

# TATTLE TALES

25¢

AUGUST, 1937



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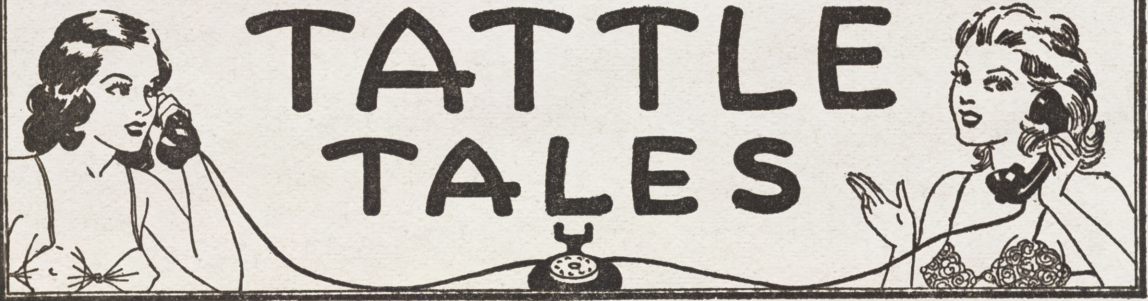
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August, 1937

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TATTLE TALES, a monthly magazine, is published by the  
 D. M. Publishing Co., Inc., Dover, Del.  
*The publishers are not responsible for  
 the return of unsolicited manuscripts.*

# Dixie, Duncan's Question Box



Rememer—Dixie Duncan helps those who can't help themselves. Don't hesitate to ask her about that perplexing problem that's been bothering you. A stamped addressed envelope will bring you a personal reply if you don't want your letter published. Address her in care of Tattle Tales, D. M. Publishing Co., Dover, Delaware.

Below are some pleas for pen pals from some of your fellow readers. Get busy and make their lives cheerier by filling their mail boxes!

*Dixie Duncan*

Dear Miss Duncan,

I am writing to enlist your valued assistance in obtaining a bunch of pen pals.

I am a young fellow, 24 years old, full of life, healthy and happy. I would surely appreciate meeting all the readers of your swell magazine.

So come on, you lads and lassies, dip pen in ink and drop me a line. I will promptly answer all letters.

Yours for continued success, I am,

John A. Cramer

4530 N. Kimball Avenue, Chicago, Ill.

Dear Miss Duncan,

It has only been recently that I became acquainted with "Tattle Tales", but you can rest assured that I thoroughly enjoy every number.

This is especially true in regard to your column, as I like to correspond very much, and am hoping you can find space to publish this appeal for pen pals.

I am 22 years old, 5 ft. 5 in. tall, and have brown hair and eyes. I like to write about any and every subject possible, and promise to answer every letter that I receive.

I want to keep this letter short so that you will be more able to find room for it, and I will sincerely appreciate your including it in your column real soon.

Thanking you for your kindness, and again promising to answer all letters received, I remain,

Most sincerely,

(Miss) Joan Sterling

P. O. Box 1041, Denver, Colorado.

Dear Dixie Duncan,

As a constant reader of your very excellent magazine, I want to extend my congratulations to you and the editors of "Tattle Tales" for the grand stories they publish.

Being lonely and desiring correspondence, I wonder if you can please publish my plea. I am 24 years old, 5 ft. 11 in. tall, weigh 168 pounds, have dark brown hair and brown eyes. Will also gladly exchange photos. Here's hoping to hear from all you readers.

Sincerely yours,

Charles A. Bosak

1817 So. Millard Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

# FAITH!

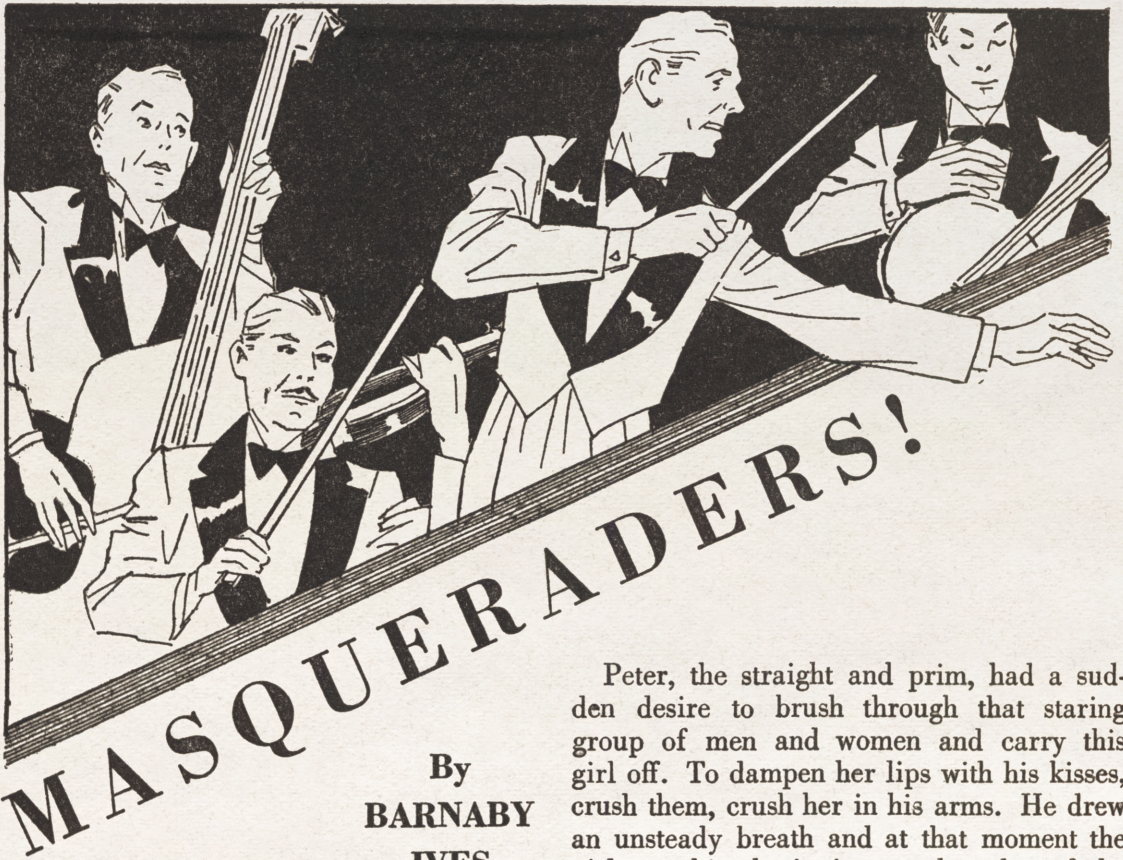
By  
J. C. VIVIAN



I'd trust my husband anywhere  
My faith in him is strong;  
I know that all his thoughts are right—  
That he could not go wrong.

\* \* \*

I know that he is broad and fine  
That all his love is square;  
I'd trust my husband anytime—  
Were not a woman there.



By  
**BARNABY  
IVES**

**T**HERE was a great deal of gaiety down in the orchards tonight. The gay lilting of a violin came on the air, and Peter Brent, owner of the great cherry orchards, dropped his air of indecision and strolled that way.

The pickers were gathered on the beach around a huge campfire and, mounted on an upturned cherry crate was the violinist. It was a girl, Peter noted with surprise, and what a girl. The wind was blowing off the lake and it whipped her skirts flat against her thighs. Her dress was one of the new parachute models, made in cheap print, and perfectly adapted for winding about her. Her waist was slim and the tight bodice of the gown sharply defined firm young breasts.

There was apricot color in her cheeks and cherry on her parted mouth and as she played and swayed, she wet her lips with a small, pointed tongue, as if the madness and passion of the tune she was playing created its own inward fire.

Peter, the straight and prim, had a sudden desire to brush through that staring group of men and women and carry this girl off. To dampen her lips with his kisses, crush them, crush her in his arms. He drew an unsteady breath and at that moment the girl saw him hesitating on the edge of the firelight.

An accordion player had taken up her tune and the people turned towards him so the girl stepped down off the crate and advanced toward Peter, swaying lightly as she walked, unconfined breasts bobbling with each step.

"Hullo, there. I was beginning to think there wasn't an unattached man in the camps. I'm new to all this. My first year," she said in a friendly manner. "Name's Patricia, what's yours?"

"Peter," he said, surprising himself.

"Well, listen. They are going to have a dance on the sand. Will you stay and dance with me?" she asked coaxingly, leaning closer so that he had no trouble following the sweet line of her throat to where it vanished in the white valley between her breasts. The apricot color followed the line down as Patricia saw the direction of Peter's glance.

"All right."

How was this little vagabond to know he



*She sang, the colored lights playing over her, pointing out graceful legs under the sheer skirt. . .*

was the owner of all this? He had just returned that day from the city, to find the camps, under his able foreman, running full tilt, and picking well started.

Harmonicas had appeared to join the accordions and someone took Pat's violin and began to play. Dancers drifted out on the

hard packed white sand and Pat lifted up her arms and circled Peter's neck.

"I won't bite," she advised drily, as he diffidently put his arm around her waist.

He wasn't so sure as she pressed the full voluptuous charms hard against him and gripped him tighter so that he had to bend

toward her. It wasn't so bad for, crushed up against him as she insisted, it crushed her charms flat against his shirt and bulged her blouse.

They began to sway to the tune of a rhumba. Pat remained still above the waist but what she could do with her hips made Peter's hair dampen around his forehead. He thought of Hilda fleetingly. Hilda, from the next place, who called him an old poke and had turned him down every year since they were ten. Pat and Peter were moving as one now, out of the line of firelight, in the sweet, cool shadows, while the rich, heady fragrance of cherries was everywhere.

Pat put back her head and looked up at Peter, lips parted invitingly. Of course he couldn't kiss her, though it was plainly what she wanted, or could he? Serve Hilda right. Hilda had acted the flirt, and when she had taunted him into kissing her, had burst into screams of laughter at his timid peck at her lips.

He bent his head and kissed the cherry picking girl in the very center of that warm, pouting mouth and it clung to his so that he didn't know how to stop kissing her without being rude. Then he decided there was no use to stop. The evening was his, since Hilda had gone somewhere dancing with someone more exciting than Peter.

Pat's blouse had come out of the swaggering print skirt for he felt her bare flesh as he moved his arm to get a firmer grip of her and Pat gave a sudden wriggle so his hand slid up her bare back and under her arm. She pressed against him, her lips parting in an explosive gasp, and imprisoning his hand so that it could do nothing but grip soft, throbbing flesh.

Their dancing feet had carried them so far down the beach that they lost the sound of music. Noting this Peter paused, but Pat kept on dancing, swaying from side to side.

The pine woods beckoned him over Pat's head and he moved her that way and they sank down on the needle carpeted forest floor. Music came faintly, in gusts, then faded away to music of their own that was made up of soft gasps and sighs, then silence.

PETER WAS SCARED when he became half way sane. After all, she was riff raff from city streets and he had always loved Hilda. He was the owner of the camps, this girl's boss. What claim mightn't she hold against him?

"I've got to get back, a date," muttered Peter, rising and pulling Pat to her feet.

She didn't look at him. "Of course. I'm . . . You looked so prim standing there I wanted to devil you somehow, and then . . ."

"It's all right, forget it!" Peter's voice was rough. "I'm not much used to girls."

They swung down the beach, skirting the dancers and plunging into the orchards. At the door of an orange camp trailer, Pat paused. "Here's where I get off," she said abruptly. "So long."

"So long!" Peter fairly ran toward the big house, threading in and out of the trees in a round-about manner so the girl wouldn't see where he went. He'd been crazy and there were some things to figure out. Especially how to treat Pat when she found he was the boss of all this. She'd been soft and sweet to love, and fragrant as cherry blossoms when he buried his face in soft flesh.

The next day it rained and Peter wasn't too sorry he had an excuse not to go down to the camps. He loafed on the screened veranda, watching the orchards, but caught not a sight of the violin playing picker.

After dinner that night he was seized with an urge to join the pickers once more. The weather had cleared and a watery moon shone and the light of the beach campfire sent up beckoning fingers against the sky, as red as passion, as enticing as the girl with the red cherry mouth.

"Hello, old dear, I cut my dates tonight to sit with you," Hilda's languid voice said, from the gloom next to the porch. "Came over in the speedboat. I do believe you're sulking."

Peter was relieved to see her. Now he couldn't find an excuse to go down to look for Pat. To see if they might not share another delirious interlude in the darkness scented with pine and cherries.

"Just lonesome," he said moodily. "Drink? Cigarette?"



"Both. Bring them out here." Hilda sprawled in the long, brightly cushioned swing, the sport skirt she wore opening to the waist to reveal shorts that matched, and a gay bandeau which insecurely bound her huge bosom. Her tanned legs were bare from shorts to anklets. As Peter went to mix the drinks he wondered if she was as brown all over, then grew red, for he had never had such a thought in connection with Hilda before.

He made his drink a triple straight rye, and joined Hilda in the swing. As he bent over to give her a light, he discovered that, as far as he could see, she was an even honey tan, and his breathing quickened.

Peter tore his eyes away, flushing, and leaned away from her.

Hilda moved closer, her bare leg pressing his so that a stream of warmth came through the linen suit he wore.

"Don't be an old meanie, Pete. I got stood up tonight. Dave discovered an old school chum, if you can tie that, walking on the beach, and took her for a ride. They passed me in his car, going like the wind. So I came over here to pout."

Peter leaned close, "Papa kiss and make well," he promised, and sank his mouth deep into the pouting, painted mouth of Hilda. His hands came up and snaked her so close the bandeau strings loosened.

"Pe-ter!" gasped Hilda, as Peter's big brown hand wandered up to her bared shoulder.

"Keep quiet and kiss me," he commanded harshly, and resumed kissing her in the mad manner he seemed to have learned from Pat.

HILDA STRUGGLED but to no avail, and with an excited gasp she sank against Peter.

Relaxed, Hilda lay in his arms. "Peter, Peter, I've been a fool. It's yes, if you want it."

"Yes, what?" Peter asked gruffly, feeling unexcited and slightly let down by the discovery that having Hilda in his arms hadn't been exciting at all.

"Why yes. I'll marry you," pouted Hilda.

"Good heavens, I wasn't asking you to marry me! Be yourself, Hilda. A kiss or so

certainly doesn't mean marriage." Peter's voice was curt.

"But . . . but Peter, it was more than a kiss," stammered Hilda, "and you've asked me to marry you every year since we were ten."

"This is another year," muttered Peter.

"Why, you old devil!" Hilda sat up, red with anger. "Did you think you could treat me this way and get away with it?"

"Why not? I seem to remember last year your telling me, when I found you and Dave Carson in a clinch, that such things meant nothing and were just the modern way. It was a struggle, but I think I see it your way now." Peter lighted a cigarette nonchalantly, while his thoughts raced around his head like mice in a trap.

*He didn't want Hilda.* She wasn't half as exciting as Pat. To be tied to her all his life wasn't his idea of an ideal existence. He wondered how he could shake Hilda and go in search of Pat.

But Hilda didn't intend to be shaken. "I want another drink, Pete, a good big one. I'm horribly upset. I wouldn't have made you like this, hard and cynical, for all the men in the world. I always thought there was my old, sweet, Pete to go back to. That you'd be waiting."

"I thought you had an idea like that." Peter rose, stretching his long body.

"Come along with me while I mix the drinks then I'll take you down to your boat. It is getting late for little girls to be calling on men."

Hilda stared at him, fear creeping into her narrow green eyes. Of course he was punishing her for running around with Dave, and Peter was so much more exciting than Dave. She'd been a prize idiot not to have discovered it years ago.

IN THE KITCHEN Hilda jumped to the broad shelf and sat there swinging her bare legs temptingly while Peter put together a pair of drinks, but he suddenly had no eyes for legs edged with the crinkled tan crepe shorts almost the hue of the skin.

Hilda drank her drink, eyes sparkling with anger.

"Who was she, Pete? The girl that woke you up so that I am just a casual on your list? You weren't like this day before yesterday. You got as red as a Bing cherry when you accidentally touched my knee."

"You're talking through your hat," with the brutality which had been Hilda's all the years past. "Ready? Let's mosey down to the docks." He took her by the arm and spilled her off the broad shelf.

She wasn't licked but she had to have time to mend her fences and figure all this out, and make new plans.

"Going to the Cherry Gables dance tomorrow night, Pete? Want to take me?" she coaxed, slipping her arm through his and walking so close to him when she stepped that her leg brushed his.

"Haven't decided yet. This is our busy time. I may be too tired. Better pick yourself a date and if I come we'll have to manage a dance or two."

"Peter, I think you're mean, after all the dances you've asked me to go to with you, to turn me down the first time I ask you," pouted Hilda. "I've the grandest new dress."

"That's swell. I'll be glad to see you in it."

"Pete, it's almost an open secret from the waist up, except for a skimpy apron-piece in front." Hilda held Pete's arm when he would have stooped to untie her boat.

"That's swell," he repeated, lifted her under the arms and dropped her into the speedboat, then tossed the rope in after her. "Good night!" He turned and went up the dock, fairly running.

They were dancing on the beach and he looked eagerly for Pat but she was unaccountably missing.

"Where's Pat?" he asked a woman, sitting beside the fire.

"Pat? I don't know him," she said indifferently.

"I mean the girl who played the violin last night out here." Peter's voice was impatient.

"Oh, that one. She was just a tourist who asked if she could put her trailer in the orchard overnight and the foreman said yes.

She was gone when we got up this morning, anyway her trailer was."

Peter raced for the house. There were a hundred thousand trailers on the roads the automobile clubs said, and in one of them was Pat, already a day away.

He got in his car and drove to town, to the tourist camp there, but no Pat. An orange trailer? Yes, there had been one that pulled in after midnight last night but it was gone before dawn.

At dawn Peter pulled wearily into his own orchard and went into the house and to bed. That was the end of Pat. Sweet, little, dimpled Pat whom he had thought one of his pickers and easily accessible, should he want to see her again, which he'd been sure he would not. Pat had run away too. Probably she had thought him one of the pickers or packers and had been surprised too at their interlude under the pines. She had admitted she had started to devil him because he looked so prim. He didn't feel prim now. He never would again. When the picking season was over he'd take his car and visit every camp.

THAT NIGHT AFTER he had showered he decided to go over to the Inn and dance. Some little imp inside told him that looking for one orange trailer was going to be like looking for a certain pebble in a huge stone pile. If he'd only stuck around that night instead of bolting like a scared calf. . . .

Cherry Gables was a huge inn half over the lake waters, half buried in cherry laden trees. The parking lot behind it was choked with cars when Peter arrived and he half turned to go back, then remembered his big, lonely house, and entered.

Standing in the doorway, he saw Hilda in the most daring creation imaginable, and not a single ripple of interest went over him.

