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JAN. 1. 1938

LOVE STORY

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EVERY WEEK

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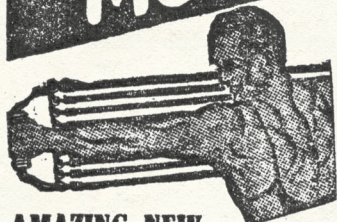


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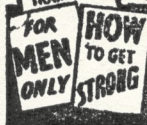
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Turn Back The Clock

By Madge Wray

THE old year was dying, and Penelope Jordan was going back to Twenty Trees, the home of her childhood, for the first time in ten years. They were ten heartbreaking years, in spite of the fact that they had brought her Hugh Wing's love, and the peaceful security of knowing that she would always be protected and cherished as his wife.

Much as she shrank from it, she had to make one last trip to Twenty Trees, and so she had tried to make the occasion as gay as possible, to permit no chance of any aching memories coming back to haunt her. What could be gayer than a New Year's Watch Party?—Penny had wondered a little desperately. And so she and Hugh were leading their whole hilarious crowd to the little old town of Walton, and Penny prayed that the party would be so gay and carefree



that not a single ghost would rise to mock her.

The country landscape was as glamorous and glittering as a frosted Christmas card on this last night of the old year. Stars twinkled white as platinum in a midnight-blue sky. Penny was startled when snow, piled car high along the broad highway, didn't keep Hugh from parking his blue coupé under a bare, spreading tree in the cold December moonlight.

It wasn't like Hugh to park. But now he turned to the slender, fur-coated figure beside him and looked down at her possessively. Penny steeled herself. It troubled her that she always had to prepare herself for Hugh's kisses. It made her wonder desperately if that tragedy, ten years ago, had so changed her that she would never thrill to love like other girls.

Her lips were cool, sweet and passionless under his, but Hugh didn't seem to notice. He turned her face to his and said:

"Let's announce it to-night, darling!"

Why should her heart drop like a falling star at Hugh's words? She wanted to marry him—she must want to marry him! She was so desperately lonely and so deeply fond of Hugh. She sat very still, gathering her courage.

Penny had velvet dark curls peeping from under a jaunty red *béret*, and eyes that matched her name. She was smaller than the average girl, rounded, dainty, lovely to look at, and the perfect complement of Hugh's big blond handsomeness. But now she said, knowing her fiancé's love of dignity and manner:

"But, Hugh, do you think we should announce our engagement at a New Year's party?"

His arms were possessive around her. Penny had always hated the feeling of being fettered, lonely as she had been for so long now. But if she were going to marry Hugh, she reminded herself,

she would have to get used to feeling bound.

"We've put it off long enough," Hugh replied firmly. "I can't quite understand you, darling. Here we are with a wedding scheduled for February, and our friends haven't even been told!"

"Which reminds me," Penny said, struggling out of his arms. "The crowd has gone on. They won't know how to get to Twenty Trees if I'm not in Walton to tell them."

Hugh kissed her again and started the car. It occurred to her how very little she knew about this man she was going to marry.

"Then we'll announce it," he told her with satisfaction, sweeping back onto the highway. "I can't understand this mad jaunt out to this place you call Twenty Trees, darling. We could have given a grand New Year's party at one of the clubs, if your heart was set on it."

Penny said carefully, "But you see, Hugh, I promised these—these friends of mine that I'd—I'd barge in on their party to-night. They're very old friends. You remember I told you, we always used to spend our summers at the bay when I was little. Of course, we may not find any one at home—they may have moved on to some one else's house. You know how parties are. But they said for me to make my party at home anyway."

Hugh was so blessedly gullible, Penny thought gratefully. He'd believe what she was telling him. Of course, they wouldn't find any one at Twenty Trees! The place had been closed for ten years, half of her own lifetime. They would have to build a rousing fire, first of all.

Penny's throat tightened. It had been breaking a piece from her heart to tell her lawyers a month ago, to go ahead and sell the place. But she simply could not marry Hugh Wing entirely penniless. She couldn't bear to feel utterly dependent on any one person, not even the man she married.

She stole a glance at Hugh's precise profile and smothered an hysterical inclination to giggle. If there was anything Hugh hated, it was being made to appear ridiculous. Yet he certainly looked that way in that absurd Roman toga which showed under his great top-coat.

The masquerade idea for the party had been her own, of course—another pathetic attempt to be as gay as possible in saying farewell to Twenty Trees. No one but herself would know it was a farewell, but she would know it with poignant ache in her heart all evening.

Even the old town of Walton would haunt her with a thousand memories. There was the old-fashioned square and the nine cars of the crowd drawn up at the quaint hitching posts, waiting to be directed to Twenty Trees.

"Follow us!" Penny called as she and Hugh swept by, and she directed him, "Turn right at the corner drug store. We'll take the river road——"

She stopped abruptly at the swift stabbing pain that wrenched her heart, and she was terribly frightened. Why should she shrink from going back to Twenty Trees so much that it was almost a mental phobia with her? And why should it hurt like physical pain to travel back along the old river road?

"Something awful is the matter with me," Penny thought desperately. "I'll be a mental case if I don't get a hold on myself."

Through the snowy blue of the night loomed the dark gables of a great house behind tall iron palings. Penny sat with her hands gripped tightly in her lap, white teeth biting down hard into her soft red lip. That place was Inglenook, and something in her mind cowered away at the sight of it! She thought gropingly:

"That's Inglenook. There's something about it I don't want to face. But I'll make myself. I've got to stop feel-

ing like this. What could there have been about Inglenook?"

Relentlessly she drove her mind back into memory, but it would go just as far and no farther, and then it cringed away from something that was still an aching wound.

"There were three little girls and a red-haired boy I used to play with every summer. They lived at Inglenook," she prodded herself. "I liked them all. It can't be that that hurts. But I can't remember their names."

Their names! Her mind flinched from that question like a spirited horse balking at a hurdle. She finally gave it up in mingled relief and fear. She tried to recall the faces of the three little girls she had played with, but couldn't.

It was the ghost of the red-headed, blue-eyed boy with freckles that rose to haunt her! She whispered:

"His name was Rusty! But that's all I remember. Except that we used to quarrel and loved to be together. He had even more imagination than I had! It was always games of make-believe."

Unconsciously she drew a deep, tremulous breath, and Hugh said immediately:

"Happy, aren't you, Penelope darling? That sigh told me so!"

Yes, how little she and Hugh really knew about each other. He knew that she was orphaned and utterly alone in the world. She knew that he had had one unhappy love affair when he was quite young. Aside from that, they were really friendly strangers who were fond enough of each other to want to marry.

Hugh never called her "Penny." It wasn't dignified. But Penny loved the name because—— Her thoughts stumbled suddenly and she thought with an inward gasp:

"Why, it was Rusty who gave me that name! He meant it as an insult because he said I wasn't worth a cent, but the name stuck."

Coming back to these old familiar scenes, she was remembering things she had long forgotten. Why then, couldn't she remember the names of her playmates at Inglenook, and why did it hurt so terribly to try to remember them? She said suddenly:

"Hugh, we've nearly missed the turning. It's at those stone gateposts."

Of course, the gates wouldn't be open nor the driveway shoveled. She hadn't even told her lawyers she was coming out to the estate to-night. But she had a practical reason for coming, otherwise she could never have forced herself to come. She had to get the other little jade lady. She knew just what trunk in the attic held the chest with the figurine in it.

Once there had been two little jade ladies. Somehow, one had been brought along with the other curios to the New York apartment. That one had been sold six months ago. Penny had been living on the proceeds since then.

The second jade lady would pay for her trousseau when she married Hugh in six weeks. Hugh shouldn't buy that for her either! Penny's white chin took on a determined angle.

At that moment, she saw the gates of Twenty Trees standing wide! That was strange. Why, any one could wander in, even camp on the estate. It was careless of her lawyers to have permitted that.

They wound up the shoveled drive, nine other cars close behind them. Penny's heart was pounding smotheringly under the pink net little-girl dress she wore for the masquerade. Coming home! The last time, it had been with her father, mother and twin brother Paul. She bit down hard to still the trembling of her lips, fought the welling tears. This was a New Year's party. She must be gay and let no one suspect, least of all Hugh, who was saying now, cheerfully:

"Well, your friends are home, all right. But they haven't much light. Just candles, I guess."

Penny didn't breathe. Her heart didn't beat. She stopped living for a moment. The open gates, the shoveled drive and soft yellow lights blurring every window at Twenty Trees! There was the sound of an orchestra, too.

With a great blare of horns, Penny's cavalcade swept to a halt in the drive. Hugh's car stood under the white portico, and Hugh, mask in place, jumped out and opened the door for Penny.

For a moment, Penny's slim legs failed to obey her commands. Could she be dreaming? There couldn't be any one at Twenty Trees! The place was still hers. Her lawyers would have informed her had they been able to dispose of the place during the month it had been for sale.

"Hurry, Penelope," Hugh was saying almost impatiently. "The gang's getting restless. They're piling out."

They were. A conglomerate crew, Pierrots and Pierrettes, pirates, troubadours and a score of others. Penny blinked her eyes rapidly and the dream didn't fade. It was real. Some one had taken possession of her house!

There was something in Penny's brown eyes as she stepped down from the car, that boded trouble for the unfortunate usurper of her family home.

She and Hugh mounted three shallow steps and found that the door had evidently been standing open, waiting for them. A tall old man in white, with flowing white hair, stood leaning on a great curved scythe, gazing at them. A cleverly painted mask completely hid his features.

"We've come to the party," said Penny determinedly, and took a swift step back. For "Father Time's" arms suddenly swept out in their white draperies and drew her close!

"Penny!" said Father Time huskily. "So glad you could come!"

Penny sputtered and gasped. Hugh looked disapproving. Then Penny couldn't even gasp, for Time was kissing her! Not the cold, fatherly salute one might expect from one of his years. Quite the contrary. Time's mouth on hers was young, eager and possessive!

It was the most amazing thing that had ever happened to her. She who had passively endured her fiancé's kisses, flamed to the touch of this arrogant stranger! For that breathless moment while their lips merged, all the loneliness and unhappiness of the past ten years were a dim dream to Penny.

Then the stranger said hospitably:

"Bring your gang in, Penny. My party's a bit smaller than yours, but we'll get on. Let them get acquainted themselves."

Penny's crowd needed no further invitation. They swooped into the broad reception hall and into the great living room where a fire blazed on the open hearth.

Time tucked Penny's arm through his and hissed in her ear, "The name's Kent."

Penny swallowed. The effrontery of him! But she said:

"Oh, Kent, I forgot to introduce you. This is my fiancé, Hugh Wing."

Time bowed. Hugh inclined his blond head stiffly.

"How do you do, Kent?" he inquired.

"Now make yourselves right at home," Time invited genially. "There's dancing upstairs. The gang in here is roasting apples and telling fortunes. There's a buffet supper going on continuously in the dining room."

Penny was sputtering inwardly. "Make yourselves at home!" How dared this person named Kent? He was some brazen adventurer who had strayed in here, appropriated everything to himself and was having the impudence to see it through. He had been stand-

ing in the doorway and had heard Hugh call her "Penelope" when she got out of the car, and being a clever scoundrel, his quick brain had immediately wormed its way through his first difficult situation.

Hugh said stiltedly:

"I think we'll dance, thank you," and tucked Penny's hand through his arm, turning his back on their host.

"Unmasking's at midnight, you might tell your guests," Time called after them cheerfully. "We're having quite a jamboree to salute young 1938."

"I think we'll have gone by then," Hugh said grimly as they climbed the stairs. "I don't like that fellow, Penelope. I don't care how long you've known him."

She couldn't tell Hugh that she had known him not quite five minutes! Suddenly, Penny's smooth cheeks flamed with color. She felt as though she had known that audacious stranger intimately, a long, long time! His kiss still throbbed through her blood, tingled like heady wine on her lips.

Hugh took her sedately in his arms and they danced. Hugh's toga impeded his dancing a bit, but Penny scarcely noticed. This big old room was shadowy with memory for her!

It was curious, but now she was remembering the happy things, her mind not even taking time to cringe from the memories that hurt so.

Here she had had her first big party, when she and Paul were eight, to celebrate their joint birthday. Here, in a glamorous pink silk dress, not unlike the pink net she wore now, she had danced with "Rusty" in his first dancing pumps. He had tweaked her velvety black curls when the chaperons weren't looking and had told her her freckles got larger and goldier, the older she grew. How she had hated Rusty!

Almost as much as she hated this adventurer masquerading as Time in her house, kissing her as no man but

Hugh had any right to kiss her, and as Hugh never had. She thought in panic:

"I'll corner him somehow, expose him. I'll think of a way, without Hugh's finding out this place is mine and all I've got——"

Except the little jade lady which would pay for her trousseau. Somehow, she must get rid of Hugh and steal up to the attic to get that. The burglar surely wouldn't know about the jade lady. He wouldn't know about the old trunks in the attic.

Suddenly, a tall white figure loomed up behind Hugh, and before Penny could catch her breath and steady her heartbeat, a pair of warm arms swept her close. Penny began to float in space. The childish patent leather slippers she wore may have skimmed the waxed floor, but she didn't know it. Those arms were like wings holding her lightly.

Penny breathed again finally and began to think. She said icily:

"I suppose you know this house is mine and that I'm going to have you arrested?"

"Is it? Are you?" murmured Time. He had a disturbingly warm, rich voice. "Let's not talk, Penny. Having you in my arms this way is just about my idea of heaven."

Penny was an ice flame inside. So he thought she would forget his crime if he kissed her and told her holding her in his arms was heaven! Then he didn't know Penelope Jordan.

"Smooth, aren't you?" she asked in a deadly voice. "I don't know just what your game is, but you're not going to play it, if I can help it."

"You're cute when you're mad, Penny love," he laughed. "You've got a nerve yourself, you know, barging in on my party this way, pretending you know me, letting me kiss you before your fiancé."

"Letting you!" she gasped indignantly.

"Exactly." He danced her into a secluded alcove. Hugh had found a delectable Spanish señorita and didn't notice. It was shadowy in the alcove. One tall, yellow candle flickered dimly there. That was all.

Time put back his painted mask, and she had a glimpse of two burning dark eyes, before his mouth and arms claimed her again. The alcove rocked. The candle went out because Penny closed her eyes before a sudden blinding glory. She had to cling to Time to keep her feet. But she didn't have to let her lips leap to life under his! She didn't have to yield for delirious moments to the sweet ecstasy that thrilled through her.

But that's what Penny did! Then she broke from his arms, faced him, a blazing, outraged figure.

"How I hate you!" she gasped. "Oh, how I hate you! I loathe you——"

"Despise me?" queried Time helpfully. His mask was again in place. He added meditatively, "I wonder how you'd kiss me if you loved me? For that was very satisfactory, you know."

Penny left him while she had the strength, before her rage got beyond control. She found the little room she had slept in as a child. It was still done in blue and yellow with a tiny canopied bed, and a procession of ducks around the molding. It still had a cushioned window seat, and there Penny curled up and cried.

She cried for anger and shame, and for something she couldn't name. She had kissed that man back! Hating him, she had kissed him as she had never kissed Hugh. Her cheeks burned.

"I'm just a little crazy," sobbed Penny. "Coming back here has done this to me. And then, to find some one here, pretending to own the place!"

Presently, she dried her tears and brushed back her tumbled dark curls. She had things to do. In the corridor,

Penny curled up on the window seat and cried. She had kissed Kent back! Hating him, she had kissed him as she had never kissed Hugh. Her cheeks burned.



Hugh, of all people! It wasn't like him to take on a flirtation, even for an evening. Was he trying to punish

she passed Hugh and the señorita sitting on a love seat, talking so animatedly they didn't even notice her go by!

Penny's lips twisted in a tiny smile.

her for letting Time kiss her?

There ought to be a phone in the library. If it wasn't connected, she would take Hugh's car and drive back

to Walton. But the library phone was connected. The burglar had been thorough. Well, it would prove his undoing!

Grimly, she called the police station. They were a long time answering. Finally a sleepy voice murmured:

"Hello? What's that? Oh, yes, ma'am."

He listened to her indignant story.

"Well, blame me, but that's funny," drawled the law when she had finished. "Darn funny. You say he ain't molest-in' you, an' you can keep him there?"

"That's the trouble," wailed Penny. "I can't make him leave. The place is mine. I'm Penelope Jordan, I tell you. You surely know that the Jordans have owned Twenty Trees for years!"

"Ev'rybody knows that," the law reassured her. "Well, ma'am, you keep him there and I'll be up directly."

Penny hung up with a sigh. The police might get here in a half hour or an hour, she thought optimistically. Turning from the phone, she decided that now was the time to get the jade lady. That was her real reason for coming out here.

"Penny, my sweet!"

He had bobbed up again! This time he rose from a deep chair in front of the library fire. He came toward her and she backed away.

"I've called the police!" she told him a little wildly. "If you want to save your precious neck, you'd better leave now."

"I heard you," he said quietly. "I'm sorry. That's going to put you in an embarrassing spot. But I didn't look you up to quarrel with you again, Penny."

How queer his voice was! Not teasing or bantering, nor even pretending to be warm and tender now. It was very grave, a little sorry!

Penny was instantly on guard. Failing to win her around by one method, he was going to try another, was he?

But she was quite unprepared for what he said.

"I don't know how you'll feel about it," he told her diffidently, "but your fiancé is upstairs kissing my intended wife."

A pin wheel of light burst before Penny's eyes and started spinning madly. She clung to the back of a carved chair. My intended wife! Why did it hurt so? Somehow, she was sitting down, and he was bending over her anxiously.

"Penny dearest, you're so white!"

He was chafing her limp hands and she was willing herself to take them out of his warm, vibrant clasp, but she couldn't move. Why did it matter if he did have an intended wife?

"I know it's an awful shock to you if—if you're fond of this Wing chap," he said gravely. "But I had to tell you. I thought——"

She snatched her hands away at last. She stood on her feet, brown eyes blazing in her white face.

"Why don't you do something about it?" she demanded passionately. "Take off that silly nightshirt and do something! It's—it's the person you're going to marry too, isn't it?"

"You're right," he said slowly. "Maybe I should. Only I thought that maybe you didn't care."

"I do care!" she flamed. "Why shouldn't I care? How can you be so stupid? I—I haven't any one but Hugh."

She stopped, wishing she hadn't said that last. The man named Kent turned and walked out slowly. Penny stood motionless, trying to collect her whirling thoughts and quiet her throbbing emotions.

So Hugh was kissing the Spanish señorita? It was so hard to imagine Hugh doing a thing like that. He was so conservative, so careful. Of course, the señorita was charming, that girl who was going to be Time's bride.

"She must be just like him," Penny

decided. "An adventuress. That's why she's making a play for Hugh. Well, let her. Let Kent, whoever he is, save his own bride. I'm not interested."

But she was, of course, vitally interested, and hated it because she was. However, now was a good time to slip up to the attic and get the jade lady while Time was occupied and couldn't trail her.

The two parties had mingled and were carrying on hilariously, quite unaware of the drama unfolding all around them. Penny wrapped herself in her fur coat, and on the attic stairs paused to light a tall yellow taper she had taken out of a window. On rainy days she and Rusty had climbed these stairs to play under the great beams of the old attic. Rusty's sisters and her twin brother Paul had been their playmates, but it was she and Rusty who furnished the imagination for their games.

Something wistful made her heart ache hauntingly. Why couldn't she have stayed here, grown up at Twenty Trees? Maybe she and Rusty would have grown to be friends after they outgrew childhood.

Dust, shadows and old shrouded furniture. Piles of trunks and boxes. The one she was looking for was of old polished wood, studded with brass nail heads. There it was with three others piled on top. She set the candle down and attacked the trunks. They were heavy. The middle one began to slide and came clattering down. Penny stumbled backward into a pair of sturdy arms.

She gasped, her heart thudding madly. The arms turned her around and the candlelight flickered up into a brown face, shone like burnished copper on a man's crisp, curly hair.

Penny's eyes widened. She swallowed, and her heart began pounding.

"Rusty!" whispered Penny. "Rusty, grown up!"

"But you didn't grow up, did you?" asked Rusty softly. "You stayed little, sweet and eternally young."

Penny's knees gave way. She sat down on an ancient ottoman and stared at him.

"It was you all the time," she breathed. "You're the burglar, you're Time, you're the——"

"The scoundrel for whom you've called the police," Rusty finished gravely.



"We've always been at sword's points, you know, Penny."

"And," said Penny, as though she hadn't heard him, "it's your intended wife, kissing Hugh."

"Well, I don't believe they're still kissing," Rusty answered diffidently. "In fact, I'm fairly sure Hugh is looking for you."

Hugh would be looking for her to announce their engagement. Having finished his flirtation with Rusty's intended bride, he was ready to announce his engagement to Penny. She turned blindly toward the trunks, pulled out the nail-studded one.

"May I help you?" offered Rusty. "What are you looking for?"

"No, thank you. I can manage. You did have plenty of nerve though, Rusty, to stage a party in my house. With your own just next door."

"We sold Inglenook years ago. The money saved dad's neck during the depression."

How could she find the jade lady when her eyes were brimming with tears? And what on earth was the matter with her? She bent her head so that the velvet dark curls fell over her face. There was the little cabinet it should be in. Rusty asked abruptly:

"What are you going to do with the little jade lady, Penny?"

She stood up and faced him, the figurine in her hands. In the short pink net dress, with the black curls tumbling to her shoulders, she looked heartbreakingly like the child who had played in this old attic years ago. Her chin was set defiantly.

"Sell it," she said. "Not that you have any right to ask me. I'm ready to go now."

But Rusty's arms barred the way.

"What do you need the money for, small one?" he asked. And a tenderness in his warm, vivid voice made her heart ache with a poignancy she had never endured before.

But she thought of the Spanish señorita, and answered defiantly:

"To buy my trousseau. Any more questions, Mr. Rusty Kent?"

"Why, yes, several," said Rusty calmly. "Where's the other little jade lady? And why are you selling Twenty Trees? I thought you loved the place, that it meant something to you."

For a long moment their eyes met and held, hers brown and angry, his deep, dark-blue and accusing.

"You don't have to answer me," he said bitterly. He bent over and picked up the candle. "Hugh Wing's bride would have to have a dowry."

Penny couldn't answer him. She was

too angry, hurt and bewildered. Why were she and Rusty quarreling? She had been so glad to see him, ready to forgive him for being that silly, arrogant Time. Now nothing in the world was right. Rusty hated her for putting Twenty Trees up for sale, felt contempt for her for marrying Hugh.

Suddenly, Penny's heart stopped and her whole being became one searing flame. She was remembering how she had kissed Rusty when he was Father Time! She smothered a moaning sound. All the time he had been laughing at her, really despising her!

Hugh and the Spanish señorita were standing at the foot of the attic stairs. Rusty held the candle and it threw strange flickering shadows on four strained faces. Penny had a queer, light-headed feeling.

She put her hand on Hugh's arm and smiled, a strained, fixed smile. She looked hauntingly like a little girl, alone and afraid in the dark, appealing for help.

"Hugh darling," she said. The words were wooden puppets marching jerkily. "Shall we go down and announce our engagement? It's close to midnight."

Hugh's face changed color above his Roman toga. Penny watched it, fascinated. His eyes dilated and his face became red. Then it paled to a strange gray. Hugh swallowed and made a final, valiant effort.

"Penelope," he choked. She was sorry for him, remotely. But she couldn't really feel much at all. "This is Lila Stevens. She——"

"How do you do?" murmured Penny politely. "You're going to marry Rusty, aren't you?"

Lila Stevens's scarlet lips parted but no sound came. Her velvet dark eyes went to Hugh appealingly.

"Lila and I have known each other for years!" he blurted at last. He mopped his brow with a corner of his

toga. "We—we were engaged once, years ago, when Lila was eighteen. You know I told you, Penelope, about another girl. We had one of those senseless lover quarrels. And to-night we made it up."

Lila added eagerly, "I really haven't known Kent Linden so very long——"

But "Linden" was the last word Penny heard before a whirling, smothering blackness closed down upon her, engulfed her, possessed her utterly.

There was something faintly familiar about the pattern on the wall paper. Little brown houses under tiny green trees and pale-blue paths that wound over fascinating bridges and up adorable tiny mountains. It was her nursery wall paper, Penny decided.

She turned her dark head carefully so as not to spoil the dream. It intensified. For the light from a shaded lamp fell on Rusty's thick copper hair, outlined his strong brown profile in gold, showed her anxious blue eyes. They looked at each other gravely, and Penny whispered:

"Linden! That's why my mind shied away from Inglenook and your name, Rusty! You—you know about my parents and Paul."

"I read that they all lost their lives in a dirigible crash in Germany, ten years ago," Rusty said gently. "I'm

sorrier than you can know, Penny sweet."

She paused over the marvel of those two words and the infinite tenderness in his voice, but she had to get this thing over, once and for all, to be free of the phobia that had held her so long a pitiful prisoner.

"Rusty," she cried on a sharp breath, "the name of the dirigible was the *D-X Linden!*"

His eyes questioned and she tried falteringly to explain, but every word cost her a sharp pain.

"Psychiatrists say that your mind plays you tricks like that, Rusty. Your last name was Linden. Don't you see? My mind flinched from that every time I thought of Inglenook, you and your sisters, even when I thought of coming back to Twenty Trees. I couldn't fight it off. You see, after the crash that took every one dear to me, I was terribly ill for nearly a year, and when I was well, things were different. I had the horriblemest feeling about coming back to Twenty Trees. I had to force myself to come, after ten years."

"I understand, my darling," Rusty said softly. "And out of our loneliness, we both thought we could find a measure of peace with some one else."

He knelt by the bed and took her gently into his arms, and Penny murmured shakily, "I never fainted before,

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Rusty. I guess I'm still not worth a cent."

His arms tightened and Penny's heart thudded hard against his. "You're worth the whole world to me, sweetheart," Rusty said huskily. "I've known that all my life, really. Dearest"—his voice shook a little—"once before to-night, you kissed me."

And just as Penny lifted her lips, there was a deafening peal on the front doorbell.

"The police!" she gasped. "Rusty, I've been so stupid. I'll explain to them that it was all a mistake."

She was at the door. Rusty told her gravely:

"Yes, darling, for Twenty Trees really is mine, you know. I closed the deal yesterday. Your lawyers just haven't had time to tell you."

Penny went dazedly down the curved walnut stairs. She opened the door and stared rather blankly at the blue uniformed figure of the law. He was armed to the teeth. Only a machine gun was lacking.

"Now if you'll just show me this here burglar, ma'am, we'll make short work of him."

"Oh, no, you mustn't!" Penny gasped. "It's a mistake. There isn't any burglar——"

A white figure was slowly looming in the porch shadows behind the policeman. It waved long white arms and moaned hollowly. Penny's words died on her lips. The law took one quick glance over its blue-clad shoulder and vanished so quickly, that he left only a little cloud of snow-dust behind.

The ghost, who closely resembled Father Time without his white whiskers and scythe, took Penny's laughter-shaken figure in his arms, and they clung together, laughing. A platinum-frosted moon rounded the edge of the porch and seemed to stand dead still. For the laughter had died on the lips of those two, with a sobbing sound made of hunger, joy and fulfillment.

Rusty took Penny's soft red lips and owned them. And for the first time in her life, Penny exulted in feeling possessed. From the dark church tower etched against the winter night sky, the chimes of midnight and a new year rang out on the crisp, cold air. Penny lifted her dark curly head from her lover's shoulder.

"Happy New Year, dear," she whispered. "Make a New Year's wish, quick, Rusty! It'll come true."

His arms held her tenderly close to him.

"We used to do that when we were kids," he said huskily. "Do you know what I used to wish, sweetheart?"

She shook her head mutely.

"I used to wish I could always have you for a playmate, darling, that you and I could always be together. And now——"

"And now we're going to be!" Penny finished on a note of pure rapture.

The chimes faded into winter-still silence, but those two on the snowy porch never knew. They were lost in a dream of time, curiously fashioned of memories of the past and beautiful dreams of the future.





STARLESS MOMENT

By Grace Porter

PEGGY NASH, junior half of the Burrell-Nash Typing Bureau, took the original and the three carbons from her machine. She heaved a sigh of relief as she stacked them neatly in place. Thank Heaven that was over! She didn't mind typing interesting things, but when it came to a treatise on lizards, she was bored stiff.

She was all alone in the office. Helen, her partner, had gone to Atlantic City for the week-end. The clock over the door told her it was a few minutes before five. Peggy wondered why Don hadn't telephoned. She remembered a half date made with her fiancé.

After a minute she got up, washed carbon smudges from her slender fingers and ran a comb through her chestnut hair. She had just finished when the phone rang shrilly.

"Hello? Burrell-Nash Bureau?" The voice was maculine but not Don Walker's. "This is Jerome Duncan," the voice continued, "the playwright. I believe you've done quite a little work for Harry Anderson, the producer."

"Quite a little," Peggy agreed.

"I wonder if you could come up and take some dictation to-night," Jerome Duncan said. "I have a special rush job that I'm willing to pay well to get out. How about it?"

Peggy hesitated. After all, Don hadn't called and business, despite the lizard treatise, had been slow. It would be a thrill, too, to work for such a famous, celebrated author as Jerome Duncan. In the past he had had more than a dozen hits on Broadway through the years.

"I think it can be arranged," Peggy told him. "What time and where?"

When she rang off, the office door opened and Don Walker came in. One glance was enough for Peggy to see how discouraged he looked. He slumped down wearily into the chair beside her desk. His handsome, boyish face was shadowed and his gray eyes dull.

Peggy bent down to kiss him. He sighed, laid the large Manila envelope on her desk and gestured bitterly.

"Our honeymoon play! The three-act dramatic sensation that was to pay all our expenses and start us smoothly across the sea of matrimony! Take a look, it's back home again!"

"Oh, Don!" Peggy's tone held a note of sorrowful regret. "You mean they actually returned 'Starless Moment'? What did they say? Who had it?"

Wearily, Don opened the envelope and drew out a letter.

"I sent it to Harry Anderson. I was sure it was right up his alley. It's the kind of thing he's been doing so successfully since he went in for himself. Smart, sophisticated comedy, terse, snappy dialogue and a fat part for Benita Howland, his star. And what does he say? Read that."

Peggy took the letter he handed her and opened it. Her troubled eyes read the few lines it contained:

Sorry, but this doesn't seem to be what we're looking for. Too talky and draggy. Needs complete revision.

The signature was that of Harry Anderson and the date that morning. "Poor Don!"

He laughed under his breath.

"Poor Don is right, with the accent on the first word! I guess I'm all washed up!"

Peggy longed to comfort him, knowing exactly how he felt. "Starless Moment" had been Don's inspiration and masterpiece. He had worked on it for weeks, polishing, cutting, revising, re-writing. He had put all his young hope into it and so certain of success was he, that they had planned to get married the minute the play was accepted and the advance royalty paid.

"There are other producers," Peggy told him. "The Anderson office isn't the only one in business."

Don shook his head.

"It's the only one as far as I'm concerned—the only one that can do 'Starless Moment' the way it should be done. Why, the girl's part was custom built for Benita Howland. No, if Harry Anderson doesn't want it nobody'll look at it."

His voice was harsh, colored with bit-

ter disappointment. Peggy knew how discouraged he was. But Don was like that. His artistic bent had made him temperamental, sensitive. One moment he was up in the clouds, the next in the depths.

"Cheer up," she advised. "Things can't be so black. You're going to write a big Broadway hit yet. Suppose we do have to postpone getting married? It will be all the more wonderful when it really does happen."

He looked at her haggardly. There was something in his face she had never seen before. It was a quenched, beaten expression and it frightened her.

"That's what I want to talk to you about—getting married. I—I'm releasing you!"

"Don! What do you mean?"

"It isn't fair to keep you waiting for something that might never happen. Who knows——"

"But I love you!" Peggy interrupted quickly. "Love isn't measured by time or circumstances, Don dear! This is the time you really need me!"

"No! You don't understand. You're successful in your work, you're the half owner of a going business. I'm a failure, a flop! What right have I to even think of love, your love? It's absurd. And so I'm ending it."

With wide, startled eyes Peggy stared at him. His blank face told her nothing. He avoided her direct glance. She felt an ache in her heart, a poignant hurt almost like a cruel blow. She made one more attempt to turn the situation around to where it had been.

"Don, you don't know what you're saying! To-morrow——"

"To-morrow I might weaken. Now I know what I'm doing. It's no use, Peggy. I—I don't want to go through with it!"

She slipped the ring he'd given her from her finger. It lay cold in the pink palm of her hand. She wanted to cry, but her eyes were dry, sad with a thou-

sand regrets. She tried to tell herself that Don didn't love her as much as she had thought. Love meant sacrifices, a partnership, two people fighting to overcome obstacles in their path.

He was a quitter. The first disappointment and he was folding up. Don couldn't take it! The words rang in her mind. Did she really want a man like that for her husband—some one she could never rely on?

With trembling lips, Peggy laid the ring on the desk beside her. It was all like a distorted dream, a nightmare. He got up and pushed the ring toward her.

"Keep that to remember me by, Peggy. That is," he added in the same brittle tone, "if you want to remember a failure!"

The door opened and closed. Don's footsteps died away down the tiled corridor. Peggy heard the elevator stop and then continue its descent.

With a start she realized the office was in darkness. She switched on the desk lamp. Its mellow glow made the discarded engagement ring glimmer. She picked it up and slipped it back on her finger, thinking of the day he had put it there and wondering why the tears wouldn't come.

In all her life Peggy had never been so miserable as when she dined in a cafeteria an hour later. Her heart was like lead. All she could think of was Don and the play that had dug the pitfall for their love. It was queer that she was going to take dictation from a man, successful and wealthy, whose own plays had been put on by Harry Anderson.

As she ate mechanically, Peggy recalled that every big hit Jerome Duncan had turned out had been sponsored by Anderson. She had seen one or two of them. Smart, fluffy stuff, in no way better than Don's "Starless Moment." How did he do it? Name and reputation, she supposed, were responsible.

Peggy took a taxi to the address Jerome Duncan had given her. All the way uptown to the Park Avenue apartment she had a queer, detached feeling. Even yet it was impossible to believe her engagement was over, that very possibly she would never see Don again. She knew him so well, knew how stubborn and headstrong he could be, once his mind was made up. Vainly, she tried to tell herself that she was a fool to grow despondent over some one who was a quitter.

A servant admitted Peggy to Jerome Duncan's suite. She had never been in such a beautiful apartment. An interior decorator had lavished all the artifices of his trade upon it. She couldn't help but mentally compare the pine-walled study with Don's furnished room. This was the difference between success and failure.

"Good evening, Miss Nash. So you came over personally," he said, looking at the card the servant had given him. "Here, let Jasper take your wrap."

In appearance Jerome Duncan was rather tall and somewhere in the middle forties. He had a dapper, foppish air expressed in his perfectly tailored clothes. His tie was colorful and Peggy noticed a thin silver chain around his left wrist.

His lean, closely shaven face was a trifle swarthy, almost Latin in complexion. His eyes might have been called "shifty" and the thread of a narrow mustache decorated his rather long upper lip. There was a weakness about his mouth and chin that Peggy was conscious of, too.

She sat down at a desk and opened her notebook. Duncan lighted a cigarette and passed the case to her. Peggy shook her head.

"I never smoke when I'm working, thank you."

"Gets up that pretty nose and makes you cough?" he suggested, smiling. "I don't suppose you drink, either."

"No, I don't."

"Fine! I've engaged a paragon of all the virtues! The work ought to be one hundred per cent. Let's talk about it. It's a new play I've been doing. I promised Anderson the first act by Friday morning. My idea was to dictate it directly to you and have it typed, six copies. Think you can have it ready Friday?"

"I'm sure of it."

"Swell. Perhaps a few explanatory remarks might not be amiss. Sort of give you the mood and tempo of the piece, as it were. You probably know my stuff. This is smart, sophisticated, modern. I don't hesitate to say it's the best thing I've done yet. It's called 'We Two.' If you're ready——"

He began dictating from a conglomeration of typewritten sheets. For the first twenty minutes Peggy registered nothing save the words that flowed smoothly from Duncan's lips. Then, abruptly, she was vaguely conscious that somewhere, sometime, the dialogue she was taking down in shorthand was familiar.

Her pulses leaped. A tiny shock went through her. Where? When? Suddenly, a great light dawned in her mind. Fantastic though it seemed, Peggy knew that this was Don's "Starless Moment," only lightly concealed by a few changes in the characters!

There couldn't be any mistake. She had typed the other script for Don. She knew the situations perfectly. For days Don's dialogue had impressed itself on her mind. These very lines Jerome Duncan was tossing off blithely as his own were stolen!

Bewildered, Peggy was careful to suppress her emotions. She traced from cause to effect. How was it possible for Jerome Duncan to rattle off Don's brain child? Then Peggy remembered gossip she had once heard. Harry Anderson was a busy man. He never read plays submitted by unknown au-

"Keep the ring to remember me by, Peggy. That is," he added in a brittle tone, "if you want to remember a failure!"



thors. In all likelihood he had asked Duncan to take a look at it. And Duncan, realizing the value of it, had sent it back to Anderson with the criticism that it was no good. Anderson, basing his rejection on that, had hustled the script back to Don with the depressing letter Peggy had read in her office.

Obviously, Duncan had had a copy of "Starless Moment" made for his own use. But

how could he hope to get away with it? With a sinking heart Peggy realized that Don hadn't copyrighted his manuscript. A dozen times she had mentioned the fact to him. Always he had told her he would, but had put it off. He was like that, too artistic to be a good business man.

Perhaps, Peggy thought, some of Jerome Duncan's other hit plays had been stolen from poor and unknown authors. A suit for plagiarism cost money and was not often successful. Without a copyright, nothing at all could be done. Her temples throbbed when, presently, the first act was completed and she closed her notebook.

"Ten after twelve," Duncan murmured. "My dear Miss Nash—Peggy—I had no idea it was so late. You've been splendid. Can you come to-morrow night and we'll do some of the second act?"

"I'll be glad to."

"Fine. Now I'll get my car and take you home."

"That isn't necessary. I'll take a taxi."

"But I want to. This is no hour for attractive young ladies to ride unescorted in taxis."

