap dancing is my hobby, and I also love swimming, boating, and horse-back riding. I'm nineteen years old, full of pep, and want all of you for my Pen Pals.

JERRY KO.

Hit the trail with a twentieth-century pioneer.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a married woman of thirty-five, have four children, and live in Ohio. My hobby is sewing, but I can do most anything. Next summer I expect to do a lot of traveling in an up-to-date covered wagon. I'd like to hear from others who like such a life; maybe we'll meet on the trail some day.

MODERN PIONEER.

Starting early on his own business career.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a boy with curly red hair and blue eyes, twenty-three years old. I'm fond of hunting, fishing, and roller skating, and am always ready for a good time. I'm in business for myself, and during the winter months have a lot of spare time. So come on, fellows, and give me a chance to use it up.

HAPPY IOWAN.

Won't you tell her about life in the open?

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a woman married to an American-born man of Polish descent. I'm thirty-one years old, have four children, and live in Pennsylvania. I'm anxious to get into forest or mountain country, and would love to hear from women living there, especially forest ranger's wives.

WILD HEART.

One more lonesome bachelor, waiting for friends.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young man in my twenties, single, and not interested in girls. I live in the country in New York State, and get terribly lonesome. Won't you boys take pity on me and write?

UP-STATE FRANK.

Boys, be a Pal to a well-traveled orphan.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a boy of twenty-one, and have slightly wavy chestnut-colored hair. My chief interests are reading, the theater, and the outdoors. I'm an orphan, and get pretty lonesome at times. I like traveling, and have crossed the continent twice. Pals, don't forget me.

PHILADELPHIA NED.

Fans, you'll find him interesting.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young sport enthusiast of eighteen, looking for Pals interested in football, boxing, or wrestling. I played varsity football, and am now managing a young boxer as a hobby. I'm connected with a wholesale grocery concern, and can tell many interesting things about the grocery business. Fans of all kinds, write to.

EMILE OF MAINE.

Don't give her time to miss her big brother.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young girl alone in the big world except for a brother who's going to France to finish his studies. I'm twenty, live in Connecticut, and feel very lonely. Who'll be a true friend to me?

JULIET OF PUTNAM.

A deep-sea sailor asks your friendship.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a boy of eighteen, with brown wavy hair and blue eyes, and at present am employed on a vessel as a cadet. I'd like to tell Pals of my experiences in Germany, England, Ireland, Cuba, Panama Canal, Mexico, and South America. I'm fond of dancing and football, and hope there is at least one Pal for me.

SEAGOING CADET.

She'll live up to her half of the correspondence bargain.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of sixteen, and have sports and letter writing for my hobbies. I'm a Girl Scout, fond of baseball, hiking, tennis, and golf. Won't some one be a Pal to me while my mother is away—and afterward, too?

BUDDY OF THE BRONX.

Here's some one cheerful to write to.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young girl of seventeen, and have golden-brown curly hair and big blue eyes. I play the piano, saxophone, and clarinet, and am crazy over dancing. I had the nicest vacation this summer, and would love to tell Pals all about it.

MISSOURI BABS.

See college life on a far, interesting island.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: The sunny Philippines—that's where I write from. I'm a coed college girl from the University of Santo Tomac in Manila, an institution twenty-five years older than the first American university. I'm not yet a débutante—only seventeen—and haven't yet had the best that society offers. Will no one be my friend?

MANOLITA.

One wife who's always on the go.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of twenty-one, married, and have a little boy of three. My husband is a traveling salesman, and we travel with him all the time. I'll welcome Pals, young and old. Please don't be bashful. MAE OF THE U. S. A.

She's found romance in a romantic land.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm not exactly lonesome, but I'd give anything to have Pen Pals. Girls, here, there, and everywhere, please write to me. I won't tell you anything about myself now except this: I'm a girl of seventeen and in love.

PHILIPPINE PAL.

Girls, don't overlook little Dolly Dimples!

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm just a little girl ten and one half years old. I'd love to have a Pal in every State and send and receive funny, cheerful, interesting letters. I'll promise to answer all the letters you girls send me; please make it soon.

DOLLY DIMPLES.

She peps up life to suit herself.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May a seventeen-year-old brown-eyed blonde join your Corner? I love sports and dancing, can speak French quite well, and am willing to write in it. I was recently in an accident and can tell of the thrilling experience. I've traveled, am thoroughly modern, and love parties. Please write, Pals.

GLOUCESTER GIRL.

Here's a touch of real romance.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a nineteen-year-old bride, married a month. I had a beautiful big church wedding out here in California. I'd love to hear from Pen Pals all over the world. Won't some one please write?

SUNNY SUE.

He offers a rare thing—real friendship.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I wonder if I have a chance of getting what I want—loads of true Pals? I'm a nineteen-year-old boy

with blue-gray eyes and brown hair. I indulge in dancing and swimming, and like all sports. Won't some one who's in great need of a true friend write to me?

BIG-TOWN JOE.

She may swim to Catalina some day.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of fourteen, with brown hair and a lot of pep. Won't all you people write to me? I'm a swimming enthusiast, so come on, all you swim fans; you'll find a faithful California correspondent in me.

SWIMMER SALLY.

She'll revive your interest in life.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a modern high-school girl in my late teens, and would love to have Pals anywhere. I've taken two years of French, and my interests range from A to Z, so I promise that no one writing me will be bored. Girls, let's get started.

MODERN FROM CHICAGO.

She's after adventure, and she'll find it.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a colored girl of thirteen, entering high school this fall, and living in New York City. I'm a good actress and singer, and am interested in books, adventure, dancing, and other enjoyable things of life. I want a lot of mail!

DOT THE ACTRESS.