He cut in and took Hilda away. She was breathing fast and had a sultry look in her eyes that made him regret picking her out. She pressed close to him.

"Pete, you did come! You'll take me home, won't you? I came alone purposely. I . . ." her voice trailed away for Peter wasn't even listening.



"Pete, you aren't even human," she raged. "What'd you cut in for if you are going to look and act so remote?"

The crowd surged by, pressing them closer and closer. Over the heads of the girls he saw Dave Carson come rushing forward, and did not try to avoid him. He stepped back and moved to the wall near the orchestra and leaned there, indifferently watching the dancers. Queer, it had been a lot more fun dancing on the beach last night to the music of two harmonicas, an accordion and violin, than tonight with an imported orchestra that had an added attraction, a singer.

The dancers were crowding back now and Peter turned to look at the orchestra.

A girl stepped forward, a girl in a floating, white tulle gown which touched the floor

*"I've got to get back for a date," muttered Peter, to her disappointment.*

tall around and was a cloud around a high held amber head. She began to sing and Peter stared, gaping at her. Pat, *here*, singing, when he had pictured her in some camp far away.

She sang, swaying to the music, the col-

ored lights playing over her, pointing out graceful legs under the sheer skirts, rippling over thrust-out bosom, making shadows on her throat and a deep violet one where her throat disappeared into an enchanting gorge of silky flesh.

As her last line trembled on the air, it was cut short, for she had swung about slowly in her singing and was facing Peter. The words died away and thunderous applause took their place.

Peter stalked forward as she hesitated, looking about for an exit. He circled her slim waist with his arm, and swung her into the dance.

"Pat, why did you run away?" he demanded, shaking her a little before clamping her tightly against him.

"Peter, why did you run away?" she mocked, her voice a ragged thread of sound, and he could feel a ripple of feeling surging through her tightly held body.

"I ran back," he retorted, "and you were gone. I was going to start looking for you as soon as we were through picking, then I found you were a tourist and probably lost. I came here and found you here almost under my nose."

"Well?" her voice light and slightly acid. "I did not know they allowed cherry laborers at the Gables. How did you get in? Do they know you are a picker in the Brent orchards?"

PETER'S BLOND HEAD went back and he laughed. "So you *were* running?" he taunted gaily. "You were scared just as I was, that you had . . . had become interested in someone not in your class."

"Then you knew . . . recognized that I was not in your class? That I was more than a picker?" Pat asked eagerly.

Peter grinned and pulled her closer "Snob," he teased.

"I can't help it. You're devilishly handsome, Peter, but I wish you hadn't found me again. It was hard enough running away the first time."

"So you *are* interested in me?"

"No," indignantly. "I, well I didn't want you to chase me around."

"Then why does your body cling to mine the way it is doing?" Peter asked tormentingly, and, as she tried to free herself from his clasp, "No, you don't! No matter how far you run, Pat, I shall run after you."

"I was afraid of that," wailed Pat. "Peter, don't?" As his arm circled her closer so that he could press the soft, satiny flesh under her arm. "Oh, Peter, why do you make it so difficult? Do you think I've come this far to marry a cherry camp bum? Don't you suppose I know where the Brent's get their pickers? Off the streets?"

"It doesn't matter, Pat, I love you, and I think you like me more than a little. Admit it," letting his fingers stray farther, gloatingly, over the delicious curves under the floating veils of chiffon.

"Yes, but I won't yield to it. That's all over." Pat stuck out a pugnacious chin which quivered.

The music had stopped and Peter was swinging her through the crowds.

"Where are we going?" she demanded.

"To your trailer. I've a thousand things to say, a thousand plans to make for us. Coming?" Peter asked sternly.

Patricia looked at him then up at the bright banner of lights over the orchestra shell, "The One and Only Patricia in Person Tonight Only".

"Yes, darn it, I am!" the voice a little wail of defeat. "M-my trailer's parked deep in the Cherry Gables' orchard, if you must see it."

"Peter! Peter Brent! Wait!" shrilled Hilda's voice, as they stepped out on the stone terrace and the fragrance of the dead ripe cherries closed around them.

"Too late, Hilda, I've found what I want," Peter flung over his shoulder, and picked up Patricia, white chiffons and all and plunged into the orchard.

"Put me down, you . . . you masquerader!" stormed Pat, wriggling, and becoming a white pinwheel with darting chiffon-clad legs and delicious froth of under laces.

"Never! But aren't you glad you decided to come with me when you thought I was a tramp, a cherry camp tramp?" grinned Peter,

(Please turn to page 64)

# GOOFY OVER GANDERS

By

OTTO NELSON

FOR two afternoons Chick Benson had seen the girl at the track. She was a medium brunette, slim, delectably curved and contoured, dressed in the latest the fashion magazines hurled at the opposite sex.

When the ganders came out of the paddock for the parade to the stall gates the girl watched every move. When they broke she yelled "They're off!" When they came into the head of the stretch she hung over the rail and when they flashed under the wire Chick noticed she was tensely excited.

The funny part was she was always alone.

Chick, slapping down two bucks for a Daily Double ticket, saw the girl the following afternoon. She stood near one of the white pillars of the clubhouse, staring pensively across the oval of the Agawam track. A breeze wandering down from the Berkshires flattened her gray silk dress against her.

Chick didn't need much imagination to visualize every sweet, nubile line of her young body. He drew a quick, deep breath. He was goofy over ganders, but he knew a swell looking dame when he saw one. The gal in the gray dress did things to him. He watched while she opened her program and found a seat at the edge of the lawn.

About that time Bat Buckley came busting up to Chick. Bat was a clocker, a tout, an early morning sharpshooter who tabbed the matutinal workouts of the horses and always had a sure thing up his sleeve.

"Hello, kid," he greeted Chick. "Ridin' high today, boy. The third hop. Take a peek. Old Fitkin, tuned like a violin and ready to run for all the slant-eyes in Japan. Get down heavy."

Chick nudged him.

"See that gal over there. The one in gray. Clock her and see how fast she goes. I've got a yen broad as Park Avenue."

Bat stared and shook his head.

"Nice legs. I don't know her. Got a yen, eh? Listen. Race track dames are poison in any country. Take a tip and lay off."

Chick laughed.

"All the same," he murmured, "I'm never going to be happy until that baby's in my arms."

He lost the Daily Double when both his selections ran second. To recoup he plunged on Fitkin, but it wasn't the nag's day to bring home the apple strudel money. Then, desperately, Chick let Bat's tip in the fourth go unheeded. He put his last twenty on his own choice and saw the gander left flat-footed at the post.

Chick looked at his watch. It was a beautiful time-piece. It had come down from a long line of ancestors. The back of it was encrusted with rubies and diamonds. Any time he wanted to hang it up, Broadway pawnbrokers would go a grand on it.

Chick slipped the watch back in his pocket and decided to shove off. He walked toward the cement that led to the clubhouse entrance. And there, busily tearing up a sheaf of mutual tickets, he saw the girl in gray.

"Hold it!" Chick advised. "Never tear up a ticket until the next day. I did once and found they'd disqualified the winner and placed my gander first."

The girl smiled. She had hot red lips. When they curved, her blue eyes sparkled and her nose wrinkled a tiny bit.

"I'm wondering," she murmured, "where I'm going to get bus fare. No chance of any disqualifications on these."

She stirred the fragments of the tickets with the tip of her small slipper.

"I've got a car parked out in the sun," he told her. "Like to ride back to Springfield with me?"

"Love to."

HE FOUND HIS HEAP, helped her in and rolled away from the track. Chick felt a pleasant tingling. At close range the girl was even more attractive than he had imagined. She had a lot of class. She was pretty and there wasn't anything cheap about her. Most of the solo dames who tried to make a living off the ganders were a hard lot. This girl was soft, smooth, enticing to the senses, stimulating to the imagination.

She told him her name was Marge Donlon and that she worked in a night club until they changed to a summer revue. That let her out and she had drifted up New England way, trying to build her savings up on the nags.

It was a straight story, but it made Chick frown. Somehow he couldn't picture Marge being alone, without escort or admirer. She wasn't the type to be a wallflower anywhere. Gals of her sleek, lovely appearance usually had a couple of heels hanging around.

"No boy friend?" he asked.

She shook her brunette head.

"Not one."

Chick grinned.

"That's a break—for me."

He glanced down at the gray silk molded so suavely over her rounded thighs. He saw the ample swell of her breasts, gloriously seductive, tantalizing. Again his imagination glowed hotly. It had been a long time since he had stepped out with a patent-leather doll.

By the time they reached Springfield they were on friendly terms. Chick found out she had been in the floor show at the Toreador. He learned she was staying at the Berkshire Hotel and that she was nineteen, came from Chicago and when the Agawam meet ended expected to hop over to Suffolk Downs, near Boston, and continue to play the gees.

"How about a little dinner with me and a show after?"

She lifted delicately arched brows.

"Sounds swell, but where's the show?"

"Burlesque in town this week. Joe Armstrong's Harem Hotties. It's at the Amphion."

"I'd love to go. All I do at night is sit in my room and study the dope sheet for the next day's races."

"I'll pick you up at seven," Chick told her. "Be in the lobby."

While he shaved and changed his clothes, Chick forgot about the Agawam oval and Bat's tips. All he could think about was Marge, the gray silk plastered against her, the eyes that sparkled and the rose-red lips that curved so temptingly.

The inner tingle he felt grew electrical. It made him hot and cold by turn. When he finished pulling a blue serge jacket on, to go with his cream colored slacks, a swift tide of expectancy was in his blood. What a gal! He breathed hard when he went down to the street, climbed into his car and headed for her hotel.

SHE WAS WAITING on the wide, old-fashioned porch when he glided into the curb. She had changed from gray to dark green. It was a cute little outfit. It consisted of silk jacket and skirt. A white blouse was under the jacket. Her slippers were high heeled and her stockings the latest shade.

Chick took her to the King Arthur Grill. The cocktails were good there. For a quarter they put in real liquor. They had three apiece before they went in to dinner.

Chick looked at his diamond-studded watch after awhile. It was eight-thirty. He put his hand in his pocket and made sure he had the box seats for the burlesque show handy. Marge smiled at him across the table.

"You're sweet," she murmured. "Picking me up, bringing me home, taking me out for dinner and a show. You don't know anything about me except what I've told you. I might be a pennyweighter or a twist, making a play for your bankroll. How could you know?"

Chick laughed.

"I've been around. I know the lightweights when I see 'em. Come on, inhale that mocha and let's scram. The show begins in ten minutes."

The burlesque house was crowded, but they were the only ones in the box. Chick moved his chair close to hers. She smiled at him through the roseate dark.

"I haven't seen a real hot burlesque show since I left the main boulevard," she announced.

"Me either."

The night was warm but the show was tor-

rid. Chick couldn't figure how the cops let it get by. There must have been a piece of bribery somewhere. The patter was rancid as last year's butter. The strip teasers gaily went the limit. They took off and left off. They moulted like canaries and left nothing to any guess work.

Chick watched Marge to see how she took the nudity. She watched the performance with high interest. She laughed at some of the choicest wise-cracks from the comedians and Chick breathed hard again. He was glad she wasn't any novice who hadn't looked at life and knew what it was all about.

Still, he figured, at the Toreador she must have had a post graduate course. That night

a sizzling dance on the part of one strip-teaser who used little more than her skin for a costume. Finally the last curtain came down with a roll.



*"Sometimes, a little spice is a good thing," she said. "Sort of peps you up."*



slab was plenty rough. The only difference between it and a sewer was that the Toreador had a doorman.

"This is no kindergarten sing-song," he said, when they stepped out for a beer during the intermission.

Marge's blue eyes smiled up at him.

"But sometimes," she said, "a little spice is a good thing. It sort of peps you up."

The final half of the show went the first instalment ninety per cent worse. There was

OUTSIDE THE NIGHT was full of stars. A cool, Massachusetts breeze stirred the trees. Chick opened the door of his buggy for Marge and drove out, a mile or two from town.

He parked on a lonely road. The moon hung over a meadow. Woods on either side made long, dim shadows.

Chick put his arm around Marge. She rested her head against his chest, puffing on the cigarette he lighted. Under the white blouse beneath the green silk jacket, Chick let his fingertips explore. He didn't feel any

brassiere strap—nothing except the smooth expanse of her warm back.

Warily, taking his time while he breathed in the perfume of her hair, he got his hand around to a point under her arm. She gave a little start when his hand stopped.

"I'm thirsty," she said slowly.

Chick let his lips touch her hair.

"Just a minute, honey. I'd like a kiss. I'll trade you a quart of Scotch in my hotel room for—"

She laughed drowsily.

"More bribery!"

But her lips came up to his, readily and eagerly. He kissed her passionately. He tried to take her all together in his arms. She fended him off with an admonishing word:

"Uh-uh. That isn't in the bargain."

Chick swallowed.

"Okay, let's shove off."

The town was serenely silent when they reached it. Chick's hotel was a few blocks from the railroad station. The clerk at the desk didn't look up when he and Marge crossed the lobby. They went up to the second floor and down a corridor paved with a heavy red carpet.

Chick opened the door of Room 203. He switched on the electric light and pulled down the shade at the open window. The room was warm from its daylong heat. He took off his blue coat, wound his watch and laid it on the dresser, together with his keys and a handful of small change.

Marge sat down on a day-bed opposite. She powdered her nose, smoothed back her polished hair and crossed her legs comfortably. Again Chick saw how symmetrically perfect they were. He went into the bathroom where he kept his small, ice-filled cooler and dug out a bottle of prepared cocktails. There was a jar of syrupy cherries in the medicine cabinet over the basin. He washed a couple of glasses and went back to Marge.

She had taken off the green jacket and piled pillows behind her. She was gracefully relaxed. The white blouse was partially opened. The electric light made her skin resemble satin.

"Manhattan?" she said, tasting the contents

of the glass he handed her. "My favorite burg and drink!"

"Mine, too." Chick held up his glass. "To tomorrow and the ganders. Six winners in a row."

"Know anything?" she asked.

"Only that you're about the most beautiful dame I've met since they buried prohibition."

She laughed quietly.

"You're not so terrible, yourself. Six feet. Nicely tanned. Good looking. Swell dresser. Chick, you're tops."

That made him feel good. He dropped down beside her. The moon filled the window, round and silvery. He asked himself if it could be the same moon they had looked at on the lonely country road. That made him remember the soft flesh his hand had touched and he felt a tightening in his throat.

They had three or four more cocktails and half a package of cigarettes before her brown eyes blinked at the overhead lights.

"Can't we turn 'em off?"

CHICK SNAPPED THE switch and went back to her. His arm encircled her. She melted into his embrace. She drew him down to her. For a rapturous interval Chick fondled and kissed her.

"You're sure I'm not cutting in on some other guy?" he whispered hoarsely.

"Of course not. Hold me closer—"

Her lips were honey sweet, moistly velvet. She responded to his ardor with a delightful intensity. Chick fumbled around until he found the loops fastening over the pearl buttons of the blouse. Three were joined. One by one he opened them.

She trembled a little in his arms, but aided him in getting the blouse off. Her arms locked about his neck tightly. The moon had left the window and the room was dark. But not too dark for Chick to see the fire in her half closed eyes and the white glimmer of her teeth.

He kissed the hollow at the base of her throat. His lips moved over her shoulders, down—and still further down. Then he crushed her in a savage flare of passionate madness and after that all was silent except



for the mocking laughter of the night breeze. . . .

It was after four in the morning when Chick finally fell into a doze and nearly ten when he awoke again.

For a few somnolent minutes he stared at the ceiling, trying to link up the wonderful minutes of the night with the new day. Finally he sat bolt upright, peering around. he saw no one, only the mashed cushions

*"You're sure I'm not cuttin' in on some other guy?" he whispered softly.*



on the day-bed, the empty cocktail glasses and the defunct volcano of the ashtray.

Marge had gone!

Chick took a shower, dressed and went to collect his watch and change from the top of the dresser. The small heap of silver was there with his keys but the watch, like the girl, had disappeared!

With narrowing eyes Chick stared at the

spot where he had left it. Then he cursed softly, viciously.

A call to the Berkshire Hotel revealed the fact no Marge Donlon had ever registered there. To follow through and make sure Chick put in a long distance call to the

Toreador in New York. The answer was the same—no Marge Donlon had ever worked with any floor show there.

Toward three the same afternoon Bat, at the track joined Chick. The little railbird's face was flushed with color.

"Where've you been, pal? Listen, I've got a sleeper in the next chukker. It can't lose. Put every dime you've got on Black Falcon's nostrils and get a twenty-to-one payoff. This is molten!"

Chick looked at his program. He needed a lot of coin in a hurry. His eye ran down over the names of the starters. Bat, without another word, ducked away.

For a minute Chick looked at the vacant chair where Marge had sat the previous afternoon. He felt hollow, empty. His gaze went from the chair to the program. He fished out his wallet and the lone fifty buck bill it contained.

AT THE MUTUAL WINDOW he bought a fifty dollar ticket and went out to watch the horses leave the paddock.

The race was a mile and a sixteenth. The start was in front of the grandstand and there were twelve going. Absently, his thoughts still on the girl, Chick watched the starter's flag go down, heard the gong ring and saw Black Falcon beat the gate and steal into a long lead.

Stiffly still, at the edge of the lawn he kept his gaze on the twenty-to-one shot while they rounded the turn and thundered into the stretch. With the finish line in sight a small chestnut filly slithered through on the inside,

nipped the long shot at the wire and won by a neck.

The crowd groaned when the numbers went up on the totalizer board. Bat sidled up to Chick. He snapped his cigarette away.

"Sorry, kid. It looked like a cinch. Only a half a length at that. But say, look at the payoff on the winner. Eighty-seven dollars to two. Lose much?"

Chick began to smile. He shook his head slowly.

"I didn't play Black Falcon. At the last minute I—I had a hunch."

Bat's mouth opened.

"A hunch? You mean—"

Chick nodded.

"Yeah, a real hunch. Gals may be poison. They might walk out on you and cop your jewelry, but sometimes they leave something behind you can cash in on. Fifty bucks at eighty-seven for two. How much is that?"

"You had half a C on—"

Chick nodded again.

"On the winner, Lovely Liar!" he answered.



"I SUPPOSE WHEN YOU FON-  
DLE A GIRL, YOU MAKE A  
THOROUGH JOB OF IT?"

"NO, I ONLY TOUCH THE  
HIGH SPOTS."

She: *"Listen, Freshman, if you do that again I'll slap you so hard you'll see stars!"*

He: *"Okey — hit me hard enough so I'll see Mae West and Sally Rand."*



# Broadway Barnstormers

By

TOM KANE

ADRIAN took Sue in his arms and kissed her. He pressed her lightly clad body close against him and his fingers strayed into the thick strands of her dark and lustrous hair.

They stood thus for several seconds, then a voice said, "Curtain!" and Adrian and Sue broke apart. They eyed each other with a shyness not usually to be found with actors rehearsing a scene.