Beside him, in his purring sedan driven by a chauffeur in livery, Peggy tried to clear her mind. A thief! As much of one as a man with a gun, helping himself to what wasn't his! What could she do about it? Her thoughts whirled dizzily.

When they reached her apartment house on Morningside Heights, Jerome Duncan followed her into the dim vestibule. He slipped his hand over hers. A dryness in her throat choked Peggy. Last night Don had lingered there with her. She had known the magic of his kiss, the gentle tenderness of his arms and his hopeful, whispered words.

She glanced up. There was a queer light in Duncan's eyes. He was smiling faintly. He kept his hand over hers.

"Thank you again, Peggy. You won't forget to-morrow, same time? Good night."

All the next day Peggy waited for the telephone to ring and Don's voice to come over the wire. But it didn't. In Helen Burrell's absence she had double work to do. She was rather glad. It didn't give her much time to think about the broken engagement and what had happened.

Later, after the office was closed, Peggy went to the Park Avenue address. Jerome Duncan welcomed her. Instead of holding her hand, his arm slipped easily around her shoulders.

"You look tired, my dear. You mustn't work too hard. Life isn't worth it. It's much too short."

He began the second act. This time he had hardly bothered to disguise the "Starless Moment" script. When he came to the high light of the act, the lovers' quarrel, he laid down his notes and looked at Peggy.

"This is a point where I want to ask your opinion. You've been in love?"

"Once," she answered faintly.

"Not now?" There was no hiding the eagerness in his tone. She shook her head and he continued: "That's rather remarkable, a beautiful girl like you, intelligent, charming and young. Really, if I were a few years younger—" He stopped and laughed. "Maybe I'm not too old at that. Forty-seven isn't so terribly antique, is it?"

"Don't you think we'd better go on with the play, Mr. Duncan?"

"I'd rather talk to you. Strange, my mood isn't creative to-night. Will you come and have lunch with me to-morrow, Peggy?"

She hesitated doubtfully. She hadn't decided what to do about the stolen work she was compiling for him. She had to be extremely cautious at this stage of the game. If she were aloof, all might be ruined.

"I—I'd love to have lunch with you," Peggy told him slowly. "Only, I can't take more than an hour,"

"An hour with you will be worth an eternity with any one else," he replied gallantly.

For the luncheon engagement Jerome Duncan selected Jardine's. It was a place where writers, newspapermen, stage and screen stars congregated. There were a number of small tête-à-tête compartments done in red leather. As Duncan seated Peggy in one of them, she suddenly saw Don across the room, lunching by himself.

A thrill arrowed through her. For an instant Peggy's heart stood still. She couldn't help noticing how wan and pale Don looked. He lifted his head and saw her. For a moment he sat stiff and still, peering across the crowded confines of the place. Resolutely, with no sign of recognition, Don turned to the plate before him.

A sob rose in Peggy's throat. He had deliberately turned away! That was the cruelest cut of all. Maybe, she told herself, he had only used the return of "Starless Moment" as an excuse to break the engagement. Maybe there was some one else, some other girl.

Jerome Duncan was talking in his suave, flippant way. Peggy hardly heard him. In her mind was a rosary of memories. The park in April rain, a lake, a bench. Don beside her, watching the swans. His first words of love. Manhattan nights, filled with the flash and sparkle of Broadway. Themselves, laughing, happy, carefree! The summer, the beaches they had visited, roar of surf and glamour of sun on sand——

"You're hardly eating anything, Peggy. Try that fricassee—it's delicious."

As if in a haze, she saw Don get up. Carefully, he kept his back toward her while he laid a tip on the table and took his check to the cashier's window. He

disappeared into the street outside and Peggy forced herself to eat, though the food seemed to choke and stifle her.

After she made another appointment for that night at Duncan's apartment, she went back to the office. There was a telegram from her partner under the door. Helen would return from Atlantic City the following day. Peggy knew some relief. The last few days had drawn her to the breaking point.

She knew this was no time for weakness. She had to be alert. What she planned to do needed all of her courage and strength. She was thinking of that night and what confronted her when the office door opened.

Her heart clamoring, Peggy looked up and saw Don.

"I just dropped in to get the other two carbons of the play. I'm burning them. I want the whole works to go up in one grand puff of smoke."

"Isn't that foolish?" Peggy asked throatily.

"I thought for a time of rewriting it. I haven't the ambition to do it. It's better off in ashes."

Peggy made no comment. She couldn't think of anything to say. When she looked at his taut, drawn face, a wave of sympathy engulfed her. He was so despondent, beaten. For a moment she almost blurted out what she had discovered at Jerome Duncan's apartment.

With an effort she checked the impulse and shrugged. She opened the metal cabinet behind her and gave him the two carbon copies of his play. He folded them into his coat pocket and smiled crookedly.

"I suppose congratulations are in order."

"You mean——"

"Jerome Duncan. I recognized him with you at Jardine's. That's sensible, picking a winner instead of an also-ran."

"You don't understand——"

"The trouble is, I do. Duncan has quite a reputation as a ladies' man. He's fascinating and charming. He's known as a writer of box-office smash hits. You couldn't do better than to——"

"Please go!" Peggy cried.

He seemed on the point of saying something else, thought better of it, and without another word went out.

Peggy's chestnut head drooped to the arms she laid on the edge of the desk. The tears came at last, hot and scalding. Her shoulders heaved under the stress of her anguish. She was spent and exhausted when, at last, the storm subsided.

Once more Jasper admitted Peggy to the beautifully appointed apartment on Park Avenue. Jerome Duncan wore a gray suit, a blue shirt and tie to match. His dark eyes drank her in eagerly when he took her hands in his.

"You're ten minutes late. I didn't think you were coming."

"The traffic was heavy and the lights never seemed to go green."

"You're here and that's all that matters. But you look so tired. I say, let's knock off to-night and relax. I'll get Jasper to set up the movie camera and show you some films I made last summer in the Canadian Rockies. I was on a hunting trip——"

Peggy forced a smile.

"I think we'd better work, Mr. Duncan. I'll be all right to-morrow. Miss Burrell is returning and she'll relieve me."

"Please let me show you the pictures. Your health means a great deal to me. Everything about you means a great deal. I hadn't meant to tell you to-night, but I'm in love with you!"

Peggy's red lips parted. She stared at him blankly. She saw his smile, the glint in his eyes, the way his hands grew tremulous.

Duncan crossed to her. Before Peggy was aware of his purpose, his arms were

around her. He drew her to him, his face close to hers. She felt powerless to move or resist. Her heart fluttered wildly. She kept her face turned away, afraid he would kiss her.

"You're beautiful, lovely! From the first moment I saw you I was attracted, intrigued. No girl ever stirred me as you do, Peggy! I want you——"

Before she could find her voice, there was an interruption. Jasper's cough sounded from the study door.

"Beggin' yo' pardon, Mistah Duncan, suh. Dey's a gen'leman to see yo'-all."

Duncan released Peggy. His brows drew together in a quick frown.

"Who is it? I don't expect any one."

"He says his name is Mistah Walker and that yo'-all telephoned for him to come up heah."

"There's some mistake. I don't know any one by that name."

"I did!" Peggy heard herself saying.

Jerome Duncan turned to her quickly.

"Oh, a friend of yours? Ask him to come right in, Jasper."

"He didn't know I called and left a message at his boarding house," Peggy said, when the servant left the room. "I thought it best to ask him here to-night so that we could come to an understanding."

Before Duncan could ask her to explain, Don entered. Peggy saw him halt involuntarily and hesitate, his gaze sweeping from Duncan to her.

"I don't get this——"

Peggy went across to him.

"You will in a few minutes. Don, I want you to meet Jerome Duncan, the famous playwright. Mr. Duncan, this is Don Walker, my ex-fiancé. You two should know each other. You see, Don, Mr. Duncan's stolen your play 'Starless Moment.' For the past few nights I've been here taking dictation, writing his version of it!"

Duncan's affable smile vanished. He stiffened, his shifty eyes darting swift looks at her. Don took a step forward.

Trapped, the playwright's color deepened in his swarthy face.

"I'm sure there must be some mistake."

"There's been no mistake." Peggy's voice was crystal-clear. "The first act of your play, Mr. Duncan, I took to a notary and swore I typed from your dictation. I intend doing the same with the second act unless we can reach an agreement. There is no copyright on 'Starless Moment,' but I'm sure a judge and jury, after they hear what I testify, will realize what obvious plagiarism it is!"

For a moment Jerome Duncan was silent. His suave, worldly air of sophistication finally came to his aid. He drew himself up to his full height, a smile lighting his lean face.

"You spoke of an agreement——"

"Nothing will be said or done, and no investigation made into the records of your other plays," Peggy said, "provided you do what I ask. It isn't difficult. You will get in communication with Harry Anderson. You will tell him you made a mistake, that instead of rejecting Don's play you are recommending it for immediate production!"

She watched Jerome Duncan's expression. Upon his answer depended the brilliant success or dismal failure of her stratagem. She had lost Don, but her final gesture would be in seeing

that justice was done. That would be something to remember always.

"I'll be very happy to recommend Mr. Walker's play to Anderson," Duncan said smoothly. "Now that I remember, it is a piece with great possibilities. I won't hesitate to offer my opinion that this play, with Benita Howland in the leading rôle, is certain to be a hit!"

In the elevator that took her to the street level, Peggy thought she was going to faint. She felt weak and dizzy. Blindly, she got out through the main entrance and onto the sidewalk. The cold night air was stimulating. She drank it in greedily.

After a moment she was dimly aware of the taxi that slid up to the curb and of an arm around her.

"Get in, Peggy. I must talk to you."

The cab door shut. Don drew her to him. It was dark in the vehicle but Peggy knew it was her own precious though starless moment—the one minute that healed all heart hurts and reinforced the bond that had been so devoutly welded between them.

"Don't talk. Just hold me close," Peggy whispered.

"But I want to ask you to forgive me! I've been a fool, a blind, selfish idiot! Oh, Peggy, dearest, if you can only——"

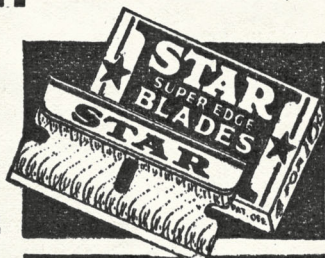
Her lips on his ended his pleading.



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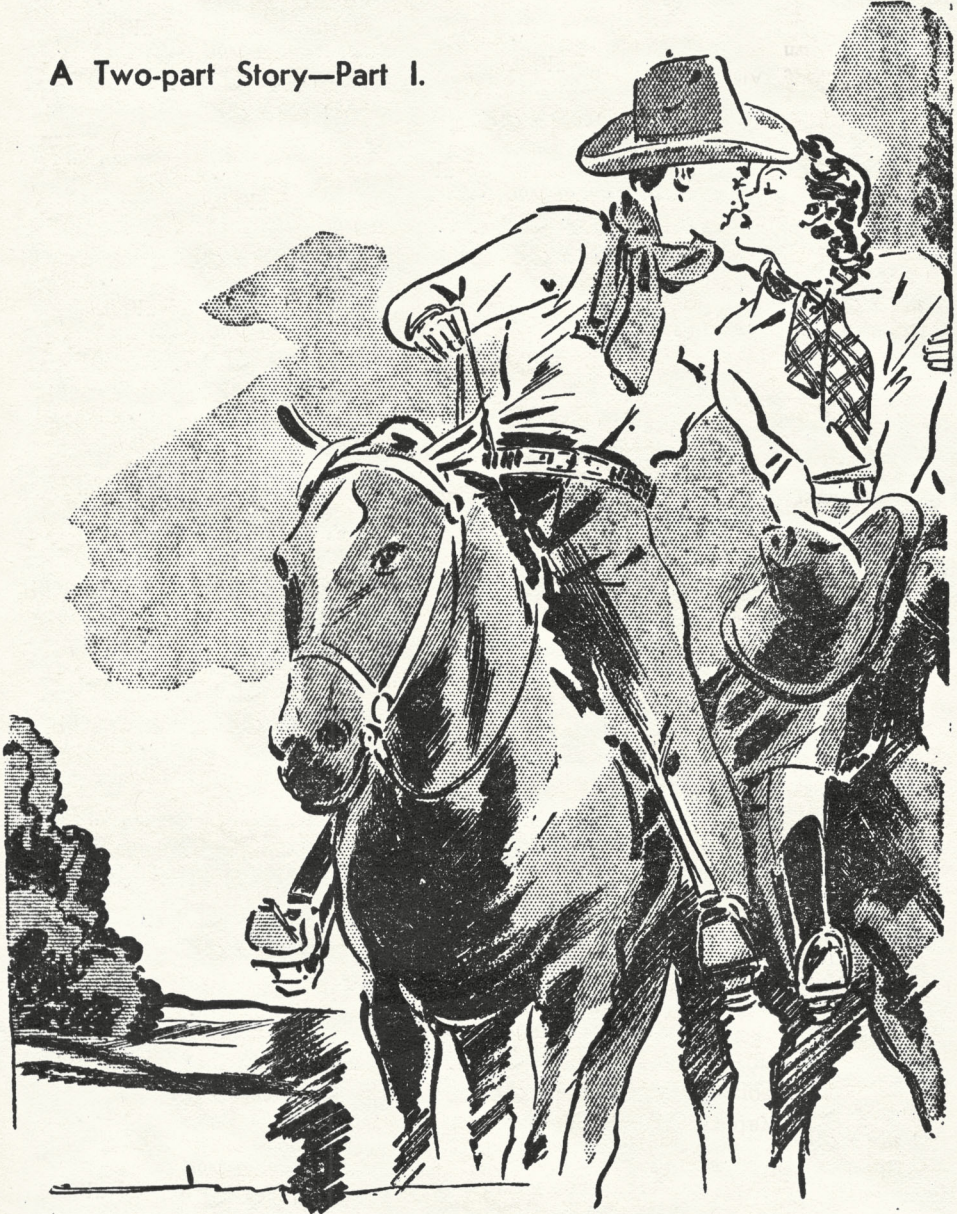
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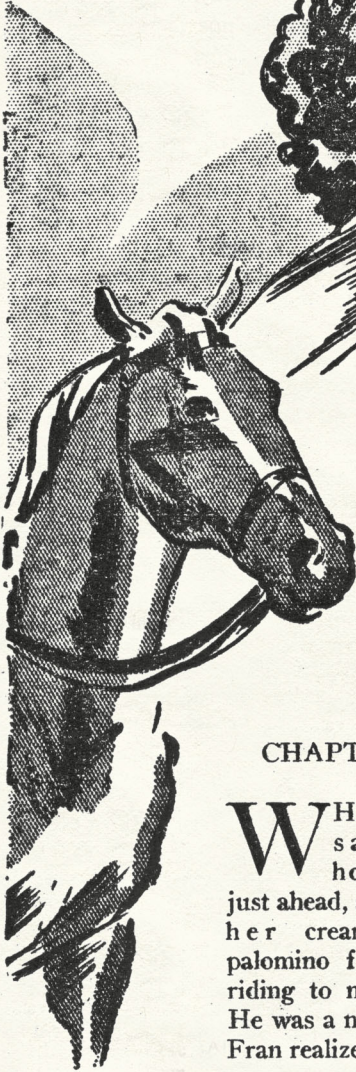
THE DEVIL RIDES A BLACK HORSE

A Two-part Story—Part I.



By ISABEL STEWART WAY

"You'll come back?" she whispered, knowing vaguely that she had no right to ask it. "Lee, you'll come back?" His lips sought hers, then almost roughly he pushed her from him.



CHAPTER I

WHEN Fran saw the horseman just ahead, she urged her cream-colored palomino forward, riding to meet him. He was a newcomer, Fran realized, and all newcomers were excit-

ing in this lonely spot below the border; some were dangerous.

As she came close, he pulled his buckskin to a stop, swept off his wide felt hat, and sat waiting. She saw that he was tall and young and lithe, bronzed

by wind and sun. His hair was copper-colored, close-cropped; it clung to his head in tight little curls. His face was thin, almost angular; high cheek bones and lean cheeks narrowed to an outthrust chin. A strong, relentless man, Fran thought; a hard man, who would fight and give no quarter.

Then his generous mouth widened to a grin, and Fran caught her breath at his charm. It was as if an inner candle had been kindled; his face was alight; his eyes were deeply blue and filled with tender laughter.

"Good morning, ma'am," he drawled. "Here I thought I was meeting up with some little dark-skinned señorita, and it turns out to be an angel!"

Admiringly, his gaze swept over Fran, from the white expensive Stetson that sat upon her shining black hair, over the white silk blouse, the white doeskin riding skirt, and down to the fine leather boots. Fran always wore white, and rode the palomino, except at night. But that was another, a rather dreadful story, she realized in that strange moment.

"A white angel," the cowboy repeated, and more than ever Fran was conscious of his charm. It caught at her, held her.

For a moment she sat there in the saddle, rich with its silver mountings, and stared at him. It had been a long time since she had met and talked with a man like this; perhaps that was why

she was so breathless, all at once, that she couldn't speak.

"Not even a good morning?" he asked, reproachfully. "When a man is lost in a strange land——"

"Are you lost? I can help you, then. This is my ranch, the Dancing Doll. Mine and my brother's."

He leaned forward, stared incredulously.

"The—which?"

"The Dancing Doll. It's called that because——"

Fran stopped in sudden panic. She couldn't tell this man the truth—that the Dancing Doll was an easy brand to put over the other well-known ones above the border. The Triangle, the Circle T, the Walking O; all these lost their identity easily to the more intricate Dancing Doll brand.

She couldn't tell this man, with the blue fearless eyes, that she, Fran Markey, was the mysterious leader of the Black Hawk band that ravaged and plundered above the border.

"It's called that," she finished hastily, "because I've always danced."

"So this is your home!" he mused, glancing about over the rolling acres. "You were born here?"

"No," she evaded. "My brother and I were born down Tampico way. Dad was with an American outfit down there, until a few years ago." She didn't mention the two years when her father moved above the border, with his motherless children, because he wanted to raise them in his own country. She didn't tell about the homestead, nor the war between the big cowmen and the small ranches, that had brought ruin and death to her father. And she made no mention of the vow she had made to pay the ranchmen back for the heartache they had caused. She merely finished, "Dad is dead, now."

He reached out a lean brown hand in sympathy, and his touch brought a feeling she'd never known before; a feeling

of mingled joy and vague sorrow, and a throbbing sensation that pulsed to ecstasy all through her being. She wanted to laugh and to cry, at the same moment.

"Tell me about yourself?" he asked, with a grin. "Your name, and how and why and what! I'm Lee Graham," he added.

It was nice to have him interested, and Fran didn't mind his questions. There was no danger in answering, for Frances Markey, young girl-owner of the Dancing Doll Rancho, was one person; the evasive leader of the Black Hawks was another. Only her own men, and the swarthy buyer who came to take over the cattle, knew that they were one and the same.

She did have caution enough to start riding slowly away from the trail to El Diablo, where a big herd of cattle with newly-blotched brands were held. Then she forgot everything as she rode alongside Lee Graham, and talked; just what they said, she couldn't recall afterward, for the hour was a joyous haze of unreality.

They stopped at the *casa*, and Fran led him to a shaded corner of the great patio. The air was sweet with the smell of roses; it was dynamic with their nearness. They sat at a gay red table and ate seed cakes and sipped cool drinks from tall glasses, brought to them by old Conchita, who had been with Fran, always. And they laughed a great deal over nothing at all.

It was a magic hour for Fran. Once their hands met—and clung. Lee's eyes grew dark; his tanned young face was tense.

"Fran—Fran!" He leaned toward her. "You're lovely——"

She was drunk with his nearness. She wanted him close, closer. Her mouth was a satin scarlet flower, quivering with yearning. She closed her eyes, waited, then he dropped her hand, stood up, laughed, as if he were embarrassed.

"I'd better be riding on," he said, his voice strained. "I've business to attend to."

She stood up, too; felt as if the blood had all drained from her heart, the sweetness from her life.

"Of course," she said, steadily. A dangerous moment had passed. There could be no love for Fran Markey; no love with a man like this. He was decent, fine. She was the leader of an outlaw band.

She drew away from him. "It's easy to forget time, in this land of *mañana*," she said, and her lips curved in a stiff smile.

He grinned at her, then. "Ride with me a way, Fran. It's been nice, finding a new friend down here! And, after all, I'm still lost, you know!"

She was silent a moment before she nodded. Surely, she reasoned, a ride could do no harm. "All right, Lee," she said huskily. "As far as the open trail that leads over the border."

They were strangely quiet on that ride. Occasionally Lee spoke of trivial things—of the opal haze to the southern hills, of the sand-devils that danced in the sun, of the glory of the day. But, all the time, Fran's mind was busy with her loneliness. Something bright and joyous had lived in her heart for a time. Now it had died, and Fran knew a great hunger for love, as it might have been.

They stopped when they reached the trail. Fran felt Lee's gaze upon her, but she dared not meet it.

"Good-by," he said, at last, and reached out his hand. "Good-by, white angel!"

Fran put her hand into his, knew that he felt her trembling, but she could not control it. It was as if the firm-lipped, self-sufficient girl who exacted obedience from a band of lawless men had melted into a soft helpless child, who couldn't even hold back the tears.

"Fran, you're crying," he said, softly. "Why, honey!"

She didn't try to explain. She only looked at him from under the heavy black silken lashes, her eyes bright with grief.

"You're lonesome," he said; his voice gentle. "You don't belong down here, where there's none of your own kind! You——"

For a second he stared at her, deep into the smoky-gray eyes that had golden lights in their depths, then suddenly he bent, his mouth upon hers.

It was a pulsing, dizzying kiss, that lingered, and throbbed with a thousand flames. Fran felt as if old wine were poured into her veins. She was drunk with the thrill of his lips, with the love that blazed in her heart.

"Fran," he murmured. "You're sweet—sweet!"

"You'll come back?" she whispered, knowing vaguely that she had no right to ask it. This man and she—there was a world between them; a world of her own making. "Lee, you'll come back?"

"Yes!" Again his lips sought hers, then almost fiercely he pushed her from him. For a moment he stared away into the distance. "Sure, I'll come back," he went on, awkwardly. "And I'll bring somebody along with me; somebody you'll like for a friend. I'll bring Neva Ray. She's——" Again the pause, the fumbling for words. Then: "Neva's the girl I'm going to marry."

The world spun around Fran for an instant. The jagged hills dipped and swayed, and the rainbow-colored wastelands that merged into the Rancho, all wavered in a sodden gray mist.

"The girl you're going to marry?" she breathed.

Still Lee Graham didn't look at her. He was flicking at a scurrying lizard with his quirt. But he nodded.

"Neva's the daughter of my foreman," he said. "She's pretty. Her hair is—well it's kind of butter-yellow, and her eyes are brown. Swell kid, Neva is," he finished.

Pride came back to Fran, strengthened her. She lifted her head defiantly and made her voice gay.

"Why, that's wonderful! Do bring Neva down! I'm giving my annual *baille* at the Rancho in a few days, and I'd like to have you both as my guests! We'll all be happy together. For, you see, I'm engaged, too—to Utah Oliver, my foreman!"

His smile was strained; there was bleakness in his blue eyes. "But," he drawled, softly, "you liked my kisses! You——"

His words, his probing gaze, were little flames set against the dry tinder of Fran's hurt and humiliation. With sudden intensity, her emotions blazed to ungovernable red fury. Her quirt came up. The smoky eyes were dark pools of anger.

"You cad!" she cried, and lashed at him, was glad when she saw the trailing welt her quirt left on his lean cheek. "Now ride and keep riding!"

"O. K., white angel!" His smile did not leave. "Till I get off the path, again!"

With that he was gone in a swirl of dust and Fran sat still in her silver-mounted saddle, watching him. She put one hand against her slim aching throat. "I'll get even with him!" she whispered through quivering lips. "I'll get even, if I die for it!"

Dimly, she was glad of her anger. Fury was easier to bear than pain; hate was better than heartbreak.

Slowly, Fran turned her palomino, started back toward El Diablo Canyon. She heard hoofbeats close by, but she did not turn her head, not even when she glimpsed the two horsemen who drew alongside. They were "Shag" Murfree and "Stumpy" Kline, members of the little band who had fled from the range war, two years ago. There had been five in that band: Shag and Stumpy, old Angus Cameron, Fran, herself, and her brother, Phil. Now they

were outlaws, all of them; bandits, with a price on their heads.

Shag, a loyal-hearted old blowhard, had been her father's partner. Stumpy had been a neighboring homesteader; a one-legged cow-puncher who could stick any bronc tighter than a well-cinched saddle, after he'd climbed aboard with one of his home-made wooden legs slung to the saddle horn.

Shag Murfree spoke first: "You got rid o' that hairpin, I see, honey! Good work, too!" He took off his shabby felt hat to wipe his shining bald head. "Makes me think o' the way I outsmarted a jasper up in the panhandle, twenty year ago. I——"

"What was that hombre doin' on the Dancin' Doll?" Stumpy broke in. Folks always did break in to ward off Shag's lengthy tales. "Why did he come?"

Fran stared ahead, dazedly. What was Lee doing here on the Dancing Doll? Why had he come, except to tear her soul out with a kiss, and leave in mockery?

"I don't know," she said tiredly. "He said he was lost, and I started him back."

"Lost?" Both men echoed the word scornfully. Then Stumpy laughed. "Him—lost? Say, Lee Graham knows every foot o' this border-country. That's why they made him head o' the Border Cattlemen's Association, because they think he's the one that can drive the Black Hawks out."

Fran drew a deep breath. She knew about the Cattlemen's Association; it had been formed for one purpose—to track down the Black Hawks!

"Yeah," Shag nodded, his round face screwed to tenseness. "We picked the news up in the saloon at Ocotillo. Lee Graham's out for our blood, honey. Mebby he's smelled out the layout, connected the Dancin' Doll with the Hawks."

"Perhaps he did," Fran said slowly, "but it won't do him any good, for we're

going to fight him in the way that will hurt him most. We'll shame him, make him so ridiculous that he'll be laughed off his own range. We'll ruin him"—her plans came, full-born, to her mind—"by taking his cattle. We'll bring him here, make him ride with us, and when we send him back, he'll have nothing to go back to!"

Not even the girl with the butter-yellow hair would care about him, Fran thought, when he left the Dancing Doll.

"Next week, we'll raid his ranch!" Fran went on, fiercely. "We'll teach him to come down here on a trouble hunt!"

A deep silence greeted her words, and she looked around, saw that Angus Cameron, dour old Scot, had joined them. Angus had been the single dissatisfied complaining cowhand of her father's small outfit, and he had growled his gloomy way through the two years he had spent as bandit. His face was twisted to disapproval, now; the other two men refused to meet Fran's eyes. It was Stumpy who spoke.

"Dangerous business, Fran," he observed, cautiously. "You'll have to turn him loose, some time, bein' opposed to bloodshed, like you are! Then all he'll have to do will be come back and clean us out!"

"I'll take care of that!" Fran said sharply. Stumpy had spoken the truth, she knew. It was a wild, reckless plan; a dangerous one, but she was ready to stake everything to hit back at Lee Graham to shatter his happiness.

"What's things comin' to?" Angus growled, scratching at his stubbly sandy beard. "All these goin's on—" His voice trailed to a moody rumble.

Shag shrugged, peered at the cloudless sky. "Mebby there won't come a dark night," he offered, "and we've never chanced any other kind. Them new boys Utah hired are r'arin' for trouble, but it's best to play safe, honey, like you've always done!"

LS—3F

"We'll ride next week," she said, more quietly, now, but her hands were tight on the palomino's reins.

"Anyhow," Stumpy offered, "he didn't stand any chance o' nosin' out the critters we was holdin' up in El Diablo. Shag and me, we was hidin' back o' the big butte, ready to pop him if he come hellin' that way. And Angus was staked out, nearer the pass; he was watchin', too. Time's acomin', honey, when we can't stop short o' bloodshed." He peered at her closely.

"Perhaps. But, so far, luck has ridden our trail. And thanks, all of you!"

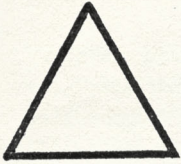
Fran smiled her appreciation at these three faithful ones: Shag and Stumpy and Angus. They would help her, no matter what it meant! They would follow her to the gates of hell, itself.

CHAPTER II.

Night lay thick as tar in the narrow, high-walled pass. The band of riders, with their coal-black mounts, their black clothes and low-pulled dark Stetsons, could scarcely be seen, even by one another, as they came in double file over the dusty trail.

They rode in furtive silence. Only the crack of leather, the dull *plop* of hoofs, betrayed their coming. All the same, it seemed to the slender girl who rode at their head, that the beating of her heart could be plainly heard above these familiar, muffled sounds.

It angered Fran Markey, that quivering, throbbing expectancy she felt. Her thoughts were traitors, always leaping ahead to the coming meeting with Lee Graham. It was no way to go into a raid, all trembling and excited like this. She needed every nerve calm, every muscle steady; she'd have to be calm and steady if she were to lead these men of hers safely through the raid, and get away with the vast herd of cattle they would take back with them, over the border, and down to the Dancing Doll.



TRIANGLE

Fran had never felt all keyed up like this before; but then, Fran had never raided the Triangle Ranch before, nor planned to take

back with her, as prisoner, the red-headed young owner of the brand!

"I'll show him!" Fran muttered to herself, and yet a tingling warmth crept through her at thought of the kiss Lee Graham had given her, only a week ago. It had burned beyond her lips; seared so deeply that life had been a turmoil, ever since. "He'll be sorry—sorry!"

There was still another thing Fran meant to do, but she scarce admitted that, even to her own heart. She was going to make Lee care for her, terribly, make him forget the pretty daughter of his foreman, then she would laugh at him, and send him back, broken, to his yellow-haired Neva Ray.

One of the riders pushed ahead of the others, until he was close beside Fran. She turned her wide gray eyes his way, looked at her foreman, Utah Oliver. His face was a blob of white against the darkness.

"Right ahead, the pass opens into the valley," he said, "and it's plenty light out there, with that moon and all!"

"I know!" she said, and rode on till the pass began to widen; then she drew her black horse to a stop, waited till the others came up.

"Time to mask!" she told the group, in her low tones. "In a minute, the moon will go under a cloud. Then we travel!"

While they adjusted the black silk masks that covered the betraying white of their faces, Fran looked at them, sharply. There were an even dozen, now, with the new men Utah Oliver had brought into the band.

"You know what you're to do!" Fran went on, adjusting her own mask.

"Utah, you take your men"—she always referred to the newcomers as Utah's men—"and fan out to start the cattle running. Shag and Stumpy will keep off the Triangle men till you get the cattle hazed into the pass here, and they'll keep the pass covered till almost daylight. Angus—"

"Well, wha' is it noo?" the stocky short man asked glumly, his weathered face a scowl of disapproval, as he fumbled with his mask.

"You and Phil come with me, after Lee Graham! He's close, and he'll come when he hears the raid!"

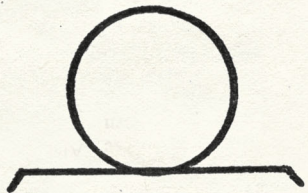
"Aye, an' nice business it is, too," Angus grumbled. "A lass plannin' for to kidnap a mon! What's the business o' raidin' comin' to, what wi' kissin' an' fightin' bein' mixed—"

Utah Oliver whirled in his saddle, and his hand dropped to his holster. "You take that back, Angus, or I'll put you where raids don't matter to you! When you talk about Fran, you're talkin' about the girl I'm goin' to marry!"

"Hush, both of you!" Fran's voice cut sharply, but her own hands clenched to fists. She had never told Utah she would marry him; she had never been able to answer his insistent pleas. And now she realized that old Angus must have seen that kiss Lee Graham had given her. She was glad the moon went under a cloud and

the talk could end. She said shortly: "Come on! Ready!"

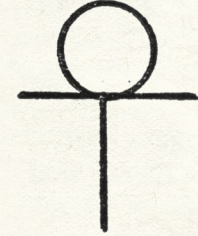
Like a fan Utah Oliver and the other Black Hawk riders spread over the valley, yelling, firing their guns, opening the attack with startling abruptness. Their shouts could be plainly heard, but they echoed against the valley walls,



WALKING - O

and were confusing. The beat of horses' hoofs sounded like the advance of an army.

The Triangle men sought to meet the raid, but there was nothing to guide them; not with all the bewildering echoes and reëchoes, and the riders who could not be seen in their black garb. Guns popped. A Triangle rider's gun clattered from his hand.



CIRCLE-T

The cattle were started, hundreds of them, running toward the high walled pass that had its far end beyond the border.

Fran and her two helpers stood waiting, their horses motionless, and Fran's heart was a thumping drum of sound in her own ears.

At last Angus stirred. "There he comes!" and pointed a black-gloved hand toward a rider, galloping recklessly, at fierce speed, toward the running cattle. Young Lee Graham, rushing to the defense of his herd. "The daft numbskull, showin' no sense, at all!" the old man grumbled.

Fran waited a minute longer before she gave the signal. The moon had come out for a moment; it shone on that gleaming red hair, for Lee rode hatless. Fran couldn't tear her gaze away. A little fire seemed lighted at each pulse.

Then her gray eyes opened wide as she saw the biggest of the black riders leave the others, and ride straight toward Lee Graham. It was Utah Oliver. The two men would meet. Both had drawn guns, and in an instant—

Fran raked her horse with cruel spurs, and he charged toward those two figures. Her gun whipped out, spat fire toward Utah, and his great figure slumped in the saddle. His horse wheeled, made across the flats.

"Get Utah. Bring him, Phil!" Fran told her brother, while she kept her own horse headed straight for Lee.

He sat waiting, gun ready.

Old Angus had separated from Fran; now he rode up beside Lee.

"Drop that gun!" he growled.

Lee's head turned at the sound, and Fran rode in from the other side. "Lift 'em up!" She kept her voice low.

There was no help for Lee Graham; not with the two of them holding the drop on him. Slowly, his hands raised.

The moon was out, full and clear, dripping radiance over the wild scene. While Angus deftly bound the young ranchman, hand and foot, Lee sat his horse, staring defiance at his captors.

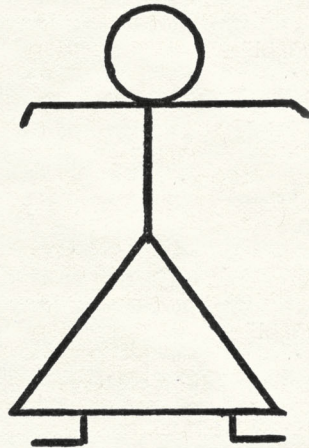
"What do you want with me?" he demanded.

"Ye're to ride between us for a spell," Angus grunted as he prepared a blindfold, "to see mebbly do ye fancy our company."

"Hurry!" Fran spoke impatiently to Angus. "We must be off!"

Lee's contemptuous gaze went from Fran's slim form, over to the thick-shouldered, stocky Angus.

"What kind of a man are you," he asked, scornfully, "to be taking orders from a stripling?"



DANCING DOLL

"That's for ye to find out, lad!" Angus adjusted the blindfold deftly. "Let's be ridin'!"

The scoffing voice went on. "I thought the Black Hawks rode only on dark nights! Skulked in the shadows while they thieved! How come you chose a night like this? If a mask should slip, you'd pay plenty. Your younker boss grows bold!"

Fran shivered a little. Lee spoke truly. It was a tradition that the Black Hawks raided only on dark nights. She had made a rash play to-night. Would she pay the price?

"But why not?" Lee's mocking voice went on. "A big brave chieftain, still in his teens, giving orders to his *vague-ros*!"

"Such clack hurts my eardrums!" Angus rasped. "Hush, lest I stick a gag in your throat, to give us peace!"

Fran almost wished Lee would talk, as they rode over the seven miles of the pass that lay between the Triangle outfit and the Dancing Doll Rancho, just two miles below the border. She would have liked to hear his voice, to reach out and touch him, there in the inky darkness of the high-walled pass. When her horse spooked at a fluttering night bird in a clump of bushes, bearing over against Lee's buckskin until Fran was pressed close against him for an instant, she knew a wild surge of emotion that frightened her. Jerking her mount around, she sent him on ahead, until she came to Phil, who was helping Utah, his huge body slumped over his saddle.

"Phil," she asked, low, "is Utah hurt badly?"

A patch of moonlight caught Phil's sulky face as he came toward her. Fran frowned a little. Phil had been getting out of hand, lately. He was a full year older than Fran, but, always before, he had been willing, in his moody, ungracious way, to take orders from Fran. These past few weeks, though, he had

been different. Now he scowled openly at his sister.

"No fault of yours that he isn't killed!" he retorted. "Grazed across the ribs, and just luck you didn't clip his heart!"

"Utah, I'm sorry!" She rode alongside.

Utah's wide shoulders twitched. His eyes glowed at her.

"You had to choose between him and me," he spat out, "and you chose him! I won't be forgetting soon!"

Fran's pity melted under her anger. "I'll not forget, either, that you disobeyed orders. You knew our plans, yet you deliberately tried to provoke a gunfight with him!"

"I had plans of my own," Utah returned insolently. "It takes a man's head to figure things out, and it's time you——"

Fran's eyes were steely cold, and her voice was like the lash of a whip as she broke in. "It's time you learned that I still run the Black Hawks!" she said. "Also, that I haven't promised to marry you——"

"I was just trying to protect you, Fran!" Utah put in. "And I do intend to marry you, if ever you see it my way!"

"Wait, then, till I do! And I don't need any protection, against old Angus nor any one else! I can take care of myself! It's time you learned that and that I still run the Black Hawks! I've overlooked a lot, Utah. You've overstepped your rights. But that's done. From now on, you obey orders!"

She turned to her brother, who was muttering under his breath. He had removed his mask, and his face was white, tense.

"That goes for you, too, Phil!" she said, crisply. "As long as you ride with the Black Hawks, you'll do as you're told!"

"Well, you'll not be telling me what



Unbelief struggled in Lee's eyes, as Fran tore her mask off. "It's—it's you!" he jerked the words out.

to do much longer!" he returned harshly. "I'm getting sick of this way of doing!"

He looked at Fran, and she was torn with pity for him. Suddenly he seemed

so young, so miserable. She put out a hand toward him.

"Phil," she began, then remembered Utah. She couldn't talk to Phil in front of her foreman.

Utah's eyes in his big handsome face were blazing at her.