Croon your favorite songs with a young blues singer.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Is there a place for me to squeeze into? I'm a girl nearly thirteen years old, with light-brown hair and blue eyes. I'm fond of reading, dancing, talkies, and the latest song hits. Come on, girls; give me a chance.

CONNECTICUT CROONER.

His correspondence circles the globe.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Who's interested in stamp or coin collecting? If any one is, please write to me, or if you're a tennis or swimming enthusiast, I'd like to hear

from you, too. I have correspondents in Japan, Guatemala, England, Malta, the Philippine Islands, and the United States, and I want more people added to the list.

RALPH THE COLLECTOR.

A mother who knows the thrill of footlights.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a twenty-two-year-old married woman with a darling eight-month-old son. I'm fond of dancing, have been on the stage, and would like to write to all of you, especially Pals of the great wide West. I'm terribly lonesome, but hope to find a real true Pal.

STAGE MOTHER.

Girls, see the life of wealth through two girls who have lost it.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: We are two sisters who until two years ago were accustomed to wealth and social standing, but since our financial downfall we have been unable to keep up our past standards of living. We've found some of our friends untrue, and we'd like to find true friends through your Corner. The older of us is twenty-one, and we're both blond. Please write, girls.

TWO LONELY SISTERS.

Who wants a red-headed Pal?

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'd like friends everywhere. I'm a woman of thirty-six, and have auburn hair and gray eyes. I hope my letter box will soon be filled. Don't forget me, Pals.

R. OF D.

A little girl in need of cheer.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of fourteen, recently lost two of my best friends, and I'm lonely. I'm fond of sports, dancing, and music, and would like to hear from far and near. Pals, I'm waiting to see how fast you'll answer this letter.

SUNNY OF SHAMOKIN.

She'll make Australia more than a place on the map.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of twenty-one, living away off in Sydney, Australia, hoping to write to all of you. I'm fond of outdoor life, and swim, play

hockey, and dance. I'm interested in movies and embroidery, and will tell all about my country to any one who writes.

MISS MEG.

She stands behind Canada's finest.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a policeman's wife, twenty-four years old, the mother of two lovely boys. Won't everybody write to me? I'll tell you all about my city, Toronto. Even a policeman's wife can be lonesome, you know.

CANADIAN BUDDY.

An artist with every girl's interests.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of Irish-German descent, more Irish than German, and have reddish-brown hair and large blue eyes. I love to tap dance, swim, play baseball, and see a good football game or prize fight. I'm going to California soon to study art, and hope to be a successful illustrator. Girls, won't you drop me a line?

GIRL ARTIST.

Find out what life means to a factory girl.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of twenty, with black hair and brown eyes. I live in Missouri, work in a large factory, and can tell plenty of interesting things. I like swimming, skating, and the movies. Pals, give me a chance.

K. C.

Boys, send your letters to fierce, mysterious India.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Four English Pals would like to correspond with anybody from anywhere. We're privates in the British army, stationed in India, and have traveled all over the world. We're fond of outdoor sports. Who would like to hear of our adventures?

FOUR TOMMIES.

Who'll grant the first wish of her life?

DEAR MISS MORRIS: If my fairy god-mother gave me three wishes, the first one would be for Pals. I'm a girl with brown hair and blue-gray eyes, and I'm a junior in high school. My hobbies are swimming,

tennis, reading, hiking, golf, and skating. Please write to me, Pals.

GREEN MOUNTAIN SUNSHINE.

A nurse on historic ground.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a nurse, doing private duty, and sometimes get very lonely among strangers. I'm a girl of twenty-three, and am living in South Deerfield, Massachusetts, where the early settlers saw so much warfare with the Indians. If any of you Pals would like to hear about this historic place, I'd surely be glad to tell them. Girls, don't forget me.

NURSE ALICE.

Write to a prima donna of the future.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a seventeen-year-old girl, with black hair and brown eyes. I hope to be a singer some day, and would be especially glad to hear from girls interested in this ambition of mine. Who'll be my first Pal?

SMOKY CITY ROSE.

Miss 1931 hasn't forgotten how to bake a cake.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Have you room for a modern sixteen-year-old Chicago girl? I'm fond of rowing, hiking, football, and boxing, and like the movies and just love to cook. Girls, won't you let me prove my friendliness?

MODERN-MINDED CLARE.

Help along her convalescence with long, cheery letters.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of fifteen, and I have dark curly hair and blue eyes. I just came out of the hospital, and would very much like to have some Pen Pals. Girls, do I stand a chance?

INVALID MARY.

A school-teacher, as gay as her pupils.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Live-wire Pen Pals, I sure need you. I'm going away from home this winter, and my only salvation lies in interesting letters. I'm a school-teacher, nineteen years old, a girl who loves fun and good times. Come on; my pen's all set!

NEW JERSEY LEE.

The Friend In Need

Department

CONDUCTED BY

Laura Alston Brown



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.

IN many cases, marriage, these days, presents not only the problem of keeping of love and loyalty, but also of coping with limited financial reserves. Many couples are having to face this.

If the husband is out of a job, should the wife put her shoulder to the wheel and work?

That seems to be an easy question to answer, doesn't it? But what if you had a doubt in your mind regarding your husband's desire to get out and round up some sort of job? What if it looked as though he might prefer to have you work, instead, excusing himself on the grounds that work was hard to find or didn't pay enough, and apparently made no special effort to resume the responsibility of supporting his wife?

If you were the woman in this case, would you get out and find some sort of work, so that the man you loved would be provided for?

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am faced with a rather grave problem, and I don't know what to do. Six months ago my husband was laid off because his firm was cutting

down expenses. The little that we had saved is almost gone, and it looks as though it were up to me to do something about it.

I'm twenty-nine; my husband is thirty-four. We have been married seven years, and I believe he still loves me as I love him.