Adrian turned to the young man who had cried "Curtain!" "How did it look?" he asked.

"It looked," the young man replied, "like the real McCoy."

Adrian grinned and reached for Sue's small hand. "It was," he said; their eyes met and it was all there in letters a foot high.

"All right, kids," Adrian said in a business-like voice; "that's all there is for this morning. Go get a swim and something to eat and be back here by three o'clock."

He and Sue, still holding hands, walked out of the dimly lighted barn into the brilliant summer sunshine. They faced each other.

Sue said, "I don't think I could play a really long love scene with you, Adrian."

"Why not?"

"Because," she replied with a wicked look in her dark eyes, "I'd blow my lines and say . . . where shall we go!"

Adrian laughed. "Which reminds me . . ."

"Where shall we go?"

They went a little distance from the made-over barn and lowered themselves to the grass beneath a gigantic oak. Sue promptly flung herself down and folded her hands behind her dark head. She closed her eyes.

Adrian gazed out across the rolling hills. "This is a far cry from Broadway, isn't it, Sue?"

"And what a relief," Sue murmured.

"After a whole season in Times Square . . . this is the life."

"You wouldn't want it all year round, would you?"

Sue opened her eyes and smiled up at him. "No," she said, "I guess I'm a Broadway baby; but for a change, this is simply swell." She closed her eyes again and Adrian turned his from their idle contemplation of the landscape to an active survey of Sue.

"I'm looking at you," he said gently.

"I know it. I can feel the caress of your eyes almost as though they were your hands. I like it, darling."

"They wouldn't have to be armor-piercing eyes, either, to go through what you're wearing, something seems to tell me."

"It's awfully hot in July, Adrian."

Adrian agreed with her absently. Through the loose mesh net of the polo shirt Sue was wearing, he could see the outline of her small and tight bosom, and something whispered in his ear that she was not wearing a great deal underneath the trimly fitting slacks.

ADRIAN SWEEPED HER suddenly into his arms and held her young body against him. Her crisp hair brushed against his cheek and she clung to him.

"Oh, darling," Adrian whispered "I love you so."

"And I love you. It's because I love you so much that I'm playing this part so well. It's only a bit; but I bet I make a hit in it."

"I hope you do," Adrian said. "I've got some news for you. Bullock's coming up from New York for the opening."

"No!" Sue broke away from him and her eyes shone radiantly into his. "When did this happen?"

"I reached him by phone this morning and talked him into it. I told him to watch you particularly."

Sue flung her soft, bare arms about his neck. "Darling," she said; "I'll play the part as it's never been played before."

"But don't let's talk shop. There's plenty of time for that."

"What shall we talk about?" Sue's dark eyes were twinkling, and her lightly covered bosom rose and fell.

"Why don't you and I go to the end of the lake and have a swim?"

She swayed towards him. "Swell," she breathed.

"Your beauty's breathtaking enough as it is," Adrian went on: "but in that scanty bathing suit of yours . . ."

Sue's eyes flickered. "I only have one thing against that suit," she said. "It makes us go to the end of the lake where nobody can see us. I had no idea it was as skimpy as it is when I bought it."

"That's just dandy," Adrian said.

Once again, he wrapped his arms about her. She was trembling, and her fingers plucked nervously at the back of his neck. Her bosom was crushed against his shirt, and Adrian imagined he could feel the hammering of her heart.

"Let go of me, Adrian! Your arms're driving me crazy."

They started to rise to their feet, when the voice of the stage manager broke in on them.

"Sorry to interrupt you two," he said; "but, Adrian, Claire wants to see you."

Adrian frowned. "She wants to see me? What for? The rent's paid."

The stage manager shrugged his shoulders. "She didn't say what for. Just said she wanted to see you. She's waiting for you on the stage."

"Damn the girl!" Adrian said impatiently. He turned to Sue. "You run along, dearest, I'll join you later."

"Where?"

"At the far end of the lake. The farthest end."

Very annoyed, Adrian made his way back to the barn and entered through the stage door. He found Claire alone, seated on a couch in the center of the stage. She was blonde, quite beautiful in a selfish way and



dressed in a light, very revealing summer dress.

"Hello," Adrian said not too chummily. "What can I do for you?"

Claire patted the couch at her side. "Come over here and sit down," she directed. Her voice was low and languorous. It did things to him.

Adrian sat down. He looked at Claire. The dress she was wearing was very thin and it revealed a great deal more than it concealed. Her skirt had crept up, and since she was not wearing stockings, Adrian was treated to a display of round, white knee, and a few inches of equally white and very fetching thigh.

"Adrian," Claire said, "I've been watching the rehearsals of this play of yours and I like it very much."

"That's fine."

"Now, I might just as well come to the point at once. I want to play the part Sue's playing."

Adrian stared at her incredulously. "I don't think I quite understand," he said.

"It's perfectly plain. I want to play that part."

"Now, wait a minute," Adrian said. "In the first place, you haven't had any experience; secondly, we open in a few days and you don't know the part; and, thirdly, it's Sue's big chance."

CLAIRE SMILED HER cool and confident smile. "A girl doesn't need experience to play that kind of part," she said. "Not the way you make love to her. It's a short part and I can easily learn it in time for the opening. And—strange as it may seem—I don't give one damn whether it's Sue's big chance or not. I want to play that part."

"Suppose I refuse?" Adrian's voice was hard.

Claire shrugged her shapely shoulders. "I happen to own this barn which you've transformed into a theatre. There is a clause in the lease which says that said lease can be terminated on twelve hours' notice any time I want to terminate it."

Adrian's eyes glittered. "And you'd take advantage of that clause?"

"*Mais certainement,*" Claire said. She leaned towards him coquettishly, and Adrian had to admit that she was very attractive. The low V of her frock parted and he could see almost to her waist. The skirt had crept higher and the whiteness of her skin was quite dazzling.

Adrian got to his feet. "I feel like slapping your face," he said.

"I think I'd even like that. Provided you kissed the place and made it well afterwards."

"You must be a little mad," Adrian said.

"I am, darling. Mad about you. But it won't last. My crushes never do."

"Are you serious about this part business?"

"Oh, yes. Very serious." She smiled up at him. Adrian's brain was reeling.

"I'll let you know," he said.

"I know now. Good-bye . . . lover-to-be!"

Adrian flung himself out of the barn. In his cottage he undressed, strapped a pair of trunks about his waist and donned a bathrobe. His face black with anger, he started for the lake.

He found Sue sitting on the pebbly little beach waiting for him. She was wearing the scandalous bathing suit and the sight of it almost returned him to good humor but not quite. It really was quite a suit!

"What's the matter, Adrian?" Sue's voice sounded anxious.

"I'll tell you later. I don't want anything to spoil our fun. Ready?"

Sue rose to her feet. For a few brief seconds she stood before him in the revealing suit. The sun glittered on the white flesh of her shoulders, back and legs, then she turned and dashed towards the water. Adrian watched her with love and admiration as she executed a perfect dive, then he followed her.

"I'm glad the water's so cold," Sue said. "That means we won't stay in long."

Adrian grinned at her and he forgot all about Claire for the time being.

THE LAST REHEARSAL dragged to a close and Adrian went outside. Claire was waiting for him in her trim little roadster.

"Can I drive you anywhere?" she asked. To her utter surprise, Adrian grinned.

"I was going down town for a drink," he said.

Claire flipped open the door. "Hop in," she said. "I'm glad you're becoming a little more human. Can I join you in a drink?"

"Yes, of course."

"Swell!"

Claire let in the clutch and the little car gathered speed. Adrian noticed that again her short skirt was above her knees and again he could see a few tantalizing inches of white and satiny skin. The jersey she was wearing fitted tightly across her lush bosom, bringing out its lines and curves in a very fetching way. There was no denying the fact that Claire was a very attractive number and if it hadn't been for Sue. . . . Adrian decided not to dwell on that.

It was damply cool in Mike's Bar and Grille, and they found a table at the far end in a shadowy booth. Mike waited on them personally.

"What's it going to be, Mr. Abbott?"

"What about it, Claire?"

"I'll have a Scotch highball," Claire said absently.

"I'll have the same only make mine a double."

"Okey-dokey," Mike said. He withdrew and Claire leaned across the table.

"You don't like me at all, do you, Adrian?" she said plaintively.

"Why should I like you?"

"You haven't given me a chance."

"I happen to be in love with Sue and I can't be in love with more than one girl at a time."

"You mean you can't indulge in a little mild flirtation?"

"I have an idea it wouldn't be so mild," Adrian said.

And then Mike arrived with the drinks. He set them down and grinned at Adrian.

"Tonight's the big night, ain't it?" he asked.

"It is," Adrian admitted. "I've got a biggie coming up from New York to catch the play."

"In that case," Mike said, "I wouldn't play

around with too many of those." He indicated the glass and went away.

Adrian raised his glass and Claire did likewise. "To the play," she said.

"Thanks."

Claire set the glass down and her hand reached for Adrian's beneath the table. She found it and placed it firmly and frankly on the soft and yielding flesh of her knee.

She smiled and Adrian could not help the thrill that shot through him.

MIKE STRAIGHTENED and looked at Claire. "Dead to the world," he pronounced.

Claire looked from the recumbent form of Adrian up at Mike.

"But what'm I going to do?" she wailed. "He's got to give a performance in a few hours."

"Canoe him out to the island and back," Mike said. "If that don't do it—nothing will."

Claire groaned and got to her feet. Between them they managed to half carry and half drag Adrian into the car.

For a long while Adrian remained motionless in the bow of the canoe. Then he stirred and jerked himself to a sitting position.

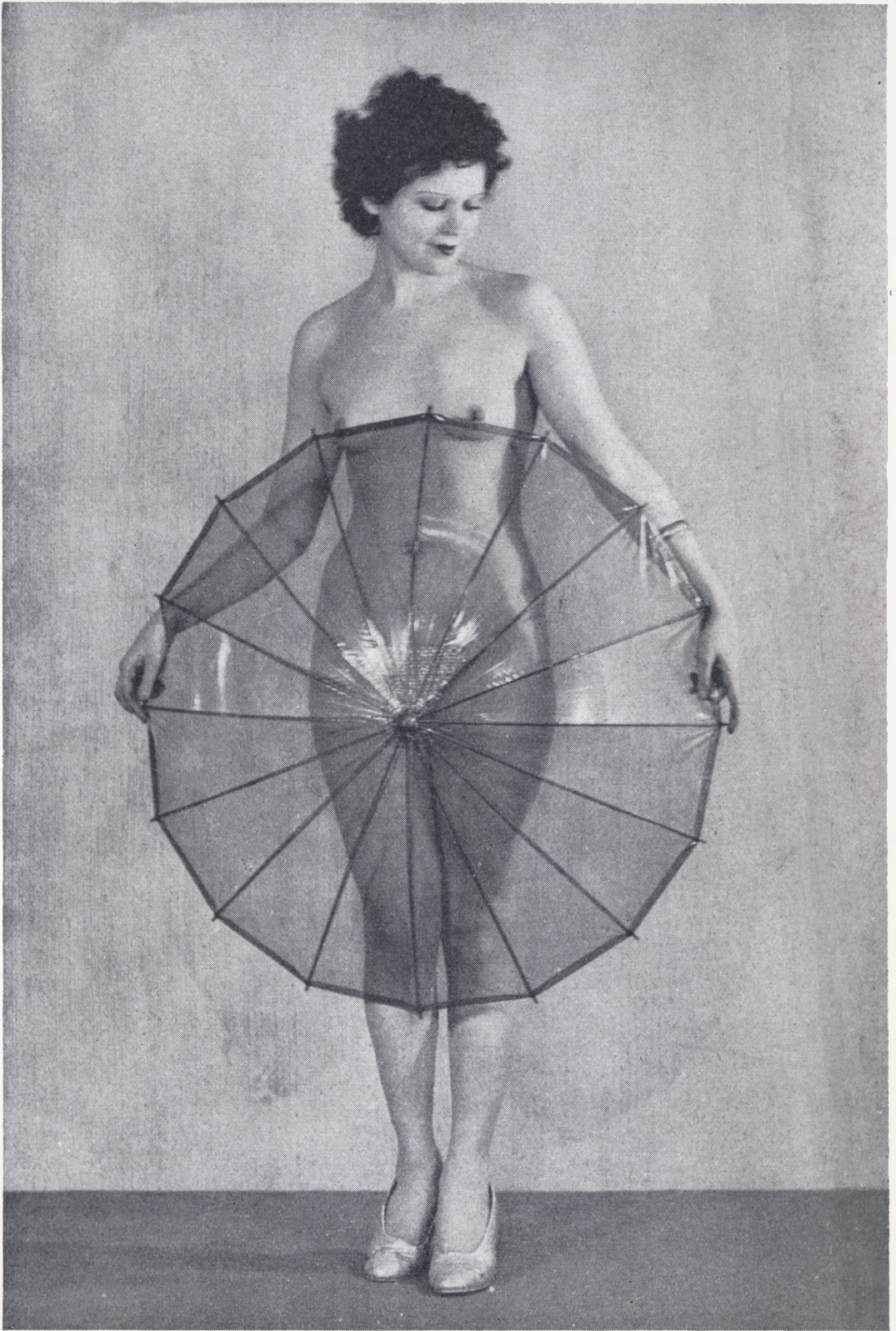
He glanced about him with half-shut eyes. "What's the idea of all the water?" he demanded thickly.

Claire heaved a sigh of relief. "I'm trying to get a little air into your lungs. You've got to sober up."

"Me sober up? What're you talking about. Never was so sober in my whole life. Who're you?" He peered at her drunkenly. Then he grinned foolishly. "Li'l Claire. The girl who wanted a mild flirtation. Well, here goes . . ."

His sudden motion almost capsized the canoe. Only Claire's dexterity kept it afloat. "Don't be an ass," she shouted. "You'll upset us."

"Let's have a flirtation," Adrian said. "Jus' a li'l mild flirtation . . ." He managed to stand up, and Claire managed the tossing canoe. She did not speak. She was too busy trying to keep the canoe afloat. Adrian took an unsteady step forward, stumbled and the





next thing Claire knew he was thrashing wildly about in the lake.

In spite of herself, Claire laughed. "Hey . . . grab hold of the canoe and I'll tow you ashore."

Adrian's feet touched and he stood up. The water came to his waist. Seizing the canoe by the prow, he dragged it ashore. Then he reached inside and pulled Claire out.

She said, "You certainly sobered up in a hurry."

"I'll say I did." And there was not the faintest slur to his speech. He walked ashore with Claire in his arms and dropped her to the ground.

She gazed at him suspiciously. "What's this all about?" she asked.

Adrian dropped his hands to her shoulders. "You've been framed, little one," he said quietly. "Beautifully and rather expensively framed. I was drinking cold tea back there in the pub and there never was a moment in my life when I was more sober."

Claire's eyes flashed. "So what?" she demanded.

"So this . . . darling!"

Adrian reached for her. Claire struggled a little but she was no match for him. Carefully and thoroughly, Adrian ripped her dress to shreds. He jerked the remains from her and left her cowering in a set of sheer

and none-too-adequate step-ins and brassiere.

"What does this mean?" But Claire's voice had lost its confidence.

"It means that you're going to stay on this island until after the show this evening. I took the dress in case you got the idea into your head to swim to the mainland. It's quite warm and you won't catch cold. So long . . . lover-to-be!"

Adrian shoved the canoe off, tossed in the remains of the dress and clambered aboard. He seized the paddle and water flew.

HE FOUND SUE sitting disconsolately on a bench outside the converted barn. Dripping wet, hair in his eyes, he dashed over to her.

"Sue, darling, no time for explanations: but you go on tonight. I'll tell you all about it after the show."

"But where's Claire?"

Adrian laughed uproariously. "Giving the seagulls a pre-season exhibition of the new fall underwear."

"But I don't understand . . ."

"You don't have to understand. I'll tell you all about it later. In the meantime . . ."

His arms closed about her and he held her close. Wet as he was, Sue clung to him desperately. Her lips sought and found his and her bare little arms stole seductively about his neck.

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*Yvonne Darling says a girl  
can stand for a man with  
most any kind of a past if  
he hands out swell presents.*



# LARCENY FOR A LADY

By

KEN COOPER

LEE BRADY tapped the silver monogrammed bowl of his English pipe. He crossed his legs, slumped deeper into the leather upholstered chair of his father's study.

"I think it's high time I was excused from toadying to your week-end guests, Governor," he said.

Walter Brady's florid jowls quivered. "Oh, you *think*, do you? That's a very debatable point. And another thing, young man, stop calling me Governor. I don't like it and I've told you a dozen times that I don't like it."

Lee smiled, shrugged. "And I don't like playing youth's companion to Mr. and Mrs. Reginald Pettigoat's maiden daughter, or Captain and Mrs. Horatio Flimflam's son."

The multi-millionaire industrial magnate turned blue with indignation. "You impertinent scamp," he bellowed. "You should consider it an honor to be allowed to mingle with reputable people. If you think for one moment that I'm proud to introduce you as my son, you're mistaken!"

"Then why bother, Governor?"

"Unfortunately, the world knows I have a son. Common decency decides that I acknowledge him."

Lee rose, crossed to a desk, tapped the contents of his pipe into an onyx ash tray. "Sorry I can't see it your way. I'm driving down to New York for the week-end. I've absolutely nothing in common with your guests and see no reason for letting them bore me."

Walter Brady pounded his fist on the desk. "I shall forbid you the use of the cars! I shall see to it that you do not leave the grounds! Once and for all, I'm going to teach you a lesson! You owe me some respect and I'm going to get it."

Lee smiled as he paused at the door. "Remember your high blood pressure, Governor."

In his room, Lee rang for Atkins, the stony-

faced English valet. "The Governor's having week-end guests, Atkins," he said.

"Yes, sir."

"Britishers, I understand."

"Yes sir. The Duke and Duchess of Aberley and her Ladyship Mary Louise. I have laid out your dinner clothes in the dressing room, sir."

"Very thoughtful of you, Atkins, but very unnecessary. I'm not dressing for dinner. In fact, I'm not having dinner here. Do you know what I'm going to do, Atkins?"

The valet squirmed. "No sir."

"Well, I'm going to run away, Atkins. I'm going to flee the Duke and Duchess and her Ladyship Mary Louise. Present company excepted Atkins, I regard the British as the most anemic of people. They're usually thin, scrawny and cold. The less I see of them, the better. Now, listen closely. Go down to the gardener's cottage and have him give you the oldest, most disreputable suit of clothes he owns. He's about my size and it should fit me. I want a complete outfit, shoes, hat and everything. Do you have any money, Atkins?"

The valet, somewhat ruffled, nodded. "Yes sir."

"About twenty dollars?"

"Yes sir."

"All right, bring that back with you and mind, Atkins, not a word to anyone about this."