"The whole bunch of us are sick of it!" he cried. "We're tired of being hampered by a petticoat that's afraid of a drop of blood! Except Black Hawk blood!" His voice grew bitter. "You're quick enough to spill that!"

"Hush! What more do you want? You're making plenty, and, so far, no

one's stretched a rope. It's cattle we want; not bloodshed. Only fools murder to get what they want!"

She turned, then, rode slowly back to meet Angus and his red-headed prisoner. Vaguely she was disturbed, worried about Phil. He was weak, there was no denying that, and the only way Fran could look after him was to keep him with her. Some of the other men—the new ones who had joined—chafed under orders, too. She had left them to Utah to handle, and now Utah was taking too much authority. She'd have to give more thought to her band, and less to the memory of a kiss that had been left on her lips!

They reached the Dancing Doll Rancho, just at dawn. Mexican *vaqueros* in wide sombreros were waiting to haze the cattle on toward El Diablo, where the arduous job of changing Triangle brands to the Dancing Doll would begin.

Fran gave orders for Utah to be brought to the big house, and put under the care of old Conchita, who had helped raise Fran and Phil, and would gladly have given her life for either of them.

Shag and Stumpy and Angus had an adobe cabin of their own, but ate with Phil and Fran. The rest of the men had their own bunk-house eating room on a shaded knoll above the corrals.

Angus waited with the prisoner until Fran had seen Utah lifted off his horse and helped inside; then he pushed the redhead forward.

"What ye want wi' him, noo that he's here?" Angus asked glumly.

"He'll stay at the big house," Fran said, low. "Untie him, please!"

Angus obeyed, and Lee Graham dismounted, stiffly; stood there, still blindfolded, but with his lean jaw set in stubborn defiance.

"Take off your blindfold," Fran ordered, crisply, still keeping her voice low.

His hands went up, jerked away the kerchief that had covered his eyes. For a second, as he stared at her, Fran kept on her mask; it seemed as if she couldn't meet the full blaze of those eyes, just yet. But as his gaze began to light up, with recognition of the house, the scene, she tore away the strip of black satin, stood facing him.

Unbelief struggled in his eyes. He rubbed a hand across them, as if to wipe away a vision of mirage.

"It's—it's you!" he jerked the words out.

"Yes, it is I!" Fran answered, spiritedly, steeling herself against the rising wave of tingling emotion that was filling her. "Leader of the Black Hawks, owner of the Dancing Doll Rancho! And, right now"—mockingly—"hostess to the Cattlemen's Association! Please go inside, Lee Graham!"

He stood, unmoving, staring at her.

"You may as well come in," she went on, coldly, "for you're going to visit us a while. You're going to be one of us, in fact. There's no way for you to escape, so forget any ideas you may have along that line! Although, Lee Graham, you need not be a virtual prisoner, if you'll give your word to play according to my rules.

"What are those rules?" His blue eyes glinted with fiery lights.

"You're to pretend you're a guest. You're not to go near the corrals, alone, nor any place away from the house. You'll make no attempt to communicate with your friends. It would be serious for them, if they followed you here."

He was silent a moment, staring at her. "Kidnaping is a bad business," he said, thoughtfully.

Fran shrugged. "So is rustling, but that is my business. Now will you give me your word to abide by the rules?"

Another second, then he smiled. "My answer to that is—keep me here, if you can!"

But he followed her into the house.

Siesta time followed lunch; early, because they were tired from the all-night ride. In the quietness and coolness of her own thick-walled adobe room, with its clean whitewashed inside, Fran lay upon her bed and stared at the ceiling. sleepless and tense. She had to take stock of herself; had to fight down, right at the start, the queer emotion that was taking possession of her.

Lee had lunched at the family table; he was well guarded, with Phil and Shag, Stumpy and Angus to watch him. It had been an awkward, silent meal, for the men; for Fran it was an hour of bewilderment. It couldn't happen again, she knew.

"He hates me and I despise him!" she told herself. "He had no right to kiss me, then tell me about her! And he said I liked his kisses, but he'll be sorry! I hate him—and her, too! A little yellow-haired fool!"

Over and over, Fran told herself of her hatred; of her desire to ruin Lee Graham, shame him before the eyes of his friends and his neighbors and Neva Ray. Yet she couldn't shut away the memory of that brief time together, at lunch.

Every time Lee looked at her, even in scorn, it set her pulses to leaping, her heart to throbbing. If he touched her, by any chance, it was like match

touching tinder. Her whole being flamed with some strange yearning, burning her, yet consuming nothing of the strange emotions that bewildered her.

That had to stop. She had to nerve herself to meet his glances in cool aloofness; to feel the touch of his hand without wanting to surrender. She could do it; she would do it. A girl who had kept a dozen men within the iron restrictions of her will, men who were bent on bloodshed and plunder, could surely curb the traitorous feelings within herself.

Fran's thoughts were interrupted by the sound of furtive steps crossing the big patio. She slipped on a silken robe and went to the shuttered window, looked out.

For a moment, she couldn't recognize the figure that shuffled across the clay tiles. Then he lifted his head and she saw that it was Hart Biggall, one of Utah's latest additions to the Black Hawks.

"What are you doing here?" Fran asked sharply, and fear seized her. The men had orders to keep away from the big house unless they were sent for, yet this man looked at her with an ugly possessiveness.

"Who sent you to come here?" she demanded again, throwing back her head



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"Scream if you want to, baby," the man said, drawing her close. "I've had my eye on you from the first, and I'm ready to plug any one who stands between you and me!"

and clenching her hands to keep them from trembling in her fright.

"Nobody, rightly," he admitted, in all calmness. "I jest rambled up to see how Utah was makin' out. We needed to know what he wanted done about them cattle we're holdin', up in El Diablo Canyon."

Anger almost drove out her fear. "Since when have you been taking your

orders from Utah?" she flared. "Orders that didn't come first from me?"

Hart Biggall pushed his hat farther back on his thin, colorless hair, shuffled his gangling body to easier position, and regarded her with insolence.

"Us hombres down at the bunk house," he said, "figger that Utah hired us. So we go to him for orders."

"Well, you won't go to him, any

more!" Fran's anger flamed to pure rage. "You're fired! Pack up and ride off the Dancing Doll—to-day! You're through here!"

He came closer, put his narrow, caloused hands upon the wide casement sill.

"We likewise figger," he drawled, "that bein's Utah hired us, he gets the firin' of us, as well!"

His small eyes looked into hers, and Fran saw a light leap into them; a greedy light, as his gaze went lingeringly over her slender, silken-robed figure. His thin face twitched; his slit of a mouth fell open. And in that moment, Fran realized that she was not only the leader of the Black Hawks, a pack of ruthless border bandits. She was also a lone girl among a band of ruthless, devil-may-care, woman-hungry men.

Desperately, she gathered all her courage, made her tones firm and calm.

"Get out of here, Hart Biggall!" she ordered. "If you don't——"

"Then you'll scream, I suppose," he finished with a harsh chuckle. "Well, what good'll that do you? Your brother's down at the bunk house, talkin' over some business of his and Utah's, with the other men. Utah, himself, is laid up and that young cowboy you brung

home so high-and-mighty, I'd like a good chance to shoot him. So go ahead and scream, and bring him out!"

His hands shot out, suddenly, caught her tight, held her there, as he climbed over the wide sill.

"Scream, if you want to, baby!" he repeated, drawing her close. "I've had my eye on you, from the first, only Utah said you was wearin' his brand! But Utah's out of it, now. And I'm ready to plug any one who stands between you and me! I'd just as lief the first one would be that redhead from above the border."

A thousand sickening thoughts churned in Fran's mind, as she bent far back to avoid the touch of his thin, greedy lips. If she screamed, Lee would come, straight into the death that awaited him here. And if she didn't scream——

For a moment, Fran's eyes went wide, staring from a white face up into the evil countenance, so terribly close. Then she closed her eyes, shuddering from what she read there.

"Lee! Lee!" she whispered the name she dared not call aloud. "Lee!"

The only answer was the hot, harsh breathing of the man, whose lips were coming so close to her own.

TO BE CONCLUDED.



NEW YEAR'S EVE

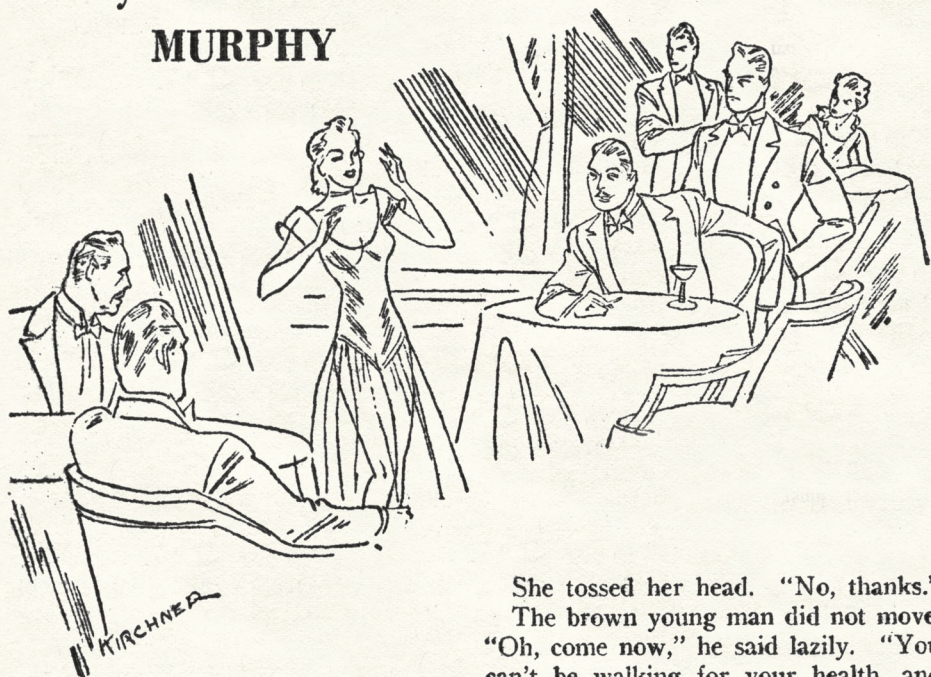
LIKE a great eagle, poised for ready flight,
The old year contemplates the gathering night
With vain regret—too late to do or die—
The good and evil deeds are done, and death
Waits, lonely, in the bleak of winter sky,
To grip the old year in its icy breath.
Relentless midnight tolls, yet, beauty lingers,
A residue of stars, with silver fingers.

FLORENCE CALDWELL MCCURDY.

HONEYMOON

in HEAVEN

By ETHEL
MURPHY



WANT a lift?" The tall, brown young man slouched under the steering wheel of the big sports roadster, peered from under the brim of his slouch hat at the slender girl on the dusty roadside.

"Want a lift?" he asked again when she didn't answer, and he indicated with a wave of his brown, muscular hand the seat beside him.

The girl's amber eyes regarded him with hostility. She was very young, very pretty and very tired-looking. She had on a smart green linen suit with frilly blouse and she carried a small overnight bag. She certainly wasn't the kind of girl one finds on a lone country road at sundown of a hot summer day.

She tossed her head. "No, thanks." The brown young man did not move. "Oh, come now," he said lazily. "You can't be walking for your health, and you've had enough exercise for one day. I saw you get off that bus two hours ago."

The girl's lips curled. "And I suppose you came along to play the good Samaritan?"

"Not at all," he said, as if he detested all girls. "I've been down to the corner store for supplies and I just happen to be going this way. So you might as well take advantage of my kind offer. It will be dark up here soon, you know."

She looked around her uneasily. Already twilight had fallen. This was pretty lonely country up here, and she remembered that it had been hours since she'd seen any sign of habitation.

Then she remembered how tired she was. Her slim shoulders drooped. Her head ached, her feet felt blistered, and



the overnight bag which she carried felt as if it were made of lead.

Her hauteur suddenly cracked. The defiance in her lovely cameolike face faded. Without a word, she got into the car beside the brown young man.

The big machine whirled and slid off down the dusty road again. The girl sighed wearily, and her taut nerves relaxed a little. For the first time in long hours she had a feeling of safety.

The man asked, "Going far?"

She hesitated. "No —no, just up the road a bit." She didn't dare tell this brown young man that she had no idea where she was going.

He turned suddenly



"Sweet," he muttered against her lips.
 "So little and lovely, and so very sweet.
 How could a man help loving you?"

and looked at her from narrowed eyes. "You don't by any chance mean that you're going up to Harriet Kennedy's shack?"

"Y-yes," she stammered, grasping at straws. If she could just reach this shack, she would at least have a roof over her head. "Harriet is an old friend of mine. And she's lent me her shack for the week-end."

"Harriet is always lending her shack to some of her friends, so I should be used to it," the young man said sharply. "You see, I live in the cabin just below Harriet's."

A frown creased the girl's forehead. She looked at him out of the corner of her eye. He had a strong, handsome face and a hard mouth that was etched with cynical lines. There was a look about him that said he didn't care for man or the devil, that he didn't have faith in any one. Not the kind of man who would bother about a girl who was running away from her own folly, she thought with a thud of her heart.

"Maybe we'd better introduce ourselves since we are going to be neighbors," he suggested. "My name is Wyndham Copeland—my friends call me 'Wyn.'"

A shiver of fear shot up her back. But she had to say something. "I—I'm Janis Smith."

She hesitated on the last name and the man grinned derisively.

"Don't you believe me?" she said hotly.

He shrugged. "Why shouldn't I? After all, it's none of my business if you want to keep this—this little rendezvous a secret."

His tone was like an insult. Words fairly choked in Janis's throat. "Do you mean that you think I came up here to meet some one—some man for the week-end?" she gasped.

His blue eyes flashed over her for a moment. "Well, it's pretty obvious that you expect company. You're traveling

pretty light. Harriet's cabin has been closed over a year, and some one evidently is going to furnish groceries." He lifted an eyebrow mockingly. "People do have to eat up here as usual, you know."

Janis didn't answer. She couldn't tell this sarcastic young man that Harriet's cabin, utterly bare, was like heaven to her. And if he thought she had come up here to meet some man, he wouldn't guess the real reason she had come.

She had simply had to get away. She had known that last night, when she had stood alone and terrified in Greta Lane's apartment where she had found Greta with a bullet wound in her head.

Greta hated her. Every one knew that, and talked about it. They had quarreled bitterly only the day before. Greta had made an usually nasty crack, and Janis had struck out blindly in return.

So she had been a fool to go to Greta Lane's apartment at all. But she had thought that if she could talk to Greta alone, they could come to some kind of understanding.

Greta was a dancer in the night club where Janis sang. Exotic, glamorous, dangerous, and notorious for her many love affairs, Greta had always resented Janis. Greta always resented any girl who came near a man she wanted. And she wanted Cam Cameron, the owner of the club where she and Janis worked.

Greta had marked sleek, dark Cam Cameron as her private property, and everybody knew that Cam was crazy about Janis James.

But no one knew that Janis hated Cam Cameron and was afraid of him. She hated the way he looked at her, the way his hand would linger on her arm sometimes. She hated the way he introduced her to his friends, as if she belonged to him. Janis had been pretty desperate when Cam had given her that job, and that was why she had stayed on.

She had lost many of her illusions in the years since her parents had died and she had been on her own. She had learned how to take care of herself, how to appear hard, cynical and sophisticated. She learned to laugh at the men who tried to make love to her, and not to believe any of them. She learned that a man never gave a girl anything without expecting payment in return.

But even so, Janis didn't belong in a place like Cameron's. Cam saw that at once. He spent hours watching her, the bright flash of her head, the way her golden lashes lifted from her amber eyes. Other men saw it, too, and wanted to take her out of Cameron's place—men who would give her everything in the world but a wedding ring.

At first Janis was bitter about it, then cynical and aloof. But Cameron was a patient man, and he could afford to wait for the sweetest girl he'd ever met. Greta Lane had seen him slipping from her, so she had made things as difficult as possible for Janis.

But Janis had wanted Greta to know that Cam meant nothing to her. So she had gone to Greta's apartment, and found her with a bullet wound in her head.

Janis would never forget that moment of stark terror. There was Greta, motionless, lying across her bed, and she was there alone, the smell of gun smoke still in the room. People knew that she had come up there, and that she and Greta hated each other.

Her heart seemed to stop in cold despair. Fate had caught her in a hopeless web. Minutes passed, hours maybe. She didn't know how long she stood there, and then she had gone down the fire escape, back to her own apartment. There, in new terror, she had thrown things recklessly into a bag and fled.

She had climbed onto a bus and had ridden for hours. Then, last night, she had sat for hours in a station in a little out-of-the-way town and listened to

them broadcast her description. So she had gotten on another bus, and here she was.

That small station back down the road had seemed as good a place as any to get out, these hills as good a place as any to lose herself. She seemed to have been walking for hours when the brown young man had come along and given her a lift.

He stopped at last before a weather-stained, deserted-looking cabin. He untangled his long legs, got out and opened the door for her.

"Well, this seems to be your destination," he said.

Janis's heart sank as she looked about in the dim light. The unknown Harriet's cabin certainly did not offer a welcome. It was dark and lonely-looking.

"It's rather lonely, isn't it?" she asked, and tried to keep her voice from quivering.

"And deserted, too," he said without encouragement. "Your party evidently hasn't arrived."

"No," she answered dismally.

"Well, they'll probably be along soon," he observed, and got back into the car.

Her heart sank. "Thank you for the lift," she said politely, but she had a wild desire to detain him, to tell him that he couldn't leave her alone in this lonely cabin with her own black thoughts.

"Oh, not at all," he assured her, his hands on the wheel. "I hope you have a pleasant week-end. If you happen to feel sociable I'll be in the cabin at the bottom of the hill."

The big car whirled again, and moved rapidly down the darkening road. Janis stared after the vanishing car with angry, amazed eyes. No man had ever treated her with such cool indifference.

After a moment her slim shoulders straightened. She picked up the overnight bag and marched determinedly up the weed-grown path. She wouldn't let

this tall, brown young man upset her. At least, he had shown her where she could sleep for the night. It was a mistake on his part, but she should be thankful for that, too.

The door was locked and she went around to the back. At last, when she could find no other way of entrance, she broke a windowpane. She reached her hand inside to turn a latch, and a jagged piece of glass tore at her flesh. She cried out sharply, but she lifted the window sash and crawled inside.

Everything was eerily silent. She found an oil lamp and burned her fingers while lighting it. A strange chill crept up her back as she looked around. The place was thick with dust and spider webs. Her heels made echoing sounds as she walked about.

The kitchen was bare and dirty. She put the lamp on a table and sank wearily into a chair. She had eaten nothing since morning, and realized that she was very hungry. But there was no food here, absolutely nothing at all.

Resentfully, she thought of the young man who had driven her here. He could at least have seen that she was comfortable before he left her.

She tied her handkerchief about her wounded hand which had become painful. Dark shadows danced in the corners of the room, and she shivered with fright. At last, she could bear it no longer. She got up and went outside. It was quite dark now, but there was a faint light from the stars. A bright light twinkled invitingly at the bottom of the hill.

Her heart caught. Wyn Copeland said that he lived just at the bottom of the hill. But she couldn't go there. She wouldn't—

A few minutes later, Janis was stumbling down the road toward that gayly twinkling light.

Wyn didn't look at all surprised to see her when he answered her knock. He even smiled cynically.

"Hello," he said, lifting an eyebrow. "I've been expecting you. I thought you'd be along soon."

Her face flushed hotly. He'd known she would have to come down here and he was laughing at her. She gritted her teeth grimly, and walked into the room without answering him.

The room was large, airy and comfortable. There was a long room to the right which was probably a studio, another bedroom to the left, and the kitchen, from which came a tantalizing odor of bacon and coffee.

"Won't you sit down?" he asked politely.

She had to say something, so she managed, "My—my party has probably been detained. So I just came down here. I hope you don't mind."

"Of course not at all," he assured her. "Supper will soon be ready."

He went back to the kitchen and Janis sat staring after him. Something in his eyes told her that he hadn't wanted her to come down here. That discovery was more than a little shocking.

She tried to fight back the tears that crowded against her hot eyelids. She felt weak and dizzy and the cut on her hand began to throb painfully. The room seemed to swim about her.

At last Wyn appeared in the doorway. "Supper is ready," he said briefly.

Janis didn't move, and he turned and asked sharply, "What's the matter? Aren't you hungry? Or is this just a social call?"

She winced at the sarcasm in his voice, and her face went a little whiter. "No, I—I guess I shouldn't have come at all."

Her voice trailed off as she started across the room. She swayed, but he caught her in his arms before she fell.

"Look here, what's wrong?" he cried. She didn't answer him. Her head fell limply back against him, and her bright hair spilled down across his shoulders. He looked at her for a long

moment and the dusky shadows of her long lashes fell gently across her cheeks. A strange expression crossed the man's face as he strode to the couch.

Janis opened her eyes to find him bending over her, his face pale, his eyes anxious.

For a long moment their eyes met and held, and there was a breathless sensation in Janis's heart that she had never known before.

Her lips twitched. "You gave me a scare," he said huskily. "You see, I'm not used to having strange young ladies faint in my house."

She sat up and tried to smile. "I'm sorry to be such a bother. So stupid of me."

He caught sight of her hand. "Wait, you've hurt your hand."

She looked at her hand and a shiver went up her spine. "Yes, Harriet forgot to give me a key, so I had to break a windowpane."

His eyes were expressionless as he brought bandages. "I see. Well, you'd better sleep here for the night."

She looked at him steadily. "If some one came up here and found me—I mean your mother or sister, or maybe a sweetheart—would it compromise you or anything?"

His eyes were cynical. "I have no sister or mother, and I assure you that if you were found here it wouldn't compromise me in the least. So if you want to stay here it's O. K. with me."

She ate the food he brought on a tray and afterward she went into the bedroom, got into the pajamas he laid out for her and crawled into bed, too weary and heartsick to care if she never woke again.

Next morning, she opened her eyes drowsily as she heard a clatter in the next room. A bright strip of sunlight lay across her bed, and a cool breeze stirred the curtains at the windows. She sat up, remembering everything. But

the wild terror she had known the day before did not return. She had a strange feeling of safety. Her heart hammered wildly. She could hardly wait to see the tall, brown young man who had picked her up in the dusty road yesterday.

The small bag into which she had so hastily thrown a few possessions, was just inside her door where Wyn had evidently put it. She brushed her hair, slipped into a yellow print silk dress and went into the long living room.

She found him busy in the kitchen, his shirt sleeves rolled to his brown elbows, his dark hair rumped. Her heart caught at sight of him. She wished that cold, distant look wouldn't come into his eyes.

"Hello," she said.

"Hello," he answered briefly. "Breakfast is ready."

Janis sat down disconsolately, but suddenly she didn't feel hungry. There was a tight, choked feeling in her throat.

When they had finished, Wyn stacked the dishes with quick, deft hands.

Janis watched him curiously. She wondered who his friends were, where he lived, why he was up here alone, and what had made those bitter lines on his face.

She said, "I'll be glad to help if you'll let me."

But he refused her help.

"I'm an artist," he explained. "I'm up here for a rest, and trying to get an inspiration for some new illustrations I'm to do. So I'm sorry if I won't be able to entertain you."

"Oh, I'll manage," she told him lightly.

A little later when he found her in the living room, staring at the radio which she had not observed the night before, he said casually, "I'm sorry, but it's out of commission."

She breathed a sigh of relief. She had known there would be news reports. And Wyn would be sure to recognize

her as the girl for whom the police were searching.

But now he would go on thinking that she was just a girl who had been stood up on a week-end date. He would let her stay here. After a while, perhaps, the real truth would be learned about what had happened in Greta Lane's apartment. She would have time to plan what to do. After a while, she could go away and build a new life somewhere, forget the past.

But she wasn't going to be allowed to forget so easily. Late in the afternoon when they were busy with supper, a car came swiftly down the hillside. Janis tried to hide the sudden fear in her eyes. With a murmured excuse, she went carelessly into her bedroom.

But once the door was closed, she sank trembling and terrified onto the bed. She heard Wyn talking to men who had entered. They had gone into his studio and she was safe from being seen.

When she went out into the kitchen after the men had gone, Wyn remarked casually, "They were some men who came to see me about those illustrations I was to do. I've promised to have them in a couple of weeks. That means I've got to work pretty hard."

He didn't ask her any questions. His face had a white, set look. He went out of the room abruptly, and when darkness came he had not returned. Janis got into bed and lay with sleepless eyes. Wyn came home at last. She heard him slam the screen door to the little porch where he slept and, much later, she heard him tossing restlessly on his bed.

Wyn showed no inclination to probe into Janis's past, present, or future as the days passed. He showed very little interest in her altogether.

Most of the mornings he spent in his studio. Sometimes she heard him whistling softly as he worked, or at other times she caught a glimpse of his

dark head bent over his drawing board. Now and then, he came down to the lake where she was swimming or lying in the sun. He would sit, sketching busily, until she went back to the house.

But he lost some of his coldness toward her. He talked to her, even laughed sometimes. He could be a gay companion when he wanted to be, and her heart warmed toward him.

He told her stories about the hill country. He talked about the unknown Harriet, who owned the shack at the top of the hill, and the summers they had spent up here, and once he spoke of Harriet's engagement to a man who was going to take her abroad.

Then Janis knew what had caused those bitter lines on his young face, why he had lost his faith in women. And she found herself hating the girl who had hurt him.

"Did you love her very much?" she asked softly.

He said slowly, as if to himself, "I thought I did. And I thought she loved me until the day before we were to have been married, when she told me she loved another man." His lips twitched. "You see, the other man had a great deal more money than a struggling young artist could ever hope to earn. I was a fool not to see how much things like that counted with Harriet."

After that, he didn't speak of Harriet again. Janis explored the hillsides, but she felt lost when she was away from Wyn. Strange how she had grown to depend upon him. Strange how his presence dispelled the dark fear in her mind, the terror of that moment when she had looked down at a still Greta.

She stopped expecting a car to stop on the graveled drive, and blue-coated officers to enter. She stopped seeing prison bars about her when she awoke at night. Her amber eyes lost their haunted look. And, somehow, she couldn't stay away from Wyn. But he laughingly shooed her away when she

showed an interest in his work. He kept his studio locked against her, and he refused to show her his illustrations.

"You'll learn about them in time," he said, with a strange look in his eyes.

And she had to be content to wait. But she thought about Wyn a lot. She liked his grin when he chose to use it. It was so boyishly open, so straightforward. She liked his eyes that said he could never do anything underhand. She liked the set of his shoulders that informed the world he could take care of himself. She liked everything about him. He was so different from any man she had ever known.

One afternoon, he came down to the lake where she sat idly flipping stones into the water. He wore flannel trousers and his white shirt was open at the throat. He looked young, handsome, boyish. Her heart caught as

he threw himself down on the grass beside her.

"Like it up here?" he asked.

"Oh, yes! It's so lovely."

"Yes, lovely," he said slowly, but his eyes were on her face.

Gradually, Wyn lost some of his coldness toward Janis. He talked to her, went walking with her. He could be a gay companion when he wanted to be, and her heart warmed toward him.



Hot color stained her cheeks. "You've been rather nice to let me stay here."

"Oh," he answered, "it's been rather nice having you around."

There was something like a caress in his voice and her long lashes dropped over her eyes.

But next morning Janis thought she must have dreamed the tenderness she had thought she had seen in his eyes. He was irritable, preoccupied.

In the morning he said, "I'm going into the city for a while on business. You'll be all right until I come back."

She didn't answer. There wasn't anything she could say. After he had gone, she felt the hot tears in her throat. She knew that his illustrations must be almost finished and he would be going back to the city. She sat very still, with suddenly empty eyes.

That meant that she would have to go away. And she would never see Wyn again! She had had so little out of life, and now she would never have anything. Because she loved Wyn Copeland! She buried her head in her arms and cried heartbrokenly.

That was the longest day Janis had ever spent. The day passed and Wyn did not return. She made sandwiches, but found that she could not eat. Twilight came, then darkness.

She was sitting on the low steps when Wyn stopped his car on the drive. The moon had risen and the world was bright with soft yellow light. He strode swiftly up the walk, but stopped abruptly when he saw her.

"Janis, why are you out here?"

She tried to stop the wild pounding of her heart. She looked up and he saw her smile, uncertain, wistful in the moonlight. "I had almost thought you were not coming back."

He caught her hands and pulled her to her feet. "Did you, Janis?"

She didn't answer, and he went on, "All day I've been thinking of you here alone, wondering what you were doing."

There was a reckless note in his voice, as if a tight control he had long kept upon himself was breaking down. He pulled her hard against him. She could feel his heart pounding as he set his lips on hers.

Janis couldn't move, couldn't speak. She stood there, her slim figure pressed against him.

"Sweet," he muttered. "So little and lovely, and so very sweet. How could a man help loving you?"

He kissed her again and the night seemed to burst into song. The moonlight turned the leaves into small living mirrors, making a ladder of dreams into the sky.

He let her go at last. "Why, Janis, you're crying," he said incredulously, and touched one wet cheek with a brown finger. His voice was shaking. "Janis, are you crying because I kissed you? I've wanted to kiss you ever since I picked you up in the road that day."

"And I—I wanted you to kiss me, Wyn," she said shyly, her soft arms locked about his neck. "I—I was scared to death you wouldn't kiss me, ever."

"Darling!"

To the end of her life Janis knew she would remember a moon coming up over dark trees and Wyn standing there, holding her in his arms, his face tender.

She knew very little about him. He knew nothing at all about her. Nothing mattered but that they were here together. Nothing could spoil this perfect moment.

Later they made coffee and sandwiches, and Wyn had to stop now and then to kiss her, to tell her how lovely she was. Much later, Janis fell asleep with lips soft and tremulous from his kisses.

She woke early next morning. The sun was already high in the heavens and the day was growing warm. She smiled

joyously when she thought of all the wild rapture she had known in Wyn's arms the night before. A mad, sweet magic was dancing, singing through her blood.

She got out of bed and dressed quickly in the linen suit she had worn up here the first day she had come, and which she had freshly laundered. She went into the long living room. A note lay on the table.

"Darling, I've gone down to the lake fishing," she read.

Her eyes were soft with tenderness. She put the note to her lips for a moment. Then she went out into the kitchen to make coffee.

Later, when she was dusting in the living room she heard a car on the drive. Her heart leaped up in sickening fright. But she didn't have time to get away.

A slim, blond girl in a sheer black dress came up the walk, followed by a man who looked dreadfully familiar to Janis. Cam Cameron, the man for whom she used to work, and whom she hated! What was he doing here?

She faced them, pale, wide-eyed. The blond girl fell back in astonishment at sight of her. "So you're Wyn's model! You're actually staying up here with him!" she cried shrilly.

"Yes, I've been staying here with Wyn," Janis faltered.

Cam sprang forward. "Why, it's Janis!"

His eyes narrowed as he took in every detail of her slim figure. Her lovely face had become slightly tanned these last two weeks. Somehow, she was different from the girl who sang in his night club, but more desirable than ever.

"Cam, who is this girl?" the blond girl cried. "Do you know her?"

Cam's eyes were suddenly crafty. "She isn't a model at all, Harriet. She is the girl the police think was in Greta Lane's apartment the night she was shot. She is wanted for information."

"Then what is she doing here?" the girl demanded.

Cam's smile was mirthless. "Hiding, probably."

Janis's heart went cold within her, but her eyes were defiant, proud. "Yes, I've been hiding here. So what? I suppose you'll turn me over to the police, now that you've found me."

"No," Cam said slowly. "No, I don't think we will."

He turned to the blond girl at his side. "Maybe I'd better introduce you two girls. Harriet, Miss James. Janis, Miss Kennedy, the girl Wyn Copeland, who seems to be your host, used to be engaged to."

There were murmured acknowledgments, but there was no friendliness in Harriet's eyes. Janis's heart shook as she looked at Harriet. So this was the girl Wyn had loved!

"Since Harriet and Wyn were once engaged," Cam went on smoothly, "naturally, when she heard that he had landed a contract with the Myers Cosmetic Co. for a series of advertising illustrations, she wanted to congratulate him. Harriet and I are old friends, so I came along. But we had no idea we'd find Wyn's model, who also happens to be Janis James, the girl the police have been looking for for days."

Janis's lips were white. "Do you mean that—that I was the model for Wyn's illustrations?"

"Don't be funny," Harriet sneered. "You know you posed for those illustrations. Wyn turned the first of them in yesterday, and I saw them early this morning. I recognized you as the model the minute I came into this room."

Janis didn't answer. A cold wind seemed to be blowing against her heart. Wyn had helped her only because he wanted her as a model. What a fool she had been!

She understood now why he wouldn't let her see his drawings. She remembered the incident of the radio being

out of commission. He had probably known who she was from the first, and disconnected it so that she wouldn't learn of any new developments and leave before his illustrations were finished.

She laughed, and her laugh made an unpleasant sound in the room. He had been using her while she had been dreaming of love in a cottage and yellow curtains blowing in a spring wind.

Cam came toward her, took her hand. "Why did you run away from me, Janis? I would have helped you. If you'll come back with me now I'll see you through this. I've always been crazy about you."

Janis's lips curled. "You've been crazy about a lot of girls," she reminded him.

"But I've never felt about a girl as I do about you, Janis," he said ardently. "I don't know why you came up here with Wyn Copeland, or where you met him. I don't care why you were in Greta's apartment that night. I'll take you away somewhere until this is cleared up, then I'll take you back, give you another chance with me——"

She pulled her hands away from him. "I don't want another chance, Cam," she broke in, her eyes hard and feverish. "I'm never going back to your place."

His eyes were suddenly hard, cruel. "I think you will," he said slowly. "Because if you don't, I'll tell the police where you are, and they'll find you before a day has gone by. Greta Lane is still in the hospital, sinking. If she dies, you'll be tried for murder. Everybody knew that you and Greta hated each other, and you wouldn't have a chance."

Janis felt cold with terror. She knew that what he said was true, but she had to keep her courage. "You can't scare me. I can prove my innocence."

He smiled craftily. "No, you can't. Because I'll swear I saw you go into Greta's apartment that night, and that a few moments later I heard a shot."

"You wouldn't dare!" she breathed.

"I'll dare anything to get you. I've always wanted you. If you'll come with me, I'll get you out of the country until this blows over, and I promise that Harriet will keep silent."

Janis faced him with wide haunted eyes, but before she could answer a quiet voice said behind them, "Janis isn't going with you."

They whirled and Wyn, grim-lipped, hard-eyed, stood in the doorway.

"How can you stop her, Copeland?" Cam demanded harshly.

Harriet threw herself against Wyn's broad chest as he advanced. "Oh, let them settle this between themselves, Wyn. I want to talk to you. I could hardly wait to see you. I've missed you so."

Wyn smiled tightly. "Have you, Harriet?"

"Oh, yes, Wyn!" Harriet said, her wide eyes on his tanned face. "When I knew that I would always miss you like that, I came back."

Wyn wasn't smiling now. "What does that mean, Harriet?"

"It means that I've broken my engagement to Jack Sommers," Harriet answered, low.

Janis felt faint as she looked at Harriet, slim, golden, clinging to Wyn's arm. She was a woman any man would desire. The waves of her gold hair peeped from under her smart black hat, and her skin was like snow. She was exquisite. Pain like a sharp-edged knife went through Janis's heart.

"I was dying to see you, Wyn. So as soon as I got back I came right up. Let's go somewhere alone where we can talk things over."

His lips were tight. "I'm afraid we haven't anything to talk over, Harriet."

The blond girl gasped unbelievably. "You're just trying to be cruel, to punish me."

"No, Harriet. I don't know why you broke your engagement to Jack Som-

mers. But you turned me down once, and you broke whatever there was between us. You're very lovely, and if I hadn't found out what real love is, I might still delude myself into thinking I loved you."

Harriet's eyes were venomous. "I guess you've fallen for this girl. But you won't get by with it. I'll go to the police myself!"

"It won't do you any good," Wyn said clearly. "Because Janis isn't guilty."

"What do you mean?" Cam cried.

"I mean simply that Greta Lane's assailant was found yesterday. He was one of Greta's discarded lovers. And the police aren't looking for Janis any more."

"How do I know this is true?" Cam sneered.

"It will be in the evening papers. This man comes from an influential family, and they are trying to keep the story down. But Janis's name will be cleared. Although Greta is still dangerously ill, her doctors said yesterday that she would recover, so the case will probably never get to the headlines." He turned to Cam. "That's about all, so get out!"

For a moment Cam hesitated. Then, as the young giant advanced toward him, with a muttered threat he turned and

left the room. Harriet followed with a last venomous look at Janis.

When they had gone, Wyn turned to Janis who faced him in cold defiance and scorn. She couldn't realize she had been cleared of the charge that had hung like a dark cloud over her head for days. She could think only that the man she loved had tricked her.

"Janis, let me explain about those illustrations," he began.

"No, I won't listen," she said furiously. "You could have told me that you were using me as a model. That was why you let me stay here. You probably knew who I was from the first."

"Yes," he told her coolly, "I did."

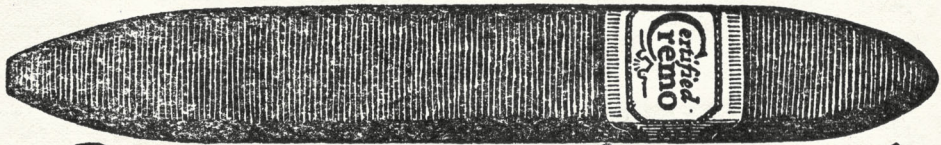
"And I thought you were different!" She laughed shrilly, and he said sharply, "Shut up, and listen just for a moment."

"I'll never listen to any man again," she cried furiously.

She started toward the door, but his arms suddenly closed so tightly about her that she couldn't move.

"Janis, you're going to listen to me," he said through clenched teeth.

His face was dark with anger. He tried to speak but seemed to find no words. So, with an air of desperation, he put his lips against hers so fiercely that it stopped her angry words. He kissed



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her again and again until she stopped trying to speak. She couldn't breathe or move. She could only lie helpless in his arms.

At last he raised his head and looked deeply into her eyes. "That," he said thickly, "tells about everything I've got to say. I love you! I've loved you from the first moment I picked you up in the road that day. What are you going to say about that?"

Janis's eyes were round with amazement.