But here's the real worry: Recently, my husband has had two opportunities to get a job which would not, of course, have paid as much as the job he lost; but it would have kept us going. Each time he made the excuse that the job should have paid more, and that he was not going to "work for next to nothing."

I hate to think he doesn't want to work. We haven't any folks to expect help from, and when our last dollar is gone, what will happen to us? I have never worked, but understand methodical housekeeping.

Now, I know I can easily get work as housekeeper for some wealthy family in this city. It would mean long hours, but I understand it could be so arranged that I would be able to go home nights and take care of my own home.

Shall I do it?

EDNA MAY B.

Doing nothing and taking things easy often gets under a weak-kneed person's skin. I would advise you first to make very sure just how your husband feels about hustling for a job. Does he mean to loaf, and has he in mind the idea that it

Note: In the October 3rd and October 10th issues of Love Story Magazine there was published a two-part story under the title "Ladies Must Eat."

The publishers wish to announce that this story has absolutely no connection with the play of the same title, copyrighted by Gabrielle Grey. The use of the title by us was purely a coincidence.

would be nice for you to bring home the shekels? If so, refuse to be imposed upon. Probably by the time that last dollar is in danger of being actually spent, he will wake up and grab off a job without complaining that it doesn't pay enough—when he sees that you prefer to remain just where you are.

But, on the other hand, if he doesn't mean to lie down on the job as husband and provider, and is the kind of man who wouldn't expect his wife to work unless it were absolutely necessary, and then only until he had a chance to land something, then by all means help out for the time being.

What's your idea, readers?

DEAR MRS. BROWN: If men prove to women that they really love them by not harming them, then how can a woman prove her love for the man?

I'm twenty-one, so you see I'm not just a mere child asking foolish questions. I love a young man dearly, and he tells me he loves me, too; but somehow I feel doubtful about that, because he has been too forward. I refused to listen to him, so he left. He said that he loved me and that, if I really cared as much as I said, I wouldn't resist him.

I have tried to forget him, but somehow I can't. Do you think I ever will? If that old saying, "Man does not harm the thing he loves," is true, then it does look as if he didn't really love me.

DYNAMITE.

He's just been handing you the old line, dear, and isn't worth the salt of your tears. Don't be silly; of course you will forget him, and the sooner you apply a little will power, the easier it will be.

Women can't prove their love for men in the way this boy meant. That only wrecks romance. Real love is something fine and beautiful, something much deeper than the attractions of the flesh, something that grips your very soul. And when such love exists between a

man and a woman, it doesn't need "proof"; one simply knows it is there.

Some day you'll find the man of your heart then you will understand that love is more than an embrace, a kiss, a touch of the hand.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have a problem which I have been trying to solve and just can't do it.

To begin with, I am twenty-five years of age. I was married at eighteen, and my husband died when I was twenty-three. I can't say I truly loved him, but I had the greatest respect for him. I was terribly upset when he died, and I have not forgotten him entirely; but I have met another man who has made me understand what love is.

I have been going with him a little over a year. He comes to see me five nights a week, and even the other two nights I know where he is. He says he loves me and can't give me up, but he doesn't want to marry me.

I have my own apartment, completely furnished, and go to business, so you see if we did marry he wouldn't have to furnish a home.

Some time ago the temptation of being with him proved too great, but I couldn't help it. Do you suppose that is why he doesn't marry me?

I want a home and something to live for, but it seems I can never have these things with him, and yet I can't give him up. He was away on his vacation for two weeks and only sent me one card in all that time, and I was frantic.

I'm just about all in; my nerves are shot to pieces, and I worry all the time for fear of losing him; but I don't seem to have the backbone to give him up. I'd just want to die if anything happened.

There are other men I know who'd be very eager to dance attendance upon me, and I have made a fool of myself waiting on this man hand and foot. The only way I can get any affection is to get good and mad—and then he babies me.

Please tell me what to do. I will follow whatever advice you give me. How can I change him? If I go out with other men, he will think the worst of me, and I'm not really bad. I don't mean to be.

EDDY.

You can't change him, Eddy, but you'd better change your life, or

you will bring more and more unhappiness to your own door.

In the first place, he doesn't really love you, and certainly it doesn't sound as if he ever would or intended to marry you in the future. You're so madly infatuated with him that you can't see ahead at all.

Don't you see, child, that you are ruining your chances of marrying some man who could offer you honest love and marriage? Suppose you meet such a man, and he finds out about this affair, what then?

Stifle your own wild emotions, Eddy; give up this fellow, and don't kid yourself that it can't be done. Later, when the first aches have vanished, you'll be much happier. There's nothing like a normal life and the protection of marriage for a woman, no matter how glamorous all this free love appears. Remember that.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: This problem of mine may not seem serious, but it happens every day in this old world of ours. I have been married just two years, and we have a baby four months old. I am from another State and quite some distance from my own people, whom I love very much.

I like my husband's people and they all like me; but here's my trouble: I want to live in the same town with my people, but my husband refuses to move. I am feeling very discouraged and am depending on your advice.

BILLIE.

Aren't you being a little childish and unreasonable? Now that you are married, you must make up your mind to live with your husband, and not expect him to drop his work and everything else and move, just because you want to be near your people.

Of course, I understand just how lonesome a person can be away from those with whom one has grown up, but you must try to consider your husband, too.

Can't you arrange to visit your

people once or twice every six months, stay with them for a month or so? That would give you and the baby a change, and it would do away with that lonesome feeling. Why not talk it over with your husband?

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I'm a boy of twenty-three, five feet ten, blond, and have been going out with girls since I was thirteen. I got in with the wrong kind of people while quite young and just went from bad to worse. Once I drank so badly that the doctor gave me three months to live. But that was three years ago, and I'm still here.

My health isn't what it used to be, but I'm not drinking now, and feel that time will help. I had two serious love affairs, and this is the third.