DUSK WAS FALLING when Lee, attired in the gardener's suit with twenty dollars of Atkins' money in his pocket, slipped out of a side door of the Brady country estate.

Ten minutes later, after skirting the gravel driveway, he reached the huge iron gates that opened out on the main road. Fortunately, the caretaker, at dinner in his cottage, failed to see him. Darkness was falling fast.



*Lee found himself in the rear seat, holding a squirming girl in his arms.*

There were only a few faint grey streaks in the western sky.

On the road, Lee lit a cigarette. As the match flared, he heard a rustle in the bushes. The next moment, two men stepped out into the open. They were ominous looking characters; one short and bull-necked, the other, tall and thin. A week's growth of beard covered their ugly faces.

"We seen yuh slip out of dem gates, bo," the thin one muttered. "What was yuh doin' in dere?"

Lee thought fast. "Figured I'd get me a handout."

The short one laughed. "You pick swell joints, bo."

"Spider is what they call me," the thin one said. He jerked a thumb towards his companion. "This is Trigger. What's your handle?"

"Tony," Lee responded. Here was adventure, in his lap.

"O.K.," Spider said. "How'd you like to make some real dough, Tony? Enough dough so you won't have to bother with handouts? We need a third guy to help us and you look like the kind who can hold up his end."

"O.K.," Lee said. "What is it?"

Spider lowered his voice. "We seen in the papers how one of these here Dukes and his wife is comin' to visit this joint. They're

bringin' their daughter with 'em, see? Trigger and me figured to snatch the dame and hold her for plenty ransom."

Lee almost choked. A kidnap! What a reception for the visitors.

"We ain't got much time," Trigger said. "They ought to be along any minute now."

Lee could see tremendous possibilities. What better way could he find to get back into his father's good graces than foiling this kidnap scheme? He took command.

"Sounds jake to me, boys. I know this part of the country like a book. There's an old logger's cabin down by the lake about a mile from here. We can keep the dame there until we collect the dough. Now here's how we work it. The car comes along, we stop it, and I snatch the dame. You take care of the Duke, his wife and the chauffeur. Get them out of the car as fast as you can. We'll hop in, drive down to the trail. I'll take the dame to the cabin while you two get rid of the car."

"Ain't this cabin too close to this joint?" Spider questioned suspiciously.

"Sure, but that's what makes it so good. They'll never think of looking right under their noses."

The twin headlight of an automobile swung around the bend in the road. "Here they come," Trigger grunted. "Get ready!"

THE SNATCH WENT OFF like clockwork. Spider hung a punch on the chauffeur's jaw, knocked him out. The Duke sat down in the road, too dazed to utter a sound. The Duchess fainted. Not more than two minutes from the time they stopped the car, Lee found himself in the rear seat holding a squirming girl in his arms. He clamped his hand over her mouth.

With Spider at the wheel, the car leaped forward, shot down the road. A mile from the gates, Lee issued the order to stop. "How do we find the cabin?" Spider asked.

Lee gave instructions. He lifted the girl in his arms, carried her out of the car.

It was five hundred yards down the trail to what Lee had described as a logger's cabin, but what was actually a fishing camp situated on the Brady estate property. He found the key hanging in the customary place behind

the door jamb. Inside, he set the English girl down on her feet, switched on the lights.

For a full thirty seconds—and thirty seconds is a long, long time—he stared at his prisoner. She wasn't thin and she looked anything but cold. She had warm, golden colored hair, deep blue eyes and strawberry red lips. She was wearing a tailored suit, cut in the severe English style, but even its masculinity failed to conceal the plump swell of her breasts and the arch of her hips.

She brushed a strand of her hair back, smiled quizzically. "Rather a rough reception, don't you think? Are you Americans always as impetuous as this?"

Her voice penetrated deep into the marrow of Lee's bones. It was a rich contralto, smooth as honey. "I—I'm sorry if I hurt you," he stammered.

"Oh you didn't hurt me," she replied lightly. "After all, you can't conduct a business like this as though it were a pink tea. From what I've read of your American customs, I assume I'm kidnaped." She looked around. "Rather nice jail you've got me in. I don't think I'm going to mind it very much."

Lee found himself tongue-tied. "Then—then you aren't frightened?"

She shrugged prettily. "Frightened of what? As a matter of fact, I'm a little thankful you did this. It will probably be much more thrilling than a boring week-end with wealthy Americans. You wouldn't know, but there's nothing so impossible as wealthy Americans. How much ransom are you going to ask for me?" She pirouetted, hands on her hips. "Would I be worth ten thousand pounds? That's about fifty thousand dollars in your money."

Lee found himself up against a blank wall. He expected that he'd have to deal with a squalling brat and instead, she was a gorgeously mature woman, completely at ease.

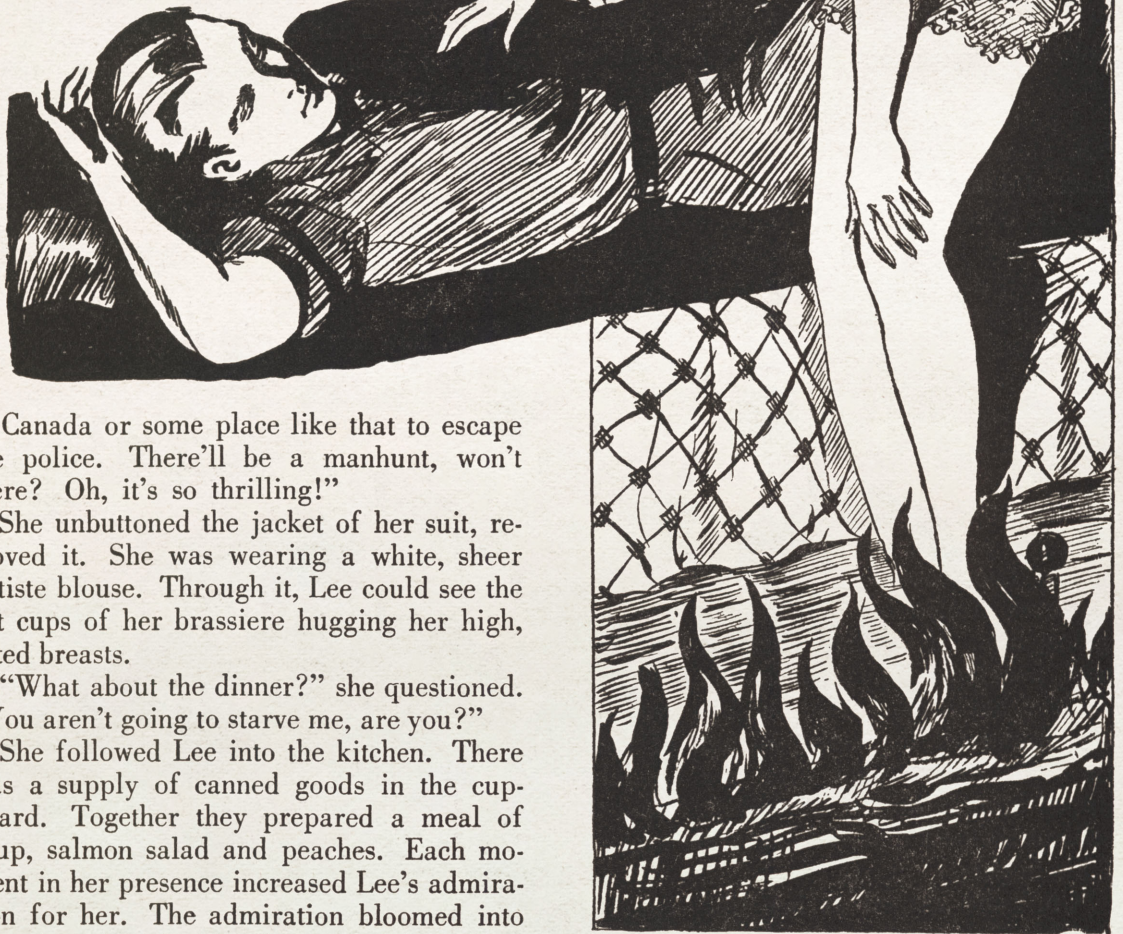
"What about those other two men?" she questioned. "Judging from their voices, I shouldn't think I'd like them very much. I heard you telling them how to get here. The directions sounded awfully confusing."

Lee smiled. "They were; confusing and wrong."

SHE CLAPPED HER HANDS delightedly. "Oh, you double-crossed them, didn't you? How thrilling!" Her eyes twinkled. "I'm so glad this happened, really I am. Now I'll have something to tell my friends back in London. The newspapers will be full of it, won't they?"

"You're a funny girl," Lee said. "Anyone else would be frightened to death."

"Why should I be frightened? You're not going to hurt me. Actually if you were dressed in striped trousers and a cutaway, you'd be quite a handsome man. After you get the ransom money for me, you'll be able to buy yourself some nice clothes, won't you? I'd like to see you in them but I don't suppose that's possible. You'll have to run away



to Canada or some place like that to escape the police. There'll be a manhunt, won't there? Oh, it's so thrilling!"

She unbuttoned the jacket of her suit, removed it. She was wearing a white, sheer batiste blouse. Through it, Lee could see the net cups of her brassiere hugging her high, tilted breasts.

"What about the dinner?" she questioned. "You aren't going to starve me, are you?"

She followed Lee into the kitchen. There was a supply of canned goods in the cupboard. Together they prepared a meal of soup, salmon salad and peaches. Each moment in her presence increased Lee's admiration for her. The admiration bloomed into affection; the affection into something else.

The night got chilly and Lee built a fire. In the living room, seated before the fireplace,

*"I—I heard some noises," Mary Louise said. "I—I was afraid."*

she stretched languidly. Lee glanced at her, saw the ivory warmth of her shoulders through the batiste blouse, the gentle upper swell of her breasts.

"I like this," she said softly. "It's so peaceful. How long do you think I'll have to stay here before they'll pay the ransom?"

The light of the flames danced on her silk-sheathed legs. Her body was gorgeous in relaxation. Its only movement was the rise and fall of her breasts.

"Not very long," he replied.

"Oh, but aren't kidnap victims kept prisoners for weeks at a time?"

"Yes, but—"

She turned towards him. One of her hands dropped on his knee. "You don't have to ask for the ransom immediately, do you? Can't you delay it for a while?"

The touch of her hands sent a thrilling quiver through Lee. "I was thinking of taking you back tonight. Your father and mother are probably terribly worried."

A pained expression flitted across her face. "Oh please don't. A little worry won't hurt them. I'd much rather stay here with you than be bored to death listening to that rich Mr. Brady boasting about all the land he owns and all the people he employs. You can't appreciate what it means to have to be entertained by people like that." Her hands moved up to Lee's shoulders. "I'll kiss you, Mr. Kidnaper, if you promise to let me stay here for a while, at least, over the week-end."

SHE DIDN'T WAIT for his reply. Her lips, teasingly parted, pressed hard against his mouth. Lee reacted normally to the caress. His arms circled her waist, drew her close against him. If she had intended it to be a short, pecking kiss, she was sadly mistaken. Lee bent her back, parted her lips even further, found all the moist warmth of them. His right hand swept over her shoulder, slipped into the hollow beneath it, found the resilient softness that yielded to the pressure of his fingers.

"Oh," she gasped as her lips separated from his, "oh, you're quite—quite romantic, aren't you?"

Lee thought he detected a chastening note

in her voice. He released her. "I'm sorry."

She laughed softly. "There's nothing to be sorry about. It—it just took me by surprise." The pupils of her eyes had contracted. Spots of color glowed in her cheeks. "I'm certainly not going to let you take me back now," she said. "Nobody has ever kissed me like that. Do you make love to all the women you kidnap?"

"Well, you're the first woman I've ever kidnaped."

"Really? The first one?"

"The first and the nicest."

"Oh, you're just saying that." She leaned her elbows on his knee, looked up into his face. "Tell me, how did you ever happen to become a kidnaper? You don't look like a kidnaper should look."

Her position gave Lee a perfect view of the charms beneath her blouse. The swelling of her breasts had loosened her brassiere and he could see almost all of the twin beauties cupped in the diaphanous net.

"If you must know, I was pushed into it by my father."

Her eyes became saucers. "You—you mean your father forced you to become a kidnaper?"

"That's about the size of it."

"Oh, how horrible." The pink tip of her tongue circled her voluptuous lips. "And yet, I'm rather glad you are a kidnaper. I never would have been kidnaped if it were not for you. You know, you're the most interesting man I've met since I've been in America." She regarded Lee. "And the best looking, too. All the rest have been so dull and fop-pish."

LEE WAS ON THE verge of telling her the truth but he hated to spoil her illusion. There was only one thing worrying him about this entire business. Despite the fact that he had given Spider and Trigger completely false directions as to how to reach the fishing cabin, there was a chance they might stumble on it anyway. It would be best to get the lights out as soon as possible.

"I'll have to ask you to go to bed, Lady Abberley," he said.



"Oh, don't call me that. Mary will do. What's your name?"

Lee swallowed hard. "Er—Tony."

She smiled. "I like Tony. Why must I go to bed so early?"

"Because I'm turning the lights out."

She drew a deep breath. Lee blinked when he saw her breasts swell sensuously. "Can't we sit in the dark?" she queried. "I adore sitting in the dark."

Lee shook his head. "No, we can't." He rose, led the way to the cabin's lone bedroom. "Sorry I haven't pajamas or a nightgown to offer you."

"Silly goose. I wouldn't think I was kidnaped if I had them. I'll sleep in my panties and brassiere." Her eyes twinkled meaningfully. "Where do you sleep?"

"In the front room."

"All alone?"

"Er—yes. Well, good night."

She leaned against the door jamb, her golden head thrown back. In profile, her gorgeous breasts jutted provocatively. She ran her fingers over her sleek, flat hips.

"Americans don't say good night that way, do they?"

Lee began to tremble. The palms of his hands became moist. "I—I don't know what you m-mean," he stuttered.

"This is what I mean." She came into his arms, her luscious lips parted, clung to him during the duration of the sweet, warm kiss. Lee felt the weaving of her hips and the



*"Wait a minute!" Lee said as he saw his father enter the cabin. "It won't do you any good to arrest me!"*

throbbing of her heart against his. He was weak when the kiss ended.

"Good night," she whispered.

Lee turned out the light in the front room, sat down before the fire. In case Spider and Trigger did stumble on the cabin, he wanted to be there to meet them.

The warmth of the fire and the faint crackling of the logs made him drowsy. He must have dozed off because the next thing he knew someone was on the couch beside him.

"Tony," a soft voice murmured.

Lee sat up, blinked. For a moment he thought the blonde, half-clothed goddess next to him was the figment of a dream.

"I—I heard some noises," Mary Louise said. "I—I was afraid."

The glow of the fire did exotic things to her milk-white skin. It did revealing things to the net cups of the brassiere. The illusion was one of complete nudity.

"You—you can't stay here," Lee gulped.

"But—but I am. It's cold in that room. You kidnaped me and you must take care of me. Look, I'm shivering."

TO DEMONSTRATE THE shivering, Mary Louise wriggled into Lee's arms, hugged herself tight against him. It was the last straw. Lee's emotional stability had been severely shaken when he had held her fully dressed. Now it was shattered into a million unrecoverable pieces.

"Warm me," she whispered. "Oh, warm me, Tony."

Lee needed no second invitation. His arms encircled her bare waist. His mouth found her ripe lips. Every inch of her deliciously curved body was against him. He could feel her throbbing breasts and the plump fullness of her thighs.

But the ecstasy was unfortunately short-

lived. A faint *tap-tap* at the door brought Lee to his feet. He picked up the andiron, approached the door.

"Who's there?"

"Mr. Lee! It's Atkins, sir!"

Lee turned the key, jerked the door open. Atkins, his eyes bulging and perspiration running down his forehead, stumbled in.

"Oh, sir, I've tried so hard to reach you before the Master and the others got here." He heaved and spluttered.

"Talk, Atkins! What's the matter?"

"Two men, sir. Ruffians, sir. They were caught in his Lordship's car, sir. They said a fellow in old, tattered clothes had taken her Ladyship Mary Louise to a cabin near the lake, sir. I knew it was you, sir, so I hurried down to warn you that—"

Atkins was cut short by the screaming of sirens and the sound of voices. Bright searchlights swung down the trail from the road.

"Here they come, sir!" Atkins gasped.

They came—in a rush. Lord Abberley, Lee's father and a dozen members of the State Police. Lee retreated to the couch at the fire, helped Mary Louise up, slipped an arm about her waist.

"Arrest that man!" Lord Abberley cried.

"Wait a minute," Lee said. He grinned as he saw his father enter the cabin. "It won't do you any good to arrest me. Yes, I kidnaped your daughter, but in this country, Lord Abberley, a wife can't testify against her husband."

Mary Louise twisted in Lee's arms. "Oh, Tony, you darling!" she cried.

"The name is Lee," he said. "Lee Brady."

Mary Louise threw her arms about his neck. "I don't care if it's mud, sweetheart. Get out of here, all of you! I'm kidnaped and I'm staying kidnaped!"

Lee was sure he saw his father smile.





# RANDY MAKES A DEAL

By

PATSY HUNT

**R**ANDY LEWIS had grown to hate the Signature *E. A. Hesketh* with a fierce and implacable hatred that threatened to consume the full six feet of his body. To Randy it was the symbol of destruction. It meant death to some of the best advertising layouts his firm of Ring and Lewis had ever turned out. E. A. Hesketh was the new superintendent for Ashworth Rayon Company, succeeding old Bob Ashworth, who had died two months before this fateful morning when Randy's last and best effort had been returned to his desk with E. A. Hesketh's veto of the use of semi-nude models.

"How in the devil," Randy barked to Betty Chase, his secretary, "are you going to advertise lingerie unless you drape the stuff on undraped models?"

Deep disgust surged under the skin of his handsome lean face; a burning disgust, it was, that showed faintly red beneath the deep bronze of his sunburn.

"I suppose, Betty," he growled on, "that Hesketh, the old fool, would like us to display the Ashworth stuff in still life. Like an apple maybe, or a blue vase with a single red rose. Perhaps we ought to make up something thrilling like a wrinkled pantie with a caption under it reading, '*Pantie the Morning After!*' or '*Ashworth Panties Never Sag!*' or something!"

Betty Chase smiled, a very faint, lovely little smile like the slowly unfolding petals of a rose bud. Betty was pretty always, with her luminous brown eyes and thick dark lashes that swept sideways to her temples and her warm brown hair that was the color of an autumn leaf with the sun upon it. But when she smiled she was ravishingly beautiful. She was smiling and beautiful now, but Randy didn't see it. He was blind to everything but his fury; his desire to knock some sense into E. A. Hesketh's dumb thick skull.

"Have you brought these lay-outs to Hesketh's attention?" Betty asked, gently.