"I—I don't know what——"

"Well, it's true," he broke in fiercely. "But I was afraid to let you see it. I didn't have any faith in women. I'd been hurt once, and I didn't want to get hurt again. But I couldn't let you get away from me.

"I knew who you were that night when you said Harriet had forgotten to give you a key and you cut your hand. I'd been listening to them broadcast your description all day. That night I didn't know what to do with you. I knew you were innocent and I knew I had to help you.

"I put the radio out of commission so that you wouldn't worry. When those men from the office came up next morning, they saw the sketches I'd made of you from memory that night before, when I couldn't get you off my mind. They were enthusiastic about them, and thought they were just the thing for their new illustrations.

"I had to have that contract so that I could ask you to marry me. I could

keep you here until this Greta Lane case was cleared up, and use you as my model at the same time——"

"But Harriet—— You—you loved her. You could have made up with her to-day."

"I've never loved any one but you," he said fiercely. "I let Harriet go without even a struggle, but the whole world couldn't take you away from me," he cried.

His arms tightened about her. "Now—now I can ask you to marry me, Janis!"

Janis's breath caught in her throat. This all seemed like a dream. But miraculously, the ice around her heart had melted. She felt young and alive again.

"Janis, answer me," Wyn commanded, his voice deep and urgent. "Look up so that I can see what my answer is going to be."

She looked up, young love deep and shining in her amber eyes. Young lips, soft and tremulous with promise, lifted to his.

"I love you, Wyn," she murmured, as soft arms went about his neck. "Is that answer enough?"

"Oh, Janis," he said, drawing her close, his voice shaken. "We—we can be married to-day, and I'll take you away on a honeymoon anywhere you want to go. How would you like that?"

"A honeymoon in heaven! What girl wouldn't?" she cried, as he proved his love again in the wild ardor of his lips.



LIGHT

THERE is no valleyed land, no moonless night
Where friendship's candle may not lend its light;
But, oh, the splendor of the hilltop's arc
Where love's white beacon burns away the dark!

QUEENA DAVISON MILLER.



Passionate Desire

By Edna E. Davies

A SERIAL—Part IV.

CHAPTER VII.

VANINE had always hated uncertainty, indecision. It was utterly foreign to her temperament.

Surely there were things to do, places to go, interests in which to become absorbed, in which to drown this emptiness, this loneliness! Surely she was not so weak that her entire existence was dependent upon the whims of one

man! She, who had always prided herself upon her self-sufficiency!

Yet despite it all there was that ache, intolerable almost! That place which could not be filled. That sense of loss, of frustration, or failure! That realization of incompleteness.

She found herself thinking of Dolcis. Had Raif taken Dolcis with him? But Dolcis would not have gone with him, if she knew that he was once again a poor man.

He would not want her, either, while he was beginning at the bottom, again. But it was for her that he was working, for her that he was rebuilding his life.

It had always been Dolcis. It would always be Dolcis.

Dolcis and Raif! Raif and Dolcis!

She would never make him happy. But he would never know that. Men never did. They were fools. A pretty figure, languishing glances, all the tricks of the trade of the professional vamp cloaked in the pseudo-respectability cast

by the condition of a wedding ring which had to be thrown in, always won.

Which is the worse—the woman who would give, in love, without the respectability of marriage, or the woman who would sell herself, without love, for power, pride, position, or that others might envy her, but who demanded the wedding ring to “sanctify her spiritual immorality”?

Vanine knew that she would not have demanded marriage, of Raif, had she been sure of his love for her and hers for him. Dolcis Cator would demand marriage, of course, for there were some conventions which she never flouted. But she would not give fidelity with it.

And Raif was the sort of man who would demand, and who needed, fidelity in his mate.

In a moment of singular clear-sightedness, Vanine knew, without conceit, that she could give Raif the greatest thing which any girl has to give to any man; perhaps the greatest of all the gifts which life has to offer to man. Just as she knew that Dolcis Cator's nature was essentially tawdry, lacking in depth, mercenary, and shallow. Yet so consummate an actress was Dolcis that if she were to marry Raif he would probably go through life without ever realizing that she had nothing to give him, unless some accident revealed the truth to him. It was equally in the cards that with Vanine he could go through his whole life without ever discovering how much she had to give him, for her nature, as is the case with most people who feel deeply, was not demonstrative.

A tiny ache of regret was in Vanine's heart now, and would remain there, growing more intense perhaps as the years passed.

The regret that she had not been able to throw off that shyness, that instinctive inhibition, on the one occasion when she might have revealed the depth of her affection for him!

She had tried so hard to respond, to

be more than a passive agent, during that never-to-be-forgotten period of early-morning hours. Had she succeeded, she might have held him. He might never have gone.

But she had not succeeded. Unsure of the reality of his feeling for her, she had been unable to reveal to him the depths of her feeling for him. Had she been sure he loved her, and that the emotion which drove him was not merely temporal, then the barriers might have been broken down.

But she was not sure, and so the moment had passed. And she would regret it all her life.

“Never give!” She had been right, from the start, in making herself difficult to win! “But when you do give, make the gift worth the winning!” And, there, she had failed.

Better, far better, to have gone on giving nothing at all than to have given with reservations, as she had done.

Vanine uttered a sharp, stifled sigh. Her eyes again became aware of the world outside; of the sunshine, now gradually deepening into the shadow of dusk; of the moving people; the cars speeding silently up the road.

Life went on and had to be lived. Hearts did not break! Things had to be done, decisions made, one could not throw in one's hand. It was not in one's nature to do that, if one was a fighter at all, if one belonged to the modern creed.

Then, so strange are the workings of fate, and so small, her attention was caught momentarily by a crimson neon sign over a movie theater farther up the street, announcing the title of the current attraction. One word stood out in larger letters than the rest.

—PARIS—

Quite suddenly, Vanine realized that she was a woman of means.

She determined, in that instant, to go

to Paris. Perhaps travel, a new world, new scenes, would help her to find stability and decision again.

There was nothing to keep her here, now. She would engage passage immediately.

Two things happened, almost simultaneously, which no amount of forethought on Vanine's part could have foreseen; which could only have occurred in real life, where it is the unexpected which invariably happens.

Yet, in a way, both were the logical outcome of the situation.

First, Raif Steel wrote, and his letter was delivered at Betty Harris's apartment half an hour before Vanine left it on her way to the pier.

It was quite a long letter. She read it, sitting on the arm of a chair, dressed, her suitcases piled around her.

Nowhere in it was a word of sentiment, nor any reference to the gift he had made her.

He told her that he had settled down in his new job in London, and that there were big things ahead of him. He also told her that he had seen Dolcis Cator, and that they had spent the evening together. He hoped she was finding her new-found affluence to her liking. He desired to be "remembered to Roy Trent," whom he evidently assumed to be still taking her out. He closed with a few perfunctory words.

Vanine folded the letter carefully, after she had read it, and thrust it into her hand bag. She would want to take it out, and read it again, in the near future. Try to read between the lines.

The warmth in her heart which was inspired by the fact that he should have written to her at all was exactly counterbalanced by the fact that he had told her that Dolcis was with him.

She did not know whether the letter was meant to indicate that the cut was finally complete—hence his reference to Dolcis—or whether it was meant to indicate that it was not complete. Else why should he have written at all, unless it was sheer conventional courtesy?

It was dusk when she got aboard the Channel boat. Lights burned and blazed in every part of the ship. The stewards were walking among the passengers on deck announcing that dinner was about to be served.

Vanine realized that she was hungry—a

state of affairs which she had not realized until this moment, in the excitement of the journey and the emotional chaos engendered in her by the receipt of Raif's unexpected letter.

Vanine discovered that the layer of sophistication which had cloaked her for so many years, since she had to earn her own living, was thinner than she had realized.

THE STORY SO FAR:

Vanine Gray, department store cashier, is in love with Raif Steel who has inherited Snellings' store. Through bad management, the store fails and is bought by Schwartz & Kline. Vanine prevents Raif from killing himself and marries him. She becomes quite friendly with Aaron Schwartz and gets Raif a job in the store. He hears of her friendship with Schwartz and accuses her of being unfaithful. When he realizes he is wrong he tells her he is not going to be a burden to her any longer and leaves. Alone, Vanine opens a gown shop, but fails due to Schwartz. The day before the shop closes, Raif comes to see her. With the financial help of Roy Trent, a friend of Vanine's, the shop is saved and Raif soon turns it into a successful business. They are at a road house celebrating their success when Raif meets Dolcis Cator, whom he loves but who threw him over when the store failed. They continue the party at Vanine's apartment and, after the others leave, Raif spends the night with his wife. He and Vanine finally decide to split up and the business is sold. Raif disappears and Vanine, heartbroken, realizes that she has enough money to do whatever she wants to.

She felt, to tell the truth, like an excited schoolgirl on her first vacation. It was her first vacation, if it came to that, or, at any rate, the first on which she had been able to travel as a person of any importance.

It gave her an extra thrill when a white-coated steward met her at the foot of the dining salon, and ushered her deferentially to a vacant seat.

She unrolled the napkin, and then looked, interestedly, around her.

The salon was fairly full, for the ship carried a full complement of passengers. Stewards were moving busily to and fro among the tables. A buzz of conversation, interspersed with occasional bursts of laughter, filled the air.

Through it all, the deep siren of the vessel sounded three times, the sound of it stilling, for a moment, even the noise in the salon.

Almost immediately, a distinct vibration made itself perceptible.

A woman at a table just behind Vanine's giggled nervously.

"We're moving. I hope there's no fog. A Channel crossing is so bad if it's foggy."

A male voice answered her, reassuringly. Something in the timbre of that voice caught Vanine's attention. Surely she knew that voice!

She turned around in her chair.

The woman who had spoken was fat, fifty, and bleached. Her pudgy hands were laden with rings that glimmered in the light.

The man who had answered her remark—he sat opposite to her, and it was not obvious whether they were traveling together or whether they were merely chance acquaintances of the dining table—was Roy Trent.

The recognition was mutual and instantaneous.

Vanine was the first to speak.

"What on earth are you doing here?" she asked.

Roy Trent grinned. "Running away

from you," he answered. "At least, that was the purpose of my taking this trip."

"We seem," said Vanine, "to be running in the same direction."

Roy gestured to a passing steward.

"Can you put this lady and myself at the same table, steward? We are old friends!"

"Certainly, sir," answered the man.

Vanine caught the scandalized, disgusted expression in the face of the kittenish lady of the rings and the peroxide hair, who thus saw herself deprived of what she must have hoped would be a piquant "companion de voyage."

Quite suddenly; she wanted to laugh.

"Roy," she said, for his ear alone, as he took the vacant chair at her table, "who is your lady friend? I'm quite sure she thinks you've just picked me up."

But Roy refused to be flippant.

"I am hoping I have at last," he said, "since it is evident that Steel is not with you. Or is he?"

His eyes held hers, and his face seemed, suddenly, drawn.

The thrill vanished. In its stead came a new sensation, one of danger, of irrevocability. His gaze compelled an answer.

"No! He isn't with me," said Vanine and wished instantly, as she saw the look in his eyes, that she had not told him.

It was dark on the boat deck. Vanine's hand was on her hat. Roy wore a heavy coat. He was hatless.

He broke a long silence.

"So we are both going to Paris! Strange coincidence. No, not coincidence! Fate! I was running away from you, and you, running away from yourself, run right into my arms."

She was silent for a moment. Was that true? Was she running away from herself, was that the explanation of the seething, unsettled urge which drove her?

The pale light of the stars showed his

face whitely in the gloom. He was watching her. She felt, rather than saw, the old glimmer of mockery. She knew, before it happened, what he would do.

His arms came out, and went around her, tentatively, doubtfully. She neither surrendered, nor moved away.

"Well?" said Roy, quietly.

"I don't know," whispered Vanine.



Vanine folded Raif's letter and thrust it into her hand bag. Nowhere in it was a word of sentiment, nor any reference to the gift he had made her. Had he written merely to tell her that Dolcis was with him?—she wondered.

He burst out explosively:

"You're the most difficult girl I have ever met."

Then, she had to laugh; a low gurgle of genuine amusement.

"Raif used to think that, too," she said.

The effect of her words was not what she had expected. He released her abruptly. "Damn Raif! Can't we keep him out of this?"

She studied him with some interest, now. "Hardly," she murmured. "He is still my husband, you know."

"Then why isn't he with you?"

She turned her gaze on the stars.

"Some day, perhaps, I'll tell you that. And yet, perhaps I won't."

"Vanine, are you made of ice?"

"Oh, no! I wish I were. Far from it, Roy! That's the trouble, if you but knew it. You see, if I were, it would not matter to me what man kissed me or if none did at all."

"You're still in love with him, then?"

"I just don't know."

He made an impatient movement, checked it, and turned on his heel. There came the scrape and flare of a match. His lean-jawed face sprang into prominence as the flame in his cupped hand illumined it. Then darkness, again.

"Is there any chance for me at all, Vanine?"

Now, she answered him honestly.

"I can't answer that, Roy. That's the whole thing."

"If you had met me first——"

"Yes. If I had met you first I should probably have cared for you, my dear. That's the pity of it."

He changed the subject.

"Know any one in Paris? Any friends there, I mean?"

"Not a soul."

"Been there before?"

Again she laughed, that gurgle of sound which was so attractive to his ears.

"Do you realize that I have been a working girl all my life till now? Where

do you think I got the money to go to Paris?"

"Then you'll need an escort to show you about." He spoke confidently. "We'll have some good times, together."

She held out her gloved hand. He took it in a firm grip.

"That's a bargain, Roy. Provided you don't expect too much."

"I'll take my chances on that." He hesitated for a second, and then added, in a deeper and lower voice: "Provided you will take yours."

Her face colored a little in the darkness, but she did not answer that.

A steady, green light showed in the distance over the port bow. Behind it, a white light flamed intermittently. The speed of the vessel had slackened. Behind the green harbor light, a faint radiance gradually grew from the darkness, a radiance which resolved itself into the lights of a town.

Side by side, they watched it. Roy broke the silence, first. He raised an arm.

"France," he said, quietly. "And a new world! A new life for both of us. In less than half an hour, now, we shall be on the train."

Vanine winced. Raif had said that, too. "A new life."

It was not as easy as that. The old life clung. The memories would not be forgotten. It was all very well, this modern creed of independence, of freedom. But you were not free. You were shackled by yourself, by your own weaknesses, and your own desires.

Roy made an abrupt movement.

"If you look like that, Vanine, I shall kiss you."

She answered him hurriedly.

"Very well, then. I won't look like that! Come on! We had better see about getting our things together. Are you going to see me safely through the customs, Roy?"

He took her arm and led her back onto the lighted main deck.

"I would see you a lot farther than that, if you would let me. Through life itself, in fact."

Vanine stopped, as a strange thought flashed into her mind. She looked very frankly into his face.

"Meaning marriage, Roy?"

He grinned at her crookedly.

"It will probably surprise you when I tell you that you are the first girl I have ever said this to, but, yes, marriage."

"Marriage is a terrible risk, you know."

"You wouldn't accept anything less!"

"How did you know that?"

"I have always known that. Raif Steel wouldn't have married you, otherwise."

She bit her lip, and a spasm of pain shot through her. How true that was; how much more true than he realized.

"I wonder if a girl is always wise to stand out for marriage," she whispered, speaking more to herself than to him. Then, she came down to earth. "Come, Roy, we can't stand philosophizing here."

"If you should decide that it isn't wise, you'll let me know, won't you?"

She looked at him, rather curiously.

"Roy! Does marriage—all right, love, then—mean nothing more to you than that?"

"Why should it? Life is short. Beautiful women are two-a-penny. But the sort the thrill would last with are not so common."

"You think it would last, with me?"

"I think that the man who once held you in his arms would be drunk for the remainder of his life."

At that, she cried out, sharply.

"Roy, I don't want to attract men, that way."

He laughed at her.

"You silly little idiot, how else do you expect to attract them, in the first

place? Maybe there is more to it than that afterward. I can't say. I've never experienced it, so I don't know. You ought to know more about that than I do. You're married, and I'm not."

She seemed to have lost all her anchors. The beliefs and faiths which had buoyed her through life, up to now, had all proved a mirage. She felt that she could be sure of nothing, that right and wrong were so inextricably mingled that it was impossible to know which was which. In that mood, she answered him, and her cheeks were faintly colored, her eyes confused, misted, and yet with a light in them.

"Perhaps, before we leave Paris, we'll both know, Roy."

Did she mean that to be a promise? Perhaps neither of them knew that.

Not far away from them was the cosmopolitan Rue de Rivoli, home of tourists, and of hotels which cater to tourists.

Within a stone's throw, the Gardens of the Tuilleries, the Louvre, and, the other side of the river, which flowed beneath them in a somber ribbon, the noisy Place from which mounts the Boule-Miche, with all its traditions and its shams.

Vanine and Roy Trent stood on the footway of the Pont Neuf, sister bridge to the Pont des Arts, and with elbows resting on the parapet looked down at the waters of the Seine as they flowed noiselessly seaward.

"So flows life," whispered Vanine, softly.

She wore evening dress, for they had been to a cabaret in the Rue Pigale, and had walked homeward, deliberately deviating so as to pass through the Quartier Latin, and take coffee in the famous café in the square, in the early hours of the morning.

"Except," answered Roy, "that the

river knows where it is going, whereas you and I do not."

She half turned her head, and gazed at him. Evening clothes suited him, his height, slenderness, and sophistication. It came to her, then, that many men would have been less patient.

And he looked back at her. At the slenderness of neck and throat; the soft curve of her low-necked gown, the supple hips and slim, almost boyish legs against which the skirt of the gown fell in silhouetting proximity.

A tiny pulse was beating in his temple.

An occasional taxi crossed the bridge, behind them, that was all. They might have had this corner of the world to themselves. The booksellers of the southern embankment had long ago packed their boxes and gone home, leaving the stonework bare in its inherent nobility and peace.

His voice was suddenly husky.

"Vanine!"

She straightened, then, and withstood the force of his eyes which had become suddenly hungry. He put a hand on her arm, and his fingers burned through her skin.

"Vanine! I saw a perfect apartment, for rent, furnished, this afternoon, not a stone's throw from the Rue de la Paix. I looked at it. It had been furnished by a honeymoon couple. If you say the word, it's ours!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A glistening white motor cruiser was gliding gently to its mooring. A girl stood at the wheel, and a youth in flannels was standing on the peak, boat hook in hand.

Subconsciously, Vanine noticed these things. The moon was full, and the scene was almost as light as though it had been daytime.

The river, the trees, that indescribable air of peace and tranquillity which she

was beginning to know to be typical of this corner of Paris!

If she said the word—— Her being had become immobile, stilled, poised, as it were, upon the brink of—what?

Was it loneliness which was catching her by the throat now? Or was it love for the man by her side? Was it, perhaps, just the atmosphere of Paris?

They lived by a different code, here, of course. More materialistic, perhaps. Certainly freer in their relationships. She had already perceived one characteristic difference between the relationship of the sexes in Paris.

Whereas in the Anglo-Saxon countries a woman still believed that it was for the man to pursue, here, among the Latins, the girls were different. They did not wait for the male to entertain them. They took the initiative, frankly and unashamedly. They did not merely suffer themselves to be loved, they loved!

The mission of the Anglo-Saxon woman was to experience pleasure at the hands of her menfolks. Here, in Paris, the woman did not submit to caresses, tamely and passively. They chose their mate, and made love to him; hardily and with aggression.

Strange thoughts passed through Vanine's mind. The women of her own country thought themselves free. They claimed to have established equality with their menfolks. Yet in the one thing which mattered to a woman, they had no equality. They were not equals in love. But the French women were. They set about a love affair with an aggression and frankness, when they had chosen their mate, which was almost frightening.

"What about it, Vanine?"

Roy's shoulder was against hers, now. Had she been a Parisienne she would have been able to meet him on equal terms. But she was not.

She turned her head and looked up into his face, again.

"Do you really want me as much as

all that, Roy? You must realize that I don't care for you the way you care for me. Or as much as you care for me, shall we say."

But even as she spoke she knew that that would not worry him. Her ability to make love to him was not in question, only her willingness to consent to his love-making.

A Frenchman, now, would have had no use for mere passive acceptance. But it would satisfy Roy.

Suddenly, she realized that her stay in Paris had changed her. She might be able to suffer Roy's caresses, even to extract some balm for her loneliness from them. But she could never give him affection in return, and she had absorbed sufficient of the Latin atmosphere to have come to regard that as essential.

She had suffered enough from inhibitions, already. Never again. The passive attitude of the Anglo-Saxon woman toward things of the physical might be a tradition, but it did not make for a free and happy married life.

She put up a hand.

"Roy, I——"

But Roy Trent thought his moment had come. He caught her by the shoulders and crushed her to him. He bent back her head, fastened his lips on the white curve of her throat, and then on her lips.

Vanine did not struggle. A sudden, strange sickness had seized her. She uttered a strangled moan. Startled by her immobility, he released her, and she slid sidewise, in a dead faint, against him. If his arms had not been holding her she would have collapsed.

"Taxi, monsieur?" said the driver of a prowling cab, drawing in to the curb. "Madame is ill?"

He sprang from his seat and, together, they lifted Vanine into the back.

The room was full of sunshine. On the doctor's desk was a great, brown

bowl of crimson roses. The fragrance from them filled the atmosphere.

The man was smiling at her, and toying with his pince-nez; tapping them lightly on the blotting pad before him.

"Your indisposition, madame, was nothing very unusual. Ladies in your—er—delicate state of health are quite liable to have sickness and fainting attacks, at first."

So Vanine discovered that she was about to become the mother of Raif Steel's child.

Later, in her sitting room, at her hotel, the sun still filling the atmosphere around her with that pleasant sense of well-being and contentment which only sunshine can bring, she tried to think.

This changed everything, of course!

After leaving the doctor's she had met Roy, by appointment. They had gone to the Hermitage for tea and danced. She had promised to dine with him, this evening. He wanted to take her to Chez Langer, in the Champs Elysées. She had never been there, yet. She had come back to her hotel to change. He was to pick her up at seven; it was nearly six thirty, now.

While they were dancing, this afternoon, she had told him.

"Roy, I have been thinking about what you asked, last night. I thought, at first, that I might have said 'yes.' You see, I've been lonely. And a girl needs affection. I thought, perhaps, that I liked you enough. There was something about that apartment idea which appealed to my worst instincts, I suppose. I'm coming to the conclusion that there are queer streaks in my nature, streaks I have not been conscious of until recently. I don't think I am really respectable at heart. There was something infinitely attractive about sharing that apartment with you and— and forgetting everything but a woman's need to be loved.

"But I have been thinking. Some—



Vanine did not struggle as Roy crushed her to him. A sudden, strange sickness had seized her. She uttered a strangled moan, then fainted against him. Roy hailed a passing cab.

thing has happened, too, which changes everything. It's no use, Roy. I can't do it. I thought I could. I deliberately

gave myself the opportunity of seeing if our friendship would develop naturally into something more. But it hasn't



worked out that way. You are not the right man, Roy."

He stared at her grimly.

"Does there have to be a right man?"

"With me, I'm afraid the answer is 'yes.'"

He faced the matter brutally. "I suppose it was your fainting last night. You're going to have his child, aren't you?"

A tiny flame of resentment at the crudity of the question lighted in her heart, but she controlled it.

"Yes, Roy. But I had made my decision before then. I was just going to tell you when you took matters into your own hands and kissed me. And, Roy, if I had had any doubts before you did that

they would have disappeared when you did. You see, my dear, your kiss left me quite cold. And that's final, isn't it, if you know anything about women at all?"

He looked rather incredulous.

"You really mean that?"

"Every word, Roy. As soon as you kissed me I knew it was hopeless." She laughed a little, perhaps a little hysterically. "It just didn't click, Roy, and I couldn't live with a man whose kisses left me flat, now could I?"

He began to laugh, and as she heard the sound she knew that the episode was over. Something beyond the powers of both of them had killed it dead. That which had hovered between them was gone as though it had never been.

"You're a strange child," he told her. "Come, let's dance. You're not backing out of the date for this evening, I hope?"

"Do I need to?" she retaliated. "I'd like to come."

"Need to? Rats!"

So that was over and another chapter closed! It seemed there were some things one could not learn except by experience, and that "sophistication" might cover a multitude of things; inexperience, for instance.

Curious! A year ago she had thought herself completely mistress of herself. Now—well, wasn't the truth of it that in those days there had been so little in her that it had been easy to be mistress of it? Whereas now—

Now, there were depths which could not be plumbed; which had to be sailed on, somehow.

Vanine had discovered a great truth; which is that one cannot estimate life as a balance sheet of liabilities and assets, and that the process of calculation has no place in human relationships.

Just precisely why one man, among all others, should matter so much to one's contentment it was not possible to know. But that it could be so, was certain. Though neither rhyme nor reason would give an explanation of the phenomenon!

One came up against something one could not control, and one had to accept it. Until one did, and ceased to calculate and analyze, the deep river of life would not flow.

She had half an hour, before Roy would come for her!

She drew paper and pen toward her and commenced to write.

DEAR RAIF:

I have just made a discovery. I do not know how you will feel about it. Personally, it has brought to a head a good many things which I think I was dimly beginning to understand, even before I knew. I do not know if I can explain. I have been adopting a wrong attitude toward our marriage, and I can see it, now. What I might term the "single girl" attitude. I cannot explain it any

better. I've been expecting a condition to come into existence, between us which can never come into existence except between husband and wife. If I had adopted the wife attitude toward our marriage, things might have been very different.

This is the last time I shall ever try to analyze emotions, Raif. In future I shall just accept them. I think that is life, if we only knew it.

I am not asking you to give it another try, if you feel that you cannot. But I love you, Raif, and there is going to be a baby.

She signed it, simply, "Vanine."

As she sealed and stamped the letter, the telephone bell rang. She went to it. A voice told her that, "Monsieur Trent is waiting."

"Tell him I will be down in a few minutes," she answered.

CHAPTER IX.

In the days that followed, Vanine worked herself up into a vein of emotional ecstasy.

It was as though, having dammed up and controlled her weaknesses for so long, now that she had finally surrendered to them, the surrender had to be absolute. Or, like the artist who, having learned the rules and, finally, reached the stage of rebelling against all rules, must cover his canvas with riotous color.

She had surrendered to the forces within her, to the extent of questioning them no longer but accepting them as an integral part of the structure which is human existence. It had come home to her, with almost terrifying suddenness, that conventions are so much bugaboo. She had cast them overboard now, not in the sense that the modern girl rebels against all conventions merely for the sake of rebelling, and asserting her independence. She rebelled against them because they conflicted with her basic needs, and, also, perhaps, because she had understood that they only exist as a guidance and a protection to the inexperienced, whereas she had, herself, become infinitely experienced, at last.

There was a much greater guardian on sentry duty in her soul now than the mere regard of conventions; a guardian who was an essential part of her nature.

She danced, went to restaurants and theaters, with Roy Trent, and he had never known her more light-hearted. Her inhibitions had gone, and in their place had come a gorgeous, joyous poise. She no longer needed to deny herself for fear of where indulgence might lead her in the ultimate, for her sense of values had become established. She was completely mistress of herself.

At one and the same time she had become infinitely more approachable, infinitely more human, and infinitely more remote. She even, demonstratively, gave Roy affection; the affection a mother might have given a boy. They flirted, a little. But she had passed forever beyond his reach, and, ruefully, Roy Trent recognized that fact. She even managed to laugh at him, and that was the final straw.

It was not surprising, then, that when he discovered the girl he had marked as his prey to have become infinitely wiser and more competent at gauging the potentialities of life than he was himself, Roy Trent should decide that Paris was no longer a suitable climate in which to sport himself.

Roy Trent was not particularly partial to wise women. They made him feel young and foolish, and he was not the type of man to enjoy that sensation.

Vanine, the new Vanine, pricked his conceit. He went back to London, in search of pastures new.

Vanine, alone in Paris, spent her time savoring to the full the new fragrances, the new riot of color to which her new attitude toward life had made her receptive.

She lunched in the cafés, dined in them, took afternoon trips by river steamer, and walked in the evenings in the Bois; where Parisian lovers wander among the trees, shamelessly and

piquantly arm in arm and cheek to cheek. She browsed along the embankment, sampling the treasures of literature displayed by the itinerant booksellers, and with every passing hour of every passing day her being unfolded and became more receptive to the deeper things of existence.

Growth, in a woman, is like that. A matter of days, once it sets in. Most women never grow up at all, only those whom some crisis sets in the pathway to reality!

And each morning she waited for the letter from Raif.

She built up in her imagination the scene at their meeting. She planned what they would do, that first night when, as she was so sure he would, he arrived in Paris. She planned, too, what they would do afterward.

Perhaps they would take that apartment which Roy Trent had seen, or one just like it.

He was sure to come. He must come!

But when nearly two weeks had elapsed without a sign either of him or from him, she remembered Dolcis Cator.

Surely he did not intend to ignore the letter she had written him. He couldn't be heedless of the fact that he was going to become a father.

Not that! Not that!

She began to haunt the more exotic of the night clubs in search of movement and gayety to keep her mind from brooding. She made friends with an American couple who were honeymooning in Paris and, through them, with others. Gaston Lemaarton, gigolo at the Chez-Bleu, fitted into her scheme of things, because he was sufficiently mercenary to appreciate the tips she gave him, and sufficiently sensible to know his limitations, and confine himself to them. He found Vanine a more pleasant mistress than some fat and elderly flapper would have been, even though the pickings might have been greater.

Gaston had a car, in which they were

in the habit of taking tours, in the glorious afternoon sunshine.

He took her to Conflans, and they went on the river. To Versailles! He showed her much of the real life of Paris which she, a foreigner, would otherwise never have known. He persuaded her to change her hotel, and move to a quiet, typically French family hotel just at the back of the Gare du Nord, where she, alone of all the guests, was not French.

He wanted to motor her out to Rouen, to see the famous old buildings and the equally famous "street of the clock." But there she drew the line, for it would have meant not returning the same day.

It was when they were returning from a trip to St. Honore, after an afternoon on the river, that the inevitable happened.

Two months had elapsed, and she had not heard a word from Raif in reply to her letter. She had written him once and pride prevented her from writing a second time. If he could ignore the news she had given him, then it was impossible that she should humiliate herself by pleading.

She knew the worst, now! No chance of blinding herself to it any longer. Raif did not want her. He did not want his own unborn child, either! He preferred Dolcis Cator; perhaps, by now, they were living together, waiting for him to get his freedom.

Though she had heard nothing about any moves toward a divorce, and, surely, if he intended to divorce her she must have heard, by now.

Maybe it was not Dolcis, but some other girl.

Bitterness had been growing for a long time, and bitterness, combined with a flooding emotion, mingled with a terrible desire for a real fullness of life, is a dangerous thing for a girl to nurse in her soul.

Gaston was not a fool, else he would not have been the successful gigolo that

he was. He had been aware of this rising tide behind the dam of self-repression, in Vanine, for some time. He did not know the reason for it—some other man, he guessed, cynically—but that it could be turned to his advantage was obvious.

Lonely women were his stock in trade. The more difficult they were to begin with the more complete their surrender in the long run, was his creed.

In his own way, too, he had learned to care for this deep-eyed, sensitive creature who was so slight that it was sometimes difficult to realize that she was a woman and no longer a child, until a man looked into her eyes and read, there, many things which he, in his wisdom, could interpret even though she herself was unaware that they existed.

On the way back from St. Honore she lay quietly back beside him. Now and then he would turn his head and study her.

The mouth was slightly pouting, the eyes unfathomable. Her breast rose and fell, softly, and there was a tense, and yet relaxed, immobility about her which he knew to be symptomatic.

He commenced to talk, quietly, while he drove.

"You are not the sort of woman to go through life without a lover."

Vanine glanced at him.

"I have a husband."

He laughed.

"A poor sort of husband, if you ask me."

"It is your business to make love to lonely women, of course. You do it quite well!"

"Every woman has to have her cardboard lover," he answered, cynically. "There is no affection in the matter, of course; merely a mutual appreciation of charm; an exchange of thrills, as you would say."

She pondered the remark. They covered some distance in silence.

"There are certain needs which a

woman knows, and which cannot go without satisfaction, if her life is to be other than a dried-up rind," he added, as she did not speak. "That is natural, *non?*"

She was very still, now, conscious to the depths of her of the truth of his statement. Conscious, too, of that strange mixture of emotions within her, of the urge on the one hand and the inhibition on the other. Again she was experiencing the realization that she was not, essentially, what one would call a "good" woman; for she could derive a pleasure from dwelling upon things which her intelligence told her she was too good for.

And Raif did not care! After all, what did anything matter, in the face of that? She could never love another man. But was she to be "a dried-up rind," because Raif did not want her?

"You think, then, that love is not necessary in an *affaire*?" she asked.

Gaston smiled, and showed a glimmer of white teeth.

"Chérie, love, as you call it, would be fatal in an *affaire*. It would spoil everything. To enjoy life—that is one thing. But to be serious—that is another. *Mais non!* Did I love you, I could not speak as I do, now. It is only because I do not love you that I can tell you these things. For instance—that you have lips which were made for a man to kiss; a throat which Circe would have envied. *Ma foi!* When I think of these fat old ladies who think their destiny is to be to some one a Pompadour, and look at you, whom the good Creator made especially for the delectation of man, I could weep. Lips made for kissing, and which no man kisses. Arms made for holding a man, and in whose embrace no man forgets his cares. Eyes, heart, a soul, in the depths of which a man could lose his senses, a delicacy of artistic susceptibility which would render even the most passing of experiences a thrill never to be

forgotten, and all wasting to the winds. *Sacré*, Vanine, do you mean to tell me that you never want me to make love to you?"

She had to laugh, then, if only to hide the confusion of her senses into which his words had thrown her.

"Often, my dear Gaston," she admitted. "I should imagine you would do it beautifully. In fact, I should think you would be able to extract the last atom of sensation from any—experience, did you call it?"

He shrugged.

"With the fat old ladies I usually dance with, it is difficult. But with you—your own common sense ought to tell you that."

Vanine had gone a little white.

"It does," she whispered.

He slowed down the car, and watched her, narrowly.

"An hour, snatched from life, and then, *pouff!* It is gone. For what else were we made? Why not be brave and take the plunge! You must do it some day, why not now? It is a part of every woman's education. Why fight it?"

The bitterness, the loneliness, and the hunger welled up in her body like a flood. What had she to lose now? Could Gaston satisfy the ache in her heart?

"If I let you kiss me, Gaston, should I be committed?" she asked, slowly.

"You shall be committed to nothing which you do not wish," he answered.

She closed her eyes and leaned her head back against his shoulder.

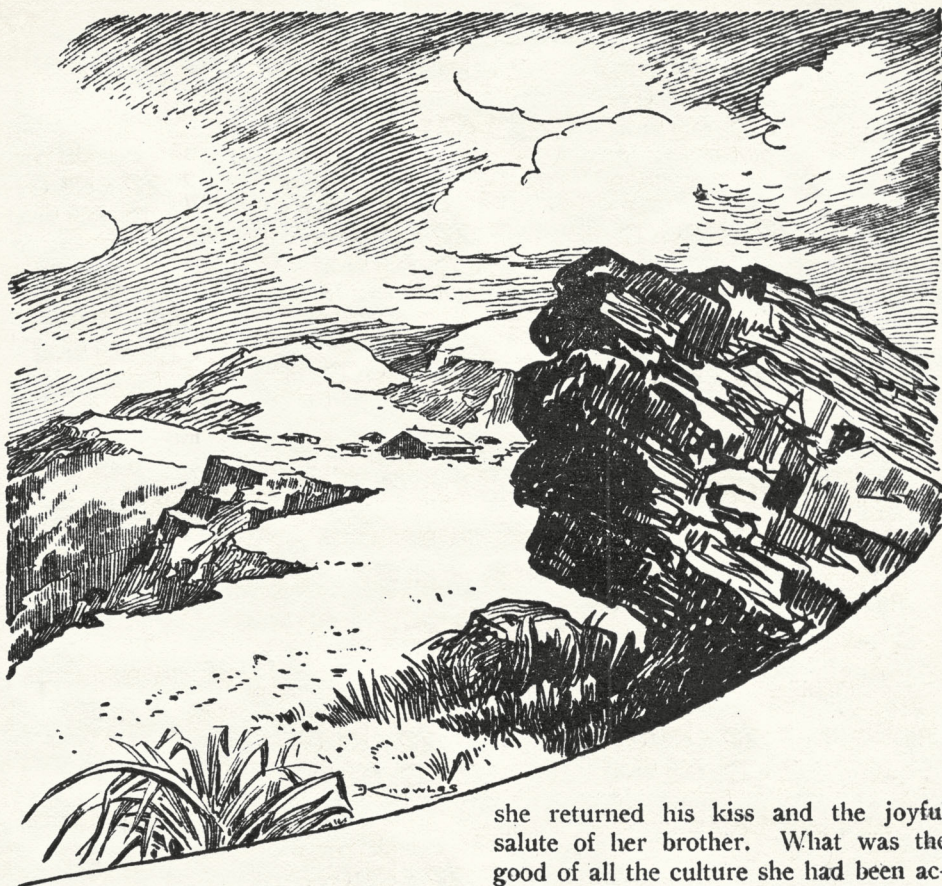
"I'm so tired of being alone," she whispered.

Gaston Lemaarton drew the car quietly to a standstill, down a narrow side road, beneath a screen of trees. He slipped one arm behind her shoulders and lifted her against him. Then, he bent his dark head and kissed her, very expertly, on her half-parted lips.



Two In Love

By Elizabeth Booth



JANEY MACANDREW had driven all night over lonely Texas roads just so that she could park her travel-stained roadster, at breakfast time, by the side of a dobe ranch house and call exultantly, "Make way for MacAndrews!"

It was an old cry of the clan. Family history said that there had been a time when Scottish kings stepped aside at the shout, "Make way for MacAndrews." Certainly, Janey's cry brought results. She found herself promptly being bear-hugged to the point of suffocation by two tall, lean men. "Janey!"

There was almost moisture in grizzled Pop MacAndrew's eyes. "It's been a long time, girl. Two years."

Two years wasted, Janey thought, as

she returned his kiss and the joyful salute of her brother. What was the good of all the culture she had been acquiring for two years in the East and in Europe, when all that seemed to matter, somehow, was this old dobe house, dad and her brother? "Gee, I'm glad to be home."