This girl is eight years older than I. Do you think she is too old for me? She doesn't think there's any difference, and I am crazy about her. We want to get married, but I'm not working full time, and don't think I could support her.

Her people look down on me. I guess it's because I haven't any money. I am afraid that if I did marry her, her people would try to boss me, tell me what to do, and just run things in general.

Her father and I get along all right; I guess it's because he never has much to say. I am convinced I really love her; I know I would do my best to make her happy. I am more than willing to try.

What do you think? Shall I marry her? Have we got a chance?

DON H.

You may not agree with what I think about your love affair and the girl, but this is my honest opinion:

First, there's too much difference between your ages. You may not think it would make a difference now. It probably wouldn't. But when you are thirty-five and still a young man, this girl will be forty-three. Then it will make loads of difference. Better think it over most carefully.

Second, you are apparently not so sure of your love for the girl as you like to think you are, because, if

you were, there would be no doubts in your mind. And if there were no doubts, you wouldn't have bothered to ask for my advice.

I believe it is an infatuation. Be good friends with her, but see other girls, too—girls of your own age or younger. I am sure this girl is sensible and will see your point.

When a crush is mistaken for love and marriage follows, unhappiness is the result. So go slowly; you still have lots of time to think of marriage. Work, regain your health, get ahead financially, and then consider marriage.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have been reading your department for some time and think you give some mighty good advice. Here is my problem: I'm a young girl living with my foster parents, who have one son. He is two years my senior. I have lived with them for thirteen years, ever since my mother's death.

My foster brother, Walter, and I have always been the best of pals, and he always came to me with all his troubles. When he was through high school he secured a good position in a bank. He is very handsome, but started running around with a very wild crowd and went from bad to worse.

One evening he came home after having had a few drinks and told me he had gotten a girl of his crowd in trouble. He didn't want to marry her, as she wasn't good and had just tried to get him so no one else could have him.

I had many boy friends and was engaged to a wealthy young man at the time, although I did not love him. I tried to run away with my fiancé, but Walter caught me and brought me back. Then we were told by my mother that I had been adopted.

The next afternoon Walter and I were secretly married. He insisted that I give up all my friends, but he still goes with the old crowd. Girls are calling him up all the time, and I don't like it.

Finally, after three weeks of it, I told my foster mother, or mother-in-law, that we were married, and made her promise not to tell any one else, as I still have half a year of high school to finish. Walter is willing to let me finish, so I intend to.

I am only seventeen now, and feel years older. I told my mother all about how he had been treating me. Of course, she is a dear and believes in being fair and doesn't always take her own boy's part, so she took mine.

She made it hot for him for a while, and he began to improve a little. He is still running around with the girl he got in trouble, and talks on the phone with her all the time. Do you think he is being fair to me?

He is only nineteen, swears he loves me, and I'm wild about him. He is devoted to me when he is with me, but that is very seldom, as he goes out so much.

He does not approve of my going out with other boys. I tried that, and he put the other boy in the hospital. I will be waiting for some advice as to what I should do, and will be glad to have your opinion.

JOAN.

No matter how crazy you and Walter were about each other, you should have waited a little longer before actually getting married. However, now that this has happened, try to be patient and wait. Walter is a mere youngster and probably hasn't the least idea about a married man's responsibilities. This marriage is apparently an adventure to him.

But why keep it such a great secret? You have done nothing to be ashamed of. Announce the marriage, my dear. This will put a damper on the girl-friend business, and other girls will have enough sense not to bother with him any more.

His parents should have a talk with him and make him realize that now he can no longer chase around with other girls. Of course, you shouldn't date other boys, either. But if he is so strict in his demands that you have no other boy friends, you have a perfect right to demand that he quit bothering with other girls.

I would advise you to make public your marriage as soon as possible.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: After reading Hard-boiled Steve's letter, I feel I just have to write and say a few things to this unreasonable man.

Marriage is one great blessing, Steve. I know, because I'm married and have the dearest wife and two children any man could want. You sure are all wrong, Steve, when you say marriage just affords a woman a good time, no responsibilities, and a man to support her. And when you say a woman gets something for nothing, you're very much mistaken.

My wife has plenty to do, taking care of our home and the children. Why blame all women and claim they are alike? Mrs. Brown has told you plenty, and the right things, too.

I have seen many wonderful marriages, and if you would stop being so pessimistic and look at the brighter side of life, your life would be different. You seem to be the sort who looks forward to only the dull side of life, but you will never find happiness by just picking out the bad spots.

I feel that any man with common sense would not prefer to stay single when there's so much happiness to be had in a good marriage. We started out with a furnished room, and if we had looked only for faults, we would probably have been where Steve is—separated.

Our home is a haven now. We are happy. No one is perfect. We don't always agree—I like roller skating, while my wife likes dancing—but we trust each other. There are no questions asked when we have been out at different places, except if the other had a good time. We know life is what you make it, so why look for the dreary things?
G. O. E.

Life certainly is what you make it, to a greater extent than we sometimes realize. Although we cannot prevent some unhappiness or misfortune, we get out of life just as much as we put into it. If we are stingy, life will stint us, and doing the right thing and thinking uplifting thoughts is like a boomerang; sooner or later we are bound to get some of it back.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: At nineteen I find myself a widow with two children to care for. I am a stenographer in a business office and receive a fair salary. My parents take care of the babies, as they feel

that, if I work and go out, I will have a better chance to meet some nice man whom I might marry.

A few months ago I was engaged to a man seven years my senior. He knew about my children, didn't seem to mind in the least, and said he would love them as though they were his own.

One day I brought him to my parents' home to see the children. On the way back to my apartment I told him that after we were married the children would naturally live with us, as I loved them and wouldn't dream of leaving them, ever.

This changed him very much, and finally I told him if he didn't think he could love my children and take care of them as well as of me, I couldn't possibly marry him. He left and didn't try to communicate with me for a while.