"Brought them to her attention?" Randy roared. "Good gosh, Betty! I've raised every known kind of protest the past two weeks. I even went out to the plant to see her, but she sent word by her secretary that she was in conference. After she vetoed this stuff once I sent it back with a note begging her to reconsider. This is good copy, Betty. I don't know what's wrong with her. *Look!* These are swell illustrations."

Randy held up the layout, his brows knitted at his nose in a dark scowl. He pointed toward the lusciously drawn feminine figures displaying rayon brassieres with inserts of lace topping voluptuous pouts, panties that were infinitesimal covering on youthful hips, and other breathless rayon creations.

"Not bad. I did 'em myself," he went on rapidly. "What the devil can be wrong with Hesketh that she doesn't go for 'em! I'll bet she's the type of woman who would leap at the chance to seize a placard and lead a temperance parade. Why, the directors of Ashworth Rayon must have been nuts to employ her as general manager. Just plain nuts! Now tell me the truth, can you see anything wrong with this layout, Betty?"

BETTY FLUSHED A LITTLE, nervously pulling on the silver ball that topped the shining ladder of the zipper on her jade colored sweater.

"Why, Randy, isn't it a bit—provocative?" she said softly. In her absorption she didn't realize that the zipper was humming downward, that if she kept on pulling, white flesh would show above and beneath the pale pink satin brassiere that covered jutting twin mounds. She wasn't conscious at all of what she was doing. And neither was Randy.

"Don't be old-fashioned, Betty!" he said

evenly. "I know that when old man Ashworth was alive he went in more for conservative illustrations. But times have changed! Why, I had just about won him over to this type of advertising when he died. You've got to compete nowadays. Pick up any mag on the stands today. What do you see? Nude gals in bath tubs plugging soap. Nude gals in the sunshine plugging vitamins in cold creams. Nude gals in silk stockings. In other words, *nude* gals. And I only ask for *semi-nude* ones!"

Randy caught his breath. He rumbled his dark hair with a sort of desperation. Then he plunged on. "Ashworth Rayon has given us a quarter of a million for this year's advertising campaign," he said.

"We've got to produce results or the contract won't be renewed next year. And how the devil am I going to get results unless Hesketh lets me use snappy advertising? We were fools to agree to the contract allowing her to review all the material we sent to the magazines. But that's the agreement and we're stuck with it. I've just got to think of some way to get the idea across to that dame that she is wrong. But, how to do it! Got any ideas, beautiful?"

Betty's delicate oval face went serious. Beneath a tangle of unbelievably long lashes her soft brown eyes stared hard at the polished surface of the desk. She said, "I don't know, Randy." And her voice was so vibrantly soft that Randy forgot Hesketh for one moment and stared hard at Betty.

The anger in his dark eyes vanished and a fire of another source burned in their depth. His gaze moved over her then, across her slim shoulders, down the shapely perfection of her bare arms and over the impertinent twin puffs of her bosom. She was still nervously fumbling with the zipper and Randy's impulses began to stir, his expression was a little dazzled. He found himself waiting for the downward course of that zipper, his heart pounding. Then Betty, too, became aware of her fingers.

With a noise that was like a z-z-z-z the ball sailed upward to the soft little hollow of her throat. White flesh and a pink satin bandeau

were covered with jade wool. Randy grinned despite his disappointment. He said:

"Forgive me for looking. I couldn't help it, you know. I'm quite human—thank gosh!"

BETTY DIDN'T ANSWER. She looked down at the desk, a brilliant flush in her cheeks. And Randy sat there loving her. What a timid, modest little thing she was—just the sort of girl that a man wanted to marry. He'd never known her type before. He had never met anyone like her.

In all the ten months she had been his secretary he had never been able to hold her in his arms more than a brief, deliciously thrilling moment; he had never been able to crush her lips under his for more than a tantalizingly short time. But when he had he had known that Betty was capable of great fire, of tremendous responsiveness. Only it seemed that she wasn't the type to be rushed. She had to be won. She had to love utterly and completely—to be quite sure of everything—before she would give herself into his embrace and stay in it!

"It is hard to say how to deal with Hesketh," Betty resumed, not looking up. "You say you haven't met her yet. Consequently you are up against it. It's like sparring with a ghost. You have no ideas about her at all?"

"Ideas, yes! I have an idea, for example, that she's a flat chested old dame who wears mannish suits and glasses on a black silk ribbon."

"Well," said Betty, pursing her lips in a way that made Randy feel he'd go crazy if he didn't possess her—and soon. "If she's like that I'm sorry for her. What makes you think she's flat chested and stiff?"

"She'd have to be!" Randy added. "Now take you, Betty . . ." and he swept a hand over the length of her body. Betty flushed crimson and in her embarrassment tugged at the silver ball again. In a split second there was a tinkling z-z-z-z and the jade sweater was open to the waist. White flesh and a pale satin brassiere showed beneath.

Randy got up quickly, went to her and without a word drew her into his arms. He said, softly, "I love you, Betty. If this contract with Hesketh is renewed next year, I can



ask you to marry me. Do you see why it's so important dear. Do you understand now?"

Betty's lips parted. He couldn't wait for her to answer with them—he read the answer in her eyes. He crushed her to him then, his hands sweeping closely over her, his blood leaping through his body.

*"Forgive me for looking," he murmured. "I couldn't help it you know."*

"Betty, Betty," he whispered, and then he lifted her up, carried her quickly to the sofa, locking the door en route. As he lowered Betty to the downy cushions he reached up, pulled a cord and the white venetian blinds came clattering down to the sill. He bent for Betty's lips, his head whirling, and then, with something of a shock, he saw that this time Betty had not pulled up the silver ball.

A LONG WHILE afterwards, with Betty's lovely head on his shoulder, her lashes fluttering, Randy reached out and drew up a cellarette. He poured himself a drink, of-

ferred Betty one which he knew she would refuse. Then he gulped his and said:

"Betty, I'm really going to try to get an idea across to that old biddy. She's got to understand. Get your pad and take a letter."

"All right, Randy, though I don't feel exactly letterish," she said, slowly.

She got up then, crossed the room and came back with her pad. She sat down beside him, swung one shapely leg over the other, the lace edging of panties showing. When Randy stared at that lace, grinning, Betty quickly uncrossed her legs and stuck her spiked heels under the sofa.

"Randy!" she said softly. "Go on with the letter to Hesketh. Please!"

Randy did and he prided himself on the words that flowed so silvery from his tongue. He had advanced an argument, he decided, in favor of the unashamed exhibition of the form divine that should earn him the eternal gratitude of the advocates of Nudism.

He thought his concluding paragraph, too, was a masterpiece. "Does one, my dear Miss Hesketh," he dictated to Betty, "clothe the paintings of Reubens in a shroud? Does one veil the exquisite murals of Michael Angelo? Do we not grub among the sands of Egypt to bring into the light of day the beautiful treasures of the past? What served as the model for the deathless marvels of antiquity but the unclothed body of woman? Why, then, should we shrink from exhibiting on the printed page the same lovely form, in the same lovely fragile wisps that a husband sees in the boudoir?"

Randy paused for breath. "How'm I doing?" he laughed, lightly. "I think that last part ought to cinch the thing."

"You forgot one thing," said Betty, yanking the cord at her side and sending the venetian blinds upward with a clatter. A straight beam of sunlight shot like a golden spear into the room and lighted the red fires in Betty's hair.

"What?" asked Randy.

"That Hesketh hasn't a husband to show her lovely fragile things to," said Betty, evenly.

"Well, then," said Randy, "the way you figure this Hesketh is that she is maybe sour

because no man has ever tried to fight his way into her boudoir?"

"Why, *Randy!*" Betty bit a cherry lower lip. Her voluptuous breasts rose and fell on a gasp.

"All right," Randy laughed. "She is just plain sour. And I don't suppose this letter is going to do a thing but make her sniff. Would it convince *you*, Betty?"

"I don't know, Randy," said Betty, wrinkling her impudent little nose. "I think I would be more susceptible to a personal argument."

"Say-y, *that's* an idea!" Randy's dark eyes danced. "If I could get that old she-devil's ear for a few minutes I think I could convince her that she ought to let me plan her advertising. That she ought to keep her prudish old nose out of it. By golly, that is certainly an idea, Betty! I'm going to haunt that rayon factory until I see Hesketh. If necessary I'll bribe her secretary. That failing, I'll find out where she lives and bribe the janitor to let me into her apartment. *I'll* find a way to get the idea across to her that she isn't still living in the '90's."

LATER IN THE DAY when Randy rang for Betty he was told by Margie, the fat little blonde switchboard girl who bulged in all the wrong places, that Miss Chase was still out to lunch. He hadn't any work for Betty to do but he wanted to talk to her some more about Hesketh. After all, it was one thing to bluntly threaten to make Hesketh see his way, but quite another thing to do it. Obviously Hesketh was a woman with a mind of her own.

Randy felt that perhaps he had boasted too soon. He wanted to ask Betty a number of questions that had been puzzling him all during the noon hour. It was curious how he warmed up inside at this realization that he depended on her so much. It seemed that nothing he undertook lately was done without first talking it over with Betty. And it was astonishing how good was the advice she gave him. No one would suspect that that shy, bird-like creature with the incongruously enormous bosom just coming into full bloom, possessed the hard sense that she did.

He leaned back at his desk then and

thought of the morning. How soft and warm her lips had been, how strong and thrilling her young arms. All the shyness had fallen away from her when she had been in his arms on the sofa.

She had kissed him with abandon, her big

“So you saw me dive, and remembered me?” he asked surprised.



breasts nestling flat against his chest, her body yielding, sweetly responsive. He remembered then with something almost like a shock that Betty hadn't said she would mar-

ry him if Hesketh renewed the contract next year, and then he remembered with another electric shock that he was always talking marriage and that Betty was always listening attentively, but saying nothing.

You'd think that this morning, the very first time she had gone into his arms and stayed there— Good gosh, was Betty in love with him or not? Certainly she *must* be in love with him. He glanced at the sofa, at the white venetians. Of *course* she was in love with him!

As Randy passed into the outer office he dropped into Betty's chair and rummaged around on her desk for the letter he had dictated to Hesketh. When it did not come to light he decided that she, efficient as always, had typed it, signed it for him and dropped

it into the mail. "Good kid," he thought in his mind. And he felt a queer little thrill shoot through his blood for here he was, sitting where those cute soft little hips of hers rested, sharing with that unappreciative chair the delightfully provocative glimpses of sheer silk, of thin lace-edged panties. Tonight he'd talk marriage again, he decided, and this time he'd get an answer.



RANDY ENTERED THE OFFICE building at the enormous Ashworth plant and continued on to where Hesketh's secretary sat like a guard mount outside a door. He turned on his most breezy manner, he flashed his best smile and tossed a card on the desk.

"Tell Miss Hesketh I'd like to see her, please. About the advertising campaign."

"She's busy!" was the short reply of the redhead with the glittering green eyes. Then she turned and saw Randy. She lifted her long arms carelessly back of her head, her breasts jutting forward, her emerald glance moving over his dark hair, his lean bronzed face, his meticulous tweeds.

"I hope," he thought savagely, "that this dame sees me!" And he boldly came inside the oak rail and stood close to her, leaning carelessly against her desk. She dropped her long white arms languidly and climbed to her feet with a sort of weaving sensuous motion of her hips, her thin yellow silk sweater flopping with the jellied sway of the two round pouts beneath. She stood there smiling then, her bright eyes still moving over Randy.

"Look here, whatever your name is," said Randy desperately, "I've got to see Miss Hesketh. Come on, be a good fellow and arrange it."

"Say-y," the girl began, the glow in her eyes increasing, "aren't you the guy who won the diving cup up at the Kenneth Country Club last fall?"

"Yeah. But what's that got to do with me seeing Hesketh?"

"Nothing. Only I never forgot you. You wore red bathing trunks that afternoon. You looked swell. I wondered who you were. About a year now I've been thinking about you." She glanced down at his card on her desk. "Mr. Randolph Lewis, eh? Well, ain't it a small world, fellow. I spend a year thinking about you and you walk right in and smack your card down on my desk!"

Randy bit his lip with irritation. "Listen," he began, "get me in to see Miss Hesketh. I'll make it worth your while."

"How?" she asked and edged over to him, her arm against his, her knee touching his leg.

Randy swallowed with annoyance. Such a waste of time! Such a delay! He started to say, "I'll send you a black chiffon nightie!" or "I'll send you garters studded in real sapphires!" But he looked into her green eyes and he came to another decision. He didn't like the idea, but after all, what the hell! He drew the girl to him, bent her gently and with boneless ductility across his arm.

"So you saw me dive and remembered me," he asked. But she didn't answer. She just remained there across his arm, looking up into his eyes, her big bosom rising and falling on an uneven respiration. Randy slipped a hand under the loose bottom of the sweater, slid it up along flesh that was silky but a little too plump. It was to him like patting a leather mitten but he went through all the motions. He grinned inwardly as he felt a tremor shoot through the girl, as he became conscious of the quiver of her bosom against him. A little more of this, he thought, and the door to Hesketh's office would be opened wide for him. Then he thought of Betty. He said in his mind, "Forgive me, kid. All is fair in war and love and business and I've got to see Hesketh!"

Suddenly the girl's pressure let up. She stepped back. Her round somewhat moon-like face was critical, speculative and finally, with color seeping under her cheeks, she showed fury! She ran a pink tip of tongue over her lips.

"So-o-o," she snapped. "I get it! Just a little man trying to get along in a big way! Then it wasn't me that attracted you at all—

but the lock on Miss Hesketh's door. Well, she's still out to you fellow—and *get the hell away from here!*"

IT WAS LATE WHEN Randy, depressed and angry, got back to his office. Betty had gone home without without so much as leaving a note of explanation.

"Damn it!" Randy swore viciously. "She knew I wanted to see her tonight! She knew it!—and then she stands me up!"

All at once came the deadening realization that perhaps she had someone else to date; that maybe another man was the reason back of her vagueness whenever he talked of marriage. He had never asked her about any of the men she knew—of even if she knew any! He had just taken for granted that Betty was his and his alone. And what a fool he had been to take that attitude! Betty with her smouldering brown eyes, her scarlet lips and chestnut hair; Betty with her trim little figure and her voluptuous young breasts that swung this way and that with every step she took. And he'd thought that he was the only man who'd be interested in her!

Well, hell, he'd go on home now and get tight. That was the best way to pass a lonesome evening; that was the best way to keep from worrying; to keep from wondering if some other guy was holding Betty in his arms, kissing her mouth, caressing her.

Two hours later Randy was so far along in his objective that the familiar apartment was an odd merry-go-round before his eyes. He found his way to the kitchen where he mixed his drinks through the lanes of chairs through force of habit. He found his way back to the sofa through instinct. The haze was almost impenetrable when his telephone rang and he staggered to it and the operator announced that Miss Hesketh was in the lobby, that Miss Hesketh was coming up to his apartment.

"Miss Hesketh! *Miss Hesketh!*" Randy babbled in confusion. But he wasn't too drunk to say, "Operator, tell her to wait fifteen minutes in the lobby and then come on up. I—I've got to dress!" He fumbled frantically to get the phone back into its cradle and then he staggered over to straighten out the mess

of cigarette ashes, wet stains on the coffee table from numerous glasses. He was accomplishing nothing, succeeding only in knocking over a lamp, the bulb exploding like thunder in his ears. After several frantic efforts to straighten things he lunged into the bath, stepped under the shower with all his clothes on and turned on the cold water faucet. In five minutes he was fairly sober; in ten minutes he was out of his wet clothes and in dry shorts. He was struggling into a crimson lounging robe with a brilliant gold dragon embroidered across the shoulders when the bell shrilled through the apartment.

"Come in, Miss Hesketh," he said thickly, opening the door and peering at his visitor. "Come in," he repeated politely, bowing at the waist, clicking his heels.

ONLY ONE DIM CERISE colored lamp was on in his living room. He had arranged that purposefully, had deliberately kept the room dark to hide the ravages of his solitary drinking bout. But it was light enough for him to see Hesketh!

She was worse than he had feared. *She was awful!* Flat heels, a wide coarse tweed coat



down to her ankles, double lensed spectacles on her nose, a black silk ribbon, to guard them against being blown off her nose, pinned to her shoulder. The only thing feminine about her was a wide floppy hat brilliant with a variety of flowers, fruits and ribbons. Vaguely he wondered why she wore such a dressy picturesque type of bonnet with a sports tweed coat. And he knew, of course, without seeing that Hesketh had on no Ashworth Rayon wisps beneath the tweeds—that indeed she wore them long and woolly. But he really didn't give a damn!

"What can I do for you, Miss Hesketh?" he asked, bowing her into a chair in a shadowy corner of the room where she would not

see the glasses, the cubes of ice, the decanters of whiskey.

The voice that answered him was nasal. "It's about our advertising campaign, Mr. Lewis," she whined. "I have decided to leave it entirely in your very capable hands!"

"Well!" Randy jerked himself erect. He stood there very tall and dark and completely sobered by her words. He said, "Repeat that, please, Miss Hesketh!" And she did.

Then all of a sudden his dark eyes narrowed, his mouth went grim. He reached over and snatched the floppy flower garden hat off the woman's head. He yanked the black ribbon and down went the specs. He clawed at the tweed coat and shoved it off sloping little shoulders. *And there sat Betty Chase!*

"Miss Hesketh!" groaned Randy. And then his eyes brightened. He couldn't be cross with her. He loved her too much. He said, evenly, "Why, you little imp, you! I ought to spread you across my knee and go to work on you! And by golly, I think I will!"

Randy seized Betty and pulled her over with him to the couch. He lifted up the heavy tweed coat, the jade green skirt, a pink silk slip. Betty struggled between laughter and resistance. "Spank me if you dare!" she challenged. Randy sat looking at her. "Oh, how can I," he groaned. And he crushed her close to him, his lips found her warm mouth, his arms folded young and hard and tender about her. He meant to kiss her only once; he meant to set her off in his arms and scold her for raising his hopes, by making him think that Hesketh had come to see him and had given him full power over the campaign only to dash his hopes by her masquerade. But with her close, her mouth stirring on his, her arms slipping around his shoulders, he couldn't push her away.

His blood flamed, his head whirled and with something almost like a groan in his throat he felt her responsiveness like something tangible beneath his caresses.

A LONG WHILE LATER, Randy lifted Betty's lovely head from his shoulder. He caught the little silver ball of the zipper and pulled

it up, he smoothed down her skirt and plucked a yellow curl from her hair and pressed it in place on her temple.

Then he said, evenly, "Now tell me, why the masquerade? Why raise my hopes to high heaven and then dash them to hell. You know how much I want to see Hesketh. And yet, you could fool me this way!"

"But it wasn't a masquerade," said Betty lightly. "I'm E. A. Hesketh, Randy."

"Sure! And I'm the three blind mice!"