The older MacAndrew smiled in mock reproof. "I spent a lot of money educatin' the 'gees' out of you, young lady."

Janey grinned—a grin that began at her wide red mouth, crinkled her nose, twinkled in eyes as blue as Texas blue-bonnets, and seemed to dance in her golden hair. "Don't you know you can't educate a Western gal like me, dad? Where's breakfast?"

The hours flew by, with work on the Triangle T nearly at a standstill, while Janey and her family caught up with each other's news. It was noon before Janey thought of asking, "Say, pop,

where's this handsome foreman you've been writing me about?"

Mr. MacAndrew, known affectionately the range over as "pop," looked sheepish. "He's gone, Janey. Left couple of weeks ago. I just about offered him the dog-gone ranch to stay, but he wouldn't."

Janey's eyes gleamed with mischief. "Dad, I'm disappointed. I'd looked forward to meeting your miracle man." That was true. Not that another man or two meant anything in Janey's life, but this Pete Martin must be rather special, Janey thought, to make pop unlimber his pen and write like a boy with his first girl.

"Disappointed?" pop roared. "What d'you think I am? Best danged foreman I ever had, bar none. Besides, Janey"—with another sheepish grin—"he's the first man I ever saw I could welcome as a son-in-law."

Janey's laughter was like golden bells. "I don't suppose you suggested anything like that to Mr. Martin, pop?"

"Oh, no, Janey, no. I did talk a lot about you, how you were gettin' educated back East and what a grand girl you are, and how the fellow who married you would be mighty lucky, besides gettin' a nice slice of the ranch. But I didn't come right out and say anything to him, Janey." Pop's blue-eyed gaze was innocently protesting to Janey.

She laughed again. "Dad, you're priceless. You scared the poor man away. He thought it was going to be a case of 'marry the king's daughter or off with your head.'"

That was the end of Pete Martin for another hour or so, until Janey said, "Jamie, if you'll saddle Lazybones for me, I'll look the place over," and turned on her older brother the barrage of her smiles.

There was a moment's strained silence before Jamie muttered uneasily, "I was giving pop what-for just this morning,

Janey, when he told me. I wasn't here when it happened, or it wouldn't have happened."

"W-what?" Janey asked. "What has happened? Is something wrong with Lazybones?"

Pop looked piteously at Jamie. "I—I gave him to Pete Martin, Janey. Now, be still a minute. When he left, I—well, I offered him his pick of horses on the ranch, and he picked Lazybones." Pop's shrug was expressive. "And when a MacAndrew gives his word, Janey, what could I do?"

"What could you do?" Janey stormed. "Why, tell him it wasn't your horse to give, that's what. Lazybones is my horse. I trained him and taught him tricks. You're just a couple of—of horse thieves, that's what you are!" Janey burst into tears.

It was only when she caught sight of her father's unhappy expression that Janey stopped crying. "It's all right, dad, honest. I don't mind so much. It was just a shock, that's all."

"Shucks, Janey, I'm sorry. I'd told him any horse, and then I couldn't go back on my word. Listen, honey, I know where Pete is. He's working on a dude ranch in New Mexico. I'll buy your horse back for you, or else I'll steal it."

Janey couldn't bear the sorrow of the two tall, lean MacAndrews. "It's all right, dad and Jamie. Just skip it." But she came down for breakfast the next morning dressed for travel in dark linen, carrying a packed bag with her. "Goin' away so soon?" her father asked. "You been gone a long time already, Janey."

"I'll be back in a few days to stay forever, pop," Janey told him gently. "Just where in New Mexico is this dude ranch?"

Pop stared. "Going after Pete Martin, Janey?"

"No!" Janey was indignant. Two years of the East and six months of

Europe slid away from her. "I'm going after my hoss."

Janey, slim and charming in jodhpurs and white silk shirt, pushed back the remains of a man-sized breakfast and smiled at the girl who sat across from her at the table for two. They had both driven in the night before, the latest recruits at the Jingle Bell Dude Ranch, and had been put together at the small table until they made other friends and other arrangements.

"I'm Janey Hilliard," Janey announced calmly. "What do we do now?"

The other girl was blond, too, but a delicate, silvery, artificial blond, and she had a bored, lovely face. "We now go flirt with the handsome cowboys," she said soberly. "This is my fourth dude ranch, so I know."

Janey had a swift mental picture of languishing, longing cowboys, still waiting somewhere in Montana, Arizona or Nevada, maybe, for the letter a certain blonde had promised to write. She rose, smiling. "It sounds rather cruel, but fun. Where do we start?"

"We start at the corral. The old, hard-bitten ones do the work. The young, good-looking ones who show off their roping and riding are hired to amuse the cash customers, like you and me." She added casually, "I'm Lorraine Fillmore of New York."

Janey and Lorraine leaned on the whitewashed corral fence and watched in silence. Over in a far corner, men were going about the business of getting pack and saddle horses ready for the day's activities. But nearer the fence were lithe young men in sombreros, in shirts no self-respecting cowhand would wear, ornate boots and flashing accouterments. Lorraine pointed suddenly to a slender man, not much more than a boy, whose sun-burned hair gleamed gold when the breeze ruffled it, and whose muscles rippled smoothly under his thin shirt. "He's mine."

Janey laughed. "I'll match you for him. Do we just grab him and run, or what?"

Lorraine, with the experience of three dude ranches behind her, took command of the situation. "Hi, you with the speckled shirt. Hello."

The man rode over swiftly, pulling his horse to a stop with a flourish. Janey saw that his eyes were as blue as her own, and he was certainly handsome, especially with that faintly insolent, devil-may-care grin he wore just then. Unerringly, he spoke to Lorraine. "I think you called my shirt speckled."

Janey thought, "Texas," and watched Lorraine go to work. It was certainly an education to watch her. Janey predicted silently that cool as Texas looked, he'd be going through his paces before long for the lovely blonde beside her. She wasn't really much interested in Texas, however. She was looking, with eyes almost misty, at the white-footed bay cavorting gayly with the other loose horses in the corral dust. Lazybones! Janey wondered if he'd forgotten all the tricks she had taught him, and heard Lorraine saying, "The girl friend and I are quarreling over you. Do you mind?" and turned to watch, but if Lorraine expected a blush, gawkiness and an inane remark from Texas, she was fooled.

Texas just grinned in that faintly insolent way and said coolly, "They all do. That's why the manager hired me. Shall I perform for you now?"

Conceited but smart, Janey decided. Probably hated this, but had to make a living. Lorraine giggled enchantingly and surrendered. "You're all right, Mr.——"

"Martin," the sun-browned Greek god told her, smiling. "Pete Martin."

"So happy," Lorraine murmured. "I'm Lorraine Fillmore, right now from Texas, but permanently from New York. The little lady waiting so impatiently by

my side is Janey Hilliard, and I don't know where from."

Janey caught her breath and said, "Points east." So this was Pete Martin. Pop sure had an eye for a man, even if he did drive them away with all his chatter.

Pete said "Janey?" on a reflective note, and spent a couple of seconds sizing both girls up, before he shook his head as if he'd decided something.

With her first hint of imperiousness, Lorraine called his attention back to herself. "We'd like to go riding—with you."

"The direct approach," Pete told her, grinning devilishly. "All right. Pick your mounts, and I'll saddle up for you. And if you can't ride, for Heaven's sake don't try to pretend. I don't want you falling all over the range and having to be picked up."

Lorraine's drawl was charged with steel. "You're much too smart for a cowboy, mister. And I can ride anything, preferably that bay with the four white feet."

Pete's blue eyes probed hers for a moment, steel meeting steel. Janey felt almost uncomfortable, unaccountably left out. Pete wasn't paying any attention to her at all. Funny how platinum hair always bothered a man. And dad had thought Pete smart. "And you're too smart for an Easterner," Pete was telling Lorraine. "That's my private mount, and I'll ride him myself."

Pouting, Lorraine chose another horse, and Janey picked a rangy black with powerful legs and plenty of spirit. Twenty minutes later the three of them were cantering down a path that led, so Pete told them, toward a river and comparative coolness. Janey, almost sick with envy of Pete, astride Lazybones, was doleful. Pete even had a way with horses. Nobody but Janey had ridden Lazybones before. Now and again Lazybones nuzzled at Janey's knee, but then, he did the same for Lorraine, rid-

ing on Pete's other side. It made Janey blue to think that Lazybones didn't remember her any better than that.

Pete was impartial, too, turning his smiles and conversation first to Lorraine, then to Janey and seeming, she thought, to be having a private joke of his own all the time. Firmly, she made up her mind that she would acquire Lazybones somehow, leave Pete to the not too tender mercies of Lorraine Fillmore, and forget the whole thing. Only, forgetting Pete Martin wouldn't be easy for any girl.

Janey was beginning to wish she had gone frankly to Pete and said, "I'm Janey MacAndrew and I want my horse back," and seen what would happen. On the way to the Jingle Bell, it had seemed a better idea to go incongito, to find out what kind of person Pete Martin was before she tried to get her horse.

They rode for a while in silence, then Pete observed, "Lazybones seems to like blondes. Guess that's not so strange. The girl who owned him, before I got him, was a blonde."

Janey almost gave herself away. So he had known all along, had he, that she owned Lazybones? She thought, "I'd like to smack the grin off that conceited face," and, "If I ever get on Lazybones's back, that's the last Pete Martin will ever see of him."

She asked casually, "Did you buy him?"

Again that diabolical grin. "Nope. I worked for her dad, MacAndrews, down in Texas. He sure is a great guy. I thought the world of pop. When I quit him he gave me the horse. Told me to take my choice of any horse on the Triangle T."

"How thoughtful of you to choose the girl's horse," Lorraine said. "Where was she all this time, anyway?"

Pete chuckled. "In the East, getting educated out of all the good Western horse sense she probably had when she left, so I figured she wouldn't appreciate



For one thrilling second he held her close with arms of steel, then he said, "I think we'd better go in, Janey. We're pretty conspicuous out here."

and come back too dog-gone high-hat to——"

"To associate with uncultured, handsome he-men like you," Lorraine finished

softly. Her gray-green eyes were mocking.

Pete's brown hand shot out and

Lazybones when she got back. I like girls," Pete added unnecessarily, "but I can't stand Western girls who go East

seized her shoulder. "You'll say too much sometime, blonde."

It looked—oh, thrilling. Janey had never been, or felt, so left out in her life. She suddenly hated Lorraine, who was all expensive charm, and Pete, who was fool enough to fall for it. She was sorry she had ever made this spur-of-the-moment expedition of rescue, especially when Janey knew in her heart it had been half to get Lazybones and half to see pop's Pete Martin. She dug a hard boot heel into her mount's flank and shot away from them. Probably, she thought, Pete would kiss the girl as soon as they were alone.

Janey was surer than ever about that kiss when they caught up with her. Lorraine had that look, and Pete, Janey thought crossly, looked like the all-conquering hero. Lorraine burst into talk.

"Pete's been showing off Lazybones to me. He does the cutest tricks."

"Who? Lazybones or Pete?" Twin devils born of anger and lonesomeness flickered in Janey's blue eyes. The words won her a glance from Pete, which didn't make Janey any happier, because it was just a nice, friendly look, not special like the ones he gave to Lorraine. "Lazybones did all the performing," he told her gravely. "I'm waiting for moonlight."

Janey's inadequate "oh" was lost in another gush from Lorraine. "I'm just crazy about that horse. Pete darling, will you sell him to me?"

"Lazybones isn't for sale," Pete said briefly.

Lorraine shrugged. "I thought the Jingle Bell tried to please its patrons, Pete. Maybe if I saw the manager— And I'd pay a lot for him, Pete."

Pete answered glumly, "Yeah, you probably would, too. A girl lost me my last job, too."

"How? You mean with that fellow down in Texas?" Janey couldn't help asking.

"Yeah, with pop. I liked it there, and was doing swell when he started throwing his daughter at my head. He kept tellin' me what a fine girl she was, and that the fellow who married her would get half the ranch and all, and I got scared and lit out. After all, a man wants to pick his own wife, and the way old pop went on, I was afraid I'd be roped and branded before I knew what was happening to me."

Janey wanted to giggle or to cry, or something. She'd never been in a situation quite like this and hoped she'd never be again. "Why—why didn't you wait and see the girl?"

Pete's grin flashed. "I didn't have to. The way pop went on trying to sell her to me, I knew there was something wrong. Anyway, even if she does have all her teeth and so on, it's ten-to-one she's a spoiled brat I wouldn't even look at. Great guys like pop always have bad luck in daughters."

Lorraine, left out too long, murmured in headline tones, "Saved in the nick of time, or, Pete Martin lams on Lazybones!"

Acidly Pete commented, "Very clever," but he gave her another probing glance which bothered Janey. Everything bothered her. She was glad when they reached the Jingle Bell again.

It was when Pete was giving her a hand down from her horse that he smiled at her—a direct smile that seemed, somehow, rather special too, even more special than the ones he gave Lorraine. And it seemed to Janey that his clasp was firmer and longer than she really needed, just for assistance. But he said only, "You're a mighty good rider Miss Hilliard," which wasn't news to Janey, and left her feeling forlorn again.

Lorraine asked then, "What's next on the program, Mr. Martin?"

"Dinner. And then we dance in the big room, if you're not a bridge hound," Pete told her carelessly.

"Swell. Will you be there?"

"I'll be there." Janey could have sworn that Pete was laughing as he walked away.

"A nice young man. And I'm going to buy his horse," Lorraine announced casually as the two girls parted for their respective cabins.

Janey thought grimly, "You'll get that horse over my dead body, Miss Lorraine Fillmore." And, a nice young man? Janey, near tears, tried to convince herself differently. Pete was a cheap male flirt, conceited, willing to stoop to anything to hold his job. Whatever had pop seen in him? But Janey knew. Pop had seen a man, and Janey saw a man, too, who rode like a centaur and smiled like an Adonis, whose touch or glance could be thrilling even when you knew he didn't mean it.

Still very unhappy, Janey dressed for the dance. The arrival of a telegram from pop—Janey, halfway to the Jingle Bell, had wired him of her assumed name—didn't help. It said:

LONESOME STOP BRING LAZYBONES OR PETE OR BOTH OR NEITHER BUT COME HOME.

"Well, I want Lazybones," Janey reflected miserably, "and pop wants Pete. Maybe if I tell him who I am and that I won't insist on marrying him, I can get them both, before that gilded Lorraine does!" Janey brightened. Yes, that seemed a good idea. She'd tell Pete at the dance.

Janey hadn't really hoped to outdo Lorraine, although she knew she looked lovely in a long, full gown of pink, and blue-and-pink flowers on her piled-up curls. Lorraine just shimmered in a straight, slim metallic sheath.

Pete looked very different, but decidedly handsome in white linens. Janey was seized upon by a good-looking guest before she had time to think, but it didn't matter. Pete was already

dancing with Lorraine, and it was fully a half hour before he claimed Janey for a dance. His brown face was alight with laughter. "Listen, Janey, I don't want to dance. I'm going to burst if I don't tell this to somebody. Will you come outside with me?"

Would she? Janey, feeling weak, wondered if anybody had ever said "no" to pop's Pete Martin.

When they were leaning against the whitewashed fence that inclosed the grounds of the ranch house proper, he laughed—a hearty, rich laugh. "You remember all that talking I was doing this morning about Lazybones and Pop MacAndrew and his daughter, Janey?"

"Uh—why, yes, I remember," Janey said softly. Was he going to tell her he knew who she was?

"Well, I was fibbing a little. When I got Lazybones I didn't know he belonged to Janey MacAndrew. I knew he'd been trained well, and thought maybe he belonged to the family. I rode him several times because I thought he needed more exercise. But nobody ever mentioned Janey in connection with Lazybones. I remember now that pop did act awful funny when I picked him, but I didn't pay much attention then." Brown hands worked with cigarette and lighter. "Smoke?"

"Thanks." Janey felt as if she were going to need a cigarette.

"Well, this morning, before you and Lorraine got to the corral, I got a wire from pop. It said, 'My girl on way to get Lazybones. He was hers. Watch out for squalls.'"

Janey's "oh" was very weak.

"Yes. So, of course, I knew what was up the minute Lorraine started talking to me. She's just the way I was afraid pop's daughter would be. Pretty, but artificial and spoiled, and hard as steel under that flirtatious manner. That's why I talked the way I did this morning, just to let her know."

Janey stifled wild, incredulous laugh-

ter, and when she could speak, "Are you sure?" Daringly, "Maybe I'm Janey MacAndrew. My name is Janey and we both drove in last night, and we're both blondes."

Pete's hand had found hers. "I know better than that. You're not that kind of girl. If I had your horse, you'd walk up to me like a man and talk it over. Besides—oh, I know it makes me sound vain—it gives her a good chance to look me over, too. You know, a girl can chase a horse, but she can't run after a man. In this case Janey Lorraine is doing both very neatly."

Pete, forgetting to let go Janey's hand, not noticing her silence, rambled on, "Besides, she had Texas license plates, and yours are New York."

"She said," Janey remarked thinly, "that her father had spent the winter in Texas, and she was there with him."

Pete grinned. "Part of that's right. Janey, if pop's Janey had been like you, I'd never have run away."

"You darling idiot," Janey thought, and, "Oh, gee, I'm in a spot. I can't ever tell him now." Aloud, "What are you going to do about Lazybones?" Might as well know that, anyway.

"Over my dead body will she get Lazybones," Pete muttered grimly. "It may be cruel, but that's the way I feel about her."

"Well, we're agreed on that," Janey told herself. Not that it helped her any. She was in a jam, painful to think about even with Pete's warm, strong fingers closing on her arm now.

"Incidentally, I'm going to give her as good as she sends," Pete went on. "So, Janey, if you think that I— That is, I mean, I'm not really interested in Janey MacAndrew Fillmore. Not with you around, Janey. Maybe I'd just better give her Lazybones and send her packing, eh?"

"Oh, no," Janey protested quickly and weakly. "I wouldn't do that. And don't you think we'd better go in?"

Pete, for one thrilling second, held her close with an arm of steel before he answered, "Yes, I think we'd better, Janey. We're pretty conspicuous out here."

Another day. Another telegram. This one just said: **COME HOME PRONTO.** Janey wired back frantically: **BUSINESS NOT COMPLETED,** and got a return wire: **YOU NEED REINFORCEMENTS,** which worried her a lot. No telling what pop'd do now.

Feeling a little shy, yet wanting to see Pete, Janey wandered down to the corral again. It was Saturday and preparations were under way for the amateur rodeo to be staged the next day. Pete was busy, but when he spotted Janey by the fence he came over hurriedly. "Janey, I'm in a mess. Janey Lorraine made a terrible fuss with the boss here about buying my horse. I won't let her have it, and that's that. I made out a bill of sale, dated yesterday, to you. Will you sign it quick, and pretend you bought Lazybones last night? Don't give me any money because, of course, we'll tear up the paper when Janey Lorraine leaves in a huff."

Janey stared, like a person in a trance, for half a second, while Pete impatiently urged pen and paper upon her. Slowly, she wrote her name and gave the bill of sale to Pete, who thrust it into his pocket. They were none too soon. Lorraine, looking smug, accompanied by the manager, was approaching.

The manager began nervously, "About your horse, Lazybones, Pete. Miss Fillmore has taken quite a fancy to him and—"

"So did Miss Hilliard," Pete interrupted quietly. "I sold him to her last night."

Janey nodded. "That's right."

Lorraine gave her one venomous look. "You smug little thing. I suppose you thought if you got the horse you'd get the man. Well, really, I don't want

either of them." She turned on her heel and marched away.

Pete grinned diabolically, the manager sighed and left, and Janey took a deep breath. "Well, Pete, Lazybones is mine. Suppose you let me ride him for a while?"

Pete shook his head. "Nothing doing, honey. You saw Lazybones at his best, yesterday. Sometimes he bucks. I don't want you to take any chances."

"Oh, please, Pete, please." Janey's eyes were really full of tears, not about riding Lazybones, which Pete doubtless thought, but about the whole silly, sickening mess in which she was.

"Janey, for the love of Mike, don't look like that. Honey, of course you can ride him, but please be careful."

Looking very unhappy, Pete saddled Lazybones and brought him to the fence. "Just ride him around the outer yard here for a while, Janey, so I can watch," he implored.

"You dear idiot," Janey thought. "I want to ride him away, out of your life." She hated herself and Lorraine and even felt most unkindly toward pop, who had brought all this about.

Janey never knew, afterward, what had happened. Pete didn't know, and probably Lazybones didn't, either. Maybe he recognized Janey and gave a leap in delight. Anyway, it caught Janey unprepared. Off she flew, landing in a huddled little heap at Pete's feet.

She was out only a moment, and even though she hurt all over, Janey thought it was worth it to hear Pete saying, "Janey dear! Open your eyes, honey."

Janey opened one blue one. "I'm all right, silly. Darling!"

There was a crowd around by then, but Pete whispered, before some one picked Janey up and carried her off to the cottage, "Janey dear, do you feel that way, too?"

Janey pressed his hand tightly. "Yes, Pete."

In love! Janey, being made to stay in bed when she knew it wasn't necessary at all, decided just to enjoy the feeling. Maybe she wouldn't have a chance to enjoy anything at all after Pete knew the truth. And there was another wire, this time from Jamie: DAD'S ON HIS WAY.

Just for the present she wasn't going to think about it, not with Pete walking in the door, looking so anxious.

"Janey!" It was funny, Janey thought afterward, how natural it had been to have Pete's arms around her and to raise her lips for his kiss. Only his kiss wasn't funny at all, but sweet and solemn, with passion slumbering in his touch. A man's kiss for the woman he loved—a kiss that broke Janey's heart, because she was going to have to destroy all his illusions before long.

"I love you, Janey."

She laughed shakily. "Pete, I'd never have guessed it."

"We'll get married, of course." Then Pete sighed. "Janey, I'm a fool. You're young, rich and from a different kind of life. I'm just a cowhand, a good one, but that's all. I haven't much education—just sort of what I've picked up reading and studying people and things. I haven't anything to offer, except that I love you, till it hurts."

Janey was crying, laughing. "Pete, are you trying to back out already?"

"No, dearest." His answer was convincing. For a while Janey could forget all the gnats of trouble that buzzed around her. Presently she asked, "Lorraine gone?"

"No." Pete frowned. "She walks around with a gleam in her eye as if she had a joke. I don't like it. I—I lost that bill of sale for Lazybones, and I'm afraid she found it. It was an amateur sort of thing. She'll make trouble with the boss, and I don't want to lose this job now that I've got you."

She'll make trouble all right, Janey was thinking. But not with the boss. Janey had just remembered how she

had signed that paper—"Janey MacAndrew," in her sprawling hand. She sighed and Pete asked quickly, "Tired?"

Janey nodded. "I'll go then, dear. Janey, you stay in bed for days and days and take care of yourself."

"Don't be stupid, Pete. I'll be up tomorrow."

Halfway to the door Pete turned, came back. "Janey, do you love me?"

Clearly, proudly, Janey answered, "I love you, Pete." It was one thing she could say that was the truth. She loved him until her heart was all joy and ecstasy.

Janey was up early the next morning, feeling a little sore and stiff, but otherwise none the worse for her fall. It was a big day on the Jingle Bell. Ranchers and their families for miles were coming to take part in or watch the rodeo. It was a big day for Janey, too. If she had known how big, she would have gone back to bed. Instead, in tan whipcords and a blouse the color of her eyes, she went to the corral.

"Pete, I want to ride in the rodeo."

Pete laughed indulgently. "You're a swell rider, honey, but this is Western stuff."

"I want to ride Lazybones." Janey's face was set. She had her pride to redeem before the Jingle Bell. She wouldn't be remembered there as the girl who had fallen off a horse.

"Sweetheart, no." Pete's face could be set, too.

"He's mine"—blue eyes flashing a little.

"And you're mine"—blue eyes a little angry.

Lorraine had been coming closer, smiling oddly to herself, to listen to the tiff. "Lover's quarrel?" she asked lightly.

Janey turned, flushing. "Oh, I just want to ride in the races, and Pete doesn't want me to. I want to ride Lazybones."

Lorraine shrugged. "Why not? Lazybones is yours, isn't he? You've always owned him, haven't you, Janey MacAndrew?"

Janey felt herself go white. Pete stared. "Janey MacAndrew?"

"Of course, Pete. When you have people sign things, don't you read their signatures? How careless!"

Ignoring her, Pete faced Janey. "Is that true?"

Dumbly, Janey nodded.

"Oh, I see." Pete's lips were white. "How—how clever of you! So now you've got your horse, haven't you? And you've made a fool of me. You've been everything I said Pop MacAndrew's girl would be, and I'm sorrier than ever for him, because you don't look like that kind of girl at all."

Janey said, "Pete, don't go. Wait!" in a strangled voice. Pete turned and asked grimly, "What for?" before he walked on again, back very straight and so final-looking. Janey, turning, found that Lorraine had gone.

Janey stopped a passing cowboy. "Saddle my horse, will you, please, and where do I enter the races?"

"Which horse, ma'am, and there's no formalities. You line up with the rest when you want to race. There's a girl's race you might be interested in, ma'am." Clearly, the man didn't know the situation, but he saddled Lazybones and brought him around to Janey.

There was an hour before the race she wanted to run. Janey spent it packing, crying until she thought she couldn't stop. Then she washed her eyes, powdered her face and went out to the small grand stand with the large oval track open to the country on one side.

An announcer called out her name with the other entries: "Janey MacAndrew on Lazybones." Despite her misery, Janey knew a thrill of excitement. At the last minute a cowboy thrust on



"I don't know which of you is the bigger idiot," Pop roared, "but Pete's coming with us if I have to use a gun." Janey looked at Pete uncertainly, then went into his outstretched arms.

her head a great, gray sombrero. Janey laughed.

The horses were unused to starts, and they got away raggedly, Janey about in the middle section. But Lazybones suddenly seemed to realize who sat him, and his long legs ate up the lead with every stride. Janey pulled him around the first turn with all her strength, and on the next she pulled into the lead. It was then that Janey saw pop—dear, grizzled, pop. She grabbed off the sombrero and waved it, yelling wildly, "Make way for MacAndrews!" but Janey was choking back a sob. There'd always be pop, anyway. They could live together and have a pretty good time, and she couldn't let him down—couldn't let him know that her heart was broken. Almost without knowing it, Janey finished the race, yards in front.

She made her way toward pop, seeing too late that Pete stood by him. "That was all right, Janey"—which was pop's way of saying how proud he was. Then he frowned. "Other things ain't so good, though!"

Janey kissed him. "I'm packed, pop, and ready to go. Let's pull out."

"Lazybones?"

"I'm leaving him," Janey said dully.

"Pete?"

Janey was conscious of Pete, so near, yet so far. "I'm leaving him, too, dad."

Pop roared. "Oh, no, you ain't, young lady. I don't know which of you is the bigger idiot, you or Pete. But he's comin' with us if I have to use a gun. You can talk things over on the way." There was a twinkle far back in pop's irate eyes.

Janey looked at Pete, said uncertainly, "Pete——"

Pete looked at Janey, mumbled, "Janey dear——" Then he laughed. "Didn't I always say pop'd use a gun on me, if necessary, Janey MacAndrew? Come on, let's travel."

But his hand on Janey's trembled, and his eyes carried a message that made Janey's heart beat fast. Talking things over with Pete was going to be rather wonderful, Janey thought.

But talking wasn't necessary. Later, when Janey and Pete found themselves alone, they looked at each other wordlessly. Then he reached out, caught her in his arms and kissed her again and again. Her arms around his neck, her lips on his, was Janey's only explanation. That was enough.



THE OLD HOUSE

YOU say I own this old house
That nestles in the grass,
As still as any bold mouse
That hides when tabbies pass?
You'd think I'd sell it, coming
To bide where you may be?
Oh, winds and swallows homing!
It's this old house owns me!

ROSE MARY BURDICK.



A Novelette

Undress Parade

By Dorothy Dow

CHAPTER I.

UNDRESS Parade. Carisimo, who owned the Club Caress and offered a floor show to his patrons nightly, called that last act "Living Picture Play," but the girls who took part in it called it by the other name.

Undress Parade. Beauty, unveiled for sale or for lure, that any one who paid the ridiculously high cover charge could stare at and smirk about. The loveliest girls on Broadway, and the barest, so rumor said.

There were seven of them, the same size, almost the same shape, as nearly

as possible the same age. Six of them had hair of varying degrees of darkness—brown hair, chestnut hair, auburn hair, black hair.

That was planned, to set Amory off even more than her own beauty could do—make her startling fairness stand out, make her dazzling whiteness seem more amazingly white. Amory knew that it had been planned that way, and hated it.

Posed just a little ahead of the other six who, in rainbow-colored tunics of the sheerest, briefest chiffons, made a background for her pure whiteness, Amory moved to slow music, letting one lovely pose dissolve into another equally lovely pose. Now you noticed first the sweep of slim young shoulders, and now her slender, curved figure stood in taunting starkness, outlined against black velvet.

"Some baby!" a voice from the audience was sure to say thickly. It was never the same man, but it was always the same thought. Only the fact that a black velvet mask slashed the whiteness of her face, made Amory able to bear it. That mask gave her the one bit of privacy that made her say to herself, "Well, anyway, no one who knew me would recognize me!"

The crowd changed, but what happened was always the same, night after night. Women stared, enviously or with chagrin. Men stared, planned discreet little notes. Pilloried by the stripping eyes, Amory prayed for the curtain to go down, hating the eyes, hating the staring faces, hating herself.

And yet, it was the only place she could find. Even ladies who hate must eat. Amory reminded herself of that, going along the hall to the big dressing room that the girls shared, feeling soiled and damaged. Amory told herself savagely:

"So you hate it, idiot? It doesn't hurt, really. You'd hate starving more, wouldn't you?"

She had actually almost starved, more than once, in that first frantic month that had followed her mad running away from the small town in Ohio where a stepmother had made her life misery.

It had not been an impulsive whim, that running away, but the cold, deliberate decision of desperation. It had been bad enough having to sleep in the hot little attic room, so that the other bedroom could be used for Phoebe's various relatives. Bad enough having to wait on her father's second wife hand and foot, knowing all the time that the woman was jealous of her loveliness, her soft voice, the fact that men's eyes followed her.

But when Lank Fetters had started to hang around the house, with his narrow gaze and hungry mouth, continually trying to touch her as she passed, Amory had felt a new kind of fear.

Every one knew what sort of man Lank was. No more than thirty, he had been married twice, and both his wives had died of the brutality that only the cruel savagery of man can teach a girl to know. Amory despised him, but it was bitterly plain that what she thought was of no importance.

Lank had five farms, a big house, a car, and he wanted to marry her. Craftily, he had gone to Phoebe about it, rather than to Amory herself. Phoebe, seeing presents for herself, and wanting Amory out of the house, had made up her mind that the wedding should take place.

She had even persuaded her husband that, after all, what a girl really needed was a rich husband. Kind ones were easy to get, but kindness didn't feed you. Amory would be lucky, with servants to wait on her, with a husband who was mad about her——

Amory had run away from Lank's greedy hands and hungry mouth—hitch-hiking, walking until her shoes were tatters under her, eating little, going wet and hungry. Anything to get

away! Somewhere in the world there must be men who were kind, gentle and strong, like the men one reads about in books.

It was nice to dream of men like that, but it wasn't the shadowy Mr. Might-be that she was thinking of to-night, after the curtain had gone down on the last show and Greta, at the next table, was pulling off her fig leaf of beads and stretching her young arms with a sigh of relief.

It was another man who brought the dark frown to Amory's clear brow, and made her violet eyes seem almost black—a stranger.

He was one of those men who sat at front-row tables and sent notes saying: "Won't you have dinner with me to-night? I should like to know you better." One of the men who sent flowers that she tossed aside, presents that she sent back.

You should get used to things like that when you have been part of the most daring floor show in New York for three months. But Amory hadn't gotten used to it. She never would, she said now, shoving a great mass of green orchids onto Greta's table, as if she were glad to get rid of them.

"You wear them if you like them so well. I hate them. I hate the kind of man who sends them to a girl he doesn't know except as so many inches of bare flesh!"

Greta giggled. "Honey, you're certainly crazy. I'm awfully glad to have the orchids because I'm stepping out with Chuck to-night, and chorus men never have a dime for flowers. I'll be lucky to get a corned-beef sandwich and a couple of beers. Chuck is cute, though. But believe me, if that handsome stranger had asked me, I wouldn't have said 'no.' What did the note say?"

"Dinner at the Star or Twenty-one, or any place I said." Amory sighed, wiping the cold cream off her face.

"Just what the notes have been saying every day for three weeks. Couldn't we be friends. Ugh! I'd as soon be friends with a snake or a bat or——"

Greta said patronizingly: "You'll never have a limousine or a diamond bracelet if you act like that. Besides, I think that man is some one important. He looks familiar. Maybe he's a millionaire——"

"Wanting," murmured Amory wearily, "to marry me?"

"You are a nut! Why should millionaires marry showgirls when they can marry any one? But they can be awfully nice. Gosh, I'd rather have a millionaire a friend of mine—you know what I mean—than be married to a plumber."

Amory smiled gently into the silly, pretty face that stared at her. "You talk that way," she said softly. "But you're just the kind of girl who'll marry the plumber, and live happily ever after."

"Maybe I am." Greta looked suddenly worried. "You and I are about the only girls in this show who are really good girls. You know what I mean. Sometimes I think it's silly, and sometimes when I feel lonely and worry about a job, I don't know——"

"I sometimes think nobody knows," Amory murmured to herself rather than Greta. Her eyes looked too unhappy for such young eyes, and there was a bitter droop to the nineteen-year-old mouth, that should have been gay and smiling. "And I'm not sure of anything, except that I'd rather die than have for a friend, or even marry, the kind of man who comes here and stares."

"You sound old when you talk that way. You don't want to be blue, Amory. Gee, I like you more than any of the other girls. Gee——"

She broke off, because Carisimo stood in the doorway of the dressing room, looking suave and discreet.

"All dressed, girls? Gentleman here who wants to meet some of the loveliest



ladies on Broadway. Come in, Mr. Schwartz, come in. This is Miss Kelly, the one you asked about."

Mr. Schwartz was heavily built, handsome in a bland, dangerous-looking way. You felt evil in the air, and yet it certainly was not in his perfect clothes, careful smile or rich voice. Greta gave a nervous giggle in the background. Amory said coldly:

"Good evening, Mr. Schwartz," and replied to his brief attempts at conversation coldly, crisply. Carisimo looked pained, and explained that the gentleman had just come back from Europe and seen the show for the first time, and thought that perhaps she, Miss Kelly, would be good enough to have a bottle of wine with him.

Amory replied icily, "I don't drink wine. I'm tired and I'm going home," with no thanks, and Carisimo scowled behind the bland "good-bys" of the

stranger. Greta gaped as the door shut behind them.

"Gosh, Amory, you certainly have nerve. I know that when you took this job you said that you wouldn't sit with the customers, but—well, Carisimo certainly is sore! And no wonder!"

"No wonder, why?"

"Listen, don't tell me that you've never heard of Bruno Schwartz? He's

Posed just a little ahead of the other girls, Amory moved to slow music, letting one lovely pose dissolve into another. "Some baby!" a voice from the audience said thickly. Only the fact that a black mask slashed her face, made Amory able to bear it.



worth about ten million. And he gives girls pearl necklaces just because he likes them."

She dropped a kiss on Amory's head, said, "Be seeing you," and dashed out, the orchids that John Parker had sent Amory bright at her shoulder. The other girls went out, one by one, but Amory felt too tired to hurry with her dressing. She lingered before her dressing table, brushed her hair, trimmed a finger nail absently. When she was finally dressed, she looked exactly what she was—a beautiful young girl. The other showgirls wore silver foxes, sables, red-fox capes. Even Greta had a pointed fox scarf which she flaunted. The other girls looked what they were—glamorous Broadway showgirls, perfumed, gay with flowers, paint, high-heeled slippers, rhinestones, nose veils. On the stage, with the footlights caressing her young limbs, making her body a marble statue that would come to life in a moment, Amory was glamorous, too. But now, dressed for the street, she looked young, alone and unhappy in her simple dark suit, her plain small hat. She hesitated, picked up her purse, then went toward the door slowly, as if reluctant to return to the solitude of her tiny room. There was no one in the dim hall that led to the entertainers' exit. Amory turned a safety lock twice, took a step out into the street, then stepped back with a little cry.

A tall young man stood there, immaculate in his black-and-white evening clothes, his silk hat under his arm, a perfect gardenia in his buttonhole. He had thick wavy hair, a face of classic perfection that smiled at her.

Amory knew the smile, the face, the man. Night after night, he had looked at her from the table in the front row. Night after night, his eyes had caressed her. Night after night he had sent notes, flowers, presents back stage. He was foremost among the things that

made Amory hate the club, hate herself for having to work there—a rich playboy, sure that his money would buy anything, even a pretty girl.

But she had never heard his voice, because she had always refused to meet him. When he spoke, she gave an involuntary jump, because something in that voice startled her, momentarily moved her to a strange thrill.

"Miss Kelly, I'm John Parker. I want to know you, and I wish you'd tell me some way that it could be managed. Because I've tried every way I know, and you won't say 'yes'——"

"I haven't progressed beyond two-letter words in my education," Amory told him insolently, coldly. He stood directly between her and the door, so that she could not go on. "And you might have guessed by now that I don't want to meet you."

He laughed wryly. "I have guessed that. But, after all, girls have been known to change their minds. There's nothing wrong with me. I'm unmarried, white, over twenty-one——"

"The big thing wrong with you," Amory said curtly, "is that you don't interest me. And if you will let me go——"

"But I don't want to. Maybe you're stubborn, but I'm just as stubborn. I want to know you, and I'm going to. I want us to be friends."

Amory cried angrily: "We could never be friends. I hate you. I hate your kind of man."

"My kind of man?" His voice was cool, suave. "How do you know what kind I am?"

She laughed bitterly. "How can I help knowing? You're the kind that finds pleasure in staring night after night at undressed girls. You're the kind that thinks your money will buy anything. You're the——"

"So you think I'm like that, do you?" Again, a note in his voice and a strange

look in his steady eyes sent a curious thrill through Amory, as if he reminded her of something, as if they had met in another life. Then the thrill left, but the anger remained.