But lately I have had five letters from him. I haven't answered any of them, although I do miss him very much, as I had learned to care for him. Should I forget him?

However, here's my problem:

Do you think I should go to parties, smoke, pet, and try to forget my husband? I don't see how I could, as it has been only a little over a year since he is gone. And don't you think that, if this man really loved me, he wouldn't have felt this way about my babies?

UNDECIDED JOANNA.

It was rather stupid of that boy friend of yours to think that you would marry him and leave your two children. A mother who loves her babies could never do that. However, he may have thought it over and found he really cared, so why not get together and talk things over and find out how you both feel about the entire matter?

As for your going out to parties and smoking and petting, I hardly think it would be the dignified thing for you to do. Time will help you forget the pain of losing the husband you once loved, although I doubt if you will ever forget entirely. But memories can be sweet.

Go out with women friends, work hard, and keep busy. I'm sure happiness will come to you some day.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have been a reader of your department for the past five years. I am married and have a darling boy of four. My husband was very cruel to both baby and me, drank more than was good for him, so I left him four months ago, and came to this city.

My little boy often asks for his daddy, and I hear that my husband is a changed man. I don't know what to do about returning to him, but I want to do anything that will make my little boy happy. I still love my husband, and I am sure he must love the baby, so he has tried to locate us.

I would go back, but I am so afraid he will begin to drink again and it would be the same story. What would you advise me to do?

DORRY.

Since you know that your husband is trying to locate you, and have heard that he has changed, why not take another chance? Manage it so that your husband will secure your address from some friend of yours, and then let him come to see you.

Perhaps he has really changed, and understands everything so much more clearly now; but wait until he asks you to go back to him. Don't let him see you are eager to do so. And, before you do go back, make it very clear to him that you will never again stand for the same sort of treatment he handed out before, and that he must understand this is a new start. I think, for the boy's sake, you might give your husband another chance.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am a constant reader of your department, and have always felt sorry for the girls who have suffered through men. Up until a week ago I was happy and never thought that I would need advice so soon. I will tell you my story.

I have been going with a fellow for four years, and, no matter what course I take, I shall always love him. Before he went with me he drank, gambled, and was always seen in undesirable company. I liked him from the very first, and, as he was eighteen and I was sixteen, I thought I could make him change his ways.

I have always had peculiar ideas about love, and, no matter how hard I try, I can't get away from them.

Tom swore he loved me, and he certainly changed; he didn't drink, gamble, or bother with girls, and we were both happy.

I am not trying to appear as a goody-goody girl, because I have had my share of beaux but Tom is the only one I have ever really loved.

I've always wanted to keep myself for the man I loved, and Tom was the man. For the last two years I have been like a wife to him, thinking I would keep him to myself; but now I'm getting what I deserve.

I thought he would be true to me. Instead, he told me that for the last few months he has been seeing other girls; but he had to tell me, as his conscience bothered him. He said he had been drinking each time and didn't know what he was doing, and that the other fellows kidded him.

Am I all wrong in believing that a man can't stay true to his girl?

ANOTHER FOOL.

Either marry him at once or break up and make another start. I don't see just where all this will lead you, if you keep on making a fool of yourself, my dear.

Why be constantly dodging scandal and gossip and feel afraid that some day somebody will find out? If you think you can keep him by being easy, you are just fooling yourself.

The fact that he did not stay true to you shows that you have used the wrong method in trying to keep him. Refuse to go on as you have, and, if he doesn't offer to marry you, break with him. Don't say, as you read this, that you can't do it or that it will break your heart. You can do it, if you've any self-respect and backbone.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: You have shared so many sorrows that I feel as though I should like to have you share my happiness.

There is only one thing that makes me feel so sad that it seems happiness wasn't

meant for me. You see, Mrs. Brown, I am engaged to a sailor. Of course, we aren't going to be married until he is out of the navy and has a little saved up; we figure on waiting three more years before we marry.

Now, the thing that mars my happiness is the way people talk about sailors, although I should be ashamed of myself for feeling this way, because I love him and I don't care what happens or what people say. But it does hurt to have people think bad of the one you love.

I know for a fact that sailors are not bad. Of course, there are a few bad ones, but why should the good ones be judged by them? All they want is a good pal, and whenever I can help a boy in blue I will. I love my sailor, and he is really a good boy.

A SAILOR'S PAL.

Why worry about the opinion of some people regarding sailors, as long as you have found the right boy?

You love each other, are engaged, and are happy; that's all that matters. Certainly, the good boys shouldn't be condemned. There are a few bad men in every walk of life.

Go ahead and be happy, dear, and if you think that every one has a poor opinion about sailors, I'm sure some of our readers will gladly get busy and show you how wrong you are.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have come to you for advice. I am a school-teacher and am married to a flirt.

My husband, Bill, is twenty-five and considered very handsome by other women. I have never met a girl who did not fall for him. He goes out every night with a different woman, while I stay at home and worry. Even when I am out with him in the car, and he sees a girl he knows, he'll call out: "Hello, babe!"

I have a very nice home and a lovely two-year-old boy. I have almost everything I want, except love. I would go out with other men, but I am afraid of my husband.

All my friends tell me I am a fool to stay at home, and that if I gave him a dose of his own medicine he would change and treat me better.

I think I am beginning to hate my husband. When he isn't working, he is out. He stays home about one night a week; that's all. If it weren't for the baby, I would have left him long ago; but I have to consider little Bill.

My husband won't let me go out, but he has all the women friends he wants. One night, when he happened to be home, I told him I couldn't stand this kind of life any longer and that I wanted a divorce.

He was so surprised he couldn't talk. He promised to behave and said he loved me and was sorry for all the silly nonsense, and for a whole month he stayed at home. Then he seemed to forget all about me again.