"No, dear. Just one of them," Betty smiled. "I insist that I am E. A. Hesketh. Only, of course, that is just a blind. The Hesketh is my mother's name—her maiden name. The rest of it is mine. Elizabeth Arns-worth! You see, years ago my father and mother separated. I spent some time with both, but mostly with my mother.

"When she died a year or so ago, I went looking for a job and landed in your office. I could have lived off my father but I preferred not to. Then he died and left the factory to me. I know nothing about the business at the factory. Not really. Mr. Carson runs it just as he did the last six years when father was so ill. However, I did help on the advertising because of my experience in your office.

"I—I vetoed your layouts, Randy—through the secretary at the plant, of course—because I—well, because I was so damned shy. But I'm not now. No one could be if they're around you for long, you rascal, you! And the reason I spent so little time at the factory—only during my lunch hours—was because—I was in love with you.

"I wanted to be here with you all day. As your secretary I could. I've wanted over and over to tell you that I'd marry you when you asked me but you see I knew who I was and if you married me you'd know, too—and I was so sort of shy and everything—after all the things you said about E. A. Hesketh I—I sort of hated to tell you that I was Hesketh! Do you understand now, darling—and do you forgive me for fooling you?"

"I," groaned Randy, "must not be as sober as I thought I was." He gulped. "I guess

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*“Now, let me think—do I have any outstanding features?”*

# PERSONAL TOUCH

By

VICTOR LANDE

**R**OGER Barry had developed a habit of stopping off at Gilda Garnett's apartment every afternoon at four o'clock. He had a cocktail with the glamorous young actress and a cigarette. He enjoyed the personal touch she gave his moments with her—Martinis in her own, etched rock-crystal cups—her specially blended cigarettes with the initials GG below their corked tips.

Everything about Gilda was different, exotic. He couldn't help but compare her with Jo. His wife was a meek, mouse-like little person—Gilda was fire and flame. He had met her at a night club through Warren Quarrier.

The man was a millionaire, a bachelor and a noted woman chaser. Quarrier boasted of his conquests. Lavishly he gave expensive gifts to those who appealed to the amorous side of his nature. He was famous as a love thief, a home wrecker and a boudoir buccaneer.

Roger, however, was sure of Gilda's virtue. Quarrier had a business interest in the dramatic box office smash she was appearing in. That was all. From his many afternoons at the apartment his intuition told him that Gilda was not the type who would surrender to anyone unless she loved him.

And yet—

This afternoon Roger drank his Martini, smoked one of her delicately mild initialed cigarettes and looked at her speculatively. She had returned from a gallop in the Park. She had changed from whipcord breeches and lacquered boots to some sort of loose lounging robe made of very finely woven cashmere. She sat at ease on a small divan, one straw-slippered foot swinging idly.

Her hair was burnished chestnut, her eyes a mysterious gray-green and her rather full-lipped mouth shapeless except when she smiled. Then it became a thing of animation

and wonder. She was about twenty-two, had made an overnight hit on Broadway and possessed, Roger was sure, the most delectable figure he had ever seen outside of an art museum.

Her curves were sculptured loveliness. Beginning with her throat's narrow column, going down over the generous plump breasts to her slender waist, stream-lined hips and long, shapely legs, she was perfect in each exquisite detail.

SHE SMILED AT Roger when he tipped the cocktail shaker again. She mashed her cigarette out in the stone dish and spoke slowly:

"We've got to put an end to all this," she told him. "I've been thinking it over. It's very delightful, you dropping in on your way home from Wall Street, and it's been very innocent and harmless, but—"

Roger expertly dropped an olive into his cup. "But—what?"

Gilda leaned earnestly forward. "Your wife. I'm stopping this before it gets out of hand—before anyone's hurt."

Roger laughed shortly. "Don't worry about Jo. She understands me. We have an amiable arrangement. I don't interfere with her or she with me. You're not serious, Gilda. These half hours with you are the high spots of my days. If you—"

"I think we'd better cut them out."

Roger gulped down half the cocktail. His first thought, was that she was tired of seeing him. She had some other man interested in her—perhaps Warren Quarrier! Something like a cold chill swept over him.

He set the glass down and went over to her. For weeks he had carefully concealed his emotions. He had used all of his self-control to keep her from knowing what blazed in his mind and pounded in his blood.

He took the glass she held and put it on



the table. He emptied her fingers of the cigarette with the GG printed on its rice paper. With a single move he drew her to him.

"I can't stop seeing you!" he told her hoarsely. "I love you!"

In his arms she looked like a drooping flower. The declining sun glinted in her hair like a copper motif. She opened her gray-green eyes and looked up at him.

"I've known that for a long time, Roger."

The scent of her gown and hair was maddening. The warmth of her in his embrace stabbed him craftily. A tumultuous flood of emotions washed over him like a wave from a vast, invisible sea.

"You—knew?"

She spoke mechanically: "It's because I love you, too, that I'm asking you not to see

me any more. Sounds quixotic, but it has to be. I've put myself in your wife's place. I'm actress enough to realize how she would feel, what her thoughts and emotions would be, if she could see you as you are now."

"I tell you Jo doesn't care!"

Gilda smiled faintly. "How can she help it?" Her voice was a whisper. "You—her husband! You—with your youth, your charm—everything that makes you you!"

For a moment the full realization of what Gilda had told him struck like a hammer on the anvil of his mind. She loved him! She was giving him up because she loved him! He felt dazed, overcome. He had known she liked and enjoyed his company. Otherwise there would have been none of these four o'clock meetings.

*But love!*

THERE WAS NO restraining the red madness now. He crushed her in an ecstasy of longing. The glory of her hair was a snare for his lips and fingers. Her damask skin was velvet he could not resist. Her mouth was the crimson threshold leading through to his confused dreams. And her body, so beautifully made, so subtly scented, was the haven of all sensuous satisfaction.

His kisses awakened the lips he had never before pressed. She became vibrantly alive and eager in his arms. She gave him back kiss for kiss, careless of the robe she wore, of how much it concealed or revealed, of the way he turned her so his embrace and kisses could be more intense.

"Gilda! What does anything matter—now?"

She stroked his boyish face. "Roger! I've fought against this—so long! Why did you make me weaken? Every ideal I've set up for myself is demolished!"

He laughed happily. "That's because we love each other! Gilda! I must have you! You must be mine, all mine, in reality!"

"No—"

His voice was throbbing as he pleaded: "Gilda, sweetheart! You must! Do you think I can stand being—so near, yet so far!—oh, Gilda!"

His love hungry cry found an echo in her own pulsing heart. Of a sudden she let herself go. She half collapsed against him, her eyes haunted and dreamy, her lips moist temptation and her satiny cheeks pink with color.

Roger leaned over, looking at her. This was the one supreme minute of his life, the climax of every yearning desire, the essence of rapture. He leaned closer and then, loud in the quivering silence, the telephone at the end of the couch rang shrilly.

Unsteadily, groping toward it, Gilda picked up the instrument. She spoke. Breathing hard, Roger slumped down on the cushions her head had dented. He heard a man's deep, resonant tones in the receiver, "Gilda. This is Warren. Busy?"

Her stage experience came to her rescue. "Why?"

Her tone was placidly even. Roger heard Quarrier chuckle.

"I want to see you tonight—after the show. A business acquaintance has come down from Canada. With his wife. I'm giving them a little private supper here in my apartment. Can I meet you after the play?"

The gray-green eyes drifted in Roger's direction.

"I'm afraid not—tonight. I—I have an engagement."

She hung up after a few more words. She stood, the fading sun painting a background for her slim grace. She drew a long, strident breath.

"You—have a date?"

"With you," she said slowly.

Roger got up and went to her. "*Gilda!*"

BUT THE ENCHANTMENT of the moments previous to the phone call had gone. She fended him off with a tapering white hand. She shook her head, smiling again mystically.

"No!"

"But—love—"

She stood on tiptoe, the palms of each hand resting on his broad shoulders.

"Tonight—after the performance. Call for me and bring me home here. Then we—I—" She broke off abruptly. "Please go, Roger."

He kissed her cheek, found his hat and went down into the five o'clock streets, crowded now with those released from another day of Manhattan toil.

Jo was doing her nails when he went in the apartment. The bedroom reeked with banana oil. She wore a flowered dressing gown that was a foil for her dark eyes and black hair. She looked up, the rhythm of the buffer slowing.

"Drina called. She wants me to go to Washington with her over the week-end. Remember anything, Roger?"

He went in the bathroom and laid out shaving paraphernalia. "Such as?"

"Washington! Place we honeymooned, stupid!"

"So it was."

He made a huge lather on his chin and cheeks. He began to play razor golf, see how



few strokes he could take around the course that went from ear to ear.

"What about Washington?"

"Nothing—except I thought maybe you'd like to buzz down with me. You said you could get a week-end whenever you wanted."

"That's right, but I'm terribly rushed this week. New business today."

"Oh," Jo murmured.

Once or twice he glanced in the bedroom. Jo had stripped off the robe and started to dress for dinner. She stood facing the mirror, a tiny figure in brassiere and flimsy panties. Roger couldn't help but compare her petite form with that of the voluptuous Gilda. He frowned as he finished cleverly shaving beneath his nose and swished the razor in the soapy water.

"Take me to a show, Roger? Drina saw Gilda Garnett's new piece last night and said it's terrific. Maybe we could get tickets from a spec. Would you want to?"

He dabbed lotion on his cheeks.

"I—I almost forgot. I've got to go out—later. There's a customer in town who wants to buy some bonds. He's entertaining and won't be able to listen to me until around midnight."

"And you want to rest?" He heard her sigh. "I don't know whether I'm happier now that you're getting rich—or back a few years ago when we had to count the budget over twice to make sure we could really afford a movie."

ELEVEN O'CLOCK ROGER got out of a taxi and walked down Longacre Square. Gilda's theater was the Renaissance. Her name sparkled from the marquee in brilliant incandescence. The audience was just beginning to come through the lobby doors. Roger went around to the stage entrance and handed his card to a man there.

The man disappeared. Roger rested against the brick wall and watched the scene shifters on the yawning stage strike the last set. Gilda would be ready now. She wasn't in the last ten minutes of the play and in ten minutes she usually could change and be out of her dressing room.

The man came back:

"Sorry, Mr. Barry, Miss Garnett's gone. She left this for you."

Roger took the envelope. He opened it in the light of the caged bulb overhead. He read the few penciled lines she had scribbled in evident haste:

*Roger, dear. So sorry. Can't see you after all. Will explain tomorrow. Have to coach my understudy for road company going out Tuesday.*

Her initials signed it.

Roger crushed the note in his pocket. He walked back to Broadway, joined the throng on the sidewalks and flowed south with it. His mind whirled. His temples ached and he couldn't put away the remembrance of the telephone call in her apartment that afternoon. A jealous barb of suspicion cut cruelly. Warren Quarrier! What he had heard the man ask Gilda!

Stories and rumors, vague and elusive, linking Gilda's name with Quarrier returned to torment Roger. In front of the Astor he climbed into a cab:

"Take me up Riverside Drive to Dyckman Street—anywhere."

The thoughts persisted. Quarrier and Gilda! Her virtue he had always been so confident of! Had she tricked him? Was she on the point of surrendering because, with her, love was an old story? Had she been acting during those enchanted afternoons when intuition told him that no man had ever interested her?

It was nearly three in the morning when Roger's harried driver pulled up in front of the bronze canopy jutting from the bland facade of an apartment building on Sutton Place.

A sleepy-eyed servant, aroused by a thumb kept over the pearl circle of the bell, answered his query:

"Mr. Quarrier is out, sir. At some night club—with friends."

A muscle twitched in Roger's face. His smile was thin and skeptical.

"Really? This is important. I'll wait for his return."

The servant hesitated. Then he shrugged. "Yes, sir—as you wish."

A LIVING ROOM sleek with the art of an interior decorator was perfumed with the tang of alcohol and tobacco. The servant retired and Roger prowled around inquisitively. There was a bedroom next to a shower compartment done in black, mottled glass.

Roger glanced in. The canopied bed with its two pillows was unmade. Purple pajamas sprawled across a chair. Roger's glance focused on a diaphanous rose-pink *robe de nuit* bunched carelessly on another chair. From that piece of intimate feminine apparel his narrowed eyes moved to the small plush slippers on the floor.

Abruptly he turned and went back to the living room. He dropped into a chromium-bound leather chair beside a low, inlaid walnut table. He looked haggardly at the plain carpet. Beside him was a silver ash receptacle. It was so brightly polished it trapped his reflection. Roger peered at himself for a long interlude.

Something impressed itself upon him and he leaned over. He picked something up, considered it with tightening mouth while, slowly, he felt a depressing emptiness weigh down within him. It was as if a door had opened and closed in his heart—forever. As if the sun had set, never to rise another time.

As if he had stopped breathing entirely.

The servant heard him in the foyer and looked out: "Aren't you waiting, sir?"

Roger shook his head. He had difficulty in recognizing his own voice: "No, I'm leaving."

At an all night telegraph office he addressed a message to Gilda. He wrote briefly:

*You were right. It simply can't be.  
This is the end.*

JO WAS AWAKE when he unlatched the apartment's door. She was reading by the bed light, tiny among the pillows, the tufted counterpane drawn to her chin. She smiled at him over the top of the book.

"'Bout time you got home, wanderer. Let me smell your breath."

Roger laughed. He went into the bathroom

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# BACKWOODS ROMEO

By

BILL STORM

THE droning hum of the motor changed abruptly to a sickening staccato and Alicia saw Bob Trent's face whiten as she glanced over her shoulder.

"Something's gone wrong!" he yelled, "but I think I can bring her down! Hold tight!" His pointing finger jabbed down over the carpet of tall spruces and Alicia felt a surge of giddy relief as she saw a clearing ahead with the squat outline of a log cabin nestled comfortably in one corner of it. She felt her father's arm around her waist, pressing her reassuringly. As the tiny patch of field rushed up at them, she closed her eyes, holding her breath. . . .

A few bumping shocks and the plane stopped. "Made it!" Bob sang buoyantly, "But if that fuel line had plugged a couple of miles back—" he shrugged his shoulders expressively.

Alicia followed her father out of the plane and stood gazing around weakly. She noticed smoke billowing from the chimney of the log cabin and then a man came running out, followed by a woman who stood in the doorway gazing at them curiously.

"That sure was a neat landing!" the man said, slowing his stride to stare at them curiously. "Motor trouble?"

"What do you think?" Bob said crossly, flinging his helmet into the cockpit. Alicia saw the man's face redden under its stubble of tawny beard. Then he looked at her, and she noticed that his eyes were very clear and that he was clean looking and lithely built in spite of his rough corduroy pants, high boots, and flannel shirt.

"I'm Jerry Tuck," he introduced himself diffidently, "and that's Ma Tuck over in the cabin. You're welcome to any help we can give you."

"That's fine of you," Alicia said gratefully. "I'm afraid we may have to take advantage of your offer—if you can find room

to accommodate us for the night!" She introduced her father and Bob briefly.

"We may have to stay in this dump all night, at that!" Bob muttered crossly, under his breath, "unless I can get that pipe line clear before dark!"

"Father's on his way up state for a survey of his logging operations," Alicia explained to her backwood's host, as she walked beside him to the cabin, "and I'm sure glad Bob's plane bucked up just when it did!"

"I'm glad, too!" Jerry said, letting his blue eyes rove over Alicia's trim, graceful figure.

"I mean," she explained, blushing slightly, "that if it had to develop trouble, I'm glad there was a chance to land safely!" She was conscious of a feeling of resentment at his words, as though he had presumed too much. Alicia had ideas of her own about keeping ambitious men in homespun in their places.

Jerry introduced Alicia briefly to "Ma" Tuck. The woman's face was placid. She was chary with words, however, and Alicia noticed that she looked at Jerry as though seeking approval of her few brief utterances. She was clothed simply and neatly in a gingham house dress, and her white hair was brushed smoothly.

"Maybe the young lady would like to hear you sing, while I'm getting supper," she suggested.

"Shucks, Ma!" Jerry winked at his mother and grinned a bit. It was evident that her suggestion embarrassed him greatly.

"I'd like to help with the supper," Alicia said eagerly. "May I?"

The woman nodded doubtfully and Alicia pulled off her leather jacket. Again she noticed Jerry's eyes darting over the trim contours of her scantily clothed body. Her face colored, in spite of herself, as she saw the enraptured look in his eyes when they lingered on her tightly molded breasts. She was wearing a thin white sweater, with noth-





ing but the thinnest of webby bandeaux underneath and the way her big resilient breasts jutted and quivered with her every movement was nothing short of inspiring. But a few weeks ago, Alicia had paraded her lush charms before a group of admiring judges who had promptly awarded her the decision in a beauty contest; but to be stared at by this lout with his disconcerting eyes was making her feel no end of embarrassment and resentment.

"Now, you go to the well for fresh water, Jerry!" "Ma" ordered, "and Miss Meade and I'll put supper on!"

AN HOUR LATER they were all sitting on the low porch. Jerry, with his back to a post and his long legs stretched comfortably straight, strummed a guitar and sang a spirited backwood's ballad. Alicia's vivid lips had curved in a smile of tolerance when he started, but now she was leaning forward, drinking in every inflection of his marvelous voice. He sang a love song and in the softly falling dusk, Alicia could feel his eyes holding her own. In spite of herself, thrill after thrill of tender emotion tingled through her body.

"That was beautiful!" she breathed softly, when the last tender note faded away into the darkness. "Your voice is wonderful, Jerry!"

Jerry laid his guitar on the bench by the door and rose awkwardly. "Shucks!" he said, grinning down at her, "I guess you're just saying that to please Ma and me!"

Unthinkingly, Alicia rose too, and stood beside him. Their eyes met and her pulse quickened strangely.

"Shortly the moon will be rising," he said softly. "It's like a great red balloon hung over the tree tops. Wouldn't you like to watch it from the top of the lookout on the hill back of the cabin?"

"Go ahead, Alicia!" Bob's voice held a gibing note, "I'd go along, too, only I detest balloons! But you can tell me all about it, tomorrow!"

Alicia ignored Bob. She wondered if he could be jealous and somehow the thought was not pleasant. She supposed she would

marry him sometime—after she had taken a fling at the career she had planned for herself.

Jerry tucked his arm through hers as they sauntered along the narrow trail through the woods. But shortly he removed it and placed it around her waist. Alicia bit her lip, but she didn't say anything. Her breath was short by the time they reached the ladder running up into the wooden lookout cage.

"I'll go first," Jerry said. Alicia reached him a hand when she neared the top and he grasped it, pulling her up beside him. The black tops of trees spreading out in all directions gave her a feeling of being isolated on top of the world.

They sat down on a hewn bench and Alicia carefully tucked her skirts around her legs. Her breath quickened as the staggered tree-line in the east became etched against a glorious pink-and-gold background.