She went on hotly: "I can't stop your sending notes. I can't stop your coming every night to look at me. I can't knock you down now to get away from you, though I'd like to. But I can tell you that I'll never, never have anything to do with you. I'll never, never be your friend. I'll never——"

He put his hand on her wrist. The touch was a sudden flame through Amory's whole being, as if an electric spark had passed between them. She pulled her wrist away, but his touch still lingered there.

He said lightly: "Wait a minute! Don't be so sure of that. You might be made to listen to reason."

"Reason?" she flared. "Is it reasonable for you to bother me when I've let you know in every way possible that I don't want to know you? Other men can manage to understand what the word 'no' means, but you're so—so smug, so——"

She was almost crying. What she said was true. Other men had sent flowers, gifts, notes, but there had been no trouble in sending them away. But this man was different—stubborn, persistent, difficult. She went on shakily:

"When you bribed Lois to bring me along to that party, I sent you word that nothing could persuade me to go out with you. When you sent your car around for me, I said I'd rather walk. I've asked you to stay away from me. Why won't you?"

"Because I don't want to."

She actually pleaded then. "But you make me nervous. I hate being stared at. I hate being pursued. I work here because I have to. Away from here I want to forget everything about the place—everything!"

"Then why don't you let me take you away from here?"

She gasped. The words hit her consciousness like a blow. Her face went deep-rose in the darkness, then white. Her hand shot out, then fell away, just short of his cheek.

She said, breathing hard, "I wouldn't lower myself by slapping you for that suggestion."

There was a pause, and then he answered in a voice that was almost harsh: "Maybe you don't really understand that suggestion. And maybe you don't really understand your position either, or me. Maybe you'd better think twice. What if it were a choice of being nice to me or losing your job? How would you like that?"

"That's a silly threat." She laughed through stiff lips. "The Club Caress isn't marvelous, but it isn't that sort of place. The girls don't have to have anything to do with the customers."

"But suppose the Club Caress changed hands?" There was a note of power that was ominous in his deep, rich voice. Amory shivered involuntarily. "What if I told you that I had taken an option on the Club Caress? What if I bought it and changed the rules a little?"

"You're crazy!" Amory cried, feeling a childish panic because this man made her feel uncertain, nervous, tense. "Men don't go around buying night clubs——"

He said: "I do. And how would you like to be out of a job? It's not fun, is it?"

She cried in a stifled voice, "I could kill you!"

He laughed. "You don't have to kill me. You just have to be nice to me—have dinner with me now and then, get used to me. That's all."

Above their heads, through the open windows of the gambling room, penetrating between the thick curtains that kept the light out of the alley and made the back of the Club Caress seem bathed

in darkness, the faint clink of money came lightly, sharply. Money, or was it chips, tossed on a number?

Whatever it was, that faint sound brought an idea into Amory's head, stunningly, full-fledged. It was a mad idea, but it was her only chance.

She tried to match his casual lightness, but her voice was husky despite the effort. She said slowly, gravely:

"So I have to be nice to you or lose my job, do I? Like the old melodramas?"

The words were a taunt, but this John Parker who stared at her so insistently was thick-skinned, it seemed. He simply nodded.

"If I can't get you to speak to me any other way, yes!"

She knew what "being nice" meant. Girls in the chorus were nice to men who gave them apartments, cars, jewels. The very thought of John Parker being that sort of man, when he looked so clean and young, made it twice as bad. Amory would never be an actress, but she came close to being one for the first time in her life when she laughed into his eyes and said carelessly:

"Well, maybe I wouldn't mind being nice to you. But, you see, some one else might object—the man who comes ahead of you in line."

Even as she said the words, they shocked her. It seemed as if they must have shocked John Parker for a moment, too. And then he laughed briefly.

"That's a good line, if you tell me who the man is. A boy from home, I suppose?"

"Not at all." Amory shook her head, tilted her chin proudly. "Not a boy from home, but a man from New York." She caught her breath before the name, then said it breathlessly: "Bruno Schwartz. You know who he is, don't you? You wouldn't want to try to steal his girl, would you, Mr. Parker? So maybe you'd better stop sending me

flowers, and trying to get to know me, and——"

"I wouldn't," said John Parker with sudden violence, "touch Bruno Schwartz's girl with a ten-foot pole, not to save my life. But you needn't think I believe that story. It's impossible. You wouldn't look at Bruno—you wouldn't be in the same room with him."

He sounded so perfectly sure! Amory shook with rage. "How do you know? You don't know me. You don't know anything about me!"

"I know," John Parker replied, "that you wouldn't be going home alone if you were Bruno's girl."

"And maybe I'm not going home," she snapped, before she thought. "Maybe I was just opening the door to get some air, before I went up to the gambling room to tell him that I was ready to go."

"I'll believe that when the moon turns into cheese. I'll believe that when the sky turns——"

She cried recklessly, "I'll prove it to you," and turned, ran along the hall, up the stairs that led to the second floor. The gambling rooms were there, small, luxurious, crowded, forbidden. Only the people who were especially selected were allowed to gamble there. John Parker was close on her heels, but Amory didn't take time to look back. She pressed her way through the crowd that clustered about the long roulette table. Some one said, "Ten on the black," and some one shouted, "Play 27—that's my lucky number!" Bruno Schwartz raked in a handful of chips, as if money were nothing to him. Amory slipped close to him, put her hand on his arm, said so low that no one else could hear:

"I've changed my mind. If you want to take me to supper, you can do it right now. If you come now——"

Bruno's face looked surprised, pleased. When his smile came, it was the smug smile of a man who is sure to get his

girl sooner or later. He turned away from the roulette table, put his arm about Amory's shoulder to help her through the crowd. He said loudly:

"Baby, we'll have lobster and champagne! Why did you make me wait so long?" And she looked into John Parker's eyes, defiantly. There was the queerest look of disbelief and shock in them. Then she had passed him, her head in the air, a smile fixed on her mouth. Bruno mumbled in her ear:

"I said from the start that I was yours, baby. You're a wonderful-looking girl! Thank Heaven, women change their minds. This is my lucky night."

CHAPTER II.

Bruno's car was like himself, big, shiny, gaudy-looking. The man who sat at the wheel looked more like a thug than a chauffeur. Amory had her first pang of worry when he turned to look over his shoulder at her, a sort of cold contempt in his stare. Bruno tucked her in, covering her with a rug, asked her where she wanted to go. Amory murmured quickly, "Some place quiet where we won't run into many people."

He laughed, a coarse laugh. "That's a swell idea. Here I am out with the doll who's turned down all the Johns on Broadway, and she wants me to take her some place where no one will see us. Baby, that isn't the way I treat girls when they're as pretty as you are. We'll go to the hottest spot in town. We'll go to the Terrace."

The Terrace was the hottest spot in town. Amory had never been there, but she knew all about it. Racketeers brushed shoulders with polo players, famous actresses came in with famous writers, wearing simple tweeds. The tables were jammed, the music abominable, the food not very good, but every one went there because the Terrace was said to be the chic place of the moment. It was a small place, noisy, with no

show and no place to dance. A man went from table to table singing bawdy songs, and there was the orchestra. For further entertainment, celebrities stared at each other and whispered behind their hands.

There were stares and whispers when Amory came in, with Bruno striding ahead of her, demanding a good table. Immediately, an obsequious head waiter produced one. He produced wine and lobster salad, too, with amazing speed.

"I get service," Bruno boasted. "They all know me. Nothing cheap about me, baby. I know what I want, and I'm willing to pay for it. The minute I saw you, I said, 'Fella, that's your girl.'"

He put his pudgy hand, with the great diamond ring on the third fat finger, over hers. He looked pleased with himself, confident and sentimental.

"You and me are going to get along fine," he said. Involuntarily, in the depths of her heart, Amory cringed. She wished herself away—wished herself with John Parker even, rather than here.

And then, over Bruno's shoulder, she saw the head waiter pull out a chair at the next table and a man seat himself. The man smiled, bowed, and Amory felt herself flushing as his eyes went to her hand, imprisoned under Bruno's on the table. The man was John Parker. He called across the blare of sound:

"Good evening! It's a great surprise to see you here," and Amory knew by his smile that he had followed them. It was one more thing to chalk up against him. It was his fault in the first place that she was here with this detestable man. It made it worse to have him watching, amused by it all.

She turned her face from him, smiling into Bruno's eyes. She had had a mad thought of running out, leaving him, but she knew that John Parker



"Get out!" Bruno mumbled between thick lips. "Because if you don't——" Amory picked up a great crystal bowl and moved toward Bruno, as his trigger finger trembled into action.

had come to call her bluff. She would really have to let Bruno take her home.

She said gayly: "This is a marvelous place. It was sweet of you to bring me here. I think we're going to be great friends."

She managed to get through the supper party, somehow. Bruno talked, boasted, laughed, patted her hand. She kept a smile fixed on her face, and she made her voice high, gay and empty, like the smile. As soon as she possibly could, after the food and the wine had been



served and eaten, she suggested going. Bruno wanted to go to other places, show her off, but Amory coaxed prettily:

"Please, I have to go home. Great big strong men can stay up all night, but working girls can't. I'll be terribly tired in the morning, and there's a rehearsal at ten."

"Pretty girl like you ought not to have to work," Bruno said. He winked one eye knowingly. "And I'm the fellow to do something about that, little girl."

The smile on her face was pure agony. What he was saying was just about what John Parker had suggested a couple of hours earlier. She pretended not to

have heard him. It was simple to be busy with her purse, her compact, when he went on murmuring things about apartments, pearls, and trips to Paris. It was simpler to pretend that this was all happening to some one else.

But in the big car she couldn't pretend that it wasn't her slim body that Bruno Schwartz tried to take into his arms, roughly. His lips hunted for hers, and she could feel his warm breath. Her mind worked like lightning, sensing how he could be handled tactfully, smoothly.

She made herself laugh. She said, pull-

ing away just enough so that she avoided the kiss:

"You don't think I'm silly enough to fall for such a joke, do you? I know you aren't the kind of man who kisses girls in automobiles, Mr. Schwartz. I know you have more finesse than that. I can tell it by your manner, by the way you talk. It's such kid stuff, isn't it? I suppose you wanted to see what sort of girl I was, what sort of a line I fell for? I know you aren't like that."

He moved away a little, at once. One arm stayed behind her, but the other relaxed, and Amory breathed more freely. His face was still close to hers, but the kiss had been averted. He answered fondly, thickly:

"Where do you get that 'mister' stuff? Call me Bruno—that's my name for you, baby. This is a joke on Carisimo, baby. He bet twenty dollars you'd turn me down. I said there was a hundred in it for him if you didn't,

but he said he couldn't do a thing with you—you were pure ice. No girl is pure ice when the right guy comes along. I sure was surprised when you came up to the wheel to-night, and said you'd changed your mind. It's almost worth a wrist watch to see Carisimo's face tomorrow, hon. What sort of wrist watch would you like? You're the kind of girl who has class, baby——"

He went on like that, drunkenly, revoltingly. Amory sat straight, her body rigid, her breath coming fast. It hadn't been worth it, to get rid of John Parker. Nothing was worth this humiliation, this hateful man beside her.

It seemed forever, before the car stopped in front of the apartment building in which she had her one-room kitchenette. Amory jumped out quickly, when the door was opened, not waiting for Bruno to get out. She gasped, in a rush:

"Thank you so much. Good night——" But before she had come to the last word, Bruno was out of the car, towering over her. He laughed ominously.

"Listen, you don't think I'm the kind of guy who wouldn't see a girl to her door, do you? Why, I have to be sure a little lady gets in safe when I take her home. Thoughtful, that's me. What floor do you live on, baby?"

He walked beside her, his hand holding her arm, up the two flights of stairs to her apartment. Amory stood before the door, stiffly, hunting for the key in her bag. She said over her shoulder, as she unlocked the door, a curt "good night," but even as she spoke, she had a frightened feeling that it was no use.

He said roughly, "I'll say 'good night' when I feel like it," and shouldered his way into the room. Amory tried to pull herself together. Her voice was not quite natural, but it was almost so as she told him pleasantly, hiding her tremors:

"I'm sorry I can't ask you to stay. But, as I told you, I'm very tired and I have to get up early. So, if you don't mind, I think——"

"You can skip that line, girly," Bruno answered harshly. His arms closed about her. He pulled her to him, and began kissing her, bruising her lips with his, fumbling with the lacy collar at her throat. He seemed incredibly big and strong. Amory twisted in his arms, striking him, kicking out wildly, but she could not get away. His breath was hot on her face, his hands were cruel and relentless. She heard her blouse tear, and his hand closed over a bare white shoulder. She screamed out with her last breath, not expecting any one to hear, not hoping, only wildly desperate with a sick fear.

The door opened, and some one burst into the room. Bruno whirled about, letting go of the girl, and she tried to pull her torn clothes together, tried to cover the quivering bare flesh. She could not breathe or speak—she could only stare at the man who had come into the room.

It was John Parker, handsome, impeccable even to the white gardenia in his buttonhole, undisturbed—until you looked at his face, and then you saw something ruthless and savage there.

Bruno saw the same thing Amory saw. He whipped his hand into his vest, and jerked out a snub-nosed, shiny thing that looked menacing, inescapable. He mumbled between thick lips:

"Get out, because if you don't——" But John Parker moved closer, as a boxer moves.

"Make me get out, if you can!" he snapped. "I'm going to take you to pieces and throw the pieces out to the dogs. I'm going to——"

"You're going to rot in an alley," Bruno Schwartz sneered. He raised the gun, leveled it. John Parker was ready to spring in the same moment that

Bruno's trigger finger trembled into action.

One second before, Amory moved. There was a great crystal bowl of red roses on the window sill. She had the bowl in her arms—water, roses and all. She had moved, thrown it at Bruno's head with all her strength, before he could even turn to see what she was doing. The bowl, the flowers, the man—all went down together in a tearing, grinding crash. John Parker said in a low voice, "Fool girl," and his eyes said something more. Amory stumbled across the room, quivering, trembling, to where Bruno lay still.

"Is he dead? Have I killed him?" she gasped. Then the room whirled about, and Amory fainted.

She woke up slowly, peacefully. There was a dim light in the room but no sound. Amory leaned against something that was hard and soft at the same time—something that was rough and smooth.

John Parker's shoulder was beneath her head, John Parker's coat about her, hiding the tatters and rags that Bruno had made of her blouse. John Parker still wore his gardenia. He looked untouched, unmoved.

She got to her feet dizzily, and said in a whisper:

"I'm sorry. I never fainted before. But, you see, I never killed any one either. And—and I don't know what to do."

Her eyes were searching the room while she spoke, but what she looked for wasn't there. Her eyes went to John Parker last, waiting for an answer to the question in them. He answered lazily, lightly:

"If you're looking for Bruno, he went out on his own steam. That is, not on his own steam exactly, because I helped him with a kick or two. He'll have a nice scar to remember you by, though. And his gun is over there on the table.

I made him leave that for you to remember him by—to remind you that little girls shouldn't go out with bad men."

She should have been thanking him for being there, for having saved her. But the lash in his voice made her angry, as he always managed to. She said, stammering with her intensity:

"I suppose it—it would have been better if I had been out with you. I suppose it's better to have things done smoothly instead of—of crudely, even the same things——"

"I don't know what you're talking about," John Parker interrupted. He stood over her, tall, young and devastatingly arrogant. "Only, I think if a girl has to be made love to, it would be better to have it done by her husband than by——"

Amory cried furiously: "I haven't any husband! If I had, do you think I'd be working in a strip show? I haven't any one."

"But you could have a husband if you wanted one, you know. If you will be stubborn——"

He broke off, shrugged. Amory answered childishly, petulantly:

"I couldn't have a husband even if I wanted one, and you know that as well as I do. Girls who work in the Club Caress don't get men who offer them wedding rings. They get men who offer them apartments or bracelets or trips to Paris. They get men like Bruno, like you!"

"But," said John Parker calmly, "I want to marry you."

The words took her breath away, left her speechless and staring. He was perfectly sober, perfectly serious, and yet, of course, he couldn't have meant it.

"I tried to get you to listen to me," John Parker went on in his rich voice, that seemed to touch some secret chord in her heart and disturb her, even when she hated him most. "But you wouldn't

listen. You had to have your fun. You——"

"Liar!" Amory breathed fiercely. Her heart was thudding; her voice sounded strange in her own ears. "Oh, you are a liar! Unless you think that is a joke—a cruel, terrible joke! How could you want to marry me? You've never even seen my face! You only sat and watched me night after night, masked, undressed. Men don't fall in love with arms and legs and bare shoulders."

"Oh, don't they?" asked John Parker gently. "But I think they do, because beauty is so rare."

"If they do it's disgusting," Amory stormed. "I may be awful. How do you know? You don't know anything about——"

She stopped short, because he had come close. He put his hands on her shoulders gently, lightly. He shook his head, as if at a child.

"Are you sure about that?" he asked. "Are you sure that I don't know all about you—where you come from, what you get paid? Are you sure that I couldn't use some of the same money that buys you orchids, to find out about you—to find out that you were good and sweet and true?"

She was trembling. "You can't expect me to believe that. Why would you bother to find out about me?"

"Doesn't a man always try to find out about a girl he wants to marry?"

"But you—you——"

"Maybe I did fall in love with your grace, your loveliness, even if you don't

like to think of it. Just the way one falls in love with roses, with sunsets. But where I come from, a man is fussy when he gets married. I'm fussy."

His arms were about her now. She stood tense, not able to speak. If what he said were true, it was like something in a book—something lovely, a dream come true.

"Maybe I'd better tell you who I am, at that. I'm plain John Parker from Montana. I have a ranch, some horses, money. I came to see the town. I stayed because I saw you, because I wanted to take you back with me."

There were two big tears in her eyes, and he kissed them away before he went on speaking:

"If you're willing to live quietly in the country most of the time, that is. If you like to ride horses and pet dogs. If you think you'd like a home and——"

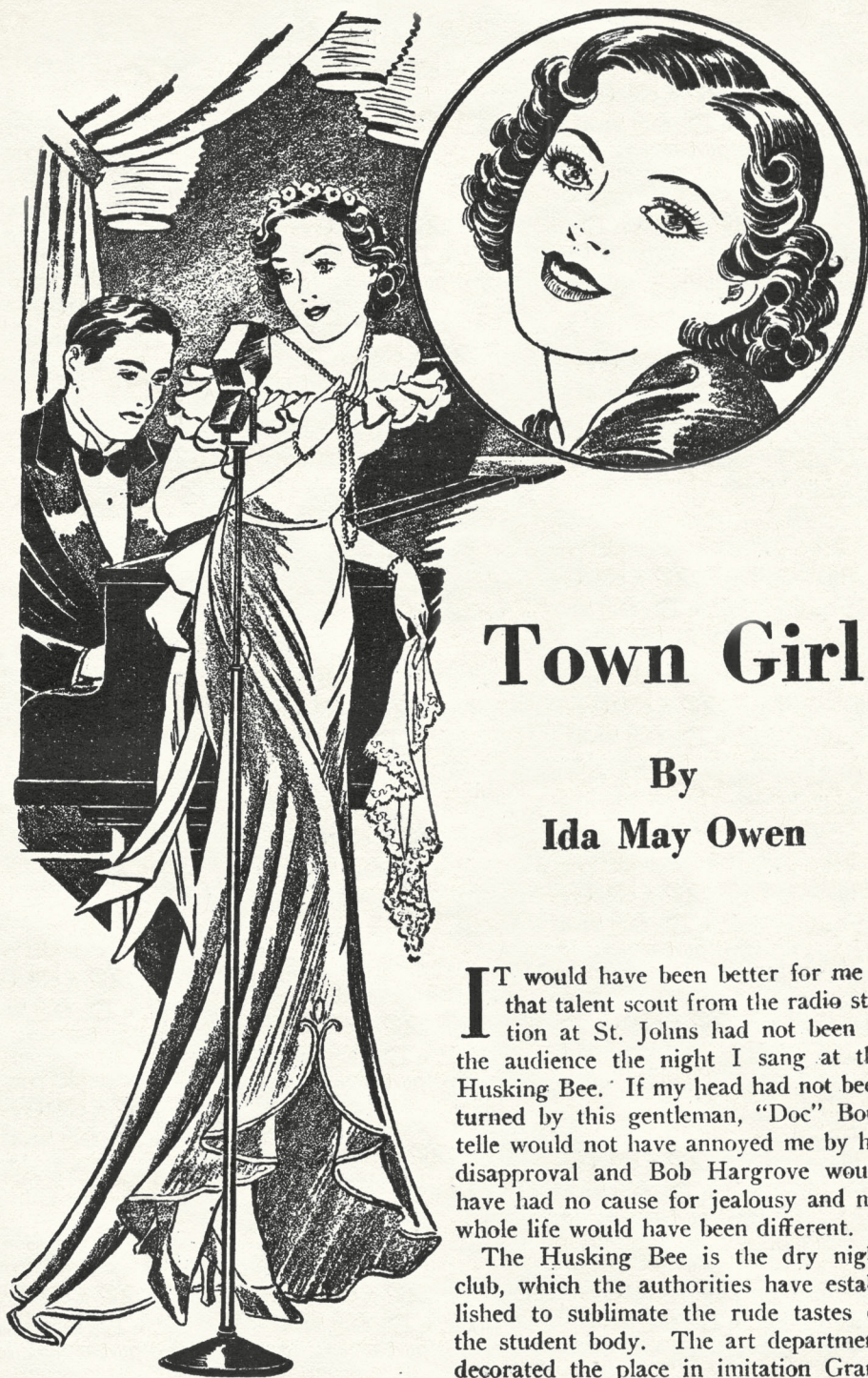
She stammered: "I don't know what to say. I'm all mixed up."

"Maybe this will help you decide." His arms tightened around her so that she could not have gotten away if she had wanted to. His arms were steel-strong, his lips against hers were strong, fierce and tender, all at the same time. Some flame seemed to seep into her veins—a delicious flame of excitement and wonder.

He murmured against her lips, "Now do you know?"

Amory shut her eyes. "Kiss me again. I've always dreamed of being kissed like that. I don't know anything, except that I want you to go on kissing me forever."





Town Girl

By
Ida May Owen

IT would have been better for me if that talent scout from the radio station at St. Johns had not been in the audience the night I sang at the Husking Bee. If my head had not been turned by this gentleman, "Doc" Bottelle would not have annoyed me by his disapproval and Bob Hargrove would have had no cause for jealousy and my whole life would have been different.

The Husking Bee is the dry night club, which the authorities have established to sublimate the rude tastes of the student body. The art department decorated the place in imitation Grant Wood farm scenes; amateur student

swing bands furnish the music; the floor show is in charge of the various sororities and fraternities; only soft drinks are sold. You can't beat fun!

It was Beta Zeta's turn to provide entertainment, and the girls insisted on my singing a couple of pash songs in my cigarette contralto. I had never taken my voice seriously, until that Shannon man, from WZX, handed me his line.

I broke my date with Bob Hargrove to go with his fraternity brother, Doc Boutelle. I played around with a lot of boys, but Bob was the one who cared most. He was getting hard to handle, so when Doc asked me, I told Bob that I had forgotten about a long-standing date we had, just to put him in his place.

Doc Boutelle was a challenge to me, just as he had been to all the Beta Zeta honeys who had failed with him. His own fraternity brothers in Psi Chi respected him as a hard-to-get guy. He had his life all mapped out: graduation from the medical school, internship, a three-year fellowship at the clinic, a hospital job as staff surgeon, and then private practice. He didn't plan to marry until he was thirty-five. That he was handsome in a clean, blond way and more mature and more courteous than the average college boy did not interest me half as much as his reputation as a woman hater.

I found Doc hard going, for he treated me like a little girl. The Beta Zetas are supposed to be the most sophisticated gang on the campus; the jealous Sigmas even call us steppers, so Doc Boutelle's attitude piqued me.

Mary Kay Porter, my best friend, dropped over to the table where Doc and I were sipping our cokes. "That man over there is from WZX. He's looking for new talent. That's your chance, Marnie." She nodded toward a table where two older men of thirty or thereabouts were sitting.

"Why did you tell me?" I moaned. "Now I'm a sure flop."

"You're simply marvy," she encouraged. "You're on after the truckin' sextet. Forget everything and get up and give." She made a giving gesture with her whole expressive body and left us, leaving me in inner panic.

"That's what bores me about those babies," Doc grumbled. "They think honky-tonk manners are cute. Get up and give!"

"The girls think that just because I do close harmony after the third drink that I can sing," I explained. "I'm scared."

Doc reached over and covered my hand with his competent-looking surgeon's fingers. "You're sweet, to-night, Marnie. If I were going to go for any girl, I'd go for a little dark one in a white dress."

"Symbol of purity, I suppose." Bob Hargrove, who was glowering jealously at me, would never have said that about my smooth white satin which molded my slimness with a minimum of cloth before it flared discreetly to the floor. It wasn't meant to be an innocent dress, and I resented Doc's reaction.

"Well, yes," he admitted. "And I like you when you're natural. You don't quite get away with that trollop line."

"So you like them innocent?" I flashed a smile at Bob Hargrove. He liked me too much; Doc, too little.

Doc ignored my taunt. "You're tense, now," he diagnosed. "You're nervous because a professional is here. Forget about him. Sing to me. That will give you confidence and blur the rest of the audience."

I could see that Bob was having a fit because Doc was holding my hand, so I withdrew and said, "I'll do that." I mentally added, "And how!" I hated his smug, righteous attitude. Hated his noble seriousness. Even Dean Hurst, the dean of women, variously known

as "Old Ironsides" and "The Well-corseted Mrs. Pettiblon," would approve of him.

The truckees finished their encore, and Renee Irwin, sheathed in black, announced, "Marnie Loomis, the well-known Beta Zeta blues singer, will wring our heartstrings with 'You'll Never Know.'"

I squeezed Doc's hand, found Bob's eyes and swept forward. It was the first time I had ever sung in public, and even before my friends I felt shaky. I propped myself against the piano, and played with my chiffon handkerchief while my accompanist played dissonant chords as a prelude. The man from WZX was watching me, so, fixing my yearning gaze on Doc Boutelle, I started to sing.

I forgot the talent scout, forgot Bob, forgot the crowd. The only thought I had was to show Doc Boutelle that I was hot and that his opinion of me was wrong.

As I began he beamed encouragingly at me, but when heads were turned toward him, grinning, he became grim. My encore was "My Sweet Papa's Gone," and I delivered it in the same way, singing sweet at first, then swinging the second chorus. Directed at Doc, my numbers were a riot.

Because Doc Boutelle's *Sir Galahad* complex was so well known, the applause was tumultuous. I made my way back to the table through a shower of congratulations. I snuggled up to Doc. "Did I get across?"

He looked handsomer than ever with that set, angry look on his flushed face. "A sweet exhibition!" he scolded. "If you had any idea of what you meant, you'd be ashamed of yourself."

"Maybe I do and maybe I'm not." I was furious at his prudish superiority. "Just because you came to this corn-belt college from a city you needn't think that every coed is a hick."

His remote smile was irritating. "I just think that little girls should have their mouths washed out with soap. Let's clear out."

I was aghast. "And not dance?"

"And not dance. We're going home by the nice, clean river and look at the nice, clean stars. Then it will be time for little girls to be in bed."

I stood up, too, and called to Bob Hargrove. "Doc's walking out on me, Bob. Do you happen to be wanting a girl?"

"I want my girl," said Bob, slipping my arm through his. He scowled up at Doc, who was half a head taller. Bob was cute, though, with his wavy black hair and dimpled chin. If he only weren't so hard to handle!

Renee came up with Al Shannon and introduced him above the blare of the orchestra. He was old, about thirty, and his good clothes and assured air set him apart from the college boys.

"You got over big," he said. "I enjoyed your numbers very much. Would you be interested in an audition for WZX?"

"Interested? Thrilled!" I spoke in my throatiest tones.

"There is an arresting quality about your lower register. Won't you and your friend join us?"

"Thanks no," said Doc. "We're just leaving."

"I'd love to," I cried.

We glared at each other and Bob held me tighter. Mr. Shannon was smooth. "This occasion demands a celebration and not with cokes. What about coming back to St. Johns with me and we'll put on a party that is a party."

"Perfect!" I agreed. Bob was willing but Doc did not want to let me go.

"St. Johns is out of bounds without a permit, and the fun you'll have isn't worth the penalty you'll get. Besides, I took you out to-night and I'm respon-

sible for you." Doc was right, of course, for drinking parties at St. Johns, a small city twenty-five miles away, were taboo to college students. They treated us like infants at Eyota, even patrolling the river with guards so that no heavy necking could take place in canoes.

Doc hadn't any right to tell me what I could and couldn't do. "I'm a town girl," I insisted. "No one knows when I'm out of bounds. I have a latchkey, and I don't have to come in through a coal chute the way the girls at the house do when they're out late."

"Sure, we'll come to your party, Shannon. We'll trail you in my car." It was Bob's way of showing Doc that he was top man. We left Doc standing there.

The party would have been grand if Bob hadn't gotten jealous of Al Shannon. Shannon monopolized me, talking radio, planning the build-up he'd give me, and buying round after round of drinks. Bob saw him kissing me while we were dancing and broke up the party. I was a little tight by that time and didn't want to go home, but Bob made such a scene that we finally left with a promise to look Al Shannon up the first time I came to St. Johns.

"Ol' meanie!" I said. "Best party I ever had." We were in Bob's car again, headed homeward. "You kids think you do a lot for a girl if you buy her a couple of beers. Mr. Shannon knows how to treat a girl."

"Oh, he does, does he? He was trying to make you, that's what he was trying to do."

"Let him try. That's all the good that it will do him. But you were an ol' meanie to take me away from that orchestra and those lovely whisky sours."

"I'll show you a better orchestra and better drinks." Bob turned his car around and parked near the St. Johns Hotel.

We shouldn't have done it. We should have gone home while we were still able, but Bob Hargrove was so jealous that he couldn't bear to have me praise any other man.

It was almost twelve o'clock so he ordered three Scotch-and-sodas and three whisky sours and parked them on the table before us by the time the bar closed.

We had already had plenty, and these added drinks were just too much. Bob had a single idea, that we should get married, and he kept arguing with me. By the time a weary bartender put us out I was ready to agree to anything.

We weaved out to the lobby. "See here, I can't drive like this," Bob said. "I'm drunk. Stay all night."

"Ol' Ironsides won't let us," I feebly protested.

"S all right. We're getting married to-morrow. That'll make it right."

I draped myself over the desk while Bob, after many scratches and much blotting managed to register as "John Smith and wife." He got into quite an argument with the night clerk, who wouldn't give us a room. He pegged us for college students and said that they had already had too much trouble with the university authorities.

"Keep your hotel," said Bob, grandly. "There are other hotels that will be glad—" But once in his car he decided to go home. I didn't care where we went, for I fell asleep right away.

I roused when the car stopped. We were off the narrow two-laned highway that led to Eyota and now parked on the soft shoulder. "Can't make it," said Bob. "Gotta get sleep." He passed out with his head on my shoulder, and I cuddled down and dropped off again. That is absolutely everything that happened, regardless of what people said.

When I came to I was lying in a cornfield. There were a lot of people

around, and I could hear Bob Hargrove calling me and asking me if I were hurt. His car was on its side in a ditch, and the car that had hit us had completely overturned. The scream of the ambulance siren brought me to my senses. Neither Bob nor I suffered anything but bruises because we had been so completely relaxed.

What had happened was that some kids, who were pretty tight, were coming back to Eyota at seventy miles an hour and, seeing our tail lights, got off the highway and on the shoulder. The driver hadn't realized that we were parked and had struck us as he attempted to regain the road. Some of the kids were pretty badly messed up.

They took us to the hospital, and, though we weren't hurt, Bob and I thought we'd better sleep the few remaining hours of the night and see what could be done with the car in the morning. I telephoned my dad about what had happened and assured him that I was all right and went to bed, where I stayed until noon.

I admit that things looked worse than they were, and a college town is prepared to believe the worst. The newspaper photographers snapped Bob and me together over my protests, because my once-lovely white satin was a wreck. The St. Johns papers never miss a chance to play up a flaming-youth college story, and the fact that we were in a parked car on our way home from a drinking party was right up their alley.

My case came up before the student council, and if Doc Boutelle had not been on it as medic representative I might have gotten off easier. But the combination of his I-told-you-so air and Old Ironsides's aggrieved I-trust-my-girls manner was too much for me. My defiance got me expelled, while Bob's smoothness got him off easier, for he only was campussed for a month and deprived of his car for the rest of the school year. The indignation against

student drinking ran high, because some of the occupants of the other car had been badly hurt.

I couldn't believe that I was expelled. My dad was a sociology professor, and I did not think that they would do this to me on his account. He believed my story but said that he was helpless and that the decision was for the general good. I had broken the laws and must abide by the consequences.

The story of how Bob and I had tried to register at the St. Johns Hotel as man and wife was discovered by a sob sister on the paper and she publicly deplored student morals. To get around any possible libel suit she printed a photostatic copy of the hotel register with quotes from the hotel management on how they tried to cooperate with the university.

My only excuse was that I was tight and didn't realize what we were doing, but that didn't go down at all with the sisters in chapter meeting. They jerked my pin for not upholding the Beta Zeta ideals of true womanhood. That was a laugh, because most of them had done what I had done, and more, and the only reason that they didn't try to get away with a lot of things was because our house mother was so strict and followed all Old Ironsides's regulations.

It was a terrible jolt to me to be fired from school. Dad was sweet to me, but I knew that he was disappointed in me. I was glad that my mother had not lived to face my disgrace.

I had been rushed by every sorority, though some of them were just courtesy dates, of course, and bidden by the first five. Beta Zeta had crowed over the big haul that they had made in the fall and had gloated over me as their prize. Now, with all the scandal, they turned suddenly virtuous. It was sickening.

I thought that I would show them. I went to St. Johns and looked up Al

Shannon. He came through with the audition all right, but the production manager was a woman and the man who heard me was a musician, so my tests didn't get across. They were kind and said nice things about my possibilities and suggested lessons.

Al Shannon took me out to dinner at the Palm Garden, which had been the scene of our party that night, and gave me advice on how to get into radio. By the second cocktail he was trying to make me. Bob Hargrove had had grounds for his jealousy. I had no one but myself to blame. My choice of songs that night, my mode of delivery, my eagerness for a wild party, had made him think that I was a hot number.

I acknowledged to myself that Doc Boutelle was right. Maybe I wasn't as sophisticated as I thought myself to be. I shook this Al Shannon as soon as I could and drove back to Eyota, a wiser girl.

I was pretty blue in the days that followed, for I missed the interfrat, the spring prom, and a lot of good formals to which I would have been asked if I were still in school and still a Beta Zeta. Now, even the plainest barb was more desirable than I was.

I hadn't seen Bob Hargrove since the scandal, though he had called me several times to see how I was getting along and to say that he'd be seeing me as soon as he was through being campussed.

Then, one night when he did call me for a date, we thought we'd go canoeing in the May moonlight. Bob looked cute that night, in his white flannels, his dark wavy hair slickly shining. He had lashes that a movie star might envy, and the deep dimple in his square chin was very attractive. Bob and I had a lot in common, I mused. When he asked me again, I'd say "yes." If I were the first Beta Zeta to be married, that would be something.

But marriage wasn't in Bob's mind.

The discipline he had gone through had changed him. He was running with the pack, not against it.

He paddled downstream until he came to a dark spot where he anchored the canoe by a clump of willows. There he changed his seat and reclined on the pillows beside me. With his arms about me, he told me how lonely he had been for me and how he had missed me.

We kissed each other, just as we used to do; but instead of telling me that he loved me and asking me to marry him, he began to make violent love to me. His questing lips found my neck and his restless hands unfastened the buttons of my blouse as his caresses became more daring. He was getting out of control and my slaps only made him more persistent.

"Don't be like that, Marnie. I love you—I've been waiting—so long."

We struggled in the rocking canoe. "If you don't quit, I'll scream and bring a guard here."

"What's wrong with you to-night? Come on, Marnie! I'll make you happy. There's nothing wrong with——"

"Please, Bob." I was breathless from wrestling. "To-night I was sure I loved you. I thought I'd say 'yes' when you asked me to marry you; now you act like this——"

"Oh, you know I can't marry till I'm through school. What's the sense in waiting? I love you, darling, darling girl——" His seductive, disturbing kisses thrilled me, but my wounded pride came to my rescue.

I screamed for help. I heard the sound of oars cleaving the water as the patrol shouted an answer. Bob got back to his old seat, facing me, and pushed off.

I was so mad that I cried a little. "You know I'm not that kind of girl," I told him.

"You have the name; why not have the fun? You can't beat fun," he



"You know I can't marry till I'm through school. What's the sense in waiting? I love you, darling, darling girl." His seductive, disturbing kisses thrilled me, but my wounded pride came to my rescue.

quoted, using the old campus catch phrase. For the first time I understood what it meant. Doc Boutelle had been right. I was dumb about a lot of things.

"We'd better go back."

"O. K."

We had nothing to say to each other. Our aborted romance was just another

campus affair. Bob Hargrove didn't love me. If he had, he wouldn't have accepted the popular verdict about me. He would have known better.

I had a dull time that spring. I saw a little of Mary Kay and Renee and some of the girls who had condemned me as a sorority but who believed in

me as an individual. The boys who dated me wanted to go on drinking parties at St. Johns, or out riding or canoeing, places that were forbidden to college kids but which were expected of me as a town girl, whose actions were supposed to be unrestricted.

I don't know what I would have done if it hadn't been for my music. I found that I didn't know a thing about singing, but my voice improved under coaching and my teacher thought that I had possibilities. I was pretty much ashamed, now, of the show I had put on at the Husking Bee.

I got pretty close to my dad during the summer which we spent at our cottage in Maine. We sailed and fished and swam together, and by the fall, when it was time to go back to school, our companionship had given me a new slant on life.

"You can make a comeback," he assured me. "I'd like you to fit yourself to earn a living. You'll never know when you need it."

"I always thought I'd like to be married."

"Men take you at your own valuation," he went on. "They seldom marry a girl they can throw around, because they think that every other fellow can do the same."