What shall I do?

MARRIED SAP.

Why not stick it out, if you possibly can, for the baby's sake? Have a frank talk with your husband and say you will give him six months to straighten out his ideas regarding marriage duties and responsibilities, and that, if he thinks you're not serious, he will know better if, at the end of that time, he still behaves as he now does.

Then proceed to be completely indifferent as to his behavior, and show no heartbreak or worry as to how many women he is friendly with. This will certainly pique him, and may cure him long before the six months are up. Refuse to live with him as his wife.

Visit with your women friends; arrange to go out and take in a show every week with one of them; join a club if you can, and have some one take care of the baby for a few hours for you while you are out.

Your husband may not be able to figure out just what the bright idea is, and I'll wager that long before those six months are up Bill will have come to his senses.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I, also, have a problem for you. I have tried so hard to find some way out, but I can't.

I am twenty years old. When I was a mere child of fourteen I met a boy at an

ocean resort. We were good friends, hiked and swam together for the whole summer. Every summer has been somewhat the same until this year, when I returned to my home in the city wearing an engagement ring.

Every one likes this man. He is a church worker, has a nice home and a pretty good business of his own. As for love, no one could wish to be loved more than he loves me. His whole ambition, ever since he first met me, has been to marry me. I can see his love in every move he makes.

I have been engaged to him for two months. The wedding date has been set already, but I find that I really do not love him as a girl should love the man she is going to marry. He has always been a good pal, but I think love should hold a deeper feeling than just friendship, and I don't seem to feel anything else for him.

Should I break this engagement after he has built and furnished a home for me, has lived, apparently, only for me for so many years, and has put all his faith in me? What shall I do?

His health is poor, and I am afraid to break with him. His condition is one that can never be remedied. His health will always be poor.

I don't want to be mean and inhuman. I have always tried to be fair. Now, what would be the fairest thing to do—marry him or break with him and wait for the right man? I am very certain that I don't and never will love him.

Please, Mrs. Brown, help me out of this mess before it is too late. PAL.

Of course you don't wish to hurt your good friend; but the fair thing to do now is to be frank and tell him just how you feel toward him, how sorry you are you cannot return his love, although you perhaps have tried to do so.

He will be hurt at first; but how much worse he would be hurt when, after having married you, he found out how you feel! And he would surely discover that later, if he can't see it now.

Yes, dear, love is something far deeper than friendship, although true love contains the elements of friendship also. Even if you mar-

ried him, I doubt if you could make him happy. So it would be better to have it out with him now, and wait for the man who can win your heart.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Will you please tell me what I should do? I've been going with a boy for three years. It hasn't been actually steady, for he only had one day off a week; then he came when he felt like it. He has never spent a dime on me, only taken me for a ride; but I love him. He appears to care for me when he's with me.

I used to go out and try to forget, but I don't feel like it any more. Mother tells me I'm losing my good-natured disposition; but I can't tell her the real reason, for she doesn't like Maxie.

A week ago I found out that, instead of coming home when he didn't come to see me, as he said he did, he was chasing with the wrong kind of girls.

I love him and can't give him up. Please tell me what to do. ALBERTA.

Forget him. Why cry over a boy who apparently doesn't feel about you as you do about him?

Brace up, put your chin up, and wear a smile. Make new friends and go out with other boys, and don't kid yourself into the idea that it can't be done. Others have been in the very same predicament. They've let their Maxies go and dated boys who cared for their friendship. So can you.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I hope you can help me out with your advice. I will try and make my story as short as possible, and at the same time I hope you will give it careful thought.

In the first place, Mrs. Brown, I am in love. You have doubtless heard this phrase many times; but I am really and truly in love and very much so, I am afraid. I am twenty years of age and, in my estimation, not too young to be in love. I have a good job and live a normal life.

I am very much in love with a young girl of seventeen whom I have known for quite some time, as she lives next door to my sister, at whose home I always stay when in town. She is a girl worthy of any man's consideration. I have come to the

conclusion that I have loved her from the first, and I don't believe there will ever be another girl for me. You'll probably understand.

I have no parents, as they died while I was very young, so I have no one to talk to me about the ways of girls. I am coming to you with the hope that you can help me and tell me what to do.

I care for this girl so much that I can't bear to be away from her long. My work keeps me away during the week, so I can see her only on Sunday, and the hours seem like years to me. She is the only girl who has ever come into my life, as I have never run around with girls and they never interested me until now.

How am I going to find out if she likes me? I have told her of my love for her, but she doesn't seem to take it seriously. That hurts me, but I never let her know it. Surely there must be some way to show her I love her and to make her love me.

GEORGE.

The girl's youth is probably one reason why she doesn't take you seriously, and you are very young yourself, you know. Why take it all so seriously? Why not just be good pals with the girl, see her as often as you can and as often as she will let you, chum around with her, and wait until both of you are older.

Perhaps you won't agree with this; but I am looking at your problem from an adviser's point of view, and I'm trying to be sensible about it.

After a year of friendly companionship, the girl may learn to return your love, and then your problem will have solved itself. In the meantime, be patient, considerate, and friendly. I'm sure if the girl has good eyesight she won't miss a thing.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: May I have some of your wonderful advice?

I love my husband as much as any wife can love her mate, and perhaps I am as much to blame as he is for our marriage touching rocks, so I am coming to you as a last hope.

I am a redhead, and always had a ter-

rible temper but in the short year that I've been married I have learned to stick my tongue in my cheek and count ten. It saves trouble.

We married on the quiet, and when my husband went to his mother and told her we were married, she cried for weeks. She made me feel I had taken away something I shouldn't have. He went to see her every other night, but he would never take me, and she never came to see me.