"It's really beautiful!" she breathed, leaning forward.

"Two beautiful things—so near!" Jerry said haltingly. "It's almost like Paradise."

"Are you trying to compliment me?" Alicia asked, meaning her voice to be kind.

"I am complimenting you!" he said doggedly. "You're beautiful, Alicia! The most beautiful girl I've ever seen!"

Alicia laughed.

"And that's saying a lot, isn't it?" she murmured.

Abruptly Jerry seized her in his arms and abruptly his lips descended on hers. Alicia tried to push away, but his arms were like steel hoops, binding her soft warm body to his.

"You might as well take it easy," he said coolly. "Something tells me you've been accustomed to having your own way too much. It isn't good for little girls. It spoils 'em!"

She felt his lips, hard and masterful, pressing against her own. For a moment she fought them, compressing her lips tightly. Then, she felt his hands gliding over the lush curves of her thinly clothed body. She gasped. Reckless and thrilling excitement surged through her, quickening her breath. And then, as though he realized her rapidly

changing mood, his lips became gentle and, in spite of her determination, Alicia responded.

She felt him tremble as her lips parted slightly in a kiss that was but a delightful forerunner of more to come. For Alicia, once she had reached the kissing point, could do wonderful things in that breath-taking art.

Jerry's stubble of beard prickled her face and Alicia came to. Her cheeks burned as the thought flashed through her mind that she was making a complete fool of herself. Winner of a nation wide beauty contest and the movie contract that went with it, she was simple enough to let an uncouth backwoodsman beguile her into watching the moon while he made violent love to her! The two just didn't go together—or they shouldn't go together.

"Let me go!" she panted suddenly. "I've had enough of your attentions! And consider yourself lucky that I don't tell my fiance about your trick!"

He sat for a moment as though stunned. Then he laughed mockingly, and snapped to his feet.

"Still the spoiled brat, aren't you? And I thought for a few minutes that you might be something worth while. Okay—we'll go! The fog's coming in, anyway!"

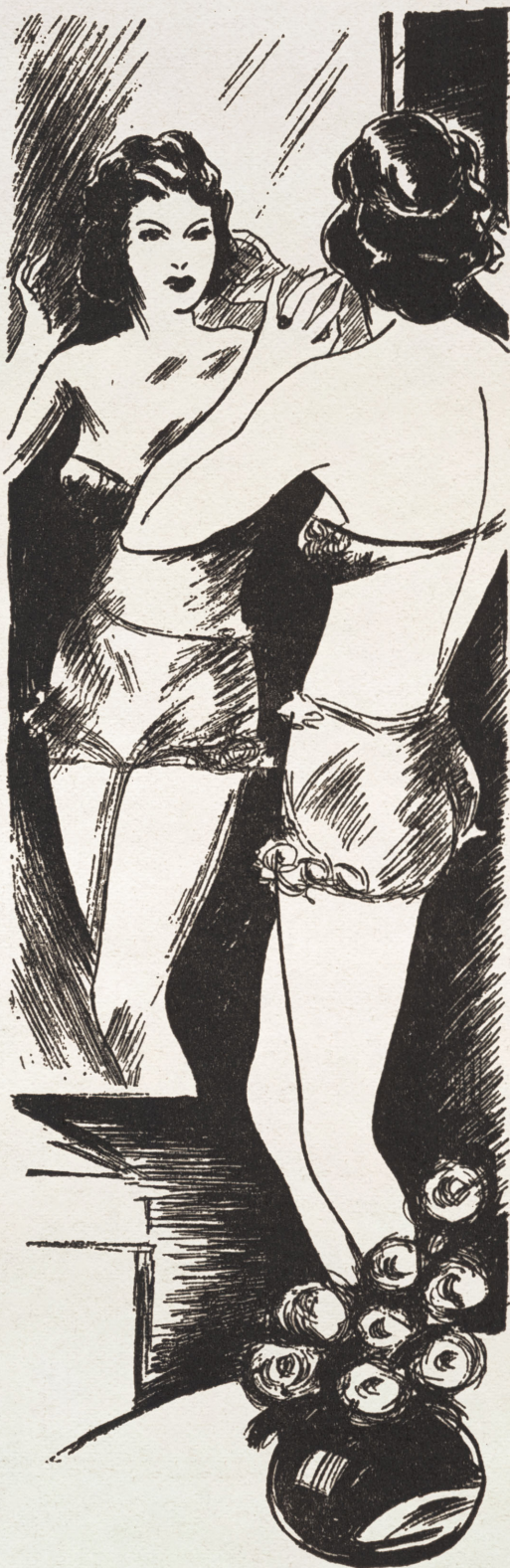
GRAY LIGHT FILTERED through the small square window when Alicia was awakened by "Ma" Tuck. The woman's face had an anxious set.

"Your father, Miss Alicie," she said nervously. "He would insist on splitting wood for kindling and he's cut his foot—terribly. Jerry's given first aid, but he can't stop the bleeding. Something's got to be done—a hospital—"

Alicia was already getting into her clothes. In a moment she was in the kitchen. She threw one look at her father's white face and almost fainted. She felt Jerry's arm go around her shoulder.

"Steady!" he said coolly. "It isn't so bad—if he can get hospital care right away. Your fiance is working on the plane now."

Alicia ran out and Bob looked up ner-



*She smiled with satisfaction at the beauty of her lovely legs. No star in Hollywood could beat those!*

vously as she hurried over to the place. His face was smeared with grease.

"How much longer will it take?" she asked tensely.

"I've got the line clear—but we've got to wait for this damned fog to lift!" he informed her, casting his eyes around the thick gray murk. "It'd be suicide for all of us to try to take off—"

"But father—he's getting weak!" Alicia faltered, "and it will take three hours to make Seattle!"

Bob shrugged helplessly and his eyes avoided hers.

"There's no use!" he said finally, "we can't risk our necks!"

"Oh!" Alicia gasped, "If I could only pilot a plane!"

"Maybe I can help!" Jerry's voice cut in. "I—I know a bit about planes. If you'll get your father ready, I'll pilot you to Seattle—and we'll take off immediately!"

"You? Thanks, Jerry," Alicia said miserably, "but I'm afraid you don't understand! It's very dangerous. Just ask Bob!" she added sardonically.

"Then—I'll take your father alone!" Jerry insisted briskly.

Alicia looked at Bob. The latter was gnawing at his lips.

"Think I'd trust my plane and your father's life to a mere backwoods rowdy?" he snapped angrily. "I tell you this fog will lift in a few hours—"

But Alicia was already following Jerry back to the cabin. She explained the situation gently to her father. He nodded reassuringly and gazed into her troubled eyes.

"It's all right, Licia, dear! If Jerry says he can handle a plane, I believe him!" His head lolled weakly and Alicia shivered as she saw the ever widening crimson stain in the rough bandage around his foot. The rude tourniquet seemed pitifully inadequate.

Jerry came out of a bedroom buttoning a heavy duck jacket which he had hurriedly donned. Without a word, he lifted the half fainting man in his arms and strode through the door. "Ma" Tuck's face was composed but white as she watched them go.

"Take it easy, Ma!" Jerry called over his

shoulder. "I'll be back again before dark!"

Alicia raced after them. Jerry lifted her father into the plane as she came up. She saw a sudden spasm of anger on Bob's dark face as she stepped up to take her place.

"You're not going!" he flared at her, seizing her by the arm. "This is my plane and I'm going to have something to say about it!"

Jerry turned and faced him coolly. Alicia saw his body tense.

"And I'm having something to say about it, too!" His voice was brittle. "A man's life is at stake—"

"Yeah?" Bob flared, hunching his shoulders, "and what's the next scene in your little melodrama—since you insist on playing the part of a hero?"

"This," Jerry said. And with a lightning uppercut, that was somehow deliberate, he stretched him neatly on the ground. Then he clambered into the pilot's seat and gave the idling motor the gun.

ONE NIGHT, TWO WEEKS later, Alicia fluttered nervously before the dresser in her Hollywood hotel. Robert Heywoode, director at Hi-Art's big studio, had already interviewed her, but it seemed that there was still more to be considered before her contract was presented. But Alicia was confident that everything was okay, because she was having a dinner engagement with Mr. Heywoode—and that meant, of course, that he merely wanted to study her more intimately.

She had just stepped out of a cold shower and her flesh was glowing as she stepped over to the bed on which were laid out an assortment of underthings. After a moment's thoughtful consideration, Alicia picked up the briefest and sheerest of the lot: panties of white silk, which shortly were clinging to the graceful curves of her hips as smoothly as the skin they blended with. She let her excited eyes rest speculatively for a moment on the up-thrust globes of big, firm breasts. Ordinarily Alicia wore a brassiere, but there was really no need—except to make their lushly enticing contours a bit less noticeable. But tonight, she wanted to make every delightful feminine charm as conspicuous as possible—



*"You might as well take it easy," he advised coolly. "Something tells me you've been having your own way too much!"*

She had just finished the final arrangement of her rippling brown hair, etched the enticing cupid's bow of her vivid lips, when a knock sounded on her door. In spite of her confidence, her breasts were rising and falling rapidly when she faced Robert Heywoode.

Hi-Art's big director was a man past middle age, with a strong lined face and direct eyes that were accustomed to appraisals of feminine beauty. But as he looked at the vision of loveliness standing before him, he experienced a thrill of admiration to which he had been stranger for years. For a moment his eyes gleamed, then resumed their former calm. He picked up her ermine wrap and placed it over her shoulders and he thought of smoothly chiselled ivory.

They dined simply at one of Hollywood's more conservative restaurants, and all the while Robert Heywoode talked of everything but the movies and contracts. After a couple of cocktails, he suggested that they run over to his hacienda and talk things over concerning her career.

Once they were comfortably seated in the low, luxuriously furnished room off the rambling porch, Robert Heywoode's manner changed subtly. Alicia had thought nothing of his dropping down beside her on the softly

When she had finally fastened on her gown of dark blue satin, it was obvious that little but the panties graced her body underneath. The sharp little crests of her breasts made noticeable protuberances, and soft satin clung slinkily to every breath-taking curve. She pulled up her skirts and smiled with satisfaction at the beauty of her lovely legs. No star in Hollywood had more of what it took than Alicia, and the knowledge of it made her confident.

cushioned *chaise longue*; but when his hand dropped to her knee and brushed upward a few inches, her eyes widened.

"Come, Miss—er—Wynne," he said softly, noticing the stiffening of her body, "you've been charmingly naive all evening! Certainly you can indulge in other moods as well!"

"I understand that we came up here to talk business!" Alicia informed him crisply. "If that is not the case—we'll call it my error!"

SHE ROSE AND PICKED up her wrap. He laid his hand on her arm. There was a smile on his face and his eyes were pleasant. Alicia felt suddenly that she had made a fool of herself.

"All right, Miss Wynne!" he said evenly, "business it is! I've been trying to evade it as long as possible, as you've noticed. I'm afraid Hi-Art can't give you a contract, after all. Unfortunately, I have to confer with the directors in your case, as taking an unknown is at best a gamble. The chairman, after examining your photos, has decided that you're not the type for pictures!"

Alicia was stunned for a moment. Her blue eyes filled slowly and she sank back on the *chaise longue*. Then consuming anger coursed through her and she straightened.

"It isn't fair!" she flamed. "They haven't seen me! They're judging me without giving me a chance. I demand to see them, right now!"

Robert Heywoode pursed his lips. He frowned thoughtfully.

"Are you sure that you can change the mind of the directors?" he asked finally. "You must think a lot of yourself, young lady!"

"I can tell them what I think of them!" Alicia said coldly.

"It might not be a bad idea, at that!" he ruminated. "Yes, I think I'll give you that chance. I think you deserve it. Wait here, and I'll do some phoning!"

He went out and Alicia's anger and pride seemed to go with him. She buried her hot face in the cushions and sobs twisted her shoulders. A hand fell on her arm and she

sat up quickly. Incredulity was in her staring eyes as she gazed at the face bent over her—a face no longer rough with a stubble of tawny whiskers, but lean and bronzed and handsome!

"Jerry!" she whispered, "Jerry Tuck! What—what are you doing here?"

"I'm refusing you a movie contract!" he said gently. "I'm the president—and chairman of directors—my uncle just told you about!"

"Oh, Jerry!" she whispered, "why—why did you deceive me so? Why did you let me make a fool of myself, b-back there in the woods?"

"Because I didn't love you then, darling! But I realized after I had left you with your father at the hospital that I was not going to be happy again—ever—until I had you in my arms again! Alicia—darling—you're too wonderful for the films! I refused you a contract because I want to offer you another one—one that will make me happy for life! Will you sign it, darling?"

Alicia melted in his arms. In the two weeks since she had left him, she had been fighting a vague desire that even the excitement of Hollywood and the career that had never started, could not efface. And now she knew what it was! The feel of Jerry's arms around her sinuous waist, the contact of his hard lips on her mouth!

Her lips leaped to meet his and her arms glided around his neck. She closed her eyes, revelling in the delirious intoxication of his possession of her vibrant body. She felt his hands gliding over the satin sheathed slope of her hips. She trembled giddily when his fingers contacted her warm flesh. And in the yielding of her maddeningly curved body against him, in the sweet surrender of her moist lips, Jerry had his answer.

A FEW DAYS LATER, Alicia again looked down over the green carpet of tree-tops. Her eyes gleamed softly as in the distance she saw the cabin in the clearing. At the same time, Jerry cut the motor of the little two-seater and they started gliding down. Almost to the door of the big cabin they taxied.

(Please turn to page 63)

# HOLLYWOOD BOUND

By

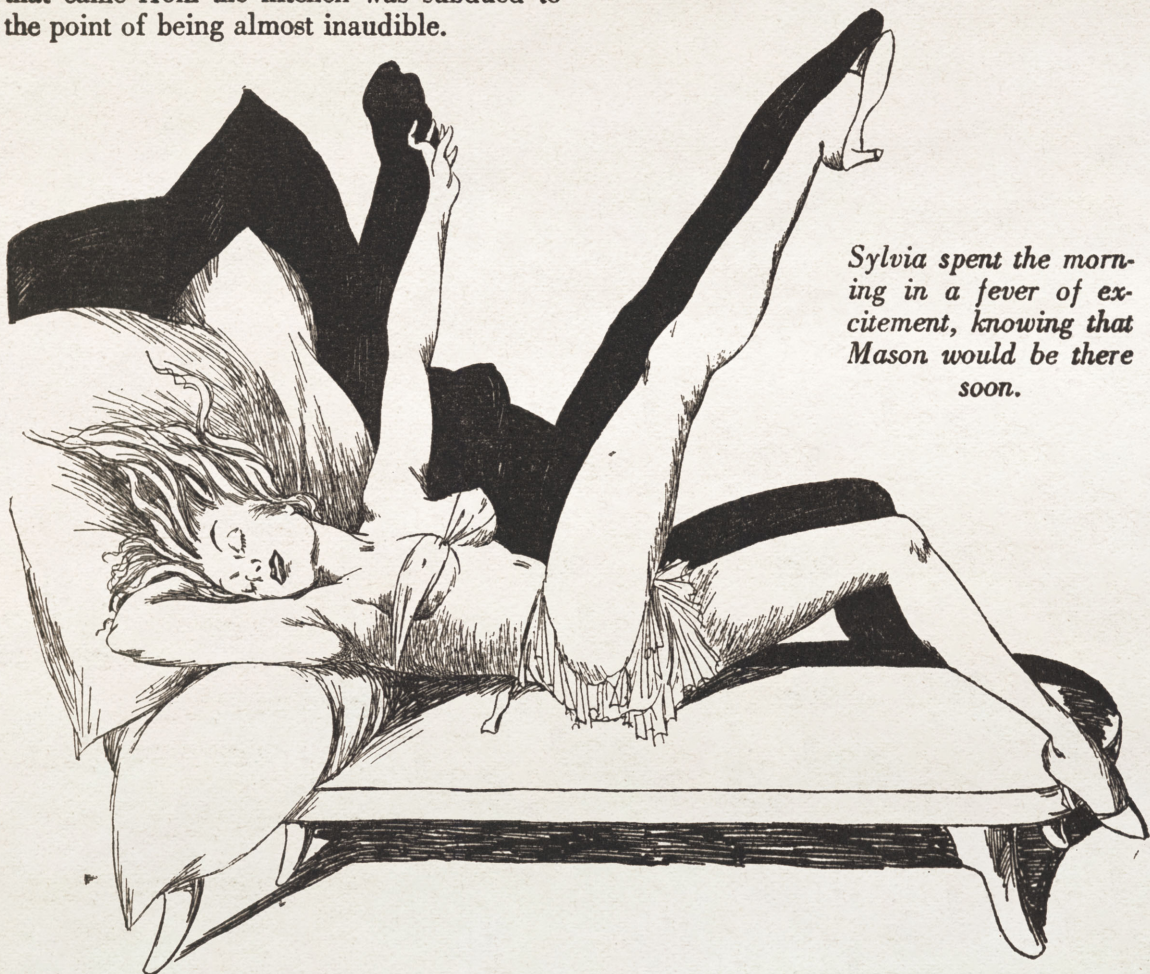
MASON JOHNS

**S**YLVIA NORTH entered the dining room of the Surfside Inn and glanced furtively about her.

Not that there was any need for slyness since she was the only person in the room. It seemed to her that acres of empty tables lay between her and the door, and the noise that came from the kitchen was subdued to the point of being almost inaudible.

it clouding over. Sylvia sighed, and beckoned the waiter. She gave her order.

It was difficult to tell how old she was. Her face was young and yet the expression about the large, dark eyes said that she knew, more or less, what it was all about. Her thick, dark hair was arranged carefully



*Sylvia spent the morning in a fever of excitement, knowing that Mason would be there soon.*

Sylvia leaned back in her chair and looked out of the window. In spite of the blinding sunlight, there were not many people about and those that were, seemed suspicious. Every now and again they glanced towards the brilliant sky, as though expecting to see

about her head, and she was dressed in the lightest and sheerest of flowered summer frocks.

Her figure was superb. Her arms, bare to the shoulders, were round and soft and the vibrant flesh glowed with health. The neck-

line of the dress was cut very low, and the top of her rounded bosom was frankly visible. There was little back to the dress, and the tan of her nude back showed that she had taken advantage of what little sun there had been during August.

Judging by the manner in which the dress clung to the roundness of her thighs, she was wearing very little under it. Her legs and feet were bare, and carmine toenails peeped between the white straps of her sandals.

The headwaiter, who had been watching her, forced his eyes away from the low revealing neckline of the dress and came over to the table.

Sylvia forced a smile she did not feel. "Good morning, Jules," she said.

Jules bowed from the waist. "Good morning, Miss North."

Sylvia made a sweeping gesture which embraced the empty dining room. "Swell business we're doing," she said bitterly.