"It's so puzzling, dad. If you want to be popular you have to pet, and one thing leads to another. They take it for granted—" I told him about Bob and how disillusioned I had been. I blamed it on the freedom he had given me as a town girl.

"You have liberty because I have faith in you," he said. "You've had your lesson. You can rely on your own judgments from now on. You were just a little girl experimenting with life. You've grown up now."

"You talk like Doc Boutelle." My one date with that boy still rankled.

"That boy is a better bet than a dozen Hargroves," was my dad's opinion.

It was hard to go back to school in the fall and harder still not to be a Beta Zeta. I enrolled in a pre-med course with a view to becoming a lab technician. In high school, before I had become so boy-crazy, I had often been on the honor roll, and in my senior year I had a straight A average in chemistry. I confess that Doc Boutelle had no small part in my choice of a profession.

But if I expected to run into him in one of the medical buildings I was mistaken. He was a senior and had part of his work in the University hospital, which was off my beat. The few times I did see him we were both with other people and merely exchanged casual greetings.

I still was careful about my grooming; I still wore smart clothes, but I was a different girl inside. The boys who used to date me were not aware of that. Their attitude showed me only too plainly where I stood on the campus. I could have had plenty of drinking parties in St. Johns and plenty of petting parties on the river, but nowadays I imposed on myself the same restrictions as the college girls. The boys seldom tried a second date when they found I would not give them what they wanted.

My comradeship with my father deepened. I discovered that he was a grand human being. I became his hostess, and he entertained distinguished visitors in our home instead of the faculty club. I made friends with a couple of young instructors and went with them to concerts and lectures and little theater plays. There were other things in life besides necking a cute kid who belonged to the right fraternity.

I had been taken into a professional sorority as a matter of course, for the requirements were scholastic and if the girls had any doubts about my character they gave me the benefit of them. It was through this chapter that Eileen Benton became a friend of mine.

One day she caught up with me on

the campus. "I want to ask you something confidentially, Marnie. I'm a Sigma, you know, and the girls are interested in you, but they don't want to bid you and get turned down. We think that Beta Zeta should have stood by you. I think all that stuff last year was just newspaper talk."

My spirits soared. "It was true enough," I confessed. "We, my dad and I, think that it is a good thing it happened. I got a terrific jolt and it was hard to take, but I think I'm almost happy now."

"Well, mull it over. I'll ask you again, Monday."

Mary Kay dropped over soon after that and I told her my problem. I didn't owe anything to Beta Zeta, since they had jerked my pin, but I had scruples about joining another society when I already knew the inner secrets of its rival.

"Hold everything till you hear from me," Mary Kay begged. "Beta's your bunch. Who of us haven't been tight? Who hasn't broken rules? How many never spent the night with a man?"

"Well, I haven't," I said. "Reputation to the contrary."

"Sure, I know. I always felt that your *femme fatale* line didn't ring true. I love you, darling, so hold everything till you hear from me."

I asked dad's advice. "I'm a fraternity man," he said. "I believe that secret societies have their place. However, you must admit that they are childish, that their vows of loyalty don't hold water and that you can exist without them."

"Then you mean to turn both down?" I asked.

"Not necessarily. If you feel congenial with a certain type and have friends, join. Social standards at college are artificial. The friends you've made this year have been drawn by your real personality. I've been proud

to have you at the head of my table, my dear."

I didn't decide anything right then, for it would be time enough if and when I were asked. The incident bolstered my pride and cut away the inferiority which had hampered me since my disgrace.

That is why, when a famous name band which was touring the country broadcasting from various campuses was scheduled for Eyota, that I went in for the try-outs. I was lucky enough to be chosen.

The broadcast was to take place at an all-college dance in the armory. I hoped that Doc Boutelle would be there. This time I would not be a conceited little freshman dressed like a demi-mondaine, making up in personality what she lacked in voice. I'd show him. But then, he'd probably not even be at such a frivolous affair. There was plenty of publicity, though, and if he read at all, he couldn't help knowing that I was to sing.

I went with dad and Byron Wilson, a young instructor in his department. I wore white again, an off-the-shoulder, transparent thing that made me feel like a sixteen-year-old. On my dark curls was a diadem of gardenias.

I was really frightened now. My only experience before the mike was that memorable audition where I had failed. Before I had had an audience of friends, but now the huge armory was jammed with strangers, and the unseen audience on the air was still more terrifying.

Then Doc Boutelle, as if he intuitively understood my panic, sought me out backstage. He towered over me, handsome and blond and shy.

"There's only one thing that could pull me here to-night."

I smiled up at him. "What's that?"

"You." He was embarrassed. "I was so rotten to you that other time. I've always felt that if I hadn't made you mad you wouldn't—it wouldn't

have—— Oh, gosh, you know what I mean——”

Joy suffused over me. I was so happy that I could have swooned then and there.

“Where are you sitting?” I didn’t want to go into what he wanted to talk about. It was enough to know that he had gotten over his disgust of me.

“I’ll stand back here with your father.”

“No, please go out front, all of you. Stand some place at the back and pray for me. I need it.”

“You’re lovely, Marnie. You—you——” Then he caught my dad’s amused glance and followed him.

I did my first number well enough, for it was one that I had been coached on, but I wasn’t satisfied. I kept looking around, trying to find my men, but they were lost in the mob. The master of ceremonies cut short the applause and announced my second number.

It was then that I spied Doc, at the back of the hall. I remembered the cheap way I had sung to him that other awful time, and this time my song was my apology. The orchestra was marvelous and on the second chorus they started to jam it. I was intoxicated by their rhythm and sang any old syllables that came into my head as my whole body responded, and I forgot even Doc and went to town with the boys.

Doc found me backstage, and I guess that dad must have detained Byron, because they never did find us. One of the trombones called to me, “Boss wants you to wait.”

“You were swell, Marnie,” Doc kept complimenting me, but he was low about something. “I never knew you could sing like that. Why mess around a lab when you can do this?”

We waited until intermission, when the big boss came up to me. “We’re almost through this college circuit, and after that we go back to the studio for

thirteen weeks for the same sponsor. I’ve a spot for a girl with my band and I think you’ve got what it takes. Interested?”

“Tremendously.”

“I’ll see you after the dance and we can talk it over. Is there a night club here, or what about that big town we came through?”

“There is at St. Johns.” I didn’t dare look at Doc.

“St. Johns it is then. I’ll be watching you at the dance.”

Doc Boutelle was standing glumly listening to us. “Come on in,” I begged. “It isn’t often that we have a chance to dance to an orchestra like this.”

Mary Kay and Renee rushed up. “Darling, you were divine! We’re so proud of you. To-morrow you’re going to find a note from Beta Zeta in your post-office box, but we can’t wait to tell you. It’s not merely a bid, but we’re telling you how ashamed we are because we didn’t stand by you in your trouble.”

My cup of joy was full. I had Doc and I had a tentative offer of a job. The sorority didn’t loom with great importance. I hesitated.

“When we went for Old Ironsides’s O. K., she said you’d gotten a lot of poise and sense. She said you’d be a good influence,” Mary Kay giggled. “Do be a sport and say ‘yes.’”

I was too happy to be anything but a sport.

When the girls asked if we were coming in to dance, Doc said that we would come along in a minute but that we had to do something first, so they left us. Doc took me out to his car, where we could talk in private.

“I’m not going to ask you not to go to St. Johns,” he began. “This guy is on the level. He’s offering you a real job. The other time——”

“——is past. You were right about me, Doc, but I’m a different girl now. No

more hotcha! I've a new sense of values."

"I'm not going to crab your chance, but I can't let you go, Marnie, without telling you I love you. This year has been torture, loving you, wanting you, knowing that my stupidity got you into that jam——"

I snuggled against him, so that he put his arm about me. "I have nothing to offer you to compete with that job. Internship. Three years on a fellowship at seventy-five dollars a month. Who could support a wife on that?"

"Maybe some one's wife would know enough to hold a job by that time."

He paid no attention. "A staff job in a hospital at a pittance. A struggle for the first years in practice. I—I'm glad about this radio thing, Marnie. Get you to New York. Meet interesting people. I want you to go, Marnie, but I also want you to know that I love you."

"You're a swell salesman, Doc!

Every argument is against your own product."

"I can't ask you to marry on nothing and I can't ask you to wait——"

"But you can ask me to wait till I get through school and you can ask me to work with you side by side——"

"You mean——"

My answer was my lips. My whole body was vibrant with emotion as I lay, at last, in his eager arms, losing my loneliness in his dear nearness.

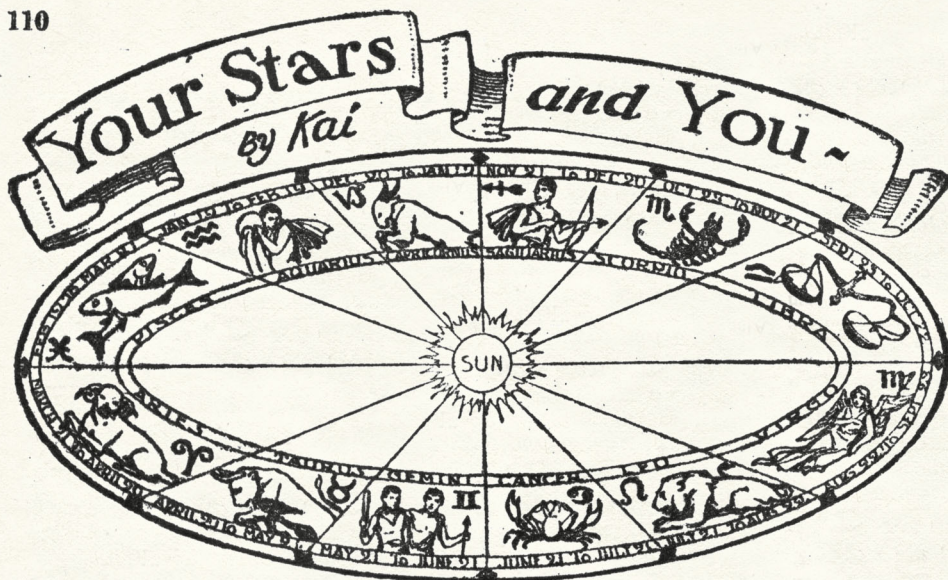
Gone is the shame of my abused freedom. Gone is the cheap thrill of the love game. We have three years of waiting ahead of us before I can get a lab job. The urges of youth are demanding, and three years is a long time. But I am certain that Doc is worth waiting for. The consummation of our love will be all the sweeter because it took self-denial and self-respect to win it. I am convinced that there is no hey-hey way to happiness.



TRIBUTE

FOR all the myriad kindnesses you do,
Inadequately I can but express
My gratitude for your sweet thoughtfulness
Throughout the old years and the joyous new,
For all our years have glowed with radiant hue.
Full measure of real joy they shall possess
If I can hold intact your warm caress
And be all-worthy of your love and you.
The maple's vivid flame has faded; snow
And sleet and piercing winds are here again.
But on our cozy hearth the bright logs glow
And, confident, we look ahead to when
A new spring shall renew our vows once more
To love, to cherish ever, and adore.

FRANCES I. SHINN.



YOUR WEEK

The major influences during the week will be mostly beneficial. Your judgment is apt to be poor in matters involving travel, especially if it affects environmental matters, so postpone unnecessary decisions along these lines during the week. Friends will be of much assistance to each other, especially in financial and occupational matters, and environmental benefits may come through friends. Adjustments in business and other routine matters may reduce expenses as well as add to your income. The week will be excellent for money matters and many of you will receive unexpected financial benefits. Love interests will be promoted for many of you by a better financial situation and also through the co-operation of friends. Those out of work should redouble their efforts to gain employment this week. Study the "Day by Day" influences and the "Born Between —" section applicable to your birth date, and be alert to your opportunities during the week.

DAY BY DAY

Hours mentioned are Eastern standard time. If not using that time, make correction to the time you are using.

Saturday, January 1st

♌

During the morning hours you may have opportunity to advance your business interests by alert thinking. Environmental benefits may be received. Love interests

can be advanced by attention to material problems. Between 11:30 a. m. and 1:00 p. m., unexpected financial benefits may be received. Between 1:00 p. m. and 5:00 p. m., friends will do you favors. Business and financial benefits may be received. Love and marriage interests can be advanced. The evening hours may be quiet.

Sunday, January 2nd

☺

During the morning hours, business, financial, and employment benefits may be received. Love interests can be advanced. Friends will do you favors. Beneficial adjustments in environmental matters may occur. The early-afternoon hours may be quiet. Between 4:30 p. m. and 5:30 p. m., mark time in environmental and occupational matters. Avoid extravagance in money matters. Between 5:30 p. m. and 7:00 p. m., friends may do you favors. Business and financial benefits may come through alert thinking. Between 7:00 p. m. and midnight, social interests can be advanced.

Monday, January 3rd

♌

The morning hours will be very beneficial in most matters. Business, financial, and environmental benefits may be received. Love interests can be advanced. Pleasant surprises are likely to be received. Between 2:00 p. m. and 3:45 p. m., business and financial benefits may be received. Social interests can be advanced. Between 3:45 p. m. and 5:30 p. m., mark time in

employment matters. Avoid business transactions with friends. You may be put to unexpected financial expense. The early-evening hours may be quiet. Between 10:30 p. m. and midnight, curtail social activities. Mark time in love and courtship. You may be put to unexpected financial expense.

Tuesday, January 4th



During the early-morning hours, business and financial benefits may be received. Between 8:15 a. m. and 9:30 a. m., mark time in environmental matters. Avoid business dealings with friends. The later-morning hours may be quiet. Between noon and 2:00 p. m., watch your speech carefully. Avoid misunderstandings with friends. Avoid unnecessary business transactions. The later-afternoon hours and early-evening hours may be quiet. Between 11:00 p. m. and midnight, curtail social activities. Avoid extravagance in money matters.

Wednesday, January 5th



During the morning hours, business and financial benefits may be received. Love interests can be advanced, but be careful in courtship. Between 1:00 p. m. and 3:30 p. m., environmental benefits may be received. Curtail social activities. Avoid extravagance in money matters. Between 3:30 p. m. and 5:00 p. m., environmental benefits may be received. You may be able to add to your income by alert thinking. Between 5:00 p. m. and 9:30 p. m. may be quiet. Between 9:30 p. m. and midnight, social interests can be advanced. Friends will do you favors. Environmental benefits may be received.

Thursday, January 6th



During the early-morning hours, mark time in employment matters. Business benefits may be received. Between 9:00 a. m. and 10:30 a. m., unexpected financial benefits may be received. Pleasant surprises may come to you. Between 11:30 a. m. and 1:00 p. m., environmental benefits may be received. Business benefits may come through alert thinking. Between 1:15 p. m. and 3:00 p. m., mark time in environmental matters. Be careful around dangerous bodies of water. The later-afternoon hours and early-evening hours may be quiet. Between 9:00 p. m. and mid-

night, business and environmental benefits may be received. Love interests can be advanced.

Friday, January 7th



During the morning hours, mark time in environmental and employment matters. Avoid unnecessary business transactions with friends. Unexpected financial benefits may be received. Between 12:30 p. m. and 3:00 p. m., mark time in environmental matters. Be careful around dangerous bodies of water. You may be put to unexpected financial expense. The later-afternoon hours may be quiet. Between 8:30 p. m. and past midnight, mark time in environmental and employment matters. Avoid the transaction of unnecessary business. Be careful of your speech. Avoid unnecessary travel. Curtail social activities.

The influences affecting the particular zodiacal group to which you belong are given in the "Born Between—" section of this article, which you should also consult.



IF YOU WERE BORN BETWEEN

March 21st and April 20th

(Aries ♈)

—Aries people born between March 21st and 26th should avoid extravagance in money matters this week. Business benefits may be received. Friends will do you favors. Best day for you this week, Monday. If born between March 27th and 31st, unexpected financial benefits may be received. Curtail social activities. Best day for you this week, Monday. Mark time on Saturday. If born between April 1st and 5th, financial and environmental benefits may be received. Be careful in courtship. Best day for you this week, Tuesday. Mark time on Saturday. If born between April 6th and 10th, mark time in love and courtship. Best day for you this week, Tuesday. Mark time on Saturday and Sunday. If born between April 11th and 15th, be alert in employment matters. Best days for you this week, Tuesday and Wednesday. Mark time on Sunday. If born between April 16th and 20th, business, financial, and environmental benefits may be received. Love interests can be advanced. Best day for you this week, Wednesday. Mark time on Sunday and Monday.

April 20th and May 21st
(Taurus ♉)

—Taureans born between April 20th and 26th should avoid unnecessary business transactions with friends this week. Financial benefits may be received, but people will ask to borrow money from you. Best days for you this week, Wednesday and Thursday. Mark time on Monday. If born between April 27th and May 1st, the unexpected may happen in money matters. Be careful in courtship. Best days for you this week, Saturday and Thursday. Mark time on Monday. If born between May 2nd and 6th, be careful in courtship. You may be put to unexpected financial expense. Business and environmental benefits may be received. Best days for you this week, Saturday and Thursday. Mark time on Tuesday. If born between May 7th and 11th, financial benefits may be received. Love and marriage interests can be advanced. Best days for you this week, Saturday, Sunday, Thursday, and Friday. Mark time on Tuesday. If born between May 12th and 16th, employment and financial benefits may be received. Love interests can be advanced. Best days for you this week, Sunday and Friday. Mark time on Tuesday and Wednesday. If born between May 17th and 21st, environmental, business, and financial benefits may be received. Love interests can be advanced. Best days for you this week, Sunday, Monday, and Friday. Mark time on Wednesday.

May 21st and June 21st
(Gemini ♊)

—Geminians born between May 21st and 26th will find this an excellent week in which to advance love and marriage interests. Friends will do you favors. Financial benefits may be received. Best day for you this week, Monday. Mark time on Wednesday and Thursday. If born between May 27th and 31st, be careful around fire and sharp instruments. Mark time in love and courtship. Financial benefits may be received. Best day for you this week, Monday. Mark time on Thursday. If born between June 1st and 6th, be careful in courtship. Financial benefits may be received. Best day for you this week, Tuesday. Mark time on Thursday. If born between June 7th and 11th, love interests can be advanced. Best day for you this week, Tuesday. Mark time on Thursday and Friday. If born between June 12th and 16th, mark time in employment matters. Best days for you this week, Tues-

day and Wednesday. Mark time on Friday. If born between June 17th and 21st, avoid falls and be careful around dangerous bodies of water. Be careful of your speech. Avoid misunderstandings. Mark time in love and courtship. Best day for you this week, Wednesday. Mark time on Friday.

June 21st and July 23rd
(Cancer ♋)

—Cancerians born between June 21st and 27th should curtail social activities this week. Best days for you this week, Wednesday and Thursday. If born between June 28th and July 2nd, unexpected financial benefits may be received. Be careful in courtship. Best day for you this week, Thursday. Mark time on Saturday. If born between July 3rd and 7th, environmental and unexpected financial benefits may be received. Be careful in courtship. Best day for you this week, Thursday. Mark time on Saturday. If born between July 8th and 12th, mark time in love, courtship, and home affairs. Best day for you this week, Friday. Mark time on Sunday. If born between July 13th and 18th, employment and home benefits may be received. Best day for you this week, Friday. Mark time on Sunday. If born between July 19th and 23rd, environmental and home benefits may be received. Best day for you this week, Friday. Mark time on Sunday and Monday.

July 23rd and August 23rd
(Leo ♌)

—Leo natives born between July 23rd and 28th should curtail social activities this week. Avoid extravagance in money matters. Mark time on Monday. If born between July 29th and August 2nd, you may be put to unexpected financial expense. Be careful in courtship. Mark time on Monday. If born between August 3rd and 7th, you may be put to unexpected financial expense. Be careful in courtship. Mark time on Tuesday. If born between August 8th and 13th, social interests can be advanced. Mark time on Tuesday. If born between August 14th and 18th, employment benefits may be received. Mark time on Tuesday and Wednesday. If born between August 19th and 23rd, mark time in love, courtship, and environmental matters. You may benefit in connection with a journey or with long-distance communication. Mark time on Wednesday.

August 23rd and September 23rd

(Virgo ♍)

—Virgo natives born between August 23rd and 28th will find this an excellent week in which to advance love and marriage interests. Employment benefits may be received. Mark time on Wednesday and Thursday. If born between August 29th and September 2nd, unexpected financial benefits may be received. Be careful in courtship. Avoid cuts and burns. Best day for you this week, Saturday. Mark time on Thursday. If born between September 3rd and 7th, be careful in courtship. Financial benefits may be received. Best day for you this week, Saturday. Mark time on Thursday. If born between September 8th and 13th, love interests can be advanced. Employment benefits may be received. Best days for you this week, Saturday and Sunday. Mark time on Thursday and Friday. If born between September 14th and 18th, be alert in employment matters. Best day for you this week, Sunday. Mark time on Friday. If born between September 19th and 23rd, avoid falls and dangerous bodies of water. Best days for you this week, Sunday and Monday. Mark time on Friday.

September 23rd and October 23rd

(Libra ♎)

—Librans born between September 23rd and 28th may receive financial and other assistance from friends this week. Be careful of your speech. Best day for you this week, Monday. If born between September 29th and October 3rd, the unexpected may happen in money matters. Mark time in love and courtship. Best day for you this week, Monday. Mark time on Saturday. If born between October 4th and 8th, mark time in love, courtship, and marriage matters. You may be put to unexpected financial expense. Best day for you this week, Tuesday. Mark time on Saturday. If born between October 9th and 13th, avoid unnecessary occupational changes. Best day for you this week, Tuesday. Mark time on Saturday and Sunday. If born between October 14th and 18th, employment and marriage benefits may be received. Best days for you this week, Tuesday and Wednesday. Mark time on Sunday. If born between October 19th and 23rd, avoid unnecessary environmental changes. You may benefit in connection with correspondence. Best day for you this week, Wednesday. Mark time on Sunday, Monday, and Friday.

October 23rd and November 22nd

(Scorpio ♏)

—Scorpio people born between October 23rd and 28th should avoid extravagance in money matters this week. Curtail social activities. Occupational benefits may be received. Best days for you this week, Wednesday and Thursday. Mark time on Monday. If born between October 29th and November 2nd, you may be put to unexpected financial expense. Be careful in courtship. Best days for you this week, Saturday and Thursday. Mark time on Monday. If born between November 3rd and 7th, you may be put to unexpected financial expense. Be careful in courtship. Environmental benefits may be received. Best days for you this week, Saturday and Thursday. Mark time on Tuesday. If born between November 8th and 12th, love interests can be advanced. Best days for you this week, Saturday, Sunday, Thursday, and Friday. Mark time on Tuesday. If born between November 13th and 17th, employment benefits may be received. Love interests can be advanced. Best days for you this week, Sunday and Friday. Mark time on Tuesday and Wednesday. If born between November 18th and 22nd, you will find it an excellent week in which to advance love and marriage interests. Environmental benefits may be received. Best days for you this week, Sunday, Monday, and Friday. Mark time on Wednesday.

November 22nd and December 22nd

(Sagittarius ♐)

—Sagittarians born between November 22nd and 27th will find this an excellent week in which to advance love and marriage interests. Financial benefits may be received. Best day for you this week, Monday. Mark time on Wednesday and Thursday. If born between November 28th and December 2nd, the unexpected may happen in money matters. Mark time in love and courtship. Avoid cuts and burns. Best day for you this week, Monday. Mark time on Thursday. If born between December 3rd and 7th, mark time in love and courtship. Be careful around fire and sharp instruments. You may be put to unexpected financial expense. Best day for you this week, Tuesday. Mark time on Thursday. If born between December 8th and 12th, love interests can be advanced. Occupational benefits may be received. Best day for you this week, Tuesday. Mark time on Thursday and Friday. If born between December 13th and 17th, mark time in

employment matters. Best days for you this week, Tuesday and Wednesday. Mark time on Friday. If born between December 18th and 22nd, avoid falls and be careful around dangerous bodies of water. Mark time in love and courtship. Best day for you this week, Wednesday. Mark time on Friday.

December 22nd and January 20th (Capricorn ♑)

—Capricornians born between December 22nd and 26th will find this an excellent week in which to advance love and marriage interests. Financial benefits may be received. Best days for you this week, Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday. If born between December 27th and 31st, you will find it an excellent week in which to advance love and marriage interests, but be careful in courtship. Unexpected financial benefits may be received. Best days for you this week, Saturday and Thursday. If born between January 1st and 5th, love and marriage interests can be advanced, but be careful in courtship. Unexpected financial benefits may be received. Best days for you this week, Saturday and Thursday. If born between January 6th and 10th, love and marriage interests can be advanced. Occupational benefits may be received. Best days for you this week, Saturday, Sunday, Thursday, and Friday. If born between January 11th and 15th, employment benefits may be received. Love and marriage interests can be advanced. Best days for you this week, Sunday and Friday. If born between January 16th and 20th, love and marriage interests can be advanced. Business and environmental benefits may be received. Best days for you this week, Sunday, Monday, and Friday.

January 20th and February 19th (Aquarius ♒)

—Aquarians born between January 20th and 25th will find this an excellent week in which to advance love and marriage interests. Friends will do you favors. Financial benefits may be received. Best day for you this week, Monday. If born between January 26th and 30th, you may be put to unexpected financial expense. Be careful in courtship. Environmental benefits may be received. Best day for you this week, Saturday. If born between January 31st and February 4th, you may be put to unexpected financial expense. Environmental benefits may be received. Be

careful in courtship. Best day for you this week, Saturday. If born between February 5th and 9th, love and marriage interests can be advanced. Occupational benefits may be received. Best days for you this week, Saturday, Sunday, and Tuesday. If born between February 10th and 14th, be alert in employment matters. Best day for you this week, Sunday. If born between February 15th and 19th, business, financial, and environmental benefits may be received. Love interests can be advanced. Best day for you this week, Wednesday.

February 19th and March 21st (Pisces ♓)

—Pisceans born between February 19th and 24th will find this an excellent week in which to advance love and marriage interests. Business and financial benefits may be received. Best days for you this week, Wednesday and Thursday. If born between February 25th and March 1st, unexpected financial benefits may be received. Mark time in love and courtship. Avoid cuts and burns. Best day for you this week, Saturday. Be extra careful in courtship on Thursday. If born between March 2nd and 6th, unexpected financial benefits may be received. Mark time in love and courtship. Avoid cuts and burns. Best day for you this week, Saturday. Be extra careful in courtship on Thursday. If born between March 7th and 11th, love and marriage interests can be advanced. Best days for you this week, Saturday, Sunday, Thursday, and Friday. If born between March 12th and 16th, mark time in employment matters. Best days for you this week, Sunday. If born between March 17th and 21st, avoid falls and be careful around dangerous bodies of water. Mark time in love and courtship. Best days for you this week, Sunday and Monday. Mark time on Friday.

Note for "Born Between—" readers: The week referred to begins with Saturday, January 1st, and ends with Friday, January 7th. Compare with information given in "Your Week" and "Day by Day" to see what the general influences are.



MORE ABOUT CAPRICORN PEOPLE

If you were born between January 6th and 10th, you are filled with enthusiasm when doing the things you like to do; and you have a definite idea of what interests

you most. You have originality of thought, strong mentality, and good judgment. You have an excellent sense of humor, which comes in handy when things are not entirely to your liking. You are earnest, sincere, truthful, and courteous. You are conscious of your shortcomings as well as your general ability. You seldom overrate your ability to accomplish anything you set out to do. You are self-reliant and persevering, and take success as a matter of course, expecting to meet obstacles and being confident of your ability to overcome them. Success doesn't turn your head; hardships only make you try the harder. You are agreeable, constant in love and friendship, and eager to make life more pleasant for others. You have good musical ability and like things of a cultural nature. You like to travel, if given the opportunity. You may become engaged in commercial enterprises requiring much travel, some of it possibly in foreign lands. You should avoid speculation. You will be most successful in lines where the element of chance is a minor factor. You may become successful as a watchmaker and in the making of fine scales and precision instruments.

If you were born between January 11th and 15th, you usually qualify yourself to do many things, and the useful knowledge that you gain, you try to pass on to others. You are inclined to study a lot of things, however, that can be of no practical value to you other than the pleasure it gives to you. It will be to your advantage to pass up subjects that can bring you no material or cultural benefit, as there are many lines of endeavor you can pursue that will bring you both pleasure and profit. Recondite subjects are a challenge to your mentality and should you turn your attention to industrial research work, you may see beyond present knowledge to important discoveries generally beneficial. Experimental work in the growing of fruits and farm products may bring you success. Conservation of national resources by devising new and better ways of using them may be something that you can do. Improvements in machinery used in mining, farm work, road construction, dam building, and other earth-work may bring you material reward. Devising cheaper and more enduring building materials, and fabricating fireproof houses would be in your line. You may have secret ambitions and may become downcast if they are not realized. You are quiet and reserved, with good self-control. You are steadfast in your affections. In marriage you should get some

one who likes you as you are and will not try to make you over to another pattern.

If you were born between January 16th and 20th, you have a liking for technical subjects such as chemistry and higher mathematics. You may become very proficient in some technical line. Success may come to you in civil and mining engineering, and your knowledge may elevate you to a professorship or you may become a consulting engineer. Other technical lines requiring the utmost exactitude may offer you a promising field in which to display your talents. Due to your forceful characteristics, you take a leading part in whatever activities you essay. You are likely to advance to responsible positions. You may travel extensively in connection with your work, sometimes to foreign countries. Dairy farming may prove a profitable vocation for you. You love the best in music and have a deep sense of harmony, which manifests itself in your daily life. Consequently, you fail to do your best work in discordant surroundings. You like to be quiet and unharried and will do much to avert strife. Your self-control is good, but if goaded too far, you may lose it, to your after-regret, and to the consternation of those who assumed too much. You are determined, sincere, and kind. You are easy to get along with, if others make any appreciable effort to be agreeable. You are affectionate and have a good understanding of human nature. You make allowance for the shortcomings of others and often remain silent when criticism would seem to be in order. You speak as clearly as you think, sometimes so tersely as to seem almost abrupt. You may become prominent in athletics.

(Capricorn article to be continued next week.)

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
★ THE STAR QUESTION BOX ★
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

T. E. F., female, born July 7, 1915, 5:45 p. m., Maryland: You may have an excellent opportunity to marry happily about the latter part of October or the first part of November, 1938.

H. M. M., female, born July 4, 1916, about noon, Maryland: Unless careful, you are apt to contract an unsatisfactory marriage. During the next several years, the times most favorable for your contract-

ing a happy marriage will be approximately as follows: Last part of May and first part of June, 1938; middle of February, 1939; last half of March, 1940; September, 1941; last half of November, 1941.

Miss M. H., born July 6, 1912, time unknown, North Carolina: You did not ask a question.

Miss E. Y., born May 4, 1915, 10:00 a. m., Illinois: You will come under influences conducive to marriage at about the following times: First half of March, 1938, good; last part of July and first part of August, 1939, may be obstacles; last half of August, 1939, good.

Miss R. A. S., born December 15, 1920, between 3:00 a. m. and 4:00 a. m., Ohio: You may have favorable opportunity for marriage about the middle of June, the last part of November and the first part of December, 1938. Employment benefits may also come to you about those times.

V. H., female, born December 30, 1913, 2:00 p. m., Missouri: You "go around in circles" because you lack concentration. You do not keep your mind on one thing long enough to fix it accurately in your memory. You dissipate your mental energy by letting your mind wander, and consequently you get nowhere through your aimlessness. Control your thinking and you will quit going around in circles.

M. C. B., female, born December 20, 1918, 1:30 a. m., West Virginia: You may have a good opportunity to marry about the last half of July, 1938.

Miss A. V. R., born December 12, 1910, between 11:00 p. m. and midnight, Pennsylvania: You will come under beneficial influences conducive to marriage about the first half of March, the last part of April and the first part of May, 1939.

M. P. W., female, born August 13, 1920, 3:00 p. m., West Virginia: About the latter part of March or the first part of April, 1941, you may have an opportunity to contract a financially successful marriage. About the middle of December, 1942, if unmarried at that time, you may really fall

in love and marry. Don't get serious about the boys until you know your own mind or you may contract an unhappy marriage.

C. M. M., female, born August 25, 1914, 2:00 a. m., Pennsylvania: From an examination of your husband's horoscope, I am inclined to think that he has had dietary habits in addition to his fondness for drink. I believe that his fondness for drink can be materially lessened by supplying possible food deficiencies. See your physician and have him tell you what you should try to get your husband to eat.

Miss M. L. E., born May 28, 1919, about 1:00 p. m., Ontario: I have compared your horoscope with that of the young man who has asked you to marry him. There are some discords between you, but there are many very fine harmonies to more than offset them. If you both will stress the harmonies and ignore, so far as possible, the discords, I believe that marriage between you will prove happy and successful.

L. C., female, born April 14, 1918, 3:00 p. m., New York: I have compared your horoscope with that of your boy friend. The harmonies between you considerably outweigh the discords, and I believe that you would find marriage to each other satisfactory, happy, and materially successful. Due to his not yet being of age, and possibly for present financial reasons, I doubt if your boy friend will feel that he will be in a position to seriously consider marriage before another year or eighteen months. The influences are favorable in your horoscope for happy marriage about the latter part of September and first part of October, 1938, the latter part of April and first part of May, 1939, and the latter part of August and first part of September, 1939; but whether or not you and your boy friend will marry each other, I cannot say.

Miss G. W., born December 18, 1915, about noon, Tennessee: Your social popularity will increase from now on. New friends are likely to be made, or old ones take a new interest in you, at about the following times: April, May, October, November, and December, 1938, and January, 1939. Permanent social and other benefits may come to you as a result.

Editor's Note: Questions are answered through Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine or by mail. Each reader is allowed to ask one question. Be sure to give the following data in your letter: date, month, year, and place of birth, the hour of the day or night, if possible, and sex. Address your letters to KAI, care of this magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.



Do not mail letters to these Pen Pals after January 14th.

WHO wants to hear all about life in Australia? This young bride is eager to correspond with single and married Pen Pals in America and other far-off countries. She is friendly, interested in people, and I'm sure that every one of you will enjoy her letters. So get busy, all you seekers of friendship, and write to Jack's Wife to-day!

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I would more than appreciate it if you will find me some Pen Pals. I'm a teen-age bride, have plenty of free time, and would love to hear from girls and married women of any age, especially those in America. I live in Australia, enjoy outdoor sports, and will exchange snapshots. JACK'S WIFE.

He likes hunting and fishing.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: This is a plea for Pals from all over the country. I'm a man of twenty-four, interested in everything and every one, enjoy fishing, hunting and swimming. Come on, fellows, let's get acquainted. BENTON.

Wanted—Pals from the West.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Won't some of you Western Pen Pals please write to me? I'm a girl twenty years of age, interested in every one and everything, and will be a true-blue Pal to all. HAPPY A.

Doda hails from New Jersey.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May I have some Pen Pals? I'm a girl in my twenties, live in New Jersey, fond of writing long letters, and promise to be a true Pal. Come on, girls, let's get acquainted. DODA.

All the way from Colorado.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a married woman of twenty-four, live in Colorado, have two fine

youngsters, love to swim, play tennis, piano, make friends, and my hobby is collecting picture post cards. I'll exchange them with any one. DENVER MRS.

She needs your cheer.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Please find me some Pen Pals. I'm a girl of eighteen, interested in reading, sewing, collecting stamps, writing long letters, and at present hearing from Pals everywhere would be wonderful, as I am laid up with heart trouble. I promise prompt replies. BROWN-EYED MARGE.

Music is her hobby.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: This is a plea all the way from California. I'm a married woman twenty years of age, have one child, fond of outdoor sports, and music is my hobby. I've visited many famous places in this State, and have lots to write about. E. C.

Introducing a peppy sports lover.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a peppy girl of seventeen, fond of sports, adore writing letters to Pals far and near, live in a very interesting town in Maine, and feel sure I can make my replies far from dull. Who'll be my first Pen Pal? ALICE B.

Boys, write to this Pal.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I enjoy writing letters and am interested in every one, so won't all you fellows in Oregon, Washington, and California drop me a line? I'm a young man, considered good-natured, will exchange snapshots, and tell more about myself in my first letter. KANSAS BOB.

Girls, you'll like Reba.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I've never had a Pen Pal, so here's hoping I'll get lots of letters.

I'm a girl of seventeen, enjoy sports, will exchange souvenirs, snapshots and photographs. I'm easy to get along with, and have oodles of things to talk about.

REBA.

Her letters will pep you up.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Help me get some Pen Pals. I'm a lively girl of seventeen, high-school graduate, like to read, sew, drive a car, and am keeping house for my brothers and sisters. I have lots of time to write, and the first Pal who writes will receive a gift.

OHIO GEN.

She's especially fond of the movies.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Are there any girls who want a Pennsylvania Pal? I'm a girl of twenty-one, especially fond of movies, but I also enjoy sports, listening to the radio and making friends. Writing letters is my real hobby. Come on, girls, write to me.

RIORITA.

This Pal hails from Oklahoma.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I would love to hear from single and married Pals of any age. I'm a married woman of nineteen, live in Oklahoma City, enjoy dancing, movies, making friends and writing letters. Pals, please drop me a line.

BEATRICE.

For every girl named Evelyn.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of eighteen and want to hear from every girl whose name is Evelyn. I'm fond of sports, and have loads of interesting things to write about. Let's go, girls!

EVELYN.

Rud is a motion-picture operator.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I would like to hear from motion-picture operators. I'm one myself, like the work, and have plenty of spare time on my hands. I live in Florida, and will try hard to make my replies worth while.

RUD.

Peppy and full of fun.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Help me find Pals who would appreciate a steady correspondent. I'm a married woman twenty-one years of age, have a small daughter, like to make quilts, and have lots of time as my husband works long hours. I live in Indiana.

PEPPY KIT.

She collects song hits.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Please find room for my plea. I'm a girl of nineteen, enjoy dancing, sports, live in Canada, and collect song hits. I promise to answer every letter I get, so don't forget me, girls. I'll be waiting.

TOBY.

All between seventeen and twenty-one, write!

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Here's a Massachusetts girl looking for Pen Pals. I'm twenty, considered good-natured, and want to hear from girls

between seventeen and twenty-one. How about it, Pals?

CRESCENT.