Then we moved near his sister, and things began to happen. She told him everything under the sun, among other things that men called to see me when he was away. This, of course, was absolutely untrue. His mother and sister would also say that I considered myself too good for them and didn't want them near me.

I tried to win them over. Every time I cooked something special, I would take it over to his sister's. Then they told my husband I was wasteful and many other lies.

When his sister moved away, peace reigned once more until he began to visit his mother every day. Each time he came home he would be terribly angry, although he was good to me in every other way. I think he loves me.

Why should his people hate me so and lie about me? What shall I do? I'm sick of everything.

E. W.

What you two need is some understanding, and it is high time to go in for it now. And the surest way to reach some phase of understanding is to begin talking things over in a quiet and reasonable manner.

So get together, you two. You're wise, dear, to hold that temper of yours. Talk things over in as friendly a way as possible. Tell him he is unjust and that, if he loves you at all, he must see that his treatment of you is causing your marriage to work out a failure.

Don't take your in-laws too seriously. They are probably jealous; they'll get over their tantrums in time. Perhaps they are the sort who wanted to pick a wife for your husband, and can't take the surprise gracefully.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I'm twenty-one years old, and I'm going with a man of forty-seven. He wants me to marry him.

Dear Mrs. Brown, I was married before, when I was only fifteen years old. I did everything I could to make it a success, but my husband was just no good. I stuck it out for three years; then I left him.

I've been going with different fellows for the last three years. I've not been interested in any of them. After my first experience I'm rather backward with young men. I know they are not all alike, but I can't bring myself to take any of them seriously.

I met the man I'm going with now through a friend of mine. He seemed so different from the rest. He didn't want all he could get from a girl for an evening's entertainment. Sometimes I think I love him, and then again I'm not sure. I know he loves me, and he treats me with every consideration.

He has a good business and is liked by every one; but, Mrs. Brown, that isn't all there is to marriage. My parents like him, but they never say anything to me about marrying him. I can't go to my mother, as she never invites my confidence. You are the only one I can come to with my troubles.

Would you advise me to marry him? I know he will make a wonderful husband and will be good to me. When I first met him I figured he would be more settled and I wouldn't be treated as I was the first time. I can't forget my first experience, and would hate to make the same mistake again.

Dear Mrs. Brown, he is waiting for my answer now. Please tell me what you think. I really don't know what to do, and will be grateful for your help.

JUANITA.

Dear child, I wish I could advise you to go ahead, but I'm afraid I would not be sincere. You do not say you love him, although you think he would make a good husband. Granted he would, and even if you thought you loved him, I would not advise you to marry a man twenty-six years older than yourself.

It isn't now that this difference in age would count so much. Consider the time when you will be thirty. He will be much older than forty-six then, and the old saying that May and December cannot mate is so very true.

It is to be regretted that your first marriage turned out so badly, but that need not make you afraid to marry a man older by a year or two. You've been hurt by a young man, and now you feel that safety and comfort lie only in a marriage with an older man.

Try to interest yourself in young men. Go out with them. If you do that, you will find your interest revived, and will eventually meet some young man with whom you will find true love and happiness.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I recently read a letter in this magazine from An Ex-Leatherneck's Wife, and want to hand it to her for giving a good word about the soldiers, sailors, and marines.

I really can't see what's the matter with them. I have two brothers in the navy, a cousin who is a marine, and an uncle who is a soldier, so I ought to know.

My best boy friend is a sailor, and is a nice boy. Of course, there are all sorts of people, and a lot of the men in uniforms live up to the reputation they have. But I, for one, stay true to the navy, army, and leathernecks!

With best wishes to you.

A SAILOR'S BEST PAL.

Three cheers and a yell of glee! Any one else in favor of the boys in the service?

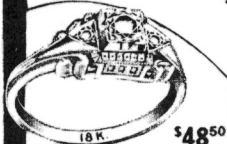
Of course, there is some bad and good in all of us, only some of us are more successful in squashing the bad side so it isn't especially noticed. But I think there is more good than bad in every human being, and we can all use a boost for good.



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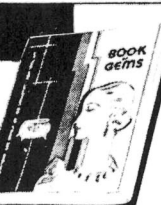


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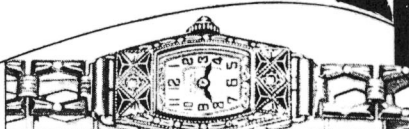
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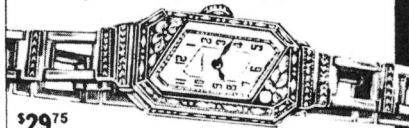
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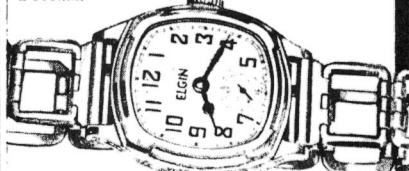


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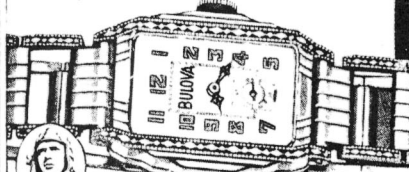
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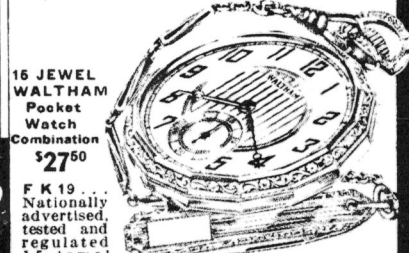