Jules shrugged his shoulders expressively. "The weather," he pointed out. "Rain, rain, rain. Nothing but rain. People stay in the city. They don't come to the seashore when it's raining."

"You're telling me," Sylvia said. She glanced out of the window. The low neckline sagged and Jules did not deny himself the pleasure so offered him. His eyes glittered. What a woman! What a seductive enchantress, he told himself. Jules would have willingly given five years of his life had he been able to place his arms about her and crush that high and handsome bosom flat against his French chest. Sylvia's voice brought him back to earth.

"Even if this weather keeps on," she said, "it won't do us any good. Everyone'll clear out on Labor Day. I wish I'd never gone into this thing." She swung around and crossed her legs. It did not seem to occur to her that in doing so, her skirt crept about her knees, revealing the white knees themselves and an inch or so of alabaster thigh. Jules' blood pressure was rising rapidly.

He forced his drying tongue to say, "If people could be made to stay through September . . ."

"Impossible!" Sylvia snapped. "It's never been done yet."

The waiter brought her breakfast but she paid no attention to it. She continued to look at Jules and he continued to look at her. But from different points of view.

"Perhaps," Jules suggested, his eyes wandering feverishly from those too few inches of thigh to the top of the wondrous bosom, "if we could get hold of a celebrity as a sort of drawing card."

Sylvia shrugged her almost nude shoulders. Fascinating revolution took place beneath the blouse of the dress and Jules closed his eyes in ecstasy. "Don't know any," Sylvia said.

"It was just an idea." Jules had no idea of what he was saying. Two round cones . . . two inches . . . two round cones . . . two inches . . . Jules fled while he still had his reason.

HALF AN HOUR or so later, Sylvia left the boardwalk and turned into a narrow, rutted lane. It was really very hot and she was glad she was so lightly clad. Against the strong sun, one could see the outline of her splendid body through the thin material of the dress, and she walked with the lithe grace of a tiger.

Without knocking, she opened the screen door of a modest bungalow. A tall young man in white slacks and a polo shirt came to meet her. Without saying a word, she slipped into his arms and he crushed her yielding body to him. She clung to him and she shuddered when his fingers strayed into her glossy hair. Her bosom was flat against him and her heart hammered against her ribs.

"Tony," she whispered at last, "it's so marvelous being with you again."

"I go through hell every time you leave," Tony told her. "I wish you'd let me stay at the inn."

"People'd talk," Sylvia said.

"What people?"

She broke away from him and lowered herself to the swing. Tony joined her. "That's the hell of it," Sylvia said. "There are no people."



Tony slipped his arm about her slender waist and drew her to him. He feasted his eyes on what he could see through the neckline of the dress. Sylvia noticed him and she shuddered.

"We can't go on like this," Tony said. "We've simply got to do something. Get married—or something."

"There isn't enough money to get married," Sylvia said.

Her lips sought and found his and she pressed herself close to him. Tony could feel the wild beating of her heart against him and it was more than matched by the yammering of his own.

His hands were on her bare arms and they



*"Oh, darling,"  
Sylvia breathed.  
"What would I  
ever do without  
you?"*

"Even your eyes on me do things to me," she whispered.

Tony's grip tightened. Sylvia swayed towards him and her dark head dropped to his shoulder. Tony slipped a brown hand onto her soft, warm knee.

"No, Tony," Sylvia said huskily. "Not now."

"It's been so long since I've seen you."

Sylvia smiled up into his good looking face. "Two this morning," she said. "You've seen quite a lot of me." She bit her lower lip and flung her arms about his neck.

scorched her through the thin material of her dress. She felt them on her shoulders and in her hair. She was breathing heavily.

"Oh, Tony, darling," she breathed.

SOME TIME LATER Sylvia reclined languidly in a corner of the swing. Puffing furiously on a cigarette, Tony paced up and down the porch.

"You know," she said after a little while: "I think there's something to that idea of Jules'. I mean about getting a celebrity down here for the month of September."

"There is," Sylvia agreed. "But we don't know anybody."

Tony went over and sat down. He gazed at her tenderly.

"After all the years you and I've been in show business," he said, "we must know somebody."

Sylvia laughed bitterly. "They're all in Hollywood. I'm about the only actress still left undiscovered."

"Then we'll make one," Tony said.

"How?"

"Listen, darling, before I went in with you on this hotel proposition, I was pretty well known as a press agent. I've made quite a few celebrities. How does Mickey Quinn strike you?"

Sylvia smiled. "What is there famous about Mickey?" she wanted to know.

"Nothing—yet. What was there famous about Adele Ward? Or Perry Scott. Or the Lamont Twins. Nothing until I got to work on them. Quinn's our man."

Sylvia was not convinced. Yet there was no doubt about Tony's reputation for making a lot out of nothing. If it could be done, Tony could do it.

"You'll have to hurry," Sylvia said.

"I'll leave for New York immediately."

Sylvia smiled at him. "Oh, darling," she said, "what would I ever do without you?"

"Get someone else."

"Come here . . . nit-wit."

The exposed top of her bosom was rising and falling emotionally, and her eyes were drooping.

"What for?" Tony asked.

"There are too many pretty girls in New York."

Their arms closed about each other.

LABOR DAY HAD been gone a week, and still the Surfside Cafe was jammed. There was actually a waiting list and Sylvia was rapidly pulling out of the red.

Tony had certainly gone to town. Sylvia had forgotten the number of Mickey Quinn's accomplishments: but that sterling young actor who, less than no time at all ago, was almost destitute, now basked in the most expensive suite the inn afforded, surrounded on all sides by free-spending, adoring autograph hounds. Mickey was beginning to be-

lieve it himself and he had not drawn a sober breath since he had been installed.

Sylvia, resplendent in a scandalous evening gown of white satin, locked the day's receipts in the safe and prepared to leave her office. The door opened and Mickey Quinn, staggering noticeably, entered.

"Hello," he said, "I wanna talk to you."

Sylvia lowered herself to the edge of the desk and stared at him. There was an ugly look about him as he came over to her.

He eyed her from head to foot, from her bare shoulders down to her peeping, stockingless feet. His gaze dwelt on the soft flesh of her arms and on the outline of her bosom.

"I wanna talk to you," Mickey repeated.

"I'm listening," Sylvia said.

"I'm not getting enough out of this," Mickey said.

"Is that so? You're getting the best suite in the place, all you can eat and drink and half-a-yard a week. What more d'you want?"

"You know." Mickey leered drunkenly at her.

"You must be crazy," Sylvia said.

"Oh, no, I ain't. I've wanted you ever since the first day I saw you. Honest, Sylvia, I have."

She decided to humor him. She smiled. "You go to bed, Mickey. You'll feel differently about it in the morning."

Mickey lurched closer to her. His hands ran along her bare, gleaming arms and Sylvia drew back. "Don't be that way, Sylvia," he whined. "I ain't a bad guy." He reached for her suddenly and Sylvia did not move in time. Mickey's thrill was short-lived. He was slapped violently in the face.

"Don't try that sort of thing with me," Sylvia said harshly.

Mickey tried to get close to her but Sylvia was on her guard and easily eluded his drunken advances. Mickey gave it up after a bit and came to a swaying halt in the middle of the floor.

"Okay," he said, shaking his head stupidly, "okay. If that's the way you feel about it, I'm going to blow my head off. I'm going to tell all these people that you've played them for suckers and see how that sets next season."

"Mickey! You wouldn't . . . you couldn't . . ."

Mickey blundered towards the door. "You'll find out." Before Sylvia could stop him, he had gone. She almost collapsed on the couch. She rose immediately, slipped on a wrap and left the inn.

Tony unlocked the screen door and she stepped inside. She looked his dim figure over in the moonlight.

"I'm sorry I got you up, darling, but the most awful thing has happened."

"Take it easy." Tony led her over to the swing and sat her down. He caressed her



and soothed her while she told him what Mickey had done. Tony listened attentively. When she had finished, he said,

"What I can make I can break. Mickey gets the bum's rush out of here tomorrow."

"But the guests. When they find out."

"Keep calm. They won't. They'll think he's gone to Hollywood. I'll get Mason on the phone first thing in the morning and tell him to come down here. He can take Mickey away with him with a promise of a Hollywood contract. Keep Mickey cockeyed for a week or two until these people forget all about him. The rat!"

Sylvia relaxed in his arms. His hard hand brushed lightly again her bosom and she quivered. "I must be getting back," she whispered.

Tony held onto her. "Right away?"

"I should. I really should."

"Right away?"

She flung her bare arms about his neck,

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and it was quite some time before she "got back".

SYLVIA SPENT THE next morning in a fever of excitement. Mickey had not shown up and Tony had phoned her, telling her that Mason would be there in time for lunch. She was to introduce Mickey and Mason before the former had time to carry out his plan.

Neither Mickey nor Mason showed signs



of putting in an appearance at all.

Business boomed. Tony came in. He looked worried and at the clock.

"Where's this Mason man?" Sylvia asked nervously.

"I don't know. He should be here by this time."

Mickey walked out of the elevator. He looked terrible. He came over to them.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourselves," he said severely. "Putting over such a story on decent people."

"You cad," Tony said without emotion. "I've a good mind to smash your face in."

"Nuts to you, pal!" He walked off into the crowded bar.

"And that," Sylvia said, "is that."

"Where in the name of Pete is Mason?" Tony moaned.

Mickey worked fast. One by one at first and then in twos and threes and finally in droves the guests walked up to Sylvia, demanded their bills and told her what they thought of her.

It did not occur to them that they had

been fooled by that type of publicity time after time. This time they had found out and their resentment knew no bounds.

Sylvia took it as gracefully as she could and doggedly refused to go to her office to get away from it.

Mickey finally emerged from the bar. He was flushed and he walked with a bit of a lurch. He came over to Sylvia and smirked at her.

"I think I wrapped you up for good," he said.

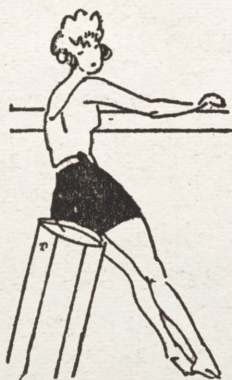
"You did," Sylvia admitted. "Yourself, too. You're going to find yourself back on the grass of Central Park."

"I only did my duty," Mickey said.

"Go away."

"I won't." Mickey leaned across the desk. His eyes were glowering and his lips worked fiercely. "I didn't come here because of the free room and board. I came to be near you. Thinking that if I was near you . . . something might happen. It didn't and there wasn't anything I wouldn't do to hurt you. That's all and I'm not sorry."

"I understand," Sylvia said gently. In spite of the havoc which lay about her, she



did understand and she actually felt sorry for Mickey. Tony, who had watched the little scene from a distance drew up alongside Mickey.

"Scram," he said.

"Go to hell. I hate you more than anything in the world." Mickey commenced to sob and Tony led him over to a chair. He stumbled into it and passed quietly out. Tony returned to the desk.

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"Poor fool," he said. He grinned at Sylvia. "I love you," he said.

Sylvia seized his hand and crushed it in her slender fingers.

"Darling," she said huskily, "what would I do without you?"

"Get someone else."

AT THAT MOMENT the door opened and a huge, red faced man stormed in. In three strides he reached the desk. He looked about him and mopped his streaming face with a huge handkerchief. Then he grinned.

"Phew! I've never driven so fast in my life. How are you, Sylvia? You, too, Tony?"



"Bill Gates himself," Tony said. "What're you doing here?"

Gates drew several breaths before replying. "I put one over," he said. "I had breakfast this morning with Mason. Just happened to run into him. He told me he was coming down here to sign someone for Hollywood. I put two and two together."

Tony and Sylvia exchanged mystified glances. "Yes?" Sylvia said.

"I put water in his gas tank!" Gates roared.

"So what?" Tony said.

Gates became serious. "Sylvia," he said: how about making a test for me? Mine's a better outfit than Mason's, and I thought, right from the very beginning, that it was a crime for a swell actress like you to run a cheap seashore hotel. How about it, kid?"

Sylvia fought down the beating of her

heart. Airily, she said, "You'll have to talk it over with Tony. He's my manager."

Gates grinned cheerfully. "Lucky stiff. Come and have a drink, Tony and we'll talk business."

"You go ahead," Tony said. "I'll be right with you."

When they were alone they looked at each other. Sylvia was first to speak. "What irony," she said. "When I was playing in a hit show on Broadway, he wouldn't have anything to do with me. But because he thought Mason was after me, he couldn't get here fast enough."

Tony shrugged his shoulders. "That's show business," he said.

Sylvia leaned across the desk, and she knew what her dress was doing. "What would I do without you, darling?" she whispered.

"Get someone else."

"I'll be waiting for you in the office," she said. "Don't be too long—in the bar, I mean."

---

*Lee Chinwell was sporting a black eye the other morning and we asked him, "How come?"*

*"I was out to that redhead's house last night, and she put the Carioca record on the phonograph. Her old man came in while we were dancing it, and being deaf, he couldn't hear the music!"*

z z z

*Her (in parked car): "You mustn't kiss me this way! Mother says only married people should kiss like that."*

*Him: "Then it's okay, girlie. I'm married!"*

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1867

“Oh, mother dear, I have just finished the book which you urged me to read. I wish to thank you so much. It is such a sweet story, and the heroine is so noble. How she must have suffered, in the face of such adversity. I am sure I am going to be a better girl because of meeting such a character.”

1937

“Say, Mummsy, Old Stuffings, if you wanna renew your youth, read this book. Believe me you, the soak who wrote this live stuff sure knew his wild oats. The hot mamma in this story certainly does some stepping, and tosses a dozen different playboys on their ears without losing a date. I got an awful wallop outta it, and learned a coupla little tricks on the side that are going to come in handy!”



## Personal Touch

(Continued from page 45)

to run a tub. For a minute he listened to the gush of the water. His hand moved to his pocket. His fingers closed over and drew out the thing he had taken from Warren Quarrier's silver ashtray on the inlaid walnut table.

It was the lipsticked stub of a cigarette. The initials GG were printed below its cork



tip. Roger looked at it grimly. The personal touch—those all-revealing initials that had closed his heart's door with a final slam.

He shredded the tobacco, rid his fingers of it and stood in the doorway.

"By the way, Jo. I've been thinking over that Washington week-end idea. Sounds mighty good. We need another honeymoon. You'd better count me in."

And that was all of Roger, but not quite all of Warren Quarrier.

Sometime toward noon the following day Quarrier, in his apartment, dialed a telephone number.

"Hotel St. Quentin?" he asked. "I want to speak with one of your Canadian guests. A gentleman registered there with his wife. The name is Gilbert Gaynor. Would you mind ringing their room?"



## Backwoods Romeo

(Continued from page 52)

Then Jerry sprang out and opened his arms for Alicia.

"Darling," he whispered, "are you sure you'd rather spend our honeymoon here? You're not enthusiastic just because I love it so up here—away from everything?"

He felt the throbbing beat of her heart against his chest and his blood raced giddily at the contact of her gorgeous body.

"I love it, too, Jerry!" she whispered. "There's only one thing more I can ask to make this heaven!"

"Granted!" Jerry murmured happily. "What is it, sweetheart?"

Alicia rubbed her smooth, glowing cheeks. "Only that you'll promise to shave, darling—every night!"

Jerry scooped her into his arms—and whether he kept his promise or not that night Alicia never knew!

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**Randy Makes A Deal**

(Continued from page 38)

I'm still drunk. I guess this isn't happening at all except in my brain!"

Betty laughed then. She reached over and pinched Randy on the cheek. He yelped as her sharp little scarlet tipped nails sank into his flesh. She laughed again then, "See," she said, "you're you! You can still feel things!"

"Say-y, I can, can't I?" he grinned.

Betty curled her arms about him then, her fingers played over the heavy gold of the dragon on his shoulders. She pressed her mouth on his cheek, her hair mingling with his dark waves. "Randy," she whispered, "you're hot stuff, kid! Let's neck!"

Randy looked at Betty in amazement. He said, "Where oh where has my little shy girl gone!" And then he grinned and added, "Let's!"

And they did!



**Masqueraders!**

(Continued from page 10)

and kicked open the door of the gay orange trailer and carried Pat inside and shut the door behind them.

"You think you're so smart," spluttered Pat, "letting me think . . ."

"Darling, suppose we both stop thinking," Peter said, sinking down on the davenport with Pat still in his arms. "You thought I was a tramp, I thought you were a tramp . . . well when cherry season is over, suppose we both become tramps, honeymooning tramps . . . now . . ." he stopped talking as well as thinking.

"I do love this dress, Peter," protested Pat.

"So do I, darling. Suppose we put it over on that seat and just look at it," he agreed pleasantly, and in two quick jerks, reduced her to two scraps of scented lace.

THAT WAS GREAT, DEAR!  
LET'S MAKE THE NEXT  
NUMBER "THE WEDDING  
MARCH"

# HOW A QUICK, EASY WAY TO LEARN MUSIC



*changed my name from "Miss" to "Mrs."*

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Here's how it happened!

One evening I was sitting in my lonely room gazing from the window. From across the street came the sound of jazz and happy laughter. I could see couples dancing—others talking—all having a good time.

Everything seemed to center around the girl at the piano—Mary Nelson. How I envied her! She had friends, popularity, happiness—all the things I longed for—but didn't have.

The next afternoon I dropped over to see Mary—told her how lonely and depressed I felt. To cheer me up Mary sat down at the piano and played waltzes, jazz bits, sonatas. When she had finished, I sighed enviously.

"Thanks, Mary, it was wonderful. What wouldn't I give to play like that! But it's too late now! I should have had a

teacher when I was in school—like you!"

Mary smiled and said: "Ann, I never had a teacher in my life. In fact, not so long ago I couldn't play a note."

"Impossible," I exclaimed. "How did you do it?"

Then she told me about a wonderful new short-cut method of learning music that had been perfected by the U. S. School of Music. You learn real music from the start. When I left Mary it was with new hope. If she could learn to play this way, so could I. That very night I wrote for the Free Book and Demonstration Lesson.

I never dreamed that learning to play the piano could be so simple—even easier than Mary had pictured it. And as the lessons continued, they seemed to get easier. Although I never had any "talent" I was playing my favorites—almost before I knew it.

Then came the big night at Margaret Jones' party. What a moment that was when our hostess, apparently troubled, exclaimed: "Isn't it a shame that Mary Nelson can't be here to play the piano."

I spoke up, "I'll try to fill Mary's place—if you're not too critical."

Everyone seemed surprised. "Why, I didn't know she played!" someone behind whispered.

As I struck the first rippling chords of Nevin's lovely "Narcissus," a hush fell over the room. I could hardly believe it; but—I was holding the party spell-bound.

When I finished you should have heard them applaud! Everyone insisted I play more! Only too glad, I played piece after piece. Before the evening was over, I had been invited to three more parties. And it wasn't long until I met Tom who shortly afterward asked me to become his wife.

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