Don't keep Rosie waiting.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a peppy girl of seventeen, love to make friends, write letters, enjoy sports, and will exchange snapshots with any one. I live in Pennsylvania and want a carload of letters.

ROSIE.

He likes music and sports.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Here's another young man of twenty-one looking for Pen Pals. I'm fond of sports, music, dancing, and live in a very interesting city. I'll answer all letters received. Every one is more than welcome.

WAYNES.

She likes lots of action.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Have I a chance? I'm a girl of seventeen, live in Oregon, enjoy sports, especially ball games and horseback riding. I'm good-natured, and adore writing letters. Please, girls, give me a chance to be your friend.

CALL ME JUNE.

Let her tell you about life on a farm.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I would certainly appreciate hearing from Pals, single or married who are around thirty-five years of age. I'm a married woman, live in Ohio, have lots of things to tell about life on a big farm, and hope to get at least one letter from every State in the Union.

DI.

A lonesome big-city girl.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Please print my plea. I'm a girl of nineteen, live in Chicago, but get very lonesome, and hope Pals everywhere will drop me a few lines. I'm fond of meeting people, making friends, and will be a steady correspondent.

MARY EVE.

Time on her hands.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm another girl with plenty of free time on my hands. I'm twenty, live in Montreal, and am very lonesome. I'll exchange snapshots, promise faithfully to answer every letter received, and will be a real friend.

ONTARIO MISS.

Add her name to your list of Pals.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a small-town girl who would like to hear from other small-town girls, as well as Pals who live in large cities. I'm seventeen, fond of sports, collect picture post cards and photographs of movie stars. I have lots of time and will answer all letters.

GARDENIA.

You may write to him in English, Spanish or French.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Who wants to correspond with a college student? I'm a young

man of twenty-one; live in the South, enjoy sports, collect stamps, understand French and Spanish, and will answer letters promptly.

MORGAN.

A prospective attorney-at-law.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I hope some of the lonely girls who read my plea will not hesitate to write. I'm a good-natured girl, live in a small town, and my pet ambition is to study law. I have lots of things to tell, and feel sure my letters won't bore any one. Girls, let's be friends.

CELIA C.

Drop this Pal a line, folks.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Here's another plea. I'm a girl of eighteen, live in Pennsylvania, interested in sports, making friends, and will be waiting eagerly to hear from girls everywhere, regardless of age. I was born in the South, and can tell all about my home State. Pals, drop me a line.

SLIM BEE.

If you like the great outdoors, you'll like her.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a blond, blue-eyed girl of seventeen, love the great outdoors, will exchange snapshots, pictures of movie and radio stars, and send souvenirs to every one who answers my plea. Girls, sling a little ink my way.

OUTDOOR GIRL.

Here comes the army.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Please find me some Pen Pals. I'm a soldier of nineteen, stationed in Panama, will be glad to exchange snapshots with all who write, and to the first ten Pals I will send souvenirs of Panama. All letters will be answered promptly.

DAVIS.

Kali is lonesome.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I would appreciate hearing from Pals far and near. I'm a girl of eighteen, live in Brooklyn, New York, employed as secretary, considered good-natured and fun-loving. Pals everywhere, I'm lonesome and need your friendship.

KALI.

All the way from England.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May I have some Pals? I'm a teen-age girl with blond hair, green eyes, live in England, and hope to hear from Pals in America and Canada. I promise to answer every letter I get. Write to me, girls. I'm waiting.

HILDA.

Cuddles hails from Ohio.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May I have some Pen Pals? I'm a friendly girl from Ohio, age eighteen, with brown hair and gray eyes. I have an interesting collection of china and toy dogs, and also enjoy other hobbies. Girls, don't pass me by.

CUDDLES.

Single or married, you're needed, Pals.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Here's hoping some one will write to me. I'm a married woman in my twenties, have two children, and as my husband is often away from home I get very lonesome. Pals, single and married, won't you write to me? I live in the South.

G. L. G.

A brunette from Canada.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Here's hoping I'll get loads of letters. I'm a peppy girl in my early twenties, live in Canada, will exchange snapshots, and promise true friendship. Come on, Pals, write to me. I'll answer letters promptly.

DUCHESS.

Richmond has traveled.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Who'll take me for a Pen Pal? I'm a young man of twenty-one, graduate nurse, have traveled as far as Argentina, North Canada, and Hawaii. I have lots of interesting things to talk about, and will answer all letters received.

RICHMOND.

She likes dancing and music.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I would love to correspond with girls all over the country, young or old. I'm a girl of seventeen, live in Ohio, fond of skating, dancing, music, and will exchange snapshots with any one. Write to me, Pals. I'm sure we can be good friends.

GARNET.

Stranger in the city.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: This is a plea from a very lonesome girl of twenty-five. I'm a stranger in the big city of Chicago, and would love to hear from Pals all over, especially those who live in the country. I like reading, dancing, movies and writing letters.

LOUISE H.

This young married woman wants to hear from all of you.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young married colored woman, live in Nova Scotia, and get very lonesome as my husband's work often takes him away from home. I have lots of free time, and would love to hear from single and married Pals.

SCOTIA MRS.

Miss Mary Morris will see to it that you will be able to make friends with other readers, though thousands of miles may separate you. It must be understood that Miss Morris will undertake to exchange letters only between men and men, boys and boys, women and women, girls and girls. All reasonable care will be exercised in the introduction of correspondents. If any unsatisfactory letters are received by our readers, the publishers would appreciate their being sent to them. Please sign your name and address when writing. Be sure to inclose forwarding postage when sending letters, so that mail can be forwarded. We are not responsible for money (coins) sent through the mail.

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THE FRIEND IN NEED

Conducted by

Laura Alston Brown

Well-known Authority on Love and Marriage

THE question why men side-step marriage is one that covers a lot of ground. According to Milliard, it would seem that marriage to-day is a luxury out of reach of many young men simply because girls are not willing to manage on a modest salary. He claims that wives expect too much of marriage, too often deliberately ignore the fact that a pay check can be stretched only to a certain point, and are always ready to criticize a husband for his inability to satisfy his wife's demands.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Two years ago I fell in love with a girl, and although I didn't intend to consider marriage for some time because my salary was not, according to my ideas, large enough to support a wife, we were married anyway. We've been married exactly two years. I'm twenty-three, and my wife is two years my junior. I must say that she was more responsible for the marriage than I, because I argued with her that my salary would not stretch far enough to get the things she has been used to, but she said we'd get along.

I suppose all girls say that, once their minds are made up. Her father had always had a good job, and her parents have a small house of their own. She thought it would be better for us to live with them. But her parents made it clear that it was my job to support her. I admitted they were right, and later induced my wife to board with my married brother.

My wife didn't know a thing about cooking or housekeeping. She told me frankly that while she was home and single, she didn't want to be bothered by such things. My sister-in-law was willing to teach her, but my wife was not interested.

About four months after we were married,

my wife told me she was terribly disappointed in marriage, and in me, too. She said I didn't give her enough money for clothes, that she had too little to spend when she went out with her girl friends, et cetera. But what did she expect? She knew how big my salary check was before she married me. One thing led to another, and before we knew it we were quarreling almost all the time. This went on for a year.

She complained to her mother that I was not providing for her, and she also started going out with a boy she'd known before we met. Her parents blamed me for making their daughter unhappy, and a few days later my wife went home to them.

I was terribly discouraged. This wouldn't have happened if I were making more money. I've decided to let my wife do as she likes. Am I wrong in thinking that if she loves me she will come back to me, and try to be satisfied with my income until I am making more?

Looking around me, I've noticed that few girls have the qualities they pretend to possess before they are married. They expect too much of marriage, and are ready to down a man who, despite the fact that he is doing his best, cannot earn more because times are hard. Girls don't even try to play fair and be patient until things change for the better. To a man with a small income, marriage is a luxury out of his reach, and he should stay single. I can't understand why a girl is not willing to start at the bottom, especially if she claims to be in love with the man she marries.

MILLIARD.

Rather than attribute the outcome of your marriage to lack of a fat pay check, Milliard, I am inclined to think that you and your wife failed to adjust yourselves to the changed conditions your marriage

brought about. Regardless of your present opinion, the fact remains that many girls are willing to lighten their husbands' duties by being patient and doing the best they can. I'm sure many readers will agree with me that this is true.

Your wife's duty was, of course, to stay with you. But if she has never been obliged to work, it probably did not occur to her that she might have tried to improve the situation by either looking for a job, or by learning to economize until your salary was increased. As for your in-laws, they might at least have tried to be understanding and sympathetic instead of finding fault with you because you could not cater to their daughter's demands. After all, she was old enough to know what she was doing when she married you.

However, don't be discouraged. If your wife loves you, after she has had time to think this over, she will come back. But I'm afraid your story does not exactly prove that a man who earns only a modest salary should regard marriage as a luxury to be looked at from a distance.

What is your opinion of Milliard's point of view, family?

DEAR MRS. BROWN: When I was seventeen I made the mistake many young girls make. The man in the case was almost twice my age. When I told him I was going to have a baby, he insisted on taking me to a doctor, but I refused because I wanted the child.

He was terribly angry with me, went to another State, and I went to live with my sister who was married to this man's brother. My parents believed we were married. I was afraid to tell my father, and my mother, one of the kindest and best, would have been broken-hearted. I secretly hoped that, in time, this man would give my baby a name. But he did not.

My baby arrived, and this man paid my hospital and doctor bills, but aside from that he has never done anything for the child. I kept the baby and went back to my parents. Two years later, I received a telegram from my sister telling me that my baby's father was to be married. The shock was too much for me. I had hoped and prayed that things would be made right for me and my little boy.

After that, I didn't care what happened. I told my parents the truth. Needless to say, they were bitter toward this man. He had always pretended to be a good friend of theirs. My father and I immediately went to the State where this man was living. The judge gave him his choice—marriage or a jail sentence. So we were married, but I returned home with my father and a few months later, agreed to a divorce.

The next year I met a young man and we started going steady. He seemed to care much

for me, and we were happy together. I gradually forgot the past. However, when he asked me to marry him, I thought it only right that he should know about my son, as I was determined to have my baby with me as soon as possible. He seemed to understand, and promised that I should have my boy as soon as we were married.

The next day I received a wire from my mother to come at once as my baby was sick and in a critical condition. I went home, and my boy got well. I didn't want to leave him again.

A few months later, my fiancé came and we were married, but he begged me to wait a while before taking my son with us, as his friends did not know that I had been married before. I agreed, but every time I asked about sending for my boy he made some excuse, and finally said, "Why should I support another man's child?" Then our troubles began.

I loved my husband and worshiped my little son. I was terribly unhappy without him. Then I discovered I was to be a mother again. This displeased my husband and he began going out without me and was as disagreeable as he knew how to be. Once when I mentioned it to his mother, she informed me that I could not expect him to sit home with me, that he was young and was entitled to go out. We were the same age. I knew then that I'd made a mistake in telling her our troubles.

He treated me more like a servant than a wife. I really tried hard to please him but it was no use. If I needed clothes, he gave the money to his mother and she bought them. I never had the pleasure of buying my baby's things, either. Still I held on because I was in love.

Then he calmly informed me that he wanted to go with a girl he had met. My heart broke then. I asked him if the girl knew he was married, and he said she didn't, and that he was in love with her. So I told him to take his things and go. I couldn't stand it any longer. He left me for this other girl. I was alone when my baby girl was born.

When she was three months old he came back. The other affair had ended. We moved into another place to begin anew. I was happy to have my little family together, though I never got over his leaving me when I needed him most. But a few months later, he began going out nights again. I found powder and rouge on his coat, and lipstick on his handkerchiefs. I gave up then. I am ashamed now, but I tried to end it all, and almost succeeded. He left again, this time for a year and a half. However, he came two or three times a week to see the child.

People told me how foolish I was to sit home and cry, so I tried going out with young men, but always came home disgusted. One evening my neighbor and her son asked me if I would like to go to a show with them. This became a habit, and soon her son and I began going together. That was a year and a half ago.

We have seen each other every day during

the whole time. The fact that we were in love came as a surprise to us both. I'm sure it did to me. I thought I could never love any one else. He is twenty-four and I am twenty-eight, but he is old for his age. He is the quiet, serious type, and all he can talk about is our future together, and how much I mean to him. When I remind him that I am almost five years older, he insists that he has gone with younger girls and appreciates me all the more. I do not look quite my age, and am considered attractive, but I'm afraid of the future. I don't want him ever to regret marrying me. Would I ruin his life? I love him sincerely, not in the thrilling, romantic way I loved my husband, but when I'm with him it gives me a feeling of peace and contentment. I can't bear to think of giving him up. He seems to like my little girls—there are two of them now—and I know that he would be kind to them. My mother still has my son.

My husband returned a month ago and told me we would have to share the same house as he could not keep up financing two homes. Since there was nothing else I could do, I had to let him move in. He wants me to be his wife again, but I don't care for him. He is peeved because things are not as he would have them. He says he's tired of chasing around and that there can never be any one else for him.

He suspects that I care for this young man and demands that I return a ring which he gave me a few weeks ago. I told him I saw no reason why I should, and he said if I didn't he would see that there would be a different "set-up" around here. I don't know exactly what he means. I don't want him to make trouble. Meanwhile, my friend is unhappy because we cannot be together so often. I miss him terribly, too.

What would you advise me to do? I have to make a decision soon. I can't go on like this, and I don't want to make another mistake.

L. W.

Whether or not you should give your husband another chance is something that you must decide for yourself, my dear. Perhaps he has really changed for the better. Knowing him as well as you do, it should not be impossible for you to make up your mind on this point. Suppose you talk matters over with him, see what his attitude is now, and find out if he will withdraw his objections to having your son live with you if you consider living with him. Then, at least, you will have all your children with you.

Regarding this other man, four years is not a great difference in ages, even if it is on the woman's side. However, you might stop to consider that a young man of twenty-four is not as understanding and mature in his way of looking at life as an older man would be, and there is the pos-

sibility that later he might resent supporting another man's children. Settle this angle of your problem beyond any doubt before you consider a second marriage.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I'm a girl twenty years of age, considered good-looking, have known quite a few boys, but none really appealed to me until I met Ty. I'm very much in love with him. Please don't say I don't know what love is. I do, and I am very unhappy.

Before I met Ty I was dating John. We've had some very enjoyable times together, and I know that John loves me dearly. But I think of him only as a good friend. He will graduate from college this year, and is promised a good job. He has asked me to marry him as soon as he comes home from college and lands the job, but I've told him I'd have to think it over.

I met Ty last summer, while John was away, and it seemed to be love at first sight. He is an only child, somewhat spoiled, and has to have his own way all the time. He is several months my junior, but looks and acts older. I never know when I'm going to see Ty. He never makes dates with me, but just drops in unexpectedly.

Ty doesn't know I'm in love with him. His boy friend tells me that Ty likes me a lot, but doesn't want me to know it, because then I'll take him too seriously.

Ty is very funny. When he comes to see me and I don't happen to be ready, he won't come in. He sits in the car, and my parents don't like it. Mother has asked him in, but he always makes an excuse.

It is very hard for me to live at home because my parents don't want me to go with him. They say he doesn't treat me right. I know he doesn't, but I still love him and probably always will.

He also comes from a nice family, has a new car of his own and all the money he needs.

He has changed since we have been dating. He doesn't drink as much as he used to, or go to the places he once did. At least, if he does, I don't know about it.

Every one, with the exception of a few friends, is against my going with him. They want me to go with John. What shall I do?

JUNE.

Don't you see, my dear, that if Ty is not treating you right now, you could never find real happiness with him? Besides, a boy of nineteen does not know his own heart and mind, and it will take a few years before he settles down and becomes more serious.

Try not to resent the fact that your parents do not want you to date Ty, and take their advice. They have your best interests at heart and want you to be happy when you get married. Very probably, this is only a crush on your part.

Even if you are not in love with John,

there would be no harm in continuing the friendship, but see to it that you also have other beaux. It will help you to make comparisons and, when the time comes, you will be better able to decide whom you want to marry.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I don't know why people of my age shouldn't know their own minds, but I'm afraid I don't.

I worked in a small California desert town, in a café; made good money and was quite happy. I had been married and divorced. I married at sixteen; my husband was twenty-six. Then I met a nice fellow who had just come home from the army. His people owned a big ranch eighteen miles from town. He was well liked by every one. He told me he was twenty-eight years of age, and I told him my age, thirty-one. After seeing me for about a month, he took me to his home and I met his people. They all seemed to like me.

He begged me to marry him right away. He was working on the ranch. I told him to get a good job and I'd think about it. So he got a job on the police force in the city. He made good money, and wired me money to come there on my day off so that we could get our marriage license. The following week on my day off we were married. He took me home to his people, and then I learned he was only twenty-two years old.

He can easily pass for a man of thirty. He is settled, and seems to be very much in love with me. He is always home on time and never goes out without me. He is ambitious, a high-school graduate, and is now studying engineering.

What worries me is whether or not he will always love me. I realize that nearly ten years is a great difference in age, especially when it's on the woman's side. If he hadn't lied to me about his age we would never have been married. I love him, but do you think we are headed for a break? We have been married six months.

IRENE.

You are not exactly headed for heart-aches and disappointment, even if you are nearly ten years older than your husband. Of course, he should have been frank with you regarding his age. However, now that you are married and look about the same age, why worry? Naturally, you will have an additional problem to cope with. You will have to make a special effort to always look well and keep yourself youthful, not only physically, but also mentally, so that you and your husband will be able to see things from the same point of view.

But if your husband loves you, and you love him, forget the age difference as much as you possibly can, and be happy. It is foolish to invite trouble.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am a girl twenty years of age. Although I like a good time, I don't think a girl has to smoke, drink, et cetera. I am very fond of dancing and sports.

My mother is a very determined person, and has been spoiled by my father, sister and myself. My mother has been sick a good deal, and I gave up almost everything to wait on her, as my sister was in training to be a nurse and was not at home.

A year ago, I met a boy and started to go with him, but at that time I was also dating a boy who was going to college. My mother idolized the college boy, and from the very first she didn't like the other one. Then the college boy began to get a little too serious, so I told mother that I didn't love him, and asked if she didn't think it best to tell him how I felt. Much to my surprise, she said, "No."

This boy was just grand to me and I hated to hurt him, but I told him how I felt, and he said he suspected it from my actions, and thanked me for telling him. Mother was furious with me and took away everything that she knew I cared for. That included my not seeing the other boy.

Mrs. Brown, I know that I love this other boy, but mother won't even let him come to the house. He is a nice boy, doesn't drink, comes from a nice family and is of the same religion. He doesn't understand why he can't come to see me.

Please don't tell me to have a talk with mother, because she won't talk about the matter at all. She gets up and leaves the room.

At present I am sneaking out to see him and it hurts me. It is just making liars out of both of us. I love my parents. I am good to them, and they are wonderful to me, but mother just won't understand. Dad approves of this boy, but he wouldn't go over mother's head. Everybody says mother is wrong, and she knows it, but she won't admit it. Mother made my sister break her engagement, and my sister has been very unhappy ever since. I don't want that to happen to me.

UNHAPPY JO.

A girl of your age should be permitted to choose her own friends, and feel that she can bring them home for her parents' approval. No doubt your mother means well enough, but she should realize that she cannot live your life for you, and that you have a right to seek love and happiness. And if you marry a boy you don't love simply because she fancies him for a son-in-law, that will only make you miserable.

Instead of sneaking out to meet this boy, tell your mother frankly that you don't want to hurt her, but at the same time she must understand that you love this boy and he loves you, and that you intend to stick to your decision.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Last summer I fell in love with a young man who seemed to fall just

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as hard for me, and we have been going together ever since. But lately, I've found out that he has been drinking for several years. In fact, ever since he was about fourteen years old.

I found out about it several weeks ago. His mother liked me and thought I should know everything about him. She divorced her husband because he was a drunkard, and said this boy is just like his father. She also said she didn't want me to go through the same heartaches she experienced.

I had a talk with this boy and he promised not to touch liquor again. He has been sober ever since we've had that talk. But my people have no use for him, and my father said that if I marry this boy I can never come home again. My father has always been very good to me.

This boy has tried to make me happy, but he is extremely jealous. I know I love him and think the world of him, but I'm undecided whether to marry him or not. Do you think I should break with him now, or wait to see how he turns out? All my people have against him is that he is partial to liquor. I hate to go against their wishes, but I think I'm old enough to pick the man I want to marry. I'm eighteen, and this boy is twenty.

Please help me decide what to do.

PUZLED OF MAINE.

Considering the fact that this boy is very young, perhaps there is a good chance that if he is encouraged and given time, he can overcome the habit of drinking to excess. Both of you can afford to wait a year or two. Why not continue to be good friends for that length of time?

In the meantime, have a frank talk with your parents. Tell them you believe you're really in love, and that in order to be fair you have decided to give this boy a chance to prove that he is worthy of your affection. Ask your parents to be patient. But while you are waiting, have other beaux, too. Also, encourage this boy to make new friends and spend his free time in a way that will help him forget his liking for liquor. He might join a club, find an interesting hobby, or take up some study that will keep his thoughts away from drinking sprees.

Give him a year and, meanwhile, try to persuade your parents to be friendly with him. Perhaps by the end of that time your problem will have straightened itself out.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: My parents were divorced when I was quite young and I went to live with a cousin. When I was twenty years old my cousin decided that I should marry, and proceeded to find me a husband. The man she chose was wonderful, according to her ideas. But I was heartbroken and hated him. I wanted to wait until I met a man I could love. Then I met Fred. He was a fine young man, and when he asked me to marry him I told him I would, if he wanted me, but that I did not love him. I liked, admired and respected him. I was honest with him, and we were married.

For a while we were happy, and then I found

out that I was madly in love with Fred's best friend, although I knew that if we married we wouldn't be happy because our ideas about life in general were too far apart. Nevertheless, I couldn't keep him out of my thoughts.

For days I fought this love. I love this man so much that I almost go mad at times with longing for him. I have never told my husband because I couldn't hurt him. Not willing to leave my husband, I told John how I felt and asked him not to visit us again. John promised to keep away, but I am in the depths of despair. I would like to see him occasionally, but I cannot have him in our home when he knows how I feel.

Did I do wrong in telling John how I felt? Should I have just avoided him? My husband invites him over now and then. Did I do my husband an injustice? I merely told him to refuse an invitation from Fred to spend the week-end in our cabin. If we didn't stay apart I don't know how it would all end, and I can't hurt Fred. When John and I parted I merely said, "Good luck."

Please tell me if I did wrong in telling John I was in love with him. Don't think I am being noble, but I could never cheapen myself, even for John. I want to play the game squarely and avoid all possible regrets.

Fred knows I am unhappy, but I cannot tell him why. I have never said that I love him, but some day I hope to do so. I am twenty-two; Fred, thirty-two, and John thirty-six, so we're not kids. Please advise me.

LORRAYNE.

There are times, Lorraine, when we cannot help feeling attracted to some people. However, although it was rash on your part to tell John that you were in love with him, you must continue to be a good wife and try hard to make your husband happy. If you do that, you will be happier yourself, if not immediately, then surely in the long run. But very likely this is only infatuation on your part and it will pass, especially if John has done nothing to encourage you.

My suggestion is that you use will power and make a real effort not to think constantly of John. If necessary, perhaps you could even find part-time work outside your home, so that you will have less time to think of your own emotional reactions. This is a problem that will work itself out in time. So be patient, and always remember your duty to your husband. You will have no regrets if you play fair.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I'm a girl of eighteen, considered attractive, but it seems impossible for me to keep either boy or girl friends. The longest I've ever dated a boy was three weeks.

At present I'm working, but still I'm not happy. My mother tells me it's my temper that keeps me from having friends. But how can I help being as I am? If some one is mean and hurts me, I pay them right back in their own coin.

I don't smoke or drink, but I do love parties and dances. I long to have a few real friends, but it seems almost impossible to find them. My mother tells me to join a club and learn to do the things other girls enjoy, like going in

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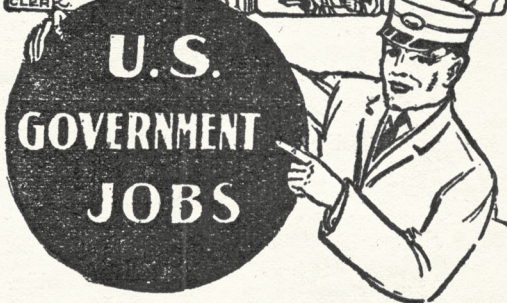
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for outdoor sports. But I'm not earning enough to go places.

One of my high-school teachers told me I had the wrong slant on life and people, but I don't think so. I would love to have good times like other girls, but no one notices me. What can I do to keep friends? Please advise me.

LONESOME.

I suggest that you follow your mother's advice and join a club. That is one of the best ways of meeting people and making friends. I notice that you live in a large city. It should not be hard for you to locate a club or two. You might start with the Y. W. C. A., and compel yourself to take an active part in the interests of whatever club you join.

If you have a quick temper and are too outspoken, keep in mind the thought that sugar can be used to greater advantage than the proverbial vinegar. In other words, make a real effort to control your temper. I'm sure if you once get in with the right type of young people, they will not do anything to hurt your feelings, and you will enjoy their friendship. Friends will not be dropped on your doorstep. You must go after them.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I met Bill two years ago, and we dated for about four months. Then he went back to a girl he knew before we met, and married her. They are now expecting a baby.

Bill and I are still good friends. I was talking with him only the other day, and he told me that he was not happy, and that as soon as the baby arrived he intended to leave his wife. He is only twenty, and says he's too young to settle down. I've tried to tell him how wrong he would be to leave his wife and child, but he said he still loves me.

Now, I'm not at all in love with him. I like him, but that's all. I have never really loved him, but I think he thought I did when we were going together, and from the way he talks now, he still thinks so. Do you think if I told him how I feel he would keep away from me and stay with his wife? I have no desire to encourage him to leave her. I know how terrible it would be for her if he left. She loves him very much.

Every chance he has, he drops in at our house. He doesn't make love to me, or anything like that, except that he told me he loved me without realizing it when we were dating, and that he hasn't changed. My people don't know he's married, or they'd tell him to stay away.

H. T. R.

It is apparent that Bill has no clear conception of the responsibilities of marriage and his obligations as a husband. The sooner you make it clear to him that his place is with his wife, the better it will be for all concerned. And if he is under the impression that you are in love with him, by all means tell him the truth. If being friendly with you is causing trouble between him and his wife, then it would be advisable not to see him any more.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: The young man in this case is twenty-five, considered good-looking, and the type that doesn't seem to mind being tied to his mother's apron strings. I'm eighteen, have a good-natured disposition, but rather stubborn and quick-tempered.

I was chumming with a girl when I met Dick, and I don't know what possessed me to let him have his way. He told me he loved me and we made plans for our future together, but I didn't want to get married as I was only sixteen. Besides, I didn't love him. Then I met Bob, and it was love at first sight. I broke off with Dick. He is now married.

When Bob questioned me about other boys, I told him about Dick. I felt he ought to know the truth. He didn't like it, of course, but said he still loved me, although now I have my doubts about that. Well, before I knew it, our love affair became quite involved. My mother found out that I was going to have a baby, and had a nervous breakdown. She was in the hospital for several months, but is home now and loves my baby.

But to get back to my story. When I told Bob that I was going to become a mother, he said the baby was not his, and gossiped about me, so in despair I started running around with other fellows. However, my father made me take the case into court, and Bob was found guilty and ordered to pay all expenses and a weekly sum for the baby's support, but he seldom sends me money.

His parents think I'm just awful, taking Bob's money whenever he sends it, and have even suggested that I give up my baby. But I could never do that. I'm tired of everything and so thoroughly disgusted with myself, I often think of ending it all. Only the thought of my baby has kept me from doing something desperate long ago.

Mrs. Brown, I really love Bob and still hope he will marry me, but lately he has been dating another girl. Do you think he will ever change and do the right thing? I don't go out often, and I can't get a job because my mother is not well and I have to stay home and take care of the house and my baby. Life seems so drab and uninteresting, and I don't see any happiness ahead. GERRY.

It's too bad that Bob did not stand by when you most needed the protection of marriage. However, now that he has definitely let you down, you should make up your mind to let him go and try not to think about him any more than you can help. It is evident that he is not worthy of your affection.

I can readily understand that you are depressed and unhappy, but you are still young, and should hang onto the idea that you have everything to live for. We can never foresee what happiness is in store for us.

Try to keep up your courage. If you keep your head high and respect yourself, others will respect you, too. And some day you will meet a man who will love you for yourself, and gladly help you look after the baby. So keep your chin up and try not to spend your time thinking about a

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man who does not deserve a second thought.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Is a girl of nineteen too young to consider marriage? My parents think so, and that's where my problem comes in. I'm considered attractive, and have always had lots of beaux.

I'm engaged to a boy I love, but my parents are jealous. My mother was very angry when I told her that Bill and I were engaged. She said that any boy who does not ask the girl's parents first, is a sneak.

I was terribly hurt at first, then decided that my mother didn't want me to get married, especially as this boy lives in another town, and she always said that she didn't want me to go away when I married. She made me promise that I would give back the ring he gave me and stop seeing him, but I couldn't. She is always grouchy and cross whenever I go to meet him. He seldom comes to our house.

Another point is that I met another fellow a few months ago, and although he knew I was engaged, he kept asking me for a date until finally I let him walk me home from work one night. He was so nice that I let him take me home often. I didn't think there was any harm in that until I started looking forward to seeing him.

I don't want to fall in love with him because I have every intention of marrying the boy I'm engaged to. Last week this other boy took me for a ride and I nearly lost my head. I know he is in love with me. He knows that I love my fiancé, and yet he insists on coming to see me. If I keep on dating both boys, one of them is going to drop out and hate me, and I don't want that to happen.

Do you think I should keep on seeing this other boy? My fiancé doesn't know I date him. Or should I get married secretly, regardless of the way my parents feel about my fiancé? Please help me decide. **BETH.**

Since you are so undecided, it is doubtful if you are really in love with your fiancé. If you were in love with him, you would not enjoy going out with this other boy. Why not stop beating around the bush, and tell your fiancé that you are not sure about yourself, and prefer to wait? Then you can date any one you like until you can make up your mind whom you want to marry.

As for getting married secretly, you might regret it afterward. A girl's marriage is very important, and an occasion she may well be proud of. Secret marriages sound thrilling and exciting, but nothing can compare with the happy time when her family and friends are close to share her happiness and wish her luck.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: So many girls are interested in how they can attract and keep boy friends, that I thought perhaps my suggestions might be of help, although I don't know if all girls will approve of my method.

First of all, I want to say the idea that men

prefer the sweet, old-fashioned type of girl is just a joke. Men are not as ready to get married as they were fifty years ago, especially since they've realized that women have some brains, and that if a marriage does not work out, the wife packs, gets her freedom, and looks for a job. If there are children, they can always be placed in day schools or boarded at grand-ma's.

Now, the men to-day know all this. No wonder they are not anxious to tie themselves down, and make it so hard for girls to lead them to the altar. What should a girl do when a man is only mildly interested—sit by the telephone and wait until he calls her? My idea is that a girl shouldn't hesitate to call a man if she likes him. If she phones him, the result will probably be a date. Often, when a boy calls up a girl and she isn't home, does she call him back? Oh, my, no! But does the live wire hesitate? I'll say not. She rings him up and the friendship has a chance to progress. A girl has to be right on the job to hook a man these days. She has to actually sell him the idea of matrimony because times have changed, and women have to do half the hunting if they don't want to stay single all their lives.

I was once considered a sweet home girl. That was at seventeen. I suppose that, on the surface, I may have appeared modern enough. But my method of getting and holding boy friends was all wrong. When I met a boy who appealed to me, and he'd say, "I hope I'll see you again sometime," I'd get all choked up and say: "Oh, yes. That will be nice." But he never mentioned when, and I never saw him again.

I'm twenty now, and have long ago decided that it's better to say: "Why not to-morrow night? I happen to have no date, so now's your chance." Nine times out of ten it works. The girl who hesitates is not only lost, as the saying goes, but left alone.

Of course, once in a while a girl meets a man who likes to do all the hunting, but those men are rare and, as a general rule, it flatters a man no end to have a girl run a little after him. After all, it's the girl who thinks of marriage first.

MODERN MISS.

But even if it is the girl who thinks of marriage first, which is natural, should she take all the initiative? What is your opinion, readers? Is it advisable to tell a man outright that he makes your heart beat faster, or should he be kept guessing? One method, we all know, is like one kind of medicine—it does not apply to every case. How many of you believe that men are more readily won by the strong-arm, frank method, rather than by the properly reserved attitude? Let's hear!

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ANNOUNCEMENT of New Coffee Agency Openings



EARNINGS UP TO \$60⁰⁰ IN A WEEK

Over 350 more men and women are needed at once to open up fine-paying Coffee Agencies right in their own home localities. If you are looking for a bona fide chance to make as high as \$60.00 in a week, starting at once, this company will send you everything you need, give you all the help you require, and back you up with its proven successful plans. You risk no money. A chance to be independent, work as you please, and make more than just a modest living. If you want to know whether there is an opening for you in your own or nearby locality, mail the Application below. By return mail you will be notified whether we have an opening for you, and if we have, you will receive full information about this Coffee Agency Plan. You don't send a penny—just mail the Application. No obligation—you decide after you read the plan. Don't delay. Send your Application at once.

ALBERT MILLS

4950 Monmouth Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio

Clip Out and Mail Today!!

COFFEE AGENCY APPLICATION

①

**WRITE YOUR
FULL NAME AND
ADDRESS HERE:**

Name
(State whether Mr., Mrs., or Miss)

Address

②

**HOW MUCH TIME
CAN YOU DEVOTE
TO COFFEE
AGENCY?**

City and State

Mark with an "X"

☐ FULL TIME: ☐ PART TIME

[Full time pays up to \$45 to \$60 in a week. Part time, either during the day or evenings, pays up to \$22.50 in a week.]

③

**STATE WHICH
BONUS YOU PREFER — CASH OR
FORD
AUTOMOBILE**

In addition to their cash earnings, we offer our producers a cash bonus of \$500.00 or a brand-new, latest model Ford Tudor Sedan. State which you would prefer if you decide to accept our offer. Mark "X" before your choice.

☐ \$500.00 CASH BONUS: ☐ LATEST MODEL FORD TUDOR SEDAN

④

**CAN YOU START
AT ONCE?**

Mark with an "X"
☐ YES; ☐ NO

If you cannot start at once, state about when you will be able to start.

**ALL
APPLICATIONS
WILL BE
HELD STRICTLY
CONFIDENTIAL**

Send No Money

There is no money fee of any kind required with this Application. It merely tells us that you would consider running a Coffee Agency in your locality if we have an opening for you. You will be notified *by return mail* whether your home locality is available. Then you can decide if the money-making possibilities look good to you. No obligation on your part. Those who apply first will be given preference, so be sure to mail your Application without delay—NOW! No letter is required, just the Application. Mail at once to

ALBERT MILLS, President

4950 Monmouth Ave.,

Cincinnati, Ohio



CHARLES ATLAS
*Holier of the title
 "The World's Most
 Perfectly Developed
 Man" won in open
 competition in the
 only national and
 international con-
 tests held during
 the past 15 years.*

"Bunk!"
 —says
CHARLES ATLAS

**"I'll Prove in the first 7 days YOU
 can have a Body like Mine!"**

**No other Physical Instructor in the World has ever DARED
 to make the offer he makes in this announcement!**

DON'T get the idea that it takes a lot of time and hard work for you to get smashing strength and powerful muscular development! And don't fool yourself into thinking that you need dumbbells, stretchers or any other such contraptions.

Both of these ideas are all bunk—and I have **PROVED** it. All I need is 7 days to prove what I can do for you! And I don't need any apparatus either. In fact, I have no sympathy with apparatus at all—don't believe in it. It is artificial—and it may strain your heart or other vital organs for life!

**NATURAL Methods
 Are All I Need**

On this page you will see an actual photo of how I look today. This picture has not been changed in any way. No muscles have been "painted on." This photograph is the camera's honest proof of what I have done for MY body. I myself am ready to prove what my secret of **Dynamic Tension** can do for yours!

To look at me now you wouldn't recognize me as the same man I used to be. Then I was a physical wreck, a 97-pound weakling—flat-chested, spindly legs, arms like pipe stems.

I was worried—and I had a right to be. I decided to study myself, to do something about my body. Then I made a discovery. I found a new way to build myself up. A way that was simple, natural, quick and sure! "**Dynamic Tension**" is what I called it. I put this secret to work. And in a short time I had the kind of body you see here—the body which has twice won the title of "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."

**This Secret Has Helped
 Thousands**

Thousands of other fellows now know this secret, too—and know from their own personal experience what **Dynamic Tension** has done for them. When they turned to me for advice, they were just as frail and puny as I once was. Now they are life-sized examples of what a man can and ought to be with mighty, tireless endurance and muscles that stand out like bridge cables all over their bodies.

I have written an interesting booklet, filled with pictures, which tells my story—and theirs. I would like to send you a copy of it entirely free.

**Let Me Send You My
 FREE BOOK**

I'd like you to know what **Dynamic Tension** has done for me—what it has done for others—and what it can do for you. This little coupon will bring you my free book which tells all about it. There is no cost or obligation of any kind—and no one will call upon you.

I just want to put into your hands proof that I can do for you what I have done for so many thousands of others: give you broad powerful shoulders, biceps that bulge with smashing strength, a chest which stands out solid and muscular, and an evenly developed body that will make others look like dwarfs next to you.

Will you gamble a stamp to win a body like mine? Then mail this coupon TODAY. **CHARLES ATLAS**, Dept. 621, 115 East 23rd St., New York.



**This Sterling
 Silver Cup Being
 Given Away**

This valuable cup stands about 11 inches high on a black mahogany base. I will award it to my pupil who makes the most improvement in his development within the next three months.

FREE BOOK



Gamble a stamp today. Mail coupon for free copy of my new book, "Everlasting Health and Strength." It shows you from actual photos how I have developed my pupils to my own perfectly balanced proportions. Where shall I send your copy? Write your name and address plainly on the coupon. Mail it today to me personally.

**CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 621
 115 East 23rd St., New York, N. Y.**

I want the proof that your system of **Dynamic Tension** will make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscle development. Send me your free book, "Everlasting Health and Strength."

Name
 (Please print or write plainly)

Address

City State