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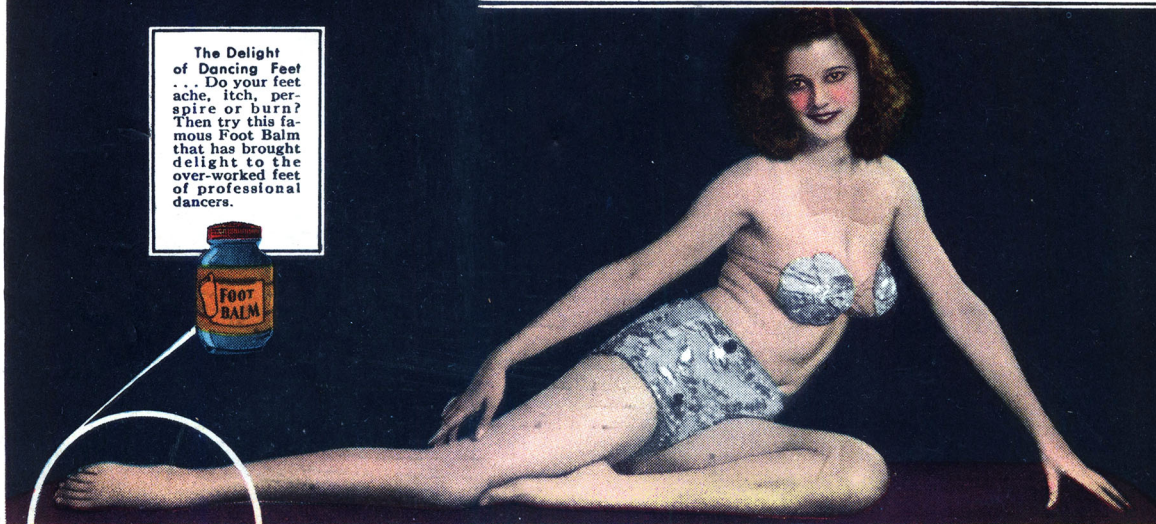
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dancers.



★ (NEWS ITEM)

On the very threshold of international fame and fortune, Joanne Williams wants a new "Stage Name." Young-graceful and talented, her beautiful body is vibrant with the magnetic glow of youthful personality. Critics say her performances are "Sensational," "Exotic" and "and that she is at the door of stardom. Now, because her name is similar to that of another star of Broadway, she wants a NEW name by which she will be featured and which she hopes to carry to fame.

WHAT an amazing opportunity! You may win this big cash prize in only a moment's time. Simply send us a name for this graceful young dancer—*nothing more to do*. Sound easy? It is easy! The first name that comes to your mind this minute may be the very one to win \$500.00 cash. It does not have to be a "fancy" name—just some simple name that is easy to say and easy to remember—a name that will look well in blazing electric lights in front of the na-

COSTS NOTHING TO WIN
Nothing to Buy Nothing to Sell No Entrance Fees
No "Number Paths" or "Guessing" to win This Cash Prize
JUST SUGGEST A GIRL'S NAME

tion's finest theatres. Think of a name—send it Today—Win \$500.00 Cash—qualify for \$3,000.00 opportunity.

NO WAY YOU CAN LOSE . . .
Simply suggest the winning name—that is all you have to do to get the \$500.00. We are giving the prize to Balm that is even now used by many. A famous name is valuable in advertising this rising young dancer will also. Foot Balm—her fame will bring us big opportunity of a life-time. Maybe your friend may be the very name we want. Fortune for you to win.

THIS money is entirely *separate* and in *addition* to the prize for the *Dancer's* Name. Over 50 cash prizes—fine automobiles. Think of it! You may win over \$3,000.00 cash or a new Buick 8 Cylinder Sedan and \$1,500.00 Cash besides! What a magnificent fortune! Some one is going to get it—why not you? You have just as good an opportunity to win as anyone. Suggest a name for the *Dancer*. Do it now—it may mean a *fortune* for you.

\$1,000.00 CASH CERTIFICATE
Will Be Sent to You At Once—Be Prompt!
One thousand dollars EXTRA if you act
PROMPT and win first prize. So don't
delay! Send your name suggested promptly
—nothing more to do now or ever toward
getting the Name Prize and to qualify for
the opportunity to win the other huge
prizes. You can't lose anything—EVERY
PERSON WHO TAKES AN ACTIVE
PART WILL BE REWARDED IN
CASH. I will send you a \$1,000.00 Cash
Certificate as soon as you mail me a card
and I will tell you just how you stand in the
distribution of over \$5,000.00 in cash
prizes and fine new automobiles.

HUNDREDS HAVE WON
Viola Lauder, Oregon, was destitute—her

JUST SENDING A NAME QUALIFIES YOU FOR OPPORTUNITY TO
Win \$3,000.00
OR BUICK 8 SEDAN AND \$1,500.00 IN CASH

home burned down. She suggested a name for our toilet soap and won a big cash prize of \$500.00! Hollenbach, Pa., won \$675.00; Thompson won \$625.00. Lutz received \$500.00. Hundreds of others made happy by big prizes and rewards. Now, some yet unknown person is going to win \$3,000.00 cash; many others are going to be made happy with scores of prizes as high as \$750.00. Three fine cars will be given.

Read These Simple Rules

Contest open to all except employees of our company. Only one name may be submitted—sending more than one name will cause all names sent by you to be thrown out. Suggest a first and last name for the dancer. Contest closing date given.

in my first letter to you. In case of duplicate winning names, duplicate prizes will be given. Every person submitting a name qualifies for opportunity to win \$3,000.00 cash or Buick 8 Cylinder Sedan and \$1,500.00 in cash. Use the coupon or write a letter to submit name and receive all details.

WALTER BRENT, Mgr.

Dept. 6085-P.P.
906 Sycamore Street Cincinnati, Ohio

Winning Name Coupon

WALTER BRENT, Mgr.,
906 Sycamore St., Dept. 6085-P.P. Cincinnati, Ohio.

The Name I suggest for the Dancer is:.....

Name.....

Address _____

City: _____ State: _____

Rush me the \$1,000.00 Cash Certificate for Promptness and tell me how I stand for Winning \$3,000.00 cash.